

# Everybody Is Ignorant, Only on Different Subjects

*Eliot Butler*

It is presumptuous, of course to attempt to describe and discuss the *educated person*. I take comfort, however, in the observation that one is not required to be that which he describes. It does seem easier to get directly at the opposite of the educated person. James Thurber had a classmate whom he described clearly: “While he was not dumber than an ox,” Thurber said, “he was not any smarter either.”<sup>1</sup> I guess that we have all known that boy.

In my attempt to reach a definition of the educated person I have kept you and me in mind. If the standard set by the definition is so high that almost none among us can achieve it then the standard is clearly too high and there is no point in discussing it, except as an academic exercise.

One is tempted to consider as educated only Renaissance men, those great scholars whose knowledge and superior ability swept across many fields. There is no doubt that Leonardo was an educated man. And one stands in awe of Christopher Wren, who was mathematician and astronomer, and who appears to have picked up architecture only as an afterthought—and then designed beautiful churches, cathedrals, libraries, hospitals by the score. Thomas Jefferson’s breadth of excellence was such that at a dinner in the White House honoring Nobel Prize winners, President Kennedy could describe his guests (those Nobel laureates) as, “The most extraordinary collection of talent, of knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House—with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.”<sup>2</sup> But, let us face the truth. Renaissance people are not crowding the world. Even solid competence in a rather narrow field is not common enough.

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1. James Thurber, “University Days,” in *The Thurber Carnival* (New York: The Modern Library, 1945), p. 223.

2. As quoted in “Far From the Briar Patch,” *Time*, 11 May 1962, p.18.

On the other hand, if the standard for the educated person is so low that with little or no effort any one of us can achieve it, it is valueless.

A common fault made in discussing education is to describe it as a posture or stance, when in fact it is a continuing process. The vigor and effectiveness of one's mental activity and learning today tell much more concerning whether that person is educated than does the record of matters learned last year. Yet we use such expressions as, "She was educated at Vassar," "He completed his education last year," or even, "I'll be so glad to finish my education and get out of here." (It is sad to tell that too often those statements about finishing and completing one's education turn out to be true.)

Let us try then: *An educated person is one who by his or her own initiative and discipline is consciously, vigorously, and continuingly learning.* We will need to add two small extensions later, but just now we will not cloud the issue.

Meeting this definition does not guarantee one a Nobel Prize, nor does it make one a scholar. But it is worth noting that no one ever became a scholar without first becoming an educated person. This is a good first step.

Notice some characteristics that the educated person must have:

If she is educated, she is learning now, and this learning is not an aberration, because the requirement is that it be a continuing process.

If he is educated, the learning must be the result of self-discipline and not the result of demands and pressures from others.

If she is educated, she is learning vigorously.

I have enjoyed the experience in almost every one of twenty years at Brigham Young University of teaching a class of freshmen. Without exception there have been a few educated people in each freshman class that I have taught. There have been men and women who had grown out of the slavlike position of doing only what was required by pressures from parents or teachers or society, and had found the satisfaction of being free—of doing more than meeting requirements, of learning because it is good to learn.

It is disappointing that there have also almost invariably been a few who have chosen a false freedom—the hedonistic freedom of doing only that which seemed fun at the moment. This, of course, is no freedom at all, and it leads neither to education nor even to graduation.

A much larger number of students work to meet the requirements. It is commendable to do what is required, but merely meeting the requirements can at best make one trained or taught—never educated.

A first extension to our definition of the educated person is that the learning be worthy of the attention of a human being.

The verb *to learn* is used in so many ways that we must spend a moment to clarify what we're about. The most common and casual use of the word is completely removed from the conscious and active learning of the educated person. One says, "I just learned that it is raining in Santaquin," or asks, "Have you learned what time the play begins?" To become aware is often important and it may be truth that one is becoming aware of, but that is not the learning that makes one educated. The learning must be active.

There is a kind of very real learning that occurs as a result of facing life, but this too is not the active learning required by our definition of an educated person. Let me illustrate. Any parent learns in breathtaking steps—just by being a parent. You should realize that because of you your parents learned much. But that kind of learning under the sword does not qualify one as an educated person.

The learning must be of matters of reality: the real behavior of people and of matter, the real thoughts and reasoning of thinking people, not the pseudoevents so eloquently denounced by Daniel Boorstin—those continued nonevents that make up most of what is called news.<sup>3</sup>

There is a strong belief among some people that merely naming something solves the problem:

"I was concerned," one hears, "for he acts as if he were two different people. What a relief to find that he is schizophrenic."

"Why does the Indian government respond in that way?" "Oh, you see, India is a third-world country."

Learning for the educated person must be more than becoming aware, or gaining experience, or applying names. The learning must challenge the human being's intellect and capacity to comprehend.

What of depth and breadth? Neither the narrow specialist nor the shallow generalist is the ideal. W. H. Auden's description of the bewildered fifth century Athenian who visits our society is apt:

"Yes," says the man from Athens, "I can see all the works of a great civilization: But why cannot I meet any civilized persons? I only encounter specialists; artists who know nothing of science, scientists who know nothing of art, philosophers who have no interest in God,

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3. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), chapter 1.

priests who are unconcerned with politics, politicians who only know other politicians.”<sup>4</sup>

It is sad to report that occasionally one even finds able men and women, competent in their own specialties, who act proud of their having kept clean and innocent of understanding in other areas of study. Perhaps this is only a cloak for hiding their fear of the unknown. But that kind of pride or fear cannot be an attribute of the educated person.

However narrow the specialist with no rounding out may seem, even more pitiable is the generalist with no substance. Here is the master of the bull session and the party. In his extreme he becomes almost like characters in *The School for Scandal*: able to gossip a little about several subjects, but no more. An evening spent in sharing ignorance with people who do not know and do not think does not produce understanding. Indeed, the application of a course number and credit to a bull session, as has been known to happen, does not give it educational merit.

One hears easy statements such as “Today we all know,” and “There is an explosion of knowledge.” One might carelessly suppose that today everyone is more intelligent than were members of earlier generations. It is well to remind ourselves that where there is increased understanding it is largely the result of intensive study and effort by a few great characters and is not a summation of the halfhearted and idle curiosity of millions. Moreover, for one to be proud that now people know so much, while remaining ignorant oneself, is a foolish position. The student who chooses a major because its requirements are easily met cheats himself of the opportunity to be taken through a rigorous, if short, introduction to the reasoning, thinking, study, techniques, and challenges of one subject. Having avoided the opportunity to learn discipline he is doomed to superficiality.

In a real sense good education is always *both* general and special.

None of us enjoys having personal ignorance displayed publicly. However, the fear of having others see one’s ignorance, if not controlled, can easily prevent one from being an educated person. Socrates made the nice point in the *Apology* that ignorance of one’s ignorance is the worst kind of all.<sup>5</sup> A person who is obsessed by the need to cover up personal ignorance has no chance to become educated.

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4. W. H. Auden, Editor’s Introduction, *The Portable Greek Reader* (New York: Viking, 1948), p. 7.

5. Plato, *Five Great Dialogues* (New York: Walter J. Black, 1942), p. 38.

Is it useful to be educated? Listen to an approximate quotation:

“I took algebra and geometry, never used them, and now my income is fifty times that of the woman who taught those classes. I pay big taxes. Why do the schools waste our hard-earned money teaching junk like that?”

That is essentially the statement that appeared in a letters-to-the-editor column a few years ago.

Some questioners take an expanded view of the problem:

“Why study English or any language? The Adamic language is all we’ll need.”

“Law should be useful in the next life—if you are in the place where there will be arguments and disagreements and criminals.”

This next one cuts:

“What are you chemists preparing to do? Make thermodynamic studies of the lake of fire and brimstone?”

It is sad that so many have spent so much time at schools and universities without getting the point—that far beyond all professional or vocational or career aspects of the institutions there is the assistance, guidance, and encouragement to be educated. And that brings us to the second extension to the definition: there should be purpose and a sense of responsibility to the learning, at least for the educated *Christian*. Here we are not speaking of economic or employment purpose. Your parents and we are all anxious that you be able to get worthwhile work to do and we expect that almost all of you should do better at work because of having been here. Indeed, most of you will get positions that you could not have obtained without the experience and degree from the university. However, much of our effort with you here is to help you to be educated—and if that effort is successful your reward will be far greater than any vocational or economic return alone could ever be. You will be a changed person, your life will be different, and you will have increased ability and opportunity to serve.

The Lord said it directly. After stating the limitless breadth of subjects appropriate for our study, he explained the purpose: “That ye may be prepared . . .” (D&C 88:80). As one reads on in the 88th Section one sees that the preparation is to serve—to serve one’s fellow beings.

Is one credible who speaks of an eternity of progress, but who makes only halfhearted effort to learn today?

The question is asked, “Isn’t it enough to be good?” In the limited time I would like to make a few observations: Joseph Smith, instructed by the greatest characters of scriptural times, burdened with the responsibility

of establishing the Restored Church in the face of appalling difficulties, persecuted, often turned upon by people who had been at his side, still responded with remarkable vigor to an inner drive to learn. And how he learned! Read of the School of the Prophets, the tutors, the subjects he attacked. After you catch your breath there, look at the founder of our university. A recurrent theme in the letters of Brigham Young to his sons is “observe.” Whether they were on missions or away at school he urged them to observe and learn.<sup>6</sup> President John Taylor made his case for learning with an analogy all could understand:

We want our children to grow up intelligently, and walk abreast with the peoples of any nation. God expects us to do it. . . . I have heard intelligent practical men say, it is quite as cheap to keep a good horse as a poor one, or to raise good stock as inferior animals. And is it not quite as cheap to raise good intelligent children as to rear children in ignorance?<sup>7</sup>

I encourage you to hear the other presidents of the Church. It is as if the call to that office ignites an intense drive to learn. President Kimball’s comment here during the centennial year reaches to the heart of the matter: “We understand, as few people do, that education is a part of being about our Father’s business. . . .”<sup>8</sup>

Isn’t it enough to be good? One is reminded of the statement of a distinguished member of this faculty in earlier years, P. A. Christensen: “God himself is limited when men cease to think.”<sup>9</sup>

We have defined the educated person as one who by his or her own initiative and discipline is consciously, vigorously, and continuingly learning. We have added that the study and learning must be in subjects worthy of the offspring of God—worthy of human beings with great potential—and that there must be purpose. Now the questions must be faced:

“Are we doing no more than defining an exclusive and elite group? Are we seeking to feed egos by establishing a new class system in which

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6. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book 1974), pp. 14, 29, 31, 276, etc.

7. John Taylor in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855–1886), 24:168–69.

8. Spencer W. Kimball, “Second Century Address,” 10 October 1975, Brigham Young University.

9. P. A. Christensen, “On Liberty in Our Time: Milton and Mill,” in *Of a Number of Things* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1962), p. 25.

members of the upper class can feel and act out their pretended and snobbish superiority—just as in all class systems?”

Certainly not! In the first place there is no barrier to anyone except one's own self. The invitation is to all of us. Any one of us may start immediately, study, learn, and feel the joy of expanding the godlike aspects of our humanness. In addition to the unrestricted invitation, there is built into the nature of learning a remarkable protection against pride. The educated person, actively, consciously, and vigorously learning though his own drive, cannot be egotistical about what he or she knows. Each step that increases understanding reveals a larger area of ignorance than could be seen before. For example, one who has never heard of ancient Greek civilization can have no concept of the extent of his ignorance of that subject. One who knows nothing of calculus cannot begin to appreciate how ignorant he is of the possibilities of reasoning, order, logic, and complex problem-solving offered by that area of mathematics. One must learn some before he can even recognize his ignorance. Will Durant, in an interview at age 80, said it well: “Sixty years ago I knew everything; now I know nothing; education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.”<sup>10</sup>

You have heard Newton's statement about having been like a child playing on the beach and having picked up a few pebbles of understanding from the vast shore. In his play *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* Shaw has Newton say to Charles II and George Fox, “I spend my life contemplating the ocean of my ignorance. I once boasted of having picked up a pebble on the endless beach of that ocean. I should have said a grain of sand.”<sup>11</sup> Newton's statement does not imply, of course, that he became more ignorant. It tells that through a lifetime of study he became increasingly conscious of a world of learning yet to be pursued.

The expansion of one's awareness of his ignorance as he learns is a guarantee that the educated person is kept humble about knowledge and understanding. Stop to consider the people you know who know all the answers: they know how the neighbors should rear their children, they know what the president of the Church should say about this or that, they know how the president of the country should handle that problem, and so on. Is it not true that the people who know the least about the problem tend to be the most outspoken and the most positive

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10. “The Essence of the Centuries,” *Time*, 13 August 1965, p. 48.

11. George Bernard Shaw, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* in *Complete Plays*, 6 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1963), 6:19.

about its solution? If a person is not aware of his own ignorance he can easily be positive.

Pascal's analogy of learning is helpful: The circle of knowledge grows larger as one learns, and the circle thus impinges on everincreasing regions of ignorance.<sup>12</sup>

When we recognize that the educated person is kept keenly aware of his expanding consciousness of ignorance, and that the door to being educated is open to all of us, we can consider and appreciate Aristotle's response to the question, "By how much are educated people different from the uneducated?" "As much," said Aristotle, "as the living from the dead."<sup>13</sup> His comparison is very apt. Remember that there was no formal and structured school system such as we know. There were no degrees. There were no symbols to confuse us. The educated person was one who had come to life, who was living. This person was consciously and vigorously learning. The invitation is to every one of us: Join the Living!

Our definition of the educated person includes the point that one's own discipline must cause the learning. A favorite line from *The Wisdom of Solomon* bears on this: "The very true beginning of [wisdom] is the desire of discipline."<sup>14</sup> At our worst we do not even rise to the level that we desire to discipline ourselves. But when we desire to develop discipline, there is hope.

To learn is hard work. It requires discipline. And there is much drudgery. When I hear someone say that learning is *fun*, I wonder if that person has never learned or if he has just never had fun. There are moments of excitement in learning: these seem usually to come after long periods of hard work, but not after all long periods of hard work.

We human beings tend to let our minds congregate in areas of trivia and to protect our minds from the challenge of serious thought. Notice how much more comfortable we feel in the book of Acts where action leads us on than in Paul's letters, especially when scriptural arguments are being developed.

The commander in Shaw's *Man and Superman* in a sad sense represents all of us when he finds the philosophical discussion between Don Juan and Lucifer too deep for his marble-headed capacity.

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12. C. Kegan Paul, trans. *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Company, 1885), pp. 19–20, 83.

13. Diogenes Laertius, "Aristotle," Book V of *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), p. 188.

14. The Wisdom of Solomon, 6:17 (*The Apocrypha*, Authorized Version).



“This is extremely abstract and metaphysical, Juan,” he said “If you would stick to the concrete, and put your discoveries in the form of entertaining anecdotes about your adventures with women, your conversation would be easier to follow.”<sup>15</sup>

It is impossible to imagine an educated person who does not love the language. The reasons are manifold, but the first by all odds is that language is at the heart of our humanness. And our humanness is an essential step in the preparation to become what God would have us be. Without language would we even be human?

In the beginning was the Word. Is it not interesting that John chose to describe the Son of God in a way that means not only the truth and the way in the direction and the instruction, but also means the language? One is stirred by the thought that John, wise and eloquent, intentionally included multiple meaning: the purposeful beginning for any of us lies in language.

How anxious one who learns is to tell friends and family of new experiences and new understanding! And as the understanding is of increased complexity and the experiences of deeper consequence to our souls, how our need for language explodes! How one yearns for enough competence in the language to say it well.

You have reached maturity at a time when the language suffers both neglect and vigorous attack. Those who have rebelled against society or some part of it have often chosen to make their degraded language the first symbol of revolt. But it is not necessary to revolt to sour the word. Conversations overheard about campus seem often to consist mostly of huh, y’know, yeah, okay, I mean.

I should hasten to admit that the language lives and evolves, and that each minute step of its evolution will irritate someone. But evolution of the language and its destruction are different matters. Rapid upheaval of the language by those who never knew or loved it soon leads to complete and dreadful isolation—isolation from heritage, from philosophical roots, from faith, from the opportunity to learn well from one’s fellow human beings, from the ability to tell someone clearly what one knows and feels. We, of all people, should understand this, for we know of Nephi and Laban—and of God’s concern that the religious heritage in written and continuingly understandable form go with the little group of colonists.

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15. George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, in *Complete Plays*, 3:631.

There is no evidence that the people of Mulek set out to destroy their language or even that they were especially neglectful, but there is clear evidence of the result of their losing the blessing of a stable language. The great stabilizers of the English language, dating from the early seventeenth century, have been the King James Bible and Shakespeare. But as generations of English-speaking people mature having had no serious contact with the Bible and only a forced splash in *Julius Caesar* in high school, what do we have for stabilizers? Commercial television?

When I was an undergraduate we all read 1984 and *Brave New World*. We discussed and argued at length the positions of those early futurists. I remember feeling that Huxley peered ahead more clearly than did Orwell: That “Newspeak” described by George Orwell was too ludicrous to imagine. In the official language of the regime in 1984 words had the opposite of their ordinary meaning. This language was used for control of the minds of the people. How unbelievable. But this is only 1976—eight years short of 1984. We have read transcriptions of the White House tapes and have compared them with contemporary public statements by the same men. Newspeak! And if that example seems only a shocking aberration, consider the chatty, disorganized, smudged, meaningless mixture of words that often substitutes for conversation today:

“Hey, wasn’t that, y’know, just a fabulous thing.”

“Yeah, I mean, really, just far out.”

In the beginning was the word. For too long and too often the word has been used to deceive. Some people in the areas of speech writing, public relations, and advertising have sullied their trades by becoming professional fabricators of images—images that obscure the truth, that deceive.

A strangulation of the language is underway by another group—the Pompous People. The following quotation should lead us into that gagging bog: “I cannot conceive of any scenario in which that could eventuate.”<sup>16</sup> This was said neither by a stand-up comedian nor by Howard Cosell (I am indebted to ABC and their reporting of the Olympic contests for my awareness of Mr. Cosell). The statement was made by a vice-president of the United States when he was asked if he might be a candidate for president.

“I cannot conceive of any scenario in which that could eventuate.” One shouldn’t be too critical for he could have said, “At this point in time, possibilitywise, I am inclined to prioritize that minimally.”

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16. “More Blood in GOP’s Donnybrook,” *Time*, 24 May 1976, p. 8.

That reminds me of the time I asked a man a question that needed only yes or no. His answer: “My response to your inquiry is affirmative.”

The aim of many seems to be to mess it up. “Cute” words are collected by some and used endlessly.

expertise	upgrade	finalize
input	interface	actualize
output	interact	prioritize
feedback	know-how	internalize
thrust	utilize	

Listening to someone use such barbarisms nearly forces one to externalize his breakfast. The numbing effect on the reader or listener is such that he slips past the point of caring that the sentences are meaningless.

“Your information will be integrated into our own brainstorming.” That appeared in a recent memo sent to me.

Ordinarily I have nothing good to say in behalf of speed reading—for if something written is worth reading it deserves attention and thought, and at its best, even savoring. But too often I find myself thinking that since responsibility forces me to plow through nonwriting in too many memos, committee documents—*documents* (their word, not mine)—and studies, speed reading is the most that they deserve, while complete and rapid oxidation is the correct treatment.

Now let me hasten to add my appreciation to those busy people who always make the effort to avoid jargon and to get to the point, even taking time to inject a little grace. Not every memo or letter or report can be a poem, but it needn't be a garbage dump.

When I was in school *use* and *utilize* had a subtle but valuable difference in meaning. To *utilize* meant to make application of something beyond its designed or intended purpose. For example, one on a desert island might, in the emergency, utilize his fountain pen for extracting his companion's appendix. That is clearly an extension of the utility of a fountain pen. Today, however, one dare not use the word *utilize*, for the pseudosophisticates, believing that it is a synonym for *use*, would never apply the one-syllable word when three can throw in.

The nature of English allows nouns to be made from verbs; consequently, you and I have heard *utilization* as an offensive five-syllable substitute for *use*. (The *use* of something vs. its *utilization*.) The language, polluted, quickly becomes a hindrance to understanding. The noise is high and the signal is weak.

You probably will not believe this next. I have heard that *finalize* is used officially at some universities. My thesaurus has nearly a half page

of words that mean to finish, to end, to complete, to conclude. Despite the abundance of good words in use, some barbarian with neither love of the language nor appreciation for its value patched together *finalize*. And it did not stop there. The end has become the *finalization*. Next we will probably encounter the monstrous verb *finalizationalize*.

These examples are only a few flyspecks in the filth of mucky language, but you get the idea.

The loss will be irreparable if we reach the point that our ties of understanding with the past and the future are severed. Consider those attributes that differentiate us from the animals. Neither our relative hairlessness nor our use only of the upright position for walking provides meaningful distinction. God's *offspring* as distinguished from his *creatures*, have the capability not only of learning from each other and thinking about it but also of learning from the accumulated understanding, wisdom, and faith of their ancestors. In addition, God's offspring have the responsibility of leaving a heritage of knowledge and faith for their descendants.

The love of the language that we speak of is not merely some appreciation for the rules that guide us in its use, important as they are. The language at its best functions to reveal the dignity of man. What would you know of your birthright as a child of God without language? What would one know of the continuity and of the change in the aching efforts of human beings to climb to understanding without the language? How could there be love instead of mere lust, without the language?

Degraded language still allows some functioning in society—one can find the way to a restaurant, buy and sell, send and receive memos, get the television repaired, mention the weather and the election to a neighbor; much that occupies our time can still be handled with degraded language. But those matters that lift us above the crude and the mundane cannot.

George Orwell made an interesting point about the language:

A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts.

He then adds a hopeful note:

“The point is that the process is reversible.”<sup>17</sup>

It is possible for one who does not love the language to be well trained—but not to be an educated person.

We have, so far, scarcely mentioned the university and how it fits into the matter of our becoming and staying educated. It should be clear to you that some educated people have not attended a university, and such are not just the Abraham Lincolns of the past. I mentioned having some freshmen in class nearly every year who are educated—and who show the interest and drive that should keep them vigorously learning and hence educated. Is there any point in their staying at the university? Since you can be educated outside the university should you stay? Hold on. Don't pack your football and curling iron yet. (I was careful, you'll notice, to choose objects that could not imply any sex bias.) The university is excelled by only one other institution in igniting the fire of desire to be educated, and the university is by all odds the best widely-available institution for giving one a solid start in one discipline (the major) along with sufficient exposure to several other areas that one's lifetime of learning can have direction and meaning.

It feels redundant to say again what has been proved so many times: it is painfully obvious that one can obtain a degree without becoming an educated person, and that unfortunate truth obtains worldwide. Neither four years of punting on the Cam River nor four years of eating parsley at Cannon Center carries a guarantee that one will become educated. But the university offers the opportunity and encouragement. And you must decide how you will respond. The Introduction to Music class can be a drudge with you dragging mental feet, complaining at the requirements of the class—or you can wake up, get interested in the subject by meeting the requirements, and then become free by letting that interest carry you beyond the requirements. You can choose to get credit, or you can choose to change your life (still receiving the credit, but now with an improved grade). That class may be one that will affect your listening ever after. With a little understanding of music you will crave increased understanding, for you will have seen how much your appreciation and enjoyment grew just from effort in one class. Or you can get the credit.

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17. George Orwell, “The Politics of Language,” in *The College Omnibus*, 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948), p. 63.

You can approach the class in the physical sciences—necessary either to prepare for a general education exam or because your major requires it—with fear and resistance because it will be hard. Or you can immerse yourself in the subject and come to feel the unusual rewards. In no other subjects can one, knowing little, do so much that is correct, and predict accurately the results of so many previously untried experiments. In these subjects, as nowhere else, one can gain an appreciation for the order in God’s universe and for the possibilities and limitations of human reasoning.

Or one can resist and be fearful and miss the whole point.

I have reflected recently on my undergraduate years, this apparently being one of the required activities of middle age. In each of those four years I had at least one class outside my major that has had profound effect on my life ever since. What a disappointing void would have remained if I had missed taking those classes! By associating with those fine teachers, who were educated people, more mature and much wiser than I, I was introduced to several subjects that I could hardly have hoped to encounter significantly otherwise, and the introduction was sufficient to make it possible for me to maintain reading and study in those areas.

I mentioned that the university is excelled by only one institution in the area of igniting the desire to be educated. It is with joy that I remember the many young men and women whom I have known through their undergraduate years, who have changed in that period from enrolled bodies to awake and consciously learning students. But another institution has an even better record of making people want to learn than the university and we, of all people, should not be surprised to hear that it is the home.

Harry Golden tells in his little book *Only in America* of a practice followed among immigrant Jews in lower eastside New York when he was growing up there. When a child was presented his first book—one that would be his own—a little ceremony was held in which a drop of honey was placed on the book’s cover, and the child knelt, placing his tongue on the honey on the book so that his first contact with learning and books would be sweet!<sup>18</sup>(One weeps when one realizes that the counterpart in too many homes today is that the child may eat his first pizza off the television set.)

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18. Harry Golden, *Only in America* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 181.

Now frequently one observes that the student who has unusual commitment comes from a home where people cared and tried, where books were known and loved, and where ideas instead of neighbors were discussed.

I am sorry to say that one cannot always detect whether someone recently met has graduated from a university. But one can soon tell if one is speaking with an educated person. Mark Van Doren points out correctly that nobody who is will ever admit to being educated.<sup>19</sup> This is not, of course, that the person is embarrassed to be educated, but only that he or she is so conscious of many areas of gross ignorance. Will Rogers saw it clearly: "Everybody is ignorant," he said, "only on different subjects."<sup>20</sup>

But, I say, one quickly detects when one speaks with an educated person. Matters learned last evening, an idea being pondered and developed, books recently read, an essay just encountered, an argument still going on, a book just purchased to be read tonight as soon as another is finished—one hears of such from an educated person.

Over several years I have spoken with many graduating seniors in one program here: with several there was the pain of learning that not one book had been read since they entered the university except the required books. By others a few had been read. But the educated men and women in the program all had books just finished, others being read, and a growing list of books that they could hardly wait get into.

To be an educated person does not carry a set of comfortable guarantees—it will neither cure acne nor remove unwanted weight. It does not promise to remove all ambiguities from life. But the educated person will have increased capacity for living amidst some ambiguity, without losing faith in God or man. To be educated does not promise that one will be popular, but neither does it require that one become a social clod. Indeed the educated person is vastly more interesting to be around. To be educated will enrich one's life and increase one's joy—and joy is the reason that humans are. To be educated will increase one's humanness and one's respect and love for God's offspring—and such love is the second great commandment. To be educated will enlarge one's capacity to

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19. Mark Van Doren, *Liberal Education* (Boston: Beacon University Press, 1965), chapter 1.

20. Will Rogers, syndicated column, 31 August 1924, as quoted in *The Will Rogers Book*, comp. Paula McSpadden Love (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), p. 138.

serve one's neighbor—and to serve well is the highest calling for a child of God.

My suggestion for you and me is that we get on with the task.

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## *Ex Nihilo:* The Development of the Doctrines of God and Creation in Early Christianity

Keith Norman

Many men say there is one God: the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God! I say that is a strange God anyhow—three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization. “Father, I pray not for the world, but I pray for them which Thou hast given me.” “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those which Thou hast given me, that they be one as we are.” John 17:9, 11. All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—He would be a giant or a monster. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Joseph Smith’s caricature of the creedal mire in which orthodox Christianity has been stuck for so long, although apparently based on the sixth-century Athanasian Creed,<sup>22</sup> is indicative of the confusion and

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21. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 6:476. (Cited hereafter as *HC*.)

22. The origin of this most orthodox Catholic creed is obscure; it was ascribed to Athanasius after the ninth century, although much closer to Augustine in wording and thought. The first part is as follows: “Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith: Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

“And the Catholic Faith is this:

“That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate: the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible: the Son incomprehensible: and the

misunderstanding which attempts to explain the Godhead by esoteric philosophical formulation have engendered. Although most Christian denominations officially subscribe to one or another of the various creeds proclaiming “the Mystery of Trinity in Unity,” the doctrine is like Einstein’s theory of relativity: only the most learned and able minds are capable of really understanding it in any depth. This leaves the orthodox Christian with no choice but to profess belief in something he does not and probably cannot comprehend, since, as Cyril Richardson mused on “The Enigma of the Trinity,” “It has been observed that by denying it one may be in danger of losing one’s soul, while by trying to understand it one may be in danger of losing one’s wits.”<sup>23</sup>

How did the Christian Church come to accept such a complicated and unscriptural article of faith? This study will attempt to show that the basis of this fundamental departure from the simplicity of faith in a personal God who is our Heavenly Father, and in his son Jesus Christ,

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Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

“And yet there are not three eternal: but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated, not three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible [Latin *immensus*]. So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.

“For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord: so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, there are three Gods, or three Lords.

“The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.

“So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another. . . . But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.

“He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.”  
(See Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877], 2:66ff.)

23. Cyril C. Richardson, “The Enigma of the Trinity,” in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy W. Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 235.

is the consequence or corollary of the development of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*; i.e., God alone is uncreated and eternal, while all else—mankind, angels, other living things, and matter itself—was created by God out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, and is thus of an entirely different order of being from the Creator.

### The Creator/Creature Dichotomy

The culmination of the long process of doctrinal development and philosophical speculation in early Christianity, at least in the Western Church, lies in the definitive corpus of the writings of St. Augustine, whose famous conversion occurred in 386. He became *the* authority for generations of Catholics and Protestants, and one still finds no rival to Augustine's reputation and influence who does not depend upon him far more than he might venture to contravene him. His *De Trinitate*, on which the Athanasian Creed is based,<sup>24</sup> is the classic statement of the trinitarian position; but the theme of a God who is transcendent, unchanging, and incomprehensible runs throughout his writings. "Nothing can be said that is worthy of God. We seek for a fitting name but do not find it."<sup>25</sup> For Augustine it is impossible for any man to know God, or even any of his attributes, for man is entirely different from his Maker and exists on a completely different plane of reality. The only reliable information about God is negative—what he is not.<sup>26</sup> God is, by philosophical definition, incomprehensible to the mind or senses of man, and it is impious to assert any direct knowledge of him.<sup>27</sup>

By Augustine's time it was well established among Christian writers in both East and West that existence in the full sense belonged to God alone,<sup>28</sup> and he affirmed that all creation, being changeable and corruptible, cannot have "true being":

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24. G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936), p. 152. See also J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), p. 273.

25. Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of John* 13.5, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 7:89. (Cited hereafter as *NPNF-1*.)

26. Augustine, *Discourses on the Psalms* 85, in *Patrologiae Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: n.p., 1865), 37:1090. (Cited hereafter as *PL*.)

27. Augustine, *Sermons* 117.3.5, in *PL*, 38:663.

28. John F. Callahan, *Augustine and the Greek Philosophers* (Villanova, Pa.: Villanova University Press, 1967), p. 18.

Anything whatsoever, no matter how excellent, if it be mutable has not true *being*, for true being is not to be found where there is also *non-being*.<sup>29</sup>

In the words of the modern theologian Paul Tillich, God is not a being, but *being-itself*.<sup>30</sup> God transcends every being and the totality of beings. He is *totaliter aliter*—"wholly other." In philosophical terms, God has "necessary being" but man has only "contingent being"; his existence is totally dependent upon the will of God. Man, a "creature," is like every other created thing, whether animal, vegetable, mineral, or even spirit: not only does his initial existence stem from the creative fiat of God, but his continued existence is sustained only by God's active will. Before the divine creative activity, man (and all else) did not exist, either as individual entities or as unorganized matter. Man had an absolute beginning and, should God cease to will his existence, will have an end.

In its doctrine of God and man, then, mainstream Christianity has postulated two radically different orders of existence or planes of reality, with a firm ontological line drawn between them—a radical gulf of essential being which forever separates the Divine from the human, the Creator from the created.

There is no greater sense of distance than which lies in the words Creator-Creation. Now this is the first and the fundamental thing which can be said about man: He is a creature, and as such he is separated by an abyss from the Divine manner of being. The greatest dissimilarity between two things which we can express at all—more dissimilar than light and darkness, death and life, good and evil—is that between the Creator and that which is created.<sup>31</sup>

Although this statement by the neoorthodox theologian Emil Brunner would be considered extreme by some, it is merely the logical outcome of such official pronouncements as the Westminster Confession of Faith of the Anglican Church (1647), and the Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Faith, adopted by the First Vatican Council in 1870, which insists that God "is to be declared as really and essentially distinct from the world," which is created out of nothing.<sup>32</sup>

29. Augustine, *Tractate on the Gospel of John*, 18.10, in *NPNF-1*, 7:220.

30. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951–63), 1:235.

31. Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 90.

32. See Schaff, *Creeeds of Christendom*, 3:606ff and 2:239.

Mormonism, on the other hand, in one of its most radical departures from traditional Christian orthodoxy, proclaims that man and God are of the same race, that God is a personal being with a physical body and literally our Eternal Father, and that we also are eternal beings without essential beginning or ultimate end.<sup>33</sup> Not only has mankind always existed as intelligence “in the beginning with God,” but matter itself is eternal (D&C 93:23, 33). It cannot be created or made *per se*, only organized or formed into specific material entities.

### “Creation” in the Old Testament

Consequently Joseph Smith took issue with the standard translation and interpretation of the opening verse in the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”<sup>34</sup> Although the Hebrew word *bara'*, here translated *created*, is usually reserved in the Old Testament for God's activity in forming the world and all things in it, synonymous terms and phrases scattered throughout the Hebrew scriptures take the force out of any attempt to use this fact as evidence that an *ex nihilo* creation is being described in Genesis 1. The most common of these synonyms are *yāšar*, to shape or form,<sup>35</sup> and *ʿāśāh*, to make or produce.<sup>36</sup> In a study of the Hebrew conception of the created order, Luis Stadelmann insists that both *bārā'*, and *yāšar* carry the anthropomorphic sense of fashioning, while *ʿāśāh* connotes a more general idea of production.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the Old Testament the image is that of the craftsman fashioning a work of art and skill, the potter shaping the vessel out of clay, or the weaver at his loom.<sup>38</sup> The heavens and the earth are “the work of

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33. Two excellent treatments of this are in Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), pp. 49ff. and Truman G. Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), pp. 23ff. *et passim*.

34. HC,6:475.

35. Genesis 2:7, 8, 19; Isaiah 27:11; 43:1; 45:7; Jeremiah 1:5; 10:16.

36. Genesis 2:3; 3:11; Job 36:3; Isaiah 45:7. Note especially Isaiah 45:18, where *yāšar* and *ʿāśāh* immediately follow and clarify *bārā'*.

37. Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), p. 5.

38. Isaiah 29:16; 40:22; 45:9; 51:13, 15, 16; Psalms 74:13–17; 89:11; 90:2. Cf. Romans 9:20.

God's hand."<sup>39</sup> Thus Joseph Smith, who had studied Hebrew, preferred to translate the verb *bārā'* as "to organize."<sup>40</sup>

Although apparently the Prophet in this instance was speaking primarily from the standpoint of scholarship rather than the direct word of the Lord, contemporary theologians, committed to the *ex nihilo* position, would have rejected his analysis out of hand. Since his day, however, the influence of biblical critics, combined with the canons of modern physics, have taken their toll on the orthodox position, while vindicating the Latter-day Saint interpretation. Frank M. Cross concludes that it was the creation *ex nihilo* tradition which prompted the translation of Genesis 1:1 found in the King James and similar versions. According to *The Interpreter's Bible*, the Hebrew *berē' šit* would more properly be rendered "In the beginning of"<sup>41</sup> rather than simply "In the beginning."<sup>42</sup> Thus the first verse of Genesis does not stand apart from the following narrative as a kind of summarizing prelude, but merges naturally with verse two, and we might correctly translate, as E. A. Speiser suggests, "When God set about to create heaven and earth, the world being then a formless waste . . .,"<sup>43</sup> or, as Cross renders it (subscribing to the theory of the higher critics that Genesis 1:2 is a later addition), "When God began to create the heaven and the earth, then God said, 'Let there be light.'"<sup>44</sup> The traditional translation of Genesis 1:1 as an independent statement, implying that God first created matter out of nothing, and *then* (verses 2ff.) proceeded to fashion the world from that raw material, is now widely questioned,<sup>45</sup> and several recent translations have adopted the approach advocated by Speiser and Cross.<sup>46</sup>

39. Psalms 102:25; 8:3.

40. *HC*, 6:475.

41. Class lecture notes, Harvard University, September 1972.

42. I.e., the construct state. Literally, "In the beginning of God's creating. . . ." See Cuthbert A. Simpson, "The Book of Genesis: Introduction and Exegesis," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1952-57), 1:466.

43. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, vol. 1, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 3.

44. Class lecture notes, Harvard University, September 1972.

45. Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1897), p. 7, n. 3; cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 49, and esp. p. 46: ". . . the notion of a created chaos is . . . a contradiction."

46. Simpson, *Genesis, Interpreter's Bible*, 1:466. Other modern versions which incorporate this usage include *The New Jewish Version*: "When God began to create the heaven and the earth, the earth being unformed and

The King James translation of Genesis 1:2, which renders the Hebrew as “void,” has also lent support to the creation *ex nihilo* theory, whereas actually the word always occurs in the Old Testament in tandem with *tohû* (“formless”), describing a “formless waste,” or the “chaos” common to Near Eastern creation mythology.<sup>47</sup> In the last analysis it is this association of Genesis 1 with the ubiquitous creation stories of antiquity which decidedly rules out creation *ex nihilo* as the idea behind the biblical text. The earth was *tohû wabohû*: “without form and void,” as the Authorized (King James) Version renders it, “and darkness was upon the face of the deep (*tehôm*),” i.e., the watery chaos (cf. 2 Peter 3:5). This hardly signifies absolute nonexistence; rather it speaks of the formless, primeval chaotic matter, the *Urstoff* out of which the Creator fashioned the world.<sup>48</sup> Hermann Gunkel called this chaos of Genesis 1 “ein uralter Zug,” which apparently has an independent existence, however shadowy.<sup>49</sup> Thus, concludes C. H. Dodd, “the Mosaic account of creation postulates two pre-existent factors—the eternal God, and Chaos.”<sup>50</sup> Even a modern Catholic theologian can no longer maintain “that the first Genesis account expressly teaches that God created all things out of nothing. The notion of ‘nothing’ was unimaginable to the unsophisticated author.”<sup>51</sup> Just as elsewhere in the Old Testament, when the Lord God “laid the foundations of the earth,” his command brought response

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void. . .”; similarly *The Bible, An American Translation* (1931); *The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible* (1948); Moffat’s translation (1935); and the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), alternate reading.

47. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 26. Cf. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 49: “‘Tohuwabohu’ means the formless; the primeval waters over which darkness was superimposed characterizes the chaos materially as a watery primeval element, but at the same time gives a dimensional association: t’hom (‘sea of chaos’) is the cosmic abyss. . . . This damp primeval element, however, was agitated by a divine storm (cf. Daniel 7:2) . . . This declaration, then, belongs completely to the description of chaos and does not yet lead into the creative activity. . . .”

48. See von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 49.

49. Gunkel, *Shöpfung und Chaos*, p. 7. Gunkel refutes Wellhausen’s assertion (n. 3) “that Chaos was created by God in the beginning according to Genesis 1; this is untenable; the ‘heaven and earth’ is the *organized* world.”

50. C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), p. 103.

51. Robert Butterworth, *The Theology of Creation*, no. 5 of *Theology Today* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 37.



from the elements rather than effecting existence as such (Psalms 104:5-9; cf. Isaiah 48:13), so also, admits Gerhard von Rad, in Genesis 1 “the actual concern of this entire report of creation is to give prominence, form and order to the creation out of chaos,”<sup>52</sup> i.e., unorganized, chaotic matter. Accordingly, Speiser, after an extensive analysis of the Hebrew in the first verses of Genesis, is forced to concede in a guarded, roundabout statement: “To be sure my interpretation precludes the view that the creation accounts say nothing about coexistent matter.”<sup>53</sup> That is, Speiser, against his orthodox tradition, must interpret Genesis 1 as describing the creation by God out of preexisting matter, not *ex nihilo*.

In fact the Old Testament account of the creation, from Genesis 1 and consistently throughout,<sup>54</sup> supports the radical departure of Joseph Smith and Mormonism from the orthodox *ex nihilo* dogma. God fashioned or organized the heavens and the earth from existing material and not “out of nothing,” and though God is far above man in his righteousness, perfection, and glory he formed man “in His own image and likeness.”<sup>55</sup> This personal, anthropomorphic, actively-working God is vastly different from the one of the creeds and the theologians, and belief in this kind of a Father-Creator brought at least as much contempt from sophisticated thinkers in the early Christian period as it does today.<sup>56</sup>

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52. von Rad, *Genesis*, p. 147. This is a concession, since von Rad tries to establish an *ex nihilo* creation by the priority of vs. 1 over vs. 2.

53. Speiser, *Genesis*, p. 13.

54. E.g., Isaiah 5:30; Psalms 64:8; 76:17-18; 92:3-4; Jeremiah 5:22; 38:16.

55. Although a discourse on Genesis 1:26-7 is not within the scope of this study, the comment of von Rad (*Genesis*, p. 56) deserves notice here: “The interpretations, therefore, are to be rejected which proceed from an anthropology strange to the Old Testament and one-sidedly limit God’s image to man’s spiritual nature, relating it to man’s ‘dignity,’ his ‘personality’ or ‘ability for moral decision,’ etc. The marvel of man’s bodily appearance is not at all to be excepted from the realm of God’s image. . . . The whole man is created in God’s image.” Claus Westerman, *Creation*, trans. John J. Scullion (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 57, discusses the movement among biblical scholars to describe man as the image of God in *appearance*, beginning with Hermann Gunkel, P. Humber, Ludwig Köhler and J. J. Stamm. In criticizing this interpretation Christiaan Vriezen objected that the Old Testament is not aware of a body/spirit dualism; man is a unity. But of course this sword cuts both ways: an exclusive “spiritualized” interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27 cannot be upheld on Vriezen’s principle: the visual, bodily image and likeness must be included.

56. See especially the ridicule of the second-century philosopher Celsus in Origen’s *Against Celsus* 4.37.71; 6.6off; 7.27, in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 24 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm.



## Early Christianity and the Creator

Early Christianity grew up in a scene far removed from that of the Hebrew prophets. It was a world saturated by Greek culture and ideas even more than it was dominated by Roman politics, and Jewish resistance to this foreign influence had been gradually breaking down. One of the most conspicuous examples of this is the Septuagint, the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, traditionally attributed to seventy Jewish elders in Alexandria. This work reflected the disdain of Greek intellectuals for the *demiourgoi*, or craftsmen, who were looked down on as the lowest order of society.<sup>57</sup> Even the artist who created a great work was differentiated from his achievement, and its “creator” remained an object of contempt.<sup>58</sup> Aristotle pointed out that this applies to the demiurge of the cosmos,<sup>59</sup> and thus the Septuagint, when referring to God as the Creator, avoided forms of the word *demiourgos* in favor of the verb *ktidzō* and its derivatives. Homer, however, had used *ktidzō* in the sense of “to build” or “establish” a city, and the word still carried its architectural connotation into New Testament times, despite our translation of *ktidzō* as simply “to create.”<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, it was a step removed from the anthropomorphic craftsman image of creation, and provided a foothold for later advocates of an *ex nihilo* interpretation.

It is important, however, to observe that the Jewish doctrine of creation was not highly developed in a technical sense at the beginning of the Christian era. Divine creation was an assumption rather than

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B. Eerdmans, 1956), 4:513, 529, 600ff., and 621 respectively. (Cited hereafter as ANF.) Origen’s “defense,” written almost a century later, consisted in reinterpreting the Bible on a more philosophical level: only the simpleminded would take such passages literally.

57. See Plutarch, *Theseus*, 25, and *Pol.*, 3.4. As cited by Werner Foerster, “Κτίζω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromley, 9 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 3:1024.

58. Plutarch, *Pericles*, 2, in *ibid.*, 3:1024.

59. Aristotle, *On the Procreation of the Soul in Plato’s Timaeus*, in *Theological Dictionary*, 3:1024. Plato’s Demiurge, which remarkably resembles the “Word” (logos) in John 1:1–14, was the maker of the world (out of preexistent eternal material). See Plato’s *Timaeus* 27d–29e, 53a–56c.

60. Foerster, in *Theological Dictionary*, 3:1025. However, the Septuagint’s rendition of the Hebrew *tohû wabohû* in Genesis 1:2 as *aeoratos kai akataskeuastos* (unseen and unfurnished) “probably meant to suggest the creation of the visible world out of preexistent invisible elements” (Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, p. 111).

an assertion: both Christian and Jewish writings reveal belief in the Almighty God, the sovereign Lord of all creation, without speculating on the nature of the act of creation itself.<sup>61</sup> But there are indications in the intertestamental literature of a tendency to speak with greater clarity on the refinements of theological issues. In the Wisdom of Solomon 11:17 we read of God's hand which "created the world out of unformed matter (*ktisasa ton kosmon ex amorphou hylēs*)," but 2 Maccabees 7:28 had already affirmed of the heavens and earth, that "God did not make them out of existing things (*ouk ex ontōn epoiēsen auta*)." Although this latter phrase has often been cited as early and explicit assertion of creation out of nothing, actually such an idea is quite remote,<sup>62</sup> since "the non-existent [in 2 Maccabees 7:28] is not absolute nothing, but . . . the metaphysical substance . . . in an uncrystallized state."<sup>63</sup> This relative "nonbeing" referred to a chaotic, shadowy state of matter before the world was made; as we might say in biblical terms, "without form and void." Such a view is implicit throughout the Greco-Roman literature of the time of Christianity's inception, and there is no indication in the Christian writings that they held a different view. On the contrary, a famous late nineteenth-century study by Edwin Hatch of the inroads of Greek philosophy into early Christianity describes the tacit but widespread assumption of the coexistence of matter with God.

There was a universal belief that beneath the qualities of all existing things lay a substratum or substance on which they were grafted. . . . It was sometimes conceived of as a vast shapeless but plastic mass, to which the Creator gave form, partly by molding it as a potter molds clay, partly by combining various elements as a builder combined his materials in the construction of a house.<sup>64</sup>

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61. Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), p. 49.

62. Foerster, in *Theological Dictionary*, 3:1016. Hugh Nibley points out that this phrase refers to a change from another "phase of a going concern." See his "Treasures in the Heavens," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Autumn/Winter 1974): 88, note 23. Cf. Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 46ff., for development of this idea.

63. C.A. Scharbau, as quoted by Foerster, in *Theological Dictionary*, 3:1001, n. 6.

64. Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1892), pp. 194ff.

In spite of the fact that this assumption is not regularly made explicit, the two types of expression, the one specifying the preexisting material and the other emphasizing the new state of being or order achieved in creation, continued to develop along parallel lines.<sup>65</sup>

But if some Jewish writers were beginning to show the influence of Greek ideas and culture, Jesus and his followers taught the God of the Fathers, not a new or higher immaterial God. Jesus' summons for men to live as God would have them was entirely in the prophetic tradition of what Tillich calls "biblical personalism." In radical contrast to "philosophical ontology," he insists, "no ontological search can be found in the biblical literature."<sup>66</sup> The authors of scripture were simply not concerned with defining the nature of being. As McGiffert explains it in a somewhat regretful tone, "Jesus' idea of God indeed is quite naive

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65. Cf., for example, 1QS (the *Manual of Discipline* from the Dead Sea Scrolls), 3.15–18, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Vision 1.1.6, in *Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 2:8: "Ho theos en tois ouranois katoikōn kai ktisas ek tou mē ontos taonta (God who dwells in Heaven and created that which is out of that which is not. . .)" with Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, x (ANF, 1:165): "We have been taught that He in the beginning did of his goodness, for man's sake, create all things out of unformed matter (*ex amorphou hylēs*). Cf. *First Apology*, 49 (ANF, 1:182). Likewise in the *Secrets of Enoch*, 25.1–3, God says, "I commanded . . . that visible things should come down from invisible . . ." (As cited in Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks*, p. 111.) Cf. the similar phraseology in Philo, that early first-century A.D. Jewish philosopher in Alexandria: "This cosmos of ours was formed out of all that there is of water, and air and fire, not even the smallest particle being left outside" (*De Plantatione* 2.6). Further, "when the substance of the universe was without shape and figure God gave it these; when it had no definite character God molded it into definiteness . . ." (*De Somniis* 2.6.45). Although *De Somniis* 1.8.76 states that God "*ha proteron ouk ēn epoiesen, ou dēmiourgos monon al kai ktistēs autos ōn* (the things which before were not he made, not only being the craftsman but also himself the creator)," this is thought to be a later interpolation. See Edwin Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas*, p. 183. Cf. Philo's *De Opificio Mundi* v. 21. 26. Text of Philo's works with excellent English translations are available in ten volumes of the *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. and trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962). For a contrasting view of Philo's conception of creation see Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), 1:180, 300ff.

66. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:11ff.

and anthropomorphic, and there is no sign that he was troubled by any speculative problems or difficulties.”<sup>67</sup>

During his mortal ministry, Jesus spoke simply of “the creation which God created” (Mark 13:19), without elaborating on the details, and this was in harmony with the Rabbinic view which regarded speculations on the nature of preexistent matter as “useless and dangerous,” since “it is enough to say that God created the world and all that therein is.”<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, for the most part the New Testament was composed in Greek, and its terminology was greatly influenced by the Septuagint. Thus the term *demiourgos* is used only once, in Hebrews 11:10, which has no direct reference to the creation. The most common verb to describe the creative activity is *ktidzō* but it is followed in frequency by *poieō* (to make or produce, especially of art), and *plassō* (to form, mold, shape or fashion), both of which are used synonymously. Despite the attempt of later commentators to exploit such passages as Romans 4:17, 11:36, Colossians 1:16, and Hebrews 11:3 to show an implicit creation *ex nihilo*, a closer examination of the text belies this interpretation. As Werner Foerster admits, Romans 4:17, when translated “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (RSV, from *kalountos ta mē onta hōs onta*), “contains a logical impossibility. . . . One can call forth only that which already exists.”<sup>69</sup> The Authorized Version remains closer to the original.

Furthermore, in Romans 9:20–23 Paul himself employs the potter-vessel image of Isaiah 29:16, while 2 Peter 3:5 reminds us that the earth “was formed out of water” (RSV)—the primeval chaos, or “deep” of Genesis 1:2. The plain fact is that the New Testament writers were at one with those of the Old when they referred to the creation; this and the period immediately following is characterized by Kelly as a “pre-reflective, pre-theological phase of Christian belief.”<sup>70</sup> What this means for the present discussion is that no one had yet thought of a creation “out of nothing.”

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67. Arthur C. McGiffert, *The God of the Early Christians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 4.

68. Foerster, in *Theological Dictionary*, 3:1017. Cf. George Foote Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 1:381.

69. Foerster, in *Theological Dictionary*, 3:1010. “The idea of a command presupposes the existence of ministering and obedient powers to carry out the will to create.” Ibid. n. 72. See above, note 42, and below, note 84.

70. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 90.

## The Conflict with Gnosticism

Two major currents of thought were instrumental in bringing about the reinterpretation of the mode of creation among Christians: the Gnostic cosmologies which denigrated the material creation *and* its creator or Demiurge, and the Greek philosophical conceptions of God as the One, transcendently good, immaterial, and eternally unchanging.

By the latter part of the first century A.D., especially during the persecutions of Domitian's reign (81–96), the forces of the world seemed about to overwhelm the young church, now virtually bereft of the personal guidance of apostles. Many Christians were bewildered by the seeming disintegration of their world. Numerous "false prophets" came forth claiming to be the guardians of the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom.

It was under such circumstances that the Gnostic cosmologists produced their dualistic cosmogonies to exonerate the supreme Creator from complicity in the malign state of affairs by attributing it to the Demiurge.<sup>71</sup>

The basic idea is that the Demiurge who created the world is far down the hierarchical scale of being from the supreme Unknown Father and, either out of ignorance or rebellion, made the universe full of evil and defect, which became a prison into which the souls or pure elements of spirit were cast down.<sup>72</sup> Such thinking was a real threat to the Old Testament account of creation, and against this mythology Christian and Jewish writers alike were pushed to clarify the Genesis account in terms of the Creator as the absolute soul-existent being.

A good example of the sort of challenge that stimulated the recasting of the Old Testament view of creation is Marcion, who left the Christian Church in Rome in A.D. 144, insisting on the literal meaning of the Jewish scriptures. For Marcion the strict legalistic God of the Old Testament could not be reconciled with the grace and redeeming love revealed in the gospel of Christ, and he concluded that there must be two Gods, the lower Demiurge whom the Jews worshipped, and the supreme "hidden" God revealed for the first time by Jesus.<sup>73</sup> Although Marcion was

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71. E. O. James, *Creation and Cosmology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), p. 93.

72. See Werner Foerster, *Patristic Evidence*, vol. 1, *Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts*, trans. R. McLean Wilson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 4ff.

73. See Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1.2 *et passim* in *ANF*, 3:271ff.

not a Gnostic in the strict sense, his low opinion of the Creator closely parallels Gnostic cosmological schemes. Together with the Gnostic attack on the harsh and seemingly capricious Creator in the Old Testament, Marcion's rejection of the Jewish scriptures and Deity, on the basis of his interpretation of Paul, brought a response from orthodox circles which sought to allegorize the Old Testament and describe its God in the more acceptable philosophical language of divine transcendence. "Christians in the second century had rejected the gnostic attack on creator and creation, and had in rebuttal asserted both the goodness of the Creator and Creation."<sup>74</sup>

Ironically, the reaction against the Marcionite and Gnostic views put the orthodox Christian God up to compete for superlatives with the Supreme Hidden God of Gnosticism, until finally the biblical Father was pushed into a transcendent alienness beyond comprehensible reality. Obviously this super-Being could be no mere craftsman or artificer, and an explicit formulation of a creation *ex nihilo* concept was the next logical step. The step was taken by Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon near the end of the second century, in his anti-Gnostic treatise *Against Heresies*.<sup>75</sup> In the face of the Gnostic dualism which attempted to isolate the supreme God from the visible universe, Irenaeus countered by asserting the creation of the world out of "nothing," i.e., God's will alone. This means that the world takes its being directly from God and is therefore good, rather than intrinsically evil and alien from divine being, as the Gnostics taught. "They do not believe," Irenaeus argued, "that God, according to His pleasure, in the exercise of His own will and power, formed all things . . . out of what did not exist."<sup>76</sup> Although this is impossible for men, all things are possible with God:

While men, indeed, cannot make anything out of nothing, but only out of matter already existing, yet God is in this point preeminently superior to men, that He Himself called into being the substance of His creation, when it previously had no existence.<sup>77</sup>

But this was a new argument, formulated for polemical purposes, and did not win immediate assent from Irenaeus' peers.<sup>78</sup> There was a cer-

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74. Brooks Otis, "Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958):114.

75. In *ANF*, 1:315-567.

76. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.10.2, in *ANF*, 1:370.

77. *Ibid.*, 2.10.4.

78. Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas*, p. 198.

tain amount of rethinking necessary concerning basic ideas about the nature of deity.<sup>79</sup>

### The God of Philosophy

A new conception of God in terms of the absolutes of Greek philosophy is implicit in the following analysis by E. O. James, and this development went hand in hand with the reaction to Gnosticism in making the belief in an *ex nihilo* creation an inevitable adjunct:

By the end of the second century, largely as a result of the conflict with Gnosticism, the view of the cosmos being fashioned from pre-existent matter was abandoned in favor of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. God alone, it was affirmed, was without beginning or end as the Ultimate Principle, existing in his own right as Creator. Therefore, the cosmos was created by him "out of nothing."<sup>80</sup>

In the struggle against the gross heresies of the Gnostics, "orthodox" Christianity rushed to the citadel of Greek philosophy. Second century pagan philosophers spoke scornfully of Christians as people who believed in a God who had a human form,<sup>81</sup> and sophisticated Christians, including converted philosophers such as Justin Martyr, were embarrassed by the naivete of their theology. They could not help but be influenced by what G. L. Prestige calls the "speculative influence" which "permeated the very atmosphere mentally absorbed by the Christians of the second and third centuries, even more completely than simplified biology and third-hand physics pervade the popular intellectual atmosphere of the twentieth century."<sup>82</sup> The simplicity of Christian doctrine, which Paul wrote makes "foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:20), was now seen by many Christians as well as by the pagans to be rather strange and outdated.

When Justin, the Platonist Christian convert who was martyred in A.D. 165, taught a preexistent primal matter (*hylē*) which, he assures us, "we have learned" from our revelations,<sup>83</sup> he was well within the tradition of Clement, the earlier (c. A.D. 96) bishop of Rome. Clement had praised God who "has made manifest (*ephaneropoiēsas*) the everlasting

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79. See Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, pp. 47ff.

80. James, *Creation and Cosmology*, p. 92.

81. See note 36 above.

82. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. xvii.

83. Justin, *First Apology* 59, in *ANF*, 1:182. Cf. *First Apology* 10, in *ANF*, 1:165. The whole universe, he insists, is made out of this substratum.



fabric (*aenaon sustasin*) of the world.”<sup>84</sup> But when Justine associates this with Plato’s teaching in the *Timaeus*,<sup>85</sup> he calls to mind the Greek mythological tales of a bungling demiurge who formed the world out of primordial matter (*hylē*) which resisted perfection, and thus a defective world was created.<sup>86</sup>

Justin’s peers, including the Apologists Aristides of Athens, Justin’s renegade pupil Tatian, Athenagoras of Athens, Theophilus of Antioch, and later Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and his successor Origen, were only too eager to shun the superstitions of mythology and exploit any links between their own ideas of God and those found in Platonism, the most widespread and respected of all philosophic traditions. “It was the Platonic tradition which was to play the vital role in determining the image of God which predominates in the thought of the [Church] Fathers.”<sup>87</sup> The now well-worn description of God as “without body, parts or passions,” taken from the first of the Church of England’s Thirty-nine Articles, “is not the sort of description of God which arises naturally or spontaneously from the Bible taken by itself,” Maurice Wiles reminds us. “It comes straight from this Platonic tradition which the Fathers shared with the most thoughtful of their pagan contemporaries.”<sup>88</sup> The Platonic dualism between spirit (or intellect) and matter, between the real and the illusory, the eternal and the transitory, the One and the many, gained increasing support among the Church Fathers. Where the Bible speaks of God as unchanging, referring to his constancy in judgment and grace, the Fathers affirmed from this a metaphysical static permanence; it seemed obvious that a perfect being does not change.<sup>89</sup> The concept of unity has long fascinated both the philosophical and the

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84. 1 Clement 60.1, in *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:112. Cf. also *Clementine Recognitions* 1.27 and 8.16, in *ANF*, 8:85 and 169ff. The latter passage mixes the earlier tradition with the later *ex nihilo* doctrine, but the incongruity is glaring.

85. Justin, *First Apology* 59, in *ANF*, 1:182. Justin believed that Plato borrowed this concept from Moses.

86. E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), pp. 13ff. For the relationship of this idea to Plato, see A. H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 13ff. On the Manichaean personification of Darkness as *hylē* see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 210ff.

87. Maurice Wiles, *The Christian Fathers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), p. 16.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 21.



religious mind. From the biblical emphasis on Jehovah as the only true God a leap had to be made to the mathematical ideal of a simple undifferentiated unity, and this concept became axiomatic from Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria through Origen,<sup>90</sup> finding its most fervent eloquent expression in Augustine. The tendency was always to describe God in absolutes and infinities, and Athenagoras, as early as the latter part of the second century, professed a belief in “one God, the uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, uncontainable, comprehended only by mind and reason, clothed in light and beauty and spirit and power indescribable, by whom the totality came to be.”<sup>91</sup> Such a being could not have any peer, since there can only be one infinite, and infinitude was equated with divine or eternal, so that only God himself could be eternal in any ultimate sense.<sup>92</sup>

This wholesale adoption of Greek philosophical metaphysics, which is still the basis of Christian theology, gave rise to serious questions—indeed numerous heresies—concerning several basic Christian doctrines, since Christians worshipped Jesus as God. How can an unchanging, impassible God become incarnate, or suffer and die? How can the Platonic concept of God as a simple undifferentiated unity be thought to have a Son who is also divine?<sup>93</sup> How can a God without any passions possess “love”? And can a totally self-sufficient, never-changing God participate in any act of creation as though in need of anything outside himself?

The only way these difficulties could be resolved was to push the philosophic logic even further, and this is where Christianity went beyond Greek philosophy. Justin himself repudiated the Stoic idea that the world is necessary to God’s own existence or divinity, since he was God before the world was made.<sup>94</sup> Tatian, who left the Roman Church after the martyrdom of his teacher Justin, agreed with him that the world was created out of matter, but further postulated an absolute creation, apparently from nothing, of that matter by God. “For matter is not, like God, without beginning,” he reasoned.<sup>95</sup> About the same time

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90. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

91. Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* 10, in *ANF*, 2:133.

92. Athenagoras himself did not draw the conclusion of a creation *ex nihilo* from this. See p. 308 below.

93. Wiles calls this a “logical impossibility.” *Christian Fathers*, p. 19.

94. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 127, in *ANF*, 1:263.

95. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 5; cf. 12 in *ANF*, 2:67 and 70. This was an early Apologetic attack on pagan philosophy, and the only one of his several

Theophilus, who became bishop at Antioch in A.D. 168, argued against the Platonists that, if God is uncreate and matter is uncreate [=eternal], then God cannot be the Maker of the universe, nor is there any indication of the monarchy, or single rulership, of God. The power of God is shown by his creation of the world “out of things that are not,” according to Theophilus; any craftsman (*demiourgos*) can manipulate existent material.<sup>96</sup> In spite of such logic, as late as the beginning of the third century the Christian Hermogones shared with the Greek mind the view that creation *ex nihilo* is wholly irrational.<sup>97</sup> But his contemporary Tertullian, despite his claim to be a firm opponent of Greek philosophy, reasoned with rigid philosophical logic when he objected that only the divine is eternal, which also implies unchangeableness and indivisibility. Eternal matter would subject God to limitation and destroy his liberty. Tertullian concluded, “It is more worthy to believe that God is the free author of evil things than to believe that he is a slave,” that is, limited in any respect by coexistent matter.<sup>98</sup>

In fact, the rash of arguments in favor of *ex nihilo* creation at the end of the second century points to the newness the concept.<sup>99</sup> Tertullian’s tract especially adds to the evidence that the argument was against an established belief within the Church, since it was directed against a fellow Christian rather than against Platonism. Tertullian himself concedes that creation out of nothing is not explicitly stated in the scriptures, but asserts that since it is not denied either, the silence on the matter implies that God does have the power to create *ex nihilo*, since that is more logi-

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works to be preserved. Subsequently Tatian apparently founded or at least led an extreme ascetic sect which opposed marriage and denied the salvation of Adam. Consequently his innovative views on creation had little influence on his immediate contemporaries, and may explain the reluctance of Athenagoras and Clement to endorse the belief in creation *ex nihilo*. (Irenaeus’ development of this doctrine was on an entirely different basis, that of a refutation of heretical Christians rather than a defense of the faith directed to outsiders.)

96. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolychus* 2.4, in *ANF*, 2:95. The passage is problematical, since it is debatable whether Theophilus conceived of an absolute creation *ex nihilo* in the modern sense. His terminology still points to shadowy substratum of preexistent chaos, “without form and void.” See note 42 above.

97. McGiffert, *The God of the Early Christians*, p. 157. On Hermogones, see Tertullian, *Against Hermogones* 2, in *ANF*, 3:477ff.

98. Tertullian, *Against Hermogones* 21, in *ANF*, 3:489.

99. Origen, *On First Principles* 2.1.4, in *ANF*, 4:269, expressed his surprise that “So many distinguished men” have believed in uncreated matter.

cal.<sup>100</sup> Such “logic” had escaped Athenagoras, who despite his stress on the transcendence of God,<sup>101</sup> in the same context explains concerning the preexistent Son:

He came forth to be the energizing power of things, which lay like a nature without attributes, and an inactive earth, the grosser particles being mixed up with the lighter.<sup>102</sup>

This chaotic matter also existed before the creation. Although Athenagoras repeatedly emphasizes the disparity between matter and God, the created and the Uncreate, he did not subscribe to Tatian’s view of the precreation of primal matter:

But if they are at the greatest possible remove from one another—as far asunder as is the potter and the clay (matter being the clay, and the artist the potter)—so is God, the Framers of the world, and matter, which is subservient to Him for the purpose of His art. But as the clay cannot become vessels of itself without art, so neither did matter, which is capable of taking all forms, receive, apart from God the Framers, distinction and shape and order. . . .<sup>103</sup>

If Athenagoras was aware of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, he gives no indication of it: the widest disparity he can think of as a comparison is that between the Artificer and his materials.

Clement of Alexandria, the head of the Christian philosophical school there around A.D. 200, is more problematical, since he uses apparent creation *ex nihilo* language, but without the later doctrinal connotations associated with such terminology. Chadwick argues that although the declaration that the world is made “out of nothing” occurs three times in the *Stromata* (a collection of his miscellaneous notes), his usage is similar to that of Philo, referring to the ordering of formless matter.

In each case the phrase he employs is *ek mē ontos*, not *ex ouk ontos*; that is to say, it is made not from that which is absolutely non-existent, but from relative non-being or unformed matter, so shadowy and vague

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100. Tertullian, *Against Hermogones* 21, in *ANF*, 3:489.

101. See note 71 above.

102. Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* 10, in *ANF*, 2:133. Cf. chapters 24 and 19 (pp. 141 and 138), where he explicitly states that God as an artificer (*demiourgos*) requires matter, but this relationship proves the priority and superiority of God.

103. Athenagoras, *A Plea for Christians* 10, in *ANF*, 2:133.

that it cannot be said to have the status of “being,” which is imparted to it by the shaping hand of the Creator.<sup>104</sup>

Nevertheless, the idea of a creation *ex nihilo* was being discussed in Christian intellectual circles by this time. Clement himself seems aware of the difference between an absolute creation out of nothing and creation out of primal matter in at least one passage,<sup>105</sup> where he does not view it as crucial to orthodoxy. But in his “Hymn to the Paedagogus” he clearly favors the view of creation from preexistent material:

O King. . . .  
 Maker of all, who heaven and heaven’s adornment  
 by the Divine Word alone didst make;  
 . . . according to a well-ordered plan;  
 out of a confused heap who didst create  
 This ordered sphere, and from the shapeless mass  
 of matter didst the universe adorn. . . .<sup>106</sup>

Clement was apparently too cautious to advocate the unscriptural idea of creation *ex nihilo* to his pupils, however congenial it may have been to his Christian philosophical system.

The dynamic of doctrinal transition appears also in Origen, whose stature as a theologian in the Eastern Church is often compared to that of Augustine in the West. In his early speculative treatise *On First Principles*, Origen retained a belief in the preexistence of both matter and souls, but denied that these always existed of themselves; in fact he implied that creation *ex nihilo* was taught by the apostles and had been handed down as Church doctrine.<sup>107</sup> “Nevertheless,” Chadwick notes, “Origen never reaches a perfectly clear opinion on the exact status of

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104. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, pp. 46ff. Cf. the use of the negative particle *me* in Romans 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 1:28. This view of Clement, however, is controversial. James, *Creation and Cosmology*, p. 92, interprets Clement similarly, but this is in contradiction to E. F. Osborne, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1957), p. 33, who wrongly concluded, “Clement is the first person to state and give reasons for the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.” If Clement did favor the *ex nihilo* viewpoint, he was preceded by Tatian, Theophilus, and Irenaeus in formulating an explicit position on the subject.

105. Clement, *Stromata* 2.16, in *ANF*, 2:364.

106. Clement, *The Instructor* 3.12, in *ANF*, 2:296.

107. Origen, *On First Principles*, preface 4, in *ANF*, 4:240. Cf. 2.1.4 and 2.3.3 (pp.296 and 272).

matter in the divine purpose. . . .”<sup>108</sup> In his later Apologetic work *Against Celsus* he relegated the question of uncreated matter to the sphere of physics rather than theology;<sup>109</sup> in other words, creation *ex nihilo* was not yet established as an article of the faith, although by Origen’s time “it had become the prevailing theory in the Christian Church. God had created matter. He was not merely the Architect of the universe, but its Source.”<sup>110</sup>

### The Trinitarian Controversy

In the third and fourth centuries the emerging Catholic Church, which experienced the reversal from official repression to adoption and support by the state, was doctrinally preoccupied with defining and refining its position on the internal relationship of the Godhead. What was the relationship of God the Son to God the Father? Specifically, how can the belief in the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God be reconciled with the commitment to a monotheistic faith in “the only true God” inherited from Judaism and demanded by Greek absolutism? It will be seen that the creation *ex nihilo* doctrine had much to do with the

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108. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought*, p. 86. Origen referred to the common substratum of matter without form or properties upon which qualities may be stamped from archetypal ideas. See *Against Celsus* 3.41; 4.57; 6.77; and *First Principles* 4.1.35; in *ANF*, 4:480, 523ff., 608 and 380. His interpretation of the creation as an eternal activity of God implied that created matter in some form always existed, even if its existence was contingent rather than necessary being. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*, vol. 1 *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 203.

109. Origen, *Against Celsus* 4:60, in *ANF*, 4:525. Perhaps his reticence here was due to his recognition (*ibid.*, 5.23,24 [p. 553]) that the affirmation, “all things are possible with God,” does not refer to things “non-existent” or inconceivable. God cannot do anything contrary to reason, and to the Greek philosophical mind creation out of nothing was unreasonable (see note 77 above).

110. Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas*, p. 197. It is illuminating to note that as late as the middle of the fourth century, creation *ex nihilo* was still not firmly established as church doctrine. Athanasius, despite his usual assumption of it throughout the anti-Arian writings (an assumption shared by his opponents), concedes that it is not crucial to orthodoxy. See his *Orations Against the Arians* 2.16.22, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1952), 4:359. Cited hereafter as *NPNF-2*.)

final formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, developed principally by Augustine, which is still the touchstone of orthodox Christianity.

As with the doctrine of creation, the subtle theological distinctions concerning the nature of the Godhead which culminated in ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in the fourth century were not an issue in earlier discussions on the subject, at least not before the beginning of the third century. Jesus was spoken of as distinct from his Father, but nevertheless divine.<sup>111</sup> As Prestige tells us, "The recognition of divine monarchy [monotheism] and the proclamation of a divine triad were originally presented as independent facts."<sup>112</sup> The Christian apologists were faced on the one hand with the accusation of polytheism from Judaism,<sup>113</sup> and on the other by the Hellenistic interpretation of mythological gods as personified attributes or manifestations of the Supreme Unity governing the universe.<sup>114</sup> Thus when Justin insists that the Logos (the "Word" of John 1:1-14) is numerically distinct (*arithmō heteron*) from the Father,<sup>115</sup> he is defending the Christian belief which denied strict monotheism. Likewise the use of the term *triad* by Theophilus of Antioch<sup>116</sup> and that of *trinitas* by Tertullian<sup>117</sup> were affirmations of the distinction of persons, not the tri-unity which "trinity" later came to connote.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, the philosophical pressures on Christian intellectuals did not abate, and the history of Christian doctrine in the third and fourth centuries is littered with the names of "heretics" such as Sabellius, Praxeus, Noetus, and Marcellus who attempted to make the distinctions in the Godhead only nominal. This "Modalism," or belief that the persons of the divine triad are mere modes of one being, was known to contemporaries as monarchianism and later as Sabellianism, after

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111. E.g., 2 Clement 1.1, in *Apostolic Fathers*, 1:128; Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 18.2 and 7.2 in *ibid.*, 1:190 and 180; *Epistle of Barnabas* 5.5; 6.12 and 7.2; in *ibid.*, 1:354, 360, and 364.

112. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 97.

113. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, p. 362, notes that the "starting point of all the discussion of the problem of tri-unity was the rejection of the conception of the absolute unity of God as defined on behalf of Judaism by Philo."

114. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, pp. 7ff.

115. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 138 and 56, in *ANF*, 1:264 and 223ff.

116. Theophilus, *To Autolychus* 15, in *ANF*, 2:101.

117. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 3, in *ANF*, 3:599.

118. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 93.

Sabellius, one of its early third-century exponents in Rome. Against this, Tertullian expounded a “governmental monarchy” which stressed the unity of the Godhead’s will and power, based upon an analysis of the term *monarchia* as “single rule”:

I am sure that monarchy has no other meaning than single and individual rule; but for all that this monarchy does not, because it is the government of one, preclude him whose government it is from having a son . . . or from ministering his own government by whatever agents he will.<sup>119</sup>

There is only one rule of the universe, but a hierarchy of rulers, a “trinity” of persons, numerically distinct and capable of being counted.<sup>120</sup>

Tertullian’s designation of the Son as a “*personum, secundum a patre* [a personage, next to the Father]”<sup>121</sup> is echoed by Origen, who describes the Father and the Son as “two things in respect to persons, but one in unity of thought, in harmony, and in the identity of will.”<sup>122</sup> Origen’s teaching that the Son is a *deuteros theos*, or secondary God (since his deity is derived from the Father who alone is uncreated),<sup>123</sup> is known by the technical term “subordinationism,” and was taken up by the Arians in the controversy which led to Nicaea. However, Origen also stressed the absolute likeness of the Son to the Father,<sup>124</sup> even using the term *homoousios* as a description of their kinship,<sup>125</sup> and he originated the idea that the three persons of the Godhead are distinct *hypostaseis*

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119. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 3, in *ANF*, 2:599. Cf. Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* 4, in *NAF*, 4:66; Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* 14, in *ANF*, 2:135; and Novatian, *On the Trinity* 21, in *ANF*, 5:643ff.

120. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 2, in *ANF*, 3:598. Cf. Justin’s terminology at note 95 above.

121. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 5 and 8, in *ANF*, 2:600ff and 602ff.

122. Origen, *Against Celsus* 7.12, in *ANF*, 4:643ff. Thus Origen can say, “We are not afraid to speak in one sense of two Gods, in another sense of one God” (*Dialogue with Heraclitus* 2, cited in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p.129).

123. Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, in J. P.Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Graeca*, 161 vols. (Paris: n.p., 1886), 14:108ff. Cf. *Against Celsus* 2.64, in *NAF*, 4:457; and *On First Principles* 1.3.3–5, in *ibid.*, pp. 252ff.

124. Origen, *First Principles* 1.2.12, in *ANF* 4:251.

125. Quoted by Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 2 vols. (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960), 2:78. *Homoousios*, adopted as the technical term for the likeness of the Father and the Son at the Council of Nicaea, was here used by Origen in the sense of a common specific genus. See Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp.322ff.



(substances or essences) from all eternity.<sup>126</sup> This concept of the “eternal generation” of the Son provided ammunition for the opponents of Arius as well, and it was this introduction of Greek metaphysical terminology which ironically led to the rejection of Origen’s Neoplatonic theological framework.

According to Platonism in this period, the order of reality emanates from “the One” (God) in a hierarchy, the second level being Mind or Logos, the agent of creation, and the World-Soul third. Origen found this system very convenient in explaining the order of the Godhead, since the functions of the Platonic Mind seemed analogous to that of the Son of God in Christianity, as did the World-Soul to the Holy Spirit, Origen’s teaching that the Son was “eternally generated” from the Father is also strikingly similar to the emanation of the Divine Mind in Neoplatonism. However, such a system of emanations, having no definite differentiation between creator and creation, could not be reconciled with the increasingly accepted Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*,<sup>127</sup> and was rejected by both sides in the Arian controversy. Arius was the monotheist *par excellence*, believing in “One God, alone unbegotten, alone everlasting, . . . alone sovereign,” and thus could not accept the full divinity of Christ.<sup>128</sup> Although the greatest and most perfect of all “creatures,” Christ was nonetheless “alien from and utterly dissimilar to the Father’s essence and being.”<sup>129</sup> Arius had no quarrel with the firm line between the divine reality inherent in an uncreated being (God) and that of creatures: his insistence was that Christ, the “Son,” belonged to the latter category. In fact the controversy further widened this theoretical gulf:

What emerged in the fourth century was a perception that no doctrine of mediating the spiritual and material (or uncreated and created) poles

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126. Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 2.10.75. As cited in Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 129.

127. Methodius, the platonist Bishop of Lycia, argued that there must be either a single uncreated which is ultimate and unique, or an infinite regress of uncreateds (*ageneta*). See his *On Free Will* 5 and 6, in *ANF*, 6:358ff.

128. Letter of Arius to Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, as cited in James Stevenson, ed., *A New Eusebius* (London: Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 1970), p. 346.

129. At least this is the way Athanasius characterizes his opponent’s belief, in *Oration Against the Arians* 1.2.6, in *NPNF-2*, 4:309.



of the Platonic dualism could suffice if God were really infinite and incomprehensible and Christ were really God.<sup>130</sup>

Obviously this raised another problem as to how such a transcendent Saviour could be the “mediator” of mankind, but this so-called Christological controversy belongs to another level of the dispute, carried on well into the next century.

At Nicaea in 325 the general council almost unanimously agreed to condemn the position of Arius, but many of the conservative majority chafed at the prescription in the creed that the Son of God was “consubstantial (*homoousios*) with the Father,” since it was completely foreign to scriptural terminology.<sup>131</sup> However, the formulation had the Emperor Constantine’s strong backing, and the participants had little choice but to acquiesce. After all, the issue at Nicaea was not the unity of the Godhead in the Augustinian sense but the status of the divinity of the Son. As Eusebius explains, “the phrase ‘of the substance’ was indicative of the Son’s being indeed from the Father, yet without being as if a part of Him.” The Son was “not a part of His substance.”<sup>132</sup> Any other interpretation would have brought the charge of Sabellianism upon the Council, and “there is simply not a trace of Conservative panic over any supposed Sabellian association or tendency of the term *homoousios*,” since it was not “a definition of the unity of God, but of the full and absolute deity of Christ.”<sup>133</sup> Even Athanasius, the leader of the anti-Arian party, maintained the real distinction of the Son from the Father, albeit insisting that they shared the same nature.<sup>134</sup>

Although the divinity of the Son was now settled in orthodox circles, the official use of the word *homoousios* led to further controversy, and a group of “semi-Arians” (basically the heirs of the Nicene conservatives) began advocating a modification of *homoousios* to *homoiousios* to clarify that the Son was merely of “like substance” with the Father. During this heated and prolonged discussion Athanasius seems to

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130. Otis, “Cappadocian Thought,” p. 114. Cf. Athanasius, *Oration Against the Arians* 1.13.58; 3.23.4; in *NPNF-2*, 4:340,395.

131. See Eusebius of Caesarea’s apologetic letter to his church over the outcome, in Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, pp. 364ff. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 153, tells us that “philosophical analysis was needed to define precisely how the Scripture ought to be understood.”

132. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, p. 366.

133. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 24.

134. Athanasius, *Oration Against the Arians* 1.13.58; 3.23.4; in *NPNF-2*, 4:340, 395.

have hardened his stance to assert that not merely exact resemblance but *identity* of substance (*ousia*) was intended. Thus the real doctrinal innovation of the fourth century was not the creed promulgated at the Council of Nicaea but Athanasius' later use of the word *homoousios* to express identity in substance. This was "a new development in the Greek Language."<sup>135</sup>

### The Contribution of Augustine

While the leading theologians in the Eastern Church developed an explanation of the Godhead which emphasized the separate identity of the persons of the Trinity, and which became the basis of the decrees of the Council of Constantinople in 381, the definitive formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the West had to wait for Augustine, whose masterful *De Trinitate* was completed around 419. It is in Augustine that we find the relationship of the tri-une God and the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* fully developed. Although, like Origen, he was vastly influenced in his conception of God by the Neoplatonism of Plotinus,<sup>136</sup> "Augustine draws his line firmly and finally between the one Maker and the many things made."<sup>137</sup> Augustine's insistence upon and exposition of the *ex nihilo* theory reflects his earlier struggle over the problem of evil:

Just as the Alexandrian Christians developed the idea of sole beneficent Creator in an absolute sense as a response to the Gnostic cosmological dualistic speculations, so Augustine developed the specific doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation in reaction to the Manichaeism dualism, i.e., [according to Augustine] the world is not inherently evil because it comes from God's being.<sup>138</sup>

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135. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 219. He notes further (p. 268) that "the semi-Arians were substantially correct in their view that homoousios, as employed in the creed of Nicaea, really meant what they preferred to express by the word homoeousios [*sic*]."

136. James, *Creation and Cosmology*, pp. 93ff.

137. John Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, p. 163, as cited by Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 296. See *Augustine's Confessions* 7.9–11, 20–21; 12.7; trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), pp. 141ff., 154ff., and 284ff.

138. James, *Creation and Cosmology*, pp. 93ff. The Manichaeism system depicted Good and Evil as two independent and equal powers on the cosmic level which were in a constant struggle over the souls of men.

Augustine's solution to the problem of evil was to deny it any essential reality: God is totally good and created everything himself out of nothing, so it must follow that there is really no evil in creation.<sup>139</sup>

As has been noted, by Augustine's time it was well established in both East and West that being or existence in the full sense belongs to God alone.<sup>140</sup> "For all substance that is not a created thing is God, and all that is not created is God."<sup>141</sup> Because of his conception of God in terms of a single divine substance—unchangeable, incorruptible, eternal, immortal, and infinite<sup>142</sup>—he excludes every hint of subordinationism and separate identity in the Godhead. "Let no separation be imagined to exist in this Trinity either in time or space, but that these three are equal and co-eternal, and absolutely of one nature."<sup>143</sup> He could not understand or accept the Greek distinction between one *ousia* and three *hypostaseis* propounded by the Cappadocians, and preferred instead the formula "one essence or substance and three persons,"<sup>144</sup> the basic meaning behind the Greek term *prosopon* (=Latin *persona*) being that of a mask or outward visage. Consequently, everything concerning God should be expressed in the singular.<sup>145</sup> Even the use of the term "three persons" bothered Augustine; he himself explains that he only employed it to avoid the charge of Sabellianism.<sup>146</sup> As Tillich points out, August-

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139. In true Platonic fashion, Augustine insists that what we perceive as evil is really only incomplete goodness; i.e., anything less than God is imperfect, changeable, and incomplete, and to that extent unreal or illusory. See his *Confessions* 7.12 and 13 (Penguin ed., pp. 148ff). The irony of Augustine's position is that in attempting to avoid one dualism (Good/Evil), he sets up another (Creator/creation), which in effect becomes the same thing, since evil is defined as a lack of goodness or being, and this lack of true being is the prime characteristic of creation.

140. Callahan, *Augustine and the Greek Philosophers*, p. 18; cf. Hatch, note 90 above.

141. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 1.6.9, in *NPNF-1*, 3:21.

142. Augustine, *City of God* 11.24, in *NPNF-1*, M2:218; *On the Trinity* 15.5.8, in *NPNF-1*, 3:303.

143. Augustine, Letter 169, in *The Fathers of the Church*, 67 vols. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), 12:54. Cf. *On the Trinity* 6.10.11, in *NPNF-1*, 3:102ff.

144. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 5.7.10; 7.5.10; in *NPNF-1*, 3:92, 11.]

145. *Ibid.*, 5.7.9 (pp. 91ff). Whence the formula of the Athanasian Creed (see note 2 above), "yet there are not three eternal [incomprehensibles, almighties, etc.], but one eternal. . . ." Thus Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 273, notes that the Athanasian Creed is "Augustinian through and through."

146. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 7.4.7–9, in *NPNF-1*, 3:109ff.

tine's distinction of persons is "without any content"; it is used "not in order to say something, but in order not to remain silent."<sup>147</sup>

Although Augustine makes an ingenious and involved analysis of the three persons of the Trinity using internal, psychological analogies, he did not expect anyone to apprehend this transcendent Deity. In fact, such a comprehension is not within the realm of possibility:

We are speaking of God; is it any wonder if thou dost not understand? For if thou dost comprehend, He is not God. Let there be pious confession of ignorance, rather than a rash profession of knowledge. To reach God by the mind in any measure is great blessedness, but to comprehend Him is altogether impossible.<sup>148</sup>

After all, God is that unknowable, "wholly other" eternal reality with whom created beings have no essential kinship. "Whatever man may think, that which is made is not like Him who made it. . . . God is ineffable. . . . What is He then? I could only tell thee what He is not."<sup>149</sup> As the eminent Catholic scholar Etienne Gilson describes "the Christian world of St. Augustine":

Between "Him who is" and ourselves, there is the infinite metaphysical chasm which separates the complete self-sufficiency of His own existence from the intrinsic lack of necessity of our own existence.<sup>150</sup>

## Conclusion

The history of Christian thought can yield no equal to Augustine in resolving the dilemma of the doctrine of God, either in brilliance or influence. His emphasis on one God manifested in three persons rather than three persons in one Godhead has remained decisive for the Christian Church in the West to this day, and almost without exception its creeds reflect his paradoxical language:

Those three, therefore, both seem to be mutually determined to each other, and are in themselves infinite. Now here, in corporeal things, one thing alone is not as much as three things together, and two are something more than one, but in that supreme Trinity one is as much as

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147. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2:944. Cf. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, p. 358.

148. Augustine, Sermon 117.3.5, in *PL*, 38:663.

149. Augustine, *Discourses on the Psalms* 77.12, in *PL*, 35:1090.

150. Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1941), pp. 53ff.

three together, nor are two anything more than one. And in themselves they are infinite. So both each are in each, and all in all, and each in all, all in all, and all are one.<sup>151</sup>

This orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity, as we have seen, may be understood to a great extent as a consequence and corollary of the unscriptural concept of a creation *ex nihilo*. This understanding of creation did not gain acceptance until after A.D. 200, but it colors almost all subsequent theological discussion, culminating in the definitive writings of Augustine two centuries later. When the Church found itself on the path of philosophy rather than that of revelation, it had to travel the whole road and history has recorded no clearer documentation of the departure from the primitive faith held by the apostles than the acceptance of this magical God of philosophy who calls into existence all things out of nothing. It is not a doctrine which enhances the understanding of God, but must be accepted strictly on the authority of the Church, because it defies all natural experience and logic. In the words of one modern historian, "It is therefore absurd, meaningless, unverifiable and a waste of words to ask reason how that was brought into existence which previously had no existence."<sup>152</sup> In like manner the companion of *ex nihilo* theology, the doctrine of the Trinity, hardly fosters an intimate personal relationship with the loving Father in Heaven taught by Jesus. Adolph Harnack noted the disastrous results of this supposed triumph of Christian philosophy:

The educated laity . . . regarded the orthodox formula rather as a necessary evil and as an unexplainable mystery than as an expression of their Faith. The victory of the Nicene Creed was a victory of the priests over the faith of the Christian people. . . . The people must simply believe the Faith; they accordingly did not live in this Faith, but in that Christianity of the second rank which is represented in the legends of the saints, in apocalypses, in image-worship, in the veneration of angels and martyrs, in crosses and amulets, in the Mass regarded as magical worship, and in sacramental worship of all sorts. Christ as the homoousios became a dogmatic form of words; and in place of this the

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151. Augustine, *On the Trinity* 6.10.12, in *NPNF-1*, 3:103. Cf. notes 1,2,4, 126 above.

152. John H. Gay, "Four Medieval Views of Creation," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 271.

bones of the martyrs became living saints, and the shades of the old dethroned gods, together with their worship, revived once more.<sup>153</sup>

Orthodox Christianity still labors under the burden of this excess philosophical baggage, and perhaps the consequences would be even more serious if Christians actually understood and believed the doctrines officially proclaimed by their churches. Studies have shown that most churchgoers today cling to the belief in a personal God to whom they can relate.<sup>154</sup> Even Freud could recognize the absurdity of the theologian's logic vis-à-vis meaningful religion, and his indictment of their folly is the irony of an atheist who acknowledges the superiority of the testimony of the Prophets over the philosophies of men:

Philosophers . . . give the name of "God" to some vague abstraction which they have created for themselves; having done so they can pose before all the world as deists, as believers in God, and they can even boast that they have recognized a higher, purer concept of God, notwithstanding that their God is now nothing more than an insubstantial shadow and no longer the mighty personality of religious doctrines.<sup>155</sup>

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153. Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. from the third German edition (1900) by Neil Buchanan, 7 vols. in 4 (New York: Dover Publications, 1961) 4:106.

154. See for example, Douglas W. Johnson and George W. Cornell, *Punctured Preconceptions: What North American Christians Think About the Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1972), p. 44. In their poll of 2344 American church members, they posed the following statement: "I Believe in God as a heavenly Father, who watches over me and to whom I am personally accountable." Of those polled, 98.7% indicated agreement, and yet 96.4% said they subscribed to "honest and wholehearted belief" in the doctrines and teachings of their church. Technical questions about the nature of God were not included in the survey. However, it is revealing to note that while the established orthodox creedal churches have been consistently declining in membership in the past decades, the groups with a fundamentalist, biblical, personal- God orientation are booming. Perhaps the much-discussed estrangement of "modern man" (actually an intellectually elite minority—see 2 Nephi 9:28!) from God is closely related to a deeper understanding of the traditional creeds of Christianity. At any rate, Joseph Smith may be seen as a spokesman for the common man and common sense as well as a prophet if the success of his proselytizing followers is any indication. See D&C 123:12.

155. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1964), pp. 57ff.

Joseph Smith taught that the first principle of revealed religion is to know for a certainty the character of God,<sup>156</sup> and his reaffirmation of Deity as the loving, personal Father of the scriptures stands in conspicuous contrast to the confusion and obscurity of traditional and modern theologies. Just as the orthodox doctrine of an incomprehensible God who creates *ex nihilo* is clearly at odds with the prophetic proclamation in both the Old and New Testaments, by the same measure the Latter-day Saint conception of divine creation in terms of the organization of eternal matter provides a remarkable commentary on Joseph Smith's claim to be a prophet of the Living God and on his work in the restitution of all things.

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156. *HC*, 6:305.

## Nathan Smith (1762–1828) Surgical Consultant to Joseph Smith

LeRoy S. Wirthlin

One of the more touching episodes in the life of Joseph Smith was his bout with a serious illness as a young boy when the Smith family lived in Lebanon, New Hampshire, from 1811 through 1813. His mother, Lucy Mack Smith, described a long siege of typhus and vividly recalled a serious operation performed in their home on Joseph's leg for a bone infection (osteomyelitis).<sup>157</sup> The operation originally recommended by the "Council of Surgeons" was an amputation that both the boy and the mother refused. One develops great sympathy for the young man beset by country physicians who had to be dissuaded from amputating his leg. There follow the details of a seemingly gruesome operation performed at home without benefit of anesthesia or aseptic technique. Joseph's mother recalled that the bone of the leg was drilled and fragments of the bone were removed.<sup>158</sup> Lucy Smith's description of the operation is the first clue that young Joseph received unusual surgical care as the drilling of long bones in the leg was not described or published in medical literature until a later date. The combination of drilling and removing bony fragments as treatment for osteomyelitis was suggested in the late 1800s and was finally standardized following the First World War surgical experience.<sup>159</sup> It is most curious that young Joseph would receive such treatment in the early 1800s in a remote area of New Hampshire.

There is a second account of Joseph's boyhood illness and operation contained in the manuscript history of Joseph Smith dictated in 1838.

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157. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet and his Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: Published for Orson Pratt and S. W. Richards, 1853), pp. 62–66. Dictated in 1845, this manuscript was later revised and published and is now available as Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958).

158. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 65.

159. Abraham O. Wilensky, *Osteomyelitis: Its Pathogenesis, Symptomatology and Treatment* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 189.



When I was five years old or thereabouts I was attacked with the Typhus Fever, and at one time, during my sickness, my father dispaired of my life. The doctors broke the fever, after which it settled under my shoulder, and Dr. Parker called it a sprained shoulder and anointed it with bone ointment, and freely applied the hot shovel, when it proved to be a swelling under the arm which was opened, and discharged freely, after which the disease removed and descended into my left leg and ankle and terminated in a fever sore of the worst kind, and I endured the acute suffering for a long time under the care of Drs. Smith, Stone and Perkins, of Hanover. At one time eleven Doctors came from Dartmouth Medical College, at Hanover, New Hampshire, for the purpose of amputation, but, young as I was, I utterly refused to give my assent to the operation, but consented to their Trying an experiment by removing a large portion of the bone from my left leg, which they did, and fourteen additional pieces of bone afterwards worked out before my leg healed, during which time I was reduced so very low that my mother could carry me with ease.<sup>160</sup>

To our knowledge these are the only two accounts of Joseph's surgery.<sup>161</sup> This brief account, however, identifies three physicians who provided care and reveals that eleven doctors came from Dartmouth Medical College to assist with the surgery.<sup>162</sup> Mr. Kenneth C. Cramer, Archivist, Baker Memorial Library, Dartmouth College, suggested that for time and circumstance Smith and Perkins might have been Nathan Smith and Cyrus Perkins, both of Dartmouth Medical School and partners in medical practice.<sup>163</sup> Although there were no operative notes or

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160. Joseph Smith, "Manuscript History of the Church," Book A-1, Note C, p. 131, Church Historian's Office, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. The manuscript history was dictated by Joseph Smith in 1838-1839. The original is in the handwriting of Willard Richards, Church Historian during the 1850s (Leonard J. Arrington to LeRoy S. Wirthlin, 15 November 1976), and has been reprinted in Reed C. Durham, "Joseph Smith's Own Story of a Serious Childhood Illness," *BYU Studies* 10 (Summer 1970):480-82.

161. Leonard J. Arrington to LeRoy S. Wirthlin, 15 November 1976.

162. The majority of the eleven "Doctors" would have been medical students at Dartmouth as there were only two doctors on the staff at the time, Dr. Nathan Smith and Dr. Cyrus Perkins. Lucy Smith reported that there were seven physicians. (Draft manuscript for the *Biographical Sketches*, Church Archives.)

163. Larry C. Porter, "A Study of the Origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania, 1816-1831," (Ph.D

patient records, the mention of Smith and Perkins together with the eleven medical students who carried out an operation for osteomyelitis solidly identifies Nathan Smith as a contributor to young Joseph's surgical care. It was Nathan Smith who years before had developed the techniques of drilling, sawing, and removing dead bone in cases of osteomyelitis, thus preventing the unnecessary amputation of extremities.

It should be of interest to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to learn that Dr. Nathan Smith was the only physician in the United States at the time who had the vision, knowledge, and necessary surgical experience to deal successfully with Joseph Smith's medical problems. The purpose of this paper is to present a sketch of Nathan Smith's professional life which will illuminate the accounts we have of Joseph Smith's boyhood illness and surgical treatment.

Nathan Smith was one of New England's finest physicians, surgeons and medical educators. He founded Dartmouth Medical School and participated in the founding of Yale and Bowdoin Medical Schools. His published works, *Practical Essay on Typhous Fever* and *Observation on the Pathology and Treatment of Necrosis*,<sup>164</sup> the former dealing with the recognition and treatment of typhoid fever and the latter concerning the surgical treatment of osteomyelitis, were the first substantial American contributions to the understanding and rational treatment of these disorders. Both works remain classics in medical literature. During his Dartmouth years Nathan Smith wrote little; as an extremely busy physician and teacher, he had no time for personal journals or histories. The information we have on his work is gleaned from lecture notes recorded verbatim by medical students at Dartmouth and later at Yale Medical School, from letters to former students, from correspondence to his lawyer, from letters of students to their families, and from his daily account ledgers.<sup>165</sup> A great deal of research and compilation of material concerning the life of Nathan Smith has been done by Oliver S. Hayward, M.D., who has written extensively on Smith's life and medical

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diss., Brigham Young University, 1971), p.28.

164. Nathan Smith, *Practical Essay on Typhous Fever* (New York: E. Bliss and E. White, 1824); Nathan Smith, "Observations on the Pathology and Treatment of Necrosis," *Philadelphia Monthly Journal of Medicine and Surgery*, 1827, pp. 11-19, 66-75 (reprinted in Nathan Smith, *Medical and Surgical Memoirs* [Baltimore: William A. Francis, 1831], pp. 97-121).

165. This material is located in the archives of Dartmouth Library and Yale Medical School.

contributions.<sup>166</sup> Although a biography is now in progress, no definitive biography has yet been published.

Little is known of Nathan Smith's early life. He was born in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, in 1762, and grew up in Chester, Vermont. He acquired an ordinary country education but did not have opportunity to attend college. His initial interest in pursuing a medical career was sparked when he assisted a country physician, Josiah Goodhue, in performing an amputation.<sup>167</sup> On the spot he wished to become apprenticed to this surgeon.

The opportunities to obtain an American medical education in the last quarter of the eighteenth century were limited. The usual method was to apprentice under a practicing physician without a formal college education. With the introduction of American medical schools in the late 1700s, one could, in addition to the apprenticeship, obtain courses in anatomy, chemistry, and current drug treatment.<sup>168</sup> Opportunities for hospital and practical clinical experience were minimal. The long periods of medical school study combined with substantial periods of hospital training characteristic of modern medical education only evolved during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were few physicians prior to the 1800s who had received training beyond an

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166. Oliver S. Hayward, "Dr. Nathan Smith (1762-1829) - American Pioneer," *New England Journal of Medicine* 261 (3 September 1959):489-94; Hayward, "A Search for the Real Nathan Smith," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 35 (July 1960):268-81; Hayward, "Two Nineteenth Century Medical Professors: Nathan Smith and his Son, Ryno," *Bulletin of the School of Medicine, University of Maryland* 48 (October 1963):39-58; Hayward, "A Student of Dr. Nathan Smith," *Connecticut Medicine* 24 (September 1960):553-59; Hayward, "Nathan Smith's Medical Practice or Dogmatism Versus Patient Inquiry," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 36 (1962):260-67; Hayward, "The Basis in Sydenham, Rush and Armstrong for Nathan Smith's Teaching," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 56 (February 1962):343-48; Mather Cleveland and Oliver S. Hayward, "Nathan Smith (1762-1829) on Amputations," *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* 43-A (December 1961):1246-54.

167. When an amputation was to be performed, the news would spread and the village would gather for the event. Since there were no trained assistants, volunteers from the crowd were called to assist and restrain the patient for the minute or two required for amputation without anesthesia.

168. The first medical school was organized as a department of the University of Philadelphia in 1764. A second medical school was begun in New York at Kings College but was disorganized by the British occupation of the city in 1776. Harvard Medical School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, established in 1783, was the third.

apprenticeship, and there were only a few hundred physicians in the entire country who had obtained a degree in medicine by 1800.<sup>169</sup>

Before Josiah Goodhue accepted Nathan Smith as a pupil, he insisted that the young man should broaden his education under the training of a Reverend Whiting of Rockingham, Vermont. After several months study, Smith returned to Dr. Goodhue for three years as an apprentice before beginning practice in Cornish, New Hampshire, in 1787. After three years of practice and recognizing his lack of suitable education, he entered Harvard Medical School for a course of lectures. He graduated with an M.B. (Bachelor of Medicine) from Harvard in 1790, the school's fifth graduate since its beginning.<sup>170</sup> He then returned to Cornish, New Hampshire, and practiced as a circuit-riding country physician and surgeon.

Professor Nathan Smith, by Samuel Finley Breese Morse, Gift of the Medical Class of 1828.

[Graphic omitted. See source document.]

Cyrus Perkins, M. D.

[Graphic omitted. See source document.]

Recognizing the poor training of local physicians, and the inability of young men in rural New England to attend medical schools in Cambridge, New York, or Philadelphia, Nathan Smith proposed to the Board of Trustees of Dartmouth College in Hanover that a medical school should be founded and that he should become Dartmouth's fourth professor.<sup>171</sup> The Board of Trustees delayed the decision, and Nathan Smith left for Edinburgh and London where he broadened his clinical experience by working in hospitals where medical experience was concentrated. He became a member of the London Medical Society.

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169. Carlton P. Frost, "Medical Education in New Hampshire," *New Hampshire Medical Society Centennial Anniversary 1791-1891* (Concord, New Hampshire: Republican Press Association, 1891), p. 157.

170. T. F. Harrington, "Nathan Smith," in *The Harvard Medical School: A History, Narrative and Documentary: 1782-1906*, ed. J. G. Mumford, 3 vols. (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1905), 1:339. See also "Alumni Roll," *Harvard Medical School*.

171. Nathan Smith to Board of Trustees, Dartmouth College, 23 August 1796, Nathan Smith Correspondence, Dartmouth College Library.

After one year he returned with books and equipment to begin medical lectures in Hanover in 1797. Dartmouth conferred an honorary degree of Master of Arts in 1798. A professorship of Anatomy, Surgery, Chemistry, Materia Medica, and Theory and Practice was created, and Nathan Smith began the unbelievable task of singlehandedly teaching all the courses offered by the medical school, which he continued to do for many years. A review of notes taken during these lectures reveal that the courses were not superficially taught; substantial material was presented in all lectures.<sup>172</sup> Thus at age thirty-five with no college degree, with a seven month course of study at Harvard Medical School, and with a year's study in England, he established the country's fourth medical school which has remained organized ever since. With only casual assistance he continued to teach all the courses until 1810 when the New Hampshire State Legislature agreed to appoint Cyrus Perkins, a former student of Dr. Smith's, as Professor of Surgery and Anatomy. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who later occupied the Chair of Anatomy at Dartmouth, said of Smith's professorial responsibilities that he occupied not simply a "Chair, but a whole settee" of professorships.<sup>173</sup> Nathan Smith received an M.D. from Dartmouth in 1801 and the degree of M.D. from Harvard in 1811. In 1812 he became president of the New Hampshire Medical Society.<sup>174</sup>

During his Dartmouth years Nathan Smith was extremely busy. He received no salary from the college but depended on tuition from his students and also on his active medical practice for financial support. He had none of the conveniences that we now associate with a modern medical practice: no private office; no hospitals with specified care facilities; no highly trained medical colleagues with whom he could confer. All patients were seen, treated, and operated on in their own homes. To accomplish this, Nathan Smith traveled in a fifty mile radius by horseback with a few instruments and medications packed in saddlebags. A review of his account ledgers reveals that he saw many patients each day.

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172. J. S. Goodwin, Lecture Notes taken at Dartmouth, delivered at Dartmouth Medical Theater 1812–1813, Dartmouth College Library.

173. As quoted in Hamilton S. Putnam, *New Hampshire Medical Society* (Milford, New Hampshire: Cabinet Press, 1966), p. 70.

174. The New Hampshire Medical Society was founded in 1791 by Josiah Bartlett, then president of New Hampshire. (He was later elected governor.) This was the fourth medical society established in the United States. Josiah Bartlett was also a signer of the Declaration of Independence. (*New Hampshire Medical Society Centennial Anniversary*, pp. 97–104.)

His busy practice, however, also afforded medical students opportunities to gain practical experience as there was no hospital in this rural area. Medical students followed their professor on his rounds throughout the countryside; often an entire entourage of students would accompany Nathan Smith on horseback and assist him in his operations.<sup>175</sup> This arrangement also provided Dr. Smith with reliable surgical assistance. Ezekiel Dodge Cushing wrote to his father in 1809, describing his schedule as one of Nathan Smith's medical students:

. . . I am tired to death and have seen more real service since I have been here than ever I did before. In attending the lectures I find more than sufficient to employ my whole time. I have been employed in the lecture room with five others in performing chemical experiments till three o'clock in the morning two thirds of the time since the lectures have begun. . . . Last Monday afternoon the Dr. was sent for a man that had a burst in which the intestines had broke through the muscles on the belly. . . . Nineteen students with the Dr. at their head set out from Hanover about four o'clock in the afternoon, we stopt twice and arrived at Barre about four o'clock Tuesday morning, the operation was performed about twelve, we started from Barre at one and arrived at Hanover just at three, all the way on horseback, next day we had two lectures, I went to bed early Wednesday night, but all hands were called up at ten to go to see a boy that had broke his leg twelve miles off. I got home about 3 o'clock in the morning. Friday noon all hands were called to go with the Dr. to a boy that had fallen off his horse upon his head. The Dr. thought best to trepan him. . . .<sup>176</sup>

The trips to care for the critically ill were often longer than fifty miles, and several operations might be done on one trip. In a letter to his sister, Cushing mentioned traveling to operate for osteomyelitis:

. . . I have been a journey of ninety-five miles up Connecticut River in which I saw four operations successfully employed, three of them were the removing a portion of the bones which had perished in the limb, the other which was the most difficult one that I ever saw, was what I mentioned in my letter home. It took Dr. Smith above an hour

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175. Hayward, "A Search for the Real Nathan Smith," pp. 272–73.

176. Ezekiel Dodge Cushing to his father, 30 October 1809, Oughterson Collection, Yale Medical Library.

to perform it. . . . Have likewise been to Walpole to see an important operation. . . . Your loving brother.<sup>177</sup>

There was at least one student who recorded disinterest in traveling with a “concourse” of students, in the long tiring rides, cost of horse rentals, and the weariness produced by such a strenuous schedule.<sup>178</sup>

This schedule continued for years and provided Nathan Smith with considerable experience. Because of his work at Dartmouth, he was recognized as an able organizer, medical educator, physician, and surgeon. These talents were attractive to Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, where a new medical school was planned. He was offered the position of the first Professor of Surgery and Medicine at the newly organized medical school which he accepted in 1813.

He did not leave Hanover immediately, however. One of the serious matters which prevented his leaving was the great typhoid fever epidemic which spread through the Connecticut River Valley. In a letter to Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale University dated 31 March 1813, he commented,

Dear Sir . . . According to my promise to Dr. Cogswell, I intended to have visited you at New Haven last January, but before I was ready to set off on my journey, we were visited by a very fatal epidemic and instances of sickness and mortality became so frequent that I was afraid to leave my family in such perilous times; and my fears were not groundless . . . four of my children have lately been affected by the prevailing epidemic, but by the Divine Goodness have nearly recovered. I believe this country has never before been visited by sickness which has carried off so great a number of adult persons in so short a time. In some towns of this vicinity which contain perhaps from 1000 to 1500 inhabitants they have buried over fifty persons since the first of last January. The disease has not yet much abated either in its violence or frequency of attack. We hear of new cases every day, and almost every day brings me an account of the death of some friend or acquaintance. How long this dreadful calamity will be suffered to afflict us, no one can tell; but we hope and pray that when the winter is over the disease will disappear. . . . The winter here has been long and severe. . . . Your obedient servant, Nathan Smith.<sup>179</sup>

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177. Ezekiel Dodge Cushing to Mehetibal Cushing, undated, Oughterson Collection, Yale Medical Library.

178. Hayward, “A Student of Dr. Nathan Smith,” p. 553.

179. Nathan Smith to Professor Benjamin Silliman, 31 March 1813, as cited in Emily A. Smith, *The Life and Letters of Nathan Smith, M. R., M. D.* (New



The disease which swept the Connecticut River Valley has been known by several names. It was called typhus fever at the time as the distinction between Old World typhus and what we know as typhoid fever was not well understood. In 1838 the first clear differentiation between the two diseases was made.<sup>180</sup> In 1824 Nathan Smith had published a detailed description of typhoid fever; however, he did not distinguish between typhus and typhoid.<sup>181</sup> This paper is one of the best early accounts of the disease and stands as a classic of American medical writing.<sup>182</sup> His great experience was due to the prevalence of typhoid fever along the Connecticut River Valley.<sup>183</sup>

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Haven: Yale University Press, 1914), pp. 85–86.

180. Thomas McCrae, "Typhoid Fever," *Modern Medicine: Its Theory and Practice*, ed. William Osler, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: Lea Bros. and Co., 1907), 2:74.

181. Smith, *Typhous Fever*.

182. Nathan Smith's greatest contribution to the management of typhoid fever was his rational approach to treating a disorder he could not alter. He wrote, "Indeed . . . during the whole course of my practice I have never been satisfied that I have cut short a single case of Typhus, that I knew to be such; nor have I seen a solitary instance of its having terminated within fourteen days from its first attack" (Smith, *Typhous Fever*, p. 45). He taught that one would cause great mischief by using current treatment programs. Benjamin Rush, a great early American medical educator in Philadelphia, taught that vigorous bleeding should be used. Smith wrote, "So far as I can judge from my experience, bleeding does not generally produce any considerable change in this disease" (Ibid., p. 52). He taught, "In fact I feel well convinced that all powerful remedies and measures, adopted in the early stages of Typhous fever are very liable to harm, and those patients who are treated with them in the beginning, do not hold out so well in the latter stages of the disease" (Ibid., p. 48). "It does not follow, because we have no expectation of arresting the disease, that we are to neglect doing anything" (Ibid., p. 46).

His teaching would be influential in New England; at least Lucy Mack Smith did not record that any of her children were bled during their bout with typhoid fever.

183. Prior to 1920 typhoid fever was very prevalent in the United States. Estimates varied, but it was thought that 35,000 people died of the disease each year with an estimated 350,000 total number who recovered. Typhoid fever was the great killer of soldiers before World War I—in the Civil War there were 80,000 cases of typhoid fever among the Union Troops with a mortality rate of 37%. Typhoid fever is a febrile illness of several weeks duration caused by infection with *Salmonella typhosa*. The infecting bacteria are transferred from the intestinal tract (fecal discharge) of one person to the mouth of another. Great epidemics raged because of contaminated water, milk, and other food supplies. The epidemiology was discovered between 1850–1875. Sanitation efforts were

This same epidemic of typhoid fever struck the home of Joseph Smith. His mother records that all the children in the family suffered the disease.<sup>184</sup>

Joseph Smith developed typhoid fever and recovered. During the convalescence he developed pain in the arm and shoulder region from an abscess under his arm. This was wrongly diagnosed; but when it became large enough and fairly obvious, a Dr. Parker drained a quart of purulent material from the collection. Shortly thereafter Joseph developed a “fever sore”<sup>185</sup> in the left leg. Prior to antibiotics, both soft tissue abscesses and osteomyelitis were not uncommon complications of typhoid fever.<sup>186</sup> Joseph developed what we now call an acute hematogenous osteomyelitis or an acute bone infection caused by seeding of bacteria into the bone via the blood stream. To appreciate what Joseph Smith experienced and to understand the unusual contribution to the treatment of osteomyelitis made by Dr. Nathan Smith, it is necessary to explain at least in a general way the changes that occur with acute osteomyelitis in the long bones of the lower leg and to briefly review the history of the treatment of this disorder.

Bacteria reach the interior of the bone through the nutrient artery (principal artery to the bone) and through other vascular channels surrounding the membranous covering the bone (periosteum). With bacteria in the shaft of the bone and under the periosteum a process of abscess formation and suppuration (breakdown of tissue with the formation of pus) begins. The purulent material (pus) builds up pressure within the bone and under the periosteum causing severe pain. If contained under the periosteum, the purulent material may break through and enter the soft tissues and finally dissect its way to and through the

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improved, and in 1910 prophylactic vaccination was begun. With a wide-scale vaccination program and improved sanitation, the disease became less common after 1910. (See McCrae, “Typhoid Fever,” pp. 71–77). The discovery of the antibiotic chloramphenicol brought about a change in the duration and prognosis of the disease.

184. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 60–61. We are not sure of the exact date as there were typhoid epidemics in 1812 and in 1813. Nathan Smith recorded that he and his partner, Cyrus Perkins, treated fifty cases of typhoid in Hanover in the autumn of 1812. However, the epidemic of 1813 was of a larger scale. (See Nathan Smith, *Typhous Fever*, p. 53.)

185. A colloquial term in New England at the time for the local signs and symptoms of osteomyelitis.

186. McCrae, “Typhoid Fever,” pp. 166–67, 169. See also Wilensky, *Osteomyelitis*, pp. 262–67.

skin forming a chronically draining sore, if the afflicted person survives the acute stages of the disease.<sup>187</sup> With the development of suppuration a second process, bone death or necrosis, occurs. As the circulation of the bone is compromised by the buildup of pressure within the bone and for other reasons, death of rather long segments of bone occurs. The separation of the dead bone (sequestration) begins when attachments to the living ends are interrupted. In the presence of infection the dead bone (sequestrum) stimulates the formation of new bone (involucrum) which envelopes the dead fragments so that the end result is a segment of dead bone entrapped and enveloped by a cylinder of new bone. A portion of dead bone might penetrate the surrounding new bone and work its way to the surface through the skin causing a chronically draining discharge that may persist for years.

Since Hippocrates and until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the treatment of osteomyelitis consisted of applying poultices and other preparations to the diseased part to reduce inflammation.<sup>188</sup> When a fragment of bone presented itself through the skin it was merely plucked out.<sup>189</sup> Sir Benjamin Brodie, of London, whose work was published in 1832, is usually given credit for the first drilling of long bones of the leg to drain a bone abscess;<sup>190</sup> however, William Heys, of Leeds, England, published an account of his experience which began in 1786 with the direct surgery for osteomyelitis in three patients and was able to save the extremity in each case.<sup>191</sup> This involved drilling, sawing, and

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187. There are no accurate figures for mortality rate of osteomyelitis in the early 1800s. However, in the preantibiotic era of the 1900s mortality varied from 2–26%. (See Wilensky, *Osteomyelitis*, p. 237.)

188. A poultice was a hot, moist mass of linseed, bread, mustard or soap and oil between two pieces of muslin applied to the skin to relieve pain and inflammation. Poultices were of all sorts.

189. Hippocrates also taught that free-lying bony particles could simply be removed, a concept that continued to be taught through the Middle Ages and up to the eighteenth century. See Edgar M. Bick, "Orthopedic Surgery before the 19th Century, The Middle Ages," in *Source Book of Orthopaedics* (New York: Hafner, 1968), p. 33. The simple removal of loose bone presenting at the skin surface is to be distinguished from the operative exposure of bone, drilling, and removing any dead fragments, a technique which was to come later.

190. Benjamin C. Brodie, "An Account of some Cases of Chronic Abscess of the Tibia," *Medico Chirurgical Transactions* 17 (1832):239–49.

191. William Heys, "Abscess in the Tibia with Caries," in *Practical Observations in Surgery* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1805), pp. 22–25. His instructions to his first patient in 1786 should be mentioned. "Nothing more remained

removing bony fragments that were infected and dead. These attempts, however, were unknown in general and specifically unknown to Dr. Nathan Smith, who began independently and aggressively to operate for osteomyelitis in 1798 and perhaps had greater experience than the two English surgeons as this disorder was so common in early New England.

Smith's work is classic in the history of treatment of osteomyelitis as he was generations ahead of his time. Amputation continued to be the general method of late treatment until 1874 when principles described clearly by Smith in 1827 were independently rediscovered and applied.<sup>192</sup> However, it was not until after the First World War that the treatment became standardized throughout the modern medical world.<sup>193</sup> Prior to antibiotics, the overall prognosis even in the twentieth century was poor.<sup>194</sup>

Nathan Smith's clear understanding of the pathology of osteomyelitis and the principles of treatment are illustrated in lecture notes taken verbatim by a student, J. S. Goodwin, at Dartmouth in 1812.

Necrosis [i.e., osteomyelitis] - This is a disease of considerable importance but surgical writers have said little about it. Bell in his treatise on ulcers says a little, but it amounts to nothing. When matter is found within the bone, it should be punctured with a trephine<sup>195</sup> a little below the center so that the matter may be discharged. Sometimes it is punctured with a common perforating instrument with a point. When this

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to be done, which could afford a rational hope of curing this disease except amputation of the limb, or a bold attempt to explore fully the extent of the internal caries, and to remove the diseased part of the bone. I explained the case fully to my patient who submitted entirely to my judgment. . . . I was satisfied that she would not reproach me on account of my ineffectual endeavors to preserve her limb, if my attempt to remove the diseased part of the bone should prove unsuccessful" (Ibid., pp. 23-24). This same rationale would be used in Joseph Smith's case.

192. Wilensky, *Osteomyelitis*, p. 189.

193. Bick, *Source Book of Orthopaedics*, pp. 223-25.

194. E. T. Crossan, "Hematogenous Osteomyelitis: Collective Review of the Literature from 1932 to 1937," *Surgery Gynecology and Obstetrics* (International Abstracts) 66 (1938):176. He writes, "The survey of the literature on acute hematogenous osteomyelitis from January 1932 to June 1937, established one fact, and it is the only fact established clearly; namely, the disease has a poor prognosis." The course of acute hematogenous osteomyelitis was to change radically with the discovery and use of systemic antibiotics.

195. A trephine is a small cylindrical saw used to cut a circular piece of bone, usually from the skull.

is used, there should be a number of holes made, that it may discharge freely. . . . Nature begins to form new bone, which generally surrounds the decaying part, the dead bone is sometimes thrown out by the surgeon keeping the wound open. . . . The new formed bone is much larger than the original and confined both ends of the dead part within its walls. In this case, the dead bone should be cut with a trephine or Heys saw in the middle and extracted with a pair of common forceps. Sometimes the new bone may be cut with either of these instruments or a pair of strong cutting forceps. There is scarcely any case where the affected part may not be removed by the surgeon if he be skillful except in the bones of the hands and the feet. In the thigh or the leg the dead bone may be easily removed. Much perseverance is required in this disease. When the bone of any limb be removed, the limb should be kept in proper situation, that it may not be deformed. Some regard to time in this operation should be observed, for instance in the thigh, the operation should not be performed until new bone is formed in order that the limb may be kept in its proper length - the operation should not be deferred until the bone rots away, for in this case, the patient generally becomes a cripple the remainder of his day. By operating in the right time, a small piece being taken out it generally saves the loss of a large portion.<sup>196</sup>

Smith gave more detailed advice in his published paper:

Respecting the operation, the cases which occur are so peculiar, and require such different methods, that nothing more than general directions can be given. The object, however, in every case is the same; that is to remove a piece of dead bone, which has become a foreign body as it relates to the living.

The instruments which may be wanted in this operation are a probe, knife, round saw, and one or more of Heys saws, several pair of strong forceps and a pair of cutting forceps. . . . When we undertake this operation, we should be provided with all the instruments named, as we cannot always foresee at the commencement of the operation, what instruments we shall need before it is finished.<sup>197</sup>

Nathan Smith comments on his success:

When I first began to perform operations of this kind I was under the apprehension lest so much bruising and handling of the soft parts, as is

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196. Goodwin, *Lecture Notes*, p. 58

197. Smith, "Treatment of Necrosis," *Medical and Surgical Memoirs*, pp. 118–19.

sometimes necessary, to dislodge a large sequestra unfavorably situated, might be followed with bad consequences, and some of these operations have been most laborious and tedious to myself and the patient, which I have ever performed, yet I have never known any untoward circumstances to follow such operations, of which I have performed a great many.<sup>198</sup>

That he was successful was also further attested by his insistence that amputation was unnecessary. In every notebook of class lectures reviewed, Nathan Smith taught that amputation was to be avoided. A student recorded:

. . . In the beginning I mentioned Necrosis [i.e., osteomyelitis] as a disease which frequently was the cause of amputation; true it is a lamentable fact. This is the cause of many limbs being taken off. When in all cases there is hardly need of a single operation of this kind, when the surgeon understands the use of medicine. When a piece of bone is dead or matter is within the bone, I have described what is to be done in a previous lecture.<sup>199</sup>

In another set of notes, further condemnation of amputation for osteomyelitis is stressed.

It is not an uncommon thing for some surgeons to amputate for necrosis (or fever sore). When this is absolutely necessary, it acknowledges ignorance or bad practice in the former treatment as they can most always be cured by the modern mode of practice.<sup>200</sup>

In his published work Nathan Smith described the various stages of osteomyelitis and gave clear instructions in how to handle each combination of difficulties.<sup>201</sup> He wrote with the authority of one having had significant experience. We do not know what his amputation rate was, but it must have been low. Subsequent amputation for failure is not mentioned in his lectures or his published writings. From letters of medical students we know that Nathan Smith was invited to amputate seriously affected legs; but when other methods could be employed, amputation was unnecessary. In a letter to his father a medical student at Dartmouth College wrote, "I went to Concord with Doct. Smith and upward of

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198. *Ibid.*, pp. 120–21.

199. Goodwin, *Lecture Notes*, p. 71.

200. Notes taken from Dr. Smith's lectures, 1815, author unknown, p. 59, Dartmouth College Library.

201. Smith, "Treatment of Necrosis," *Medical and Surgical Memoirs*, pp. 112–15.

twenty of his students to see a limb taken off but when he got there he concluded that he could cure it without taking off the limb. . . .”<sup>202</sup>

Little is said of the aftercare of the wound. He recommended that one treat it as a simple wound with dressings, making certain that the skin edges did not heal until the wound healed from below.<sup>203</sup> On occasion he prescribed an irrigant solution if the drainage were foul. Apparently there were few problems with an open wound containing exposed bone, which was certainly not the case for future generation of surgeons.<sup>204</sup> That he was able to carry out the procedure and the postoperative care without antiseptic operative techniques and without broad spectrum antibiotic coverage is truly a marvel.

Such was the care that Joseph Smith received. He developed osteomyelitis following the drainage of an abscess during his recuperation from typhoid fever. His mother’s account states that his leg began to swell and caused great pain for two weeks or more; finally, after a good three weeks, a surgeon was called.<sup>205</sup> The surgeon incised the left leg from knee to ankle through the soft tissues.<sup>206</sup> Joseph experienced great pain during these several weeks as the wound healed and underlying pressure from undrained purulent material increased. The surgeon was again called and a second incision was made, this time down to bone, through the periosteum.

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202. Alexander Boyd to William Boyd, 26 November 1810, Dartmouth College library.

203. Smith, “Treatment of Necrosis,” *Medical and Surgical Memoirs*, p. 120.

204. When surgeons after 1870 discovered again the fact that necrotic bone should be removed surgically, there were considerable differences of opinion as to how the wound should be treated, and a great volume of literature concerning this was produced up to the 1930s. Wounds were: kept open; closed under plaster casts; irrigated with chemicals; scraped in the depths of the wound and bone cavities; not scraped. In the period between 1920–1930 there was even a great fad for purposefully placing maggots in the wound as maggots were found to generally keep such wounds clean. See Bick, *Source Book of Orthopaedics*, pp. 226–27. Techniques to cover open wounds with skin grafting were developed, and the techniques of wound closure were finally standardized after World War II. That Nathan Smith’s patients were kept at home and not in hospitals, where cross contamination of the wounds might occur, as well as the fact that few persons dressed the wounds, undoubtedly contributed to the successful result.

205. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, pp. 62–63.

206. This would have been directly over the tibia, common site for osteomyelitis.



Nathan Smith taught that perhaps in the very early stages such an incision as Joseph received might be enough; but Nathan Smith made it clear that by the time he was usually called, there was always sup-puration so that he never had the opportunity to test this idea in his practice.<sup>207</sup> He explained, however, that it was possible to treat this condition early without loss of bone:

The second stage of this disease, when matter is formed between the periosteum and the bone, still admits cure without any loss of bone. If in this stage of the disease, an incision is made through the soft parts, and the periosteum be divided as far as it is separated from the bone, and a portion of the bone be cut out with a saw or several perforations be made in the bone which has been denuded, down to medullary substance, so as to allow the matter collected between that substance and the walls of the bone to escape, the necrosis or death of bone will be prevented. By this mode of treatment I have succeeded perfectly in arresting the further progress of the disease in the bone, and the patient has recovered without loss of any portion of it.<sup>208</sup>

During the second attempt on Joseph's leg, an incision was made down to bone; but the bone was not removed or perforated to allow the egress of pus, and bone death occurred. Obviously Nathan Smith did not perform either of these procedures. As Joseph became worse and was wracked with pain, a surgical consultation was obtained ("Council of surgeons"). Dr. Stone was mentioned by Joseph's mother as being the principal surgeon up to this point.<sup>209</sup> Although Stone is not further identified, it is probable that he had studied under Nathan Smith at Dartmouth as the two procedures performed suggest familiarity with Smith's teachings although they were timidly and inadequately applied.

It is likely that Stone contacted Dr. Smith and explained that his treatment was getting nowhere, the disease was advanced, and that an amputation would be necessary. Amputations were not numerous, and this might be a good opportunity to teach young doctors. Nathan Smith

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207. Smith, "Treatment of Necrosis," *Medical and Surgical Memoirs*, pp. 11–12. Nathan Smith lamented that he was never called early: "Persons often prefer their family physician although ignorant of surgery and therefore a surgeon is not usually called till the bone is dead and there is foreign matter in the place of it" (Samuel Farnsworth, Lecture Notes, 20 October 1812, Dartmouth College Library).

208. Smith, "Treatment of Necrosis," *Medical and Surgical Memoirs*, pp. 113–14.

209. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 64.

excelled in his techniques of amputation and practiced modern concepts also in this area;<sup>210</sup> however, he was prepared to deal with whatever situation he found in Joseph Smith's home.

Thus Nathan Smith, professor and founder of Dartmouth Medical School, graduate of Harvard Medical School, president of the New Hampshire Medical Society, newly appointed professor at Yale, and the busiest physician with perhaps the largest practice in New England, saddled up with his partner, Cyrus Perkins, and their cavalry of medical students and rode the five miles from Hanover to Lebanon and the humble Smith residence. Joseph's mother later recalled their conversation as follows:

"Gentlemen, what can you do to save my boy's leg?" They answered, "We can do nothing; we have cut it open to the bone and find it so affected that we consider his leg incurable, and that amputation is absolutely necessary in order to save his life."<sup>211</sup>

Exact conversations are poorly remembered thirty years later, but there is little question that an amputation was suggested as the situation may have indeed seemed hopeless. This may have been stressed, however, to obtain permission or informed consent to carry out an alternate procedure for which there was no known precedent in medical teaching at that time. In this sense they obtained permission to carry out an experimental operation.<sup>212</sup> Joseph Smith recalled,

But young as I was, I entirely refused to give my assent to the operation [i.e., amputation] but consented to their trying an experiment by removing a large portion of the bone from my left leg, which they did. . . .<sup>213</sup>

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210. Cleveland and Hayward, "Nathan Smith on Amputations," pp. 1246-54.

211. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 63.

212. Medical litigation was not as common in 1813 as it is now; however, it did exist, as Nathan Smith was called to testify in defense of other physicians. See Hayward, "A Search for the Real Nathan Smith," pp. 274-75. From reading Joseph's mother's account one might think that she originated the operation as she remembers, "Can you not by cutting around the bone, take out the diseased part . . . and by this means you will save his leg?" (See Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 64) She was certainly aware that this operation was being done as it was common enough along the Connecticut River Valley, and she may have known of good results. It is of course better to have the patient or family suggest the "experimental" procedure rather than the surgeon insist on its being done.

213. Smith, "Manuscript History of the Church," A-1, p. 131.

There were no anesthetics for the procedure; the operation was carried out on an awake young man restrained by his father.<sup>214</sup> Joseph's mother provided a vivid description of the operation:

The Surgeons commenced operating by boring into bone of his leg, first on the one side of the bone where it was affected, then on the other side, after which they broke it off with a pair of forceps or pincers. They thus took away large pieces of the bone. . . . Joseph immediately commenced getting better, and from this onward, continued to mend until he became strong and healthy.<sup>215</sup>

We do not know who performed the surgery; perhaps Nathan Smith guided the hands of Dr. Stone, but more likely he did the operation himself, as the operation was as aggressive in degree as the two previous attempts had been timid. The procedure as described by the mother and son did, however, follow the teachings and principles laid down by Nathan Smith, and indeed it was successful.

How do we know that Smith and Perkins mentioned by Joseph were the Nathan Smith and Cyrus Perkins of Dartmouth Medical School? There were no journals or patient files; there were no operative notes, operative logs, or daily listings of operations or other services. What was recorded was the service and the professional fee rendered. If no fee was rendered, there would not have been a record of the service.<sup>216</sup>

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214. The sawing of bone and the drilling of bone was not painful in itself; however the dislodgement of the fragments with ends attached to living tissue produced acute pain. William Heys commented on this pain in his first patient: "The pain was so great during this operation of nature [i.e., development of osteomyelitis] that my patient assured me, . . . that she had suffered more pain during the whole of the six weeks . . . than I had caused during the operation necessary for removing the unsound bone" (see William Heys, "Abscess in the Tibia with Caries," p.25).

215. Smith, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 65. Lucy Smith did not view the procedure as she was repeatedly excused from the room; however, the details she records are highly accurate. Perhaps the description of the procedure presented by the surgeon or perhaps communicated by Joseph's father, who restrained the boy during the operation, was detailed enough to be branded into her memory.

216. The letter of Ezekiel Dodge Cushing to his father dated 30 October 1809, mentioned three medical events: an operation for hernia in Barre, Vermont; treatment of a broken leg in a young boy; and an operation for trepanning in another young boy. Smith's ledger of 1809 contains a fee for two of the three operations: a fee for \$25 for the hernia to a Mr. Parker of Barre, Vermont (3 October 1809); and a fee of \$20 to Samuel Brown for trepanning his boy (27 October 1809). There was no fee for the treatment of the broken leg and hence

Careful search of the Smith and Perkins daybooks and ledgers from 1811 through 1814 did not reveal a fee for the service recorded by Joseph Smith and hence no listing of the service.<sup>217</sup>

The identification by Joseph Smith of a Dr. Smith and a Dr. Perkins, in addition to the reporting of other doctors from Dartmouth Medical School, leaves little doubt as to the identity of the physicians involved. In addition, there was not another surgeon in New England who traveled with a concourse of medical students. Finally, the operation described by both Joseph and his mother is as good as a signature to an operative note, as this was an operation developed and perfected by Nathan Smith.

Joseph Smith's wounds gradually healed, and his ordeal came to an end following proper treatment. Joseph, however, continued to walk on crutches for three years and walked with a limp during his adult life. When sickness finally left the Smith home, Joseph Smith's family moved to Norwich, Vermont.

In the fall of 1813 following the typhoid epidemic, Nathan Smith moved to New Haven, Connecticut, and accepted his appointment as Professor of Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics at the Yale Medical School. He continued, however, to give lectures at Dartmouth until 1816. In 1817 he moved his family to New Haven, Connecticut, where a tenth child was born. In 1821 a medical school at Bowdoin College in Maine was opened with Nathan Smith consulting in the development of the school and giving the bulk of the medical lectures. His son, Nathan Ryno Smith, had in the meanwhile become a physician and was appointed Professor of Surgery and Anatomy at the new medical department of the University of Vermont in Burlington. Nathan Smith also gave lectures in this school. He continued an active career as a surgeon, lecturer, and writer until his death in 1828 in New Haven.

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no mention of it in his ledger. (See account ledger of Nathan Smith 1809, p. 185, Dartmouth College Library.) Nathan Smith's fee for surgery for osteomyelitis was \$11.

217. There were listings, however, of services to a Mr. Smith, father of Joseph Smith. In the daybook of Smith and Perkins 1812–1813, p. 184, there begins on 2 April 1813 a listing of fees to a “Mr. Smith, father of Joseph Smith, of this town.” This would refer to a Joseph Smith of Hanover and not Lebanon. The daybook, November 1812 through May 1815, lists nine visits to a Joseph Smith beginning in April of 1813. Joseph Smith was certainly a common name in New England; the 1810 census of Hanover, Grafton County, New Hampshire, lists two Joseph Smiths. It is probable that the Joseph Smith mentioned in the Smith and Perkins daybooks was not the same Joseph Smith of Lebanon, New Hampshire.

Much more could be said about his life. He was an expert in many areas of surgery and medicine, a master surgeon; there were few his equal in early America; his influence was felt throughout New England.

William Henry Welch, in commenting on Nathan Smith's role at Yale Medical School, wrote the following:

Dr. Nathan Smith, when he came to New Haven from Dartmouth, was already a star of the first magnitude in the medical firmament. . . . Nathan Smith shed undying glory upon the Yale Medical School. Famous in his day and generation, he is still more famous today, for he was far ahead of his times, and his reputation, unlike that of so many medical worthies in the past, has steadily increased as the medical profession has slowly caught up with him. We now see that he did more for the general advancement of medical and surgical practice than any of his predecessors or contemporaries in this country. He was a man of high intellectual and moral qualities, of great originality and untiring energy, an accurate and keen observer, unfettered by traditions and theory; fearless and above all, blessed with an uncommon fund of plain common sense.<sup>218</sup>

For members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints it is important to realize that Joseph Smith received treatment that was generations ahead of current practice and was attended to, on at least one occasion, by the most highly trained and experienced physician in northern New England who was also the only physician in the United States who aggressively and successfully operated for osteomyelitis and thereby prevented amputation. Thus Joseph received the best of care that was available for many years to come from a giant of a man who lived, taught, and practiced in Hanover, New Hampshire, only a few miles from Joseph Smith's home.

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218. William Henry Welch, "The Relation of Yale to Medicine," address at the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of Yale, 21 October 1901, cited in Harrington, *The Harvard Medical School*, 1:349.

## The Historians Corner

*Edited by James B. Allen*

BYU Studies hopes publishing a variety of personal, firsthand documents can help the history of the Latter-day Saints more easily “come alive” for its readers. It is not just the quaint spelling, grammar, and punctuation of a century gone by that does it, though these things properly reproduced are certainly necessary to a feeling for the times. More important are the hopes, frustrations, and testimonies of the Saints involved—their deepest feelings and most interesting experiences as only they could relate them. No amount of polished retelling can ever capture the genuine experience as it was recorded by the people themselves. In reading their accounts, we seem to draw closer to them and, in a symbolic but important way, become their historic friends.

Two of the four documents presented in this issue provide such an opportunity. The first, a letter, helps us experience firsthand the trials, testimony, and excitement of a group of emigrant British Saints on a trans-Atlantic voyage in 1840. The second, a journal account, presents a personal associate’s impressions of Joseph Smith during the last years of his life.

The third document presents a different perspective: that of a non-Mormon minister in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836. Here we see many of the common attitudes of the citizens of Ohio who were deeply disturbed by the growth of the church in their communities. Many of the accusations were distorted, others were completely inaccurate, but knowing them is essential to our historical understanding for they portray the attitudes through which anti-Mormons perceived the Church. Also important to the student of Mormon thought, this article by Reverend Truman Coe gives us an important new insight into LDS doctrine known in the 1830s. It has been generally assumed among modern historians that the Mormon concept of God was not fully developed at least until the 1840s. This document, however, demonstrates that at least as early 1836 other people perceived that Mormons believed in a God who was a “material being, composed of body and parts.” Few, if any, Mormon documents from this period are as explicit in their descriptions of God the Father,

and this non-Mormon document provides significant confirming evidence of what the Mormons were actually teaching.

A fourth contribution is a short note on a little-known kind of missionary calling—genealogy missionaries. Before the Church had professional genealogists compiling and collecting records in Salt Lake City, many members were set apart as genealogy missionaries to go find the records and bring back the information. This movement eventually led to the organization of the Genealogical Society.



## “We Had a Very Hard Voyage for the Season”: John Moon’s Account of the First Emigrant Company of British Saints

*James B. Allen*

By 1840 the spirit of gathering to America was beginning to excite the British Saints. Even though the official call to gather did not come from Church headquarters until that August, many British Saints had anticipated it and were ready to go. Mission leaders were concerned, however, thinking that perhaps the emigration was premature, but on April 15 they finally decided to allow it.

A number of Saints decided to go on their own, without waiting for organized companies. Others organized themselves into companies, even before the Church emigration agency was established. The first of these self-organized companies, some forty-one Saints, left Liverpool on 6 June 1840, under the leadership of John Moon. The letter which follows is John Moon’s account of that voyage written to William Clayton, and is, so far as we know, the earliest document available telling the story of a trans-Atlantic voyage of Mormon emigrants.

The letter is included in a letter William Clayton wrote on 19 August 1840 to Brigham Young and Willard Richards who were fulfilling an important mission in England. Clayton had recently been released from the British Mission presidency and was preparing for his own emigration. Moon was a cousin of Clayton’s wife and wrote to Clayton from New York. Clayton, obviously interested in the problems of an ocean voyage, used the bulk of his letter to reproduce John Moon’s report.<sup>219</sup>

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219. The letter was found in the Brigham Young papers, Church Archives. For more background, see James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton 1840 to 1842* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1974). This publication contains the earliest extant journal account of the trans-Atlantic crossing, but Moon’s document is the earliest account of any type and is therefore of special interest.

. . . Bro Jno Moon writes - N York July 22 - \* I feel glad to find my feet upon the Land of Joseph after so loud and tedious a journey; we have had a very long voyage but quite as short as any ship on the sea at the same time. Many ships which sailed before us was not come in when we was set at liberty, the captain said we had a very hard voyage for the season. Started from Liverpool on the 6th of June good wind 6 hours and then a calm 4 sick in the company on the 7th on Sabbath we had a rough wind. On the 8th was had a very high wind and water came over the bulwarks all that day and all was sick. I never saw such a day in all my days. Some crying, some vomiting; pots, pans, tins and boxes walking in all directions; the ship heaving the sea roaring and so we passed that day. On the 9th a calm. 10 good wind all day - company rather better; they all came upon Deck. Sister Hannah, Dorothy, Lydia and Alice was very sick; did not vomit much. I was sick and heaved up about 5 or 6 times and was 3 or 4 days as though I was half dead. Wm.& Thos. was very sick and vomited much. Hugh and young Henry was sick about 3 or 4 days. Old Henry was not sea sick at all-was poorly. As to the rest of the company you may measure them by our family and you get the length of the whole company. On the 11th not much wind. July 6— the scene has been very different, since the 11th of June then all our family was recovering but alas since that time we have had the bowel complaint among us and all the company has had it either in a greater or less degree except myself. Sister Hannah has had it all the way. It is the most dreadful complaint that has come to us. We was all sick at once and what made things worse I had the ill luck to scald my foot in boiling broth. With regard to ship and convenience it has been bad and I would say to all who may come here keep from Brittainia if you want peace. Come on a packet ship if you give rather more (He then speaks of provisions recommends to make our own bread and not buy biscuits). With you getting wisdom and patience for when men begin to gather the corn they thresh it; and so it is with the saints when they begin to gather they get thrashed and all the good will stand and the rotten will fall. I got up very early on friday morning July 17th saw land at 4 o'clock. Tacked off untill 2 in the afternoon when we saw land again. At 5 saw Long Island all covered with green trees and white houses such a beautiful sight I never saw. I did rejoice to behold the land of Joseph: yea, I thought it did pay for all the hardships which I had gone through. Quarantine 3 days. If you could come sometime from September to May you would not need. I got permission from the Captain to go to New York on the Sabbath arrived about 1 o'clock P.M. It was with much trouble I found the saints. I was at the meeting in the afternoon. I told them who I was and from whence I came and wither I was going. Their hearts was filled with joy and their eyes with tears. They received us

with all the care possible. All the company got in on Monday the 20th of July. We have had much affliction tis true more than I can describe but after all I do not know that I ever heard one word of murmuring in all our afflictions. We have all got over safe and in a state of tolerable health. I feel glad that we have got so far on our journey. I feel somewhat sorry for all those who have to come after us but keep up your hearts and as your day is so shall your strength be. You must expect great tribulation in the way to Zion for those who John saw had come through much tribulation and I do not know any way but one that leads to the kingdom of God. But I can say with truth that if things had been 10 times worse than was I would just have gone right ahead through all.— We had 3 storms but the Prophecy of Er Kimball was fulfilled the winds and water was calmed by prayer and the power of God. In New York we can buy a large Loaf for 6 pence sugar 3-1/2 pence Butter 6 pence other things in like manner. Potatoes much like England in price and very good. Tea, Coffee & Spirits— very cheap. I have asked after Bro Garner but I can hear nothing of him. I have also asked after Bro Benbow but they have not seen him. There were ships that sailed 10 days before us and had not come in when we go to shore. One ship had been 90 days on the water. Many of her passengers was almost worn out and many dead. Sister Eaves was delivered of a Male child on June 22nd. It died on the 27th and was buried on the 28th. Love to all &c &c. Jno moon.

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# Howard Coray's Recollections of Joseph Smith

*Dean Jessee*

So contradictory is the source material pertaining to Joseph Smith that serious students of the Prophet are forced to invest considerable time in checking its reliability. Although many witnesses claimed first-hand knowledge of Joseph Smith, careful consideration must be given to their competence to report what they claim to have observed. Among those who had more than a passing acquaintance with the Prophet was Howard Coray, a talented writer who was closely associated with Joseph Smith for a considerable period of time in the 1840s. Employed as a clerk in the Prophet's office, Coray had a particularly close vantage point from which to view his public and private activities. Important documents of the Nauvoo era in Coray's handwriting, such the Prophet's letter book, patriarchal blessing records, and the history of Lucy Mack Smith, show the trust that was placed upon him and the quality of his work.

On at least two occasions, Coray wrote a short sketch of his life, both of which give details that are not in the other. Presented below are transcriptions of the two undated manuscripts in Coray's hand. The first is published in its entirety; the second is an extract from a more lengthy account. Together they give valuable insight to the personality of Joseph Smith and his method of doing things. Copies of the two documents are filed in the Church archives. The originals are in the possession of a Coray descendant, Jennie M. Weeks, of Salt Lake City. To distinguish the two documents I have arbitrarily titled them Coray Ms #1 and Coray Ms #2.

## **CORAY MS #1**

I, Howard Coray, was born on the 6th day of May 1817 in the Township of Dansvill[e], Steuben County and State of New York. When I was about 10 Years of age, my father moved down to Pa. Luzern Co. and Township of Providence; in this State, we continued to reside until

the fall of 1838, being then in my 22 year of age. At this time my father, hearing about what a beautiful country Illinois was— the lovely Praries &c &c, got the western fever; so about the first of Dec. he put \$1000.00 worth of Mdze. in his wagon and taking myself and my brother George, he started for the west: We reached Perry Pike Co. Ills. sometime in the following January; here we were brought face to face with Mormonism. The next spring, as those who were driven out of Mo. scattered about in Ills. seeking homes, or somewhere to live, I came in contact with them, and was anxious to know something about their faith;—I attended one of their meetings; & the man's name that preached, was Joseph Wood,— a very bright intelligent person;— he took for the foundation of his remarks this scripture: “The Priesthood being changed there is made of necessity also a change of the law” —: Well, he handled this scripture in such a manner as to make me wonder where he got his information:— he showed up in a masterly manner what the Priesthood had to be changed to, and all about it. This made me anxious to follow up Mormonism, and know all about it and what there [was] in it, so on the 25th of March 1840, I and my 2 brothers, Geo. & Wm were baptized by the said Joseph Wood. On the following April I went to Nauvoo to see the Prophet and attend Conference. It so transpired that I obtained an interview with him. After eyeing and questioning me a little, he asked me if I could come and live [with] him and clerk for him; I replied in the affirmative; but desired to go home first which would take me about 2 weeks he said; that would do: So in a couple of weeks, or such a matter I was on hand to go to work. Well, I went to work the next day after my arrival at his house. The first thing he gave [me] to do was to copy a large pile of letters into a Record. This labor was performed in his kitchen, having no other place at that time to do such business—

While thus engaged, I had many very precious opportunities—great and Small, almost every day, were calling on him, some for one thing, and some for another.— politicians and preachers and of different persuasions—some with the view of testing the depth of his knowledge and, if possible, confounding him and putting [him] to shame. Well, what did I discover—that he was equal to every occasion, that he had a ready answer for all questions. I heard him say that God had given him the key of knowledge by which he could trace any subject through all its ramifications. I had heard it remarked that Joseph Smith was Sidney Rigdon's cat's paw: soon after he returned from the East he came to see Joseph, and the thought went through my mind: now I will see, who the cats paw is.—well, I did see; after passing the usual compliments, Rigdon said to Joseph:— “When I was preaching in Philadelphia after I had finished my discourse a man stepped up to me and desired me to explain something in John's Revelation, mentioning at the same time

what it was)— “Well, I could not do it, how is it Joseph?” Joseph cited him at once right off hand to a passage in Ezekiel and something in some other book of the old Testament, saying that they explained all about it.” I thought to myself, that don’t look much like Joseph’s being a cats paw.

Stephen A Douglass called to see him and ask him some questions. One thing he desired to know, was how he managed to govern a people so diverse, coming from so many different countries with their peculiar manners and customs. “Well, he said “I simply teach them the truth, and they govern themselves,” was his ready answer. Among other great men who called to see him was Cyrus Walker—a lawyer of much note; he tried to sound the Prophet, and see how deep he was. Well, it was with Walker, as it had been with all the others, he soon got enough, found Joseph too deep for his lead and line, and gave up the enterprise. Thus it was in every instance that came under my observation: how could we expect it to be otherwise— for any man who had never peered into heaven and seen heavenly things, be a match for one who had had a half a score or more heavenly messengers for teachers.

I continued the work of copying his letters until I finished the same. He then desired me to write up the Church history, saying that he would furnish all the material. I declined telling him that I did not feel myself competent for such a work— he said, if I would undertake it, I would be thankful for it as long as I lived: having more confidence in him than I had in myself, I engaged in the business of an historian. He placed in my hands some items and scraps of history for me to arrange chronologically and fix up as best I could. We had now moved into his new office— a two story building arranged to do the office work in the upper story, John C. Bennet was occupying a portion of the room engaged in writing the Nauvoo Charter: Joseph dictated much of the Charter. I could overhear the instructions he gave Bennett, and know it was gotten up mainly as Joseph required.

One morning, I went as usual, into the Office to go to work: I found Joseph sitting on one side of a table and Robert B. Thompson on the opposite side, and the understanding I got was that they were examining or hunting in the manuscript of the new translation of the Bible for something on Priesthood, which Joseph wished to present, or have read to the people the next Conference: Well, they could not find what they wanted and Joseph said to Thompson “put the manuscript one side, and take some paper and I will tell you what to write.” Bro. Thompson took some foolscap paper that was at his elbow and made himself ready for the business. I was seated probably 6 or 8 feet on Joseph’s left side, so that I could look almost squarely into Joseph’s left eye— I mean the side of his eye. Well, the Spirit of God descended upon him, and a measure

of it upon me, insomuch that I could fully realize that God, or the Holy Ghost, was talking through him. I never, neither before or since, have felt as I did on that occasion. I felt so small and humble I could have freely kissed his feet.

#### **CORAY MS #2**

On the 3d or 4th day of April, 1840, I set out with a few others for Nauvoo, for the purpose of attending conference, and to gratify a curiosity that I had to see the Prophet. Some time during the conference, I took occasion to visit him, in company with Joseph Wood. He introduced me to brother Joseph with something of a flourish, telling him that I was a collegiate from Jacksonville College. This was not true and was not authorized by me. The Prophet, after looking at me a little and asking me some questions, wished to know whether it would be convenient for me come to Nauvoo, and assist, or rather clerk for him. As this was what I desired, I engaged at once to do so; and, in about 2 weeks thereafter, I was busily employed in his office, copying a huge pile of letters into a book—correspondence with the Elders as well as other persons, that had been accumulating for some time.

While I was employed in this manner, I had many valuable opportunities; the Prophet had a great many callers or visitors, and he received them in his office, where I was clerking—persons of almost all professions—Doctors, Lawyers, Priests and people seemed anxious to get a good look at what was then considered something very wonderful: a man who should dare to call himself a prophet, announce himself as a Seer and ambassador of the Lord. Not only were they anxious to see, but also to ask hard questions, in order to ascertain his depth. Well, what did I discover? This, verily that he was always equal to the occasion, and perfectly master of the situation; and, possessed the power to make everybody realize his superiority, which they evinced in an unmistakable manner. I could clearly see that Joseph was the captain, no matter whose company he was in. Knowing the meagerness of his education, I was truly gratified, at seeing how much at ease he always was, even in the company of the most scientific, and the ready off hand manner in which he would answer their questions.

In the following June, I met with an accident, which I shall here mention: The Prophet and myself, after looking at his horses, and admiring them, that were just across the road from his house, we started thither, the Prophet at the same time put his arm over my shoulder. When we had reached about the middle of the road, he stopped and remarked, “brother Coray, I wish you was a little larger, I would like to have some fun with you.” I replied, perhaps you can as it is,—not realizing what I

was saying. Joseph, a man of over 200 lbs weight, while I scarcely 130 lbs, made it not a little ridiculous, for me to think of engaging with him in any thing like a scuffle. However, as soon as I made this reply, he began to trip me; he took some kind of a lock on my right leg, from which I was unable to extricate it; and throwing me around, broke it some 3 inches above the ankle joint. He immediately carried me into the house, pulled off my boot, and found, at once, that my leg was decidedly broken; then got some splinters and bandaged it. A number of times that day did he come in to see me, endeavoring to console me as much as possible. The next day when he happened in to see me after a little conversation, I said: bro Joseph, when Jacob wrestled with the Angel, and, was lamed by Him, the Angel blessed him; now I think I am also entitled to a blessing. To this he replied: "I am not the Patriarch, but my father is, and when you get up and around, I'll have him bless you." He said no more for a minute or so, mean while looking very earnestly at me; then said, "Bro. Coray, you will soon find a companion, one that will be suited to your condition, and whom you will be satisfied with. She will cling to you, like the cords of death; and you will have a good many children." He also said some other things, which I can't so distinctly remember.

In nine days after my leg was broken, I was able to get up and hobble about the house, by the aid of a crutch and in 2 weeks thereafter, I was about recovered—nearly as well as ever—so much so that I went to meeting on foot, a distance of a mile. I considered this, no less than a case of miraculous healing. For, nothing short of 3 months, did I think it would be, ere I should be around again, on my feet, able to resume work.

I finished the job of copying letters. I was then requested by Bro. Joseph to undertake, in connection with E. D. Woolley, the compilation of the Church History. This I felt to decline, as writing books was something, in which I had had no experience. But Bro. Joseph insisted on my undertaking it, saying, if I would do so, it would prove a blessing to me as long as I should live. His persuasive arguments prevailed; and accordingly in a short time, Bro. Woolley and myself, were busily engaged in compiling the church history. The Prophet was to furnish all the materials; and our business, was not only to combine, and arrange in cronological order, but to spread out or amplify not a little, in as good historical style as may be. Bro. Woolley's education, not being equal to mine, he was to get the matter furnished him in as good shape as he could; and my part was to go after him, and fix his up as well as I could, making such improvement and such corrections in his grammar and style as I might deem necessary. On seeing his work, I at once discovered, that I had no small job on my hands, as he knew nothing whatever of grammar; however, I concluded to make the best I could of a bad job,



and thus went to work upsetting and recasting; as well as casting out not a little. Seeing how his work was handled, he became considerably discouraged; and rather took offence at the way and manner in which I was doing things, and consequently soon withdrew from the business.

Immediately after Bro. Woolley left, I succeeded in obtaining the services of Dr. Miller, who had written for the press, and was considerably accustomed to this kind of business. Now I got on much better. I continued until we used up all the historical matter furnished us by the Prophet. And, as peculiar circumstances prevented his giving attention to his part of the business we of necessity discontinued our labors, and never resumed this kind of business again.

I next engaged in school teaching; which was my main avocation, for livelihood, while I resided in Nauvoo.

Subsequent, some three or four weeks, to getting my leg broke, & while at meeting, the blessing of the Prophet came into my mind, viz: "that I should soon find a companion, &c &c." So I thought I would take a square look at the congregation, and see who there was; that, possibly, the fair one promised me, might be present. After looking and gazing awhile at the audience my eyes settled upon a young lady, sitting in a one horse buggy. She was an entire stranger to me, and a resident of some other place. I concluded to approach near enough to her to, scan her features well, and thus be able to decide in my own mind, whether her looks would satisfy my taste. She had dark brown eyes, very bright and penetrating; at least they penetrated me; and I said to myself, she will do; the fact is, I was decidedly struck. After the dismissal of meeting, instead of going for my dinner, I remained on the ground, and presently commenced promenading about, to see what I could see. I had not gone far, before I came square in front of the lovely Miss, walking arm in arm with a Mrs. Harris, whom I was well acquainted with. They stopped and Mrs. H. said, "Bro. Coray, I have the honor of introducing you to Miss Martha Knowlton, from Bear Creek." I, of course, bowed as politely as I knew how, and she courtesied, and we then fell into, somewhat familiar conversation. I discovered at once, that she was ready, off hand, and inclined to be witty; also, that her mind took a wider range, than was common for young ladies of her age. This interview, though short, was indeed very enjoyable; and closed with the hope, that she might be the one, whom the Lord had picked for me; and thus it proved to be. I shall not go into all the details of our courtship; suffice it to say, every move I made, seem[ed] to count one, in the right direction. I let Bro. Joseph into the secret—showed him a letter that I had written, designed for her. He seemed to take uncommon interest in the matter, took pains to see her and talk with her about me, telling her that I was just the one for her. A few letters passed between us; I visited her at her home, proposed,

was accepted; and, on the 6th day of February 1841, we were married at her father's house—Bro. Robt. B. Thompson performing the ceremony. I will say in this connection; that, what the Prophet said, in regard to the companion which I should soon find, has been fully verified. . . .

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## Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism

*Milton V. Backman, Jr.*

One of the most descriptive summaries of the early history of the Restored Church and concise analyses of the distinguishing beliefs of the Latter-day Saints written by a nonmember during the 1830s was prepared by Reverend Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister who had lived among the Saints in Kirtland for about four years. Published in the 11 August 1836 issue of *The Ohio Observer*, this article aptly reflects the myths, facts, truths, and errors about the Mormons that were being circulated in Kirtland in the mid-1830s.

When Coe wrote this article, Latter-day Saints had not yet published a comprehensive history unfolding the major events which had occurred in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith nor had he or other members produced an articles of faith to summarize many of the most significant characteristics of their theology. Although Oliver Cowdery had published in *The Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* in 1834 and 1835 accounts of some of the important events in Church history and had included descriptions of many of the distinguishing beliefs of the Latter-day Saints, Coe did not employ these articles as the primary source for his work.<sup>220</sup> Instead, his account seems to have been based primarily on his personal observations and on concepts he had learned from others.

Reverend Coe wrote this article while he was serving as pastor of the Old South Church in Kirtland, a congregation that was experiencing a significant decline in membership in the mid-1830s. This religious group had been organized as a Congregational body in 1819. Three and a half years later, these Calvinists decided to unite with the Grand River Presbytery in harmony with the Plan of Union in which Congregationalists and Presbyterians agreed to cooperate rather than compete

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220. *The Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (1834):13–16, 42–43; 1 (1835):77–80; 2 (1835):193–202.

in western communities. Although they were organized as a Congregational Church, the members remained under the jurisdiction of the Presbyterians until 1847. Reverend Coe began his pastorate in 1833 and continued serving the inhabitants of Kirtland until his retirement from the ministry in 1848.<sup>221</sup> According to reports submitted to the Grand River Presbytery and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, one year after Coe assumed leadership of the Calvinists of Kirtland, membership increased from 50 (February 1833) to 140 (February 1834), representing the single largest increase in the early history of that congregation. But membership declined to 116 in 1835 and in February 1837 there were only 75 communicants.<sup>222</sup> The loss of almost half of his congregation undoubtedly disturbed Coe. Only a few of his parishioners united with the Latter-day Saints, but undoubtedly many emigrated in search of lands located father west, partly to escape the constant flow of Saints settling in Kirtland.<sup>223</sup> Aroused because of the decline in his congregation, Coe wrote this article to warn others of what he considered to be an impending problem and submitted it to a newspaper printed in Hudson, Ohio, *The Ohio Observer*, which was allied with the orthodox Calvinistic movements of America.

“Priest Coe,” as he was known, lived in an age of ridicule when many writers employed vicious terms to denounce their religious and political opponents. This slovenly system of propaganda produced innumerable

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221. Marion A. Crary, “Extracts from ‘A Brief History of the Congregational Church of Kirtland, Ohio,’” n.p., n.d., pp. 1–9; Mary B. Sim, “Old South Congregational Church,” *The Historical Society Quarterly, Lake County, Ohio* 2 (1960):n.p., reprinted in *The Historical Society Quarterly, Lake County, Ohio*, 1959–1975 (Painesville, Ohio: Painesville Publishing Co., 1976), pp. 20–21.

222. Minutes of the Presbytery of Grand River, 1814–1836, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, pp. 184–85, 229, 252–53; Minutes of the Presbytery of Grand River, 1836–1848, Western Reserve Historical Society, pp. 26–27. Microfilm copies of these minutes are located in the Genealogical Society, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. See also *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1836* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1836), pp. 358–59; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1837* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1837), p. 572.

223. Oliver Harmon, Jr., a member of the Old South Church in Kirtland, was baptized a member of the Restored Church on 13 July 1836. His name appears on a subscription list of the South Church which is dated November 1832. “Subscription List,” Western Reserve Historical Society. See also Sim, “Old South Congregational Church,” p. 21.

articles in Ohio newspapers which greatly distorted the history and message of the Restoration. Although Coe resorted to the name-calling that was so popular in that decade and reported some incorrect concepts, his work was one of the most accurate articles on the Latter-day Saints written by a non-Mormon in the 1830s. Only by comparing this work with more than 100 other articles which appeared in the Ohio newspapers during the thirties can one fully appreciate Coe's contribution.

There is no mention in his brief historical sketch of Joseph Smith's First Vision, of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood, or of the testimony of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon plates. Although the Prophet had written at least two short histories prior to 1836 which included a description of the First Vision, an account of this sacred experience had not yet appeared in print, and following the pattern employed by Oliver Cowdery in his short history, Reverend Coe began his sketch with the visions which led to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Most of Reverend Coe's descriptions of conditions in Kirtland in mid-1836 harmonize with other records. His estimate, for example, of one thousand members in Kirtland is not far different from other accounts<sup>224</sup> and his analysis of the poverty and sacrifices of the Saints while they were building the temple also coincides with other documents. Coe's statement, however, that some of the wealthy members held three or four thousand acres of land in different parts of the township does not agree with the land and tax records of Geauga County. In 1836 Latter-day Saints paid a property tax on only about one thousand acres, and land records indicate that none of the known Latter-day Saints owned more than 140 acres in Kirtland Township.

Of particular interest to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Reverend Truman Coe's description of the Latter-day Saint concept of God. While considering the most distinguishing characteristics of Mormon theology, he reported in 1836 that members of the Restored Church held that "the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts" and that Adam was formed in the image

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224. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-51), 2:296; "An Account 'About the Mormons,'" B. C. Fowles Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society. This latter manuscript provides the more precise estimate of 800 Latter-day Saints living near the Kirtland Temple in 1836-37.

of his Creator. While many contemporary records reflect that members emphasized such a belief during the Nauvoo period, Coe's narrative discloses that Latter-day Saints taught this concept during the Kirtland phase of Church history.

The account reproduced below is Coe's article as it appeared in the 11 August 1836 issue of *The Ohio Observer* (Hudson), p. 1, col. 6; 2, p. 2, cols. 1-2. This article was reprinted with only a few changes, primarily in punctuation, in *The Cincinnati Journal and Western Luminary*, 25 August 1836, p. 4, cols. 2-4.

For the Ohio Observer.

MORMONISM.

Mr. Editor.

Dear Sir:—Having been for the last four years located in Kirtland, on the Western Reserve, I have thought proper to make some communication to the public in relation to the Mormons, a sect of Religious Fanatics, who are collected in this town. This service I have considered as due to the cause of humanity, as well as to the cause of truth and righteousness. What I have to communicate shall be said in the spirit of candor and christian charity.

Mormonism, it is well known, originated with Joseph Smith<sup>225</sup> in the town of Manchester, adjoining Palmyra, in the state of New York. Smith had previously been noted among his acquaintances as a kind of Juggler, and had been employed in digging after money. He was believed by the ignorant to possess the power of second sight, by looking through a certain stone in his possession. He relates that when he was 17 years of age, while seeking after the Lord he had a nocturnal vision, and a wonderful display of celestial glory. An angel descended and warned him that God was about to make an astonishing revelation to the world, and then directed him to go to such a place, and after prying up a stone he should find a number of plates of the color of gold inscribed with hieroglyphics, and under them a breastplate, and under that a transparent stone or stones which was the Urim and Thummin mentioned by Moses. The vision and the command were repeated four times that night and once on the following day. He went as directed by the angel, and pried up the stone under which he discovered the plates

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225. We understand that this same Joseph Smith is now held in bail to appear before the next court for public assault on a respectable citizen in Kirtland. —Ed. Ob.

shining like gold, and when he saw them his cupidity was excited, and he hoped to make himself rich by the discovery, although thus highly favored by the Lord. But for his sordid and unworthy motive, when he attempted to seize hold of the plates, they eluded his grasp and vanished, and he was obliged to go home without them. It was not till four years had elapsed, till he had humbled himself and cast away his selfishness that he obtained a new revelation and went and obtained the plates.

The manner of translation was as wonderful as the discovery. By putting his finger on one of the characters and imploring divine aid, then looking through the Urim and Thummin, he would see the import written in plain English on a screen placed before him. After delivering this to his emanuensi, he would again proceed in the same manner and obtain the meaning of the next character, and so on till he came to a part of the plates which were sealed up, and there was commanded to desist: and he says he has a promise from God that in due time he will enable him to translate the remainder. This is the relation as given by Smith. A man by the name of Harris, of a vissionary turn of mind, assisted in the translation, and afterwards Oliver Cowdery. By the aid of Harris's property, the book was printed; and it is affirmed by the people of that neighborhood, that at first his motives were entirely mercenary,—a mere money speculation. The book thus produced, is called by them *The Book of Mormon*; and is pretended to be of the same Divine Inspiration and authority as the Bible. The Mormons came in Kirtland about six years ago; being taught by their leaders that this was one of the stakes of Zion,—the eastern borders of the promised land. Not long after their arrival in Kirtland, a revelation was obtained that the seat and center of Zion was in Jackson county, in the western part of Missouri; and thither a multitude of them repaired, with Smith at their head. Soon after they were routed and expelled from the county by the infidels, and many of them returned to Kirtland. There they have been gathering their converts from various parts of the United States, until their present number probably amounts to upwards of one thousand: besides the transient companies of pilgrims who come here from the east to inquire the way to Zion, and then pass on to Missouri.

They have built a huge stone temple in this town, fifty feet high, and 60 by 80 on the ground, at an expense of \$40,000. On the front is this inscription, "The House of the Lord, built by the Latter-day Saints." The lower story is the place of worship, the middle for the school of the prophets, and the upper for an academical school; a distinguished professor of Hebrew is their teacher. He is now giving his second course, with about one hundred in each class.

While I am exposing these palpable impositions of the apostles of Mormonism, candor obliges me to say, that many of the common people

are industrious, good neighbors, very sincerely deceived, and possibly very sincere christians. They seem to delight in the duty of prayer, and the services of devotion, and their zeal goes far beyond any thing seen among sober christians. Some are enterprising and intelligent, conversant with the bible, and fond of reading; and here, I apprehend, many who have heard of them only by common report, are mistaken; supposing them all to be ignorant and degraded, and beneath the notice of all respectable people. The prevalence of religious delusion is not to be attributed so much to mere ignorance, as to the structure and prejudices and pernicious habits of the mind,—a pre-disposition to be captivated with any thing that is new or wonderful. It is furthermore proper to notice that this religious sect have been slandered, and belied, and persecuted beyond measure. We entirely disapprove of those violent measures which have been taken with them in Missouri and some other places; 1st, because it is an outrage upon inalienable rights—all men justly claiming to be protected in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and 2d, because it is unwise; persecution being the most effectual way to build up fanatics in error and delusion. But since there is a certain class in every community who are predisposed to embrace any wild delusion which chances to meet them, and since many such have already been deceived and lured away to Kirtland and to Zion and have been disappointed and distressed, and reduced to poverty and want; and, moreover, since there are now many converts abroad who are looking to this place with longing eyes, as to a land flowing with milk and honey, and expecting, when they find the means of getting here, to bid farewell to all earthly sorrow, we think the world have a right to know the state of things among them. Many of them live in extreme indigence. They suffer accumulated evils by crowding a multitude of poor people together, when, by a wider distribution, they might have better means of supplying their wants. Some of them are wealthy, and they have purchased 3 or 4000 acres of land in different parts of this town. A grotesque assemblage of hovels and shanties and small houses have been thrown up wherever they could find a footing; but very few of all these cabins would be accounted fit for human habitations.

About the first of May, 1834, a company of armed men from this place, about 100 in number, by command of Joseph, commenced a crusade to Missouri, to expel the infidels of Zion, and to reinstate their brethren into their possessions; at the same time he assured them by a revelation from heaven, that the expedition would succeed and the object be attained. When these gallant knights-errant arrived in Missouri, they were met by some of the constituted authorities and warned to desist; and Joseph very prudently had a revelation that the war was at an end. After spending the hottest part of the season on this long



tedious pilgrimage of 2000 miles, having suffered great hardships, and numbers having been swept off by the cholera, they returned in straggling companies to Kirtland. Those of them who remained here during the campaign, were required to work one each week on the temple; and the poor females were instructed to part with even the necessaries of life in aid of the same object. They looked forward to the completion of the Temple as a Grand Era, when Christ would descend and dwell among them, and commence his reign on earth. These burdens are severely felt by the poor people among them, and can only be sustained by the unconquerable strength of their faith. Last summer a man came to Kirtland and brought among the Mormons four Egyptian mummies. The exhibition exactly struck their fancy. All the Mormons flocked to see the wonderful sight; and Joseph deciphered some of the hieroglyphics, and made known in writing the name and character and antiquity of some of the mummies;—this was an additional proof of his divine inspiration. The man continued with them a week; and then a command was given them to purchase the whole, which they did for \$2400. The mummies were soon sent out for exhibition by one of their apostles, but being unsuccessful, he brought them back to Kirtland, and threw them aside. There is reason to believe, that many who come here with high expectations, have met with sore disappointment. They expected to find everything in apostolic order; but instead of this, they have found a whiskey selling tavern, a pugnacious prophet, and an inhospitable people. Some poor, families, after long journeys to see this Promised Land, have met with a cold repulse; have been compelled to sleep out of doors, and to remain in a community the most unfavorable to get a livelihood, and under a spiritual hierarchy, who bind heavy burdens grievous to be borne, but will not touch them with one of their fingers.

The Mormons to a man all abhor priests, and priestcraft, and societies, and the whole system of religious institutions among established churches; and yet they themselves are the most obsequious and abject slaves to the spiritual rule of their leaders. All their affairs, small and great, are directed by special revelation. By a miserable attempt to ape the language and style of scripture, they clothe their commands with the authority of heaven; and the people have nothing to do but to hear and obey. If the prophet demand their money for the Lord's treasury, he can have it by uttering a Thus saith the Lord. By these sacrifices, they give what among selfish men would be called a pretty good proof of sincerity at least. Thus it happens, that those who complain loudest of priestcraft, are the most wofully priestridden of all men.

In regard to their religious sentiments, the fundamental principle of Mormonism is, that God continues to hold intercourse with the saints on earth by visions and revelations, as freely and familiarly as he

has done in any age of the world. That the true church have the same power to cast out devils, to speak with new tongues, to take up serpents, to drink poison unhurt, and to recover the sick by laying on of hands. They make great use of the declaration of our Savior in Mark xvi. 17,18, and strenuously contend that the promise applies to all that believe in every age.

They contend that the God worshipped by the Presbyterians and all other sectarians is no better than a wooden god. They believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him about the size and shape of God himself. They believe in the final restoration of all men except apostate Mormons. They blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, and can never have forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Their avowed object is to restore christianity to its primeval purity. In the true style of fanaticism they regard themselves as the exclusive favorites of heaven; and the whole religious world as natural brute beasts that know nothing. After the example of our Savior they have recently ordained and commissioned twelve apostles and seventy elders, to go throughout this heathen country and to give a final call to repent and be baptised and believe in Mormonism before the wicked are cut off. The people of this region are viewed by them as standing in the place of Chorasm and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, unwilling to believe, in spite of all the mighty works they have tried to perform. They are habitually pretending to speak in tongues, and to the working of miracles, but nobody can have any evidence of these wonders but those who have Mormon eyes and Mormon ears. When they first came to Kirtland, Mr. Rigdon joined them, and a few families followed in his train; but otherwise of the former inhabitants, scarce a single conversion has happened since. The fact is that the people are well assured that all their pretensions to miraculous gifts of every kind, are a sheer imposition. But whenever any miracle fails, they have a convenient salve at hand to account for the failure; that is the want of faith: a most impudent and officious intruder, always ready at hand to nullify all their pious efforts, and to render them weak and feeble as other men. Instances frequently occur which may serve as examples of their power of healing. A young man lying on a bed of sickness, sent after Smith and his elders to come and heal him. After praying over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, he commanded the disease to depart; pronounced him healed, and ordered him to rise and walk. Stimulated by the circumstances and by high expectation, the youth rose up and attempted to walk; but presently becoming faint, by the help of bystanders he betook himself to the bed again, and grew worse. They of course imputed his sudden relapse to the failure of his

faith. He then sent for the regular physician, and by faithful means he recovered. Another late instance was a young woman lying at the point of death with the measles. The elders were called to lay hands on her in like manner; and very soon afterwards she was a corpse. The prophet has undergone repeated trials before the church, and has made frequent confessions; and among the faithful, this is accounted as additional proof of his humility and divine inspiration. They only class his failings with those recorded of the ancient prophets. But the faith of many among them has failed, and they have had honesty enough to confess it. They have opened their eyes—the delusion has vanished, and they have been astonished at their besotted infatuation.—Frequent depredations have happened among them, and it has sometimes required the art and assiduity of all their prophets and priests and elders to keep the whole babel from tumbling down together.

It is difficult to foretell how long it will take this gust of Fanaticism to spend itself, and die away, and sink to the oblivion of the 100 others which have gone before it. Situated as we are, we have need of patience; and we often realize the truth of Solomon, that “Though you should bray a fool in a mortar with a pestle, yet will not his folly depart from him.”

On the whole, the vice of Mormonism must be accounted one of the most palpable and wide-spreading delusions which this country has ever seen; and nothing can equal the zeal of their leaders in its propagation. The completion of the temple, according to the pattern shown to Joseph in vision, is a monument of unconquerable zeal. The imposing splendor of the pulpits, the orders of the Melchisedec and the Aaronic priesthoods, and the vails which are let down or drawn by machinery, dividing the place of worship into several apartments, presents before us a strange compound of Jewish antiquity and Roman Catholic mummery. The reproof which the prophet addresses to ancient Israel that they dwelt in ceiled houses while the Temple of God was laid waste, can never be applied to these Mormons.—Stimulated by strong faith and zeal, you will see them muster all their forces for miles around to hear the brethren speak in tongues, and proclaim the wonderful works of God. In this view they give to those who call themselves sober christians a most severe rebuke. If they had half the zeal of these misguided Mormons, the world would tremble, and the millennial day would speedily be ushered in. Yours, in the bonds of the Gospel.

Truman Coe.

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## Missionaries for the Dead: The Story of the Genealogical Missionaries of the Nineteenth Century

*Jessie L. Embry*

The Latter-day Saints' enthusiasm for the restoration of the gospel led to many interesting types of missions in the nineteenth century. Members were "called" not only to preach the gospel, but also to go to the gold mines in the 1850s, to gather rags for making paper during the economic crisis of the 1860s, to serve as M.I.A. and Sunday School missionaries, to go to Europe to study art, and to go East for higher education and medical training.<sup>226</sup> Because they believed in salvation for the dead, genealogical work also became an important part of their missionary activities.

But doing genealogical research then was more difficult than it is now. As the records were not available in Utah, the immigrating Saints were encouraged to bring with them genealogical information concerning their friends and relatives, living and dead, who might not have the chance to come to Zion or who might never accept the gospel in this life. Then they would be able to have the necessary ordinance work done for them in the temples. An editorial in the *Millennial Star* warned those coming from England:

If you neglect the opportunities you now have to secure the information, you will see the time when you will perhaps seek for it, but not be able to find it until you have so far paid the debt of your neglect, that some kind angel from the spirit world will be justified in bringing you the necessary intelligence.<sup>227</sup>

Those who were already in Utah and had not brought their records with them tried to get the necessary information by writing letters

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226. See A. Glen Humphreys, "Missionaries to the Saints," *BYU Studies* 17 (Autumn 1976):74:100.

227. "Editorial," *Millennial Star*, 15 (6 August 1853): 521–23.

or visiting their relatives. Correspondence was not always successful, because relatives who had opposed the Church frequently would not answer the letters. Others did not have the necessary dates, and their ministers were not always willing to check through church records. Consequently, many members of the Church decided to search the records themselves, which often meant returning to their homelands, many as genealogical missionaries.

Some of their names were included on the official missionary lists of the Church with a special note that they were going to work on their genealogy. Some of the brethren also recorded the names of some additional people who had been set apart to serve on this type of mission. These records show that between 1885 and 1900 at least 178 Saints served as genealogical missionaries. Most of them were middle-aged or older retired men, although some young men and women and even a few couples went. They were mainly from Utah and the majority of them went to England. They were not required to serve for any set length of time. Franklin D. Richards went on one genealogical trip for seventeen days while John Adams Wakeham spent over three years gathering his genealogy.<sup>228</sup>

Genealogical missionaries were also different from others in that there were few if any formal calls made, the members simply volunteered to go.<sup>229</sup> They were invited to come to Salt Lake City to be set apart by one of the General Authorities and to be given a missionary card. In addition they were given a clergy discount card which allowed them to travel to Chicago for \$6.25.<sup>230</sup> As they were set apart, they were

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228. Consideration of material in the Church Archives reveals the following profile of 178 genealogical missionaries from 1885–1900: *Age*: Under 20 (1); 20–30 (6); 30–40 (7); 40–50 (32); 60–70 (16); 70 and over (6). *Sex*: Male (135); Female (43). *Home Residence*: Utah (128); Idaho (7); Arizona (2). *Mission to*: Great Britain (90); United States and Canada (51); Europe (2). (Missionary Record, Reel 2 [1830–1906], Missionary Department, Church Archives; Franklin D. Richards Journal, Franklin D. Richards Collection, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.) The figures given in some sections of this profile do not total 178 because the records were not complete.

229. In response to a letter from Elder M. H. Fitzgerald, Franklin D. Richards, of the Quorum of the Twelve, said that if he wanted to go to Virginia to do his genealogy he should come to Salt Lake City to be set apart. Richards to Fitzgerald, 30 April 1892, Franklin D. Richards Collection, Church Archives.

230. Elder Richards told C. M. Hubbard that he would receive this missionary rate for his trip to visit his friends in the East. Richards to C. M. Hubbard, 23 November 1883, Franklin D. Richards Collection, Church Archives.

instructed not only to search for the names of their ancestors but also to try to preach the gospel to their living relatives. On one occasion, for example, Franklin D. Richards recorded in his journal,

Yesterday I blessed Elder John Luther Dalton of the 5th ward Ogden for a visit and a mission to various states in the Union to visit relatives and search for the genealogy of his ancestors as well as to testify of the work of God unto them . . . and gave him a letter of appointment.<sup>231</sup>

Several of the missionaries left journals that give us some idea of what a genealogical mission was like. They wrote of visiting relatives, copying family Bibles and other records, and of trying to find out everything that people knew about their ancestors. They also went to the parish churches spending hours searching through the old registers. They searched cemeteries to find the gravestones of their relatives. Many recorded having special spiritual experiences where they felt the Lord had miraculously directed them to the proper sources.

John Adams Wakeham, who was set apart for a genealogy mission in 1891 by John Henry Smith, returned to New England and recorded several spiritual experiences during his mission. On one occasion he went to visit a distant relative whom he had never met. He knocked on the door and when a lady answered he said that he was a relative of the Copp family and he had been directed to her since she was the granddaughter of William H. Copp. He asked if she had any of the history of the family. She questioned him for fifteen minutes and then told him that he had an honest face and she would let him come in. It turned out that she had been trying to gather the genealogy but had not been very successful.

Wakeham's brother suggested that he visit a Dr. John R. Ham in Dover, Maine, who had done some genealogy. Dr. Ham was a member of the New England Historic Genealogical Society and had a library with many books on genealogy. In these Wakeham found the name of his great-great-grandfather and also learned that his great-grandfather was an Indian, confirming a family tradition concerning an Indian ancestor, and also confirming a statement in Wakeham's patriarchal blessing that identified him as a literal descendant of Joseph.

Wakeham did not spend all his time doing genealogy. He stopped to see many friends and spent a great deal of time helping them. He spent

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231. Franklin D. Richards Journal, 7 February 1890, Franklin D. Richards Collection, Church Archives.

two summers, for example, on the farm of A. H. Wenworth. At the end of his mission he expressed gratitude for the help these friends gave him, but he was very disappointed that few of them had the courage to accept the gospel. He returned to Salt Lake City in 1894.<sup>232</sup>

Another missionary, John Amor, also an English convert, later wrote that he had always been interested in genealogy. As a child, in fact, he had spent much time reading the inscriptions on the tombstones in the churchyards because he had no playmates. After a long search for the right religion, he had joined the Church in 1867 and emigrated to Utah. He and his wife received their endowments in the Endowment House. He later wrote that shortly thereafter, "I began to have dreams concerning work for the dead. Several times a week I dreamed that I had died and had neglected to do work for those who had died and they were very much displeased with me, which caused me much sorrow." He said that the dreams did not cease until he finally started his genealogical work. He gathered as much information as he could from his mother. However, when Apostle Mariner W. Merrill said in the Logan Temple, "You should use every means in your power to gather your genealogy by writing and inquiry and not rest until all means are exhausted," he decided he had not done enough. He was set apart for a mission in 1896 and was promised that he would go and return in safety and be able to find the records of his ancestors.

Amor left with only five dollars in his pocket and arrived in England with three. Since he was on a special mission, he was allowed to travel without a companion, and in his search for the records he walked 1,400 miles and traveled 600 miles by rail and by water. He recorded several miraculous experiences. In one town he was allowed to check the parish records and instead of charging him the regular fee, the minister gave him fifty cents. Amor converted one member of his family to the gospel, but "the devil entered the wife of the family and said all manner of evil against me." The husband wrote to the mission president to see if the records that Amor had were correct and even tried to take them away from Amor. Because of these problems and because winter was approaching and Amor had no money, the mission president told him he could be released if he wanted to be. He was not sure that he wanted

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232. John Adams Wakeham Autobiography, Church Archives.



to go home, but, feeling that the president would not have suggested it if it were not the right thing to do, he returned to Utah.<sup>233</sup>

One of the most ambitious of all the genealogical missionaries was Franklin D. Richards, who later became the first president of the Genealogical Society. He went on several short genealogical missions to gather information from his relatives in Massachusetts. For example, in 1890 he and his son Charles spent nearly a month visiting friends and relatives and gathering genealogy in the East. After returning to Salt Lake City, he recorded in his journal,

Thanks and praise to God . . . for his good salvation and for the information that I was enabled to obtain in Lanesborough, Pillsfield, Richmond and other places of men whom I never saw before concerning our Dead that I may prepare a proper Record of my work such as will be acceptable when the dead shall be judged out of the Books that shall have been written.<sup>234</sup>

Later, as he was arranging these names for temple work, he recorded,

It is quite singular and rather wonderful how much thought, study and care is required to get the temple work ready and be sure of its accuracy when we have to pick it up in such a fragmentary condition as it comes to us.<sup>235</sup>

Many of the journals are so sketchy, it is hard to determine how successful the missionaries were in gathering their genealogy. A letter from Duncan M. McAllister to Wilford Woodruff implies that their efforts were not worth the expense. He said that at least fifty persons were making the trip to Europe each year to get their genealogy, at an annual expense of approximately \$25,000. In addition, nearly all other missionaries spent some time doing genealogical research. He calculated that one man with ordinary accounting skills could do more than fifty of these unskilled people.<sup>236</sup>

As the leaders of the Church received letters like this they began to realize that individual, unaided efforts to gather genealogy were not always successful and that if the Church wanted the members to

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233. "Biography of John Amor," Archibald F. Bennett Collection, Church Archives.

234. Franklin D. Richards Journal, 15 June 1890.

235. *Ibid.*, 8 January 1894.

236. Duncan M. McAllister to Wilford Woodruff, 16 February 1893, Genealogical Society Correspondence, Church Archives.

complete the temple work for their ancestors they would need some aid. That is one of the reasons why, on 13 November 1894, genealogical and Church leaders gathered in the office of Franklin D. Richards to organize the Genealogical Society of Utah.

The society started out in a small room in the Historian's Office with a few books and a big dream. Nephi Anderson defined this dream in 1912:

Let me suggest the future of this work. I see the records of the dead . . . gathered from every nation under heaven to one great central library in Zion—the largest and the best equipped for its particular work in the world. Branch libraries may be established in the nations, but in Zion will be the records of last resort and final authority. Trained genealogists will find constant work in all nations having unpublished records. . . . Then, as temples multiply, and the work enlarges to its ultimate proportions, this society . . . will have in its case some elaborate but perfect system of exact registration and checking, so that the work in the temples may be conducted without confusion or duplication.<sup>237</sup>

This dream has been fulfilled. The genealogical library is the largest of its kind in the world and there are now over 100 branch libraries. Records are being preserved and brought to Salt Lake City on microfilm and the Temple Index Bureau and the Computer File Index help bring order to temple work. Doing genealogy is comparatively easy for members of the Church today because they have many records in a central place.

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237. Nephi Anderson, "Genealogy's Place in the Plan of Salvation," *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 3 (January 1912):21–22.

## Mormon Bibliography 1976

*Chad J. Flake*

One of the most significant books on Mormonism to be published during the last year is James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard's *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. It marks the first time that a single book by professional historians has attempted to survey the entire breadth of Mormon history. The book is not without critics or problems. Those who are used to seeing only the divine hand in all things will object to the fact that the authors have placed Mormonism in its historical setting, demonstrating that some of its teachings are similar to doctrines and principles which were being debated in New York and Ohio. On the other hand, those wishing that all the facts should be known are disappointed with the way in which certain problems are ignored or left without interpretive analysis. Others will become lost in the maze of twentieth century organizational changes and other minutiae. The book gives rise to two questions: (1) Can a truly objective history be written which will satisfy both sides of the question? and (2) Can the complexity of Mormon history be condensed into a single volume?

A book that has just crossed my desk which must rank as one of the worst pieces of bookmaking I have seen in quite some time is the Deseret Book edition of the Book of Mormon done on newsprint. As one opens the book and eyes the gray paper, the question arises: How on earth is anyone to be impressed with the book when it is presented on such poor and ugly paper? There must be a point below which a publisher cannot go and expect a favorable reaction to a printed page, and this edition has passed it.

As in the past, *Mormon Americana*, Volume 17 (1976), has been used for the compilation of the "Mormon Bibliography."

### Historical

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## Book Reviews

Fell, Barry. *America B.C.: Ancient Settlers in the New World*. New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1976. Illus., appendix, biblio., and index, 312 pp. \$12.50.

Reviewed by John L. Sorenson, Professor of anthropology and sociology, Brigham Young University.

*America B.C.* will be welcomed by thousands of Latter-day Saint readers. In it Fell gives a vigorous blow to anthropological and linguistic orthodoxy by claiming, and to some degree demonstrating, that a wide variety of European peoples crossed the Atlantic repeatedly to North America over a period of thousands of years. He pictures, discusses, and interprets scores of inscriptions and artifacts many of which appear to be in languages and scripts related to Hebrew. With this kind of content the book is sure to interest some Mormon readers, but they will do well to consider carefully its weaknesses as well as its strengths.

Is the book any more reliable than others of this kind which have periodically made their appearance—with the fanfare of ringing cash registers—only to prove full of hokum? The answer is yes. While the volume in some ways claims too much, is sloppily presented, and lacks the niceties of scholarship, it does represent enough solid research that its effects will be felt among the acknowledged experts, who are totally unprepared for it.

Fell glosses over his qualifications in his introduction to the book. Actually his preparation is more solid than he lets on. Marine biology is his profession and he is currently at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard. But his study of Latin and Greek in secondary school in New Zealand and Gaelic at the University of Edinburgh led to an expanding interest in inscriptions throughout the Mediterranean and via Spain into Atlantic Europe. He definitely has a knack with ancient languages, having deciphered, for example, the hitherto-baffling Mohenjodaro script of western India. He has expressed delight, in correspondence to me, “that one of the Israeli scholars recently mistook me for a Hebrew on the basis of my Semitic decipherments!” He definitely has the scholarly power to deal with the inscriptions he has confronted, although the burden of carrying on two careers has led to his cutting corners in the presentation of the results of his epigraphical scholarship in the present volume.

Since word began to get around a few years ago about Fell's interests and abilities, many people have sent him materials and a few workers have assisted him professionally. As a result he has a large collection of inscriptions, numbering in the hundreds, from the Pacific Basin and New World. He now claims to have identified in the American inscriptions no fewer than eleven scripts from across the Atlantic, representing at least five languages: Basque, Iberian Punic, Libyan (of the Semitic family), Celtic, and Egyptian. Dates for the Old World use of the scripts range forward from 800 B. C. *America B. C.* prints many of these inscriptions and his readings of them. It also shows and treats artifacts and sites found in the United States whose equivalents are associated in Europe with Celtic rituals.

Some of the most startling items, however, are long-known texts which Fell reexamines. He compares a "sacred creation chant of the Pima Indians" recorded authoritatively around 1902 with Arabic with startling results. He finds a heavy admixture of "Libyan" in the language of Zuñi in New Mexico. And, in one of the most impressive analyses, he clearly relates the previously-known writing system of the Micmac Indians of Maine (supposed to have been invented by an early Catholic priest among them) to Egyptian hieratic glyphs which seem to have been in use in Maine before Christianizing began. I am assured by colleagues competent in the material that there is indeed solid substance at this point.

Among the variety of material Fell has brought forward much is indeed significant and interesting. That doesn't mean that he sweeps all opposition in front of him. Flaws abound. Documentation for many assertions is slight or absent. Some of the inscriptions are so crude one wonders whether they really are what he claims. His statements about when certain scripts were used are vague and sometimes inconsistent. On point after specific point Fell will probably be rebutted by more conventional and careful scholars.

For example, on page 283 Fell claims that the word for "tree" in "the Wabanaki dialect" of Maine is *abassi*, which is also said to be a Hebrew or Phoenician word instead of the normal word for tree in other Algonquian languages across northern North America. A colleague of mine thoroughly prepared in a number of Semitic languages recognizes no such word in Hebrew, the nearest being a term meaning "wild grape." The author plays fast and loose in other places, too, stretching a meaning here or a spelling there. This is all the easier to do since his inscriptions show only consonants. And why refer to "African" language (pages

178–90) when surely he must have had something more concrete in mind. Still, the author has apparently been unaware of supporting evidence which can be pointed out in some instances which make his case even stronger.

Altogether the book is paradoxical. The sloppy methods cast considerable doubt on the significance of what is offered, yet every now and then the work strikes a vein of pure gold. The easy way out would be for critical people to pick at the weaknesses and dismiss the whole. I am afraid that is precisely what most professionals will do, particularly since few are prepared in more than one of the disciplines involved. Their lives will be easier, for awhile, if they do so. But someday, in a more sophisticated form, these impressive finds will no doubt be presented with the power they deserve.

Meanwhile Fell has much more information in his files. New Libyan material is in his hands which he says is connected with the enigmatic early Hohokam culture of Arizona. Nor does *America B.C.* contain any of his Pacific material, which seems to show the presence of Semitic-speaking voyagers in the Pacific islands who came via the Indian Ocean in B.C. times. (Ironically, our Mormon tradition about Israelites in the islands could prove correct without reference to the questionable Hagoth tradition, as 1 Nephi 22:4 may have been trying to tell us all the time.)

The Book of Mormon is nowhere mentioned in this volume, but if, as I expect, a good deal of Fell's evidence holds up under closer scrutiny, the effect will be felt by Latter-day Saints. For instance, if voyaging across the oceans proves to have been commonplace in ancient times, Mormons as well as orthodox archaeologists will need to do some reinterpreting.

Fell will no doubt be smitten vigorously by hostile critics. He and his handful of collaborators are in a vulnerable position professionally. Their limited resources could be augmented significantly by sales of this book. Mormons who wish to assist one who shares some of their position in the face of opposition from the professional establishment could strike a blow by buying this book. They may enjoy it, too.

HILL, DONNA. *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977. xviii + 527 pp. \$12.50.

Reviewed by Davis Bitton, professor of history at the University of Utah and assistant Church historian.

When the great biography of Joseph Smith appears, wrote Daryl Chase several years ago, its author will be "a first-rate scholar in the field of Christian church history and a specialist in the heretical religious movements which have originated in New England," . . . "an authority in American history down to the Civil War, and know the important part the Christian churches played in that period." He will have access to all the manuscript materials pertinent to the subject, Chase added, and will be "a good sociologist, psychologist, and student of the Bible." Although she possesses several of these qualifications, Donna Hill is not this imaginary ideal biographer, and the "definitive" biography of Joseph Smith remains unwritten. It may of course always remain that elusive ideal that is never attained but is worth pursuing; but major strides are resulting from the analytical essays of Marvin Hill, the careful work of Dean Jessee with the Prophet's holograph writings, and the forthcoming volume by Richard Bushman, supported by a Guggenheim Foundation grant, that will carry the life of Joseph Smith to 1830. In any case, the publisher's blurb that *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* is "definitive" may be a bit premature.

This is an important book and a "fair" book. It also contains disappointments. To first consider some of its inadequacies, one can start with such a simple matter as the evidences of the publisher's haste, the typographical errors, the minor flaws. David Brion Davis is rechristened David Briton Davis. *Mormonism Unveiled*, Eber D. Howe's 1834 blast against incipient Mormonism, is fastened as a title onto the later works by Parley P. Pratt and John D. Lee, although both of them did manage to spell the second word properly. *The Western Humanities Review*, whose lack of receptivity to scholarly articles on Mormonism has been a disappointment to readers familiar with its flair under the editorship of William Mulder, is listed as one of the journals publishing on Joseph Smith and his followers "with almost bewildering frequency." Martha Cragun Cox, author of one of the most vivid Mormon journals, is identified as Cragun Cox, robbing a grand old lady of her femininity, while Andrew

Jenson is identified as “a former Church Historian,” a belated promotion he would have welcomed during his lifetime.

The bibliography and notes indicate a strong effort and are full of valuable references. It would be a mistake, however, to see this as a “complete” bibliography for the subject. On the controversy over the First Vision, James B. Allen’s valuable article in the *Improvement Era* is unmentioned. Under dissertations and theses one looks in vain for Michael Quinn’s “The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832–1932: An American Elite” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1976), which may have been completed too late for inclusion, but the same excuse can hardly justify omission of Quinn’s “Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy, 1832–1932: A Prosopographical Study” (Master’s thesis, University of Utah, 1973). There are other surprising omissions. Readers will be well advised to consult the superior bibliography in James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Deseret Book, 1976).

But enough of such nit-picking. Although the style is uninspired, it is workmanlike. And clearly, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* is an important book, a fact best appreciated by considering how the author deals with certain strategic questions. This, after all, should be the test, for the main external facts are well enough known and can be quickly discovered by going over a chronology such as Hill herself has provided at the front of the book. On the First Vision she shows an awareness of the scholarly controversy and the different versions of the experience but concludes, after considering the visions of others at the time, that “he spoke the truth when he said that in his youth he had the religious experience which was as meaningful to him as he maintained.” She examines the evidence of Smith’s money-digging activities. One is left with the impression that there was far more to these reports (and those of divining rods) than the traditional versions usually allow. And she seems to accept the 1826 trial, although in fact the reader is left with unresolved contradictions. Yet she does not feel compelled to jump to conclusions about the validity of the basic religious claims, which she treats with due seriousness.

The troubles of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio and Missouri are given rather full treatment. The whole experience of the Kirtland Bank is treated frankly and the Prophet does not emerge “covered with glory.” The persecutions in Missouri are explained with balance, showing that zealous Mormons provoked some of the opposition. Sidney Rigdon’s Independence Day oration is quoted, omitting some of the most

damning passages but with enough intact to make plausible the anti-Mormonism of the Missourians. Yet somehow Hill's presentation of this work avoids the tone of the anti-Mormon accounts, for the faith of the Saints is evident throughout.

Of particular interest in any life of the Mormon prophet is the subject of plural marriage. Two chapters convey much of the complexity of this subject and the turmoil it caused within the Smith family and among the inner circle of Church leaders. It is not a treatment that will be consoling to members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, for the practice of plural marriage clearly originated with Joseph Smith. Nor will it be inspiring to those Utah Mormons who are not fond of dwelling on this aspect of their history. Yet Hill has done what any responsible biographer must do—examine the evidence and follow it where it leads her.

I do not wish to undervalue what this book offers: a basically favorable reexamination of Joseph Smith that is forthright in confronting the evidence. If it is not psychologically searching (the author disavows “psychological analysis”), it addresses most of the knotty problems. In general, she has done her homework. Readers should come away with confidence that nothing has been swept under the rug. For the most part they should also come away with an impression of Joseph Smith that is not hero-worship in any simple sense but one of respect and sympathy. “With my view of him as an inspired spiritual leader who had ordinary human failings, I think he would have been entirely in accord,” she writes. “He himself saw the danger to his followers of holding illusions that he was sanctified, and he repeatedly insisted that he had a man's passions and weaknesses. He was entirely convinced of his mission on earth but thought that the Lord had chosen a weak thing through which to accomplish His work.” (p. ix).

In a sense the Hill biography owes its importance to its placement on a spectrum. On the one side are the unfriendly accounts, including the skillful presentation of a slanted interpretation by Fawn Brodie. On the other side are the various appreciations or faith-promoting accounts. (Are there other biographical accounts—perhaps of Gandhi or St. Francis or Mohammed—which tend to slide off into either the one side or the other?) Now Ms. Hill has come along with a work which, though with some disappointments, offers something close to a satisfactory middle ground. It is a favorable interpretation by and large, but one that shows awareness of all the evidence. Those Mormon readers who prefer to close their eyes to some of the unedifying scenes or the difficulties of

interpreting conflicting testimony do not really want biography; they want hagiography, and there are other works that will provide it for them. Some general readers who want a lively story well told and who can swallow an unconvincing major premise (that Joseph Smith lied but convinced himself that he was telling the truth) may still prefer Brodie. For most readers, it would seem that Donna Hill has provided the treatment that can be recommended: middle-of-the-road, sympathetic, thoroughly researched.



KORN, ALFONS L. *News From Molokai*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976. 345 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Robert J. Morris, instructor of modern languages at BYU-Hawaii when this review was written, and currently a student at the University of Utah College of Law.

Alfons Korn, professor emeritus of English at the University of Hawaii, has provided scholars of Mormon history in Hawaii with a rich vein of high-grade ore in an area of research heretofore seriously deficient. The letters and notes in his recent *News From Molokai* encompass the lives of three Hawaiian Latter-day Saints in the latter half of the nineteenth century who collectively represent in very human terms the birth pangs of modern Hawaii and the role of the Church in that process. The three are Jonathan Napela, Koihi Unauna, and Queen Liliuokalani. In their collective story lies a great drama for both the researcher and the playwright.

The book is comprised of correspondence between Dowager Queen Emma Kaleleonalani and her cousin Peter Kaeo, both *alii*, or nobles. Their letters were written in the years 1873-76, when Peter, then a confirmed leper, had been confined to the leper settlement at Kalaupapa, Molokai. The correspondence is significant because it reflects the attitudes of two Hawaiians of noble birth during a period of political intrigue, cultural change, and new social values, "especially of the more piercing emotions that sustained some of those values, not only into the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but also very evidently beyond" (p. 278). The numerous references to Mormons and Mormonism throughout the letters suggest the depth to which these conditions and the Church intermeshed.

When Peter Kaeo arrived at Kalaupapa late in June 1873, he found Jonathan Napela and his wife, both also of chiefly lineage, already in residence. Napela, a former magistrate at Wailuku, Maui, had been one of the first Hawaiians to accept the Restored Gospel when it was taught to him by George Q. Cannon. He had become Cannon's missionary companion, helping him to translate the Book of Mormon into Hawaiian. Napela had once been involved with Walter Murray Gibson on Lanai, had lived for a time at the Mormon settlement at Laie, Oahu, and had journeyed to Salt Lake City to be ordained a high priest under the hand of Brigham Young. Now he had finally come to Kalaupapa as a *kokua* or helper to his wife who had contracted leprosy.

From the friendship which developed between Peter Kaeo and the Napelas we see a picture of Mormons caught between the new culture and the old ways, between the new religion and the traditions of their fathers.

The “existential shock and suffering of that destructive scene” in Kalaupapa (p. xxvii) are shown up here in all the horror of an archetypal night journey that competes with anything in the leprosy stories of the Bible for grotesqueness. Peter writes: “Napela has just told me that they tried a man for burying another one which was eat by the Hogs” (p. 24). Napela was involved in such trials since he was a *luna* or overseer of the settlement and responsible for the adjudication of such matters: “Napela has begun to have Beef killed at the Beach so as not to let those poor men without fingers handle the meat for those at the Beach” (p. 33).

Peter never mentions that Napela taught him Mormon doctrine, though Father Damien, the famous Catholic “leper priest of Molokai,” tried on several occasions to convert both Peter and Napela to Catholicism. For the Napelas and Peter Kaeo, religion included not only theology but politics, and they were religiously concerned about the fate of the kingdom of Hawaii. They shared many dreams and visions portending the hoped-for death of the king, Kalakaua, and the ascension of Queen Emma. “Signs, Omens, and Dreams,” Peter writes to Emma, “are the orders of the day here, and all on your behalf” (p. 186).

Peter and Napela paid frequent visits to the resident priestess, or *kahuna*, to hear her forecasts of doom and invocations of the “ancestral gods” in Emma’s behalf. They fasted and prayed together, Old Testament fashion, for divine intervention in the lives of all their enemies. The central political issue at the time was the proposed “Reciprocity Treaty” with the United States and the cession of Pearl Harbor as a naval base, and both were seen in terms of white supremacy versus Hawaiian home rule. “Mr and Mrs Napela and I are Praying every morning on your behalf, beseeching our Lord that he may . . . subdue your Enemies which infect the name of Hawaii . . .” (p. 173).

Anti-Mormons within the settlement caused Napela to be stripped of his rank as *luna* only months after his appointment. He pleaded with the Board of Health to be permitted to remain with his wife, and this was granted. Then early in 1874 Emma wrote to Peter: “Do you divine Taffy’s [Kalakaua’s] object in soliciting the Morman party, so as to secure their votes in case of anything happening to His Majesty before a successor is appointed?” (p. 169). Shortly thereafter Emma tells of a plot to poison her, allegedly perpetrated by Kalakaua, his brother, and one “Koi.”

This was Koihi Unauna, a kinsman of Kalakaua, a lawyer, and a court genealogist, who was baptized a Mormon by Jonathan Napela in 1862.

A third side of the political triangle was Kalakaua's sister, Mrs. Lydia Dominis, about whom Emma loved to gossip: "Mrs Dominis has a new love, a native boy of Waikiki" (p. 88). Any such "news" about "Mrs Dominis"—fact or fiction—is of interest to Mormon scholars because she became Queen Liliuokalani upon Kalakaua's death. She was deposed in a revolution a few years later, thus ending the monarchy in Hawaii, and on 7 July 1906, while in private life at her home in Waikiki, she was baptized a member of the Church, eleven years before her death.

Though the Church has flourished in the Islands for a century and a quarter, we have not yet produced a synoptic, scholarly study of what that existence has meant. Hawaii's special situation both geographically and ethnically—its significance as a crossroads and a gathering place—suggests that the human business which has been transacted here, both in and out of the Church, has large implications for any Mormon concerned with the Pacific Islands and Asia.

When George Q. Cannon first came to these Sandwich Islands, the Savior himself appeared to him at Pulehu, Maui, to show his approval of this work. Now, as the new official history of the Church is presently being written, we must hope that the appropriate people will be concerned with the works of scholars like Alfons Korn as they strive to provide a truer view of the Hawaiian context of Mormonism.

WISE, WILLIAM. *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Legend and a Monumental Crime*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1976. 317 pp. \$11.95.

Reviewed by Leonard J. Arrington, LDS Church Historian and director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University.

Historians, Mormons and non-Mormons alike, will recognize immediately that *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Legend and a Monumental Crime*, by William Wise, is wildly inaccurate both in its statements of "fact" and in its interpretations. This is not surprising since the book was written without use of the trial records, government reports, travelers' accounts, letters, and diaries which are in the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, California, the Brigham Young University Library in Provo, Utah, and the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. Nor has Mr. Wise even prepared himself for treating the topic by reading responsible histories of the Mormon people. Overlooking the many available, Mr. Wise has relied primarily upon such outdated potboilers as those by T. B. H. Stenhouse, William Linn, and M.R. Werner. In thus slanting his history of the Mormons, which occupies fully half of the book, he is seeking to build up a case of negative expectations so that when he finally gets around to his real topic, the tragedy at Mountain Meadows, the reader will readily accept his accusations.

The second half of the book, that dealing with the massacre itself, is ostensibly based on published government documents including reports of the two trials of John D. Lee. Like the Warren Report on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the documents are replete with wild allegations, contradictory claims, rumor, eyewitness accounts, memories several years later, and responses to charges. It takes a simple mind to select from this kind of material a single story and tell it as if it were perfectly obvious. This is what Wise has done. In this respect he dismisses the best available treatise on the massacre, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* by Juanita Brooks, published by Stanford University Press in 1950 and republished by University of Oklahoma Press in 1962. Widely praised for the thoroughness of her research and her relentless honesty in following the evidence where it led her, Mrs. Brooks wrestled with the larger, more significant question of how the massacre could have happened. Her most valuable insight has to do with the fact that

the Mormons in Southern Utah had come to perceive the Fancher train as criminals and enemies, that a war psychology had been whipped up by the approach of a body of 2,500 federal troops, and that once a series of events was set in motion it became impossible to reverse it. The possibility of Brigham Young's complicity is one she naturally considered. Her conclusion is that he cannot be blamed for the crime in the sense of having ordered it. But Brooks sought not primarily to pin the responsibility in a simple way but to understand. Recognizing the background of persecution in which the Mormons had themselves been victims, and the hysteria of the Utah War period, she was able to present the evidence in a way that made sense to Mormons and non-Mormons alike—to professional historians and “buffs”.

Now what would justify a new book on this subject? There is no new evidence—or at least none that is introduced by Mr. Wise. There is no new frame of reference through which to see the old evidence—or at least none that is introduced by Mr. Wise. The most important secondary study of obvious importance and relevance is Norman Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859*, published by Yale University Press in 1960. Unknown to Mr. Wise. Wise has a chapter on the Gunnison Massacre, and the standard, thoroughly researched reference is a master's thesis, “The Gunnison Massacre” by David L. Miller, Jr., of the University of Utah. Also unknown to Mr. Wise. There is every evidence that Mr. Wise wrote this book hastily—there is a lack of familiarity with the relevant scholarly research and of an unseemly and damaging reliance on a few older works that historians have learned to treat with extreme caution. Mr. Wise's work would not pass muster as a dissertation or thesis in any respectable American university, for his mentors would quickly recognize the inadequacy of his documentation.

Does it matter to Mr. Wise that Brigham Young sent a still-surviving letter to the Mormons in Southern Utah telling them not to interfere with the emigration trains passing through Utah? “You must not meddle with them,” he counseled. This letter, as Juanita Brooks concluded, “clears Brigham Young of any direct responsibility for the massacre.” Surely Wise could understand, if he took second thought, that Brigham Young and the Church had everything to lose by wiping out the Fancher train. No one was more sensitive to the need to arouse sympathetic public opinion among Americans in the East than Brigham Young. This was the basis for his Sebastopol plan of evacuating Salt Lake City and other communities during the Utah War. This helps to explain his firm orders to Mormon troops to avoid inflicting casualties on the approaching U.S.

troops. Mr. Wise would like us to believe that this same Brigham Young, at the same time, turned around and, with flinty eyes and fire-spouting nostrils, gave the order to obliterate a passing wagon train. Where is the evidence? Mr. Wise furnishes none.

If William Wise offers no evidence to support his assignment of guilt, what does he do? He tells the story based on circumstantial evidence. With no direct evidence one way or the other he over and over again assumes that he knows what happened. His favorite word is “doubtless,” which of course means that there is no evidence but that Mr. Wise’s surmises are sufficient. Doubtless Brigham Young had his eye on the Fancher train from the time it entered the territory; doubtless he knew how much money it had and thought that the gain would be worth the price of a crime; doubtless Charles C. Rich persuaded the company to go by the southern route; doubtless Young and his associates discussed the details of the Fancher train’s progress; doubtless he gave the order to move ahead with the massacre. Doubtless Mr. Wise has interwoven his own conjectures at key points in order to help make the whole thing appear doubtless.

Hastily prepared and largely dependent on selected tendentious secondary studies, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* is an excellent model of what careful scholarship is not.

## Corrections

The following corrections should be made in S. George Ellsworth's review of James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard's *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* in *BYU Studies* 17 (Winter 1977):241-46:

(1) Insert the following on page 243, line 6, immediately following the colon: "Church organizations, organizations, and institutions (67 pages, 10.5 percent);".

(2) On page 246, the last line of the review should read: "In short, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* is an excellent draft, ready to be polished by authors and editors."





