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Chattanooga's *Southern Star*: Mormon Window on the South, 1898–1900

David Buice

One of the least researched and least known facets of Mormonism is the history of the Church in the southern United States. This omission is, in a sense, understandable. Mormon missionary activities in the South during the antebellum period were scattered and sporadic and, frankly speaking, far less important than the efforts of the Church to find a permanent home where its members could establish themselves and worship without persecution. Similarly, while missionary activities in the post-Civil War South were far more extensive than those preceding the war they were largely ignored by contemporary observers in the swirl of controversy surrounding the polygamy question and the corollary issue of statehood for the territory of Utah, and little has been done in recent years to correct this situation. While scholarly research on Mormonism has been voluminous in the past thirty years, few scholars have focused their attention on Mormon activities in the South. As a consequence, a void in both Mormon history and the religious history of the South remains largely unfilled.

A window through which one can gain a fascinating glimpse of the LDS church in the South in the late nineteenth century is *Southern Star*, the weekly tabloid published at the headquarters of the Southern States Mission in Chattanooga, Tennessee, from 8 December 1898 until 1 December 1900. An examination of its contents provides significant insight into the status of the Church in the southern states near the turn of the century. This glimpse reveals that as the nineteenth century drew to a close Mormonism in the southern part of the United States was a faith still struggling to define, defend, and sustain itself in a largely hostile environment.

The publication of *Southern Star* came after more than a half century of sporadic missionary activity in the South, beginning shortly after a general conference of the Church at Amherst, Ohio, on 25 January 1832. At this meeting, four elders, Luke Johnson, Seymour Brunson,

Amasa Lyman, and Zerubbabel Snow, were instructed to preach in the "south countries," meaning the area south of Ohio. As a result of their labors, a small branch of the Church was soon organized in Cabell County, Virginia (now West Virginia), although the exact date of its establishment is not clear. Within a short period of time, other elders proclaiming the new dispensation established Mormon congregations in other areas of Virginia as well as in Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, North and South Carolina, and Louisiana.¹

Very little is known about these itinerant elders and the small, scattered congregations they established in the antebellum South. The missionaries who first brought the teachings of Mormonism into the region were in all probability like most other early LDS converts, people of limited means, usually small farmers and craftsmen, and it appears that each remained in the South only a few months before returning to his home. The congregations they established were all very small, ranging in size from as few as seven or eight members to no more than twenty to twenty-five, at most.²

Mormon missionary activities in the South declined appreciably after the murder of Joseph Smith in 1844 and ended completely with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. With many of the normal patterns of life disrupted by the rapidly spreading hostilities, Church officials deemed it wise to keep their missionaries completely out of the region, and it was not until several years after the end of the fighting that the Church again began seeking converts in the southern states.³ It appears that a few dauntless Mormon elders ventured into the South in the late 1860s and early 1870s, and finally in 1875 the Church resumed significant missionary activities in the region. In that year Church officials in Salt Lake City appointed Elder Henry G. Boyle of Pima, Arizona, to serve as president of the Southern States Mission, which originally encompassed the states of Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Virginia. Slightly later its jurisdiction was expanded to include North and South Carolina, Kentucky, Maryland, Texas, Florida, Louisiana, and, for several years, Ohio.⁴

Originally, Church authorities appointed seven elders to serve alongside President Boyle. These elders and those who followed them were, to say the least, a courageous lot as the South was at that time probably the most dangerous of all Mormon missionary fields. Southerners were, of course, in the throes of ridding themselves of the last vestiges of "Radical Reconstruction," and they were at that time in no mood to tolerate the intrusion of carpetbaggers, especially those who preached polygamy, a doctrine as odious as any that ever reached the nostrils of southern Protestants. As the Mormon missionaries gradually spread their activities throughout the region, lurid rumors stalked them like strange phantom figures. It was said that Mormon elders had broken

up homes and turned family members against one another, that they baptized their women converts in the nude, and that the flower of southern womanhood was being lured away to lives of slavery in the harems of Mormon patriarchs in Utah. The Church's opponents also charged that Mormons preferred to preach in the more isolated areas of the southern countryside because of the general ignorance prevailing there. Following the murder of President James A. Garfield, some suggested that the president's assassin, Charles J. Guiteau, was a Mormon and that the news of the president's death was received with joy in Salt Lake City.⁵

Complicating the situation in the South was the tendency of southern converts to emulate the example of earlier members in gathering with their fellow Saints. As early as November 1877, a group of about eighty southern Mormons made their way to Scottsboro, Alabama, and from that point traveled westward by rail under the direction of Elders John Morgan, James T. Lisombree, and Thomas E. Murphy to the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Over the next few years they were gradually joined by several hundred additional southern converts who along with Mormons from southern Utah largely populated the Colorado communities of Manassa, Richfield, and Sanford.⁶ The Mormon converts who left the South and made their way to the settlements of southern Colorado never amounted to more than a minuscule fraction of the region's total population, yet to opponents of the Church this desire of southern Mormons to leave the region of their birth for the wilderness of the Far West seemed somehow devious and sinister and was cause for added suspicion.

In such an atmosphere, tragedies soon occurred. The first of these was the fatal shooting of Elder Joseph Standing by an anti-Mormon mob at Varnell's Station, Georgia, on 21 July 1879. From time to time, similar events took place, and by the end of the nineteenth century five Mormon missionaries had been killed while serving in the South. No one was ever convicted of any of these crimes, and while murder was the exception, threats and lesser acts of violence committed against Mormon missionaries occurred almost daily. Indeed it must have taken a particular brand of faith to answer the call to labor in the mission fields of the South in the late nineteenth century. The Mormon elders who walked in pairs along the lonely backroads, traveling—to use the Mormon term—"without purse or script," were almost entirely dependent on the hospitality and goodwill of the people on whom they called for their daily bread and shelter. While there is no record of any of them dying of hunger or exposure, they often walked with empty stomachs and were commonly pelted with rocks and eggs and often roused in the dead of night and beaten with whips, harnesses, switches, tree limbs, barrel staves, and any other weapons their opponents could lay their hands on.⁷

If Mormon leaders in the South could do little to change the attitudes that tolerated and condoned such behavior, they could at least take steps to maintain the morale of those most affected by it—the missionaries laboring in the region and their converts. To leaders of the Southern States Mission, it appeared that one of the best ways to boost flagging spirits among missionaries and members was to publish a mission paper, an activity which by the late nineteenth century had become a respected weapon in the Mormon arsenal. Beginning with the publication of the *Evening and Morning Star* at Independence, Missouri, in 1832, mission leaders had frequently established newspapers as a means of combatting error and maintaining discipline and morale among Church members.⁸

While some of these publications lasted only a short time, others enjoyed a much longer life. One of the most successful of these nineteenth-century Mormon publications was the British mission's *Millennial Star*, first published in May 1840. Leaders of the Southern States Mission were convinced that this journal had played a vital role in the ongoing success of the British mission, and they hoped for similar results in the southern United States. Through such a publication, missionaries would have a forum to report on their activities, members could learn of the successes and tribulations of their brothers and sisters, and Church authorities in the mission headquarters in Chattanooga, as well as those in Salt Lake City, would have an avenue for maintaining contact with their scattered members and traveling elders in the South.⁹

The idea of publishing a newspaper for the Southern States Mission seems to have originated with Elias S. Kimball, who served as president of the mission from 1894 to 1898. While he was not able to bring the proposed publication into reality, his successor, Ben E. Rich, strongly supported the proposal, which finally came to fruition late in 1898. On 3 December of that year, the first issue of *Southern Star* was published at the mission headquarters in Chattanooga. Weekly editions followed until publication ended abruptly in December 1900.¹⁰

Southern Star was throughout its lifetime a typical nineteenth-century Mormon publication, being both tendentious and provincial: tendentious in the sense that its *raison d'être* was the propagation of the Latter-day Saint gospel; provincial in that it took little interest in national or world events occurring outside the confines of the Mormon church. Its editors did, however, have a strong interest in the past. As David Brion Davis has written in a recent review article, Mormon faith traditionally has rested on a belief in the literal historicity of sacred events, beginning with Joseph Smith's vision of God and Christ as physical beings and the subsequent appearances of the Angel Moroni. This intrusion of, to quote Davis, "sacred power into mundane history" led to the establishment of

the restored Church in 1830 and its missions around the world.¹¹ Given this belief in the sacredness of the Mormon past, it is not at all surprising that *Southern Star* contained a running narrative of the history of the Church in the South, which carried over from one edition to the next. These historical articles were always placed near the front of each issue. Many issues, in fact, began with historical accounts emphasizing the fulfillment of God's purpose through the tenacity of his Saints in the South. The bias of the accounts notwithstanding, they remain an excellent source of information on the origins of Mormonism in the southern states.

In a typical issue of *Southern Star*, the opening article dealing with the Church's past would be followed by one or more theological essays. These were printed under such titles as "What is Faith?" "Perfection the Aim of Life," "Sunlight of Your Soul," and "Is the Book of Mormon an Inspiration?" to cite a few examples.¹² These discussions, along with the Articles of Faith, which were reprinted with each issue, were doubtless intended to maintain the purity of Mormon doctrine and the morale of the Church's scattered members in the largely hostile southern environment. The closing pages of each issue were usually devoted to news from throughout the mission, sometimes illustrated with photographs, sketches, and editorial cartoons. Here were found biographical sketches of current state mission presidents, as well as articles dealing with conference meetings, the organization of new branches, the distribution of Mormon literature, the appointment and release of various missionaries, and the latest instances of mob violence committed against the Saints in the South.

The source of much of this violence was the issue that more than any other shadowed and haunted the editors of *Southern Star* throughout the lifetime of the paper: polygamy. The hoary rumors of old continued to circulate through the South, despite the issuance of the Manifesto by President Wilford Woodruff in 1890, and were given new vitality by an event that occurred not too long before the publication of the first issue of *Southern Star*. In 1898 B. H. Roberts, an admitted polygamist and former missionary who served as acting president of the Southern States Mission in 1883 and 1884, was elected to the United States House of Representatives from his home district in Utah. This reminder that polygamy was still practiced immediately raised the ire of many southern Protestants. Typical was the response of the Florida Baptist Convention, which in 1899 adopted a set of resolutions denouncing the election of Roberts as "a menace to every home and the honor of every woman in our land." The resolutions further implored the members of the Florida congressional delegation to use their "utmost endeavors" to secure Roberts's expulsion and the adoption of a constitutional amendment forever prohibiting any polygamist from holding a federal office. Similar

sentiments were soon expressed by a number of southern newspapers such as the *Gainesville* [Florida] *Sun* and the *Atlanta Constitution*.¹³

Each of these attacks was reprinted in the columns of *Southern Star* accompanied by rebuttals. The 7 January 1899 issue of the *Star* characterized B. H. Roberts as a man of great ability and presence before whom “others shake like aspen leaves whenever he appears.” The editorial asked its readers to consider what might happen if, instead of seeking admission to Congress, Roberts was trying to gain admission to heaven. “Think of Abraham refusing Roberts a place on the grounds that he is a polygamist.” And finally, “Now, candidly if Brother Roberts is good enough to enter heaven, to recline on Abraham’s bosom, and to play on harps of everlasting glory, is he not good enough for Congress? I think so.” A later issue of the *Star* added a slight dash of humor to the Roberts defense. When the *Chattanooga News* commented that Roberts had bought more toys than any other member of Congress, the *Star* replied that that was not because he had more children than anyone else in that body but because he acknowledged all he did have.¹⁴

While editors, such as those in Gainesville and Atlanta, limited their opposition to words, others were not so restrained. One of the most violent events to take place during the lifetime of *Southern Star* occurred in Jasper County, Georgia, on 25 July 1899. Elders Smith E. Rogers and G. M. Porter were warned not to enter the county, and when they failed to heed these warnings a mob broke into the Eudora, Georgia, home of William H. Cunard on the evening of the twenty-fifth and dragged the two elders off into the darkness. In the melee, Mrs. Cunard was accidentally shot in the face with a blast from a shotgun. The elders were carried to the county line and in return for their freedom promised not to return to Jasper County.¹⁵

It was not just in the more isolated rural areas of the South that the Mormons faced the threat of mob violence during this period. Events recounted in numerous issues of the *Star* indicated that in the towns and cities of the region a similar threat existed, although the opposition was not always violently expressed. From the inception of their missionary activities in the South, the Mormons had always had more success winning converts in the countryside than in urban areas. The explanation offered was that the worldly spirit prevailing in the cities worked against the success of the gospel, “money thus filling the vacuum of lacking faith,” as *Southern Star* expressed it. This omission, however, troubled mission leaders, and in the spring of 1896 the decision was made to begin preaching in the towns and cities of the South in an effort—again to use the Mormon expression—“to capture” them for the Lord.¹⁶

The response to this new direction in Mormon missionary work varied. In some cities, such as Columbus, Georgia; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Lynchburg, Virginia, Mormon elders seem to have been

cordially received. In others, such as Hattiesburg, Mississippi; and Birmingham and Bessemer, Alabama, city officials resorted to various means to prevent the Mormons from teaching. In Hattiesburg in March 1899 local authorities pressured their fellow townsmen into refusing the Mormons permission to meet in various public buildings, such as the courthouse or the local opera house, and they finally had to hold their meetings in the parlor of the St. Nicholas Hotel. Mayor R. N. McKellar of Shreveport, Louisiana, delivered a strong tongue-lashing to two elders who ventured into that city in May 1899 and then grudgingly gave them permission to hold a series of public meetings there. One of the more interesting responses to the Mormon entry into the cities occurred in Nashville. While attempting to preach on a street corner in that city one October evening in 1899, Elder J. Urban Allred of Lehi, Utah, was suddenly surrounded by a detachment of the Salvation Army, and the elder's voice was soon drowned out by "the boom of the big drum, the tinkle of tambourines and the strident voices of the squad singing salvation." The captain in charge then reportedly made some remarks denouncing the Mormons, and when he finished he and his followers wheeled and marched off as suddenly as they had appeared. Retaking the corner and regaining his composure, Elder Allred remarked that if this was the customary time and place for the Salvation Army to meet in Nashville, he would speak at some other time. In Chattanooga, in contrast to Nashville, there seems to have been relatively little anti-Mormon sentiment, with the exception of occasional stentorian blasts from some of the Baptist pulpits in the city.¹⁷

Southern Star's response to these incidents varied. At times the newspaper expressed itself in tones that were both tart and angry. In commenting on the Hattiesburg, Mississippi, difficulties and the support given by the local newspaper to those who opposed the Mormons, *Southern Star* characterized the Hattiesburg *Progress* as "a small souled mendacious paper that assumes to dole out the news in semi-weekly blotches to 500 stipendiary, who no doubt tearfully realize that a slimy reptile often creeps into their household." When two Mormon elders were roughed up and had paint smeared on them in Albemarle, North Carolina, in March 1900, an editorial predicted, "It may be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgement than for Albemarle, North Carolina." And when a bill was introduced in the South Carolina House of Representatives that attempted to make itinerant Mormon elders subject to the vagrancy laws, the paper voiced the opinion that "Jesus would have a hard time of it if he were to visit South Carolina traveling without purse or script."¹⁸

Responses such as these, however, were the exception. Considering the treatment Mormons were often subjected to, most of the *Star's* editorial comments were remarkably calm and judicious. Rather

than engaging in vituperative exchanges with the Church's opponents in the region, the paper generally urged restraint and patience, as in its response to the Eudora, Georgia, mobbing. In commenting on that event, the 5 August 1899 issue emphatically but calmly assured its readers that the Mormons would not be driven out of the state of Georgia or any other state. Mormon missionaries were in the South "to advocate the Gospel of peace and to teach mankind that it is impossible . . . to love God and hate their fellow men." And when events such as those in Eudora occurred, Mormons must "be more vigorous in advocating truth, religious tolerance and charity."¹⁹

In addition to counseling tolerance and restraint, the editors of *Southern Star* passed along through its columns an abundance of practical advice to the missionaries who had been called to serve in a region whose customs and habits were different from those of the region from which they had come. Almost every issue contained articles dealing with such commonplace but important matters as food, bodily hygiene, the southern climate, contagious diseases, and the temperament of southern Protestants. Elders were warned to eat in moderation as the foods most commonly prepared in the South were very different from those they were accustomed to in the West. They should bathe as often as possible but not in stagnant water, which might be "supercharged with deadly microbes." They should not walk too far in the summer heat and should avoid drafts while cooling off. In tending to the sick through anointing and the laying on of hands, discretion should be exercised, especially "when a disease so loathsome and so highly contagious as smallpox is believed to be under consideration." While martyrdom was commendable, suicide was not. Noting that anti-Mormon sentiments tended to reach their peak during the summer revivals, elders were urged to conduct themselves in a "quiescent manner" at that time of the year.²⁰

And there were the ways of the flesh. The 29 April 1899 issue of *Southern Star* ran a picture of a Mormon mother, Mrs. George Palmer of Farmington, Utah, seated in her home surrounded by her three daughters in nightshirts, under the caption, "Papa's on a Mission." The photograph was followed by a brief message from President Rich urging missionaries not to give in to temptation when a vision of wife, children, and home was before them. This admonition was perhaps timely as elders were sometimes separated from their families for as long as three years while serving in the South.²¹

Along with articles dealing with the grind and dangers of life in the Southern States Mission were numerous accounts of miraculous occurrences. These, like the historical narrative, were intended to help legitimize Mormon beliefs. Thus the 19 March 1899 issue of the *Star* recounted the experience of Elders John P. Morris and Charles J. Call near Good Hope, Virginia. While trying to make their way to a speaking

engagement, the two became lost in the darkness on an unfamiliar road. Suddenly there appeared before them "a volume of heavenly light" composed of hues of orange, silver, and purple. Shaped like a huge cornucopia, it traveled just in front of them down the center of the road. When the two emerged from the forest in which they had been lost, the light suddenly disappeared, and they found themselves within two hundred rods of the schoolhouse where they were to speak.²²

In a similar but slightly more vindictive vein, Elders O. D. Flake and A. B. Porter wrote from Mississippi late in 1898 that ministers who had fought them had been known to drop dead in their pulpits, others who had cursed them had been stricken so that they could no longer speak, and towns that had rejected them had been burned to ashes within days. And in the spring of 1899, Elder E. B. Dorman reported from Alabama that a horde of grasshoppers had invaded Crenshaw County, from which two elders had been driven several years earlier, and were devouring everything in sight. Dorman admitted that he had not seen the grasshoppers but said he had been told about them by "reliable parties who have witnessed the phenomenon."²³

Descriptions of the miraculous also included conversion experiences. Rather typical was that of Mrs. Mary F. Quinn of Hill City, Tennessee, who characterized herself as a studious person who had been studying the doctrines of the Seventh-Day Adventists. On a bitterly cold night in January 1897, she went to bed but could not sleep. Soon she heard a low murmur, but when she got out of bed she could not find the source of the voice and claimed that for the next hour she listened to one of the best sermons she had ever heard. Six weeks later, two Mormon elders began preaching in the area, and when she went to one of their meetings to her amazement she found herself listening to the same sermon she had heard in January. Shortly thereafter both she and her husband were baptized into the Church.²⁴

Long before the printing of the first issue of *Southern Star*, Church authorities in Salt Lake City had gradually concluded that most of those who became Mormons should remain where they were rather than gathering with their fellow Saints. As economic opportunities became more limited in the West, the Church began deemphasizing the gathering, and by 1907 this change of mood and outlook had become rooted in Church policy. Foreign members were urged to stay in the country of their conversion and build up the Church there. As Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton have expressed it, Zion would now move to the scattered members rather than the scattered members to Zion.²⁵

This changing emphasis found expression in some of the earliest issues of *Southern Star*. An editorial printed on 4 February 1899 stated that while the doctrine of the gathering had not been suspended, its unwise application had caused problems, and consequently great care

should be exercised in advising or urging Saints to emigrate to the Far West. The climate of that region was vastly different from that of the South, as were the customs of the people, and economic opportunities were far less abundant than in an earlier day. All things considered, the editorial concluded that it would be better for most of the Church's nine thousand southern members to remain in their homes. They would certainly still have many unpleasant things to contend with, but their presence would be of incalculable assistance to the missionaries still laboring in the South, and their example would do more to allay anti-Mormon prejudices than the best sermons that could be preached.²⁶

For almost two years after this advice was printed, *Southern Star* continued to observe, editorialize, and exhort in behalf of the Latter-day Saints in the South. Its labors suddenly ended, however, when the final issue of the paper was published on 1 December 1900. No advance warning of this decision had been given in earlier issues, and the explanation offered was rather vague. The announcement stated that the editors had labored continuously for the continuation of the *Star*, "but existing conditions at the present time, and Church affairs generally, warrant us in concluding it best to cease publication." Elaborating a little on this statement, the editors added that when the *Star* was first printed in 1898 there had been five hundred missionaries in the field in the South, and each of them, as well as their families in the West, subscribed to the paper. Now there were only three hundred elders laboring in the South, and the decline in readership brought on by this reduction in the missionary force made continued publication very difficult. Thus, "if the *Star* must die, and her end is inevitable, why let us see to it that she goes not to her resting place a poor, famished, impoverished, indebted skeleton, but in robustness, vivacity and honor, free from debt, that she may justly merit a righteous and glorious resurrection." On a more practical note, the editors asked all those who were in arrears with their subscriptions to clear up this indebtedness as quickly as possible. They also announced that bound volumes of the paper would go on sale after the first of the year, each to be placed in "a neat, substantial binding, ornamental to any library in the land, and worthy of a place in every home." And finally there was this plaintive note, part reflection, part hope:

Many homes have been brightened, and many hearts gladdened by the presence of this weekly messenger of truth and righteousness. Its irradiating gleam will still shed a ray of light divine, and the holy principles of the everlasting Gospel for which it has vigorously contended, will yet prevail in every land and clime.²⁷

How many hearts were gladdened and how much strength the readers of *Southern Star* drew from its columns, no one can say. Yet this

much seems certain. However subjective the prism through which its news was reported, the events described in *Southern Star* reveal that at the end of the nineteenth century the limits of religious toleration in the South were still rather tightly constrained and that to be a Mormon in that region at that time required not only faith but no small amount of personal courage as well.

NOTES

¹LaMar C. Berrett, "History of the Southern States Mission, 1831–1861" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960), 9; Samuel George Ellsworth, "A History of Mormon Missions in the United States and Canada, 1830–1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1951), 37–39; B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Century I*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:250.

²Berrett, "History of the Southern States Mission," 99.

³*Ibid.*, 219–21, 252, 257–58; Ellsworth, "History of Mormon Missions," 319; William W. Hatch, *There Is No Law . . . A History of Mormon Civil Relations in the Southern States, 1865–1905* (New York: Vantage Press, 1968), 25.

⁴Hatch, *There Is No Law*, 26–27; Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1941), 821; Roberts, *Comprehensive History* 5:558.

⁵James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 387; Hatch, *There Is No Law*, 29; Roberts, *Comprehensive History* 6:26–28.

⁶Roberts, *Comprehensive History* 5:559, 584.

⁷Hatch, *There Is No Law*, 41–90, passim; Jenson, *Encyclopedic History*, 821–22.

⁸Loy Otis Banks, "Latter-day Saint Journalism" (Master's thesis, University of Missouri, 1948), 14.

⁹*Ibid.*, 387–88; *Southern Star* 1 (10 December 1898): 12. (The pages in each of the two bound volumes of the *Southern Star* are numbered consecutively from the first issue to the last issue in each volume.)

¹⁰*Southern Star* 1 (25 November 1899): 409.

¹¹David Brion Davis, "Secrets of the Mormons," *New York Review of Books*, 16 August 1985, 15.

¹²*Southern Star* 1 (17 December 1898): 20–21; 1 (4 March 1899): 107–8.

¹³The Florida resolution is quoted in Rufus B. Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865–1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1961), 37; and *Southern Star* 1 (3 December 1898): 67; 1 (18 March 1899): 123.

¹⁴*Southern Star* 1 (7 January 1899): 44–45; 2 (30 December 1899): 36.

¹⁵*Ibid.* 1 (5 August 1899): 284.

¹⁶*Ibid.* 2 (31 March 1900): 138; 2 (21 April 1900): 162. A discussion of the early and largely unsuccessful Mormon missionary efforts in one southern city, New Orleans, can be found in the author's article "When the Saints Came Marching In: The Mormon Experience in Antebellum New Orleans, 1840–1855," *Louisiana History* 23 (Summer 1982): 221–37.

¹⁷*Southern Star* 1 (22 July 1899): 272; 1 (6 May 1899): 180; 1 (22 April 1899): 164; 1 (29 April 1899): 175; 1 (15 July 1899): 264; 1 (28 October 1899): 279; 1 (23 September 1899): 344; 2 (2 February 1900): 77–79; 2 (13 October 1900): 367.

¹⁸*Ibid.* 1 (22 April 1899): 164; 2 (24 March 1900): 135.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 1 (5 August 1899): 284.

²⁰*Ibid.* 1 (3 December 1898): 4; 1 (10 June 1899): 220; 2 (3 February 1900): 76; 2 (24 March 1900): 132; 2 (17 November 1900): 402.

²¹*Ibid.* 1 (29 April 1899): 176.

²²*Ibid.* 1 (18 March 1899): 122.

²³*Ibid.* 1 (31 December 1898): 39; 1 (4 March 1899): 106.

²⁴*Ibid.* 1 (13 June 1899): 230.

²⁵Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Vantage Books, 1980), 140.

²⁶*Southern Star* 1 (4 February 1899): 96.

²⁷*Ibid.* 2 (1 December 1900): 424.

Waking to an Empty House

She has showered and gone and hasn't left a note.
There is only the morning, the apricot sunlight
as hard as fresh-cut boards leaning
yellow and clean against the wall.

You wander the house touching tables.
If your voice would let you, you would say,
"This is me and this is the morning,"
but you're thinking of the Chinese monk who lived
in a belfry for seven years without talking.
Seven years and not a single hello to the bats
that hung in the corners like clenched fists.
Not a mumbled thank you to the girl with yellow hair
who sent his food up on the pulley.

In the garage you find your boots
you've let sit since last winter.
You dust them off, pull the strings tight,
and paint them till they're black and clean as beetles.
In the afternoon, she'll find you in your paisley shorts,
boots laced firm, nuzzling the Siamese.
She'll see your lips moving
but will hear nothing at all.

—Lance E. Larsen

BYU Student Life in the Twenties

Helen Candland Stark

Introduction by David J. Whittaker

The following reminiscence was written by Helen Candland Stark at the request of President Ernest L. Wilkinson as he was preparing the four volume *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*. Several years later, the essay was shared with Virginia Riggs of the BYU Alumni Association, and in 1984 copies were distributed to members of the Class of 1924 on the occasion of their fiftieth year reunion.

Helen Candland was born on 18 September 1901 to Arthur Charles Candland and Lydia Hasler. She grew up spending her summers in Mount Pleasant, Utah, and her winters in Provo. After graduating as a member of the first class of speech majors under T. Earl Pardoe in 1924, she taught high school, first at Kanab, then at Jordan, and then at Bingham Canyon. In 1934, she returned to BYU to work on a master's degree and as an instructor in Freshman English. She married Henry M. Stark in 1936 and thereafter moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where Henry worked as a research chemist for DuPont. They adopted three children. During their thirty years in Delaware, the Starks' home was often a center for LDS church activities. In 1966, Helen was asked to write a history of the Church in Delaware. She taught English courses for the University of Delaware Extension Division and composed many poems and essays. Following Henry's retirement in 1965, the Starks moved back to Utah, settling first in Salem then moving to Provo. Henry passed away in January 1988. Helen continues to write and show great interest in life. Both Henry and Helen have shown great love for the university over the years. They helped to establish the Alice Louise Reynolds Lectureship in the Lee Library and also supported the Women in Science programs.

Because Helen was the editor of the *Banyan* in 1923 and vice president of the student body in 1924, and because she writes that her college years were joyous, she is in a unique position to describe student life at BYU in the 1920s.

BYU STUDENT LIFE IN THE TWENTIES

Those students of the twenties, what particularly characterized them? For one thing, they were pretty much locally grown. In 1922–23, for example, 31 percent originated in Provo; another 28 percent came from surrounding Utah County, while a mere 20 percent represented the remainder of the state. Idaho provided a surprising 7 percent. Six other states supplied from one to seven persons each. Enrollment stood at 864, a total that included a number of unclassified, unmatriculated, or special students. Even by 1928, this ratio had not changed too drastically. Enrollment had reached 1,457. Provo still provided about a third of the students, actually the same 31 percent. Utah County had dropped a few points to 23.5 percent. However, the number from the rest of the state showed a rise to 33.8 percent, or nearer to a third than to a fifth of the enrollment. All other states, now numbering eighteen, contributed 15.2 percent of the students. Idaho still led with 92 of the 221 non-Utahns, while Arizona, with 35, was not a very close second. There were also twenty students from outside the United States. Still, more than half of those on campus originated within a radius of fifty miles.

Moreover, the student body was essentially rural in background. Provo still clung to its country roots. Many families continued to milk a cow that pastured on “ward” meadows just out of town. Families traditionally grew their own vegetables and fruits, sewed their own clothing, and shopped in the neighborhood market. Smaller towns differed from Provo more in degree than in kind. Some were isolated by poor roads, by mountains or desert, by inadequate vehicles. Without easy access to urban centers, they lacked many modern conveniences. Newspapers were delivered late. Radio was in its infancy. The big trek to “conference” often provided the adventure of the year.

Nevertheless, many persons today look back upon that period as almost utopian. They enjoyed a sturdy sense of family, church, and community interdependence. A pioneer tradition, sometimes remote, sometimes recent, sustained the entire culture. Too often, however, progress ground to a halt. A predominantly livestock economy could run out of water, grazing land, or markets. Unless a steel plant or a turkey farm, a mine or a railroad sparked business, expansion hit a dead end. Then the small town faced exporting its most precious natural resource—its young people. For many responsible and ambitious parents, this meant educating their children for nonrural careers. Often such a decision entailed sacrifice in both dollars and farm labor. Students often enrolled late or had to leave school early. Their hands bore marks left from thinning beets, pitching hay, or cleaning irrigation ditches.¹

So here they came, mostly by rail at the new one-and-one-half cents per mile fare, neither the overly rich nor the really poor, bright and eager

though relatively naive. Combined with the local youth, they became the raw material for Franklin S. Harris's experiment in embryonic growth.

Student life necessarily begins with a place to stay. At BYU the home away from home was literally that. The 1923–24 catalog states:

The university emphasizes the value of home life, and the people of Provo have shown great educational patriotism by providing for the comfort and convenience of students. If patrons will make their wants known, no one need fear a lack of accommodations within easy access of the University.²

Committees stood by with lists. As numbers increased, procedures were elaborated to decree separate housing for boys and girls, and inspection teams were formed to approve facilities.

Obviously, at \$12.50 a month for board and room, homeowners did not “take in students” as a financial venture. They hoped to break even or perhaps to underwrite the cost of food for their own families. Most of those who shared their residences opened doors for the sheer joy of having young people share their family life. Their own children helped to change the weekly sheets, and they helped *cheerfully*, says one informant, with the cooking and the dishes for tables set for twelve or more three times a day. In many homes, students shared in family prayers; hence it was a matter of concern when the scheduling of additional classes precluded kneeling together before breakfast. Small niceties in behavior were encouraged. One doesn't get into a clean bed with dirty feet. Each person attends to his own bathtub ring. A now-distinguished scientist, then fresh from the wilds, remembers his chagrin when he dropped the uncut roast on the floor. His landlady's understanding graciousness silenced the jeering laughter. It was a lesson in values he never forgot.

Often some room in the house became a joint study hall. Even the housemother was often taking a course. And there always seemed to be time to talk over a problem with the resident father-figure. Many a life-long friendship flourished between families in Provo and their counterparts in the boondocks. Sometimes, if money were tight, a parent brought in a dressed lamb or a bushel of pears.³

While it is true that in some parts of America the Roaring Twenties really roared, exuberance on the BYU campus was tempered by awareness that families had worked hard to provide this opportunity, and no child wanted to muff it. Says the 1923–24 catalog, “The standards of honor, Christian integrity, and Latter-day Saint ideals are required. Within these limits the students are given the fullest freedom.”⁴ In a devotional welcoming students, President Harris admonished, “We pride ourselves in being an institution practically without rules; we simply expect every student to be a gentleman or lady, and leave largely to each individual responsibility for doing this as best he can.”⁵ But this

did not imply that there were no rules. The Committee on Attendance and Scholarship included the most prestigious faculty members. To be called before them for scholastic failure or for moral laxity was a sobering experience. In addition, they carried with them not only the weight of the administration, but the sense of the student body: these things just aren't done at the "Y."

On the other hand, the spirit of the twenties was full of play. It was a zesty time. As one informant put it, "You opened the door a crack and they were through it." This enthusiasm partly explains the hang-up on freshman hazing. It was a big thing on other campuses. Many a high school student had been regaled by charismatic young teachers with tales of fraternity goings-on. Moreover, upperclassmen, outnumbered by newly arrived "big wheels" from Kanosh or Escalante, felt moved to teach respect for and obedience to their betters, to say nothing of initiation into the "Y" mystique. Regulations varied from year to year but usually included injunctions to wear the prescribed green beanie and to use only the rear and side doors of the Maeser and Education buildings. Freshmen were to memorize the college song and half a dozen college yells to sing or to say back on request. In particular, they were to be at the beck and call of any upperclassman to run errands, carry books, or otherwise demonstrate subservience. Penalties ran the gamut from being hauled before a senior court, through wearing a sign announcing "Freshman Law Breaker," to rare cases of paddlings. The 1929 *Banyan* put it thus:

The Freshmen this year were a typical crop of newcomers, with more pep than sense, and not too much of either one. With the aid of the Sophomores they soon began to realize their place in college and settle down to their rightful duties. Although there were a few sporadic outbreaks, they brought nothing but trouble and the lesson was soon learned. . . . This may be counted as a successful year . . . for the Freshmen emerged as well-behaved a bunch of youngsters as could be found anywhere.

Except for minor adjustments, the student body governmental structure remained relatively unchanged during the Harris period. The 1924 constitution called for the election of a president, first vice-president, second vice-president, secretary-historian, editors of the *Y News* and *Banyan*, and cheermaster. Together with a representative from each class, a representative from the secondary training school, and one faculty member, these officers made up the student council. President Harris was an exofficio member. Editors of the literary magazine, *White and Blue*, and the humor magazine, *Y's Guys*, were appointed by the council. Managers of athletics, forensics, dramatics, and music were recommended by the departments for council approval.

Election of officers each spring was no hit-and-miss affair. Feelings ran high. Slogans, songs, skits, and posters channeled assorted

skills into campaigns that participants considered to be deathless.⁶ Publications editors were selected with special care. Some of the outstanding students of the twenties cut their wisdom teeth in the old College Building offices. The perceptive coverage of the many facets of university life provided a unifying body of shared experience.

For the entire decade of the 1920s, a ten dollar per student activity fee covered operational expenses. In 1924, an income of ten thousand dollars was allocated as follows:

Athletics	\$4,600
Debate	650
Banyan	500
Y News	850
Honors	500
Lyceum	1,500
General	900

This administration also paid off a previous student body debt and transferred fifteen-hundred dollars in bonds to the university toward the purchase of a stadium site.

Whatever its physical limitations, College Hall became a focus for the abundant life. Three times a week students poured in for devotionals of surprising variety and interest. Often there was a face to face meeting with a General Authority. Some Churchmen, such as Adam S. Bennion, became campus favorites. For example, in March 1924 he began a series of mind-broadening lectures entitled “Literature and Life.”⁷ Nearly every student during this period remembers one of the short talks by President Emeritus George H. Brimhall that particularly struck home. One informant still recalls the warning about over-busyness. Too much hurry, he told the students, and one loses the precious moment that should have been savored. President Brimhall had just been driving through Orem’s flowering pear orchards, and he said, “When you drive through heaven, stop and look.” The memory of this talk has an added poignancy for this former student now that she is almost blind.

Student-sponsored programs were especially popular, often centering upon some up-coming athletic contest. BYU often exchanged programs with sister institutions. If somebody won an essay, short story, reading, or extemporaneous speaking contest, everyone knew and applauded, for the claimant to fame performed in devotional. So also for musical accomplishments. Almost every conceivable endeavor found a community or school sponsor eager to give a medal or a prize.

College Hall was always crowded for the Lyceum numbers. Students who had never traveled outside the state heard lectures on India or South America. They were introduced to distinguished poets such as William Butler Yeats, or to artists such as sculptor Gutson Borglum.

They heard the Minneapolis Symphony, the Kansas City Orchestra, the Chicago Opera Company, and Hans Kindler, the cellist. They saw the Portia Mansfield Dancers and the Tony Sarg Marionettes.

Debates were popular and well attended. They addressed such topics as “Resolved, that the best interest of the State of Utah would be served by grouping the Central Pacific Railroad with the Union Pacific rather than with the Southern Pacific,”⁸ or “Resolved, that the United States should immediately grant independence to the Philippine Islands under substantially the same basis as that enjoyed by Cuba.”⁹ Coaches were history, sociology, and speech professors. Participants opposed teams from other colleges within the state and also took on the universities of Nevada, Wyoming, and Southern California. If they did not always win, they usually returned less parochial. And at home, the 1922 *Banyan* reported, “College Hall has been filled for every debate held here.”

Dramatic productions were high on the priority list. Somehow between choir and chorus, band and orchestra, rehearsals had to be sandwiched in and the stage repeatedly set and dismantled to coordinate with complex scheduling. A close-knit fellowship of widely divergent men established a sanctuary under the stairs from which to operate. These stagehands, known as the “lion tamers,” miraculously changed the face of College Hall as occasion demanded. There were, of course, the favorites current in that period: *Peg O’ My Heart*, *Clarence*, *The Country Boy*, *The Great Divide*, *The Thirteenth Chair*. But each season also rejoiced in more ambitious productions that drew on the resources of nearly every university department. Memorable were *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Professor Pardoe playing the name role.

All of these cultural endeavors had the unqualified support of President Harris. As one student said, “I never ceased to be astonished by his willingness to find time to support University activities—not simply athletic events, but concerts, lyceums, plays, operas, recitals, exhibits, etc. As a participant in numerous plays and musical events, I learned to expect that President and Mrs. Harris would be present.”

If College Hall were the “head” of the school, the center of extracurricular intellectual and cultural life, surely the Ladies’ Gym was the hands and feet. It was here that the dances were held and many basketball games played. In the early twenties, it was possible to enjoy an opening handshake party where, by means of serpentine lines, everyone could literally shake hands with everyone else. So having been introduced, one naturally continued to say hello. The ten-minute dash from upper to lower campus or the reverse chimed with greetings. Mixers at no-date matinee dances further broke down restraints. Partners were in order, however, at evening parties. A girl’s popularity could be gauged

by how rapidly her program was filled. Orchestras were, of course, live, playing such tunes as "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles," "The Sheik of Araby," "Dardenella," and "A Perfect Day." Evening dresses for girls carefully covered arms and shoulders. Cheek-to-cheek dancing was strictly prohibited. At a second warning from Coach E. L. Roberts, an offending couple was whisked off the floor.

The athletic story has been detailed elsewhere. However, the intense feeling about basketball, win or lose, is a vibrant part of student life at BYU. Probably no area known to man, of comparable square footage, ever produced the din felt and heard in the Ladies' Gym at the peak of a crucial game. If energy could be stored in brick and wood, here is atomic potential.

School catalogs encouraged belonging to clubs, urging an "interest on the part of every student in all those activities which contribute to a bigger and more democratic 'Y' spirit, and which furnish opportunities for all students in those activities which interest them most."¹⁰ Obviously filling a need for participation in smaller units, clubs fell into several categories: geographic, hobby, academic, and social. Geographic groups represented such areas as Arizona, Alpine, Dixie, Idaho, Spanish Fork, Uinta Basin, Wasatch, and Beaver. Hobby groups covered a wide range of interests, from the Winter Walkers (who sponsored a winter carnival) to the Radio Club that fiddled with homemade components in the basement of the Education Building. Academic clubs proliferated to include Agriculture, Art Service, YEA Graduates, Biology, Mask, Piano. Students and teachers enjoyed warm fellowship in these departmental societies. More difficult to categorize are the Block Y Club (wearers of letters for intercollegiate competition), the YDDs (returned missionaries), and the Rolling Pin Dodgers, that odd minority assortment of married students.

There were also chapters of national honor fraternities on campus, linking BYU with a larger world and increasing its reputation with other schools. The earliest to arrive was the debate fraternity Tau Kappa Alpha, to be followed by Theta Alpha Phi (dramatics), Alpha Delta (commerce), Gamma Phi Omicron (home economics), and Alpha Kappa Psi. Club cohesiveness was fostered by means of an all-presidents' club.

In almost every discipline, achievement awards sprang up, some sponsored by individuals or groups in the community and others by concerned faculty members, departments, or campus clubs. For example, 1924 saw competition in piano, stringed instrument, and vocal music, and in various oratorical, playwriting, and extemporaneous speaking contests. Special recognition was also given for academic achievement through the Sina N. Chipman Award and the prized Chamber of Commerce Efficiency Medal.

Financial aid was limited and depended largely on local efforts. Because students felt concern that often their peers were compelled to leave college for the lack of a little emergency money, the sophomore class of 1922 initiated a Loan Fund Ball that continued to be an annual event until 1960. At their graduation in 1924, thirty-one students had already benefitted from this fund. In 1925, BYU was one of a limited number of colleges to receive loan money from the Harmon Foundation. By 1929, numerous individuals, alumni, and institutions were offering a wide assortment of scholarships and loans.

The 1920s were an important time for women. During this decade, women won the right to vote. The girls at BYU also threw off a few shackles, even to the extent of “bobbing” their hair, shortening their skirts, wearing makeup, and initiating a few programs on their own. A loan fund honoring Emmeline B. Wells was sponsored by the Relief Society General Board in 1923. Elsie C. Carroll initiated a short story contest open just to girls. Home economics and elementary education were still the majors of choice for women, but awareness grew that the options were widening. One of President Harris’s first acts as president was to appoint Amy Lyman Merrill as the first full-time dean of women. She sponsored affiliation with the National Association of Women Students, an organization linking many colleges and universities. A Big Sister movement took shape, with each junior or senior girl befriending half a dozen freshmen or sophomores. There was a standing committee on Care of Girls’ and Women’s Activities, made up of the dean, representative faculty women, and distinguished women from the community. The dean of women in 1924 was Nettie Neff Smart. A directory card for each girl went into her files, and she was available at all times for consultation, particularly to freshman girls.

While BYU was referred to facetiously as “BY Woo,” a mere 1.2 percent of the students were married in 1924. To questions as to whether a student should marry before graduating, President Harris replied that it depended on the girl, but he added, “I think a person has a better show to make it himself than he would with a wife, but the right kind of wife should be a help; she could pitch in and keep boarders.” Women were usually not permitted to work after marriage, so keeping boarders was about the extent of help a wife could give monetarily to a student-husband. So while romance flourished on campus, and many a match was made, marriage was usually deferred until after graduation.

Inevitably, the vigorous ferment of college life began to flow back to its roots by means of outreach programs. The Language Club opened its membership to “all people within easy reach of the university who have studied the modern languages. . . . Membership privilege is especially extended to the people of the community of French, German

or Spanish birth.”¹¹ After a popular course in social leadership, enrollees were often transported back to their hometowns to give demonstrations. Thus, for example, a couple of carloads of students from Fillmore, along with teachers Delbert Webb, Algie Eggertsen Ballif, or Gene Roberts, would travel back home for a how-to-do-it session at the stake MIA leadership meeting. This sort of thing was part of the subsequent rationale for Leadership Week (later renamed Education Week) when BYU played host on its own campus.

In 1921, student Ernest L. Wilkinson, using campus talent, organized what was to flower into the Public Service Bureau. Even as early as 1922, it produced fifty-two programs involving 460 persons and reaching audiences totalling twenty-five thousand. Subsequent years averaged one hundred to two hundred programs, presented to ever-widening audiences until eventually entertainments were given state-wide and even nationwide.

There was nothing at BYU in the 1920s comparable to the current student wards. The students were scattered among the local wards, and most bishops were baffled about how to tap the resources of this elusive minority, unexpectedly housed in their precincts. Often, too, Utah County students took the “Orem” train home for the weekend, further eroding the ward’s unstable membership. Religious life at the University was fostered in general through the devotional programs in College Hall and in particular through the theology teacher, who felt a special obligation to become intimately acquainted with the students in his classes and to encourage them to come to him with their personal problems. President-emeritus Brimhall was keenly aware of this need. He often sent out questionnaires to the theology teachers, asking, “Will you kindly furnish a statement of what you have done thus far this year toward rendering the members of your class pastoral attention in the lines of becoming personally acquainted with them.” Or, “How often do your students pray and would they take religion classes if not required?” Such surveys were anonymous.¹²

During the later years of the decade, science and technology plunged ahead at a bewildering rate. All over America, new sets of values and new moralities clashed against conventional religious beliefs. Many students hungered for the reassuring comfort of their hometown faith. President Harris felt this anxiety and tried to meet it. As one former student wrote:

As students we all respected President Harris very highly. Having never been to a university before, I was particularly naive, strictly a farm boy from the broad sagebrush plains of southern Idaho. We thought of him, not only as a fine scholar, sophisticated—in the best sense of the word—urbane, world traveled, and a gentleman; but we also knew him to be a sensitive and perceptive father away from home to every student.

The 1920s were the great period of college fraternities and sororities. As such organizations flourished on sister campuses, the clamor from BYU students became insistent. Both the Church and the University administration sensed danger in organizations that were exclusive and secret. Nevertheless, students felt a valid need to belong to a smaller, more intimate group. Elsie Carroll wrote as follows to President Harris:

Unless we can supply a more satisfactory means for giving the students of this school a broader and more formal social training, I should very much dislike to see these clubs abolished. Instead, I should like to see encouragement given for the creation of a sufficient number of such clubs that all students who desire might be affiliated with one.¹³

Much soul-searching ensued before a plan emerged that would, it was hoped, alleviate some of the hazards. As the 1928 catalog put it:

The University recognizes that proper social development is one of the important by-products of college training. This social opportunity has been provided through the class and club organizations of the institution, but in recent years these organizations have become too large to provide the students with the ultimate opportunities for leadership which are thought desirable.

Every student was to join a social unit of from twenty to thirty persons, established on the basis of gender, interest, and congeniality. It was argued that if there were a social unit for each student, the undertaking might work. The 1929 *Banyan* pictures members of about two dozen social units. Assuming a total enrollment of fifteen hundred, this would suggest that at least half of the students were not yet affiliated. An examination of three separate quotations from this publication leaves the impression that the social unit problem was still just that—a problem. On page 193, the response is positive:

This year marks the first full year of the operation of the Social Unit system. Started as an experiment in Democracy last year, it is working so well that most of its critics have been silenced. Although there have been many problems arise in the inauguration of such a radical departure from the policies of the past, most of them have been met and successfully solved. It is not a settled proposition yet, by any means, and much still remains to be worked out.

The most notable contribution of the Social Units this year has been the cooperation with the student body officers in the putting over of various projects. The value of the existence of many groups already well organized was proved numerous times. Among these were, The Spanish Fiesta, staged during Leadership Week; the Pep Vodie; the big pilgrimage to Salt Lake before the Dedication Game (new stadium); and on various other occasions.

The social life of the school has been increased both in quantity and in quality due to their activities. They have given opportunities and development that were impossible under the old system.

On the other hand, there are pages covering only a dozen clubs, including the honorary fraternities. There is an almost wistful note to be found in the quote on page 218:

The variety and large number of clubs on the Brigham Young University campus, has always been traditional in the past. Although the beginning of social units has caused a decrease in the number, the quality has not suffered any slump. Clubs offer an opportunity for contact with people who cannot be met in any other way and they will never die out.

The final quote, from page 215, may or may not tell it like it was:

Social units are at once the pride and joy and the target for ridicule at Brigham Young University. The optimists among the faculty and students view their handiwork with beaming approval, proclaiming it a panacea for every social ill. The pessimists, intolerant and impatient, regard it a masterpiece for making bad conditions worse. The majority of students regard it with toleration and sympathy, realizing that it is like a young baby that is not yet entirely sure of its steps. They hope that it will soon grow up into a husky system, well able to take care of itself. It is with hopeful eyes that the future is faced with the expectation that this will prove an improvement over the past.¹⁴

What happened next belongs to the 1930s.

The twenties changed the face of America, including and perhaps especially the small towns. Now they were linked to the wide world by roads, Model A Fords, radio. Additional frontiers vanished with the advent of the airplane. On 10 May 1927, Charles A. Lindbergh had flown nonstop to Paris. High-pressure advertising crowded kitchens and barnyards with expensive and intricate machines. It was a bull economy. To innovation and progress there appeared to be no foreseeable end.

There was an end, of course. And the thirties forced a sobering change in student life at BYU.

NOTES

¹Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 2:305–6.

²*Brigham Young University Quarterly: Annual Catalogue* 19 (May 1923): 28.

³Author's interviews with Algie Ballif and Kathryn Pardoe, June 1974.

⁴*Annual Catalogue* [1923], 28.

⁵Franklin S. Harris, "Address to Student Body, 1924," Franklin S. Harris Collection, box 12, folder S, in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo (hereafter cited as Lee Library).

⁶See, for example, "Finals Promise Hot Battle," *Y News*, 2 May 1923.

⁷*Y News*, 12 March 1924.

⁸Wilkinson, *Brigham Young University*, 317.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Variants of this statement appear in most annual catalogs of the period.

¹¹*Annual Catalogue* [1923], 22.

¹²George H. Brimhall Papers, 1920–32, Lee Library.

¹³Elsie Carroll to Franklin S. Harris, 1 October 1927, box 19, folder C, Harris Collection, Lee Library.

¹⁴*Banyan* (Salt Lake City: Paragon Publishing Co., 1929).

A.M. Revelation

Somewhere between the hours of 1:30
And 5:30 A.M. my frustrated fatigue
Drifts away with the wonder of my child.
The cavity in my arms
That I never knew existed till
It was filled with his tiny, perfect body
Is now so full that I know
This, at last, is love.
All history begins with this moment,
And I wonder how did I manage
From one meaningless day to the next
Before him? There is nothing
I would not do for him,
And I covet for his happiness.
As I make the tender transfer
From my breast to the cradle,
As I position the flannel blanket
To ensure the most warmth,
As I leave the room with the door ajar
Just enough to hear the next cry—
I suddenly realize that
Once-upon-a-time my mother enacted
This very night with me. . . .
Near tears—this then must hold
The meaning of being mother and child.

—Laura Hamblin

Lincoln

The dense gray twilight surrounding me is a web
Of elements hanging loose or tattering, the war's
Last windfall. Streets of Washington are empty
Of the ranks of soldiery, and stolid generals
Recede into the impertinence of sleep. The war
Was desolation of finality, the multithousand
Corsairs of darkness vanishing into the gulf
Of their final deployment. I, who gave commands,
Cannot forget my inclination to remain silent.
Now, the carriage waits, and a play's illusion
Is minutes away. The play may entertain,
But the shape will have a smooth, inevitable
Effect in which the mind espouses its own repose.
Once, whistling revenants drew my mind into war,
And the tumult rose like heat to twist and thwart
The vision of regiments that mulled the cause.
Soft and winding heather and vines, rows of roses,
And acresting wheat. If I slump, soon taken
From orders of fiery expedience and slipping will,
I shall rest in the piety of final peace, for war
Suborned the touch and measure of the full devotion
Of my spirit before the prizing primordial will.
I have taken litres of the draught of fire
And have quaffed them, or I have handled a chain
By which I keep a lion down and in, though
He stalks the perimeters of strategic war.
The forlorn milieu of battle rehearses me
For a play at Ford's, but the lists of fallen
Are nailed in me like the play's advertisements
That I may wear my continence like conviction
Or the wearing will to survive. Am I still
The attack at Gettysburg and Chancellorsville
Or the still helpcare of a nursing home?
What comes suddenly upon me in the wilderness?
The rainmist shifts and settles, and silence
Is the closure of the desperate, wheeling attack

That hushed me intermittently as I waited
For cannon and the lines to waver slowly forward
From my command and disappear. I wait alone.
The soldiery do not return. I stand guard,
But hear only the crisp leaves crackling
And the flow of the air I breathe. I feel
The darkness. Someone's behind me, at my shoulder,
Now.

—Clinton F. Larson

Winged Words

A Portfolio of Paintings and Drawings by James C. Christensen

Introductory Commentary by Charlene R. Winters

Sisters is a painting that draws an audience. Two women face each other in striking profile. The clothing and jewels one wears indicate comfort and riches; the second's indicate poverty with a gown of similar style but with coarse material long worn to tatters. Yet both faces are identical. Are they biological sisters? Are they sisters whose bond is the shared link of womankind? Are they sisters in spirit? Despite their differences, are they, in fact, equal? The art conceals and reveals.

Sisters, a recent painting by BYU faculty artist James C. Christensen, is part of a series of new works he displayed in a late autumn one-man show in both Utah and Connecticut. *Sisters*, as well as the other art in the show, could be peeled, layer by layer, to reveal deeper symbols and intentions. The same could be said of Christensen, whose career has expanded beyond the corners of the university and the Intermountain West to interested galleries and audiences on the East and West coasts.

"My own metamorphosis in *Sisters* came as I painted it," says Christensen. "I first thought the poor woman would be virtuous and the rich one elitist. But I realized most people I knew were closer to the rich lady's side—and most were fine, good people. I almost slid into the common falsehood of assigning intrinsic virtue to poverty and inherent evil in having the goods of this world." He chose instead to have both women serve the best way they could. The poor lady has a white violet, the symbol of hope and faith; the other, a strawberry, also humble, but a representation of the fruitful man. "The lady with money has the ability to do more good works—and because of her means she ought to—yet her strawberry is not quite ripe; maybe there is more for her to figure out."

There is, no doubt, more to be discovered in all of Christensen's art, but Christensen prefers to leave most of the understanding to the viewer, believing "there is so much more to a painting if you have to find it." Vern Swanson, director of the Springville Museum of Art, feels that "Jim's art

gives us room to interpret. We can jump in, but we'll discover we have a long journey to find the end in his work."

Christensen's art has the advantage of significant popular success. People like it. Willing audiences see his shows. In the early 1980s, he provided several paintings for Time-Life Books' "Enchanted World" series. In 1984, NASA featured *Low Tech*, Christensen's lighthearted tribute to space exploring barnstormers, for its twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition, "Visions of Other Worlds." The Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library in Washington, D.C., offers a Christensen poster that is a montage of the bard's plays and characters. Since 1985 the Greenwich Workshop in Trumbull, Connecticut, has used Christensen as its only fantasy painter among a stable of acclaimed artists that includes Americana specialist Charles Wysocki, creative wildlife artist Bev Doolittle, and western artist Tom Lovell. Christensen has managed these assignments and others while teaching full-time at BYU.

Christensen's work is usually finely, even elaborately, detailed using a style focused on clarity of subject, form, color, and detail. He has worked as a commercial illustrator, but his work transcends illustration. "When I began taking fantasy work seriously, I used it primarily as illustration," he says. "I painted the pictures in my mind that grew as I read people's books. These paintings communicated everything immediately—usually a necessity in the commercial book market. Now, however, the 'fantasies' are my own and my choices are more symbolic. I'm using metaphors and fantasy parables to tell stories that will teach, inform, enlighten, and even amuse."

Often, for example, he uses fish in his work, symbols of profound life. He'll follow the idea of fishing as a way to extract the unconscious elements from deep sources, "elusive treasure, legend—or wisdom."

Christensen propels himself in new directions to keep his art fresh to himself. He challenges his technical expertise, for example, by moving from acrylic to oil, changing his scale, or working in a more abstruse way. He thinks of himself as a "a player in the scene of contemporary art . . . but not on the cutting edge of mainstream artists." By this he means he is not trying for a New York show to establish a reputation. "Being represented by galleries on both coasts doesn't 'count.' Only New York 'counts,' and then only in a narrow geographic area where a group of critics and recognized galleries meet to identify and direct contemporary art movements. New movements seem to evolve every year-and-a-half. I don't want to play that game because a lot of it is not valid. Many New York artists seem to have traded their souls for good public relations, losing the passion or belief that drives them."

He'll be an art school of one, if necessary, and said, "If I am ever identified with the mainstream culture, it's because the culture has moved toward fantasy." It appears the culture is moving that way.



Sisters
acrylic





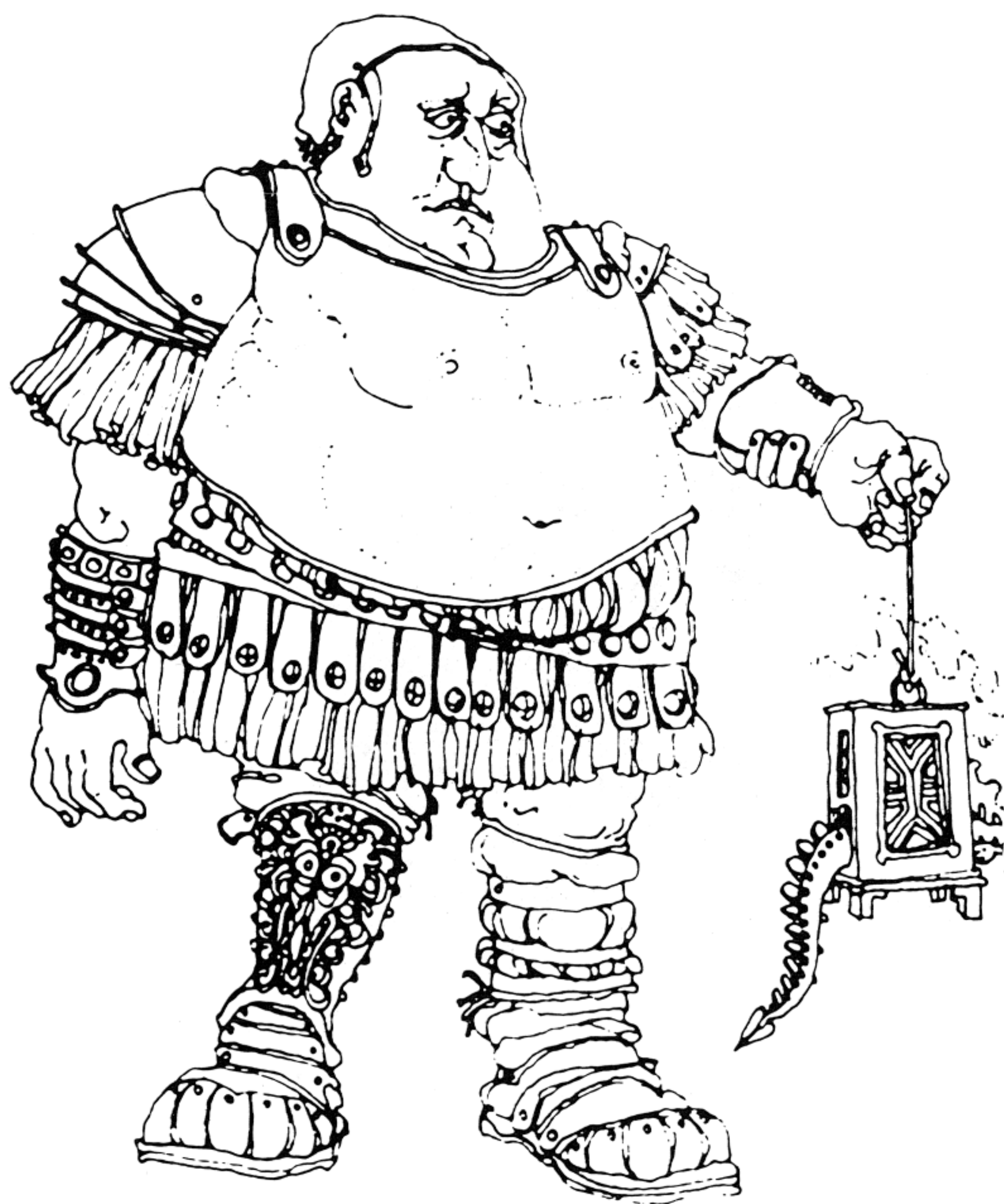
Benediction
oil



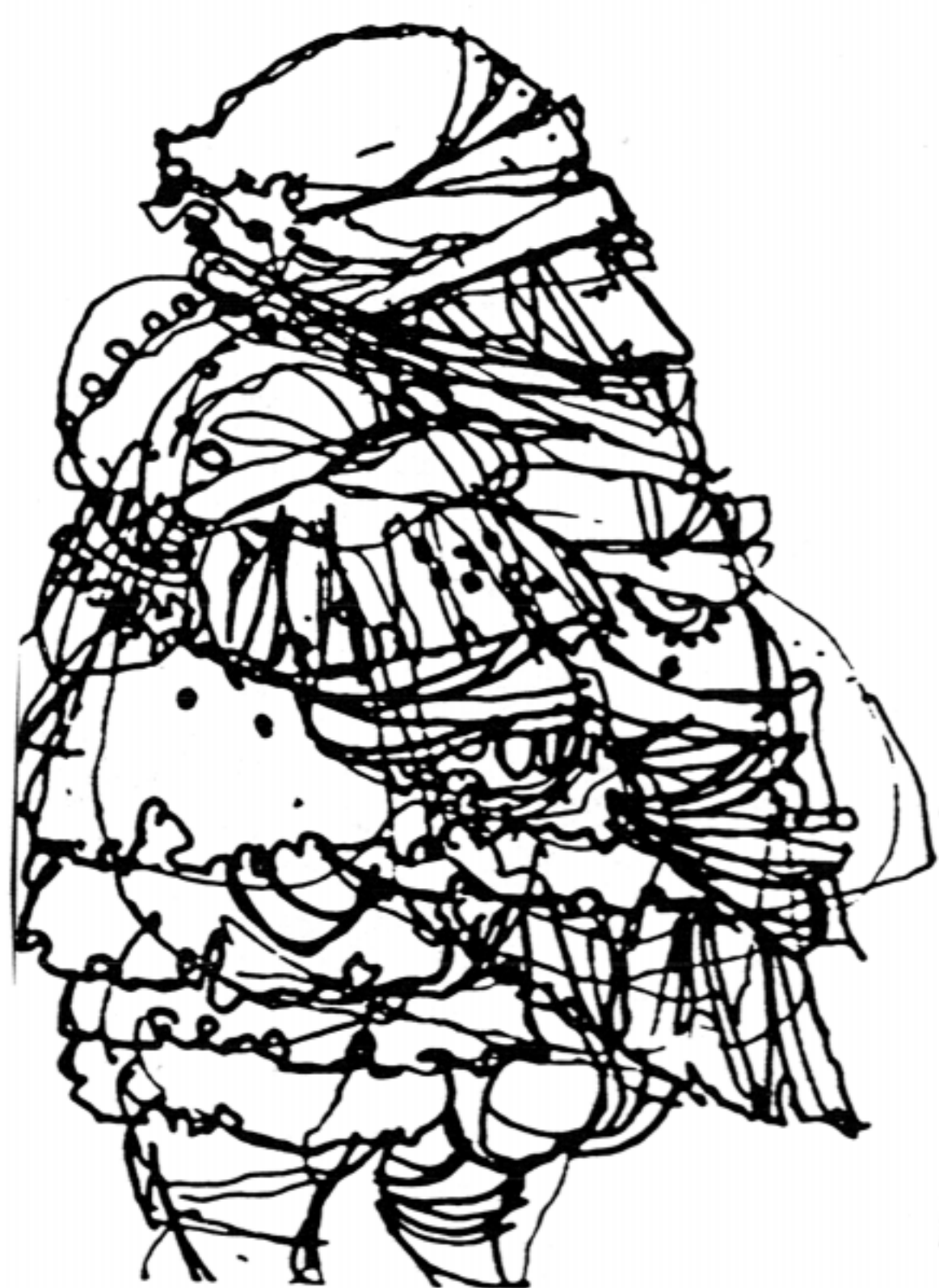
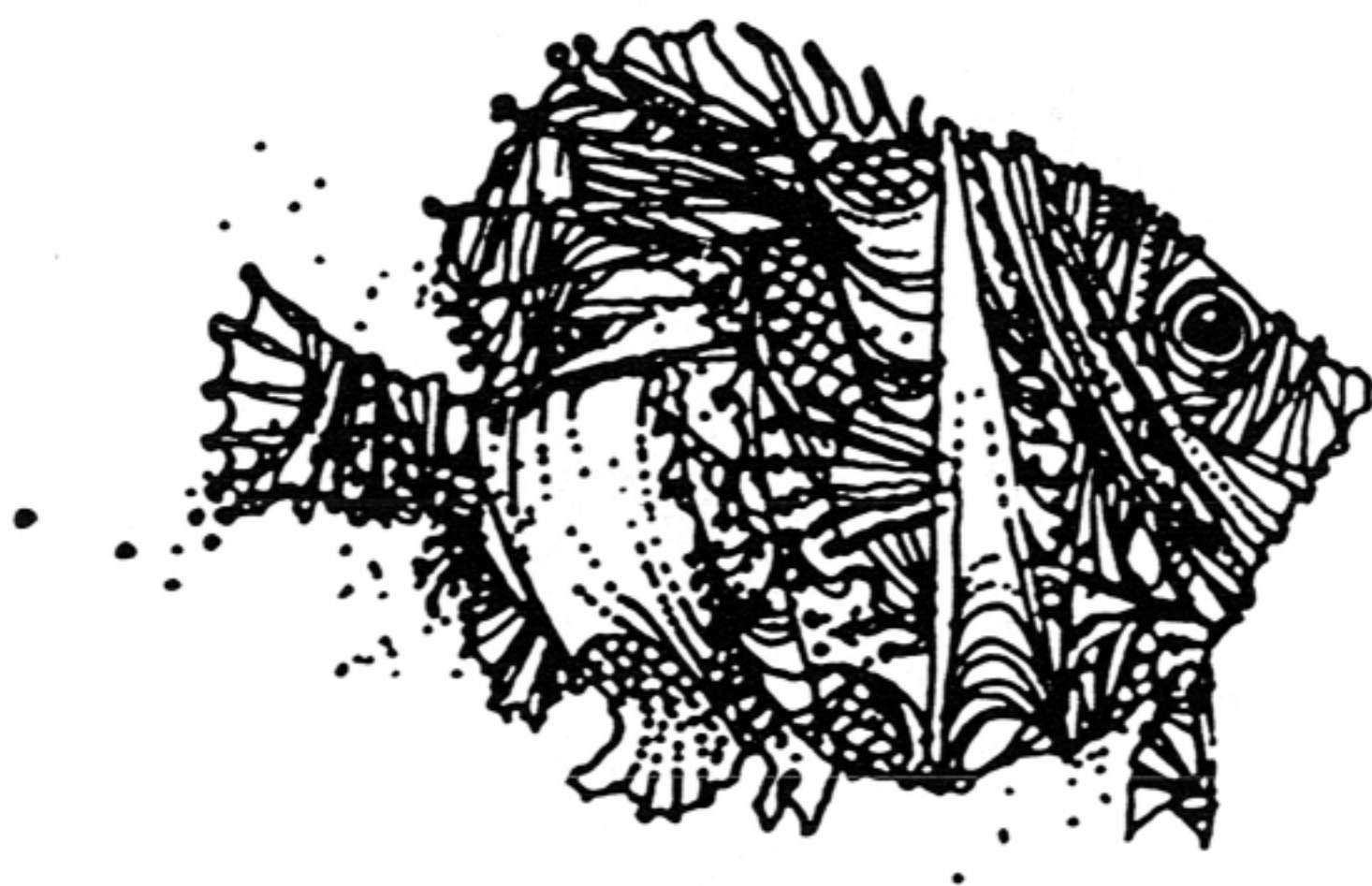
La Duquesa
oil



Annunciation
oil

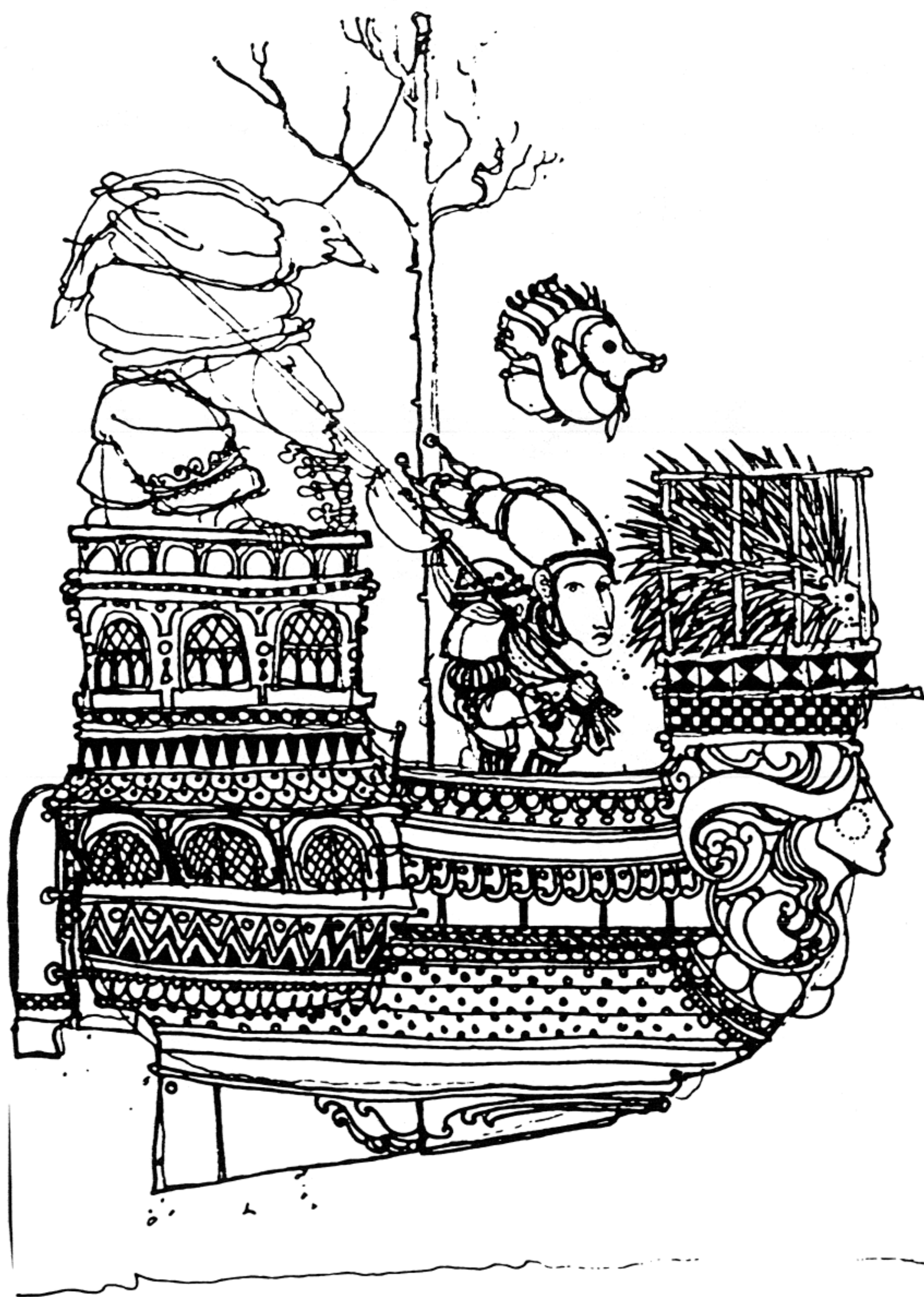














PICADOR GORDO

CORRIDA, SUNDAY 3de MAYO -

Big day today - the ~~pastor~~ ^{PASTOR} this morning - (it has been the same since we left. I didn't buy anything but Cassie got a great leather back pack for \$40 or \$50. we met Antonio & his son and went with them. after the resto we went to the plaza. they are working on the building & everything has been moved - I couldn't find anything! But the day was good - I enjoyed seeing my favorite again. but, somehow, the overwhelming sense of wonder that I had the first time & even to some extent the second, seems to be gone. I study the work now, I try to see how they did things that I can apply to my own work, but the sense of awe & reverence, the heart beat, the emotional response, isn't there. Not really disappointed, but I am surprised at my response. — After the plaza & resto we went to the bull fight - the fights were not terrific except for one good quinto kill, but a Brazel Ueno got gored and a horse got zapped, and a matador about lost an eye to the horse.





Firenze

So much to see & so little time. Even though we have more time in Florence than ever before, I just keep discovering more things to see. And, at the same time, we are trying to do some artwork. I have done a few watercolors, but they are mostly an excuse to look & think. The drawing below was done from the Piazzale Michelangelo. This city really causes one to think. It makes one want to do great & noble things. After visiting the Academy & seeing the Michelangelo sculptures, it was mentioned that after seeing that work, we felt that we didn't want to go home & spend our lives doing trivial things, either for money or because they are easy to do. The best art has a spirit of its own, dignity & reverence for beyond observation or form. lofty content, significant form & appropriate subject matter support & sustain each other as do ideals of truth, beauty, & goodness. What a challenge for the artist! When I begin to think like that, the things that take up so much of my energy at home seem so unimportant! I must pray for perspective. I don't want to lose these feelings of the desire for greater art, but I don't want to lose myself in the pursuit of a goal that may only have earthly rewards.

B · A · I · A · N · C · B



Education, Moral Values, and Democracy: Lessons from the German Experience

Douglas F. Tobler

History is not very popular these days. We apparently live in an age that has turned its back on the past. To many, history is what Henry Ford said it was—bunk—with little relevance to either individual or collective life. This would appear to be especially true of college students, who are staying away from history classes in droves. Perhaps that is because, as one friend put it, they have not lived long enough to be conscious of history, let alone understand it. But the student generation is not alone in what the sociologist Robert Nisbet, quoting T. S. Eliot, calls “disowning the past” in favor of a present that is progressively more impatient with yesterday.¹

We historians have contributed to this declining interest by becoming too narrow in the pursuit of our own special interests and by abdicating to journalists the task of writing to the general educated public. We have perhaps thought the “trickle down” theory would work better in history than it does in the economy. We have also lost some credibility by our failure to draw commonsense conclusions or even lessons from our studies in the collective experience and thus forfeited a major purpose for which history exists. What good is the study of history if we do not learn something about ourselves and the human condition? Some modern historians have even exhibited a kind of cynical pride in the meaninglessness of history. For example, consider the following comment by Professor David Donald of Harvard:

What undergraduates want from their history teachers is an understanding of how the American past relates to the present and the future. But if I teach what I believe to be the truth, I can only share my sense of the irrelevance of history and the bleakness of the new age we are entering. . . . Unlike every previous American generation, we face impossible choices. . . . What, then, can a historian tell undergraduates that might help them in this new and unprecedented age? Perhaps my most useful function would be to disenthral them from the spell of history, to help them see the irrelevance of the past.²

Part of the current skepticism about the value and meaningfulness of history may result from a tendency to put too much emphasis on the side of history that is unique and changing, while taking historical continuity for granted. There are basic human needs and values, such as life, freedom, the preservation of human dignity, the desire for justice, and the search for a purposeful existence, that do not derive from history and transcend time. These form a continuity that balances with change to provide us with some standards for judging the past.

What historians should be telling students is that history is unique to human beings, that it is intrinsic in our nature and at the same time elevates us above the rest of nature. History serves the same purpose for society as memory does for individuals: it protects us from collective amnesia, a disease even more disorienting and dangerous to a society than to an individual. Just as the thoughtful memory of things past provides perspective and direction in personal life, so history can work its civilizing influence upon a society. But while neither memory nor history can offer an ironclad guarantee for the future, they are (as Bernard Baruch once said in defense of old age) “better than the alternatives.” In his own day, Albert Einstein pleaded to have history taught as “progress in civilization,” as a means of developing a lofty spirit in man commensurate with his potential dignity.³

There are, of course, numerous insights or lessons to be learned from historical study. This essay explores some insights gained from a look at democracy and freedom through the German experience in the first half of the twentieth century.

My study and observations during the past few years have convinced me that democracy does indeed offer the best hope for all of mankind to enjoy the blessings of freedom and the opportunity to develop what the early nineteenth-century German philosopher and government minister Wilhelm von Humboldt called the “full flowering of the human personality.” Recent struggles in Poland, the Phillipines, and Korea have vividly illustrated this basic yearning we all have to control our own destiny. At the same time, we have learned that democracies are not as inevitable as some nineteenth-century political thinkers supposed, and that they cannot be imposed on a people who do not want them or who refuse to pay the price—both the down payment and the monthly installments. Moreover, democracies are fragile and require constant vigilance if they are to survive. Winston Churchill summarized this view in a thoughtful speech to the House of Commons in 1947:

Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.⁴

For the German people, the years after World War I were a time of extraordinary change and turmoil. Their failure to achieve a viable democracy during this period proved to be a catastrophe for them and for the world. An examination of this first attempt at German democracy, with its potential implications for other times and places, may be a worthy effort for the historian. But first let me briefly review the facts in the case. The rising generation is too young to remember them, and those who lived through the era may have forgotten.

In November 1918, World War I—the “war to end all wars,” to make the world “safe for democracy”—came to an end. After four years of giving their all to what they believed was a “just” cause, the German people discovered they had indeed lost the war. The magnificent empire Bismarck had created in the center of Europe collapsed; Kaiser Wilhelm II fled; and in the heat of the revolutionary mood a democratic republic, the Weimar Republic, was proclaimed. The Weimar Republic was from the beginning a frail and even sickly plant. There were few democrats and even fewer republicans to provide a fertile soil for growth. Some Germans wanted the monarchy back; others wanted neither the republic nor a monarchy, but something patterned after Bolshevik Russia.

The young republic was buffeted by a constant stream of difficulties: responsibility for the punitive Versailles Treaty, which every German, regardless of political persuasion, resented; political assassinations of strong democratic leaders; invasion of the industrial Ruhr heartland by French and Belgian troops; inflation that saw the exchange rate soar from eight to four trillion marks for one dollar in four years; the Great Depression, with similar unemployment and misery to that in America but without our stabilizing democratic traditions, values, and institutions; political instability and psychological despair. In this mood, the political leadership and a plurality of the people turned to Adolf Hitler. He had, he said, answers. Most Germans were convinced things could hardly get worse; they would experience a rude awakening. On the occasion of his accession to power, Hitler promised, “Give me ten years and you will not be able to recognize Germany.”⁵ This turned out to be the ironic understatement of the century!

What were Hitler’s “achievements” in his twelve years of power? For the first six years, he brought apparent prosperity and renewed national pride while preparing for war and locking the country in the noose of a totalitarian police state. Then followed 2191 days—six years—of conquest, slaughter, misery, famine, death, degradation, and guilt. Twenty million Germans went to war; 3,250,000 died in battle while another 3,350,000 civilians perished in addition to 7,750,000 wounded and 1,300,000 missing. Of twenty million buildings in Germany, seven million were destroyed or damaged, along with three

thousand miles of railroad track. The monetary cost for Germany, in 1940 dollars, was \$272 billion.

The cost for the world was greater. Seventy million men fought in history's bloodiest conflict; seventeen million died on the battlefield together with eighteen million civilians. Some calculations push the death toll beyond fifty million. The direct cost of the war was one trillion 1940 dollars, or about two-and-a-half trillion today. Indirect costs (mostly property damage) totalled an additional four trillion.⁶

But there was also a heavy moral cost. As the prospects for victory deteriorated, the Nazi leadership intensified the other war against the Jews. Consciously, systematically, bureaucratically, and efficiently, Hitler's regime carried out their major objective: the murder of the Jews. But other things, such as faith in modern man and in our capacity for progress toward civilization, died too. Many wondered if this was indeed what the world was coming to.

Democracy in Germany had failed, but questions remained. Why did it fail? Why did the German people, with their reputation for cultural and educational achievement, permit someone like Hitler to acquire and consolidate power in such a way as to start a war and carry out the Holocaust? What motivated the Nazi leadership to pursue their course to so destructive an end? What had happened to the ethical and moral values that should have served as a barrier against inhumanity? Could something similar happen there—or anywhere—again?

Historical explanations are necessarily complex. Oversimplification is as dangerous and distorting in understanding history as it is in understanding the motives of individuals. Historians have offered long-range explanations that emphasize the German tradition of authority and the strong state while playing down the significance of individual freedom. This was coupled with the Machiavellian marriage—the legacy of Bismarck—that united national pride and the ruthless abuse of political power. The German idea of freedom within the state rather than against it was different from that in the West. Then there are the short-term explanations: the loss of World War I, the Depression, the despair and disillusionment and the particular concatenation of people and events that led up to 1933. There are also political, social, economic, and psychological explanations; all have contributed something to our understanding, but all are, in my judgment, inadequate to account for the magnitude of the event.

Two respected German historians looked out on the carnage after 1945 in search for meaning, one from within the country, where he had spent his entire life of eighty years, the other from the safer refuge of the America to which he had been driven. Both had taken pride in their native culture and its achievements; both now stood in horror at the sight. The older man, Friedrich Meinecke, called the sight before him "The German

Catastrophe” and in Gordon Craig’s felicitous phrase offered the following explanation: “the emphasis upon power at the expense of spirit has corrupted the values of the people and stunted their political growth.”⁷ The younger historian, Hajo Holborn, later Sterling Professor of History at Yale, allowed more time to pass before offering a more expansive but similar analysis. While paying attention to the role social conflict had played in paving the way for Hitler, Holborn placed a major portion of the blame elsewhere:

The actual decline of German education goes far to explain not only why so many Germans voted the Nazis into power but also why they were willing to condone so many of their subsequent crimes. German education hardly dealt with the “whole man”; it chiefly produced men proficient in special skills or special knowledge but lacking not only in the most primitive preparation for civic responsibility but also in a canon of absolute ethical commitments. Although the churches provided this for a good many people, and to a greater extent within the Roman Catholic Church than within the Protestant Churches, the number of Germans who looked to the church for guidance was limited. The higher philosophy and the humanities of the period were largely formalistic or relativistic and did not produce a firm faith. In these circumstances it was inevitable that so many people fell for cheap and simple interpretations of life and history, as offered by the racists. To young people in particular this proved an irresistible temptation.⁸

Well over a century before this explanation was written, a French nobleman-scholar came to the United States to study democracy in its living setting. He was confident that it was the “wave of the future” for France as well as the rest of Europe, but he doubted that the Old World was preparing to make democracy work. Therefore, he set out to determine “the principles underlying action, principles susceptible of universal, not merely American, application.”⁹ What followed was the classic *Democracy in America*, which has served ever since as a kind of handbook for those who wished to know what conditions democracy needed to prosper and grow. Very early in the treatise, Tocqueville admonished political leaders about the interrelationship between education, moral virtues, and democracy:

The first duties that are at this time imposed upon those who direct our affairs is to educate democracy; to reawaken, if possible, its religious beliefs; to purify its morals; to mold its actions; to substitute a knowledge of statecraft for its inexperience, and an awareness of its true interest for its blind instincts; to adapt its government to time and place, and to modify it according to men and to conditions. A new science of politics is needed for a new world.¹⁰

Later, in an 1835 letter to one of his closest friends, M. Stoffels, Tocqueville explained both the advantages and weaknesses of democracy, asserting “that such a government cannot be maintained without certain conditions of intelligence, of private morality, and of religious

belief that we [France] as a nation have not reached, and that we must labor to attain before grasping their political results.”¹¹ Tocqueville then enunciated some of these moral principles—Holborn’s absolute commitments—which must be idealistically and passionately held by both leaders and the broad mass of the people if democracy is to function properly: (1) a religious view of man’s existence, placing him a little lower than the angels and making him responsible to his Creator in a life hereafter for his deeds in this one; (2) an unshakable faith in the worth of the human being; (3) a commitment to the equality of all as human beings—“the gradual development of the principle of equality is a providential fact”¹²; (4) a true and sincere respect for right and justice; and (5) a true love of freedom, which, as a later scholar, John Hallowell, counseled “requires both a knowledge of the good and the will to choose the good when known.”¹³

It was precisely these moral values that were not a strong enough part of German life to enable the young democratic political institutions to resist the seductive appeal of Hitler and his party. When torrents of disillusionment, resentment, and irrationality overflow traditional banks, only absolute ethical standards held with fervor and conviction can provide the dams and headgates needed to keep the raging stream from untold destruction.

How could the widely respected German educational system have contributed to the creation of a moral climate favorable to Hitler’s rise to power? At the end of the nineteenth century, Germany had the lowest rate of illiteracy in Europe—a mere .05 percent at a time when Britain had twice and France eight times that rate.¹⁴ However, universal education in Germany was limited to the elementary grades. Both before and during the Weimar era of the 1920s, an overwhelming majority of students had completed their comprehensive schooling by age fourteen. Thereafter they attended vocational school for two or three years before becoming full-fledged members of the permanent work force. In 1931, for example, there were approximately seven-and-a-half million children in the elementary schools but fewer than nine hundred thousand in secondary schools and fewer than 120,000 students enrolled in all German universities and technical schools.¹⁵ Thus, only about one out of every eight children went to school beyond the eighth grade, and fewer than one in fifty attended the university.

More significant than the numbers, however, were the curriculum, textbooks, and spirit that pervaded the classroom. The curriculum consisted of the three R’s plus singing, with history, geography, natural science, and geometry added in the upper grades. Learning was generally by rote memorization of the facts under the direction of a schoolmaster, although from time to time there were serious attempts to humanize the approach. Albert Speer, Hitler’s architect and later

Minister of Armaments, remembered what school was like for the generation that provided the Nazi leadership:

In school, there could be no criticism of courses or subject matter, let alone of the ruling powers of the state. Unconditional faith in the authority of the school was required. It never even occurred to us to doubt the order of things, for as students we were subjected to the dictates of a virtually absolutist system.¹⁶

Speer's evaluation is reinforced by a mature Albert Einstein. After finding refuge in the U.S., he spoke out against the education through coercion that he had resented as a boy:

To me the worst thing seems to be for a school principally to work with methods of fear, force, and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the sound sentiments, the sincerity and the self-confidence of the pupil. It produces the submissive subject. It is no wonder that such schools are the rule in Russia and Germany.¹⁷

It is significant that an estimated 30 percent of the political leaders in Nazi Germany came from among the teaching profession, especially from elementary schoolteachers.¹⁸ By the early twentieth century, there was little, if any, attention paid in the German elementary schools to the human values: the sacredness and dignity of the individual personality with its need for maximum personal freedom, as taught a century earlier by Humboldt and friends. Instruction was designed to teach the basic subjects—not citizens—and to promote German nationalism, military strength, and the preservation of the class system. Children and adults read Goethe and Schiller, but it was difficult to internalize the human values in their work—if they were understood—over against the prevailing dogmas of the time.¹⁹

Students in the elementary schools were required to have religious training, but it, too, stressed order and discipline and was cold and formalistic. The foremost scholar on the German educational system, Friedrich Paulsen, described his own religious training experience in these terms:

As far as I can remember, [religious instruction] adopted the scheme of neo-Lutheran orthodoxy and contained an epitome of the system of dogmatics, conceived in the spirit of that new faith and dealing at length with such matters as the doctrine of the two natures and the three offices of Jesus, the way of salvation leading through recognition and confession of our sins, through repentance and penance, faith and justification, to sanctification and eternal bliss. Of all these things we are able to give account in the form of forceful definition. But I do not remember that any impression was ever made in this way either on our minds or on our hearts.²⁰

The secondary schools and universities—the prestigious training ground for Germany's elite—did no better than the elementary schools

in either teaching or exemplifying the moral values needed for democracy. Harry Kessler, one of Weimar Germany's most respected intellectuals, reflected back on his school days at the famous Johanneum Gymnasium, a special high school for those going on to the university in Hamburg, and noted that the aim of studying Latin and Greek, the staples of a curriculum designed to produce a truly educated, refined, and humane individual, had been perverted:

All that remained of the ideal of the human individual, bearing in his mind and heart consciousness of all mankind and its culture, such as had inspired the age of Goethe, all that remained was the enormous industry necessary to absorb the immense material involved [and this] had acquired an independent function and usurped, as it were with satanic majesty, the throne of the old ideal of humanism.²¹

Even more than the public schools, the universities basked in the glow of international adulation. Budding scholars came from everywhere to sit at the feet of lionized savants whose reputations had been built primarily on substantial research productivity, and this productivity was primarily in the realm of narrow specialization. In that system, serious advancement to full professor was out of the question if you were just a teacher. Prominence, power, and prestige produced a kind of contempt for being generally educated; it also produced a narrowness of perspective easily communicated to students wishing eventually to emulate the social position of their professors. Looking back in 1946, the Heidelberg philosopher Karl Jaspers attributed the rise of Nazism in the university to "the disintegration of scholarship into an aggregate of specializations [that] had in wide circles destroyed the spirit of truth."²²

Moreover, German university communities also were contemptuous of the kind of political involvement that democracies require. To be politically aloof—apolitical—was to preserve the professor's supposed objectivity and make him a credible critic of society and the political order. But this was a dangerous delusion: most professors were intensely political in support of the old order. To them, the monarchy, German power in the world, and a socio-political order based on a class system were infinitely superior for Germans to any kind of republic or democracy, which they viewed as a foreign import from the West. And this attitude was maintained long after the monarchy had been replaced by the republic.

German universities taught other values that gave little help to democracy. Besides being institutionally vacuous, Christianity inspired little faith and confidence among the intellectual elite. Higher criticism of the Bible, the onslaughts of philosophical and practical materialism, and the substitution of nationalism and the power of the state as ersatz religions to which one owed primary spiritual and emotional allegiance all had a withering effect on traditional Judeo-Christian values.²³ In

addition, the academic community had given a new respectability to the doctrine of anti-Semitism. Even before Hitler achieved actual power in January 1933, the German universities had become first bastions against democracy and the Republic and then student citadels for the new movement. The universities, even more than German society in general, had been secularized to the point that the central issues of Christianity—love and fear of God and love for fellowman—had become blurred in the vision of a generation soon to gain enormous political power. Speaking of the secular transformation from his parents' generation to his own, Paulsen wrote:

But there can be no doubt that a great change has taken place in the general attitude; the ties which used to bind the individual to the Church as a traditional way of life have greatly weakened. To the parental generation, a life without the Church would have seemed unthinkable, while the generation now growing up would hardly be conscious of any great gap in their lives if the Church were suddenly to disappear. It is remarkable how rapidly this alienation has spread even to the rural communities in a neighborhood which used to hold with the Church. The principal reasons are that life in general has become more worldly and that the mind has been taken up by other interests.²⁴

In Carl Zuckmayer's play *The Devil's General*, the hero, Harras, a rough but honorable general in the German Air Force, muses over the negative role that education has played in the formation of his generation:

Our kind of half-education has filled our guts with metaphysics and our heads with intestinal gas. We are dragged down by what we can't digest. We have become a nation of intellectually constipated elementary school teachers who have traded the disciplinary stick for a riding whip in order to disfigure the face of humanity. We build castles in the air and are slave drivers at the same time. A miserable people.²⁵

What has been said about the failure of the schools to teach absolute ethical values was also true, if to a slightly lesser degree, of the churches. Both the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches as well as some smaller religious groups were so thoroughly entwined with the prevailing political, economic, and social mores that their pulpits were more often given over to sermons of national rhetoric than calls for repentance. Protestants, in particular, had accepted the marriage of church and state ever since the time of Luther nearly four centuries before. Religion, to them, was primarily institutional and passive, not personal and active. At the same time it was political and even class oriented, not spiritual and ethical. One was a Christian by one's church affiliation rather than by conduct; the church's (and by extension the state's) enemies were each person's enemies, and it was as difficult for them to carry out the challenging injunction to love our enemies as it is

for us now. In a 1945 address, Karl Jaspers expressed the deep feelings of guilt that many Germans carried with them:

Thousands in Germany sought, or at least found death in battling the regime, most of them anonymously. We survivors did not seek it. We did not go into the streets when our Jewish friends were led away; we did not scream until we too were destroyed. We preferred to stay alive, on the feeble, if logical ground that our death could not have helped anyone. We are guilty of being alive. We know before God which deeply humiliates us.²⁶

Three other issues clouded the vision of religious Germans, making it difficult for them to perceive the evil about them. First, there was a kind of morbid preoccupation with “Godless Communism” threatening them from the east. Many Germans, especially those who considered themselves “religious,” became convinced that the political choices open to them had been narrowed to only two, National Socialism and Communism, and that since Hitler had given repeated assurances that his regime must be built on “positive Christianity” (whatever that meant) he was the last bulwark against the westward thrust of this political and ideological scourge. Hitler talked about being God’s servant and of following his providential intuition. In *Mein Kampf* (1924), after describing how he had become a rabid anti-Semite, he closed the chapter with the kind of arrogant rhetorical flourish that was to become his ideological stock-in-trade: “Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: *by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord.*”²⁷

The insensitivity to the threat posed by National Socialism to the basic ethical values needed for democracy was aided by the churches’ long-time sympathy with anti-Semitism. When a delegation of Catholic bishops remonstrated with Hitler shortly after he took office about his already-manifest persecution of the Jews, he stifled their objections with a brief history lesson. The protocol of the meeting reveals the following response:

He had been attacked (Hitler said) because of his handling of the Jewish question. The Catholic Church had regarded the Jews as parasites for 1500 years, had ushered them into the ghetto, etc.; at that time Jews had been seen for what they really were. In the era of Liberalism [the 19th century] this danger had no longer been seen. I return to the previous period, to what was done for 1500 years. I do not place race above religion, but I see this race as parasites on state and church, and perhaps I am doing Christianity the greatest of services thereby; hence their expulsion from the educational area and the state professions.²⁸

German Protestants had, if anything, an even stronger anti-Semitic tradition than the Catholics.

The Christian churches in Germany had been cool in their reception of the Weimar democracy not only because of their injured nationalist

sentiment, but because they also identified the Republic with materialism and moral decadence, both also largely ascribed to the wicked hidden hand of the Jews. The decadent cabaret life of Berlin in the 1920s loomed large enough as a national moral problem that Christians of several denominations were willing to support a strong leader who promised to clean it up—without paying too close attention to what else he might do in the process.

In his recent prize-winning book on Germany, Professor Gordon Craig of Stanford has summarized the moral myopia of the educational and religious establishments: “[they] reflected all too faithfully the weakness of the political and social system that supported them. Indeed, as the years passed, the energies of Germany’s religious and educational institutions seemed to be diverted increasingly from their functions and used to buttress the status quo.”²⁹ Professor Craig might have added that not only was this true of the churches and the schools, but of German homes as well. Traditions of authoritarianism, nationalism, and the age-old commitment to duty and responsibility combined with contempt for democratic political life and postwar despair to create a home climate easily exploited by the demagogue.³⁰

The moral impoverishment of education and religious life had a profound effect on the three groups of Germans who played a major role in making the war crimes and the Holocaust possible: the rank-and-file Germans who either voted for Hitler or acquiesced in his accession to power; the specialists and technocrats, like Albert Speer, who willingly put their considerable talents and abilities at the disposal of a criminal regime; and the criminals themselves, the ones who had struggled so many years precisely to be able to organize the crimes committed. The catastrophe could not have taken place without the involvement of all these groups.

Least culpable, in my view, are the common German people themselves. To this day, those of the Nazi generation are torn by a sense of guilt for the crimes committed by a regime that they may have helped to bring to power and did not try to overthrow. They thought—as did many other responsible observers around the world—that they were turning over their government to a man with special political gifts, who understood what they did not and had not been educated to understand: how Germany could regain the international power, prominence, and prosperity the country had lost. No one else within the framework of the Weimar Republic had been able to master the serious political and economic disorders; Hitler seemed to have the answers. Most people did not inquire much about his views on the dignity of man or the preservation of life, law, and freedom. These were the people of the “false conscience,” those who thought they were doing right but whose consciences betrayed them. They sensed Hitler’s arrogance but did not

perceive that his inclination to “play God” was deadly serious; the cult of the Fuehrer made him responsible to neither man nor God. Nor did it seem to matter to them, as Sebastian Haffner has pointed out, that Hitler was a great hater who subsequently derived much inward pleasure from killing.³¹ They knew he had a low opinion of Jews and intended to put them in their place—many Germans approved of this—but they paid little attention to how the Nazis progressively dehumanized the Jews in the popular mind until they could be dealt with as rats to be exterminated. The German citizenry simply had not been adequately prepared by the primary institutions—home, school, or church—to identify and defend moral absolutes in a time of national crisis. Only after the hour had grown late and the evil fully revealed did many Germans realize what had been lost.

The lack of moral scruples also played a role in the willingness of skilled technocrats, bureaucrats, and specialists of every kind to lend their talents and skills to the objectives of the Nazi regime. These were people such as Albert Speer; Hjalmar Schacht, a financial wizard who helped finance Hitler’s early objectives; Franz von Papen; Leni Reifenstahl, the famous movie director; Erwin Rommel; Walter Schellenberg; and many more.³² Even more than the common people, these were “morally indifferent.”³³ These were people with special talents without which, as Speer later lamented, the Third Reich could not have been built:

I was already surprised at the paltry intellectual level and lack of intellectual members [in the Nazi Party]. . . . With his party comrades alone, Hitler could never have ruled. His triumphs, which astonished the world for a time, could not be traced to the strata of functionaries who began in the Party and forged ahead into the administrations of the Reich and the regional governments. Quite the reverse. . . . An excellent officialdom and outstanding technocrats in the widest sense of the word offered their services in 1933. And in many respects they were behind Hitler’s economic and administrative successes.³⁴

These people were not necessarily committed to Hitler’s aims. They simply did not ask the moral questions. When later queried whether he knew about the crimes being committed in Eastern Europe, Speer responded that that was not the right question; he did not want to know. When a friend, Gauleiter Karl Hanke, who had seen the extermination camps, began warning him against accepting an invitation to view Auschwitz in the summer of 1944, Speer turned him off. Speer’s account movingly describes the morally indifferent technician and the later awareness of guilt:

I did not query him [Hanke], I did not query Himmler, I did not query Hitler, I did not speak with personal friends. I did not investigate—for I did not want to know what was happening there. Hanke must have been

speaking of Auschwitz. During those few seconds, while Hanke was warning me, the whole responsibility had become a reality again. . . . For, from that moment on, I was inescapably contaminated morally; from fear of discovering something which might have made me turn from my course, I had closed my eyes. This deliberate blindness outweighs whatever good I may have done or tried to do in the last period of the war. Those activities shrink to nothing in the face of it. Because I failed at that time, I still feel, to this day, responsible for Auschwitz in a wholly personal way.³⁵

In his last book, Speer describes in minute detail a conference with Hitler in September 1942 concerning the use of prisoners of war in Nazi slave labor camps. He comments on the state of moral callousness that prevailed in these terms: "This conversation, which was to determine the fate of countless unfortunates through the next two-and-a-half years, took place in a matter-of-fact, technocratic manner detached from any human considerations."³⁶

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel would become legendary for his bravery and cunning, but also for his commitment to the conduct of warfare according to the rules. Still, he could be and was exploited by Hitler because his extraordinary ambition and vanity blinded him until it was too late to resist the basic destructiveness and criminality of his superiors.³⁷ Countless others were, like Adolf Eichmann, simply bureaucrats, "carrying out orders." To them it was more important to be diligent and loyal in their assigned tasks than to inquire about their morality. They understood the system. Peter Drucker has written about this moral indifference among German elites he had known. He describes one acquaintance who, in his search for ambition and power, became an administrator for the Final Solution. This Drucker characterizes as the sin of lusting for power. He describes a second acquaintance who played a game of trying to prevent the worst and perished. This was the sin of pride. Then Drucker concludes: "But the greatest sin is neither of these two ancient ones; the greatest sin may be the new, the 20th-century sin of indifference, the sin of the distinguished [German] biochemist-psychologist who neither kills nor lies but refuses to bear witness, in the words of the old gospel hymn, when 'they crucify my Lord.'"³⁸

I will not spend much time discussing the criminals of the third group. With them, there was no moral indifference; they knew exactly what their objectives were and were willing to pay the price. They were a relatively small clique with Hitler as the unquestioned leader and demigod.³⁹ They did not challenge his authority or his political or military abilities. Notwithstanding recent attempts to exculpate Hitler from responsibility for the atrocities, we have it from Speer and others that the annihilation of the Jews was indeed the dominant obsession of Hitler's life. He seemed possessed and had the capacity to mesmerize those about him. Like an inverted pyramid, everything in the Third Reich derived

from him, and it is unlikely that the whole movement would have been anything like it was or achieved what it did without him. Knowingly, he and his henchmen set out to violate not only the absolute ethical standards necessary for democracy, but to make a shambles of the rules of decency and civilization and the laws of God and man. They had their own gods and their own rules, the real law of the jungle. Human life was first degraded by misery and then coldly blotted out. Hitler's contempt for human life, even the vaunted Aryan race, was made manifest in the end when he proclaimed that the German people should meet their twilight of the Gods because they were unworthy of his leadership. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that had he been successful in World War II, he would have used the totalitarian police power to persecute and perhaps weaken the Christian churches so that they could pose no threat of any kind to him. I cite here two quotations which reproduce the representative tone and substance of Hitler's beliefs about democracy and its underlying values:

Democracy is Jewish domination, for the people do not rule; public opinion is manufactured by the press which is owned by the Jews. At the same time democracy is not an end in itself, but the means to an end. The end is the achievement of Jewish domination through education for democracy—that is, through the creation of a lethargic mass of people who thinks that it rules through its elected representatives.⁴⁰

And again:

Insofar as we deliver the people from the atmosphere of pitiable belief in possibilities which lie outside the bounds of one's own strength—such as the belief in reconciliation, understanding, world peace, the League of Nations, and international solidarity—we destroy those ideas. There is only one right in this world and this right is one's own strength.⁴¹

What followed from these ideas and circumstances we have already chronicled. The "Holocaust Kingdom" based on moral indifference exacted a heavy toll from mankind, but that price could yet become higher if some lessons are not learned.

What, then, are the lessons? I do not know all of them by any means, but let me cite a few. One stimulating intellectual historian, Franklin Baumer at Yale, has expressed skepticism about the future of our Western civilization and its values if secularization continues to destroy the "permanent ideals"—the absolute values—that have served us so well in the past. They are vitally important for our whole culture.⁴² Robert Nisbet asks another question: "What is the future of the idea of progress in the West?" He responds:

Any answer to that question requires an answer to a prior question: what is the future of Judeo-Christianity in the West? For if there is one generalization that can be made confidently about the history of the idea of progress, it is that throughout history the idea has been closely linked with, has

depended on, religion or upon intellectual constructs derived from religion. . . . In our day, however, religion is a spent force. If God is not dead, he is ebbing away, and has been since the early part of the century.

Then Nisbet paraphrases G. K. Chesterton that “the result of ceasing to believe in God is not that one will believe nothing; it is that one will believe anything.”⁴³

One lesson the German experience teaches us is that if any people wish to acquire or preserve the blessings of democracy—freedom, human dignity, life, justice—they must accept and prepare for the responsibilities that go with it. Democracy requires, especially in times of stress, a passionate commitment to those ideals—to the absolute ethical values—if it is to survive. Citizens must develop their critical, intellectual, and spiritual faculties to be able to choose correct policies and good leaders. Our education must be broad enough to transcend a narrow specialization and prepare us for something beyond a life of personal indulgence, material wealth, and militant moral indifference. We need a lively sensitivity for the dignity of all human beings, which, in turn, derives from understanding the relationship of each person to God. When any person’s human dignity and life are threatened, we cannot sit idly by. Einstein was right: “When the human condition is threatened, each of us should make his own personal contribution to the discussions and decisions on which its fate may eventually depend.”⁴⁴ Merely to have gone to school or even to the university may not be enough to train not only mind and heart, but emotions and judgment to be a sentinel in the modern world. Democracy requires the education of the “whole” man as preparation for correct thought and action.

The German experience also teaches us that membership in a church is not sufficient for being a Christian. Institutional and “social Christians” found it easy to accept or even go along with Hitler and his policies. German Catholics and Protestants were much more concerned about the potential threat to Jews who had become Christians than they were about the threat to Jews as Jews. Only those for whom the fear of God (in the sense of caring what God thinks of them) and love of fellowman were “flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone” were able to recognize the wicked and criminal tendencies of the regime.

Latter-day Saints have an unusually sacred commitment to the life, freedom, and dignity of man. We believe all human beings, regardless of color, economic or social status, or religion, are God’s literal children, and that is the most exalted statement that can be made about our nature. To think of or treat another human being as anything less is to betray not only our humanity, but also our embryonic deity.

I cite one last lesson: citizens in a democracy must be well enough educated and informed to choose their leaders wisely. We must make the effort to identify demagogues, haters, destroyers, and those

contemptuous of God and man, and do it in time. Modern scripture counsels us to choose men who are wise, honest, and good (D&C 98:10). Elder Neal A. Maxwell has pointed out that they must be all three.⁴⁵ With these lessons, perhaps we and others will be able to preserve a democracy where the wicked do not rule and the people do not mourn.

NOTES

¹I wish to thank my friend and colleague Gordon Whiting for calling my attention to Nisbet's book. It is a sobering view of a society that is not only turning its back on the past, but also on the Judeo-Christian values that have formed a basis for the progress of Western civilization (Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* [New York: Basic Books, 1980], 323ff.).

²David Donald, quoted in the *New York Times*, 8 September 1977; later reprinted in the *American Historical Association Newsletter* 15 (December 1977): 3–4. Nisbet believes this point of view is widely held by historians.

³Quoted from a 1934 speech, in Arturo Loria, "Einstein and Education," *Einstein: A Centenary Volume*, ed. A. P. French (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 221.

⁴*Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 150.

⁵Adolf Hitler, speech in 1933 as quoted in Louis L. Snyder, *The War: A Concise History, 1939–1945* (New York: Dell, 1960), 611.

⁶I have relied on Snyder's statistics in *The War*, 611–14.

⁷Gordon Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 763. See also Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen, Dritte Auflage* (Wiesbaden: Eberhard Brockhaus Verlag, 1945), 161 and passim.

⁸Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany*, 3 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1969), 3:813.

⁹Philips Bradley, introduction to Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New York: Knopf, 1955), 1:xix.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹*Ibid.*, xx.

¹²*Ibid.*, 6.

¹³John J. Halliwell, *The Moral Foundations of Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 112.

¹⁴Craig, *Germany*, 187.

¹⁵R. H. Samuel and R. Hinton Thomas, *Education and Society in Modern Germany* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), 38, 112. This is the best study of the subject available.

¹⁶Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 35.

¹⁷Quoted in French, *Einstein: A Centenary Volume*, 316.

¹⁸Samuel and Thomas, *Education and Society in Modern Germany*, 67.

¹⁹Speer makes an oblique comment about the relationship of literature to his education: "Even in our senior year, German class assignments called solely for essays on literary subjects, which actually prevented us from giving any thought to the problems of society" (Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 35).

²⁰Friedrich Paulsen, *Friedrich Paulsen, an Autobiography*, trans. Theodore Lorenz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 117.

²¹Quoted in Samuel and Thomas, *Education and Society in Modern Germany*, 17–18.

²²*Ibid.*, 130.

²³For further elaboration of this view, see my "German Professors and the Weimar Republic" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1967).

²⁴Paulsen, *Autobiography*, 39–40.

²⁵Author's translation of Carl Zuckmayer, *Des Teufels General* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1980), 117.

²⁶Quoted in *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Dial Press, 1947), 72.

²⁷Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), 65.

²⁸"Roman Catholic Conference in Berlin, 25–26 April 1933," in *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches: A Documentary Account of Christian Resistance and Complicity During the Nazi Era*, ed. Peter Matheson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1981), 18–20.

²⁹Craig, *Germany*, 180.

³⁰The role of family life in preparing the ground for Hitler has yet to be fully explored. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann has, however, made us aware of the increase of patriarchal authority in the German bourgeois family in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with each husband/father fashioning himself as a kind of miniemperor in his own family (see Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974], 117–18). The impact of nationalistic attitudes and the lack of religious teaching in homes is manifest in a study by Theodore Abel of the life histories of six hundred Germans who joined the Nazi Party. He presents six typical cases of how and why they cast their lot with Hitler (see Theodore Abel, *The Nazi Movement* [New York: Atherton Press, 1966]. This book was originally published in 1938 under the title, *Why Hitler Came to Power*).

³¹Sebastian Haffner, *The Meaning of Hitler*, trans. Ewald Osers (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), 154.

³²Christopher Browning, "The Government Experts," in *The Holocaust: Ideology, Bureaucracy and Genocide: The San José Papers*, ed. Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton (New York: Kraus International, 1980), 183–97.

³³The question of "moral indifference" is the subject of a stimulating book by Ranier C. Baum, *The Holocaust and the German Elite: Genocide and National Suicide in Germany, 1871–1945* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1981).

³⁴Albert Speer, *Infiltration*, trans. Joachim Neugrosche (New York: Macmillan, 1981), 4.

³⁵Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 481.

³⁶Speer, *Infiltration*, 24–25.

³⁷See David Irving, *The Trail of the Fox* (New York: Dutton, 1977).

³⁸Quoted in Baum, *Holocaust and the German Elite*, 25.

³⁹Hugh Seton-Watson made an interesting distinction between "dictators"—meaning, it would seem, absolute monarchs—and "totalitarians." Dictators have been inhibited by moral and religious sanctions of some kind; they have respected some standard external to themselves. To totalitarians everything is relative except their own power. The difference can be well summed up in the relative claims of Louis XIV and Hitler. "L'état, c'est moi" left large fields of human endeavor untouched. "Recht ist, was dem Volke nutzt" (Right is whatever benefits the people) was an unlimited claim, especially in view of the fact that the sole judge of the interest of the *Volk* is Hitler (see "Revolution and Democracy in the 20th Century," in Wilhelm Burges, ed., *Zur Geschichte und Problematik der Demokratie* [Berlin: Duncker und Humboldt, 1957], 115).

⁴⁰Gordon Prange, ed., *Hitler's Words* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1944), 37.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 40.

⁴²Franklin L. Baumer, *Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas, 1600–1950* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 517.

⁴³Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, 351–52.

⁴⁴French, *Einstein: A Centenary Volume*, 216.

⁴⁵Neal A. Maxwell, "Challenge of Democracy" (Address delivered at Brigham Young University, 24 February 1972).

Imprints

Eucalyptus and date palms grow in my mind.
Like gulls that followed my lunch to school,
The smell of the sea from my nursery
Followed me to Alabama. It mingled
With magnolia; it mocked the red clay.
And now the Rockies haunt me, like the negative
You see after staring at one color.

My parakeet is bonded to me,
But talks endlessly to his mirror.
How does he know his own?
Like his neon-colored feathers
And the hollow in his bone,
It grows.

After you left, I could still see you
There, where you lay beside me,
Imprinted on your pillow,
A shadow behind my eyes.

—Karen Todd

Joseph Smith, the Constitution, and Individual Liberties

J. Keith Melville

The theological impact of Joseph Smith today is not even questioned. But what of his secular contributions? Was the Prophet important, like Jefferson, for his political insights? What were his constitutional ideals? How important are they now? It is my intention in this essay to examine some possible sources of Joseph Smith's views on the Constitution and the importance of individual liberties, his contrasting of ideal and worldly societies, and his strategies for obtaining protection for the rights and liberties of his people. He did not achieve his political goals during his lifetime, but subsequently the essence of his political objectives has been largely realized.

Although Joseph Smith's love of freedom and interest in social justice were no doubt rooted at least partly in his childhood training and his life's experiences, I propose that scriptural sources were the taproot of his ideas and were central in the development of his constitutional writings.

The Book of Mormon conditionally promises that America is a choice land, a land blessed above all others, a land of liberty (2 Ne. 1:5–7). In addition, the Book of Mormon contains several meaningful discussions of political values. For example, there is the prophesying Mosiah's comparison of the virtues and vices of monarchy with those of a democratic government. The ideal system, in Mosiah's view, would be to have just kings who would "establish the laws of God" (Mosiah 29:13), but the prospects of wicked kings prompted him to advocate a system of government where judges, chosen by the "voice of the people," would rule within constitutional guidelines and under the laws of God (Mosiah 29:25). The purpose of this system of government was to promote the well-being of the people. Mosiah declared:

And now I desire that this inequality should be no more in this land, especially among this my people; but I desire that this land be a land of liberty, and every man may enjoy his rights and privileges alike, so long as the Lord sees fit that we may live and inherit the land, yea, even as long as any of our posterity remains upon the face of the land. (Mosiah 29:32)

Fourth Nephi offers a model for an ideal society as contrasted with the nasty, brutish qualities found in most temporal political systems where force and coercion are hallmarks of the state. The ideal society of the Nephites was one in which "there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things in common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift" (4 Ne. 2–3). After two hundred years, however, class stratification crept into the society, greed and selfishness returned, "all manner of wickedness" developed (4 Ne. 27), and the ideal society came to an end.

Another scriptural glimpse of an ideal society is found in Moses:

And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even Zion. (Moses 7:18–19)

This society was in such contrast to the wicked, worldly societies, with their wars and bloodshed, that "the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed" (Moses 7:20). Enoch was privileged to walk with the Lord and behold generations of people who would dwell upon the earth. It was a vision of such human degradation that the scriptures record the Lord was indignant, the earth mourned, and Enoch wept. Enoch and all his people, however, "walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom" (Moses 7:69).

Such scriptural contrasts of the governments of God and men could not fail to impress Joseph Smith. His concerns about the plight of humanity historically as well as the problems of the Saints in the existing political societies prompted speculative thinking on what could be done to improve society and how an ideal society might be achieved. In addition, inquiries of the Lord about problems had prompted revelations to Joseph on a variety of subjects, some of which addressed social, economic, and political themes. A prescription for the ideal society is found in the economic program called the law of consecration and stewardship, unfolded in a number of revelations:

And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just—

And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church—

Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order unto you, and unto your successors, inasmuch as you sin not. (D&C 82:17–20)

Although the order was replaced with the law of tithing following the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri and not attempted again during the Nauvoo period of the Church, Joseph Smith did not depart from the essentials of fairness and justice included in the law of consecration and stewardship. Fundamental principles bearing on the inalienable and constitutional rights of man, the value and purposes of individual freedom, the divine factor in the establishment of the Constitution, and the responsibility of citizens in keeping government responsive and responsible to the people are included in sections 98 and 101 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 134, although not written by Joseph Smith, is in harmony with his ideas and was adopted unanimously by the body of the Church. It sets forth the following concepts regarding governments and laws: (1) the divine institution of governments; (2) governmental accountability to God as well as man; (3) the importance of just legislation and evenhanded administration of policy for the good of society; (4) the right of free exercise of individual conscience; (5) the right and control of property; (6) the obligation of government for the protection of life; (7) the separation of church and state; (8) the obligation of political obedience to just governments; and (9) the idea of limited government.

As Joseph Smith cogitated upon contrasts between the government of God, which constituted an ideal, and the governments of men, he concluded that the ideal society could only be achieved when the kingdom of God rules the whole world with Christ as its king. He realized, however, that there was human responsibility in establishing Zion and the kingdom of God. He also realized the importance of working for justice in the existing temporal society. In an address on 21 February 1843, he declared, "From henceforth I will maintain all the influence I can get. In relation to politics, I will speak as a man; but in relation to religion I will speak in authority."¹ Experience had forcefully pointed up the political wisdom of the scriptural statement that "when the wicked rule the people mourn. Wherefore, honest men and wise men should be sought for diligently, and good men and wise men ye should observe to uphold" (D&C 98:9, 10). Each individual, therefore, had a responsibility to labor for good government.

Even when his own constitutional rights were denied, Joseph Smith never doubted that the Constitution of the United States was a divinely inspired document. How could he believe otherwise when he was the spokesman through whom the revelations on the Constitution were given? Following the expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County,

Missouri, a fundamental principle of the gospel was brought forth in a revelation that pointed out the basic purpose of the Constitution: to protect the rights and liberties of the individual in a free society. The principle of free agency—so vital doctrinally to all people in order that they might prove their worthiness and return to God as celestial beings—is fostered by the free environment provided by the Constitution. The Lord declared that the Constitution had been established “that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment” (D&C 101:78). In keeping with this principle, the revelation condemned slavery and every other interpersonal restriction of free agency: “Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood” (D&C 101:79–80).

The Prophet looked to the Constitution as a “glorious standard” even in the most adverse conditions, such as during those trying months while a prisoner in the Liberty Jail. In such a situation, many men would have vilified the Constitution as a document filled with hollow promises. But the Prophet became more dedicated than ever to fight for the rights of the Saints. In a letter written between 20–25 March 1839, he admonished the Saints to gather a knowledge of all the “facts and sufferings and abuses put upon them” and also the amount of damages they had sustained, that this information might be published and brought before governments. The letter concludes with a reaffirmation of Joseph’s faith in the Constitution—that it is not only a “glorious standard” but is on the level of holy writ:

We say that God is true; that the Constitution of the United States is true; that the Bible is true; that the Book of Mormon is true; that the Book of Covenants is true; that Christ is true; that the ministering angels sent forth from God are true, and that we know that we have an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, whose builder and maker is God; a consolation which our oppressors cannot feel, when fortune, or fate, shall lay its iron hand on them as it has on us.²

The attempt of the Prophet in 1839, after his “release” on a change of venue from the Liberty Jail, to obtain redress for the Saints’ grievances against Missouri by turning to the national government was rebuffed. President Martin Van Buren responded to the Saints’ plea with the remark, “What can I do? I can do nothing for you!” Constitutionally the position of President Van Buren had some judicial support at that time. The Supreme Court had ruled in *Barron vs. Baltimore* (1833) that the protections in the Bill of Rights against government actions pertained to the national government, not to the states.³ It appears, however, that

Van Buren's remark was motivated in part by political expediency. He is reported to have added: "If I do anything, I shall come in contact with the whole state of Missouri."⁴

The Mormons had been expelled from Missouri by the state militia under the "Extermination Order" of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs. A "treaty," forced on the Saints by Generals Samuel D. Lucas and John B. Clark, confiscated Mormon properties to pay for the "Mormon War," exiled the Mormons under the threat of death, and precluded any hope of legal redress of their losses. The state legislature sanctioned these actions by appropriating \$200,000 to pay the men called into the state militia. Redress of their grievances from the state of Missouri appeared hopeless to the Saints. Indeed, separation of powers—thought to be an institutional arrangement to protect individual liberty against governmental tyranny—failed the Saints in Missouri as all three branches of government were united in opposition to the Saints. If they could not receive help from the national government under the Constitution, where could they turn?

It was with the unresolved Missouri problems vividly in mind and the developing friction with some of the citizens and public officials of Illinois that the Prophet, on 15 October 1843, acknowledged the virtues of the Constitution but found that it contained one significant fault:

It is one of the first principles of my life, and one that I have cultivated from my childhood, having been taught it by my father, to allow every one the liberty of conscience. I am the greatest advocate of the Constitution of the United States there is on the earth. In my feelings I am always ready to die for the protection of the weak and oppressed in their just rights. The only fault I find with the Constitution is, it is not broad enough to cover the whole ground.

Although it provides that all men shall enjoy religious freedom, yet it does not provide the manner by which that freedom can be preserved, nor for the punishment of Government Officers who refuse to protect the people in their religious rights, or punish those mobs, states, or communities who interfere with the rights of the people on account of their religion. Its sentiments are good, but it provides no means of enforcing them. It has but this one fault. Under its provision, a man or a people who are able to protect themselves can get along well enough; but those who have the misfortune to be weak or unpopular are left to the merciless rage of popular fury.⁵

Joseph concluded by proposing that officers of the government should be required to support affirmatively constitutional guarantees or be severely punished. Since the realization of this proposal was unlikely, Joseph turned to other national strategies, including his campaign for the presidency of the United States in 1844.

The sanctuary the Saints developed in Nauvoo after their exile from Missouri began to erode in 1843. The Prophet again sought national solutions. Letters were sent on 4 November 1843 to John C. Calhoun,

Lewis Cass, Richard M. Johnson, Henry Clay, and Martin Van Buren, who were the possible candidates for the presidency in 1844. Calhoun's reply was reminiscent of Van Buren's attitude, asserting a lack of federal jurisdiction. Joseph Smith, incensed with this position, responded in a letter written to Calhoun on 2 January 1844, chastising Calhoun for his limited interpretation of the constitutional powers of the national government. The Prophet's letter then continued with a nationalistic interpretation of the Constitution protective of Mormon rights. He ridiculed the position that the national government was helpless to intervene when a "sovereign" state banished fifteen thousand of its citizens with a state militia supported by legislative appropriations. He pointed out that the properties of the Mormons, many of which were purchased from the national government, were taken over by the Missouri mob and that the federal government had a constitutional obligation to protect these property rights. The Prophet believed that Missouri had violated the privileges and immunities clause of the Constitution and that the state was violating the principles of a republican government. Hence the United States had a constitutional responsibility under article 4 to correct these problems in Missouri. He wrote:

Congress has power to protect the nation against foreign invasion and internal broil, and whenever that body passes an act to maintain right with any power; or to restore right to any portion of her citizens, IT IS THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND, and should a state refuse submission, that state is guilty of *insurrection or rebellion*, and the president has as much power to repel it as Washington had to march against the "whiskey boys of Pittsburg" or General Jackson had to send an armed force to suppress the rebellion of South Carolina!⁶

Hamilton's broad construction of the Constitution seems moderate in light of the Prophet's interpretation of the Tenth Amendment: "Why, Sir, the power not delegated to the United States and the states, belongs to the people, and congress sent to do the people's business, have all power." Joseph Smith also found power sufficient in the general welfare, suppression of insurrection, and necessary and proper clauses of article 1, section 8, to justify the national government in protecting the Saints in their rights. A cognizance of these powers, declared Joseph, "will raise your mind above the narrow notion, that the general government has no power—to the sublime idea that congress, with the President as executor, is as Almighty in its sphere, as Jehovah is in his."

Mounting depredations on the Mormon populace in and around Nauvoo prompted another national stratagem. On 21 December 1843, the city council of Nauvoo memorialized Congress for redress of grievances and protection from further persecution by praying that the Nauvoo charter be the basis of an enabling act creating a self-governing territory for the city of Nauvoo. The council also asked that the mayor of

Nauvoo be empowered to call United States troops into service to maintain the public safety, and implored: "Let it not be recorded in the archives of the nations that Columbia's exiles sought protection and redress at your hands but sought it in vain. It is in your power to save us, our wives, and our children from a repetition of the bloodthirsty scenes of Missouri, and greatly relieve the fears of a persecuted and injured people."⁷ This proposal was never considered by Congress.

Joseph Smith believed that the Constitution, correctly interpreted, clearly empowered the national government to pursue one or more of a number of alternatives to protect the Saints in their rights. He became increasingly concerned with the "limited" or "strict" interpretation of the Constitution by those in political office. On 29 January 1844, the Prophet met with the Twelve Apostles and others at the mayor's office to consider the course for the Mormons to take in the presidential election. They agreed they could not support Martin Van Buren or Henry Clay, the likely Democratic and Whig candidates, so it was moved by Willard Richards that they have an independent ticket with Joseph Smith as the candidate for President. In the Prophet's response he said: "Tell the people we have had Whig and Democratic Presidents long enough: we want a President of the United States. If I ever get into the presidential chair, I will protect the people in their rights and liberties."⁸

That same day the Prophet dictated an outline for his "Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States," amplifying many of his previously developed constitutional concepts, and on 7 February 1844 he completed and signed his "Views." The next day he gave an explanation as to why he was a candidate. Citing the denial of the Saints' religious and civil rights under the Constitution and the failure of the state and national governments to grant relief, he declared:

I feel it to be my right and privilege to obtain what influence and power I can, lawfully, in the United States, for the protection of injured innocence; and if I lose my life in a good cause I am willing to be sacrificed on the altar of virtue, righteousness and truth, in maintaining the laws and Constitution of the United States, if need be, for the general good of mankind.⁹

Joseph's "Views," his presidential platform, included the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and a number of economic, social, and political proposals. He argued that equality and protection of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are denied when "some two or three millions of people are held as slaves for life, because the spirit in them is covered with a darker skin than ours." He proposed the compensated abolition of slavery, believing "an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity in bondage!" He expressed compassion for the poor and contempt for the inequities in the system when the poor are put in prison while the embezzler, the defrauder, or the defaulter of millions takes the

“uppermost rooms at feasts.” Imprisonment for debt, he held, was unconscionable. He also expressed his concern for the poor when he called for more economy in government and less taxation on the people, which he believed would promote “more equality through the cities, towns, and country, [and] would make less distinction among the people.”

He proposed the establishment of a national bank, with branches in each state or territory, which would be for the “accommodation of the people.” He championed the cause of popular sovereignty and insisted that the will of the people be honored: “In the United States the people are the government, and their united voice is the only sovereign that should rule.” Moreover, the “Views” called for congressional reform by reducing the size of the House of Representatives by at least one half and limiting the pay of senators, representatives, and administrators. Joseph declared that officers of the government are nothing more than servants of the people and should work to “ameliorate the condition of all: black and white, bond or free . . . for ‘God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.’ ” He urged prison reforms, with emphasis on rehabilitation instead of punishment, stating, “rigor and seclusion will never do as much to reform the propensities of man, as reason and friendship. Murder only can claim confinement or death. Let the penitentiaries be turned into seminaries of learning.” He advocated that constitutional liberties and rights be extended to every man. The great end and aim of the Constitution, he wrote, was “*to protect the people in their rights.*”¹⁰

A special conference was called in Nauvoo on 15 April 1844, and a list was published of 340 elders of the Church designated to go to every state in the Union to “preach the truth in righteousness, and present before the people ‘General Smith’s views of the power and policy of the General Government,’ and seek diligently to get up electors who will go for him for the presidency.”¹¹ A “state convention” was held in Nauvoo on 17 May, in which “General Joseph Smith” was supported for President, Sidney Rigdon “of Pennsylvania” for Vice President, and five prominent Mormons were designated as delegates to a national nominating convention to be held in Baltimore on 13 July.

History records what came of this last effort to find a national solution to the problems of the Saints. Indeed, Joseph lost his life “in a good cause.” His lifelong quest for social justice found only injustice returned to him and his people, culminating in his assassination on 27 June 1844. Prior to his death, in a response to Henry Clay’s position on the Mormon difficulties, he registered disillusionment in existing social and political arrangements and yearned for the speedy establishment of the kingdom of God:

I mourn for the depravity of the world; I despise the hypocrisy of christendom; I hate the imbecility of American statesmen; I detest the shrinkage of candidates for office, from pledges and responsibility; I long for a day of righteousness, when he “whose right it is to reign, shall judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth,” and I pray God, who hath given our fathers a promise of a perfect government in the last days, to purify the hearts of the people and hasten the welcome day.¹²

Joseph’s dream of the ideal society, the kingdom of God, was not achieved during his lifetime, nor did his various proposals succeed in protecting the Mormons in their rights. Many ridiculed his presidential platform, and few in his own day agreed with his constitutional views. The people and officials of Missouri and Illinois abridged the Mormon right to free exercise of religion. Procedural protections in the criminal process were unavailable to the Saints in Missouri and jeopardized in Illinois. Mormons lost their lives, liberties, and property without due process of law. Additionally, Mormon political and civil rights were transgressed.

It is interesting to note that many of the policies Joseph Smith advocated in the 1840s have been essentially realized in our time. His presidential platform was clearly ahead of its time. Much of what he proposed has been achieved with the abolition of slavery; the creation of the Federal Reserve System in banking; prison reform, probation, and parole emphasizing the rehabilitation of convicts; suffrage extension to all adult citizens and reapportionment of electoral districts on the “one man, one vote” principle; and the current emphasis on the protection of individual liberties.

Moreover, the core of Joseph’s objectives—protection of individual liberties of the poor and unpopular by the national government with the President as executor—has also been realized, but it has been accomplished through the federal courts’ interpretation and application of the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. The relevant part of this amendment reads:

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

The Fourteenth Amendment was adopted in 1868 in the hopes of attaining pervasive social reforms, but for nearly a century reforms were limited by the restrictive interpretations of the Supreme Court. Since World War II it has finally blossomed into the protector of individual freedoms through the selective incorporation of almost all of the Bill of Rights. The substantive rights of the First and Fifth Amendments have now been applied to the states, protecting the freedoms of religion, press, speech, and assembly, and those of life, liberty, and property against

violations of these rights from any officials or instrumentalities of the states. Similar incorporation of the procedural protections found in the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth amendments has brought the criminal justice systems of the states a long way toward the ideals of fairness and justice implied in the notion of “due process of law.”

This important national function of protecting individual rights, which Joseph Smith considered appropriate under the Constitution, should not be lost sight of in an age clamoring for new checks on federal power. What essentially is required now is a fine-tuning of federal-state relations that will expand human freedom and development. We cannot afford to pare away genuine gains that have been made in individual liberties and human dignity by interpreting constitutional protections in restrictive ways.

Although presidents and presidential candidates professed in Joseph’s era that they “could do nothing for the Saints,” the Congress, the people, and the courts could and did in later generations by proposing, ratifying, and applying the Fourteenth Amendment. Acting as its adjudicator, the Supreme Court of the United States has become the guardian of individual rights. Even though instances can be cited wherein the Court has restricted rights important to Mormons, the vast extension of protected rights cannot be ignored. The “one fault” Joseph Smith found in the Constitution has largely been corrected through the Fourteenth Amendment, and every person in America today can feel secure that his basic liberties will be protected substantively and procedurally from state as well as national encroachment. The goals of individual liberty as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the protections in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, though not always realized in every court across the land, are measurably more a part of each of our lives than they were in Joseph Smith’s era.

NOTES

¹Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1946–50), 5:286 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

²*Ibid.* 3:304–5.

³President Andrew Jackson expressed this position earlier in a letter of 2 May 1834 by Lewis Cass of the War Department when the Mormons first appealed to the national government for redress of their grievances resulting from mob violence in Jackson County, Missouri. Jackson believed that the executive could not intervene in a state affair without a request from state authorities as set forth in article 2, section 4 of the Constitution.

⁴*History of the Church* 4:40.

⁵*Ibid.* 6:56–57.

⁶“Correspondence of Gen. Joseph Smith and Hon. J. C. Calhoun,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (January 1844): 396.

⁷Memorial presented to 28th Cong., 1st sess., National Archives. See also *History of the Church* 6:130.

⁸*History of the Church* 6:188.

⁹*Ibid.* 6:210–11.

¹⁰“Gen. Smith’s Views on the Government and Policy of the U.S.,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (May 1844): 528–33. See also *History of the Church* 6:202.

¹¹Brigham Young, “‘Special Conference’ Statement,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (April 1844): 506.

¹²*Ibid.* 5:547–48.

The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830–1844

Charles R. Harrell

Perhaps no doctrine has had greater impact on Latter-day Saint theology than the doctrine of preexistence, or the belief in the existence of the human spirit before its mortal birth.¹ Fundamental concepts such as the nature of man as an eternal being, his singular relationship as the offspring of Deity and concomitant brotherhood with all mankind, the talents and privileges with which he is born into the world, and his potential godhood are all inextricably connected to the doctrine of preexistence. This distinctive LDS doctrine was not immediately comprehended by the early Saints in the more fully developed form in which it is understood today. Like many of the other teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was revealed line upon line and adapted to the Saints' understanding. Moreover, there was a natural tendency to view initial teachings on preexistence in light of previously held beliefs until greater clarity was given to the doctrine. This study traces the early development of the doctrine by examining chronologically the revelations and recorded sermons and writings on preexistence by the Prophet Joseph Smith in light of contemporary commentary by his associates. Seeing how early Saints perceived preexistence enhances our own understanding of the doctrine and leads to a greater appreciation of our theological heritage.

What is presented here as early LDS thought is not an attempt to portray "official" or revealed positions on the doctrine of preexistence, but an effort to describe how the doctrine appears to have been understood in the Church from 1830 to 1844. Regrettably, personal records from this period are virtually silent on the subject; most of what can be discovered regarding early beliefs about the nature and origin of the human spirit comes from published doctrinal works and LDS periodicals of this era. Thomas Alexander notes, however, that "the monthlies and doctrinal expositions like the Lectures on Faith since they were meant for public dissemination provide the most reliable sources for contemporary perceptions of doctrine."²

NINETEENTH-CENTURY VIEWS ON THE ORIGIN OF SPIRITS

To fully appreciate the beliefs of the early Saints regarding the nature and origin of spirits, it is helpful to have some idea of contemporary religious beliefs that may have been influential on their thinking. The predominant Christian view with which most of the early LDS converts were probably familiar was creationism, which held that man's immaterial spirit was created *ex nihilo* through a fiat act of God at the time of conception or birth of the individual. That is, as each body is prepared through mortal procreation, God's will brings into existence the immaterial spirit to inhabit that body. Characterizing this common belief, Orson Pratt observed:

It is believed, by the religious world that man, both body and spirit, begins to live about the time that he is born into this world, or a little before; that then is the beginning of life. . . . How was the spirit formed? Why says one, we suppose it was made by a direct act of creation, by the Almighty Himself; that He moulded the spirit of man, formed and finished it in a proper likeness to inhabit the tabernacle He had made out of the dust.³

Two less commonly held views were traducianism, which stated that every human spirit was seminally created in Adam and then individually and naturally propagated through mortal parentage,⁴ and materialism, which maintained that what is called spirit is really the result of corporeal organization and matures and dies along with the body.⁵

While traditionally the doctrine of creationism held that the creation of man's spirit occurred either at the time of conception or at birth, a variation of creationism incorporating preexistence attracted scattered interest. This doctrine of preexistencism differed from creationism only in that it placed the time of the creation of all spirits at the beginning of the world. As characterized in an 1836 religious encyclopedia, preexistencists held that

at the beginning of the world, God created the souls of all men, which, however, are not united to the body till the individuals for whom they are destined are begotten or born into the world. This was the opinion of Pythagoras, Plato, and his followers, and of the cabalists among the Jews. The doctrine was taught by Justin Martyr, Origen, and others of the fathers, and has been the common opinion of mystics, both of ancient and modern times.⁶

The doctrine of preexistence was anathemized in the post-Apostolic church, but by the nineteenth century the idea had regained a certain degree of acceptability. After giving a summary of historical and contemporary arguments for and against preexistence, one prominent nineteenth-century theologian concluded that, though still considered unorthodox, "There is no reason to denounce the simple doctrine of the preexistence of souls as heretical."⁷ Poets and philosophers were

becoming intrigued with the idea of preexistence, and even such noted clergymen as the venerable Isaac Watts was reputed to have believed it.⁸ Nowhere was the belief more prevalent than among the mystic groups that were beginning to spring up. Indeed, there was a wide currency of occult and Kabbalistic ideas at the time of Joseph Smith in which notions regarding the preexistence of souls were prevalent. Modern Spiritualism, which grew out of this environment, originated later in the same region of New York as Mormonism and espoused preexistence.⁹ It was in such a setting that the Prophet Joseph Smith sought to bring the Saints to a true understanding of the origin of spirits.

EARLY LDS INTERPRETATIONS OF "PREEXISTENCE" SCRIPTURES

The Latter-day Saints did not at first deduce the idea of preexistence from the biblical passages so frequently summoned today to prove it. Except for acknowledging the preexistence of Christ, nineteenth-century Christians were reluctant to admit any biblical support for the doctrine as it applies to man. Edward Beecher, an avowed believer of preexistence himself, observed in 1854, "Even those serious theologians who assert the doctrine of preexistence do not claim any express scriptural evidence for it, only that it nowhere expressly refutes it."¹⁰ Spirits or angels mentioned in the Bible as being with God in the first estate, including Lucifer and the spirits who followed him (Isa. 14:12–15; Jude 6; Rev. 12:3–4), were traditionally viewed as being a separate species from humans, not preexistent spirits. Biblical passages used today to support preexistence were interpreted differently when cited by the Saints during the first decade of the Church. Parley P. Pratt, for example, referred in 1838 to the sons of God who shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid (Job 38:4–7) as being sons of God through redemption and resurrection from bygone worlds.¹¹ In 1841 W. W. Phelps cited Deuteronomy 32:7–8, which refers to when God "separated the sons of Adam [and] set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel," to show that Adam had twelve sons.¹²

The first intimation of preexistence in the Prophet's teachings is commonly believed to be found in the Book of Mormon, which was first published in March 1830. It is doubtful, however, whether the Book of Mormon elicited the idea of preexistence in the minds of the Saints at that time. In reflecting back on his own initiation to the doctrine of preexistence, Orson Pratt, who was among the most theologically perceptive of the early Saints, observed that had it not been for revelations subsequent to the Book of Mormon, "I do not think that I should have ever discerned it in that book."¹³ Modern Saints most frequently point to the teachings on foreordination found in the thirteenth chapter of

Alma for evidence that preexistence is a Book of Mormon doctrine. Alma explains that priests are “called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God” (Alma 13:3). This language is identical to that used in the New Testament to describe how the elect are “afore prepared” (Rom. 9:23) and “chosen . . . before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) “according to the foreknowledge of God” (1 Pet. 1:2). The Saints in 1830 would have been no more disposed to infer preexistence from Alma’s teachings on foreordination than their contemporaries would from the New Testament teachings on election. Furthermore, debates on the meaning of election were so common that it would have been difficult for anyone caught up in the early nineteenth-century religious movement in America to have escaped the influence of Protestant indoctrination on the subject. This influence can certainly be expected to have implications for the way in which the early Saints viewed preexistence.

Few doctrines polarized nineteenth-century Protestantism as much as the doctrine of election. Presbyterian Calvinists insisted that God elected or foreordained certain individuals to become believers in this life according to his will and pleasure, and that his foreknowledge that these individuals will believe results from his having foreordained or decreed them to do so. This doctrine of predestination, which states that God foreknows *because* he foreordains, was vehemently opposed by adherents to the Arminian doctrine of free will, espoused by the Methodists, towards whom young Joseph Smith was “somewhat partial” (JS–H 8). These opponents to Calvinism contended that while individuals are elected from the foundation of the world, this calling or election *results* from God’s foreknowledge that these individuals will be holy. In other words, God foresees who will be obedient through their own free will and foreordains them to holiness accordingly. For neither Calvinists nor Arminians did foreordination or God’s foreknowledge presuppose prior existence of those who were foreordained or foreknown. In explaining how God, through his foreknowledge, foreordains or elects certain individuals from the foundation of the world, even though they do not yet exist until born in mortality, the official Methodist doctrine approved at a general conference held in 1784 declared:

Christ was called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and yet not slain till some thousands of years after, so also, men are called elect from the foundation of the world, and yet are not elected perhaps till some thousands of years after, till the day of their conversion to God. . . . The act of election is in time, though known to God before, who according to his foreknowledge, often speaketh of things which are not as though they were.¹⁴

In other words, God’s foreknowledge enables him to speak of one’s future election as though it had already occurred.

For those Saints familiar with this controversy surrounding the doctrine of election, Alma's teaching may have been received as being merely a free will statement on priesthood: (1) that all humans are born into this world "on the same standing" in their favor with God; (2) that every man has the same opportunity to live worthy to receive the priesthood, "being left to choose good and evil"; and (3) that because God knew who would be obedient and receive the priesthood, their calling was (with him) "before the foundation of the world." In 1841, approximately one year prior to the publication of the Book of Abraham, in which foreordination based on preexistent worthiness was first publicly introduced,¹⁵ Brigham Young and Willard Richards published a widely circulated article entitled "Election and Reprobation," which shows evidence of this interpretation of Alma. They write that "God chose, elected, or ordained, Jesus Christ, his son, to be the Creator, governor, Savior, and judge of the world; and Abraham to be the father of the faithful, on account of his foreknowledge of their obedience to his will and commandments."¹⁶ Citing the aforementioned passage in Alma 13, they make no mention of a preexistence, concluding only that "God chose Abraham to be the father of the faithful, (viz.) because he knew [Abraham] would command his children and his household after him."¹⁷ Given this apparent coincidence of the Saints' belief in foreordination with contemporary views on election, it seems unlikely that the early Saints perceived the idea of preexistence in Alma's teachings.

The only other Book of Mormon passage that might have been construed as referring to preexistence is Ether 3:15. In fact, this verse was later mentioned by Orson Pratt as "the only place in the Book of Mormon where pre-existence is clearly spoken of."¹⁸ In this passage, the preexistent Christ reveals his spirit body to the brother of Jared and states that "all men were created in the beginning after mine own image" (Ether 3:15). Any overtone of preexistence in this declaration tends to be overshadowed by the text immediately before and after it which discusses men's creation in the flesh. For Orson Pratt, in the light of his later understanding of the concept of preexistence, the clear implication was that all men were created spiritually in the beginning in the image and likeness of Christ's spirit. However, it is unlikely that the earliest converts, who did not have the additional revelation, would have perceived this abstruse passage as being a reference to a preexistence. Orson Pratt himself reported that he saw a reference to preexistence in this verse only after reading "the new translation of the Scriptures, that throwing so much light and information of the subject, I searched the Book of Mormon to see if there were indications in it that related to the pre-existence of man."¹⁹ It would seem, then, that neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon was sufficient to establish the idea of preexistence in the minds of the Saints.

SPIRITUAL CREATION AND THE JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION

Orson Pratt indicated that it was Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible, which began soon after the publication of the Book of Mormon, that first drew his attention to the idea of a preexistence in latter-day revelation. The first seven chapters of the revised account of the creation (revealed in June 1830) as recorded in the Book of Moses make repeated reference to man's spiritual creation.²⁰ Several revelations during the next two years also appear to refer to this spiritual creation. In September 1830, the Lord declared that he created "all things both spiritual and temporal—first spiritual, secondly temporal, which is the beginning of my work; and again, first temporal, and secondly spiritual, which is the last of my work" (D&C 29:30–32). In March 1831, the Lord stated that it was the purpose of the earth to "be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made" (D&C 49:17). One year later the Lord revealed, "that which is spiritual [is] in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, as also the spirit of the beast, and every other creature which God has created" (D&C 77:2). Interestingly, the Prophet makes no further recorded mention of a spiritual creation after 1832.

It has been argued that the *spiritual* creation spoken of in these early revelations does not refer to the spirit creation or the creation of the human spirit. Some commentators regard it as being a reference to an intellectual or conceptual creation.²¹ Others view it as referring to the creation of Adam's paradisiacal physical body in the Garden of Eden.²² Much of the confusion as to whether *spiritual* means *spirit* arises because use of the word *spirit* as an adjective is a modern LDS convention that does not appear in earlier literature. Consequently, all early references to the spirit body or the spirit creation invariably use the adjective *spiritual* instead of *spirit*. Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary defines *spiritual* as "consisting of spirit; not material; incorporeal; as a spiritual substance or being. The soul of man is spiritual." Whatever the intended meaning of the word *spiritual* in these passages, no record from the early era of the Church offers any evidence that this spiritual creation was ever viewed in any way other than as a spirit creation.²³ Orson Pratt's statement cited earlier suggests that it was precisely the scriptural references to a spiritual creation that opened his mind to the reality of a preexistent spirit creation. He further spoke for his fellow Saints in saying that in June 1830

[the Lord] told us about the spiritual creation, something we did not comprehend before. We used to read the first and second chapters of Genesis which give an account of the works of the Almighty, but did not distinguish between the spiritual work and the temporal work of Christ. Although there are some things in the King James' translation that give us a little distinction between the two creations, yet we did not comprehend it.²⁴

With the insight received from D&C 29:30–32 and Moses chapter 2, Elder Pratt related that it became evident that “all things that dwell upon the earth, had their pre-existence. They were created in heaven, the spiritual part of them; not their flesh and bones.”²⁵ If Orson Pratt’s hindsight is reliable, it would appear that the idea of a preexistent spirit creation began to form in the minds of at least those most closely associated with Joseph Smith concurrent with his work on the translation of the Bible.

Widespread awareness of a spirit creation did not occur immediately upon the receipt of the spiritual creation revelations. Because of the delay in getting revelations published and disseminated, a considerable amount of time often lapsed before a doctrine that had been revealed became common knowledge. The Book of Moses, in particular, was not formally published and distributed until 1851 although portions other than those pertaining to the spiritual creation began to appear in print in 1832. To be sure, the Saints’ awareness of revelations was not entirely dependent on publication as many of the revelations were circulated among the Prophet’s associates either verbally or through handwritten copies before they were ever published.²⁶ It wasn’t until June 1835, however, three months prior to the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants, that an explicit reference to preexistence first appeared in print. W. W. Phelps, one of Joseph’s scribes in translating the scriptures, announced in the *Messenger and Advocate*: “New light is occasionally bursting into our minds of the sacred scriptures, for which I am thankful. We shall by and by learn that we were with God in another world, before the foundation of the world, and had our agency.”²⁷

While a rudimentary concept of preexistence began to take hold in the Church by the mid-1830s, it was still quite different from our current thinking. It appears to have merged with creationist thinking to produce a notion similar to contemporary preexistencism. The creationist view, that the human spirit was a fiat creation ex nihilo, is nowhere contradicted in the earliest revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The first revelations only speak of a spiritual creation and say that God created all things by the word of his power.²⁸ The Mormon receptivity to creationist thinking is shown by an extract from Jacques Saurin, a French theologian, that appeared in the *Latter-day Saint Evening and Morning Star* in October 1832. Saurin emphasizes the contingent nature of the human spirit, stating, “the annihilation of a being that subsists requireth an act of power similar to that which gave it its existence at first. . . . The creator, who, having created our souls at first by an act of his will, can either eternally preserve them, or absolutely annihilate them.”²⁹ In May 1835, Warren Cowdery, a correspondent for the *Latter-day Saint Messenger and Advocate*, spoke in a similar vein, stating that it is God who is “self existent” while “man is dependent on

the great first cause and is constantly upheld by him, therefore justly amenable to him.”³⁰

In addition to believing that the spirits of all men were created through a divine fiat, creationists also considered spirit to be immaterial. This idea also appears in early LDS literature. Saurin’s treatise in the *Evening and Morning Star* rejects materialism, which “affirmed the materiality of the soul and attributed to matter the faculties of thinking and reasoning.” He avers that the soul “is a spiritual, indivisible and immaterial being.”³¹ In March 1835, Warren Cowdery also affirmed the immateriality of the spirit, reasoning that “if there be intelligence, there must be spirit or mind, for matter is inert and abstract from mind, has neither intelligence or mind.”³² In December 1836, the *Messenger and Advocate* printed an extract from the philosopher Thomas Dick containing the popular argument for the immateriality of the spirit deduced from the immortality of the spirit.³³ While the appearance of views from non-LDS thinkers in LDS publications is not necessarily an endorsement, it certainly suggests an influence on the Saints’ thinking that, in the absence of contrary teachings, may have been significant.

Because of the appearance of these creationist views in LDS literature during the early 1830s and the absence of references to a preexistence, historians have concluded that a general ignorance of the doctrine prevailed before the Church’s move to Nauvoo in 1839.³⁴ What seems to be overlooked is that these creationist teachings were totally consistent with contemporary preexistencist views. It is possible, therefore, that knowledge of a preexistence may have been more widespread than some modern historians believe.

UNCREATED, DIVINE INTELLIGENCE (D&C 93)

In May 1833, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that man was in the beginning with God as intelligence, and that this “intelligence or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). In early LDS literature, the words *intelligence*, *truth*, and *light*, which denoted understanding or awareness of reality (note in D&C 93:24 that truth is not defined as reality but as *knowledge* of reality), were often used to denote the life force or spirit in man. According to Parley P. Pratt’s *Mormon Proverbs*, “Intelligence, or the light of truth, never was created, neither indeed can be. Truth is light—light is spirit—spirit is life.”³⁵ There is no recorded instance during the Prophet’s lifetime in which his associates ever used the term *intelligence* to designate a personal preexistent spirit. Uncreated intelligence, or light and truth, was generally believed to have become a spirit when a portion of it was infused into the body at birth. It seems to have been in this sense that intelligence or truth was perceived as becoming “independent in the sphere in which God has

placed it, to act for itself” (D&C 93:30). In July 1843, Thomas Ward declared that “what the church of Jesus Christ understood by salvation, . . . was this, that intelligence, or the light of truth [i.e., spirit] being connected with elementary matter [i.e., the physical body], which constituted our existence, had become, through the fall as Gods, knowing good and evil.”³⁶ Whether the idea of intelligence being uncreated was immediately grasped by the Saints is uncertain. Oliver Cowdery, for example, wrote in December 1836, “It is certain that we had no more agency in forming or creating the intelligence, without which these bodies are a lifeless lump, than we had in forming the body.”³⁷ Even after the idea of uncreated intelligence caught on, it wasn’t understood that individual spirits were uncreated, but only the intelligence that was considered to be the conscious, quickening principle in man.

Many early Saints recognized a divinity in the intelligence or spirit in man. They made no essential distinction between the intelligence that constitutes a man’s spirit and the intelligence that constitutes God’s glory. It should be noted that section 93 reveals that man was in the beginning with God, not only as uncreated intelligence, but also as “Spirit, even the Spirit of truth” (D&C 93:23). Additionally, the revelations represent intelligence, light, and truth as the glory of God, radiating from his presence to fill the immensity of space.³⁸ The human spirit was seen by many as merely an extension of this universal spirit. Benjamin F. Johnson, one of the Prophet’s associates, recalled many years later,

[Joseph Smith] was the first in this age to teach . . . that light and truth and spirit were one, that all light and heat are the “Glory of God,” which is his power, that fills the “immensity of space” . . . that light or spirit, and matter, are the two first great primary principles of the universe, or of Being . . . and from these two elements both our spirits and our bodies were formulated.³⁹

This view that spirits were derived from the same divine light or spirit that constitutes God’s glory was particularly espoused by Parley P. Pratt, who was initially the most influential expounder of LDS doctrine among the Prophet’s associates. In July 1839, Pratt wrote a treatise entitled “The Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter,” in which man’s spirit is equated with the spirit or intelligence that emanates from God. Writing before Joseph Smith introduced the concept that spirit is matter, Pratt distinguishes between spirit and matter, stating that “matter and Spirit are the two great principles of all existence. Everything animate and inanimate is composed of one or the other, or both of these eternal principles. I say eternal, because the elements [i.e. matter] are as durable as the quickening power [i.e. Spirit] which exists in them.”⁴⁰ Pratt explained that “spirit is eternal, uncreated [and] self-existing,” and that when earth and water were “filled with the quickening, or life giving substance, which we call spirit, they produced living creatures.”

According to Pratt, this same principle, when breathed into man, “quickened him with life and animation.”⁴¹ For Parley P. Pratt, it was not a personal spirit that quickened the body, but rather an infused portion of the divine spirit. Elaborating on this spirit or intelligence, he wrote in 1842, “the *spirit of truth*, proceeding from the Father and the Son, fills immensity, comprehends all things, and is the light, life, and spirit of all things.”⁴² The “spirit of all things” (humankind included) was thus advanced by Pratt to be none other than the divine or holy spirit emanating from the presence of God.⁴³

Parley P. Pratt’s earliest recorded views on the derivation of man’s spirit correspond remarkably to the classical doctrine of emanation, which uses the analogy that man emanates from God the way a spark is emitted from a fire. Verging on pantheism, the doctrine of emanation emphasizes that all men are parts of God, a notion Orson Pratt claimed was taught by Joseph Smith.⁴⁴ Emanation differs from creation in that it implies that man’s existence is derived from God’s being or essence rather than being merely a creature of his making. This notion is not to be confused with spirit birth, however. Man is seen more as being an offshoot of God rather than his offspring. Emanation was the most common form of preexistencism in the early Christian church. This Platonic concept regarded the soul as a part of the divine nature from which it proceeded and to which it will again return. Pratt chose to use similar language in 1838, when he wrote that mortals are “animated by the spirit of life” and, at death, will “return to the fountain and become part of the great all from which they emanated.”⁴⁵ Pratt’s teachings clearly evidence an early belief that the human spirit was merely an individual expression of God’s uncreated, inexhaustible intelligence.

MATERIALITY OF SPIRIT

In April 1842, the concept that all spirit is a form of matter was introduced in Joseph Smith’s recorded teachings. Joseph explained that “the spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state the spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body.”⁴⁶ This was a very direct pronouncement on what was generally regarded as a metaphysical mystery. Buck’s *Theological Dictionary*, published in 1832, defined the spirit as

that vital, immaterial, active substance, or principle, in man, whereby he perceives, remembers, reasons and wills. It is rather to be described to its operations, than to be defined as to its essence. Various, indeed, have been the opinions of philosophers concerning its substance. The Epicureans thought it a subtle air composed of atoms, or primitive corpuscles. The Stoics maintained it was a flame, or portion of heavenly light. The Cartesians make thinking the essence of the soul.⁴⁷

Although spirit was generally regarded in the nineteenth century as being immaterial in its composition, this characterization was not necessarily intended to exclude the quasimaterial substance that was believed to pervade the spirit realm. It was rather an effort to state what spirit isn't than what it is. One noted Protestant writer observed in 1835: "The soul is a substance; for that which is nothing can do nothing. . . . It is not bones and flesh that understand, but a purer substance, as all acknowledge."⁴⁸ Perhaps Joseph Smith was objecting to the inconsistency of calling spirit immaterial and yet substantive when he corrected a Methodist minister by stating, "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes" (D&C 131:7).

Joseph's ascribing materiality to spirit does not appear to have had an immediate impact on the Saints' concept of preexistence. The emphasis given by the Prophet to the materiality of spirit during the Nauvoo period did prompt later attempts, particularly by Parley P. Pratt in *Key to the Science of Theology* and Orson Pratt in the *Seer*, to develop a detailed system of metaphysics, not too unlike materialism, to describe the behavior and various properties of spirit matter.

UNCREATED SPIRITS AND THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

After six years of silence on the subject of spirit origins, Joseph Smith revived the topic in 1839 with the sole emphasis being given to the eternal nature of spirits. This idea corresponds to teachings concurrently being brought to light in the Book of Abraham. The Prophet began translating the Book of Abraham in 1835 and was acquainted with the material contained in chapter 3, such as Abraham's teaching on the planetary systems, at least as early as May 1838.⁴⁹ This chapter records the Lord's instructions to Abraham that even though one spirit may be more intelligent than another, these two spirits "have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are gnolaum, or eternal" (Abr. 3:18). The idea of spirits being uncreated appears in all other pronouncements of the Prophet on the origin of spirits after 1833:

c. August 1839: "The Spirit of Man is not a created being; it existed from Eternity and will exist to eternity."⁵⁰

February 1840: "I believe that the *soul* is eternal; and had no beginning."⁵¹

January 1841: "If the soul of man had a beginning it will surely have an end. . . . Spirits are eternal."⁵²

March 1841: "The spirit or the intelligence of men are self Existant principles."⁵³

April 1842: "The spirits of men are eternal."⁵⁴

April 1844: “I wish to speak of . . . the soul—the immortal spirit—the mind of man. Where did it come from? All doctors of divinity say that God created it in the beginning; but it is not so. . . . Is it logical to say that a spirit is immortal and yet have a beginning? Because if a spirit of man had a beginning, it will have an end. . . . God never had power to create the spirit of man at all. . . . Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age, and there is no creation about it. All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.”⁵⁵

As might be expected, these sayings of the Prophet led some to believe that each individual spirit or intelligence, not just collective intelligence, has existed eternally. Furthermore, Joseph Smith makes no mention of these uncreated spirits ever undergoing a change of state, such as spirit birth, prior to entering the physical body. Even the apparent contradiction to spirits being uncreated found in the same chapter in Abraham, which mentions that intelligences “were organized before the world was” (Abr. 3:22), seems to have been interpreted by the Prophet as a social organization of intelligences and not a material organization of intelligence into intelligent entities.⁵⁶ The following quotations represent the extent of the recorded usage made by the Prophet of the term *organization* when referring to spirits:

- c. August 1839:* “The Father called all spirits before him at the creation of man, and *organized* them.”⁵⁷
- January 1841:* “At the first *organization* in heaven we were all present and saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made and we sanctioned it.”⁵⁸
- April 1842:* “The spirits of men are eternal. . . . They are *organized* according to that Priesthood which is everlasting.”⁵⁹
- May 1843:* “He who rules in the heavens when he has a certain work to do calls the Spirits before him to *organize* them.”⁶⁰
- October 1843:* “The *organization* of . . . spiritual and heavenly beings, was agreeably to the most perfect order and harmony—that their limits and bounds were fixed irrevocably, and voluntarily subscribed to by themselves.”⁶¹

The only organization of intelligences envisioned by the Prophet in these statements is a social organization and not an organization of intelligence into intelligences. Joseph taught that spirits, like God, are self-existent and that “God Himself found Himself in the midst of spirits and glory. Because He was greater He saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest, who were less in intelligence, could have a privilege to advance like Himself. . . . So He took in hand to save the world of spirits.”⁶² In the absence of later teachings of a spirit birth, one might have supposed from Joseph Smith’s sayings that God’s plan for saving spirits

was simply a benevolent gesture arising from the happenstance of a superior intelligence finding himself in the midst of unorganized, inferior intelligences. As the Prophet declared in March 1841, “God is good and all his acts is for the benifit of infereir inteligenes—God saw that those inteligenes had Not power to Defend themselves against those that had a tabernicle therefore the Lord Calls them togather in Counsel [organizes them] and agrees to form them tabernicles.”⁶³

Rather than establishing a doctrine in the Church of uncreated spirits, the records show that the Prophet’s insistence on spirits being uncreated served primarily to reinforce the already growing concept that the essential part of man, whether it be the intelligence he possesses or his spirit element, has always existed. The references to preexistence by Joseph Smith’s associates in Church periodicals during the last two years of the Prophet’s life, particularly in the editorials of John Taylor and Thomas Ward, emphasized that while the spirit or intelligence may have had no beginning, individual spirits are the product of creation.⁶⁴ Some Saints did adopt the idea of uncreated spirits from the Prophet’s teachings in Nauvoo. However, the idea was evidently neither long nor widely held as it soon gave way to the later concept of spirit birth. Joseph Lee Robinson recorded that in 1845, while the Saints were still in Nauvoo,

Some of the Elders said that the Prophet Joseph Smith should have said that our spirits existed eternally with God, the question arose then, How is God the Father of our spirits? I wondered, studied and prayed over it for I did want to know how it could be. I inquired of several of the brethren how that could be—a father and son and the son as old as the father. There was not a person that could or that would even try to explain that matter, but it came to pass that in time a vision was opened, the voice of the spirit came to me saying: that all matter was eternal, that it never had a beginning and that it should never have an end and that the spirits of all men were organized of a pure material or matter upon the principle of male and female so that there was a time when my immortal spirit as well as every other man’s spirit that was ever born into the world—that is to say, there was a moment when the spirit was organized or begotten or born so that the spirit has a father and the material or matter, that our tabernacles [i.e., spirit bodies] are composed of is eternal and as we understand are organized upon the principles of male and female.⁶⁵

By the end of Joseph Smith’s ministry, several different views on the origin of man’s spirit appear to have been in circulation. A sermon delivered by Sidney Rigdon in 1845, after his disaffection from the Church, is revealing in this regard. Admonishing his followers to accept only those teachings concerning the origin of spirits that the Lord had plainly revealed, Rigdon deferred to the biblical account of the creation: “[Moses] states that God formed a body out of the dust of the earth, and, after he had formed it, he put a spirit or life into it . . . we can conceive of his putting spirit into it and of its then having life.” This, according to

Rigdon, is all that can be known with any certainty about what he termed “the principle of intelligence” in man. Disturbed by the Prophet’s King Follett Sermon as well as speculative teachings, many of which he had undoubtedly encountered among the Saints in Nauvoo, he declared:

If our spiritual existence was the effect of creative power [i.e., creationism], we do not know it, and whether the great creator formed them out of nothing [ex nihilo creation] or something [e.g., eternal intelligence or spirit element] . . . or whether they exist on the same principle he does [i.e., uncreated, self-existing spirits], are matters which can only be settled by revelation; for everything else which any may pretend to know is conjecture only. . . . Endless are the conjectures of men in relation to our spiritual existence. Some say the spirits of all were created in the six days [i.e., preexistencism]; others that they are created as their bodies are prepared for them.⁶⁶

If Rigdon’s statement can be taken as a commentary on contemporary LDS views with which he was in disagreement, it certainly attests to the diversity of views among the Saints.

SPIRIT BIRTH AND JOSEPH SMITH’S NAUVOO TEACHINGS

The belief that man is literally the offspring of God in the spirit is by far the most significant concept related to preexistence in LDS theology.⁶⁷ This doctrine, however, does not explicitly appear in the scriptural or other writings and recorded sermons of Joseph Smith.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the doctrine is conspicuously absent from the records of his associates during his lifetime. It appears that during the Prophet’s lifetime the Saints’ thinking conformed to the traditional belief that the fatherhood of God was only figurative and not to be taken literally.

Eliza R. Snow is often credited with first publicly introducing the idea of a literal spirit birth through heavenly parents in October 1845 when she penned the sublime poem “O My Father.”⁶⁹ Much speculation exists in fact as to whether Eliza R. Snow received the idea from Joseph Smith or through direct revelation.⁷⁰ Actually, the first pronouncement in print on spirit birth was provided by Orson Pratt in his *Prophetic Almanac* for 1845. Under a section entitled “The Mormon Creed,” Pratt declares, “What is man? The offspring of God. What is God? The father of man. Who is Jesus Christ? He is our Brother. . . . How many states of existence has man? He has three. What is the first? It is spiritual. What is the second? It is temporal. What is the third? It is immortal and eternal. How did he begin to exist in the first? He was begotten and born of God.”⁷¹ Pratt’s almanac went on sale 3 August 1844, though it was advertized in the *Prophet* as being at the printer’s as early as 22 June 1844, with a note that it “contains much matter interesting to the Saints.”⁷² The doctrine of premortal spirit birth next appeared publicly at the dedication of the Seventies Hall on 26 December 1844,

some six months after the death of the Prophet. A hymn composed especially for the dedication by W. W. Phelps contained the following stanza:

Come to me; here's the myst'ry that man hath not seen:
Here's our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen:
Here are worlds that have been, and the worlds yet to be:
Here's eternity,—endless; amen: Come to me.⁷³

A second hymn written also for the dedication by John Taylor eulogized Joseph Smith in these words:

Of noble seed—of heavenly birth,
He came to bless the sons of earth."⁷⁴

George Laub reported that a sermon was also delivered by Brigham Young at the dedication in which he taught that "Christ is our head and Elder Brother. For we were once organized before God, and Jesus was the firstborn or begotten of the Father."⁷⁵ The day before the dedication, Phelps wrote a letter published in the *Times and Seasons*, which referred to Jesus Christ as "our eldest brother" who "kept his first estate . . . and [was] crowned in the midst of brothers and sisters, while his mother stood with approving virtue."⁷⁶ With the basic preexistent family organization being delineated near the end of 1844, the idea of humankind originating as spirit children of heavenly parents became a subject of great interest throughout 1845.⁷⁷ Eliza R. Snow's "O My Father," written in October 1845, is significant only in that it so eloquently captures the essence of this already developed thought.

While it is interesting that the first recorded teaching of premortal birth did not occur until after Joseph Smith's death, to suppose that the doctrine entirely originated at that time would be as erroneous as believing that the fully developed doctrine was preached from the early beginning of the Church. The more probable explanation is that the idea gradually took shape, beginning with the strong paternal concept of God popular in nineteenth-century Protestantism combined with the enlightenment imparted through Joseph Smith on the nature of God and man. From this point it took only a little inspired reasoning to realize that individuals began their career as spirit offspring of heavenly parents.

The LDS doctrine of spirit birth is often depicted as being a radical departure from the traditional creator-creature dichotomy of Patristic theology that supposedly dominated nineteenth-century Christianity. It is important to realize, however, that during the early nineteenth century there was a common tendency to view God's fatherhood much the same way as taught in Mormonism, except for the procreative process implicit in LDS teachings. The Methodists spoke of man's divine

sonship eventuating in his moral perfection. Universalists appealed to the endearment implicit in the fatherhood of God to prove the ultimate rescue of the wicked from endless punishment. In 1824 the *Christian Magazine* echoed the growing sentiment that man's soul possesses "a spark of his intelligence, and continues to be in a high and peculiar sense 'his offspring.' Hence the nature of the soul, and its relation and resemblance to the divinity, proclaim its worth."⁷⁸ One theologian writing at the beginning of the twentieth century reflected back on this trend to paternalize God, stating, "No doctrine of the relationship of God to men has assumed such prominence during the last half-century as that of His Fatherhood."⁷⁹ Even the Heavenly Mother and Father concept of Mormonism was to be found in the esoteric teachings of the Kabbalah, which intrigued Christian mystics at the time of Joseph Smith. According to this tradition, the soul is "born into this world in which we live, through the union of the King and Queen who are, as regards the generation of the soul, like the human species in the generation of the body."⁸⁰ It was primarily the development and advancement of the belief in this literal spirit birth that set Mormonism apart from mainstream Protestant thought on the meaning of God's fatherhood.

Early LDS literature generally reflects contemporary attitudes toward God as a father figure, exemplified in a *Messenger and Advocate* editorial dated August 1837, which observed, "the great God is called our Father, as well as our preserver and bountiful benefactor: what fond endearments, what tender ties are not associated with the expression our Father."⁸¹ For the Saints, however, the concept of God's fatherhood grew to be more than just a sentimental metaphor. The Saints were taught to believe that "that which is temporal [is] in the likeness of that which is spiritual" (D&C 77:2), so that everything on earth, including the birth process, has its likeness in heaven. Furthermore, they were instructed that God is an exalted man who once experienced mortality,⁸² and that righteous couples are to become Gods themselves, receiving "their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men."⁸³

The belief that man may become as God in bearing the souls of men certainly would have been sufficient to establish the corollary belief that man himself is the offspring of God. It is quite possible in fact that the revealed destiny of man became the key which unlocked for many of the Saints the mystery of man's origin. In addition to scriptural inferences of spirit birth, there is evidence that the Prophet privately taught the doctrine to others. An isolated incident related secondhand some seventy years after its occurrence purports that Zina D. Young, who lost her mother when she was eighteen, was consoled by the Prophet, who told her she would see not only her earthly mother again, but also her Heavenly Mother.⁸⁴ Several of the Prophet's associates did not hesitate later to attribute their knowledge of premortal spirit birth to his teachings.

Parley P. Pratt, for instance, later recollected that in the latter part of 1839 he spent several days with Joseph Smith in which he learned “many great and glorious principles concerning God and the heavenly order of eternity.” Reflecting back on his impressions received during these conversations with the Prophet, Pratt wrote, “I felt that God was my Heavenly Father indeed, that Jesus was my brother.”⁸⁵ Benjamin F. Johnson wrote late in life of Joseph Smith, “He taught us that God was the great head of human procreation—was really and truly the father of both our spirits and our bodies.”⁸⁶ The fact that Joseph’s associates attributed their knowledge of spirit birth to Joseph Smith coupled with the unequivocal way in which they proclaimed the idea of spirit birth beginning near the time of his death strongly suggest that the doctrine originated with the Prophet. At the very least, Joseph Smith must be credited with having provided the impetus that led to an awareness of spirit birth.

One of the important effects of the doctrine of spirit birth was to unify the diverse views extant in the Church. While spirit or intelligence could still be thought of as being uncreated as an essence or individual (an issue still unsettled), it was recognized that spirit birth was a kind of creation. The divine parentage in spirit birth imbues each spirit with a portion of divinity as well, which is close to the ideas espoused by Parley P. Pratt resembling emanation. Thus the doctrine of spirit birth helped solidify and even integrate the Saints’ thinking on preexistence.

The development of the doctrine of preexistence from 1830 to 1844 illustrates the expanding theology of the early Church. It was especially meaningful for Saints at this time to lift their voices and sing, “The Lord is extending the Saints’ understanding.”⁸⁷ While it is difficult to determine precisely how prevalent particular beliefs were and when they began to take root or change form, it is clear that the basic idea of preexistence began to emerge shortly after the organization of the Church but was not fully expounded in Church publications until after Joseph Smith’s death. While the Prophet’s initial teachings on preexistence were perceived in the light of contemporary views on the nature and origin of spirits, these tentative beliefs were continually being reevaluated and revised in light of the ongoing teachings of the Prophet until, by the end of 1844, all of the basic elements of the current LDS doctrine of preexistence were in place. Nearly a century and a half later, this doctrine continues to vitalize LDS theology, adding a significant dimension to nearly every precept of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

NOTES

¹Although many consider *preexistence* to be a self-contradictory term, it should be realized that the prefix *pre* can signify either “prior” or “prior to” depending on the root word with which it is used. In the case of *preexistence*, the obvious intended meaning is “prior” existence, not “prior to” existence. Other synonyms found in modern LDS literature include *first estate*, *premortal*, *antemortal*, *pre-earth*, *primeval*, *primordial*, and *primal existence*.

²Thomas Alexander, “The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology,” *Sunstone* 5 (July-August 1980): 32 n. 4.

³*Journal of Discourses* 1:54.

⁴While creationism was the prevalent theory in the post-Apostolic church among the Eastern fathers, traducianism was generally accepted in the West and essentially held that “the first man bore within him the germ of all mankind; his soul was the fountainhead of all human souls; all varieties of individual human nature were only different modifications of that one original spiritual substance. Creation was finally and completely accomplished on the sixth day. As the body is derived from the bodies of the parents, so the soul is derived from the souls of the parents—body and soul together being formed by natural generation” (James Franklin Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* [London: Methuen, 1903], 303).

⁵From an early nineteenth-century viewpoint, materialists represented “a sect in the ancient church, composed of persons, who, being prepossessed with the maxim in philosophy ‘ex nihilo nihil fit,’ out of nothing, nothing can arise, had recourse to an eternal matter on which they suppose God wrought in the creation, instead of admitting Him alone as the sole cause of the existence of all things. . . . Materialists are also those who maintain that the soul of man is material, or that the principle of perception and thought is not a substance distinct from the body, but the result of corporeal organization” (Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary* [Philadelphia: James Kay and Co., 1830], 345).

⁶John Newton Brown, *The Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Brattleboro, Pesenden and Co., 1836), 964.

⁷John Henry Blunt, *Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology* (London: Rivertons, 1872), 590. Many nineteenth-century religious thinkers were neutral as to “whether the souls of all mankind were actually created, as some suppose, at the time of Adam’s creation, or whether they were successively created” (Samuel Worcester, *Sermons on Various Subjects Practical and Doctrinal* [Salem, Mass.: Henry Whipple, 1823], 36).

⁸Elder Elijah Bailey, *Primitive Trinitarianism Examined and Defended* (Bennington, Vt.: Darius Clark, 1826), 92. Bailey was a Methodist elder who disagreed with some of Isaac Watts’s views saying: “The first difficulty and mistake we think the Doctor labored under was in imagining all souls were created at once, or were created before their bodies were created for them.”

⁹Spiritualist views bore some similarity to LDS ideas expressed during the Nauvoo period as evidenced by one Spiritualist who wrote in 1869: “Something from nothing, a self-evident absurdity, there are no absolute creations in the universe, only new and higher formations. Spirit and matter both eternal; spiritual substance in connection with physical substance in its various gradations constitute one eternal duality” (J. M. Peebles, *Seers of the Ages* [Boston: William White, 1869], 13). And again: “The basis of man’s immortality is deific substance. As a conscious spirit in the innermost, he is compounded and therefore indissoluble. Having in spirit neither a beginning nor end, he is eternally past and eternally future” (*ibid.*, 262).

¹⁰Edward Beecher, *The Conflict of the Ages; or, the Great Debate on the Moral Relations of God and Man*, 5th ed. (Boston: Phillips, Samson, 1854), 563. Edward Beecher’s brother, Charles, was also an advocate of *preexistence*.

¹¹Parker Pratt Robinson, *Writings of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Privately published, 1952), 65, 216. Pratt maintained this interpretation of Job at least until 1844 when he wrote that as we rise to the station of a son of God in the resurrection, “we may be called upon, with the other sons of God to shout for joy at the organization of new systems of worlds, and new orders of being” (*ibid.*, 39). In March 1841 Joseph Smith used this same passage to prove *preexistence*, not from the viewpoint that the sons of God were premortal children, but based on the reasoning that Job must have *preexisted* for the Lord to have asked him where he was when the foundations of the world were laid (see Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980], 68).

¹²*Times and Seasons* 2 (1 February 1841): 299. President Harold B. Lee has interpreted this passage more recently to mean that those spirits who were faithful in the *preexistence* were there foreordained to be born into the house of Israel (Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974], 10–11).

¹³*Journal of Discourses* 15:249. Orson Pratt was baptized 19 September 1830 after hearing the preaching of his brother Parley. He therefore would not have had an awareness of *preexistence* before that time.

¹⁴John Potter, *An Inquiry Concerning the Most Important Truths* (Uniontown, Pa.: J. and T. Patton, 1820), 80, 86.

¹⁵The only mention prior to this time of a belief among the Saints that preexistent behavior determined one's opportunities in this life comes from J. B. Turner, a Mormon antagonist, in his book *Mormonism in All Ages: or the Rise, Progress, and Causes of Mormonism; with the Biography of Its Author and Founder, Joseph Smith, Junior* (New York: Platt and Peters, 1842), 242. Turner wrote: "Their sublime faith teaches them that their action and destiny here are the result, and can be explained only upon admission, of their existence and action before they inhabited their present bodies. This notion, however, does not distinctly appear in their published revelations. It was at one time promulgated, but from its unpopularity, their leaders suppressed the full development of their peculiar scheme of preexistence until faith on the earth should increase."

¹⁶*Millennial Star* 1 (January 1841): 218.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 220. Orson Pratt also expressed this idea of foreordination based on foreknowledge of the future in the case of the Savior, and argued that this foreordination was not an actual calling but rather an anticipated calling that was to be effective retroactively: "Jesus was called and made a High Priest centuries after the law [of Moses] was given, yet there is no doubt that he was considered in the mind of his Father the same as a High Priest before the foundation of the world; and that by virtue of the Priesthood which he should, in a future age, receive, he could organize worlds and show forth mighty power. *God, by his foreknowledge, saw that His Son would keep all his commands, and determined, at a certain time [i.e., mortality] to call and consecrate him a High Priest.* He determined also that by virtue of that future consecration to the priesthood, he should, thousands of years beforehand, have power to create worlds and govern them, the same as if he had already received the consecration" (Orson Pratt, *Seer* 1 [October 1853]: 147 [italics added]).

¹⁸*Journal of Discourses* 3:352.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 15:249.

²⁰Moses 3:1–7; 5:24; 6:36, 51, 59, 63. An interesting addition to the revelation of Enoch comes from the Kirtland Revelation Book under date of February 1833, when a song was sung by the gift of tongues and translated (the persons involved are unknown). Part of the translation alludes to preexistence: "He [Enoch] saw the beginning [and] the ending of men; he saw the time when Adam his father was made, and he saw that he was in eternity before a grain of dust in the balance was weighed. He saw that he emanated and came down from God" (cited in Fred Collier, *Unpublished Revelations of the Prophets and Presidents of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing, 1979], 63).

²¹See Thomas Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 33 n. 32; Blake Ostler, "The Idea of Preexistence in the Development of Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 75 n. 11. In both of these sources, the interpretation that *spiritual* means *intellectual* has its basis in the fact that this is one of the meanings (meaning 6) given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Ostler further notes, "the treatment of the first chapter of Genesis as a 'conceptual blue-print' formulated by God before creation, was a popular means of resolving the seeming contradiction between Genesis 1:26–27 and 2:4 as Joseph had done in the Book of Moses" (Ostler, "Idea of Preexistence," 61). This interpretation of the first account of the creation as a conceptual or ideal creation was popular in the nineteenth century only among Kabbalists who claimed that "the first chapter of Genesis applies only the Prototypic or Upper Adam, who was androgenic and made in the image and likeness of Elohim. . . . Indeed the second account expressly says, the plants, i.e., man, were not yet on the earth and the terrestrial man did not yet exist" (Isaac Myer, *Qabbalah* [Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1888], 273). Kabbalists, however, used the term *spiritual body* to designate Adam's paradisiacal physical body created from the dust of the earth as recorded in Gen. 2:7, which followed the ideal creation (*ibid.*, 248).

²²Elder Bruce R. McConkie was a proponent of this view. He conceded that the word *spiritual* in these passages has "a dual meaning and applies to both the premortal life and the paradisiacal creation," but he emphasized that the "more pointed and important meaning" is that of a "paradisiacal creation" (Bruce R. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," *Ensign* 12 [June 1982]: 13–14).

²³If later commentaries are any indication of earlier thought, Orson Pratt consistently taught after the Saints moved west that the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis (corresponding to the second chapter in the Book of Moses) refers in its entirety to the spirit creation. While the current tendency is to view both the first and the second chapters as an account of the physical creation with only an interjectory reference to a spirit creation (Moses 3:5), Elder Pratt contended that "to suppose that these two chapters only give the history of the natural creation would involve us in numerous difficulties when we endeavor to reconcile the description given in the second chapter with that given in the first. But to receive them as the descriptions of two successive creations, the first being spiritual (as it truly was), and the second being temporal, all different descriptions vanish away, and a flood of light bursts upon the mind" (Pratt, *Seer* 1 [February 1853]: 22). Concerning D&C 29:30–32, both Orson Pratt (*Journal of Discourses* 15:265; 21:200–205; *Millennial Star* 10 [1 August 1848]: 238) and Brigham Young (*Journal of Discourses* 1:50; 4:218; 18:257) interpreted the first spiritual creation mentioned as having reference to the spirit creation and not to the paradisiacal physical creation. No contrary interpretation of these passages by any of the Prophet's associates could be found.

²⁴*Journal of Discourses* 21:199–200.

²⁵*Ibid.* 21:200.

²⁶Orson Pratt relates: "We often had access to the manuscripts when boarding with the Prophet; and it was our delight to read them over and over again, before they were printed; and so highly were they esteemed by us, that we committed some to memory; and a few we copied for the purpose of reference in our missions; and also to read them to the saints for their edification" (Pratt, *Seer* 26 [March 1854]: 228).

²⁷*Messenger and Advocate* 1 (June 1835): 130. Phelps may have had reference to D&C 93:29–30 since preexistent agency is implied elsewhere only in the Book of Abraham, which had not yet come into Joseph Smith's possession. Preexistent agency was not a widely held belief among contemporary preexistencists although it was taught by Origen and preserved in Kabbalistic teachings that held that "souls had freedom of will as to good and evil and this was exercised by them before the creation of the universe" (Myer, *Qabbalah*, 273). Origen believed, however, that earth life was a punishment for disobedient spirits rather than a reward for the righteous.

²⁸See Jacob 4:9; Moses 1:32. That Christ is often designated as the agent in all of God's acts of creation, including that of man (see Ether 3:16; Moses 1:32; D&C 76:42, 93:10), corresponds with certain contemporary Protestant views and may have given the general impression to the early Saints that Christ was the actual creator of man's spirit. Today these passages are explained by invoking the doctrine of divine investiture of authority (see vol. 1 of Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 73).

²⁹*Evening and Morning Star* 1 (October 1832): 78.

³⁰*Messenger and Advocate* 1 (May 1835): 113.

³¹*Evening and Morning Star* 1 (October 1832): 77, 80.

³²*Messenger and Advocate* 1 (April 1835): 97.

³³*Ibid.* 3 (December 1836): 424–25. The basic argument states that since all things that are material tend toward dissolution and decay, the spirit must be immaterial since it is immortal and does not dissolve or decay.

³⁴T. Edgar Lyon, "Doctrinal Development of the Church During the Nauvoo Sojourn," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Fall 1975): 439; Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 333; Ostler, "Idea of Preexistence," 60–61. By at least 1840 it was public knowledge that the Saints were teaching preexistence although it was viewed in at least one early Mormon pamphlet as being "a matter of little or no consequence" whether the spirit was created at birth or at some time prior to birth (Benjamin Winchester, "An Examination of a Lecture Delivered by the Rev. H. Perkins," 1840, 7, photocopy in possession of David J. Whittaker, original at Harvard University Library).

³⁵*Millennial Star* 6 (July 1845): 26. Alexander opposes the view that the term *intelligence* in section 93 was understood prior to 1838 to mean "the essential uncreated essence of each individual." He cites the fact that *intelligence* was used elsewhere to mean facts or information ("Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 33, n. 23). I would argue that *intelligence* was also understood to mean the uncreated essence of man, not in the sense in which it is understood today, but in the sense of a divine light or truth that is the life-giving and conscious principle in man. Later expressions of Brigham Young (*Journal of Discourses* 7:286–87) and Orson Pratt (*Seer* 1 [September 1853]: 132–33) preserve this same thought as they allude to the uncreated intelligence spoken of in section 93 as a divine endowment giving man life and identity.

³⁶*Millennial Star* 4 (July 1843): 32.

³⁷*Messenger and Advocate* 3 (December 1836): 428.

³⁸D&C 84:45; 88:7–13, 40, 66; 93:36. In February 1834, Joseph Smith declared not only that God's radiance but that God himself "is perfect intelligence" (*History of the Church* 2:12). A current tendency is to arbitrarily distinguish between intelligence that is "Light and truth" and intelligence that is the "light of truth"; the former being an attribute, while the latter denotes the primal essence of spirits.

³⁹Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, cited in E. Dale LeBaron, "Benjamin Franklin Johnson: Colonizer, Public Servant and Church Leader" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967), 331 (italics added).

⁴⁰Robinson, *Writings of Parley P. Pratt*, 63–64. This work was originally published with Parley P. Pratt's book of poems and later republished by itself "corrected and revised" as "The World Turned Upside Down, or Heaven on Earth" (see *Millennial Star* 2 [June 1841]: 32; 3 [August 1842]: 80; and *History of the Church* 4:54).

⁴¹Robinson, *Writings of Parley P. Pratt*, 66–67.

⁴²*Millennial Star* 2 (April 1842): 187.

⁴³The view that the human spirit is essentially an extension of the Holy Spirit, although in its more unrefined state, can be found in Parley P. Pratt's teachings as late as 1853, when he declared that portions of the "Holy Spirit . . . [are] organized in individual form and clothed upon with flesh and bones . . . also that there are vast quantities of this spirit or element not organized in bodily form" (Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* [Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855], 43–45). Pratt also taught in 1853 that this pure and holy spirit that is organized into individual intelligences is "invisible to us, unless we are quickened by a portion of the same element" (*Journal of Discourses* 1:8).

⁴⁴*Journal of Discourses* 2:342–43. Orson Pratt here cites an unpublished revelation that was intended to show that "intelligent beings are all parts of God, and . . . wherever a great amount of this intelligent Spirit exists, there is a great amount or portion of God."

⁴⁵Robinson, *Writings of Parley P. Pratt*, 216.

⁴⁶*History of the Church* 4:575.

⁴⁷Buck, *Theological Dictionary*, 567.

⁴⁸Leonard Bacon, *Baxter's Works* (New Haven: Durrie and Peck, 1835), 28. The materiality of spirit was being advanced within the Church at least as early as 1840 as evidenced in a pamphlet written by Samuel Bennett in which he reasoned, "The moment we attempt to conceive of a thing we invest it with materiality; and we cannot, according to our mental constitution, conceive of immaterial existence" (Samuel Bennett, "A Few Remarks by Way of Reply to an Anonymous Scribbler" [Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking and Guilbert, Printers, 1840], 11).

⁴⁹*History of the Church* 3:27.

⁵⁰Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 33.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 60.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁴*History of the Church* 4:575.

⁵⁵Stan Larsen, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 203–4. Larsen's amalgamated version of the King Follett discourse is particularly significant here in that it preserves the wording of the original firsthand accounts, which read "a spirit" is uncreated. This has since been altered to read "the intelligence of spirits" (see Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], 353), which is frequently quoted as proof that the Prophet had in mind the intelligence of spirits, not spirits themselves, when he spoke of spirits as being uncreated.

⁵⁶It is noteworthy that Joseph Fielding Smith also made use of the word *organize* in Abraham 3:22 to describe the social or ecclesiastical organization of preexistent spirits in his book *The Way to Perfection* under the heading "Intelligences Organized before the World Was Formed." From Abraham's teaching that there were many intelligences (spirits of men) and that they were organized before the world was formed, Elder Smith concludes: "Men were organized in some such way as we are organized here in the kingdom of God. Among the spirits of men there were superior intelligences chosen to act in authority" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], 27–28).

⁵⁷Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9 (italics added).

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 60 (italics added).

⁵⁹*History of the Church* 4:575 (italics added).

⁶⁰Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 207 (italics added).

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 253 (italics added).

⁶²Larsen, "King Follett Discourse," 204.

⁶³Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 68. Joseph Smith taught that in preexistence, "the Spirits of all Men were subject to oppression and the express purpose of God in Giveing it a tabernicle was to arm it against the power of Darkness" (*ibid.*, 62).

⁶⁴See *Times and Seasons* 4 (1 March 1843): 121, 135, 332; 5 (15 December 1844): 748; and *Millennial Star* 4 (June 1843): 18–19; 5 (November 1844): 95. Even in a direct commentary on the King Follett discourse, which has since become the primary basis for arguing that spirits have always existed individually as intelligences, Thomas Ward concluded: "We believe in the eternal nature of spirit [not spirits] and elements, and of the continued progression of intelligence [not intelligences] . . . attaining to the perfection of existence" (*Millennial Star* 5 [November 1844]: 95).

⁶⁵Joseph Lee Robinson, *Journal*, 21. Regarding the confinement of the idea of uncreated Spirits, Ostler concludes from his survey of nineteenth-century LDS thought on preexistence that "the view that man originated when spirit matter was organized into an individual through literal spirit birth seems to have been the only view consistently elucidated between 1845–1905" (Ostler, "Idea of Preexistence," 68).

⁶⁶*Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ*, 15 June 1845, 225, 227.

⁶⁷President Marion G. Romney, for example, wrote that the truth that "man is a child of God is the most important knowledge available to mortals" (*Ensign* 3 [July 1973]: 14). Elder Bruce R. McConkie termed this knowledge, along with the knowledge of God's existence, as "the greatest truth in all eternity, bar none" (1976 *Devotional Speeches of the Year* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976], 393–94).

⁶⁸The modern LDS scripture cited today as a proof text for spirit birth is D&C 76:24, which testifies of Christ's universal creative and redemptive works, proclaiming "that by him, and through him, and of him; the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." Grammatically speaking, the preposition *unto* is dative, making God the indirect object of the birth mentioned. It would require the genitive preposition *of* to make God the one who is giving birth. The preposition *unto* is only used elsewhere in scripture when associated with birth to describe the siring of a child by one person to be given to or for the benefit of another. For example: "*unto* us a child is born" (Isa. 9:6); "his brother shall . . . raise up seed *unto* his brother" (Matt. 22:24); "if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed *unto* me" (Jacob 2:30). The implied meaning of D&C 76:24 is that just as the worlds were created by Christ, so also are the inhabitants thereof begotten unto God by or through Christ. That is, the birth spoken of is the spiritual rebirth through Christ. This appears to have been the interpretation given by the Prophet himself (*Times and Seasons* 4 [1 February 1843]: 82–83) and is the interpretation given in an official doctrinal exposition of the First Presidency and the Twelve in James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974), 470. This clarification is also made by Bruce R. McConkie in *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 130, 745, and in the subject matter summary for D&C 76:18–24 contained in the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which states that the "inhabitants of many worlds are begotten sons and daughters unto God through the atonement of Jesus Christ."

There is no indication that the Saints viewed this passage as a reference to spirit birth prior to their trek west. Interestingly, Orson Pratt, who in 1852 was the first to use this passage as evidence of a spirit birth, still acknowledged the indirect nature of this birth, stating: "Notice, this does not say that God, whom we serve and worship, was actually the Father Himself, in His own person, of all these sons and daughters of the different worlds, but they're begotten sons and daughters unto God, that is, begotten by those who are made like him. . . . [T]hey begat sons and daughters, and begat them unto God, to inhabit these different worlds" (*Journal of Discourses* 1:57).

⁶⁹*Times and Seasons* 6 (15 November 1845): 1039.

⁷⁰For recent discussions on this issue, see Ostler, "Idea of Preexistence," 76, nn. 26 and 27; Linda Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 5 (September-October 1980): 10, 15 n. 10.

⁷¹Orson Pratt, *Prophetic Almanac for 1845* (New York: Prophet's Office, n.d.), 7–8.

⁷²*Prophet* 1 (22 June 1844): 4.

⁷³*Times and Seasons* 6 (15 January 1845): 783.

⁷⁴*Ibid.* 5:767.

⁷⁵Eugene England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 178.

⁷⁶*Times and Seasons* 5 (1 January 1845): 758.

⁷⁷See *ibid.* 6:809, 891–92, 917–18; *Millennial Star* 6:4, 19–21, 157–58, 174–75. Orson Pratt became immediately fascinated with the doctrine of spirit birth, publishing several articles on the subject in issues of the *Prophet* and the *New York Messenger* during 1845 in which he delved into nearly every imaginable implication of the idea.

⁷⁸*Christian Magazine* 1 (April 1824): 107.

⁷⁹J. Scott Lidgett, *The Fatherhood of God in Christian Truth and Life* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), 1. Lidgett explains that this fatherhood consists of "the creation of mankind as the calling into existence by God, out of His own life, of beings at once kindred with Himself, and having a distinct individuality of their own. But this, so far from exhausting what is meant by Fatherhood, touches only the surface. The calling into existence of such beings—kindred with Himself, yet having personal independence—is motivated by the love of God; introduces them into a world, a home, of love, which environs their whole life; and has as its end, that fellowship of mutual giving and receiving, that most intimate communion which can only be between those who are spiritually akin" (*ibid.*, 288). This writer further emphasizes the divine potential of man resulting from God's "giving existence to a kindred nature, whose life consists in growing up into the perfection of its Source" (*ibid.*, 291).

⁸⁰Myer, *Qabbalah*, 273.

⁸¹*Messenger and Advocate* 3 (August 1837): 557.

⁸²Larsen, "King Follett Discourse," 200.

⁸³D&C 132:63 (compare vv. 19–20, 30). See Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 232, 269–70, 293 for evidence that offspring in the world to come was understood to mean spirit offspring and not just a continuation of physical seed.

⁸⁴Susa Gates Young, *History of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from November 1869 to June 1910* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1911), 25–26. A separate incident has been cited, which was related thirdhand, concerning a vision in which Sidney Rigdon and Zebedee Coltrin in company with Joseph Smith were shown the Father and Mother in Heaven (see Wilcox, "Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," 10). In actuality, what Zebedee Coltrin repeatedly confirmed they saw on this occasion was "father Adam and mother Eve" (see Calvin Robert Stephens, *The Life and Contributions of Zebedee Coltrin* [Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, August 1984], 46–47).

⁸⁵Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972), 297–98.

⁸⁶LeBaron, "Benjamin Franklin Johnson," 340.

⁸⁷William W. Phelps, "The Spirit of God," *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 2.

Book Reviews

Beyond "Jack Fiction": Recent Achievement in the Mormon Novel

A Review Essay

Eugene England

LEVI S. PETERSON. *The Backslider*. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1986. 361 pp. \$12.95 paperback.

LINDA SILLITOE. *Sideways to the Sun*. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1987. 255 pp. \$7.95 paperback.

ORSON SCOTT CARD. *Seventh Son*. New York: TOR, 1987. 241 pp. \$17.95 hardback. \$3.95 paperback.

Only fourteen years ago, Karl Keller called most Mormon novels to that point "jack-fiction."¹ With that play on the familiar term "jack-Mormon," used for one whose faith and activity have lapsed and who is loyal to Mormonism only as a culture, Keller was claiming that Mormons had produced fiction essentially irrelevant to the doctrines of Mormonism and therefore removed from the heart of the faith. He offered as a model for what genuinely religious literature could be the work of Flannery O'Connor, whom he quoted as claiming, "I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means that for me the meaning of life is centered in our Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to that." It surprised and disappointed Keller that his fellow Mormons had not been similarly engaged in creating fictional worlds based on the unique ways Mormon theology and experience would lead them to see the world.

Keller was right. To that point nearly all Mormon fiction was jack-fiction. The first main outpouring, the "home literature" of the 1880s and 1890s (which continues today in the popular Mormon romances published by official and semiofficial presses and magazines) was consciously intended to strengthen young Mormons and convert others.

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But in blatantly serving *religion*, such writing has not been good *literature*, and in trying so hard to be more “Mormon” it has become less so, often narrowing, or even subverting, the complexity, freedom, and generosity of Mormon thought and life in its preachy didacticism. On the other hand, the outpouring of nationally published and honored fiction of the 1930s and 1940s was too often provincially antiprovincial, regional in focus, and nostalgic for the heroic Mormon past, but ignorant of or hostile toward the richest dimensions of Mormon theology and contemporary life.²

When Keller wrote, in 1974, he knew that a very few examples of something new, like the first buds of spring, had begun to appear, such as Douglas Thayer’s stories “The Red-tail Hawk” and “Under the Cottonwoods.”³ These were powerfully expressive of central Mormon ideas and concerns but not marred as literature by being written to promote either religion or antireligion. Soon after Keller’s essay, in the late seventies and early eighties, there developed a lovely blooming of serious, religious Mormon fiction, very little of it “jack-fiction,” written by Douglas Thayer, Donald Marshall, Eileen Kump, Levi Peterson, and others. Karl Keller died in 1986, just before he could have seen the marvelous outpouring, in the span of just six months, of three excellent Mormon novels that move well beyond jack-fiction.

The first of these, published in late 1986, was Levi Peterson’s *The Backslider*. It is the funniest Mormon novel so far, possibly the best, and worthy to be compared not only with Flannery O’Connor but with some of the better recent American fiction, such as the work of Joyce Carol Oates and Reynolds Price. The questions it raises—and the answers it dramatizes—make it the very antithesis of jack-fiction. It explores the effects on two people, a Mormon and a Lutheran, of various notions about what God is like, what he expects of us, and how he helps us—certainly among the most fundamental religious questions.

Peterson’s protagonist, Frank Windham, is a twenty-year-old cowboy from Panguitch, Utah, imbued with the usual Mormon village virtues of fundamental decency and honesty, self-sacrificing neighborliness, and a certain bent for hell-raising. Unfortunately, he is also indoctrinated in the usual—and some unusual—pernitions (my own word) of popular Mormon theology. He believes in God but he wishes he didn’t—and knows he therefore is in big trouble. God is absolute, inscrutable, exasperatingly contradictory, yet unrelenting in vengeful pursuit of sinners, especially Frank, whose abiding image of divinity is a giant eye looking down a gunbarrel at him, ready to fire. He imagines God treating people the way Frank treats his boney, gristle-teated, mean-spirited milk-cow: “Having decided that splintering a milk stool on a cow’s back was an important part of animal husbandry [Frank realized] it fit in well with the way God treated

human beings. He broke up furniture on their heads, so to speak, but it was for the good purpose of making Christians of them" (195). Such a concept of God, of course, defeats any natural optimism. Frank believes that "everybody has misery in this world. That's what this world is for" (205).

One misery seems especially revealing of God's nature and his intentions for Frank. His brother, Jeremy, is affected even more than Frank by their mother's various fixations and fanaticisms, especially concerning sexual purity and God's determination to assign and reveal particular punishments to people. Jeremy makes the mistake of going north to BYU, where his theological confusion is compounded by religion professors and Provo herbal medicine practitioners, whom Peterson creates in hilarious detail. But the result is not funny: Jeremy has a mental breakdown, is picked up by Frank and taken, despite his occasional incoherence, on the fall deer hunt, where, after killing his first deer and gutting it, he proceeds to cut off his own genitals and nearly bleed to death. Frank, in an heroic effort, carries Jeremy up over a steep ridge and saves his life, sees him through treatment at the State Mental Hospital—where Jeremy develops a new identity as "Alice"—and then brings him home to wonderfully gentle, tolerant care from family and neighbors.

Peterson's gifts include not only the skill to create the physical and psychological reality of all this but to do so with both exacting attention to the nuances of rural Mormon speech and clear sympathy with *all* his characters. For instance, when Jeremy first goes back to priesthood meeting and is introduced by Frank with his new name, and some deacons snicker, the gruff, pragmatic bishop who is shepherding Frank through his repentance from backsliding announces:

There's nothing in Scripture that says a man can't be called by the name he wants to be called by. Come Judgment Day we're going to see Sister Alice standing on the right hand of the Savior. The Lord has put him among us for a special reason and we better not let the Lord down. Brethren, keep an eye on your kids and if you see them making fun of Sister Alice, larrup the daylights out of them. (244)

This is the benign side of the Mormon ethos, a strong sense of communal responsibility to suffer together and ease each other, along with an emphasis on a God of justice who requires—even metes out—fit suffering for sin. The bad side of such a gospel of works is explored from Frank's perspective as he becomes increasingly obsessed with God's intent to punish him—for his hell-raising, for succumbing to various temptations of the flesh, such as good hard work, good food, and even the sexual pleasures he enjoys with his wife, Marianne. In scenes of breathtaking humor combined with terrible sadness, Peterson shows us the perversions that such a mixed-up theology can produce: Frank

toting up his good deeds against his sins (such as making love to his wife other than the mutually agreed once on Friday night, or enjoying his work so much that he suddenly realizes “he hadn’t thought about God and spiritual things for three or four hours”); Frank then adding up his credits (reading from the scriptures every evening except Friday) and finally making up for the extra sins over credits by lashing himself with a leather strap. In one of the most horribly funny passages I’ve ever read, Frank and Marianne try to live in their marriage as the kind of Christians “that Frank said God loved.” This discipline includes not salting their beans, lest they tempt them toward carnality by tasting too good, and together fixing Frank up with a contraption to control his wandering hands and induce proper chastity. The scene ends with Frank losing control, making passionate love with his wife, and then punishing himself for being a carnal sinner by mutilating his hand with a vegetable grater.

Later, in his growing despair, as he begins to interpret Jeremy’s earlier puritanism as saintliness, Frank even decides that Jeremy could only have been “wasted” by God as a warning to *Frank*. Finally, in the very process of aiding in a miraculous Easter morning birth by giving a prophetic priesthood blessing and while preparing to baptize Marianne, who has converted to Mormonism in part from unconditional love of him, he begins to seriously consider practicing the old Mormon perversion of blood atonement on himself. He thinks of imitating Jeremy—but when no one is near, as he was for Jeremy, to save his life.

By this time most readers might agree with the long-suffering Marianne when she says, “All the Mormons I know have gone crazy.” But Marianne’s wonderful religious sanity is formed partly through her *becoming* a Mormon. At first she has both the qualities and the weaknesses produced by a pure Lutheran theology of grace: she is vital and hearty and generous and at peace but of somewhat easy virtue. When she and Frank first fall into sexual sin, his problem is that he is obsessed to despair with sexual initiation and evil; her problem is that she is not serious enough about the dangers, the reality, of sin. She is afflicted with that perversion of Protestant thought that the theologians call “cheap grace.” She has a moving but sentimental and limited understanding of Christ and the Atonement:

I daydream about a cowboy Jesus . . . coming through the trees on a horse. . . . He is riding a double rigged saddle and he’s got a lariat. . . . He’s got on chaps and spurs and a blue denim jacket and a ten gallon hat. But when he gets up close I see he really is Jesus. He has a beard and he looks like there isn’t anybody in the whole world he can’t love. He says, I found you; you were lost, but I found you. (27)

Marianne’s somewhat shallow sense of who God is and how he helps us deepens steadily through the book as she gets pregnant and deals with her troubles alone for a while. Then, when Frank recognizes he has been

trapped by God, she agrees to marry him just long enough to legitimize their child. Finally, as they fall genuinely in love, she even agrees to try out Frank's strange notions of what good Mormons must do: "We wouldn't have sex except to make babies. We wouldn't eat fancy food—just plain stuff to keep us going. We wouldn't keep a fancy car. . . . It's a vanity. We wouldn't ride and hunt and fish for fun. We wouldn't laugh out loud" (298).

Marianne's own growing spiritual maturity helps her recognize what is happening to Frank. After hearing a Sunday School lesson on the Atonement, she comments, "I wasn't sure Mormons believed in the Atonement at all," and when assured that Frank has a great testimony of it, she continues, "You can't tell it by the way he acts. He doesn't act very atoned" (288). Even though she is willing, because of her own love for Frank, to try to act as unloving of God's world and gifts as he is, she prays, "Sweet Jesus, please don't be like Frank thinks you are." She constantly assures Frank in his despair, "Jesus loves you," and bears her testimony to him: "No matter what you say, Frank, Jesus is kind. I can't believe in no other Jesus." As she sees what final direction Frank is taking, she pleads, "Why can't you believe his blood was enough? Why do you have to shed yours too?" and prays alone: "Sweet Jesus, help us before it's too late." Jesus answers her prayer and appears to Frank in the form her faith has prepared him to see, "His face as kind as an August dawn." Jesus listens to Frank's troubles and gives him some straight talk in Frank's own language: "That Marianne is one hell of a good woman. Why don't you just settle down and enjoy her like a husband would who has some good sense. . . . And work on that crap about hating God. See if you can get over it" (355-56).

That vision is one of the most lovely and believable epiphanies I have encountered in modern fiction. It is the capstone to an extraordinary achievement, not only in thematic content that is seriously theological but in form that is meticulously crafted to give permanent being to that content. The narrator is a combination of a more mature Frank and the more rural side of Levi Peterson himself, populating this imagined Mormon world with richly textured beings and a pungent vernacular. The marvelous range of that vernacular also includes the humble poetry of good things seen straight on. Here is Frank, touched by Marianne's tender voice on the phone asking after him just as he is approaching the depth of his despair before his vision:

[Her voice] made him remember how much he loved the world. The highway and truck, the river glinting in the sun, the clouds climbing into the blue sky, the sage brush plains, the high timbered mountains, the pastures full of horses and cattle, the furrowed fields, the little towns, the people eating, talking, loving, all these numbed him with sweet grief. (343)

And this is Marianne, being greeted by her new fellow saints in the Relief Society room after her baptism: "Her hair still damp, her cheeks radiant, [she] took the hand of each person. . . . Those waiting their turn stood with curious, reverent faces, as if she was fresh from heaven and a blessing to touch and to talk to" (357).

Peterson has presented himself, both in person and in most of his fiction before this novel, as something of a Mormon backslider. The quality of theological insight, moral clarity, and achieved conviction here suggest to me that, whatever he may claim, he has backslid a bit from that backsliding.

In Mormon theology, Christ's atonement is the means by which God gives us the power to accept ourselves and overcome sin—and thus be saved from this world's greatest problem. To *continue* to progress in the image of God the Father and Mother, Mormons believe they must build an eternal marriage. Thus, relationship, particularly in the family, is central to Mormon thinking about what is best in this life and eternal life—what in fact makes up our own as well as God's work and glory. But our theology, more than any other I know, also posits radical individuality. We each have necessary, unconditioned, unrelated being. We have always existed and will always exist autonomously. As the Mormon amateur theologian B. F. Cummings writes, "The self is insubordinate, wandering, imperially aloof, solitary, lonely, withdrawn, unvisited, impenetrable"; it "cannot escape from existence nor can it escape from the awareness of its existence" nor from "the inevitable sense of solitude" that is born from "being an eternally identical one."⁴ And yet, as Cummings also notes, for Mormons "nothing that [the individual] can do is of avail without . . . affiliations. Through all eternity he remains an individual but through eternity he will remain a social individual."⁵ This is certainly one of the "oppositions" that Lehi declared all progress, even existence itself, depends upon (see 2 Ne. 2:11-13). It is this opposition, the central paradox of life in a Mormon society, that Linda Sillitoe explores with persuasive skill in *Sideways to the Sun*.

Sillitoe goes beyond jack-fiction because, though more indirectly than Peterson, she also grapples seriously and helpfully with central issues of Mormon theology, without, in the main, using her fiction for ideological purposes. Hers is the first good Mormon novel about immediately *contemporary* Mormon life, and it brings us into that world with dramatic force. Megan Stevens, a typical Mormon mother of four, married to a typical faithful Mormon elder and living in a typical Mormon suburban neighborhood in Bountiful, Utah, suddenly finds herself in the atypical but increasingly common condition of single parenthood. Her husband simply disappears, and the novel is her pilgrimage to discovery and creation of self apart from the

relationship that had defined and enclosed her for half her thirty-five years.

First she must break the enclosure built by thoughtless Mormon “families are forever” theology. This comfortable but often superficial and imprisoning world is imaged by Sillitoe, in the voice of Megan’s newfound divorced friend, as a “golden circle of married women,” the “perfect ones” (39) in the ward. With even more satiric bite, Sillitoe pictures the same group of women in a pool, swimming in a circle like fish in an aquarium, talking only about their husbands.

Megan, who had once even misread her street’s name, “Stonybrook,” as “Storybook,” gradually, then forcefully, breaks out of this dreamworld, and Sillitoe creates in convincing complexity the pain and beauty of such a discovery of self. The Mormon women I know, once they start reading, cannot stop until they finish, they are so engrossed with the power of this first fiction about a process so relevant to their own lives. For a time, Megan tries to fall back upon the inauthentic structures of popular Mormon theology and mythos, symbolized most daringly and yet effectively by Sillitoe in the sacred temple undergarments. Early in her growing sense of loss, as she folds her husband’s garments, these symbols of him and his priesthood absorb her tears without a trace, and the warmth of her own garments comforts her, as though she were sleeping in his embrace. But she discovers increasing evidence that her husband has not been hurt or victimized but has simply abandoned her. She also discovers that other Mormon women (who “are just like me, really, right down to the garment lines we can all see under our clothes” [134]) not only fail to understand her increasingly desperate needs but regard her as if she is “‘ruined’—not a widow, not a divorcee . . . no right to grief or anger or comfort. . . . She was nothing. Nowhere” (28). In a movingly believable and yet terrifying passage, Sillitoe takes us down with Megan into that nothingness, a “black hole” she feels growing in her that will “devour the remains of her world.” She has a miscarriage in which her body, seeming to want to be hollow, actually absorbs the fetus, and soon after she collapses inward:

On Tuesday morning she reached the bottom of the well, a place soft, plush, and utterly empty, like black snow. There she found a clarity she hadn’t discovered on her way down. Even with her eyes closed, blankets clutched around her face, and sunk into herself as far as she could go, Megan felt herself within an opening.

“Do you want to die?” she heard herself ask, respectfully. She waited as the question reverberated gently. The darkness caressed her face like a loving hand. It soothed her nostrils, her lungs, stroked her flesh as if she were infinitely precious. . . .

From this safe nucleus, Megan could see herself clearly—so inadequate, so sad.

Thinking this, she seemed to be both at the top of the well looking in and at the bottom peacefully considering her fate.

Then an answer began forming deep in her solar plexus, hard and unmistakable. No, I want to live; she considered this. She almost smiled when she understood that her reason was curiosity. She wanted to see how everything turned out. Drawing a deep breath, she gave the rope a tug so that Megan at the top would start to pull her out. (86–87)

This is one of the best creations of a sense of being reduced to fundamental identity I have seen anywhere, but it is particularly appropriate to serious fiction about Mormon experience, where the poles of identity and relationship are in constant tension. Megan soon finds how true this is when, as part of her gradual development of a new self, she takes an evening class in the sociology of the family to renew her teaching certificate. She feels a pang of fear and sorrow as she leaves her children to go to class and sees them taking on new responsibilities, but then she senses the pang is “more like the ache under a bird’s wings, a bird on the far end of a branch sensing the first inkling of flight” (112). In the class she learns how much more poverty there is in female-headed households and how little her college degree counts in economic terms compared to being or having a man. The teacher asks, “Why aren’t women more independent?” But the other women, all married, want instead to talk about “partnership.” When Megan, advocating more independence, tells her own story, they respond with embarrassment and condescension that enrages her.

The symbol of complete casting off of her old, delusory sense of identity based only in relationship—as daughter, sister, wife, mother—is her pained but decisive removal of her garments, which had clearly become identified with the male-dominated marriage and culture that had failed her. Sillitoe is careful to show that this is not merely an angry lashing out at the Church and the gospel, but a radical rejection, in the spirit of section 121 in the Doctrine and Covenants, of priesthood as authority and power rather than long-suffering love. This is dramatized, along with Megan’s hard-won new powers of self-direction, when she confronts (and routs) a polygamist seminary teacher who has attempted to seduce her daughter into his cult with claims of priesthood power.

Sillitoe’s ground-breaking creation of the struggle for identity by a contemporary Mormon woman sometimes leads her to extremes that make me uneasy. All the major women figures in the novel are essentially innocent, the men weak if not wicked, and the marriages fail essentially because of men’s failures. This failure of generosity or imagination on the author’s part ends up damaging her heroine. When Megan finally, through a quite improbable set of coincidences, finds her husband—and also a perfect opportunity for revenge, she does not hesitate to take it, acting with the full decisiveness and ingenuity of her new identity: “Thoughts marched through her mind, orderly and logical, as if she had

planned this random event for months. Vengeance is mine, she thought” (221). But of course only the Lord, as he reminds us constantly, can rightfully say that. And Megan’s surrender to the sin of revenge, though very human, tends to flaw the remainder of the novel.

But this flaw is small compared to the achievement, which is, like Peterson’s, an achievement of form as well as content. Sillitoe experiments with a roving third-person narrator, who moves chapter by chapter into the consciousness of a different one of the main characters and then back to others, returning most often to Megan. This gives some delightful and challenging perspectives from inside the minds of children and teenagers, men and women, and it allows for an unusual and appropriate mix of judgment and sympathy from the reader. The writing, though given to occasional repetitions of arresting phrases (almost like intentional clichés), is consistently alive with the play of deeply felt metaphors, such as the final image Megan herself articulates, of her home full of marks and prints from people, mainly her own, “like a potter’s hands on clay” (255). This develops an earlier image of herself as a “new wet pot” (168), so we see her finally—and she sees herself—as both shaper and shaped: “Even if her touch was forgotten, it became imprinted. Everyone’s did. Now distracted, now intent, they all went on shaping by sun and dusk what never seemed quite ready for the kiln” (255). This complex image unites perfectly with Sillitoe’s central theme, the achievement of wholeness through the proper tension of integrity and relationship, of shaping and being shaped.

Orson Scott Card’s *Seventh Son* tells about another kind of shaper, literally a “Maker,” claimed to be the first one born “since the one who changed water into wine.” He lives in early nineteenth-century America, has the same name as his father, is a good wrestler, and early in life has a vision of a man in white, his garment open at the breast, who appears three times and teaches him things crucial to his salvation and the salvation of all others. The boy has a special relationship to American Indians and sense of their destiny; he suffers from an infected bone in his leg but refuses strong drink when it is operated on without anesthesia, saying he can bear it if his father holds him.

Sound familiar? Well, it is *very* familiar if you are a Mormon or have read a biography of Joseph Smith. But *Seventh Son* is not a biographical novel about Joseph Smith, but rather a fantasy, the tale of a folk magician growing up using his “knacks,” gifts based on hidden powers: drawing a perfect hex on his house to ward off danger; splitting stone by feeling its hidden structure; healing the spiritually ill and seeing into the future; barely surviving constant threats to his life from dark, watery forces because protected by divine ones, including a young “torch” who can see his heartfire and a “Taleswapper” who senses that

his story is the most important one on earth. That's enough to make any twentieth-century, rational Mormon uneasy, especially after the Hofmann forgeries and murders and the rearing of a salamander's head into our comfortable world of rational theology and modern science. Mormons *should* be uneasy, not because this book undermines Joseph Smith's status as a divinely-called prophet (in fact, I suspect the five projected sequels to this novel will create for us a very believable and challenging prophet), but because it raises the most fundamental questions about what a prophet really is, in fact, what divine power itself is and how and why it intersects with our mundane world.

Non-Mormons should be uneasy as well, not because this is Mormon propaganda in disguise, but because it raises the most fundamental questions about fantasy itself and injects profoundly religious questions—and implied answers from a Mormon Christian bent—into a genre not generally taken seriously except by its devotees. The book is not written in service of religion, but it is religious in the most important way: It challenges its serious readers to *be* religious. It is the only fantasy novel I know of that is profoundly antifantasy. And perhaps only a Mormon can see that, despite the unusual folk vocabulary and the strange doings we have learned to deprecate with the word “magic,” the world the author creates is for him the only “real” world, a world where spiritual powers form a seamless whole with everything else.

So far, readers don't seem to be uneasy with this book. Its first five chapters were published in *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* in 1986, under the title “Hatrack River,” and won the World Fantasy Award for best novella. It was featured in a half-page ad in the *New York Times Book Review*, is selling extremely well, and gets rave reviews from the Eastern press and also Mormon readers. I wonder whether people are reading closely enough, because this is no mere popular fantasy novel, nor is it jack-fiction, written to serve comfortable Mormon ideology. It is subtly written, the narrator, like Peterson's, using a vernacular akin to but somewhat more flexible and knowing than that of the main character's—in effect, he is one who speaks from their community but with more insight and authority. We trust the narrator and thus his story and his people, but we also stand just a little apart from them with him.

The book is dense with well-researched, believable (and, I think, believed) folklore and folk magic and a great variety of folk magicians. With all this, Card makes a more sophisticated contribution to Mormon thought than most of the commentators who were stimulated by Hofmann to reexamine Mormonism's beginnings. Using the powers of good fiction, Card shows from *within* what a magical worldview looked like and thus how complex, believable, and actually like our own Mormon religious worldview it really is—despite our allegiance to

post-Enlightenment rationalism (which I believe is one of the creeds that Christ told Joseph Smith was an abomination in his sight).

For the present, let me merely call attention to two major theological contributions Card makes in *Seventh Son*. The “Shining Man” who appears three times to young Alvin Miller, Jr., cuts his own palm with a knife and as the blood drips gives Alvin a vision of a lie and cruelty he had just committed with his special powers in order to get *even* with his sisters. He promises during the second visitation never to use his powers for himself again, and in the third he learns that his real knack and lifelong mission is not simply cutting stone and fixing things but to “make all things whole,” beginning with the drunken, one-eyed Indian who suddenly appears in his room. He reaches out in compassion and heals the Indian of something more than drunkenness or blindness. The Indian drops out the window and we next learn of him organizing a peaceful, sober nation of Indians nearby. (The second volume in the series, *The Red Prophet* [New York: TOR, 1988], using much imagery from the Book of Mormon, develops the story of this pacifist seer.) In all this we have the beginning of a profound struggle by Card with something he already dealt with brilliantly in his prizewinning science fiction novel, *Speaker for the Dead*: How is one moved by Christ to exercise Christ-like ethics and powers? And the question is particularly challenging as well as gratifying to Mormons because, as Peterson dramatizes in *The Backslider*, we have great resources for answering that question theoretically but haven’t done so very well in popular theology and living.

Particularly challenging for serious readers is Card’s stunning evocation of what it is young Alvin, the Maker, has come into being to oppose and what power he has to oppose it with. He has a recurring nightmare: “[It] came on him, waking or sleeping, and spiked his heart to his spine till he like to died. The world filling up with an invisible trembling nothing that seeped into everything and shook it apart. Alvin could see it, rolling toward him like a huge ball, growing all the time” (124).

“Taleswapper” (a marvelous creation by Card of a Romantic poet-seer modeled on William Blake) helps Alvin to name and thus better identify this “nothing” and to understand why when its presence intrudes on his mind he “couldn’t stop fidgeting until he’d done some weaving or built a haystack or done up a doll out of corn shucks” (127). It is the Unmaker, an evil more fundamental and dangerous than the devil (“who can’t afford to break everything down . . . or he’d cease to be”). The Unmaker is radical cosmic entropy, the tendency of all being toward nothingness, something Martin Heidegger spent a brilliant career helping us to learn how to oppose by *increasing* being, especially through language. Alvin learns this, and more, because his creator has

read Lehi's great discourse on ultimate being in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 2):

Alvin knew all kinds of opposites in the world: good and evil, light and dark, free and slave, love and hate. But deeper than all those opposites was making and unmaking. So deep that hardly anybody noticed that it was the most important opposite of all. But he noticed, and so that made the Unmaker his enemy. (129)

Alvin's creator, Orson Scott Card, believes there are more weapons to fight nonbeing with even than brilliant philosophers and poets, that powers beyond man are engaged in the fight, beings who come to earth themselves to help, as well as sending humans with special gifts. As Alvin tells Taleswapper:

[The Shining Man] showed me what my knack was for, and now I see it's the same thing you're talking about. I saw a stone that I pulled out of a mountain, and it was round as a ball, and when I looked close I saw it was the whole world, with forests and animals and oceans and fish and all on it. That's what my knack is for, to try to put things in order. (130)

So, within the space of just six months, we have seen published a Mormon novel that creates the reality of salvation from sin by neither grace nor works but by a change of being that transcends both those categories and is motivated by a marvelous, utterly real vision of Christ; another novel that engages us fully in a modern Mormon woman's struggle to find authentic identity and forge new, more authentic relationships when her old identity and relationships are destroyed by a false, priesthood-bearing husband and some confining, dominating notions of priesthood perpetuated in Mormon culture; and finally a "fantasy" novel that raises the most troubling questions about the supposedly sharp borderline between magic and religion, between magicians and prophets, and the most sobering questions about the continual encroachment of nonbeing upon being, the Unmaker on all Makers.

This is not jack-fiction. It is fiction that is formally experimental and powerful, lovely in its skill, but it is more. It begins to fulfill a hope Karl Keller expressed in an essay written even earlier than his lament about jack-fiction:

A great work of *Mormon* literature will be like all great works of literature; it will be one that makes me wrestle with my beliefs and which stimulates me by the example of the author's own effort to re-create my own life on surer grounds of belief. It will be one that doesn't program life for me, but leaves me free from constricting assumptions to wrestle, rebuild, and search for meaning.⁶

Keller recognized that there were a few pieces that did this but that the list was small, and he predicted:

Perhaps when we realize that literature cannot be written or read in the service of religion but that like religion it is an exercise in otherness, an exercise in faith, an exercise in renewing our grounds of belief, then we will have an important body of Mormon literature.⁷

I wish he had lived to see his prophecy fulfilled in these novels.

NOTES

¹Karl Keller, "The Example of Flannery O'Connor," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 9 (Winter 1974): 62.

²See Edward A. Geary, "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s," *BYU Studies* 18 (Fall 1977): 89–98; also my "'The Dawning of a Brighter Day': Mormon Literature after 150 Years," *BYU Studies* 22 (Spring 1982): 131–60, especially 141–44.

³"The Red-tail Hawk" appeared in *Dialogue* 4 (Autumn 1969): 83–94; "Under the Cottonwoods" first appeared in *Dialogue* 7 (Autumn 1972): 18–26, later reissued as the title story of Thayer's volume *"Under the Cottonwoods" and Other Mormon Stories* (Provo: Frankson Books, 1977), 155–72.

⁴B. F. Cummings, *The Eternal Individual Self* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Co., 1968), 7, 69, 70.

⁵*Ibid.*, 121.

⁶Karl Keller, "On Words and the Word of God: The Delusions of a Mormon Literature," *Dialogue* 4 (Autumn 1969): 19.

⁷*Ibid.*, 19–20.

MARTIN B. HICKMAN. *David Matthew Kennedy: Banker, Statesman, Churchman*. Volume I in Monograph Series of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co. and David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, 1987. xi; 403 pp. Photographs, map, notes, index. \$15.95.

Reviewed by Thomas G. Alexander, professor of history and director of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies at Brigham Young University.

A future historian of twentieth-century Mormonism may well conclude that the agent of the most significant change in the post-World War II period was former Chicago banker and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury David M. Kennedy rather than one of the Church presidents. More than any other leader, Kennedy showed that, through quiet and patient diplomacy at the highest governmental levels, the Church could gain access to nations throughout the world, including such diverse governments as Soviet-bloc Poland and those with strong state religious traditions such as Greece and Portugal.

In retrospect, David Kennedy's origins seem quite improbable for an international banker and treasury secretary. A native of the small northeastern Utah farming town of Randolph, Kennedy grew up there and in Riverdale and Ogden. He attended Weber College for a time, married, and served as a missionary in Great Britain before he and his wife, Lenora Bingham Kennedy, moved to Washington, D.C. It was that move and the events following it that led Kennedy on the path that would place him in the highest ranks of power and prestige in the United States and the world. He worked for the Federal Reserve Board while completing a law degree at George Washington and later a graduate degree in banking at Rutgers. At the Federal Reserve he became closely associated with a number of influential figures including Marriner Eccles and the group that revolutionized the regulation of the American banking system. In 1946 he moved to Chicago to accept a position at Continental Illinois Bank, where he eventually became president and chairman of the board. He remained there until he accepted the treasury post in the first Nixon administration in 1969, subsequently serving as ambassador at large and ambassador to NATO before his retirement in 1973.

Such a career might well have seemed enough for one lifetime, but after his retirement Kennedy was called by Presidents Spencer W. Kimball and Nathan Eldon Tanner to serve as ambassador at large for the LDS church. Kennedy had remained active in the Church during his governmental and banking careers, serving as a bishop and as a counselor in a stake presidency. In his various religious and secular positions, he developed close relationships with a number of prominent Latter-day Saints as well as non-Mormon financial and political leaders throughout

the world. As LDS ambassador at large, he had direct contact with President Kimball, and this enabled him to override others within the Church's hierarchy, bureaucracy, and informal political networks who tried to control or direct his activities. His outside connections and patient diplomacy facilitated the development of favorable relations for the Church in east Asia, and he obtained Church recognition in such European countries as Poland, Greece, and Portugal.

In trying to fathom the reasons for Kennedy's success, Hickman does not fall into the conventional trap of assigning all of the credit to the man's Mormonism. Recognizing that the core of his personal qualities "emerged from his childhood and youth in Randolph and Riverdale" (315), Hickman nevertheless understands that at certain crucial points Kennedy made choices that others of his background might not have risked. His decisions to move to Washington, to remain at the Federal Reserve Board, and to obtain degrees at George Washington and Rutgers were all crucial. In addition, as Hickman portrays him, Kennedy understood when to break with traditional Mormon attitudes. When George Romney suggested, for instance, that the two of them agree never to work on Sunday, Kennedy recognized from his previous government and banking careers that that would not always be practical. Unlike some Mormons, Kennedy eschewed the temptation to clannishness and to promote his fellow Saints in preference to others. Nor did he flaunt his religious convictions in public, observing the Church's teachings against the use of alcohol, for instance, without making those around him uncomfortable. Moreover, he recognized that the ultraconservative views of some Church members such as Ernest L. Wilkinson were often a hindrance in dealing with well-connected people outside the Mormon community.

In general, Hickman does not try to hide Kennedy's problems. He deals quite openly with the secretary's disagreement with Wright Patman over banking practice, with his friendship with the Italian scam artist Michele Sindona, with the setback Kennedy experienced in introducing bankcards at Continental Illinois, and in the opposition of J. Reuben Clark to the use of stone on the surface of a new chapel in Illinois. He also gives full consideration to Kennedy's conflicts with the state department and his inability to deal effectively with the press.

In some cases, however, Hickman seems too circumspect or defensive in writing about some of Kennedy's difficulties. Hickman discusses a disagreement with a Washington stake president over the naming of a counselor, for instance, without naming the president; he presents the positive evidence of Kennedy's openness toward blacks in the text but relegates the negative evidence to a note; and he fails to identify the source of the opposition to Kennedy's proposal to bring an East European poet to BYU. In considering Kennedy's poor relations

with the press while treasury secretary, Hickman is very defensive (328–29), apparently failing to recognize that any person who accepts a public office assumes the burdens of that office. One of those burdens includes the necessity of dealing with the public through the press. That Kennedy's first goal was not to remain in office is irrelevant. Kennedy had to govern effectively, which he could not do if he could not explain himself and his policies effectively.

This issue relates to an interpretive question that Hickman could have addressed, and that might have led us to understand Kennedy better. What are we to make of the apparent inconsistency between Kennedy's masterful effectiveness in relations with world leaders and other businessmen and his apparent inability to deal effectively with the press and with some members of congress? In the first instance, Kennedy developed what he called the "Kabuki" style of diplomacy, which was a means of dealing indirectly with issues in a way that left an opponent an avenue to save face. By using this technique in diplomatic negotiations, Kennedy allowed his opponents the freedom not to commit to anything in advance of the completion of negotiations. Instead of adapting that style to his relations with the press and congress, Kennedy insisted that he would not "fudge" (329). On the surface, it is difficult to see the difference between the substance of fudging on controversial issues and the Kabuki style of diplomacy. Why, for instance, did Kennedy go to such great lengths to develop personal relationships in negotiations with opponents on the world and business scene and eschew such efforts with opponents in congress and with representatives of the press? Why was he able to find a way to allow one group to save face and not the other? Hickman does not tell us.

These are, however, minor problems. In general, the context within which the events took place is briefly but sufficiently drawn, and we understand how Kennedy fit into the times in which he lived. On the whole, this is an excellent biography worthy of the attention of any serious scholar or interested layman concerned with the history of twentieth-century American business, government, and religion.

JAN SHIPPS. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985. 211 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by M. Gerald Bradford, adjunct lecturer in social sciences and executive associate of the Western Center of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences at the University of California, Irvine.

The clue to what Jan Shipps's book is about is contained in her subtitle, *The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. What Shipps has written is not a history of Mormonism in any conventional sense but rather an imaginative book-length essay, particularly of the early history of the movement, wherein she advances the following thesis: Mormonism ought not to be dismissed as "little more than an elaborate idiosyncratic strain of the nineteenth century search for primitive Christianity" (68) nor should it be perceived as a peculiar Protestant denomination; rather, Mormonism ought to be compared to early Christianity in that it is to traditional Christianity what primitive Christianity was to the Judaism of the era, that is, a movement that started as an effort to restore an old faith and ended up becoming a new religious tradition. To substantiate this view, Shipps employs her own version of what could best be called a comparative "history of religions" approach and evidences the kind of insight that can be gained when a subject is studied, if not on its own terms, then in relatively nonreductionistic terms. In this case, that means studying Mormonism as what it obviously is, a religion.

In the first part of the book, in the chapter entitled "Prologue," the author presents a rather straightforward account of the beginnings of the Mormon tradition in the early part of the nineteenth century with a focus on the indispensable role played by the Prophet Joseph Smith. This is followed by a chapter on the Book of Mormon entitled "In the Beginning. . . ." Here Shipps introduces the technical interpretive categories of myth and sacred time. Those who early on accepted the Book of Mormon as a Hebraic record and also a second witness for Jesus Christ participated, according to Shipps, in the formation of a new myth. The coming forth of this book, its confirmation of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling, and the collective experiences of the early members of the Church combined to form a new mythos and a new sense of time: the "new dispensation of the fulness of times" (52, 59). It is unfortunate that the author did not pay more attention in this chapter to the literary and ritual motifs found in the narrative of the Book of Mormon, since these would seem to support further her main thesis.

In the chapter entitled "History as Text," Shipps argues that to understand properly the early Mormons as they understood themselves it is necessary to account for how they lived their newly formed myth. What we discover, she says, is that Mormons reiterated, reinterpreted,

and recapitulated in actual events significant events in Israel's past and in the history of early Christianity. The various and complex ways in which they did this, and in certain respects continue to do it today, account for why this "new religion" survived and became a new tradition. For Shipps, the key to understanding her lies in recognizing that the Book of Mormon, with its narrative ending in the fifth century of the common era, "effected a break in the very fabric of history" for the Mormons. Consequently, "the first Mormons were, then, suspended between an unusable past [the whole institutional history of Christianity from the fifth to the nineteenth century] and an uncertain future, [and of necessity] returned as it were to a primordial state." Then, as their future unfolded, they experientially lived the sacred events of this new age: "reestablishing the covenant, gathering the Lord's elect, separating Israel from the Gentiles, organizing the church, preaching the gospel, [and] building up the kingdom." In other words, "they moved out of the primordial present into the future by replicating the past." Thus "this activity allowed the Saints to recover their own past, . . . Which, despite its similarity to words and acts, places and events in the biblical stories of Israel's history and the history of Christianity, was . . . neither Christian nor Jew" (52–53).

On the basis of these "mythic" insights, Shipps devotes the balance of the book to an interpretation of formative stages in the history of the tradition from its beginnings in 1830 to the turn of the century. In the chapters "Reformation and Restoration" and "Getting the Story Straight," Shipps argues that what began in New York as a "restoration movement" bent on restoring primitive Christianity became in the early 1830s in Kirtland, Ohio, a radical restorationist movement (67, 87) blending aspects of ancient Israel's united kingdom with select Christian elements. The recapitulation of the Age of the Patriarchs continued in the early 1840s in the establishment of the city-state of Nauvoo in Illinois. The crisis of 1844 precipitated by the killing of Joseph Smith resulted in a divided kingdom. Those Saints who remained in Illinois and points east returned to the earlier reformation model; those who in 1846 and 1847 made the exodus to Utah worked more than ever to build the kingdom of God, institutionalized in communitarian experiments, plural marriage, and a unified political order.

Finally, in the concluding chapters of the book entitled "In and Out of Time" and, interestingly enough, "The Millennial Vision Transformed," Shipps sees this distinctive recapitulation of Hebrew and Christian myths coming to an end in the 1880s and 1890s when, under federal pressure, the Utah Saints were forced to abandon the chief characteristics of their united kingdom. At this point, with Zion forced to come to terms with Babylon, the Mormon "past was filled up. Complete" (63). The Saints, in other words, moved from sacred into

ordinary time, a move that, on this reading, was predictable and even necessary if the movement was to continue on its way toward becoming a new religious tradition. The past, for today's Mormons, is not recapitulated in actual events, but rather is ritually recreated, especially in their temple worship. And, of course, it follows, according to Shipps's interpretation, that Mormons no longer live in terms of an imminent, literal millennium but in a time marked by, at best, the hope of a more elusive metaphorical millennium.

This is an important book, if not, as one excited reviewer put it, "the most brilliant book ever written on Mormonism" (from the dust-jacket blurb). In many respects, it is a first of its kind. It is virtually free of sectarian rhetoric. Its importance lies in illustrating the kind of scholarly understanding that can be achieved when something like the phenomenological approach that Shipps uses is turned toward this kind of subject. Still, such approaches have their limitations, not the least of which are the naturalistic biases common to most such endeavors, which markedly come to the fore in dealing with religious matters. So, for example, it is not surprising to find Shipps concluding that "Mormonism's transition from cultic movement to religious tradition *follows the pattern* by which other traditions made the transition" (65) and for her to stress, as she repeatedly does, that the early Mormons, in living their myth, were not *conscious* of what they were doing, meaning, presumably, that they did not know what they were *really* doing, while Mormons today are conscious of the fact that they can only ritually repeat the past—with all the ominous implications for their future that this implies.

One of the tests of studies such as this ought to be, given the limited level of understanding that can be achieved in such efforts, whether or not the subjects under investigation recognize themselves and their traditions in the resulting portraits. I suspect that many Mormons who read this book may well acknowledge that Shipps has seen things about their past others may have missed, but they will still find the developed picture of themselves somewhat out of focus.

GARY B. PETERSON and LOWELL C. BENNION. *Sanpete Scenes: A Guide to Utah's Heart*. Eureka, Utah: Basin/Plateau Press, 1987. 144 pp. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Edward A. Geary, editor of *BYU Studies*.

The cover photographs alone are almost worth the price of *Sanpete Scenes*. They are extraordinarily beautiful and at the same time represent symbolic images that effectively set the tone for the entire volume. On the front cover is an autumn scene in Spring City, the gem of gems among Mormon villages. The foreground is composed of richly colored maple leaves above a shaggy carpet of roadside grass and weeds. Through the leaves, the weathered boards of a barnyard gate are visible, and beyond that the roofline of a pioneer adobe house, and farther still the graceful steeple of the Spring City LDS chapel silhouetted against the sky. It is a remarkable composition that captures the essence of the Mormon village: its oasis quality; the beautiful and durable (yet constantly endangered) historic houses and public buildings; and the rich accumulation of clutter that tells of lives lived and things valued. The back cover offers a montage of representative scenes: a sensitive shot of the Manti Temple, perhaps the most beautiful and surely the most strikingly situated building in Utah; the winding road up Maple Canyon; and the sun rising over the ridges of the Wasatch Plateau on a herd of sheep with shepherd. These photographs make a fitting introduction to a book that exemplifies, as the authors put it in the preface, "the art of reading landscapes and interpreting them graphically" (4).

Both Peterson and Bennion are competent geographers, and their book, though aimed at a wide audience, reflects solid scholarship in its treatment of the elements of place. The goal, however, is breadth rather than depth. The book is made up of seven chapters divided into forty-four topical subchapters, most of which are only one or two pages long. Chapter 1 presents an overview of Sanpete County, with emphasis on its physical setting ("A Basin between Plateaus"), its location at the geographical center of Utah yet remote from population centers and off the main transportation routes, and its essential character as "A Rural-Small Town Domain." Chapter 2 focuses on the peoples of Sanpete and the historical development of the communities, with an especially fine account of the Scandinavian heritage. Chapter 3 treats transportation, both in the narrow sense of railroads and highways and in the broader sense of the movement of population. It includes a section, titled "Sanpete's Curse," about the Balkanization that has prevented the development of any one dominant commercial center in the county. (Earlier the authors quote a local resident who compares the individual

towns to “a bunch of city-states” [29].) It would be equally appropriate, however, to call this characteristic “Sanpete’s Blessing,” for it is largely the strong sense of community identity that makes Sanpete towns so interesting.

Chapter 4 deals with the economy, from the early period when Sanpete was Utah’s breadbasket, through the emergence of wool-growing as the dominant wealth-producer at the turn of the century, to the more recent growth of the turkey growing and processing industry, and the general struggle to make a living in “a region depressed ever since the Depression” (53). Chapter 5, which I found most interesting of all, is titled “The Mormon Landscape” and includes perceptive and well-illustrated analyses of landscape elements, town plans, and architecture. A section of this chapter is devoted to the Manti Temple, and another section to “Cemetery Symbolism.”

Chapter 6, “Change in Sanpete,” describes not only technological and social changes over the years but also changes in the “Neverlasting Hills,” from the pristine condition in which the first settlers found them, through the ruinous erosion and flooding caused by overgrazing at the turn of the century, to more recent efforts at stabilization and conservation. Chapter 7 is perhaps the most immediately useful part of the book. It is given over to tour guides, with detailed tours of Mount Pleasant, Spring City, Ephraim, and Manti, and briefer guides to other towns—even to such little-known hamlets as Jerusalem, Pettyville, and Dover.

Such a book as this is the product of numerous compromises. The cover photographs illustrate the rich potential for color treatment of this scenic region, but color plates throughout the volume would have made it prohibitively expensive and turned it into a coffee-table book instead of a useable guide to be carried into the field. The authors’ determination to include as many aspects of the Sanpete scene as possible meant that no topic could be explored in much depth. The desire to present a comprehensive visual record of Sanpete’s past and present resulted in an extraordinary wealth of photographs, more than six hundred in a volume of fewer than 150 pages. Many represent Gary Peterson’s efforts to document the Sanpete scene as it exists today. Many more are historical shots, some by the great nineteenth-century Utah photographer George Edward Anderson, others gleaned from various family collections. Taken all together, they reflect every period of life in the towns and fields and mountains of Sanpete. In addition, they are supplied with informative captions and are effectively placed as close as possible to the relevant text. In order to include so many photographs, however, it was necessary to make some of them very small. I sometimes found myself wishing there were fewer but larger illustrations—though I would be hard put to identify any that I would willingly give up.

There are also compromises determined by sponsors and intended readers. Peterson and Bennion clearly hoped to spread as wide a net as possible, to catch Sanpete residents as well as outsiders, casual tourists as well as serious students of Mormon landscape and townscape. Publication of the book was funded by Snow College, as part of its centennial celebration, and by local governments. In view of these considerations, it is not surprising that a mild strain of “boosterism” runs through the volume. At the same time, however, one of the book’s objectives is obviously the raising of local residents’ consciousness of the value of their own material heritage.

The authors lament the continuing loss of historic structures and the devastation too often wrought in the name of “beautification,” and wonder why it is that “the landscapes of Mormon settlement, as unique and attractive in their way as those of the Amish in the East, have never really been perceived as ‘marketable’ by Utahns” (65). Noting that the town of Gunnison was the “winner” in the recent competition for a new state prison, they remark, “After spending a night in the beautifully restored Manti House Inn, we began to wonder if Sanpete could somehow combine economics and aesthetics instead of having to choose one *or* the other” (64). They go on to raise the possibility that Sanpete could, by taking full advantage of its historic assets, reap the benefits of a much strengthened tourist economy:

What if Sanpete were to preserve, in fact as well as on paper, the historic districts of Spring City, Mt. Pleasant, and some other towns? What if Ephraim, which razed its striking stone tabernacle in the early 1950s, were to restore its classic Co-op and convert one level into, say, a museum and gallery with a professional curator and the other into a quality crafts center? And then make the adjoining old Relief Society granary into an eatery that served barbequed beef or lamb, sourdough biscuits and mutton, and smoked turkey or Scandinavian pastries—dishes which Sanpeters normally save for special private affairs? Who in the world would support such radical restoration of the old Sanpete landscape? Any and all Utahns who have gained an appreciation for their lost past now that so little is left of it even in the most rural regions. (64–65)

One can only hope someone will heed Peterson’s and Bennion’s message before it is too late.

FREDERICK S. WILLIAMS and FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS. *From Acorn to Oak Tree: A Personal History of the Establishment and First Quarter Development of the South American Missions*. Fullerton, Calif.: Et Cetera, 1987. 390 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Mark L. Grover, Latin American Studies Librarian at Brigham Young University.

The tradition of honoring prominent religious figures with ecclesiastical or popular sainthood is an integral element of Catholic Latin America. Though the Mormon church does not canonize mortals, there are Mormon men and women in Latin America honored with a kind of respect and appreciation generally reserved for saints. Most commonly they are early members and missionaries who made exceptional sacrifices for the establishment and expansion of Mormonism. One such couple is Frederick S. and Corrairie Williams. It is appropriate that Frederick, now in his mid eighties, has published, with the assistance of his son, a personal history of his involvement in the first twenty-five years of the Mormon church in South America.

Williams was one of the first missionaries sent to the newly opened South American Mission headquartered in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and served from 1925–29 under Reinhold Stoof, the young and dynamic mission president. As a missionary, Williams saw the Church grow slowly but methodically during those early years as it switched from having a majority of German-speaking members to having a majority of Spanish- and Italian-speaking members.

After coming home to Arizona, getting married, and working, he returned at the age of thirty as the second president of the Argentine Mission (1938–42). During this time the mission was adversely affected by the realities of pre-World War II Argentina that for the Church included visa difficulties, conflicts with German-speaking members, and occasional police interference in Church activities.

Returning to the United States, Williams worked for the U.S. State Department in the Division of Health and Sanitations in Venezuela and Uruguay. At the age of thirty-nine, he again served the Church as the first president of the Uruguay Mission (1947–51). It was in this delightful South American country that Williams influenced the development of a somewhat different South American church, one that saw rapid growth and baptisms of members from a higher social class. The growth and development under his and others' leadership was so significant that in the late 1950s, Uruguay became the administrative center of the Church in South America. After his release Williams worked in Peru and was instrumental in opening the Pacific nations of South America to Mormon missionaries.

This volume fits in the long and excellent Latin American tradition of the private publication of personal memoirs. As such the authors made the determination of what to include and not an editor whose primary interest is often the marketability of the volume. In it are delightful descriptions of missionary life and member activity, copies of family letters, and quotes from personal blessings. The authors do provide a limited historical and cultural background of Latin America that sets the Church's evolution in the context of the environment in which it developed. The book, however, is primarily a personal memoir of Williams's experiences in South America; consequently, important events in the history of the Church are discussed only if the Williamses were involved. The appendix includes valuable lists of converts and missionaries along with biographical descriptions of early missionaries, members, and presidents. Unfortunately the book includes several typographical and editorial errors that detract from the flow of the story.

The authors have provided the Church with an important document of twentieth-century history. Not only is it a discussion of an interesting but neglected area of Church history, but the Williams's have also provided future historians with invaluable source materials for future research. Furthermore, the book will assist in understanding current issues faced by the Mormon church in Latin America such as political problems, leadership development, and cultural conflicts.

KAREN LYNN DAVIDSON. *Our Latter-Day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988. ix; 486 pp. \$17.95.

Reviewed by Michael Hicks, assistant professor of music at Brigham Young University.

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Saints should be filled with the Spirit, "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19). We sometimes forget this: hymnody is not only a prayer to God, it is a way of speaking to ourselves. And because it is not always obvious what we are saying to ourselves in our hymnody, hymnbook companions become necessary. Such works not only expound the hymns but also tell their histories, on the premise that a hymn's origins may say something about the people who sing it.

The publication of a new Latter-day Saint hymnbook in 1985 made Davidson's book necessary. Originally a General Music Committee project undertaken in connection with the new hymnbook, this book attempts to appeal both to scholars and novices, indeed anyone who might ever sing an LDS hymn. By and large, it substantially improves

upon its predecessors, George Pyper's *Stories of LDS Hymns* (1939) and Spencer Cornwall's *Stories of Our Mormon Hymns* (1963). It is more attractively designed, better researched, and more comprehensive than those books. Aside from the traditional hymn-by-hymn commentaries, the work offers a well-illustrated biographical appendix, a concise history of LDS hymnbooks, and a miscellany of facts that, while humbly labelled "hymnbook trivia," illuminates the character of the 1985 hymnbook.

The book's airy beige cover suggests its tone. The hymn commentaries are optimistic, generous in their appraisals, and occasionally facile in their exegeses. Yet the book strives to be candid even when candor may seem to tarnish some cherished misconception. For example, Davidson notes the errors in attribution that for years unjustly credited certain hymns to LDS authors: "As the Dew from Heaven Distilling," "God Is Love," and "Come Thou Glorious Day of Promise" are three notable examples. In clarifying these hymns' origins, Davidson reaffirms that the Church has consecrated much of its distinctive tradition from the surrounding Christian culture. While that may seem a small blow to our sense of exclusivity, it unites us to a larger fellowship of believers.

Despite the book's evident strengths, weaknesses of two sorts remain: inconsistency and inaccuracy. Perhaps because of its committee origins, the book lacks the singleness of vision that illuminates the finest reference works. The hymn commentaries fluctuate in style and method; the sort of information that will be supplied for a hymn follows no coherent plan. For example, only a few entries concerning borrowed hymns tell when (much less why) a given hymn formally entered Mormon hymnody. Is that information one should expect or not? And the entries are disproportionate. The new hymn "A Key Was Turned in Latter Days" gets a longer treatment than does the venerable "Praise to the Man." Shouldn't readers assume that a more prominent hymn will get a more comprehensive treatment? Such small inconsistencies are aggravated by Davidson's modest but cloying habit of quoting large chunks of Pyper and Cornwall (not to mention McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*). Had Davidson, a capable writer, relied exclusively on her own narrative and expository gifts, the book might have gained a sense of unity which it now lacks.

Davidson also has relied uncritically on others' scholarship, particularly that of the generally tenacious Bruce David Maxwell. In doing so, she neglects some important sources. For example, she apparently did not consult *The Dictionary of American Hymnology: First Line Index* (1984), arguably the most valuable single hymnological sourcebook. Had she consulted it she would have found the following information:

1. "Love at Home" appeared in a hymnal in 1865, a year before the first publication date she gives it (297). (The song actually had appeared in sheet form by 1859.)
2. Both "Scatter Sunshine" and "Count Your Blessings" were published two years before the dates she assigns them (240, 249).
3. The text to "God Is in His Holy Temple" appeared in no fewer than ten different hymn collections before the 1864 date she gives it (158).

Other scholarly sources would have shown her that "All Is Well" was published with music as early as 1838, not 1841 (59), and that the original title of the poem that begins "A poor wayfaring man of grief" was "The Stranger and His Friend," not "The Stranger" (57).

Ironically, given the nature of the book and the accessibility of LDS sources, the Mormon hymns suffer most from errors of citation. Davidson credits the first publication (words and music together) of "For the Strength of the Hills" to the *Latter-day Saints' Psalmody* (1889)—but it appeared on the Sunday School Music Card no. 20 (c. 1878), in the *Juvenile Instructor* (1880), and in the *Jubilee Songster* (1885). She credits "Zion Stands with Hills Surrounded" to the *Deseret Sunday School Union Music Book* (1884)—but it appeared in *A Collection of Hymns and Anthems Set to Music by Home Composers* (1883). She traces "God Is Love" to the 1889 *Psalmody*—but it too appeared in the 1883 *A Collection of Hymns and Anthems*, as well as in the *Improvement Association Song Book* (1887). "Today While the Sun Shines," credited to the Primary Association's 1880 *Tune Book*, actually appeared in the *Juvenile Instructor* (1877) and on the Sunday School Music Card no. 24 (c. 1878). "Come Along, Come Along," "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," and "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain," all credited to the 1884 Sunday School *Music Book*, all appeared earlier in the *Juvenile Instructor* (1878, 1879, and 1883, respectively). "Great Is the Lord" and "O Say, What Is Truth?" were both included in the 1887 *Improvement Association Song Book* before their appearance in the 1889 *Psalmody*. In these and other instances, Davidson has left a good object lesson in the definition of research: always check for yourself.

Davidson also misleads the reader in several more recent matters. She refers to "Adam-Ondi-Ahman" as being "retained from the 1950 hymnbook" (24–25). But the song was not in the 1950 hymnbook. Indeed, that omission prompted the First Presidency in 1959 to ask that the song be restored to the hymnbook in its next printing (which is why the song appears on the last page of editions since then). Concerning "For the Strength of the Hills" she writes that "the 1950 hymnal omitted a verse from the 1948 hymnal" (64). Actually the verse in question was in all printings of the 1950 hymnal until President McKay had it deleted in 1965. Davidson writes that the text of "I Am a Child of God" came to Naomi Randall by inspiration in the middle of the night and that

“the general board approved the words the next morning” (303). While this is essentially true of the song’s three verses, the chorus evolved through several versions, the first of which ran:

Teach me all that I must know
This is my earnest plea!
I am a child of God
Please show the way to me.

Only after a good deal of tinkering did the chorus arrive at its much stronger “final” form:

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,
Help me find the way,
Teach me all that I must know
To live with Him someday.¹

A clearer rendering of this song’s origins would only serve to bolster Davidson’s observation in the preface that “inspiration and revision are not mutually exclusive processes” (5).

One hopes that Davidson will take a cue from that maxim. Her book, a labor of love and, I believe, inspiration, still lacks a bit in that fragile human quality known as craft. For all its admirable traits, the book is not finished. As it stands, it deserves and undoubtedly will get a wide audience. But like many books, it deserves—and probably will not get—a critical reading, except by a few scholars. And like it or not, the dearth of critical reading may say as much about us as do the hymns we sing.

NOTE

¹See Naomi Randall to Mildred Pettit, 29 January and 5 February 1957, holographs in Library-Archives, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

RONALD D. DENNIS. *The Call of Zion: The Story of the First Welsh Mormon Emigration*. Volume 2 of Religious Studies Center Special Monographs. Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1987. xii; 243 pp. \$10.95.

Reviewed by Richard L. Jensen, research historian, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, Brigham Young University.

Ronald Dennis, whose academic training is in Portuguese, undertook some years ago the challenging task of mastering the Welsh language, spoken more than a century earlier by his immigrant ancestors. Since that time, Dennis has done much to promote contact with Welsh language and culture. One of his most valuable endeavors has been his involvement with a treasure trove of mid-nineteenth century Welsh Latter-day Saint writings, most of them published but all now virtually inaccessible because of the language barrier. Among these materials is a substantial amount of information about the first collective Welsh Latter-day Saint emigration to America, in 1849.

The Call of Zion consists of three kinds of material. First is Dennis's historical narrative of the emigration experience of this particular group. Initial plans called for the entire Welsh contingent of 326 to travel as one party, but they were divided in two when the ship they obtained was unable to accommodate all of them. Dennis describes the voyage of the 249-member Welsh company on the *Buena Vista* in frank detail, including the challenges posed by seasickness, interpersonal conflicts, and the apostasy of a small faction of the group. He outlines more briefly the experience of the seventy-seven Welsh emigrants who sailed soon after on the *Hartley*, along with English, Scottish, and Irish coreligionists, and who were instrumental in the conversion of four of the ship's crew. On the way up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers to Council Bluffs in riverboats, both groups were engulfed in the cholera epidemic that raged up and down the river that year. The survivors were reunited at Council Bluffs for two months, then divided by the differences in their ability to undertake the overland journey to Utah. Eighty-four proceeded onward that year with the George A. Smith company; 113 became the nucleus of a Welsh-language branch of the Church in the Council Bluffs area; others remained in the vicinity of St. Louis until 1852, when William Morgan led a mostly Welsh company from Council Bluffs to Salt Lake City. Dennis's eighty-page narrative is informative and well-organized.

The remainder of the book is devoted to appendices, the largest of which is a section of thirty separate documents, all originally published in Welsh in the mid-nineteenth century and now translated by Dennis, all relevant to the first Welsh Latter-day Saint emigration experience. The

documents, consisting primarily of correspondence and verse, are helpful but not as revealing as one might hope. The writers sought to encourage their compatriots to emigrate; thus, as Dennis notes, they emphasized the positive aspects of their experience. Still, although the documents lack candor to a degree, many of them acknowledge problems at least in passing. Dennis's narrative emphasizes more than do the documents the magnitude of tragedy involved in the encounter with cholera, which he estimates claimed the lives of more than sixty. Nine more had died by the time the last organized group had crossed the plains, and at least nineteen disassociated themselves from Mormonism after arriving in Missouri.

The other appendices are a variety of helpful items: lists of the emigrants with conveniently tabulated data; photographs of forty-eight of the emigrants; and biographical sketches of seventy-one emigrants and two others whose stories are closely related.

With Dennis's reconstruction of the emigration providing the necessary balance and significant detail, the documents are a good source for a wide variety of additional insights. They show the centrality of Captain Dan Jones in the Welsh Latter-day Saint community and the variety of strong feelings for and against him in Wales. They provide information about the earliest non-English speaking branches of the Latter-day Saint church in Council Bluffs-Kanesville and in the Salt Lake Valley. They are an excellent source for the practical information and advice given to prospective emigrants. Moreover, they document contemporary thought and perceptions, such as the notion that one had to work harder in Wales than in America, where it was said that few people were accustomed to digging, and the expectation in 1852 that the Salt Lake Temple would be completed within three years.

One of the most curious stories in the book is that of Elizabeth Lewis, whose husband, David, remained in Wales to complete the sale of part of his inheritance to his brother. Much of the proceeds from that sale assisted other Welsh Latter-day Saints in their emigration. Mrs. Lewis arranged for one of the emigrants to convince her husband to support that endeavor. Two weeks after her arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, with the permission of Brigham Young, she was sealed as a plural wife to Captain Dan Jones. Five months after their marriage, she asked John Davis, a Latter-day Saint editor in Wales, to tell her father, sister, and first husband to come to Salt Lake City soon if they had not already left. We are not told whether any of them ever reached Utah, where their reaction to Mrs. Lewis's marital situation would have been of particular interest. In the meantime, just before the Welsh company's arrival in Salt Lake Valley, Dan Jones was said to have proposed that they establish a miniature kingdom west of the Jordan River, with Elizabeth Lewis as queen. The scheme was dropped after Elder George A. Smith quieted

separatist tendencies by disclaiming anti-Welsh prejudice on the part of Church leaders.

This reviewer detected only a few apparent factual errors in Dennis's history. There is a discrepancy in the maximum recommended weight per wagon pulled by three yoke of oxen, which is given as three thousand pounds on page 61 and as two thousand pounds on page 181. Debris left by easterners enroute to the California gold fields would have been deposited along the trail not in 1848, but in the earlier part of 1849, shortly before the Welsh crossing of the plains. Laramie (61) should be Fort Laramie. Little Mountain is not as close to South Pass as the book seems to suggest (64); it took the emigrants about three weeks' travel beyond the pass to reach it.

There are a few organizational problems, perhaps the result of compacting the manuscript. Material introduced as if illustrating Welsh opposition to the Mormon emphasis on emigration (6) is out of chronological sequence and does not refer to emigration. Reference on page 62 to "such a rosy depiction" has no antecedent that answers to the description. *Udgorn Seion* is introduced as a source (7) with no explanation until page 70 of what kind of publication it was. Some source citations are incomplete or do not match those listed among "Works Cited."

The translated documents could have been made more comprehensible for most readers by adding explanatory footnotes. For example, Dan Jones's mission to find the so-called Welsh Indians, or Madocians—apparently a major concern of his for at least two years—is mentioned at least four times without explanation; reference could at least have been made to Ronald Dennis's brief article, "Captain Dan Jones and the Welch [Welsh] Indians" (*Dialogue* 18 [Winter 1985]: 112–17).

In Dennis's narrative, the general reader would probably appreciate the addition of brief explanations about the purposes of the so-called Joint Stock Company, Captain Jones's brother and why he was well known in Wales, the reasons why Latter-day Saints were encouraged to either break engagements or marry before leaving for America, the presence of a harp among the emigrants, and the extent of the cholera epidemics of 1849 worldwide. It would be helpful to know that the Welsh Latter-day Saints who stayed in Kanesville until 1852 finally left there as part of a concerted Church effort to bring Kanesville Saints to Utah. Explanation is needed for references to practicing "the gifts" aboard ship—apparently the gift of tongues, prophecy, and perhaps other gifts of the spirit. It would also have been helpful to briefly consider the Welsh Mormon emigration within the context of the overall Welsh emigration and to determine whether the promotion of emigration was otherwise a controversial topic in the late 1840s. In view of the bitter opposition to the Mormon emigration, were the departing emigrants really cheered by

the inhabitants of Swansea, as is claimed, or were they jeered? The inclusion of descriptive information from other voyages of the period seems somewhat superfluous in view of the amount of detail provided by emigrants aboard the two ships under consideration.

The translation is generally readable but occasionally seems a bit awkward, as in the case of repeated reference to dragging ships into or out of harbors; towing might have been a better term.

Professor Dennis's work is a welcome addition to the literature that demonstrates the significance of language and ethnicity among immigrants. In publishing this book and Dennis's forthcoming bibliography of Welsh-language Latter-day Saint publications, Brigham Young University's Religious Studies Center is helping to illuminate a little-known but remarkably well-documented facet of Latter-day Saint history.

Death Is the Frame of Love

Death is the frame of love,
our skeletons the groundwork of our play;
and however we move,
the bones move in us that outlast the clay.

Yet bone is a firm ground
to build the highest act of love upon:
if love by death is bound,
it is by limbs in virtue of their bone.

In skull, blade, groin, hip, knee,
we grasp the form that will outlast the eye:
without these dead things we
should not be we to know each other by.

Bone as the frame of love
outlasts the picture. What joy can be there?
Dust the loved self must prove;
but bone framed joy from love's mere flesh and air.

—Arthur Henry King
Early 1942

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