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IN THE LATTER-DAY SAINT
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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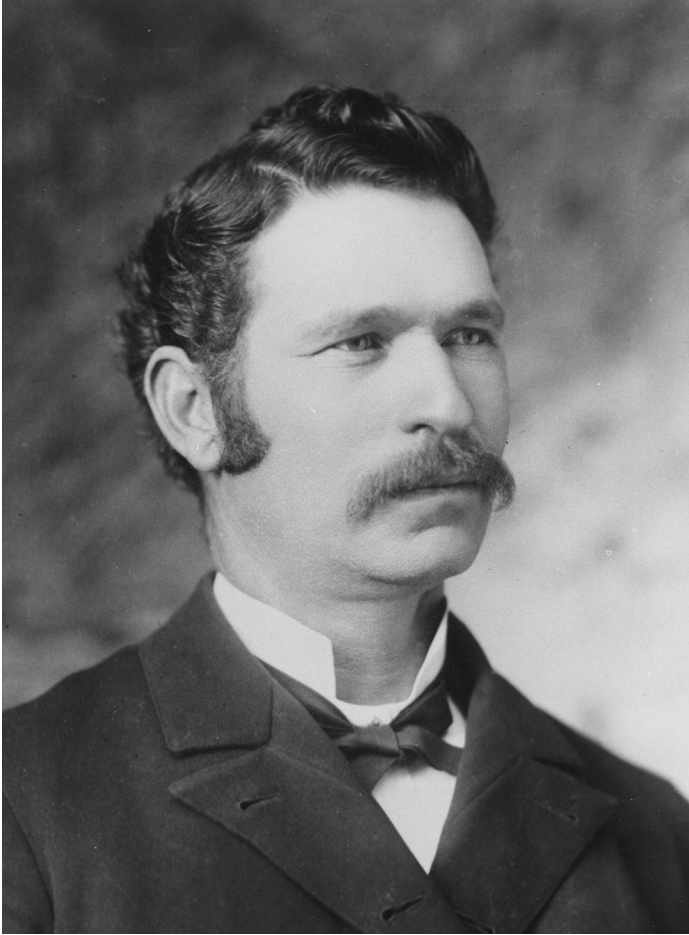
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Benjamin Cluff Jr., 1893. Under the leadership of Benjamin Cluff, Brigham Young Academy became a Church-sponsored university dedicated to both spiritual edification and scholarly accomplishments. While Cluff has received less attention from historians than his predecessor and successors, his contributions played a significant role in shaping BYU. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

Shaping BYU

The Presidential Administration and Legacy of Benjamin Cluff Jr.

Brian Q. Cannon

Virtually every student and alumnus of Brigham Young University has heard of Karl G. Maeser and his legendary circle of honor. Maeser is commonly identified as BYU's first president. Actually he and his predecessor, Warren Dusenberry, served as the first and second principals of Brigham Young Academy, an elementary and secondary school with an associated Normal Department for training teachers. A stately building overlooking Utah Valley is named for Maeser, and his statue graces a walkway leading to the building. Far fewer students and alumni have heard of Maeser's successor, Benjamin Cluff, the person who directed the institution as it developed collegiate programs and was designated as a university.¹ If they have heard of Cluff at all, it is generally in connection with his abortive quest to visit Book of Mormon lands and find Nephite ruins, an episode that began with fanfare and high hopes but ended in embarrassment and adverse publicity for Cluff and the school. That episode has attracted disproportionate attention compared to Cluff's more important contributions to BYU.²

Although his legacy is not well known, and although his successors George Brimhall and Franklin S. Harris have received more attention recently from historians, Benjamin Cluff was the father of Brigham Young University in many significant respects.³ Under his watch, the institution reoriented its educational approach and broadened its scope. As Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, authors of the university's centennial history, acknowledge, "From the moment he attained a position of influence in the administration of the school he had an impact of lasting importance. . . . He was constant in his determination to lay a solid foundation of educational philosophies, policies, and practices upon which a

great university could be established.”⁴ Under Cluff’s leadership, Brigham Young Academy established a collegiate department, offered a full array of college courses, and awarded bachelor’s degrees. Cluff spearheaded the academy’s reincorporation as a Church-sponsored institution, ending its status as a proprietary academy of Brigham Young with ties to the Utah Stake. Cluff also successfully lobbied the Church Board of Education to rename the Provo academy Brigham Young University.⁵

The university’s centennial history acknowledges Cluff’s “lasting importance” for BYU, but scholars have disagreed regarding the nature of Cluff’s leadership. Gary Bergera and Ron Priddis portray him as primarily an agent of secularization, insensitive to the workings of the Spirit. Cluff was “less preoccupied than Maeser with the effects of learning on religious

Brian Q. Cannon

My office in the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies overlooks the David O. McKay School of Education. I have a perfect view of a larger-than-life banner suspended each winter semester from the ceiling in the stairwell of the McKay Building. The banner displays a photograph of Benjamin Cluff surrounded by his colleagues; it commemorates Cluff’s contributions to teacher education at BYU. Aside from that banner, Cluff is largely forgotten on campus. My curiosity about him was sparked several years ago



when I met Colleen Cluff Caputo. She shared with me typescript copies of some of Cluff’s journals along with other documents. With help from Jermaine Carroll and Dave Dixon, talented research assistants, I burrowed into Cluff’s correspondence and other manuscript materials in the university archives. The more that I read, the more I was convinced that Cluff profoundly influenced BYU’s orientation and identity and that his contributions had been underestimated or misunderstood. Moreover, I saw that his life encapsulated key tensions within the social and intellectual history of Latter-day Saints of his era. I treat those themes in this article.

commitment,” and he “represented the antithesis of what had been practiced at the academy under his predecessor,” they write.⁶ The authors of the university’s centennial history also contrast Maeser and Cluff: the authors acknowledge that “both were dedicated to the same religion” but characterized Maeser as the “spiritual architect” of BYU while emphasizing Cluff’s enthusiasm for educational training from the “gentile world” as opposed to Maeser’s preference for “a closed society.”⁷ Conversely, Thomas Alexander characterizes Cluff as an apologist who was not sufficiently levelheaded to please business-oriented Church leaders like Heber J. Grant. Cluff was “too idealistic and not secular enough,” having “substituted dreams of the discovery of Zarahemla and new golden plates for sound management practices.”⁸ A close reading of Cluff’s speeches, writings, and reports of his activities reveals that he viewed religion and scholarship as mutually supportive endeavors—a perspective that scholars have largely missed in their characterization of the man. Cluff was a religiously committed administrator and teacher with solid academic credentials who believed religious insights and divine guidance could produce superior scholarship, which in turn would enhance Mormonism’s reputation among influential elites. Thus, gospel insights and spiritual knowledge could advance scholarship while scholarly pursuits could advance the Church’s interests. This vision was one of Cluff’s landmark contributions to BYU. He was also a skilled, persuasive negotiator who secured significant support and concessions from the First Presidency for the Provo school.

Rise to Prominence

Cluff’s association with Brigham Young Academy began in 1877, just two years after Brigham Young established the school. Cluff traveled from his home in Coalville, Utah, to Provo and enrolled in the institution’s teacher training program, known as the Normal Department. After studying for a year, Cluff taught briefly in the academy’s elementary school but was interrupted when he left to serve a mission to Hawaii. After his mission, Cluff resumed his work at the academy in 1882, teaching language and reading in the Primary Department and math, composition, and bookkeeping to older students.⁹ In 1886, the academy board granted Cluff’s request for an unusual two-year leave of absence so he could study at the University of Michigan. Maeser endorsed Cluff’s request to President John Taylor, expressing confidence that Cluff “will maintain his integrity before God, in case you should permit him to go to some eastern College.”¹⁰ After requesting a priesthood blessing, Cluff was set apart to study in Michigan



Cluff lecturing during a teaching theory class, 1898. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

by Apostle John W. Taylor. Cluff departed in December, leaving his first wife, Mary, and daughter Fern with Mary's parents in Provo until he could make arrangements for them to join him. He also left behind Harriet "Hattie" Cullimore Cluff, his plural wife he had recently married in the Logan Temple. Like most plural marriages being performed in this era, Cluff's marriage to Harriet was performed privately and he and his plural wife had to live separately following their wedding to avoid detection and arrest by federal marshals. Cluff's leave stretched to three and a half years, at the end of which he received a bachelor of science degree in June 1890. When he returned to Provo that summer, he was the only instructor at the academy with a university degree. Cluff began teaching in Provo in the fall. Knowing that Maeser would soon be released from his position as principal so that he could devote more time to his responsibilities as superintendent of Church schools, Cluff anticipated he would soon be made principal; he was the best-educated employee at the academy, and prominent Provo residents—including his father-in-law David John—had told him the president of the institution's board of trustees, Abraham O. Smoot, intended to promote him.¹¹

Cluff's ideas and approaches, fresh from one of the nation's top public universities, enthused older high school-level students at the academy, particularly "the Normals" who were training to be teachers. Drawing upon his University of Michigan training, Cluff developed and taught new courses in educational psychology.¹² One of Cluff's students that first year was Richard R. Lyman, who was elected president of the senior class. Lyman later recalled:

I, as a student, began work with him as a teacher the very fall that he began teaching in the B.Y.A. The innovations he introduced were numerous and important. He made the seniors class-conscious. Ours, the class of '91, was the first class in the school to organize. He taught us how to conduct meetings. He gave us simple instructions concerning "rules of order"—. We published the "B.Y.A. Student" the first student paper published in the State of Utah, and we prepared and published also the first "Commencement Annual." To the members of the Class of '91, President Cluff was more than a teacher. He was an intimate friend and close confidential companion.¹³

Not a prolific writer or dedicated researcher, Cluff offered students an appealing blend of educational psychology and common sense. When he spoke to members of the academy's Polysophical Society, he emphasized mental discipline, or "attention," as the "secret of success," telling the students that "if the mind was allowed to wander and deviate from the path of the study in hand, the impressions would be faint and would soon vanish."¹⁴

Cluff soon alienated some of his fellow teachers with his talk of how the Provo institution could be made more progressive. He was a profoundly ambitious educator, eager to remake the world, and believed his colleagues "were sadly in ruts [and] the school was quite demoralized."¹⁵ On September 20, just a handful of weeks into the fall classes, Maeser complained to George Reynolds, secretary of the Church Board of Education, about the "estrangement springing up between Brother Benjamin Cluff and some teachers in the Brigham Young Academy." The two groups seemed to be on a "collision" course.¹⁶ Cluff sensed the estrangement extended to Maeser himself. Confronted with what he believed to be Maeser's "rather antagonistic spirit," Cluff determined to "be more assertive and positive" in pushing for change by going over Maeser's head and appealing to the board of trustees.¹⁷ Despite Cluff's apprehensions, Maeser was quite supportive of Cluff although he disliked the young man's "impetuosity." Cluff's friends on the board, including President Abraham O. Smoot, endorsed his reform agenda, and on September 25 they appointed him

assistant principal. Maeser urged the faculty to give Cluff “the same kind of courteous assistance” they had shown Maeser.¹⁸

In his new administrative position, Cluff promoted loyalty to the institution and school spirit. He instituted Founder’s Day, an annual celebration that included athletic contests, concerts, dances, and parades. Cluff divided the student body into classes based upon the year they would graduate and encouraged each class to choose their own motto, chants, and songs. Under his leadership the school selected white and blue as its colors.¹⁹

Cluff particularly used the board’s support and his new administrative authority to revitalize the academy’s teacher education program. A Provo journalist who visited in the fall of 1890 learned that Cluff envisioned a mutually supportive relationship between the school’s Primary and Normal departments. Cluff intended to make the Primary Department a “model primary department in every detail . . . from which the normal students [as observers and student teachers] can gain instruction.” In accord with the best educational science of the day, the primary classrooms were attractively decorated with flags, pictures, and pine boughs, “the object being to make the place appear as bright and pleasant as possible” for students. Based upon the progressive principle that students learned best by doing, Cluff encouraged teachers to involve their students in hands-on activities, such as creating sand relief maps to learn geography.²⁰

Seven months into the school year, Maeser voiced his premonition that Cluff’s “pushing” and innovation might eclipse the academy’s spiritual “anchorage,” whereas Cluff believed progressive education complemented the school’s mission. Tensions between the headstrong Maeser and his equally determined assistant mounted when, in August 1891, Cluff offered to resign as assistant principal.²¹ The offer was likely a ruse designed to force the board of trustees to choose between him and Maeser; Cluff later explained, “Opposition on the part of the faculty and especially of Bro. Maeser became stronger, so I determined to bring matters to a focus. . . . On my request for a clearer understanding of my powers and duties, the presidency of the Church Wilford Woodruff, Geo. Q. Cannon and Jos. F. Smith met with the Board.”²² Rather than accepting Cluff’s resignation, the board announced that Cluff would soon replace the sixty-three-year-old Maeser.²³ Woodruff recorded that the meeting lasted three hours and “settled the Difficulty with Brother Maeser and Cluff,” the compromise arrangement being that Maeser would continue as principal until the new academy building was completed and “then Br Maeser would withdraw & Cluff would be principal.”²⁴

Financial Change and Academic Innovations

With his ascendancy assured, Cluff proceeded more aggressively in the autumn of 1891. He persuaded the First Presidency to subsidize the tuition of those studying to become teachers and to establish a permanent Normal Training School. On November 14, 1891, the school paper, *The Normal*, announced that thereafter students in the Normal School would be required to pay only a \$17.50 admission fee during their first year and a fee of \$5.00 in every subsequent year. Although the paper credited the First Presidency and the academy's board of trustees with the subsidy, Cluff had negotiated the subvention. In hindsight, the concession was more significant than anyone realized at the time because it established a precedent for closer financial ties between the Church and the academy. That fall, Cluff also helped organize a student loan association, underwritten by school personnel and friends of the academy.²⁵

Cluff was inaugurated as principal on January 4, 1892, at the dedication of the new academy building. Although his duties would remain essentially the same over the next twelve years, his title would change two more times; in 1895, when the board of trustees designated each department head as a principal, they denominated Cluff as president of the faculty. On October 15, 1903, when the Church Board of Education renamed the academy Brigham Young University, Cluff became the university president.²⁶

As principal and president, Cluff worked assiduously to boost appropriations for the school, and he dramatically altered its future when he proposed that it become "a Church school," meaning by this that the general Church would assume all of its debts and fund its programs.²⁷ Although Cluff did not engineer this change single-handedly, he did advocate it persuasively. Early in 1896, Apostle Brigham Young Jr., who had replaced Abraham Smoot as president of the academy's board of trustees, informed Cluff that "we may not look for aid from the Church financially for some time" because of the Church's heavy indebtedness, exacerbated by the Panic of 1893 and the ensuing depression.²⁸ The new policy would make the school almost entirely dependent upon donations from the Utah Stake and tuition payments. Cluff recalled, "One evening while returning from a walk down town and while studying deeply over the future of the Academy, the thought came to me like an inspiration. 'Give the school to the Church.'"²⁹ Inspiration or not, this was hardly a novel idea; Maeser had previously proposed it to Church authorities, but they had rejected the idea. This time Cluff and Reed Smoot, an influential Provo businessman, president of the Utah Stake, and member of the academy's board of

trustees, met with the First Presidency and informed them that the academy was \$80,000 in arrears and that creditors had sued to recover the debts. Cluff and Smoot warned that if the Church did not assume financial responsibility, Brigham Young's vision and legacy in establishing the academy would "fail," the academy buildings would "be wholly lost," and the "beneficiaries" of the institution—Latter-day Saint young people—would lose significant opportunities for a faith-based education.³⁰ Although Cluff and Smoot gave well-reasoned arguments, the First Presidency's assent was remarkable given the Church's heavy indebtedness and low tithing revenues. They agreed that "the BYA will pass entirely into the hands of the Church," noted Maeser.³¹ The Church would assume all the school's debts and "provide the necessary means to support and maintain" the institution.³² Cluff took pride in this successful petition, although he acknowledged that others had assisted him. He told a colleague in 1901, "If we had sat idly down, if we had not urged our rights at [Church] headquarters, the Academy would have been a little one-horse stake institution today."³³

During his tenure as principal and president, Cluff presided over numerous innovations on campus, including the creation of student clubs and associations; the establishment of campus newsletters and newspapers; the adoption of a school song; the introduction of college yells and yell masters; and the creation of school track, baseball, football, and basketball teams. While Cluff presided over and in some cases actively supported these endeavors, he did not devise them. Nevertheless, he was severely criticized for permitting them. Elder Brigham Young Jr. strenuously objected to student athletic contests and college yells. Chants like "Ru, rah, ru, rah, ra, 'Cademy, 'Cademy, B.Y.A. Zip boom bah, Ya, ya, ya, 'Cademy, 'Cademy, rah, rah, rah"³⁴ were "an abomination to my spirit," Young complained. They transformed students into "a lot of hoodlums." The Apostle was certain his father would have deplored such boisterous conduct, and he viewed it as a sign that the academy was "departing from the spirit of the founder."³⁵ Other influential Latter-day Saints strongly criticized football games, which at times degenerated into melees involving not only the players but also fans. George Goddard of the Sunday School Union protested that "football games [were] damaging to the respectability" of the institution and ran counter to "the religious tone that should always characterize every Latter-day Saint school."³⁶

Cluff was more directly responsible for other developments, many of them related to academics. Prior to 1892, students rotated between classes every half hour. The thirty-minute periods allowed little time for pupils to consider the information being taught and created what Cluff called a

“state of mental congestion.”³⁷ The principal lengthened the class sessions to sixty minutes, affording more in-depth instruction.³⁸

The new principal took particular interest in teacher training because of his expertise in pedagogy and educational psychology, and he worked to improve and promote the Normal School. In addition to their coursework in educational psychology, educational theory, and history of education, trainees rotated through classes in the eight primary grades, spending an hour a day in the classroom as student teachers. One professor and two peers observed and critiqued the student teacher. A visitor in 1893 remarked, “I attended these exercises a number of days in succession and must confess that they seem admirably adapted to fit the teacher for his profession.” Reflecting his pride in the program, Cluff informed the visitor that graduates of the Normal program had proved “uniformly successful.”³⁹

Cluff worked to enhance the reputation and accreditation of the Normal School. During the 1899 legislative session, he spent the better part of two weeks lobbying legislators to approve a bill placing diplomas and teaching certificates from private schools on par with those from the University of Utah’s Normal School. Graduates of the state university’s Normal School were not required to pass a state test before certifying as teachers, whereas the government required BYA graduates to take the test. Administrators from the University of Utah strongly opposed the bill, fearing that it would detract from their own program.⁴⁰

In conjunction with the Deseret Sunday School Union, Cluff inaugurated a Normal Sunday School in 1892 as an extension of the Normal School, enabling the academy to broaden its service to the Church. This innovation reflected Cluff’s conviction that scholarly activity at Church schools could benefit Church members and programs generally. Representatives from ward and stake Sunday Schools were invited to participate and receive instruction and experience in teaching religious topics. Eighty-seven students enrolled in the first five-week Normal Sunday School course. In addition to studying their own specialized curriculum, ward and stake representatives were encouraged to attend other classes on the campus. The Sunday School Union advised attendees to take careful notes so that they could share their training with others at home. The Normal Sunday School meeting on Sunday mornings commenced with a forty-five-minute lecture on teaching methods, followed by opening exercises and a fifty-minute class. An age-appropriate curriculum focused upon scripture stories for young children, scripture reading assignments for intermediate students, and discussions of advanced theological works by Orson Pratt and others for high school students. In the first weeks of the

course, professional teachers modeled gospel teaching in the fifty-minute classes. Later in the course, advanced Normal students took a hand at teaching, experimenting with what they had observed and learned.⁴¹

Another academic innovation Cluff introduced as an auxiliary to the Normal School was an annual summer session for teachers from across the state. Cluff intended the session to “bring to Utah the best educators of the East and place them side by side with the best of our home talent.”⁴² The school could begin to acquire a national profile and win friends for the Church through this program, Cluff believed. Visitors would leave Provo having had prejudices dispelled and having been favorably impressed with Mormon teachers and students, while local teachers would have been introduced to the latest educational research regarding questions such as those posed by Dr. G. Stanley Hall in 1897: “What kind of surroundings, mental, moral and physical, can we give to bring the child to the most complete maturity?”⁴³ Here again was evidence of Cluff’s conviction that academic excellence and secular knowledge could promote the interests and mission of the Church.

The academy hosted a small-scale experimental summer session with fifty-five participants in 1891, followed by its first full-fledged session with prominent guests in 1892, Cluff’s first year as principal. In recruiting guest lecturers, Cluff capitalized upon BYA’s location at the foot of the Wasatch Range, with exceptional opportunities for fishing, hiking, and camping in the mountains. That first year, he persuaded Francis W. Parker, Sarah Griswold, and Zonia Barber from the Cook County Normal School in Chicago to come to Provo. Nearly four hundred students signed up for the seminar with Parker, an internationally renowned expert in pedagogy.⁴⁴

The following year, psychologist James Baldwin of the University of Texas participated. In his first presentation to about three hundred teachers, Baldwin delighted his audience with his humor. He claimed to have heard that in its frontier days Provo had been “a little rough,” much like his native Texas. In fact, Provo reportedly had been so wild that there had been a popular saying, “Provo, Texas, or hell.” So he said he was surprised to find Provo “a little nearer heaven than [any place] he had ever held a summer school before”—owing to the altitude.⁴⁵

Touring eastern schools in 1893 and 1894, Cluff contacted many of the nation’s most eminent educators. Several of them subsequently came to Utah Valley as summer school lecturers, including Burk Hinsdale from the University of Michigan, G. Stanley Hall from Clark University, and William M. Davis from Harvard. Cluff was particularly pleased when

Hinsdale, who had once been “greatly prejudiced” against the Mormons, agreed to visit.⁴⁶

From BYA to BYU

The new principal led out in promoting the identity of BYA as a collegiate institution empowered to confer undergraduate degrees—a significant and lasting legacy. Soon after he assumed control of the school in 1892, Cluff began teaching his own college-level courses. In the spring of 1893, the academy granted its first bachelor’s degrees in pedagogy. Cluff and his faculty acted on their own authority because some members of the Church Board of Education believed that BYA and other Church schools should confine themselves entirely to elementary and secondary education, sending any students who desired collegiate training to either a new Church university in Salt Lake City or to the University of Utah. Cluff rejected that limited mission and intended to establish BYA as “a normal college unsurpassed by any institution.”⁴⁷ He noted in his diary in December 1894:

We are having some difficulty in regard to our conferring degrees. Bro. Talmage, now president of the U of Utah, seems determined to stop the growth of the Church Schools. The three schools, however, have now united (B.Y. Academy, B.Y. College and L.D.S. College), and will present a joint petition to the General Board for certain privileges due to all colleges. viz: the power to confer degrees.⁴⁸

Although Cluff was not immediately successful, in 1896 the board at last permitted Cluff and his associates to establish a Collegiate Department. After completing four years of collegiate work, students could receive a bachelor’s degree with emphases in pedagogy, science, language and literature, or philosophy.⁴⁹

In 1903, Cluff recommended to the Church Board of Education that the Collegiate Department be formally designated as a college “to express more fully the actual work being done.”⁵⁰ He had privately broached this idea as early as 1897.⁵¹ When Cluff proposed the name Joseph Smith University, Anthon H. Lund of the First Presidency viewed the proposal as opportunistic and manipulative. “I told them in my mind there was not a better name than B. Y. Academy. Bro Cluff is a schemer!” he wrote. A shrewd promoter Cluff truly was, and a persistent one at that. Although the board refused to drop Brigham Young’s name from the institution, two weeks later Cluff was back with a second proposal and the endorsement of board members Reed Smoot and Wilson Dusenberry. Since the Church already had a Brigham Young College in Logan, how about a Brigham Young University in Provo? “The name Academy places the school in a bad

light,” Cluff told the board. Lund believed the proposal was “premature,” but despite his objection, the board approved the proposal with the stipulation that the new title would not commit the Church to greater appropriations for the school. In changing the institution’s name, the board set the Provo school on a markedly different course from that of a college; colleges were relatively small institutions where professors specialized in teaching and catered to younger students who needed an intellectually controlled, morally safe environment in which character could be nurtured. Universities were larger, freer institutions specializing in graduate and professional training, research, and untrammelled discourse. It was a lofty vision that would alternately challenge and inspire administrators, faculty, and trustees over the next century and beyond. “I hope their head will grow big enough for the hat,” Lund remarked.⁵²

As an academy, college, or university, the school’s academic credibility hinged upon the quality of its faculty. When Cluff returned from Michigan to Provo in 1890, he was one of only fourteen teachers at the academy—about the same number as at the University of Deseret.⁵³ Five years later, the number of faculty members had doubled. Most had earned their degrees in Provo, but nine held degrees from other institutions, and at least four others were studying elsewhere with Cluff’s encouragement. Cluff recruited Mormon scholars assiduously, capitalizing upon their religious loyalties and promising them blessings if they chose to work at the academy. Writing in 1896 to Frank Warren Smith, a chemist and physicist, Cluff expressed the academy’s “need of [a] better teaching force,” and especially a science teacher. “I am certain the Lord will bless you in your labors here, if you should see fit to come and work with us,” he continued, closing his letter with the phrase, “trusting that you will be guided by the spirit of the Lord in the choice of your labors.”⁵⁴

When Cluff began his tenure as principal, few Mormons had studied at universities, and to make matters worse, the Church’s other colleges depended upon the same small pool of potential LDS faculty. Academy faculty members were paid with a combination of cash and tithing house scrip. This arrangement placed the Provo school at a comparative disadvantage in recruiting professors. For instance, Cluff tried to lure Harvard graduate John A. Widtsoe to Provo in 1894, but he was only able to offer him \$600 in cash and \$600 in scrip. Widtsoe was interested in teaching at the academy, but he needed cash to repay his educational debts. When Brigham Young College in Logan offered him a salary of \$1,200 cash, Widtsoe moved to Logan.⁵⁵

In order to boost the academic qualifications of his faculty in the short run, Cluff broke with tradition and hired non-Mormons. In 1894,

he hired his first gentile faculty member, Abby Calista Hale, a graduate of Clark College in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the niece of U.S. Senate Chaplain Edward Everett Hale.⁵⁶ Although she never embraced Mormonism, she loved Utah, regarded Mormonism favorably, and later quipped that she was “not so *very* ‘non’” as some feared.⁵⁷ Three years after he hired Hale, Cluff hired three more non-Mormons.⁵⁸ When Wilford Woodruff questioned the propriety of having nonbelievers teach impressionable young Latter-day Saints at the academy, Cluff assured the prophet that such hires were temporary but necessary in order to safeguard academic standards and preserve the school’s legitimacy. He said he looked forward to the day when more Mormons would be thoroughly qualified to teach, and to that end he encouraged Latter-day Saints to pursue advanced degrees in the East. Cluff had set the example by taking leave to earn a master’s degree in pedagogy and mathematics at Michigan during the 1893 to 1894 academic year.⁵⁹

As Cluff hired a larger number of teachers, the academy expanded its course offerings. For instance, he enlisted John Hafen, who had studied art in Paris, to develop an art department. By 1903, the final year of Cluff’s administration, fifty-four faculty members worked at the academy, including seventeen professors with college degrees. They offered courses in history, economics, educational philosophy, English, theology, pedagogy, foreign languages, natural science, math, physics, law, domestic art, business, music, and drawing.⁶⁰

Cluff also left his mark on the academy by securing funds for modern, well-equipped instructional facilities. When Cluff returned to Provo in 1890, the academy operated in a converted warehouse. The foundation for a new academy building had been laid years earlier, but the project had stalled. Cluff spearheaded a successful campaign to complete the project. He later secured appropriations for additional buildings to house the Missionary Preparatory departments and the Collegiate Department. As principal, Cluff solicited funds for laboratories from prosperous families. In 1898, the Holt Laboratory of Physics and the Magleby Laboratory of Chemistry opened. Soon thereafter the Beckstead Laboratory of Mechanics and the Hinckley Laboratory of Natural Science were dedicated.⁶¹ Cluff also raised money and solicited book donations for the academy’s library. From 1893 to 1894, he purchased books in New York, Boston, and Chicago for the library. By May 1894, the library boasted 1,310 books and 1,806 pamphlets. Cluff also solicited funds from alumni. In 1892, he encouraged graduates to form an alumni association. Subsequently the association helped raise money for the Maeser memorial building.⁶²

Building Zion

In developing a collegiate program, establishing summer schools, hiring faculty, and raising funds for buildings and laboratories, Cluff believed, as had his predecessor Maeser, that he was building not only a school but also God's kingdom. He expressed his spirituality and testimony through his work. He likened his efforts to those of previous generations of Mormons who had built Zion by establishing farms and communities. As he told a congregation in the Provo Tabernacle in 1892, "It seems to me the work of God is assuming another form. Heretofore the work has been of a physical nature. The soil has been subdued and now the work assumes a new form. Schools are being established in our midst . . . to give the young people an intellectual training, a thorough knowledge of the gospel."⁶³

Cluff felt certain that Mormonism was divinely destined to grow in converts, prestige, and power. The academy would play a role in that destiny by providing Latter-day Saints with a thorough knowledge of the gospel so that they could "prove from the Scripture the tenets of our faith."⁶⁴ Based upon personal experiences, Cluff was convinced that knowledge and logic enhanced the effectiveness of missionaries; when educated believers preached Mormonism, many outsiders were favorably impressed. Cluff often described his meeting with an elite group of easterners in which he had described for them "proofs" of the Book of Mormon, including the testimonies of the three and eight witnesses. After listening to Cluff's reasoned defense of Mormonism, they "confessed that this was a most wonderful religion."⁶⁵ He fondly recounted another occasion when he explained Mormonism to a man who held a PhD from one of the nation's leading graduate schools and to a Unitarian minister. One of the men, a Dr. Boulton, pronounced Mormonism "the most rational system of religion" he had ever heard.⁶⁶ Cluff used these stories to show that the Church could transcend its reputation as a provincial, bizarre cult by having more educated, articulate proponents of Mormonism. Whereas Maeser distrusted academic innovation and sought to shelter students from the world's influence, Cluff envisioned education at a Church school as a means of breaking down prejudices and winning friends for the Church.

To help prepare Mormons to discuss their religion convincingly, Cluff established training programs for prospective missionaries. In 1899, he proposed and the Church Board of Education approved a one-year course for missionaries at the academy focusing upon Mormon theology, religious history, and general academic skills.⁶⁷

Cluff expected that the academy would advance the cause of Zion not only by training Sunday School teachers and missionaries but also

by teaching Latter-day Saints to apply gospel insights to their academic studies. Brigham Young had called for integration of gospel insights at the academy, but Cluff extended that charge in a new direction for the academy: Mormons had “the best system of education in the world” because of their religion and the direction of the Holy Ghost, Cluff believed.⁶⁸ He expected divine intervention in the work of Mormon academics. With these inspired insights, Mormons could “become renowned for their scientific attainments.”⁶⁹ “From among the sons and daughters of the Latter-day Saints there will be found learned philosophers, great scholars, great statesmen, great men in every vocation in life,” he predicted.⁷⁰ This in turn would “bring the attention of the learned to the gospel” and promote the Church’s missionary efforts.⁷¹

In order to receive divine inspiration in their academic work, Cluff believed, the faculty and students needed to live their religion fully. In this he followed an emphasis pioneered by Maeser in response to directives from Brigham Young. As Cluff advised Charles E. Maw, a chemistry instructor, “We desire our teachers in the Academy to enter in upon their work in a spirit of a missionary and to stand in that attitude before the students and their fellow teachers. . . . We do not choose our teachers simply from a monetary or professional point of view, but also from the point of view of the spirit of the Gospel. If I did not think that you were a good Latter-day Saint, humble and prayerful, I would not have you in the Academy at any price.”⁷² In 1899, Cluff decided to encourage the faculty and students to reform. Many had been haphazard in their commitment to gospel principles such as the Word of Wisdom. Cluff invited everyone to participate in the reformation, although some refused. In November, he convened an evening faculty meeting for “those who were trying to live the lives of Latter Day Saints to the best of their ability.” There he encouraged the faculty to “live” their religion. Some complained that the commandments were burdens calculated to deprive them of life’s pleasures; Cluff countered that genuine happiness flowed from gospel living.⁷³ The faculty met again a few days later in a second meeting that lasted two and a half hours. Every member present spoke and “all were strengthened,” Cluff reported. He held a similar meeting with “all those students who desired to live their religion and were going to make a special effort to do so.” Between fifty and seventy-five attended.⁷⁴ For students who would not live the gospel voluntarily, Cluff adopted a more coercive approach: he laid down the law in a devotional later that month. His talk about rules of conduct for students “caused considerable talk among the students, many of whom considered them severe and encroaching upon the rights of individuals.”⁷⁵

Ministering to Students

Although his overarching objectives for building the kingdom and the academy entailed dollars, buildings, curriculum, and creative initiatives, Cluff devoted a large amount of his time on the job to working with individual students in ministerial fashion. Previous studies of Cluff have largely overlooked this dimension of his work and the ways it reflected his faith. He routinely received letters from prospective students and their parents inquiring about room, board, and tuition, and his answers reflected his embrace of gospel principles including industry, faith, and charity. Fred Seaman, a twenty-one-year-old farm boy in Kane County, wrote to Cluff in 1895 pleading with the principal to “work in my behalf.” Seaman wanted to go to school, but his parents could not pay his room and board. “Is there any teachers that would take me and board and school me for what work I could do?” he asked.⁷⁶ Cluff solicitously responded to such requests. In 1897, when Audrey Keeler wrote to him telling how much she wanted to study at the academy, Cluff replied that he “no doubt could get you a position” doing housework for someone in Provo in return for her room and board. “I feel quite certain as you are so anxious to go to school, that in some way arrangements could be made for your attendance, and if you have faith that you can go to school, you may come to Provo at your earliest convenience, and we will arrange in some way for you,” Cluff advised.⁷⁷ Such responses dignified prospective students by according them respect.

Much like Audrey Keeler, William Boyle arrived in Provo fresh from the farm with insufficient money to pay for his expenses but “determined to attend the Academy.” Unsure of what to do, he knocked on Cluff’s door. Boyle recalled that he told Cluff, “I am going to go to school some way, even though I have but little money.” Cluff replied, “Well, young man, if you want to go to school that bad, I will tell you what I will do. If you will milk my cows and feed the hogs and cut wood for the stoves, you can board with us.” After he had made the offer, Cluff realized that he had no acceptable place at home for the boy to sleep, so he converted a small room near his office in the academy into a bedroom and study for Boyle. “Often as he would pass me in the hall or would meet me elsewhere, he would stop to enquire how I was getting along and ask if he could be of any assistance. He never let go of me,” Boyle fondly remembered.⁷⁸

Parents expected Cluff to act as a surrogate father for their children while they were away at school, and Cluff rose to the challenge. S. L. Brunson, whose sons were studying at the academy, wrote to the principal in 1895 asking him to “see that they study their religion [even] if they don’t

lurn [*sic*] anything else.”⁷⁹ A week later Brunson again wrote, worried that his oldest boy was spending his evenings out on the town. The concerned father asked Cluff to “explain” to his son “what dultry [*sic*; adultery] is” and then to “see that he don’t go out nites.”⁸⁰ Similarly, Issac Riddle wrote to Cluff worried about his son’s appetite for tobacco. Cluff replied, “We will do our best to have him avoid all bad habits, and overcome his weakness of smoking.”⁸¹

In his role as a surrogate parent, Cluff sought to “teach the students the great principles of self-government, realizing that the highest point to be reached in discipline by young men or young ladies is the ability to govern and control themselves.” He trusted them—until they violated that trust. “The greatest liberty possible is . . . allowed the students until by some overt act they demonstrate that they are not able to use that liberty with wisdom and discretion,” Cluff explained.⁸² The principal came down hard on those who violated his trust. Margaret Maw, a primary school teacher who worked under Cluff, remembered him as “a wonderful disciplinarian.”⁸³ When one young man fell behind in his studies, violated curfew, and was accused of moral “misdeeds,” Cluff instructed, “Students must understand that membership in the academy entails responsibility by its importance, and that among their responsibilities is good studentship and good moral conduct. When it is demonstrated that a young man has neither of these, his attendance should cease.”⁸⁴ After a young woman was seen loitering about a saloon and then walking through town with a drunken man, she was expelled. She wrote to Cluff pleading for mercy. The student insisted she had not imbibed a single sip of alcohol, nor had she gone into the saloon. She had simply gone out walking with a man and on their way home he had stopped at a bar. She had waited outside for him and had then walked with him some more, but was that any reason to be expelled? Cluff expected her to avoid not only evil but also its appearance.⁸⁵

Students frequently dropped by Cluff’s office or home or wrote notes to him seeking counsel. One was too embarrassed to visit the principal, so she wrote to him requesting advice. She had been dating a young man with low standards, she explained, and she wanted to break off the relationship but didn’t know how to go about doing so. She wanted Cluff’s counsel.⁸⁶

Cluff’s involvement in students’ lives also extended to securing teaching jobs for graduates of the academy’s Normal School. Many graduates like Weston Vernon wrote to the president asking him to “please take steps to secure for me the first *good* [underlined twice] position you may hear about.”⁸⁷ Cluff prided himself on his graduates, many of whom ranked among Utah’s best elementary and secondary school teachers. After interviewing Cluff, a journalist echoed his booster rhetoric and pride:

Everywhere in the Territory, and, indeed, in many towns of neighboring states and territories, one hears of the Brigham Young academy, the leading Mormon institution of secondary education.

Is there a young Elder who speaks particularly well; a man pushed far in advance of his years into responsible positions in political, social or business life; a youth here and there pointed to by fathers and mothers as a pattern? The odds are he will be named to you as having been a student of this famous institution.⁸⁸

Absences and Conflicts

Although Cluff left his mark on the academy and its students in many laudable ways, he was not a flawless leader. He spent years of his tenure as principal and president away from the campus. Cluff felt justified in absenting himself for months or even years from Provo. He spent the 1893 to 1894 academic year in the East completing his MA degree and visiting schools in New England, New York, Canada, and Illinois. In 1896, complaints reached the First Presidency and Karl G. Maeser that Cluff “had been absent a great deal of the time” from the campus.⁸⁹ From 1897 to 1898, Cluff accepted an invitation from United States Senator Frank Cannon to travel to Hawaii and investigate the views of native Hawaiians regarding the United States’ proposed annexation of the islands. Cluff seemed ideally suited for the assignment because of his acquaintance with Hawaiians and their language as a result of his missionary service. Then in April 1900, he capitalized upon his intellectual curiosity and wanderlust by embarking on a twenty-two-month expedition to Mexico and Central and South America in search of Book of Mormon ruins. “My whole desire in this expedition is to enrich the museum of the Academy with the splendid collection of specimens possible, and to gain some evidences of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” he wrote in his diary.⁹⁰ He hoped to use the tools of the academy—exploration, research, and discovery—and the tools of the gospel—faith and divine inspiration—to impress and convince skeptics and critics of Mormonism.⁹¹

The time Cluff spent in Michigan earning a graduate degree was a wise investment for the school because he simultaneously acquired valuable knowledge and enhanced the academy’s prestige by obtaining an advanced degree. He encouraged other faculty to also leave Provo to obtain university degrees that would enhance the reputation and quality of the faculty.

But his other absences were unwise even though they involved noble causes; they deprived the academy of his leadership and jeopardized his relationship with many faculty and students. The fallout from one of those absences—Cluff's expedition to Latin America—cast a long shadow over Cluff's positive contributions to the academy even though the explorers returned with valuable specimens of flora and fauna for the school.

Cluff returned from south of the border in 1902 to find the community and the campus seething with rumors regarding his leadership and conduct on the expedition. Almost from its outset, the expedition had suffered from poor morale. Convinced that each member must live worthy of divine guidance in order for the expedition to succeed, Cluff responded to moral infractions as a martinet, and many in the party chafed under his iron hand. After visiting the expedition in Arizona, Heber J. Grant reported that the students were inexperienced, their behavior had been



The South American exploration party, 1900. *Front row:* Walter Wolfe, Benjamin Cluff Jr., John B. Fairbanks; *back row:* Joseph Adams, Asa Kienke, Heber Magleby, Chester Van Buren, and Paul Henning. Cluff hoped his expedition would find evidence supporting the Book of Mormon, but his actions stirred controversy instead. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

“unbecoming,” and Cluff had exhibited “poor judgment.”⁹² President Lorenzo Snow instructed Joseph F. Smith and Seymour B. Young to travel south and advise Cluff “to either disband his expedition or reorganize it” on a smaller scale.⁹³

When rumors reached Salt Lake that Cluff intended to take Florence Reynolds, a teacher at the Mormon academy in Colonia Juarez, with him on the expedition, the First Presidency’s concerns escalated. George Q. Cannon said that if he had known about Cluff’s romantic attachments and “marital relations,” he would have “opposed his expedition.”⁹⁴ Lorenzo Snow sent a telegram to Mexico stating essentially that “it was the unanomous [*sic*] opinion of the Prest. & Apostles that the expedition disband but if reasons exist which we do not know of that a part of the expedition proceed Cluff must assume the entire responsibility.”⁹⁵ Cluff “felt sure the Expedition had been greatly misrepresented by someone” and refused to give up.⁹⁶ Snow had stopped short of issuing an ultimatum, for which Cluff was grateful. “I thank God that I am permitted to go on,” he wrote to Brimhall, but many in Provo considered Cluff impetuous and unwise for continuing under the circumstances. As Brimhall informed Cluff six months after the expedition had departed, many at the academy had come to regard it as “a private enterprise” and were “not content with looking upon it as a school enterprise even.”⁹⁷

Cluff recorded after he returned that “there was in some prominent quarters a decided coldness. This was manifest among some members of the Board especially. Jesse Knight, a new member appointed during my absence; L . . . Hollbrook, counselor to [stake] Prest John and a new member, . . . W. H. Dusenbergh [Dusenberry] and Reed Smoot. Among some members of the school also there was a decided coldness.”⁹⁸ As Francis Kirkham recorded, some students who had grown fond of acting president George Brimhall had “qualm[s]” about seeing their “own beloved Brimhall supplanted by brother Cluff.”⁹⁹

Soon after the return, Cluff’s colleague and fellow traveler Walter Wolfe—a well-educated professor of history and Latin but also a mercurial convert with an appetite for liquor—formally accused him of acting dictatorially, extorting money, and embezzling funds. Wolfe insinuated also that Cluff “had taken a young wife” while in Mexico. Eventually Wolfe and Gordon Beckstead, who had served as Cluff’s counselor during the early part of the expedition, hammered out formal complaints against him. President Joseph F. Smith convened an investigation to review the charges against Cluff and, as it proceeded, Wolfe retracted some of his complaints. After the investigators learned that Wolfe had taken \$100 from the expedition fund and had “gambled and drunk up the whole amount, having been

in a drunken state and sick from the effect for five days,” the majority of the investigators’ sentiments shifted in Cluff’s favor.¹⁰⁰ At the end of thirteen hours of investigation, the panel exonerated Cluff and voted to renew his appointment as president for another year, but by a bare majority of four to three. The only board member from Provo who voted to retain Cluff was his father-in-law David John. Both the prophet and Apostle John Henry Smith voted in Cluff’s favor.¹⁰¹

This was hardly the ringing vote of confidence in Provo Cluff had hoped for. To be sure, Cluff was pleased that “before the [school] year was out prominent students came to me to express their confidence, and to state that they had learned that Wolfe had lied to them.”¹⁰² But Cluff never regained the trust of the entire community and board. In the spring of 1903, when Cluff’s contract again came up for renewal, some members of the board plotted to replace Cluff with either Brimhall or another of their friends. Jesse Knight offered to pay the president’s salary from his fortune if the board would appoint Brimhall. When David John attended a board meeting and learned of their proposal, he was disgusted. “The prejudice of some of the Directors against Cluff was strong, but is [*sic*] was based in my judgement in un-righteousness,” he recorded. “They wanted some of their kindred, their pets, to be elected, and whether they were qualified or not, it seems would make no difference.”¹⁰³

Post-Manifesto Marriage and Resignation from BYU

Although David John identified self-interest as the dissatisfied board members’ primary motive, another important reason Cluff could never regain the trust of some in the community was that his actions on the expedition had not only offended some members of the party but were also potentially embarrassing to the Church and academy. In June 1900, Cluff had left the expedition in Thatcher, Arizona, and had proceeded on to Mexico seeking permission from the Mexican government for the party to cross the border. Cluff returned periodically to Arizona but was absent for most of June, July, and August. During that time, he kept company with Florence Reynolds, a woman who became his fiancée long after the Manifesto. Between the 1890 Manifesto and 1904, many prominent Mormons like Cluff and Reynolds became engaged and entered polygamous marriages. As Carmon Hardy has observed, “For many Mormons [after the Manifesto] . . . there was confusion as to what was and was not permissible” with regard to plural marriages. Some believed the Manifesto applied only to marriages performed in the United States; they crossed

the border into Canada or Mexico or sailed into international waters to marry beyond the jurisdiction of United States laws. Over two hundred polygamous marriages were contracted between 1890 and 1904; over sixty of them were performed by Apostles. Church leaders performed new plural marriages and publicly defended the principle in sermons, believing that plural marriage was divinely ordained and that the promised blessings for obedience remained in force.¹⁰⁴ As Joseph F. Smith told a Senate investigating committee in 1904, the 1890 Manifesto “did not change our belief at all” regarding the sanctity and divine approval of plural marriage. Smith continued, “I believe that the principle [of plural marriage] is as correct a principle to-day as it was then [prior to the Manifesto].”¹⁰⁵

Although the exact date of Cluff’s marriage to Florence Reynolds is uncertain and several scenarios are possible, it seems most likely that Elder Seymour B. Young performed the marriage while he and Joseph F. Smith were visiting Cluff in Mexico in August 1900. Young recorded, “I was called to administer to and bless Sr Florence Reynolds Cluff in connection with her husband I gave her such a blessing as she will never forget. Neither will Bro Cluff forget.”¹⁰⁶ Cluff’s daughter Fern recalled that her father later told her, “I want to tell you that Brother Joseph F. Smith told me that I could marry Aunt Florence.”¹⁰⁷ Nine and a half months after Young’s blessing, Benjamin and Florence’s daughter Alice was born on May 31, 1901.¹⁰⁸

Cluff’s prominence, the fact that General Authorities had been involved in performing or at least blessing the marriage, the fact that Florence was the daughter of General Authority George Reynolds, and the fact that Wolfe was a mercurial man who might tell federal authorities what he knew about Cluff’s marriage placed the Church and the academy in a precarious position following his return from Mexico. This was ironic, given Cluff’s hope that the discoveries of his expedition would dispel prejudice against the Church. The problems were compounded when academy board member and Apostle Reed Smoot, who knew Cluff well, was elected to the Senate in January 1903. The Senate decided to investigate both Smoot and rumors of continued plural marriage within his Church before seating him.

As a member of the academy’s board of trustees at the time of Cluff’s wedding, Smoot could be more closely linked to Cluff’s marriage than to any other post-Manifesto union. Charles Mostyn Owen, an investigator hired by Protestant opponents of Smoot and the Mormons, was assembling a list of witnesses to testify before a Senate committee regarding post-Manifesto marriages. He had already tried to track down Wolfe, who was serving a mission in England but would return within a few months.¹⁰⁹

Aware that Cluff would likely be subpoenaed by the Senate committee and that Wolfe would likely testify against Cluff, members of the board of trustees encouraged the president to resign and move to southern Mexico, asking him essentially to place his career on the line for the good of the Church but stopping short of ordering him to resign. He was offered a position as superintendent of a rubber plantation being acquired by the Utah-Mexican Rubber Company, a recently organized firm presided over by his longtime friend and advocate, Apostle John Henry Smith, a member of the university's board of trustees. The company offered Cluff a starting salary of \$250 per month, \$50 more than his current salary. In Tabasco, Cluff would be beyond the reach of the US government. He would also be able to continue his search for confirming evidence of the Book of Mormon. Eager to have him out of the way, board member and university benefactor Jesse Knight, a longtime friend and supporter of George Brimhall who hoped to see Brimhall promoted as president, pushed strongly for Cluff to resign. Board member Susa Young Gates wrote Cluff, advising him to accept the offer while reprimanding him for his ambition and poor judgment in continuing the expedition against the advice of Church leaders and marrying a third wife. She also played to his interest in building the kingdom. "Sister Gates has an idea that I am very ambitious, and very selfish, or at least that I have been but am better now. . . . Still she pays me some very nice compliments. She thinks I ought to go South, for there is a great work down there for me, and that I will be instrumental in building up colonies of our people," Cluff recorded.¹¹⁰

Cluff weighed his options, praying and fasting about them, as his spiritual nature inclined him to do. After John Henry Smith offered him the position, Cluff asked Smith to seek the First Presidency's advice in his behalf. Cognizant that Cluff's marriage grew out of his commitment to Mormonism, they chose not to force him out. They replied that they trusted Cluff's judgment and that "whatever he might think proper to do . . . would be agreeable to the Presidency."¹¹¹ On October 23, he listed the advantages and disadvantages of leaving BYU.

This is a good offer financially. It will also enable me to finish the work I began in the expedition, for I will be permitted to travel some, and I will have opportunities of studying the language and the people. It may also open up missionary labors among the natives there, and in this matter I am deeply interested. Still, on the other hand I have a good position here with \$200.00 per month, good home, and have now the school back again in my control.¹¹²

Roughly three weeks later, Cluff met with nine members of his faculty and told them he would probably be leaving Provo. Five days later, on November 17, he informed the University Executive Committee that he

intended to resign at the end of the year. On November 19, he addressed a letter to the First Presidency tendering his resignation so that he could accept the appointment with the Utah-Mexican Rubber Company.¹¹³

In recording the minutes of the meeting where Church leaders considered Cluff's letter, George F. Gibbs indicated that Cluff submitted his resignation "believing it to be in harmony with the Holy Spirit that he do this, as it would enable him to finish the labors he had begun in the wouth [*sic*], and perhaps be the means of bringing the gospel to the seed of Lehi." The First Presidency and eight other leaders considered the matter "quite fully" in connection with "the situation at Washington" involving Reed Smoot "as also the reports of Plural Marriages." Then John Henry Smith moved and the group concurred that they accepted Cluff's resignation "with our good will, best wishes and blessing." With Cluff's case fresh in his mind, President Smith then turned to the topic of plural marriages and said that "if members of our Church have entered into such alliances they have done it upon their own responsibility" and must be prepared to "abide the consequences."¹¹⁴ Cluff formally submitted his resignation to the board of trustees on December 15. On January 5, 1904, he handed over his keys to the academy building to his successor George Brimhall—having served exactly twelve years at the helm.¹¹⁵

The next day Cluff traveled to the Salt Lake Temple where he received temple blessings with his wives Mary and Hattie, perhaps a sign that Church leaders recognized and appreciated his willingness to sacrifice his university post in the interests of the Church; he prized the temple blessings conferred upon him, recording, "This is one of the great events in my mortal life."¹¹⁶ Cluff soon departed for Mexico and was south of the border by the time the Smoot hearings convened on January 16. He never regained his prominence within educational circles or within Mormondom.¹¹⁷ In this respect he somewhat resembled his counterpart, Joseph Marion Tanner, president of Brigham Young College in Logan. Deprived of his position at the college for his continued involvement in plural marriage, Tanner lived out the remainder of his life in relative obscurity in Canada. Tanner's second wife, Annie, judged, "Because of his persistence in practicing polygamy, the time came when the Church had no use for [him]."¹¹⁸ Her words seem to fit Cluff's case, too, at least in the sense that he became a public relations liability to the Church by virtue of his polygamous marriage. In both cases, the institutional Church was forced by public pressure to conform to national expectations. Similarly, Apostles John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley were removed from the Quorum of the Twelve in a move that some General Authorities regarded as a "necessary sacrifice,"

and others were passed over for Church positions because their “appointment would bring trouble on the church.”¹¹⁹

Business Endeavors

Unlike Tanner, who continued to write articles for Church magazines, Cluff abandoned the life of an educator, although he did look back fondly. Writing to Brimhall from Mexico in 1904, Cluff asked him to “kindly remember me to the faculty and the school” and indicated, “My heart is with you.” He added, though, that he had “chosen other work in which I am very interested.”¹²⁰ Cluff threw himself into his new commercial pursuits. At one time all three of his wives lived in Tabasco, although his first wife, Mary, remained for only a year. While he superintended the rubber company, he also formed the Mexican Land and Sugar Company and tried to interest capitalists in purchasing 376,000 acres in Tabasco for a sugarcane or rubber plantation. He hoped to establish a colony of Latter-day Saints on the land. Unfortunately, the prospective investors soon lost interest and the project foundered.¹²¹ In 1908, Cluff wrote to Brimhall, informing him that his initial contract with the rubber company would soon expire. The furor in Congress over post-Manifesto plural marriage had blown over and Cluff could return to Zion if he wished. Brimhall tried to dissuade Cluff from signing on for a second stint south of the border, although he did not offer Cluff a university appointment if he returned. “I have never been uncertain as to the opportunities for making money in the locality of your present operations,” Brimhall told his friend and former associate. But he expressed his fear that Cluff would “break yourself down that you will not be able to enjoy the fruits of your strenuity.” Ultimately, Cluff disregarded his friend’s advice and signed on for another two years.¹²²

He did take a brief leave of absence and returned to Utah for a few weeks early in 1909, where he was hailed and honored in Provo and at BYU. As Brimhall’s guest, he traveled north with members of the state legislature to visit the State Agricultural College in Logan, stopping in Salt Lake on the way home to attend a fast meeting in the temple.¹²³ A few days later he spoke at the invitation of stake president Joseph Keeler in the Provo Tabernacle. It was a church service, and Cluff emphasized the religious facets of his work, facets that he had frankly pushed aside because of the press of business in Mexico. He told the congregation that he had left Provo in order to “learn the language and study the ruins so abundant in [Mexico] and bearing such an important part upon the Book of Mormon history.” He described the social structure and customs of the inhabitants of Tabasco, reported that “their habits, customs and religious

traditions are opposed to progress and advancement,” and concluded that “it will take a greater power than man possesses to prepare this people to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹²⁴ Cluff was feted at the university. An editorial in the student paper praised Cluff for having “forgone the many comforts and advantages of civilized society” in order to be able to “collect ‘first hand’ invaluable data concerning the traditions and customs of the Indian” and certified, “We were glad to welcome him back into our midst again, and only regret that his stay could not have been longer.”¹²⁵

Shortly before his return to Mexico, Cluff summarized his business activities in Mexico and shared his enthusiasm for the rubber company’s financial prospects with a reporter. The company had planted one hundred thousand rubber trees on five thousand acres, along with twenty-one thousand banana trees, and the rubber trees would soon be sufficiently mature to tap for rubber sap. “With the trees planted and growing rapidly, the shipping facilities improving every year and the methods of harvesting rubber and preparing it for market becoming more practical and economical under Yankee ingenuity, the company has entirely passed through the period of anxiety which always attends the launching of a new enterprise . . . and its future is assured.”¹²⁶

A year later, Cluff again visited Utah on business, still sanguine about the rubber company’s prospects. When asked about revolutionary activity in Mexico, Cluff said he was confident that the Mexican government would preserve order and predicted that the United States would mobilize its forces if necessary to protect heavy American investments south of the border.¹²⁷ He was whistling in the dark. A few months later, revolutionaries raided the rubber company’s plantation, driving off the horses and cattle. Cluff, his family members, and the other company officers holed up in an office building with walls thick enough to stop bullets. After twenty-four hours the rebels had not returned, but Cluff “decided that it was best for us to leave,” his daughter Fern recalled. On December 29, 1910, they boarded a ship bound for Texas. “So he came from Mexico . . . almost a poor man with just the money that he had in his safe,” Fern explained.¹²⁸

Back in Utah, Florence settled in Springville. The former university president searched for suitable work, but his long absence from academia and the cloud under which he had departed made a teaching appointment at the academy impractical. The best he could find was a job with the Consolidated Wagon and Machine Company in Salt Lake. His new position disappointed him. “I went to see him one day, and he was at a desk. I had seen him as president of the Brigham Young Academy. It was heartbreaking to see him sitting at a little desk with a little book in front of him,”

reflected Fern. “He spoke three languages and was one of the best teachers in the whole world.”¹²⁹

Joseph F. Smith advised Cluff to swallow his ambition and stay in Utah where he could participate regularly in church meetings. But Cluff could not forget “some land he had seen” in Mexico. “He just couldn’t stand [the job in Salt Lake]. He couldn’t make a living the way he wanted to make it and at what he thought he deserved,” Fern explained.¹³⁰ In May 1913, after persuading capitalists in Utah to back him, he returned to Tabasco with Florence, hoping to establish a new plantation and grow bananas. His first two wives, Mary and Hattie, refused to return, having grown disillusioned with Mexico and uncertain about Cluff’s ability to provide for them. When Cluff arrived, conditions were less stable than he had hoped; Mexico was engulfed in revolution, and bands of soldiers and thieves roamed the countryside, pillaging and raiding. When he reported the situation, his backers in Salt Lake withdrew their money. He chose, nevertheless, to stay. He cleared land and raised bananas, but guerrilla activity and raiding made his business unstable. In 1914, after revolutionists raided the plantation, Cluff and his family abandoned their land and fled to the town of Huimanguillo. Cluff established a small store and obtained contracts to supply representatives from American oil companies who were scoping out possibilities in the region. In 1917, though, Mexico adopted a new constitution. Article 27 authorized the government to expropriate land, water, and mineral rights and placed new constraints upon foreign businesses operating in the region. The oil companies withdrew and business prospects continued to deteriorate for Cluff. A decade after they had returned to Mexico, the Cluffs were desperately poor. Cluff was also in his mid-sixties. In 1924, he returned permanently to the United States. He and Florence, who had stayed by his side in Mexico, moved to California, where they invested the remains of her inheritance in a small fruit stand and grocery store in Redondo Beach. “Mother now began attending church, a blessing we had not had for a long time. My sister Elda, brother Benjamin and I were baptized on July 3, 1925,” recalled Cluff’s daughter Margaret. Few of the Cluffs’ customers knew that the man who waited on them had once presided over a university. The Cluffs operated their store until 1932 when Florence passed away and Cluff retired.¹³¹

Cluff’s Legacy

Cut off from BYU by his choices, the Church’s political predicament, and his commercial ambitions, Cluff retained a lively interest in the university he had helped to create. But he could not hope to regain his stature

in Utah or Mormonism. As Lorenzo Snow had warned Church members in a statement published in 1900 in the *Deseret News*, "If, therefore, any member disobeys the law, either as to polygamy or unlawful cohabitation, he must bear his own burden." The institutional Church could "not advise nor encourage any species of lawlessness."¹³² For Cluff as a prominent Mormon, the consequences of plural marriage were heavy. After Cluff visited his sons Wilford Cyril and Joseph in Richfield in 1924, the town's newspaper editor noted the irony that such a "noted educator" who had "probably touched the lives of more boys and girls and influenced them for good than falls to the lot of most men, educators and religious teachers included" had arrived and departed from town "unheralded and unsung" except by his relatives.¹³³ Minimizing his own achievements as academy and university president, Cluff publicly repressed any bitterness he might have felt and praised the accomplishments of BYU president Franklin S. Harris, saying, "Neither George [Brimhall] nor I could have done what this new young man has done. We didn't know enough." When he received a special citation from the Alumni Association in 1947 at age ninety, he delighted in the honor and expressed his regrets that his health would not permit him to visit. He asked Eugene Roberts to "carry my best wishes to the Alumni Association, The President, and the Faculty of the University, and to the Student-body" for their "constant success."¹³⁴ Cluff's health remained frail and he passed away on June 14, 1948, in Redondo Beach. Provo and Salt Lake newspapers reported his death. His funeral took place in his ward chapel in Redondo Beach, and he was buried in the LDS plot of the Inglewood Cemetery.¹³⁵

The controversy and opposition that dogged Cluff late in his administration, his sudden departure from the university, his business reversals, and his descent into penury seem ill-suited to the father of a thriving university. Universities supposedly facilitate upward mobility and progress not only for their students but also for their faculty and administrators. Unlike Maeser, who ended his career as superintendent of Church schools, Cluff faded from prominence. That disappointing story, too, is part of the legacy Cluff bestowed upon BYU. Perhaps the difficulty of telling that story fully is one reason it has been easier for BYU boosters to eulogize Maeser as the architect and first president of BYU.

Placed in perspective, though, there is much to admire in the arc of Cluff's career, including his religious devotion to the principle of plural marriage at great cost to himself, his search to know God's will when he was offered a position with the Utah-Mexican Rubber Company, and his dogged persistence in the face of business reversals beyond his control.

It is tempting to speculate about how Cluff's career might have unfolded had he not undertaken the expedition to Latin America or married Florence Reynolds after the Manifesto. He might have enjoyed the security and stability that eluded him. Almost certainly the university would have thrived intellectually under his leadership and openness to innovation and progressive education. The possibilities of what might have been if a professionally trained, academically minded, independent president had been at the helm of BYU during the Progressive Era are intriguing.

The speculation is so intriguing because Cluff achieved so much between 1890 and 1903 at Brigham Young Academy and University. He created and nurtured college-level work at the institution, expanded the range of topics taught at the school, and designed a professionally sound teacher education program. He extended the reach and heightened the visibility of the institution through summer sessions and courses for Sunday School teachers and missionaries. He enlarged the size of the faculty, boosted its professionalism, encouraged prospective and current faculty to study at eastern universities, and raised funds for an impressive physical plant. His influence and efforts were crucial in placing the school on firm financial footing and shaping its primary identity as a university. Cluff regarded these activities as well as his interactions with students as his contribution to the kingdom of God. Although he was not a seminarian in the tradition of Karl G. Maeser, he was a man of faith who saw greater good than Maeser did in secular learning. He believed, along with many Christian theologians and social reformers of his era, that the sacred and the secular could be made to serve one another. Ultimately, that optimistic vision of the compatibility and harmony of the sacred and secular, inspiration and intellect, worthiness and rigor, significantly reoriented Brigham Young University.

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1. Under Maeser's direction a handful of collegiate courses were offered as an experiment in math, language, and science during only the 1884 to 1885 school year. Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975–76), 1:167 n. 19.

2. The fullest treatment of the expedition in search of Zarahemla is Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:289–329. See also Benjamin Hemminger, "Forgotten

Quest: The Brigham Young Academy Scientific Exploration Expedition," *Insight* (Fall 1998): 20–28; and Samuel W. Taylor, *Rocky Mountain Empire: The Latter-day Saints Today* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 147–72.

3. For recent scholarly treatments of Brimhall and Harris, see Mary Jane Woodger and Joseph H. Groberg, "George H. Brimhall's Legacy of Service to Brigham Young University," *BYU Studies* 43, no. 2 (2004): 4–46; and J. Gordon Daines III, "Charting the Future of Brigham Young University: Franklin S. Harris and the Changing Landscape of the Church's Educational Network, 1921–1926," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006): 69–98.

4. Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 181, 182.

5. For another important treatment of Cluff's contributions, see Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:378–81.

6. Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 8, 9.

7. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:209, 218–19.

8. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 167.

9. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:213–14; see also Benjamin Cluff, "Diaries, 1881–1909," September 25, 1882, 78, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Perry Special Collections).

10. Karl G. Maeser to John Taylor, April 19, 1886, quoted in Thomas Wendell Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad': Latter-day Saints in American Higher Education, 1870–1940" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2005), 80.

11. Eugene L. Roberts and Mrs. Eldon Reed Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr., Scholar, Educational Administrator, and Explorer: Second Principal of the Brigham Young Academy and First President of Brigham Young University; A Study of the Life and Labors of One of Utah's First School Administrators," unpublished typescript (1947), 24, Perry Special Collections; Cluff, "Diaries," October 17, 1886, 113; October 24, 1886, 113; December 20, 1886, 2; letter inserted under date of April 9, 1890, 38–41; Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:215.

12. "Ex-President, Benj. Cluff, Jr.," *White and Blue*, January 22, 1904, 1.

13. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 219.

14. "Y.A. Polysophical Society," *Provo (Utah) Daily Enquirer*, September 5, 1891; Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 43.

15. Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 43.

16. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:216.

17. Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 43.

18. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:216–17.

19. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 60–61.

20. "The B.Y. Academy," *Daily Enquirer*, November 4, 1890.

21. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:217.

22. Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 44.

23. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:217–18.

24. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature, 1983–84), August 31, 1891, 9:160.

25. "Important to Normals," *The Normal*, November 14, 1891, 41, quoted in Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 83; Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 44; Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:263–64; J. Marinus Jensen and others, "History of Brigham Young University," typescript, 1942, 37–38, Perry Special Collections. The Church had provided modest support in the form of scholarships for a handful of Normal students as early as 1882 to 1883. See Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:121.

26. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:219, 242; Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 80.

27. Woodruff, *Journal*, February 18, 1896, 9:391.

28. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:242.

29. Cluff, "Diaries," 1893–97, 49.

30. The Articles of Incorporation of Brigham Young Academy, July 18, 1896, in Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:536, 539.

31. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1: 245.

32. Articles of Incorporation in Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:536–37.

33. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:348. See also Jed L. Woodworth, "Refusing to Die: Financial Crisis at Brigham Young Academy, 1877–1897," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 1 (1999): 99–106. For an overview of Church finances during the 1890s, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 400–403.

34. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 67.

35. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:242, 283.

36. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:283.

37. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:261.

38. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 62; Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 44.

39. G.M.C., "Brigham Young Academs.," *Deseret News*, April 8, 1893.

40. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 87–88; Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:343–44; see also Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 46.

41. N.L.N., Secretary, "Normal Sunday School," *Deseret News*, November 19, 1892; "Deseret Sunday School Union," *Deseret News*, April 15, 1893.

42. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:269.

43. "Educators Meet," *Daily Enquirer*, August 16, 1897.

44. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:268–69; "Coming to Provo," *Daily Enquirer*, February 23, 1892; Cluff, "Diaries," Christmas 1894, 44.

45. "Brigham Young Summer School," *Deseret News*, August 12, 1893.

46. Cluff, "Diaries," June 8, 1890, 42; Christmas 1894, 46; "City and County Jottings," *Daily Enquirer*, March 1, 1894; "Summer School," *Daily Enquirer*, May 8, 1897; "Educators Meet," *Daily Enquirer*, August 16, 1897; see also, "In the Summer School," *Daily Enquirer*, June 8, 1895. The summer seminars made friends for Utah and the Mormons, as Cluff had hoped. Flora Cook, a visiting lecturer from Chicago, said, "I have been in Utah three weeks and have never received more kind and courteous treatment in my life." "Brigham Young Summer School," *Deseret News*, August 12, 1893. President Hall of Clark University said he was pleasantly "surprised and delighted" by his encounters with the much-maligned Latter-day Saints. "Instinct and Heredity," *Deseret News*, August 28, 1897.

47. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:259–60, 265.
48. Cluff, “Diaries,” Christmas 1894, 46; the typescript contains a probable typo, “vig.” For information on the Church university that operated in Salt Lake and the threats it posed to Brigham Young Academy, see Woodworth, “Refusing to Die,” 96–99, and Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:221–32.
49. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:265.
50. Cluff, “Diaries,” 1903, 70.
51. Benjamin Cluff to Frank Warren Smith, August 18, 1897, Frank Warren Smith Papers, Perry Special Collections.
52. John P. Hatch, ed., *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon H. Lund, 1890–1921* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 247–48; Woodworth, “Refusing to Die,” 105–6. On the distinction between a college and university in the late-nineteenth century, see George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 123–33.
53. Roberts and Cluff, “Benjamin Cluff Jr.,” 54; Chamberlin, *University of Utah: A History*, 169.
54. Benjamin Cluff to Frank Warren Smith, March 24, 1896, Smith Papers.
55. Wilkinson and Skousen, *School of Destiny*, 169–70; H. A. Anderson to Benjamin Cluff, March 15, 1894, Brigham Young University President’s Records, 1892–1903, Benjamin Cluff, Jr., Perry Special Collections.
56. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:258–59; Roberts and Cluff, “Benjamin Cluff Jr.,” 89.
57. Abby Calista Hale to Benjamin Cluff, April 6, 1897, President’s Records.
58. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:258.
59. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 258–59.
60. Roberts and Cluff, “Benjamin Cluff Jr.,” 95–98.
61. Roberts and Cluff, “Benjamin Cluff Jr.,” 68–70.
62. Oscar F. Lyons to Benjamin Cluff, March 7, 1895, President’s Records; Benjamin Cluff to Frank Warren Smith, May 7, 1897, and June 11, 1897, Smith Papers; “The Alumni Association,” *Daily Enquirer*, May 20, 1892; “The Great Day for the Students of the B. Y. A.,” *Daily Enquirer*, May 24, 1894.
63. “Gospel of Christ,” *Daily Enquirer*, August 22, 1892.
64. “Theology Notes,” *White and Blue*, December 1, 1899, 37–38.
65. “Sabbath Services,” *Daily Enquirer*, March 19, 1894.
66. Cluff, “Diaries,” Christmas 1894, 44; “In Conference,” *Daily Enquirer*, May 7, 1894; Benjamin Cluff, “Education from the Latter-day Saint Point of View,” 1898, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; reprinted version, Benjamin Cluff Jr. Annual Lecture, Featured Essay 2003 (Provo, Utah: David O. McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University, 2003), 10.
67. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:271–73.
68. “Sabbath Services,” *Daily Enquirer*, March 19, 1894.
69. “In Conference,” *Daily Enquirer*, May 7, 1894.
70. Cluff, “Education,” 11.
71. “In Conference,” *Daily Enquirer*, May 7, 1894.
72. Benjamin Cluff to Charles E. Maw, April 15, 1903, President’s Records.
73. Cluff, “Diaries,” November 19, 1899, 60.

74. Cluff, "Diaries," November 23, 1899, 60.
75. "Editorial," *White and Blue*, December 1, 1899, 30.
76. Fred Seaman to Benjamin Cluff, April 30, 1895, President's Records.
77. Benjamin Cluff to Audrey Keeler, November 23, 1897, President's Records.
78. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 220.
79. S. L. Brunson to Benjamin Cluff, August 28, 1895, President's Records.
80. S. L. Brunson to Benjamin Cluff, September 4, 1895, President's Records.
81. Benjamin Cluff to Isaac Riddle, October 15, 1897, President's Records.
82. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:279.
83. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 52.
84. Benjamin Cluff to George Brimhall, October 24, 1893, President's Records.
85. Lillie Metcalf to Benjamin Cluff, November 21, 1895, President's Records.
86. Lulu Matthews to Benjamin Cluff, November 19, 1895, President's Records.
87. Weston Vernon to Benjamin Cluff, July 11, 1895, President's Records.
88. "Brigham Young Academs.," *Deseret News*, April 8, 1893.
89. Karl G. Maeser to Benjamin Cluff, October 22, 1896, President's Records.
90. Cluff, "Diaries," December 17, 1899, 61.
91. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 88, 101–65. For information on Cluff's Hawaiian investigation see "Local and Other Matters," *Deseret News*, March 5, 1898; "At Home and Abroad," *Deseret News*, March 19, 1898; "How the Hawaiians Feel," *Deseret News*, March 19, 1898; "Let Hawaii Come," *Deseret News*, March 26, 1898; "He Canvassed Hawaii," *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 14, 1898. On the Latin American expedition, see Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:289–329; Wilkinson and Skousen, *School of Destiny*, 151–62; Hemminger, "Forgotten Quest," 20–28; and Taylor, *Rocky Mountain Empire*, 147–72. Although Cluff's trips to Latin America and Hawaii deprived the academy of his leadership, at the outset, it appeared that the trips would benefit the Church. His service to the nation on a government investigation of annexationist sentiment in Hawaii might place him in the type of national limelight that he believed educated Mormons must occupy in order to dispel prejudice against the Mormons. And in traveling to Latin America, he endeavored to advance secular knowledge and Mormonism's credibility by combining research and religion in a single endeavor. But he also staked his own reputation on the Latin American endeavor. When Anthony Ivins, Joseph F. Smith, and Seymour B. Young met with Cluff in northern Mexico in the summer of 1900 and advised discontinuing the expedition, Cluff reportedly told them that "if he returned now the expedition would be a failure & his reputation was worth to him [more] than his life. He would rather fail on the Isthmus or on the banks of the Magdalena River than turn back now." Anthony W. Ivins, Diary, July [August] 1, 1900, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.
92. Journal History, July 19, 1900, Church History Library, microfilm copy in Perry Special Collections; Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:302, 307.
93. Ivins, Diary, July [August] 1, 1900; July 31, 1900.
94. Journal History, August 9, 1900; Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:309.
95. Ivins, Diary, July [August] 1, 1900; August 11, 1900.
96. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:311.
97. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:314–15.
98. Cluff, "Diaries," 1903, 68, 69.
99. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:371.

100. Cluff, "Diaries," 1903, 69.

101. Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 506; Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Proceedings before the Committee on Privileges and Elections of the United States Senate in the Matter of the Protests against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot, a Senator from the State of Utah, to Hold His Seat*, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 1906, 4:4–68; David John, "Journal," May 15 and 16, 1902, Perry Special Collections. A transcript of a portion of the investigation is found in Senate Committee, *Proceedings*, 4:39–45, 45–50. For information on Wolfe, see Harvard S. Heath, "Reed Smoot: The First Modern Mormon" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1990), 171–74.

102. Cluff, "Diaries," 1903, 70.

103. John, "Journal," April 21, 22 and 23 and 24, 1903; Fern Cluff Ingram, interview by Leonard R. Grover, April 5, 1980, Salt Lake City, 6, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, LDS Polygamy Oral History Project, Perry Special Collections.

104. B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 183, 190.

105. Michael Harold Paulos, "Under the Gun at the Smoot Hearings: Joseph F. Smith's Testimony," *Journal of Mormon History* 34 (Fall 2008): 201, 205.

106. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18:1 (Spring 1985): 87.

107. Ingram, interview, 6.

108. For Cluff's marriage to Florence Reynolds, see Quinn, "LDS Church Authority," 69–70, 86–88; Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 187; and Ingram, interview, 6. For the broader context of post-Manifesto plural marriage and substantial support for it within the Quorum of the Twelve, see also Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 60–73. For the Smoot hearings, see Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Harvard S. Heath, "The Reed Smoot Hearings: A Quest for Legitimacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 33 (Summer 2007): 64 n. 175, agrees that Cluff married Reynolds but suggests that the marriage occurred "apparently in 1898." An even earlier date, April 18, 1894, is recorded in family records compiled as part of the LDS Church's family history site, FamilySearch, <http://www.familysearch.org>. Margaret Cluff Parson Edwards, "Florence Mary Reynolds," 1, Perry Special Collections, identifies 1896 as the year her parents married. The International Genealogical Index shows Florence's endowment date as April 18, 1894, but such an early wedding date does not square with Lorenzo Snow's recollection in 1900 that Cluff had requested Snow's permission to marry Reynolds.

Snow did not become prophet until late in 1898. Snow and Smith met with Cluff to discuss his relationship with Florence in October 1899, at which time Cluff assured him that they were not married. See *Journal History*, October 13, 1899. *Journal History*, August 9, 1900, records, "Elder Cluff's marital relations were now freely discussed. It seemed that some time ago, but long since the issuance of the Manifesto, he, although already a married man, won the affections of one of his students, and diplomatically endeavored in a quiet way to convey the idea that he had married her, and this he did in hopes of having the marriage

ceremony performed secretly in the future. At least this is the supposition. This matter was brought to the attention of President Snow in the presence of Brother Cluff, when it was held by Professor Cluff that ther[e] was nothing wrong whatever in the relations between himself and the young lady, but he expressed the desire that the marriage ceremony could be performed.” Florence’s father, George Reynolds, testified that his daughter married Cluff sometime between December 1899 and 1901. See Quinn, “LDS Church Authority,” 87.

In the summer of 1899, Cluff went with his wife Mary and their children up into Little Cottonwood Canyon on an extended camping trip. His oldest daughter Fern, who was thirteen or fourteen at the time, intimated that Benjamin and Florence married that summer:

“One day he came walking over from Park City. There is a trail there and he walked over the mountains. He looked like a young man and he was all dolled up. He looked just like a bridegroom. We were so surprised. He had a straw hat on, and he looked gorgeous. He looked ten or twenty years younger than we had seen him last.

“My mother’s face went white as snow. She told us to go away. They never told us what was happening. My ears were opened because I suspected something, but I didn’t know what. . . . He came over and told Mother something. He took Mother in the tent. Mother made a great big scream, and what she did, I don’t know. She fainted or something, and Father said, “Mary, don’t be silly.” Now that was the way he comforted her! I didn’t know what it was. After awhile Mother came out. I didn’t find out what it was.” Ingram, interview, 5. It seems likely that the news that broke Mary’s heart was Cluff’s engagement to Florence.

In the fall of 1899, Cluff traveled with Reynolds to Mexico and apparently petitioned Anthony W. Ivins to marry Cluff and Reynolds. Possibly Ivins performed the wedding because thereafter Reynolds assumed the name of Cluff on Church records. But it is also possible that Ivins refused to do so without the prophet’s consent. Apparently Cluff’s request became the subject of a private conference in Salt Lake a few weeks or months later. Quinn surmises that the meeting was convened by Francis M. Lyman after Ivins related Cluff’s request to him. Apparently Joseph F. Smith disapproved of the meeting and reprimanded Ivins for divulging Cluff’s request to Lyman. In February 1900, Smith wrote to Ivins stating, “I know nothing about his [Cluff’s] domestic arrangements nor do I want to, the less I know about some things the better for me at least and perhaps for others concerned. I know that some things may have been done which are better left in oblivion as far as possible, and yet no censure would attach except in the eyes of the world, and my motto is and always has been to protect to the uttermost in my power the rights and the secrets, if secrets there may be, of my friends and the friends of the kingdom of God.” Joseph F. Smith to Anthony W. Ivins, February 6, 1900, Joseph F. Smith Letterpress Copybooks, available on Richard E. Turley Jr., ed., *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), vol. 1, DVD 30; Quinn, “LDS Church Authority,” 86–88.

109. Senate Committee, *Proceedings*, 34.

110. Cluff, “Diaries,” November 11, 1903, 71–72; October 23, 1903, 70–71; Flake, *Politics of Religious Identity*, 74–75; Ingram, interview, 6.

111. Journal History, November 19, 1903; Cluff, “Diaries,” October 23, 1903, 71.

112. Cluff, "Diaries," October 23, 1903, 71.
113. Cluff, "Diaries," November 12, 1903, 72; November 17, 1903, 72–73; November 19, 1903, 73.
114. Journal History, November 19, 1903; White, *Church, State, and Politics*, 528.
115. White, *Church, State, and Politics*, 528, 530; Cluff, "Diaries," January 1, 1904.
116. Cluff, "Diaries," January 1, 1904.
117. See Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," ii–iii, 193–216.
118. Annie Clark Tanner, *A Mormon Mother: An Autobiography by Annie Clark Tanner* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Library; Tanner Trust Fund, 1991), xv, 223.
119. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 65, 67. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 263–67.
120. Benjamin Cluff to George Brimhall, October 12, 1904, Brigham Young University President's Records, 1903–1921, George H. Brimhall, Perry Special Collections.
121. Ingram, interview, 11, 12, 17; "Land Mostly Under Water," *Salt Lake Herald*, March 8, 1905.
122. Benjamin Cluff to George Brimhall, January 2, 1908, Brimhall, President's Records; George Brimhall to Benjamin Cluff, January 20, 1908, Brimhall, President's Records.
123. "Benjamin Cluff, Jr. Returns to City from Old Mexico," *Provo Herald*, February 4, 1909; George Brimhall, "Diary of George Brimhall," ed. Jennie H. Groberg, 2 vols. (privately published, 1990), 1:534, Perry Special Collections.
124. *Provo Herald*, February 4, 1909.
125. "A Visit from President Cluff," *White and Blue*, March 12, 1909, 132–33.
126. "Benjamin Cluff, Jr. Returns," *Provo Herald*, February 4, 1909; "Talks about Rubber," *Salt Lake Herald*, March 21, 1910; "Utahns in Mexico Cultivate Rubber," *Salt Lake Herald*, March 27, 1910.
127. "Talks about Rubber," *Salt Lake Herald*, March 21, 1910; "Utahns in Mexico Cultivate Rubber," *Salt Lake Herald*, March 27, 1910.
128. Ingram, interview, 11, 17, 19; Ship's manifest for the S.S. *Disa*, December 29, 1910, <http://content.ancestry.com>.
129. Ingram, interview, 19; Edwards, "Florence Mary Reynolds," 1–3.
130. Ingram, interview, 11, 20.
131. Edwards, "Florence Mary Reynolds," 1–3; Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," 204–15; Ingram, interview, 19, 20. For conditions in Mexico during the Revolution, see Benjamin Keen and Mark Wasserman, *A Short History of Latin America*, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 258–77.
132. Hardy, *Solemn Covenant*, 203, 188.
133. "Noted Educator Visits Richfield," *Richfield (Utah) Reaper*, June 26, 1924.
134. Roberts and Cluff, "Benjamin Cluff Jr.," iii, 230.
135. "1st President of BYU, 90, Dies on Coast," *Deseret News*, June 16, 1948; Edwards, "Florence Mary Reynolds," 4.

Enhancing Evolution

Posthumanous Dreams and the Moral Complexity of Biomedical Aspirations

Samuel Brown

A noted academic bioethicist and British media pundit with a named chair at the University of Manchester, John Harris has recently given birth to an odd literary child. His latest book, *Enhancing Evolution: The Ethical Case for Making Better People*, hails from an esteemed university press, but it is informal and tendentious, often jeering at opponents, both popular and academic. Despite his credentials (an Oxford D. Phil. in philosophy, co-editorship of the British *Journal of Medical Ethics*, a lengthy curriculum vitae), Harris has created a popular polemic better fitted for the entertaining and energetic repartee of the *Daily Show with Jon Stewart* than academic discourse.

The book's style is in some sense unsurprising, as it derives from public lectures by a media-savvy intellectual. Even the distracting preface from the sponsors of the lectures (ix–xiv) affirms a strongly activist bent, an impression confirmed by Harris's own introduction (3–4). Still, the degree of colloquial informality (frequent repetitions, reuses of identical quotations, simplistic recitals) and polemicization (name-calling and the creation of strawman opponents) is somewhat surprising in a book written by an academic within his discipline. To rebut two of the West's most prominent political and ethical philosophers, Michael Sandel¹ and Jürgen Habermas,² with pungent sarcasm and *reductio ad absurdum* violates most canons of academic discourse. While Harris is correct that excessive reliance on mere authority may be dangerous and academic distance enfeebling, his snippy, self-assertive argumentation does little to solve either problem.

Despite flaws in rhetoric and substance, this book offers several important challenges to those who reject so-called enhancement technologies

and interventions on human embryos. Harris is clearly well-informed and cognitively agile. The great strength of Harris's treatment is his ability to show the inconsistencies in many current normative views relating to human enhancement. As he and many others are wont to exclaim, even eyeglasses are enhancements, and in our longevity-obsessed, death-dreading culture there is little *a priori* reason to resist further attempts to prolong the span of life or improve its quality. If nothing else, Harris forces readers to articulate their positions and views with greater rigor. This of course does not mean Harris is correct, merely that many of us have not yet trained our minds carefully on these issues. The encounter with Harris will likely be uncomfortable; still, there is much to be learned from the experience.

In his book, Harris treats the main themes in the debates about human enhancement and the manipulation of undifferentiated biological material to modify resulting humans. He discusses athletic, cognitive, and psychiatric enhancements (19–58), the quest for immortality (59–71), reproductive choice (72–85), the nature of disability in the face of enhanced ability (86–108), “designer children” (143–59), and the moral complexity—the “irredeemable paradox”—of the human embryo (160–83). He adds a logical albeit controversial epilogue (184–206) on the moral duty to participate in biomedical research.

Because Harris treats, superficially, a dizzying array of arguments, I will limit myself to considering some of the possible Latter-day Saint valences of the themes Harris treats and then focus on one important problem in Harris's treatment—a basically evolutionary definition of good. I end my somewhat informal, personal response with some spiritual reflections on the book. While Harris's roughshod treatment invites rebuttal, owing to constraints of time and space, I will defer to another setting responses to two other critical components of Harris's enhancement proposals—the meaning of human identity and the ethics of contingency, the obligations to those whose very existence is shaped by another individual's decisions. (Harris is harshly dismissive, without much analytical sophistication, of reservations to enhancement based in those two areas.)

Latter-day Saint Vantages

Many, though not all, Latter-day Saints will find Harris as spiritually nettlesome as Richard Dawkins or his fellow New Atheist popularizers of science. Harris has certainly not met religious audiences halfway. In an extended treatment of a problem fundamentally framed by definitions of the soul and control of human identity, Harris mentions the soul

only tangentially in one location (73). While policy in a plural society necessarily cannot rely exclusively on disputed religious beliefs, personal philosophical analyses can and perhaps should derive from private and corporate religious beliefs. For populations whose moral compass will be challenged or damaged by a policy, these views merit at least some discussion. On an issue on which religious bodies and individuals have made their reservations both public and vocal, Harris mentions religion only casually and dismissively, as something undignified or even frankly evil (73, 81, 136).

Harris's aggressive New Atheist worldview should not distract Latter-day Saints from substantial intersections between Mormonism and the themes of his book. Enhancement, particularly in the eternal scheme, is no stranger to a tradition often labeled perfectionistic by religion scholars. From the earliest teachings on physical translation and the sanctified state of humanity during the Millennium, to the physiological benefits of polygamy or obedience to the Word of Wisdom, to the modern Mormon Transhumanist Association anticipating the technologies of the "Fourth Epoch" that will usher in the "Singularity" of superhuman innovations,³ Latter-day Saints have long embraced the possibility that they can become better, both body and spirit. Independent of these themes within Mormonism, enhancement (with the associated promise of immortality) resembles nothing quite so much as the blessed state of the righteous in the next life. If in the afterlife we will be free from all sorrow, pain, and suffering, why should we not pursue our own taste of heaven here on earth? The creation of heaven on earth has been central to our communal goals as a church since at least the 1830s, whether through consecration, eternal families, or the building of the kingdom of God.

For some, framing enhancement as the medical approximation of resurrection will make biomedical enhancements seem like nothing quite so much as the Tower of Babel narrative, when, according to early Latter-day Saints, people sought to build their own ladder to heaven on the plain of Shinar.⁴ From this Babel perspective, believers could argue that it is the one who makes us immortal rather than the mere fact of immortality that matters most. The perfect immortality of the afterlife comes through Christ and a moral transformation, while the perfect immortality of biomedical enhancement comes merely at the price of purchased technology. Mormons could argue that God has already "enhanced" Enoch's city, the Apostle John, and the Three Nephites. To turn that holy process into the equivalent of a steroid-augmented athletic contest seems a sacrilege. Many Latter-day Saints believe that we should focus on changing our hearts; in his due time, God will change our bodies. In the other

envisioned enhancement of the body, there is no attendant change of heart. The immortal but unredeemed person proposed by Harris resembles no one quite so much as the hypothetical Adam who ingested the fruit of both trees (Alma 12:22–27).

Harris, beyond dismissing such beliefs as absurd, obscurantist, and superstitious, would likely claim that because we do not reject current medical therapy as bricks in a mounting tower at Babel, we should not reject more aggressive efforts. Harris repeatedly and explicitly invokes a slippery slope, but he uses it to force his point rather than to urge caution, as the trope is normally applied. Though many religionists believe in and cherish faith healings, they generally exercise caution and also turn to physicians to heal their bodies. In contrast, if any enhancement, even eyeglasses, is reasonable, then all enhancement must be reasonable, Harris argues. If the embryo is morally indeterminate, then so is the seriously disabled infant—he actually advocates infanticide (98–100) in certain circumstances. Most reasonable people will recognize that this sort of absolutism is unlikely to be fruitful, that the best solution lies somewhere between the extremes. Somewhere between eyeglasses and biomedical perfection of the body may stand an important threshold or region that should not be crossed.

Grounding the Good

Moving from the realms of personal and corporate religious belief, I have a more vital objection to Harris's pursuit of enhancement. For a project that, according to Harris, must override such foundational concepts as human identity, the rights of future humans, and the meaning of mortality, surely there must be a reliable standard for the weightier good. The determination of the good to be achieved, though, is the Achilles heel of his approach.

Harris does not make his grounding of the good terribly explicit, but it appears to arise from two sources, a metaphysical and teleological belief in evolution as a mandate for "progress," and an implicit or imagined consensus of the majority of "reasonable" people. The former is as unsupportable philosophically as the religious worldviews Harris rejects, while the latter is an inconsistent pseudo-democratic impulse that ignores the moral impulses of the large majority of actual people (who are by Harris's metric unreasonable).

Repeatedly, Harris affirms the moral necessity of enhancements or embryonic selection on the basis of doing "good." He invokes a "responsibility shared by all moral agents, to make the world a better place" (3).

He repeats himself on the next page: there is “a clear imperative to make this world a better place” (4). Later he provides a hint of greater detail as to what he might mean: “Saving lives, or what is the same thing, postponing death, removing or preventing disability or disease, or enhancing human functioning” is the good we must all seek (50). Harris’s dream is of “better people, less the slaves to illness and premature death, less fearful because we have less to fear, less dependent, not least upon medical science and on doctors” (185). True, these goals sound desirable, but why? In a world where humans are merely agglomerations of genetic material, what impels us to privilege human enhancement over otter or gerbil enhancements or the building of a giant abacus? For Harris, human functioning seems to be a euphemism for evolutionary or medical fitness—more powerful, sexually attractive, and cognitively sophisticated. These definitions postpone or ignore the question of the good. Surely the measure of human meaning is more than existing indefinitely in excellent physical health and physicosexual potency. Harris skirts the issue by defining the meaning of existence in terms of medicalized fitness or longevity.

Harris’s choice of a title for his book is an important indication of his broader approach. He justifies biomedical enhancements as the next phase in evolution, appropriate because the impersonal forces of nature have long engaged in similar “behavior.” Harris seems to argue that evolution makes us better, so why should we resist the chance to do the same to ourselves that evolution has historically done to us?

Without being entirely explicit, he also absorbs and disseminates the broader religious sensibilities of New Atheism. Evolution thus becomes not only scientific consensus but a potent metaphor for the meaning of existence. Evolution makes us live longer, look better, and be smarter. It guides us to want these better outcomes for ourselves and, to borrow an image from Richard Dawkins’s odd metaphysics of genetics, it guides the genes that reproduce themselves throughout the generations. Within the evolutionary model, particularly the one that is biomedically enhanced by Harris’s anticipated therapies, what we consider human is a mere artifact of a given moment in our development from the ancient Mitochondrial Mother Eve to whatever superhero awaits. Mitochondrial Eve—the essentially heuristic assumption of an African first human ancestor—along with Y-chromosomal Adam, are terms much beloved by evolutionary polemicists but that also betray a certain holy reverence. This heavily teleological vision of evolution is as nonrational as the groundings of meaning that Harris rejects. Darwinian evolution, strictly speaking, argues that reproductive fitness within a particular ecological niche tends to be maximized

over long periods of time. The only way to get something else from evolution is through quasi-theological and, frankly, worshipful amplifications.

The persistent question is why should reproductive fitness in a given ecological niche matter fundamentally? What is it about the hunger for survival and pleasure of *Homo sapiens* that requires its normativization now and in the future? And if the definition of the good derives from something fundamental about humans, how can we decide the good without reference to the meaning of being human?

There is a certain Benthamite inevitability about Harris's calculus. Unfortunately, traditional assumptions about how to bring the most good to the most people (the core impulse of Bentham's utilitarianism) have seen significant challenges in recent decades. Evolving data from economics and experimental psychology suggests that happiness is not correlated with wealth, and while happiness lessens with disease, there is no clear evidence that happiness is improved with supranormal functioning. In fact, data suggests that marked inequality tends to limit human happiness for all but those at the upper echelons, while full equality may fail to deliver happiness for certain participants in a society. Our highest performing illegally enhanced athletes, while they win games and break records, are not manifestly thereby happier. But if happiness is not the metric for the good, is it merely longer lifespan and freedom from activation of nociceptive nerves responsible for communicating physical pain? It is difficult to define the good without coming to terms with the human and its grounding, both cosmic and moral. But Harris explicitly refuses to engage in such philosophical struggles.

How, in Harris's calculus, does one distinguish an enlightened society of mortals from a benighted society of immortals? What does it mean to live smart, healthy, and long without a soul (either in the metaphysical or metaphorical sense)? For believers in the Christian scriptures, this would seem to be a textbook case of what Jesus described as losing life in the attempt to save it (Matt. 10:39; 16:25–26; Luke 9:24; 17:33). In the absence of an overarching system of meaning, what makes Harris's goals any less arbitrary than the goals espoused by others—such as Michael Sandel or Leon Kass—to experience the emotion of humility or to appreciate the poignancy of our temporary existence? Harris dismisses his opponents as neo-Luddites, but he does not offer any more persuasive arguments to support his goals.

Personal Thoughts

I should confess that, as a socially and politically liberal academic physician, prior to reading this book I supported most enhancement applications, including embryonic research. The presentation of these arguments by Harris has given me pause. When the apologia is an unreflectively metaphysical attachment to the “more is better” school of evolutionary theory, the entire program seems flimsy, a kind of faddish construct making the rounds of college campuses and coffee shops. That Harris evinces an almost Pollyannish certainty that biomedical science will succeed gives the book an air of science fiction. This fictitious quality to the project makes Harris seem less credible still.

Though the Nazi card can be overplayed in analogies within biomedical ethics, it is worth remembering that the concept of intentionally improving the fitness of the human race through medical or pseudo-medical interventions antedates by at least a century the deciphering of the genetic code. The field of eugenics existed long before German National Socialism; individuals as varied as Winston Churchill, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., George Bernard Shaw, Margaret Sanger, and in a way even the late nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint polygamists all believed in some form of biological intentional manipulation of future generations to improve the species. The similarities between enhancement and eugenics can be overstated, but it would be incorrect to dismiss entirely such criticisms by comparison. Using Harris’s own reasoning, the refusal to provide an enhancing technology is morally indistinguishable from the active causation of harm of a similar degree. Restriction, even if by market forces, of enhancements from those at the socioeconomic margins may be the functional moral equivalent of forced eugenic policy, even if no single individual or legislative body can be easily blamed. Allowing wealthy parents and social groups to shape the physical makeup of their next generation, to “enhance” evolution, may make the offspring of poorer parents less fit (and less happy) still, since reproductive fitness (and happiness) is always defined situationally.

Chasing per capita income and consumption has not clearly improved the quality of life or reported levels of happiness in the West over the last several decades. Is there any reason to believe that escalating this arms race of personal power into the genome will yield better fruit? Is it not likely that artificial enhancements will create new forms of economic and social classes together with their own invidious forms of discrimination and competitive imperialism? Even if biomedical outcomes of enhancement technologies (a subject better suited to speculative fiction

than rigorous science) were known with certainty, the social and human implications for populations are difficult to map predictably. We cannot reliably foresee the outcomes of our genetic interventions. Even the much milder enhancements of engineered pharmaceuticals have unexpected results missed in the decades of research and testing leading up to product release. How would the drug recall of a meddled (and thereby muddled) genome take place? While Harris dismisses concern about the risks of misfires or unintended side effects without argument, the experience with cane toads in Australia (ecological mayhem) and thalidomide in morning-sick women (severe birth defects) may give us pause. Closer to home are the COX-II inhibitors (VIOXX is the best known) that were proved after their FDA approval and broad dissemination to increase the risk of heart attacks. In as complex a system as human heritability (which is not strictly limited to the genome, either *in* or *ex utero*, a point the biomedical community is only now beginning to comprehend), the probability of predictable outcomes, except in very rare settings, is quite low.

Ultimately, though, my primary objections to Harris's line of arguments are my belief in divinity and an actual afterlife, the problematic nature of declaring the good when neither human nature nor God is available as a signpost, and that extremism impairs our ability to draw the line in complex situations. A crucial point is that in these novel areas of ethics and ability, there will need to be lines drawn somewhere. Even Harris agrees that genetic enhancement should not be undertaken against the will of a cognitively intact adult or as part of a system of human enslavement (such as engineering clones with large muscles and stamina and limited intellectual reserve specifically to work in factories). Yet his extremism makes even such scenarios and determinations problematic when the overwhelming good is defined as duration of life and augmented fitness for each agent able to purchase such outcomes.

The book is a lively and challenging read, though, whatever its flaws. My primary satisfactions with *Enhancing Evolution* result from Harris's exceptional ability to expose the unconscious compromise and inconsistencies we engage in when discussing medicalization and enhancement. He has made me think much harder about the meaning of human identity, even as he himself refuses to engage it. *Enhancing Evolution* provides a highly readable overview of a strongly argued libertarian and technophilic position on the questions of human enhancement. Given the tendentious tack of the author, it may be a book best read on loan from a library—many theists will find themselves uninterested in supporting the author financially, even though they are obliged to confront his arguments.

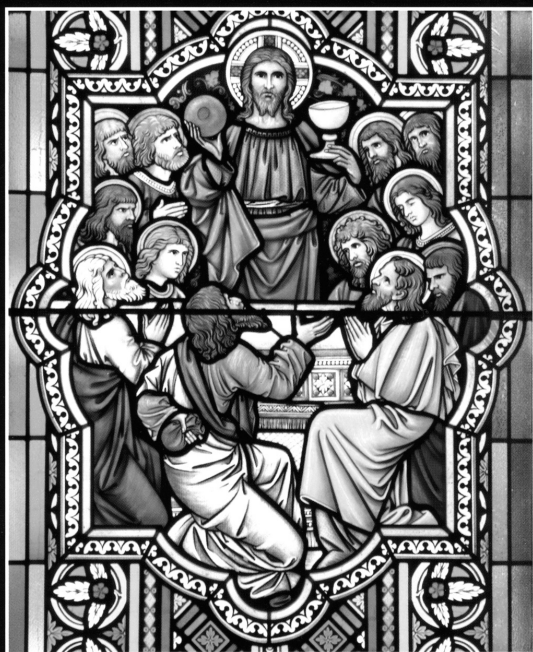
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1. Sandel's essay began in *The Atlantic* (April 2004) and has been revised and published by Harvard University Press as *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering* (2007).

2. The standard English-language treatment is Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), a translated collection of three lectures.

3. Something of a manifesto for this group was published as "Transfiguration: Parallels and Complements Between Mormonism and Transhumanism," *Sunstone* 145 (March 2007): 25–39.

4. The noted conservative ethicist Leon Kass has independently compared the modern technological project to the Biblical story of Babel's tower (Gen. 11:1–9). See his speech "Technology and the Humanist Dream: Babel Then and Now," available online at http://www.ctinquiry.org/publications/reflections_volume_7/kass.htm.



MORMONISM IN DIALOGUE WITH CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES



EDITED BY

DONALD W. MUSSER AND DAVID L. PAULSEN

FOREWORD BY MARTIN MARTY

Mormonism in Dialogue contains a longer and more thoroughly foot-noted dialogue between David L. Paulsen and Clark H. Pinnock. Published by a southern Christian university (Mercer University Press) and bringing together some of today's foremost theologians to talk about Latter-day Saint faith, this book is the first of its kind. It also includes dialogues between Mormons and Christians on process theology, liberation theology, feminist theology, black theology, and myth theology, as well as dialogues on the theologies of Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich.

Open and Relational Theology

An Evangelical in Dialogue with a Latter-day Saint

Clark H. Pinnock and David L. Paulsen

The following lively exchange began with a lecture given by Clark H. Pinnock at Brigham Young University in 2004. David L. Paulsen responded to that presentation, and further dialogue ensued. BYU Studies is happy to present their formalized dialogue, which is a model of mutually beneficial interfaith discussion.

CLARK H. PINNOCK: For all of us, God is a great mystery and a major challenge to speak about. Therefore, a humble spirit is required if we wish to attempt it, which (of course) we do, because we must talk about God, who is the first and principal topic of Christian doctrine. Augustine sets the tone for any inquiry into the mystery of God when he begins a tract entitled “On the Holy Trinity” by asking readers to keep him company when they are in agreement, to dialogue with him when they are hesitant, and to call him back when they think he is in error. Augustine hopes that such practices will ensure that we advance together toward God. He also adds that there is no “inquiry more laborious” nor where “error [is] more dangerous,” but also none where the “discovery of truth [is] more profitable.”¹

When I refer to open and relational theologies, I have in mind a cluster of models of the divine that strive to bring out the personal nature of God and want, in their own distinctive ways, to lift up the conviction that God is “open” and that he exists in a significant relationship with the creature. Open and relational theologies envisage a situation where there is genuine interaction between God and his creations, where God enters into reciprocal give-and-take relations with his creations, and where God responds to what his creations do. In all this, God willingly (sometimes necessarily) accepts a degree of conditionality and risk taking. Although

these theological themes are quite old, traditionalists have not usually allowed such open models to hold sway. But many theologians are adopting similar models today. These theologians are keen to recover such relational themes as God's loving, God's risking, God's suffering, God's changing.

The desire to formulate a more relational model is widespread among theologians across the spectrum of Christian thought. As for myself, I have worked with a relational model that has been named "the openness of God"—sometimes called free-will theism—and have done so in the evangelical context.² As hinted at above, this model is by no means limited in time or number. Relational nondeterminist theology is as old as Christianity itself. Although I am a relational theist who swims in the streams of tradition flowing from Wesley, I believe that there are different ways of approaching relational theism, and that subscribers to these various approaches need to be conversing with one another. Who knows—we may learn something from the methodologies and discoveries of others. We know the things of God only "in part" (1 Cor. 3:12), which should make us open to insight from whatever direction.³

Relational theists have a lot in common with Latter-day Saints, commonality that should lead to fruitful interaction. Social Trinitarianism, the view that the Godhead is best understood by starting from the threeness of the persons, is one example. Another is my own personal openness to considering the idea of a divine embodiment, taboo in traditional theology but central to LDS thinking. There are other commonalities: of a mutual dissatisfaction with classical theism, the espousal of libertarian freedom, the denial that God has a monopoly on power, the belief that God experiences pathos in interaction with creatures, and the belief that God prefers to exercise persuasive rather than coercive power. There may be more. And of course there will be divergences alongside the convergences.⁴

In this presentation, I will explain open and relational theologies in an attempt to call attention to possible points of contact with LDS thought and to open lines of communication. As a non-Mormon who is not an anti-Mormon, I cherish the hope that the Holy Spirit will open doors to dialogue between Latter-day Saints and traditional Christian believers. Obviously there will be differences and limits to agreement at this stage, but there may be areas of promising growth also.

I know that Latter-day Saints debate with each other as to what ideas are necessary beliefs in their faith and as to how these beliefs are best articulated. I know that they do not now follow some practices that were followed by Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century (for example, the practice of polygamy or denying priesthood to blacks). LDS thinking does not stand still, and we should not impute to them things that they do

not now hold or practice. I will give David L. Paulsen the opportunity to clarify things that puzzle me.

In this conversation, of course, we are coming from very different places. The Latter-day Saints appeal to the broad canon of their scriptures and to the restoration gospel contained therein, and I will not. But the simple fact that we both accept the Holy Bible means that there will still be a lot in common. On the subject of canon, let me add this: I freely grant that, for there to have been a restoration of Christianity through Joseph Smith, it follows that there would have been fresh scriptures to bear witness to it. Scriptures arise in such contexts. I find the existence of the Book of Mormon and other uniquely LDS scripture to be consistent with religious tradition and entertain no dogma of a closed canon that would rule out such modern revelation.⁵ As for a restoration, this is a familiar theme in American church history. One thinks of the Anabaptists, the Campbellites, and the Pentecostals, who rival even the Latter-day Saints in world outreach. All these organizations think of themselves in restorationist terms, and it seems to this Canadian that the Americans have a flair for restoring, rectifying, and renewing religion!

A distinguishing feature in the doctrine of God today is the debate surrounding the traditional absolutist model of God, a model that was developed in the ancient and medieval periods of church history and that is inclined to employ abstract and deterministic categories for understanding the nature of God and God's relationship to the world. Many theologians today, including some who think of themselves as classical theists, are critical of this approach. A great many tend to emphasize the perfections of a personal God, who engages in give-and-take relationships with creatures. There is a trend in contemporary theology toward relational theism, a shift in doctrine toward more dynamic categories and away from the more static categories. Open theists think (and I believe that Latter-day Saints agree) that this does greater justice to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, who is not an apathetic and immobile God but a compassionate, loving, and responsive person.

Donald G. Bloesch, a leading evangelical theologian, expresses this strongly when he writes:

A compelling case can be made that the history of Christian thought shows the unmistakable imprint of a biblical-classical synthesis in which the ontological categories of Greco-Roman philosophy have been united with the personal-dramatic categories of biblical faith. The attempt at synthesis began already with the early apologists, who sought to vindicate the claims of Christianity to the pagan culture of their time. The Hellenising of Christian faith was particularly apparent in Clement and Origen, who introduced "elements of religious speculation and

intellectualistic spirituality belonging to a world altogether different from that of the Gospel.”⁶

The God of biblical faith interacts with people in the drama of history, whereas the God of the Hellenistic ethos is a self-contained absolute, characterized by imperturbability and impassibility. But believers do not want a cold, immutable, and philosophical kind of God. They want a God who reveals himself, listens to prayer, and can (to some extent) be grasped in human terms. Shaye Cohen writes:

The God of the Hebrew Bible is for the most part an anthropomorphic and anthropopathic being, that is, a God who has the form and emotions of humans. He (it is a he) walks and talks, has arms and legs, becomes angry, happy, or sad, changes his mind, speaks to humans and is addressed by them, and closely supervises the affairs of the world. The God of the philosophers is . . . abstract, . . . immutable, and relatively unconcerned with the affairs of humanity. The tension between these rival conceptions of the Deity is evident in the work of Philo, who is . . . particularly careful to sanitize the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic passages.⁷

This kind of criticism is made by many: liberals like Adolph von Harnack, Reformed scholars like Vincent Brümmer, open theists like John Sanders,⁸ and LDS academicians like Stephen E. Robinson. Robinson writes, “There isn’t a single verse of the Bible that I do not personally accept and believe, although I do reject the interpretive straight-jacket imposed on the Bible by the Hellenized church after the apostles passed from the scene.”⁹

Robinson’s statement clearly converges with the beliefs of other varieties of relational theology. Belief in some kind of mistake by certain theologians of absolutism is not limited to Latter-day Saints, although they see it radically. But even here we need not exaggerate the difference. Robinson continues, “Informed Latter-day Saints do not argue that historic Christianity lost *all* truth or became *completely* corrupt. The orthodox churches may have lost the ‘fullness’ of the gospel, but they did not lose all of it nor even most of it.”¹⁰ This is a remarkable concession and a conciliatory tone that is seldom heard among the sometimes vicious evangelical critics of LDS thought. At the same time, Latter-day Saints disagree on this point, given the fact that Joseph Smith’s account of the First Vision uses strongly negative language about traditional Christianity. However, Robinson warns against misinterpreting Joseph Smith’s intent, and Benjamin Huff warns that Latter-day Saints ought to be careful how they see the precise nature of the Apostasy and should not distort things.¹¹

Open theism, which also associates itself with the evangelical movement in North America, belongs to the family of relational approaches. Sharing themes with others, we open theists too are in pursuit of a personal God who is dynamically related to the world. We hold that God by grace has granted humans significant freedom to cooperate with or work against God's will for us, and that God enters into dynamic give-and-take relationships with us. We also espouse the belief that the future is not settled in every respect, and that God knows both what will be and what might be. Open theism is a biblical theology rather than a metaphysical construct, though open theists are not averse to its philosophical, scientific, and existential credibility. In their efforts to engage in biblical theology, the Latter-day Saints are closer to open theism than they are to process thought. However, they tend more to process theism in some matters such as creation out of nothing.

The openness version of the relational models has been marketed under that "openness" logo to evangelicals because the chief proponents of open theism are themselves evangelicals. We present a biblical theology in sync with our relational piety. In spite of opposition, mostly from the paleo-Calvinist strongholds in the evangelical movement, the message has been getting out. (Indeed their vociferousness in criticism has given us a great deal of free publicity as well as sympathy.) We also have some advantages. For example, it is hard to find an evangelical who does not believe in a relational God who responds freely to prayer. Also, young people often gravitate toward open theism because it encourages them to make a difference in a future that is not altogether settled.

Meanwhile, one might see open theism in a mediating position between classical theism on the one hand and process theism on the other. This gives us three explanatory models to compare, offering us a well-rounded explanation of God's nature and God's relation to the world.¹²

To start with, classical theism is an absolutist understanding of the nature of God in which God has no need of the world and is not internally related to it. God's joy is not increased by the world's beauty or diminished by its pain. God's being is perfect and fully actualized apart from the world. Any alteration to God's character would only decrease it. In this understanding, God is immutable in a static sense, essentially unrelated to the world and unaffected by what happens in it and to it. Classical theists see absoluteness and impassibility as basic attributes of God that determine how the revelation of God in Christ is understood. This model has dominated Christian thinking through most of church history and defines the God that atheists love to hate. One wonders how many people have

rejected faith in God because of such a definition of him. It presents God as, in the words of Dallas Willard, “a great unblinking cosmic stare.”¹³

At the other extreme stands process theology. Here God and the world are coeternal and interdependent. According to process theology, God created the world and the world creates God. He is evolving along with the universe and dependent on the world for the content of his life experience. In effect, as the saying goes, God proposes, man disposes. Not at all distant and aloof, God is always involved in the world. There are possibilities for change and improvement. God has a physical pole and is thereby thoroughly passible. God cares about us all and is always trying to lure us toward what is best for us. Being mutable and involved in the process of becoming, his knowledge is finite and undergoes changes. He cannot know the future exhaustively. He knows all possibilities, not which possibility will become actual. Ultimately, all entities receive their life from God and return their life to God. Creativity is everlasting; God is the power that inspires the creative becoming of all things through tender persuasion and that treasures their achieved values in his own everlasting life.

Open theism, as I have said, takes a position between these two extremes, and I believe that LDS thought does also. Open theism appeals to those who cannot accept classical theism and like aspects of process theism but want a more mediating corrective. One might say that these individuals want a neoclassical, not a nonclassical, view. I am not presenting something alien to the Latter-day Saints but something familiar and agreeable to them. Openness thinking has affinities to both process theism and classical theism, plus real differences. Open theists embrace the one God, maker of heaven and earth, who at the same time self-limits to make room for significant creatures. In sovereign freedom, the triune God chooses to create. In particular, he makes a world capable of receiving and returning love and grants the kind of freedom necessary for this. God also decides to make some of his actions contingent on us—on our prayers and actions. He lets himself be affected by what we do, and he responds to what we do. God does not tightly control everything that happens but gives space for us to operate and cooperate in. God is also creative and resourceful in how he works with us. As Sanders puts it, “God has divine purpose with open routes.”¹⁴ We reject the blueprint worldview. History is not a scripted play in which our decisions are simply what God has decided.

Controversially, open theists also say that God knows all that is possible to know, that God knows what will be but also what might be. He knows what he has decided to bring about, but he also knows the possibilities that he has left open. Graciously, God invites us to collaborate with him in bringing the as-yet-open part of the future into being. Open

theists do not want a God as impotent and finite as the process God, so they posit omnipotence but see God as choosing not to use his full power out of respect for libertarian freedom. I realize that this exposes a point of vulnerability for me in that a God who can self-limit can also un-self-limit, but I can live with it.¹⁵ As a *via media*, open theism wants to preserve the classical emphasis on the greatness of God while at the same time highlighting the relational aspects.

Being a pilgrim in theology, I have experienced changes in my thinking over the years, and one such change lies in God's relationship to humans. Over a period of thirty years, I have moved away from the paleo-Calvinist system typified by the canons of Dort to a postconservative, evangelical Wesleyan standpoint. In terms of the doctrine of God, I moved from thinking of God as "an unmoved mover" to thinking of him as "a most moved mover." And it has taken effort over a lifetime to work out the implications of this one thing: what does it mean to believe in a relational God of unbounded love?¹⁶

Belief in a loving triune God took center stage in my thinking, and I began to see God not as a solitary God, but as a communion of love marked by overflowing life. I got the sense of a totally shared life at the heart of the universe, not of God the monarch, ruling from isolated splendor, but of God the perfect sociality, which embodies the qualities of mutuality, cooperation, and reciprocity—a unity with genuine diversity.¹⁷ I began to see that relationality is central to who God is, in that ours is a personal God, carrying out a project and acting for the sake of others. God is the maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, and the source of everything, but God is also one who limits himself in ways that preserve his eternal nature while relating to us. God takes a stance of openness toward the world. He chooses to be God for the world and allows himself to be affected by it and opens himself up to vulnerability. God sovereignly restricts his power and risks the pain of rejection. The relationship is a two-way street. Humans can choose for or against God's love, and their decisions genuinely affect him. We gather that God must to some extent be limiting the exercise of his power to give us space to act in.¹⁸

Thus God, though unchangeable in his qualities, is open to change in other ways. Who God is does not change, but what God experiences does change. So, too, God is not impassible, as the tradition has mostly insisted. The God who loves us is open to experiencing delight as well as anguish. God does not experience fickle emotions or suffer inappropriately as we do. But there is pathos and suffering in God. Similarly, God is not timeless, since he accompanies us in time as we act and he responds. Such interaction reveals that God experiences sequence. God is not in time as we are,

but his experience is sequential like ours. As a result of thinking through the truth of the love of God, I was led to the open view of God.

In 1990, four colleagues and I put together a multi-authored book that would make a case for open theism. We knew that some already held this view (especially some of the Christian philosophers) but that far more people were unaware of it, at least formally. So we became a team to cover the bases, methodologically following the Wesleyan quadrilateral.¹⁹ We asked ourselves questions like the following: What do the scriptures say? How well have we done theologically? What perspective might philosophy contribute? and Are there practical implications?

Now, to bring to the surface issues of interest both to openness and LDS thought, let us scout out the territory that we mapped and, at the same time, interact with the LDS doctrine of God. I will share what open theists found and open the door to critical feedback. I hope it is possible that, as friends, we may agree and disagree amicably.²⁰

DAVID L. PAULSEN: I hope to respond to these introductory comments and ensuing comments in the same Augustinian spirit that Clark Pinnock exemplifies. I will at times “keep him company” when I am in agreement, at other times I will “dialogue with him” when I am hesitant, and I will not be reluctant to respectfully “call him back” when I think he is in error. At the outset of his introduction, Pinnock identifies the essential elements of a “relational” theology, all of which, I believe, most Latter-day Saints would heartily affirm.

In regard to open theism in particular, Mormonism shares unique theological convergences as well as important divergences that ought to be explored. Joseph Smith would undoubtedly agree with such an exchange as he emphatically declared before the Saints in Nauvoo that “we should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true ‘Mormons.’”²¹

TRADITION AND INTERPRETATION

PINNOCK: Joseph Smith’s comment here raises an important question of how to recognize and interpret the “good and true principles” in the world’s traditions. Open theism has been seen as a little controversial because it challenges tradition. But ought we not place scripture above tradition? We are critical of a traditionalism that would condition evangelicals not to grow as hearers of the word. At the same time, we do not want to dismiss all catholic traditions and do not actually consider open theism to be a major innovation. Critics exaggerate the degree of innovation in order to stir up passions against us, but we do not see open theism as highly

untraditional. We see it as a not-too-large modification of Wesleyan/Arminian thinking.²² We wanted evangelicals in particular to encounter relational theism as a scriptural paradigm, unencumbered by any existing and possibly tired-out labels.

What about tradition and the influence it exercises upon our interpretations? Our two groups see themselves differently. Open theists want to be in continuity with history and the community, even though they recognize that there are reforms to be undertaken.²³ Thus they speak of “great tradition,” of the Vincentian canon (what has been believed by “everyone, everywhere, at all times”), and even of “mere Christianity,” as referred to by C. S. Lewis.²⁴ Admittedly, the great tradition is a nebulous concept and one that open theists do not take uncritically, though we receive it respectfully. It serves as a kind of subordinate third testament and map to the terrain, a canon outside the canon, and a way to identify error. It is a *norma normata* (a norm that is itself normed by scripture), which directs but does not control us.²⁵ Open theists differ from Latter-day Saints in holding to God’s promise not to let the gates of hell prevail against the church. We take it as a promise to help her to remain in the truth and not to fall into irremediable ruin. We do not find the New Testament warning us of a completely ruinous apostasy.

In contrast, Latter-day Saints do speak of an apostasy and of a restoration, similar in some ways to a reformation, but much more radical. This restoration has been the source of some radical new ways of thinking. For instance, it supplies what Robinson calls “the different ontological frame or view of the nature of the universe” in which Latter-day Saints place “the basic gospel of Christ.” This includes the literal fatherhood of God, God and humans belonging to the same species of being, and God’s having spiritual offspring in a premortal existence.²⁶ Reading the Bible in this context is bound to take interpretation in a certain direction, just as respect for the “great tradition” would in the case of open theists. Still, there is room for us to relate. LDS traditions from the early days until now, current developments in LDS thinking, and respect for the prophetic office—all of this is likely to produce differently nuanced interpretations over time and to open up points of contact, maybe even surprisingly so. I think both groups, Latter-day Saints and open theists alike, must ask what is really binding in our positions and what is open to re-examination.²⁷

PAULSEN: We do, as Clark points out, come to our understanding of God from distinctly different perspectives: he from the standpoint of what he calls a “modified classical trinitarian monotheism” (Pinnock, 85, in this article) and I from the standpoint of what I believe to be modern revelation, beginning with the First Vision of Joseph Smith. As Pinnock has

acknowledged, however, we are not without common ground. We both believe in the Bible and in the possibility of divine guidance in our search for fuller understanding. These can indeed bring us closer to the truth, closer to one another, and closer to God. Beyond this, however, is the issue of the bearing of “the great tradition” on our respective interpretations of scripture. Pinnock indicates that for open theists the great tradition, though not inerrant, is significantly normative. However, because of what he takes to be our belief in a “ruinous” and “irremediable” apostasy, Pinnock implies that the tradition is without normative authority in our interpretation of scripture and in our subsequent formulation of doctrine.

Latter-day Saints do believe in a widespread apostasy from New Testament Christianity. In particular we believe (as do open theists) that, as a result of a classical-biblical synthesis, the impersonal, static, absolute God of the philosophers and theologians supplanted the personal, passible, relational God disclosed in the Bible. This facet of the great tradition is normative for neither of us.

More fundamentally, however, Latter-day Saints understand the apostasy as constituted by the loss of apostolic authority and by the loss or corruption of saving gospel ordinances, including the ordinances of the temple. But this does not mean that we believe that the great tradition fell into irremediable ruin, completely lost all truth, or was bereft of divine guidance. To the contrary.

From the inception of the restoration, LDS leaders have emphasized that the Church has no monopoly on truth and encouraged members to seek truth wherever it may be found, including within the great tradition. Joseph Smith said, “Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes.”²⁸ Brigham Young repeatedly taught the same doctrine: Mormonism “embraces every principle pertaining to life and salvation, for time and eternity. No matter who has it.” Sectarians possess much truth and sound doctrine, he said, and “as for their morality, many of them are, morally, just as good as we are. All that is good, lovely and praiseworthy belongs to this Church and Kingdom. ‘Mormonism’ includes all truth.”²⁹ And Apostle Orson F. Whitney observed that God “is using not only his covenant people, but other peoples as well, to consummate a work, stupendous, magnificent, and altogether too arduous for this little handful of Saints to accomplish by and of themselves.”³⁰

More recently, the First Presidency of the Church declared:

The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and bring a higher level of

understanding to individuals. The Hebrew prophets prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who should provide salvation for all mankind who believe in the gospel. Consistent with these truths, we believe that God has given and will give to all peoples sufficient knowledge to help them on the way to eternal salvation, either in this life or in the life to come.³¹

And BYU professor Roger R. Keller, former Richard L. Evans Chair for Religious Understanding, wrote:

The meridian of time was principally the dispensation of the Atonement. Yet, at that time, Christ did establish the Church's correct order. He knew full well that the Church would disappear, but the many truths that remained would prepare the way for the gospel's restoration. Those truths would enable men and women to recognize the true Church when its time came in the last days.

I believe that our Catholic and Protestant brothers and sisters were, and still are, an integral part of the Lord's plan to prepare people to receive the fullness of the gospel. They preserved essential gospel truths that made it possible for the Restoration to take place in an environment of light, rather than in one of total darkness with no understanding of Jesus Christ or his mission. They preserved a basic understanding of Jesus Christ, the crucified Lord who died for the sins of the world, as well as the many other teachings about God and his work that are found in the Bible.³²

Thus, it appears to me that Latter-day Saints have a divine mandate to seek and assimilate truth wherever it may be found—especially, perhaps, that contained in the great tradition. Definitive revelation, canonical or otherwise, trumps tradition. But in areas where we still see through a glass darkly, tradition may, on some occasions, be our safest guide.

PINNOCK: Let me emphasize that open theists appeal first and foremost to the Bible. It is for us a basic commitment and one that motivates us to be respectful of its truth and to be wary of alien assumptions. Our primary commitment is to the scriptures rather than tradition, reason, or experience. And, in our appeal to scripture, we have brought neglected truth to light and offered a plausible mode of its interpretation. We give particular weight to the narrative quality of the Bible and to the language of personal relations. The sacred story involves real drama and bears witness powerfully to the interactivity of God. We accept diversity in the biblical witnesses, too, and recognize the dialogical character of the text. Indeed, the Bible does not speak with a single voice but fosters dialogue between different voices. The writings contain a long and complex search for the mind of God. We listen to the Bible as we would listen to a conversation between testimony and countertestimony, aware of the fact that

scripture is inexhaustibly rich and that, when approached prayerfully and with good questions, it will yield ever new insights.³³

We try not to burden the text with our presuppositions but learn from God's self-revelation. We do not presume the absolutist hermeneutic but listen to the scriptures when they tell us that God changes for our sake and even suffers on our behalf. The scriptures lead us to speak of God as one who humbles himself and who shows his perfection by changing as well as by not changing. We celebrate God's compassionate, suffering, and victorious love. We think that Augustine was wrong to have said that God does not grieve over suffering in the world, that Anselm was wrong to have said that God does not experience compassion, and that Calvin was wrong to have said that the biblical metaphors are merely accommodations to our finite understanding. For much too long, pagan assumptions about the divine nature have skewed our exegetical reflection.³⁴

Thus we note in the text such things as God's testing as a way of knowing man's heart. After testing Abraham, God says, "Now I know that thou fearest God" (Gen. 22:12). By testing Abraham, God learned what kind of fellow he was. On one occasion, God had decided to set aside the people of Israel and try some other approach, but, in response to Moses's prayer, "the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring upon his people" (Ex. 32:14). Jeremiah visited a potter's house and noted how the potter would rework the clay when it did not suit him. God says it is thus with the nations. God will bring judgment or not, depending on the circumstances. What God will do or not do depends in part on what his people will do or not do (Jer. 18:4–10). Isaiah the prophet likens Israel to a vineyard that God planted, one in which he worked hard but that still disappointed him. He had expected good grapes but received only wild grapes. God asks rhetorically why it yielded a bad harvest (Isa. 5:1–5). It was not what he had expected and not what he had wanted. In a word to Hosea, God speaks of his compassion despite Israel's ingratitude and even describes his inner feelings: "My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender" (Hosea 11:8). We find many texts that seem to support an openness rather than a classical hermeneutic.

PAULSEN: Perhaps the best way to see how our respective approaches to scripture, reason, tradition, and experience actually operate is to consider several doctrinal points case by case.

PINNOCK: To that end, then, I wish to put on the table specific items that will foster conversation between open and LDS theists.

DIVINE EMBODIMENT

PINNOCK: In the course of searching out the truth of scripture, I stumbled onto what was to me an unfamiliar and not very congenial idea (though not unfamiliar or uncongenial to LDS thinking or the patristic sources). This idea was evidence of divine embodiment.³⁵ Divine embodiment has not been something that open theists, much less other evangelicals, have been comfortable with. As one who wanted to take biblical imagery seriously, I found myself having to reckon on the possibility of God's having—or at least assuming, in the case of Jesus—embodied ways.³⁶ (This is a good illustration of how influential the community is on our interpretations.) So I had to ask myself why I had just let this lie before and had never pursued it. It was not as if some of the early fathers of the church, like Tertullian, had not taken it seriously—he did so, and strongly.

Nevertheless, “the idea that God is not embodied has been the stock-in-trade of Theological orthodoxy” for centuries.³⁷ John Macquarrie observes, “That God is a purely spiritual being, immaterial, invisible, intangible, is assumed to be a basic truth by the great majority of those who believe in God. To suggest that God might have a body would seem absurd to virtually all of those believers.”³⁸ But divine embodiment cannot be ruled out so long as one is prepared to elucidate the idea responsibly, which is what Grace Jantzen was trying to do with the suggestion that the universe itself is somehow God's body. I think that relational theists can accommodate this idea under our belief in God's omnipresence.

After I regained my bearing, I remembered a wise question by C. S. Lewis: “What soul ever perished from believing that God the Father really has a beard?”³⁹ In other words, maybe corporeality is a funny idea to many Christians and not one that we can easily entertain, but why rule it out when it has scriptural backing and when it forms no boundary issue for Christianity? Christians are entitled to peculiar beliefs without its robbing them of salvation, aren't they?

More substantially, I also remembered how Donald G. Bloesch makes room for the idea of divine embodiment when he writes, “[God] stands infinitely beyond materiality, but he has his own divine nature, his own supernatural body.” Again he writes, “God is not a material being, but he can assume a material form, and he has done so in the incarnation of his Son.”⁴⁰ This is extraordinary—here we have the premier evangelical systematic theologian speaking of divine embodiment! Granted, LDS theology is not his likely source, but Latter-day Saints are entitled to a bit of “we told you so” to more traditional Christians. Then add these comments

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID L. PAULSEN

BYU STUDIES: When did you first become aware of open theism?

PAULSEN: I came upon open theism in the mid-1990s while working on my article “The God of Abraham, Isaac and (William) James” [*Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (1999): 114–46], in which I argued that while James’s pragmatic view of God differed significantly from traditional Christianity’s, it was nonetheless biblical. I learned that open theists, like James, believe God to be relationally interactive with us and actively and freely engaged in an undetermined universe. For the article, I drew on arguments from *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* in providing a biblical defense of James’s understanding of God.



BYU STUDIES: How did the book *The Openness of God* come about?

PAULSEN: A lot of anger was expressed against the views of John Sanders and Clark Pinnock at a conference at Wheaton College, the focus of which was, ironically, religious pluralism. Consequently, Sanders and Pinnock set out to correct what they believed to be a gross misunderstanding of their view of God.

BYU STUDIES: Who are the main proponents of open theism?

PAULSEN: Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, Richard Rice, William Hasker, David Basinger, Randall Basinger, Greg Boyd, Thomas Jay Oord, John Polkinghorne, and Richard Swinburne.

BYU STUDIES: How long has open theism been around?

PAULSEN: It became a recognizable movement in 1994 with the publication of *The Openness of God*. But even earlier, thinkers like J. R. Lucas and Jürgen Moltmann had espoused similar views. Nineteenth-century theologian Lorenzo M'Cabe wrote two books on the topic.

BYU STUDIES: How popular has open theism become?

PAULSEN: *The Shack*, a fictional work with some openness ideas, has been on the New York Times bestseller list now for over a year, and *The Openness of God* has sold about 35,000 copies. Pinnock believes that the movement’s freshness breeds its popularity.

BYU STUDIES: What kind of tensions have open theists stirred up?

PAULSEN: They have reignited some classic arguments between Christian denominations. Some conservative evangelicals, especially those with Calvinist leanings, consider openness thinkers to be heretical and have taken action to marginalize them. Some open theists have been persecuted, including being forced to leave educational institutions. John Sanders was denied tenure and then terminated at Huntington University because of his openness views. A motion was brought before the Evangelical Theological Society to oust Sanders and Pinnock from the Society for the same reason. Open theist literature has been specifically excluded by some denominations and colleges.

BYU STUDIES: Such exclusions from institutions of higher education seem unusual.

PAULSEN: They are unusual. The major resistance often comes from whichever denomination supports the college. For example, open theist Greg Boyd was an extremely popular and effective faculty member at Bethel College in St. Paul. The college came under great pressure from a faction led by the Hyper-Calvinist John Piper to oust Boyd, but the administration resisted and refused to dismiss him.

BYU STUDIES: How did you begin a dialogue with open theists?

PAULSEN: I sent a reprint of my published article on William James to Clark Pinnock, who shared it with other leading open theists. Subsequently, I invited Sanders and Pinnock to lecture at BYU and at a meeting of the SMPT [Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology] hosted by Utah Valley University. However, I had become acquainted with Bill Hasker much earlier. The two of us were co-participants in the mid-eighties in an NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] summer institute for college teachers. Bill shared with me a published article on religious experience in which he referred to Mormons as “non-Christian.” Needless to say, this occasioned some rather passionate discussions. Shortly after returning home from the Institute, Bill mailed me a reprint of another of his published articles, this one on the trinity. On its cover he had inscribed: “To David, my heterodox, Christian friend.” Our paths have often crossed since.

BYU STUDIES: What is “open” about open theism?

PAULSEN: First, God is relationally open to us. He is receptive and reactive to our faith and influence. He invites us all to be “caught up into the dynamism of the divine life,” as Clark says. Also, God is open to the future, which is as yet largely undetermined.

BYU STUDIES: What other fundamental principles do open theists espouse?

PAULSEN: Tom Oord lists seven core principles: First, God and creatures are relational, meaning that others do affect them in give-and-take relationships. Second, God is not all-controlling and has not settled the future—thus God’s expectations about the future are partly dependent upon human action. Third, love is the ethical imperative of both God and humans. Fourth, God experiences change, though God’s nature is unchanging. Fifth, although everlasting, God experiences time in a way analogous to how humans experience time. Sixth, God created all nondivine things. Seventh, humans are genuinely free to make choices pertaining to their salvation.

BYU STUDIES: What are the most salient theological similarities and differences among prominent open theists?

PAULSEN: Open theists agree quite well on several points: God does not have absolute knowledge of future free decisions; God is attempting, consistent with other commitments, to make our lives as good as possible; God willingly self-limits his powers in order to grant humans meaningful freedom; and God experiences emotional change.

BYU STUDIES: And the differences?

PAULSEN: The most salient differences include the extent to which God self-limits his powers in order to grant humans meaningful freedom. Oord believes that God almost never intervenes in earthly affairs. Sanders, Hasker, and Basinger believe he sometimes intervenes, but they differ on what principles justify intervention. Boyd emphasizes that God has every possible situation thought out in advance and so has prepared each and every possible response prior to creation. Others think this idea takes away from genuine divine responsiveness.

BYU STUDIES: That phrase “genuine divine responsiveness” brings up the issue of a God who freely chooses and freely risks in the face of evil. Is there any controversy among open theists concerning choice and evil?

PAULSEN: Differences in their views on freedom and the nature of evil are particularly pronounced when looking at the incarnation of God. Some believe Jesus could have acquiesced to temptation, in which case the incarnation would have been aborted. Others hold a more traditional Christology and believe Jesus’ temptations were real, but that he could not have fallen. But open theists

generally do believe that God takes calculated risks. Sanders's book *The God Who Risks* has been very influential among openness thinkers.

BYU STUDIES: What is their position on creation and how that relates to evolution?

PAULSEN: Again, there are some differences here. While most open theists defend creation *ex nihilo*, Tom Oord admits to being the most explicit denier of it, and Pinnock admits that creation out of nothing is not described in Genesis. Regarding the evolutionary process in creation, some open theists believe evolution occurred largely without God's intervention, others think God had to be very involved in the evolutionary process, and others don't believe in evolution at all.

BYU STUDIES: What do open theologians mean by the word "theology"?

PAULSEN: Pinnock explains that since faith seeks understanding, "theology is a continuing search for the fullness of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Sanders says that the purpose of theology is to help Christians better live a Christian life, and so it involves reflection on scripture, traditions, cultural thought-forms, and modes of conduct. Oord says theology involves humble speculation about who God truly is and what God really does.

BYU STUDIES: So what does the word "theology" mean to you?

PAULSEN: For me, theology means sustained reflection on scriptural and other authoritative LDS discourse about God and his purposes for man with a view to deepen understanding, strengthen trust in God, and increase faithfulness in leading a Christian life. I personally find LDS theology compelling in each of these areas.

BYU STUDIES: What do you make of LDS thinkers who say Mormonism does not have a theology, at least in the traditional sense?

PAULSEN: Perhaps they mean that, given our belief in continuing revelation, we should not attempt to integrate our beliefs into anything like a complete and final system of thought. But granting this, it does not follow that we should not attempt to articulate our beliefs in a clear and self-consistent way.

BYU STUDIES: Although Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote *A Rational Theology*, Latter-day Saints often shy away from theology. Why?

PAULSEN: Historically, I don't believe Mormons have shied away from theology. In addition to *A Rational Theology*, there are many books by General Authorities that could appropriately

be considered theological. Widtsoe also wrote *Joseph Smith as Scientist* and *Evidences and Reconciliations*. James E. Talmage wrote *The Philosophical Basis of Mormonism* and *The Articles of Faith*. Major works by B. H. Roberts include *The Seventy's Course in Theology* [five volumes] and *The Truth, The Way, The Life*, as well as *Joseph Smith, the Prophet-Teacher*. Given my understanding of theology, nearly every book by Neal A. Maxwell is theological. Even *Doctrines of Salvation* [three volumes] and *Man: His Origin and Destiny* by Joseph Fielding Smith and *Mormon Doctrine* by Bruce R. McConkie could, perhaps, be included in the list. And these are just a few of the more prominent ones. Of course, such theological discourse, even that done by General Authorities as they often explicitly remind us, does not necessarily represent the position of the Church or have the status of official Church doctrine.

BYU STUDIES: In light of the LDS idea of authoritative revelation, is there room for such disciplines as “rational” or “speculative” theology in our tradition?

PAULSEN: Our theology is indeed grounded on revelation from God as opposed to human reason or speculative thought. Joseph Smith once said that if you could gaze into heaven for five minutes you would know more on the subject than is contained in all the books ever written. Joseph, and his successors in the prophetic office, I believe, have been granted such privileged gazes. But granted this, it does not follow that individual Church members, as well as individual General Authorities, should not engage in sustained reflection on religious questions. Indeed, such reflection may even serve as a prelude to revelation. Consider the backdrop for President Kimball's revelation on the priesthood being available to all worthy males. Ed Kimball's article in *BYU Studies* [vol. 47, no. 2] chronicles the pondering and questioning that took hold of leaders and Saints worldwide before the revelation.

BYU STUDIES: What lasting effect do you hope your book *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies* might have?

PAULSEN: My hope is that it will help spur ongoing theological dialogue between Latter-day Saints and other Christians. We have much to learn about and from each other.

by Richard Swinburne, a world-class Christian philosopher and open theist: “By saying that God is essentially bodiless, I mean that, although he may sometimes have a body, he is not dependent on his body in any way.” In other words, while we need our bodies in order to exist, God does not, though he has one.⁴¹

Whatever we make of this, I think we have to say that it is God *as personal*, not God *as spiritual*, that dominates biblical thinking. The writers did not worry as much as we do about approximating God too closely to the human. The tradition has wanted to emphasize the spirituality of God but in doing so has obscured the personal nature of God. So a corrective is needed, but a careful one, because there are dangers. Surely deity is not subject to human limitations such as needing to sleep or going to the restroom.⁴²

In this area, I was helped by something Stephen E. Robinson said: “Latter-day Saints affirm only that the Father has a body, not that his body has him.”⁴³ And I also appreciated Blake Ostler’s writing that “the sense in which the Father’s body is like a human body must be qualified.”⁴⁴ We have to remember that a glorified body would be very different from what we know of bodies (see Philip. 3:21 and 1 Cor. 15:50). The idea does not have to be taken in a crude way—there may be ways of understanding it that are intellectually viable.⁴⁵ It is easier, however, to understand how the Son acquired a body now in glory (we all celebrate that fact) than to understand how the Father acquired a body (if he did) or how the Spirit will (if he or she does). So there are issues to work on here. Meanwhile, in saying that God has a body, the Latter-day Saints have raised an issue for Christian theology and philosophy at large that should not be swept under the rug anymore. Are we traditionalists willing to give them a little credit for that? Can we not let them come in out of the cold?

PAULSEN: To be frank, it is particularly refreshing to see a theologian from the Wesleyan tradition seriously considering the many biblical passages that apparently take divine embodiment for granted. While I will refrain from taking the “I told you so” attitude regarding this particular issue, I will say that the Latter-day Saints have waited a long time for competent Christian theologians to release explicitly anthropomorphic and anthropopathic biblical passages from the shackles of merely figurative interpretation.

Pinnock addresses the issue of divine embodiment at greater length in his book *Most Moved Mover*, where he writes:

In tradition, God is thought to function primarily as a disembodied spirit but this is scarcely a biblical idea. For example, Israel is called to hear God’s word and gaze on his glory and beauty. Human beings

are said to be embodied creatures created in the image of God. Is there perhaps something in God that corresponds with embodiment? Having a body is certainly not a negative thing because it makes it possible for us to be agents. Perhaps God's agency would be easier to envisage if he were in some way corporeal. Add to that fact that in the theophanies of the Old Testament God encounters humans in the form of a man. They indicate that God shares our life in the world in a most intense and personal manner. For example, look at the following texts. In Exodus 24:10–11 Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abidu and seventy of the elders of Israel went up Mount Sinai and beheld God, as they ate and drank. Exodus 33:11 tells us that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." Moses saw "God's back" but not his face (Exod. 33:23). When God chose to reveal his glory, Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up (Is. 6:1). Ezekiel saw "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord" (Ezek. 1:28). John saw visions of one seated upon the throne (Rev. 4:2) and of the Son of Man in his glory (Rev. 1:12–16). Add to the fact that God took on a body in the incarnation and Christ has taken that body with him into glory. It seems to me that the Bible does not think of God as formless.⁴⁶

Latter-day Saints have often made similar biblical cases for the doctrine, agreeing with Pinnock's own declaration, "We need to let God's own self-revelation dominate our thinking rather than what natural reason and tradition tell us that God must be like."⁴⁷ Pinnock's statement echoes that of LDS scholar B. H. Roberts in *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* wherein Roberts cites Jesus Christ as being "both premise and argument" for divine embodiment.⁴⁸ Is Jesus God? Was he resurrected with a tangible, though glorious, incorruptible body of flesh and bones? In describing to his Apostles the nature of his resurrected body, Jesus uses straightforward declaration rather than allegory, imagery, or parable. "Behold, my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; For a Spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have" (Luke 24:39).

Will Jesus ever lose or discard His resurrected body?⁴⁹ James describes death as "the body without the spirit," and Paul affirms that Christ's resurrected body is incorruptible (1 Cor. 15), "that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (James 2:26; Rom. 6:9). Latter-day Saints hold to a social model of the Godhead consisting of three distinct persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who together constitute one God or one mutually indwelling divine community. Did not Jesus declare himself to be the fullest and clearest revelation of God the Father when he declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)? Paul is even more explicit in his letter to the Hebrews: "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:1–3). *Strong's Concordance* explains

“express image” as denoting “a graver, i.e., engraving, the figure stamped, i.e., an exact copy or representation.”⁵⁰ Therefore, the LDS *biblical* case for divine embodiment can be succinctly stated as follows:

1. Jesus Christ is God.
2. Jesus Christ was resurrected with an incorruptible body.
3. The separation of the spirit from the body is death.
4. Jesus Christ will never die again.
5. Thus, Jesus Christ will be embodied everlastingly (from 2–4).
6. Therefore, Jesus Christ is both God and embodied everlastingly (follows from 1, 2, and 5).
7. Jesus is the express image of the Father (Heb. 1:1–3).
8. Therefore, God the Father is embodied everlastingly (from 5 and 7).

Pinnock states that divine embodiment cannot be “ruled out so long as one is prepared to elucidate the idea responsibly.” What could be more responsible than relying on “the revelation of God in Jesus Christ” as our premise, argument, and understanding for the way in which God is embodied? Is it so “peculiar” (Pinnock, 63) to believe that one member of the Godhead has the same properties (physical as well as moral) as another?

In *Most Moved Mover*, in addition to making a biblical case for divine embodiment, Pinnock proposes (without developing) three arguments for the same conclusion. First, Pinnock opines that God’s agency would be easier to envisage if he were in some way corporeal.⁵¹ Second, Pinnock suggests that embodiment may be a necessary condition of personhood. “The only persons we encounter are embodied persons and, if God is not embodied, it may prove difficult to understand how God is a person. What kind of actions could a disembodied God perform?”⁵² Finally, Pinnock hypothesizes that corporeality may be a necessary condition of God’s being passible.⁵³ Each of these suggestions is provocative and each merits further development. Latter-day Saints should be eager to join in the task.

In regard to tradition, while Latter-day Saints would agree with Pinnock that “the idea that God is not embodied has been the stock-in-trade” of orthodoxy for centuries, they might question how *many* centuries Christians have believed in an incorporeal God (Pinnock, 63). Indeed, divine simplicity and incorporeality were not included in the faith once delivered to Christians, but were introduced into Christian thought from Greek philosophy (Pinnock, 53–54). Pinnock concedes that it is Platonism rather than Biblicism which damns the idea of a corporeal God when he

writes, "I do not feel obliged to assume that God is a purely spiritual being when his self-revelation does not suggest it. It is true that from a Platonic standpoint, the idea is absurd, but this is not a biblical standpoint."⁵⁴ In a previous paper, I provide evidence that ordinary Christians for at least the first three centuries of the current era commonly (and perhaps generally) believed God to be corporeal.⁵⁵ It is the tradition of the early centuries, as close to the apostolic era as possible, to which the Latter-day Saints (and maybe openness Saints) would rather associate.

Finally, I will mention two issues in regard to the existential meaning of a belief in an embodied God. First, belief in an embodied God replaces the duality of Greek philosophy wherein the body is relegated to an evil regression from the purely spiritual⁵⁶ with an abiding reverence for the body, which finds a divine parallel in God. Thus, as LDS philosopher Truman G. Madsen says, "There are levels of consciousness, powers of expression, ways of fulfillment in thought, feeling, and action that come only when the threefold nature of man is harmoniously combined. To cultivate the soul is to cultivate both the body and spirit."⁵⁷ LDS Apostle Charles W. Penrose summarizes the existential implication of believing in divine embodiment: "The body of flesh is . . . essential to its [the spirit of man's] progress, essential to its experience on the earth and ultimately in its glorified condition, essential to its eternal happiness, and progress and power in the presence of the Father."⁵⁸

Second, understanding the literalness of being created "in the image" of God is tremendously ennobling and empowering as one seeks to overcome the trials and temptations of the flesh (Gen. 1:26–27). Current LDS President Thomas S. Monson expressed this idea to a group of Latter-day Saints in Helsinki, Finland: "John Mott, a recipient of the Nobel Prize, indicated that this particular knowledge, a knowledge that we have been created in the image of God, is the single greatest segment of knowledge that can come to man in mortality." Though in and of ourselves "we can do but little," President Monson explains, "when we realize that we have actually been made in the image of God, all things are possible."⁵⁹

In sum, it is important to keep in mind here that while the Latter-day Saints find considerable biblical evidence and rational support for the doctrine of divine embodiment,⁶⁰ their affirmation of the doctrine is grounded most fundamentally neither on biblical exegesis nor theological argument. Joseph declared that the Father and Son have tangible bodies, humanlike in form, because this is how these two divine personages revealed themselves to him in a series of divine disclosures beginning with their appearance to Joseph in a tradition-shattering theophany known as the First Vision.⁶¹ These disclosures have served to greatly illuminate

anthropomorphic biblical passages. Modern revelation is thus the bedrock for LDS belief in divine embodiment.

PINNOCK: Regarding the divine embodiment, David was encouraged when he found that I had noticed this idea in the Bible and was willing to take it seriously, if not literally. He is right—it is time for self-styled Bible-believing evangelicals to stop sweeping under the carpet biblical ideas that they disapprove of. For my part, I do not mind giving credit where credit is due. The difference is what we imagine it means for God to be embodied. I agree that no soul will perish for having thought that God had a beard, so let's stop nitpicking and start asking, How is it that God can do the things that the Bible plainly says he does?

PAULSEN: On this issue our views converge considerably, although Clark is much less certain than I as to the nature and mode of God's embodiment. The divergence in our views is again a function of our initial standpoints. The biblical data on which Clark relies is not sufficient to resolve the issue. Canonized modern revelation accepted by Latter-day Saints is more definitive: the Father and the Son have bodies "of flesh and bones as tangible as man's," while the Holy Ghost is "a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22–23).⁶² Spirits are also bodies. A "spirit" is a person with a body that is humanlike in form (Ether 3:6–16). "All spirit is matter," but matter so rarefied and pure that it cannot be discerned by normal visual perception (D&C 131:7–8). The conventional idea that spirits are immaterial substances, I believe, is not biblical but a borrowing from Platonist philosophy.⁶³

PLURALITY OF GODS AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

PINNOCK: A similar example of an unexpected result of exegesis among open theists, and of interest to Latter-day Saints, crops up in the work of Gregory A. Boyd. While examining the motif of spiritual warfare in the Bible, he says he is comfortable with biblical references to other gods existing alongside Yahweh.⁶⁴ Boyd does not think that these other gods can successfully challenge the creator, since their power is "on loan," but he does think that they have significant power to thwart God's will and can inflict suffering on others. This is a different take on monotheism, which dictates that God is the only god in existence. Boyd sees other "gods" as created but fallen beings and comes close, I think, to the LDS idea of subordinate gods. The Bible does not take the view that there are no gods apart from Yahweh. It presents a more practical kind of monotheism. The Bible says that the nations have their "gods," but Yahweh is the only God one needs to deal with if one is an Israelite (or a Christian). We believers

are unimpressed by rival deities—for us, the Lord, not Baal, is God. The other gods are subject to God. The psalmist says, “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment” (Ps. 82:1).⁶⁵ In this arena, Western theology tends to think of God and the world but neglects to consider the celestial middle world, that is, the powers in between heaven and earth. This cannot be said about churches in the third world nor about the Latter-day Saints.⁶⁶ I am unsure whether Mormons also develop, as Boyd does, a scenario of spiritual warfare that may contribute to a relational theodicy, which helps to explain why the world often has the appearance of a battlefield.

PAULSEN: Very simply, yes, Mormons do develop “a scenario of spiritual warfare that may contribute to a relational theodicy.” However, the LDS understanding of “spiritual warfare” is a result of the conjunction of two foundational doctrines, both of which are addressed by Pinnock. The first is the belief in the eternality of intelligences⁶⁷ (or primordial individuals⁶⁸) while the second is the belief in libertarian free will.

These two concepts lay the foundation for LDS belief in a premortal “war in heaven.” Since individuals have always existed and have always possessed free will, it is possible that there have always been wills in opposition to the divine will, and hence the possibility of “spiritual warfare” is something that God has always had to deal with. Latter-day Saints believe this battle of competing agencies was what John the Revelator was describing when he wrote of a war in heaven. “Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not.” Satan, the dragon, was banished from heaven, being “cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:7–9).

Scriptures revealed to Joseph Smith are even more explicit in describing the rebellion of Lucifer and his attempt to persuade the children of God to follow him (see Moses 4:1–6). This belief in premortal war is congruent with the LDS conception of mortal life as a testing and trial period (see Abraham 3:25). Jude records that there were angels “which kept not their first estate” (Jude 1:6). LDS theology recognizes mortality as man’s second estate and the next phase in the battle, which started in the premortal realm, to overcome evil and develop Godlike qualities. This insight becomes especially profound when one attempts to develop a relational theology that effectively deals with the problem of evil, for if intelligences (or spirits) are self-existently eternal and autonomous, then God cannot determine or control the choices that these intelligences may make. His only option is persuasion. Thus, God is relational not solely by choice but by ontological necessity. He must, in order to accomplish his plans and

purposes, resort to persuasion, longsuffering, and loving relationships when dealing with others.

THEOSIS AND DEIFICATION

PINNOCK: Yet another exegetical surprise for me, also in the realm of “the gods,” arose in the idea of “theosis” drawn from Eastern Orthodox thinking, to which both Latter-day Saints and open theists appeal. Theosis is the idea that believers will share the glory of God and become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Evangelicals accept this notion too and indeed are thrilled by it; however, they have not taken theosis so literally that they call it deification. Open theists have thought of it as believers sharing the glory of God without ceasing to be creatures.⁶⁹

We have not felt comfortable saying that humans “become gods,” as Latter-day Saints have, even though we know that early Christians did speak of our human destiny in such terms. For example, Irenaeus writes, “Christ became what we are so that we might become what he is,”⁷⁰ and Athanasius writes, “He became man that we might become divine.”⁷¹ However, I wonder whether these Greek theologians thought of it quite in Latter-day Saint terms. Bridging the gap a little, Ostler makes the point that these “gods” are not to be identified with the supreme God. Lesser deities can partake of the divine nature but cannot surpass God, who is ruler of the universe and the God of gods.⁷² Robinson too writes, “Latter-day Saints do not, or at least should not, believe that they will ever be independent in all eternity from their Father in heaven or from their Savior Jesus Christ or from the Holy Spirit.” They “will always be subordinate to the Godhead.”⁷³ This narrows the gap between open theists and Latter-day Saints. With these comments in mind, how far apart are we really? (I suspect that the exponents of theosis in the early church and even in modern exponents like C. S. Lewis would have held onto a gap remaining between the uncreated God and a created humanity, even a humanity in this future blessed condition.)⁷⁴

PAULSEN: Pinnock seems to accept theosis to a point, yet maintains an ultimate and inherent “gap” between God and humans. Latter-day Saint tradition holds that there exists no *ontological* barrier preventing mankind from becoming all that God is and enjoying the *same* kind of life that God lives, and I have been puzzled by LDS scholarly claims to the contrary.⁷⁵

The logic behind this concept of existence is quite simple: man is an eternal intelligence, and so is God. God has advanced (staggeringly) far beyond man, and thus, in the words of Joseph Smith, “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent,

saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to *advance like himself*.” Our relationship to God “places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted *with Himself*.”⁷⁶

Thus God, our Father in Heaven, analogously to an earthly father, becomes our mentor, our confidant, and our guide as we pass through the experiences of our mortal lives. We are dependent upon Him for the means and guidance to survive physical and spiritual death and to flourish spiritually, but not because we are of a different ontological species—we simply lack the requisite knowledge, experience, and spiritual strength to do so on our own. Thus God’s purpose becomes the immortality and exaltation of the “weaker intelligences.” Indeed, in a revelation to Joseph Smith, Jesus Christ promises, “You may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father” (D&C 93:19–20). Elaborating upon this promise, Joseph taught:

What is it [to be joint heirs with Christ]? To inherit the *same* power, the *same* glory, and the *same* exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, *the same as those who have gone before*. What did Jesus do? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds came rolling into existence. *My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same*; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to My Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom.⁷⁷

In short, God’s purpose is to help man realize his divine potential, and until recently LDS thinkers have recognized no limits upon this potential. One of the biggest differences between LDS and open theology is that in LDS theology there is no inherent or unbridgeable ontological gap between human beings and God. Pinnock notes the differing ontological frame from which Mormons view the world. If this is the case, the question for open theism is what to do with the overwhelming biblical evidence that humans are offspring of God, not creatures merely.⁷⁸ If humankind is of the same species as God, then it is rational to believe in a more ennobling version of theosis or deification.

For traditional Christianity, the doctrine of deification⁷⁹ has a unique history. Biblically, Peter, John, and Paul all spoke of the idea that man can become God (2 Pet. 1:4, John 14–17, Rom. 8). In the writings of Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria, one can find references to the idea that “God became man, that man might become God.”⁸⁰ Indeed, the doctrine of theosis has always played a distinctive role especially in the East; Vladimir Lossky refers to theosis

as the “very essence of Christianity.”⁸¹ By contrast, however, acceptance or enumeration of an explicit doctrine of deification in Western theology has been minimal, if not absent. D. B. Clendenin says:

Western theologians in general and Protestants in particular have given only scant attention to the central importance of theosis in Orthodox thought. Nor do they address the doctrine as an important biblical category in its own right. New Testament theologies such as those by George Ladd (1974) and Leon Morris (1986), for example, do not even mention theosis. On the other hand, as early as Gregory Palamas’s fourteenth-century work *On Divine and Deifying Participation*, Orthodox thinkers have systematically analyzed the doctrine at length.⁸²

But things are changing. The past fifty years reflect a steadily increasing interest in the issue of deification. Some scholars are asserting that deification is not only compatible with Augustinian theology, it is central to it.⁸³ References to deification have even been found in Aquinas’s *Theologica*.⁸⁴ The result of this awakening has been a virtual explosion of research, dialogue, and publication regarding the doctrine of deification.⁸⁵ And it crosses every denominational line. Latter-day Saints are eager to continue the conversation.

As to the existential meaning of belief in theosis, Latter-day Saints identify with Catholic theologian Mark O’Keefe. After noting that “reference to deification is virtually absent from the major Roman Catholic ascetical and mystical manuals of this century,” O’Keefe mourns its loss and the fact that it “could not regain a central place in Roman Catholic spiritual theology.”⁸⁶ He speaks repeatedly of “retrieving” the idea of theosis and believes that this doctrine contains a powerful pragmatic punch that should be vital in spurring believers to live a more moral and spiritual life. He explains, “To understand the Christian life as a path of *theosis* is to suggest that the human person is called not ‘merely’ into relationship with God—as truly incredible as that is in itself—but that human persons are invited and called into a share in the divine life itself.”⁸⁷

While I believe that scripture, tradition, and reason compel us to this stronger formulation of deification, I do think Robinson is essentially correct when he said that deified humans “will always be subordinate to the Godhead”⁸⁸ as long as such subordination is not held to be an ontological necessity. Deified humans will forever be subordinate to the Godhead because, as Charles Hartshorne argues, God is unsurpassable in certain respects, but eternally self-surpassing in others. But never is God to be surpassed by something else.⁸⁹ Hence even those who reach the status of god will never catch up to God himself because he is continually

progressing with respect to these great-making attributes. I think B. H. Roberts had it right when he taught that exalted intelligences

may be regarded as available for *assignments* to presiding stations among the Presiding Intelligences of the universes of the Gods—the sons of Gods, to preside in worlds or systems of worlds as may be required. . . . Of such may be chosen sons to preside *as Deities* over worlds and world systems as the Gods of eternity may determine or appoint.⁹⁰

God will continue to direct the future of the cosmos, but within a community of those who possess the same nature and attributes rather than as a solitary, “unmoved mover.”

PINNOCK: A real difference here is my belief in the ontological gap between God and the creation and David’s denial of it. The God I worship was not once a man like me. We are not (God and I) of the same species. I am create—God is uncreate.

PAULSEN: Clark is correct, I believe, in pointing out that Latter-day Saints hold a more robust view of deification than most Orthodox theologians, owing to a difference in their theological anthropology. Given Clark’s premise, it follows logically that man can never be exactly like God, for that which is create can never become uncreate. I ask, however, what conceivable limits are there in eternity to human development and transformation with God as guide, sanctifier, and enabler? Peter and Paul both affirm that in the eschaton Christ will transform man into his likeness (Philip. 3:21; 2 Pet. 1:4). And John writes, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2). Sacred scripture affirms that God is both able and willing to transform us into his likeness. Why then should we call such transformation impossible or even qualify God’s promises in ways he does not?

THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

PINNOCK: When it comes to God’s omniscience, there is a discussion among Latter-day Saints, much as there is among evangelicals, with some holding to exhaustive definite foreknowledge and others holding to present knowledge, that is, to a foreknowledge that considers the future as not completely settled and, therefore, as not completely foreknown.⁹¹ Belief in libertarian freedom beckons both groups to move in the latter direction. For instance, open theists hold to a self-limitation on God’s part, one aspect of which involves God’s making a world with a future that would not be foreknowable in its entirety. Open theism takes self-limitation one step further than classical Arminians do, who believe in

libertarian freedom but maintain God's exhaustive foreknowledge. This is an important step but not a huge one. It sounds to me as if in this matter the two communities are in just about the same place.

PAULSEN: Pinnock challenges the traditional understanding of omniscience by contending elsewhere that although God knows "everything that could exist in [the] future," he does not possess exhaustive specific foreknowledge.⁹² For Pinnock, "exhaustive foreknowledge would not be possible in a world with real freedom."⁹³ Critics of the openness model are quick to contend that any qualification of the notion of God's complete knowledge of the future diminishes his power and worshipability. To the contrary, open theologians argue, this only makes God more praiseworthy for his wisdom and resourcefulness in responding to emerging contingencies. I would agree with Pinnock's assessment that in the area of divine foreknowledge the LDS and open "communities are in just about the same place."

Latter-day Saints differ among themselves in their understandings of the extent of God's foreknowledge.⁹⁴ Some, including Presidents Brigham Young and Wilford Woodruff, have thought that God increases endlessly in knowledge and, hence, presumably, lacks exhaustive foreknowledge. Brigham Young stated that "the God I serve is progressing eternally, and so are his children; they will increase to all eternity, if they are faithful."⁹⁵ And, in agreement with Young, Wilford Woodruff explained: "If there was a point where man in his progression could not proceed any further, the very idea would throw a gloom over every intelligent and reflecting mind. God himself is increasing and progressing in knowledge, power, and dominion, and will do so, worlds without end. It is just so with us. We are in a probation, which is a school of experience."⁹⁶

Other Latter-day Saints hold to a more traditional view that God's knowledge, including the foreknowledge of future free contingencies, is exhaustively complete. Joseph Fielding Smith asserted: "Do we believe that God has all 'wisdom'? If so, in that, he is absolute. If there is something he does not know, then he is not absolute in 'wisdom,' and to think such a thing is absurd." God progresses not by learning hidden truth, "for if there are truths which he does not know, then these things are greater than he, and this cannot be."⁹⁷ Bruce R. McConkie expressed a similar sentiment:

God progresses in the sense that his kingdoms increase and his dominions multiply—not in the sense that he learns new truths and discovers new laws. God is not a student. He is not a laboratory technician. He is not postulating new theories on the basis of past experiences. He has indeed graduated to that state of exaltation that consists of knowing all things.⁹⁸

Despite these differing views within the LDS tradition, there is accord on three fundamental points: (1) Man is an agent with power to choose other than what he, in fact, chooses; (2) Whatever the extent and nature of God's foreknowledge, it is not inconsistent with man's freedom—God's knowledge does not causally determine human choices; and (3) God's knowledge, like God's power, is maximally efficacious. No event occurs that he has not anticipated at least *qua* possibility or has not taken into account in his planning.

Pinnock's statement concerning the attractiveness of open theism could well describe Mormonism: "Young people often gravitate toward open theism because it encourages them to make a difference in a future that is not altogether settled" (Pinnock, 55). Libertarian free will contains tremendous emotional and practical appeal. We find it ennobling to understand ourselves as agents, free to choose, and thus to accept responsibility for our choices. It is motivating to believe that our futures are not yet settled and that our present choices will impact the world's outcomes. Indeed, we live as if these self-understandings were true, no matter what our theological creeds may say.

PINNOCK: David and I are quite close and find debating partners within our own groups on the subject of divine omniscience. Were it the case that God possessed exhaustive definite foreknowledge, it would mean that the future is completely settled and no issues need to be resolved. It leaves no room for the historical biblical drama or to our own dignity to make contributions as co-laborers with God. It prevents us from being possibility thinkers and makes us into a people of resignation, as if whatever will be will be.

GOD, GENDER, AND THE DIVINE FEMININE

PINNOCK: A delicate point and a point of divergence concerns God and gender. If God is personal, even embodied, one might conclude that God would have to be either male or female. And, since God is our "Father," he is presumably male. And, if God is male and begets offspring, there must be a goddess, a Mrs. God, somewhere. (Unless God were male and female, since humankind, male *and* female, was made in God's image.) So what, if any, sexual characteristics apply to God?

Open theists assume that none literally do, except in sociological ways. That is, we have taken the term "Father" not to indicate a sexual being so much as a patriarch, pointing to God's qualities of leadership, headship, and transcendence. We have not and do not think of God as having a consort. True, Jesus is the "Only Begotten" of the Father, but we have not

thought of this in sexual terms either. I have always thought of the Father/Son relation not in terms of physical patriarchy but in terms of intimacy and mutual fidelity. We think of God as male-like in depiction but also as female-like—that is, as manifesting feminine qualities like nurturing and tenderness (for example, God’s feeling the pangs of childbirth on behalf of his people in Isa. 42:14). Similarly, activities of the Holy Spirit are taught with the use of feminine images—activities like comforting, encouraging, yearning, and birthing. Some prefer the masculine traits in God, which bring out ideas of initiating, commanding, and establishing. But open theists, along with many others, are drawn in the direction of balancing both male and female traits in God.

On the other hand, Latter-day Saints seem to believe in a literal male deity. This being the case, I wonder why we hear practically nothing of a female deity. Is she everlasting too? Can she be prayed to? Do Latter-day Saints speak of goddesses? Is there procreation among God and Goddess? Evangelicals have great difficulty imagining God in this way. We have heard of such things in the religions of the ancient Near East, where gods are begotten and come into being, but we have not seen it in the Bible. Might it be that, just as classical theism was influenced by Hellenism (as open theists and Latter-day Saints agree), LDS theism runs the risk of buying into a different kind of paganism, a paganism not from Athens but from Ugarit? Is it possible that in their tradition of a procreating God and Goddess, Latter-day Saints have let some pagan Semitic ideas exercise undue influence?⁹⁹

Issues such as this one suggest certain questions about the role of tradition in theology. While open theologians are perhaps unwilling to partake in the drastic revision of tradition that a notion like God’s gender would require, certain theological revisions need to be made in light of the openness view, revisions which Latter-day Saints presumably could agree with. For open theism, certain of the divine attributes need to be redefined so as to bring out the perfections of a personal God. We need to introduce such categories as God’s changeable faithfulness, God’s self-limitation, God’s relationality, the divine pathos, the divine temporality, the divine foreknowledge, and the divine wisdom and resourcefulness.¹⁰⁰ New categories need to come into play, and some may need to be retired or, if not retired, at least reworked.

For example, there is no love without openness to rejection, suffering, and loss. To believe in the triune God is to believe in a God who shares our suffering, a suffering that is not a sign of impotence but of strength and that leads to final victory. God’s unity is not a mathematical oneness but a living unity with diversity. God’s steadfastness is not a dead immutability

but a dynamic constancy of character and purpose that includes movement and change. Here is a power that is not raw omnipotence but that reigns with a sovereignty of love that is strong even in weakness. Here is an omniscience that is not a trivial know-it-allness but a wisdom that includes the foolishness of the cross. An openness hermeneutic requires revision in the ways we think about and define some of the divine attributes. It requires subtle changes across the spectrum of the attributes, if they are to be the perfections of a personal God.¹⁰¹

PAULSEN: Pinnock astutely notices at the outset that “if God is personal, even embodied, one might conclude that God would have to be either male or female.” In regards to such a “delicate point” of God and gender, I return once again to Jesus Christ as both premise and argument.¹⁰² Was Jesus Christ literally a man? Is Jesus Christ God? The same argument asserted in favor of divine embodiment may be used again in regards to God being literally male. Assuming God is male (as Latter-day Saints do), Pinnock asks a variety of questions, including “Do Latter-day Saints speak of goddesses?” and “Is there procreation?” To both of these questions, LDS theology answers yes. The idea of a Mother in Heaven is deeply enshrined in LDS thought and even hymnology. The idea found its clearest and most moving expression in a poem written by Eliza R. Snow, first published November 15, 1845, in the *Times and Seasons*. It was subsequently set to music and included in an LDS hymnal first published (without a title) in 1851 in Liverpool.¹⁰³ Titled now “O My Father,” it has been one of the most beloved LDS hymns for over 150 years. It is partially quoted here:

I had learned to call thee Father,
Thru thy Spirit from on high,
But, until the key of knowledge
Was restored, I knew not why.
In the heav'ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare!
Truth is reason; truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.¹⁰⁴

The belief that we have a Mother in Heaven was officially accorded doctrinal status in 1909 when the Church's First Presidency, in a statement called “The Origin of Man,” declared: “All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.”¹⁰⁵ The doctrinal status of a Heavenly Mother was again officially reaffirmed in the “Proclamation on the Family” issued in 1995 by the Church's First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God.
Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such,

each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps more surprising than present Christian theological interest in a divine feminine is the emerging body of scholarship which indicates that the idea of a Heavenly Mother is no modern innovation but has biblical support. A great many Bible scholars believe that ancient Israel believed in a goddess named Asherah. Mark S. Smith goes further than this, suggesting that perhaps the majority of experts in this field agree that ancient Israel believed in this goddess.¹⁰⁷

LDS leadership and scholars have spoken to some extent of the existential meaning of Joseph's doctrine. In speaking to the women of the church, President Spencer W. Kimball said, "God made man in his own image and certainly he made woman in the image of his wife-partner. . . . You [women] are daughters of God. You are precious. You are made in the image of our heavenly Mother."¹⁰⁸ President Harold B. Lee spoke of the influence of our Mother in Heaven: "We forget that we have a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother who are even more concerned, probably, than our earthly father and mother, and that influences from beyond are constantly working to try to help us."¹⁰⁹ Another church leader, Vaughn J. Featherstone, said, "Women are endowed with special traits and attributes that come trailing down through eternity from a divine mother. . . . Theirs is a sacred, God-given role, and the traits they received from heavenly mother are equally as important as those given to the young men."¹¹⁰ This existential meaning is deeply significant to Latter-day Saints.¹¹¹

Pinnock's curiosity concerning "Mrs. God" is valid, and his honest inquiries deserve reasoned responses.

"Is she everlasting?" The Latter-day Saints hold that *all* intelligence is everlasting in the sense that it cannot be created or destroyed, and hence the intelligence possessed by "Mrs. God" is just as everlasting as that possessed by God the Father.

"Can she be prayed to?" Latter-day Saints, like their fellow Christians, follow the pattern outlined by the Savior in the Lord's Prayer: they address the Father, give thanks, ask for blessings, and close in the name of Jesus Christ. This pattern holds true for all LDS prayers, both public and private. President Gordon B. Hinckley reiterated this pattern: "Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. That doctrine rests well with me. However, in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven." However, he hastens to add that "the fact that we do not pray to our Mother

in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her.”¹¹² In our prayers we simply strive to follow the example that Jesus Christ set for us.

“Do the Latter-day Saints speak of goddesses? Is there procreation?” While the Latter-day Saints admittedly do not often speak of “gods and goddesses” in their Church meetings, this idea *does* occupy a central place in LDS theology as well as in temple ceremonies—of which eternal marriage is one. And as noted before, the ability to enjoy an “eternal increase” is one of the main characteristics by virtue of which God is considered to be divine. Hence, the LDS concept of deification holds that this divine, procreative power can be communicated to those who qualify for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Thus it is clear that deification requires *both* the male and female genders, and that *both* are to be considered “gods” and “goddesses” respectively, and the doctrines of the eternality of families and the ability to exercise procreative powers beyond the grave are cherished by the Latter-day Saints.

Moreover, since the doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is not explicitly stated in the revelations, sermons, or writings of Joseph Smith, Pinnock’s suggestion of LDS theological borrowing from Ugarit is understandable.¹¹³ However, the doctrine was implicit in Joseph’s revelations regardless whether he explicitly drew it out.¹¹⁴ Indisputably, the idea of a Mother in Heaven was openly expressed and published within months of Joseph’s death. W. W. Phelps¹¹⁵ referred to the idea in a poem,¹¹⁶ which he composed and read at the dedication of the Nauvoo Seventies Hall on December 26, 1844. The poem was published in the Church newspaper the following month. It seems significant that this first known publication of the idea presented the doctrine matter-of-factly, as if commonplace. Several months later, in October 1845, Eliza R. Snow published her poem “O My Father.”

PINNOCK: I, in my innocence, prodded David to talk about divine gender a little, and he put a number of interesting ideas on the table. His discussion of the hymnody, for example, reveals how proud Latter-day Saints are of their doctrine of divine gender. They love to think that they have a Mother in Heaven who models for them what it means to be female, including the conception and rearing of children. But questions arise in my curious mind. Do the gods and goddesses have intimate relations? Do their bodies process waste? Did Yahweh have a wife and consort? David responds that he may have had one, and her name was possibly Asherah. One marvels at how literal the Latter-day Saints are willing to be in working out their beliefs in divine embodiment and human theosis. They really mean it when they say that we are “like God” and God is “like us,” whiskers and all. I think that non-Latter-day Saints will take a while to come around to these ideas.

I come to the issue of God from the standpoint of a modified classical trinitarian monotheism, while Dr. Paulsen comes at them from the insights (nay, revelations) found in the LDS standard works and later documents. The result is that when I encounter these LDS concepts of God, I am amazed. I find myself scratching my head and asking: “What did he just say?” Partly this is due to my not having come across some of the ideas before and partly it is due to what seems to me to be its fantastic aspects: the golden bible, a radical doctrine of deification, private temple rituals, a remarkable history, Joseph Smith’s King Follett Discourse, and so on. I am only trying to register the point that the intellectual and cultural distance between us is considerable, and the evangelical/LDS dialogue is at an early stage. We are not going to get things altogether right the first time around, and the best thing for us to do is just to get on with it. We can trust God to use such conversations to bring us closer to the truth.

PAULSEN: In the context of discussing LDS belief in a Mother in Heaven, Clark “marvels at how literal Latter-day Saints are willing to be in working out their beliefs in divine embodiment and human theosis” and poses some of the questions to which these beliefs give rise. “Do the gods and goddesses have intimate relations? Do their bodies process waste?” Very simply, we do not know. Of course, it is fallacious to assume that since God is like us in some respects—for example, in having a body (D&C 130:1, 22) that is humanlike in form—he must be like us in all respects—for example, in having a body that is exactly like ours in all of its operations and functions.¹¹⁷ To make such an assumption is to be guilty of “reverse anthropomorphism.”

Scriptures, both biblical and LDS-specific, definitively mark out ways in which a divine body differs from ours. Paul provides the fullest biblical account of different modes of embodiment; he sharply distinguishes the mortal body from a resurrected or divine body: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power” (1 Cor. 15:42–43).

Similarly, in his epistle to the Philippians, Paul again strikingly contrasts these two kinds of bodies when he affirms that Christ “shall change our vile¹¹⁸ body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philip. 3:21). James E. Faulconer has reminded us that “Luke 24:31 tells us that Christ is able to disappear immediately from view and Luke 24:36 tells us that he can enter a [shut] room just as suddenly.”¹¹⁹ This ability is also shown in Acts 1:1–11 when Christ ascends bodily into heaven.

Mortal and divine bodies are also contrasted in modern revelations. Joseph Smith describes the Father and the Son as standing above him in

the air—apparently divine bodies are not subject to or can override the effects of gravity. He reports that their “brightness and glory” was beyond “all description” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). And in the report of Moses’ face-to-face encounter with God, when “the presence of God withdrew from Moses,” he “fell unto the earth.” It was “many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.” So glorious is God’s personage that Moses had to undergo a temporary transfiguration simply to withstand God’s presence (Moses 1:9–11). Notwithstanding the fact that our knowledge of both male and female divine bodies is scant, it is clear that they are not subject to all of the limitations of mortal bodies.¹²⁰

THE SOCIAL TRINITY

PINNOCK: Remarkably, both Latter-day Saints and open theists hold to a “social Trinity.” Open theists believe in one God and three persons. We see God’s eternal life as personal life in relationship. God exists in community and constitutes a communion, or *koinonia*, of persons joined in love. The divine life is social and the basis of community among creatures. (Indeed, our human experience of community is the best clue we have for understanding God’s triune life.) The three persons find their identity in their relationship with one another. They “indwell” each other, they make room for each other, and they are united in a divine dance. But what is the nature of the unity? The Trinity seems to be quite unlike anything on earth. It involves a rich and complex oneness and is closer to an organic than to a mathematical unity.¹²¹ Open theists do not think of the Trinity as a self-enclosed group of divine beings (like Peter, James, and John in Gregory of Nyssa’s analogy), which smacks of tritheism. Instead, open theists are dealing with a mysterious symbol of a God who saves us and whose triune nature is something incomprehensible in theory but intimate in relational terms. God is a community of persons knit together in a bond of love and beyond complete understanding. It calls believers to enter the dance and to love without judging.

For Latter-day Saints, the Trinity is a little differently understood. It consists of three individual personal and separate beings, collectively constituting the object of faith. They are distinct persons. Yet Latter-day Saints use the term “God” to refer to the Godhead, which the three comprise, and which is close to what open theists believe. For Latter-day Saints, as for open theists, there is a three-in-oneness and a plurality of persons united by being in relationship with one another. Neither of us

really knows exactly how the three are one, but it is LDS doctrine and openness doctrine that they *are* one. What Latter-day Saints do not hold is that the three persons are ontologically one being, as the creed says. Their emphasis is on a functional rather than on an essential Trinity. At the same time, I hear Robinson denying polytheism and affirming that the three are only one God.¹²² Are we not both trying to retain belief in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) with a trinitarian structure that is faithful to the gospel narrative? On the other hand, the LDS idea makes membership in the Trinity somewhat voluntary and therefore potentially subject to breaking up (for example, if Jesus had succumbed to temptation)—an unsettling thought that takes God’s risking to a much higher level.

PAULSEN: LDS understanding and openness thought both reject the conventional view that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost constitute one metaphysical substance, affirming rather that they are so lovingly inter-related as to constitute one perfectly united community. This understanding of the Godhead is known in contemporary Christian discourse as “social trinitarianism” or as “the social analogy of the Trinity.”

Pinnock’s brief treatment of the LDS understanding of the Godhead was very straightforward, perceptive, and correct. In 1842, in response to a Chicago newspaperman’s inquiry as to what Mormons believed, Joseph penned thirteen basic beliefs. These “Articles of Faith” remain the closest LDS analogue to a creed. The first article affirms belief in the New Testament Godhead: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”

Complicating the matter are Joseph’s revelations and translations, replete with the statement that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are one God (2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 15:2–5; Alma 11:44; 3 Nephi 11:27, 36; Mormon 7:7; D&C 20:28) and his declaration that “we have three Gods anyhow, and they are plural.”¹²³ Thus, as Cornelius Plantinga writes about the Creed of the (Eleventh) Council of Toledo, “The main problem or puzzlement here is that of threeness and oneness. What are the referents of these numbers? Three what? One what? And especially, how are these three and this one related?”¹²⁴

Joseph’s revelations respond to each of these questions. Three what? Joseph answers, “I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit.”¹²⁵ One what? Joseph answers that Jesus “possesses the same mind with the Father.”¹²⁶ The Book of Mormon also helps to answer “one what?” with words like “doctrine,” “judgment,” “baptism,” and “record.”¹²⁷

And especially, how are these three and this one related? Joseph answers that the Son possesses “*the same fullness* with the Father. . . . And he being the *Only Begotten of the Father*, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father.”¹²⁸ Further, Joseph taught, “everlasting covenant was made between three personages [Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] before the organization of this earth.”¹²⁹ In short, the persons of the Trinity are bound by genetics, by “everlasting covenant,” and by “the same fullness” or set of divine attributes.

Thus, Joseph explicitly rejected the traditional belief that the Godhead, or Trinity, constituted one metaphysical substance.¹³⁰ Rather, Joseph understood the Trinity to be constituted by three distinct persons who together form one mutually indwelling divine community, perfectly united in mind, will, work, and love.¹³¹ In his revelations, the word *God* is used to designate the divine community as well as to designate each individual divine person.¹³² In order to avoid misunderstanding, it is imperative to keep this dual use of the word *God* in mind. Thus, consistent with his revelations, when Joseph declares there are “three Gods,” he means that there are three distinct divine personages. When he affirms that there is “one God,” he means that there is one perfectly united mutually indwelling divine community.¹³³ There is no contradiction here. Perhaps the late LDS Apostle James E. Talmage provided the clearest formulation of Joseph’s understanding of the Godhead when he wrote:

This unity is a type of completeness; the mind of any one member of the Trinity is the mind of the others; seeing as each of them does with the eye of perfection, they see and understand alike. Under any given conditions each would act in the same way, guided by the same principles of unerring justice and equity. The one-ness of the Godhead . . . implies no mystical union of substance, nor any unnatural and therefore impossible blending of personality.¹³⁴

As stated in the LDS Bible Dictionary, *mystery* “denotes in the New Testament a spiritual truth that was once hidden but now is revealed, and that, without special revelation, would have remained unknown.”¹³⁵ Thus, the Latter-day Saints recognize the doctrine of the Trinity as a mystery, a spiritual truth re-revealed through Joseph Smith.

It is to scripture rather than the historic creeds of Christianity that the Latter-day Saints wish to conform, which is precisely the criticism open theology is making. Christianity should be defined by God’s own revelatory disclosures rather than by our rational constructions. In the words of Pinnock:

We must stop attributing to God qualities that undermine God’s own self-disclosure. Let us not treat the attributes of God independently of the

Bible but view the biblical metaphors as reality-depicting descriptions of the living God.¹³⁶

[For] what we are doing, in effect, is seeking to correct the Bible; to derive truth about God not from biblical metaphors but from our own intuitions of what is “fitting” for God to be.¹³⁷

The Latter-day Saints claim that “God’s own self-disclosure” continues through living prophets today, and when God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820 as separate individuals, the LDS conception of the Trinity began to unfold.

PINNOCK: I take it then, regarding their interpretation of the social Trinity, Latter-day Saints can be called tritheists, which fits their polytheistic outlook in general. The Father, Son, and Spirit refer to three individual and separate deities who collectively constitute a Trinity or the cosmic committee of three. This is not what I have taken the social Trinity to be. By the term, I have meant to affirm that the eternal life of the one and only God is personal life in relationship. They are three ways in which God is God. It is like, but not exactly like, a *koinonia* of persons in love. It is like, but not exactly like, a loving community and the picture of hospitality. Obviously I am assuming monotheism when thinking of the persons, while David is not.

PAULSEN: My understanding of the Godhead is what contemporary theologians refer to as a social Trinity, but Clark labels my view “tritheistic.” At the same time, Clark’s view seems closer to classical trinitarianism than to a social model inasmuch as Clark seems to pull away from affirming the real distinctness of the three divine persons when he says, “The eternal life of the one and only God is personal life in relationship. They are three ways in which God is God.” While this may be his understanding of the social Trinity, others present a stronger model. In his lucid presentation on the subject, Cornelius Plantinga specifies three conditions a view of the Godhead must satisfy in order to be a “strong or social theory”:

(1) The theory must have Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct centers of knowledge, will, love, and action. Since each of these capacities requires consciousness, it follows that, on this sort of theory, Father, Son, and Spirit would be viewed as . . . *persons* in some full sense of that term. (2) Any accompanying sub-theory of divine simplicity must be modest enough to be consistent with condition (1), that is, with the real distinctness of trinitarian persons. . . . (3) Father, Son, and Spirit must be regarded as tightly enough related to each other so as to render plausible the judgment that they constitute a particular social unit.¹³⁸

The LDS understanding of the Godhead clearly satisfies Plantinga’s criteria of a social model. So when I say that Latter-day Saints are social

trinitarians, it is to these conditions that I appeal. It is not clear to me that Clark's model satisfies Plantinga's second condition. If not, then given Plantinga's criteria, it is Clark's view, not the LDS view, of the Godhead that fails to constitute a social model of the Trinity. There is, of course, much more to consider here. Would Clark endorse Plantinga's criteria for a social model? If not, what would he offer as alternative criteria? Perhaps a more important question is: what model coheres best with the New Testament? Plantinga acknowledges that his model might be considered tritheistic by Christians who hold to a strong simplicity theory. But if so, Plantinga says, he is in good company, for by the same criteria Paul and John would also be tritheists. Latter-day Saints would also be proud to be in this company.

GOD AND THE CREATION

PINNOCK: The ultimate metaphysical fact—is it God-and-world or is it God, period? For process thought (and LDS thought), the ultimate metaphysical fact seems to be God-and-world. Without a world, God would have no actuality and no real existence. Thus God needs the world almost as much as the world needs God. So God is inherently limited. For open theists, the situation is different. For us, the ultimate metaphysical fact is not God-and-world but God only. We believe that God could exist without creation, even though he chooses not to. Thus the world owes its existence to God's free choice, not to any metaphysical necessity.

Both open theists and process theists appeal to the logic of love to explain creation but do so differently. For process theists (and perhaps Latter-day Saints), the divine love entails a necessary world—God must have creatures to love and care for. For open theists, on the other hand, God's love excludes a necessary world because love must be a voluntary commitment. Love requires a degree of divine independence and a creation freely chosen. Open theism is thus neoclassical in certain ways (for example, creation by the word of God and not the result of some other power). Nor do open theists believe that God began creation with something preexisting, as Latter-day Saints do. As Langdon Gilkey puts it, "God is the source of all that there is"; "creatures are dependent but real and good"; and "God creates in freedom and with purpose."¹³⁹

The term *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) was meant by theologians to lift up the notion of a sovereignly chosen creation. I myself would rather speak of creation *ex amore*—that God in the act of creating acted out of love for creatures. I believe this is the most important point to make in discussing creation.¹⁴⁰ Still, open theists are impressed by God's

creating “all things, visible and invisible” (Col. 1:15). We believe that “God calls into existence things that do not exist” (Rom. 4:17). We hold to creation by God’s word such that “what is seen was made from things that are not visible” (Heb. 11:3). The key issue here is whether there is reality that is a given for God and that God is stuck with. Open theists believe that everything is ontologically dependent on God and has not existed everlastingly. At the same time, I have never thought that Genesis chapter one taught “creation out of nothing.” Genesis 1:2 seems to describe a situation preexisting when God begins the six-day work. So I do not draw the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* from there and would not even claim that my texts prove *creatio ex nihilo* outright. I would also admit that, even with *creatio ex nihilo*, God soon finds himself confronted by serious opposition in the world we have to live in. So what difference does it really make in practice?

For Latter-day Saints, there seem to exist several metaphysical factors that, in their interaction with each other, have helped to produce the present world. It seems as if there is a struggle involving a diversity of ultimate principles. In that case, what do we make of the structurally unified character of the world? It does not seem to be something on the verge of breaking up. Open theists believe that there are no metaphysical first principles alongside God, having their being from themselves and not from him. We see creation as God’s decision and the meaningful expression of his will, not the outcome of struggles between gods or primary principles. I am not denying that, at the present moment, real conflict exists between God and the gods, owing to the freedom they have been given, which can be used to frustrate God’s will. The gods do have a certain autonomy without being radically independent from God. However, they were created by God and are sustained by him and are gradually being lured, in spite of themselves, to a future that God has planned.

I sense that Latter-day Saints may feel that, were God to have created the world out of nothing, it would put God far away from us and jeopardize his interactions with us. It is almost as if God has to be a mortal being in order to relate to mortals. Surely not. God could have created the world by his word alone without being totally beyond it himself. God is exactly as far from it and as near to it as he wants to be. He can behold the world from his heavenly glory and, at the same time, enter into its life as fully as he wants to. God decides what his relations with creation will be.

PAULSEN: Open theology accepts libertarian free will but then rejects the eternity of spirit or intelligence (and matter) in favor of creation *ex nihilo*. Creation out of nothing is one of the core doctrines of conventional

Christianity with which open theists have no quarrel. Indeed, according to Pinnock, they have “resisted tossing out creation *ex nihilo*.”¹⁴¹ Why? It even seems as if some of Pinnock’s statements about creation are incongruous with creation *ex nihilo*. For example, Pinnock states, “The acts of creation as recorded in Genesis chapter 1 brought chaos under control and reintroduced God’s order, but they did not eliminate the threat of this mysterious ‘formless void’ factor. It is a situation where, although God has the upper hand, he is not now totally in control.”¹⁴² If God brought all things out of nothing, only extreme self-limiting in regard to the processes of nature would allow him to be not totally in control. For a theology that holds to the primacy of scripture, it is interesting for Pinnock to admit, “I have never thought that Genesis chapter one taught creation out of nothing.” Thus, it seems pertinent to question why openness clings to the idea of creation *ex nihilo* when they have rejected many other concepts because they conflict with the Bible.¹⁴³

Pinnock recognizes that the idea of a self-limiting God “exposes a point of vulnerability” of open theism yet is willing to “live with it” in order to retain the doctrine of classical omnipotence (Pinnock, 57). Yet, elsewhere, Pinnock concurs with John Sanders that “sometimes the attributes of God are derived on the basis of the *dignum deo* (what it is dignified for God to be according to natural theology).”¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, Pinnock speaks negatively about theology that “think[s] of God abstractly as a perfect being and then smuggle[s] in assumptions of what ‘perfect’ entails.”¹⁴⁵ Pinnock’s unyielding defense of conventional conceptions of creation out of nothing and its corollary that God is subject to no nonlogical conditions or constraints appears to be an expression of *dignum deo*, not biblical, theology. This is puzzling. Perhaps openness is concerned about its relationship to the evangelical movement and is therefore wary of departing too far from conventional Christian thought.

Nevertheless, Pinnock does offer a subtle defense of the openness interpretation of creation when he criticizes the LDS theology that “without a world, God would have no actuality and no real existence.” This statement seems to indicate that the creator-God of openness and conventional Christianity is superior to that of the LDS faith because of his ability to have “real” existence without a world. If true, that might provide a rationale for openness thinkers to stick to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. However, I believe this is a mischaracterization of LDS thought. Joseph Smith affirmed that God is a self-existent being and further elaborates, “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.”¹⁴⁶

In LDS theology God does *not* depend on the world for his “actuality” or “real existence.” As we have seen, God and the world (or, rather, the elements from which God organized the world) are both “actual” and “real” *metaphysically*. Matter is eternal and cannot be created or destroyed. God likewise is eternal, existing *independently alongside* matter, and neither is dependent on the other for “actuality” or “real existence.”

Thus, in LDS thought, God *could exist* without creation. Pinnock questions whether for LDS thought the divine love entails that God engages in creative activity. I believe it does. Indeed, while in conventional Christianity, God’s nature forbids that he should have equals, in LDS theology God’s very nature entails that he seeks to share with others all that he is and has.

Conversely, the openness view is that “God does not need a world in order to experience love.” Hence, according to open theology, the world becomes “not something God needs, but something he wants. . . . A world would provide for God an external expression of his own perfect goodness.”¹⁴⁷ To me this appears to differ but little from conventional Christianity’s claim that God created in order to provide himself with creatures who would worship him. Although open theology attempts to change this motivation from “the desire for adoration” to “the need for love,” for me their argument ultimately fails because, in short, given an openness worldview, we are not necessary in the eternal scheme of things. God would be just fine without us!

Finally, I must say that Latter-day Saints view the causal/teleological order of the cosmos in the same light as conventional Christians: namely as a testimony of the reality of a Supreme Creator or Organizer. While process theology might argue for “a struggle involving a diversity of ultimate principles” (Pinnock, 91), LDS theology holds that “all kingdoms have a law given; and there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom” (D&C 88:36–37). God’s creative power, therefore, is not only reflected in chaos, but also stems from his knowledge of the eternal laws and principles by which the universe is inherently structured! The application of “higher laws” can overcome “lesser laws” (just as Bernoulli’s principle can in a sense overcome gravity), and through their application God was able to “create” or “organize” what we see today. Thus it seems that both LDS and open theologies view creation as God’s decision and the meaningful expression of his will, not as the outcome of struggles between gods or primary principles.

I have asked relevant and difficult questions concerning creation *ex nihilo* and the implications of holding to it. Joseph Smith’s revelations present a viable alternative to this troublesome doctrine. Is Joseph’s

doctrine not both scripturally as well as practically sound? Indeed, there are many scriptures that testify that man is the offspring of God (see Deut. 14:1, Ps. 82:6, Hosea 1:10, Mal. 2:10, Acts 17:29, Rom. 8:16), created in his image (Gen. 1:27), and endowed with His knowledge (Gen. 3:22). From my understanding of the openness model, it seems like a rejection of creation *ex nihilo* would be a more consistent position to hold for three reasons: First, it would be much easier to explain God's desire to enter into relations with us as well as his ability to interact with us dynamically. Second, it would extricate the open model from the problem of evil by attributing ontological self-existence and agency to entities other than God, thereby making evil an eternal possibility or something that God has always had to deal with. Finally, it would make the existential appeal already enjoyed by the open model even greater by elevating the status of human persons from brute creations to sons and daughters of God, who, through obedience and the grace of God, might one day become "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

PINNOCK: Regarding divine limitations and the problem of evil, I believe that God is not limited by anything outside of himself but that he loves to constrain himself voluntarily, especially where love is concerned. God gives room to creatures to love him freely. In a one-sided emphasis, classical theologians have overstudied God's transcendence, while neglecting God's condescendence. This has resulted in the image of an omnipotent God and an impotent man that lacks the "strength in weakness" motif that took our Lord to the cross. Unlimited power fosters subservience and not the loving fellowship that God desires. God is, as it were, unwilling to be omnipotent without us, because he wants partners, not slaves.

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

PINNOCK: Concerning omnipotence, open theists and Latter-day Saints agree that there are limitations on God's power but do not explain it in quite the same way. Open theists use the language of voluntary self-limitation, while Latter-day Saints think of God's being limited by uncreated matter and intelligences, which are entities external to himself.¹⁴⁸ To my understanding, Joseph Smith saw such inherent limitations as entities coeternal with God, and that God has to deal with chaotic matter and built-in law-like structures.¹⁴⁹ But Ostler adds this: "God could prevent an intelligence or natural substance from *exercising power* freely by overpowering it through coercive power. . . . [However,] God will

generally refrain from such coercive power because it is not consistent with his loving nature.”¹⁵⁰ Ostler seems to be saying that God has obstacles to overcome but that he can overcome them. This would approximate the view of open theism that God is not so much limited in power as he restrains its exercise. As in his loving relations with us, God does not force himself on us. Open theists see a restraint of power for the sake of love, and I think that Latter-day Saints do, too.

By accepting some limitations and conditionality within God, both open theists and Latter-day Saints make room for a more modern understanding of the world and its processes. This understanding and the powers of reason that helped formulate it also have a role to play in theology, if we value coherence and intelligibility in our work and if we want the message to be timely and compelling. Philosophers can help us if they have good data to work with.

Relational philosophies and theologies are good at relating to the dynamic understanding of reality that is characteristic of our time. They give us a metaphysics of love. They help us negotiate the shift we are seeing from a static to a more dynamic understanding of reality. The old Newtonian assumption that the world moves forward in a deterministic fashion is being replaced in quantum theory and by an understanding of causation that includes an intrinsic element of indeterminism. The old assumption that the world is a stable, solid, deterministic, thoroughly rational, and utterly predictable system is being replaced by a view of the world as a dynamic process that is to some extent indeterministic and unpredictable. The more it shifts this way, the less classical theism will have anything to say and the more relational theism will have to offer.

PAULSEN: Pinnock is right when he says that in the LDS perspective God is inherently limited (which may be another reason why open theology accepts *ex nihilo* creation). Indeed, the difference between LDS and open theology is quite clear: for the Latter-day Saints this limitation is a *metaphysical* reality, while openness thinkers claim that God *voluntarily* limits himself. This assertion by open theism of self-limitation on the part of God is for me the greatest point of divergence between LDS and open thought, especially in view of the fact that self-limitation combined with creation *ex nihilo* does not succeed in exonerating God from the responsibility of creating evil. For if God did create the world *ex nihilo*, as open theology holds, then is not God still, at least ultimately, responsible for all the evil (both natural and moral) in the world since he produced by fiat the natural structure of the world and gave his creatures agency? Could he not, for instance, have created humans with a nature far less prone to

gross sinfulness? I am not sure that the openness solution to the problem of evil would survive an attack such as Dostoevsky's and still be able to justify that such a risk was "worth it."¹⁵¹ God really could prevent genuine evils; he really could possess exhaustive specific foreknowledge.

Pinnock deserves commendation once more for his lucid portrayal of LDS belief on the subjects of creation and the ultimate constituents of being. Joseph rejected the idea that God is the "ground of all being." Instead, he taught that a plurality of original entities exist coeternally with God, including matter and mankind. In the words of the Prophet: "We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough; but how did it get into your head? Who told you that *man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles*? Man does exist on the same principles."¹⁵² Thus, in LDS thought God *is* ultimately limited by the structure of uncreated reality, and hence there are ontological (not merely logical) limits on what he can do or bring about (for example, he cannot force free intelligences to act against their wills or impart knowledge that can be gained only through personal experience).

However, this does not mean that Latter-day Saints should have less confidence in God than their Christian counterparts have—Latter-day Saints believe in the same Bible, which constantly testifies that God is able to accomplish *all* of his plans and purposes. In fact, the Lord gave us this promise through Joseph Smith: "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say, but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (D&C 82:10), meaning that when we are obedient, the Lord *will* do what he has promised, whatever that may be. Hence the Latter-day Saints take seriously all promises God makes in the Bible and look forward to their fulfillment. This fact not only makes a difference theoretically, but also existentially. Does the open view of God have similar positive existential consequences? For example, can petitionary prayer affect God to the extent that He will un-self-limit in order to meet the needs of humans? The biblical narrative speaks of a God who does *all he can* to benefit his children who are endowed with agency. If God could un-self-limit at any time, then he is not doing all he can. Why would God then allow evils to occur that do not serve some greater good? Surely openness thinkers do not consider *all* evil to be logically necessary for a greater good. It seems much easier to relate to a loving God who does all he can to prevent seemingly pointless evil than to one who deliberately chooses, for personal reasons, to do less than he can.

THEODICY: THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

PINNOCK: This brings us to the issue of theodicy, or the issue of God's causing or allowing evil. Open theists think that light is shed on this issue from the direction of God's voluntarily, not essentially, limited power. This contrasts with LDS thought, which sees the limit on God's power to be not the result of God's decision but in the nature of things; there is a limitation on the power of God that is inherent in the structure of the world. In this regard LDS theory is closer to process theism than it is to open theism.¹⁵³

Latter-day Saints see that if God's power is inherently and not only voluntarily restrained, then God cannot be blamed for many of the evils that happen because God is already doing the best that he can in the face of stubborn resistance. On the other hand, open theists prefer to say that God does have the power to overturn evil but rarely does so because he values human freedom. (Latter-day Saints agree with us that God can perform miracles, which puts them closer to us than to process theorists.) It seems that God has set himself a limit that he will not cross in taking away freedom.

God's problem (if I may speak thus) is that God loves. Love complicates his life, as it does ours. So there is a reason (a creation covenant) why he does not prevent certain evils. Hence there are psalms of lament in the Bible where believers ask God why he is not doing more, on the assumption that he *could be*. We have to trust God when things do not seem to be lining up in our understanding. In the last analysis, however, we both agree that God does not cause or will our suffering; rather, we believe that God identifies with our suffering and works faithfully and everlastingly to transform that suffering into the highest possible good.¹⁵⁴

PAULSEN: Belief in *ex nihilo* creation greatly exacerbates the logical problem of evil. It posits God as the ultimate cause of all things, making him an accessory before the fact and, thus, seemingly ultimately omniresponsible for all the world's evils. While Clark hedges on the biblical standing of *ex nihilo* creation, he does acknowledge that it is not supported by the Genesis account of creation (Pinnock, 91). However, I do not understand how this admission serves to exculpate God from ultimate responsibility for the world's evil, for Clark suggests that the elements then present (and, indeed, all things) were ultimately *ex nihilo* creations of God (Pinnock, 90–91). I hope Clark and other open theologians will address this issue more directly as our conversations continue.

PINNOCK: Regarding the vexed question of theodicy, open theism (we grant) does not resolve the theodicy problem completely. But who

(pray tell) has the full solution? Surely, only God himself can shoulder that burden. There can be no complete theodicy without eschatology, that is, without the hope of a great victory over the reality of evil and the resurrection of the dead. It is to these divine promises and not to human speculations that I look. I am not much comforted by LDS speculations about God or gods who are too weak to put a stop to evil because they are inherently limited.

PAULSEN: In its rejection of *ex nihilo* creation, modern revelation provides Latter-day Saints resources for resolving the logical problem of evil.¹⁵⁵ These revelations indicate that intelligences (or primal persons), chaotic matter (D&C 93:29, 33), and “the laws of eternal and self-existent principles”¹⁵⁶ are realities coeternal with God. Given a plurality of coeternal realities, it follows that God is neither an accessory before the fact to all the world’s evils nor ultimately responsible for them. Further, given this plurality of coeternal realities, it follows that God is not unlimitedly powerful. B. H. Roberts has proposed that Latter-day Saints understand divine omnipotence as the power to bring about any state of affairs consistent with the natures of eternal existences.¹⁵⁷

From these theological premises, it does not follow that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically incompatible. Neither does it follow, as Clark infers, that God is “too weak” to prevent the evils that occur in the world. It does follow that he cannot prevent all evils without an overriding diminution in the overall value of the world. Lehi, a Book of Mormon prophet, sets out some of the eternal principles to which even God is subject. Lehi teaches that “men are that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). But, Lehi explains, not even God can bring about joy without moral righteousness, moral righteousness without moral freedom, and moral freedom without an “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11, 13).¹⁵⁸ Modern revelation sheds considerable light on the unavoidability of evil in our present existence.

Nonetheless, Clark does well to remind us that even with the light of modern revelation Latter-day Saints also “see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12) in our attempt to understand the “why” of many of the world’s actual evils. We, too, must look to the eschaton for fuller light. Latter-day Saints, like openness thinkers, believe that God is redemptively sovereign. We trust that he can and will fulfill all of his purposes and promises. As Joseph Smith reassured the early Saints, “All your losses will be made up to you in the resurrection, provided you continue faithful.”¹⁵⁹

RELATIONAL THEOLOGIES AND THE PRAGMATIC LIFE

PINNOCK: For many of the reasons set forth above, theologies that emphasize relationships between beings have tremendous practical appeal. Open theism supplies “existential fit” in the way we handle our walk with God and the life of prayer. It energizes us by imputing real “say so” to human beings. (Remember that Latter-day Saints and open theists are both strongly Arminian.) Open theology confirms our deepest intuitions that our choices are not predetermined and the future is not altogether settled. Thus it enjoys an “as if” advantage. That is, we notice that people act “as if” the relational gospel were true even when they do not believe that it is, which is a fine compliment. Open theology is a theology where our lives really matter and where what we do (or do not do) makes a real difference. Thus it is a theology for revival and for missions (a passion to evangelize the world is yet another factor that Latter-day Saints and open theorists share). I resonate with William James, who wondered what difference divine aseity or God’s self-love or God’s simplicity or God’s pure act make, without agency. James wrote, “If they severally call for no distinctive adaptations of our conduct, what vital difference can it possibly make to a man’s religion whether they be true or false?”¹⁶⁰ The pragmatic test for truth may not be everything, but it counts for something. Open theism works in the lives of those who espouse it. Here the open and LDS views seem indistinguishable.

PAULSEN: Latter-day Saint Church President John Taylor once said:

When “Mormonism” was presented to me my first inquiry was, “Is it Scriptural? Is it reasonable and philosophical?” This is the principle I would act upon today. No matter how popular the theories or dogmas preached might be, I would not accept them unless they were strictly in accordance with the Scriptures, reason, and common sense.¹⁶¹

I think that these words offer a summation of the success of both “Mormonism” and other relational theologies: they are scriptural, reasonable, and practically appealing. Indeed, both find an “existential fit” within the lives of their adherents and even within the lives of their enemies, as Pinnock astutely notices. Neither theology claims to have all the answers, yet both believe that these answers are within our reach, and it is *this* belief that keeps the conversation alive. As we progress towards a greater understanding of each other’s beliefs, I am reminded of the words Joseph Smith:

The inquiry is frequently made of me, “Wherein do you differ from others in your religious views?” In reality and essence we do not differ so far in our religious views, but that we could all drink into one principle

of love. One of the grand fundamental principles of “Mormonism” is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may.¹⁶²

CONCLUSION

PINNOCK: Open theism is part of a larger movement of relational theologies, which include LDS theology and which seek to recover the perfections of a personal God and the dynamic relationships into which God enters with his creatures. It is a biblical theology that seeks to bring our definitions of God’s attributes into line with the perfections of a personal God. It celebrates God’s true glory, which is not static perfection but loving relationships with his creatures and partnerships in which God allows himself to be made vulnerable.

Open theism is being discussed widely, and its prospects seem promising.¹⁶³ It is scripturally compelling. Its doctrine of God appeals in a modern context where classical theism can be a hard sell. It promotes intimacy with God and posits a real “say so” to human beings. In the evangelical context, it needs to overcome the paleo-Calvinist charge that it is heretical and the classical Arminian intuition that it goes too far. In terms of connecting with other relational theologies, a beginning has been made in our interaction with process theology. I myself have not had Latter-day Saints as dialogue partners before, but I welcome it. Of course, not everyone approves of our talking to Latter-day Saints, process theists, and others. They see it as proof positive that we are not evangelical ourselves and perhaps not even Christian. But we do not believe in closing doors that God has opened and do not allow ourselves to be governed by our fears.

None of us controls the outcomes of our deliberations, and God’s providence will see to it that what is valid is sorted out from what is invalid and what is significant from what is insignificant. As St. Paul says, “Now we know in part—then we will know as we are known” (1 Cor. 13:12). Meanwhile, our work is tentative, though we hope it is worthwhile.

PAULSEN: It is worthwhile. I have learned much in my dialogue with Professor Pinnock. He is an ideal conversation partner. He takes my ideas seriously, and his responses are always respectful yet thought-provoking, compelling me to refine my ideas. I am richer both as a person and as a thinker for our interactions.

PINNOCK: Latter-day Saint thought challenges evangelical thought in its complacency toward other varieties of Christian faith. Latter-day Saint scholars are working hard at the defense of their faith. The opposite is also true. The quality and quantity of evangelical work is improving and could

benefit from the interaction we are seeing. Let the iron sharpen iron. May God lead us all into the fuller truth of what Jesus brought into the world. I appreciate interacting with Dr. Paulsen very much, both in person and in print, and am the richer for it as a theologian and as a person.

PAULSEN: Without doubt, LDS and evangelical scholars are hard at work in more clearly articulating and defending their faith. Both can benefit from the interaction we are seeing. I thus say “amen” to Clark’s concluding appeal: “Let iron sharpen iron.” Let God bring us to the truth.

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1. Augustine, “On the Trinity,” in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 3, bk. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1956), chap. 3.

2. See the manifesto written by Clark H. Pinnock, John Sanders, Richard Rice, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994). John Sanders filled out the picture in *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998).

3. See Sanders, “Divine Relationality in the Christian Tradition,” in *The God Who Risks*, chap. 5.

4. In the dialogue book *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*, co-authored with Craig Blomberg (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 195–96, Stephen E. Robinson lists the most important points of agreement and disagreement that were discovered.

5. Robinson has expressed the wish that some evangelical would say that the Book of Mormon could be inspired by God. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 71. I will say it. Of course it *could* be inspired. But the possibility does not prove that it is or that there may not be some explaining left to do.

6. Donald G. Bloesch, *God the Almighty: Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Love* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995), 205–6, quoting Vladimir Lossky, *The*

Vision of God, trans. Asheleigh Moorhouse (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), 67. Notice, however, that Bloesch wants a relational theism but not quite an open theism (254–60).

7. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 86–87.

8. Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, chap. 2.

9. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 59, 138.

10. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 61; emphasis in original.

11. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 161–62, 165–66; Benjamin Huff, “How Polemics Corrupted Latter-day Saint Apologetics,” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 1 (2003): 273–309, believes that Richard R. Hopkins is too unnuanced in Hopkins's book *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1998).

12. See John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001), 62–73.

13. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 244–45. Francis Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish are classical theists who have written about LDS thought: *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1991).

14. Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 230–35, 244.

15. Tyrone L. Inbody, *The Transforming God: An Interpretation of Suffering and Evil* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 67–78, 142–43, 148–49.

16. The story of my shift in thinking is told in my biography by Barry L. Callen, *Clark H. Pinnock: Journey toward Renewal—An Intellectual Biography* (Napanee, Ind.: Evangel, 2000); and in Clark H. Pinnock, “The Need for a Scriptural, and Therefore a Neo-Classical Theism,” in *Perspectives on Evangelical Theology*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1980), 37–42.

17. Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), chap. 1.

18. John Polkinghorne, ed., *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001).

19. For the use in theology of multiple sources, see Donald A. D. Thorson, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990).

20. From my standpoint, Joseph Smith had stimulating and even prophetic insights that I can appreciate, even though I do not hail him as the Prophet of the latter days.

21. Joseph 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, 1971), 5:517.

22. John Sanders, “Open Theism: Radical Revision or Miniscule Modification of Arminianism?” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38 (2003): 69–102. See also Roger Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002), 192–96.

23. We are part of a living tradition, two thousand years old: see Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003).

24. I have noticed an appreciation by Latter-day Saints of C. S. Lewis and have thought to myself what an important factor that might prove to be. Certainly he

is quoted more often by the LDS leadership than any other non-Latter-day Saint writer. A friend of a friend is a friend of ours. See Nathan Jensen, *Restored Gospel according to C. S. Lewis* (Springville, Utah: Bonneville, 1998).

25. On scripture and tradition, see Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, chaps. 1–2.

26. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 18–19.

27. Latter-day Saints enjoy the luxury of having living prophets and therefore need to depend less than evangelicals on written texts. What God said in the past is somewhat secondary to what God is saying now. And who knows where that will take them? The evangelical fixation on the past makes it hard for them to change and reform. It happens, but it is undisciplined.

28. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1976), 316.

29. John A. Widstoe, *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 3.

30. Orson F. Whitney, Conference Report 91 (April 1921): 32–33.

31. Official Statement of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, February 15, 1978.

32. Roger R. Keller, “Do I Know My Neighbor?” *Ensign* 21 (March 1991): 25.

33. Walter Brueggemann features the motif of testimony and counter-testimony in his work *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

34. Pinnock, “Overcoming a Pagan Inheritance,” *Most Moved Mover*, chap. 2.

35. See, for example, Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), chap. 6.

36. See Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 33–35.

37. Grace Jantzen, *God’s World, God’s Body* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 21; and David L. Paulsen, “The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives,” *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 7–94.

38. John Macquarrie, forward to Jantzen, *God’s World, God’s Body*, ix.

39. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harvest-Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), 22.

40. Bloesch, *God the Almighty*, 50, 89.

41. Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 127.

42. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:206–20.

43. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 88.

44. Ostler, *Attributes of God*, 352.

45. For example, David L. Paulsen, “Must God Be Incorporeal?” *Faith and Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (January 1989): 76–87.

46. Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Baker, 2001), 33–34; see also 80–81.

47. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 79.

48. B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1998), 119.

49. Paul uses the word “spiritual” to mean resurrected body in 1 Corinthians 15:44.

50. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), paragraph 5481, page 77 of Greek Dictionary of the New Testament.

51. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 34.

52. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 34; see 80–81.

53. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 81; 81 n. 54.

54. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 34.

55. David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 2 (1990): 105–16.

56. The work of St. Thomas and the Scholastics revolved around this issue, with Platonic and Aristotelian premises—the relegating of the “heavenly” to immateriality (the angels, for example, are “pure species”), and the “earthly” to materiality or corporeality.

57. Truman G. Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1966), 47.

58. Charles W. Penrose, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 26:21 (November 16, 1884). For a recent article discussing the existential implications for the LDS view, see Russell M. Nelson, “We Are Children of God,” *Ensign* 28 (November 1998): 85–87.

59. Rulon T. Burton, comp., *We Believe: Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Tabernacle, 1994), 429.

60. Genesis 1:27; 5:1; 9:6; 32:30; Exodus 24:10; 31:18; 33:11; Luke 24:39; John 14:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:4; Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.

61. See Joseph Smith—History 1:15–17.

62. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22–23. Compare the words of the resurrected Lord to his Apostles: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24: 39).

63. Rabbinic anthropology, for instance, does not consider the soul to be immaterial or radically distinct from the body. Alon Goshen Gottstein, “The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87, no. 2 (April 1994): 176–77. See also J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th rev. ed. (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1977), 14, 16.

64. Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), chap. 4. I have spoken of other gods myself in Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992), chap. 4.

65. Ostler, *Attributes of God*, 9, quoting an observation by Hans-Joachim Kraus.

66. Eichrodt, “The Celestial World,” in *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:186–209.

67. The term “eternalism” was coined by B. H. Roberts to describe the Mormon position. B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 2:410.

68. That “intelligence” is coeternal with God is universally held, but whether or not the term “intelligence” refers to individuals has been debated in the LDS

faith. For both sides, see B. H. Roberts, "The Immortality of Man," *Improvement Era* 10 (April 1907): 419; and Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1979), 387. See also Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1991), 341–62.

69. Compare Robert B. Rakestraw, "Becoming like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of Theosis," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997): 257–69.

70. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, book 3, chapter 10.

71. Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, paragraph 54.

72. Ostler, *Attributes of God*, 9–10.

73. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 86.

74. This point is discussed in Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), chap. 18.

75. See, for example, Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 86.

76. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:312; emphasis added.

77. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:306; emphasis added.

78. See for example, Acts 17:28–29, Deuteronomy 14:1, Psalm 82:6, Hosea 1:10, Malachi 2:10, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Romans 8:16, Ephesians 4:6, and Hebrews 12:9.

79. To follow suit with recent theologians, I will use the terms *deification* and *theosis* as synonyms in this dialogue.

80. Norman Russell, "'Partakers of the Divine Nature' (2 Peter 1:4) in the Byzantine Tradition," in *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to Joan Hussey for Her 80th Birthday* (Camberley, UK: Porphyrogenitus Publications, 1998), 51–67. See also "Deification," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3d ed., ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 467.

81. Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 97. See also D. B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 120–21.

82. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 121. See also "Deification," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 465.

83. David L. Balas, "Divinization," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2d ed., 2 vols., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1997), 1:339; Gerald Bonner, "Augustine's Conception of Deification," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 37, no. 2 (1986): 369–86.

84. A. N. Williams, "Deification in the Summa Theologiae: A Structural Interpretation of the Prima Pars," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 219–55.

85. A relatively current bibliography reveals that since 1950, 195 of 222 total publications (or 88 percent) on deification were published. Bibliography in Paulsen's possession.

86. Mark O'Keefe, "Theosis and the Christian Life: Toward Integrating Roman Catholic Ethics and Spirituality," *Eglise et Théologie* 25 (1994): 56.

87. He continues: "Because *theosis* is a present reality—though only partially realized—Christians strive to live a life in conformity to the awesome dignity to which they are called. . . . To believe that one already shares in the divine life demands of the Christian an authentic response to the divine life and love, especially as this has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Christians strive to model in their lives those perspectives, dispositions, virtues, attitudes, intentions, and affections

that seem authentically conformed to the deified life which they have already begun to live, although as yet incompletely and imperfectly. Believers strive to decide and to act in a way consistent with their new life and with the character which flows from it. Christian ethics—both of doing and of being—must be profoundly rooted in the reality of *theosis*.” O’Keefe, “Theosis and the Christian Life,” 60–61.

88. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 86.

89. Charles Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1964), 46.

90. B. H. Roberts, *Discourses of B. H. Roberts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1948). 95–96; emphasis added.

91. Ostler, *Attributes of God*, chap. 10.

92. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 100.

93. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 100.

94. David L. Paulsen, “Omnipotent God; Omnipresence of God; Omniscience of God,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1030.

95. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:286–87 (January 13, 1867).

96. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:120 (December 6, 1857); emphasis added.

97. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:5–7.

98. Bruce R. McConkie, *Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 24–25.

99. Jim Adams, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph Smith? God, Creation, in the Old Testament and Mormonism,” in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 153–91. This is an informative book, but it is too negative and unsympathetic to the Latter-day Saints.

100. Consider Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979), chaps. 18–22.

101. I appreciate Daniel L. Migliore’s treatment of this in *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 72–74.

102. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 119.

103. Jill Mulvay Derr, “The Significance of ‘O My Father’ in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow,” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 98.

104. Eliza R. Snow, “O My Father,” *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1985), 292. For an early Christian parallel to Snow’s poem, see John W. Welch and James V. Garrison, “The ‘Hymn of the Pearl’: An Ancient Counterpart to ‘O My Father,’” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 127–38.

105. “The Origin of Man, November, 1909,” in *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 4:203. In 1925, the First Presidency reaffirmed the Mother in Heaven doctrine using the exact language of the 1909 statement. “‘Mormon’ View of Evolution, September, 1925,” in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:244.

106. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* 25 (November 1995): 102.

107. "Does the biblical and extrabiblical evidence support the view that Asherah was a goddess in ancient Israel and that she was the consort of Yahweh? Or, alternatively, does the data point to the asherah as a symbol within the cult of Yahweh without signifying a goddess? The first position perhaps constitutes a majority view, represented by the older works of H. Ringgren, G. Fohrer, and G. W. Ahlstrom, and the more recent studies of W. G. Dever, D. N. Freedman, R. Hestrin, A. Lemaire, and S. Olyan." Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 88–89. Smith himself holds to a minority position held by B. Lang, P. D. Miller, J. Tigay, and U. Winter, who maintain on the paucity of evidence that Asherah neither referred to a goddess nor symbolized the goddess of Israel. See also Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 15–25, 80–81.

108. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 25.

109. Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 70.

110. Vaughn J. Featherstone, "A Champion of Youth," *Ensign* 17 (November 1987): 28.

111. See, for example, Carol Lynn Pearson, "Healing the Motherless Home," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1992), 231–46; "Emerging Discourse of the Divine Feminine," in Hanks, *Women and Authority*, 257–96; and Cheryl B. Preston, "Feminism and Faith: Reflections on the Mormon Heavenly Mother," *Texas Journal of Women and the Law* 2 (1992): 337–86.

112. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign* 21 (November 1991): 100.

113. At least one LDS scholar has questioned whether the doctrine can be ascribed to Joseph. See Blake T. Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Spring 1982): 59–78, 76. Others find convincing the total evidence—circumstantial, testimonial, and otherwise—that Joseph taught the doctrine. See Derr, "Significance of 'O My Father,'" 98–101; Charles R. Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830–1844," *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (1988): 75–96; and Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Women and Authority*, 5–6. Daniel Peterson's study of 1 Nephi 11:8–13 shows that Ugaritic and Canaanite religious connections between the tree of life and a feminine divine being are not borrowings—ancient or modern—from pagan sources but were at home in biblical Israel; see his chapter in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 191–243.

114. Wilcox, "Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," 4, 6.

115. W. W. Phelps was closely associated with Joseph Smith, serving as both clerk and scribe to Joseph in Nauvoo, and, earlier, as counselor in the first stake in Missouri. Sydney Marie Hughes, "Phelps, William W.," in Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard Cowan, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 917–18.

116. This poem in part reads: "Come to me; here's the myst'ry that man hath not seen: / Here's our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen." W. W. Phelps, "A Voice from the Prophet. 'Come to Me,'" *Times and Seasons* 6 (January 15, 1845), 783.

117. But compare Luke's account of the appearance of the resurrected Christ wherein he eats fish and honeycomb (Luke 24:41–43).

118. The Greek word used here means literally "an unpretentious state or condition, lowliness, humility, humble station." Paul is referring to "the humble body, of the material body in contrast to the glorified body." *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker, 3d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 990.

119. James E. Faulconer, "Divine Embodiment and Transcendence: Propaeudetic Thoughts and Questions," *Element: An E-journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 1 (2005): 1.

120. For instance, Grace Dyck (now Jantzen) has shown there is no incoherence in holding a divinely embodied person to be omnipresent. Grace M. Dyck, "Omnipresence and Incorporeality," *Religious Studies* 13 (March 1977): 90–91. Stephen E. Robinson makes a similar point: "If an immaterial God can be immaterially omnipresent, then a material God can also be immaterially omnipresent (even where his body is not), in the same way." Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 88. See also Paulsen, "Must God Be Incorporeal?" 81.

121. On twentieth-century efforts to understand the Trinity, see Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 95–115.

122. Blomberg and Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?* 131–32.

123. *History of the Church*, 6:474; Larry E. Dahl and Donald W. Cannon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 297.

124. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement*, ed. Ronald Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21.

125. *History of the Church*, 6:474; Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, 297.

126. Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, 345.

127. 2 Nephi 31:21, Alma 11:44, 3 Nephi 11:27, and 3 Nephi 11:36, respectively.

128. Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, 344–45; emphasis added.

129. Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, 712.

130. Christopher Stead writes, "Theologians have been rightly convinced that the ultimate effect of Nicaea has been to assert, not merely the equality, but also the essential unity, of the three Persons; and they have attempted, I think incautiously, to represent this as the original and express intention of the Nicene fathers. In support of this view, it has been argued that homoousios was adopted at Nicaea to express the form of trinitarian theology prevailing in the West." Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 251.

131. "Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God. I say that is a strange God anyhow—three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization. 'Father, I pray not for the world, but I pray for them which thou hast given me.' 'Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.' All are to be

crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God—he would be a giant or a monster. I want to read the text to you myself—‘I am agreed with the Father and the Father is agreed with me, and we are agreed as one.’ The Greek shows that it should be agreed. ‘Father, I pray for them which Thou hast given me out of the world, and not for those alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be agreed, as Thou, Father, are with me, and I with Thee, that they also may be agreed with us’ and all come to dwell in unity, and in all the glory and everlasting burnings of the Gods.” *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 372–73. See also John 17:21 in *The Message Bible* and *Worldwide English Bible*, for other variant translations.

132. Joseph said, “The heavens declare the glory of a God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork; and a moment’s reflection is sufficient to teach every man of common intelligence, that all these are not the mere productions of chance, nor could they be supported by any power less than an Almighty hand.” *History of the Church*, 2:14; Dahl and Cannon, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 291; emphasis in original.

133. See my interview, “Are Mormons Trinitarian?” in *Modern Reformation* (November/December 2003), 40–43, wherein I answer common questions concerning the LDS understanding of the Godhead.

134. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1988), 37.

135. LDS Bible Dictionary, *Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), s.v. “Mystery,” 736. (Compare Rom. 16:25–26; Eph. 1:9; 3:3–10; Col. 1:26; 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:16).

136. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 27.

137. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 67.

138. Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” 22, 31.

139. Langdon Brown Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: The Christian Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), chap. 3.

140. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:99–106. Consider Paul Copan and William Lane, *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2004).

141. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 78.

142. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 36.

143. For example, in the openness publication by Pinnock, Sanders, and others, *The Openness of God*, 101–25, Pinnock himself argues against the traditional conceptions of omnipotence, immutability, impassibility, and omniscience on biblical grounds.

144. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 67, quoting John Sanders.

145. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 67.

146. Stan Larson, “The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text,” *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1977–78): 204.

147. Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 185.

148. On divine self-limitation, see Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 224–28.

149. David L. Paulsen, citing Doctrine and Covenants 93:23, 29, in “Joseph Smith and the Problem of Evil,” *BYU Studies* 39, no. 1 (2000): 58.

150. Ostler, *Attributes of God*, 132.

151. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 271–83.
152. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:393; emphasis added; see also Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 346, 352, 359.
153. See Paulsen, “Joseph Smith and the Problem of Evil,” 53–65.
154. Blake Ostler presses the critique of openness theodicy: “Evil: A Real Problem for Evangelicals,” *FARMS Review* 15 (2003): 201–13.
155. See Paulsen, “Joseph Smith and the Problem of Evil,” 53–65.
156. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 60.
157. See B. H. Roberts, *The Seventy’s Course in Theology*, 5 vols. (Dallas, Tex.: S. K. Taylor, 1976), 2:70.
158. I call this passage “Lehi’s theodicy.”
159. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 296.
160. See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2002), 445.
161. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:14 (March 14, 1869).
162. *History of the Church*, 5:499.
163. See William C. Davis, “Why Open Theism Is Flourishing Now,” in *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity*, ed. John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helseth (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003), 111–45.

Artistry and Aesthetics in Contemporary Mormon and Iranian Film

Travis T. Anderson

Having discovered that The Movies are infiltrating his provincial world, a modern Don Quixote decides to muster arms against that assault. Much to the man's dismay, however, his friends and family neither share his reactionary fears of the silver screen nor appreciate his moral remonstrations against it. In fact, over time they begin exploiting his zealous antics for comic effect, luring him into situations where his passionate opposition to The Movies can be secretly transformed into the subject for one. Although he is initially offended by this duplicity, once the hapless crusader finally sees the film in which he has unwittingly played a starring role, all is forgiven and he becomes an enthusiastic advocate of everything cinematic.

As contemporary as this scenario might read today, it is actually the plot of a 1932 silent comedy called *Haji Aqa, the Movie Actor*—the second feature film ever made in Iran. The possibility that twenty-first-century members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints might find themselves sympathetically engaged and perhaps even amused by such a plot is no mere coincidence.

Almost from their inception, cinematic media and technologies have been accepted and appropriated with surprising enthusiasm by Iranians and Mormons alike. While both cultures appear to have embraced cinema as a natural outgrowth of their lively and longstanding appreciation for art and family-oriented entertainment in general, the eager involvement in film by LDS faithful is no doubt also due to our widespread belief that all discoveries and inventions with the potential to benefit humankind have their source in God and are therefore intended to improve education, disseminate truth, and otherwise further God's purposes on earth.¹ On the

one hand, that belief might certainly help explain the incalculable time and capital officially invested by the LDS Church in making and distributing films, television programs, and related media of its own. It might also help explain the degree to which many individual Latter-day Saints have themselves made disproportionately numerous and significant contributions to the cinematic arts, both technologically and artistically. What it does not explain, on the other hand, is why the artistic progress and quality of *Mormon cinema as such*—both in and out of the commercial arena, and notwithstanding our remarkable beginnings in the industry and the capacity of faithful Latter-day Saints for spiritually enhanced talents and faculties—has thus far, with few exceptions, fallen short of its potential.

Our artistic inconsistencies and disappointments are particularly vexing when considered alongside the more notable accomplishments of Iranian film artists, who have overcome much more formidable obstacles than those with which we have had to contend and in the process have created an astonishing number of spiritually profound, culturally insightful, and cinematically sophisticated films that have not only artistically outshined most of our own best efforts to date but have also played to far greater critical acclaim than any Mormon production has yet to receive. And perhaps more tellingly, were we Latter-day Saints to judge our own movies against these standout Iranian films—with reference either to their artistic quality or to their spiritual profundity (in other words, were we to judge them with reference to the very criteria most of us would likely cite as hallmarks of great art, including the fundamental “virtues and values” that underlie the superficial variants some of our prominent LDS filmmakers and publishers currently extol²)—many of us would no doubt begin to wonder if the best “Mormon” feature films aren’t being made today by Muslims in Iran.³ Although the last decade (and especially the last few years) has seen notable improvements in LDS cinema as well as a small number of really praiseworthy films, our homegrown movies are frequently sentimental and formulaic, and all too often they mistake cinematic prettiness and high production values for genuine artistry. Moreover, as painful as it is to admit, the primary virtue of which many Mormon films can boast is a mere lack of the art form’s most obvious moral vices—and as I have argued elsewhere, the lack of vice is but one of many important aspects of virtue.⁴

It is sometimes said that our high moral standards place LDS faithful at an artistic disadvantage, since we are more discriminating than our peers both in terms of what we will watch and what we will make. But the history of Iranian film would suggest that the curious gap in artistic accomplishment and recognition between our two cinematic cultures is not due to a difference in the ethics embraced by our respective filmmakers

and audiences. In fact, Iranian filmmakers have often accomplished their impressive work while adhering to Muslim moral codes even stricter in some ways than our own high standards. It is equally unlikely that the dearth of outside attention to distinctly Mormon movies and moviemakers could be explained away as backlash for our outspoken opposition to the liberal values manifest by most Indie (studio-independent) and Hollywood films, or that the absence of critical kudos for many Mormon movies could be attributed to a disproportionate commitment among LDS artists to spiritual or religious ideals, since many acclaimed and groundbreaking Iranian films are deeply moral and unapologetically concerned with spiritual and often overtly religious issues.

While many LDS religious beliefs are certainly unique, we are not as singular a culture as we might sometimes think we are, and our art needs to reflect that fact; our theological status as a “peculiar people” does not insulate us from the challenges, struggles, desires, and day-to-day experiences common to all other people (and all other moviemakers), so it also should not excuse us from creating art that can profoundly and empathetically speak to those shared aspects of the human condition. All too often when our films speak to no one but ourselves, it is because they are needlessly idiosyncratic and self-absorbed, not because others aren’t willing to listen. The respective successes of *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004), *The Other Side of Heaven* (2001), *New York Doll* (2005), and *Saints and Soldiers* (2003) prove that when we make films that warrant either widespread attention or critical acclaim, we’ll get it—just as culturally peculiar Iranian films have successfully and often unexpectedly appealed to audiences far beyond Iran’s own borders.

In seeking to understand the reasons for these important differences between Iranian and Mormon cinema, it might help to ask the following questions. To what degree does each cinematic culture (at the very least, among its own filmmakers) demonstrate a thorough understanding of film artistry and aesthetics? Does each culture speak eloquently to important issues with unique, recognizable voices, as well as with an obvious fluency in the common language and conventions of film? Are there compelling styles, concerns, subjects, and genres in each culture’s film oeuvre which are particularly revelatory of that culture’s identity, values, and spirituality, and which are appealing to discerning audiences both inside and outside that culture?

While a thorough history of Latter-day Saint artistry in the media arts is beyond the scope of this work,⁵ even a cursory review of filmmaking contributions by Latter-day Saints paints a vivid, if peculiar, picture of our artistic heritage and inclinations. Among other things, it reveals that the

historical struggles faced by LDS filmmakers and audiences bear in many respects a striking resemblance to those that have often been encountered in Iran. Of course, any study of such resemblances could easily run the risk of overextending the parallels and minimizing the many mitigating factors that might complicate it, not least of which is the significant difference in potential talent and resources available to even a small nation in contrast to those available within a relatively minor and increasingly dispersed religious subculture. Nevertheless, it is the presumption of this study that a conservative and guarded analysis, despite its limitations, might at minimum offer us valuable insights into our own artistic tendencies and aspirations, as well as an opportunity to learn from the many instructive similarities and differences that can legitimately be drawn between our respective cinematic traditions. It might also help us better understand how LDS filmmakers and audiences can work more earnestly toward what Spencer W. Kimball described as the rich promise of an artistic community in which we should be “peers or superiors to any others”—a community at once carefully and reflectively attuned to spiritual truths, passionately committed to realizing the sublime power of great art, and “never satisfied with mediocrity.”⁶

In an attempt to ground such an analysis on concrete criticism rather than abstract theory, we will begin by comparing the opening scenes of a recently made and artfully realized Mormon feature film with an Iranian movie of equitable credentials and see what those respective excerpts reveal to us about the artistic complexity and aesthetic approach of each work.

Artistry and Aesthetics in *The Best Two Years*

A standout example from the last decade’s deluge of commercial features aimed at an ordinary LDS movie-going audience is *The Best Two Years*, directed by Scott S. Anderson and released in 2004. It was among the more popular Mormon movies at the box office, and although it is no art-house film, it is certainly artful, as evidenced not only by its impressive production values and studio-level development, but also by the fact that it is one of the few Mormon commercial films to date singled out as artistically praiseworthy both by critics and by other LDS filmmakers.⁷

The Best Two Years opens with an establishing shot of Amsterdam. As the credits roll, we hear the following lyrics sung with a curiously incongruous country-western twang: “Mama makes the best fried chicken. / Wrangler makes the best blue jeans. / Everybody knows Oklahoma / makes the very best football teams. / I believe that the Mormons / make the very best pioneers, / so I’m going to the land of the tulips, / where I’m gonna make

the best two years.” Beautifully framed shots of Dutch rooftops, windmills, and canal boats segue to a close-up on a dark suit and an unmistakable LDS missionary name-tag. An older man readily identifiable as a mission president shakes hands with an equally recognizable elder, whose face we do not immediately see. The anonymous missionary boards a train and awkwardly searches for a place to sit. While he stumbles down the aisle, the camera shakily scans other passengers from his point-of-view (POV) until he finally finds a seat, after which a well-framed through-the-window shot maintains our bearings while showing the mission president waving from outside. Cued by that view, our perspective shifts back to the platform, where we watch the train pull away from the station. Further aerial shots of tulip fields and of the train speeding across a gorgeous European landscape are intercut with close-ups of the elder’s hand writing in his journal. The music continues throughout and ends with the refrain: “I’ll be ringing lots of doorbells. / I’ll be talking in the street. / I’ll be reaching with the spirit / every single person that I meet. . . . / Here in the land of the tulips, / I’ll be knocking out my best two years.” Another POV shot, this time of the elder in the train looking at his watch, gracefully cuts to a desk-top alarm clock in what is presumably his new missionary apartment. A sleepy missionary reaches over and turns it off before kneeling to pray. A second alarm clock rings, which a second missionary tries unsuccessfully to turn off and finally smashes in frustration on his nightstand before joining his companion for prayer. Clearly (at least to most Mormons), another new missionary has arrived in the field, and another new missionary day has been set in motion.



A beautifully framed through-the-window shot of a Dutch windmill from the opening scenes of *The Best Two Years*.



Elders John Rogers (K. C. Clyde) and Hezekiah Calhoun (Kirby Heyborne) walk home from the train station through a postcard landscape.

What can we say specifically about the artistry of this beginning? First, while charming and engaging, it plays out strictly by the numbers. A beautifully filmed, though thoroughly conventional, series of extreme long shots establish the location of the story. Key characters are sequentially introduced as conventional continuity cuts smoothly stitch together postcard landscapes and character details. The POV shots simultaneously identify the mission president for subsequent scenes and cleverly hide the identity of the new elder—presumably so we can all sympathize more easily with him and later be amused by his ungainly appearance and tonally discordant behavior. The timepiece shots are also well-crafted and edited, but they trade on stereotypical views of missionaries rising early for prayer and end with an exaggerated smash-the-alarm-clock sequence that is disappointingly clichéd. The strained comic tone and slightly slapstick antics continue throughout the film, being half-heartedly replaced by a semi-serious turn of events only during the final moments of the story, when one of the elders belatedly rediscovers why he first became a missionary and thereby redeems an otherwise disappointing mission. Generally speaking, then, the movie is artfully realized and professionally crafted—the writing, casting, directing, production design, cinematography, music, acting, and editing all contribute to a coherent, interesting, and entertaining movie with no glaring flaws. And yet the movie is also a study in contradictions, both in its conception and in its realization. While there is much to laugh about in missionary life, the humor in *The Best Two Years*—as in

virtually all Mormon comedies to date—relies almost entirely on farcical acting and on the inherent amusement to be found in familiar cultural oddities, rather than on a clever and original narrative, subtle anticipatory setups, insightful close-to-the-lens performances, or the many other possibilities exploited by master comedians. And there is far too much cheap comedy in *The Best Two Years* for a film that wants to end on a dramatic and redemptive note. In addition, audiences are constantly assailed by music, lyrics, and dialogue that set a tone and narrative pace inconsistent with the subject matter the film eventually tries to develop. Even the title of the film belies the fact that were we to measure the amount of time actually devoted therein to oversleeping, arguing with companions, wasting time, pulling practical jokes, and lamenting lost girlfriends, in contrast to time spent on any spiritually edifying labor, the film would be more truthfully titled *The Best Two Weeks*.

How should we describe the aesthetic of such a work and others like it? After an over-long series of comic episodes meant mostly to evoke familiar recollections from former missionaries, the story unfolds as do most Hollywood narratives, in accordance with what has come to be called the “classical paradigm”—essentially, a quasi-Aristotelian progression through complications and rising action to a climactic and presumably cathartic resolution. Though the sumptuous cinematography is perhaps the most praiseworthy feature of *The Best Two Years*, elemental concerns like camera angles, shot composition, and lighting seem staid and insensitive to the individual characters and their situations—either that, or the



This exaggerated smash-the-alarm-clock sequence is an example of a strained comic tone that is inconsistent with the subject matter of a film that wants to end on a dramatic and redemptive note.

director and actors were unresponsive to the possibilities opened to them by the director of photography. The editing consists almost entirely of continuity cuts, cut-away and cut-to transitions, classical emphasis edits, and scene shifts. Revelatory and synergistic mise-en-scène is virtually nonexistent. In sum, when considered from an aesthetic point of view, the film is essentially a series of nicely photographed albeit loosely and formulaically connected sight gags, comic anecdotes, and dramatic interludes with no cogent understanding of what artistic end the film should realize or what means would be best employed in doing so.

LDS columnist Eric Snyder's movie review describes *The Best Two Years* as "*God's Army* without the melodrama." He writes, "Its characters are Mormon missionaries who are ordinary and therefore relatable. Their stories are commonplace, especially to anyone who has been a missionary, but they are told with insight and compassion."⁸ There are commonplace elements to be sure: the meager apartment and dreadful diet, the challenging companions and constant rejection, the longing for home, the hunger for mail—and, of course, the peculiar but strangely universal missionary lingo. And the film is indeed story driven, though the story here is less a coherent narrative structure than a string of recollected or imagined missionary episodes. But whatever insight or compassion we might attribute to such a story was achieved with much more honesty and artistry in *God's Army* (2000), despite its questionable melodrama. So in the end, any aesthetic we might attribute to *The Best Two Years* can only be a borrowed, albeit tamed, Hollywood aesthetic: the story reigns supreme,



Elders Calhoun and Rogers pose for a snapshot as new missionary companions.

attempts at real artistry are restricted to the acting, and while the subject matter is unquestionably Mormon, all the cinematic conventions used to tell that story (even the characters themselves) are familiar to the point of being trivial, and they are employed without any apparent regard for their dialectical relation to the story or its theme. Though a pleasant movie, *The Best Two Years* speaks with no unique voice either for LDS culture or for its director, and it wrestles with no really significant issues. If it offers any novel or profound insights about its missionary subject matter, about Mormon culture as a whole, or about life in general, they are not obvious. This is not to say it is a bad film, for it does evoke shared memories and familiar sentiments in a charming and entertaining way. But that success does not negate the fact that the film's artistry is pedestrian and its aesthetic is discordantly derivative. Likewise, most other recent Mormon films we might consider (including those made specifically for the Church, like Kieth Merrill's *Legacy* [1990] and *The Testaments* [2000], as well as virtually all recent efforts at Mormon comedy) also problematically adopt their various underdeveloped and ambivalently derivative aesthetic sensitivities almost entirely from run-of-the-mill Hollywood sources.⁹

As these somewhat disappointing observations underscore—and as our talented and award-winning acting and animation students at Brigham Young University have proven time and again—we are (almost disconcertingly) good at mastering the methods and appropriating the aesthetic values of the movie industry at large. Unfortunately, we have proven ourselves much less adept at finding unique artistic voices for ourselves (though films like *New York Doll* and *Napoleon Dynamite* have made admirable progress in this regard) or at creating artworks that deserve critical acclaim, much less invite genuine study and emulation. And yet, if an appreciation for pretty pictures, a reliance on borrowed Hollywood conventions, and an admirable desire to tell various chapters of “the Mormon story” in a family-friendly though formulaic and derivative way is insufficient to constitute a meaningful aesthetic genuinely suited to the spiritual concerns and profound themes we so want to explore, then what more *is* required to reach that goal?

Artistry and Aesthetics in *The Color of Paradise*

By way of a tentative answer to that query, let us contrast *The Best Two Years* with *The Color of Paradise*, an Iranian work directed by Majid Majidi and released in 1999. Like Scott Anderson, Majidi is no art-house director. In fact, he has been almost universally overlooked by serious scholars infatuated with more formalistic and art-crowd-oriented Iranian



Fully two and a quarter minutes into *The Color of Paradise*, the first visual image appears—a tape player with numerous cassettes strewn across a blanket. An adult hand ejects a tape and hands it to a blind child.

directors like Abbas Kiarostami and Mohsen Makhmalbaf, even though Majidi's work has garnered numerous national and international awards. Like Anderson, Majidi focuses his lens on issues of interest to ordinary Iranians and on the spiritual life of regular people. And like Anderson, Majidi is popular among homefront audiences (his more recent film, *The Willow Tree* [2005], reportedly achieved in Iran the highest box office grosses of any Iranian feature film to that point).¹⁰ But the similarities between these Mormon and Iranian films and filmmakers end there.

As the opening credits of *The Color of Paradise* appear in white script against a completely black screen, we hear crackly Persian music and the sound of a cassette player being repeatedly opened and closed. More music and spoken selections follow, while a voice asks the owner of each tape to identify himself. Aside from the credits, we still see nothing; it is fully two and a quarter minutes into the film before an actual image appears—an overhead shot of the tape player we have apparently been hearing, along with numerous cassette tapes scattered across a blanket. An adult's hand reaches down from the top of the screen and ejects the tape that is playing. As he holds out the cassette, an adult asks, "Whose voice is this on the tape?" A child's hand reaches up from the bottom right of the screen. "My grandmother's," a boy answers as he takes the cassette from the man's hand. We then see a close-up of the boy's face. He is obviously blind. His name, we soon learn, is Mohammad.

With originality and a dialectical reciprocity between content and communication, the beginning of this film establishes a cinematic sensitivity

thoughtfully attuned to a blind boy's inability to see, an inability that can only be treated ironically in an artistic medium which by its nature privileges the very sense the protagonist lacks. The film starts in the prolonged darkness that constitutes the defining trait of Mohammad's world. That the first images *we* see should be those of sound-making machinery and the hands of eight disabled children groping in the shadowy half-light of a school for the blind elegantly alerts us to the sensual parameters of Mohammad's existence. That the adult hand of the teacher should descend into the film frame from above (with a trajectory and certainty known only by those who can see) and should be met from below by the trusting fingers of a blind child (which enter the frame uncertainly and from the darkest corner of the screen) subtly foreshadows the thematic complexity and religious tensions of the plot. The story revolves around three principal figures: a father whose eyes function perfectly but whose heart is blinded by his myopic selfishness and burdensome misfortunes; a boy whose eyes are veiled by physical deformities but whose perfect heart is constantly overflowing with love and tenderness—even while his mind is tormented with the fear that his blindness is a mechanism God employs to hide himself and the beauty of his creations from Mohammad's longing but impotent reach; and a God who remains invisible to us all except at the moment of our death, though his hand occasionally reaches down from above to supply with loving care our needs and blind longings.

The character of this child and the itinerary of his spiritual journey are both established in short order. After long, tearful hours spent waiting for his father to retrieve him from school—long after all the other children have been tenderly reunited with their parents and taken home—Mohammad hears a newly hatched bird peeping under the leaves. Having endured his wait in heartbreaking solitude, his ears are acutely attuned to cries that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Hands outstretched, he stumbles off the safety of the pavement, chases away a prowling cat, and then gropes among the leaves and debris at his feet to find the baby bird, which he places in the pocket of his shirt and laboriously struggles to return to its nest, sightlessly and painfully fighting his way up through the branches of the tree from which it fell.

As the narrative fully develops, we realize that this scene functions as a subtle metaphor for the relationship between God and little Mohammad, who in the end is similarly rescued by God, but who remains—until that rescue—as blind to God's providential care as the baby bird was to Mohammad's own intervention. In the movie's pivotal scene, shortly before his father initiates a journey that will endanger Mohammad's life,



Mohammad sightlessly gropes among the leaves and debris at his feet to find a baby bird that has fallen from its nest.

Mohammad tearfully confides his most intimate fears to a blind carpenter into whose care he has been abandoned:

Nobody loves me. . . . They all run away from me because I'm blind. If I could see, I would go to the local school with other children, but now I have to go to the school for the blind on the other side of the world. Our teacher says that God loves the blind more because they can't see, but I told him if it were so, he would not make us blind so that we can't see him.

The carpenter listens sympathetically to Mohammad's tortured reflections, and after a long, troubled silence he tells Mohammad that his teacher was right. And yet as the carpenter soberly retreats, we see in his face what Mohammad cannot—that the adult blindly wrestles with feelings and doubts every bit as painful and confusing as those of the child.

The Color of Paradise, like *Saints and Soldiers* and *New York Doll*, is a film that is spiritually uplifting and genuinely moving. But it surpasses those admirable films by raising questions about God and religious belief in ways that are from the start artistically and dialectically determined in direct relation to the questions themselves—thereby suggesting (though never forcing) equally profound and artistically satisfying answers. And unlike many Mormon movies that try to address religious issues effectively, *The Color of Paradise* refuses to pander to preconceived audience expectations or resort to manipulative sentimentality and referenced emotions in order to drive home a scripted point. Through theme-appropriate

cinematography and music; symbolic uses of color, sound, and imagery; and convincing portrayals of layered and complex characters, this film reveals a world in which an invisible God is nevertheless believably omnipresent and omnibenevolent, and it portrays that world in ways that unobtrusively disclose God's hand to viewers if not to the characters themselves. While it is at times stunningly beautiful to watch, none of the actors, sets, or locations betrays a hint of artificiality or beauty for beauty's sake; Majidi employs sumptuous photography only when he clearly wants us to appreciate what his blind protagonist cannot—as evidenced by the visually dreary opening sequence and the monochromatically filmed scenes underscoring the father's drab spiritual outlook on life. What little music there is in *The Color of Paradise* is tonally compatible with the other filmic elements and never functions as a spiritual crutch or emotional cue card. It is heard only briefly and at four strategic moments in the narrative; the remainder of the soundtrack is dialogue and ordinary ambient noise, some of it (like certain bird calls) emphasized for thematic effect, but never in discordant ways. The characters brought to life by the largely nonprofessional actors are so effective we forget they are fictional. There are no gratuitous displays of glossy production values or manipulative cinematic techniques, no tonal inconsistencies or appeals to provincial prejudices, and no references to privileged information that would alienate or confuse non-Muslims. The film's appeal is universal, and yet the story it tells does not span the Muslim universe or feel at all contrived—it limits itself to the exposition of a thematically delimited plot peopled by protagonists whose challenges and responses are not pedagogically imposed from without but internally decided by and from within the narrative itself. In short, *The Color of Paradise* exhibits a consistent, coherent, and fully developed spiritual aesthetic in which Majidi supplements artistic norms common to the moral-fable genre of Iranian films with project-specific stylistic devices chosen to evoke blindness, to accentuate those visual experiences inaccessible to the blind, and to emphasize the moral and psychological conflicts naturally produced as the major characters each grapple with what they can and cannot see. That aesthetic is philosophically grounded in clear convictions about the nature and relation of God to his creations, and it is artistically grounded in a hard-won understanding of how to articulate those convictions cinematically.

As a result, *The Color of Paradise* is not a film we can escape into for either mere entertainment or pure pedagogy; it is a film that provokes us ethically and troubles the security of our spiritual complacency. It is a film that encourages us by its honesty and simplicity to evaluate our own relationships and moral choices. In sum, it is a film that invites us

to goodness like the gentle parables spoken by the Master Teacher of the New Testament. And it succeeds where other overtly propagandistic films fail because it is not sentimental but sentient, not didactic but dialectical. The guiding choices made by Majidi and his production crew clearly grew out of an informed reflection upon the holistic relationship between the film's *content*—the visuals, the soundtrack, the narrative, and the spiritual truths they and the other filmic elements are each meant to convey—and the *manner* in which those various elements should evolve, intertwine, and synergistically inform each other. In other words, *The Color of Paradise* is the artistic result of an educated and deeply spiritual reflection upon the *medium* of film itself and the relation of that medium to the spiritual *message* the film wants to communicate (which the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel claimed to be the task of any great art).

Contemporary Mormon Filmmaking

This preliminary analysis raises the question: Why was this film made by an Iranian Muslim and not a Utah Mormon? What critical differences can account for the fact that, while Iranians persistently suffered seemingly insurmountable political and religious impediments to filmmaking that Latter-day Saints did not, Iranian directors literally rose from the ashes of revolution to take the artistic world by storm, while only a few LDS film directors have sporadically earned any real critical acclaim? Why have so many contemporary (including some award-winning) LDS filmmakers subsequently squandered that hard-earned capital on culturally introverted and artistically disappointing projects, while many Iranian filmmakers succeed despite (and sometimes, because of) the overtly religious perspectives and culturally distinct features inherent in their films?

One such difference is that LDS filmmakers who are committed to exploring cultural issues and religious topics have to date focused myopically on stories, themes, and rhetoric that have appealed *only* to Mormons—and in many cases, only to a *select group* of Mormons. This must change. And it probably will change (by necessity if not by choice) as the market becomes saturated with tired, low-budget comedies and with preachy, propagandistic, and parochial films that emotionally move audiences only by evoking established beliefs and sentiments rather than by developing characters and stories that naturally and fairly stir spiritual dispositions.¹¹ We already have examples of films that have attempted to break this mold: as Latter-day Saints we clearly recognize aspects of our own culture in the previously mentioned *Saints and Soldiers* and *Napolean Dynamite*, for instance, although neither of these films addresses itself

to an exclusively LDS audience or speaks with a voice that alienates non-LDS viewers.¹² And to say we should generally aim at a wider audience does not mean, of course, that we should never directly explore aspects of Mormon culture or religious belief. *New York Doll* and *The Other Side of Heaven* directly tackled LDS subjects and featured LDS protagonists, and both films elicited almost universally positive responses. Iranian cinema has shown that cultural and religious differences can even work to a film's advantage, since people are naturally interested in the unfamiliar when it is presented in a sympathetic and comprehensible way. Our cultural heritage can provide us with a multitude of themes, genres, and modes of expression that are fresh and effective. Iranians have favorably exploited their own exotic culture and history in the development of widely appealing genres such as social realism and moral fables. They have also frequently constructed clever films around children in order to explore with innocence and subtlety sensitive issues that would probably have involved profanity or depictions of sex and violence had those same issues been dealt with in realistic films about adults. We could likewise draw on our own rich heritage and culture (as LDS painters, writers, and poets have already done) in searching for innovative and uplifting ways to develop our singular voice and to find modes and matters of cinematic expression unique to us but appealing to others.

A second difference is the unfortunate and widespread attitude that even now prevails among many educated Church members: that while successful labor in the technical arts and blue-collar trades obviously requires specialized training and preparation (even more so in the scientific and mathematical disciplines), success in humanistic ventures like teaching and filmmaking needs only hard work, righteous living, and a modicum of introductory instruction. Even today we often fallaciously assume that at most an aspiring filmmaker might need to learn from the world the practical fundamentals of his or her specific task, but a thorough and penetrating knowledge of cinematic traditions, artistic approaches, and critical theories need not be pursued—and *should* not be pursued where those traditions, approaches, and theories include artworks and movements of ostensibly questionable moral worth or of a demanding intellectual nature. LDS filmmakers *en masse* have yet to invest the time and labor needed to play an informed and compelling part on the world stage. Mormon audiences and filmmakers alike need to acquire a passionate understanding of film *as art*, not just as a means of idle entertainment, personal expression, or religious commentary and apologetics. We also need to resist our evident penchant for tackling projects beyond our current resources or preparation.

Those attitudes are now slowly changing in some circles in ways *de facto* if not *de jure* by the simple fact that LDS Church membership today is so large and diverse that professionally accredited and highly educated Latter-day Saints are now proportionately numerous and influential. And yet the many disappointing Mormon films that have been made in the wake of *God's Army*, Richard Dutcher's debut effort, suggest that far too many aspiring LDS movie producers and directors are still falling prey to that sad assumption—in part, perhaps, because so many of our local filmmakers have been trained within an artistic culture that is historically haunted by those attitudes.¹³

Happily, however, a select few LDS filmmakers have produced quality films despite their limited experience and resources. Ryan Little's *Saints and Soldiers*, Jared Hess's *Napoleon Dynamite*, and Greg Whiteley's *New York Doll* are all standout examples of critical and financial success stories in Mormon cinema.¹⁴ Cleverly employing World War II re-enactors and shooting at Utah locations, Ryan Little made the impressive *Saints and Soldiers* for less than a million dollars and won more than a dozen awards from small, mostly family-film-oriented film festivals for his effort. *Napoleon Dynamite*, similarly shot on a shoestring budget, not only generated an astronomical return on its investment but also garnered almost as many nominations and wins as did Little's film, and several of them were from major festivals and award programs such as the Sundance Film Festival and the Grammy Awards. *New York Doll* earned two award nominations (one for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance), and it was the most spiritually moving film of the three. Certainly, one of the primary reasons why all of these films reached wide audiences, returned a profit, and won significant awards is that all three were sensitively written and filmed in such a way as to generate universal interest and cross-cultural appeal, rather than being aimed at an exclusive and critically undemanding provincial audience. But another reason is that all of them were small-scale projects conceived and carried out within the well-considered capabilities of their respective filmmakers, instead of grandiose enterprises with unrealistic aims or expectations.

Said differently, in addition to mastering the techniques of the trade, LDS filmmakers need to develop an impeccable knowledge of the language, conventions, and theories of film that constitute its artistic essence and history. We also need to collaborate and communicate more effectively and frequently, contributing to film literature and perhaps even forming a society and publishing a journal of our own, thereby nourishing a true community of filmmakers, and not just a collection of artists loosely allied under a broad banner of overlapping religious beliefs and professional

aspirations (the LDS Film Festival and its sponsored projects constitute a noteworthy step in this direction). Some of the fault for our past failures in these areas lies with well-meaning filmmakers who were simply more invested in making films than in learning about them, but fault also lies with teachers, mentors, and institutions more committed to graduating filmmakers and completing projects than in providing genuine education and demanding uncompromising artistry. Much of the fault also lies with LDS audiences willing and sometimes eager to patronize and thereby perpetuate shoddy and undemanding artistry.

Iranian Filmmaking

Although Iranians have struggled with the same limited resources that Latter-day Saints have often wrestled and contended with (as well as formidable social and political challenges, the likes of which have not plagued Mormons since the turn of the twentieth century), a critical core of Iranian filmmakers was prepared to rise to the occasion when opportunities to artistically flourish presented themselves, whereas the bulk of LDS filmmakers was not.

The trajectory of filmmaking artistry in Iran has since World War II followed a slowly ascending arc with two remarkable spikes: one peaking around the early 1970s and then dropping down during the late '70s and early '80s; another beginning in 1995 and climbing steeply during the next few years toward a peak it has apparently not yet reached. Were we to plot this spiky climb on a graph, it would loosely parallel a plot of the increasing number of Iranian artists who have been educated by foreign universities and programs or by domestic schools patterned after foreign models—all of which feature curricula stressing an absolute mastery of history, artistry, and theory as well as craft. Such a plot would also parallel charts tracking the availability of generous government and institutional economic support from which those artists have often benefited (despite periods of government and religious restrictions) and the increasing number of international awards and recognitions earned by the more competitive Iranian filmmakers. Let us see why this is so.

The auspicious beginning of Iranian filmmaking marked by the 1932 film *Haji Aqa* was soon thereafter sabotaged by the very circumstances that had made it possible. As artistic freedom and market choices increased in Iran, artistic quality of the films produced therein initially decreased. With the exception of an unusually sophisticated and rich documentary filmmaking tradition (launched and nurtured, ironically enough, by the U.S. government and, later, Syracuse University),¹⁵ Persian

language feature films during the Pahlavi period of 1926–78 only sporadically showed signs of realizing their initial promise. In a concise albeit overstated summary, Richard Tapper notes that “nothing of distinction—nothing worthy of being called ‘national cinema’—was produced [in Iran] until after the Second World War. For many years, the films shown publicly [in Iran] were mostly dubbed imports; local productions were imitations of Indian, Egyptian and other foreign films, the most popular being what became known as the *film farsi* genre.”¹⁶ Then, too, right up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, ideological intervention by a monarchy committed to increasing nationalist pride, encouraging veneration of the Shah, and adopting pro-Western ideals no doubt also took its toll on artistic achievement, as did inflexible censorship of content. But evidence suggests that market forces and community preferences played a more pivotal role in this series of events than scholars have thus far acknowledged (since neither censorship nor renewed government manipulation *after* the Islamic Revolution prevented Iranians from making great films).

Mohammad Ali Issari observes that as theaters proliferated in Iran during the period of Persian talkies, they became divided into two general groups. There were those that catered to more elite, educated tastes by showing literary adaptations, Hollywood studio films, European art films, and other films with a predominantly Western flair—in short, movies that satisfied the demands of a more critical eye. Then there were those, much larger in number, that appealed to less literate audiences by charging cheaper admission prices and showing Indian- and Persian-language low-budget films, serials, comedies, action-adventure movies, and other products that reflected familiar and provincial practices, offered escapist entertainment, and made virtually no critical demands on their viewers. Issari claims that while more sophisticated Iranian audiences generally rejected these early Persian-language films because of their poor technical quality and trite subject matter, those who spoke only Persian and lacked the formal education to assess a film’s artistic flaws embraced the locally produced films. He also persuasively argues that this very division exacerbated the problem of poor-quality fiction-film production in Iran, and for some time the failure of cinema-goers to demand better quality films contributed to the stunted growth of its fledgling film industry.¹⁷ Regardless of precisely which factors were more or less influential, the point deserving emphasis is this (and herein lies a significant lesson for our own LDS moviemakers and audiences): Iranian moviegoers themselves were largely to blame for the mediocre indigenous cinema of the pre-Islamic Revolution years; by patronizing and tolerating mediocre local films, they helped shape a culture and an economy which encouraged and perpetuated that

very mediocrity. As cultural expectations and critical demands on Iranian artists began to increase in the decade preceding the Islamic revolution of 1979, so too did the quality of their cinema arts.

Film exhibition and production in Iran was dealt a serious blow by the wave of fundamentalist opposition unleashed in the wake of the Islamic Revolution, which had its roots in events that began in the mid-twentieth century and resulted in the theocracy of the Ayatollah Khomeini almost twenty years later in 1979.¹⁸ By 1980, as many as 180 cinemas across Iran had been burned or shut down, 32 in Tehran alone, and many gifted Iranian moviemakers and actors had become tragic casualties of the new, revolutionary government's repressive practices and strict censorship measures.¹⁹ These tragic facts notwithstanding, it is important to note (especially for LDS filmmakers and audiences) that virtually every one of the few really memorable films made after 1931 and before the 1979 revolution were made when Iranian directors began realizing the cinematic vision of *Haji Aqa* by *reacting against* the slew of frivolous and derivative movies that had to that point dominated the market, and by *turning to* subjects and issues of moral and social worth. In other words, the artistic freedom enjoyed by Iranian artists prior to the revolution did not of itself produce great art—and, as we will see, nor did serious restrictions on that freedom after the revolution prevent its production.

The first sustained *artistic* movement in Iranian cinema history was the aptly named Iranian New Wave, which crested between about 1971 and 1978 but began with a rising tide of social realist concerns and nonformulaic plots exemplified by a handful of films stretching from the late 1950s to the late 1960s and strengthened with a swelling move away from the glossy production values of imported mass-market movies and their Iranian copies. And yet New Wave filmmakers represented no homogenous group or single ideology. Many of them were educated abroad and brought to their productions a sophisticated understanding of cinema history and conventions. Some were self-taught amateurs who learned their craft through personal study of foreign-film masterpieces and the movies of their educated peers. Many were highly individualistic *auteurs*. Some were collaborative team players, breaking strict *auteur* parameters by working with talented writers and thinkers outside the filmmaking profession who were able to contribute a self-critical eye, an understanding of psychology and philosophy, and a penchant for narrative innovation that classically trained filmmakers often lacked.

While there were certainly many significant contributing factors to the success of Iranian New Wave films and other standout Iranian movies from the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s—such as state sponsorship²⁰

and filmmaking societies²¹—the primary qualities that ultimately garnered them international critical praise were their directors' historically informed contributions to cinema style, genre, and narrative technique; their insistence on morally meaningful themes; and their passionate commitment to the seriousness of their art. For instance, Naficy describes the New Wave movement as "essentially a 'cinema of discontent,' whose realistic and often critical assessment of contemporary social conditions, expressed through allegory and symbolism, contradicted the aims of its sponsors."²² While this is indeed true in some cases, it was a "cinema of discontent" in another, more essential sense: the Iranian New Wave evolved as a reasoned rejection of prevailing modes of filmmaking artistry—it largely abandoned Hollywood and European studio conventions, and it repeatedly broke new ground and challenged audiences to evolve along with the art rather than content themselves with movies that made no hermeneutic or philosophical demands, provoked no critical reflection, and occasioned no moral or spiritual insights. It did not challenge or provoke viewers for the sake of mere challenge or provocation, however; successful disruptions of the cinematic *status quo* from the 1960s to the 1980s operated in the *service* of art, not in its stead. Just as these were the true defining traits of Iran's first great masterpieces, it is no surprise that they are the traits inherited and embellished by Iranian filmmakers currently earning acclaim.

The hard-won artistic progress of Iranian international cinema can be gauged to some degree by an exhaustive search of U.S. film distribution company catalogues, which turns up no Iranian films in U.S. distribution besides 1969's *The Cow* until Icarus International obtained Mehrjui's 1974 *The Mina Cycle* for a 1979 release.²³ There then followed a relatively long stretch of time without any new Iranian features reaching the U.S. market. But all that changed in 1995, when Jafar Panahi's *The White Balloon* won the *Camera D'Or* at the Festival du Cannes and October Films began distributing it the following year. Then, in 1997 the prestigious Cannes *Palme D'Or* was awarded to Abbas Kiarostami for *A Taste of Cherry*, and Majid Majidi's *Children of Heaven* became the first Iranian film nominated for an Academy Award. And in a story right out of *Haji Aqa*, New Yorker Films acquired for their 1998 catalogue the 1996 film *Gabbeh* by Mohsen Makhmalbaf, of whom Gerald Peary later wrote, "Makhmalbaf . . . is atoning for his dour, puritanical adolescence when, under the spell of his religious Moslem grandmother, he rejected cinema as unholy stuff, and spent five years imprisoned by the Shah as a fundamentalist terrorist. How transformed is he? 'When I first saw [Wim Wenders's] *Wings of Desire*, I wished that my grandmother were still alive so that I could show her that

not all movies take you to hell,' he explained in a 1995 interview. "There are some that can take you to Paradise."²⁴

Appropriately, audiences can now say the same thing about the films of Makhmalbaf himself, as well as of Panahi, Kiarostami, Majidi, and other Iranian directors. During the last decade or so, as Iranian productions began winning one prestigious international award after another, the distribution market witnessed a veritable avalanche of Iranian cinematic accomplishments.²⁵ Moreover, this astonishing streak continues unabated today: it increased under President Mohammad Khatami's reforms, which eased some of the more draconian Khomeini restrictions with which previous filmmakers had to struggle; and while the current Ahmadinejad administration has backpedaled in many ways since taking control of Iran in 2005, Iranian filmmakers accustomed to a generation of artistic freedom and international acclaim have stubbornly sought innovative ways to circumvent or work within renewed hard-line restrictions and thereby maintain the quality, if not the quantity of artistic Iranian films during the Khatami period. (It remains to be seen what lasting effects Ahmadinejad policies may have, but there may be positive results among them, as a troubling number of Iranian films produced immediately prior to the 2005 change in government had begun surrendering to the seductive allure of relaxed moral standards, especially regarding sex and profanity.) During his remarks at the opening gala of the 1995 Telluride Film Festival, the world-famous German director Werner Herzog made the following prediction, "What I say tonight will be a banality in the future. The greatest films of the world today are being made in Iran."²⁶ His prediction has proved entirely correct. Every year, Iranian films broach new territory and win more prestigious awards. They are perennially among the most popular films to play the international film festival circuit—and this despite the fact that they are often unapologetically religious and almost always culturally insightful and philosophically demanding.

Lessons To Be Learned

If the LDS filmmaking community hopes to awaken the interest and earn the respect of worldwide viewers and scholars, effectively compete in the worldwide movie market, help repair a morally troubled movie industry, and thereby nurture the pride, expectations, and intellectual sophistication of our own LDS movie-going public, we must develop filmmakers and media and entertainment professionals of all types who can create, recognize, produce, and sell great films. Among the many lessons we might specifically learn from Iranian films and film history is that

movie artistry and appreciation within a culture is perhaps best developed when a critical mass of passionate filmmakers not only addresses timely and meaningful issues in distinctive, insightful ways, but when those artists assiduously study and engage the artistic history, conventions, and masters of world cinema and consequently produce films that manifest that engagement, speak with a distinct aesthetic voice, and artistically educate audiences (both inside and outside their own culture) to appreciate and expect artistic excellence. Obviously, not every Iranian film is deserving of praise; like every other culture, Iran has produced a plethora of poor-quality moviemakers and movies. But as we have glimpsed, it has also produced some impeccably educated masters and true movie masterpieces, and it is this latter pair of accomplishments (first recognized *outside* Iranian culture) that has earned Iran its world-class filmmaking reputation and accustomed discerning audiences *within* Iran to expect and appreciate quality art from its own artists, thereby increasing and further developing a sustainable pool of critical viewers. And while it is true that only a small percentage of any particular culture's filmmakers will create artistically groundbreaking movies or perform in a register that earns accolades from national and international audiences, those elite and committed filmmakers are absolutely essential in nurturing the pride, expectations, and intellectual sophistication of a culture's filmmaking community and movie-going public. They are equally essential in awakening the interest of renowned critics, scholars, and fellow filmmakers from whom peer response and recognition must come if any culture's cinema is to reach its full artistic potential or participate meaningfully in the movie arts.

As the plot and characters of *Haji Aqa* suggest (and as the history of Iranian cinema demonstrates), Iranian filmmakers and audiences have often walked a veritable tightrope between the demands of religious orthodoxy and embattled cultural identity at one extreme and an uncommon zeal for artistic creativity and self-expression at the other. Partly in response to this tension, the more gifted and committed Iranian artists have devoted themselves to making movies that are both entertaining and spiritually enlightening. The peculiar demands imposed on Iranian cinema since the Islamic Revolution seem to have worked to its eventual advantage, fostering a climate among serious artists in which frivolous and self-indulgent filmmaking has been unthinkable, and in which artistic subtlety and originality has been the norm. As critics and industry insiders everywhere were predicting that Khomeini's imposition of harsh censorship tactics and repressive Islamic codes of conduct would spell the death of Iranian cinema, Iranian filmmakers like Abbas Kiarostami astutely mused that laboring within limitations rather than combating or lamenting them,

could work in one's favor by encouraging creative solutions. He compared his own struggle to make films with that of an architect forced to build on crooked plots of ground: such circumstances don't necessarily prevent building, he observed; they simply require more imaginative designs and innovative responses to the challenges of difficult terrain.²⁷ LDS filmmakers need to adopt a similar attitude. Only then will we realize President Kimball's prophetic vision of an artistic community that is the "peer or superior" to all others.

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1. A succinct variation of this belief was expressed by Brigham Young during the dedication of the Salt Lake Theater on March 6, 1862: after lamenting the prejudice of many pious Christians against simple amusement, he preached that "there was nothing lovely in the world, nothing delightful, but the Lord had created it for the good of His children and that it was the abuse and not the proper use of anything that constituted evil." Helen Garrity, "The Theatre in Utah," in *Utah: A Centennial History*, ed. Wain Sutton, vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1949), 1008–9. Speaking specifically of motion pictures, President David O. McKay reportedly shared a similar sentiment in 1956 after recording some narration for the film *Feed My Sheep*: "I am so glad the Church is utilizing these marvelous inventions for communication. I believe the Lord has provided these great inventions like the motion picture, television, radio, and such things. This is one of the ways in which the gospel message will go to all the world." Wetzel O. Whitaker, "Pioneering with Film: A History of Church and Brigham Young University Films," unpublished manuscript, iii, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

2. See <http://www.audiencealliance.com/vvm.php>.

3. A telling indication of how Utahns and Mormons have judged the quality of Mormon films to date can be found on the ldsfilm.com site, where twenty Mormon films from 2000 to 2005 are assigned a numerical score according to the various ratings they received in published movie reviews from five local newspapers: the highest rating assigned to any film on the list is only an 84 (*Saints and Soldiers*, 2003), while the average score is a dismal 57. LDS Cinema Table, <http://ldsfilm.com/table.txt>.

4. Travis T. Anderson, "Seeking after the Good in Art, Drama, Film, and Literature," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 231–46.

5. Virtually all significant early Utah film history yet carried out was researched and written during the early 1970s by a Brigham Young University student and faculty member named Richard Alan Nelson, and much of that

impressive work remains in fragmentary research notes and unpublished papers donated to the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. The two exceptions are an impressive history of LDS film productions through the mid-1960s submitted as a master's thesis by another BYU student named David Kent Jacobs, and a brief summary of Jacobs's work, updated with a thesis-length personal history of Church and BYU film production from the 1950s through the 1970s, which was written and donated to the L. Tom Perry Special Collections by Wetzel O. ("Judge") Whitaker, the man who founded the LDS Motion Picture Studio and played a seminal role in nurturing the nascent BYU Theater Arts Department. A liberal recounting of the above-mentioned histories along with a provisional review of current developments can be found in Randy Astle, with Gideon Burton, "A History of Mormon Cinema," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 13–163.

6. Spencer W. Kimball, "Education for Eternity," Brigham Young University Address, September 12, 1967, 14; excerpted and modified in "First Presidency Message: The Gospel Vision of the Arts," *Ensign* 7 (July 1977): 2–5; reprinted in its entirety in John W. Welch and Don E. Norton, eds., *Educating Zion* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 43–63.

7. Speaking to a BYU student reporter, LDS filmmaker Richard Dutcher reputedly described films like *The RM* (2003) and *The Home Teachers* (2004) as "mindless, trivial, numbing," but praised *The Best Two Years* as "wonderful for a Mormon family audience. . . . There's good stuff there." James Greaves, "Dutcher Foresees End of Genre He Fathered," *The Daily Universe*, February 1, 2006, 1. Though the movie broke no new ground and earned no major accolades, it did receive numerous favorable reviews, including those by Joe Leydon in *Variety* and Jeff Vice in the *Deseret Morning News*, who opined that it "not only reaches the bar [established by *God's Army* in 2000], but . . . actually sets it a little higher," standing "head and shoulders above the most recent crop of LDS features." Jeff Vice, "'Two Years' Serves Its Mission Well," *Deseret Morning News*, February 20, 2004, W4.

8. Eric D. Snyder, "The Best Two Years," online at <http://www.ericdsnyder.com/movies/the-best-two-years/>.

9. On his Audience Alliance website, for instance, Kieth Merrill champions the timeworn adage of Hollywood's story-driven approach to filmmaking, an approach that routinely reduces or subjects every other cinematic consideration to the exposition of a formulaic plot, thereby eliminating out of hand the possibility of feature films (like those of Terrence Malick, Wong Kar Wai, Zhang Yimou—and virtually all renowned Iranian directors) in which mood, character, spiritual experience, or even truth can take precedence over story and dialogue. Merrill's mantra (borrowed from the likes of Hollywood screenwriting guru Robert McKee) is this: "To make a great movie there are three things that matter: Story! Story! Story!" While now acknowledging (perhaps in consequence of our November 15, 2007, *BYU Director's Cut* panel discussion on this very issue) that "great movies offer entertainment with virtues and values *embedded*," Merrill originally described his Audience Alliance Motion Picture Paradigm as "entertainment first, values *added*" (emphases mine). Regardless of whether Merrill has changed simply the wording of his web page or whether he has indeed changed his production philosophy, any "values added" approach suffers from at least two significant problems, since moral value is a function of everything constituting a

film, not just the way a film's story is told: First, not all great films are entertaining; many are sobering, thought provoking, or even troubling. Second, real values cannot be added to an artwork after the fact like icing on a cake; they must be dialectically integrated into the mix so they are present in every aspect of the film. Merrill's award-winning documentary and Imax films have always outperformed his cardboard-character, formula-driven fiction films precisely because they have not been structured by formulaic stories with values added or by "virtue and value" quotients and matrices. See "Values for Life: The Audience Alliance Values and Virtues Matrix," Audience Alliance Motion Picture Studio, <http://www.audiencealliance.com/vvm.php>.

10. By October 19, 2005, *The Willow Tree* had "surpassed 600,000 admissions to become the highest grossing drama ever in Iran." "Academy Award-Nominated Director Majid Majidi's 'The Willow Tree' Breaks Box Office Records to Become the Highest Grossing Drama in Iran," IndependentFilm.com, online at <http://www.independentfilm.com/resources/academy-awardnominated-di.shtml>. *The Color of Paradise* received numerous awards, including the Grand Prix at the 21st Montreal Festival for World Films, and was described by movie critic Roger Ebert as a family film that "shames the facile commercialism" of Hollywood family films. Ebert writes that Majidi's work "feels truly intended for God's glory, unlike so much 'religious art' that is intended merely to propagandize for one view of God over another. His film looks up, not sideways. In this and his previous film, the luminous Oscar nominee *Children of Heaven*, he provides a quiet rebuke to the materialist consumerism in Western films about children. . . . Because they do not condescend to young audiences, Majidi's films of course are absorbing for adults as well, and there is a lesson here: Any family film not good enough for grownups is certainly not good enough for children." Roger Ebert, "The Color of Paradise," June 2, 2000, online at <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20000602/REVIEWS/6020303>.

11. This very point was eloquently made by Mitch Davis (director of *The Other Side of Heaven*) in an interview with the online Meridian Magazine: "The average movie in Hollywood costs \$80 million to make and market today. Excluding *The Other Side of Heaven*, the average budget for LDS-themed movies over the last few years has been under \$600,000. Until now it has been possible for movies made on those low budgets to succeed because of the curiosity and hunger of the LDS audience. But I think that curiosity is waning and the hunger is growing more selective. I think the LDS audience is going to become more discerning and more demanding. . . . I think the only way LDS filmmakers are going to begin making movies that cross over is if they are forced to make that kind of movie. If the LDS audience starts demanding that LDS filmmakers spend more money on their productions, those filmmakers will be forced to find additional audiences for those movies, which means they will begin to be more considerate of the cross over audience. . . . Personally, I think we set the bar pretty low when we make movies about ourselves for ourselves, show them to ourselves in our local theaters, then congratulate ourselves. We can do better, and I think the realities of the market are going to force us to do better." "Mitch Davis on Mormon Movies," Meridian Magazine, online at <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/arts/041015Mitchprint.html>. Davis does not discuss the consequences of business ventures like Deseret Book Company's acquisition of Excel Entertainment, which might perpetuate the

production of mediocre Mormon movies by assuring their DVD distribution to a trusting LDS customer base.

12. It is worth citing at this juncture Hamid Reza Sadr's appraisal of Majidi's Academy Award winning *Children of Heaven* (1997), which in many regards mirrors Roger Ebert's review of *The Color of Paradise*: "Majidi's intense study of a family living in the grip of poverty is exaggerated in mood, but this is a work characterised by visual quality and emotional generosity, which impressed the Academy members. It offered an opportunity for international audiences to observe characters whose lives might be very different from their own but whose concerns are ultimately universal." Hamid Reza Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 229.

13. The memoirs of former Disney Studios employee and LDS Motion Picture Studio founder Wetzel Whitaker reveal a distinct pattern to the productions during his tenure at BYU through the early 1970s—a pattern that in some critical respects is still followed today by many BYU-educated filmmakers. His two welfare films that launched postwar LDS filmmaking (*Church Welfare in Action* [1948] and *The Lord's Way* [1948]) were both made entirely by dedicated volunteer Church members possessing between them only a modicum of professional filmmaking experience. And while Whitaker gratefully acknowledged that BYU and the LDS Church were astonishingly helpful in supplying the necessary facilities and equipment to facilitate studio production (especially after the original BYU studio burned down in 1964), Whitaker also admitted that for years he struggled under constant pressure to accept projects effectively beyond his limited abilities, meager budget, inadequate equipment, and bare-bones facilities. More importantly, until he had himself trained a generation of filmmakers, he had to rely almost entirely on uneducated students, poorly paid personnel, and amateur actors, supplemented by only a cherished few professional associates—most of them with training in peripheral fields. Whitaker, "Pioneering with Film," 11; Wetzel O. Whitaker, interviewed by Thomas Cheney, July 30, 1985, recording transcript, 10–15, Perry Special Collections. For example, during his first several years at BYU, Whitaker's initial cameraman and only professionally trained assistant was a still photographer named Robert Stum, a person with no prior experience at all in motion picture work. On one occasion, Whitaker and his second cameraman (Frank Wise, former director of the Deseret Book film distribution unit) had so little experience between them that they failed to record a key scene on film because neither of them knew how to properly plug in a new camera (Whitaker, interview, 21–22).

Referring to this particularly discouraging period, when he was deliberating whether to quit the BYU assignment and resume work for Disney, Whitaker lamented that "it seemed as though we were the forgotten men who had been relegated to Siberia." Whitaker, "Pioneering with Film," 14. According to Whitaker, the primary problem during these "very, very" discouraging times was not simply a lack of resources, but a *lack of education*; he and his production crew lacked critical training, and so did the administrators and leaders to whom he had to report: "It was a tough assignment," he recalled. "I wondered sometimes what they wanted us up here for anyway to give us a roll of Kodachrome and go out and start shooting. Well, they didn't know what film making was like at all. They didn't have any idea. It was an educational problem." Whitaker, interview, 14.

Little by Little, Whitaker and his associates *did* acquire much of that needed education, but only through what he described as “on the job” training—as when Whitaker’s crew was able to apprentice as it were with Disney layout man Kendall O’Connor while he was briefly hired to help out on *Man’s Search for Happiness* (1964). Whitaker, interview, 18–19. And while they were slowly accruing experience and expertise, Whitaker’s team produced some really exceptional work, *The Windows of Heaven* (1963) and *Man’s Search for Happiness* being among the more notable successes (though the heavily edited and abridged version of *The Windows of Heaven* currently available on DVD preserves little of its original artistry, as does the remade *Man’s Search for Happiness*). But it is nevertheless disappointing that from the beginning the Church could not invest the same kind of time and money in professionally educating its institutional filmmakers as it did its turn-of-the-century temple mural artists like John Hafen, who was among those sent on art missions to study painting in the ateliers of Paris at Church expense. See James B. Allen, “Education and the Arts in Twentieth-Century Utah,” in *Utah’s History*, ed. Richard D. Poll (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 602. Had it done so, the *artistic* history and heritage of Mormon filmmaking might now read very differently.

14. Since this article was written and first submitted to *BYU Studies* in 2006, several LDS commercial filmmakers have created exceptionally fine films. For instance, in 2008 Utah State University’s Ashley Karras directed a first-rate documentary titled *The Inheritance of War*, about WWII’s Bataan Death March survivors. In January 2009, Boston University student Kristal Williams-Rowley won the LDS Film Festival Short Film and Audience Choice awards with her stunning drama *Mind the Gap*, which she produced as her BU graduate student thesis project. And Christian Vuissa, founder of the LDS Film Festival, has made over the last few years—on remarkably small budgets—several intimate and moving portraits of LDS characters.

15. See Mohammad Ali Issari, *Cinema in Iran, 1900–1979* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 172, and Hamid Naficy, “Iranian Cinema,” in *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*, ed. Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2001), 136–39.

16. Richard Tapper, ed., *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 3. The vast majority of prerevolutionary Iranian films that *weren’t* derivative (like an enormously popular series of *Luti* or “Tough Guy” films that played from 1958 through the late 1970s) were still considered meritless pabulum by most Iranian film scholars. So too, were the *Fardin* films. See Farzan Navab, “Farewell to Fardin,” *The Iranian*, April 7, 2000, online at <http://www.iranian.com/Arts/2000/April/Fardin>.

17. Issari, *Cinema in Iran*, 65. Naficy agrees that most early Persian language films were “low-quality, formulaic and escapist,” but he attributes those failings as much to strict state censorship and foreign competition as to what he calls “prevailing social and economic conditions.” Naficy, “Iranian Cinema,” 135.

18. For historical details, see Elton L. Daniel, *The History of Iran* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001); and Donald N. Wilber, *Iran, Past and Present* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

19. Hamid Naficy, “Islamizing Film Culture in Iran: A Post-Khatami Update,” in Tapper, *New Iranian Cinema*, 30.

20. For instance, in 1983 the postrevolution Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance established the Farabi Cinematic Foundation, which produced a number of influential films about overtly spiritual themes—one of the finest being the 1985 film *Beyond the Mist*. For an extended discussion, see Sadr, *Iranian Cinema*, 182.

21. One of the best examples of such a syndicate was the self-organized Progressive Filmmaker's Society formed in 1973 by Dariush Mehrjui (director of *The Cow* [1969], which is generally considered to be Iran's first real art film) and fourteen other notable Iranian moviemakers of the time. Their stated aim, formulated well before the religious reforms enforced by the Islamic Revolution, was to oppose sex and vulgarity in the movies, to encourage intellectual exchange and mutual support, and to make films embodying high moral values. Sadr, *Iranian Cinema*, 154.

22. Naficy, "Iranian Cinema," 156.

23. Catalogues searched include those of Kino, New Yorker Films, Swank, Janus Films, Kit Parker, Ivy Films, Budget Films, Films Incorporated, October Films, and many others.

24. Gerald Peary, "Gabbah," *Film Reviews, Interviews, Essays, and Sundry Miscellany*, November 1999, online at <http://www.geraldpeary.com/reviews/ghi/gabbah.html>.

25. By way of example, in 2000 New Yorker Films alone was distributing three of Makhmalbaf's films: *Gabbah*; his earlier 1996 film *A Moment of Innocence*; and his 1998 feature *The Silence*. They had also acquired Jafar Panahi's 1997 *The Mirror*, and the 1998 debut film of Mohsen Makhmalbaf's seventeen-year-old daughter, *The Apple* (directed from her father's screenplay). The next year they added to their catalogue Majid Majidi's 1999 film *The Color of Paradise* and the 1999 award-winning production *The Wind Will Carry Us* by Abbas Kiarostami—who consistently tops critics' lists as one of the world's greatest living directors. By 2002, New Yorker also carried Kiarostami's *ABC Africa* (2001), Bahaman Farmanara's *Smell of Camphor, Fragrance of Jasmine* (2000), Marzieh Meshkini's *The Day I Became a Woman* (2000), as well as Hassan Yektapanah's *Djomeh* (2000) and Bahman Ghobadi's *A Time for Drunken Horses* (2000)—dual winners of the *Camera D'Or* from Cannes in 2000. In order to appreciate the truly astonishing achievement that these numbers represent, one need only consider that New Yorker Films carried only one Egyptian film that same year—Shadi Abdelsalam's *Night of Counting the Years*, which was made in 1969 (the same year in which Iran's *The Cow* was produced) and which for years afterward was the only film from the entire Middle East in U.S. distribution. The Egyptian film industry hasn't managed to add another single film to New Yorker's catalogue over the same period of time in which Iran added eleven—all of them award-winning films.

26. Anjula Razdan, "The Iranian New Wave," *Utne Reader* 119 (September/October 2003): 28.

27. "Creativity is a necessity and limitation makes people more creative. I have a friend who is an architect. He tells me that he is at his best professionally when he designs structures for odd lots because these lands do not fit into the normal pattern and he has to work within a great deal of limitations. So, he must be creative and he enjoys this. It is these restrictions that provide an opportunity for people to be creative." Ali Akbar Mahdi, "In Dialogue with Kiarostami," *The Iranian*, August 25, 1998, online at <http://www.iranian.com/Arts/Aug98/Kiarostami>.

Letters on Mormon Polygamy and Progeny

Eliza R. Snow and Martin Luther Holbrook, 1866–1869

Jill Mulvay Derr and Matthew J. Grow

Practically I should oppose polygamy of course, believing the one wife system the best,” Dr. Martin Luther Holbrook, editor of the *New York Herald of Health*, wrote to Eliza Roxcy Snow, the well-known Mormon “poetess,” in 1869. Nevertheless, Holbrook continued, “unless a cover for vice I have no objection to the experiment being made as you claim to be making it.” Holbrook, himself an advocate of radical health reforms, even stated, “As long as the practice is conscientiously maintained, it will lead to good.” The following previously unpublished 1866–1869 correspondence between Holbrook and Snow features two prominent Americans in a cordial discussion of Mormonism that crossed boundaries of belief, gender, and age. Snow in particular prized the exchange, as she copied into her journal three of her letters to Holbrook and one of his replies, the only personal correspondence she preserved there (fig. 1).¹

Snow’s letters display her gift for expression as well as the energetic defense of Mormon women and children under the system of plural marriage that characterized her leadership from 1868 until her death in 1887.

1. Eliza R. Snow, Journal, 1842–82, holograph, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The location of the actual letters is unknown; the only record is Snow’s journal. This journal includes daily entries for 1842–44, when Snow resided in Nauvoo, Illinois, as well as drafts of Snow’s poetry and letters dated through 1882. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1995), the most complete scholarly edition of Snow’s life sketch (1–45) and three diaries, includes only the 1842–44 entries from this journal (52–99), but not any later letters and poems. In reproducing the letters here, the original punctuation and spelling have been retained. Snow’s underlines are represented with *italics*.

Reply to Dr. M. L. Holbrook, N. Y.

Dr. M. L. Holbrook, Dear Sir,

Altho' your letter was unanticipated, it was no less welcome. I should have acknowledged its receipt before this, but for previous engagements and responsibilities, I must confess, I have not the least recollection of either yourself or your coat; but am happy to say I have an agreeable remembrance of your mother, and, as I frequently made coats, it is very probable I did myself the honor of making "the coat." Many eventful scenes of life have transpired since then, and it is no wonder that late circumstances of early youth have escaped my mind, yet I fondly cherish the memory of my friends, and am ever pleased to hear of them and their prosperity. I am thankful that you Sir, are engaged in so noble an enterprise as editor of the Herald of Health. I have not seen a No. of that Magazine, but judge from its heading, with the contents of the Nov. No. which you kindly sent me, that I should like it. I will enclose in this, the amt. of a year's subscription—Please forward as soon as convenient.

The leading items in the heading of your Magazine, are portions of our practical faith, as a people, to which we attach much importance.

The elevation and redemption, morally and physically, of fallen human nature, and laying a foundation for the prolongation of life, are, with us, subjects of great moment. The object is at once grand and noble. Ignorance and neglect of the laws of life, resulting from a lack of knowledge of the value and design of this present state of existence, and its bearing on a future, are telling in results of corruption and depravity, not only in the lower ranks of life, but also in what is termed its upper walks—abridging the longevity allotted to man—cutting asunder the thread of life, by destroying its purity. This state of things is increasing to a fearful extent, and the urging of every philanthropist should be aroused and enlisted to arrest the deadly work. The death-day Saints are alive to this great achievement.

Human progress in the development of all the rational and noble faculties of man, physically, morally, mentally, and socially, is what we are striving and living for. ————— To ensure the accomplishment of

FIG. 1. A page from the journal of Eliza R. Snow, on which Snow copied the letter she sent to M. L. Holbrook on November 30, 1866. Eliza R. Snow, Journal, 1842–82, Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

They also reflect her grasp of Mormon doctrine and errand as well as her interest in health matters. In addition, the correspondence suggests that some Americans involved in aspects of radical reform, such as Holbrook, took a much more nuanced and open view toward Mormonism than most of their contemporaries.²

2. George Francis Train, Thomas L. Kane, and Susan B. Anthony, for example, maintained sympathetic relationships with Latter-day Saints. See Davis Bitton,

Eliza R. Snow and Martin Luther Holbrook

In 1866, the thirty-five-year-old Holbrook initiated the correspondence with Snow, then sixty-two, by reminding her that three decades earlier, she had worked as a seamstress for his parents, Ralph and Margaret Laird Holbrook, in the small town of Mantua in Ohio's Western Reserve.³ Snow (1804–1887, fig. 2) was born in Massachusetts but raised in Mantua. Baptized a Latter-day Saint in 1835, Snow joined the Saints in Kirtland and then in their peregrinations to Missouri, Illinois, and Utah, and chronicled their saga in poetry and song. A plural wife of Joseph Smith and, following Smith's 1844 martyrdom, a plural wife of Brigham Young, she bore no children.⁴ In April 1868, Young commissioned sixty-four-year-old Snow (who retained her own name) to reestablish women's Relief Societies in all the wards or



FIG. 2. Eliza R. Snow. Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

"George Francis Train and Brigham Young," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 3 (1978): 410–27; Matthew J. Grow, *Liberty to the Downtrodden*: Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Joan Iversen, "The Mormon-Suffrage Relationship: Personal and Political Quandaries," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 11, no. 2–3 (1990): 8–16, reprinted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, ed., *Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870–1896* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 150–72.

3. Holbrook might have seen one of Snow's jeremiatic Civil War poems in the *New York Times* in 1862. The *Times* published several stanzas of Snow's "Response to 'Our Country's Call,'" by William Cullen Bryant, the unnamed correspondent labeling it "an index of the views of the more orthodox Mormons on the present National civil struggle." "Affairs in Utah," *New York Times*, January 20, 1862.

4. On Snow, see Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "The Eliza Enigma: The Life and Legend of Eliza R. Snow," in *Essays on the American West, 1974–1975*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 29–46, reprinted in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11 (Spring 1978): 30–43; and Jill Mulvay Derr, "Form and Feeling in a Carefully Crafted Life: Eliza R. Snow's 'Poem of Poems,'" *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Spring 2000): 1–39. Derr is writing a book-length biography.

local congregations in the Rocky Mountain area. The semi-autonomous Relief Society, which had functioned sporadically in the twenty-six years since its founding by Joseph Smith in 1842, furnished women official responsibilities within the Church organization. Young's assignment to Snow launched her twenty-year tenure as head of the women's organizations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, firmly established Relief Society as an ongoing part of the Church's organizational structure, and opened to Mormon women new opportunities for charitable service, economic enterprise, and personal and political expression.⁵ In addition, Snow was instrumental in establishing among the Latter-day Saints women-directed organizations for young women (1870) and children (1878).⁶

Holbrook (1831–1902) remained in Mantua until 1859, when he went to Cleveland to attend the Ohio Agricultural College and to work as associate editor of the *Ohio Farmer*.⁷ That year he purchased from his father, Ralph Holbrook, part of the Mantua farm that previously had belonged to Eliza Snow's father, a portion of the homestead she had known as a child. Martin Holbrook sold the land in 1860.⁸ In 1862–63, he studied at Boston under the

5. Emma Hale Smith, Joseph Smith's wife, was president of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. Snow served as secretary and brought to Utah minutes of the Nauvoo meetings, the organization's "Constitution and law." See Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Lion and the Lioness: Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 2 (2001): 76–79, 82–84. On Relief Society, see generally Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

6. Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of the Y.L.M.I.A., 1911), gives November 28, 1869, as the founding date, but other documents, including "Resolutions, First Young Ladies Department of the Ladies' Co-operative Retrenchment Association," Salt Lake City, *Deseret News Weekly*, June 29, 1870, 249, suggest a founding date of May 27, 1870. On the founding of the organization for children, see Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, *Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1979), chapter 1.

7. On Holbrook, see James Grant Wilson, ed., *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 7, supplement (New York: D. Appleton, 1900), 143; *Who Was Who in America. A Component Volume of "Who's Who in American History,"* vol. 1 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis, 1943), 576; and *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 12 (New York: James T. White, 1904), 334.

8. In 1847, Ralph Holbrook purchased 91 acres from Erastus Crocker, who had purchased the whole of the property from Alvirus Snow, the half brother of Eliza Snow's father Oliver, to whom it had been deeded in 1838. In 1859, Ralph Holbrook sold portions to his sons Martin and William, and in 1860, Martin sold his holdings to William. Deeds, Portage County, Ohio, 38:1, 47:553–54, 74:79–81, 76:261, cited in Nancy S. McPherson, "Research Report on the Residence of Oliver

tutelage of Dio Lewis, a leading advocate of physical education, a subject Holbrook subsequently introduced into Cleveland public schools.⁹ After his marriage at Mantua in 1864, he moved to New York, where he obtained a physician's license. In 1866, he began editing *The Herald of Health and Journal of Physical Culture*. Under Holbrook's editorship, *The Herald of Health* discussed a wide range of topics, from water cures and vegetarianism to progressive agriculture and prison reform. The journal encouraged the training of women doctors, advocated a healthy lifestyle complete with exercise and proper diet, and advertised everything from clothes wringers to graham crackers to home gymnasiums. Henry Ward Beecher, Horace Greeley, Phoebe and Alice Cary, and Theodore Tilton were some of the journal's most notable contributors.

Holbrook's interests were many and varied. Among his accomplishments, he worked as a professor of hygiene in the New York Medical College and Hospital for Women for fifteen years; he discovered, through microscopic work, "the terminations of the nerve of the livers and kidneys";¹⁰ he helped to introduce the first Turkish bath in the United States, which he managed from 1865 to 1887; and he patented a "muscle-beater" for exercise. He published several books on topics he discussed with Snow, including *Marriage and Parentage and the Sanitary and Physiological Laws for the Production of Children of Finer Health and Greater Ability*. His obituary in the *New York Times* called him "one of the best-known medical authors and editors in New York."¹¹

Trends in Medicine and Physical Culture

Holbrook's correspondence with Snow occurred at a time of transition of progressive medical thought within American culture. Letter 1, discussed in overview and printed in full below, demonstrates Snow's enthusiasm for what she saw as Mormonism's similarly progressive society.

By the time of the Civil War, both heroic medicine, with its reliance on bloodletting and purging, and the herbal-based Thomsonian botanic medicine, which had proved highly influential in early Mormonism, had

and Rosetta Snow Located in Mantua, Portage County, Ohio," Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah, copy in Church History Library.

9. On Lewis, see Jack S. Blocker Jr., "Dioclesian Lewis," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13:565–66. For the physical education movement, see Mabel Lee, *A History of Physical Education and Sports in the U.S.A.* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983).

10. Wilson, *Appleton's Cyclopaedia*, 143.

11. "Dr. Martin Luther Holbrook," *New York Times*, August 13, 1902, 9.

been largely discredited.¹² The Civil War greatly expanded the role of government in medicine and trained legions of professional doctors, hospital managers, and nurses, which helped create a more favorable atmosphere for scientific medicine in the postbellum period. Even as medicine became more professionalized, however, the public continued to subscribe to a variety of medical approaches during the 1860s and 1870s.

During the post-Civil War period, Mormonism also shifted from its inclination toward Thomsonian medicine to tentatively accept more scientific remedies.¹³ For example, Brigham Young, who had often denounced professional doctors, gradually became more open to scientific medicine. In 1869, he even appointed a son of Willard Richards to be trained as a physician in an eastern medical school; Willard, who had served as Young's counselor, had been a Thomsonian doctor. Young then assigned another son of Richards to attend medical school in 1871 and finally sent his own nephew Seymour Young in 1872.¹⁴ Young also began to encourage women to train as doctors, suggesting the idea as early as 1867. Both Snow and Young intensified their call for women physicians in the early 1870s, and Young subsequently assigned a number of women to study at the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, including Romania Bunnell Pratt in 1873, Margaret Curtis Shipp in 1875, and Ellis Reynolds Shipp in 1876.¹⁵ Snow supported their work and simultaneously continued water treatments for herself, specifically cold water baths.¹⁶

12. For overviews of Mormonism and nineteenth-century medical practices, see Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., "Medical Practices," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:875; Lester E. Bush Jr., "The Mormon Tradition," in *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in Western Religious Traditions*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Darrel W. Amundsen (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 397–420.

13. Lester E. Bush Jr., *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints: Science, Sense, and Scripture* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1993), 93–96; Leonard Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 367–68.

14. Robert T. Divett, *Medicine and the Mormons: An Introduction to the History of Latter-day Saint Health Care* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1981), 135–43; Linda P. Wilcox, "The Imperfect Science: Brigham Young on Medical Doctors," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12 (Fall 1979): 34; Thomas W. Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad': Brigham Young's Romance with American Higher Education, 1867–1877," *Church History* 76 (December 2007): 778–98.

15. Divett, *Medicine and the Mormons*, 161–62; Chris Rigby Arrington, "Pioneer Midwives," in *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, ed. Claudia L. Bushman (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976), 43–65.

16. Susa Young Gates described the "wooden tub of cold water" which stood in Snow's room in the Lion House where Snow, "breaking the ice-crust in the

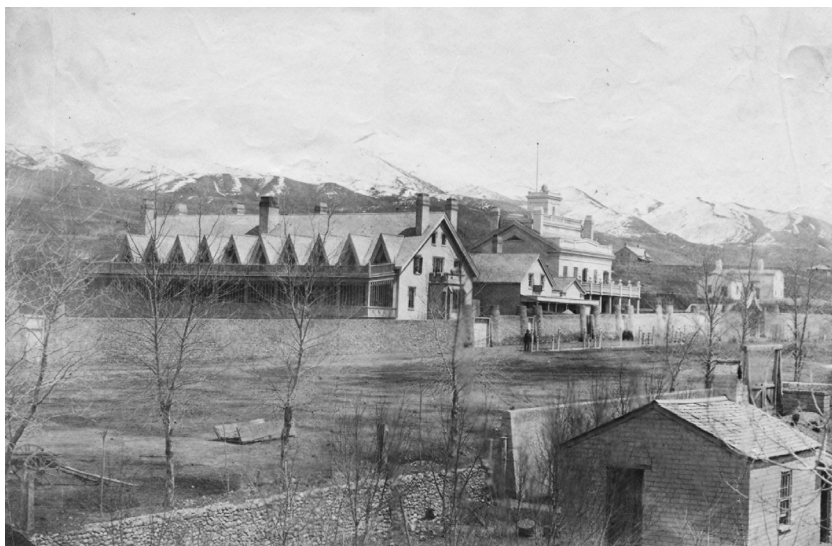


FIG. 3. The Lion House, left, residence of some members of Brigham Young's family, including Eliza R. Snow. Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Brigham Young viewed the physical culture movement favorably. His daughter, Susa Young Gates, suggested that her father possibly knew Dio Lewis when Young lived in New York as a young man and may have gained his ideas regarding the importance of "gymnastics and fresh air" from Lewis. In 1862, Young's son-in-law and business manager Hyrum Clawson obtained plans and specifications for a Dio Lewis gymnastics set, which was then built on a porch on the west side of the Lion House, the Young residence in Salt Lake City (fig. 3). Gates noted that the set, complete with "wooden steps or stools, trapeze, vaulting and climbing poles, wands, hoops, backboards, jumping ropes," made the Young children participants in "physical culture pioneering."¹⁷

Overview of Letter 1—Snow to Holbrook, November 30, 1866

As Snow indicated in her first letter to Holbrook (pages 157–59), many of the reforms praised by Holbrook and other physical culture advocates

winter for the purpose," bathed "every morning of her life." Snow had suffered from tuberculosis. "Life in the Lion House," 39, Susa Young Gates Collection, box 12, fd. 2, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

17. Susa Young Gates, "How Brigham Young Brought Up His 56 Children," *Physical Culture* (February 1925): 29–31, 138–44; Susa Young Gates and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Life Story of Brigham Young* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 349–50.

resonated with Mormons' optimism about human progress. Written in response to Holbrook's first letter, which is not extant, and to an issue of the *Herald of Health* that he also had sent, Snow introduced the main themes of their correspondence. Concurring with Holbrook's "faith in human progress," she affirmed the Mormon effort to develop "all the rational and noble facilities of man, physically, morally, mentally, and socially." Because the Latter-day Saints had "no particular established system of physical culture," Snow focused on the broader Mormon approach to elevating mankind. Implicitly criticizing Holbrook for "wasting [his] energies in trying to better the condition of man in a mixed mass," Snow provided the rationale for the Mormon doctrine of the gathering, which undergirded the Saints' efforts to improve humanity.¹⁸ By gathering believers in a place removed from the corruptions of the world, the Saints would be "cleansed and preserved in purity." She argued that the Saints' gathering would ultimately "benefit all the generations of man," whereas other reformers sought only to "benefit the condition of a portion of the community."

Snow related her second principal theme, the state of Mormon children within polygamy, to the gathering. She argued that Utah's unique polygamous culture, separated from the wickedness of the world, produced exceptional children, both physically and morally. She explained that the creation of a godly society required "a location on premises with a certain amount of control without which, the greatest talents and the most persevering efforts would accomplish but little." Rather than provide a lengthy defense of polygamy, as she had of the gathering, Snow sent Holbrook a copy of a recent discourse by Apostle Amasa Lyman, which presented the standard Latter-day Saint arguments for plural marriage.

The Publication of Snow's "Man Capable of Higher Developments"

Five months following Snow's letter of November 30, 1866, Holbrook published one of her poems, "Man Capable of Higher Developments," in the *Herald of Health* (fig. 4 and sidebar). The poem charted the potential progress of mankind from birth as mortals with "The germ of the Deity planted within" to immortal beings "Perfected in body, perfected in mind." The poem reads, in part:

18. For the Mormon doctrine of the gathering, see Ronald D. Dennis, "Gathering," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:536–37. More detailed discussions include William Mulder, "Mormonism's 'Gathering': An American Doctrine with a Difference," *Church History* 23 (September 1954): 248–64; and Gustive O. Larson, "The Mormon Gathering," in *Utah's History*, ed. Richard D. Poll and others (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 175–91.

[Man] may learn how to strengthen this life's feeble chain,
And redeem the longevity man should obtain—

.....
Though frail and imperfect, unlearn'd and unwise
We're endowed with capacities needful to rise
From our embryo state, onward, upward!— at length
To a fulness of knowledge, of wisdom and strength.¹⁹

It is unlikely that readers of the *Herald* would have found anything unfamiliar or objectionable in Snow's ten stanzas. Yet Latter-day Saints

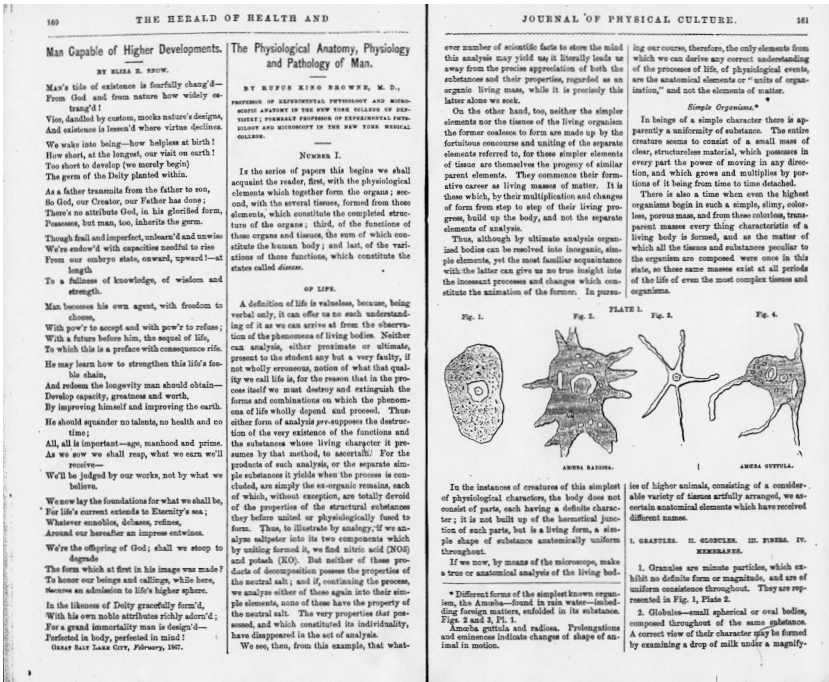


FIG. 4. *The Herald of Health and Journal of Physical Culture* 9 (April 1867): 160–61. Here M. L. Holbrook published a poem that Eliza R. Snow had sent him. The topic of the poem, the potential progress of mankind, was not out of place in this journal, which discussed social reforms as well as scientific discoveries.

19. Eliza R. Snow, "Man Capable of Higher Developments," *The Herald of Health and Journal of Physical Culture* 9 (April 1867): 160; also in Eliza R. Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political*. Also *Two Articles in Prose*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Latter-day Saints' Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1877), 101–3, and Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), poem 380.

Man Capable of Higher Developments.

By Eliza R. Snow

Man's tide of existence is fearfully chang'd—
From God and from nature how widely estrang'd!
Vice, dandled by custom, mocks nature's designs,
And existence is lessen'd where virtue declines.

We wake into being—how helpless at birth!
How short, at the longest, our visit on earth!
Too short to develop (we merely begin)
The germ of the Deity planted within.

As a father transmits from the father to son,
So God, our Creator, our Father has done;
There's no attribute God, in his glorified form,
Possesses, but man, too, inherits the germ.

Though frail and imperfect, unlearn'd and unwise
We're endow'd with capacities needful to rise
From our embryo state, onward, upward!—at length
To a fullness of knowledge, of wisdom and strength.

Man becomes his own agent, with freedom to choose,
With pow'r to accept and with pow'r to refuse;
With a future before him, the sequel of life,
To which this is a preface with consequence rife.

He may learn how to strengthen this life's feeble chain,
And redeem the longevity man should obtain—
Develop capacity, greatness and worth,
By improving himself and improving the earth.

He should squander no talents, no health and no time;
All, all is important—age, manhood and prime.
As we sow we shall reap, what we earn we'll receive—
We'll be judged by our works, not by what we believe.

We now lay the foundations for what we shall be,
For life's current extends to Eternity's sea;
Whatever ennobles, debases, refines,
Around our hereafter an impress entwines.

We're the offspring of God; shall we stoop to degrade
The form which at first in his image was made?
To honor our beings and callings, while here,
Secures an admission to life's higher sphere.

In the likeness of Deity gracefully form'd
With his own noble attributes richly adorn'd;
For a grand immortality man is design'd—
Perfected in body, perfected in mind!

Great Salt Lake City, February, 1867.

reading the poem would identify it at once as a summary of their belief in eternal progression, the capacity of men and women to become as God, ultimately to be gods themselves.²⁰ Snow's poem dramatically illustrates that Mormons could readily discuss human progress with other reformers such as Holbrook, while drawing upon significantly different theological frameworks.

Overview of Letter 2—Snow to Holbrook, October 1869

Snow next wrote Holbrook in 1869 (pages 159–62). The intervening three years were a time of significant change for Snow and for the Church due to her April 1868 appointment to reorganize the women's Relief Societies in local wards. These organizations, which resembled in many respects popular benevolent societies, served as the base from which women developed and administered new programs for youth, reinforcing the work of Mormon Sunday Schools, which were revitalized in 1866–67. Relief Societies also succored the poor, supported the Church's emphasis on home industry

20. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20. See Lisa Ramsey Adams, "Eternal Progression," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:465–66; and Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), chapter 6.

and economic self-sufficiency and, beginning in 1870, rallied women in defending plural marriage and opposing antipolygamy legislation.²¹

Snow's vigorous defense of Mormon children in her letters to Holbrook was a response to the virtually constant criticism aimed at Mormon child rearing. Since the early 1850s, visitors to Utah had regularly and negatively commented on the physical and mental state of Mormon children. Opponents of Mormonism presented the supposedly deplorable condition of children in Utah as clear evidence of the moral depravity of polygamy. Condemnation of Mormon child rearing was not universal, as some commentators, such as Sir Richard Burton and Elizabeth Wood Kane, portrayed Mormon children in a more positive light; however, Mormon children were more commonly depicted as intellectually weak, morally devious, and physically deformed, all as a result of polygamy.²²

Anna Elizabeth Dickinson (1842–1932), to whom Snow refers in her second letter, particularly censured Mormon child rearing in her popular lecture “Whited Sepulchres,” which she developed after a brief visit to Utah in June 1869. A Quaker and one of the most prominent orators on the national lyceum circuit between 1863 and 1875, Dickinson traveled widely in delivering her stirring lectures on issues ranging from women's rights to universal education to rights for former slaves.²³ In “Whited Sepulchres,” she characterized Salt Lake City as the “new Sodom,” claiming there were “no free schools, no general system of education, no libraries, no reading-rooms, no morality in the streets.” She commented that she had “heard of five out of six [children] dying,” and described the remaining children as “puny,

21. See Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, chapter 3, for an account of Snow's leadership, 1868–87. For Latter-day Saint women's defense of plural marriage, see Kathleen Marquis, “Diamond Cut Diamond: The Mormon Wife vs. the True Woman, 1840–1890,” in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, ed. Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marlyn Klee-Hartzell (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 169–81; Lola Van Wagenen, “In Their Own Behalf: The Politicization of Mormon Women and the 1870 Franchise,” *Dialogue* 24 (Winter 1991): 31–43, reprinted in Madsen, *Battle for the Ballot*, 60–73; Joan Iverson, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women's Movements, 1880–1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997).

22. See Lester E. Bush Jr., “Mormon ‘Physiology,’ 1850–1875,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 56 (1982): 218–37; Lester E. Bush Jr., “A Peculiar People: The Physiological Aspects of Mormonism, 1850–1875,” *Dialogue* 12 (Fall 1979): 61–83; and Davis Bitton, “Zion's Rowdies: Growing Up on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Spring 1982): 182–95.

23. Giraud Chester, *Embattled Maiden: The Life of Anna Dickinson* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1951), 100.

sunken, stunted animals.”²⁴ Brigham Young sarcastically responded, “Her researches in this community were immense. But let me tell you she is hired by some lackeys to lecture against ‘Mormonism’ and the ‘Mormons.’”²⁵ Like Dickinson, other opponents of Mormonism often asserted that Utah suffered from an unusually high infant mortality rate. In actuality, with the exception of the 1850 census, Utah regularly reported an infant mortality rate substantially lower than the national average.²⁶

Besides these health-based attacks, critics also described Mormon children as exceptionally ill-behaved. Ex-Mormon John Hyde declared in an 1857 book that “every visitor [to Salt Lake] proclaims them to be the most whisky-loving, tobacco-chewing, saucy and precocious children he ever saw.”²⁷ Mormon leaders themselves increasingly recognized that “the children of the promised day were all too often behaving like ordinary nuisance-loving children and at times like thugs and ruffians.”²⁸ The growing concern among Latter-day Saints for the rising generation coincided with a gradual and subtle change among the American middle class, which accepted childhood as a distinct and important stage of life and began to envision children not as economically beneficial, but as socially and morally valuable.²⁹ The organizational attention directed by Snow and other Mormon leaders toward children and youth in the late 1860s was a culmination of both the criticism from without and the growing realization from within that Zion’s youth needed more social and spiritual guidance.

24. “Anna E. Dickinson in Boston,” *The Revolution*, October 21, 1869, 241–42.

25. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 13:88 (January 2, 1870).

26. Bush, “Mormon ‘Physiology,’” 233. The Mormon Historical Demography Project, based on a data set of 1.2 million individuals, also concluded that late-nineteenth-century Utahns experienced rates of infant mortality which “compared favorably with the experience of other white populations [in] the United States at that time.” The demographers suggested that Mormon doctrine, which stressed the primacy of family, probably contributed to a lower infant mortality rate. Katherine A. Lynch, Geraldine P. Mineau, and Douglas L. Anderton, “Estimates of Infant Mortality on the Western Frontier: The Use of Genealogical Data,” *Historical Methods* 18 (Fall 1985): 161–62; Lee L. Bean, Ken R. Smith, Geraldine P. Mineau, Alison Fraser, and Diana Lane, “Infant Deaths in Utah, 1850–1939,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 70 (Spring 2002): 158–73.

27. John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York, 1857), 77, quoted in Bitton, “Zion’s Rowdies,” 185.

28. Bitton, “Zion’s Rowdies,” 191.

29. Priscilla Ferguson Clement, *Growing Pains: Children in the Industrial Age, 1850–1890* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 38; Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 3–6, 209.

Snow evidenced her concern by regularly contributing didactic poetry and articles to the *Juvenile Instructor*, which began publication in Salt Lake City in 1866. In addition, six months after she penned the October 1869 letter to Holbrook, she began organizing retrenchment associations in which young women resolved to eschew worldly fashions and gradually, along with young Mormon men (1875), turned their efforts to “mutual improvement.”³⁰

Aside from the larger context of attacks on the Mormon family, Snow’s October 1869 letter to Holbrook was prompted by a “slip” (clipping) from the *New York Evening Post* Holbrook had sent her.³¹ The August 23, 1869, *Post* article read:

As might be expected, the mortality among Mormon children is frightful. The polygamists are like the old woman who lived in a shoe, and do not know what to do with their many children, at any rate they do not properly care for them.

Of sixty deaths in Salt Lake City in a month, forty-four were children. Heber Kimball is reported to have buried forty-eight children out of sixty-three in his collection; one bishop had lost twenty children; another, twenty-eight; another, seventeen. Joseph Smith had six wives, but left only two sons. The death rate among Mormons of all ages is said to be greater than that of this city or New Orleans, and more than twice as great as that of Oregon.³²

Snow replied to Holbrook by avouching Latter-day Saints’ unique understanding of “the worth of children” and by drawing upon her own information to refute the *New York Evening Post* critique and Dickinson’s attacks. For her, however, the practice of plural marriage could only be understood within the theological framework of Mormonism’s contemporary “revelations of God.” She concluded: “We have the Gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by Him and His apostles. The power of the gospel qualifies men to cooperate with God by which they can accomplish good for their fellow men that no others can. It has a Priesthood which confers an authority by which they bind on earth and it is bound in heaven and benefits not only the living but also the dead.” Thus Snow offered Holbrook the opportunity of perusing Orson Spencer’s *Letters*, a compilation of early

30. The impact of these organizations on the lives of Latter-day Saints is discussed by Ronald W. Walker, “‘Going to Meeting’ in Salt Lake City’s Thirteenth Ward, 1849–1881: A Microanalysis,” in *New Views of Mormon History*, ed. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 138–61.

31. Holbrook had also recently featured the topic of infant mortality in the *Herald of Health*. See Mrs. M. A. Baines, “On the Prevention of Excessive Infant Mortality,” *Herald of Health and Journal of Physical Culture* 14 (July 1869): 1–7.

32. “Mortality among Mormons,” *New York Evening Post*, August 23, 1869.

missionary tracts by Spencer (a well-educated former Baptist minister), including a chapter defending plural marriage.

Public Debate Regarding Plural Marriage

The sympathetic conversation in the letters stands in striking contrast to the highly polemical debate surrounding the Latter-day Saint practice of plural marriage.³³ After a brief (and failed) plural marriage in the mid-1830s, Joseph Smith introduced plural marriage during the Saints' sojourn at Nauvoo, Illinois, during the early 1840s, though The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did not officially acknowledge the practice until 1852. Orson Pratt, the eloquent Mormon Apostle who made the 1852 announcement at the Saints' first tabernacle in Salt Lake City, emerged as the leading defender of polygamy, and his systematic arguments, largely based on historical and biblical justifications, provided the rationale for almost all Mormon defenses of the practice. Latter-day Saints commonly contrasted Utah society under plural marriage with what they viewed as the pervasive prostitution, divorce, and general immorality of monogamous America.³⁴ In 1870, shortly after her correspondence with Holbrook, Eliza Snow and Mormon women entered the debate to speak forcefully for themselves. Their vigorous defense of polygamy surprised many

33. On Mormon plural marriage and society, see for example Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature, Books, 1989); Sarah Barringer Gordon, *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); B. Carmon Hardy, ed., *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy, Its Origin, Practice, and Demise*, Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier, volume 9 (Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark, 2007).

34. See, for example, David J. Whittaker, "The Bone in the Throat: Orson Pratt and the Public Announcement of Plural Marriage," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1987): 293–314; David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Polygamy Defenses," *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 43–63; Davis Bitton, "Polygamy Defended: One Side of a Nineteenth-Century Polemic," *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 34–53; Hardy, *Doing the Works of Abraham*, 86–90; Belinda Marden Pratt, *Defence of Polygamy: By a Lady of Utah in a Letter to Her Sister in New Hampshire* ([Salt Lake City, 1854]); and Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 241–46.

Americans who assumed that Mormon women were repressed, abused, and silently opposed to plural marriage.

American politicians, clergymen, jurists, and reporters countered these Mormon defenses by asserting that polygamy degraded women, produced misshapen children, and was unbiblical and immoral. The cartoon image of the Mormon harem became nearly ubiquitous in the national press.³⁵ The first antipolygamy federal legislation, the Morrill Act of 1862, made bigamy a criminal offense and invalidated Utah laws that supported polygamy. While the Morrill Act went generally unenforced, the political pressure intensified after the Civil War with a new round of proposed antipolygamy legislation. On both sides, a “zealous, polarized quality, an unyielding insistence on their exclusive moral rightness” generally characterized the debate regarding plural marriage.³⁶ Holbrook, however, was not alone in giving credence to the Mormon point of view, as a group of prominent observers—including Horace Greeley, Richard Burton, and Mark Twain—attempted “to establish a point of view on the ‘Mormon Question’ that was neither apologetic nor detracting but interactive and dialogic.”³⁷ Like Holbrook, they validated the role of the Mormon voice in the national dialogue about polygamy.

Letters 3 and 4—Holbrook to Snow, November 18, 1869, and Snow to Holbrook, December 2, 1869

Snow copied into her journal the letter Holbrook sent in response to her letter of October 1869, the only letter from him that she recorded (pages 162–63). The letter shows the physician to be friendly, polite, and tolerant. Snow must have derived some satisfaction from his skepticism about journalists’ depictions of Latter-day Saints and from his openness to the “experiment” of plural marriage. In addition, Holbrook praised the

35. For studies on the nineteenth-century Mormon image, see Terryl L. Givens, *Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Jan Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint: American Perceptions of the Mormons, 1860–1960,” in *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); and Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834–1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983).

36. Gregory Pingree, “‘The Biggest Whorehouse in the World’: Representations of Plural Marriage in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Western Humanities Review* 50 (Fall 1996): 214.

37. Eric A. Eliason, “Curious Gentiles and Representational Authority in the City of the Saints,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 11 (Summer 2001): 156–57.

Mormon reputation for “temperance, sobriety, & industry,” virtues already attributed to the Latter-day Saints by friendly observers and which became the hallmark of Mormon image by the mid-twentieth century. He also mentioned the possibility of visiting Utah himself.

His liberal response brought an immediate reply from Snow (pages 163–64), wherein she reaffirmed the uniqueness and expansiveness of Mormon doctrine. While praising Holbrook and other “noble philanthropists,” she observed that despite the reformers’ efforts, “the streams of degeneracy and corruption are increasing.” Snow ended their correspondence with a characteristic appeal to Holbrook to join the divinely appointed labors of the Latter-day Saints in “renovating and regenerating the human family,” rather than “exercising [his] abilities in other channels.” She expressed her unwavering confidence that her own experience had confirmed that the Mormon social experiment was commanded by God. Snow testified that “no other people are doing so much to promote the happiness—to purify, elevate and redeem the human race,” guided by the gospel of Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and priesthood authority which “qualifies men to cooperate with God by which they can accomplish good for their fellow men that no others can.”

Falling Out of Touch

Nothing suggests that Snow and Holbrook ever met following their correspondence. She visited New York City in November 1872, but her letters do not reference a visit with him. In 1881, she sent Holbrook a volume of her poetry and money to renew her subscription to the *Herald of Health*, which Zina Diantha Huntington Young—Eliza’s close friend, sister-wife, counselor, and successor as Relief Society president—personally delivered while in New York City.³⁸ Likewise, while it is unclear whether Holbrook ever fulfilled his wish to visit Utah, he wrote a letter of introduction for a fellow physician traveling to Utah in 1875.³⁹ Holbrook did not feature in the *Herald of Health* any discussion of polygamy, and Snow, except for her emphasis on training female physicians, did not champion Holbrook’s ideas about health. Yet, their polite encounter by correspondence may have had an impact on Snow’s emerging public defense of polygamy.

38. Zina Diantha Huntington Young, Journal, August 30, 1881, Church History Library. For information on Zina Young, see Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 71–113; and Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward, *4 Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000).

39. M. L. Holbrook to Eliza Snow, May 6, 1875, Eliza R. Snow Papers, Church History Library.

Snow's Public Defense of Polygamy

Interestingly, within five weeks after her last recorded letter to Holbrook, Snow rallied Mormon women in the first of many large gatherings where they defended their commitment to Mormonism and to plural marriage. These public meetings received national attention precisely because they shattered many of the common assumptions that portrayed Mormon women as the victims of an unyielding and authoritarian patriarchy and a degrading and licentious polygamy.⁴⁰ The “Indignation Meetings” that commenced in January 1870 provided Snow and her sisters a platform for denouncing the Cullom Bill, antipolygamy legislation pending in the United States Congress, as well as answering other critics.⁴¹

Perhaps her correspondence with Holbrook piqued Snow's willingness to lead Mormon women in publicly countering ridicule and widespread misrepresentation as she organized mass meetings, sent memorials to Congress, and commenced publication of a new newspaper by and for Mormon women: the *Woman's Exponent* (1872–1914). In any case, Snow's letters to Holbrook were written at a turning point for her and for Mormon women. This friendly correspondence allowed the physician and the poet to transcend the polarized national debate regarding Mormon polygamy and allowed Snow to present her deepest convictions with greater respect and less polemic than was her wont. They also prepared Snow to initiate the highly visible defense of Mormon women and children that was a critical component of her leadership over the next two decades. Snow's correspondence with Holbrook provides a window on her thought at a critical juncture in her life and in the history of Mormon women.

40. Quoting statements from the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*, Lola Van Wagenen observed, “The newspaper coverage of the meeting offered the most positive account ever given of Mormon women and that helped to deflect criticism of the whole community.” See Lola Van Wagenen, “Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870–1896” (PhD diss., New York University, 1994), 21.

41. In January 1868, when earlier antipolygamy legislation was pending in Congress, Snow and her sisters penned for Salt Lake City's *Deseret News* a one-hundred word “expression of indignation towards Senator Cragin and his despicable Bill,” but declined to comment further. “Correspondence: Cragin and His Bill,” *Salt Lake City Deseret News [Weekly]*, January 15, 1868. “But,” Snow declared in January 1870, “there is a point at which silence is no longer a virtue. In my humble opinion we have arrived at this point.” “Great Indignation Meeting,” *Deseret Evening News*, January 14, 1870. On this topic see also J. Smyth Iversen, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women's Movements: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

Correspondence between Eliza R. Snow and M. L. Holbrook

Letter 1: Eliza R. Snow to M. L. Holbrook, November 30, 1866

Reply to Dr. M. L. Holbrook, N.Y.

Dr. M. L. Holbrook,

Dear Sir,

Altho' your letter was unanticipated, it was no less welcome. I should have acknowledg'd its receipt before this, but for previous engagements and responsibilities. I must confess, I have not the least recollection of either yourself or your coat; but am happy to say I have an agreeable remembrance of your mother, and, as I frequently made *coats*, it is very probable I did myself the honor of making "*the coat*." Many eventful scenes of life have transpired since then, and it is no wonder that little circumstances of early youth have escaped my mind, yet I fondly cherish the memory of my friends, and am ever pleased to hear of them and their prosperity. I am thankful that you Sir, are engaged in as noble an enterprize as editor of the Herald of Health. I have not seen a No. of that Magazine, but judge from its heading, with the contents of the Nov. No. which you kindly sent me, that I should like it. I will enclose in this, the amt. of a year's subscription—Please forward as soon as convenient.

The leading items in the heading of your Magazine, are portions of our practical faith, as a people, to which we attach much importance.

The elevation and redemption, morally and physically, of fallen human nature, and laying a foundation for the prolongation of life, are, with us, subjects of great moment. The object is at once grand and noble. Ignorance and neglect of the laws of life, resulting from a lack of knowledge of the value and design of this present state of existence, and its bearing on a future; are telling in results of corruption and depravity, not only in the lower ranks of life, but also in what is termed its upper walks—abridging the longevity allotted to man—cutting asunder the thread of life, by destroying its purity. This state of things is increasing to a fearful extent, and the energies of every philanthropist should be aroused and enlisted to arrest the deadly work. The Latter-day Saints are alive to this great achievement.

Human progress in the developement of all the rational and noble faculties of man, physically, morally, mentally and socially, is what we are striving and living for. ——— To ensure the accomplishment of any grand pursuit, it is of vital importance, that we get a correct starting point; without which, no definite calculation can be made of the results, and nothing can

be done to elevate mankind, without purity of heart and life. We are at war with the corruptions of the world; and we know it to be indispensably necessary for us to occupy a position where virtue, purity and innocence can be successfully guarded and defended. This includes a location on premises with a certain amount of control without which, the greatest talents and the most persevering efforts would accomplish but little. It is impossible to purify the water of a muddy stream, while flowing in its own filthy channel, but, if taken out in detach'd portions, it can be cleansed and preserved in purity.⁴² It would not avail much for us to extend benefits to our fellow beings, unless we had the power of securing those benefits to them.

"We have faith in human progress, and look forward to a future, not far distant, that shall develop the most perfect types of manhood." This is part of our creed, but we anticipate it on a vastly more extensive scale, than other people can possibly anticipate. Others propose to develop types of man, we, of nations—others are laboring to benefit the condition of a portion of community, we, to redeem the whole world. We have now established an order of things and a location which constitutes a nucleus for the gathering together of the good of all nations, through which to benefit all the generations of man, and which will, ultimately extend its influence to the ends of the earth. It has taken years of struggle amidst all the ignorance and wickedness with which we have had to contend; but, instead of wasting our energies in trying to better the condition of man in a mixed mass, surrounded by influences which tend downward, we have been gathering them by thousands, from all nations, and placing them in a position where influences will be in the right direction.

But with all these advantages, it is a slow business: Habit is like an iron band, and it requires more time to undo what has been done wrong, than to implant truthful and saving principles in minds untrammelled. But one grand point is gained when people are in a place where they can be taught, and can observe the laws of life, and those principles which lead to perfection: and yet, much more is anticipated from the children born here, than from those who gather. The children inherit the advantages of all the healthful physical and moral influences consequent on the location. As a matter of course, great care is taken of children here, and we have many more growing up, in proportion to the number of families, than are to be found elsewhere. In some families here, the children are very numerous,

42. Snow elaborated this idea in a poem, "The Fountain and the Streams of Life," published in the *Salt Lake City Deseret News*, June 12, 1867, and reprinted in Snow, *Poems*, 2:99, and Derr and Davidson, *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry*, poem 385.

which is the result of the system of polygamy, of which much is said abroad. I will send you by the same Post, a paper containing a discourse by A. Lyman, on this subject.⁴³ I think you will find some suggestions in it that will interest you.

With the exception of a few instances, where children have inherited feeble constitutions from their mothers, in consequence of sufferings to which they were exposed during our persecutions, children here are very healthy, and as much so in large families as in small ones. As a sample, I wish you could have seen a few of our young men, born in polygamy, who passed through N. York this season en route for Europe, on missions.

Although great pains are taken in rearing children, as yet, we have no particular established system of physical culture—we are a practical, not a theoretical people, and with us, all the physical as well as mental powers are called into requisition. We have not had sufficient time for development. This great work is still in embryo—but it is so far, established on an omnipotent basis. It is not of man—it is of God, and what one generation does not accomplish, another will.

I thank you Sir, for your kind invitation—should I visit your City I shall certainly avail myself of it. With the best of wishes for your success in doing good—I am &c

Nov. 30, 1866

E. R. Snow

Letter 2: Eliza R. Snow to M. L. Holbrook

To Dr M. L. Holbrook

S. L. City, Oct. 1869

Dear Sir,

Yours of Aug. 25,—enclosing a slip from the Evening Post should have been answered nearly two months ago.

With mortification I confess I had forgotten it. At the time of its receipt I was just starting on a visit to our Southern Settlements—by mischance it was mislaid, and this morning in looking over a parcel of letters

43. Amasa M. Lyman, "Marriage: Its Benefits," in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:198–208 (April 5, 1866). Lyman's discourse attacked the evils which he perceived flourished in monogamous societies, including the lack of opportunities for all women to marry, prostitution, and the general mistreatment of women. Perhaps of interest to Holbrook as a physician, Lyman claimed that monogamy contributed to "physical degeneracy," which explained the decreasing lifespan of humanity from the days of Adam to the present. Lyman stated that "plural marriage is the great necessity of the age, because it is a means that God has introduced to check the physical corruption and decline of our race."

I discovered it, and forthwith reply. But in doing so, I trust you will sufficiently allow me freedom of speech to say that I consider the article in question to contemptible to hold any claim on our valuable time—written, as it evidently was, without a particle of candor. So far as all such articles are concerned, and their authors I feel as an ancient prophet express’d himself as recorded in the good old Book, to wit, “As the Lord lives before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehosophat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor see thee.”⁴⁴ And let me assure you Sir, that it is purely out of respect to yourself that I refer to it.

The Press, with a few honorable exceptions, has been teeming with effusions of ridicule, scandal, malice and bigotry against the Latter day Saints for nearly forty years—long enough, at least, to have lost their novelty.

I very well know that much of this is attributable to ignorance; but at present there is no excuse for this ignorance. We have always courted investigation—our history is before the world—our missionaries are among all nations or nearly so, and our works are not in secret.

Pardon this digression—you wished me to inform you how much of the article enclosed is truth and how much falsehood. It contains one truth, or, I think the statement “Of sixty deaths in S.L. City, 44 were children,” is a correct one. I have not time to examine the Sexton’s report, but presume it is a true copy probably from the Sep. report one year ago.⁴⁵ The month of Sep. is much the worst month in the year both for sickness and death especially for children. Salt Lake City Sexton’s report for last month very much exceeds every previous one—ie. 97 deaths of whom 86 were children.⁴⁶ But this report is not confined to deaths in the City—many who live at a distance, having friends buried in the SL Cemetery, prefer coming here to inter their dead. The Sexton’s report includes all burials, regardless of where from.

A few months since, I was comparing the mortality of S.L. City with other large cities particularly of England, France & Scotland, and found our average death-rate very little less more than half as much, and I think in one or two instances, less than half. Ours averages between 12 & 13 to the thousand.

44. 2 Kings 3:14.

45. Actually, the *New York Post* used the October 1868 sexton’s report, as did another opponent of Mormonism, J. H. Beadle, in an 1870 book which also denounced Utah’s infant mortality rate. See Bush, “Mormon ‘Physiology,’” 233.

46. For a copy of the sexton’s report for September 1869, see *Journal History of the Church*, September 30, 1869, 1, Church History Library, microfilm copy in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

Our annual foreign immigration—the process of acclimating and influx of transients & persons through have a tendency to increase mortality.⁴⁷

Another consideration—We have proportionately more, many more children—than other cities, and, notwithstanding the E. Posts⁴⁸ allusion to the “old woman in the shoe” there are fewer deaths in proportion to numbers in our larger families than in the small ones. The idea of “Mormon” mothers having more children than they know what to do with, is a ludicrous one—and the statement of Anna Dickinson that we have no schools and the children are not educated, is a libel on good sense and matter of fact.⁴⁹

There are no people on earth, but the Latter day Saints that know the worth of children, for no others understand the purposes of God in the creation—the present and eternal destiny of man; and no other people are doing so much to promote the happiness—to purify, elevate and redeem the human race.

Through the revelations of God, we know that many spirits are yet waiting in the spirit world to come forth and take tabernacles of flesh, without which they cannot be perfected; and it is a matter of great importance that they should have a parentage where they will be trained in principles of purity & righteousness—where they will be surrounded by influences which elevate & ennoble—which tend to the highest attainments physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually.⁵⁰

We have the Gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by Him and His apostles.

The power of the gospel qualifies men to cooperate with God by which they can accomplish good for their fellow men that no others can. It has a

47. Snow crossed the *l* in *acclimating*.

48. “E. Posts” refers to the *New York Evening Post*.

49. Historians differ in their assessments of the quality of schools in Utah Territory. See M. Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1939); Frederick S. Buchanan, “Education among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah,” *History of Education Quarterly* 22 (1982): 435–59; Charles S. Peterson, “The Limits of Learning in Pioneer Utah,” *Journal of Mormon History* 10 (1983): 65–79; Tally S. Payne, “Education on the American Frontier: The Territory of Utah in 1870” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 2000).

50. For a brief discussion on the Mormon belief in a premortal life—which prompted a theology advocating large families in order to provide “tabernacles of flesh” to the spirits “yet waiting in the spirit world”—see Gayle Oblad Brown, “Premortal Life,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1123–25.

Priesthood which confers an authority by which they bind on earth and it is bound in heaven and benefits not only the living but also the dead.⁵¹

But to return to the subject—I have omitted telling you how much falsehood the “slip” contains. *All* except the *one* truth is egregiously false.

You will please excuse this *long* letter—I am in haste and did not design writing but short. Should I see you, I should have much to say. Would you accept a small work entitled “Letters by Orson Spencer?”⁵² If so *Will you read it?*

Yours truly

E. R. Snow.

Letter 3: M. L. Holbrook to Eliza R. Snow

Reply to the foregoing

New York, Nov. 18, 1869,

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your kind letter. I have little doubt but most of the letter writers from Utah tell some big stories. If the gentiles would but copy your virtues, and avoid whatever vices may be found among ~~you~~ Latter Day Saints or any other people, I should be thankful. I have no holy horror of what you are doing and should be glad if outsiders would do you justice. I will gladly read the book you mention, and write you if you care for it my opinion.

Practically I should oppose polygamy of course, believing the one wife system the best, but unless a cover for vice I have no objection to the experiment being made as you claim to be making it. As long as the practice is conscientiously maintained, it will lead to good. I hear with admiration of the temperance, sobriety, & industry—These virtues will save any people or nation.

51. Snow is referring here to the Latter-day Saint doctrine of salvation of the dead. Mormons believe that all humanity must receive certain ordinances, such as baptism, which can be properly administered only with the authority of the Latter-day Saint priesthood. Thus, Latter-day Saints utilize temples to perform ordinances by proxy for their deceased ancestors and others. See 1 Corinthians 15:29; Doctrine and Covenants 124:29; 127, 128, 138; Douglas Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace, and Glory* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 85–86.

52. Orson Spencer, *Letters Exhibiting the Most Prominent Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Liverpool: Orson Spencer, 1848). First published in 1848, Spencer’s *Letters* became a highly popular explanation of Latter-day Saint doctrine and went through several editions. In 1853, Spencer added a final chapter defending plural marriage.

I hope sometime to go west on the great R. R. now running to the Pacific—but it may be a long time yet.

With regard & esteem

(Signed) M. L. Holbrook—

Letter 4: Eliza R. Snow to M. L. Holbrook

S. Lake Dec. 2, 1869,

Dr. M. L. Holbrook,

Dear Sir,

With this, I forward you the book referred to, trusting that it will be rec'd with the same kind feelings with which it is sent. I certainly would be gratified with your opinion respecting it, if you can spare the time to write.

You say “practically I should oppose polygamy.” I certainly expect you to do so until you are convinced that God is speaking, and that it is His special ~~command~~ <requirement>. In saying this, I am giving my own experience, and that of thousands.— —Altho’ it is abundantly proven by the Bible, to have been anciently sanctioned and approved by the Almighty, such is the power of tradition, that it requires a special command directly from Himself, not only to introduce, but, (I think) to justify its adoption. Knowing that “God is the same yesterday, today & forever,” and also that He is now revealing His will, as formerly, and that He has commanded His people to practice this doctrine, I have no fear that it will ever become a cover to vice: Were it introduced by the device or wisdom of man, as a matter of experiment, I should cherish no such confidence. Altho’, with us as with the ancient Church of Jesus Christ, tares are mingled with the wheat—where there is a Peter, we may look for a Judas.

All the wisdom of the world fails to meet the exigency of the times. It is time a few noble philanthropists like yourself, are at work with their might, to stem the torrent of evils with which the inhabitants of the earth are being inundated; but with all your efforts, the streams of degeneracy and corruption are increasing. None but God can provide a remedy. He alone has wisdom to introduce an order of things by which “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the seas.”⁵³

In doing this, He establishes His own platform and chooses His own stand point—and He will accomplish His purpose.

Is it not better for us to cooperate with Him in the great work of the last days—in renovating the earth and in regenerating the human family,

53. Habakkuk 2:14.

than to be exercising our abilities in other channels? This surely is, as the ancient prophet said, “a marvelous work and a wonder⁵⁴—affecting not only the living but also extending to the dead.—If by writing so lengthy, I intrude on your time, I have only to plead in apology, the importance of the subject.—Should your anticipated visit to the West be in *my day*, I hope the pleasure of personal interview.

With feelings of much Respect I am &c,

Eliza R. Snow

54. Isaiah 29:14. This phrase is prominent in Mormon scripture as well; see, for example, 2 Nephi 25:17 and 2 Nephi 27:26.

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Richard Bauckham. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses:
The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony.*

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006

Reviewed by Thomas A. Wayment

Undoubtedly, Professor Richard Bauckham's most recent contribution will add life to an already thriving scholarly discussion on the historical foundations of the New Testament Gospels, particularly the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Like others who have contributed to this field of study, Bauckham (professor of New Testament studies at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland) sets out to describe the sources used by the authors of the canonical Gospels, and, in doing so, provides a viable theory that has been met by exuberant praise and will certainly encounter significant rebuttals. In his own words, he states:

It is the contention of this book that, in the period up to the writing of the Gospels, gospel traditions were connected with named and known eyewitnesses, people who had heard the teaching of Jesus from his lips and committed it to memory, people who had witnessed the events of his ministry, death, and resurrection and themselves had formulated the stories about these events that they told. These eyewitnesses did not merely set going a process of oral transmission that soon went its own way without reference to them. They remained throughout their lifetimes the sources and, in some sense that may have varied for figures of central or more marginal significance, the authoritative guarantors of the stories they continued to tell. (93)

In this volume the reader will be treated to an admirable display of scholarly acumen and original insight. As the above-cited thesis implies, the author proposes to establish a causal link between the eyewitness tradition about Jesus and the later authors who recorded those early testimonies and stories about Jesus. In order to establish this, Bauckham first discusses the criteria for writing history in first-century Judea and in the larger Mediterranean world. Then, after surveying the appropriate secondary literature, chapter 2 reviews Roman and Greek historians concerning their views about what constitutes valid historical writing. The author

arrives at the tantalizing conclusion that credible history was not written by those who had only a bookish knowledge of events, but rather by eye-witnesses to those events. In this regard, he reconsiders the vital testimony of Papias, who states:

And whenever anyone came who had been a follower of the presbyters, I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter had said, or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other disciple of the Lord, and what Aristion and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord, were still saying. For I did not imagine that things out of books would help me as much as the utterances of a living and abiding voice.¹

Typically, this statement of Papias is viewed as a late-first-century skeptical appraisal of the written Gospels because scholars have assumed that they had become so untrustworthy in the sub-apostolic era. Bauckham, however, sees this statement in the context of ancient historiography and the art of writing history in the Roman period. From writing treatises on philosophy to medicine, history was considered an expression of eye-witness testimony. Drawing largely upon the earlier work of Loveday Alexander, Bauckham concludes that Papias relied upon what he had himself learned from the eyewitnesses and that, like his contemporaries, he viewed the written word as less authoritative.² Following this line of reasoning, Papias must have had access to those who had met Jesus personally or who knew those who had met Jesus personally. This rereading of Papias's statement is both articulate and intriguing.

From this point, Bauckham launches into a study of the names recorded in the New Testament and in surviving documentary texts outside the canonical tradition. He establishes a lengthy list of the most common names for males and females in the first century and shows that many of the names in the synoptic tradition are rather obscure names. He uses this point he uses to discount the Bultmannian proposition that the names in the Gospels were supplied by second-generation Christians who were trying to lend credibility to their texts. Bauckham, however, shows that this unlikely conclusion is based on the fact that names tend to drop out from earlier to later sources—from Mark to Matthew—and that rather than choosing common names only, the authors of the Gospels used names that fit well with the profile of names of Judean society at the time of Jesus. In other words, the names that survive in the Gospels appear in roughly the same frequency as those same names appear in texts outside the New Testament.

Perhaps the most novel contribution regarding named persons in the New Testament is the observation that names appearing in the earliest source (Mark) drop out in later accounts where the same stories are

recorded and where it would be natural to include the name. The reason for the disappearance of names in the later accounts, Bauckham argues, is that those persons had passed away and could no longer lend credence to the stories as living voices and surviving eyewitnesses. This contention is likely the most unique feature of the volume.

Moving on, Bauckham rounds out the volume with a study of orality in first-century Christianity and models of oral tradition, particularly among Jesus' followers. These latter chapters are more heavily dependent upon secondary literature and are incorporated to bolster an already strong thesis presented in the first nine chapters. Bauckham gives a strong critique of earlier studies on oral cultures and how they shaped traditions. He observes that earlier scholars have drawn parallels to cultures where oral traditions developed over many decades and centuries, whereas in the New Testament the time between the writing of the Gospels and the death of Jesus is much shorter.

The final portion of the book deals with the Gospel of John and its apostolic witness to the life of Jesus. Bauckham arrives at the somewhat controversial opinion that the author of the fourth Gospel is not John the son of Zebedee and brother of James, but is rather the Presbyter or Elder John mentioned in Eusebius. One of the primary reasons for this identification is that Bauckham finds it inconceivable that the author of the fourth Gospel would have hidden or obscured an apostolic witness. This is in line with the thesis of the volume as a whole, that named individuals served to bolster the eyewitness claims of a text. In this vein, it is unthinkable that someone would hide an eyewitness as prominent as one of the sons of Zebedee.

One of Bauckham's underlying criticisms is that the form-critical approach to the origins of the Gospels, namely that the Gospels were authored in nameless communities by second-generation Christians who were trying to develop a myth of the saving power of Jesus, is wrong. Behind these nameless form critics, who Bauckham rarely cites, are scholars generally associated with the Jesus Seminar and the now fractured History of Religions School. His contribution to this ongoing discussion is both timely and well researched. It will be difficult for Bauckham's so-called form critics to ignore this work.

Overall, the author should be applauded for his careful scholarship and faithful and respectful handling of sources. Indeed, the book gives the impression that Bauckham's concern is to establish a Christian community founded upon authoritative teachers—the Twelve and other disciples—that sought to propagate a universal gospel message rather than a unique community-based Christian identity. In other words, Christianity

began as a tight-knit group of followers who were profoundly devoted to Jesus, and then that same community of followers evangelized others. In the process of evangelizing the Gentiles, they solidified the story of Jesus by writing the gospels through the authoritative tradition of eyewitnesses.

Significantly, Bauckham creates and then critiques a single viewpoint represented by unnamed form critics. Certainly there are many scholars who hold the positions challenged by Bauckham, but those who hold such views are not unified in their positions on many of the matters discussed in this volume. It would have been more helpful if Bauckham clearly identified those scholars whom he had in mind rather than relying on a nameless form critic. One might also add that Bauckham's critique of studies that draw upon oral culture to explain the development of the synoptic tradition is somewhat tardy. Following the studies of Milman Parry in the 1920s and then later Werner Kelber in the 1980s, research into oral culture and the creation of the New Testament Gospels was a major focus of scholarly inquiry. However, since the heyday of the 1980s and early 1990s, studies in orality have waned and scholars have returned to thinking of the Gospels as developing in a more academic environment with a greater emphasis on textual borrowing and manipulation.

The evangelical publication *Christianity Today* awarded Bauckham's volume its highest award for biblical studies in 2007, making it a must read in evangelical scholarly circles. For that reason alone it will make a lasting impact.

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1. Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 102.

2. See L. A. Alexander, "The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christianity and in Graeco-Roman Texts," in D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl, and S. E. Porter, eds., *The Bible in Three Dimensions* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1990); L. A. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Henry J. Eyring. *Mormon Scientist: The Life and Faith of Henry Eyring.*

Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007

Reviewed by Ned C. Hill

Henry Eyring (1901–1981) is undoubtedly the most celebrated scientist produced within the Mormon faith to date. He published over six hundred scientific papers and about a dozen books, and he received almost every prize science has to offer. His theories form the core of modern chemistry. One of his colleagues said, “The contributions of Dr. Henry Eyring touch practically every field of chemical science and technology in a very fundamental manner” (xx). Not only was he a brilliant scientist, he was also a man with deep faith in God and in the restoration of the gospel in modern times. This biography by his grandson Henry J. Eyring highlights his scientific achievements and gives the reader a faith-affirming look into the mind and soul of an exceptional man of science. The book captures his simple yet powerful faith, his love of people, his wry sense of humor, and his incomparable work ethic. One needs no scientific background to find resonance with this remarkable man.

Henry Eyring was born in 1901 on a fourteen-thousand-acre cattle ranch in Colonia Juarez in the Church’s Mexican colonies. Raised in a large polygamous family, Henry was completely at home on the back of a horse. The author argues effectively that Henry’s unusual upbringing—two “mothers,” many siblings, a revolution that drove the family out of Mexico, and the demands of the harsh environment of the Southwest—contributed to his eclectic scientific interests, fertile curiosity, and remarkable problem-solving skills. His formal university training was an unusual mix of mining engineering, metallurgy, and chemistry. He was able to study under the best scientists of his day and spent fifteen years on the faculty at Princeton University during the same time Albert Einstein was there. Henry was one of the bright lights in this golden age of science that saw the development of relativity, quantum theory, and many fundamental concepts in chemistry—his own absolute rate theory key among them. He came to the University of Utah in 1946 to be its first dean of the

graduate school, a position he filled for twenty years. During his many years as a professor, he produced hundreds of doctoral graduates, personally taught thousands of students, and profoundly influenced many tens of thousands, young and old, through his writing and speaking.

Eyring had a lively and engaging speaking style, which made him a natural mentor to the young. When surveyed, over ninety percent of his students said they would take another chemistry course from him (82). The book captures the same essence of the man and teacher I once encountered. As one of his part-time undergraduate research assistants, I had a laboratory across the hall from his office. One evening I asked if he could explain his absolute rate theory so an undergraduate could understand it. He said he would be glad to explain it to me and Mary Lou, his secretary. He happily arranged a large pile of books as a sort of barrier on top of his desk. Jumping up on the desk, he asked us to pretend he was a molecule slowly gyrating around. He explained that the barrier of books kept him on the desk as long as the temperature of the molecule was low. Then, as the temperature warmed up (he began to gyrate around faster), the molecule gradually got enough energy to jump over the barrier (he suddenly bounded over the books and landed on the floor) to transform down to a lower energy state represented by the floor. I never forgot that visualization—and we were both glad he did not break his leg. Eyring had the notion that if you really understand a concept—no matter how complex it is—you should be able to explain it to an eight-year-old. If you cannot, “you don’t really understand it yourself” (80).

Henry Eyring’s personal touch was legendary. He responded with kindness and patience to the many letters he received, even responding with sensitivity to those who were “on the crusade” to stamp out scientific theories he entertained (173). One day, as I worked in his laboratory, I heard him talking with animation to someone in the hall. I peeked out to see who this person might be. It was the custodian. A few days later I overheard him conversing with someone else in the hall—using the same friendly, animated voice. I again looked out, and he was speaking with an internationally recognized visiting scientist. Dr. Eyring obviously showed no difference in his level of respect for both of these individuals.

The book chronicles his exchanges (and disagreements) with Joseph Fielding Smith concerning the theory of evolution and the age of the earth (61–63). Again, the exchanges reveal not a scientific hubris but a simple faith—a most remarkable characteristic considering his station in the scientific community. He once debated Dr. Melvin Cook on the topics of evolution and the age of the earth at a fireside. Dr. Cook favored a very literal interpretation of the biblical account of the creation: no evolution and an

age of the earth measured in thousands of years, not millions or billions. Both subjects were of concern to faithful members of the Church—especially college-age students who were encountering these tensions between science and religion for the first time. I attended and saw that Dr. Eyring took a most refreshing approach. He was not bothered in the least by the theory of evolution or radio-dating techniques showing the earth to be billions of years old. He was absolutely confident that, once we more fully understood the creation and how it relates to science, we would see there was no conflict.

To him there was no religious truth separate from scientific truth—truth was simply truth. Religion may seek it one way and science another—but both would eventually get to the same conclusion. He took great comfort in the advice his father gave him when he left to study mining engineering at the University of Arizona in 1919: “In this Church you don’t have to believe anything that isn’t true. . . . Whatever is true is part of the gospel” (4). Henry believed fully in God, Jesus Christ, and the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith. That belief was independent of the method God used to create the earth and put man upon it. He was not afraid of any scientific inquiry—it would only add to our understanding and eventual discovery of the truth. Hearing the assurances of a man of such towering intellect and faith gave young students of that era needed comfort and patience.

The book is not a critical examination of the relative scientific merits of Henry Eyring’s contributions to the field of chemistry and is therefore very accessible to those lacking a scientific background. Any readers, especially Latter-day Saints, will find this biography of Henry Eyring’s life and faith to be an informative, engaging, and lovingly written account of one of the most remarkably gifted souls of the twentieth century.

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N. T. Wright. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church.*

New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008

Reviewed by Noel B. Reynolds

Many Latter-day Saints are showing an increased sympathy for the writings of Anglican bishop N. T. Wright of Durham, England, and others in the Emerging Church tradition. Such LDS interest derives from the movement's emphasis on returning to basic Christian living modeled in the New Testament and adherents' willingness to back away from those churches that have systematic theologies and a seeming addiction to the discourse of power while pursuing their agendas. The Emerging Church is more of a conversation than an organization, and it crosses denominational boundaries around the world. It is characterized by a deep interest in interpreting the New Testament as narrative, in Christian living and service as the keys to spreading the gospel, and in Christ's invitation to all converts to join with him in building the kingdom of God here—in this life and on this earth.

Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church provides Bishop Wright an opportunity to bring together his scholarly work on these New Testament themes with his personal insights on Christianity for a general readership. He can look back on a remarkable career as a scholar and cleric. He is one of the most respected New Testament scholars worldwide and currently serves as Bishop of Durham, the number four authority in the Church of England. As an Oxford graduate in classical studies and PhD recipient in theology, Wright has produced a remarkably fresh analysis of the New Testament in which he finds the traditional Luther-based theology of the evangelical tradition to be inadequate and argues for the superiority of a Calvinist approach. He has written dozens of books and is currently halfway through an ambitious six-volume series entitled *Christian Origins and the Question of God*.¹ His most recent volume in that series, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*,¹ provides much of the scholarly basis for *Surprised by Hope*, which is written to a broader audience. He has argued that church leaders should be

Bible scholars and teachers, and he has written commentaries on almost all the New Testament books in his For Everyone series published by SPCK, which he says is aimed at twelve-year-olds or seventy-year-olds who have never read a Bible commentary.

In *Surprised by Hope*, Wright makes a number of interesting points about the resurrection that would require a general revision of what most Christians commonly expect. Most obviously, he rejects the notion popularized in much evangelical writing that the elect will be snatched to heaven in a rapture that will deliver them from the evils and sufferings of this material world. He finds this antipathy for the material world to be one more unfortunate influence of Platonist thinking in the Christian tradition that cannot be supported with scripture. While in the long range he does see a heaven in which almost all humans will find a place, he claims it will be on this earth. And the kingdom of God that Christ brought to the world is the project by which this earth will be transformed into heaven. The bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the event that launched the earth's transformation. Every converted and baptized Christian has the responsibility to devote his life to continuing the work and should not sit idly by, waiting for the day of deliverance to come.

Not even death will bring us directly to heaven. Rather, as LDS readers will further appreciate, Wright finds in the New Testament clear evidence that there will be a resting time and place for the dead that will not end until the time of their resurrection arrives. He does not try to describe what happens in the interim, but it seems to be a time when all men are in a suspended state, without significant activity, waiting for their return to a physical body. When the dead awake and are embodied, they will join with Christ in the renewal of this earth.

Almost as interesting as his treatment of resurrection are his side observations about the state of current Christianity. Perhaps because of his clear perception of errors and weaknesses in every form of Christianity today, Wright has proved exceptionally able to reach out to people of other faiths and Christians with significantly different theological and pastoral approaches, both among evangelicals and fellow Anglicans. He is widely appreciated as a man of ecumenical spirit, who through his official and unofficial work has come to believe that bringing unity to today's fragmented Christianity will be better accomplished by sharing deepest beliefs and understandings than by delicate negotiations. But his forthrightness has also generated controversy, both on the left and right. On the right, he dismisses evangelical literature on "the rapture" and related topics as a serious misunderstanding of scripture. In fact, it seems that Wright would agree with the leading American evangelical theologian Ben Witherington III

that most of the distinctive evangelical teachings are based on misreadings of the New Testament.² And on the left, Wright's clearly stated opposition to the ordination of homosexual priests has proved effective in holding the worldwide Anglican communion to its traditional policy. (Wright was the only British representative on the commission who addressed the issue of those American ordinations.)

Yet Wright never betrays any sense that Christianity might be in decline. His faith in the future of the kingdom of God is so firm that he sees all things leading to an eventual triumph of the kingdom over all its foes. He believes the triumph will occur through the gradual spread of genuine Christian living as people observe what it means to believe and live as Christians. In spite of his repeated examples of Platonistic beliefs that need to be rejected and replaced with true scriptural understanding, he is clearly part of the movement that has decided to hold firm to Trinitarianism and the other rulings of early church councils.

Regarding the nature and implications of resurrection, Wright finds early Christian belief to be unanimous in its endorsement of no less than seven significant and surprising mutations of the Jewish understandings that preceded it (40–48).

1. Unlike the range of views about life after death that characterized Jewish belief, Christians always held to the single view that there would be a bodily resurrection.
2. Further, this belief in a physical resurrection was moved to the center of Christian teachings.
3. Christians expected to receive a new physical body—not a return of the old one. And it would be *transformed*—composed of material that would not be corruptible or incompatible with the new heavenly *glory*, a term referring to a “status within God’s world” (44).
4. Christian resurrection was also surprising in that it was not conceived as one great event, but was divided into two—beginning with the Resurrection of a single person “in the middle of history in advance of its great, final occurrence” at the end (45).
5. What seems completely unique in the Christian teaching is that the Resurrection of Christ launched the beginning of the end, a long process in which his followers would be engaged in the work of transforming the world and preparing it for the final resurrection—what Dominic Crossan has called “collaborative eschatology” (46).

6. Long Jewish use of “resurrection” as a metaphor for the restoration of God’s Israel was replaced by a new Christian metaphor—that through Christ’s Atonement all human beings could be renewed first spiritually and eventually physically.
7. In a similar vein, Christians transformed the Jewish expectation of a Messiah who would lead Israel to victory over the pagans into a Messiah whose death was one key element of his messianic victory.

Wright argues persuasively that this first-century shift in the prevailing understanding of death and life after death can only be reasonably explained by an actual experience of resurrection, the one to which the New Testament points repeatedly.

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1 N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

2. Ben Witherington III, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2005).

B. Carmon Hardy, ed. *Doing the Works of Abraham: Mormon Polygamy, Its Origin, Practice, and Demise. Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier*, volume 9.
Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark, 2007

Reviewed by Kathryn M. Daynes

Joining a significant topic with one of its preeminent scholars is a certain formula for an important book. Such is *Doing the Works of Abraham* by B. Carmon Hardy. Polygamy shaped nineteenth-century Mormonism's relationship with the remainder of the world, and Hardy has written numerous articles and books on the topic, including *Solemn Covenant*,¹ named Best Book of the Year for 1992 by the Mormon History Association. The publication of this documentary history of nineteenth-century plural marriage is thus a major event in the ongoing scholarship on the topic.

The subtitle of the book accurately reflects the scope of the book, from the origins of plural marriage in Nauvoo, through its practice and opposition to it in Utah, and to its demise in the wake of federal prosecutions and the 1890 and 1904 Manifestos. Organized chronologically in general, it nevertheless includes chapters on topics such as Mormon defenses of polygamy, opponents' arguments, and individuals' experience living the principle. The coverage is comprehensive on polygamy within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, concluding with only a brief discussion and one document about fundamentalism.

Hardy's selection of a wide variety of published and unpublished documents reflects his long familiarity with and vast knowledge of polygamy. Among the many included are the expected documents, such as the revelation that became Doctrine and Covenants 132, William Clayton's narrative of the context in which the revelation was recorded, Belinda Marden Pratt's "Defence of Polygamy," Kate Field's condemnation of it, antipolygamy legislation (Morrill, Edmunds, and Edmunds-Tucker Acts), *Reynolds v. United States*, and the Manifestos (1890, 1904, and 1933). Even better in illustrating Hardy's mastery of the topic are the many less familiar documents, such as Orson Hyde's sermon on bridling sexual passion reported by Luke William Gallup, Charles R. Bailey's account of his marriages to two wives,

and Charles R. Bliss's 1885 letter to Grover Cleveland averring that "Senator Edmunds has," by opposing polygamy and unwittingly inciting rebellion, "solemnized more polygamous marriages than Brigham Young" (305). And there is George Q. Cannon's obscure (and, in terms of policy, wisely forgotten) 1857 editorial to the *Western Standard* entitled "Improvement to our Species," which advocated laws forbidding the unhealthy to beget children and the death penalty for prostitutes and those guilty of illicit intercourse (106–9). Hardy's extensive scholarship is evinced by his selecting the most original source, choosing, for example, to print Kingsbury's copy of the original Clayton transcript of the 1843 revelation about polygamy written from Joseph Smith's dictation, instead of using the version in Doctrine and Covenants 132. Random checking of several documents revealed minor spelling and capitalization differences between the original and what is published in this book, but never is there a substantive difference in meaning.

Unfortunately, the publisher demanded that Hardy's manuscript be cut by a third. Still, the book's introductions, conclusions, and interconnecting narrative represent the most comprehensive and up-to-date work extant on polygamy, for Hardy's knowledge encompasses not only original materials but the secondary literature as well. A documentary history necessarily privileges what individuals wrote, de-emphasizing overall trends and patterns, but Hardy overcomes this at least in part by discussing a variety of issues, such as the prevalence of polygamy in Mormon society. Hardy's knowledge of the sources is reflected in the extensive, although not exhaustive, bibliography, providing an excellent guide to the wide literature on polygamy. Surprisingly, not every work given in the abbreviated footnote citations is listed in the bibliography, which does not include Hardy's own article "Self-Blame and the Manifesto." (Full bibliographic citations for such excluded works may be found at <http://mormonhistory.byu.edu>.)

Hardy's objective was to write as "full and balanced a portrait of nineteenth-century polygamous Mormonism as possible" (19), a goal he achieves—which is not to say that he does not bring his own perspective. While he puts the origins of polygamy within a European intellectual context, he also acknowledges participants' own accounts of their spiritual experiences. The 1890 Manifesto, he writes, "gave the impression of being little more than private opinion publicly expressed" (348), but he also notes that "Woodruff earnestly believed that divine intent prompted his mind and hand" (344). As for the changes the Manifesto wrought, Hardy accurately puts the revelation into the larger context of events both before and after its issuance, even if it was "the most significant turn" up to that date in the various transformations that ended plural marriage within the Church (341).

The balanced portrait Hardy presents flows from his own tolerance and genuine humanity. However, his tolerance is tried by some of his nineteenth-century subjects, who, consistent with their cultural milieu, viewed women as inferior. But sometimes his depictions of some early Church leaders' views of women are tenuous. An account by Samuel Bowles of Heber C. Kimball's sentiment is questionable as an accurate depiction of LDS beliefs about women. Readers may also raise an eyebrow at the author's paraphrase of Heber C. Kimball's 1854 remarks. The original quotation reads that Kimball intended to "put my property & all my wives into the Church. I am going to dedicate all I have to God. . . . My body is only lent to me by the Lord." Hardy renders the quote to say that Kimball "intended to place his wives *with the rest of his property* into the keeping of the church" (128, emphasis added), shifting the meaning from Kimball's acknowledging God as the giver of all to Kimball's viewing women as property. Such lapses, if such they be, are rare and spring from Hardy's repugnance to treating anyone with disrespect. Similarly, while he treats opponents of polygamy and the Saints with balance, he nevertheless deplores anti-polygamists' intolerance (392). His sympathies, though not uncritical, lie with those who sacrificed to live in plural marriage. They deserve, he claims, "a long overdue heraldic place on the tablet of this American Israel's pioneer epoch" (392), but, he laments, they are now rewarded with "official inattention" (388) from the society they helped to build.

This book is a tribute to their struggle both to live plural marriage and to defend it in the face of overwhelming governmental and social opposition. And it is a treasure trove both for scholars and casual readers, a model of scholarship that unfolds a compelling story.

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1. B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

Vern Grosvenor Swanson.
Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mormonism's Sacred Bloodline.

Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2006

Reviewed by Jesse D. Hurlbut

What do the Virgin Mary, King Arthur, and Joseph Smith have in common? This is one of the questions that Vern Swanson attempts to answer in *Dynasty of the Holy Grail: Mormonism's Sacred Bloodline*. Swanson, who has been director of the Springville Art Museum in Utah since 1980 and who has published extensively in art historical topics, applies his skills to a different body of material in this impressive, large-format volume of over five hundred pages.

The author refers to his own work as a “scattershot miscellany of random thoughts” (411). While some may find in this statement a self-effacing motif, most readers will acknowledge that the phrase provides a fair assessment of this unusual project. This book falls outside the parameters of traditional academic inquiry. It can be categorized neither as fictional narrative nor religious treatise. It is not history, theology, or science. It borrows from each of these disciplines as well as from a significant body of folklore to derive and to propagate myth. I use the term “myth” in its original sense of something that a group holds to be true, although I am not certain who constitutes the believers in this case. To be sure, Swanson’s arguments will be most intelligible to an educated LDS audience, but the degree of speculation required to accept them as fact will dissuade most from buying into the theories. The author does plainly state (at least four times in the front-matter sections) that his conclusions do not represent official LDS doctrine, although the tone throughout the book is matter-of-fact.

Professor Swanson’s claim that “legend often contains hidden knowledge” (39) governs his approach to the central ideas and the justification for this book. He constructs a fascinating narrative of possibilities, but which more than strains the limits of traditional academic approaches. He relies heavily on questionable source material, including legends, fictional literature, arcana, sensationalistic research, and even hearsay. To be fair, his arguments deal with matters that presumably have either been deliberately

withheld, concealed and embedded in folklore, or which have at some point been purged from surviving records; hence recourse to standard historical documentation provides limited help. He admits that in some cases, he is unable to establish observations on conclusive data, and so he studies, rather, its “cumulative effect” (78). Nevertheless, while he accuses a number of authors of bending “to their own purpose whatever material crosses their path” (188), he is happy to rely on what he calls “internal theological logic” (132) to reconstruct a jigsaw puzzle that has too many pieces missing.

When stated in a nutshell, each of the author’s conclusions sounds at least a little far-fetched: The Virgin Mary was born in England (or Ireland); Jesus visited England to study with the Druids; Joseph Smith is a direct descendant of Jesus Christ; the Holy Grail of King Arthurian legend represents Joseph Smith and the light and truth of the gospel as restored by him. But Swanson’s strength is found in the manner he discusses and substantiates each of these claims by connections to other evidence or studies, including statements from modern-day prophets and Apostles. As tenuous as some of the source materials may be, the overall effect is a well-crafted hypothesis. The connections drawn from one hypothesis to the next yield a solid, well-structured argument that has a ring of truth to it.

For example, an important premise of the book is that the inherited Y-chromosome of Joseph Smith Sr. and the mtDNA of Lucy Mack Smith remained unmutated over centuries. Preliminary DNA testing substantiates this claim back through a number of generations. If Christ had had children, presumably through Mary Magdalene, and if a daughter of Christ provided the mtDNA for the lineage of Lucy Mack Smith, and if a son of Christ provided the Y-chromosome for Joseph Smith Sr., then it can be argued that Joseph Smith Jr. was a pure descendent of Christ. Professor Swanson cites Brigham Young on the matter of Joseph’s pure heritage: “That blood which was in him was pure and he had the sole right and lawful power, as he [Joseph Smith] was the legal heir to the blood that has been on the earth and has come down through a pure lineage. The union of various ancestors kept that blood pure” (285). The proposed purity of Joseph Smith’s lineage is a reflection of the lineage of the Virgin Mary, whose father descends from Judah through the branch of Zerah (Judah’s twin son), while Mary’s mother descended from the lineage of Perez (the other twin), after passing through Jesse, David, and King Zedekiah. Hence, Mary was uniquely able “to pass on the inheritance of the full house of Judah to Christ” (29) through both branches of her own genealogy.

The argument of the purity of Joseph Smith’s genetic heritage back to Judah, indeed, to Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham, hinges entirely on the question of whether Jesus had children. Several quotations from discourses

by LDS Apostles Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt proffer that Christ was married, he was a polygamist, and he had children (85–108). “Evidence” suggests that for their protection, the children of Christ were carried away and hidden in different nations, notably, in Western Europe (France and the British Isles, today). Swanson establishes the presence of Israelite blood in Europe by drawing upon Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln’s pseudo-scholarly notions,¹ popularized by Dan Brown in *The DaVinci Code* (383), purporting that the myth of the Holy Grail conceals the location of Christ’s progeny in the western edges of the continent.

According to Swanson, the Holy Grail refers specifically to “that vessel being the uterine chalice or womb of Mary Magdalene” (102–3). The idea that a hot-button issue like the offspring of the Savior might need a code name for security purposes seems reasonable, but Swanson gains nothing by calling upon the faulty research of late twentieth-century authors who suggested that King Arthur and the Holy Grail provided this security function. By Swanson’s own reckoning, the mystery of the Holy Grail defies analysis: “So complex, enigmatic, profound, and cryptic is its message that to the unknowing it is merely the confusing miasma of bygone prophets, troubadours, and romancers. Even the poets of this holy drama were never quite sure what the script meant” (183). While modern revelation provides answers to many longstanding mysteries, there is nothing in the *Journal of Discourses* (or in any other latter-day prophetic writings) that sheds light on the question of the Grail. The Holy Grail is an enchanting metaphor, but the fact that it surfaces for the first time only in the twelfth century—more than a millennium after there could have been a need for a security mechanism—marks it as a contrivance. If the author’s project constitutes an attempt to assemble a jigsaw puzzle, then the pieces dealing with the Holy Grail come from a different box.

Stylistically, the author’s writing is generally clear and well organized with the exception of the chapter on Gnostics and the divine feminine (chapter 5), where he seems to assume that the reader is already equipped to enter into an ongoing and heated discussion of these topics. He does provide a useful introduction to the history of the discourse on these issues in the closing chapters, but this material would be helpful earlier in the book. I should also note that the text reveals the author’s strong reaction against attitudes in this debate that he categorizes as “a fuzzy gnostic, leftwing, liberal, and adamantly feminist bias” (56). Instead of countering with a strong empirical stance, he resorts at times to sharp, even sarcastic, rejoinders to these arguments. This tone does not prevail throughout the book but may have the unintended consequence of weakening his position overall.

Professor Swanson's book benefits from his background in art history. Several plates of beautiful artwork and illustrations accompany the text. While not an essential part of his exposition, the plates offer corroborating visual evidence for his dominant hypotheses. Curiously, the caption for plate 13 misidentifies what clearly looks like a modern printed tarot card as a tempera painting on paper from the fifteenth century.

More than fifty pages of bibliography generously accompany the text. In a rare move that more scholars might emulate, Swanson has indicated which books he has not yet read and includes them in the interest of compiling an exhaustive list of resources. Because of the length of the list, he has subdivided it into twenty-three topical categories. This extensive bibliography provides readers with a rich resource for further investigation into any of the subjects covered. The disadvantage of the topical organization is that many works fit neatly into more than one category. For instance, Zina Petersen's lecture entitled "The Divine Feminine and the Goddess Movement" is found under the section "*Da Vinci Code* and Dan Brown" and not under "Goddess and the Divine Feminine," where it might also logically be located. Moreover, searching for the work of a given author, as one might want to do while examining the extensive footnotes throughout the text, requires one to scan tediously through each of the twenty-three topical bibliographies.

In conclusion, this large volume is not a response to the fervor created by *The Da Vinci Code*, since its conception and development predate the publication of Dan Brown's popular fictional novel. The two works draw upon some of the same source material and were conceived in parallel. No doubt, however, the appearance of *The Da Vinci Code* and the surprising attention it received created an environment favorable for Swanson to present the conclusions of many previous years of research. It remains to be seen between the two books—the novel or the footnoted study—which one is found more persuasive and which one tells a better story.

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1. Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1982).

Camille Kaminski Lewis. *Romancing the Difference:
Kenneth Burke, Bob Jones University, and the
Rhetoric of Religious Fundamentalism.*

Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007

Reviewed by Brian Jackson

In February 2000, George W. Bush made an early campaign stop at Bob Jones University, an institution that until that very year had prohibited its students from interracial dating. The school's community had no idea his visit would thrust BJU into the national gaze, making it a scapegoat for public political anxieties. Republicans (like Bush's opponent John McCain), Democrats, and journalists alike jumped into the mix to assault BJU publicly and thereby make Bush guilty by association. Though revisions of the interracial policy had already been in the works, Bob Jones III, president of BJU at the time, went on *Larry King Live* in March and officially lifted the campus ban on interracial dating. In the process, he told the television audience that though he and his predecessors believed the ban had scriptural warrant, it was ultimately less important than freedom of religion and the overall evangelical message BJU wanted to convey to the secular world.

Jones's rhetorical move on *Larry King Live* deserves scrutiny, and Camille K. Lewis, Chair of the Department of Rhetoric and Public Address at BJU, gives it and other BJU strategies a thorough treatment in *Romancing the Difference*, an academic monograph that will appeal mostly to scholars of religious communication. Though her position at BJU may compromise her study for some readers, Lewis does what many scholars and media pundits cannot bring themselves to do: give the symbolic messages of a fundamentalist organization a sympathetic and generous hearing. In *Romancing the Difference*, Lewis uses rhetorical theory to account for the way BJU uses its museums and other outreach methods to avoid being victimized by the secular world. In fact, these sectarian strategies become more than avoidance; they are, for Lewis, "courtly" (7) in that BJU

uses its public discourse to “woo” the secular “Other,” ostensibly through conversion (8). Such a sympathetic study should interest those of us who teach and work in a religious institution that, like BJU, tries to “romance” outsiders, often for similar purposes. Lewis herself believes her study will open a way for us to work for “a more egalitarian public sphere” by including the voice of the “religious separatist” (11).

To understand what Lewis means by “romance,” we need to understand how she uses the often-bewildering theories of philosopher Kenneth Burke (1897–1993) to show how BJU goes about its courtly wooing. Burke is a hard scholar to pin down. Traced through his dense and provocative works, his subject could be broadly conceived as “human motive” and the challenges that come from being symbol-using animals. Since Lewis is a rhetorician—a student of rhetoric, the classical and contemporary art of using symbols to promote social cooperation—she is interested in how Burke gives us tools to understand how a fundamentalist institution might use symbols effectively or otherwise to persuade secular outsiders to adopt certain values or attitudes. She looks at two of these conceptual tools in depth: the “tragic”—the tendency we have to make victims of those who transgress the moral order—and the “comic”—Burke’s “corrective” for the tragic tendency, a critical practice that leads us to accept our imperfections and see transgressors as “mistaken” rather than “evil” (1, 3). Tragic rhetoric seeks out society’s dangerous elements and makes symbolic scapegoats of them, as the Democratic party did to BJU after Bush’s visit (96). Comic rhetoric, though not very present in the public dialogue about BJU in the 2000 election, seeks to upend the value system that leads to scapegoating in the first place.

Interestingly, Lewis concludes that sectarian rhetoric *vis-a-vis* BJU is neither tragic nor comic, but *romantic*—that is, it seeks neither to make the secular world an enemy nor to ironically excuse its wrongs but to woo it through “that irresistible beauty that joins the Other to the sectarian ethic far outside the dominant frame” (128). In one chapter titled “The Romantic Pied Piper,” Lewis describes how BJU, as “the lovely sectarian” (62), “stands beyond the dominant” (39) and “plays a beautiful tune, not to entice the rats to their destruction, but to woo the citizens” (40) to “embrace a beautiful divinity” (46). Here, as in other places in the book, Lewis lets the theoretical poetry of her terms suggest the meaning: in its public discourse, BJU tries to impress nonevangelical outsiders and invite them to be saved.

This kind of romantic outreach may seem odd since we often (perhaps mistakenly) think of fundamentalists as reactionary antagonists rather than suitors. And in fact, one of the challenges we face with this otherwise

admirable work is that Lewis does not define what she means by the term we find in the subtitle: “religious fundamentalism.” In light of popular scholarship on the history and rhetoric of fundamentalism by George Marsden, Sharon Crowley, and others, it seems we need a definition and a historical context so we will know how the suitor strategy fits into the pageant of religious rhetoric in contemporary America. Also left unexamined is the way BJU as an institution operates rhetorically in ways other fundamentalist discourse may not. (The popular *Left Behind* novels by Jerry B. Jenkins and Tim F. LaHaye would make an interesting comparison.)

However, the book’s intense and singular gaze, even with limited context provided, has its advantages. Kenneth Burke sort of blew the top off classical rhetorical studies by introducing what has been called “Big Rhetoric,” or the study of *any* kind of symbolic activity beyond persuasive speech or writing. That open space lets Lewis apply the principles of tragedy, comedy, and romance to photographs and artwork in BJU’s internationally celebrated museums—the lovely objects of the “secular gaze” (63)—as well as other symbolic expressions as prosaic as campus recycling and the help desk in the administration building. From the professionally orchestrated to the mundane, BJU uses beauty, conservatism, and a fundamentalist gospel as a “beautiful costume” to “lure the Other” and “attract their lonely Beloved’s attention” (86). The metaphor is not only romantic but medicinal. Just as Burke sees the poet as a medicine man, Lewis sees BJU as using rhetorical strategies to “cure” a culture diseased with worldly pursuits. Lewis analyzes the texts from Bible Study Luncheons (81–84) to illustrate how BJU faculty use the scriptures to show how their secular neighbors, whether they know it or not, are lonely and sickly and need “communion as [a] balm” (85). As inheritors of divine truth, the sectarian fundamentalist knows what ails the culture and also knows the cure.

As Latter-day Saint missionaries know, most of the time these sickly secularists do not want to take their medicine. And in fact, sometimes prospective proselytes interpret these curative efforts, however well-intentioned, as “malpractice” (70). Lewis knows this, and she is willing to take at least one step away from her institution—admittedly, it is not a big step—to argue that in order to offer up this cure, sectarians must make the medicine (in other words, the message of the gospel) palatable by adapting it to the dominant conservative culture in ways that actually weaken their position. In public pronouncements during the 2000 presidential election controversy, BJU officials sought to identify “with the secular by embodying their core ideals” (118). (Throughout this work one is never sure if “secular” refers to non-Christians or more broadly nonfundamentalists, like Catholics.) Often in public discourse, the whole romantic thing falls flat.

The outreach seems disingenuous and indecorous. And when fundamentalists fail to convince the secular public, they often retreat from the public sphere as they did after the Scopes trial in the 1920s. They become passive, and “political action is impossible within this sort of passivity” (122). Lewis then proposes a “romantic comedy hybrid,” a phrase that may at first evoke in the reader an image of a favorite movie. What she means is that BJU, and all other rigidly fundamentalist sects who wish to enter public discourse, should learn how to use critical laughter and the metaphor of friendship rather than courtship to engage with the secular Other (122).

I finished this helpful contribution to the study of religious rhetoric feeling sympathy for the rhetorical predicament of the fundamentalist. I feel sheepish saying so, since such feelings can be interpreted as condescension. But perhaps there was something “close to home” in the analysis. Here is a religious institution with certain principles that it will not—*cannot*—negotiate. Not only will it not negotiate these principles with the secular world around it, but it feels divinely charged to encourage that world to adopt those principles. Unfortunately, the world by and large rejects both the message and the messenger and therefore rejects what the institution knows will bring happiness and ultimate redemption. Because the principles themselves do not do their own persuading, the fundamental dilemma (pun intended) for a missionary religion is to discover the means whereby one makes the truth palatable, even beautiful, to outsiders. *Romancing the Difference* provides a much-needed case study in the fortunes of this precarious and exhilarating courtship.

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Amos Yong. *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity.*

Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007

Reviewed by Rosalynde Welch

Amos Yong's *Theology and Down Syndrome* represents an ambitious attempt by an Evangelical theologian to come to grips with the conditions and conundrums of disability in a contemporary Christian context. The book's nine chapters and formidable bibliography inquire into cognitive disability of all kinds, not, despite its title, narrowly into Down syndrome alone. Yong writes in the dense idiom of critical academic theology and disability studies that may put off some readers, but the text is leavened with epigraphs, personal asides, and case studies that will appeal to most readers.

Yong sets himself three aims in this volume: to edify the reader, to contribute a new perspective to the field of systematic theology, and to transform the church into a more hospitable hearth for disabled people (xi). Implied in these three aims—the existential, the theological, and the pastoral—are the rather different audiences to whom the book is addressed: Christian believers with a personal interest in Down syndrome in particular or disability in general; theologians interested in the implications of disability; and church leaders and members facing the challenges of ministering to disabled congregants. Not coincidentally, Yong himself fits all three profiles. His youngest brother, Mark, was diagnosed shortly after birth with Trisomy 21, or Down syndrome. Therefore, short personal vignettes are dispersed throughout the text in italicized asides. As a working academic theologian, Yong brings his family's acquaintance with disability to bear on his professional interest in theology. And Yong's personal background in the evangelical missionary effort overseas has honed his sensitivity to the practical challenges faced by disabled believers in the context of a faith community.

Yong chooses to write within the subgenre of systematic theology, a discipline of general theology that seeks to give a rational, methodical account of Christian beliefs and to pursue the implications of those beliefs

over a wide range of topics. If the book is governed by a single controlling idea, it is Yong's notion of the "pneumatological imagination" (11). Building on the account in Acts 2 of remarkable Pentecostal outflow of diverse languages imparted by the Holy Spirit (*pneuma*), Yong develops a "pneumatological" epistemology:

[The pneumatological imagination] provides a theological rationale for preserving the integrity of difference and otherness, but not at the expense of engagement and understanding. Finally, it alerts and invites us to listen to the plurality of discourses and languages in the hope that even through "strange tongues," the voice of the Holy Spirit may still speak and communicate. (11–12)

The pneumatological imagination thus emphasizes the marginalized other—in particular, of course, the disabled community—and privileges diversity within unity. In this concept, Yong discovers a helpful biblical warrant for the theologically liberal vocabulary of social justice, inflected by the academic counterdiscourses of late modernity with which Yong undertakes an extensive engagement.

From this pneumatological perspective, Yong launches an ambitious project of survey and summary. He begins by examining the Bible's treatment of people with disabilities, particularly the blind, the deaf, and the lame. Working within a Protestant framework of *sola scriptura*, Yong must reconcile any contemporary theology of disability with the relevant scriptural accounts, but this is no easy interpretive task. Yong finds that Old Testament writers understand disability within a dualistic ritual framework of purity and defilement, whereas New Testament writers emphasize the Christological narratives in which the healing of a disability symbolizes Christian redemption. Given the vast differences that science and rationality have generated in the ways modern people understand the causes and treatments of disabilities, contemporary readers may find the biblical sources irrelevant or even unsatisfying. In response, Yong suggests three simple enduring biblical themes, corresponding to the three aims of his project: the existential truth that the disabled are to "endure patiently the outworkings of God's inscrutable plan, given the hope that God's ultimate intentions include their well-being and vindication"; the theological insight that under God's sovereignty all "disabilities are part of God's plan"; and the pastoral injunction to the church to meet the needs of people with disabilities (39–40). In addition, Yong suggests that if we are to move forward in a biblical epistemological framework we must reread the canon "beneath and between its lines," seeking a saving interpretation of scripture for modernity rather than a rigid literalism (42).

Yong then turns his attention to a lengthy history of Down syndrome and disability in the modern world, with an eye to exposing its legacy of discrimination. He traces the eventful emergence of the biomedical model of disability, in which Down syndrome, for instance, is ultimately understood in reductive genetic terms and subject to both a science-driven course of rehabilitative therapy but also a science-enabled regime of pre-natal testing and abortion. Yong next tackles the peregrinations of disability in the postmodern world—that is, within the academic discourses of disability studies. The master insight of disability studies is the so-called “social model” of disability, which holds that what we call disability is primarily an ideological construct composed of (largely unjust) representations of disability and the disabled. Yong shows that although it is suffused with a civil rights vocabulary of justice and liberation, the social model can be as confining as the biomedical model, for the social construction of disability is simultaneously a deconstruction of individual agency: the disabled “subject position,” to use the academic idiom, can be just as reductive as the biomedical focus on biology.

Yong proposes instead a perhaps too easy “both/and” approach to the conflict: disability is *both* a positive biomedical condition *and* a constructed social condition. He suggests, optimistically, that our late modern context combines both promising scientific resources and a culture in which “differences are valued and embraced” (110). While there may be weaknesses to this undertheorized reconciliatory posture, it puts Yong in position for the culminating effort of the book, namely the encounter of disability studies with a theology of disability.

Yong’s method in the final chapters of the book turns away from survey and toward analysis: he first outlines the traditional Christian position on a variety of topics and then subjects each to critical cross-examination in light of contemporary disability studies. Yong selects seven of the traditional theological *topoi* for special inquiry: creation; providence, including the problem of theodicy; the Fall; the *imago dei* (or what Latter-day Saints would call the question of divine nature in humanity); ecclesiology, including sacraments and ministry; soteriology and salvation; and eschatology. In each case, Yong reconsiders traditional Christian notions—occasionally, as in the case of the Fall, dismantling them all together—in favor of a pneumatological revision that privileges the democratic, the pluralistic, and the antihierarchical. As he does so, he develops three key concepts for a theology of disability: emergence, relationality, and transcendence (201).

The concept of emergence is developed in the context of “theological anthropology,” the study of what defines human nature. Yong argues that the soul as consciousness emerges from, but is never fully reducible to, the

body and its processes. Emergence offers two advantages for a theology of disability: first, it is able to accommodate a modern scientific understanding of disability—that is, that disability is in part a biomedical condition of the body—while retaining a theory of soul; and second, in contrast to a Cartesian model that privileges the (rational) soul over the (material) body, an emergentist model of human nature values embodiment, prior to consciousness, as the criterion for personhood, and thus unambiguously extends the protection of personhood to even the most cognitively impaired humans.

If emergence offers an account of human nature, relationality offers an account of human salvation. Any theology of disability must answer the vexing question: how can a person who lacks the capacity to learn and take moral account of his or her actions be saved, whether by faith or by works? In response to this problem, Yong proffers the notion of relationality, by which he means a person's embeddedness in relationships with God and within a human community: "Each person with intellectual disability stands in a unique relationship of moral and spiritual responsibility before God, one dependent on the degree to which the various intellectual, moral or social dimensions of life are emergent in that life" (237). If the conceptual uncertainty of this solution frustrates some readers, its pragmatic flexibility in the practical questions of fellowship and ministry cannot be denied. And in the end, Yong's optimistic vision of pneumatological transcendence centers constructively on inclusion and community rather than on doctrinal exactness:

The Christian heavenly hope is possibly the most extensive vision of inclusion in our theological repertoire. The question is whether we will truly open up the doors to God's embracing and empowering difference, rather than attempt to retain control over who is in or out according to our conventions regarding the present scheme of things. (291)

For Latter-day Saint readers, part of this book's interest will lie in tracking the points of convergence or divergence of Yong's ideas with LDS teachings. At times, Yong's theology resonates strongly with LDS doctrines. His emphasis on relationality, for example, chimes very nicely with the emphasis of Latter-day Saints on family and friendship, together with their corporate and covenantal dimensions of salvation. And while he explicitly rejects the possibility of postmortem evangelism, Yong finally arrives at something that resembles the LDS idea of eternal progression. In order to explain how profoundly disabled people can be resurrected to glory while retaining a continuous identity, Yong endorses Gregory of Nyssa's (about AD 335–394) vision of a dynamic eschatology: "For this is truly perfection:

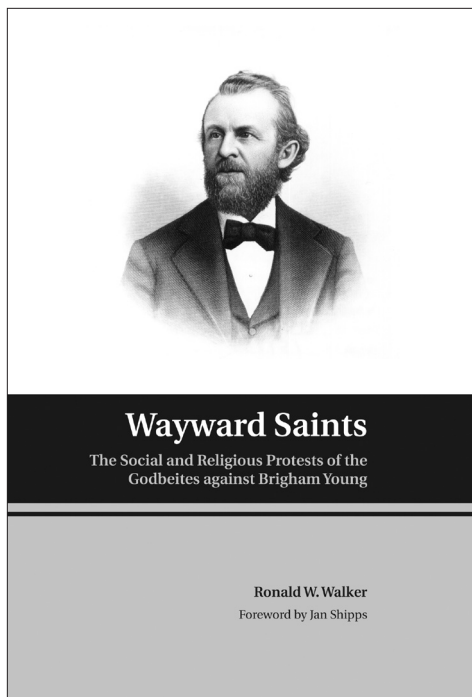
never to stop growing towards what is better and never placing any limit on perfection” (275).

On the other hand, the LDS doctrine of a premortal existence during which the unembodied spirit already exercised individual agency seems to contradict or transcend Yong’s notion of emergence, according to which the body and its processes must exist prior to any individual consciousness and on which much of his theology of disability rests. Even Yong’s basic method may stand at odds with any potential LDS theology of disability: to what extent, the LDS reader may wonder, is it possible in an LDS context to subject doctrinal assumptions to critical interrogation from secular perspectives? Will vocabulary drawn from liberal, social justice activism be congenial to LDS theological discourse, or will a native LDS vocabulary need to be developed in order to articulate and integrate unique LDS concepts into a suitable treatment of LDS perspectives on disability?

These questions, and many others evoked by this erudite theological journey, should help Latter-day Saints in conversing with other Christians about ministering to those with disabilities and should stimulate readers to further fruitful reflection on all of these important themes.

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A story that includes spiritualist séances, conspiracy, and an important church trial, *Wayward Saints* chronicles the 1870s challenge of a group of British Mormon intellectuals to Brigham Young's leadership and authority. William S. Godbe and his associates protested against Young because they disliked his demanding community and resented what they perceived to be Young's intrusion into matters of personal choice.

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