

On Doing Theology

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M. Gerald Bradford

Any paper dealing with the nature of theology and particularly with theological method, within the context of the restored gospel, must acknowledge at the outset the somewhat enigmatic character of the role of theology and of the theologian in the Church. On the one hand, every member of the Church is admonished to be a theologian—that is, every member is urged to study the scriptures and teachings of the Prophets; to attempt to understand the scope and depth of the gospel and to apply it in his life, all under the inspiration of the Spirit. Consequently, no individuals in the Church are singled out as official theologians; no one is called and set apart as a theologian to the Church. On the other hand, it is obvious that there have always been certain individuals who for a variety of reasons—either because of their concentrated study of the gospel, their position in the Church, or more importantly, because of the books and articles which they write, wield tremendous influence in interpreting and teaching the meaning of the gospel to others.

These individuals have full claim to the title “theologian” and as such are the topic of this paper. My objective is to reflect upon what I take to be the role of such theologians in the Church. Initially I intend to say something about how I view the nature of theology by considering two issues: (1) from the perspective of the theologian as theologian, how does his view of the nature of reality influence what he says and does as a theologian; and (2) what kind of a relationship ought to exist between any theologian and the subject-matter of his study. In other words, I will attempt to clarify what ought to be accepted as “given” by any theologian before inquiry can even begin.

In addition I will inquire into the ways of doing theology employed by some theologians in the Church and suggest certain norms which, if followed, ought to enable such thinkers to present their ideas in a logical and understandable manner. Finally, on the basis of these considerations I will be in a better position to determine the nature of the role of the theologian in coming to know the things of God, especially when viewed within the tradition of the restored gospel.¹

There is no question but that some theologians occupy a special position of influence in the Church. And yet on the basis of some recent examples of theological reflection it occurs that it might be helpful to attempt to delineate the role of the theologian the better to distinguish his

position from that of the prophet's. I contend this needs to be done precisely because it is a fact that certain theologians in the Church at times say things which not only run into conceptual and argumentive difficulties, but more importantly, are of such a speculative nature as to portray the theologian as inadvertently and presumptuously arrogating to himself some of the prerogatives of the prophet.

The Theologian Qua Theologian

Theology is often defined as an exposition of religious beliefs in language which is both systematic and temporally relevant. James E. Talmage claims that "theology is the science that deals with God and religion; it presents the facts of observed and revealed truths in orderly array, and indicates the means of their application in the duties of life."² And professor Sterling McMurrin sees the primary task of theology to be the reconciliation of "revelation to culture, to make what is taken on faith as the word of God meaningful in the light of accepted science and philosophy."³

No doubt one who undertakes to do theology ought to see his job primarily as one of exposition or description of what is taken to be the revealed word of God. His objective ought to be to portray, with as much clarity and accuracy as possible, the coherent teachings of the gospel, thereby helping himself and others to understand what they believe. And in so doing it is presumed that in some measure the teachings of the gospel will be made more meaningful and correspondingly more relevant.⁴ But before going into this in more detail, I want to consider the perspective of the theologian as theologian, thereby saying something about the nature of theology itself.

A theologian clearly is not an objective, unbiased observer of the religious scene. I mean by this that he cannot approach his subject matter as would, say, the historian of ideas, or the philosopher. Theology in the Church is an activity of men who believe the teachings of the gospel. To make the point more forcefully, theology is an activity of men committed to Christ, men who, ideally at least, look to the teachings of the Savior for direction, orientation, and meaning in life. And therefore, a Latter-day Saint theologian will not leave open the question of why the gospel is decisive for him; that would include within the task of theology itself the question of whether there ought to be theology at all.

Yet given this personal commitment on the part of the theologian, it does not follow that his stance is wholly subjective, in the pejorative sense of that word; it does not follow that what he says is necessarily unjustified or unjustifiable. The nature of reality, how things really are, is in measure a matter of how we segment or divide up our experiences of the world. And that which determines how we will carve up and thereby give meaning to such experiences depends upon a number of factors—not the least of

which is what we want to achieve in life. Yet the very fact that the world is viewed from many perspectives is proof of man's various and often conflicting interests and values and proof also that there is no standard way of "carving up the world." Consequently, it is difficult to know what it would mean to expect that a theologian in the Church defend his particular view of reality *as a theologian*.

To demand such a defense implies not only that a universal criterion exists by which all competing world views can be evaluated, but also suggests that everyone recognizes and accepts the authority of such a universal norm—a position which is clearly untenable. Mormonism itself proposes yet another way of viewing the world, of speaking about reality, and the starting point for a theologian in the Church is the recognition and acceptance of the gospel. He can analyze the gospel, explore its contents, trace its implications and consequences, but the fact that such teachings are read and accepted as they are he cannot account for *as a theologian*. If you ask a Latter-day Saint theologian his view, for instance, on the nature of man, you will probably discover that he has derived his ideas in large measure from the scriptures and the teachings of the Prophets. If you ask why this view of man is to be taken seriously, or why this view instead of another, *he* will probably say, "Because this is how things are." And why? "Because such a view is true." True in the crucial way that such matters are true, true because such ideas give a leading and grounding in life which those who follow them find to be right in an important comprehensive way.

If this point is granted, it follows that it ought to become a chief concern of every theologian in the Church to clarify the way in which he views the world, to determine how his views differ from other perspectives, and to determine the bounds of sense bordering what he says about the world, speaking as a theologian. To this he must add consideration of what is clearly central to the whole issue, namely, the relationship which ought to exist between himself and the object of his study.

The subject-matter which any theologian tries to explain will have its own kind of objectivity, but what is singled out for attention and the significance paid to what is selected will necessarily bear the stamp of the investigator, of one biography, of one particular world view. Such a position can represent an authentic comprehension of the world. It need not be seen as an example of mere intellectual imposition or sheer emotional projection, as I have tried to point out. But it does represent an angle of vision, which is not at all neutral, but which enables one to make publicly valid observations while at the same time reflecting the experiences, values, and commitments of a personal life.⁵

The goal here is not to rid oneself of such presuppositions but to attempt to see them for what they are; to try to understand how they influence not

only what one sees but what one wants to see. A theologian can achieve a level of objectivity toward his subject-matter by fully respecting its independent nature and by realizing the implications of his own legitimate but nevertheless existential perspective on what he studies. The crucial issue here is not that the theologian fails to identify properly the object of his study or that he mistakes theological inquiry for out and out speculation, but that he needs to become sensitive to how much his own outlook influences what he is studying and trying to understand.⁶

Up to this point, I have centered on what could be called the outer limits of theological reflection itself. I have tried to determine what must be attempted by every theologian before such inquiry can even begin. I should like now to go into some details as to the ways of doing theology employed by some individuals in the Church.

On Doing the Theology

Some theologians, in attempting to reconcile their view of Deity with other suggested ideas about God or man, as, for example, the attempt to relate the idea that God knows all things with the view that he is still progressing in knowledge, or the attempt to resolve how if God has foreknowledge of things man could still have free agency, inevitably hit upon the use of difficult and ambiguous concepts such as “glory,” “intelligence,” “truth,” etc. The trouble is they often use these words in an uncritical and consequently misleading way—supposedly assuming there is general agreement as to the meaning of such words (when there is not), that is, assuming there is one possible meaning regardless of the way the words are used or the context in which they are found.⁷

The first question any theologian should ask is not whether a particular theological claim is true or false but rather what counts as a meaningful claim and whether that claim does indeed make any sense. And this is not an easy thing to do. People often use words in an unfamiliar manner and in ways which lead to confusion. Therefore, one whose task it is to understand what the Scriptures and the teachings of others mean must be doubly on guard that he uncover the intentions of any given writer he is studying and not, in turn, use words carelessly. And it would be especially helpful if he evidenced an awareness of other possible interpretations to which his views lent themselves, eliminating those he considers incorrect. B. H. Roberts must have had something like this in mind when, speaking of what is required of theologians in the Church, he cautioned:

It is often the case that misconceptions arise through careless use of words, and through using words interchangeably. . . . Hence, . . . a lack of careful or precise choice of words, a large dependence upon the general tenor of what is written to convey the truth, a wide range in using words

interchangeably that are not always exact equivalents, are characteristic. . . . Hereafter, let the student be on his guard in relation to the words 'intelligence,' 'spirit,' 'soul,' 'mind,' etc.; and he will find his way out of many a difficulty.⁸

Consider, for example, the familiar suggestion that while the Lord is not progressing in knowledge, power, etc., he nevertheless is progressing in the sense that his creations increase, his dominations, his spirit offspring multiply, etc. The first step in understanding this idea is to determine what it means. Take the point that the Lord continually has spirit offspring and yet is said not to be progressing in knowledge. Surely the creation of a new spirit child would be a unique experience for God, one which would in turn result in a genuine increase in knowledge for him. To suggest otherwise is to use the words "experience" and "knowledge" in a very unfamiliar way. Some may admit that this is precisely the point; that words mean something totally different when they speak of God than when they speak of man. But then are we ever sure that we understand what is being said about God?

In any event, some theologians, using key words and phrases in one particular manner and suggesting one possible interpretation, feel the need, on occasion, to postulate or deduce what appears to be new truth, for example, about the nature of God, whether or not what they conclude has any scriptural precedence. Presumably this happens because the logic of their position dictates such a deductive move, or it may simply result from their haste to present what appears to be a doctrinal reconciliation. But the inevitable result is that the intended solution is not forthcoming, and that uncertainty reigns as to just what is being claimed, and more questions are raised than settled.

One alternative to this way of doing theology can be stated quite simply. What it amounts to is lowering one's sights, i. e., taking a more modest view of what the theologian can successfully accomplish—keeping in mind his objectives of helping us understand what we believe and his need to take seriously what the prophets and others say thereby avoiding the inclination on his own to introduce new ideas to "fill in the blanks." If one desires to answer the question, "Can God know all things and still progress in knowledge?" why not begin analyzing the assumptions underlying the question itself? Why not prepare a careful comparative study of important scriptural and prophetic words and phrases to enable us to better understand this mode of expression as a criterion for determining correct usage and to achieve conceptual clarification in these areas? Why not present a more detailed study of the relationship between such ideas and other revealed truths? What is required, in other words, is not speculation as to what the Prophet Joseph Smith (and others) meant, but more detailed study of the actual statements made by them in different contexts and at

different times when they discussed theological matters. Furthermore, it is required that the theologian present his ideas in a clear and coherent manner. His reflections must be carried out in a consistent and systematic fashion. His arguments must be valid according to the rules of logic, theology being as dependent on logic as any other scholarly discipline. The emphasis would be on theological clarification not theological system-building or speculation. This would require more work of the theologian, and results would be harder to come by, take much longer, and usually be on a smaller scale; but I suggest, they would be more firmly grounded and hopefully more in accord with revealed teachings of the Church.

The Theologian and the Prophet

The inclination on the part of some theologians in the Church to deduce religious truths solely on the basis of their own interpretation of scriptures and according to the logic of their particular perspective brings us to a central issue in theology—a question of authority and epistemology. To what extent is the theologian able to establish new theological truths on his own, especially for the Church at large? This is a traditional problem in the history of Western religious thought—sometimes referred to as the problem of reason vs. revelation. It might be profitable to discuss this problem briefly to better appreciate how the issue is resolved from the perspective of Mormon thought.

At times the theologian has been looked to as the source of insight concerning the things of God. The scholastic tradition (both Catholic and Protestant), for example, provided a total world-view by virtue of which everything from God to the lowliest of his creatures could be thought of as one great chain of being. The same clear and consistent ideas or categories of thought could be applied to all. Reasons seemed to move in harmony with revelation. Thus using Aristotelian categories and on the basis of deductive logic it was thought possible to “prove” or establish not only the existence of God and something of his nature, but also the authenticity of scriptures. That is, it was held that there are demonstrable truths available to anyone solely on the basis of the use of human intellect unaided by revelation.

This type of harmony between reason and revelation did not last long, however. Followers of Luther and Calvin came to minimize the value of reason—of natural theology, questioning the authoritative teachings of the Church (the traditions of the Fathers) and stressing the revealed word of God found in the Bible, referring all questions of doctrine to the “private judgment” of individuals. And by the time of the Enlightenment, the pendulum had swung the other way. The value of revealed theology was minimized to where it was felt that the “rational” man had no need of revelation

at all, since revelation was seen as nothing more than the “reduplication of the religion of nature.”

Moreover, beginning in the modern period and continuing down to the present, the complexion of the problem has so changed that it is now no longer a question of whether reason or revelation, or reason in accord with revelation is the source of religious knowledge, but for many individuals the concern is over what could possibly count for such knowledge. For one thing, the prevailing view of revelation has changed. In large measure, the more established view that theology deals with revealed truth, with propositions about the nature of reality, has been rejected in favor of the view that revelation is exclusively an event, the creation of an I-Thou encounter between God and man. According to this view no information is conveyed from God to man, no knowledge is sought or gained.

This radical change can be traced to a number of profound challenges to theology beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially those of science and the scientific method. Science appeared, as it still does, to offer a uniquely reliable way of gaining information about reality. And it became increasingly apparent to some that none of the topics on which theology believed it could inform had the kind of evidence and authority that science could refer to. In other words, because of threats from science, from biblical criticism, and the like, the very authority of theology has come to be questioned. Those who continue to speak about the revelation of God simply locate this vision somewhere other than in inspired propositions vulnerable to scientific criticism, and, consequently, theology today is often viewed as based upon moral and religious experience—upon a divine human encounter, that which is presumed beyond the bounds of science.

There are at least two explanations for why a similar question as to the authority of theology has not arisen within the Church. Both have to do with avoiding the inclination to view the theologian as a source of new religious truths.

First of all, consider the acceptance and understanding of the well-established role of the prophet in coming to know the things of God. This understanding rests, in turn, on the distinctive view of revelation, and the relationship between reason and revelation articulated within Mormon thought.

I agree with one description.

There is among the Mormons a pronounced intellectualism in matters pertaining to religion and a strong commitment to the capacities of human reason. It is assumed that the world is intelligible and though there are limitations to human knowledge in relation to the objects of religion, those limitations do not justify the acceptance of paradox or an official doctrine

of mysteries. In principle everything is knowable and the ways of God are reasonable.⁹

However, “both the existence and nature of God are known by revelation only. In this way the primacy of revelation is protected.”¹⁰ In other words, while revelation is considered the exclusive means of coming to know the things of God, reason is not correspondingly denigrated. Reason does play a role in the process. In revelation truth is conveyed to man, the ways of God are made known to man, and that which is revealed is understandable, is “reasonable.” In an important if only introductory study of the relationship between reason and revelation in Mormon theology, Professor Truman Madsen contends that according to Joseph Smith, the things of God are not “above” the laws of thought. Consequently there are no grounds for disparagement of reason. There is no celebration of the irrational. “Paradox and contradiction were clues to error, not to ‘divine truth.’”¹¹ But at the same time, while

reason may help to order and relate our knowledge of God, it cannot of itself apprehend Him, nor in any genuine way ‘infer’ Him except as He manifests himself. . . . In sum, Joseph Smith neither disparaged nor deified reason. Rationality and consistency are prerequisites to truth, but not final guarantors. Reason, if necessary, is not sufficient. . . .¹²

Madsen concludes:

Before and after the high movements of revelation there must be genuine human initiative and effort. Perhaps rarely in religion have two opposite views been so firmly entrenched: man dependent upon God’s continual revelation, and man dependent upon his own continual ‘working out,’ utilizing the totality of his experiences¹³ in relation to his needs and problems—with almost complete responsibility.¹⁴

And for the Church, there is only one man who holds the “keys.” The “prophet, seer, and revelator” alone may come to know the things of God for the whole Church.¹⁵ Thus it is difficult to see how any Mormon theologian could mistake his role for that of the prophet. And it is doubly unfortunate if what a theologian says falls outside of what could count as meaningful discourse because not only does this render understanding difficult, if not impossible, but it also suggests that one may assume the ways of God are not reasonable. And revelation from God has always been viewed as reasonable.

Secondly, consider an even more important reason. Mormonism, despite the well-meaning intentions of a few “rationalistic” theologians in the Church, is first and foremost a revealed religion. The message and influence of the gospel must ultimately be accepted on the basis of individual initiative under the influence of the Holy Spirit. I contend there is simply no place for the alternative view that as a result of systematic or

creative theology the gospel can be said to be made “rational” in such a way that it would be accurate to speak of a person genuinely embracing it solely upon the dictates of reason alone.

Conclusion

An understanding of the nature of theology reveals that it would be nonsense to inquire of the theologian whether there ought to be theology at all. As I have stated, the starting point of Mormon theology is the recognition and acceptance of the teachings of the gospel. And the theologian cannot give a justification of this point of departure.

But in regard to that which the theologian can justifiably do, I have suggested that he ought to conform to a number of methodological norms. Despite the fact that such norms are quite obvious (and possibly for that very reason) they need, on occasion, to be reviewed. Thus we can require that the theologian articulate his view of reality and evidence some awareness of how his view influences what he is studying and trying to understand. And we can require of him that he maintain the proper relationship between himself and his subject-matter. I have tried to get clear about the nature of this relationship and suggest what the theologian can do to help maintain it. My suggestions boil down to the following point: If the object or subject of theology (at least in the proximate sense) is the revealed teachings of the gospel, then the theologian must be faithful to what these teachings actually say. Theology, after all is said and done, is chiefly a descriptive-interpretative enterprise. On this view, the theologian is saved from at least one kind of subjectivism. It means the theologian ought not to advance his own personal ideas or beliefs *as if they constituted revealed truths*. This is not to deny that the theologian’s own personal stance obviously plays a legitimate part in what he does. But I stress the point that the teachings of the gospel—the corpus of what is taken as revealed truths—address the theologian in precisely the same way they address others. The theologian must strive to achieve that degree of objectivity which allows his subject-matter to be what it is and ultimately to determine his approach to it. Anything short of this allows the theologian to substitute his deductions and speculations for that which can only come through the prophetic gift.

If a Latter-day Saint theologian fully understands his task and its limitations, if he correctly sees his role in proper relationship to that of the prophet’s, then he will strive for logical rigor, coherence, and conceptual clarity in what he says and will see his task not as one of uncontrolled speculation, but as one of helping himself and others to better understand what they have come to believe, so far as this is possible.

In the scriptures and in the writings of the prophets, relatively little importance is attached to theorizing about the nature of God. What seems

to be the primary concern of the prophets is to testify that God is, to seek for themselves and to admonish others to constantly attempt to discern God's will, and to learn to stand in the Lord's presence as one fully dependent upon him. And what the theologian does, if it is done correctly, can be of immeasurable help to the prophet in achieving these important objectives.

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1. It should be obvious that my intention in this paper is to talk *about* doing theology in the Church rather than to actually *do* theology. However, I am well aware that some will interpret my observations and suggestions as, in one respect, committing the very thing I am suggesting the theologian ought to avoid. That is, when I conclude that the theologian ought to see his function in the Church as helping us to understand what the Prophets have taught rather than seeing his role as an alternative for the prophetic function in coming to know the things of God, some may interpret my presuming to describe and mark off the proper bounds of theological reflection as, in effect, placing myself in the role of the prophet. Let me assure the reader that this is not my intention. The suggestions and conclusions which I arrive at present merely one personal view and the motives behind the investigation ought to be viewed for what they are—one person's attempt to better understand the scholarly demands and responsibilities attendant to this type of activity in the Church. I wish to thank my students and colleagues for their comments and criticisms, especially Professor Louis Midgley, my mentor.

2. James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, 1924), p. 5.

3. Sterling McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City, 1965), p. 47.

4. An assumption in these definitions, one somewhat tangent to our considerations, ought to be pointed out. The trouble lies in the suggestion that the relevance, the meaning and presumably even the truth of theology is judged according to contemporary cultural standards, that theology ought to be evaluated in "light of accepted science and philosophy." But is this necessarily the case? Why must relevance be understood in this sense? If all that was implied here was the requirement that whatever the theologian says must be meaningful according to some acceptable standard, then it is hard to see how anyone could take exception to this. But a larger claim is being made. Theology is to be judged according to prevailing criteria of culture. This understanding has become almost axiomatic among Christian theologians and has even had a profound influence upon the nature of theological reflection within the Church. Nevertheless, I consider it highly suspect. My guess is that the theologian comes closer to the mark by simply writing what he deems to be correct, paying strict attention to the control imposed upon his ideas not by prevailing cultural norms but by those teachings taken to be the revealed word of God. In fact, it seems that the teachings of the gospel do not require men to take sides in the various cultural shifts. The gospel message stands rather as a constant critic of all cultural manifestations in the sense that it continually requires of us to ask what we can make of this culture. The message protests now, as it always has in other ages, whenever men say how things are in such a way that the picture is closed, the future settled, the factors of risk and uncertainty removed. This is not to suggest that

prevailing scientific theories, philosophical positions and the like need to be compared and contrasted to revealed teachings. On the contrary, there is a constant need for this within the Church. But what is being questioned here is the idea that the latter be finally evaluated on the basis of the former.

The claim I am making obviously influences how I view the nature of theology. I believe that when theology is viewed from the perspective of the gospel some such conclusion must necessarily follow.

5. I have discussed this idea with Professor Thomas O'Dea. See his "Transformations of Thought in America," *Thought*, 47 (Autumn, 1971):325–345.

6. No doubt the best way to illustrate what I mean here is to point out an actual example of theological reflection which has, in one or more ways, failed to conform to these norms. From 1848 to 1854 Orson Pratt was in the Eastern states and in Great Britain as mission president. During this time he became concerned with the philosophical implications of certain Mormon doctrines, especially the concept of God. In 1853, Pratt suggested, "All these Gods are equal in power, in glory, in dominion, and in the possession of all things; each possesses a fulness of truth, of knowledge, of wisdom, of light, of intelligence. . . . The fulness of all these attributes is what constitutes God. Each person is called God, not because of his substance, neither because of the space and size of the substance, but because of the qualities which dwell in the substance. Persons are only tabernacles or temples, and TRUTH is the God, that dwells in them. When we worship the Father, we do not merely worship His person, but we worship that truth which dwells in His person. It is truth, light, and love that we worship and adore. . . . Whenever you find a fulness of wisdom, knowledge, truth, . . . there you find God in all His glory, power and majesty, therefore, if you worship those adorable perfections you worship God." (*The Seer*, Vol. I, No. 1 (January, 1853), p. 24.) What Pratt says here is clear enough. And there is no question but that what he says is logically consistent. But it is also clear that Pratt is strongly influenced by certain Platonic philosophical views. What is not certain is whether or not he was aware of such influences on his theological investigations. In 1860 the *Deseret News* published a list of specific ideas advanced by Pratt including the above question, along with a statement by Brigham Young and other presiding authorities to the effect that such views were *not* to be considered acceptable as doctrine. While the brethren did not spell out their reasons for calling such teachings into question, one might be safe in concluding that in this situation the brethren were, at the very least, drawing attention to the fact that when the notion of God as a person is de-emphasized—when God is understood as subject to immutable attributes—then the divine personality is relegated to something less than the highest order of reality. The important point being that according to the Mormon concept of God, we do not worship truth, goodness, and beauty, as some kind of abstract form or idea, in the manner of Plato, but we do worship God who is said to have such attributes predicated of him.

This is a classic instance of a theologian uncritically letting a particular world-view influence his reasoning. We do not know if the brethren specifically took exception to Pratt's platonism; we do know that what he said about God was considered false doctrine. And it does appear that a source of his error was unduly letting certain presuppositions influence his reading of the scriptures and his interpretations of the teachings of the prophets.

7. Consider, for example, the possible meanings of the word "truth" as used in the D. & C. 93: 24. B. H. Roberts, referring to this passage, suggests "truth" can be interpreted as relative truth, absolute truth, or truth unfolding, or becoming. This last interpretation implies that a statement said to be true of things at the present may not

be true of things as they are to come because objects in the real world are in a constant state of change and alternation and because new relationships are continually being realized as one's perspective with regard to reality changes. (*Joseph Smith: The Prophet Teacher* (Salt Lake City, 1945), pp. 29ff.) The point is anyone either interpreting or using such a word ought to evidence an awareness of its potential different meanings, identify which meaning he intends, and indicate how his particular meaning of the term can influence our understanding of the point he is trying to develop. Cf. James R. Harris, "Eternal Progression and the Foreknowledge of God," *BYU Studies* 8 (Autumn 1967), pp. 37–46.

8. Roberts, *Joseph Smith*, p. 38.

9. McMurrin. *Theological Foundations*, p. 47.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

11. Truman Madsen, "Joseph Smith and the Ways of Knowing," in *Seminar on the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 1961 (Provo, Utah, 1964), p. 38.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 39–41.

13. "In Mormon thought there has never been a commitment to rationalism, empiricism or intuition as a primary method of knowledge. On the contrary there has been instead a tacit and uncritical respect for all three ways of knowing. The Mormon view can perhaps best be summarized as commitment to the methods of science, which effect a conjunction of reason and sensory experience, and to revelation." Sterling McMurrin, *The Philosophical Foundations of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City, 1959), p. 9.

14. Madsen, "Joseph Smith," p. 43. Compare the views of the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The things of God are of deep import. And time, and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man, if thou wilt lead a soul to salvation must stretch as high as the utmost heaven and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss and the broad expanse of eternities. Thou must commune with God." Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, 1938), p. 137.

15. For a fuller statement on rationalizing in the gospel setting see Pres. J. Reuben Clark, Jr.'s April 1952 conference address recorded in the *Conference Report*, pp. 95–96. In this talk he said ". . . there is only one in this Church and in this world, who has the right to rationalize, and that is . . . our prophet, seer and revelator. . . ." (p. 95).