DIALOGUE
a journal of mormon thought

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

Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought is published quarterly by the Dialogue Foundation. *Dialogue* has no official connection with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contents copyright by the Dialogue Foundation. ISSN 0012–2157. *Dialogue* is available in full text in electronic form at www.dialoguejournal.com and is archived by the University of Utah Marriott Library Special Collections, available online at: www.lib.utah. edu/portal/site/marriottlibrary. *Dialogue* is also available on microforms through University Microfilms International, www.umi.com.

Dialogue welcomes articles, essays, poetry, notes, fiction, letters to the editor, and art. Submissions should follow the current *Chicago Manual of Style.* All submissions should be in Word and may be submitted electronically at https://dialoguejournal.com/dialogue_submissions/. For submissions of visual art, please contact art@dialoguejournal.com. Allow eight to twelve weeks for review of all submissions.

CONTENTS

A Retrospective on the Scholarship of Richard Bushman

Grant Underwood, Harry S. Stout, Gordon S. Wood, Catherine Kelly, and Laurie Maffly-Kipp,

with a response by Richard Lyman Bushman

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY GRANT UNDERWOOD

Among Latter-day Saint academics, few have achieved the professional stature or exerted the intellectual influence of Richard Lyman Bushman. Gordon Wood, a member of the blue-ribbon panel featured here and a scholar with few peers in the historical discipline, calls Bushman "one of our most distinguished American historians." Generous and dignified as well, Richard Bushman is the proverbial "gentleman and a scholar." His words and deeds have touched many lives across the span of his more than fifty-year academic career. To commemorate that career on the eve of his eightieth birthday, it seemed fitting to honor him among his professional colleagues and friends at the January 2011 annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA).

Richard's years in the Boston area as both student and professor, his scholarly attention to New England, and the 2011 conference theme "History, Society, and the Sacred" combined to make the 2011 AHA meeting in Boston an ideal venue for a session titled "A Retrospective on the Scholarship of Richard Bushman." The American Society of Church History and the Mormon History Association were both anxious to co-sponsor the session with

the AHA. Not surprisingly, when it came time to start, virtually every chair was filled. It is common in academic conferences for people to come and go, listening to a speaker in one session and then darting off to another concurrent session to catch a different presentation. In this case, however, few left. Those who trickled in ended up on the floor but, like the rest, remained for the duration of a most engaging session. To enable the many well-wishers afterward to pay their respects to Richard and Claudia Bushman, a lovely reception was held that was ably organized by Sheree Underwood and generously underwritten by the Mormon History Association, the BYU History Department, and the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A native son of the West, born in Salt Lake City and raised in Portland, Oregon, Richard Bushman headed east for his college education. A decade later, he had served a mission, married Claudia Lauper, begun his family of eventually six children, and earned all three of his degrees from Harvard University. He received his Ph.D. in 1961 from Harvard's pioneering, multidisciplinary program: The History of American Civilization. His *Doktorvater* was the renowned Harvard historian Oscar Handlin, for whom Bushman later edited *Uprooted Americans: Essays to Honor Oscar Handlin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1979). When Bushman was ABD (all-but-done) in his Harvard program, he accepted a position at Brigham Young University and taught there for a half dozen years in the 1960s. That period was interrupted by a two-year stint at Brown University as an interdisciplinary fellow in history and psychology.

In 1968 the Bushmans left Utah for good, returning to Boston where Richard accepted a position at Boston University. His award-winning book *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967) had been published the year before and had garnered both the year's Phi Alpha Theta Prize (Phi Alpha Theta is a national history honor society) and the coveted Bancroft Prize in American History. In his mid-thirties, Bushman was already a rising star. During his nine years at Boston University, Richard wrapped up work on the Great Awakening, publishing a volume of documents on the subject that is still in print (*Great Awakening: Documents on the Revival of Religion, 1740–1745* [New

York: Atheneum, Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1970; rpt., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1989]), and then turned his research interests to Massachusetts during the Revolutionary period, launching a study that culminated some years later in *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985; rpt., 1992).

In addition to his academic endeavors, Richard managed to squeeze in time to help Claudia rear their growing family and to serve as bishop and then stake president.

The Bushmans left Boston in 1977 and took up residence in Newark, Delaware, less than an hour down the interstate from Philadelphia. Richard taught at the University of Delaware for the next twelve years. While there, he published the first installment of what would eventually become his definitive biography of Joseph Smith: *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984). The book was an immediate success, chosen as a History Book Club featured selection and as recipient of the lucrative David Woolley Evans and Beatrice Cannon Evans Biography Award in 1985. Appreciative scholars and eager generalists would have to wait another two decades for Bushman's full biography of Joseph Smith because Richard was always a historian of America first and a student of Mormon history second. As the decade of the 1980s progressed, so did Richard's work on what would become another History Book Club and Book-of-the-Month selection, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). This volume detailed the quest for gentility, for "taste and manners," in early American history. Its impact was such that, within a year, it was issued as a Vintage paperback.

Just before *Refinement of America* hit the national market, Bushman reached the pinnacle of his academic career and was appointed Gouverneur Morris Professor of History at Columbia University. This endowed chair at Columbia placed Bushman among a rarefied group of America's finest historians. No other historian who is also a Latter-day Saint, aside from the Bushmans' close friend and colleague Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, has achieved such high academic distinction. Richard's recognition is all the

more impressive because he did not shy away from publishing in Mormon history while establishing his reputation as an American historian. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that Bushman's careful scholarship on Mormonism over the years has helped Mormon studies gain an accepted place at the academic table.

As Bushman approached retirement from Columbia in 2001, he found himself contemplating the completion of his biography of Joseph Smith. With encouragement and support from the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at BYU, Bushman began a series of summer seminars in Provo, drawing together promising young students of Mormon history and setting them to work on topics related to his culminating work on Joseph Smith. In addition, his labors were enriched for several years immediately preceding the completion of the biography by his involvement as an executive editor of the new Joseph Smith Papers project. Few volumes have been more anxiously awaited than *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). Arguably Bushman's magnum opus, *Rough Stone Rolling* has sold more than 100,000 copies and garnered a number of awards, including the Evans Biography Award and the Best Book Award from the Mormon History Association. The saga of its reception and Bushman's response to that reception in the year surrounding its publication is engagingly told in *On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author's Diary* (New York: Mormon Artists Group Press, 2006; rpt. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007).

Most recently, Richard has held the inaugural Howard W. Hunter Chair in Mormon Studies at the School of Religion in the Claremont Graduate University. This is the first endowed chair in Mormon studies outside Utah.

This brief overview of Richard's long and illustrious career has focused on the major publishing milestones in his life. Given their significance, it is not surprising that Bushman has received a number of prestigious research fellowships along the way. The list of sponsoring institutions reads like a who's who of America's academic elite: Harvard, Princeton, Columbia, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Smithsonian, and the Huntington Library. Nor should it surprise

that, in addition to his major books, Bushman has published many important articles in scholarly journals.

On this occasion, however, we focus on the four major works previously mentioned. That we have been able to secure the participation of the four eminent historians who make up this panel speaks emphatically to the esteem in which Richard is held throughout the discipline. That each of these exceptionally busy scholars expressed enthusiasm about the prospect of participation testifies to their personal regard for a dear friend. Each will focus on the particular volume that intersects with the area of his or her special expertise and will discuss the impact of Richard's scholarship on the relevant historiography. Harry Stout will discuss *From Puritan to Yankee*. Gordon Wood will probe *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*. Catherine Kelly will engage *The Refinement of America*. And Laurie Maffly-Kipp will assess the contribution of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. While some element of celebration will be both inevitable and appropriate, the primary purpose of the session is to provide a serious exploration of Bushman's scholarship. Bushman himself will be the commentator and will respond to what this blue-ribbon panel says about his work. His remarks on *King and People*, abbreviated for lack of time in the oral presentation, are here restored. He will also offer his own retrospective ruminations about his scholarship. I shall introduce each of our distinguished panelists immediately preceding his or her presentation.

As a minor aside for readers of *Dialogue*, Richard Bushman wrote the very first "Letter to the Editor" to appear in the journal and served as the journal's first book review editor.

* * *

INTRODUCTION TO HARRY S. STOUT

HARRY S. STOUT is professor of history, religious studies, and American studies, and Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Christianity at Yale Divinity School. He has published *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* with Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B.

Eerdmans, 1991), and *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking Press, 2006), and several edited books, including *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) with Darryl G. Hart, and *Religion in American History: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) with Jon Butler. He is the general editor of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953–) and co-director with Jon Butler of the Center for Religion and American Society at Yale University.

HARRY S. STOUT

I am delighted to offer some thoughts on the legacy of Richard Bushman's *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765*. On a personal note, I can begin by admitting that this book influenced me more than any other single book I read during graduate school. On rereading it for this session and looking at my marginal notes, I realized anew that it literally set the categories for the first two scholarly articles I wrote. Before Bushman, Puritan scholarship was almost exclusively theological and categorized as "intellectual history." But change was in the air. The field of American history was undergoing a generational transformation that would culminate in the rise of the "New Social History." Suddenly it was no longer enough to study the treatises of a small army of Puritan preachers for their intellectual content. Questions of economic and demographic change, political power, and social conflict assumed a new primacy and *From Puritan to Yankee* was in the thick of it. In the remarks to follow, I would like to summarize some of the major arguments in *From Puritan to Yankee* that helped to redefine the field of colonial New England studies, and then move on to a critical appreciation.

The main contours of Bushman's argument follow along economic, religious, and political lines. Briefly stated, the book offers a social and cultural analysis of colonial New England that tells the familiar story of "declension" but in a strikingly original way. In looking at the eighteenth century, Bushman portrays the devolution of the Puritan consensual community (nicely summarized by Kenneth Lockridge as a "closed, corporate, Christian, Utopian Community"),[1] to a more recognizably democratic culture. According to Bushman, the primary triggers for this devolu-

Eerdmans, 1991), and *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking Press, 2006), and several edited books, including *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) with Darryl G. Hart, and *Religion in American History: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) with Jon Butler. He is the general editor of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953–) and co-director with Jon Butler of the Center for Religion and American Society at Yale University.

HARRY S. STOUT

I am delighted to offer some thoughts on the legacy of Richard Bushman's *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765*. On a personal note, I can begin by admitting that this book influenced me more than any other single book I read during graduate school. On rereading it for this session and looking at my marginal notes, I realized anew that it literally set the categories for the first two scholarly articles I wrote. Before Bushman, Puritan scholarship was almost exclusively theological and categorized as "intellectual history." But change was in the air. The field of American history was undergoing a generational transformation that would culminate in the rise of the "New Social History." Suddenly it was no longer enough to study the treatises of a small army of Puritan preachers for their intellectual content. Questions of economic and demographic change, political power, and social conflict assumed a new primacy and *From Puritan to Yankee* was in the thick of it. In the remarks to follow, I would like to summarize some of the major arguments in *From Puritan to Yankee* that helped to redefine the field of colonial New England studies, and then move on to a critical appreciation.

The main contours of Bushman's argument follow along economic, religious, and political lines. Briefly stated, the book offers a social and cultural analysis of colonial New England that tells the familiar story of "declension" but in a strikingly original way. In looking at the eighteenth century, Bushman portrays the devolution of the Puritan consensual community (nicely summarized by Kenneth Lockridge as a "closed, corporate, Christian, Utopian Community"),[1] to a more recognizably democratic culture. According to Bushman, the primary triggers for this devolu-

tion were the combined forces of relentless economic expansion and religious contention. These destructive forces released a degree of individualism and generated frankly factional politics based on private rather than public interest. These continual challenges to authority altered the conception of the nature of the state and of the proper relationship between the governors and the governed in ever more democratic ways. This transformation, in turn, paved the way both for revolutionary resistance in the late eighteenth century and for the Yankee individualism that came to triumph in the nineteenth century.

Bushman's method reminds me ever so much of Perry Miller's sense of colonial New England as a laboratory or "test tube" to describe the evolutionary process of Americanization, from its European origins in the seventeenth century to the Revolution and a new republic in the nineteenth century. Though disdainful of social history, Miller astutely recognized that colonial New England had no significant immigration after 1640. Nor were any books with dangerous ideas allowed into the colony. This meant that New England's cultural and intellectual evolution was entirely internal—the product of successive generations of insulated New Englanders confronted with the new realities of their New World environment. With few outside influences to contaminate the test tube, it would be possible to observe the interactions of ideas, individuals, and the environment, and trace change in motion as it evolved over generations. Miller believed that he could trace this transformation through elite intellectual sources alone, that supposedly marched lock-step into the future as a monolithic "New England Mind."

One great contribution of *From Puritan to Yankee* was to prove Miller's test-tube methodology astute but his conclusions wrong. By broadening his search beyond clerical voices to political and economic elites, Bushman unveiled the profound transformations in eighteenth-century New England that had, as their greatest cultural convulsion, the Great Awakening. In fact, there was no monolithic mind by 1690, nor could printed sermons alone reveal what was happening on the ground, as Puritans became Yankees.

The research invested in *From Colony to Province* is far ranging and imaginative. In particular, Bushman thoroughly mined the

fantastic manuscript archives at the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. Included in these records are land records, as well as deeds, mortgages, and exchanges. Bushman also combed local town records for town meeting minutes, proprietor records, and the papers of ecclesiastical societies. Information on individuals was available to Bushman through probate records, also housed at the Connecticut State Library. Finally Bushman accessed Connecticut sermons, especially in the awakening era.

Bushman sets the stage for his laboratory with a backward look at seventeenth-century Puritan origins. (See Chapters 1–2.) In this traditional, and quasi-theocratic society, the Congregational Church and the vernacular Word of God reigned supreme. The church, in submission to scripture, and not the individual, was the lowest common denominator of a good and godly social order. Every institution from marriage and the family to the state and the economy was designed with a view toward upholding the integrity of church and Word. Personal "liberties" and "freedoms" went no further than the freedom to honor God's laws and ministers—a lesson painfully learned by, among others, Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams. Culture and education did not exist for their own sake, but to train citizens in literacy for membership in a Bible Commonwealth.

From seventeenth-century origins, Bushman shifts to his primary focus on the eighteenth century, describing the forces that would destroy the original Puritan utopian vision. These included land, commerce, religion, and politics.

Economics, even more than religion, would prove especially transformative in Bushman's analysis. During the Stuart Restoration, property titles were threatened; and in 1685, the Connecticut General Assembly permanently altered the social organization of the towns by transferring the control of land from all town inhabitants to individual proprietors. An exclusive proprietary group now exercised privileges formerly held by all, and the line thus drawn between proprietors and inhabitants destroyed the homogeneity of the community and created a group of "outcasts" at variance with the leadership. The result was social erosion that "debilitated the old order" (37). As early as 1690, agriculture was no longer about self-sufficiency and communal barter, but about emerging markets in timber, fish, and surplus produce, all mak-

ing their way to urban and coastal markets through a network of navigable rivers and, increasingly, roads. (See Chapters 3–6.)

Accompanying the economic transformation was a relentless population growth that demographic historians working in the 1970s likened to the population explosions of emerging nations today. In the original founding towns, grandchildren and great-grandchildren discovered that land was no longer available for them to inherit. Caught in what demographers label a "demographic transition," those populations gradually dispersed to land located farther from the village centers and away from old institutional controls inherent in church and state. The creation of separate parishes, a frequent occurrence after 1700, inevitably spurred contention between the "core" and the "periphery" over myriad issues including schools, meetinghouses, roads, militia duty, and town taxes, all of which destroyed the original town harmony. That an individual's interests were no longer coextensive with the town but divided between town and parish ultimately diminished his or her attachment to both, a process that, Bushman argues, further promoted the growth of individual freedom from social, religious, and political constraints. (See Chapters 10–14.)

As if new parishes were not enough, Bushman traces the emergence of entirely new towns after 1690, especially in eastern Connecticut. These towns were organized differently from the original towns. Proprietors bought tracts of land and engaged in speculation. The new basis for town citizenship was no longer moral probity, a shared theology, or community approval, but cash. Land speculation induced geographic mobility, which, in turn, created unprecedented social instability. Private citizens invariably had less commitment to the town as community, especially if they were nonresident proprietors or tenants. Because towns as institutions became less effective in maintaining social control and in furthering the interests of their inhabitants, individuals began to look beyond them to the provincial government to fulfill their private ambitions and to resolve disputes. (See Chapter 6.)

But this provincial recentering, Bushman shows, was no more successful in promoting unity and cohesion than were the local towns. The long and remarkable contention between James Fitch, Native American Indians, and the Winthrop family over titles to

vast tracts of land in eastern Connecticut embroiled previously apolitical individuals in provincial politics because their property rights were directly affected by one faction or the other. This division within the colony's leadership diminished the sanctity and authority of government and allowed ordinary men—and women (though their voices are largely mute in Bushman's account)—to voice their desires and complaints, which they expressed not only in votes but also in mob action. While the conservative upper house decried the loss of law and order, the more popular lower house proclaimed its duty to represent the will of the people. By looking simultaneously at economic and political change, Bushman is able to show how, subtly, government's role was coming to be seen more as the promoter of the people's desires and less as the authoritative governor over their passions. (See Chapters 15–16.)

The same process occurred in religion. Clerical elites found themselves increasingly on the defensive before an assertive laity and experienced a sharp decline in status. Even as they claimed the exclusive right to speak for God in public assembly and use the pulpit to decry declension in popular piety, resentful parishioners could fight back by withholding or reducing clerical salaries, a punishment made sharper because inflation, fueled by paper currency, steadily eroded the value of those salaries. Instead of presenting a collective front before the people as in the past, the clergy, too, disassembled into contending factions distinguished by rival emphases on the "head" or the "heart." These divisions would presage the divisions wrought by the Great Awakening. Here Bushman recognizes a divisive contestation of "piety" versus "order." Head-centered ministers stressed the importance of a well-regulated intelligence that would rationally balance all the centrifugal forces in society and bend them to a consensus. Heart-centered ministers emphasized the "New Birth" and the attendant responsibilities of ministers to transcend questions of social and ecclesiastical order and touch the souls of their congregations. This division, in turn, presupposed that the ministers themselves had experienced vital grace and a personal relationship with Christ. (See Chapter 12.)

In this divisive and guilt-ridden society, a "great awakening" found fertile ground in Connecticut. Bushman describes the

awakening as a "psychological earthquake" that created new men and women with new social, as well as religious, attitudes. When discussing the Great Awakening, Bushman augments his economic analysis with a foray into psychology and traces the shifting psyches of Connecticut Puritans. With the commercial revolution in place and newfound fortunes throughout the land, many inhabitants experienced guilt over their commercial gains. These feelings were reinforced by accusations from the clergy that they had declined in piety and were in danger of hell's damnation unless they returned to a well-ordered past with proper deference to godly magistrates and ministers. In traditional Puritan teaching, these clergymen were God's representatives, and as a result, their words and their laws were, in essence, God's words and God's laws. Traditional Puritans, Bushman recognized, "did not separate earthly clashes with authority from sins against God, for they believed the rulers and laws derived their power from the heavens" (187). To rebel against the leaders was to rebel against God. Unwilling to change their economically driven ways, yet unable to shake their guilt before accusing ministers and magistrates, the people lived on a razor's edge of economic success and psychospiritual remorse.

The Great Awakening resolved this tension by calling into question the equality of ministers and magistrates with the very word of God. It told them, in effect, that they could challenge their leaders' authority without mortally endangering their souls, because those authorities were merely men—in many cases, men lacking in experiential grace. By extension, it told them that resistance to authority was not a sin against God. All they needed to do was to acknowledge their personal guilt before God and find personal salvation. With this acknowledgment, God's unconditional grace suddenly loomed larger in their psyches than sin and condemnation. (See Chapter 13.)

I have gone on at some length in summarizing the argument of this book in order to highlight the brilliance of the argument when it first appeared in 1967. When read in the context of scholarship written since 1967, I can imagine certain differences in emphasis, without affecting the central argument, which stands as strong today as it did then. All of these additional emphases would be informed by the now decades-old "New Social History."

First, if he were writing today, Bushman would certainly be aware of the recentering of colonial religious and cultural history from New England to the Middle Colonies and South in what historian Charles Cohen terms a "post-Puritan paradigm."[2] This development would lead Bushman to certain constraints in making clear that his Yankees are not stand-ins for American Yankees but, on a more limited scale, New England Yankees. This adjustment, however, does not challenge Bushman's argument, only its scope.

Second, I imagine that if *From Puritan to Yankee* were written today, Indians would play a more central role in the narrative. As it stands, they are generally backgrounded in disputes over white men's lands and wars. If written today, their agency would be more acknowledged as central to the evolving Anglo-American drama, and indeed, as critical to that evolution. They would stand as irreducibly important "others," in ways that would decisively interact with the laboratory mix.

Third, and relatedly, if the book were written today, women would play a more active role as agents and enablers. Three decades of scholarship on what Nancy Cott termed the "bonds of womanhood" would shift the argument from what is essentially an all-male analysis, especially of the Great Awakening, to a more nuanced approach that highlighted how women's voices and presences helped to shape the lived experience of colonial inhabitants. I think the work of Cott herself would be influential on Bushman, alongside that of such scholars as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Amanda Porterfield, Sandra Gustafson, Cornelia Dayton, or Catherine Brekus.

Finally, I close with a brief meditation. When the book first came out I was so enamored of the title that I never really paid attention to the subtitle, until preparing for this meeting: "Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765." When placing "Puritan" and "Yankee" alongside character, some difficult questions emerge. Puritan culture and "puritanical" are notably negative terms today associated with strict moral legislation and the persecution of witches or Quakers; "Yankees," on the other hand, are generally heroic and quintessential Americans of the finest sort (at least in New England, if not the Confederacy!). But the Yankees who emerge in this study are not the estimable heroes of American democracy. I doubt many Americans would regret

the transition from quasi-theocracy to republic. But what about character? Yankee culture emerges in these pages as oddly degenerate: conflicted, greedy, increasingly violent and war prone, and terribly exploitive.

No one can read Bushman's economic characterization of Yankee culture today without being uneasily aware of the resonances with our present: reckless speculation and people "living beyond their means," shopkeepers and merchants who "extended credit ever more liberally," creating a downward spiral where "indebtedness embittered relations all across the complex web of credit" (136). When reading this book, one can more easily understand the resistance of pastors like Jonathan Edwards to Yankee manners and pre-capitalistic free markets. As summed up by Bushman: "Besides a passionate independence, the familiar avarice and shrewdness also characterized the [Yankee's] temperament. . . . By 1765 the door was open for a release of the cupidity that was in time to bring him such notoriety" (287). On the level of character, one can more readily understand the concluding two sentences of *Puritan to Yankee*: "In the century after the Revolution Yankee society produced a flowering of individualism, a magnificent display of economic and artistic virtuosity. Yankees also learned the sorrows of rootlessness—fear, guilt, and loneliness. The light and the dark both were fruits of the liberty wrested in the eighteenth century from the Puritan social order" (288).

This is a sobering book that deserves ongoing appreciation. It has more than stood up to the test of time and will continue to inform colonial historiography in decades to come. Speaking personally, and for the larger audience before me, I thank you for this gift of scholarship, along with other works yet to be discussed.

Notes

1. Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years. Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York: Norton, 1970).

2. Charles L. Cohen, "The Post-Puritan Paradigm of Early American Religious History," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd ser., 54 (1997): 695–722.

INTRODUCTION TO GORDON S. WOOD

GORDON S. WOOD is Alva O. Way University Professor Emeritus at Brown University. He received his B.A. degree from Tufts University and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. He taught at Harvard University and the University of Michigan before joining the faculty at Brown in 1969. He is the author of many works, including *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), which won the Bancroft Prize and the John H. Dunning Prize in 1970, and *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), which won the Pulitzer Prize for History and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Prize in 1993. *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin, 2004) was awarded the Julia Ward Howe Prize by the Boston Authors Club in 2005. His book *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin) was published in 2006 and *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History* (New York: Penguin) in 2008. In October 2009 he published a volume in the OXFORD HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES series titled *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press). *Empire of Liberty* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, the winner of the New-York Historical Society American History Book Prize, and a *New York Times* bestseller. In 2011 he was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama and the Churchill Bell by Colonial Williamsburg. Professor Wood is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

GORDON S. WOOD

Since Dick Bushman is one of our most distinguished American historians, it is a great honor and privilege to participate in the commemoration of his eightieth birthday. All of his major works are imaginative and path-breaking, but I have a special affection for *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (1985; rpt. ed., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), the work that I was asked to comment on.

Sometime around 1980 at some meeting or another, I got to talking with Dick about interesting books that we had recently read. One I mentioned was Harold Perkin's *The Origins of Modern*

English Society, 1780–1880 (London: Routledge, 1969) which had been published in 1969. I had owned the book for a decade but had not gotten around to reading it until the early '80s. I was especially taken with Perkin's early chapters, where he outlines the characteristics of what he called the "Old Society."

To my surprise and delight, Dick said that he had been reading the same book and was impressed with the same opening chapters. For both of us—trained as we were in colonial history and politics—Perkin's chapters were a flash of light that helped clarify for both of us what had hitherto been inchoate and undeveloped ideas about the nature of eighteenth-century colonial society. Reading Perkin, one had the feeling that what one was instinctively groping to say could now be said with some assurance. It was not that Perkin created out of whole cloth our understanding of colonial society, but he sparked our imagination and allowed what we knew about colonial monarchical society to fall into place.

At this time, Dick was completing the manuscript for his book *King and People* published in 1985, and I was preparing the three Phelps Lectures that I would present at New York University in February 1986. These lectures would eventually be expanded and published as *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. Anyone familiar with the first section of that book will realize how similar it is to Dick's *King and People*. We are both indebted to Harold Perkin. In *King and People*, Dick actually quotes a crucial paragraph from Perkin's book, having to do with the importance of dependency and patronage in the Old Society:

> In the mesh of continuing loyalties of which appointments were the outward sign, patronage brings us very close to the inner structures of the old society. Hierarchy inhered not so much in the fortuitous juxtaposition of degree above degree, rank upon rank, status over status, as in the permanent vertical links which, rather than the horizontal solidarities of class, bound society together. "Vertical friendship," a durable two-way relationship between patrons and clients permeating the whole of society, was a social nexus peculiar to the old society, less formal and inescapable than feudal homage, more personal and comprehensive than the contractual, employment relationships of capitalist "Cash Payment." For those who lived within its embrace, it was so much an integral part of the texture of

> life that they had no name for it save "friendship." (Perkin, quoted in *King and People*, 58–59)

What Dick was describing, in effect, was a social world very different from what came after. Dick's book was, in fact, crucial in explaining the nature of that society. I don't believe many people fully understand the significance of Dick's book in explaining the nature of the Revolution that followed. His book lays out, not just a political system, but an entire society.

No one before him had described that monarchical world of the colonies as fully and as accurately as he. To be sure, we had many works describing the conflicts between king and people, between the royal governors and the colonial assemblies—over fees, over salaries, over all the little things that led to squabbles in the separate colonies. But all these works, dozens of them written over the century of academic history writing from the 1880s to the 1980s, conceived of these political controversies more or less in modern terms, as similar to the contests that might take place between governors and their legislatures today if each were in the hands of opposing political parties.

Bernard Bailyn's little book *Origins of American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968) was an exception, and both Dick and I, as Bailyn's students, were familiar with it. Bailyn was the first historian to claim that the colonial political system was fundamentally different from what followed, which, despite his misleading title, he himself conceded. The colonists' political system in the mid-eighteenth century, he wrote, had "no climax in the state and national party politics of later periods of American history. . . . The story of politics in the colonial period is not that of a distinct evolution toward the modern world: the evidence of growing modernity are delusive."[1] Thus, instead of describing the roots of modern American democratic politics where organized political parties compete for votes among a large and relatively egalitarian electorate, Bailyn's book recreated a peculiar political world of grinding factional conflict in which narrow and shifting oligarchies tied together by family or patronage struggled for power in a variety of political arenas. It describes a political system that resembled the one that had existed in England but which was sufficiently different from England's as to create an underly-

ing instability in the colonies that made the colonists receptive to much radical Whig thinking that was only marginally important in the mother country. This phenomenon led Bailyn to be confirmed, as he put it, in his "rather old-fashioned view that the Revolution was above all else an ideological, constitutional, political struggle and not primarily a controversy between social groups undertaken to force changes in the organization of society or the economy."[2]

Well, we know the American Revolution was not like the French or Russian revolutions in this respect. But I don't think Bailyn realized the extent to which the political world which he described was essentially a social world. Making that connection was left to Dick's book *King and People*. Although Dick says that "Massachusetts society was not monarchical," and that the colony "partook of monarchical culture, but lacked a monarchical society" (238), we know what he means. The society was too flat, he says, too many independent yeomen, too lacking in patronage, its chains of dependency too weak to sustain a proper monarchical society. In other words, the society was latently republican.

Still, until the moment of revolution, it saw itself as a monarchical society, a provincial outpost of the same kind of society that existed in the mother country. It was the contradiction between what it claimed to be and what it was in fact that created the instability and the confusion of politics. When the people of Massachusetts realized that they were going to throw off monarchy and become republican, they knew that they were involved in a social transformation. As Dick put it, they "soon came to understand that republican government had social implications" (235).

I think it is impossible in light of Dick's book to claim that the American Revolution was not a social revolution. So, when Bailyn argued in 1967 that the leaders of the American Revolutionary movement were concerned "not with the need to recast the social order . . . but with the need to purify a corrupt constitution and fight off the apparent growth of prerogative power," he hadn't yet read Dick's book.[3] If he had, he would have realized that Dick's *King and People*, for all its emphasis on patronage and monarchical political power, was in effect describing a society, a social order, the old king-subject society that was destroyed by the Revolution.

In his new preface in the reissue of a paperback edition in

1992, Dick realized that politics in the eighteenth century had a different meaning from what it does for us. "Now," he wrote in that preface, "we see politics as an overlay on a social structure of class relationships and on an economic system of production and trade. Eighteenth-century people saw politics as much more fundamental." I think that what he was saying in effect in that new preface was that politics back then encompassed society. The relationship between king and people was a social bond grounded in protection and allegiance. "Social relationships throughout society," said Dick in 1992, "paralleled this primary bond between king and people, creating elaborate chains of patrons and their dependents everywhere" (ix, viii).

When that political world of monarchy was repudiated and republicanism was put in its place, the society was effectively transformed. Realizing that he had written exclusively about the political culture of Massachusetts, Dick nonetheless sensed that he had written about social forces as well, though they were "social forces as the participants understood them." He was groping to see the social meaning in the political culture he was describing. He realized that throwing off monarchy constituted "more of a change than we might think, looking back." By seeing the Revolution as essentially "a struggle over dependence," Dick captured the social meaning of the Revolution (246, 249, 247). That is why I think he is correct in saying that his book, with its description of the monarchical culture of the old society, makes possible an understanding of the republican culture and the republican society that succeeded that monarchical political world.

The reason republicanism emphasized personal independence so much was because its social opposite, monarchy, emphasized personal dependency. Republics promised a new world, one without dissembling monarchical courtiers and possessing only independent free-holding farmer-patriots. It is only in the context of the monarchical culture which Dick described so brilliantly that we can come to appreciate the significance of the republican government that replaced it.

What has happened to our understanding of the American Revolution over the past half century gives me confidence that history is actually a progressive and a more or less scientific discipline—that is, that we now have a fuller and deeper understanding

of the Revolution than we had fifty years ago. We now know that all those monographs we historians write don't go to waste and fall into black holes, that they actually are building blocks that, when put together, create something new that we did not have before.

Right now most historians working on the Revolution are not much interested in the issues that Dick and I were interested in. But when the profession once again turns to the question of the transition from monarchy to republicanism, they will necessarily have to go back to Dick's path-breaking study of *King and People* to get their start. It is clearly one of the most important works of early American history written over the past half-century.

Notes

1. Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), ix.

2. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967; enlarged ed., 1992), x.

3. Ibid., 283.

INTRODUCTION TO CATHERINE E. KELLY

CATHERINE E. KELLY earned her Ph.D. from the University of Rochester in 1992. In the early 1990s, she taught at Case Western Reserve University, and since 1999 she has been at the University of Oklahoma. Her first book, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999) was awarded the James J. Broussard First Book Prize by the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic. She is the co-editor with Heidi Brayman Hackel of *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture, in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) and is currently completing a book on visual culture in the Early Republic. Since 2009, she has edited *Common-place*, an online journal of early American history and culture. She is also the winner of numerous awards and fellowships, including grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the

of the Revolution than we had fifty years ago. We now know that all those monographs we historians write don't go to waste and fall into black holes, that they actually are building blocks that, when put together, create something new that we did not have before.

Right now most historians working on the Revolution are not much interested in the issues that Dick and I were interested in. But when the profession once again turns to the question of the transition from monarchy to republicanism, they will necessarily have to go back to Dick's path-breaking study of *King and People* to get their start. It is clearly one of the most important works of early American history written over the past half-century.

Notes

1. Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), ix.

2. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967; enlarged ed., 1992), x.

3. Ibid., 283.

INTRODUCTION TO CATHERINE E. KELLY

CATHERINE E. KELLY earned her Ph.D. from the University of Rochester in 1992. In the early 1990s, she taught at Case Western Reserve University, and since 1999 she has been at the University of Oklahoma. Her first book, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999) was awarded the James J. Broussard First Book Prize by the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic. She is the co-editor with Heidi Brayman Hackel of *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture, in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) and is currently completing a book on visual culture in the Early Republic. Since 2009, she has edited *Common-place*, an online journal of early American history and culture. She is also the winner of numerous awards and fellowships, including grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the

American Antiquarian Society, and the Library Company of Philadelphia.

CATHERINE E. KELLY

Reflecting on the significance of Richard L. Bushman's *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), for the joint session of the Mormon History Association and the American Historical Association should have been a piece of cake. After all, I was charged with talking about a book that I have assigned to graduate students and undergraduates and have mined for any number of lectures. I would be speaking about a book that I continue to consult regularly for my own scholarship, a book that by now is battered, dog-eared, filled with fading marginalia and festooned with grimy post-its. I would be assessing a book that has been by my side for the whole of my career as an academic. Coming to terms with *The Refinement of America* should have been easy.

Except that it wasn't. It was, in fact, remarkably difficult. I chewed on the book, and chewed on why I couldn't figure out how to talk about the book, for a long time. Eventually, I realized that for me—and for countless other social and cultural historians, material culture scholars, art historians, and curators—*Refinement of America* has become a sort of mental furniture. By likening the book to mental furniture, I do not mean to suggest that it is static—that it is fixed in place and time. I do not mean to suggest that it is stuffed, much less stuffy. I certainly do not mean to imply that it is wooden. Instead, I mean that the book has become so deeply imbricated in how we see the relation between things and culture in early America that it is difficult to imagine that relationship without it. For that reason, it is very difficult to see the book clearly, to see it fresh, nearly twenty years after it first appeared.

Yet there are good reasons to reexamine the book now, reasons that go well beyond the opportunity to celebrate Richard Bushman's remarkable career. In the last twenty years, Americanists of all stripes—historians, art historians, and literary scholars—have been increasingly preoccupied with visual and material culture. Scholars now routinely invoke "the material turn" and "the visual turn." They refer to "thing theory" and proclaim the utility of "style as evidence."[1] A growing number of cultural and

literary historians have come to focus their studies on objects and images rather than adding them as afterthoughts—as illustrations for arguments derived solely from written documents. And while art historians and curators have always attended to visual and material sources, many of them are increasingly attuned to the cultural and political work performed by images and objects. This is a wide-ranging, protean literature; it developed from multiple (and often conflicting) fields of inquiry and cannot be categorized as the direct descendent of *Refinement of America*.

That said, the "persons, houses, and cities" that stand at the center of Bushman's landmark study have a purchase now that they did not have when the book was published. Given the attention that has accrued to the kinds of questions Bushman posed in *Refinement of America* and the evidence he mined to answer them, it makes sense to take another look at the book. Rereading *The Refinement of America* in 2011 affords a sharp sense of Bushman's remarkable achievement. But fresh readings raise fresh questions. And twenty years down the line, *Refinement of America* poses questions every bit as important as the ones it answers.

The first thing that stands out is the book's scope and range. Bushman covers a very long swath of time. To tell the story of refinement, he begins with courtesy books published in the mid-sixteenth century, hits his stride with the eighteenth century, and marches boldly through almost the whole of the nineteenth century. Although the book concludes with the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848, the last chapter reaches as far as the 1870s for evidence. That is an impressive accomplishment by any measure. More impressive than the book's temporal scope is its topical range. The book's chronology is enabled by a larger literature (literatures, really) about republicanism, capitalism, and the transformation of personal relations and social identities. Taken together, those literatures generate a meta-narrative that provides the book with its deep structure. Richard Bushman maps a narrative about refinement onto a series of other, well-established if not uncontested historical narratives about politics, economics, class, and culture.

The book's topical range is another matter altogether. The subtitle gestures modestly to "persons, houses, cities." It suggests a straightforward trajectory from the individual to ever-larger col-

lectivities. Yet unlike the historiography that generates the book's deep structure, the scholarly literatures that provided Bushman with insight into his "persons, houses, and cities" constitute disparate fields with no obvious connection to one another. *The Refinement of America* rests on a mastery of a secondary literature that is dizzying both in its breadth and in its remove from the kinds of sources that are the meat and potatoes of the historical profession. It depends on Marley R. Brown's "Ceramics from Plymouth, 1621–1800: The Documentary Records"; Katherine Gee Hornbeak's *The Complete Letter Writer in English, 1568–1800*; Daniel D. Reiff's *Small Georgian Houses in England and Virginia: Origins and Development through the 1750s*; Harold Wickliffe Rose's *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America Built in the Colonies before the Republic and Still Standing*; Roger Moss's *Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings, 1820–1920*; and Ellen and Bert Denker's *The Rocking Chair Book*.[2]

This is an extraordinarily technical literature, aimed at providing very precise information to curators, collectors, archaeologists, preservationists, and connoisseurs. To extract the relevant technical data from those sources and weave it into a story it was never intended to tell takes determination and imagination in equal measures. I confess that I had not really appreciated that part of Bushman's achievement until I started writing a book on visual and material culture. Make no mistake: It takes energy and a certain amount of courage for a traditionally trained historian to wade into and through those literatures. And it is surely no accident that so many studies published in the wake of *Refinement of America* focus only on persons, say, or cities. From a research perspective, there is nothing straightforward about telling the story of persons *and* houses *and* cities.

The second thing that strikes me about the book in 2011 is its prescience. I was fascinated by the book's 1992 reviews. Although they were generally positive, a couple of them excoriated Bushman for writing what one historian termed a "magnificent throwback." Critics who worried that the book was somehow backward-looking pointed to its geographic focus on New England and the Mid-Atlantic as opposed to the Deep South and the West; its subjects, who were overwhelmingly white and propertied if not precisely affluent; and its vexing politics, an issue I will return to

later. But in no sense does the book revert to an older form of history. Think about it: In *The Refinement of America*, Bushman writes about the multiple forms of cultural representation: about the body, performance, and spectatorship; about consumption and the consumer revolution; about manners, emulation, the persistence of British and aristocratic forms; about the representation of race. These topics were all at the cutting edge of cultural history around the time that the book was published or subsequently assumed a place there. Indeed, one way to read the book from the perspective of 2011 is as a kind of forecast for the development of a field—or interdisciplinary fields, more precisely. And this prescience is especially remarkable given that the book was, as Bushman confesses in the preface, a decade in the making.

Just as Richard Bushman could not have predicted the role his book would play for subsequent scholars, neither could he have predicted the kinds of speculation it would provoke decades after it was published. From my perspective, some of the most tantalizing issues concern the relation that Bushman sketches between things (clothing, silverware, houses, gardens) and texts. One criticism that has been leveled at the book is that it is—somehow—not really a book about material culture, not really a book about paintings or furniture or clothing. Instead, I have been told by any number of curators, art historians, and material culture experts, the *Refinement of America* is a book about texts. And if, in their remarks, "text" is not exactly a dirty word, neither is it something to boast about.

Certainly, *Refinement of America* is a far cry from the kind of scholarship oriented around a close reading of objects and images, the sort of work championed by someone like art historian Jules David Prown, a sort of approach realized most recently and most brilliantly by scholars as different as art historian Margaretta Lovell (*Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America*) and David Jaffee (*A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America*).[3] And it is certainly the case that Richard Bushman does not have the same mastery of clothing, sofas, and architecture that he has of the secondary literature addressing those things. Bushman himself acknowledges this orientation in the book's introduction. He tells us that he is sensitive to the lack of depth of his knowledge. He knows that he is no cura-

tor. He explains that he is interested in the relationship between personal ideals and the material world (xiii, xii).

That relationship, I would argue, was realized through texts, both in the early American past and in Bushman's analysis. The book points, time and again, to the dynamic, ongoing, and complex relationships that connect objects, texts, and subjectivities. It is not an accident that the flowering of gentility coincided with the flowering of print culture, with the expansive worlds of reading and writing that opened between the end of the eighteenth century and middle of the nineteenth. The objects, performances, and spaces that captured Bushman's attention took on meaning in an explicitly discursive context, one that was historically specific. Two examples can suffice. In the first, Nancy and Tommy Shippen, members of one of eighteenth-century Philadelphia's finest families, correspond about their social lives. After receiving a letter describing a ball that Nancy attended with their father, Tommy responded that he "should have liked very much to see Papa attract the admiration of the Ballroom by his graceful minuet, and not less to observe you with your handsome partners setting an example worthy of emulation" (55). For Bushman, the scene evokes the double-mindedness of eighteenth-century refinement, the simultaneous experience of being in the moment and observing oneself in the moment. The second example concerns a very different form of visibility. Bushman contends that the mass-market domestic fiction of the mid-nineteenth century offered female readers the hope that refinement would "bring worthy women to the attention of the great world" (311). Hackneyed plots turned on the promise that any refined woman's home could be transformed into "a stage watched from afar. Through refinement," he suggests, "a reader could become a person in a story" (311).

Throughout *The Refinement of America*, Bushman used these texts (in this case, letters and novels) as tools for exploring very different experiences of refinement—one unfolding at the apex of eighteenth-century Philadelphia society, the other in the parlors of the antebellum middle class. Texts provide him with points of access. But what strikes me is just how profoundly connected those reading and writing practices were to the shifting construction of refinement itself, to the imaginative alchemy that binds

objects and performances to identity and subjectivity. The Shippens's eighteenth-century double-mindedness (and all the refracted "looking" on which it depended) was realized not merely in the performative space of the ballroom. It was also, and perhaps ultimately, realized textually, through the discursive conventions and practices that shaped the siblings' relationship with each other and the world. The antebellum woman's fantasy of visibility was far less dependent upon the social, upon collaborative performances. Her fantasy was realized only through texts.

My point is not simply that texts mattered but that the nature of the text and the context in which the text was created and circulated shaped individuals' experience of refinement and of themselves. In gracefully executed script, the Shippens' pen fantasies about how their refinement allows them to shine within a small, charmed, and completely familiar circle. The antebellum woman, on the other hand, becomes visible only as a solitary reader, curled up with a novel in her parlor. Even at the level of fantasy, she becomes visible only as a "person in a story"—that is, only to the far-flung and anonymous world of readers/viewers created by the expansion of the capitalist market. However unintentionally, *The Refinement of America* directs our attention not toward a reciprocal relation between personal ideals and the material world but toward the dynamic, triangular relationship between material culture, texts, and subjectivities.

My final speculation concerns the problem of politics, the politics of culture more specifically. It should surprise no one that Richard Bushman, a scholar whose first and third books are about politics and power, is acutely sensitive to the ways that culture operates as an instrument of power. What continues to surprise me is the extent to which the same scholars who have endlessly mined *Refinement of America* for data about architecture, fashion, furniture, and manners have overlooked its arguments about power. In the book's final chapter (titled, appropriately enough, "Culture and Power"), Bushman makes a series of complicated and provocative arguments about how culture operates. Gentility spreads, he suggests, because people emulate those with more: more money, more style, more knowledge, more cachet, more refinement, and more power. So provincial colonials emulate the English aristocracy, middle-class matrons emulate colonial gentry, free blacks

emulate white respectability, and so on down the line. This is emulation. It is not mere imitation, not exactly a matter of aping one's betters.

To be sure, Bushman attends to the ways in which refinement does and does not change as it spreads across space, over time, and through different sectors for society. He is also exquisitely sensitive to its effect on the human psyche, to its capacity for transcendence and humiliation in equal measure. Nonetheless, in the end, he explains, the spread of refinement suggests that "culture is created at the top for those lower down." (405) He acknowledges that this pattern will make us uncomfortable, for this way of thinking about culture flies in the face of our egalitarian instincts. Indeed, that level of discomfort might explain why so many scholars simply ignore that last chapter.

I confess that I am one of those uncomfortable scholars. My discomfort has less to do with my politics than with the way I inhabit culture. Do we always emulate, appropriate, and borrow up? Probably not. And probably not only in our postmodern culture, in which street so often informs high style. Consider one obvious, early American example: Virginia's colonial gentry. The eighteenth-century planter class, which figures prominently in the book's opening chapters, was a bastion of refinement in precisely the terms that Bushman sets out. But those men and women also inhabited a world that was deeply informed by and often literally made by African and African American slaves. Virginia's well-heeled planters may have aspired to the standards of refinement set by England's aristocracy, but their aspirations were realized (or not) in things and words and experiences that were both explicitly creole and explicitly hybrid. The most cursory survey of eighteenth-century Anglo-Virginian food, architecture, music, language, desire, and dreams reveals the extent to which the bottom percolates up. However unwittingly, Virginia's gentry appropriated down and up. And yet . . . And yet, when those same women and men memorialized themselves, they did so through the tropes and conventions of English gentility, with its exquisitely aristocratic pedigree. Now, in the twenty-first century, we may choose to tell a different, multi-cultural story about them. But that multi-cultural story is not the story they chose to tell themselves about themselves.

Ultimately, I suspect that Richard Bushman is more right than wrong about the way refinement operates. But as the brief and contradictory example sketched above suggests, refinement is always unrealized to one degree or another. For Bushman, this unrealized, partial quality has everything to do with the fact that refinement was an ideal, a personal ideal, forever receding just ahead of the pursuer's grasp. For me, it suggests that the worlds of refinement and gentility were also always fantasy worlds. Then as now, fantasy worlds have a habit of butting up against grubby, everyday, workaday worlds. What happens then? How did these intersections register in the lives of our historical subjects? How do they register in our scholarship?

The task that remains, I would argue, is not to expose these fantasy worlds as fantasies, as always incomplete and unrealized, much less to denounce them as hypocritical or undemocratic. We would do better to explore how, for example, Virginia's gentry appropriated down even as they emulated up. We would do better to ask how they did and did not incorporate stories about these cultural processes of emulation and appropriation into the stories they chose to tell about themselves. We would do better, in other words, to examine what happened when women and men moved from the center of refinement to its margins, to consider how they inhabited—both simultaneously and sequentially—worlds that were as rough and rude as they were refined.

Notes

1. Anyone questioning the ascendance of these phrases need go no further than a Google search. For the original formulations of the theories that have since become catch-phrases, see W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Martin Jay, "That Visual Turn: The Advent of Visual Culture," *Journal of Visual Culture* 1, no. 1 (2002): 87–92; Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2002): 1–22; and Jules David Prown, "Style as Evidence," *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 3 (1980): 197–210.

2. Marley R. Brown, "Ceramics from Plymouth, 1621–1800: The Documentary Records," in Ian M. G. Quimby, ed., *Ceramics in America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1973); Katherine Gee Hornbeak, "The Complete Letter Writer in English, 1568–1800," *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, 15 (1934); Daniel D. Reiff, *Small*

Georgian Houses in England and Virginia: Origins and Development through the 1750s (Toronto: Associated University Presses for the University of Delaware Press, 1986); Harold Wickliffe Rose, *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America Built in the Colonies before the Republic and Still Standing* (New York: Hastings House, 1963); Roger Moss, *Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings, 1820–1920* (Watkins Glen, N.Y.: American Life Foundation, 1981); and Ellen Denker and Bert Denker, *The Rocking Chair Book* (New York: Mayflower Press, 1979).

3. Margaretta Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); and David Jaffee, *A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

INTRODUCTION TO LAURIE MAFFLY-KIPP

LAURIE MAFFLY-KIPP has been at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since 1989. She received her B.A. from Amherst College in English and religion (summa cum laude) and completed her Ph.D. in American history at Yale University (1990). She is now professor and chair in the Religious Studies Department and holds an adjunct appointment in the American Studies Department. Professor Maffly-Kipp's research and teaching focuses on African American religions, religion on the Pacific borderlands of the Americas, and issues of intercultural contact. In *Religion and Society in Frontier California* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994) she explored the nature of Protestant spiritual practices in gold-rush California. In articles on Mormon-Protestant conflicts in the Pacific Islands, African Americans in Haiti and Africa, and Protestant outreach to Chinese immigrants in California, Professor Maffly-Kipp has analyzed the religious contours of nineteenth-century American life. Along with Leigh Schmidt and Mark Valeri, she served as co-editor of *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630–1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2006). She also co-edited with Reid Neilson a collection of essays about Mormonism in the Pacific world, *Proclamation to the People: Nineteenth-Century Mormonism and the Pacific Basin Frontier* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), wrote the introduction for the Penguin Classics edition of the Book of Mormon (2008), and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Mormon History*.

Georgian Houses in England and Virginia: Origins and Development through the 1750s (Toronto: Associated University Presses for the University of Delaware Press, 1986); Harold Wickliffe Rose, *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America Built in the Colonies before the Republic and Still Standing* (New York: Hastings House, 1963); Roger Moss, *Century of Color: Exterior Decoration for American Buildings, 1820–1920* (Watkins Glen, N.Y.: American Life Foundation, 1981); and Ellen Denker and Bert Denker, *The Rocking Chair Book* (New York: Mayflower Press, 1979).

3. Margaretta Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); and David Jaffee, *A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

INTRODUCTION TO LAURIE MAFFLY-KIPP

LAURIE MAFFLY-KIPP has been at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since 1989. She received her B.A. from Amherst College in English and religion (summa cum laude) and completed her Ph.D. in American history at Yale University (1990). She is now professor and chair in the Religious Studies Department and holds an adjunct appointment in the American Studies Department. Professor Maffly-Kipp's research and teaching focuses on African American religions, religion on the Pacific borderlands of the Americas, and issues of intercultural contact. In *Religion and Society in Frontier California* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994) she explored the nature of Protestant spiritual practices in gold-rush California. In articles on Mormon-Protestant conflicts in the Pacific Islands, African Americans in Haiti and Africa, and Protestant outreach to Chinese immigrants in California, Professor Maffly-Kipp has analyzed the religious contours of nineteenth-century American life. Along with Leigh Schmidt and Mark Valeri, she served as co-editor of *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630–1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2006). She also co-edited with Reid Neilson a collection of essays about Mormonism in the Pacific world, *Proclamation to the People: Nineteenth-Century Mormonism and the Pacific Basin Frontier* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), wrote the introduction for the Penguin Classics edition of the Book of Mormon (2008), and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Mormon History*.

In 2010, the prestigious Belknap Press imprint of Harvard University Press published Professor Maffly-Kipp's *Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American Race Histories* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); and Oxford University Press published her *Women's Work: An Anthology of African-American Women's Historical Writings from Antebellum America to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), edited with Kathryn Lofton. As if all this were not enough, Professor Maffly-Kipp is president-elect of the American Society of Church History.

LAURIE MAFFLY-KIPP

It's a great pleasure to be here to celebrate and honor the work of a colleague and friend I have admired for many years. I feel particularly fortunate to have been asked to talk about Richard's monumental biography of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005). One of the books on my list for my comprehensive exams as a graduate student was *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), the first installment of this project. When this extended treatment appeared in 2005, I felt as though I finally had the bookend to that earlier study. The story had been completed. I know that for Richard it felt as though it had been a long time in the making, too. But it was worth the wait. *Rough Stone Rolling* is so clearly the work of a judicious and seasoned scholar who has a thorough command of his sources and an encyclopedic knowledge of his subject. I can't begin to count the number of times in the last five years that I have returned to consult *Rough Stone Rolling* as the definitive account, the last word—well, maybe not the last, for we are academics, after all—on Joseph Smith's life and legacy.

It also seems fitting that Richard's work and this book in particular are the subject of a joint session sponsored by three groups: the American Historical Association, the American Society of Church History, and the Mormon History Association. For these overlapping communities are three of the intended audiences for this book, another being Mormon lay readers who are not scholars or historians. Richard took on a particular kind of challenge in addressing them simultaneously. They are diverse audiences, to be sure: *Rough Stone Rolling* has received views from multiple quarters that exhibit different and sometimes contradic-

tory modes of analysis and critique. They represent not simply different scholarly fields, but communities with distinctive questions, methods, and epistemologies. To Richard's great credit, readers in all of these areas have found much to praise. Ironically, Richard himself has been perhaps his own harshest critic, writing in his later memoir, *On the Road with Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), about his various regrets in terms of the way he approached the subject, detailing things he might have done differently. I would instead credit him with enormous bravery—not only in his willingness to voice publicly his own fears about the reception of his research—fears that we all feel and that most of us spend our lives trying to mask—but also courage in the optimism and audacity of his vision of the possibility of presenting Joseph Smith to believers and nonbelievers alike in a way that all might understand, if not entirely agree with.

If the first thing to be affirmed is the methodological difficulty of this task, the even more striking feature of this project is the stubborn opacity of its subject. I received an email several months ago from someone I did not know. The subject line was of the sort that should always give one pause: "a quick question." Here was the email: "Do the elements of the Book of Mormon—language, phrasing, sentence structure, nouns, concepts—appear to be similar or related to any religious writings you are familiar with that existed before 1823? I just can't believe Jos Smith Jr. made all that up out of thin air, but I don't believe in divine personages, either. Can you recommend good books on this?"

The question might have been quick, but the answer, as we all know, is not. Joseph Smith Jr. is a complete puzzle of a figure; he is extraordinarily difficult to "explain" as a human being, even if one brackets the claims of miracles. An uneducated young farmboy who produces an extraordinary text and eventually launches an elaborate and bureaucratically sophisticated religious movement; a man who gives his all to the growth of a community yet simultaneously acts in ways that he knows will result in persecution or even his own death; a charismatic figure who elicits both utter loyalty and intense loathing from observers.

These are not easy characteristics to explain, and there is a reason that few people have attempted a comprehensive biographical treatment. The fact that Fawn Brodie's work, first pub-

lished over sixty years ago, has until now been the "go to" book on Smith's life by most historians outside of the LDS Church, speaks volumes about the reticence of mainstream historians to take on a tough personality—much less tackle the subjects of revelation, the miraculous, and the power of the religious imagination. It is also testimony to the elusiveness of Smith himself. *Rough Stone Rolling* bores directly into some of these puzzles and asks precisely the right set of questions: How can we possibly understand this man? What makes him tick? And I should note that Church leaders have been no more anxious than outsiders to rush to get comprehensive biographies of Smith in print.

One of the highlights of the book for me is the skill with which Richard thinks through a plausible logic for Joseph's actions over time. He humanizes the young prophet; at times he presents a number of alternative possibilities for behavior—and he tells his reader honestly when Smith becomes a cipher in his own writings; this insight is enormously important as an admission of the limits of the historian's craft. Richard steers a deliberate middle ground between a hagiographic portrait of Smith and an exposé of his more colorful exploits. The Smith that emerges here gets angry, sometimes impetuously and violently so. He agonizes over his family situation. He runs up debts and runs away from the law. But Bushman provides the social and cultural context that renders many of the Prophet's reactions understandable, if not always laudable. Bushman gamely tackles the most controversial elements of Smith's life: the early visions, the translation of the Book of Mormon, the failures of the community in Kirtland and in Missouri, and the intra-communal tensions surrounding the revelation on plural marriage. He gives historians precisely the kind of texture and density that they love, if not always the explanations they can accept.

Richard explained in his later writings that he was also trying to give believing Mormons what he thought they needed: honesty about the character flaws of the most revered of their religious leaders.[1] Smith's deep humanity in the face of revelatory bombardment could be seen as an endearing attribute in a prophet. But here the gulf between non-LDS historians, who tend to view biography as evidence that can provide a distinctive path into a more general knowledge of the past, and believers, who seek

truth of a different sort in the life of the biographical subject, seems to have become most apparent.

Or is this the most accurate diagnosis of the battle over Joseph Smith's legacy? Is it really evidence of a division between believers and nonbelievers, between those who seek scientific fact in biography and those who clamor for a faith-promoting rendering? It is the easy explanation, to be sure, and it fits with a pattern of intellectual exclusion that Mormons have long felt within the academy and have themselves fostered at times. It is also the way I understood the divide when I reviewed Richard's book—believers versus hostile, nonreligious academics. But on further reflection I believe that this analysis is too easy, and it causes us to overlook some of the more significant methodological questions raised by Richard's work. This presumed war between secular and faithful readings of *Rough Stone Rolling* has been, to my way of thinking, overblown; this relatively simplistic analysis of the situation does not accurately describe the myriad reactions to Richard's interpretive choices or to Smith himself. Apologetics is not the only intellectual fault line that we can see; it prevents us from probing further into the very questions that this work so elegantly raises. I have time here for only a few brief examples that suggest a more complex mapping of the battle over the biography of a religious leader.

In an extended essay in the *FARMS Review* about reactions to *Rough Stone Rolling*, Daniel C. Peterson, a BYU professor, was quite laudatory of Richard's multi-faceted depiction of the prophet: "I hope that Joseph Smith will be perplexing to others. He should be. Unless and until onlookers come to grips with his claims—in my view, until they accept them—they should continue to find him baffling."[2] By "accept," I take Peterson to mean something quite different from understanding the facts of Smith's life as revealed in the biographical form. Indeed, he seems to suggest that biography cannot completely explain Smith but must be a preliminary step toward another kind of agreement with Smith's religious claims.

An online blogger, also a believer who praised the book, suggests a somewhat different aim: "Bushman's purpose wasn't to 'dig up dirt' on the prophet, but rather to point out that the 'dirt' that has already been dug up really isn't as bad as people sometimes think. Once it is placed in its historical context, and once we see Joseph as a man, then the so called 'dirt' isn't such a big deal,

and we can get back to the work of thinking of Joseph as the Prophet of God, and the 'Hero' that he was."[3] In this case, the "dirt" of biography is an obstacle, not a help, to a different kind of knowledge of Smith as a prophet. In both cases, believers weigh in on this book and find it helpful—but their reasoning is radically different and the distinctions are worth pursuing if we are to understand how they and others might characterize their own relationship to the past and to Smith as a historical subject.

Lest we assume, though, that historians have a more unified, secular perspective on what biography should be, we need look no further than the editorial statement of the *American Historical Review*, which claims that, as a general rule, the journal does not publish biographical pieces—unless the biography can say something more fundamental about historical events or periods. The AHA has long displayed an ambivalence about the significance of biographical method, and some historians have even charged that it yields a "lesser" form of history than other kinds of analyses. (Who will define value and significance in these discussions is a subject left unexplored.) For others, biography is a more forthrightly presentist enterprise; rather than toeing a positivist line about the need for particular and verifiable forms of evidence (measures unmet by discussions of miracles and revelation), quite a few historians would agree with the formulation of Louis Menand that biography is a powerful form that verges on fiction: "A biography is a tool for imagining another person, to be used along with other tools. It is not a window or a mirror."[4]

I don't have time to do more than gesture to the fact that historians and believers both weigh issues of knowledge and truth in their formulations, and their assessments are hardly uniform, nor are they easily lined up along sacred/secular lines. If we can move past cultural battle lines, *Rough Stone Rolling* raises profoundly important questions for both historians and others about biographical method, about the value of study of the past for present communities (both those that are avowedly religious and those that are less explicit about the values they share and promote), and about the questions that motivate our study in the first place. For me, the book also opened up new sorts of questions about the power of religious imagination and how we evaluate it. Richard does a wonderful job of placing Smith's activities in a localized context of reli-

gious ferment and prophecy. The more one looks, the more one finds other ordinary and many unschooled Americans of his day thinking "like the Bible" (107), as Richard puts it, writing and publishing extrabiblical texts or glosses on scripture that, when taken in the aggregate, challenge easy assumptions about the inviolability of Protestant notions of the canon as closed.

The second point I want to raise concerns the relationship of Smith as biographical subject to the historiography of Mormonism as a whole. It seems to me that readers on all sides have conspired to equate Smith's life story with the history of Mormonism. It is revealing that the *New York Review of Books* called on Larry McMurtry, a writer of fiction set in the American West, to review *Rough Stone Rolling*.[5] Smith himself, of course, never set foot in anything resembling the American West of today (although admittedly Missouri was, at one time, a frontier); his life is not like the story told in *Lonesome Dove*. I read this editorial choice (to have McMurtry review the book) as a conflation of the later history of the Church with Smith's life story. Surely Smith is inextricably linked to the church he founded, and his claims regarding the Book of Mormon (including writing himself into the story) forever bind his own life to the sacred history that he revealed. Yet many Mormons in the early period came to the Church without ever having met Joseph Smith or having seen the Book of Mormon. While Smith as a sign or symbol was surely important to their acceptance of religious claims, his life does not encapsulate the entire history of the early Church, and we should not treat it as standing in for a more full-blown look at why many believers from many different places joined the Mormons in this early period.

The temptation to conflate Joseph Smith's life story with the history of the Church also springs, I think, from Richard's success: the persuasive way in which he narrates the unfolding of revelation as a coherent and teleological set of steps, a series of events that dramatically unfold into a worldview. *Rough Stone Rolling* does a marvelous job of articulating the appeal and coherence of Mormon cosmology and ecclesiology for the uninitiated. This approach pays off in lucidity. Drawing on a number of excellent studies of early Mormonism and American culture in the Early Republic, Richard makes a strong case for the appeal of a family-based, priesthood-centered theology centered in ongoing reve-

lation. Despite the tendencies of anti-Mormons both then and now to make Mormon cosmology sound bizarre and exotic, Richard artfully connects Mormon beliefs to longstanding debates and issues in Christian theology. And he places the Mormons politically as well, noting the differences between their "kingdom talk" and the republican rhetoric of their neighbors.

Yet this smoothing down of the rough edges, the ignoring of the bits and pieces of revelation that never went anywhere, leads to a methodological question: Did Joseph Smith Jr. ever understand Mormonism in the way that Richard describes it, or is this a Mormon theology for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? What I want to make clear here is that this problem is not one of religious apology as much as one of historical method. I'm not convinced that Joseph understood the totality of his teachings in as lucid a manner as they are described here, since Richard also tells us that revelations came to Smith unsystematically, in scattered "flashes and bursts" (xxi). Surely many of Smith's contemporaries did not share the certainty, for example, that women occupy the most central and important role in the Mormon system (444), or that the Book of Mormon is a transgressive text that champions the "native point of view" (98–99). At best these are contested issues, and certainly they are points that were not decided in Smith's lifetime.

I want to stress, returning to my first point, that this issue is not necessarily a difference of belief versus nonbelief. It dovetails with crucial debates over the interpretive method employed by the biographer: How much coherence should an author attribute to the subject? How much is any life experienced as a fragmented and partial set of events? Here, of course, the stakes for understanding Joseph Smith's life as existentially coherent are great for those who believe that he was an instrument in the unfolding of a grander cosmic scheme. But for historians, the question may simply be: Does this narrative tell us about Joseph Smith's self-understanding, or does it provide a retrospective view of how one might imagine Smith's bursts of insight to cohere? These, it seems to me, are questions well within the bounds of scholarly debate and are fruitfully asked about any portrait of a religious founder. Where does the leader stop and the tradition begin to take on a life of its own?

I return, in closing, to the difficulty of this task. Writing biography is hard work. But it is particularly difficult with a figure as

elusive as Smith, a religious leader who stands for so much to so many. *Rough Stone Rolling* is a terrific example of a book that achieves what such works do best: It gives us a comprehensive and compelling reading of an individual life, it uses that life as a window into a historical period, and it forces us to grapple with issues of meaning and value that are never settled or closed. That it leaves unanswered some questions about ultimate truth, while it may dismay those who want to just go back to seeing Joseph Smith Jr. as a "hero," is in my mind a signal achievement. I applaud Richard for helping us all to continue these conversations.

Notes

1. Richard Lyman Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author's Diary* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 19–20, 121.

2. Daniel C. Peterson, "Editor's Introduction: Reflections on the Reactions to *Rough Stone Rolling* and Related Matters," *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): xi–liv, http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=19&num=1&id=631 (accessed April 19, 2011).

3. James Carroll, "Rough Stone Rolling Review," http://amateurscriptorians.blogspot.com/2009/02/rough-stone-rolling-review.html (accessed April 19, 2011).

4. Louis Menand, "The Lives of Others: The Biography Business," *New Yorker*, August 6, 2007, http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/ 2007/08/06/070806crbo_books_menand (accessed April 19, 2011).

5. Larry McMurtry, "Angel in America," *New York Review of Books*, November 17, 2005, 35–37.

GRANT UNDERWOOD

What a rich and stimulating session! Thanks to all our presenters for their warm and insightful remarks. At this point, Claudia Bush- man has graciously agreed to offer a few personal reflections by way of introduction to Richard. Immediately following Claudia's remarks, Richard will have the last word.

[Claudia extemporaneously gave a few comments about Richard.]

RICHARD LYMAN BUSHMAN

My thanks to Grant Underwood for conceiving this panel and go-

elusive as Smith, a religious leader who stands for so much to so many. *Rough Stone Rolling* is a terrific example of a book that achieves what such works do best: It gives us a comprehensive and compelling reading of an individual life, it uses that life as a window into a historical period, and it forces us to grapple with issues of meaning and value that are never settled or closed. That it leaves unanswered some questions about ultimate truth, while it may dismay those who want to just go back to seeing Joseph Smith Jr. as a "hero," is in my mind a signal achievement. I applaud Richard for helping us all to continue these conversations.

Notes

1. Richard Lyman Bushman, *On the Road with Joseph Smith: An Author's Diary* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 19–20, 121.

2. Daniel C. Peterson, "Editor's Introduction: Reflections on the Reactions to *Rough Stone Rolling* and Related Matters," *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): xi–liv, http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?vol=19&num=1&id=631 (accessed April 19, 2011).

3. James Carroll, "Rough Stone Rolling Review," http://amateurscriptorians.blogspot.com/2009/02/rough-stone-rolling-review.html (accessed April 19, 2011).

4. Louis Menand, "The Lives of Others: The Biography Business," *New Yorker*, August 6, 2007, http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/ 2007/08/06/070806crbo_books_menand (accessed April 19, 2011).

5. Larry McMurtry, "Angel in America," *New York Review of Books*, November 17, 2005, 35–37.

GRANT UNDERWOOD

What a rich and stimulating session! Thanks to all our presenters for their warm and insightful remarks. At this point, Claudia Bush- man has graciously agreed to offer a few personal reflections by way of introduction to Richard. Immediately following Claudia's remarks, Richard will have the last word.

[Claudia extemporaneously gave a few comments about Richard.]

RICHARD LYMAN BUSHMAN

My thanks to Grant Underwood for conceiving this panel and go-

ing to all the work to put it together under the auspices of the American Society of Church History. It was a generous act of friendship on his part. I am delighted also that Skip, Gordon, Catherine, and Laurie agreed to comment. It is a little uncomfortable for me to be the center of attention. But it is gratifying nonetheless to hear so many interesting people reflect on what I have written. My intention is to enjoy it for a few minutes and then forget everything that has been said.

I want to use the occasion to reflect a little on what this all means. At the Harvard commencement, the president welcomes the new graduates into the company of educated men and women. Today I wish to celebrate the company of men and women historians. I have been teaching American religion at Claremont Graduate University this past year, and it has brought me great pleasure to find how many of the books I assign were written by people I know. I know their styles, a few personal idiosyncrasies, and something of what matters to them. Although I see them only occasionally, I still feel that we constitute a circle of friends as well as group of scholars. Perhaps one of the most important parts of becoming an historian is to be initiated into that circle.

In forming these academic friendships, our books are our surrogate selves, commonly our initial introductions to one another. I rode up in an elevator at a convention once with David Hall; and glancing down at the nametag of another conventioneer, David snapped out two titles. There was instant recognition. Had there been time, there could have been conversation. In this company of historians, person and writing merge. As we become better acquainted, we begin to hear personality coming through the words on the printed page. That's so like her, I say to myself. Knowledge of the person helps us to understand the writing better, and the writing opens up the person. The combination creates a kind of intellectual kinship that is one of the great rewards of our profession.

In the interests of furthering our sociability, I want to speak about this intermingling of writing and life in my own work. As the years go by, my historical work, in my own mind, blends more and more with biography. I see my writing emerging from a life and not just from a discipline. Careful as I tried to be in reading the evidence, what went on the pages of the histories I have written is recognizably my own.

My first book, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967), though written as a kind of bottom-up analysis in the spirit of the town studies coming out in the 1960s, also grew out of my Mormon upbringing in Portland, Oregon. When I was choosing a dissertation topic in the late fifties, most of the important work dealt with high politics or high intellectual history. I was not attracted to that kind of history. I wanted to work at another level, not because writing about ordinary people was in the air, but because I was interested in people like those I had grown up with—my family, friends, and fellow Church members in Portland. There was a huge gulf between my life in Portland and my life at Harvard. I actually loved Cambridge and was more myself there than anywhere I had been, but still the Portlanders were my people and represented the real world in my mind. It was that world I wanted to return to as I began my research.

I hit on the Great Awakening as the central problem of my work because it seemed like an exceptional opportunity to get inside the minds of a large number of otherwise inarticulate people. I had sat in testimony meetings in my Latter-day Saint congregation and heard people stand and talk about their innermost problems and views of the world as they were encouraged to do on the first Sunday of each month. Listening from my place at the sacrament table where young priests sat to bless the bread and water, I found the adults' expression of their inner turmoil reassuring. Their struggles resonated with my own adolescent miseries. Remembering those occasions, it was not a far stretch for me to see in the Great Awakening an opportunity to gain access to the inner lives of ordinary eighteenth-century people like my Mormon brothers and sisters in Portland.

Not just the subject, but my explanation for the revivals came out of my early life. In the book I posed the question: Why were so many eighteenth-century people willing to hear preachers tell them they were hopeless sinners and believe it? Where did the pervasive guilt come from that must have lain beneath the consciousness of thousands of hearers? The answer in *From Puritan to Yankee* was that many in the population had resisted the authority of the standing order—in moving out of the town centers, in breaking from the churches, in seeking wealth over piety. They

had not followed the Puritan practice of weaned affections—diligently pursuing their earthly callings without giving their hearts to them—but had sought material well-being to the point of repeated conflicts with civil and ecclesiastical authority.

Other historians at the time I wrote had seen the Great Awakening as resistance to oppressive authority, and it was surely that. What I added to the mix was an acknowledgment that resistance to authority produced guilt. People paid a price for standing up to authority, I believed. That came right out of my Mormon upbringing. Mormons live in a structured world of Church and family authorities who are not easy to resist. They are benevolent figures, dedicated to the well-being of those in their charge. Talking back to them is like talking back to a father who you know truly loves you. The price of resistance to that kind of power is guilt. It is heroic and liberating to resist authority—but costly. I cast this Mormon view of authority onto the Puritans and came up with the guilt that fed the Awakening.

That same dynamic ran through *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). Initially I thought of it as an extension of *From Puritan to Yankee*. The study I began on Connecticut would extend into Massachusetts and focus more on politics than on religion. I sensed a similar psychological structure in revival religion and revolutionary rebellion. Both began with a tyrant—a God who unfairly condemned the sinners he had made and a king who oppressed his subjects. The language in both contexts, religious and political, sounded the same to me. I thought I could write a book that joined the two, though the outcome was different in each case. Revival converts ultimately reconciled themselves to God. They admitted their unworthiness and found a way to love the God who threatened to cast them off. The revolutionaries never made peace with the tyrant king. They destroyed him, smashing his image and putting themselves on the throne. My work with Erik Erikson during a two-year post-doctoral fellowship at Brown University was an attempt to explore the psychodynamics of these two struggles.

The book I had planned never was written. I drew back for two reasons. The first was that I began to question my subject. Who and what was I writing about? I feared it was some abstract

"mind" of the culture. Scholars spoke of the American mind in the 1950s. In the 1960s, as the sociological turn occurred, we wanted to treat real people who could be named and numbered. My tyrant-ridden mind seemed to reside somewhere off the planet. I wanted to root my arguments in real people and events—hence, my turning to political culture and the realities of Massachusetts politics.

The second reason for the switch was my inability to sustain a narrative. I did a ton of research in political and religious documents, and each summer set out to write. I would turn out forty or fifty pages and the narrative would sink into the sand like river water in the Great Basin. I could not figure out where I was going. I came to doubt my powers as a historian. Where had the historian who produced a Bancroft Prize winner on his first try gone to? I thought of leaving the university and going to work in the Church Historian's Office.

I was saved by the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. Every early Americanist in the world was asked to lecture during 1976. What was I to lecture on? All I had was the pile of notes I had accumulated over the past decade. I was forced to ask, "What is it I really want to say?" By staring at texts in the microfilm readers for hundreds of hours, I had discovered the themes of dependence and independence that run through *King and People*. I got down to the bare bones of my thinking, cobbled together the lectures, and by the end of the Bicentennial year I had the outline of a book. I was saved not by the bell, but by the celebration.

To my eye now, every one of my books has personal dimensions. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) is a treatise on my mother's and my grandmother's culture. The book is shot through with ambivalence about the merits of gentility. In the book, gentility is portrayed as both a civilizing ideal and a meretricious and snobbish device for enforcing class boundaries. All that came from struggles with my own identity. My grandmother was the daughter of a German schoolteacher who had taught art in a Dresden *gymnasium* before he migrated to Utah as a Mormon convert. There his attempts at teaching school for tuition failed, and he became a shoe salesman. My grandmother as a girl worked in a shoe factory and had no education, but she created a home where her artist father's frus-

trated tastes were made manifest. She had a gift for making everything beautiful, including the furniture she finished herself. To my youthful eyes, her living room was gorgeous. My mother grew up aspiring to make everything beautiful, too—the leading theme of genteel culture. I admired her but in a typically boyish way fought her as she imposed those standards on me. I didn't like that her model for my best dress was the Duke of Windsor. That prepared me to partake of the disillusionment with gentility in the larger culture as I was growing up. I was aware even then of class divisions and didn't like them. The outcome in the book, as in my life, was a kind of ironic distance between me and gentility—embracing it as the culture of my mother and grandmother while lamenting its superficialities and hurtful exclusions.

Besides recognizing gentility as an instrument of class power, I also saw it in a religious light. The book actually rests on a theology of culture I learned from Reinhold Niebuhr. In graduate school, I had come under the influence of Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1949). Niebuhr argued that humans combine a yearning for the infinite with the reality of finitude. They aspire to be gods when they are actually confined by human limitations and corruptions. Many of the highest human achievements grow out of this drive for power, but so do many of the evils of human history. The yearning for the infinite manifests itself in the noblest reaches of art, science, and politics but equally in the drive for power that underlies the most horrible crimes. I read into the genteel urge for elevation, for beauty, and for perfect grace another symptom of the yearning to transcend human finitude. It was an elevating aspiration, noble and generous at its best, but prideful, vain, superficial, and invidious in many of its manifestations, a source of hurt, shame, and social conflict. It was both godly and devilish. I probably should have dedicated the book to Reinhold Niebuhr.

My personal involvement in my early books might never occur to a casual reader; not so with *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), my biography of the Mormon prophet. It probably appears to be the most personal of all my books. Here I bring my personal religious beliefs into the open in directly addressing Mormonism's most controversial figure, Joseph Smith. Readers both Mormon and non-Mormon have imag-

ined this as a difficult book to write, since it attempts to confront the whole Joseph Smith—his extravagant claims to visions and revelations, his polygamous excursions, his boosterism and braggadocio, his engagement with magic, his temper and raw emotional force as well as his religious ingenuity and his capacity for evoking the sacred. Was it not hard for you as a believing Mormon, I am asked, to lay it all out for your readers? Weren't you challenged in your beliefs? Weren't you worried about what other Mormons would say? Weren't you divided in yourself?

Strangely that was not my experience in writing the book. I was not constantly asking, "How do I handle this hot potato or that?" I simply gathered what information I could from the sources and wrote the story. There were no long debates with myself about what to include and what not. Everything I thought relevant I put in. Virtually every reader will sense my sympathy for Joseph Smith, but that is how I write about all historical subjects. My inclination is to give the historical subject's own perspective priority, rather than to act as critic. I felt I was treating Joseph Smith as I would treat Benjamin Franklin were he the subject. Anything that revealed something about Smith's character or his plight went into the book.

I have always applauded Fawn Brodie for creating a Joseph Smith who was a credible human being and not a caricature of religious fanaticism as earlier works had presented him. She made him a pious fraud, but intelligible and sympathetic, a believable person. I wanted to portray a believable Joseph Smith, too, but one who was sincere, a man who thought he was a prophet and who carried that conviction through his life. On the basis of the evidence alone, I am not sure that you can choose between the two, but I wanted readers to have a choice. That simple aim made the book relatively easy to write. I was aware that many would not follow me through the book. I asked them to accept more than they could stomach. But the simple premise of Smith's sincerity guided me through the tangled story.

So what have I offered you? Probably the least trustworthy of all histories is a writer's account of his motivations in writing. How can we take a writer's stories seriously when we know that all of us have to protect ourselves and make ourselves presentable to the world? The need for myth-making is all the greater when we

write about something we cherish as much as our own work. But trustworthy or not, I think it useful to tell our stories about ourselves as I have tried to do today. I go back to the Mormon testimony meetings I attended as a boy. When those people stood to account for themselves, they spoke from a mythic world spun from their culture and their psychic pain. I can see now that they were spinning the stories to make themselves believable and the world sensible. Even so, as I listened, I felt that I encountered life at a deeper level. I was hearing human beings trying to create meaning out of the raw materials of their experience.

In something of the same way, I listen for the deep bass notes in the writings of my fellow historians. I value their skill, their industry, their pursuit of truth, but I read their books as more akin to my Mormon friends than you would think. They, too, are constructing mythic meanings for themselves and their readers. However scholarly, they are trying to make themselves believable and the world sensible. You will understand, then, why I hear in the works of my esteemed colleagues a kind of testimony bearing, and why I value their friendship all the more for that.

The Midrashic Imagination and the Book of Mormon

Robert A. Rees

> *[From] the Midrash-complations, . . . we learn from what we know [scripture], that which we should want to find out.*
> *–Jacob Neusner*[1]

> *Midrash invites us to be attuned to the many sounds that the text makes in our souls.*
> *–Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso*[2]

With the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple in 587 BCE, it became necessary for the Jewish Fathers to create, as it were, a "synagogue in exile," in which the emphasis shifted from the temple to the Torah as the locus of worship. With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the Jewish rabbis once again emphasized the Torah as their temple. During these periods and after, the text of God's revelation became the focus, not only of the Jewish heart and mind but also of its imagination. These sages considered every jot and tittle, every caesura and metaphor, as God's design and, further, that God intended, even commanded, the rabbis to search out not only all *possible* interpretations of the text and everything that lay hidden in the text, but more than this—to create all possible inventions and imaginative explorations that lay embedded in or suggested by the text.

Thus the Jewish Midrash, which runs to some twenty volumes, is a treasure house of "rabbinical exegeses, extrapolations, interpretations and expansions on the Torah."[3] Traditional midrashim, based on both oral and written tradition, constitute an extensive library of Jewish insight into the possible interpretations of scripture.[4]

The word "midrash" comes from the Hebrew root *daled-resh-shin* which means "interpretive retelling,"[5] "to examine," "to investigate," to "search" and interpret. Midrash has been defined variously as "creative interpretation," "a means of extracting meaning" from as well as "a way of reading meaning *into* the text,"[6] and a way to "derive homiletical meaning from [a] passage" of scripture, a process that gives "the narrative new life and make[s] it meaningful for another generation,"[7] "reconsideration and reinterpretation," "narrative retellings,"[8] a process by which the "human imagination" illuminates "the hidden, holy meanings of scripture," "to find, in the liquid, living language of Torah, a new way to meet God."[9] In short, creating midrash requires creative engagement with holy writ. As Emerson noted, "There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world."[10]

It is important to make a distinction between textual exegesis or commentary and midrash. In his *The Midrash: An Introduction*, Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner observes, "For the sages wrote with scripture, by which I mean that the received Scriptures formed an instrumentality for the expression of a writing bearing its own integrity and cogency, appealing to its own conventions of intelligibility, and, above all, making its own points. . . . They did not write *about* scripture, they wrote *with* Scripture, for Scripture supplied the syntax and the grammar of their thoughts." Neusner makes a distinction between "exegetical" writing ("getting meanings out of the text") and "eisegetical" writing ("reading meaning into the text"). He clarifies, "But when our sages of blessed memory proposed to compose their statements, and while they, of course, appealed to Scripture, it was an appeal to serve a purpose defined not by Scripture but by a faith under construction and subject to articulation."[11] Thus, as we will see later with the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, various interpreters/extrapolators of the text over the generations have seen the story differently because of the particular circumstances under which their "faith [was] under construction and subject to articulation."

This is why every generation has the opportunity (and responsibility) to read scripture with new eyes, minds, and hearts and

why sacred texts are always open and never exhausted. As the distinguished rabbi and theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel says of the Bible:

> It is a book that can never die. . . . In fact, the full meaning of its content [has] hardly touched the threshold of our minds. Like the ocean at the bottom of which countless pearls lie, waiting to be discovered, its spirit is still to be unfolded. Though its words seem plain and its idioms translucent, unnoticed meanings, undreamed-of intimations break forth constantly. More than two thousand years of reading and research have not succeeded in exploring its full meaning. Today it is still as if it had never been touched, never been seen, as if we had not even begun to read it.[12]

According to the rabbis, "What Moses delivered amidst the thunder and lightning of Sinai was not a final product but rather the beginning of a conversation between God and the people of Israel. Revelation did not end with Moses but began with him . . . ; the rabbis highlight Torah as a continuing revelation."[13] Since it sees scripture not as the ending but rather the beginning place in the search for meaning, midrashic composition is foreign to many and even forbidden to some Christians (including some Mormons) because of their tendency to see sacred texts as fixed, inerrant, immutable, even closed. But scripture itself provides examples of this very process. To a significant degree, scripture comprises midrash on other scripture.

Perhaps no better example exists than the dramatically different retellings from a conjectured original source[14] of the story of Jael and Sisera as recorded, respectively, in Judges 4 and 5. Whether the longer, more poetic version found in Chapter 5 is of a much earlier origin than that in Chapter 4, as some have argued, or composed contemporaneously as others contend,[15] they represent dramatically different tellings of the same story. In the first account, the army of Sisera the Canaanite, which consists of "nine hundred chariots of iron," is "discomfited" by the army of Israel with the help of the Lord. Sisera, the only survivor, flees to the tent of "Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite," and asks her to give him water to drink and to hide him from the pursuing Israelites. The text says simply, "And she opened a bottle of milk and gave him drink, and covered him" (4:19), and then adds matter-of-factly and with surgical precision, "Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent,

and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary, and so he died" (4:21).

In Judges 5 the story is told in a starkly different fashion with detail, dramatic elements, structure, and irony—all absent from the version in Judges 4, although likely closer to the original source. As compared with the prosaic narrative in Judges 4, the account in Judges 5 is conveyed through poetry, song, and a variety of rhetorical devices into a sort of cosmic conflict in which all forces—human, natural, celestial, and divine—join to defeat Sisera and his mighty army. In this version, we are told that "the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water [the "dropping" symbolizing and foreshadowing Sisera's impending fall]. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel" (Judg. 5:4–5). Through this allusion, the great prophet Moses himself is connected to the narrative:

> They fought from heaven;
> the stars in their courses
> fought against Sisera.
> The river of Kishon swept them away.

Kings, angels, and the Lord join the fray on behalf of Israel. Now, notice how differently the author(s) portray Jael's heroic deed than in Judges 4:

> Blessed above women shall Jael
> the wife of Heber the Kenite be,
> blessed shall she be
> above women of the tent.
> He asked for water, and she gave him milk;
> She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.
> She put her hand to the nail,
> and her right hand to the workman's hammer;
> And with the hammer she smote Sisera,
> she smote off his head,
> when she had pierced and stricken
> through his temples.[16]

And then (in spite of his severed head!), they bring him back to life, stand him up, and with deliberate rhythmic effect show his slow, crumbling descent and collapse:

> At her feet he bowed,
> he fell, he lay down:
> at her feet he bowed,
> he fell: where he bowed,
> there he fell down
> dead.

The use of repetition and the slow, cascading rhythm of these stanzas draw us into the action, helping us not only to see the ultimate decline and fall of Israel's foe, but to participate in it, to feel it.

Not satisfied with the death of Sisera, the author(s) bring in his mother who wonders why he is so late in returning from the battlefield. The irony is exquisite:

> Her wise ladies answered her,
> Yea, she returned answer to herself,
> Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey;
> To every man a damsel or two;
> To Sisera a prey of divers colours,
> A prey of divers colors of needlework,
> Of divers colors of needlework on both sides,
> Meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?

Then, to nail the point home as surely as Jael nailed Sisera's head to the tent floor, the narrative closes with this supplication to Jehovah:

> So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord:
> But let them that love him be as the sun
> When he goeth forth in his might.
> And the land had rest forty years.

This kind of imaginative, dramatic, and ironic retelling and restructuring is characteristic of the best midrashic treatment of

scripture. The Midrash contains not only such imaginative retelling of scriptural narratives, but it also contains alternative and even contradictory versions of traditional biblical narratives. For example, with one of the Bible's most powerful and perplexing stories—Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:1–24), referred to as the *Akedeh*—Jewish writers (ancient and modern) have reimagined the story a number of different ways, some of which respond to questions raised by the text (e.g., Why is Sarah left out of the story? What is the impact on Isaac of what seems like his father's duplicity and incipient violence? How does this experience affect their relationship afterward? etc,):

• Abraham takes Isaac to sacrifice him but does not tell Sarah what he is going to do. Satan then appears to Abraham and Isaac in disguise, trying to persuade them not to go through with the sacrifice and later he deceives Sarah by telling her that Abraham has sacrificed Isaac. Sarah seeks confirmation and threatens suicide. Satan then appears in a different disguise to tell her Isaac hasn't been sacrificed after all, which joy causes her to expire. Abraham and Isaac return to find her dead.[17]

• In another midrash, Abraham instead of withholding the knowledge of their errand, chooses to tell Isaac that he is to be sacrificed: "Abraham couldn't keep the secret to himself. By sharing the ultimate purpose of the journey with Isaac, he included him in this ultimate test. And the Torah tells us that even after this revelation, 'the two walked together.'" According to this Midrash, both father and son accept the divine imperative with astonishing obedience.[18]

• In the Bereshit Rabbah, Isaac agrees to be sacrificed to prove to God that he is more righteous than Ishmael.[19]

• In a strange retelling of the story, Abraham actually slays Isaac on the altar, but Isaac is resurrected and Abraham attempts to slaughter him a second time.[20]

• Even stranger is a twentieth-century retelling in which it is Abraham who is slaughtered "while Isaac watches in horror and disbelief, wishing desperately to save his father, but unable to do so."[21]

• In one particularly dolorous version of this story, following the harrowing experience of the attempted sacrifice, Isaac goes blind and Sarah goes mute. In explaining such an ending, Judith Kunst says, "The imagined and specific aftermath of pain keeps the shock of the story alive. . . . [T]he stories of lingering pain in Isaac and his family keep the full impact of relationship with the Holy One alive in the Jewish mind."[22]

As Hebrew scholar David C. Jacobson observes,

> From a literary point of view, the rabbinic, medieval, and modern authors of these retold versions of the story of the binding of Isaac created new works out of the biblical text in significantly different ways that reflect each period's literary norms and its attitude toward the Bible. Nevertheless, these authors share a common midrashic impulse to use the Bible as a source of characters, plots, images, and themes in order to represent contemporary issues and concerns. For authors of midrash, the way that a biblical text can serve as a meaningful vehicle for the representation of contemporary reality is by transforming it, sometimes even to the point of turning it on its head.[23]

As the last example of the Abraham-Isaac narrative demonstrates, modern and contemporary Jews, not content to let the ancient rabbinical sages be the only writers of midrash, have tried their hand at this inventive compositional form. These have been anthologized in such collections as David C. Jacobson's *Modern Midrash* (1987), Naomi M. Hyman's *Biblical Women in the Midrash: A Sourcebook* (1998), and Jill Hammer's *Sisters at Sinai: New Tales of Biblical Women* (2001). See also the Institute for Contemporary Midrash (www.icmidrash.org/).

For those who might consider it appropriate for only Jews to write midrash, in her *The Burning Word: A Christian Encounter with Jewish Midrash*, Judith M. Kunst presents a persuasive argument for Christian-composed midrashim. She argues that, in both traditions, there is an invitation from God to be passionately engaged not only in reading and understanding scripture, but in imaginatively exploring its deeper, hidden, and more expansive meanings. Indeed, one could argue that much of the New Testament consists of midrashic readings of the Old Testament.

As an example of how a Latter-day Saint might create midrash-

im, I offer the following imaginative expansion of the episode of Peter walking on the water as recounted in Matthew 14:28–33. In doing so, I have tried to imagine the tension Peter must have felt between his wish for the kind of power Jesus possessed and his own inner fears and misgivings about his worthiness to exercise such power. That is, beneath Peter's customary impetuous and boisterous demeanor was likely an insecurity which is symbolized by "the wind boisterous" (v. 30) that he feels swirling around him, making the sea as turbulent as his self-doubts. This is an important teaching moment in Peter's life, for before long he will be asked to actually take on the mantle of Jesus's power and to make a greater sacrifice of faith than he is even capable of imagining at this moment:

When Peter stepped out of the boat and onto the roiling sea, it was as if his feet were on flat stones, so solid was the footing. When he took his first steps toward his waiting Lord, a thrill coursed through his veins. Incredulous that he, too, could do what Jesus did, he looked down at his feet and beyond into the blue-black depths. Then, just as he was about to walk on the watery plane, he saw the shadow of Leviathan, that great monster of the deep, and the devouring moon-eyes of the giant squid with its thousand-mouthed tentacles and the great devil beak at the center. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw the circling black fins of sharks. He then looked skyward to shearing wind and the demon-shaped clouds and, at that moment, the water gave way at his feet and he plummeted, only to be saved by the grasped hand of the Lord, whose feet were still planted firmly on the seemingly solid surface of the sea.

People speak of Peter as having doubts that he could walk on the water, but the threatening creatures he sees below the surface of Galilee and in the sky above symbolize the demons in Peter's subconscious—his doubts about his courage to face persecution and even death, his faithfulness to follow the Lord to Calvary, and his willingness to surrender his pride for the kingdom. It is his fear of his own weaknesses, not the water beneath his feet, that causes him to sink.

Midrash involves risk, just as Peter's stepping out onto Galilee's turbulent waters did. As Judith M. Kunst observes, "This is what imaginative reading ultimately requires: a willingness to step completely out of the boat and dive into the waters with a God who has declared from the beginning that we will not drown."[24]

Speaking of her own Christian upbringing, Kunst makes a distinction between her tradition's emphasis on information and the Jewish emphasis on conversation[25]—conversation with oneself, with others and with God about the meaning of sacred texts.

All of this is a prelude to my argument that Latter-day Saints should consider writing midrashim based on Restoration scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon. Since Latter-day Saints believe that the Book of Mormon was written by Israelites who began their long, exiled history in the New World with the Law and the Prophets up to Jeremiah, it seems inviting to consider it a source, like the Torah, not only for interpretation but for invention, expansion, and imagination. That is likely to take some adjustment in our attitude toward scripture where we tend toward a literalistic interpretation of the text and focus more on answers than questions, yet questioning is at the heart of the rabbis' encounter with sacred writ. The Israeli author Amoz Oz emphasizes the difference: "Fundamentalists live life with an exclamation point. I prefer to live my life with a question mark."[26] As Rabbi Sandy Sasso adds, "The rabbis turned the text and turned it again. They delighted in reading the Bible with question marks to discover not just what the Bible meant but what it continues to mean. They entered into dialogue with the text and added another voice in the room. And it was from these voices and question marks that they wrote midrashim."[27]

In actuality, Latter-day Saints should be comfortable with the idea of midrashic writing, especially since much of Restoration scripture could be so categorized. That is, it is possible to consider parts of the books of Abraham and Moses as midrashic extrapolations from or extensions of Old Testament or other ancient texts, passages in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants as midrashic revisions of certain Old and New Testament scriptures, and Joseph Smith's inspired revision of the Bible as midrashic refinements of certain biblical passages. In his *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, Latter-day Saint scholar Grant Hardy argues that Nephi's citation of and commentary on Isaiah "offers something of a midrash (to use an anachronistic term) on Isaiah."[28]

So, how does one begin to approach the Book of Mormon as the old rabbis did the Torah and as many contemporary Jewish writers currently do in carrying on the tradition? To begin with, I

think we need to take seriously the idea that the Book of Mormon was written for us—for our times. As Moroni, the concluding prophet of the book, states:

> The Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.
>
> Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. (Mormon 8:34–35)

Ezra Taft Benson said, "The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book. It is a record of a fallen people, compiled by inspired men for our blessing today. Those people never had the book—it was meant for us. Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day."[29]

It was with the idea that the Torah was written for each generation that Jewish writers kept coming back to it to see what fresh meaning, what new readings it could yield. One of the reasons to keep open minds and imaginations to the possible meanings of the text and the possible explorations of what is only hinted at in the text, or what may not be there at all, but nevertheless relevant, is that each generation has not only the readings and inventions of the past, but new tools—both technical and critical—at their disposal. Also, both our expanded understanding of human and divine nature and the continual unfolding of history open new vistas to us. As Jill Hammer argues, "The Torah grows by reinterpretation. Through midrash, each generation can add its own wisdom and experience to a fixed text and make it dynamic so that it does not reflect a single era but every era in which it is read."[30] For example, a generation ago, there was very little feminist midrashic literature. Today, it is one of the richest veins of the tradition as a new generation of women scholars and writers hold sacred texts up to the light to see what new meanings shine through them.[31]

In my "Toward a Feminist Mormon Midrash," I outline a number of ways in which contemporary Mormon women could begin exploring the midrashic possibilities not only of the central texts

of the Judeo-Christian tradition but of Restoration texts as well, especially the Book of Mormon.[32] I suggest, for example, that Mormon women could name, clothe, and create lives for the many anonymous female characters in the Book of Mormon who are referred to only by their generic identities: wife/wives (80 times), daughter/daughters (76), woman/women (55), mother/mothers (17), concubine/harlot/harlots (15), widow/widows (7), female (5), and maidservant/maid/mistress (3).[33] A rising generation of girls and young women, to say nothing of the adult women who have come to the Book of Mormon looking for mirrors of their own lives in the lives of these ancient people, can find very little by way of models. While it is true that all readers have Nephi, Alma, Abinadi, King Benjamin, Mormon, and Moroni, it is important for girls and women to have faithful, courageous, and heroic models of their own gender. Hopefully, Latter-day Saint women, like their Jewish counterparts, will awaken their imaginations to the possibilities that lie hidden in the record of Lehi and Sariah's people. It is interesting to contemplate whether the Nephites took with them not only the brass plates but some concept of midrash. Even though the earliest collections of midrashic literature as we know them date from the middle to late third century, as Steven D. Fraade, professor of Jewish history at Yale, speculates, "They contain interpretive traditions, whether attributed or anonymous, that might be significantly older."[34] Indeed, as Rabbis Michael Katz and Gershon Schwartz observe, "In one sense the process of midrash began the very first time the Torah was read."[35]

What midrashic possibilities does the Book of Mormon present? To answer that question, I have considered how both the sages and modern Jewish readers familiar with their rich tradition of mining the text and all that lies beneath and beyond it might begin approaching this New World scripture. I am not an expert on the Midrash, but I have immersed myself in enough midrashic writing to offer some tentative ideas and directions. To begin with, it would be enlightening to imaginatively reconstruct the lives of the first Book of Mormon family before they begin their perilous journey into the wilderness, across the Arabian Peninsula, and finally to the New World. We know that Lehi was a prominent man and that his family enjoyed both status and wealth

in Jerusalem. What more can we imagine that would add to the scant information that the first pages of the book provide? What, for example, are the "many great and marvelous things" Nephi says his father read in the book given to him by the Lord? (1 Ne. 1:14) What can our imaginations reconstruct of Lehi and Sariah's family—especially of the sibling rivalry that is already fully developed by the time the family leaves Jerusalem? What explains Laman's and Lemuel's antagonism toward their younger brother? Was it akin to other biblical sibling rivalries—Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers? Certainly the older brothers have murderous intent toward Nephi similar to that which Joseph's brothers have toward him. It is difficult to understand Laman's and Lemuel's spiritual schizophrenia because it is so extreme (and so predictable), and yet nothing determines or defines the family's journey to the Promised Land more than their behavior, with the exception of Nephi's steadfast spiritual leadership. What could have happened back in Jerusalem to have created two such malcontents? It is clear that they have their own welfare and family riches on their mind more than anything spiritual.

Sometimes the writers of midrash tell the story from another point of view. Since Nephi is the lone narrator of the odyssey from Jerusalem to the New World, we need to keep in mind that, as Wayne Booth and other textual critics argue, first-person narrators (I would include possibly even such narrators of sacred texts) can be unreliable, or at least limited, in the way they see and report events.[36] In some ways, in the beginning Nephi seems like the insufferably righteous younger brother. That's certainly the way his two older brothers experience him. What if the story were told from the point of view of Laman or Lemuel or Zoram? What if it were told by Nephi's wife? How would another view change the way we see the drama unfold? How do Ishmael and his family experience their journey away from Jerusalem, across the desert, and to the New World?

One of the things that marks the Hebrew Bible as great literature is its willingness to present both individuals and families with honesty, to position them within the full range of psychological and social complexity. Thus, we are shown characters who are not only courageous, faithful, and heroic, but also jealous, lustful, and murderous. It is in fact, such unflinching portrayals that allow us

to position ourselves within the real world of sacred literature. That is, if God can take a man like Abraham or a woman like Sarah who doubt that God can bless them with a child in their old age and through the refining process of faith and sacrifice make them among the most venerable figures of human history, through whom "all the kindreds of the earth [would] be blessed" (1 Ne. 22:9), then we may hope that we, too, can rise above our weaknesses and be transformed when God touches our souls. Regarding the Nephites, there are many other relational matters to consider. What, for example, was the family's relationship with Ishmael and his family before the brothers returned to persuade them to join the exodus? Had the romantic relationships that blossomed in the desert already begun? Were the pairings determined by their parents? Was everyone content with his or her chosen or assigned partner? How did the wives and the children of the brothers get along? Imagine how wrenching the internecine conflicts must have been for the children of these families. The bonds that must have been forged among the brothers' wives and children from Jerusalem to Bountiful and across the sea would have been particularly painful when the tribes split shortly after arriving in the New World.

And what of the episode of building the ship? It is such a breathtaking commandment for desert dwellers to suddenly be told that they are to build a ship and that they are actually going to board it and set sail on what must have seemed an endless sea to a far, unknown country. Who could blame some of the party for being incredulous? Who among us under similar circumstances might not have said, "Our brother is a fool, for he thinketh that he can build a ship; yea, and he also thinketh that he can cross these great waters?" (1 Ne. 17:17) The Midrash has commentary on such audacious enterprises undertaken by the people of the Bible, including Noah's neighbors, who mocked him for building so fantastic a vessel as the ark. One legend tells how God, as with His turning stones into lights for the brother of Jared, "showed Noah with His finger how to make the ark," and, according to another legend, also similar to Nephi, "Noah learned how to build [the ark] and mastered as well the various sciences, from the Sefer Razi'el (the book from which the angel Raziel taught Adam all the sciences), which had been brought to him by the angel Raphael."[37] One story

about the building of the Tower of Babel reminds one of Laman and Lemuel: When one of the builders "fell and was killed, no one noticed. But if a brick fell and was broken, they sat down and wept."[38]

The voyages of both the Jaredites and the Nephites offer wonderful opportunities to explore the dynamics of the first Book of Mormon immigrant families. As Steve Walker notes, the directions for the construction of the Jaredites' sea-going vessels might have made for a particularly interesting and perilous voyage: "'Behold, thou shalt make a hole in the top, and also in the bottom; and when thou shalt suffer for air thou shalt unstop the hole and receive air. And if it be so that the water come in upon thee, behold'—I'll interrupt here to mention that they would have beheld with particularly rapt attention, as the ocean rushed in on them—'ye shall stop the hole, that ye may not perish in the flood.' In other words, Mahonri, if the plug lets in the water, consider the possibility that you may have opened the wrong end!"[39] Regarding another detail of the Jaredites' long voyage to the Promised Land, Walker observes, "I smile, reading about the Jaredites coralling 'swarms of bees' in their boats."[40] Walker's finding humor in such episodes is also characteristic of some midrashim.

Claudia L. Bushman, like most readers of the Book of Mormon, yearns both for more narrative and more detail. Speaking of the abbreviated history kept by such scribes as Enos, Jarom, and Omni, she writes, "The years pass quickly in these little books. Fifty-five years after settlement, Jacob, the brother of Nephi born in the wilderness, begins his charge to engrave entries on the small plates. Jacob is told to hand his records down to his seed, from generation to generation. But, at the end of this period, his line has died out, and the records have moved to another lineage. Just twenty-six pages later, the space occupied by these five short books, we have traversed more than four hundred years." Bushman, in the spirit of midrash, writes, "If I were Jacob and I were writing a short book, I would make it a narrative history of my time. But Jacob gives us very little narrative history. . . . More of an anthologist than an historian, Jacob seems to lack the drive to keep the record."[41]

Out of what I consider a nearly inexhaustible source for a

Book of Mormon Midrash, let me suggest several especially fruitful lines of narrative to consider:

• The excursion to the New World by the Mulekites as revealed in Omni (1:12–14). These are people without a book and therefore with a fading historical memory until they meet and then join up with King Mosiah's people. Coming, as both groups did, from the same location and historic period, it must have been fascinating for them to compare remembered stories of Jerusalem, the changing political scene following Lehi's departure, their respective voyages to a new continent, and their experiences after arriving. Once they became assimilated, how much of their language, customs, and tribal memory did the Mulekites retain?

• The Mulekites inform Mosiah that they had discovered Coriantumr, the lone survivor of the Jaredite mutual annihilation, and that he had lived among them for "nine moons," during which Coriantumr "spake a few words concerning his fathers. And his first parents came out from the tower [i.e., The Tower of Babel]" (Omni 1:20–22). How strange this meeting must have been and what stories Coriantumr must have told about the violent endgame of his civilization, his experience of wandering alone in such a wide world, and what it must have been like for him to have human companionship once more.

• In Alma 63 we are told of Hagoth, "an exceedingly curious man" who built ships and inspired a major northward Nephite migration, consisting of 5,400 men and their families. After reaching his destination, Hagoth returned to build more ships for additional emigrants and supplies and departed with a second group, including Alma's son Corianton, but we are told they "were never heard of more." The remaining Nephites concluded that these people may have "drowned in the depths of the sea" but offer no proof of this assumption. These people suggest additional material for midrashic composition.

• When the prophet Abinadi is pursued by the murderous agents of King Noah (Mosiah 11), we are told that he was gone "for the space of two years," after which "he came among them in disguise, that they knew him not" and began to prophesy. What could we

imagine Abinadi doing during his two-year exile—surreptitiously moving about the country, trying on various disguises to see which was the most effective? If so, in his very first utterance, he blows his cover, telling those assembled, "Thus has the Lord commanded me, saying—Abinadi . . ." (Mosiah 12:1).[42]

• The story of the Nephites, like that of the Jaredites before them, ends darkly, with Moroni, the remaining righteous survivor, the last witness of his people's barbarism. As he speaks of the destruction of his people and the death of his father, Mormon, his words are heartbreaking: "And I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not. . . . And whither I go it mattereth not. . . . And behold, I would write [more] also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not" (Mormon 8:3–6). Referring to Moroni's lament in these verses, Reid Bankhead, my Book of Mormon teacher at BYU, called him "Sad Sack Moroni" (an allusion to a comic book character popular during mid-twentieth century[43]) but I think these verses call only for compassion: to be all alone for sixteen years, to be constantly in danger of falling into the hands of his enemies without a single person to befriend him must have been extremely trying for Moroni. It might be instructive for modern readers, faced by the threat of terrorist attacks, weapons of mass destruction, and the specter of unending war, to say nothing of existential loneliness, to identify with Moroni, to imagine his life during these long dangerous years of exile.

• There are, of course, many other stories, episodes, incidents, puzzling references, and provocative allusions that might awaken our spiritual imaginations were we to undertake the composition of what might constitute a Book of Mormon Midrash. In fact, every page of the Book of Mormon might call forth what one midrashic scholar has called "secular scripture."[44]

For nearly two hundred years, Mormons have been yearning for the time when the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon would be opened to them. According to Joseph Smith's contem-

poraries, that which is sealed could be as large as or larger than the translated portion.[45] Nephi described the untranslated text as containing "a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the end thereof" (2 Ne. 27:7). From the time the Book of Mormon was first published, there has been considerable speculation about when and under what conditions the remainder of the Jaredite and Nephite records would become available. As individual readers, we may not have control or influence over the timing of new revelations or the unfolding of old revelations, but we do have influence and control over how we might imaginatively engage with the record we do have. That is, while we may not have access to the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, using our spiritual imaginations, we could unseal more of the possibilities of the portion we do have.

I recognize that what I propose might be seen as abrogating to individual members that which some would say should be reserved for prophets or other ecclesiastical leaders, but in reality it is simply a call to extend and deepen the activity in which many Latter-day Saints are already engaged—expounding, expanding, and interpreting scripture, imaginatively stretching the boundaries of sacred texts to make them more relevant to the challenges of our everyday lives.

Speakers in general conference as well as in many sacrament meetings participate in something akin to midrash. That is, Mormons believe in what might be called the democratization of scriptural interpretation—not that scripture might mean anything or that it means everything, but that each person is encouraged to engage with scripture with his or her heart, mind, and even imagination. As long as such engagements do not challenge doctrine (as I believe the above imaginative reading of Peter walking on the water does not), they might be seen as part of our spiritual work. If the purpose of reading scripture is to understand how we might be better disciples, then anything that furthers that objective should be deemed acceptable. In other words, the Holy Ghost might enlighten our imaginations as much as our minds were we to be open to that possibility.

Perhaps the judgment of Mormon midrashic writing could be measured against at least some of Lowell Bennion's criteria for judging interpretations of scripture. As Philip L. Barlow summa-

rizes, "Bennion gauges a scriptural interpretation as worthy if it: (1) is consistent with gospel fundamentals . . . , (2) is confirmed by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, (3) appeals to thoughtful ethical judgment, (4) has won wide agreement among informed and rational persons of good will, (5) allows for the human as well as the divine in revelation, and (6) is primarily concerned with scripture's religious intent."[46]

It could be, as the rabbis themselves argued consistently, that such imaginative encounters with sacred literature are what God intends. As Rabbi Sandy Sasso proclaims, "God delights in the human imagination."[47] Thus, rather than God wanting our attention focused on fixed, immutable texts, rather than our being satisfied solely with literal interpretations, rather than our seeing the divine-human story as closed, He has been inviting us all along to open our hearts and minds to their imaginative possibilities, as—according to the rabbis' bold suggestion—they are also continually open to God's heart and mind. That is, the rabbis saw even God as continuing to read and wrestle with His own scriptures: "The Talmud says that God himself studies the Bible every day. It says God is sitting in the bet midrash, the study house, wearing a round black cap and holding an open Bible, arguing and wrestling [with] his own text right along with learned rabbis throughout the ages."[48]

While we may tend to be suspicious of the imagination, to think of imaginative impulses as "vain," it is important to recognize that everything, including the creation of the world itself, was or first had to be imagined. As humanistic scholar Ihab Hassan states, "Perhaps the imagination is the true teleological organ in our evolution, directing all change."[49] I believe that the Book of Mormon awaits a new generation of bold, thoughtful, and imaginative readers, those who, to borrow a phrase from B. H. Roberts, "will not be content with merely repeating some of [the Book of Mormon's] truths, but will develop its truths; and enlarge it by that development." Roberts calls not only for more dedicated discipleship but what I like to think of as more imaginative discipleship:

> Not half—not one-hundredth part—not a thousandth part of that which Joseph Smith revealed to the Church has yet been unfolded,

> either to the Church or to the world. The work of the expounder has scarcely begun. The Prophet planted by teaching the germ-truths of the great dispensation of the fullness of times. The watering and the weeding is going on, and God is giving the increase, and will give it more abundantly in the future as more intelligent discipleship shall obtain. The disciples of "Mormonism," growing discontented with the necessarily primitive methods which have hitherto prevailed in sustaining the doctrine, will yet take profounder and broader views of the great doctrines committed to the Church; and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas; cooperating in the works of the Spirit, until they help to give to the truths received a more forceful expression and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of its development.[50]

I contend that one of the ways in which Latter-day Saints can cooperate in works of the spirit is to "cast [Restoration scriptures] in new formulas," including the creation of a body of midrashic readings of these sacred texts. As pointed out earlier, Rabbi Sandy Sasso speaks of the rabbis' unfolding of Torah as "continuing revelation,"[51] a concept central to Mormon experience. Thus, Latter-day Saints should be open to continuing imaginative revelation through both ancient and modern scriptures. As the rabbis said of their study of Torah, "Turn it and turn it again, for everything is contained therein."[52]

Notes

1. Jacob Neusner, *The Midrash: An Introduction* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1994), xi.

2. Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, *God's Echo: Exploring Scripture with Midrash* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2007), 27.

3. Robert A. Rees, "Toward a Feminist Mormon Midrash," *Sunstone* (forthcoming).

4. For clarification, "Midrash" (capitalized) refers to the library or collection of midrashic writings, whereas "midrash" (lower case) refers to an individual midrashic composition. It is important to distinguish between the two types or categories of midrashim—Halakhic or Tannaitic midrashim, which focus on the laws derived from scripture, and Aggadic midrashim, which focus on edification derived from imaginative readings of scriptural text. The former is a much more legalistic approach and focuses on extremely close readings of the Torah to ascertain the minute and esoteric aspects of the law. In the second, "the historical themes of the Scriptures are midrashically interpreted in such a way that the entire story of Yisrael becomes a continuous revelation of G-d's love

and justice." "What Is Midrash?" http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/WhatIsMidrash.htm (accessed October 17, 2009). An example of a Halakhic midrash is seen in the attempt to "discover the law that the Shabbat can be profaned in order to save life (e.g., where the doctors say that hot food must be served to a dangerously sick person and no hot food is available . . . so one is allowed to cook) derives this from the verse: 'You shall keep My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live—I am Hashem' (VaYikra 18:5). Since the verse states 'shall live,' it is implied that where death may result from the observance of the laws, the laws may be set aside." An example of an Aggadic midrash is "the comment on the verse: 'G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Pelishtim, . . . ' (Shemot 13:17), that is, His providence over the Yisralim in the Wilderness was not through natural process ('the way of the land'). In natural order bread comes from the ground and water from the sky, whereas in the Wilderness the Manna came from heaven and water from the flinty rock" (ibid.).

5. David C. Jacobson, *Modern Midrash: The Retelling of Traditional Jewish Narratives by Twentieth-Century Hebrew Writers* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 1.

6. Naomi M. Hyman, *Biblical Women in the Midrash: A Sourcebook* (London: Jason Aronson, 1998), xxvii, xxix.

7. Sasso, *God's Echo*, 30, 69–70.

8. Leila Leah Bronner, *From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press 1994), xxi, 185.

9. Judith M. Kunst, *The Burning Word: A Christian Encounter with Jewish Midrash* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2006), 5, 76 .

10. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in Joel Porte, ed., *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 59.

11. Neusner, *The Midrash*, x–xi.

12. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), 242.

13. Sasso, *God's Echo*, 11.

14. Based on internal evidence and historic events, scholars have argued that the poetic version in Judges 5, known as "The Song of Deborah," was composed much earlier than the simpler prose version in Judges 4. However, Gregory T. K. Wong, "Song of Deborah as Polemic," *Biblica* 88 (2007): 20, argues that a "more likely" scenario is that "both prose and poetic accounts were based on essentially the same source material or had similar knowledge of the same historical event, but that

each author had independently chosen to include different details to fit his specific rhetorical goal."

15. See K. L. Younger Jr., "Heads,! Tails! Or the Whole Coin?! Contextual Method and Intertextual Analysis: Judges 4 and 5," in K. L. Younger Jr., W. W. Hallo, and B. F. Batto, eds., *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective,* in Vol. 4 in SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 109–35.

16. According to Danna Nolan Fewell, the accurate translation of the Hebrew *raqaq* is not "temple," but rather "parted lips," suggesting that her act is more violent, for she "drives a tent peg through his mouth . . . severing his spinal column, leaving him to die a convulsive death." "Judges" in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *The Women's Bible Commentary: Expanded Edition, with Apocrypha* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Knox Press, 1998), 75.

17. *'Aqedath Yishaq*, from the Midrash Ben Ish Hai, www.midrash.org/halakha/aqedah.html (accessed August 19, 2009).

18. *Parshat Va'yera* [Weekly Torah], prepared by Rabbi Charles Sheer, http://www.hillel.org/jewish/archives/bereshit/vayera/2002_vayera.htm (accessed August 19, 2009).

19. Jacobson, *Modern Midrash*, 2.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Kunst, *The Burning Word*, 108–9.

23. Jacobson, *Modern Midrash*, 3.

24. Kunst, *The Burning Word*, 86.

25. Ibid., 128.

26. Amos Oz, quoted in Sasso, *God's Echo*, 17.

27. Sasso, *God's Echo*, 17.

28. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2010), 69. Hardy's *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), uses such headings as "The Lehites in the Last Days (Midrash on Isaiah 29:3–5)" (1 Ne. 26).

29. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God," *Ensign*, May 1975, 63.

30. Jill Hammer, *Sisters at Sinai: New Tales of Biblical Women* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), xiii.

31. See, for example, Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007) and Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

32. Rees, "Toward a Feminist Mormon Midrash."

33. See John W. Welch, comp., "Charting the Book of Mormon," http://byustudies.byu.edu/januarybomcharts/charts/108.html (accessed June 21, 2009). See also J. Gregory Welch and John W. Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS/Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 1999).

34. Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Midrash and Ancient Jewish Biblical Interpretation," *Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99.

35. Michael Katz and Gershon Schwartz, *Searching for Meaning in Midrash* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 9.

36. Wayne C. Booth, "Telling as Showing: Dramatized Narrators, Reliable and Unreliable," in his *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), chap. 8. See also "The Unreliable Narrator," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unreliable_narrator (accessed September 27, 2010).

37. "Noah in Rabbinic Literature," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah_in_rabbinic_literature (accessed January 15, 2009).

38. Batnadiv HaKarmi, "Hubris, Language, and Oppression: Recreating Babel in Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* and the Midrash," http://130.102.44.245/journals/partial_answers/v007/7.1.hakarmi.pdf (accessed October 4, 2010).

39. Steve Walker, "Last Words: 4 Nephi-Moroni," in *The Reader's Book of Mormon*, edited by Robert A. Rees and Eugene England, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 7:xviii.

40. Ibid.

41. Claudia L. Bushman, "Big Lessons from Little Books: (2 Nephi 5 through the Words of Mormon)," *The Reader's Book of Mormon*, edited by Robert A. Rees and Eugene England, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 2:vii–viii.

42. I cite this as an example in my "Irony in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 26.

43. See http://www.sadsack.net/ (accessed September 30, 2010).

44. Jacobson, *Modern Midrash*, 15.

45. Alexander L. Baugh, "Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, edited by Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 707.

46. Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 203–4.

47. Sasso, *God's Echo*, 14.

48. Kunst, *The Burning Word*, 4.

49. Ihab Hassan, "Fiction and Future: An Extravaganza for Voice and Tape," in Ihab Hassan, ed., *Liberations: New Essays on the Humanities in Revolution* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 179.

50. B. H. Roberts, Letter dated June 1, 1906, in "Book of Mormon Translation: Interesting Correspondence on the Subject of the Manual Theory," *Improvement Era* 9 (1906): 712ff.

51. Sasso, *God's Echo*, 11.

52. Kunst, *The Burning Word*, 58.

Alma's Experiment in Faith: A Broader Context

Heather Hardy

The thesis of this paper is a modest one, namely, that reading the Book of Mormon with an eye to its literary context significantly enhances the reading experience regardless of whether one's objective is instruction, insight, aesthetics, or merely the pleasure of discovering coherence in its various details.[1] A necessary corollary is that the Book of Mormon, as a text, is sufficiently crafted to warrant such attentive effort. There is nothing remarkable about the suggestion that internal context matters—that even a minimal level of understanding of any scriptural passage requires consideration not only of who is speaking, why, and to whom, but also of how a particular verse fits into a larger argument or interacts with nearby passages, or of how a discourse relates to either its immediate or extended corresponding narrative. But this is not the manner in which Latter-day Saints typically read the Book of Mormon, either individually or as a community; even as we make our way sequentially through the book, we are much more likely to reflect upon isolated doctrinal prooftexts or paraphrased narrative episodes.[2]

I will attempt to demonstrate a more integrative, contextual approach for reading the Book of Mormon by focusing on a single passage, Alma's proposal for an experiment in faith found in Alma 32, although any number of other Book of Mormon segments could be equally employed by way of example. One advantage of considering Alma's experiment in faith is its wide familiarity, since any deepened understanding can thus be more readily attributable to a heightened attention to context. Another advantage in considering this segment on faith is that the verses in ques-

tion comprise just a portion of a larger discourse which itself is closely tied to an adjoining narrative. This situation is not atypical for other doctrinal passages; most are embedded in sermons, and most Book of Mormon sermons do, in fact, have clearly identified narrative contexts. Alma's comments here are part of a discourse delivered to impoverished Zoramites in Antionum as part of a missionary campaign with specific political and religious objectives (Alma 31:1–5). Such nesting of a scriptural passage within a doctrinal argument within a background narrative renders a contextual analysis not only fitting but perhaps even indispensable for responsible reading.

A final advantage in considering a passage from Alma as a test case for contextual study is that Alma himself is consistently depicted both as one of the Nephites' most gifted orators and also as one of their most self-reflective and spiritually mature leaders. Not only are Alma's sermons tightly and thoughtfully composed, rewarding careful attention to his arguments, but he is also presented as a dynamic character whose skills and understanding are repeatedly enhanced by his pondering of personal experiences.[3] Mormon's minimal editing of Alma's words enables us to discern his development as it occurs.

Mormon's editing also assists us in identifying broader and perhaps less-than-obvious contexts for discovering the richer meanings of particular passages. His methods for doing so include juxtaposition, thematic linking, editorial interruption, distinctive phrasal repetition, and the demarcation of literary units. We will recognize several of these strategies in play as we proceed, but I begin the contextual analysis with a consideration of the last of these: the demarcation of literary units.

In the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, the text we now know as Alma 32 was the central part of a larger unit identified as Alma XVI, a chapter comprising contemporary Alma 30–35. Royal Skousen has argued that the earlier, longer chapters (designated by roman rather than arabic numerals) were indicated by marks or blank spaces on the gold plates themselves, which means that they were part of Mormon's ancient editing.[4] Taking this original chapter division as an interpretive clue, I will presume that Alma XVI in some way represents a conceptual whole. As we seek to discover the coherence manifest in it, I will consider what

additional sense this particular context might bring to the passage at hand.

The narrative in Alma XVI recounts the final public events of Alma's career, namely his confrontation with Korihor and his missionary efforts among the Zoramites. Although these incidents have typically been read as isolated episodes, the original chapter designation invites us to consider their connections. Such an attempt is supported superficially by the episodes' geographical convergence: Korihor leaves Zarahemla to preach in Jershon and ends up in Antionum, while Alma and his companions leave Zarahemla to preach in Antionum and end up in Jershon. A connection between the episodes is likewise supported by distinctive phrasal repetitions linking the final verses of chapter 30 with the opening verse of 31: both Korihor and Zoram have led away the hearts of the people (Alma 30:55, 31:1) and "perverted the ways of the Lord" (30:60, 31:1). The detail about bowing down to "dumb" idols (31:1) may similarly have been included as a link to Korihor's curse (30:49–50), since no further use is made of it.

More substantially, Mormon links the two episodes by narrative and thematic commonalities. In both cases, Alma is responding to religious dissenters who have rejected Nephite prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, although their reasons for doing so are different. Korihor's rejection is based on a rational argument against prophecy itself—"no man can know of anything which is to come" (Alma 30:14, 26)—supplemented by a disavowal of Adam's fall and hence of the need for an atonement (30:16–17, 25). The Zoramites, in contrast, have not denied the need for redemption (cf. 31:17), but have rejected the coming of Christ nonetheless, primarily—it appears—because of their desire to distinguish themselves theologically from the Nephites by casting the latter's traditions as "childish" and "foolish" if not heretical (31:16, 18).[5]

The Zoramites' second doctrinal argument is only implied—namely, that believing in the Son of God constitutes a violation of the strict monotheism presented in the law of Moses. The Rameumpton prayer provides a hint of this rationale when it indicates that "a belief of Christ . . . doth lead [the Nephites'] hearts to wander far from thee, our God" (31:17), as does the Zoramites' later

question to Alma about "whether they should believe in *one* God" (33:1; emphasis mine). Alma's appeal to Moses as one who testified of the Son of God, even though this reference is much more oblique than his citations from Zenos and Zenock, further suggests that the Zoramites had denied this very point, especially when combined with Amulek's emphasis that "the whole meaning" of the law of Moses is found in "that great and last sacrifice of the Son of God" (34:14). Likewise, the narrative detail provided by Mormon—that the Zoramites "would not observe to keep the commandments of God, and his statutes, according to the law of Moses" (Alma 31:9)—may have been included to reinforce the unstated point that Zoramite objections to a belief in Christ's coming were *not* based on genuine Mosaic piety. In both situations, Alma is responding to those who do not merely lack belief but who have hardened their hearts against it (cf. 30:29, 46; 33:20–21).

The Korihor Incident as Narrative Background

Alma's initial response to Korihor's challenge to the coming of Christ is less satisfactory than it appears, although this assessment has been deftly obscured by Mormon's editing. Alma's task is to demonstrate the legitimacy of faith as a foil to Korihor's assertion that "ye do not know that there shall be a Christ" (Alma 30:26), but instead he is sidetracked by a far lesser point, but one which will find its own echo in the Zoramite episode.[6] Mormon minimizes our recognition of Alma's distraction by dividing Korihor's message into three teaching occasions: to those in Zarahemla (30:12–18); to those in Gideon (30:22–28); and before Alma and the chief judge (30:30–55). He informs us that Korihor preached the same message each time (cf. 30:30), so that when Alma confronts Korihor, Mormon has already presented Korihor's main arguments and has him open here with accusations about Nephite priests "glutting on the labors of the people" (30:31). Korihor succeeds in distracting Alma with this line of reasoning and the latter responds defensively to this clearly minor issue, rather than directing his remarks to Korihor's challenge regarding belief in the coming of Christ. In Mormon's presentation, the exchange comes off naturally enough

that readers are unlikely to notice Alma's omission of the primary issue.

Alma next shifts to a mode of rhetorical questioning in which Korihor again gets the better of him by responding in direct opposition to his expectations:

> Believest thou that we deceive this people, that causes such joy in their hearts?
>
> And Korihor answered him, Yea.
>
> And then Alma said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God?
>
> And he answered, Nay. (Alma 30:35–38)

Korihor has caught Alma off guard, but in doing so he inadvertently reminds Alma of the crux of their confrontation, namely, the rationality of belief in Christ's coming. Alma finally addresses this issue by retreating to personal testimony: "I know there is a God, and also that Christ shall come" (Alma 30:39). Although he has a rational, evidence-based argument to back this up (albeit one derived from his subjective experience and thus non-transferrable to the hard of heart), Alma apparently doesn't think here to appeal to his own angelic witness (cf. Mosiah 27:11, 15; Alma 9:25-29). What he does do is to continue his rhetorical questioning. But rather than risk Korihor's defiance again, he answers presumptively on his challenger's behalf: "Believest thou that these things are true? Behold, I know that thou believest, but thou art possessed with a lying spirit" (30:42).[7]

In the end, Alma carries the day but only because Korihor slips and, in his arrogance, cavalierly promises to believe in God if Alma can produce a sign. Once Korihor is struck dumb, he confesses his apostasy, his short-lived converts are reclaimed, and Alma's standing before the people is confirmed. But Alma must have been keenly aware that he had been vindicated only by a miracle, and one can hardly rely on divine intervention to end every argument.[8] Korihor's challenge regarding the rationality of belief in future events has gone unanswered, and Alma surely reflected upon his inadequate response repeatedly, working through the *esprit de l'escalier* of what he should have said, and awaiting an opportunity for rebuttal.[9]

The Zoramite Situation as Narrative Context

Ammon's Account of the Lamanite Mission	Mormon's Account of the Zoramite Mission
And we have entered *into their houses* and taught them, and we have taught them *in their streets*; yea, and we have taught them *upon their hills;* and we have also *entered into their temples and their synagogues* and taught them. (Alma 26:29; emphasis mine)	And it came to pass that they did go forth and began to preach the word of God unto the people, *entering into their synagogues*, and *into their houses*; yea, and even did they preach the word *in their streets*. . . . [and] Alma was teaching and speaking unto the people *upon the hill*. (Alma 32:1, 4; emphasis mine)

Within Mormon's single chapter of Alma XVI, the aftermath of the Korihor trial, then, is the background from which Alma mounts a preaching tour to the Zoramites, a community of Nephite dissenters among whom the silent and defeated Korihor went to dwell but where he was "run upon and trodden down, even until he was dead" (Alma 30:59). The Zoramites have settled in a land bordering on Lamanite territory, and many fear that they will enter into a military alliance with the Nephites' long-standing enemies. So Alma, encouraged by the recent missionary success of the sons of Mosiah's tour among the Lamanites,[10] musters an eight-man preaching team, consisting of himself, two of his sons, three of the sons of Mosiah, his former preaching companion Amulek, and their convert Zeezrom. Collectively, they have had decades of experience in preaching to the hard of heart, to those who "because of unbelief . . . could not understand the word of God" (Mosiah 26:3). But even so, they are "astonished beyond all measure" (Alma 31:19) when they discover the Zoramites' innovative and defiant manner of worship. Once a week, believers climb, one at a time, up to a narrow platform called the Rameumptom in the middle of their synagogues, and recite a prayer thanking God for separating them from their wayward brethren: "Holy God . . . we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ. . . . Thou hast elected us, that we may not be led

away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God" (Alma 31:16–17).

Alma's primary reaction to this prayer is concern for the Zoramites' apostasy, but he is grieved as well because of their excessive pride, that "their hearts were set upon gold, and upon silver, and upon all manner of fine goods" (31:24–26). Alma's intent in this missionary endeavor is to reclaim the separatist Zoramites, "bringing them again unto [God] in Christ" (31:34), and he prays on behalf of his companions that they might have strength in their anticipated afflictions, success in their endeavors, and wisdom in their teaching approach.[11]

After a laborious struggle to find an audience for their message, the missionary team begins to meet with success among the poor class of the people. Mormon reports that "a great multitude" of "the poor in heart, because of their poverty as to the things of the world" (Alma 32:4), assembled where Alma was preaching, and their spokesman approached with a particular concern: "Behold, what shall these my brethren do, for they are despised of all men because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have cast us out of our synagogues . . . and we have no place to worship our God; and behold, what shall we do?" (32:5) When the destitute, despised inhabitants of Antio- num come to the missionaries, they, like Alma, are troubled by the rampant materialism that has made their lives miserable. But they do not consider themselves apostates. They fully subscribe to Zoramite beliefs about divine election and the foolishness of looking forward to Christ. Indeed, they worry that their salvation might be forfeit since they have been barred, on account of their poverty, from participating in the Zoramite practice of ritual prayer. The congregation that has gathered certainly knows who Alma is and what he is likely to say, so it must have been out of sheer desperation that they approached him to ask "What shall we do?" They are not interested in learning about Christ, the God of the Nephites; rather they fret, "Our priests . . . have cast us out of our synagogues . . . and we have no place to worship *our* God" (32:5; emphasis mine).

All of this means that the one message Alma and his companions have come to preach is precisely what the multitude is unwill-

ing to hear. They may be poor in heart, but they are still Zoramites, who have explicitly and emphatically rejected teachings about Christ. Alma recognizes an opportunity: "He beheld with great joy; for he beheld that their affliction had truly humbled them and they were in a preparation to hear the word" (Alma 32:6). But from his recent encounter with Korihor, as well as from the discourse that follows, it is clear that he also recognizes the delicacy of the situation and the rhetorical expertise required to bring this preparatory state to religious awakening. Amulek later suggests that Alma thought through his preaching strategy in advance, considering—in broad strokes at least—how he might "prepare [the Zoramites'] minds" to receive a message about the Son of God (34:3).

Like any good missionary, Alma looks for common ground upon which to base an appeal, much as the sons of Mosiah did among the Lamanites (Alma 18:22–33, 22:5–11), but the objectives of the two parties are nearly irreconcilable: The multitude want to know how they can return to worshiping their God (in a manner that Alma finds reprehensible), while Alma fervently desires to bring them back into the Nephite religious tradition (which centers upon a deity whom they have decisively abandoned). Although hostile to Christianity, the Zoramites nevertheless believe in the need for redemption and the possibility of revelation (cf. 31:16–17), and they appear to accept at least some of the brass plates' scriptures as authoritative (cf. 33:12–13). Alma will eventually span the divide that separates them through an astute appeal to the writings of Zenos.

Alma's Discourse on Faith in Christ

In the much-beloved discourse that follows, found at the heart of Mormon's Alma XVI (or in contemporary chapters 32–33), Alma demonstrates the very finesse that he seemed to lack in his earlier encounter with Korihor. With a tender and versatile rhetoric (and undoubtedly aided by the wisdom that he had prayed for God to provide), Alma reaches out to the spiritual and emotional concerns of his audience. He speaks with the utmost circumspection throughout, careful to not raise antagonisms or otherwise ignite contrary opinions in the delicate process of challenging

deeply held, albeit erroneous, convictions. The display of rhetorical skills that he brings to the task is nothing less than remarkable.

Listening Reflectively. Alma listens carefully enough to the Zoramites' initial inquiry to repeat it back to them accurately: "Behold, thy brother hath said, What shall we do—for we are cast out of our synagogues, that we cannot worship our God" (Alma 32:9). In doing so, he communicates that he, unlike the Zoramite elite, values not only his listeners' concerns but also their dignity: "Their souls are precious, and many of them are our near brethren" (31:35).[12] He further substantiates this respect by inviting them to consider with him both the implications of their dilemma and the hint of a possible way out: "Behold I say unto you, do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God save it be in your synagogues only? And moreover, I would ask, do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week?" (32:10–11). Alma evidently has a response in mind, but he wants to help his listeners work their way to it with him. In the process, he will keep their attention by continuing to use their question to shape his remarks, recalling it twice more—first, in introducing an experiment in faith (32:24), and again, before quoting several scriptural witnesses (33:2).

Redefining the Situation. Alma encourages the Zoramites to see their current misfortune as a potential asset. He offers hope where they have seen only despair: "I say unto you, *it is well* that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble, and that ye may learn wisdom" (Alma 32:12; emphasis mine). Likewise, he recasts the value of their reduced social status, identifying their poverty and oppression as spiritual benefits: "*blessed are ye*; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance" (32:13; emphasis mine). Alma continues in this indirect fashion to enumerate the familiar gospel principles of faith, repentance, baptism—though not explicitly here in the name of Christ—and enduring to the end.[13] Very early in his response, then, he is also subtly redefining the Zoramites' question itself, from "What shall we do . . . [that we might worship]?" to "What shall we do . . . [that we might obtain salvation]?"

Easing into the Heart of the Matter. Alma addresses the Zoramites' question about worship without speaking directly of the Rameumptom. He has no interest in debate (his encounter with Korihor had manifested its ineffectiveness) or in provoking his lis-

teners to defend their beliefs. Instead he appeals, ever so gently, to core gospel principles that he knows they had once been taught, hoping to rekindle a spiritual spark from embers long dormant. When Alma does introduce these means of salvation, he does so only hypothetically, drawing no attention whatever to the fact that these appeals actually comprise the solution for which the impoverished Zoramites have been looking. Alma merely offers a glimpse and then retreats. Rather than calling his listeners to repentance or charging them to be baptized, he speaks instead of the blessed state of "he that believeth in the word of God" (Alma 32:16).

A few verses later Alma speaks again of God's word, this time alluding to a passage from Zenos that he will eventually quote at length: "And now, behold, I say unto you, *and I would that ye should remember*, that God is merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word" (Alma 32:22; emphasis mine; cf. 33:4–11). With the simple addition of "I would that ye should remember," Alma has put into play a clever ambiguity. He is either asking the Zoramites to keep the idea of God's mercy in mind for the remainder of his discourse, or else he is calling to mind a particular text that he expects to be familiar to his audience. Either way, when he gets to the quotation of Zenos (which describes God as merciful six times in eight verses [cf. 33:4–11]), his listeners will have a flush of affirmation and will find the prophet's words resonant without particularly noticing why.[14] Alma is adeptly maneuvering toward the possibility of his listeners' subsequent assent.

Note here also how Alma again suggests and retreats. As soon as he puts forward the idea (not included in Zenos though picked up later by Amulek; cf. Alma 34:15) that "God is merciful unto all who believe on his *name*," he modifies it with "yea, even on his *word*." Alma, it appears, has a very particular word in mind here—a name, in fact—that he wants the Zoramites to remember but which he is deliberately leaving unsaid. He is executing a subtle transition, from the word of God in v. 16, to this name/word in v. 22, to his own words in v. 27, and finally to a particular though again unspecified word (as we will see below), in v. 28.

Encouraging the Zoramite Poor to Act for Themselves. Alma implies, ever so discreetly, that his listeners need neither the Zoram-

ite elite nor their mode of worship to be "blessed," that is, to be in a right relationship with God (he repeats this word eight times in four verses [Alma 32:13–16]). He invites them to imagine the superiority of those who humble themselves to those who are compelled to be humble, tacitly encouraging them to aspire to the former. Later, in an aside, he attempts to flatter the impoverished Zoramites into such autonomy: "I verily believe that there are some among you who would humble themselves, let them be in whatsoever circumstances they might" (32:25). He urges them not just to reenvision their situation but to take action to change it: "Awake and arouse your faculties . . . exercise a particle of faith . . . desire to believe . . . give place for a portion of my words" (32:27).

Teaching Them How to Act for Themselves. Alma not only encourages his listeners' religious autonomy from the Zoramite elite, but he also instructs them on how to achieve it. Ever mindful of their prejudice against belief in the coming of Christ, he outlines an experiment by which they can come to a knowledge of spiritual truth for themselves.

> Now, we will compare *the word* unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, *or that the word is good*, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me. Now, behold, would not this increase your faith? (Alma 32:28–29; emphasis mine)

Alma introduces this seed metaphor in the broadest of terms. But as suggested above, he is not being general here; there is, in fact, one very particular word that he is encouraging his listeners to plant in their hearts. So as not to arouse their prejudice, Alma never mentions the name/word that remains his focus throughout; he continues, instead, to develop the metaphor, instructing his listeners on how to nourish the seed by applying their faith and patience.

After drawing on scriptural testimony, Alma summarizes his message with a final appeal to the Zoramites' ability to affect their own spiritual good: "And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall

plant this word in your hearts, and as it beginneth to swell even so nourish it by your faith. And behold, it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life. . . . *And even all this can ye do if ye will* (Alma 33:23; emphasis mine).

Preempting Objections. Into his discourse, Alma incorporates responses to the Zoramites' arguments against belief in the coming of Christ. Again, he is not interested in debating these points, but he does want to put the potential issues to rest. By referring to Moses's testimony concerning the Son of God, he dismisses any claim that belief in Christ violates that prophet's teachings. (See note 5.) He counters the assertion that one can know nothing about things which are to come (cf. Alma 31:22), by conceding, first, that "faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things," and then by explaining that one can, in fact, come to know of unseen things for oneself by exercising that faith (32:21, 27).

From his opening allusion and use of similar wording, Alma manifests that he is here presenting his worked-out rebuttal to Korihor's challenge regarding the rationality of belief:

Alma	*Korihor*
Yea, there are many who do say: *If thou wilt show unto us a sign* from heaven, then we will **know of a surety**; *then we shall believe*. Now I ask, is this faith? . . . Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true (Alma 32:16-17, 21; emphasis mine).	O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, . . . why do ye look for a Christ? for no man can know anything of that which is to come. How do ye **know of their surety?** Behold, ye cannot know of things which ye do not see . . . and *except ye show me a sign, I will not believe.* (Alma 30:13, 15, 48; emphasis mine)

This cluster of ideas—of knowing of a surety, hoping, believing in things not seen, and believing only after signs have been shown—is found only in these two scriptural episodes which have been linked by Mormon in a single chapter. Alma has come to realize that as long as one's heart is not hardened against belief, spiritual understanding is indeed attainable through individual empirical experience; the growth of a seed is, after all, a largely

hidden, yet completely natural, universally applicable process. To Korihor's argument that "ye cannot know of things which ye do not see," Alma finally responds:

> And now, behold, because ye have tried the experiment, and planted the seed, and it swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow, ye must needs know that the seed is good. And now, behold, is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing . . . and this because ye know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, and that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand. O then, is this not real? I say unto you, Yea. (Alma 32:33–35)

Alma is still answering his own rhetorical questions, but he has now provided rational justification for belief in the future coming of Christ.

Appealing to Scriptural Authority. In keeping with the Mosaic prescription of "two or three witnesses" (cf. Deut. 19:15; 2 Ne. 11:2–3), Alma now appeals to scriptural testimony to buttress the truth of his message. In doing so, he intentionally transfers the authority inherent in these scriptures to his efforts to instruct the Zoramites. Here, too, Alma eases his listeners into the heart of the matter, testing the water with a couple of oblique allusions.

He begins by incorporating Nephi's interpretation of his father's vision of the tree of life and its "most precious fruit" into his experiment in faith (Alma 32:40–42; cf. 1 Ne. 8:11, 15:36). As Alma surely knows—and perhaps hopes that the Zoramites will recall—Nephi's understanding of the meaning of this tree is embedded in a divine testimony of the mission of the Son of God (cf. 1 Ne. 11:6–23). Alma's next allusion—that in feasting upon this fruit his receptive listeners will "hunger not, neither shall [they] thirst"—similarly takes its context from a scriptural testimony of salvation, this time in the work of the chosen servant described by Isaiah (32:42; cf. Isa. 49:8–10).

After completing his explanation of the experiment in faith, Alma returns at last to the Zoramites' opening inquiry, about how they are to worship God, by reciting an extended passage from Zenos, a prophet from the brass plates. The quotation that follows fits Alma's rhetorical needs perfectly: It begins by addressing the Zoramites' question (its theme is the efficacy of personal

prayer) and advances toward Alma's ultimate objective of bearing effectual testimony of the Son of God. Shifting away from his studied indirection, Alma begins now to make his purpose clear: "Behold, ye have said that ye could not worship your God because ye are cast out of your synagogues. But behold, I say unto you, if ye suppose that ye cannot worship God, ye do greatly err, and ye ought to search the scriptures. . . . Do ye remember [*that word again!*] to have read what Zenos, the prophet of old, has said concerning prayer or worship?" (Alma 33:2–3)

Note how Alma ingeniously conflates the terms "prayer" and "worship" here (just as he did previously with "name" and "word"). The Zoramite poor have asked specifically about the latter, and Alma—drawing on Zenos—instructs them that spontaneous prayer *is* worship and that it can be offered anywhere: in the wilderness, in cultivated fields, or in the privacy to be found in either closets or crowds. As he repeats Zenos's refrain "*thou* didst hear me," Alma is also implicitly arguing against the need for priestly mediation in one's access to God.

Until this point, Alma has carefully avoided a direct confrontation over belief in Christ. He has spoken at length about planting "the word," but so far has used the term only in ambiguous (and thus deliberately inoffensive) ways. But now, in quoting Zenos's concluding verse, Alma inches toward theological specificity: "And it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me . . . for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son" (Alma 33:11). There is still no mention of the name/word, but the identity of this particular son of God cannot be lost on his audience.

After concluding the passage from Zenos, Alma elaborates upon this very point:

> Do ye believe those scriptures which have been written of them of old? Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what Zenos said; for behold he said: Thou hast turned away thy judgments because of thy Son. Now behold, my brethren, I would ask if ye have read these scriptures.[15] If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God? For it is not written that Zenos alone spake of these things, but Zenock also spake of these things—For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son. And now, my

> brethren, ye see that a second prophet of old has testified of the Son of God. . . . But behold, this is not all; these are not the only ones who have spoken concerning the Son of God. Behold, he was spoken of by Moses. (Alma 33:12–19)

Alma's primary purpose in incorporating the teachings of Zenos, Zenock, and Moses is to demonstrate their testimonies of Jesus Christ. But he is also making brilliant use of these scriptures to appeal to the particular conditions of his listeners. He uses the Zenos quotation, for example, not only in subtle criticism of Rameumptom worship but also as a remedy for his listeners' particular afflictions.

It is remarkable just how comparable Zenos's personal situation is to the context of the Zoramite mission. The opening verses apply directly to the situation at hand from the perspective of Alma and his missionary companions: "Thou art merciful, O God, for thou hast heard my prayer . . . yea, thou wast merciful when I prayed concerning those who were mine enemies, and *thou didst turn them to me*" (Alma 33:4; emphasis mine). The analogous prayer is when Alma prays for success in reclaiming the Zoramite dissenters (31:26–35). Note that Zenos's prayer thanks God for turning these enemies not *from* the speaker—as at Psalms 9:3 or 56:9—but *to* him. And this is literally what has occurred, and what needed to occur, and what presumably could only have occurred because of the grace of God, when the multitude approached Alma with their question about worship. Had the Zoramites turned *from* Alma, he would have had no opportunity to teach them.

Subsequent verses apply directly to the situation of Alma's listeners.[16] Verse 8 includes this indirect criticism of the Zoramite mode of worship: "Thou art merciful unto thy children when they cry unto thee, *to be heard of thee and not of men*" (Alma 33:8, emphasis mine). The Rameumptom prayer was certainly designed as public display and an iteration of self-importance rather than as the penitent submission Zenos describes. Alma elsewhere explains as much when he instructs his son Shiblon, who had been a member of the missionary team to Antionum: "Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they *pray to be heard of men*" (38:13, emphasis mine).

Verses 9 and 10 continue to describe the situation of the

Zoramite poor: "Yea, O God, thou hast been merciful unto me, and heard my cries *in the midst of thy congregations* [i.e., not from the Rameumptom, from which they had been excluded]. Yea, and thou hast also heard me when I have been *cast out* and have been *despised* by mine enemies." In approaching Alma, the spokesman for the Zoramites used these very words to describe their condition: "Behold, what shall these my brethren do, for they are *despised* of all men because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests; for they have *cast us out* of our synagogues . . . and we have no place to worship our God" (Alma 32:5). And finally, v. 11 describes the common condition of both the Nephite missionaries and their Zoramite interlocutors: "And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and it is because of thy Son that thou hast been merciful unto me." (See Alma 31:31–33 for the missionaries' afflictions, and 32:6, 24 for the Zoramites'; the sincerity of both groups is self-evident.)

When Alma later quotes Zenock as saying, "Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son," he is not just linking Zenock's testimony with Zenos's in affirming the reality of the Son, but he is also condemning *this* people, the Zoramites, for their prideful rejection of Christ. He avoids the direct confrontation that such an accusation would otherwise bring, by voicing it in Zenock's words and by focusing attention on its testimony of Jesus rather than on the Lord's anger at its rejection. With this one brass-plates' verse, Alma both condemns those of his listeners who "will not understand" and simultaneously invites those willing to humble themselves to receive the Lord's mercies.

In appealing to Moses, Alma refers to a narrative rather than a quotation, but again he demonstrates the prophet's testimony of the Son of God and also uses the scriptural passage to draw out a reading of the Zoramites' current condition. Like the children of Israel, most of the Zoramites are lacking in understanding and are so hard of heart that they will not look to the Son of God (or to his "type . . . raised up in the wilderness") to be healed (cf. Alma 33:18–20). Where Alma previously let the indirection of the Zenock passage stand, he now makes the scriptural comparison explicit: "O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes . . . would ye not behold quickly, or would ye

rather harden your hearts in unbelief . . . that ye might perish?" (Alma 33:21).

Alma's discourse culminates in the full gospel message, as he urges his audience to "begin to believe on the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works" (Alma 33:22). But Alma has still not uttered the one word most likely to offend Zoramite religious sensibilities; he leaves its articulation to Amulek.

Preaching in Tandem. Alma and Amulek work in Antionum as a teaching team, much as they had in Ammonihah. As we have seen, Alma has prepared the minds of his audience through the simultaneous emotional and theological development of ideas, and Amulek's task is to bring this strategy to its intended conclusion. He begins with a summary of Alma's message, finally making explicit the word that Alma has held back, which he ties to his listeners' own unstated concern:

> My brethren, I think that it is impossible that ye should be ignorant of the things which have been spoken concerning the coming of *Christ*, who is taught by us to be the Son of God. . . . And as ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your afflictions . . . he hath exhorted you unto faith and to patience—Yea, even that ye would have so much faith as even to plant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness. And we have beheld that the great question which is in your minds is whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ. And ye also behold that my brother has proved unto you, in many instances, that the word is in Christ unto salvation. (Alma 34:2–6; emphasis mine)

Amulek goes on to explain the necessity of the Atonement and to expound on Jesus's role in the "great and eternal plan of redemption" (Alma 34:8–16). He reiterates Alma's admonition that the Zoramites exercise faith and patience in experimenting upon the word (32:41–43; 34:3–4, 17), speaking the name of Christ several times more (34:8, 37–38). He reinforces Alma's teachings on the centrality of personal prayer by offering his own exhortation based on the repetition of Zenos's phrase "cry unto

him" and including the prophet's distinctive usage of *wilderness*, *field(s),* and *closet(s)*, the only aspects of Zenos's psalm that Alma had not already incorporated in some way (cf. 34:18–27). He urges the Zoramites to "continue in prayer" and to attend to the needy as a return to observing the performances of the church (34:19, 28–29; cf. Mosiah 18:23, 27; Alma 31:10).

Amulek concludes with an extended and clarion call to repentance, once again following up on Alma's earlier indirection. Compare Alma's "for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance" (32:13) to Amulek's: "And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance. Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about in you" (Alma 34:30–31). Alma and Amulek are working together here to empower the Zoramite poor to "work out [their] salvation with fear before God, and . . . no more deny the coming of Christ" (34:37).

The Aftermath of Alma's Preaching to the Zoramites

In concluding Alma XVI, Mormon reports the results of the missionaries' efforts among the Zoramites: "Those who were in favor of the words which had been spoken by Alma and his brethren were cast out of the land; and they were many; and they came over . . . into the land of Jershon" (Alma 35:6), where they were received and given an inheritance by the people of Ammon. This series of events, in turn, stirred up the remaining Zoramites in anger and resulted in their military alliance with the Lamanites. Within a year, a tremendous battle ensued, just as Alma had feared, such that "the number of the dead was exceedingly great" (44:21), with a consequence that the Zoramites essentially drop out of Nephite history.

Ironically, then, and rather problematically, Alma's missionary tour directly caused the very scenario it was intended to avert (cf. 31:4–5). But as it turns out, this, too, was foretold by Zenos: "Yea, O God, thou hast been merciful unto me. . . . Yea, thou didst hear my cries, and wast angry with mine enemies, and thou didst

visit them in thine anger with speedy destruction . . . . And it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me . . . for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son" (Alma 33:9–11). Zenos's prophecy here underscores the message that the warfare that transpired was indeed God's will, thereby eliminating any culpability that might be assessed to Alma and his preaching companions.[17] It also specifically identifies the upcoming "speedy destruction" as God's *judgment*, and thus redefines the missionaries' task in Antionum as harvesting the righteous before the wicked are inevitably overtaken, much like what had occurred in Ammonihah.

Those Zoramite poor who hearkened to Alma's message, experimented upon the word, and found mercy from their faith in the coming of Christ, were delivered not only from their sins but also from the battle that obliterated their former co-dissenters. The suddenness of the Zoramite downfall echoes Mormon's summary of Korihor's demise: "And thus we see the end of him who perverteth the ways of the Lord; and thus we see that the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell" (30:60).

What, then, are we to make of all this? How, precisely, can attending to context affect our understanding of the Book of Mormon? There is nothing wrong with asserting simply and sincerely from a reading of Alma 32 that "faith is like a little seed: if planted, it will grow,"[18] but we are mistaken if we think that this is all Alma has to offer. In expanding from the experiment-in-faith pericope (Alma 32:26–32) to the context of Alma's entire discourse (32:7–33:23), for example, we can recognize that his general teachings on faith become increasingly focused on Jesus Christ and that he draws upon scriptural witnesses to support this testimony. As we bring in Mormon's narrative to supplement Alma's words, considering the audience and situation that Alma is addressing (31:1–32:6), we come to realize both why he adopted this rhetoric of indirection for the Zoramites and how expertly and gracefully he employed it. (Indeed, it may serve as a model for how to communicate unwelcome truths without provoking hostility.)[19] As we expand our circle of meaning to include Amulek's words as well (34:1–41), we come finally to understand the specific meaning of the word that is to be compared "unto a seed" and the precious

fruit available to those who "exercise [their] faith unto repentance" and "take upon [them] the name of Christ" (34:17, 38).

Adding the context of the Korihor episode, as Mormon surely intends, not only from his original chapter division but also from common themes and phrasing, we see the development of one called to be an instrument in God's hands (cf. Alma 29:9) and the unfolding of responses to challenges to faith. Neither do Mormon's intended interpretive contexts for Alma's mission to the Zoramites end at the boundaries of Alma XVI. He leaves hints throughout—distinctive phrases, narrative details, repeated words—that earlier events also offer significant material for illumination, including Alma's and the sons of Mosiah's youthful anti-Christian preaching and subsequent conversion (Mosiah 26–27), Alma's labors with Amulek in Ammonihah (Alma 8:8–15:2), and the sons of Mosiah's mission among the Lamanites (Alma 17:5–27:15). Teachings of earlier prophets—Zenos, Zenock, and Moses, certainly, but also Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Abinadi, and others—come into play as well through intentional quotation and allusion.

In reading the Book of Mormon, the consequence of ignoring these multiple contexts is a limitation rather than a danger. By its own admission, the book is plain, clear, and didactic. There is little chance of serious misreading and little ambiguity in its central teaching of "how to come unto [Christ] and be saved" (1 Ne. 15:14; cf. Moro. 10:32). But the Book of Mormon is also much richer than is generally supposed even by its adherents (to say nothing of its many detractors). There is an integrated coherence and profound wisdom here that are too often obscured by our attempts to make its truths accessible, whether in contemporary chapter divisions and versification or in the rush to extract eternal principles from its lengthy sermons and intricate narratives. Before we analyze what Alma's sermon on faith means to us, it would be well to imagine what it meant to his original audience and also to Alma himself, in light of his recent experiences. By studying specific incidents within their broader contexts—especially those indicated by Mormon's arrangement of his material—readers may be able to find more insight and coherence in this extraordinary book than they had previously expected.

Notes

1. This paper will not be considering the historical context of the Book of Mormon itself—that is, whether the text is best considered as an ancient document or a product of the nineteenth century or some combination of the two. It will, instead, focus on the internal contextual issue of reading scriptural passages within the narrative and doctrinal auspices of the Nephite society depicted in the Book of Mormon.

2. The presentation of the authorized LDS edition of the Book of Mormon encourages these kinds of truncated readings with its extensive thematic footnotes, ubiquitous references to corroborating proof-texting verses and to the Topical Guide, and a format which emphasizes versification at the expense of paragraphs. Although each of these apparatuses facilitates particular kinds of appropriate scriptural reading, contextual approaches are much better conducted using Grant Hardy's *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). Without changing the wording, the reader's edition features quotation marks, poetic form, footnotes indicating original chapter breaks and the locations where narrative lines are broken off and then resumed, the clear demarcation of literary units, descriptive subheadings, and paragraphs. In this format, the general context of any passage is always readily accessible.

3. Passages demonstrating Alma's self-reflection include Mosiah 27:23–31; Alma 29; Alma 31:24–35; and Alma 36. In his sermon at Zarahemla (Alma 5), he encourages his audience to adopt a similar stance by asking them dozens of self-assessment questions.

4. In 1879, the format of the Book of Mormon text was changed to make it more consistent with standard biblical presentation, including the addition of versification and the reassignment of chapter divisions. The modified chapters are generally shorter and more consistent in length. For Royal Skousen's analysis, see his "Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 85–87.

5. The Zoramites justify their rejection of Christ's coming on the basis of two particular doctrinal arguments. The first is made explicit in the Rameumptom prayer which declares the twin beliefs that God is spirit and is also "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Alma 31:15, 17), with the connotation that He thus will never take upon Himself human form, for "thou was a spirit, and . . . thou art a spirit, and . . . thou wilt be a spirit forever" (31:15). If the source for the scriptural allusion is indeed 1 Ne. 10:17–18, this usage marks a particularly audacious exam-

ple of wresting scripture (and otherwise "perverting the ways of the Lord," cf. 31:1), since the context there is a testimony of "the Son of God, the Messiah who shall come."

6. In contrast to the Nephite priests, the Zoramite religious authorities apparently do "glut themselves with the labors of [the people], and . . . yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they do not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God" (Alma 30:27–28). The Zoramite poor have been cast out of the synagogues, which they "labored abundantly to build with [their] own hands" (31:5), and they do indeed believe in the teachings of their elite, who proclaimed that they had learned from revelation that there shall be no Christ and that the only way to worship God is in Rameumptom prayer.

7. Yet perhaps Alma is not being "presumptive" here so much as self-revealing. Does he know that Korihor is lying because he is projecting his own former state onto his opponent? Alma's perceptions are vindicated by Korihor's confession (Alma 30:52). For a fine analysis of Alma 30 that takes into account the similarities between the two men, see Robert A. Rees, "Irony in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 27–29.

LaMar Garrard has observed that "because of Korihor's position that we cannot know anything of the world around us except through empirical observation, he claimed we cannot know that there is a God," yet Garrard did not go on to recognize that the experiment on the word in Alma 32 appears designed to produce just this sort of predictable, repeatable evidence. LaMar Garrard, "Korihor the Anti-Christ," in *Studies in Scripture: Alma 30 to Moroni*, edited by Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 1–15. In any case, as Brant Gardner has noted, "Modern readers should not understand Korihor's answer as a declaration of atheism. . . . [He] is not a secularist. Alma is not asking him if he believes in *any* god, but rather if he believes in the *Nephite* God." This would explain how Korihor could believe an angel but not believe in God at the same time (Alma 30:53). Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Alma*, 6 vols. (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 4:421; emphasis Gardner's.

8. Even though Alma's youthful attitudes seem to have had much in common with Korihor's heresies, the force of Alma's conversion by an angel was apparently such that he never felt the need to reexamine the logical weaknesses of his earlier opinions. This is exactly the sort of intel-

lectual work necessary to come up with a rational rebuttal (as opposed to simply taking refuge in personal testimony, which outsiders obviously do not share). Previous commentators have tended to see Alma's dialogue in Alma 30 as a decisive refutation of Korihor's position. I disagree. When Alma is faced with many of the same theological challenges in Antionum, particularly their denial of the coming Christ, he does not repeat his earlier argument that "I have all things as a testimony that these things are true" (Alma 30:41). Claiming that everything counts as evidence could be construed as an admission that one's point is not backed up by anything in particular. Alma does, however, return later to the witness of prophets and scripture (Alma 30:44).

9. *Esprit de l'escalier* is a lovely French phrase roughly translated "spirit of the staircase" which describes the not uncommon sensation of determining the perfect response one wishes one had made only long after a conversation has concluded, when one is already on the way home. It is equivalent to a "what-I-should-have-said" rumination.

For other treatments of the Korihor episode, see Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (1957; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988), 367; Gerald N. Lund, "An Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon—The Face May Be Strange, but the Voice Is Familiar," in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the Word*, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992), 105–28; Robert E. Clark, "Notes on Korihor and Language," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 198–200; and Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 36–40.

10. One wonders if Alma is deliberately trying to adopt their successful tactics here in Antionum. Is there an element of friendly rivalry or even holy envy involved in his missionary campaign to the Zoramites? Gerald Lund, "An Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon" (108–10), has proposed that the two episodes are linked, based primarily on comments concerning "the power of the word," but there is still more evidence. Note that Alma adopts many of the distinctive phrases from Ammon's report of the Lamanite mission in his prayer concerning the Zoramites, including his requests for the Lord to give comfort and success and for the missionaries to bear their afflictions with patience (Alma 26:27, 31:31–32), as well as an appeal for God's power and wisdom (26:29, 31:35). Mormon also suggests a connection between the two campaigns with the wording he chooses to open the Zoramite mission narrative. Compare:

Ammon's Account of the Lamanite Mission	Mormon's Account of the Zoramite Mission
And we have entered *into their houses* and taught them, and we have taught them *in their streets*; yea, and we have taught them *upon their hills;* and we have also *entered into their temples and their synagogues* and taught them. (Alma 26:29; emphasis mine)	And it came to pass that they did go forth and began to preach the word of God unto the people, *entering into their synagogues*, and *into their houses*; yea, and even did they preach the word *in their streets*. . . . [and] Alma was teaching and speaking unto the people *upon the hill*. (Alma 32:1, 4; emphasis mine)

Oddly enough, no further mention is made in Alma XVI of the Sons of Mosiah's experience in Antionum.

11. The juxtaposition of the account of the rote Rameumptom worship and Alma's heartfelt, spontaneous prayer is obviously intentional, included here either by Alma or by his later editor Mormon. The narrator immediately notes that the Lord answered Alma's prayer in specific and concrete ways because he had "prayed in faith" (Alma 31:38). See also Rust, *Feasting on the Word*, 134, for a point-by-point comparison of the two prayers. Rust is one of the few commentators who have tried to read Alma's sermon to the Zoramites in its broader context (133–37).

12. The reading "near brethren" is that of the original manuscript, the printer's manuscript, and the 1830 edition. The deletion of "near" in the 1837 and subsequent editions appears to have been accidental. See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 4* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2007), 2257–58.

13. The conspicuous absence of the Holy Ghost in this list may indicate that its denial is another, otherwise unstated, element of the Zoramite creed that Alma is deliberately avoiding at this point so as not to provoke his audience. A later comment by Amulek lends support to such an interpretation: "And now, my beloved brethren, I desire that ye . . . *contend no more against the Holy Ghost*, but that ye receive it" (Alma 34:37–38). This Zoramite contention could be based on a strict monotheism, also justifying their rejection of Christ. (See note 5.)

14. The only other chapter in all of scripture with even half as many instances of the word "merciful" is Psalms 119. Alma's asking the Zoramite poor to "remember that God is merciful" may well have brought to mind the Zenos passage, just as a reference to "charity" today can inspire us almost unconsciously to recall 1 Corinthians 13.

15. "These scriptures" rather than "the scriptures," accords with

Skousen's reconstruction of the original text. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 4*, 2,288.

16. Hugh Nibley mentioned the audience in passing long ago. See his *Since Cumorah*, 2d ed. (1967; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/ Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988), 119.

17. For more on how Mormon, as editor, deals with the uncomfortable issue of Alma's role as a catalyst for the Zoramite war, see Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148–49.

18. Beatrice Goff Jackson, "Faith," *Children's Songbook* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995), 96–97. Well, actually there is something *a little* wrong with it. In serving as a Primary chorister, I came to love this song, but the doctrine is not quite accurate. Alma never compares faith to a seed; rather, he likens the word to a seed, which is nourished by faith. Compare Lund, "An Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon," 109–10.

19. In an earlier article, I suggested that the Book of Mormon was written on two levels, as both a primer for judgment and also as a handbook for sanctification. Nurturing the word as a seed belongs to the first category; but for those who already have a firm testimony of Christ, there is still a great deal of wisdom to be gained from a close analysis of Alma's preaching. Alma's challenge in reaching out to the Zoramites may be echoed not only in missionary situations, but also in ward settings and within families. See Heather Hardy, "Another Testimony of Christ: Mormon's Poetics," *Journal of the Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 16–27.

Jared Steffenson,
Mountain Escape Sleeves,
wood, fabric, dimensions variable,
2005.

Jared Steffenson,
Lofty Peaks,
wood, 84" x 48" x 72",
2011.

Faith and Knowledge: Intellectual Prospects for Mormonism*

Charles Taylor: Catholic Mentor to the Mormon Scholar

James C. Olsen

I'm going to try and convey aspects of Charles Taylor's work that I find tremendously helpful in working through the challenges that all of us confront and that give rise to conferences like this one. Let me begin, however, with a personal note about Taylor. He is perhaps the most successful contemporary philosopher bridging the analytic continental divide and is best known for his contributions to political philosophy, moral philosophy, philosophy of social science, and the history of philosophy. One mark of his significance is the contemporary influence of his work on non-philosophers, which stems in part from his encyclopedic grasp of intellectual history and the ease with which he synthesizes history, theology, anthropology, sociology and econom- ics in order and display philosophical insights.[1] For numerous reasons, he has been a very important professional model for me. More importantly, Taylor has successfully negotiated the worlds of faith and reason, opening up a way for me to follow. I do not exaggerate when I say that he has stood as something of a Savior on Mount Zion for me.

---

*The following papers were presented by participants in the "Faith and Knowledge" conference, Mormon Scholars Foundation at Duke University, February 11, 2011. More information about the foundation is available at http://www.mormonscholars.com.

If nothing else, I am hopeful that I can convince some of you of the value of reading Taylor's works as you personally negotiate your way between worlds. I will focus primarily on Taylor's discussion of the nature of human beings and their meaningful worlds. In closing, I will briefly allude to how Taylor's work can help Mormons situate and articulate their religious experience within the broader context of cultural evolution in the West.

The *Worlds* We Live In

Toward this first point then, I'm convinced that the greatest difficulty facing Mormon academics today is not their ability to contribute to, or earn the respect of, the academic community. Rather, it's negotiating their departure from a familiar world and their initiation into a new, robust, usually beneficial, and occasionally hostile or at least foreign world—a world in which the claims and practices of Mormonism are, at best, odd and superfluous. To elaborate, I need to discuss what I mean by "world."

"World" is an important term of art, introduced by Martin Heidegger and used by phenomenologists (like Charles Taylor) ever since.[2] Worlds are the meaningful horizon within which we all necessarily, inextricably dwell. Colloquially, we speak of the world of academia, the wide world of sports, or the world of the ancient Egyptians. These examples help us to get at the relevant phenomenon. Worlds are the holistic background and meaningful context by which each of us makes sense of and copes with the interrelated web of things, actions, people, and purposes of our lives. Worlds shape the way we experience, feel, and reflect. Any object or event we encounter is going to be practically and conceptually related in a holistic way to the other objects and events with which we're familiar and with which we cope in our practical dealings. It is on account of the position within these practical and conceptual webs that any given thing (i.e., any phenomenon on which we might focus) is able to show up *as* what it is. For example, I understand lecterns like this one by practically relating it to the other objects with which I cope (chairs, tables, classrooms), and within certain contexts of activity (attending classes, teaching classes, gathering for academic conferences), all of which relate to the purposes and roles that I've adopted in my life (perhaps that of a young Mormon scholar).

My example object here—this lectern—is understood by or is meaningful to me on account of how it is embedded within these interrelated, holistic contexts. The same will be true for any object, activity, relationship, or role. The meaningfulness of any particular thing requires its being situated against the holistic backdrop of one's world. Thus, it is the world of baseball that allows a 90 mph projectile to simply show up *as* a pitch. Essential to what it is to be a human is our ability to concernfully—that is, passionately and committedly—dwell within such a world. As philosopher John Haugeland recently stated, "It matters to us what happens in the world, it matters to us what happens to us, it matters to us what happens to our friends. . . . Those are things to build a life on, that one can summarize in the phrase 'giving a damn.' . . . In a word, what [artificial intelligence] has so far failed to come up with. . . . The trouble with computers is that they just *don't* give a damn."[3] It may be helpful to note that, while a robot can sense or launch a 90 mph projectile, a robot cannot throw a pitch.

Closed World Structures

Two important elements of a world are one's (perhaps implicit) intellectual assumptions and one's moral outlook. These elements work together and help to give structure to one's world, which in turn serves as "an underlying picture which is only partly consciously entertained, but which controls the way people think, argue, infer, and make sense of things."[4] As noted, one's world or the elements structuring one's world both allow something to show up *as* what it is (e.g., a projectile to show up as a pitch), and likewise prohibit other things from showing up (e.g., in the world of baseball spectators can't show up as legitimate outfielders). Thus, Taylor talks about "closed world structures," which are the correlative intellectual assumptions and moral outlooks that do not allow for (or at least make very difficult) the possibility of experiencing transcendence.

I think it is, first of all, helpful to recognize the fact that whether one *has* transcendent experiences is largely a function of one's background world—a world we are largely socialized into rather than a world of our volitional making. Second, Taylor points out that, on their own, the intellectual claims operative in closed world structures are dramatically unconvincing. Despite

the way the story gets told, it is the correlative moral outlook or ethic that is always the more significant factor in closing us off to transcendence. We're converted to the moral outlook and subsequently accept the correlative intellectual claims. I will discuss one example here and give another in Table 1 to help illustrate this point.

One of today's familiar closed world structures grounds itself in the intellectual claims of an influential modern epistemology. According to this epistemology, what it is to be human is to be a rational, knowing agent set in opposition to an external world of objects. Knowledge itself is a mental representation of that external world. This sets up a hierarchy of certainty in the types of knowledge we are able to possess: I know my own thoughts most certainly (right now I think I'm giving a presentation); less certain are the external and value-neutral objects represented to me (like these gold cuff links); significantly less certain are values imposed on those value-neutral objects (like the preciousness of these cuff links); and least certain of all, if it's even possible, is any theoretic knowledge I have of the transcendent. (For example, I might infer from the beautiful world I see that there *is* a beneficent God; knowledge of transcendent things is thus merely inferential, making it epistemologically suspect.)

This influential epistemological picture came under heavy fire in the twentieth century and is now at best a beleaguered alternative. What Taylor finds significant is not the philosophically shaky merit of these epistemological claims, but the fact that, to their proponents, these claims were simply obvious—resulting from stripping away all the smoke and mirrors and scientifically looking at what was left when one examined what we naturally are and experience as humans. According to Taylor, however, there was a powerful ethic at work behind this picture that made it *appear* obvious and natural—the ethic of the Enlightenment which posited the ideal image of human beings as that of independent, disengaged subjects, capable of reflexively controlling their own thought processes and who insist on self-responsibility. All of these characteristics and behaviors require courage, a refusal of the easy comforts or consolations of an enchanted world; it also allows one to surrender to the promptings of the senses and

TABLE 1
MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY AND MATERIALISM

	Intellectual Claims	*Correlative Ethic*
Modern epistemology	• I am essentially a rational/knowing agent. • Knowledge is representational. • There is a clear hierarchy of epistemological certainty; it begins with knowledge of myself, followed by knowledge of value-neutral facts, knowledge of the values or relevances imposed on naturally neutral facts, and concludes with any theoretic knowledge of the transcendent (if such is even possible; knowledge of *this* world is representational; knowledge of the transcendent world is *merely* inferential)	An Enlightenment ethic: an understanding of humans as naturally independent, disengaged subjects, capable of reflexively controlling their own thought processes and insisting on self-responsibility; all of this requires courage, a refusal of the easy comforts of conformity to authority or the consolations of an enchanted world; it also allows one to surrender to the promptings of the senses and licenses the dismissal of other forms of coming to an understanding.
Modern materialism	Science has refuted religion by establishing the fact of materialism: that all phenomena with which we deal (including ourselves and our thoughts) are consequences of physical relations with material entities. Therefore, any religious explanation = substituting wrong/mythical explanations in place of the brute, unavoidable, material ones.	Humans are a speck in an incomprehensively vast and utterly indifferent universe. This fact is disconcerting. Religion stems from a childish inability to courageously face that fact. On the other hand, unbelievers are courageous adults, affirming human worth without false/childish appeals/consolations; it's also entirely inclusive and universal in its philanthropic scope (unlike religion).

licenses the dismissal of other forms of coming to an understanding.

On the one hand, the epistemological picture of this closed world structure is clearly inadequate and is embarrassing grounds for claiming the impossibility of transcendence. This inadequacy doesn't argue in favor of God, however; and everything in Taylor's analysis of the arbitrary and weak nature of closed world structures is perfectly compatible with an atheistic universe. On the other hand, the Enlightenment ethic informing this epistemology—independence, control, responsibility, courage, and maturity—is very appealing. Taken as a package and socialized into a world with this background understanding, this intellectual and moral structure can operate very successfully to close off transcendence.

Challenge of the Mormon Scholar

This phenomenon—i.e., the potency of the various structures ascendant in academia—is the real challenge of the Mormon scholar. I simply can't take seriously the notion that we struggle to contribute to the scholarship of our fields. And I have yet to find a substantive challenge to faith in Mormonism posed by theories in philosophy, religion, history, or the like—which is not to say that I haven't met individuals who genuinely *felt* intellectually compelled to abandon their faith. Rather, it's our baptism into the various closed world structures operative in the world of academia that we find challenging and which, often gradually and unconsciously, convert some of us out of Mormonism.

An important challenge that most of us face is that, while growing up, we're decidedly not exposed to religious scholarship. The few scraps we do receive come from CES instructors or manuals whose goal and practice are clearly a devotional approach, generally at the expense of a more comprehensive approach. Not yet capable of recognizing the difference, we commonly conflate devotional for academic exegesis, entirely failing to grasp the overall paucity of our religious understanding. This paucity becomes conspicuous and problematic in college and graduate school where we dedicate years of our lives to rigorously developing our intellectual and other capacities within the discipline of our field, often while allowing our spiritual understanding to

stagnate. Our experience in the merely devotional settings of the church—Sunday School, Institute, Deseret Book—can be jarring in the wake of a growing juxtaposition of rigor between our academic and devotional lives, particularly when our academic experience (understandably) ignores the spiritual. In Church settings, we often receive encouragement and hear testimonials concerning the efficacy of daily scripture study as a means of shoring up weakening faith. Daily devotional study, however, fails as a strategy to directly respond to a challenge that grows out of an intellectual disparity.

The problem faced is not a lack of contact with the scriptures, but one of the changed ways that the scriptures disclose themselves to us when the depth of our religious understanding does not grow in tandem with our intellectual life and when our approach to scripture and religion more generally remains artificially narrow. If we hold on to a childish, perhaps even a cartoonish spiritual ethic or understanding of Mormonism—one that implicitly compartmentalizes and consequently puts aspects of our life in tension—and if our personal religious experience remains superficial, then following the Sunday School admonition to daily read the Book of Mormon is only going to force us to daily confront how silly and immature our faith appears to us. It is emphatically *not* simply a matter of daily feeding our spirit as well as our intellect—a strategy that rests on the sandy foundation of a false dichotomy, one that denies Joseph Smith's merging of the spiritual and intellectual.

The reality is that we are always, in conjunction with those around us, in the process of constructing the world in which we dwell and, consequently, the way in which transcendent experiences do or do not appear to us. It is easy under certain conditions to come to see the faith of our childhood as fundamentally childish. In discussing examples of those who began life with a strong faith but who later felt intellectually compelled to abandon it, Taylor says, "What happened here was not that a moral outlook [e.g., faith] bowed to brute facts. Rather it gave way to another moral outlook; another model of what was higher triumphed. . . . One's childhood faith had perhaps in many respects remained childish; it was all too easy to come to see it as essentially and constitutionally so."[5] This result is particularly true when many of our

close associates claim childish fantasy as the root of religion. In other words, we experience an understandable colonization of one world by another, resulting in a painful closing off of transcendence. This was my own experience as I went directly from career ambitions in the Church Education System to graduate school.

A Few Possibilities for the Mormon Scholar

Recognizing the reality of the different and competing worlds—not just models or theories—in which we dwell as Mormon scholars opens up several possibilities for how we might operate. First, the proliferation of worlds that flourish and overlap in our pluralistic society opens up the possibility of simply remaining aloof, of maneuvering between our Mormon and academic worlds without ever firmly settling in one or the other. This is a common stance I think, one that offers a sort of therapeutic refuge for some of us as we develop. But I find this approach ultimately unsatisfying and its inherent instability difficult to maintain.

Next is the possibility of learning to dwell within one's "Mormon" (or other religious) world but changing the shape and structure of that world to incorporate the goods of our academic lives. This is, in my opinion, what the gospel calls us to do. We can recognize that which is lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy in the very best of our various disciplines of study—including their methodologies, forms of argument, and the contextual value of their insisted-upon impersonal, universal, and wholly immanent explanations. We can humbly recognize the provincial limits of the Church as an institution and the silence of the gospel on many or most of the matters to which we devote our professional time and attention. At the same time, we can recognize the limits, the unjustified grounding, and historical contingency of the closed nature of today's academic world. Doing so requires the hard-won virtues of humility, rigor, and a thick skin. The humility and rigor go together to shore up the weaknesses in one's religious assumptions without being drawn in by unjustified epistemological assumptions that work to close off our experience of transcendence.

The greatest difficulty is, of course, the lack of friends with whom to build and share our remodeled Mormon world. I'm an advocate of this second possibility, but I'm skeptical whether we

can, while working in academia, ever fully overcome the constant pressure to adopt the mainstream pairing of an intellectual and ethical background that serves to structure the ascendant world of our peers. I've been fortunate enough to have peers at Georgetown who have never reacted with anything stronger than mild befuddlement when they see me embracing the same philosophical goods that they do while maintaining the goods of my faith. I know that not everyone is so lucky. Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly a significant alienation resulting from this position.

Being faithfully grounded while openly embracing one's intellectual education can cause alienation from one's professional peers; but this position is made even more difficult by the skepticism, prejudice, and hostility that can come from other Mormons. Aristotle was simply right that good friends are necessary for full flourishing,[6] and the religious alienation one can experience (from spouse, parents, in-laws, ward family, etc.) is, I think the most severe challenge in adopting this position. Nevertheless, recognizing the social and ethical nature of these challenges (i.e., recognizing that intellectual honesty does *not* lead us one way or the other) relieves the overwhelming pressure we sometimes feel to choose between our education and our faith, and opens the door to authentically combining both. Consequently, I believe the social community we're developing at conferences like this one are far more important to our reconciling faith and knowledge than the propositional content of our presentations. Friends are needed—not just to comfort the Mormon academic, but to actually construct the Mormon academic world I'm advocating.

Finally, I want to address why I describe this second option as dwelling in the Mormon world while incorporating the goods of our academic world, rather than calling it a hybrid world, and why I advocate this position as opposed to its opposite—i.e., dwelling in the academic world while incorporating aspects of the Mormon. This latter is certainly a possibility, and there are models for it that one can follow. I believe, however, that there is a basic asymmetry between the two. I've tried to be candid about the genuine difficulties, the cross-pressures, and dual alienation that lie in wait for Mormon academics. Nonetheless, outside of these difficulties for Mormons, I do not see any of the goods of the academic world that are denied a Mormon who remains faithfully grounded.

I believe that Mormon academics have available to them, at least in principle, the goods of both their first and second estate. From within the reverse position, however, that of the secular Mormon, one abandons (or perhaps embraces a denial of) the possibility of transcendence. A secular Mormon can maintain certain cultural goods from his or her Mormon world; but in accepting the cultural background of an academic world as primary, the secular Mormon's experience of the world inevitably changes so as to preclude the possibility of transcendence. While I'm convinced of this inevitability on an intellectual level, it is my best friend—an atheist orthodox Jew—who has convinced me on a personal level.

Situating Mormon Notions of the Sacred

In concluding, I want to mention how Taylor's elaboration on the phenomenon of worldhood has deepened my own understanding of Mormonism, and how it demonstrates a successful means of carrying out Mormon studies. In his *A Secular Age* (esp. 29–54), Taylor performs a sort of philosophical anthropology, discussing two important and related shifts that took place gradually in the development of "Western" culture, and which are key markers of modernity: shifts in how we understand our self and the causal nature of the universe. First, he describes a shift in the nature of our self-understanding, from that of a porous to a buffered self. A porous self makes no inner/outer mental distinction. Instead, we are fully open to what we might call today an external, mental influence for good or ill, protection or attack. The meanings of things are not merely in the human mind, but inhere in things themselves. Our understanding is open to being influenced or impressed by these meanings. Immaterial ghosts are thus physically threatening, as Horatio tries desperately to convince Hamlet atop the battlements of Elsinore.

In contradistinction is the buffered self, for whom the inner/outer mental distinction is quite real. All non-physical aspects of human life (e.g., meanings, emotions, moral values, etc.) are reduced to the merely "mental." Thus "sticks and stones can break my bones, but words will never hurt me." And consequently, we scoff at the Horatios and tell our terrified children that a ghost can do no more than scare them.

Paralleling this shift in self-understanding is a shift in our understanding of the way in which things potently interact, from multiple notions of interaction to our modern notion of a merely mechanistic universe of causal interaction. Medieval Europe maintained an understanding of potent interaction through what Taylor calls "influence." Objects, places, or times can be charged with a positive force whose influence on their surrounding environment is equal to their meaning or value. Thus, holy relics, places, or times can influence, not through mechanistic interaction, but through the openness of our porous selves to their potency.

Alongside influence, our familiar modern notion of causal interaction gradually developed and eventually came to dominate our general understanding. As opposed to influence, causal impingement is mechanistic interaction according to scientific laws that in no way depend on the meaning or value of the objects involved. Hence, any change in one's well-being in the wake of contact with a relic is understood simply as placebo.

These shifts are directly related to worlds, in that one's (perhaps implicit) self-understanding and notions of causal relations between objects help to structure one's world. Consequently, these understandings help shape one's experience of the sacred (or lack thereof). Taylor focuses on the medieval pairing of porous selves and influence versus the modern pairing of buffered selves and mechanistic causality. Nevertheless, his work in historically tracing these changing notions over the past five hundred years creates a framework containing other possibilities and is fruitful for situating Mormon notions of the sacred.

By and large, I believe that Mormons have adopted a version of the modern understanding of the buffered self, while maintaining a dualistic notion of interaction. Consequently, temples are seen as literally sacred, charged with a pervading influence such that "all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord's house may feel . . . constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is . . . a place of holiness" (D&C 109:13). We all have our faith-promoting stories, told in brilliant variety, of unbelievers attending a temple openhouse and being astonished and converted by the spirit felt. Likewise we take literally the notion of "unclean" persons' ability to "pollute" sacred places, prayers, and events merely by their presence (D&C 109:20). The charged influ-

TABLE 2
TYPES OF SELF AND INTERACTION

	Porous Self	*Buffered Self*
Influence	The medieval European understanding of the sacred, containing a rich trove of holy objects, places, events, and times that are charged and that influence all who come in contact with them.	The Mormon understanding of the sacred—e.g., temples are literally charged with a sacred influence, though one can resist the influence.
Causal interaction	Perhaps something like the Cartesian understanding of distinct inner/outer aspects of self, mysteriously linked via a causal bridge (Descartes's pineal gland); meanings can thus still inhere in things, but interact causally with persons.	Modern materialist and reductive epistemologies that either deny "folk" notions of mental life or maintain a neo-Cartesian dualism between the causal and the meaningful; likewise, modern naturalist explanations of miracles as potentially understandable science, sometimes adopted in Mormon explanations

ence of the sacred isn't a necessary force, however; and we often talk of a person's ability to resist the Spirit or ignore the sacred atmosphere of the temple, perhaps because their conscience has been seared as with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:2). On the other hand, Mormons are great proponents of modern science and likewise tend to be amenable to naturalistic explanations of miracles. We've all heard discussions of Christ's complete ocular understanding, which allowed him to heal the blind man. It is precisely the way in which we comfortably, even casually, operate with both interactive understandings that is often so off-putting to our secu-

lar and more modern friends, inviting accusations concerning the backward, superstitious beliefs of Mormons.

Regardless of whether I am entirely correct in my situating of Mormon notions of the sacred, I think this model is a potential step forward in our attempt to understand ourselves vis-à-vis the broader social context. Something like this model is necessary if we desire to have a two-way dialogue, assisting scholars in the work of explaining Mormonism to the world and likewise helping everyday Mormons to a greater self-understanding of their faith and faithful experiences. Learning to appreciate and articulate the nuanced differences between our experience and that of others within a broader framework is not just the model for successfully explicating our history. Building on the work of the Sterling McMurrins and Truman Madsens of our past, it is also the model for successfully explicating our philosophical, theological, and cultural traditions.

Notes

1. Taylor's synthetic approach operates in much of his work and is paradigmatically on display in his magnum opus *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

2. For a brief but helpful introductory overview of Martin Heidegger's use of "world," see Mark Wrathall, *How to Read Heidegger* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 17–29.

3. John Haugeland Interview, in *Being in the World: A Celebration of Being Human in a Technological Age*, DVD, directed by Tao Ruspoli, 2010 (not released at this writing, April 2011). For a more detailed, philosophical discussion of this critical aspect of human nature, see Haugeland's "Authentic Intentionality," in *Computationalism: New Directions*, edited by Matthias Scheutz (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 159–74; also http://philosophy.uchicago. edu/faculty/haugeland.html (accessed April 17, 2011).

4. Charles Taylor, "Closed World Structures," in *Religion after Metaphysics*, edited by Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49. This essay is perhaps Taylor's most concise statement of the points I summarize here.

5. Taylor, "Closed World Structures," 55.

6. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, translated by Martin Ostwald (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1999).

Future Prospects in the Comparison of Religions

Michael D. K. Ing

Jonathan Z. Smith famously remarked that "a comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge."[1] One of the insights that has animated the study of comparative religion in the past several decades is that those doing the comparing must be aware of the kinds of knowledge they are serving. Said another way, scholars involved in the comparison of religions must confront questions such as: Why compare this one tradition with another? Does the comparison of two entire traditions, as opposed to comparing two persons, give the scholar too much leeway in constructing his or her own narrative? Does the comparison of two traditions or individuals lead to false dichotomies that serve an unspoken agenda? In short, what is the purpose of comparison?

The questions involved in the act of comparison will become more prominent in LDS communities as more Latter-day Saints engage in the academic study of religion. Mormons, in general, have struggled with these questions primarily because they reveal that the primary purpose of comparison is often the reassertion of our own truth claims. Our comparisons all too often bend the evidence to fit our predetermined narrative, most of the time by identifying similarities in two or more traditions that serve to highlight the correct practice of our own. I will call this, as we proceed, a kind of structuralist model of the comparison of religions since it presumes universal structures or patterns at work in religion (usually patterns assumed to be revealed by God, or universal modes of thinking presumed to be inherent in the human mind). What I would like to do in the next few minutes is to describe some of the history of this model and briefly propose an alternative model of comparison, one that I will call an interactive model of the comparison of religions. While this model also has shortcomings, it has more potential to be academically sound and at the same time religiously meaningful to Latter-day Saints.

Comparison, as I am discussing it here, is not necessarily re-

stricted to the act of examining different religious traditions. The process of comparison can be done within the same religious tradition by looking at various facets of the tradition across space or time. In fact, some scholars assert that the act of comparison is so ubiquitous in religious studies that comparison itself is the defining characteristic of religious studies as a discipline. In this light, Latter-day Saints compare when they analyze the ascension narratives in ancient Israel, Egypt, and Mesoamerica; but they also compare when talking about washing and anointing in Old Testament and modern-day temples. Comparison also occurs when relating nineteenth-century Mormonism to the nineteenth-century Shaker movement, or the twenty-first-century Church in America to the twenty-first-century Church in Africa. In this broad sense, Latter-day Saint scholars do not uniformly participate in a structuralist model of the comparison of religions; however, such a model seems to be *a* dominant, if not *the* dominant, paradigm among LDS scholars.

At the same time, I want to stress a main point regarding a structuralist model of the comparison of religions: LDS scholars, or scholars with religious beliefs, are not the only people to sometimes employ such a model. The field of comparative religion has a long history of attempting to effortlessly analyze different cultures as part of a single study, and of presuming it unproblematic to examine multiple time periods of one tradition in the same work on the basis of universally normative patterns. E. B. Tylor, a nineteenth-century professor of anthropology and a major theorist of religion, for instance, asserted a universal structure of the human mind in his theory known as the "ascent of man."[2] In this view, primitive people noticed that human beings seemed to be animated by some unseen force, evidenced by the fact that bodies of deceased human beings seemed to lack this force after death. This observation led people to believe that other things such as the sun, water, wind, etc., were also animated by unseen forces. So, according to Tylor, we find the beginning of religion here in these observations—all religion; and it is deeply embedded in the mind of all human beings. As one more contemporary scholar explained, for Tylor "all the world is a single country."[3] Indeed, understanding one place or one tradition, for Tylor, is to understand them all. Max Müller, often seen as a founding figure of compara-

tive religion, writing in roughly the same time period as Tylor, sought the universal structure of religion in the development of language. It is worth noting that Müller was instrumental in establishing the notion of "world religions," which is still very much a dominant paradigm in the field of religious studies today.[4]

More recently, scholars such as Mircea Eliade have argued for a phenomenological approach to comparative religion where time and place may vary, but in which purported manifestations of the sacred remain. Hence we can move from one culture to another and identify common "patterns" (following Eliade) of religious experience. All religious traditions, for instance, exhibit a "nostalgia for Paradise" where the world and human beings were originally created in purity but fell into the profane, so human beings seek to re-create the conditions of paradise.[5]

Critics of Eliade's work have noted problems with its decontextualized nature, its assumption of a shared sacred, and its unintended consequence of distorting the objects of study so that they fit a predetermined religious pattern. This last problem bears some semblance to the critique of the structuralist model mentioned above so I will expand on it here. If all religions exhibit a nostalgia for Paradise, for instance, we go into the various cultures of the world looking for such a nostalgia. If we look hard enough, we will find it everywhere, but only after much searching and ignoring other, perhaps more dominant, paradigms. In early China, for instance, the creation of the world is not a central part of most religious narratives, and the earliest human civilizations are not usually depicted as beginning in states of purity.

A primary challenge that contemporary scholars raise with regard to these paradigms of the past is best summarized under the rubric of "Orientalism." The term "Orientalism" was, of course, popularized in Edward Said's 1978 book of that title (New York: Pantheon Books). Said's point was to argue that Western perceptions of the East—in particular perceptions of Islamic culture—were a hodge-podge of semi-accurate descriptions compiled to serve political ends. Depicting the East as emotional and the West as rational, for instance, justified colonial rule since rationality must control emotion in order to ensure a stable society. Elements of Eastern culture that did not fit the preconception of the East as emotional were ignored. Similarly, comparativists of the past

have constructed a kind of convenient religious "other" to further a variety of ends. The term "Confucianism," it is worth noting, is not translated from a Chinese term. It actually comes from Europe in the mid-nineteenth century and was created partially so that China would fit the pattern of world religions.

The field of comparative religion, generally speaking, has, throughout its history, been guilty of at least three kinds of Orientalisms. The first I call a barbaric Orientalism. This is where one party depicts the other as the barbarian while depicting itself as the genteel; or the other is described as being crude, while the party doing the describing is considered refined. This is, for the most part, what Said focuses on. The second kind of Orientalism is exotic Orientalism. Here, members of one group depict the other as everything they wish themselves to be. The other, in this case, serves as a convenient foil with which to criticize aspects of the describer's society. Eastern religion, it is often said, focuses on a one-ness with the natural world, while Western religion focuses on controlling the natural world. An exotification of the East was a key component of the nineteenth-century transcendental movement's critique of Western culture. The third kind of Orientalism, I call chauvinistic Orientalism. This is where one group recasts the other as a lesser form of itself. Both traditions or individuals are described as part of the same family, but one becomes the younger sibling of the other. We see this kind of Orientalism in much of the LDS scholarship mentioned above. It is even suggested in the title of such courses offered at Church institutions as "The Gospel and the World's Religions."

In responding to these critiques, the field of comparative religion has done several things including restricting the scope of comparison. Books with titles such as *Confucianism and Christianity* are being replaced by books with titles such as *Mencius and Aquinas*.[6] By restricting the scope of comparison, the theory is that the author is less able to construct a kind of ideal-type Confucianism with which to compare an ideal-type Christianity.

Another move that those in the field of comparative religion have made is to compare three figures instead of two—thereby lessening the chance of creating false dichotomies.

Some in the field of comparative religion have also moved toward what I call an interactive model of the comparison of reli-

gions. These segments of the field include scholars such as Arvind Sharma, who argues for a method of "reciprocal illumination" (where both traditions shed light on each other), and Aaron Stalnaker, who speaks about comparison as a kind of inverse hermeneutic in which we use the unfamiliar to reinterpret the familiar.[7]

Building on the work of these scholars, an interactive model of comparison where Mormonism serves as the familiar might do the following.

1. Note vague similarities (or stark differences) between a specific aspect of Mormonism and a specific aspect of another religious tradition. Joseph Smith, for instance, emphasized rituals for the purpose of properly relating the individual to the larger social and sacred world; Confucius seems to do the same. I use the word "seems" here on purpose. These similarities need be only a kind of vague node of consensus. In other words, at this stage, we allow shallow similarities to potentially mask deep levels of difference. So here we invoke a certain degree of what can be called "interpretive elasticity," in which we allow our selected categories to work with less precision than we otherwise would.

2. Deeply immerse ourselves in the unfamiliar. At this stage of comparison, we work to understand the unfamiliar in its own context, relatively independent of the familiar. We engage in a kind of archeology of meaning and aim for lucid descriptions of the unfamiliar, where lucidity is defined by the community of interpreters seeking to understand this material. Put into terminology that Latter-day Saints are perhaps more familiar with, we seek to become native speakers in the language of the unfamiliar. Yet an important step in the process of immersion is to not stop there. In addition to becoming native speakers, we seek to become native listeners where we suspend our value judgments—at least to the degree that such is possible—and strive to listen to, or understand, the world in terms of the unfamiliar. This step is a kind of productive disorientation, where we find ourselves in the midst of something new.

3. Reinterpret the familiar in light of the previously unfamiliar. Where I described the previous step as a kind of productive disorientation, this step can be described as a kind of constructive reorientation. At this stage of comparison, we ask questions such

as: How would Confucius understand Joseph Smith's theory of ritual? What questions would he raise, and how might Joseph respond? This is a rather creative endeavor because things such as authorial intent and a full understanding of both contexts lie beyond the interpreter's ability to ascertain. Yet our deep immersion in both traditions *should* lead to responsible interactions.

At this stage we do more than think *about* other religious traditions; additionally, we learn to think *with* other religious traditions—both thinking *along with* them and thinking *with their terms*. As such, we open up new windows of meaning to our own community of faith. For instance, as I discussed in the last Faith and Knowledge conference, Confucian theories of ritual highlight the otherwise neglected aspect of embodiment in Mormon ritual.[8] Cast in the language of metaphor theory, we understand Mormon ritual *as* Confucian ritual; keeping in mind that the metaphorical "as" is fraught with tension. Mormon ritual is like, but at the same time, remains unlike Confucian ritual.[9] Neither tradition or religious figure is reduced to the other.

In pursuing an interactive approach, we might think about other comparative projects that Mormons could engage in: How would Dignaga pray? How would Black Elk read the Book of Mormon? What would Guru Nanak think of the King Follett sermon? How would Zoroaster understand the endowment? And, how would a Rastafari interpret the Word of Wisdom?

In contrast to the structuralist model mentioned previously, an interactive model is not caught up in explaining connections. Indeed, a central problem of the structuralist approach is its fixation on explaining why things are similar. Such a complex venture requires not only a vast knowledge of history, but also engagement with other universalist theories predicated on linguistics and cognitive science—not to mention the fact that such a venture must also remain sensitive to the observer's own theological presuppositions. Paraphrasing one of my mentors, John Berthrong, simply making sure that the parties being compared have even a shallow point of convergence takes up an immense amount of time.[10]

Rather than establishing a connection between two traditions by means of history, linguistics, or theology, an interactive model of comparison establishes a connection by means of the compar-

ativist's superimpression on the material. In other words, instead of arguing that ascension theories in the Bible and Mesoamerica are similar because of a historical or theological connection, the interactive comparativist personally *observes* or *renders* them similar so that they can be brought into interaction with each other. The objects of comparison may or may not have an ontological connection; however the interactive comparativist is not primarily concerned with such a connection. Rather the issue of primary importance is how different readings of seemingly similar things can highlight previously unconsidered insights. For Latter-day Saints such an orientation should serve as a novel and interesting model of comparison, where "interest" is defined in terms of new grounds to explore, new conversation partners that raise fresh questions, and new windows of meaning for an increasingly diverse membership in our community of faith.

Notes

1. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

2. E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (London: J. Murray, 1871).

3. Daniel L. Pals, *Seven Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 21.

4. On the development of this paradigm, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). The point here, in short, is that the concept of "religion" is born of particular (i.e., Western) historical circumstances. However, it is often presumed to be a universal concept found throughout the world.

5. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask (1959; rpt., Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt Books, 1987), esp. 92.

6. Julia Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study* (New York: Kodansha International, 1977); Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

7. Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil: Human Nature and Spiritual Exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006); Arvind Sharma, *Religious Studies and Comparative Meth-*

odology: The Case for Reciprocal Illumination (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

8. Michael D. K. Ing, presentation published as "Ritual as a Process of Deification," *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 39–55.

9. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 6. For more on metaphor theory, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

10. John H. Berthrong, *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 7.

The Fabulous Jesus: A Heresy of Reconciliation

Scott D. Davis

Let me begin by stating that this is not an academic paper; there's no bibliography. It is, rather, a personal reflection addressing the difficult questions of reconciling faith and the academy—many of which have already been raised today.

I hope that you are amused by the title of my talk. I hope that you are envisioning Jesus brunching by the Sea of Galilee, wearing bejeweled Armani sunglasses and a pashmina ascot, sipping mimosas and flamboyantly expounding the homosexual agenda with an Aramaic lisp. I also hope you are thoroughly baffled, maybe even a little offended—although this crowd seems shameless. Those among you who are New Testament scholars are required to be annoyed by this ludicrous and anachronistic characterization of Jesus. Faithful members of the Church will be deeply troubled by the mimosas. But however ludicrous, ahistorical, or

odology: The Case for Reciprocal Illumination (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

8. Michael D. K. Ing, presentation published as "Ritual as a Process of Deification," *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 39–55.

9. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, translated by Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 6. For more on metaphor theory, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

10. John H. Berthrong, *The Divine Deli: Religious Identity in the North American Cultural Mosaic* (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 7.

The Fabulous Jesus: A Heresy of Reconciliation

Scott D. Davis

Let me begin by stating that this is not an academic paper; there's no bibliography. It is, rather, a personal reflection addressing the difficult questions of reconciling faith and the academy—many of which have already been raised today.

I hope that you are amused by the title of my talk. I hope that you are envisioning Jesus brunching by the Sea of Galilee, wearing bejeweled Armani sunglasses and a pashmina ascot, sipping mimosas and flamboyantly expounding the homosexual agenda with an Aramaic lisp. I also hope you are thoroughly baffled, maybe even a little offended—although this crowd seems shameless. Those among you who are New Testament scholars are required to be annoyed by this ludicrous and anachronistic characterization of Jesus. Faithful members of the Church will be deeply troubled by the mimosas. But however ludicrous, ahistorical, or

even heretical a gay Jesus might seem, I submit that He is a highly appropriate metaphor for our unique project. As both practitioners and scientists of religion, we often find ourselves in a rather ludicrous position, at once derided for believing in the absurd and impossible, and distrusted for making irreligious and unspiritual investigations. We balance history and science on the one hand and faith and revelation on the other. We are baffling and a little offensive. So my fabulous metaphor stands. You (and especially I) are all fabulous Jesuses. And, as I hope to demonstrate, we are all heretics, or, at least, should be.

It is with a certain smugness that every intellectual generation concludes that it has, once and for all, settled the ultimate questions of epistemology over and against the obvious idiocy of its predecessors. We are indebted to the Enlightenment for the offended chastisement of passé religious superstition and for the discovery of pure, rational, and unbiased objectivity. But we are also relieved that poststructuralism has completely reversed the Enlightenment by clearly demonstrating the instability of meaning. And what a blessed day when postmodernists deconstructed the whole damn thing! While epistemology is ostensibly concerned with the science of knowledge, it is often more concerned with how out-of-style epistemologists got it wrong. It is, like most intellectual systems, a reactionary science.

The intellectual orientation of the eighteenth century gave us Immanuel Kant. The nineteenth century gave us Joseph Smith. Both preached a "coming of age," but they disagreed considerably about where it was coming from. The Second Great Awakening and American Transcendentalism had very specific targets. They sought to reclaim the soul of humankind from the mechanical and self-congratulatory excesses of Enlightenment philosophy and academic elitism. At the heart of this struggle was the basic question of epistemology: How do we know what we know? And, indeed, what exactly is it that we know and why do we know it? Rejecting the hyper-secularism of eighteenth-century deists, Transcendentalism sought to restore experiential and spiritual sources of wisdom. The nineteenth century defined itself by what the eighteenth century lacked. Mormonism, born at the dawn of the Transcendental movement, beautifully and dramatically typified this restoration. Early Mormon theology and culture largely de-

fined itself as a reactionary movement, embracing a posture of antagonism, difference, and peculiarity. It still does.

The players have changed and the debate has evolved in the last two hundred years, but it is not unfair to say that modern Mormonism still defines itself in opposition to secularism, academic intellectualism, and even mainstream scientific investigation. Its epistemology is revelatory and it is fundamentally suspicious of other sources of knowledge. By contrast, the academy (at least on its face) adheres to the scientific method, rejecting divine revelation as unsuitable evidence for determining historical accuracy. The academy's epistemologies, methodologies, and even philosophies are defined by what religion is not.

To demonstrate my point I present Exhibit A: Bruce R. McConkie, arguably Mormonism's most influential and widely read doctrinal authority of the last fifty years, wrote a book many of you may have heard of: *Mormon Doctrine*. The book was neither authorized by, nor—officially—affiliated with the Church. And despite the fact that it is no longer published, it survives in lesson manuals, conference talks, and Sunday School discussions as a definitive source for, well, Mormon doctrine. McConkie has a lot to say about nearly everything, Mormon and non-Mormon. If you look under the heading of "Higher Criticism" in *Mormon Doctrine*, it says "see also, Apostasy."[1]

Exhibit B: Before the most recent meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta in November 2010, a former member of the Society, Ronald S. Hendel, wrote an article excoriating the society, claiming that it had lowered its academic standards by providing too large a space for religious practitioners and faith-based projects at its annual meetings. He stated: "Facts are facts, and faith has no business dealing in the world of facts."[2] Support for Hendel's position was considerable, with the result that SBL revised its oversight procedures to more strongly emphasize and encourage its academic mission. This is not a polite disagreement. The church and the academy impose mutually antagonistic paradigms or, as I would like to call them, hostile orthodoxies.

Scripture tells us that we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24), but here we are, standing in the sliver of a very angry and ever-shrinking Venn diagram. One of the questions posed by our conference is: How do we maintain a place for ourselves? Shifting

the pillars of these orthodoxies themselves is likely a task beyond our ability. If, then, institutional change is not a viable option, our prospects are individual. Can our dual identities be reconciled? The simple answer? Maybe. But it's tricky. In the path toward personal reconciliation, how do you stay faithful to these two mutually antagonistic orthodoxies? You don't. You can't. Instead, I suggest you practice heresy—double heresy, to be precise. I suggest this approach because I am a self-professed heretic and have found, in my heresy, reconciliation. If you will indulge me in presenting a brief autobiography, I would like to describe a personal heresy that repaired a mortal fissure in my ultra-orthodox soul.

As I am sure it has become clear (by the purple cuff links, if nothing else) I am gay. I was Mormon. Two and a half years ago, I began a master's program in New Testament at Yale Divinity. At the time I was a closeted homosexual but openly intellectual. And devoutly Mormon. My intellectual interests were well received by my peers and professors, though they were a bit tepid about the whole Mormon thing, questioning whether I would be able to endure challenges to my faith. Since I was a card-carrying Mormon, the New Haven singles branch was delighted to receive me, though some of its members were troubled about my openly intellectual lifestyle and were, regrettably, distrustful of the mission of the Divinity School altogether.

Both the academy and the Church were uneasy places for me, not so much because they so often disagreed, but because they decided to disagree before a disagreement ever came up. Ultimately, it was not the historical Jesus who brought the tension to the breaking point. It was the Fabulous Jesus or, rather, the Jesus who was not-yet-fabulous. Being gay at Yale Divinity School is a lot like being Catholic in Italy. Our queerness is legendary even for the gay Ivy. Being closeted at Yale is—well, it's hard. While Mormon theology is met with open hostility, queer theology is happily practiced in the Divinity School chapel. By contrast, while McConkie may be quoted regularly from the pulpit of the local branch, Oscar Wilde is not.

And so, there were places I could be an intellectual; there were places I could be a Mormon; and there was a place where I could have been gay. But there was really nowhere that I could be all three. Things really began to fall apart for me on October 10,

2008, the day the Connecticut Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage to be an inalienable right. For weeks leading up to the decision, Church leaders strongly encouraged me to do whatever was in my power to oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage in the state. When the decision was announced at the Divinity School, the room erupted into cheers. I wanted to disappear forever.

That day broke me. My Church leaders wondered how I could support an organization that tolerated and championed that kind of moral degradation. To them, the Divinity School typified the sort of arrogance, moral bankruptcy, and worldliness that they believe characterizes the liberal movement. My fellow students—my friends—at the Divinity School questioned how I could be a part of what they saw as a close-minded, intolerant, and unloving institution. On that day, the Venn diagram was just too small. And so, unable to serve two masters, I clung to one and watched my soul tear apart. I stopped going to church. I came out of the closet.

That is not reconciliation. Choosing one orthodoxy over the other is not reconciliation. In leaving the Church, I did not find reconciliation—at least, not immediately. I merely became an apostate and a heretic. But I wasn't a good-enough heretic. A good-enough heretic pisses everyone off. A good-enough heretic makes mutually exclusive orthodoxies agree at least about one thing—namely, that he's a heretic. Let me describe to you a good-enough heretic. To Mormonism, the concept of a gay, ascot-wearing Jesus is thoroughly heretical. But to the academy, particularly in the field of LGBT studies, the ascot is perfectly acceptable. A Mormon Jesus, on the other hand, is completely unacceptable and offensive to the academy. But a Mormon Jesus for the Saints? Well, duh. Both a gay Jesus and a Mormon Jesus are heretical, but they are not heretical enough. But a gay Mormon Jesus, maybe even a gay, Mormon, intellectual Jesus—there we have something. Something that pisses everyone off. That is a good-enough heresy.

An intellectual, gay, Mormon Jesus is shocking and offensive to just about everyone, except, perhaps, to an intellectual gay Mormon who has been scorned by the intellectuals, rejected by the gays, and cast out by the Mormons. But, to me, such casting-out resonates with the New Testament characterization of Je-

sus—the Jesus who was not understood, who offended the orthodox and the powerful, who was abused and cast out by His own people. But also the Jesus who identified with, condescended below, and lifted up the poorest of the poor. Now, I wish to make it clear that, in my melodramatic reference to rejection, I am not claiming to be among the poorest of the poor. Nor am I claiming to be Jesus. (I assure you that I took my medication this morning.) But through this mixed metaphor of this mixed Jesus, I am telling you something you already know—something I wish I had remembered during those dark and lonely days: All is reconciled in Christ. While these two orthodoxies are defined by what the other is not, Christ is only defined by what is. And God is more nuanced, more complicated, and more complete than either of these orthodoxies can circumscribe. God is the infinite Venn diagram. Somewhere along the way, I stumbled into that Venn diagram, or rather, I stumbled out of orthodoxy altogether. For the Jesus I came to know and who knows me is so mixed up that He is something wholly other.

A good-enough heresy offends both orthodoxies because it forces each to see itself melded with the other. It forces each to see itself in the other, reconciled with the other, to see that its identity need not be defined by what the other is not, but rather that its identity can be completed only by what the other has. A double heretic embodies a completed orthodoxy. Our heresies complete us.

I do not consider myself to be a particularly graceful double-heretic. As I said, sometimes it's tricky. I did not, nor do I believe I ever will, find a place for myself in the Church. On the other hand, while there may be a place for me in the academy, it won't be an orthodox place. I hope never to give up heresy completely. As a New Testament scholar, I may be quick to dismiss the Gospel of John as fundamentally ahistorical. But I will accept as truth the words of the Johannine Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Jesus didn't say that, but Christ did. That is a double heresy. And that is good enough.

I am not suggesting that the answer is to leave the Church. Nor am I suggesting it isn't. But wherever you are—wherever we are—we should not be quiet, feeling obligated to vote along party lines. We should not define ourselves by what the other half of us

isn't. We should not be orthodox. If we wish to reconcile our competing orthodoxies, we must practice a healthy dose of heresy. Reconciliation is found by living in the other.

As a student of history, I have to admit, however reluctantly, that Jesus didn't wear pashmina ascots or Armani sunglasses—but neither did he wear white shirts, dark suits, and a bicycle helmet. Jesus wasn't fabulous but neither was Jesus a twenty-first-century Mormon. It's hard to tell whether he was even an intellectual. Of the historical Jesus, we know so very little. But what does seem clear is that he didn't play by the rules. He caused great offense to official authorities—Roman and Jewish. And he attracted a following of not particularly notable people. We are not particularly notable people. But we are people with issues, people who are complicated, people who are torn, people in need of reconciliation. And so, we can follow Him. And break the rules. And cause offense. And be made whole. Of course, if you've read to the end of the book, you know that it's a rather risky venture. But as Paul taught, the Cross that offends also gives life (Gal. 5:11). "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Notes

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 353.

2. Ronald S. Hendel, *Biblical Archaeological Reviews*, http://www.bib-arch.org/bar/article.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=36&Issue=4&ArticleID=9, (accessed February 10, 2011).

Immortal for Quite Some Time

Part 2*
(after the autopsy, after the funeral, after AIDS)

Scott Abbott

I've started to read John's missionary letters from Italy. Nearly one a week for two years. From what Mom told me when I asked about them, I expected requests for money, reports of trouble, and depressed silences. John communicated all of that, of course; but his letters are profoundly uplifting as well (or is it fraternal nostalgia I'm feeling?).

From Genoa, John's first assigned city after two months learning the Italian language and missionary techniques in Provo's Language Training Mission:

November 17, 1970
Dear Family,

Sorry I haven't written the last two weeks. I wrote two weeks ago, but never sent it. I don't really have that much to say, and I think it's dumb saying the same things every week.

We started teaching a young boy, 17, about a month ago. He came to every meeting, was reading the Book of Mormon, but didn't

*For Part 1, see *Dialogue* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 105–14.

John and Michele, Genoa, Italy, November 1970.

believe in God. I have gotten so I really love this guy, Michele. Last Sunday he came to church and was really upset, down etc. He finally told us he wasn't going to come anymore. He said he knew our church was the best church around but that he just couldn't believe in God. He doesn't know why but he's been sincere, he tried to believe, but he just can't. He tries to pray but how do you pray to someone who "doesn't exist" to you. I've never felt worse. I can't tell you how much I learned to love him. It hurt me so bad. I'd give anything if he could accept God, get an answer to his prayers. I never knew I could be hurt so bad. But then he told us he wasn't coming anymore, because he couldn't be part of us and not believe everything. He wanted, he wants to believe but he tried, and it didn't work for him. I don't know why; I almost started to cry. Well that's that. I just pray for him every time I pray. I can't see how God can let this happen to such a great guy. I don't know

John's pencil slides from the "w" in "know" to slash across the rest of the sheet of paper. The second page has a long p.s. about

buying "a real good camera for Christmas," a request for recipes, especially for Mom's cinnamon rolls, and a final note asking Mom to tell our piano teacher that he's been playing the piano at church for the last month.

Desire works powerfully between a missionary and the persons he teaches. They are attracted to each other, pleased by reciprocal interest. They feed mutual longings for religious community, for order, for divine love. They join in fervent prayer. They share self-sacrifice and service. The missionary teaches truths calculated to enhance life, to bind families, to give purpose. The investigator accepts the teachings as truths, changes lifelong habits, takes on the name of Christ, and becomes a new person. The remarkable transformation reinforces the missionary's sense for the truth of his message. The two years he is sacrificing become unforgettably beautiful.

Because the potential for intimate personal relationships is so high under these circumstances, missionaries are required to work in pairs at all times, and their mission president transfers them often from city to city. The rules of conduct are made explicit in a handbook every missionary is told to read daily, along with the scriptures.

In Mom's storage shed I find a black, six-ring notebook similar to the one I had received two years earlier. It contains the Church president's essay on "The Calling and Obligation of a Missionary," a "Church Organization Chart" depicting the Church's hierarchy, and an essay on "The Conduct of a Missionary":

> Conduct yourself circumspectly . . . Guard against familiarity with the opposite sex. There must be no courting, kissing or embracing. Your kisses should be for home consumption and be brought home (unused) to your loved ones where they belong. Kissing and hugging aside from this lead to immorality. . . . Immorality is the bane of missionary life.

John's handbook also contains a section on "Ordinances and Ceremonies," a list of "Scriptural References on Tithing," and "Un Sistema Uniforme Per Istruire Gli Investigatori."

On blank pages at the end of the notebook, he compiled several vocabulary lists, including Italian food words and the following list of idioms translated from Italian:

it serves you right
it looks good on you
damn
in the wolf's mouth
the beauty of it is
draw water for your own mule
he hasn't even discovered America yet
I'm broke
he is an ace
make like the devil's advocate
I lick my own mustache
what a bore
he was born lucky
I don't care
sleep with angels or have beautiful dreams
I don't feel well

On one page he copied John Henry Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light." On another he collected a hodgepodge of maxims:

You set your personality for eternity during your mission
Don't set limits on your service to the Lord
Turn my friends over to the Lord
Let no obstacles stop you, it's stupid if you do!
Obedience, the first law of the universe
I have responsibility to God because I have the Melchizedek Priesthood
No sacrifice is too much for the Lord
Don't let bad feelings out, it's my responsibility to keep them canned
Christ suffered for me, what do I owe him?
The priesthood is the power to act as if you were God
As soon as I open the window Satan is waiting to get in, and will if I'm not careful
Discouragement and depression are tools of Satan
Work to get the spirit of the Lord
Keep the Sabbath holy
Know the Gospel

I distinctly remember the feelings of commitment and faith that motivate a missionary to submit himself completely to a system perfectly designed, as he supposes, to bring him salvation here and in the next life. The rewards are immediate and substantial and include security, power, and a sense of direction. The absolute faith also breeds absolute rhetoric (or is it the absolute rhetoric that breeds the absolute faith?): for eternity, no limit, no obstacles, the first law of the universe, no sacrifice, as if you were God, and Satan as the absolute antithesis.

I wish John had embraced a gentler vocabulary, one far enough from the march of Christian soldiers to provide space as he found and developed needs this productive system could not address.

I check my own black binder to see what thoughts I collected as a nineteen-year-old missionary:

> Be like a duck, unruffled on top, but paddle like hell underneath.
>
> The ladder of life is full of splinters. Never slide down.
>
> Atheist—a man without an invisible means of support.
>
> "Questions": Will you wait womanish, while the flattering stream / Glosses your faults away?

In addition to that mysogynist fragment from C. Day Lewis, I copied uplifting sayings by Samuel Johnson, Emerson, John Kennedy, Lincoln, Thoreau, Longfellow, Edgar A. Guest, Benjamin Franklin, St. Francis of Assisi, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Norman Cousins, W. C. Fields, Socrates, Dale Carnegie, William James, and Adolph Rupp. In most cases I didn't even know who the author was, much less the context of the quotation.

A nineteen-year-old, suddenly required to teach answers to questions he has never asked, grasps at straws.

25 January 1971, from Cagliari, Sardegna
Dear Family,

I was transferred from Genova this week to Cagliari Sardegna. I'm really sorry to leave because it's a great town and great people whom I love very much. Michele came to the apartment Thursday and I got to talk to him for a little while. He's a great guy, and I'm sure he'll accept God and the Gospel when the time is right. Then he, Elder Nelson and I went to

the port in a taxi. I bought my ticket and paid for my bike. It cost me about $15.20 in all. It was raining so we waited inside till 5:00. Then we took my stuff on the ship (they got to come, too). They waited till 5:30 and then Elder Nelson left, but Michele waited. I was on the ship, he was on the dock. We couldn't talk because of the distance and the wind. We just looked at each other. Finally at 6:30 (I was supposed to leave at 6:00) he had to go. We said good-bye. I sure felt sad, and realized how good a friend he'd been. I'm sure I'll get to see him again though.

Well my address is Via sanna randaccio 63, Sardegna, Italia 09100.

Love, John

We just looked at each other.

In contrast, I keep my distance. I keep myself out of trouble. I circumvent messy situations, personal entanglements, potential failures. I calculate. I protect myself.

Responding to John's death, I find that that's not enough. So I write to reveal myself. I write to unearth motivations, to track down fears, to open myself to change.

I ask a friend to read my manuscript, apologizing, as I hand it over, for the exhibitionist quality of my writing.

Her reply: An exhibitionist, perhaps, but you're wearing a full suit of clothes under the overcoat.

16 February 1971
Dear Family,

Well Cagliari's kind of a slow city right now, it's only because we aren't working hard enough and don't have enough faith, though. My companion and I are starting to get along better. My organ "playing" doesn't seem to be improving but a funny thing happens. When I play before or practice I can't play any of the songs but then during the meeting I can, not at all perfect, but all right. There's only one person who can be helping me.

Right now I'm having a hard time. I want to study, work etc. but I don't want to. I just kind of want to exist. I really miss being able to be alone. It's one thing I really dislike about my mission. It's hard to live with my companion. We're about alike as a cat and a dog. I haven't felt at all

like a missionary, close to god, or anything else the last couple of days. I hope I can pull out of it soon.

Love, John

On the back of this envelope John wrote "Send me Scott's address." Reading his note, decades after the fact and in the third person, I still feel the warmth of something approaching conversation. How I wish I could talk with him—with you, John.

24 February 1971
Dear Family,

My companion was sick Sunday night Monday and Tuesday but other than that it was an alright week.

Thanks for sending my letter. It was from a guy I met when I went to the Junior Civitan Seminar 3 years ago.

We had a party Saturday. We went out to the sea and had a weeny roast. It was kind of fun, but not really.

Well I guess that's all. One of our contacts gave me a seahorse (dead) but its really pretty.

Love John

Was the letter from the guy Mom thinks introduced John to gay sex?

It's so tenuous, this construction of a life out of memories, a photo, and some letters.

25 February 1971
Dear Mom & Dad,

There's something I have wanted to tell you for many years now. I love you, and the example you've been to me, although you haven't seen me follow it, until now. I had more or less hypnotized myself into not seeing the real you. Looking at only your mistakes, which weren't or were just little, and enlarging them, making them into large oversized lies, and telling myself this was my parents. I fought, argued because it kind of pleased me for the moment to see you get angry etc, but I always felt really bad afterwards. There were so many times I wanted to

accept you but I just didn't and couldn't change; I told myself the reason was because I didn't want you to be pleased or satisfied with me. I'm sorry I caused you much heart-break and sorrow. I always wanted to be close to Dad, like my friends were with their dads, but I wouldn't let myself. I was too proud to accept, what I called then, "defeat." There aren't any two lovelier or better people in the world. Two people who have sacrificed for and loved their family more. I love you, each.

I always had big dreams but was too lazy to do anything about them. As I look back I see two roads, one the example you set for me and the other the way I followed. I am really sorry I didn't change and become a better person while I was home and follow your example.

Thank you for everything. I love you, and wish I could show it more effectively. Dad, you said that you considered me and my mission as part of the mission you didn't serve (officially). Well, let's see what I can do to make us both proud of what I do. It'll be hard but with your faith and prayers, I can do it.

Thanks again.
Love, your son John

John is feeling remorse. He wants to be good. He is a missionary of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel of repentance is working powerfully within him. Confession eases his soul and makes progress possible. His desires, however, will conflict increasingly with the system he has internalized.

How can I be so sure? Don't I, after all, believe in repentance, change, spiritual rebirth?

Not in the black-and-white sense of the question. Not in the sense of absolute change or conversion. Not any longer.

My own life is the product of a Mormon worldview. National Honor Society president in high school. College graduation with honors. Mission in Germany. Marriage to an intelligent and beautiful woman. Graduate studies at Princeton. University professor. Seven children.

Yet in and through it all runs a web of conflicting desires. They too make me who I am.

2 April 1971
Hi,

This has really been a good week. We highlight it tomorrow when we baptize Sister Accardi. She is the lady from Holland.

The Calabrese are trying to make up their mind about tithing, 10%. They agree that it's right, but that they should only pay what they can afford. He's a teacher and makes 130 mille Lire a month.

We got a telephone call a few minutes ago. Another one of our members died. He was in a car accident. He was inactive, and I have never seen him.

Well, I'm out of things to say, so ciao,
John

p.s. I'm getting better at the organ.

A good week. John would have met with the Calebrese family to bear testimony that the law of tithing came from God and that blessings would follow if they paid tithing first and worried about their bills later. The inexperienced nineteen-year-old could be confident about sacrifice and its attendant blessings because he had watched his parents donate to the Church 10 percent of a junior high school teacher's meager salary, plus a monthly "fast offering" to provide assistance for the needy, plus periodic deep-cutting assessed donations to a building fund. And while doing so they expressed pride and pleasure at being co-builders of the "Kingdom of God on Earth."

15 April 1971, from Cagliari
Dear Family,

Saturday we had a very wonderful and exciting experience, Sister Accardi was baptized. The first of many here in Cagliari. When the President was here for the Conference in March [he said] that he would get plane tickets and fly over if we had a baptismal service of 4 people. Well, remember the Calabrese family? They've been estimated for the 17 of April. The Lord has revealed to my companion and me that this is the right date. And as the handbook says an estimation is always a baptism. So, we're going to have a few baptisms here on the Rock. Their only real problem now is tithing. Sister Calabrese told us how their money situation is. He receives 130,000 mille Lire a month (about 220$) and after the rent, taxes, and these kind of things that have to be paid they have

40,000 mille Lire (64$) to live on for the rest of the month, with tithing 13,000 mille Lire 22$. Well, they're going to have to have the faith to pay their tithing despite everything, but the Lord wants them baptized so they'll overcome this obstacle.

It's Easter or Pasqua in Italian. It's really a big thing here, too. They have chocolate eggs, vacazion from school and horrible church services. Last night we went into one of the churches here and it's sickening to see the paganism. Apparently the Catholic church rakes in the $ this time of year. The incense, the statues of the madonna or Mary, of all the Saints, the Priests officiating over the communion or sacrament. It's really sad to see these people doing things like this. Well, that's the reason we're here.

Love, John

The Catholics would be ecstatic to rake in 10 percent. If John had been more tolerant of this kind of difference, could he have been kinder to himself?

Late in his mission John was transferred to Milano as a zone leader, responsible for several districts of missionaries. He had a car, which he hated, a leadership position which he accepted and disliked, periodic bouts of depression, and continued struggles to fit the missionary mold and to "perfect himself."

5 November 1971

We had an experience Wed. that I want to share with you. We had taken our clothes into a laundry and I went back to get them. She had them all wrapped up and then told us the price, L7,500, over $10. She had ironed the shirts, washed my socks specially, because "they were wool." I got angry and we yelled at each other for 2 hours because I'm sure I told her not to iron my shirts. Well finally I just paid her and left. I told myself I wasn't even going to apologize for yelling at her. Well that night when I knelt down to pray nothing came out, no matter how hard I tried. I got in bed and started thinking of a scripture in the Bible, Matt. 6:14–15: "For if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." I decided to go back and apologize and at that moment felt the peace I needed. I was able to pray.

A mission works on you that way. You truly want to be a better per-

son. You try to follow the example of Jesus Christ. You strive to be humble. You burn to be filled with saintly love. I am still grateful for the spaces those feelings opened inside me.

12 November 1971
Dear Family,

It's 4 o'clock and I'm just getting around to writing. I have just been talking to the Signora Sicardi and listening to the birds that were settling down outside in a big tree, in the courtyard. It's funny this tree. They say that in the summer birds flock to it by the hundreds to rest there for the night. Just sitting by the window, watching, listening, gives one that extra little boost to continue in life, it takes away all unpleasant thoughts, all desires to do what's wrong. Just seeing and hearing the little birds sing takes one away from this world of strife and hate. I've never seen this kind of tree before but would like one in my home.

We have a sweet little old landlady. Everyday we talk a little. Her husband died about a year ago and she is all alone. She has lost all she had, money, trucks, etc. and cries when she thinks of the injustice, the sacrifice she's gone through. She was going to live with her sister in America but fell and broke her arm which hasn't completely healed yet. She is always trying to help us, dusting our room, shaking the rugs, and telling us to be a little more orderly.

Milano is different from my other cities, and I'm sure once we get working hard I'll love it. As of yet I'm still getting used to the smog which I don't care for too much. It has rained just about all week. Signora Sicardi gave us an ancient umbrella to use. It works good!

I'm having an awful time getting myself going here in Milano. It's starting to get cold, the leaves are leaving their trees, and coats are being pulled out.

I'm happy I'm here, and am happy only when I'm doing my best. It's hard though, especially for me.

Well I love you each, and am waiting to see you again.

Love, John

As the weeks and months passed, John grew closer to his "sweet little old landlady." He discovered she was going to lose her apartment if she didn't come up with some money. She had sets of nineteenth-century furniture and crystal and dishes to sell, and John decided to help her. There were several quick notes home describing her need and the furniture and promising it would be a good investment. The $3,000 should be sent immediately.

Our parents indeed had money in the bank, although $3,000 was an enormous sum for them, saved over the course of a decade. They sent the money. There were difficulties with crating and shipping. The furniture sat in a U.S. customs warehouse for months until another substantial sum was paid. An Albuquerque antiques dealer was finally found to take the furniture on consignment. Several years later, long after Mom and Dad had resigned themselves to a total loss, someone bought it for about the money already spent. So, except for the headaches and worry, it didn't turn out too badly. Mom ended up with a set of crystal. Signora Sicardi saved her apartment. And John satisfied a generous need to be of assistance.

23 December 1971

Until yesterday I still hadn't been able to get back into the spirit of missionary work. I lost a whole month here in Milano without accomplishing a thing. Yesterday however we started working. It is sure hard to keep a strong testimony if we don't use it. I have found out that each period of depression I let myself fall into it takes longer and is harder to pull myself back up. For that reason I have decided to "fall no more," to occupy my thoughts with the work and nothing else.

Why isn't Scott getting married?

Reading this, I'm left wishing I could have talked with John about why I broke off my engagement. I would have answered with questions: Because the intimacy was too much for me? I wanted space for myself? I wanted to be "clean"? I was only twenty-two? There would have been questions for John as well: Is Mom right about gay sex and the Junior Civitan Seminar? Had you had homosexual feelings before that? And of much deeper

import: Why didn't we talk about such things, John? Why didn't we talk?

John says he let himself fall into depressions and decides, biblically, to fall no more. What tensions were at work in him as he tried to be one possible version of a saint and yet felt, perhaps, "unholy" attractions? What memories weighed on him? Did he lie to his stake president when he asked if he were sexually pure? How did those lies, if he did lie, work in him as he exhorted others to be honest and pure, as he sought the "guidance of the Holy Spirit"?

Firmly centered in a strictly defined theological and cultural system, John had no fulcrum outside that system. Soon after his mission, when he broke away from the Church whose prohibitions were eating him alive, he faced a difficult task: creating a self without that center.

15 January 1972
Dear Family,

I have been really having a hard time this last little while and haven't written for that reason. I just couldn't think of something to say that I felt. Well, things have happened both good and bad. I have had some of the most spiritual experiences I've had on my mission but have also been very very down. It seemed everytime I started to write I couldn't find anything to say.

4 March 1972

I am really sorry I haven't written more than I have lately, but there hasn't been much to say and I hate to send cruddy letters, also as you know it's very hard to write letters. I start, get about this much written, and then go all "bla" inside and can't write anymore. It's really hard to keep myself on a high spiritual plane.

I hate driving "Little Horse," our car. It's expensive but also nerve racking. This week we must have almost been hit 20 or 30 times, each time the car missed us by less than an inch. Our "guardian angel" must have really been helping us. Alma asks if we are ready to die in this moment, I have to say no, because there are so many things I have to do

before I go meet my Lord. As I said, I hate to drive. It takes twice as long to get anywhere than if we used bikes and costs so much more.

At the end of a subsequent letter describing a joyous meeting with an investigating family, he adds a quick note about the car:

Well another interesting event happened Monday night. I just about totaled our little car. We hit another guy coming through the intersection but thanks to our Father in Heaven no one was hurt.

In another letter written in March 1972, John begins a paragraph with his usual "Well" and then continues with the now common theme of depression:

I haven't been happy lately, largely because I'm not satisfied with myself to any degree. I have been very depressed and because of that haven't done the work, which makes me in turn feel worse about myself, becoming more depressed which I imagine is what made me make myself sick for the last two weeks. My temper has been bad, my emotions on the rampage etc. What I thought when I heard I was to be a Zone Leader was "Why?" I didn't want it. I was shocked because since I've been here in Milano I haven't done anything hardly at all. I realize what I have to do but it's so very hard for me to do it.

I got a real nice letter from Scott today. All of the Elders want to see Carol's picture. If you have one that is in color I'd like that. Well, I love all of you. Don't worry about me. I'll do fine from now on! Thanks for everything. I love you, John.

What did I write him? Did Mom send him a photo? Our sisters were so beautiful!

John was a zone leader, second only to the assistant to the president in mission hierarchies. I never achieved any such position, perhaps because of a parodic sketch several of us did at a mission conference poking fun at our all-too-serious mission president. Or was it because I refused to get up regularly at 6:00 A.M.? Or because I spent as much time reading Bertolt Brecht as I did reading books on the approved list for missionaries?

For a European missionary, John had remarkable success, baptizing whole families and several single people. I helped

teach only one woman who was baptized, and until the final hour it was nip-and-tuck whether she would choose us or the Jehovah's Witnesses. It's no wonder, then, that my strongest memories are of chance encounters while knocking on doors: the energetic old woman who ushered us into a packrat's apartment and claimed to be Max Weber's daughter whom the world had forgotten; the publisher who regaled us with stories of American authors he knew and sent us away with armloads of his books; the students who prayed with us and then taught us songs protesting our country's war; the Freemason who recounted Lessing's parable of the rings to teach us that religions are true only as they make their adherents good people; the beer-bellied behemoth who bumped me down three flights of stairs while shouting about the anti-Christ.

One memory stands out. I find it described in my missionary journal:

> December 1968, Wuppertal, Germany
>
> The Wiebers weren't in church today, the Branch President tells us on the Sunday before Christmas. Could you visit them and see how they are doing? Brother Wieber fell from a scaffold, as you know, and broke his back. Little Sonja also ended up in the hospital with twitching legs, probably from malnutrition.
>
> We get the address, check our map of Wuppertal and environs, and set out on a clear cold morning. First the Schwebebahn, the hanging train that snakes along the steep Wupper valley. Then a bus to the city limit. Another bus over icy country roads to a windswept stop in front of a house surrounded by white fields. The Wiebers, it turns out, live in the low cinderblock shed across the yard from the house. Sister Wieber opens the door slowly, looks at us with dull eyes. Two of her children huddle under a blanket on a mattress in a corner. Greasy food wrappers litter the floor. The stove is cold.
>
> We try to clean up. We build a fire with the last few sticks of wood and the food wrappers. The stove belches smoke. We put the fire out and open a little window to clear the air.
>
> There's a knock at the door. A Catholic priest with a box of food enters, speaks softly, leaves the food. We leave as well.

Teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ is our task. We have no training, no resources, no place on our weekly report for time spent getting firewood for the Wiebers. Hours tracting—hours

teaching—hours traveling—and if they add up to 60, it was a good week.

It's pitiful.

March 19, 1972

Friday night we went out for baptismal interviews with the Carnieletto family. Brother Carnieletto and I went into the kitchen. We talked for a while, started the interview, read from the scriptures and were periodically interrupted. First the plates on the refrigerator started rattling, he moved them, then a stack of clothes fell for no reason at all. Other things like that, that shouldn't have happened. He told me it was Satan trying to interrupt us and I fully agreed. We spent about one and a half hours talking, clearing up problems and questions and then we knelt in prayer. He offered a very sincere beautiful prayer, pleading with the Lord to help him know the truth. Then I offered a prayer. It was one of the most beautiful experiences I have ever had in my life. We both felt the Spirit of the Lord, which was very very strong. Oh, it was beautiful. The next day they got baptized and it was so very beautiful, so very very beautiful. They asked me to confirm the father, was I ever grateful, I love them as much as any family I ever baptized. Brother Canieletto paid me a very high compliment. He said that I really helped him during the interview to make up his mind. They say each missionary can touch the heart of certain people and I believe it.

So do I, even as I attribute the rattling plates to the refrigerator's compressor. John loved them, and they loved him. And then he was transferred again.

After his mission, John attended BYU for a while. He trained to be a chef in the kitchen of the Hotel Utah. He worked in restaurants in Houston, San Diego, and then Boise.

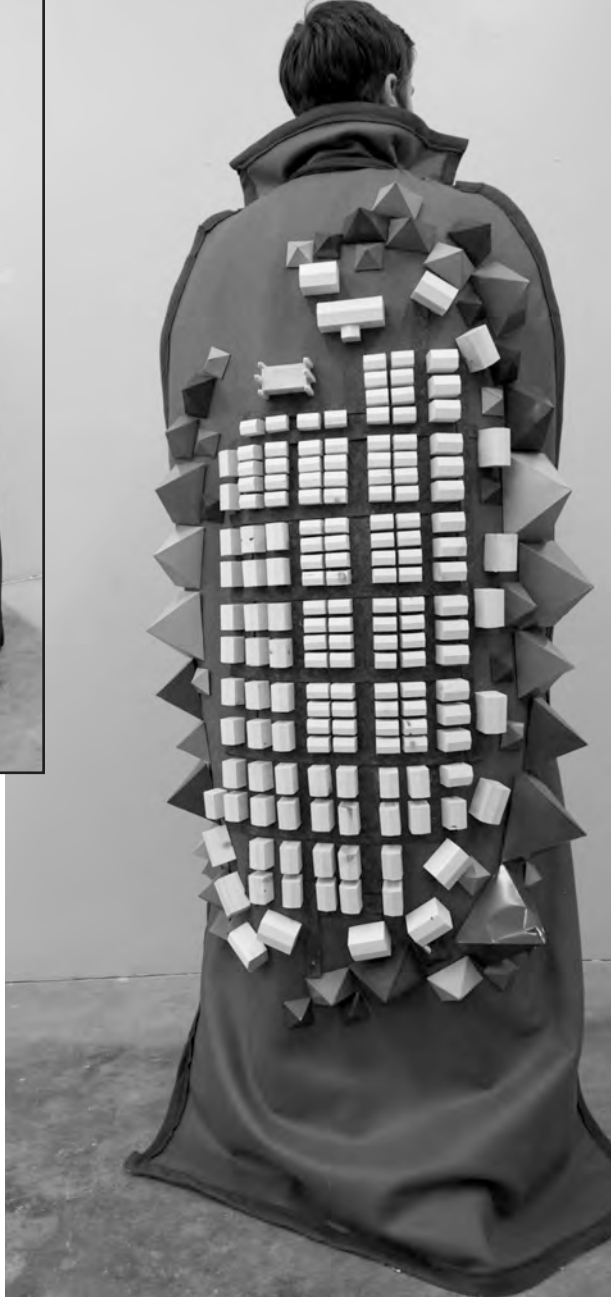
One of the medical forms from the Boise clinic where John was treated twice in the weeks before he died said that he "denies homosexual activity."

Who asked him the question?

Was there still enough Mormon Puritanism in him that he felt guilty when confronted with what had infected him? Or was he simply what Nietzsche's Zarathustra called an "awful counter-

feiter, you have no choice! You would use cosmetics on your illness when showing yourself naked to your doctor."

I put down John's letters. I have hundreds of questions and no one to ask. A brilliant orange sunset across the western horizon. Slowly it flames pink. The sprinklers swish rhythmically. A lawnmower goes silent. The light fades. I throw Honey's dumbbell again and again and she brings it back to me, wagging her tail.



Jared Steffenson,
Defendor,
Felt, wood, paper,
dimensions variable,
2011.

Jared Steffenson,
Shoulder Shade Tree,
wood, fabric, dimensions variable,
2005.

Blessing My Son

Matt Nagel

Now that you are named
and heretofore known
and promised missions and maidens
and temples and talents

and white shirts and quorum duties
and a car full of car seats—
I whisper to you now
what I really hope for:
safe
healthy
kind

And if you discover sex before you're supposed to
may it be good sex and safe sex
(for her sake at least)
And if you discover beer and weed and
the f-word
may you use them safely, too,
and kindly

And if Joseph's lightning strikes in you no dry kindling
let it strike instead a damp, indifferent sponge,
no big deal, merely academic,
never a burr or a thorn—

And if you really fly off the deep end
I will remember that
I am bound to my neighbors by beautiful covenants
and appointments on the damn Cub Scout calendar
but our bond is blood
and name
and ten million minutes together
chasing you chasing me
just to be with you
I don't care where
just to be with you
I will follow you if you don't
follow me

Listening to My Parents from the Ventilator Shaft

Anita Tanner

Before sleep I overhear them,
their scrabble of words
scattered to draw meaning
from a day with eight kids,
their voices like bowls
that hold experience
until they can name
what happens and relive it.

What they say, what they mean—
the silence in between the two—
surprises, alerts, and softens me.
How deep the well of concern
from which they fumble words.
How one thought followed
leads a circuitous route
that ends up in city traffic
far from our secluded farm.
How he says she says
becomes a ball tossed
back and forth to a rhythm
I can fall asleep to.

It's here, through the shaft
below my bed, words
rising like starlings
from the underground,
where I first guess
their conjugal feeling, sounds
and tones expressing more
than can be said
in soporific backdrop.
It's here I learn to love language,
here the germination:
the said,
the unsaid,
the nevertalkedof,
the breath.

Sex Talk Sunday

Deja Earley

I sit in a class of virginal twenty-somethings,
rows of polka dot skirts, shiny shoes, sculpted hair,

waiting for a stern and nervous bishop
to deliver the semi-annual sex talk.

He stands, buttons his suit coat, unwraps
delicate tissues from a bakery brownie,

and hands it to the first girl on the front row.
"Pass it around," he says.

While it winds back, he preaches the joy
of matrimonial union, the dangers of being

alone in dark places with boys, staying late,
watching movies horizontally.

When the brownie returns, he leans in and lowers his voice.
"You see," he says, "who will want it now?"

And I'm thinking that it doesn't look too bad,
that I'd like nothing better than to push past the bishop

and lick that brownie very slowly. Or better, bite.

Intermission Wine

Deja Earley

I'm in London, alone at a ballet,
wearing a wide hat
and sitting very straight.
The man next to me is eyeing
me, checking me out, maybe.

I want him
to be checking me out,
to invite me for intermission
wine, to stand at the window,
one heel propped behind the other,
flirting from behind my hat.

Trouble is, I don't drink wine.
And I don't talk to men who aren't Mormon,
lest I fall from grace, on my ass, something.

I don't know how I'd tell this man I can't drink,
can't follow him home, can't share a joint or
rob a bank—whatever would follow hello.

So I sit stiffly, angle away from him, dart off.
And when I come back from the bathroom
he's at the window with a freckled brunette,
her head tilted back,
a long blue dress,
a glittering glass in her hand.

Dishes

Anna Kohler Lewis

Yesterday morning
as I was sitting cross-legged at the kitchen table
enjoying a bowl of corn flakes
Jesus walked into our apartment.
"Hello," he said. "I'm Jesus.
"I'm here to do the dishes."

I was a bit hesitant at first.
Technically it was Sarah's turn,
but he's a persuasive guy, so in the end
I just showed him where we kept the sponges.
He said, "Thank you very much," and politely asked
if I had an apron handy.

He rolled up his sleeves to the elbow
and did the pots first.
He splashed water everywhere,
I mean everywhere.
It almost makes you think
that the Flood
wasn't so much a punishment
as a big accident.

And soap! Good grief, the soap he used!
First of all,
he used a lot. A LOT.
And (here's the weird part)
He didn't just stick to dish detergent.
He used our hand soap, shampoo,
and even some of the bubble bath.
"I am no respecter of soaps," he said.
Boy, he got a kick out of that one.

He said it twice, chuckling to himself,
slopping water all over the kitchen floor.

And he sang.
He has quite a good singing voice.
It wasn't quite what I expected.
After watching him
slap a pot a few times to the beat,
I asked if he was a Southern Baptist.

That really killed him.
He has a laugh like Santa Claus.
He didn't answer, though.
"Well," he said, and gave me a satisfied nod,
"that's that."
He stacked the last plate
into our crowded dish drainer,
And I realized he was just going to leave.

I asked him if that was it.
After all, he'd come all this way and—
wasn't there anything else?

He wiped his hands on the apron and nodded.
After clearing his throat, he said very formally,
that if it wouldn't be too much trouble
he'd like a small glass of ginger ale.

So, of course, I got him his drink,
which he took in one shot.
Then he handed me the glass,
thanked me for my time,
and walked out the door,
the damp hem of his robe
dragging behind.

Nixon Was Wrong: Religion and the Presidency, 1960, 2008, and 2012— An Interview with Shaun A. Casey

Note: *Gregory A. Prince, a member of* Dialogue*'s board of editors, conducted this interview with Shaun A. Casey on April 29, 2010, in Potomac, Maryland. Casey is professor of Christian Ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. His recent book,* The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960 *(New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) formed the background of this interview.*

Prince: I want to start with what I thought was an amazing quote from Richard Nixon, where he says, "I can take some satisfaction from the fact that this was probably the last national election in which the religious issue will be raised at all."[1] What a prophet!

Casey: Right, right, what did he know? That was in his *Six Crises*, right?

Prince: Yes.

Casey: Well, *Six Crises* is really one of the early election books that now are coin of the realm. Everybody who's thinking they're running for president writes a book.

Prince: Before, during, and after.

Casey: That's right. So Nixon writes this; and one of these six crises is the 1960 presidential race. It really is quite remarkable how open and candid he was about that. In fact, I went through his papers—the memos from his staff. As he's writing this book, he sends a memo to his remaining private staff and says, "Gather all

the documents with respect to religion. I want to go over that with a fine-tooth comb." What I think you see there is that Nixon hoped against hope that Kennedy would falter in his first term, Nixon would be resurrected by the Republican Party to run against him a second time, and by then the religion issue would be off the table. So I think what you hear there is less a prophecy than a desperate political wish on Nixon's part: "Oh my goodness, the Catholic question is now gone and I can run against Kennedy on the issues and beat him on the issues because I don't think he's going to be a very good president." I think that's more of a cry for help than it is a prognostication.

Prince: When was the religion of the candidate first an issue? Was it Al Smith?

Casey: Well, I think it can go all the way back to 1800 when Thomas Jefferson ran. He was attacked as being an atheist. You see it crop up in American presidential elections from time to time.

Prince: But there, with Jefferson, you have what his religion wasn't. When was the first time that a candidate was under attack because of the particular faith tradition that he embraced?

Casey: Well, I don't want to argue the point. Jefferson was an Episcopalian. He was a deist—not an atheist in the classic sense. But certainly Al Smith was where somebody said, "Do not vote for this major party nominee for the presidency because he's a Catholic. He's a specific kind of religious person. So don't vote for him." The results for the 1928 election were really in the conventional wisdom moving forward. Kennedy, in 1956, wanted very desperately to be on the ticket with Adlai Stevenson as the vice president.

Prince: Let me back you up here. How big a deal was religion with Al Smith? Was it a headline issue during the campaign? Or was it more a whispering campaign?

Casey: I think it was pretty explicit. I'm in no position to judge if it was because of his Catholicism or because he was a New Yorker and the governor of an East Coast state. People argue back and forth and I'm in no position to judge, but my understanding is that there were very explicit attacks against Al Smith because of his Catholicism. It was in the public arena, but it was subterra-

nean as well. I think he faced the worst of all possible worlds there.

Prince: All right, so now move up to '56.

Casey: Eisenhower, in 1952, began to pull Catholics away from the old FDR Democratic coalition. A lot of Democrats got nervous that the great war hero, now Republican candidate, was siphoning off what had become traditional Democratic constituents.

Prince: Was he specifically wooing Catholics, or was it just his nature?

Casey: It just happened.

Prince: He was a magnet?

Casey: Yes. You know, he was a war hero. So people across a wide spectrum said, "Yes, that's my guy over against Adlai Stevenson, the egghead intellectual." So one of the questions in '56 was: How can we Democrats hold on to our base among ethnic Catholics? Kennedy saw an opportunity and put together a memo that said, "Actually, if you have a Catholic in the second slot, that will help woo Catholics back to the Democratic Party." Adlai Stevenson never really bought that argument.

Prince: Do you think Kennedy bought it, or was it a bit of naive opportunism?

Casey: It was both. I think he would take whatever worked to get him on the ticket.

Prince: You point out that Kennedy wasn't an intellectual.

Casey: That's correct. In fact, it was Ted Sorenson who stitched together the argument in the statistics that tried to show that a Catholic in the second slot in '56 would help bring Democrats back from Eisenhower. Who knows if it was really true or not? But certainly there was a heavy dose of political opportunism there where the Kennedy campaign said, "Okay, we've got an opening to make a public argument that actually being Catholic helps instead of hurts." They were willing to ride that argument as far as it would take them. And it was not a totally specious argument. They tried to demonstrate that, at the state level and congressional level, Catholic candidates kept getting elected in districts where the presidential race cut the other way. They tried to show

that people will still vote for Catholics if they're prominently displayed on tickets. It's one of those endlessly debatable arguments. But it's not completely implausible.

One of the interesting things is that, at several points along the way, Kennedy thought he had dealt with the religion issue and took the position: It's going to go away now, and it's not going to come back.

Prince: After he became the candidate?

Casey: Before and after. To their dismay, they kept getting surprised by the tenacity of anti-Catholicism. After the West Virginia primary, for instance, where Kennedy went in—into an overwhelmingly Protestant state and beat Humphrey handily—they thought, "Oh, finally it's over with!" Then they got to the general election, and suddenly they realized, out across the whole country, that it was still a very, very toxic issue for them.

Prince: And organized.

Casey: And organized, which really scared them. And at that point, they snapped back to the reality that they had to address this issue directly. They couldn't give in to their wish that it was behind them. They were confronted with some real evidence that Nixon was organizing these forces but that the forces had a life of their own. And that's when they suddenly realized, starting with the Houston speech in September, that they had to get organized and they had to continue to address this issue. It hadn't gone away. On the one hand, they were surprised by the tenacity of the issue; on the other hand, they were smart enough to say, "We've got to be flexible here. We've got to be realistic. We've got to keep applying assets to this issue because it's scary how it might, in fact, come back to bite us in the end." They were not intimidated politically by the tenacity of the issue, and they were responsive to it. That's the genius at work there politically—that they realized the threat was real.

Prince: Let's dwell for a while on why it was that Roman Catholicism was such a lightning rod. On one level that sounds like a simple question, "Why don't they like the Catholics?" But I'm not sure that it's such a simple question.

Casey: I think it's very complicated. Let me try to walk through the

different pieces of that. On the one hand, I think a lot of Americans saw the Roman Catholic Church as European. Even though there's an American branch, the head of the Church is still in Rome. Not only is he in Rome, Italy, he's in this little nation-state called the Vatican. So, there was a political tinge to the Church that wasn't true of other Christian denominations.

Prince: And that goes way back in our country's history.

Casey: That's right. So there was that sort of organic distrust of Catholicism—in the Vatican, in Europe, and that Catholics had divided loyalties. It's a nation-state as well as a church. Second, it's a hierarchical church. If you're kind of a strong democrat—little d—where you think democracy is all about people coming together and deciding their fate in freedom, you're a little dismayed by religious folk in your own midst who ultimately say, "My allegiance is to this guy sitting in Italy issuing decrees on politics and on life and faith and practices." And it's a hierarchy, it's not a democracy. The Catholic Church is not a democracy.

So there was this question, "Is the Catholic Church anti-democratic?" There's an intellectual tradition in the Catholic Church that is explicitly anti-democratic, pro-monarchy, highly authoritarian, and quite suspicious of democracy in the French-Anglo-American trajectory. So even as late as the 1870s and 1890s, the Catholic Church was cranking out documents that, on the face of them, are quite shocking to Americans. These documents were saying that democracy is not divinely sanctioned and that a monarchy and a state church are God's plan. That was Catholicism's intellectual tradition, and American Protestants were great students of that literature. They could quote chapter and verse from documents and doctrines dating from the nineteenth century—and before—that really, to American democratic ears, sounded absolutely repressive.

So history gets in the way sometimes when you get a contemporary American politician whose Church tradition is not pure going back. Now, the Protestant distrust ignored the emerging conversation among American Catholic intellectuals who were taking the position that religious freedom is actually good for the Catholic Church.

Prince: Including intellectual clergy?

Casey: Oh, absolutely. John Courtney Murray was at Ground Zero, arguing that an American form of democracy in religious freedom was of great blessing to the Catholic Church worldwide. So there was something afoot in the middle of the twentieth century intellectually, but it did not percolate to the rank-and-file among American Protestant churches. They still had this other view of the Catholic Church. So when you begin to add all that up, you sense why aversion to Romantic Catholicism was very complex but very deeply engrained in the American psyche in 1960.

Prince: And Roman Catholicism was the predominant American religion. The largest.

Casey: The largest single denomination, although only a plurality. And that was a little scary to Protestants. The fear was, "They are going to out-birth us." People saw large Catholic families, and they were terrified that America might become a Catholic majority at some point.

Prince: And if you were a conspiracy theorist, it played to your fears that this was a planned takeover.

Casey: That's right. And there were people like Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State. One of their most popular pamphlets was something like, "What if America becomes 51 percent Catholic?" It was just this fearful thing, "All bets would be off. The Vatican will control our country and religious freedom will disappear when they become the majority religion in America." People who belonged to Protestants and Other Americans United were fairly smart, bright, literate people, ginning that fear up actively in the mid-twentieth century.

Prince: So how quickly did Nixon figure out that this was an easy handle to grab?

Casey: Nixon was in a tough position because he didn't know who he was going to be running against until the Democratic Convention was over in early June 1960. There's some internal evidence to suggest that he didn't think Kennedy was going to win. He thought, at times, that they might name Kennedy as vice president. But he thought Lyndon Johnson was going to win or Hubert Humphrey. In his brain, he couldn't see the Democrats making that big a leap.

Prince: Because of the religion issue?

Casey: I could never find a full-blown explanation for that blind spot. Robert Finch gave a speech in the spring of 1960 in which he essentially said, "I think Kennedy is way down the list. He's not going to be our opponent." So Nixon really didn't have much time to think about what he was going to do against Kennedy until June of 1960. Then suddenly it's like, "Holy cow! We're not facing Lyndon Johnson or Hubert Humphrey; we're facing the Catholic guy." So I think Nixon kind of made up his religious strategy against Kennedy on the fly. I found no evidence that he devoted much thought to that topic before Kennedy actually won the nomination.

Prince: But once he made that judgment, do you think he was initially going down both sides of the street simultaneously, publicly saying, "I will never make this an issue," and privately setting up this huge network?

Casey: Absolutely. In fact, ironically, Nixon had a form of Catholic outreach already working for him. One of his chief speechwriters was a Catholic priest. Nixon spoke at a lot of Catholic events in the late '50s as vice president, hoping to continue to sway Catholics into the Republican fold as his boss Dwight Eisenhower had done. So he actually had a Catholic strategy in mind; but then suddenly, he was facing a Catholic. I think what helped Nixon crystallize his strategy was the fact that people were coming to him, saying, "I can do these things for you." I think Nixon was smart enough then to realize, "Hey, I can do this sort of subterranean, off-the-books campaign because I have people like Billy Graham, the National Association of Evangelicals, and former Congressman O. K. Armstrong, coming to me, saying, 'We can do this work for you.'"

Prince: Getting back to that question of why the aversion to Roman Catholicism—Why did Billy Graham put his neck on the line, even though he tried to cover it up? What was the visceral problem there?

Casey: I think it was a problem but also an opportunity. It's very seductive when the nominee for the presidency of the United States for one party comes to you and says, "Can we work together?" If Richard Nixon had won that race, Billy Graham would have been

in the inner ring in the Nixon White House in 1960. That kind of access to power is seductive to anybody. That kind of attraction is not inherent to the right or to the left.

Prince: But you talked about these outsiders coming to Nixon.

Casey: Well, that's right. Opportunity was one piece of it, but it's not the whole story. The other story is that Graham was a thoroughgoing anti-Catholic, like most white Evangelicals in the mid-'50s and early '60s. "Rome is the enemy. Rome imprisons people, intellectually and theologically. The Evangelical faith gives them freedom." They saw, I think, nominal Catholics in America as potential converts to the Evangelical movement. I think they also feared the Vatican. They feared the Pope. They feared Catholic clergy for their ability to organize. And they feared that big Catholic families would continue to grow, and would become more mainstream in America.

Prince: I want to show you a volume that demonstrates where the Mormons were on this issue.

Casey: I can't wait.

Prince: It was written in 1958 by Bruce R. McConkie, one of our Church's general officers, with the presumptuous title, *Mormon Doctrine*.[2]

Casey: "Church of the Devil." There you go.

Prince: Read down to definition #2.

Casey: Yes, " . . . the Roman Catholic Church, specifically." Yes, this is coin of the realm. I went through a couple of places that had great collections of anti-Catholic literature. The hard-core pieces are the books about Protestant teenage girls chained in rectory basements. That view was kind of a minority; but still, it represented the far, far frontier of anti-Catholic literature.

Prince: The 5 percent, as you broke it down by percentages in your book.

Casey: Right. McConkie's statement was common—the notion that the "whore of Babylon" in the book of Revelation is the Catholic Church. That was a standard interpretation.

Prince: So you could read McConkie's statement and not know which denomination it came from?

Casey: You could have said, "Shaun, guess where this came from?" and I could have given you twenty different guesses. So this was standard rhetoric about the Catholic Church.

Prince: In the same time-frame that we're talking about?

Casey: 1958, absolutely. What was most astonishing to me, though, was to see the deep anti-Catholicism among liberal Protestants of the day: Methodists, Presbyterians, presidents of Princeton Seminary and Union Seminary. Great bastions of liberal Protestant theology saying things like, "I could never vote for a Catholic. The Catholic Church is anti-democratic. It's hierarchical. It's un-American." It's shocking now, from a distance of sixty years, to go back and look at that and see these leading lights on the Protestant left, mouthing—maybe not quite that it's the church of the devil—but simply saying, "I could never vote for a Catholic because of the nature of the Catholic Church." That's pretty shocking, by today's standards, to see even on the liberal Protestant left these very strong forms of anti-Catholicism.

Prince: I think it's as important a message from your book as the political message.

Casey: Yes, absolutely. If we want to circle back to the Mormon Church today, I think there may be similar dynamics at work. You think about Mitt Romney and the construction of the LDS temple in Belmont, Massachusetts, for instance. Belmont is kind of Ground Zero for liberal Massachusetts politics, and yet I know some very progressive, liberal, secular people who said, "Not in my backyard." So that kind of reaction has not disappeared from the American scene.

Prince: No, just has a different focal point.

Casey: Yes, that's right.

Prince: Let's talk about continuing trends that you describe here that I think are still germane to the current political climate. You say, "His main point was that Catholics were simply ignorant about Protestantism—and, by implication, Protestants were equally ignorant of Catholicism. The result was the Catholics were totally unprepared for ecumenical dialogue. They were not hostile to it, they were simply not ready."[3] We certainly see that unreadi-

ness now in attempting to set up a Mormon/non-Mormon dialogue. I see it on both sides of that gulf. Comment on that?

Casey: I think maybe one way to say it is that when different religious traditions first begin to sort of overlap, the lack of history can lead to fear, it can lead to distortion, it can lead to anxiety, even to out-and-out rejection. So with respect to Catholicism and Protestantism in the mid-'50s, you began to find some intellectual conversations in places like New York City and Boston, but not in Chicago. There was a kind of intellectual, scholar-to-scholar, informal conversation going on. Now, I talk a little bit about that in the book. These were smart, liberal-spirited people, but those first conversations were very halting. It was like one step forward, two steps back—a little dialogue, but then angry letters and angry editorials. Then another meeting where they tried to clarify what the other meant. It was like a really difficult, kind of ritualistic, diplomatic dance among partners who really don't have a lot of history together.

Prince: When did it start to get easier for the Protestant-Catholic dialogue? Post Vatican II?

Casey: When Vatican II occurred, from 1963 to 1965, liberal Protestants admitted their error.

Prince: Because they now saw the transformation in Roman Catholicism?

Casey: Well, they saw a conversation. At Vatican II, Protestant observers were invited to come in and watch the proceedings. Then they were part of the informal conversations taking place around the formal conversations, and they realized, "Hey, we can talk to these people. They invited us in. They don't lock us out. They let us watch the sausage-making going on, in all its splendor, in all of its ugliness." The documents they wrote are amazing, because the Catholic Church then said, "We want to relate to the world in a different fashion." So it was movement on both sides. The Catholic Church opened the door and invited some of these Protestant intellectuals in and said, "You can actually help us. Sit in the corner and watch. But after the proceedings, let's have dinner and let's talk and let's have a structured conversation."

Prince: Did the Protestants then start to mine the depths of many centuries of Catholic discourse that they had been ignoring?

Casey: Well, there was irony. Let's say you taught theology at Harvard Divinity School in 1958. You would have been having your students read Aquinas and Augustine. You would have been reading the Catholic literature all that time. You just hadn't been talking to Catholics about it, and therein is the irony. But there was a tradition they could both appeal to. And they had Christian scripture that they could also talk about. There were forms of discourse—content they could talk about—and they both felt that they owned or at least shared that tradition. So there was actually some intellectual territory they could talk about.

Prince: They just hadn't been building the bridges.

Casey: That's correct. But after Vatican II, Protestants reached out to Catholic institutions, and Catholic institutions reached out to Protestant institutions. And even at the local level, Catholic priests were talking to Protestant ministers. The Catholic Church said, "Ecumenical dialogue is actually a good thing, and we're going to participate in it."

Prince: Was that part of Vatican II?

Casey: Yes. And that just exploded in the late '60s, early '70s. You just saw all kinds of association and communication going on that were not there prior to Vatican II.

Prince: How would you describe the situation now?

Casey: Oh, it's routine.

Prince: It's one community?

Casey: Oh, that kind of dialogue is routine, and there is real community among Protestant and Catholic churches. For example, I did my doctoral dissertation at Harvard Divinity School under a Roman Catholic priest. Here I come from a low-church Christian tradition—Churches of Christ—and I've got a Catholic priest who supervises my dissertation. That's sort of symbolic, I think, of the kind of give-and-take that now exists across the Protestant-Catholic divide.

Prince: Although it's not complete, because a Roman Catholic

priest still has to go to a Catholic seminary to be ordained. Is that correct?

Casey: That's correct. But when they do doctoral work, there are no restrictions. You can get your seminary degree at a Catholic institution and then go on. In fact, when I first came to Harvard Divinity School in 1979, Catholics were the largest single denominational presence among the student body, about 22 percent. Of course, there are ups and downs to that as history goes by. But by and large, Vatican II really is the great historical marker that marks a new era of ecumenical conversation between Catholics and Protestants.

Prince: After Vatican II, we had another Roman Catholic candidate for the presidency, John Kerry.

Casey: And, ironically, it was more of an issue for the Catholic Church than it was for non-Catholics. That's because of specific issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research—those issues where the Church is probably going to be more conservative.

It's conceivable that we could have a conservative Catholic Republican be president, and there would probably be less trouble within the Church because that person probably would be closer to the Church's teachings on some of these hot-button issues. So, it's certainly conceivable that we could have a Catholic candidate who would not be controversial in a major sense.

Prince: Certainly not to the level of Kennedy.

Casey: That's correct. It's very hard to envision that ever happening again. I look at Joe Biden. Joe Biden was a Catholic running for vice president and he caught minor guff, but mainly from the Church itself—from inside the hierarchy. Out on the stump, you never heard a whiff of controversy about the fact that he was Catholic. So, I take that to be evidence about how much things have changed since 1960.

Prince: But the way religion plays in presidential politics has morphed and, in a sense, become much more divisive.

Casey: Oh, there's no doubt. It is different.

Prince: And in a sense, I think it has become much more perverse.

Casey: I would entertain that argument. But it continues to evolve. You look at the Democratic Party. You look at Bill Clinton, for instance. Clinton was a master at reaching out to religious constituents. His staff was completely flummoxed by that. A couple of staffers got it; but by and large, it was driven by his own kind of innate religiosity and also political instinct. Michael Dukakis was thoroughly secular in his approach. Al Gore is kind of a middle figure. But certainly when Kerry ran, Kerry saw no advantage to talking about his faith. I think he came to regret that; and when he was thinking of running again, he had rethought the religion issue.

But the Republican side is where I think the difficulty is today. That is, if you want to be the Republican nominee, the way the process is structured today—particularly in the state of Iowa—you've got to pass muster with the hard-core Religious Right. If you are not arguably a member of the Religious Right, you've got some explaining to do. And you've got a very hard road to trek, I think, to win over the hearts and minds of those people. So your best strategy might be hoping for twelve candidates running and that the winner of the Iowa caucus will emerge with 18 percent of the vote. In that case, your religion maybe matters less.

Prince: Isn't that what happened with McCain?

Casey: Absolutely. I think this is where Mitt Romney's problem is. The Religious Right is fearful of a Mormon. So somebody who is not an Evangelical Christian but who, in fact, is Mormon, has a much higher threshold of skepticism to meet among those folks in the nominating process.

Prince: So let's talk about Romney and let's talk about Mormonism, because I'm sure that there are both some strong parallels with 1960 and also some fundamental differences, particularly in the way the candidates have handled the issue. Let's talk first about Mormonism and why it now represents whatever it does represent to presidential politics, because Mitt Romney ran into a firestorm that George Romney never experienced. Perhaps George's candidacy didn't last long enough, but I don't think that was the reason.

Casey: I think it's a completely different political atmosphere.

1968 and 2008 represent two radically different political environments.

Prince: In the 1960s, you still had a McKay brand of Mormonism. McKay was a revered American figure.

Casey: That's right.

Prince: We don't have that now in Mormondom.

Casey: No.

Prince: Mormonism, I think, was riding a wave of good will through the '60s. Sometime later, the wave crashed.

Casey: I think that's a plausible interpretation. The political ramifications of that dynamic are palpable for somebody like Mitt Romney today. He faces a gauntlet his father never faced.

Prince: So what is it about Mormonism that pushes that button now?

Casey: Well, let me throw in a couple possibilities.

I think, within the conservative, Evangelical worldview, Mormonism is viewed as an esoteric religion. It looks secretive.

Prince: As in cult?

Casey: Some people use that word, but some Evangelicals would be several degrees away from that kind of thinking. They know Mormons. They see Mormons in society doing well. We're not used to thinking of cult members getting elected governor of Massachusetts or running big corporations or being deans of business schools at Harvard. So the utility of the "cult" label only goes so far. There's countervailing evidence to say that "cult" doesn't quite catch what these people are.

Prince: But there's still something sinister.

Casey: Well, it's not sinister. It's esoteric. It's secret. I think centrist and center-right Americans are susceptible to the fear factor about what they perceive to be closed, secret or secretive, or esoteric groups. It's "You know, I'm just not sure if I trust those people." It's almost the same way they distrusted the Catholic Church. It's not exactly the same, but it's similar.

Prince: There are secretive elements in both?

Casey: Exactly.

Prince: And a strong hierarchical structure in both?

Casey: And what's different is that Mormons have the Book of Mormon. In the Evangelical Church, we don't have that. In fact, we think that's wrong. You really just need the New Testament. If you add anything to that, that's theologically wrong.

Prince: Catholics have the Apocrypha, and we can deal with that.

Casey: Exactly. But we do share the New Testament, so at least there is some distant connection there, where we still talk Bible. Mormons have the Bible, too; but the Book of Mormon thing is a real barrier, I think, for a lot of American conservative Christians, because that looks like adding on. So you add all of that up and it's just this sense of—well, it's like I explained it to a friend: You can walk into Barnes & Noble today, and you can walk into the religion section. Let's say I'm a conservative Southern Baptist. I want to learn about Catholics. I can go to the religion section and buy a book that says *Catholicism for Dummies* that will walk me through. If I want to, it's there. I can learn it. As far as I know, in that same religion section there isn't a *Mormonism for Dummies* that does it all.

Prince: Actually, there is just such a title, and Jana Riess, one of the authors, is on the *Dialogue* board with me. It's a good book.[4]

Casey: Oh, this is hysterical. Well, this is helpful, because I think most conservative Evangelical Christians think it doesn't exist. Or if it does, it's not the whole story.

Prince: It doesn't resolve all the boundary issues.

Casey: Right. So, as you know, the Evangelical world is teeming with anti-Mormon polemics. The internet is teeming with it—you know, people like Jon Krakauer and his "Mormons are cultists who commit murders" approach.[5] From top to bottom in our culture, you do have an anti-Mormon message.

Prince: How much of it is substantive, and how much of it is just opportunism?

Casey: It's all of the above. There's no doubt.

Prince: Krakauer knows how to write books that sell.

Casey: Exactly.

Prince: And he's got a nose that will lead him to a saleable story.

Casey: Absolutely. He is a marketer. He's a writer. I see that. I totally see that. So I think you add those things up. You add up the fear, the suspicion, you have the polemic, and you have the "lack of transparency," although that may be too strong a term. But I think most Americans look at the Mormon Church and they don't see a kind of accessibility.

Prince: It's not too strong a term, because we have these things called temples. The door's locked to you.

Casey: Exactly, you may let me in, you may give me a tour—

Prince: —but only before it opens.

Casey: Yes. And I think most Americans of kind of a nominal Christian orientation look at that, and they say, "I don't get a warm, fuzzy feeling from that. That makes me suspicious when I see that." So, if you're running for president as a Mormon, that's a pretty formidable set of cultural and institutional forces.

Prince: Plus, there is still some historical baggage.

Casey: That's true too.

Prince: When I say "Mormon," you say "polygamy."

Casey: That's right.

Prince: Poll after poll, it's the strongest association with the word "Mormon."

Casey: And then when you get these Mormon offshoot groups that are in the headlines, when west Texas sheriffs go out and round them up, people just say, "Oh, yes, that's what you Mormons do." So you talk about a tough hill to climb politically!

Prince: My grandfather was the county sheriff in southern Utah from 1936 to 1954. He was on the Utah side in the 1953 raid on the polygamists. The Feds and the Arizona police came up from the south. He didn't want to have anything to do with it, but he was the law in Washington County, so there he was. A few years ago, my cousin, who still lives in St. George, Utah, got a call from the county office. They said, "Bob, we found a box here and it's got 3x5 cards that were your grandfather's arrest records. We have no use for them. If you don't want them, we'll throw them away." Bob took them, of course. One of them is priceless. The man my grandfather arrested was Edson Jessop, one of the prominent po-

lygamists in Short Creek. The arrest record, in my grandfather's handwriting, said: "Charged [with] illegal cohabiting with more than one person of the opposite SECT."

Casey: Oh, that is priceless! That is just unbelievable.

Prince: That's part of the problem—that we have a long history of not engaging with other faith traditions.

Casey: Exactly. So if you're Mitt Romney, on the one hand, you try to find a way not to go right through the middle of that. But he's got this problem in his own political party, the way the party is established. Those folks want red meat; they want red Christian meat, and they are just very suspicious.

Prince: Not long after Mitt bowed out of the race, I was talking to his nephew. He said Mitt made two strategic errors, in both instances accepting at face value what his advisors told him. One was that his advisors told him to move to the right to get the nomination. He made that move and it caused him tremendous grief. Ironically, the man who got the nomination, John McCain, stayed toward the center. The other was that he ignored his religion as an issue, because his advisors told him it would go away. Instead, it crushed him.

Casey: I understand why that advice would be attractive to hear, because you want to believe it. I think Kennedy wanted to believe that, after the West Virginia primary was over, he had put the religion issue behind him.

The parallels between Romney's and Kennedy's attempts to get the religious questions out of the way are pretty clear, as you can see by comparing their Houston speeches. Kennedy's Houston speech was a speech of fear and desperation. He had just discovered the scope of the Nixon operation, and he felt like, "Oh my God, I've got to address this directly or I'm going to lose control!" When Mitt gave his,[6] the Iowa caucuses were just around the corner. It really reeked of: "I've been reading the tea leaves, I've been watching the polls, and I may not win Iowa. I've got to do something, and this is my attempt to sort of throw the long pass and move my standing in the polls." I saw his strategy, and it's what I call a three-handed sermon. "On the one hand this, on the other hand that, on the other-other hand this." You know, when

you start counting more than two hands, the audience gets confused.

Okay. So, on the one hand, I think Mitt went through a phase where he tried to tell Evangelicals, "I'm really one of you." In this speech he says, in essence, "I'll tell you who I think Jesus Christ is. But I'm going to stop about three minutes, three seconds into that, and then say I'm not going to go any further because it's really not appropriate." He says, "Jesus is Savior and Lord, but we may disagree about what else is really going on there."

Then he says, "I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. My church's beliefs about Christ may not be all the same as those of other faiths. Each religion has its own unique doctrines and history." Now that's the other hand, where he says, "You know, I really am Mormon."

And then the other-other hand is, "This is kind of all private anyway. I'm like Kennedy, I'm not the Mormon candidate; I'm the Republican candidate who is also a Mormon. So, at one level, I'm one of you, and at another level I'm really not one of you; but it's all private anyway and shouldn't count."

Somewhere between those three hands, I'm dizzy. I'm not really sure what he's trying to communicate to me. Now a lot of the speech, I think, is laudable. He, in essence, says there's overlap between the religions. "If you look at the values that my faith produces, to me they are religious toleration, religious freedom, hard work—American values." He launches into values language, and that's fine. I think that's plausible. But I think for the sensitive, Religious Right ears in Iowa, this speech came off as incoherent. It did not ring the bell they were hoping he was going to ring. And the truth is, he can't go there. He can't plausibly say, "I'm one of you." I think it's a mistake to try and do that.

Prince: So they would never buy it no matter how he couched it.

Casey: That's exactly right. He could say, "You know, I got baptized at the Church of the Nazarene three counties over last week, and I'm now a Nazarene and no longer a Mormon." But no one from that cohort is going to buy that message.

Prince: He may win over liberal Protestants, but he is not going to win over the Evangelicals.

Casey: And that's not going to help him get the nomination in the Republican Party.

Prince: That's right. Now go back to Kennedy's speech. Let me lay it out simplistically and then you can react to it. It seems to me that the main thing Kennedy had to convince people of was, "The Vatican will not control me. You don't need to be afraid."

Casey: That's right.

Prince: I think voters were less worried that Salt Lake would control Mitt, but I think that *he* thought control was the major concern.

Casey: And that's a misdiagnosis on his part, if that's what he thought.

Prince: To me, the real issue he had to address was that Mormons are not weird, and I don't think he got to first base on that one.

Casey: No, not at all. I totally agree with that.

Prince: And Kennedy never had to fight that battle. People may have distrusted Roman Catholicism, but they certainly didn't think it was weird.

Casey: Right, and what Kennedy was able to say was, "I actually disagree with my church. I'm not going to appoint an ambassador to the Vatican. I'm not going to give federal funds to Catholic schools, and I'm not going to ban federal funds on birth control in foreign aid." So he was able to give very specific policy declarations that separated him from his own church. Mitt's not in a position to do that. First of all, as far as I know, the Mormon Church does not have official political positions on a thousand public policy issues.

Prince: Correct.

Casey: So there's nothing for him to push back against on that front to demonstrate his distance from them. But again, I don't think the fear is, "You've got to watch out for that inner cabal in Salt Lake because they're going to pull the strings on Mitt if he gets in the White House." I've never picked up that kind of vibe.

Prince: There's distrust, I think, because of the secrecy, but I don't think it rises to the level of fear.

Casey: That's correct. You know, one of the things I think Romney could do is to say to these folks that he needs to persuade, "Look,

I'm pro-life." Explain that. "I'm for free enterprise." Explain that. "I'm for small government." Explain that. I don't know where he is on same-sex issues or where he is on stem cells; but plausibly, he could take a stand that would be palatable to those folks. He needs to say, "Look, name any public policy issue and I will show you that, as a Mormon, I'm with you. I'm not against you."

Prince: On same-sex issues the Mormon Church later handed him, on a golden platter, what he wanted, Proposition 8.

Casey: Yes, that's right.

Prince: That creates a problem for other constituencies, but with the Evangelicals that should have been his gold ticket. But that was after the fact, after he was out of the race.

Casey: Right. In theory he's going to be running against Barack Obama. Okay, assuming Obama is renominated, Mitt has a very hard target there to say, "I'm not that guy, and let me show you that in some specific public policies that are shaped by my values and shaped by my faith, I'm with you. You're closer to me politically than you are to the current president of the United States."

Prince: Yes, that's if he can get the nomination. Along the way, he has to compare himself to people who aren't such hard targets.

Casey: That's correct. But he also has a burden if he is the front runner, as polls suggest at this point. Certain issues come with that identity, because he then becomes the primary target of all the other band of thousands that are going to run. But I do think it would be wise for him to make some kind of stab at the religion issue; and from that point forward, he can say, "You know, that's really old news. I've dealt with it. Go back and read the transcript. Next question."

Prince: Yes, because neither his campaign organization nor he as an individual confronted the religion issue directly, while both Kennedy and his organization did so repeatedly, forcefully, and clearly.

Casey: Right. Now, at times I think Kennedy had to be dragged kicking and screaming to that confrontation, but he was smart enough to know the downside of ignoring it, which was way too large.

Prince: Yes, at no point did they come up with the conclusion that the religion thing would just go away, so they didn't need to address it.

Casey: That's right. And I think that's what, at this point, separates Kennedy from Mitt Romney politically. If Romney is still, in his mind, thinking that the religion issue is history or that he has already dealt with it, I think he's made a huge mistake. And it could also be the case that he could win the nomination and then, as Kennedy did, think, "I've put this behind me, because I've dealt with the conservatives in my party." But he's still going to need centrist Evangelicals in the general election that turn out for him in healthy, healthy volume to win.

Prince: An interesting comparison of Kennedy and Romney is that Kennedy's concern was the Republicans, and Romney's also is the Republicans. I don't think, for the Democrats, that Mormonism is nearly as big a deal. I don't think they care.

Casey: No, and there's Harry Reid in the story.

Prince: Which is what Romney should have done.

Casey: Absolutely.

Prince: Rather than saying nasty things about Harry, Mitt should have said, "If you think Mormons are all tarred with this brush, look at my good friend Harry Reid."

Casey: Yes, and look at the Udalls. There are a lot of examples he could have pointed to and said, "Look, no one is dragging these guys down with these kinds of accusations. Look around. Look at your history." The other thing I think he should do is what Kennedy did, which was to go around to anti-Catholic leaders, meet with them one-on-one, and say, "Help me understand this. I don't get it." I think Romney needs to start engaging Evangelical intellectuals in the same manner.

Prince: Has he at all?

Casey: I don't know. There's Richard Mouw at Fuller Seminary, but I don't know if Mouw and Romney have ever met. If I'm advising Romney, I'm saying, "You need to go see Rich Mouw. You need to ask him, 'Whom should I go see?'" And that gets out. You don't issue press releases on that, but the Evangelical networks

are very active in terms of chatter and communication. I think he needs to make friends and alliances in peace to the extent he can with those folks. However, I've never sensed that Romney is comfortable with some of the Religious Right leaders. I could be dead wrong on that, but I don't sense that there's much traffic there, not much conversation.

Prince: I'm not sure how comfortable Romney is with his *own* religion in terms of having to deal with the public. I don't know that he's comfortable in his own skin.

Casey: That's interesting.

Prince: I don't think he disbelieves privately where he is in his own faith, but I don't think he's comfortable wearing that skin publicly. I think if he were, he would be willing and capable of having that dialogue with a Helen Whitney, or a Richard Mouw, or whomever.

Casey: Right.

Prince: I think his advisors who are not LDS gave him that message in good faith. My hunch is that he embraced it, in part, because of his own fear. He didn't want to have to fight that battle, and they gave him the out. Just supposition.

Casey: I think that's very plausible. It's hard to go in to a prominent politician and say, "Excuse me, Governor," or, "Excuse me, Senator, but I think you're wrong. In fact, you may be fatally wrong on this point." That takes a certain amount of chutzpah and gumption on the part of a staffer to look a leader—their boss—in the eye and say, "Are you sure you want to go with that? Because here is an alternate case that says you need to do the opposite. You need to actually confront it." In fact, I think he made a mistake in the Texas A & M speech, where he said, "There's one fundamental question about which I often am asked, What do I believe about Jesus Christ?" Boy, you start going down that road and you are establishing a religious test for yourself, particularly on this one, when he cannot give the answer that right-wing Christians are looking for.

Prince: How should he have addressed that issue?

Casey: I don't know that he should have. I think he should have said, "You know, I believe; I am a strong God-fearing person," and

just leave it at that. I think—and frankly, this is where I feel the most pain for him as I read this speech—I think it's lamentable that any politician has to say, "Let me go over my catechism with you here in public and tell you the nitty-gritty details of what I believe. Then, you, too, can decide what to make of that."

Prince: And Kennedy avoided that.

Casey: Yes, Kennedy said, "I'm not a theologian. I'm not a priest."

Prince: Neither is Mitt.

Casey: Exactly. And Obama has tried to do that sometimes. He said, "Look, I'm not a theologian, I'm not a preacher. So I'm in over my head when we start talking about finer, granular details of Christian theology." I think it's a slippery slope when politicians volunteer to start going down that road about what they believe and how that might be different from what you believe, because that implies that something is at stake electorally about the quality or lack of quality in their religious belief.

Prince: And Romney is not a Teflon candidate, in the sense that if he cozies up to these guys and says these things, people are going to remember it when he moves to the next constituency. That's where his trouble really starts, although he never got that far in 2008.

Casey: That's right. I see several scenarios if there are lots of people running. Jump in, in Iowa, and you might win with 18 percent of the vote, and you just don't address that issue directly. The other would be just to skip it and say, "I'm going to start in New Hampshire. I'm not going to burn millions of dollars in Iowa, where I'm not going to get much traction anyway. But let me camp out in New Hampshire where, in theory, I've got some resonance and I've got a high name recognition."

Prince: He has a home in New Hampshire.

Casey: Yes, so I can certainly see the wisdom of saying, "Iowa is going to be a train wreck, but I can win New Hampshire and win convincingly and go from there." If I were he, I would think about the listening tour. I would think about making a speech to say, "Okay, look, I'm going to say this one time," and make it short, make it sweet, and not drill down about what I think about Jesus Christ versus anybody else, but simply say, "Here are my values. Here is

my faith." The other piece of this—and he can't do this by himself—is try to mainstream Mormonism. You know, there certainly is a narrative to be played up there, to say, "Mormons run multi-national corporations. We govern states." He can't say it in so many words, but he has to convince voters that Mormons are not weird.

I would think that there are plenty of prominent Mormons in this country for whom helping Mormonism become more mainstream is a benefit to everybody, and not just to Mitt Romney, the candidate who happens to be Mormon.

Prince: There is a small but growing strain within Mormonism that wants to do that. We are beginning to get it.

Casey: Oh, I have no doubt, I have no trouble believing that. And I think that's a win for everybody. I really do. But that's a long-term project. That's going to occupy the Church for decades to come. You can't just flip a switch and run an ad campaign and suddenly transform the perception. That's a long-term project, but the building blocks are there. You do have Mormons who are successful in public life. You do have Mormons who are successful in business. You have Mormon congregations salted through the entire population.

Prince: And I think that Harry Reid's presence in the Senate is no small victory.

Casey: Oh, I think it's huge!

Prince: And that will have a residual beneficial effect.

Casey: Absolutely. There the plausible argument is, "Look, we've got leaders in both political parties." I noticed a news item the other day that Harry cancelled some kind of speaking engagement in Las Vegas.

Prince: Yes, because Mormons threatened to demonstrate in front of the church.

Casey: That's right. Well, it was very interesting to see that Orrin Hatch and other Republicans—political types—said: "This is not right. He is an honorable man. Now I may disagree with him politically but he is a real Mormon. He's a devout Mormon. He's an honorable man, and this is not what Mormonism's about." What

really impressed me was to see the Republican, Mormon voices that spoke up and said, "This is not a good thing."

Prince: Yes. We've got some housecleaning to do.

Casey: Yes.

Prince: You talk about a decades-long process. It may be that there is not a viable Mormon presidential candidate until that decades-long process has run its course. I said at your presentation at the Newseum, "Is Mitt Romney our Al Smith?" He may be.

Casey: He may be.

Prince: It may take one or two or more generations before this becomes enough of a non-issue that there is a possibility of a Mormon being elected. I don't think there's a chance in the world right now that Romney could be elected.

Casey: It's hard to see. It's really hard to see. And that's got to be galling and infuriating to Mitt Romney. He could win the nomination and then lose the election, and then he does literally become the Al Smith. People might then say, "We're not going to do Mormon again, because look what happens when you do a Mormon candidate." I think it would be absolutely tragic if that's the lesson that gets generated. There are going to be Mormon politicians post-Mitt Romney, and I think that's where the hope is—that at some point it becomes second nature. We want people to wonder: "Why would it be a problem to be a Mormon running for national office?"

Prince: Since Utah is always going to have Mormon senators, it's likely that we will see other presidential candidates who are Mormons.

Casey: Mitt Romney was governor of Massachusetts, and that's an added advantage he carries—that he is not a Utah political product.

Prince: He could have stayed there after the Olympics, and he was weighing that. "Do I run for governor of Utah or Massachusetts?" He made the right call.

Casey: Oh, he made the right call. Absolutely. I think to get a Mormon from somewhere other than the West is potentially a huge political advantage. But I don't envy him. I think he is in a tough

political position. He's actually got a more plausible national narrative than he does in his own party. I think he can run as a businessman. I think he can run as a centrist, a fixer-upper kind of politician. I just don't know that that's going to win you the nomination in the Republican Party of 2012, where it seems to be a race to the bottom about who can be the most obnoxious and the most anti-Obama.

Prince: There's a sequel to this. Whether or not Mitt becomes president, there's a book there.

Notes

1. Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), 421.

2. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 129.

3. Shaun A. Casey, *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 41.

4. Jana Riess and Christopher Kimball Bigelow, *Mormonism for Dummies* (New York: Wiley Publishers, 2005).

5. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

6. For the complete text of Romney's speech, see http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16969460 (accessed May 5, 2011).

Finding the Presence in Mormon History: An Interview with Susanna Morrill, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Robert Orsi

Introduction by Matthew Bowman

Robert Orsi holds the Grace Craddock Nagle Chair in Catholic Studies at Northwestern University. He is a historian of Catholicism in America and, more broadly, a student of religious experience. His highly acclaimed work includes *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2002), *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotions to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), and, recently, the essay "Abundant History: Marian Apparitions as Alternative Modernity," which appeared in *Historically Speaking* 9, no. 2 (September/October 2008), 12–16.

Mormons should be interested in Orsi's work. His essay is a challenge to traditional scholarly method: It asks what categories of interpretation there are for supernatural events—for what Orsi calls supernatural "presences" or "abundant events"—that influence human behavior and with which humans construct relationships. Though Orsi's area of study is American Catholicism, and though he wrestles with apparitions of Mary and the presence of the saints, his questions speak directly to the heart of struggles within Mormon historiography. Many students of Mormon history continue the wars over Joseph Smith's trustworthiness; many seek to account for his feats through appeals to environmental influence or his psychology while many others refute such appeals. More recently, a younger generation of scholars have often cast

such questions aside, concluding that the tools of history cannot explain Joseph and that such attempts are therefore a dead end. Orsi's work should invite all of these camps to consider new ways of thinking about how we might discuss what happened to Joseph Smith.

Recently, *Dialogue* asked Susanna Morrill, associate professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College, to moderate a discussion between Robert Orsi and Richard Lyman Bushman, then chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University. The three discussed the relevance of Orsi's work to Mormon historiography, his impressions of Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), and how scholars of religion might strive to deal with religious experience in more satisfying ways.

* * *

Susanna Morrill: I'd like to start the conversation by asking four framing questions relating to the issue of religious experience: First, are "abundant events" proper subjects of study for historians of religion? Second, how do historians of religions go about studying such experiences within the methodological expectations of the academy? Third, what are the responsibilities of scholars to the believers whom they write about? And fourth, to what extent will, and should, the faith of scholars appear in their work? Richard, could you start start the discussion with the ideas Robert offers in his article?

Richard Bushman: Your essay "Abundant History" suggests a helpful way to conceptualize the experiences of visionaries such as Joseph Smith. The essay offers a new vocabulary for describing such events, which is, in my opinion, much closer to the reality than the words we have used before. You call encounters with divinity "abundant events" and then note various phenomena surrounding such events—the density of personal relations in which the visionary is involved, for example. But you go beyond the divine encounter itself to what follows. In the aftermath of Marian apparitions, the people who approach the shrines exhibit an unusual intimacy. The worshippers drop the walls around themselves as they share their pain and hope. These observations suggest a re-

search agenda for historians looking at other abundant events such as Joseph Smith's visions.

Robert Orsi: Yes.

Richard: You also speak of the routes of influence radiating from such events. That's a nice way of putting it; the word "routes" suggests an approach to what happens in consequence. Where do the abundant events lead? But it occurs to me that some of the responses of the Marian groups, which taken together could be thought of as a morphology of an abundant event, take a different form in the case of Joseph Smith. Rather than the abundant event dissolving the boundaries of subjectivity and establishing intimacies, in Joseph Smith's case it leads to structure and organization. The people who are converted take on priesthood offices and go on missions; they have council meetings. As the influence radiates still further, you get minutes of the meetings and letters and all the paraphernalia of organization. I thought it would be interesting to talk about how events that are so similar at the core lead in different directions in the aftermath.

Robert: I appreciate the difference. I was thinking about that concept as I read the very powerful final chapter of *Rough Stone Rolling*, in which the people left behind in Nauvoo after Joseph's murder continued to work on building the temple, though they knew they weren't going to be using it after it was done because they would be leaving Nauvoo. It seemed to me that we needed some word to get at what happens between Max Weber's idea of initial charismatic leadership of a new religion and its eventual institutionalization. It seems as if something else is going on there, almost as if the stones themselves were charismatic—the stones of this sacred building that would otherwise signify the routinization of Mormonism. So I take your point. It does lead in different directions, which might have to do with the specific peculiarities of modern Catholicism and modern Mormonism. I was struck by—as you want to put it—the radiation outwards of Joseph's spirit and his vision through the organization.

Richard: I agree that the Weberian term doesn't work. The way I've put it, to preserve a little of Weber, is that charisma is immediately routinized with Joseph Smith. That is, he invests this organi-

zation and all these offices with this divine power, so that everybody in it thinks they are receiving revelation.

Robert: Right, right.

Richard: And there's no right word for describing that.

Robert: No, there isn't. I don't think there's a right word to describe what happens in Nauvoo after he dies and his followers continue building. One of the moments that especially interested me was the anointing with oil in 1836 in Kirtland, also in a temple-related setting. I was surprised to learn how many of Joseph's visions were communal, how many were shared, with Sidney Rigdon and others. Again and again his visions are actually occurring in a context of other people having visions alongside him. Is that right?

Richard: That's absolutely right. He hoped he could bring all of his people to come before God the way he had. His real precedent is Moses trying to bring the children of Israel to Sinai to confront God, and they shrink back before they can do it (Ex. 19:16–10). He had this democratic sense that his own experiences should be diffused through the church.

Robert: Again here's an example where the language fails us. What is happening at these meetings in 1836 where there is an abundance of visions that are shared by lots of people—where people are speaking in tongues and seeing the heavens open? Modern historiography just stops at this point; it cannot deal with such experiences historically or phenomenologically. And as you say early on in the book, it appears that the only two options in modern historiography are either debunking such moments, claiming that the person at the center of it all is a charlatan and everyone else are dupes, or else translating the events into the language of the social: that it's a matter of poverty, of people being on the margins of society, etcetera. But that leaves the central experiences unexamined and thus absent from history.

Richard: I agree with you entirely. You don't have to dismiss all those other things; but if you were to talk about them to the people themselves, they might nod but would think we missed the point. One trouble is we get caught up in our readers' struggles. If we had absolutely neutral readers, we might be able to do it. You

suggest at the end that, to write understanding history, the historians must have a certain sensibility, but so do readers. They have to be willing to go with the flow, and that's sometimes hard for them to do.

Robert: I think you certainly invited readers to do that in *Rough Stone Rolling*. I had read Fawn Brodie earlier, of course (*No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945]), and so I had my head filled with the usual things about Joseph Smith. But you really do invite readers into a very different experience of him, and I found it quite powerful. I might be a particularly sympathetic reader; nonetheless, I thought the way the book was structured was fabulous. And what you say in the opening chapters—that what's interesting is that so many people so quickly believed Joseph enough to uproot their lives and follow him—I do think that's extraordinary. Why historians feel the need to explain away such appeal or how they think it was accomplished by deception or charlatanry I don't understand. What kept getting me is why historians can't simply marvel at this extraordinary act of imagination, however you want to see it, that takes place in upstate New York, and begin the work of interpretation with being so astounded that they find themselves at the limits of their inherited explanatory tools and need to find new ones.

Richard: In some ways I think we're moving in a direction where a larger number can, or want to. But so many people are extricating themselves from religion of some sort and therefore are uneasy about dealing with divine connections—

Robert: Yes.

Richard: They want to keep a distance between themselves and divine experiences. For example, some readers of books on Joseph Smith say that, whenever you talk about Joseph Smith's visions, you always have to say "alleged visions."

Robert: Right. That I don't understand. The visions were not alleged to *him*. They were not alleged to the people around him. It's the same with the women I wrote about with St. Jude. St Jude was not *allegedly* present to them. I had to begin with the fact that they

understood St. Jude to be present and efficacious in their lives, and to begin anywhere else would have distorted the history.

Richard: You would not be valuing their experience, and you have to begin with that. You may want afterward to translate that experience into your own language but you have to start with what they experienced.

Robert: I've said some place that the halls of religious studies departments are filled with ex-ministers and ex-priests and so forth, all of whom have very powerful and very deep and perhaps legitimate concerns about religion and long and complicated histories with religious traditions. I agree that such personal background does play a role in the scholarship, and I think it's critically important for people to be very clear about what anxieties and commitments they bring before they set out to do this work.

Richard: Let me ask you about some of the words you proposed. You used the terms "abundant events" and "presences." These might be thought of as stand-ins, some might say, for "God" or "angels."

Robert: Yes, I wanted to find a language open enough so that angels, God, and other special beings could find a place in this critical terminology.

Richard: That was the genius in the choice of those words. They encompass so much. Since I'm right in the middle of Mormonism, I must find a way to distinguish what I'm doing from confessional history, written for and by believers. It seems to me that your words establish a ground where the differences between confessional and scholarly history are put aside for the moment. Tell me what you thought about when you devised those words.

Robert: I was trying to name a particular kind of human experience that I believed historians had not been taking sufficient account of—namely, the experience of a presence that is outside the self, other than the self, an otherness that has consequences. Joseph had to attend to his own revelations, as you say, which is a perfect example of what I was after. The people who pray to St. Jude experience the saint as other than themselves. They experience him as having his own needs, his own desires, and his own ideas about them and what they need; and they have to contend

with all of those issues as they would in any other relationship. In that sense, I was trying to get to a place where we could actually argue that figures like St. Jude are themselves agents in history.

Richard: What kind of response have you gotten from this article? Ruth Harris's book, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Penguin, 1999), an account of the origins of the shrine and the current practices of patrons, was so useful because it did win over a lot of people. Harris was so empathetic and yet kept a grip on her Jewish secularism; she was kind of a neutral witness. I wonder how far that kind of history will go.

Robert: I want to see more of it. I'm trying to think of recent examples. While I was reading *Rough Stone Rolling*, I was also reading a book by Michael Lambek, an anthropologist I met last summer in Central Asia. He's a professor of anthropology and the Canada Research Chair at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. The book is *Human Spirits: A Cultural Account of Trance in Mayotte* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Mayotte is an island off the coast of Madagascar. Lambek's language is unabashedly that of presence. The book is about spirit possession, spirits interacting with him, talking back to the spirits—he appears to have no problems with any of those activities.

While such an approach may not be the norm, anthropology departments seem to offer more space for such conceptualizations. It occurred to me as I was reading Michael's book and thinking about this conversation we were going to be having that this difference has to do with the history of our respective disciplines. Anthropology has the privilege of approaching these realities in the ways we're talking about here without apology, in part because anthropologists traditionally are dealing with populations that have been framed as radically other, although anthropologists go on to trouble such distinctions as familiar or unfamiliar.

But what makes it so dangerous when we talk about abundant presence is that we're referring to populations that are part of modern Western civilization, and then the stakes change. But again, Lambek says, in essence, "I spoke to the spirits, and the spirits spoke to me." Spirits interact with people, so they interact with the anthropologist. This interaction is a dimension of the fieldwork. There is not a hint of squeamishness here.

But you had asked me about how I approached my essay. When I gave the lecture at a university for the first time, some people were angry with me. One young scholar accused me of betraying modern critical religious scholarship, saying that I had crossed over to the other side and become a confessional historian. Which is, as you know, not what I aspire to. Other people felt that I was trying to explain away the sacred, which they saw as the most aggrandizing and arrogant position of modern historiography—that I could somehow explain the sacred. I don't think I'm doing that either. I'm actually trying to find a path between these alternatives, but it's proven difficult.

Richard: Russell McCutcheon stakes out the position for the true Enlightenment scholar who is under an obligation to undercut the reports of divinity in his *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001)]. But I think that, in the long run, what's going to work are books like your *St. Jude* and *Madonna*—books that have explanatory power and bring into focus phenomena that are otherwise omitted. In the long run, that's what's really going to help.

Robert: I agree—because it's truer to history. If you're really an empiricist, a radical empiricist, this is where you have to go. How could you empirically treat the early history of Mormonism without saying the things that you say in the book?

Richard: I get into a difficult position because I have to explain the translation of the Book of Mormon. Marian apparitions are easy compared to golden plates.

Robert: I appreciated this dilemma with new force as I was reading you this time. As I understand it, the two options are composition and transcription.

Richard: Yes.

Robert: I take it people want you to say something there?

Richard: Yes. I felt pressure from the same group that you're talking about to reduce Joseph Smith to an expert at assimilating his culture and generating this text. I'm not saying that it's impossible; but if you look at the record of the people who saw him translating, there are few signs of an author composing a text. Everything we know from first-hand accounts about what went on

seems to indicate that he was reading out of a stone, that he was inspired by it, and that the words just came forth. And if you look at his life, his background, his training, his previous experience of writing, it's very hard to see him generating this huge history of a civilization. The best I can do is to say: Here are two views of it; but if you really follow the documentary evidence, you come to a different result than that he just made it up out of his own head.

Robert: Do you think the problem there is a question of belief or a question of language? Do we simply lack the conceptual tools to talk about a moment like that—a moment that can avoid either composition or transcription? Do we just not have a rich enough language to approach the human imagination in religious history and culture?

Richard: I think language could make a huge difference, because Joseph Smith's is not the only text that seems like a miraculous production from an untutored person. The spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis produced that kind of text, and people marveled about it in the same way. Automatic writing doesn't do it; you need to retain a religious impulse behind it—the sense of encounters beyond the self.

Robert: I feel that an earlier generation of scholars of religion was willing to consider these questions. The answers may not always have been satisfying—but I think of William James here, or even the early theorists of crowd behavior. There were scholars interested in talking about how we think about these sorts of human events, but I don't see it anymore.

Richard: James is the perfect example of it—

Robert: But in the end he's too individualistic for me!

Richard: Very Protestant, maybe?

Robert: Yes. [Laughs] Another topic that occurred to me while I was reading your book was the whole issue of prayer, of what prayer is as a historical, cultural phenomenon. If we historians think of prayer only from a human perspective, we miss the kind of speaking that prayer is, empirically, because prayer is not simply a monologue. If practitioners understand a dialogue to be taking place, that dialogue has to be taken into account by scholars. Prayer is a particular sort of human practice. I was interested in

the amount of praying that takes place among early Mormons, how often they're actually on their knees together.

Richard: Yes, that's true, in private councils and wherever. I guess that's true of all religious groups, but Mormons integrated it into all of their activities. Whenever they make a decision about the Church, they pray about it. Also the use of the words "Holy Spirit," which can be dismissed so easily, but the important part is their sense that something flows, that they are transformed, that something is coming from the outside in response to those prayers. That sense gets lost. I don't think I did a good job of capturing that experience, but it's there in the record.

Robert: My wife, Christine Helmer, who is also a scholar of religion—one of her topics of interest is religion and sports, or theology and sports. She often talks about the psychological concept of flow, which, as a former athlete she knows from experience as well as from her reading about the world of sport. It occurs to me, as she talks about it, that here is another useful word in thinking about these experiences; there is a sort of an embodied flow between people. I'm very interested in the connections among people in these moments; that's what I was thinking about as I read your book. The density of Joseph's surround—his interpersonal surround—was really amazing. What language can we find to talk about the ways people together can share visions or experiences like this?

Richard: That's what you were referring to when you spoke of mob theory—an effort to spiritize, a sort of ether that connects people.

Robert: Right, yes. I'll take ether. I'll take anything that helps us to think in new ways (or in old/new ways) about such human events. There's no problem in kinesiology or sports psychology with talking about athletic flow, about a team suddenly coming together in an extraordinary way, when a play suddenly seems to belong to no individual player but to all of them at once and to be outside them in some way, as if they were being played by the game rather than the other way round. A kid in the NCAA tournament just said that he didn't know how the game he was in ended; he just did what he did and he doesn't know how he did it. I think we could maybe borrow some language from this domain.

Richard: The rowers call it swing, being perfectly in sync, when the boat just seems to slide. Those are strange moments.

Robert: I take it that, despite such moments, there is sometimes dissent within the Mormon community as well in regard to your work.

Richard: Well, the dissent takes two forms. Of course, there are people who've defected from Mormonism and who are eager to deflate its claims and who think I am altogether too easy on Joseph Smith. But then there is a larger group of people who have sort of idealized him as a person and have idealized the whole process as a sort of pristine flow from God to him, unsullied by anything human. When I introduce magic or Joseph's temper or any of a number of things that seem to detract from his immediate connection with heaven, they get uneasy. I've had people tell me they read fifty pages and couldn't stand it. They had to put the book down. And to me that's the beauty and the force of it—that here is this poor guy, struggling along and yet feeling that God is with him and angels are his companions.

Robert: Right. It's funny to me that you should mention that people read fifty pages and then stop. According to my notes, which I'm looking at here on my desk, it's on pages 49 and 50 that you talk about the culture of magic. So it might be there where they jump ship. I have to say that I wish we had a word other than "magic" for the world of Smith's childhood, because "magic" carries with it such a long and nasty history. I was thinking, "What other words are there?" At the end of "Abundant History," I quote the anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere, who talks about "hypnomantic societies" in *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990). Anything other than words that bring with them dismissal and disdain—words that don't help us approach empirical realities.

Richard: Mormons have fallen heir to Protestant concerns about superstition; they put all magic into that category and believe that it's in contradistinction to a pure, true religion. If Joseph Smith got his ideas from the Bible, that's fine; but if he was stimulated to look for God through something they think of as magic or superstition, then that detracts from what he's doing. I don't know

what a better word would be, but there are a lot of Mormons who struggle with magic.

Robert: Speaking for myself, I think that's one place scholars can stand. I'm willing to use this language I'm talking about and this perspective we've been discussing to think about Vodou spirits or Catholic saints or the spirits in Mayotte. I don't have the squeamishness that people in areligious traditions might have about seeing other people's abundant presences as real. I think that's something a scholar of religion can contribute to human society: inviting people to be patient with and attentive to other people's spirits.

Richard: I think that kind of alliance is getting easier and easier. It certainly is within Mormonism. I think the battlefield—because it *is* a battlefield to many Mormon minds—is changing its configuration. It's no longer denomination against denomination but believers against unbelievers. It's easier to reach out and say hurrah for the Catholics. And Mormons really like Jews who have some teeth in their religion, particularly Orthodox Jews. It's getting easier.

Robert: I know that revelations have continued in Mormonism, and I've read a little about popular Mormonism, or whatever one wants to call it—everyday Mormonism. Is there still a culture of spirit presences?

Richard: There's a lot of lore. I guess it's common to a lot of Christian religions; a husband dies and he appears at his wife's bed three days after the funeral, that sort of thing. What would really interest me would be for you to observe a Mormon testimony meeting—do you know what testimony meetings are?

Robert: I do, yes.

Richard: People getting up and trying to describe moments when they feel they've been touched by the divine, even in the ordinary: "I was helped to find an apartment or get a job." Sometimes they go deeper than that. I think they come closest to capturing Mormon private religion, which then becomes communal because you're urged to tell people about it. There's a wonderful juncture there— people seeing the presence here and there in their lives and relating it to their brothers and sisters.

Robert: Yes, and then they struggle to find language to speak of it.

Richard: Right, and they don't have any good general words; they would never use the word "presence." They would probably say "Holy Spirit" or words like "inspiration." But usually it has to be reduced to some incident—"here God helped me, or someone came to my aid."

Robert: Clifford Geertz said someplace that the anthropologist stands alongside his or her sources as they're struggling to make sense of their worlds, and he or she joins them in the work of thinking through the meanings of their world. I prefer this as a model to the stark "we explain what happened to them."

Richard: That's lovely, a very human conception of the scholarly mission—to be useful to the people. I love Ruth Harris getting in and helping a poor soul get up to the right spot. It's a beautiful scene.

Susanna: This has been a fascinating conversation. To wrap it up, do either of you have any final questions or parting shots about how abundant history might change how we understand Mormon or Catholic history?

Robert: Well, actually, I have one question of fact that I want to ask. It wasn't clear to me. Richard, the anointing with oil, was that on the head? The face? Where was the anointing with oil?

Richard: It was over the whole body.

Robert: It was? What kind of oil was it?

Richard: I don't think they described it in those early days, but it would be some simple olive oil or something of that sort. They did try to imitate the anointing of the Levitical priests in Exodus. They tried to imitate the washing fluids—it calls for cinnamon and myrrh, and they couldn't get any myrrh but they did use cinnamon. But I don't think they had any kind of special oil.

Robert: I spent some time last summer in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, which is going through a religious revival right now of Orthodoxy, and saint shrines are becoming very important again. What happens at saint shrines very often in contemporary Georgia is anointing with corn oil. People will sometimes pour corn oil into the earth of the saint's grave as a way of establishing a

connection, or they'll drink some of it after the bottle has been touched to the saint's grave. Again, it's this desire to be in touch with the real in a particularly intimate way. I tell my students that if it doesn't offer you the opportunity to taste something, lick something, kiss something, or put something into your mouth, it's not a religion.

Richard: There's a lot of body in Mormonism.

Robert: There *is* a lot of body in Mormonism, I have learned that. This is obviously a conversation that can continue, and I look forward to continuing it in other venues.

Richard: Your essay is of immense importance. I'm grateful to have had access to it. It's something I can use in courses I teach. You may have seen the talk I gave at Harvard Law School where I cited Charles Taylor.

Robert: Yes.

Richard: It's very useful for Mormons to situate what they're saying about their own religious experiences in some larger framework. I don't know whether it legitimizes it or enlarges it, but somehow it adds seriousness to say we're part of a larger configuration of contact with the divine. I think your work is going to be very important for Mormons.

Pomp, Circumstance, and Controversy

Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black, and Donald Q. Cannon. *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois: A History of the Mormon Militia, 1841–1846*. Norman, Okla.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2010. 436 pp. Acknowledgements, introduction, illustrations, tables, appendices, bibliography, index. Hardcover: $39.95. ISBN: 978–0–87062–382–0

Reviewed by William P. MacKinnon

From its gorgeous dust jacket to its prosaic index, this valuable book provides narrative history, data compilations, and unexploited documents shedding light on one of the most unusual, controversial organizations of antebellum American military history, the short-lived Nauvoo Legion of Hancock County, Illinois. In the process, the authors add to our understanding of the violent forces that led to the 1844 assassinations of Joseph and Hyrum Smith as well as the subsequent westbound Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, then one of the largest cities in Illinois. Perhaps unwittingly, authors Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black, and Donald Q. Cannon also illuminate a subject not directly addressed in their book—the Mormon military tradition that developed during the subsequent 160 years.

The authors tell the legion's story through eleven chapters bracketed by an admirable introduction and conclusion. While *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois* is not a textbook, these three veteran professors of Brigham Young University's Department of Church History and Doctrine are masters of the classic pedagogical technique of telling students what they are going to hear, communicating the message, and then reviewing what has been said. This orderly approach to the book as a whole is mirrored in the design of the chapters, each of which opens with a series of key questions to be addressed and ends with a summary of the conclusions to be drawn from the intervening narrative. The result is a refreshing model of clarity, with little ambiguity about the authors' message. In a sense, the reader's challenge is to remain critically alert to the substantive "meat" in this historical sandwich while benefiting

from the appealing (even disarming) rhythm and flow of the book's three-part structure.

Reader alertness is indeed warranted, for *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois* is not only the history of an interesting militia organization but is also an examination (and rebuttal) of some of the most volatile, corrosive accusations hurled at the Mormon Church during its formative, pre-Utah years. Perhaps the most important of these criticisms is an enduring claim running to the very character of both the legion and the Church whose members it protected—the notion that this militia was some sort of out-sized, rogue, un-American, all-Mormon private army answerable only to Joseph Smith, heavily populated by Danite vigilantes, and tasked with an aggressive mission of vengeance against non-Mormon tormentors in two states.

While many books with multiple authors emerge as uneven, lumpy monographs with an ambiguous "voice," this volume works. It does so partly because of the richness of the authors' backgrounds, the long-term nature of their professional collaboration, and an up-front identification of the not-necessarily contiguous segments for which each of the three bears prime responsibility. Bennett, Black, and Cannon explain their collaboration nicely through a musical metaphor: "A single work by three authors rarely speaks with one voice. Our attempt is not to sing solo, but in three-part harmony. . . . Although we admit to variety in our interpretations of Smith and the Nauvoo Legion, we do not see discord. We believe that our differences enrich this work without creating disharmony or dissonance, and have sought to complement each other's strengths and interests" (18). The approach here, then, differs from that of the more homogenized narrative published in 2008 by another trio—Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard: *Tragedy at Mountain Meadows* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

To this book's first three chapters fall much of the conceptual heavy lifting to establish just what the Nauvoo Legion was and was not, its origins and mission, and the surrounding context of American society and its military tradition as both played out in Missouri and Illinois during the first fifteen years of the LDS Church's history. These chapters start by limning a portrait of the United States as a society racked by pervasive mob violence

against unpopular ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, including the Latter-day Saints of Missouri. There follows an account of the legion's establishment in 1841 driven primarily by the requirement of Mormon compliance with long-standing federal and state legal requirements that virtually all adult males enroll in a gubernatorially controlled militia and by Joseph Smith's resolve, after the searing Missouri expulsions of 1838–39, that an effective Mormon military capability was essential for self-defense in the face of feckless federal and state governments.

Thanks to John C. Bennett's draftsmanship and effective lobbying in Springfield, the Mormons obtained a state-sanctioned city charter for Nauvoo that included authorization for the Nauvoo Legion as a municipal military force (similar to those operating in Philadelphia and elsewhere) that functioned as an integral unit of the Illinois state militia. With the passage of this legislation, Illinois's governor then responded to Mormon nominations by commissioning Joseph Smith as the Nauvoo Legion's lieutenant general, its uniformed commander, and John C. Bennett, assistant president of the LDS Church, as the legion's major general and second in command. With the explosive population growth of Nauvoo fueled by an influx of European converts, the legion's size soon expanded commensurately (and proportionally, the authors argue) to almost 3,000 men—not the 5,000 troops imagined by contemporary commentators and some historians. Nonetheless, it was a force ten times the size of the Hancock County militia regiment serving the region outside the city's limits. Notwithstanding the resulting non-Mormon apprehensions that arose in Missouri and neighboring Illinois towns such as Warsaw, Carthage, and Quincy, the authors believe that Joseph Smith stuck to a mission for the legion that was strictly defensive (rather than aggressive or vengeful) and subordinate to the civilian control of Illinois's chief executive.

After this foundational material, Chapters 4–6 present, with multiple supporting tables and five appendices, a plethora of data resourcefully gleaned from previously unexploited archival documents. This information and the authors' related analyses shed light on the legion's table of organization; the identity, birth/death dates, unit assignments, and ranks of its officers and noncoms; and similar information for hundreds (not thousands as the

dust jacket claims) of its private soldiers. It is this information, incomplete as it is, that most obviously distinguishes *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois* from earlier studies. The book puts a face on what has heretofore been a largely anonymous military organization known only through a few of its more religiously prominent leaders. With such valuable scholarship, the authors approach the high standard set by Norma B. Ricketts's *The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846–1848* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1996); Lieutenant Colonel Sherman L. Fleek's *History May Be Searched in Vain: A Military History of the Mormon Battalion* (Norman, Okla.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2008), and Roger B. Nielson's *Roll Call at Old Camp Floyd, Utah Territory: Soldiers of Johnston's Army at the Upper Camp, 8 July to 8 September 1858* (Springville, Utah: N.pub., 2006).

The remaining chapters deal with Joseph Smith's readiness and qualifications to lead the legion; the unit's training regimen (primarily drills and parades); internal divisiveness fueled by the disloyal behavior of John C. Bennett (excommunicated and militarily cashiered in 1842); neighbors' perceptions and fears of the legion's size, mission, leadership, and even appearance; an escalation of Joseph Smith's legal difficulties; his unconventional decision to run for U.S. president; and the beginnings of his tendency to use the legion for non-militia purposes unsanctioned by the governor. The latter behavior included the suppression of an offensive grog shop and, most significantly, the use of a legion detachment to remove Smith from the clutches of a Missouri sheriff and to destroy the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which Smith ordered as the city's military commander rather than as a Church or civilian leader.

The book then describes the murder of the Smith brothers at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844, by disguised troops of another militia unit; the post-assassination ascension of Brigham Young from the military rank of assistant chaplain to lieutenant general; Governor Thomas Ford's 1845 retrieval of the legion's state-issued weapons; the legislature's repeal of the Nauvoo city charter and, with it, the legion's official standing as an arm of the Illinois militia; the legion's continuation as an unauthorized self-defense force in the face of neighboring raiders; and its valiant but futile rearguard action to protect the remnants of the Mormon popula-

tion remaining in Nauvoo after the mass westbound exodus of early 1846. It was a meteoric rise and fall for the Latter-day Saints in less than five years, with the Nauvoo Legion involved virtually every step of the way.

If *The Nauvoo Legion in Illinois* has any flat spots, some of them run to editorial as well as authorial matters. For example, in a half-dozen instances, portions of key documents are quoted in one chapter and repeated in another, once with a slight change in text and different source cited. This somewhat distracting repetition is probably attributable to the book's multiple authorship, as is the book's occasional internal display of differences of opinion on more substantive matters such as whether the legion was a competent or ineffective fighting force (124, 178) and whether, in its membership, it was a Mormon organization (as the book's subtitle implies) or a more diverse militia. The authors cite nineteenth-century as well as modern assessments that perhaps as much as 10 percent of the legion's troops were non-Mormon (106–7) but make no attempt to analyze the accuracy of this important point.

Although this volume has twenty-six illustrations, the absence of a map depicting central and western Illinois and the Mississippi River will leave some readers unclear about the flow of action between Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri as well as between Nauvoo and such important Illinois places as the capital city of Springfield; Carthage, site of the Smiths' assassination; and Warsaw/Quincy, the towns so welcoming in 1839 yet hostile a few years later.

Of more concern to me is the editorial decision to virtually forego clarifying footnotes for the chapters' tables as well as for the five appendices, which alone constitute 30 percent (131 pages) of the book. As a result, most readers will be at sea in coping with a plethora of arcane legion terms, usages, titles, and ranks. Take, for example, the book's use of "brevet," an honorific for officers used by the U.S. Army for only three limited purposes, all of which were inapplicable to the legion's situation. Even more obscure is the title for the legion officer called a "herald and armor-bearer," a rank with a medieval, if not biblical, ring. Unaided, will readers recognize "ensigns"—today's lowest-ranking naval officers—as subalterns in the early U.S. Army as well as the Nauvoo Legion? Was a legion "major sergeant" an offi-

cer, and, if so, how did his rank and duties differ from those of the noncommissioned officer similarly dubbed "sergeant major"? (Both ranks appear unexplained in one of the book's tables.) Since the Nauvoo Legion had no officer titled "general" (today's four-star grade), what kind of leader bore that force's rank of brevet general?

Although the authors have explicitly confined their examination of Mormon military matters to the time and locale indicated by this book's title, I believe that they missed an opportunity in not footnoting the entry in Appendix D for Jefferson Hunt to identify him as the subsequent senior captain of the Mormon Battalion (and later a brigadier general of California militia) and that for Daniel Hamner (misspelled as Hammer) Wells to indicate that in Utah he would become the legion's third lieutenant general and arguably the most important Mormon soldier of the nineteenth century. It is a bit like listing Abraham Lincoln as first a captain and then a private of Illinois volunteers in the Black Hawk War without noting his subsequent role as commander in chief.

Aside from these somewhat technical points, the omission of two other subjects warrants comment: the colorful, missing story of the three Generals Bennet/t; and the broad contextual significance of Joseph Smith's rank as the legion's lieutenant general. In my view, both matters bear on how one assesses Joseph Smith's judgment when he was acting in his capacity as the Nauvoo Legion's commander.

Joseph Smith's nomination of John C. Bennett to be his major general and second in command (as well as mayor of Nauvoo and assistant president of the LDS Church) is covered at length in the book. What is touched upon but not discussed in any depth is Smith's appointment of the eccentric James Arlington Bennet (misspelled as Bennett)[1] of Brooklyn, New York, to be a legion "major general" and the unit's inspector general. Totally absent is any reference to Smith's selection of Bennet to be his presidential running mate in 1844 and his appointment of yet another Bennett, this one James Gordon, the controversial publisher-editor of the *New York Herald*, to be a legion "brigadier general." Immediately after John C. Bennett's 1842 court-martial and dismissal, Lieutenant General Smith ordered both New York-based generals to present themselves in Nauvoo to fill the resulting leadership

vacuum atop the legion, a summons to which neither Bennet nor Bennett responded. In view of their character flaws, quirks, and erratic behavior, Joseph Smith's willingness to commission the three Bennet/ts in senior leadership positions raises questions about the top-heavy character of the legion's officer structure, the seriousness of the unit as a fighting force, and the quality of Smith's decision-making in selecting his closest subordinates.[2]

Aside from the legion's plethora of general officers, brevet appointments, and padded sinecures—an array that a West Point grandson of Brigham Young later dubbed "fantastic" (111 note 34)—the starkest illustration of the unit's top-heaviness lies with Joseph Smith's own rank. Notwithstanding the fact that Illinois's Governor Thomas Carlin sanctioned Smith's nomination by his troops to be a lieutenant general, the simple fact is that theretofore no officer in the American regular army and militia force had held that rank in the history of the republic with the sole exception of George Washington. So sacrosanct was Washington's memory and his service as a lieutenant general that even the proposal to promote Major General Winfield Scott, the U.S. Army's general in chief, after the Mexican War met with fierce (at times vicious) resistance in Congress. As a result, Congress elevated Scott only to brevet lieutenant general, a rank purposely lower than Washington's. The lieutenant general's title accepted by Joseph Smith did not appear in the U.S. Army after George Washington's death until Ulysses S. Grant's promotion from major general in 1864. Smith's use of the title in 1841 opened him to perceptions of overreaching and resulted in widespread criticism that damaged not only his own image but that of the militia he led.

For readers prone to conclude that the presence of multiple major generals in the legion would indicate the need for a lieutenant general to command them, I would point out that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a major general commanded all other major generals in the U.S. Army with only four exceptions—Lieutenant Generals Washington, Grant, William T. Sherman, and Philip H. Sheridan. For others who might feel that Smith was, in effect, bound by protocol to accept the title once nominated by his troops, it should be noted that, during the Mexican War, Jefferson Davis declined a brigadier's commission in the Mississippi Volunteers as unmerited as did fellow West Pointer

and Utah War veteran John W. Phelps on multiple occasions when he was tendered substantive or brevet promotions as a captain, brigadier general, and major general. The authors' brief comment, "In this era, the rank of lieutenant general, whether in the militia or in the Regular Army, was rarely used and was considered a special honor" (140), is an observation so understated that it misses, if not obscures, the significance of Smith's decision to accept, and use with insistence, such an exalted title.

In concluding Chapter 11, the authors finish their account of the legion's disintegration in 1846 with a cryptic comment designed both to recognize and preclude quibbling about the parameters of their study: "That the Nauvoo Legion would again serve to meet the needs of the Mormons in Utah Territory is another story, to be told at another time, and in another place" (261). If Bennett, Black, and Cannon take on such an assignment, I hope that they will examine the extent to which Governor Brigham Young benefited from or ignored the lessons that should have emerged from General Smith's uneven military experiences in Illinois. For example, when Young declared martial law on September 15, 1857, and was indicted for treason three months later, one wonders if he recalled that one of the factors involved in Joseph Smith's final incarceration at Carthage was a treason indictment flowing from his unauthorized proclamation of martial law in Nauvoo. By the same token it would be fascinating to know whether General Smith's cavalier incorporation of two Mormon militia companies from Iowa into his Illinois unit influenced Governor Young's enthusiasm for sending Utah's Nauvoo Legion into extra-jurisdictional adventures in the territories of Oregon, Nebraska, and New Mexico during 1857–58. Finally, one wonders if Brigham Young was emboldened to set aside his gubernatorial and militia responsibilities for an unauthorized five-week trek into Oregon during April–May 1857 by Joseph Smith's unauthorized absence from his legion duties while in hiding for three months during the summer of 1842 (193).

Whether or not the trio from BYU has finished its work on the Nauvoo Legion with the story of that unit's foundational Illinois period, Bennett, Black, and Cannon have done nothing but whet our appetite for more of their scholarship while bringing honor to themselves. If Joseph Smith's (and their) exotic heralds

and armor-bearers did not survive the daunting trek across the plains, deserts, and mountains from Illinois to Utah, much of the rest of the legion did. This remnant rose again to drill, parade, and occasionally fight, but this time in a quite different way against an eclectic mix of Lamanites and federal troops.

Notes

1. In the interests of full disclosure, I have made this same mistake in print repeatedly until corrected by Gene A. Sessions of Weber State University's history faculty.

2. For a summary description of the checkered backgrounds and careers of the three Generals Bennet/t, see MacKinnon, "Epilogue to the Utah War: Impact and Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 213–14 note 61; Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 65, 68–72, 108–9, 115, 126.

Harrell's Mettle

Jack Harrell. *A Sense of Order and Other Stories*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2010. 220 pp. Foreword by Robert Bird. Hardback: $26.95. ISBN 978–1–56085–209–4

Reviewed by Karen Rosenbaum

How do you read a collection of short stories by one author? Do you curl up with the book the same way you would with a novel, reading one story after another until your leg falls asleep or your stomach growls for food or the phone rings? Do you read one story, then close the book to think about it, perhaps reopening the book to reread parts or the whole? Do you expect the stories to be connected by characters or theme or tone and therefore search for universal elements? Do you come to each story afresh, hungry for wonder and new insights?

The way you answer those questions will probably determine how you react to Jack Harrell's *A Sense of Order and Other Stories*, winner of the Association for Mormon Letters' short fiction award for 2010.

With the exception of two Adam and Eve pieces, the sixteen

and armor-bearers did not survive the daunting trek across the plains, deserts, and mountains from Illinois to Utah, much of the rest of the legion did. This remnant rose again to drill, parade, and occasionally fight, but this time in a quite different way against an eclectic mix of Lamanites and federal troops.

Notes

1. In the interests of full disclosure, I have made this same mistake in print repeatedly until corrected by Gene A. Sessions of Weber State University's history faculty.

2. For a summary description of the checkered backgrounds and careers of the three Generals Bennet/t, see MacKinnon, "Epilogue to the Utah War: Impact and Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 213–14 note 61; Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 65, 68–72, 108–9, 115, 126.

Harrell's Mettle

Jack Harrell. *A Sense of Order and Other Stories*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2010. 220 pp. Foreword by Robert Bird. Hardback: $26.95. ISBN 978–1–56085–209–4

Reviewed by Karen Rosenbaum

How do you read a collection of short stories by one author? Do you curl up with the book the same way you would with a novel, reading one story after another until your leg falls asleep or your stomach growls for food or the phone rings? Do you read one story, then close the book to think about it, perhaps reopening the book to reread parts or the whole? Do you expect the stories to be connected by characters or theme or tone and therefore search for universal elements? Do you come to each story afresh, hungry for wonder and new insights?

The way you answer those questions will probably determine how you react to Jack Harrell's *A Sense of Order and Other Stories*, winner of the Association for Mormon Letters' short fiction award for 2010.

With the exception of two Adam and Eve pieces, the sixteen

stories in this collection are not linked, so don't settle in for one long read. Harrell's tales are better explored one by one, with time for appreciation and contemplation between them. Although there are some common themes, there is not a clear "sense of order"—but there isn't a sense of chaos either. Despite the frequent appearance of mystical elements, the stories make sense—even when, as in the final piece, "Calling and Election," the reader can't, with certainty, distinguish between reality and illusion. Harrell's characters are usually estranged from both others and themselves; all are aware of the confusion in their world. What distinguishes them is the way they react to this confusion.

This pattern is probably most easily seen in the six shortest stories. Each of the main characters is profoundly depressed. One's solution is suicide, another's is sleep; a third's is defiance. The three more imaginative depressed characters daydream—although their dreams offer neither escape nor resolution. In the most compassionate of the short-shorts—"Who Would Not?"—a morbidly obese woman sitting on her front porch sees two "bright and blond teenage girls in vivid dresses" (113) and reflects on their giddiness and the burden of her own body and life. Harrell quietly uses both the woman's point of view and an omniscient narrator to tell us, "She glimpses the fountain of the girls' health and color, but she overlooks a truth too simple to see: theirs is a mystery as deep as her own" (114).

In the longer stories, Harrell's characters mature, both despite and because of obstacles, despair, and turmoil. These human beings range in age from a high school senior who attends a heavy metal concert with Jesus to a presumably aged but quirky and independent Mormon prophet who longs to buy a garden hose and an Almond Joy in a Wal-Mart. Harrell's mostly male protagonists include an actuary, a college teacher, a seminary teacher, an electronics repairman, and a forklift operator who makes and sells wishing wells. Four stories feature Mormon characters; three of these and four others feature supernatural elements—visitations, voices, revelations. Sometimes, but not always, the otherworldly might—or might not—be explained by physical phenomena—a brain tumor, a stroke.

For these characters, the external conflicts reflect the internal conflicts. There is what can be called good and evil in the

characters, although there is rarely a clear division between them. At least three of Harrell's characters seem to speak for Satan: the unnamed man with cold, small eyes in "The Trestle," Lucifer in "The Lone and Weary World," and Brother Lucy in "Calling and Election." Each tempts the protagonist to actions that would result in his ultimate destruction, but the satanic character is either clever or confused enough himself to mask the outcome until it is too late. Brother Lucy recalls the devil in the book of Job. In a paper at the Association for Mormon Literature meeting in February of 2009, Harrell argued: "Goodness in fictional characters is deep, rich, and complex; while evil is shallow, paltry, and simple."[1] Yet the three satanic characters do not seem "shallow, paltry, and simple"—Brother Lucy especially seems multi-faceted.

"Calling and Election," in particular, may remind a reader of Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "Young Goodman Brown." Harrell's protagonist is seminary teacher Jerry Sangood. Though he isn't without goodness (the literal meaning of his surname), he may have an unhealthy craving to have his calling and election made sure; on the other hand, he seems to want no more than what many other devout Mormons have coveted. The seminary director also has an allegorical name—Brother Severe—but he, like the other two seminary teachers, all confess to Jerry his part in their own salvations.

Goodness in Harrell's stories may seem much more than "deep, rich, and complex"; it may make life intolerable. The college teacher Morgan, who has developed "Godsight" in the story of that name, can hardly bear the pain he sees in the lives of those around him, including the woman who lies about him so that she can chair their department.

Harrell does a better job with his male characters than his female ones. Most of his women are nice enough people, but limited in sensitivity and understanding. One of the strongest women is Andie, the librarian in "Jerome and the Ends of the Universe," my own favorite of the stories. Yet Andie's climactic scene, in which she explains a kind of revelation she has had about her relationship with her ex-husband, wasn't persuasive to me. Even here, though, the dialogue works; in fact, the dialogue is convincing in all the stories.

Some of the stories are set in southern Illinois, where Harrell

lived until he was nineteen; others take place in southern Idaho, where Harrell now lives and teaches English at BYU–Idaho. The first Adam and Eve story, "The Lone and Dreary World," takes place in the wilderness into which Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden. (From the description of the mountainous landscape, a reader assumes the setting is far from Missouri—but perhaps not far from Idaho.)

Harrell (or an editor?) has not chosen one of the most compelling stories for the title. Perhaps he wanted to avoid the repetition of "story" (*A Prophet's Story and Other Stories*), perhaps he wanted to avoid the repetition of "and" (*Jerome and the Ends of the Universe and Other Stories*; *Calling and Election and Other Stories*). But how about the first story in the collection, the one about a non-Mormon teenager who accompanies Jesus to a Megadeth concert in Idaho Falls? *Tregan's Mettle and Other Stories* would have been a splendid title for this startling and original collection.

Note

1. Jack Harrell, Presidential Address, Association for Mormon Letters annual meeting, February 2009, http://www.jackharrell.net/mormon-conflict-paper.html.

On Vital Questions

Robert L. Millet, ed. *By What Authority? The Vital Question of Religious Authority in Christianity*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2010. x + 200 pp. Paper: $35. ISBN 13: 978–0–88146–201–2

Reviewed by Joseph M. Spencer

Opening his short contribution to this collection of essays, Roger Olson, professor of theology at Baylor University, writes: "One can hardly do justice to the subject of religious authority in a brief reflection essay" (180). Indeed. And while eleven brief reflection essays *might* be able to do justice to what Robert Millet, as the volume's editor, describes as "a, if not *the*, crucial question among re-

lived until he was nineteen; others take place in southern Idaho, where Harrell now lives and teaches English at BYU–Idaho. The first Adam and Eve story, "The Lone and Dreary World," takes place in the wilderness into which Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden. (From the description of the mountainous landscape, a reader assumes the setting is far from Missouri—but perhaps not far from Idaho.)

Harrell (or an editor?) has not chosen one of the most compelling stories for the title. Perhaps he wanted to avoid the repetition of "story" (*A Prophet's Story and Other Stories*), perhaps he wanted to avoid the repetition of "and" (*Jerome and the Ends of the Universe and Other Stories*; *Calling and Election and Other Stories*). But how about the first story in the collection, the one about a non-Mormon teenager who accompanies Jesus to a Megadeth concert in Idaho Falls? *Tregan's Mettle and Other Stories* would have been a splendid title for this startling and original collection.

Note

1. Jack Harrell, Presidential Address, Association for Mormon Letters annual meeting, February 2009, http://www.jackharrell.net/mormon-conflict-paper.html.

On Vital Questions

Robert L. Millet, ed. *By What Authority? The Vital Question of Religious Authority in Christianity*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2010. x + 200 pp. Paper: $35. ISBN 13: 978–0–88146–201–2

Reviewed by Joseph M. Spencer

Opening his short contribution to this collection of essays, Roger Olson, professor of theology at Baylor University, writes: "One can hardly do justice to the subject of religious authority in a brief reflection essay" (180). Indeed. And while eleven brief reflection essays *might* be able to do justice to what Robert Millet, as the volume's editor, describes as "a, if not *the*, crucial question among re-

ligious traditions that make unique truth claims about Jesus Christ" (x), these essays, unfortunately, do not.

This volume unevenly gathers contributions from a variety of Christian traditions: two from Roman Catholicism, one from Eastern Orthodoxy, two from the Protestant Evangelical tradition, one from the Restoration (Campbellite) Movement, one from Adventism, one from Pentecostalism, and three from Mormonism. This LDS-heavy distribution is odd (particularly in something published by what was once a Baptist institution). It might of course make sense to privilege Mormonism in discussing authority, given LDS belief in both the absolute necessity of sacraments for salvation and the idea that such sacraments have to be administered authoritatively. But as this book itself makes clear, Latter-day Saints have such a distinctive notion of authority that one might wonder whether they are really part of the conversation.

The first LDS contribution to *By What Authority?*, written by Stephen Ricks, professor of Hebrew and cognate learning at Brigham Young University, in explicit fidelity to Hugh Nibley's work on early Christian history, comes fourth in the volume, following the two Catholic essays and the one Orthodox essay. The piece is well written and erudite (and, for Latter-day Saints, generally convincing); but its position in the volume lends it a likely unintentional air of arrogance. The Catholic and Orthodox pieces respond first and foremost to rifts in Christianity (between East and West and between Catholicism and Protestantism) and so focus on how authoritatively to distinguish true doctrine from error. Ricks, however, employs a distinctly Mormon understanding of authority and so provides a historical argument about the loss of apostolic authority. The reader is left to decide whether the Latter-day Saint simply—and perhaps somewhat cluelessly—stands outside the conversation, or whether he is actually dictating to the other contributors the questions they *should* be asking (as well as the answers they should be providing).

Steven Harper, professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU, in his contribution later in the book, recognizes the implicit audacity of the Mormon position, noting that his piece "may sound apologetic or combative to some" (125). But he then goes on to defend Roger Keller's presentation at the 2005 *Worlds of Joseph Smith* symposium at the Library of Congress, to which both

Douglas Davies and Jan Shipps responded by wondering whether Latter-day Saints can do scholarship without proselytizing (136–37). Here again the reader gets the unfortunate—and, I think, inaccurate—sense that Latter-day Saints are only participating in interreligious dialogue opportunistically, in order to find a further platform for preaching.

Another disconnect reinforces this image. Almost uniformly, the contributors from non-Mormon traditions are dissidents, liberals, or at least progressives within their respective religious communities, a position that Millet as editor recognizes (162). For example, Roger Olson discusses having left his religion (Pentacostalism) over its abuse of authority; Robert Randolph, institute chaplain at MIT, dedicates the whole of his essay to criticizing the parochialism of his own religious tradition (Restorationism); and George Knight, emeritus professor of Church history at Andrews University, takes conservative adherents of his tradition (Adventism) to task for not grappling seriously with contemporary historiography. But the Latter-day Saints who contribute to the volume are, without exception, unquestionably orthodox and all BYU professors. (Millet himself is the third.) No Mormon dissident has a voice in the volume. The result is interesting. All the other traditions represented in the volume seem to have problems with authority, to be at odds with themselves, or to be baffled at the essential question, while the Latter-day Saints come across as confident, clear-sighted, and unified.

In the end, however, I do not believe the content and form of *By What Authority?* is so much strategic as symptomatic. Millet's article is, significantly, not at all polemical or apologetic. He attempts to make sense of—rather than to argue for—Joseph Smith's admittedly odd understanding of authority. Millet, in short, seems to recognize quite well the ecumenical setting of the project and to tailor his own contribution accordingly. But one is left wondering why, if he seems so attuned to the stakes of the project, he did not employ a stronger editorial hand in bringing the volume together. Though I enjoyed the essays by Ricks and Harper and am glad to see them in print, I cannot help wondering whether it would not have been better to drop one or the other (or both), simply to maintain a clearer sense of ecumenical balance in the volume. As it stands, one finishes the book with the distinct

though unintended impression that Latter-day Saints have—as they are often accused of having—an axe to grind.

The book, then, seems to me to be a symptom, an indication of the real tension between unapologetic fidelity and self-critical pluralism. Whether the former or the latter plays a greater role, their intertwining seems always to leave something wanting. But what, then, is really wanted? Might it be a voice, precisely, that speaks "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29)? But how is *that* voice to be captured? Despite the dialogue Millet has brought together in this book, it seems to me that *the* vital question of authority remains not only unanswered, but perhaps even unasked.

To Bless and Sanctify: Three Meditations on the Sacrament

Baking a Sacrament Prayer

Kris Wright

The wheel of the week has turned to Saturday once again. Inevitably, during the course of the day, my mind is drawn toward Julina Lambson Smith. On Sunday, January 3, 1886, she recorded in her diary: "Fast day. No breakfast to get. Prepaired bread for sacrament. Cooked a good dinner. Did not go to meeting. Can hardly get up and down I am so lame. Jos. brought Kahaana home with him to dinner. I got supper with the help of the girls. Feel some little better this evening."[1] I have read this one little paragraph many times, trying to tease meaning out of this brief entry. Did Julina see her sacred baking as a female contribution to the sacrament ordinance, or was this merely another food preparation task for her?

Since reading about Julina Lambson Smith, the idea of making the sacrament bread won't leave me alone. I am similarly intrigued by an obituary in the *Woman's Exponent* for Frances Ann Adams, who made the sacrament bread for her ward for twenty-five years.[2] Could sacramental bread baking be a form of female ritual?[3]

For most of its history, bread has been made at home. Perhaps early Mormon women like Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy in Kirtland transformed their kitchens into sacred space. She recalls, "Blessings were poured out. Solemn assemblies were called.

Endowments were given. The elders went from house to house, blessing the Saints and administering the sacrament. Feasts were given. Three families joined together and held one at our house. We baked a lot of bread."[4] I wonder who brought the bread to the early meetings of the School of the Prophets. Zebedee Coltrin paints a vivid picture where bread is central to their worship: "The sacrament was also administered at times when Joseph appointed, after the ancient order that is, warm bread to break easy was provided and broken into pieces as large as my fist and each person had a glass of wine and sat and ate the bread and drank the wine; and Joseph said that was the way that Jesus and his disciples partook of bread and wine."[5]

I contemplate the possibility of entering the realm of an ordinance that is traditionally performed by men by baking the bread. Such a horizontal expansion along the "x-axis" of where the sacred and profane intersect allows women to experience and recover religious rituals from the "bonds of verticality." Scholar Lesley Northup asserts that such "creative ritualizing has allowed women in a variety of cultures to more fully articulate and re-envision their religious experience. In many instances, it has also provided a mechanism for social critique and renovation."[6] The idea of women seeking to claim religious ritual space has been problematic in many faiths. Northup describes a cartoon which pictures an ancient sacrificial rite. A young woman lies waiting on a stone altar, a large knife raised over her by a priest in elaborate ritual clothing. A spectator who is watching the scene, comments to another, "Serves her right. She was always whining about women not being allowed to participate in the services."[7]

Notwithstanding, I make arrangements to bake the sacrament bread for a month, hoping in my own way to claim horizontal space. Baking bread has always been a curious alchemy of art and science. Early in my homemaking career, I took on the task of making my own bread. With my copy of *Laurel's Kitchen*[8] propped up on the counter, I would fret about the right water temperature, proofing the yeast, and finding the perfect place for the dough to rise. I gained confidence and soon perfected a couple of recipes and baked bread a couple of times a week. Then I graduated to owning a Bosch mixer, to keep up with the demands of a growing family.

It is early on Saturday morning when I begin the process of making the bread. After working with whole grains for many years, I can't bring myself to use white flour but think there could be a possible rebellion if I present a dense, 100 percent whole wheat loaf to my ward. I settle on spelt, which will still yield a loaf light in color and texture. I grind the spelt berries—embracing the teachings of a whole history of Homemaking classes. Yet this is no superficial exercise in Molly Mormonism—I find great pleasure and meaning in my task. I measure out water, yeast, olive oil, honey, and salt and begin to mix the ingredients. I watch the transformation of these simple yet symbolic elements.

This time I am not using my bread mixer. I want this to be the work of my own hands—and I realize at this moment that, by separating myself from the task through technology, in some ways, I haven't really made bread in several years. Bread is a living process, and kneading the dough brings its own rewards. The repetition and rhythm free the mind for contemplation. My hands are sticky, but I feel the familiar sensation of the dough beginning to spring to life beneath my fingers—the leaven in the lump. It is here that the transcendent nature of this holy food begins—the symbol of the body of Christ.

As I rhythmically knead the floury mass, I feel the power of this newly born, embodied ritual. The familiar words spring to my mind: "O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son . . ."

My little daughter pulls up a chair beside me. "What are you doing?"

"Making the sacrament bread," I reply.

"Oooh, nice," she sighs, slipping her arm through mine.

A feeling of holiness envelops my kitchen. Food by its very nature readily lends itself to symbolic use, and a home where people share meals together easily becomes ritual space. Since the publication of Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane* in 1957, academics have debated the nature of the function of ritual and how it moves the believer out of time and space into an alternative sacred reality.[9] Yet female ritualizing often occurs in place and time; it is rooted in the here and now, in everyday materials and in ordi-

nary locations where women live and work. This ritualizing and the attendant horizontal expansion of sacred space can be described as "the activity of incubating ritual; it is the act of constructing ritual either self-consciously and deliberately or incrementally and editorially."[10]

The dough has been transformed into a smooth ball, and set it in a protected place, then sheltered with a red tea towel. Covering the sacrament bread with colored cloth doesn't resonate with my Mormon sensibilities. I search for a large white napkin. Mirroring the ritual preparation of thousands of sacrament meetings, I gently drape the bread in white. I go through the typical bread-baking process—punching down the dough and allowing for a second rise, shaping the loaf, waiting for a third rise, and then into the oven. Once it has cooled, I cover the bread again with the white cloth.

I take the bread to church the next morning, and I'm completely unprepared for my own reaction. We sing, "O God, th' Eternal Father" and all of sudden I am too emotional to sing as I watch two priests, both of whom I have known since they were three, carefully breaking up my bread. I know that my sacrifice is a broken heart and a contrite spirit, but it feels very meaningful to lay something tangible on the altar as well. There is "a difference between doing something yourself and observing someone else doing it[. It is] a matter of great significance."[11] In a small way, I am a partner in feeding my ward this sacramental meal. The deacons approach our row. Gandhi's words spring to my mind, "There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread." I approach my God through bread—the morsel of bread that I eat now, the bread that I have fed His sheep today, the bread I have baked.

Notes

1. Julina Lambson Smith, quoted in Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, eds., *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 346.

2. "Obituaries: Frances Ann Adams," *Woman's Exponent* 31 (March 1903): 78.

3. Tony Begonja, *Eucharistic Bread-Baking as Ministry* (San Jose, Calif.:

Resource Publications, 1991); H. E. Jacob, *Six Thousand Years of Bread: Its Holy and Unholy History*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2007).

4. Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy, 1816–1902, "Life History of Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy Written by Herself," typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/NTracy.html (accessed May 14, 2011).

5. Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes, October 3, 1883, in Merle H. Graffam, ed., *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes, 1883* (Palm Deseret, Calif.: ULC Press, 1981), 38.

6. Lesley Northup, *Ritualizing Women: Patterns of Spirituality* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 85. Lesley Northup has written extensively on the topic of ritualizing women and the horizontality of these rituals. Her scholarship has deeply influenced my thinking on this topic. See also her "Expanding the X-Axis: Women, Religious Ritual, and Culture," in her anthology, *Women and Religious Ritual* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1993), and her "Claiming Horizontal Space: Women's Religious Rituals," *Studia Liturgica* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 86–102.

7. Lesley A. Northup, "Emerging Patterns of Women's Ritualizing in the West," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 109.

8. Laurel Robertson, Carol Flinders, and Bronwen Godfrey, *The Laurel's Kitchen Bread Book: A Guide to Whole-Grain Breadmaking* (New York: Random House, 1984).

9. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 1987). For a critique of Eliade, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and his "No Need to Travel to the Indies: Judaism and the Study of Religion" in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Take Judaism, for Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, 2d ed. (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1986). For a discussion of the usefulness of Eliade in Mormon studies, see Richard L. Bushman, "'Eliade's Return,'" *The Mormon Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 1–4, http://timesandseasons.org/mormonreview/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/MormonReviewV1N3.pdf as well as "MR: 'Eliade's Return,'" http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2009/09/mr-eliades-return/ (accessed May 14, 2011).

10. Ron Grimes, *Reading, Writing and Ritualizing: Ritual in Fictive, Liturgical and Public Places* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1993), 5.

11. Ann Braude, ed., "Blu Greenberg," in *Transforming the Faiths of Our Fathers: Women Who Changed American Religion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 243.

This Is My Body: A Mormon Sacrament

Matthew Bowman

In thinking about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, I want to first discuss language: religious language, which is to say, words that are not simply language. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus Himself is in some sense language: the Word of God, which "became flesh, and lived among us, and we have seen his glory" (John 1:14, NRSV). What these verses tell us is that language is not simply a tool of description, but rather the way in which God invokes His presence in the world. In Genesis, of course, God creates simply by speaking; for John, God initiates the work of salvation that is the life and death of Jesus Christ by cloaking that same Word in flesh. If we read the words of scripture to discover the world as God imagines it should be—a world of order, truth, and redemption—we see in the Word of Christ His action to make that world true.

All of this is why we should study the scriptures—and really study them, in the way I hope to do while I'm standing before you today. What I'm going to ask you to do here is to read closely and carefully, to seek the deep patterns of metaphor and meaning that illuminate the ways the bread and water, the body and blood, illustrate divine reality as the authors of scripture understood it. What we should presume when we study scripture in search of that great organizing Word is the absolute presence of significance: There are no irrelevancies. Every choice of word, syntax, emphasis, or allusion carries with it meaning, and adds pieces to the totality of the world that God is dreaming. And so, if we spend our fifteen minutes of study on a single verse, it may be so much the better for us.

So. Let's turn to the institution narrative of the Lord's Supper, here, in Mark 14:22–26 (NRSV):

> While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

> Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it.
>
> He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.
>
> "Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."
>
> When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

What we are given here is not an explanation for what the Lord's Supper is or why it was important; what we are given here is a story: a narrative with character, plot, and action. And this is important, because the Lord's Supper is not something we believe; it is something we do. It is a ritual that we enact, a story that we imitate; these are words which we take upon ourselves. We do not merely hear and understand them cognitively but make them part of our own robust, multi-dimensional beings, part of our time, our bodies, and our actions. And in so doing, we seek to make their power our own.

What is that power? I propose it's twofold. First, the Lord's Supper teaches us to see the world sacramentally. Strictly speaking, of course, despite our colloquialisms, the Lord's Supper is not *the* sacrament but *a* sacrament—that is, a rite in which God has promised to deliver His grace in some formalized and particular way. Baptism and the temple ordinances might also be considered sacraments. And all of them are marvelous for a particular and pointed reason: They show us the ways in which the mundane things of the world—bread, or water—might suddenly tilt in particular times and places and refract the lovely and blinding light of God's love in ways unexpected and dazzling.

But the Lord's Supper also presents to us a particular way of thinking about what God's grace might do for us, and that is its power to evoke in us holy and typological memory, to bring us into a particular flow of history in such a way that revises our understandings of who we are and to whom we belong.

Every Sunday, we imitate the lives of a band of first-century Jews; we remember with our hearts, and our minds, and our bodies; and we become conscious of history as God sees it, dated by its own pulses and rhythms. We learn to date our lives by His reckoning rather than our own, and we learn to see ourselves as the spiri-

tual brothers and sisters of the group that sat in that rough and simple upper room that night, members of the same great body of believers, sitting together to receive the bread and water, which are the body and blood of our Savior.

What do these things mean about the ways in which the Lord's Supper might change us? To answer that question, I, again, want to look closely at the texts, at the very beginning of Mark's account: "While they were eating . . ." At its most basic level, the Lord's Supper is just that: a supper; a meal, shared among friends. Why is this important? The Apostle Paul answers, chastising the Corinthians for the ways in which they served it:

> When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.
>
> For in eating every one takes before another his own supper: and one is hungry, while another is drunken.
>
> What? have you not houses to eat and to drink in? or do you despise the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I will not praise you. (1 Cor. 11:20–22 NRSV)

The New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan has a great deal to say about the importance of meals in the ancient Mediterranean world. For most, they served as a key place to enforce social distinctions: to exclude those deemed unworthy on grounds of poverty, or gender, or status as a slave or servant or laborer. For Paul, and for other Christians, meals were the place to subvert these distinctions and instead to celebrate the radical inclusivity that Christ taught and that Paul repeated: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28 NRSV). At the Lord's table, all that was required was a broken heart and contrite spirit.

And indeed, once we begin to read carefully and see sacramentally, once we are alert for the sudden appearance of God's grace, we begin to see the Lord's Supper everywhere in scripture: food and drink as Christ, and the eating of them as the creation of a community of worshipers. Christ first proclaims Himself as a worker of miracles at the wedding feast of Cana, where He reveals that in plain water there may be rich wine. He repeatedly defies the social boundaries of his time by eating with prostitutes and lepers and the unclean. And the only miracle Christ performs

that is repeated in all four gospels is His feeding of the five thousand.

> When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"
>
> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.
>
> Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."
>
> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,
>
> "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"
>
> Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all.
>
> Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.
>
> When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."
>
> So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. (John 5:5–13 NRSV)

This miracle is, perhaps, the greatest type-scene of the Lord's Supper in scripture, and reading it will help us understand better what goes on in the sacrament, particularly when we note the attention Christ gives to the bread. He blesses it and passes it across to all those who have come to hear Him, and it is only a matter of verses later that Christ tells us that He is the bread of life. Bread is Christ's gift, and it comes inextricably entwined with Christ's word, which of course is God's word. As Christ gives the bread, so does God give us Christ.

Further, the wonderful thing about this story—and the institution narrative in Mark—and, more, in the way that we Mormons administer the rite is that it is Christ's disciples who pass and gather the bread. We bear Christ's grace to each other; we serve it as we pass it down the rows; as the memory of that upper room makes us the spiritual children of the first apostles, so in serving the bread of life to each other do we make each other our brothers and sisters.

Paul, again, has something to say about this:

> Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?
>
> Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor. 10:16–17 NRSV)

There is, of course, only one Bread of Life; and for Paul, the rite of the Lord's Supper is similar to the rite of baptism, of which he says in Romans 6:3: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Notice that we are not here baptized *in* the name of Christ, but *into* Christ; we are clothed in His identity, brought into His body. These sacraments are not merely a symbol but a means by which God extends the reach of the Holy Spirit to make us all the spiritual children of His Son. And as we serve it to each other, we become instruments of that grace.

Now, there is another way in which the feeding of the five thousand echoes the ritual of the Lord's Supper. Let's compare the language here. In John 6:11 (NRSV), as Christ prepares to feed the five thousand, we read: "Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted."

Now remember Mark 14:22: "And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.'"

The patterns here run toward similarity: Jesus takes, blesses, breaks, and gives.

The same pattern repeats in all the other gospels:

> Matthew 26:26: Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

> Luke 22:19: And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

> [And, even, in a profoundly interesting move, in 3 Nephi 18:3:] And when the disciples had come with bread and wine, he took of the bread and brake and blessed it; and he gave unto the disciples and commanded that they should eat.

The liturgical theologian Gregory Dix identified this fourfold pattern—taking, blessing, breaking, giving—as what he called the "shape of the liturgy."[1] For us to rightly celebrate the Lord's Supper, we must present the bread and water to the congregation, we must pray over them, we must break the bread, and we must offer them to our fellow worshipers.

But it seems to me that we can see also the very thing that we celebrate in the shape: the Atonement itself appears here, as Christ takes upon Himself the flesh of human life, blesses those around Him in miracle and teaching, is broken on the cross, and gives us all life eternal. The Lord's Supper then reminds us that the Atonement extended from the birth to the death of Christ and reminds us to remember the incarnation as much as the cross.

Interestingly, the Joseph Smith translation of these verses in Mark drives this theme home; Christ there emphasizes not only His death, but His life, adding to the admonition to "remember him" the poignantly particular "this hour that I was with you." Each moment of the shape of the liturgy, then, calls us to remember a facet of Christ's life and death: the body broken, but also born, the body slain, but also resurrected. And Mormon scripture in particular emphasizes the life as much as the death of Christ: His presence with his disciples, His communion with them, and by extension our communion with each other.

Thus, the Lord's Supper is not only a type of what has happened but also what is happening and, ultimately, what will happen. It gives us the entire scope of salvation history, from our fall to our redemption, wrapped up in the barest of actions, because all of those things are bound together in Christ's exodus through mortality.

Now, the theme that I hope is emerging here is that, the deeper we push at the ideas presented to us in the Lord's Supper, the greater its scope extends; the more nuanced our examination of the words, the more we understand our own actions. We see in them not only the works and the history of Christ but also, increasingly, our own. In what we do there, at the Lord's Table, we are told what we do now and what we should do in the rest of our lives—and, most importantly, we see those two things merge. We are the ones who break the bread, the body of Christ—those

young men up on the stand thus represent all of us, sinners in need of grace every one. But we are also the ones who give—who pass to each other as Christ did the bread of life—who create the corporate body of Christ by partaking of its grace, and helping others eat of it as well.

Notes

1. Gregory Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

Holy, Holy, Holy

Kristine Haglund

We speak so often of "taking" the sacrament and too rarely of receiving it. Our discussions revolve around what we should do, what we should wear, what we should sing, when we should arrive at church, how we should quiet our children so that we can be certain to constrain the Lord's Spirit to be with us. It's a little silly, really, to imagine that we're in charge, that a member of the Godhead might be put off by the shade of our shirts or the happy prattle of our children. I've always loved what Annie Dillard had to say about such delusions:

> On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of the conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake some day and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.[1]

Yesterday was a day I needed to be lashed to the pew. I was visiting my brother's ward for the naming and blessing of a sweet

young men up on the stand thus represent all of us, sinners in need of grace every one. But we are also the ones who give—who pass to each other as Christ did the bread of life—who create the corporate body of Christ by partaking of its grace, and helping others eat of it as well.

Notes

1. Gregory Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Continuum, 2005).

Holy, Holy, Holy

Kristine Haglund

We speak so often of "taking" the sacrament and too rarely of receiving it. Our discussions revolve around what we should do, what we should wear, what we should sing, when we should arrive at church, how we should quiet our children so that we can be certain to constrain the Lord's Spirit to be with us. It's a little silly, really, to imagine that we're in charge, that a member of the Godhead might be put off by the shade of our shirts or the happy prattle of our children. I've always loved what Annie Dillard had to say about such delusions:

> On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of the conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake some day and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.[1]

Yesterday was a day I needed to be lashed to the pew. I was visiting my brother's ward for the naming and blessing of a sweet

new nephew. My brother's ward is a funny pie-sliced wedge of city and suburbs, a sometimes awkward mix of suburban apartment-dwelling graduate students and inner city residents, mostly poor, mostly immigrants, many from Liberia. Most of the members are new(ish) converts, and many of the men are therefore adult Aaronic Priesthood holders. And yesterday, several of them helped with the administration of the sacrament for the first time. Or, better, yesterday they ministered to us—to me—in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The first prayer was in beautifully African-accented English. I lost track of how many times it started; I only know it was enough for me to hear and feel every word."O God, dee Eternal Fader"—the repeated invocation more earnest each time. And when all the words (or nearly all, at least—in the end, we all shared a single soul, because the plural "s" just would not come out) were perfectly pronounced, there were no twelve-year-old deacons lining up in white shirts; in fact there was no lining up at all, just a bewildered clustering around the sacrament table, a lot of whispered instructions, and a few young men leading their elders by the hand to show them which way to go, or, in one case, to steady an older brother who walked with some trouble.

There wasn't a lot of quiet prayer or pondering among the members of the congregation, either. We were all nervous to see what would happen; maybe a few people were scandalized by the hint of chaos. I was mostly scrounging around for tissues for my leaky eyes. After a few minutes, there was a motley parade back up to the table—servants of God in parkas, kente cloth, a bright orange sweater, and a necktie or two. Another blessing, another confused outpouring of grace, and it was finished. The cloth folded, our brothers returned to sit among us in the pews, as though they had not just been transfigured, as though they had not been—a moment ago—holy vessels of God's surpassing love.

I used to think that people were all mostly alike, that if we learned the same things, and especially if we belonged to the same church, we'd eventually understand each other well enough to get along, to feel something at least vaguely warm and fuzzy for one another, and that we'd become unified by being more like each other (by which I meant, of course, that everyone would come around to my way of thinking). I thought we could make

ourselves into brothers and sisters by force of will (mostly mine). To my shame, I believed that I mostly knew how things should be done. I knew what a well-planned, elegantly executed sacrament service was and assumed that it was the goal of all congregations. I thought that loving my fellow Saints, especially newborn ones, mostly meant helping them know how to do things the "right" way. Once we had mastered the basics of reverence, I thought, we might touch the hem of God's garment, might get a staid taste of mercy.

It is not like that at all. Not at all. I have nothing to teach, no help to offer. I am small and broken, and it turns out that I know nothing of love. Yet holiness rains down in wild, pelting torrents, without warning or reason, though we don't expect or deserve it. Because we don't deserve it. The mercy seat is right there, in front of us, the table groaning under the weight of Christ's broken body, His love poured out like water, laughing at those tiny cups as it floods the room to cleanse and heal and refresh, to hold us all in the womb of grace, until we are reborn as true brothers and sisters.

Note

1. Annie Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 52.

CONTRIBUTORS

SCOTT ABBOTT {scott.abbott@uvu.edu} is Professor of Philosophy and Humanities at Utah Valley University, where he directs the Program in Integrated Studies. He is working currently on two books: "Barbed and Dangerous: Constructing the Meaning of Barbed Wire" (with Lyn Bennett) and "On Standing: *Homo Erectus* in the Culture of *Homo Sapiens*."

MATTHEW BOWMAN {matthewbbowman@gmail.com} earned his Ph.D. in American history at Georgetown University. He is a member of the Arlington First Ward in Arlington, Virginia, and delivered this sermon on January 31, 2009.

RICHARD LYMAN BUSHMAN {rlb7@columbia.edu} is emeritus professor of history at Columbia University, the former holder of the Howard W. Hunter Chair in Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University, and the author of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

SCOTT D. DAVIS {scott.davis@yale.edu} is a graduate of Yale Divinity School (March 2011) and is now a Ph.D. student in the history of ancient Christianity at Yale University. Scott is from Logan, Utah, where he completed a B.A. in history at Utah State University. He published an earlier version of this essay on his blog Tea with Tumnus {http://njirving.blogspot.com}, February 14, 2011, and presented it at "Faith and Knowledge: Intellectual Prospects for Mormonism," held at Duke University on February 12, 2011.

DEJA EARLEY's {deja.earley@gmail.com} poems and essays have previously appeared or are forthcoming in national journals like *Arts and Letters, Borderlands*, and *Lilliput Review*. She has received honors in several writing contests, including the 2008 Joan Johnson Award in poetry, the 2004–2005 Parley A. and Ruth J. Christensen Award, and an Honorable Mention from the Academy of American Poets in both 2003 and 2004. She completed a Ph.D. in English and creative writing at the University of Southern Mississippi and moved to the Boston area, where she works as a development editor at Bedford/St. Martin's Press. She blogs at dejavuearley.blogspot.com.

KRISTINE HAGLUND {editor@dialoguejournal.com} is editor

of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. She also blogs at bycommonconsent.com, where a version of this essay was published December 27, 2010. She lives in Belmont, Massachusetts, with her three children, and serves as choir director and ward missionary in her congregation.

HEATHER HARDY {hardy.heather@yahoo.com} earned an MBA from Brigham Young University and worked for several years in university administration at Yale and BYU before leaving the workforce to raise children and pursue a life of learning. She resides with her husband, Grant Hardy, in Asheville, North Carolina, where she currently serves as the ward nursery leader.

MICHAEL D. K. ING {ing@fas.harvard.edu} holds a B.A. from Brigham Young University and a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Harvard University where he studies Confucianism. Michael presented this paper at "Faith and Knowledge: Intellectual Prospects for Mormonism," held at Duke University on February 12, 2011.

ANNA KOHLER LEWIS {anna.c.lewis@gmail.com} lives in Columbus, Georgia, with her husband, Chris, and their daughters, Sophie and Mary. Her poem "Dishes" inspired her play *WWJD*, which was performed in Utah in April of 2011. New Play Project is producing the play as an independent film in August of 2011.

WILLIAM P. MACKINNON {MacKBP@msn.com} is an independent historian residing in Montecito, Santa Barbara County, California. He is a Fellow and Honorary Life Member of the Utah State Historical Society and, during 2010–11 was president of the Mormon History Association. Since 1987, MacKinnon has been a frequent contributor to *Dialogue* through articles, essays, and book reviews. He is now completing the second volume of his documentary history of the Utah War, *At Sword's Point*, for the University of Oklahoma Press's Arthur H. Clark imprint. During 1962–68 MacKinnon served in squadrons of the U.S. Air Force and New York Air National Guard, a distant cousin, if not collateral descendant, of Illinois's Nauvoo Legion.

SUSANNA MORRILL {smorrill@lclark.edu} is an associate pro-

fessor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. She is the author of *White Roses on the Floor of Heaven: Nature and Flower Imagery in Latter-day Saints Women's Literature, 1880–1920* (New York: Routledge, 2006). Her research interests include Mormon women, the Mother in Heaven concept, and popular religion in America.

MATTHEW THOMAS NAGEL {mtn.nagel@gmail.com} lives with his wife, Sara Jane, and four young boys in Oakley, Utah. He teaches English, ethics, journalism and debate at the high school in Park City. Matthew studied literature at the University of Utah (B.A., 2000) and theology at the Vanderbilt Divinity School (M.T.S., 2003). He spent his childhood in Denver, his youth in New Orleans, and his mission in Brazil. He is currently serving as the Young Men's president in Oakley First Ward.

JAMES C. OLSEN {jamescolsen@gmail.com} and his wife, Erin Fairlight Olsen, recently moved with their four children to Doha, Qatar, where he is working to finish his dissertation and complete a Ph.D. in philosophy from Georgetown University. After serving in the Missouri St. Louis Mission, James completed an undergraduate degree in philosophy from Brigham Young University and a Master of Arts in international affairs from George Washington University. His article was modified from a paper delivered at the conference "Faith and Knowledge: Intellectual Prospects for Mormonism," February 12, 2011, at Duke University.

GREGORY A. PRINCE {gprince@erols.com} is a member of *Dialogue*'s board of editors.

ROBERT A. REES {brees@heartmath.org} teaches Mormon studies at Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. He is the editor of *Why I Stay: The Challenges of Discipleship for Contemporary Mormons*, forthcoming from Signature Books.

KAREN ROSENBAUM {readerwriter@mac.com}, a former fiction editor for *Dialogue*, lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, where she writes short stories and personal essays.

JOSEPH M. SPENCER {stokiejoe@gmail.com} is a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, studying contemporary French thought. He is the author of *An Other Testament: On*

Typology (Salem, Ore.: Salt Press, forthcoming 2011) and has published articles in *Dialogue*, *Element*, *Journal of Mormon History*, and *BYU Studies*. He currently serves on the executive board of the Mormon Theology Seminar {http://mormontheologyseminar.org}. He and his wife, Karen Spencer, have four children.

ANITA TANNER {anitatanner6@gmail.com}was raised in Wyoming and has resided in Utah and Colorado. She now lives in Boise, Idaho, where she reads, writes, and tends her yard and garden. She is the mother of six and the grandmother of seventeen. Adjusting to the loss of her husband from cancer is her most challenging endeavor.

KRIS WRIGHT {kristine.l.wright@gmail.com} lives, writes, and bakes bread near Guelph, Ontario, Canada, with her husband and five children. She is an independent scholar who has co-authored several articles on Mormon healing rituals with Jonathan A. Stapley, most recently, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Winter 2011): 1–85. She is also a regular contributor at the Juvenile Instructor, a Mormon history blog.