MORMON EXPERIENCE SCHOLARSHIP ISSUES & ART

SUNSTONE

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THE COST OF CREDULITY

MORMON URBAN LEGENDS & THE WAR ON TERROR!

- ROBERT A. REES

December 2006—$5.95

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Faith and doubt.

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James E. Talmage
Foreword by James P. Harris

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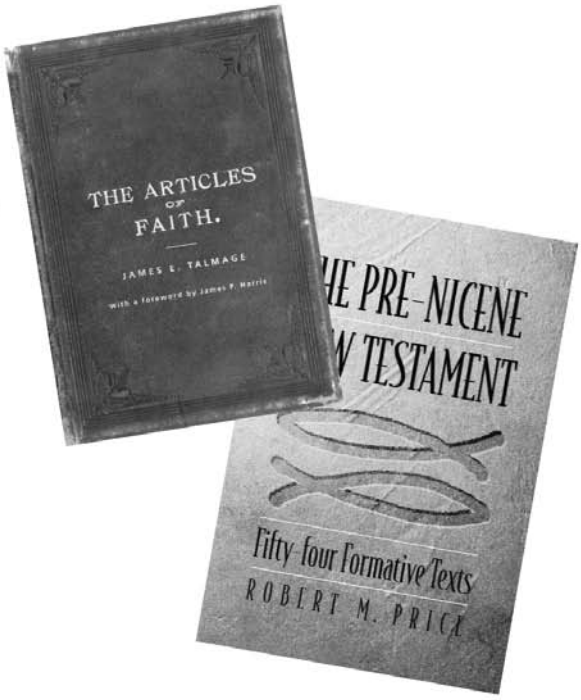

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MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, & ART

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YEA, YEA NAY, NAY

THROUGH EYES OF LOVE

READING THE STORIES IN THE "FOR Better, For Worse, For Apostasy?" article in the November 2006 SUNSTONE left me with a strange feeling of *déjà vu*. The pressures devolving on couples who become spiritually and theologically unyoked are enormous—coming at them from family, friends, and others in the Church.

I especially appreciated the wisdom of Page Kimball's words: "I realized that I needed to stop looking at Thomas through the Church's eyes." So often we look at our spouse, parents, or children through the eyes of the Church and, in so doing, judge them to be inadequate, rebellious, or apostate instead of looking at them through the eyes of love. In my own extended family, parents have told children to leave the home because they started smoking or drinking. In the families of many of my acquaintances, children have been "sent away" to prevent shame for pregnancies. It seems that many in the Church are programmed to reject, expel, and alienate family and friends who turn from the principles of the Gospel instead of embracing them. As Robert Kirby so eloquently stated, "It's the height of irony to divorce someone over God, particularly since faith in him is supposed to be all about patience, forgiveness, and love."

Like those in the SUNSTONE essays, my first marriage began when my wife and I were both "true believers." During the next fifteen years, as I studied Church history and doctrine, I drifted from orthodox believer to a closet fundamentalist and ultimately into agnosticism. Like Page's father, I shielded my then-wife as much as possible from the roller-coaster that was my spiritual life, but she overheard conversations I had with friends that caused her to feel threatened. Ultimately, in answer to prayer, she heard a clear voice say that if she didn't divorce me, I would destroy her testimony of the gospel. I tried to point out that changes in opinions and beliefs occur from inside a person and that no one would be able to change her views without her consent, but arguments along those lines did nothing to alter her decision. Convinced she was following the path God wanted her to travel, she filed for divorce.

Discussed only briefly in the SUNSTONE essays is the source of what is probably the primary pressure on unequally yoked partners—how to instruct the children of the marriage. My ex-wife is adamant in requiring that our daughter be raised in the LDS tradition. I have supported that over the last five years out of a desire to maintain peace within the family. But I resent having my daughter taught that her father is the "bad guy" for not believing in the gospel. While we walked together among the ancient cliffs of Arches National Park this past summer, I shared with my daughter a bit about the age of the rock formations we were witnessing. She then asked if I believed in Adam and Eve. When I replied that I didn't, she asked if I believed in Noah and the ark. Again I answered in the negative. "Dad," she retorted, "you are weird."

I don't mind being weird, but I fear that one day she will be told to fear my opinions, told that I am "blinded" by the sophistries of men and that I will not be worthy to live with her eternally. After struggling with this issue for nine years, I want my daughter only to grow up open-minded enough to form her own belief system, not one inherited whole from her mother, father, or her church.

In the end, I believe feelings of contention and fear are driven more by our own insecure belief systems than by genuine love for spouse or child. Too many members seem willing to relinquish a relationship with a spouse or child here in mortality in exchange for some unknowable reward for "faithfulness" in the hereafter.

BRIAN H. STUY
Lehi, Utah

SHINING A LIGHT

I WAS FASCINATED AND VERY MOVED by H. Parker Blount's article, "Scarlet Threads in the Lineage of Jesus" (SUNSTONE, November 2006) regarding Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, the only four women besides Mary listed among Jesus' forebears, each of whom had in her history sexual experience that we condemn today but which actually was part of what allowed these women to make the contributions that they did. Had they been "better dead than morally unclean" our history would be less rich than it is. And it is instructive that the sacred text that brings us these women does so without condemnation.

I contrast this with the inhumane guilt our own religious community heaps upon the young especially, as they navigate the challenging ground of sexual behavior. The loss of self-esteem, of sexual and emotional health and sometimes even of life itself of many of our brothers and sisters is devastat-

ing. Just the other day, one of the gay men whose story is told in my recent *No More Goodbyes: Circling the Wagons around Our Gay Loved Ones* wrote me that his first suicidal thoughts had come at age seven. He felt certain that it would be better for him to die than to turn eight and become accountable for the sinful feelings he was experiencing.

My heart breaks for him and for so many others. I thank Brother Parker for helping to reframe this difficult subject by shining light on a part of our scriptural history we have never noticed.

CAROL LYNN PEARSON
Walnut Creek, California

WISE ADVICE

SINCE READING MICHAEL ASH'S thought-provoking "The Sin `Next to Murder': An Alternative Interpretation" in the November 2006 SUNSTONE, I've found myself reflecting on the evolution of my own beliefs. What I've come to realize is that any questions I may have entertained over the years have come not so much from the writings of those "critics, ex-members, and even borderland members" who, Ash suggests, "intentionally lead others away from the gospel by the things they do, say, or write." Rather, I've found that the greatest challenges have come from well-meaning, faithful, generally orthodox members who, in defense of their own deeply felt convictions, have believed it necessary to resort to dogmatism, intolerance, secrecy, and suppression—at least, as I've read them. I don't doubt that in doing so, such members honestly believe they have in mind the best interests of the kingdom and its citizens. But the end result has invariably been—again, in my experience—the begging of larger, more challenging questions.

Ironically, when Ash, in a footnote, dismisses John-Charles Duffy's concerns regarding the incivility evident in some recent apologetic writings by suggesting that Duffy "seems to take a humor-impaired approach to apologetic discourse," I can't help but wonder if Ash himself—whose tone otherwise is generous—may be veering dangerously close to the "sin" of "holier-than-thou-ness" he also cautions readers to avoid. (Or perhaps Duffy isn't the only humor-impaired reader.)

Finally, I hope that Ash's concluding counsel—that we all need continually to examine and re-examine our own "inner motives"—finds a prominent place on all of our to-do lists. It's wise advice that none of us should ignore.

GARY JAMES BERGERA
Salt Lake City, Utah

REID'S MORMONISM

I WRITE TO CORRECT A COUPLE OF impressions the November 2006 SUNSTONE may have left regarding Senator Harry Reid. In the mention of Reid's ascendency to the majority leadership in the People section (p.76), SUNSTONE states Reid grew up in a Mormon family. The article in the Mormonism and Politics section (p. 75) left unclear where Senator Reid's membership resides.

Senator Reid was asked to speak in the Washington, D.C. stake conference 19 November 2006. He was introduced by stake president Nolan Archibald as an active member of the Chevy Chase Ward. In his moving and poignant conversion story, Senator Reid said that his first contact with the LDS Church came when he left his home in Searchlight, Nevada, to go to high school in Henderson. Life in Searchlight was devoid of religion and antithetical to a moral upbringing, as understood in the Church today. In Henderson, he was introduced to the LDS seminary program by a friend there and attended early morning classes.

After attending the College of Southern Utah (now Southern Utah University) in Cedar City, Senator Reid enrolled at Utah State University in Logan, where he majored in political science. It was there that he was given the missionary lessons by stake missionaries—one of whom he described as crippled but who braved the ice and snow of Logan winters to teach him—and joined the Church between his junior and senior years.

VANCE C. PACE
Kaysville, Utah

DIFFICULT DILEMMA

I FINALLY GOT AROUND TO READING P. D. Mallamo's "Anythang Will Help" (SUNSTONE, September 2006) and found it both entertaining—and familiar. Eight years ago, just after I had started a new job at the Church Office Building, I got to know "Mark," who used to sit with his "Homeless" sign and plastic cup on the planter box near the crosswalk between the ZCMI Center and the Church Administration Building. At the time, Mark was living in a tent up in the hills. His reason for being homeless was Mallamo's number nine: bad luck. He was soft-spoken and not mentally ill. He had a pretty good work history but also a persistent tobacco and alcohol habit.

After almost a year, and feeling fairly confident that Mark was telling me the truth, I talked a friend of mine, a vice-president at a large corporation, into hiring Mark to do part-time clerical work. The company did a full background check, which came up clean. The job got him off the street. I next saw him probably four years later when I went to lunch with him and the friend who had hired him. Mark looked like a completely different person—well-dressed, well-groomed, and, well, ordinary. Unfortunately, Mark's luck didn't last. One morning he came

JEANETTE ATWOOD

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to work drunk. The company has a no-tolerance policy, so Mark was out of work again. I don't know where he landed, but he never showed up on the street again.

My association with Mark changed my habit of giving money to panhandlers. According to Mark, many are not homeless at all but professional beggars. The veteran Mallamo describes, for instance, the one with one leg and a dog, owns a house, and word on the street says he can make $200 a day when he brings the dog. A work colleague of mine walked past the couple with the pill bottles and luggage one day as they were taking a break in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. He heard the man scold his wife with, "You've got to look sicker!" And the woman in the pink coat at the north gate of Temple Square, the one who wouldn't talk with Mallamo? Well, she told me her name was Evelyn. She also told me her story—parts of which didn't add up. In return, I explained to her why I do not give money to panhandlers and why I donate generously instead to organizations that help the truly needy. She had no problem with this and never again asked me for spare change when I walked by, but she did generally put on a gloomy face and, when I inquired, said that things were not going well. For old time's sake, I did give her five bucks the week before Christmas last year.

I no longer work in Salt Lake City, but I think about these street people now and then. They present a difficult dilemma to trusting, goodhearted, employed citizens. I suppose each of us has to find a solution he or she feels comfortable with. Good luck.

R. K. TERRY
Orem, Utah

YET JUDGE WE DO

SUNSTONE'S SEPTEMBER 2006 ISSUE contains statements that I feel are a bit unfair to everyday members of the Church who are trying to do their best. There are many sides to every issue, and I would like to present another point of view concerning beggars in the street.

For sixteen years, I lived, worked, and volunteered in the Temple Square complex. I was paid to be a consultant and teacher in the Church's Family History Library, whose archives are a gift that Mormons give freely to the whole world. We strive to keep our collections safe, available, and understood by everyone who walks through the doors. We seek to protect our patrons as well as our records.

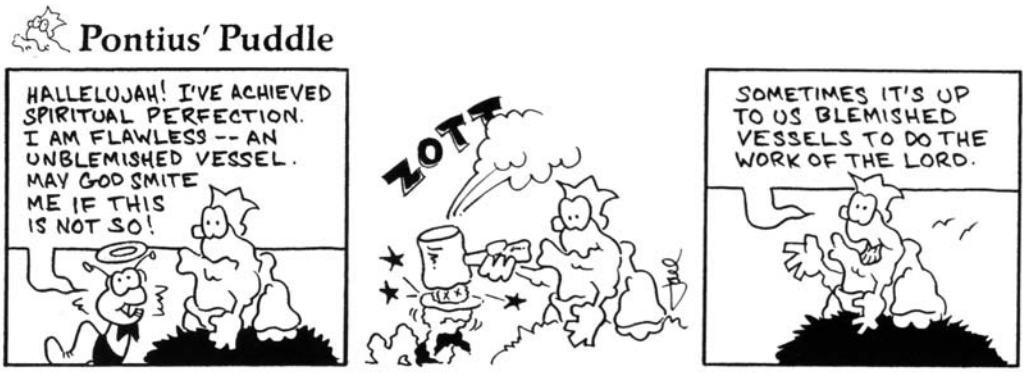
Our patrons come from all over the world. They save up to spend a week or two in local hotels and walk to the Library day and evening to use their short time in town doing research. Many prefer to come in the winter when the library is less crowded and hotel rates lower. I always felt I was the luckiest person I knew to be able to work there, that my days and evenings were times of service. I didn't mind the dress code—I dressed professionally both as a teacher and a consultant. I felt safe and needed.

Then one day I was in the Library when suddenly I heard the strident voice of an elderly woman pulling a cart filled with gold rocks about the size and shape of a large potato. She knocked on the table at which I sat and held up an example. "See these lovely rocks which I am selling for only a dollar! Every person needs one or several." She demonstrated. "You can break your car window if you have lost your keys, or you can hit someone on the head who is threatening you." I thought to myself, "Yes, you can also smash our microfiche readers, break up our microfilm, and destroy our computers with your golden rocks." I quickly got up to notify Security.

We were always grateful that Security was around when we had to work until 10:00 p.m. on the darkest nights and knew that the homeless and others (some with harmful intentions) were outside nearby. We felt real fear of many in the street. During my working years, there was a murder in the library—a sweet volunteer in her eighties was shot in the forehead. In separate incidents, a patron was killed and a bullet took down one of my favorite Security guards—a wonderful man who cared at night for an invalid wife. Another time, a fellow historian was blown apart by a homemade bomb just a few short blocks away.

I continually tiptoed past street people who asked for a handout. I could not afford to give to everyone, so I always tried to let the Spirit guide my giving. Once I ignored that Spirit and did not sleep that night fearing that I had missed someone whom I had been singled out to help. Generally I saw the same people with the same illiterate signs, persons who chose not to accept help at nearby shelters and use free medical resources and facilities. Street drugs and alcohol are a growing problem and visibly represented in our homeless community. It is difficult to know how to deal with street addicts.

Late one night, I was approached by a young woman with a neat appearance. She said that she had run out of gas and just needed "enough money to buy a gallon which can take me to my ATM machine." Helpfully, I offered two dollars. For the next two weeks, I observed her



TOUCHSTONES CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

SUNSTONE HAS BEEN EXCITED BY THE RESPONSE TO THE NEW TOUCHSTONES section that has run in the previous four issues. We're taking a break from it for this issue in an attempt to build up a larger cache of reflections to draw from. The next three topics are: "THE WARD," "POSSESSIONS," and "FAMILY DINNER." Please send us your stories and musings right away!

TOUCHSTONES is a SUNSTONE section that debuted in the December 2005 issue. It was inspired by "Readers Write" in The SUN *magazine. TOUCHSTONES topics are intentionally broad in order to give room for personal expression. Writing style is not as important as the contributor's thoughtfulness, humor, and sincerity.* SUNSTONE *reserves the right to edit pieces, but contributors will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove of editorial changes prior to publication. To submit a reflection, please send it typed and double-spaced to* SUNSTONE, *343 North Third West, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84103. Electronic submissions can be sent via email to TOUCHSTONES editor Allen Hill at:* ALLEN@SUNSTONEONLINE.COM. *Due to space limitations, submissions should be kept somewhere around 400 words, but we are willing to make exceptions for exceptional pieces.*

wandering the street introducing the same sad story to passersby. Joining my husband for lunch one sunny afternoon, I listened as he told me of his generous response to a young lady whose "car had run out of gas and she needed to buy enough to get her to her ATM machine." Naturally I had to tease him about joining our "gift-giving" club. On our way back to the Library, we passed a young mother with two tiny children in a stroller who was struggling to find some change for the young woman who "needed to purchase a gallon of gas to get to her ATM." My husband was unhappy at being conned and warned the young mother away. The thwarted beggar nearly attacked him before she disappeared.

We did love the street musicians and always tried to find a little cash for someone who was willing to share a special talent. We had loved street musicians in San Francisco and Europe. We love them equally on the streets of Salt Lake City.

Best of all, I loved to visit the temple on my day off and tried to show respect for the house of the Lord—washing my hair, wearing my Sunday best, and carefully ironing my temple clothes. My preparations were for a visit to a temple of God, not to impress street people (or journalists) who wanted to send me on a guilt trip for wearing finery and ignoring their needs.

MORMONS ARE THE most generous persons I know of. They pay a full tithe, add a fast offering, and find money for humanitarian aid and the Perpetual Education Fund to help scholars in Third World countries. Mormons also donate to the United Way and the Red Cross. We donate canned goods and turkeys to shelters at Thanksgiving. With tinkling coins, we answer Salvation Army Christmas bells. Locally we volunteer at Welfare Square, canning beans and tomatoes, baking bread and rolls. We make quilts for homeless infants, tying knots if we can't stitch. We are proud when we learn that a trainload or planeload of goods, which we helped collect and donated money toward, takes off to answer frantic calls for help from victims of earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, or fires. LDS physicians and nurses use their vacation time to fly from their homes and families and help take care of newborn infants and children from the Third World who would die without their help and knowledge. Members (including my son-in-law and teenage grandson) volunteer to help rebuild homes that were demolished by "Katrina," paying their own expenses for travel and materials. We are a community of volunteers and givers.

Mormons are reluctant to brag or discuss their offerings. To do so seems to take away the sacred importance of these gifts. Once one of my young sons complained when I encouraged a tithe, "It seems like we have to buy our way to heaven." I agreed that a gift should be rendered silently. But when an LDS-oriented magazine seems to want to chide the neatly dressed member to honor the beggar in our midst, it is time to point out in return what the article writer stated, "Judge not, yet judge we do daily" (p. 20).

LYNNE WATKINS JORGENSEN
Salt Lake City, Utah

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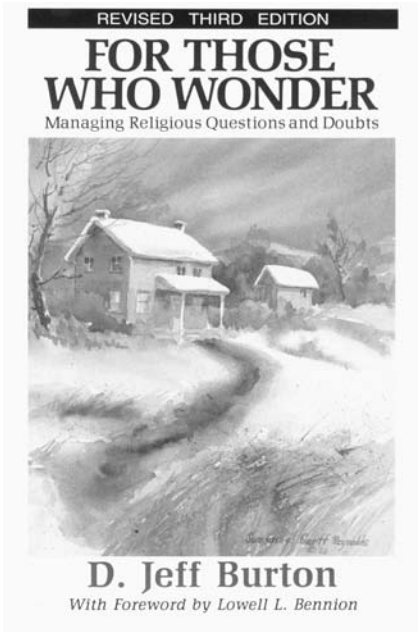

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FROM THE EDITOR

BELIEVING "IN"

By Dan Wotherspoon

EVERY HOLIDAY SEASON, I go through the same process, re-ask the same questions: Okay, what do I *really* think about the Christmas story? About Jesus? About the Atonement? I call myself a Christian, but what do I *really* believe about what happened two millennia ago, about the man whom many call Christ?" I suspect this may be a familiar ritual for others as well.

It's not just the December sermons and general seasonal focus that bring me back to Christological questions. For me, much of the impetus comes from the music—in particular, the strange grip it has on me. In addition to the usual reasons for re-assessing beliefs and my sense of who and what Jesus is, part of what drives my quest is how much I like Christmas music—and how odd I have found that autobiographical fact to be. I don't like all the songs, though. I'll generally switch radio stations when a song about roasting chestnuts, winter wonderlands, or city sidewalks/busy sidewalks comes on. It's not the anthems to the winter season that grab me. But put on "Silent Night," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," or "Angels We Have Heard on High," and mysterious forces take over. Something deep within me begins to stir.

The first time I really became conscious of the hold these songs had over me was during the four or so years when I was actively trying to forget all about things divine, to forget all the Sunday lessons and scriptural stories that had once captured my imagination but were then bringing me down, making me feel guilty for not living up to the shining examples they put before me. Even then, even in the midst of being fully engaged in the "high life," every November and December, I'd catch myself adding Salt Lake's FM100 and other soft-sounds stations to my radio buttons, hoping to hear "O Come All Ye Faithful" or something about tidings of comfort and joy. "What the hell is up with me?" I'd wonder as my hard-rock self furiously scanned for another fix of that manger hay.

IN this and several other ways, my adult life has been, to borrow Flannery O'Connor's phrase, "Christ-haunted." Coming to a place of personal peace concerning Jesus' question to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42), has long been a major quest for me. I have come to feel at home in my skin—to feel loved and even liked by God. I feel fully and truly forgiven of my sins (and Christ is the one who makes all of this possible, right?). Yet, even as I've found the peace I sought, I have been driven again and again to question how all of that works. I've taken New Testament and Christian history courses at each level of my schooling. I've studied Christology proper as well as pursued Christological topics as part of other courses and within various theological traditions. I own five or six shelf-feet of books on Jesus scholarship, and it was partly my obsession with getting to the bottom of the Christ question that I studied classical Greek for two years largely because I wanted to read the New Testament in the original. I came to realize that language studies wasn't where I shone before trying to dig into Aramaic or Coptic, but I did think about pursuing those, too. I was determined to figure out for myself who Jesus was and is, and I wanted to understand the world in which he ministered and from which Christianity arose.

I've gained many wonderful insights from my studies, appreciations for many things about Jesus' life and character. My examinations into the formation of the Gospels and epistles have given me a compassionate view of scripture. After two-plus decades of attentive sifting, I also sense I have a decent handle on what is wheat, what is chaff among competing views of the canon's essential messages. But even given the care with which I've pursued my questions about Jesus, I've been far less successful in getting my brain around the Christological claims, around how and why the atonement works, how it is that Jesus can be both man and God, and whether or not Christ's truly is the *only* name through which anyone can be saved.

SOME of the good sense in Marcus Borg's new book, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), has helped me feel better about my relative failure. Borg's book has even led me to a better sense of why my understanding has failed and has provided some comfort about the anomaly of my left-brained self being so drawn to songs about angels and claims about a king in a manger, claims that don't sit particularly easy with me.

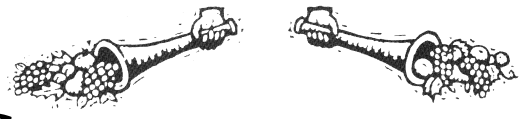
Borg reminds me first about the huge difference between *believing that* and *believing in*. He explains that before the seventeenth century, the "object of the verb 'believe' was always a person, not a statement" (20). Up until the Enlightenment and the emergence of modern science,

> believing in God and Jesus did not mean "I believe *that* the following statements about God and Jesus are true." Rather, to believe in God and Jesus . . . meant to *trust* in God and Jesus. Not to trust in *statements* about God and Jesus (for this would be 'believing *that*'), but to trust in God as known in Jesus. . . .
>
> *Believing that* and *believing in* are very different. The first leads to an emphasis on correct belief, on believing the right things. The second leads to a transformed life. (20–21)

Borg goes on to discuss the subtle way that science led to this shift from *belief in* to *belief that*. Because modern Christians recognize that their claims fly in the face of the scientific worldview, religious testimony has come to be tinged with a felt need to declare belief "in spite of" science and the reasons it gives to cause one to question its claims (22). Borg's explanations make sense to me. They help me recognize and understand my strong desire to be aligned with the best scientific and philosophical thinking while at the same time reminding me that genuine faith truly is a matter of trust, fidelity, loyalty. Its home is in the mystery called love.

Borg offers a brief glimpse into his own worship life that also helped me. In a section dealing with Christian doctrines and his own doubts about many of them, he writes: "I belong to a church that recites the creeds in its worship services, and I have no difficulty doing so. But this is because I understand the creeds as later Christian testimony to the significance of Jesus, . . . [as] their deepest convictions about Jesus—about who he was (and is) and why he matters" (17).

Jesus matters to me, too. I may not know exactly what it means to claim that he is "the Christ," nor am I fully comfortable with many statements about God and the Savior in the hymns I love. But, by golly, I *can* still joyfully sing "*Gloria in excelsis deo!*"



CORNUCOPIA

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Belly of the Whale

"YOU CAN GO TO HECK"

In this regular Cornucopia column, Todd Robert Petersen (www.toddpetersen.org), the author of a new short story collection, Long after Dark *(Zarahemla Books), muses on Mormon culture, arts, and politics from the perspective of a baptized outsider. Petersen teaches English and visual studies at Southern Utah University.*

YEARS AGO, I LEFT THE WORLD OF YMCA SUMMER camping with the idea that if I tried hard enough, I could become two things: a writer and a college professor. Being a college professor meant getting a Ph.D., which after a summer of jackhammering the basement out of a grocery store didn't seem like bad work if you could get it. Being a writer is a totally different matter. Even though I don't like to say it out loud because it sounds smarmy and elitist, I believe you have to have a book to move from being someone who writes to being a writer. Well, I now have a published book of short stories, so, as far as I'm concerned, I'm now a writer, and I'm excited about the book.

Last September, I let the manuscript go out of my hands and into the pocket-sized world of Mormon publishing for editing and final review. Sanguine blurbs (they all are, aren't they?) started coming in. My editor liked the book, which was important because I'd been through the thing so many times in the preceding months that I couldn't read it anymore—really. I'd just stare past my computer at the blank wall above my desk and jiggle my computer mouse.

During one my jiggling sessions, my email gong sounded, and to my surprise, my first tiger of criticism was crouching in the inbox. It was pretty toxic stuff. This critic thought the book would undermine the future of the press. He questioned the wisdom of using a foreword by my good friend and mentor Brian Evenson, because of the trouble in LDS circles Evenson's book *Altmann's Tongue* had stirred up. He said the stories were based on straw man arguments, were the work of a gadfly, and were veiled attempts to justify wild sex scenes (which he admitted were not quite explicit).

In some ways, this criticism felt satisfying to me because I tell my students that polarization around your work is what you want. Middle-of-the-road insouciance spawns *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Eragon*. When you write in such a way that it will offend no one, you are also writing stuff that won't excite anyone. So, I'm fine with this anonymous critic's displeasure. In fact it's a boon. It strengthens the matrix of the book's identity, gives it some hard edges, makes it more like my favorite polarizing texts: *Raising Arizona* and the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon is so odd (and, for me, wonderful) that no one should be shrugging their shoulders about it. And only a fool would think that everyone will like it. The true story of God's working among his people *should* be a strange book. How would the opening lines of First Nephi work with Ray Romano standing around in Lynbrook, New York, in his bathrobe saying, "My parents were all right, and they did a pretty good job with me"?

I think a little outrage is just fine; this critic's vitriol just caught me a bit off guard. For all I know, this critic of my book could be right on the money. Maybe my stories are a bunch of empty theological placebos (my words), and I suppose I have to be ready to take the blame as well as the praise. At least all of my judge's guns were on the table. But I won't lie: it made me a little sad that this person didn't just criticize the work. Instead he chose to call me names and cast aspersions on a good friend. The tone of the criticism gave me a feeling I hadn't experienced much until I joined the Church in the late '80s. I don't have the exact word for it, but it feels rotten, like when you're in a grocery store watching a mom in the cereal aisle slap her four-year-old.

THIS LITTLE DOSE of critical venom stuck with me and metastasized into a question that unsettled me: Why do so many Mormons feel endowed by their Creator with the inalienable right to criticize others? I didn't come across this much in my Mormon pre-existence. I encountered lots of criticism, but what I mean here is different, and maybe the better word for it is "offense." Mormon people are offended more than any other group I've ever come across—except maybe vegans.

The only other time I've experienced as much direct criticism was in a bar in Stillwater, Oklahoma. I played in a band during graduate school, and one night, we found a hundred-dollar bill in the tip jar. At first we thought it was a mistake, but the bartender confirmed that a certain dude would regularly do that kind of thing. Two weeks later, we had another gig in the same place, and the hundred-dollar-tip guy was there again. This time he walked right up to us and stood there, staring without blinking, and said, "You ain't got any soul," then walked away.

All-seeing eye

HONEY, I SHRUNK THE GARMENTS

ACCORDING TO AN URBAN LEGEND, LDS QUARTERBACK STEVE YOUNG obtained a special dispensation from his bishop to play football on Sundays. Might other bishops give supporters of presidential hopeful Mitt Romney the leeway to wear this thong?

ProGOPgear.com, a company that sells a wide range of legitimate (not satirical) pro-Republican merchandise, including T-shirts, jackets, caps, and tote bags, includes in its catalog this revealing item. Made of ultra-fine combed cotton, this thong (cost: $13.99) reads "Mitt Romney for President" and barely covers anything at all. "Panty-minimalists love our casual thong that covers sweet spots without covering your assets and putting an end to panty-lines," reads the product description.

Does this product mean that Mitt might run as the candidate with "nothing to hide"? Is it a hint that his foreign policy will focus on "turning the other cheek"? Probably not, as ProGOPgear also markets thongs emblazoned with promotional messages for several other leading Republican politicians.

What about Mormons who fall for this product but still feel bound to wear a much more modest type of undergarment? ProGOPgear.com proposes the perfect solution: Instead of wearing the thong, "toss these message panties onstage at your favorite rock star."

Alas—where is Donny Osmond when you really need him?

What turned this guy from a patron to a pundit? My dad used to demand to see my college grades because he was paying the bills. Campaign contributors feel like they have the right to lean on lawmakers because their money helped put them in office. It's all part of the same process. Mormon people, on the other hand, will criticize you without paying for it. And a Mormon would rather tell you you're going to hell than tell you to *go to* hell. The phrases are close, but in the first one they're not swearing, so it's preferable.

When you tell someone to go to hell, it means that you're sick of them. Which isn't a nice thing to say, even if it's true. I think we all know that with this statement, you're not giving someone directions. On the other hand, if you tell them they're going to hell, then as a Christian, you are burdened with the obligation to try to save them. Perhaps Mormons who feel empowered to pronounce about a person's future destination consider it a missionary opportunity. Maybe they're thinking: "People can't repent if they don't know they're doing something wrong. But they are too wicked to have the Spirit with them so God can tell them what they're doing wrong. So here's where I can help."

I was a little bit prepared for the criticism of my book because of my work with the *Sugar Beet*, during which all of us involved were regularly told that what we were writing was so abominable that we should just throw our temple recommends into the toilet and then dive in after. I believe these people believed they were doing the right thing by calling us on the carpet, that they felt their indignation was righteous, that being offended means that you're more sensitive to the Spirit, and all that.

Imagine my delight, however, at Elder Bednar's suggestion during October's conference that we are actually able to choose *not* to be offended. When I got to thinking about my run-in with this critic's utter disdain for my book (the first of many, perhaps), Elder's Bednar's talk helped me realize I could have been outraged, too, but I didn't have to be, even though people "can be inconsiderate and tactless" (David A. Bednar, "And Nothing Shall Offend Them," *Ensign*, November 2006, 91.)

I still don't know why so many Latter-day Saints get so ecstatic about being offended and why they continue to feel compelled to tell people about it. It doesn't seem to solve very many problems. I guess my final position on the whole thing (a spiritually immature one but also strangely satisfying to my inner fourteen-year-old) is this: if someone is offended by me, this column, or my book, well . . . they know where they can go.

A Place for Every Truth

BOOKS NOT WRITTEN

This regular column features incidents from the life and ministry of Elder James E. Talmage as compiled by James P. Harris, who is currently working on a full-length biography of this fascinating Mormon apostle. The column title is taken from the statement inscribed on the apostle's tombstone: "Within the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is room and place for every truth thus far learned by man or yet to be made known."

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE IS REMEMBERED AS A prolific author, giving LDS members classic doctrinal literature. Talmage wrote books such as *The Articles of Faith* (1899), *The Great Apostasy* (1909), *The House of the Lord* (1912) and, of course, *Jesus the Christ* (1915). He also wrote two lesser-known doctrinal works: *The Vitality of Mormonism* (1919), a collection of newspaper articles he wrote in 1917–18; and *Sunday Night Talks* (1931), a collection of radio addresses he gave in 1930. Talmage is less remembered for science texts he wrote for the LDS School System, *Domestic Science* (1891) and *The First Book of Nature* (1893).

In his journals, Talmage mentions two books he had been commissioned to write, but for reasons unknown, he never completed them. On 7 September 1915, he wrote in his journal:

> Today the First Presidency renewed an appointment originally made about five years ago and suspended because of press of work—that I prepare as soon as possible a work dealing with the Restoration of the Gospel, the book to be in the nature of a companion volume to "The Great Apostasy."

My research has yet to uncover a typed copy of such a book by Talmage. Unfortunately, due to the "press of work," Talmage had many uncompleted projects.

The second book he was asked to write is mentioned in his journal entry of Tuesday, 4 May 1920:

> I was called into conference with the First Presidency, and was appointed and requested by them to prepare a book for use in our theological classes and among our people generally, on the subject of "Priesthood." The exact title of the work is yet to be determined. Already a number of small boxes have been published by members of our Church, some with official sanction and others as purely personal undertakings, dealing with different phases of this great subject; but the need of a comprehensive work to be issued by the Church has long been felt.

Talmage's 1923 journal contains numerous references to talks he gave on priesthood that year; however, he never indicates if any of the talks are extracts from the proposed work. For example, on 28 February 1923, he wrote: "I went by morning train to Provo, where I delivered the first of a series of lectures on 'Priesthood and Church Organization,' before the student body of the Brigham Young University." On 14 March 1923, he wrote: "Went to Provo by early train and lectured before the student body of the Brigham Young University on 'Priesthood and Church Government.'"

Talmage finished his ministry with a series of radio addresses on priesthood in June-July 1933. The addresses were delivered on Sunday evenings. Talmage passed away on Thursday, 27 July 1933. The final priesthood-themed radio address he wrote was read by his son Sterling on 9 August. The address was titled "Priesthood in Ancient America." Collectively, the eight addresses could comprise chapters in a book about priesthood, but, again, a work with such a title was never published by Talmage or, at least, is not among his papers.

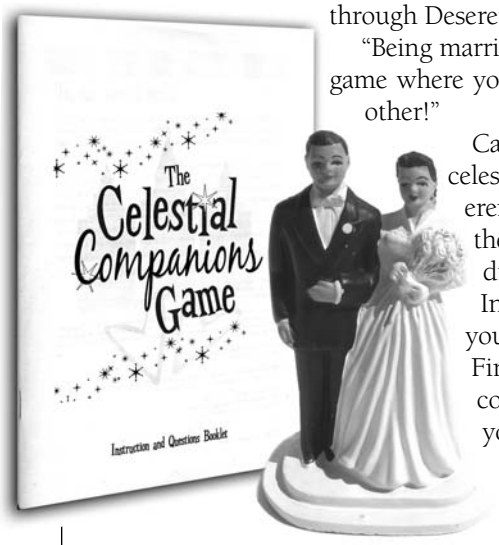
In 1939, Elder John A. Widtsoe, Talmage's colleague in the Council of the Twelve, published a book titled *Priesthood and Church Government*. The book was apparently written under Church auspices and for many years served as a de facto Handbook of Instructions. We can only speculate that Widtsoe was asked to finish the project that Talmage was unable to see to completion.

Jots and tittles

THE NEWLYWED GAME—MINUS THE WHOOPEE

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE RACY TV SHOW *THE NEWLYWED GAME* HAD censored all references to "making whoopee" (the show's euphemism for sex) and turned itself into a Mormon board game?

Wait no longer for the answer, for here comes *The Celestial Companions Game* (Cedar Fort Publishing), now being sold through Deseret Book for $17.99.



"Being married is fun!" the blurb on the box informs us. "Couples go head to head in this hysterical game where you and your spouse will find out how much you actually know (or don't!) about each other!"

Calling the game "hysterical" *might* be a stretch, but that depends on what you and your celestial companion normally do for fun when you have other couples over. Packed with references to LDS entertainers, politicians, authors, books, bookstores, films, and church life, the game is supposed to test how well you know your spouse, but it might be a better indicator of how well acculturated you are into Mormonism—*Utah* Mormonism especially. In Round 7, women are asked: "Which of the following church-sponsored events would your husband most enjoy? (A) Lighting of Temple Square, (B) Christmas devotional by the First Presidency, (C) Concert by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, (D) Your home teacher coming over? In Round 13, men are asked: Which of the following LDS authors would your wife be most inclined to read? (A) Anita Stansfield, (B) Susan Easton Black, (C) Sheri Dew, (D) Neal A. Maxwell. These two examples alone indicate the gender stereotyping and Utah focus that pervade the game.

The product is not particularly slick: your money buys you four miniature marker pens, score cards, and a question booklet that looks as if it could have been run off your own printer. In addition, the booklet contains some rather glaring typographical errors. For instance, in Round 17, *men* are asked, "What is the last movie you and your husband saw together?"

Oops! *Those* celestial companions must have gotten their marriage license in Massachusetts!

The Sugar Beet

"All the Mormon News That's Fit to Print"

The Mormon Tabernacle Enquirer, *a collection of* The Sugar Beet's *best material, has sold out its first printing. Sorry to all you slowpokes who didn't get one. Copies of the second printing are now on sale at* ZARAHEMLABOOKS.COM. *Your home teacher said he wants one for his birthday. All proceeds will go to a deserving group of "fasting" Mormon writers.*

EXCESS MEAT SCANDAL ROCKS SEMINARY PRESIDENCY

NAPANEE, ID—A huge blow was delivered to the Napanee High School Seminary Thursday when Gary Cole, seminary president, was caught eating meat in excess behind the school.

Cole was allegedly in the middle of consuming huge quantities of beef in the form of hamburger, veal, and the highly addictive medium rare ribeye steak when Brother Anglemeyer, the 10th grade seminary teacher, confronted him.

According to eyewitness McKayla Anderson, Cole was caught "with an open bottle of A-1 in his hand and a piece of steak still hanging out of his mouth."

"This is a huge smudge on what was once a clean record," said Anglemeyer. "Not only did Gary flout the Word of Wisdom by eating too much meat, it wasn't even at a time of winter, famine, or excess of hunger."

Seminary second counselor Michael Thisbee said he isn't surprised by this sudden revelation. "For the past few weeks, I've thought I've been smelling chocolate on Gary's breath. And as we all know, chocolate is the gateway to harder foods. Satan tells you it's all right, that it won't hurt anything. But look at what happens."

"My main worry is that this will spread like a virus through the student body," Anglemeyer said, "Students furtively chewing on Slim Jims in the classroom, sneaking into fast food joints for their burger fix. And if things get really bad, we'll lose precious souls to those nefarious all-night barbecues I've been hearing about."

EVIL UNABLE TO ATTEND PARTY

MAPLETON, UT—Bobby Stanton regrets to inform those he invited to his party scheduled for Saturday night that Evil will not be able to attend.

"I tried to invite Evil early," he said in an interview with the *Sugar Beet*, "I did everything I could to attract him. I was even planning on spiking the punch, renting a few *American Pie* movies, and maybe even having a few *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issues out back. But I guess Evil was busy with other plans Saturday."

Fortunately the Appearance of Evil isn't doing much that night and will come to Stanton's party in Evil's place.

"Naturally we've had to tone things down since only the Appearance of Evil is coming. So I've got some O'Doul's on hand and a couple of *Austin Powers* movies." said Stanton. "There is also the distinct possibility of off-color conversation. Still, I'm pretty sure all the guys will be able to bless the sacrament the next morning. Sorry about that."

Views from the Street

Deseret Book just purchased Seagull Book and its twenty-six stores. What do you think?

Does this mean the Church is finally going to talk about the birds as well as the bees?

If they expand their scrapbooking aisle, then I will know this was an inspired takeover.

Today Deseret Seagull, tomorrow Deseret Seagull Time Warner AOL MSNABC Lockheed Martin.

Is this the way the Church deals with splinter groups now? 'Cause the "United Brethren of Exaltation unto the Throne of Kolob" is up for sale to the highest bidder.

It's just as Daniel prophesied when he spoke of the "Bookstore cut from the Mall without hands."

Mormons read?

We all have the power to create conditions in our life that will cause things to come into existence, regardless of circumstances—things that will inspire us, call us into action, cause us to make the world better.

CREATING FAITH

THE CONDITIONS OF EXISTENCE

By Jody England Hansen

I HAVE COME TO REALIZE, IN RECENT YEARS, THAT the experience of living is a creative process. If there is anything I really want to experience in my life, I have the power to create it. Once I choose something I want to experience, one of the first steps of creation is seeing what the conditions of existence are for that experience.

For example: If I wanted the experience of teaching art classes in my home, then I would create these conditions—classroom space and materials, curriculum and students. Once these conditions exist, I can teach. It's as basic as starting a fire. If you have fuel, oxygen, and a spark, the conditions of existence for fire, then fire happens.

I want to create faith in my life—faith as an experience.

The creative process is not always easy, but I think it is something that is inherent to us as human beings. When I acknowledge the creative power of God, that I came from that power and am connected, even drawn toward it, that is when I feel most alive. When I say, "There is nothing I can do about it," then I am denying the divine genetic make-up that I believe we all have.

When I say "I can" and "I am," I embrace my heritage. I was raised by activists. When Dad saw a proposition on the ballot in Palo Alto in the '60s that would take out an entire neighborhood of Arts and Crafts homes to build a commercial medical complex and change the entire nature of the city, he didn't dwell on his lack of resources or experience. He and Mom went to work doing everything they knew how to do, learning how to do what they didn't know, and asking others to do what they couldn't. I remember, as a nine-year-old, being driven with my siblings and our friends to different neighborhoods, then going door to door to pass out flyers that asked people to vote against the proposition. Then, after the proposition was defeated, Mom and Dad drove us around the neighborhood that had been saved. People had hung banners out of their homes expressing gratitude for the votes that saved their homes from being condemned and leveled. It was the first time I was aware of the joy that comes from making a difference in the world. Last spring, Mike and I took our kids to visit Palo Alto. We drove them around that same neighborhood. The houses are still there, as beautiful as ever.

In the early '80s, I watched my parents create Food for Poland. They had every reason not to. They didn't have the money or the time. They didn't know the right people or have the contacts needed to collect large donations of food and get them into the right hands in a Communist country that was under military control. They were even threatened by people who thought they were aiding and abetting the enemy. They had every reason not to and only one reason to do it: they saw it as a way they could make a difference in the world for peaceful resolution to conflict. They created the contacts they needed, worked tirelessly (although I remember being tired a lot) and kept asking for help. Shipments were gathered, celebrities joined the cause, statewide fast days were declared, the LDS Church cooperated with the Catholic church to get the shipments to the Solidarity Union. The Polish government was overthrown through peaceful resistance. Years later, the wall came down, without tanks or bombs.

My parents had no guarantee that the food shipments would get through. We may never know the extent of the difference Food for Poland made. But once my parents saw that the resistance movement in Poland needed food, doing nothing would have gone against their very natures.

HOW DOES ALL this fit in with creating faith in my life? What is faith to me, and why do I want to experience it?

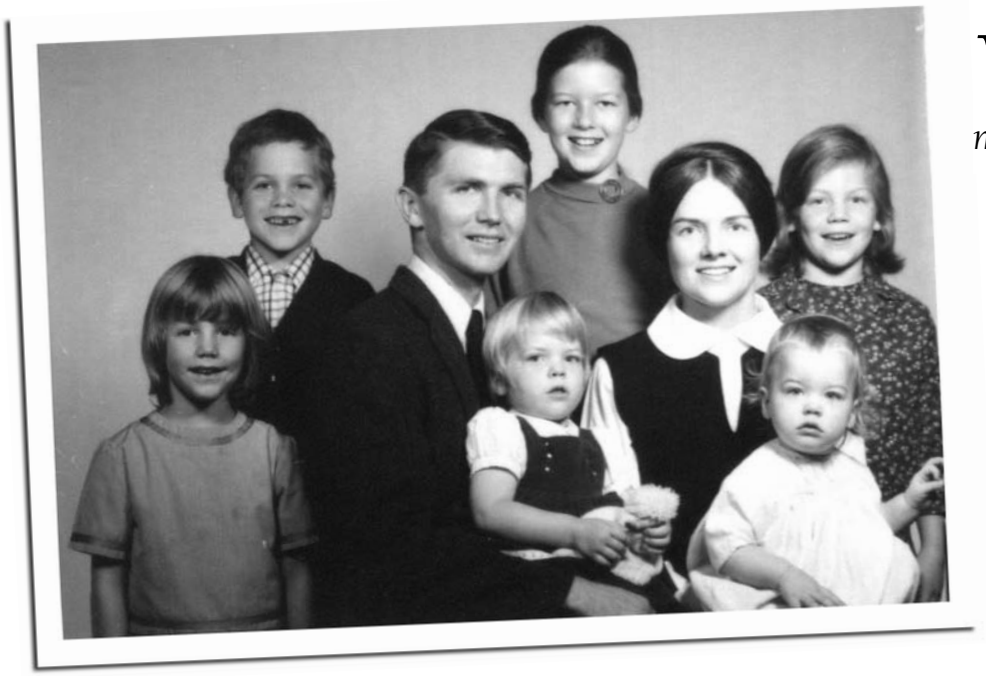
One definition of faith is a hope for things not seen, which are true. One way I define faith is knowing that anything is possible in life. And that what I do makes a difference.

JODY ENGLAND HANSEN is an artist, art teacher, and home creator. She recently moved to Denver with her husband, Michael, who is also a creator. Their daughters, Charlotte and Anna, are at the University of Utah and helping organize their Grandpa Gene's papers. Their son, Joseph, is in high school and is taller than both parents. An earlier version of this essay was given as a Pillars of My Faith address at the 2004 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium (tape/CD/download SL04291).

What conditions do I need to create so I can experience faith?

THE FIRST CONDITION of faith is choice. Our agency, the power we have to choose is inherent to our existence.

About a year and a half after my dad died, I was taking a service leadership course. In one of the classes, I shared about the difference Dad had made in the world. The leader of the course shared a concept that has had a great impact on me. She said, "There are three things that are certain in life. One—there is a day that we are born; two—there is a day that we will die; and three—we have absolute choice in who we will be with the time in between." We talked about the visual image of how that was presented on my father's headstone. A birth date, a dash, and a death date. A small dash represents such a life. Since then, a phrase comes up frequently in my head: "Who are you choosing to be in the dash?"



The Englands in Palo Alto, circa 1967

I am not saying that we choose to have terrible things happen to us. That is just what life is like. Wonderful things happen, and terrible things happen. I believe I knew that before I chose to have a life on earth. I don't think I made that choice in ignorance. I chose to come here and live this life. I shouted for joy at the prospect, even knowing that pain is a part of life. It is no wonder that I feel helpless and hopeless when I am complaining, "This shouldn't be happening, it's not fair, this life is not the one I wanted." When I do that, I am denying a powerful choice I made.

I spent five months doing that after Dad died, telling myself, "I shouldn't have to live life without my father. If he is gone, then all the amazing things that my children, my husband, and I were going to learn and experience with him are gone." Then one day I was able to see that the only thing that had happened was—my father died. There was not some grand conspiracy connected with his death that was designed to take away my family's life. The pain of missing him was still there and always will be. But I can still choose to live an extraordinary life, even though he is gone. In the moment I choose that, everything that was amazing about my dad comes back to me. I see that everything I love about him will never be gone. His words and conversations come to me as though he were speaking them to me. I see him in other people who are working to create peace and dialogue. I sense his presence whenever I am with my mom. When I choose to be miserable because my dad died, then I have no faith—no possibility of being with him now or ever. When I choose to have an extraordinary life, partly due to my dad, I have him back in my life now and always, even in the midst of missing him. *I have faith when I choose.*

When I say "I can" and "I am," I embrace my heritage.

LOVE is a condition for faith. There are countless definitions for love, especially in song lyrics and poetry. Love is like a red, red rose; love is all you need; love hurts, I'll never fall in love again; I love you, you love me. If they don't define love, they define conditions for love. In the wee small hours of the morning; why do birds suddenly appear; when I find myself in times of trouble; it's a beautiful day in the neighborhood, won't you be mine? Which form of love is a condition for faith?

I have learned from my early years that ultimate love is unconditional love. The love God offers us. It took most of my life to see that loving unconditionally is not the same as enabling or allowing abuse. God doesn't. Yet God loves us all, even when we are abusive. In those moments when I have let myself be in the presence of God's love, when I stop listening to all the noise around me and in my head, then I sense that I am completely accepted and appreciated for exactly who I am and who I am not, in that moment. From there, I can do anything with my life. I see that God loves all of us that way. I think that is what we all want: to receive and to give that kind of love. Why does it seem to be such a rare occurrence? If love is the thing that I want most in my life, why am I stingy and withhold it from others?

Then I saw there was another facet to creating unconditional love. It was during a recent lesson about the parable of the Good Samaritan. I saw that the message of that parable is: if there is any one you don't love, you don't love anyone. *Anyone?* Never mind accepting and appreciating political

leaders whom I vehemently disagree with, what about past Church leaders and ward members who offended me? Will that keep me from having unconditional love with my husband and children? With God?

I thought about 9/11. Thousands of people dying in a very short time. Some who died were the terrorists flying the planes into those buildings. We're told they expected to go straight to God, to sit next to him. I believe we will all go to God after this life. We are all God's children. But some of us will not want to stay there, because it is not what we expected and not the direction we chose here. It works for me to think that everyone who left this life that day was greeted by God or God's messengers who would help them see where they would belong. I think that we continue to learn, that our Heavenly Parents would make every attempt to invite us and teach us to choose to be with them.

I can still choose to live an extraordinary life, even though he is gone. In the moment I choose that, everything that was amazing about my dad comes back to me.

What about the terrorists? They are children of God. Who might be the ones to greet them? I think that my dad, who died only weeks before 9/11, would have been one who could greet the terrorists and teach them the love of God. Who better to teach those who had learned to be so driven by hate than someone who had learned to love everyone, even those who would be his enemies? That is where I want to belong— with those who can love in the face of hate and who have the freedom that comes with that. From there, anything is possible. The whole world can shift.

I have faith when I love.

Gene and Jody, circa 1994

LISTENING is a condition of faith. The act of prayer is what most effectively puts me in a listening mode. I have not found any place or time in life where I would not be able to pray if I wanted or needed to. The very act of expressing gratitude, concern, and asking for help opens my mind to ideas, suggestions, and direct revelation. What amazes me is how quickly I can go from being confused and frustrated to having at least some comfort and direction when I open myself up to listening for anything. When I only want to hear what I want to hear, the chances of staying confused are high, because I am not listening. If I am listening so that I have room to hear and consider anything, there is no end to what I can receive.

I get to practice this with my kids. When I only want to hear things like—"Thanks Mom, you are the best." "Wow, you're brilliant, Mom." "I agree with you." "You are right, Mom"—then I am not willing to listen to anything else and will even argue with anything else. When that happens, my children learn not to say anything, or they lie. When I am willing to listen to anything from them, without adding judgment, then they will talk forever.

An interesting example of listening is the 1978 revelation about the priesthood. How much sooner would that revelation have occurred if a larger portion of the members of the Church had been listening and praying for it? How many more were listening for it at that time because an apostle had asked them to pray for it in the 1960s?

When I first heard that Dad was in surgery and they had found a brain tumor, I was praying constantly—most of it pleading. We were hearing some conflicting opinions from the doctors. What I heard from God as I prayed is that we would have a little bit of time with Dad and to cherish it. As we all worked to help him recover from the surgery, I wasn't willing to hear anything else. He was getting stronger, and I planned on him being around for years. Then when he grew weaker again, I kept asking God for what I wanted—no more cancer and my father strong again. It was only when I was willing to listen for anything that I heard the prompting from God, "Let him go; let him be healed completely with me." With that prompting came a physical change. I realized that I had spent energy being anxious. I was no longer wasting that energy. I needed it to help my parents through the last days of Dad's life. I was also able to just be with my dad in the final weeks without trying to save him. If I hadn't listened for that prompting, the few moments of peace I had during the most devastating time of my life would not have been possible.

I have faith when I listen.

REPENTANCE is a condition of faith. I have tended to link repentance with blame and guilt. The more I have embraced the gospel of Christ and have seen how much God wants us to be happy, I am able to see that repentance is a gift, an opportunity to be responsible for what I want to have happen in my life. I don't have to wait until the stars line up, circumstances are

perfect, and everyone around me is doing what I want before I can have real joy.

A few years ago, there was a fair amount of tension between me and my son, Joseph. It seemed that we couldn't have any interaction without it turning into an argument. There were times when he would get up and walk out of the room when I came in because it was too hard for him to be around me. I kept trying to think of what was wrong with him. Why couldn't he see that I loved him and I wanted what was best for him? I wanted him to do his homework, practice the piano, keep his room clean, do his chores, eat right, and be kind because that would help him become a happy, functioning, capable adult—why couldn't he understand that? But he seemed to think that I didn't care about him at all and fought with me over everything. It got to the point that I was afraid I was losing my son.

I finally was willing to look for ways that I was responsible for causing this tension. With the help of an amazing coach, I was able to see that I was not motivated to get Joseph to practice and study and work because I loved him and wanted to train him to be an adult. I was motivated by wanting people to think I was a good mom, who had children who were good at school and at home, who were very smart and very talented. I had taken activities that had been fun and satisfying to Joseph and turned them into requirements for being my child. I was able to see that he never could feel loved and accepted around me because there was always something else to accomplish. I saw that I had lied to him when I told him I loved him, because I was always trying to get him to be different.

Jody and Joseph today

This was a very painful thing for me to see. But the moment I saw it, I knew that I did not have to let things continue this way. I saw I was responsible for creating this tension, I could be responsible for creating a new relationship with Joseph. I did not waste time wallowing in blame or guilt. I went to Joseph, told him what I saw I had done, promised him I would stop doing it, and asked for his forgiveness. I told him that if he ever felt that I was breaking my promise, he could tell me, so I could back off and see if that was so. He worked with me to set up guidelines and rules around getting chores, homework, and practicing done. Now if he gets things done, he knows there are benefits; if he doesn't, he has chosen the consequences. If he does or he doesn't, he and I both know it has nothing to do with me looking like a good mom. It took a while, and we are constantly repenting and forgiving each other, but he hugs me and tells me he loves me, a lot.

We have a good time together, and we can laugh about me actually wanting him, in the past, to do things so I could look good. In other words, I repented, and he forgave me. There are still plenty of moments of conflict, but a few years ago I could not have imagined having such a great relationship with my teenage son. Now, anything is possible with him.

I have faith when I repent.

We are constantly repenting and forgiving each other, but he hugs me and tells me he loves me, a lot.

FORGIVENESS is a condition of faith. My mom shared a definition of forgiveness with me that I like. She said, "Forgiveness is giving up all desire of changing the past." I have many things that I said and did in the past that I can let hang around in front of me, making me wish them back, reminding me of how stupid or ashamed I felt when I made a mistake or really did something wrong. Without much effort at all, I can vividly recall times when someone else hurt or offended me. Keeping those things around from the past, wanting them to be different, thinking they should not have happened, keeps a barrier around me that is stronger than a brick wall. This barrier of hanging on to the past gets in the way of everything.

My degree is in art. I remember when I was in college and constantly working on art projects, one of the most terrifying moments for me was when I had a blank canvas or blank paper in front of me. What if started drawing in the wrong place? What if it didn't look right? Had I done enough rough sketches to move on to the nice paper? It's amazing I got any projects done.

Luckily, the majority of my arts training has occurred since then. I learned long ago that being uptight over putting marks on paper will only produce uptight marks. People are dying of cancer, there are wars going on where children are being massacred. Knowing that is happening, I don't have the time or the energy to waste on being worried about making a wrong mark on nice paper. I do think that every act of creation is an act against war. So I create. And I teach others to create, to feel free to make marks on paper that are uniquely their own. That moment when I have a blank paper in front of me has become

precious to me. In that moment, nothing is in the way, anything can happen, and it is all wonderful.

Forgiveness is what can take the clutter of the past away from being in front of me. I can have a blank page for my future life, where anything can happen. How does it work? Christ suffered the atonement out of love for us, with no guarantee that we would accept it. When I can allow myself to receive that much love, my heart is broken. The pain, ugliness, and shame of past sins—my sins as well as those against me—can be released from my heart. Nothing is left, a blank page where anything is possible. I choose to fill it with love.

I like this translation of Isaiah 65:17–18:

> Can we leave old ways behind and begin our lives afresh? For now I create new heavens and a new earth and the past need not be remembered, nor ever brought to mind. Be glad and rejoice in what I can create.

I have faith when I forgive.

SERVICE is a condition for faith. One expression of that for me is involvement in the Church. It is a structured organization that provides continual opportunities to create all the conditions I have mentioned. I have, my entire life, been able to serve, worship, teach, learn, and be served by people who I love being around, and some who irritate me to no end, as well as everyone in between. I have learned to sustain and support leaders who have constantly inspired me, and some who I don't agree with at all, as well as everyone in between. I am grateful I had a father who taught me that I could sustain and support leaders without having to agree with them. I have come to realize that there are as many points of view and opinions as there are people on the earth. When I saw that wanting all of my leaders and fellow members to agree with my opinions made as much sense as them wanting me to agree with theirs, then I was able to stop wasting energy trying to get people to agree with my brilliant way of thinking. For me, church activity is a persistent exercise in learning to love when it is not easy and learning to serve when it is not convenient. The long periods of time where I felt the sacrifice was greater than the blessing have been more than compensated during times of great need when my church community more than supported me. Church activity asks me to constantly look toward the person I say I want to be. Left on my own, I would only be giving lip service to wanting to help others in the community while I was checking out which movies I could rent for the weekend.

I have faith when I serve.

LANGUAGE is a condition of faith. The words of Christ's gospel are beautiful to me. Here is what I see. Creation began with language. God, our Heavenly Parents, have such powerful integrity that what they speak *is*. They *are* their word. They spoke the conditions of a world where we could live and choose and create, and the elements obeyed. Light, water, earth, plants, animals. And here is the earth. The ultimate playing field for mortals who might want to practice for immortality and eternal life. Christ came to teach us and be an example of love beyond comprehension, just so we could have a hint of God's love for us. God has poured down every imaginable resource for inspiration, direction, and revelation since life began so we would know we are loved and wanted. We can choose to listen and respond, or not, because God honors our choices. This continues on beyond where we are now. God will never stop reaching out to us. If we choose to follow, we will be like them. How can I know this? Because they spoke their promise. They are their word.

I have faith when I speak words of faith.

I REMEMBER A demonstration from a science class I took years ago. There was a chamber that contained fuel for a fire but no oxygen. A flame thrower shot huge flames into the chamber, but the fire could not exist. The conditions were not right for fire. When the chamber was filled with oxygen, it took only a small spark to start a large blaze.

It is easy to see this life as a series of trials and steps that we "have to" take in order to return to God and those we love. The gospel of Christ does not inspire me to take that view. We all have the power to create conditions in our life that will cause things to come into existence, regardless of circumstances—things that will inspire us, call us into action, cause us to make the world better. Or we can create conditions which will bring about frustration, exhaustion, guilt, separation, loneliness. When I choose to cause faith to exist in my life, even in the midst of difficult circumstances, I get to experience the love, connection and inspiration that is promised in Christ's teachings.

ROCHESTER IN MAY

Lilacs in Rochester in May
andy wharholic, forget the
marilyn, forget the campbells
soup can, only lavender
off Monroe Avenue. I've
been there poking around
Highland Park until the
heavy fragrance overwhelmed
me like trying to absorb the
Sistine Chapel all at once,
closing in on you, no place
to breathe in the cool open
space of the museum.

—JAN BALL

What does the invention and dissemination of urban legends tell us about ourselves?

THE COST OF CREDULITY
MORMON URBAN LEGENDS AND THE WAR ON TERROR

By Robert A. Rees

AS DOES ANY CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS GROUP, Latter-day Saints tell and retell stories. Some of these stories follow a specific formula classified as urban legends. There are a number of contemporary Mormon legends that I believe qualify under this formula. Perhaps you have heard that:

- Steve Martin and Christina Aguilera are members of the Mormon Church.
- Microsoft's Paul Allen and Billy Graham's son Franklin, have both been defending the Church.
- God regularly preserves Mormon buildings from natural disaster.
- A little girl was saved by "birdies" (angels) who visited her from beyond the veil.
- LDS General Authorities are teaching that today's Mormon youth were "generals in the war in heaven."
- A boy with Down's Syndrome had his faculties restored after receiving his patriarchal blessing.
- Scientists have found a Jaredite barge in Lake Michigan and a steel knife dating from 350 BCE buried in an ancient sequoia tree in California.
- In 1736, a Catholic priest prophesied of the Restoration.
- The apocalypse is certainly close at hand because missionaries are being called to China and others are being called home in order to be ready to serve in World War III.[2]

LDS general authorities have voiced their concern over the continuing currency of such legends. In a 1973 *Ensign* article, President Harold B. Lee wrote about members of the Church who spread

> rumor and gossip . . . which, when once started, gains momentum as each telling becomes more fanciful, until unwittingly those who wish to dwell on the sensational repeat them in firesides, in classes, in Relief Society gatherings and priesthood quorum classes without first verifying the source before becoming a party to causing speculation and discussions that steal time away from the things that would be profitable and beneficial and enlightening to their souls. . . . It never ceases to amaze me how gullible some of our Church members are in broadcasting these sensational stories, or dreams, or visions, some alleged to have been given to Church leaders, past or present, supposedly from some person's private diary, without first verifying the report with proper Church authorities."[3]

More recently, and specifically concerned with the tendency of members to invoke General Authority authorship or sanction for the stories they tell, a 13 May 2004 letter to all Church leaders from the First Presidency states:

> From time to time statements are circulated among members which are inaccurately attributed to the leaders of the Church. Many such statements distort current Church teachings and are often based on rumors and innuendos. They are never transmitted officially, but by word of mouth, e-mail, or other informal means.
>
> We encourage members of the Church to never teach or pass on such statements without verifying that they are from approved Church sources. . . .[4]

In spite of such official statements, many myths and legends continue to proliferate among the Latter-day Saints. Like those of other groups (religious and otherwise), such legends rein-

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force the perceived special nature of the group, affirm that God and the angels are protecting its members, confirm that miraculous events continue to happen in believers' lives, prove its doctrines true and sacred texts authentic, and so forth. As folklorist Donna Wycoff summarizes:

> Contemporary legends—those generally anonymous, apocryphal, narratable, linguistic-based rumor-stories that report on ostensibly true and relatively current events—often circulate within a community as part of an unconscious, creative, collective response to some community concern, even as they symbolically encode the social ambiguities that underlie that concern.[5]

While some such myths and legends are rather benign, others have a negative and, in some instances, even destructive nature. In this article, I discuss a group of specific Mormon legends relating to the so-called "War on Terror" and comment on their meaning for the contemporary Church.

THE STORIES WE TELL

To what degree do we "invent" rather than "report" the events in our lives and those of "our people"?

LEGENDS TEND TO proliferate during times of great crisis and, as generally proves true, the greater the crisis or perceived threat, the more dramatic and miraculous the legends are likely to become. The September 2001 terrorist attack on the U.S. and subsequent attacks on other nations by radical Islamists, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the turbulent conflict in the Middle East, global warming and cataclysmic natural disasters, and other seemingly apocalyptic events have all led to a dramatic increase in fear and anxiety among the general populace. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are a number of such legends associated with these events nor that some of these are distinctively Mormon.

JEANETTE ATWOOD

LEGENDS REINFORCE THE PERCEIVED SPECIAL NATURE OF THE GROUP, AFFIRM THAT GOD AND THE ANGELS ARE PROTECTING ITS MEMBERS, CONFIRM THAT MIRACULOUS EVENTS CONTINUE TO HAPPEN IN BELIEVERS' LIVES, PROVE ITS DOCTRINES TRUE AND SACRED TEXTS AUTHENTIC.

The first Mormon legend having to do with the terrorist attacks and their aftermath emerged almost immediately after 9/11. Within days of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the failed attack on the White House, stories began circulating that no Mormons were killed on that day. According to one version, "Bishop Gonzales of the Hollywood Ward"[6] in the Los Angeles stake reported that although forty-eight Mormons worked in the World Trade Center, "not one member (in good standing) of the Mormon Church died in the World Trade Center collapse on 9-11-2001." When questioned about the validity of the report, the bishop is claimed to have replied that this information came by way of "an internal memo sent to all bishops and stake presidents by. . . President Hinckley."[7]

This story has several characteristics typical of a legend:

- It comes secondhand, from someone who heard about the event or who knew of someone who did.
- It includes specific (though not necessarily accurate) information and data—e.g., that forty-eight members of the Church worked in the Twin Towers.
- It has apparent authoritative support—e.g., an internal memo from President Hinckley.
- It includes information that while perhaps slightly incredible on one level is nevertheless plausible, especially if one considers the percentage of

Latter-day Saints in the general population of the Eastern seaboard.

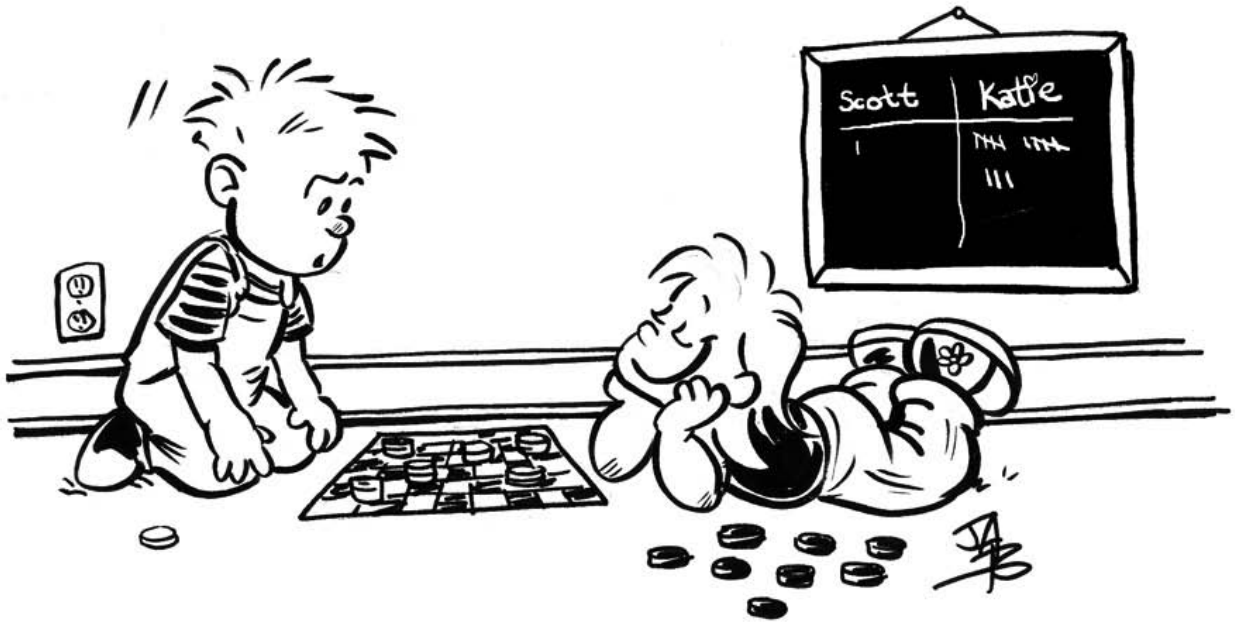
On closer examination, we recognize elements that might undermine confidence in the veracity of the story, including the fact that it reports that only *active* Mormons were saved. When this story was posted on an Internet blog, one correspondent asked, "How many inactive members were killed?" to which another, obviously more skeptical blogger responded, "All of them, the bloody heathens…!!!"[8] Interestingly, according to Mormon scholar Mary Ellen Robertson, "There was an article in the *Deseret News* published 12 September 2001 indicating no New York church members or missionaries had perished in the tragedy. Later news reports indicated that in fact, a number of Mormons had been killed in these events."[9]

What does the invention and dissemination of such a legend tell us about ourselves? Legends that are based on real-life events and that correspond with a reasonable degree of verisimilitude to actual events may do no more than illustrate the human proclivity for exaggeration and hyperbole, especially when it comes to self-interest or self-promotion. That is, all of us engage in some degree of creative invention when telling stories about ourselves or our families, friends, and fellow believers. Like all storytelling, such narratives are arranged and ordered to make them more dramatic. We all want our lives to be more heroic than they are, our children to be smarter and more beautiful than other children, our churches to be sanctioned by the heavens, our lives to be more meaningful, our memories to be honored. And so we distort and invent, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, until with the passage of time, even we are no longer able to distinguish between what really happened and what we wish or imagined or are inclined to believe happened.[10]

Some stories, however—those that essentially are manufactured out of whole cloth—tend to be less benign. These are intentional fabrications, lies told in the service of convincing ourselves and others that we are the objects of special providence, that we are God's chosen people who enjoy a state of grace superior to others. Like stories told by any group which feels it is chosen or highly favored of divinity, these legends reinforce elitist sentiments. The message is that although others may suffer and be killed by terrorists, God intervenes to save Latter-day Saints. A Catholic archbishop or Jewish rabbi might be killed in such an event, but not a tithe-paying, temple-worthy Latter-day Saint elder. The latter would be spared simply because he happened to hold the priesthood and belong to "the one and only true church."

THE ZONE CONFERENCE

AN ALTERNATE LEGEND about 9/11 is the report that a large missionary zone conference was scheduled to take place in the World Trade Center on the day the terrorists struck but that none of the missionaries headed there was able to reach his or her destination. "Miraculously," alarm clocks failed to go off, automobiles broke down, bus connections were missed, and so forth.[11] Some have such a need to believe these stories that they don't stop to consider the likelihood of a missionary conference being scheduled in the World Trade Center or, more significantly, to consider the character of a God who would not intervene to stop the terrorists from destroying so many innocent lives but would intervene in multiple minor ways to save several dozen Mormon missionaries. This is to believe in God as discriminate puppeteer.



JEANETTE ATWOOD.

If I was such a valiant general in the pre-existence . . . how come I'm so lousy at strategy now?

THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

ANOTHER LEGEND RELATING to terrorist attacks concerns the Mormon Tabernacle Choir being miraculously spared from the July 2005 terrorist bombings in London. According to this legend, the choir had planned a tour of Europe several years prior to its scheduled departure in the summer of 2005. Then, the December before, President Hinckley "instructed the choir to cancel their overseas tours, including a trip planned for London."[12] The "Choir was scheduled to perform on the day the bombs hit London." Not only this, but they were scheduled to take a train from London to Scotland and would have been departing from King's Cross Station, near where one of the bombs exploded. In various versions of this story, the account is told or confirmed by "someone who works in the Church Office Building," by "the boss of my boss," or by "several members of the Choir."

Like most legends, this one contains elements of truth: the Choir's European trip was cancelled, but it was "because of worldwide security issues, not because of some future subway bombing in London." As reported at SHIELDS.com,

> The Church's Public Affairs Dept. and. . . the Publicist of the Tabernacle choir, Michael von Rosen [reported that] the trip planning was not far enough along to determine which subway the Choir might use. . . . [Besides, since] the Choir normally travels on private buses, not public transportation, it is unlikely that it would have even used the subway. The choir publicist also confirmed. . . that the choir would not have arrived in London until ten days after the bombings.

As with other such myths and legends, there is a didactic purpose to this story: "Listen to the Prophet even if his instruction does not seem to make sense. He is truly a prophet of God and still guides and leads the members of the Church through dangerous times and can lead us to safety." Or, as the narrator of one version of this legend puts it, "They don't call this Hinckley guy a prophet for nothing!!"

The people who pass on such stories don't seem to ask such questions as: "If President Hinckley had received an impression or revelation concerning danger to the choir, why wouldn't he have conveyed that information to the British government so that the lives of all those in harm's way would have been spared?" But, of course, that would take away the essential purpose of the story, which is to confirm that Latter-day Saints enjoy special protection of the heavens.

OSAMA IN UTAH

REFLECTIVE OF A high level of anxiety about terrorism are numerous rumors that Osama Bin Laden has been hiding in various parts of the American West, including Utah. Apparently, a familiar desert landscape and hospitable place in which to continue his polygamous marriages (to say nothing of being one of the least likely locations in the world where people would be looking for him) brought him to the Great Basin. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Federal agents in Salt Lake City say they have recently fielded dozens of reports that the accused terrorist mastermind has been spotted on the freeway, in the mall, or enjoying a Big Mac and fries at McDonald's." FBI Special Agent Kevin Eaton is quoted as saying, "It is pretty surprising how many people really believe he is here."[13]

MILITARY MIRACLES

OTHER POPULAR LEGENDS are centered in Iraq. Two elaborate ones have circulated quite heavily in LDS circles. The first was sent to me by a friend who prefaced the message with "Incredible story. . . . a guy in our office knows the soldier." The

story had an additional prefatory validation: "I thought you might appreciate this story. In this instance, I actually know Michael and his wife." The story is titled, "LDS Military Miracle":

> Thought you'd find this timely. . . . it came from a friend of ours. . . Tonight my visiting teachers, the Lovelands, came by. They brought some photos that their grandson, Sgt. Schaub, sent them. I asked their permission to share it with my friends. Sgt. Schaub, who is in Iraq, had a set of scriptures taped together to make a quad. He had been reading his patriarchal blessing the night before and tucked it into the pages of his scriptures and the next morning, picked them up and tucked them into his shirt and his bulletproof vest. Sgt. Schaub led a troop out that morning and was rounding a corner when he was met by an Iraqi with a rifle. The Iraqi fired four bullets into his chest then ran out of bullets. Sgt. Schaub stood there waiting to fall to the ground dying, but instead, grabbed his pistol and shot the Iraqi dead. It was discovered that the Iraqi's bullets penetrated the bulletproof vest and went through the scriptures and stopped at the pages just before the patriarchal blessing. Days later, their military vehicle was hit by artillery and literally melted to the ground. The next day, Sgt. Schaub found the scriptures that were laying on the dashboard and only the outside of the pages had been burned. Amazing! I have attached the files which are virus free. . . . I made them myself.

Attached to the email were photos of a Book of Mormon with bullet holes in it and some burned pages.

This story recalls legends that have circulated among Latter-day Saints in the recent past, about missionaries protected from harm by their temple garments or about copies of the Book of Mormon that miraculously survive after the owner's home burns down. Those similarities invite skepticism about this new story, despite the photographic "evidence" that accompanies it through cyberspace. As one of my more skeptical friends wrote: "Moral of the story: on patrol, never pack less than a fully loaded quad." There are, in fact, reasons to believe that this story has been at the very least embellished if not completely fabricated.[14] It is ironic that the person passing on this story speaks of the files being "virus free" since there is no protection against the kind of spiritual virus such legends spread. Again, those inclined to believe such legends don't seem to wonder about the caprice of a God who would cause a piece of paper to stop a bullet but not stop bullets and bombs from killing tens of thousands of his children.

AN EVEN MORE elaborate and more dramatic Mormon urban legend relating to 9/11 is also about Mormon soldiers fighting in Iraq. According to this legend, which circulated on the Internet and in high priest group meetings (a fertile ground for such stories!), including in my ward, members of the 1457th Utah National Guard's Engineer Combat Battalion are credited with almost single-handedly winning the initial campaign in the war in Iraq.

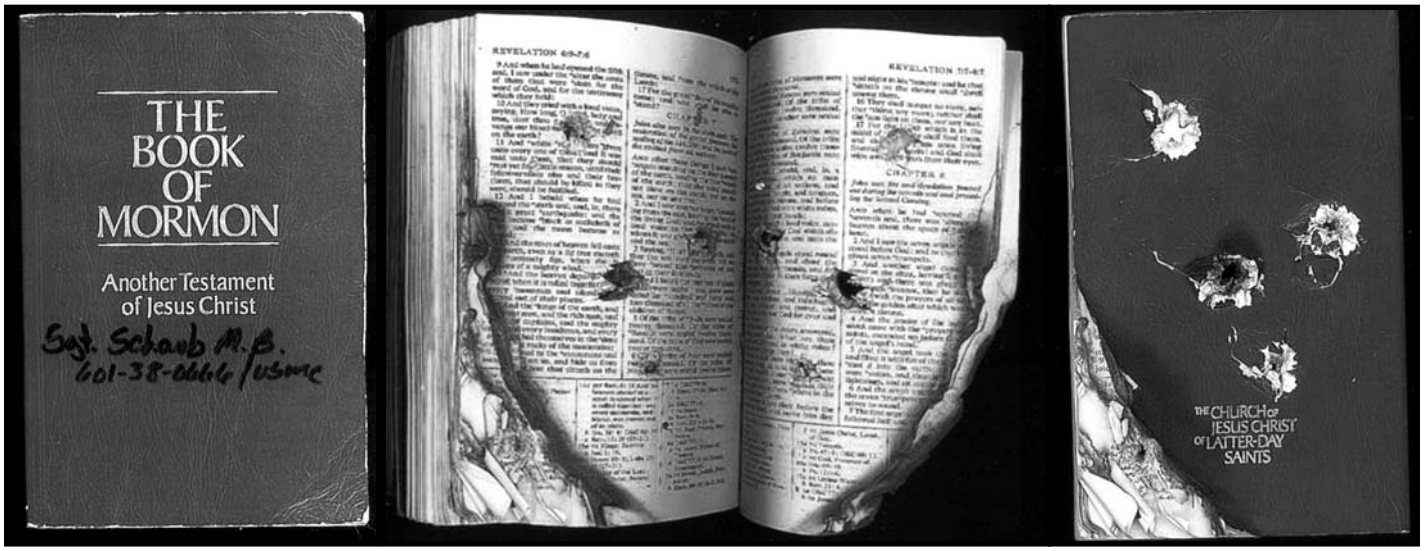
The story reports that these particular soldiers were required to go on such dangerous missions that "they were told to prepare messages and letters to their families and to plan their funerals, since the majority of them would not be coming back."[15] So certain was their demise that "the President [of the United States] wrote a letter of apology to them." The fabricator of this story can't help but slip a little conservative politics into the narrative. We are told that this engineering unit had to go to Iraq "because the eleven regular army combat engineer units were too badly depleted during the Clinton Administration to be combat-ready."

In this legend, Mormon soldiers are credited with capturing Saddam Hussein, pulling down Hussein's statue, capturing the first Iraqi prisoners of war, and winning a number of strategic battles—all without losing a single soldier. They were on some of the most dangerous missions, missions in which other soldiers were killed but they were not: "More than once, Jack [the supposed son of the narrator] came out alive, unscathed from a destroyed Humvee. . . . When a squad took casualties, the ones walking away from it always included the combat engineers [from Utah] they had with them." The soldiers were so inspired in battle that they seemed to have special insight as to where to lead other soldiers. Mormon soldiers, many of whom were returned missionaries, seemed to have special channels through which they received revelations, performed miracles in combat, and inspired others. "Only the true Spirit would lead men to say such great things." Mormon soldiers didn't just supply specific intelligence to fight particular battles; they were also a key source of general intelligence: "Much of the intelligence for the war comes out of Draper [Utah]. The translation and analysis comes out of the linguistics group there."

According to the legend, extraordinary exploits of Mormon soldiers

> prompted a full-scale investigation into them, without even their knowledge. . . . Now regular army spooks were following them around everywhere they went and reporting every small thing they did, and asking other soldiers about them. The general story coming back was that they were essentially extremely religious guys who had close friends [i.e., fellow returned missionaries] everywhere and all of them were afraid of nothing. They must have some kind of unexplained charmed life. There was no logic at all in the way they came back unharmed over and over again.

Beyond their remarkable performance on the battlefield, these soldiers had a profound influence on the religious scene in Iraq. They held worship services and "special prayer circles" that became so popular that "standing-room-only meetings were held every hour on the hour, from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM." So many Latter-day Saint and other soldiers attended these Mormon services that the only place large enough to hold the services was "Saddam's huge residence," which the Mormon soldiers "cleaned out" for this very purpose. But even that was not large enough because before long, one could see "the desert covered with men in prayer circles, arms wrapped around each other's shoulders." Soon this became one Great



"EVIDENCE" FOR THE AUTHENTICITY OF SGT. SCHAUB'S STORY

These images accompanied the email account of the Sergeant's miraculous protection from bullets and the book's own preservation during a vehicle fire that occurred days later.

Awakening throughout the valley of the Euphrates: "As time went on, the prayer circles were held after lights out in the tents all over Iraq." Before long, strains of "I Am a Child of God" could be heard throughout Iraq!

Hearing of the accomplishments of these Mormon soldiers, "many times. . . a senior officer. . . would break down in tears and ask, 'What kind of people are we commanding anyway?'" So remarkable were the accomplishments of this battalion that, according to the legend, the Pentagon ordered an investigation. Their heroic exploits were so astonishing that "five senior generals" visited with a group of General Authorities to commend the Church for producing such extraordinary young men.

Called "Our Modern Day Stripling Warriors," this legend is replete with the language of special providence and miraculous deliverance:

- "Never before in American military history has any assault engineer unit gone into war and not suffered heavy casualties—until now."
- "It was not a coincidence that a Utah boy found Saddam. It was also Utah Guardsmen who threw a rope around Saddam's statue and pulled it down, with the world watching."
- The soldiers are called "Miracle men"; others regard their accomplishments with "amazement"; the narrative reports on "unexplainable things happening—at least unexplainable in ordinary terms."

The narrative suggests that all of this was according to divine plan: Why were these Mormon soldiers sent to Iraq? The answer is found in the response of one of the soldiers to his father,

> You see, Dad, it wasn't just that the president sent us there, at least not the national kind. The Lord sent us to Iraq to start something for Him. Not since the days of Abraham has there been any significant Melchizedek Priesthood presence in Babylon. We talked about it a lot among ourselves. We all knew that the Lord was doing something special and decided we would keep our mouths shut and get on with it.

It is a powerful, faith-promoting story. Unfortunately, almost none of it is true. Jan Harold Brunvand describes urban legends as "true stories that are too good to be true. . . . [They] are also too neatly plotted to be believed,"[16] as this one certainly is. The Army was so embarrassed over this story that it produced three separate responses to quell and quash it, by James A. Montoya, battalion chaplain; Maj. Lorraine Januzelli, spokesperson for the Utah National Guard; and Lieutenant Colonel Jefferson S. Burton, commander of the 1457th Engineer Combat Battalion. Major Januzelli stated, "Our service was not particularly unique. . . . Sadly, the lies and sanctimony expressed in the fictional email cheapens the dedicated service of honest service members everywhere."

Colonel Burton countered the legend in detail, saying, "I will refute the lies told in this fabrication point by point:

- We were *not* "sacrifice troops"
- The President *did not* send us letters of apology as asserted
- Sgt. Jack *does not exist* anywhere but in the mind of the author
- The 1457th *did not* "engage the enemy from Kuwait to Baghdad"
- We *did* fight as a unit and were *not* "divided up among other units"
- We *did not* serve with the "3rd Marines, 7th Marines, Rangers, Special Forces, or 101st Airborne"
- We *did not* engage in "hand-to-hand combat with the enemy"
- We *did not* "find Saddam Hussein" (That was the 4th Infantry Division)
- We *did not* "rescue the first prisoners"

- We *did not* "fight ahead of the main force"
- We were *not* considered "chaplains" by other soldiers
- We held church services in a *tent*, *not* in "Saddam's Palace"
- We had few, if any, "visitors" at our Sunday church services
- *No* "General Officers" attended our church services
- We held *no* "prayer circles"
- "Pete," the so-called technical services vendor for the Utah Guard, *exists only* in the mind of the author
- Senator Hatch *did not* complain to the Joint Chiefs asking them "if they were trying to kill his Utah Guardsmen"
- We are *not* responsible for the combat operations performed by any other units!
- We were *not* the "spearheads for the 3rd Marines or the 101st Airborne"
- We *did not* "teach the Army how to pray" because they already knew!

The one element of the narrative that was factual was that the battalion did not suffer any casualties during its tour of duty in Iraq. Montoya, the battalion chaplain, speaks of their "miraculous protection," saying, "It was miraculous that we had no serious combat injuries or fatalities," and he testifies that "we were protected and strengthened by the power of our Lord." But he also reveals that the unit "arrived in Iraq after major [combat] operations had ceased."

Although Chaplin Montoya says, "I am certain that the author(s) [of this legend] had no intention of deceiving anyone by sharing our story," it is difficult not to conclude otherwise, especially given the story's fabrication.

As folklore specialist Linda Dégh observes, "The core idea remains that untruth is told for truth and that the other components are used to set up and elaborate this assumption."[17] While one might be tempted to consider such a tale benign, it is dangerous to do so, mainly because it reinforces the sentiment that Mormons are so special they deserve divine protection and guidance not afforded others. In the language of the legend, "The Pentagon had ordered [an investigation into] every small thing about particular groups of soldiers, trying to figure out what was different about them—why they were so special."

WHY THESE LEGENDS ARE DANGEROUS
Dark sides to our desire to be "special"

MORE THAN A century ago, William Graham Sumner coined the term *ethnocentrism* to describe the human phenomenon which David Berreby terms "sovereign human kind"—the "view of things [according to Sumner] in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled in reference to it."[18] In his newly published book, *Us and Them: Understanding Your Tribal Mind*, Berreby explores the way the human mind establishes a hierarchy of human kinds: "Human beings . . . have an immense mental apparatus for mapping the world of human kinds."[19] Berreby cites various studies to show our proclivity to select positive and deselect negative characteristics of our group or tribe:

> It is not hard to see. . . how moral feeling sparks up when we hear about actions by people we feel are our kind, even if those actions have no effect on us personally. If someone is a member of the same human kind as you are, then his behavior is in a sense yours as well.[20]

Thus, showing the Mormon soldiers in Iraq as larger than life or, as the legend puts it, "superior soldiers" (one pictures them like Arnold Freiberg's heroic, muscular Sons of Helaman or Captain Moroni), in some ways may make us feel that we too are extraordinary, that we too could walk into the lion's den of war, do mighty things, and, by the special grace of God, walk out unscathed. Like the soldiers in this legend, we could fight our nation's wars and at the same time teach others how to come unto the Lord, all while being protected under the banner of heaven.

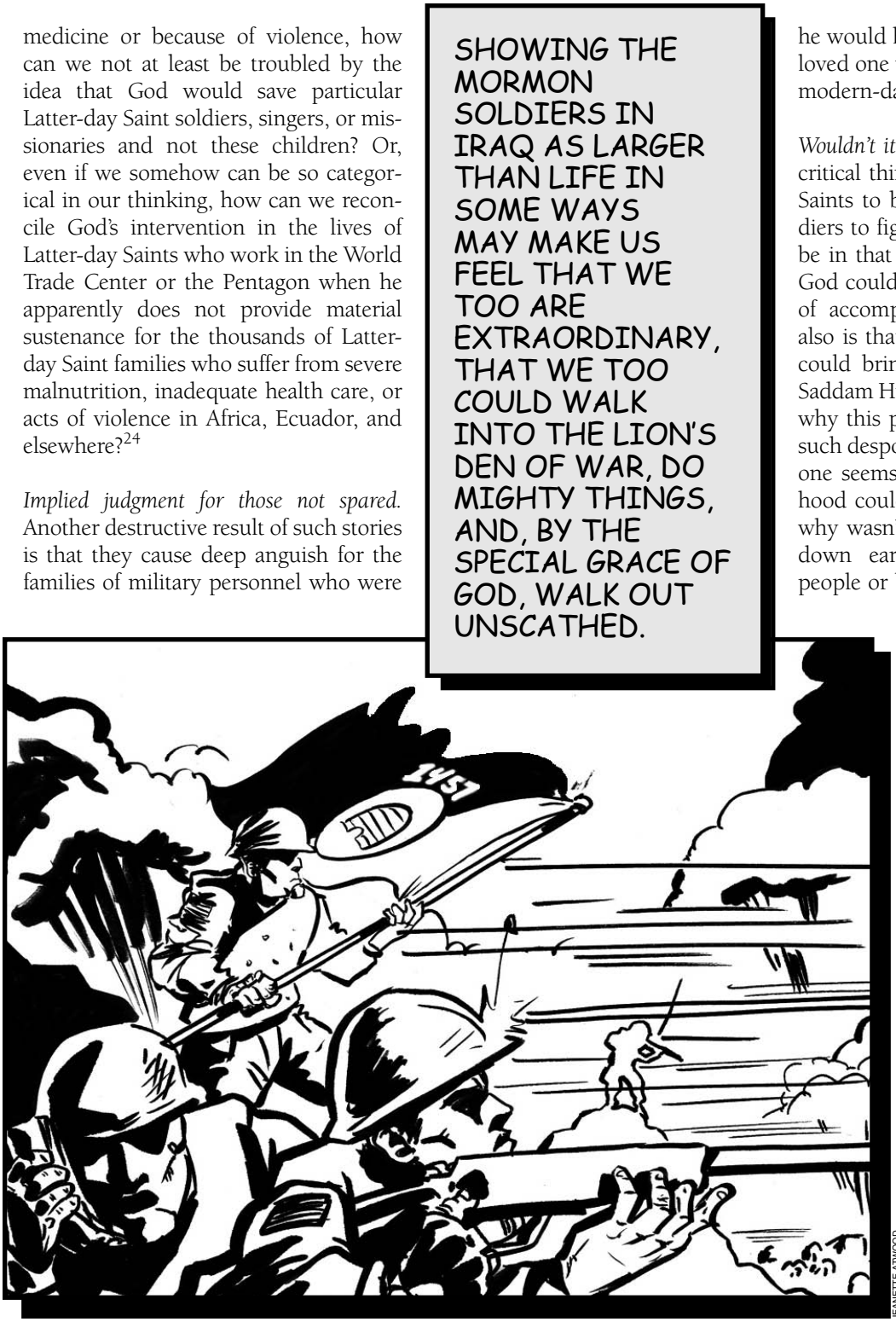
In an October 2005 *Wall Street Journal* article titled "Brains Strive to See the Good, Leading to God," Sharon Begley reports on how our brains "interpret unexpected and even unwanted outcomes as being for the best." Begley cites the work of Daniel Gilbert, a Harvard University professor, who states, "People don't know how good they are at finding something desirable in almost any outcome. So when there is a good outcome, they're surprised, and they conclude that someone else has engineered their fate." Gilbert posits that we are wired so that the brain "tends to search for and hold onto the most rewarding view of events, much as it does of objects."[21] In a July 2006 *Washington Post* article titled "How the Brain Helps Partisans Admit No Gray," Shankar Vedantam states, "Psychological experiments in recent years have shown that people are not evenhanded when they process information, even though they believe they are."[22]

Desensitizing us to suffering others. One of the effects of such a process is that it may lead Mormons either to dismiss or to diminish the tragedy and suffering of others. If God saves Mormons but not others in such situations, then he must not save others either because they are not special and deserving or for some reason known only to him. If God manipulates world events and intervenes in such specific ways in the lives of the Saints, then Mormons can be assured that "God's in his heaven—/All's right with the world"[23]—at least for us! Conveniently, we don't have to wonder about the tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi citizens killed in the war, many by our own bombs and bullets, perhaps arguing that somehow, because they are Muslims, they get what they deserve or are unfortunate if necessary collateral damage in the war on terror.

With so much evidence as we are confronted with in such places as Iraq, Darfur, and Palestine (and, more recently, Lebanon), and throughout the developing world where tens of thousands of children suffer and die daily for want of food and

medicine or because of violence, how can we not at least be troubled by the idea that God would save particular Latter-day Saint soldiers, singers, or missionaries and not these children? Or, even if we somehow can be so categorical in our thinking, how can we reconcile God's intervention in the lives of Latter-day Saints who work in the World Trade Center or the Pentagon when he apparently does not provide material sustenance for the thousands of Latter-day Saint families who suffer from severe malnutrition, inadequate health care, or acts of violence in Africa, Ecuador, and elsewhere?[24]

Implied judgment for those not spared. Another destructive result of such stories is that they cause deep anguish for the families of military personnel who were not preserved from the ravages of war.[25] What must the parents, spouses, and children of a soldier killed in Iraq or Afghanistan conclude about the death of their loved one? That either he or they were not worthy of God's special providence? That God is capricious in his grace? That if only their loved one had joined the 1457th Engineer Combat Battalion instead of another unit, or carried all of the standard works into battle, he would have been spared? Why wasn't their loved one worthy enough to be classified as "a modern-day Stripling Warrior"?



Wouldn't it have been better if . . . .? A lack of critical thinking also enables some Latter-day Saints to believe that God sent Mormon soldiers to fight in Iraq so the priesthood would be in that part of the world once more, as if God could not find an easier, less violent way of accomplishing this task. The suggestion also is that only the power of the priesthood could bring down a person of such evil as Saddam Hussein (which causes one to wonder why this power was not used to bring down such despots as Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot). No one seems to ask the question: if the priesthood could capture the evil emperor of Iraq, why wasn't it powerful enough to bring him down earlier—before he killed so many people or before we started a war that has resulted in the deaths of tens if not hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens?

The war in Iraq and Israel's actions in the Middle East are God's will. One of the most destructive results of such a legend is that it tends to increase Mormons' support of the war in Iraq—or, at the very least, to muzzle any criticisms they might entertain about the moral justification for the war. If God is using the war to convert others to Mormonism and to restore the priesthood to Babylon, then the war must be justified. Undoubtedly, such sentiments also help explain the overwhelming support of Utah Latter-day Saints for the Bush administration. If the President has led us into what he appears to believe is a God-sanctioned war, a war that has allowed the Melchizedek priesthood to be reestablished in the ancient land of Abraham; if Mormon soldiers, many of whom are returned missionaries, are indeed God's modern-day Stripling Warriors who not only defeat the proponents of the false religion of Islam and the architects of evil but who also show thousands of American soldiers the true order of prayer and worship, then how can this be other than the inspired decision of a Christian president who feels led by God?

Further, if God privileges the Latter-day Saints as his

modern chosen people, then Latter-day Saints are likely to be unquestioning in their support of God's other chosen people, the Jews, no matter how many innocent civilians they kill in Lebanon or in Gaza in their attempts to retain their habitation in the Promised Land. Thus, the Israelis' fight against Hamas and Hezbollah in the increasingly apocalyptic endgame currently raging in the Middle East becomes the Latter-day Saints' battle as well. Moral complexity is simply ignored or obscured. This is the dark side of the idea of chosen people or peoples.

What about genuine miracles? One other casualty of such stories is that they undermine those instances where there seems to be a legitimate miracle or a convincing justification for divine intervention.[26] That is, if we tell and pass on fraudulent stories and people later come to discover that they are false, their faith is invariably compromised. This reminds me of our experience with our youngest daughter when she discovered that the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny, and Santa Claus were not real. She asked, "What about Jesus?" In the article cited above about Daniel Gilbert's work on the brain, Sharon Begley writes, "Prof. Gilbert once asked a religious colleague how he felt about helping to discover that people can misattribute the products of their own minds to acts of God. The reply: 'I feel fine. God doesn't want us to confuse our miracles with his.'"[27]

GENUINE CHRISTIANITY
The true call to "chosenness"

IRONICALLY, AND TRAGICALLY, these supposedly faith-affirming legends actually serve to undermine the very foundations of the Christian gospel. The miracle of Christ's mission, including his atonement, is that it was so universal, so completely democratic: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). The great moral challenge and burden of the gospel is articulated in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. There Christ challenges our tribalism in a way that leaves us no room for escape or excuse, no retreat into callousness or indifference, no self-satisfaction in being his chosen people. If, as the Book of Mormon contends, "all are alike unto God," then he values Palestinians as he does Israelis, inhabitants of Darfur as those of Detroit, Sunnis as Latter-day Saints, our neighbors as ourselves. Such legends as those discussed above counter Christ's central message of our universal brother- and sisterhood.

If there is such a thing as chosenness, then surely it must mean not a privileged place in Christ's kingdom, not special providence to save us from the violence and vicissitudes of this spook alley we call life, not a greater measure of grace than others enjoy, but rather a heightened call to service and sacrifice, an enlarged stewardship to participate with Christ in bearing the burdens of the world, an increased compassion for our suffering brothers and sisters, a greater willingness to try with him to descend the harrowing journey beneath all things, and, ultimately, to consider ourselves, as he does, the least among our fellow beings.

NOTES

1. In her chapter, "Is There a Definition for the Legend?", folklore scholar Linda Dégh discusses the challenge of finding a consensus among folklorists about what, exactly, constitutes a contemporary legend: "For almost two centuries, scholars have attempted, with arduous dedication, to find a definition of the legend—to capture this 'elusive butterfly.'" See Linda Dégh, *Legend and Belief: Dialectics of a Folklore Genre* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 23.

While no uniform definition exists, the following Wikipedia definition will serve our purposes here:

> An urban legend is a kind of modern folklore consisting of stories often thought to be factual by those circulating them. The term is often used with a meaning similar to the expression "apocryphal story." Urban legends are not necessarily untrue, but they are often false, distorted, exaggerated, or sensationalized. Despite the name, urban legends do not necessarily take place in an urban setting. The name is designed to differentiate them from traditional folklore in preindustrial times.
>
> Urban legends are sometimes repeated in news stories and, in recent years, distributed by email. People frequently say such tales happened to a "friend of a friend"—so often, in fact, that "friend of a friend", or "FOAF," has become a commonly used term for this sort of story.

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_legend (accessed 11 December 2006).

2. A list of such Mormon urban legends, including those mentioned in this list, can be found on the SHIELDS (Scholarly Historical and Information Exchange for Latter-day Saints) website, a section of which is devoted to debunking "LDS Hoaxes, Myths, and 'Faith Promoting Rumors.'" See http://www.shields-research.org/Hoaxes/Hoaxes.htm (accessed 11 December 2006). The rumor about missionaries being called to China has been around for quite a while, but an apparent recent resurgence in its spread has caused the Church to respond specifically to it. See "No Foundation to China Rumor," *Church News*, 23 December 2006, 13.

The legends about LDS buildings being miraculously preserved remind me of a report on CNN just after Hurricane Katrina in which the reporter, commenting on the devastation that engulfed New Orleans, showed a statue of the Virgin Mary that somehow had escaped being hit by a large tree that had destroyed a nearby church. Calling it "a miracle," the reporter didn't seem to wonder why God would preserve a statue but not the hundreds of citizens who perished in the destruction.

Regarding the claim that LDS youth were generals in the war in heaven, a note posted on the SHIELDS site states: "President Boyd K. Packer, acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve, has released the following concerning a statement he is said to have made:

> We continue to receive reports of the distribution of a quote attributed to me which begins, 'The youth of the Church today were generals in the war in heaven,' and ends with the statement that when they return to heaven 'all in attendance will bow in your presence.' I did not make that statement. I do not believe that statement. The statement, on occasion, has been attributed to others of the First Presidency and the Twelve. None of the Brethren made that statement."

According to this note, "President Packer has sent a letter to mission presidents requesting their help in clarifying this matter among missionaries and members, and has had posted on some Internet sites carrying the statement a notice that he did not make this declaration."

The legends about mission calls remind me of the urban legend circulating fifty years ago when I was a young missionary in the Northern States. Several missionaries reported that a missionary they had known, before being sent into the mission field, had been taken up to a promontory overlooking Salt Lake City by a General Authority who said something like the following, "Elder, take a good look at this valley because when you return from your mission it will be covered with tents." As a group of us sat around one night repeating and embellishing such stories, speculating about the return of the Lost Tribes, one of my more sardonic companions said, "I don't know what you guys are getting so excited about, it's just going to be a national Boy Scout jamboree!"

3. Harold B. Lee, *Ensign,* January 1973, 105.

4. As quoted on the SHIELDS site, http://www.shields-research.org. This statement came shortly after a summary of lighthearted remarks made in Kuna, Idaho, 21 March 2004 by Elder L. Tom Perry concerning the various personalities of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve began circulating on the Internet. For a copy of what circulated and more on the story, see SUNSTONE, May 2004, 76–77 and SUNSTONE, July 2004, 54–55.

5. Donna Wycoff, "Why a Legend? Contemporary Legends as Community Ritual," *Contemporary Legend* 3 (1993): 2; as cited in Dégh, *Legend and Belief:*

Dialectics of a Folklore Genre, 45.

6. This name seems to be accurate. At the time, there was a Bishop Gonzales in the Hollywood Ward.

7. This attribution was reported at: http://groups.google.com/group/alt.religion.mormon/msg/74e24cf4d7a357e5?as_umsgid=f6058cf6.0210250954.ccb998c@posting.google.com (accessed 11 December 2006). A long string of responses, most skeptical, follow the post.

8. Ibid.

9. Mary Ellen Robertson, "Still Circling the Wagons: Violence and Mormon Self-image," paper delivered at a Utah Valley State College conference on Religion and Violence held 18–19 October 2001 in Orem, Utah. This paper was later published with the same title in SUNSTONE, April 2002, 64–66. The article Robertson is referring to is *Deseret News*, 12 September 2001, "LDS Church members in N.Y. are safe," B4. The story contains an interview with Elder Craig Zwick, then area president of the Church's North America Northeast Area, who said "he is aware of 'more than 20 members who work every day in and around the trade center that didn't come in to work yesterday, which is pretty amazing.'"

10. Elbert Eugene Peck provides an excellent reflection on this phenomenon in his wise and judicious editorial, "Casting Out the Spell," in SUNSTONE, September 2001, 12–15. This is the SUNSTONE issue dedicated to exploring the many facets of Elder Paul H. Dunn's fabrications about his baseball and war experiences and the aftermath.

11. See "Missionaries miraculously spared in World Trade Center attack," http://www.shields-research.org/Hoaxes/LDSWorld_Internet_Hoaxes_and_Mormon_Urban_Legends.htm#wtc (accessed 21 August 2006).

12. This and all quotations in this section are found in the story, "Mormon Tabernacle Choir Kept Safe from London Subway Bombing," and comments found at http://www.shields-research.org/Hoaxes/Tabernacle_ Choir_01.htm (accessed 28 July 2006).

13. See "Osama bin Laden has been sighted in Utah" at www.Snopes.com/rumors/utah.htm (accessed 2 July 2006).

14. According to SHIELDS, "This item is passing around on the Internet about a Sgt. Schaub that was saved when bullets penetrated his bullet-proof vest, at close range, and was stopped by his scriptures. We have verified that much of this story is true, but cannot pass on all issues at this time. The family is unhappy that this story is passing around on the Internet and we encourage everyone to stop sending it around. As we obtain further data, it will be posted here." My attempts to acertain the veracity of the story have convinced me that the entire story was fabricated. One person who originally testified that the story was true, wrote, "I know the man who you are talking about. He and his wife divorced about a year ago. He had a real problem telling the truth.' (Confidential email sent to Robert Rees, 21 August 2006). Another respondent reported, "The whole thing ended up being a lie. The guy fabricated the story." An additional bit of information came from a third correspondent: "Apparently the photos were not photo-shopped. . . . he actually shot the book."

15. This and all quotations in this section are from the story, "Modern Day Stripling Warriors," and the commentary at http://www.shields-research.org/Hoaxes/Modern_Day_Stripling_Warriors.htm (accessed 25 July 2006).

16. Jan Harold Brunvand, *Too Good to be True: The Colossal Book of Urban Legends* (New York: Norton, 1999), 19.

17. Dégh, *Legend and Belief, 46*.

18. David Berreby, *Us and Them: Understanding Your Tribal Mind* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005), 211.

19. *Ibid*., 214.

20. *Ibid*. 194.

21. Sharon Begley, "Brains Strive to See the Good, Leading to God," *Wall Street Journal*, 28 October 2005. Available at http://www.mindpowernews.com/BrainStrives.htm (accessed 4 August 2005).

22. Shankar Vedantam, "How the Brain Helps Partisans Admit No Gray," *Washington Post*, 31 July 2006, A02.

23. Robert Browning, "Pippa's Song." Available at http://www.bartleby.com/101/718.html (accessed 22 August 2006). The distinction between particular/special and general providence has existed at least since the early Greeks. It was debated during the Protestant Reformation (see, for example, John Wesley's "On Divine Providence" [Sermon 67] available at http://gbgm-umc.org/UMHISTORY/Wesley/sermons/serm-067.stm (accessed 22 August 2006), and became particularly vigorous during the Enlightenment. Voltaire believed in both kinds of providence until he saw the devastation of the earthquake in Lisbon. His "Poem on the Lisbon Disaster:' Or an Examination of the Axiom, 'All is Well'" (http://oll.libertyfund.org/Texts/Voltaire0265/OnToleration/HTMLs/0029_Pt05_Lisbon.html#toc_lf029.head.086 (accessed 22 August 2006), is a direct counter to the optimism of Browning and others.

24. See Dr. Bradley Walker's articles "Spreading Zion Southward, Part I: Improving Efficiency and Equity in the Allocation of Church Welfare Resources" and "Sharing our Loaves and Fishes," in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 91–109, and *Dialogue* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 33–47.

25. In relation to the urban legend about how wonderful it was that Mormons were spared in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, one blogger wrote, "A friend of mine did not take it that way when an LDS member told her this story. Her son, who is Baptist, died in the WTC attack." See the thread at: http://groups.google.com/group/alt.religion.mormon/browse_thread/thread/494b392f0edb1bcf/74e24cf4d7a357e5 (accessed 11 December 2006). The post cited above was written by "Garydw" on 29 October 2002.

26. Such legends also open Mormons to ridicule for being so gullible, as the following story posted on the Internet demonstrates (punctuation and spelling corrected here):

> Has anyone heard this urban legend? A Mormon soldier in Iraq was shot dead in a gunfight. After the gunfight, a little Afghan boy noticed something sticking out of his uniform. It was the Book of Mormon. The little boy picked it up out of curiosity and took it home and his family read it. After the family finished reading it, the Holy Ghost bore witness to them and they all wanted to get baptized. Unfortunately, they didn't know how to contact the missionaries. They traveled thousands of miles to the nearest town with Mormon missionaries. After several days and some help from the locals, they were able to track down the missionaries. Fortunately one of the missionaries knew the Iraqi language and was able to communicate with them. The family told the story of finding the Book of Mormon, reading it every night as a family, and praying together. They all received witness from the Holy Ghost that it was true and wanted to be baptized. The missionaries scheduled a date and then the Iraqi speaking missionary spoke up. "I am confused," he said in Iraqi, "Do any of you speak English?" They all shook their heads indicated that they didn't. "Then how did you read this?" the missionary asked, "It is an English Book of Mormon." At first the missionaries thought it was a hoax, but the family members were all able to recite stories from the Book of Mormon accurately. There was no doubt they had read the book without knowing how to read English. The only explanation was [that] God gave this family the gift of tongues. The story gets more interesting. The family was baptized by the brother of the Mormon killed in Iraq. They discovered this later. The Iraq family now believes his brother died so they could find the gospel. Does this sound familiar. If not, it's because I made it up. LOL. How does it sound? Do you think TBMs [True Believing Mormons] will buy it? I am going to mass email it to a bunch of TBMs and see if it spreads.

See http://www.shields-research.org/Hoaxes/Mormon_soldier_killed_in_Iraq.htm (accessed 3 November 2006).

27. Begley, "Brains Strive to See the Good."

MY SON VISITS

I misplace Wisconsin on the map but you come home
to me like a Midwestern bleep,
a burned out shopping center.
You don't leave the state
but somehow you're traveling somewhere.
I park your lack of enthusiasm in jaded youth.
I play bumping cars in the parking lot
and skid into our green arrogance.
You are rude to me like a spoiled gourd.
There are insects in your deranged pulp.
I don't know how to walk away from your disillusion
because I am umbilically caught in our genetic career.

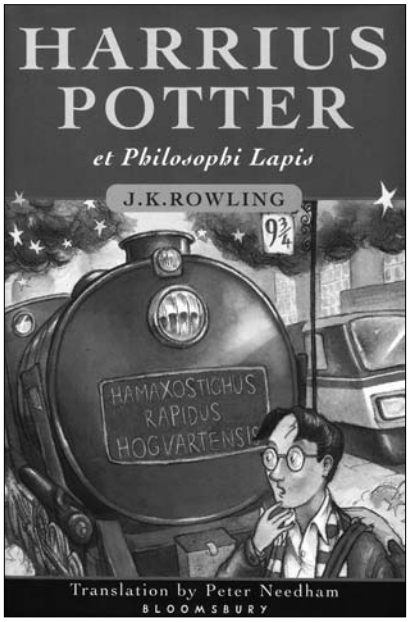
—DAVID LAWRENCE

The moment America yields to its neurotic impulse to become a Christian nation, instead of being a nation that respects and values Christianity, Harry Potter *and the rest of our imaginative life will join Darwin on the scaffold erected each year by the Kansas City school board to toast great ideas.*

THREE CHEERS FOR CICERO

SOME THOUGHTS ON READING *HARRY POTTER* IN LATIN

By Edwin Firmage Jr.



LAST CHRISTMAS, I DECIDED TO brush up on my Latin. I say brush up, but vigorous scrubbing with steel wool designed to remove heavy rust would be more accurate. As an undergraduate, I studied Latin, as well as a number of other dead languages, but had not done much with it in the almost twenty-five years since. After a couple of weeks' review with a well-thumbed copy of Wheelock, I was ready to begin my first big Latin read in decades. Providentially, at that very moment, my kids were cleaning out their rats' nest of a bookcase and came across a copy of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in Latin (*Harrius Potter et Philosophi Lapis*, translated by Peter Needham, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003) that had been given us by my dad, who is prone to buying strange things in London bookshops. In school, I had never gone in for translations of English kids' books into Latin and Greek. But, being older now and more fun-loving, I opened the book and began reading: *Dominus et Domina Dursley, qui vivebant in aedibus Gestationis Ligustrorum numero quattuor signatis. . . .* By the end of the first page, I was hooked. I finished the book two weeks later. Following are some reflections on reading a twentieth-century children's classic done into the language of Cicero, two thousand years dead.

WHAT INITIALLY SURPRISED me most is the fact that the book *could* be done into Latin. It's a testament to the timeless quality of J. K. Rowling's writing, as well as to the brilliance of Needham, her Latin translator, that the book reads beautifully and fluently, despite the occasional appearance of twentieth-century problems such as Uncle Vernon's car (*autocinetum*), the traffic jam (*vehicula impedita*) in which it gets stuck, and motorcycles (*birotulae automatiariae*), flying and earthbound.

But more is at work here than "just" timeless writing and clever wordsmithing. Perhaps reports of the demise of Latin, I began to think, have been exaggerated. The more I reflected on this, the more positively perfect Latin, among all dead languages, seemed to be for this sort of thing. I imagined reading *Harry Potter* in my Sumerian and Hittite classes at Berkeley, and I pondered if it were done in Hittite, would we use all 315 cuneiform characters, complete with Akkadian and Sumerian logograms, or would we opt for the chicer look of the hieroglyphic Hittite inscriptions? And, speaking of hieroglyphics, how would *Harry Potter* work as part of a new, conversational

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approach to teaching Middle Egyptian in place of the *Tale of Sinuhe* and *The Shipwrecked Sailor*? The fact that the humor in these last two sentences will be lost on readers who have not spent years trying to learn Ancient Near Eastern languages and literatures is in itself instructive. Clearly, when we're speaking of languages and their associated cultures, there are degrees of morbidity. Sumerian, Hittite, and Egyptian (Old, Middle, and New) are all in the class of things, like the Monty Python parrot, that would not voom if you put 4,000,000 volts through them.

Latin and Latin culture, by contrast, are still very much with us, even those of us who do not call Vatican Hill home. Classical Latin just refuses to die. No doubt many thought it dead when uncouth Germans of various persuasions overran Gaul, Spain, and Italy. The Empire did die, but Roman culture lived on and actually ended up conquering the conquerors. The Franks, to take one instance, overran Gaul, giving it the new name (France, Frankreich) by which we still know it. Yet so completely did Roman Gaulish culture absorb the barbarian horde that less than a dozen words of Frankish origin survive in contemporary French. Gaul, that nation of Astérixes, was the medieval equivalent of the Borg of *Star Trek*, assimilating everyone who crossed its path. Roman Gaul, complete with assimilated Franks, was again listed as an endangered species when an invasion of strapping blondes from Norway hit the shores of Omaha and Utah beaches in the ninth century. Like their Frankish cousins, however, the Norsemen, or Normans, too, were totally assimilated. By 1066, when they had had enough of continental easy living and set off to obliterate all things bright and beautiful in Britain, these *quondam*-Vikings were no longer speaking Old Norse but French, a new-fangled derivative of Latin.

The purpose of the preceding *CliffsNotes* review is to illustrate the fact that a lot of what made Roman culture great in Cicero's day continued to make it great for centuries, long after people stopped reading Cicero. One reason that *Harry Potter* in Latin is not only possible but is positively good reading is that something of ancient Roman culture hung on through countless invasions and disasters and lives on in Europe and its colonies today.

Unfortunately, however, except in a few isolated monasteries where the inmates sought relief from the tedium of ceaseless scripture reading by an occasional illicit dip into the classics, people *did* stop reading Cicero. Despite the stubborn survival of some basic elements of classical culture in Europe, people today would not be reading *Harry Potter,* or Oxford editions of Cicero for that matter, if other events had not occurred to bring the classical authors back to life. The story of that resurrection not only explains how we get a Latin version of *Harry Potter* that reads as naturally as if J. K. Rowling were Cicero's daughter, but also how European culture came to be and why it, not the fabled empires of the East, was to be the birthplace of the novels about Harry, Ron, and Hermione.

What I've come to appreciate in my musings on *Harrius Potter et Philosophi Lapis* is that, in ways so deep and broad that they at first escape our notice, our culture *is* Roman, or, to give the Greeks their due, Greco-Roman. *Harry Potter* in Latin makes sense to us because, generation after generation since at least the eighth century, European culture has made the culture of Rome its own. Roman culture is the source to which Europe has returned again and again when it needed to reanimate its flagging spirit. When new words, new ideas, new legal forms, new philosophies, new architectural models, and new ways of analyzing the real world were needed, Europe did not create these from scratch, but rather dug deep into its own Roman past for the solutions. During the Renaissance alone, for example, some 10,000 new words, and with them thousands of new concepts and untold numbers of new institutions, came into the English language, and the vast majority of these were direct borrowings from Latin. Thousands of additional Latin words had already entered the language in the Middle English period. Through his Bible translation, Wycliffe singlehandedly contributed about a thousand. Also during the Middle English period, English adopted some 10,000 new French words, which of course themselves stem mostly from Latin sources. These too also represent more than just vocabulary items as isolated phenomena. Words embody concepts, practices, beliefs, institutions, and the like. The fact that English found a need for these words indicates the profound transformation of European society that was then underway. And the fact that the borrowings come ultimately from Latin suggests where a lot of this new cultural equipment originates as well: Rome.

To put these Latin influences into perspective, consider that the lexicon of ancient Sumer as we know it consists of about 3,700 words (it's admittedly incomplete). The modern Hebrew lexicon contains about 20,000. The contemporary English lexicon numbers between 50,000 and 60,000 entries. What these comparisons reveal is the extent to which our English vocabulary has increased in both size and expressive range due in no small measure to Latin influence.

Renaissance linguistic borrowings are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Latin influence on European culture. There have, in fact, been four great turnings to Roman culture. The first had already taken place in the eighth century when Charlemagne, in the process of trying to resurrect the Roman Empire, realized that to build such an empire he would need to have the same tools the Romans had used. He needed a literate and educated administration, a language capable of handling the complexities of empire, and a legal system that was equally sophisticated and flexible. He found them all in classical Rome. Thus began the first of Europe's Romanizing renaissances.

The Carolingian Renaissance contained all of the elements that would mark the three subsequent great awakenings of European culture. It came at a time of incipient political expansion and development, which in turn were made possible by the reintroduction of Roman institutions. It heralded a flowering of literature, music, and art, which likewise drew inspiration from Roman precursors. And it inevitably led to conflict with the Church, though the Church benefitted in the end.

As one living in the most overtly and sometimes extremely religious Western nation, I say of the Bible Belt, "There but for the grace of Roman unbelief go I."

Charlemagne's grand plan for a new Roman Empire came crashing down with the appearance of the Norsemen, who plunged Europe into two hundred more years of turmoil. Emerging from this in the eleventh century, Europe was once again ready to expand and develop, and once more it turned to Rome for guidelines. The result was the twelfth-century renaissance that heralded the birth of modern Europe. From this time on, despite several setbacks, Europe never again sank into a dark age. This was the age of the great Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals, of the Crusades and the Inquisition (OK, so it's not all good), of Magna Carta, of nascent nation states, and of a triumphant Papacy. This was also the beginning of European industry, which initiated an unprecedented exploitation of water and wind power; of the rise of cities, the first worthy of the name in hundreds of years; of trade; of scientific and philosophic inquiry; of Thomas Aquinas, Peter Abelard, Roger Bacon, Leonardo Fibonacci, and the anonymous authors of the Merton Speed Rule.

Empowering all of this—the most extraordinary cultural and political renaissance the western world had seen—was the rediscovery of Roman culture. It was a new-found appreciation of Aristotle and other Greek philosophers of science in Latin translation, that made the new philosophical and scientific achievements possible. It was the rediscovery and adaptation of Roman law, transformed into canon law, that enabled the growth of the Church and the papacy on an unprecedented scale, with all of the attendant consequences for good and ill. (The use of torture and the techniques of the Inquisition, for example, are of Roman extraction.) It was this same Roman law that became the foundation for continental Europe's nascent civil law codes.[1] This amazing age, in which Europe began to leave other regions of the world behind in all things political, economic, technological, and scientific, is a child of Rome.

The fourteenth century witnessed political unrest and disaster (the Black Death) on such a scale that, by rights, Europe should have sunk into another century or two of chaos. Instead, it rebounded even stronger than before—and in less than a generation. It's a testament to the depth of the transformation that began in the late eleventh century, which is in no small way a Roman transformation, that even having lost a quarter to a half of its population, Europe of the fourteenth was able to spawn what we call the Renaissance, *the* Renaissance.

The accomplishments of the Renaissance are well enough known that they need no retelling here. Like its predecessors, it is fundamentally a societal awakening brought about by the continuing unfolding of Europe's own classical past. What starts to change is the pace and extent of the unfolding and the increasing ability of society to absorb and adapt the past to its own new purposes. One of the novelties of this renaissance is the fact that for the first time since the fall of Rome ancient materials are no longer exclusively Latin. Scholars now have access to Greek originals, and Greek joins Latin as the *sine qua non* of the educated man. Greek philosophy, aesthetics, art, sculpture, architecture, and science now take their proper place alongside their Roman counterparts as models for emulation and adaptation.

One consequence of the rediscovery of Greek culture that's particularly relevant to *Harry Potter* is the huge interest of Renaissance scholars in Greek magic and alchemy. It is not the much-maligned Dark Ages but the iridescent Renaissance that, borrowing on Hellenistic sources, is the origin of Europe's fascination with such arcana as the philosopher's stone. The combination of this interest in magic and the newly invented printing press created the cottage industry of books about magic that continues unabated to this day.

It's ironic that the Renaissance, this highest of high points in classical studies (at least until then), should also represent the beginning of the end (a sort of end, anyway) of the Latin language. With the Renaissance, the living Latin of the middle ages gave way to a learned, classicizing Latin, admirable but artificial, and increasingly less of an obvious choice over rapidly maturing vernaculars. Having been injected and reinjected into the cultures and vernacular languages of Europe for centuries, Latin, in the years following the Renaissance, gradually yields to the vernaculars as they become capable of standing on their own as tools for political administration, literary expression, and scholarly and scientific research. Even so, Latin remains the prime language of scholarship well into the eighteenth century and the revolutions that brought Europe into modernity.

IT WAS THIS turmoil that set the stage for the fourth, and in some ways most important, European borrowing from the classical world: the revival of a democratic political culture. If, for Charlemagne and the twelfth-century Church, Rome was the paradigm of empire, for Thomas Jefferson, it (and of course Athens) provided a model for the world's first republic since Cicero's day and the first democracy since Plato's. The etymology here speaks for itself: democracy, from Greek *demos*, people, and *kratia*, power—the original people's power; republic, from Latin *res publica*, the people's business, as administered on their behalf by the mostly rich, powerful, and hopefully enlightened (a typically Roman transformation of Greek radicalism).

Less famously indebted to the classical world than its predecessors, the eighteenth century enlightenment and its political ramifications are in fact unthinkable anywhere but among the spiritual descendants of Pericles and Cicero. To understand

why, consider Europe's next-door neighbor, the Middle East, which has never known a political system other than tyranny—even if, as in modern Jordan, the reign of Saladin, or the caliphs of Spain, that power could be considered relatively benign. Not to put too fine a point on the matter, the Middle East has never had a political *culture*. The manifold institutions of thought and practice that made republican Rome, Periclean Greece, or modern America possible are as rare beyond the Bosphorus as lovers of George Bush. Middle Eastern government was, and still is in many places, tied to familial and tribal, rather than public, forms of organization. Political life and the practice of government in democratic Greece or republican Rome revolved around the *agora* and the forum. Political life in the Middle East was focused in the *divan*, the potentate's private council chambers. There was no architectural forum in Middle Eastern cities because there was no metaphorical forum for discussion. And not much has changed for the better between Saladin and Saddam.

The primary gathering place in a Middle Eastern city is the mosque. Even today in Cairo, the Muslim world's greatest city and its cultural Mecca, the grandest buildings—and, colonial structures and squares excepted—the only places *everyone* can enjoy, are the mosques. Herein lies another great difference between the classical world and its European descendants on the one hand and the Middle East on the other. The importance of this difference for the emergence of free thought and imagination of the sort that lead to a *Harry Potter* can't be overstated. Greco-Roman law, politics, and government are essentially secular. The making of democratic and republican law was by and large a matter of public debate based on practical, real-world considerations, and the people making these decisions were not religious leaders. No religious scripture defined the parameters of the debate. Interestingly, although they were even in their own day more a matter of propaganda than of practice, the ancient Near Eastern law codes (Eshnunna, Lipit-Ishtar, Hammurabi, the Middle Assyrian Laws, and the like) were also decidedly secular in nature. Too bad they proved to be a false start. In the

THE GRACE OF HOCUS POCUS

SOME READERS MIGHT question whether books on magic constitute a plus for European culture. I make the point here primarily by way of a parenthesis relevant to the background of the *Harry Potter* books. But, while we may dismiss the practice of magic as so much hocus pocus, its presence in our culture is not without an upside. It has certainly provided a wealth of historical curiosities that writers of fantasies such as *Harry Potter* have used to wonderful effect. If you believe Carl Jung, however, it's done more than that. Magic and alchemy have also enriched our imagination. In Jung's reading, alchemy in particular shows itself to be not (or not simply) a misguided predecessor to chemistry but a form of psychological symbolic expression and self-exploration for a sizeable chunk of European society for whom Christian orthodoxy was an unsuitable vehicle.

The magic of the *Harry Potter* books, being nothing so deep, merits no such analysis. But I don't think one should try to evade evangelical criticism of the magic in *Harry Potter* by simply dismissing it as superficial or just a prop for the story. Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that it was a richer and deeper part of the story, as it is in, say, Charles Williams's adult fantasies. How should one then react to it? If Jung's alchemical studies have demonstrated anything it is that one man's garbage is another's treasure, one man's magic, another's religion. Your hocus pocus is my Eucharist (*hoc est corpus meum*), your hail-fellow-well-met gentleman's cult is my temple endowment. That portion of its past that mainstream religion—any religion in any age—deems to be inappropriate can conveniently be dismissed as so much magic. The Christian church certainly did this with paganism. From a skeptic's point of view, however, the definition of Christian orthodoxy as something self-evidently other than magical mumbo-jumbo is a distinction without a difference. From a phenomenological perspective, religion and magic are the same thing. When we talk about the significance of the magical tradition, therefore, what's really at stake is the cultural value we place on that particular form of imagination *cum* spirituality that is religion. Strange as it may sound to orthodox ears across the Christian spectrum, therefore, I would say that Christians, as symbolic thinkers and humans who would be more soulful, are richer for our magical, pagan past, for the survivals of the worship of trees, springs, storms, and animals, and for the numinosity that surrounds sex.

If one grants the possibility that much of what one believes is at least significantly incomplete and possibly utter nonsense, as close to a real understanding of God as the alchemists were to real chemistry, one has to concede that there isn't much point in being unduly concerned about achieving philosophical perfection in one's belief system. Is there any advantage in being 3 percent accurate in one's statements about God as opposed to, say, 2 percent, if 4 percent is all you can achieve? Pursuing this line, then, one must admit that religion, insofar as it is a matter belief and ritual, is more metaphor than syllogism, and one should feel free to explore a variety of metaphors. Many believers, for example, don't object when the Hebrew Bible calls Yahweh a warrior. It is (for most moderns at least) a metaphor that says something about God, and one doesn't feel compelled to take the statement too literally. Why, then, should one object to the notion that God is also an oak tree, a summer thunderstorm, or a bountiful harvest? In this case, the more metaphors perhaps the better. Take all for what they can offer, none as absolute truth. In this view, if the early Christian church made a mistake in its confrontation with paganism, it was in not incorporating more of the mumbo-jumbo than it did, for it ended up with an impoverished notion of God. Perhaps evangelical critics of *Harry Potter* should trust that God won't hold them to a metaphor and try a bit of spiritual homeopathy: read the book!

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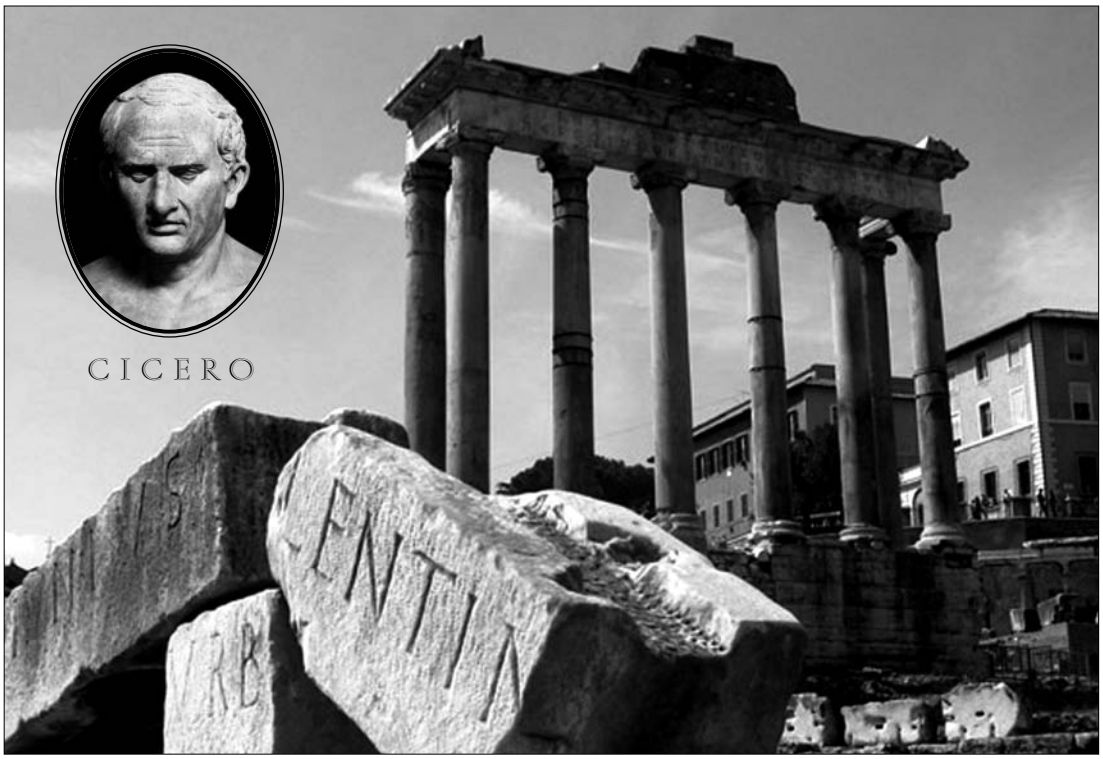
Large parts of Roman culture, especially the godless bits, have always been part of our own, even in outposts such as Salt Lake City, Utah. They live on, like the boy who lived. Harrius Potter exists because Cicero and his pals in the Senate and the plebs of the comitia believed that people should be governed by rational, civic-minded debate, not by revelation from God.



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Muslim Middle East, there is *no* native legal tradition that is independent of Scripture and its interpretation. Indeed, *no* aspect of life, including modern business practice, escapes the jurisdiction of the Qur'an. In extreme cases, such as Saudi Arabia, Qur'anic interpretation in practice means that public and private life alike are subject to the intrusions of the religious police. In Afghanistan, until its liberation, it meant Taliban thugs.

This is where secular Roman law saves the day for Europe. European political culture was able to throw off the yoke of the Church because it had a sophisticated and secular legal tradition, a Roman tradition, to take the place of the Bible and the priestly guardians of righteousness. That tradition included such abstractions as the corporation, on which all modern business depends. In fact, the genius of Roman law is that it is *full* of abstractions—abstractions that free it from any attachment to the particular individuals who make and enforce the law. As a result, in the West, the notion of law itself is an abstraction. It is something that exists independent of a lawgiver (Yahweh, Marduk, Allah, or your local tribal headman). It is sanctioned not by the threat of divine punishment but by the consent of the governed. At the core of modern Western law is the conviction of the governed that there exist certain inalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which it is the purpose of all law and government to protect. It is not the purpose of law to enforce righteousness. Mostly, in the view of those brilliant colonial interpreters of Greece and Rome, that government is best which governs least.

Thus Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine. At a time when many in America are demanding that the country return to its roots, people would do well to remember that as far as its political philosophy is concerned, these roots are in the Roman forum, not the Vatican or Mt. Sinai. Paine, a true man of his time, was among the first to apply, if crudely (in both senses of the term), what we today would call a historical-critical approach to the biblical text. In the process, he ripped that text to shreds.

As America struggles to decapitate a Hydra of its own making in Iraq, it would likewise be useful to recall that politically and culturally speaking, Iraq has yet to emerge from under the shadow of the caliphs, of whom Saddam Hussein is simply the last and most sadistic incarnation. It has not had the benefit of a secular, democratic political culture two millennia in the making. There are only two real democracies in the Middle East today, and both took their lead significantly not from their own ancient sacred books (in fact, they deliberately turned their back on these books), but primarily from European examples. Both were founded by men committed to secular democracy. Considering this, I think the Israelis and the Turks would agree with me that George Bush is therefore unlikely to be the father of a third Middle Eastern democracy. Such a happy eventuality is only slightly easier to conceive than the idea that the next worldwide children's bestseller will

be written by a Muslim woman presently on the dole, as was J. K. Rowling when she wrote the first *Harry Potter* novel. But, two thousand years down the road from Cicero, I (an American living in a remote western city where "Latin" refers variously to a class of salacious dances, the blank spot on the map south of Tucson, or cheap labor) read a children's book written by an unemployed English woman and translated into Latin by a professor at stuffy old Eton, and it seems like the most ordinary thing in the world for me to do. It seems that way because large parts of Roman culture, especially the godless bits, have always been part of our own, even in outposts such as Salt Lake City, Utah. They live on, like the boy who lived, *puer qui vixit. Harrius Potter* exists not only because Cicero spoke Latin but because Cicero and his pals in the Senate and the plebs of the *comitia* believed that people should be governed by rational, civic-minded debate, not by revelation from God.

HARRY POTTER, and you can pick the version, Latin or English, is indebted to the classical tradition in at least two other specific ways that are worth mentioning. The first has to do with the sacred role of comedy in that tradition. We might also call this playfulness of mind. It's a very good sign indeed when the first book of the *Harry Potter* series opens with a delightful send-up of parental authority. In the original tongue, the book reads:

> Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbors.

And in Peter Needham's inspired translation:

> *Domina Dursley erat macra et flava et prope alterum tantum colli habebat quam alii homines, quod magno ei usui fuit quod tantum tempus consumebat in collo super saepes hortorum porrigendo, finitimos inspiciens.*

Like the best of her countrymen authors—I think of Roald Dahl, G. K. Chesteron, P. G. Wodehouse, and Charles Dickens—Rowling has a fine satiric and comedic intuition, and Needham renders it as dryly as one of James Bond's martinis.

Humor is an unobtrusive but constant feature of Rowling's books, and in good classical tradition, a lot of it is directed at authority. One thinks, for instance, of Cornelius Fudge, the blustering, self-important, and aptly named Minister of Magic, or the hilarious celebrity professor, Gilderoy Lockhart. There's the Ministry of Magic, whose bureaucratic buffoonery lacks only a Department of Silly Walks in order to be complete. Rowling's playfulness of mind is everywhere manifest. There's her deliciously incorrect pedagogy that has Mad-Eye Moody turning Draco Malfoy into a ferret. There's Hagrid's hexing fat Dudley Dursley with a pig's tail. No wonder educators love this stuff! What tired and underappreciated teacher wouldn't love to be able to use such a spell just once, perhaps on a school board member? Then there's the plethora of positively Dickensian personal names and magic book titles such as Cassandra Vablatsky, author of *Unfogging the Future*; Vindictus Viridian, author of *Curses and Countercurses;* or Phyllida Spore, author of *One Thousand Magic Herbs and Fungi*. Peter Needham makes his own contribution to this treasury of outrageous nomenclature when he turns the town in which the Dursleys live, Little Whinging, into *Querela Parva*, Little Whining. All this foolery is authentically English, but it would equally be at home in Aristophanes. It is not at home in the *Thousand and One Nights* or *Kitab al-Aghani*.

Now, I won't claim that humor is uniquely Roman, or more correctly, Greco-Roman, in the way that secular law is, but there is a point to be made here about the special place that humor has in classical culture. It is a curious fact that although we have an abundance of material from the cultures of the ancient world, our only significant body of comedic works comes from Greece and Rome.[2] Most of them still make great reading and have been appreciated by European audiences for as long as they have been known. Terence and Plautus were shamelessly plagiarized by Shakespeare. Martial's epigrams are still piquant and readily enjoyed without a critical apparatus. He's quite as quotable as H. L. Mencken or Edward Abbey. Go to Amazon.com, and you'll see that people still read him and even write reviews of his work. The satires of Juvenal and Petronius console us with the realization that culture has more than once survived the idiocy of the rich and the powerful, and that we, or at least future readers of Edward Abbey, will have the last laugh. Considering the antics of the current White House, who cannot agree with Juvenal that it is hard not to write satire?

Towering above all of these figures, however, is Aristophanes, the maculate master, the only Athenian who could hold his own against Socrates in a verbal or a drinking duel. You'll look in vain for his like in other ancient literatures. And, it's hard even to *imagine* his like outside Greece or Rome. Aristophanes and the funny men who came after him enjoyed the luxury of writing in a culture that gave even sharp-tongued critics a remarkable degree of license. I, for one, have difficulty imagining an often obscene and foul-mouthed Aristophanes, an even more obscene Petronius, or a trenchant critic like Juvenal thriving, or indeed surviving, in any of the cultures of the ancient Middle East. And I would rate their chances of survival in the contemporary Middle East only slightly higher. Their modern descendants—the Twains, Menckens, and Abbeys—also thrive because of the license for humor and imagination that Western culture still offers more abundantly than any other. If you don't believe this, just imagine Roald Dahl reading from a newly released Arabic translation of *My Uncle Oswald* to a group of scholars at Al-Azhar. (Note to Peter Needham: a Latin version of *My Uncle Oswald* would earn you the eternal thanks of undergraduates, who could use another comic classic in the syllabus.)

While I find humorous bright spots in other places such as the *koshare* of the Hopi, the gentle haiku of Issa, or the Sufi stories of the wise and hilarious Nasrudin, I still think Europe *uniquely* fortunate to have been the heir of Greco-Roman humor. Through the darkest days of the Dark Ages, this tradition survived thanks to the bad boys of the clergy who recog-

Being pure is not the same thing as being concerned about being pure. The former is the quality that makes saints. The latter is what makes inquisitors. Neurotics can't tell the difference.

nized, as Umberto Eco in his own imaginative masterpiece has so delightfully taught us, the sacred role of humor. Perhaps the protection accorded humor in the European tradition reflects the fact that it was indeed sacred to the gods. Greece's comedic competitions have their origins in religious rituals that expressed and institutionally sanctioned, as Mardi Gras does today, the human need for play, sacred and especially profane. In no other ancient tradition do I find a similar degree of divinely sanctioned bad behavior. According to their chroniclers, the classical gods themselves often misbehaved, and after the interminable solemnity of the god portrayed by church, synagogue, and mosque, this seems to be a less neurotic view of what it means to be the maker and epitome of the human species.

THE *HARRY POTTER* books, though delightfully playful and full of that English wit that is the envy of the rest of Europe, are not primarily comic. They are fantasy, a genre that seems to have found especially fertile soil on the Britannic fringe of Roman culture. Rowling is the true heir of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, Hugh Lofting, and George MacDonald, whose likes, as in the case of Aristophanes, are not to be found in the Near or Far East. Nor will we find the likes of the German Romantics Eichendorff, Novalis, and Hoffmann, to whom George MacDonald in particular was indebted.

To the extent that the novel is a modern art form, and by and large it is, one shouldn't press the classical connection with *Harry Potter* too hard. Nonetheless, the best pre-modern precedent for the fantasy novel is in fact a piece of Latin fiction, and interestingly it is also a moral tale about the use of magic (can fantasy not be about magic, I wonder?). I'm speaking of course about Apuleius's *Golden Ass*. To this, one might add the smaller, less fantastical Greek romances or novellas, *Chaereas and Callirhoe, Leucippe and Clitophon, Daphnis and Chloe*, Xenophon of Ephesus's "Ephesian Tale," Heliodorus's "Ethiopian Story," and Pseudo-Callisthenes's *Alexander Romance*. *Harry Potter* is heir to these not only in the limited sense of being an extended work of fantasy but also in the sense that it is the product of a culture, which, like Greece and Rome, values playful imaginative expression and, above all, individual expression.

The other pre-modern book that could claim status as prose fiction on the scale of a novel, though it isn't fantasy, is Petronius's bawdy classic, *The Satyricon*. Petronius and the Greek romances reveal a dimension of Roman, but especially Greco-Roman, play, which, thanks to the youth of its protagonist, is largely absent from *Harry Potter*. This is sexuality in its myriad artistic sublimations: the art and sculpture of the nude, outright erotic art and even pornography, bawdy comedy, and romantic fiction. Our models for all of these are largely classical. If a chaste fantasy such as *Harry Potter* is impossible to conceive without the classics, how much more so is an adult fantasy such as George MacDonald's *Phantastes* or its German Romantic precursors? Without the tutoring in matters of sex-as-art provided by Greece and Rome, European arts and letters would scarcely be recognizable. We would have, of course, no Michelangelo or Rodin, no Ingres or Bernhard (Ruth), no Shakespeare or Joyce. We would also have (for better or worse) no Freud or Jung, no Kinsey or Hite. And, we'd have none of the thousands of their kin whose like is not to be found outside the Roman pale.[3]

The cultural life of Europe, especially from the Renaissance on, presents us with a thousand and one reasons for cherishing its humanism, seedy, seditious, and sublime. One might cite, for example, Albinoni, Bach, Buxtehude, Vivaldi, Telemann, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, Dvorak, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Verdi, Puccini, Fauré, Debussy, Chausson, Ravel, Duruflé, Strauss (times two), Elgar, Barber, Howells, Quilter, and Vaughan Williams. Or Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello, Lippi, Alberti, Castagno, Della Francesca, Verrocchio, Botticelli, Bellini, Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Bramante, Raphael, Correggio, Titian, Tintorello, Palladio, Vasari, Van Eyck, Bosch, Holbein, Dürer, Bruegel, El Greco, Rubens, Van Dyck, Vermeer, Hals, Bernini, Velazquez, Wren, Rembrandt, Watteau, Hogarth, Piranesi, Gainsborough, David, Turner, Ingres, Goya, Delacroix, Seurat, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, Rodin, Van Gogh, Monet, Gaugin, Klimt, Picasso, Klee, Chagall, Matisse, Moore, Le Corbusier, Wright, Van der Rohe, Pollock, Wyeth, Weston, and Adams. Or Napier, Newton, Leibniz, Fermat, Euler, Lagrange, Laplace, Bernoulli (times four), Gauss, Hamilton, Boole, Riemann, Fourier, Möbius, Poincaré, Russell, Cantor, Whitehead, Hilbert, Gödel, Turing, von Neumann, Mandelbrot, and Wolfram. For the sake of paper and the reader's patience, I'll forgo the list of headliners in the history of science and technology, a list that would take pages. But, I'll highlight one inventor, Johannes Gutenberg, because his creation, after writing and the alphabet, is perhaps the most pivotal. It's the one that makes books like *Harry Potter* and magazines such as SUNSTONE even thinkable, much less affordable.

I tax the reader's patience with this list because it's important to see all of these names together in order to appreciate the sheer magnitude of what starts to happen in Europe in the Renaissance. It's a creative explosion, the likes of which the world had never seen. But it's not happening in China or Japan, and it's not happening in the Middle East. From the last of these areas, in particular, what we hear is silence, broken only by the insect-like murmur of millions of children reciting verses from the Qur'an.[4]

This gets to the heart of what I consider to be the true legacy of Greek and Roman culture to the world. Within the

limit of its franchise, and this was by no means universal, Greco-Roman culture valued individual human creativity to a degree that was unique until the rise of modern Europe. And as we approach the modern age and the classical ideal of the individual asserts itself more and more, we find the European world full of interesting individuals whom we know intimately and by name. In what other literary culture would we find such treasures as the vision of St. Perpetua, the letters of Jerome, the neurotic confessions of Augustine, the dream diaries of Hildegard of Bingen, the mystical sermons of Meister Eckhart, or the journal of Marjorie Kempe, just to name a few of the hundreds of remarkable, sometimes nutty, individuals whose writings have come down to us. In what other modern literature do we find the likes of Shakespeare, Swift, Molière, Voltaire, Sheridan, Austen, Dickens, Twain, Bierce, Joyce, Shaw, Wodehouse, or Abbey?

I fully recognize that the Western tradition does not have exclusive patent rights on either individuality or creativity. But there can be no argument that until the opening of cultural boundaries in our own time, due in large measure to Western influence, the West has indeed put far greater emphasis on the individual and has given individuals a far greater scope of action than in Near and Far Eastern cultures, in which social conformity has been raised to the level of divine ideal or in which the greatest expression of human action is inaction. Harry Potter makes no sense as hero of either a Confucian or a Buddhist fantasy, if such a thing existed. And his life at an Islamic *madrasa* wouldn't even make a story.

When all is said and done, the *Harry Potter* novels are just good stories. What the West has done better than other cultures is to give individuals and their stories, imaginary or not, an opportunity to develop in ways truly *unimagined* elsewhere. If additional proof of this point is needed, I offer this observation. We have yet to see, even with the benefit of Western influence and the explosion of global marketing, a native Chinese, Japanese, Indian, or Arabic *Harry Potter* or *Lord of the Rings*. Before too many tomatoes start flying my way, let me hasten to add that fantasy is by no means the last, nor even most important, word in artistic activity. The East has given us many wonderful cultural gifts of other kinds. Zen and its arts in particular are a priceless bequest to a West whose aesthetics seem primitive by comparison. I for one would much rather read Basho than Byron. If exiled to a desert island, I'd infinitely prefer to have Shiki in my backpack than Sylvia Plath. The Far East has made, and I hope will yet make, if it is not entirely overrun by Western commercial culture, unparalleled contributions of its own to the fund of human creativity. But the East's gifts have not included, and probably won't, products of pure fantasy.

Of the Middle East and its future contributions, expectations at present are singularly low. They're low not principally because America, the birthplace of modern democracy, has, through its support of dictatorships such as the Shah of Iran and the Saudi royal family, for decades waged war against democracy in the Middle East, nor because Europe waged similar wars against Islam for a millennium, but because of problems inherent in Muslim society that Muslims as a whole have yet to acknowledge, much less to address. It's not my purpose here to discuss these at length, only to offer a few observations as they pertain to the issue of the life of the imagination, of which *Harrius Potter* is here our emblem. What this Middle East observer (whose Hebrew and Arabic were once far better than his Latin) finds so disappointing and increasingly disquieting is how the region's always present but frequently quiescent neurosis is now manifesting itself pathologically. Neurosis, beautifully defined by psychologist Thomas Moore as a lack of imagination, is our overidentification with a particular idea of self. When a political leader, for example, forgets the distinction between his person and his office, he becomes neurotic. He also probably becomes a criminal. Louis XIV's *l'état c'est moi* is perhaps a factual description of the state of France at the time. As a psychological profile of France's top man, it's a recipe for disaster, as his even crazier grandson was to learn. Leadership seems to be an especially fertile ground for neurosis. But there are plenty of ways in which the rest of us can get some neurotic action. When my sense of who I am derives largely from such airy abstractions as nationality, ideology, or dogma, I become neurotic. When a church handbook or encyclical or a mufti's fatwa can define my notion of good and evil, I become neurotic. In fact, nothing induces neurosis like the life religious. The desire to be the purest, most orthodox, or most faithful is in itself *always* a gateway to neurosis. The reason? Being pure is not the same thing as being concerned about being pure. The former is the quality that makes saints. The latter is what makes inquisitors. Neurotics can't tell the difference.

Because it is a limitation of the imagination, neurosis is always, even in inflation such as Louis's, a diminishment of self. The more neurotic the self (or group or nation), the more simplified reality, which isn't simple, becomes. In its most extreme form, neurotic simplicity becomes positive simplemindedness, and it ends in suicide bombings. The prevalence of these in Muslim society today says something profound about its utter imaginative bankruptcy. As an expression of neurosis, however, suicide bombings are not that different from the murderous fatwa against Salman Rushdie or the threats directed against Naguib Mahfouz for *The Children of Gebelawi*. And they differ only in degree of rabidity from the attacks on J. K. Rowling herself from the Christian Right in America. Behind all of these is the inability to think imaginatively, and therefore to understand and tolerate those who do.

Imagination, as I've used the word here, is more than just a quality of playfulness of mind. It is, in essence, the ability to put oneself in someone else's shoes, whether that person is real or imaginary. Imagination expresses itself in empathy and understanding. It is an extension and expansion of self. As the negation of these, neurotic simplemindedness is therefore a diminishment of one's ability to feel compassion, and no one is less compassionate than the ideologue for whom a single idea or objective defines how he or she relates to the rest of the world. That electrifying, defining idea may be the rights of the unborn, the righteousness of *laissez-faire* capitalism, or the untouchability of the sacred land of Saudi Arabia. The murderous

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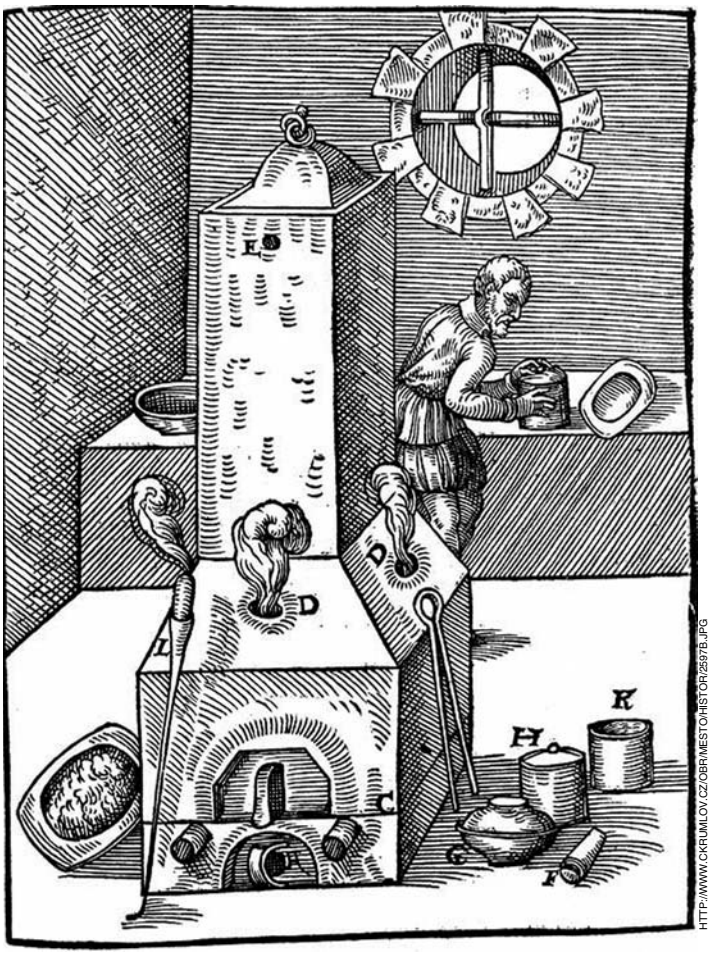
I don't think one should try to evade evangelical criticism of the magic in Harry Potter by simply dismissing it as superficial or just a prop for the story. If Jung's alchemical studies have demonstrated anything it is that one man's garbage is another's treasure, one man's magic, another's religion. Your hail-fellow-well-met gentleman's cult is my temple endowment.



consequences of buying into these neurotic gospels are apparent for all to see.

Shortly before 9/11, the dean of Western scholars of the Muslim Middle East, Bernard Lewis, set out to explain what has gone wrong in the Muslim world—what has caused the culture that led the world in Baghdad during the eighth century and in medieval Spain during the eleventh and twelfth centuries to become the hiss and byword of the twentieth.[5] The answer to Professor Lewis's question—this is my own view on the matter but Professor Lewis seems to take a similar line—lies in the absence of a tradition of secular governance. The inseparability of religion and governance, which was as true of the Muslim world in its golden age as it is of that world in its long contemporary decline, was tempered early on by the fact that all governments everywhere were highly inefficient and limited in their ability to impose uniformity on the governed. But state-enforced religious orthodoxy or indeed religiosity, when the state has all of the economic, data-gathering, police, communications, and military powers that modernity offers, is terror incarnate.

Here, then, is the key to what went wrong. Whereas European nations progressively dropped their religious agendas in the course of modernizing and flourished as a result, Islamic states did not. The result was a no less impressive descent to the bottom of the political heap, with every advance in government power and efficiency progressively increasing the reach of state religion and correspondingly diminishing individual imaginative freedom. The fact that the classical texts that have played such a role in the rise of Europe came in no small measure through the intermediacy of Muslim translators, and that modern mathematics and science might well not exist without the Arabs—who, among other things, invented algebra and gave us a useable number zero—makes this turn of events all the more shocking. Europe made culture-shaping, world-changing use of these things, and Islam did not. And why did Islam *not* seize on them as Europe did? Because, at least in part, it was bound by the increasingly limiting strictures of religious orthodoxy.

In Europe, the strong traditions of secular law and secular notions of human rights, coupled with the tradition of individual creativity, have helped to moderate our own tendencies toward neurosis in matters of the spirit. The Middle East has never had such counterbalances to its religious fervor. As a Westerner, I therefore find myself saying of the Middle East, "There but for the grace of Rome go I." And as one living in the most overtly and sometimes extremely religious Western nation, one that from time to time calls to mind the Middle East, I say of Bible Belt, "There but for the grace of Roman unbelief go I." I pray for help in my unbelief, but not quite in the way of Jesus's would-be disciple. The moment America yields to its neurotic impulse to become a Christian nation, as the Sudan is an Islamic one, instead of being a nation that respects and values Christianity, *Harry Potter* and the rest of our imaginative life will join Darwin on the scaffold erected each year by the Kansas City school board to toast great ideas.

At present, however, even benighted school districts in the U.S. teach a syllabus that is worlds apart from what has been until comparatively recent times, and in many places still is, the traditional education of the Muslim Middle East. Even in medieval times, European education was secular. It consisted of the Trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). The basis of the Trivium in particular was not the Bible, "so

little read in so many places at so many times" (Thomas Greene), but pagan Latin classics such as Cicero and Virgil. The traditional Muslim *madrasa*, on the other hand, focuses exclusively on the Qur'an, memorization of which is the core of the curriculum. While European students were testing their wits against Aristotle, their counterparts in Cairo were getting scripture pounded into their heads.

MY WISH FOR *Harry Potter* is therefore that it may be the messenger of the Good News of imagination to places like the Middle East and the American Bible Belt, where imagination is in short supply; that it may nudge a few of the millions of kids whom it has already taught to enjoy reading to seek out some of the sources of its magic. And since J. K. Rowling herself studied classics, we may safely assume that at least a few of these sources will originally have been in the tongue of Cicero.

In view of what I've said here about the role that Latin has played in shaping the European culture that makes *Harry Potter* possible, it's no surprise that Needham's Latin version works as well as it does. But that doesn't diminish one's admiration of the result. At a time when all life is threatened by the many manifestations of our neuroses, it's good to celebrate a sparkling masterpiece of imagination.

HARRIUS REDUX

AS THIS ARTICLE was going to press, news reached me that Peter Needham's translation of Book II of the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (*Harrius Potter et Camera Secretorum*), is scheduled for release on 26 December 2006, a year almost to the day since I got my hands on Book I. As unlooked for as Aeneas appearing out of his cloud among the Carthaginians, Harrius, beautified by the breath of a divine translator, reappears! I had hoped, but not dared to expect, that more such treats were in store. What better way to spend another holiday season than enjoying the fruits of those divine fields, *Saturnia arva*, which are white already to harvest?

NOTES

1. The Romans themselves sensed that their most important legacy to the world and the justification for their empire, at least in the mind of their greatest poet, Virgil, was to put the whole world under the rule of law, *totum sub leges mitteret orbem* (Aeneid 4:231).

2. Comedy is as characteristic of Greco-Roman literature as Psalms, and indeed religious poetry in general, is of the Bible—a telling isogloss. The contrast works both ways, for devotional literature is no less *un*characteristic of the classics.

3. While we're on the subject of things missing from *Harry Potter*, one might also mention religion. Magic, as I've already noted, can have a religious dimension and may, as in philosophical alchemy or Wiccanism, be indistinguishable from what people commonly call religion. But that aspect of magic is absent from the *Potter* books, which one might say are religiously as well as sexually chaste. In fact, the absence of overt and even implicit religion seems to be a characteristic of fantasy and fairy tales in general. It's missing, perhaps, because writers of fantasy are generally imagining a world that is separate from ours, a world that has its own history, laws, and culture. To the extent that it involves magic, it has its own natural laws as well, according to which magic is not a violation of nature but part of it. Even *Harry Potter,* which takes place in contemporary England, unfolds within a world of its own cordoned off by magic from the non-magical world. George MacDonald begins his *Phantastes* with this quote from Novalis (in my translation from the German) that highlights the quality of separation from the workaday world of the reader that is essential to fantasy:

> In a true fairy story, everything must be wonderful, mysterious, and self-consistent; everything must be animated in one way or another. All of nature must mix fantastically with the whole spirit world. Here we enter the time of anarchy, of lawlessness, of freedom, of the natural state of nature, of the time before time. . . . The world of the fairy story is one that contrasts utterly with the real world, and precisely for this reason is utterly like it, as chaos is like the finished creation.

To imagine such a world, to believe in it, as lovers of Harry Potter, Aragorn, and Curdie believe in them, is playfulness in its truest sense. It is world-building capable of engaging the whole mind (of adults even more than children). As Tolkien said in his essay "On Fairy Stories," while we're part of that world we believe utterly in it or the story fails. Such belief, to those who do not think imaginatively, is a species of blasphemy, for it is to entertain the possibility however remote that the universe, gods included, that they so assiduously construct for themselves is perhaps just a construct. It may therefore not be coincidental that fantasy writing emerges in Europe only after the latter's religious-spiritual unity had been shattered by the Reformation and deconstructed by the Age of Reason.

4. I am fully aware that a sentence like this, and indeed many of my musings on the Western world's Greco-Roman inheritances, will raise charges that I'm (1) not being politically correct, and (2) playing the role of unabashed cheerleader for the West. To these charges, I plead guilty. On the second charge, I recognize that there is another side, indeed there are several other sides, to the story of the rise and spread of Western values. And perhaps after I finish my shameless encomium to modernist values, I'll write my own critique. But of one thing I have no doubt: there are no professorships of postmodern studies in universities sponsored by the Taliban, the Islamic Brotherhood, or Hizbullah. Nor is postmodernism a thriving major at Al-Azhar. If our Western house is made of glass, as the postmodernists assert, we had better be careful about the stones we throw around inside.

To those offended by my decidedly un-PC appraisal of traditional religious education, I suggest that they would do well to consider which truth is the proper target for their ire: that I am politically incorrect, or that education systems and governments based on scripture should exist in the twenty-first century? I single out the Islamic *madrasa* for special recognition, but it is unique only in the degree to which it excludes modernity. One could also mention by way of evenhandedness many a Jewish yeshiva and Christian home school.

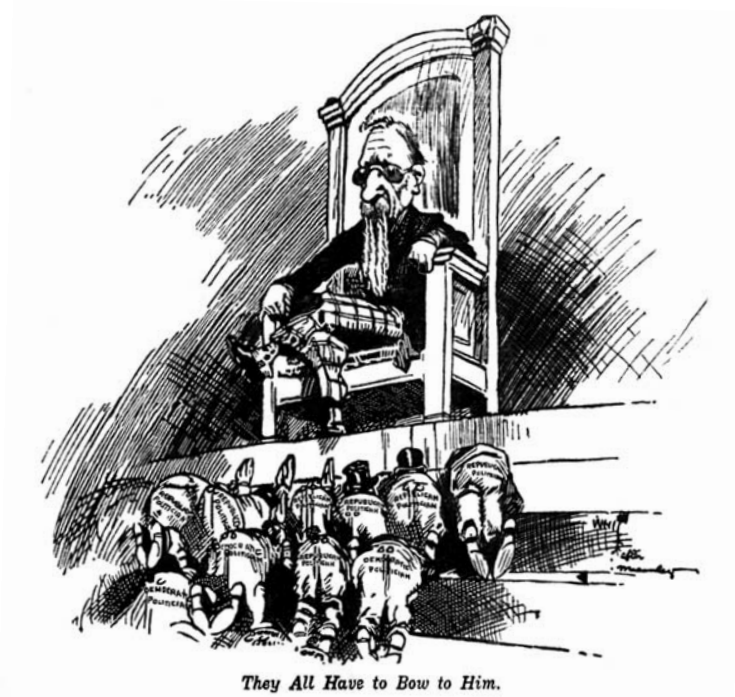
Those who take exception to my critiques of such narrowmindedness have the luxury of doing so because they are the product of a culture that believes, at least some of the time, that criticism of authority, even criticism that borders on derision, is by and large a good thing. As Ed Abbey said, "*Always* question *all* authority." Female critics of my Western cheerleading and lack of political correctness might ask themselves where they would be if traditional religious attitudes to women, and you can pick your religion, still applied in the West. Male critics might consider whether they would like their sons prepared for careers in the modern world within the halls of a *madrasa*. There's reason for outrage here, but the rage would be better directed than at the messenger who is politically incorrect—OK, politically irreverent—enough to call a spade a spade.

5. The Muslim world's own renaissances in the periods just mentioned are themselves in no small way the result of encounters with Greek and Roman sources. The periods in question, like our Renaissance, were marked by a flurry of translations, in this case, Arabic translations, from Greek and Latin or from earlier Syriac versions of the same, and by attempts to incorporate this classical legacy into Islam. In stark contrast to contemporary Islam, defined as it increasingly is by a repudiation of non-Muslim thought, the golden ages of Islam show a remarkable openness to outside ideas, Greek, Roman, Christian, Jewish, and even Buddhist. (An intriguing, though not certain, case of Muslim borrowing from Buddhism is Sufism, whose similarities to Zen are striking. Sufi borrowing from Neoplatonic and mystical Jewish sources is also possible.) What all of this illustrates is the quite simply breathtaking extent to which the best of world culture this side of India has drawn inspiration from Greece and Rome. I find myself thinking that even Virgil might have been surprised by the truth of Jupiter's prophecy of the Romans, *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono | imperium sine fine dedi*, "On these I place no limits in space or time. I've given them an empire without end" (Aeneid 1: 278-79). Virgil was as keenly aware as anyone of the cost in human suffering that this empire would entail, starting with the life of his own suffering and ambivalent hero. Virgil, as Jackson Knight observed, "always sees two sides of everything." But on balance, like Virgil, I think the imperium has just possibly been worth the price.

A new century. New kinds of media controversies.

POLITICAL CARTOONING AND THE REED SMOOT HEARINGS

By Michael H. Paulos



They All Have to Bow to Him.

I have been horribly caricatured and made hideous in cartoons. . .
—JOSEPH F. SMITH, 1904

IN THE PAST YEAR, POLITICAL CARTOONS HAVE BEEN a source of great controversy in the U.S. and around the world. In early February 2006, all six of the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs denounced a *Washington Post* cartoon depicting Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as a doctor treating a quadruple-amputee soldier and claiming he was listing his condition as "battle hardened."[1] Labeling the cartoon "reprehensible," "callous," and "beyond tasteless," these Pentagon officials publicly denounced the cartoon as offensive to U.S. military personnel who "have suffered traumatic and life-altering wounds," sparking an interesting public debate on the limits of cartooning propriety and the freedom of the press.

Shortly thereafter, I watched in shock the violent rioting in the Middle East and across the world over the publication in a Denmark newspaper of a political cartoon of Muhammad, depicting the Islamic prophet's headdress as a bomb.[2] Muslim extremists and terrorists used the cartoon to incite riots and abet hatred. The media was filled with pictures of militants protesting and holding signs stating, "Europe. Take Some Lessons From 9/11"; "Exterminate Those Who Slander Islam"; "Behead Those Who Insult Islam"; and "Europe Is The Cancer, Islam Is The Answer."[3] While the majority of American news-

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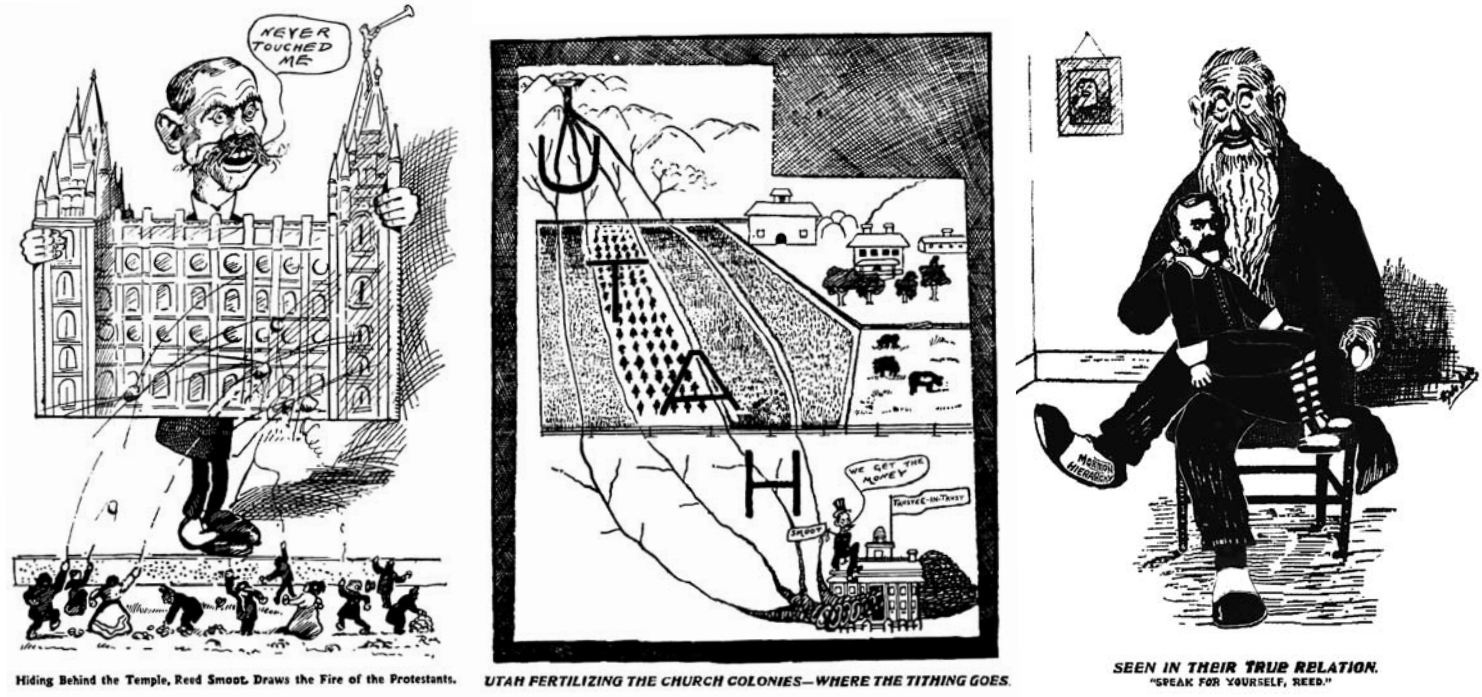
papers and mainstream media outlets covered the protests, they elected not to print the Muhammad cartoons, leaving some U.S. citizens without the full story and thus without a full understanding of what, exactly, sparked the outrage.[4]

These controversies happened to occur during the final stages of my preparing a one-volume annotated abridgement of the U.S. Senate hearings dealing with the seating of LDS apostle and senator Reed Smoot, which were in full swing exactly a century ago. My research on the Smoot hearings naturally led me to examine the cartooning and newspaper coverage of the event. As the examples and explanations that follow demonstrate, political cartooning and the media's sense of its role in 1906 were a far cry from what they are in 2006.

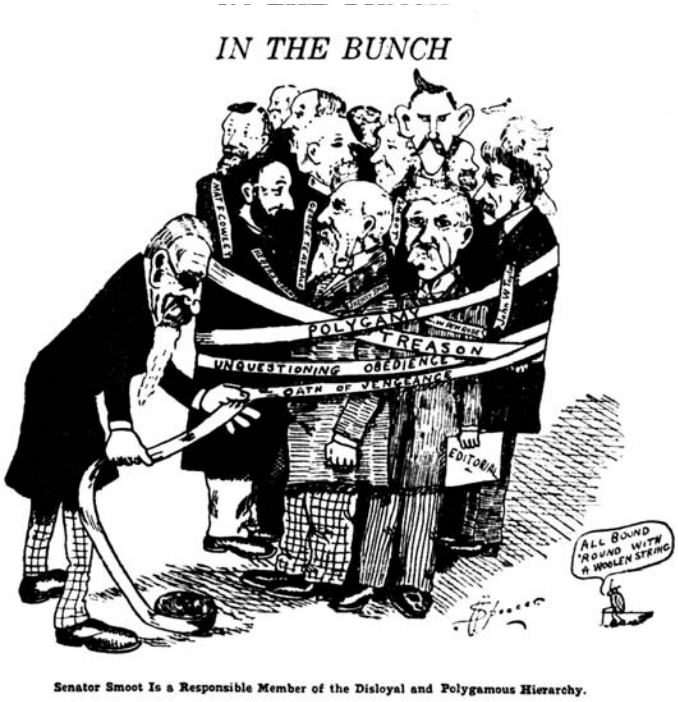
Smith's frustration was aimed primarily at the *Salt Lake Tribune*, which over the four-year period of the Smoot investigation, published hundreds of unflattering cartoons of Smith and the Church.[7] Responding to Smith's displeasure at its coverage, the *Tribune* pounced:

> So Joseph F. Smith does not like to be cartooned as he really is. . . . What is the matter with Joseph F. Smith? Is he better than Theodore Roosevelt or William James Bryan? Is he any worse than Johann Most or Jack the Ripper? All men who come before the public either in good or bad light, are subject to the cartoonist's pencil. But this individual—the chief law-breaker of his generation—tries to make this community regard him with a peculiar sanctity. Joseph F. Smith is no better than the great men of this Nation, and he is perhaps no worse than the other wicked men of this country—and he must take the fate common to all. . . . What is the matter with Smith? The *Tribune* will tell. Smith is rageful because the truth is being told about him, both in language and in picture; he writhes under the truth. Being unable to defend himself against it, and being too brutally willful in his wrongdoing to retreat and permit this State to have peace. . . . Well, let him stop his infamies, and then the cartooning will stop.[8]



LEFT: "HIDING BEHIND THE TEMPLE, REED SMOOT, DRAWS THE FIRE OF THE PROTESTANTS," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 22 December 1904. The protestants who opposed Smoot finished making their arguments on 20 December 1904. CENTER: "UTAH FERTILIZING THE CHURCH COLONIES—WHERE THE TITHING GOES," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 January 1905. Smoot's relationship with the Church's Trustee in Trust (Joseph F. Smith) was a concern in Washington, as all tithing monies given to the Church were under Smith's control. RIGHT: "SEEN IN THEIR TRUE RELATION: 'SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, REED,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 February 1905. FACING PAGE: "THE KING OF UTAH," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 June 1906. The figures bowing before King Smith are members of the Utah state legislature.

THE SMOOT HEARINGS and the national media scrutiny received during the hearings by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Senator Smoot, and LDS prophet Joseph F. Smith were brutally sensational.[5] In a letter to Smoot, President Smith complained about how he'd been beaten up in the media. After lamenting the "scandalous treatment I have received from the public press on account of my testimony given before the Committee," Smith continued, "Of course you know how I have been horribly caricatured and made hideous in cartoons, and slandered and lied about most outrageously. . . ."[6]



LEFT: "IN THE BUNCH," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 March 1906. This cartoon depicts Joseph F. Smith with the Quorum of the Twelve under wraps. The apostles appearing in this cartoon include John Henry Smith, Reed Smoot, Matthias Cowley, John W. Taylor, Heber J. Grant, George Teasdale, and Charles W. Penrose. RIGHT: "THE LID IS OFF," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 February 1907. This cartoon was published the day after Smoot was vindicated. The cartoon mocks the fact that Smith had been hiding several Church leaders alleged to have entered into post-manifesto marriages. Pictured here are Charles W. Penrose, Matthias W. Cowley (deposed apostle), John W. Taylor (deposed apostle), and J. M. Tanner (deposed General Board of Education member). In the *Tribune's* perspective, since Smoot was no longer on trial, President Smith could unearth the fugitive church leaders. The phone message President Smith is receiving from Smoot is, "It's all safe now Brother."

Public sentiment nationwide was against Smoot and the Mormon Church. Wrote Smoot opponent and former First Methodist minister of Ogden, Dr. J. Wesley Hill:

> The churches all over the land took the matter up and the newspapers have condemned Mormonism as un-Christian and un-American. I have seen some of the most severe cartoons where it [Mormonism] was represented as a devil-fish, as a destroyer of womanhood and as an influence of the most baneful character.[9]

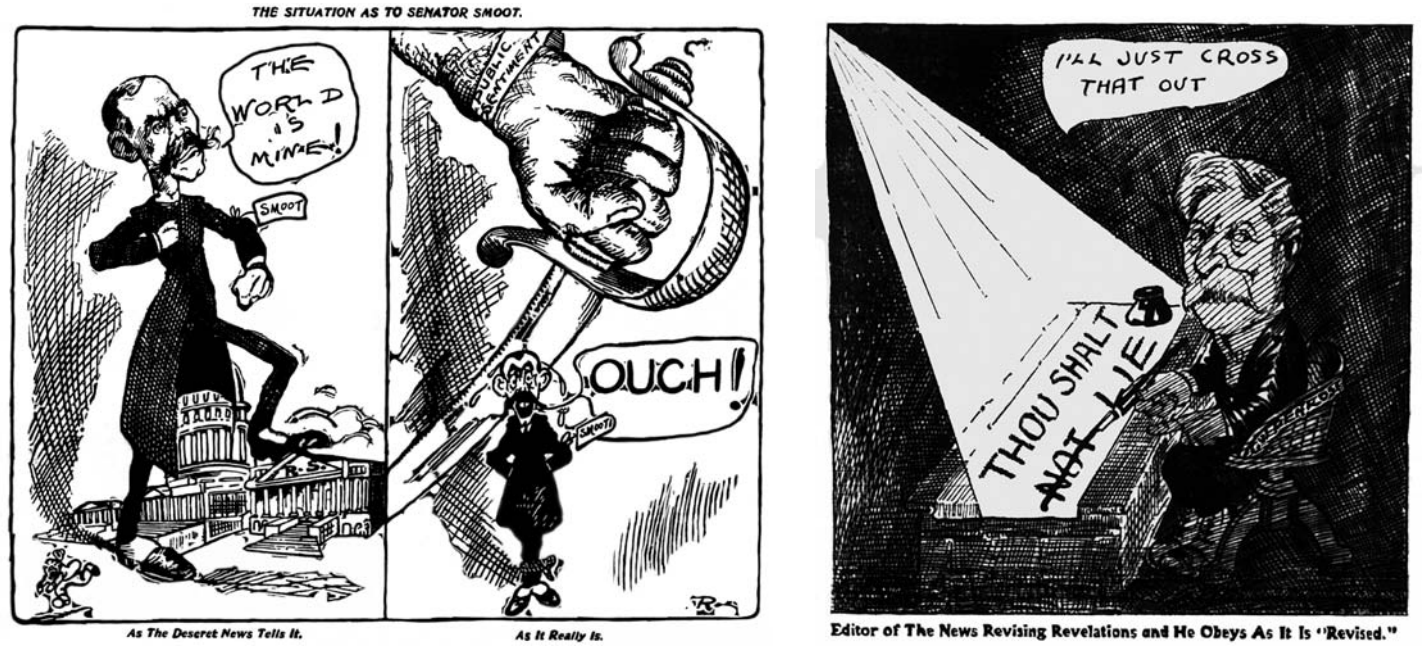
Since so many articles contained extreme language as well as undocumented and untrue rumors, one can easily understand the frustration of both Smith and Smoot.[10] An incredible amount of column space in Utah periodicals, especially the *Tribune* and its rival *Deseret Evening News (*now *Deseret Morning News)*, was devoted to the Smoot hearings, including daily reports from Washington, transcripts of testimony, trenchant opinion columns, and, of course, lampooning cartoons.[11]

At the time of the hearings, the *Tribune* was owned by Utah Republican Senator Thomas Kearns (who had served in the U.S. Senate from 1901–1905). Smoot was also a Republican, and initially, he and Kearns were allies, but their friendship quickly deteriorated when Smoot's political machine squeezed Kearns out of power.[12] A bitter man, Kearns blamed Smoot and the Church for his demise, bolted the Republican Party, and assisted in establishing the anti-Mormon American party.[13] Following these events, the *Tribune,* which had previously been an organ of the Republican Party, launched a frontal anti-Mormon and anti-Smoot attack. Of the *Tribune's* reporting, the *Deseret Evening News* abrasively published the following:

> The old anti-"Mormon" gall and wormwood and sinuous prevarication and abuse in the *Tribune*, oozes out in acrid volume mingled with a pretended half-eulogy, half sarcasm, about the testimony of President Smith before the committee. But it matters little. The protestors and their organ will elicit much more than they want in the examination and will fall in other directions. The country will learn the facts, and the rational and sensible will perceive the true situation, and whether prejudice prevail against Senator Smoot or not, the result will be the spread of "Mormonism" throughout the world. But we advise the antis not to shout too loudly or too soon.[14]

Kearns hired the angry and lapsed Mormon Frank J. Cannon to be the *Tribune's* editor. Though Cannon had fallen from grace and was no longer taken seriously by his LDS peers,[15] his editorials became so inflammatory that he could not be ignored.[16] Cannon's extreme editorials even became a hair shirt for many Gentiles living in Utah, who blasted his work as editor of the *Tribune*. The following sarcastic assessment appeared in *Truth*, a weekly newspaper published in Salt Lake City by John W. Hughes, a non-Mormon:

> The specials from Washington which appear daily in that paper one would have thought are sufficiently



LEFT: "THE SITUATION AS TO SENATOR SMOOT," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 December 1904. The cartoons above are an outgrowth of some of the newspaper wars between the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Evening News*. The first cartoon represents the *Tribune's* opinion that the *Deseret Evening News* was spinning its reporting on how the Smoot case was unfolding. RIGHT: "EDITOR OF THE NEWS REVISING REVELATIONS AND HE OBEYS AS IT IS "REVISED," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 December 1904. The second cartoon is a mockery of the testimony given at the hearing by George Reynolds and *Deseret Evening News* editor Charles W. Penrose. The issue at hand was the Wilford Woodruff Manifesto, which Reynolds testified that he, Penrose, and John R. Winder helped revise for publication. The *Tribune* mocks Penrose's alleged penchant to revise scripture.

> mendacious, misleading and cold bloodedly false to suit the most depraved taste. However, those masterpieces in their line, are not sufficiently depraved for the *Tribune*. To help out their deficiency the paper has its local staff at work, but the efforts of the latter are puny compared to the stuff that comes from the master mind at Washington. . . . How proud we Gentiles are of our self-constituted champions in the fight the *Tribune* is making on the Mormons! Tom Kearns, the leader of a pure and holy cause for principle's sake. It is to laugh. And the editor of the *Tribune*, ex-Senator Cannon, Mormons and Gentiles are proud of him. . . . In years gone by when the Cannon's [sic] ruled the church roost, Frankie received more favors from the church and the Mormon people than any other man. He sought all the church influence he could get and more too. He let nothing pass even to carrying a "recommend" from his bishop and certificate to the effect that he had paid his tithing and he is as much of a Mormon today as he ever was. Yes, we Gentiles are justly proud of him as a leader! We are like the lectures he reads us in the columns of the *Tribune*. We like to be told by him above all men of our duties as Gentiles and the responsibilities which rest upon us. He and Tom [Kearns] the great mentors.[17]

Frank Cannon was excommunicated on 15 March 1905.[18] Using the bully pulpit provided by his *Tribune* post, Cannon had tried his best to oust Smoot from the Senate. Despite Cannon's printed cacophony,[19] Smoot was allowed to retain his U.S. Senate seat in 1907 by a vote in the Senate of 42–28. Cannon and the *Tribune* had been effective in getting the anti-Smoot message out, but their efforts failed, and Smoot ultimately served five terms in the Senate (1903–1933).

SINCE THE SMOOT hearings a century ago, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of overtly acerbic articles published on the topic of Mormonism in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The majority of inflammatory statements that appear today arise in the letter to the editor section, and then only rarely do they contain anything approaching the level of vitriol that was *de rigueur* of the Cannon editorship. By the same token, today's *Deseret Morning News* no longer prints aggressive retorts directed at the *Tribune*. Between 1903 and 1907, the *Tribune* consistently published cartoons that caricatured the LDS prophets and apostles. Nowadays, the *Tribune* never prints a malicious cartoon featuring a Mormon leader. Moreover, the aggregate U.S. media has adopted similar journalistic redlines that restrict the cartooning of some religious figures.

The Smoot/Smith cartooning and Muhammad cartoon controversy represent a fascinating hundred-year dichotomy that, in my assessment, yields mixed results. On the one hand, the media has taken a journalistic step forward by generally showing deference to religious figures. But it has taken a jour-

"THE APOSTLE IS GOING SOME," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 February 1906. Controversial quotations from the *Journal of Discourses* were used by the protestants opposing Smoot as they asked questions of him and other church witnesses. These extracts provided some of the hearings' most entertaining moments.

nalistic step backward by becoming too cautionary in much of its coverage and commentary.

NOTES

1. For the *Washington Post* cartoon by Tom Toles, see http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/01/AR2006020102465.html.

2. For the Muhammad cartoon, see http://www.uriasposten.net/pics/JP-011005-Muhammed-Westerga.jpg

3. For a list of these and other slogans, visit http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/?p=385 (accessed 11 December 2006).

4. Among the hundreds of U.S. newspapers and other media outlets that chose not to publish the Muhammad cartoon are: *New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, USA Today,* the Associated Press, NBC, MSNBC, CBS, CNN, and National Public Radio's website. The only U.S. media outlets to run the cartoon were the *Philadelphia Inquirer, Austin American-Statesman*, FOX News, and ABC. See *Salt Lake Tribune*, "The true motive for cartoon censorship," 11 February 2006.

5. Smoot historians Kathleen Flake and Harvard Heath have both noted the viciousness of the media's treatment of Smoot. See Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and Harvard Heath, *Reed Smoot: First Modern Mormon* (Ph.D dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1990).

6. Joseph F. Smith to Reed Smoot, 9 April 1904. Smoot papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

7. See Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834–1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1983), 65–70.

8. *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Smith and the Cartoons," 9 January 1907.

9. *Salt Lake Herald*, "Smoot's Chances Very Poor," 2 May 1904. Dr. Hill said this while drumming up anti-Smoot petitions in his new ministry area of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

10. A. Reed Smoot granddaughter, Kathryn Smoot, wrote a senior honors thesis on the newspaper coverage of the Smoot Hearings. She concluded that the *Salt Lake Tribune* was more effective in communicating its anti-Smoot, anti-Mormon message than the *Deseret Evening News* was in refuting it. See Kathryn Smoot, "The Role of the Newspaper in the Reed Smoot Investigation: 1903–1907," (unpublished paper, special collections, University of Utah, 1964), 105.

11. Opinion columns on Smoot and issues related to the hearings appeared nearly every day in either the *Deseret Evening News* or *Salt Lake Tribune*. Strong allegations and skewed reporting from one paper elicited rebuttal**s** from the other, and so on. A personal battle between the editors of each newspaper unfolded. LDS apostle Charles W. Penrose edited the *Deseret Evening News*, and Frank J. Cannon, an ex-Utah Senator and son of LDS General Authority George Q. Cannon, edited the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

12. Kearns's term ended in 1905, at which point he was not a candidate for reelection.

13. For a good study on the American Party, see Reuben Joseph Snow, "The American Party in Utah: A Study of Political Party Struggles During the Early Years of Statehood." M.A. thesis, University of Utah, 1964.

14. *Deseret Evening News*, "Law and Testimony," 4 March 1904.

15. Cannon had alienated himself from his church and former friends. One measure of the animosity and disdain that Church leaders had come to feel for Cannon is the following statement made by newly called apostle George Albert Smith to Smooth's personal secretary: "Frank J. Cannon is as near crazy as he can be and will not last long if he does not repent of the evil he is seeking to bring upon the people. I am informed that he is using the strongest of stimulants to nerve him for the work he has sold himself to do. Poor Frank; what a splendid opportunity he had to make a record in the world for ability and for the blessing of the people amongst whom he was reared. He chose to be unclean and the result is evident in his ruined life. Reproached by those of his own blood, despised by those who pay him for his services, pitied by those who tried to make him useful and who did all they could to reform him when he had disgraced himself and the name he bore, he rushes along to sure destruction, not heeding the pleading of his own family and loved ones." George Albert Smith to Carl Badger 31 March 1905. As quoted in Rodney J. Badger, *Liahona and Iron Rod* (Family History Publishers, 1985), 264–65.

16. Smoot's personal secretary in Washington, Carl Badger, penned the following to his wife, "The [Salt Lake] *Tribune* is making a cur of itself; Frank Cannon is a fool. The trouble with a man when he begins to fight something that he thinks is wrong is that he is likely to go to the extreme. This is especially true when it comes to religion." Carl Badger to Rose Badger, 19 January 1905. As quoted in Badger, *Liahona and Iron Rod*, 246.

17. *Truth,* "The Cowardly Tribune," 21 January 1905, Journal History.

18. See *Salt Lake Herald*, "F. J. Cannon Finally Excommunicated," 15 March 1905. Carl Badger commented on the coverage of Cannon's excommunication in Washington D.C.: "The [Washington] Post this morning has a picture of Frank J. Cannon, accompanying a telegraphic announcement of his excommunication. I am told that the reason that Frank was cut off at this time was that he and others contemplated charging President Smith with apostacy [sic] at the coming Conference. I do not know that this is true." Carl Badger to Rose Badger, 15 March 1904. As quoted in Badger, *Liahona and Iron Rod,* 262.

19. Tithing money paid to the church became an issue at the Smoot hearings. Starving for attention, Cannon put a sinister spin on the impact of tithe-paying in Utah, "Mormon clerks pay, or are supposed to pay, their tithes to the church, and this tithe-paying practice becomes in the long run an equally-diffused community burden. The tithes paid indirectly by the Gentile merchants flow into the great secret treasury of the church leader, and may be utilized at any time to establish or reinforce business institutions in competition with these same Gentiles." *Salt Lake Tribune*, "Gentile Merchants in Peril," 30 November 1904, Journal History.

In response to this editorial, the Gentile-owned newspaper *Truth* suggested that Cannon's bluster about the evils of tithing smacked of hypocrisy. "The spectacle of [Cannon] . . . writing editorials . . . is enough to create a feeling of disgust with mankind. . . . Never in the history of Utah has such cordial and neighborly feeling existed between the Mormons and Gentile as a whole as now. . . . When did . . . Cannon come to the conclusion that it was wrong . . . to pay tithing? He paid his own tithing for last year and it was so recorded and when he was running for office and out on the stump he carried a Mormon's bishop certificate in his pocket . . . he thought it would aid in his political aspirations." *Truth*, "Senator Cannon and Tithing," 3 December 1904.

Joseph Smith taught that in the growth process, Latter-day Saints would be at vastly different levels of gospel advancement, with considerable divergence in their personal beliefs. He left doors wide open for reinterpretation and evolution in LDS belief, both personal and institutional.

"I AM LIBERAL IN MY SENTIMENTS TOWARDS ALL MEN"

EXPLORING THE MIND OF JOSEPH SMITH ON DIVERSITY AMONG THE SAINTS

By Van Hale

THE QUESTION WAS ASKED AND MAY STILL BE contemplated, as Joseph Smith put it: "Why is it this babbler gains so many followers, and retains them?" His answer was, "Because I possess the principle of love. All I can offer the world is a good heart and a good hand."[1] As I delve into the mind of Joseph Smith, I see another possible answer.

Joseph Smith boldly announced the re-opening of the heavens. He proclaimed the dawning of a new dispensation and with it a veritable cloudburst of revelation. No longer need humankind look only to the past for revelation, for much withheld from the ancient prophets was now to be revealed in the last days—in fact, revealed not only to prophets but to "babes and sucklings." This deluge of knowledge was not just for the prophet Joseph Smith, but for all Saints.[2] Available to even the least of the Saints, when they were prepared, was that which no eye had seen, no ear had heard, nor had ever entered into the heart of man. Line upon line; in bits and pieces; here and there a little was the process by which the Saints would progress in gospel maturity.

Awaiting those Saints who prepared themselves was a prophet *longing* to feed them a feast of new ideas, new revelation, and mysteries: deep mysteries, mysteries which would be revealed to some but not to others. In addition to revealed truth, Smith's followers were to aggressively pursue a universal search for truth, "let it come from whence it may,"[3] in order to come out true Mormons. A little confidence in, or even a hope for, such an exciting prospect could have been nothing less than exhilarating to many.

The 15 March 1844 *Times and Seasons* reported that for several Sundays at the temple grounds, the Saints had been favored with "very interesting and eloquent discourses" from Joseph Smith. The report states that Joseph frequently declared that the "many glorious principles of the kingdom of God, which he is anxious to make known to the saints, is a burden upon his mind." His audience is described as listening

> with an almost breathless silence; their minds apparently being completely absorbed with the subject, while with a rapturous delight they heard so exquisite a dissertation upon these important principles, which are connected to the great plan of salvation.

I suggest that one reason "this babbler gain[ed] so many followers and retain[ed] them" is this exciting prospect of receiving new gospel concepts from the prophet, as well as from one's own study and personal revelations. The heavens were potentially open to every Saint.

One natural consequence of Joseph Smith's progressive approach is that the Saints would be at various levels of gospel maturity and diverse in their personal beliefs. I contend that this diversity is a situation which Joseph promoted and defended.

What follows is a gathering of sources demonstrating that this new age of enlightenment, with expected and acceptable diversity, was a basic theme permeating the teachings of Joseph Smith from the beginning of his public ministry in 1829 through his death in 1844.

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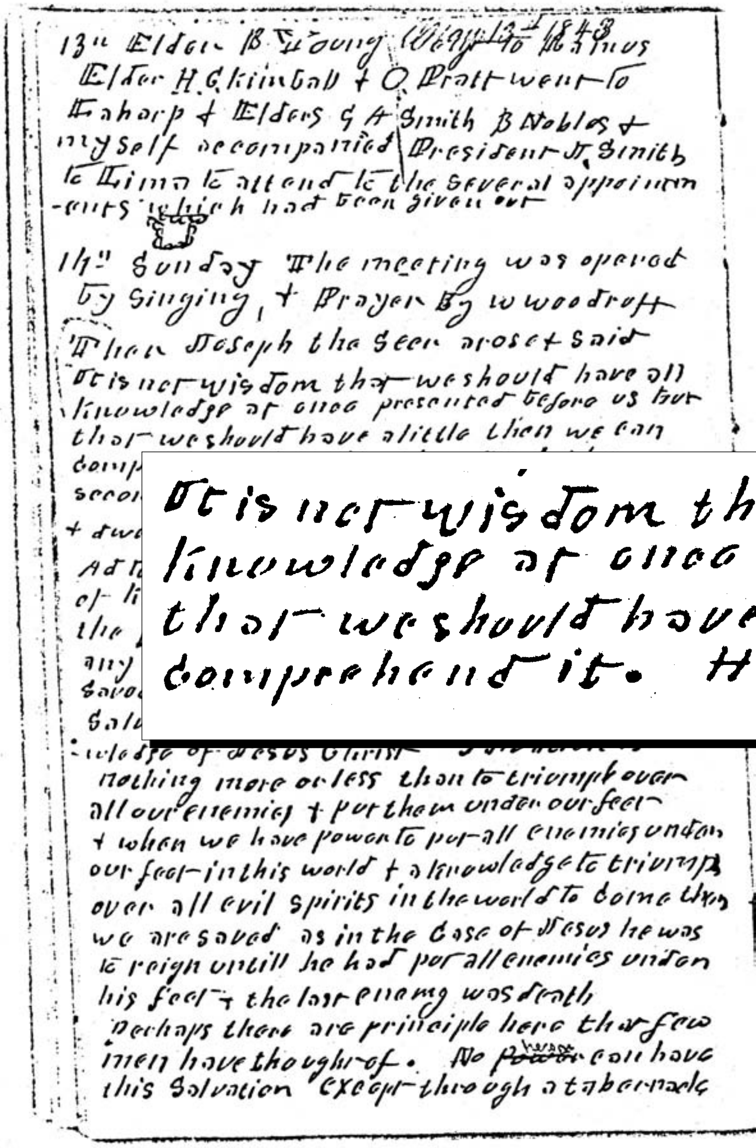
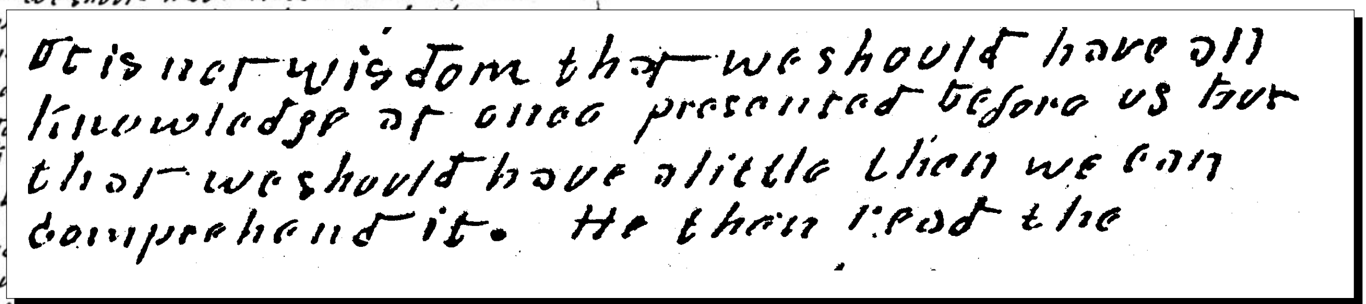




FROM A 14 MAY 1843 JOSEPH SMITH SERMON
This is a scan of a page from Wilford Woodruff's journal.

A CLOUDBURST OF NEW REVELATION

JOSEPH ANNOUNCED A final dispensation in which secrets, mysteries, and even things withheld from former prophets would potentially be available to all Saints.

> Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, and rejoice ye inhabitants thereof. . . . For thus saith the Lord . . . those who serve me in righteousness . . . to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come. (D&C 76:1–7)
>
> The dispensation of the fullness of times will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations; also other things that have not been before revealed.[4]
>
> Those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. (D&C 128:18)
>
> I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times. (D&C 124:41)
>
> That which hath been hid from before the foundation of the world is revealed to babes and sucklings in the last days.[5]
>
> God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them.[6]

In an 1842 council of the patriarch, bishops, apostles, and other leaders, Joseph reported that

> [T]he communications I made to this council were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritual minded: and there was nothing made known to these men but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints. . . . [7]

To Joseph Smith, the ultimate potential for a Saint was virtually boundless:

> The day shall come when you shall comprehend even God. (D&C 88:49)
>
> [Melchizedek priesthood holders] . . . have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and pres-

ence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. (D&C 107:19)

The Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.[8]

GROWING IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

JOSEPH TAUGHT THAT all Saints are but children and must expect to progress like children. Of course this meant that in the growth process, the Saints would be at vastly different levels of gospel advancement, with considerable divergence in their personal beliefs.

Ye are little children and ye cannot bear all things now; ye must grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. (D&C 50:40)

Ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. (D&C 78:18)

The Lord deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it.[9]

It is not wisdom that we should have all knowledge at once presented before us; but that we should have a little at a time; then we can comprehend it. [10]

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation.[11]

THE MYSTERIES

JOSEPH SMITH'S TEACHING on the mysteries is a topic worthy of its own study. Mysteries fall into several categories: those that can be written and those that cannot; those that have been revealed to some and those that have never been revealed; those hidden in the scriptures (D&C 71:1) and those that can be received only by revelation.

While the Saints were to learn from the scriptures, from Joseph Smith, and from one another, they were encouraged, even commanded, to go beyond these sources and to personally delve into mysteries. Gospel maturity is largely a personal enterprise—so personal that the Saints are potentially privy to restricted mysteries which they are not at liberty to divulge, those which could neither be written nor spoken.

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men. . . .

He that will not harden his heart . . . is given . . . to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full. . . .

They that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries. (Alma 12:9–11; see also Alma 40:3; 1 Nephi 10:19; Jacob 4:8)

He that repenteth and exerciseth faith, and bringeth forth good works, and prayeth continually without ceasing—unto such it is given to know the mysteries of God; yea, unto such it shall be given to reveal things which never have been revealed. (Alma 26:22)

If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries . . . for unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but unto the world it is not given to know them. (D&C 42:61, 65)

The vision of the degrees of glory received by Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in 1832 included some mysteries which were not to be written or spoken. They are only to be made known to Saints individually and personally:

The mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us . . . he commanded us we should not write . . . and are not lawful for man to utter;

Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;

To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves. (D&C 76:114–117)

Unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. (D&C 63:23; see also D&C 76:1–9)

I reveal . . . all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom . . . those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man. (D&C 76:7–10; see also D&C 109:7, 14)

THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

IN ADDITION TO the enterprise of gathering truth from revelation—past, new, and personal—Joseph directed the Saints to employ the natural principle of study to glean from a vast body of truth abroad in the world.

I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

Teach ye diligently . . . in theory, in principle, in

> doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand. . . . Seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith. (D&C 88:77, 78, 118)
>
> Study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people. (D&C 90:15)
>
> Where is the man who is authorized to put his finger on the spot and say, thus far thou shalt go and no farther: there is no man. Therefore let us receive the whole, or none.[12]
>
> Many seal up the door of heaven by saying so far God may reveal and I will believe but no further.[13]
>
> I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness.[14]

Clearly, even with the great potential for spiritual growth announced frequently by Joseph Smith and found in several LDS scriptural passages, the most faithful and aggressive LDS student will yet leave this life far short of a full understanding of the mysteries.

> But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.[15]

An 1833 revelation speaks of an outpouring of advanced knowledge at the coming of the Lord, unknowable before that event:

> In that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—
>
> Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—
>
> Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven. (D&C 101:32–34)[16]
>
> One of the grand fundamental principles of "Mormonism" is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may.[17]
>
> Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes. They all have a little truth mixed with error. We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true "Mormons."[18]

In 1839, Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail to Isaac Galland, a non-Mormon:

> [I] am liberal in my sentiments towards all men, in matters of opinion, and rights of conscience. . . .
>
> Mormonism is truth; and every man who embraced it felt himself at liberty to embrace every truth: consequently the shackles of superstition, bigotry, ignorance, and priestcraft, falls at once from his neck; and his eyes are opened to see the truth, and truth greatly prevails over priestcraft.[19]

DIFFERENCES OF OPINION AND THE NATURE OF CREEDS

JOSEPH CONDEMNED THE idea of an established creed because it stifles deeper thought and bars further revelation. To him, being a true Mormon means opening up to a diverse array of thought, not narrowing down to an established list of mandatory doctrine.

> I have the most liberal sentiments, and feelings of charity towards all sects, parties, and denominations; and the rights and liberties of concience [sic], I hold most sacred and dear, and dispise [sic] no man for differing with me in matters of opinion.[20]
>
> I never feel to force my doctrine upon any person; I rejoice to see prejudice give way to truth, and the traditions of men dispersed by the pure principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.[21]
>
> In relation to the power over the minds of mankind which I hold, I would say, It is in consequence of the power of truth in the doctrines which I have been an instrument in the hands of God of presenting unto them, and not because of any compulsion on my part. . . . I ask, Did I ever exercise any compulsion over any man? Did I not give him the liberty of disbelieving any doctrine I have preached, if he saw fit?[22]

While Joseph's body was locked in Liberty Jail for five months, his mind soared. He wrote from the confines of jail in 1839:

> Mormonism is truth, in other words the doctrine of the Latter Day Saints, is truth. . . . The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another.[23]

In 1842, referring to his attorney Justin Butterfield, Joseph Smith said:

> I told him I had no creed to circumscribe my mind.[24]

The next day, in response to a question by Butterfield, he expanded this thought:

> The most prominent difference in sentiment between the Latter-day Saints and sectarians was, that the latter were all circumscribed by some peculiar creed, which deprived its members the privilege of believing anything not contained therein, whereas the Latter-day Saints have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time.[25]

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

JOSEPH SMITH'S POSITION concerning unity among the Saints was clear. He found the notion of unity of belief, established by creeds, offensive because that stifles the learning process he had announced and promoted. Individual Saints were to amalgamate bits and pieces of truth from a variety of heavenly and earthly sources. The inescapable consequence of this process is diversity of belief among the Saints.

The Pelatiah Brown incident is well known. Brown "was hauled up for trial before the High Council" because of some of his teachings. While Joseph Smith did not agree with Brown's scriptural interpretations—in fact, he said he "could not help laughing" at Brown's views—nonetheless he

> did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter-day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammelled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine.
>
> The High Council undertook to censure and correct Elder Brown, because of his teachings in relation to the beasts. Whether they actually corrected him or not, I am a little doubtful, but don't care.
>
> I want to come up into the presence of God, and learn all things; but the creeds set up stakes, and say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;" which I cannot subscribe to.[26]

CONTENTION AND DIVISION

ONE HAZARD OF free thought which Joseph encountered was contention or division. This he denounced. In the same discussion of the Pelatiah Brown incident, he continued:

> It is not very essential for the elders to have knowledge in relation to the meaning of beasts, and heads and horns, and other figures made use of in the revelations; still, it may be necessary, to prevent contention and division and do away with suspense. If we get puffed up by thinking that we have much knowledge, we are apt to get a contentious spirit, and correct knowledge is necessary to cast out that spirit.
>
> The evil of being puffed up with correct (though useless) knowledge is not so great as the evil of contention.

Joseph went on to instruct Brown and the elders to "let the mysteries alone" when preaching, and to confine themselves, per the Lord's instruction, to repentance and baptism.[27]

> Strive not about the mysteries of the kingdom.[28]

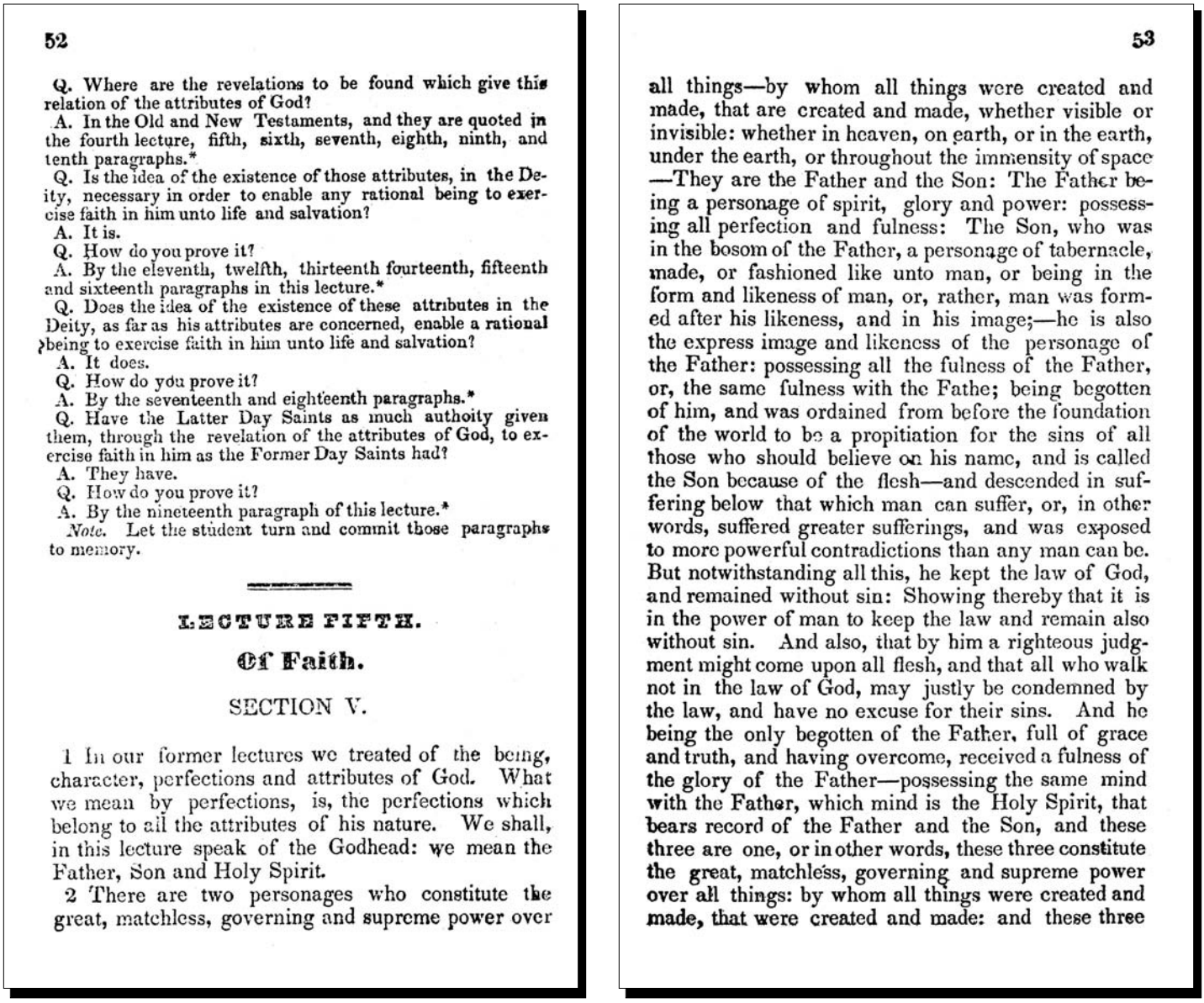
> It is no use living among hogs without a snout. This biting and devouring each other I cannot endure. Away with it. For God's sake, stop it.[29]

In Third Nephi, Jesus commands the Nephites:

> There shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been . . . concerning the points of my doctrine. . . . He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger. . . . (3 Nephi 11: 28–30)

Jesus then goes on to list the principles that alone are his doctrine. I suggest that this is the closest thing to an early Mormon creed. It limits doctrine, perhaps mandatory doctrine, to faith in Jesus, repentance, baptism, the visit of the Holy Ghost, the testimony of Jesus revealed by the Father, and the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Further, Jesus speaks against those who "shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine" (3 Nephi 11:40).

This passage does not condemn the declaration "of more or less than this," only the establishment of it "for my doctrine." From this narrow definition, all other ideas, concepts, and revealed mysteries are outside of the parameter of the doctrine of Jesus—that is, mandatory doctrine. This is not to say that this doctrine is all the Saints should consider. Remember Joseph's 1844 advice, strongly supported in Mormon scripture, "I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness."[30] I suggest that from Joseph's point of view, the numerous ideas, concepts, and teachings of the Saints that go beyond what Jesus to the Nephites called "my doctrine" fall into the category of Mormon thought, and are open to various degrees of speculation, expansion, evolution, and revision. But conclusions drawn from these searchings and ponderings, regardless of how strongly supported or



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Q. Where are the revelations to be found which give this relation of the attributes of God?
A. In the Old and New Testaments, and they are quoted in the fourth lecture, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth paragraphs.*
Q. Is the idea of the existence of those attributes, in the Deity, necessary in order to enable any rational being to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation?
A. It is.
Q. How do you prove it?
A. By the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth paragraphs in this lecture.*
Q. Does the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity, as far as his attributes are concerned, enable a rational being to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation?
A. It does.
Q. How do you prove it?
A. By the seventeenth and eighteenth paragraphs.*
Q. Have the Latter Day Saints as much authority given them, through the revelation of the attributes of God, to exercise faith in him as the Former Day Saints had?
A. They have.
Q. How do you prove it?
A. By the nineteenth paragraph of this lecture.*
Note. Let the student turn and commit those paragraphs to memory.

LECTURE FIFTH.

Of Faith.

SECTION V.

1 In our former lectures we treated of the being, character, perfections and attributes of God. What we mean by perfections, is, the perfections which belong to all the attributes of his nature. We shall, in this lecture speak of the Godhead: we mean the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2 There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over

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all things—by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible: whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space —They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness: The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or, rather, man was formed after his likeness, and in his image;—he is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father: possessing all the fulness of the Father, or, the same fulness with the Fathe; being begotten of him, and was ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name, and is called the Son because of the flesh—and descended in suffering below that which man can suffer, or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be. But notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God, and remained without sin: Showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin. And also, that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, and that all who walk not in the law of God, may justly be condemned by the law, and have no excuse for their sins. And he being the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fulness of the glory of the Father—possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one, or in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things: by whom all things were created and made, that were created and made: and these three

THE OPENING PAGES OF "LECTURE FIFTH" FROM THE LECTURES ON FAITH

These are scans from the 1835 edition of the D&C.

how firmly established, nonetheless fall short of mandatory doctrine.

Hearkening back to Jesus's command that "there shall be no disputations among you," it seems "doctrine" is very limited and refers to what is universally believed. The rest is not doctrine. If the Saints realized that where they may differ is on topics that are not doctrine; that the ideas of any or all of them may be infected with some degree of insufficient knowledge, immature enlightenment, uncertainty, theory, speculation, and perhaps even error; this would have a humbling effect, inconsistent with the dogmatism and fanaticism which foster contentious disputation. Given this ideal, differences would exist; disputations would not. Thoughtful Saints could exclaim with Joseph, "It feels so good not to be trammelled."

TEACHING AND PREPARING TO RECEIVE NEW TRUTHS

JOSEPH EXPRESSED A great desire to teach new ideas. He longed to tell that which he felt restrained to divulge. I cannot help but sense his excitement at the opportunity to lift the curtain a little, allowing the Saints a peek at a whole new stage of religious thought.

> It is my meditation all the day, and more than my meat and drink, to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind.
>
> Oh! how I would delight to bring before you things which you never thought of![31]

> I want to go back to the beginning, and so lift your minds into a more lofty sphere and a more exalted understanding than what the human mind generally aspires to.[32]
>
> It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries—new things—for my hearers.[33]
>
> Would to God that I had forty days and nights in which to tell you all![34]

Joseph lamented the restraint he felt because of the strength of tradition. While many Saints relished the prospect of new ideas, he observed that it was difficult for others to open their minds to concepts incompatible with their traditions.

> It is very difficult for us to communicate to the churches all that God has revealed to us, in consequence of tradition; for we are differently situated from any other people that ever existed upon this earth; consequently those former revelations cannot be suited to our conditions; they were given to other people, who were before us.[35]
>
> There are a great many wise men and women too in our midst who are too wise to be taught; therefore they must die in their ignorance, and in the resurrection they will find their mistake. Many seal up the door of heaven by saying, So far God may reveal and I will believe.[36]

At an 1841 meeting that included such Saints as Heber C. Kimball and Wilford Woodruff, Joseph declared that there were truths held in reserve which even the three of them were not prepared to receive.

> Some say Joseph is a fallen Prophet because he does not bring forth more of the word of the Lord," "Why does he not?" Are we able to receive it? No . . . not one in this room.[37]

He commented further in 1843 and 1844:

> I shall take the broad ground, then . . . we have received a portion of knowledge from God by immediate revelation, and from the same source we can receive all knowledge. . . .
>
> The Saints are slow to understand. I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all.[38]
>
> I suppose I am not allowed to go into an investigation of anything that is not contained in the Bible. If I do, I think there are so many over-wise men here, that they would cry "treason" and put me to death. So I will go to the old Bible and turn commentator today.[39]
>
> Many men will say, "I will never forsake you, but will stand by you at all times." But the moment you teach them some of the mysteries of the kingdom of God that are retained in the heavens and are to be revealed to the children of men when they are prepared for them they will be the first to stone you and put you to death.[40]

TOLERATING A RANGE OF DOCTRINAL VIEWS: AN EXAMPLE

Joseph Smith's teachings about the Holy Ghost

JOSEPH SMITH UNDERSTOOD that some devoted Saints who had escaped the bondage of tradition and imbibed some of the mysteries would be doctrinally at odds with other devoted Saints who had not—and at odds not just in some small detail. Joseph knew that extreme new concepts provoke extreme shock. To Joseph, the Mormon experience is progressive, with Saints at various levels of gospel maturity and a diversity of belief. Instead of condemning this, he defended it.

Joseph's concern with doctrinal differences focused primarily on the contention and division at times fostered by difference of opinion. He described LDS belief only in a basic and general way. It is difficult to find concepts which he declared to be mandatory.[41] On doctrinal belief, he kept the doors wide open to change and development.

As an example of Joseph's own comfort with a range of doctrinal speculation, what follows is an extensive examination of three concepts of God—two diametrically opposed—that Joseph endorsed during the Nauvoo period.

The Lectures on Faith are a series of seven lessons that were taught to the elders at the School of the Prophets at Kirtland in 1834.[42] Lecture Five is of specific interest here. It was published in the Church's *Messenger and Advocate* in 1835 with the note that it would soon be published in a collection of "important revelations on doctrine and church government" to provide "a perfect understanding of the doctrine believed by this society."[43] The reference was to the soon-to-be-published 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants approved by a general assembly of the Church at Kirtland in 1835.[44]

The Father and the Son

In Lecture Five, the physical nature of God the Father is contrasted with that of the Son:

> The Father being a personage of spirit. . . .The Son . . . a personage of tabernacle . . . being in the form and

> likeness of man . . . [and] the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father . . . the Son because of the flesh . . .[45]

Here the term "personage" equals organized form, while "tabernacle" equals flesh and bone. Both the Father and the Son have organized form, but only the Son has tabernacle, that is, flesh and bone.

In an 1840 pamphlet responding to an anti-Mormon tract by William Hewitt, Parley P. Pratt restated this view of the Father as a personage of spirit and the Son a personage of tabernacle:

> The Son has flesh and bones, and . . . the Father is a spirit . . . a personage of Spirit has its organized formation, its body and parts, its individual identity, its eyes, mouth, ears, &c., and that it is in the image or likeness of the temporal body, although not composed of such gross materials as flesh and bones; hence it is said that Jesus is "the express image of his (the father's) person."

Pratt declared that this was the Church**'s** belief as found by "whoever reads our books, or hears us preach."[46]

Holy Spirit

Later in Lecture Five, the Holy Spirit is contrasted with the Father and the Son who are personages, while the Holy Spirit is not. Rather, the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Father and the Son. The Son is presented as

> the only begotten of the Father . . . possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit.[47]

For greater precision, a catechism was appended to the Lecture:

> Q. How many personages are there in the Godhead?
> A. Two: the Father and the Son.
>
> Q. Do the Father and the Son possess the same mind?
> A. They do...
>
> Q. What is this mind?
> A. The Holy Spirit. . . .[48]

To summarize: in Lecture Five, the Holy Spirit is not a personage but the mind of the Father and Son, who, in contrast, are personages: the Father, a personage of spirit—no flesh and bones; the Son, a resurrected personage of tabernacle—a personage with flesh and bone.

Joseph's Nauvoo Teachings on the Father and the Holy Spirit

As early as 1841, Joseph Smith was teaching a different view than that articulated in the 1834 Lecture Five. He began teaching that Jesus did that which his Father had done before him—that is, experience mortality, including death and resurrection—and that he is now a resurrected personage of tabernacle (i.e., flesh and bone). Joseph taught further that the Holy Spirit is indeed a personage, having organized form, but no flesh and bone, who will yet have the same opportunity as the Father and the Son to receive a body of flesh and bone.

> There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones John 5-26 "As the father hath life in himself, even so hath he given the son to have life in himself". God the father took life unto himself precisely as Jesus did.[49]

> The Son Had a tabernicle [sic] & so had the father But the Holly [sic] Ghost is a personage of spirit without tabernicle [sic].[50]

> Peter and Stephen testify that they saw the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all. . . . As the Father hath power in Himself, so hath the Son power in Himself, to lay down His life and take it again, so He has a body of His own. The Son doeth what He hath seen the Father do: then the Father hath some day laid down His life and taken it again; so He has a body of His own; each one will be in His own body.[51]

Eleven sources preserve Joseph's Nauvoo teaching that the Father is a personage of tabernacle, resurrected with a body of flesh and bones, the same as that of Jesus,[52] and nine sources that the Holy Ghost is a personage, but a personage of spirit, not of tabernacle, i.e., not having flesh and bones.[53]

Two reports record Joseph Smith's teaching

> that the Holy Ghost is now in a state of Probation which if he should perform in righteousness he may pass through the same or similar course of things that the Son has.[54]

The following summary of the Nauvoo teachings of Joseph Smith is found in an 1843 sermon which was added to the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 130:22)—not the 1844 edition, which he supervised, but the 1876 edition supervised by Orson Pratt under the counsel of Brigham Young:

> The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit.[55]

Discussion

What happened to the Lecture Five doctrine? Did Joseph Smith replace it with the Nauvoo teachings? What was Joseph Smith's belief at his death in 1844?

In an attempt to answer these questions, we must consider the publication of the second edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1844. Parley P. Pratt had requested permission to publish the second edition in New York but was informed in a letter by Hyrum Smith from Nauvoo:

> I cannot give any encouragements for the publication of the same other than at this place, or, where it can come out under the immediate inspection of Joseph and his councillors, [sic] So, that no one may be chargeable with any mistakes that may occur.[56]

Joseph Smith personally supervised the publication of this second edition of the Doctrine and Covenants,[57] the printing of which was almost completed at his death in June 1844.[58] This was not simply a reprint of the 1835 edition. Joseph Smith added seven new sections and deleted the minutes of the conference which authorized the preparation and publication of the 1835 edition.[59]

Given this personal attention to the production, Joseph's inclusion of Lecture Five in the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants without any alteration seems highly significant. In doing this, the Lecture Five doctrine of the Father as a spirit, and the Holy Ghost, not as a personage, but as the mind of the Father and the Son, received continued endorsement. I have found no instance where Joseph taught this Lecture Five doctrine during the Nauvoo period. In fact, all his teaching on these points ran contrary to the Lecture Five doctrine. Yet, he included Lecture Five, unchanged, in the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. This would seem to imply his endorsement of Lecture Five as an acceptable position for mainstream Mormons.

In short, Joseph had been teaching concepts contrary to Lecture Five for at least four years. He could have altered Lecture Five to conform to his Nauvoo teaching, or he could simply have deleted it from the new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. But instead, he included it without modification. Further, he could have included his new Nauvoo teachings of the Godhead in the new Doctrine and Covenants; but, in fact, none of the new sections presents his Nauvoo concepts. From these facts, it is clear that Joseph endorsed the printing of Lecture Five as doctrine for distribution among the Saints, although I suspect he no longer believed the Lecture Five doctrine, if he ever did. While on a number of occasions at Nauvoo, he had taught his new ideas of God discussed above, none appeared in print prior to 1844.

Interestingly, Joseph also presented a third view of God in a letter written for publication. I refer to the Wentworth letter, written and published in 1842. After a brief sketch of Mormon history, the letter concludes with thirteen statements of Mormon belief —the Articles of Faith. The first Article of Faith reads: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." This was the only statement of LDS belief on the Godhead included in the letter. Whatever additional ideas the Saints may have entertained on this subject, it is likely that all would have subscribed to this

THE HOLY GHOST IS A PERSON: EVOLUTION OF JOSEPH SMITH'S TEACHINGS 1841–1844

1841 Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham's record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 190.

1841 Joseph said Concerning the Godhead it was Not as many imagined—three Heads & but one body, he said the three were separate bodys—God the first & Jesus the Mediator the 2d & the Holy Ghost & these three agree in one. . . (William McIntire Minute Book). *Words of Joseph Smith*, 63.

1841 . . . the Son Had a tabernicle & so had the father But the Holly Ghost is a personage of spirit without tabernicle. . . (McIntire). *Words*, 64.

1842 We believe in three Gods. There are three personages in Heaven—all equal in equal in power and glory, but they are not one God (from a non-Mormon interview with Joseph Smith). *Times & Seasons* 3:926.

1843 The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage. *Teachings*, 276; *Words*, 160.

1843 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. D&C 130:22; *Words*, 170, 173.

1843 Joseph also said that the Holy Ghost is now in a state of Probation which if he should perform in righteousness he may pass through the same or a similar course of things that the Son has (Franklin D. Richards' notebook). *Words*, 245.

1843 Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all. *Teachings*, 312; *Words*, 212, 214.

1844 . . . the holy ghost is yet a Spiritual body and waiting to take to himself a body as the Savior did or as god did or the gods before them took bodies. . . (George Laub diary). *Words*, 382.

1844 I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit; and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. *Teachings*, 370; *Words*, 378.

statement. In fact, it was universal Mormon doctrine. It does not address any of the hotly debated issues of historic Christianity found in the trinitarian controversies. In fact, all of the Christian factions would have subscribed to this statement. Beyond belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this statement is silent.

Yet the view that the Father, like the Son, had experienced mortality and that both have resurrected physical bodies; that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit destined to live in mortality; that there is a plurality of Gods; and that the Father has a Father are all ideas which had been taught by Joseph by this time.[60] The statement of belief in the first Article of Faith does not settle any questions raised by the contrast between Lecture Five and Joseph's Nauvoo teachings on the nature of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. Beyond belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the door is left open to considerable divergence.[61]

The 15 September 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, edited by Joseph Smith, included an article from another paper—an account by a clergyman of his visit to Nauvoo. He reported the following from a conversation with Joseph:

> He [Joseph] next asked me—
> What is the fundamental doctrine of your faith? "The unity of God—one God in one person." "We don't agree with you. We believe in three Gods. There are three personages in Heaven—all equal in power and glory, but they are not one God."

Joseph responded to the clergyman's account with an editorial comment:

> Tolerably fair: . . . no odds whether there be two, three, or "Gods many." The Father, and the Son are persons of Tabernacle; and the Holy Ghost a spirit, besides the sons of God: for the scriptures say: "Ye are Gods."

According to the clergyman's report, Joseph rejected the idea of one God and expressed belief in three Gods, but Joseph's editorial comment falls short of being dogmatic. He seems amenable to three options: "two, three, or 'Gods many,'" rejecting only the belief in one God. Belief in two Gods seems to be the logical conclusion to draw from Lecture Five. In one of Joseph's 1839 Liberty Jail letters, dictated by him to be circulated among the Saints, he advocated, or at least suggested, the existence of many Gods (D&C 121:28, 32). However, when this letter was first published in the *Times and Seasons,* the concept of a plurality and hierarchy of Gods found in these two verses was deleted.[62] Those Saints privy to the letter were exposed to Joseph's belief in a plurality of gods, while those reading the letter in the *Times and Seasons,* published for the general Church membership, were not. Two different views derive from the two renderings of the letter. So here again we see Joseph's expectation and toleration, and even responsibility, for diversity among the Saints, even upon a subject of considerable significance to him.

Joseph's final conference address is highly significant in understanding his views of the Godhead at the time of his death. Unlike many other times, Joseph prepared for this sermon.[63] A large open area adjacent to the temple was readied in anticipation of the largest congregation of Saints yet assembled. The address has come to be known as his King Follett Discourse. Two competent reporters, Thomas Bullock and William Clayton, received a special assignment to record full minutes of the conference. These were to be amalgamated and published in the *Times and Seasons* so that Joseph's views on God could be widely distributed among the Saints.[64]

The King Follett Discourse is Joseph's most extensive declaration of his views of God. In his remarks, he contends that concerning the character of God, the great majority of mankind "know but little above the brute beast." For Joseph, this was intolerable, for "it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God." He continues, admonishing the Saints that "from this time henceforth" the question, "What kind of a being is God?" should "occupy [their] attention." He even declares a true understanding of God's nature to be a prerequisite of exaltation.[65] The views he proceeded to present include:

- How God came to be God
- That God was once a man
- God lived, died, was resurrected and has a physical body, like Jesus
- The plurality of Gods and plurality of worlds
- The grand council of the Gods
- The Saints must learn how to become Gods
- God's glory increases as his children become Gods
- There is a hierarchy of Gods
- God did not create the world out of nothing
- God has always existed, and so has the spirit of man.

Two significant points in Joseph's theology are missing in this discourse: that the Holy Ghost is a personage, and that God the Father has a Father. In his last address to the Saints, 16 June 1844, Joseph again took up the subject of the King Follett Discourse and included these two points.[66]

The King Follett Discourse was Joseph's best reported address. Immediately following the conference, under the supervision of the Twelve, Thomas Bullock amalgamated his and Clayton's reports of the conference for inclusion in the *Times and Seasons*. Publication of the conference minutes was serialized beginning in the 1 May 1844 issue. Joseph's King Follett Discourse first appeared in print in the 15 August issue, about the same time that the production of the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which included Lecture Five and its radically divergent doctrine, was completed. Thus we see that at Nauvoo, Joseph endorsed for publication three views of God, two of which, on several points, were diametrically opposed.

ALTHOUGH JOSEPH SMITH spoke at length on his views of God in the King Follett Discourse, he by no means considered his remarks comprehensive, but rather a morsel, a mere appetizer for the feast which awaited those who admitted their ignorance, discarded their certainty, and focused on the remarkable 1832 promise that "the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God" (D&C 88:49):

> Had I inspiration, revelation, and lungs to communicate what my soul has contemplated in times past, there is not a soul in this congregation but would go to their homes and shut their mouths in everlasting silence on religion till they had learned something. Why be so certain that you comprehend the things of God, when all things with you are so uncertain.[67]

From this perspective, the spiritual knowledge of the Saints is superficial and unable to sustain the level of certainty required for dogmatism or fanaticism that might foster contention and division. The result for those who grasped this would be significant diversity but without contention.

While Joseph was deeply committed to unify the Saints in their basic beliefs and cooperative efforts to build the kingdom of God, he frequently, as we have seen, explained, endorsed, defended, and expected considerable, even startling, diversity in the realm of what may appropriately be termed doctrinal speculations; but he condemned those who turned diversity into contention or division within the Church. He was the champion of both unity and diversity. In his vision, individuals widely divergent in religious maturity would unite in the common cause of the Restoration.

Joseph proclaimed the dawning of the last dispensation, and with it, an enticing opportunity faced every Saint. The old scriptures were available for each Saint to study and glean truth. Much withheld anciently was to be revealed to the prophets and the Saints in the last dispensation. Thus the knowledge of even the least Saint would soon exceed that of the ancient prophets. Also, the ancient scriptures were now open to new interpretation and expansion.

Joseph encouraged each member to seek the personal revelation promised to all Saints. In addition, there were many gems of truth abroad in the world awaiting the Saints' discovery. And the Saints themselves were to be a resource for each other. They were to share with each other, when appropriate, their views and newly discovered truths. Given this milieu, each Saint was free, perhaps even obligated, to amalgamate truth captured from all these sources into his own personal brand of Mormonism.

In Joseph's vision of the Mormon mainstream, if they were to grow, the Saints would need great freedom of belief, very little mandatory doctrine, and no creeds. He left doors wide open for reevaluation, reinterpretation, development, and evolution in LDS belief, both personal and institutional, in most, if not all, areas. He considered the Church a work in progress, as also the beliefs of its members. To him, the ideal church is a body of independent, freethinking individuals, zealous in their pursuit of truth, who, while diverse in their doctrinal conclusions, simultaneously recognize their deficiencies and work together in a strong bond to promote the cause of the Restoration. Joseph saw that the greatest strength in the Church—in fact the ideal ultimate authority—would be a body of strong, faithful, yet independent Mormons coming to consensus on a matter. By comparison, the consensus of a body consisting of nonthinking, blind followers has nominal value.

A PERSONAL JOURNEY
Serving and thinking within the Kingdom

LET ME CONCLUDE on a personal note. I am exhilarated by the prospects of freely gathering truth and seeking mysteries from whatever source, as urged by Joseph throughout his ministry. As a young missionary in California in 1964, deeply interested in Joseph's doctrinal teachings, I purchased *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and studied it throughout my mission. I was particularly inspired by those numerous instances where he advocated a bold, open-minded search for truth from a wide range of sources, with the expectation of uncovering mysteries, perhaps even mysteries unknown to any other Saint. With this sense of personal freedom in all my inquiry, and my expectation of Joseph's enthusiastic endorsement, I have never felt required to believe anything which runs contrary to the results of my investigations.

Upon returning from my mission, I intensified and diversified my study. History became my new passion, specifically Judeo-Christian and Mormon history, particularly regarding the development of beliefs and doctrines. I also pursued biblical studies, a passion first awakened during my mission, and I soon discovered that by far the best research in this field is being done by non-LDS scholars. I also found that the value of modern Bible translations far exceeds that of the King James Version. Non-Mormon biblical, historical, and theological studies are often viewed with suspicion by Mormons and are thus neglected or avoided. Due to my encounter with Joseph's teachings, I have felt no hesitation to seek truth from the fine research of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and secular scholars, and I have delighted in the study and comparison of thirty-five Bible translations I have collected. Further, I have incorporated much from these sources into my Mormonism.

In junior high and high school, I hated history. Science was my passion. I built a laboratory, and when I was twelve, I wrote a book of my findings and experiments entitled, *Van Hale Boy Chemist.* It has not been published—yet. I intended to become a scientist. I studied several disciplines and was awestruck by the results of scientists applying the scientific method. As a result, I have found myself unable to support the battle that some Saints are waging against a number of scientific conclusions. I have long respected the consensus of modern scientists, and I therefore believe that the earth is some four to five billions of years old, that man is the result of an evolutionary process, there was no universal flood as reported in Genesis, and that the Native Americans are of Asian not Israelite descent.

Further, I am not persuaded by the mountain of arguments thus far produced that the Book of Mormon is a translation of an ancient history, and I view as misguided the battle to prove or disprove Joseph's claim to be a prophet by resorting to arguments for or against Book of Mormon historicity. While I acknowledge my position to be unorthodox, I am strongly persuaded that numerous facts and arguments support my spiritual conviction that in creating the Book of Mormon, God

and Joseph worked together to produce an authentic book of divinely inspired scripture. This, my ultimate conclusion, is certainly mainstream Mormonism.

When I became aware of the vast holdings in the Church archives, I spent every afternoon for more than a decade researching manuscripts, many of which had just been catalogued and had never been read by any previous researcher. This experience was intoxicating. My specific Mormon interests have centered on Joseph's history and teachings, but I also have harbored an insatiable penchant for controversy, including numerous issues debated within the Mormon community and those raised by ex-Mormons and other critics. I relish discussion on points of disagreement. This sometimes results in a modification of my views. This path has lead me to some positions regarding Mormon history and doctrinal belief again in the minority.

Through a series of circumstances, twenty-six years ago, I found myself behind the microphone at a small religious radio station—KBBX, "Utah's Golden Gospel Giant"—discussing my Mormon views with callers and guests. Almost invariably these discussions turn to the controversial. Since 1980, I have hosted a call-in talk show, "Mormon Miscellaneous," where I have invited advocates of all points of view. Participants include many guests—all of the Mormon categories: Mormon, non-Mormon, ex-Mormon, anti-Mormon, fundamentalist Mormon, and Jack Mormon; historians, ministers, authors, evangelists, professors, scientists; conservatives, liberals, atheists; the rational and irrational, and of course, the fanatics—discussing virtually every aspect of Mormon history, belief, and practice. Throughout these many years, I have freely expressed my views, which could be classified as orthodox, conservative, neutral, liberal, unorthodox, and heretical, depending on the issue. But again I turn to Joseph and insist that I am well within the mainstream, regardless of the various possible classifications of my beliefs, because first and foremost I am a believing Mormon.

In fact, I have lived my life within the Mormon mainstream, fully participating in every aspect of LDS life and practice. I have crafted my own personal brand of Mormonism from more than forty years of study of thousands of sources and extensive contemplation of numerous perspectives. I candidly acknowledge that my brand of Mormonism is unique; but then, I believe this is true of every student of the faith. I find it interesting and significant that through all my years of candid discussion, all that time a full LDS participant, no Church authority, general or local, has criticized me for my minority views or for my public expression of those views. I am certain that each Church leader could easily find among my beliefs things with which he would disagree. My personal experience has been "the liberty of thinking and believing as I please," the ideal which Joseph taught and defended.

HOW DO I deal with the tensions of holding my minority views? Joseph taught me that new truths and mysteries would be unveiled or discovered—some so startling that certain Saints would "fly to pieces like glass."

VAN HALE IN THE K-TALK STUDIO

Mormon Miscellaneous currently airs Sunday evenings from 5:00-7:00 pm MST on K-Talk Radio 630 AM. It can also be heard on the Internet at: MMS://STREAM.NETRO.CA/KTKK. Recordings of current programs, and a selection of past programs, are archived along other materials at MORMONMISCELLANEOUS.COM.

With this warning, and Joseph's admonition that the full truth is not within my grasp in this life, I am content with my belief that the final, absolute truth is not necessary now and that doctrines held by the best of Saints are, like mine, made up of a considerable amount of speculation.

The statements I have collected for this article support my insistence that I am within the mainstream. I believe I have traveled on the path introduced to me in 1964 by my encounter with Joseph's teachings—the path which he declared produces true Mormons: "We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true Mormons."

In May 1969, I was a young, idealistic returned missionary, enrolled at BYU in hot pursuit of truth, infused with Joseph's celebration of the grandeur of free thought. The campus was in full bloom. I was three weeks from getting married and eight weeks from reporting for active military duty during the Viet Nam war. I was preoccupied. But a General Authority arrived on campus to address the student body. He stepped up to the pulpit. His commanding personality captivated the audience. It was President Hugh B. Brown, my favorite speaker of that era. This and his topic, "An Eternal Quest—Freedom of the Mind," dissolved my preoccupation. To my delight, in his powerful persuasive manner, he declared what I recognized then, and even more now, as the very essence of the mind of Joseph:

> One of the most important things in the world is freedom of the mind; from this all other freedoms spring. Such freedom is necessarily dangerous for one cannot think right without running the risk of thinking wrong, but generally more thinking is the antidote for the evils that spring from wrong thinking. More thinking is required, and we call upon you students to exercise your God-given right to think through every proposition that is submitted to you and be unafraid to express your opinions, with proper

respect for those to whom you talk and proper acknowledgment of your own shortcomings.

You young people live in an age when freedom of the mind is suppressed over much of the world. We must preserve it in the Church and in America and resist all efforts of earnest men to suppress it, for when it is suppressed, we might lose the liberties vouchsafed in the Constitution of the United States.

Preserve, then, the freedom of your mind in education and in religion, and be unafraid to express your thoughts and to insist upon your right to examine every proposition. We are not so much concerned with whether your thoughts are orthodox or heterodox as we are that you shall have thoughts.[68]

NOTES

A NOTE ABOUT SOURCES: From the beginning, Joseph Smith was committed to creating and preserving records which were to be the sources for compiling of a complete history. The project of compilation, which has become the six-volume *History of the Church,* edited by B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902–1912), was begun by Joseph Smith in 1838, completed by Church historians in 1856, and published originally in serial form in the *Times and Seasons, Millennial Star,* and *Deseret News*. That history relies almost entirely on documents created during Joseph's lifetime. This process, the documents, and the individuals involved are explained in Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History" *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971).

Almost everything included in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (hereafter *Teachings)*, edited by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1938), one of my main sources in this paper, is drawn from *History of the Church.* Many of the quotations I use are from sermons of Joseph Smith. None was recorded stenographically. There are, however, minutes, reports, and sketches of his sermons written at the time. They were filled out, and when there was more than one report, they were amalgamated to provide a fuller approximation of Joseph's remarks and then included in the *History of the Church*. The original reports have been published in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1980). While on fine points *Words* is sometimes a better source than *Teachings*, in this article I have generally preferred *Teachings* because its version of Joseph Smith's sermons are smoother and a better approximation of his wording.

Nearly all of the original sources have been preserved and are housed in the LDS Archives. Many sources I have used come ultimately from the diaries and sermon reports of Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, William Clayton, Joseph Smith, Eliza Snow, Thomas Bullock, and several others. In recent years, many of these original documents have been published. The list includes Dean C. Jessee's three volumes published by Deseret Book: *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (1984) and *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volumes 1 and 2* (1989 and 1992); Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); Scott Kenney, ed. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal,* 9 volumes (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1983); George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).

1. From a sermon delivered 9 July 1843. *Teachings*, 313.
2. In fact, Joseph issued a reprimand to those Saints so relying upon him as to neglect their personal growth. Speaking to the Relief Society on 26 May 1842, he referred to the "present state of the Church," declaring "that righteous persons could only deliver their own soul . . . that they were depending on the Prophet, hence were darkened in their minds." *Teachings*, 238; taken from "Relief Society Minutes," page 51, LDS Archives.
3. From the same 9 July 1843 sermon. *Teachings*, 313.
4. From a sermon delivered 3 October 1841 and published in *Times and Seasons* 2:578. See also *Teachings*, 193.
5. Report of Willard Richards in Joseph Smith's diary, 13 August 1843. *Teachings*, 321. In addition to the four quotations listed under this heading about the cloudburst of new revelation the Lord was ready to send forth, see also *Teachings,* 137, 170, 193, 309, and 321. See also D&C 35:18; 131:26–33; 124:38, 41; 128:18.
6. From instructions on doctrine given 27 June 1839. *Teachings*, 149; also 237, 297.
7. From a council introducing temple ritual, 4 May 1842. *Teachings*, 237.
8. *Teachings*, 151; also D&C 93:1; 107:19.
9. From remarks given 21 May 1843. *Teachings*, 305.
10. From a sermon delivered 14 May 1843, reported by Wilford Woodruff. *Teachings*, 297.
11. From the King Follett Discourse, delivered 7 April 1844. *Teachings*, 348.
12. Joseph Smith, Letter from Liberty Jail to Isaac Galland, 22 March 1839. Published in *Times and Seasons* 1 (February 1840), 55.
13. Joseph Smith Diary, 11 June 1843.
14. From remarks given 12 May 1844. *Teachings*, 364. (*Teachings* inadvertently gives the date as 2 May 1844.)
15. From the King Follett Discourse, delivered 7 April 1844. *Teachings*, 348. On the concept that much knowledge will come after we pass on, see D&C 121:32.
16. If this is saying that there are things unknown to man about the creation of the earth to be revealed when the Lord comes, then it may recommend tentative conclusions regarding the creation accounts in Genesis, Moses, and Abraham.
17. From a sermon delivered 9 July 1843. *Teachings*, 313. A good source for understanding more about what Joseph Smith considered the "grand fundamental principles" of Mormonism, as well as for more on Joseph's urging the Saints to gather truth from whatever source it may come, see Don Bradley, "'The Grand Fundamental Principles of Mormonism': Joseph Smith's Unfinished Reformation," SUNSTONE, April 2006, 32–41.
18. From a sermon delivered 23 July 1843. *Teachings*, 316.
19. From the Isaac Galland letter dated 22 March 1839 and published in *Times and Seasons* 1 (February 1840), 53–54.
20. Ibid.
21. From a letter dated 13 February 1844. *History of the Church* 6:213.
22. From a sermon delivered 24 March 1844. Ibid., 6:273.
23. From the Isaac Galland letter dated 22 March 1839 and published in *Times and Seasons* 1 (February 1840), 53–54.
24. From conversations with his attorney, Justin Butterfield, on 31 December 1842. *History of the Church* 5:214.
25. From conversations with Justin Butterfield on 1 January 1843. *History of the Church* 5:215.
26. From the report of the sermon given by Willard Richards and William Clayton at a conference held 8 April 1843. *History of the Church* 5:340, 344. This is also found in *Teachings*, 287–94, but a paragraph important to this point is left out of that compilation.
27. *Teachings*, 287; also *History of the Church* 5:340.
28. From the *Messenger and Advocate* 1:137; also *Teachings*, 77.
29. Remarks by Joseph to those working on the temple. *History of the Church* 5:286; also 2:317–18; 2:352–53; 2:431.
30. From remarks given 12 May 1844. *Teachings*, 364.
31. From a sermon delivered 16 April 1843, reported by Wilford Woodruff. *History of the Church* 5:362.
32. From the King Follett Discourse, delivered 7 April 1844. *Teachings*, 343.
33. From remarks given 12 May 1844. *Teachings*, 364.
34. From the King Follett Discourse, delivered 7 April 1844. *Teachings,* 355.
35. From remarks of Joseph Smith at a conference of elders on 21 April 1834. *Teachings*, 70.
36. From a sermon delivered 11 June 1843. *Teachings*, 309.
37. From notes made by Wilford Woodruff of Joseph's remarks at a meeting held on 9 December 1841.
38. From a sermon dated 21 January 1844, as reported by Wilford Woodruff. *Teachings*, 331. (*Teachings* inadvertently gives the date as 20 January.)
39. From the King Follett Discourse, delivered 7 April 1844. *Teachings*, 348.
40. From a sermon delivered 11 June 1843. *Teachings*, 309.
41. For a nominal exception, see *Teachings*, 24.
42. *History of the Church*, 2:176.
43. *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (1 May 1835):122–24.
44. *History of the Church*, 2:176.
45. Lectures on Faith 5:2; also, Mosiah 15:3; D&C 93:4. The Lectures on Faith are seven lectures on theology given in 1834 at the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio. They were included in all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants from 1835 to 1921, when they were removed.

46. Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt's Tract* (Manchester, England: W. R. Thomas, 1840), 9.

47. Lectures on Faith 5:2.

48. Lectures on Faith 5:3.

49. Discourse, 5 January 1841, reported by William Clayton. *Teachings*, 181.

50. Notes of a discussion recorded in the William McIntire Minute Book, 9 March 1841. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 64.

51. From a report of Joseph's Smith's 11 June 1843 discourse prepared by amalgamating the reports of Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff. *Teachings*, 312. For the two reports, see *Words of Joseph Smith*, 209–14.

52. *Teachings*, 181, 312, 345–46, 348, 373; *Words of Joseph Smith*, 61, 64, 173, 382; D&C 130:22; also recorded in Wilford Woodruff's journal, 11 June 1843.

53. *Teachings*, 190, 276, 312, 370; *Words of Joseph Smith*, 63, 64, 160, 170, 173, 212, 214, 245, 382, 378; D&C 130:22.

54. Notes by Franklin D. Richards of Joseph Smith's sermon of 27 August 1843. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 245. This teaching is also recorded by George Laub in his report on a discourse by Joseph given 16 June 1844. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 305.

55. The original source for this verse is a sermon of Joseph Smith given 2 April 1843 and reported by William Clayton and Willard Richards. *Words of Joseph Smith*, 170, 173.

CREOSOTE

Creosote trees sweating into the night air.
It had rained and so the story goes these bushes,

once soaked, release this goop from which creosote
is made, and I can't breathe and I am thinking

the whole western half of the country stinks,
stews polluted. Soon a great big chunk of lard

will break off and float out into the Pacific,
and it serves us all right, those of us dead at night,

I thought. I was twenty-two, an only son
who should have been dead by now or in prison,

and I am looking up at the sky, those shooting
stars like comets across Death Valley, a blue-purple

shroud like bruised flesh, upon my youth, choking,
weighing me down to surrender, and I thought

about this perfect place to start walking, to disappear
forever, beyond this place where the night tucks

itself beyond mountains, creosote scent to erase my exit.

—VIRGIL SUÁREZ

56. Joseph Smith Letterbook, LDS Archives. Quoted in Robert J. Woodford *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants,* 3 vols (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1974), 1:53.

57. *History of the Church*, 5:264, 273; 6:100. The 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was the work of a committee appointed at a General Assembly (see page 255) and identified on the title page: "Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God and Compiled by Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, Frederick G. Williams, (Presiding Elders of said Church)." The title page of the 1844 Doctrine and Covenants reads: "Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God. By Joseph Smith, President of Said Church."

58. A notice in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* published 12 June 1844 announced that "The Book of Doctrine and Covenants will be published in about one month from this time." The first evidence that the new edition had been completed is found in an article in the 2 September 1844 *Times and Seasons* (6:636), which quotes from the new D&C.

59. These additional sections are D&C 103, 105, 112, 119, 124, 127, 128 (sections given here refer to their numbering in current editions of the Doctrine and Covenants).

60. For a discussion of the development of Joseph's view of God with a timetable, see Van Hale, "The Doctrinal Impact of the King Follett Discourse," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 209–25.

61. The Book of Mormon doctrine of the Godhead is sufficiently ambiguous as to be irrelevant to this discussion, except perhaps as further demonstration that ambiguity on the Godhead is acceptable. The doctrine of the first Article of Faith is certainly that of the Book of Mormon (e.g. 3 Nephi 11:27, 36), but the Lecture Five doctrine and Joseph's Nauvoo doctrine venture far beyond that of the Book of Mormon. In several Book of Mormon passages, it seems that, in some sense, Jesus is the Father and the Son (e.g., Ether 4:12, 3:14, Mormon 9:12, Mosiah 15, etc.), perhaps supporting a position of the Father and Son as numerically one person. Yet, in 3 Nephi 11–28 and forward, in many passages it seems that the Father and Jesus are numerically two persons in two locations: Jesus, ministering to the Nephites, frequently refers to his Father, and their Father, not as there among them as he is, but in heaven. See, for example, 3 Nephi 12:48, 18:35, 19:22–23, 26:2, 27:28.

62. The original of this letter of 20 March 1839 is preserved in the LDS Archives, and a transcript is published in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 389–407. In Joseph's letter to Emma the next day (408–09), he informs her that the 20 March letter sent to her is actually an epistle for the Church, and he instructs her to keep the original and have it copied for circulation among the Brethren. The first half of the letter, which includes that found in D&C 121:1–33, was published in *Times and Seasons* 1 (May 1840):99–104. D&C 121:1–33 was excerpted from this letter, but from the original rather than the edited version published in the *Times and Seasons*. A comparison of the *Times and Seasons* version with D&C 121:28, 32 reveals no hint of a plurality of Gods in the former while the other suggests that such will be revealed (v. 28) and proclaims that a council was held, "the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods" (v. 32). The phrase "whether there be one god or many gods, they shall be manifest" was left out of the *Times and Seasons*, where the verse comparable to D&C 121:32 reads, "ordained in the midst of the council of heaven in the presence of the eternal God. . . ."

63. *Teachings*, 320. Joseph's diary entry for 13 August 1843 reads: "I am not like other men. My mind is continually occupied with the business of the day, and I have to depend entirely upon the living God for every thing I say on such occasions as these." At this time, Joseph's diary was being kept by Willard Richards.

64. Concerning the history of the text of this discourse, see Van Hale, "The King Follett Discourse Textual History & Criticism," SUNSTONE, September-October 1983, 4–12.

65. From the King Follett Discourse, delivered 7 April 1844. *Teachings*, 343–52. The views Joseph presented were too much for some Saints, including William Law, Joseph's second counselor in the Church presidency, and apparently even Sidney Rigdon, his first counselor. In fact, as Joseph was about to present scripture in support of his view that the Father had experienced mortality, he exclaimed: "Mark it, Elder Rigdon!" (*Teachings,* 346), which I assume indicates that Joseph was aware that Rigdon was familiar with his view but disagreed. Many of the King Follett teachings were included in a list of grievances published two months later by an organized group of dissenters of which Law was one of the principal leaders.

66. From a sermon given 16 June 1844, reported by Thomas Bullock. *Teachings*, 370.

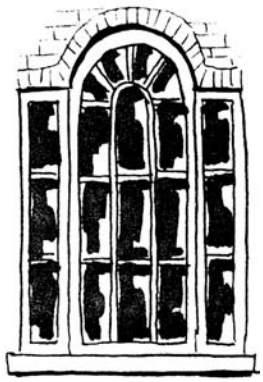
67. From Joseph Smith Diary, 13 August1843. *Teachings*, 320.

68. Hugh B. Brown, "An Eternal Quest—Freedom of the Mind," *BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1969).

2004 Brookie & D. K. Brown Fiction Contest Starstone Winner

CAT WOMAN

By Julie J. Nichols



IT'S CHRISTMAS, OR WILL BE NEXT WEEK, but I've been resenting it since Thanksgiving. This winter is bitterly cold already and gray, dull-metal silver with the polluted inversion that plagues this valley in December and January so that light is dim and breathing measurably difficult. Logan, our two-year-old, suffers from asthma; already we're spending nights holding him upright after he's been dosed with his prescriptions just so he can breathe. It's the worst part of winter, come earlier than usual this season, and I resent it. I'm a stickler for fairness. I don't like to be barred from tranquility by such ephemera as light or breath.

So when the alarm rings at 6:00 a.m. and NPR pumps out some esoteric harpsichord, I want to stay in bed, curled up and blank to the hard weather. "Couperin's *Barricades Mysterieuses*," they announce cheerfully. "Winter storm warning for tonight. Stay home if you can!" I'd like to pretend I don't have to get Logan up and ready for daycare as usual, don't have to be in a high school computer classroom calm and detached at eight to once again monitor honors English students—integrating cutting-edge technology and language learning in a postmodern, rational way.

Of course I do get up. But I'm bothered.

SOMETHING happened yesterday," I tell Geoff in the shower. He's scrubbing my back. It's a good time to confess.

I tell him about the face I saw in the monitor yesterday when Peter Hollister raised his hand for help. Peter wants to know everything. He always needs help.

"I tried to log on, and nothing happened, Mrs. Dumont," he said. I typed in the generic login and password and saw on the screen a snarling face, real as a video clip, *seeing me*, her eyes—definitely a woman's eyes—meeting mine, her dirty, nail-bitten hands clenched close to her terrible bared teeth.

Peter said, "Thanks, Mrs. Dumont!" He clicked on a link and went right to work. Saved by a password. Didn't seem to have seen what I saw.

"*Thought* you saw," Geoff says. He turns me to face him so he can soap my breasts. "You're hallucinating. Too many nights up with Logan. Or"—this is why I love Geoffrey, his lawyer instincts advocating for me—"what was it?"

There it is again, the snarling face in front of my eyes. I lean against the wall of the shower, close my eyes. "I am exhausted," I admit. "Log's meds don't work." I'm thinking. Slowly. "Doc said give it 72 hours to kick in, but four days? Don't they know anything about pediatric asthma?" The loofah on my arms and neck comforts, the warm water hypnotizes me kindly. But no. Right now, perplexity before pleasure. I say, "Something was going on with that computer." I'm an expert in computers. This was *not* about Logan.

"Want me to give Log a blessing?"

A blessing? I shake my wet head to clear it. "You think that would help?" Geoffrey knows I doubt. Among many other things, I doubt I'd have chosen this religion he and I were born into. I'm not into mysteries. But Mormonism is, I've pointed out repeatedly, not only one of the largest and fastest-growing Christian sects in America, maybe the world, but also a mystery cult. Witness the book from the bowels of a mountain, the visionary teenaged prophet, the temples where the faithful do work for the dead—new names, cleansings, redemption. Blessings! It's all mystery.

I push away Geoff's hands now teasing my nether regions. Fine hands. Blessing hands. Like all good Mormon parents, his taught him to take them for granted—blessings *and* mysteries. Eva, his mother, does genealogy these days as if there were some virtue in it that would keep her alive forever. Stereotypically spry, still shoveling her own walks in the winter, golfing in the summer, she's gone to Canada or France to look at gravestones every autumn for the past ten years. As she was doing the temple ceremony in proxy for one of her own dead ancestors, long-ago Europeans whose sturdy (if asthmatic) classical genes my boy carries, she says she nearly fell asleep at one point when she felt a tap on her shoulder. She looked around, and *no one was there*.

Well, it could have been one of the helpers. That's what they're supposed to do, help you through—remind you of the

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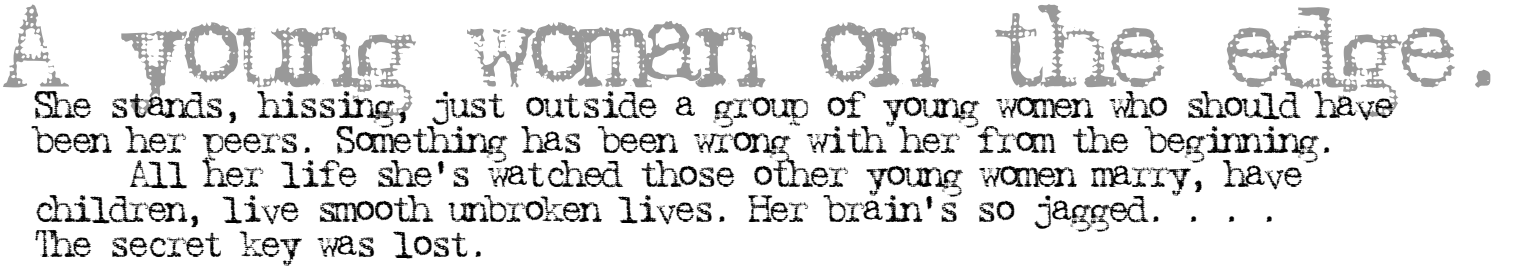
words you forget. But she says it happened again. Every time she nodded off, every time she looked, no one was there. Maybe it's inevitable that if you're standing in for a dead person, you expect strange happenings, unexplainable details. Mysteries. But right here, right now—blessings? Faces in the computer? "I can't think about it," I say, pushing out of the shower. "Really, hon." But before I can grab the towel, Geoff's hand rests on the small of my back. He is rarely in the kind of hurry I always am.

"Tell me about the computer thing," he says, pulling my head to his chest. "Mom says nothing's so important a little attention can't help."

I yield. "Just for a minule," I say into his collarbone.



"Sure," he says, climbing out of the shower, "of course." He knows I have to get to work. He wraps the bath sheet around both of us, sheltering.

And the furious face from the computer appears. I know—how do I know this?—she hates everybody. Including me. Including Geoffrey. Thoroughly. "Whoa," I say.

"Just tell me," he says. It won't switch off anyway.

THE WOMAN'S STORY comes at me in a series of insistent images, the background sound of the shower still running a soft white noise in my awareness, Geoff's hands a soothing presence. Now the snarling face is covered with knotted hair. Now it bends downward, the hands, with extraordinarily long fingernails, covering it. The entire image seems vivid red as if backlit by a violent video game. I'm meant to make something of this, I know. I *have* to pay attention. Geoff holds me while it happens.

The story plays out like some kind of video cartoon, except that it's a real, eighteenth-century European woman in there, not a jerky-limbed android hybrid. First a little girl runs wild, screaming. Her life is bound up with the lives of women, caregivers who suffer her. That's the word that flashes almost subliminally, like an Internet pop-up: *suffer*. An older woman with a gray braid and a stout, coarsely bloused bosom feeds her and holds her, much more kindly than any cartoon I've seen in the last five years. Another (the older one's daughter?) stays just out of reach of the child's screaming, scratching fingernails.

Now (a flash of graphics), a young woman on the edge. I understand this word "edge" to be both literal and metaphorical, both emotional and physical. She stands, hissing, just outside a group of young women who should have been her peers. Something is seriously wrong with her, has been wrong from the beginning. She can't speak. She only spits and shrieks. But the old woman and the young one have suffered her to live, have made sure she stays alive, clean and fed, though she pushes at them always and sometimes rakes their skin.

The other young women call her "cat woman." But it's pre-superhero, pre-Michelle Pfeiffer. I hear nothing—what comes at me is all visual—but I see she hisses and scratches, and knots her hair with her clawing fingers. I know she dies like that; she never gets better. "I'm so sorry," I mumble into Geoffrey's chest.

"What?" he asks.

"All her life," I say, in a sort of trance, "she's watched those other young women marry, have children, live smooth unbroken lives. Her brain's so jagged . . . she can't—oh, wait."

Unbelievably (another flash of color), and only by the grace of her caretakers, she grows to old age, sitting in corners, taken care of by other women, the daughters and granddaughters of her original woman-family. These younger women she treats miserably. At her death—I realize I know—many of the young women of her town are relieved. She's been a burden to them even if they haven't had to wash her and feed her. They've seen her and said to themselves, "We could have been like her." She's known this too, only in converse terms. All she ever desired in all her life was to be like them. Normal. Womanly. Able to speak what she feels, able to function properly, all parts of her body, all parts of her brain. But the secret key was lost. What she wanted could never be hers.

Finally I know she's died, unhealed, unloving, unfulfilled. I'm there. It may be a dream, but I am connected somehow to this visual across time and space, and I'm tense with sorrow and anger.

SUDDENLY GEOFF IS moving away from me, standing me upright, gathering his robe around himself, urgent, insistent: "Listen! It's Logan—you'd better wake up. Hurry!" He throws me a wrap. Together we follow the sounds of the wheezing, dash to the room where Logan is coughing, barely getting in enough air to make the next outbreath, panicked, jerking, unable to make a sound. We throw on sweats and jackets, bundle him in his coverlet, and run.

In the next four hours, we will spin over frozen streets to the hospital emergency room. We will arrange for a substitute to take my place at school, we will denounce the doctor whose prescriptions have been so ineffective. We will call Eva for support, catching her on her cell phone just as she is in the parking lot of the Jordan River temple. Her second home.

"Do you think I can do anything right there, right now? I'm just about to do the work for this new name I found on the last trip to France. My namesake! An Eva! What if I come as soon as I'm done? Less than two hours, and I'll be there."

I protest, but Geoffrey suggests that she's right, there's probably little she could do here immediately. She might as well do the work she loves, praying for her grandson as she stands in for her great-great-great-ancestress So we pour the meager efforts of our hearts over our little boy as he pants more and then less convulsively, clings to our hands, scratching in terror if we let go for a moment. Doctors come, observe, administer, depart. At one point, Geoff puts his hands on Logan's head and murmurs ritual words.

When Eva arrives, she holds us all in her embrace. "I put his name on the prayer roll," she assures us. "I did the work for, let's see . . . Eva Serena Reynard, 1742, somewhere in Boulogne. And you know? I felt peaceful. He'll be all right."

Shortly after, nurses inject our boy with something that finally quiets his attack. We get a new prescription which maybe this time will work. Logan says, wanly, "Mommy—home?" and that's where we all go.

Now it is snowing hard. Such weather often pushes out the inversion, and though visibility is poor to drive, I'm glad of the snow, the veil of white fanning away the infernal gloom. At home, I hold Logan in the rocker by the window. Geoff turns the humidifier's spray toward us as we look out into the snow. Briefly, so that I almost don't see it, a clear, untwisted face appears in the window, a hand raises. I am almost sure I see it: the fingernails on the hands cut, the hair smooth. *Release* flashes behind my eyes—not a command but a noun—and *grateful*. Breathing slow and deep, as if I could inspire my boy's lungs to work properly on their own, I rub his back. Geoff puts one hand on top of mine, with the other offers Logan something warm to drink from the kitchen. "Sank you, Daddy," he says, and sleeps within minutes. I'm faint with gratitude. Help from anywhere, I'm thankful.

AFTER

My grief is a handful of sand, father.
I hold you cupped while the wave
sucks back. Liquid ropes
lash my ankles. My feet have become
invisible in the soft white face
of the beach.

—HELEN W. MALLON

Shortly we tuck Logan back into bed, his head propped up on two pillows. Hand in hand, we return to the living room to send Eva home. I try to tell her about the cat woman and about what I saw just now, in the storm. I know I sound inarticulate and exhausted. "Ah," she says, though, nodding. Smiling. "It's so good our boy is fine."

When she has left, we head back to our own room and lie close to each other, warming ourselves under the star quilt, luxuriating in the possibility of a few hours' rest. "Mysterious," he says once. We lie quietly for a time. Then we turn toward each other, letting things work themselves out through the skin and tongue, wordless, unexplainable, all puzzlement and love.

THE 2007 BROOKIE & D.K. BROWN FICTION CONTEST

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION invites writers to enter its annual fiction contest, which is made possible by a grant from the Brookie and D. K. Brown family. All entries must relate to adult Latter-day Saint experience, theology, or worldview. All varieties of form are welcome. Stories, sans author identification, will be judged by noted Mormon authors and professors of literature. Winners will be announced in SUNSTONE and on the Foundation's website, WWW.SUNSTONEONLINE.COM; winners only will be notified by mail. After the announcement, all other entrants will be free to submit their stories elsewhere. Winning stories will be published in SUNSTONE magazine.

PRIZES will be awarded in two categories: short-short story—fewer than 1,500 words; short story—fewer than 6,000 words. Prize money varies (up to $400 each) depending on the number of winners announced.

RULES: 1. Up to three entries may be submitted by any one author. Five copies of each entry must be delivered (or postmarked) to SUNSTONE by **30 JUNE 2007**. Entries will not be returned. A $5 fee must accompany each entry. No email submissions will be accepted.

2. Each story must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white paper and be stapled in the upper left corner. The author's name must not appear on any page of the manuscript.

3. Each entry must be accompanied by a cover letter that states the story's title and the author's name, address, telephone number, and email (if available). This cover letter must be signed by the author and attest that the entry is her or his own work, that it has not been previously published, that it is not being considered for publication elsewhere, and that it will not be submitted to other publishers until after the contest. If the entry wins, SUNSTONE magazine has one-time, first-publication rights. Cover letters must also grant permission for the manuscript to be filed in the SUNSTONE Collection at the Marriott Library of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The author retains all literary rights. SUNSTONE discourages the use of pseudonyms; if used, the author must identify the real and pen names and the reasons for writing under the pseudonym.

Failure to comply with rules will result in disqualification.

2006 R. L. "Buzz" Capener Memorial Writing Contest in Comparative Religious Studies Second Place Winner

THE SACRAMENTAL WORLD VIEW

A PHILOSOPHICAL COMPARISON OF JOSEPH SMITH'S MAGICAL VIEW OF ORDINANCES WITH A LIBERATION VIEW OF SACRAMENTS

By Dennis Potter

As a latter-day restoration, Mormonism sought to reestablish distant patterns extending into the ancient world and also to respond to current questions of personal experience and of the contemporary American environment. Occult beliefs and magical practices were part of early America's heritage and experience. Even the fragmentary historical record demonstrates this. . . .

[I]ntelligent and religious Americans perceived reality from a magic view, and regarded such beliefs and practices as both rational and religious.

Likewise, early Mormonism was filled with religious and intelligent believers who perceived reality from a magic view and often practiced various kinds of folk magic. This included founding prophet Joseph Smith.

—D. MICHAEL QUINN[1]

Magic and religion melded in Smith family culture.

—RICHARD L. BUSHMAN[2]

INTRODUCTION

JOSEPH SMITH SAW THE WORLD AS A MAGICAL place. Despite the initial controversy of D. Michael Quinn's seminal work, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, most scholars of Mormonism now accept that occult beliefs and magical practices played some role in how Smith viewed and interacted with the world. Moreover, Smith and others who held the magic world view (i.e., those who were not totally indoctrinated by Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume),[3] did not draw a hard and fast distinction between religious rites and beliefs and magical rites and beliefs. So, for them, it would be natural to view the efficacy of religious rites in terms of magical understandings about their metaphysical nature.

In an earlier article, "Defending Magic: Explaining the Necessity of Ordinances," I argued that the animism[4] that lies behind the magic world view is in fact the only rational reason to insist that ordinances are absolutely necessary for salvation.[5] However, the view of magic I develop in that article is overly tainted by a scientific perspective of the world. In this way, it distorts the magic world view and thereby undermines its credibility. In this article, I want to compare Joseph Smith's magic world view to the view of religious sacraments advocated by a contemporary liberation theologian, Leonardo Boff. By way of this comparison, we can understand the animism that underlies the magic world view in a way that doesn't contort magical perspectives to fit a pseudo-scientific rubric.

Before starting, some words about the methodology and organization of my arguments. First, I will take for granted that Joseph Smith and many of his contemporaries held the magic world view. I believe that Quinn's arguments are completely persuasive regarding the thesis that magic influenced how the Smith family saw the world. Second, I will take a Wittgensteinian approach to the nature of religious language. Essentially, this is the view that religious language gets its meaning from the practices in which it is embedded and may be very different from the meanings attached to similar concepts in other areas of discourse.

As regards the ordering of this paper, I will first point out

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that the magic world view involves an animistic perspective. Second, I will offer a preliminary definition of animism that will turn out to be problematic. Third, I will argue that the magic world view informed how Smith understood the efficacy of priesthood ordinances. Fourth, I will describe Leonardo Boff's distinction between a sacramental world view and a scientific world view. Fifth, I show that animism can be defined in the context of a sacramental world view and that this definition differs from the previous definition of animism. Indeed, it is better. Sixth, I show that the latter understanding of animism explains the necessity of ordinances by placing sacraments at the center of how human life is ordered. But the catch is that they are necessary in a way that is essentially *communal* and not individual. Therefore, I conclude (contra arguments I made in the earlier article) that we should try to explain the necessity of ordinances not in individualistic terms but in communal terms.

MAGIC AND ANIMISM

ACCORDING TO THE Christian establishment, there is a difference between magical events and miracles. The latter are the result of a direct divine intervention on the part of God in violation of natural laws.[6] As Quinn points out, magic involves a more direct action on the part of the person practicing magic.[7] This is also how the difference is understood in Catholic theology:

> In a restricted sense magic is understood to be an interference with the usual course of physical nature by apparently inadequate means (recitation of formularies, gestures, mixing of incongruous elements, and other mysterious actions), the knowledge of which is obtained through secret communication with the force underlying the universe (God, the Devil, the soul of the world, etc.); it is the attempt to work miracles not by the power of God, gratuitously communicated to man, but by the use of hidden forces beyond man's control.[8]

In essence, magic involves the person herself or himself performing supernatural acts rather than persuading God to do so. Catholics typically avoid saying that Jesus was a magician by claiming that he was God.

If magic involves some sort of direct action on the part of the magician, then it must harness powers in nature that exist independent of God's complete control—or, at least, that God allows to exist independent of his control. Naturally, it follows that if magic is possible, then some version of animism must be true. Quinn agrees that this is part of the magic world view.[9]

So, our question now is how to define animism in a more precise way. In some sense, animism is the view that every object of the natural world has a life and/or power of its own. Henceforth, I will just refer to the object's "life" and attempt to define what this might mean. I will call the first understanding of animism *the scientific understanding*. This is a rather odd term to use since science is well-known for its rejection of animism. However, it is an apt term because it involves the attempt to use the language of science to describe a metaphysical context in which animistic beliefs might make rational sense. This is the approach that early LDS apostle Orson Pratt takes. In his essay, "The Absurdities of Immaterialism," Pratt postulates that everything is made up of "uncuttable" atoms that each have a degree of "intelligence" or consciousness.[10]

The important point to make about this view of animism is that the term "life" applies to non-biological objects in the world in a way that is qualitatively similar to the way it applies to biological beings. The difference is one of quantity: they have less of it than we. "Life" has the same meaning when it is applied to any type of object in the world. This is the scientific understanding of animism because it reconciles the meaning of the term "life" as applied to merely material objects to the meaning of the term "life" as applied to biological beings. The latter has been transformed by the scientific domination of the term, and hence such a reconciliation allows science to determine what animism would mean as a doctrine. Notice how Pratt's view sounds like a peculiar adaptation of Newtonian physics to his theological perspective.

The problem with this view is its mysteriousness. This is not to say that mystery and awe are bad in themselves. The problem here is that we have a term that applies to something that none of us can witness, something that seems tangibly false; and yet to hold this view, we would have to assert that this appearance is misleading, that everything we think we know about the universe turns out to be illusory. Under this definition of animism, something else is going on behind the scenes, and we have no idea about it.

Moreover, it is not clear how we could even learn to apply the term "life" to inanimate objects in this way, since the conditions for applying "life" to biological entities are so different. For example, it makes sense to say of a human body that it is alive or that it is dead. This distinction cannot possibly apply to rocks. So, if "life" can have application to inanimate material objects, in a scientific context, it must be in a different way than the term applies to biological beings. Forcing the scientific paradigm on an animistic worldview is unnatural and distorts the very meaning of the terms used in the animistic perspective.[11]

PRIESTHOOD POWER AND MAGIC

ALTHOUGH I HAVE clearly distinguished between magic and miracles above, this distinction is based on the views of those who denigrate the magic world view (in this case Catholic theologians). This distinction is not so easy to maintain. Quinn argues for a collapse of this distinction. He says:

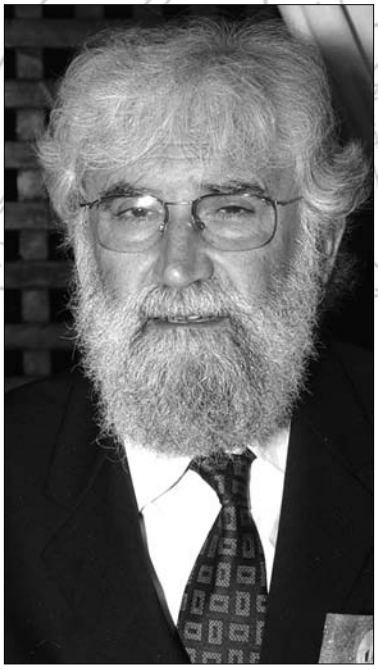
> The potentially religious dimension of these definitions raises the problem of clearly separating magic from religion. Influential writers attempted such distinctions from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and these views continue to appear in textbooks and scholarly writings. For modern Americans, "the distinction between magic and religion seems . . . simple and obvious enough," com-

> mented George B. Vetter. "Magic, being by definition false or wicked, or both, couldn't possibly be confused with 'religion' which was equally by definition true and virtuous."[12]

But if one accepts the magic world view and religion as well, then such a definition of the distinction would make no sense. Magic would not be false and wicked. Indeed, it may be that there would not be much of a distinction at all. It is possible that Joseph Smith understood there to be a close identification between the power of magic and the powers conferred to human beings via the priesthood. Quinn says,

> [E]arly Mormons understood that priesthood meant divine power . . . that was conferred on mortals and was centered in the relationship of an individual with the powers of deity.[13]

Quinn's argument is bolstered by quotes from Brigham Young and others, but I will let the reader examine these for herself.[14] Instead, my argument is a theological one. Joseph Smith's developing theology was headed in the direction of breaking down the ontological distinction between God and humanity. The more this distinction is undermined, the more like God humans become. In this way, given our definition of magic, it follows that humans, in essence, would be able to perform magic. In fact, given Smith's theology, he wouldn't have seen a difference between miracles and magic since they are both performed by the same type of beings, some exalted and some not.



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"[MATERIAL OBJECTS] *have become signs and symbols of encounter, effort, conquest, and the inner life of the human being. . . . Objects begin to speak, to tell the story of their interplay with humanity. They are transformed into sacraments.*

"The human world, even if it be material and technical, is never merely material and technical. It is symbolic and fraught with meaning." —L. Boff

The last piece of the puzzle is also located in the above quote. If priesthood involved the actual acquisition of divine power, then the rites of the priesthood, ordinances as they are now called, would be magical rites.

In my article, "Defending Magic: Explaining the Necessity of Ordinances," I argued that the scientific view of animism would help us explain the necessity of ordinances. If this is right, then bolstering the rationality of Smith's position on the magical nature of priesthood rites would help this explanation. However, I believe that there are problems with that earlier view that can be corrected with a better understanding of the nature of animism.

BOFF'S SACRAMENTAL WORLDVIEW

LEONARDO BOFF IS one of the most important theologians of the liberation theology movement that started in Latin America in the late 1960s. Each piece of his theology fits into the framework of a theological praxis whose intent is to show that Christ's mission is to liberate the poor and the oppressed. This is no less true of his view of the nature of sacraments. For the purposes of these arguments, it is important to note that the term "sacrament" means virtually the same thing in Catholic theology as "ordinance" means in Mormon theology. I will first discuss Boff's view of the sacraments and then show how it can give us a better definition of animism. Finally, I will indicate how this all fits into a theological picture that is decidedly liberationist in its approach.

In his book, *Sacraments of Life, Life of Sacraments: Story Theology*, Boff contrasts two ways of thinking about the world called *the scientific view* and *the sacramental view*. The scientific view is one in which we look at the purely physical properties of an object and discern its nature based on these physical properties and what laws they necessarily follow. This constitutes the nature of the object. And there is no more to the universe than this. Speaking of how we look at objects from the scientific view, Boff says:

> Looking at a thing from the outside, I bend over it, scrutinize it, manipulate it, transform it, and allow it to be nothing more than a thing, an object of human use and abuse. That is the scientific way of thinking that characterizes our modern age.[15]

The scientific view, then, is characterized by a theoretical and technical approach to the world. By contrast, the sacramental view is characterized by a narrative approach to the world. It involves seeing the nature of objects in the world in terms of the roles they play in lives. Boff suggests in the sacramental view that

> [material objects] are [not] mere objects. They have become signs and symbols of encounter, effort, conquest, and the inner life of the human being. . . . Objects begin to speak, to tell the story of their interplay with humanity. They are transformed into sacraments. The human world, even if it be material and technical, is never merely material and technical. It is symbolic and fraught with meaning.[16]

Material objects become symbolic. They become part of the

life of the human being. In other words, they are part of a life story and they *have* life as players in this story. To see the world as sacramental is to see it as a locale of material stories and not material properties. This view of the material world is not logically inconsistent with the scientific view; it is not even logically comparable to it. That is, assertions about life according to the sacramental view are of a qualitatively different nature than assertions about life according to the scientific view. So, to say that the world is alive is *not* to say something like what Orson Pratt argues in "The Absurdities of Immaterialism."

To see better what Boff means by the sacramental view of the world, let's look at one of his stories. I will quote it at length:

> There is this aluminum mug of ours, the good old kind that is bright and shiny. The handle is broken, but that gives it the air of an antique. The family's eleven children of all ages drank from it. It has accompanied the family on its many moves: from rural countryside to town, from town to city, from city to metropolis. There were births and deaths. It has shared every thing. It has always been there. It is the ongoing mystery of life and its continuity amid differing situations of life and mortal existence. The mug endures, old but still shiny. I think it must have been old even when it first came into the house. But its elderliness is really youthfulness because it generates and bestows life. It is the centerpiece of our kitchen.
>
> When I drink from it, I do not drink just water. I drink in freshness, gentleness, familiarity, my family history, and the memory of a greedy little boy quenching his thirst. Whatever sort of whatever it may be, in that mug it is always good and fresh. Everyone in our home takes a drink from it when she or he wants to quench a thirst. As if it were a ritual, we all exclaim: How good it is to drink from this mug! How good the water is here![17]

Boff tells a story about this mug. Its physical properties matter very little to what this mug is, and when they do, it is only because they too play a role in its life. This mug has a life in the life of the family to which it belongs. A physically identical mug is essentially different from this particular mug because it does not have that history. The life of a physical object that is not biological (in the scientific sense) is the role the object plays in the stories we tell about it. Animism is the view of the world in which the lives of physical objects are more relevant to how we interact with them than their particular scientific properties. In this way, animism portrays a world that is necessarily symbolic and ritualistic. Let's call this *the sacramental view* of animism.

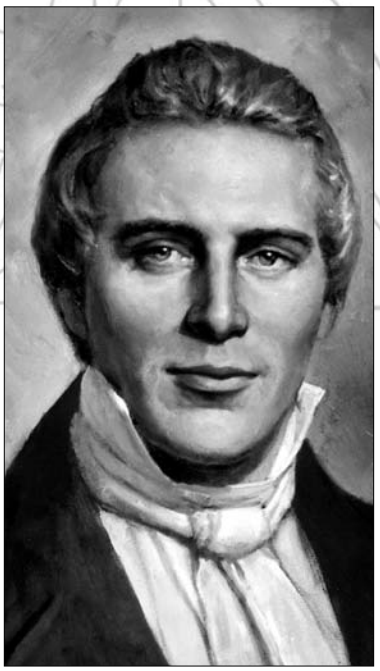
I believe that the sacramental view of animism is preferable to the scientific view for several reasons. First, the sacramental view does not contort the meaning of animism into the constrained language of science in the way the writings of Orson Pratt and most others do. Second, the sacramental view of animism allows the term "life" to have a meaning that is grounded in its observable use rather than some metaphysical situation going on "behind the scenes" as is the case with the scientific understanding of animism. The life of the mug is the role it has played in the life of the family.

This second point could use a bit more explanation. The idea is that in science "life" has come to mean something very specific. It applies to certain types of beings in the world of which we can say things that we cannot say of objects like mugs. For example, it applies to things that can become corpses. This does not make much sense when applied to a mug. So, of course, it seems utterly irrational to someone entrenched in the scientific world view to say that merely physical objects could have lives of their own. This is because that person thinks the concept has the same meaning as it does in scientific discourse. But the sacramental view of animism shows that the term "life" can have a different meaning. It can mean that the something in question plays a role in a story. Having a "life" is being a player in a story. All the world is a stage and we are all players in that story. And so, we (and I include Boff's mug in this "we") are all alive in that sense. The term "life" is heterogeneous and not homogeneous in its meaning: in biology it means something different than it does when we are thinking in a sacramental way.

So, if we are to understand animism in terms of the sacramental view, then the magic world view is not something that

JOSEPH SMITH *wouldn't have seen a difference between miracles and magic since they are both performed by the same type of beings, some exalted and some not.*

Joseph Smith's vision was all encompassing: magical, priestly, communal, and political. Physical objects told their stories to him, and he translated them.



DEL PARSON, 1999

contradicts (in the logical sense) science. Rather the magic world view is incomparable to science. We cannot stand outside the scientific view and the sacramental view and compare them, unless we do so from within some other yet-to-be-defined view of the world. And then this view would not be above and beyond the sacramental and scientific views but a view to be held alongside them. It follows that it is not quite right to say that a miracle or a magical performance are violations of natural law. The concept of natural law is germane to the scientific view and not to the sacramental view. Natural law just doesn't play a role when we see the world sacramentally. Again, talking about his family's mug, Boff says:

> From the newspapers we gather that the water is ill-treated. It comes from the polluted city river and it is full of chlorine; but, thanks to our mug, it becomes good, healthy, fresh, and sweet.[18]

His point is not that the mug has transformed the water in a way that the scientist could detect. His point is that what it means for the water to be good, healthy, fresh, and sweet means something different when the mug and its water are viewed through a sacramental lens.

SACRAMENTAL NECESSITY AND LIBERATION

HOW DOES THE sacramental view of the nature of animism fare with respect to the question of the necessity of ordinances? The answer depends on how we ask the question. In my 2002 article, I asked the question in such a way that the primary object of salvation was an individual person. I now believe that this was a mistake. Clearly salvation (i.e., exaltation) in Mormonism is communal. We cannot be saved without each other. So, why would sacraments be necessary for us to be saved together? The answer is, I think, that the sacramental view of the world requires us to see salvation holistically and communally. The sacramental view forces on our minds a communal understanding by way of stories that involve many players. I am not who I am independent of my stories, and in those stories there are many other players, including material objects. Seeing the world as full of symbols and rituals that get their significance from stories we tell about them is to see the world as synthesized into one great kingdom of God. Moreover, the sacramental view gives us all intrinsic value by virtue of our places in the story. We are all important, because we are valued for our qualitative and not our quantitative contribution.

But the scientific view prevents us from seeing the world qualitatively and communally. It analyzes, breaks down, and individualizes. It takes things apart and understands them as wholes only by how the parts work. This individualization has its political counterpart in modern liberalism, which sees society as a conglomerate of individuals who save themselves by virtue of their own merit. Moreover, the scientific view quantifies everything. Instead of looking at the value an object has to a family that uses it in day-to-day life, science necessarily ignores all of these particularities. It abstracts away from them and evaluates objects by quantitative abstractions. This quantitative abstraction has its economic counterpart in modern day capitalism, which sees every object as a commodity with an exchange value. The scientific world view is inseparable from the liberalism and capitalism from which liberation theologians believe we must be saved by God. This scientifico-capitalist view of the world is one in which ritual, story, and symbol mean nothing unless they can be bought or sold to us for profit. They are no longer salvific, merely profitable.

The sacramental view of nature, with its emphasis on story, ritual, and symbol, is a necessary element for our salvation, not because it does something to each individual. Instead, it is necessary for our salvation because it brings all individuals together into the community of the kingdom. One cannot help but think communally when one thinks sacramentally. And so liberation from the current state of environmental destruction, economic slavery, and political oppression will require a return to (or more properly a progression toward) the view of the world that Joseph Smith so clearly envisioned. His vision was all-encompassing: magical, priestly, communal, and political. Physical objects told their stories to him, and he translated them. Would that the Restoration had continued in this trajectory. Perhaps it's not too late for us to move in Joseph's direction once more—to recover the awe and magical power of the sacraments—and in so doing, to restore ourselves, to come to understand the true significance of our lives within the kingdom.

NOTES

1. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View,* rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books. 1998), 321.
2. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 51.
3. See Hume, "On Miracles," *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Oxford University Press), Section X.
4. Animism is the view that all objects of the natural world have a life and/or power of some sort. See Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View,* xxiv.
5. R. Dennis Potter, "Defending Magic: Explaining the Necessity of Ordinances," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 139–46.
6. For example, Thomas Aquinas says, "Those effects are rightly to be termed miracles which are wrought by Divine power apart from the order usually observed in nature." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles, Volume III* (Chicago: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), cii.
7. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View,* xxiii.
8. See http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11197b.htm (accessed 20 December 2006).
9. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View,* xxiv.
10. Orson Pratt, "The Absurdities of Immaterialism," *The Essential Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 61–108.
11. For more along this line of argument, see Peter Winch's "Understanding a Primitive Society," in *Religion and Understanding,* ed. D.Z. Phillips (New York: Macmillan, 1967), which has greatly influenced me in the writing of this paper.
12. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View,* xxv.
13. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 37.
14. Ibid.
15. Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of Sacraments: Story Theology*, trans. John Drury (Portland: Pastoral Press, 1987), 13.
16. Ibid., 3.
17. Ibid., 9.
18. Ibid.

2006 Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest Third Place Winner

HOME BEFORE DARK

By Afton L. Wilkins

Dad, in front of the family's Oak City home, circa 1940

I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE GROWING UP DURING WORLD War II, and I worried. With one older brother and our Mama in a humble home on a small farm in Oak City, near Delta, Utah, I was trying to figure out who I could be and where. Four older brothers and sisters had married and left home. A brother I'd never known had died as a toddler. A miner in Eureka, some fifty miles away on a dirt track, Dad was rarely home. Our Uncle Earl was the town drunk, and Grandma and Grandpa drank coffee. Dad smoked Bull Durham, and Aunt Vera got a divorce. We came from the wrong side of a polygamous family, and one of my cousins became an unwed mother. Some Church people looked down on us. However, this was my family, and I loved them all. Church bells rang all week, and in spite of our marginal status among the Saints, Mama, Clead, and I always attended meetings. My teacher didn't like me, and a boy at school called me, "Dirty Jap."

I was tired of the war. I wished it would all go away—ration stamp books and Western Union telegrams with horrible news. I mean, how could all *five* Sullivan brothers have been killed? I wanted to hear no more of Hitler or Jewish death camps. I wanted the Japanese internment camp at Topaz erased from the desert and our old Oak City world back, including my brother Ray, fighting in the Pacific.

But I also wanted America to win the war, to win big victories. Mama did, too. She never missed any speech of President Roosevelt. That's why we always took the newspaper and used electricity to listen to the radio after chores and supper. One night as the radio blared out more war news, Mama said, "It's downright atrocious!"

I figured she'd heard that big word in Relief Society, where she often went. Attending Relief Society had begun to make her act a little odd. For example, one time after being with those women, she said, "Ice cubes would sure be grand in the summer." I could not believe she would want to drink a glass of water with an ice cube floating in it. It was just too weird. Now, if Relief Society could remove the slimy cream clots in the milk poured over our toast for supper, that would be *real* relief!

One evening after a Relief Society meeting, Mama asked if I would like to kneel by the bed and have prayer with her. I felt awkward. I thought of the boy Joseph Smith kneeling for the very first time in a grove of trees in upstate New York. I felt embarrassed as Mama humbly knelt and waited. I had never knelt

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Class photo, 1946. Afton is in the front row, third from the right.

to pray with my mother before. She, Clead, and I had always given thanks before eating supper, and if we had anything to say to God, we said it then. But I slid down beside her and bowed my head.

Her voice cracked when she blessed those in the armed forces and asked that her sons and son-in-law would come home safely from the war. Then she asked a special blessing that I would grow up to be a lovely young woman. Oh, growing up again!

ONE AFTERNOON AS I walked our fence line, I thought how those Relief Society prayers were surely starting to put a damper on my life. I had been planning to go, at least once when I got a little bit older, to see Delta's famous Billy Van's Dance Hall. My wild, red-headed cousin went there, she who smoked store-bought cigarettes, stuffing the butts through the floorboards of our grandfather's abandoned adobe cabin on Main Street. She loved Billy Van's and drank beer there all the time.

Some folks said she'd once danced there with her blouse unbuttoned down to her navel. Her underpants had been found in the back seat of several cars. Why, she was *way* off the straight and narrow path. Mama said, "It's a crying shame she's fifteen years old and going to have a baby." This was actually bigger news in town than the war. The mothers of some of my friends snuggled their daughters close whenever I came around, and I lost one friend forever.

My cousin said the dance hall spread out above the auto parts store on Main Street and that the hall glittered and sparkled as a 400-pound globe covered with 2,000 little mirrors rotated in the middle of the ceiling. On top of the globe was a small Salt Lake Mormon Temple, and circling it was a model train supporting a little airplane that towed a banner reading, "We dance next Sat." She said eight smaller, mirrored balls hanging from the ceiling threw a kaleidoscope of yellow, aqua, and pink all around the big dance floor. And there were hundreds of hand-cut mirrors glued to the walls and ceiling.

THE THIRTY-THIRD president of the United States, Harry S. Truman, now seemed to be putting a Billy Van sparkle in Mama's eye. From the beginning of his term, she'd decided never to like him—no one could ever be as wonderful as Franklin D. Roosevelt. Yet she had thought it only fair to politely, open-mindedly listen to the broadcast of Truman's first presidential proclamation:

> Whereas it is fitting that we acknowledge anew our gratitude, love and devotion to the mothers of America; and, whereas, in this year of war's greatest intensity we are ever mindful of their splendid courage and steadfast loyalty . . . I do request the observance of Sunday, May 13, 1945, as Mother's Day.

Mama really puffed with pride about that.

My birthday would follow. Mama wasn't much on birthdays. I don't think any of us kids ever had a birthday cake. Still my birthday was important to me. I would get to stand up in front of the class while everybody sang "Happy Birthday" to me. Well, probably not the boy who had been calling me a Dirty Jap ever since the day when, as the last one up on his team, I'd struck out. Anyway, I was watching out for my friend Nola to come up the ditch path. I wanted to tell her about my birthday coming up and also our new, rumble-seat roadster.

One fine day, Clead had driven a 1928 Ford black, rumble-seat roadster down our driveway, swung right, and braked between the woodpile and the fence separating the house yard and farm yard. Mama had run from the house to stroke the black canvas top over the two-seater convertible. Each window space had a rolled-up black curtain tied with a string above the doors. Two headlights bulged like frog eyes on each side of the little mesh radiator. Very gently, Clead kicked the 17-inch spoke wheels. The front bumper angled slightly unevenly. The original trunk was no longer strapped on behind. But the leather rumble seat was jazzy. And when Clead lifted the sides of the hood, they settled over the small blue engine like gray pigeon wings folding down before sleep.

Mama said, "You're not really old enough for a driver's license." Yet with her help, my fifteen-year-old brother had paid the mammoth sum of $25 for this wonderful seventeen-year-old car. Climbing in, he said, "Let's take a little spin before chores." His right foot pressed the floorboard starter button. His head sat proudly on thin shoulders as the black and white

gym shoe on his left foot jammed down the clutch. His hand maneuvered the ball of the gear shift rising from the floor. The engine grated hoarsely. He pulled out the choke, which shuddered slightly and then clipped into a tinny rasp.

After Mama had seated herself up front, Clead slapped his hand on the outside of his door. Our little dog Punk understood, hopped on the running board, and braced himself as we flew down the old Delta road. At 20 mph, we zipped past the pheasants in the twilight fields. Mama's feet strained against the floorboard. Being in the rumble seat, I felt a little rich and wished I were wearing a long, pink chiffon scarf that flew out into the wind.

I TURNED THIRTEEN on Monday, May 14, 1945, the day after Mother's Day. The same day, George Albert Smith, 88, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, died. Also on my very birthday, the first train carrying Topaz Japanese started for Chicago. Local officials had been doggedly following the national "big squeeze" plans to close the center and had shut down three mess halls.

"But where on this earth can those poor Japanese people go?" Mama asked.

I was a teenager, now, as were some Japanese I'd seen. After he'd been fired for sitting and coughing at the mine, Dad had come home and worked some at Topaz. I'd gone there with my sister when she took her baby to the doctor. So I knew that despite being fenced in, the Topaz Japanese had lots of conveniences we didn't. Flush toilets, a beauty salon, library, tofu factory, art classes, kindergarten. The Japanese got food from the government, vegetables such as cauliflower, which I'd never even seen. Meat and store-bought milk and cheese every day. Milk from our cows tasted like the sagebrush and stinkweed they grazed on. And the Japanese sometimes got to go into Delta to shop.

Somebody said that putting the Japs in camps probably saved their lives. Later I thought maybe that idea made some people feel better about the way these U.S. citizens had been treated. Back then, like Mama, I just wondered where they could go after Topaz. We knew that some who'd gone back to their homes in California had suffered lots of prejudice. Lost land, houses, and businesses.

Anyway, while I was waiting for my friend Nola, I wondered where I could go if forced out of the place I'd been living all my life. What would I do if, as lacking as it was, I didn't have a home to go to now?

I asked Nola that question when she finally came to the ditch. And I told her about my birthday and our new roadster. She didn't answer anything. She didn't even seem to want to know about my birthday and our roadster. Maybe birthdays weren't celebrated in her family, either. Maybe she thought everyone should have a car like her father's Model T Ford. Anyway, she soon whispered good-bye and left. She did that sometimes. Yet sometimes she brought her two little brothers and let them play in the ditch or with Punk quite a while. No matter what went on in our town, Nola was my dear friend through thick and thin.

WHILE I WAS thinking, evening shadows had crept like stains up the foothills, blotting the scrub oak and sage. Now that the Europe war was over, was Ray thinking of home? Thinking of our peach orchard in bloom and of feasting on new potatoes and creamed peas first chance in the spring? About the shed securely made from railroad ties? Of the cow and sheep corral, chicken coop, pig pen, the haystack that looked like a large loaf of bread? Of the dark, cobwebby root cellar I hated to go down into? Might Ray be in

Mama, circa 1946

a foxhole half full of bloody water near a marsh full of dead soldiers? Had he even gotten Mama's letter telling that Dad had died in February, just a few months back?

I crossed my legs beneath me on the ditch bank. Sunset over Delta and Topaz glowed crimson. Mauve-gray clouds were veined with strands of fuchsia, apple green, and canary yellow embroidery silk. Punk curled beside me as color kissed the east mountain tops, and some great hand began turning down the lamp in heaven. I told a red ant carrying a speck of food past, "You better hurry to get home before dark!" Finally standing, I sighed. Punk and I would also have to hurry to the home Mama kept up as best she could for Clead and me, the home that, in his roadster with friends, Clead would leave every possible night.

BOUNDS AND CONDITIONS

THE RELIGION AND MENTAL HEALTH MATRIX

By Louis Moench

COLUMN EDITOR'S NOTE: My dream for the Bounds and Conditions column is to cover a broad spectrum of topics on the intersections of faith, science, and health from a Mormon point of view. This hope is being realized. In coming issues, we'll publish discussions on evolution, astronomy, nanotechnology, human cloning, and other subjects from a wide range of sciences and perspectives. But since I first began collaborating with SUNSTONE *on the column, I've had a private interest in one particular topic: Mormonism and psychology.*

And so it's a great pleasure to introduce a bit of gold I struck while up late one night mining through the digital archives of past Sunstone symposiums. There I uncovered a presentation from 1984 by Dr. Louis Moench titled "Mormonism and Psychopathology" (tape/CD/download SL84005). Excited by my find, I stayed up late into the night transcribing. The next morning I called Dr. Moench at his office for permission to run the piece, and with polite hesitance, he replied, "I'm not sure I'd agree with anything I said twenty years ago!"

Although we have ended up revising and updating a bit, as well as integrating additional case studies from an expanded article Dr. Moench published in AMCAP Journal *11, no. 1 (1985): 61–73, we've reached consensus that the core of this presentation is as valid and pertinent today as it was two decades ago. I'm pleased to introduce it to* SUNSTONE *readers here.*

Please send your reflections on Mormonism and science or health issues to me at BOUNDS.AND.CONDITIONS@HOTMAIL.COM. —RICK JEPSON

It is more important to know what kind of patient has the disease than what kind of disease the patient has. —SIR WILLIAM OSLER[1]

I ONCE HOSPITALIZED a Mormon bishop whose emotional fervor in conducting a funeral had been followed by a sleepless night, agitation, and a sexual interlude with his wife which made him feel exalted. This feeling led to his insistence that his children stand unclothed outdoors in the snow at 5:00 a.m. so they could be exalted with him, followed by his throwing objects out a closed window when their enthusiasm for exaltation failed to match his. He was willing to come to the hospital only under authority: the patriarchal authority of his father, the ecclesiastical authority of the stake president, and the civil authority of the deputy sheriff.

In the hospital, he continued to testify loudly in King James English and to give solemn pronouncements by priesthood authority—punctuated by the not-too-gentle laying on of large hands. He continued to rearrange reality—crumpling bed mattresses, shattering drinking glasses, and confusing his spiritual strengths with his physical. He was a very large man and seemed to be entertaining the notion of rearranging me next. A non-religious nurse commented what a shame it was that devotion to religion has this effect on people.

Eventually, as lithium prompted his devil to depart, the patient was eager to go home, to plow snow from the church parking lot, to conduct required interviews, and to spread the gospel of medication to distressed Saints in his ward—all the while extolling the virtues of his hospital caretakers and counselors.

A non-religious psychiatrist observed, "He's still manic, isn't he?" I replied, "No, he's back to 'baseline bishop.' That's the way bishops are." In his psychotic state, his nurse confused his religion with his illness. In his recovered state, a doctor confused his illness with his religion.

As those of us who are active in church and psychologically healthy know, religion can provide the structure that channels creative energy in peaceful and desirable directions. It can offer communal support to buoy us up, affirm individual worth, provide opportunities for growth, and offer anxiety-ameliorating answers to the existential questions of life's meaning. But as the case report above illustrates, the line between religious thought and behavior and mental disorder is sometimes thin. Does religion, Mormonism included, predispose one to psychopathology? The answer is *no*. But just as personality traits become exaggerated under stress, mental illness may make whatever is centrally important to a person become the focus or matrix upon which symptoms manifest.

WHAT factors in a Mormon religious orientation make it a matrix upon which psychopathologies will sometimes find expression?

Evangelism

ANY church seeking to spread its beliefs through missionary efforts is likely to find that a disproportionate share of people ripe for conversion are those who are already dissatisfied with their adaptation to life or are unsuccessful at it for a variety of reasons, including mental illness or personality disorder. In the case of LDS conversion, the enormous degree of attention missionaries pay to potential converts would be attractive not only to the honest in heart, but also to passive, dependent personalities, people ostracized from their social group, or those with a narcissistic bent for the limelight. We might think of these converts as analogous to the "Potato Mormons" of post-World War II Germany who joined the Church because of the effect of the welfare program on their empty stomachs. The need for filling empty spaces in one's psyche is also great.

K.L. was a person with that need. She was a twenty-three-year-old, unmarried LDS convert of five years. Ostracized by her family, she moved into the home of a generous Relief Society president—a large home in an old, upper-class neighborhood. There a peculiarity or two surfaced. Her poetry, sometimes good and always romantic, became difficult to comprehend. And she walked through the house with garlic bulbs and honey between her toes. Her explanation was simple: garlic to ward off cold viruses and honey to keep the bulbs in place.

One day the Relief Society president pulled into her driveway and noticed a young boy staring at a second-story window.

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Looking up, she saw her houseguest, entirely nude and seemingly oblivious to the street below, striking poses. Horrified, she ran upstairs shouting, "What on earth are you doing?" The girl continued to pose in front of the mirror near her window and nonchalantly replied, "You can see the resemblance, can't you? I've traced my genealogy back to Venus."

Her next stop was my office, where we uncovered another peculiarity. She had become convinced through faintly overheard phone conversations at work and erased blackboard messages (visible to no one but her) that her boss was infatuated with her. This, in combination with her other behaviors, led me to her diagnosis: "de Clerambault's Syndrome" a rare, schizophrenia-like delusional belief that one is the object of passionate love by an inattentive and not well-known other. Her having joined the Church as the result of the ample attention of two missionaries, combined with her desperate need to be accepted for the only feminine trait she knew of—allure—led her to hopes of salvation through two missionaries, her boss, and the Venus de Milo, with whose femininity she could identify.

Trust in Miracles

ANOTHER factor in the Mormon matrix that occasionally leads to psychopathology is reliance on divine intervention through priesthood power. Such trust is commendable. But what is less commendable, and too often encountered, is the view that God *must* intervene even when adequate human intervention is available. Patients who have been promised in blessings that they will recover from illnesses contingent upon their faith worry that to then turn to medical doctors for treatment would be to deny faith in the blessing's efficacy or the Lord's power to heal.

One patient facing this dilemma was B.E., a seriously and psychotically depressed seventy-five-year-old woman who had great difficulty tolerating several anti-depressants that had been tried serially. She was given a blessing in which she was promised recovery. We urged hospitalization for electroconvulsive treatment, which for this type of depression is safe, rapid, and more effective than medication. But she felt that consenting to the treatment would jeopardize her standing with the Lord. Meanwhile, she became progressively less able to exercise faith, get out of bed, or even think logically.

Her husband finally brought her to the hospital, creating enormous guilt in her. And within seven days, she was virtually depression-free.

Mistrust of Medicine

MORMONISM'S communal structure can also become a dangerous element in combination with certain types of psychopathology, especially when joined to a mistrust of medicine. Where information circulates freely through the community, so do anecdotes of treatment successes and failures. How often in testimony meetings do we encounter the convention of exalting the Lord's power by devaluing the medical profession with statements such as: "The doctor didn't know what to do for me"; "All the doctors were fooled"; "The doctor said it was impossible"; "They said they have never seen a case like mine"; or "Everyone had given up hope." Fed by such expressions, many a patient's decision regarding medical care is based not on prudence, but on consensus within the group. Word-of-mouth recommendations from fellow Latter-day Saints can lead people to quacks and quack medicine.

A tragic illustration of religious faith and quackery was the case of D.S., a recently-married, twenty-two-year-old girl with lupus. When she was admitted to the hospital with a psychotic delusion that she was married to Christ, she was taking prednisone, a steroid. Both lupus and prednisone can cause psychosis.

Despite her gradual improvement with treatment, her husband was not satisfied. He knew of a good sister who claimed to have cured her own child of lupus by "natural" means, and he wanted his wife to see the woman. Her other doctors and I strongly emphasized to both her and her husband the dangers of abrupt discontinuance of steroids. They knew about those dangers anyway since the patient's sister—also suffering with lupus—had almost died when she abruptly stopped her prednisone regimen.

Nonetheless, contrary to medical advice, the husband insisted that she be discharged from the hospital. The patient, not psychotic enough to meet criteria for involuntary commitment and not strong enough a person to oppose her husband's fanaticism, passively went with him to the natural healer.

Two weeks later, a police sergeant called me wanting to know what I could tell him about a certain woman who had died that morning and whose husband was tightlipped about the circumstances. A full, untouched bottle of prednisone was found in her bedroom.

A far more terrifying case of what can go wrong when trust in priesthood power is combined with mental illness—in this case, a psychotic episode—is that of L.R., a twenty-six-year-old husband and father of a nine-month-old son, who was nearing college graduation and preparing to be an LDS seminary teacher. He was deeply impressed one week when he picked up a hitchhiker and discovered in conversation that the hitchhiker's father, though not LDS, had been paying tithing. He took that to mean something of considerable significance. He also came to view other experiences over the next few days as spiritual manifestations.

Then one night, after watching the movie *Mary Poppins* on television, he noticed names in the credits that were very similar to Nephite names from the Book of Mormon. He was amazed. He then felt the presence of someone entering the room. Thoroughly convinced it was one of the Three Nephites, he quietly locked the doors so the presence would remain.

In the intensity of the moment, he became convinced that his faith was to be tested in the manner of Abraham, something that remarks of a zealous religion teacher had led him to contemplate. He got a knife from the kitchen, entered the baby's room, took him from the crib, and placed him on the dressing table. The father raised the knife, closed his eyes, and began to bring it down. Unable to go through with it, he opened his eyes. He saw that the baby had moved and thus would have escaped the path of the knife.

Relieved by this sign, which he regarded as divine intervention, he returned the baby to the crib and left. But soon, an anxious feeling came over him that he had not been adequately tested. Even if the baby had been moved by heavenly means, he thought the father's hand needed to be stayed by a heavenly visitor in order for the test to be genuine. So he returned to the room and repeated the scene. This time the baby did not move, and no angel stayed his hand.

He was dumbfounded as his little son cried out. Then it became clear to him that the requirements of the test had changed: he was *meant* to sacrifice his son, as God had sacrificed his Only Begotten, and then to sacrifice himself. He drew the knife across his own abdomen, chest, and throat—slicing them, but not deeply enough to harm his vital structures.

His wife entered the room, saw the blood, and ran for help from their downstairs neighbors. As the young neighbor couple came up, L.R. perceived that the test had changed again: rather than join his son in heaven, he was to heal him. He knelt with his neighbors and wife in a prayer circle around the baby. He had already cancelled the ambulance his wife called because its arrival would negate the test. Over the next two hours, several

blessings were said, and he reassured everyone that by the power of his priesthood everything would be all right. Eventually they all retired to bed. By 4:00 AM, the baby had bled to death. Deeply impressed, L.R. then called the bishop over, asking, "Do you have enough faith to raise my son from the dead?"

The psychotic delusion of the young man is obvious. But one wonders about the other, presumably sane, adults in the room that night and their understanding of priesthood authority.

Belief in Evil Spirits

ANOTHER element of Mormon theology that occasionally combines in an unhealthy way with faith in priesthood blessings is the belief in evil spirits and the possibility of demonic possession. Many Latter-day Saints, like other sincere people, operate out of a set of superstitions instead of religious belief. This tendency may manifest itself in such simple ways as mistaking wishful thinking for answer to prayer or such complex ways as dissociative reactions, autohypnosis, or overt psychosis. These are often misinterpreted as possession states, to be treated by casting out demons. During a schizophrenic psychotic episode, searching for evil spirits to banish is futile. When such attempts fail, they demoralize the giver of the blessing and heap guilt on the suffering victim. Casting out devils has far less efficacy than antipsychotic medication.

Because of its central position in the believer's life, religion often becomes the matrix on which psychopathology finds its expression. It may provide the forms and symbols through which psychotic thought disorders and perceptual distortions are expressed.

Authoritarianism

MORMONISM clearly has authoritarian elements. And in authoritarian systems, the expected response is obedience. The progression of learning in the temple endowment begins with obedience, but it does not end there. Once obedience is mastered, there are other, more transcendent, principles to learn. Too many Mormons, however, seem to suffer developmental arrest at the obedience level, leading them to always look up for direction, wanting to be commanded in all things.

Which authority should be relied upon? The arm of the flesh is obviously suspect, yet many consult nineteenth-century authorities who aren't flesh anymore. Though the state of their art is well over one hundred years out of date, some members still regard Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's herbal recommendations as divine in origin. One might just as logically find a statement by Joseph or Brigham saying the best way to get from here to there is by horse and conclude that the car and the airplane are anti-gospel. Thomsonian medicine, a system based on the work and writings of Samuel Thomson, a nineteenth-century herbalist, is still the standard for a good many Mormons, including some in high places whose use of herbs lends an apparent stamp of approval. One such highly-placed person was hospitalized and found to be on twenty-six different herbs, at least six of which were potentially toxic and may have caused his symptoms.

Medically, one might think of obedience as the chief trait of a good patient—compliant and ready to do just what the doctor ordered. However, when given options in the treatment process, this kind of patient says, "You're the doctor," and when given tasks that require his own effort, says, "I was hoping you just had some kind of pill that would take care of it." It is not easy to help a patient who wants not help but a takeover. A patient must ultimately be in charge of his or her own health, with the doctor acting as advisor and collaborator. As a rheumatologist friend of mine tells patients who want him to take over, "It's difficult for me to be more interested in your illness than you are."

Obsessive Compulsiveness

AUTHORITARIANISM can also lead to obsessive compulsiveness. Obsessiveness is characterized by industrious activity; performance of duty; restraint of anger, of aggression, and of sexuality; conscientiousness; orderliness; perfectionism; meticulousness; and frugality—all of which are characteristics typically valued by Mormons.[2]

Obsessive persons tend to see most questions, including neutral ones, as moral. LDS obsessives would agree with the line from the hymn, "There's a right and a wrong to every question." Yet often decisions are not between right and wrong but simply between A and B, or between two goods.

Some obsessive persons also incorporate the view expressed in another hymn that "angels above us are silent notes taking," leading them to such fear of making a wrong decision that they can't decide anything until all the facts are in. But there is rarely a time in which all the facts are in. As a result, LDS obsessives commonly avoid decisions by seeking endless counsel from Church authorities. Elder Packer called this behavior "going on the spiritual dole."[3] Unfortunately, indecisive obsessives can always find those who are willing to boldly step in and decide for those who won't. These people represent another variety of obsessiveness, characterized by rigidity. They are happy to determine truth and right for everyone.

Consider the example of a forty-year-old, marginally mentally disabled mother of six whose husband's intellectual capacity was no greater than hers. She was admitted to the hospital with a self-inflicted stab wound to the abdomen, which missed her pregnant uterus. Having already exceeded the number of children she had the capacity to care for, she could not face the prospect of another baby. But her bishop had counseled her that birth control is *always* wrong. Thus, she felt that she could avoid having another child only through sexual abstinence, which, curiously, this bishop did not consider birth control.

Because she did not want another baby, she rejected her husband's sexual advances. As a result, marital harmony deteriorated, and tensions arose between husband and wife. Ultimately, she relented, and the result was the present pregnancy. Whatever needs her bishop's authoritarian pronouncements served, they did not serve hers.

Hyper-criticalness and Inappropriate Guilt

ANOTHER trait of the obsessive personality is being quick to spot wrongs. Sometimes, as in scrupulosity syndrome, the wrongs are seen to reside in others. One sister, for example, regularly criticized the ward chorister's choice of a sacrament hymn if it did not mention sacrament or atonement. Yet more often, these obsessives find wrongs in themselves. They strive for perfection and become demoralized when they don't reach it immediately, causing them to feel enormously guilty. A religion imposing rigid rules of conduct and straight and narrow ways to win approval from God, is bound to make guilt a major issue.

Now, guilt can be beneficial. When justified, it can produce growth and healthy life transformations. Neurotic guilt, however—guilt that self-condemns, devalues, and brings into doubt one's acceptability before God—does not lead to growth but rather ob-

structs it. In the King James translation of Matthew 5:48, Jesus admonishes followers, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." Lowell Bennion has pointed out to me the beauty and good sense of the New English Bible's translation: "There must be no limit to your goodness, as your Heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds."

Consider the guilt which plagued O.V., a thirty-two-year-old executive secretary and mother of four. She was admitted to the hospital via the emergency room in a psychotic state and with injuries caused from a suicide attempt. She had been haunted by the delusional belief that she was becoming Satan. When she was sixteen, in an impoverished, alcoholic, single-parent family, she derived virtually her only source of self-esteem from being an officer in her high school's seminary program. A lesson strongly emphasized the blessings of paying tithing. The patient paid tithing on a meager babysitting wage that week. Soon afterward, she obtained a regular babysitting job which put spending money in her pocket. Excited, she convinced her mother to tithe. Her mother received an unexpected promotion with a considerable increase in salary.

Now, at age thirty-two, she had come to see that her motive for paying tithing had always been to obtain blessings—something consistent with much pulpit rhetoric. Yet as she realized that the true purpose of tithing is to learn charity, take care of the poor, and to advance the Lord's work rather than receive material returns on an investment, she felt tremendously guilty. She concluded that because she had hoped for material blessings all these years, she must be evil in nature and must end her life before she became even more so.

A.E., a thirty-two-year-old single schoolteacher and returned missionary, dealt with guilt differently. Having difficulty with postmission loneliness, she discovered a sense of intimacy through autoerotic fantasy. When depression interfered with her ability to teach, she was hospitalized. While in treatment, she confided her embarrassing secret to her psychiatrist and added that her bishop had threatened to excommunicate her for it. This threatened punishment clearly seemed to exceed the sin. Her doctor called her bishop, who explained that he had not threatened her membership because of her masturbation but rather because of her penchant for confessing it to everyone. Indeed, by then, she had disclosed her secret to most of her fellow patients in addition to a good share of the members in her ward.

Rigidity of Belief

WHEN religion neatly and tidily explains everything, high expectations arise, leaving little room for doubt and shades of gray.[4] Any problem is solvable through gospel methods, and any blessing is obtainable by understanding and applying the principle upon which it is predicated (D&C 130:20–21). Intervention of the Lord is certainly forthcoming as we bind him by doing what he says (D&C 82:10).

Such expectations, attested to again and again by fellow Saints, may lead those who fail to prosper to take the advice of Job's friends and scour their souls for some great wrong, or to be demoralized by the Calvinistic conclusion that only they among the elders' quorum or neighborhood block were not elected to grace.

Some, so used to the meticulously rigid fitting of every piece into its proper place, abandon the whole puzzle upon encountering a non-fitting piece. This is what happened to M.B, a young physician and father of three who had lived a charmed life. Handsome, athletic, personable, kind, and loving, he had been a National Merit Scholar and a Special Presidential Scholar at the university he attended, where he had graduated with a 3.95 GPA.

He married a classmate of a very different personality style and background because he thought he could help her. He dealt with the tension in the marriage by adopting a good-natured, patient, and longsuffering attitude. His devotion to religious principle and church activity remained high. But the long-awaited blessings did not follow.

The couple's tolerance of each other's differences did not improve, leading to his becoming discouraged about unmet expectations for a happy ending. As a result, he proved unusually susceptible to the charms of a young nurse at the hospital where he was doing his residency. Having no flexibility in his rigid scheme of neatly packaged understanding to account for the failed blessing, he threw away his temple marriage, wife, and children, and moved two hundred miles away with the nurse.

RELIGION in general, and Mormonism in particular, does not cause mental disorders. However, because of its central position in the believer's life, religion often becomes the matrix on which psychopathology finds its expression. It may be the ideology by which a person rationalizes a neurotic style of living. And it may provide the forms and symbols through which psychotic thought disorders and perceptual distortions are expressed. It may precipitate distress, leading to the breakdown of one's ability to live effectively.

Whether the impact of religion on a person's physical, spiritual, and mental health is positive or negative cannot be determined in the general case. But in specific cases, it is clear that religion can be a factor of great importance. May we approach our brothers and sisters who exhibit dangerous or obsessive behaviors with compassionate hearts as well as wisdom to know that love for them sometimes also involves seeking professional help.

TWENTY-TWO YEARS LATER

SINCE delivering this paper and writing the expanded article more than two decades ago, I have come to value more highly the positive aspects of religion, including LDS religion, on mental health. I have become more aware of the importance of community, not just association of people with a common interest but a common purpose and moral outlook. I am struck by the way efforts to lead a spiritual life can mollify the crassness and incivility we find ever more prevalent in today's material world. Where I once was unfavorably impressed with the monotonous sameness in the typical LDS ward, I now see in those same wards a richness of diversity.

I have been pleasantly surprised at the number of bishops and other Church leaders I have encountered, both male and female, who have recognized mental illness in aberrant thinking or behavior and have tried to steer fellow saints toward professional treatment. The bishops I have consulted who are willing to use fast offerings to fund mental health therapy for a ward member when necessary has been encouraging, as have books and *Ensign* articles that signal the Church is taking a more proactive stance in recognizing and treating mental illness.

NOTES

1. William Osler, as quoted by Howard P. Rome, "Personal Reflections," *Psychiatric Annals* 13, no. 10 (1983): 751.

2. This connection was explored in Marlene Payne, "The Obsessive-Compulsive Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 116–22.

3. Boyd K. Packer, "Solving Emotional Problems in the Lord's Own Way," *Ensign*, May 1978, 91.

4. For an excellent discussion of different gospel temperaments, see Richard D. Poll, "What the Church Means to People Like Me," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 4 (1967): 108.

BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

THE BORDERLANDER'S GIFT

By D. Jeff Burton

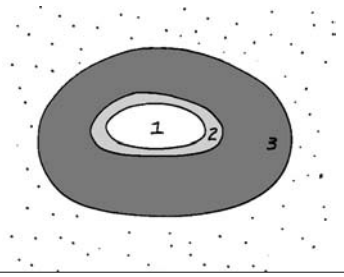


FIGURE 1. GROUPS IN THE LDS ORBIT

1—CORE MEMBERS: *true believers, unwaveringly supportive, the acceptable.*

2—BORDERLANDS MEMBERS: *those who consider themselves faithful to and part of the Church but don't fit comfortably in Group 1.*

3—MEMBERS-OF-RECORD ONLY: *non-participators, non-believers, non-supporters.*

DOTS—*previous members, prior investigators, and non-LDS family members.*

NOTE: This regular column explores the stories of Borderlanders because it is useful to know how others have successfully (or unsuccessfully) dealt with problems and challenges.[1]

IN THIS COLUMN, I offer two stories that Borderlanders have shared with me. (I have modified details to protect identity.) I also briefly discuss a problem that has recently arisen in my church experience that may also come up for some Borderlanders.

First, however, thanks to those who blogged about the "Pandemic" column from the September 2006 SUNSTONE at www.SunstoneBlog.com. I greatly appreciate those who blog with a civil tone and recognize the great diversity of those in the Borderlands. I hope to see more of this approach to sharing good information among us.

Update from Borderlander "Jared"[2]

A FEW MONTHS ago, our daughter announced that she is going to BYU next year and is also determined to be married in the temple. My first thought when she dropped this bomb on us was, "Where did we go wrong?" Then one night she said, "Mom will never go to the temple with me." I told her to not think it was impossible and said, "Stranger things have happened. Don't be too surprised." I thought I was just giving her a straw to grasp. I never imagined it would actually happen.

Then that stranger thing did happen. We had driven our girls to a Church-sponsored "Trek." We saw them depart and then met them at the end. We attended their testimony meeting, spoke with them, and watched them in action. When we got home, we reflected on what a great family experience the whole thing had been for us and for the girls.

The feeling of the Spirit was tangible at that Trek. It occurred to me to wonder if it had been some kind of "mass hysteria." Then I thought, "So what if it was? It was *good*—logical or not. Everyone was the better for it."

At that point, an epiphany occurred for my wife and me. We said, almost in unison, "We probably ought to jump in all the way and get temple recommends." I forget the exact words, or who said it first, but it was a united feeling. It will be a good thing for all of us.

Since the time several years ago when we almost left the Church but then decided to give it one more chance, we have been getting more and more involved—volunteering, paying tithing, going on splits with the missionaries, getting out our old temple garments (I came within a whisker of burning them), and accepting little callings. The more we got involved, the more blessings came to us: health-wise (we found a needed medical program at the hospital), financially, and family-wise (our relationship, my relationship with our daughters).

It was as if someone was trying to tell us something. My wife and I often tell each other, "You are mine!" This new experience was sort of like God telling me, "This family is mine! You can come along and enjoy the fruits, or you can kick against the pricks and be dragged along kicking and screaming and be an obstacle!" I thought, "How dumb do I look?" As Bob Dylan sings, "It doesn't take a weatherman to tell which way the wind is blowing."

We meditated and prayed and talked endlessly. But in the final analysis, we felt as if we were being pulled into a loving current that is all good. To hell with logic and past rationales and reasoning. There is good, and there is divinely good, which cannot be understood with the temporal mind. You can explain the process of creating and having a baby logically, naturally, biologically, but you miss the whole point and the bigger meaning and reality of it all. Who would ever want a baby if only logic were involved? Same sort of deal. Our decision is bigger than our egos and our reasoning. It feels "delicious" and so, so right.

So we went to our bishop for recommends, where, of course, I had to face the questions: "Do you believe. . . ? Do you accept. . . ? Do you have a testimony of. . . ? You wrote that one approach was to level with the bishop, to say essentially:

> I do not want to be duplicitous about any of this, but I really do not know anything for sure. But I am a loyal and dedicated member of this church. I want to work for it and serve others, and I do believe the basic tenets are true at one level or another. I choose to have faith. I choose to believe, or at least not disbelieve. There are many things I do not "know," but I am willing to suspend disbelief and accept them on faith.

I tried that approach on our bishop, ending with, "That is what I mean when I reply in the affirmative about those questions." And he said, "That is totally acceptable."

So, as my wife and I say to each other every day, "I can't believe we are doing this." It is such a relief to my wife because I know how much she wants to be there if our daughters get married in the temple. But she will not do it dishonestly. And neither will I. But the "temple marriage issue" is not the major reason we are doing this. We are doing it for ourselves and each other and because it feels right. And we both agree it's different from when we joined the Church about twenty-five years ago. This time we have our eyes wide open, knowing the problems, as well as the blessings, it has to offer. Unlike when I was a new member, I don't curry the favor of the big shots by trying to act like the perfect Mormon and say what I think they want to hear. I speak my mind on issues, regardless of whether it is the politically acceptable position in Church circles, but also I try not to be offensive or argumentative. It feels good.

D. JEFF BURTON is an author and a member of the Sunstone Board of Directors.

"We felt as if we were being pulled into a loving current."

"John's" story (consolidated)[3]

I CAME ACROSS the Church through a college roommate who had a Book of Mormon. I called the local ward and began a long investigation. I was troubled by a few things but others drew me in—e.g., the concept of an eternal family.

At that time, I earnestly sought a "definite" testimony, which would be beyond challenge, transcend rationality and logic, and that would form the basis for a decision about the Church and the future course of my life. Nothing of this type came. I eventually made the "leap of faith" on the basis that things seemed and felt right. There seemed to be some legitimate evidence for the Book of Mormon, and therefore the Church was most likely true. I had discovered *Dialogue,* and its content actually eased my decision to join. I decided to live "as if" I knew the Church were true.

I got married during my Church investigation, the timing of which was heavily influenced by the fact that we were "living in sin." We decided to start our family a couple of years later, and we were married in the temple shortly after the birth of our first child. Our family was raised fully in the Church. Our son served an honorable mission and the oldest two were married in the temple. All are active in the Church.

Once I was established in my career, I was called as branch president of a unit likely to become a ward, and it seemed as if I might soon be called as a bishop. At this time, my original spiritual quest, along with the questions and issues that distressed me, slowly came from the "back burner" to the forefront of my mind.

I once again sought a "definite" testimony—an experience, in whatever "format" was appropriate, which would solidify the spiritual foundation for the next years of my life. I went into the forests and mountains; I prayed alone in the branch president's office. I acknowledged my very human flaws and limitations and just asked God for knowledge that would enable me to serve him much more effectively. But again I was left to myself.

An analogy I often use in referring to this relates to the "ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened" concept—I felt as if I had been pounding my head against that door until it had been bloodied, but nobody was going to answer.

I discussed these issues with our stake president and others. Nothing changed. I eventually asked to be released as branch president, since it seemed ill-advised to have someone who wasn't even sure of God's existence serving as the "spiritual leader" of others. This was a period of depression and great discouragement for me. I had always been prone to a somewhat melancholy state of mind, but no longer having any "foundation" for my life greatly exacerbated it.

Since that time, almost fifteen years ago, nothing of substance has changed in the "definite testimony" department. It seems increasingly unlikely I will receive the revelation I have consistently sought. But I haven't abandoned hope completely, and I remain fully open to spiritual experiences. We attend sacrament meeting most of the time. I maintained a temple recommend to be able to attend our children's temple marriages, but currently I feel disillusioned. Were it not for the havoc it would wreak with our children and grandchildren, I would likely become inactive.

The bottom line is that I don't have any axes to grind, no preconceived notions. I have always been completely open, honest, and receptive in searching for the truth, and have always, simply, wanted to know what is true. Who knows, I may yet receive the "light and knowledge" I have always sought and then be able to have something to offer others.

A Worrisome Sentence

I WAS SURPRISED recently when my ward's newly called high priests group leader came to my home and said that I was probably not qualified to teach in priesthood meeting. He quoted from the *Church Handbook of Instructions* (1998), Book 2, Section 1, page 166, which says, "[Priesthood instructors] should have strong testimonies of the gospel."

Encountering something like this is not a problem for me. I've successfully dealt with this testimony/faith issue all my life. This worrisome sentence in the *Handbook* won't change my commitments. We'll work things out in my case without much trouble.

What I do worry about are the numerous struggling, testimony-building, or wondering (but faithful) members who would take "offense" or feel "unacceptable" were they told they can't be full participators because they don't have a "strong testimony." Many will feel like second-class citizens. Others will leave active participation. And those who remain will miss out on the great testimony-building experience of teaching.

If this issue comes up for you, I suggest you handle it the same way many Borderlanders have chosen to handle the temple recommend questions. (See the comment on this in "Jared's" story.)

Shortly after my group leader's visit, I wrote a letter to F. Michael Watson, secretary to the First Presidency (with whom I have had other communications about "faith and testimony" issues). I expressed concern about the "requirement" as written in the *Handbook*. I wondered if it might not be prudent to have the committee responsible for this paragraph consider a change or a caveat. For example, it could be modified to "[Instructors] should be strong faithful members of the Church," or "[Instructors] should be worthy to hold a temple recommend."

Brother Watson replied by mail directly to me (not through my bishop, which is a good sign) that my suggestions "have been noted." To me, this response is another encouraging sign. Changes like this take time, of course, but maybe we'll see something new or different in the next edition of the *Handbook*.

IT seems appropriate to close this column with one of my favorite scriptures, which directly applies to the fine people who shared their stories here. The Lord told Joseph Smith: "To some it is given. . . to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. . . . To others it is given to believe on their words" (D&C 46:13–14).

It is vital to remember that it is a gift to be able to live the gospel by faith alone. This is the gift given to many Borderlanders. But it would seem more like a gift if all Church members would simply recognize faith (as a motive for living the gospel) as a gift, not a burden or a deficit.

NOTES

1. In my first column (this is the twenty-third), I introduced the Borderland member as one who may have an unusual but LDS-compatible outlook on life; a distinctive way of thinking about faith, belief and testimony; a different view of LDS history; some open questions about a particular aspect of the Church; reduced or modified activity; or feelings of not meeting Group 1 acceptability criteria. See the figure. Copies of all columns are available on my website, www.forthosewhowonder.com.

2. Excerpts from other notes from Jared can be found in the May 2005 and September 2005 issues of SUNSTONE.

3. I will place a longer summary on the Sunstone blog, www.SunstoneBlog.com.

Please send me any of your experiences or tales from life in the Borderlands.
D. Jeff Burton, jeff@eburton.com

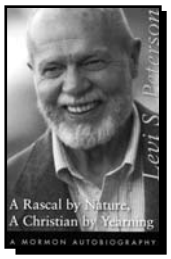
BOOK REVIEW

WILDERNESS WITHIN

A RASCAL BY NATURE, A CHRISTIAN BY YEARNING: A MORMON AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by Levi S. Peterson
University of Utah Press, 2006
465 pages, $29.95

Reviewed by Tracie A. Lamb



Levi is not candid simply because of the shock value but because of his honesty. He could not pretend with his religion, and he will not pretend with his person.

IN *A Rascal by Nature, A Christian by Yearning,* biographer, novelist, and short fiction writer Levi Peterson delivers another well-written, candid portrayal of a life: this time, his own. Above all else, Levi is a good storyteller, and he approaches the writing of his own story with the craftsmanship he displays in his other writing.

In his opening paragraph, Levi explains the dominant themes of his life: "wilderness, my vexed and vexing relationship with Mormonism, my moral and emotional qualities, and my family" (1). In addition, there is one overriding theme that he does not mention but that permeates his life, a theme aptly shown in the title. Levi's life is one of dichotomy—a tension between conflicting parts and pieces, which he attempts to reconcile through his writing and his life.

THE first and perhaps strongest tension is Levi's need for family on one hand and separation and distinction on the other. He says, "Family is at my emotional core" (366) and explains how he internalized his mother's impulse for "keeping strong the ties of extended family" (435). And much of Levi's book is about his family—detailing the lives of his father and mother, his own childhood, and his effort to remain close to his grown siblings and their families. He discusses his need for other people and admits he is "no solitary animal," explaining, "I was happiest when others were happy" (86).

Despite this need for closeness and connection to his family, he also insists on being different from them and suggests that even his marriage to Althea, a non-Mormon, is a statement of his independence. Regarding his marriage and its effect on his family, he says, "I need this distinction between us. A telling sign that I don't believe as they do has been essential to my continuing affection for them" (436). Surrender to familial conformity, it seems, would obliterate his personal identity. He says, "I have had a central core of personality to which nonconformity, resistance, rebellion have seemed absolutely vital and indispensable" (283).

Clearly, remaining close to his family is a priority for Levi even though he does not share their beliefs. Less understandable is his need to remain in the Church while deliberately separating himself from its general membership. One of the more poignant sections of the book is where he describes the moment during his mission when he finally acknowledges his lack of belief in Mormon doctrine. He explains how he feels desperate to go home and yet, in the end, remains because "I lacked the stamina for restructuring my life outside the expectations of Mormonism" (142). Despite his anguish over this decision, when he severs his religious ties with the Church, he determines to keep the cultural connection.

He remains active in the Church to this day, often attending sacrament and priesthood meeting and serving as a home teacher. Yet, in this as well, he intentionally creates a division between himself and his religious community. He drinks coffee because it's "a convenient sin. It is a very handy, inexpensive way to stay out of harmony with your church" (223). Although he goes to church, holds a calling, and has even performed the baptism of his grandson, he is not a believer in its doctrines and states, "My identity require[s] disbelief" (415). Despite the "depths of [his] disbelief" (323), he claims a place within the Church and, reflecting on his habit of admonishing doubting Latter-day Saints to stay Mormon if they feel they can, states: "If I met a wavering person whose identity was deeply Mormon, I had an impulse to help that person remain in the fellowship of the Church" (304).

ANOTHER tension of opposites in Levi's life has been between the child and the adult within himself. Levi admits to an ongoing emotional struggle, what he calls his "pathology," which has repeatedly threatened his ability to function. He says, "My pathology was roused by situations that forced me to recognize myself as an independent adult" (216), and explains, "I function today on the assumption that as a little child I internalized some terribly dysfunctional attitude that forbade me ever to grow up" (217).

Levi explains his long struggle to maintain equilibrium and function in society. To his credit, he is unafraid to admit he went through extensive counseling. Finally, though he was initially overwhelmed by the thought of being a parent, the birth of Karrin, his daughter, helped relieve his anxiety. He says he still has a "pathological need to be within a parent-child circle" (413). Although his place within the circle has now shifted, the connection serves to soothe his

TRACIE A. LAMB has had several essays published, as well as Yearning for the Living God, *the memoirs of her mission president, F. Enzio Busche (Deseret Book, 2004) which she compiled and edited. She is currently working on a children's book. She teaches English as a second language and lives in Auburn, Washington, with her husband and one of her two daughters.*

anxieties. Currently, he and Althea expend a great deal of time and effort serving Karrin and her family. Maintaining a close connection to his progeny benefits his own well-being but is, no doubt, an immense help to them as well.

THE element of Levi's autobiography most likely to cause some readers discomfort, as it did me, is his extreme candor. While most people go to great lengths to hide their vulnerabilities and weaknesses, Levi is willing, even eager, to reveal his deepest fears and shameful acts. Nothing seems too personal or sacred to divulge. He is not candid simply because of the shock value but because of his honesty. He could not pretend with his religion, and he will not pretend with his person.

Early on, Levi explains that this book started out to be a reflection on wilderness but became his autobiography instead. However, it remains a book about wilderness—the wilderness within. It also explains, to some extent, his struggle with growing up. He says that as a child,

> Adults ordered me not to behave so wildly, so I knew the wild was something to be disapproved of and repressed like sin, vice and rudeness. (89)

His inherent attraction to wildness even affected his decision to major in English, of which choice he writes, "Among the values consistently associated with wilderness in [literature] . . . was . . . freedom from social restraints" (201). Later, when describing how his grandson Hans bolts during Levi's brother's funeral, Levi says, "There is something refreshing about the indifference of the very young to protocol and propriety" (432).

In his autobiography, Levi certainly shows his own indifference to protocol and propriety, at least on the written page. He explains his recognition and acceptance of the fact when he says,

> Among the important issues I had to settle while writing the chapter [on my early college years] was candor. I knew in advance that many of my likely readers would feel uncomfortable with [my] revelation[s]. . . . Yet I decided to include these facts in my chapter, thereby licensing myself to include similar facts in my later chapters.
>
> My impulse to make such facts known derives, in part, from a resentment I have felt since early childhood toward the mandatory silence polite society imposes upon matters of sex and personal hygiene. (411)

By writing so freely about "matters of sex and personal hygiene," Levi affirms the wild within, so that his autobiography remains, as it was first intended to be, a treatise on wilderness.

Others have also been caught off guard by the level of candor in this book. As Levi shared at the 2006 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium, his brother Leon told him:

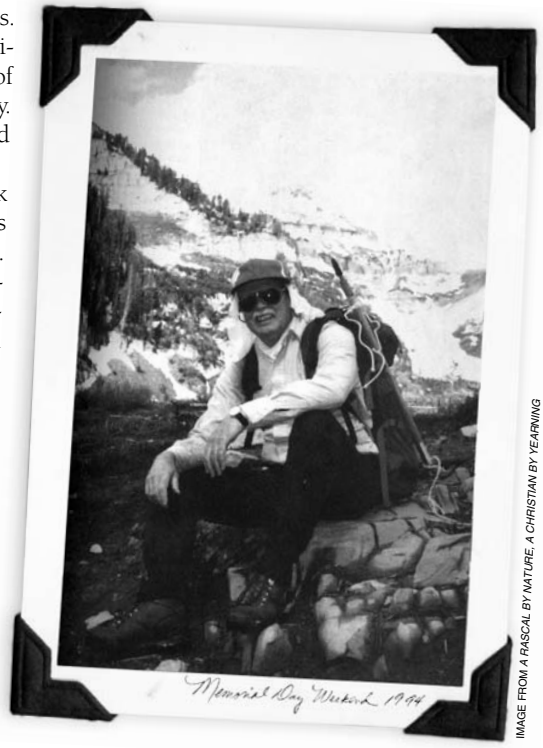


IMAGE FROM *A RASCAL BY NATURE, A CHRISTIAN BY YEARNING*

> Well, Levi, it is a pretty candid book. On Judgment Day, the great and dreadful day of the Lord, when, we're told, all will stand forth revealed to the entire world, there will be no problem for you because the whole world already knows it.

Although I acknowledge that it may serve a purpose in his life and writing, Levi's bluntness is, for me, personally, the greatest contradiction his autobiography raises. I have known Levi for nearly thirty years now, since he was my advisor at what was then Weber State College. I have also been fortunate to be in a writers' group with him. What I have experienced of the man in person flies in the face of what I read in his writing. Although at times prone to irreverence, he has been unfailingly gracious, warm, and generous towards me. Whatever I have written is because of Levi's encouragement, and I know he has done the same for countless others. The sometimes shocking and offensive revelations in the book do not jibe with the kind, gracious man I know.

Not all readers will agree with me concerning Levi's candor. Some may enjoy his frankness, and some may suggest that his autobiography portrays Levi just as he is. Perhaps he reveals the blunt side of himself to some more than to others. Certainly as my college professor, he was less graphic than he has been as a friend. And I suspect he can wax even more colorful with a bunch of male buddies on a hike.

Nevertheless, I feel a bit like Levi's niece Joan, who wrote him, "What I object to is the picture I think [your stories] may be painting of you . . . which seems in variance with the great and good man you are in my eyes" (272). Although Levi is self-revelatory beyond the norm, I think including these crude stories works against the book's ability to reveal the person of good will and service I know. The book may present his inner life but does not adequately portray the whole man in his giving relationship to others. Kathleen Petty, letters editor for *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, of which Levi is the current editor, says, "He has to reveal what people won't guess, but he's too modest to reveal the good and generous parts that people cannot guess."

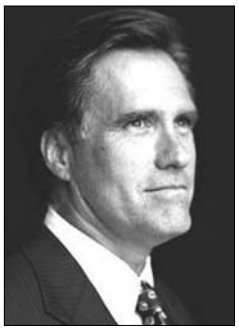
DESPITE the book's scatological obsession and at times uncomfortable candor, Levi remains, overall, a fine writer. He frequently quotes from his journals, kept daily for years. Some of these unrevised excerpts show Levi at his best. In one, he writes:

> If I am evanescent and brief in fact, I am not so in desire. In desire I am eternal. Eternity, I think, is time without its beginnings and endings. I would be without beginnings and endings. I would escape my fated march toward death, I would evade annihilation. I would see myself in the dawn forever. I would smell fresh air and see suns rise. I would hoe my garden and sit with my friends tomorrow as today, and the day after that, and then always the day after that. My will to be is endless. (242)

Life is more poignant for those who believe it will not go on. Levi achieves immortality through his writing and through his relationships. He leaves a trace of himself in this way—the only immortality he believes there is.

UPDATE

MEDIA FOCUS ON ROMNEY'S FAITH—AND UNDERWEAR



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FROM WHITE UNDERGARMENTS TO the White Horse prophecy, the media continue to scrutinize the more esoteric aspects of Mitt Romney's faith and to ask what impact these could have on his potential run for the White House.

Several media outlets have focused on the fact that the Massachusetts governor wears LDS garments. "Do you wear the temple garments?" Sridhar Pappu asked Mitt Romney for a September 2005 *Atlantic Monthly* article. "I'll just say those sorts of thing I'll keep private," Romney answered.

"It is a weird religion thing," radio host Michael Graham told MSNBC's Tucker Carlson on 27 November, referring to LDS garments. "'It doesn't say Hanes until Jesus says it says Hanes'—I don't really get the whole deal, but it won't be a problem to Mitt Romney because of who Mitt Romney is."

Graham argued that despite his Mormonism, Romney can do well even in South Carolina "because he does not send out [a] freaky religion vibe." "Mitt Romney *looks* like a president," said Graham. "He's central casting. He *sounds* like a president. He's great on television. And other than a very technical theological debate inside evangelical Christianity, [Mormonism] does not present a problem."

In connection with a story about Mitt Romney, political commentator Andrew Sullivan posted on his blog a picture of a couple wearing garments. When some of his readers complained that the picture was "sacrilegious and offensive," Sullivan replied in a 24 November blog entry: "My policy on this site is to publish reality, within certain boundaries of religious respect. If I can publish a cartoon of Muhammad, I can sure publish tasteful pictures of Mormon underwear."

"Is the Republican party too bigoted to select a Mormon as its presidential candidate?" asks reporter Justin Webb in a recent piece for the BBC. "Until recently I would have said it probably was. But what I have learned about Mormons and what seems to be happening in America, leads me to wonder whether their time has come."

In his report, Webb educates readers on Mormon beliefs about the last days, when "Jesus will return and set up his kingdom in Jackson County, Missouri." "I am not suggesting a U.S. Second Coming is imminent and there are plenty of Americans who will continue to resist the theological eccentricities of this Church," Webb adds. "However, I would be tempted to sell my Starbucks shares if I had any—2007 will not be the Year of the Hot Drink in a nation where Mormons are on the rise."

A 3 November *Wall Street Journal* story speculated about Romney in relation to the so-called "White Horse Prophecy," according to which "the Mormon people, symbolized by a white horse, [will] ride in and save the republic from collapsing." Even though the article quotes BYU professor Susan Easton Black pronouncing the prophecy a fake, the *Journal* asserts that the prophecy continues to inspire Mormons to run for office. "Would Mormons see a Romney White House as a White Horse?" the story asks.

While everybody agrees that Romney's faith could be a deterrent, that doesn't mean he couldn't still be the choice of the Religious Right. In late October, Romney invited to his home fifteen of the country's leading evangelicals, including Jerry Falwell, Franklin Graham, and Richard Land.

Richard Lee, a Baptist minister from Cumming, Georgia, asked Romney about his belief in Jesus. "When I say Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, I realize that means something different to you than it means to me," Romney admitted, as reported by Jonathan Darmen in the 25 December *Newsweek*. "But [Romney] urged them to remember their shared beliefs: the faith that Christ was born of a virgin, was crucified and rose after three days."

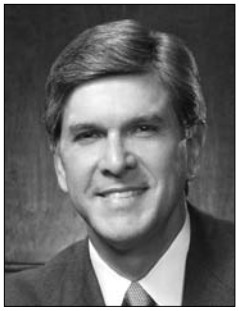
At least some evangelicals are convinced. One blog, EVANGELICALSFORMITT.ORG, which draws about 5,000 readers a day, highlights the similarities between Romney's stated positions and the site creators' own beliefs. "[Romney]'s not just a candidate evangelicals can support—he is the best choice for people of faith," reads the blog. "That's why we launched a grassroots effort earlier this year that helped earn him a terrific victory at the first presidential straw poll, and that's why we're starting this website."

JEANETTE ATWOOD, BASED ON CONCEPT BY HUGO OLAIZ AND JOHN-CHARLES DUFFY

Thank you, Senator, for your response to the conflict in Iraq. Governor Romney, the next question is for you: "What can you tell us about your underwear?"

Support for Romney, who is expected to announce his run for the White House in early January, may be growing among evangelicals, but it is slipping among the general population. A November poll concluded that about 43 percent of Americans now say they would *not* vote for a Mormon president. That number represents a 6 percent increase from a similar poll conducted in June (see SUNSTONE, September 2006: 73).

LDS SENATOR GRABS NATIONAL ATTENTION



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LDS SENATOR GORDON SMITH, R-Ore., grabbed national attention on 7 December when he broke with the Bush administration over the war in Iraq and gave an emotional speech on the Senate floor, calling for a U.S. pullout.

"I, for one, am at the end of my rope when it comes to supporting a policy that has our soldiers patrolling the same streets in the same way, being blown up by the same bombs day after day," he said. "That is absurd. It may even be criminal. I cannot support that anymore."

Asked by ABC correspondent George Stephanopoulos what triggered his speech, Smith answered, "Waking up the other morning and turning on the news and hearing that yet another ten of our soldiers died the same way that several thousand have—to roadside bombs. I went from steamed to boiled, and I felt I had to speak out because if we're going to be there, let's win. If we're not, let's at least fight the war on terror in a way that makes sense."

Although he represents Oregon, Smith has also been featured prominently in the Utah media in connection with a book he recently wrote to raise awareness about suicide and mental health issues. On 23 October, Smith spoke at Utah Valley State College about suicide awareness and prevention on college campuses, a topic the senator knows all too well. His remarks were highly personal as he recounted the story of his son, Garrett Smith, who committed suicide while attending UVSC in September 2003.

The senator has sponsored legislation to create the The Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, authorizing $82 million for three-year grants to help states, tribes, colleges, and universities fund development and expansion of early intervention, suicide prevention, and mental health services to children and young adults. The act was signed into law in 2004. "I will admit that I did not fully appreciate how lethal mental illnesses can be until our family tragedy befell us," Senator Smith said in a 10 September interview with *The Oregonian*. "But having experienced that, I take from that sorrow a sense of determination to help others. That's the way I find new meaning in the life of my son."

Utah leads the nation in suicides among men aged 15 to 24. According to the American Association of Suicidology, Utah also has the 11th highest suicide rate—14.3 deaths per 100,000 people—in the nation across all age groups.

JEFFS ORDERED TO STAND TRIAL

WWW.CANADA.COM/VANCOUVERSUN

ON 23 APRIL 2007, WARREN JEFFS, PRESIDENT OF THE Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, will face his accuser on trial. Fifth District judge James L. Shumaker ordered Jeffs, who was captured last August, to stand trial on two counts of rape as accomplice for his role in forcing a fourteen-year-old girl to marry and have sex with an older cousin.

The woman, known as Jane Doe IV, testified that Jeffs married her to her cousin, who later forced himself on her. She said that when she asked Jeffs to release her from her marriage, he told her to give herself "mind, body, and soul" to her husband and to have children with him.

"This was the darkest time of my entire life," the woman said in court, "one of the most painful things I've ever been through."

Jeffs's attorney, Walter Bugden, contended that Jeffs was merely offering counsel to a troubled couple as any spiritual leader would. "Officiating at a wedding does not put Mr. Jeffs on notice that unconsented sex is or was going to be happening," said Bugden. "Does a priest, a rabbi, or a marriage counselor subject himself to a charge of accomplice to rape anytime he or she counsels a married couple having domestic problems to make their marriage work? Does a Mormon bishop become an accomplice to rape when he suggests that a couple think about having children?"

Jane Doe IV has filed a multimillion dollar civil lawsuit against Jeffs, the FLDS Church, and the United Effort Plan Trust, the church's financial arm.

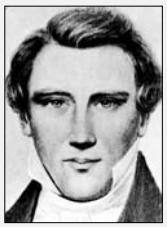
THE RAPE CHARGES against Jeffs are part of a larger investigation into the FLDS Church, which is suspected of welfare fraud, child rape, and criminal dealings in connection with the $110-million United Effort Plan.

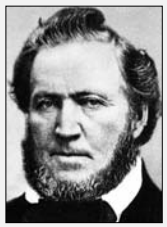
On 7 December, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a letter that had been seized by federal authorities. The letter, written by Colorado City marshal Fred Barlow Jeffs and addressed to Warren Jeffs, implies that the marshal remained loyal to the fugitive leader, knew of his whereabouts, and asked him for directives.

"I rejoice at the peace that comes over me when I follow the directives that you have sent to me through Uncle William,"

People

Hired. Controversial commentator GLENN BECK, 42, by CNN's *Headline News*. Beck, who converted to Mormonism in 1999, gained notoriety as a radio host for his outrageous comments, which include calling Katrina refugees seen on TV and the father of a terrorist victim "scumbag," advocating that the Middle East be nuked, praying for the gruesome death of U.S. Representative Dennis Kucinich, and fantasizing about strangling political activist Michael Moore to death.





Ranked. Among the most influential Americans, JOSEPH SMITH and BRIGHAM YOUNG, in the December issue of *Atlantic Monthly*. The article, which featured the nation's 100 most influential individuals, ranked Joseph Smith 52nd and Brigham Young 74th. Abraham Lincoln was ranked number 1. Other religious leaders on the list include Martin Luther King (8), Mary Baker Eddy (86), Jonathan Edwards (90), and Lyman Beecher (91).

Suing. Brigham Young University, for $1 billion. BYU claims Pfizer Inc. defrauded BYU professor DANIEL SIMMONS out of his research on the COX-2 enzyme, a key component of "super-aspirins" such as Celebrex. Pfizer says BYU was fully paid under a research grant agreement. Simmons says he wants to receive proper credit for his work.

Ordered. To stand trial, JULIA REDD, 58, and LEMUEL HARDISON REDD, 61, on charges of kidnapping their daughter Julianna Myers the day before her temple wedding. A BYU student, Myers testified in court that her parents believed her fiancé was "evil and abusive" for buying her a gold band instead of a diamond ring. The day before the wedding, instead of taking her to a Deseret Clothing store as planned, they took her to Grand Junction, Colorado, reportedly against her will.

Working. For family-friendly movies, LDS filmmaker KIETH MERRILL through the newly formed Audience Alliance Motion Picture Studios. The group will produce feel-good movies based on Christian values. Merrill, the Alliance's Chief Creative Officer, says the organization will allow "every moviegoer and member of the general audience to become directly involved in changing the way movies are made."

the marshal wrote. "I and all the other officers have expressed our desire to stand with you and the priesthood. I fill [sic] that without the priesthood, I am nothing."

On 6 December, the Utah Peace Officers Standards and Training Council put the entire Hildale/Colorado City Town Marshal's Office under investigation. "We feel like the police department is Warren Jeffs's private goon squad on taxpayer dollars," lawyer Zachary Shields told the council.

Last year, the council decertified Hildale Town Marshal Sam Roundy because he is a polygamist. The Washington County Sheriff's office has said it can cover Hildale but expressed concern that residents may be reluctant to report crimes to outsiders.

THE WEEK BEFORE Jeffs was ordered to stand trial, fundamentalist Mormon Winston Blackmore appeared on CNN's *Larry King Live,* presenting a kinder, gentler, brand of fundamentalism. An independent polygamist from Bountiful, Canada, Blackmore is believed to have more than twenty wives and more than eighty children.

In stark contrast to the secretive style of Jeffs's FLDS Church, Blackmore invited a CNN crew to his home and offered a rare peek into his family life. During the one-hour interview with King, Blackmore praised deceased FLDS leader Rulon Jeffs, said that the LDS Church is "doing a great missionary job," and explained that he has "no problem" with gay marriage.

Although overall the interview showed polygamy in a good light, Blackmore admitted that he married a woman who was at the time under sixteen—a crime that could land him in prison. Blackmore said that the Royal Mounted Police, Canada's equivalent to the FBI, has interviewed him and his wives about the age at which they married and first had sex.

ON A LIGHTER note, the arrest of Jeffs and his current consignment to the Purgatory Correctional Facility in Hurricane, Utah, has led to a renewed focus on polygamy as an opportunity for entrepreneurs. New T-shirts and other products are appearing bearing messages such as: "I've Been in Purgatory," "Jeffs is Jailed/We Got Our Man," "Honk If You're Living the Principle," "1 + 1 + 1 . . . Polygamath," "Monogamy is for Ugly People," and "Polygamy Saved My Marriage." One shirt with the caption, "Saturday at the Wal-Mart," shows a cutout man with three women. Many of these Jeffs- and polygamy-themed products are available online through CAFEPRESS.COM.

GAY-SPONSORED EXHIBIT REACHES OUT TO POLYGAMOUS FAMILIES

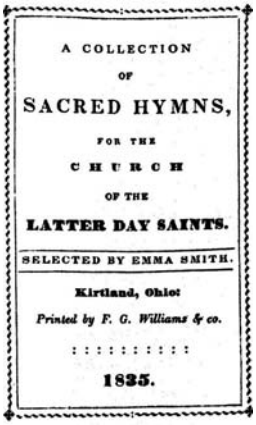
A UTAH-BASED GAY ORGANIZATION IS LOOKING FOR families of all shapes and sizes, including polygamous families, to be photographed and interviewed as part of an upcoming exhibit. Sponsored by the Utah Pride Center and titled "Families … It's All Relative," the exhibit premieres 14 February at the Salt Lake City Library.

"It's just to show there are different types of families that maybe aren't traditional families, but that are maybe just as much a family," Nathan Meason of the Pride Center told the *Deseret Morning News*. "We want to give people this idea that there are these alternative families in Utah."

The number of people living in polygamous families in Utah is estimated to be as many as 50,000. Will some of those families accept the invitation?

"It's a possibility," said Mary Batchelor, co-founder of the polygamy advocacy group Principle Voices. "There are some very open-minded polygamists who would find [it] broad-minded of the gay and lesbian community to include them."

1835 HYMNAL FETCHES BIG BUCKS


A COLLECTION
OF
SACRED HYMNS,
FOR THE
CHURCH
OF THE
LATTER DAY SAINTS.
SELECTED BY EMMA SMITH.
Kirtland, Ohio:
Printed by F. G. Williams & co.
1835.

A RARE HYMNAL, THE FIRST ONE produced by "the Church of Latter Day Saints," as it was then called, was sold for a whopping $273,600 at Christie's Auction House in New York.

According to the auctioneers, the 1835 hymnal, in mint condition, is one of three confirmed to exist. The identities of the seller and buyer were not disclosed.

The hymnal was compiled by Emma Smith, who was commanded in a July 1830 revelation "to make a selection of sacred hymns" (D&C 25:11).

DESERET BOOK BUYS TWO MORE COMPETITORS

FOLLOWING MONTHS OF DISPUTES OVER MERCHANDISING AND MARKETING, ON 28 DECEMBER, DESERET Book announced its acquisition of two top competitors, Covenant Communications and its sister company Seagull Book & Tape. In July 2006, Deseret Book threatened to pull its products from Seagull's twenty-six stores over complaints that Seagull didn't follow merchandising and promotional agreements with the publisher. With the purchase, Deseret Book acquires its major competitor in both LDS publishing and retail sales.

According to Deseret Book president and CEO Sheri Dew, the two companies will move forward independently, the purchase notwithstanding, honoring existing author contracts and keeping the same management personnel. Dew also said she doesn't expect any Seagull stores to close. "We are not going to merge retailers; we are not going to merge publishers." Honoring the unique strengths of Covenant as a publisher and of Seagull as a retailer, Dew continued: "Why would we buy them, only to change them and have them be us? For those who like Seagull, I'm happy to reassure them that Seagull will be Seagull, and that's just how it is. . . . We're certain that there's a place in the market for both, and that they'll do both very well."

Despite Dew's reassurances, some observers lament what they see as Deseret Book's monopoly over the LDS book market and predict that as inventory systems and decision-making merge, fewer authors will get published, the number of titles will decrease, and stores will close.

"When Deseret Book purchased Bookcraft nearly a decade ago, I editorialized . . . that the purchase was a bad move," wrote independent publisher Kent Larsen on MotleyVision.org, a blog dedicated to Mormon arts and culture. "Subsequent events showed that I was right, as Deseret Book reduced the size of its list of titles published and had its first layoffs."

"No one is in a position to take the place of the Seagull Book stores that will close and try to compete with Deseret Book," he added. "I'm afraid that this means the LDS market is worse off for this merger. And I don't really see that Deseret Book gains much as a result."

In addition to this latest acquisition and the 1999 purchase of Bookcraft mentioned above, in the past two years, Deseret Book has also purchased competitors Excel Entertainment and LDS Living.

For more conversation on this topic, visit MORMONSTORIES.ORG, which features a podcast discussing this newest Deseret Book acquisition.

GWEN YULL, BASED ON CONCEPT BY NICK LITERSKI AND HUGO OLAIZ

—"My, what big teeth you have!"
—"The better to CORRELATE you with, my dear!

Solar flare

Putting the Keg in Eggnog. At least no one can say BYU students aren't resourceful. On 17 December, three students from the stone-cold sober college organized an off-campus "kegnog" party where the only party animals were fish (real ones) and the eggnog wasn't even spiked.

"The closest thing to debauchery at Sunday's kegnogger was the football game on television. . . , the straddle-jump hug one young woman gave a man, and the fish feeding," the *Deseret Morning News* reported. "At 9 p.m., two women, using their bare hands, dropped three goldfish one at a time into a huge fish tank. Dozens of party-goers cheered as a lionfish, a sop fish, and a squirrel fish successfully hunted the prey."

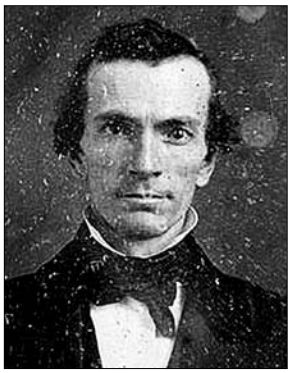
"Bare hands"? "Straddle-jump hug"? Somebody better call the Honor Code Office right away.

JASON OLSON, *DESERET MORNING NEWS*

Publication was delayed while the 1833 Book of Commandments was printed. A mob then destroyed the printing office, and the hymnal was again postponed while the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was printed.

The 1833 Book of Commandments is believed to be the rarest of LDS books, with one copy selling for $500,000 and another for $350,000. The 1830 Palmyra edition of the Book of Mormon, the most sought-after LDS book, currently sells for about $90,000.

DAGUERREOTYPE FOUND—IS IT OLIVER COWDERY?



HTTP://MEMORY.LOC.GOV, (SEARCH JAMES PRESLEY BALL, ITEM 6)

A RECENTLY DISCOVERED daguerreotype (an early form of photography) could be the image of Oliver Cowdery, "second elder of [the] church" and one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. The image, officially titled "Unidentified man, half-length portrait, with arm resting on table with tablecloth" is part of the digital collection of the Library of Congress.

On 6 February, Patrick A. Bishop, a CES employee, was using the Library of Congress website to research 1840 clothing styles when he found the daguerreotype, which Bishop immediately recognized as Oliver Cowdery. Bishop told the *LDS Church News* that there is a 95-percent certainty that the daguerreotype is indeed of Oliver. A grid comparison with a Cowdery engraving made from another daguerreotype matches the location and shape of the facial features with exactness.

The daguerreotype was made by J. P. Ball, who in 1845 opened shop in Cincinnati and in 1846 traveled around Ohio as an itinerant photographer. Cowdery lived at the time in Tiffin, Ohio, 180 miles north of Cincinnati, and he could have traveled to Cincinnati because of his involvement in politics.

In the mid-1990s, Ron Romig, head archivist for the Community of Christ, revealed the existence of a daguerreotype believed to be an image of Joseph Smith.

Sunbursts

CAROL LYNN PEARSON'S new play, *Facing East*, is going on tour. Dealing with a Mormon couple's grief over the suicide of their gay son, the play will have a May-June run at New York's off-Broadway Atlantic Stage 2 theatre and an August run in San Francisco's Theatre Rhinoceros. More details will be posted soon at PLANBTHEATERCOMPANY.ORG.

A CONFERENCE FOR LDS graduate students at divinity schools or who are in religious studies programs will be held 16–17 February at Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut. The conference, "Faith and Knowledge: Latter-day Saints in Religious Studies" will feature discussions of the role of LDS scholars in the academy as well as other topics related to Mormon theology and scholarship. Several panels are scheduled, and Richard L. Bushman and Terryl Givens will be featured speakers. For more information, visit FAITHANDKNOWLEDGE.ORG.

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY of Religion has just approved a new program unit on Mormon studies to begin at its November 2007 annual meeting in San Diego, California. The Mormon Studies Consultation will sponsor or co-sponsor one to two sessions at each annual meeting for at least the next three years. For information about the consultation and to receive the initial call for papers, contact Dan Wotherspoon at DAN@SUNSTONEONLINE.COM.

MORMON STORIES PODCAST has resumed after a several-month hiatus. MormonStories, the 800-pound gorilla of LDS-themed podcasts hosted by John P. Dehlin, averaged nearly 3,000 listeners at its height. The first podcast in the re-launch is a discussion of Deseret Book's recent acquisition of its major publishing and retailing competitor (see story, page 77). To subscribe to the free podcast, visit MORMONSTORIES.ORG

BYU LEERY ABOUT SCREENING "STATES OF GRACE"

RICHARD DUTCHER'S FILM, *STATES OF GRACE,* IS GETTING the cold shoulder where he might have least expected it: his alma mater, Brigham Young University. In a 13 November *BYU News Net* editorial, BYU student Julie Espinosa said she approached five professors or club presidents with a proposal to host a free on-campus screening and discussion of *States of Grace*. Despite the fact that only one had seen the film, all five declined.

In her commentary, Espinosa quotes Brigham Young, who said that the Saints should study not only good and its effects,

MAIN STREET MOVIE COMPANY

but also evil and its consequences. "Why is it, then, that at Brother Brigham's namesake university, we often avoid works of art that challenge a cotton-candy worldview and show instead dramatic, cosmic struggles of good versus evil?"

Media watch

THE PASSION OF MORMON

MORMONS HAVE BEEN BATTLING BRAVELY ON THE blogosphere since the release of *Apocalypto*, Mel Gibson's gory epic set in a pre-Columbian Mayan world. And even though the movie is rated R for violence and nudity, some Latter-day Saints have succumbed to the temptation to see it. While many non-Mormons may wonder if Gibson has created an accurate depiction of the crumbling Mayan civilization, some LDS wonder if the director of *The Passion of the Christ* has created a faith-promoting film around some of the themes and narratives of the Book of Mormon.

"The movie is very very gritty," wrote a blogger at FairLDS.org. "It shows the depravity of Lamanite society, post-[Book of Mormon]. Mormon and Moroni were not joking around." A thread at MillennialStar.com starts by asking those who saw the movie "how it affected how you visualize the Book of Mormon" but the thread quickly turns into a long debate about the merits of showing violence in movies.

Outside the Mormon blogosphere, some Latter-day Saints used *Apocalypto*-related forums to bear their testimonies—a move that invited harsh criticism. At YouTube.com, an apparently LDS blogger wrote that "the young man in the clip with the pregnant wife is one of the last good people descended from Nephi the son of Lehi told in the Book of Mormon." To this, another blogger replied, "Wow, I had no idea the calendar turned back to [the] 16th century, when the Catholic Church elaborated the ridiculous theory you are talking of. The theory of the lost tribe of Israel was a Catholic patch to justify the obvious challenge that the existence of the New World presented to Judeo-Christian mythology. By the way, this theory has been widely discredited by anyone that was born with a brain in the 20th century."

A FAIR blogger wrote that he actually ran into Gibson in Mexico while the director was wrapping up shooting for the film and asked him if he had shot in Cerro Vigia, Book of Mormon scholar John L. Sorenson's proposed site for Ramah Cumorah. Blissfully unaware of Sorenson's limited geography model, Gibson reportedly replied that Cerro Vigia "wasn't in the story" and that he "hadn't been able to do any touristy stuff because 'it has been crazy around here.'"

JEANETTE ATWOOD, BASED ON CONCEPTS BY HUGO OLAIZ AND JOHN-CHARLES DUFFY

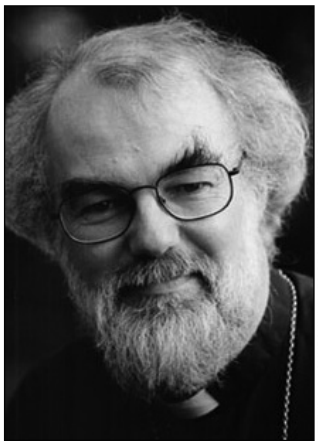
That was NOTHING *like "The Testaments!"*

AN OLIVE LEAF

USING OTHERS "TO THINK WITH"

By Rowan Williams

This reflection is excerpted from the book, Writing in the Dust: After September 11 *(Eerdmans, 2002, 63–73), written by Rowan Williams, who has been archbishop of Canterbury since July 2002. British spelling and punctuation conventions have been retained.*



HTTP://WWW.CHURCHINWALES.ORG.UK/ARCHBISHOP/ROWAN.JPG

RECOGNISING common experience is the exact opposite of using someone else to fit with your agenda, using them to play out roles you have worked out and assigned. We have been very resourceful in this over the centuries. Christians have conscripted Jews into their version of reality and forced them into a role that has nothing to do with how Jews understand their own past or current experience—what one scholar called 'using Jews to think with.' In the Middle Ages, Muslims too were made to play a part in the drama written by Christians, as a kind of diabolical mirror image of Christian identity, worshipping a trinity of ridiculous idols. This was a distortion nurtured by popular religion, of course; responsible theologians studied the Qur'an and knew better. But those very writers who were so careful not to parody Islam were also capable of calmly and authoritatively writing nonsense about women; it would not have occurred to them that there was a Christian principle involved in listening to what women had to say about themselves.

And yes, of course, Jews and Muslims cherished equally bizarre beliefs about Christianity at times. They, like us, needed to assert some kind of control over the stranger, the other, by 'writing them in' in terms that could be managed and manipulated. What happens is that the stranger is assigned a meaning, a value, in the dominant system. When, as with Christians and Jews in Europe, this is allied to a hugely disproportionate distribution of power, the effects are dreadful.

'Using other people to think with'; that is, using them as symbols for points on your map, values in your scheme of things. When you get used to imposing meanings in this way, you silence the stranger's account of who they are; and that can mean both metaphorical and literal death. Death as the undermining of a culture, language, or faith, and, at the extreme, the death of tyranny and genocide. I have been using religious examples, but it isn't essentially a failing of religion itself. The collective imagination needs the outsider to give itself definition—which commonly means that it needs somewhere to project its own fears and tensions. . . . Living realities are turned into symbols, and the symbolic values are used to imprison the reality. At its extreme pitch, people simply relate to the symbols. It is too hard to look past them, to look into the complex humanity of a real other.

The World Trade Center and the Pentagon were massively obvious symbols of American dominance, economic and military. To target them was clearly a blow against that entire system of dominance. The trouble is that, while burning the Stars and Stripes in a demonstration is one thing, the Twin Towers and the Pentagon were inhabited buildings; they may have been 'natural' symbols, but the people in them were not (people never are). . . . It is always people who suffer and are killed, not symbols. When we strike out at a symbol such as a flag, we hurt nothing except perhaps the self-esteem of those who use the language of which it's a part. When we decide to treat people as symbols, the story is different. . . .

ONCE the concreteness of another's suffering has registered, you cannot simply use them to think with. You have to be patient with the meanings that the other is struggling to find or form for themselves. Acknowledging the experience you share is the only thing that opens up the possibility of finding a meaning that can be shared, a language to speak together. . . .

[I]t is only here, with the renunciation of all our various ways of making suffering a weapon or a tool of ideology, that we are going to learn how to grieve properly. Of course, we just grieve anyway, 'properly' or not; but where does our grief take us? And what do we mourn for? If, as St. Augustine says in his *Confessions*, we can fail to 'love humanly,' then surely we can also fail to grieve humanly, to grieve without the consolation of drama, martyrdom, resentment, and projection. Are there words for grief that can make us more human, so that we mourn not just for ourselves but for those whose experience we have come to share, even for those whose moral poverty is responsible for murder and terror?

What use is faith to us if it is only a transcription into mythological jargon of the mechanisms of that inhuman grief that grasps its own suffering to itself as a ground of justification and encloses the suffering of others in interpretations that hold it at a safe distance?

TIRED of the wait between SUNSTONE issues? Want to connect with friends between symposiums?

VISIT THE SUNSTONE BLOG!

New design. New contributors. New energy.

FROM RECENT DISCUSSIONS:

Creating with Evolution

RICK JEPSON, 29 November

Here's a situation: right now we can't figure out how bacteria came to be. (And that's the chink in Darwin's armor that creationists keep prodding.) Evolution makes great sense after that point. But that first step seems too impossible. Especially in the short time it took: bacterial life was basically here as soon as the earth had an environment that could support it. So my question is, what if, when God came to create life, He started with "bacteria unorganized" and went from there?

Glass Grapes

JANA REMY, 1 December

An LDS friend showed me his shot glass collection recently, glowing with pride as he pointed to the Nauvoo Temple glass that sits front and center. The shot glasses reflect his travels and hobbies and don't appear to be used for imbibing hard liquor. . . . But I have to admit that I was also a bit jealous. Because I rather enjoy Mormon kitsch. In a prominent space in my own living room, I have my grandma's purple glass grapes—perhaps a better reminder of my heritage than the many LDS tomes that grace the nearby bookshelves. Am I alone in my fondness for such oddities?

Domestic Shrines

SCOT DENHALTER, 4 December

As long as the artistic gesture within our devotional art is studied and posed, it will only be clever. Until these gestures come from the soul and not from an eye for the marketplace where the inspiring is set aside for the trite but inoffensive, Mormon devotional art will remain mute to us and our domestic shrines trivial.

Against Spiritual Inoculation

STEPHEN CARTER, 14 December

Maybe I'm misreading Burton's [views on inoculation]. Maybe he's pulling for something that I've always wanted: more vigorous, more honest, more person-oriented (rather than principle-oriented) Church environments. A place where doubts are welcomed, where people who have been decentered can find an empathetic community, a place where people can find virtue in their "disease." Jesus said he didn't come to minister to the healthy, but to the afflicted. Perhaps afflicted is another word for growing. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Afflicted.

WWW.SUNSTONEBLOG.COM

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

SUNSTONE BLOG

The Sunstone Education Foundation is pleased to announce:

THE 2007 R. L. "BUZZ" CAPENER MEMORIAL WRITING CONTEST IN COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION invites submissions of papers to the R. L. "Buzz" Capener Memorial Writing Contest in Comparative Religious Studies.

The contest originates in the conviction that the study of Mormon theology and doctrine can greatly benefit from examination in a comparative context with other Christian and non-Christian traditions. The contest encourages entries that bring LDS concepts and practices into discussion with the worldviews, doctrines, and rituals of other faiths, trusting that the comparative act will enrich the understanding of each. Papers should exhibit sound scholarship but also be accessible to a broad, non-specialist readership.

The papers, without author identification, will be judged by qualified scholars of Mormonism and religious studies. The winners will be invited to give their papers at the 2007 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium, held 8–11 August, and their papers will be published in a future issue of SUNSTONE magazine. Only the winners will be notified personally of the results. After the judging is complete, all non-winning entrants will be free to submit their essays elsewhere.

The contest is sponsored by the family of R. L. "Buzz" Capener to honor the memory of his life of faith, acceptance of diversity, and the pursuit of truth.

PRIZES: A total of $1,000.00 will be awarded:
$750.00 for the best submission
$250 for the runner-up

RULES:

1. Only one entry may be submitted by any author or team of authors. Four copies must be postmarked or reach the Sunstone offices before or on **30 APRIL 2007**. Entries will not be returned.

2. Each entry must be 8,000 words or fewer (exclusive of footnotes). Entries must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white paper, paginated, and stapled in the upper left corner. Author names should not appear on any page of the entry.

3. Each entry must be accompanied by a cover letter that states the essay's title and the author's (or authors') name, address, telephone number, and email address. Each cover letter must be signed and attest that the entry is the person or team's work, that it has not been previously published, that it is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere, will not be submitted to other forums until after the contest, and that, if the entry wins, SUNSTONE magazine has one-time, first-publication rights.

4. Winners will be selected by anonymous evaluations supplied by judges appointed by the Sunstone Education Foundation and the R. L. "Buzz" Capener Memorial Writing Contest organizing committee. Sunstone will announce the winners at www.sunstoneonline.com and in SUNSTONE magazine.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in disqualification.

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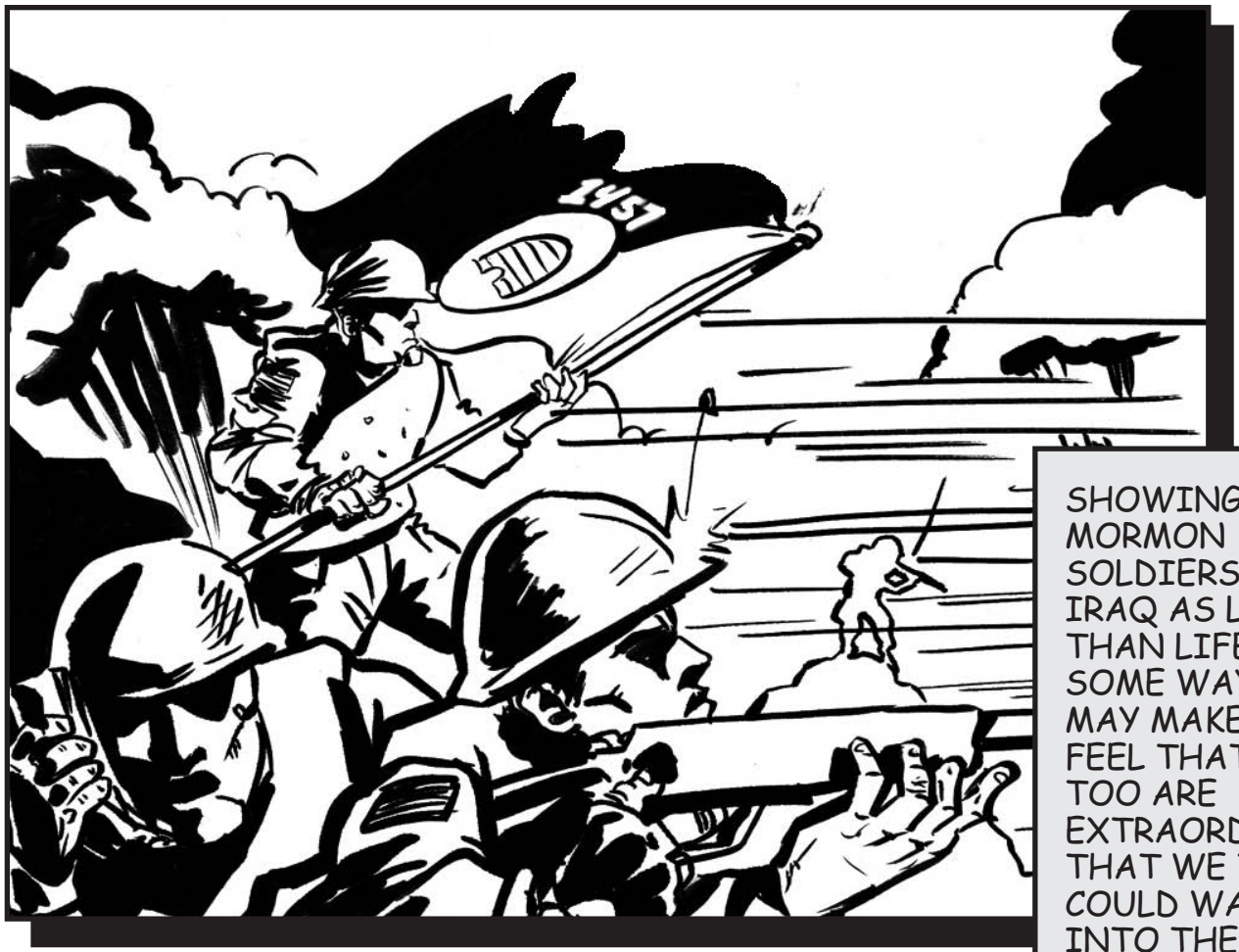

SHOWING THE MORMON SOLDIERS IN IRAQ AS LARGER THAN LIFE IN SOME WAYS MAY MAKE US FEEL THAT WE TOO ARE EXTRAORDINARY, THAT WE TOO COULD WALK INTO THE LION'S DEN OF WAR, DO MIGHTY THINGS, AND, BY THE SPECIAL GRACE OF GOD, WALK OUT UNSCATHED.