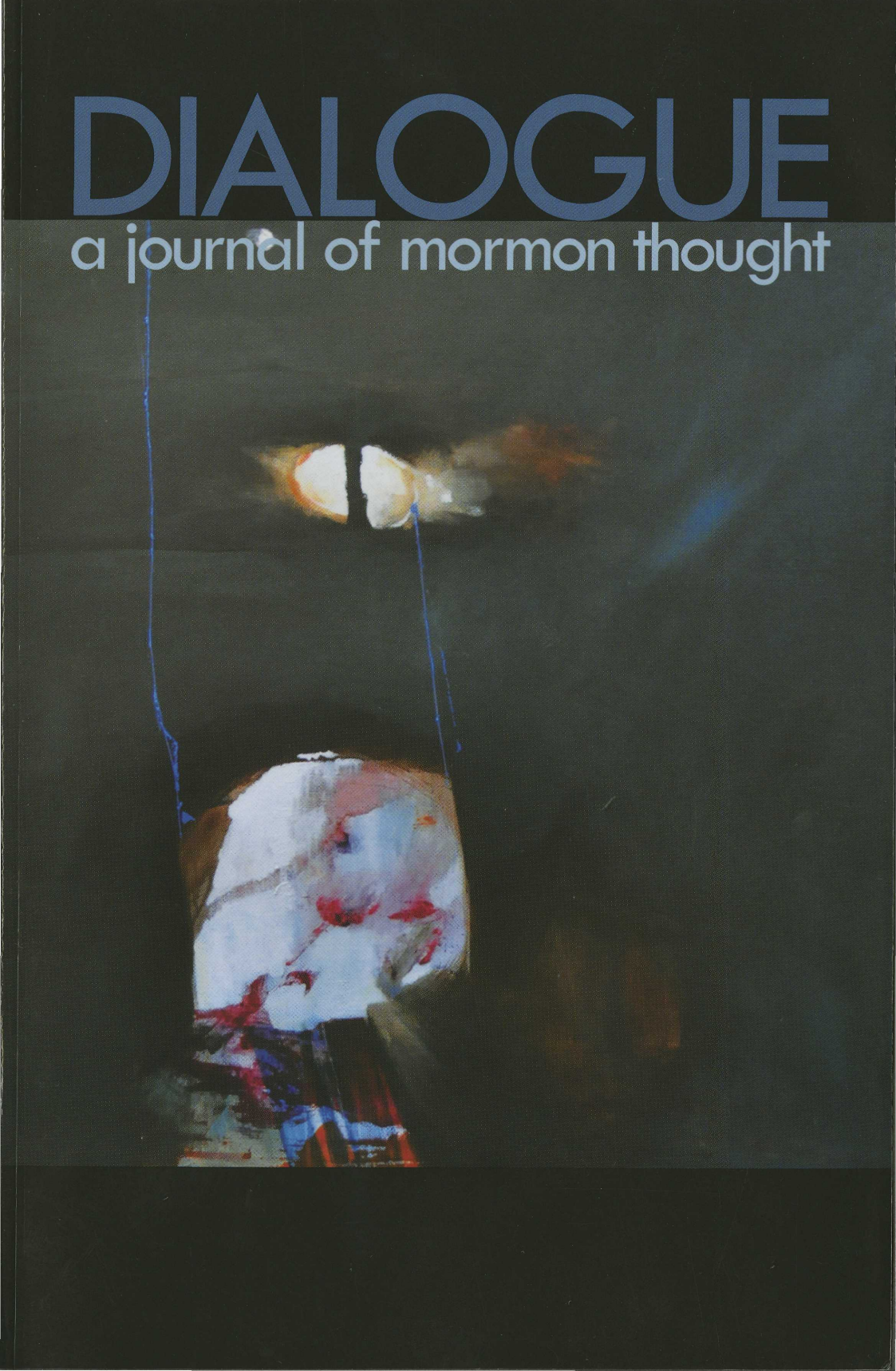
DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought



On the Front: Emily Plewe, *Impend*
acrylic on canvas, 48" x 48", 2008,
On the Back: Emily Plewe, *Waft*
acrylic on canvas, 36" x 36"

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

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CONTENTS

LETTERS

A Call for Compassion

I was raised in Logan, Salt Lake City, and Ogden, Utah, as an active member of the LDS Church. I gained so much of great value from all the years in Primary, Mutual, and the priesthood quorums. From that association, as well as the great example of my parents and wonderful teachers along the way, I learned many positive lessons that have formed the foundation of my life.

I learned that we should all love and care for each other—that we are all brothers and sisters and should treat each other accordingly. I learned that perhaps our highest calling is to help those who are in need and to be compassionate and kind toward those who are faced with difficult challenges. I learned, generally, that hatred, prejudice, and meanness toward others should be rejected in favor of love, inclusiveness, and kindness. Those seemed to be the fundamental moral messages from my church.

However, I learned other, very different, lessons as a young Mormon boy. I learned that discrimination against African Americans, including their exclusion from the priesthood and their exclusion from worshipping in LDS temples, was compelled by God because their skin color was the mark of Cain as a result of their wrongdoing in an earlier life. I even learned that Brigham Young maintained that slavery was an institution ordained by God, that a white person who "mixed his seed" with a "Negro" should be killed, and that African Americans were not to be treated as brute animals, but were to be treated as the servants of servants.

I learned that we were not to question religious or civil authority. I recall once hearing someone say from the lectern in my ward that, according to the Twelfth Article of Faith, we are to unquestioningly follow the directives of leaders, including military commanders, and that if the directives are immoral, those giving them, not those who follow them, will be held responsible on judgment day. Even as a young boy, I recall being appalled at that call for individual moral abrogation. The idea that we are all to fall in line when ordered, even when doing

so harms others, is abhorrent, dangerous, and contrary to the most fundamental lessons taught by Jesus and other major religious leaders.

Until 1967, antimiscegenation laws in many states prohibited interracial marriages. An African American and a white, like Barack Obama's parents, could not marry each other under those laws. Society advanced, and the laws caught up with those advances. In 1978, the president of the LDS Church said he had a revelation from God that the exclusion of black men from the LDS priesthood was to be lifted.

I learned another thing as a young boy: I was taught that gays and lesbians—they were called "homosexuals" in those days—were inferior people engaged in perverse wrongdoing. It was common for many people to use derogatory terms like "homo," "queer," or "faggot."

Since then, I have learned to liberate myself from those bigotries. I have learned that I can grow—and that, as I do, not only do I treat others better but I also become a better person myself. My life is enriched as I learn about others who are different from me and as I learn to value, not just tolerate, those differences.

I know many gay and lesbian people who have married. In fact, I recently attended a wedding reception for two men, Idaho farmers, who were married in California. They have been together, committed to each other, loving each other, for thirty years. So many of the gay and lesbian couples I have known are loving and committed, and have demonstrated a remarkable stability in their relationships—a stability that has so far eluded me in my relationships. These good people, and those who love them, are hurt every day of their lives when they are treated under the law as second-class citizens and as they face the sort of prejudice, discrimination, and hatred generated by such measures as Utah's Amendment 3 and California's Proposition 8.

The LDS Church is repeating a tragic and deplorable history through its vast involvement in the passage of Proposition 8—except that the bigotry and discrimination are now being directed not at African Americans but toward gays and lesbians. It is an outrage—and it is an occasion of great sadness for the LDS Church, for its members who are once again being, and allowing themselves to be, led astray, and for those who are victims of the hurtful judgments of those who think they are some-

how superior to their gay brothers and lesbian sisters.

Let us all call for greater love, better understanding, and dignity and respect toward all, regardless of race, regardless of faith or lack of faith, and regardless of sexual orientation. Let us all follow, rather than just talk about, the Golden Rule. Let us move beyond the false and hollow judgments that result in such pain, even to the point of suicide, for many LDS youth. And let us embrace each other as brothers and sisters and rid ourselves of the pernicious distinctions on the basis of sexual orientation that, with tragic consequences, have been drawn in the law and in so many hearts.

Just as racial discrimination is now forbidden in the United States, and just as antimiscegenation laws are now nothing more than a shameful part of our nation's history, we will celebrate full marriage equality some day. We have come so far in just a few years, particularly because most young people do not carry with them the burden of bigotry as I did, and as did so many of my generation. There will be obstacles, but reason, fairness, and a higher morality will prevail–if we join together in demanding it.

Let us all keep up the proud fight–the fight for fundamental fairness, the fight for compassion, the fight for love.

Ross C. "Rocky" Anderson
Salt Lake City, Utah

Clarifying My Own Stance

I deeply regret that Thomas Alexander understood my recent article ("Can Deconstruction Save the Day? 'Faithful Scholarship' and the Uses of Postmodernism," 41, no. 1 [Spring 2008]: 1–33) as attacking him and Leonard Arrington. This was not my intention. I'm sorry that I may have given that impression by not clarifying my stance on the issues raised in the article.

My aim in that piece was to offer historical perspective on orthodox LDS scholars' uses of postmodernism and to assess the likelihood that those appeals could win greater status for orthodox scholarship within the larger academy. Apart from that assessment, however, I was not trying to weigh in on the debates that have played out around orthodox scholarship. While I have strong opinions regarding those debates, I wanted to be as impartial as I could manage in my discussion of them for the purposes of this article.

As it happens, my sympathies lie with those, like Alexander and Arrington, who argued for

alternatives to the more restrictive, militant conceptions of orthodox scholarship advocated by antipositivist critics like Louis Midgley and David Bohn. In fact, Midgley has complained that my essay casts him as the villain in a "morality play" that pits a "heroic New Mormon History" against a "deplorable Faithful History" (comment posted in response to Kaimi Wenger, "Moderation in All Things," *By Common Consent*, August 2, 2008, http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2008/07/moderation-in-all-things, comment 34). While I hope I managed to give a more balanced and nuanced account in the article than Midgley's complaint implies, his perception of my commitments around these issues is not so far off.

One source of confusion, perhaps, was my use of the term "antipositivist" to describe Alexander's and Arrington's critics. I used that term merely to reflect the language of the debates. I myself do not believe Alexander and Arrington were posi- tivists; indeed, I find the accusation of positivism absurd. That accusation made sense to critics only because they (the critics) held a stark, fundamentalistic worldview that dismissed everything to the left of their own brand of orthodoxy as irreligion.

Given my lack of sympathy for the agendas that were pursued under the rubric of "faithful history," I feel little enthusiasm about the efforts some LDS scholars are now making to enhance orthodox scholarship's status within academia. Having watched "faithful scholarship" achieve its current position of privilege within Church institutions as a result of campaigns to enforce orthodoxy, I find it hard to be moved when orthodox scholars now bid for the academy's sympathy by invoking postmodern appeals on behalf of marginalized and deprivileged voices.

Again, I regret that my article may have given a mistaken impression of my intentions to Professor Alexander, whom I regard as someone who tried to fight the good fight.

John-Charles Duffy
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Asherah Alert

For some time I have been hearing about and greatly anticipating the appearance of Kevin L. Barney's scholarly comparison of the Mormon Mother in Heaven with the female deity Asherah. I have long admired Kevin Barney's research, writing, and opinions. So it is with

some regret that I feel compelled to point out some dangers and flaws in his "How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated)" (41, no. 4 [Winter 2008]: 121–47).

I agree with Barney's assessment (and the starting point for my examination of this topic) that Daniel C. Peterson's article "Nephi and His Asherah" is "surely one of the most remarkable articles ever published in Mormon studies."[1] Here Peterson introduces Mormon readers to Asherah, chief goddess of the early Canaanites, who was also worshipped by at least some of the ancient Hebrews. Although the Old Testament is rife with condemnation of this idolatrous practice, Peterson, for the first time in Mormon writings, gives credence to the position that worship of the Asherah may have been legitimate.

In his article, Barney follows up on the link that Peterson proposed between Asherah, the tree goddess, with Nephi's vision of the mother of the Son of God and the Tree of Life. As much as I admire such an exegesis, I must point out that a more conservative reading of 1 Nephi 11 suggests that Nephi is shown Mary and her child to connect Jesus with the tree, not Mary with the tree. Among Mormon scripturalists who accept this reading is Elder Jeffrey R. Holland: "The images of Christ and the tree [are] inextricably linked. . . . At the very outset of the Book of Mormon, Christ is portrayed as the source of eternal life and joy, the living evidence of divine love, and the means whereby God will fulfill his covenant with the house of Israel and indeed the entire family of man, returning them all to their eternal promises."[2]

This view fits better with the chapter as a whole, the condescension of God being the demonstration by the Father of His love for the world by sending His "only begotten Son," Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Those who have some experience in women's studies of the Old Testament will readily recognize Barney's recapitulation of the "Sophia as Heavenly Mother" theme. I agree with his assessment that Sophia (Latin for Wisdom) "was present at the creation and assisted in its work" (134) as a divine female force. It is quite possible that the Wisdom figure can tell us a great deal about the Goddess Asherah and even our Heavenly Mother herself.

But when it comes to pegging Asherah as our Heavenly Mother, there are many prob-

lems which must be overcome, and Kevin Barney falls short of doing so. Barney's proposition is that the early worship form of venerating Asherah is more valid than the later, more evolved form of monotheism. If we accept this view, then we must acknowledge the entire pantheon of gods worshipped by the early Canaanites and Hebrews, which entails rejecting the prophetic authority of the reform period. I am willing to consider that worship of a Holy Mother figure may have been a part of the primordial religion. But by the time we come to know the Asherah figure in the Old Testament, she has been perverted into a licentious, dissipated, corrupt figure whom God's prophets denounced. Barney mentions, but downplays, the very severe rejection of Asherah by the prophets and by Josiah, a king whom the Deuteronomist considers to be a divinely inspired national hero. The frequent association between Asherah and the Canaanite fertility cults shows that, at least by the time of the major prophets, she had become a sign of idolatry and was henceforth rejected. In fact, Asherah may bear little or no resemblance to the Mormon Heavenly Mother. How do we know, I wonder, which of her attributes are divine and which are not? Can we accept her association with trees, groves, or poles while rejecting, for example, the cult of prostitution accompanying her worship?

Kevin Barney concludes his article by suggesting some of the ways this conception of Heavenly Mother might be worshipped that are consistent with an orthodox LDS position. The best of these, which quite captured my imagination, was that we "reconceptualize" our Christmas tree traditions as symbols of the Christchild's mother. Says Barney, "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" (136).

This description in Barney's article had my head spinning as

I immediately began to imagine many different ways of decorating a Christmas tree. But Latter-day Saints might be better served by imagining ways to exclude paganism than from reconceptualizing it. After all,

> Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.
>
> For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth *a tree* out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.
>
> They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. . . .
>
> Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.
>
> They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. (Jer. 10:2–4, 14–15; emphasis mine)

After spending many words advising his reader that the current policy of the Church is not to pray publicly to Heavenly Mother, Barney "suggest[s] a partial, small exception" (133). Apparently Barney finds it acceptable for infertile women to pray to Asherah. I believe that Barney is treading on thin ice with this suggestion. Although I will admit to praying to a Heavenly Mother in private under certain circumstances, it is nonetheless a practice which might lead to the wrong side of the stake president's desk. Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, in issuing his instructions, first to the Regional Representatives and then to the women's general meeting, did not limit the restriction on prayer to a Mother in Heaven: "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. 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."[3] I read Barney's paragraph on prayer to the Mother as a dance of fancy footwork where he trips in and out of recommending these types of supplications but simultaneously absolves himself of responsibility for counseling that anyone actually do so.

The last area where I strongly feel that Kevin Barney has

stepped out of bounds is his assumption that he knows the personal name of our Heavenly Mother. Says he: "I personally regard it as very significant that we actually know the name of our Mother in Heaven: Asherah" (133). This possibility cannot, given the lack of other information, be discarded, but Barney would certainly have to give more evidence to convince me of this than that a few ancient Hebrews once adopted the appellation of a Canaanite Goddess as the object of their devotion. I feel no more comfortable using "Asherah" as Heavenly Mother's personal name than I do using as her title "Elat," which he identifies as an ancient word for "Goddess." (I do love the word studies, though. Kevin Barney excels at them, and his expertise is in evidence throughout his article.)

Other suggestions lose their potency as we realize that the Asherah of the Old Testament just may not be She whom we seek. Naming children Asher or Sophia, planting saplings to honor a tree goddess, seeing consecrated olive oil as a symbol of a feminine presence in ordinances, and even serving in the temple in the way described by Barney seem weak proposals compared with the active, vital worship of a feminine deity in Goddess-based religions.

In writing this response, I do not wish to discourage those who are searching for greater light and revealed knowledge upon the important subject of the Divine Feminine. I commend Kevin Barney for his efforts in this matter and hope students of Mormonism will continue to probe in this direction.

Notes

1. 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; and "Nephi and His Asherah," Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 9, no. 2 (2000): 16–25.

2. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997, 160, 162. See also Garth Norman, *The Christmas Tree and the Tree of Life,* http://www.meridianmagazine.com/articles/081223tree.html (accessed January 6, 2008): "Nephi saw the Tree and marveled at its exceeding beauty and whiteness, but he still did not understand its relationship to the Son of God. Desiring to know the interpretation of this tree, Nephi was then told to look, and a vision of Jerusalem opened up to him. . . . The scene then changed and Nephi saw the same virgin bearing a child in her arms, which the angel introduced to Nephi as the Lamb of God,

yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Now, the angel asked Nephi if he knew the meaning of the Tree of Life which his father (and he) had seen, and Nephi exclaimed, "Yea, it is the love of God." . . . This tree, as a sign of the Son of God, and the way God bestows his greatest gift on mankind was now clear to Nephi. It was all wrapped up in this infant child. The Tree as a sign of life was a sign of God's gift of the Christ child to the world as the ultimate expression of God's love."

3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign,* November 1991, 97.

Cheryl L. Bruno
Summerville, S.C.

Kevin Barney Responds

Thank you so much for taking the time and making the effort to comment on my "How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated)" (41, no. 4 [Winter 2008]: 121–46). Let me assure you that I am in no measure offended or upset that you disagreed with me; on the contrary, I am flattered that you thought the piece was worthy of this substantive attention. So I thank you.

It should come as no surprise, however, that I disagree with your comments. I will try to outline the nature of my disagreements as follows:

1. Peterson's article. I was a bit stumped by your comments on Daniel Peterson's article, "Nephi and His Asherah."[1] You seemed at first to be an enthusiastic fan of the piece. But Peterson basically does two things: (1) In general, the article is a survey of recent Asherah scholarship from an LDS perspective, and (2) In particular, it is an exegesis of 1 Nephi 11. Yet you reject both the general relevance of non-LDS Asherah scholarship to the topic of the Mormon Mother in Heaven and the specific exegesis Peterson offers, so it was unclear to me what, exactly, you found to like in the article at all.

I freely acknowledge that I stand on Peterson's shoulders in writing my article. I probably would not have had the confidence to attempt it if he had not plowed this ground ahead of me. I remember for a long time being familiar with the foundational work of Raphael Patai in *The Hebrew Goddess* (3rd ed. [Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1990]); and as the scholarship on this point began to accelerate, I considered writing about it. But in the end, I threw up my hands, just overwhelmed by how much there had come to be out there—which is why I was thrilled when Peterson made the effort and did it

better than I could have. I did not know Peterson at the time (our times at BYU did not overlap), but I recall finding his email address and sending him congratulations on the achievement. We later crossed paths at a conference and have become friends.

On the exegesis you reject, you are no doubt correct that the more "conservative" approach to the chapter is to see the tree as a symbol of Christ. You quote Elder Holland as saying "The images of Christ and the tree are inextricably linked."[2] It is unfortunate that Elder Holland does not present evidence or argumentation for this claim, and many questions go unanswered by his unelaborated assertion. Why is there a connection between the tree and Jesus? What I found so powerful about Peterson's reading is that it resulted in the passage's finally making sense to me. The angel does not explain the tree; but when he shows Nephi the virgin and then the virgin with the child in her arms, the meaning becomes clear to Nephi without further explication.

Seeing the tree as Asherah symbolism in this context makes tremendous sense to me. Trees were always associated with goddesses in the Old Testament. And I am fond of John Sorenson's suggestion (in his classic *Dialogue* piece, "The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship")[3] to the effect that the brass plates were a northern recension of scripture, reflecting Lehi's familial background as part of Manasseh in the north. We know that the people of Israel prior to the Assyrian conquest worshipped Asherah, so for that tree symbolism to immediately make sense to Lehi's son really works for me. Of course, you are welcome to read the passage in your own, more traditional way, but I continue to favor Peterson's insight here.

2. Are we forced to acknowledge the Canaanite pantheon? Your letter seems to think my approach requires it. I disagree that if we accept any part of Asherah mythology, we are forced to accept the whole kit and kaboodle. Why? We know there was corruption involved, so we can certainly be selective about what we take and what we leave behind. I tried to follow a selection method of identifying positive allusions to Asherah in the scriptures, then used them as my base. Without stating it, obviously I was also looking at these things through the lens of modern Mormonism. And why not? I took pains to make it clear that my essay was engaged in religion-making. I do not see why

we have to reject the tradition completely, simply because it contains corrupted elements when it also, in my view, at least, contains valid ones.

To take your example of cultic prostitution, as I am sure you know recent studies have questioned whether such a thing ever really existed. But assuming *arguendo* that there was an Asherah-based prostitution cult, so what? We can leave that on the trash heap of history. I see no reason why we have to take all of it; it seems to me that we can pick and choose.

3. Reform prophets. Your comment about my proposal's potential for undermining the authority of reform prophets is where the rubber really hits the road, and I think it is your strongest point. I knew that this argument was going to be tough for rank-and-file Mormons to accept. We tend to want to read the scriptures as being univocal, without development. If one prophet rejected a certain practice, then it is unquestionably a bad practice and all prophets would agree.

Just recently I had to counsel with a man in another state who used to be in my ward, because his BYU-attending son had learned about the nineteenth-century Adam-God beliefs held by Brigham Young and others. His son said, in effect, "Look, this isn't a trifle. It's a doctrine about the nature of God. It's something as important as can be. And Brigham Young as prophet taught this. So it either has to be true and the Church is in apostasy for not teaching it, or the prophets are wrong altogether and they have no authority." We have raised an entire generation of Saints with such linear thinking about prophetic infallibility that they cannot handle the nuances, and there really are a lot of them beyond the obvious Adam-God example.

The truth is that the winners get to write the history, and it was those who rejected Asherah who largely redacted or wrote the Old Testament as we have it today. There is, quite frankly, a lot of political spin in the Old Testament. I recognize that we get really nervous when we start talking about spin in the scriptures. So I do not blame anyone, including you, for not wanting to follow me there.

4. Evict paganism. On my mission I ran into very conservative Christians and, of course, Jehovah's Witnesses who saw clearly the pagan elements in such celebrations as Christmas and Easter and therefore advocated against celebrating them. I

can understand and respect that position, all the while disagreeing with it profoundly. I love the holidays, and I love the fact that we Mormons are pragmatic enough to acknowledge the pagan elements in them and celebrate them anyway. I love that we do not feel threatened by Santa Claus or Easter bunnies or yule logs or mistletoe or anything else like that. I think that such tolerance shows a certain amount of religious maturity for our people. (Even those who are sure Jesus was born on April 6 are content to celebrate Christmas on December 25—and good for them!)

5. Prayer. I referenced the same Gordon B. Hinckley statement you did, albeit quoted in two different places. I did not quite understand your criticism here. I made it clear that I personally do not pray to Mother in Heaven but that there is a scriptural precedent for such a prayer in limited circumstances. If people want to take the responsibility for themselves of following that precedent, then obviously the principle of agency is not suspended in their case and they are free to do so. You acknowledged that you sometimes pray to Mother in Heaven for unspecified reasons without scriptural precedent. Should we censure Leah for daring to offer a prayer to Asherah at the birth of her son Asher, named in honor of the Goddess? I do not think so.

6. Personal name. I am also not sure why you object so strongly to acknowledging Asherah as the personal name of our Mother. As I showed in the article's appendix, that name appears forty times in the Old Testament, even if it is always mistranslated in the King James Version. If we cannot accept Asherah as a name, how can we accept El/Elohim or Yahweh as personal names of deity? Mormon scholars have become comfortable with the interface of Canaanite precedents and the early Hebrew pantheon. See, for instance, my article, "Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith's Understanding of Genesis 1:1," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 107–24.

A good illustration of how Canaanite precedents influenced early Israelite belief is provided by Deuteronomy 32:8-9, which reads as follows in the Revised Standard Version: "When the Most High [*elyon*] gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God [*bene elohim*]. For the LORD'S [*YHWH*] portion is his

people, Jacob his allotted heritage."

Here the High God El fixes the number of the nations at seventy to equal the number of His sons (also seventy), assigning one son to each nation. El assigns His son Yahweh to be the God of Israel.[5] The confluence of Canaanite mythology with the early Hebrew pantheon in this passage is striking.

In conclusion, I note that the bibliography I appended to the article had to be cut in half to meet space limitations. The amount of scholarship on Asherah as a Hebrew Goddess is absolutely huge. If one is unwilling to see that literature as relating in a meaningful way to the Mormon Mother in Heaven, then I would recommend following the position of my good friend Blake Ostler, who has stated that he is "open to the possibility that the entire belief in mother in heaven is a cultural overbelief."[6] You may as well, because there is not some vast body of evidence about some *other* Mother in Heaven figure in ancient Israel who would fit Joseph Smith's statements. In my view, Asherah is our one shot at situating such a figure in the real world of the Old Testament, with actual Israelite worship directed to her.

Once again, thank you so much for your careful attention to my article. I hope my response above gives a clearer idea of my perspective on specific points raised by your critique.

Notes

1. 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.

2. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 160, 162.

3. John L. Sorenson, "The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10 (Autumn 1977): 31–39.

4. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign,* November 1991, 100.

5. The KJV at the end of verse 8 reads "sons of Israel," which is an attempt to soften the original reading "sons of God," since the sons of Israel also numbered seventy. That the KJV reading is secondary is clear. The reading "sons of God" is attested in two fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls: 4QDeut^{j} and 4QDeut^{q}. See Patrick W. Skehan, "A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses' (Deut. 32) from Qumran," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Re-*

search 136 (December 1954): 12–15; Patrick W. Skehan, "Qumran and the Present State of Old Testament Text Studies: The Masoretic Text," Journal of Biblical Literature 78 (1959): 21; and Julie Duncan's definitive edition in *Qumran Cave 4–IX: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings,* Vol. 14 in DISCOVERIES IN THE JUDEAN DESERT series, edited by Eugene Ulrich (Oxford, England: Clarendon, 1995), 90. Although many Septuagint manuscripts read "angels of God," which represents an alternate attempt to soften the original reading, the oldest Greek witness to Deuteronomy, P. Fuad 266 (Rahlfs 848), reads "sons" rather than "angels." The editor for the Deuteronomy volume of the Göttingen edition of the Septuagint, John W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 513, regards the reading "sons of God" as assured. For additional evidence supporting this reading, see Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 157.

6. Blake Ostler, Comment No. 68 (March 1, 2008) to TT, "The Future of Heavenly Mother," *Faith Promoting Rumor* (February 27, 2008), http://faithpromotingrumor.wordpress.com/2008/02/27/the-future-of-heavenly-mother (accessed January 8, 2009).

Kevin L. Barney
Hoffman Estates, Illinois

Rest of the Story

After my article on leadership in the Utah War was at press ("Who's in Charge Here?: Utah War Command Ambiguity," 24, no. 1 [Spring 2009]: 39–64) I became aware through Ardis E. Parshall of additional information about how Colonel Albert Sidney Johnstonwas selected for this responsibility in late August 1857. As discussed on p. 39, Johnston believed at the time that his selection was solely the decision of Gen. Winfield Scott, the army's general in chief, rather than that of President James Buchanan, whom Johnston had never met.

On April 7, 1887, a very different version of the selection decision emerged in New Orleans at the dedication of an equestrian statue erected in Johnston's honor posthumously. At this ceremony the principal speaker was Jefferson Davis, former president of the Confederacy and Johnston's commander in chief when he was mortally wounded at the 1862 Civil War battle of Shiloh.

In reprising Johnston's career, Davis recalled an 1857 conversation between him and Buchanan at a time when Davis was chairman of the U.S. Senate's military affairs committee and the recently resigned secretary of war in President Franklin Pierce's cabinet: "Buchanan, when President, sent to me to ask, 'Who do you think ought to have command of the Utah expedition[?]' I did not choose

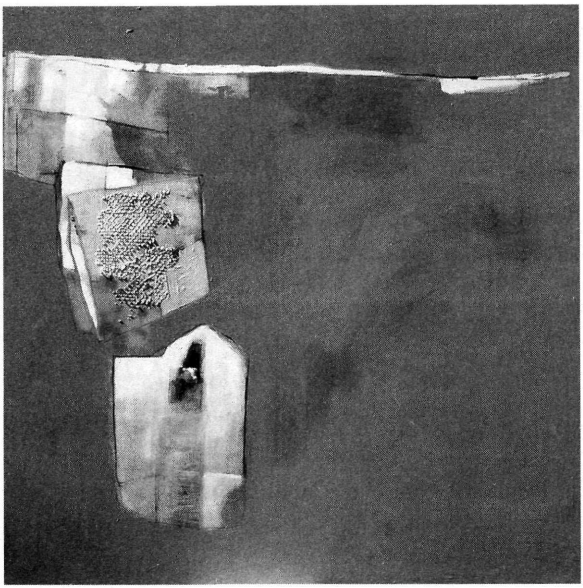
to select one only from my army acquaintances, and I gave three names. He said: 'Do you and [Illinois Senator John A.] Logan ever agree about anything?' I said: 'I think so.' He replied: 'In this instance you have named the same three men.' They were Persifor [F.] Smith of Louisiana, Albert S. Johnston and R. E. Lee. Johnston was selected, and he was the best selection. He commanded the expedition to Utah, and was [later] made brigadier general by brevet. So he had gone to the highest grade next to commander in chief within a short period after the Mexican war."[1]

Albert Sidney Johnston's contemporary but incomplete understanding of the forces at work combined with Jefferson Davis's more senior but probably fading recollection provide more light on how Johnston came to the Utah command than heretofore known. My very recent awareness of Davis's version, even after a half-century of research, also illustrates how much more remains to be discovered about the Utah War's origins, prosecution, and impact.

Note

1. "Jeff Davis's Speech. The Grey-Haired Statesman and Soldier Pays a Tribute to Sidney Johnston," Dispatch, April 7, 1887, from New Orleans, *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 8, 1887.

William P. MacKinnon
Santa Barbara, California



Emily Plewe, *Accession*
acrylic on canvas, 36"x 36", 2005

"The Living Oracles": Legal Interpretation and Mormon Thought

Nathan B. Oman

"We have only an outline of our duties written; we are to be guided by the living oracles." –*Wilford Woodruff*[1]

"The judges in the several courts of justice . . . are the depositary of the laws; the living oracles . . ." –*William Blackstone*[2]

I

Mormon thinkers have a problem. Suppose that a Latter-day Saint were interested in learning what his or her religion has to say about some contemporary philosophical, social, or political issue. Where should a Mormon thinker begin? Consider the counter-example of Catholic intellectuals. Faced with such a question, they have the luxury of a rich philosophical and theological tradition on which to draw. They can turn to Aquinas or modern Catholic social thought and find there a set of closely reasoned propositions and arguments to apply to the questions before them. To be sure, the task of such a thinker is not simply to "look up" the answer, but Catholic intellectuals do have a religious tradition that has been digested over the centuries in intellectual categories that lend themselves easily to analysis and extension into new areas. This option, however, is not open to a Latter-day Saint. Mormonism—despite some important exceptions[3]—has largely eschewed closely reasoned systematic theology. As one sympathetic Catholic observer has written, "I have found it difficult to try to understand the complex relationships between philosophy and theology in

Mormon thought."[4] To which I would respond, "Join the club." Given the difficulties presented by what is at best a nascent philosophical tradition, Mormon thinkers interested in offering a "Mormon perspective" on an issue such as the nature of property or the proper forms of political reasoning, for example, face a methodological problem. How does one begin looking for Mormon resources from which to construct such perspectives? Indeed, on many issues it would seem at first glance that Mormon thinkers might be justified in concluding that Mormonism just doesn't have much of anything to say.

To be sure there is a voluminous body of Mormon writing on many subjects, but the overwhelming majority of this work is homiletic and is meant to inspire and motivate its audience rather than provide them with careful conceptual analysis. Furthermore, when one looks to the content of this work, one finds that much of it consists of narrative rather than exposition. Richard Bushman has observed that "Mormonism is less a set of doctrines than a collection of stories."[5] Indeed, the central obsession of Mormon intellectual life for the last half century has not been systematic theology but history. One might point to any number of things to underline the centrality of history for Mormon thought.

One example will suffice. The relationship between faith and reason is a perennial question for religious thinkers. Generally speaking, these debates are couched in the language of philosophy. The question is, as Alvin Plantinga has put it, whether or not belief is rationally warranted.[6] In contrast, the most sophisticated and prolonged debates within Mormonism on the relative claims of faith and unaided human reason have been cast as battles between "faithful history" and "secular history."[7] Where other traditions debate epistemology and theology, Mormons debate historiography and historicity. Accordingly, one response to the methodological problem facing Mormon intellectuals discussed above would be the interpretation of history in normative terms. Indeed, we can see something like this in the work of writers such as Hugh Nibley who look to historical narratives about nineteenth-century Zion-building as a basis for social criticism.[8] Such efforts, however, are dogged by persistent anxieties about the intellectual respectability of using the past as a springboard for broader conceptual or normative discussions. For many profes-

sional historians and the Mormon intellectuals who take them as models, straying beyond concrete debates over sources, chronology, and their interpretation smacks of apologetics or sectarian rather than "scholarly" history.

The two quotations at the beginning of this essay point toward a related but slightly different response to the methodological quandary of Mormon thinkers. Wilford Woodruff taught, "We have only an outline of our duties written; we are to be guided by the living oracles."[9] On its face, this seems like a fairly standard appeal to the authority of Mormonism's living prophets. The contrast between "living oracles" and the mere "outline of duties" that is actually written down, however, suggests a second point. The formal, propositional content of Mormon scripture, it would seem, provides no more than a framework in which the concrete meaning of Mormonism is worked out by the inspired fiat of Mormon leaders. While Joseph Smith produced a mass of scriptural narrative, subsequent Mormon prophets—with notable exceptions such as Joseph F. Smith's vision of the redemption of the dead (D&C 138)—have made their weight felt less in terms of new sacred stories than in terms of new institutions and practices. Strikingly, Brigham Young's sole contribution to the formal Mormon canon is a revelation on the structure of immigrant trains (D&C 136). He—like most of his successors—spent the bulk of his energies on the delineation of Mormon practices and institutions.

What Mormons see in this history is the accretion of many decisions in concrete historical situations made by wise and inspired leaders. The result is a set of practices and institutions that they regard as imbued with the divine, even when the practices and institutions cannot be shown to be deduced in any unproblematic manner from sacred texts, theological first principles, or dramatic moments of charismatic revelation. The same is true of the activities of Latter-day Saint leaders who have not reached the top of the hierarchy. They too have been involved mainly in the execution and building up of a set of practices and institutions. Accordingly, Bushman's view of Mormonism as a collection of stories must be updated. Mormonism is also a set of practices and institutions. This fact points toward another answer to the methodological dilemma of Mormon thinkers: legal interpretation, particu-

larly the methods of interpretation used in the judge-made common law.[10]

II

According to Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., "It is the merit of the common law that it decides the case first and determines the principle afterwards."[11] Like most Holmesian aphorisms, this statement is open to multiple interpretations; however, it rightly insists that the common law is first and foremost about resolving concrete disputes. A common-law judge seldom finds himself announcing abstract principles for their own sake. Rather, he is generally concerned with the question of doing right in the particular case before him or at most with interstitial modifications of existing law. The resolution of the case will depend on analogies to past cases and the judge's own wisdom and intuitions about justice. It is only after the piling up of innumerable particular cases that the abstract rules of legal doctrine emerge.

Hence, it is uncontroversial to claim that, for example, in the case of conflict between a written contract and the parties' oral testimony about the content of their agreement, the writing will control.[12] This rule, however, was never announced in a distinct, legislative moment. Rather, it is an accepted generalization that captures the outcomes of hundreds of preexisting cases. Finally, it is only after the myriad of particular cases have been organized into a doctrinal structure of abstract legal rules that a common law thinker might try to discern within, say, the law of contracts a set of normative choices, such as a general preference for economic efficiency, personal autonomy, or transactional fairness.[13] Hence, as Blackstone wrote, common law judges are "living oracles" who declare the law in particular cases rather than deducing it from first principles. In this sense, they function much like Mormon prophets and priesthood leaders.

Working within the common law system, a jurist doesn't provide a conceptual foundation from which the law is deduced. Rather, her task is to uncover the latent normative judgments that emerge spontaneously from the accretion of particular precedents. These generalized statements of legal principles and policies can then serve as a basis for either criticizing or extending current practice. They are not, however, the common law itself.

Rather, the common law always continues on as a practice that is "more like a muddle than a system."[14] This process is true whether our jurist is a lawyer, a law professor, or even a judge reflecting on the law.[15]

Hence, for example, a common law lawyer would note that, in case after case, when a litigant in a contract case claims that the oral agreement of the parties was substantially different than the written contract, the judges always side with the writing over the oral testimony. This regularity might then be stated as a rule. In many cases, the theorist would note, the effect of this rule is to enforce contract terms that may differ from the subjective understanding of the parties. Such an outcome seems inconsistent with the notion that contract law is primarily concerned with advancing the autonomous choices of individuals. On the other hand, by privileging the written terms, the common law rule contributes to certainty in commercial transactions and reduces the cost to the courts of resolving contract disputes, throwing those costs back onto the parties who have an incentive to reduce their actual intentions to a clear writing. What emerges from this analysis is a conclusion that, at least in this area of contract interpretation, concern for economic efficiency seems paramount over concern for individual choice. This conclusion, however, is not the law. It is not even a major premise from which the law is deduced. It is simply an articulation of the latent normative logic of the law as it now stands. The case comes first, and it is only afterward that we discover principles. The "living oracles," however, with their focus on particular cases, may well move the law in a different direction in the future.

This method of interpretation can be applied to the practices and institutions of Mormonism. The goal would not be to provide first principles from which correct conclusions can be deduced. Rather it would be to articulate the inchoate normative logic of these practices and institutions. Two concrete examples can illustrate the kind of analysis that I envision. Suppose that one is interested in Mormon conceptions of property and contract. These institutions stand at the center of modern market economies, and one might wonder what Mormonism has to say about them. At first glance, Mormon theology—or at any rate the extremely small literature on systematic Mormon theology—seems to have very lit-

tle to say about either property or contract. The analogy to legal interpretation, however, suggests that one should search for Mormon ideas not only in Mormon discourse but also in Mormon practice.

One place to look for materials would be the nineteenth-century Church court system, which among other things decided property and contract disputes between Latter-day Saints.[16] One will search the records of these cases in vain for anything that even distantly resembles a theory of property or a theory of contract. The priesthood leaders resolving these disputes decided the case without recourse to any elaborate set of first principles. Nevertheless, in examining their practices and the institutions they sought to create, we can discern a distinctive set of normative choices that one might unapologetically label as Mormon concepts of property and contract. Consider first the case of Oliver Cowdery's excommunication.

III

In 1831, Joseph Smith received a revelation setting forth what became known as the "Law of Consecration and Stewardship" (D&C 42).[17]All members of the Church were to "consecrate" their property to the Lord by executing a deed that transferred land and other assets to the Church. Each member then received in return a parcel of property as his particular "stewardship."[18] In Jackson County, Missouri, which an earlier revelation had designated as the location of the New Jerusalem to be founded by the Saints, members received their stewardships as part an effort to build up Zion. In 1833, after growing tensions with the original settlers in the county, an ad hoc militia violently expelled the Mormons from the area.[19] The loss of Jackson County precipitated a crisis for many Latter-day Saints. How were they to build up Zion if the revealed location of the New Jerusalem was held by "the Gentiles"? Coupled with other events, this loss caused a leadership crisis within the church that came to a head in 1838.[20]

In the resulting struggle, Oliver Cowdery found himself on trial before a Church court. Among the charges leveled against him was that he had denied the faith and abandoned Zion by selling his stewardship. Oliver responded with a lengthy letter in which he refused to submit to the jurisdiction of the high council

that was trying his case, insisting that no Church court could interfere in his "temporal affairs." The letter contained the following, revealing passage on property rights: "Now sir the lands in our Country are allodial in the strictest construction of the term, and have not the least shadow of feudal tenours attached to them, consequently, they may be disposed of by deeds of conveyance without the consent or even approbation of a superior."[21] Scholars have long found his reference to "allodial" land and feudal tenures puzzling.[22] Oliver's objections, however, go to the heart of how Mormon practices conceptualized property.

Feudal tenures refer to medieval doctrines in the common law by which the ownership of land created certain kinds of reciprocal social obligations. The way in which one owned property defined one's place in the social system. Every freeman "held his land of" someone else. A deed, for example, might specify that Sir Cedric held Blackacre "in knight's service" of Lord Lothgar. What this meant was that Sir Cedric's ownership of Blackacre created an obligation on his part of loyalty and military service to Lord Lothgar. In turn, Lord Lothgar–at least in theory–had obligations to protect Sir Cedric and provide him with justice in disputes with his neighbors. The result was a thick set of social duties centered on the ownership of land. As one legal historian has written: "When feudalism was at full tide, it was clearly much more than a system of providing legal title in land; indeed, the sense of mutual personal obligation between lord and vassal may have been even more essential than the granting of fiefs in return for promises of services."[23] Legally speaking, however, these were not free-floating rights or obligations. They inhered in the concept of property itself. To own Blackacre meant to have a certain set of obligations in the community where Blackacre was located. By contrast, holders of allodial land "were free from the exactions and burdens to which the holders of fiefs were subject, yet they did not enjoy the protection of a superior."[24] Hence, allodial land had no "feudal tenures," rendering its owner free of both the social obligations and the social benefits inherent in the lord-vassal relationship.

During the period prior to his Church trial, Cowdery was following an informal course of reading of the kind standard among would-be frontier attorneys.[25]In the perennial manner of law stu-

dents, he was no doubt eager to show off newly mastered jargon, but his appeal to allodial property and feudal tenures recognized that the Church was asking him to fundamentally reconceptualize property in terms very different than those that prevailed in American culture. Following the formulation given by Locke a century earlier, the American Revolution had rallied around the vindication of rights to "life, liberty, and property." In this trinity of values, however, property had a particular meaning, one mediated in part through the legal concepts that Cowdery invoked. For example in 1765, John Adams attacked the Stamp Act in *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law* that identified the tyranny of Parliament as the latest chapter in a story of repression with its roots in feudal tenures. "All ranks and degrees held their lands by a variety of duties and services, all tending to bind the chains the faster on every order of mankind," Adams noted.[26] The dire result of this system, he continued, was "a state of total ignorance of every thing divine and human." In contrast, among those who "holden their lands allodially," a man was "the sovereign lord and proprietor of the ground he occupied."[27]

A generation later, in his widely used American edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, William and Mary law professor St. George Tucker noted with pride that, due to the "republican spirit," feudal tenures had been abolished by statute in America, and "it was expected that every trace of that system would have been abolished in this country when the republic was established."[28] Likewise, in his 1828 *Commentaries on American Law*, Chancellor James Kent traced in detail the end of feudal tenures in America and the rise of allodial holding, marking it as a restoration of ancient lost liberties. "Thus, by one of those singular revolutions incident to human affairs," he wrote, "allodial estates . . . regained their primitive estimation in the minds of freemen."[29] As an aspiring attorney, Oliver was well aware of such standard legal texts as Tucker's and Kent's commentaries, and his rhetorical fillip on allodial land was likely a deliberate allusion to this line of thinking.[30]

The most salient feature of this "republican" vision of ownership was that it constituted a sharp limit on social obligation. Whatever a man's obligations in the public realm, once within the private space of his allodial castle, he could do as he wished.

Blackstone, the most important reference work for generations of American attorneys, insisted: "So great moreover is the regard of the law for private property, that it will not authorize the least violation of it; no, not even for the general good of the whole community. . . . In vain may it be urged, that the good of the individual ought to yield to that of the community."[31] Nor were these merely "legal" categories. For a lawyer of Oliver's generation, legal positivism had not yet shattered the identification of the common law with natural law. Accordingly, this absolutist conception of property marked off more than simply the positive law of the land. It represented a fundamental feature of moral reality. In effect, to own property was to have a sphere, however limited, beyond the reach of the community.

Mormonism did not try to reinstitute feudal tenures. It did, however, reject the notion of property as a boundary or limit of communal duties. Furthermore, in common with the feudal system, it fragmented the moral concept of ownership and transformed property into a nexus of obligations to others. In Joseph Smith's revelations nobody owns property in the absolutist way championed by Blackstone.[32] Rather, one 1834 revelation declared, "I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; all things therein are mine" (D&C 104:14). The institutions of consecrated properties and stewardships served not only to redistribute wealth among the Saints, but also to redefine their relationship to property. In the same revelation, God declared that property is given to the Saints "that every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him" (D&C 104:12). One did not hold property as a way of creating a private sphere free of communal obligations. Rather the purpose of property was to create obligations to others and to become accountable to God. (See also D&C 42:32.) Obligations associated with ownership included the duty to "administer to the poor and needy," assisting to purchase property "for the public benefit of the church," and most inclusively for "the building up of the New Jerusalem" (D&C 42:34, 35).

While the concrete institutional arrangements of "the law of consecration and stewardship" were short lived, the underlying approach to property continued within Mormon practice. For ex-

ample, in 1838 Joseph Smith published a revelation that replaced the earlier system of consecrations and stewardships with a system of tithing requiring Mormons to "pay one-tenth of their interest annually" into the coffers of the community (D&C 119:4). However, the rule, which is still followed by Latter-day Saints, did not repudiate the earlier concepts of stewardship and subsidiary ownership. Rather, the revelation explicitly linked the new regime to the older rules requiring that "surplus property be put in the hands of the bishop" (D&C 119:1) and to a notion of property rights linked to the obligation to build up Zion:

> Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass that all . . . shall be tithed of their surplus properties . . . .
>
> And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you. (D&C 119:8–9)

Thus, in a single passage, "properties" are associated with divine obligations ("my statutes and judgments") and the creation of a community defined by reciprocal obligations of love and service ("a land of Zion"). In place of the conception of property as a bulwark of individual freedom, Mormonism offers property as a nexus of obligation to God and to one's neighbors. The 1838 revelation is particularly striking in this regard because it came in the context of a retreat from cooperative economic arrangements toward a regime of greater personal control of property. Nevertheless, it carried forward the notion that to care for the poor and build up Zion is not something that one chooses to do with property that is truly one's own. Rather, everything one owns is a stewardship from God, given for the purpose of making one accountable to him. The obligation to build Zion inheres in the concept of property itself.

IV

The nineteenth-century Mormon court system can be similarly mined for Mormon conceptions of contract. In contrast to their detailed discussion of matters relating to property, Mormon scriptures have comparatively little to say about contract. In this sense, they mirror the law codes of the Old Testament, which like-

wise have little to say about enforcing voluntary agreements. Nevertheless, Joseph Smith's revelation on the law of consecration and stewardship clearly assumes an economic order involving commerce and voluntary exchange, commanding "thou shalt pay for that which thou shalt receive of thy brother" (D&C 42:54). Another revelation speaks of a store to be set up to serve the Saints in Zion (D&C 57:8–10). While contracts exist only in the margins of Mormon scripture, covenant is an enormously important concept in Latter-day Saint theology. Most dramatically, an 1832 revelation suggests that sacred promises bind even God. "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10). This reverential attitude toward the power of promises carried over into Mormon contract cases.

On December 7, 1863, a local schoolteacher filed a complaint with the bishop of a ward in northern Utah against a local farmer (both teacher and farmer were Mormons) "for unchristianlike conduct, unworthy of a Latter Day Saint, in refusing to pay me a small debt due for School teaching in wheat flour or corn." The farmer admitted to having promised to pay but insisted that "prior to his calling on me for wheat, I had contracted my flour what I had to spare to raise a certain amount of money that I owed." A trial ensued, and testimony before the bishop's court revealed that the farmer had initially told the schoolteacher that he had no grain and had then tried to find a buyer who would pay for his wheat either with livestock or sufficient ready cash. When the schoolteacher found out, he demanded the wheat according to the earlier agreement; but by this time, the farmer had found willing buyers at the higher price, a group of Gentile miners. In his complaint to the bishop's court, the schoolteacher insisted that he had "very much needed" the wheat and expressed dismay that it had gone to "speculators from the Bannock Minz." Other Mormons testified that they had offered to buy the corn with cash or calves, but the farmer had refused them, either because the amount of money offered was too little or because the calves were too young. The clerk recorded that the bishop, after deliberating, "said it was a very plain case, many cases come up rather misty but this is a very plain case. . . . I think so and more than enough has been said to prove that [the farmer] has told in a number of in-

stances that which is not true and [the bishop] moved that we disfellowship [him] until he make satisfaction."[33]

The little drama described in this case is common enough in contract litigation. Able promises Baker some commodity at a fixed price. At the time of delivery, however, the market price of the commodity has risen, and Able breaches his contract to Baker to make a better deal elsewhere. The bishop's approach to the case, however, deviates significantly from the common law of contracts. Holmes famously declared, "The duty to keep a contract at common law means a prediction that you must pay damages if you do not keep it—and nothing else."[34] While laypersons commonly speak of "enforcing" a contract, in point of fact the common law generally will not force a breaching party to literally do what he promised in his contract. Rather, the usual remedy is damages. A breaching party must—in theory, at least—compensate the disappointed promisee for the lost value of the bargain but is always free to simply breach and pay. Furthermore, the breach of contract—while giving rise to liability—is not regarded as a legal wrong in and of itself. For example, with a few extremely rare exceptions, the mere breach of contract is not a crime or even a civil wrong giving rise to a fine nor do courts inquire into the culpability of breach in any but the rarest of cases. In short, one is always free to simply walk away from one's agreements, albeit at the risk of a suit for damages.

The justifiability of the common law's preference for compensatory damages is hotly contested among legal scholars. There are at least two possible arguments. The first is that contract law's primary concern is and ought to be to provide contracting parties with incentives to behave in economically efficient ways. In this view, society does not want people to keep all of their promises. Rather, it only wishes to see promises kept when the benefits of doing so exceed the costs. Sometimes, however, it will be economically efficient for parties to breach their contracts; and in such cases, we wish them to do so. Damages incentivize performance but not too much, encouraging so-called "efficient breaches."[35]Alternatively, some argue that, in a liberal society, the law should not concern itself with the personal morality of its citizens, confining itself to protecting them against invasions of their rights by others. The duty to keep a promise, being grounded in

personal virtue, is not something that the law should concern itself with. It will provide compensation to those whose legitimate expectations have been disappointed by breach, but it ought not to act to keep the promisor from breaking his promise merely on the basis of moral objections.[36]

Thus, there is a sense in which both of these justifications treat contracts as extremely thin obligations between two essentially unrelated individuals. Both take an amoral attitude toward promises, treating them as either instrumentally useful in some cases to achieve economic goals or alternatively as matters about which a properly constituted political community ought to be indifferent. In this view, the actions of the farmer were altogether benign, even perhaps commendable from an economic point of view. To be sure, he ought to pay the schoolteacher something, but the common law would attach no stigma per se to his shopping his grain to the highest bidder, notwithstanding his prior promise to give it to the schoolteacher. The bishop, in contrast, viewed the farmer's actions in starkly moralistic terms. The farmer had not only breached his contract, but he had also lied. Furthermore, the remedy imposed was not simply an order to pay some amount of damages. Rather, he was cut off from the community until the man he had wronged determined that he was once again eligible to enter it. Under the rules that prevailed at the time, of course, the schoolteacher's power over the farmer's continued fellowship was not absolute. Someone who felt that he had been abused under a judgment from a Church court could always file a counter complaint for, in the words of one such action, "unchristianlike conduct in . . . depriving me of my fellowship in the Ch. Of J.C. of LDS."[37] Still, the bishop's resolution of the case gave more to the schoolteacher than a mere claim for money damages and had a punitive aspect foreign to the common law of contracts.

The Mormon preference for moralizing contracts shows up in other areas where Mormon adjudication differed sharply from secular legal doctrines. Where possible, Church courts required breaching parties to perform their obligations, awarding damages only when performance was no longer possible.[38] Even when damages were awarded, the Church courts took a tougher line with breaching parties than do secular courts. For example, under

the rule announced in the famous English case of *Hadley v. Baxendale*, a breaching party's liability includes few of the secondary negative effects of his breach because the law sharply limits so-called "consequential damages." The decisions in the Church courts were quite different.

For example, in October 1847, the Salt Lake High Council heard a complaint against a man who had apparently breached a contract to deliver some gunpowder in his possession, selling it instead to a third party. He offered to pay for it, but the council went on to hold that he "be held responsible for *any damage* that may accrue from the want of it, until paid," greatly enlarging the man's liability beyond what would be available under the common law.[39] Elsewhere, Church courts awarded punitive damages for breach of contract, something almost totally unheard of in the common law.[40] Likewise, Mormon courts regularly enforced debts that had been discharged by bankruptcy or even death, on the theory that Latter-day Saints had a moral duty to meet their obligations come what may.[41] This highly moralistic approach to obligations was never tied to communitarian economic institutions and has survived in contemporary Mormon discourse, notwithstanding its sharp divergence from secular ideas of contract.[42]

V

Obviously, the interpretation of these two Church court cases is open to debate. They do illustrate, however, the way in which one can extract fairly abstract ideas from a concrete set of practices that do not themselves articulate the abstract ideas. Hence, Cowdery's property dispute reveals an idea of property as a nexus of communal obligations rather than as a boundary of those obligations. The dispute between the farmer and the schoolteacher shows a contract as a locus of moral testing and obligation, rather than the amoral vision of a contract as a mere facilitator of efficient behavior or as another boundary line among rights-holding strangers. In short, the analogy to legal interpretation shows how the nitty-gritty response of Mormonism to concrete questions of practice contains the germ of more generalized discussions.

Such an approach has a number of attractive features. First and most importantly, it shows that Mormonism has something to say on subjects where it appears initially taciturn. While a philos-

opher might view the relentlessly practical and practice-focused Mormon landscape as a mute wasteland, a legal theorist can see it as a vast reserve of material waiting to be rendered articulate.

Second, a jurisprudential approach largely sidesteps the thorny issue of authority within Mormonism.[43] At a conceptual level, it rests on the authority of the "living oracles" and their ability to invest the prosaic, practical aspects of Mormonism with the divine. The concrete confrontation over the sale of Cowdery's parcel of Jackson County land or between the farmer and the schoolteacher serve to fill in the "outlines of our duties [that] are written." They do not, however, purport to uncover the first principles that ought to guide the decisions of the living oracles. The legal analogy provides no critical leverage against the authorities of the Church. Those with ecclesiastical offices giving them stewardship over a particular practice or institution may always change it and, in so doing, will provide new cases to be interpreted and enfolded into our ongoing understanding of what Mormonism has to say about the world. Hence, even at the conceptual level, the jurisprudential analogy assumes that the practice of Mormonism is logically and normatively prior to any theory that one might have about it.

Third, this approach allows us to sharpen our normative analysis of Mormon history while sidestepping the morass of debates over historiography and historicity. If we adopt the stance of a legal theorist, successful examinations of the past no longer consist of providing an "objective," "neutral," "scholarly," or "historical" assessment of it. The jurisprudential approach can mine past practices and institutions in normative terms without intellectual embarrassment because it is, from first to last, an exercise in normative archeology rather than ostensibly disinterested history. Past practices and institutions become interesting primarily as the instantiation of a particular constellation of normative choices. It is this constellation of normative choices, rather than the concrete historical details and their interpretation, that is of interest. In a sense, institutions and practices become more akin to arguments to be appreciated and evaluated rather than events to be explained on causal or historical grounds. Finally, and most importantly, the turn to legal interpretation helps to render artic-

ulate what was previously mute and reveals Mormon practices and institutions—and by extension Mormonism itself—as "worthy of the interest of an intelligent [person]."[44]

Notes

1. Wilford Woodruff, April 8, 1862, *Journal of Discourses,* 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 9:324.

2. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 1:69. Blackstone's Commentaries was originally published in England in 1765.

3. One might point to the early work of Orson Pratt, the synthesis attempted by B. H. Roberts, or modern Mormon philosophers such as Sterling McMurrin, Blake Ostler, and David Paulsen.

4. David Tracy, "A Catholic View of Philosophy: Revelation and Reason," in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies,* edited by Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007), 449.

5. Richard Lyman Bushman, "What's New in Mormon History: A Response to Jan Shipps," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 518.

6. See generally Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000).

7. For a collection of the key articles, see George D. Smith, ed., *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

8. See Hugh Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints,* edited by Don Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1994). Other examples include James W. Lucas and Warner P. Woodworth, *Working toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1994), and Phillip J. Bryson, "In Defense of Capitalism: Church Leaders on Property, Wealth, and the Economic Order," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 89–107. For historical works setting forth the narratives on which this work is largely based, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900,* new ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons,* 2d ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

9. Woodruff, *Journal of Discourses,* 9:324.

10. I have written elsewhere about the relationship between legal thinking and Church doctrine. In a sense I am repeating many of the same arguments here, although I offer them as a way of generating iden-

tifiably Mormon perspectives rather than as a way of discovering authoritative Church doctrine. See Nathan B. Oman, "Jurisprudence and the Problem of Church Doctrine," *Element* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 1–19; Nathan B. Oman, "A Defense of the Authority of Church Doctrine," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1–28.

11. Quoted in Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 339.

12. This is the so-called parole evidence rule, which holds, in the technical language of the American Law Institute, that "a binding integrated agreement discharges prior agreements to the extent that it is inconsistent with them . . . [and] a binding completely integrated agreement discharges prior agreements to the extent that they are within its scope." *Restatement (Second) of Contracts* (St. Paul, Minn.: American Law Institute, 1978), §212.

13. For a brief introduction to the contemporary philosophy of contract law, see Nathan B. Oman, "Unity and Pluralism in Contract Law," *Michigan Law Review* 103, no. 6 (May, 2005): 1483–1506.

14. A. W. B. Simpson, ed., "The Common Law and Legal Theory," in *Oxford Essays in Jurisprudence,* 2d series (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1973), 99.

15. Admittedly, law professors are less tied than lawyers or judges to what H.L.A. Hart called "the internal point of view" described here. Nevertheless, when law professors are engaged in what is called "doctrinal scholarship" or—at a higher level of abstraction—"interpretive reconstruction," they are engaged in the sorts of activities described above. For Hart's discussion of the "internal point of view," see, e.g., H.L.A. Hart, *The Concept of Law,* rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 88–91.

16. For a summary of civil dispute resolution in nineteenth-century Mormon courts, see Nathan B. Oman, "Preaching to the Courthouse and Judging in the Temple," *Brigham Young University Law Review,* no. 1 (2009): 157–219; and Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

17. Richard Lyman Bushman, Joseph Smith: *Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 154–55.

18. Firmage and Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts,* 61–63.

19. Bushman, Rough Stone Rolling, 222–27.

20. Ibid., 346–49.

21. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 164.

22. Mormon law professor Steven D. Smith, for example, has written: "Oliver's position seems a bit bizarre. . . . I admit to being in sympathy with some of Oliver's concerns. Even from a distance, though, I think we can say that on this specific issue of property, Oliver seemed confused. . . . Why would the fact that in this country property is allodial rather than feudal (whatever that means) preclude a church from giving direction to those who choose to belong to it, even in temporal affairs?" Steven D. Smith, "The Promise and Perils of Conscience," *Brigham Young University Law Review,* no. 3 (2003): 1057, 1065–66. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling,* 348, however, sees Cowdery as making a deeper point with his pedantry over allodial property.

23. Arthur R. Hogue, *The Origins of the Common Law* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 1984), 94.

24. George W. Thompson, *Commentaries on the Modern Law of Real Property,* edited by John S. Grimes, 14 vols. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1980), 1:168–69.

25. See Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery: Second Elder and Scribe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962); Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Oliver Cowdery, Esq.: His Non-Mormon Career," *Proceedings of Utah Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 45, no. 1 (1968): 66–80.

26. John Adams, *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams,* edited by C. Bradley Thompson (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 2000), 23.

27. Ibid., 27.

28. St. George Tucker, *Blackstone's Commentaries: With Notes of Reference to the Constitution and Laws of the Federal Government of the United States and of the Commonwealth of Virginia,* 5 vols. (Philadelphia: William Young Birch and Abraham Small Pubs., 1803), 3:44.

29. James Kent, *Commentaries on American Law,* 4 vols. (New York: O. Halsted Pub., 1828), 3:412.

30. In an 1838 letter setting forth the books necessary for his study of the law, Oliver listed both Blackstone and Kent's *Commentaries.* See Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery,* 168.

31. Blackstone, *Commentaries,* 1:135.

32. Interestingly, however, Doctrine and Covenants 134:10–11 takes a somewhat different attitude toward property, insisting that "we do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property" and further insisting that "we believe that all men are justified in defending . . . their . . . property . . . from unlawful assaults." This section, however, was authored by none other than Oliver Cowdery. See Robert J. Woodward, "Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 1784–94.

33. Ecclesiastical Court Cases Collection, Disfellowshipment Re-

cords, 1839–1965, CR 355, 2, 1863, fd. 1, LDS Church Library, Salt Lake City. These restricted records are used by permission on condition of masking individuals' identity.

34. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., "The Path of the Law," *Harvard Law Review* 10, no. 8 (1897): 457, 459.

35. See A. Mitchell Polinsky, *An Introduction to Law and Economics,* 2d ed. (New York: Aspen Law and Business, 1989), 27–38. For reasons to doubt the economic validity of these arguments, see Nathan B. Oman, "The Failure of Economic Interpretations of the Law of Contract Damages," *Washington and Lee Law Review* 64, no. 3 (2007): 829–75.

36. Randy Barnett, "Some Problems with Contract as Promise," *Cornell Law Review* 77, no. 5 (1991–92): 1022–33.

37. Ecclesiastical Court Cases Collection, Disfellowshipment Records, 1839–1965, CR 355, 2, 1858, fd. 2.

38. See, e.g., Nicholas Groesbeck Morgan Sr., *The Old Fort: Historic Mormon Bastion, the Plymouth Rock of the West* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1964), 55, reproducing minutes of the Salt Lake Stake High Council in a case for "non-delivery of an ox" ordering the defendant to deliver the ox rather than pay damages.

39. Ibid., 71–72; emphasis mine. It is not entirely clear that this was a purely contractual case. The man may have been the equivalent of a bailee, holding the gun powder as an agent rather than simply promising to deliver it. Needless to say, Church courts made no attempts to draw such fine distinctions in their decisions.

40. Firmage and Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts,* 344.

41. Ibid., 341–44.

42. See, e.g., Dallin H. Oaks, "My Brother's Keeper," *Ensign,* November 1986, 20.

43. For some thoughtful discussion of the issue, see Armand Mauss, "Alternative Voices: The Calling and Its Implications," *Sunstone,* April 1990, 7–11, and Dallin H. Oaks, "Alternative Voices," *Ensign,* May 1989, 27–31.

44. The phrase appears in Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., Letter to Harold Laski. One of his goals in writing The Common Law was to reveal jurisprudence as a topic "worthy of the interest of an intelligent man." Holmes, *The Essential Holmes: Selections from the Letters, Speeches, Judicial Opinions, and Other Writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.,* edited by Richard Posner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 265.

"A Style of Our Own": Modesty and Mormon Women, 1951–2008

Katie Clark Blakesley

Historically, modesty of dress has had important symbolic meaning for leaders and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Brigham Young, second president of the Church, often warned women against following the "indecent" fashions of the world, challenging them to separate themselves from women of the world and dress accordingly. Almost thirty years after Young's death, President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors issued "A Call to the Women of the Church," expressing concern that "our women are prone to follow the demoralizing fashions of the world [including] exhibitions of immodesty and of actual indecency in their attire . . . seemingly oblivious in this respect to the promptings and duties of true womanhood."[1] In response, the general boards of the Relief Society, Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA), and Primary, led by Relief Society general president Amy Brown Lyman, issued dress guidelines for all Mormon women.[2] Although Church leaders made short-term efforts to define Churchwide dress standards in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these attempts did not result in either a widely recognized definition of modesty or a set of official instructions regarding women's dress. Instead, despite the attempts of Young, Lyman, and others, modesty of dress was almost a non-issue during this time.

On February 13, 1951, Elder Spencer W. Kimball delivered a speech to students at a Brigham Young University Devotional entitled "A Style of Our Own: Modesty in Dress and Its Relationship to the Church."[3] Kimball's talk defined standards of modesty for

LDS women in the twentieth century and also articulated enduring rationales for proper dress. Generally regarded as the "first" modesty talk of the twentieth century, it caused a stir at BYU and elsewhere. This address and the phrase "a style of our own" became classics; many talks, articles, and LDS publications on modesty, beginning in the 1960s, reference either the phrase or the actual text of Kimball's devotional.[4]

Clothing has been the subject of scriptural injunctions and a perennial topic of Church leaders' concern. Subtle changes in both dress standards and rationales for modest dress in the latter half of the twentieth century reflect the LDS Church's teachings and attitudes toward chastity and women, the feminine ideal, and changing women's roles. Definitions of modest and appropriate dress have symbolic importance as well, and have served as a mechanism to both maintain and blur boundaries between LDS women and the broader culture.

In his address, Elder Kimball warned his student audience against falling into temptation. Asserting that "unchastity is the great demon of the day!" he instructed young men and women that sexual sin is an abomination and admonished his listeners to hold chastity and virtue as "most dear and precious above all things" (Moro. 9:9). Elder Kimball specifically denounced "immodest dresses that are worn by our young women, and their mothers" as contributors to the breakdown of moral values in America and declared that "immodest clothes lead to sin." He categorized strap and strapless evening gowns, low-necked dresses, form-fitting sweaters, shorts in general, backless attire, and "general immodest clothing" as inappropriate for the daughters of Zion and argued that "a woman is most beautiful when her body is clothed. . . . She needs no more attractions . . . and men will not love her more because her neck or back is bare." Elder Kimball strongly encouraged all in attendance to seek "clean hands and a pure heart" and counteract the evil of modern styles by developing a "style of our own," by which he meant a fashion sense unique to Latter-day Saint girls and women that would set them apart from the world.[5]

Although Elder Kimball's talk only briefly discussed and promoted "a style of our own," his remarks apparently made an impact on those who were in attendance.[6] Perhaps because the last

official statement on women's dress had been issued in 1917, Kimball's disapproval of strapless gowns and other "inappropriate dress" surprised many young women. Although today Brigham Young University has a formal dress and grooming standard, the student-initiated Code of Honor, adopted in 1949, mentioned only the importance of honesty, integrity, and moral cleanliness.[7] Bertha Clark, a BYU sophomore in 1951, remembered that, prior to attending Elder Kimball's devotional, she had purchased a strapless dress to wear to an upcoming BYU formal dance. She recalled, "My dress was beautiful, but it wasn't 'kimballized,' so I bought a little jacket I could wear with it. Most of my friends 'kimballized' their wardrobes. In fact, we called modest clothing 'kimballized' until one of the brethren told us we shouldn't single [Kimball] out."[8] An editorial in BYU's *Daily Universe* a week after Kimball's speech applauded "the noticeable change in attire at the Friday night Banyan Ball" among women students. The article continued: While "no order will be imposed to enforce modesty, we expect to see a very definite effect on coed's [sic] clothing."[9]

Significantly, at that point no link was made between modest dress and sexual chastity, despite the immediate press coverage of the talk, including publication in the *Church News* and in a series called "An Apostle Speaks to Youth," subsequent general conference talks, *Church News* editorials, and other LDS publications. During the 1950s, few General Authorities besides Elder Kimball cited immodesty as a leading cause of sexual sin. Instead, addresses and publications, including BYU's Code of Honor, focused on modesty only as one of many virtues, along with honesty, loyalty, honor, and propriety.[10]

A 1957 version of BYU's *Your Passport to Honor* reminded students to observe "integrity, honesty, [and] the principles of the gospel in all you do."[11] Students at BYU had ample opportunity to listen to lectures, including a series by President Ernest L. Wilkinson, watch films, and study pamphlets on the Code of Honor.[12] In contrast to the later emphasis on dress standards, BYU students at that time were encouraged to exhibit a more comprehensive sort of modesty—a genuine modesty of person. A 1957 Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) pamphlet series entitled "Be Honest with Yourself" included a pamphlet called

"Modesty Is the Best Policy," which emphasized the importance of modesty in conduct, manner, and dress. It argued that fashionable clothing and modesty could coexist, but that "flaunt[ing] one's figure," especially in order to impress a young man, was "more likely to bring a 'whistle call' of dubious compliment than a sincere proposal of honorable friendship."[13] The pamphlet emphasized that "modesty is a many-sided virtue," and presented information on speech and conduct in the same detail as it did dress. A final reward promised to those who cultivated this holistic version of modesty was self-respect, which would lead to the "true joy of living." The same information was also available in poster form, and both were available to congregations throughout the Church.[14]

In September of 1959, the *Improvement Era* began a four-month series of columns entitled "To a Teenage Girl." It gave advice on appropriate habits, dress, speech, and general behavior for young women but focused on the importance of good posture and a good figure, proper apparel, including ironing and pressing one's clothes, and how to "graciously give and graciously receive" gifts and compliments.[15] Despite the detailed suggestions in many aspects of personal appearance and cleanliness, it mentioned dress only in passing or indirectly. Instead of stipulating what type of clothes to wear, young women were only instructed to make sure their clothing was clean and pressed. In the 1950s, the definition of modesty at BYU and as discussed in MIA pamphlets and the *Improvement Era* was an important component of general modesty of person, which included how one thought, dressed, and acted.

Despite Elder Kimball's 1951 call to arms, there were few new threats, inside the Church or in the broader American culture, to the morality of LDS youth that would elicit intense interest in women's dress. The Church continued to teach young women and men to be loyal to their country, prepare for the responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, and be active in practicing their religion. Likewise, popular culture emphasized loyalty to the United States and idealized family life, promoting a "cult of motherhood," where fulfillment for women meant serving others, most often their families. *McCall's* magazine described American family life in idyllic terms in 1954—Little League, car rides, and back-

yard barbecues.[16] Although strapless dresses and tight sweaters were popular in the 1950s, fashionable hemlines did not rise above the knees, and women could easily be in style without appearing either dowdy or immodest.

However, the 1960s brought a decade of rapid social change in the United States, and Church leaders were especially worried about the effects of social turmoil on Mormon youth. This perceived nationwide moral crisis was epitomized by the popularity of new women's fashions, including the miniskirt and hip-hugging bell-bottoms, the introduction of the birth control pill in 1965, a nascent feminist movement, and the sexual revolution.[17] Also alarming to Church leaders was the emergence of the drug culture, counterculture, radical student movements, and a general disregard for authority among the nation's youth. In the midst of these changes, Mormon youth began adopting the dress and grooming habits of the new morality and the counterculture, including shorter skirts, "grubby" clothing, and longer hair and beards for men. The importance of modest dress took on a new urgency. Prior to the 1950s, many Church leaders had seen immodest dress as, at worst, a nuisance. However, in the 1960s, immodest and unkempt appearance were symbols of undesirable attitudes and even actual evil.

Modesty in dress quickly became a watch cry for protecting the purity and moral values of LDS youth; and increasingly, LDS leaders exhorted members to dress both modestly *and* appropriately. However, LDS Church leaders employed varied and at times contradictory tactics for influencing female members to choose modest clothing in particular, rather than focusing on the more general "modesty of person" articulated in earlier materials. Such exhortations were particularly frequent in *Church News* editorials. These unsigned editorials had been written by Mark E. Petersen of the *Deseret News* "since the beginning of the publication in 1931," and which he continued as an apostle (ordained in 1944 at age forty-three) until close to his death in 1984.[18]

General Authorities and local leaders alike delivered strong statements condemning immodest clothing.[19] LDS leaders taught that women's immodest dress often led to immoral or unchaste behavior. They emphasized a woman's responsibility not only for her own dress and chaste behavior, but also for the chastity of her male

associates. Modest dress would keep men's thoughts clean and pure; women were responsible if their dress encouraged male failure. Elder Petersen gave a talk at the annual Relief Society conference in 1962, later published in multiple venues, where he charged: "What tempts the boys to molest the girls today more than any other one thing . . . is the mode of dress of our girls," which included skirts above the knees, tight and revealing tops, and low-cut evening gowns. When "such sights are placed before their eyes, almost like an invitation, can you blame them any more than you would the girls who tempt them, if they take advantage of those girls?"[20] This strong indictment of young women's immodest dress as the cause and even excuse for young men to take advantage of them sexually, harsh by today's standards, was not uncommon in America at this time.[21] Although Petersen criticized young women for tempting their male counterparts, he also faulted their parents for buying them skimpy clothing and permitting them to date early. Instructing the women in attendance that "the preservation of the home is left chiefly to the wife and mother," Petersen asked them to "have the courage to correct" the immodest clothing of their daughters by establishing a fashion style of their own.[22]

In a 1964 letter to the *Church News*, Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith strongly encouraged the women of the Church to "correct the evil . . . which confronts the female world and which members of the Church imitate," by which he meant immodest dress. He feared that "modesty is DEAD!" and without modesty, chastity was in danger.[23] Smith and other leaders felt that modesty for young women was of extreme importance because of Church teachings that sexual sin, including not only premarital intercourse and adultery, but also "lesser sins" of physical intimacy, were an "abomination."[24]

The importance of modesty as a shield against sexual temptation and women's responsibility for both their own and male chastity has survived. Taught today in the LDS Church to varying degrees, it was not apparently the primary motive for LDS Church teachings on modesty in the 1960s and 1970s. Occasionally, a *Church News* editorial blamed miniskirts for societal decay, but more often, the editorials suggested women should dress modestly and appropriately to express their independence from

worldly fashion and to establish boundaries between women of the church and women of the world. In the mid to late 1960s, Elder Petersen employed several strategies in his *Church News* editorials to convince LDS women to eschew modern styles. For example, these editorials cited campaigns for modesty in Philadelphia schools and elsewhere, quoted Parisian fashion experts who denounced miniskirts that exposed women's knobby knees and flabby thighs, and also quoted alleged FBI statistics that rape had dramatically increased after the introduction of the miniskirt.[25]

Two conflicting calls to action emerged during this decade. The first was an appeal for independent thought by the Church's women, particularly its young women. The second was a renewed emphasis on "femininity" and feminine dress. On the first call, editorials and articles by General Authorities often tried to appeal to young women's individuality or bravery, asking Latter-day Saint young women if they "had the courage" to change their wardrobes, independent of the popular fashions of the day.[26] An editorial entitled "The Mini Skirts" asked, "Isn't it time for our women to decide to use their own good sense in regard to dress, and refuse to be like sheep following the dictates of fashion designers who like extremes? . . . If our people would think for themselves, rather than be herded into styles by New York or Paris, all would be infinitely better off." Instead of mindlessly following the whims of fashion, the editorial invited women to daringly think for themselves and "just decide to forget the world."[27]

A 1967 *Church News* editorial, "Time for Style of Our Own" encouraged women of the Church to become "distinctive, special, and independent" in creating their own style, which would help them "put decency above fashion and decide to be beautifully feminine, but still remain becomingly modest." The article argued that the more than two million members of the LDS Church would be able to make a difference in the world. A campaign for modesty in dress would bring the Church and its women "at least as much admiration as have our Welfare Plan, our Missionary Program, and our stand on the Word of Wisdom." The editorial suggested that LDS women would become as distinctive in the world's eyes as the missionary service of LDS men.[28]

Independent thought was heralded as a virtue, as long as it led women to spurn the world and worldly dress. Miniskirts were not

the only new fashions that concerned Church authorities; many leaders in the late 1960s and 1970s equated appropriate dress for women with "feminine" dress. Popular women's fashions in the mid to late 1960s included collarless jackets and bellbottoms, and "women's fashion increasingly favored the 'boy look'; full breasts and hips [popular in the 1950s] go out of fashion as women try to make themselves look as androgynous as possible."[29] Women of the world began to wear pants, jeans, and more casual clothing generally, adopting a unisex look, but Church leaders pled with LDS women to retain their feminine charm.

Perhaps Church leaders would have worried less about young women wearing jeans or collarless jackets (both of which were modest and therefore would presumably not cause unchastity), if they had not also been increasingly concerned about the influence of the feminist movement. The second wave of feminism, which began in the 1960s, sought to rectify inequalities in the workplace, government, and education. In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, which confronted "the problem that has no name," or the free-floating discontent felt by many women at being defined by a biologically driven and domestic ideal. She suggested that many women did not find fulfillment through total involvement in their family and encouraged women to take control of their own lives.[30] While some feminist organizations, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) worked to combat prejudice and discrimination that faced women, more radical organizations such as New York Radical Women and the Redstockings advocated the overthrow of capitalism and "repudiated the male master class, marriage, and the traditional nuclear family."[31]

Many leaders and members of the LDS Church felt that the feminist movement threatened traditional gender roles. While groups like the Redstockings were certainly subversive to Church teachings concerning the importance of marriage and family, organizations such as NOW also advocated that women did not have to find fulfillment as a wife and mother, but instead could remain single or enter the workplace, even with children at home. Alarmed by these trends, Church leaders not only emphasized the importance of modesty, but also actively campaigned for feminin-

ity in dress, and discouraged women from dressing in a "unisex" manner.[32] Taking a bold and independent stand against the world, as leaders encouraged, did not also translate into joining new independence movements.

As early as 1965, the Church published its first *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet, which provided LDS youth with guidelines concerning dress, manners, dating, dancing, and clean living. Officers of the MIA, representatives from BYU and the Church Educational System, and youth of the Church joined to create the pamphlet, designed to be a guide for youth and their parents. The First Presidency (then David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, and N. Eldon Tanner) felt strongly about the importance of the original *For the Strength of Youth* and asked members of the Church to "familiarize themselves with . . . and conform to [its] regulations."[33]

Six years later, Brigham Young University and other Church colleges formally adopted a dress and grooming standard.[34] Although BYU had established a dress code for its students in the previous decade, it had not been incorporated into the Honor Code. A new, slightly altered dress code became a condition of enrollment in the fall of 1971.[35] *For the Strength of Youth* and BYU's dress and grooming standards were designed to encourage appropriate dress and behavior among the youth of the Church and can be used to track changing standards and rationales for standards among Church leaders. Although both dress codes have been revised since 1965 and 1971, standards of modesty regarding clothing style and length have remained remarkably similar to instructions given by Elder Kimball in 1951.[36] However, both documents have evolving definitions of gender-appropriate clothing, including the acceptability of pants, jeans, sweatshirts, and shorts. These two "codes of modesty," used as a case study for the Church's emphasis on femininity, show that Church leaders invoked modesty to prevent women from looking like women of the world in hopes that their behavior would also remain distinctive. The emphasis on femininity was meant to discourage women from following larger American trends away from women's traditional roles and instead to encourage women to dress a certain way to reflect their feminine, God-given nature.

The first *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet reflected Church leaders' concerns about members' dress. The pamphlet acknowl-

edged that "modesty cannot be determined by inches or fit since that which looks modest on one person may not be so on another," but also instructed that skirts should "be long enough to cover the kneecap" and that low-cut, strapless, and spaghetti strap outfits were inappropriate.[37] The 1968 version noted that women were to "always try to look feminine in their dress. They should not dress like boys or try to give a masculine appearance." In addition to this general principle, the pamphlet specified: "Pants for young women are not desirable attire for shopping, at school, in the library, in cafeterias or restaurants."[38] Women were allowed to "appropriately wear slacks" only when participating in hiking, camping, and active sports, activities that would presumably be immodest in a dress.[39]

Church leaders modified the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet several times. Several of the changes deal with issues of propriety, not actual modesty in dress. For example, one section originally titled "'Grubbies,' Curlers, Hair Fashions" in 1965, informed young women that "'Grubby' clothes are inappropriate in public for everyone. A 'real lady' does not go out in public, to the market, or to shops with her hair in curlers." Perhaps leaders felt their instructions were not sufficiently explicit, for three years later, "grubby" was replaced with "soiled, sloppy, or ill-fitting clothes." These items joined long hair [for men], an unkempt or dirty appearance, and "rowdy" behavior as proscribed behavior in 1968.[40] Presumably because these traits were characteristic of the student movements and counterculture of the 1960s, Church leaders counseled youth to avoid even the appearance of being associated with them.[41]

Like *For the Strength of Youth*, BYU's dress and grooming standards evolved over time, often spelling out the need for women to dress femininely and elucidating the reasons behind some of the dress standards changes. A BYU Dress Standards Committee had existed since the late 1940s; in the 1950s and 1960s, Ernest L. Wilkinson, president of Brigham Young University, had tried to create formal dress standards for students.[42] His administration published two general types of material to convince students to follow "appropriate dress standards" and distributed materials to inform students about standards that emphasized the interconnectedness of beauty, dress, and modesty.[43] For example, out-

raged by the preponderance of short skirts on campus, in 1968, BYU officials began passing out a "Pardon Me" card to students and visitors alike whose skirts were "too short." The card read in part: "In order to spare you embarrassment we give you this folder to remind and inform you of dress standards at BYU because we do not want you to feel out of place on our campus. . . . Women—The following are not acceptable: Mini skirts (anything above the knees), Pant dresses, Shorts, Pants & pedal pushers (acceptable on 1st floor of Wilkinson Center only), Sweat shirts, Bare feet, Culottes (acceptable if dress length)."[44] The student body reacted strongly against this practice, with the *Daily Universe* printing "you are not pardoned" coupons to be given to officials. The administration halted the practice soon after it began.

An example of a less intrusive and proscriptive publication is *Dress Standards at BYU*, an eight-page pamphlet apparently published and circulated in 1969. It did not set forth specific dress standards for women (or men) but quoted several leading Church authorities on beauty, dress, and modesty. Notably, it quotes Church president David O. McKay several times on the link between chastity and beauty: "There is a beauty every girl has . . . [and] that beauty is chastity. Chastity without skin beauty may enkindle the soul; skin beauty without chastity can kindle only in the eye." A beautiful woman, if she was also chaste and modest, was "creation's masterpiece."[45]

However, as the flowering of Mormon beauty self-help books in the 1980s indicates, being beautiful required walking a fine line. *Dress Standards at BYU* quoted Brigham Young as equating beauty with simple goodness: "Goodness sheds a halo of loveliness around every person who possesses it, making their countenances beam with light, and their society desirable because of its excellency."[46] Although the pamphlet taught that modesty made a woman beautiful, constant reminders to women to pay attention to their appearance suggest that simply covering objectionable parts of the body was not enough; *excessive* femininity or overt sexiness could also ruin a woman's modest beauty.[47]

Despite the attempts of the Wilkinson administration to create a mandatory dress code, the BYU dress and grooming standards did not become a condition of enrollment until the fall of 1971.[48] On April 1, 1971, the First Presidency issued a statement which

read in part: "The Church has not attempted to indicate just how long women's or girls' dresses should be nor whether they should wear pant suits." Only when going to the temple were women advised against wearing "slacks or mini-skirts, or otherwise dressing immodestly."[49] This statement prompted changes in *For the Strength of Youth* and BYU dress standards. The 1972 version cited the First Presidency statement, but no longer advised that skirts cover the kneecap; instead, skirts and dresses should be "of modest length."[50]

In the summer of 1971, Dallin H. Oaks, newly appointed president of Brigham Young University, sent a letter to the parents of all BYU students advising them of two changes in the BYU dress code. The university's Public Relations Department also mailed students a special issue of the *Daily Universe*, informing them that women's hemlines should be of "modest length" and that women were authorized to wear slacks.[51] Oaks's letter and the student newspaper included the information that the new dress standards applied to the Church College of Hawaii, Ricks College, and LDS Business College as well.[52]

President Oaks spent much of his 1971 presidential address discussing BYU's first published, formalized dress code. He quoted a statement by the BYU Board of Trustees, consisting of the First Presidency and other General Authorities, which stated that students' grooming should emphasize "cleanliness and avoidance of dress or manner which . . . symbolizes either rebellion or non-conformity." Oaks argued that while skirt lengths were "a function of modesty," the prohibition of beards and long hair dealt with "symbolism and propriety." He described the ban against beards as "temporary and pragmatic. They are responsive to conditions and attitudes in our own society at this particular point in time. . . . Beards and long hair are associated with protest, revolution, and rebellion against authority. They are also symbols of the hippie and drug culture . . . a badge of protest and dissent."[53]

Oaks did not, however, make the parallel that women's dress standards were likewise to prevent association with protest and dissent. Rather, "the inclusion of pant suits authorizes a style of dress that is clearly modest, however unfeminine some may think it to be. . . . [It] does not authorize the wearing of jeans, men's

trousers, or other slacks from the grubby end of the spectrum. . . . These two modifications must not be the occasion for a general deterioration of women's dress standards on this campus."[54] Oaks's 1971 address, the new dress code, and *A Style of Our Own* (1973) discouraged the unisex look and advocated dress-based distinctions between men and women.[55] This emphasis suggests that Church officials were not only concerned with the symbolism of bearded young men but also of androgynously dressed young women. Feminine dress would serve as a boundary separating LDS women from women of the world, especially American women who were advocating for new rights and against discrimination. Perhaps if women dressed to accentuate their femininity and to reinforce their identification as wives and mothers, Church leaders felt they would be less tempted by such worldly things as careers and the feminist movement.

The 1974 edition of *A Style of Our Own* makes two changes from the 1973 version. First, after repeating the injunction about appropriate dress, it explains: "*The intent of this standard is to encourage women to wear comfortable yet distinctly feminine attire.*" And second, it gives a measurable definition of "modest": "Women's hemlines (dresses, skirts, culottes) are to be *modest* in length. *A modest length for most young ladies would be no shorter than the top of the knee.*"[56] Subsequent Honor Code statements changed few things about these early 1970s publications except for finally allowing jeans for women (1981),[57] permitting knee-length shorts for both sexes (1991), and, most recently, prohibiting tattoos and multiple earrings for men and women (2000).[58] These prohibitions, along with an occasional threat to revoke the privilege of wearing shorts, have stayed largely the same since the early years of both the Dress and Grooming Standards and the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlets. If anything, both "codes of modesty" have become stricter, emphasizing not necessarily the standards themselves, but youth and other members of the Church's responsibility to follow them.

In summary, then, during the 1960s and 1970s, Church leaders were concerned that members were adopting the dress and grooming habits of the feminist movement and the counterculture, regardless of whether they were also espousing the movement's ideologies and methods. Symbols and image are very im-

portant to both the leadership and the general membership of the Church. Appearance matters. Appropriate dress delineated a clear boundary between "Saints" and "the world," thus serving a function similar to that of the Word of Wisdom in the twentieth century. In this case, appropriate, or feminine, dress became a behavioral reminder to LDS women to dress and act in ways that represented their true self. In the December 1974 *Ensign,* Rita L. McMinn, an assistant professor of clothing and textiles at Brigham Young University, emphasized: "If dress communicates to others, it also communicates to ourselves. . . . Our choice of dress even goes so far as to influence our behavior."[59] McMinn felt that one could judge a person's character and future actions based on dress, and advised young women and men to dress appropriately. Elder Sterling W. Sill of the First Council of the Seventy instructed: "When we put on the uniform we may naturally expect that we will be judged by the standards that our appearance suggests" and remarked that appearance is much more than a style. Instead, "it is also an outward symbol of an inward condition."[60] Similarly, a 1971 First Presidency statement on dress read, "Make yourself as attractive as possible, but remember that your clothes reflect your values, outlook, and personality."[61] The idea extends to the present; the most recent *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlets, similar to previous versions, states, "The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside."[62]

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the issue of appropriate dress for Mormon women took a somewhat dramatic turn. Earlier pleas to dress femininely established an idealized boundary in both dress and behavior between women of the Church and women of the world. In 1977, approximately five thousand women were serving as LDS missionaries; one in six missionaries—15 percent—were female.[63] In that year, according to Alice Buehner, wife of a former mission president, and point woman for new dress and appearance standards for sister missionaries, Church leaders realized that "a stigma had been attached to lady missionaries." This "far from desirable" stigma was due to their lack of "understanding, knowledge and awareness . . . of the effect of nonverbal communication in areas of clothing, makeup, hairstyles, and social behavior." The General Authorities felt strongly,

Buehner claimed, that the sister missionaries' dress and appearance failed to represent the Church favorably. Because a sister missionary's physical appearance "communicates her own character and capabilities . . . [and] it also reflects upon the LDS Church as a whole," sister missionaries were encouraged to change their proselyting attire.[64]

Church leaders asked several women, whose husbands had served as mission presidents and who were image consultants, to create an educational program to train sisters "in the art of projecting a professional image . . . to enhance not only their own appearance—therefore building individual self confidence—but also to improve the image of the Church as a whole."[65] This committee focused on "wardrobe, grooming, poise, makeup, and hair care" to create the Personal Development Program for Lady Missionaries.[66] Buehner was in charge of the program's dress and grooming portion. She described "the general appearance" of sister missionaries as "a motley assortment of house dresses, jumpers, and little girl type clothes. An occasional mumu even showed up."[67] To combat this unprofessional look, Buehner launched a mandatory weekly dress and grooming class for sister missionaries in the Provo Missionary Training Center (MTC) in October 1977.

Shortly thereafter, the wives of the Managing Directors of the Missionary Department developed an interim three-page clothing guide, sent to sister missionaries already in the field, advising them on appropriate dress. It was quickly determined that a more comprehensive guideline should be prepared, and Buehner's thesis was part of this process. As a result, the committee created a pamphlet for the Church and the Missionary Training Center describing aspects of "a professional image for sister missionaries."[68] Buehner notes, "Research into the area of nonverbal communication and clothing design determined that the most professional image is considered to be the 'executive' or 'business' look which projects authority and efficiency."[69] The Church printed fifteen thousand pamphlets in 1981 and distributed them to sister missionaries, either with their mission calls or through direct mailings to sisters already in the field. The pamphlet's goal was to improve the appearance of sister missionaries, which should communicate "order, cleanliness, neatness, tasteful femininity, freshness, reasonable stylishness, dignity and modesty."[70]

Many sister missionaries were upset at the attention placed on their appearance and felt that "learning to be more attractive was superficial and valueless." Buehner also noted, "But the First Presidency of the Church stressed the importance of each Sister attending the classes concerning personal appearance . . . They recognized the fact that the Sisters could be more effective missionaries if they felt better about themselves and if they had a more professional appearance."[71]

Both the pamphlet and class included pattern and style selection, color selection, fabric selection and care tips, examples of appropriate dress, examples of color-coordinated wardrobes, and a wardrobe worksheet. Buehner noted that the elders already wore professional attire (suits, white shirts, and subdued ties), and that the same "business executive" look, primarily composed of suits or a dress and jacket, were likewise most appropriate for the sisters.[72] The pamphlet concluded: "All that the Lord created is beautiful, and He created YOU. It is His desire that every one of His daughters develop herself in every way: spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically."[73] Church leaders had added yet another reason for women to dress appropriately and modestly: to improve the Church's image.

In 1980, the Church also published a pamphlet for its own employees, stating that Church employees in particular should follow Elder Kimball's injunction to create "a style of our own." It read, "A personal appearance that reflects the image of the Church is an important part of our Church employment. . . . Both proper dress and grooming habits combine to create the Church employee look." Church employees were instructed to always be clean and neat; women could not wear "pantsuits and immodest clothing." They were also required to wear nylons. Men were instructed in areas of hair, hygiene, clothing, mustaches, and shoes. "A neat, well groomed haircut and clean-shave are essential." Above all, "whatever our work may be, we should be sure that our appearance befits that of individuals engaged in the Church's important work, that we add to and not detract from the positive impression the Church communicates everywhere."[74]

A 1967 *Church News* editorial thirteen years earlier had asked a frequently recurring question, "Why shouldn't Latter-day Saints

just decide to forget the world—and not be so much OF the world—and dress beautifully in becoming clothes that preserve the decency which the Lord expects of his lovely daughters?"[75] The preponderance of grassroots efforts and new "modest" clothing companies in the last decade indicates that some LDS women are attempting to create a "style of their own" and influence others to buy into that style. Women have organized and participated in ward and stake "modest fashion shows," as well as collaborations with major department stores. New and expanded business ventures, many of them internet-based, advertise cap sleeve undershirts meant to make any shirt modest (and disguise garment lines), swimsuits, knee-length shorts, wedding, prom, and trendy dresses, and a wide variety of clothing that meets the standards in the *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlets.[76]

The first published instance of young women trying to create a style of their own occurred in 1976 in southern California. Not all of the Young Women from the La Cañada First Ward could find or afford to buy modest one-piece swimsuits for their stake swim meet. They finally found "47 yards of chlorine-proof, stylish, inexpensive, and two-way-stretch" orange and purple fabric. The article applauds the young women for winning the meet, sewing their own suits, and being modest.[77]

A 1987 article in the *New Era* highlighted young women from Austin, Texas, and their girls' camp experience. "Even the heat and the exclusive company of other girls are no excuses for dressing immodestly. Short shorts and tank tops are not allowed."[78] Instead, the girls got together each year to make camp shorts that were knee-length, baggy, and brightly colored. Two articles in the September 1990 issue, both titled "The Strapless Dress," discussed this struggle. The first, a short fiction piece, ended when a girl's father fashioned her strapless gown into a modest dress, minutes before the prom. The second was a practical guide to finding modest dresses. It advocated sewing your own, renting or borrowing, looking in catalogs, going "ethnic," and being creative.[79]

Ten years later, modesty became a hot topic, particularly regarding prom dresses. A group of LDS young women from Kansas campaigned for modesty and attracted attention throughout the Church and even internationally; they were interviewed by the BBC and the *Wall Street Journal*. When they had difficulty finding

modest clothing, they took their complaints to their local department store. Through a presentation to several stores, the young women stressed, "Modesty is not a trend. Modesty is a style" and succeeded in influencing the store's purchasing decisions. Young women from Slidell, Louisiana, to Rancho Cucamonga California, to Midvale, Utah, have held fashion shows modeling modest clothing. A particularly well-organized group in southern California worked with a local Nordstrom's to put on "A Class Act," a modest fashion show. Over 900 people attended the show, aided by a front-page *Los Angeles Times* article, support from a local, large Christian church, and nearby Latter-day Saints.[80]

In 2004, Chelsy Rippy founded Shade Clothing, the first business to successfully market "modest clothing" to young women, not all of whom are Mormon. Since then, the Mormon clothing market has exploded with more than thirty retailers marketing "modest clothing." The trend started with cap sleeve undershirts, intended to make fashionable clothing modest. Companies have now branched out to also offer swimsuits, formal dresses, and a variety of other clothing options. Some brands have been picked up by small boutiques and major retailers, even outside of the Wasatch Front.[81] Mormon women are not the only segment of the American population interested in modest clothing; in the last few years, media outlets as varied as PBS, Dr. Phil, the *Catholic Courier*, the *Washington Post*, local news channels, MSNBC, *Good Morning, America*, and *Newsweek* have run features on the "Modesty Movement.[82] Other religious groups have played a large role in this movement, including Pure Fashion, a Catholic girls organization that is "an international faith-based program designed for girls 14-18 to help young women re-discover and re-affirm their innate value and authentic femininity."[83]

In 2003, Janiece Johnson and I surveyed almost five hundred women regarding modesty. Trying to ascertain how contemporary LDS women define and understand the Church's current standards of modesty, the survey asked two questions regarding modesty: (1) What are the Church's dress and grooming standards? Have they changed? and (2) Why does the Church teach modesty? Although the respondents were not a representative sample of LDS women, 496 women, ages sixteen to eighty-three,

responded. Living in forty different states, with varying educational accomplishments, marital statuses, and activity levels in the Church, the women responded to the survey, disseminated by email, over a one-week period.

In response to the first question, 53 percent answered that Church standards of modesty had changed; 37 percent disagreed, and 10 percent were undecided or did not answer the question.[84] Some women listed specific aspects of modest dress; others quoted directly from or invited me to look at *For the Strength of Youth* or the BYU standards; some merely stated that the Church taught its members to be "neat and clean." A twenty-seven-year-old woman from Florida wrote, "As a general rule (sports the biggest exception), clothing should not be backless, sleeveless, or extremely tight. It should also be at least knee-length." She concluded that modesty was to preclude women from becoming "hyper-focused" on their bodies.[85]

When answering the second question, half of the women named multiple rationales for modest dress.[86] When these responses are sorted by themes, the results are striking. Forty percent of the women listed respect for the body as a sacred gift from God and as a temple for their spirit as an important reason to be modest. Twenty-five percent cited the importance of promoting and protecting chastity. The same number felt that recognizing one's status as a child of God/having self-respect/not objectifying one's body was an important reason to be modest. Twelve percent cited the wearing of temple garments, either currently or in the future, as impetus for dressing modestly. Other reasons mentioned by less than 10 percent of the respondents were the importance of being an example to the world and representing the Church, a link between dress and behavior, a link between dress and a general feeling of respect, and the idea that modesty of dress represents modesty of person.[87]

A twenty-four-year-old New Yorker wrote, "[The Church teaches] modesty as a symbol of the inner spirit. If you wear clean, modest clothes, you yourself will inwardly be reminded of what you believe."[88] A thirty-three-year-old from Alexandria, Virginia, commented, "Dress[ing] modestly . . . helps us keep our other covenants. We often behave how we dress. Clothing is a powerful symbol of identity."[89] Many women linked clothing to both their iden-

tity and their behavior. A Centerville, Utah, woman responded, "I think that modesty is an eternal law and that's why the church teaches it. It is a law of happiness. I think that people act as they dress. If one is to be modest in behavior, one should be modest in dress."[90] A forty-four-year-old Californian argued, "If we are trying to be pure on the inside we need to show it on the outside."[91]

Chastity was an important reason to be modest for many women. A Colorado woman made an explicit connection between immodesty and immorality: "Satan has a strong army fighting against the [sic] morality. It is my experience that once modesty goes then it doesn't take long before there are issues of immorality and sexual sins. Modesty is like the skin—it is the first line of defense against disease."[92] Many women felt modesty of dress helped deemphasize the body, thus leading to healthier self-concepts and relationships. A twenty-six-year-old Palo Alto woman remarked, "The spiritual purpose is for self-respect and recognition of yourself as a literal daughter of God. I wish we could, as a culture, focus more on this purpose, as I see many young women focusing more on their appearance than the purpose and significance of our bodies."[93]

A forty-year-old New Yorker wished the Church would emphasize modesty of dress less: "Modesty is a way to behave and live, not a way to dress. Modest apparel changes over time and culture, but behaving respectfully towards one's own self and others does not. This, in my opinion, is what should be taught."[94] Not everyone was completely sure why the Church taught modesty. Some remarked that they had never thought about it before, while others were still ambivalent. A twenty-five-year-old Provo resident identified the Church's dress and grooming standards with the BYU Honor Code and *For the Strength of Youth*. She wrote, "I suppose [dress standards exist] because we should respect our bodies and not tempt others with the way we dress, but sometimes I wonder."[95]

Many women focused on respect, whether for themselves, their bodies, others, or the Lord. A thirty-five-year-old woman from Florida commented, "Modesty shows respect for our own bodies, that they are not for all to see. It also shows respect for our souls by not placing all emphasis for beauty and attractiveness on the outward appearance."[96] One Lake Havasu City woman differentiated

between being attractive and being provocative: "Attractiveness, in my definition, implies an attention to the entire woman or man. It requires a recognition of body *and* soul. Provocation, on the other hand, really is about the body *alone*. . . . Of course, modesty does not guarantee that men and women will always see each other as complete beings, but it certainly is a step in the right direction."[97] Finally, a sixty-eight-year-old woman wrote, "When one goes before the Lord, one wants to convey respect. . . . Modesty is one way we make ourselves worthy of his inspiration."[98]

As these responses indicate, modesty of dress has had many meanings for many people, perhaps because the specific guidelines and rationales for modesty have fluctuated in response to changes within the Church and within the broader American culture. Definitions of modest and appropriate dress have symbolic importance, simultaneously maintaining and blurring boundaries between Latter-day Saint women and their broader culture. Subtle changes in both dress standards and rationales for modest dress in the latter half of the twentieth century in part reflect the LDS Church's teachings and attitudes toward chastity and women, the feminine ideal, and changing women's roles.

For example, Church leaders and publications have emphasized that Mormon women should avoid particular fashions, such as miniskirts, pants (especially casual ones), and unfeminine dress in general. During the late 1960s and 1970s, these articles of clothing were prohibited as symbols of the counterculture and feminism, two movements that LDS Church leaders did not want its women to be involved with, sympathize with, or even look like. In a time of professionalism for the Church in the early 1980s, the Church wanted its employees and sister missionaries to project a "business executive" image. Dowdy housedresses and funky florals, although modest, did not fit this professional image, and women employees and sisters missionaries were asked to alter their clothing according. (These guidelines are still in force.) This new professional image for sister missionaries was for the benefit of those with whom the missionaries came in contact. These instructions blurred the lines between what a Mormon woman, at least as a missionary, was supposed to look like and represent, namely a professionally accomplished businesswoman, and women of the world who were professionals. Based on the earlier

fears that dressing progressively (i.e., in pants) would encourage Mormon women to become part of the women's movement, it is surprising that the dress and grooming standards for sister missionaries emphasized the business executive look.

Symbols and image have been and remain very important to both the leadership and the general membership of the LDS Church. Dress matters. Definitions of modest and appropriate appearance are somewhat fluid. As the larger culture and society change, fashion as a boundary matters, not necessarily because it produces immorality or because Zion's daughters must emphasize their femininity, but because dress fundamentally represents not only the individual, but the Church in general.

Notes

1. Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, Charles W. Penrose, *A Call to the Women of the Church* (pamphlet), September 22, 1916, Historical Department Library and Archives, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Library).

2. In response to the First Presidency's letter, the General Auxiliary Boards (General Boards of the Relief Society, Deseret Sunday School Union, Young Men's and Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations, Primary Association, and Religion Classes), with the First Presidency's approval, sent *Communication on Dress*, pamphlet, 1917, to "All Women Officers and Teachers in the Church," LDS Church Library. The short pamphlet asked women to be more modest in dress, and to eschew the fashions and fads of the world, particularly the "sleeveless gowns and such extremely low-cut bodices and short skirts at evening parties as to bring the blush of embarrassment to the cheek of the truly modest man or woman." The pamphlet reaffirmed that a dress could be beautiful and still be modest, specifying that it should "cover up the shoulder and upper arm; the round or V neck should not be extreme; and the skirt not immodestly short." General Auxiliary Boards, Communication on Dress, [1917].

3. Spencer W. Kimball, *A Style of Our Own: Modesty in Dress and Its Relationship to the Church*, An Apostle Speaks to Youth, No. 4 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1951).

4. Although other General Authorities gave talks and Church magazines published articles concerning modesty in dress and grooming in and around 1951, Elder Kimball's talk seems to have made a more lasting impression. For example, Matthew Cowley, also of the Quorum of the Twelve, gave a talk at Ricks Academy exhorting his audience (an el-

ders' quorum) to "be narrow minded about dress and other important things." Cowley, Address to elders' quorum, November 30, 1951, photocopy of typescript, LDS Church Library. However, no other publication or talk appears to have made the same impression, either in scope or phrasing, as *A Style of Our Own*.

5. Kimball, *A Style of Our Own*, not paginated. Kimball quoted President George Albert Smith who taught that all shorts were immodest and should only be worn in women's rooms. Any activity, including baton twirling, queen competitions, and beauty contests, especially where the participant was required to wear a bathing suit or shorts, was inappropriate.

6. Dallin H. Oaks, "A New President Speaks to Brigham Young University" *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1971), 12, commented: "I can vividly recall the furor that followed [Elder Kimball's] criticism of strapless evening gowns on this campus." Oaks's talk was reprinted as Dallin Oaks, "Standards of Dress and Grooming," *New Era*, December 1971. See also Ralph O. Brown, "Warning of a Prophet," *Daily Universe*, February 20, 1951, 2; and "Post Mortems by the Editor," *Daily Universe*, February 20, 1951, 2. One woman who participated in a July 2003 "Modesty Email Survey" conducted by the author and Janiece Johnson, also a July 2003 Joseph Fielding Smith Institute Summer Fellow wrote, "In my mother's era of teenage hood (1950's) there wasn't near the emphasis on modesty. She had strapless prom dresses and nobody questioned her religious commitment." Modesty Email Survey, #435, age 45, Centerville, Utah.

7. For more information about the beginnings of the Honor Code, see John J. Hunter, "History of the Formal Honor System at Brigham Young University during the First Ten Years, 1950–1960: A Compilation of Documents and Other Materials for the Dean of Students," Brigham Young University, 1960; Ernest L. Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University: The First 100 Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1976), 2:488, states: ["The] Honor Code was a joint attempt by students, faculty, and administration to place the responsibility for conduct in keeping with gospel principles on students themselves."

8. Bertha Clark, Conversation with Katie Clark Blakesley, Erda, Utah, July 6, 2003. Another woman remembered, "When I was growing up, there were no particular dress standards until Pres[ident] Kimball gave instructions against strapless dresses." Modesty Email Survey, #199, age 71, Salt Lake City.

9. "Post Mortems by the Editor," 2. A letter to the editor by Ralph O. Brown makes it clear that responses to Kimball's talk ranged from de-

light to horror about his denunciation of strapless dresses. Brown, "Warnings of a Prophet," 2.

10. See, for example, Associated Students of Brigham Young University, *Your Passport to Honor* (pamphlet), 1957, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections). From a study of general conference talks and *Improvement Era* articles from the 1950s, it appears that dress was not considered as contributing to unchastity. For example, Elder Mark E. Petersen's October 1959 conference address, *Improvement Era* 62 (December 1959): 922–23, lists early dating and lack of parental control as causes of early marriage, illegitimate children, and unchastity among youth, perhaps because 1959 preceded the sexual revolution and the miniskirt. His omission of immodest dress is particularly interesting because he so frequently linked immodesty and sexual sin during the 1960s. See also Hunter, "History of the Formal Honor System," 385.

11. Associated Student Body, *Your Passport to Honor* (1957) [pamphlet]. See also Hunter, "History of the Formal Honor System," 397. Ernest L. Wilkinson, "The Importance of Honor," *Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1959), 5, in his opening address on September 30, 1959, to the returning student body, recognized the ten-year anniversary of BYU's adoption of a Code of Honor and reaffirmed its importance. He specifically heralded "the maintenance of standards of honor and integrity, of graciousness in personal behavior, of Christian ideals in every day living, of a single standard of morality, and of abstinence from the use of alcohol and tobacco" as expected from BYU students.

12. Ernest L. Wilkinson and Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young University: The First 100 Years* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1976), 3:280. Arrington was a coeditor on Volume 3 and associate editor on Volume 4.

13. "Modesty Is the Best Policy" (Salt Lake City: Mutual Improvement Association, 1957), LDS Church Library. The front of the card has an illustration of a man and woman dancing, with the phrase "Modesty Is the Best Policy" written at the top and "Be Honest with Yourself" at the bottom. The back of the card discusses the "many-sided virtue" of modesty, including modesty in speech, manner of dress, and manner of conduct.

14. Hunter, "History of the Formal Honor System," 385.

15. "To a Teenage Girl—On Being a Lady," Pt. 1: "Sit Tall, Stand Tall, Think Tall," *Improvement Era* 62 (September 1959): 710. See, for example, "To a Teenage Girl—On Being a Lady," Pt. 2: "A Shining You," *Improvement Era* 62 (October 1959): 777–78, and "To a Teenage Girl—On

Being a Lady," Pt. 4: "Graciously Receive," *Improvement Era* 62 (December 1959): 996–97.

16. Edward L. Ayers, Lewis L. Gould, David M. Oshinsky, and Jean R. Soderlund, *American Passages: A History of the United States*, 2 vols. (Fort Worth, Tex.: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000), 2:963, 977. The authors describe the 1950s as characterized by the "cult of motherhood," where fulfillment for women meant serving others. They also describe television images of families living "charmed lives," where the father had a good, stress-free job, the mother was a housewife who did not work outside the home, and children were well-behaved. Robert A. Goldberg, *Grassroots Resistance: Social Movements of the Twentieth Century* (Prospect Heights, Ill.; Waveland Press, 1991), 196, discusses women in the 1950s, saying that "ideals of female selflessness and nurturing drew strength from a media celebration of domesticity." Women were expected to be content "living in the suburbs and caring for a husband and three or four children," and fashion dictated that fashions "featur[ed] long, full skirts, small waists, defined bust lines, and high heels."

17. Karen Greenspan, *The Timetables of Women's History: A Chronology of the Most Important People and Events in Women's History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 364.

18. "This Week in Church History: 25 Years Ago," *Church News*, January 3, 2009, 2, in a retrospective article based on Elder Petersen's obituary, published January 15, 1984, quoted from that obituary: Petersen "'had written the editorials in the *Church News* since the beginning of the publication in 1931.'"

19. As an example of local concern, Alma P. Burton, president of Sharon Stake in Utah Valley, addressed the parents and youth in one session of his stake's 1969 quarterly conference. He denounced: "SHORT SKIRTS . . . Don't let anyone fool or mislead you. This is one of the most serious evils among us today." Burton chided parents for letting "young women come out of their homes in short skirts" and asked the young women to think again about the message their skirts sent to young men. He encouraged parents to deny their daughters access to a car, tuition money, or money for new clothes until they wore longer skirts, because short skirts were "a thing of temptation to their boy friends" and something that "also makes it more likely that our daughters themselves will lose their virtue." Alma Pexton Burton, "Youth—Be Modest in Your Dress," Address, Sharon Stake quarterly conference, November 23, 1969, typescript, 1, LDS Church Library.

20. Mark E. Petersen, "Modesty Protects Virtue," address, to officers' meeting of the annual Relief Society general conference, October 3, 1962, published under the same title, *Relief Society Magazine* 50 (Janu-

ary 1953): 9, and summarized in "Relief Society Women Hear Leaders Appeal for Modesty in Dress," *Church News,* October 6, 1962, 4.

21. Greenspan, *The Timetables of Women's History*, 388, notes that a rape victim was "long assumed by the popular imagination to have caused her own violation by seductive dress or behavior. . . . [E]ven when it is reported, rape has the lowest rate of apprehension and conviction of any violent crime. . . . [M]en are not held responsible for their sexual aggression once their sexual drive has been aroused." Petersen, "Modesty Protects Virtue," 9–10, quotes an editorial from "a recent national publication" stating: "We must face the fact that more and more American women are unwittingly inviting sex crimes. . . . [A]t least one half of the rape cases . . . could have been avoided had the victim shown more discretion and good judgment."

22. Petersen, "Modesty Protects Virtue," 8–9, instructs mothers to have the "valor and courage to protect their children by helping them to live up to the Church standards of decency and right" (10). Petersen also felt that "many of these young women are innocent victims of a bad situation. From infancy they wear but little clothing . . . [and] become accustomed to exposing themselves. It is all they seem to know" (9).

23. Signed letter, Joseph Fielding Smith, "Pres. Smith Speaks Out against Immodest Dress," *Church News*, August 8, 1964, 3, specifically mentions sleeveless dresses and attire that exposes the midriff. This article also faults men's immodest dress and behavior to a lesser degree. It would be a mistake to think that Church leaders fault only women's dress as being inappropriate. However, I have yet to read an indictment of men's dress as a cause of immorality or sexual sin, either their own or that of their dates.

24. When trying to convince young women to be modest, Church leaders often quote Book of Mormon scriptures: "chastity and virtue are most dear and precious above all things" (Moro. 9:9) and God "delight[s] in the chastity of women" (Jacob 2:28).

25. "The Mini Skirts" (editorial), *Church News*, September 23, 1967, 16, states: "[Fashion experts] pointed to the ugliness of knees in general and of the fat ones and the bony ones in particular. . . . They explained that "thigh-high" dresses not only were unbecoming but distasteful, and approached the indecent." This editorial quoted national radio commentator Paul Harvey as stating that, according to the FBI, "forcible rape had increased dramatically each year since 1964 when the mini skirt began. He reported that in England where the mini first appeared, the rape rate increased 90 percent in five years. . . . Eighty three per cent of the police interviewed by Mr. Harvey said that most cases of rape today are direct results of mini skirts."

"Was Prohibition So Bad?" (editorial), *Church News*, August 22, 1970, 16, notes that the "side effects" of the mini skirt are as obvious as the side effects of liquor. The *Church News*'s tactic of quoting national figures was an attempt to convince LDS young women that others besides their parents and Church leaders opposed the new fashion. "The Mini Skirts," 16, editorialized that no one approved of or even liked mini skirts, including young men, Church leaders, and women, all of whom were "disgusted by the new fashion."

"Knees and Hemlines" (editorial), *Church News*, June 4, 1966, 16, quotes Veronica Papworth, a columnist for the *London Sunday Express*: "But the masses are not models. . . . Somehow, no one seems to have found the time for a single glance in the looking glass; so all over town right now we are being treated (?) to a surfeit of knees and thighs. Knocked or knobby, desiccated or dimpled, pallid or purple, in this excess of exhibition anything goes."

26. "Mod Means Modest for These Girls," *Church News*, April 29, 1967, 16, editorialized that a modest clothing campaign would actually increase the beauty of Mormon women because "no woman looks as lovely as when she is properly and fully clothed. What woman can suppose that ugly knees and bony shoulder blades can add luster to her charm?"

27. "The Mini Skirts," 16.

28. "Time for Style of Our Own," *Church News*, November 5, 1966, 16.

29. Greenspan, *The Timetables of Women's Fashion*, 364, 368.

30. Goldberg, *Grassroots Resistance*, 196, 198.

31. Ibid., 200, 204.

32. "Is This the Time" (editorial), *Church News*, June 27, 1970, 16, shows that Church leaders felt threatened on many fronts: "a world movement to destroy moral standards, . . . sex revolution . . . the new morality . . . infidelity . . . free abortion . . . short skirts . . . plunging necklines . . . and a disregard for religion and an acceptance of the teaching that there is no God." The editorial asked young women to abhor worldliness, not only in fashion but also in behavior, and instead to "take pride in being different from the world."

33. Introduction, *For the Strength of Youth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1965), 2, microfiche, LDS Church Library.

34. "Y Board, Church System Establish Dress Standards," *Daily Universe*, July 22, 1971, 1. The July 22 number was a "Special Issue" published by BYU's Public Relations Department and mailed to all new and continuing students. The dress standards took effect on September 1.

35. According to a timeline called "The Honor Code," available

from the Honor Code Office, Brigham Young University, January 2004, print-out in my possession, between 1959 and 1969 "Dress and Grooming standards were formally implemented." However, I could not find any pamphlets dealing with the Honor Code that included a formal dress and grooming standard. For example, the pamphlet *You Are on Your Honor* (1963) outlines academic and nonacademic rules for BYU students but does not mention dress. Wilkinson and Arrington, *BYU: The First 100 Years*, 3:330, briefly discusses dress standards, reporting that "Wilkinson accosted students on campus and instructed them to abide by the standards." However, it lists no actual standards before 1971. See also Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), chap. 3, "Standards and the Honor Code."

36. The notable exception is the case of sleeveless dresses and shirts, prohibited in later versions of the Dress and Grooming Standards, but I have been unable to determine the date they were first prohibited in writing.

37. Church leaders also appealed to a sense of attractiveness. *For the Strength of Youth*, 1965, 2, 4, stressed that "girls should dress to enhance their natural beauty and femininity" and that "few girls or women ever look well in backless or strapless dresses. Such styles often make the figure look ungainly and large, or they show the bony structure of the body."

38. *For the Strength of Youth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1968), 3, 6, microfiche, LDS Church Library. Although this paper focuses on dress and grooming standards for women, the BYU Dress and Grooming Standards and the *For the Strength of Youth* also listed approved clothing for young men, although most male counsel focused on facial hair. *For the Strength of Youth*, 1968 and 1972, 5, instructed young men not to wear "extremely tight-fitting pants" but permitted "shorts . . . during actual participation in active sports."

39. *For the Strength of Youth*, 1965, 6. "Any apparel that suggests a house robe should not be worn in public but only in one's home or apartment. Tight-fitting sweaters and figure-hugging clothes of any kind are not appropriate LDS dress." Although women were asked not to wear pants, rather contradictorily, "pedal pushers, knee-knockers, bermudas, capris, or any pants which reach just above the knee are acceptable." Ibid., 7, 6.

40. *For the Strength of Youth*, 1968, 6.

41. Ibid., 8, 9, 11.

42. Bergera and Priddis, *House of Faith*, 112.

43. It is not known whether students were unaware of dress stan-

dards, if the standards were unenforced, or if they were disregarded in general. Bergera and Priddis, *House of Faith*, chap. 3, seem to think that any dress standards were "unofficial" until the early 1970s. "The Honor Code" states that "Dress and Grooming standards were formally implemented," but the Honor Code Office was unable to provide me with more detail.

44. Associated Students of Brigham Young University Dress Standards Committee, "Pardon Me!" 1968, Perry Special Collections.

45. *Dress Standards at BYU* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1969), Perry Special Collections. Accompanying this pamphlet, as an example of appropriate dress, is a picture of a young man and woman holding hands. The young woman is wearing a dress that is beautiful, but which certainly wouldn't be allowed at a BYU function today. It is a strapless white empire waist gown, with a sheer polka dot overlay on the bodice; she is evidently not wearing a conventional bra.

46. *Dress Standards at BYU.*

47. Mormon women could go too far in trying to be feminine and beautiful. When this occurred, they were criticized for "bad taste" in dressing gaudily or emphasizing their sexuality. See Spencer W. Kimball, "Gems of Thought: Character Is Reflected in Dress, Speech," (excerpt from Spencer W. Kimball speech, general session, MIA Conference, Tabernacle, June 1965), *Church News,* July 3, 1965, 16.

48. One of the primary means administrators had of enforcing the pre-1971 dress standards was "interviewing" women and men who were in violation of the standards at fall registration. For example, in the fall of 1969, Dean of Women Lucille Petty talked to 201 female BYU students whose dresses were too short. Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:328.

49. *For the Strength of Youth*, 1972, 4–5.

50. *For the Strength of Youth*, 1965, 6.

51. Wilkinson and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:329.

52. "Y Board, Church System Establish Dress Standards," 1.

53. Oaks, "A New President Speaks to Brigham Young University," 10–13. He made it clear that the dress standards applied only to students attending Church schools, not to Mormon youth in general.

54. Ibid., 11.

55. *A Style of Our Own*, 1973, included the dress code, a message from CES Commissioner Neal A. Maxwell, and statements on modesty by Church leaders. Both women and men were asked to be neat and clean in their dress. Shorts and grubby attire were permitted only in living and athletic areas. Appropriate attire for women included "dresses, sweaters, blouses with skirts, culottes, slacks, or *modest* pant suits" but not

levis. "Women's hemlines (dresses, skirts, culottes) are to be *modest* in length." Sleeveless dresses were apparently acceptable, since one photo showed a young woman in a sleeveless (not spaghetti strap) dress. Men were required to be clean shaven, with hair "styled so it does not cover the ears." Ibid., not paginated; emphasis pamphlet's.

56. *A Style of Our Own*, 1974, Perry Special Collections; emphasis pamphlet's.

57. *Code of Honor/Dress and Grooming Standards*, pamphlet, 1981, LDS Church Library. A sample from this code reads: "Clothing, including swimming suits, must be modest in fabric, fit, and style. Shorts, swimming suits, and gym clothes are acceptable wear only in the living and athletic areas. So-called 'grubby attire' may be worn only in the immediate areas of residence halls and at informal outdoor activities, but not in dining areas. 'Grubby attire' includes tank tops, sweat suits, jogging attire, bib overalls, clothes with holes or those which are noticeably frayed, cutoff, or patched. Shoes are to be worn in public campus areas. Thongs or slippers are allowed in living areas only." For the first time, the code explicitly condemned "dresses or skirts above the knee or those with slits above the knee. . . . Similarly, the no-bra look is unacceptable at BYU."

58. Under President Jeffrey R. Holland, a group of faculty, administrators, and students updated the Honor Code and Dress and Grooming Standards in 1991, which included some supplemental pamphlets, including Honor Code Council, *On My Honor: From Students, To Students* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1992). *BYU Honor Code and Standards: The Faculty Role* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1992) instructed faculty to voice support for the Honor Code, include its requirements in their syllabi, counsel students in private, and refer serious offenders to Honor Code authorities.

59. Rita L. McMinn, "I Have A Question," *Ensign*, December 1973, 31.

60. Sterling W. Sill, "Personal Appearance," ca. late 1960s, 1, typescript, LDS Church Library.

61. As quoted in Peggy Hawkins, "Fads and Faith," *New Era*, October 1971, 15. The First Presidency Statement on Dress, *Priesthood Bulletin*, June 1971, cited in "Q&A: Questions and Answers," *New Era*, December 1974, 10–13.

62. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *For the Strength of Youth*, 2001, http://www.lds.org/youthresources/pdf/ForStrengYouth 36550. pdf (accessed in December 2008).

63. Alice Buehner, "The Communicational Function of Wearing

Apparel for Lady Missionaries for the LDS Church" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982), 2.

64. Ibid., 2, 5–6.

65. The assumption that women would not be employed outside the home and the further assumption of traditional family dynamics and power structures reflect a middle-class LDS demographic. A new emphasis on professional dress for female missionaries also showed signs of a desire for middle-class acceptance of the gospel message. According to Kristine Haglund, "Issues of modesty and adornment are class issues. Our language betrays us on this point: a well-dressed woman is 'classy,' a too-scantily or brightly clad woman is called 'cheap.' Our Mormon notions of modesty derive not just from sexual protectiveness, but also from the vestigial aspirations to respectability and inclusion in polite society left over from the early days of the church, from being regarded as barbaric (in both senses of the word—primitive and strange, outlandish). http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2008/04/modesty-and-adornment-spring-fashion-issues/#more-1885 (accessed April 2008).

66. Buehner, "The Communicational Function of Wearing Apparel," 5–6.

67. Ibid., 6.

68. Ibid., 7, 10.

69. Ibid., 15.

70. Ibid., 40.

71. Ibid., 41.

72. Ibid., 5.

73. Susan W. Olsen, *Personal Development Program* (pamphlet), (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Publications, 1981), quoted in Buehner, "The Communicational Function . . .," 18. Buehner quotes this pamphlet completely in her thesis. The class was eventually discontinued, and subsequent dress and grooming guidelines for sister missionaries were less explicit, instead suggesting what clothing to bring and what they could not wear. For example, a later pamphlet, *Clothing for Sister Missionaries*, 1994, LDS Church Library, in a section titled "Maintaining Your Appearance" states: "You will represent the Church best when you dress simply and attractively, taking care to always look your best. You can do this by keeping: Your face, hair, and hands clean and neatly groomed; Your shoes, handbag, and belt clean, polished, and in good repair; Your hems, buttons, and linings sewed securely in place." In 1995, the Church published a similar guideline for elders.

74. Personnel Department, *Style of Our Own: The Church Employee Look* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980), LDS Church Library.

75. "The Mini Skirts," 16.

76. This list is not inclusive but highlights several "modest" clothing companies: http://www.shadeclothing.com/, http://www.layersclothing.com/, http://www.modbeclothing.com/, http://www.Modestprom.com, http://www.divinemodestee.com/, http://www.modestbydesign.com, http://www.mikarose.com/, http://www.shabbyapple.com/, http:// www.latterdaybride.com; http://www.ldsbridal.com; http://www. beautifullymodest.com; http://www.modestswimm.com, www.LimeRicki.com, and http://www.kneeshorts.com (all accessed in July 2008).

77. "FYI," *New Era*, March 1976, 45.

78. Janet Thomas, "Deep in the Heart," *New Era*, July 1987, 28.

79. Joy Saunders Lundberg, "The Strapless Dress," *New Era*, September 1990, 44–46; Judith Rasband, "Dress for Celebrating," *New Era*, September 1990, 47.

80. The Church magazines have highlighted several of the more impressive efforts of LDS women to promote modesty in their communities. See, for example, in the *New Era*: Nikki Miner, "Dressed Up!" May 2003, 45 (a report of a Young Women's project in Saratoga California Stake); Caroline H. Benzley, "Evaluate Your Style," January 2002, 28 (Young Women in Red Bridge Ward, Kansas, met with local department stores to lobby for more modest attire); "Of All Things: Copycat Designers," March 2002, 41 (a department store fashion show in Rancho Cucamonga, California); and Lisa M. G. Crockett, "High Fashion," June 2001, 26, (Young Women in Slidell, Louisiana); and Naomi Frandsen, "News of the Church," *Ensign*, January 2003, 75 (a fourteen-stake fashion show in southern California). My home ward's Young Women (Union Park Third Ward, Midvale, Utah) put on a fashion show in the spring of 2003 for the ward. "Modest, Style-Conscious, and Frustrated No More," *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 2002, describes the 900-attendee fashion show as follows: "On Saturday, Nordstrom in Costa Mesa's South Coast Plaza will host a sold-out fashion show featuring 33 Mormon teenage girls from Southern California wearing stylish dresses with not a spaghetti strap in sight."

81. Shade Clothing touts itself as "the first company to infuse modesty into today's hottest fashion trends." http://www.newsweek.com/ (accessed in December 2008). In November 2008, I was surprised to see Shade Clothing T-shirts at my local Costco in Virginia.

82. See, for example, http://www.purefashion.com/ (accessed in December 2008); "Girls Gone Mild(er)," *Newsweek*, July 23, 2007; and "Girls Gone Mild: Teenagers Try on Modesty," March 13, 2008, http:// www.msnbc.msn.com/id/23596656/ (accessed in December 2008).

83. According to its website, "Pure Fashion has continued the momen-

tum by growing into an international faith-based program that encourages teen girls to live, act, and dress in accordance with their dignity as children of God. Pure Fashion focuses on guiding young women ages 14 to 18 to become confident, competent leaders who live the virtues of modesty and purity in their schools and communities. Through an eight month Model Training Program that covers public speaking, manners and social graces, hair and make up artistry, personal presentation, and much more, Pure Fashion models learn the importance of living a life in accordance with God's will and fostering a life of grace through purity of heart, mind, and body. The Pure Fashion program culminates in a city-wide fashion show featuring clothing that is pretty but not provocative, trendy but still tasteful." http://www.purefashion.com/about/media (accessed in December 2008).

84. I placed those who did not explicitly answer the question in the "undecided" category. Several women made the distinction that the standards hadn't changed but either the interpretation or practice has. Others felt that they had just become a little more specific. Many women cite changes in standards from their own experience, including one who wrote: "Yes, I think dress standards have changed. When I was a teenager in SLC, we all wore sleeveless dresses. They might have been tight and short" but people could still tell the difference between a 'good' and 'bad' girl." Modesty Survey, #32, age 65, Anchorage, Alaska.

85. July 2003 Modesty Email Survey, #6, age 27, Lantana, Florida.

86. Only a handful of women felt that modesty was a means for the male hierarchy to control women; the overwhelming majority felt that it was important for women (and men) to be modest.

87. Interestingly, many people expressed regret and frustration that the Church had gotten more casual in Sunday dress standards. People were either very happy or very upset that women no longer always wore skirts in the chapel and while visiting teaching. Other examples of casualness included not wearing nylons and closed-toed shoes, and the preponderance of jean skirts and flip-flops on Sunday. All cited a decrease in feminine dress. Some said the standards had gotten stricter over time; others felt they had been relaxed. Others differentiated between practice and principle, reasoning that although the principle of modesty has not changed, its expression has. A good number of women wrote, "Obviously, the standards have changed," or "obviously, they have not." I find this difference very interesting, especially based on the wide range of responses, from "the church has no standards" and "I model nude for my University's Art Department and feel that modesty is not connected to dress" to "we must wear skirts below the kneecap" and "BYU's standards apply to the whole church" or "one must always dress, even in childhood,

so that one would be able to wear the garment." It appears to me that some believe modesty is not an obvious standard but one that is interpreted by individuals.

88. Modesty Survey, #51, age 24, New York City.

89. Modesty Survey, #80, age 33, Alexandria, Va. Respondent #199, age 71, Salt Lake City, emphasized that modest dress is "a preparation for the time when young people go through the temple and will be wearing temple garments."

90. Modesty Survey, #66, age 33, Centerville, Utah.

91. Modesty Survey, #104, age 44, Fremont, California.

92. Modesty Survey, #93, age 28, Eagle-Vail, Colorado.

93. Modesty Survey, #365, age 26, Palo Alto, California.

94. Modesty Survey, #142, age 40 years old, New York City.

95. Modesty Survey, #74, age 25, Provo, Utah.

96. Modesty Survey #106, age 35, Florida. Echoing a T-shirt sold in 2003 in the BYU Bookstore, one woman wrote, "Remember the motto: Modest is Hottest!" Modesty Survey, #494, age 49, Emmett, Idaho. Not all of the respondents were intent on deemphasizing the body.

97. Modesty Survey, #387, age 37, Lake Havasu City, Arizona; emphasis hers.

98. Modesty Survey, #281, age 68, no residence given. The woman shared a story to demonstrate more casual Church standards. "One weekday afternoon as a young mother I had driven ten miles to attend a stake Relief Society chorus practice. When I found that the women were practicing in the chapel, not the Relief Society room, I drove to a nearby shopping center to buy a long skirt, so I could change out of pants and not violate the sanctity of the chapel. Now neither I nor others would worry about slacks anywhere in the Church building. If we have inactive members or friends who want to attend Sunday services but don't have a skirt or dress, I would invite the woman to come and feel comfortable wearing nice slacks." Although modesty seems to mean different things to different people, very few seemed to feel that modesty of dress was *not* an important virtue. A recent *Ensign* article by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve cites a myriad of reasons that women should dress modestly and appropriately, noting that too casual clothing is not "modest" either. Robert D. Hales, "Modesty: Reverence for the Lord," *Ensign*, August 2008, 34–39.

Emily Plewe, *Rupt*
acrylic on canvas, 48"x 48", 2009

The Education of a Bible Scholar

Sheldon Greaves

I first heard the tales of Hugh Nibley, the brilliant and eccentric LDS scholar whose fertile and fecund brain defended and expanded the faith of thoughtful Church members, virtually at my mother's knee. I remember as a child listening rapt with wonder at the accounts of his marvelous ability with languages, his wartime service with Allied Army intelligence, and his vast knowledge of things ancient and arcane. I was also, as time went on, delighted by the news that he was also reputed to be conversant in many scientific fields—a Mormon Renaissance man, as it were. I'm not sure I wanted to be Dr. Nibley, but the job sounded fun. When I was eleven, those stories combined with reading a brief biographical sketch of Leonardo da Vinci by Dan Q. Posin[1] to fix my desire that some day, somehow, mine would be a life of the mind. I read and studied passionately, compulsively, and indiscriminately in pursuit of that vague but compelling ideal.

It was an easy choice in those days. The space race and the Sputnik scare meant that cultivating intellect—albeit with more emphasis on science and engineering—was rightly considered a matter of national security. Funding for education poured out like water; and by the time I started first grade at Liberty Elementary School in Salem, Oregon, all those marvelous learning tools were there, waiting for me. I was a voracious reader to begin with and was always engaged in learning of one form or another. Unfortunately, one of those tools was "New Math," which confused and frustrated me to the point where my earliest love, science, did not seem like a viable career for me in the end.

There remained the humanities, which was fine. In high school I excelled in theater and music, but choosing a specific field wasn't easy. Before my mission, I had majored in theater at

Ricks College. After my mission I had attended BYU and mucked about in majors ranging from earth science to filmmaking. Then, my parents and my local Church leaders made a rather intriguing suggestion: pursue some line of study that would equip me to work for the Church, ideally as a teacher in the Church Educational System or perhaps even as a professor at BYU. This seemed a reasonable choice. I had always done well in seminary. I had been well prepared for my mission. I knew the scriptures better than most of my contemporaries. Moreover, I had seen enough of the liberal arts to know that running with the Muses was a very hard dollar. Our family had not known affluence and had more than our share of tight times, and I wanted to avoid that. Working for the Church seemed like a good way to find economic security.

Some long talks with my parents ensued. I also had a very interesting and memorable interview with our local stake president who was a CES employee. He gave me a good picture of what it was like to work for CES. "The Church is a good employer," he advised and went on to say he felt that I would be an excellent teacher of scripture and related topics. I was inspired by that compliment. Moreover, I respected this man and was grateful that he had taken an interest in me and my career. I took his words to heart.

There remained the question of a major. At first I toyed with the idea of studying classics and looked into a few programs, particularly one at the University of Oregon. But while leafing through a BYU course catalog, I saw the major in Near Eastern studies. At once I knew that this was exactly what I needed to prepare myself to be a teacher of ancient scripture. I could also take the classes I'd need to enter CES as a seminary or institute teacher.

So, in the fall of 1982, I returned to BYU with the goal of getting a degree in Near Eastern studies. My days began with a Hebrew class every day, very, very early in the morning. It was followed by classes in Near Eastern history from David Montgomery, biblical archaeology with John Lundquist, and gradually expanded to other topics and languages: Near Eastern mythology, Ugaritic, "temples and texts," and a course on Arab-Israeli politics from Donna Lee Bowen. As I got better at Hebrew, I began to dig into the secondary literature on biblical scholarship, and there encountered modern biblical criticism for the first time—something I had only vaguely heard of. But before long I would be saturated

in this discipline. The result was a broader, richer, and deeper view of scripture. It also rendered untenable my plans of becoming a CES employee.

The discipline of "biblical criticism" rests on the same proposition as any other form of rational inquiry, namely, that if something is important, the curious mind will demand to know how it came to be, how it works, and why it is so important. Obviously, the Bible qualifies as important, not merely as an object of cultural significance, but as a cornerstone of western spirituality for the last two millennia.

Modern biblical criticism is also the response to the failure of traditional ecclesiastical scholarship to satisfy post-Enlightenment intellectual sensibilities when they confront the difficulties raised by the biblical text. In centuries and millennia past, oddities such as content that is repeated (but repeated with variations), apparent contradictions, or odd or inexplicable turns of phrase were usually explained as manifestations of the text's intrinsically sacred nature. For example, passages containing words or ideas repeated with variations elsewhere were explained by interpreters as nonetheless having value, for any single passage of the word of God can be interpreted in many different ways. By the time of the early Christians, allegory was a common means of reading—and writing—the Bible. The "facts" of the text were less important than its "point." King Herod's infamous slaughter of the innocents is not mentioned in the otherwise highly detailed biography of Herod written by Josephus, which argues strongly against its historicity. So when Matthew's narrative describes Jesus escaping Herod's slaughter of the innocents when his parents flee into Egypt, the Gospel of Matthew is less concerned with telling history as it is than with drawing an explicit parallel between Jesus and Moses. While some aspects of the allegorical method can be useful, it was also common for some allegorical interpreters to take some small aspect of the text and from it derive entire stories or lessons that the average modern reader would find difficult to accept as truly part of the original author's intent. Modern biblical scholarship strives to discover or at least roughly triangulate the original author's intent.

These traditional ways of reading scripture proved less valu-

able in the years following the Renaissance. The desire to have better translations of holy writ prompted scholars to begin taking a closer look at the language and grammar of ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Moreover, scholars such as Lorenzo Valla (1407–57) and Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) began to emphasize linguistic, historical, and philosophical considerations over traditional scholastic theology. While they favored using the text to draw moral and theological lessons, they dismissed the more fanciful allegorical methods of their predecessors. Their work led to a much improved understanding of the New Testament in particular, and translations far superior to those available before.[2]

The Reformation continued in a similar vein, building on the advances in linguistics and generally rejecting elaborate allegorical interpretation. This led to a tendency to read the text more literally, which in some cases eventually mutated into modern notions of biblical literalism and inerrancy.

The earliest precursors of modern biblical criticism fall under the category of text criticism, and were originally used in the field of classics to try to create the best possible edition of an ancient text. Textual criticism assumes that there was an original text (German, *Urtext*) in which stories, oral tradition, law, and so forth were set down in writing, which then evolved over time. As with any ancient text, it would be subject to scribal errors, additions, censoring, editing, reediting, translations, and changes in the meaning of words and even the language. The tools of textual criticism are intended to try to recover or at least approximate that *Urtext*, to spot and avoid the obscuring influences, and try to end up with the best text possible. What was not well understood until more recent times was that, in many cases, the quest to recover an original text fails to account for multiple versions written by the same author at different times, or that the "original" text had multiple variations and drew from multiple traditions and sources.

Defining modern biblical criticism is not easy; it draws upon many disciplines and approaches, each with its characteristic strengths. It relies on close, careful reading of the text using sound scholarship and methods. But most of all, modern biblical criticism is the art and science of letting the Bible speak for itself, unencumbered by the weight of extraneous traditions and inter-

pretations imposed upon it by the needs of its readers. It is not "criticism" in the sense of disparagement or disapproval, but rather in the sense of the Greek root of "criticism" (*krino*, "to judge, weigh, evaluate"). Thus, modern biblical criticism strives to achieve considered judgments that answer old questions while raising fresh ones.

Biblical criticism and each of its sub-disciplines is therefore another way of reading the text. However, most types of biblical criticism share a common set of assumptions, such as the need to approach the text in its original language, acknowledging that the text and its precursors have evolved over time, that outside cultural influences and even religious syncretism manifest themselves in it, and that the narrative was used in different ways and understood differently over the centuries. It further assumes what is obvious but sometimes forgotten: that scripture is written in human languages by human beings using their own rhetoric, literary forms, and expressions to convey its messages. Perhaps the best overall guideline for reading the Bible offered by modern scholarship is to try and read the Bible as far as possible in its original cultural and historical context, bearing in mind that this context must allow for the process of history and the attendant editing, re-editing, and revision that each text was subject to.[3]

Perhaps no single aspect of modern biblical criticism has generated as much heated controversy as the "documentary hypothesis," first articulated in the nineteenth century by German scholar Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918). Wellhausen proposed that the Bible, as we have it today, is a composite document containing different sources that represent different strands of religious thought. According to this hypothesis, these strands were eventually compiled into a single body and later subjected to additional editing and redaction. Wellhausen and his successors identified four main sources for the Old Testament, designated as P ("Priestly"), J ("Jawist," Yahwist, or Jehovah-ist), E ("Elohist"), and D ("Deuteronomistic") sources. Each source could be discerned in the text by certain characteristic markers such as style, which name was used for God, technical terms, other vocabulary, and subject matter. Although some early attempts went overboard in assigning bits and pieces of scripture to one of a multitude of hy-

pothetical sources, the documentary hypothesis in its mature form did not seek to dismantle the unity of scripture. Instead it was an attempt to make sense of inconsistencies and flat contradictions often found in the same book of the Bible and sometimes even in the same chapter of a book.

The documentary hypothesis explains much of the structure and some of the more perplexing features of the text, although like any other scientific approach it has undergone many changes over the years. A number of Wellhausen's original assumptions have been modified or replaced. But the identification of multiple sources as a means of understanding the biblical text remains a powerful tool for explaining contradictions and stylistic variations in the Bible and understanding the different editorial viewpoints that often created these contradictions and variations. Other methods grew up in the wake of the documentary hypothesis. "Tradition criticism" examines the history of the text itself, attempting to see how changes made to the text reflected the religious community's shifting attitudes and doctrines at given points in history. "Canonical criticism" recognizes that texts often define religious communities and that one community might use a text in ways that differed from another. This approach led to the study of scripture in the context of a given community. "Form criticism" seeks to identify smaller literary subunits within the text that reflect other types of early literature, such as oral traditions, rituals, hymns, and covenants. Their structure can offer a window into the origin and thrust of the text.

A fuller description of the modern biblical scholar's panoply of methods and tools is beyond the scope of this article, and in fact my later education did not stress any one school of thought or method above any other. As I mentioned, my original intent in pursuing advanced training in ancient Near Eastern studies was to be able to understand better holy writ. As I gradually learned about modern biblical criticism and how to use it, I came to appreciate how some critical tools are better suited than others for a given problem. Overuse of one or two methods makes for stale scholarship. Eventually each student decides which method will provide the most insight under a given set of circumstances.

Needless to say, when the Bible is examined in this way, one finds meanings and can arrive at conclusions that traditional

views would find foreign or even heretical. This dynamic has created tensions between traditional readers and scholars employing more modern techniques. Centuries of venerating scripture as the word of God have conferred upon it a sense of inviolability that, ironically, has frozen in place many nonbiblical accretions in the form of traditional readings that distort the text. Faith is, ultimately, based on or at least tuned to a narrative. When an interpretation seems to change the narrative, it can pose an apparent threat to traditional faith. This perception of modern biblical criticism and its aims is, unfortunately, common among Latter-day Saints.

While the tools of biblical criticism, whether they are textual, historical, literary, canonical, form, or any other variant, may not be particularly welcome in the average LDS Sunday School class, in the larger world of biblical scholarship they are used routinely. It is not an exaggeration to say that these tools have done for biblical scholarship what Newton's laws of motion did for physics.

However, in all fairness, we might say that the application of modern scientific criticism to a prescientific religious text constitutes a mismatch on the surface. It seeks to apply the logic and empirical values of science to a text produced by a culture that espoused a completely different view of the world and how it worked. Modern assumptions about the role of text, how text has been used, and the use of ideas communicated through it cannot be applied automatically. But while modern criticism unlocks all kinds of fascinating or disquieting questions and answers about how the text came to be, it also constitutes a slippery slope in which it becomes easy to pass moral and theological judgments on the Bible through a misapplication of modern standards and mores.

When considering the history as recounted by a text or the community that produces and/or uses it, many professional historians must assume that things happen according to the laws of nature. Miracle stories are read as expressions of faith on the part of the writer; only the laws of physics are sacrosanct.

While engaged in my studies at BYU, I usually taught elders' quorum on Sundays. I enjoyed these classes. The students were usually thoughtful and engaged. We all had a good time, especially when I could give them something in the lesson that most of

them hadn't already heard over and over again. It gave me a chance to share with them a few of the little-known tidbits I was learning during the week and get a taste of what I might be doing for a living later.

Student wards were wonderful for this response; they are full of people with extremely active, inquiring minds. But after I married a brilliant and talented classics graduate student, Denise and I began attending a local Provo ward. Again, I ended up teaching elders' quorum. By and large, the response was similar, as many of those who attended my lessons were young married men who were still in school or only recently graduated.

But there were subtle differences; and in my enthusiasm and inexperience, I didn't read the full significance of a certain tone for a question or an answer, or correctly interpret a look, inflection, or nervous shifting in one's seat as a challenge to something I had said. As the year wore on, I began to realize that a few people in the class were slightly uncomfortable with my teaching. More precisely, they were not happy with some of the content I was bringing in by using outside sources and commentaries that were not Church approved. Not knowing how big this problem was, I simply forged ahead, trying sincerely to avoid generating controversy for its own sake and to be respectful of all opinions and questions. Fortunately, the elders' quorum president was very supportive, as were most of the others in the class. But it jolted me just a bit to see in some eyes and hear in some voices a fear of the unknown or the unorthodox. I was startled to see their reluctance to encounter scripture on its own terms.

The most common mistake made by the average modern reader of the Bible is always to read the text literally, that is, as an expression of what the author actually thought had taken place or to take the words at face value without allowing for cultural or historical context, consistency with respect to the remainder of the text, translation issues, or any number of other important factors. To take one example, Christian adherents of creationism or intelligent design may downplay the necessity of a strict point-for-point correspondence between Genesis and the formation of the earth, but they nonetheless base their pseudoscientific agenda on their reading of the Genesis cosmogony. In contrast, virtually no creationists or intelligent design advocates appear among mem-

bers of the Jewish faith because they read and understand Genesis in profoundly different ways.

Religious movements evolve, along with their doctrines and dogmas. This developmental process is reflected in how sacred texts are used and sometimes in the text itself, due to changes, interpolations, or deletions of material. Even sacred texts are written by human beings and are subject to their foibles and whims.

Like most LDS youth I grew up hearing a curriculum of scripture weighted toward preparing us to serve proselytizing missions, with a fairly strong emphasis on apologetics. Missionary service was an exercise in presenting a more consistent, better-explained interpretation and understanding of the Bible and scripture. The prevailing assumption among ourselves and our teachers was that the scriptures reflected an almost scientific level of accuracy, the message was consistent, and our understanding of God and His relationship with humanity was constant and unchanging.

Most coursework in my major devoted little time to biblical criticism per se unless it was a specific matter of language and translation. My exposure to modern biblical criticism took place in the BYU library. Many scholarly works on biblical subjects assume familiarity with the tools of biblical criticism, and the Lee Library had an excellent collection of such works.

Learning Hebrew was one of the first ways to peel away the veneer of smoothness from the text as I had grown up with it. Even as a beginner learning the language, I soon saw hints of the Bible's unique, hidden character. I came to know the points where the text was unclear, its variant meanings depending on the way an unvoweled text might be read or misread. When I read the Bible (or any book) in the original, it suddenly developed texture and became a different book. As my study advanced, I discovered places in the King James Version where Christian dogma dictated the translation, or where textual difficulties had been glossed over, where even the original Hebrew bore unmistakable signs of editing, and where grammatical irregularities created ambiguity in the meaning of a verse.

Outside the Near Eastern studies Department at BYU and particularly among those who taught religion classes, there was and remains a very strong bias against modern biblical criticism.

Bruce R. McConkie's disdainful condemnation of "higher criticism" in *Mormon Doctrine* reflected the general consensus of BYU religion faculty regarding modern biblical criticism and scholarship.[4] The required religion courses either ignored higher criticism completely or would trot it out occasionally as a straw man representing the "philosophies of men" or godless intellectuals gleefully trying to undermine the faith of the Saints. Biblical criticism was, in this context, little more than proof that the apostasy was alive and well beyond the boundaries of Zion's pure doctrine. BYU religion professors also made it clear that their position reflected that of Church leaders and that promoting or using modern biblical criticism, particularly to examine Mormon scripture, was morally wrong.

A few of my professors in Near Eastern studies, however, understood and applied the techniques of modern biblical scholarship in their papers and articles intended for the professional journals. Discussions were rarer—conducted in smaller, graduate-level classes, if at all, or one-on-one office hours, in low voices and with the door closed.

The imperative of our field to examine the Bible in the original language and context enforces a slower, more deliberate and deliberative reading. The Hebrew Bible is a different book, in many ways, than the Bible we all grew up with. To find unexpected irregularities in the text suddenly made me reconsider elements I had noticed but dismissed as unimportant. If the Pentateuch is, in fact, the "law," why are there two versions of the Decalogue? Why does Moses go up on Sinai in some verses to talk to God but on Mount Horeb in others? If Moses really wrote the Pentateuch, why does he always refer to himself in the third person? And how could he write about his own death at the end of Deuteronomy? The explanations provided by religious tradition (both LDS and others) seemed forced and dismissive of those who ask such questions. The explanations provided by modern biblical scholarship were an alternative that respected reason.

Another lesson of modern biblical scholarship is a recognition of the vast gulf in cultural grounding that separates us from the authors of the bible. Ours is a world where scientific understanding and the laws of physics are the final arbiter, where nature obeys rules describable with mathematics. The average high

school student has an understanding of the world that is profoundly different from that of most people living in the ancient Near East. In that world, gods and demons accounted for almost every phenomenon or interaction in the everyday world—to an extent that even those of us who are strong believers would probably find startling.

One closed-door discussion in 1984 was particularly insightful for me. I was finishing a class with David Wright in which we were reading the Bible commentaries of the medieval rabbis. We held the class in his office because I was the only student who signed up for the class; graduate students had that privilege. Undergraduates would have found the class cancelled without a minimum number. After we had finished, David showed me some research he had been doing on the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of the Bible. He was interested to see how the JST handled portions of the Old Testament that presented perplexing difficulties in the original text but which had been glossed over in the King James Version (KJV) from which Smith had worked. To his surprise he discovered that most of the changes that Joseph Smith made in his rendition were to words that had been printed in italics in the KJV. These words were italicized because they had no direct corollary in Hebrew. For instance, the phrase "he wrote" would be written with a single word (*ktb*), the pronoun being implicit in the conjugation of the verb. In the KJV, the pronoun would be italicized. To further complicate matters, it seemed that the JST addressed almost none of the trickier aspects of the original Hebrew text in any way. It was asking too much of credulity to assume that the King James translators had gotten every such puzzle exactly right; the only reasonable conclusion was that the JST was not concerned with those problems. David told me that he was leaning toward the conclusion that the JST was in fact, not a restoration of original material, but a commentary on the KJV. It was an explanation that seemed to make sense.

That conversation was an eye-opener for me. Here I saw basic tools of biblical criticism brought to bear on an assumption I had held since I became aware of the JST and one that was regarded as dogma in BYU's Religious Studies. Its dean, Robert J. Matthews, had done his doctoral dissertation on the JST and clearly believed

that it represented a restoration of original material. But David's closer examination of the text using tools of critical analysis revealed that this assumption could not stand—and did so with impressive ease. It helped confirm to me the usefulness of biblical criticism and its tools.

At BYU, the *sub rosa* discussions of modern criticism along with my own reading convinced me and some of my fellow students that these disapproved tools of modern scholarship had value and served a real purpose in pursuit of interesting and legitimate questions. It was clear that they grew out of a sincere desire to explain the biblical text. Slowly, quietly, we began to grasp how these insights could enliven the biblical text, revealing a deeper texture that demanded a more circumspect, nuanced understanding—one that required the reader to entertain some enlightening assumptions that others might consider disquieting or even dangerous. In an almost karmic compensation for this stimulating new understanding, the required religion courses taught by Religion Department instructors became correspondingly dull and unspeakably boring, for me at least. Sometimes teachers in the Religion Department who had a background in ancient languages followed the uncritical "party line" in the class teaching. Instead of leading students into the fascinating and beautiful complexities of the biblical text, they instead seemed to oversimplify the Bible to fit with BYU's ecclesiastical emphasis. For example, I knew of one professor who had received his Ph.D. in biblical studies from a major university; but during his tenure at BYU, he did not teach modern biblical criticism. Instead, he emphasized evangelical gospel teaching. Likewise, one of my professors brought a strong background in ancient studies to his work. I remember his wonderful graduate seminar on Hellenistic Egypt that gave me my first introduction to the early Church Fathers. However he seemed to encounter resistance from the Religion Department's administration when he attempted to direct his scholarship outside the usual boundaries as defined by the department's curriculum.

I finished my B.A. in Near Eastern studies in 1984 and immediately began work, still at BYU, on my master's degree. During that time, my fellow BYU students and I began to hear that highly qualified applicants for faculty positions in the Department of Religious Studies found that being trained in modern biblical schol-

arship and even ancient languages was more often an obstacle to getting hired at BYU than a plus. Further rumors (later confirmed) told how some of those in the department who had these skills but who had somehow "slipped through" were treated with disdain and even scorn by those who distrusted such things. My fellow students and I were disappointed by these reactions, since by this time our reading in the literature had been broad and deep enough to make it clear that modern biblical criticism was the product of sincere scholarship and honest questioning, not some anti-religious crusade. Indeed, most other religious traditions had struggled with it and had found a place for it among believing scholars. We found the Religious Studies Department's attitude stifling and dull. We came to feel that it was somewhat embarrassing that our university's religion faculty would be so outmoded and incurious when it came to serious scholarship.

Denise and I moved to California, where we settled into the Palo Alto First Ward. I was quickly called to teach Gospel Doctrine. Denise had been accepted into the Ph.D. program in classics at Stanford, and I had been accepted into a joint doctoral program in Near Eastern religions at Graduate Theological Union and the University of California at Berkeley. For the first time, I was able, not only freely to discuss, but also openly to practice the techniques I had read about. I was excited to work with and learn from professors who were fluent in their use.

The entire atmosphere at Berkeley was an almost indescribable contrast to Provo. Where I had worked and studied in an increasingly irritating environment of conformity, Berkeley appeared on the surface to be an exercise in barely controlled intellectual chaos. There were no such things as blogs then, but I found their antecedents in the form of passionate, fiery dialogues scrawled as graffiti on bathroom stalls, covering everything from nuclear disarmament to the artistry of Jimi Hendrix. It became clear at once that what I was seeing was one side effect of a truly vigorous forum of ideas. Virtually no subject was off-limits, as far as I could tell. And yet, while sniping and high feelings prevailed at times, the discussions tended to remain focused on the ideas. Graduate Theological Union, while perhaps less boisterous than Berkeley itself, was equally astonishing to me. Here was a group

of some nine seminaries of different colors and flavors, mostly of the Judeo-Christian variety, who carried on their own dialogues, maintained their respective identities, but still managed to work together in the interests of interfaith dialogue and ecumenism. They even pooled their books in a common library, which struck me as an astounding commitment to the principle of a diverse yet unified religious community.

But Berkeley also brought its challenges. Shortly after I got there I became acquainted with Edwin Firmage Jr., another Mormon who was pursuing a doctorate in Near Eastern studies. Soon after we became acquainted, he gave me a draft of a paper he was working on in which he examined descriptions of the translation of the Book of Mormon for support of the idea that it was a literal translation and that Smith had in fact been able to translate a real work of ancient history. He had skillfully applied the tools of biblical criticism to Mormon scripture and, as with the Bible, those methods highlighted uncomfortable and profoundly disturbing conclusions for someone like me who was more flexible than many at BYU as to my beliefs but still active in the Church. Ed's essential conclusion was that many powerful factors suggested that the Book of Mormon was not a historical document and that it could best be described as pseudepigraphic. In other words, it was a book authored as though it had been originally written by someone else. Pseudepigraphic documents were commonly written during the intertestamental period, the two or three centuries before Christianity, when Judaism taught that there was to be no more prophecy until the time of the Messiah. Those who felt a godly muse would pen their insights under the name of Moses or Solomon or some other famous spiritual figure and proclaim the "discovery" of a lost work of scripture.

Frankly, I resisted Ed's conclusions for a long time. I could now to some extent understand why biblical criticism induced such fear and loathing among the Mormon faithful, particularly those who felt themselves called to defend the purity of the faith as they received it. But I continued to think about it from time to time, because as a scholar it would be disingenuous of me to simply dismiss it without a fair hearing.

Another fellow Church member was Randy Hepner, who was an astonishingly articulate, brilliant scholar working on a master's

in theology at the Pacific School of Religion, one of the member schools at GTU. We met at the LDS Institute, housed on the outskirts of GTU campus in a grand old mansion that used to belong to the Hearst family. We engaged in several long, stimulating, and (for me) seminal discussions, including one all-nighter and another sitting on the roof of the Institute building watching the sun set over San Francisco Bay. Through these talks I got to know more about an aspect of Mormonism I had never encountered before. Randy introduced me to the works of Sterling McMurrin, Lowell Bennion, and other more liberal Mormon thinkers. I learned about an earlier, though short-lived flowering of Mormon scholarship written by scholars trained in biblical criticism: Obert C. Tanner, Russell Swenson, and Milton Bennion. I also became more aware of the scholarship of B. H. Roberts than I had previously been and discovered that his body of work included studies of Mormon scripture that were boldly honest and unflinching in their candor.

From Randy and others I also grew more aware of the growing tensions that existed between segments of independent Mormon intelligentsia and the General Authorities. Randy had helped establish and publish a few issues of a newsletter on Mormon theology and had encountered resistance from his local leaders for doing so.

After I was accepted into the Berkeley/GTU doctoral program but before we left Provo, David Wright strongly advised me to take its seminar on advanced readings in biblical Hebrew, conducted by Professor Jacob Milgrom. An ordained rabbi, Milgrom is also one of the top authorities on ancient Israelite law and religion. His seminar at the time was tied to his work on the Anchor Bible commentary on Leviticus, on which he had been working for some twenty years. The commentary was eventually published in three massive volumes, is the premier commentary on Leviticus, and is likely to retain that status for some time.[5]

I took David's advice and signed up for the seminar. As he had hinted, it turned out to be one of the intellectual highlights of my life. Professor Milgrom held his seminar on Monday evenings at his home, a beautiful house in the Berkeley hills with a spectacular view of the San Francisco Bay. In addition to the many books one

would expect to find there, it was also filled with interesting and original works of art, most of them with Jewish themes and several created by Jacob's spouse, Jo, an accomplished artist who also holds a Ph.D. in art history.

Each semester, the seminar would cover one chapter of Leviticus. Just one. On the first night of class, Milgrom would make reading assignments to each of the students who had signed up, usually about half a dozen. He also assigned readings or commentaries to keep track of as we went through the text. One student would follow along in the Septuagint, an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, or the Samaritan Pentateuch or one of the Targums (ancient translations of the Bible into Aramaic). My assignment was to follow in the medieval commentary on Leviticus by Rashi, a fourteenth-century rabbi who lived in France, and the Targum Jonathan. I also was responsible for following in a modern commentary by Gordon Wenham, and a commentary in Dutch by Henk Jegersma, which I was able to read thanks to having served my mission in Dutch-speaking Flanders. Milgrom also divided up a stack of relevant articles for us to read, according to our language facility, since the articles were just as likely to be in German, French, modern Hebrew, Spanish, or Italian as English. We would take our assigned articles and create summaries to hand out to the rest of the class when the subject of the article came up.

Our weekly sessions lasted about two and a half hours, including a short break midway through. In that time, we usually managed to get through about one verse per session. This had all been described to me second-hand (Milgrom's seminar was almost legendary among the Near Eastern studies students at Cal and GTU), but before experiencing it I was a little dubious about why it would take so long to go through a single verse.

At the beginning, Milgrom would pick a student to read in Hebrew the verse to be covered, then offer his or her translation. Then the questions began. Milgrom would ask the student why he or she had settled on a particular word to translate the Hebrew. He might test the student's understanding of the grammar or the context. Gradually the questions expanded to the rest of the class as we were invited to bring in what our commentators had to say. Milgrom would ask questions that seemed simple and obvious on

the surface but which proved, on deeper reflection, to be anything but. Next, he would call for any assigned articles with a bearing on the text. The students responsible would give a brief oral summary and pass out the written summary to be studied later. The opinions, conclusions, and reasoning of these article would be stacked against the text and what we had found thus far. Many years later, while reading about practices of Talmud study in Judaism, I realized that Milgrom's seminar followed the same format used in studying the Talmud since medieval times. Gradually, the seminar would work its way toward a consensus of how the verse should be read and its place in the larger context of the chapter, the book of Leviticus, and the Bible as a whole. It was an enthralling process.

But the seminar was also an intense, pressurized experience. You never, ever showed up to Milgrom's class unprepared. On one memorable occasion, he noted that the verse under discussion had an interesting variant in the Septuagint and asked who was following it. The student next to me sheepishly raised his hand and confessed that while he had read the Septuagint passage, he had left his copy and notes at home. Milgrom peered down at him over his bifocals and, with the smallest hint of a smile, replied, "You should have memorized it."

It was easy to pass this comment off as a humorous rebuke, until a few weeks later when we watched him trading memorized Talmud passages in Aramaic with a visiting Israeli scholar as they discussed the rabbinic interpretation of a particular verse. The rest of us sat there slack-jawed at this casual display of brilliant erudition. We were all put through our paces and gradually learned to apply modern methods in the venerable Old World tradition of rigorous, objective scholarship.

I learned many lessons during my two semesters in the seminar as well as in my other classes. The first was that, if I wanted to understand the text, I must be willing to question it at every level and do so relentlessly. This process was not just throwing interrogatives around, beating the text about the head until exhaustion or bias demanded that we pick a conclusion. Rather, it was a careful and considered weighing of every available fact and building a picture that accounted for as many of them as possible. I

learned that, by examining one small piece of the Bible in very great detail, I often found myself delving into many other parts of the Hebrew Bible and coming away knowing more about the Bible as a whole. Although Milgrom accepted and used the tools of source criticism and other methods of modern biblical scholarship, he insisted that, at the end of the day, the text must be treated as a complete unit.

Another lesson I learned was that good biblical criticism is very hard work. On one occasion when I was working on a paper on the creation accounts in Genesis, I encountered a problem regarding the meaning of the verb "to create" used in Genesis 1. My professor suggested that I do a word study, which required me to look up every last instance of this verb in the Hebrew Bible and compare the contexts, looking for patterns. It was hard, tedious work, but it bore fruit. This experience was quite characteristic of the kinds of work required to do biblical criticism well.

In retrospect, my professors and fellow students at Berkeley dissected the text of the Hebrew Bible in a way that would likely have caused considerable discomfort among my BYU instructors. At BYU, I had a sense that it was possible to look too closely at the text, that it was somehow fragile and could be broken by too much rough handling. Milgrom and others among my teachers at Berkeley and GTU proved otherwise.

Meanwhile, I continued to ruminate on the issues raised when modern biblical scholarship's methods were applied to the Book of Mormon. I recall distinctly when the question of Book of Mormon historicity resolved itself for me. I had turned off Euclid Avenue and was walking uphill toward the GTU Library. Almost between one step and the next, I realized that the traditional explanation of the Book of Mormon as a fully historical record was not tenable. A myriad of textual and circumstantial problems and inconsistencies that I had mentally swept aside or trivialized came to mind in what felt like an intellectual shockwave propagating through my brain. All the loose ends that had been hanging there, all the nagging difficulties (or nearly all) suddenly went away once I was no longer insisting on a literal translation of a historical record. The experience took no more than a few seconds; I probably walked no more than about a dozen yards, but it felt like walking out of the fog and into the light. The effect of that brain-

storm stayed with me the rest of the afternoon; and although I got to the library soon afterward, I don't recall reading much that day. I sat in one of the armchairs near a window and stared out, thinking long and hard about this new understanding.

One feeling that came in the wake of this moment was relief. I think I had been close to this insight for some time. I was frankly starting to grow weary of fighting against the problems that I had believed would compromise the value of the Book of Mormon if they could not be solved in ways that supported the traditional understanding. With this realization also came the idea that the whole life-or-death struggle to demonstrate the historicity of the Book of Mormon was not merely a pointless distraction but an impediment. The average reader of the Book of Mormon has neither the tools nor the time nor the inclination to find out individually if the book is indeed historical. They take it on faith, as the promise of Moroni 10:4 implies. But what can be demonstrated empirically need not and should not remain under the rubric of faith. For some time, it had been possible to see where the historicity battle was going. For years, the trend has been a shrinking defensive perimeter around the traditional historicity camp.

And should it prove beyond all doubt that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document, what then? Does that render the call to serve one another likewise untrue? Are the wars and trials of nations no longer connected to the moral strength of their peoples and leaders? Do the consequences of arrogance and greed and neglect of the weaker ones among us no longer deserve our attention?

I realized that, for me, the question of historicity was a distraction. What mattered in the Book of Mormon are its transcendent ideas, tested against the canon of my life experience, the observations of my fellow beings, my conception of the universe, my personal spiritual sense and, yes, even my understanding of secular history. From that moment, the question of the Book of Mormon's historicity became less interesting to me and has remained so ever since.

At about that same time I began to sense intuitively that tensions between independent Mormon scholars and the Church leadership were increasing, although I could not at the time point

to any one indicator of that tension. It was mostly an increasing feeling of unease. The same tensions I had seen in my elders' quorum classes in Provo were manifesting themselves again, but with greater intensity, in my Gospel Doctrine class. Most of the members greatly enjoyed my classes, but a few were profoundly uncomfortable with my teaching and my drawing on unofficial materials. Eventually, in an effort to make everybody happy, I was given my own class so that those who liked the way I taught would have an option, but they were mostly younger people who moved away after they graduated or took jobs elsewhere. My career as a Gospel Doctrine teacher faded away.

By that time an accumulation of signs, large and small, had coalesced into a conclusion that what I had sought to gain and put into the service of the Church was not wanted. A couple of years later when the September "fall housecleaning" briefly made headlines in 1993, I knew that the gift I had sought to lay on the altar was no longer acceptable. I toughed it out for another year and then became inactive.

The 1993 firings of BYU professors and excommunications, including that of David Wright, by then at Brandeis, and subsequent disciplinary actions seemed to signal to the rest of the Church that the attitudes I had seen at BYU were to be normative and that the tools of modern biblical scholarship were to be regarded by orthodox Church members as implements of spiritual chaos and destruction. The Bible need not be subjected to such rigorous examination; to do so was to "look beyond the mark" or give too much credence to the philosophies of men. The King James Bible, supplemented by the Inspired Version and the Book of Mormon should be sufficient. This approach is understandable for those who are seeking confirmation of what they already believe. But the experiences that have shaped my personal educational and religious philosophy demonstrate that, if progressively deepening understanding is the objective, then I cannot be well served by techniques of reading scripture that amount to intellectually jogging in place.

Moreover, my experience at Berkeley and GTU refuted the idea promulgated by McConkie and his adherents that those engaged in biblical criticism are "men without faith" who lack recognizable spirituality. Besides Rabbi Milgrom, I took an excellent

seminar on the Dead Sea Scrolls from two wonderful Jesuit scholars, John Endres and Tom Leahey. I studied Hellenistic philosophy with David Winston, an observant Jew who could recite the entire Torah in Hebrew from memory. My teacher for biblical archaeology was Pastor Victor R. Gold. Later I received a Newhall Fellowship for a term that made me his teaching assistant for a class on the interpretation of the Pentateuch, held at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. During this rich experience I was helping to train a new class of Lutheran pastors while simultaneously teaching the Gospel Doctrine Sunday School class weekly in Palo Alto First Ward.

Other instructors of mine, while not religious, showed respect for the religious beliefs of their students. My dissertation advisor, Dr. Anne Kilmer, was such a person. Another was Dr. John Hayes with whom I studied Canaanite dialects. Even though he was an outspoken atheist and critic of organized religion in general, he never brought it up in class and made it clear that such sniping had no place in his class when any of the students might find such tactics offensive.

But my favorite example of the faith of my instructors was an incident that took place in one of Jacob Milgrom's seminars. One evening as we gathered, he announced to us on behalf of one of our students, who was in attendance, that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and would not be able to finish the class as a result. At that point, he asked the student if she would let him pronounce a Jewish blessing over her as was traditionally done for the sick. She nodded assent. His demeanor changed somehow. Professor Milgrom had a deserved reputation for kindness and taking an active interest in his students' welfare, so the change was subtle, but still remarkable. Because the subject was the Torah, Rabbi Milgrom always wore the traditional skullcap when he conducted the seminar. On this occasion he also drew a traditional Jewish *tallit* or prayer shawl about his shoulders and stood up at the head of the dining table where we usually sat for the seminar. I remember him with his hands raised slightly, palms outward as if both to encompass those in the room, and particularly the student for whom he was about to pray. In his deep, rich voice with an unhurried cadence he pronounced the prayer in Hebrew, then

repeated it in English just to make sure we all knew what was said. It is hard to encapsulate in words the feeling that permeated the room as he spoke. His voice ached with tender concern, with unvarnished charity for a fellow human being; but most of all, it radiated compassion. An almost palpable feeling of warmth and support permeated the room. I realized I had been witness to a powerful spiritual outpouring.

If we want to understand the lessons of scripture, we must be prepared to question, modify, or even abandon preconceived notions. Sometimes oversimplified paradigms must yield to paradigms that encompass the complexity in a text. Spiritual perspectives must also, of necessity, evolve. Sometimes we may find that the beliefs we have held since childhood are inadequate to the challenges of adulthood and that, to be honest, we must frame our faith in ways that are supported by intellectual rigor and careful, methodical research. But that is the price of knowledge. It will cost us only our ignorance.

The Bible's value is in the way it serves as a sort of scale model of the human experience, the human condition. Somehow its readers always find relevance. While many traditions ascribe the Bible's authority to the status they give it as the literal word of God, a close, critical reading of the biblical text by itself reveals a forthrightness, humanity, honesty, and perceptiveness that demand attention. It is full of human failings, contradictions, ambiguity, and complexity.

What happens when we start to consider the language, the archaeology, the cosmic ideology of a text—very often totally different from our modern scientific viewpoint—and its cultural context? The text comes alive. More precisely, it acquires a biography and a history. It takes on more texture and dimension.

The view of the Bible that we see through the lens of modern scholarship is perhaps comparable to the image of the moon that Galileo saw when he first trained his telescope upon it. He saw vast geological features—mountains and craters—instead of the flawlessness that was considered becoming for a celestial object. But how much more tedious would featureless "perfection" have been! The Bible is a comparable object; it shows signs of struggle. It contradicts itself at times, making one or both conflicting accounts wrong from a historical point of view. It speculates. It speaks in metaphor

and allegory as well as narrative and history. It presents neither smoothness nor perfection in the traditional sense. Rather, it embodies the ambiguity that makes it a compelling scale model of the human condition as it searches for spiritual truth. That is what has made it so fascinating and so relevant for so long.

Through the eyes of modern scholarship, we see how the authors of the Bible struggled with their religion in much the same ways as believers today. To wrestle with questions of God, morals, ethics, and law, to seek to do well amid opposition or difficult circumstance is to take one's own small place among the great spiritual heroes and villains of history. We see that one can and should question established, conventional wisdom, for the Bible does. Often a book of the Bible builds on, interprets, or critiques previous books. Jesus rejected the "eye for an eye" teaching of the Old Testament (Matt. 5:38–39), and Ezekiel ascribed the destruction of Sodom, not to sexual perversity, but to its residents' refusal to care for the poor among them (Ezek. 16:49). It means that we must allow for alternate and even dissenting voices, for the Bible incorporates them into its very fabric.

Modern biblical criticism is not the practice of testing something to the point of failure or destruction, but the process of the refiner who strips away the dross and tries, however imperfectly, to see the Bible for what it is: a wonder of the human spiritual quest—warts, scars, and all.

Notes

1. Dan Q. Posin, "Leonardo," *Dr. Posin's Giants: Men of Science* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson and Company, 1961), 27–36.

2. Jerry H. Bentley, "Interpretation, History of," in Michael Coogan and Bruce Metzger, eds., *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 317.

3. Stephen L. Harris, *Understanding the Bible* (London: Mayfield Publishing, 1992), 5.

4. Bruce R. McConkie, "Higher Criticism," *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 324–25: "*See* APOSTACY, BIBLE, EVOLUTION, REVELATION, SCRIPTURE. In modern times, the uninspired biblical scholars of the world—men without faith, without revelation, without the gift of the Holy Ghost, without a knowledge of the plan of salvation; men who do not accept Christ as the literal Son of God—have

studiously dissected the Bible so as, in effect, to destroy its divine authenticity."

5. THE ANCHOR BIBLE: Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); his *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); and his *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

At the Cannery

Phyllis Barber

By myself, I'm driving east on I–70, just out of Denver. I'm looking for silos. I'm also listening to jazzmeister Herbie Hancock on his new tribute-to-Joni-Mitchell CD, *River. You gotta love that Herbie*, I'm thinking. Tina Turner's singing "Edith and the Kingpin," something about victims of typewriters and how the band sounds like typewriters. I laugh. I'm one of those victims who's emerging out of my cave where I write every day to volunteer at the Aurora Cannery, a division of LDS Welfare Services.

Flat roof. American flag. Silos with catwalks against a gem-blue sky. I notice a network of antennae. Probably for shortwave radio/emergency communication with all of Colorado as well as Salt Lake City. When Tina sings her last word, I turn off the radio, then realize I'm fifteen minutes early. I smile at the inverted irony that I'd been fifteen minutes late a few weeks ago when arriving at another welfare project in Salt Lake City, a soap factory.

* * *

I'd called my friend Virginia from Denver to tell her I'd be visiting Salt Lake for a few days and could we get together? She suggested we do something besides lunch, something more like our normal life together when I'd been her neighbor. "I've already signed up for a day at the cannery when you'll be here," she said. "Do you want to come along?" "Yes," I said. "That would be good. Like old times."

She and I arrived at 9:15 rather than 9:00 A.M., however. We'd been looking for 526 So. Denver Street, but addresses in the city were usually given in grid terms. We'd driven nervously up and down several streets until we sighted the telltale tan bricks of an industrial-looking building in an otherwise residential area. We were definitely tardy campers when we walked inside the glass door of Deseret Soap & Detergent. Still, we were laughing, full of

spring sunshine and exuberance, friends reunited for a few hours. An imposing man with the name "Larry" embroidered on his blue jumpsuit greeted us. I suspected he'd been in charge for a lot of years, the way he rolled his eyes at the dilettante volunteers who'd entered his domain without the serious intent to match his. He pointed to a sign: "No jewelry allowed, no watches, no cell phones or purses." He pointed to a row of lockers.

"Are you ready?" He tapped his foot.

"Almost." Both suddenly aflutter, we hurriedly stuffed our purses in the lockers, then pinned the keys to our t-shirts. We followed Larry, who padded down the concrete hall on gummy soles. He opened a heavy door and ushered us into his sacred temple of soap—a huge Star Wars-looking warehouse where gargantuan stainless steel contraptions hummed songs of metal on the move and filled boxes of laundry detergent with powder before sealing the cardboard. Solidified ribbons of newly poured soap rolled past on a conveyor belt before being guillotined into rectangles. Everything moved in concert in this factory of moving parts and mechanical arms.

"You'll be working with shampoo today," Larry said.

He assigned Virginia a job taping cardboard boxes with a super-sized tape machine. He told me to keep an eye on the bottles moving down the line toward the spigot dispensing pink shampoo. Then he stood back with his arms folded across the elastic waistband of his jumpsuit to make sure things ran smoothly. But there was trouble in Soap City. The dour man who had been running the operation solo while waiting for us laggards to arrive launched into his orientation demonstration, but empty shampoo bottles suddenly jumped ship, flew through the air, and bonked against the shiny concrete floor.

I wanted to laugh. I couldn't help my good mood. The bouncing bottles reminded me of the Three Stooges. I forced down the corners of a breakout grin. We had a Larry, and I felt like Moe, ready to break into schtick by elbowing Virginia and saying, "Hey, Curly." But Larry, trusty manager that he was, interrupted that thought. He stepped up to the spigot and jabbed a big red button. More bottles jammed into each other. More empties flew through the air and skittered across the floor.

"Give me a minute," he said, grim under pressure.

Virginia took that time to unstick the tape from the roller of the tape dispenser she'd be using. I assessed a stack of gigantic cardboard boxes, wandered over to peek into the only open one, then swam my hand through a sea of empty plastic bottles. But the True North magnet for me was the long ribbon of soap being slashed by paper-thin blades into rectangles. Hypnotic rhythm. Smooth, sharp cuts forming bars that disappeared into a bulky machine. Curious, I walked around to the other side and felt like a kid in The Magical Land of Deseret Soap & Detergent when a newly minted bar of soap popped out, freshly stamped with a beehive.

And suddenly, as I sit in the parking lot of the Aurora Cannery not far from Denver International Airport, listening to the peripheral sound of a jet streaming overhead, I'm remembering when I was twelve years old and a Beehive girl in the Mutual Improvement Association. I was taught about the industry of bees who worked, worked, worked for the community (though I'm thinking now that no one ever said much about the drones who worked, so to speak, only for the queen bee). The beehive was the logo for both the State of Deseret and the Great State of Utah. It ranked high on my list of favorite symbols. There it was again, imprinted on the broadside of a bar of soap—a reminder that, in this Church, industry was sacred. "When we're helping, we're happy," we sang in Primary before I went to MIA. Work, work, work—a strong Mormon ethic stamped firmly into my own broadsides. The key to a good life was service to others.

I check my watch. Ten minutes to go. Time is ticking more slowly than usual. I find the button to lower the seat back and try to get comfortable while I wait. Larry and Salt Lake are on my mind again.

After several stops and starts and mumbling under his breath (no expletives—this was, after all, a Church operation), Larry had things under control. The march of the bottles began again. This time, each empty stopped in the correct position for its manually operated fill-up to the perfect level. Then each was sent on its way to have its top tightened into end-product shape before Virginia hand-loaded them into boxes and taped them shut with her heavy-duty dispenser.

My job was to keep a supply of empty bottles ready for filling and replenish the bottle-top bin for the man regulating the flow of pink shampoo. As I rushed around trying to be all things to all people, I moved the huge open box of bottles from one spot to another (it wasn't heavy but my efforts could make a good impression for anyone who might be watching, maybe Larry) and unloaded it, ready for the assembly line. Spigot Man kept an eagle eye out to make sure I came nowhere close to being remiss in my duty.

After a few missteps and one reprimand, I synchronized my rhythm with the machines and the process. I felt as if I were a dancer in a mechanistic *corps de ballets*. I kept the assembly line supplied before the humorless Spigot Man could catch me being lax again. I felt a surge of pride in my competence: *I wonder if the soap factory has ever had such a fine worker, such an efficient cog in the wheel of industry*, but then I heard a man's voice calling out. "Pay attention," he said, louder this time. I'd let the supply of bottles come dangerously close to the red line indicating he would soon be bottle-less at the spigot. *Pay attention. Step it up.* Panic hit when I realized the big cardboard boxes with more supplies were taped shut, the open one empty. I had no knife. Fingernails wouldn't work. *Don't panic. Where's Larry?*

I looked around the concrete warehouse/factory and saw him in the northwest corner directing a forklift operator moving pallets of boxes, directing the operation of loading trucks destined for the Bishop's Storehouse where those in need could obtain cheese, bread, meat, canned tomatoes, feminine hygiene products, and soap, of course. I'd been to that store without cash registers. But now I needed to get bottles on the assembly line. *Larry?* Luckily, another employee walked by, saw my dismay, pulled a box cutter from his pocket, and sliced the sealing tape. He helped me carry it and pour its contents into a bin. Back in business again.

* * *

By now, the sun on the driver's side of my car is heating up the window glass even though it's cold outside. I wish I had a towel to tuck into a crack at the top, something like a maiden's handkerchief signaling that I need the sun to let up. I'm ready to go inside for the canning *du jour*. I've heard that the Greeley tomatoes are

the A-1 product from the Aurora Cannery, but it's too early in the season for tomatoes. So I wonder what we'll can today. When I look at my watch, it seems as though time has stopped. I shake it, though that's an old-fashioned, useless thing to do with batteries. I'm still early.

I breathe deeply, center myself, ease the tension in my shoulders, slow my overactive thoughts. But they, as usual, keep tramping across the open field of my mind. I can't believe I'm sitting here like a faithful Latter-day Saint, waiting to be a cog in the machine. Why am I doing this? Am I play-acting? I still have my questions. I still have my arguments. But then, I remind myself, some part of me speaking its truth, that when I hear anyone speaking unfairly about the whole enterprise, I'm there. The Defender. There was that difficult evening in 2002 when I lived in Park City. . . .

I'd been asked to speak to a group of New York socialite women gathered for a week of skiing and *après-ski.* The acquaintance who invited me was a part-time resident of New York City and Park City, and her friends had expressed curiosity about Mormonism. Would I please present an after-dinner speech on the culture and a brief overview of the theology?

Having been inactive in the practice of my religion for twenty years, I wondered if I were the best person to speak, but I had, after all, spent the first forty years of my life totally immersed. I'd come from a long line of nineteenth-century pioneer ancestors converted in Wales, England, Denmark, even Massachusetts and Illinois. Some of these hardy forebears had bumped across plains in Conestoga wagons, some had pushed handcarts and worn out their shoes, but all had found something deeply invigorating about the idea of building the kingdom of God here on earth. It represented something to which they could give their lives, their all. As they traveled westward, their passion for God became even more thickly mixed with the blood that flowed through their veins and then into mine. Scratch my skin and you'd find a Mormon there.

I'd tried to disaffiliate myself from the religion, frustrated with its challenges to my wide-ranging intellect and my concern for how women's voices were underrepresented and often unrecognized outside the domain of homemaking. My childhood, my roots, tradition, the music, the community, even the language

and concepts of the cosmos, however, inhabited much too much of my sensibility for me to think I could make a clean break. I was certainly still Mormon enough to discuss the exotic faith with a group of curious New Yorkers.

The hostess and owner of this never-ending mansion on the side of a hill overlooking Deer Valley had opened her doors with grace. She'd shown my sister and me into her breathtaking home where old money spoke softly from the muted corners of every room. I noticed a copy of one of my books at each place setting, purchased as a favor for each guest. After introductions, I was immediately enamored with the savvy group and their anthropological sensibility: a willingness to learn, to listen, to actually treat Mormonism as a subject worthy of consideration. I'd been used to other responses—dismissing Mormons as a quaint weirdness of the other Wild West; decrying the way they sent out their young, naive, robotic missionaries dressed in funereal suits with those grim plastic nametags on the lapels; denouncing them as an insidious cult of long-john-wearing crazies with Stepford wives. When I'd "left" the Church years before, a well-known poet had asked me, "How can anyone as smart as you are still be a Mormon?" I'd surprised myself with the uncharacteristic sharpness of my response. "Do yourself a favor, and don't ask a dumb question like that." Very few outsiders understood the appeal or complex demands of living a life patterned after Christ's teachings in the alien Mormon format.

But there was an element of surprise that evening in Park City: the inclusion of four guests from Salt Lake—all of whom I'd known when I'd lived there from 1970 to 1990 and been involved with community voluntarism. One of the high-profile, prominent women was known for her voluble opinions about Utah culture and the ever-present majority population. The divide between Mormons and "non-Mormons" was a constant topic of newspaper editorials and *sub rosa* conversations, the substance of sniper remarks from both sides of the fence. I wondered if this group would be open to a fresh encounter with an all-too-familiar subject.

I'd become accustomed to a wariness around the fact of my Mormonism. I'd lived in Boulder City, Nevada, for the first eleven years of my life. In this small town of 4,000, my family lived among geologists, engineers, employees of the Bureau of Reclamation,

Veterans of Foreign Wars, Masons, Catholics, and members of the Grace Community Church, all employed in the construction and maintenance of Hoover Dam (Boulder Dam in those days). There were relatively few Mormons in town. Even though our family was what I thought of as regular as apple pie with one mother and one father and four kids in a tidy and a tiny white plastered house with red shutters—a true family of the '50s—my father, who'd served in the Navy in World War II, had instructed us children to keep our Mormonism to ourselves. "Too many people don't understand what the religion is all about. They have cockeyed ideas about who we are."

So we learned to keep a tight lip on the subject of our faith. We knew we were viewed as a "peculiar people," both internally and externally. We knew that our belief in Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon from gold plates, in his conversations with the Godhead and angels, in latter-day prophets who kept our religion current with God's desires and whom we were taught to obey as our consciences allowed, was something about which people could raise their eyebrows. And, of course, there was the ever-present topic of polygamy which everyone loved to seize with canine teeth and roll their eyes about, even though the Manifesto had withdrawn official permission for new plural marriages in 1890. I could appreciate the difficulty of the topic—both my paternal and maternal great-great-grandfathers had been polygamists—but these things could be skewed and twisted and turned in strangulating, frightful directions.

* * *

I assess the smudged winter remnants on my windshield, almost dangerous for visibility. I need to get to a gas station after my shift and get the thing washed. Checking my watch again, I see that only one measly minute has passed. I'm rarely early, so this stretch of unfilled time is disconcerting, but I can't stop thinking of that palatial living room in that tastefully decorated mansion.

I spoke for thirty minutes on the history, the bare bones of the theology, and about the Mormon desire to build the kingdom of God on earth. I spoke of the cooperative experiment when everyone's crops were taken to the bishop's storehouse to be distrib-

uted to all. I spoke of the paradox of a hierarchical, patriarchal church that seemed monolithic to the outsider who wasn't informed of the deep regard for free agency. I spoke of the paradox of people who seemed so sure of their theology and yet who were also taught to seek individual answers from God and to continually search the scriptures and best books to perfect their knowledge. I spoke of how Joseph Smith, the original prophet, had expressed in his personal writings that "the first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another"—and how this applied to all members, not just to men.[1]

The women seemed open-minded. They admitted that they knew little about the religion and seemed genuinely curious during the question and answer period. After five minutes of Q&A, the hostess raised her hand. "Why don't Mormons have dinner parties?" she asked, though too many other questions were also flying through the air, and I was beginning to despair of answering them all. Just as I was mentally formulating an answer to her what-I-considered-to-be-off-the-wall question, one of the women from Salt Lake City waved her hand impatiently.

I called on her, then realized she'd raised her hand to ask a question that wasn't a question. "You're not talking about the reality of the Mormons," she stood to say. "You're not talking about the rednecks from the rural part of the state who have no conception of separation of church and state, who take a lion's share of control over the legislature—the ones who vote for guns to be allowed on the university campus and think that by their very numbers they can run things however they see fit. You're not addressing the problems in education and in a fair representation of the opposing point of view." She was a prickly heckler from Hyde Park, parachuting into this Deer Valley living room and standing defiantly on her own soapbox.

"I wasn't asked here to address the problems," I said, trying not to be defensive, my familiar default position. "I was giving an overview of the culture and the theology. Of course there are problems, but that's a subject for another lecture."

I knew the problems well. I hadn't expressed my concern with

the Mormon claim of being "the only true church," a stance which often made me uneasy as it created an unnecessary divisiveness with other religions, or with the insensitivity that occurred when a few ill-mannered Mormon children in Utah taunted non-Mormon children for being blind to their truth. I knew Utah Mormons were used to being the majority and used to their own language and conception of right and wrong. I also knew they were caught up in the very busy and demanding world of their wards and stakes, inadvertently making the uninvolved feel peripheral. Worse yet, many nonmembers felt Mormons were only interested in them as possible converts, not as friends. Back in the '70s, I'd written about this split/rift/divide in "Culture Shock," an article for *Utah Holiday*. In it, I'd observed that a move to Utah challenged Mormon newcomers as well. But please . . . I wanted to say to that woman, Utah wasn't the first place in the world having to deal with majority versus minority. Consider Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, India and Pakistan, Northern Ireland, even Boston.

Lately, the fact that people seemed very sure about who and what Mormons were had become a source of irritation. I myself had played that game. For a time, I'd tried looking down my nose, not being native to the Utah culture, after all. I'd taken a sophisticated, "above it all" stance, and sniffed at young couples with overly large families using up educational resources without paying a fair share. There's no tax penalty for large families, and I'd heard that Utah traditionally hovered just above Arkansas at the bottom of state expenditures for education per child. I'd groaned over some of the legislative decisions and the liquor laws that seemed to ignore people who thought differently. But while I was living in Park City and gradually, almost subterraneously, reconsidering my roots, I'd also been coming to an awareness that I had an immature understanding of my religion and of Jesus Christ. He not only said, "Feed my sheep" and provided fishes and loaves, but was a source of solace and salvation I was only beginning to comprehend.

The hostess had raised her hand again. "Please tell us why Mormons don't have dinner parties. I really want to know."

"It's not that they don't have dinner parties," I began cautiously, still torn by the challenge from the heckler from Salt Lake, her words on the cusp of my mind. "Mormons are very social, ac-

tually, especially among themselves. Their entertaining, however, is done on a practical level as they're very busy with their families and church service." I stalled, trying to stay focused, trying not to short out from the demands on my knowledge and my position of being the authority on a complex subject. "They're busy taking care of the sick, the dying, baking potato casseroles for funeral dinners, working at canneries, going to temples to renew covenants and honor their ancestry by unbinding the knotted links in the genealogy of the world."

My words began to feel as though they were whirling, going nowhere, unintelligible. "Also, Mormons don't drink alcoholic beverages. Sumptuous dinner parties usually presuppose a familiarity with fine wines. While some Mormons have no objection to either providing wine for their guests while drinking none of it themselves or telling their guests to bring along what they want to drink, this still makes for an awkward dinner party."

As I saw a jungle of hands being raised, including the hand of the Hyde Park heckler, I felt hunted. I didn't want to stand up there anymore. I'd subjected myself to old wounds in my psyche long enough. I'd left this religion. So why had I accepted the invitation to speak to this group of women, defending it, wanting them to understand something even I'd said didn't matter?

"I'm sure I've taken more than my time," I finally said. "Thank you for inviting me here tonight and for your interest. If you have further questions, feel free to talk to me afterwards." And as I drove home with my sister, I vowed not to accept that kind of invitation again.

* * *

There's still five minutes before I'm due to sign in at the cannery and stash my belongings in a locker. I might as well close my eyes for at least three of those minutes. I could turn on the Herbie Hancock CD again, but I'm not in the mood. I roll down my window a smidge because the magnifying-glass sun's almost burning my shoulder. The cool breeze helps.

A few summers after my speech in Park City, on a hot July day in 2004, I drove through Provo Canyon to Robert Redford's Sundance resort to hear the caustic columnist, Molly Ivins, speak.

I wouldn't want to be on the wrong side of her tongue, though I suspected she wasn't a total sidewinder beneath the lingo. When I arrived at the Tree Room, I saw the Salt Lake woman who'd been so outspoken at the Park City dinner three years earlier. We exchanged greetings, though her response still burned hot in my memory. She'd seemed so dismissive, sure of her position, even arrogant, and I could be good at holding onto a grudge. I took my assigned seat which, I was relieved to see, was not next to hers.

After a sumptuous brunch where prime rib was sliced onto plates next to a selection of opulent fruits, vegetables, sauces, and puff pastries, the crowd quieted to hear a speech from the lively Molly. Touring to promote her latest book, *Who Let the Dogs In?*, she took us on a brief, wild ride to visit the unruly characters in politics, including the top dog known as Dubya. Afterward, she asked for questions. A man raised his hand and asked, "Is Karl Rove an undercover emissary for the Mormon Church in Washington, D.C.?"

"Hell, no," she said. "He goes to some Presbyterian church, something like that, and doesn't have anything to do with the Mormons. Where'd you get that idea?" Then my mouth dropped open in astonishment as she continued: "And furthermore, I think people say things about the Mormons they'd never say about a Jew or a Catholic or whatever they are. There's a lot of disrespect."

Molly Ivins said that? And the Hyde Park heckler heard it, too? *Yes*. I wanted to raise a triumphant fist. *Yes*.

* * *

I had no intention of "going back" to Mormonism when I bought a house in Salt Lake City in December of 2002. I'd lived in the city from 1970 to 1990. My first husband and I had raised our three sons here before moving to Colorado and into a divorce. But I'd been living in sharp contrast to Mormon beliefs for almost twenty years. In one of my cross-country moves after my divorce in 1997, I tried largely non-Mormon Park City to be closer to my younger sister but not too entangled in my religious roots. Then I impulsively married a local man trying to right the ship. The marriage lasted twenty-one months and was devastatingly disappoint-

ing. Not knowing where I belonged, I moved back to Salt Lake to be close to old friends and well-established networks. I needed something when so much else seemed to have failed.

But after ten months of hiking and biking and sometimes attending other churches on Sunday mornings, one day I smelled winter coming, the end of the crisp autumn days. I noticed the change in the light. Sunday mornings had become like other people's Saturday nights for me. The dawning of the Sabbath had always meant it was time to get ready for church. A lifetime of that habit had made its indelible mark. I often felt restless in those early hours.

On that particular Sunday, a neighbor, another divorced woman named Belle, called to invite me to sing in the ward choir with her. "Singing is good for the soul," she said, probably hearing overtones of depression in my voice. On a whim, I decided to go along, possibly influenced by my readings of Carl Jung and the Dalai Lama who both spoke of reclaiming one's roots. After all, I could keep to myself in the choir and not get caught up in the rigmarole of having a calling or answering questions about my worthiness for a temple recommend. I did love music and the chance to sing. But after a few weeks, when we were told we'd actually be singing in sacrament meeting, the game plan changed.

Walking into that meeting by myself, walking into that lair of "happy families" sitting shoulder to shoulder on the benches, felt like walking the gauntlet—a self-conscious sinner returning to the chapel with a sign around her neck: "I am alone. I'm not with my family. I'm not like the rest of you anymore."

I walked tall, acting proud, pretending immunity to this all-too-familiar setting with the organ playing prelude music and people chatting amiably before the meeting. I'd known what it was like to sit, another mother hen, in this safe nest with my chicks at my side, their shoes shined and their hair combed, tucking them under my wing, urging them to think about Jesus during the sacrament rather than playing with Nintendo or drawing giraffes and tigers with crayons.

I walked toward the choir seats on the speaker's stand. I didn't look right or left, but took my seat hastily, feeling both shy and displaced. I could see little diversity in all of those trimmed, cut, and shaved Latter-day Saint faces. I took a deep breath to keep from

weeping in front of everyone. As I fought tears, I saw a man who'd been sitting behind me walking toward me. He held out his hand. "Hi," he said. "My name's Jim Pearce. I just want to say it's nice to have you here. My wife and I have heard you playing the piano when your windows are open and we've been out walking. We'd love to hear more sometime."

"That's nice," I mumbled, feeling as exposed as a snail without its shell. He had picked the perfect, right/wrong moment to approach me when my protective shell was not in place. Sometimes there are moments when things change, when there's an opening, a little shaft of light, a recognition, a moment when the guard is down and when the tide comes in with a wave that curves in a different way than any other wave before it. Jim could have approached me another time and our exchange would have been idle talk, but something about him or something about the moment and its timing caught me by complete surprise.

"I play the banjo," he added. "Maybe you'll accompany me sometime." Then it was time for the meeting to start. We nodded to each other, and he went back to his own choir seat in the tenor section.

The congregation sang the opening song, "Love at Home." I averted my face and tried to stay the tears, though they were coming fast. This was a song I'd sung many times. This chapel was my home, my childhood, my family. I surveyed the people when I dared through the wet veil over my eyes, not quite able to focus, but somehow seeing something more than the concrete wall of self-righteousness I experienced when I first walked in. Those were individuals out there, not just a brick wall of conformity. It wasn't fair to lump them into one monolithic unit designed to make me feel uncomfortable because I'd strayed from the path.

A few days later, Jim's wife, Virginia, called to ask if they could come by for a visit. I didn't quite know what to do with myself. After the meeting where the choir had sung, Belle told me that Jim's wife was the daughter of President Gordon B. Hinckley. I felt briefly like the duck girl from the village noticed by the daughter of the king. I'd grown up bearing my testimony of the gospel every first Sunday of the month, saying how I was grateful for a prophet to lead the church. As cynical as I was, I could still be im-

pressed, even touched, by the thought of having the prophet's daughter cross the threshold of my home.

During the following few years of living alone in Salt Lake City, Jim and Virginia were like two patient photographers waiting for a wounded animal to come out of its lair. They never prodded me with a stick. They helped me feel safe by saving a seat for me next to them on Sundays. I felt as if I could be myself and that I wouldn't be forced into anything. "We're not here to change you," Virginia said. "We like who you are."

Also during those years, Virginia, Laurel Olsen, and I had volunteered several times together at Welfare Square, one of the Church-related services I could render with no hesitation. We'd bagged bread in the bakery, catching slices after they passed through rows of sharp blades and easing them into a plastic bag. We'd helped package fruit drink powder on a day when another machine was acting up and granules of cherry-colored powder sprayed onto the floor, under our feet, so that when we walked we crunched. We'd toured the cheese factory and were told about Atmit, an indigenous Ethiopian porridge of oats, honey, and milk, reformulated by the Deseret Dairy from oat flour, powdered milk, sugar, salt, vitamins, and minerals. Six hundred tons had been shipped to Ethiopia in 2003 to aid children whose digestive systems had almost completely shut down. Given two tablespoons every two hours about eight times a day by a team of doctors, nurses, and other volunteers, the children graduated to something more substantial. Atmit had also been sent to Uganda, Israel, Sudan, Niger, Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, Chad, and the Gaza Strip.

* * *

It's time for my shift at the wet pack cannery. Finally. I raise the back of the seat, grab my purse, and climb out of the car. A few strangers are gathered at the front doors, but no one seems to be going inside. Not in the mood to socialize just yet, I lean back against the cold metal of my car and fold my arms across my jacket. I'm living in Denver now, close to my three sons—the Wild Barber Bunch—their wives, the four grandchildren, and my first husband, David, who is, now that the battle cries have faded, a

good friend. I'm trying to work out what it means to be family again when Mother and Father aren't married anymore. But it's not bad. I love my sons too much to be away from them. It's satisfying to feel as if we're united again. I'm still going to church, though I sometimes feel peripheral, as if I were supposed to be at the center of something and am not. But then I remember how people can feel lonely, and isn't it the higher purpose to reach out and be a friend rather than wait for one to come?

The cold from the metal is seeping through my jeans, making my legs feel like ice, a wake-up call to go inside and practice welfare—something that benefits both the giver and the receiver. I'm happy to be here, even though I still feel like a stranger, maybe an imposter, in this role. But as I'm walking toward the glass doors, I think of how, just a week ago, I'd taken the bus to my office. That morning it seemed as though all of Africa was aboard, no one speaking a word of English, the aisles jammed with strollers, women with babies in their arms, tall, thin men. About five stops down the line, everyone disembarked in front of the New Covenant Church, which serves the Ethiopian Orthodox Church community. Africans dressed in white ceremonial robes sometimes linger outside the building on certain Sunday mornings. Before the bus started up again, a somewhat bedraggled Caucasian man boarded and sat behind me. I surmised he was en route to the VA Hospital not too much farther along the line, that he was probably a Vietnam vet. I'd met so many of them on the #10 bus line. "Must be some kind of a church meeting," I said to express my curiosity out loud, "but then, it's a Friday morning." "No," he answered. "They've probably come for food."

I gazed after the last of those Africans streaming across the street and entering the church. *Feed my sheep. The loaves and the fishes. Give them this day their daily bread. Feed them. Take care of their hunger, and you will be filled with Spirit.*

* * *

Spirit shows its face in the most unlikely places and times. I first became acquainted with it as a child when I prayed to God, my Father and Friend. I trusted He would catch me if I fell, that He cared about my well being, that each creature was of His mak-

ing and therefore beloved by Him. Beneficence reigned beyond the staging of this world.

My father was the bishop of the Boulder City Ward, which met in an old wooden church building small enough to have been transported on wheels from the town of Henderson. I'd heard him talking about stranded travelers, to whom he'd given money and for whom he'd arranged shelter. I'd accompanied him on Saturday mornings as he directed the building of a brick chapel—because he was bishop, not because he knew the contracting business. Members of the ward came out to help, some of them knowledgeable about construction, most not. He was a good shepherd to his flock, a man who could be filled with Spirit as he tended to their needs for food and shelter as well as to those of their souls. Once, late at night, I overheard him talking to my mother after he'd been gone all evening.

"He shot himself in the head," I heard my father saying. "Do you have any idea what it's like to pick up the pieces of someone who's blown off his head?"

"He's lucky to have you, even if he's gone," my mother said.

"I wish I'd known he'd hit bottom," my father said. "I wish he'd at least have called me first."

* * *

And so it is that I'm moved to spend a day at the Aurora Cannery, one of a network of over 750 storehouses, canneries, thrift stores, and family services providers. I'm the first from my ward to walk through the doors for the morning shift. The manager directs me to a row of black rubber boots hanging upside down on poles to dry and warns me to be careful stepping over the orange and yellow hoses. Unsupervised, I meander through the facility, surveying large stainless steel baskets next to voluminous pressure cookers, cardboard boxes filled with Ball lids, a row of emergency buttons, a stainless steel table top with twenty round-hole cutouts at its edge.

The six women assigned to the round table, including myself, are short, tall, wide, hefty, wiry. They could be doctors, lawyers or Indian chiefs for all I know, their hair and most of their features hidden inside their gauzy shower caps. We stuff mounds of

ground beef into tin cans, then send them down the line where lids are sealed and pressure cookers steam. We laugh and make smart remarks. We're sisters. Three hours later, we clean the room with pressure hoses and pressurized hot water. There are squeegees to clean the floor, to push the water and remaining bits of ground beef into a drain in the center of the floor. When everything is spick and span and I've retrieved my purse, I take the outside sidewalk to the dry pack wing to check it out.

"Sister Carlson," her standard plastic name tag reads, is seated at a rectangle folding table in a cavernous warehouse. She greets me cheerfully. I ask her a few questions about the operation, and it's as if I've turned on a spigot. "Mesa, Arizona," she says with high enthusiasm, "has a huge welfare cannery with a monster truck packed and ready to go at all times. When a tornado, earthquake, or hurricane is being forecast, a truck will be on the road before the storm even touches the ground."

Resting her elbows on the table, she grins with delight: "Two churches were listed by the media as being the main source of help to those hit by Katrina, one of them the Mormon church, the other the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." She laughs a can-you-believe-it laugh. "The genius of this system is that there's someone to receive the goods on the other end who knows how to distribute and deliver them where they're needed."

I used to tire of what I considered to be a certain smugness, this Dudley Do-Right infatuation with one's goodness and accomplishments. Today, though, I respect her pride and dedication. Today, I don't feel separate from, above or below, Sister Carlson. Oh so subtly and gradually, I'm being folded back into the fold. I've given up resistance somewhere along the way.

As I depart for the parking lot, I read a poster in the foyer, something written by a Sister Jean Christensen while serving a Philippine mission: "Ultimately, I sense I have only . . . been whole when I've divided myself among those who needed me. I've only stood tall when I've stooped to help those that needed lifting." There had been a time when I'd have thought, "How saccharine. Give me a break, Mary Poppins," but today I set my cynicism aside. *To be saved spiritually, people need to be saved temporally. Feed my sheep. We are one. Love one another.*

As I drive away from the Aurora Cannery listening to Herbie Hancock's incomparable piano accompanying Corinne Bailey Rae who's now singing the title track "River" (about "coming-on Christmas" and the upset over lost love), I feel that vulnerable part of myself rising, the part that gets kidnapped by duality—like, is this the right way to live life or am I only kidding myself with unreal idealism? Mentally, I scan my emotional interior for that hard edge in myself, the dependable part that'll keep me from going too soft. Maybe jazz will save me. *Turn up the volume. Blow those horns.* "I wish there were a river I could skate away on," Corinne wails. But today I'm immune to the sadness those lines have elicited in the past. I've been there, done the blues, and, at this particular moment, I don't share that sentiment.

Note

1. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 415.

A Shaker Sister's Hymnal

Elizabeth Pinborough

Come Life, Shaker Life

The frost grows fierce upon the pane, crystals cluster in tight geometry. Inside my glove my fingers freeze. I gasp the cold until I am dumb: until my eyes are arctic marbles rolling blue and plumb in their sockets: until my leaden tongue sinks in my mouth.

The moon cracks above my head. It is the aspen wood-shaven splinter by which I see. I work beauty on the windows of sleeping Sisters. With sticks I scrawl trees and leaves, ferns and bees, stars and stalactites.

I work all night, my mind a-glitter with unearthly sight. Ice crystals splay into arches and doorways, turrets and towers, bridges and bowers. I have come at last to God's garden gate.

An oil lamp inside seems the warm glow of heaven. It beckons me on in my wild, flower tracings. And above I see the winged angels racing, on stars interlacing, their wings afire as they fling themselves against the sky.

* * *

My spine freezes. I draw the salty crescents large, with small, furry stars. They imbibe the moon's hard, white glow.

Inside my boots my toes are numb, I am unable to step once the mural is done. As I stumble to bed the horizon brings the revelation of day, a prophecy of bread:

I will work with my bones. I will grind the wheat. I will build and atone; bread alone will I eat. On each stone I will write "Hallowed be Thy name." I will not seek earthly fortune or gain.

* * *

I Want to Gather Down

The winter bleeds, and freezes, and all with it. Godspeed could not overtake it. In all God's goodness, could he not give us endless springs, chased with rain? Towers of foxgloves for bees to roam?

Still, there are little gifts. In the sunlit kitchen I knead and knead in the kinetic posture my knuckles make. I inhale the yeast and red cracked wheat; their scents mingle, becoming heavenly meat.

I share this meat with all I see—farmers hauling loads of grain, beggars dressed in threadbare robes, children on a lumbering wain—hags, thieves, harlots, rogues.

* * *

With the sun overhead, I pick weeds of pain. They grow profusely in the kitchen garden. They suffocate seeds with their greedy brown roots and sap the sunlight from other fruits.

Yet, apples prosper in the orchard. I walk among this world of trees. Ladders stand stark in the morning mist, awaiting the eventual hum of bees. Dewdrops glisten on the apples' skin; all reflect the glow within.

I lift my firkin and ascend a ladder, the crooked ladder by the pond. The wooden rungs ring and echo; the earth resounds with

heaven's beat. But as I climb, my firkin grows weighty. I can no longer lift my feet.

My woolen dress hangs heavily. I am but a bony rack for clothes. My heart is hard and full of dread. My feet are rooted in the earth. My heart is rooted in the body of my birth. I feel the tug of heavenly traces but cannot move.

* * *

The Burning Day

The Sabbath dawns with quiet fire. I inhale its pale, blue light. Angels press in around my bed, their gowns glowing amber bright.

By degrees, the sun increases. I rise and walk through burnished halls.

Piles of light cram into corners and jam my chamber door. I lift my limbs into a porcelain tub. The sun's hot rub ribs my skin into brilliant, scaly furrows.

* * *

Outside, leaves are lit on tree-like pyres. Windowpanes ripple and fold under the bold, bright heat. The floorboards warp—wood flares and tears itself into dusty curls.

I gather these ashes in my palm; they flicker gray and golden red.

I feel an incorporeal flame within. It burns outward, consuming eyes, hair, flesh, and skin. My mind melts. It has become a globe of purest glass, annealed with wisdom by godly blast.

* * *

Who Will Bow and Bend like the Willow

As I walk to meeting across the grass, angels alight on windows and eaves. They are hymning and praising and comforting the bereaved.

Behind me I feel the airy shuffle, hear the woolen ruffle, sense the white presence of vanished Brothers and Sisters.

With an echoing crack I stumble on the granite meetinghouse stoop.

* * *

Under the cerulean ceiling we stand, like spires, until a single voice rings out the hollow *lo-lodle-lodle-lodle-lo-lodle-lo.*

Now the spires start to move. We stomp our soles with ringing clomp as we slowly pace in circular pairs.

The floor quakes as the room shakes. I labor and clap, march and sing. I hear the beat of angels' wings.

I traverse the verse of every song. Swept along by movement and voice, I whirl and bend in vision's currents, strong.

* * *

Pleasant Walk

The room revolves as the sky dissolves; my bodily sense has long been spent. A new landscape appears—a veil is rent—and I see a world beyond the ken of human eyes.

A towering mulberry tree appears; its leaves are cross-wise intertwined. Beneath the tree a table stands, with exotic fruit, delicate wine. I

sit at the table and drink until it spills from my lips.

Straightway I see a dwelling place, peerless in its form and grace. Within, angels give me garments new and present me with fine trinkets—colored balls and jeweled boxes—not a few.

Here spirits dance in union sweet. Between them I see a staircase rise. It spirals and spirals toward unseen skies. A rushing wind flies from its heights and sweeps me, breathless, to its clime.

The universal star shines above; its amber light suffuses sight. My feet are led from step to step. Below me dwellings constellate, forming a geometric homestead.

A gold gate gleams ahead; Sisters and Eldresses await me there. With joyous shouts they urge me on, guiding me with eager care. I stretch and reach to touch their hands but cannot shake my earthly bands.

Sudden mists cloud my eyes, and I fall—through the hands of the dead.

* * *

I'm on My Way to Zion

The autumn sky dies in purple silk, while the moon wanes scarlet, saffron, and pearl. A clock is ticking on the wall, like the ringing echo of soft footfalls.

My painted floor is grooved and worn from nights of marching, treading thorns. Yet lines of copper nails still shine—small stars planted in the pinewood.

Miracle #1

Sunni Brown Wilkinson

First, it was water:
a marriage festival,
a mother
asking a favor
from her son
And it came:
wine.

Later,
another feast,
thirty pieces of silver,
a tree
in the shape of a cross:
a body.
Nothing is holy
without first being mistaken
as ordinary.

Miracle #2

They sang hymns
before he entered Gethsemane.

In a small room
belonging to another man,

He broke his own body
and blessed it,

gave it to twelve men he loved
and they were filled.

The breaking and the eating:
what a poor man does

with his own sorrows
to understand his Lord.

Some Kind of Beginning

The alfalfa fields had their own luster
and, besides, no one came
for any harvest. Instead, as children, we drifted
in a golden sea with monarchs, my brother waving
his net like a sail. We floated past
clumps of aspen, tiny islands;
other children, on swing sets and trampolines,
were strange natives whose language
we chose not to utter. Little pilgrims
in our faded jeans and Keds
we navigated past our abandoned tree house,
past the chokecherries oozing
their droplets of blood (the sticky splendor
my mother caught and wrung
into jelly, jam, syrup), past
the knotted tree trunk crouched
like a lost ogre trying to hide at the foot
of the mountains, until we reached it:

the grave. And here we stopped,
my brothers and me,
to run, dance, laugh over the tombstone
of an almost forgotten dog. *Rather*,
meaning his name. Meaning
I'd rather bury my bones in the dark. Or
I'd rather lie here asleep. A tiny tombstone
reading: "Rather, a dog who deserved
far more than he got." Then,
in the quiet of chewing
our sandwiches, swallowing
green punch, we sensed the spirit
of the great dog rise up
and beg. With a reverence
befitting our Sunday School lessons,
we listened, knowing of God
and the afterlife, the inevitable judgment
of all creatures. But even then
at the mouth of the canyon
the bulldozers started their engines.
The alfalfa fields trembled.
I think it was then, without our knowing it,
that mortality came to us.
Dirt over a rough grave. The whir
of approaching machinery.
The anguish of swallowing it all for lunch
with so much laughter to spare.

Pulses

Caleb Warnock

For more than a week, I thought
cutting off my toe was penance.

I delved a hole for this toe,
a quick, tiny sepulcher at the crook

of a tree, but my desire for
a whole foot only grew. I

lay down beside the gap.
The Spirit of Elijah asked if

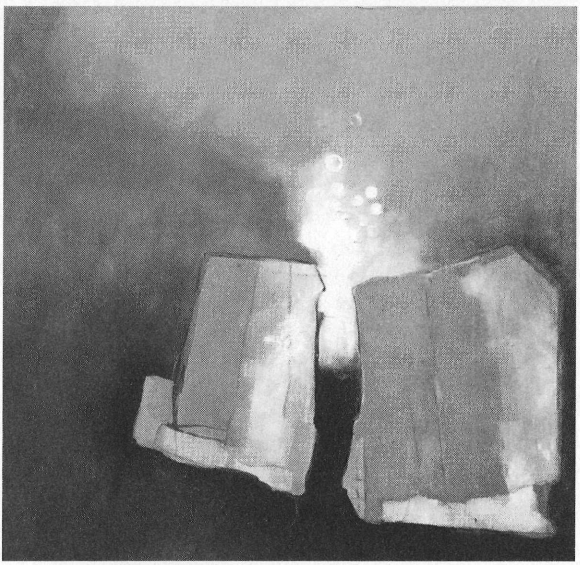
my fingers were poison,
too. This question stunned

me. Fingers are personal,
an autograph of a person's day

or ruthless absence. Like a
mutable seer stone flung into

the vast numinous, no one is
going to miss this toe, or

search long for it, or mistake
it as the start of an exodus of fingers.



Emily Plewe, *Effervesce*
acrylic on canvas, 36"x 36", 2009

Triptych: Plural

Shawn P. Bailey

I

Nora bears the tray of hors d'oeuvres she spent three hours this afternoon preparing. Mushroom caps stuffed with chopped and sautéed artichoke hearts, onion, garlic, bread crumbs, and three cheeses. She approaches the door; Seth follows several steps behind.

Nora married Seth in the Manti Temple seven years ago—seven years consumed by medical school, residency, and internship. Now Seth is the youngest obstetrician-gynecologist in a group of five doctors. Once a month, the doctors meet at one of their affluent-Philadelphia-suburb homes. To complement the meticulously prepared hors d'oeuvres, they sip (all of them except Nora and Seth) wine from delicate glasses.

This is Nora and Seth's second time; after the first—on their drive home—Seth apologized abundantly to Nora. Not that it was his fault. No one had told him what to expect. And the others were actually charmed by the young doctor's unpretentious offering: a bright yellow box of microwave pizza rolls.

Such blunders, Nora decided, are only charming once. Now cognizant of the ritual, she stands at the door prepared to officiate. She rings the doorbell.

Dr. Libbert opens the door. He takes Nora's tray and ushers the couple to a sofa. Sherry Libbert rushes in.

"Welcome to our humble home!" she cries. "Hello, Nora, darling. How have you been? And the handsome Dr. Westover. Hello, welcome, still handsome I see." Sherry takes the tray from her husband and places it at the center of the table across the sitting room they occupy. "That looks delicious," Sherry moans. "You won't tell if I snitch before the party starts, will you? Oh, how could you?" She partakes and moans again.

Nora is pleased and anxious about presentation. "Just don't take two," she silently threatens Sherry.

Others soon arrive, hors d'oeuvres and wine bottles in hand. Trying to detect reactions to her labors, Nora tracks with her eyes each individual who approaches the table to make a deposit.

Dr. Swanson arrives last. Her husband, Garrett, follows her through the door. He stands at least four inches taller than every other man in the room. He approaches the table; his thick right hand unloads a tray of something tan and musty on crackers. He scans the table.

"What, Seth, no pizza rolls?" Garrett booms, turning to smile at the others. "Not even pigs in a blanket? So one month is all it takes to turn a perfectly solid guy all frilly? They have obviously gotten to you, young man."

"I like to think I'm still solid," Seth smiles back at him. "It was Nora's turn this month. She has class for both of us."

"Sure," Garrett laughs. "Blame your wife. That's the man's way out."

One hour later. Having cut through children, vacation spots, insurance companies, and even medicine itself, the conversation now reaches taxes.

"When you add them all together," one of the doctors says, "how many do you think there are? How many little corporations and LLC's and partnerships does it take to keep our little group from paying more than our share?"

"I think counting them is bad luck," Dr. Libbert says. "I am a man of science; but when it comes to taxes, superstition seems prudent."

"We did have little voodoo dolls of the accountant made up didn't we?" Dr. Swanson quips. "Cute little dark gray suit and tiny little matching wing-tips?"

"Yes, Seth," Dr. Libbert says. "That raises a question. Have you found an accountant to do your personal taxes? You will need one now that you are going to make enough money to actually pay taxes."

"I haven't," Seth says.

"Since I have known him," Nora says, "I have been his accountant. Not that I like doing it. I always tell Seth: if you ever decide to take another wife, she'd better be an accountant. You know, not

good looking or anything–I like to think I have that covered–just find some serious bean-counting chops."

"There you go," Garrett says. "Get your own. I like it."

Dr. Swanson discreetly digs the heel of her shoe into her husband's foot. He goes silent.

"Shall I open another bottle?" Sherry cheers, filling in the silence.

One hour later. Seth and Nora approach the door. They apologize that their babysitter has school in the morning. Nora thanks Sherry once again for hosting them. Seth shakes Dr. Libbert's hand and waves to the rest of the group. Good night and good to see you, he tells them. Drive safely and good night, they call back. And see you bright and early.

Driving home, Seth glances right to see her profile.

"You are funny," he says.

"We can't both be the straight guy," she says. "What did I do?"

"If Seth ever takes a second wife?" he says.

"What?" she says.

"When you said that, how many people at that party asked themselves whether polygamy is a real option for me?"

"Yes," Nora says. "How many of those women now want to join your harem? That is an important question. Sherry is kind of interesting."

"I am serious," Seth says.

"Well," she says, "let's go back."

"Go back?"

"I'm going to explain! Some of those couples I think will make great friends if I haven't already scared them off."

"But–but, honey," Seth says, "I think they probably didn't even notice it. They probably thought it was some kind of cynical joke about divorce."

"Please go back."

"But I think it will just be calling attention to the whole thing. You don't want to turn an offhand comment into a whole scene, do you?"

"Maybe you're right."

"They're bright people. They won't think that's something we just do!"

Driving in the other direction from Dr. Libbert's home, Garrett briefly glances at his wife. "Did you catch that thing about Seth having two wives?" he says.

"Don't get any ideas, Gary," she says.

"Too late," he grins, eyes on the road.

She glares at the side of his head.

"You don't think it's real, do you?" Garret says. "There's no way Seth and Nora would do that. Is there?"

"I don't know," she says. After a pause, she adds: "I wouldn't be surprised."

II

It takes three cars—two of them minivans—to transport all thirteen boys. They are both quorum and troop. Some weekends they encircle a fire on Friday night and then make two neat lines before the bread and water on Sunday morning. One after the other, the cars park on a narrow Farmington lane. Liberated from the cars, waiting for a leader to approach the door, the boys trample footprints into a derelict lawn.

"Do we get a merit badge or something for going in there?" one of them says.

"No," the Scoutmaster says. "Not everything worth doing wins you a little patch." His forehead makes two deep furrows, and he shakes his head. Then, less sure of himself, he says: "Maybe. We can look into it."

"Everybody here?" the assistant Scoutmaster says. "Great! Let's go learn about the pioneers!"

"Yippee," drolls a boy in the back.

Undaunted in green knee socks with a red band at the top, the assistant Scoutmaster climbs the wood porch and raps on the screen door. Frightened birds burst from the plum tree behind them.

"Hello," she says, voice raspy, high-pitched. She pulls the door wide, steps back, and makes a trembling, grand gesture. Enter, it says. Welcome. She turns and walks away from them down the hall. They follow.

"I see old people," one of the boys whispers. Muffled laughter ensues.

She stops in the dimly lit hallway, walls thick with old por-

traits. Again trembling, she points at a man behind a convex oval of glass. He wears a black beard and has large deep-set eyes. "This is Grandpa Lewis. He built this house." She pauses for emphasis. "He was a pioneer."

She brisk-limps down the hall, leading them to a kitchen full of early evening sun. She recites the history of Grandpa Lewis: converting in Liverpool, crossing ocean and plain, farming rocky foothills, building a shack and, later, this stone home, presiding as stake patriarch.

She stops. The boys look around, hoping she is done. Where table and chairs have been pulled to one side, she folds back a rug. Halting and struggling, she bends, pokes a claw into a large knot-hole, and lifts a section of the floor. The assistant Scoutmaster helps her lean it against the wall.

"Grandpa Lewis dug out a basement," she points, "and put this trap door in." Short of breath, she pauses. "Many of his friends, even apostles, kept themselves safe here. Federal marshals used to come around looking for them."

"Wow," one boy gasps, leaning over to look in. "It's just dirt!"

"What did they do?" another asks.

"Polygamy," she says. "The new and everlasting covenant."

"Not real apostles," one of them says.

"Yes, real apostles," she says.

"But they're so old!" he protests. "Could they even stand up down there?"

"I don't even think the bishop would go down there," one says.

"I saw a movie about that once," another says.

"Oh, really?" she says, gazing into the hole.

"These guys had a place like that," he says. "And you had to know a secret knock to get in there and they kept their food storage down there."

"But were they pioneers?" she says.

"I think so," he says. "But they had another name for them. Let me think."

"Boys," she says, "Grandpa Lewis was a good man. He followed the prophet. And he raised a righteous posterity unto the Lord. Hundreds of us. We should all be grateful."

"Bootleggers!" the boy shouts.

She glares at the Scoutmaster. Her sharp look silences the boys. She sighs and shrugs, and turns to uncover a tray of cookies. The subdued boys eat, offer shy thanks, and depart.

Pulling into the street, the Scoutmaster glances in his rearview mirror at the boys in the back of his minivan. He recites the first two lines of the Scout Oath. "Sometimes," he says, "it is not easy to do your duty to God and your country."

No response. They drive.

"I wish my house had a trap door," one of them says.

III

The seatbelt light goes off. Jenna releases her buckle, lifts the armrest, and lays her head on Dave's shoulder. Jenna married Dave yesterday in the Salt Lake Temple.

"There you are," Dave says. "I missed you."

"Me too," she sighs.

"Four hours to New York," he says.

She is silent.

"Considering the circumstances," he whispers in her ear, "four hours is such a long time." He kisses her ear.

"You need your rest anyway," she grins and turns to look at him. "You made it twenty-three years. What's four hours?"

"Let's not talk about before I married you," he says. "Twenty-three years of bad dreams. And now I'm awake."

Jenna feels warm in a pleasant way. She is twenty-four and halfway through a master's degree in chemical engineering. She closes her eyes and sees her heart pumping to every inch of her body not just blood, but an unfamiliar concoction. An elegant chain of molecules that somehow equals contentment. She is also exhausted and sore, but nothing undoes that warm feeling.

"Did I tell you that you look great in that outfit?" Dave says. "Is it from the shower?" Temple-compliant-yet-cute was the theme of the bridal shower that Jenna's friends gave her.

"This old thing?" she says. "Yes," she adds, "the shower. You should see the strappy little shoes I got to go with it. Hot."

"Sounds interesting."

"I packed them," she says, "so I wouldn't have to take them off going through security."

She shifts in her seat, turns toward him, closes her eyes again, and drifts into sleep. Two hours later, she wakes. She looks up at Dave. He smiles. She stretches, rubs her eyes, and rises cautiously into the aisle.

"Little girl's room," Jenna smiles back at her husband of twenty-two hours. Her soreness grows sharper. She fears the urinary tract infection prophesied by a friend.

She returns. Dave looks up from a route map—countless red arcs frowning from city to city—that he pulled from the pouch in front of him.

"You have to stop leaving me like that," he says. "Honeymoon rules."

"I promise," she says. She sits. She looks out the window.

"Everything all right?" he asks.

"Everything," she says.

"Are you sure?" he insists.

"Of course, Dave," she says. "Everything."

Dave is silent. He stuffs the map back into the pouch.

"There is one thing," she says, turning to face him. "But it is stupid."

"I'm sure it isn't stupid," he says, returning her gaze.

"I wanted to say I do," she says.

He looks surprised, but he smiles.

"I know, I know," she says. "Tell me how dumb that is. Ruined by movies and television. It's like those statistics of how many murders the average person sees on TV in a year. How many TV weddings do you think I have seen in the past twenty years?"

"Jenna, I think that's part of the point," Dave says, reluctant to respond at all. "You know, the temple is different. Special."

"But it was so foreign and quiet! I didn't know what to expect! There was no anticipation at all. And all my life I dreamed of saying I do."

Dave is eager to defend the temple. But he fears saying too much right now will only crystallize her disappointment. He says nothing.

"I love the temple, Dave," she says. "Don't misunderstand. It was holy. It, you know, has the power of the Church, sealing and all that. It was just so foreign to me! A wedding in my mind just

means something different. I don't know . . . something more romantic."

"I'm sorry," Dave says.

"Do you think it would offend people," she says, "if we had another ceremony where I just got to stand there and look into your eyes and say I do?"

"Honestly, Jenna, yes," he says. "I do think that would offend people. I think it would offend your parents, for example. And mine. Not to mention," he hesitates, "our ancestors. People who sacrificed like crazy to build that temple."

"I know, Dave," she says. "I know. But that's another problem. The temple makes me think of polygamy. Some men actually still believe they'll get extra wives in heaven or something."

Dave shrugs.

"Are you serious? Do you believe that? Do you believe you will have," she pauses, "you know, more than me after this life?"

Dave realizes too late he is trapped. "I'm not sure," he says.

She just stares at him.

Her look, Dave thinks, demands elaboration. "But I think it's possible," he says. "I can't see how else to read D&C 132."

Jenna's eyes go hard. She turns away from him. Her mind races. What have I married? How did I fail to ask him about polygamy before now? Instant jealousy asserts itself: resurrected single women—worthy of temple marriage, interested in Dave—enter her mind. Jenna wants to somehow eviscerate their incorruptible bodies.

"Jenna?" Dave asks softly, touching her shoulder.

She turns. Slowly and firmly, she says: "I will never agree to that, Dave. Not even in heaven. Never."

For the rest of the flight, Dave and Jenna do not speak. They do not even touch.

The Widower

Eric W Jepson

Four years had passed since Mary had died; Torrance still wasn't comfortable dating and yet here he was, getting married. Five years with Mary may have been too short, but it was still a lifetime's worth of love, and for Torrance it was enough.

He sighed and looked out the side window at his reflection. The bags under his eyes were there, as usual, and he still had that hunted look. You know your demons are close to the surface when even you can see them reflected back from your car window at four in the morning.

The car behind him honked, and Torrance jerked alert and drove through the intersection. What was a car doing behind him at four in the morning anyway? The other lane was even empty. Jerk.

The car was the first Torrance had seen this morning and could be his last. He'd been delivering early morning papers for over three years now. Just a way to fill the hours; and with general conference or the scriptures playing, it sometimes even felt like time well spent.

Time well spent. There hadn't been much of that the last few years. Still on the same rung of the corporate ladder as when she died. Didn't bother him much—hard to care about accounts receivable when eternity was painfully close and too, too far away. Without Mary, full-time burger-building could've about covered Torrance's expenses and ambitions.

He rolled down his window, punched in the newspaper code, and the gates swung open. Bavarian Fields was one of the swanky, look-at-me-I'm-wealthy gated communities that Mary had always been attracted to. Heaven knows why. She liked the ones too ritzy to have a community pool. No, you want a pool, you get one of your own. Torrance grew up too rural to look kindly at that. Besides, all the Fields-dwellers insisted on front-porch delivery, no driveway

drops here. And they didn't tip. Not that anyone tipped much—the days of the cute paperboy at your door once a month were long gone—but at Christmas a dozen people or so would give a few bucks to the now anonymous Paper Delivery Person.

Most likely, Torrance figured as he ran up the long driveways, he would have to give up the route when he got married again. Probably have to get more serious at work, too. Start acting like a grownup again. He returned to his car after the last drop on Mansborough Avenue and glanced at the large, empty front lawns. He could save so much time just cutting across them. Set off a dozen alarms too.

Bitterness. Sing a hymn.

It was funny, Torrance considered, that he had never felt directly bitter about Mary's death, yet every other one of life's irritants made him hateful and angry. Ridiculous, really. Thirty-three and a bitter old man. Why in the world did he think he would make a good husband? Why in the world was he getting married?

It wasn't because he wanted to, that was for sure. It wasn't as if he stayed up nights praying, "Oh Lord, send me a wife!" A wife was the last thing Torrance wanted. Pity and papers were plenty.

When Mary had died, Torrance had been bishop for all of three months. They released him right afterwards, calling his older, more experienced first counselor to take his place. A necessity, he supposed, but a terrible thing. He'd just gotten into the schedule of busy-busy-busy, worry-worry-worry about other people's problems, then there he was: busy-free, with nothing to think about but his own tragedy. Alone—no company except his pain—exactly like hell.

No. With hell, that's it. At least Torrance knew some day he and Mary would be together again, raising their twin daughters—one aged two hours, the other three days—but in the meantime, the house was empty, and macaroni and cheese with hot dogs was still macaroni and cheese. Add barbeque sauce or béchamel? Macaroni and cheese. Pork and beans is pork and beans. Cold Spaghetti-Os. For nine weeks. Then, without planning to, he found himself in the produce section, and he bought a tomato.

Torrance stopped at the end of the last street in Bavarian Fields, grabbed nine papers, got out of his car, and paused. A few weeks ago, some punk kids had thrown a rock at him here. The

back fender was still dented. His insurance would cover the repairs, but, you know, he didn't care. There had been a lot of damage that night in the Fields—uprooted flower gardens, spray paint, toilet paper. The police had come to ask him if he'd seen anything, and he showed them his car and gave a vague description. They'd made him fill out some forms. They never caught them. No surprise. Spoiled Fields kids, Torrance figured. Always getting away with something.

Torrance laughed at himself as he reached the end of the block, tossed his last paper, and ran back to the car. Why was he such a nut in the mornings? Maybe when he was married again, he could start sleeping through the nights and give up throwing papers. Maybe his four-to-six self-flagellation routine could finally die and he could sleep till seven. Wouldn't that be something?

Torrance had only been able to convince himself to see his replacement, the new bishop, once, six months late, but once had seemed enough. He still did papers and didn't care much for work; but to some degree, he had started living again. He read when he was home; he ate real food sometimes; he bought a dartboard. Things were better.

Torrance left the Fields and drove onto Kelvin Street, named after someone no longer remembered. Who knew if it even was someone's name? He stopped long enough to fold another thirty papers or so. Tuesday's paper was always the thinnest, so it was no problem to fold them with his right hand as he drove with his left, taking rubber bands off the wipers control, but he still threw faster than he could fold, and so the thirty-some-odd buildup. And then he was off, slaloming down Kelvin, jerking from one side to the other, tossing the papers onto left-side driveways, hucking them over the car to those on the right. He had to look like a maniac, he knew, but at 4:47 in the morning? There's no one to see. If a maniac is driving and no one sees him, is a maniac driving? Torrance laughed.

Reverting to bachelorhood had been lunar in its emptiness—especially in a house he had once shared—but he adapted. The hardest was learning to think selfishly again. If he wanted to watch *Cool Hand Luke* again (for the thousandth time), there was

no reason not to give in to the impulse. Who was it going to hurt? Or bother? Nobody. "Sometimes nothin' can be a real cool hand."

But sleeping alone was hard. Or bothering to make a real meal. Or checking the mail when there was no one to get excited at the pizza ads. Or enjoying the temple. Oh he still went—usually twice a month—but he usually ended up crying, and for all the wrong reasons. Once, one of the sisters asked him if he would like to do sealings, and he started bawling right there in the lobby.

On the year anniversary of her passing, he held a mopefest, inviting only her stuffed squirrel. It lasted most of the week, until he suddenly thought to ask himself why he had a religion if he wasn't going to use it. It was a good question. Even now, as he pulled into the Presbyterians' parking lot to turn around, it was still a good question. So he had started thinking about it. Not just eternal families, but God's love and the Atonement and "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" and everything. It helped. And then, a year and six weeks later, the bishop asked to see him again. Torrance held his emotional breath, but the meeting was short and he left with a calling. Sunday School teacher. Finally.

He would teach every other week, alternating with someone named Amelia Draper—how long had she been in the ward? And why had she got a calling before him? Torrance laughed as he remembered the sense of injustice. He turned the car into an alleyway he'd found the first year of papers, cut behind Marco Polo Johnson Elementary School, and onto the last part of his route. The narrow streets ended the need to swing from side to side; just drive down the road, throw the rest of the papers.

He had dived into the lessons—New Testament that year. He reread the Gospels seven times and traced Paul across the continents and could quote the best-known parables. Even by the end of his first week, he almost felt better. Even at work he heard himself laughing without cynicism. He started catching the occasional name; he went and saw a movie with an old friend. He even went to dinner with Amelia once, although he still wasn't sure how that had happened.

An image of Mary giggling flashed across his eyes. Torrance threw a paper straight into a bush. He yanked on the emergency brake and ran out to put it on the drive.

Her girliness was what had driven him crazy. It was weird—he

had hated girly girls in high school with their send-me-flowers and their heart-dotted i's and their everything pink. Maddening. And then, suddenly, on his twenty-third birthday, he met the girliest of girls; and before the month was out, he was in love. He remade himself in her image. Anything she imagined, he made happen. Then they were engaged and that was right. At the sealing, her eyes and hair were accompanied by angels in the light. And then they two—

Torrrance shook his head. He had a tendency to pangloss their five-year marriage. Sure they were happy, most of the time. Most of the time they laughed and cuddled, but he'd also spent a week's worth of nights on the couch. Once, about six months in, he was yelling; and when he paused for breath, he heard the wind chime she kept over the sink humming. He stopped. The chimes stopped. But his words hung in the air. He apologized. He said he would never yell again at the woman he loved. And he hadn't.

She had this way of shaking her head. She would smile and shake her head, then look up at him from under her brow. And he would want to kiss her; she would laugh and run into another room, and he would chase her, following her girlish giggle around until they ended somewhere, wrapped up in each other's arms, smiling at each other and sharing each other's breath. They would just lie there like that. For hours sometimes. Some mornings, Torrance would reach out to hit the snooze, then realize his alarm clock was in another room and he was lying on the floor of the spare bedroom with the picnic blanket wrapped around them. Around him and his wife. Mary. Then he would open his eyes, and look at her head on his chest, her fingers twitching. She was smiling. Always smiling. Sometimes, as he drove to work, he would thank God for Mary's smile. That he had it to come home to. Her smile alone made life worthwhile. Maybe it was cheesy, but it was true.

Torrance felt a tear fall on his arm. He was still holding the parking brake. How long had he been sitting there? He reoriented himself and drove on, throwing papers.

* * *

Torrance got in at 6:18—four minutes later than average. He had taken today off to do wedding stuff, but Amelia wouldn't be

over until 8:00. Time enough to shower and shave and make breakfast. But first, the trash.

The first time Amelia had stopped by the house—to drop off a book by Elder Maxwell he had wanted for a lesson on the day of Pentecost—Torrance had just piled all the month's trash by the front door, ready to be taken out. Amelia's first impression: him in gloves, heavy winter coat, and Bermuda shorts with tons of trash everywhere, including a tied stack of mac&cheese boxes. One of those best-ever moments.

He didn't want to take the book because he had mayonnaise smeared on his gloves (from a jar he had broken while opening the door), so he invited her in so she could set it somewhere. Fortunately, the front room was relatively clean. Or tidy, rather—the thick layer of dust suggested the real reason for the tidiness: disuse. She blew off the coffee table before setting the book down.

"Sorry about the mess—I'm expecting Oscar. Green guy. You might know him." It was a bizarre thing to say, but it got a smile. Amelia's smile was different from Mary's. He didn't want to say it wasn't girly, because what did that mean? But it wasn't. Calling it more grown up seemed even worse. But she had a nice smile, and he watched it as she turned to leave.

He had smiled himself, that night, remembering it.

The next morning, he berated himself as an adulterer. He threw papers into the gutter and nearly hit two parked cars.

How could he ever look at a woman again? It didn't make sense, no matter what he read or heard or thought. He could get comfortable with the notion of moving on from about 10:00 A.M. to bedtime, but part of him still felt disloyal. After all, temple marriage is eternal marriage. Mary might be gone, but she was still his wife. Flesh of his flesh. Except that her flesh invariably brought thoughts of worms and centipedes and horrible fungus. Once, Torrance had thought he would throw up over his desk.

How could he, a married man, date? How?

So he didn't. Almost. There was that dinner with Amelia. And some group things. And then more stuff with Amelia. It got to a rhythm eventually: Amelia over to play Yahtzee or something as she told stories of Tolstoy or Manhattan or the Peace Corps; guilt as he delivered the papers. Sometimes he wondered if he was diagnosably bipolar.

The air was cool, but not cold. Torrance set the lid back on the trash can. Wouldn't be long now before the sun was up this time of day. He glanced to the side of the house. The bulbs Mary had planted were already peeking up.

Amelia loved the tulips. Her favorite flower, she said. Mary's flowers, Amelia's favorite. How was that? Torrance closed the door and went to the bathroom for his shower.

There was a memory; Torrance tried to grasp at it as he got into the shower. How did it go? Mary had been a funny combination of vibrant and shy when they first got married. She liked showing off for him but was so embarrassed in the bathroom that she made him put a slidebolt on the door so he couldn't be tempted to find a way in.

Torrance rinsed his hair, the shampoo sliding over his eyes like it did every single, stupid morning, when the memory arrived. He'd had shampoo in his eyes then, too. He had heard the world's most hesitant voice ask if she could wash his back. He was so surprised he opened his eyes, which hurt, so he had to rinse them but then he accidentally inhaled some water and started coughing and Mary was hitting him on the back, then she slipped and he caught her and she pulled the shower curtain down on them and next he knew they were both sitting on the floor of the tub laughing hilariously. Finally, he pushed the curtain off; she climbed into his lap and gave him a kiss.

"Yes," he said, "you can wash my back anytime."

* * *

Sometimes Torrance would hear himself thinking Amelia was everything Mary wasn't. It made his body tense, fists ready to punch through walls. Mary was wonderful, he would remind himself. Mary was perfect.

Amelia was totally different. She was so much taller and struck him as stockbrokerish sometimes, whatever that meant. She could be deadly serious, then joke about a fish named Timmy, and end with a verse from Deuteronomy. She was so—so herself. For Halloween, she darkened her hair and became Amelia Bedelia. She took Torrance to his first dance in six years. She also brought an evening's worth of Amelia Bedelia gags. "Let's cut a

rug," she said as Torrance tried to slip back to the punch bowl. And she took a 6x6-inch square of carpet and some scissors from the pockets of her frumpy maid's uniform and cut it up, there on the dance floor. He laughed and reached out for her. Before accepting his hand, she stuck a piece of carpet in his breast pocket, then he took her across the floor. That night, he took the carpet from his pocket and looked at it. He smelled it. He put it under his mattress.

The next day, he accused himself of sharing his bed and shoved the carpet into the trash. That night, he dug it out and placed it on the mantel, above the unused fireplace, under a dead clock. Where it stayed.

Mary had loved the fireplace. She liked to snuggle up to him in front of it, on her big, fake polar bear skin. She liked to make hot chocolate and not drink it. She made paper marshmallows, blowing between the folds to inflate them, and burned them at the ends of coat hangers. But for four years now it had been a black and empty cavity, a symbol of lost life. But next winter, he knew, next winter . . .

He had an hour to make breakfast. That's a long time for breakfast prep. Only fourteen seconds for Honey Smacks. But he had done some shopping for this morning. Fresh salsa, sour cream, hashbrowns. He emptied the fridge and considered the spoils. Now it just had to come together.

Torrance had basically stopped cooking after the honeymoon. Mary loved cooking; and even if she knew she wasn't that good, she certainly kept her enthusiasm. Although once, suddenly frustrated, she turned on her half-dozen fallen soufflés, mocking her from their ramekins, and viciously stabbed them with a handy spatula, splashing their doughy guts across the kitchen. Raspberries everywhere. She had a maniacal, wild-animal look, her hair clumped with the blood of berries. She held the dripping spatula aloft. She was frightening. He couldn't stop laughing.

No soufflés on the menu today. He instead had something vaguely Mexican in mind. Amelia liked her food hot, so his collection of bright red sauces had multiplied over the last year, and now he knew which were best for eggs and which with fish. A talent like the one for hot sauce can lie latent for years until suddenly ta da! a hot sauce girl comes into your life. Who knew?

Mary had liked French stuff. Sauces and onion soups. Her tastes in food had been the first thing he had told Amelia about her. It was strange. It was fun talking about Mary's tendency to spread peanut butter on zucchini bread, but it also felt distinctly irreligious. Like chatting about temple ceremonies down at the corner market. Mary's life was private and sacred. And his. For him.

But once he started, he couldn't stop. He told Amelia about her tics and her jokes and her fuzzy stockings and the way she joked about her mother. He told her about the soufflés and the paper marshmallows, and he even told her about Mary's smile. Sometimes he got too nostalgic and no doubt dreamy-eyed. But Amelia never seemed to mind. She seemed to understand. She would smile at the stories. She even smiled at the right places. She was smiling at Mary.

In pioneer times, Torrance had read, the first wife had to approve of any sister wives. But Mary wasn't there to approve of Amelia. When he prayed about marrying Amelia, he also prayed to know Mary's opinion. But did Mary have one? Was she up on things? She had to be, right? He's her husband!

Is she jealous, he wondered. Is she resentful? Does she look at Amelia as a man-stealing interloper? What?

"Hey, you."

Torrance jumped. "Oh! Hi!" He turned around to look at her. He hoped the hunted look was gone. "Jeez, you're quiet. I gotta start locking that door."

She shook her head and frowned. "Jeez, yourself. It's almost eight, Torry. And I see you're still in your sunrise state of vampiric gloom." She bared her teeth at him, hissed, and leaned against the table, eyebrows raised.

"Not true." Torrance shook his head. "The sun's up, the vampire's turned to dust, and here I am. Just me. Your friendly neighborhood Torrance." He lifted his arms to demonstrate his humanity and tried to laugh.

"Right. Well I'm glad to hear it. Smells good."

"Oh? What does vampire dust smell like?"

"The food, numbskull."

Torrance laughed a real laugh and turned back to the stove. "Thanks. I'm out of corn tortillas so we're stuck with flour."

"That's fine."

"So you say, but I know you better than that."

"And I know you well enough to know the vampire's not dead yet. So what gives?"

He shrugged and then, to his surprise, his mouth started talking—and he watched his fears crawl toward Amelia, as if she were their judge and master: "I'm already married, Amelia," they said. "I am! Why should you have to be someone's second? You deserve more than half a husband, more than some needy, mopey, bigamous—" He waved a hand at the window above the sink. "You deserve more than—

"More than—

"More than me."

He caught his breath. Thought for a moment he was done. Then: "How do you . . . feel about Mary? I mean really, Amelia. How do you really feel about her?"

Amelia pursed her lips. She pulled up one of the kitchen chairs and sat down. Her trenchcoat fell open, one white button on her black blouse catching the sun. She rested her elbows on her spread knees, and ran her hands through her hair.

"Well, we can't tell the bishop you're a bigamist, you know." She looked up at him and shook her head. "That's not allowed." She leaned back and watched him return, embarrassed, to chopping green onions. "I don't know how I feel, honestly. It's weird."

She sighed and looked away. "I never knew her, you know. And I feel like I ought to be jealous when you talk about her, but I'm not. And I really ought to be jealous because she had you first. But I'm not." She looked back at him and he turned to face her. "Torry?"

"Yeah?"

"I know it's weird to say, but somehow it's true: I love her. I don't know why, I don't know how, but I do. I shouldn't— No. No, I guess maybe I should. It just seems . . . off, that's all."

She stood up and walked over to him, looked close into his face. "Torrance. I love you. But I love Mary, too. I'm okay knowing I'll share eternity with her. It's not my girlhood dream, no. But

there you are. I marry you. She already did. And that's okay." She stepped back and leaned against a cupboard.

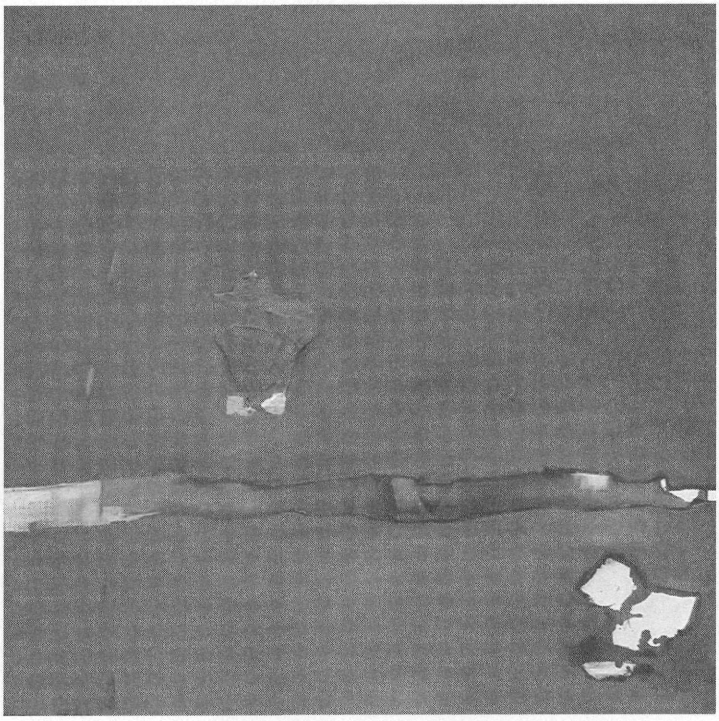
Torrance checked the hashbrowns, stirred them. Just a little longer. Almost done. Amelia loves Mary. Maybe Mary loves Amelia too. Why not? He turned off the gas and listened as the sizzling slowed.

"I love her, too," he whispered.

He turned to Amelia, standing there in her long coat and worried face. He reached a hand to her.

She took it and stepped into him.

"And I love you."



Emily Plewe, *Rive*
acrylic on canvas, 36"x 36", 2005

Meeting Donna Freitas: A Review of *Sex and the Soul* and an Interview

Heidi Harris

Review

Donna Freitas. *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 299 pp. Hardcover, $24.95; ISBN: 978-0-19-531165-5

Returning from spring break in 2005, Dr. Donna Freitas, assistant professor of religion at St. Michael's College, a small Roman Catholic school near Burlington, Vermont, witnessed an epiphany in her "Dating and Friendship" course. One by one, her students admitted to themselves and to each other their profound disappointment in the sexual culture of their school–the "hook-up culture." They were tired of juggling reputation and desirability. They noticed that it was practically impossible to find a respectful and long-term relationship and equally impossible to find any romance at all. And finally, they wanted to figure out how so much could be going on at frat parties that flew in the face of what they supposedly believed. After discussing the larger issue, Freitas's students determined that there was an essential dialogue missing from their everyday campus lives. Conversations about sex were pervasive within peer groups, and campus priests and professors spoke often about spirituality, but Freitas discovered that her students wanted to "have conversations about sex *in relation* to the soul" (12; emphasis hers).

Thus began *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses.* Freitas took her

students' questions and shaped them first into a cross-country study and, second, into a critically acclaimed book. *Sex and the Soul* explores the pressures experienced by students across varied college demographic situations. Her research includes seven campuses, each classified within her system as either Catholic, Evangelical, private secular, or public. However, although she makes these technical distinctions throughout the book, Freitas concludes that there is little difference between the spirituality of sex in Catholic, private, and public schools, eventually lumping them into a more general "secular" label. The outliers in her "spiritual" category are the Evangelical colleges in which the "hook-up" culture was practically non-existent and where students worked within the framework of their own complex "purity" culture.

Sex and the Soul quotes extensively from the more than 2,500 student interviews Freitas conducted as well as daily journals kept by selected study participants describing everything from their party schedules to their wardrobes to their feelings at mass. As Freitas moves between her chapter-by-chapter review of students' romantic ideals, peer anxieties, and spiritual connections, readers become acquainted with individuals like the popular but conflicted Amy Stone or bisexual and Evangelical Molly Bainbridge (pseudonyms). Using the words of the students themselves, Freitas stays connected to the campus scene and the various peer pressures found in both her "secular" and "spiritual" schools.

Sex and the Soul takes a balanced approach to its explorations of both hook-up and purity culture. Though the majority of the book focuses on the varied experiences students have in reconciling sex and spirituality, Freitas is able to identify how all of her subjects are alike in their sexual and spiritual dilemmas regardless of their campus affiliations. First, they are all highly invested in their spiritual identities, whether the construction of those identities is primarily institutional or strictly personal. Second, all of her respondents experience sexual desire and long to act on it. Third, students generally agree that "romance" is mostly an asexual experience and that finding it is a life priority. Yet, finally, all have difficulty reconciling the three, regardless of their campus affiliations.

Sex and the Soul distinguishes itself not only as the first major study to explore young adults' experiences negotiating their spirituality and sexuality, but also in its call for action and practical solu-

tions. Students in every situation expressed a "degree of shame, regret, or angst with regard to sex, though for different reasons" (216). Furthermore, Freitas observes that "students at Evangelical colleges lack mentors when it comes to sex, and students at spiritual colleges lack mentors for spiritual formation"; therefore, "reconciling sex and the soul is not only extremely difficult for them, it is rare" (216). Because of these problems facing both "secular" and "spiritual" college students, Freitas includes "A Practical Guide to Sex and the Soul." In it she encourages a more open discussion of sexuality and its undoubted connection to students' spirituality within families, campuses, and churches. She even provides a "Top Ten Questions to Ask about Sex (and Love and Romance)" on pre-college selection tours. She also encourages parents to have a "college sex talk" with their student about the pressures found in any university situation and includes suggestions on what to ask and how best to approach the subject.

Though none of Freitas's respondents identified as LDS, many similarities can be found between her discussions about Evangelical campuses and Brigham Young University. Students strive to remain sexually abstinent before marriage, make up specific and sometimes elaborate rules for themselves in dating relationships, have similar issues with guilt and fear of rejection from the community, frequently marry young, and even use similar slang terms like NCMO (non-committal making out). In some ways, LDS campus life represents an even more conservative "purity culture" than the Evangelical colleges Freitas visited, in sexual activity if not in theology. At least statistically, LDS students are having significantly less premarital sex than their conservative counterparts. I realize that comparing two separate studies can skew some assumptions. Regardless, it may be interesting to note that in Freitas's study between 20 and 35 percent of Evangelical students reported having engaged in premarital sex, which is still well below the percentages reported from students at "secular" colleges with comparable results of 67 to 74 percent. These figures are well above the 3 to 4 percent reported in a 2002 BYU survey of LDS students.[1] In addition, BYU students are marrying during college at a significantly high rate. In April 2007, 63% of male and 55% of female BYU students were married by gradua-

tion—numbers that elicited more than one surprised exclamation from Freitas herself during our interview.[2]

From these statistics, one would assume that LDS campus culture must achieve such conservative percentages only by exercising an ultra-orthodox regime of purity. However, BYU students are not subjected to nearly the same quantity or quality of "chastity warfare talk" as the Evangelical students in Freitas's study. Many, if not most, of her "spiritual" students held their standard at a "kiss at the altar" and felt as if their dating lives were mere acts of selfishness and even a form of idol worship (179). LDS students are encouraged to have vibrant dating lives, to never associate "proper" affection with guilt, and to consider their physical bodies and sexual desires as sacred, eternal, and, most importantly, godlike.[3] Perhaps the secret of BYU's chaste success is not a hyper-conservative theology of sexuality or an extremist purity culture, but rather an openly pro-sex doctrine linked with a premarital ideal that attempts to balance desire with restraint.

Of course, LDS campuses are not purity perfection by any means. Many of the spiritual, social, and emotional hardships that Freitas's Evangelical students describe are found at BYU as well, particularly the anxieties experienced by single women. As at the Evangelical schools, female BYU students also feel the "senior scramble," which Freitas succinctly defines: "Failing college for these young women is not about grades or jobs. Failing college is about graduation without a husband, or at least a fiancé" (114). To further complicate the "ring by spring" fear, women also feel as if "they are expected to be passive" in the courtship game (114). Though women at BYU have been encouraged, even over the pulpit, to be more pro-active in dating, aggressive female wooers are simply not included in the distinctly and concretely defined LDS gender traits list.[4] Perhaps then, an LDS female student has it even a little worse than her Evangelical counterpart. A female student in Freitas's study only has to fret over her culturally enforced passivity, but an LDS woman has to wade through mixed messages of, "Go get him, tiger" and simultaneously deal with, "Guys don't like pushy girls."

Sex and the Soul thus provides an important comparison study for an LDS audience. Though Freitas's observations on "hook-up" culture provide a stark juxtaposition to a campus like BYU, it

is her chapters on the complex communities created by a "purity" culture that illuminate more of the positive and negative consequences a conservative college campus may have for its sexually mature students. Perhaps even more fascinating are the differences that LDS readers and scholars can identify between the Evangelical and BYU sexual experience:

- How do we theologize chastity compared to our "Sex and the Soul" counterparts?
- Do we (or do we not) accept the idea of "born again virginity"?
- Mormonism teaches that sexual sin is "most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood" (Alma 39:5) and theologically claims that "gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Do these popularly understood teachings cause teens and young adults to become seriously conflicted, doctrinally empowered, or some confusing combination of both?

The foundational theses and extensive data of Freitas's Sex and the Soul round out an information base that simultaneously connects LDS campus culture to the larger American college scene and distinguishes places like BYU as unique and worth future investigations.

Overall, Sex and the Soul is not only an intellectual and sociological achievement but maintains a helpful readability, personal tone, and practical application often lacking in academic publications. Freitas's well-researched study provides indispensable insight into the most personal dilemmas of modern teens and twenty-somethings and, indirectly, insight into the reconciliations we all make daily between our action and our belief.

Interview

In addition to this review, I interviewed Dr. Freitas on August 7, 2008, over lunch at a Salt Lake City restaurant when she was presenting her research on hook-up culture at the 2008 Sunstone Symposium. Dr. Freitas, currently an assistant professor of religion at Boston University,

recently published a well-received young adult novel, The Possibilities of Sainthood *(New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2008)," and is a contributor to the* Wall Street Journal *and National Public Radio. As intimidating as all these accolades can be, her energetic personality (fueled perhaps by her marathon running) and friendly "hey girlfriend!" attitude could set anyone at ease . . . especially her extremely nervous former-student-turned-*Dialogue*-interviewer, myself.*

Heidi: Why should an LDS audience care about Sex and the Soul?

Dr. Freitas: I think one of the things that is important about some of the recently published books about hook-up culture is to remember that a lot of us are coming out of that sort of environment. It can help those from religious colleges—which are quite different communities from your average American university—understand the pressures of hook-up culture. In addition, the pressures students feel are getting more extreme. Starting up a conversation about these things is important.

The one thing that distinguishes this book is the faith/religion/spirituality link where most other books on sexuality and young people only deal with sex or romance and nothing else. It's more than, "Look, people are hooking up!" It's the soul part of the book. What I think is important is recognizing how intertwined sexuality and religion are within many students' minds. For me, the way out of hook-up culture is an interest in spirituality. It is the most effective way out I've found.

I do think that students in Evangelical colleges are interesting examples of what it could mean to live out your romantic desires via a faith life. Most of the students everywhere else were interested in understanding or getting a portrait of that life. They didn't know how to do that, even though they understood that spirituality might be able to affect their relationships. That's why so many of my students have been interested in books like Joshua Harris's *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 1997) or Wendy Shalit's *A Return to Modesty* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Free Press, 1999) which combine these two ideas and offer you that picture—the possibility of what a "spiritual" sexuality looks like.

Heidi: That window is one of the most important ideas of the

book. You discovered something interesting about the ideal of "romance" in your interviews.

Dr. Freitas: Yes. Both men and women tend to describe romance as chaste, as asexual. That tells you a lot about hook-up culture. It is implied that their experience of sex is completely separate from romance. Their romantic ideal is so innocent. It's holding hands and communication, maybe a kiss. It tells you something about both Evangelical and secular college campuses. In large part, Evangelical colleges are living out the romantic ideal that other colleges only conceptualize. But it isn't perfect. Purity culture has its pressures and negative effects on certain individuals and groups. For example, there is tremendous anxiety for women who are constantly concerned about, "Am I pure enough?"

Heidi: You mentioned your Evangelical colleges as having a type of mentoring community. What are the effects of this type of community?

Dr. Freitas: There's a porousness in Evangelical culture. People don't just want an education. They want to learn what it means to be a good Christian in the world. Their academic and faith lives cross over into each other. And it is an intergenerational conversation—which is so unique. Secular students often felt alone. It wasn't acceptable to bring up personal things with your professors, and it set up this stark separation between what you live and what you learn that could really be a disadvantage. Perhaps secular colleges could have a similar culture by actively exemplifying, say, a mission statement, a set of ideals that are constantly referred to within the college community, a living foundation.

There is also a peer mentoring aspect that can be good or difficult. Evangelical youth culture is a community in which people hold each other accountable. If you're stressed about something, it is very common to go to your roommate and say, "I need some help here. Can you pray for me? Will you help keep me in line?" But some issues become a lot more taboo than others. For example, it's a lot scarier to be open about or ask for forgiveness about sexual things. It can lead to judgment, harsh criticism, and even alienation. But that foundation for intimacy is there, even if there are some negative effects. For the most part, it creates a rich community.

Secular students are at a disadvantage. I mean, hook-up culture isn't the result of an intergenerational conversation, after all! It's the symptom of a purely peer-generated pressure which is much less healthy and much less empowering.

Heidi: BYU has what is called an Honor Code—an institutional code of conduct, including sexual conduct. Did any of your schools have a similar system and what were the effects you observed of that system?

Dr. Freitas: Well, it depends on which college you go to. Many had a Declaration of Beliefs and many also included a code of conduct. In my interviews I heard positive thoughts about these systems, but there are also negative effects. For example, many students were afraid to get help for pregnancies or fearful about STDs, but they didn't have anywhere to turn where they could feel safe and free to ask questions. They were afraid they might get kicked out of school. But at the same time, when I talked to campus ministries, they were horrified by the idea that students would be afraid to come for help.

Sometimes it has a really intense effect on campus. Sometimes it's just more of a statement of ideals that they try to hold each other to, and some don't have anything like that at all.

Heidi: Could you talk a little about the sexual minority groups you came across in your Evangelical college studies? How do they cope and reconcile, or could they?

Dr. Freitas: I think it really depended on the person. It's important to note that there is diversity everywhere, tremendous amounts of diversity in every college population I studied. I think the perception of Evangelicals in America is that they're all somehow "lock-step" and speak with a single voice, but their incredible diversity of opinion is evident in the stories I've highlighted in *Sex and the Soul.*

There's no doubt that it's complicated if you're not heterosexual in conservative religion. It definitely makes your faith life difficult. One story is about a male student who admitted his attraction to men and a refusal to have sex with women but who vehemently denied being gay because of the religious associations it had in his community. He really showed how deeply wounding this conflict can be. It was sort of like a death sentence to himself and his faith. But another student I highlight was a lesbian with

preacher parents. She was the founder of an LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender] awareness club on her campus, was extremely "out," and had been in a long-term relationship for several years. It was difficult for her at times, and she expressed desires to have the traditional Christian fairytale wedding, even though she also knew she couldn't have it if she was a lesbian. But she was certainly working through it. She was okay being in that complicated place.

There's an incredible diversity even within these sexual minority groups. I think everyone assumes that these people have faith lives that just die when they identify themselves within those groups, but that is simply not true. I think it's one of the important things we need to see. Now, that doesn't mean it isn't complicated for these people. It's always complicated. But sexuality is complicated for everyone.

Heidi: Was purity culture equally emphasized for men and women, or were there different consequences for deviancy? Did you find a gender difference at the non-Evangelical colleges?

Dr. Freitas: With regard to purity culture, the answer is yes and no. Everybody at Evangelical schools aspires to chastity culture regardless of gender. Almost across the board, all men were as concerned about keeping their virginity as the women were. However, I think women talked more about chastity. The expectations they had were the same, but women were more stressed about it—probably because of the social repercussions. If women cross a line and that comes out in some way, the repercussions for them are far greater and potentially ruinous than to men. It's your typical double standard. Men will aspire to chastity; but if they cross the line, they far more easily forgive themselves and are forgiven. You know, "Boys will be boys" or "Boys just want this more."

The line that women students at non-Evangelical colleges have to walk may even be more complicated. They have to participate in hook-up culture because that's how you find a relationship—even though that's, like, the worst way to do it!—but at the same time they have to be very, very careful how often or how much they participate because the guys still want, well, they want virgins! They basically want a woman to be a virgin and a whore at

once. A very stereotypical thing. Girls have to be very careful in hook-up culture about getting a reputation.

Heidi: Will you be continuing your work in youth culture, sexuality, and spirituality in the future?

Dr. Freitas: Of course! I still have a lot of material I wasn't able to include in the book and quite a few more angles my data showed that I want to explore more. Hopefully, there will be a few more articles and books on this subject.

Heidi: Well, I hope so. Sex and religion is a combination that deserves more exploration.

Dr. Freitas: Much, much more.

Heidi: Thank you for the interview, Dr. Freitas.

Dr. Freitas: Thank you for the lunch!

Notes

1. Bruce A. Chadwick, "A Survey of Dating and Marriage at BYU," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007).

2.These statistics were posted on the BYU website, "Gender and Marital Status at Graduation," demographics page (accessed March 2008) but no longer appear on the website.

3.See, for examples, Dallin H. Oaks, "The Dedication of a Lifetime," address delivered at Church Education System, May 1, 2005; and Jeffrey R. Holland, *Of Souls, Symbols, and Sacraments* (pamphlet) (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), publishing his BYU Devotional, delivered January 12, 1988.

4. I make this observation based on my personal experience in a BYU singles' ward for four years and two years in a Boston Young Singles Adult ward. Women were encouraged to take a more active role in dating "at least for the first one." In one Relief Society lesson, a member of the bishopric encouraged the women to initiate dates as much as we could, not excluding men who were not members of the Church. However, somewhat contradictorily, Dallin H. Oaks, "The Dedication of a Lifetime," encouraged a more "Evangelical" model by instructing men to "start with a variety of dates with a variety of young women" while he enjoined women to "*make it easier for shy males* to ask for a simple date" and to "*persuade men to ask* for dates more frequently" rather than to initiate a relationship themselves (emphasis mine).

Reading the Mormon Gothic

Stephenie Meyer. All titles published in New York by Little, Brown, in hardback: *Twilight* (2005), 544 pp., $19.99; ISBN: 0316160172; *New Moon* (2006), 608 pp., $19.99; ISBN: 0316160199; *Eclipse* (2007, special edition), 672 pp., $19.99; ISBN: 0316036293; and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), 768 pp., $22.99; ISBN: 031606792X

Reviewed by Tyler Chadwick

Mormons and vampires—a strange combination, indeed. Stephenie Meyer first brought them together in her mock-epic series of Twilight novels, a contemporary literary phenomenon that sprang, true to the classic gothic impulse, from the author's vividly persistent dream.[1] The series tracks Isabella ("Bella") Swan and her "vegetarian" vampire[2] beau, Edward Cullen, as they first meet in Forks, Washington, fall into forbidden love, and, after conquering a series of increasingly threatening obstacles, live happily ever after as immortal husband and wife.

Although there is little in the story that openly speaks to LDS theology, its cultural reception, most notably among active Latter-day Saints (particularly LDS youth), and Meyer's self-avowed Mormonism virtually beg readers to view it as an article of the faith. For some enthusiastic readers, this response entails adoring Meyer's commitment to her characters' chastity, her apparent affirmation of choice and moral agency, and her infusion of light into the darkly erotic mythology of vampires.

However, for some orthodox Mormons, the uncanniness of Meyer's world simply misses the mark of LDS theology. In an assembly of letters written to the editor of *Meridian Magazine* in response to the magazine's positive treatment of the *Twilight* saga, several readers wonder how we Mormons, "the children of . . . Light," can justifiably indulge ourselves by reading literary works situated in supernatural realms of darkness and touching the inherent sensuality of human experience.[3] How have we, "the very Elect" of God, one asks, "been hood winked [sic] and dazzled by the Adversary" into thinking that *Twilight* and its sequels are "harmless" entertainment?[4] For despite *Twilight*'s squeaky clean

façade, the story seethes with an "erotics of abstinence,"[5] a muted sexual interplay that arises as Bella's hormones and Edward's bloodlust repeatedly interact and their bodies ache to possess one another, often actively to the point of arousal, though never beyond sexual climax until after their marriage in *Breaking Dawn.*

In light of LDS teachings on chastity, this unconscious answer to the question "How far can we go without going all the way?" may thus pose valid concerns for those worried about the morality of our youth and Meyer's influence on their attitudes toward sexuality. Hence, even if readers don't grasp the historical connection between vampirism and sexual perversion, this tension between a self-consciously hygienic surface and an implicitly dirty core leads one letter writer to ask why we insist on "glamoriz[ing]" and "splitting hairs with evil." For as this writer reminds us, "The Savior does not split hairs[;] wrong is wrong, evil is evil. Dress it up or slice it any way you want to . . ., the [teachings of the] Prophets of the Lord . . . are contrary to Ms. Meyer[']s story lines."[6]

Similar arguments have been leveled against Eugene Woodbury's *Angel Falling Softly* (Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2008), another, more explicitly erotic iteration of the Mormon/vampire union. In Woodbury's tale, Rachel Forsythe, wife of an LDS bishop, struggles to come to terms with her youngest daughter's terminal disease. Unwilling to believe that neither God nor medical science is going to restore her daughter's health, she attaches herself to Milada Daranyi, a mysterious new neighbor who, Rachel senses, may have the power to release her daughter from the chains of death and her family from despair. Once Rachel learns that Milada is a vampire, the two women set in motion a pattern of sacrifice and a separation that, in the end, prove redemptively subversive to both, restructuring their individual faith, their identities, and their families in apocalyptic ways.

Angel Falling Softly differs from *Twilight* in form, approach, and audience. *Twilight* is a sprawling young adult romance published by a national publishing house, a story in which Mormonism plays a largely metatextual role while *Angel,* a genre-based book printed by an independent Mormon publisher, takes an outsider's view of Wasatch Front Mormon culture even as it pokes at the boundaries of LDS theology and of the vampire genre. However, each is firmly linked to the other and rooted in Mormonism in its interaction,

however unconscious, with Freud's notion of "the uncanny." As Freud has it, that which is uncanny is an object, image, or idea that is alternately "familiar and agreeable" *and* "kept out of sight" and that, through this paradox, presents us with "nothing new or alien" but rather illustrates "something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through a process of repression."[6] Since the uncanny thus occupies the threshold between the unfamiliar and the familiar, the imagined and the real, in its broadest sense it essentially serves a subversive function in the systems through which we mediate the immaterial and material aspects of our world, including psychology, language, and religion. In terms of the Mormon gothic, as I've suggested here, this repressed and subversive familiarity deals with more than simply the hidden aspects of Edward's or Milada's vampirism, an identity each book's protagonists and readers sense–but are ultimately unsure of– from the beginning. Beyond that, it suggests that we must confront the psychologically or linguistically or metaphysically repressed aspects of our psyches (as represented by the gothic monster) if we are to move through the "silence, solitude[,] and darkness"[7] of estrangement into a genuine state of at-one-ment with self and others, including God.

For those strictly raised into repression and social taboo, this dynamic ultimately means confronting the physical desire and curiosity about the nature of sin and evil that flow beneath the individual and the collective consciousness. And that means, in one sense, learning to accept the role an artist (even an LDS artist) can play in laying bare the deeply human experiences, emotions, and sensations that we've successfully tucked away beneath shaded memories and normative attitudes and behaviors. Because language, as art, is essentially compressed or refined experience, it offers the perfect medium through which to absorb, expand, and complete our own life experience to "the nth power" and to fulfill the obligation and opportunity to progress placed on us through our theological and cultural relationship with Mormonism–but only if we're willing to vicariously explore alternate, rhetorical lives.

Tory C. Anderson explores this particular conception of literature and its potential to get at "the heart of the meaning of life without ever talking about it" by leading us through Gustave Flaubert's

Madame Bovary. In his gloss of the story, he illustrates how the skilled and conscientious artist can use aspects of the uncanny—in Flaubert's case, a familiar but repressed reality—to help us feel and understand how another feels and understands by moving us through a fictional life, a "refined life." In this way, Anderson says, readers can "understand something like the ugliness of unchastity without experiencing it," much as Christ can understand everything we've felt and done without actually doing it himself.[8]

For readers to carry this burden with the writer, however, they must open themselves to the writer's world(s), as expressed through the demanding realities of language, and allow themselves to increase in understanding vicariously. If we deny our ourselves the vitality of such experience in our venture toward godhood by refusing an invitation into the uncanny—especially as this invitation relates to gaining understanding of sexuality, sin, and evil without falling prey to the (potential) perverseness of these principles—it may just take us, as Anderson observes, "four billion earth lives (give or take a million) to experience what we need to experience to become like God."[9] Stephenie Meyer summons us, particularly as LDS readers, into this revisionary reading of the ungodly through her rearticulation of the gothic aesthetic—that is, by coaxing the vampire novel into the light, she gives us the opportunity to confront and come to terms with the implicit humanness of the uncanny as we grow into the fullness of our stature as embodied children of an embodied God.

Notes

1. Stephenie Meyer, "The Story behind *Twilight*," StephenieMeyer.com, http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/twilight.html (accessed November 17, 2008).

2. A unique brand of principled vampire (as it were) who drinks animal instead of human blood.

3. A. Hartung, "Is Everyone Nuts?" in "*Dark Knight* and *Twilight* Saga Surge Reader Response," letters, *Meridian Magazine*, August 8, 2006, http://www.meridianmagazine.com/letters/080806knight.html (accessed October 30, 2008).

4. Nina Jo Jensen, "Missing the Point," in ibid.

5. Lev Grossman, "Stephenie Meyer: A New J. K. Rowling?", posted April 24, 2008, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1734838,00.html (accessed August 14, 2008).

6. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,* edited by Vincent B. Leitch et al., and translated by Alix Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 933, 944.

7. Ibid., 952.

8. Tory C. Anderson, "Just the Fiction, Ma'am," in *Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature,* edited by Eugene England and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 73.

9. Ibid.

When Your Eternal Companion Has Fangs

Stephenie Meyer. *Breaking Dawn.* New York: Little, Brown, 2008. 768 pp. Cloth: $22.99. ISBN: 978-0316067928

Reviewed by Jonathan Green

As a teacher of language and literature, I am probably supposed to sneer at Stephenie Meyer's novels. They are not just genre fiction but, by blending urban fantasy and romance, genre fiction twice over; they are not only written for the young adult market, but they also avoid offending the sensitivities of Mormon readers; and their prose does not insist that you stop and weep over its sheer beauty. But the students whom I've observed reading one of the *Twilight* novels before class—the only unassigned books I've seen anyone reading so far this semester—are among my brightest and most articulate students. That in itself is evidence that Meyer has chosen some of the right steps in the mysterious dance between authors and readers. Certainly *Twilight* (New York: Little, Brown, 2006) and *The Host* (New York: Little, Brown, 2008), Meyer's recent science fiction novel, have demonstrated the author's talents, among them the ability to open novels so that readers don't put the book down until they reach the middle; and in *Breaking Dawn,* the last novel in the *Twilight* series, Meyer effectively renders the narrative voices of Bella, her protagonist who is in love with the vampire Edward, and Jacob, her perpetually second-best werewolf friend. There would have been nothing wrong with bringing the plot to the satisfying conclusion that my students have been anticipating, but *Breaking Dawn* undertakes

something much more ambitious and interesting than merely finishing off a story about love between the living and the undead. The questions to which *Breaking Dawn* is a sustained and vividly imagined answer are instead very Mormon questions: What will it be like to have a marriage continue past death into the eternities? What does it mean to have a perfected body, or to love an eternal being? *Breaking Dawn* is a profoundly Mormon book by a proudly Mormon author—a good reason to move on from anguished hand-wringing about the state of Mormon letters and instead start circling all the major deals in *Publishers Weekly.*

A conventional romance would have seen Bella's marriage to Edward (or, more crassly, her conjugal union with him) as the culmination of the story, but *Breaking Dawn* does not share the teleology of bridal magazines. For Bella, marriage is not the culmination, but the beginning (and Meyer spends barely 100 pages getting us to that point, leaving over 600 for the rest of the novel). If Meyer had wanted to write a tear-jerker, Bella would find fulfillment in sacrificing her life for her child. But for Bella, maternal self-sacrifice is also only prologue. The previous novels in the *Twilight* series were driven by the tension between Bella's self-destructive wish for vampirehood and the seeming impossibility of its fulfillment, but the story Meyer wants to tell at the close of the series is about wishes fulfilled, not self-denial or personal destruction. Bella, as it turns out, has always been a goddess in embryo, meant to become a magnificent being with a glorious, powerful, unaging body in which no blood flows. Her real destiny is to put aside the physical clumsiness and limitations that have previously defined her and to become endowed with talents and abilities beyond her imagination, becoming a partner equal in every respect to Edward. Bella's marriage, her relationship to their child, and her extended ties to everyone she loves are not meant to be limited by mortality. If the first three novels in the series are very human stories involving love and indecision, frustration and self-denial, *Breaking Dawn* tries to imagine a life that is no longer mortal.

One might criticize *Breaking Dawn* out of misplaced prudery. Although the author lowers the curtains discreetly over the scenes of Bella and Edward's intimate relations, she makes no attempt to hide what they're doing or that they rather enjoy it. It is, after all,

what married people do. Whenever my fifth grader gets around to sneaking *Breaking Dawn* out of the bookshelf, I won't stop him. Although *Breaking Dawn* is fantasy, the depiction of pregnancy as a perilous internal assault by a life-sucking parasite, while perhaps upsetting to some, is all too accurate outside of those times and places with access to modern medicine (and, my wife tells me, even within them).

It is true that Bella's transformation removes much of the tension in the story, which might leave some fans disgruntled if they were expecting a thriller. Even the final conflict with the overlords of vampire society ends bloodlessly—but the point, I think, is precisely not that a new clan should claw its way to the top, as a coven of deposed Romanian vampires are hoping, but rather that greed and fear are powerless against ties of love and affection. Premortal and postmillennial wars between Christ and Satan and their followers figure prominently in Mormon cosmology, but there is never any sense that victory is in doubt or that the threat of violence is even at all serious. Meyer takes the same cue for the final conflict in *Breaking Dawn,* which is, to resurrect another Mormon trope, a battle of testimony.

One might object that vampires—murderous, ruthless, blood-crazed monsters—could never represent perfect immortal beings. But why not? After all, in the words of someone who was not Mormon but is frequently quoted as if he were, "The dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare."[1] The difference between the two is, in the Twilight series, largely a matter of proper diet.

Note

1. C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001): 45.

Insight Inside

Kathryn Lynard Soper, ed. *The Mother in Me: Real-World Reflec-*

tions on Growing into Motherhood. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008. 256 pages. Cloth: $19.95; ISBN: 978-1-60641-014-1

Reviewed by Rosalynde Welch

At a climactic moment of George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda,* an adult Daniel meets the mother who abandoned him in his infancy. To this now-grown son, she utters an accusation and issues an ultimatum: "Shall you comprehend your mother, or only blame her?" Though Daniel assures her that he desires only comprehension, she goes on to insist that he can never understand her experience as a mother, the meaning of which she mingles with her experience of diaspora Judaism: "You are not a woman. You may try—but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out—'this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman's heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed receipt.'"[1]

Here Eliot invokes the theme that has animated women's personal writing about motherhood for as long as such writing has found paper: that there is a secret meaning of motherhood that somehow, always and already, exceeds its cultural representation—except in the volume at hand, wherein that meaning is finally captured, though not imprisoned—hence the duplex history of motherhood, at once linear and circular. While mothers' lived experiences move in relation to the parade of cultural and political forces across the decades, the perennial work of mothers' writing is to bring to light a truer, more authentic figure of the mother-and-child. And even if one's reflex is to qualify the very notions of experiential truth and authenticity with quotation marks, as mine is, that search for that hidden meaning can be compelling.

Deseret Book's new offering in the women's inspirational category, *The Mother in Me: Real World Reflections on Growing into Motherhood,* takes up Eliot's demand—"Shall you comprehend your mother, or only blame her?"—albeit in considerably gentler tone. In so doing, it joins with Daniel's estranged mother to partake of the genre's conventions. The book, edited by Kathryn Lynard Soper, comprises forty-three short, first-person essays and poems, illustrated throughout with a series of black-and-white

photographs of mothers and children. The authors, poets, and photographer Maralise Petersen are affiliated with the journal *Segullah*,[2] an outlet for LDS women's reflective writing: "We believe personal writing is a powerful vehicle for growth, for writers and readers alike," Soper explains in the introduction. *The Mother in Me* shares *Segullah*'s ethos and purpose (6).

The scope of the book is narrower: the essays and poems focus on early motherhood: pregnancy, childbirth, and infancy. Each piece addresses a passage of motherhood with its particular problem: Among the many essays, Melissa Young writes of miscarriage in "The Yoke of Wisdom"; Lani B. Whitney writes about debilitating pregnancy sickness in "Small Sacrifice"; Heather Harris Bergevin explores the challenges of mothering as a disabled woman in "Giraffes Kiss"; Lisa Meadows Garfield shares her experiences with adoption in "Grace and Glorie"; Maralise Petersen writes about caring for her chronically ill and disabled sons; and Heather Oman addresses her struggle with illness and infertility in "Tea Party Blessings."

As this list of topics suggests, the book aims for realism over sentimentality, readily addressing the difficulties of both mothering and mothering culture—but always concluding with an affirmative resolution. In this way, the volume represents a soft-edged episode in the genre of critical-personal motherhood literature that has developed in concert with feminism since the 1970s, a tradition that spans Adrienne Rich, Anne Lamott, and anthologies like *Mothers Who Think*.[3] The narrative voices of *The Mother in Me* essays are marked by an imagistic and lyrical sensibility, frequently rendered in the present tense, and strongly (if indirectly) influenced by writers like Rich and Lamott. Brittney Poulsen Carman's "Earthbound" is a skillful example. As such, they will be familiar to those readers who have explored the larger tradition.

But if this volume plants one foot in the critical motherhood genre, it keeps the other firmly in the tradition of Mormon letters. The personal essay, related as it is to the conversion narrative, has always been an important Mormon literary form; its conventions are well suited to the native optimism and cooperative individualism of Mormon culture.[4] The personal essay is not a uniquely Mormon form, of course, nor is its development in Mor-

mon literary culture necessarily faithful to the essay's origin in Montaigne. But the essay lends itself well to a climax centered on an insight—a sudden flash, a realization—and the insight is one of the enduring tropes of Mormon thought. The insight, as a way of knowing truth, provides a vocabulary and a psychological model for the experience of personal revelation, one of the two epistemological foundations of Mormon experience. The other, of course, is institutional revelation.

And in this sense, *The Mother in Me* is Mormon at the bone: Virtually every essay is structured around the revelation of an insight into a hidden, truer meaning of motherhood. These mothers come to know suddenly or slowly, as a flash or a dim thought, but always with certainty: "Motherhood, I now know . . . "; "Now I realize that . . . "; "Eventually, I came to understand . . . "; "It occurs to me that . . . "; "And suddenly, I knew . . . " (4, 42, 156, 172, 232). Again and again, the essays present themselves as midwives to a kind of esoteric knowledge born of the lived experience of motherhood: The infant offspring of the essay is not a squalling red newborn, but a shining nugget of meaning. This form is essentially therapeutic in nature, intended to offer solace amid hardship through understanding—"Shall you comprehend your mother, or only blame her?"—as Soper's introduction makes clear: "Our purpose here is to celebrate this season, to illustrate its unique challenges and delights, to reveal its deep significance. Let's face it: on those days when we do nothing but wipe bottoms and cook Ramen noodles, significance can be hard to find" (6). Like the golden plates lying hidden deep in a mountainside, only to be revealed to the chosen confidante, the insights at the center of these essays yield themselves to a kind of discursive excavation of the experience of motherhood, offering the spiritual riches of knowledge to the kindred seeker.

In many ways, this narrative form is not the most natural fit for reflections on motherhood. The central drama of early motherhood, after all, is the labor and delivery of the newborn child herself, and even the most penetrating of insights into the nature of motherhood pales in comparison to the charisma of a young child. Just as Mormon spiritual thought sometimes privileges a notion of revelation as propositional knowledge over the revelation of God in the person of Christ, these essays, it seems to me,

sometimes miss the rich narrative resource presented by small, sticky persons, by turning to private meaning-seeking. Brooke Olsen Benton's "That One in the Middle" is a notable exception, ultimately proffering her middle child himself rather than a middle-of-the-night realization as the ultimate revelation, and the relief the reader feels in encountering something different points toward the limits of the insight as a narrative device.

In placing so much emphasis on the recovery of a hidden meaning, the volume risks a particular kind of reader fatigue. After forty-two insights into the authentic meaning of motherhood—no matter how comforting, humorous, or profoundly wrought—one wonders how much more one can absorb. Furthermore, the reliance on personal insight can occasionally veer toward solipsism—stopping well short of it, I think, but nevertheless moving in that direction.

The visual rhetoric of Maralise Petersen's photography underscores the point: These photographs, like the essays, are tightly cropped around the faces of mother and child, the visual frame decontextualizing and isolating the pair in an intimate space. Any portrait of a mother and child takes as its inevitable referent the traditional Madonna and Christchild image. As in the traditional images, the mothers' gazes turn from the viewer toward the child, while the children gaze boldly out of the frame. The overall effect is one of intense personal absorption in a private world, the same absorption in finding a hidden personal meaning that structures the essays. In the end, though, and despite the dangers of the literary form, it's difficult to begrudge these likable authors their moments of meaning. Given the massive depletion of subjectivity that new motherhood requires, one can hardly criticize the gentle counter-assertion of the self between these covers.

If these mothers labor to bring forth their insights, what is the meaning of motherhood that they finally discover within? The answer requires the writers to leave their private work of discovery and enter, at least temporarily, the contemporary world of parenting politics, for they can only assert a truer meaning of motherhood in the context of the false shadows of the same—the impoverished cultural representations of motherhood—on the cave wall. These essays reach their insights through engagement,

however oblique, with two sets of cultural intertexts reappearing throughout the essays, most notably the childbirth and child-rearing bibles that offer expert advice to the expectant mother. These texts are repeatedly invoked and, repeatedly, found to fail as reliable guides to the experience of motherhood: "Nursing was supposed to be the epitome of womanhood, like *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* had implied," Kristen Ridge complains in her essay "Expectations" (36). The real epitome of womanhood, one can assume, will be properly elucidated at the end of the essay at hand, and indeed at the conclusion of the essay the author Ridge realizes that "the only thing that matters [is] that we keep trying" (42). Whether persistence is in fact the essence of motherhood matters less than the fact Ridge reaches that insight through a critical engagement with the ambient mothering culture.

While these essays critically invoke mainstream parenting bibles as foils for their hidden insights, they turn affirmatively to another powerful intertext: the figure of Eve as the mother of all living. But this is no old-school Eve, beguiled by the serpent and sorrowful in childbirth. Instead these women invoke a proto-feminist Eve, the reinterpretation of whom has been such an important discursive tool in the ongoing Mormon renegotiation of gender roles and relationships. This Eve possesses a powerful will—an empowered Eve—the beneficent exercise of which ultimately brings fulfillment and satisfaction: "Like Eve," writes Johanna Buchert Smith, "I've discovered the Earth again on this seventh day: everything is fresh, alive, vibrant and new, beautiful and wonderful and created for me and my daughter. Everything is reproducing after its own kind—and now I know just how good it really is" (24).

And like this contemporary Eve, these mothers discover the true meaning of motherhood to be something very modern indeed: Motherhood is chosen, though it may sometimes feel like a forced choice; motherhood brings pleasure, though it may not always feel like it; and individual women, guided by the Spirit, have the inner resources they need to be good-enough mothers, though they may doubt their capacities. This benign coupling of humanism and genial hedonism informs the volume's reassuring mother-wisdom: "He measured me in an incomprehensible way and found me whole, good, faithful, growing," confides Kiley Turley. "That thought lifts and mystifies me" (199). Turley real-

izes that "the secret of enjoying motherhood is in the moments. To stop and hear the peals of laughter, to touch the tiny hands, to notice the organic smell of their sun-warmed bodies after they come in from playing outside on a hot day—and to be deliberate enough to enjoy it all" (237).

In discovering motherhood to be chosen, affirming, and pleasurable, these essays work to provide "imaginary resolutions to real social contradiction,"[5] to invoke the language of literary criticism; they work, in other words, in an ideological capacity, to clothe the naked material bones of contemporary lived experience in story and identity, to create a subject position for the contemporary Mormon mother. To understand these essays as ideological, to suggest that they conceal structural realities even as they reveal personal insights, is not to diminish their accomplishment; on the contrary, it is to acknowledge their active role in the real-time making of culture.

But if there is one channel through which the book reaches beyond ideology and toward the tragic—that is, toward the poetic—view of motherhood, it is its emphasis on an aesthetic enjoyment of the experience. Mormonism has developed no native language for tragedy, and yet tragedy is inscribed in the most basic bargain of motherhood: Children must grow or die, and they can only grow from something you love to something you lose. How, then, is a Mormon literature of motherhood to acknowledge the tragedy inherent in motherhood without the benefit of a tragic language? One solution is to approach the tragic indirectly, by way of the aesthetic: Tragedy works by spinning the straw of human suffering into the gold of human pleasure in beauty. These essays, at their best, suggest that this transformation can be worked backward, gesturing toward the tragic with an invocation of beauty. In the volume's closest encounter with tragedy, Megan Aikele Davies's "The Tree of Life," a moving account of her son's stillbirth, resolves optimistically, with a reference to Lehi's vision of that "most desirable" of all fruits (2 Ne. 15:36). These essays find in motherhood the "most desirable" of all human fruits—the sweetest, loveliest, most enjoyable—but, as in Lehi's dream, they sense too, if fleetingly, that desire always entails the possibility of eventual loss. Darlene Young's poem "Since You Were Born" narrates this risk:

because, since you were born, I've tasted fruit
I never knew could grow from the thin root
of my cold life. I've savored all your grins,
your honeyed sleep, the freshness of your skin—
delicious. This new fruit is more than sweet;
my tongue prickles with terror as I eat.
But even terror lends a tang: it's joy,
since you were born. My son, it tastes like joy. (227)

Notes

1. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=16875&pageno=424 (accessed December 20, 2008).

2. "In Hebrew *segullah* signifies a cherished personal possession that is set apart and diligently cared for; it is a term the Lord has used with affection to describe His covenant people (Exodus 19:5, Psalms 135:4), and one we use here in remembrance of the blessings and responsibilities we receive in relationship with Him." http://segullah.org/about_segullah.php (accessed January 8, 2009).

3. See, e.g., Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986); Anne Lamott, *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994); Camille Peri and Kate Moses, eds., *Mothers Who Think: Tales of Real-life Parenthood* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1999).

4. See, for example, Mary Lythgoe Bradford's fine exposition, "I, Eye, Aye: A Personal Essay on Personal Essays," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 81–89.

5. Frederic Jameson, "Imaginary Resolution," in *The Jameson Reader,* edited by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (2000), http://books.google.com/books?id=5PHqYHpGcBAC&pg=PA38&lpg=PA38&dq=imaginary+resolution+real+contradiction&source=web&ots=ou5Zpqwiyv&sig=vctQrDrkifqUgGkVrcvoNI_M4FI&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA39,M1 (accessed December 10, 2008).

Gazing into the Face of the Other

Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen, eds. *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies.* Macon, Ga.: Mercer

University Press, 2007. 553 pp. Paper: $25.00; ISBN: 0-88146-116-4

Reviewed by Richard T. Livingston

The publication of *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies* in November 2007 marked an auspicious moment in Mormon studies. While Mormon studies, especially in the area of theological discourse, is still very much in its infancy, the prospects for its success have never been higher. For example, academic courses, programs of study, conferences, organizations, and publications are all increasing in number and scope. Emblematic of these developments, one of the most commendable features of this volume is that it brings together some of the brightest minds who have helped set the agenda for current theological reflection about and within Mormonism—e.g., Truman Madsen, the late Eugene England, David Paulsen, James Faulconer, and James McLachlan. What's more, with few exceptions, the scholars[1] representing Mormon points of view in this volume demonstrate a high level of competence in the subject matter of their discussion partners and show themselves to be capable interlocutors as they explore twentieth-century Christian theologians and themes. As such, *Mormonism in Dialogue* provides one more example that optimism in the future of Mormon studies is neither naive nor misguided.

In addition, comparative studies, interreligious dialogue, and interfaith interactions are very much in vogue throughout the contemporary landscape of the thought, practice, and scholarship of religion. In academic, ecclesiastical-institutional, and lay modes of discourse, broad trends indicate that extreme forms of isolationism and exclusivism are out—i.e., becoming increasingly marginalized—while ecumenism and inclusivism are very much in. *Mormonism in Dialogue* is exemplary in this respect as well, because just as the scholars of Mormonism are among the finest, the Christian contributors are also some of the best-respected in their particular fields—e.g., David Ray Griffin, Robert McAfee Brown, David Tracy, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Dwight Hopkins, Gary Dorrien, and Clark Pinnock. Indeed, one of the academy's most eminent scholars of religion and culture, Martin Marty, provides a

very concise, cogent, and complimentary foreword to the volume. Marty is generous in his praise of Mormonism in Dialogue, stating, among other things, that he "hopes that the richness of the essays in this book will inspire study in theological schools and schools of religion so that a new generation can be poised to do as well as this one in dealing with 'the other'" (ix). He concludes his brief reflection with a ringing endorsement, noting his unexpected satisfaction with the "scope, detail, and depth" of the volume, and his desire that others will come to see that it represents a gift "to everyone who has an interest in and concern for 'the other' in religious thought" (x). With such talented individuals on both sides and such timely topics, Mormonism in Dialogue not only offers an excellent example of critically constructive interfaith conversations, but also the sort of bridge-building and mutual enrichment that can occur when such dialogical encounters are at their best.

Marty's employment of the term "other" is significant, because that notion provides part of the fabric with which the entire text is implicitly interwoven. Always situated within a historical situation and conditioned by a cultural context, one's most basic understandings of the world emerge out of the interaction and interdependency of the "mirrors" and "windows" that are placed on the walls of one's existential space. Whether the light is refracted through the penetrating stare into the mirror or the poignant gaze through the pane of glass at the lives and faces of those who may initially seem so peculiar, these "lenses" rarely allow for anything like perfect clarity and comprehension. In other words, one subtext that allows a book like this to hang together coherently is the complementary relationship between self-reflection and the attempt to step into the horizon of, and fully engage with, modes of thinking about and being in the world that are unknown, unfamiliar, and often unsettling. Mormonism in Dialogue is important, therefore, because it shows both how and why reflections on the images that appear in the mirror, the imaginative wonder at those which lie beyond the window, and the interpenetration of the open window of dialogical discourse, are inexorably intertwined in a constant dialectical movement that shapes one's being-in-the-world. As such, constructively critical conversations allow for an unfolding and enfolding of horizons that might otherwise be impossible.

The work of Stephen Robinson and Robert Millet with the Evangelical community has produced, for example, Stephen E. Robinson and Craig L. Blomberg, *How Wide the Divide?: A Mormon & an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998); Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007); Robert L. Millet and Gregory Johnson, *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical* (Rhinebeck, N.Y.: Monkfish Book Publishing, 2007); and Robert L. Millet, *A Different Jesus?: The Christ of the Latter-day Saints* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing, 2005). Still, in many respects *Mormonism in Dialogue* stands as a pioneering effort. This achievement is important to note, because the relative newness of and ambivalence toward theological reflection among Mormons, as well as their relative lack of experience with scholarly interfaith conversations, lead to moments in which the dialogues display misunderstandings, confusions, and momentary lapses into monologues, devotional depictions, and even polemics. For example, recall the rhetorical and intellectual disconnect that took place during the the concluding moments of the symposium on Joseph Smith, held at the Library of Congress in March 2005, when Douglas Davies posed one of the most memorable questions of the entire event. In response to a somewhat awkward moment, in which it had become apparent that one of the Mormon panelists had stepped beyond the type of discourse appropriate to academia, Davies commented, good-naturedly but pointedly, "I think the most important thing I want to say is, What are we doing here? What kind of event is this? What kind of a symposium? Is it academic, or is it evangelistic?" Like several of the participants at that event, it is apparent that some of the Mormon writers here are still working to develop a scholarly voice that can comfortably and coherently situate them between their religious and academic commitments, or find a position that is some combination of both.

Without a doubt, however, this reaching for a common vocabulary, syntax, and tone was a challenge for both groups of interlocutors, and thus I think that Marty is also correct to point out that, in

general, "the LDS scholars are far more at home with . . . Christian thought than vice versa. . . . The Christians here with few exceptions give little evidence that they boned up on LDS thought with the present project in view" (ix). Their lack of expertise in Mormonism is regularly acknowledged, however, so genuine admissions of ignorance, attempts at clarification, and proposals for continued exploration are quite common. In short, intellectual honesty and academic integrity are manifest throughout. Regardless, this less-than-ideal dynamic keeps "the Latter-day Saint scholars in a kind of responsive-defensive mode" (ix). Such deficiencies certainly aren't an insurmountable barrier to dialogue, but the attempt to achieve a significant measure of nuance, richness, and creativity is somewhat stultified when either side is not intimately acquainted with the other. Thus, if the Christian scholars had demonstrated a greater familiarity with the religious community that was outside their "windows," the text would have benefitted immensely.

In addition, I expected more mutual exploration, one in which each side reflected on itself and the other all the way through. Instead, in all but the final dialogue between Clark Pinnock and David Paulsen on openness theology, the essay that begins each conversation was written long before the idea for this volume had been conceived. In fact, each was originally presented at BYU as part of a series of lectures hosted by Paulsen, who was then Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding, so they were intended only to provide an introductory summary of a twentieth-century Christian theologian or school of thought. Because those original encounters did not formally involve two-sided investigations, readers should be prepared for a lack of direct, substantive, or extended engagement with LDS thought, history, or practice in the overviews by the Christian thinkers.

Mormonism in Dialogue is divided into three sets of dialogues. The first covers prominent twentieth-century figures: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Neibuhr, and Langdon Gilkey. The second introduces the family of liberation theologies: liberation theology itself, and then the sub-genres of feminist theology, womanist theology, and black theology. The final set of essays focuses on theological questions surrounding revelation and reason: process theology, theology as hermeneutics, and openness theology. The format of each dialogue is roughly as follows: an

overview of the Christian theologian or theology, a response by a Mormon scholar, a rejoinder by the Christian thinker, and a final reply by the Mormon thinker. As Paulsen notes, the "point is not to give one or the other the final word," but rather the "format is to encourage sincere inquiry and interest in each other" (17). Thus, *Mormonism in Dialogue* ably attempts to create a forum in which Christians and Mormons alike not only illuminate their own understandings, but also help each other to "clarify and refine their respective theological formulations" (13). Once again, the hope is that the mirror and the window will hang together to allow for a sort of fusion of horizons to emerge.

Adherence to that basic template, however, is not consistent, which makes for some awkward and even disappointing moments. The first deviation occurs in the dialogue on Paul Tillich, which contains no final reply by Truman Madsen. Second, in the dialogue on womanist theology, neither a rejoinder nor a final reply is provided—i.e., there is only an overview and a response—so it is difficult to say that a "dialogue" actually occurred. Third, there is no final reply by Eugene England in the dialogue on black theology (perhaps because of England's untimely passing in 2001). Fourth, in response to David Tracy's essay on theology as hermeneutics, not just one, but three Mormon thinkers (Kent Robson, James Faulconer, and Benjamin Huff) provide a response, yet there is no rejoinder to any of them from Tracy. Tracy mentions Mormonism in his overview, but only in an incidental way; because he does not attempt a substantial engagement with LDS philosophy or theology, a conversation never really gets off the ground. In one final example, Kent Robson responded to Gary Dorrien's piece on Langdon Gilkey's myth-creative liberal theology, and Dorrien provided a rejoinder. However, another response also unexpectedly appears, this time from James Faulconer, which is in turn followed by a rejoinder, not from Dorrien, but from an entirely different thinker, Gregory Sapp. The dialogue then concludes with a final reply by Faulconer. No explanation is offered for the variation.

Perhaps the unusual format would not have been so disconcerting if it weren't for the fact that Robson's response is one of the weaker essays from among the Mormon scholars. Summarily

stated, Robson's response demonstrates several important misunderstandings of Dorrien/Gilkey, raises several tangential counterpoints, and fails to recognize the complexities involved in his own (Robson's) assessment of both the Christian tradition and LDS understandings. I thus think Dorrien is correct in rejecting Robson's exaggerated view of "the influence of Augustine's arguments about original sin over 'all the rest of Christianity'" (420), in calling into question Robson's (mis)characterizations of Neibuhr and Gilkey, and in clarifying why both he and Gilkey "are far removed from the doctrine of God expounded in Professor Robson's paper" (422). Faulconer's response then poses several interesting questions for Dorrien/Gilkey—e.g., Martin Heidegger's argument that God must be *a* being rather than Being Itself; how it is that phenomenology can speak of transcendence; and the relation between secular reason and mythic-theological reflection. Still, his contribution is somewhat marred by his explicit admission that he does "not have firsthand knowledge of Gilkey himself" (445) as well as his own lack of engagement with Mormon thought. Faulconer's lack of expertise with primary sources and his choice to focus exclusively on Dorrien's account of Gilkey, however, was not nearly as unfortunate as Robson's failing to adequately appreciate or engage with the main points of Dorrien's essay.

On a more positive note, however, Faulconer's response to David Tracy's article on hermeneutical theology was one of the very best in the entire volume. Tracy opens his overview with an expression of puzzlement: "As an interested reader of the distinguished history of Latter-day Saint philosophical reflection, I have found it fascinating but difficult to try and understand the complex relationships between philosophy and theology in Mormon thought" (449). My initial reaction to that statement was wondering exactly who or what Tracy had in mind when speaking of "the distinguished history of Latter-day Saint philosophical reflection," because it's difficult for me to think of many Mormons who have actually done philosophical reflection—i.e., produced philosophical works from an explicitly Mormon point of view. Regardless, his basic point is well taken, and it is certainly a common reaction by many observers of Mormon thought. Trying to discern Mormonism's understanding of and relationship to philoso-

phy and theology individually is challenging enough. Even more challenging is making sense of the messiness of their interplay in LDS discourse. The sentiment thus seems quite justified.

Nonetheless, Tracy then goes on to explore that relationship from his perspective as a Catholic theologian and shows why a more in-depth review of the positions held by some theologians who are commonly thrown into the extreme camps of fideism and rationalism reveals a more complex portrait than such reductive labels allow for. While it is surely the case that many thinkers lean (perhaps heavily) toward either a fideist or rationalist trajectory, pure examples of either are extremely difficult to find, which is an indication that neither necessarily excludes the other. For Tracy, theology must be revelational, that is, it must affirm the centrality of revelation as "an event of divine self-manifestation in the event and person of Jesus the Christ" (453). His central thesis is that "hermeneutical philosophy provides the kind of contemporary philosophy needed by a revelational theology" (459), and he provides five reasons which incisively support that view. He concludes with a brief reflection on how such an exegetical approach can help unite "theory to the praxis of spiritual exercises" (461), reason with faith, or theology with philosophy.

Unsurprisingly, each of the three respondents takes up the challenge evoked by Tracy's puzzlement, and their responses neatly exemplify the difficulty involved in gaining a clear sense for what that relationship is like for Mormons. James Siebach takes a somewhat polemical, dogmatic, and simplistic tack, describing the entire history of Christianity as little more than a misguided attempt at a synthesis of Platonic thinking with Christian theology. He concludes that "such marriages are *always,* in the LDS view, transformative of both philosophy and scripture and, as such, *a departure from revealed truth,* for philosophical systems are relative to culture in a manner that revelation is not, even though revelation takes place in a particular culture and time" (466–67; emphasis mine). *Always* a departure from revealed truth? Siebach provides little justification for this sweeping declaration. For him, Joseph Smith's visionary encounters serve to clarify rather than obscure, and the many divine disclosures disseminated through Smith generate a tradition of an "uninterrupted,

ongoing stream of revelation from God to his people through a prophet who leads and guides the LDS Church" (465). An *uninterrupted* and *ongoing* stream? Given the difference between much of Smith's work—e.g., the dissemination of visions and revelations, and the production of scripture—and that of his successors as Church president, it's difficult to know what to make of this type of claim.

Regardless, for Siebach, such prophetic hearing necessarily coincides with a realization that God is known only through revelation. In contrast to the blending of Platonism and Christian theology, whereby concepts like *hypostasis* and *ousia* only served to "obscure rather than illuminate the divine nature" (464), the LDS understanding of God flows out of Smith's first vision, which provides a "clear description of the Father and the Son as distinct and separately embodied persons" (464). Unwilling to acknowledge any potential difficulties in the Mormon conception of multiple, finite deities, Siebach argues that any synthesis between philosophy and theology is "ultimately deleterious to a true understanding of the divine nature" (464). As such, while the attempt to bring hermeneutical philosophy and a theology of revelation together may provide some benefit at the individual level, he argues that such efforts cannot be the "procedure by which LDS doctrine is to be established or *clarified*" (467; emphasis mine). He thus holds that LDS discourse on the divine must maintain a "refusal to incorporate philosophical analysis into the formulation of LDS church doctrine" (467) and that LDS God-talk is ultimately *atheological.* Mormons should thus be deeply suspicious of Tracy's proposal for unifying such disparate and mutually exclusive modes of discourse.

Unfortunately, Siebach does very little to elucidate what revelation at either the prophetic or the personal level finally amounts to. Has it always meant the same thing throughout LDS history? Again, what does the notion of an "uninterrupted stream" mean? Have there been additional moments like Joseph Smith's theophany that have significantly shaped LDS self-understanding? Have revelations in the form that they are presented in the Doctrine and Covenants been given to or experienced by either some or all of Joseph Smith's successors? If the answer is yes to either one of those last two questions, what is the evidence for that claim? If not all LDS prophets have reported such encounters,

what does prophetic disclosure of the divine mean in the contemporary setting? And, how does that understanding relate to individual communication with deity? Nor does he provide any helpful indicators about how one might identify when revelatory moments come to an end and rational ones begin, and vice versa. All that we're told, in effect, is that revelation always and necessarily trumps reason, so it just isn't clear to me what the division of labor ultimately comes to. Furthermore, far too many of Siebach's statements are given as little more than bald assertions and dogmatic claims. As such, it was one of those "What are we doing here?" moments in which the mirror may have been granted an undue level of prominence.

Fortunately, James Faulconer's response is much more balanced, nuanced, and cogent. He begins with an excellent clarification of the multiple senses of the term "revelation" itself in Mormon discourse—a description that was sorely needed in a text where the term is ubiquitously employed but in which useful articulations of its distinctive character in either community were surprisingly rare. He then offers a concise elucidation of the various understandings of theology among Mormons and follows with five insightful suggestions why they have done so little theological work. First, the Church itself is still relatively young. Second, "fideism has grown in popularity among contemporary Church leaders" (473) (and I think Siebach's piece nicely represents this common tendency). Third, the LDS concept of continuing revelation "makes theology more challenging"—at least "if theology means rational theology" (474)—but it doesn't render it impossible.

Fourth, and closely related to number three, he points out that Latter-day Saints often have a mistaken view of the nature of scripture. They often treat scripture as "a set of propositions that are poorly expressed or, at best, poetic," he observes. "We then try to discover the propositional content (doctrines) that we assume is behind those poorly expressed or poetic expressions" (475). Instead, the sacred texts of Mormonism allow for a primordial questioning of self and world, demand a response in faith, and thus call for interpretive appropriation and meditative discipleship. Such an approach is "inherently theological, albeit not strictly rational" (475), and is, of course, very much in accord with the main

thrust of Tracy's proposal to unify philosophy and theology by a hermeneutical methodology.

Fifth, and perhaps most important for Faulconer, is that the Latter-day Saint experience of religion "is fundamentally practical, and, so, does not lend itself readily to theological reflection as most Mormons understand that term" (476). Mormonism is much more concerned with practice than it is with intellectual explication of dogma, which has—perhaps somewhat ironically, and maybe even a bit unnaturally—been the most common approach to doing theology in those relatively few instances when it has been attempted. Examples of this type of approach would include Orson Pratt, B. H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, and Bruce R. McConkie. And, although Blake Ostler, easily the most prolific contemporary Mormon theologian, offers a much more sophisticated type of theologizing than has been done in the past, his philosophical theology does manifest a similar impulse.

Faulconer then concludes with a brief review of the diversity of methodologies that have appeared recently, affirming those that he holds to be most conducive to and fruitful for the Mormon mode of being-in-the-world: "Mormon theology is beginning to take part in the larger theological discussion, moving more in the direction of multiple theologies and, particularly, theologies that, as Tracy so well puts it, 'accord priority to "possibility" over "actuality,"' 'take history and historicity with full seriousness,' and recognize truth as manifestation, disclosure, or disclosure-concealment" (478). Simply put, Faulconer's essay was careful, concise, and convincing. What's especially fascinating about this group of essays is that Benjamin Huff then rounds out the continuum of perspectives by actually arguing in favor of a systematic approach to LDS theology, albeit in a modified sense—one that recognizes its inherently provisional status and that allows narrative, practical, and conceptual considerations to complement and illuminate rather than exclude or prohibit one another.

Another moment that provides a good example of the high caliber of engagement in *Mormonism in Dialogue* is the dialogue on the theology of Paul Tillich. Joseph Price provides a very good introduction to Tillich's career and thought, which was framed around Tillich's "understanding of theology, especially as manifest in the development of his theological method of correlation,"

his conception of "God as being-itself," and his "understanding of faith as the dynamic state of being ultimately concerned" (124). After a short review of Tillich's background, Price followed through on each of those three central threads quite skillfully. Truman Madsen's response to Price takes a decidedly critical stance toward several axiomatic components around which Tillich's entire corpus pivots. First, he raises serious questions about Tillich's conception of symbol. The problem, according to Madsen, is that Tillich maintains *in theory* "that religious symbols cannot be transcribed or reduced to ordinary language" (148) and thus cannot be explicated; yet explication is precisely what he does with them *in practice.* "A primal question," Madsen therefore asks, "is how Tillich, given this untranslatability thesis, can emerge from symbolic solipsism; that is, from the subjective circle which he imposes on religious awareness" (148).

Second, Madsen offers a stinging critique of Tillich's formulation of the divine as "ultimate concern," "being itself," the "ground of being," or the "power of being." Madsen's main worry here, as it is with his suspicion of symbols, is just how to coherently account for the cognitive content of the notion of being-itself, particularly in light of Tillich's shifting and reshifting position on how to articulate the status of this most basic ontological assumption. In other words, how can the proposition "God is being-itself" ultimately overcome the charge that it is a vacuous and meaningless statement? On Madsen's reading, Tillich has gone through three different stages of understanding on this question, each of them either inadequate or incoherent. Madsen's bigger, even "holistic," worry, however, is this: "Does Ultimate Concern have ultimate concern for me?" (150) Nothing less than the consummate problem of the simultaneity of God's transcendence from and immanence in the world is a stake in Madsen's critique. No theology can escape a confrontation with this fundamental challenge, and he offers two major responses from an LDS perspective. However, in doing so Madsen isn't nearly as self-critical as he is with Tillich and thus fails to point out the potentially problematic areas with his own counter-claims. Nonetheless, in my judgment, his general arguments against Tillich are compelling, and, if sound, potentially devastating. Unfortunately, Price's rejoinder to Madsen's

brief and trenchant essay is wholly unsatisfactory, because he largely sidesteps Madsen's main arguments.

Before turning to what, for me at least, were the two high points in the volume, I want to offer a few comments on what I felt was the low point in text—the dialogue on feminist theology. This was another conversation in which the format was slightly altered; two overview essays rather than one were given by Rosemary Radford Ruether. Each calls for a radical reinterpretation of God-language. The first focuses on a reimaging of Christological understandings and the second on a complete revisioning of Christianity's root metaphors for God. In my judgment, both pieces are interesting and insightful in terms of their historical, sociological, and cultural reflections. Even if a greater recognition of the diversity of vantage points of the events and structures she addresses may have been desirable at times—i.e., the feminist lens through which she frames her subject matter is in very sharp focus throughout—her critiques are consistently incisive. She demonstrates a very thoughtful and creative impulse with (1) her reformulation of Christology in terms of an integration with egalitarian anthropology, and not just in terms of gender, but also ethnicity and culture (262); (2) her reconception of God as both male and female, simultaneously Father and Mother, and the Divine Parent (255, 256, 262, 270, 274); and (3) her reinterpretation of God "in terms of liberating, loving, and mutual human relationships" (275).

While I found much to be praised in Reuther's call for theological and Christological rethinking, the radicality of her revisions and the centrality of her metaphorical conceptuality call for a particularly skilled and sensitive Mormon feminist to find equally creative ways to engage with her thought, achieve mutual understanding, and foster constructively critical growth. Unfortunately, I don't feel that respondent Camille Williams was able to achieve that level of discourse. Given that Reuther's theological proposals cut right to the heart of so much that is axiomatic in Mormon discourse—e.g., her absolute rejection of literalistic conceptions of God and utter repudiation of gender essentialism at both the theological and anthropological levels—almost any LDS response would inevitably produce some very strong moments of divergence. The fact that Williams made such divergences clear was not the problem with her retort; rather, it was the manner in

which and the substance with which she highlighted her disagreements. Her inability to sufficiently recognize potential moments of convergence, and her general lack of theological creativity. My basic concerns then are roughly as follows: (1) She fails to adequately appreciate, understand, or engage with the thrust of Reuther's main deconstructive and constructive movements; (2) Her historical, sociological, and cultural assessments lack a sufficient degree of sophistication and self-criticism; and (3) Her overall presentation is decidedly dogmatic in tenor, often crossing the line into a devotional mode of discourse.

With respect to my first concern with Williams's response, Reuther offers both theological criticism and constructive counter-proposals in her essays, but Williams primarily engaged with them only indirectly and thus could not successfully show why Reuther's formulations were either untenable or incoherent on their own terms. In other words, when the scholarly task required Williams to peer out the window at the unknown and discomfiting, it seemed that she was willing only to refract her account through a constant glance over her shoulder at the mirror. What she offers then is a very simplistic account of commonly held LDS points of view, without either critically acknowledging or assessing potentially problematic areas of the Mormon ideas she attempts to elucidate. Nor does she seem to recognize the possibility that the history of Mormon theology allows for a multiplicity of conceptions and creative reinterpretations in many relevant areas.

As a second and closely related problem, Williams does not successfully show why Reuther's historical, social, and cultural critique is mistaken, nor does she offer any critical assessment of the origins and evolution of the sociological and theological constructs that have served to shape Mormonism's own self-understanding about gender identity and roles. As such, I think Reuther is right in her rejoinder to Williams when she says, "On family and gender roles she sometimes resorts to caricature of a feminism that represents neither my position, nor that of mainstream feminism" (296). A further weakness is the absence of discussion of the LDS Church's strained relation with the feminist movements of the last third of the twentieth century. Indeed, to the best of my

reading, she does not draw on any nondevotional LDS feminist scholarship in her piece.

Third, and finally, Williams persistently uses language more appropriate to a devotional setting. Examples of such rhetoric show themselves in such statements as: "Reuther's claim . . . 'that all of our images of God are human projections,' is not supported by LDS doctrine, nor is the view that we are at liberty to reconstruct the 'images of God' to better suit contemporary sensibilities. Joseph Smith saw two separate *embodied* personages: God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ" (278; emphasis hers). Once again, Davies's question is entirely apropos. Reuther trenchantly captures their disparity:

> The real crux of the difference between my views and those of Camille Williams is her rejection of social analysis and ideology critique. Basically she wishes to reduce the problem of abuse of women in family and society to exceptional individuals, men or women, who fail in their responsibilities. But she rejects both the possibility of distorted historical social structures that are inherently unjust and false ideologies designed to justify and sanction unjust social structures. Most particularly she rejects any possibility of social or ideological critique of the LDS tradition and its family and social patterns, seeing these as divinely revealed and hence infallible. (297)

In sum, the language, style, and substance of Williams's essay, while likely familiar to and accepted by many Latter-day Saints, is the sort that tends to end conversations rather than lead to mutual appreciation, exploration, and enrichment.

In direct contrast, the essay most exemplary of self-criticism was, without a doubt, Eugene England's response to Dwight Hopkins's treatment of black theology. Hopkins's piece was largely a historical overview of the origins and development of black theology in the latter half of the twentieth century, primarily focusing on the work of its leading figures. I considered this essay an especially helpful introduction to the movement and would strongly recommend it to anyone interested in gaining a basic sense of its formative stages and constituent themes. In the opening lines of his poignant response, England asserts that black theology stands as nothing less than an indirect "*rebuke* of Mormon popular theology and behavior in three major ways" (370; emphasis his). First, if one considers "the large mass of unofficial sermons, writings, jokes,

folk-tales, actions, opinions, and other expressions," Mormonism has been "at best self-contradictory about race and at worst openly racist" (370). Second, Mormon leaders and members alike occasionally contributed to the oppression of black people in America, which led to the emergence of the civil rights movement. And third, black theology reminds Latter-day Saints that the Church, as an institution, has yet to officially, explicitly, and unambiguously repudiate "the racist theology and popular beliefs that grew up as rationales for that discrimination" (371).

Although England's critique is clear and incisive, it is not simply a one-sided condemnation. After reviewing some of the notable events and highlighting various written works on both sides of the debate leading up to and including the June 1978 revelation, England expresses his profound appreciation to the black community for its role in the progress and reconciliation that has been made: "Let me try to be so clear on this matter that I cannot be misunderstood. We Mormons owe an enormous and as yet unexpressed debt of gratitude to black people for helping liberate us from false and destructive ideas about race, for saving our souls from the sins of racism and oppression, and for making possible the world-wide expansion and growth of the Church that we prize so much" (376).

For England, the civil rights and black power movements not only saved America but also enabled the divine disclosure through which the priesthood ban was removed, which "in turn made possible the explosive growth of Mormonism since" (376). At the same time, there is still a lot of work to be done, because although "behavior has changed dramatically, the false ideas that were invented to rationalize racist practices are still with us" (377)—e.g., the entry on "Races of Man" in Bruce R. McConkie's (still in-print and massively influential) *Mormon Doctrine* (2d ed., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966). In the remaining pages of the essay, England turns his attention to an engagement with black theology itself in relation to Mormon teaching and ideals. He offers several constructive suggestions to black theologians, such as more carefully avoiding the temptation to reinforce the extreme polarization of victim and perpetrator, instead striving for a greater recognition of the universality of sinfulness. "A quest for

liberation," writes England, "can easily turn self-righteous, have its own blind-spots, and even perpetuate oppression in new forms" (380). One must, therefore, look *both* in the mirror at one's self *and* out the window at the other, and maintain an equally Christlike stance toward each when doing so.

In his rejoinder Dwight Hopkins expressed how completely struck he was at the forcefulness of England's admissions. "It is rare to admit publicly previous white supremacist thought and practice that, to my knowledge," writes Hopkins, "no other white or predominantly white institution, religious or otherwise, has undertaken in such a thorough and revealing manner. What it underscores is the character of the Latter-day Saints, at least as enunciated by Eugene England" (382). That final phrase is key, because the Church, as an institution, has never been as forthright and self-critical as England and has yet to formally and specifically repudiate the racial teachings used to justify the ban—the April 2006 general conference address by Gordon B. Hinckley notwithstanding. Thus, the question of whether the ban was a doctrine or a policy continues to loom large. Nonetheless, Hopkins was deeply impressed and noted that what this type of honesty reveals is "the ability to look at the facts about oneself, affirm the best of one's religious tradition, and embrace the evil in order to transform it" (382). In short, such honesty is the very "substance and depth of liberation" itself (382).

He goes on to draw some comparisons between the black community and Latter-day Saints, notes how impressed he was to learn of the narratives and themes of liberation that are contained in scripture unique to Mormonism, and suggests that liberation in both groups must push beyond race and become just as committed to gender equality. Hopkins concludes with a question that could very easily set the stage for some future conversation: "I want to know why there was a discrepancy in Joseph Smith's courageous belief and practice regarding black equality with whites, on the one hand, and the wretched borrowing of pro-slavery theology by Latter-day Saints, on the other?" (383–84).

Let me conclude now with a few words about the dialogue that I felt was the most impressive in *Mormonism in Dialogue.* Indeed, I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that I think it should be held up as a model for all future interactions like this. Given the tremen-

dous number of similarities in several of its core positions, undoubtedly openness or free will theism lends itself to just this sort of exchange. Another contributing factor, as mentioned at the outset, is that this was the one dialogue specifically prepared for publication in *Mormonism in Dialogue.* However, what truly made the difference, I think, is that Clark Pinnock, more than any other Christian theologian in this volume, demonstrates that he had indeed "boned up" on LDS history, teaching, and practice. Furthermore, he represents an uncommonly concerted effort to achieve mutual progress. "I am genuinely interested both in hearing and learning from what Latter-day Saints have to say on the matters I will present," he states, "and am hopeful that the interaction will be enriching" (491). He thus issues a call to fellow Christian theologians and Mormon scholars alike to increasingly consider the profound insights of one another. In my experience, this sort of openness to learning, not only about the other, but also from one's interlocutors—i.e., the creation of a space for genuinely transformative moments to occur—is truly rare.

I must admit, I was somewhat surprised by Pinnock's ability to recognize some of the subtleties of Mormonism, noting early on his recognition that there are disagreements among Latter-day Saints themselves about their beliefs. Contrary to the common assumption held by both insiders and outsiders, Mormonism is neither a simplistic nor a monolithic movement. Furthermore, LDS beliefs and practices have changed over the years, he observes, and those changes should be taken into consideration whenever one attempts to give an account of them: "LDS thinking does not stand still, and we [Christians] should not impute to them things that they do not now hold or practice" (492). His account of Mormon beliefs was, to the best of my reading, fair, accurate, and nuanced. After introducing some of the central claims of open and relational theologies—e.g., God is intensely affected by and intimately related to the world; the future is genuinely open, unsettled, and unknown, even to God—Pinnock frames the formal dialogue portion of his comments around the following theological issues: divine embodiment, Gods other than Yahweh, theosis or deification, God's omniscience, God and gender, tradition and interpretation, the trinity, the relation between God and the

world, God's power, and theodicy. He highlights moments of convergence and divergence with a markedly measured and appreciative tone throughout. I think any Mormon who has never read Pinnock will find some of the theological possibilities that he (as an Evangelical) is open to quite surprising and refreshing.

Paulsen's response was equally respectful, insightful, and cogent. He eloquently articulates positions well within the plausible possibilities available to Latter-day Saints and generally notes instances in which there are alternative opinions available. While I think there are problematic aspects in some of Paulsen's conclusions—e.g., his assertion that Mormon theology has the resources to provide a solution to the problem of evil—in my view, he successfully demonstrates a recognition of the complexities of the issues involved and provides solid reasoning for his own positions. Pinnock's brief rejoinder and Paulsen's final reply each offer helpful clarifications and elucidations, but what I want to close with are their personal reflections on the dialogue itself. Says Pinnock, "I appreciate interacting with Dr. Paulsen very much . . . and am richer for it as a theologian and as a person. I appreciate both the convergences and divergences of our positions and detect room for growth in myself and (I think) in Dr. Paulsen" (542). Replies Paulsen, "I am learning much as a result of my dialogue with Professor Clark Pinnock. He is an ideal conversation partner. He takes my ideas seriously, and his responses are always respectful yet thought-provoking and challenging, compelling me to rethink and refine my ideas. I too am richer both as a person and as a thinker for our interactions" (545–46). Such moments of appropriation and transformation as one gazes squarely into the face of the other, while faithfully maintaining the distinctive images in the mirror, lie at the very heart of what this sort of interfaith interaction is ideally meant to engender. Let us hope that *Mormonism in Dialogue* is the first of many such engagements between Mormons and major world religions.

Note

1. The introduction itself notes how problematic the issue of identification is (xiii–xiv), and indeed, it is simply a subset of the much larger and more complex question surrounding Mormonism's relationship to Christianity. Acknowledging that opinions will (and should) differ, and

after giving the question careful consideration, I felt that there was no better alternative to using the terms "Mormon thinkers/scholars" and "Christian thinkers/theologians" when speaking of the scholars as a group. Further, unless she or he self-identified otherwise, I employed that same basic designation when referring to the scholars individually. This approach is not intended to make any judgments or to implicitly offer an opinion on the matter one way or the other but is rather an attempt to accurately and adequately reflect the texts and conversations themselves.

Marrow: Richard Dutcher's Mormon Films

Reviewed by Dallas Robbins

> *He that sings a lasting song*
> *Thinks in a marrow-bone.*
> —W. B. Yeats, "A Prayer for Old Age"

In Richard Dutcher's latest film *Falling,* a rich scene revealing the subtle conflict between the demands of commerce and artistic endeavor is focused around the word *marrow.* The protagonist, lapsed Mormon Eric Boyle, a suffering videographer and aspiring screenwriter, is failing to sell his latest story to a well-tanned and successful Hollywood producer. After rejecting Eric's work, the producer complains to him that if he wants to make it in the film business, he needs to do something different, something new. It goes like this:

> *Producer:* Last year somebody shows blood. This year you gotta show bone. Next year you gotta show inside the bones—whatever that shit's called.
>
> *Eric* [slight contempt in his eyes and a little exasperation in his voice]: Marrow.
>
> *Producer:* Right, I don't know what that shit is—I don't know what it looks like—you gotta show it to me. . . Something new, that's all anyone wants to see. . . . You gotta push it further than anyone has pushed it before. . . . Show me some marrow."[1]

Unsettled by the encounter, Eric leaves, conflicted about sacrificing his artistic integrity to the poolside Hollywood gods. Not

ironically, the film that Eric happens to be in is an exact answer to the producer's request. While we watch Eric *fall* from any grace that he once possessed, he descends into a mélange of violence, both domestic and public, leaving little redemption at the end. Is it something new? That would be debatable. Is it something new in Mormon film? Absolutely.

Clearly the producer's "marrow" means one thing—more blood, more bucks. But to Eric, once an active Mormon, the term "marrow" would have a familiar ring from LDS rhetoric and revelations. As Eric contemplatively strolls across the Los Angeles Temple grounds, does the word "marrow" recall to his imagination the temple ritual language he once vowed to keep concealed? Does he remember the Word of Wisdom's promise that the obedient "shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones"? (D&C 89:18). In LDS thought, "marrow" carries a cultural weight that the producer's careless complaint misses; the richness of the idea of marrow makes the word echo beyond the film itself.

Marrow as the concealed territory of the blood's creation serves as a metaphor of genesis—the source for the Mormon promise of health and Hollywood's machine of shock and destruction, evoking ideas of divine blessing and redemption alongside the bloody precariousness of human mortality. Marrow, as a metaphor for the conjunction between sacred yearning and profane frailty, can serve as a useful conceit that provides an approach to the films of Richard Dutcher, where he explores Mormonism and the crux of life's messiness and grace's beauty, showing us something new.

God's Army, released in the spring of 2000, was a watershed moment in the creation of an LDS cinematic market. There had been films made by and for Mormons before, but they usually fell into categories of proselytizing videos, faith-promoting Church history films, straight-to-video family entertainment, or animated fare. But *God's Army* was different. It was explicitly Mormon and commercial at the same time. It was an unexpected but exciting surprise for Mormons to go see a movie about themselves on a Friday night, munching down overpriced popcorn, while *Gladiator* was playing in the theater next door. *God's Army* was a shift in how Mormons consumed entertainment, leading to an explosion in the LDS film market.

Aesthetically straightforward in its storytelling, the film had strong linear character development typical of a hero myth. The film was competent in the basics of film language and audience expectations, and served up the expected happy ending, with a voice-over narration comforting the audience with a sense that, "all is well in Zion."

But the film's narrative provided a way to explore the challenging aspects of missionary life while still celebrating what is "virtuous, lovely, or of good report" (Thirteenth Article of Faith). It approached the marrow of Mormon life, mixing the messiness with the sacred, unafraid to discomfit some viewers. In this story, the missionaries, usually lionized in Church media, were scaled down to human proportions and shown to be just as real as the people whom they teach. The story offered a spectrum of characters that reached toward actual experience and eschewed Church-correlated image. The film explored issues of regret, doubt, racism, abuse, and death, punctuated with practical jokes, missionary banter, slamming doors, fights, miracles, and revelation. This mixture of sacred and profane showed the marrow of missionary work, realistically explicating young men's first encounter with the tension between mortality and divinity.

While "all was well" at the end of *God's Army,* Dutcher's next film was a little messier. *Brigham City* tells the story of a widowed bishop/sheriff in a small, sleepy Utah town who is thrown into a crisis, personal and public, as a series of murders come close to home. Marketed with the tag line "Nothing Attracts a Serpent like Paradise," the film explored the fragile boundary Mormons put up to isolate themselves for fear of the outside world, unprepared for the fact that evil knows no such bounds.

The sheriff is led down a path of false starts and stops while the death toll begins to pile up. This tension is brought to a dramatic apex when the killer is discovered to be one of his own—his deputy. The emotional conflict of the climactic scene is a great moment of suspense, leaving the sheriff no other choice but to defend his life.

Amid the excellent moments in *Brigham City,* the story is occasionally interrupted by a mixed sense of style. Changing genres so drastically from *God's Army* to *Brigham City* led Dutcher to rely on

suspense movie clichés such as red herrings, visual deception, and ominous music to lead the audiences' response, typical of Hollywood fare. Whether such directorial choices were intended as irony or not, these common tropes create, at times, a disjointed tone.

But as Dutcher moved into this realm of film violence, it is obvious that, when someone pulls a trigger, he intends it to be more than just entertaining satisfaction. The marrow of violence, which eventually finds ultimate expression in Falling, had its genesis in *Brigham City.*

Brigham City shows a significant turning point in the development of Dutcher's skill as a filmmaker. Primarily his penchant for climatic and visceral endings leaves behind the "all is well" voice-over in *God's Army.* After suffering over his decision to kill the enemy, the sheriff/bishop sits on the stand during sacrament, clearly distressed. He refuses to partake in the sacramental ordinance, thus revealing his personal feelings of unworthiness. Unsure what to do, the deacon passes the bread to others, but the congregation refuses the sacrament as an act of solidarity with the distraught bishop. The bread and water are truly seen as the powerful symbols which they actually represent: redemption. And the congregation will not participate in the act of redemption until they can bring along the person who needs it the most, the bishop.

The scene is an emotional tour de force, reaching toward peace and mixed with sorrowful regret. Without voice-over or dialogue to guide the audience along comfortably, the scene lets the audience experience the moment as part of the congregation. The device became a hallmark of Dutcher's personal style which was continued in his next two films. This technique allows the dramatic climax of the film to be experienced, without dialogue or narration, but only in simple visuals, music, and acting. This type of end attempts a form of sublimity, rather than mere movie-watching, in which the viewers are offered a cathartic moment to be experienced along with the characters, regardless of whether they are comforted or conflicted by it.

Dutcher's next project *States of Grace,* while similar to God's Army in setting, was a decided break from his previous work in skill, tone, and style. This film clearly establishes Dutcher as a skillful storyteller, choosing subtle visuals and characterization

over film-school clichés. Even the music by Ben Carson is well realized and perfectly applied to the narrative beats of the story.

Expanding beyond an exploration of missionary life, it is actually a multi-viewpoint film with a diverse focus. In addition to the missionaries, Elders Lozano and Farrell, several non-Mormon characters are given equal measure. Louis is a fallen preacher living homeless on the beach, hiding from his past sins. Carl is a gangster who is extricating his life from violence while attempting to keep his younger brother from making the same mistakes. And Holly, the missionaries' next-door neighbor, is an actress who lives with the regret of a porn film credit and struggles to bridge the resulting estrangement from her family. Not solely about Mormons, *States of Grace* expands the possible underpinnings of films that explore religious ideas for a broader audience, exhibiting an inclusive outlook. The film explores people's struggles with grace and the grim realities of a violent world, approaching yet again the mortal and divine in the metaphor of marrow. It pushes the story into the far-reaching influence that violence plays in the lives of ordinary people, anticipating the bloodfest of *Falling*.

It is revealed that Elder Lozano was a gang member in his past; and he is able to build trust with Carl, not at first because of a religious message, but because of the violent culture they have shared. The story offers the idea that our sins, as well as our redemption, can build the needed love in a violent world or destroy us completely.

This concept is evident in the juxtaposition of two visual narratives central to the film. When Carl is being confirmed a member by the laying on of hands, his younger brother is being murdered in a back alley by Carl's gangster enemies. The camera offers God's viewpoint, looking down at the newly confirmed member surrounded by elders, slowly fading to the scene of a dead youth surrounded by a gang of murderers. Even though the visual analogy is obvious, its power transcends the moment into a realm of thoughtful cinema—when someone dies, it means life for someone else—reminding the viewer of Christ's sacrifice.

This complicated mix of death and life becomes the final drama of the film. Elder Farrell is being sent home early because he spent the night with Holly. He now faces the austere justice of

his father who had told him, "I would rather you come home in a casket than have you come back dishonored." Filled with the fear of parental damnation, he locks himself in the bathroom and slits his wrists. The dire narrative of a missionary driven to attempted suicide is digging deep into the marrow of Mormon culture, providing a critique of the perfectionism that pervades LDS life by showing the violent end toward which such a graceless ethic of sin and punishment tends.

In contrast, the film's final scene suggests the possibilities of a merciful ethic, which extends the power of atonement to everyone, Mormon or otherwise. At the end all major characters witness a live Christmas manger display on a sunny California beach. A metaphor for grace, the innocent Christchild, is literally passed from one to another. The scene echoes the redemptive act of passing the sacrament in *Brigham City* but is not limited by the bounds of organized religion, having its effect outside obedience and ritual.

After *States of Grace,* Richard Dutcher invited controversy with his public remarks about the Mormon film market, provoking his fellow filmmakers with the advice: "Stop trying to make movies that you think General Authorities would like."[2] Even though Dutcher was distancing himself from the LDS film market (and the Church), he clearly wasn't finished mining Mormon culture and the marrow it holds. His statement seemed to be a preparation for what was coming next.

So while *States of Grace* is a complex affirmation of God's love, *Falling* is a tragedy about a world where love is absent and violence is commonplace. Marketed as the "first R-rated Mormon film," it seems like something that the General Authorities would not like, perhaps with good reason. It teems with blood, exploring violence and sexual dynamics that have never been portrayed in a Mormon film quite like this. Devoid of music, visually stark and gritty, the film is stripped down to the bare essentials, a Hollywood life without the special effects. The aesthetic of "virtuous, lovely, or of good report" is absent, even deliberately obliterated.

The raw opening scene sets the stage. Eric Boyle bursts into his house and screams "Noooooo!" as he sees his wife's body hanging from the ceiling fan. He gets her down and holds her close, looks up at God, and repeats the perennial R-rated swear word as a prayer of pain. I've rarely seen such a no-holds-barred

hook; it will either fix you to the seat or repel you out of the theater. The film then takes the viewer back a few days, recounting the ill-advised choices that had led to that opening scene, then pushes forward to the extended bloody aftermath.

Eric is a lapsed Mormon who chases disaster in L.A., catching footage of blood and mayhem for the local news while, in his spare time, he tries to break into screenwriting. Davey, his wife, is an aspiring actress who forces herself through the casting couch culture, almost catching her big break, but thwarted by an unplanned pregnancy of unknown paternity. These two characters are stuck in their murky lives, just on the edge of "making it" but about to lose everything.

Eric, as only the chance of tragedy would have it, happens upon a fight and rolls camera, becoming the voyeur and purveyor of a murder. Eric is conflicted about his culpability but sells the footage for a few extra dollars. It is on the news later that day as he and all his friends watch, responding with a mixture of disgust and congratulations. On the same day, Davey gets the leading role in a movie, only after revealing her flesh to another sort of purveyor, along with the unsaid stipulation of sexual favors. These two choices lead the story down an inevitable path that reminds one of Greek tragedy, where escape is impossible, fate is certain, and grace is a ghost.

Eventually the story returns to the opening scene, propelling Eric down a path of revenge. In the very end, Eric is beaten, bloody, and broken, slowly stumbling down a city street, imagining himself before the Christus sculpture on the Los Angeles Temple grounds. The unresponsive, empty-eyed Christus is contrasted with the bloody, dying Eric. God is absent in *Falling,* leaving only the nostalgic memory of a God from an earlier life. While Eric is saturated in doubt, blood, and sin, the Christus is untouchable, unstained, and unmovable, as if drained of any redemptive blood. The metaphor of marrow loses its redemptive weight and meaning, remaining only a biological reminder of death. As seen previously, a Dutcher ending would leave the audience with a hope amid certain complexities and challenges. But *Falling* takes us to an uncomfortable crescendo ending in death, both mortal and divine.

But what sets *Falling* apart from a typical Hollywood thriller is

that it is a serious attempt to face the challenging pervasiveness of violence: our consumption of it, our culpability in it, and how we propagate it. It is a provocative critique of how media uses and manipulates violence for high ratings and money. And that is what especially makes *Falling* difficult to watch. There is not one moment of violence that does not get to the marrow of our culpability in being part of a culture that praises nightly news blood-letting, cineplex bone-cracking, and our use of violence in responding to our relationships at home and beyond.

However, this depiction of violence leads to complexities. Does the visual narration of graphic material hurt or help the film? This is not to question the use of such material, but how far can a story go before it actually works against its own concern?

Let me offer an idea. Vincent Canby, the late critic for the *New York Times*, in his review of the Italian film *Salo* (1978) struggled with the nature of graphic visuals: "*Salo* is, I think, a perfect example of the kind of material that, theoretically, anyway, can be acceptable on paper but becomes so repugnant when visualized on the screen that it further dehumanizes the human spirit, which is supposed to be the artist's concern. When one reads, one exercises all kinds of intellectual processes that are absent when one looks at pictures. . . . The words are not nonsensical, but they are feeble in conjunction with the ferocity and explicitness of the images."[3]

By the end, the viewer may need a respite from the barrage of violence. The graphic material pummels the audience, working against tragedy's ultimate purpose—a catharsis—leaving an empty sublimity with all terror and no wonder. In this respect, I think *Falling* falls short as a tragedy. Absent any narrative coda to let the audience catch their aesthetic breaths, the film seems to miss a full catharsis, the purging of emotion, which is essential to a successful tragedy. Rather, the emotional aftermath of the violence was stuck in my throat, leaving me with a haunted aftertaste.

While this effect does not detract from the film's challenging and worthwhile ideas, it does make the story difficult to decipher, as noted by many critics. Ultimately *Falling* is a Rorschach test stained with marrow's blood, where some people will find grace, while others will find none.

In the end, the films of Dutcher are unafraid to explore this marrow of experience, where meaning slips between sacred and

profane. From the personal conflicts and conversion in God's Army to the communal forgiveness in *Brigham City,* from crossing the ecumenical boundaries in *States of Grace* to the tragedy of no grace in *Falling,* Dutcher's films explore the meaning of redemption rarely expressed at the cineplex. I am curious where he will go next.

Notes

1. Richard Dutcher, writer and director, *Falling,* produced by George D. Smith (n.p.: Main Street Movie Co., 2008), transcription mine.

2. Richard Dutcher, "'Parting Words' on Mormon Movies," *Daily Herald* (Provo, Utah), April 12, 2007, http://www.heraldextra.com/content/view/217694 (accessed December 23, 2008).

3. Vincent Canby, "Movie Review: Salo or the 120 Days in Sodom. Film Festival: 'Salo' Is Disturbing . . . ," *New York Times,* October 1, 1977, http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9904E7D8163AE334BC4953DFB667838C669EDE (accessed December 23, 2008).

Emily Plewe, *Exeunt*
acrylic on canvas, 24"x 24", 2003

Practicing Divinity

Taylor G. Petrey

> *His divine power has given us everything needed for life and [piety], through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and [virtue]. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of [desire], and may become participants of the divine nature. For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with [virtue], and [virtue] with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with [piety], and [piety] with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.* (2 Peter 1:3–9, based on the New Revised Standard Version; translation differences noted in brackets)

Here, the author of this letter instructs his readers to live a life of piety, or godliness. He explains that the power of God has given us all the tools we need to live this life, and that it is in this way that we participate in the divine nature. Then he outlines a set of practices including goodness or virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, mutual affection, and love. This is the path to becoming divine.

The concept that religion is about beliefs is a modern notion, a manifestation of the privatization and interiorization of religion that took place in the theorizing of the modern state. Religion is, of course, much greater than either an institution or a set of beliefs. Mormonism in particular is much greater than that. In addition to these things, religion is a set of practices that make spirituality possible. There is no unmediated spirituality apart from the practices that engender it. It is, strictly speaking, impossible to be spiritual without being religious when religion is understood to include the practices of spirituality. These may, of course, include private practices conducted in solitude—such as meditation, con-

templation, or imagination—but they always belong to a history of certain ways of practicing spirituality. In this way, the private is always shared.

Anthropologists and philosophers have increasingly emphasized the deep connection between our ways of knowing, especially ethical knowledge, and bodily practices. The "ideas" of religion and religious people cannot be separated from the practices in which they engage. Practices produce dispositions, not symbols of higher truths. Laws; sanctions; social institutions from church, family, and schools; and bodily practices such as fasting and prayer form the preconditions for our experiences. The scholar of religion Talal Asad has provocatively suggested, "The inability to enter into communion with God becomes a function of untaught bodies."[1] There is a double-edged meaning to this statement. On the one hand, Asad means that communion with God is something which is produced as a contingent result of bodily practices. No transcendent experience is involved. On the other hand, the notion that taught bodies can produce these experiences, transcendent or not, is incredibly powerful and one that I think that our own spiritual tradition relies upon.

The past decades have seen increased effort on the part of a few thinkers to reform LDS theology to make room within it for a more robust notion of grace as developed in Reformation traditions. This reform movement has many positive aspects, and it has had a profound impact even at the top levels of our leadership in terms of reducing the anxiety and perfectionism that have often pervaded LDS culture.[2] There is no doubt that a reflection and incorporation of this theological tradition can be constructive. At the same time, I worry that this notion of grace can vitiate one of the most interesting aspects of the Mormon salvation drama, namely, that we must work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). This oft-repeated phrase speaks to the ominous weight of our burden.

In this particular thread of Mormon thought, the atonement of Christ has held a somewhat ambiguous place. Instead of effecting our salvation by making up for our inherent deficiency, this view of the atonement lays a foundation for salvation, but the actual achievement of salvation is up to us. I use the word "achieve-

ment" deliberately, since this view of salvation requires not only ritualized performances but also the embodiment of particular virtues. Further, in this particular LDS view, salvation is not admission into a heavenly realm, but literally the becoming of something better than we currently are. This soteriology is not an ontological shift from the human to the divine, for there are no proper boundaries between these two states in this tradition of Mormon theology. Indeed, the view that humans are divine tells us a great deal more about what it means to be divine than it does about what it means to be human.

What makes this tradition in Mormonism vital to preserve is that it rests on a view of religion as a set of practices and dispositions. One becomes divine through *acting* divine, through exercising patience, love, self-control, and endurance according to 2 Peter. While our notions of spiritual practices are not nearly as developed in scope as those of some other traditions, they do provide some effective means for the cultivation of virtue. Fasting, prayer, studying sacred literature, journaling, making cookies for the people we visit teach and home teach, attending meetings, reverence, abstaining from forbidden substances and images, and friendship, "one of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism," according to Joseph Smith,[3] are all ways of *practicing* virtue, among others. We root out our bitterness, develop our abilities to forgive, have compassion, serve, be creative, prophesy, and think. It is the practice that creates the conditions for the experience of becoming divine.

I am not suggesting an affected piety in the cultivation of virtue. Such a posture is obnoxious and, I think, has no place in Mormonism. Nor does acting in a divine manner entail exercising authority over others. Such an approach also has little place in Mormonism. Nor am I suggesting an unconditional obedience in terms of conformity (though obedience is a crucial practice in Mormonism). Nor am I suggesting that only "authentically" Mormon practices lead us in this direction and that we cannot draw on the practices of our religious neighbors. I am also not suggesting that Mormonism is comprised merely of practices and that it has no theology proper, as some recent scholars have asserted.[4] Rather, I am suggesting that we cease to imagine that Mormonism

is a set of beliefs alone to which we either assent or not. Instead, I suggest that we consider Mormonism a set of principles and practices, a technology, an art of existence. Mormonism is a series of techniques and practices for cultivating divine persons.

I have seen that one of the ways that many Mormons manifest their doubts is by moderating their engagement in the practices and disciplines of Mormon life. I am no exception to this tendency. But what I have realized is that the power of Mormonism—and of other religions as well—is in the way that its practitioners cultivate virtue. I am more diligent in my fasting now. I am more diligent in my prayers. I act with more purposefulness in my private and interpersonal religious engagements. I am teaching my body to enter into communion with God, not because God has commanded it, but because of the experience that such practices produce. Through these practices, I seek to participate in the divine nature by cultivating the virtues enumerated in 2 Peter: virtue, knowledge, self-mastery, mutual affection, and the ultimate on the list—love. To be Mormon is to be engaged in the cultivation of the self by covenant, a particular commitment to act in concert with God to be better than we are now.

Notes

1. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 77.

2. See for example, D. Todd Christofferson, "Born Again," *Ensign,* May 2008, 76–79; Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); Robert L. Millet, *Grace Works* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007). Others have sought to moderate this trend, e.g., Bruce C. Hafen, "The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign,* May 2004, 97–99.

3. From a discourse given by Joseph Smith on July 23, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols., 1902–12, Vol. 7, 1932; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948 printing), 5:517.

4. James E. Faulconer, "Rethinking Theology: The Shadow of the Apocalypse," *FARMS Review of Books* 19, no. 1 (2007): 175–99, and Faulconer, "Why a Mormon Won't Drink Coffee, but Might Have a Coke: The Atheological Character of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *Element* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 21–37.

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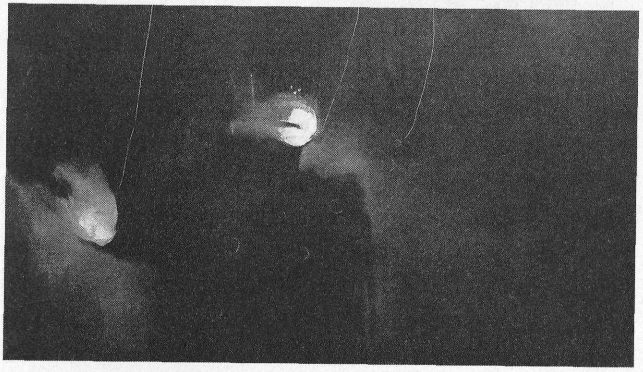

Emily Plewe, *Incline*
acrylic on canvas, 36"x 60", 2007

About the Artist

Emily Plewe

Emily Plewe grew up in Centerville, Utah, and attended Wellesley College where she studied art and literature. She then pursued a master's degree at BYU. Emily and her husband, John, who is also an artist and whose work will be featured in the next issue of Dialogue, lived for many years in Los Angeles before moving to Salt Lake City. They now live in the Sugarhouse neighborhood where Emily is involved in the community council.

As a child, Emily would explore the night sky with her grandfather who taught her astronomy which he brought to life through his telescope. This interest was augmented when she later learned about quantum mechanics and particle physics. Plewe's abstract paintings are inspired by her interest in "space, energy and interactions–both physical and metaphysical. I am fascinated by the ambiguous and mysterious spatial depth it is possible to achieve with painting."

Her work reflects the intersection of her interest in physics and astronomy with principles of design and with achieving a sense of space and form in her paintings. One of the strengths of Plewe's work is the dynamic tension in her compositions between the two-dimensional shapes and surface quality of the paintings and the sense of three-dimensional space that she achieves. The shapes and textures are not merely on the surface but appear to float in the depth of the field of color they inhabit.

Emily gives great credit regarding her decision to pursue art to Ken Baxter from whom she took a plein air painting class in high school. It was he who planted the seed that one could pursue art as a career. More of Plewe's work can be seen at www.umbergallery.com/emilyplewe/.

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