DIALOGUE

A Journal of Mormon Thought

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A Journal of Mormon Thought

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

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LETTERS

Faithful Historian Responds

I consider myself a faithful historian so I was extremely disappointed and felt misrepresented when I read John-Charles Duffy's article, "Can Deconstruction Save the Day? 'Faithful Scholarship' and the Uses of Postmodernism," (*Dialogue* 41, no. 1 [Spring 2008]: 1–33). This article is certainly not an example of careful scholarship. If I grant that Duffy is at least sincere in his evaluation of my work, I am forced to conclude that he has an exceedingly superficial grasp of it. As I reflected on the matter, I thought that there has to be a continuum from mistake to misrepresentation to half-truth to falsehood. I am not sure just where on this continuum Duffy's article rests; but since I have written a number of articles, given public lectures, and taught historical methodology during forty years as a professor at Brigham Young University, I have to wonder.

Duffy seems to believe that I arrived at my views only in an attempt to defend myself and the way I write history after being attacked by anti-positivists. Nothing could be further from the truth. I took a class in historiography and philosophy of history from Raymond Sonntag at Berkeley in 1961. If nowhere else, that class solidified my view that historians could neither be objective nor use the method of positivists. In particular, the writings on the historical theory of Charles Beard, Carl Becker, and Frederick Jackson Turner as contrasted with the views of Samuel Eliot Morison and other objectivists convinced me that history was always perspectival. I wrote my paper for the class on Turner. A wide reading in history and historiography established quite firmly in my mind that historians could easily come to different conclusions on the same subject depending on which factual information or interpretive scheme they privileged. No objectivist or positivist could hold that view.

After I arrived at BYU in 1964, I taught the students in my classes in historical methodology that objectivity was impossible. However, I did not write about those views for publication until after 1980. In some of my presentations and publications, I tried to explain my views by examining their historiographical and philosophical underpinnings. In an article published twelve years ago, which Duffy ignored or of which he was unaware ("Relativism and Interest in the New Mormon History," *Weber Studies* 13 [Winter 1996]: 133–41), I offered a personal essay with examples on the topic. In the first paragraph of the essay, I wrote, "Our understanding of the past is relative to our own interests." This is a restatement of a point of view published by Frederick Jackson Turner long before Duffy and I were born.

Contrary to the articles by various people whom Duffy cites approvingly, this argument is not part of a *Positivismusstreit*; it is rather part and parcel of an *Ehrlichkeitstreit*. It is about whether those who dislike the type of history that I write can critique my work honestly and accurately rather than classifying it as something which it is not: objectivist and positivist. Contrary to the title of Peter Novick's book, I do not believe that objectivity is *"That No-*

ble Dream." Rather, as I have said repeatedly, I believe that objectivity is impossible. I wonder whether those who have classified my work as objectivist and positivist are really honest because they do such extreme violence to my views.

Now, how do I believe historians should treat religious topics or spiritual experiences, the topic which is at the crux of this discussion? In my 1986 *Dialogue* essay "Historiography and the New Mormon History: A Historian's Perspective" (19, no. 3 [Fall 1986]: 25–49) to which Duffy alludes and which he apparently does not understand, I argued that historians should treat revelations and other supernatural events just as they do natural events for which there is only one observer. If the subject acts consistently with a revelation that he or she reports, then historians are bound to write about the revelation as a real event instead of trying to intuit or ferret out some naturalistic explanation. Recasting the event through a naturalistic explanation is, of course, something positivists would do since they believe that statements confirming the supernatural are meaningless. This explanation of my methodology earned me a rebuke from Charles S. Peterson in "Beyond the Problems of Exceptionalist History," in *Great Basin Kingdom Revisited: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Thomas G. Alexander (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1991, 148). He considered it outside the mainstream of historical method.

Peterson's rebuke notwithstanding, treating revelation as a real event is the only way I know to be honest about historical subjects who are also religious people with spiritual experiences. Instead of objectivity, I believe that honesty is the most important ideal of the historian. *As I have said and written elsewhere, honest historians must try to understand historical figures as they understood themselves.* Understanding should be the ideal. I hasten to emphasize that understanding and honesty as I use the terms are not synonyms for objectivity. Understanding others as they understood themselves is difficult, most likely even impossible to achieve, but historians should try to do so.

Because I set that as an ideal, in my biography of Wilford Woodruff, I treated the revelations he received as actual events—communications from God. I did this because he believed that is what they were, and he acted consistently with those revelations. Significantly, Richard Bushman, whose work Duffy cites approvingly, used the same technique in both his *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* and *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling.*

Beyond this, however, an honest historian will try to deal truthfully with the problems historical figures had in their lives. I heard second or third hand about the comments of others, and directly from one critic, that some people did not like my biography of Wilford Woodruff because I dealt forthrightly with some of the problems in his life. I have heard also that some people criticized Bushman's prize-winning, brilliant, and excellent biography of Joseph Smith for the same reason.

I would hasten to add that Church leaders recognize that you can't simply hide things that are unpleasant; you have to deal forthrightly with them, but with understanding. The Church has

nothing to fear from an honest treatment of its history. For that reason, the Church leadership gave Richard Turley Jr., Ronald Walker, and Glen Leonard access to every source available on the Mountain Meadows Massacre as well as the funds to search archives throughout the United States for additional sources. I know something of the work they did because I served for more than a year and a half as an editor on their project, part of the time as a full-time missionary. Their book was published in August 2008 by Oxford University Press. In the fall of 2007, President Henry B. Eyring gave an honest and excellent address in which he pointed out that, contrary to previous stories, Mormon settlers in Cedar City bore responsibility for the massacre. (See http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/150th-anniversary-of-mountain-meadows-massacre#continued [accessed June 29, 2008]). It was not perpetrated by John D. Lee and the Paiutes as had often been alleged, nor did Brigham Young order it as some mistaken souls have insisted. Moreover, the Church has undertaken the publication of all of Joseph Smith's papers in part because of this commitment to forthrightness.

In addition to his poorly informed attack on me, Duffy is highly critical of Leonard Arrington. Leonard is on record as believing in the ideal of objectivity. He was by training an economist, so it is not surprising that he believed in objectivity. After he joined the faculty at Utah State University, he took a course in historical methodology from George Ellsworth to help retool his skills as a historian. Nevertheless, he and I believed differently, *but respectfully*, on objectivity, as on some other subjects. Duffy insists on conflating our views, apparently assuming without evidence that Leonard and I agreed on virtually everything having to do with historical methodology.

Duffy also forgets that Leonard was director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church (later Latter-day Saint) History, an organization that Duffy mentions approvingly. He hired and supported the work of Ronald K. Esplin and Jill Mulvay Derr, whom Duffy calls faithful scholars.

I first met Leonard while I was a student at Utah State. At the time he was a member of the USU Stake presidency. He was active, faithful, and committed to the Church throughout his life. At the time of his death, President Gordon B. Hinckley telephoned his widow, Harriet, asking her to allow him to speak at Leonard's funeral. He spoke along with Davis Bitton, others, and me. Jan Shipps told me that, of the two recent histories of the Latter-day Saints, she considered the language in *The Mormon Experience,* which he wrote with Davis Bitton, more faith-affirming than *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. One of Leonard's great strengths was that, perhaps more than any other Mormon historian or economist, he was the earliest to reach out to all people. More recently, historians like Richard Bushman and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich have assumed that role. During his lifetime, he was arguably the Church's most effective ambassador and missionary in the historical and economic disciplines. Considering him to be someone who was not a faithful scholar as Duffy does is grossly inaccurate.

Later in his essay, Duffy moved to a discussion of perspectivism and postmodernism as strategies for promoting the serious study of religion. In this context, he cites George Marsden's work approvingly. What he seems to ignore in his haste to classify me as an objectivist and positivist is that I presented a defense of Marsden's *Soul of the American University* at a session with Marsden at the convention of the American Society for Church History-American Historical Association in 1994, the year of this book's publication. This was long before the published defense of Marsden by Jed Wood- worth, Reid Neilsen, and Grant Underwood whom Duffy cites approvingly. I also approve their defense of Marsden, but I find it strange that Duffy should cite theirs and ignore mine unless it was part of his agenda to attack me.

In conclusion, I would call on Duffy to attempt to achieve a greater degree of accuracy in representing my work and that of other historians. Critics like Duffy would do well to adopt the ideals of understanding and honesty as models for their presentations.

Thomas G. Alexander
Provo, Utah

What Is a Revival?

I have read with increasing concern D. Michael Quinn's lengthy online essay defending an 1820 Palmyra "revival" ("Joseph Smith's Experience of a Methodist 'Camp-Meeting' in 1820," *Dialogue Paperless*, E-Paper #3, December 20, 2006, http://www.dialoguejournal.com, accessed April 2008); his letter to *Dialogue* ("Filling Gaps and Responding to 'Silences on Mormon History," 40, no. 2 [Summer 2007]: ix–x) declaring himself the victor; and Gerry L. Ensley's letter in the spring 2008 issue ("A Rigorous Examination," 41, no. 1 [Spring 2008]: vi–vii) lauding Quinn's "rigorous examination of historical evidence." While I found Quinn's research thorough enough, I think many of his arguments are strained and largely irrelevant.

Quinn's so-called "conservative revisionism" consists of redating the First Vision to the summer of 1820, instead of the early spring as Joseph Smith claimed in his 1838–39 official history. This redating is necessary to make the report in the local *Palmyra Register* of a camp meeting "in the vicinity" of Palmyra Village in June 1820 relevant. Quinn even asserts it was the very meeting that led to Smith's first theophany. He argues that an unusually cold spring caused Smith to misdate his vision. Thus, Quinn attempts to free himself from the text that has informed and restricted previous discussions. In my opinion, such speculation does not justify the certainty with which he then proceeds to criticize both critics and fellow apologists.

Quinn might find it difficult to believe Smith would go into the woods to pray in cold weather, but these were people who cut holes in the ice to baptize. Recounting events that occurred "late in the fall of 1840," Ezra T. Benson, for instance, wrote: "One evening, as the moon shone bright[,] I retired near a grove to pray, there was about one foot of snow upon the ground."[1] We are not talking about snow on the ground in Smith's case, only a temperature in the 50s or 60s. It is perhaps rele-

vant that in a December 1842 addition to his history, Smith said that, upon returning home after his vision, he spoke to his mother "as I leaned up to the fire piece."[2] Some might find that image difficult to accept for June 1820. Apparently unaware that Quinn's definition of "revival" is different from those he criticizes, Ensley naively concludes: "We may now safely ignore historical criticism that no such religious revivals occurred in Palmyra until 1824."

There is good reason both Walters and his apologetic critics either dropped or ignored the June 1820 Palmyra camp meeting. It did not fit their criteria of evidence. Walters had challenged Smith's claim that there were "great multitudes" of converts joining the competing sects in Palmyra in 1820. This was the definition of "revival" that informed that discussion; and for Quinn to change the definition to include any religious excitement, especially a camp meeting, regardless of the amount of conversions, is unfair. No one, not even Walters, claimed Joseph Smith could not have attended a camp meeting—just not the *one* he described in his history. So, despite Quinn's excessively repeated and annoying accusations, Walters was not being dishonest when he downplayed the 1820 camp meeting; nor had the apologists "wrongfully conceded" the point when they expanded their search for evidence of "revivals" beyond Palmyra.

Ensley is impressed that "Quinn's evidence shows not only an extensive Methodist (exactly as Smith stated) Palmyra 'camp meeting' religious revival in 1820, but also an interdenominational (Methodist and others) Palmyra camp meeting revival in 1818 as well." However, a Methodist camp meeting occurring in Palmyra in June 1820 is not "exactly" as Smith claimed. According to Smith, the "religious excitement" that preceded and motivated his 1820 vision involved all the sects and led to his mother and other family members joining the Presbyterian church, which even Quinn admits probably did not happen until 1824.

Of course, Smith did not mention either an 1818 or 1824 revival. Rather than seeing Smith as pushing elements from 1824 back to 1820, Quinn speculates that Smith considered the 1824 revival a continuation of the 1820 camp meeting and therefore lumped all the details together. However, it was in the wake of the confusion created by competing sects and the pressure he felt to join a particular church, as his mother and siblings had done, that led to his prayer in the woods. Hence, in his conversation with his mother over the "fire piece," he said: "I told my mother I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true" (*Early Mormon Documents*, 1:143), which is significant since Lucy dated her membership to shortly after her oldest son's death in November 1823 (1:306–8). Considering how the anachronistic elements work in the narrative, Quinn's speculation doesn't solve anything.

Significantly, Joseph Smith's 1832 history fails to mention a revival and confusion over which sect to join as motivation for praying. Instead, he was motivated by a need for salvation and forgiveness of sins. This need posed a problem to him because he had already concluded all the sects were apostate. Rather than trying to find the unifying

historical truth behind these texts, I think it is more beneficial to treat them as literary and rhetorical works and explore possible reasons for this shift in meaning.

Ultimately, after all his unnecessary and unfair attacks on Walters's character, Quinn agrees with Walters's main finding—that Joseph Smith's 1838–39 First Vision story contains elements from the 1824–25 Palmyra revival. That's more than some of the early apologetic defenders were willing to concede to Walters. Although Walters may have overstated its significance (which advocates on both sides of the debate have done), his observation about the text and its relationship to verifiable historical facts remains essentially legitimate.

Dan Vogel
Westerville, Ohio

1. "A brief history of Ezra Taft Benson, written by himself," copied into Manuscript History of Brigham Young by clerk Robert L. Campbell, 16:55–82 for July 16, 1846, quotation from p. 65. Holograph at LDS Church Library. This account is reproduced in Elden Jay Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801–1844* (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1968), 250, and serialized in *The Instructor* 80 (March 1945): 103. Benson's British mission journal records that he wrote his autobiography between June 11 and September 25, 1857, at the request of assistant Church historian Wilford Woodruff and that Elder O. F. Jones helped him write it. Photocopy and microfilm of diary in LDS Church library.

2. Added by Willard Richards to Manuscript History, Book A–1, Note B; reproduced in Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents,* 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2003), 1:143.

Seeking a "Second Harvest": Controlling the Costs of LDS Membership in Europe

Armand L. Mauss

> *The Church in Europe must live again. The work of the Church has run on the backs of its European Saints since the beginning. Don't think that you are just minding the shop waiting for the Savior to come. Don't think that the great days of gathering in Europe are over. This is our time. –Elder Jeffrey R. Holland*[1]

> *Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It's very religious. So is the U.S. The one exception to this is Western Europe. One of the most interesting questions in the sociology of religion today is not, How do you explain fundamentalism in Iran? but, Why is Western Europe different? –Peter Berger*[2]

> *European exceptionalism [must be seen] in the proper perspective. As long as their religious markets are highly regulated, the apparent secularization of many European nations will be sustained. But should significant and authentic competition arise, it seems likely that other Europeans will embrace religion. –Massimo Introvigne and Rodney Stark*[3]

It is not often that we see a convergence in predictions between apostles and sociologists, though, to be sure, this is not the first prediction from Rodney Stark that has proved pleasing to the LDS leadership.[4] Yet, for today's LDS members in Europe, the predicted "great days of gathering," or, in President Hinckley's terms, "second harvest," must seem as far off as the Millennium itself. Certainly Stark's earlier projections of enduring Church growth have proved rather optimistic for Europe, where the rate

of new converts has barely kept pace with the defections. The seemingly static membership in western Europe is no secret, nor is the Church's ongoing struggle with retention. Well-researched articles on such topics have been appearing for more than a decade, and a series of 2005 articles in the *Salt Lake Tribune* brought the problem forcibly to public attention.[5] More recently, a devout and energetic young LDS scholar, David G. Stewart Jr., a pediatric orthopedist, has established a website rich in data about members' profiles, distribution, and retention and has published a telling critique of the LDS missionary program, along with many suggestions for improving both the conversion and the retention rates.[6] On balance, the prospects so far seem quite mixed for the future of the LDS Church as a worldwide religion in a meaningful sense, especially in Europe.

In this paper, I first review what seem to be the most important deterrents to the Church's growth in Europe, and then identify both a theoretical basis and some operational developments that nevertheless might justify "second harvest" optimism. This approach means a kind of "bad news versus good news" bifurcation, with the "bad news" coming first.

My personal knowledge about the Church membership in Europe is quite limited, based mainly on (1) a fairly extensive study of published membership data, (2) first-hand accounts from informed European members, and (3) some interviews and other communications with knowledgeable Church leaders and members in Europe.[7] While traveling during the past decade or so, I have also attended perhaps a dozen LDS ward meetings in England, Belgium, and Sweden. I'm well aware that this record does not make me a great expert, but it has left me with some experiences and impressions, both cognitive and emotional. As a further limitation, my observations and generalizations, drawn as they are from western Europe, are far less applicable to eastern Europe, where the religious and political histories are quite different and where a significant LDS presence is more recent. From my reading and observations, I have concluded that it is not easy to be an active Latter-day Saint anywhere in Europe, for there are many costs of membership, both obvious and hidden but not primarily financial. Most American members can scarcely appreciate or even imagine these costs. Some can be mitigated by creative changes in the Church program itself, but many are built into the cultural and political contexts of European societies.

Secular Culture and the Regulation of Religion

Social scientists have been predicting the decline and fall of religion at least since Auguste Comte almost two centuries ago. So far, however, historical developments during those centuries, and especially the periodic religious resurgences, have proved to be obstinate counterindications of secularization. Nevertheless, many scholars and commentators have observed that contemporary Europe, especially as contrasted with the United States, is permeated with a secular culture of disbelief in traditional religion and with moral permissiveness toward a variety of personal behaviors once regarded as major vices.[8] The contrasting persistence of religious belief in the United States has tended to be regarded, somewhat dismissively, as "American exceptionalism."[9]

Post-War Trends in the European Religious Scene

European observers seem astounded that surveys find belief in God and an afterlife among Americans so much higher than among Europeans, at least in western Europe. Furthermore, such religious belief as there is does not seem to be accompanied by church-going in Europe nearly as much as in the United States. Depending on the survey and the region, a majority of Americans are in church on Sunday, compared to around 20 percent or less in Europe. This situation has led British sociologist Grace Davie to identify the predicament of "believing without belonging" in her study of religion in contemporary Britain.[10]

Large-scale cultural trends, however, are rarely self-generated. They usually follow important political developments that seem to call for new norms and values and that render the old ways impractical, irrelevant, or at least "politically incorrect." In Europe, these political developments have included fundamental changes in the relationships between the traditional religions and national governments since World War II. Though a certain amount of disillusionment with religion in general probably followed that war (given God's seeming inability to prevent such disasters), the main impact on church-state relationships was the attenuation, or even elimination, of government sponsorship for religion, including the traditional state churches.[11] In Soviet-controlled territory, officially atheist states emerged. In the West, however, under the influence of the U.N.'s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an increase in religious freedom was gradually institutionalized. The derivative European

Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) was signed in Strasbourg in 1950.[12]

Further institutional backing for these documents came in 1962 through a multilateral treaty establishing the similarly named European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), also in Strasbourg. This court has issued many efficacious judgments against member nations for violations and state persecutions of minority religions, often resulting in the rewriting of national laws. Not all European nations are signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights; but as one after another has signed on, Europe has come increasingly to share an ideology of "human rights" where religion is concerned. In this ideology, each individual is guaranteed freedom of conscience, meaning freedom to choose any religious belief or tradition—or none at all.[13] Starting in the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, religious freedom also came to be a principal concern of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with fifty-six member states, as it has struggled to bring peace and security to the newly emerging states of eastern Europe.[14]

However liberating these developments might seem at the level of individual conscience, the European Convention on Human Rights also guarantees each member state the ultimate right to grant or deny the status of "legal entity" to any religious body.[15] Thus, legal entity status must be sought and granted in accordance with the laws of each country. The European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg, with some success, has attempted to require that legal status be granted in a fair and neutral process, without arbitrary delays or restrictions, without considering the preferences of the traditional state religions, and without any judgment about the religious doctrines of the applicant bodies. Yet the court also permits a state to deny or restrict legal entity status wherever, in its judgment, an application raises questions about public safety, order, health, or morals.[16]

In western Europe, generally speaking, the United Kingdom has been among the most liberal in granting legal entity status, and France is among the least liberal, with most other countries in between.[17] Although the ideal of equal treatment is everywhere espoused rhetorically, actual implementation is complicated by competing traditional values in the various states and, more recently, by the increasing assertiveness of Islam in many European countries.[18] Most of the former Soviet states in the East, meanwhile, have proved quite restrictive, especially after their traditional religious bodies began to reestablish the old ties with their governments

and to push back against the initial successes enjoyed by Mormons and others after the Soviet collapse. Yet even in those countries, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has had some impact with a succession of rulings upholding access to legal entity status.[19]

In sum, there are at least three implications of the current jurisprudence governing religious association in most of Europe: (1) Although the principles of freedom of religion (or freedom of association) are important, establishing the legal entity status for any religion, so essential for even the most basic legal and social privileges, ultimately depends on each nation's laws and their interpretations; (2) There is considerable variation from one nation to the next in both the process and the obstacles involved in gaining legal entity status; and (3) Each nation may retain a state church or otherwise privilege traditional religious bodies over newer ones and may also continue to extract a religious tax from its citizens.

Religion in Europe as Seen by Sociologists and Psychologists

In most of Europe, these conditions have led to a "two-tiered" (or even multi-tiered) system of religious registration and recognition, according to which the conventional religions in each nation are privileged not only by tradition but also by cooperative—even organic—relationships with the government.[20] These integrated relations between governments and the traditional religions have existed for centuries, comprising what some sociologists have called "pillars," by which social and civic life in Europe was carried on. Thus, Catholic citizens had their births, schooling, employment, marriages, and funerals through institutions provided by the Catholic "pillar"; Protestants did the same through a Lutheran, Reformed, or other traditional "pillar."[21] Where conventional religious "pillars" proved insufficiently inclusive, eventually such secular parallels as a socialist, a liberal, or a union "pillar" developed. In this system, religious institutions had vital secular, civic functions, supported by public taxes, whether or not citizens were church-goers.

To be sure, my description of this process is very superficial and, indeed, somewhat obsolete, for the religious "pillars" have eroded considerably in more recent years, partly because increasing numbers of citizens, especially immigrants, have been difficult to assimilate into one of the traditional religious pillars, and partly, perhaps, under the influence of changes encouraged by the spreading European Convention on Human Rights regimen in Europe. The necessary social services and amenities are

increasingly available outside the religious "pillars," making religion less salient as an organizational basis for society. At the same time, the citizenry does not seem to have sought the more ancient spiritual functions in any greater numbers. Consequently, church attendance remains very low. Having been secularized through years of integration with governments, traditional churches seem to have lost their *raison d'être* and their power to provide meaning in life.[22] Recognizing that "believing without belonging" leaves the actual functions of traditional churches somewhat ambiguous, Grace Davie has more recently suggested using "vicarious religion" to refer to religious institutions in which few citizens seek either social or worship services, but still hold to certain supernatural beliefs and still feel loyal to their religious traditions.

In this conceptualization, the traditional churches continue to represent even the large number of nonparticipants, for the latter still expect the church to be available for occasions of celebration, bereavement, or crisis, and to be supported by public funds. Still, on Sundays they prefer to have their interests represented "vicariously" by the more devout few.[23]

Yet the basic two-tiered structure among religious communities still remains, such that the newer religions are marginalized and stigmatized (*de facto* if not *de jure*). In many places, they are subject to special surveillance and restrictions. Mormons are usually positioned on this lower tier of religious respectability with Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, and even some of the "scarier" new sects (or "cults" as they are usually called in the United States), such as Scientology, the Unification Church (or "Moonies"), The Family (formerly "Children of God"), and followers of various Eastern gurus.[24] All such "cults" (including Mormons) remain at varying degrees of disadvantage whenever they are involved in any transactions requiring government approval, ranging from access to desirable parcels of land for meeting houses and temples all the way to child custody disputes. Indeed, many countries manifest an official wariness about all "sects," a pejorative term commonly used in Europe to refer to all religious communities not part of the immediate post-Reformation world.[25] The rising Muslim tide in Europe might be seen as even more ominous than the "sects," but the latter have apparently gained no comparative legitimacy in the process.

In general, sociologists in the United States, the United Kingdom, and most of Europe have found no scientific basis for privileging the beliefs of conventional Christians over those of "sects" or "cults." Accord-

ingly, most social scientists have long adopted the more neutral term "new religious movements" (NRMs).[26] Certain psychologists, however, with their more therapeutic proclivities, have retained the professional suspicion that some religious beliefs must be considered *ipso facto* symptoms of dubious mental health. Governments in France, Belgium, and francophone Switzerland, for example, have all sought the assistance of psychologists to help them identify "potentially harmful sects," more than a hundred of which appear on official lists, often including Mormonism.[27] In France, the Interministerial Monitoring Mission Against Sectarian Abuses (French acronym MIVILUDES), established in 2002 and largely financed by the French government, has been somewhat influential as a "watchdog" organization regularly advocating various kinds of regulations against "sect" activities, not only in France but elsewhere.[28] However, a team of Belgian psychologists recently reviewed the applicable literature of psychology on "contested religious movements" and basically found no reliable evidence that such movements cause any harm.[29] Nevertheless, through a complicated rationale, they still concluded that it would be well for the Belgian government to consider "precautionary" policies to protect its citizens from potential "moral harassment" by CRMs.[30]

The high cost of being Mormon, then, for LDS families and individuals, comes fundamentally from being relegated both constitutionally and culturally to this lower tier or margin of religious respectability.[31] Until this situation can be changed, which I believe is possible in future generations, membership in the LDS Church will continue to carry a cost, heavier in some countries than in others, but a cost nevertheless, with respect to marriage opportunities, family life, friendships, careers, and many other aspects of life. The number and impacts of these costs can scarcely be appreciated by Latter-day Saints in the United States, where membership and activity in a given religious community rarely have any implications for other aspects of a person's life. For that reason, American Saints (unless they have served missions elsewhere) tend to subscribe to the naive idea that retaining one's "testimony" is simply a matter of keeping the commandments and maintaining Church activity. Brought up on pioneer stories about their European forebears, who sacrificed all for the sake of gathering to Zion, American Saints do not adequately appreciate the huge difference in the cost-benefit ratios faced by today's European Saints compared to those of the nineteenth century.

Precisely because nineteenth-century Mormon European converts

emerged from humble origins and from countries with limited religious freedom, they could expect a net gain in life circumstances if they could emigrate to America—as thousands did, often with Church help.[32] This is not to diminish the faithfulness or sacrifices of those early European Saints as they adopted a new and unpopular religion, separated from loving friends and families, and confronted a cruel and hazardous journey on sea and land followed by challenges in settling in a harsh and limited environment. Yet this change offered prospects that were usually vindicated within a generation or two in the new land. LDS converts gathered, furthermore, to a new religious community in which their faith was regularly reinforced by a supportive network of friends and Church leaders. I am not unaware of cases in which immigrants to early Utah returned in disillusionment and bitterness to their homelands, but most of the transplanted Saints soon experienced a net improvement, materially and spiritually, over what they had left behind.

For today's European converts, in contrast, though their situations vary by country, the cost of Church membership is likely to exceed the benefits, material and otherwise. There is little to be gained by emigration in most cases, even when it is possible; yet in the home country, their worldly prospects are more likely diminished than enhanced by membership in a stigmatized religion. Even in the spiritual part of the equation, while a convert might take strength for a while from a powerful personal conversion experience, he or she usually does not find much spiritual support from family, friends, or large and thriving LDS congregations. Everything depends on one's own resources, insofar as these can be acquired through spiritual experiences and reinforced in the normally small LDS communities. European Saints today who remain faithful and active are indeed a tough breed.

The LDS Retention Problem

There is recent evidence of some improvement in the retention of new converts in Europe, to which I will refer in the next section. First, however, it seems only realistic to acknowledge that European wards and branches are still struggling under the heavy burden of inactive members brought into the Church in recent decades—usually amounting to a majority of those on the membership rolls.[33] I shall never forget the startling experience I had at a priesthood meeting in the Nottingham area in 1995, at which the entire meeting was devoted to discussing which of the many

inactive elders and high priests should be invited to apply for a cancellation of their Church membership. The dead weight of unconverted and disaffected members on Church rolls is another heavy cost borne by those who are still active—more in Europe than in America, for in Europe the member who drops out is usually gone permanently, while inactive members in the United States more often circulate in and out of Church activity and can more often be reclaimed later in life.[34] No matter how attrition is measured, both in Europe and elsewhere it is a discouraging problem. National census data in some countries show that the citizens claiming to be LDS are only 25–50 percent of those on official LDS records. "Active" status, usually defined as attending at least one Church meeting a month, remains at around 25 percent for members of record in most countries outside North America.[35]

This situation can be understood as the cumulative consequence of thousands of unfavorable "cost-benefit analyses" by disaffected individuals whose Church experiences have proved more stressful than gratifying. Indeed, all new converts in all societies are likely to encounter stress as they transition into an LDS way of life; but some of conversion's consequences in the normal daily experiences seem to exact a higher cost for European Saints than they do in North America.[36] Here are just a few examples:

1. Much larger investments of time and energy are required to attend Sunday meetings because of travel over much longer distances. This burden is greatly magnified by the additional meetings required during the week for the youth and their teachers, as well as for ward and stake leaders.[37]

2. Partly because of the time-consuming nature of LDS Church life, and partly because of a conservative LDS understanding of proper Sabbath observance, an active member in Europe must regularly choose between Church activities and participation in recreational activities with his or her family, given that Sundays are the preferred and usual days for family gatherings.[38] Extended families typically cannot understand the convert's preoccupation with religion, and family relationships are often ruptured beyond repair, especially when the convert is young—for youth are under parental and family guidance longer in Europe than in the United States. This strain in family relationships contributes to a common perception in Europe that Mormonism is just another "cult" stealing away the youth.

3. Like others in the lower tier of European religious legitimacy, Latter-day Saints sometimes face legal discrimination (*de facto* if not *de jure*) in cases of divorce (sometimes the convert's participation in a "religious cult" is cited as grounds for divorce), in child custody cases, adoption applications, and sometimes even in access to employment. So far, the Church itself has not usually intervened in such cases on behalf of the aggrieved member, adding irony to this special cost of membership.

4. Tithes and offerings turn out to be a much larger proportion of disposable income for most European members than for Americans. Given the welfare state features of many European nations, the tax rates are already comparatively high, and contributions to the LDS Church are often not tax-deductible as they are in the United States

5. Expectations for LDS members to participate in missionary work in various ways, though routine (if somewhat desultory) among U.S. members, are experienced as much more intrusive and objectionable invasions of privacy in most European societies. The pressure applied by succeeding waves of well-meaning American missionaries for local Saints to arrange visits and meetings with their friends simply increases the stress associated with membership.

As members who are unable to endure unfavorable cost-benefit ratios drop out of activity, they heighten the cost of membership for those who stay and who must therefore pick up the slack at the increased jeopardy of their own respective cost-benefit assessments. A vicious circle is thus set in motion. In places where men cannot be retained long enough to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Church cannot form new wards and stakes and may even be forced to collapse and combine them.[39]

Great as these costs to individual members might be, today's poor retention rates are attributable less to the struggles of converted members than to decades of a proselyting methodology that emphasized numerical increases in baptisms over enduring conversions of new members who could add to the human and religious capital of the branches, wards, and stakes of the Church.[40] Baptisms in the recent past have occurred disproportionately among those with the least to lose, who are therefore the most readily "available" in a social sense—the young, the single, the modestly educated, non-European immigrants, and the lonely.[41] The high costs of these earlier decades of inadequate convert preparation and premature baptisms are evident, not only from the low retention rates, but

also from the well-informed accounts by devout and active LDS scholars in England, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, among other countries.[42] Their work describes some of the serious—and often tragic—setbacks to Church growth and retention that have followed from large-scale baptisms of essentially unconverted new members in previous years. Even the latest program outlined in the new missionary manual envisions setting a date for the baptism of an investigator as early as a month or less after the first missionary contact.[43] To be sure, the manual emphasizes the need for investigators to understand at least the four basic lessons before they are baptized, but there is no requirement that they demonstrate an enduring change, prior to baptism, either in behavior or in commitment to church activity.[44] Large wards, with plenty of leaders, home teachers, and visiting teachers, can encircle, sustain, and fellowship new converts; but in the struggling smaller wards and branches of Europe, the unconverted disproportionately tax the time and resources of the local members and leaders. For this reason, bishops and other local leaders will sometimes, understandably, resist early missionary baptisms.[45]

In the future, it seems likely that poor retention of new converts will be less significant as the major cause of future attrition than other factors over which the Church has but little control: (1) a reduced birthrate among LDS parents (as among other Europeans); (2) continued emigration to the western hemisphere; and (3) a reduction in the U.S. military presence, especially in Germany, which has recently thinned out the numbers of both American and local Saints employed on military bases.

Brighter Prospects on the European Horizon

There is some recent and heartening evidence of improved retention of converts. In the Europe Central Area during 2006, the proportion of new converts who had attended Church meetings at least once in the previous month was 69 percent—higher than in many American wards.[46] Furthermore, the proportion of twenty-year-old men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood rose from 31 percent in 2001 to 38 percent in 2006. Even more encouraging is the evidence of retention among the European youth in particular. From 2001 to 2006, the proportion of twenty-year-old men who had served (or were then serving) missions increased from 13 percent to 20 percent.[47] This increased success among

youth and young single adults bodes well for producing a multi-generational membership in Europe.

Yet growth remains slow among the European LDS membership. The marginal status and image of the Church, and the pervasive secularized culture, still contribute to the high and varied costs of being an active LDS member in Europe today. Readers can perhaps recognize how such conditions can be costly in certain ways for the Church as an institution without appreciating how those costs are also translated to the level of the individual member. Institutional attrition, slow growth, and marginal status in a secularized society all bespeak a greater or lesser degree of stigmatization of the Church in European society, at least as symptoms, if not as causes. By extension, individual members share in this stigmatization, just as children do in stigmatized families.[48] Of course, many costs specific to the individual member also occur, as indicated above. Ultimately, individual costs cannot easily be distinguished from institutional costs, since the latter so often amplify the former.

What is occurring in Europe that might enhance the appeal and/or help to reduce the costs of LDS membership so that more members can be attracted and retained? Where can we see indications of the future "great days of gathering" envisioned by Elder Holland and others? I offer three considerations that might justify such optimistic predictions. The first draws on contemporary sociological theory to identify some cultural and political changes in Europe that have the potential to increase the appeal of the LDS religion among some segments of the population. Second, international efforts by LDS professionals and public affairs missionaries to improve the legal climate in each country for the operation of the Church and the enhancement of its public image have been promising. And finally, in a separate section, I will consider some prospects and processes that might make the LDS Church and religion seem a little less "American" and a little more universal.[49]

New Theoretical Outlooks on Secularization and Its Implications

A lively discussion has been underway for two decades among scholars, both LDS and others, about the secularization process in Europe and its implications for the future. The process is sufficiently complicated and so variable from one European group to another that many different implications can be pointed out with some evidence for each, even though some of them are mutually contradictory. Indeed, the very defini-

tion of secularization and the identification of its key indicators remain matters of scholarly debate.[50]

At least one component generally considered part of the secularization process, however, is "detraditionalization"—the decline in the power of traditional norms and institutions to inform personal identity, choices, and behavior.[51] As individuals are thus thrown back on their own intellectual and emotional resources, they will not all respond in the same way. Accordingly, despite what conventional "secularization" theories have been predicting, not all "detraditionalized" individuals will necessarily turn to strictly rational, pragmatic, and materialistic epistemologies in their search for meaning. Some will remain open to spiritual understandings and interpretations of their existence and destinies.

To be sure, terms like "spiritual" can also have many different meanings. Dutch sociologists Houtman and Aupers propose that, in the "detraditionalized" context of modern Europe, we are seeing the rise of a "post-Christian spirituality" which manifests itself as a quest to "reestablish . . . contact with the divine self . . . to reconnect to a sacred realm that holistically connects 'everything' and thus to overcome one's state of alienation."[52]

This is, they acknowledge, a kind of "romanticist conception of the self," which "lays central stress on unseen, even sacred forces that dwell within the person, forces that give life and relationships their significance."[53] Unlike traditional Christianity, which sees the divine as primarily transcendent, post-Christian spirituality sees the divine as essentially immanent. It also rejects the premise of secular rationalism that, if "truth" exists, it can be discovered only by rational human faculties. Thus post-Christian spirituality is epistemologically a "third way" of gnosis—"rejecting both [traditional] religious faith and scientific reason as vehicles of truth."[54] Importance is placed on trust in one's "inner voice" or intuition. Or, in the words of Hanegraaff, "Truth can only be found by personal, inner revelation, insight, or 'enlightenment' . . . in contrast with . . . *reason* or *faith*. . . . This 'inner knowing' cannot be transmitted by discursive language [as is rational knowledge] . . . [n]or can it be the subject of *faith* . . . [for] there is, in the last resort, no other authority than personal, inner experience."[55]

This description of the post-Christian mindset raises at least two derivative questions. First, in the modern world, is there really a sizable pop-

ulation embracing such a gnostic epistemology? Second, is the LDS gospel likely to appeal to such people?

In response to the first question, Houtman and Aupers draw upon the World Values Survey for fourteen Western countries (1981–2000) with a careful sample of more than 60,000 cases. By a complicated statistical process of cross-classifying survey respondents according to their answers on five questions, the authors identified a sub-sample that could be considered neither traditionally Christian nor rationally secularist in orientation. Between 15 percent and 40 percent of this sub-sample believes in life after death and in a life force or spirit; it rejects atheism but has little confidence in traditional churches and denominations to meet people's spiritual needs.[56] It is this population, neither traditionally religious nor secular, that the authors consider "detraditionalized" and "post-Christian." These people have not rejected religion per se but have relocated the sacred from religious institutions to an immanent spiritual force within themselves. The authors find, furthermore, that this spiritual orientation has actually been spreading in recent decades, particularly among the younger and better educated, and most notably in France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden.[57]

At first glance, this post-Christian segment of the population in Europe might not seem a very promising market niche in which Mormonism would have any appeal. The LDS Church, after all, makes claims about objective, transcendent truths which are outside the individual and available for individuals to discover for themselves through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. That does not seem quite like relying on the immanent divinity within oneself for discovering one's own path to truth and meaning. On the other hand, Mormonism has always encouraged a certain dependence on personal revelation in seeking the divine will, and this ideal has coexisted in some tension with a methodology of linear, deductive apologetics in quest of universal truths.[58]

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, LDS preaching, proselyting, and pulpit discourse relied heavily on rationalistic biblical arguments. Missionaries not only used such an approach in open public meetings and in the private homes of potential converts, but they distributed thousands of pamphlets or "tracts" based on such propositional arguments. In more recent decades, however, LDS preaching and proselyting have increasingly emphasized feelings over reason as the means of validating the truth-claims of the Church.[59] Moroni 10:4–5 in the Book of

Mormon is understood primarily as a call for members and investigators to rely on the spiritual promptings they feel when they pray, seeking confirmation of the authenticity of LDS teachings in general and of the Book of Mormon in particular.

Mormons, of course, understand the promptings of the Holy Spirit to come from outside the individual, but there is no obvious distinction between internal and external origins of feelings in such matters. Both missionaries and their investigators are taught that "in answer to our prayers, the Holy Ghost will teach us truth through our feelings and thoughts. [These feelings] are powerful, but they are also usually gentle and quiet."[60] Yet Mormonism does not hold that all spiritual experiences come externally from the Holy Spirit. Some originate from a person's own inner promptings called the "light of Christ." This is an impersonal force that "giveth light to every man that cometh into the world" (D&C 84:46), "which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space." (D&C 88:12). As President Boyd K. Packer explains, "A teacher of gospel truths is not planting something foreign or even new. . . . Rather, the missionary or teacher is making contact with the Spirit of Christ already there. The gospel will have a familiar 'ring' to [an open-minded investigator]."[61]

So we have the discovery of a "detraditionalized" population in modern secular Europe, dubbed "post-Christian" by Houtman and Aupers, because of its belief in an immanent divine power deep within each individual; and then we have a description in LDS scriptures of a divine light given at birth to every individual. Are these essentially the same powers or attributes? Such is, of course, a theological question, not an empirical one. What is important for purposes of the present discussion, however, is not whether either or both of these immanent qualities can be empirically demonstrated, but rather whether there is a segment of the modern post-Christian population that believes in such attributes and might be attracted precisely by the nontraditional nature of Mormonism. If so, such people will seek to authenticate LDS claims by resorting to their own internal promptings, whatever these are called, and will find increasing validation for their efforts as they associate with members of the LDS religious community, who are taught to recognize the "light of Christ" and the Holy Spirit in personal revelation. Such personal, subjective conversions, however, will not prove durable without some eventual support from the more rationalistic tradition in LDS discourse and teaching.

Houtman and Aupers reject the claim by such scholars as Steve Bruce that the radical individualism, fragmentation, and diffuseness of New Age spiritual believers militate against their socialization into any kind of community. At the very least, such participants in new spiritual milieux will socialize each other in the quest for personal authenticity.[62] In other words, post-Christian spiritual experiences can be "socially constructed because people are socialized into a spiritual discourse about the self"—which, in Mormon parlance, might be rephrased as discourse about "gaining a personal testimony."[63] Ultimately, only time will tell whether there is a segment of post-Christian believers that will constitute a promising niche for Mormon proselyting in the emerging religious market of modern Europe. It need not be a very large niche to be important. After all, the nineteenth-century niche where Mormonism took root in England, Scandinavia, and Germany was not large in absolute terms, but it produced half of the entire LDS membership by 1880.

Changing Prospects for the LDS Position in Europe

Even if the secularization of Europe has produced a "detraditionalized," post-Christian niche holding some promise for the "marketing" of the LDS faith, there remains the serious question of whether the Church as a corporate institution is in a position to appeal to that niche. It is apparent from the political and cultural conditions I have described that the LDS Church's public image places it at a serious disadvantage in the European religious marketplace. There is, of course, more than one way to portray the position of the LDS Church in the world. However, the context I find most useful and insightful is one I have borrowed from contemporary American sociologists and economists who study religion.[64] As it has evolved over the past two decades, it has come to be called the "religious economy model."[65] This model postulates that the potential for a "religious market" is universal, since every society, implicitly or explicitly, holds out to its members the promise of happiness or fulfillment or success (however defined), contingent upon conformity to that society's basic values and norms. Yet it is inherent in the nature of human experience that no society "delivers" adequately on its promises to all or even most of its members.

It is from this gap between the ideal and the real that the market arises for the otherworldly products of religion (and a number of other markets, as well). The main products of the religion market are supernatu-

ral; its "goods" are covenants or promises—certificates, as it were—available in this world but redeemable only in the next world. Because this redemption of "certificates" takes place only in the future, the "buyer" must accept on faith claims that are "unfalsifiable"—cannot be either proven or disproven—in the here and now. As a result, each individual must make periodic cost-benefit assessments, the outcome of which will determine whether she or he continues to prefer products from the same religious firm. Because this process for each individual is rationalistic, this theory is akin to so-called "rational choice" theories in contemporary economics, sociology, and political science.

In this religious economy model, the LDS Church can be compared to an industrial and commercial corporation, with corporate headquarters in Salt Lake City. Like other corporations, the Church not only designs and produces certain products but also directs a worldwide marketing program intended to recruit a clientele of long-term customers who will continue to prefer its products over those of its competitors. Such a conceptualization encourages us to analyze the nature and appeal of the Church's products in various niches of the world market, to see how the "packaging" of its products might need to be different for these different niches.

A critical question is: What is its competition? In the United States, we are used to seeing competition from other religious "firms" or organizations that are also in the business of marketing otherworldly products. Europe is different, however, according to the conventional wisdom, for the religious market is limited to that marginal fringe or lower tier of so-called "sects." Otherwise, there is no real competition in a highly secularized culture of moribund religious traditions sustained by the state.

This situation in Europe presents a challenge, not only to the LDS Church but also to the religious economy paradigm that has emerged recently in the American sociology of religion.[66] According to this new paradigm, secularization is inherently a self-limiting process, for no matter how much comfort and security societies can deliver in this world, fulfillment and contentment must ultimately come from an otherworldly system of meaning that is not vulnerable to the periodic setbacks, disappointments, and disasters that have always punctuated human experience. Theoretically, the more secular a society becomes, and the longer it has been undergoing secularization, the greater the proportion of its population that should be in the market for otherworldly meaning systems. Of

course, these otherworldly products need not, and often do not, come only from organized religion, which is in competition also with astrology, magic, and many other claimants to an otherworldly reality. Simultaneously, intense competition continues from hedonistic meaning systems, with which western Europe is well supplied.

The proponents of this new paradigm have long recognized that, for the religious market to operate in this idealized way, it must be mostly free of constitutional constraints. Regulation of the religious market by state agencies or public interest groups can be expected to have the same effect that regulation has in other markets. Constraining market access for certain religious communities, or relegating them to a marginal niche, will not only place artificial barriers on their growth and development but will also undermine the integrity even of the favored religious traditions, leaving them lazy, flabby, and unable to compete if and when the artificial protections of market regulations erode in favor of real competition. Furthermore, when market constraints are finally removed, brand-new religious firms can be expected to spring up, especially those of an unconventional or "fringe" kind. The general effect will be to increase the total volume of "customers" in the religious market as a whole, just as in any other market, according to supply-side economists. Latin America, whose traditional Catholic monopoly has long since broken down, provides an excellent example of the general flourishing of new religions.

The short-term and long-term consequences of market regulation, then, can be summed up in the following five propositions:[67]

1. If government regulation of religious markets suppresses competition, the authorized religious groups will make little effort to attract rank-and-file support or to meet religious "demand."

2. Moreover, the authorized churches will tend to be controlled and staffed by careerists, who are often quite lacking in religious motivation.

3. The net result will be widespread public religious alienation and apathy.

4. In addition, lacking effective religious socialization and congregational support, religious beliefs will become tentative, vague, and somewhat eclectic.

5. However, deregulation will (at least eventually) produce a religious revival. As religious organizations begin to compete for public support, participation in organized faiths will rise, and religious beliefs will become more clearly defined and widely held.

One implication of that fifth proposition is that, if and when conventional religious organizations revive and become more aggressive in the market, the newer, unconventional religions will be harder to sustain.[68] Because the religious market in the United States has always had plenty of active conventional religions, the unconventional ones, such as the Mormons, have found it difficult to compete without becoming more "conventional," the path it has followed during the twentieth century. In Europe, in contrast, since the conventional religions remain weak, the unconventional ones are actually more prevalent and noticeable than in the United States—or at least they seem so, given the amount of official animosity and "anti-cult" activity in Europe. In this difficult market, Mormonism will have to compete with many other unconventional or marginal religions, but its prospects for an increased market share against other religions will be directly tied to the success of lawyers, public affairs experts, and scholars in combating the defamation and fear-mongering generated by the political establishments in much of Europe.

To be sure, this new paradigm has had its adherents and its critics, both in the United States and in Europe.[69] Its European critics, in particular, have pointed out that it has been derived mainly from the American historical experience and ideologies, with reference particularly to the market metaphor and to the notion of secularization as inherently self-limiting. Furthermore, although unconventional or "fringy" new religions in Europe might be numerous, their combined membership remains very small. Yet the argument of Stark, Introvigne, and their colleagues is not that secularization and a religious market cannot coexist. Indeed, the secularization process helps create the demand for religious (and/or otherworldly) "products." Much of the argument between American proponents and European opponents of this theory has to do with what counts as data or evidence and with how "secular" Europeans really are as individuals. Given the general social, political, and ideological climate prevailing in most of Europe today, it might be difficult to see a large potential market for the products offered by the LDS "firm," or by any other religion that demands costly investments of time, energy, wealth, and self-discipline in exchange for covenants and promises to be redeemed in the next world. Of course, only time can tell about the long-term efficacy of any investments and commitments—whether made for rewards in this world or for rewards in the next. The various supposed "guarantees" of ultimate security and happiness in this world are scarcely more

reliable than the promises of ultimate salvation in the next. Both kinds of rewards are "products" that must be "sold" to more or less willing consumers, who accept them on faith in the future.

So what evidence have we that government regulation of religion is holding back a demand for otherworldly products that might be building up in Europe, either despite or because of the prevailing secular environment? A Stockholm-based journalist, publishing in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2007, reported on various unexpected outbreaks of religious sentiment and "upstart churches" in Sweden and other supposedly "secular" countries, precisely for the reasons postulated in the new paradigm outlined above.[70] Introvigne and Stark also offer numerous examples from various European countries supporting their claim of an inverse relation between religious participation and government regulation in any given society. Their showcase example, though, is Italy.[71] After 1947, all religions in Italy were supposedly equal before the law, but a series of Christian Democrat governments had always shown favoritism to the dominant Catholic religion. After Vatican Council II, however, and especially after the erosion of Christian Democrat political dominance in the 1980s and 1990s, the government entered into a series of new concordats with various religious communities, starting with the Vatican itself in 1984. Since then, Catholic priests have no longer drawn their salaries from the state.

However, the public still pays 0.8 percent of their total tax for purposes designated by law as "humanitarian or religious." Taxpayers may direct their respective portions to the religious communities of their choice, which need not be their own religious communities; or they may opt to leave the allocation to the discretion of the government for a "general humanitarian" purpose. The Jehovah's Witnesses, the most apolitical of all new religions, have chosen to accept the *otto mille*. Baptists have declined to accept their designated portion of the allocation. What is most interesting about this process is that it sets up an annual competition among the several religious communities, complete with professional ad campaigns, to attract these designated taxes from any and all of the taxpayers without regard to what their actual church memberships might be. Given that 89 percent of the Italian population claims to be "religious" (though only 40 percent are active participants), the designated church tax has been going disproportionately to *non*-Catholic denominations.[72]

This semi-deregulation process in Italy has opened up much more space for new evangelical and Pentecostal groups, as well as for a growing

number of so-called "para-churches" (e.g., Campus Crusade) and for totally new religious movements (NRMs), which in Italy do not face the same official "anti-cult" suspicions as in France or Belgium. So far, these non-Catholic bodies remain small, though by 2001 there were 120 independent evangelical or Pentecostal groups and some 350 unconventional new religious movements. A major reason that the Protestants and NRMs are not growing faster is because of increased competition from a resurgent Catholicism, which itself is undergoing a certain amount of internal competition from segments such as Opus Dei and the Catholic Charismatic movement. Those claiming to be "active" Catholics rose from 33 percent in 1981 to 38 percent in 1999. In other words, deregulation has not only encouraged the rise and development of various competing religions, but Italy has actually become even more Catholic as a result, supporting the claim of Stark and others that deregulation brings an increase in the total amount of religious activity, not just in the number of new religions.[73]

Finally, survey data show a general increase among Italians, across roughly two decades (1981–99), in religious belief and participation. Those believing in life after death increased from 44 percent of the population to 59 percent; those believing in hell rose from 33 percent to 49 percent; those claiming to pray with some regularity went from 71 percent to 79 percent; and weekly church attendance rose from 32 percent to 40 percent. Interestingly enough, these data for the general population were replicated, for the most part, among those between ages eighteen and twenty-nine, though with somewhat smaller figures. The authors cite several other recent studies by scholars in Italy which have also shown a generally upward thrust in religiosity among Italians.[74]

Nor is Italy unique in such trends. The Bertelsmann Foundation, a nonprofit research firm doing periodic surveys in Europe, recently found that most Germans and Swiss, for example, claim to be "religious" and that more than a fifth of respondents in each of those countries went further by claiming "deep religious convictions." These generalizations are qualified importantly by noting that such claims come disproportionately from women, youth, and Roman Catholics, and that "religious convictions" do not necessarily mean regular church attendance or traditional convictions. Yet neither do such findings bespeak a shrinking religious market in Europe.[75]

Let me be clear about the contentions of this essay so far: I am not

claiming to have demonstrated (1) that secularization (however defined) has reached its limits in Europe and is now in decline; (2) that deregulation of the religious market in Europe has been progressed far enough to permit a major religious resurgence there; or (3) that a new and extensive post-Christian religious consciousness has arisen in Europe that will provide a fertile niche for rapid LDS growth. These three propositions would all require far more empirical evidence than I can adduce here. They are also developments that could occur independently of each other without any necessary causal relationships among them. Furthermore, even to the extent that they are occurring, they might be necessary conditions, but would not be sufficient conditions, for a new "second harvest" of the Church in Europe. Nevertheless, if they are considered in light of the general theoretical framework proposed here, they do seem to offer at least the prospects for a brighter Mormon future in Europe. But much remains yet to be done.

LDS Efforts to Reduce Market Regulations in Europe

It is not well known among the American Saints, though it might be better known elsewhere, that the LDS Church itself has been actively involved in political, legal, and diplomatic efforts to reduce restraints on the religious market all over Europe. This is not a new development, for the Church has had an effective international diplomatic program for decades. One need only recall the work of David M. Kennedy, who was appointed by President Kimball in 1974 as a special envoy from the First Presidency to various governments, a post that he occupied until 1990.[76] Among his many accomplishments was gaining access for the Church and its members in Soviet-occupied eastern Europe to certain new opportunities, including the construction of a temple in Freiberg, then in East Germany, in 1985.[77]

More recently, the International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS) has been established at the J. Reuben Clark School of Law at Brigham Young University, directed by W. Cole Durham Jr. This center describes its mission as working "with scholars, government leaders, nongovernmental groups, and religious organizations from a variety of countries and faith traditions, to promote religious liberty and study the relations between governments and religious organizations."[78] Its work is supplemented by a few skilled senior couples serving special missions and based in such strategic locations as Brussels and Geneva. Led by the

globe-trotting Cole Durham, this entire effort is devoted to reducing formal restrictions on religious activity and associations of all kinds, not just on the Latter-day Saints, and improving the image of the Church and its members among the general public in every country. To use the language of the religious economy model again, all such efforts are aimed at reducing the costs of membership by improving the public image and legal status of the Church in various countries.

Although based at BYU, the work of this international center is multifaceted and world wide. It includes active participation in numerous conferences on religious regulation and freedom; cooperative projects with other centers having similar missions, such as CESNUR (Center for the Study of New Religions) based in Turin, and the Center for Human Rights at the University of Oslo; communications and negotiations with various governments, including occasional filings of amicus briefs, over issues such as legal status and privileges for various religious communities; and teaching courses in various universities and law schools on all such matters. For example, in 2007 Durham and a colleague at the University of Oslo prepared academic materials for a graduate course in religious freedom and comparative constitutional law to be taught in Indonesia. Durham also spent a month teaching a course on similar topics at the Central European University in Budapest. The center also sponsors an ongoing program of summer fellowships at BYU to provide students with expertise in these legal and constitutional issues, after which they are stationed as "interns" at various locations to gain practical experience along with their academic training.

The annual ICLRS symposia at BYU for the past fifteen years have been especially impressive, for they have cumulatively involved 527 scholars and government ministers, judges, and other officials from 108 countries. China, Russia, and eastern Europe have been especially strongly represented, no doubt a deliberate strategy in the center's selection process. Among the participants in these symposia have been the Austrian justice of the European Court of Human Rights; the head of Belgium's Advisory Centre on Harmful Sectarian Organizations; the chief justice of the Norwegian Supreme Court; various law professors; and several sociologists, including some well known to me, such as James Richardson at the University of Nevada and Eileen Barker at the London School of Economics. In looking over the entire list of past participants in these BYU symposia, available through the "past participants" link on the center's website, I am

struck by the obvious effort to establish relationships with government ministers and advisors who are likely to arrive with considerable prejudice. One hopes and assumes that they return home from these symposia somewhat less prejudiced against the cause of religious freedom generally and the LDS religion in particular.

Yet, effective as the ICLRS clearly is, its efforts must be limited to the "softening up" process—to building friendships, to persuasion, remonstrance, advice, teaching, and setting good examples. It has no formal power, and it is not a political pressure group. For more direct and strenuous efforts, the Church must find its support from local Saints and friends with expertise in law, in public relations, and in lobbying. Some such experts are found in Area offices and in the various European stakes. Most of them are local Europeans, though some are special missionaries. Along with the constitutional changes promoted by the European Convention on Human Rights and its court in recent decades, these efforts by hard-working European Latter-day Saints have helped greatly to create enough political space that the Church in most of western Europe enjoys a level of legal recognition that is adequate for most purposes, though still not ideal. Its legal status still needs to be consolidated so that it will truly enjoy the rights and privileges accorded to the "recognized" religious organizations. Even though the Church can operate as a legal entity and carry on its program openly in most countries, to the general public and to much of the officialdom it is still treated as an obscure sect or cult.[79]

In eastern Europe, the situation is even more daunting. Certain restrictions remain in force against the LDS Church and other newer religions, despite the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which most countries of eastern Europe have ostensibly either joined or aspired to join.[80] Some of these restrictions derive simply from the traditional Catholic and Orthodox outlooks on religion common to central and eastern Europe, which have been embodied in the "Austrian model" for implementing the ECHR. That model permits state discrimination in favor of traditional religions, as well as restrictions upon unconventional and "foreign" religions.[81] Serbia and Romania, for example, have recently adopted it. Of course, whatever the laws of the various countries might provide, many restrictions also take the form of deliberate administrative delays, evasions, and extralegal intimidations.[82]

Still, some progress has been made at removing or reducing these

barriers through the work of Cole Durham, of friendly local scholars and officials he has cultivated, of skilled legal counsel based in the Area office, and of local LDS public affairs people. For example, after years of groundwork, in October 2006 the Church finally achieved legal recognition in Slovakia. It wasn't easy. Slovakian law required supportive petitions containing at least 20,000 valid signatures to be collected and submitted to the government within a ten-day period. This feat was accomplished with the help of the seventy LDS missionaries from the neighboring Czech Republic.

In another emerging eastern nation, Moldova, gaining legal status also required some political pressure from LDS legal counsel in Europe. For a while, after the dedication of the mission in May 2001, LDS missionaries had been permitted there unofficially, but a change of government shortly thereafter brought a crack-down, harassment, and the expulsion of the missionaries. The Church filed for legal recognition more than once according to the prescribed procedure, but the government remained unresponsive. Then the Church filed suit in and won favorable verdicts at successive levels of the Moldovan court system, but the government still failed to comply. Finally, in 2006 five LDS members of the U.S. Senate sent a letter to the Moldovan president reminding him of the commitments his country had made under the new European legal framework for religious freedom; and in the spring of 2007, he finally complied.[83] Such victories are heartening, but the Church will be required to sustain its efforts to increase its public presence and respectability in Europe and to reduce the costs of membership among its faithful adherents.

Ironically, both the Moldovan example and the Italian situation present a public relations dilemma for the Church. In Moldova, the good news is that the Church was able to get five U.S. Senators to intervene to achieve the desired effect. But that is also the bad news, for it strengthens the perception that the Church in that country (and perhaps neighboring countries as well) is essentially an American organization, backed by the U.S. government. Such a perception is not likely to facilitate its acceptance as an authentic part of the Moldovan religious landscape. Meanwhile, in Italy, the LDS Church has applied for legal recognition under the new Italian system, but the Parliament had not approved the application as of July 2007.[84] Opinion among Latter-day Saints in Italy is mixed about how long the approval process might take; but whenever it comes,

the Church must then face the question of whether to accept its fair share of the *otto mille* tax. On the one hand, if the Church accepts the tax money, it will be violating its usual policy of remaining entirely independent of government funding. On the other hand, if it rejects the tax money, it is likely to be seen as deliberately opting out of "legitimate" Italian religious life, as though it is just another big, rich American outfit whose members don't need their share of community funds, given their connection to this "foreign" institution. Such are the dilemmas encountered even when the Church gains some success in trying to reduce the costs of membership for its European Saints.[85]

Adapting the Church to the European Setting

Some of the costs of membership borne by the Saints outside the United States, including those in Europe, are unintentionally imposed by the Church itself as an essentially American organization. In countless ways, some subtle and some overt, the Church gives expression to American cultural preferences and even to American interpretations of certain traditional teachings. Unlike the European legal arena that I have just discussed, the Church arena is one over which the Saints and leaders themselves have the ultimate power, through the process of revelation, to decide how the Church program should be adapted to the culture and traditions of each society. In making these adaptations, the Church, both at headquarters and through its leaders in each country, will be able to reduce the cost and enhance the appeal of membership only to the extent that local members and investigators can visualize how the Church program can be implemented or adapted in their lives—and without unduly increasing the cultural tension between themselves and their local families, friends, employers, and familiar traditions. Or, to resort again to the language of economists, members and investigators need to be able to see how they can "buy into" the Church program with a minimal loss or expenditure of the "cultural capital" (including "religious capital") that they have already accumulated in their respective societies.[86]

Calling attention to this approach does not mean advocating a cost-free religion, either in Europe or anywhere else. Contemporary social science theory would agree with President Hinckley that a religion commanding the loyalty and commitment of its adherents must "stand for something."[87] Put another way, the Church must "protect its brand"; it must always strive to make sure that the world knows what it stands for

and how it is distinctive. Ever since Kanter's 1972 study of religious and other utopian societies, social scientists have understood that organizational demands for conformity and sacrifice function as "commitment mechanisms."[88] More recently, Lawrence Iannaccone and others associated with the "new paradigm" have argued similarly that truly strong and enduring religions are "strict"—that is, they make demands on their members.[89]

Yet the nature and degree of strictness of those demands must be commensurate with the perceived benefits enjoyed by the adherents in a particular market niche. If the demands are too strict, they will be counterproductive and will strain the bonds of customer loyalty. If they are not strict enough, they will invite free riders, who, if they become too numerous, will demoralize the more committed and undermine the long-term viability of a "firm" or organization.[90] Some demands arising from the standard policies and practices of the Church require much more sacrifice in Europe and elsewhere than in the United States and might require selective adaptations to make them feasible. Still other organizational demands (e.g., the Word of Wisdom for Latter-day Saints) mark important behavioral boundaries that can create some tension between the organization and its surrounding culture—and which are actually functional as long as the tension is moderate or optimal for the niche in question. If the tension is too great, the religious organization will be stigmatized and persecuted. With minimal or no tension, however, the organization will lack distinctiveness, or a clear "brand" that can attract and hold adherents looking for something special.[91]

From this theoretical viewpoint, then, the strategy of the LDS Church would be to advocate and enforce doctrines and practices that would represent, not maximal but optimal, strictness within, as well as optimal cultural tension with the outside. However, determining what is "optimal" in one market niche or cultural setting will not necessarily provide an optimal solution in another. This predicament is difficult to manage in an organization guided by correlation, standardization, and centralized control. Elder Dallin Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve has attempted to define a "gospel culture" that is separate and independent of any of the cultures of the world, because it derives from the plan of salvation and informs the "values and expectations and practices common to all members of the Church."[92] Elder Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy, while serving as president of the Africa Area, was quoted in 1993 with a

somewhat more expansive definition of the gospel culture as "transcend[ing] all boundaries and barriers." Yet "building a gospel culture doesn't mean the denial of everything in our separate heritages, although we must keep the doctrine pure and be willing to change certain traditions that aren't compatible with the gospel."[93] A still more expansive view can be seen in an earlier article by Elder Charles Didier, who described the gospel culture as "a vast amalgam of all the positive aspects of our cultures, histories, customs, and languages. The building of the kingdom of God is such an amalgam, and is the only place where these different values may and can coexist." An "amalgam" is more inclusive and hospitable to good values from many sources than, presumably, a system that is "separate and independent" from all the world's cultures.[94] This definition seems to leave more room for adaptations across cultures, but a precise and common definition of "gospel culture" has not yet been embraced by all Church leaders.

Selective Adaptation of Doctrines

Obviously a major component in the gospel culture would be the official doctrines, a category that is not itself without some ambiguity. A recent "LDS Newsroom" press release on the official Church website attempts a rather parsimonious definition of what constitutes official doctrine: the standard works, official declarations and proclamations, and the Articles of Faith.[95] The same document contains the following caveats: (1) Even from those official sources, isolated statements should not be taken out of context; (2) Not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, constitutes doctrine; it might be just a personal opinion; (3) Some doctrines (such as the atonement of Christ) are core doctrines and are thus far more important than other doctrines (such as the precise location of the Garden of Eden); and (4) Continuing revelation is intended to be relevant to the circumstances of a given age or period, so that teachings and practices of the Church are subject to modification across time. In 1994 in a somewhat less public setting, the First Presidency, then consisting of Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson, defined the following as "fundamental": faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the atonement and resurrection; the apostasy and restoration; the divine mission of Joseph Smith; continuous revelation; the plan of salvation; and the priesthood with its ordinances and covenants. Even this relatively short list leaves room for a certain amount of in-

terpretation, but it probably corresponds to what the Newsroom release means by "core doctrines."[96]

From these various official statements and the observations by Elder Oaks and others, we can infer that his concept of a "gospel culture" is limited to a certain set of "commandments, covenants, ordinances, and blessings." Yet anyone in any culture who strives to act on even this limited definition of "gospel culture" must deploy time, resources, energy, and moral courage, for non-Christians—or even many Christians—will not see these expectations as culturally neutral. The gospel culture, then, will inevitably exact some cost for those who undertake to live the LDS way of life, and the cost will be higher the more exotic that way of life seems in a given traditional culture.

Can anything be done with the doctrines and policies of the Church that might mitigate this cost and thus improve member (customer) retention rate? Probably not much can be done with the fundamental or "core" doctrines outlined above if the LDS "brand" is to be protected; and it is doubtful that many Saints would welcome an erosion or abandonment of any of those core doctrines. Douglas Davies, a non-Mormon scholar of LDS doctrine and culture, has argued that a major appeal of the LDS Church is its program for "transcendence over death" or, in LDS parlance, its "plan of salvation."[97] Seekers open to such supernatural explanations for the purpose of life, whether in traditionally Christian or other cultures, will continue to investigate the core LDS claims, so it would be a mistake to abandon or "water down" these major products of the LDS brand. Nor would such a dilution be likely to appeal to committed secularists, who tend to avoid the theological marketplace altogether. Since the LDS Newsroom statement about Mormon doctrine reminds members that not all doctrines are of equal importance, one strategy for reducing the costs of membership, it seems to me, would be to deemphasize certain doctrines selectively, and emphasize others, when "marketing" the religion to peoples of different cultures.[98]

I can well understand, for example, why many European Saints these days might prefer that visiting authorities and Church publications would leave in the background such traditional doctrines as the location of the garden of Eden, the divine status of the U.S. Constitution, and the oft-repeated folk prophecy that some day the elders of the Church will have to save the Constitution. Such seeming "Americanisms" have nothing to do with "coming unto Christ" or with the covenants made as part

of the proffered plan of happiness for all of God's people. Even the designation of America as "a land choice above all other lands" in the Book of Mormon does not refer to the particular nation known as the United States of America. There can be no doubt that historically (or even ontologically) the LDS Church is an American organization; but still, to the extent that any of these "Americanisms" are highlighted in LDS discourse, they imply invidious comparisons with European and other nations. Such an approach is bound to exacerbate, not reduce, tension for European members, especially in an age when the foreign policy of the United States seems so troubling to Europeans and others.[99]

Still more dubious are doctrines long taught by Utah leaders and repeated as recently as 1998 by Hoyt Brewster, president of the Netherlands Amsterdam Mission about the LDS people as uniquely "chosen," not only for a special mission to the world in modern times, but also for a special lineage assigned them in the preexistence, so that they could be born as literal Israelites, and particularly Ephraimites, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[100] Though lacking a canonical basis, these doctrines enjoyed widespread acceptance for a very long time, since they tended to favor the British and other northwestern Europeans, from among whom most early Mormon converts had come. Such doctrines were also part of the same ideological framework that gave rise to restrictions on people of African ancestry and to the generally racist categorizations of humankind that have been common in both Europe and America for centuries. However valid it might have seemed to take such doctrines literally in the nineteenth century, contemporary LDS usage has been far more figurative or metaphorical, as were Paul's original teachings to the Galatians. Yet to the extent that contemporary American Saints and leaders insist on literal understandings of invidious distinctions among peoples of different lineages, they will impose an unnecessary burden on the public image of the Church, thereby increasing the general costs of membership in Europe and elsewhere in the world.[101]

The recent modification of a certain phrase in an official Church document illustrates how easily a potentially troubling traditional doctrine might be set aside by minor textual changes. The document in question is the introduction to the Book of Mormon bound with that book ever since 1981. Originally written by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, that introduction describes the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon as "the *principal* ancestors of the American Indians"; but a slight revision that appeared

for the first time in the fall of 2007 now describes the Lamanites as "*among* the ancestors of the American Indians" (emphasis mine).[102] Most Latter-day Saints, whether in Europe or anywhere else, probably paid little attention to this change in wording, but for the minority of members who have been paying attention to the scholarly literature on the Book of Mormon, the change is important.[103] Why? Because it relieves faithful scholars, apologists, and ordinary members of the need to defend the traditional belief that all the aboriginal peoples of the western hemisphere had descended from the small bands of Near Eastern Semites described in the Book of Mormon. A broader implication of the same change is that the Church now has no official doctrine describing exactly where the Book of Mormon story did take place, though some Western Hemisphere location is still the official understanding.

Many other examples of traditional teachings in the Church could also be cited in this connection, but perhaps these are enough to illustrate my main point that there are doctrinal issues outside the "core," which the Church could review (and perhaps modify) to reduce some of the unnecessary costs of membership, especially in Europe.

Localizing the LDS Presence

Aside from doctrinal issues, which, to be sure, can be quite sensitive, are many less sensitive issues that have implications for increasing or decreasing the costs of membership in the LDS Church. If the LDS religion is ever to become "normalized" in Europe—that is, to seem as though it really belongs and is not just a foreign cult—it will have to be dressed as much as possible in the local garb of each nation. Although the important manifestations of such normalization are cultural, to some extent, this statement could even be taken literally, for the typical buttoned-down, dark suit, white shirt, and clean-shaven look, apparently de rigueur for priesthood leaders in every country, sends a mixed message about whether they are representatives of a local people or of an American corporate organization. A particular concern is the apparently official insistence on clean-shaven grooming for stake presidents and other local priesthood leaders, especially in countries where beards are fairly common.[104] Choices and policies about dress and grooming tend to be guided by symbolic meanings that are culture-specific, and an exporting firm (in this case, an American church) might not always be aware of the meanings conveyed to the local populace by headquarters grooming stan-

dards. On the other hand, such standards might carry a deliberately didactic function from headquarters. The main thing is for all parties to understand the intended meanings of dress and grooming.

To be sure, though, there are far more important issues than dress and grooming in an LDS presence; and in many respects, Church leaders are already implementing changes that might help to "normalize" the LDS presence in European communities. Consider the following examples:

1. LDS leaders, male and female, are now typically local people, not only at the branch, ward, and stake levels, but also at the area level. Area presidents still tend to be sent mostly from Church headquarters, on a rotating basis, but counselors in Area Presidencies are more often local Seventies. Recent callings to the First Quorum of Seventy have included increasing numbers of non-Americans, so the time seems close that we will see area presidents themselves called from among the natives and permanent residents of European and other countries to serve indefinitely in such callings. As this regionalization occurs, such leaders will become the "faces" of the LDS Church in those countries, increasingly familiar to both members and non-members, somewhat like the resident prelates in the traditional churches. The 2008 call of Elder Dieter Uchtdorf (a second-generation Mormon) to the First Presidency of the Church removed him as one of the leadership "faces" in his own homeland, but he had already served there as a stake president and a mission president, so his career still represents the "localization" process I am talking about. So do the many other non-Americans called to the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, almost always after years of local leadership service, often as part of other quorums of the Seventy. Paid employees of the Church in CES, Welfare, Translation, Facilities Management, and other roles have typically been locals for a long time. The same is true of those involved in Public Affairs for the Church at various levels. And nothing bespeaks a permanent LDS presence as much as a temple, of which there are now ten in Europe, more than in the entire United States in 1950.

2. Church leaders are striving to increase the "sense of ownership" that the Saints in various countries have toward Church publications. Of course, the translation of the Book of Mormon and other scriptures into various languages has been going on for a long time, and the same with hymnals to some extent. Yet the process of translation sometimes reflects competing interests between a headquarters desire for staying as close as

possible to literal renderings of the English originals and a local desire for more colloquial and comfortable renderings—though even, at the local level, opinions will always be diverse.[105] The main Church magazine, *Ensign*, published in many languages as *Liahona*, contains a section of news about Church members in the various local countries. These inserted sections are produced, written, and edited by local members under the supervision of the Area Presidency. On the ByCommonConsent blogsite for June 9, 2007, both the U.K. edition and the Finnish edition of the Church magazine (all non-English versions are uniformly titled *Liahona*) received high marks from young LDS bloggers for such local coverage in their respective countries, hoping that they were seeing the beginning of a "decentralization" of Church supervision of such material "in favor of regional and local flavor" to help create "a church identity less dependent on SLC."[106] General and Area authorities native to various local countries are periodically contributing to the official literature in those countries—for example, Elder Patrick R. Kearon, second counselor in the Europe West Area Presidency (from Clevedon, England) wrote a news item about the U.K. Saints in that country's June 2007 issue of the *Ensign*. Entitled, "Midsummer's Day: Out of Darkness and into His Marvelous Light," this article received the appreciative comment from blogger Norbert that even though the title carried a common "Mormonish" metaphor, it was at least "a metaphor about midsummer, not [about] baseball or beet farming." Such a comment reflects the continuing desire in the United Kingdom for articles that highlight the lives of faithful members and of key events in the LDS history of each country. Certainly the recently established LDS websites for the various languages and countries will also improve a feeling of connection to the Church for its far-flung members, though these sites are still in the early stages of development.

Beyond such official initiatives, translations of articles, or collections of articles, from unofficial publications such as *BYU Studies*, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, and the *Journal of Mormon History* also seem now in prospect. Bilingual LDS Church members with scholarly training and credentials could assist greatly both in selecting material for translation into various European languages and in the translation process itself. Access to such publications in all the European languages would increase the sense of connection to the scholarly literature on Mormon culture, in addition to the official literature, among European Saints of an intellectual bent.

Of course, literature from or about the Church for internal consumption, important as that is, will not help much to improve the LDS public image on the outside. There is a desperate need to make reliable contemporary literature on the Church available to European journalists, scholars, and educators, preferably through their own local libraries. This need was brought starkly to my attention during 1999 when my wife and I visited a few local libraries in modest-sized cities and towns in the north of England. We were appalled at what the library patrons and local school children would have encountered in trying to study up on "the Mormons" in those towns. On returning to the United States, I reported on this situation to a friend in the leadership of the Seventy, who later notified me that "library kits" containing the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* and a number of standard "classics" by Talmage and others had recently been distributed to numerous libraries in all the English-speaking countries as, indeed, they had been for years in the United States. I am reliably informed that a private group of members and returned missionaries, both in Utah and in Germany, are translating the *Encyclopedia* into German for posting on a private website. There are also a few, but very few, outlets from which the Saints in various countries can purchase Mormon-related books locally. One of these, serving German-speaking Saints, is *HLT Bücher* (LDS Books) located in Salzburg. These are promising developments, but bare beginnings.[107]

Policies and Practices

Every large, bureaucratic organization devises policies and practices which seem reasonable and efficient as applied to the organization in general but which produce unintended consequences and unexpected tensions up and down the various levels of the structure. I suspect that a constant source of frustration for the American General Authorities and officers of the LDS Church is trying to find adaptations of general policies and practices that will work in Europe, Asia, and everywhere else. If appropriate adaptations cannot be made, the demands of Church programs and policies often become too costly for the members to bear. I earlier mentioned Sabbath observance and seminary attendance as examples of individual cost-benefit dilemmas. Any of the normal tensions over policies and practices in large organizations are simply exacerbated by cultural differences between the American headquarters and the local stakes. Numerous scholars who are active members and leaders of the Church in Eu-

rope and in other countries have cited examples of expectations originating in Utah that clash with European cultural preferences.[108] These clashes might arise from different political and economic traditions, or from differential cultural preferences in adapting the Church programs, while still others arise from the increasingly secularized and permissive local norms governing relationships between the sexes. For example, even though family law is very much in flux, both in Europe and in the United States, the LDS Church's current position is strongly opposed to accepting homosexual relationships or even heterosexual cohabitation as normative. However, in some European countries, the Church's legal status might well be jeopardized if it takes disciplinary action against members seeking homosexual marriages. Yet I can envision a policy that might recognize preexisting (i.e., preconversion), long-term monogamous heterosexual relationships (i.e., common-law marriages) for members who are otherwise living gospel standards and preparing for eventual temple marriages. The policy of requiring the lapse of a year between a civil and a temple marriage—a continuing irritant for non-Mormon relatives of American members—is not an issue in Europe, where all marriages must be performed by civil authority and where LDS temple marriages are not recognized.

One of the cultural differences that sometimes complicates relationships between American and European Latter-day Saints is the greater personal reserve and privacy expected in social interactions among Europeans. Thus, traditional LDS practices such as home teaching and visiting teaching often come across as invasions of privacy or unwanted intrusions into the lives of members, especially those who are not very active in the Church.[109] During the past few years, both the First Presidency and the European Area Presidencies have formally changed the home teaching policies in recognition both of this cultural sensitivity and of the practical difficulties in comprehensive home teaching where most of the membership is inactive in the Church, and where most men fail to achieve the Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly, the latest policy calls for (1) limiting home teaching assignments to about five families or individuals for each pair of brethren willing to serve as home teachers; and then (2) assigning those home teachers in such a way as to give priority to (a) new members and (b) the most responsive among the less active, with (3) the use of missionaries to supplement the work of home teachers in both of those categories. Such is the gist of the information provided me by the

Europe Central Area office. These are not all new ideas, of course, but apparently they have been more widely implemented lately as formal policy. This same basic cultural difference is greatly intensified when it is a non-member home being visited by uninvited Mormon missionaries doing their daily "tracting." This method of seeking investigators and potential converts has always rankled Europeans (and those in many other cultural settings as well), who are likely to resent being accosted by strangers wishing to discuss something as private as religious beliefs, especially when they are disturbed in their own homes. Actually, tracting has for some years been given the lowest priority among proselyting methods, considered a last resort when missionaries can't find other ways to make promising contacts. While missionaries might always do some tracting from time to time, the Church has been seeking a variety of alternative methods for finding and teaching investigators in ways that do not require the "frontal assault" of knocking on their doors. Indeed, in some of the more affluent neighborhoods people live behind locked gates, making tracting impossible. In some European missions, the missionaries now depend mainly on a system of "unplanned finding," which consists of watching for unobtrusive opportunities to greet people and engage them in conversations in public locations such as bus stops and buses, trains and train stations, stores, markets, street displays, sports events, and other random times and places. The missionaries are urged to seek at least ten such opportunities every day and thus to remain in a "mode of constant finding." During each such conversation, the missionaries will hand out "pass-along cards" with engaging pictures, the phone number of the missionaries, the address of the nearest LDS chapel, and the Church website in the local language. Opportunities for these kinds of contacts and receptivity to a subsequent visit from missionaries are also greatly enhanced by instances in which the Church receives positive publicity as, for example, whenever a new temple is dedicated. My granddaughter, who returned in 2007 from a mission in Finland, continues to rejoice in the proselytizing opportunities that resulted from from publicity associated with the open house and dedication of the Helsinki Temple in the fall of 2006.[110]

It has long been well known that the likelihood of an eventual baptism is greatly enhanced the more that local Church members themselves are involved in the teaching process, so the preferred missionary method has come to be teaching investigators in the presence of, and with the participation of, members of the Church whenever possible.[111] Various pro-

cedures for involving the members are laid out in the current missionary publication, *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* implemented Churchwide in 2004.

In some newly opened countries, where the members are too few and too new to help much in this way, the missionaries fall back on the time-honored method of offering English classes to bring in potential investigators. At the beginning of each class, the missionaries explain their ultimate purpose in offering these classes, so that there are no false pretenses. They indeed do a conscientious job of teaching English, but then invite those who might be interested in their religious message to remain after the class for further discussion.

Among the most recent and effective method for involving members in the missionary program is a pilot project that was field-tested in 2003 with the encouragement of two apostles, and finally implemented during the next two years in all of the stakes of the Europe Central Area, and perhaps in other areas as well. This method uses the CES classes with their Young Single Adults (YSA) as Institute Outreach Centers. Under the direction of the local stake and mission presidents, these YSAs join with full-time missionaries to invite and bring young people of the same general age range (18–30) to local LDS church buildings for family home evenings, Institute of Religion classes, cultural and intellectual events, socials, and sports activities. Through these events, missionaries get many opportunities to teach young investigators in the chapels with YSA members present. So far the results of this program have been promising, not only in conversions but in retentions, for 80 percent of those converted through the Institute Outreach Centers are still active a year after baptism. Social scientists have long known that people in this transitional age range comprise the category most likely to be open to new ideas and experiences, including religious ones, so this approach appears to be a very effective "marketing strategy" for reaching the most likely "customers."

The same approach has had some derivative and secondary applications: It is now being used in an effort to reactivate some less-active YSAs themselves, and it was introduced among teenagers as well through "Especially for Youth" (EFY) programs in Sweden and Germany during 2006. There are signs that the youth of all ages who get involved in this kind of outreach to their peers not only give the missionary effort a big boost but also are themselves more likely to go on missions and remain active in the Church. Meanwhile, the YSAs who participate also provide role models

that encourage the younger set in their stakes to aspire to serve missions, obtain higher education, and marry in the temple.[112]

Every device attempted by the Church to reach nonmembers is likely to produce an ambiguous cost-benefit (or risk-benefit) assessment. Probably the most serious problem for the public image of the LDS Church is simply that so few people, especially outside the United States, have ever even heard of the LDS Church, to say nothing of having been exposed to a reasonably competent and accurate explanation of what it stands for. Mere publicity, however massive in scale, is not a solution in the absence of quality control—as is apparent from the mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous stirred up about Mormonism by the Romney presidential campaign in the United States. Yet the one-to-one approach through tracting, "unplanned finding," or bringing young single adults to Institute gatherings is a "slow and steady" method, which is unlikely to produce rapid growth. The involvement of faithful members in the proselyting process, whether in their homes or in YSA events, has the advantage of increasing their personal investment in that process, and in the Church program more generally, but it also carries the risk of excessive costs for the members when leaders apply too much pressure to participate. For the LDS religion to come to seem somewhat more normal and natural as part of the European setting (and thus less stigmatizing for its members and investigators) will likely require another couple of generations of these kinds of slow and steady efforts.

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, I have been concerned mainly with the differential cost of LDS membership in Europe compared to North America, with special reference to what the Church can do to reduce the costs of membership among the European Saints. I reviewed three conditions that seem especially important as sources of these membership costs: (1) the secularized and regulated cultural and political environment throughout Europe, in which the LDS Church must operate; (2) the special costs to European members, collectively and individually, from various cultural, legal, and even logistical burdens that American members rarely face; and (3) the energy and resources that European leaders and members have had to devote to the retention and recovery of inactive members—with poor prospects in the latter case. I turned then to developments that hold out the prospect for significantly reducing membership costs in the years

ahead, especially: (1) the creation of a market niche of well-educated young Europeans with a nontraditional spiritual orientation, as a side effect of the secularization of the traditional European religions; (2) the extensive campaign being waged by the Church itself to reduce the regulation and stigmatization of the LDS and other newer religions in Europe; and (3) the potential for local adaptations of general Church doctrines, policies, and practices that will make Church activity less costly and more appealing for European members.

There are good reasons to be optimistic about the future of the Church in Europe. Old traditions and restrictions on new religions are breaking down. The religious market is stirring, and the LDS brand, with its innovative combination of the familiar and the novel, will find new "customers" in the younger generations. The Church now has experienced local leaders in place and enough organizational stability to maintain successful "franchises" in many wards and stakes. Many of these leaders are of a second generation of European Mormons, who have already learned to cope with the costs and adapt to the tensions with a Utah leadership. As the Area President put it to me, "Recent developments in Europe can give our . . . members an increased level of confidence about their own membership in the Church here. One of our/their challenges is that they deserve to have more confidence than some of them feel. I see the Brethren working very hard to 'build Zion' as much as possible in the far-flung areas of the Church, and they are very conscious of not wanting to 'Americanize' that effort."[113] For my own part, I see a new cohort of General Authorities in their fifties and sixties (and younger) who have more experience than ever before in countries outside North America, are more often native to those countries, and are more sensitive than ever to the inappropriate intrusions of American culture into LDS Church life in other countries. I see them as also more open than earlier generations to the counsel and advice of local Saints and leaders living in Europe and elsewhere, despite the strictures of "correlation."

I see that openness extending also to the work of scholars in the field of Mormon studies, especially during the past decade or so while President Hinckley was at the head of the Church. As recently as November 2007, the Church's Public Affairs Newsroom issued a statement on its website supporting academic Mormon studies at secular universities and referencing President Hinckley himself for its authority. Citing recent academic conferences on Mormonism, this statement declares that "the

Church encourages a deeper and broader examination of its theology, history, and culture on an intellectual level . . . [and] open dialogue and conversation between the Latter-day Saints and various scholarly and religious communities . . . [in the belief that] Mormonism has a depth and breadth of substance that can hold up under academic scrutiny."[114]

Mormon studies programs and courses are gaining traction at various locations in the United States and the organization of the European Mormon Studies Association in 2007 bodes well for similar academic developments in Europe. The intellectual ferment which Islam and various new religions have brought to Europe in recent years has generated a variety of regular scholarly conferences on religion there, most of them under such respectable auspices as those of CESNUR and INFORM.[115] If LDS scholars will present papers and join in the conversations at such conferences, "they can bring especially fresh perspectives rooted in their [own] LDS experience in Europe . . . [and the day] may come . . . when there will be courses in Mormon studies at universities across Europe."[116] That might seem a far-fetched prospect today, but no more so than a similar projection about Mormon studies in American academia would have been in the middle of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, 1995 seminar for stake and mission presidents in Paris, quoted in Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *The Promise: The Prophesied Growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Netherlands and Belgium and All of Western Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Netherlands Mission, 1998). Brewster, then mission president, also quotes a comparably optimistic prediction by Elder Henry B. Eyring made two years later at a similar meeting in Rome and a third by President Gordon B. Hinckley in 2000 about a "second harvest" soon to come in Sweden. Erik Nilsson, "Göteborg, Sweden: Second Harvest," *Ensign,* July 2000, 77.

2. Peter Berger, "Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger," *Christian Century,* October 29, 1997, 974. In the 1960s, Berger had been among the most confident social theorists predicting the final decline and fall of religion in Europe and elsewhere before the inevitable onslaught of modernism and secularism. See, e.g., his *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 107–8.

3. Massimo Introvigne and Rodney Stark, "Religious Competition and Revival in Italy: Exploring European Exceptionalism," *Interdisciplinary Journal*

of Research on Religion 1, no. 1 (2005, Article 5): 14, http://www.religjournal.com (accessed in April 2008).

4. I have in mind here primarily Stark's predictions during the past two decades of gigantic Church growth, compiled and updated most recently in his *The Rise of Mormonism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), edited by Reid L. Neilson, as well as certain other observations in that same book.

5. The series ran for several issues in the *Salt Lake Tribune.* See, e.g., Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Keeping Members a Challenge for the LDS Church," *Salt Lake Tribune,* July 26, 2005.

6. The website {www.cumorah.com} includes many kinds of data on contemporary Mormons. See also his *Law of the Harvest: Practical Principles of Effective Missionary Work* (Henderson, Nev.: Cumorah Foundation, 2007).

7. I acknowledge with deep appreciation how much I have benefited by the consultation, information, and advice offered by many colleagues, especially from those who provided more formal critiques of earlier versions: Wilfried Decoo, Henri Gooren, Bruce C. Hafen, George K. Jarvis, O. James Stevens, Walter E. A. van Beek, and Ethan Yorgason. I alone am responsible for whether and how I have made use of their suggestions.

8. See, e.g., Walter van Beek, "Ethnization and Accommodation: Dutch Mormons in Twenty-First Century Europe," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 119–27; and his "Mormon Europeans or European Mormons," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 27–32; also Gary C. Lobb, "Mormon Membership Trends in Europe among People of Color: Present and Future Assessment," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 62. I am not insisting that religious disbelief and moral permissiveness are always causally connected, though historically a culture's moral strictures have usually been "enforced" by some sort of supernatural beliefs. A recent Pew survey found that many people in the United States and most people in the rest of the industrialized world do not believe that morality is necessarily connected to religion. Of course, public opinion is not the same as empirical reality, and in any case such opinion in secularized societies could be expected to deny a connection between religion and morality. Also, much depends on how "morality" is defined—in particular, on whether the issue is civic morality or personal (especially sexual) morality. Nathan Black, "Survey: Wealthier Nations Less Religious," *Christian Post* 5 (November 2007), http://www.christianpost.com/article/20071105/29971_Survey:_Wealthier_Nations_Less_Religious.htm (accessed April 2008). I am grateful to Wilfried Decoo for calling this article to my attention. On the other hand, Rodney Stark and William S. Bain-

bridge, *Religion, Deviance, and Social Control* (New York: Routledge, 1997) have found empirically that in a society with high religious participation, rates of crime, delinquency, and other deviance are lower even among those who are not religious or do not attend church.

9. See, e.g., the discussion in Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 220–23; and the analysis by Edward A. Tiryakian, "American Religious Exceptionalism: A Reconsideration," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527 (1993): 40–54.

10. Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 1994).

11. I gratefully acknowledge the informative documents for this section which were shared with me by W. Cole Durham, director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University, and O. James Stevens, fellow of the center, who is currently serving a Church service mission in Brussels with his wife, Joan.

12. For comprehensive religion-state relationships, see James T. Richardson, ed., *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe* (New York: Springer-US, 2003), and Phillip Charles Lucas and Thomas Robbins, eds., *New Religious Movements in the Twenty-First Century: Legal, Political, and Social Changes in Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Religious freedom for the individual has varied among European nations for more than a century. The ECHR had the effect of bringing all member nations under one juridical umbrella, legitimating personal freedom where it was already established, and pressing for change in nations where it was minimal. For the current social and legal status of religions in European countries, see EUREL newsletters {http://www.eurel.info}.

13. Lasia Bloss, "European Law of Religion: Organizational and Institutional Analysis of National Systems and Their Implications for the Future European Integration Process," *Jean Monnet Working Paper 13/03* (New York: NYU School of Law, 2003). My thanks to O. J. Stevens for calling my attention to this paper.

14. See http://www.osce.org and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/osce #history.

15. Silvio Ferrari, "New Religious Movements in Western Europe," http://religion.info/pdf/2006_10_ferrari_nrm.pdf, (accessed June 5, 2007), 22 pp., published as *Research and Analysis Paper No. 9*, edited by Jean-François Mayer (Milan, Italy: Religioscope, October 23, 2006).

16. W. Cole Durham, "Re-Evaluating Foreign Evaluations of the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations: The Per-

spective after Ten Years," unpublished paper written for BYU International Center for Law and Religion Studies, and presented at a conference of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society, February 16, 2007, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

17. Ferrari, "New Religious Movements in Western Europe."

18. Marco Ventura, "Equality in the Regulation of Religion," in *Religious Pluralism and Human Rights in Europe: Where to Draw the Line?*, edited by M. L. P. Loenen and J. E. Goldschmidt (Antwerp, Netherlands: Intersentia, 2007). The intertwining of religious and ethnic prejudice is another complicating factor. See, e.g., *Fact Sheet No. 34: Religious Discrimination and Legal Protection in the European Union,* issued jointly in October 2007 by the European Network against Racism (ENAR) {www.enar-eu.org} and the Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe (CEJI) {www.ceji.org}, both based in Brussels. ENAR is a network of some 600 European NGOs working to combat racial and religious discrimination throughout the European Union. The *Fact Sheet* concludes (p. 22) that much remains to be done in establishing equality even in individual freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, to say nothing of legal entity status for religious organizations. Once again, I am grateful to O. James Stevens for calling my attention to these and many other documents referenced in this paper.

19. Durham, "Re-Evaluating Foreign Evaluations of the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience."

20. W. Cole Durham Jr., "Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief through Religious Association Laws," in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief,* edited by Tore Lindholm, W. Cole Durham Jr., and Bahia Tahzib-Lie (Leyden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004), 321–405.

21. Karel Dobbelaere and Lillian Voyé, "From Pillar to Postmodernity: The Changing Situation in Belgium," *Sociology of Religion* (formerly *Sociological Analysis*) 51 (Supplement 1990): S1–13; Walter van Beek, "Ethnization and Accommodation," 121–24, and "Mormon Europeans or European Mormons?," 27.

22. Van Beek, "Mormon Europeans or European Mormons?" 27–31.

23. Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000).

24. Van Beek, "Ethnization and Accommodation," 124–28.

25. Elder Bruce C. Hafen, president of the Europe Central Area, email to Armand Mauss, July 15, 2007, finds my characterization of the LDS plight here to be somewhat exaggerated or outdated, at least in the northwest part of Europe.

26. Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understand-*

ing Society (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), and her *Sects, Cults, and New Religions* (Oxford, England: Routledge, 2007).

27. Willy Fautré, Alain Garay, and Yves Nidegger, "The Sect Issue in the European Francophone Sphere," in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief*, edited by Tore Lindholm, W. Cole Durham, Jr., and Bahia Tahzib-Lie, chap. 26.

28. This organization is successor to an earlier one (MILS = Interministerial Mission on Sects) established with a similar purpose. See information about both in *Wikipedia*, http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/miviludes (accessed April 2008).

29. "Contested religious movements" (CRMs) is a more neutral term than the usual government designation "sects" (or "cults"), but less neutral than "new religious movements" (NRMs) preferred by most sociologists, at least in the United States and the United Kingdom.

30. Vassilis Saroglou, Louis-Leon Christians, Coralie Buxant, and Stefania Casalfiore, *Mouvements Religieux Contestés: Psychologie, Droit et Politiques de Précaution* (Gent, Belgium: Academia Press, 2005); see also the authors' summary: "Contested Religious Movements: Psychology, Law, and Policies of Precaution" (University of Louvain, Center for the Psychology of Religion and Faculty of Law, 2006). For an example of the consequences of such marginalization for Belgian Mormons, see Wilfried Decoo, "Feeding the Fleeing Flock: Reflections on the Struggle to Retain Church Members in Europe," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 101–4.

31. Jörg Dittberner, "One Hundred Eighteen Years of Attitude: The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Free and Hanseatic City of Bremen," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 51–69, considers this factor one of the three most important reasons for the continuing difficulty in keeping a "typical" German ward going. The other two are emigration and internal dissension.

32. Historians who have studied the social origins of nineteenth-century European Mormon converts agree that they were predominantly working class. The precise forms and degrees of religious freedom varied considerably in nineteenth-century Europe. Mormon missionaries had no trouble with public preaching and meetings when they arrived in the British Isles in 1837, but these activities were not permitted in Scandinavia until after 1850. For a useful summary of the relations between church and state in fifteen European countries across time, see *La Laïcité dans la Construction Européenne* (Caen, France: La Ligue de l'Enseignement du Calvados at the University of Caen, 2000). See also its website: www.fol14.asso.fr. Some expansion

("élargissement") in religious rights apparently occurred in May 2004, after this report was issued.

33. Interestingly enough, some knowledgeable reviewers have found this section's assessment unduly pessimistic and somewhat outdated, while others have found it quite appropriate.

34. Most of my European informants concur with this generalization, although I allow the possibility that it may be an overstatement. For the more fluid U.S. situation, see Tim B. Heaton, "Vital Statistics," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1992), 4:1525–27.

35. See reports from census data in Austria, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Chile, and Mexico, in Rick Phillips, "Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism," *Nova Religio* 10, no. 1 (2006): 52–68, and David C. Knowlton, "How Many Members Are There Really? Two Censuses and the Meaning of LDS Membership in Chile and Mexico," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 53–78.

36. Many examples have been recounted in the work of other scholars who have written on Latter-day Saints in Europe. Examples are the articles by Decoo, Dittberner, and van Beek cited earlier. These generalizations are offered in the absence of systematic comparative data for European versus North American members, which (if available) might show that I have exaggerated some of the differences, despite the reports cited here from European scholars.

37. A similar situation prevails, of course, in remoter regions of the United States and Canada, but not for the great majority of Church members in these countries.

38. Since Sunday is also the preferred day in Europe for most activities of clubs, sports teams, and even volunteer civic organizations, an active LDS member is likely to be isolated from both the local community and from the family itself. For an engaging and comprehensive historical review of cultural varieties in Sunday sabbatarian observances, see Craig Harline, *Sunday: A History of the First Day from Babylonia to the Super Bowl* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), its review by Wilfried Decoo, and commentary by others on the Times and Seasons blogsite (www.timesandseasons.org/?p=3854). The continuing influence of Puritanism on LDS conceptions of Sabbath uses is readily apparent in the Harline study.

39. Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, "Membership Growth, Church Activity, and Missionary Recruitment," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 33–57, esp. 45–52.

40. Faithful LDS Europeans still have a continuing urge to emigrate to areas where the Church is stronger. Though European emigration in total is

not large, it can severely weaken an already struggling European ward or branch. See Dittberner, "One Hundred Eighteen Years," 63–65, and Van Beek, "Mormon Europeans or European Mormons," 19.

41. See Lobb, "Mormon Membership Trends in Europe." In the Europe Central Area, at least, according to Hafen, email, July 15, 2007, two-thirds of those joining the Church during 2006 had been baptized in the country of their birth, so a third had not been. There is no separate record of converts from the second generation of immigrant families, who might constitute many of those in the native two-thirds. Immigrant converts have tended to come from southern Europe and from Africa, and have proved both highly mobile and difficult to assimilate. They are also stigmatized by the local Europeans, so their conversions do not help to make LDS congregations seem any more "normal" by local standards.

42. See, e.g., the following articles in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): Decoo, "Feeding the Fleeing Flock"; Van Beek, "Ethnization and Accommodation"; Marjorie Newton, "Towards 2000: Mormonism in Australia," 193–206; Ian G. Barber and David Gilgen, "Between Covenant and Treaty: The LDS Future in New Zealand," 207–22; and Jiro Numano, "Mormonism in Modern Japan," 223–35. See also Van Beek, "European Mormons or Mormon Europeans"; Jiro Numano, "Perseverance Amid Paradox: The Struggle of the LDS Church in Japan Today," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 138–55; Lobb, "Mormon Membership Trends in Europe"; D. Michael Quinn, "I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptisms' Era," *Sunstone* 16, no. 7 (December 1993): 30–44.

43. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2004).

44. Stewart, *Law of the Harvest*. See also his website {www.cumorah.com}, an enormous collection of worldwide data on LDS Church growth, retention, and many other matters. For a rich, data-driven overview of his findings, see his "Growth, Retention, and Internationalization," in *Revisiting Thomas F. O'Dea's* The Mormons: *Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Cardell K. Jacobson, John P. Hoffmann, and Tim B. Heaton (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), 328–61.

45. Wilfried Decoo, email, December 2, 2007, believes that readiness for baptism is not merely a straight-line function of length of time since the first contact with missionaries but that it varies by individual investigator. Decoo believes that the individual investigator should be self-motivated enough to ask for baptism, rather than responding mainly to prodding from the missionaries.

46. George K. Jarvis, mission president in Romania 1999–2002, reported similar activity figures for converts in that country. Email to Armand Mauss, January 14, 2008.

47. My appreciation to President Hafen for providing these data (email, July 1, 2007). Figures for females were not offered, probably because the number of priesthood-holding men is such a crucial determinant of the potential for forming wards and stakes.

48. Any doubt that this institutional stigmatization is extended to the individual is confirmed by Mitt Romney's 2007–08 campaign for U.S. president, which was constantly on the defensive from the flurry of misperceptions and canards about the LDS Church stirred up by Romney's detractors in this campaign. This near-obsessive focus on Mormonism's more peculiar details had the effect of giving LDS Americans a taste of what European members regularly encounter. See Suzanne Sataline, "Mormons Dismayed by Harsh Spotlight," *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2008, A1.

49. In working on the second and third of these topics, I benefited greatly from consultations with Elder Bruce C. Hafen, president of the Europe Central Area, and with Elder Marlin K. Jensen, its former president and currently Church Historian. Both generously entertained a number of probing questions from me during the summer of 2007 and responded expansively. However, I alone am responsible for the accuracy of my understanding and interpretation of the information they provided.

50. See, for example, Olivier Tschannen, "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 395–415.

51. P. Heelas, L. Woodhead, B. Seel, B. Szerszynski, and K. Tusting, eds., *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1995). I see "detraditionalization" as the equivalent, on the individual level, of "desacralization" on the institutional level, as defined by Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 200–201.

52. Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers, "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981–2000," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, no. 3 (September 2007): 307.

53. K. J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 19, as quoted in Houtman and Aupers, "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition," 307.

54. Much of this paragraph is either directly quoted or slightly rephrased from Houtman and Aupers, "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of

Tradition," 307. For the full explication of post-Christian spirituality, see pp. 306–9.

55. W. J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1995), 519, as quoted in ibid.; emphasis Hanegraaff's.

56. Houtman and Aupers, "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition," 310–13.

57. Ibid., 313–16. Though this "post-Christian" orientation is sometimes subsumed under New Age spirituality, Houtman and Aupers also point out that the former has a more coherent, socialized, and less atomized quality than the fragmented variety of New Age thinking in general (306–7, 316–17).

58. See Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. chap. 2.

59. Elsewhere I have argued that recent Latter-day Saints have emphasized subjective, affective evidence (feelings) and deemphasized rationalistic discourse. See my *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 146; and my "Feelings, Faith, and Folkways: A Personal Essay on Mormon Popular Culture," in "*Proving Contraries*": *A Collection of Writings in Honor of Eugene England*, edited by Robert A. Rees (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 23–38.

60. LDS Church, *Preach My Gospel*, 39.

61. Ibid., 90.

62. Houtman and Aupers, "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition," 316–17.

63. I recognize the conjectural nature of the parallel that I am drawing here between LDS and "post-Christian" spiritual orientations. Ultimately there is no way to determine the validity of such a parallel. I can only leave it to the reader to judge whether I have reached too far. Walter van Beek, personal communication, email, January 24, 2008, emphasizes Bruce's point that "New Age" thinking does not lend itself readily to the formation of church-like communities. Van Beek finds Mormon proselyting in the Netherlands too "church-oriented" and not sufficiently focused on redemptive doctrines for Dutch tastes.

64. See the earlier application in my "Mormonism in the Twenty-First Century: Marketing for Miracles," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 236–49.

65. For this model's fullest presentation, see Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, chaps. 2, 4, and 5.

66. R. Stephen Warner, "Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for

the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1993): 1044–93.

67. Introvigne and Stark, "Religious Competition and Revival in Italy," 2.

68. Ibid., 8.

69. Critics include Steve Bruce from the United Kingdom, Karel Dobbelaere from Belgium, and Frank Lechner, writing on the Netherlands. Stark offered a rather stern rebuttal to these critics in his "Secularization, R. I. P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999): 249–73, updated as Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, chap. 3.

70. Andrew Higgins, "In Europe, God Is (Not) Dead," *Wall Street Journal*, July 14, 2007, A1, quotes Stark and others. I am grateful to Bruce C. Hafen for bringing it to my attention.

71. Introvigne and Stark, "Religious Competition and Revival in Italy." See also Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, chap. 9, for Stark's examples supporting his argument that the total religious activity in a given society is inversely related to the extent and severity of government regulation.

72. Introvigne and Stark, "Religious Competition," 5–10. The figures on religious commitment come from the 1999 European Values Survey.

73. Ibid., 10–13.

74. Ibid., 13.

75. See www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de, especially the Religion and Society link. Some results from this foundation's 2007 *Religion Monitor* survey of some 21,000 European respondents are reported in WorldWide Religions News (WWRN), December 17, 2007, http://wwrn.org/article.php?idd=27206. I am grateful to O. James Stevens for calling these sources to my attention.

76. Martin B. Hickman, *David Matthew Kennedy: Banker, Statesman, Churchman* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), esp. chap. 19. Kennedy had been U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and Ambassador at Large in the administration of Richard M. Nixon. An international research center at BYU now bears his name.

77. Both President Henry J. Burkhardt of the Dresden Mission and President Thomas S. Monson also played key roles in this event. Raymond M. Kuehne, "The Freiberg Temple: An Unexpected Legacy of a Communist State and a Faithful People," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 95–131, and his "How Missionaries Entered East Germany: The 1988 Monson-Honecker Meeting," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no 4 (Winter 2006): 107–37.

78. Mission statement, International Center for Law and Religion

Studies website, www.iclrs.org (accessed May 31, 2007). The following overview of the center's activities comes from its website and newsletters.

79. Kim B. Östman, "'The Other' in the Limelight: One Perspective on the Publicity Surrounding the New LDS Temple in Finland," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 71–106, is a fascinating review of the struggle with different segments of the print media in Finland to define the Church's image before the dedication of the Helsinki Temple in 2006.

80. Durham, "Re-Evaluating Foreign Evaluations of the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience," deals mainly with the situation in Russia and eastern Europe.

81. Forum 18 {www.forum18.org}, based in Oslo, reports on and promotes religious freedom throughout the world. This information comes from its archived reports for the first half of 2006.

82. George K. Jarvis, email, January 17, 2008. Jarvis was president of the Romania and Moldova Mission (1999–2002). Since 2002, he has lived with his wife in Geneva under the auspices of the BYU Kennedy Center, the BYU CLRS, and the LDS General Counsel.

83. Hafen, email to Armand Mauss, July 2, 2007.

84. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Church Wants to be Official in Italy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 9, 2000; accessed indirectly from CESNUR archives, www.cesnur.org/testi/mormons.htm (accessed August 25, 2007).

85. Michael W. Homer, email to Armand Mauss, July 12, 2007. Homer has long been a well-informed observer of LDS affairs in Italy and is a close colleague of Massimo Introvigne of CESNUR. He has advised LDS leaders in Italy to accept the *otto mille* if and when it is offered.

86. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 120–25.

87. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something: Ten Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes* (New York: Random House/Three Rivers Press, 2000). His ten virtues are not uniquely LDS, although his discussion in Part 2 about marriage and family reflects traditional LDS values.

88. Rosabeth M. Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). In somewhat different terminology, cognitive consistency theory makes the same claim. The theoretical basis, which has been extensively critiqued and sustained for half a century, is in Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957).

89. Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong," *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1,180–1,211. See also R. D. Perrin and A. L.

Mauss, "Strictly Speaking . . . Kelley's Quandary and the Vineyard Christian Fellowship," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 32, no 2 (1993): 125–35.

90. Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* 100, no. 2 (1992): 271–92.

91. For a creative theoretical analysis of "strictness" in the American LDS Church, with special reference to "free riders," see Michael McBride, "Club Mormon: Free-Riders, Monitoring, and Exclusion in the LDS Church, *Rationality and Society* 19, no. 4 (2007): 395–424.

92. See, e.g., his conference addresses: "Give Thanks in All Things," *Ensign*, May 2003, 95–98, and "Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church," *Ensign,* November 2005, 24–27. In the first, he describes the gospel culture as "commandments, covenants, ordinances, and blessings," expressed, for example, by the principles in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."

93. R. Val Johnson, "South Africa: Land of Good Hope," *Ensign*, February 1993, 33–34.

94. Charles Didier, "I Have a Question," *Ensign*, June 1976, 62.

95. See www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom, link to "Approaching Mormon Doctrine," May 4, 2007 (accessed June 5, 2007). This statement concedes that the Mormon vocabulary and terminology are different in some ways from those of other religions, sometimes creating misunderstandings.

96. First Presidency, "Fundamental Principles," statement presented at a meeting of the All-Church Coordinating Council, April 26, 1994; photocopy in Armand L. Mauss Collection, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

97. Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2000), esp. chap. 3.

98. Elsewhere I have argued for categorizing LDS doctrines as canonical, official, authoritative, or folklore. See my "The Fading of the Pharoahs' Curse," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 32–34.

99. I am not in a position to estimate the frequency with which such Americanisms appear in the LDS literature or sermons circulating in Europe. Several European Church members have mentioned this issue to me in conversations; but President Hafen (email, July 15, 2007), current Europe Central Area president, told me that he had never encountered such Americanisms in European meetings. George K. Jarvis, cited above, told me the same thing. Maybe such notions appear only in the occasional comments of American missionaries serving in Europe.

100. Brewster, *The Promise*, copy in Mauss Collection, Utah State His-

torical Society. According to Wilfried Decoo, email, December 2, 2007, efforts by local leaders in the Netherlands to fulfill "second harvest" prophecies among these modern European Israelites pressured the Saints to use certain proselyting tactics and promised success as a result. When the promises were not fulfilled, a backlash of guilt and frustration occurred with which a later mission president had to deal. Like many other well-intentioned but ill-advised proselyting tactics in twentieth-century Church history, this one simply added an artificial and avoidable cost for faithful and compliant members.

101. See my *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

102. See accounts and comments on this development in the *Deseret News,* November 8, 2007, http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695226008,00.html, and November 9, 2007, http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,5143,695226317,00.html (accessed April 2008).

103. I particularly refer to controversies generated since 1980 by the work of scholars associated with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), proposing the "limited geography" hypothesis. This hypothesis argues that the entire Book of Mormon story took place in a few hundred square miles in southern Mexico. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of aboriginal peoples in this hemisphere never were "Lamanites." For an assessment of these implications, see my *All Abraham's Children*, chap. 5.

104. Van Beek, email, January 24, 2008, sees strong competition to Mormonism for Netherlands youth from new forms of evangelical and pentecostal Christianity. Mormon missionaries might be more effective in this competition, he suggests, if they were dressed more informally, rather than looking like "junior management trainees."

105. Van Beek, "Mormon Europeans or European Mormons," 20–22, describes his work on translation committees in the Netherlands. See also John-Charles Duffy and Hugo Olaiz, "Correlated Praise: The Development of the Spanish Hymnal," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 89–113. Van Beek, email, January 24, 2008, reported that, while he was a stake president in the Netherlands, General Authorities with "puritanical" musical tastes frequently criticized his stake choirs, presumably for their choice of more contemporary music. Roger R. Keller, "India: A Synopsis of Cultural Challenges," in *Mormon Identities in Transition*, edited by Douglas J. Davies (London, England: Cassell, 1996), 87–90, questioned why LDS hymns in non-Western countries should have to employ American LDS melodies, harmonies, and instruments.

106. Norbert, "Local Church News," www.bycommonconsent.com,

posted June 9, 2007, followed by twelve comments, some of which recognized the danger of "edgy theology" if there were too much "decentralization" but also pointing out that local "wackiness wardens" would not necessarily have to be in either Church or Area headquarters.

107. According to Walter van Beek, email, January 24, 2008, an LDS book company in the Netherlands, *Mosterdzaad* (Mustard Seed), translates LDS literature and also produces original works. In January 2008, FAIR (Foundation for Apologetics Information and Research) began publishing its monthly e-journal in German, http://deutsch.fairlds.org/newsletter.php and/or www.fairlds.org.

108. See, for example, work by Barber, Decoo, Newton, Numano, and van Beek cited earlier.

109. Decoo, "Feeding the Fleeing Flock," 115–16, comments on this problem and offers useful suggestions for adapting the Church program to Europe.

110. See Östman, "'The Other' in the Limelight."

111. See Rodney Stark, "Extracting Social Scientific Models from Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 178–83, and Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (1980): 1376–95.

112. Hafen, email, July 5, 2007.

113. Hafen, email, July 2, 2007.

114. See "'Mormon Studies' and the Value of Education," November 2, 2007, and the even more upbeat "Academic Interest in Mormonism Rises," February 22, 2008, www.lds.org/ldsnewsroom articles (accessed March 1, 2008).

115. INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements, based at the London School of Economics) and CESNUR are considered "respectable" by the international academic community because they are run by scholars who reflect the modern consensus in the sociology of religion—namely, that new religious movements (NRMs) cannot be distinguished from traditional religions on scientific grounds, but only on political grounds. That is, NRMs are not considered legitimate by the political and religious establishments in a given society. Countering CESNUR, INFORM, and cognate organizations are thriving "anti-cult" movements in Europe and the United States. These organizations usually include Mormons on their list of dangerous "cults." For example, see the Apologetics Index (www.apologeticsindex.org), based in Amsterdam and operated by Anton and Janet

Hein-Hudson and Ruud Hein. I am grateful to Wilfried Decoo for bringing this website to my attention.

116. O. James Stevens, Brussels-based spokesman for LDS Public Affairs.

"Weak-Kneed Republicans and Socialist Democrats": Ezra Taft Benson as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, 1953–61, Part 2

Gary James Bergera

> *My hide is no thicker than anyone else's, and I do not like to fight continuously.–Ezra Taft Benson*[1]

I

Any discussion of Ezra Taft Benson's eight years as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture must include mention of his family, especially his wife, Flora, and his oldest son Reed, whom he credited as his most valued advisers. "It was Flora's ideas and courage—her positive influence and determination—more than anything else," Benson wrote in 1962, "which added steel to my spine to fight it out for principle against the nearly overwhelming pressures of political expediency." Second only to Flora was Reed, twenty-four in late 1952, who, according to Benson, understood "more fully what I was trying to accomplish possibly better than anyone else. . . . He worked quietly and effectively behind the scenes on matters that were often of the utmost importance."[2] Benson's wife and children not only provided love and support but also emerged in the national media as the public face of an idealized mid-twentieth-century American family—white, privileged, patriotic, with mother as homemaker, father as breadwinner, surrounded by attractive, well-mannered offspring.[3]

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Long before Benson's cabinet appointment, Flora Amussen Benson (born July 1, 1901) had willingly embraced "a woman's prime responsibility," in her husband's words, "of dedicated, loving devotion to her children, home, husband and church" and thus was best prepared to avoid the seductive "worldly lure of a glamorized Washington."[4] More often than not, she "played the role of both mother and father and many a night," Benson wrote, "long after I had retired to bed, she stayed up counseling with the children and slipping notes into my briefcase which would help in my work."[5] "I can't remember a time when I came home and didn't find her there," he later elaborated. "She would meet me at the door with a smile and an embrace. It was that love and support that sustained me during my years in Washington when I was constantly under fire."[6]

In 1946, the couple had lived apart for nearly a year while Benson tended to LDS needs in post-World War II Europe. The separation had been painful for both. Facing a similar prospect in late 1952, they decided to relocate the family—including the three children still at home: Beverly (fifteen), Bonnie (twelve), and Beth (eight)—from Salt Lake City to Washington, D.C., after the children's school ended in June 1953. (At the time, Reed was an Air Force chaplain in Texas;[7] Mark, twenty-three and newly married, was a graduate student at Stanford University;[8] and Barbara, nineteen that summer, attended college in Utah.[9]) Benson found temporary quarters in Washington in early 1953, leaving Flora to shoulder over the next five months "the responsibility of selling our home and moving East."[10]

The family's preparations were temporarily halted in early March 1953, when Flora and Barbara were in an automobile accident that totaled the family car. Flora was left unconscious for a time; Barbara suffered a broken shoulder as well as cuts and bruises. Told there was nothing he could do, Benson reluctantly agreed to remain in Washington. As he struggled to concentrate on work, his mind easily drifted, he later recalled, constantly "running over the years of our life together."[11] After praying and fasting for much of the day, he was relieved to learn late that same night that Flora had regained consciousness, was recovering, and had not broken any bones. "It was the longest night and day I spent in Washington," he remembered.[12]

By the time the family arrived in the nation's capital that summer, Benson admitted, "it was none too soon." A few months earlier, after oldest daughter Barbara had spent more than a week with her father, one of

Benson's staff had told him, "You've no idea . . . how much easier it's been to get along with you since Barbara's been here."[13] Flora, too, had visited Washington in late March to look for a new house while recuperating from the car accident and had quickly settled on a modest-sized home on Quincy Street in the tony Rock Creek Park neighborhood some fifteen minutes north of downtown Washington. By mid-June 1953, the family had purchased a new car (following a customary family council), a fire-engine red Studebaker Champion, packed their possessions, been feted at a farewell reception attended by some 600 neighbors and well-wishers, and on June 15 boarded an airplane for the East Coast. They quickly remodeled the basement of their new home, adding an office for Benson, and in late July, despite the heat, tested a new fireplace.[14]

Life in Washington, D.C., especially for the children, required some adjustment. Bonnie, in junior high school, tried not to tell classmates what her father's occupation was, hoping to avoid the uncomfortable, unwanted attention.[15] Being chauffeured to and from school in the Department of Agriculture's official black Cadillac proved to be particularly chafing. Barbara "not only didn't like it; she detested it," Benson wrote. "Several times Barbara, who was eighteen, shed tears when upset over being stared at and required to ride in the limousine. . . . 'Daddy,' she said, 'you *know* we can't afford such a car. People will surely misjudge us and I don't think it's right.'"[16]

Although often absent from home,[17] Benson spent as many Wednesday evenings as he could with his family. He also found time for family vacations and sometimes invited family members to join him on government-related tours.[18] He enjoyed teasing his children, who found the concoction disgusting, by dressing one of his favorite foods—whole wheat bread, topped with honey and drenched in a bowl of milk—with chopped raw onions. And, in keeping with LDS guidelines, he committed the family not to take part in "secular activities on Sunday, except in an emergency, or, as we put it, to free the ox in the mire."[19] Fortunately, the special periodic "luncheons" hosted by cabinet members' wives were held during the week. When it was Flora's turn in May 1954, she jumped at the opportunity "to show that it's possible to uphold the standards of the Church and have a wonderful time, too." A conscientious Mormon homemaker, Flora informed her important guests that there would be no wine or alcohol, no playing cards, no tea or coffee, and no smoking. "But," she promised, "we'll try to make it up to you in our own way."

There followed cocktails of ginger ale and apricot juice, a program of family singing, musical presentations, poetry readings (including Reed's recitation of Wordsworth's "Character of the Happy Warrior" in honor of President Eisenhower), and dancing. BYU's thirty-five Madrigal Singers, in town for a concert, also performed. Afterwards, Mamie Eisenhower, the president's wife, told Flora: "The atmosphere of peace and love abiding within made all of us come away with a deep feeling of joy."[20] "The most exciting part," Flora remembered, "was the beautiful letters we received afterward from the women, telling us what a thrill it was to experience a touch of 'Mormonism' and family cooperation and what wonderful youth the BYU singers were."[21]

More public attention followed. Sometime after the cabinet wives' luncheon, nationally prominent newsman Edward R. Murrow invited Benson to appear on his CBS television program *Person to Person*. Flora immediately objected, fearing the intrusion, but Reed "saw an opportunity" to showcase the "Benson Home Family Night" and LDS values. Flora remained skeptical: "If you insist on the show, have it down at your office. Leave the children out of it."[22] However, Reed persisted, and eventually managed to persuade his mother, who decided to "thr[o]w all her energies into it." Flora later explained, "Our son convinced me that we wouldn't be exposing the family to the nation, but that we would be exposing the nation to the gospel. . . . They [Reed and others] knew the magic words, so I agreed to do the show."[23]

Scheduled for Friday evening, September 24, 1954, the live program was designed to "give the TV audience a picture of a Mormon home and family, distinguished by Mormon standards and ideals." The entire Benson family staged a one-time practice run,[24] then, with three cameras rolling, Flora spoke on the importance of the home, the girls formed a singing quartet, Barbara sang a solo while Beverly accompanied on piano, and Beth tap-danced. Reed and Mark talked about the Church's missionary and other outreach programs. Afterwards, according to Benson, Murrow said "he considered it the best show he had done to date." *Look* magazine commented that it "was much more entertaining than most calls on show-business celebrities." President Eisenhower even opined, pragmatically: "Ezra, . . . it was the best political show you could have put on."[25] The following year, Flora was named national "Home Maker of the Year."[26] Later, Flora commented that helping her husband "meant plenty of hard work and sacrifice on my part. I have long felt that the woman's

role in life was to raise righteous children, to make a haven of love and goodness and to encourage her husband to do well in his church, civic, and professional work."[27]

The Benson family's partisan political acumen—particularly Reed's and Flora's—also went on public display during the 1956 general elections. That March, when Benson was unable to address the National Republican Women's Convention, Reed, now discharged from the Air Force, substituted. Thereafter, according to Benson, the articulate, charismatic Reed "came in great demand as a speaker at Republican conclaves."[28] Employed by the Republican National Committee, Reed acted as his father's companion on the campaign trail, helped draft Benson's political speeches, and arranged press conferences. That year, Reed traveled some 100,000 miles, visiting nearly forty states. "If he sensed a crisis," Benson proudly wrote, "he would drop everything, jeopardizing his own future career and schoolwork to help."[29]

Though more reserved, Flora could be equally formidable. Addressing some 1,000 Republican women in April 1956, she reported, disarmingly, "We may live in Washington now, but I don't have a maid. And when Mamie Eisenhower comes for dinner the girls and I pitch in and cook it. I guess I've just raised all my girls to marry poor men. . . . When we women see things that are wrong, we must not just shake our heads. We must speak up. We are men's helpmates—not just silent partners."[30] Afterward, an observer quipped that Eisenhower should "get the [Benson] family a maid, and send Mrs. Benson out in the nation to preach the gospel for the Republican farm program."[31] Despite the accolades, Flora did not like the raucous free-for-all of electioneering and tended to decline many—though not all—politically oriented speaking invitations. She "was very serious about her job as mother," Benson explained.[32]

Following her husband's resignation in 1961, Flora outlined to members of an LDS congregation some of her and her family's response to life in the Capitol:

> We felt as a family in all we did and said that we were representing you and our religion. This was a great responsibility on our shoulders. People watch so closely and critically if a slip is ever made and especially being known in the public eye as we were because of the high positions we held in both Church and government. . . .
>
> Politics can be almost brutal and vicious at times with its misinterpretations of one[']s statements and the twisting of them—often misquoting and giving half truths. But never did we let this thwart our efforts in doing

> our best in helping to keep America strong and free. Our family had many a cry and heartaches with fasting and earnest prayer, but the rewarding and sunny days came often in our dealings with the government and people, knowing we had been honest in our efforts and could face anyone on these grounds. . . .
>
> I was trying to do all the jobs of a good homemaker, cooking, laundress, cleaning woman, nurse, counselor, time with my children, and at the end of the day look rested, poised, relaxed and properly groomed for a formal dinner or social engagement of some kind. . . . I was to look like a charming girl, think like a man, work like a dog and act like a lady.[33]

"I never realized it until later," Benson confessed in 1962 after leaving office, "but I know now that having Flora and the family nearby gave me new confidence in doing my job. I became more decisive, surer of myself, more willing to tackle the tough challenges. For years I had depended on her counsel and wise judgment to supplement my own thinking. In a good marriage that is inevitable. Husband and wife share their thoughts, and their desires, their problems, their joys and sorrows, until their unity is such that it's hard to tell where one person leaves off and the other begins."[34]

II

As Benson began his second term as Secretary of Agriculture in early 1957, he faced the continuing, seemingly insoluble problem of mounting commodity—specifically, wheat—surpluses. The Soil Bank required significantly large monetary appropriations but in actual practice did little to address the problem of over-production, especially by smaller farmers. In fact, of the $3.3 billion allocated for the Soil Bank that year, the "lion's share" went to 1.3 million farmers who each received an average of $2,000 annually, while 2.7 million smaller farmers received only $100 each.[35] Because of an "explosion" in agriculture-related technology, farmers were producing more than ever before. Not surprisingly, Benson was even more convinced that the only effective answer to surpluses was flexible-to-no federal price supports and a truly laissez-faire free-market economy where demand and supply set prices. What he most wanted, according to his biographers, was a "reorientation of thinking and basic legislative reforms," including the "elimination of all restraints on freedom of choice or free play of the market place in determining commodity prices."[36] "If we continue to bring the Federal Government into more and more areas wherever a need for improvement exists," he reasoned,

"where are we going to draw the line? What is to be left to state and local initiative?"[37]

In April 1957, Benson decided, in an effort to rein-in over-production, to allot some 55 million acres for wheat and to lower parity to 75 percent. ("Riding a wave of confidence" from Eisenhower's reelection, Benson hoped "it would carry us."[38]) Thus, farmers who had been receiving $2.00 per bushel of wheat would now get $1.78. Benson concluded that "this move would force farmers to make economically sound decisions regarding how much they would plant or whether they would even put the plow to some of their land."[39] South Dakota's Democratic Representative George McGovern, among others, immediately protested that Benson was "totally out of sympathy with the economically depressed conditions of farm families" and, for the good of the country, should leave office immediately.[40] "It was almost standard fare for Democratic congressmen from farm states to sharpen their teeth on Mr. Benson," McGovern later recalled. "We ate a piece of him for breakfast every morning."[41]

Benson had grown weary of such attacks and once again began to feel "the urge . . . to go back to my life's work in Utah." When he raised the subject with Eisenhower, the president remained firmly opposed to Benson's departure: "If I have to, I'll go to Salt Lake City and appeal to President [David O.] McKay to have you stay on with me," he vowed. Both disappointed and exasperated, Benson "threw up my hands," confessing, "This is a difficult assignment and I'd be genuinely happy to be out of it. But I have no disposition to run out on you if you feel I'm serving a useful purpose. But I want to say again that if at any time I seem to you to be following a course not in the best interests o[f] your Administration, you have only to pick up the telephone."[42]

Less than two months later, Democrat William Proxmire's surprise victory in Wisconsin to fill the seat of recently deceased Senator Joseph McCarthy, a Republian, gave Democrats reason to believe—and Republicans reason to worry—that the unexpected win was a clear "repudiation of the Eisenhower-Benson farm program."[43] Proxmire and House colleague Henry Reuss soon joined McGovern's call for Benson's ouster. Almost immediately, some nervous Republicans began to look to Benson as a convenient scapegoat. Congressman Melvin R. Laird, also from Wisconsin, told Eisenhower: "It is most important that a change be made in the office of Secretary of Agriculture before the next session of Congress." South Dakota Senator Karl Mundt, another Republican, wrote: "We can-

not even come close to electing a Republican House of Representatives or a Republican Senate in 1958 unless . . . Benson is replaced by somebody who is personally acceptable to the farmers of this country." With Benson remaining in office, Mundt insisted, Republicans did not have a "Chinaman's chance of winning the farm vote."[44] Benson's critics—an "avalanche," according to his biographers—"hoped that [Benson's] dismissal would defuse the situation for the benefit of them all."[45] About this same time, a small handful of angry South Dakota farmers tossed raw eggs at Benson during the secretary's tour through the state. "The eggs didn't come close to me," Benson reported, "and were apparently thrown by what one might call 'pool-hall farmers' (persons who spend more time in loafing about town than they do on the farm)."[46] Most local citizens condemned the protest even as they continued to denounce Benson's seemingly draconian policies.[47]

Shortly after Proxmire's win, President David O. McKay paid a surprise visit to Eisenhower in early September 1957. According to Benson, McKay was "planning some changes in which I might well have a part" and wondered if it "would be convenient for him [Eisenhower] to release me at this time." (McKay subsequently admitted that he wanted to provide Eisenhower with an "excuse to release Brother Benson if he desired to do so.")[48] As Benson remembered:

> President McKay said, "Mr. Eisenhower indicated to me that you [i.e., Benson] and he have been very close. In fact, the President told me 'Ezra and I have been just like this'—and he interlocked the fingers of his hands.
>
> "Then he said, 'I just don't know where I could turn to get someone to succeed him.'
>
> "Now Brother Benson," President McKay went on, "I left no doubt but that the government and President Eisenhower have first call on your services. We in the Church can make adjustments easier at this time than the government can. We want to support President Eisenhower. He is a noble character, a fine man. In this case our country comes first. But, of course, we also want you to do what you would prefer."

Benson conferred with Flora, who also "would have liked us to return to Utah." The couple agreed, however, that Benson would speak with Eisenhower but "leave the final decision to President McKay." "I recognize that you have had more than four very strenuous years in Washington," Eisenhower told Benson, "and I can appreciate that your Church is anxious to have you back. I have given this a great deal of thought, and I will not go contrary to the wishes of your Church if they feel it imperative

that you should leave. But I want to emphasize that word imperative." Informed of McKay's position, Eisenhower continued:

> "I feel, Ezra," he said, "that if you leave now it may mean giving up much of the agricultural program which we've put in operation and are trying to push to completion. I wish very much that you would stay at least one more year. Next fall [1958] we can review the situation again. At that time if changes in the Church occur or other conditions demand that you go back to Utah, I'll no longer stand in your way. But, if not, then I would like you to stay"—and here the President smiled—"stay to the bitter end."
>
> I smiled back. "Do you think the end will be bitter?"
>
> "Not one bit," he said. "Just wait and see."

Benson telephoned McKay the next day. "Please tell President Eisenhower," McKay replied, "that we want to help him in every way possible."[49]

With Eisenhower's—and especially McKay's—support, Benson tried to ignore his detractors, embarking that fall upon another overseas trade mission—a task he considered to be "more productive in solving farm problems" than lobbying Congress. Traveling from Hawaii to Japan and China, then to Pakistan, Jordan, and Israel, and on to Greece, Italy,[50] Spain, Portugal, France, and England, Benson—accompanied for part of the route by Flora, Beverly, and Bonnie—"probed every avenue for new outlets."[51] He also regularly touched bases with local LDS congregations "to help the Cause."[52] "Nothing is better calculated to impress a man with the great drama of human existence," he believed, "than seeing for himself the varying conditions of the world's people—how they make their living—their struggle for existence and, after this is somewhat assured, for cultural and spiritual development—their unremitting search for a place of their own, not only a territorial home but a place in the society in which they live."[53]

Returning home to Washington, he found to his dismay that congressional dissatisfaction with his policies had not subsided. "What you say may be true," he remembered being lectured, "but then YOU don't have to be elected."[54] Rumors circulated that ranking LDS leaders "wanted to get me off the political firing line where, they said, I had become an impediment to the Church's mission." Enduring many sleepless nights, Benson could not help wondering: "*Was* I a liability to the President and my party after all?"; and "Was it plain stubbornness that made me reluctant to quit?" With the support of friends and colleagues, how-

ever, he resolved to remain in office where he would "continue to tell the truth," as he saw it.[55]

Early the next year, when another special election nearly resulted in a Democratic victory in the House, a group of some thirty Republicans renewed calls for Benson's resignation.[56] Once again feeling "very downhearted," he asked that the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles remember him in their collective prayers. McKay promised that if Benson continued "to stand for his principles . . . things would come out all right."[57] Thus emboldened, Benson made a public statement: "I have responsibilities which I take seriously. As long as God gives me the strength I shall continue to do all within my power to help our farmers through this severe struggle to a better and brighter future." "When we find a man of this dedication and personal honesty," Eisenhower, ever-loyal, agreed, "we should say to ourselves, 'We just don't believe that America has come to the point where it wants to dispense with the advice of that kind of a person.'"[58] "I have never thought of [Benson] as a political millstone or as a political asset," Eisenhower also explained. "I have thought of him as this: One of the finest, most dedicated public servants I have ever known, a man who is thoroughly acquainted with every piece of agriculture, and puts his whole heart into doing something that he believes will be good for the long term benefit of the farmers of America."[59]

Benson quickly focused on a new farm-related legislative agenda. Among other items, he hoped to persuade Congress to strengthen the Soil Bank, terminate the acreage reserve program and eliminate acreage allotments for corn, increase acreage allotments for certain other commodities, further lower the floor for parity payments, extend trade opportunities, and expand industrial uses for crops. Eisenhower added his own set of priorities. When finally submitted in January 1958, the Food and Fiber Bill "signaled a movement away from land retirement and a return to flexibility" in federal price supports.[60] In an election year, lowering parity to 60 percent—when the previous floor had been 75 percent—was the bill's most problematic provision. Republican leaders wanted to emphasize the strengths of Benson's department and suggested, in part, that he "consider inviting a top-level, highly confidential panel of public relations experts, skilled in the farm problem, to meet with him at intervals of at least once a month (and oftener, if possible) to evaluate the manner in which the administration's story is getting through to the voters." Furthermore, if he "does not now have a top public relations man in his own De-

partment, one should be obtained at the earliest possible time."[61] Benson bristled at the suggestion that he was unskilled in public relations but agreed that the party needed to tackle the "misinformation and untruths" leveled against the administration by special-interest groups.[62]

In Congress, both houses rejected the 60 percent parity proposal and voted to freeze parity at current levels, thereby postponing any movement downward (though the House of Representatives called for a one-year freeze only). "Thoroughly disgusted," Benson "ripped into Congress," taking them "to task for their attempt to hamper the transition to a more flexible system of price supports."[63] "This was more than nearsighted," he insisted. "It was cross-eyed."[64] Benson also hinted, correctly, that Eisenhower would veto the joint resolution.[65] Subsequently explaining his rejection of the bill, Eisenhower asserted: "It would have been a 180-degree turn—right back to the very problems from which our farm people are beginning to escape."[66] Privately, however, Eisenhower had hoped to avoid such a show-down and delivered a "mild spanking" to Benson for his "advanced positions of inflexibility." Eisenhower's "little treatise," Benson remembered, "was so obviously well intended, I could not resent his giving it."[67]

Eisenhower's veto prevailed, and Democrats countered with a bill that would have "sidetracked" the administration. Benson dismissed the move, which was defeated in the House of Representatives, as an "economic monstrosity and a political hodgepodge."[68] Benson's and Eisenhower's partnership succeeded in "forc[ing] GOP dissidents to work out a compromise acceptable to administration backers." And Democrats, convinced of mid-term victories, decided to bide their time until after the elections.[69] As eventually signed into law, the 1958 Agriculture Act set a floor for parity at 65 percent (not 60); froze acreage allotments for cotton and rice; mandated price supports for feed grains; and allowed farmers to decide if they wanted restrictions on corn production. Benson thought the compromise, in general, was a positive step and looked especially to farmer-oriented cooperatives to replace much of government's role in agriculture.[70] Other observers saw the compromise as a Republican victory, as tangible evidence of Benson's "remarkable political comeback," and now credited the Agriculture Secretary with being "the most influential member of the Eisenhower Cabinet."[71] Benson, however, had to remind himself: "Ezra, be careful—be very very careful. The higher you go on the applause machine the farther you can fall."[72]

Campaigning—or, as he preferred, "farm-storming"[73]—that fall, Benson was upbeat. The choice, he thought, was both clear and simple: "a return to price fixers and the forces of regimentation, or a program under Republican leadership aimed at an expanding, prosperous, and free economy under the free enterprise system. . . . We had to reject the proposition that an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-powerful government was the panacea for our problems. Nothing was ever so wrong."[74] In Nebraska, he "admitted forthrightly that farmers were not sharing fully in the national prosperity," but insisted optimistically that they "could prosper if [they] modernized and adjusted to the new economic milieu."[75] "The government cannot guarantee all farmers a fixed level of income any more than government can guarantee every businessman a profit or every worker a high annual wage," he told Californians, "or every doctor so many patients, or every manufacturer so many customers."[76] In Arizona, he championed the reelection of Senator Barry Goldwater, a like-minded Republican conservative: "This nation will soon decide whether it shall have a truly American or a left-wing dominated Congress for the next two critical years," Benson told enthusiastic crowds.[77]

But when the polls closed in early November, despite his Herculean efforts,[78] Benson had misjudged the voters' resentment and was heartsick at the election "disaster."[79] Republicans lost forty-seven House races (twenty-three of which were Midwestern), and thirteen in the Senate. Democrats won across the board. Beginning his last two years in office, Benson realized to his chagrin that he now faced "more resistance—not increased receptivity—to his agricultural policies."[80]

III

Conceding "we had been licked and licked bad" in 1958,[81] Benson—as "undaunted" and "intractable" as ever—determined to see his party's defeat as an opportunity "to bring into focus the principles for which we stand."[82] "With every bit of strength and influence I possessed," he later recalled, "I was resolved to buck the rising trend toward politics first."[83] After a particularly disturbing cabinet meeting in June 1960, during which Benson felt he had stood alone in supporting Eisenhower's call for fiscal restraint, Benson fretted: "I could not but fear for the future of our country unless influential voices were raised in crescendo, calling not only for a halt but a reversal of this trend."[84] In fact, some hard-line conservatives, especially in the Republican Party, had al-

ready begun to view Benson as a spokesperson for concerns they (and, to a growing degree, he) believed were being ignored by party elite. Knowing that his chances for legislative success in a Democratically controlled Congress were small—"like trying to move the ball against a team that outweighed us 50 pounds to the man," he quipped[85]—Benson found his political voice expanding beyond farming issues as concerned conservatives began actively seeking his opinions on a wide range of hot-button public policy topics.[86]

Much to his surprise, and satisfaction, Benson also discovered a groundswell—minor but vocal—urging his candidacy for national elected office. (Rumors were even reaching the ears of David O. McKay.[87]) Insisting that the "thought of running for elective office has never tempted me," Benson nonetheless recognized the value of a national pulpit from which to advocate the godly values he had long cherished, specifically the "freedom to make [one's] own decisions—and learn from the consequences, good or ill."[88] He rejected the argument that personal security trumps freedom of choice, championed free enterprise as the foundation of any political philosophy, and believed in limited federal intervention in the lives of citizens. In fact, his biographers suggest, Benson's "advocacy of more local democracy and less centralized government appealed also to the Jeffersonian tradition within the Democratic party."[89]

Speaking as much to future prospects as to present realities, Benson continued to push throughout 1958 and into 1959 for the eventual elimination of all federal agricultural subsidies and supports—a goal, his biographers point out, "as courageous as it was futile."[90] He was convinced that "further changing the parity base and eliminating all acreage allotments would check overproduction and materially reduce government expenditures." He wanted a "termination of government's managerial role, with its corollary of unenforceable controls, so that the perennial wheat problem could at long last be solved."[91] He managed to convince Eisenhower to agree to relax some federal budgetary prohibitions and to push for additional public monies for the Soil Bank's Conservation Reserve program. Democrats, however, submitted a 1959 farm bill—another "monstrosity," according to Benson[92]—that called for a reduction in acreage allotments and an increase in parity to 90 percent. Eisenhower vetoed the proposed legislation, and a stalemate followed which lasted the remainder of both men's terms in office.[93] "Stymied" was how Benson described the impasse.[94]

In tandem with the president's veto, Benson departed on another trade-related mission to Europe, including Switzerland, Germany, and Denmark. "I wanted to go for many reasons," he remembered, "not the least important being the desire to say some things on European soil about freedom and human dignity and American ideals."[95] Not quite three months later, he returned to the Continent for two-plus weeks in Yugoslavia, West Germany, Poland, the Soviet Union, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.[96] Shortly before this second departure, he reluctantly played host to Nikita S. Khrushchev during a portion of the larger-than-life Russian leader's mid-September 1959 trip to the United States. "I must say," Benson later wrote, not mincing his words, "my enthusiasm for the project could have been put in a small thimble. By my lights, Khrushchev was, and is, an evil man. He has about as much conception of moral right and wrong as a jungle animal."[97] Following a tour of the federal government's 11,000-acre agricultural research facility in Maryland, during which Benson lectured the Soviet prime minister for an hour and forty minutes on the virtues of free enterprise, Benson concluded that the experience had been "far from satisfying to me personally. . . . Even if I had wanted to, I could not possibly have warmed up to the Russian leader. That was the last time I saw Khrushchev at close range."[98] ("I still feel it was a mistake," he added some twenty years later, "to invite this godless despot as a state visitor. To this day I get an uneasy feeling when I think of that experience."[99])

For Benson's politically attuned oldest son, Reed, the Russian leader's official state visit put him in a special "quandary." Long counseled to "avoid the company of evil men," he decided that "if the opportunity presented itself, he would give the Khrushchev party what he considered the greatest message in the world . . . the gospel of Jesus Christ." Finding himself returning to Washington in the same car as the Khrushchevs, Reed, who felt convinced that the encounter was "not coincidental," told the guests that "long after communism has faded away the Church of Jesus Christ would stand triumphant." Thereafter, according to his father, for "over 45 minutes Reed kindly but firmly spelled out the basic tenets of Mormonism as first one and then another asked questions and sometimes tried to rebut him." "It was good to have a communist captive audience that couldn't walk out on me," Reed later quipped. "The car was going too fast for that." "Knowing full well that communists are violators of the moral law," his father predicted, "yet it is my faith that in the Lord's

due time He will find a way to break down this murderous conspiracy and bring the truth and liberty to those Russians who are honest in heart. Somehow I felt that Providence might use men of courage and conviction—such as Reed displayed—to bring this about."[100]

Secretary Benson's subsequent visit late that same month and into October to, among other European countries, the Soviet Union made a profound and lasting impact upon him. "Of all the trade trips," he later wrote, "this one left the deepest imprint on me . . . because it put before my eyes the pitiful faces of a people enslaved and into my ears the mournful cry of those bemoaning their lost liberty."[101] Accompanied by Flora, Beverly, and Bonnie (as well as several Department of Agriculture staff), Benson scrutinized Soviet-style collective farming and returned home more persuaded than ever of the "superiority of our agricultural system of privately owned family farms, the profit motive, competitive markets, and freedom for the farmer to decide what he wants to grow and market."[102] Benson believed that the Soviet government—which he characterized as "godless, murderous, cold and forbidding"[103]—was intent on trying to outperform the United States on the world stage. Despite any thawing in the Cold War that Eisenhower's own recent talks with Khrushchev may have produced, Benson was adamant that "the basic Communist ideology and strategic objectives of world domination for Communism remained the same."[104] ("The vast number of Russian people, I believe, are fine," he was quick to point out. "It is the Communist system and its leaders that are evil."[105])

Most memorably, Benson arranged to attend, and then was invited to address, a Thursday evening meeting of some 1,500 members of Moscow's Central Baptist Church. He clearly hoped to reassure his listeners—mostly older women—that there was more to life than the sufferings they were then forced to endure: "We will live again after we leave this life. Christ broke the bonds of death and was resurrected. We will all be resurrected."[106] "I don't remember all that I said," he later wrote, "but I recall feeling lifted up, inspired by the rapt faces of these men and women who were so steadfastly proving their faith in the God they served and loved."[107] As his party left the building, the large crowd began to sing in Russian the Congregational hymn "God Be with You 'Til We Meet Again." It was an emotionally exhilarating, defining, yet devastating, experience. "Never shall I forget this victory of the spirit over tyranny, oppres-

sion, and ignorance," he promised. "Never can I doubt the ultimate deliverance of the Russian people."[108]

Benson's euphoria did not last long. Arriving home, he was met with renewed calls for his removal from office.[109] More immediately, however, he also had to contend with growing stomach pain. At first, he minimized the symptoms as the result of work-related stress. But when the pain became especially severe, he checked into Walter Reed Hospital where, and on December 4, 1959, his inflamed gall bladder was removed. Ten days later, and some twenty-five pounds lighter, Benson was back at work.[110]

As much as he wanted to push through his farm agenda, Benson knew that any likelihood of success was rapidly diminishing. He not only faced a hostile Congress, but Eisenhower was intent on cutting the federal budget and seemed disinterested "in propositions to enlarge existing programs."[111] "I could hardly be hopeful," Benson wrote; "yet if we failed, I had to make sure the fault could not justly be laid at our door."[112] He also found himself reflecting on recent experiences: "How can free government best endure in this competition with the atheistic communistic system? . . . One thing seemed all too clear to me. We could not do it by trying to provide through government action too many services to too many people too fast and at the price of living beyond our means."[113] Benson subsequently backed the idea of donating surplus food abroad to needy countries in a program called Food for Peace. "We are making our God-given bounty available to the less fortunate," he explained, "not in the spirit of a wasteful give-away but rather in the spirit of genuine helpfulness."[114] "A farmer who knows that his wheat is going abroad, to meet human need, as part of the foreign policy of the United States," Vice President Richard M. Nixon agreed, "is likely to be happier than a farmer who is told that his wheat is simply creating a storage problem for the United States government."[115]

Eisenhower's 1960 farm message—his last—was both "modest and moderate."[116] He did not seek larger appropriations for existing programs, but merely asked that the Conservation Reserve be expanded to 60 million acres, with payments offered in produce, if farmers so desired. And he was in no mood to fight: "If the Congress wishes to propose a plan as an alternative to the course here recommended, so long as that plan is constructive, . . . I will approve it."[117] Benson thought he could convince congressional lawmakers to abandon acreage allotments for wheat espe-

cially and reduce parity to 75 percent. "It doesn't make sense to me," he argued, that wheat farmers "should be deprived of productive and economic wealth by unsound farm programs that lose markets and depress prices through imbalance of natural production."[118]

Generally oblivious to—or unwilling to acknowledge—his own public-relations shortcomings and sometimes obdurate personality, Benson sincerely believed that he had only the best interests of America's farmers at heart and thus was convinced he had long been the hapless victim of a liberal smear machine. His opponents, he insisted, "have distorted my actions—sought to create a false image of the Secretary of Agriculture [and] . . . have tried to force me out of office."[119] While staunchly affirming that he had grown accustomed to such abuse, he nonetheless "resented the harm it did to effective action." Some in the media may have found it "easier to attack him than to criticize Eisenhower," his biographers explain. "In this sense, Ike was wise in keeping Benson in the cabinet. It kept much vitriol from reaching the White House."[120]

Despite Benson's pleadings, congressmen "refused to expand the Soil Bank's Conservation Reserve and balked at lowering price supports on wheat."[121] Instead, tobacco supports were frozen at 1959 levels, and parity for dairy products was raised from 75 percent to 80 percent. Benson correctly understood that the proposals tended, in part, to reverse his previous seven years' work. But if he thought that Eisenhower would veto the legislation, he was mistaken. Benson interpreted Eisenhower's inaction as evidence of Richard Nixon's ascendancy as their party's putative presidential candidate for 1960. Nixon, Benson feared, was at heart a career politician who "seemed to be more interested in devising a scheme to capture the imagination of the voters, especially in the Midwest, than in supporting the Administration's sound proposals."[122]

After one especially troubled, sleepless night, Benson vented his pent-up frustration in a letter to the vice president which he ultimately decided not to send but, tellingly, included in his published memoirs:

> For seven long years my associates and I, in USDA, have fought against great odds, a combination of week-kneed Republicans and socialistic Democrats, to bring some sense into a senseless program for our farmers, especially in the Midwest. . . . Sometimes I'm almost tempted to respond to the suggestions of friends and strangers from all segments of America and get into the presidential free-for-all myself. Not that victory would be possible, but it might present a more effective opportunity to tell the American people something of the politics of agriculture. . . . As President

> Ike said to me in 1953, "If a thing is right it should be done. And if it's right it will prove to be good politics." I can only add that if the time ever comes when what is right is not good politics, it will be a sad day for America![123]

While Nixon agreed with many of Benson's policies, he had deliberately decided to "exert more influence on agricultural affairs so that," Benson's biographers suggest, "he could start his campaign in the farm belt with no political encumbrances."[124] Nixon had to come up with a way to distance himself from Benson, who was seen as a liability, while still advocating much of Benson's program. Thus, Nixon adopted an aggressive, ostensibly independent approach to U.S. farm policy, hoping to sway American farmers.

IV

Eisenhower readily admitted Benson's expertise in agricultural issues even as he was forced to acknowledge the secretary's potential liability on the campaign trail. "Many Republicans think that any public appearance by him [Benson] would be a detriment in the Middle West," Eisenhower advised Nixon in early January 1960. "Nevertheless it is possible that he could be used efficiently in the metropolitan areas because his viewpoint is that of the nation and not of the local voters."[125] Agreeing, Nixon "redoubled his efforts to prepare a political scenario geared to soften this issue."[126] For his part, Benson worried that Nixon's politically nuanced approach meant the de facto rejection of Benson's own free-market-driven agenda. "I wish I had more confidence in the Vice-President's ability to provide wise leadership for the nation," he confided to his diary.[127] In fact, Benson's recommendations for the farm plank of the Republican Party's national platform were, early on, dismissed out of hand as too "negative" and "problem-prone." "One doesn't catch flies with vinegar," he was told.[128]

According to Benson's biographers, Nixon and his supporters "tried to put together a farm plank that would for all intents and purposes bypass Ezra Taft Benson without repudiating his farm policy."[129] The problem, as Nixon and others saw it, was Benson's seemingly imperious, autocratic persona. "Some way, somehow, our Democratic friends have done such a good job on Ezra Benson," Nixon commented, "that they have the farmers thinking he and the Republican party are against them. We took the worst shellacking [in 1958] in the farm states."[130] Politically, then, Nixon's strategy was to "put an up-to-date face on his farm policy

while removing Benson as a symbol of controversy in order to placate critics."[131] This meant "couch[ing] his [Nixon's] words in a milder, less concrete tone" and "work[ing] more closely with congressional leaders."[132] Thus, the final version of their party's farm plank—"to improve and stabilize farm family income"—reflected both "Benson's policies and Nixon's rhetoric."[133]

In their own 1960 national platform, Democrats countered that America's farmer had the "right" to "raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living." "We will no longer view food stockpiles with alarm," they continued, "but will use them as powerful instruments for peace and plenty." "These goals," Democrats explained, "demand the leadership of a Secretary of Agriculture who is conversant with the technological and economic aspects of farm problems, and who is sympathetic with the objectives of effective farm legislation not only for farmers but for the best interests of the nation as a whole."[134] Specifically, Democrats called for "production and marketing quotas . . . at not less than 90 per cent of parity, production payments, commodity purchases, and marketing orders and agreements. . . . We are convinced," they summarized, "that a successful combination of these approaches will cost considerably less than present Republican programs which have failed."[135] For Benson, the platform "ranked as the worst . . . drawn up by either major party at any time within my memory."[136]

Though as Democratic senator from Massachusetts he had tended to support Benson's policies during the mid-1950s, John F. Kennedy, now Democratic candidate for U.S. president, declared publicly in October 1960: "Mr. Benson is an honest man, but he has not been a successful Secretary of Agriculture. I could not disagree more with the agricultural policy pursued by this administration, which has got for its basis, a steady drop of support prices as a method of eliminating overproduction. . . . My own judgment is for our agricultural program that we should tie support price to parity price."[137] "Congress did give Mr. Benson's program a chance," he also commented, "but Mr. Benson's program never gave the farmer a chance."[138]

In attempting to distance himself from Benson, but not entirely disown him, Nixon knew he navigated a very thin line, especially in the Midwest. In his memoirs, he wrote:

> The Democrats for eight years had done a vicious hatchet-job on Ezra Taft Benson. They had created the impression, not only among Democratic

> farmers but among Republicans as well, that Benson had no sympathy for the farmers and their problems and that his attitude was simply that the farmer should "grin and bear it." The Republican farm bloc leaders respected him as a man of high principle. Scarcely a one of them had any alternative to offer. But almost to a man they told me—"the farmer has not been getting his fair share of America's increasing prosperity. He is hurting." He will not vote for a presidential candidate who says, in effect, "we are doing all we can and things will work out in time."[139]

At Nixon's urging, Eisenhower agreed to absent his divisive Secretary of Agriculture from the unfolding political drama by sending him on several trade missions in exchange for which Nixon would not publicly disavow either Benson or his farm policy.

At first, Benson apparently did not comprehend that he was being deliberately sidelined, for he returned from Europe and the Middle East in late August 1960 itching for partisan battle. He publicly charged Kennedy with "flip-flopping" on agriculture, proclaimed the Nixon ticket as "the nation's best hope," and even asserted—despite some private misgivings—that Nixon would be a "great and beloved President."[140] Later that fall, however, when asked to spearhead a second overseas mission, Benson realized that party leaders were intentionally snubbing him. Still, he could not resist one last piece of advice to Nixon: "I feel the time has come for you to hit hard and be tough but be sure you are right. You need to keep emphasizing the basic differences between your philosophy and your opponent's and by letting the American people know there is a real choice."[141] "The Vice President's wavering on the farm question," Benson later explained, ". . . would have made it difficult for me to support him enthusiastically in partisan political meetings."[142] Benson then quietly withdrew from active politicking and instead focused on his department affairs; he also quashed an independent drive to try to convince him to run as a candidate for Utah governor.[143]

After leaving office in early 1961, Benson recalled that his relationship with Nixon "went through three phases" during their eight years together. At first, Nixon "impressed me as an extraordinarily energetic, efficient, and ambitious young man." But after 1956, when Nixon, "the GOP heir apparent," became an "active candidate" for office, Benson began to harbor "some doubts about his qualifications to become Chief Executive." By 1960, Benson concluded that Nixon had developed "to a fine art" the "ability, to borrow an FDR phrase, of carrying water on both shoulders."[144] Benson began to look increasingly to New York's Republi-

can governor Nelson A. Rockefeller as a preferable alternative and also entertained the possibility of becoming Rockefeller's vice presidential candidate. He was disappointed when Rockefeller announced his withdrawal from the presidential race in late 1959.

At the same time, public interest in Benson's "own political future continued until at last it became a question we could no longer ignore or dismiss out of hand."[145] Raising the subject—including the possibility of attempting a run at the U.S. presidency himself—with family members, Benson initially voiced some modest reluctance, but Reed "in particular employed all his persuasiveness to get me to give the matter further consideration." Finally, he decided to raise the subject directly with David O. McKay.[146] Accompanied by Reed, Benson met with McKay on March 5, 1960, and the two Bensons forcefully presented the case for Benson's continuing engagement with national politics. McKay replied supportively that the "country needed more patriots and real statesmen" and, according to Benson, suggested that "we watch this developing groundswell closely for the next few weeks and that if we did, we should have the answer" by early April.[147]

In a section of Benson's memoirs deleted at McKay's request prior to publication in 1962, McKay continued:

> "If it should come to pass," he [McKay] said, "Governor Rockefeller and Brother Benson would be a great team. We are all proud of the way you have stood for principle—but then you had to do this to be true to your own father and [great-] grandfather."
>
> Saying it was highly desirable that more than one man should be considered for the presidential nomination in each political party, he went on and indicated he was sorry to see Rockefeller step out of the picture and hoped he could be encouraged to reconsider. President McKay thought it would be appropriate for me to make a statement indicating that the nomination should not go by default to the Vice President. . . .
>
> "I sincerely hope Brother Benson," he said, "That Governor Rockefeller will still be able to get into the race. And I have considered it all carefully and if the opportunity should come unsolicited for you to serve in a high political post you will have the whole-hearted support of all of us."[148]

McKay's own diary recorded of the same meeting:

> They [Ezra and Reed Benson] entered into a *two-and-a-half hour discussion with me on national political affairs*, especially on questions pertaining to candidates for the presidency of the United States.
>
> I made no commitments, but advised that they watch the political

> trend between [now] and April [General] Conference. Reed then asked the question (having in mind the suggestion that has been made that his father run as a candidate for presidency) if there is anything that he could do or say that there might be other candidates considered besides the Vice President on the Republican ticket. I answered, "You must never mention this—let the political leaders get together and make the suggestion, but do not let it come from you; you may acquiesce, but let them do the suggesting."[149]

Rockefeller did not change his mind and the question of Benson's possible vice presidential or presidential candidacy was soon dropped.[150]

The third phase in Benson's relationship with Nixon began when Nixon was officially nominated by Republicans as their candidate for U.S. president that summer. "He was the choice of my party," Benson remembered, "and I wanted to support him wholeheartedly. I only hoped he would not make it impossible for me to do so."[151]

To almost all—except perhaps Benson himself—the potential drawbacks to Benson's public participation in the 1960 campaign were obvious. A reporter from the Chicago *Daily News* asked Eisenhower on August 10, 1960: "Do you regret having kept Ezra Taft Benson on as Secretary of Agriculture in view of the unresolved farm problem that is giving Mr. Nixon such a hard time in his campaign?" "Ezra Benson has, to my mind," replied Eisenhower, who had also deliberately limited his own involvement, "been very honest and forthright and courageous in trying to get enacted into legislation plans and programs that I think are correct. And, therefore, for me to regret that he has been working would be almost a betrayal of my own views in this matter. I think we must find ways to give greater freedom to the farmer and make his whole business more responsive to market, rather than just to political considerations."[152]

While Benson appreciated the gesture—terming it a fitting "epitaph" to his career in public service[153]—Eisenhower's support only partially offset the painful, embarrassing indignity of his own party's rejection. As he had done four years earlier with *Farmers at the Crossroads*, Benson issued his own election-year apologia, *Freedom to Farm* in July 1960. "It doesn't matter whether we give [the "low income farmer"] 100 or 200 per cent of parity through the price-support programs," he concluded with his trademark bluntness, "his income problem will not be solved. His problem is one of volume, not price. He does not have an economic farm unit. He is not able to grow the volume of crops to benefit substantially by price supports. What he needs is an opportunity for

full employment. Undersized, undercapitalized, and underequipped farms cannot furnish such employment, nor can those who operate them possibly earn an adequate income without part-time work in other occupations."[154]

Reader response ran the gamut.[155] "There are few grays in Benson's spectrum," the *Washington Post* observed, "and that is why he has had such difficulties with Congress." "Benson believes so strongly that price supports and government production controls are morally wrong," the *Des Moines Register* added, "that he sometimes closes his eyes to facts which do not fit his beliefs." "[A] return to the good old days around Preston, Idaho [Benson's home town], should resolve the farm problem," the *Saturday Review* concluded sarcastically. On the other hand, the *Wall Street Journal* found Benson's book to be well "timed to set the record straight." The *Arizona Republic* called Benson the "voice of sanity," and the New York *Herald Tribune* concluded: "Mr. Benson has the great advantage not always shared by high government officials, of knowing exactly what he is talking about." However belated, the accolades must have been gratifying.

Finally, although the precise date is not identified but was evidently at some point shortly before he left government service, Benson experienced what was later described as a demonic attack. The specifics of the terrifying spiritual event speak not only to Benson's frame of mind and the challenges he was then confronting, but also to the nature of his faith. As his youngest daughter, a teenager at the time, subsequently wrote:

> Most of the family had gathered at Priest River, Idaho, for a few days vacation after Dad had toured some of our national forests. The rest of the family had gone—most of them to Canada to visit Barbara and Bob [Walker],[156] and Mom, Dad and I were to follow that day by plane. I, however, had a fall and hurt my leg quite badly so we decided to stay a day or two longer till I was in better shape. That night Daddy went into town to get some medication for me. As he was driving home he had some experiences with evil forces! He somehow lost power over the car and lost consciousness—and when he suddenly came to he was in the middle of a field just ready to hit some cattle. Another time he had gone off the road just before crossing a bridge over the river and got control just before the car was about to go over the edge into the river.
>
> That night Mother slept in a bedroom downstairs with me because of my leg and Daddy slept upstairs. In the middle of the night Daddy came down the stairs. I could see him from my bed. He was crying and shaking. He came into our room and sat on the edge of my bed still crying and shaking and very pale. He told us he had just had an experience that he wanted

to tell us. Mother said are you sure Beth should hear this and Daddy said yes he wanted me to. He said that all of a sudden he felt like he was strongly restricted—that he was bound and couldn't move or caged in a box and unable to move his muscles to free himself. It was a very dark and evil feeling. He seemed to fight with all his might to free himself but could not. Then he prayed for deliverance from this evil spirit and suddenly he was free—the box and bounds were lifted and the darkness was replaced with light. Then a very beautiful feeling came over him—he felt calm and peaceful and felt the explanation come to him: the Lord loves him very much and loves our entire family. But the devil is trying and will continue to try to destroy us—to do all he can to thwart us and stop us from doing good. The Lord wants us to know this to be on guard and aware of the devil's desires so that we will recognize and protect ourselves. And if we remember the Lord he will help us and all will be fine and we will be able to overcome the evil one.

I will never forget this experience or the look and feeling I got from my dear father.[157]

V

John F. Kennedy's narrow popular victory (118,550 votes) over Richard M. Nixon may have owed more to the Easterner's personal charisma than to an outright repudiation of Benson's controversial farm policies. "The ill-fated television debates," Benson's biographers suggest, "Kennedy's mod style, the issue of religion which seemed to work in Kennedy's favor, and international affairs, plus indeterminable elements, all played their role."[158] Benson, writing retrospectively, saw a much simpler answer: Nixon "began fighting for principle too late . . . [and] allowed himself to be stampeded by a small, noisy minority of Democratic propagandists in the Midwest. He misread the political signs, shrewd and experienced as he was."[159] Only a month after the election, he confessed "some concern that the prospect ahead for agriculture is not as bright at the moment as I would like to have it."[160]

Early the next month, in his official letter of resignation (effective January 20, 1961), he tried to be more positive: "It has been a great honor and high privilege to serve our farm people. . . . We have halted and reversed the trend towards a regimented agriculture. We have introduced the principle of flexibility . . . and restored to our people some of their lost freedom to plant, to market, to compete, and to make their own decisions." "Although agriculture still faces many problems," Eisenhower replied, "through your determined and dedicated work, and the efforts of your fine staff, the way has been pointed toward [the] solution of our prob-

lems."[161] Of Eisenhower's original 1953 cabinet appointees, Benson was one of only two who had served for the entire eight years.[162]

Addressing fellow Washington-based Latter-day Saints in late 1960, Benson reported: "It was a difficult thing to try and reverse a trend of many years, moving in [the] direction of more and more centralization of authority in the federal government [and] more and more control of price fixing in the field of agriculture." Yet despite the many challenges, he was pleased that he had managed to stay true to his principles and, furthermore, asserted: "If I had it to do over again, I would follow very much the same course."[163] As far as he was concerned, this comforting certitude had only one source: "I have had a conviction," he told LDS faithful the following April 1961, "through all this period, my brethren and sisters, that I was where the Lord wanted me to be. . . . I have been convinced," he continued, "I was doing the thing that seemed to me, at least, to be right . . . I have no bitterness today. . . . I have prayed—we have prayed as a family—that we could avoid any spirit of hatred or bitterness."[164] "Perhaps," he added, more contritely, in his memoirs, "I had seemed on occasion to be too uncompromising. Perhaps we did not establish, as fully as we might have, rapport with some in the Congress. As for our critics, . . . I love all God's children—but I love some more than others."[165]

Benson easily sold his family's Washington home (to the Yugoslavian government, reportedly for $60,000) and returned—with Flora and their children leaving first—to Salt Lake City early in 1961.[166] The past eight years had taken a considerable physical toll on him, and he struggled for a time thereafter to regain his health and stamina.[167] Now age sixty-one, he found the readjustment to his full-time ecclesiastical calling as an apostle to be more difficult than he had anticipated. He had to share a secretary at LDS headquarters, missed the fast-paced press of managing a mammoth bureaucracy, and began to feel "underused in the fulfillment of Church duties."[168]

Completing his politically charged memoir, *Cross Fire: The Eight Years with Eisenhower* (published in October 1962), Benson found his personal politics drifting increasingly to the right—or those of the country to the left. He would subsequently contemplate several runs at national partisan office, champion and in turn be embraced by the John Birch Society and similar organizations, and from pulpits both in Utah and across the country (as well as abroad) promulgate a particular brand of conservative politics that would eventually generate more divisive controversy within

the LDS Church than his agriculture policies ever did.[169] The 1960s would witness Benson's emergence as Heaven's patriot and zealous anti-Communist crusader.

While Benson served as Secretary of Agriculture, his detractors complained that arrogance and dogmatism combined to form a bureaucrat who was especially frustrating to work with. "When Mr. Benson's term came to a close," his successor asserted in 1969, "the Department of Agriculture not only was disorganized—it was demoralized."[170] More recently, a curator at the National Museum of American History castigated Benson's "drumming of free enterprise," "free association of clichés," and "disregard for small farmers," among other failings. "He personified the soulless future of American agriculture," this critic opined. "Secretary Benson [and others] . . . envisioned a rural bourgeoisie that lived in neat houses, farmed with the latest machines, and consumed clothes, furniture, and appliances the same as urban folks."[171]

However, to his supporters, Benson stood above such carping—the personification of courage and rectitude.[172] Possessing "fortress-like faith" and "superb expertise in his field," according to his biographers, Benson

> broke through the inertia of established tradition and entrenched attitudes to show the way toward agricultural reform. His very habits of not compromising and never giving up, made him valuable in the political arena where selling out is too often elevated into a fine art. . . . Being the recipient of political assaults brings joy to no one but Benson took comfort in the knowledge that in the end he would be vindicated. . . . [T]he annals of history may reward Eisenhower's Secretary of Agriculture far more than his contemporaries. This would be a fitting tribute to Ezra Taft Benson, the man who put the people's welfare above party politics.[173]

In another evaluation, these same biographers adopted a more nuanced appraisal of Benson's administrative success:

> The last four years of Eisenhower's term constituted a period of mixed concepts and muddled improvisations. Expectations for the Soil Bank did not fully materialize and by 1960 the [government] again possessed large amounts of food and fiber. Costs exceeded those of any other program (even those of the Truman years). . . . [A]gricultural policy soon degenerated into an incongruous combination of open production and continued price supports. . . . Although Benson was perceptive and courageous, he seemed overly motivated by doctrinaire principles at a time when hard-pressed farmers needed sympathetic help and encouragement. This sincere man, who truly loved the land and those who tilled it, never fully

> realized that his political rhetoric sounded too much like didactic sermons from Salt Lake City's Temple Square.[174]

Typically, during his eight years in office, Benson "fared best when his politics were tempered by the moderation of [a] politically-oriented president who took into consideration the criteria of feasibility and public acceptance."[175] While he "was able to achieve a modest reduction in the level of price support," Congress actually "won the war; it would never permit the secretary to lower the level of price support sufficiently to correct the surplus problem." During Benson's tenure, the "value of government-owned stocks of storable commodities rose from $1.3 billion in 1952 to $7.7 billion in 1959 and stood at $6.4 billion in 1965. The annual cost of storage programs, production control programs, and surplus disposal programs rose from less than $1 billion in 1952 to $4.5 billion in 1965."[176] Benson learned to celebrate the modest victories, minimize the defeats, and find what satisfaction he could at having pointed out at virtually every turn what he believed to be a better way for the country he loved.[177]

One of Benson's close associates later summarized that, because of the Secretary's blending of religion and politics, "a dichotomy was set up," one that the "political people with whom he worked sensed":

> I think they sensed that he was placing the moralistic realm and the economic realm above the realm in which they worked, the political realm. And I think they resented this downgrading of their calling. I think this resulted in some antagonism. Now, I can't document this, but I have this feeling, you see. They sometimes felt that they were being preached at, on moralistic terms, from a background that was not theirs, that this discipline was being offered to them in an area where they couldn't very well use it.
>
> Now, through all this difficulty, the Secretary held up. He never wavered. Time and again we would meet, his staff, in some crisis, and some of us would be getting anxious and concerned and apprehensive. Not the Secretary. He had the inner calm that came from his religious faith. No question about this. We all recognized it. Without that resource, he never could have survived the eight years. Maybe without that resource he wouldn't have been plunged into the tormenting problems that came to him. I don't know.[178]

In many ways, Benson's great strengths were also his great weaknesses. He had barged—recklessly, some conclude; courageously, others counter—head-first into the rarified world of Washington, D.C., politics

supremely confident of the rightness of both his critique of American farm policy and his vision of the benefits of laissez-faire capitalism. His deeply held convictions had allowed him to weather considerable criticism, including attacks on his intelligence, character, family, and faith. His religious beliefs had provided him with the answers to satisfy any doubts. He brooked no questions about whether he knew what was in the long-term best interests of his country and its people and how best to achieve those interests. He dismissed any deviations from his program as expedient compromises to placate special interest groups or, worse, as thinly veiled attempts to undermine America's greatness. He was, he believed, God's eternally vigilant watchman on the ramparts of American freedom.

Notes

1. Ezra Taft Benson, *Cross Fire: The Eight Years with Eisenhower* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1962), 562.

2. Ibid., 587, 585–86. In late 1960, as he was preparing to leave office, Benson called Reed "my counselor and advisor and helper through thick and thin." Quoted in Edward L. Schapsmeier and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture: The Eisenhower Years, 1953–1961* (Danville, Ill.: Interstate Printers & Publishers, 1975), 269.

3. "As the embodiment of family, home, and the American way," Benson's authorized biographer writes, "the Bensons were the focus of perhaps the most positive attention the Church had ever received throughout the country." Sheri L. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 292. For two informative studies of the American family during the 1950s, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988; rpt., New York: Basic Books, 1999); and Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

4. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 587. "The divine work of women involves companionship, homemaking, and motherhood," Benson later commented. "Women, when you are married, it is the husband's role to provide, not yours." (No editor identified), *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 548–49.

5. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 587. "I've had to play a father's role too," Flora told a reporter. "'What I Admire Most in My Husband,' by Mrs. Ezra Taft Benson [Flora Amussen Benson], as told to Leonard J. Snyder," *Capper's Farmer,* June 1955, 54.

6. Derin Head Rodriguez, "Flora Amussen Benson: Handmaiden of the Lord, Helpmeet of a Prophet, Mother in Zion," *Ensign,* March 1982, 20. Benson's love for Flora was especially cemented when on April 25, 1950, he was sealed in marriage to his recently deceased cousin, Eva Amanda Benson (July 6, 1882–August 10, 1946). Eva was the never-married daughter of Benson's uncle Frank Andrus Benson. Flora had first suggested acting as proxy for Eva, then did so during the vicarious ordinance performed by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith in the Salt Lake Temple. "I have never witnessed a more unselfish act on the part of any person," Benson recorded, "and I love Flora all the more because of it. The Lord will richly bless her for this act of unselfish love for Eva and me and the Kingdom. Flora is one of the choicest daughters of our Heavenly Father." Ezra Taft Benson, Diary, April 25, 1950, copy courtesy of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

7. "New LDS Chaplains[:] Reed A. Benson, Earl S. Beecher Set Apart for Duty in Service," *Church News,* May 14, 1952, 12. For Reed's setting apart as chaplain, see Benson, Diary, May 9, 1952.

8. "Mark A. Benson Receives Scholarship to Stanford," *Church News,* September 27, 1952, 5.

9. Flora had hoped to raise twelve children, but complications following Beth's birth in mid-1944 resulted in a hysterectomy in late 1946. Benson, Diary, October 24, 1946, and April 26, 1950. "I wanted twelve children, but had to settle for a choice half dozen," Flora later explained. "If we just would have had twins every time, we would have made it." Rodriguez, "Flora Amussen Benson," 20.

10. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 49.

11. Ibid., 82–83.

12. Ibid., 86.

13. Ibid., 137.

14. Ibid., 138–39.

15. Ibid., 215–16.

16. Ibid., 140. The Bensons surrendered to limousine service when it became apparent that the drivers were more familiar with Washington's maze of streets.

17. "All the family responsibilities will fall on you again," Benson warned Flora in early 1954. Ibid., 174.

18. Responding to criticisms of possibly misusing public monies, Benson insisted that Eisenhower "encouraged me to take members of the family for the good-will value." Ibid., 371. "Although space on the government plane was provided," he later explained, "meals, hotels, and other expenses were

borne by the family." Ezra Taft Benson, *God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 177.

19. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 141.

20. Ibid., 199–200. Early the next year, the Bensons invited Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower to join them at the Virginia ranch of J. Willard Marriott, a successful hotelier and Washington DC Stake president. The Bensons treated their guests to another Mormon-oriented evening of singing, poem recitations, and humorous skits. See "LDS Home Night Demonstrated to President and Mrs. Eisenhower," *Church News,* February 12, 1955, 6.

21. Rodriguez, "Flora Amussen Benson," 19.

22. According to Benson, *God, Family, Country*, 176, Flora was especially concerned about the national exposure of her daughters.

23. Gerry Avant, "Home and Church Come First for Devoted Wife and Mother," *Church News,* April 20, 1974, 5.

24. The run-through was necessary to determine the length of the family's presentation. Benson did not consider the practice a rehearsal per se. "It was to be an informal Mormon home evening," he insisted. "Questions were to be answered, as the children decided, with 'a Church answer.'" Benson, *God, Family, Country,* 176–77.

25. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 214–15. Not quite a year and a half later, Benson was furious when Murrow presented what Benson thought was a distorted portrait of the problems facing America's small family farmers. Ibid., 300. See also Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 240–41.

26. Benson, *Cross Fire*, 275. See also "Flora Benson Cited by Fashions League," *Church News,* November 12, 1955, 3–4.

27. "'What I Admire Most in My Husband,'" 47, 54.

28. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 325.

29. Ibid., 326. Reed graduated from Brigham Young University with a B.S. in 1953, an M.S. in 1975, and an Ed.D. in 1981.

30. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 326–27. "I'm a born politician, and I love it," Flora was quoted as saying the previous year. "Ezra has always encouraged me to speak. . . . For years he has urged me to get up at church affairs and say what's on my mind." Quoted in Dorothy McCardle, "Mrs. Truman Puts the Kettle On," *Washington Post and Times Herald,* August 21, 1955, F6.

31. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 327.

32. Ibid., 336.

33. "Talk by Flora Amussen Benson, May 1962," in Volume 30 (1958) of Ezra Taft Benson, Scrapbooks, microfilm, Historical Department Library, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS

Church Library). See also "Wives of Our Leaders[:] Husband, Family and Church Are Mrs. Benson's Whole Life," *Church News,* December 20, 1952, 6; "Tribute to Mrs. Ezra Taft Benson[;] Christian Science Monitor Praises Wife of Secretary," *Church News,* February 21, 1953, 13; and "Wives of General Authorities[:] Flora Amussen Benson," *Church News,* April 4, 1964, 8.

34. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 143.

35. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 181.

36. Ibid., 185–86. Benson and others believed that local rural development committees would help small, inefficient farmers to transition out of farming and into other kinds of employment, but the federal program never received sufficient funding to progress beyond pilot stages.

37. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 355.

38. Ibid., 353.

39. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 190.

40. Ibid., 191.

41. George McGovern, *Grassroots: The Autobiography of George McGovern* (New York: Random House, 1977), 76.

42. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 359.

43. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 193.

44. Ibid., 194–95.

45. Ibid., 194, 195; also 195–96.

46. "A Cabinet Member Says: 'Don't Let Unpopularity Scare You!'" *This Week Magazine,* August 17, 1958, 14.

47. Ibid., 191–92. "Just as I began my remarks," Benson remembered, "two or three objects came out of the crowd and sailed high over the platform to my right. I wondered what they were." Benson, *Cross Fire,* 361.

48. David O. McKay, Diary, June 6, 1960, photocopy, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. McKay was speaking with Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Arizona).

49. The paraphrase and quotation from note 48 to this point are from Benson, *Cross Fire,* 359–61. McKay's version reads:

> President Eisenhower stated that after the first four years Secretary Benson told the President that he could have his resignation at any time, and the President responded that he would be pleased to h[a]ve him remain, but that he was free to follow his own wishes. He paid tribute to Ezra Taft Benson saying, "There is no more honest man than Ezra." President Eisenhower said that there is one man who can take Ezra Taft

> Benson's place, if he (The President) can get him, and then said the matter of leaving the cabinet is "for Ezra to decide." After the interview, President McKay talked with Brother Benson and informed him, repeating that the responsibility for making the decision is entirely his. President McKay also informed Brother Benson, "We want you to be loyal to your position here, loyal to the government and to the President, but if he can spare you, we would like to use you, and if not, we will do something else." (McKay, Diary, September 3, 1957)

Less than two weeks later, Benson called McKay and "reported that President Eisenhower would like him to stay in the Cabinet for at least a year. I advised him to stay and assured him that the First Presidency would arrange its affairs accordingly. I also told Brother Benson that if President Eisenhower wants him to stay longer that he should give him the assurance that he will stay." Ibid., September 12, 1957.

50. The American ambassador to Italy had suggested that Benson meet with the Pope. Benson raised the possibility with McKay, who asked that he avoid such an encounter. McKay worried about the image of a Mormon apostle paying his respects to the leader of the Catholic church. "Really they [Catholics] have everything to gain and nothing to lose," he told Benson, "and we have everything to lose and nothing to gain." "I am in fully harmony with that feeling," Benson replied. McKay, Diary, October 1–2, 1957.

51. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 197. Benson thought that his visit to Israel and the opportunity to discuss Old Testament prophecies and the LDS Church's interest in the Middle East with David Ben-Gurion was the "high point" of the tour. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 368–70.

52. McKay, Diary, October 17, 1957. See also "LDS Servicemen Assemble for Three-Day Conference," *Church News,* October 26, 1957, 2; "Elder Benson Speaks to 400 Japanese on Stop-Over Visit," *Church News,* November 23, 1957, 2; McKay, Diary, November 19, 1957; and especially Benson, "We Saw the Church around the World," *Instructor,* March 1958, 68–70.

53. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 365. Later, he commented on the two major impressions his many trade missions had made upon him: "First, the Paradise that is the United States of America, a land of abundance, of laughter, of confident people, but above all a land of freedom; second, the fact that, despite surface differences, people everywhere are very much alike. They want to be free, they want peace, and they want a decent living." Ibid., 561.

54. Ibid., 375; emphasis Benson's.

55. Ibid., 372–75; emphasis Benson's.

56. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 198.

57. McKay, Diary, February 23, 1958. Benson's daughter Beth remembered that during these years "Dad put on a lot of weight, which was part of his stress relief." Dew, *Benson,* 293.

58. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 199. "Naturally I am not unaware of your strong feelings in this matter," Eisenhower told one of Benson's opponents, "yet it seems to me that upon reflection you will concede to Mr. Benson not merely the right but more importantly the obligation vigorously to set forth the programs and concepts which, in his best judgment, are essential to the well being of our farm people. It is my opinion that if he failed to do so, he would be derelict in his responsibility, and though so doing may understandingly create some difficulties, I hardly see how he could effectively carry out his responsibilities in any other manner." Ibid., 200–201; see also Benson, *Cross Fire,* 388–90.

59. Eisenhower quoted in Arthur Edson, "Stubborn Benson—Comes Back for More," *Ogden Standard-Examiner,* March 9, 1958, 3A.

60. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 203.

61. Ibid., 204–5.

62. Ibid., 205–6.

63. Ibid., 206; and Benson, *Cross Fire,* 391.

64. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 391.

65. "You know I'm in your corner on this whole matter," Eisenhower reassured Benson. Ibid., 393.

66. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 207.

67. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 396. Shortly before this dressing-down, on March 6, 1958, Eisenhower asked Benson to join a handful of men, mostly private citizens, subsequently dubbed the Eisenhower Ten, to provide for the continuation of a federal government during a national emergency. Benson's top-secret appointment was as Administrator-Designate of Emergency Food Agency. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisenhower_Ten (accessed July 24, 2008).

68. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 208.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., 208–10.

71. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 405–6.

72. Ibid., 406.

73. Ibid., 409.

74. Ibid., 410.

75. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 213.

76. Ibid., 215.

77. Ibid., 214.

78. Benson "traveled more miles (20,000), to more states (20), and made more speeches than any other member of the Cabinet in the 1958 midterm election." Richard F. Fenno Jr., *The President's Cabinet: An Analysis in the Period from Wilson to Eisenhower* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 186.

79. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 413.

80. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 216.

81. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 414.

82. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 217.

83. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 422.

84. Ibid., 528.

85. Ibid., 429.

86. Benson was especially vocal at this time in opposing federal aid to education, deficit spending, and the spread of Communism. Ibid., 422–27.

87. "Just keep on as you are," McKay counseled, "and we'll wait for the Lord to tell us what the future holds." Ibid., 408. According to his diary, McKay told Benson: "Do not seek the candidacy; let them come to you and if they do, we shall consider it." Ibid., October 12, 1958.

88. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 218.

89. Ibid., 219.

90. Ibid., 222.

91. Ibid., 223.

92. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 460.

93. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 223–25.

94. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 521–26.

95. Ibid., 462–63.

96. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 232.

97. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 487.

98. Ibid., 470. Seven years later, his anti-Communist activism by now in

full swing, Benson provided an additional account of his meeting with Khrushchev that included details absent from his published memoirs and details not found in any contemporary newspaper account of the event:

> As we talked face-to-face, he [Khrushchev] indicated that my grandchildren would live under communism. After assuring him that I expected to do all in my power to assure that his and all other grandchildren will live under freedom, he arrogantly declared in substance: "You Americans are so gullible. No, you won't accept communism outright, but we'll keep feeding you small doses of socialism until you'll finally wake up and find you already have communism. We'll so weaken your economy until you'll fall like overripe fruit into our hands." Benson, "Our Immediate Responsibility," Address delivered at Brigham Young University, October 25, 1966, in Jerreld L. Newquist, comp., *An Enemy Hath Done This* (Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1969), 320.

Benson repeated this sensationalized version of the incident—"as Mr. Khrushchev said to me face-to-to-face . . ."—nearly thirteen years later. Benson, "The Task before Us," July 4, 1979, privately circulated. Dew, *Benson,* 339, 364, includes the episode of Benson's comments to Khrushchev in her biography. Francis M. Gibbons, *Ezra Taft Benson: Statesman, Patriot, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1996), 224–25, does not.

In earlier speeches, Benson took note of the same ideas but attributed them as follows: "Khrushchev said this to an American television audience," "Khrushchev is reported to have said," and "Khrushchev tells us [i.e., Americans generally] to our face . . ." Ezra Taft Benson, *The Red Carpet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), 58, 65, and 126. In fact, a month before Benson's meeting with Khrushchev, U.S. Vice-President Richard M. Nixon had reported publicly on his own recent encounter: "Mr. Khrushchev predicted that our grandchildren in the U.S. would live under Communism, and he reiterated this to me in our talks." The next year at the Republican National Convention, Nixon added: "When Mr. Khrushchev says that our grandchildren will live under communism, let us say his grandchildren will live in freedom." Quoted in "This Is My Answer," *Time,* August 10, 1960, www.time.com (accessed June 23, 2007); and "The American Presidency Project[;] Richard Nixon[;] Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago July 28th, 1960," www.presidency.ucsb.edu (accessed June 23, 2007). Finally, the Library of Congress in 1962 could not document that Khrushchev ever actually made the statement regarding "small doses of socialism." See Morris K. Udall, "Khrushchev Could Have Said It," *New Republic,* May 7, 1962, 14–15. Benson evidently conflated the memory of his own meeting with Khrushchev with comments attributed—ac-

curately or not—by others to the Soviet leader. For the propensity for memoirists to make such embellishments, see Richard D. Poll, *History and Faith: Reflections of a Mormon Historian* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 123–27; and Richard D. Poll, "Truth, Facts, and Personal Anecdotes," *Sunstone,* September 1991, 54–55.

99. Benson, "Some Personal Recollections of the Struggle for Freedom in the 20th Century–Part 1," 5, June 2, 1978, photocopy in possession of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

100. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 470–71. See also Elinor Lee, "K.'s Son-in-Law Asks Benson Son to Proselyte," *Washington Post,* September 17, 1959, C20; and "6 Copies [of the Book of Mormon] Given to Khrushchev Family," *Church News,* September 19, 1959, 6; the books were sent to Khrushchev's son-in-law for distribution. For the later presence of the LDS Church in Russia, see "Fruits of Prayer Taking Hold in Russia," *Church News,* September 6, 2003, 9–10.

101. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 472.

102. Ibid., 483.

103. Ibid., 392.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid., 484.

106. Ibid., 487.

107. Ibid.

108. Ibid., 488. See also Ovid A. Martin, "Benson 'Wins' Soviet Worshipers," *Salt Lake Tribune,* October 4, 1959, 8A; and "A Church Service in Soviet Russia," *U.S. News & World Report,* October 26, 1959, 76.

109. When another Republican lost to a Democrat in a special election that November 1959—this time in North Dakota—the "defeat once more stirred talk of getting rid of Ezra Taft Benson lest the party ruin its chances in the fall [1960] presidential election." According to Benson's biographers: "The verbal venom flowed freely from the corridors of Congress." Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 241.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid., 235.

112. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 500.

113. Ibid., 501.

114. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 237. Benson later said that Eisenhower's endorsement of the Food for Peace program was "one of my proudest moments as Secretary of Agriculture." Ezra Taft Benson, *Title of Liberty,* compiled by Mark A. Benson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), 130.

115. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 236.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid., 239.

119. Ibid. By this time, Benson's critics included at least one high-ranking LDS Church leader. J. Reuben Clark, first counselor to David O. McKay, opined privately in late 1959 that Benson "had done and was doing more to destroy the small farmer than anyone else had done." Clark, memorandum (presumably to file), December 4, 1959, in Clark Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

120. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 240.

121. Ibid., 242.

122. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 503.

123. Ibid., 504.

124. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 243.

125. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956–1961* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 591. Speaking with Benson in early July 1960, Eisenhower was reportedly less reserved: "Don't give an *inch* in the stand you have taken. Make it clear to the people that you and I stand shoulder to shoulder in what we feel is best for agriculture and the country." Benson, *Cross Fire,* 526; emphasis Benson's.

126. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 245.

127. Ibid.

128. Ibid., 246.

129. Ibid., 250.

130. Ibid., 250–51.

131. Ibid., 251.

132. Ibid., 266. They continue: "The Vice-President (resembling Eisenhower) was willing to temporize and to implement plans more slowly [than Benson] as political events dictated."

133. Ibid.; also 252–53.

134. Ibid., 253–54.

135. Ibid., 254–55.

136. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 529.

137. Kennedy quoted in Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 255–56.

138. Ibid., 256–57. Following his first meeting with Kennedy in late 1957, David O. McKay, Diary, November 12, 1957, recorded: "I enjoyed my visit with him, although [I was] not too much impressed with him as a leader." A little more than two years later, however, McKay had warmed up to the Massachusetts senator: "We had a very pleasant interview with Senator Kennedy, talking on various domestic and international subjects. I was very much impressed with him, and think that the country will be in good hands if he is elected as he seems to be a man of high character" Ibid., January 30, 1960.

139. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 257.

140. Ibid., 258.

141. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 544.

142. Ibid., 543. McKay also instructed Benson about this same time that the Church did not want him "to enter the political campaigns this Fall." McKay, Diary, September 21, 1960.

143. See Benson, *Cross Fire,* 544–46.

144. Ibid., 511, 517.

145. Ibid., 518.

146. Ibid., 519.

147. Ibid.

148. Clare Middlemiss, memorandum to Ezra Taft Benson, June 25, 1962, in McKay, Diary, June 26, 1962.

149. McKay, Diary, March 5, 1960; emphasis McKay's.

150. When Benson met with McKay in early April to discuss "again the *matter of his running for the presidency of the United States,*" McKay answered: "I told him that there is no change in my advice as given to him on March 5, 1960 when he called; viz., that the pressure for this candidacy must come from outside groups, and not from him nor from his son Reed." McKay, Diary, April 6, 1960; emphasis his. As late as mid-July 1960, Benson still clung to the hope that Rockefeller would run, or at least allow his name to be floated as a possible candidate. "It was not that I did not think the Vice President would make a good President over-all," he later wrote, "despite my doubts concerning his position on agriculture, labor, and aid to education, among other things. I felt sure he would be immeasurably preferable to the immature and inexperienced Senator from Massachusetts [Kennedy], running on the strongly socialistic platform of the Democratic Party. But I doubted that Nixon could win and I felt quite sure that Rockefeller would be successful should he be nominated." Benson, *Cross Fire,* 531.

151. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 532.

152. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 266–67.

153. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 539.

154. Ezra Taft Benson, *Freedom to Farm* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 199–200.

155. Media responses quoted in Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 262–64.

156. Oldest daughter Barbara had married Robert Walker on September 29, 1955.

157. Flora Beth Benson Burton, Letter to "Dear Daddy," June 1973, 122–23, in Ezra Taft Benson, Oral History, Interviewed by James B. Allen. October 1974–May 1975, LDS Church Library. Flora Beth Benson was born on August 12, 1944, and married David A. Burton on June 8, 1966.

158. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 267.

159. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 551, 552.

160. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 268. In his memoirs, Benson described Kennedy's farm policies as "not only fantastic, they were a nightmare—the worst farm program, bar none, that I have ever heard advocated by any responsible figure in this country." Benson, *Cross Fire,* 552. With the appointment of Orville L. Freeman as Secretary of Agriculture, Benson "knew for sure that some of his policies were going to be altered." Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 268.

161. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 268–69.

162. The other was Arthur E. Summerfield, the U.S. Postmaster General.

163. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 270.

164. Ezra Taft Benson, "A World Message," *Improvement Era,* June 1961, 430–31. "I believe . . . [t]he people need to know more about what their leaders are like," Benson explained his reasons for publicly treating in detail some of the more personally painful aspects of his administration, "what motivates them, how decisions are made, the kind of infighting that takes place as political forces and figures struggle to pass or defeat legislative programs and in so doing mold the future of this republic." Benson, *Cross Fire,* xvii–xviii.

165. Benson, *Cross Fire,* 508.

166. See Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 271; and Benson, *Cross Fire,* 587–89.

167. "Ezra's physical resistance fell to an all-time low," his authorized biographer notes. "He was exhausted and had little appetite. One morning in the [Salt Lake] temple he felt so weak that he rested for two hours before returning to his office. Later that day his physician admitted him to the hospital. He couldn't remember feeling so completely tired. . . . The doctor diagnosed physical exhaustion and prescribed two weeks of rest." Dew, *Benson*, 361–62.

168. Ibid., 236–37. When Benson informed David O. McKay in mid–1961 that he had "received an invitation from the senators and congressmen to go back to Washington as an adviser," McKay replied: "I feel that if this matter comes up again that Brother Benson should remain here; that we need him at home." McKay, Diary, June 29, 1961.

169. Edward L. Schapsmeier and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, "Religion and Reform: A Case Study of Henry A. Wallace and Ezra Taft Benson," *Journal of Church and State* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 534–35.

170. In Edward L. Schapsmeier and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, "Eisenhower and Ezra Taft Benson: Farm Policy in the 1950s," *Agricultural History* 44 (October 1970): 377 note 38.

171. Pete Daniel, "The USDA Legacy: From the New Deal to Silent Spring," 2003, www.historicaltextarchive.com (accessed June 27, 2007).

172. A few years later, during Kennedy's administration, Benson met with several of his former employees. "This was when the executive branch . . . [was] pursuing a policy diametrically opposed to that which the Secretary had pursued," one of Benson's co-workers recalled. "What did he say? Bitterness about the turn of events? Antagonism for his successors? No. Apology for what he'd done? No. Just the same old reiteration of what he stood for, his feeling that this was sound and best and should be done and would ultimately triumph, and reiteration of what a great privilege it was to serve one's country, and all the old—what shall we say, dogma? platitudes? about the historical principles of government. . . . This is from the heart. This is the man." Don Paarlberg, Oral History, Interviewed by Ed Edwin, January 17, 1968, 109–10, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

173. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, *Ezra Taft Benson and the Politics of Agriculture*, 274, 275, 276.

174. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, "Eisenhower and Ezra Taft Benson," 378.

175. Schapsmeier and Schapsmeier, "Religion and Reform," 534.

176. Willard W. Cochrane, *The Development of American Agriculture: A Historical Analysis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 146, 140. After Benson, U.S. farm policy looked initially to control overproduc-

tion more effectively. In 1973, direct payments for withholding land from cultivation were phased out. Three years later, a limited, strictly voluntary program took some crops—mostly grains—out of the market for as many as three years, or until prevailing market prices attained certain predetermined levels. In 1996, the U.S. Congress passed the Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act, replacing existing price supports with transitional subsidies intended eventually to allow the free market—not federal policy—to determine production. By the end of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, in response to low prices and natural disasters, emergency subsidies had begun to increase, and farm debt to decrease. "Agriculture," http://encarta.msn.com (accessed July 27, 2007).

177. "Four-fifths of our agriculture today is free of controls," Benson pointed out a year before leaving office, "and is in fairly good balance and doing fairly well. It is the one-fifth where we have attempts by government to fix prices, to control production, that we are in difficulty. And it is in that area where we have the buildup of surpluses, because we brought our production into government warehouses instead of permitting that production to move into consumption as it should do." *Meet the Press* 4, no. 3 (January 17, 1960): 4.

178. Paarlberg, Oral History, 116–17.

Modernism and Mormonism: James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* and Early Twentieth-Century Mormon Responses to Biblical Criticism

Clyde D. Ford

During a Sunday School class I was teaching, a question came up about the lineage of Mary, mother of Jesus. A knowledgeable and respected class member answered that Mary was a descendent of David. I observed that Mary's genealogy is not given in the scriptures; and, therefore, it would not be unreasonable to hold another opinion or to keep an open mind on the question. The class member responded that his answer should be accepted on authority because "Elder McConkie[1] had so stated." I saw no benefit to continuing the discussion. Later, he delivered the following note documenting his evidence:

> Your discrediting of my comment . . . about Mary . . . was incorrect. "A personal genealogy of Joseph was essentially that of Mary also, *for they were cousins*." Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, p. 94.
>
> P.S. See Bible Dictionary p. 717—"Joseph . . . espoused *Mary, the daughter of his uncle Jacob*." [Emphases mine].[2]

The assertions that Joseph and Mary were cousins and that Mary was the daughter of Jacob, which are reproduced in these frequently used Mormon sources, are not found in the scriptures. In fact, the former may be questioned as Mary was the "cousin (or relative)" of Elizabeth (Luke 1:36) who was said to have descended from a different tribe than David (Luke 1:5); and the latter is unscriptural, since, according to Matthew

1:16, Jacob was the father of Joseph. Then how did such teachings find their way into commonly accepted Mormon beliefs? The answer is a highly influential work on Mormon doctrine, James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* (1915).[3]

In 1904–06 Talmage delivered a popular series of forty-two Sunday lectures on the life and mission of Jesus. During this time, the First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund) requested Talmage to publish these lectures. Progress on the task was slow until September 1914 when Talmage received a second request from the First Presidency urging him to finish as soon as possible. From this time, Talmage spent every spare moment in writing, secluding himself in the Salt Lake Temple to avoid interruptions. The urgency of the second request and Talmage's response suggest that a new crisis had appeared. Historian Thomas G. Alexander has hypothesized that "discussions of the nature of the Godhead and of the relationship between God and Jesus Christ" may have been the impetus.[4] Alternatively, James Harris, Talmage's biographer, has suggested that the book was intended as a response "to . . . the methodologies and conclusions of an emerging higher biblical criticism."[5] As both were among the challenging issues of the time, it is likely that *Jesus the Christ* was written with several objectives in mind.

This study will examine *Jesus the Christ* as a response to early twentieth-century biblical criticism. I first review some history of criticism, discuss its impact upon early twentieth-century Mormons, summarize Talmage's approaches to some of the major problems, and examine what appears to be the relative demise of Talmage's works among Mormons during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Modernism and Biblical Criticism

Modernism[6] was a movement during the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century that included liberal American Protestants and Catholics who sought to adjust traditional Christianity to conform to modern culture. Harvard historian William R. Hutchison (1930–2005), has demonstrated that modernists emerged in virtually all American religions.[7] Their "modernisms," some or all of which might have been the focus for a given individual, included the theological liberalism of Albrecht Ritschl (1822–89) and his school, biblical criticism, the philosophy and theories of modern science, and others. The University of Chicago modernist Shailer Mathews (1863–1941), defined modernism as "the use of

the methods of modern science to find, state and use the permanent and central values of inherited [Christian] orthodoxy in meeting the needs of a modern world."[8] Among the modernist arguments, few were more contentious than the rejection of the historical value of the Bible. As historian of American Christianity Bradley J. Longfield summarized their position: "The Bible was not a repository of inerrant history . . . [and should] be interpreted and reproduced in light of the progress of culture. . . . If modern Christians had difficulty with the resurrection, the virgin birth or the miracles of Jesus, they need only realize that these . . . [were] outmoded expressions."[9]

By the early twentieth century, New Testament criticism had been divided into "lower (or textual) criticism" and "higher criticism." Oxford's William Sanday (1843–1920) defined the aim of lower criticism as reconstructing "as nearly as may be . . . [the original] words and text."[10] Andrew C. Zenos (1855–1942) of Chicago's McCormick Theological Seminary pointed out that higher criticism was principally concerned with (1) origins, including author, date, and place of composition, (2) literary form, and (3) value, including but not limited to historical value.[11] The methodology of higher criticism was modern: "The direct application of scientific methods to the study of our Sacred Books, without regard to [religious] authority of any kind." This approach was justified because "God's Word was grievously obscured . . . [by] the dogmas of the Church."[12]

In his early twentieth-century historical survey, Cambridge's Henry S. Nash (1854–1912) noted that the higher criticism of the New Testament had originated in Germany and that it attacked the notion "that the simple, historical sense of Scripture should be sovereign."[13] Although important work had been done earlier, Nash traced a major beginning to the mid-1830s with the research of Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860) and his pupil David Fredrich Strauss (1808–74). Baur's work "forced all subsequent investigators . . . to explain them [New Testament books] from the [environmental] influences which were at work."[14] In 1835 Strauss published his *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. According to Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), Strauss was the first to systematically apply the idea that the New Testament Gospels reproduce legends about Jesus.[15] Among many controversial conclusions, Strauss suggested that readers should be "distrustful of the numerous histories of [New Testament] miracles."[16] Nash characterized Baur's and Strauss's work as "a violent precipitation . . . a new programme of interpretation."[17]

Among nineteenth-century British scholars, the new German methods and results met first with a reaction. Led by the "Cambridge triumvirate" of Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901), Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–92), and Joseph Barber Lightfoot (1828–89), they engaged in a conservative form of criticism sometimes termed "believing criticism."[18] This approach was characterized by its intent "to refute the form of skepticism represented . . . by Strauss in Germany," "ample learning," and "a firm [belief] . . . in the authority and inspiration of the Sacred Word."[19] A similar approach was reflected in the work of William Smith (1813–93) in his massive *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible* (1860–63). Talmage used its single-volume abridgment, *Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible* (1867).

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, British scholars also made significant contributions to New Testament textual criticism. Along with others, Westcott and Hort demonstrated that the myriad of ancient manuscripts could be classified into a limited number of text types and that the textual tradition underlying the Authorized (King James) Version, the "Received Text," is a fourth-century conflated work meant to harmonize and standardize the earlier texts. According to Westcott and Hort, the Received Text "rests on a few and late . . . MSS [manuscripts], which have very little or no authority."[20] This work led to their updated *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881). Such advances suggested the need for new English Bible versions that reflected the continuing advances in textual criticism and linguistics. Prominent among these was the Revised Version (1881), which, unlike many other new translations, was a revision of the Authorized Version that "introduce[d] as few alterations as possible."[21] Upgraded Greek texts and new English versions have continued to appear.[22]

Another reaction in Great Britain and America to the German critics was the publication of a large number of conservative biographies or "Lives" of Jesus. By far the most successful was Frederick Farrar's *The Life of Christ* (1874), followed by Cunningham Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ* (1877), and Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883). Two similar American works are Charles F. Deems's *The Light of the Nations* (1884) and Samuel J. Andrews's *The Life of Our Lord upon the Earth* (rev. ed., 1891). Talmage used all five. These works were intended not to debate the German higher criticism but to serve as popular alternatives. Farrar noted that his work "has not been written with any *direct* and *special* reference to the attacks of skeptical criticism."[23] Andrews added

that his did "not design to enter into any questions respecting the authorship of the gospels [or] the time when written . . . but assumes that they are genuine historical documents."[24] Although their authors were generally respected, the "Lives" made few if any significant original contributions to biblical research.[25]

But a dramatic change occurred during the first decade of the twentieth century. Cambridge New Testament critic Henry Latimer Jackson (1851–1926) expressed admiration for "the laborious industry and exactness of the German scholar," and Oxford professor F. C. Conybeare (1856–1924) lamented that, in contrast to the German nineteenth-century critics, "Our own divines, amid the contentment and leisure of rich livings and deaneries, and with the libraries and endowments of Oxford and Cambridge at their disposal, have done nothing except produce a handful of apologetic, insincere, and worthless volumes."[26] As historian Daniel L. Pals has noted: "Within the space of a decade [1900–10] the [British and American] scholar who had regarded the gospels chiefly as history . . . was to find his confidence [in the Gospels] assailed repeatedly by a new generation of far more skeptical New Testament critics."[27] The effect was to diminish the Gospels as credible sources for the life of the historical Jesus. As Henry Latimer Jackson concluded in 1909, "It is not likely that there will ever be another 'life of Christ.' . . . Biography is impossible."[28]

Not surprisingly such critics met with resistance from conservative clergy and laymen. The previous half century of "believing criticism" in Britain had the effect of blunting the controversy there; but, as historian Claude Welch (1922–) has pointed out: "In America polarization was acute, leading to a series of heresy trials and ultimately to the formalization of a fundamentalist movement in which the inerrancy of scripture was a principal bastion to be held against liberal onslaughts."[29]

Thus, by Talmage's time, a sharp dispute over the higher criticism was in full process.[30] Chicago biblical scholar Andrew Zenos described the radically differing views.[31] On one end of the spectrum were what Oxford's F. C. Burkitt (1864–1926) termed the "modern philosophical liberals" or modernists. These, Zenos noted, held to "the impossibility of the supernatural," denied any "validity of tradition," and rejected the authority of organized religion in scriptural interpretation. At the other end of the spectrum were the "traditionalists" who vigorously defended "the truth of the views held in the past." Some divided the traditionalists be-

tween the "orthodox" and "critical" varieties.[32] The former were ultra-conservative and either rejected critical analysis altogether or accepted only those findings that supported traditionalist views. The latter began with traditional presuppositions but were more knowledgeable and accepting of convincing critical conclusions. Between the two extremes was a spectrum of moderates. Approaches without presuppositions Zenos termed "the comprehensive standpoint," i.e., "[examining] all evidence . . . with a view to solving the questions arising in each case."[33] Talmage and some other Mormon leaders can also be located within this schema.

The Modernist Crisis and Mormonism

By the turn of the twentieth century, Mormons were increasingly encountering the challenges of science and biblical criticism. This process was accelerated by the desires for higher education and modern thinking among many of the Mormon youth.

The most visible modernist confrontation occurred in 1911 at Brigham Young University when three professors trained at eastern universities resigned under pressure. The professors were attacked for their beliefs in "the orderliness of Nature" rather than the "exceptional and miraculous"[34] and for regarding the findings of higher criticism as "conclusive and demonstrated . . . [so that] when these ideas . . . were in conflict with the scripture . . . it required the modification of the latter to come into harmony with the former."[35] Such views made conflict with Church leaders inevitable for, as historian Kathryn Lofton has observed, "one of the great risks of Christian modernism was that it necessarily undermined the institutional orthodoxy upon which religious institutions rely."[36]

Nevertheless, Church leaders were clearly more moderate than the ultra-conservative Presbyterians of the time or later fundamentalists who upheld, among other doctrines, the inerrancy of scripture.[37] President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) emphasized that the Church's decision to terminate the professors was not based on the Church's rejection of biblical criticism. On the contrary, Smith acknowledged that there might be "many truths" in "the 'higher criticism.'"[38] During subsequent decades, Church leaders resisted attempts by both Mormon modernists and orthodox traditionalists, including Joseph F. Smith's son, ultra-conservative apostle Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), to advance their agendas.[39]

The undermining of New Testament historicity clearly weighed heavily on Church leaders at the time of their second request for publica-

tion of Talmage's lectures. In the April 1914 general conference, Talmage himself had addressed the issue: "There be men who have arrogated to themselves the claim of superiority, who pronounce themselves higher critics of the scriptures . . . [who] profess doubt as to the truth and plain meaning of the Holy Scriptures." They were having "pernicious" effects on young Latter-day Saints who "are impressed by those who instruct them." Likewise, Church President Joseph F. Smith lamented that there are "among us . . . school teachers [who] will tell you that the scriptural testimony . . . [is] . . . simply myths."[40]

It appears that Church leaders decided to address the issue by the publication of a Church-sanctioned book. Talmage was a natural choice for its author. In addition to his appeal to the young; his academic credentials which included formal training in the physical sciences, especially geology (Ph.D., Wesleyan University, 1896), administrative experience as former University of Utah president (1894–97), and election to multiple professional societies; his respect for the authority of Church leadership; his mastery of Church doctrine; and his relative familiarity with biblical critical issues, Talmage was a scholarly authority on the Gospels, having done "extensive research and preparatory work . . . in connection with the earlier lecture series."[41]

The Critical Problems and Talmage's Response

Problem 1. Textual criticism: Have the Gospels been transmitted to us accurately?

One of the first questions that Talmage needed to address was whether the Authorized (King James) Version should be used in his composition. If Talmage accepted the near-consensus of critics that the Greek Text underlying the Authorized Version needed updating,[42] then should he refer to the Revised Version or others?

The Authorized Version had been the standard for nineteenth-century Mormons and represented a common ground with many Protestants. A number of similar passages were found in the Book of Mormon, and the Authorized Version had been used in the speeches and writings of all previous Church leaders. Thus, for Talmage to stray very far from the Authorized Version would cause a major disconnect with his Mormon audience.

On the other hand, Talmage had strong reasons other than the text-critical consensus to doubt the veracity of the Authorized Version.

One of the remarkable aspects of Mormonism in the early nineteenth-century had been its break with traditional Christianity[43] over the accurate transmission of the biblical text. In a reference that surely included the New Testament Gospels, the Book of Mormon describes writings that originated from the "Jews" and were passed by the "apostles" to the "Gentiles" who had then "taken away . . . many parts which are plain and most precious" (1 Ne. 13:24–29). This negative opinion of the Greek text underlying the Authorized Version was reinforced when Joseph Smith received a commandment to make a new "translation" or revision in March 1831.

Talmage expressed his view that there is a need for textual criticism and new Bible translations in *The Articles of Faith*: "Nevertheless, the Church announces a reservation in the case of erroneous translation." Significantly, he amended this sentence in the twelfth edition, published in 1924, to read: "Nevertheless, the Church announces a reservation in the case *both* of translation *and of transcription*." Nevertheless, the Authorized and other English versions, which were produced by "the most scholarly men," seemed to Talmage to contain a "paucity of [doctrinally significant] errors,"[44] an assessment confirmed by at least some of the critics.[45]

Talmage reinforced this position in *Jesus the Christ*. Although adhering largely to the Authorized Version, Talmage readily acknowledged that a number of the translated passages were suboptimal, referring the reader to the marginal alternatives in the Oxford and Bagster editions of the Authorized Version or to the Revised Version, which Talmage felt sometimes gave a "better rendering" or corrected "an erroneous rendering" (701–2).

Talmage was also familiar with the defects in the Greek text underlying the Authorized Version. Sometimes he accepted the critical results, for instance, the "spurious addition" to Luke 24:42 (688) and the "lack of agreement" in the early manuscripts regarding John 18:22 (622).

It may seem remarkable that Talmage failed to acknowledge either the Book of Mormon warnings regarding the text of the Authorized Version or Joseph Smith's new "translation." Perhaps the early twentieth-century attacks on the Gospels as history gave Talmage pause. And Talmage had additional reasons for not including the Joseph Smith Translation. The unavailable original manuscript and copyright were in possession of the Reorganized Church. Although published as the *Inspired Version* in 1867, Mormons conventionally regarded it with suspicions of text tamper-

ing until its accuracy was verified by the painstaking work of BYU biblical scholar Robert J. Matthews in the 1960s and 1970s.[46]

Problem 2. Higher (historical) criticism: Did the original Gospels present an accurate account of Jesus's life?

From the outset, Talmage informed his readers that Latter-day Saint higher criticism differs in two important respects. First, as noted on his title page, *Jesus the Christ* was to be "a study of the Messiah and His mission according to Holy Scriptures both ancient and modern." Thus, Latter-day Saint scripture and revelation were to occupy a dominant position among the credible evidences. Second, Talmage rejected the basic axiom of the other critics, i.e., that modern research is capable of improving on Christian tradition. The critical position was defended by Cambridge's Henry Latimer Jackson: "The modern scholar is better equipped [than the ancients] for the work of investigation, and his methods are far more exact and rigorous."[47] Talmage expressed the contrary view in *The Articles of Faith*: "The present is too late a time and the separating distance too vast to encourage the reopening of the question[s] . . . ; [The Bible] . . . must be admitted as authentic and credible."[48]

Talmage then considered the critical results in the context of his two principal authorities: LDS scripture and revelation and the nineteenth-century British "believing critics" and writers of the "Lives." To illustrate Talmage's use of each, I examine Talmage's approach to the synoptic problem (meaning the problem of accounting for the similarities and differences among the first three Gospels) and the problem of the conflicting genealogies of Joseph in Matthew and Luke, respectively.

The Synoptic Problem

By the early twentieth century, the synoptic problem was considered "the fundamental problem of New Testament criticism, and consequently of Christian origins."[49] Two hypotheses were close to scholarly consensus: (1) the chronological priority of the Gospel of Mark and its use as a source in Matthew and Luke, and (2) the existence of a hypothetical source, Q, to explain non-Markan sayings common to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Thus, in 1909 a Cambridge critic wrote: "The relative priority of Mark is to-day accepted almost as an axiom. . . . For not a few, the [two source] hypothesis [Mark and Q as sources of Matthew and Luke] . . . is an established result of criticism."[50]

Talmage acknowledged the synoptic problem in *Jesus the Christ*, not-

ing: "In style of writing and method of treatment, the authors of the first three Gospels . . . differ more markedly from the author of the fourth Gospel than among themselves" (166). Talmage also frequently pointed out the differences among the synoptic writers, attempting harmonizations whenever possible.

But acceptance of the two-source hypothesis led to disturbing results regarding the historical value of the Gospels. If the First Gospel was based on earlier written sources, it could not have been composed by the Apostle Matthew from his first-hand recollections. Further, one could analyze the changes to their sources by the authors of Matthew and Luke and demonstrate alterations that seemed more dependent on personal author bias and individual literary and theological tendencies than on the desire to preserve historical accuracy.

Not surprisingly, Talmage rejected the two-source hypothesis. Rather than emphasizing the differences among the synoptic Gospels as evidence of individual editorial activity, Talmage argued that such differences suggested independent authorship. As an example, in describing the words of God the Father at Jesus's baptism, Talmage pointed out: "Matthew records the Father's acknowledgment as given in the third person . . . while both Mark and Luke give the more direct address. . . . The variation . . . affords evidence of independent authorship and discredits any insinuation of collusion among the writers" (127).

Talmage did not mention Q but did respond to some of the results of Q research. Two instructive examples that show the influence of LDS scripture are Talmage's handling of the problems of the differences between the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) and the corresponding Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20–49), and the collection of parables in Matthew 13. Reconstructions of Q, especially by Germany's Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), had shown a good correlation in sequence for some sayings in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount and Luke's Sermon on the Plain, suggesting to Harnack that it therefore reproduced the original Q sequence. But for other Sermon on the Mount sayings, Harnack concluded, "It is simply impossible to trace any sign of correspondence in the order of the parallel passages."[51] This conclusion was in large part because some sayings in the longer Sermon on the Mount were found in other locations in the third Gospel than Luke's Sermon on the Plain. To further complicate the matter, the Sermon on the Mount combined sayings with presumed origins from Q with others from Mark and with still others

from sources unique to Matthew's Gospel. Oxford's Burnett Hillman Streeter (1874–1937) and others also observed that the author of Matthew's Gospel made substantially more changes to Mark's order than did the author of Luke's, suggesting that Matthew's document had been the one that had altered the original sequence of the Q sayings.[52] There seemed only one reasonable conclusion, as Cambridge's Henry Latimer Jackson had noted in 1909: "[Jesus's] sayings recorded by him [Matthew] were not spoken by Jesus on any one solitary occasion."[53] Such analyses also suggested that the author of Matthew had combined sayings from diverse sources as five or six extended speeches of Jesus, two of which were the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of Matthew 13.

Talmage rejected the scholarly consensus that the Sermon on the Mount was an invention of Matthew. There can be little question that a strong reason was that this discourse is reproduced in the Book of Mormon as Jesus's sermon at the temple in Bountiful (3 Ne. 12–14). Talmage harmonized the accounts of Matthew's longer Sermon on the Mount and Luke's shorter Sermon on the Plain by postulating two sermons, chiding the critics, and establishing Matthew as an eye-witness in the process:

> Critics who rejoice in trifles . . . have tried to make much of these seeming variations [between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain]. Is it not probable that Jesus spoke at length on the mountain-side to the disciples [Sermon on the Mount] . . . and that after finishing His discourse to them He descended with them to the plain where a multitude had assembled, and that to these He repeated parts [as the Sermon on the Plain] of what He had before spoken? The relative fullness of Matthew's report may be due to the fact that he, as one of the Twelve, was present at the first and more extended delivery. (247)

But Talmage took a different approach to the collection of parables in Matthew 13 as the critical conclusions in that instance did not challenge Mormon scripture: "Many Bible scholars hold that the seven parables recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew were spoken at different times and to different people, and that the writer of the first Gospel grouped them for convenience. . . . Some color is found for this claim in Luke's mention of some of these parables in different relations of both time and place. . . . We must admit that Matthew may have grouped with the parables spoken on that particular day some of other dates" (300).

In other instances, Talmage, seeking non-Mormon scholarly authority, turned not to the critics of his time, but to such individuals as William Smith and the authors of the nineteenth-century "Lives" who, as

Farrar emphasized, were "writing as a believer to believers, as a Christian to Christians."[54] Mormon historian Malcolm Thorp has recently pointed out a number of similarities between *Jesus the Christ* and Farrar's *Life of Christ*.[55] It might also be observed that Talmage was already familiar with the works of Farrar when he penned *The Articles of Faith* in the 1890s[56] and apparently used Farrar's *Life of Christ* in preparing his lectures of 2004–06 as he did for *Jesus the Christ*.[57] Talmage's extensive array of sources in *Jesus the Christ* reflects Farrar's mastery of the classics, ancient historians, and Jewish antiquities, subjects with which Talmage also had familiarity.[58] Like Farrar, Talmage felt that many of the higher critics were "unbelieving" and were trying to "discredit the [historical] account[s]" of the Gospels (323–24).[59] Also like Farrar,[60] Talmage distrusted attempts to embellish the Gospel accounts: "It is the part of prudence . . . [to] keep distinctly separate the authenticated statements of fact [the Gospels] . . . from the fanciful commentaries of historians, theologians, and writers of fiction" (87). And Talmage's writing, although more that of the reasoning scientist, not infrequently reaches for the romantic and poetic style of Farrar. An example is the description of Jesus stilling the storm at sea (Matt. 8:23–27). After describing "the howling of the winds," Farrar wrote: "He gazed forth into the darkness, and His voice was heard amid the roaring of the troubled elements."[61] Talmage's parallel passage reads: "Out through the darkness of that fearsome night, into the roaring wind, over the storm-lashed sea, went the voice of the Lord" (307).

The Problem of Joseph's Genealogies

Talmage's use of nineteenth-century British scholarship is illustrated in his handling of the difficult problem of the differing genealogies of Joseph, father of Jesus, in Matthew 1:1–16 and Luke 3:23–38. The solution that Talmage accepted ultimately gave rise to the "evidence" of my Sunday School class member.

By the mid to late nineteenth-century, several ingenious and speculative harmonizing solutions to the genealogy problem had been proposed. The *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* (1873) and *Smith's Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible* (1880) list the two most commonly accepted: (1) Matthew preserves Joseph's genealogy and Luke Mary's[62] and (2) both genealogies are Joseph's but Matthew traces the legal or royal line and Luke the actual pedigree.[63] A non-harmonizing solution, which had originated

with the Germans, was "that the genealogies . . . [were independently fabricated and are not] historical, but purely mythical."[64]

But acceptance of either of the two harmonizing solutions left problems. One was that Matthew and Luke listed different fathers: Jacob for Matthew and Heli (Eli) for Luke. Consequently, Joseph could not have been the biological son of both. For those accepting that Luke preserves Mary's genealogy, one way this problem was solved was: "In constructing their genealogical tables . . . the Jews reckoned wholly by males . . . [including when necessary a] daughter's husband. . . . Joseph, begotten by Jacob, marries Mary, the daughter of Heli, and in the genealogical register of his wife's family is counted for Heli's son."[65] For those accepting the royal/biological pedigree solution, it remained to be demonstrated how Joseph could be the son of Jacob and thus in the royal line. An influential solution was proposed by England's Lord Arthur C. Hervey (1808–94). Hervey hypothesized that the grandfather of Joseph in Matthew (Matthan) and in Luke (Matthat) was the same person and thus Jacob and Heli were brothers. Hervey then reasoned: "Jacob [the royal line] I *suppose* to have had no son, but to have been the father of the Virgin Mary: [and] Heli, the father of Joseph. Joseph . . . took Mary his [first] cousin to wife, and was thus on every account Jacob's successor and heir."[66] Dissatisfied with Hervey's hypothesis, John Roberts Dummelow speculated that Matthat and Matthan were different individuals and that "Jacob, the true heir to the throne, being . . . childless, adopted the next male heir Heli [who would have been succeeded by his son Joseph], who belonged to the other branch of the family."[67]

By the early twentieth century, there was relative agreement among conservative scholars that the royal/biological pedigree solution was the best, but there was less enthusiasm for Hervey's hypothesis that Jacob and Heli were brothers. Fausset's *Bible Cyclopaedia* (1909), which Talmage used, reproduced Hervey's Jacob/Heli hypothesis as "probably" correct.[68] However, James Hastings's larger and more prestigious *Dictionary of the Bible* (1899) did not.[69] And, as shown above, Dummelow's *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1909), which Talmage also used, proposed an alternative. In addition, the more liberal *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1903) insisted that both genealogies had been fabricated.[70]

Talmage endorsed the royal/biological pedigree solution and largely accepted Hervey's speculative Jacob/Heli hypothesis. Talmage correctly noted that "the [conservative] consensus of judgment . . . is that

Matthew's account is that of the royal lineage . . . while the account given in Luke is a personal pedigree." But he then added: "A personal genealogy of Joseph was essentially that of Mary also, for they were cousins. . . . Jacob and Heli were brothers, and it appears that one of the two was the father of Joseph and the other the father of Mary" (86). It is important to note that, unlike Hervey, Talmage did not commit on the question of whether Jacob or Heli was Joseph's biological father, an important point which I discuss below.[71] It may seem surprising that Talmage reproduced Hervey's controversial speculation, especially since Talmage simply states it as a fact without his usually associated careful reasoning and evidence. Why did he do this? A close reading shows that Talmage ingeniously used Hervey's Jacob/Heli hypothesis not only to harmonize the genealogies but as lead evidence for another of his favored conclusions, which was defended in Talmage's nineteenth-century sources but which was under attack in his own day: that Mary was a descendent of David (81–82).

Problem 3. Scientific criticism: Are the New Testament accounts acceptable in the modern scientific world?

The narratives of the biblical miracles presented challenges. A basic problem was the apparent conflict with the readily observable and predictable orderliness of nature. In contrast to traditional Christianity, which had attributed the orderliness to the influence of Deity, many moderns had hypothesized the existence of underlying independent, impartial, and unalterable natural laws. Some moderns suggested that the biblical miracle stories had originated in a more primitive, prescientific culture in which the phenomena had been misinterpreted. As physicist and philosopher John Tyndall (1820–93) had put it: "Before these [scientific] methods were adopted the unbridled imagination roamed through nature, putting in the place of [natural] law . . . magic, and miracles, and special providences."[72] In philosophical systems such as Tyndall's, God, if included at all, would be reduced to subservience to natural laws. Farrar was particularly hostile to this view. In responding to the suggestion that the miracle stories are "legends," Farrar argued: "But if we believe that God rules . . . that God has not delegated His sovereignty or His providence to the final, unintelligent, pitiless, inevitable working of material forces . . . then we shall neither clutch at rationalistic interpretations, nor be much troubled if others adopt them."[73] But by the early twentieth century, many biblical critics seemed to echo Tyndall. For example, Oxford's William Sanday questioned whether the Gospel writer's presupposed belief

in Jesus's divinity may have "affected somewhat his story of miracles, to the extent of heightening some of their details" and further suggested: "We may be sure that if the miracles of the first century had been wrought before trained spectators of the nineteenth, the version of them would be quite different."[74]

By the mid-nineteenth century, an important compromise had been advocated that seemed to preserve both natural law and God's sovereignty. Anglican Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–86), in his popular and oft-reprinted *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord* (1846) (used by Talmage), rejected the older Christian idea that God rules not "by universal [natural] laws, which . . . exist only in our conception, but . . . by his peculiar, individual, and sole will." Rather, Trench proposed, "We should see in the miracle not the infraction of a law, but the neutralizing of a lower law, the suspension of it for a time by a higher."[75] This formulation appealed to many in the early twentieth century, both outside and within the Church. For example, Sanday insisted that: "Miracle is not really a breach of the order of nature; it is only an apparent breach of laws that we know, in obedience to other and higher laws that we do not know."[76] And Mormon scientist John A. Widtsoe had already suggested in a Church-approved publication that "laws may exist as yet unknown to the world of science, which, used by a human or superhuman being, might to all appearances change well-established relations of known forces. That would be a miracle."[77]

Likewise, Talmage explained to his readers, "Miracles cannot be in contravention of natural law, but are wrought through the operation of laws not universally or commonly recognized [by modern science]" (148). In regard to Jesus's healings and modern medicine, Talmage observed: "In no case can such treatment be regarded as medicinal or therapeutic. Christ was not a physician who relied upon curative substances, nor a surgeon to perform physical operations" (320–21). Likewise for modern physics: "A resurrected body, though of tangible substance . . . is not bound to earth by gravitation, nor can it be hindered in its movements by material barriers. To us . . . incomprehensible. [But] resurrected beings move in accordance with laws making such passage possible and to them natural" (698). But Talmage also emphasized that natural law should never be seen as superior to God or as limiting God's power. Thus, in his description of Jesus calming the storm, Talmage insisted that "the dominion of the Creator over the created is real and absolute. . . . What we call

natural forces . . . are but a few of the manifestations of eternal energy through which the Creator's purposes are subserved" (309).

Where Has Talmage Gone?

Historians and Church leaders have rightly considered Talmage as among Mormonism's most important and original thinkers,[78] and Talmage's works remain fully approved and recommended, encouraged, for instance, along with the standard works for missionaries. Thus, it may seem surprising that Bruce R. McConkie, the leading ultra-conservative Mormon leader of the latter twentieth century, apparently intended his *Messiah* series (1978–80) as a conservative replacement for the more moderate *Jesus the Christ*. McConkie was respectful of Talmage but sometimes expressed dissatisfaction with *Jesus the Christ*, as he did, for example, when that volume presents "the usual sectarian explanation," "skirts the issue," or conflicts with the chronology of *Our Lord of the Gospels* (1954) by J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1871–1961), a counselor in the First Presidency for almost twenty-five years. McConkie preferred Clark's chronology to that of the non-Mormon Farrar, on which Talmage had relied.[79] McConkie, who unlike Talmage, had not been requested to write his work by Church leaders, remarkably claimed his mandate for the *Messiah* series from the deceased Talmage himself: "But I think I hear his [Talmage's] voice . . . saying, 'Now is the time to build on the foundations I laid some seventy years ago, using the added knowledge that has since come by research and revelation.'"[80]

McConkie's ultra-conservative position toward Bible criticism and non-Mormon scholarship clearly distinguishes him from Talmage. McConkie adopted his much more limited bibliography of non-Mormon sources largely from Talmage, quoting from Edersheim, Farrar, and Geikie, but reminding his readers that they were "without the light of latter-day revelation."[81] Regarding textual criticism, McConkie strongly defended the Authorized Version, rejecting the Revised Version (1881–85) and its updated Revised Standard Version (1952) as "published, among Protestant peoples" and "translated by individuals and groups some of whom have questioned the divinity of Christ."[82] McConkie's principal textual innovation was his frequent use of the *Inspired Version* (Joseph Smith Translation) of the Bible, which by the 1970s had found increased acceptance.[83] McConkie emphasized the superiority of his work over Talmage's in this regard. For example, in discussing the difference in the number of demoniacs between the accounts of Matthew and Mark/Luke,

McConkie pointed out, "If Elder Talmage had had access to this more perfect biblical account [*Inspired Version*], his expressions relative to this and a number of other matters would have been different."[84]

Also in contrast to Talmage, McConkie argued for a form of biblical inerrency. An example is seen in McConkie's handling of the differences in the Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain, which, unlike Talmage, he saw as the same sermon: "Without question, when Matthew records a thought in one set of words and Luke does so in different language, both are preserving the verbatim utterances of the Lord." McConkie suggested that the original sermon underlying both must have been longer and that Matthew and Luke each abstracted different portions of it in their accounts. Predictably, McConkie had no use for any of the findings of the higher critics whom he described as "without faith, without revelation" and who teach "doctrines of the devil." Likewise, unlike the positive view of science held by the scientifically trained Talmage and Widtsoe—that God works through higher natural laws which, at least in theory, might some day be discovered by scientific research—McConkie emphasized the inferiority of science. Miracles are "wrought by the power of God" and "cannot be duplicated by man's present powers or by any powers which he can obtain by scientific advancements."[85]

An important and interesting development of the last quarter of the twentieth century has been the general acceptance of McConkie's works as alternatives, if not replacements, to Talmage's. McConkie's books have been continuously popular with rank-and-file Mormons since their original publications, clearly because they satisfy a thirst for authoritative doctrinal statements. But McConkie's most popular work, *Mormon Doctrine* (1958), which was published outside the Church, apparently without the knowledge of Church leadership, when McConkie was a junior General Authority, was clearly in official disfavor during the administration of President David O. McKay (1873–1970).[86] A dispute continues over whether McKay approved of the publication of the revised second edition (1966). The evidence supporting McKay's approval for the second edition appears to be restricted to statements from McConkie himself and the assertion of McConkie supporters that McKay assigned Spencer W. Kimball to oversee the corrections. However, the preface to the second edition makes no mention of Kimball's contribution, McKay's papers do not document his approval, and the second edition was not published by the Church.[87]

One can only speculate about the reasons for the progressive official embracing of both McConkie and his works following McKay's death. McKay was succeeded by Joseph Fielding Smith, McConkie's father-in-law and predecessor as the leading ultra-conservative Mormon of the earlier twentieth century, and it was Smith's death that created the vacancy in the Church's governing Quorum of the Twelve that McConkie was called to fill. Furthermore, there was the force of McConkie himself who, like Talmage, had became widely recognized as one of the preeminent Mormon theologians of his time, if not *the* theologian.To illustrate the degree to which McConkie has supplanted Talmage, let us return to the statements of my Sunday School class member:

> Your discrediting of my comment . . . about Mary . . . was incorrect. "A personal genealogy of Joseph was essentially that of Mary also, *for they were cousins*." Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, p. 94.
>
> P.S. See Bible Dictionary p. 717—"Joseph . . . espoused *Mary, the daughter of his uncle Jacob*." [Emphases mine.]

The first statement, cited from McConkie's *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (1966), is actually a quotation from *Jesus the Christ*. The fact that my class member erroneously attributed it to McConkie suggests his greater familiarity with McConkie's works. The history of the second quotation is even more revealing. As noted above, Talmage did not commit himself on whether Jacob or Heli was the father of Mary. However, McConkie did: "Heli was the father of Joseph and Jacob the father of Mary."[88] McConkie's conclusion may have resulted from his use of *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary* (1913), a derivative of *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, which reproduced Hervey's speculative hypothesis. Thus, it appears that the author of the *Bible Dictionary's* section on "Joseph," is also preferentially using McConkie as the source. According to McConkie's biographer Dennis Horne, in 1973 the First Presidency appointed McConkie to "oversee the project" that produced the LDS edition of the King James Bible and its bound-in "Bible Dictionary." Horne also noted that McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* (1966) served as the basis for a number of "Bible Dictionary" entries.[89] It seems likely that McConkie's other works were used as well or even that McConkie himself drafted authoritative definitions and discussions for this Bible aid.

Some Conclusions

Jesus the Christ is a remarkable and unequaled synthesis of Latter-day

Saint scripture and theology, biblical criticism, science, ethics, and history. Although many of Talmage's critical conclusions would not be acceptable to critics outside Mormonism then or now, one cannot help but be impressed with his effort. In addition, readers can still learn important critical lessons from him. For example, while most current scholars still accept the two-source hypothesis (with modifications) as the best "working hypothesis," a minority vigorously support other solutions, rejecting "the traditional two-document [source] as in any sense an established tool of NT criticism."[90] Thus, one is reminded of Talmage's caution that it is too late to definitively resolve such issues.

In addition, we may ask where Talmage should be placed in Zenos's spectrum of approaches to the higher criticism. To those who accept LDS scripture and revelation as among the credible evidences to be considered, as Talmage did, Talmage might reasonably be classified under Zenos's moderate "comprehensive standpoint." To others who do not, he would be seen as a critical traditionalist. In neither instance can he or the early twentieth-century Latter-day Saints be lumped with the extreme orthodox traditionalism that would characterize later fundamentalism.

Lastly, it is significant that *Jesus the Christ* has not been officially superseded. It would therefore appear that Latter-day Saints who rely on its methodology and conclusions in preference to those of McConkie are well within the bounds of Church approval.

Although we have explored and contrasted several methodologies (both inside and outside of Mormonism) and their results for New Testament exposition and some of their influences on Mormon thought, it has not been the purpose of this study to conclude which is superior. That decision, on which reasonable individuals may differ, and that of who had the better approach in my Sunday School class is left to the reader.

Notes

1. Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) was a prominent conservative Mormon theologian, author, and Church leader (First Council of the Seventy, 1946–72; apostle, 1972–85) of the last half of the twentieth century.

2. These quotations are from Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary,* 3 vols. (1965; rpt., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977), 1:94; and "Bible Dictionary" in the LDS edition of the King James Bible (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 717.

3. James E. Talmage (1862–1933) was a prominent Mormon scientist, educator, theologian, and apostle (1911–33) during the late nineteenth cen-

tury and early twentieth century. Unless otherwise indicated, all references in this study are from James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915, first printing), with page numbers cited parenthetically in the text.

4. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986), 279.

5. James Harris, ed., *The Essential James E. Talmage* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), xxvii.

6. The terms "modernism" and "liberalism" can be confusing because of several uses. In their more restrictive senses, they have referred to a movement within Catholicism (modernism) at the turn of the century and to the school of the German theologian, Albrecht Ritschl (liberalism), respectively. As broader terms, they have been used synonymously in reference to the liberal movements within Protestantism and Catholicism in the decades immediately before and after the turn of the twentieth century. I am using them in this latter sense.

7. William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1976), 111–144.

8. Shailer Mathews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 23.

9. B. J. Longfield, "Liberalism/modernism, Protestant (c. 1870s–1930s)" in Daniel G. Reid, ed., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1990), 647–48.

10. William Sanday, "The Criticism of the New Testament" in W. Sanday, F. G. Kenyon, F. C. Burkitt, F. H. Chase, A. C. Headlam, and J. H. Bernard, *Criticism of the New Testament: St. Margaret's Lectures 1902* (1902; rpt., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 1.

11. Andrew C. Zenos, *The Elements of the Higher Criticism* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1895), 14–46.

12. Henry Nash, *The History of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 101, 47.

13. Ibid., 105.

14. F. C. Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism* (New York: G. P. Putnams's Sons, 1910), 133–34.

15. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910), 78–96.

16. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 415.

17. Nash, *The History of the Higher Criticism,* 134.

18. Geoffrey R. Treloar, "The Cambridge Triumvirate and the Accep-

tance of New Testament Higher Criticism in Britain, 1850–1900," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 4 (Spring 2006): 13–32.

19. Brooke Foss Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (New York: Macmillan, 1885), viii.

20. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), lxiv.

21. Francis S. Hoyt, ed., *The Revised New Testament* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Jones Brothers, 1881), 6.

22. For a summary, see F. F. Bruce, *The History of the Bible in English*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford, 1978).

23. Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (London: Cassell and Company, 1898), vii; emphasis his.

24. Samuel J. Andrews, *The Life of Our Lord upon the Earth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), v, ix.

25. For example Albert Schweitzer's survey of important developments mentions only the work of Edersheim, and that very briefly. See Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 233.

26. Henry Latimer Jackson, "The Present State of the Synoptic Problem," in *Essays on Some Biblical Questions of the Day by Members of the University of Cambridge*, edited by Henry Barclay Swete (London: MacMillan, 1909), 434; Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism*, 127.

27. Daniel L. Pals, *The Victorian "Lives" of Jesus* (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University, 1982), 168.

28. Jackson, "The Present State of the Synoptic Problem," 459.

29. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 2, 1870–1914* (1972; rpt., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1985), 166.

30. At the turn of the twentieth century, a large number of popular works supporting or opposing New Testament higher criticism appeared. Examples of the former include Ramsden Balmforth, *The New Testament in the Light of the Higher Criticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1905) and J. A. M'Clymont, *New Testament Criticism* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1913); examples of the latter include R. A. Torrey, *The Higher Criticism and the New Theology, Unscientific, Unscriptural, and Unwholesome* (Lestershire, N.Y.: Gospel Publishing, 1911), and John R. Palmer, *The Holy Scriptures and "the Higher Criticism"* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1903).

31. Zenos, *The Elements of the Higher Criticism*, 139–51.

32. For an example of the use of this terminology, see Alan England Brooke, "The Historical Value of the Fourth Gospel," in Swete, *Essays on Some Biblical Questions of the Day*, 299.

33. Zenos, *The Elements of Higher Criticism,* 147.

34. Ralph V. Chamberlin, *Life and Philosophy of W. H. Chamberlin* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1925), 145. See also Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 131–48; and Richard Sherlock, "Campus in Crisis: BYU, 1911," *Sunstone* 4 (January-February 1979): 10–16.

35. Joseph F. Smith, "Theory and Divine Revelation," *Improvement Era* 14 (April 1911): 548–51.

36. Kathryn Lofton, "The Methodology of the Modernists: Process in American Protestantism," *Church History* 75 (June 2006): 381.

37. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford, England: Oxford University, 2006), 141–95.

38. Joseph F. Smith, "Philosophy and the Church Schools," *Juvenile Instructor* 46 (April 1911): 209; Joseph F. Smith, "Theory and Divine Revelation," 548.

39. For examples, see Richard Sherlock, "'We Can See No Advantage to a Continuation of the Discussion': The Roberts/Smith/Talmage Affair," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1980): 63–78; his "Faith and History: The Snell Controversy," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 27–41; Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2005), 40–59.

40. Talmage and Smith, *Conference Addresses,* April 1914, 94–95, 4–5.

41. John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972), 182.

42. The most prominent scholar who continued to defend the Authorized Version and its Greek text against the Revised Version was John William Burgon (1813–88). The "King James only" debate continues to this day. See D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979). For some recent reviews of the history of the text-critical problems of the New Testament, see F. G. Kenyon, *The Text of the Greek Bible*, 3rd ed. (London: Duckworth, 1975) and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford, 1992).

43. For example, Bible scholar Thomas Hartwell Horne (1780–1862), whose works enjoyed wide circulation in Britain and America, wrote at the time of Book of Mormon publishing that "the books of the New Testament exist at present in all essential points, precisely the same as they were, when they left the hands of their authors." Thomas Hartwell Horne, *A Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1827), 11.

44. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Prin-*

cipal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), 240–41; emphasis mine.

45. For example, Westcott and Hort concluded that none of their changes in the Greek text affected an important "article of faith or precept of duty." Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, liv.

46. Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 7–13.

47. Jackson, "The Present State of the Synoptic Problem," 426.

48. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 252.

49. Jackson, "The Present State of the Synoptic Problem," 454.

50. Ibid., 454–55.

51. Adolf Harnack, *The Sayings of Jesus: The Second Source of St. Matthew and St. Luke* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1908), 176. The current status of Q research is summarized in James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2000).

52. Burnett Hillman Streeter, "On the Original Order of Q" in *Studies in the Synoptic Problem by Members of the University of Oxford*, edited by W. Sanday (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 146.

53. Jackson, "The Present State of the Synoptic Problem," 450.

54. Farrar, *Life of Christ*, viii.

55. Malcolm R. Thorp, "James E. Talmage and the Tradition of Victorian Lives of Jesus," *Sunstone* 30 (January 1988): 8–13.

56. Talmage quoted Farrar as an authority in his *Articles of Faith*, 137, 161, 423, 439, and 440.

57. One challenge in writing a life of Christ is reconstructing a single chronology from the divergent ones in the Gospels. Apparently, Talmage followed Farrar in *Jesus the Christ* and probably in his 1904–06 lecture series. John Talmage, *The Talmage Story*, 183. For examples of other chronologies by Mormon authors see J. Reuben Clark, *Our Lord of the Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), and Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979–80).

58. Pals, *The Victorian "Lives" of Jesus*, 80. Talmage's expertise in Christian history was shown in *The Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909).

59. For example, Farrar lamented that "hundreds of critics . . . have impugned the authority of the gospels on the score of the real or supposed contradictions to be found in them." Farrar, *Life of Christ*, vii.

60. For a similar view, ibid., 42.

61. Ibid., 233–34.

62. This idea was originally put forward by the Catholic scholar, Annius of Viterbo (ca. 1432–1505).

63. Proposed by the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and popularized among English divines during the nineteenth century by Arthur Hervey, *The Genealogies of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Cambridge, England: MacMillan and Co., 1853).

64. Hervey traced this view to David Fredrich Strauss. Ibid., 131.

65. John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 10 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873), 3:774.

66. Hervey, *Genealogies of Our Lord*, 130–31.

67. J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1909; rpt., London: Macmillan and Co., 1931), 623.

68. A. R. Fausset, *Bible Cyclopaedia: Critical and Expository* (Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton, 1909), 248.

69. James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 2:137–41.

70. T. K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black, eds., *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (New York: Macmillan, 1903), 1,666–69.

71. Talmage clearly recognized that some early twentieth-century conservative scholars accepted the hypothesis that Matthew's genealogy was that of Mary (after Hervey) while others preferred the theory that Matthew preserved Joseph's pedigree and Luke Mary's.

72. John Tyndall, *Fragments of Science*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 2:32.

73. Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 235.

74. Sanday, *Life of Christ*, 221, and his "Jesus Christ" in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 2:625. See also F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), 68.

75. Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord* (London: Kegan Paul, 1889), 16–17.

76. Sanday, *Life of Christ*, 216.

77. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith as Scientist* (Salt Lake City: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, 1908), 34–35.

78. Stan Larsen, "Intellectuals in Mormon History: An Update," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 187–89.

79. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 2:285, 1:186, 2:65.

80. Ibid., 1:xviii.

81. Ibid., 3:42.

82. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 422–23.

83. Many changes in the *Inspired Version* were incorporated as marginal notes and an appendix to the Latter-day Saint edition (1979) of the Authorized Version. See Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 12–13.

84. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 2:285.

85. Ibid., 2:117; McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 354, 506.

86. Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay,* 49–53.

87. For background and opposing views, see Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Bruce R. McConkie Story: Reflections of a Son* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), Dennis B. Horne, *Bruce R. McConkie: Highlights from His Life and Teachings* (Roy, Utah: Eborn Books, 2000), and Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, chap. 3.

88. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 1:316.

89. Horne, *Bruce R. McConkie*, 188–200.

90. A. E. Harvey, *A Companion to the New Testament*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9; C. S. Mann, *Mark*, in THE ANCHOR BIBLE (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 51.

How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated)

Kevin L. Barney

A belief that, in addition to a Father in Heaven, we also have a Mother in Heaven is to my eye not one of those doctrines that one simply *must* accept in order to be a faithful, committed, temple-attending Mormon. One is perfectly free to disavow the idea if one so chooses. My impression, however, is that even today belief in a Mother in Heaven is by far the mainstream position of contemporary Mormons. Originating in the nineteenth century, the concept was upheld early in the twentieth century by the 1909 First Presidency Statement on the Origin of Man and was given recent support by "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" in 1995. The mainstream position on Her existence was perhaps best expressed by Gordon B. Hinckley: "Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. That doctrine rests well with me."[1]

If most of us agree that a Mother in Heaven exists, then why has discussion of Her been so controversial, even resulting in disciplinary actions in a few cases? My perception is that people tend to see this matter in one of two very different ways. Those who are more liberal-minded and open to feminist thought see the concept of Mother in Heaven as a wonderful, revealed doctrine of the Prophet Joseph and are very frustrated that we do not actually *do* anything with that knowledge. Those who are more traditional and conservative (certainly the majority) may sympathize with that frustration, but they are also of the view that we simply do not know anything about Her beyond the mere fact of Her existence. People in this camp therefore tend to see those who strive to make the doctrine mean-

ingful in Church life as engaging in New Age syncretism in a misguided effort to fill the lacuna. As a moderate, I can see and empathize with both perspectives.

To borrow a rhetorical question posed by B. H. Roberts in the context of his Book of Mormon studies, "Is there any way to escape these difficulties?"[2] I believe there is. What I wish to propose is a middle, moderate path, a compromise of sorts. The scripturally based knowledge that I believe we can glean about our Mother in Heaven will surely be less than liberals might hope for—but it will also be more than nothing, which is the historic state of affairs. We can glean that knowledge only by applying the tools of scholarship, a method with which conservatives may not be entirely comfortable. But at least this knowledge derives in a certain way from our own canonized scriptural tradition.

In this essay, I shall begin by describing what we can learn about our Mother in Heaven from the scriptures.[3] I then will draw from those descriptions some (very modest) suggestions for how we might actually worship, or at least honor, Her in ways that should not be considered offensive or heterodox by traditionalists. This essay is therefore a little exercise in religion-making. It is my hope that I will be able to express my mediating thoughts in a way that will not be deemed offensive by those of either school of thought on the subject.

My basic insight is this: We think that we have no knowledge about our Mother in Heaven because we assume that such knowledge must come from modern sources, our premise being that *of course* there is no knowledge about Her in the Bible itself. It would be nice if there were a clear and direct modern revelation, say a Doctrine and Covenants 139, articulating with clarity Her nature and attributes and how we are to worship Her. Needless to say, no such text exists. But what I am going to suggest is that knowledge of Her is available in our canonized scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. Although information about Her is preserved in the Old Testament and associated literature, it is hidden in such a way that it requires scholarship to excavate it. And Mormonism is one of the few traditions, if not the only one, that has the resources within itself to take advantage of this knowledge for contemporary religious purposes.

One place to begin our story is with the work of Boyd Kirkland on the development of the Mormon understanding of God.[4] Kirkland argued that the current Mormon convention of equating God the Father with Elohim and God the Son with Jehovah (Yahweh), derived from the

1916 First Presidency Statement drafted by James E. Talmage, matches neither biblical nor nineteenth-century Mormon sources. This conclusion is in general true canonically (i.e., for the biblical text as redacted in its final form), and for a long time I assumed the same thing across the board. I began to rethink this issue only when I was introduced to the work of the independent Methodist scholar, Margaret Barker,[5] which in turn led me to a more recent trend in the scholarship of ancient Israel of seeing the monotheism we associate with Israelite theology as coming only at the end of a long line of development. Kirkland acknowledges such a development to a certain extent, but he sees it as a simple movement from an earlier stage of monolatry to extreme monotheism. The more recent trend in scholarship is to see the development as more profound, beginning with a polytheistic pantheon much like that of the Canaanites.[6]

According to this view, at first the Hebrews worshipped a small pantheon consisting of the high god El, his consort (scholar-speak for "wife") Asherah, their sons Yahweh and Baal, and the other (less important and often unnamed) sons of the Gods. Just as the Mormon understanding of God developed over time (as Kirkland documents), this early pluralistic understanding of God also developed over time in the movement toward monotheism. Baal was a very similar deity to Yahweh and therefore was excluded from the pantheon very early to make way for Yahweh's claims. El was more complementary to Yahweh in his characteristics, so he and Yahweh were simply merged into each other (resulting in the compound name Yahweh Elohim, rendered "the LORD God" in the King James Version). The other sons of the Gods became angels—still divine beings, but a lower class of being than the dominant Yahweh.[7]

The understanding of Asherah changed over time in response to these developments. At first She was the wife of El, the mother and procreator of the Gods. As El was merged into Yahweh (around the tenth century B.C.E.), Asherah came to be viewed as the consort, not of El, but of Yahweh. For instance, an inscription at Kuntillet 'Ajrud in the northern Sinai, fifty-five miles nothwest of Eilat, dating to roughly the ninth to eighth centuries B.C.E., states: "I have blessed you by Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah" [*brkt 'tkm lyhwh shmrn wl'shrth*].[8] Eventually, the functions of Asherah were also absorbed into Yahweh's; then, in an effort to put a stop to any independent worship of Her, reformers linked Her polemically to (the now thoroughly discredited) Baal, despite the fact that

such a linkage does not seem to have had any historical basis. This reform movement against the worship of Asherah took place from the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E.; and by the time of the conclusion of the Babylonian Exile, the worship of Asherah *as such* had been stamped out.

Although the formal worship of Asherah was eventually stopped, arguably Her memory did not cease to exist altogether; rather, it was kept alive under other names and guises. Her worship continued, but the understanding of Her was transformed over time in one of two broad ways. First, there was a tendency to associate her with some important human mother figure, such as Eve and, later, Mary, as human representations of the Hebrew Goddess. The other way in which She was transformed was to see her as a spiritualized agent or characteristic of Yahweh. Over time, as the Hebrews began to conceive of God less and less in anthropomorphic terms and more and more as an abstraction, the need for personified mediating entities between God and humans increased. These entities were originally conceived of as Yahweh's attributes or emanations (sometimes called *hypostases*), but they eventually developed into angel-like beings who act within the physical world and serve as intermediaries between God and humans. Examples are divine Wisdom (*chokmah*), God's Presence (*shekinah*), and God's Spirit (*ruach*).[9]

There is information about Asherah ready to be mined from the Old Testament text, but none of it is really clear or straightforward. The most direct references derive from the reform period and are therefore negative in nature. There are also a number of possible positive allusions to Asherah in the text that were only partially obliterated by scribal redaction over time. So while the evidence is limited and difficult to work with, Mormonism at least has the resources to be able to look past the canonical form of the text to the prior (positive) worship of Asherah. For one thing, we are not biblical inerrantists; it is well established in our tradition that many "plain and precious things" were removed from the text over time by redactional and scribal activity. Normally I find myself in the position of arguing against resorting to this principle as a crutch in the absence of any actual evidence for such textual and historical manipulation; but where, as here, there is actual evidence for such manipulation, our openness to this principle allows us to see and recognize it without being blinded by a commitment to the text in its final form. For another thing, our restorationist impulse means that we are very open to looking at the earliest form of a belief or worship practice, as opposed to being beholden to the

later, more evolved form. As Joseph expressed in his King Follett Discourse, he was interested in finding the *original* conception of God and then working forward from there, as opposed to trying to work backwards from the current conceptions:

> In the first place I wish to go back to the beginning of creation. There is the starting point in order to know and be fully acquainted with the mind, purposes, decrees, and ordinations of the great Elohim that sits in the heavens. For us to take up beginning at the creation it is necessary for us to understand something of God Himself in the beginning. If we start right, it is very easy for us to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it is a hard matter to get right.[10]

Faithful LDS scholars have a strong motivation to take the recent non-LDS scholarship regarding Asherah as the Hebrew Goddess very seriously. If they have any interest in propping up the contemporary Mormon image of Elohim as a father deity and Jehovah as a separate son deity (and they do), then they must recognize that Asherah is an integral part of that scholarship. And given that the existence of such a Mother in Heaven figure was apparently taught by the Prophet Joseph, it is certainly in the interest of apologetically oriented LDS scholars like me to take this scholarship and Asherah herself with the utmost seriousness.

At this point I would like to briefly survey what the scriptures teach those with eyes to see and ears to hear about our Mother in Heaven. As I have already suggested, She is not nameless, but She had (and has) a name: *Asherah*. The word *'asherah* appears forty times in the Old Testament (see Appendix A), sometimes referring to the Goddess directly, but more often referring to Her cult object—apparently a wooden pole that represents a sacred tree (like the Tree of Life) which acts as an allusion to the Goddess herself. In the King James Version (KJV), the Hebrew word *'asherah* is always represented by the English word "grove," following the mistranslations of the Greek Septuagint (*alsos*) and Latin Vulgate (*lucus, nemus*). Although when referring to a cult object *'asherah* may have occasionally been used to refer to a single living tree (but not necessarily a *grove* of trees), the word is sometimes modified in some way by such verbs as "make" (*'asa*), "build" (*bana*) and "erect" (*natsab*), indicating that it was a manmade object representing or symbolizing a tree, and not an actual living tree.

The difference between the KJV and the modern New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), may be illustrated by 2 Kings 23:4:

KJV	NRSV
And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for **the grove** [*'asherah*], and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.	The king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second order, and the guardians of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels made for Baal, for **Asherah** [*'asherah*], and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.

Where the KJV incorrectly renders *'asherah* as "the grove," the New Revised Standard Version correctly transliterates this word as the proper name "Asherah." In this case, the reference is directly to the Goddess, as the term is singular and is part of a sequence with other deities: Baal and the Hosts of Heaven.

While some Old Testament passages like this one refer directly to the Goddess, more common are indirect allusions to Her by way of Her cult object, as in Deuteronomy 7:5:

KJV	NRSV
But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their **groves** [*'asherim*], and burn their graven images with fire.	But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their **sacred poles** [*'asherim*], and burn their idols with fire.

In this case, the plural form (with the masculine ending *-im*) is in parallel with "pillars" and "idols," thus indicating that the reference is specifically to the cult object of the Goddess.

According to the Old Testament, those who advocated the worship of Asherah include the people during the period of the Judges (Judg. 3:7), Jeroboam I (1 Kgs. 14–15), Rehoboam (1 Kgs. 14:23), Asa's mother Maacah (1 Kgs. 15:13), Ahab (1 Kgs. 16:32; cf. 1 Kgs. 18:19), Jehoahaz (2 Kgs. 13:6), those in the Northern Kingdom before its downfall in 722

B.C.E. (2 Kgs. 17:10, 16), and Manasseh (2 Kgs. 21:3, 7). Those who rejected such worship include Gideon (Judg. 6:25–30), Asa (1 Kgs. 15:13), Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:4), and Josiah (2 Kgs. 23: 4, 6, 7, 14, 15).

The explicit references to Asherah in the Old Testament are all negative and reflect the polemical view of the reformers. We do not have explicit texts from the period before King Josiah's reforms articulating a positive view of Her worship. The sheer number of such negative references, however, coupled with archaeological findings, attests to the great popularity of her worship and the difficulty of totally suppressing it during the reform period. But there are also a handful of passages that, while not explicitly referring to Asherah, seem to reflect the prior positive view of her and her worship. I will briefly describe ten:[11]

1. Genesis 1:26–27.

> And God said,
> let us make man in our image,
> after our likeness:
> and let them have dominion over [the animals].
> So God created man in his own image,
> in the image of God created he him;
> male and female created he them.

The parallelism of the passage suggests that the image (*tselem*) of God was both male and female. The introductory formula with its plural forms appears to reflect a pantheon, and although the Priestly author who wrote the first chapter of Genesis would not have intended it, being profoundly monotheistic himself, he appears to have made use here of older material reflecting the original plural Hebrew conception of God. The implication of this passage is that men and women were created male and female in the image of God, which is also male and female.

2. Genesis 21:33. The KJV reads: "And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God." A more literal rendering might be: "And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Yahweh El Olam." Note the combination of the divine names "Yahweh" and "El," together with Olam "Eternal [lit. (of) Eternity]," an epithet of El. The final form of the text as it has been preserved has no direct mention of Asherah, but it

seems likely that this planting of a sacred tree by the patriarch Abraham was an act to venerate Her.

3. Genesis 30:13. The KJV reads: "And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher." It has been suggested that what she really said was not "happy am I" [*be'oshri*, lit. "by (or with) my happiness"], but "by Asherah" or "with Asherah's help" [*be'asherah*], Asherah being a fertility goddess. The traditional way of taking this, "by/with my happiness," is very awkward. The name of the Goddess, Asherah, is very similar to the word for "happiness," so it would have been a simple matter for scribes to remove Asherah's name from the narrative by replacing it with the noun for "happiness." Invoking the name of a deity in childbirth was common, and the normal form of such an invocation is with the *b-* prefix (meaning "by") Leah uses here. Leah had similarly exclaimed "by Gad" or "with Gad's help" upon the birth of her son (through her handmaid Zilpah), whom she duly named "Gad." Gad was the god of luck worshipped in Phoenicia and Canaan. In this theory, the name of Leah's son Asher would simply be the masculine form (without the feminine *–ah* ending) of the Goddess's name.[12]

4. Genesis 49:25. Jacob's blessings to his sons includes an invocation to Yahweh (v. 18), followed by an invocation to El (v. 25) including the common El epithet Shaddai ("almighty") used in parallel with "El." This verse also bestows the blessings of Breasts-and-Womb, which was known as an epithet of Asherah.[13]

5. Proverbs 3:13–18. One form into which Asherah worship was transformed was as Lady Wisdom (Hebrew *chokmah*) in Proverbs 1–9. It has therefore been suggested[14] that there is an intentional word play on the name of the Goddess in an *inclusio* we find in Proverbs 3:13–18. An *inclusio* is a type of distant parallelism between material at the beginning of a section of text and that at the end of the section, thus framing or bracketing the material in the middle. These six verses form a discrete block of text. In verse 13 is "happy" (a word that is very similar to "Asherah" in Hebrew) and "Wisdom" (the designation of the Goddess as She was transformed). Five verses later in verse 18 is the expression "a tree of life," a characteristic of Asherah paralleling the word "Wisdom" (v. 13) and a repetition of "happy" (v. 13). As the parallel elements are given in inverted order, this particular *inclusio* is chiastic in nature:

A. happy [v. 13; '*ashre*]
  B. Wisdom [v. 13; *chokmah*]
    [Framed material in verses 14 through 17]
  B. a tree of life [v. 18; '*ets chayyim*]
A. happy [v. 18; *me'ushshar* (same root as '*ashre*)]

That "Wisdom" appears in parallel with "a tree of life," long associated with Asherah as a sacred tree, tends to suggest the association of Wisdom with Asherah. The word play on the name Asherah in the Hebrew word "happy" tends to confirm that association.

6. Proverbs 8:22–31. Another illustration of the recasting of Asherah as personified Lady Wisdom is in this passage, quoted below from the NRSV:

> The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
> the first of his acts of long ago.
> Ages ago I was set up,
> at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
> When there were no depths I was brought forth,
> when there were no springs abounding with water.
> Before the mountains had been shaped,
> before the hills, I was brought forth—
> when he had not yet made earth and fields,
> or the world's first bits of soil.
> When he established the heavens, I was there,
> when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
> when he made firm the skies above,
> when he established the fountains of the deep,
> when he assigned to the sea its limit,
> so that the waters might not transgress his command,
> when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
> then I was beside him, like a master worker;
> and I was daily his delight,
> rejoicing before him always,
> rejoicing in his inhabited world
> and delighting in the human race.

7. Isaiah 6:13. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of this passage

reads: "And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump." The reference to "a tenth" appears to be an allusion to Judah, the tribe which was not taken as part of the Assyrian conquest. This tenth would not entirely escape but would be punished also in the Babylonian captivity. Yet even then a righteous remnant would remain, from which Israel could once again grow and flower. Thus, the end of the verse reflects the concept, common in Isaiah prophecies, of a returning remnant. For example, Isaiah 7:3 states that Isaiah had a son symbolically named Shear-jashub ("A Remnant Shall Return").

Although the general meaning of the passage seems clear enough, the text itself is obscure and has apparently been corrupted. Many scholars believe the relative particle '*asher*, translated "whose" in the text above, was originally a reference to Asherah. These scholars would emend the end of the verse to read: "like the terebinth [of the Goddess] and the oak of Asherah, cast out with the pillar of the high places." (Both the RSV annotation and the New English Bible do so.) That is, Judah would be cut off and burned the way a sacred tree or an Asherah pole was hewn down and burned during the reform period. These scholars would simply delete the obscure last sentence, "the holy seed is its stump," and thereby remove the concept of the return of a righteous remnant from this verse.

If these scholars are correct in seeing here an allusion to Asherah, and if they are incorrect in deleting the last line, we have a plausible explanation for the corruption in the text. In this reading, the prophet was indeed using the cutting down of an Asherah pole or a sacred tree to illustrate Judah's captivity by Babylon. He goes on, however, to argue that the stump of a sacred tree was still considered holy and could regenerate into a new tree. As a reform prophet, Isaiah would not have used this imagery to support Asherah worship; rather, he appears to have been using common Israelite beliefs about Asherah worship to make a point about the ultimate return of a righteous remnant of Israel. Later scribes, apparently offended that the prophet would have used Asherah worship to illustrate a positive prophecy of the return of Israel, even as a literary device, modified the text to avoid this association.

8. Hosea 14:8 [Hebrew 14:9]. This verse in the RSV reads: "O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress, from me comes your fruit." The line rendered "It is I who answer and look after you" is a translation of the He-

brew *ani 'aniti wa'ashurennu* (the "you" of the RSV is literally "him" in the Hebrew, referring to Ephraim). The meaning of the line as it stands is obscure. Some scholars suggest here a conjectural emendation to *'ani 'anato wa'asherato*, meaning "I [Yahweh] am his Anat [another Canaanite goddess] and his Asherah," which would then restore the parallelism of the first two half-lines in the verse. Even if one does not follow these scholars in emending the text, at the very least there seems to be a word play on the names "Anat" (possibly understood during the Israelite period as another name for Asherah) and "Asherah" in the Hebrew text as it exists. That there is such an allusion to Asherah here can be seen particularly in how Isaiah 27:9, which is based on this passage, makes explicit reference to *'asherim* "Asherah poles." True, the prophet here is arguing against Asherah worship as part of the reform movement. But he does so gently, by having Yahweh assume Her attributes. Yahweh tells Ephraim that He (Yahweh) will fulfill the historic role of Anat/Asherah in the future for Israel. Yahweh is like a sacred tree (as is Asherah); the source of fertility is not Asherah, Goddess of fertility, but Yahweh Himself. While perhaps not a positive allusion to Asherah, this passage does illustrate how Yahweh co-opted Her functions during the reform period.[15]

9. Ezekiel 8:3. This passage reads: "and the spirit . . . brought me to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy [*sml hqn'h hmqnh*]." (See also v. 5.) This "image" is generally assumed to be a statue of Asherah present at one time in the temple. The expression "image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy" makes little sense. It has been suggested that the real designation of this figure was *sml hqnh,* "the image of the creatress," consort to Yahweh, who is called "creator [*qnh*] of heaven and earth" in Genesis 14:19. If this suggestion is correct, then "image of jealousy," *sml hqn'h,* is a word play used to avoid mentioning the (at that time) forbidden "image of the creatress."[16]

10. 1 Nephi 11:8–23. In this passage the Spirit shows to Nephi the tree which his father had seen, beautiful and white beyond description. Nephi tells the Spirit: "I behold thou has shown unto me the tree which is precious above all." The Spirit asks Nephi what he desires, and he responds that he wishes to know the interpretation of this tree that had been shown to his father and which he now beheld himself. Instead of straightforwardly answering his question, the angel shows Nephi a vision of a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins, whom the angel

identifies as the mother of the Son of God. And then Nephi sees the virgin with a child in her arms, whom the angel identifies as "the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!" At this point, the Spirit asks Nephi the same question Nephi had previously asked him: "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?" To the modern reader, the tree seems irrelevant to the vision of Mary, but Nephi replies that he now knows the meaning of the tree: "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things," to which the angel responds "Yea, and the most joyous to the soul."

How did a vision of the virgin Mary and her child answer Nephi's question about the meaning of the tree? To the modern reader, the connection seems utterly obscure. Why would the virgin be portrayed in some sense as a tree and the child as the fruit of the tree?

In what to my mind is surely one of the most remarkable articles ever published in Mormon studies, Daniel C. Peterson answers the question by pointing to the tree symbolism of Asherah, the divine mother figure of ancient Israel.[17] What seems to us to be no connection at all was immediately apparent to Nephi once he beheld the virgin and her baby. Peterson's article is not only a probing exegesis of the Book of Mormon passage but also a very able survey of recent Asherah scholarship from an LDS perspective.

What information about Asherah in Her specifically Hebrew context can we derive from the scriptural canon? At this point, I shall attempt to synthesize some scripturally based propositions about Her. Needless to say, these insights are but a few pieces from a much larger jigsaw puzzle (without the picture on the box); we can see Her through the scriptures only through a glass darkly. I shall also offer a few suggestions for how we might actually include Her within our worship.

The subtitle to this essay—"Without Getting Excommunicated"—suggests some basic parameters for my suggestions. First, no idolatry. At least part of the reason that the Deuteronomist reformers worked to suppress Her worship is that over time Her worship was corrupted by idolatrous practices, much like the Nehushtan or brass serpent-pole, which, although originally fashioned by Moses and entirely unobjectionable, eventually came to be worshipped idolatrously and was therefore destroyed. That is, it was the manner of worship and not the object itself that was objectionable. So I will not suggest pouring out drink offerings to

Asherah poles or any such observance. Second, no public prayer. Given that President Hinckley has forbidden public prayers addressed to Mother in Heaven,[18] that instruction represents the current policy of the Church, although I suggest a partial, small exception below. And third, the practices I suggest are modest reconceptualizations of practices we already engage in, or practices that would be viewed as innocuous to an outside observer, or private practices meant for the home.

1. Name and titles. I personally regard it as very significant that we actually know the name of our Mother in Heaven: *Asherah*. In the ancient world, knowing the name or *etymon* of a god was very important, and just having this small bit of information helps us to personalize Her rather than leaving Her in the realm of unknown and distant abstraction.

What did "Asherah" mean? Here, as often in the Old Testament, we must distinguish between popular and historical etymology. It seems likely that Hebrew-speaking Israelites would have understood the name as meaning "Happiness, Blessedness," from the verbal root *'ashar*, the basic meaning of which is "to go straight on, to advance," whether in a literal or a metaphoric ["in the way of understanding"] sense. In the *piel* verb stem, the verb has the developed meanings "to set right, righten" and from there "to pronounce happy, call blessed." In this view, "Asherah" would be a nominal form of this verb. Indeed, early modern Hebraists understood the word in just this way.[19]

Although I have focused on the small bits of information we can glean about Her from the Old Testament, a more extensive body of knowledge is available in the older Ras Shamra tablets, written in Ugaritic, a Canaanite dialect. The Ugaritic vocalization of "Asherah" was "Athirat," which traditional scholarship interprets as deriving from the longer expression, *rbt 'atrt ym* ("She Who Treads on the Sea)." More recent scholarship prefers "Lady Athirat of the Sea," thus keeping Her name intact. A more recent understanding of the historical linguistic etymology of "Athirat" (and thus Asherah) is that it means "Sanctuary."[20] This interpretation is also supported by Her epithet *qdš* (Ugaritic *Qudshu*, Hebrew *Qodesh*), meaning "Holy Place, Holiness."

Although the epithet "Breasts-and-Womb" appears in the Old Testament (Gen. 49:25), Canaanite literature ascribes other epithets to her that are not in the Bible: "Lion Lady," "Creatress of All the Gods," and "Mistress of Sexual Rejoicing." Early Israelite belief may have continuity with at least some of this earlier Canaanite mythology; but for purposes of

this paper, I want to focus specifically on what we can learn from our canonical scripture. I make, however, an exception for Her principal title: *Elat*. Although this title is attested only in Ugaritic and not in Hebrew, it fits logically with what we otherwise know about her. "Elat" is *El* with the archaic *-at* feminine ending. "El" appears in the Hebrew Bible, both as the proper name of the Most High God and as a generic term for God; although the normal Hebrew feminine ending is *-ah*, the archaic *-at* ending also appears in biblical Hebrew, apparently paralleling the feminine *nebi'ah*, which generically means "prophetess" but, as used specifically in Isaiah 8:3, means "Mrs. Prophet" (i.e., Isaiah's wife). So the title "Elat" can mean both generically "Goddess" (in her own right) and specifically "Mrs. El" or "Mrs. God" (in relation to El Himself).

A small gesture of deference to our Mother might be to name a child in Her honor. It probably would not do to name a daughter something like Chokmah (just think of the therapy bills), but there are a couple of names that would work as honorifics of Her in our culture: *Asher* for a boy (the masculine form of Her name) and *Sophia* for a girl (Greek for Wisdom).

2. Creation. In Proverbs 8:30 quoted above, Lady Wisdom reports that She was present during the creation and assisted with it. In the NRSV, this passage reads: "then I was beside him, like a master worker." The KJV mistranslates this verse as: "then I was by him, as one brought up with him" (meaning "like a child"). The key term in the Hebrew is *'amon*, meaning a master craftsman, artificer, or architect. Thus, this passage portrays Wisdom as a skilled craftsman working beside Yahweh in creating the world. This concept fits readily into Mormon thought, since we understand the creation not as the work of a single deity, but rather as the collaborative effort of a small pantheon working together.

This passage also has numerous parallels with the creation account from Genesis 1. How did the author of Proverbs conclude that Wisdom was present at the creation and assisted in its work? One possibility is KJV Genesis 1:2: "and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Some translations interpret the Hebrew expression as "a mighty wind was blowing across the surface of the water."[21] The Prophet Joseph, however, suggested another version in Abraham 4:2: "and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters." This phrasing is not only part of our modern scriptural canon, but it likely also reflects academic knowledge Joseph gained from Professor Joshua Seixas in Hebrew classes at

Kirtland. The Hebrew word here is *merachepheth*, a participle from the verb *rachaph*, "to hover." That verb appears in Deuteronomy 32:11, where a mother bird broods (or hatches out) her young. The Syriac cognate means "to brood over, to incubate." When this concept is associated with the fact that the Spirit (*Ruach*) of God was perceived as a transformation of "Asherah" in later Hebrew thought, Genesis presents a mysterious feminine metaphor for part of the creation process. Possibly this association is what led the author of Proverbs to portray Wisdom as present and active in the creation.[22]

3. Sacred trees. Asherah was most profoundly represented in the scriptures with various forms of tree symbolism, beginning in the Garden of Eden. Prominent in the garden is the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In Mormon theology, the Fall is actually necessary for human moral development. As is often expressed, the Fall and the Atonement were not Plan B, a band-aid to remedy a great mistake, but rather Plan A, intended all along. The Fall had both positive and negative effects. The Atonement remedies the negative effects, while the positive effects remain intact. Therefore, in Mormon thought, Eve is not the great scapegoat of all humanity, ruining our one chance at true happiness, but rather the moral heroine of the story, who by a flash of insight or intuition saw the necessity of partaking of the fruit. The fruit of this tree made human beings "wise" and, thus, was the source of wisdom. The story also mentions another sacred tree, the tree of life, from which Adam and Eve were separated after the Fall.[23]

The fact that Abraham planted a tree in honor of Asherah (Gen. 21:33) acquires new significance in light of Asherah's association with tree symbolism. As Peterson discussed in "Nephi and His Asherah," we should expand the Asherah-tree symbolism to the Book of Mormon as well; think, for example, of the allegory of the olive tree or of Alma's experiment comparing faith to the planting of a seed. Indeed, in the Mormon "liken-unto-us" *pesher* reading of Ezekiel 37, which we take as referring to "sticks" of Judah and Joseph representing the Bible and Book of Mormon, the key word in the passage is *ets*, which literally means "tree" (or "wood"). We therefore can view each volume of scripture as a tree, meaning a source of divine wisdom.

In addition to reading the scriptures with greater sensitivity to possible connections between tree symbolism and our Mother, how might we apply this knowledge in Her worship? First, I suggest that we recon-

ceptualize how we think of our Christmas trees. Just as Peterson demonstrated that the tree of Nephi's vision represented the mother of the Son of God, the babe being the fruit of the tree, so it seems a very natural extension of that idea to see the decorated trees erected in our homes each December as representing the Christ child's mother—hence, indirectly the Mother of us all. Since the practice of putting up Christmas trees originated from a pagan fertility symbol that had to be reconceptualized in the first place to give it a Christian meaning, giving the tree our own reconceptualization would not be treading on inviolable ground. And, of course, putting a Christmas tree up each December is entirely unobjectionable in our culture, a practice at which no one would bat an eye. But seeing the tree as a symbol of our Mother may be a source of satisfaction to those who long to acknowledge Her in some way.

A second possibility would be to take a page from the minor Jewish holiday (minor in the sense that there are no restrictions on working), Tu Bishvat.[24] The name "Tu Bishvat" refers to the fifteenth day of the month Shevat in the Jewish calendar (*bi-* is a preposition, and *tu* represents two Hebrew letters used to form the number 15 in lieu of Arabic numerals). Tu Bishvat originally was the last date in which fruit could be taxed that year. Fruit ripening after Tu Bishvat could be assessed for tithing only for the following year (and since Mormons also tithe, this is a regulation we can understand and relate to). But over time, this day has taken on greater significance. This holiday is one of the four Rosh Hashanahs ("New Years") mentioned in the Mishnah, the basis of the Talmud. Tu Bishvat is the Rosh HaShanah La'Ilanot "new year of the trees." Today it is celebrated as the birthday of the trees, with a symbolic eating of fruits and with active redemption of barren land by planting trees. People express their ecological concerns and their desire to reconnect themselves to nature. It has become a kind of Jewish Earth Day. Certainly a day when we were to plant trees (and extrapolating that specific action to a broader concern with protecting and nurturing this earth's environment), seems to me a very natural way to honor our Mother in Heaven.

4. Artistic representations. Although the Hebrew Bible itself has only hints about the worship of Asherah in ancient Israel, the archaeological record is much richer and is not burdened by the polemical perspective of the Josian and other reformers. William Dever's remarkable recent book, *Did God Have a Wife?*, is an excellent source of archaeological evi-

dence for ordinary Israelites' common worship of Asherah.[25] In antiquity there was a rich tradition of iconic representation of Asherah.

I have a modern copy of an ancient Asherah pillar base figurine[26] on the bookshelf in my living room. Such figurines were absolutely ubiquitous in ancient Israelite homes. Mine features a woman's head and breasts, but the bottom of the figure is shaped as a smooth cylinder, representing the trunk of a tree, the Goddess's symbol. She is not an idol to me; I do not worship it, and She sits next to French gargoyles, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic icons, an Etruscan charioteer, a statue of the Greek Goddess Hygeia (the goddess of health), and a Nauvoo sunstone. Mormons tend to be more pragmatic than, for instance, some very conservative Christians or Jehovah's Witnesses, about allowing such artistic representations of deity. Therefore, there is nothing inappropriate about having such a visual reminder in one's home. In addition, those who have artistic talents could make their own, modern representations of our Mother.

5. Fertility, childbirth, and lactation. It should come as no surprise that Asherah was originally a fertility goddess. Fertility, childbirth, and lactation were among the very gravest concerns of ancient women—literally matters of life, death, and familial survival. These issues remain crucial even in our own day, when infertile couples routinely spend thousands of dollars attempting to successfully have children of their own.

This is the one area where, to my own eye at least, private prayer to our Mother in Heaven might be countenanced. I personally have never prayed to Her under any circumstances and do not feel the need to do so. And certainly there is nothing wrong with praying in our normal fashion to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ for help with these issues. But Yahweh absorbed what were originally Asherah's fertility functions and the scriptures preserve Leah's prayer to Her in successfully giving birth to one of the sons of Israel. If a couple or a prospective mother were to feel the need to address our Mother directly in prayer in this particular type of circumstance, I personally would not find it offensive. These are, of course, very private matters, and I am assuming that any such prayers would not become a matter of public knowledge. Consequently, such prayers should not adversely affect others who might not approve of such a prayer being offered in their presence.

Of course, President Hinckley's counsel on this subject did not expressly distinguish private from public prayers, and many people would

not be comfortable circumventing that direction. And I have no authority in the Church to suggest anything otherwise. So those who may wish to engage in such prayers will need to consider the matter carefully and take responsibility for their own actions. I am simply reporting that my own sensibilities would not be offended if a woman or couple, desperate to conceive, were to address their Mother in Heaven in their prayers.

6. Healing. Popular culture routinely portrays the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (and, by extension, the tree of life) in the Garden of Eden as an apple tree. But in Jewish tradition, the tree of life was most commonly an olive tree, which makes sense given that tree's important role in Middle Eastern culture.[27] I have long thought it significant that we give healing blessings using consecrated olive oil, which is the fruit of the tree of life, therefore most appropriate to the task, and at least in part a symbol of our Mother's nurturing concern for our health and well-being.[28]

7. Happiness. Even though "happiness" was not the true etymology of the name "Asherah," Israelites doubtless understood the name to have that meaning. Therefore, there was a tendency to create word plays using "happiness" in situations associated with the Goddess. Sometimes "happiness" was substituted for her name to avoid mentioning Her at all. Therefore, passages in the Old Testament that refer to happiness should be read closely with these possibilities in mind, and, as Peterson rightly notes, the same sensitivity in reading *happiness* passages should also be extended to our reading of the Book of Mormon text. There may well be nuggets of information about the Goddess hidden in such passages awaiting discovery by a diligent reader.

8. Wisdom. Since Asherah was recharacterized as personified Wisdom, we should read passages referring to wisdom with an eye attuned to possible nuanced allusions to the Goddess. In particular, we should read with care the whole of the Wisdom Literature (in the Old Testament, this would include Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes).

In the Jewish tradition, study is perceived as a kind of worship.[29] I have suggested some topics to look for in a fresh and close reading of scripture. Appendix B is a bibliography of non-LDS literature on Asherah as an Israelite Goddess. Though not exhaustive, it is sufficiently extensive to allow any diligent student to become acquainted with the most concrete information we have about how the ancients viewed Asherah and Her nature. Let no one complain about a lack of knowledge on this subject with-

out first rolling up her sleeves and digging into the many resources available that give us some genuine insight into our Mother in Heaven.

Just as the specific practice of planting trees to honor Asherah can be generalized to broader concern with the environment, we may also extrapolate from wisdom specifically to a broader concern for education and intellectual striving. Just as She would want us to protect this earth She helped to create, so, too, like any mother, She would desire for us to broaden our minds and learn the wonders of the universe to the extent we are able.

9. Temple service. I see the crowning way to worship our Mother in Heaven as engaging in temple service, whether as workers or as patrons. The connection between our Mother and the temple was and is profound. Consider, for instance, the following points:

- "Asherah" means "sanctuary," "holy place," and is thus, essentially, a synonym for temple.
- During times favorable to Asherah worship in ancient Israel, there was a statue or other image of Her prominently displayed in the temple. (This image was removed during times unfavorable to Her worship.)
- The menorah was a stylized almond tree and probably a symbol of the Goddess. It burned olive oil, which also was Her symbol.
- The two cherubim atop the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies were identified as Asherah and Yahweh.[30]
- Our modern temple ritual revolves around a creation drama, in which Asherah participated as a master craftsman.
- The Garden of Eden narrative prominently features two sacred trees (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life), both of which represent Her.
- One of the most prominent ways that ancient Israelite women worshipped Asherah was by weaving textiles that were then used in the temple.[31] It is not entirely clear what these weavings were—perhaps wall hangings or veils.

In 1985, I graduated from law school and moved to Chicago to begin my career. The Chicago Temple was dedicated not long after we arrived. Relief Society sisters in the area had made altar cloths with fine needlework for the temple's altars. It seems to be a very close analog to a specific way in which Israelite women worshipped their Mother in Heaven.[32]

In short, I can think of no finer, more profound way to worship our Mother in Heaven than to participate in temple worship. And I have

never known a bishop or stake president to excommunicate anyone for spending too much time serving in the temple.[33]

Notes

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign,* November 1991, 100. The 1909 statement reads: ". . . even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God." The 1995 statement reads: "Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents . . ." For the history of the idea in its Mormon context, see Linda R. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective,* edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 64–77.

2. 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.

3. My survey of scholarship on the ancient Hebrew pantheon is to some extent personal and subjective, as virtually all of the propositions I shall make can be and have been debated by scholars. The picture I will paint simply reflects my sense of the situation based on my reading of the literature.

4. Boyd Kirkland, "Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 77–93; and his "Jehovah as Father: The Development of the Mormon Jehovah Doctrine," *Sunstone* 9 (Autumn 1984): 36–44.

5. See in particular Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992). For an appreciation of Barker's work from an LDS perspective, see Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies." *Occasional Papers, No. 2*, edited by William Hamblin (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001). I acknowledge that Barker's scholarship is controversial and that not all LDS scholars are enamored with it. See, for example, Terrence L. Szink, "Jerusalem in Lehi's Day," *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004): 149–59. While Barker happened to be my point of entree to scholarship on the ancient Hebrew pantheon, recent scholarship on this subject is both extensive and broadly based. See Appendix B, "Bibliography of Non-LDS Literature."

6. The Israelites and the Canaanites lived contemporaneously at the same place with approximately the same culture. The Canaanites also antedated the Israelites; scholars refer to Canaanites during the Iron Age as Phoe-

nicians. Many scholars take the position that the Israelites did not conquer the Canaanites but rather simply arose from among them indigenously. The Hebrew language originated as a Canaanite dialect.

7. In general, see Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

8. John Day, "Asherah," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:483–87. This article is a summary of Day's longer study, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3 (1986): 385–408. There are a couple of similar Syro-Palestinian inscriptions of the same pattern referring to "Yahweh and His Asherah." It is unclear whether the reference to "Asherah" in these inscriptions is meant to refer directly to the Goddess or to Her cult object, a wooden pole representing a sacred tree, since proper names in Biblical Hebrew normally do not take a pronominal suffix (the "his" of the English translations). If the reference were to Her cult object, the allusion to Her would be indirect but nonetheless present.

9. On the further transformations of Asherah, see in particular Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd ed. (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

10. Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 199, as quoted in Kevin L. Barney, "Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith's Understanding of Genesis 1:1," *BYU Studies* 39 no. 3 (2000): 124.

11. This material is adapted from my unpublished internet essay, "Do We Have a Mother in Heaven?" http://www.fairlds.org/pubs/MotherInHeaven.pdf (accessed July 11, 2007).

12. W. L. Reed, "Asherah," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by George Butterick, 5 vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1982), 1:251; Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 296–97 note 15.

13. Smith, *Early History of God*, 16.

14. Ibid., 95.

15. Day, "Asherah."

16. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 54.

17. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, edited by Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 191–243. His shorter, popularized version appeared as "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 16–25. The title is a word play on a series of Syro-Palestinian inscriptions that refer to "Yahweh and His Asherah."

18. "However, in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven." Hinckley, "Daughters of God," 100.

19. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1907; rpt., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 81.

20. See the discussion in Tilde Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 142–46.

21. So for example "an awesome wind sweeping over the water" in E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 1 of THE ANCHOR BIBLE (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 3.

22. Given that Asherah's particular role was as procreator and given this particular maternal metaphor of brooding over the waters, one might be tempted to suggest that Her particular role in the creation had to do with the *biological* creation of life, which indeed originated in the deep. But this would, of course, simply be a speculation.

23. It is possible, as some scholars have speculated, that the two trees were originally one and the same and were separated only for the dramatic needs of the story.

24. See Kevin L. Barney, "Happy Tu Bishvat," By Common Consent, February 3, 2007, http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2007/02/happy-tu-bishvat/ (accessed July 22, 2007). When I first learned of this holiday from an article in my local paper, one of the congregations celebrating the holiday was Congregation Ets Chayyim, Hebrew for "Tree of Life."

25. William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005). For reviews of the book from an LDS perspective, see Paul Hoskisson in *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 186–89, and Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, "Does God Have a Wife?" *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 81–118.

26. I purchased this particular five-inch replica for $22 plus shipping from http://www.sacredsource.com over the internet.

27. Although I was not present, Andrew C. Skinner gave a presentation on the olive tree's position as the preeminent tree of life in Jewish tradition, concluding that many impressive connections help establish the core idea that the tree of life is the most desirable of all things. This presentation was given at a symposium on the tree of life on September 28–29, 2006, sponsored by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU. See the report in "Symposium Explores Widespread Tree of Life Motif," *Insights: An Ancient Window* 26, no. 5 (2006): 1, 3–4.

28. For some interesting introductory commentary on historic Mor-

mon practices of using olive oil in healing, see Jonathan Stapley, "The Evolution of Anointing the Sick," June 8, 2005, http://www.splendidsun.com/wp/annointing/ ["annointing" is as per original] (accessed July 22, 2007), and Jonathan Stapley, "Consecrated Oil as Medical Therapy," both on By Common Consent, April 17, 2007, http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2007/04/consecrated-oil-as-medical-therapy/ (accessed July 22, 2007).

29. Jacob Neusner, *The Glory of God Is Intelligence: Four Lectures on the Role of Intellect in Judaism* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1979).

30. See, e.g., Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 67–95.

31. See 2 Kings 23:7, which reads in part in the KJV: "by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove" [lit. "where the women wove houses (*bottim*) for Asherah"], where the meaning of *bottim* is uncertain.

32. Some Mormon women are offended by having to veil their faces in the temple. I have argued elsewhere that the veil can be understood as a symbol of resurrection. Kevin L. Barney, "The LORD Will Swallow Up Death Forever," By Common Consent, September 7, 2006, http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2006/09/the-lord-will-swallow-up-death-for-ever/ (accessed July 22, 2007). Another possibility relevant here might be to understand the veil in terms of the weavings women made in honor of Asherah in the ancient temple. The woman's veil can be seen as a microcosm or model version of the larger veil of the temple.

33. There remain two significant issues concerning the nature of our Mother in Heaven that the information I have been able to tease out of the text is not really sufficient to answer. Here I will give my opinion (for whatever it may be worth) on these issues, with the understanding that it is simply speculation on my part. First, is our Mother an embodied being or a spirit? I realize some Mormon feminists like to equate Her with the Holy Ghost, thus making a trinity of Father, Mother, and Son. That arrangement has a certain appeal. And, as I have argued, one of the ways Asherah was reconceptualized was indeed as God's Spirit. But I think it is oversimplistic to equate Asherah with the Holy Ghost. Although I do see an echo of Her in the Holy Ghost, I believe that in actuality She is an embodied being in exactly the same sense that the Father is an embodied being. Indeed, the "logic" that President Hinckley mentioned would seem to require embodiment. Furthermore, embodiment fits both the anthropomorphism of the ancient Israelite pantheon (and its Canaanite precedents) and our modern view of God the Father possessing a tangible, physical body of "flesh and bone" (D&C 130:3). In my view, God the Mother is similarly embodied.

Second, is God the Mother one or many? One could make an argument for a plurality of Mothers. In the Canaanite pantheon, El had multi-

ple consorts; and in nineteenth-century Mormonism when polygamy was actively practiced and defended, having plural wives may have seemed like the more natural arrangement. In my conception, however, there is only one Mother in Heaven to match our Father in Heaven. Such uniqueness is consistent with the Israelite evidence, which worships only Asherah in contradistinction to the multiple consorts of the Canaanite pantheon. Further, in my view a single Mother in Heaven is more consonant with contemporary Mormon thought.

Appendix A
The 40 Specific Occurrences of "Asherah" in the Old Testament

Singular

Deuteronomy 16:21
Judges 6:25–26, 28, 30
1 Kings 15:13; 16:33
2 Kings 13:6; 17:16; 21:3, 7; 23:4, 6–7, 15
2 Chronicles 15:16

Plural

Exodus 34:13
Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3
Judges 3:7
1 Kings 14:15, 23; 18:19
2 Kings 17:10; 18:4; 23:14
2 Chronicles 14:3; 17:6; 19:3; 24:18; 31:1; 33:3, 19; 34:3–4, 7
Isaiah 17:8; 27:9
Jeremiah 17:2
Micah 5:14

Appendix B
Bibliography of Non-LDS Literature

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FICTION

From Great Heights

Ryan Shoemaker

"How about a quick swim?" Carolyn asked, pointing to a lighted swimming pool glimmering through the fence of a large apartment complex on North Temple.

Norman smiled and continued to drive.

"I'm serious," Carolyn said. "We did it all the time at BYU. Walk in like you live there and jump in. It'll be fun."

Norman didn't feel comfortable with sneaking in, treading the chilly water in his Levis, and then driving home shivering and dripping onto the car seats and floor mats. "You're not in college anymore," he wanted to say. "What if we get caught? It's against the law." Instead he said, "It's getting late."

Carolyn stared at him, her pink lip gloss sparkling in the dim light. "Norman, you're a real stick-in-the-mud," she said.

Though Norman didn't tell her, the comment angered him.

The next evening Norman got a call from Cameron, an old friend who now lived in Murray with his wife, Erica. They'd grown up in the same ward outside Portland and had roomed together at BYU before their missions. A year ago, out of the blue, Cameron had suddenly taken an interest in Norman's social life and had even set Norman up with a few interns from his firm. Norman hadn't liked any of them. They seemed like girls Cameron would like, urbane moody types who only talked about themselves. When Norman began dating Carolyn soon after she'd moved into his ward, Cameron called weekly to pump Norman for information.

"So what's the deal?" Cameron asked. "Getting serious? Should I make room in my schedule for a December wedding? Or why not August? I'm joking. No pressure, really."

"I like her," Norman said. "It's just that . . ." He trailed off. "I think we have different ideas of fun." And then he told Cameron about the night before, about the swimming pool and Carolyn's jab. "Something

like that gives me pause," Norman said. "I mean, you can get in big trouble for that. It's trespassing."

"You have to lighten up," Cameron said. "Don't I always tell you that? The poor girl just wanted to have some fun. Live a little." There was a burst of static over the line. "So that's it? That's your big hang-up—you have different ideas of fun?"

"It's not just that," Norman said. "I know it's silly. I don't even want to mention this." He cleared his throat. "She leaves food out. Perishables like cheese and milk. And she doesn't hang her clothes up. She just slops them over her dresser. And she always loses her keys."

"Cheese and milk and keys? You're joking," Cameron said. "Come on, Norman. Be serious. Tell me you're joking, so I don't think you're a head case. A little spoiled milk and you're ready to call it quits. Isn't that alarming behavior? As a guidance counselor, wouldn't you agree? Seriously."

"It's an indicator," Norman said. "It's not a show stopper, but they're issues we'll have to work out. They're bad habits."

"How old are you, Norman? Thirty now?"

"Thirty next month," Norman said.

"Thirty and you can't stop thinking about the spoiled milk and the pile of clothes. Remember when you were looking for an apartment and stayed with us? It took you two months. Every place you looked had something you didn't like, roommates too loud or too messy, too far from work, too small. And then you end up getting your own place because you couldn't stand living with anyone. You know what happens to guys who can't stop thinking about the spoiled milk and the pile of clothes? They live alone. You see what I mean, Norman? Tell your mom I wash my hands of you." He shouted into the phone. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean that. I'll call you next week." And then he hung up.

Sitting on the couch, the phone still cradled between his cheek and shoulder, Norman pondered the sliver of moon hanging in the window and the white, wispy clouds shooting past it. Privately, he valued little of what Cameron said. He remembered Cameron as a floppy-haired, gangly teenager, exiting the bishop's office with red-rimmed, puffy eyes, head bowed, wiping at his wet nose and weepy eyes with his sleeve. He remembered when Cameron and Erica were dating, and the way she berated him in front of his friends, snapping her fingers to get his attention. Who's Cameron to give marital advice? Norman thought. He'd married a piece of work, a bland, materialistic gossip who racked up a mountain of debt, a

downer who constantly scowled at Norman and breathed long, ponderous sighs whenever he spoke. At least I didn't and won't make the same mistakes, Norman thought, and the truth of those words comforted him.

Norman continued to date Carolyn. There were dinners at the Old Spaghetti Factory or Bucco di Beppo's, Saturday matinees in Sugarhouse, hiking Millcreek or Big Cottonwood Canyon. When Carolyn's parents visited from California, he met them. Over dinner at Biaggi's, Norman formed the opinion that both were sensible people, unobtrusive but caring, moderate in the cars they drove and the clothes they wore. Financially, they were secure; and physically and mentally, there appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, Norman was impressed with Carolyn's mother's physique. At forty-seven, she still ran in the Los Angeles marathon every year. If it's true that the daughter becomes the mother, Norman reasoned, as he studied her thin ankles and corded calves, then he would be satisfied with what Carolyn would become.

Their relationship was predictable, no surprises. Maybe I love Carolyn, Norman thought. Maybe. But he couldn't forget her sitting across from him in the dimly lit car, arms folded, her lip gloss sparking: *Norman, you're a real stick-in-the-mud*. There were the other images: a chest of drawers bearing the weight of last week's clothes, a forgotten gallon of milk warming on the countertop, Carolyn riffling through the couch cushions to find a set of keys, strands of her corn-silk blond hair falling into her face.

And then in the beginning of June, Carolyn told Norman she'd decided to move home for the summer. This revelation was so sudden that Norman, hearing her announcement, began to review the past few weeks, the past few months, searching for any premonition of her decision. He'd suspected something earlier that afternoon when Carolyn had called to tell him they needed to talk and then been evasive when he asked what she wanted to talk about.

"My roommate's sister said she'd take over my lease for the summer," Carolyn told him that evening. "I don't have to report back to school until the end of August, so why not move home and save a little money? My brother's home from his mission in a couple weeks. My family hasn't been together is two years. It is sudden, I know." She sat solemnly on Norman's couch, hugging a cushion to her chest. She wore a black, short-sleeved turtleneck sweater with a raised pattern of lines and dots coursing down its front, cashmere or merino wool, soft and expensive.

Norman wondered how much she'd spent for it and why she hadn't told him about the purchase.

"It is sudden," he said, exhaling loudly.

In the stairwell, a dog barked, a sudden hoarse discharge amplified by the concrete walls and steps, followed immediately by a woman's high, scolding voice. Carolyn leaned forward, squinting into the inky night beyond the window, and Norman, sitting on a worn ottoman in front of her, thought he saw in her droopy shoulders and narrow eyes a shudder of emotion, until he realized she was squinting to read the titles on the bookshelf near the window. "I don't want you to feel," Carolyn said, "that you shouldn't see other people over the summer. We'll keep in touch, and when I get back we'll see where we're at. It's for the best. Don't you think?"

The clock on the wall clicked dryly. A buzzing filled the room, the faint electrical whir of Norman's laptop on the side table, the unflattering overhead fluorescent lights, a moth batting against the window; and Carolyn's voice, the distant timbre of it, blanched of emotion, seemed lost in the room's sterile banality.

Norman, head bent down, traced the wood grain in the coffee table with his finger, taking in this new information. He was shocked, not at Carolyn's summer plan, but at how quickly and dispassionately she was dispatching him. All evening she'd hardly looked at him, but not out of embarrassment or uneasiness. She was already gone, already sunning herself on Huntington Beach, already a thousand miles away from this oppressive apartment. This evening, Norman felt, this tidy tapering of their relationship into nothing, was just another errand for her, another checked box on a list under "change oil" and "pay phone bill."

"I can't help thinking I've done something wrong," Norman said. "If I have, I hope you'd tell me."

"No, it's not like that," Carolyn said. "I'm not angry . . ." She let her hands fall to her thighs. "I never told you this. Before we started dating, I'd just ended a relationship with a guy from my old ward. He taught snowboarding in Park City. He was twenty, wasn't thinking about a mission, had never been to college, didn't think about anything, really, except snowboarding. His life was this chaotic mess that sucked me in. He never had enough money to pay his bills. He was always doing these stupid things to scare me: driving too fast, rock climbing without a rope, hiding behind doors and jumping out. That's why I liked you so much. You were different. You were cautious. You made me feel safe." She tugged pen-

sively at a strand of hair that fell into her face and then tucked it behind her ear. "You've been great, and I've had some fun, but you're too cautious, too safe. Maybe this isn't making any sense. It's like you don't leave anything to chance. It's like you're looking down at everything around you from some great height, weighing the options, qualifying, planning your next move. Sometimes I feel you see everything as if it was some algebra problem and you're solving for X, even with me, trying to see if I add up. You can't categorize everything. Everything doesn't add up—even when it's right. I mean, sometimes you can't be safe and cautious."

Suddenly Norman felt angry, felt heat rising through his neck and coloring his face, the same anger he'd felt after Carolyn's dig in the car. "What's wrong with caution?" he demanded, slamming his open palm down on the coffee table. An unlit red candle at the table's center teetered in its black terra cotta saucer, then toppled over. Carolyn looked at him with wide, shocked eyes.

"I get sick of hearing about how recklessness is this endearing quality"—Norman made a deliberate effort to lower his voice—"the rebellious charm girls love." He twined his fingers together. His hands shook. He glared at Carolyn, feeling a certain pleasure in having gotten her full attention. "I mean, what kind of world is it where people get by on dumb luck and good graces? Not a world I want any part of."

He tried to explain—how he could still remember the inattentive, bored faces of a few of his high school classmates: Andy Dumas, Jimmy Richards, Danny Manetas. He could name others. How they'd done poorly, really, had spent their money on stereo equipment and custom rims for their cars, smoked weed in the school parking lot, boozed it up, and bedded any girl they could. Blithe grins smeared across their faces, they sashayed across campus on loose joints, heads thrown back, squinting through black shades, not a care in the world, a reckless, live-for-today charm the girls, and even the teachers, found endearing. And watching them, Norman, for the first time in his life, had experienced a nascent pleasure he could never quite articulate then, knowing they'd somehow reached their zenith, that for them life after high school would forever be a tedious struggle, an existence of depleting habits and regrets, of trying to recapture a freedom they'd never really had. How could Norman make Carolyn understand? Caution, vigilance, carefulness. These were a safeguard against catastrophe; these were the secrets of success.

"I think I'm starting to see that I can't live in that world," Carolyn

said. "I can't live in a distant place where it's always me against everybody else, where I'm constantly on guard, trying to anticipate what's next." She stood and walked to the door, pausing there, one hand resting on the knob, the other fisted on her hip. "I don't even want to ask what you really think about me, Norman. I'm only beginning to see all the ways I don't measure up. I'm starting to wonder why you even asked me out in the first place. Seeing you now in your high, moral tower, I'm wondering how you can ask anyone out. Good-bye, Norman."

For the rest of the evening, Norman read through a *Newsweek* article on a shooting at a high school in Maine, but he understood very little of it. The words floated on the page so that he had to read sentences and whole paragraphs again. Finally, he turned off the lights and lay on the couch, replaying their argument and picking through it, rehearsing what he might have said. For a moment, this image—the image of him bounding down the concrete steps toward the parking lot, putting his arm around Carolyn's shoulders, and voicing his defense—satisfied Norman. But the image quickly soured as he thought of himself standing before her, solidifying the very image of himself that she disliked.

At 10:00 P.M., Norman, not fully understanding why, opened the telephone directory and wrote down the names of three jewelry shops.

* * *

The next morning, Norman sat in an office at Caesar's Jewelers, thumbing through glossy stacks of *Modern Bride* and *Wedding Bells*. Dark, oak paneling lined the walls and a bulky desk the exact color of the paneling occupied the center of the room. Behind the desk sat a rectangular safe whose polished black surface had the glossy sheen of used motor oil.

"The measure of anything, Mr. Reeves, is in the details," the jeweler said. He sat behind the desk, head tipped back, eyes closed. "Setting, cut of the diamond—it's crucial we get these right."

"Truthfully," Norman said, "this is kind of a surprise, I guess. I really don't know anything about rings. You're only the second jeweler I've seen."

This statement piqued the jeweler's interest. "Oh, I see," he said. As if suddenly aware of his sloping shoulders, he sat up straight, the leather squeaking under his shifting buttocks. "I'll beat any competitor, Mr. Reeves. Where've you been? Blue Boutique, Sierra-West?"

"Freidman's on South Temple. I only stopped in for a minute."

"Oh boy," the jeweler said, rolling his eyes. He plopped his hands on to the desktop as if he were about to rise. "Oh boy, oh boy. I'm not one to tell a man where to spend his money, but Friedman's out to milk people like *you*. I get couples in here all the time, practically in tears, because Friedman said he could save them a buck by making the setting himself. I've seen some of those settings, if you can call them that, Mr. Reeves. They're the kind of mess you'd expect from a high school jewelry class. I won't even go into the quality of his diamonds. Details, Mr. Reeves. And there's something else." From the desk he lifted a brass statuette of a dove with outstretched wings and hefted it in the palm of his right hand as though he were judging its weight. "He's not a brother, if you know what I mean. I don't even think he's Christian. It can be a shady business. I could tell you stories."

He put the dove down and threw himself back sharply in his chair, then leaned forward again. A tall, skeletal man in his late fifties with dyed, wiry hair, the jeweler drummed his long, thin fingers against the desk's lacquered surface. "Take your time," he said. "I assure you Friedman won't provide this level of service. You'll know the ring when you see it, Mr. Reeves. I, more than anyone else, understand that this process requires time and thought."

The jeweler wore three rings on his left hand. One bore the hologram of an NFL team that changed colors depending on the angle at which the light struck it. The other rings were thick gold bands crowned with diamonds. Each ring, particularly the one with the hologram, reminded Norman of jewelry he'd seen as a kid in quarter gumball machines. The gaudy rings and the gloomy office, though, didn't fit the jeweler. He wore a white button-up shirt with a brownish ring around the collar and dark suit pants that bunched at the waist where the belt buckled.

He saw Norman staring at the rings.

"How much do you think they're worth?" the jeweler asked.

"No idea," Norman said.

"Take a guess."

Knowing the man wanted him to guess a lowball figure and then be surprised at the actual cost, Norman, not wanting to be contrary, played along. "Seven thousand dollars. Maybe eight or nine."

"Thirty thousand for the three," the jeweler said, brushing at something imaginary on the polished desktop, as if thirty thousand dollars were a drop in the bucket, chump change. "And check this out." He set his

arm on the desk and inched up his shirt sleeve in a slow tease to show Norman the silver Rolex strapped to his lean wrist. Then shooting his cuffs, he sank back into the plush leather with a satisfied grin parting his thin lips, as if he'd just proven something of great importance. "Diamonds, platinum, gold—they speak, Mr. Reeves. You probably don't realize that. When I walk into a crowded restaurant at lunch, do you think I wait for a table? When I stroll into a car dealership with these babies shining, do you think I'm dickering with Joe Salesman on a grimy plastic lawn chair in the showroom? No way. These open doors, Mr. Reeves." He rapped the desk with his bony knuckles. "Think about that."

"I don't even know what she wants." Norman closed the copy of *Modern Bride* he'd been perusing and pushed it away. "Maybe I've made a mistake."

Breathing a ponderous, dramatic sigh, the jeweler interlaced his fingers and rested them serenely on the desk, his face suddenly weighed down, revealing a small network of hairline wrinkles around his mouth and eyes, a transformation imbued with a fatherly quality, and Norman almost expected the jeweler's next words to be: "Son, listen to me and I will tell you how the world works." The air conditioning clicked on, showering down a frigid jet of air on Norman. He shifted in his seat, suddenly feeling cold and constricted. Why did this man feel it necessary to dish out advice, Norman wondered. Was there something about him that screamed out for it?

"It's always the same scenario," the jeweler said, "all guys, not much different than you, who want this to be a surprise, a moment she'll never forget, but they don't know what she wants. Am I right?"

Norman nodded.

"Quite a conundrum. But let me tell you something, and this is the truth, the God-honest truth, from one brother to another: you pay for what you get, Mr. Reeves." The jeweler stared at his rings, holding them up against the light. "Women are infinitely more observant than men. Especially in these delicate matters. They notice the quality of the setting and the size of the diamond, especially the diamond. It becomes a point of conversation, how big so-and-so's diamond is, if the setting's platinum. Small details, Mr. Reeves." The jeweler put his hand over his heart. "You wouldn't believe how many unhappy women I see because their husbands go cheap. That's the truth. And guess who has to wear the evidence of that for a lifetime? It's a bad way to start things off, don't you think, Mr. Reeves?"

Cold air hissed through the ceiling vents. The jeweler kneaded his

bony hands together, warming to the subject, staring expectantly at Norman as if waiting for a hint of validation. Norman, sitting across from this man, understood the simple dynamic of their relationship, the businessman, with his expertise and skills, providing a service for a profit. Norman also understood the rhetoric: the subtle persuasion, colored with sentimentality, building on guilt. This didn't bother Norman. There was something else.

It was this: In their short time together, the jeweler had pegged him as a cheapskate, and Norman wondered when he'd arrived at this conclusion: the moment the jeweler greeted him at the door? when he'd invited Norman into the back office? maybe when he saw Norman striding across the parking lot?

Suddenly the jeweler threw his hands up as if signaling defeat, though Norman hadn't said anything. "But, hey, I'm not going to twist your arm. That's not my business. You spend your dime the way you want. If you want to go small, I have some Black Hills gold settings and cubic zirconium. It's your choice." The jeweler formed a small triangle with his fingers. "But to tell you truthfully, it's a waste of my time. You can buy jewelry like that in a Sears catalog."

Despite the cold air filling the room, Norman felt a tepid stickiness building under his arms and across his forehead. Slightly dizzy, he clutched the arm rest to steady himself. "I want to do this right," Norman said. He knew what he must say next. His tongue clicked in the dry sheath of his mouth, practicing the words: *Cost isn't an issue*. And then he said them, his voice sounding carefree and unencumbered, like a man who really meant it.

"I knew it the moment I saw you," the jeweler erupted, slapping his palms against the desk top. "When I first saw you, I said to myself, 'Here's a man who's not going to let price stand in the way of love.' I respect that, Mr. Reeves, I admire that."

The jeweler offered his hand and Norman shook it, warmed by the man's sudden ebullience.

"Why don't we get comfortable?" the jeweler said. He pushed a green, illuminated button on the phone. A high, feminine voice crackled through the speaker: "Yes, Mr. Livingston."

"Fran," the jeweler said, "why don't you bring us in some lemonade"—he shot Norman a wink—"and some of those chocolate biscotti I like." The jeweler stared at Norman. "So here we are," he said.

"Should I keep looking through this?" Norman asked, resting his hand on *Modern Bride.*

"Look through that?" the jeweler said incredulously. He grabbed the magazine by the spine, dangling it at an arm's length as if it were something grossly offensive. Then he heaved it over his shoulder without looking. "We're beyond magazines, Mr. Reeves." Still grinning at Norman, he scooted his chair backwards and began working the brass dial on the safe. "Haven't you learned anything from what I've said today? You, Mr. Reeves, have just moved to the next level."

* * *

Norman picked up the ring on Saturday.

The jeweler walked with him to the door, draping his long arm over Norman's shoulder. "Good luck in California," he said. "It's a bold move. I have no doubt she'll be overjoyed. That's why I love this business. There's seldom bad news." The jeweler opened the door. "Think of us in the future, Mr. Reeves."

Excited and carefree, Norman drove home slowly, cracking the window to let the cool mid-morning air wash over him. He wanted to speak with someone, to pull the polished ring case from his pocket, to confess that he was going to California to propose to Carolyn. Calling his parents was not an option. Norman feared the provident, penetrating tone of his father's voice building to disappointment, feared his probing questions: *How well do you know this girl? How much did you spend? Isn't this all a bit hasty?*–bristling questions Norman could only contain by avoiding them. Norman could think of no one from the ward to share his excitement. News of his impending journey and intentions might reach Carolyn before his arrival. In the end, Norman decided to visit Cameron.

Norman knocked at the door. "Who's there?" Erica asked. Norman told her and then heard what he thought was a curse and then a slamming cupboard door.

Cameron opened the door, squinting through the radiant morning light. "It's early."

"It's already ten," Norman said. "I can't sleep past six-thirty."

"We were up late," Cameron said. He stepped out of the doorway so Norman could pass, waving him in. "Come in before I change my mind."

The living room was still dark and shaded, but Norman could see the clutter from last night's festivities: the coffee table littered with empty

soda cans and half-full bowls of chocolates and nuts, a Monopoly board speckled with tiny game pieces and paper money. Erica, in a blue terrycloth robe, loafed on a naugahyde couch the color of peanut butter, and Cameron paced the room, tidying things up, chatting nervously.

"New couch?" asked Norman.

"I guess we haven't seen you in a while," Cameron said, sweeping the Monopoly pieces and paper money into the game box with his palm. "We also bought a plasma TV."

"How much that set you back?"

"About two grand."

Norman made a sucking noise. "Two grand," he repeated, throwing a quick glance at Erica. Her silence was unnerving. She stared at him, head slightly tipped forward, scrutinizing him from where she sat.

"Well, unlike you," Cameron said, "We're not in a monastic order. We actually spend our money."

Still standing near the door, unsure of what do with his hands, Norman wondered why they hadn't asked him to sit down.

"So what about you?" asked Cameron. "Still dating that girl? What's her name? Shannon, right?"

"Carolyn," Norman corrected, "and funny you ask. We're getting married."

"That poor girl," Erica said, breaking her bored silence. She thumbed through a *Cosmopolitan* and yawned.

"She's always so sarcastic in the morning," Cameron said, shooting Erica a look Norman couldn't interpret. "You know how she is. She never wakes up until noon."

"This will wake her up." Norman fished the ring case from his pant pocket and opened it. Even in the room's weak light, the diamonds sparkled.

Erica perked up, rising slightly onto her knee to examine the ring. Cameron nodded his head.

"Cubic zirconium and white gold," Erica said. "Or is it sterling silver? I know you, Norman. You wouldn't spend more than seven hundred."

"Platinum setting and a one carat diamond," Norman said. "Eight thousand dollars plus tax and insurance. Monday I drive to California to surprise her. Ring. Flowers. Down on one knee. Right in front of her family."

"Who is this guy?" Cameron said, grinning broadly. "Where's that old Norman Reeves? So unlike you. This from the guy who didn't go to our senior party because he'd be out too late."

"Does it have a return policy?" Erica asked flatly.

"Ignore her," Cameron said. "We're both happy for you. We really are. Aren't we, honey?" He moved toward the door and Norman followed. "Taking the plunge and all, that's great, really great. Your mother will be happy. Somebody to clutter your life a little. That'll be good for you." He pointed at his watch. "I don't mean to hurry you along, but I have some friends from work coming over to watch the game and we need to scour this place." He opened the door.

"I'll send an announcement," Norman said.

"You do that. And good luck. When you get back, I'll call you."

Norman wanted to ask Cameron if someone in a monastic order would plop down eight grand for a ring, but the door shut before he could. As he walked to his car, Norman wondered why Cameron hadn't invited him to watch the game.

* * *

Eighty miles into Nevada, Norman's car began making a sharp metallic noise, something like loose change rattling in a dryer, and then a translucent veil of acrid, yellowish smoke began pouring from beneath the car. Just as Norman pulled off at the next exit, the car stalled, coming to a lurching halt on the ramp's gravel shoulder. When he turned the key, the engine whined faintly but wouldn't start. A worn atlas in hand, he stepped onto the scorching asphalt, the lurid sun pounding down like a hammer. He opened the atlas on the hood and traced the faint line of Interstate 80 to the town he'd passed earlier, a vague memory—a casino with a flashing billboard, a gas station, a decaying mobile home park surrounded by a sagging chain link fence. *Wells, Nevada*.

Norman tried to get his bearings. In the distance, barely distinguishable from the blanched landscape, he saw a dilapidated farmhouse and began walking toward it, hoping to find a phone that could get some reception since his didn't. Before he reached the stop sign at the end of the off ramp, a kid in a dusty pick-up wearing a frayed cowboy hat and no shirt—Norman believed he couldn't have been more than fourteen— stopped and offered to send help. Norman thanked him and waited by the car, lifting his

head and squinting into the fierce sun whenever a vehicle topped the rise in the interstate and agitated the desert's vast, ghostly silence.

After forty-five minutes, a tow truck materialized from the striated heat rising from the scorching road, a massive thing with a long flat bed and dual chrome exhaust pipes on each side of the cab. The tow man nodded as he pulled onto the shoulder and then backed up until the truck's bumper almost touched Norman's car. He jumped from the cab and pulled on a pair of soiled leather gloves, making a business of it, gaping at Norman through dark sunglasses and smirking as if what he saw amused him. Leaning against the truck cab, he yanked a lever that sent the bed into a sluggish, grinding tilt, and while waiting, he lifted his glasses and wiped at his forehead with the back of his gloved hand. "I bet you're wondering how I'm going to do it," he said, staring at Norman with bulging, vapid eyes.

"Pardon," Norman said.

"I bet you're wondering," the man said slowly, making a little pantomime with his hands, one palm rubbing against the other. "I bet you're wondering how I'm going to get your car on the bed of this truck." He opened a metal box under the truck bed and pulled out four greasy chains. "Everyone wonders. Last week I had a van load of Japs stop and take pictures of me loading a car. I swear to God, they took a hundred pictures, jabbering on in their Jap language, smiling ear to ear. Couldn't even see their eyes, just slits really, so excited, I thought they'd piss themselves."

Not knowing what to say, Norman turned away and said nothing, relieved when the shrill whine of hydraulics and clattering chains discouraged any dialogue. Gazing at the broad sky, Norman fingered the ring case in his front pocket, tense and anxious. The sun, suspended in the expansive sky like a child's ball, had reached its apex. Everything appeared washed out and muted, dingy browns and dull greens in every direction. Norman kicked at a faded beer can and sent it skipping down the gravel embankment.

"Almost there," the tow man said. He attached a chain to the car's undercarriage and slowly hoisted the vehicle up the angled bed. Norman watched the mechanical process, the pulley motor straining, the car inching forward against the tug of gravity, shuddering slightly—a fly suspended in a web. And then the bed of the truck, bearing the weight of the car, came level, and the tow man secured the chains over the axles and boomed them down, kicking the taut metal, turning away satisfied. He waved Norman to the passenger door. "I have to tell you now," he said,

pulling the gloves off and shoving them into his back pocket, "we're a good twenty miles out of town. Ain't going to be cheap."

Wanting to say, "It never is cheap, is it?" Norman, instead, said nothing. Head lowered, he opened the door on the passenger side of the cab, slightly cheered that his MasterCard provided a towing reimbursement for such emergencies.

Norman nudged himself into the mess collecting on the worn vinyl seat—fast food wrappers, loose paper, and a few glossy magazines with women in bikinis bent provocatively over the hoods and roofs of flashy, souped-up cars with wide tires and ornate chrome rims. The cab smelled distinctly of motor oil and dirt, and the air was thick with dust. Norman rifled through the clutter around him searching for the seatbelt latch, ready to stick his hand into the seat's dark crevices when the tow man spoke.

"Won't find it," he said, slamming the truck into gear, spinning the tires as he pulled onto the road. "Got rid of them a while ago. Read something in the newspaper about how many people die from wearing seat belts. Car rolls into a lake, you can't get your seat belt off. It happens more than you think, you know what I mean?"

Norman made a low, grunting noise, neither a positive nor a negative reply. He wanted to collapse into himself, empty his lungs of air and be gone, close his eyes and wake up a hundred miles from this stifling cab and the crass figure occupying its foul space.

"My friends call me Curly," the tow man said, extending a callused, grease-stained hand Norman reluctantly grasped. His forearms were thick and tanned a deep brown, the muscles like tight rope pushing against the skin, and Norman couldn't help thinking how pale and soft his hand appeared in Curly's sturdy grip.

Curly wore a gun on his hip, partly concealed under the greasy, threadbare shirt he wore untucked; and when he saw Norman eyeing it, he explained he carried it for job security. "Last month alone," he said, "two of my buddies in Elko almost got robbed. The cops call it attempted robbery, but you never know what'll happen. A few years ago, I heard of a tow truck driver out of Vegas who got shot in the head, execution style, murdered for forty bucks, and then dumped in a canal. Far be it from me to make a racial slur, but I say it's these wetbacks moving their drugs across the border. I can see you're a Utah boy by your license plate, and I know you're getting them over there, too. I have an uncle outside St. George. Says you can't turn into Home Depot without almost running one down

in the parking lot. Hell, it's the same all over the West I hear: L.A., Vegas, Salt Lake City. And it's not just the drugs and the crime. White people are becoming a minority. Excuse me if that sounds bad, but it keeps me up at night. I have two daughters in Elko. I have to think about them. My family goes back in this county two hundred and fifty years, and some dark-skinned invader from the south waltzes in here and wants a free piece of the pie, wants to take food from my babies' mouths. Doesn't that piss you off, paying someone's way?"

The question bothered Norman, the man bothered Norman, everything within the grasp of Norman's senses bothered him—the abrasive sun, the stifling heat in the cab, the dashboard clock, Curly's provincial drawl and crude demeanor. Norman had already conceived his own hard-nosed views on illegal immigration, views not so different from Curly's, but he didn't want to concur. He didn't want Curly to think they had anything in common. "It's a complicated situation," Norman said.

"Don't think I'm racist," Curly said. "Not at all. But some of these people will steal your car because you're white, because they think you're loaded. They don't care about giving, they just want to take, take, take, and they don't care from who. And then you see it on the news, the random violence. They'll shoot you in the head and not blink an eye. They're monsters." Curly adjusted the air vent and cleared his throat. "I hope I haven't offended you. But you have to understand my work: dark, deserted roads, strangers. I'm one who sees and hears things in the dark."

He smiled. Norman could see the yellow glint of his teeth. "Hell, I wish all my customers were like you, clean-cut and white bread. You know, you look like a guy I knew from high school, this guy voted Nicest in Class. No joking. Scott Chandler, great guy. You could have nailed his sister to a tree and skinned her alive, and he wouldn't have raised his voice. No one liked him, though. Too nice, too boring."

Curly, as if suddenly taking notice of the filth surrounding him, threw a few of the magazines and some of the hamburger wrappers behind the seat. "So tell me," he said, "a good boy like you, what's the worst thing you've ever done?"

The heat and the metrical hum of the diesel engine had lulled Norman into a semi-conscious state. He'd listened to little of what Curly had said, but the question—*What's the worst thing you've ever done?*—jolted him awake.

Curly smiled, showing his dingy teeth and gray, swollen gums. "The

worst thing you've ever done. Just between me and you. Our little secret. The worst thing you've never told anyone."

Norman, not knowing why, suddenly felt panic, his palms damp, his hands trembling, his mind frozen.

"Forget it," Curly said. "Forget I asked." He switched on the CB radio near the gearshift.

Norman wiped at his sodden forehead. The question persisted like a noisome, lingering odor. What was the worst thing he'd done? On a Webelos campout twenty years ago, he'd tested the blade of his pocketknife by cutting through the rain fly on Brother Seegmiller's tent, and then blamed it on Cliff Wallace, a smelly welfare case all the boys secretly called Pigpen. In junior high, on a dare, he phoned Christie Reed's house when she'd gone to the movies with friends and told her parents she'd been in a car accident, and then gave them the number of the county morgue. Later, in high school, he and Cameron left an unkind note on the windshield of an obnoxious, overweight girl in their European history class. Norman heard she committed suicide a few years after graduation.

Considering these small cruelties, even after so many years, Norman still felt an immense weight for what he'd done, a crippling guilt seeping into his whirring mind as he tossed in bed at night, unable to sleep, comforted only by repeating to himself again and again that these mistakes had saved him from larger mistakes. One's hold to the Iron Rod is tenuous at best, Norman had always believed. Life could quickly turn tragic, one small mistake begetting another, and then another, until the unspeakable occurred. Yet at times, Norman wondered if, in his effort to stay on the strait and narrow, he'd missed out on something.

The CB crackled. A distant, twangy voice, devoid of emotion, announced the details of a car accident south of town: rollover, station wagon, Lifeflight chopper en route, clean-up requested. Curly whooped loudly. Wide-eyed, licking his lips, he turned to Norman: "That's a hundred and twenty dollars in my pocket. It sounds bad, I know, but the more accidents the more money I make."

* * *

THREE GUYS AND A GAL AUTOMOTIVE. The faded sign rose above a cinderblock building with two open bays gaping like dark, toothless mouths. Dust-stained and deteriorating, the building blended with the barren desert around it. Norman, at first glance, thought it might be a

wrecking yard, an automotive graveyard littered with rows of afflicted cars: flat tires, peeling paint, and gutted interiors, a wasteland from which cars never returned.

Curly swung the truck through the narrow chain-link gate and braked harder than was necessary, jumped from the cab and loosened the chains mooring the car to the truck bed.

"Help me give her a shove," Curly said to Norman, and together they pushed the car into an open bay.

After Curly had returned his credit card, Norman thanked him, and then began walking toward the mechanic's office, happy to be done with Curly. Before he reached the door, someone yelled his name. Norman turned and saw Curly jump from the truck and run over. "Listen," he said, practically panting from the short sprint. "I've been thinking I offended you back there."

Raising his eyebrows to convey a surprise he didn't feel, Norman said, "No, not at all." And then: "It's been a very long day. I just don't feel that chatty. That's all." Norman, standing in the wash of Curly's rank breath, felt constricted, felt as if he wanted to tear at his own skin and scream. What did this man want, some kind of validation of his worth as a human being? A friendly, sympathetic sounding board? What? A service had been rendered and paid for, a receipt given. Norman thanked Curly again and turned to leave, feeling he owed this man nothing more.

"I have this feeling you don't think much of me. Maybe you think I'm some kind of brute," Curly said, patting the gun on his hip. "Understand this isn't Utah. This place is isolated, out in the middle of nowhere. You see strange things. And this business of making money from accidents"—he paused, looked off toward the interstate and then back to Norman—"it's not like I'm a vulture. Somebody has to do it. Somebody has to get their hands dirty to clean things up. Hell, it puts bread on the table for my babies. Don't that make it right?"

Norman didn't like the insinuation that by his living in Utah he was innocent and needed a lecture on the world's sad realities. "Really, I'm not offended. As I said, it's been a long day. I've been distracted."

"I understand," Curly said. "I didn't want you to have the wrong impression of me. You're a nice guy. I didn't want to shake you up or anything."

Stepping toward the mechanic's office, Norman said, "I'm fine. It was nice to meet you. Good luck."

"Hey, I'll tell you what," Curly said, slapping his hands together. "I'll do this job and when I get back, I'll take you out for a drink, show you the town."

Norman felt his jaw drop, felt the dry wind on the tip of his tongue. He looked up and down the narrow street, Wells's main thoroughfare. To the west he could see the blinking lights of the casino and to the east a few bars and a mobile home park. "I appreciate the offer," Norman said, "but I plan to be on the road by then."

Curly smiled and then began tapping his foot. "You don't get it. Your engine's toast. I can smell it from here. There's no way you're getting out tonight. So what do you say? My treat."

"I don't drink," Norman said.

"Then a cup of coffee."

"I don't drink coffee."

"That's right. You're one of those Mormon boys," Curly said, shaking his head. "You wear a short leash. I respect that. How about a soda then? Do you drink soda?"

Norman couldn't speak. He felt the silence gathering and knew Curly wouldn't take no for an answer.

"All right. A soda."

"Good," Curly said. "About two hours. I'll be back." He mounted the truck and, just before closing the door, turned to Norman: "Hey, tonight you can even crash at my place if you want."

Norman watched the truck move toward the freeway and knew he would do anything to be somewhere else when Curly returned.

* * *

Norman sat on the worn couch in the office and picked at a yellowed newspaper he'd found stuffed between the couch cushions, creasing the faded pages loudly and staring through an open door leading into the garage, where the two mechanics seemed oblivious to him. Both wore navy blue coveralls unzipped to their navels, exposing hairy, distended bellies. One smoked a cigarette near the open bay door and the other was bent over the engine of a black Ford truck, tapping his heavy black boots to the drone of a radio bleating out "Smoke on the Water." Norman's car, its hood up, sat forlornly on the far side of garage. Norman looked at his watch and drew a long breath.

"Gee, I hope you don't need to be somewhere tonight," a woman

said. She walked across the room and sat at a metal desk cluttered with yellow carbon copies and dirty coffee mugs with oil-smudged handles. She grabbed a bag of potato chips someone had left there and started eating. She was about Norman's age, skin tanned to a deep bronze, hair sun-streaked.

"No hope of getting out tonight?" Norman said, hoping his expectant smile might prompt her to hurry the mechanics.

"I'll be honest with you," she said. "This is the only garage in town. These guys tend to take their time." She tipped the bag of chips in Norman's directions. "Want some?"

"No, thanks. I really don't have much of an appetite."

"It's probably for the best," she said, throwing the bag on the desk. "Doctors say these things will kill you. Hydrogenated oil. That's what does it."

"Bad stuff," Norman said. He peered through the dusty window at the sign. Already its shadow was growing longer over the mass of crippled cars littering the parking lot.

"I'm the gal," the woman said.

Norman turned from the window. "Pardon me."

She pointed to the sign. "Three Guys and a Gal. I'm the gal." She crossed her legs and smiled, showing a row of straight, radiant teeth so white it seemed that light emanated from them. Norman wanted to compliment her but decided against it, wondering if she might interpret his observation as a come-on.

Through the open door came the sound of metal striking concrete. The mechanic working on the black Ford picked up a long wrench that had fallen to the floor and began fingering it as if it were a guitar, leaning back and pumping his head from side to side. The other mechanic stood over Norman's car, peering at the engine, the burning nub of a cigarette pinched between his black fingers.

"So you're the gal?" Norman said, cheered at the sight of the mechanic. "Where's the third mechanic? Did he get fired and nobody's changed the sign?"

It was meant as a joke, but the woman became very serious. "Oh, he's not around anymore," she said. She picked up a stack of papers and stared at them a moment before putting them aside. "I'm Maggie," she said, smiling again.

Norman meant for the conversation to stop there, but she asked

him a few questions and to be polite, he felt he should ask her a few. She had been born in Wells, lived there all her life except for briefly attending a small college in Colorado. She was unmarried and had been working at the garage for the last three years. "But this isn't the only thing I do," she said. "If I had to define myself solely by this job, I think I'd go mad. This is just something steady with benefits, something to pay the bills. What I really like to do is make herbal products, soaps and oils, facial scrubs, lotions. I sell them on the web. It's all about helping people achieve balance, about finding inner peace."

"Soaps and oils," Norman said. "I didn't realize there was much of a market."

"You'd be surprised," Maggie said. "I ship products to New Zealand and Finland. They're things I make in my house. There's a personalized touch. People like that."

Norman imagined large metal vats of bubbling lye and Maggie standing over them in goggles and a rubber apron, stirring the seething concoction with a long metal pole, pouring in beakers of scented oils. He imagined her body leaning into it, her narrow hips turning in small circles, her bare arms, a glistening line of sweat on her upper lip. Norman stared at the weave in the brown carpet and ran his hand quickly across his forehead as if the movement might erase this image of Maggie from his mind.

"So what about you?" Maggie asked. "I've been chattering away and I don't even know your name."

"Norman Reeves."

"Norman Reeves," Maggie said, repeating the name a few times as if practicing it for recitation. "I can't say I've met many Normans. In fact, you might be the first. The only Norman I can think of is Norman Bates from *Psycho*." Maggie narrowed her eyes and lowered her voice to an ominous whisper. "So Norman, do you have your dead mother stashed away somewhere? Do you dress in her clothes and speak in her voice and prey on vulnerable young women searching for a new life?"

"Nothing that exciting," Norman said, grasping the joke. "It's a family name. My great-grandpa—I don't know how many greats back—crossed the plains in the dead of winter pushing a handcart. I guess it's supposed to be inspiring. I've never liked it. And the diminutive's not much better. *Norm*. It makes me think of an obese alcoholic."

"What? You think you got problems?" Maggie said, her eyes bright

and playful. She leaned forward as if to impart a confidence, and Norman could smell her perfume circling the room, something like vanilla. "I'll tell you a secret," she whispered. "Maggie's my middle name. I'm really named after my grandma." She looked around and then spoke. "Her name was Elva. Isn't that horrible?"

Laughing, his hand covering his mouth, Norman tried to think of something to say. He felt awkward and disoriented, finding it strange that, after all the inconvenience the day had proffered, he now sat with a beautiful woman, having nothing to say, unsure if he should even be speaking with her.

"So what do you do?" Maggie asked. "For work, I mean." And when Norman told her, she said: "It must be nice to help people."

Norman cleared his throat and stared at the floral print on the couch with its faded arabesques of leafy boughs topped with pink flowers. "It is," Norman said.

This admission—that he was a guidance counselor—always garnered the same response from those who didn't know him: *It must be nice to help people*. This bothered Norman. Those who knew him, always scratched their heads, confessing they'd pegged him as something else when they'd first met him—an accountant, an engineer, someone who balanced rows of numbers or great masses of metal or concrete. Privately, Norman felt that he was a poor match for his chosen profession. He thought of the students who'd passed through his office, most of them slackers, oozing a palpable bravado and indifference he could sense in the way they shuffled along with no hurry or urgency, sedated, faces as blank as a cue ball, slouching and yawning as he intoned the rhetoric of fear, quoting statistics on drug use, hefting glossy pictures of doe-eyed meth addicts, painting the stark realities of the adult world as vividly as possible. Norman's scalp tingled. There was a dull ache pulsing behind his eyes. Who was he to lecture anyone? Who was he to speak with authority? He couldn't even get to California. He couldn't keep a girlfriend. And then there were the more troubled students Norman met with weekly, kids who emanated a deep hatred for everything around them. He sensed they heard nothing but white noise when he spoke, saw nothing but a hypocrite in a shirt and tie reciting facts. Norman often wondered if they saw in him a contempt for the world and disaffection equal to their own, a pained, lonely cynic as broken and jaded as themselves.

"I don't have any formal training, but I think I know when people

need help," Maggie said. "When I walked in, I saw you were having a bad day. Maybe sometimes it's enough just to talk with someone, to have a connection, and that makes a problem seem smaller. That's the way I see things. Is that strange?"

"Not at all," Norman said. He could truthfully say he felt better just talking with Maggie.

Maggie rubbed her right knee and then straightened both legs. "So where you going?"

"California," Norman said. And then he told her about Carolyn, about the ring in his pocket and his plan to propose.

"Very romantic," Maggie said. "And she doesn't know you're coming?"

"No idea at all," Norman said.

At that moment the mechanic who'd been inspecting Norman's car walked into the office. Norman jumped, suddenly feeling panicked, as if he'd been caught doing something wrong.

"Don't you need to deposit those checks?" the man asked Maggie.

She pulled an envelope from the top desk drawer and said: "I almost forgot." She looked over her shoulder as she walked through door. "It's been nice, Norman. It really has."

"It has," Norman said, noticing she had the smallest limp, a favoring of the left leg over the right. She got into a blue pick-up truck and drove toward the interstate.

"Women," the mechanic said, sitting down heavily behind the desk and making a wide sweeping motion with his arm in the direction Maggie had driven away. "Especially this one. She's a dreamer, always has her head in the clouds, always talking about the stars and moon." He yawned and scratched at a woolly patch of dark hair poking through the neck of his coveralls.

Norman cleared his throat. "What's wrong with my car?"

The mechanic pulled a short section of black rubber hose from his pocket and flopped it on the desk. "You see that hole? You lost all your radiator fluid. Overheated and shot your engine to hell. Blown head gasket."

Norman knew very little about cars, but had a vague notion that a blown head gasket was a major problem. "How much?" he asked.

"How much?" the mechanic said. "That's what everyone wants to know." He took a thick green book from a dusty shelf above the desk and began flipping through the pages and then writing columns of numbers

on a legal pad. "Parts and labor will cost two thousand, plus or minus a hundred. Might have to replace the water pump."

The words felt like a kick to the guts. Norman, speechless, stared at the mechanic's name embroidered on the breast of his coveralls. *Lou*. The name was like a stereotype, like a joke people make about bad mechanics.

"So what do you want to do?" the mechanic asked. He'd found the bag of chips and shoved a handful in his mouth, wiping his hand on his pant leg.

"Are you sure?" Norman said. "That seems high."

"Positive," the mechanic said. "It's straight from the book. Look for yourself if you want." He smiled. "I'd tell you to get a second opinion, but what can you do?"

Norman knew the cost of repairs wasn't worth it. The car was old, his grandmother's car, a gift she'd given him when he graduated from college six years earlier. He could get another car. What bothered him was that he wanted out of this town. He looked around the office, at the faded walls and furniture, all in various stages of decay, a reflection of the view through the window. People live in this. The thought baffled Norman.

By now the mechanic was drumming his fingers against the binding of the green book, waiting.

"I don't even think the car is worth two thousand dollars," Norman said.

"I got a buddy who owns a junk yard across town," the mechanic said. "He'll probably give you fifty bucks for it." He paused and then began picking at the grit under his thumbnail with the tip of a pencil. "I have to charge you a twenty-five dollar diagnostic fee for looking at the car."

Norman handed the cash over. The mechanic counted the bills and then shoved them in his pocket. "I don't mean to hurry you along," he said, "but we're closing. If you want, there's a motel near the freeway, not more than ten minutes on foot. I think the Greyhound passes by there tomorrow afternoon or maybe it's the day after tomorrow."

* * *

Norman left the mechanic's office. A hot wind blew through the empty streets, and overhead the streetlights flicked on, making an annoying buzzing sound. Norman, a backpack with a few clothes and toiletries looped around his shoulder, walked toward a restaurant he'd seen earlier from the cab of Curly's truck, a cinderblock building with a neon sign

broadcasting its name in an obnoxious red: The Ranch House. Norman walked toward the building, thinking he'd call someone for a ride and then have something to eat.

The restaurant door was locked, though Norman could hear a susurrus of voices inside. A red curtain that hung on the inside of the door suddenly parted and a man with a bloated pink face and a stubble of blond hair on his freckled head pointed at a doorbell to the right of the door. "You have to ring the bell," he said, his voice a murmur through the glass.

Norman pressed the button and waited. A woman in a low-cut red dress and black stiletto heels, blond and heavily made-up, opened the door. "What can I do for you?" she said in a low breathy voice whose affectation made each word sound sticky. She stared at Norman, her lips constricted, as if she were suppressing laughter.

"Is there a phone I can use?" Norman asked.

"Come in," she said, leaning against the doorjamb and leaving just enough room for Norman to squeeze by. "You just need to use the phone?" She spoke the words slowly, as if to leave room for Norman to interject something.

"I might order something, too," Norman said, sliding past the woman, feeling the swell of her soft breasts touch his shoulder. She smelled of lavender, a scent Norman could taste in the back of his throat. "Is there a menu I can look at?"

The playfulness drained out of the woman's face. "A menu? You're serious, aren't you?"

"Isn't this a restaurant?"

The woman began to laugh, head thrown back, eyes glistening. "If you want a restaurant, honey, you got the wrong place. This is a . . ." She paused. Her eyes searched the ceiling. "I bet you thought I was your waitress, didn't you? Thought I'd walk you to a table and take your order."

Norman could feel the crimson burning in his cheeks, could see the rising color in his cheeks reflected in an antique mirror near the door, could see himself crumpling, shoulders falling, arms crossed tightly over his chest.

"You never heard of the Ranch House?" she asked. "Where you from?"

"I just need to make a call," Norman said, looking around the room, feeling at the very center of it. "Just the phone."

Men, mostly truckers, Norman thought, judging by the big rigs in the parking lot, were scattered throughout the room, slouching around wooden tables, playing cards. And why hadn't Norman noticed it before: no plates on the tables, no crumpled napkins, no smell of food, only the stench of stale cigarette smoke, alcohol, and perfume. The room hummed with a palpable tension, a tightness and anticipation permeating the men's eager faces, animating their coarse speech. Their eyes darted about, drawn mostly to a pulled black curtain that hung in the back of the room. Norman felt revulsion for all of them. He wanted to run out the door as a sign of protest, but knew this action would be only another source of laughter for this woman, a story she'd recount later to amuse her colleagues.

The woman, seeming to tire of Norman, pointed him toward a dim hallway. "If you decide you want more than just the phone," she told Norman, "take a seat anywhere."

Not turning to acknowledge her, Norman wove through the tables, avoiding the curious eyes following him. He lifted the phone and listened to the dull pulse, seeing across the room that the woman at the door was speaking with a co-worker, a short woman in a red strapless dress carrying an empty drink tray. Both were gawking at him and laughing.

Turning away from them, Norman dialed Cameron's number and waited. After three rings, Erica answered.

"Erica, I need to speak with Cameron."

"Who is this?"

Suddenly Norman heard an eruption of sound behind him, a twangy country song with a sharp steel guitar, clapping, voices shouting over the steady beat of drums. Norman cupped his hand against the phone. "This is Norman." He paused. "Norman Reeves."

"Cameron isn't here," she said. "Call back later."

Her voice began to fade, so Norman had to shout. "Wait, don't hang up. Erica, please." Then he told her about the trip, about the car and the mechanic, and how he was stuck and wanted a ride. "You need to come get me," he said. "As soon as possible."

"I'm through waiting on you hand and foot," Erica said. "What gives you the right to order me around? After all we've done for you. And not even the courtesy of a thank you."

Norman was shocked, wanting to believe he hadn't heard her. "I don't understand," he said.

"Listen," Erica said. "When you stayed with us, you never once volun-

teered to do the dishes, never once vacuumed the floor, never cleaned the bathroom, or paid a bill. All you ever did was sit around and talk about how reckless and misguided the world is, how you're better than everyone. Do you know your mom used to call Cameron every month practically in tears, begging him to help you, to set you up with a nice girl? It's hopeless, Norman. But you got everything figured out, so figure your way a ride home."

At that moment a hand clamped onto Norman's shoulder and spun him around. He immediately recognized the face, the dark, vacuous eyes and the yellow teeth framed between two thin lips.

"Of all the places," Curly said, his words thick and slurred, his breath sour. "I never thought I'd find a good boy like you here." He draped his arm over Norman's shoulder.

"I need to go," Norman said. He tried to lift Curly's arm, but it held him tightly.

Curly waved to a woman across the room. "Marta, bring a Coke for my boy Norm. No, bring a Sprite."

Three women, all wearing short red dresses that glittered in a false and irritating way, circled the tables carrying drink trays. Others sat at the tables. One sat on a man's lap, laughing, her head thrown back, her hand kneading his arm. The black curtain was open, revealing a long hallway that led to some rooms. One door was open. There was a bed in the room and a black light that made the bedspread look like neon liquid.

"Please," Norman said. He suddenly felt sick. "I need to go."

Curly raised his hand and whistled. "Everyone, this is my friend, Norm, one of those Utah boys, voted nicest in his high school class. His car broke down and he won't be leaving tonight, but while he's here he's chosen the finest entertainment in town."

The room erupted in a chorus of shouts and wolf calls. A few men lifted their glasses and winked.

"Looks like your friend needs to loosen up a little," one waitress called out. Norman could see dark freckles on her chest. They reminded him of constellations. "Maybe I should give him a freebie just to put a smile on his face."

Again the room erupted. Norman stared at the circles of smiling faces and felt as if his mind had shrunk into something no larger than a pebble.

Lifting a sweaty glass of beer to his peeling lips, Curly said, "Well, what do you say? Isn't that hospitality?"

"I don't feel well," Norman said. He turned for the door. Curly's arm slackened on his shoulder.

"What do you mean?" Curly said. "Why'd you come here in the first place?" He set his glass down and took a step toward Norman. "You don't have any explaining to do, Norm. You're among friends. No one's going to tell, and no one's going to care."

Norman didn't turn back when he heard a crescendo of laughter and boos. He opened the door and decided he was doing the right thing.

* * *

Norman walked toward the motel, passing a bar with a wagon wheel suspended over the door. Through the window, he watched a dozen couples, hands clasped together, faces touching, waltzing across the wooden floor. He needed to call someone but knew that no one would offer a ride, not one person. They'd make excuses. They wouldn't answer. They'd delete his message. He touched the brass door knob and paused. The plaintive notes of a steel guitar filtered through the door, a sad melody that yanked at something in the back of his throat.

Norman began to cry, and so as not to be heard or seen, he covered his face with his hand and turned from the window, cupping his mouth to deaden the sobs. His body shook as if with convulsions. Norman had never felt so alone. And then, with a stone-cold clarity that razored into him, Norman knew he couldn't remember not feeling alone. There had been Carolyn, the girls he dated in high school and college, mission companions and roommates, his colleagues, friends from home like Cameron. Hadn't they been friends, conversed together, shared memories? A chill inched up Norman's spine, passed through his trembling shoulders, and settled into his jaw, making his teeth chatter. They were his friends, Norman knew, yet he'd always felt comforted he'd avoided their pitfalls and vices, and evaded their unhappiness. Norman wiped at his eyes with his palm and shook his head. Then why am I so unhappy? he thought.

At that moment, Norman saw Maggie walking up the street. A short overweight man with thinning brown hair and lardy skin followed close behind her, talking loudly and gesturing.

"What do you mean you're waiting for your boyfriend?" the man said. "Just one drink. It's not going to hurt anyone. You're the cutest little thing I ever seen in this town."

Norman was about to turn away when Maggie waved.

"Just play along," she whispered when he was close enough to hear. She held his hand and turned on the man. "I told you I was waiting for my boyfriend," she said. "Get lost." Norman narrowed his eyes and tried to stand a little taller. The man shrugged and walked the other direction. Norman looked down at their hands, at her fingers intertwined with his. The hand was soft and warm, and he didn't want to let it go. Maggie smiled and brushed a strand of hair behind her ear. He gently squeezed. She squeezed back. What am I doing? Norman thought. He slowly released her hand and took a step back.

"Thank you," Maggie said. "We get some real creeps passing through."

"It was a pleasure," Norman said. He could smell Maggie's perfume. It came to him in small bursts. He wanted to close his eyes and breathe it in.

"Hey, tough luck with the car," she said. "Lou told me what happened."

"Some things you don't see coming," Norman said. "What a place to get stuck." He realized his last sentence sounded too harsh. "I don't mean to criticize your town. It just hasn't been a good day."

"No need to apologize," Maggie said. "Sometimes I feel this place is the end of the world, but it does have its redeeming qualities. And, hey, at least we met. You could call it serendipity. Well, maybe it's not so unexpected." She puffed her cheeks and then let her arms fall to her side. "Okay, I'll confess. Lou told me what direction you went, and I started looking. Do you think that's strange? I usually don't do this: scour the town for someone I just met. Gee, to be stuck in a strange town, not knowing anyone—I felt bad." She tapped her bottom teeth with her thumb nail and gazed up at Norman. Her eyes, as resplendent as burnished onyx, were disarming and seemed to take him all in at a glance, his utter melancholy and loneliness, his helplessness. "Hey, why don't you come over for dinner? I just live around the corner. It won't be anything special, just leftovers from last night. Come on. What do you say?"

The street lamps buzzed overhead. Norman looked down Main Street toward the blinking casino lights. Beyond the lights he saw nothing but darkness. The thought of walking in that direction seemed unbearable. So did the thought of lying in a motel room, surfing channels, and listening to the rush of cars and trucks on the interstate.

"I *am* hungry," Norman said.

Maggie's house was small, a bedroom, a kitchen, and a living room

sparsely furnished with a blue denim couch and a square slate-topped coffee table. Next to the door hung a collage of photographs in a black wooden frame. Several potted plants, arranged according to size, adorned the windowsill. "This is it," Maggie said. "Stand in the middle of the living room, spin once, and you've seen everything." She disappeared into the kitchen. "Just give me a second."

The refrigerator opened and closed. The oven door banged shut. There was the click of a turning dial and then the hiss of gas. Norman waited by the door, fingering the ring case in his pocket. "You can set your bag down," Maggie said, reappearing so suddenly that her voice startled him. "Make yourself at home."

Norman set the backpack near the door, loosening and then tightening the shoulder straps for no reason at all. The evaporative cooler switched on and rattled through a vent above the bedroom door. On the other side of the room, Maggie stood near the window. She twisted a yellowed leaf from one of the potted plants and rubbed it between her fingers before setting it beside the terra cotta pot. "I believe in being honest," she said.

Norman waited for some kind of revelation, that Maggie was married or had brought him here to sell him something. "So do I," Norman said.

But Maggie said nothing. Instead, she lifted her pant leg, yanked at a leather strap cinched around her thigh, and removed the leg below the knee. She took the leg, with the shoe still attached, and set it under the coffee table. Then she looked at Norman. "Do you mind?"

"I don't mind," Norman said, watching how the empty pant leg swayed slightly in the blast of air from the vent, surprised, really, that he didn't mind.

"I didn't want you to feel uncomfortable," Maggie said. "That's why I asked. People can be cruel. You wouldn't believe what they'll say and do. Total strangers, too. Some guy in Elko, right in the middle of Wal-Mart, wanted me to show him how the prosthetic went on. One guy wanted to rub the end of my leg. I don't wear shorts anymore. Even in the middle of summer. You can understand why, I'm sure."

There was something beautiful in her vulnerability that Norman couldn't explain, something in the sadness that clouded her eyes when she told him this, in the drawn-out sighs, in the way she stared at the floor, shaking her head and smiling bemusedly at people's thoughtlessness and

cruelty. Suddenly, Norman wanted to hold Maggie. The unexpectedness of this thought shocked him. He wanted to embrace her and utter an apology of some sort. Norman wondered if he should leave. He ran his hands over his eyes, as if that might help him decide, and then stared at himself in the window, blinking at his warped image in the dark glass. The night beyond the window terrified him.

"When I'm at home I like to be myself," Maggie said. She hopped to the couch with one graceful leap and sat down. "If you're a floor person, you can use a pillow. I had the carpets shampooed a few weeks ago."

"I'll just sit by you," Norman said. As an afterthought, he took his shoes off and set them near the detached leg. "That's much better," he said, and then leaned back.

"I knew you wouldn't mind," Maggie said. "Good people are interested in more than just appearances. Most would probably freak out if I took my leg off."

"Really, I don't mind," Norman said, feeling undeserving of Maggie's admiration. "I'm glad you're comfortable."

"I'll admit it's not always easy," she said. "Sometimes, even after ten years, I still cry about it. In high school my friend and I were coming home from Elko when a drunk driver hit us. That's how it happened: out of nowhere, a bright light and then silence. My friend walked away, but I didn't." Maggie rested her arm on the back of the couch. "We didn't have any health insurance. The whole town helped. Maybe that's one of the reasons I stay. On the outside people here seem rough and uneducated, but on the inside they're good. It beats other places where people look nice and are really mean."

"It must have been quite the community effort," Norman said.

"It was," Maggie said. "For a while I wasn't doing well. Just imagine, one day I'm running track, and the next I can't walk. And on top of that we couldn't afford a prosthetic or the rehabilitation. That's when everyone chipped in. After that I always swore I'd help someone if I had the chance. That's why I came back."

With an agility that impressed Norman, Maggie lifted herself from the couch and, with her arm resting on his shoulder, took the collage of photographs from the wall. She set the collage on the table and pointed to a picture of a bearded, heavy-set man with a rifle slung over his shoulder. Behind him was the flat, monochrome desert stretching to the mountains. He looked at the other pictures: Maggie playing the piano in a white

dress, making a pie, running track. Norman wondered why the bearded man occupied the center of the collage.

"Is he your father?" Norman asked.

"He was a friend of the family," Maggie said. "Bill Mortensen." She stared closely at the picture and then wiped away a speck of dust on the glass. "He was the third guy at the garage until he got sick. Cancer. Three packs a day, unfiltered cigarettes. I saw the X-rays of his lungs. The cancer was like wisps of smoke in there, like smudges. I was living in Colorado at the time, working, taking classes when I wanted, drifting here and there, and then my mom called to tell me that Bill was getting worse and how she'd been trying to care for him, but could only do so much." She paused, fighting for composure. "It was one of those moments. It sounds so silly, I know. A moment of clarity, as if the universe opened itself for a second and I saw a pathway, a purpose. So I followed it and came home." Maggie wiped at her eyes and smiled apologetically. "Gosh, I don't know why I'm telling you this. You must think I'm so gloomy."

"I don't think that at all," Norman said. "You did something most people wouldn't do."

"That might be the case," Maggie said, "but looking back, I didn't know what I was getting into. It was the typical story of a person dying of cancer. He lived a year beyond the diagnosis. We got into the chemotherapy routine. They called it 'daycare' at the clinic. There was always a long wait. Then the drip in the arm. Then the inevitable nausea. It was the most helpless I'd ever felt to watch him puke his guts out, a big, powerful man. Then the cancer got to his liver and then into his brain. There's a horror in watching someone you've known all your life fade away. Our conversations became shorter. He began to forget things. The last forty-eight hours were the worst. My parents were there. Bill's brother, too. By that time we had a nurse. And then there was the sound of his lungs, like a squeaky door opening and closing every time he took a breath. It's like it went on forever. At one point the nurse wanted us to leave so she could freshen him up. That's when he passed, when we were standing outside the room. It's like he knew we were out of the room and wanted to save us from the final moment. When I was looking at him after, I couldn't help thinking that everything else in him had worked well. Maybe that's the lesson in all of this. One fatal flaw, one bad habit, took him from us."

"Awful," Norman muttered, wincing at how trivial and common the word sounded. He could imagine the shaded room, the smell of sick-

ness, the shrunken, waxy figure on the bed, and Maggie standing there, weeping quietly. Norman remembered a phrase he'd read and underlined in a college textbook seven years ago. "There is a great sadness pushing at the world," it said, "and it only needs a little slipway, a little opening." The words seemed rife with meaning, and Norman, for the first time, thought he understood the implication of those words.

"Have you ever read *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran?" Maggie asked. "I mention it because you're a guidance counselor and help people."

Norman knew the book—the story of an old sage imparting pearls of wisdom—but he'd never read more than a page or two, though many people had recommended it. The story seemed too contrived, too feel-good and saccharine, one of those books that litters thrift stores after its initial popularity has waned. "I haven't," Norman said.

Maggie stood and took a worn blue copy of *The Prophet* from a shelf next to the door. There was a gold hand stamped on the cover, and in the palm of the hand were human silhouettes stretching their arms upward. "This was a gift from my English teacher," Maggie said. "She gave it to me after the accident. It helped. After reading it, I started writing my own poetry. When Bill got sick I bought him a copy. Every day we read a chapter and talked about it, shared experiences and things like that. I want to read you something from it. This was Bill's favorite." She cleared her throat and began. The poem was about pain, how pain breaks a shell that encloses our understanding, how pain, like joy, is one of the miracles of our lives, how we must accept pain just as we accept the seasons of the year because pain is the bitter potion the physician uses to heal us. Maggie barely glanced at the page.

Norman tried to smile as she read, knowing that nothing he had ever thought or said had been as powerful. In all his time as a guidance counselor, he'd never helped anyone the way Maggie had helped herself and later Bill.

"You're beautiful," Norman said. Maggie closed the book and touched the gold hand on the cover. "And I'm talking about more than just the way you look."

"Thanks," she said.

"You said you write poetry?" Norman asked. He suddenly wanted to hear Maggie's voice again reading something.

"I dabble in it," Maggie said, "but it's awful stuff. I'm embarrassed."

Norman touched her hand. "Read something."

Maggie took a worn spiral notebook from under the coffee table. "I read this at Bill's funeral. It's called 'Joy and Sorrow.' You might think it's too depressing. Maybe I'll read something else."

"It's important," Norman said. "I'd like to hear it."

Taking Norman's left hand, Maggie said, "I love the way you look at me." And then she began to read.

Norman closed his eyes and listened. The words were simple and the rhythm somewhat forced, but he enjoyed the poem and even began to believe what Maggie was saying: that the deeper we are cut by sorrow, the deeper our joy, and that joy and sorrow are inseparable, and without them life is empty.

When Maggie finished, she closed the notebook. "You keep doing that," she said, pointing to Norman's right hand clamped tightly over his pant pocket.

Norman pulled the ring case from the pocket and examined its polished surface.

"California," Maggie said. She let go of Norman's hand and began fingering the notebook's metal spiral.

"I don't know if I want to go to California," Norman said. He set the ring case on the coffee table.

"What do you want?" Maggie asked.

"What do I want?" Norman said, more to himself than to Maggie. He reached for her hand. "I want you to read another poem," he said. "I want you to read all of them."

Maggie stared at their clasped hands and nodded. She opened the notebook to the first page and began reading.

Outside, the wind had picked up, and somewhere in the distance Norman heard chimes ringing, a dreamy melody that seemed to emanate from the earth itself. Sitting beside Maggie, who seemed so beautiful, Norman understood that everything, if examined closely enough, is beautiful. Norman closed his eyes. "My life's going to change," he thought.

Salt Lake City Cemetery, Jewish Section

P. D. Mallamo

Diaspora/diaspora

Ours in theirs,
Or theirs in ours?

Together driven past
Earth's small ends,
One to make a new beginning, the
Other on to new extremes.

What can we offer beyond our love,
    Cool groves above the Magick Lake,
        Graves among our prophets' graves?

Cohn Levy Siegel Shvarts
Our kindred—and reminder of God's bleak adoration,
The fate He chooses for the Chosen
This exquisite proving of His souls
Who dry like tea on distant stone and
Disappear forever.

Pierce the Veil

Cathy Gileadi Wilson

We want to know
What is on
The other side.

We light a candle,
Slide a twenty into the tithing envelope
And a five in the Salvation Army.

Even the curmudgeon agnostic
Sneaks a peak at his horoscope
When the wife's not looking.

And ghost hunters crime stoppers fortune tellers
Priests and psychics
Always make the rent.

We peer, we want to pierce
The veil
With the corners of our eyes,
The sharp, gilded tissue of the book of revelations,
Or the mercy stroke
Of the laying on of hands

So that, on late frozen afternoons,
We squint into snowbeams
Seeking a flutter of wings
In the sparkling fog.

One Tree Redux

Mary Lythgoe Bradford

The tree pronounced dead last fall
dresses the sky in a green cloud
as it answers a subterranean call.
The struggling sun parts the shroud
of foliage, intimidating yet sublime,
while cars and buildings disappear,
erased by fronds from another clime.
The old tree dons its brave new gear.

A trickle of sap in my veins belies the trope
of me as tree, spindly and brittle,
near death's door but full of hope,
failing but smiling through the spittle.
The tree will live to etch another ring
as I celebrate my own late spring.

REVIEW

A Spiritual Awakening Amid a Hippie Faith

Coke Newell. *On the Road to Heaven*. Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2007. 348 pp., $11.52.

Reviewed by Neylan McBaine, native of New York City, author, musician, wife, and mother

When I received my copy of Coke Newell's *On the Road to Heaven*, my first impressions of the book could not help but be influenced by the critical praise from Richard Bushman on the book's cover: "I have never read such a gripping story of conversion and missionary labor." Well, I thought, my job as a reviewer is clearly done. Not only does Newell wear Bushman's endorsement on the outside of the book and Terryl Givens's effusions on the inside, but the book has already won the Association of Mormon Letters Award and the Whitney Award for best novel of 2007. What more could I add to this unequivocal praise?

It turns out that, although my praise may be incremental, I can add some thoughts about why this novel works so well, and, yes, where it falters. Newell has documented the story of his own youth and conversion to Mormonism in an "autobiographical novel," fictionalizing the events by giving himself an alter ego, Kit West, and giving pseudonyms to other major characters. But from what I can tell from my own research of Newell's life, the name changes are the extent of the book's fictionalization. This is confirmed in the press release from Zarahemla Books accompanying the release of the novel: "The guy is me and the story is mine," states Newell.

Newell's story winds through his spiritual pilgrimage in the late 1970s and early 1980s: his youthful, hippie days in the Colorado mountains, his conversion to Mormonism, and his gritty mission in Colombia, in South America. Part 1, "From Zero to Zion," covers the Colorado days, and Part 2, "On the Road to Heaven," takes us to the streets of Colombia. The plot is held together with an engaging and rewarding love story between Newell—or Kit West—and his teenage love, Annie Hawk.

Teenage Kit specializes in fixing up abandoned cabins in the Colorado Rockies around his family home and living in them with similarly minded companions. His upbringing can only be described as the rearing

of a mountain man, his typical attire consisting only of a pair of overalls (no shirt) and sandals. He learned the guitar at his father's knee and grew up knowing the bulk of the American folk repertoire: "Oh Susanna," "Tom Dooley" and "Long Black Rifle." With his typical wit and honesty, Kit (or Newell) reports, "Years later I would hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir tackle a couple of these, in the most incongruous coupling of intent and attempt in the history of sound" (31).

Despite his characteristic edginess, Kit's earnest search for the Maker of his beloved Earth is never in question. Initially dismissive of Mormonism because Annie has run away from her own staunchly Mormon home, Kit eventually lands on Jesus in his search—via Ram Das, Aerosmith, acid trips, and Native American rituals—for a transcendental power. In a fairytale turn of events, both Kit and Annie rediscover Mormonism's ethereal appeal, and Kit's reverence for nature gives him a kinship with Joseph Smith and the Americas' original inhabitants.

In Colombia, Kit embarks on the missionary's accustomed path of growth through teaching and trial. Sickness, poverty, death, and joyous teaching moments are in no shortage while he anticipates Annie's return from her own mission in Quebec.

Newell's writing is consistent between the two parts—engaging, colloquial, animated—and Kit's love for Annie sees him through trials in both locales; yet I couldn't help feeling that I was reading two separate books. The first half, the Colorado days and the conversion, is so refreshingly unique, so stark in its individuality and intimacy, that I often reflected while reading that this book hits the bull's eye of Mormon literature: brutally honest, edgy, yet achingly real in its reflection of God's presence in our lives.

Had I known the outcome of the romance with Annie at the end of Part 1, I would have been thoroughly satisfied in closing the book there. As it was, I had another narrative to go, Part 2, which I found equally well-written but far less compelling. Perhaps this was because "mission stories" constitute their own genre in LDS literature, and I've just heard so many of them (although Newell's tales certainly rank up there with the most dramatic). More likely, it was because I didn't feel that the motivations that drove the first half—the desperate search for truth, the passion for Annie, the inexhaustible reverence for the Earth and the human body—carried over into the second half. The plot stalled; the momentum

of the conversion was lost in the tales of stomach ailments, on-fire teaching moments, and hot Colombian babes.

What happened? I asked myself as I slogged through the catalogue of companions' names and transfer locations. I hadn't been able to put the book down for the first half, and now I felt as if the earthy but looking-toward-heaven Kit was buried under the grime of 1970s Colombia. Must all Mormon narratives inevitably arrive at mission stories? Must we default to the extremity of a mission—the two-year commitment, the lack of contact with family and friends, the often harsh physical conditions—to italicize our conversions to our outside readers? I believe that the power of Newell's story lies in the unlikeliness of his hippie faith and that he most convincingly communicates his spiritual awakening in that setting, not in the structured crucible of the mission.

Newell's title and chapter quotations, as well as numerous references throughout the book, make it clear that *On the Road to Heaven* is a tribute to Jack Kerouac, and perhaps the lack of momentum in the second half can be attributed to Newell's effort to honor the road-wandering style. But having succeeded in creating such a drive toward resolution in the first half, Newell's second half lost me, at least, once the search for truth had reached its triumphant culmination.

Still, the novel is a passionately honest tribute to the messy process of finding God and to the uncertainty that comes with trying to do the right thing even after we have a relationship with Him. I hesitate to call *On the Road to Heaven* a novel because its qualification as an "autobiographical" work is actually, for me, the strongest thing about it. We Mormons have great stories to tell about ourselves. Maybe it's the journal-keeping bug in us, or the sheer bizarreness of so many of our clashes with the outside world; but conversion stories and mission stories are usually too good to be made up.

Such is the case with Newell's stories, and to this end I wish that Newell had forthrightly claimed the conversion and missionary tales he writes about so exuberantly. Anyone familiar with the Mormon experience will recognize the authenticity of the events; but by positioning the work as fiction, Newell has diminished its plausibility as evidenced by the *Publisher's Weekly* review of the book which asserted that certain "miraculous episodes strain credulity."[1] Not surprisingly, Newell responds in a press release issued by the publisher, Zarahemla Books: "Every one of those 'miraculous episodes' is true."[2] In an age of Jon Krakauer's *Under*

the Banner of Heaven and Martha Beck's *Leaving the Saints*, why not put up our faith-affirming realities head to head against those "insider" exposés?

The success of this book proves that our narratives are perhaps most effective when they express our faith, even our "miraculous episodes," in the messiness, grittiness, and honesty in which they are experienced. Rather than trying to brush imperfections under the rug, confronting them with real character and wit is the best way we as a people can share our collective personality with others. We need more writers like Newell, but we need them to claim their atypical stories and say, "This, too, is a real Mormon life."

Notes

1. Quoted in "A Jack Kerouac-Style Memoir for Today's 'Mormon Moment,'" press release by Zarahemla Books, August 27, 2007.

2. Ibid.

PERSONAL VOICES

Revelations from a Silent Angel

Howard McOmber

Editor's note: With this pair of essays by Howard and Amy McOmber, Dialogue *continues its series on the relationship between the Church and persons with disabilities.*

There is no way to describe the day-to-day anxiety associated with being connected to an autistic life. The first time I held Gregory I felt an impression from God that said he was lucky to have Amy and me as parents. I was embarrassed by that impression then, but now it is all I can hang on to. Everything around me makes me feel otherwise.

At birth, Gregory could not nurse properly. Amy suffered biting and then cracking, followed by fevers. She stopped nursing for two weeks, healed, and pumped herself every two hours to nurse him again. He screamed constantly. Extended family members affectionately called him "the screamer." He didn't look at us. He pushed us away when we were close to him. At first we thought he was deaf, but after tests determined that he wasn't and operations to put tubes in his ears failed to help, we persisted until we saw neurologists and other specialists. When he was eighteen months old, we had the earth-shattering diagnosis of autism.

He bites us. He clawed at us. And so it continues. At every wedding or every other public occasion, one of us sits on the periphery because Gregory can't handle the stimulus of the event. It is lonely—for him, for Amy and me, and for our other three children. Even now, he sometimes spreads excrement everywhere. Amy does countless loads of laundry, cleaning blankets and clothes every day. We bathe him every day, sometimes many times. We go through sofas and cars the way other people go

through shoes. If he can, he takes off all his clothes and goes out on the streets.

More than once, his little sister Heather has gone for a kiss; and he has knocked her to the ground. There isn't one of us whom he hasn't suddenly attacked while we are driving along the freeway. He makes it difficult to maintain friendships. He gets obsession after obsession. He has scraped DVDs with his teeth, broken plates and slid his finger along the sharp edges, flooded the basement, and frequently clambered to high points in the house. For the last few months, he has been breaking ball point pens so he can spread ink everywhere. He loves fast-moving traffic and does anything he can to stand on the sidewalk, close to the cars.

Six years ago when Gregory was turning eight, the age of baptism and acceptance of Christ's atonement, I was in a season of anger. I was full of what the Book of Mormon calls "murmuring." My heart was furious with God for giving this trial to Gregory and me. It all seemed like more trial than I could handle. I couldn't see why either of us needed it.

Yes, I believe that children like Gregory are destined for the celestial kingdom. We believe that he is already pure. We believe that before we came to earth we lived as spirit children of our Father in Heaven. We loved Him and He loved us. He was perfect, patient, loving, kind, strict, dependable. We obeyed him, but we were always free to choose not to. Heavenly Father called a council in heaven and told us that we could come to earth to be tested because we would learn more with a body. We would feel love and pain, and we would grow by learning patience, perseverance, kindness, and love. Furthermore, we would have an example to show us the way. On earth, we would inevitably sin and we would need a Savior. Through Him we would be healed of our mistakes and of the problems inherited with our mortal bodies. Then we would be able to return to live with our Father in Heaven, having proven our faith and having grown through this mortal experience. I believe all this.

More specifically, I believe our small family was at this council. We were spirits. We shouted for joy with the sons of God. We watched as Lucifer proposed to force us to choose good. Although such a choice was impossible, he drew a third of the spirit children to his side, and there was war in heaven. We beheld as Satan and his hosts fell from heaven and were cast to the earth, where they afflict us today, unseen but felt.

And I believe even more. I believe that Gregory's righteousness was so complete in the pre-earth life that he does not require the same test as

the rest of us. He endures his time on this earth for another purpose. We believe other spirits were equally righteous; but in their case, they came to earth only long enough to gain a body. These other special spirits will be resurrected as children and be raised by their parents in the Millennium. They will be raised in a world free from the evils of child molestation, robbery, and sin.

But as I said, when Gregory reached the age of baptism, I was angry. I murmured. Gregory did not need baptism because of his heavenly promise. Then why should he have to endure seizures and mortality where he had no hope of a family of his own, no wife, no children, no real existence? Amy said, "Maybe it is for us to learn how to live with helping Gregory." I am embarrassed to say that I retorted, "I have not learned one thing! I have not learned anything from dealing with Gregory!" Amy quietly responded, "Maybe I am supposed to learn how to live with *you* not learning anything from Gregory."

I am grateful for Amy's reminders of my spiritual gauge. I humbled myself. I prayed to have a softer heart, to gain answers, and to learn. So I will tell what I have learned, what we all have learned, from our silent angel. We have learned what love really is. It is pure service. It is patience. Most of all, it is hope.

In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus took the lives of all of us upon himself, one at a time—our inadequacy, our autism, our sins. He understands all that it is to be us. He has the power from this understanding to teach us each individually and as a group how to serve. I came to appreciate the Savior's lesson of service most distinctly one day when Gregory was nine years old, a year before we successfully potty-trained him. He had defecated and finger painted with it all over the basement. I put him in the tub and cleaned the room. I finished and went to get him out of the tub, only to find the bathtub full of more excrement. I pulled him out and cleaned the tub. I came out of the bathroom, back to the room I had just cleaned and found that he had done it again.

I went crazy with frustration. I thought, "I am going to lose it." Instantly, I felt someone think to me, "PRAY!" I crumpled to my knees and cried immediate, hot tears. I said, "Father in Heaven, this is more than I am capable of. Help me, please help me!" Suddenly, like a roaring fire or wind, I felt flood into my soul an incredible rush of love—the love of Heavenly Father and Jesus for me and for Gregory. I could feel the love Gregory has for me, a love clouded behind his autism that doesn't always allow

him to show it, a love so strong that any service or sacrifice seems as though it is the easiest thing to do.

I cleaned the room for the second time, praying and thanking my Father in Heaven for the chance to serve Gregory and the chance to feel His love. In my thoughts I could hear the voice of the Savior saying, "I am thankful for the service I did for you on the cross and in the Garden of Gethsemane." I felt as I served Gregory that I was truly serving God, too. I could feel the Gregory with whom I had a relationship in the pre-earth life. I understood more clearly how Jesus could have borne the suffering of each one of us and of all of us.

As for the lesson of patience that Gregory has taught us, I confess that I haven't yet mastered it entirely. I pray. I struggle to learn it. Gregory is fourteen now. He has become mind-bogglingly patient, for the most part, accepting a life that often has little indication of what will happen next. He is filled with such innocence and has become so much more loving. The idea of a life without Gregory in it is unbearable. His soul touches us daily. Amy and I have wondered if, given a choice to do it all over again, whether we would still choose Gregory. We would, although that fact doesn't keep me from wishing we could choose a Gregory healed.

The third lesson Gregory has taught us is hope. We have all—Amy and I and our three children without autism—learned it well. We hope for a cure to autism or for a prevention of it. We hope for greater communication with Gregory, and lately that hope has been realized. Most of all, we hope for the day in which we have faith—the day of the coming of Jesus Christ. In the Book of Mormon, when the resurrected Jesus visited the inhabitants of ancient America, he healed all the little children. The same experience is to happen when Jesus comes again. We have hope that He will heal Gregory. We hope that Gregory will have an opportunity to find a wife and have a family in the thousand years of peace that the Millennium will bring. All the pain and anxiety we suffer will be wiped away, but the strength we have received will remain like gold.

In the meantime, Gregory strives with his last ounce of courage. Good things do happen to him. Perfect tutors have come to him at the perfect time. Each person who tends Gregory brings just the things he needs to progress. Recently Meredith, his current tutor, has been helping him work with a small, indestructible laptop-like device called a Mini-Merc. He is learning to communicate by typing and touching. He

has mastered 300 signs and he has also started a new method of communicating and learning called the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM).

I pay tribute to Amy who has been Gregory's best and most tireless advocate. She has ripped out contaminated carpet and has laid new flooring to facilitate the daily cleaning that is required. She has been the epitome of perseverance in getting Gregory his Mini-Merc and in helping maintain funding for therapy. She chaired the local walk for Autism Speaks, which brought in over $300,000. She went to two leadership conferences in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., and lobbied for supportive legislation. She also chairs the yearly talent show at our elementary school, is an art docent, runs half marathons and triathlons, plays volleyball and basketball, and teaches music. It is fun trying to keep up, but honestly I can't. She is amazing. Our other kids always know when she is at their games. She is usually their coach. On the football field, she is the mom yelling the loudest.

So, just as the hymn instructs me to do, I count my many blessings. I am grateful for my family. I am grateful for the home in which we dwell. I am grateful for my neighbors and for the loving members of our ward. I am grateful for the strength which Heavenly Father gives us to provide for Gregory. And I am grateful for Gregory.

A Most Amazing Gift

Amy McOmber

Little did I know that when I was contemplating having a second child that I would be blessed with a very challenging, incurable neurological mystery. I didn't know that there would be so many sleepless nights past the baby stages, that there would be decisions to be made for a nonspeaking child who can give us few clues as to what he is feeling inside.

Raising a child with severe autism is definitely a frustrating daily dilemma, but at the same time a gift invaluable beyond words. One minute Gregory can be the most loving and adorable, the kindest and kissiest

fourteen-year-old, and the next, he can lose control of his body and disappear into a wild rage of frustration and anger, not knowing how to let others around him comprehend the train wreck in his mind—the seizure, the headache, the cramp, or something else that has triggered his rage.

Gregory is normally a happy, sweet person, with more love bundled up than any other fourteen-year-old I have ever met. He has the desire to be kind and to show affection. This trait, I know, is a special gift in the world of autism. Most autistic children can't handle touch. Their sensory input is heightened, making it difficult for them to filter the input. When Gregory was a baby, nursing was difficult; and hugging, kissing, or any closeness was hard for him. Keeping clothes on him was next to impossible. It took him several years to develop the ability to maintain eye contact for any length of time. Not knowing the reason for this, I just told him over and over again that he would just have to get used to the affection, because in this family, it wasn't going away. He eventually did get used to it, and we learned to desensitize him and follow his lead when he needs space to center his body again.

We were able to find sources of release: swinging, swimming, deep pressure, calm white noise, credits at the end of a show, long, skinny objects, fishy crackers, and short stints of sleep. They provide a moment of rest, a getaway that soothes our souls and brings hope.

I read books, went to conferences, got involved in groups, and had help come into the home, all the while trying to keep the rest of our lives as "normal" as possible under the constant pressure of a child who screamed in any social setting where his two parents might try to integrate themselves into the party. To compensate, we tried to make our family a learning, growing group, even when we felt so tied to an anchor which wouldn't let us sail in the direction of our choice.

As time has gone on, I have realized more and more that the anchor has guided us into an unexpected path of learning, one I would not have charted or found on my own. Yes, it is difficult; but the joy that comes when things go right is so much greater than the average. When I can take Gregory out in a boat and give him a wonderful, peaceful afternoon, it is more than a stellar day; it is a gift, a present, an added bonus. When I get brave and try something new—like taking him to a concert at a huge arena and discovering that he enjoys sitting in a stadium full of people, taking in good music and lights *with* the rest of us as a family—it is better than simply a "day out" with the family. It is a triumph, a red-letter day, an amazing finish.

I love doing races, triathlons, marathons, and hikes. I love crossing the finish line. I have enjoyed accomplishing some of them with my family; but when I ordered a tandem bike to give Gregory a chance to ride with me, not knowing whether it would work, and he started taking me by the hand and tugging me toward our tandem bicycle, that was better than a normal ride around the neighborhood. It was more like climbing Mount Everest because of the effort and risk involved.

Somehow, relief and restitution seem to follow every crisis. It is like traveling without water in a hot, dusty country for an entire day and then, when you need it the most, finding water. Sometimes my courage falls to the bottom of a barrel while I watch my son writhe in pain or behave like an animal because he can't express his discomfort or intense feelings. When he acts out in such a way, I know he doesn't have full control of himself and will regret his behavior later. I grieve. I feel lost and hopeless. But over and over, when this happens, a ray of light clarifies my darkness. Someone throws me a lifeline.

Here is something that happened just the other day. Gregory loves the water. He loves to swim, to play in it, and to be in the boat with our family; but at a swimming pool the other day, there was a disturbance in Gregory's brain that I have no explanation for. Gregory did his usual thing; he started circling around the pool, getting his bearings and transitioning to the new surroundings. He usually gets in slowly after doing about three laps of a pool.

On this day, he walked around the pool a few times, then suddenly crumpled into a ball on the ground, and started hitting the wall and the cement floor. I quickly went to his side but got too close. He was obviously having some sort of seizure and couldn't control his body. He pulled my hair until a big patch came out, then ripped a sweater right off my back. I knew he needed to calm down before we tried to move him. Still, I didn't anticipate the shocking severity of this attack, and neither did he.

Later that day, he was kind and loving and said he was sorry in his own way. The next day he was very calm all day and was very loving. Accompanied by our older son, I took Gregory to have his blood drawn to find out what was going on with him. He sat there quietly, trusting in his big brother and his mom. The Lord blessed us that day. A doctor called me from an airplane on his day off and ordered the blood work done. The light was shining for me again, and it felt so much better after I had been banished to a cave. My happiness was intensified by my prior pain.

Nonetheless, the results of the blood test were ambiguous. We had persuaded the doctor to order it because we hoped they would give us an indication of something amiss with Gregory that could be remedied with medication or diet. The results turned out to be both good news and bad news—good news because they indicated that physically Gregory was in perfect health, bad news because they gave us no new leads as to what might be making him so restless and easily angered. Sometimes it seems that our search for answers leads only to a whole new list of questions.

It is almost as if Gregory disappears for a time. Older autistic children say that they "black out" and don't remember what happens when a seizure hits. Their head hurts, and they can't control themselves. To make these distressing situations worse, severely autistic individuals don't have the ability to communicate what they experience, so it makes the frustration level skyrocket. It is challenging for everyone, but we have to keep trying. That is what life demands of us, and what we demand of ourselves as parents. The good outweighs the bad, and the love overrides the pain.

I have four children, but I have only one child who is perfect. Gregory. From the outside, he looks so broken, but inside he is as pure as new snow. He is one who I know is spiritually ready. It strengthens me to know that he is here to teach me and the rest of his family and the rest of the world a new perspective, asking us to stop, take note, and do something for the multitude of God's children, who, like him, suffer. How else could we learn the lesson of love? How else could we learn to enlarge our moral selves rather than pursue wealth and fame? Gregory and those like him are the essence of a difficulty transformed into a blessing for humanity.

To My Child With Broken Wings

You wait while others learn the lessons of mortality.
We who are your stewards are only apprentices.
You have a right to speak, to understand,
To share labor with comrades, to worship and be grateful,
And most of all to love.
We want to give these things to you
But we are not perfect, merely learning.
I will keep trying. The Lord will make up the difference.
I love you, son. Thank you for trusting me. Mom.

Tribute to Levi S. Peterson

Dear Readers,

This journal completes Levi Peterson's twenty-volume editorship of *Dialogue.* I have had the privilege of chairing the board in both his first and last years and welcome this chance to say thank you on behalf of us all.

Levi Peterson is a man of love. He wrote in his autobiography that his mother's love infused him "with a propensity to affirm and take pleasure in human beings rather than to injure or begrudge them." A noted writer, he is also an editor deeply respectful of writers and of the process and import of writing, for him central to his instinctive need for purpose, "directional, a base, a determinate." Combined, these perspectives underpin Levi's leadership style to our authors, his staff, and our board: ever clear, kind, respectful, and exceedingly generous with both his material and personal resources.

Levi teaches by deed that charity can accompany the highest professional standards. He teaches by editorial selections that we strain to understand the inexplicable for the sheer joy of the effort and that we can respect the visions of others even if no visions enlighten us. Particularly in his own writings but also in the pages of *Dialogue,* he invites us to embrace the passions and the humor of the human condition as we embrace our fellows.

Mormonism has had few such astute observers as Levi. It has had few such loyal sons. With the accuracy of the historian and the compassion of the novelist, Levi sees our flawed lives and affectionately prods us to free our minds, engage our hearts, and make peace and beauty whenever possible.

Levi has explained that his "chief motive for providing an abundance of domestic detail in his biography of Juanita Brooks was to demonstrate how Juanita's achievement had been crowded into the complex and busy life of a wife, mother, and teacher." You should know that throughout his full-time editorship, Levi has also lived a complex and busy life as a husband, father, teacher and, especially, as a grandfather to two beloved boys facing health challenges. No aspect of Levi's commitments has suffered from this overload—he just hasn't slept much. We are grateful he has had excellent help, editorial and familial, from his lovely wife, Althea. It has been our pleasure to know her, too.

We thank Levi for his stellar contributions to the journal. We love him for being our hero and our friend. Working with Levi has been a joy.

Sincerely,
Molly McLellan Bennion
Chair, *Dialogue* Board of Directors

CONTRIBUTORS

KEVIN L. BARNEY practices public finance law with Kutak Rock LLP in Chicago. He serves on the board of directors of the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) and blogs at bycommonconsent.com.

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MARY LYTHGOE BRADFORD is a former editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and the author of *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian* (Salt Lake City: Dialogue Foundation, 1995) and *Leaving Home: Personal Essays by Mary Lythgoe Bradford* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987). She is working on a volume of poetry. "One Tree Redux," is a sequel to her poem "One Tree" in *Dialogue* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 128.

CLYDE D. FORD is a physician in Salt Lake City, Utah. He has previously published in *Dialogue*, *Journal of Mormon History*, and elsewhere.

P. D. MALLAMO worked for two years in Salt Lake City while commuting to eastern Kansas where his wife, Susan, farms organically. He believes that a good poem and a good tomato are of equal value.

ARMAND L. MAUSS has published in *Dialogue* many times during the past four decades. He is also author of three books on Mormon history and culture. Emeritus professor of sociology and religious studies at Washington State University since 1999, he and his wife, Ruth, live in Irvine, California. Since 2005, he has taught courses at the School of Religion, Claremont Graduate University, as a member of the LDS Council on Mormon Studies there and this winter completes his tenth and final year of service on the Board of Directors of the Dialogue Foundation. This article is an expanded version of his keynote address at the inaugural conference of the European Mormon Studies Association (EMSA), held at the University of Worcester, England, August 2–4, 2007, and first published in the *British Journal of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 1–59, http://www.lulu.com/content/2007882; also available as PDF at http://www.bjmsonline.org. It is republished here by permission. ACKNOWL-

EDGMENTS: I appreciated and benefited by early comments on this paper from Professor Douglas J. Davies and from EMSA leaders Ronan Head, David Morris, and Kim Östman in addition to more formal reviews acknowledged in the notes.

HOWARD AND AMY MCOMBER live in Sammamish, Washington, with their four children, ages sixteen, fourteen, eleven, and seven. Gregory, their fourteen-year-old, is affected with autism. Howard and Amy run a musical theater company for children and people with special needs. They teach music, drama, dance, and assemblies in several school districts. Currently, Amy serves as the music director for their ward Primary, and Howard is a ward missionary. Their entire family is very involved in Autism Speaks, raising awareness, advocacy, and money in behalf of autism.

RYAN SHOEMAKER's stories have appeared or are forthcoming in the *Salt Lake City Weekly*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Wanderings*. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Jennifer, and their two children, Kieran and Haven. He attended Brigham Young University and will be forever grateful to his writing professors, his friends, and his mentors—Doug Thayer, Lance Larsen, Bruce Jorgensen, and John Bennion. Presently, he is a Ph.D. student in literature and creative writing at the University of Southern California.

CATHY GILEADI WILSON teaches art and writing in a juvenile correctional facility in southeastern Utah. She is the author of several books on alterative health and on education, and her poetry appears in various literary journals. She and her husband, Russell, live on three acres in Utah's high desert.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lee Udall Bennion

Lee Udall Bennion and her husband, Joseph Bennion, both descend from a long line of pioneers. They live in Spring City, a Utah village, where Lee paints and Joe makes pottery, which he fires in a wood-burning kiln. They call their dual artistic endeavor Horseshoe Mountain Pottery {http://HorseshoeMountainPottery.com/}. They have three daughters, who share their passion for gardening, riding horses, hiking in the nearby mountains, and rafting on wild rivers.

Lee's paintings have appeared in many group and individual exhibitions and have achieved a number of awards. Over a hundred images dating from 1983 to 2008 are available for viewing on their joint website. All her paintings are in frames that Lee has hand-carved and painted. Her subjects are domestic, local, and familial. She predominantly chooses to portray people. However, she insists that "portraiture is not my main concern. My painting deals with form, color, and feelings foremost." There are also landscapes and still life paintings which, she says, "tell more how I feel about a place or a set of objects than what they actually look like." Invariably, her subjects appear in simple, sparse settings. Often they merge into symbols. For example, a painting of 1993, *Divine Meditation,* shows a woman (likely Lee herself) whose head and elongated neck are suffused by an aura of light. The painting on the back cover of the present issue of *Dialogue* portrays a child—perhaps Lee's grandchild—with wings and a spotted dog. In such paintings, the ordinary and commonplace mingle with the transcendent and divine. Although her Mormonism is rarely explicit in her paintings, her faith underlies all of them. "I hope my love for God's creation and my fellow human beings shows through," she said in a recent interview. "Everything I do reflects my religion."

Front cover: *Adah with Paper Whites,* © 2008; oil on canvas; 36" x 28".
Back cover: *Angel with Dog,* © 2003; oil on canvas, 36" x 30".

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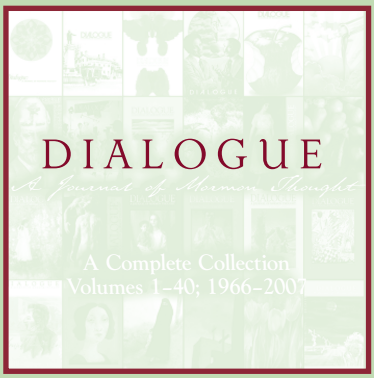

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