

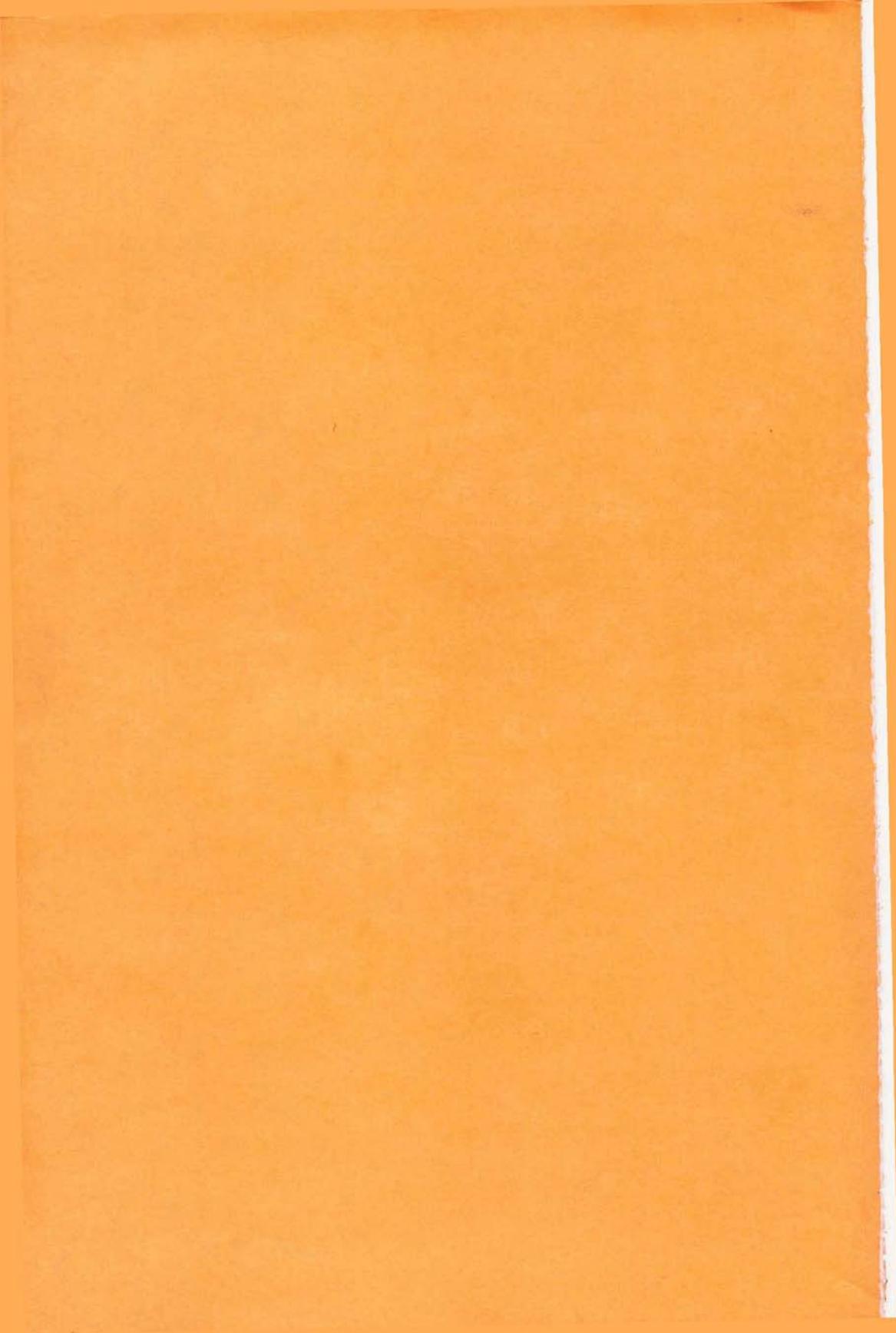
WINTER 1975

SUNSTONE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES AND ART



IN THIS ISSUE: ART GLASS WINDOWS IN MORMON ARCHITECTURE
DIVINIZATION: THE FORGOTTEN TEACHING OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
MORMON CHESS/FIRES OF THE MIND/FACING SPIRITUAL REALITY
REVIEW OF ERICKSEN'S *MORMON GROUP LIFE*



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MORMON EXPERIENCE,
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Letters



Enclosed you will find a check to cover calendar and subscription for one year. I am working on a thesis on LDS religion at the University of Oslo, and although I have good relation to the Church in Norway, (without being a Church member myself), I do miss contacts with the more intellectual Mormon circles in the States. Not that I want to say anything bad about Church members here — they are all very nice people — but the situation they live in, as a tiny, little-understood minority, demands that they develop narrowness of mind more than openness, to defend their position. Hoping to have a good magazine.

Tormond Ropeid
Oslo, Norway

The news that a new Mormon-based journal for young people is to be published is good news indeed. Hopefully this new forum will encourage articles from students who have never written for publication before. Any incentive that will help more Mormons to think clearly and put their thoughts down on paper will be a benefit to our society.

Best wishes to the editors as they take on the arduous responsibilities of publication. May they have strength to maintain their standards, energy to keep the journal lively, subscribers to fill their coffers, and luck to meet their deadlines.

Claudia L. Bushman
Belmont, Massachusetts

I am going to give *Sunstone* a try. I really

wonder, however, if there is an audience for another publication of this type. I have been a subscriber to *Dialogue* since its beginning and am aware of the struggle it has to remain in print. It would seem wise if you were to join forces. If not now, "down the road a piece." I am not in a position to make a contribution in addition to the regular subscription and I debated for some time whether to send this in. *BYU Studies* is a similar type publication. I'm asked to subscribe to the new publication of the Mormon History Association.

While I enjoy having these additional writings, they are not a substitute for the regular magazines of the Church and anyone who subscribes to them in lieu of the regular magazines, the *Ensign*, the *New Era*, the *Friend*, and the *Church News*, is making a mistake. Nevertheless, success to you.

Glenn Schwendiman
Freeport, Illinois

I too believe in the great potential of young Saints everywhere. It will be interesting to see if *Sunstone* genuinely helps these young people to grow and mature, or if it becomes instead an instrument for keeping them in perpetual adolescence. Having been involved in the "Student Movement" of my own college years, I saw the potential hazards which can accompany any undertaking that tends to institutionalize the student condition. If I have any words of advice for your fledgling enterprise, it would be to caution you against the "perennial sophomore," who is learning not for the

future, or even for learning's own sake, but rather to avoid facing life outside of the university. I have one young man particularly in mind, who was a "wheel" of sorts when I entered the university as a freshman and was still trying to remain such after I left some six years later. As far as I know, he is still on Campus — though the very idea is absurd. If he is, I'm sure he will submit a manuscript.

Robert F. Bennett
Woodland Hills, California

It was a great thrill for me to learn of your plans to publish an independent journal of arts and letters for young Latter-day Saints. I have been dreaming, praying, and working hard to formulate and bring about the proper goals of such a publication for twenty years. When I helped found *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* ten years ago, a major purpose was to provide a place for Mormons in their late teens and early twenties, those who face special problems in developing their faith — as a result of the new challenges of academic or military or work experience as well as their natural intellectual development — to express themselves and hear from others who had passed or were passing through the same opportunities and trials. *Dialogue's* other purposes have kept it from doing this as well as I had hoped and there is certainly room — and need — for a publication such as yours, though I hope your readers will take advantage of *Dialogue's* special rate for students and continue to treat themselves to the fine writing about the Restored Church that is published there.

Perhaps I could venture one suggestion, the fruit of that twenty years of personal struggle. You are taking hold of sacred things when you presume to publish — to give them indelible and widespread existence — ideas and expressions about what is in fact the Kingdom of the Lord, and you are venturing out on extremely risky ground when you presume to do that

without the direct guidance of the Lord's Priesthood leaders. I believe it is worth the risk, because there are important things you can do with an open forum to build the Kingdom (not better, but *other* things) that the Church's official publications cannot do. That's of course why the Lord told us to be anxiously engaged in the work and do many things of our own free will, because "the power is in [us]." But my suggestion is that you remember in all you do that it *is* the Lord's work, that to succeed in any meaningful sense you must have his help and must seek it in prayer as you work alone and together and must take that help when it comes — even when it comes in the form of inspiration from him or counsel from his servant that requires you to put your loyalty to his work of saving souls above everything, above your own prestige and ambitions, your academic standards and esthetic values, even the journal's very existence, if it comes to that. Such painful choices will be very few, I believe, fewer than we faced with *Dialogue's* pioneering effort, but if you are not prepared to make them, even better perhaps than we did, you will not succeed — and you *should* not.

Those of us in the Church who need and value such things as *Sunstone* — because of our nature, our special intellectual gifts the Lord has given us to complement the equally valuable gifts he has given others in the Kingdom — tend to value highly and quote often the last part of the thirteenth Article of Faith: "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." We need to remind ourselves that there are twelve and a half Articles of Faith which precede that stirring capstone declaration, and unless we are struggling to understand and live by all of those others (for instance, "We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation . . .") we have no right to adopt that motto for our intellectual and artistic endeavors — and little good will come of those efforts.

Eugene England
Kaysville, Utah

Editorial



Scott Kenney

Scott Kenney is a Ph.D. student in American religious history at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. He served a New England mission and completed a master's degree in musicology at the University of Utah while playing five seasons with the Utah Symphony.

Shortly after the camp of Israel had left the wilderness of Sinai, the Lord commanded Moses to select seventy elders to preside over the people. After a month's preparation, the seventy gathered about the tabernacle, where the Spirit of the Lord descended upon them, "and they prophesied."

But there were two other men on whom the Spirit also rested, who were not at the tabernacle, were not of the seventy — and they prophesied as well. When Joshua heard this, he said, "My Lord Moses, forbid them."

"And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"¹

In modern Israel the prophetic spirit is renewed among the people — "to every man is given a gift . . . that all may be profited thereby." Latter-day Saints are enjoined to "teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom," with the promise that "my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly . . . in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God."²

In teaching the things of the kingdom,

young people play an increasingly important role, for it is by the light of their vision that the future of Mormonism gradually emerges. *Sunstone* is a forum for the participation of Latter-day Saint youth in the intellectual and spiritual life of our times. It is for Latter-day Saints who treasure their religious heritage and labor faithfully for its future.

In 1906 Elder B.H. Roberts of the First Council of Seventy declared that the "crying need" of Mormonism is,

"For thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of its truths, but will develop its truths; and enlarge it by that development. 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 the germ-truths of the great dispensation of the fulness 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 'Morminism', 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;

¹Numbers 11:10-29.

²Doctrine and Covenants 46:11, 12.

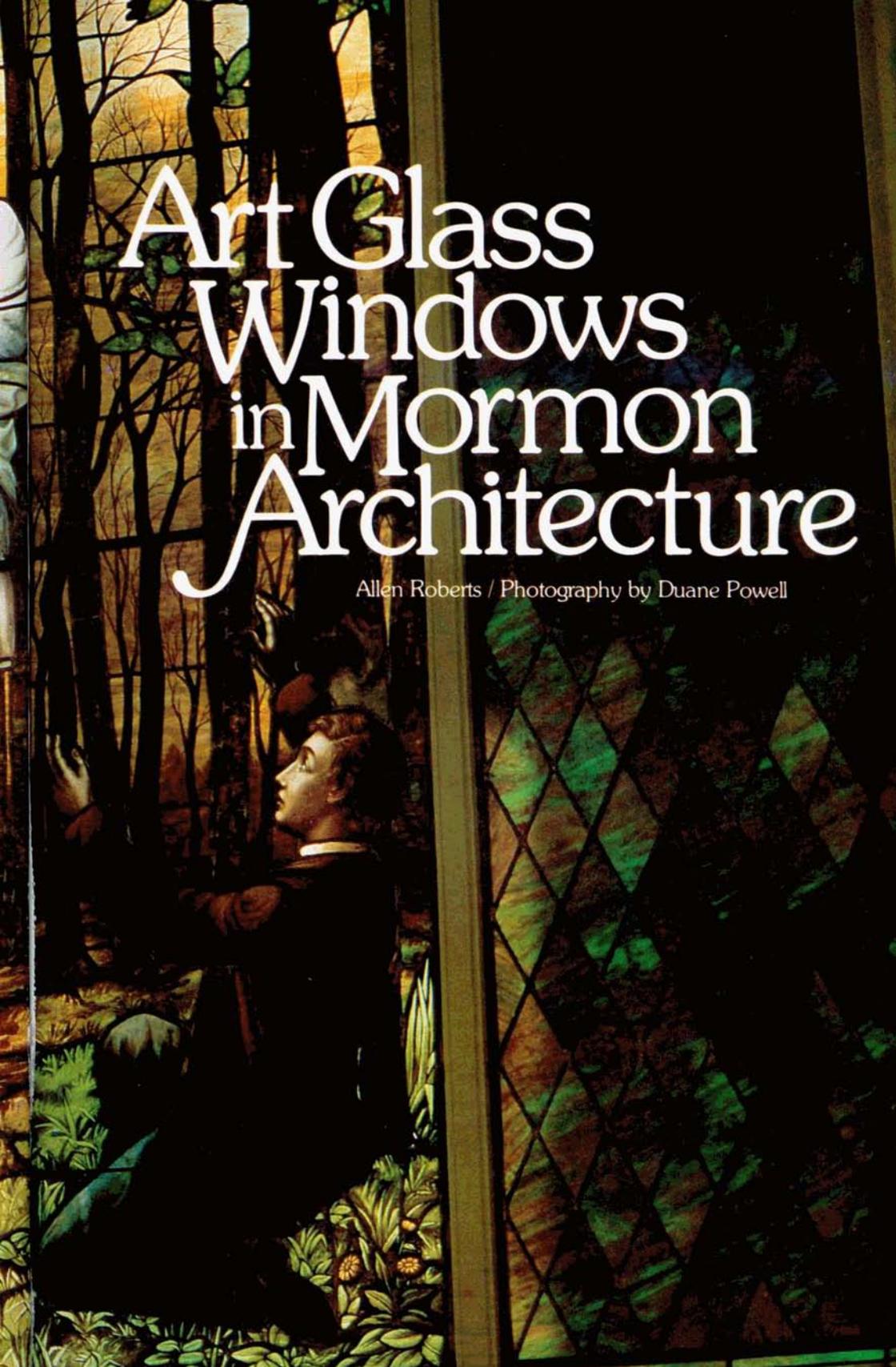
and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas; cooperating in the works of the spirit, until they help to give to the truths received a more forceful expression, and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of its development."³

May *Sunstone* attract the best efforts of young Latter-day Saints who, true to the

faith that their fathers have cherished, will raise the questions, pursue the discussions, and bear the witness worthy of a living faith that is both intellectually vigorous and spiritually discerning. For above all, *Sunstone* is an expression of faith in the commitment, insight and integrity of youth — and the working of God among them.

³*Improvement Era*, Volume 9:712-713.





Art Glass Windows in Mormon Architecture

Allen Roberts / Photography by Duane Powell

Art Glass Windows in Mormon Architecture

Allen Roberts / Photography by Duane Powell

Allen D. Roberts is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and resided in California before settling in Utah. He received a B.A. degree in Art and Design from Brigham Young University in 1973 and is currently working on master's degrees in architecture and history at the University of Utah. After working in the architectural profession for five years, and compiling an extensive "Survey of L.D.S. Architecture, in Utah 1847-1930," Allen became the Architectural Historian for the State of Utah, which position he now holds. He is currently working on a preservation policy for historic buildings owned by the Church.

Duane Powell filled a mission to Texas, graduated from the University of Utah in graphic design, and is presently studying photography at the University of Illinois. He and his wife, Dianne, have one daughter, Sarah Jane.

Mormon architecture, unlike the architecture of longer established Catholic and Protestant churches, has never been characterized by the extensive use of art glass windows. The process of designing, painting and fabricating art glass windows is long and difficult and requires greater technical expertise than could have been developed before the coming of the railroad to Utah in 1869. Consequently, before art glass could be imported from the Eastern United States and Europe, no decorative windows were to be found in Mormon

meetinghouses and tabernacles. With the construction of a large number of spectacular Gothic-styled tabernacles and temples in the late 1870's, a need for art glass windows became apparent.

Initially, designs and general specifications for windows were sent abroad where the glass for scenes depicting the Savior, the First Vision or other gospel themes was cut, painted, fired in kilns (to fuse the paint to the glass), and returned in individual pieces to Utah by train where local glass workers would assemble mullioned frames and fabricate each intricate network of lead and glass. Sometimes even the designs were done by "gentle" artists or simply selected from catalogues — thus the presence of a few anemic and haloed depictions of Christ in some old Mormon meetinghouses.

One of the first art glass designers and fabricators in Utah was Wellington B. Stafford, who received expert art glass training in Canada. While working for John Bennett of Bennett's Paint and Glass (formerly Sears and Little), he trained Harry Kimball, who fabricated the beautiful First Vision windows in both the Salt Lake 17th (1907) and 2nd (1908) ward chapels. The glass was painted and fused in Wisconsin by the La Cross Glass Company. The prototype for these windows is found in one of the sealing rooms in the Salt Lake Temple. We have no record of who designed the exquisite First Vision window in the temple, but it may have been H.L.A. Culmer, a prominent late pioneer artist who, with his two brothers, operated a short-lived art supply store in the late 1880's. The Culmers specialized in importing and making art and stained glass, but were not sufficiently skilled to create the temple masterpiece which was made by the Tiffany Brothers in New York.

Among the old extant Mormon art glass windows is the bay window in the Millcreek Ward meetinghouse (1869-76). Not included in the building originally, the pastoral scene of the Savior was made in Indiana and sent to Salt Lake City where Bennett's assembled the window on site.

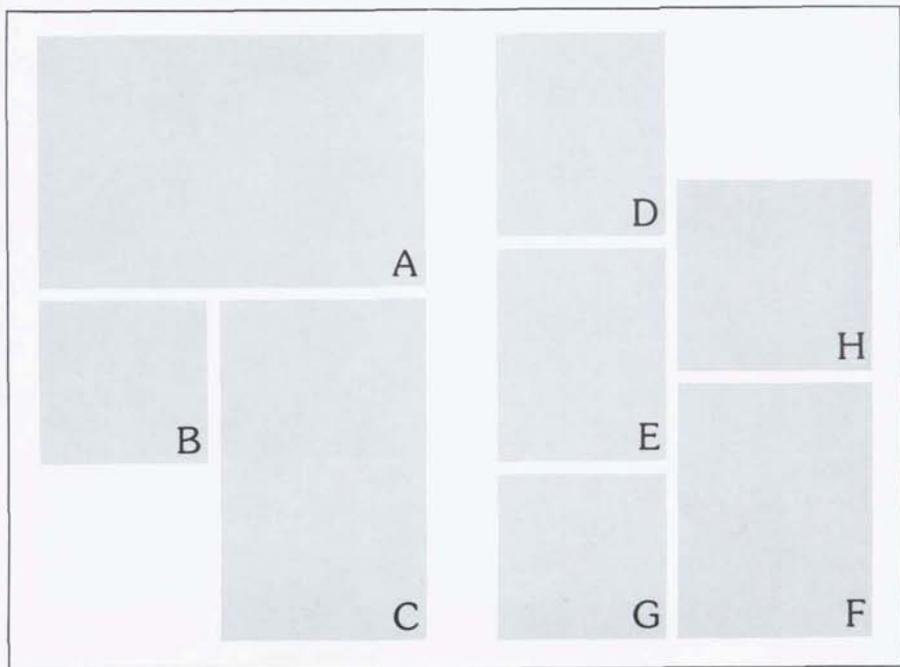


Diagram of pages 12 and 13

A Salt Lake 2nd Ward

Although very similar to the 17th Ward window, the 2nd Ward window is the most colorful and elaborate of the two. The two geometric side panels are replaced here by a continuation of the grove. This horizontal emphasis, together with the depiction of the Father and Son suspended only slightly above the ground, portray a more personal representation of the First Vision.

B Salt Lake 2nd Ward Detail**C Salt Lake 17th Ward**

Patterned after the First Vision window in the Salt Lake Temple, this 12 by 22 foot Gothic window was taken from the 1907 meetinghouse when it was razed, and included as the main design feature of the new chapel built in 1971. Bennett's provided all but the three central panels which were imported from out of state.

D Murray First Ward This

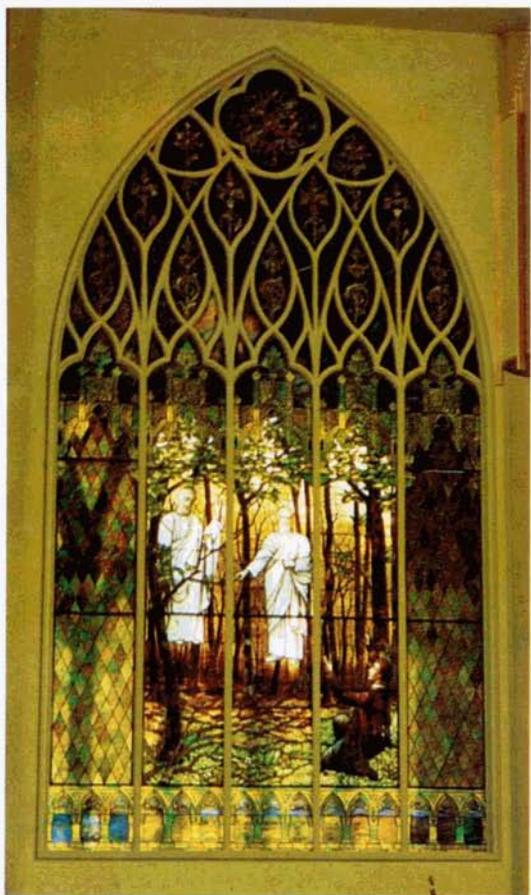
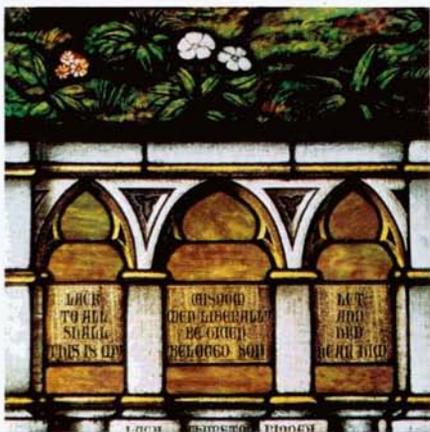
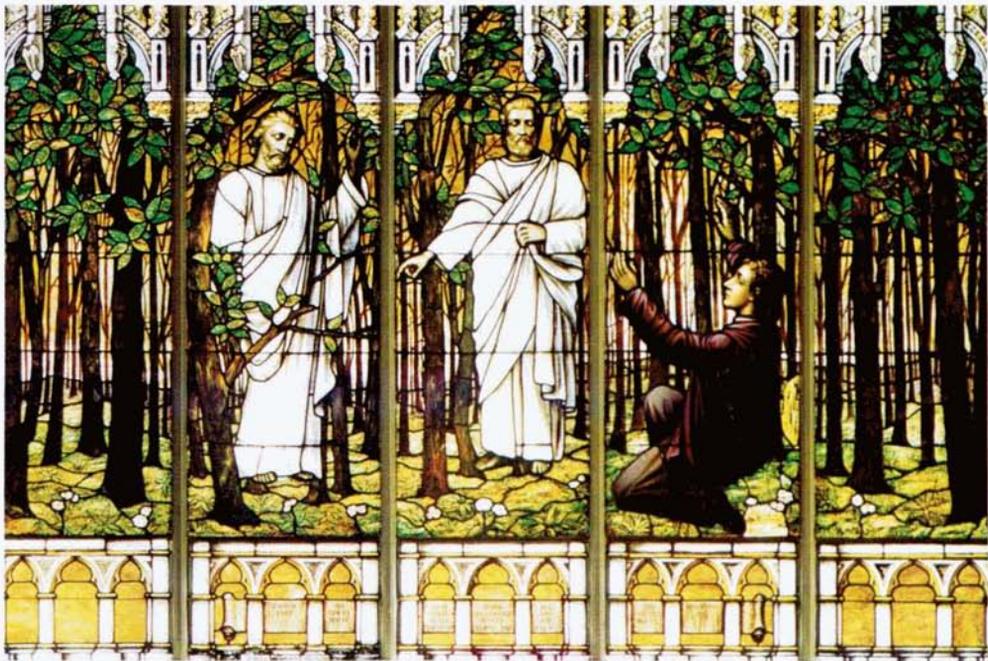
unusual window is quite Catholic or Protestant in character. The darkly pigmented and haloed Christ appears to be knocking on a heavy wooden door, perhaps a prison door — making allusion to an unidentified scriptural event.

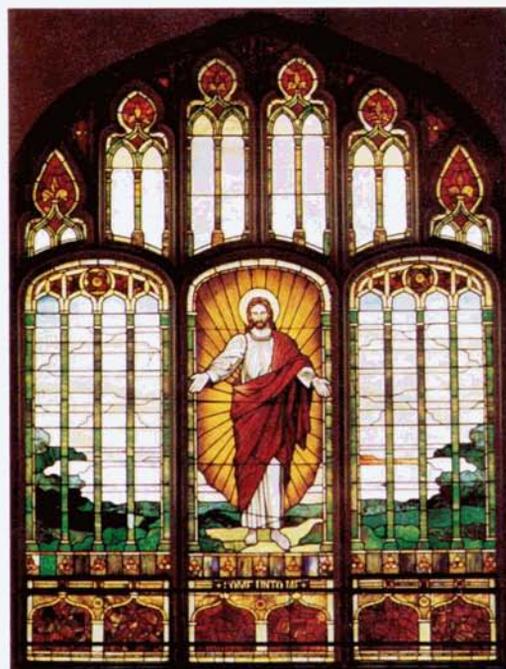
E Murray First Ward Detail**F Salt Lake 10th Ward**

Befitting the flamboyant neo-Gothic Revival architecture of the 1909 meetinghouse is this exquisite tudor-arched window depicting the Savior with a pleading gesture, "Come Unto Me." Both the design and the window itself were imported from Wisconsin and assembled by Harry Kimball and John Bennett of Salt Lake City on the site.

G Salt Lake 10th Ward Detail**H Salt Lake 10th Ward** Detail

Preceding pages: **Salt Lake 17th Ward** Detail







15 AD 11

Divinization:

The Forgotten Teaching of Early Christianity

Keith Norman

Keith Norman of Lehi and Salt Lake City, fulfilled a mission to New England, graduated from BYU and was a member of the Tabernacle Choir. In 1973 he completed an M.T.S. in early Christian history at Harvard Divinity School. Keith is presently studying languages at BYU.

One of the most neglected subjects in the history of early Christian doctrinal development is the widely-held view of salvation or the ultimate destiny of man which is designated by scholars as "Theosis" or "Divinization." This concept, espoused mainly from the second through the fifth centuries after Christ, described the resurrected physical body as being deified as well as immortalized, so that the redeemed and sanctified Christian is

glorified with Christ and himself attains godhood.

This belief, which receives its fullest treatment in such orthodox fathers as Irenaeus and Athanasius, is not a popular one with professing Christian historians today. Whether their disregard is due to embarrassment or the inability to understand such a "heresy," those scholars conditioned by theological training to think of God as "wholly other" than man tend to dismiss such talk of the deification of man as a curious aberration, not worthy of serious consideration, or at least to tone it down enough so that it escapes notice¹. Nevertheless, the roots of this doctrine are in the teachings of Christ and his Apostles as recorded in the New Testament.

More than once pious Jews tried to stone Jesus when he hinted of his own divinity

¹ One notable exception is the excellent survey of early Christian doctrinal development, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* by Jaroslav Pelikan (Chicago:

1971). I am indebted to this work for several of the primary quotations in this paper.

(John 8:58-59; 10:30-31), and Jesus defended this "blasphemy" on the second occasion by quoting Psalms 82-6: "Is it not written in your law, I said Ye are gods?" (John 10:34). This saying he describes as "The word of God," and furthermore "the scripture cannot be broken" (vs. 35). Jesus made no concessions to "human nature" in his expectation of his disciples, and his central statement in the Sermon on the Mount remains the supreme challenge to mankind: "Be ye therefore perfect; *even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.*" (Matt. 5:48, emphasis added). Likewise the vision which Jesus sees of the destiny of his faithful followers in his lofty prayer in John 17 knows no bounds: the Savior has given them the glory of God with which he was endowed, and they will be one, even as Christ and his Father are one, "that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:11, 19-24). Jesus' aim was to share fully with his brethren all that he had been given.

The theme of the saints as the children of God and their consequent divine inheritance is a common one among the New Testament authors, and closely parallels the thought of John 17. As Paul wrote, ". . . we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; . . . that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:15-17). What we endure now is nothing when we consider "the glory which shall be revealed in us" (vs. 18), which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man . . ." (I Cor. 2:9). Our eternal inheritance as the sons and daughters of God is beyond what anyone has imagined.

Both Paul and James allude to the creation of man in the image and likeness of God (I Cor. 11:7; James 3:9), and I John 3:2 assures us that when God appears to us, his sons, "we shall be like him . . ." This theme could be developed at length, but in these few citations alone sufficient material exists to construct a full-fledged doctrine of the ultimate divinization of mankind, and this is exactly what the fathers did.

Although the first clear formulation which has come down to us via the Catholic Church of the theosis view of salvation dates near the end of the second century, the fact that it appears almost simultaneously in writers as far apart as Irenaeus of Lyons and Clement of Alexandria indicates an earlier tradition from which they drew. The explanation of the lacuna in early second century church is largely to be found in gnosticism, as will be seen below, but the assertions of these subsequent Church Fathers is strikingly direct.

Irenaeus' writings (c. 177-202) are filled with references to the uniting of man to God, man's participation of God, reaching unto God, and the partaking of His splendor. (*Against the Heretics* III. 18.7, IV.20.5-6). "And how shall man pass into God," he asks, "If God [Christ] had not been caused to pass into man?" (IV.33.4). He saw our divinely ordained progression from men to gods (IV.38.4); in order to perfect us "to be what He is," Jesus Christ our Lord came to earth (V. preface).

This theme was echoed in the works of Clement of Alexandria (c. 190-215) when he wrote " . . . the Logos [Word] of God had become man so that you might learn from a man how a man may become God." (*Exhortation to the Greeks* 1.8.4). Clement stressed the importance of possessing the "true knowledge" of the soul's origin, purpose and destiny, and thus "the soul [which is kept pure], receiving the Lord's power, studies to become a god." (*Stromata* VI. 14). Origen, who was active at Alexandria immediately following Clement (c. 215-254), defined salvation as the attainment of the gift of divinity: those who fully followed Christ would be made divine (*De Oratone* 27.13). "Many become gods by participation in God; we should flee with all our power from being men and make haste to become gods." (*On the Gospel of John* 11.3,19, cf. 20.29).

The theological basis for man's deification was the belief that God, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, had united the

human and divine natures of realms, and thus made it possible for us to bridge the gap in the opposite direction. As Origen put it,

... from Him there began the union of the divine with the human nature, in order that the human, by communion with the divine, might rise to be divine, not in Jesus alone, but in all those who not only believe, but enter upon the life which Jesus taught . . . (*Against Celsus* III.28).

Although such staunch defenders of the faith as Apollinaris of Laodicea (d. 390), Cyril of Alexandria (Bp. 412-444) and Leo the Great (Bp. of Rome 440-461) all subscribed to this view of salvation, it was Athanasius (295-373), the hero of Nicaea, who was the principle exponent of the tradition "that God the Logos had become man in order that man might become God." (Pelikan, p. 206) Of all the Church Fathers, Athanasius justified his stand most consistently by the appeal to Scripture. In discoursing on I Peter 1:4's statement on the "great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature," Athanasius states bluntly, "He was made man that we might be made God." (*On the Incarnation of the Word* 65. Cf. *Oration Against the Arians* I.11.38-39, II, 19.47, and throughout his writings.) In fact his tireless defense of Christ's full divinity was to safeguard his conception of the Savior's work to bestow godhood upon men, "for man had not been deified . . . unless the Son were very God." (*Oration Against the Arians* II.21.70.) Following Athanasius in this were the Cappadocians, and Basil of Caesaria (c. 330-379) who taught that the Holy Spirit aids us in "being made like to God — and highest of all, being made God." (*On the Holy Spirit* IX.23.) Likewise Gregory of Nazianus (c. 329-389) repeated the dictum of faith that "I may become God to the same extent as

He became man." (*Orations* XXIX.19).

Another strong tradition in the early church, which often claimed to be safeguarding the secret knowledge imparted by the resurrected Jesus to his worthy disciples, was that of gnosticism — the principle rival of the "orthodox"² church in the second century. According to the analysis of Hans Jonas in *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1958), the ultimate goal of gnosis (knowledge) is Godhood: the reception of gnosis by the soul "transforms the knower himself by making him a partaker in the divine existence (which means more than assimilating him to the divine essence)" (p. 35). The content of gnosis primarily concerned the identity and origin of man's soul, and the means of returning to its home or attaining its intended destiny — the ascent back to the divine realm past the guardians or obstacles (personified as aeons) by means of ritual tokens or passwords. The culmination of man's ascent after death is to become a Power himself, to "enter the Godhead. This is the good end of those who have attained Gnosis: to become God." (Quoted in Jonas, p. 153). In fact one of the major secrets of several Gnostic systems was the identification of man and God before the cosmos was formed, and this was especially the focus of the archetypal Primal Man (corresponding to Adam), with some sects maintaining that the highest godhead himself is "Man" (Jonas, p. 217).

It is enlightening to note that the pioneer in studying and criticizing the Gnostic "heresies," the champion of orthodoxy — Irenaeus — was also the latter's first explicit advocate of Divinization. Thus the doctrine can hardly be seen as a Gnostic heresy — the argument was really over *how or by what authority* the Christian might attain godhood. Nevertheless it may be that the gnostic insistence on Divinization

² Many scholars today dispute the proto-Catholic church's claim to be the successor to the Apostolic Church, since there were several sects contending this claim before the adoption of the Roman Church as the

state religion by Constantine. See esp. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1971).

as part of their secret knowledge prompted Irenaeus to bring out into the open or explain the Church's version of theosis, since one of his axioms was that there was no "secret apostolic tradition"; it was all out in the open. An intermediate position can be seen in the *Clementine Recognitions* (3rd or 4th C.), which holds to a higher knowledge reserved for only the most worthy Christians, but claims full allegiance to Catholic orthodoxy. In a fictional dialogue between Peter and Clement of Rome, the Apostle cautions that the complete destiny of man is beyond description, but he is pressed further:

"You compel me, O Clement, to touch upon things that are unspeakable." (I. 51-52). Later he explains how angels or prophets are called gods because of the authority they receive from God: "holy men are made gods to the wicked." (II.42) Such esoteric teachings as pre-existence, baptism for the dead and divinization are alluded to or hinted at throughout the *Recognitions*, but they

are too sacred to be discussed openly. The writing and its companion piece *Clementine Homilies* enjoyed wide popularity among Christians until the Medieval Church began to close ranks on heterodox threats to its authority.

Eventually the concept of Divinization was absorbed into the mystical tradition of the Church, after Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (who was assumed to be the genuine companion of Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34) elaborated in the beginning of the sixth century on theosis as the mystical "assimilation to God and union with him." (*Celestial Hierarchy* III.2) Deification



became the goal of the true mystic who practiced the three steps of purification, illumination, union, as suggested by Neoplatonism (Pelikan, p. 344f.). Although mainstream Christianity had largely appropriated the transcendent, infinite and incomprehensible God of Neoplatonism, it came to reject the Platonic anthropology, which perceived man as basically immortal spiritual substance — the stuff of godhood. (See Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* New Haven, 1941, p. 56.) In fact the principal reason the doctrine of Divinization could not survive in the church's theology proper was that it con-

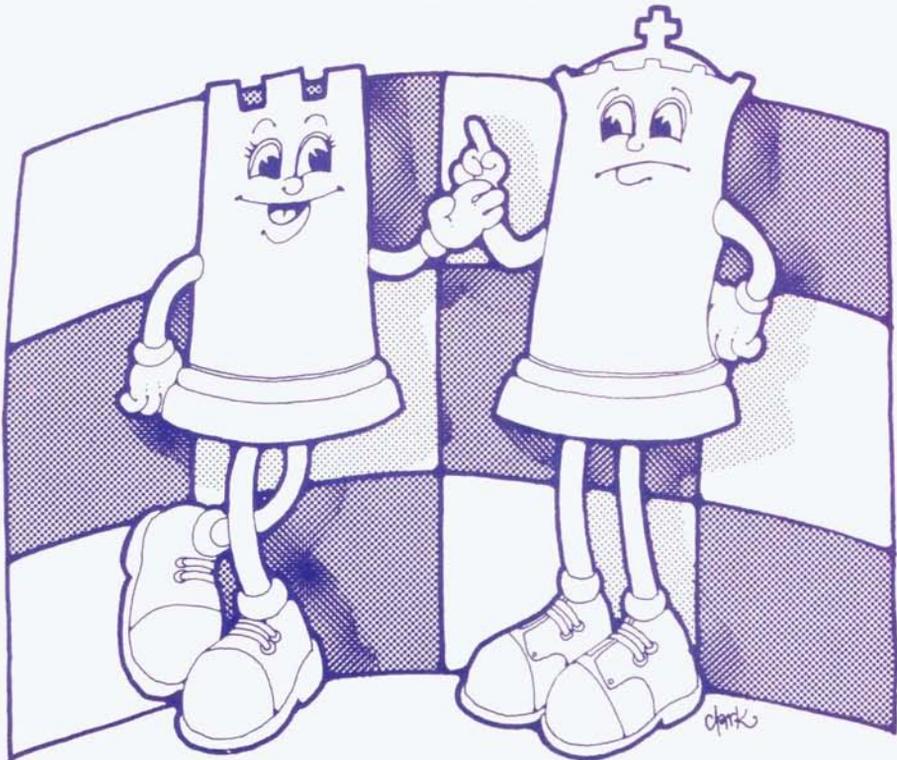
flicted with the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* to which most "orthodox" Christians adhered by the middle of the third century. Mankind, being in the category of finite "creatures," could by the Creator's grace enjoy His presence, but never really partake of his divinity. Theodore of Mop-sueta (d.428) criticized soteriological assumptions of Athanasius when he stressed Christ was fulfilling humanity in

Jesus rather than divinizing it. Theodore's reconstruction of the notion of redemption, by reconciling the doctrines of salvation and creation, was decisive for ensuing theological discussions, and today defenders of orthodoxy cringe at the full implications of Paul's hope for the saints to come "unto the measure of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13)

Although Joseph Smith's disclosure of the secret of godhood in the King Follet Discourse, expressed in Lorenzo Snow's couplet, "As man is God once was; as God is man may become," is to most sectarians today perhaps the most objectionable

teaching of Mormonism, it is profoundly similar to the dictum of the Church fathers, summarized in the phrase, "God became man that man might become God." Equally intriguing is the affinity of Mormon doctrine with certain aspects of gnosticism, as it traced the journey of the soul from its divine origin in the pre-

existence through an earthly veil to forgetfulness, the revelation of saving knowledge, and the ascent to divinity. This is indeed a rare opportunity for LDS scholars to probe and elucidate this heretofore sadly ignored aspect of the history of Christian thought.



MORMON CHESS

Kris Cassity / Illustrations by Stefanie Clark

Kris Cassity of Anchorage, Alaska, has a diverse background of experience and achievements. Of special note is the fact that he won a posture contest in third grade and was voted Webelos of the week at the age of eleven. Kris is pursuing his fourth year of undergraduate studies in English, French, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, and General Studies at BYU. He has served a mission in France and Switzerland, and is a Presidential Scholar.

Often new converts or Mormons who have had little association with other Mormons experience some frustration upon moving into a dominantly Mormon society. This frustration is generally unanticipated, and Mormonologists maintain that it is the result of an often misunderstood game called Mormon chess. This game is played frequently among Mormons and is similar to the traditional game of chess, but it has the distinct advantage that it can be played verbally without chess figures or a playing board. An explanation of the fundamentals of Mormon chess should be very useful to those who are unfamiliar with this

game and should be a definite playing asset to those who find themselves frequently defeated and frustrated.

The game is played when two individuals have opposing opinions on the same subject, or opinions which appear to be opposing. The object of the game is for each player to attack the opinion of his opponent and thus make his own opinion appear dominant. When either player's opinion is successfully discredited, the game ends.

To achieve the goal of discrediting the opponent's opinion, each player has a set of verbal strategies, known as "chessmen," that he can use either to defend his own opinion or to attack the opinion of his opponent. Each of these chessmen has different characteristics and can be directed to attack or defend in given patterns. The mark of a skilled player is his ability to make full use of all his strategies.

The first rank of chessmen, which are called "pawns," have limited mobility and limited force. The pawn stratagem is constructed by adding one of the following statements to a statement that supports a given player's point of view:
 My (A. Sunday School teacher B. Seminary teacher C. religion instructor D. Bishop E. Stake President) said that. . . . Pawns are easily overcome by more sophisticated stratagem, but they are often useful in confusing the issues enough to work to a player's advantage. For example, when confronted by an opposing opinion, a player may say, "My seminary teacher said that was false." Quite obviously, this will divert the discussion to a consideration of the merits of seminary teachers, and thus avoid the main issues.

The second rank of Mormon chess strategies, the "castles," is a more powerful rank than the pawns, but castles are much more limited in number to pawns, for they are harder to

formulate. The castles are formed by making direct statements of logic that support a player's opinion. Castles are very useful, but they have a major weakness: they can only move straight forward in direct logical progressions, and are very vulnerable from the sides.

A castle can be easily upset with an indirect attack: for example, an assertion that such and such a logical statement is a "worldly philosophy." A skillful player will, of course, counter. He may attribute his line of logic to someone who was quoted in a General Conference and thus frustrate his opponent's attack. However, this type of maneuvering is cumbersome and illustrates the vulnerability of castles.



The third rank of chessmen is composed of the "knights." Knights are approximately equal in number and in force to castles, but they are much more evasive. A knight stratagem is formed by paraphrasing a scripture which includes a word or words that might be conceivably construed to relate to a given player's opinion. Knights have the advantage of changing direction in the middle of a move and thus avoiding capture. If, for example, a knight is attacked on the basis that the context of the scripture paraphrased does not support the

responsible player's opinion, that player may reinterpret his paraphrase or allude to other passages of scripture which have similar words and which might also be construed to relate to his position. A duel between knights, often referred to by its French name, "biblebash," is a most extraordinary phenomenon of Mormon chess. A biblebash may last almost indefinitely as each player jumps from scriptural interpretation to scriptural interpretation, never quite able to firmly entrap his opponent.

The fourth rank of players is called "bishops." Bishops are in many ways similar to knights except that they have a greater range of striking

distance. Bishops are constructed by adding, "A general authority said that . . ." to a statement which resembles a given player's opinion. It is not essential that a player remember who the general authority is, the context of his statement, or even the exact content of the statement. All these things might be helpful, but they can detract from a stratagem as well as enhance it. If, for example, a player says that Brigham Young was the General Authority who said such and such, his opponent may well counter with a different quote by Brigham Young which appears to support a different view.

The most versatile and most devastating of all the Mormon chessmen is the "queen." The queen move, sometimes called the "piousputdown," is made by asserting that the opposing player, his opinion, or his assertions are worldly, unorthodox, or anti-religious. Once again, the player need not show how this assertion is true; it is merely sufficient to assert it or to imply it. The queen is a particularly destructive figure because she can be made to attack in virtually any

direction. Opposing queens are thus generally obliged to be kept some distance apart since a confrontation of the two generally means a loss of both. A player who has forfeited his queen is usually at a definite disadvantage in Mormon chess.

The final and most essential chessman is the "king," or the opinion of each player. Kings can never be taken; they can only be put in checkmate. Checkmate occurs when an opinion is exposed to an attack for which the defending player can find no defense and is thus made to appear discredited.

When either player's opinion is in checkmate, the game ends.

With a basic understanding of these fundamentals, the novice player should be well prepared to play Mormon chess if he just remembers not to commit one grievous error: an experienced player accepts defeat unemotionally since he realizes that the next game may well find him the victor. To display anger or frustration in defeat will identify him as a novice.

Remain calm. Remember, this is only a game.



FIRES OF THE MIND

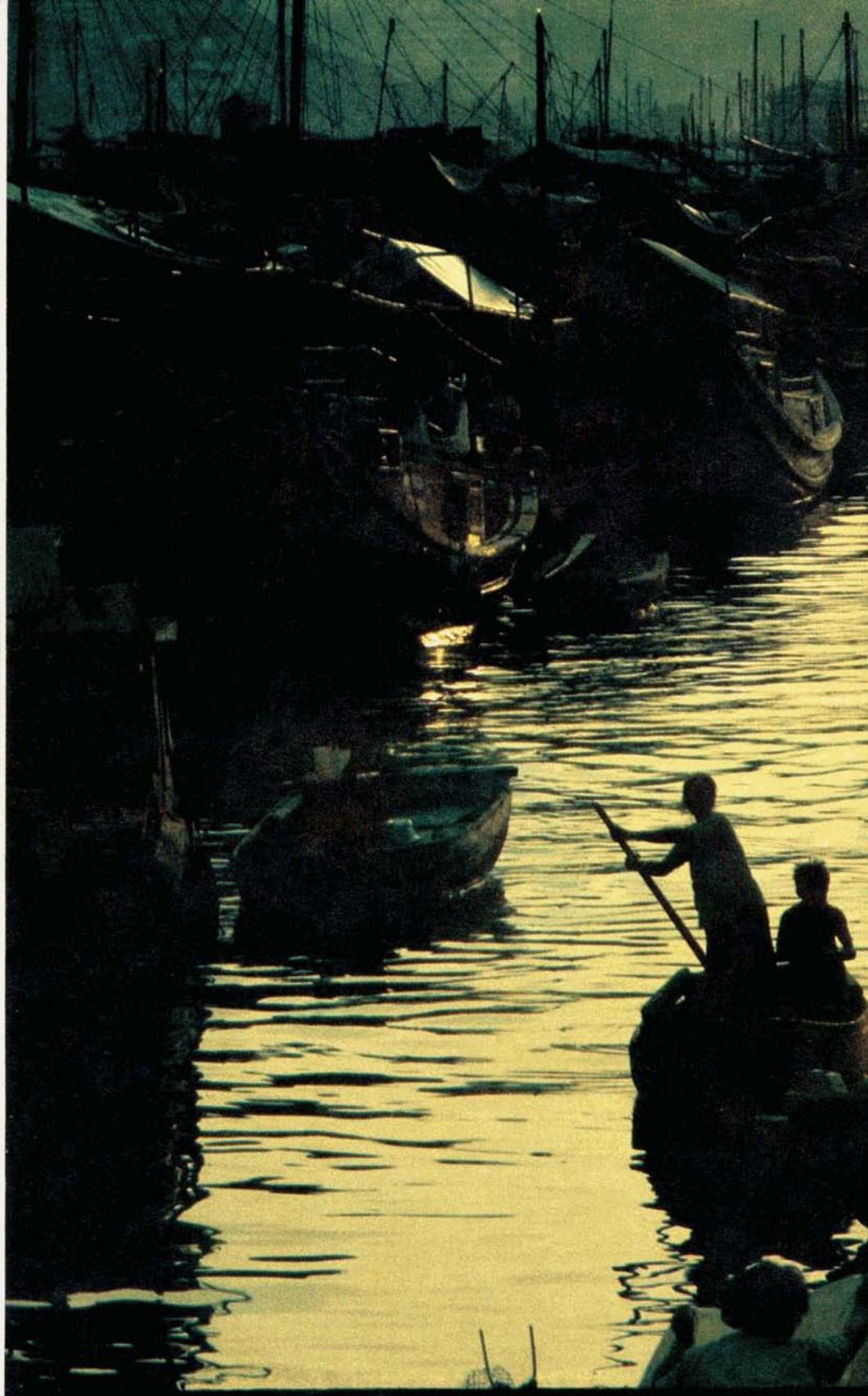
A three-act play by:

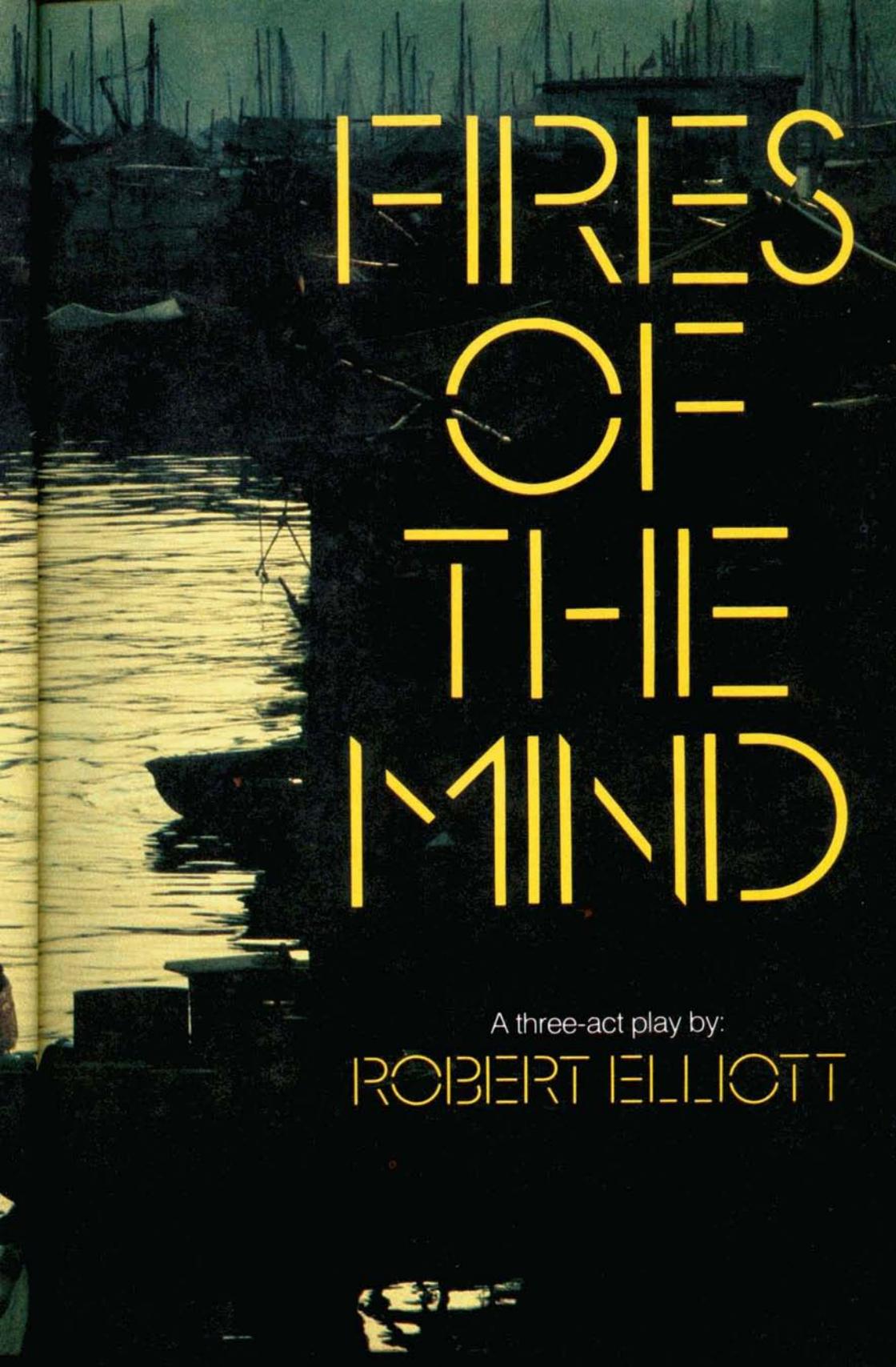
ROBERT ELLIOTT

Robert Elliot, a native of Sidney, New York, went to Brigham Young University with a David O. McKay scholarship, served a mission in Taiwan, and graduated from BYU in 1973. Bob is presently completing his master's degree at the the University of Utah in English and drama, and is married to Dorice Williams Elliott.

"Fires of the Mind" was produced in the Margetts Arena Theatre, BYU, in November, 1974, and selected as BYU's entry in the American College Theatre Festival.

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FIRES OF THE MIND

A three-act play by:

ROBERT ELLIOTT

Author's Preface

Though Fires of the Mind is written in a realistic style, the events and characters portrayed are fictional. Indeed, the play only creates an illusion of reality, what Aristotle called a "probable impossibility." It is highly unlikely that characters with the temperaments depicted, though not uncommon singly, would ever meet and mix in precisely the fashion described.

The play was written, however, with the revelatory intentions of traditional realism firmly in mind. I believe that contemporary LDS society is prepared to accept penetrating self-analysis which, without resorting to outrage or negativism, attempts to deal honestly with the human problems and weaknesses which plague it. Fires of the Mind does not intend, in any way, to disparage the divine doctrines and principles on which our religion is founded. It is a human drama reflecting the imperfect thoughts and actions of several imperfect but good young men, each struggling in his own way to become better. Hopefully, by perceiving the flaws and mistakes of these imaginary figures (especially, despite his strengths, those of Johnson), readers and viewers of the play will become more self-aware and, perhaps, be forewarned regarding tendencies in their own thoughts and actions. – Bob Elliott

Cast of Characters

ELDER BARNEY JOHNSON, 22, a Latter-day Saint missionary in Nationalist China (Taiwan)

ELDER KEITH POLL, 21, Johnson's third senior companion

ELDER MARK MARKHAM, 20, Johnson's fourth senior companion

ELDER JOSEPH MATTHEWS, 21, Johnson's zone leader

ELDER STEPHEN LUCAS, 19, Matthews' junior companion, the ZLC

BROTHER T'ANG LI SUN (UNCLE SAM), 45, their Chinese houseboy

SISTER CHOU LI TS'WUN (HOLLY), 20, a Chinese college student

BROTHER CH'EN YUN TA, 32, a Chinese college professor

Synopsis of Scenes

The action occurs over a three-week period in the summer of 1970 in Taipei, capital city of the Republic of China (Taiwan), and one of its suburbs, Lung Nan.

ACT I A missionary apartment in Lung Nan. Late afternoon.

ACT II A chapel classroom in Taipei two weeks later. Early evening.

ACT III The missionary apartment one week later. Early morning.

EPILOG The same. That night.

Setting

Although the play might best be performed in the round, with a less cluttered set, I have provided proscenium directions for convenience in visualization. The missionary apartment, though it is situated on the third floor of a medium-rent Chinese apartment building might easily be mistaken for a cheap flat in mid-town Kansas City. It contains a front room and a kitchen, both uncarpeted, visible to the audience. A door backstage left leads to a bedroom and bath facilities. Backstage right is the entrance from the apartment balcony and staircase. The front room contains a small dinner table, a coffee table, several hard-back chairs, two armchairs, a sofa, a coatrack, a bookcase, and nefarious other articles strewn about haphazardly. Only a few curious items — a Chinese painting, a coolie hat hanging from the coatrack, a Chinese newspaper — suggest that the apartment's inhabitants are 10,000 miles from home. The kitchen is nondescript, stripped to essentials, containing only a stove, a sink, a refrigerator, and some drawer or cabinet space. The chapel classroom is of white cement, very small and windowless. It contains only a small table or desk and a number of fold-up metal chairs. The entrance from the corridor is backstage right.

Dress

Except for ACT III, the missionaries wear standard white shirts and ties, with reasonably dressy pants, but without coats. Due to the weather, the shirts may be short-sleeved, or the characters may roll

their sleeves up. Jeans, T-shirts, and tennis shoes are perfectly appropriate for the playday. UNCLE SAM wears rough working clothes, sporting a besmeared apron in the kitchen. HOLLY dresses in fashionable Western styles, preferably classy pant outfits. BROTHER CHEN wears an uninspired business suit, of any color, a white shirt, and a thin dark tie.

Act I

(The missionary apartment.

Late afternoon. POLL and JOHNSON are seated in the front room at the dinner table, drinking Chi Shui.

The lights come up on JOHNSON first, then spread to POLL and the entire scene.)

JOHNSON (Lightly.) Well, how do you feel, Elder Poll?

POLL I don't know. It's a little like dying.

JOHNSON Come on.

POLL No, really. I'm scared. (Pause.) It's not just going home. You see this ring?

JOHNSON Your class ring?

POLL No, *not* my class ring. A class ring.

JOHNSON I thought it was yours.

POLL So has everyone my whole mission. Well it's not. (Pause.)

JOHNSON (Curious now.) Whose is it?

POLL Her name is Jenny Peterson.

JOHNSON Jenny Pe — J.P.! I thought that was your mother writing you all those letters!

POLL Pretty close.

JOHNSON Oh, man.
(He starts laughing.)

- POLL She's waiting, and she thinks we'll be married in two months.
- (This is even more hilarious. JOHNSON laughs harder.)
- POLL I'm up the creek; I mean what can I say? Two years and the only guy she's been out with is her cousin. Jeez. (Pause.) What's so doggone funny?
- JOHNSON (Grandly, with a grin.) Romeo Poll.
- POLL (Unamused.) Yeah.
- JOHNSON (Still chuckling.) Hey, take it easy, It'll work out.
- POLL Yeah, well . . . well it's just that things are so different.
- JOHNSON Maybe, maybe not. Missions are screwy. They warp people. And not only about girls. Jeez, I've never been so neurotic. Everything's so . . . unnatural.
- POLL (Needling good-naturedly.) The natural man is an enemy to God.
- JOHNSON (Studying his half-full glass.) I wonder if anyone's ever been baptized in soda pop.
- POLL (Grabbing the bottle.) Stay where you are Johnson, or so help me I'll soak you.
- (They both get up and circle the table warily. JOHNSON stops.)
- JOHNSON To Keith and Jenny Poll. Cheers.
- (POLL laughs and they drink. A terrible barking breaks out outside the door. There are bumping noises and MARKHAM appears, haggard and winded.)
- MARKHAM Garbage!
- (POLL and JOHNSON laugh. MARKHAM grins.)

MARKHAM What was that!

JOHNSON We call him Cerberus. Can we help you?

MARKHAM No, I've got it.

(He bumps in, puts down
bags.)

MARKHAM Whew! That's a hard climb with a foot locker.

POLL Welcome to the Lung Nan Arms Celestial Suite.

(Laughter.)

MARKHAM Is that what you guys call this place? (Looks around.)
Well, it *is* pretty nice. You should see the places in
the south.

POLL I've been there, you young whipper. Hey, you guys
haven't met, have you?

JOHNSON No.

POLL Elder Barney Johnson, Elder Mark Markham.

MARKHAM Hi.

JOHNSON How are you?
(They shake hands.)

POLL Hey, how about some Chi Shui?

MARKHAM All right!! (Laughter.) Oh, I've still got some stuff in
the cab. Save me a glass, O.K.?

(Goes out; barking.)

(POLL and JOHNSON retire
to the table, both are
meditative.)

JOHNSON Seems like a nice guy.

POLL Yeah, you'll get along great.

JOHNSON You think so?

POLL Yeah. (Pause.)

JOHNSON Listen, will you talk to him. I'm tired of going
through it.

POLL You want me to?

JOHNSON Yeah — I get so tired.

POLL I'm sure he knows some of it already.

(Johnson groans irritably.)

POLL Well, *you* let the cat out of the bag at conference.

JOHNSON What else could I do? Jeez! Bearing testimonies like it was a game of dominoes. One guy plops down, the next guy stands up, everyone trying to outdo the guy before. No way out. I just sat there and watched it coming. Man, I had to be honest! Pressure testimony. Social testimony. Jeez, that irks me!

POLL Come on.

JOHNSON (Burned.) Well . . .

POLL Listen, you know most of those guys mean what they say.

JOHNSON Yeah, but they just say what everybody wants to hear. It's not the whole truth. It's propaganda. It's a big psyche-up session.

POLL Sure it is. The Communists do the same thing over on the mainland. Political parties do it. Businesses do it. It's positive thinking. Everybody's got doubts, but they only discuss them in private. Everybody wants to be riding a winner, so they try to convince themselves they are. Except for us. We know we've got the truth.

JOHNSON Some of us do.
(Bumping, barking; they lapse into silence.
MARKHAM reappears.)

MARKHAM Should it cost 50 kwai to get here from the train station?

POLL That's about right.

MARKHAM Huh, I gave the guy a hard time for nothing. Oh well. (He grins.)

POLL You want that Chi Shui?

MARKHAM You bet! It's not as hot here, but it sure is muggy.

POLL Elder Johnson, why don't you store Elder Markham's stuff in the bedroom. I'll fill him in on our investigators. And work on that fifth discussion, O.K.?

JOHNSON Aye, aye, cap'n. Hey — let me know before you leave.

POLL I will.

(JOHNSON goes into the bedroom.)

MARKHAM (Drinking) Boy, that tastes good. You remember Tate? Marlowe says that Tate's working out a plan to import this stuff to the States. He'll make a fortune.

POLL It'll never fly. Tate's all mouth.

MARKHAM Yeah, well, probably so — say, how's the work going here?

POLL A little slow, right now. We've got one good man coming along, and one of those eternal girls, and two students and a housewife on firsts. But summers are awful, you know. Everybody falls out, or goes on vacation, or some other doggone thing. We're frustrated.

MARKHAM (Casually checks bedroom door, which JOHNSON has closed.) How's Johnson?

POLL What?

MARKHAM I wondered — well, you know — since the conference — and Larsen moved in with us after he left here. He told us there'd been some — problems.

POLL Larsen talks too much.

MARKHAM Well, we all talk.

POLL Yeah, you're right. We all talk — too much! Listen, I don't know what Larsen told you, or what conclusions you drew from that little incident at conference, but you've got one heckuva good companion on your hands. Johnson's a good man — he's a good man. (Pause.) Hey, I'm sorry. I know you're probably nervous about this assignment.

Well, it's not easy. But don't lose faith in Johnson. He's got all the tools.

MARKHAM Except one.

POLL Yeah.
(Agreeing reluctantly.)

MARKHAM What's his problem?

POLL Well, he's hung up on this "real communication" thing. He knows the Church rests basically on revelation and individual testimony, and he's not satisfied with what he's got.

MARKHAM (Snorts.) Well, who is?

POLL Yeah, but he looks at it different. He doesn't want a sign, but he figures the "warm feelings" everybody talks about aren't enough to base your life on. He wants something more, and until he gets it, he has to reserve judgment. And he's honest, painfully honest. I mean he can't just accept the fact that he hasn't completely arrived, and work at it slowly. He's always thinking about it and tormenting himself, and sometimes he has to let loose. I guess that's what happened at conference. He's too intellectual, I suppose. He *is* smart. Sometimes he goes through all his arguments and counter-arguments with me. Most of the time I don't know what he's talking about. I just tell him to be patient and stop worrying. Yeah, he is intelligent.

MARKHAM The glory of God is intelligence.

POLL Huh?

MARKHAM The glory of God is intelligence; the wisdom of men is foolishness and it profiteth them not. That's Second Nephi.

POLL Yeah, I know where it's from. Jeez, Elder, don't throw that at him. He'd go into a shell for weeks.

MARKHAM Well, why's he here if he doesn't have a testimony? (Worried and indignant.) How'd he get through his interviews?

POLL Ahh, you know how it is. Half the guys out here didn't have a testimony when they left. I didn't. I didn't know enough. Blind faith pulled me through, and I'm glad, but I'm sure I wasn't very impressive

when I was interviewed. All they really look for is desire, and Johnson's got plenty of that. He says his stake president just smiled when he told him all his doubts and said "You scoundrel, you'll be the best missionary of them all." And, well, that is the important thing, Elder Markham. Johnson wants to know the truth and he wants to share. School was getting him nowhere. He figured a mission would force some answers. So he came.

MARKHAM How can I help him?

POLL Be patient. President Jones drops him a line about once a week, and they talk whenever he comes in from Hong Kong. That's why they've kept him here in the capital — for easy access. It's kind of a shame, though. Johnson's always been a leader, and here he is, stuck in the same city after ten months, still a junior companion, while all his LTM group are senior companions or branch presidents. He gets depressed.

MARKHAM I can imagine.

POLL Well, listen, if you'll do the work, he'll follow you and help you. He's no slacker. Just stay with him, and I think it'll come.

(Barking; enter MATTHEWS and LUCAS.)

LUCAS Scramble, baby. The great white bird awaits.

POLL Lucas, I only regret that I'm leaving this beautiful island to the likes of you.

LUCAS Come on, graybeard. I promised Osborne I'd have you back at the chapel inside of twenty minutes.
(Laughter)

POLL Osborne? — Man, it's been a long time since I saw him!

LUCAS He and Anderson are terrorizing the greenies. You know how thin Anderson is. Well, he convinced one kid that he weighed 220 when he came on the island. And I heard Osborne warning two kids going to Kao Hsuung about blood leeches and poisonous spiders.
(Laughter)

POLL Wow, I'd better get down there. I don't want to miss all the action. (Looks around.) Well . . .

MATTHEWS Are your bags in the bedroom?

POLL Yeah — Hey, send Johnson out.

(MATTHEWS and LUCAS go
into the bedroom.)

MARKHAM Good luck, Elder Poll.

POLL Same to you, Elder. And be patient.

JOHNSON (Coming out.) Time?

POLL Yeah.

(He hesitates; MATTHEWS
and LUCAS come out
heavily laden.)

MARKHAM Here, give me one of those.
(To LUCAS.)

LUCAS With pleasure.

(Gives him the heaviest,
laughing; they go out;
barking.)

JOHNSON Thanks, Elder Poll. You've been like a brother.

POLL It's been good, Barney. Take care. Look me up.

JOHNSON You and the Mrs.?

POLL If Markham came back and found you dead, they'd
never catch me. (They laugh.) I — love you, Elder.

JOHNSON Me too.

(They hesitantly embrace,
arm on shoulder.)

LUCAS (Outside.) Quick, Poll! We're being attacked by Red
commandos!

POLL Ha. I'm glad the ZLs are moving in here. I don't like
Matthews much, but Lucas is gonna be one of the
best. Talk to him.

JOHNSON O.K. Seriously, good luck with the lady. And write.

POLL Thanks, I will . . . Dzai Jyan.

JOHNSON Dzai Jyan.

(Barking; POLL is gone.)

(JOHNSON goes out on the balcony, waits a few seconds, is seen waving; comes back in, pours out a glass of Chi Shui, wanders, opens a scripture, closes it, ponders; barking; enter MARKHAM.)

MARKHAM Brother, that dog is something! I'm sure glad they've got him chained up. What'd you say you called him?

JOHNSON Cerberus.

MARKHAM What's that? Sounds like some kind of mass transportation.

JOHNSON Heh, no. It's from the Greek myths. Cerberus was the three-headed dog that guarded the gates of Hell. He kept the dead in and the living out.

MARKHAM And which is Hell — in here out out there?
(Going along, lightly.)

JOHNSON(Coldly.) It depends. Wherever I am, Hell follows. I better study.

(He walks quickly into the bedroom; MARKHAM looks deflated and bewildered.)

JOHNSON (Returning.) Hey, I'm sorry, Elder. I guess I just like to shock people or something. I figure if they already think I'm a louse, I can't disappoint them with the real me. Really, I'm sorry. Can we talk about it later?

MARKHAM Sure. (Pause.) Where you from?

JOHNSON Mesa. You?

MARKHAM Salt Lake. (Pause.) You go to the Y?

JOHNSON Yeah, you?

MARKHAM No, U. of U. One year?

JOHNSON Three.

MARKHAM How old are you?

JOHNSON 22.

MARKHAM Hmm.

JOHNSON What are you studying?

MARKHAM Oh, I haven't really decided. I'd like to be a doctor.

JOHNSON Competition's rough.

MARKHAM Yeah. How 'bout you?

JOHNSON Oh, I've bounced around a lot. Social Science. Humanities, history. I don't know.

(Pause.)

MARKHAM Uh, you always been a member?

JOHNSON Well, I was baptized when I was eight, if that's what you mean. Yeah, I'm a lifer.

MARKHAM Your folks active?

JOHNSON (Looks up irritably, then smiles.)

Yeah. Look, I guess I better explain some things. Elder Poll didn't have much time. I come from a good Mormon family. My dad's been in bishoprics half his life, and my mom's a stalwart Mormon homemaker. My brother was an AP in England and my little sister's a seminary officer. (Mildly sarcastic.) Everybody in our ward thinks we're wonderful.

MARKHAM What's wong with that?

JOHNSON Let's talk about it another time.
(Sizing him up.)

MARKHAM No, wait, now if we're gonna be companions we've got to know each other. I want to know what makes you tick. What's wrong with being respected?

JOHNSON Well, my family's got problems like anybody else. My dad works too long and too hard, my mom's got an awful temper. You know. But it's not their fault. It's the lifestyle. Upper middle class. Split-level home. Two cars, a camper, a garden, sprinklers, dishwasher, workshop. I don't know. It's so domestic, and lifeless — bloodless. The boredom grates on everybody, even if they don't realize it. And the Church goes right along with it.

Everything's geared to the family — which is fine — except all the families are geared to money, success, drudging work, and boring leisure. For me, the Gospel and Church don't jive. It's hard to explain. It seems like there should be more.

(Pause.)

MARKHAM More what?

JOHNSON I don't know. Excitement, maybe. Well, not really. Real active happiness. Joy. Life.

MARKHAM The Church brings me joy.

JOHNSON Really? It bring most people peace. Then they sleep through life satisfied. They're content, not joyful. They fall into a pattern and spend the rest of their lives following a program. And they think they're happy.

MARKHAM (Mildly defiant.) Maybe they are.

JOHNSON Hey, I'm not aiming this at you or anybody. It's just that, well, the Gospel tells us not to be of the world, and we interpret that as meaning to avoid sex and drugs and alcohol. But what about materialism, the whole midde-class mentality? That's twice as insidious! (He hits the table. Pause.) I think it's funny that they call good Mormons "active." It oughta be "passive." (Silence.) You shouldn't have started me.

MARKHAM No, that's fine.

JOHNSON Look, I believe in the Gospel. The principles strike me really right. The New Testament is beautiful, though there was a time I wondered about all that self-denial. Anyway, it's the doctrines that worry me — and some of the things the Church does to people. But I could swallow the whole ball of wax if I knew it was true. I just want that assurance, and then I'll work within the system to make it all meaningful. The Lord promises individual revelation. That's what I want. Then I could surrender myself. But not before. (Shrugs.) That's why I'm here. They said in order to know the Gospel you have to live it and share it. I mean it *is* good. It brings people out of total confusion and gives them self-respect. It just seems like it should do more. I want more. What do you think?

MARKHAM Mmm, Elder, I feel like I should bear my . . .
(Barking; outside a booming voice.)

VOICE Sup-per! Sup-per!

JOHNSON Uncle Sam!

MARKHAM The servant?

JOHNSON Oh, man, don't call him that. (Going to door.) Say hey, Uncle!

UNCLE SAM Hey! Arizona still here! Good! Tonight, bacon, lettuce, and tomato, heh, heh, heh.

JOHNSON Where's you get it?

UNCLE SAM Black market, heh, heh, heh.

JOHNSON You old rascal. (They both laugh. To MARKHAM.) When he cooked for the army, they always called him the "old rascal." He stole them blind, but they loved him.

UNCLE SAM Don't worry, I've reformed, heh, heh, heh. The
(To MARKHAM.) Mormons came and told me about John Smith . . .

JOHNSON Joseph Smith.

UNCLE SAM Joseph Smith and the Book of Moroni.

JOHNSON Mormon.

UNCLE SAM Mormon, heh, heh, heh. They perverted me.

JOHNSON *Con*-verted, you old rascal.

UNCLE SAM Heh, heh, heh.

JOHNSON His English is better than mine. Don't let him put you on. He's a hopeless ham and his favorite role is the funny-dumb Chinaman. He picked it up from American T.V. shows. You remember Hop Sing from *Bonanza*?

UNCLE SAM
(Mugs and kowtows a bit; then, to JOHNSON) Who's the new tenant?

JOHNSON Elder Mark Markham — Salt Lake.

- UNCLE SAM Utah 22.
- MARKHAM What?
- JOHNSON You're the twenty-second Utah elder that's lived here since he started work. I'm Arizona 5. Poll was Idaho 16. Uncle Sam, a treat! A Canadian!
- UNCLE SAM Oh, my very first, heh, heh, heh. What else?
- JOHNSON Where's Matthews from?
- MARKHAM California.
- UNCLE SAM (Wrinkles his nose.) Ooh.
- JOHNSON He doesn't like Californians. (To SAM.) How's your family?
- UNCLE SAM The same. Ai Mei is still stick and my wife is very tired. She works too hard.
- MARKHAM Where does she work?
- JOHNSON The Zenith plant. (To SAM.) Hey, Uncle, maybe this'll help.
- (Pulls pouch off coffee table.)
- UNCLE SAM What is it?
- JOHNSON It's Idaho's Chinese money. He figured it wouldn't do him much good in Boise.
- UNCLE SAM Idaho was a good elder. (Pause.) Well, Sup-per!
- JOHNSON O.K. Uncle. If you need any help holler.
- UNCLE SAM I am the master of my kitchen, Arizona! You learn Chinese! (Roaring.)
- JOHNSON O.K. (To MARKHAM.) The guy's a riot. (Laughing.)
- MARKHAM How long has he worked here?
- JOHNSON Three years.
- MARKHAM Any trouble?

- JOHNSON (Scoffing.) No; he's a counselor in the MIA. And he loves the elders, even though he's down on Americans. The army raked him over good.
- MARKHAM Sounds like it was mutual.
- JOHNSON (Barking; MATTHEWS and LUCAS are heard singing "God Be With You." They come in, finishing the hymn together, self-consciously, very low and out of key. Laughter.) Dog eat dog, brother. That's one thing I like about the Gospel. At least it puts a stop to a lot of cutthroating.
- LUCAS Man, that was beautiful. You should've seen it. The whole place was going nuts when we got there. Osborne and Anderson and Jeffries were doing a cancan on the lawn and Moffitt had some fireworks. Then Poll did his Nixon imitation and waved peace signs at everybody. I thought I was gonna split.
- MATTHEWS It's not so funny for us, Canadian.
- LUCAS Well, if you can do a Trudeau imitation, I promise to laugh just as hard.
- UNCLE SAM (From the kitchen door) I am Pierre Trudeau, the most beautiful prime minister in the world. Mah, mah, mah, mah!!!
(He does kissing imitations. Laughter.)
- LUCAS (Delighted.) Is that the houseboy?
- JOHNSON Uncle Sam.
- LUCAS You don't really expect me to call him that do you? What's his last name?
- JOHNSON T'ang.
- LUCAS (Taking SAM's wooden serving spoon, taps him on both shoulders.) Brother T'ang, I dub you Pierre.
- UNCLE SAM (Takes back the spoon.) What does "dub" mean?

LUCAS It means I've given you a title.

UNCLE SAM I dub you Canada I.
(He raps LUCAS once,
lightly, on the head and
retires. Laughter.)

LUCAS Anyway, Gordon finally stopped the festivities and led a prayer. Then we all sang "God Be With You." It was really something — the old heads, and the greenies, and the office staff, and the chapel elders. Some of the members came down too. (Pause.) Man, I've gotta be careful or I'll start crying again. (Pause.) Yea, even, the great Stoneface did shed a tear.

(He points to MATTHEWS,
who grins sheepishly.)

MATTHEWS It reminded me of leaving the LTM. A mission's too short.

(Pause; then,
authoritatively, but
apprehensively.)

MATTHEWS Elder Johnson? We need to set you some new language goals. Your old ones are out of date.

JOHNSON Oh, great!

MATTHEWS Let's go in the bedroom.

JOHNSON Like a lamb to the slaughter.
(Heaving a sigh.)

(Walking in to the
bedroom.)

JOHNSON How many times have we been through this?

(MATTHEWS closes the
door.)

MARKHAM He hasn't even got the sixth yet?

LUCAS Not yet.

MARKHAM How's his conversation?

LUCAS Really good; he speaks as well as anybody, and he's got the gist of all the lessons. It's just the

memorizing that bogs him down. He's sort of . . . got other things on his mind.

MARKHAM Yeah, we talked a little already.

LUCAS He's probably got more talent for the language than any elder I've met.

MARKHAM Hm! Well, he couldn't have any more talent than you. They tell me you learned all six in the LTM. Down south they call you Wonder Boy.

LUCAS You know, I'm a little ashamed about that?
(Quietly.)

MARKHAM Are you kidding?
(Astonished.)

LUCAS No, really. Oh, I'm glad I learned the lessons, all right. It's been a big help. But I sure had a bad attitude in the LTM.

MARKHAM How so?

LUCAS I come from a little hick town in Alberta. When I got my mission call, I made up my mind that no big city Heart of Zion boys were ever gonna show me up. I was determined to beat 'em all. You see what I mean? I went into the LTM red hot and I burned the place up. But it wasn't for the Lord. I worked really hard, but only to prove that I was the best. All that work was an ego trip. I felt competitive. You know, I not only felt good when I succeeded on a conclusion or a discussion — I felt good when my companions failed! I'm surprised the Lord didn't humble me — hit me with a stupor of thought or something.

MARKHAM I don't see anything wrong with wanting to be the best. That's what the Gospel's all about — reaching exaltation. And only a few'll make it.

LUCAS Sure, I want to be my best. And I wanta make exaltation. But it's not a contest. We're supposed to love and help each other. You can't kick and elbow your way to glory — it's just not Christlike. I don't know how this "better" and "best" thing got started, anyway; it's the same stuff that ruined the Nephites. Everywhere, everybody wants to be the best. The best roadshow, the best Sunday School, the best mission, It's not enough just to live

righteously and do the Lord's work. People expect all kinds of praise and recognition for it.

MARKHAM Praise reinforces people. It helps them.

LUCAS Sometimes; but people are too praise-oriented, you know? They all want a reward. Rewards are a Law of Moses concept. Do we obey the commandments just to gain a reward — a blessing? I hope not. Christ said "if ye love me, keep my commandments." That's the ticket. We obey out of love for God, not because we know what He can do for us.

MARKHAM Yeah.
(Blankly.)

LUCAS It's funny the way rewards sort of creep up on us. You're from Salt Lake; you ever notice how many people consider leadership positions rewards for living the best lives? No, really, think about it. Don't you set up a ranking system in your mind about which Church positions are the most prestigious? And don't you judge people by the positions they're called to? And don't you look at the supposedly more prestigious jobs as rewards? It's hard not to; I have an awful time. But that's the worldly perspective. The world is completely reward-oriented. The Gospel is based on love.

MARKHAM That's pretty heavy stuff, Elder Lucas. You come on like a philosophy prof.
(Fairly snowed.)

LUCAS Yeah, well, it's been my pet subject ever since I realized what a bum I was in the LTM. I didn't mean to talk your ear off.
(Laughs.)

MARKHAM No, it's interesting. I'll have to think about it. (Pause.) I guess I've been thinking a little about it already — rewards, I mean. I've been out almost a year and things just haven't been like I expected.

LUCAS The mission field you mean?

MARKHAM Yeah, I don't know. I've worked hard since I came out and sometimes I wonder if it's been worth it. A few people that I've taught have come into the Church, but three of them are inactive already, and I don't think the rest really know what they're doing. Everytime somebody really feels the Gospel and comes in, somebody else loses it and goes out. I hit the doors, and check all the referrals, and fast and

pray and study, and I beat my brains out at night trying to think of creative new approaches, new introductions. If I could have baptized one family, or just one good man . . .

LUCAS You'd like to see some results.

MARKHAM (Pursuing this rapidly.) Well, I've seen some good come from my work; but it sure seems insignificant compared to the scriptures, or Church history, or even some of the things I used to hear in Sacrament meetings. It seems like there should be something here, too — something I could put my finger on and say, "That was a success."

LUCAS Yeah, I know how you feel. Usually there is; but really if we have faith and work hard, the Holy Ghost'll tell us we've done well. Besides, tangible success is just another reward — an outward sign. Rewards are a lot like signs. They're artificial. Take Johnson — now he's a sign-seeker even though he's pretty subtle about it. He wants some glorious inner manifestation. But he still wants it to come from an external source. He won't accept anything his own spirit tells him, even when he's been touched by the Holy Ghost. He calls it emotion, and goes on waiting for something supernatural. Reward-seekers aren't that complex. They just want some outer confirmation that they've done well — material comforts and blessings, praise, or a position. But it amounts to the same thing. Reward-seekers and sign-seekers are both looking for proof that they're worthy. They're both insecure, and they want the Lord to compensate them for it. Sometimes He will, but sometimes He won't. I guess that's the trial of faith, or at least one of them. (Synthesizing.) Yeah. Reward-seeking equals sign-seeking. (Brightly.) I like that. (Pause.)

MARKHAM It sounds good. But, you know, it seems like half the scriptures talk about life and the commandments in terms of rewards. Obey, and receive a blessing, obey and inherit the earth, obey and receive exaltation.

LUCAS That's terrestrial stuff. It's milk, not meat.

MARKHAM Maybe so. (Pause.) You know, you just hit on something else I didn't expect out here. I was ready for bad food, sickness, crummy apartments, doors slammed in my face, even persecution, and I haven't had problems with any of 'em. The food and

the apartments are pretty good and the people are really pretty nice. But I wasn't ready for a companion without a testimony. I thought even if we didn't get along personally, we'd at least have common goals. What can I do about Johnson?

LUCAS Listen, his bark is worse than his bite. He's been a fine missionary these last three months. Give him a chance. His spirit's coming around and it's telling him good things, even if his head doesn't know it yet.

MARKHAM I hope so. (Earnestly.) I want to do the work here and we've got to do it together. (Pause.) I just want to be a good missionary, you know?

LUCAS We all do.

(MATTHEWS and JOHNSON come out of the bedroom. MATTHEWS is visibly rattled and perturbed. JOHNSON is bland and whimsical, his eyes twinkling.)

MATTHEWS Elder Markham. Sorry I didn't talk to you right away. I wanted to get those goals set with Elder Johnson while we had a chance. Welcome to Lung Nan.

(Handshake.)

MARKHAM Thanks, Elder Matthews.

(There is some obvious hero worship here.)

LUCAS Whew, I'm bushed. How long till supper?

UNCLE SAM Twenty minutes! Any complaints, Canada?!

(Roaring from kitchen.)

LUCAS Mais, non, Pierre. Pardonnez-moi. (Laughter. LUCAS staggers in mock agony.) Uhh! It's got me!

MARKHAM What?

LUCAS The force. It's irresistible. (He clutches the door frame as though being blown by gale force winds; hoarsely.) Mattress gravity. I'm a goner, boys. Wake me for dinner.

(Moving toward bedroom as though being sucked into a vacuum.)

(He vanishes. There is a plop and a long sigh. MARKHAM, MATTHEWS, and JOHNSON laugh.)

MATTHEWS Crazy kid.

MARKHAM Well, how's the work here in the North?

MATTHEWS Oh, it's coming; the Lord is blessing us daily. The harvest is at hand if we'll just thrust in our sickles and reap. If the Lord is with us, we can't fail.

MARKHAM The Gospel's so beautiful. I've never been so happy.

MATTHEWS Yes, these are the best two years of our lives.

MARKHAM It's so wonderful to be serving these people. They're so humble and beautiful. I work my tail off and I love every minute of it. It makes me feel so good. I wish I could just do this forever.

MATTHEWS How long have you been out?

MARKHAM 11½ months tomorrow.

(JOHNSON has been relaxing with his Chi Shui, listening in quiet disbelief. This cracks him up. MATTHEWS and MARKHAM glance over. JOHNSON stops laughing. They continue.)

MATTHEWS Well, the worth of souls is great in the eyes of the Lord. It gives me a warm feeling all over to see the Gospel spreading here.

MARKHAM Like a rock cut from a mountain without hands.

MATTHEWS Huh?

(JOHNSON puts an open Bible over his face to hide his laughter.)

MARKHAM Daniel's prophecy.

MATTHEWS Oh. (Pause.) Yes, these are the best two years of our lives.

MARKHAM Yup. (Nods his head; pause.) I've never been so happy.

(Pause; JOHNSON is obviously laughing again. They look at him.)

MATTHEWS Something funny, Elder Johnson?
(Nettled.)

JOHNSON No, no. I'd better go study.
(Barely under control.)

(He goes into the bedroom shaking with silent mirth.)

MARKHAM Say, when does Gordon leave?

MATTHEWS The AP? Oh, three weeks or so. President Jones wanted him to supervise the move and make sure everybody's settled O.K.

MARKHAM When he goes, who'll take his place?

MATTHEWS Oh, I don't know.

MARKHAM I'll bet it's you. You're surely qualified.

MATTHEWS Thanks. Well, the Lord will call whoever's best for the job. Besides I've only got three months left.

MARKHAM That's plenty of time. Gordon's only been in nine weeks. I'm sure it'll be you.

MATTHEWS Maybe so.

MARKHAM Wow!

MATTHEWS What?

MARKHAM That'd be some job. (Brief pause.) I mean think of the responsibility. With President Jones only here once a month, the AP has to handle everything. Gee! I don't think I could ever prepare for anything like that.

MATTHEWS Oh, in these positions you learn to trust the Lord. He never lets you down. No one ever feels prepared for a calling, but the Lord makes weak vessels strong.

MARKHAM I'll remember that.

MATTHEWS We've heard good things about you up here, Elder Markham. You and Elder Morris baptized six people in the last two months, didn't you?

MARKHAM Yes.

MATTHEWS And you averaged seventy hours a week. That's moving.

MARKHAM Well, there's no time to waste, you know.

MATTHEWS And seventeen investigators! How many will make it?

MARKHAM Oh, hard to say. They're all on early lessons.

MATTHEWS Any families?

MARKHAM No, we've been trying to start a couple, but none yet.

MATTHEWS Good men?

MARKHAM Well, mostly high school kids really. You know how it is in the South.

MATTHEWS It's the same here.
(Pause.)

MARKHAM Say, if you do go AP, who'll be the new zone leader here?

MATTHEWS Oh, President Jones really likes Lucas but he's only been out eight months, so I imagine he and Jensen would go co-ZL.

MARKHAM Jensen's the district leader now here isn't he?
(MATTHEWS nods.) Hmm, who'll take *his* place?

MATTHEWS Well, it's up for grabs. Wouldn't surprise me if it was you though.

MARKHAM Me!

MATTHEWS Your reports have looked very good.

MARKHAM Wow!

MATTHEWS It's not a sure thing.

MARKHAM Oh, of course not. Wow, I . . .

MATTHEWS See what you and Elder Johnson can do here in Lung Nan. I'll be talking to Elder Gordon and President Jones in a couple of weeks.

MARKHAM I'll do my best. (Pause; MARKHAM sighs.)
Brother

MATTHEWS You worried about Johnson?

MARKHAM Yeah.

MATTHEWS (Talking lower.) Well, you got a right. He's a pain in the butt. I've talked to him twice and it didn't do any good. He thinks he's twice as smart as anybody. And he just mopes around. He hasn't even learned the lessons yet. Says he can't concentrate. The guy's a loafer and a goldbrick. He drags down everybody. Don't let him get to you.

MARKHAM He's already started telling me some of the junk he thinks about. It's incredible.

MATTHEWS I haven't seen many guys I thought were worthless out here, but Johnson's one. He makes things miserable.

MARKHAM What can I do?

MATTHEWS Well, the big thing is don't baby him. Poll let him have his way and it messed them both up. Their hours went way down. It killed the zone average. They were always talking. Or at least Johnson was. Poll'd pick his toenails or his nose or something, (MARKHAM laughs) and Johnson'd just rattle on. Poll didn't have the guts to lay on him. You know how he was. He never even made DL. Straight senior for fifteen months. No leadership. I don't know how many hours they wasted.

MARKHAM What about their contacts?

MATTHEWS Well, that was funny. They did really well. They baptized two people a month all three months they were together. I don't know where they found 'em. And they've got one great guy now, too. Brother Ch'en. Gee, don't lose him. He's a potential branch president.

MARKHAM How'd they find him?

MATTHEWS Johnson met him on a bus. He's good at that. He just starts talking to people. Like Lucas. Yea, Johnson's

O.K. sometimes.

MARKHAM But mostly he's a pain.

MATTHEWS You wouldn't believe. He makes everybody nervous. You've got to get him moving. Stay on him. Work his tail off. And don't take any crap. If he starts to fizzle, remind him who he is and what he's here for.

MARKHAM I'll try. What about their other investigators? Poll mentioned an "eternal girl?"

MATTHEWS Holly Chou. Yeah, she's a foxy college chick that just walked into the chapel one day and started talking to Poll. Her English is pretty good and I think she just wanted some practice. Poll got her into English class, and a week later they started teaching her the lessons. She was a fire-eater right up until they started seriously talking baptism. Then they found out she had some family problems. Her dad's a traditionalist and doesn't want her to join. I think he's pretty mean to her. She comes out to church and all the members love her. I think she's got a testimony, but it's hard to tell with girls, you know. They've been teaching her an extra lesson now and then, and Poll wanted to talk to her father, but she wouldn't let him. There's potential there. Stay with her. Careful, though, she's a knockout.

MARKHAM Don't worry. I've had it with little girls. I want a good man or two.

MATTHEWS Don't we all. (Pause.) Well, Johnson can tell you about the others. (Earnestly.) But listen, Elder Markham, you've gotta have some ready by the end of July. The zone's running low. Even Hong Kong beat us last month.

MARKHAM We'll have some. Hey, how's the food here?

MATTHEWS I've heard it's the best. Brother T'ang alternates Chinese and American food. Oh, and that's another thing. Most of the elders like Brother T'ang. But frankly, he bugs me. I don't trust these slant-eye houseboys even if they are members. And this one's too savvy. You know? He . . .

UNCLE SAM (From kitchen.) Arizona!

JOHNSON Yo!
(From bedroom.)

UNCLE SAM Set the table!

JOHNSON Aye aye, Uncle — (Comes out; looks at MARKHAM and MATTHEWS; chuckles.) Well, you guys got all our problems solved?

MATTHEWS I forgot to tell you he's a wise guy too. I don't envy you, Elder Markham. Remember, don't take any crap.

END OF ACT I

Act II

(The chapel classroom. Early evening. Two weeks later. JOHNSON is seated at the table, studying. The lights come up on him, then spread. MARKHAM is pacing impatiently.)

MARKHAM He's fifteen minutes late already.

JOHNSON He'll be here.

MARKHAM Is he always late?

JOHNSON Always.

MARKHAM Boy, I hope we haven't lost him. (Pause.) How's that fifth coming?

JOHNSON Awful. I can't concentrate.

MARKHAM Well, you'd better get on it. Matthews wants you to have all six by the move next week. He's holding me responsible. How long have you been out anyway? (Silence.) Come on, let's hear the first three conclusions.

JOHNSON I'm not ready.

MARKHAM Johnson, when are you gonna get smart? You've (Rebuking him, but without malice.) been dogging it ever since we started working together. You don't study in the mornings. You just sit there and read, or write in your journal, or stare off into space. That won't get you *anywhere*. You dog it on your bike. You dog it when we're tracting. I *always* have to wait for you. You even dog it in meetings. I might as well be alone most of the time.

(Pause.) You better shape up. (Pause.) Understand?

JOHNSON I ought to. I hear it daily.

MARKHAM And you'll hear it until you do something about it! My patience is wearing thin. So is Elder Matthew's and President Jones'.

JOHNSON President Jones understands.

MARKHAM Wanna bet?

JOHNSON You haven't talked to him.

MARKHAM He wrote me a letter before the move.

JOHNSON What'd he say?
(Interested.)

MARKHAM He said, Johnson, that you're his biggest headache right now and that he doesn't know what to do with you.

JOHNSON He did not.

MARKHAM He did. And he said he was sorry to put me into such a tricky situation, but somebody had to babysit, and he wanted someone responsible.

JOHNSON He didn't say "babysit."

MARKHAM Well, that's what he meant. So shape up. You say
(Slightly abashed, then kindly advising.) you don't want to be the baby, the "problem missionary." Don't be. Get on the ball, Elder.

MARKHAM Come on, let's hear that first conclusion.

(He waits; pause.)

JOHNSON Have you ever wondered what it'd be like to be
(In a serious tone.) Satan or Cain? I was reading today how Cain became Master Mahan. That's powerful stuff.

MARKHAM Don't talk about it.

JOHNSON I look in the mirror sometimes and wonder what it'd
(Enjoying this.) be like to be possessed. I kind of let my eyes gleam and flash, and screw up my cheekbones and squint. Then tighten every muscle in my body, and think about war or murder or sex. Once I started to shiver.

MARKHAM You're talking evil, Elder Johnson. I don't want to

hear it. That kind of talk brings on darkness. You've heard the stories. Drop it and, for your own sake, don't even think about it.

JOHNSON Stories. I wouldn't mind seeing a devil. At least I'd know.

MARKHAM Will you shut up? (Pause.) Look, *please* give me the first conclusion.

JOHNSON Don't worry, Elder. Sometimes I think I'd be better at wickedness than I am at righteousness. I have all kinds of ingenious ideas for evil. I bet I could be really creative. But it scares me as much as it does you.

MARKHAM If it did, you wouldn't talk about it.

JOHNSON Huh, maybe you're right. (Gets up.) No, I want to be righteous. I want the Gospel to be true. Hm! It's funny. I don't know if there are devils any more than I know there's a God. But they're a lot easier to talk about.

MARKHAM Haven't you ever felt like you've had an answer to prayer?

JOHNSON Sure, for a day or so. Even before my mission I'd get so uptight about truth that I'd go for a week or so not really thinking about anything else. Then I'd pray my guts out, and cry, and yell, and plead with God to hear me and answer me. Once or twice, when I was really into it, I'd suddenly feel good and all the tension and bitterness would leave me.

MARKHAM That sounds like an answer.

JOHNSON I thought so too until I cooled off and began to think objectively. Then I realized I'd been under a great emotional strain. Pressure does strange things to people. They'll do anything to relieve it — even lie to themselves. Every time I'd begin to feel good, I'd start wondering if I'd convinced myself I'd had an answer. Then all my doubts would come flooding back and I'd start over. (Pause.) Well, I don't know why I'm using the past tense. It's exactly the same now. (Pause.) You know, if the Church isn't true, whoever thought up this personal revelation trip was a genius. I mean there's no way out. You *can't* prove the Gospel is false. No way. They'll always tell you you weren't worthy, or you asked wrong, or God's reserving his answers. But you *want* it to be

true. So you keep on plugging. The Mormon God is a one-armed bandit and I'm a compulsive gambler. I feed him coins of my time and I keep on losing. A month, a year, now two years for this mission. And I always say I'll quit if I don't get an answer. But, everyone says "Try, just once more, try. You've tried so hard and so long. Don't quit now. Maybe it'll come this time." And it never does. A taste, sometimes — a feeling, a thought — but it's only a tease. They never last. Never. (Pause.) I'm sick and tired of the whole routine.

MARKHAM Elder Johnson, all I can say is I *know* the Gospel is true.

JOHNSON Yeah.
(Starts to retort, then:)

MARKHAM I know it's true because it makes me happy.

JOHNSON Ahh. There! That's where we see things differently. When I was fifteen I decided that a man could seek truth or happiness, but one had to take priority. I decided I couldn't really be happy without truth. Truth had to come first. You see? I could never say something's true because it makes me happy. For me, it's got to be the other way around. It makes me happy because it's true.

MARKHAM Wow! All I know is the Gospel can give us both.
(Shakes his head.)

JOHNSON I'd like to think so.

MARKHAM I wish Brother Ch'en would get here. (Pause.) You know, I've been out almost a year and this is the first really older man I've had a chance to teach. I'm so sick of little girls. But they're the only ones that seem to hang in there.

JOHNSON Male chauvinist.

MARKHAM President Jones says this island needs priesthood.
(Smiles.) Girls are all right, but they're no good to us.

JOHNSON That's a pretty brutal thing to say.
(Teasing again.)

MARKHAM Jeez, I'm a nervous wreck. I'm gonna go wait out front. Will you work on that fifth?

JOHNSON nods.

MARKHAM smiles and goes
out.)

(JOHNSON sits thinking for
a minute, then begins to
study. The door opens;
LUCAS pops his head in.)

LUCAS Hey, what's happening?

JOHNSON Hi, Elder Lucas. We're waiting for Brother Ch'en.
What are you doing here?

LUCAS Elder Matthews had to talk to Elder Gordon and
President Jones about the mini-move next week.
They're on the horn to Hong Kong right now. Hey,
I've got a letter for you.

JOHNSON My folks?

LUCAS Nope, it's from Boise.

JOHNSON Poll! All right! Lemme see that!

(Ripping it open.)

JOHNSON Probably a doggone wedding announcement.

(Reads, laughs, reads,
laughs again.)

LUCAS What's he say?

JOHNSON You remember that girl I told you about?
(LUCAS nods.)

JOHNSON Catch this. "Dear Barney, (Exaggeratedly) Well, it
(They both laugh.) wasn't so bad after all."

JOHNSON "Don't worry. I'm not making any rash decisions.
How could I after knowing you?"

JOHNSON (Grins, then "She sure is beautiful, though."
goes on, again exaggerating
slightly.)

(They laugh. He skims on
down the page, goes on to
the next one; admiringly.)

JOHNSON Listen to this: "Give my best to all the people we
baptized together. I've included a note for each of
them."

JOHNSON Sure enough. "Also one for Holly and Brother Ch'en. How are they doing? If you lose either one, I'll wring your neck. How's it going with Markham? And how are you?" Umm, then he philosophizes. What a good guy!

LUCAS He was a great missionary. Take his advice.

JOHNSON That's what he said about you.

(LUCAS laughs.)

LUCAS Hasn't Brother Ch'en already heard all six?

JOHNSON Yeah, but he's still wavering. We had him read through Third Nephi and we're gonna try to answer his questions today.

LUCAS He's a good man. What does he teach?

JOHNSON He's an economics professor at Tai Ta.

LUCAS I wonder if he could teach me how to live on eighty bucks a month.

JOHNSON Is that all you get?

LUCAS Well, my folks don't have much. They're not too jazzed about my mission anyway. Our seventies quorum is helping out.

JOHNSON Aren't your folks members?

LUCAS Well, sort of. They've been inactive most of my life. My dad runs a ranch and he's always busy. And when he does get a break he prefers fishing to Sunday School. My mom does whatever he wants to do. The neighbors always took us to church — my little sister and me.

JOHNSON They're not against the Church then?

LUCAS Oh no; my mom and dad are good people. They wanted us to grow up right. I guess somewhere in early married life they just got their values crossed up. You know how middle-aged people are. They think they've lost all their illusions. They consider themselves hard-bitten veterans in the war of life. I keep working on 'em, though. My sisters tell me that my letters really help. They've started having Family Home Evenings. There's hope.

JOHNSON It must've taken a lot for you to go to Church without your parents.

LUCAS Are you kidding! I'd do anything to get out of chores! (Laughter.) No, I suppose I could've stayed home if I'd wanted. My dad couldn't have put up too much of a fuss. But it always seemed right for me to go. I thought about quitting when I was sixteen or so, but I had some good teachers that worked with me and . . . I gained a real testimony.

JOHNSON How?

LUCAS Well, at first it was intellectual, I guess — at least as intellectual as you can get a sixteen. It all seemed so logical given certain premises. It wasn't until later I began to wonder about the premises. I remember sitting in a geometry class one day and the teacher saying, "Now, this theorem works out perfectly *assuming* parallel lines will never meet in a given plane. We always make assumptions. We take certain absolutes for granted in order to move ahead pragmatically." Then some joker asked what "pragmatic" meant and the whole discussion fell apart. But I remember thinking "Hmm, I assume God, don't I? I take him for granted. And Joseph Smith too." I mean I'd thought about there not being a God before, or about Joseph Smith being a crank, but it didn't mean anything. I never internalized it. That's when I began to understand all that about the Book of Mormon being the "keystone of our religion." So I began studying the scriptures on my own. And I tried really praying.

JOHNSON What happened?

LUCAS Well, I never had any angels come flapping down into my bedroom, but I sure felt good a few times. And as I got more active in our branch work and really saw the way the Church could help people, it reinforced me. Since then there've been times the Spirit's just seemed to wash over me. I guess mostly I've just felt myself growing in what seems to be the right direction. And the Gospel's at the heart of it. Sometimes I have doubts. I'll be gunning along full blast in some doctrinal discussion and my mind'll say "Whoa, do you really believe that?" Then I have to ponder it out and hit the knees; but I've always come away accepting it. I know the Gospel's true.

JOHNSON How can you ever have doubts if you know?

LUCAS Semantics. "Know" is just a word we use that means

"beyond belief." Hey, there's semantics again! Not "beyond belief," I mean "more than belief." When I say "I know" it means I "more than believe." I haven't had any Second Comforter.

JOHNSON If that's the case, why don't people say what they mean?

LUCAS Most people aren't semanticists. They don't give a rat about ambiguity. They just talk. I'm that way. It's only when I get with a linguist like you that I get inspired. Which reminds me, how's that fifth coming?

JOHNSON Oh, jeez!
(Pause.)

LUCAS Look, I'm just studying written characters in the mornings now, and they aren't that much use to me. I mean can you see me in Asian Studies? I'm going into business and get rich! So, why don't you and I start slipping out front after Gospel Study and before breakfast and you can teach me a few lessons. I'll throw you every goofy answer I've ever heard; we'll have a real good time. What d'ya say?

JOHNSON Would Elder Matthews mind?

LUCAS Elder Matthews is paranoid about my being in the bedroom anyway. He's got a guilty conscience because he spends his study time setting up a filing system for those ten thousand slides of his. Well, it does bug me a little. If we don't need to study, we oughta be out on the street. But he's the boss. And once we're out, he runs me ragged doing the work and helping the elders. He *really* works *hard*.

JOHNSON I hear the elders in Ping Tung used to call him pea-brain.

LUCAS Hey, no backbiting, fella. Elder Matthews is O.K.

JOHNSON Right, I'm sorry.

(The door opens. HOLLY stands there grinning.)

HOLLY Hol-lee Hello!

JOHNSON Hol-lee Hello! Come in! Elder Lucas, This is Holly Chou.

LUCAS Chou jye mei, ni hau ma?

HOLLY H au, sye sye ni.

(They shake hands.)

JOHNSON Holly has the best English of any Chinese student I've heard. What are you doing here?

HOLLY We just finished with English class. (She giggles, stands upright, says seriously.) I am your soul sister. Will you be my soul brother? (LUCAS and JOHNSON laugh.) I didn't say it right?

JOHNSON No, you said it right.

HOLLY Give me five.

(She sticks out her hand,
palm up.)

JOHNSON Right on, sister. (He slaps her hand, turns his palm up; she slaps it.) Groovy. Did you learn this in English class?

HOLLY Yes, Elder Ferguson says that's how the niggers talk in America.

(Brief silence.)

JOHNSON Did he teach you that word?

HOLLY Which word?

JOHNSON "Niggers."

HOLLY Yes. Is something wrong?

(JOHNSON looks at
LUCAS.)

LUCAS I'll talk to him.

JOHNSON It's not a nice word. It's like calling somebody a "shagwa" in Chinese.
(To HOLLY.)

HOLLY Ooh!
(Unpleasantly surprised.)

(MATTHEWS' voice is heard
bellowing outside:
"Lucas!")

LUCAS Whoops! The ZL cometh. Sister Chou, it was nice to meet you. (To JOHNSON) Good luck with Brother

Ch'en. See ya tonight.

(He goes out.)

JOHNSON How's school, Holly?
(Sits down at table.)

HOLLY Pretty good. My number two boyfriend got drafted.

JOHNSON And that's good?

HOLLY He was starting to get serious. Now the army has saved me. How do you say? The cavalry to the rescue?

JOHNSON Right. What about your number one boyfriend?
(Laughs.)

HOLLY He's safe. I am his number four girlfriend.

(She giggles.)

JOHNSON Holly, you're delightful. If you represent the Western influence on Chinese youth, I guess it can't be all bad.

HOLLY My father thinks it is all bad. He says Chinese culture is being destroyed by the Americans. He says Taiwan will be like Vietnam. First spheres of influence, then wars, then big power domination.
(Serious now.)

JOHNSON I hope he's wrong. I don't think the fact that Chinese students want to grow long hair and wear bell-bottom pants is America's fault. Kids everywhere are beginning to question their cultures, their lifestyles. There's a world-wide awakening. France, Greece, Thailand, the U. S., Japan — it's the same there. Students are dissenting, looking for a better way. I just hope they'll preserve what's good as well as overturn what's bad. Your father has a right to be proud of the Chinese culture. Many of your traditions are very beautiful.

HOLLY My father says Western missionaries do the most damage of anyone. He says they turn our people away from honoring their ancestors and teach them to worship white gods.

JOHNSON Well, some of them do. I hope we've convinced you, though, that our Church is universal. We believe in honoring our ancestors and *do* something

about it too. You remember what we taught you about temple work?

HOLLY Gynecology?

(They both laugh.)

JOHNSON No, *genealogy*. Where'd you learn that other word?

HOLLY Biochemistry.
(Giggling.)

JOHNSON Holly, you're amazing. (Pause.) Have you finished the Book of Mormon yet?
(Shaking his head, laughing.)

HOLLY No, I just started reading the Book of Ether last night.

JOHNSON How do you feel?

HOLLY I believe it is true. I believe all that you have taught me is true. My life is better since I met you. I have done well in school . . . and had many friends, but I have never been happy for very long. Everything seemed so . . . fleeting. So temporary. The Mormon Church has helped me understand eternal things. *You* have helped me. I will be baptized as soon as my father agrees. And if he does *not* agree, I will be baptized as soon as I am old enough to decide for myself. O.K. Joe?

JOHNSON I'm glad. (Pause.) How do you like the Book of Ether?

HOLLY Oh, so much war! It is like a . . . a gudai pyan.

JOHNSON A what?

HOLLY How do you say . . . an ancient Chinese sword movie.

JOHNSON A sword flick! Oh, man, I guess so.

HOLLY Have you seen such movies?

JOHNSON About once a month we go to one. All the missionaries love them.

HOLLY We must see *one* together. When is your day off?

JOHNSON No, I can't do that.

(Taken aback, but amused.)

HOLLY It is not allowed?

JOHNSON No, it is *not* allowed.

HOLLY Too bad; well you must go see "Blood Mountain" with your friends. It is the best I have ever seen.

JOHNSON I saw that one last week. The one with David Chiang?

HOLLY Chiang Da Wei. Yes. Oh, did you like it?

JOHNSON It was great! I loved that final scene. (He jumps up, pulls out his comb and pen, puts one in each hand, and begins to circle the table slowly, menacingly.) Your doomsday has come, Black Wang. Release the Princess Lyou.

HOLLY giggles, pulls out two pens from her book-bag, gets up and circles opposite him.)

HOLLY Never, Tiger Chang. You will never see her alive again.

(Pause; they continue, breathing heavily, growling, and squinting ferociously.)

JOHNSON and HOLLY Swwaaaya!

(They both leap in their places, doing a full twist, gesticulating wildly, then go back to circling. JOHNSON skips nimbly across a row of chairs to HOLLY's delight.)

JOHNSON (Himself.) Just practicing.

HOLLY That wasn't in the script!
(Protesting.)

(They laugh.)

JOHNSON Prepare yourself, Wang. Your life is spent.
(Reverting to his role.)

HOLLY Bold words, Tiger Chang. They carry no truth.

JOHNSON We shall see, devil-man. (He flies into a frenzy; leaps onto a chair.) Now! My trustworthy sword shall drink your blood!

(HOLLY stops below him, lowers her arms.)

HOLLY No!
(In mock terror-anger.)

JOHNSON Ayeeee! (Lands at her feet and stabs her with the comb.) Ha!

(Leaps off the chair in a full twist, gesticulating wildly again.)

(She does not fall, however, because she has been distracted by BROTHER CH'EN and ELDER MARKHAM who are standing at the door dumbfounded.)

MARKHAM Elder Johnson, what's going on here?

(Very uncomfortably with a hint of anger, poorly disguised by a smile, and that what-are-you-doing-with-her-here-alone look.)

JOHNSON Well . . . uh . . . we were acting out the final fight scene from "Blood Mountain." I was playing Tiger Chang. (HOLLY has begun to giggle. She sits down and puts her hand over her mouth.) She was Black Wang.

(This is too much for HOLLY. She breaks out laughing again.)

MARKHAM That hardly seems the thing to be doing — does it?

JOHNSON No, I guess not.

CH'EN It was, however, very accurate. Except your friend is a bit too attractive to play Wang.

(To Johnson.)

MARKHAM Oh, you saw the movie, too?

(Much relieved, laughing.)

CH'EN Yes, last week.

MARKHAM Well Oh, Brother Ch'en Yun Ta, this is Sister Chou Li Ts'un. Sister Chou is another one of our investigators.

HOLLY Hello.

(They shake hands.)

CH'EN I am very pleased to meet you.

MARKHAM Well

(He looks at HOLLY, nodding his head slightly toward the door.)

HOLLY Oh! . . . Well, I will see you Sunday. Goodbye. (She remembers she should leave.)
(Remembering she should leave.) She turns to JOHNSON and gives two kung fu thrusts.)
Sa! Sa! We will have a rematch.

(She goes out laughing.)

CH'EN A lovely girl.

MARKHAM Yes Elder Johnson, Brother Ch'en only has a few minutes. We should get started.

CH'EN I am sorry to be so late. We had an unexpected meeting at the university.
(To JOHNSON)

JOHNSON I understand.

MARKHAM Brother Ch'en would you give us an opening prayer?

CH'EN Father in Heaven, I am grateful to be here today to learn from these elders of thy Church. I am grateful that they have come here to Taiwan to teach the Chinese people more about thee. Help me to understand what they say, so that I may draw closer to thee. I say this in Jesus' name. Amen.
(Nods head; heads bow.)

MARKHAM That was a beautiful prayer, Brother Ch'en. Have you been praying twice every day?

CH'EN Yes.

MARKHAM Has it helped you?

CH'EN Yes . . . I think so.

MARKHAM Did you read Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon since we last met?

CH'EN Yes.

MARKHAM Did you enjoy it?

CH'EN It moved me greatly.

MARKHAM Good. Will you continue to read the Book of Mormon every day?

CH'EN Yes.

MARKHAM We didn't see you in church on Sunday.

CH'EN Yes, my parents asked me to go on a picnic with them in the country. I am sorry I could not come.

MARKHAM I see . . . well, of course it's good to be close to your family, but church meetings are also very important.
(A bit unnerved.)

CH'EN I understand.

MARKHAM Will you be able to attend both Sunday School and Sacrament meeting this Sunday?

CH'EN No, I am sorry. Because of a shortage of teachers at the university for the next quarter, I have been asked to take my vacation beginning this week rather than in August. I will be visiting my brother and his family in Hua Lien and then return in three weeks to begin teaching immediately. Perhaps I can attend meetings there.

MARKHAM Yes, we do have a small branch there. I'm sure they would be happy to have you visit. I will contact the elders there and tell them to expect you.
(Really jolted.)

CH'EN Of course, I don't know what my brother will have planned.

JOHNSON Perhaps your brother and his family would be interested in attending church with you.

CH'EN Perhaps. (An awkward silence. JOHNSON and MARKHAM look at each other.)

MARKHAM Well, it looks as though we will have to postpone your baptismal date. Do you remember when you were to be baptized?

CH'EN I believe it was this Saturday, July 1. Yes, I am afraid that will have to be postponed. (Pause.)

MARKHAM Well, let me check my calendar. (Digs it out.) Shall

we set a new goal date of . . . say . . . July 30?

CH'EN It is very difficult to know exactly what I will be doing when I return. Perhaps we could establish a new date after I get back.

MARKHAM (Reluctantly.) All right. We will contact you at the university sometime around the 20th. Will you be back by then?

CH'EN Yes, that would be fine.

(JOHNSON and MARKHAM look at each other again.)

JOHNSON Brother Ch'en are you beginning to feel as though you would rather not be baptized?
(MARKHAM looks at him angrily.)

CH'EN Why

JOHNSON Let's talk about it. What is it that's worrying you?

CH'EN I should have known you would come straight to the point, Elder Johnson. I am very impressed with your Church. I like your members. I enjoy the Book of Mormon and your meetings. Everything you have told me seems right to me. Yet I worry because I feel I have not received the personal witness which I need to be baptized. I have not felt the Holy Ghost as I sense he ought to be felt.

MARKHAM How do you feel when you pray, Brother Ch'en?

CH'EN I feel peaceful at first, and sometimes after I have prayed a short while, I feel warm and very good.

MARKHAM That's it, Brother Ch'en!

JOHNSON Yes, that's a *beginning* Brother Ch'en. But it's only what we told you to expect. (MARKHAM glares at JOHNSON.) If you *really do* feel that, it is a beginning. But only *you* can recognize God's real answer to you. We can tell you what *we* feel, but *you* must seek *your* answer *yourself*. If you are not satisfied, you must continue to try. Only *you* can judge what is enough for you.

MARKHAM But you must not expect too much. Once you are baptized, you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then you will have the right to have the Spirit

with you at all times. Also, as your knowledge about the Church increases, your faith will grow stronger. And as your faith grows, your ability to communicate with our Father in Heaven will grow also.

JOHNSON Still, that doesn't mean you're not entitled to a very strong answer now. The scripture in Moroni, which we showed you, is the Lord's promise to individuals truly and humbly searching for the truth. And He is bound to fulfill his promise if we approach him properly. No one is allowed to be baptized who has not had this personal confirmation of the Gospel's truthfulness by the Holy Ghost. Isn't that so, Elder Markham?

MARKHAM Yes; at the same time, though, we don't want you to think you will receive a vision or any sort of overwhelming manifestation. Don't get me wrong. Visions and powerful witnesses are possible, but they generally come to prophets or other Church leaders who have proven their willingness to serve and their unshakeable faith. I don't know any of the elders here, for instance, who have received such a powerful witness.

JOHNSON Our religion is a very personal affair, Brother Ch'en. Each man must establish his own relationship with God. We cannot really tell you what to look for or how to go about looking. We can only give you broad patterns which can help to streamline your efforts.

MARKHAM Remember, Brother Ch'en, all testimonies are not gained strictly through prayer. Your good feelings about our members, and our meetings, and about the various principles we have taught you, are just as important as any feelings you might gain through prayer.

JOHNSON Yes, but these feelings alone are not enough. You must establish a personal communication with God, as well as respond to his work here on earth.

CH'EN There seems to be a very fine balance in what is required for a true testimony. Apparently, revelation, as you call it, has a broad interpretation.

JOHNSON As broad as the whole earth, and as varied as each individual.

CH'EN Elder Johnson, you are very . . . eloquent. But let

me ask you again. What is the proper way to prepare oneself to receive such a . . . witness?

MARKHAM The best guidelines are still in Moroni 10:4-5. First you must think carefully about all you know of the Gospel, and especially of the Book of Mormon. Do you do that Brother Ch'en?

CH'EN I have thought of little else for some time.

MARKHAM Good. Now, the scripture says you must also have a sincere heart, real intent, and faith in Jesus Christ. I interpret that as meaning, first, you must be *humble* and willing to accept what the Lord sees fit to give you. Second, you must really *want* to know if these things are true. If you secretly feel that your life is already sufficient, God will not respond. Finally, faith. Do you believe God has the power to hear and answer prayers?

(JOHNSON has turned away from the discussion during this speech. He is thoughtful and a bit irritated.)

CH'EN I have always believed in some supreme power. I have always hoped that I could discover It or Him or Her. (Smiles.) Yes, I believe this power, this God, should be able to speak to me. Elder Markham, you have helped me considerably. I feel that I have perhaps not been humble enough in my prayers. I have had a tendency to kneel down and analyze all that I was doing and saying, even while I was praying, and to base my judgments on certain mental *criteria* I had established. I will try to be more humble. Also, there are times when I feel very satisfied with my life. I become complacent . . . how do the Americans say . . . a fat cat?

(Ch'en and Markham smile.)

MARKHAM Yes.

CH'EN Although it seems I have been seriously searching for the truth for many years, it is only a moments like these that I feel the need to really know. It is easy to become completely immersed in day-to-day affairs.

MARKHAM Yes. (Brief Pause.) Well, I suppose you need to be going, Brother Ch'en . . .

JOHNSON May I make one final comment? I would like to add
(Out of nowhere.) that while you are working on humility and real
intent, do not ever sacrifice your honesty or your
self-respect. You are a son of God, if God exists;
and therefore he will not require you to relinquish
these qualities ever for him.

(Markham is restless.)

CH'EN I am not sure I understand, but I will try to
remember.

JOHNSON Good. Brother Ch'en. I'm very happy I met you on
that bus two months ago. I've come to appreciate
your intelligence and your sensitivity very much. I
want you to know that I think you are a very fine
man, and I believe that you can gain a testimony of
this Gospel. Perhaps during this vacation you will
have a chance to relax from your regular routine and
concentrate on what we have taught you. I wish you
. . . the very best.

CH'EN Thank you, Elder Johnson.

MARKHAM Brother Ch'en. I'd like to bear you my testimony. I
(Honestly, plainly, and know this Gospel and this Church are true. I was
deeply-felt.) brought up in the Church and I've seen the
wonderful effect it has had on the lives of people
I've known. I have prayed to know the truth of many
things, and God has never failed me. He has
answered my prayers; and he will answer yours, if
you will fulfill your commitments to us and to him. I
know he wants you to gain a testimony and be
baptized. I know he will do everything he can to
help you find a better and more meaningful life. I
know that Jesus Christ lives, and that Joseph Smith
was a prophet. I know that we have a living prophet
that guides this Church today. I know the Book of
Mormon is true. The promise of Moroni is true. I
feel I can promise you that, if you will pray humbly
and sincerely to God, you will receive an answer
and you can come to know as I know. I bear you my
testimony in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

(MARKHAM gazes straight
into CH'EN's eyes. CH'EN is
moved.)

CH'EN Thank you.

MARKHAM Elder Johnson, would you offer the closing prayer?

JOHNSON Sure. (Heads bow.) Father in Heaven, we're thankful that we have been able to meet with Brother Ch'en this evening. We pray that thy Spirit will be with him as he leaves now, that he may return home in safety. We also pray that he will receive the answer he needs concerning this Gospel. (Uncomfortable pause.) Help us all to continually come to know thee better. We are thankful for all that we have. And we say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

MARKHAM Thank you, Elder Johnson. Brother Ch'en? (They shake hands.) We'll look you up around the 20th. Have a nice vacation. Try to make it to church in Hua Lien if you can.

CH'EN I will.

JOHNSON Good luck, Brother Ch'en.

CH'EN Thank you; good night.

(He goes out.)

MARKHAM He's a good man.
(Looking after him.)

JOHNSON Elder Markham? (MARKHAM turns.) I think we pounded out an effective compromise there. Nice job.

(Sticks out his hand.)

MARKHAM You too, Elder Johnson. (He looks at JOHNSON just as he looked at CH'EN.) I . . . I just wish you could really bear witness. It'd be so much better. (He turns to get his things, JOHNSON looks down, grimacing.) Well, let's go. We have to be at Sister Chang's by eight o'clock.

(JOHNSON slams his scriptures onto the floor; MARKHAM looks at him in exasperation; BROTHER CH'EN reappears at the door.)

CH'EN Elder Markham, would it be all right if I read some scriptures here before I leave?

MARKHAM Well, yes, of course. I thought you had an appointment.

CH'EN It is not so important. I would like to read for just a few minutes.

MARKHAM Of course; uh, Elder Johnson and I need to go to another meeting.

CH'EN Fine, I will only stay a short time.

MARKHAM Fine. Well, good night again, Brother Ch'en. (To JOHNSON, who is still looking down, in a concerned and quiet tone.) Elder Johnson? We need to hurry.

(He goes out.)

JOHNSON Good night, Brother Ch'en.

(Follows MARKHAM out.)

(CH'EN closes door, goes and sits down for a moment and opens the Book of Mormon to the end. Then he kneels by the table, the lights dim — silence briefly, then he says, with head bowed:)

CH'EN God? (Silence again, a bit longer; a spotlight comes in on him very dimly; he looks up; quietly.) Yes . . . God . . . Yes.

(The spotlight comes up on him, brighter.)

END OF ACT II

Act III

(The missionary apartment. A week later. It is July 4, a playday. Early morning. Music is heard — The Doobie Brothers, "Jesus Is Just All Right With Me" coming from a cassette tape recorder. Curtain. The spotlight comes up on JOHNSON, who is dressed very casually, as are all the characters in this act. He has

been writing in his journal;
 he gets up here, however,
 and begins to dance around
 the apartment with the
 music. Barking.)

UNCLE SAM Break-fast!
 (From outside.)

JOHNSON Get in here, Uncle. Let's see you shake.

UNCLE SAM Eh? Hey, hey, hey.

JOHNSON Come on, rock out. Relax a little.

UNCLE SAM Foreign devil music.

(They laugh.)

JOHNSON Here, I'll show you. 1-2-3 hey! 1-2-3 hey!

(They do a three step and a
 kick. Both are enjoying
 themselves immensely. The
 bedroom door flies open.)

MARKHAM Johnson, turn that music down.
 (Sharply.)

JOHNSON What?

MARKHAM Turn that music down.

JOHNSON Could he be talking to us? (MARKHAM snaps off the
 (To SAM.) recorder.) The man has no soul, Uncle. Join me
 later. I'll teach you to boogaloo.

UNCLE SAM Be a good boy, Arizona.

JOHNSON Cook my breakfast, you pagan.

(He turns the music on again
 softly. Begins to write,
 MARKHAM reappears.)

MARKHAM Johnson, I don't think that kind of music, especially
 that song, is appropriate here.

JOHNSON I do.
 (Casually.)

MARKHAM Well, I don't (JOHNSON keeps writing.) Johnson, turn it off.

JOHNSON
(Begins humming as he writes, MARKHAM retreats to the bedroom. Pause. MATTHEWS comes out.)

MATTHEWS Elder Johnson, please turn that off. I'm trying to read scriptures.

JOHNSON Fat chance. You're filing slides.

(MATTHEWS is furious. He pulls the plug out of the wall.)

JOHNSON Temper, temper!

MATTHEWS So help me, Johnson, if you push me any further, I'll punch your lights out.

JOHNSON Fighting's against the rules, Elder Matthews.

MATTHEWS I don't care.

JOHNSON "Then the high priest rent his clothes saying: He hath spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now we have heard his blasphemy. (MATTHEWS slams the door as he goes back to the bedroom) What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death."

UNCLE SAM Arizona?!

JOHNSON Who speaks to Caiaphas, the high priest?

UNCLE SAM Come here. (JOHNSON goes into kitchen.) Wise up.

JOHNSON What do you mean?

UNCLE SAM There have been others like you. I know my elders. Wise up.

JOHNSON What do you know about me?

UNCLE SAM You don't have a testimony.

JOHNSON Jeez! You're pretty blunt. Is it that obvious? (Deflated.)

UNCLE SAM You see those hotcakes, Arizona. If I don't take them off the fire soon, they'll burn up. But they tell me when they're ready. They rise and bubble and turn brown. Then I know they're ready. I take them off before they scorch. Everyone of you elders is in the fire, on the griddle. And you've all got personal problems that make things tough. But almost all of you go through the motions, make the signs, do what's expected. It's called faith. If you don't make the signs, the fire gets hotter. You came out here to make a change. Make it! Have faith. Otherwise you'll go up in smoke. I've seen it happen to one elder and I've heard about others. Wise up. If you didn't have a basic belief, you wouldn't be here. Don't fight it; use it. And don't let those others shape your battle. They're fighting too, even if they don't know it. Your battle just attracts a little more attention. Wise up.

JOHNSON I can't be a hypocrite, Sam.

UNCLE SAM Hypocrite to what? What's your alternative? The world? Do you owe your allegiance to the world?

JOHNSON I owe allegiance to myself. I can't be a hypocrite to myself. If I don't have faith, I don't.

UNCLE SAM You can be what you want to be. I know you're afraid you'll talk yourself into something that's false, because you want it so much. Well, you can talk yourself into evil, too. What are you basically — good or evil? Answer that for yourself. There's the Gospel or there's nothing, Arizona. Which do you believe in? Which do you want? If you feel like a hypocrite doing good, then you're basically evil. Some people get away because they think it's all relative, but you can't feel that way do you?

JOHNSON No.

UNCLE SAM No, you recognize good and evil. You know they exist. Choose good. Be what you want to be. (Pause.) Now, set the table, will you? (Shouting.) Break-fast!

(JOHNSON begins to set the table. The others come out warily, except LUCAS, who is bouncing.)

LUCAS What do you think of the Fourth of July, Uncle Sam?

- UNCLE SAM Pierre to you, Canada.
- LUCAS Forgive me, mon petit. (Aghast.) Sam you burned the hotcakes.
- JOHNSON Inside joke. Listen, I'm sorry about the music.
- MATTHEWS Yeah, forget it. You take the blessing?
- JOHNSON Sure. (Bowed heads.) Father in Heaven, we're grateful this morning for all our blessings. We're grateful for this calling which we have to spread the Gospel here in this land. Forgive us of our shortcomings and strengthen our faith. We're grateful for this food and pray that it will be blessed to give us nourishment and energy. This we say in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
- LUCAS Have you ever been to this beach we're going to?
(To MARKHAM)
- MARKHAM No.
- LUCAS Oh, it's beautiful. Our district had a playday there right after I came on island. It was fantastic. And we just had watermelon then. Today we cook steaks! It's gonna be great! Elder Johnson, do you play football?
- JOHNSON A little.
- LUCAS I love it. We'll have to be careful, though. The beach is a real temptation. Last time, I remember I was supposed to hit Jensen on a down and in pattern. He ran down and out. I led him right into the ocean. Jackson and the waves both hit him at the same time. He went all the way under and came up laughing like a fool. Then he and Osborne threw Jackson in. It was a free for all. After that everybody went in but the sisters, and the only thing that saved them was Sister Jordan's reputation as a holy terror.
- MARKHAM I hear she used to wrestle for the "Y". (Laughter.)
- LUCAS Anderson dunked me. I asked him before I went under if he thought this was out of line. He said, "Maybe, but I'll bet God's laughing as hard as we are." (Laughter.)
- MATTHEWS Well, it won't happen today. We're not going near the water.

- LUCAS Then why go to the beach? I mean we can at least wade.
- MATTHEWS We'll see. Elder Markham, how was that second last night?
- MARKHAM (A bit flustered.) Oh, well, not bad. We may not get past a third, though. The guy has ashtrays all over and they're all full.
- JOHNSON (Smiling.) Elder Markham really doesn't know how the second went last night.
- MARKHAM Come on, Johnson.
- JOHNSON Oh, they know how it is, Elder. (To MATTHEWS.) We rode our bikes all over the city yesterday and by the time we got to Brother Li's house, we were exhausted. He gave us a cold drink and I started the second. All of a sudden we heard snores. Elder Markham was completely zonked in the armchair. I thought Brother Li would die laughing. (Laughter.)
- MARKHAM I was not completely asleep and I was not snoring. (The other three shake their heads, humoring him satirically.)
- JOHNSON, LUCAS and MATTHEWS No.
Of course not.
Oh, no.
- MARKHAM is furious. (To MATTHEWS.) You know how slow Johnson gives his lessons. He can't even get through the first without flubbing it all up. (To JOHNSON.) It's torture listening to you.
- JOHNSON (Having a ball.) I know. Well, you sure didn't get tortured last night. I've never seen anybody look so at peace. (Laughter. MARKHAM leaves the table.) After we finished, Brother Li wanted to put a blanket on him while he and I played chess, but I figured that was a little much.
- MARKHAM (Icily.) I'll tell you what's too much, Johnson. You challenged him to baptism, you committed him to read the Book of Mormon, but you didn't bear your testimony to him, did you?
- JOHNSON (MATTHEWS and LUCAS murmur a protest. MARKHAM ignores them.) No.

MARKHAM Testimony is the heart of the Gospel, Johnson. Why didn't you bare your testimony to Brother Li?

JOHNSON You know why.

MARKHAM Yes, and I know we may lose Brother Li because of you, just like we lost Sister Chang. What are you doing out here without a testimony, huh? How do you expect to do anything at all? You don't *do* the Lord's work Johnson; you hold it up!

(JOHNSON drops his fork
and walks out; barking;
Pause.)

LUCAS You knucklehead.
(To MARKHAM)

MATTHEWS Shut up, Lucas. He had it coming. Maybe this'll wake him up.

LUCAS Sounds like Markham could use some waking up too.

MARKHAM Look at what that guy's done to this apartment. We're supposed to be companions! How can we work in a spirit like this? Wish he'd just go home. Anything to get him off my hands.

LUCAS Off your back, you mean. You don't know how to handle him and it bugs you. It makes you realize you're not perfect.

MARKHAM Could you handle him?

LUCAS I don't know. Poll did all right.

MATTHEWS Poll babied him. You don't know what you're talking about.

LUCAS I know they were happy and baptizing. But maybe you're right. He's got to face it sometime.

(JOHNSON re-enters,
trembling.)

JOHNSON Elder Markham, do something for me.

MARKHAM What?
(Flat.)

JOHNSON Come here.

MARKHAM Yeah?
(Goes.)

JOHNSON I want you to use your priesthood.

MARKHAM How?

JOHNSON Lift that breakfast table by your faith.

MARKHAM Get off it, Johnson

(He starts to walk away.)

JOHNSON Noooo, wait a minute, senior companion. You're afraid you couldn't do it. You don't really *believe* you could do it. Come on. Faith as a mustard seed, Markham. Give us a little show.

MATTHEWS All right, Johnson, cool off.

JOHNSON Shut up, pea-brain.

(He turns back to
MARKHAM)

MATTHEWS Johnson
(Walks over. Touches
JOHNSON on the
shoulder.)

(JOHNSON shoves him
away. MATTHEWS loses his
temper. They grapple for an
instant.)

UNCLE SAM Let them get it all out, California.
(Grabs MATTHEWS.)

MATTHEWS You dirty chink!

UNCLE SAM Go to your room, little boy!

(Shoves MATTHEWS into
the bedroom, closes and
holds the door.)

JOHNSON Come on, Markham.

MARKHAM You're seeking a sign, Johnson.

JOHNSON That's right. I'm a priest of Baal, Markham. I'm a Korihor. Are you an Alma? Huh? (Gives him a little

shove.) Come on; fire from heaven, bright boy,
strike me dumb!

MARKHAM Lucas?

UNCLE SAM Don't Canada. It's gotta come.

JOHNSON Markham, you don't have any more faith than I do. You don't have a testimony either. You and Matthews don't really *believe* or *live* the Gospel. You *use* it to help you plan your petty lives and make you feel important. Maybe the Gospel's true and maybe it's not, but you're not the one to tell me or show me anything about it. So keep your trap shut about my testimony. And don't worry; I'm not gonna touch you.

(MARKHAM glowers and
heads for the bedroom;
SAM lets him go in.)

LUCAS Elder Johnson, sit down.

JOHNSON I

LUCAS Sit down and be quiet. Look man, I don't care if you're three years older or not. I want to tell you something.

JOHNSON O.K.
(Pugnaciously, but sitting.)

LUCAS You're as screwed up as they are. First of all, Markham does have a testimony. So does Matthews, and so do I. We're not very strong in it because we haven't had it long. We know a little about the priesthood, but not much. It takes a lifetime to build faith. Maybe your little speech will help Markham. He's just a starstruck kid who was brought up in the Church and not in the Gospel. Yeah, I know the distinction too. Markham wants to be a mission leader and baptize a million people because he thinks that's what the Gospel's all about. Of course, he'd never admit it. But look, he's basically doing the right thing. He wants to serve the Lord, and even if his adolescent egotism gets in the way, he's on the right track. And at least he likes these people and really wants to help them. Don't be unjust to him.

JOHNSON What about Matthews?

LUCAS Mattews is schizophrenic. The world got him by the throat by the time he was twelve. Athletics, keg parties, fashion fads. He's been conditioned to the world. When he thinks about the Church and its principles, he's a great guy. You should've seen him at that send-off. He *really feels* it. But get him back to temporal affairs, even temporal mission affairs, and he's right back in the world — all its thoughts and all its reactions. I don't know if he'll ever get over it. But listen, Elder Johnson. I don't care how bright you are or how clearly you think you see things. You're the one with real trouble right now.

JOHNSON Why?

LUCAS Those guys will fight their problems within the Church framework. They'll have bishops and wives to help them overcome themselves all through life. Not to mention that the Lord blesses all of us for doing what we can. They'll probably both become bishops and at least one of them will be good. But you, baby, you're on your way out *right now*. And it's not God's fault, it's yours.

JOHNSON Why doesn't He answer my prayers?

LUCAS You won't let him. I'm sure He tries. Look, two things. How long have you been on this agnostic thing?

JOHNSON Since I was a sophomore in high school.

LUCAS And you've nourished and cared for it every since.

JOHNSON No, I . . .

LUCAS Come on, Johnson. Nobody lives in uncertainty. You may think you do, and torment yourself with arguments to keep yourself satisfied, but agnosticism has become your creed. You're proud of it. It's made you an individual. You've found your niche. The good but dissenting Mormon, who lives the principles but questions the doctrines. The man above. Pride, Johnson, and a pattern for life every bit as tight, if not so common, as the bourgeois Mormon lifestyle that bugs you so much. You've told us all what a puppet your father is. Well, the world pulls your strings too, buddy. And you jump.

JOHNSON I've thought of all this before. I've considered it. I've seen the pattern. Maybe you think all my efforts to break out are just red herrings to myself. But I know

they're not. I've felt the pain. I've scraped my brain on every wall of this stinking box I live in, and *there are no answers!* Shouldn't the Lord come to me when I can't do any more?

LUCAS You think you've thought of everything. How 'bout this, Johnson? Quote: "I can't have the faith to get an answer, until I get an answer." Unquote . . .

JOHNSON That's the vicious cycle that drives me insane.

LUCAS I *know* it is, for cryin' out loud. Will you lemme finish? That cycle, in your case, is hogwash. You believe in God, through his principles, at least part of the time, and the rest of the time you hope. True?

JOHNSON Yes.

LUCAS That should be plenty for God to work with. Alma says desire is enough of a seed to bring a response.

JOHNSON Yes, but all of Alma 32 is geared to convincing oneself that the Gospel is true rather than . . .

LUCAS Oh, Johnson. What are you, a computer? How many times have you started that line when somebody brings up Alma's seed? Can you hold off on the stock answers for just a minute? (JOHNSON looks down.) What I'm saying is this. You don't lack faith in God. Your belief is sufficient. Your doubts center on yourself. Do you understand me? You doubt yourself. You doubt your ability to receive what other people have received. You look at the Markhams and sneer because they're naive. And so you accuse them of not really knowing the Gospel is true. But the Markhams scare you, because they really seem to have had an answer. And, oh, you could pass off the Markhams. They're your age and not so smart. But what about those brilliant Church leaders you've known? And the General Authorities? Are they naive and stupid? Yet they know. They've received answers. Johnson, you're afraid. That's your problem. You're afraid that for all your brains you're not the real, worthwhile, teachable, feeling person that others are. You're afraid you wouldn't receive an answer because you haven't got what it takes. Your agnosticism is one big front of fear.

(Long silence.)

JOHNSON No, you're wrong.

LUCAS Sure I am. Everybody's wrong but you. You're always right. Look where it's got you. (Pause.) Pierre, have you got some milk? I talk too much.

(SAM goes to the kitchen.
LUCAS begins to clear the
table. Pause.)

JOHNSON Elder Lucas. Thanks. I'll think about it.

LUCAS *Feel it, Elder. That's what you need.*

(LUCAS follows SAM into
the kitchen with the dishes.

JOHNSON is in deep
thought.)

SAM Good job, Canada.

LUCAS I hope it works, Sam. He's a good man. He's bright. He cares about people. In a lot of ways he's very realistic. And he's got a sense of humor. That in itself is worth a lot. I really like him.

SAM So do I. I think he'll come around.

LUCAS I don't know. I know what Johnson's going through. I've seen it before, and I've read about it in Church history. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Thomas Marsh. Some very good and some very brilliant people get hung up on a single point of the Gospel and they can't seem to break loose and catch the whole perspective again. Sometimes it's a major doctrinal question, like Johnson has with revelation, or like others have had with Church government or polygamy. Sometimes it's a much littler thing, like evolution or birth control or the Black question. But big or small, it nails 'em just the same. Their question becomes a subtle obsession, a fire in the mind. It's like a whirlpool, and it drags them down to an intellectual pit. They're still good people. They *want* to see the whole picture. They *want* to break out. But at the same time they build the walls around them even higher. They've made such a big thing of their question either to themselves or others that it becomes a matter of pride for them to resolve it. So they struggle on, attacking their question one day, reinforcing it the next, until they're so exhausted fighting themselves that they collapse. Then, after a while, they get up and start over again. But their minds are locked in and the obsession grows stronger. And it becomes a

way of life. It's not at all pleasant, but it's individual, or at least they think it is. In their own tormented way they're satisfied. Then Satan slowly feeds on their pain, and takes advantage of their distorted view of the Gospel, and they begin to view the whole Church from the standpoint of their terribly personal battle. Suddenly *all* the doctrines and principles are on trial. And the human follies of Church members, like aspiration, or materialism, or apathy seem unbearably wicked and reflect on the Gospel rather than on the individual. Then they become bitter and indifferent, and pretty soon, out of pride and frustration, they begin to sin. They're still good people, but, after that, they no longer care, or they have to justify themselves by continuing to rebel. It's not long before they're gone.

(Pause.)

UNCLE SAM Elder Johnson's only 22.

LUCAS But he's already been fighting himself for seven years. If he doesn't recognize what he's into now, he never will. He'll just dig deeper and deeper into his hole and then it'll just be a matter of time. I hope I made him see. (Pause.) He's a good man. (Pause.) Hey! Playday. Bus in twenty minutes. We've gotta roll.

(MATTHEWS and
MARKHAM come out
sullenly.)

JOHNSON I'd like to stay home, if I could. Sam'll be here.

MATTHEWS Brother T'ang is through. He's finished. I'm firing him.

LUCAS Hey, let's hit the playday first, We'll think about it again tonight.

JOHNSON Would you mind if I stayed here, Elder Markham?

MARKHAM Fine with me.

(MATTHEWS shrugs.)

LUCAS Let's go then. See you later, Elder Johnson. We'll bring you back a steak.

JOHNSON Elder Lucas? (The others go out.) You've got all of us

pegged. Just out of curiosity, what's *your* problem?

LUCAS I can't keep my mind off women. Adios. Pierre! Au revoir!
(Smiles.)

(He goes out; barking.)

UNCLE SAM I need to go do some shopping.

JOHNSON Fine, I want to be alone. I won't run off.

UNCLE SAM Bacon, lettuce, and tomato tonight, heh, heh, heh.

JOHNSON That'd be great.

(SAM goes out, JOHNSON sits down and writes furiously in his journal for an instant. Stops. Slams it shut, goes to the door and looks out. Comes back. Pulls out a chair. Kneels.)

JOHNSON Oh, God. (Lights fade, spotlight on JOHNSON.)
God?

(Voices are heard.)

MARKHAM Isn't the Gospel beautiful? It makes my happy all the time.

MATTHEWS It makes me feel love. God is love. Love is what it's all about.

MARKHAM Love and happiness — and truth. That's what makes it so beautiful. It's true, absolutely true and it'll last forever. Love and happiness and truth, for eternity.

JOHNSON What do you know about truth?

LUCAS He knows, Elder Johnson. I know too. Join us.

MARKHAM Yes, Elder Johnson. Come.

MATTHEWS You can know too, Johnson. Come.

POLL It *is* true, Barney, I know it is.

UNCLE SAM Wise up, Arizona.

JOHNSON No. No. There's got to be more. You're just men.

LUCAS God sends his answers through men. *I* didn't speak

to you; it was the Holy Ghost. You felt it. You know.

JOHNSON No.

LUCAS What did you feel?

JOHNSON It made me think.

POLL What did you *feel*, Barney?

JOHNSON Nothing.

UNCLE SAM You felt it, Arizona. Don't be afraid.

JOHNSON I only felt a little. That's all I ever feel. I . . .

(JOHNSON's own voice is
heard.)

JOHNSON'S VOICE Don't be a fool, Johnson. Was what you felt an answer from God? Be honest, Johnson. Think!

LUCAS That's your pride talking, Elder. That's your fear. Don't listen to it.

JOHNSON'S voice What does he know about what you've felt, what you've experienced? You know this isn't enough. Don't sell yourself out.

JOHNSON I want to know.

JOHNSON'S voice Truth or happiness, you can't have both.

MARKHAM Love and truth and happiness — forever.

JOHNSON'S voice Baloney. Johnson, be honest!

LUCAS Johnson, you're talking to yourself.

JOHNSON'S voice No.

LUCAS It's what you've always feared. But the opposite.

JOHNSON'S voice. No.

LUCAS Don't talk yourself *out* of the truth.

JOHNSON'S voice Don't let them talk you into a lie. Truth, Johnson. Honesty!

JOHNSON Yes.

- POLL No, Barney.
- JOHNSON Yes. There *must* be more!
- UNCLE SAM No, Arizona. More comes later. We grow!
- JOHNSON's voice Listen to them qualify, Johnson. They're backing down.
- LUCAS He's lying, Johnson. You're answering yourself. Don't make yourself your god.
- JOHNSON's voice Shut up.
- LUCAS Don't make pride and fear your gods. Open up! Break away!
- JOHNSON Yes, I must.
- JOHNSON's voice No! What if they're wrong? How could you live with yourself if they're wrong? Your life would be a joke. All your suffering a joke!
- MARKHAM You'll never know if you're wrong.
- JOHNSON's voice That's right, you'll never know. Never, never, never, know!
- POLL God will add to your light.
- JOHNSON's voice Never!
- JOHNSON Never.
- MATTHEWS Love, Johnson.
- MARKHAM Truth and happiness.
- JOHNSON's voice Never!
- LUCAS It's true, Johnson.
- JOHNSON's voice Honesty.
- UNCLE SAM Faith.
- JOHNSON Honesty!
- JOHNSON's voice Yes!
- LUCAS No! Faith *and* honesty; your pride is *dishonest*!

Your fear is *dishonest!* Feel it, Johnson. You know, you know

(All of them join in, in a crescendo. JOHNSON is racked.)

JOHNSON's voice No!!!
(Terribly loud.)

JOHNSON No!!!
(Blending with his own voice.)

(He stands upright, picks up the chair and stares into the blinding light.)

JOHNSON God!! I . . . No!!!!

(He smashes the chair across the table, falls, and lies face upward, sobbing. The spotlight on him slowly fades into nothingness.)

END OF ACT III

Epilog

(The missionary apartment. That night. Enter MARKHAM and JOHNSON. JOHNSON is in a black, careless humor. MARKHAM is frustrated. JOHNSON flops in an armchair, MARKHAM at the table.)

MARKHAM All right, what's on your mind, Elder Johnson?

JOHNSON My mind? Nothing.

MARKHAM Come on, you've been down all night. Something's on your mind.

JOHNSON No. I'm not thinking any more. I'm just feeling. Lucas suggested it.

MARKHAM Well, you must feel rotten then.

JOHNSON Yes.

(Pause.)

MARKHAM Lucas wants us all to try to forget this morning. At least the personal feelings. I'm willing. What do you say?

JOHNSON You're willing because you came off a jackass. (MARKHAM starts to retort angrily.) But don't worry. I'm not remembering. Memory is a process of mind, and I'm not thinking. I'm just feeling.

MARKHAM Can't we do anything, Elder? Won't you try?

JOHNSON My mind is a blank. Are you speaking to me? Beep beep beep.

MARKHAM Jeez!
(Bangs his hand down on the table.)

JOHNSON Golly gumdrops!

(He laughs. Pause.)

MARKHAM Oh wow! The transfer sheet. Come on, we've got to go back to the post office.

JOHNSON We?

MARKHAM We, Johnson. Let's go.

JOHNSON Oui, a French word signifying the affirmative. My mind is coming back.

MARKHAM I said, let's go.

JOHNSON Yes, my mind! But it's all so hazy. Did you hear a jackass bray?

MARKHAM Garbage.

(Barking.)

JOHNSON Hark, Cerberus! Who comes? Goldilocks Lucas and the Pea-grain?

(Laughs.)

MARKHAM No, it's too early.

(HOLLY appears; knocks.)

JOHNSON Hol-lee Hello!
(Snaps out.)

MARKHAM How'd she know where we live?

JOHNSON We taught her here once. Come in, Holly. What is it?

HOLLY Oh, I must talk to you.

MARKHAM We have to get that transfer sheet. Gordon goes home tomorrow.

JOHNSON Look, you go ahead, I'll talk to her. It's only five minutes to the post office. I think she wants to talk to me anyway. She knows me better.

MARKHAM Shoot, it's against the rules.

JOHNSON Well, but we've got to know about the transfer don't we?

MARKHAM All right. (To HOLLY.) Sister Chou, we have some other business to take care of, but we want to help you too. You talk to Elder Johnson; I'll be right back.

HOLLY Thank you. (He goes out; barking.) Oh, Elder Johnson.
(She is crying.)

JOHNSON Here, sit down.
(They sit at the table, corner to corner.)

HOLLY My father, he is so angry with me.

JOHNSON Why?

HOLLY I told him I wanted to go to . . . American college . . . to study.

JOHNSON What's wrong with that?

HOLLY He says . . . I will stay there . . . and live . . . and forget China. Ohh. (Sobbing, she takes his hand.) Forgive me, I am so silly.

JOHNSON No, no. (He strokes her hand.) Holly, you won't forget China. Your father must know that deep down. And it would do you good to study in America. You already have beautiful English, but you could improve it in the States. And anyone who speaks English has a better chance at a job with all

the American business here. And those are the people who get better pay. Have your teacher talk to him. Do you have a favorite teacher who would help you?

HOLLY Yes, I had not thought of that. And we wants me to go very much. I am his prize student.

JOHNSON There you go. It'll work out.
(He strokes her hand again.)

HOLLY Oh, you make me so happy!
(She jumps up.)

JOHNSON Good.

(Pause.)

HOLLY But *you* are not happy. You have not been happy since Elder Poll left. Is it this Elder Markham?

JOHNSON No, it's just a lot of things.

HOLLY Your family?

JOHNSON No, it's all in my mind.

HOLLY Tell me. I am your friend. Come, we will go out on the balcony and talk. The night air sets minds free. (She stops, looks at him a moment, then leans down and kisses him on the cheek.) This is how American girls show concern, is it not?

JOHNSON Holly.
(Stands up.)

HOLLY Is it not allowed?

JOHNSON Yes, it is allowed.
(Looks at her a moment, then leans over slowly and kisses her cheek.)

HOLLY You are wonderful! You make me so happy. How can I make you happy?
(Laughs.)

JOHNSON Just talk to me. You're very beautiful.
(Seriously, gently.)

HOLLY Come, we will go downtown. I will show you my favorite noodle shop. They serve the best beef
(Taking command.)

noodles in the capital. And gigantic bottles of Chi Shui! Come! It will make you happy again.

JOHNSON No.

HOLLY Why not?

JOHNSON No, I . . .

HOLLY It is this Elder Markham. He is the reason you are unhappy. I will kick his shins for you.

JOHNSON No, it's not Elder Markham.

HOLLY Then why not?

JOHNSON Well, I'd look ridiculous wearing a tie.

HOLLY Take it off. You are more silly than me.

(Laughs.)

JOHNSON All right. I want to. I just want to talk to you.

(Takes off the tie slowly,
drapes it over the chair;
softly.)

(Barking.)

HOLLY Elder Markham! He would never let you go. Quick,
(Hand on mouth.) the back way.

(She is giggling. This is great innocent fun. She crosses into the kitchen, waves him to come on. He follows rather dumbly. She opens the back door, beckons him to be quiet. MARKHAM storms in in roaring good spirits, carrying a big bottle of Chi Shui. JOHNSON motions HOLLY to go ahead. She beckons him to come, goes out. He stands and listens.)

MARKHAM Johnson, you won't believe it. (Sees the tie, addresses the bedroom) Come here and have a glass of Chi Shui. (Pours out JOHNSON's drink, then his own.) Get this Johnson: Matthews —

busted to straight senior. I can't believe it! Jensen — AP; Markham — district leader. You get that? Markham — district leader; all right, huh? Lucas — zone leader, and co-senior with Johnson! You get that? Lucas, your buddy, is your companion — and you're co-senior! How's that make you feel? You made it, Johnson! We both made it! And, oh yeah! Here's the best part. A letter from Brother Ch'en. He got his answer. He wants to be baptized in two weeks. Whaddya say Johnson? (Pause; JOHNSON looks down again. MARKHAM shakes his head, begins to read the letter over.) Finally, a good man. (JOHNSON turns and goes out. The lights fade to a spotlight on the table.) He's such a good man. (MARKHAM drinks; a door is heard closing; the lights go off MARKHAM; only the empty chair and glass, and the tie can be seen.) A good man.

The End



Facing Spiritual Reality

JOHN T. KESLER

John T. Kesler, a twenty-nine year old Salt Lake attorney, was student body president at the University of Utah, graduated from the Columbia University law school, and attended the University of Hamburg as a Rotary International Fellow in political

economy. He has been Executive Director of the Utah Bicentennial Commission and Regional Director of Development for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Washington, D.C. John is married to Colleen (Freddie) Larsen Kesler.

"Would I like to know more about the Mormon Church? I can't believe my friends are asking me this. I'm sure they realize that I grew up in Salt Lake City and already know about their religion." Such were my initial thoughts one evening in New York City when some Mormon friends sprang the golden question. Yet I found myself saying that I would take the missionary lessons. I was almost surprised to feel an urging within myself to more thoroughly investigate something which I had rejected so long ago.

As I went home that night I mused about why, at 25 years of age in New York City, I would take another look at a religion which I considered to be a small and somewhat eccentric branch of Christian fundamentalism. The main answer I came up with was that I had investigated about everything else under the sun; so why not take one more hard look before I dismissed it for good.

My life to that point seemed like a never ending search for some deeper reality than I found readily apparent in my day-to-day environment. At first I was fascinated by the frontiers of the mind. By the time I was eleven I had read most of the books in the Salt Lake City Library on extrasensory perception and mental telepathy. During junior high school years I became an expert in hypnotism and the power of suggestion and did research on optical illusions.

As a child I attended an Episcopal church, but developed an increasingly cautious attitude about religious conversion. My studies of the mind had revealed to me how prone individuals are to self-deluding leaps of faith. Consequently, I vowed that I would resist such leaps to the utmost of my ability until I had searched as honestly and thoroughly as I was able and until what final leap might eventually be necessary would be based to the extent possible on knowledge and self-knowledge. This attitude resulted in most of my youth being spent as a skeptic and a critic of others' beliefs. If I was outwardly tolerant it belied the processes of my mind which were constantly analyzing and picking apart what I felt were the inadequacies of the world views of those around me. By the time I graduated from college, however, I realized that somehow I must find some affirmative belief of my own.

Soon after I started doing graduate work in Germany, I decided to put myself through a self-analysis. I wanted to see if there was some common denominator within me which could recognize personal truths.

After about a month of trying to purge myself of all elements which had been imposed by others or picked up by habit rather than emerging from some truth or essence within, I began to feel as if I were falling into nothingness. The sensation was like jumping into a well, falling further and further into darkness with the light at the mouth of the well representing all that was recognizable and secure, becoming less and less distinct, and at the same time falling into a dimensionless void without parameters or signposts to orient oneself. Eventually I felt that I had hit bottom and then began to rebuild. I was surprised how few perspectives I had that seemed to be purely in tune with what I felt was an inner essence that I had discovered.

This internal mechanism was not like a book which I could open at will and read what was right and what directions I should take in life. It was more like a tuning fork. When thoughts or experiences rang true to me or at the right pitch, to use the simile, the tuning fork within would begin to resonate, to signal that I was receiving ideas or directions or concepts which were in harmony with this internal signal.

I wasn't sure if this dimension within me was a synthesis of all my intellectual, emotional and instinctive faculties or whether it found its source from something more universal. In any event I came to trust that this signal should be the source of the final discernment of a matter after all thoughts and emotions had been consulted. In the next several years I learned by trial and error that not paying attention to that beacon was a mistake.

I now had a firm sense that if there was a way of life that was true or right, I would recognize it if I found it. So I began a renewed effort to review different moral, philosophical and religious outlooks as well as scientific, particularly psychological and behavioral views of man. After a year in Germany, I spent a year working and then began attending law school. Every moment I could spare from my legal studies I pursued my personal investigations. Sometimes I would stay up an entire night pouring over the writings of an original thinker such as Nietzsche or a particularly penetrating moralist. I finally became rather discouraged about the prospect of finding any kind of absolute answers. So I put my search in low gear for the time being and began to pursue more immediate concerns.

Yet, I still could not deny the force within me which somehow told me that I should persevere in my search for more universal perspectives. More than anything else in the last year my inner beacon had responded affirmatively to Christ's message of love. I had a difficult time conceiving of his actual divinity, but I felt that I probably needed to reconsider the implications of his life and ministry. I was in the process of doing so when my Mormon friends asked me if I wanted to investigate their church. When I recalled the

past several years, I had to admit I had given about everything else a chance. Now was the time, I thought, to make a final appraisal of even this unlikely Church.

During the first several missionary lessons, it was reconfirmed that I was already reasonably well informed on the basic doctrines of the Church. In later lessons I became more aggressive in trying to contradict the two young men who were teaching me, and pointed out many of the strongest arguments against the Church that I had learned so well growing up as a non-Mormon in Salt Lake City. Yet despite the ease with which I could sometimes bring their arguments to a dead end, I was impressed by their reaction to my analytical sorties. They would always fall back on their personal testimony, that they had an inner knowledge that what they taught was true as though they were in tune to their own inner beacons. I was well aware that a clever arguer can seemingly make a shambles of any message, whether it is true or not, and began to think that perhaps I was trying to be a little bit too clever.

I was skeptical, though, because when I analyzed the church and its claims from a purely intellectual point of view, it was my honest assessment that the whole thing was simply not believable. From what I had read it appeared that there was not a prominent non-Mormon archeologist who felt that there was much of a possibility that the civilization described in the Book of Mormon existed. As far as I knew, similar conclusions seemed to hold true for non-Mormon anthropologists who had looked at the Mormon claims that Indians are direct descendants of Old Testament Semites. I also had a hard time understanding why the Mormon Church should be the only group or institution I had ever found that denied privileges to the Negro on other than man-inspired discriminatory grounds. In short, it seemed that if one was going to be rational by 20th century standards, there was not much of a likelihood that one would end up believing in the claims of the Church.

In spite of such questions I decided to try to live their religion. I thought that if there was a chance in the world that it was true in spite of my best rational assessments to the contrary, I was going to let that inner beacon, or what the missionaries called the Spirit of Christ, give me feedback on the matter.

To my surprise, over a few months, my commitment to living their way of life increased. Each step I took in living the tenets of this church led me to take another. I was by no means desperate to leap into something just to find security; as a matter of fact, it was with reluctance at some points that I decided to make additional commitments. For instance, going to church had been a distasteful thing for me ever since I was quite young and had noticed the piousness that some people exude this one day a week only. Yet before long I began to go to church regularly. In each case when I took another step in living the gospel as taught by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I could feel the seed that was planted there grow and yield satisfaction and fulfillment.

Learning to pray was the most difficult initial step for me. Getting humbly on my knees to pray about material, some of which I assumed down deep was nothing but fantasy, to a God I couldn't conceive of, seemed almost absurd at times. Yet still having faith in that urging within me which kept telling me that there was truth to be discovered which was better and truer than what I had yet found, I bowed my head and prayed. It was a fatal exercise at first. Eventually, though, I felt a longing to return again and again, to come in tune with the currents in the depths of myself in search of the eternal within and a sense of the infinite beyond.

I soon began to feel a polarity within myself. My mind would go over it again and again, but I could not escape the conclusion that the claims of this church were simply not believable; they just seemed too unlikely. On the other hand, I had never before

experienced such a constant and growing satisfaction from anything in which I had previously been involved. I began to feel that whether or not final truths were ever discoverable in a pure form I should grasp that which best brings me most in harmony with what I feel in my inner essence of with the Spirit of Christ. In other words, whether or not the claims of the Mormon Church were literally true, I was beginning to feel that there was no reason not to embrace their way of life since it was superior to all other philosophies, religions, or outlooks I had yet found or manufactured.

After I reached this conclusion I began to pray more fervently concerning the truthfulness of this church. One evening after reading one of the last sections of the Book of Mormon, I decided that more than ever before I must completely absorb myself in prayer, somehow communicate with God, if he was there. I knelt in deep supplication for a few minutes, then found that thoughts and temptations began to enter my mind. I felt as if some force was trying to keep me from praying. I tried in vain to break out of a darkness which engulfed me. After some time I lay on the floor of my apartment exhausted but free from this influence. The next two evenings much the same type of occurrence ensued when I attempted to pray for an answer to my questions about the Book of Mormon and the Mormon Church.

On the fourth evening I completed the Book of Mormon for the first time since I had finished the missionary lessons. With all the earnestness I possessed I prayed once again. Almost immediately a power came over me that was so strong it pulled me out of the concentration of my prayer. I got up to see if someone was in the darkness of my room, for I felt something there. Finding nothing, I dropped to my knees again, but immediately felt completely engulfed in a suffocating darkness. I had the sensation of being thrown by someone or something, and fell against the wall by which I had been kneeling. As I struggled to get up off the floor, I had never been in such despair in my life. With every ounce of strength that I still possessed I returned to my knees and called for my Father in Heaven.

At that moment a warm, burning sensation came flowing into my body. In concurrence with this feeling a light surrounded me and filled my entire being. Then a voice spoke to me which filled me as completely as the light and the burning. It said, "John, the Book of Mormon is true. Let your Uncle Joseph know that I have answered your prayers. You will see him before he leaves this earth." Then the light and the burning subsided. Exhausted, I went to bed.

In the morning I got up and wrote a letter to my great uncle, Joseph Fielding Smith, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whom I had never met, explaining who I was, that I had received an answer to my prayers and was joining the Church. Instead of mailing the letter I pushed it to the back of my desk and went on to my responsibilities. As the letter lay on my desk for several days, I went over and over what had happened. I explored the possibility that I had become so worked up in my desire to receive an answer that my unconscious had fabricated the sensations that came over me and the voice which spoke to me. On the other hand, that force within me that had pushed me my entire life and had never let me rest or be satisfied with that I had found said, "Yes, you have found the truth." As usual, I gave in to my inner promptings. I mailed the letter to President Smith and communicated to the local bishop that I had decided to join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I was in an interesting predicament. It seemed as though I had progressed from faith or hope to real personal knowledge that the gospel as taught by this Church was true, but at the same time there was my critical intellect which still questioned various claims of the Church. I had never expected that faith and knowledge would precede belief, but in some respects, it had happened.

A short time after my baptism I experienced a confirmation of the truthfulness of the communication I had received in response to my prayers. I recalled that the voice had told me that I would see President Smith "before he left this earth." President Smith had not responded to my letter, but I thought that perhaps someday I might be able to shake his hand. Shortly after I was baptized, however, I was in Salt Lake City and an aunt of mine said out of the blue, "I'll bet you would like to meet and talk with President Smith, wouldn't you." I was so surprised, but within a few days I had the singular opportunity to meet him and to sit down and converse with him for about an hour. A few days later he suddenly died. I thought back to the promise of the voice and felt humbled and gratified. Doubts were gradually dispelled from my mind after that event, not, I believe, because I had given up maintaining a critical intellect, but because I would better allow communications from God to reach me and the blessings and realities of the gospel to take their proper perspective in my mind as well as in my heart.

It may appear to a non-Mormon reader that I have fallen victim of self-delusions of a type that I had wanted so much to avoid, a spiritual conversion through emotional catharsis based on an overwhelming desire to confirm what I wanted to believe. All I can say to the skeptic is that living the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by the Mormon Church works. It changes one's life for the better and one receives spiritual confirmation of the correctness of this commitment.

I searched my entire life as much as was humanly possible for me to discover truth. Armed with the best theories of man and a skepticism that had kept me from accepting any other religion, philosophy, or definitive outlook during periods when I needed security much more than when I investigated the Mormon Church, I had to face spiritual reality when I found it. I feel I have continued to maintain a critical intellect. The result has been that my commitment and conversion to this Church and to Christ have kept growing, for I have received confirmation many times in many ways since then of the truthfulness of this Church.

It is difficult for many people today to bow their heads and humbly pray about a "new" church with claims that are so dramatic. Yet it is my firm belief that whoever plants the seed of this Church in his heart and humbles himself just enough to let it grow, will travel down the same road that I have. As so many people in all walks of life all over the world are experiencing, he will come to know that Christ's true church exists on the earth today: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Forum



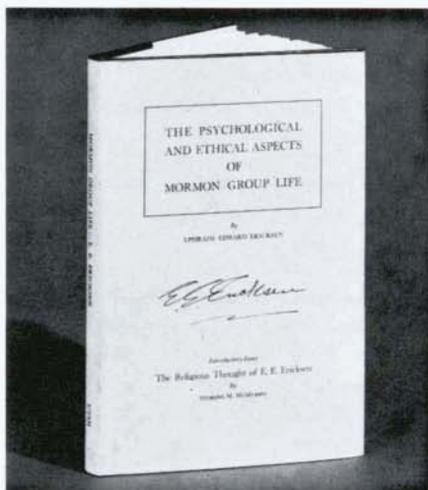
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Review

Richard Sherlock



E. E. Ericksen, *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1974. 100 pages + Introductory Essay, "The Religious Thought of E. E. Ericksen," by Sterling M. McMurrin. \$5.

At the April conference in 1924 Apostle Rudger Clawson gave a speech in which he presented a new variation on a favorite Mormon theme: the contented Saints vs. the troubled sectarian world. Using as his point of departure the bitter debate over "modernist" theology at the 1923 conference of the Presbyterian church, Clawson pointed with pride to the unanimity and

peacefulness of the Mormons in contrast. The Church was not troubled by modernism, he asserted, because Mormons knew by revelation the errors in such teaching! This may have been a useful exercise in pulpit oratory, but it was hardly an accurate assessment of the state of affairs in Zion at the time.

While there are numerous materials which are relevant and important to the understanding of the "modernist phenomenon" in twentieth century Mormonism, none quite equals E. E. Ericksen's *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life* published just two years prior to Clawson's talk.² Originally written as a dissertation for the philosophy department at the University of Chicago, this work boldly adopted a functional, interactionist explanation for the development of Mormon ideals and patterns of moral behavior. Here for the first time a young Mormon intellectual turned a critical eye on his own community and interpreted its history in terms of the social scientist. The interactionist theory of George Herbert Mead, one of the few really important philosophers America has produced, is here turned towards the data of Mormon history. If the results are sometimes less than convincing they are nevertheless of the first importance methodologically.

Ericksen's naturalistic outlook, gained from his Chicago teachers Mead, James

1. Rudger Clawson, *Conference Reports*, April 4, 1924.

2. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922. The

1974 reprint contains an excellent introduction by a former student, colleague, and close friend of Ericksen, Sterling M. McMurrin.

Tufts and Edward Ames, saw the distinctive moral norms and practices of Mormonism as the result of interaction between the community and the great forces which it has had to face in its history. Ericksen argued that there had been three major "conflicts" which had engaged the attention of Mormonism in its history; out of these, the distinctive features of Mormon life have emerged. The first was the conflict with the "gentiles" which drove them from Missouri and Illinois. The second was the conflict with the hostile environment in the Great Basin in the face of the necessity of settling the land. The last major conflict was that which emerged in this century between traditional Mormon orthodoxy and new currents of thought in sociology, biology, philosophy and in familial and business affairs. Out of the first phase emerged the strong emotional ties of group loyalty and solidarity that bind Mormons together; "he who is not with us is against us." Out of the second emerged a spirit of utilitarianism, a kind of practical and pragmatic emphasis on temporal welfare; the loyal servant of the kingdom was also efficient — in colonizing, in raising a family or in work for a co-op. Out of the last conflict came the emphasis on faith, dogma and ritual practice; the emphasis came to be placed more and more on correct belief and ritual behavior to combat "the ways of the world."

Such an outline cannot really do justice to the complexities of Mormon history, a fact of which Ericksen was well aware. Furthermore some of his arguments are simply inaccurate — for example, his assertion that evolutionary biology is incompatible with Mormon orthodoxy.³ Despite these inaccuracies and simplifications, however, Ericksen's essay really goes to the heart of what Robert Flanders has called

"The New Mormon History."⁴ Though this new history is more accurate than its predecessors, including Ericksen, the "cutting edge" of the separation between it and an older generation of Mormon historians lies elsewhere. What is central is that the new historians are really committed to the canons of historical proof and explanation that define the discipline of history in the modern west. To read an essay like Leonard Arrington's "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom" is to be constantly reminded how close this work is to Ericksen's functionalist interpretation of much of Mormon culture and life.⁵

It is at this point that Ericksen poses the methodological question more sharply than any of the "new historians" has yet done. If the distinctive features of the Mormon social system represent no more than the interesting or valuable responses of the leadership to the demands of forces outside their immediate control, what happens to the concepts of revelation, prophecy and inspiration that are central in Mormonism? This is not to say that an account of these concepts cannot be given which essentially supports Ericksen's outlook. It is to assert that this is the fundamental question which Ericksen's essay poses and to which no satisfactory answers have yet been offered by Mormon historians or philosophers.

This issue is a vital part of the third conflict which Ericksen depicted in the modern Church. It was this issue which was clearly at the core of his own life and thought: how to reconcile the scientific and philosophic perspectives of modern man with the basic doctrines and attitudes of Mormonism.⁶ He was preoccupied with this issue from his earliest

3. *Ibid.*, p. 63 My own unpublished research shows clearly that this statement was inaccurate when Ericksen wrote it and that this whole discussion of the 1911 BYU fracas is somewhat misdirected.

4. Robert Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," *Dialogue* 9:1 (Spring, 1974), pp. 34-41.

5. Leonard Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom," *BYU Studies* 1 (1958), pp. 37-49.

6. See esp. pp. 80-100. Also see the very similar discussion by Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 232-57.

philosophic education under William Chamberlin to his last work on the tension between philosophy and the Church.⁷

Ericksen's monograph under review here is the primary document of his intellectual career, as well as a central document of twentieth century Mormon intellectual life. It is obviously a treatise by a modernist, liberal intellectual who is deeply concerned over the future of his Church.⁸ In some respects the Church has developed in precisely the opposite direction from that which Ericksen would have wanted. His call for a more vigorous "social gospel" program in the Church organization was not very well met for years; perhaps the revitalized Church Social Services program moves further in this direction. His call for a more democratic church has certainly not made any headway. Nevertheless Mormon biologists now openly teach evolution at BYU and Mormon historians and social scientists of the highest professional and religious standing openly and honestly study the Mormon experience. Ericksen's

first love, philosophy,⁹ remains largely untouched.

If everything is not as Ericksen's 1922 essay envisioned it, neither is it quite as bleak as he feared. Nonetheless, it seems to me that we have yet to answer the question posed by Ericksen's life and work. In the concluding pages of his work Ericksen wrote: "When a sacred subject is once admitted to discussion it tends to lose its divinity and sometimes its vitality as a factor in control."¹⁰ For all those who care about the Church and the meaning and value that it gives to men's lives this is a disturbing comment. Once the philosopher, the historian and the social scientist have finished their examinations, what is left of the deeply religious message of the Church and its organization? To deny the genius of philosophy is to be trapped in the darkness of irrationality and nihilism; but to openly proclaim it is to raise the most profound questions yet raised about the meaning of the gospel. That we have not yet answered his challenge is a measure of the contribution Ericksen has made to the intellectual life of the modern Church.

7. E. E. Ericksen, "Priesthood and Philosophy," *Proceedings of the Utah Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 34 (1957), pp. 13-22.

8. His most explicit modernist account of religious belief as an expression of and support for moral values is in his *Social Ethics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1937), pp. 275-290. Ericksen's Mormon commitments are evidenced by his service on the YMMIA General Board from 1922-1935.

9. Ericksen taught philosophy at the University of

Utah for thirty-three years. He was head of the department from 1918 to 1948, Dean of Arts and Sciences from 1942-1948, and Chairman of Philosophy at the University of Nevada from 1948 to 1953. He was President of the American Philosophical Society, Pacific Division, in 1942. In 1965 the University of Utah bestowed its highest honor in creating the E. E. Ericksen Chair of Philosophy.

10. *Psychological and Ethical Aspects* . . . , p. 99.

Richard Sherlock, a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard, graduated from the University of Utah in history and obtained a Master of Theological Studies at Harvard Divinity School in 1972. For the past two years

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