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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

brick by brick

I was glad to read "The Cloning of Mormon Architecture" by the female author, Martha Sonntag Bradley. However, she missed some very vital feelings on the coldness of today's church financing. Being raised as bishop's daughter during the fun fundraising years in the fifties, I felt real pain as an adult when approached for building fund money. The mother of a young family struggling on one income, I had nothing to give but my talents, and this was unacceptable. For having grown up through an era that put more value on my talents than my money, I was really turned off. The meager amount I was able to siphon from the grocery money to feel like our family was contributing to the million dollar church house, was degrading and demeaning.

Since I grew up Mormon, my whole world revolved round ward building banquets, ward building carnivals, ward building bazaars, etc. Talents and budding M.C.'s flourished throughout the whole community. Mormons and non-Mormons participated during the building period, and I was surprised to learn later on that Brother So-and-So was never a Mormon, or Brother So-and-So drank beer and coffee, or Sister So-and-So was somebody's mother and no one ever told her. All barriers of discrimination broke down to build a new church house. No one was too coy not to participate and it created bonding that no glue would ever make. We each knew we had to "Put our Shoulder to the Wheel," and each Sunday we watched a temperature chart in the foyer telling us how much more money we had to go. It made us aware at a very young age that money took work, and money management was learned too. When they dedicate a million dollar church house today, I feel nothing, but back then, our \$23,000 church house was valued to the last brick. As a primary child I was elated in giving my pennies to color in a church brick on the stand. It filled my heart with more pride than any of my birthday pennies accomplished for Primary Hospital. I could color a brick, I could see it "fitting" in. It gave me a "fitting" in feeling that I'm sad to say my

children will never experience in community living.

Our testimonies grew right along with the building. Life stories were compared to nails, hammers, saws, floors, ceilings, bricks, windows, and ward members never hesitated to retell their testimonies. That was a living church for me back then, and nowadays when I read in the Saturday church section of L.D.S. churches being dedicated with smiling men standing in front of their "Cloned Architecture," I get real hostile because I know they don't know what church houses are really made of.

Mary Jean Uebelgunne
Ogden, Utah

economy vs. individuality

As one who has railed about the standard plan architecture that reigns in the Church, I was happy to see Martha Sonntag Bradley's "Cloning" article. It was the first one I read in this issue and I really enjoyed it. I hadn't realized how the policy of cloning buildings had evolved, or how it functioned in building chapels, stake centers and temples. I appreciated her comments at the close of her paper about the stifling of creative thought and effort, and the effect of eliminating diversity. I would agree with her wholeheartedly were it not for some of my experiences with some other methods of building church facilities.

I was raised as a Presbyterian. My parents are still Presbyterian and are members of the session, or governing body, of their local congregation. Each congregation in the Presbyterian Church has the responsibility for building and maintaining its own church buildings. There is no Church Architect or Church Building Committee, or whatever. Each congregation hires its own architect and builds its own buildings. And pays for them. Sometimes the results are spectacular, but the process doesn't guarantee that the buildings will reflect local needs or even be well designed. I have seen church kitchens with room for only a 10 cubic foot refrigerator (try putting on a church dinner when all the cold foods have to be stored in portable coolers in the Sunday

School rooms) and designs that had the entrance to the men's restroom inside the women's restroom (that one was corrected before construction started). One sanctuary's acoustics were so bad that the sermon was unintelligible in the last third of the sanctuary. In other words, individuality is not synonymous with quality. Perhaps the bad buildings were outnumbered by the good ones, but that is of little solace to the congregations trying to cope with them. I know the standard plans have many flaws—our chapel exhibits some of the worst, but the solution may not necessarily lie with turning the responsibility over to local wards.

My mother, who has served on several church building committees over the years, and who has served "ex officio" when my father was on the committees, thinks the nicest thing about the Mormons is that they have standard plans for their churches. (That may say something about our public relations, but I digress.) She has lived with the congregational battles over how large the sanctuary should be versus how large the pastor's office should be. Whether to carpet the nursery or put a fireplace in the fellowship hall. How big a storage closet should the Boy Scouts have. She has seen how congregations have almost been split when they tried to expand their Sunday School facilities. The human effort that goes into building a church is immense, and it usually comes at the expense of activities that are more central to the gospel of Christ. "No, I can't help with the well-baby clinic this week, I have to meet with the architect that day." "Sorry, I won't be able to teach Sunday School this winter, I'm acting as electrical subcontractor for the new addition." My father once pointed out in a session meeting that far more of the congregation's budget was going to building and maintenance than to service and outreach (the Presbyterian missionary program). He wondered if they weren't building a golden calf out of red bricks and mortar.

Although I almost hate to bring it up, the issue of economy is a valid one. Our ward requests that the members donate 4% of their income to the budget building fund. Some wards in the area request

5%. This is, of course, over and above the other financial requirements of Church membership—tithing, fast offerings, the expenses associated with Church service. How much more would it be if we didn't share our chapel with two other wards? If we were carrying a thirty-year mortgage for an individually designed building? What with tithing, budget, fast offerings, Temple trips, savings for children's missions, etc., it is easy for 20 to 25% of my gross income to be devoted to the church as it is. I might be able to afford more, but I would hesitate to ask it of every family in the ward.

No, I don't like our cookie cutter churches very much. I don't like having a gym right outside the chapel. (Yes, I know it's called a cultural hall, but those lines on the floor and the basketball hoops make it a gym to me.) Our Sunday School rooms are all wrong for our needs. There are blackboards in the nursing mothers room and none in the Junior Sunday School room. The art in the building is poor. The foyer is designed as a people trap. The acoustics in the chapel are lousy. And yes, the kitchen is totally inadequate for ward suppers. I would like to see church buildings that can inspire reverence and worship. It's just that I've lived through some attempts to create such buildings under another system and am left wondering if they were really worth the costs.

Catherine Wright Alexander
Spokane, Washington

what the living can live with

I suspect that Lincoln Oliphant's major thesis that there is an ERA-abortion connection [Spring, 1981] is essentially correct, but I so strongly disagree with the assumptions and value judgments with which he surrounds this thesis, that I feel compelled to respond. The most obvious example of this is Oliphant's notion that an ERA-abortion connection implies that we should oppose the Equal Rights Amendment. For me, the prospect that passage of the ERA would strengthen the guarantees of a woman's right to exercise her free agency in the choice of how to use her reproductive resources supplies me with yet another excellent reason to support the ERA.

I find Oliphant's arguments against the ERA and the 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion equally unconvincing. He objects to the ERA because it fits with the "view of the Constitution as a *living, dynamic document*" (emphasis his). What does he want the Constitution to be—a *dead, stagnant document* (emphasis mine)? Why on earth would we want to interpret the 14th amendment (his example) in the way the legislative committee which drafted it intended? Is the nineteenth-century mind so obviously better equipped to understand the problems of the twentieth century than we are? Personally, I believe in progress and I am glad that we are more sensitive to social injustice now than they were a hundred years ago.

Oliphant accuses ERA supporters of inconsistencies and trying to "have it both ways," but if he wants some really good examples of inconsistencies and having it both ways, he ought to do a careful—or even casual—analysis of the rhetoric of the antiabortionists. At least ours are subtle—theirs are blatant. He, himself, gets caught trying to have it both ways at several points. One example is his cry of dismay that "these people" want to use government "for imposing their favorite projects upon their fellows." It is different, of course, when he wants to use government to impose his favorite project—coerced childbirth—upon his fellows (although he probably would not impose it upon fellows—it is more acceptable to impose upon women).

He correctly calls some prochoice people to task for suggesting that abortion is analogous to kidney disease, but does not seem to realize that his own analogies are just as faulty. Abortion is not kidney surgery, but neither is it embezzlement—and to suggest that it is similar is to miss the central moral dilemma of abortion, which is making a choice between conflicting rights. His discussion of abortion fails to confront this basic moral question and thus leaves the moral dimension to become merely moralistic.

This is particularly distressing because his major complaint against the courts is the idea that "abortion and childbirth, when stripped of the sensitive moral

arguments surrounding the abortion controversy, are simply two alternative medical methods of dealing with pregnancy." The proper response to this idea is to refuse to strip it of moral arguments. The problem is that the antiabortionists have substituted moralistic rhetoric for meaningful moral reasoning and the court is right in refusing to impose moralistic prohibitions upon us. What we need to do is to bring the dialogue back into the moral realm. Simply making abortion illegal works against moral choice. We must be sensitive to the rights of the unborn, but also to the rights of the already born. We need a position that the living can live with.

I cannot adequately present such a position in a letter, but a fuller treatment of my views appears in *Sunstone* (Vol. 6, No. 4).

Marvin Rytting
Columbus, Indiana

interesting reading

I find it interesting to read what others write about the Adam-God controversy. When we can understand that Elohim is of Hebrew origin, meaning divine spirit, whom we worship in spirit and in truth, it is perfectly acceptable to me to believe that the Ancient of Days is the Father-God, and Jehovah is the Beloved Son, the Only One Begotten, ordained and anointed to be our Redeemer!

This doctrine is in Christian literature and hymns from centuries ago. It did not originate with Mormonism. To me it is the answer to who is our personal God—male and female, Adam and Eve, and our potential as sons and daughters of God!

I enjoyed "A Conversation with Beverly Campbell." I agree that women resent doing household chores as a duty, with no opportunity to express our feelings about anything.

We have honest desires to use our brain and our brawn with initiative, in powerful endeavors. When we are allowed to do so, a woman's power and influence can be great! We can respond to positive stimulus with joyful enthusiasm, and a whole new world of opportunities opens to our vision, to serve with love our fellow

human beings. I find this spirit, this desire to serve their Lord, in Christian and Mormon women.

Rhoda Thurston
Hyde Park, Utah

study precedes the revelation

In a recent *Dialogue* article entitled "Revelation: The Cohesive Element in International Mormonism" (Winter 1980), C. Seshachari said that "The Church, both in its doctrine and in its hierarchical flow chart, is singularly equipped to sustain and further that sense of cohesiveness" that "transcends national and cultural barriers." The obvious solution given for problems of internationalization was revelation. To me this is reminiscent of a commonly expressed attitude about this matter: rely on the Spirit and don't worry (i.e., think) too much about inter-cultural problems. At the 1976 Expanding Church Symposia a church leader closed the proceedings by stressing the theme, "things are getting better." Again it was stressed that the Spirit will solve all such problems if we just rely on it. I believe so. But things are also getting worse.

Would it detract from the Spirit too much if we were ever to emphasize the need to intellectually and practically grapple first-hand with gospel-related international problems? To simply assure us in doctrinal terms that the sufficient mechanisms are in place (as solutions *per se*) not only avoids the need to think *situationally* about such problems but it tends to engender a superficial, non-involving optimism. After all, the Spirit has to rely on us too.

It seems to me that what is needed just as much (but is stressed less often) is personal knowledge about, and involvement in, the realities and problems "out there." We need to spread out more. We need more reports or analyses of social realities, as opposed to only doctrinal depictions of ideal solutions, in order to develop a problem-solving attitude. This is the only justifiable optimistic orientation. And in fact, profound organizational and doctrinal changes have occurred recently. We may ask, "Were they overdue?" and "What changes are yet needed?"

And as Max Weber emphasized, "it is not the doctrines *per se* which are of social force, but the cultural meanings which are attached to them." Revelation usually comes after questions and "felt needs" (to think about it in situational terms). Hence the occurrence and implication of revelation is, in part, socially structured and personally and socially acted out. We need to consider "how often" and "under what conditions" "who of those among us" walk by revelation. Obviously revelation *can be* a cohesive element, but what needs our energy is the question "How can it be?" How is doctrine interpreted crossculturally? Is it simply standardized by the Spirit? How do patron-client relations affect church callings in Latin America? Is it possible that the revelation on priesthood extension came when it did, instead of earlier, because we members weren't ready for it and the leaders weren't asking until then? Why not at the time just before the fruition of the U.S. civil rights movement in the early 60s, when tens of thousands of converted Biafrans, and others of the uncounted "elect," were waiting? There may be some connection. Who knows?

Are questions sometimes not asked because of distance or ethnocentrism? What does a missionary do when a poor branch member in a developing country (who happens to comply with the norm of "no birth control" and have thirteen kids) asks the elder to pay for a long-term supply of anti-hookworm medicine for one of his ailing children? Should he simply follow the hopefully-inspired mission directive against financially helping any members, even though no welfare mechanism has been set up at the time to assist this poor and isolated branch? Or should he seek differing inspiration? What needs for personal knowledge *and* inspiration may have gone unmet here at the church, mission, missionary and family levels? And why so?

The scenario is more fruitfully discussed as an essentially problematic one, where the would-be receptacle of revelation happens to be seen as a social being. We know that the Almighty is ready "to pour down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints." But

where are the heads? Aspiring to the honors of men? And where are the hearts? Set upon the things of this world?

Douglas L. Vermillion
Salatiga, Java, Indonesia

outsiders' objectivity

I am baffled by Gary Gillum's review of Robert Hullinger's *Mormon Answer to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon* (Fall, 1980 *Dialogue*, pp. 136–138). While I realize that those who read the review are probably not now inclined to bother reading the book, I suggest that if you do read the book, you will conclude that it deserves a more serious review.

Gillum begins with a ridiculous comparison of Hullinger's book and Schonfield's *Passover Plot*. He informs the reader that Hullinger uses faulty logic, but he never bothers to show us that faulty logic. I think he errs when he says that Hullinger lifts Book of Mormon passages out of context. He gives no examples. He suggests that Hullinger's conclusions are at variance with the conclusions predicted for the reader in Wesley Walters' foreword, which is not the case.

It is news to me that "all Lutherans" are "tradition-bound to the inerrancy of scripture." Is it really not possible that Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* could have been a "burning issue" in western New York in the late 1820s because it had been published nearly forty years earlier? Are we really supposed to believe that the Book of Mormon's location of Jesus' birth in Jerusalem can be harmonized with the Bethlehem tradition of Matthew and Luke because residents of a modern metropolis may say they live in Los Angeles when they really live in North Hollywood? (More likely, Jesus was not born in either Bethlehem or Jerusalem.)

Gillum's real problem in reviewing the book is a problem he readily admits: he feels duty bound to prove Hullinger wrong because he feels that Hullinger feels duty bound to prove Mormonism wrong. Actually, Hullinger's analysis is very fair, and Gillum himself admits it is "one of the most charitable and objective studies of Joseph Smith ever written by a non-Mormon." Apparently Gillum is

bothered by the fact that, despite the charitable and objective approach, Hullinger assumes that the Book of Mormon was written by Joseph Smith rather than merely translated by him. For Gillum, Hullinger cannot see "the Big Picture." He feels that Hullinger and Wesley Walters "both seem to value their 'scholarly ability' to explain Mormonism more than the Mormonism they're trying to explain."

We owe a great debt to the work of several non-Mormon scholars in the past generation who have given us important insights by examining Mormonism from an objective, outsider's perspective. Hullinger's book is one of these, and deserves more than cheap putdowns by reviewers who essentially are bothered by the fact that Hullinger does not view Mormonism from the perspective of acceptance of the Mormon faith-story.

William D. Russell
Graceland College
Lamoni, Iowa

divisive dialogue

As readers of *Dialogue*, most of us have an interest in an educated discussion of gospel related topics. Indeed, to "foster scholarly achievement" is one of the purposes of the journal, and, therefore, as readers we must be willing to enter the discussion with some disposition to entertain ideas which we may not initially agree with. Hence, such a dialogue depends on our willingness to talk and listen on an academic level.

The above point of view seems obvious enough, but recently I was dismayed by a letter which depreciates the discussion we want to engage in.

Because my dispute with Mr. Tanner's letter (Vol. XIII, no. 3) is ethical and not doctrinal, it is important to consider the consequences of the doctrine advanced by Mr. Tanner. In his letter he laments that more gospel scholars do not apply the same critical analysis to the gospel as they apply to their own fields of study. I believe that he refers to those who try to keep their secular and ecclesiastical lives separate as "two headed monsters." Mr. Tanner then advances his own rational analysis of the gospel. He states

that the only evidence for the doctrine of eternal progression is the lip service that Church members give it. He claims that all answers to prayer, whether Mormon or aboriginal, are more wishful thinking than reality, and that revelation is a result of political necessity. He characterizes those who believe in such doctrines as having a twelve- to fifteen-year-old mentality. Those who do not believe in such doctrines are those who "are above that intellectual level and would look at the matter analytically and see it somewhat differently." Despite Mr. Tanner's assertions that eternal progression is a sham and that answers to prayer are anything but divinely inspired, he does not propose to eliminate the concept of God. After making such assertions, it is curious that Mr. Tanner does not proceed logically to the next step—declaring that God does not exist.

However, with analysis, Mr. Tanner's motive becomes transparent. By deriding those who believe in God and in a doctrine of eternal progression and by praising those who have submitted their former beliefs to rational analysis, Mr. Tanner intends to do one thing; he intends to make a clear discrimination between believers and non-believers. The concept of God is useful in Mr. Tanner's scheme because it identifies who belongs to which group. Mr. Tanner's proposal that scholarly discussion be enhanced is, therefore, divisive. He alienates the believers by deprecating their mentality, and he attempts to rally non-believers by praising reason and objective thinking. Such division can accomplish little for those interested in an academic discussion. Mr. Tanner himself admits that a dialogue would be impossible under such circumstances. He says that one must come to a realization of such matters alone, and then he asks, "once accom-

plished, what is the point in writing about it to another who already has arrived at this realization?"

Mr. Tanner assumes that individual analysis will yield a single realization, and perhaps he gives too much credit to analytical thought, but under the circumstances delineated by Mr. Tanner the only possibilities for communication are two. First, one group can make disparaging remarks about the other group. Or, second, the members of each group can praise themselves, rejoicing that they are not as misguided as the members of the other group. This kind of in-group rhetoric does nothing to promote a dialogue; in fact, the situation Mr. Tanner advocates inhibits any kind of discussion whatsoever. Mr. Tanner's is a rhetoric of division, meant to prevent communication between groups of different beliefs. His lament that L.D.S. scholars do not publish is, therefore, self-contradictory because it fosters the very thing it proposes to eliminate.

As someone interested in an intellectual discussion of the gospel as it relates to secular experience, I cannot accept Mr. Tanner's position. Nor as someone who hopes for certain changes to be made in the Church, can I accept Mr. Tanner's position. If Mr. Tanner were trying to encourage an educated dialogue, or if he were trying to effect a change, he would not propose the line of demarcation that he does. In fact, I suspect that Mr. Tanner is not interested in changing the intellectual level that he sees as so deplorable; he is interested in creating or preserving it. What is in question here is not the intellectual level of Church members; what is in question is Mr. Tanner's ethic.

Grant Boswell
Arcadia, California

ARTICLES

The Fading of the Pharaohs' Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban Against Blacks in the Mormon Church

ARMAND L. MAUSS

Now Pharaoh, being of that lineage by which he could not have the right of priesthood, notwithstanding . . . would fain claim it from Noah through Ham . . . [Noah] blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and . . . wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the priesthood.¹

WHEN PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL announced to the world on June 9, 1978 a revelation making Mormons of all races eligible for the Priesthood, he ended a policy that for 130 years denied the priesthood to those having any black African ancestry. Now, just three years later—in a day when Eldredge Cleaver is talking about joining the Church—it is easy to forget the major changes that led to this momentous announcement.

The history of the policy of priesthood denial can, of course, be traced back to the middle of the last century; most Mormons have assumed that it is even older, much older, having been applied against the ancient Egyptian pharaohs. In this article I shall not be concerned with the full sweep of this history, on which a considerable body of scholarly literature already exists,² but rather with the final stage, or “decline and fall,” starting around the end of World War II.

The first stirrings of this final stage might be seen in the 1947 exchange of letters between Professor Lowry Nelson, a distinguished Mormon sociologist,

ARMAND L. MAUSS, *professor of sociology at Washington State University at Pullman, Washington, is a member of Dialogue's Board of Editors.*

and the First Presidency of the Church.³ The latter's remarks to Nelson, who questioned the validity of church policy on race, are important because they were the first official (though not public) church utterance on the race subject for a long time. Following the traditional rationale, the Presidency explained the policy on blacks in terms of differential merit in the pre-mortal life; stated that the priesthood ban was official church policy from the days of Joseph Smith onward; and raised, with great misgivings, the specter of racial intermarriage.⁴

Two years later, the First Presidency issued its first general and public statement on the priesthood policy. This letter went beyond the earlier private one in its theological rationale, and included references to the black skin as indicating ancestry from Cain. It elaborated further upon the notion of differential merit in the pre-existence, and held out the prospect that the ban on blacks could be removed after everyone else had had a chance at the priesthood.⁵ Apparently based upon *The Way to Perfection*, the 1931 distillation by Joseph Fielding Smith of the cumulative racial lore since Brigham Young, this well-known letter expressed the position held, with rare exception and certainly without embarrassment, by Mormon leaders until very recent times.⁶ The durability of that position, however, was to prove more apparent than real.

TWENTY YEARS OF TEMPEST

The Gathering Clouds of the 1950s.

David O. McKay became President of the Church early in 1951. He was to preside over the stormiest two decades in the entire history of the Mormon-black controversy. In retrospect, President McKay would seem to have been an almost inevitable harbinger of change, not only because of the civil rights movement emerging around him in the nation itself, but even more so because of his own personal values. As early as 1924, Apostle McKay had attacked anti-Negro prejudice and the "pseudo-Christians" who held it; and, in a widely republished personal letter written in 1947, he had shown himself remarkably free of the traditional notions about marks, curses, and the like, referring instead to faith in God's eventual justice and mercy.⁷ Close personal friends, as well as members of his own immediate family, have affirmed that from early in his presidency, McKay believed that the restrictions on blacks were based not on "doctrine" but on "practice."⁸ One might well take the inference from such statements, that he considered the way clear to a change in the policy by simple administrative fiat, rather than by special revelation. Why, if the reports of those close to him are true, no such change came during his administration remains one of the unanswered questions of this period.⁹

President McKay does, however, seem to have taken some initiatives to reduce the *scope* of the priesthood ban to more parsimonious dimensions, and concomitantly to expand the missionary work of the Church considerably among the darker-skinned peoples of the earth. These initiatives took two principal (and related) forms: (1) the transfer of entire *categories* of people

from “suspect” to “clear” as far as lineage was concerned; and (2) the transfer, in *individual* cases, of the “burden of proof” of clear lineage from the candidate to his priesthood leaders (i.e., to the Church).

It is difficult to be certain just when the “burden of proof” was shifted, and the shift may well not have occurred at the same time everywhere in the Church. Until 1953, at least, it was apparently incumbent upon suspect candidates for the priesthood to clear themselves genealogically before they could be ordained or given temple recommends. This was certainly the case in places like South Africa and parts of Latin America, where the risk of black African ancestry was especially high.¹⁰ Such a policy obviously would place many converts in a kind of “lineage limbo” until they could be “cleared,” and deny the Church the badly needed leadership contributions of these potential priesthood holders. It was just such a predicament that prompted President McKay to investigate the situation first-hand in a visit to the South Africa Mission early in 1954. Immediately after that visit, the burden of genealogical proof was shifted to the mission president and priesthood leaders in that mission.¹¹

There is reason to believe that the visit and subsequent policy deliberations on South Africa provoked more than a passing concern on President McKay’s part over the broader implications of the traditional racial restrictions in a church increasingly committed to worldwide expansion. It was in the Spring of 1954, just after his return from South Africa, that President McKay had his long talk on this general subject with Sterling M. McMurrin, and at very nearly the same time, one of the Twelve reported that the racial policy was undergoing re-evaluation by the leadership of the Church.¹² Just how serious the deliberations of the General Authorities were at this time we are not yet in a position to know. Only a year later, however, during an extended visit to the South Pacific, President McKay faced the issue again in the case of Fiji, where emigré Tongans had settled in fairly large numbers and had intermarried to some extent with the native Fijians.

The Church had been inconsistent over the years in its policy toward Fijians, and as recently as 1953 the First Presidency defined them as ineligible for the priesthood. President McKay however, was convinced by his visit to Fiji, and by certain anthropological evidence, that the Fijians should be reclassified as Israelites. He subsequently issued a letter to that effect which not only removed the doubt hanging over the Polynesian converts of mixed blood in Fiji, but also opened up a new field for missionary work. In 1958, a large chapel was completed in Suva (Fiji), and the first Fijians received the priesthood.¹³ The Negritos of the Philippines had been cleared much earlier, and the various New Guinea peoples were also ruled eligible for the priesthood in the McKay administration.¹⁴ An important doctrinal implication of extending the priesthood to all such “Negro-looking” peoples was to emphasize that the critical criterion was not color *per se*, but lineage (from “Hamitic” Africa).¹⁵

The situation in Latin America was far more complicated, and nowhere were the complications more pervasive and vexing than in Brazil. Categorical clearances of this or that population group, as in Fiji or New Guinea, could

not feasibly be made in Latin America, nor, in the absence of *apartheid*, could the “burden of proof” of clear lineage be transferred to the Church with as little relative risk as in South Africa. That transfer thus seems to have taken place somewhat later in Latin America than elsewhere.¹⁶ The Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadores* had had few qualms about miscegenation; and countries like Brazil had had such an extensive admixture of both Indian and African Negro ancestry as to make any reliable lineage “clearance” a practical impossibility. This problem was well known to Church leaders and may have been a factor in the postponement of proselyting among the Portuguese-speaking native populations in Brazil. Until World War II, proselyting in both Brazil and Argentina was directed largely at Germans and other European emigré peoples. The first converts in South America were actually Italians, though they were soon joined by equal numbers of Spanish-speaking converts in Argentina. However, in Brazil, where racial mixture was especially extensive, proselyting was mostly confined to Germans until the outbreak of war, when the Brazilian government outlawed German-language meetings and looked with suspicion on German-based organizations. Only then did the proselyting efforts of the Church shift to the Portuguese-speaking Brazilians.¹⁷

When proselyting finally began in earnest among the latter, strenuous efforts had to be made to identify, well before baptism, those converts who might be genealogically suspect. Such efforts included a special lesson for investigators, near the end of the standard lesson series, in which the topic of lineage and access to the priesthood was discussed in a larger doctrinal and historical context. Investigators were urged to look through family photo albums, often in the presence of the missionaries, for evidence of ancestors who might have shown indications of African ancestry. Similar “screening” efforts were employed in various other Latin American countries, and the lineage lesson developed in Brazil was widely adopted, with various local modifications, in several Latin American missions.¹⁸ The mission presidents, however, were given a great deal of autonomy by the General Authorities in the application of the priesthood ban to specific cases.¹⁹

It is not difficult to imagine the potential for grief that would follow such screening policies, the more so because of their ultimate operational futility. To make matters worse, there was considerable variation among mission presidents in how meticulously the screening was enforced, so that even in the same mission an incoming president of conservative bent might inherit from his more liberal predecessor a number of problematic cases of priests or elders of obviously suspect lineage.²⁰ Even with *bona fide* screening efforts of the most meticulous kind by all parties concerned, there was a constant potential for *post hoc* discoveries of ineligible lineage as the Saints in Brazil and elsewhere took seriously their genealogical obligations. When such discoveries were made, the mission presidents again had a great deal of autonomy in deciding how they were to be resolved, or whether they had to be referred to the General Authorities for resolution.

These resolutions themselves tended to have an inconsistent, *ad hoc* quality from one time or mission to another. Sometimes there really was no

resolution; the case was either ignored or treated with benign procrastination. In other cases, the hapless holders of both Hamite lineage and priesthood office were notified that their right to exercise the priesthood had been "suspended" (or some synonym thereof). An intermediate resolution in some cases was to "suspend" an elder for all formal ecclesiastical purposes, but permit him to continue his exercise of the priesthood within his own home (including administrations to the sick).²¹ With the eventual transfer, by 1960, of the burden of genealogical proof from the Saints and investigators to missionaries and priesthood leaders, the incidence of *post hoc* discovery greatly increased. Nevertheless, the missionary harvest in Latin America only grew more bountiful than ever. Meanwhile, in North America itself, a number of cases long awaiting ordination or temple privileges were cleared under President McKay's new policy on burden of proof.²²

All such deliberations, adaptations and reformulations of the church racial policy during the 1950s remained unobserved by the membership and public at large, of course. Dr. Lowry Nelson, apparently not satisfied with the outcome of his earlier correspondence with the First Presidency, went public in 1952 with an article in *The Nation* that reiterated some of the thoughts he had expressed in his 1947 letter.²³ Having earlier responded to Nelson and others, however, the presiding brethren remained largely aloof from public controversy. A few General Authorities and other well-intentioned brethren attempted during these years to offer their own explanations and interpretations of Church doctrines and policies on race, primarily for internal consumption.²⁴ On the whole, the statements by church leaders in this period, like their less public struggles over policy applications, showed a certain consistency with the traditional and operative lore of the times, including a special concern for the problems presented by intermarriage.²⁵ Outside the Church, meanwhile, the nation itself was just beginning to discover its own racial problems and as yet paid little attention to the Mormons. Indeed, as late as 1957, when Thomas F. O'Dea published his insightful sociological study, *The Mormons*, he saw no reason to mention Mormonism's "Negro problem," even in his section on "Sources of Strain and Conflict."²⁶

The Stormy Sixties

Like most Americans, Mormons were somewhat taken by surprise at the civil rights movement. Treating blacks "differently" had become so thoroughly normative in the nation that even the churches generally did not question it until the 1950s, at the earliest.²⁷ Prior to that time, the public schools, the military, and nearly all major institutions of the nation were racially segregated. Accordingly, rumblings about racism among the Mormons were rare, and continued so until the 1960s.

The arrival of the New Frontier, however, was accompanied by an accelerating, and increasingly successful, civil rights movement, which not only produced a long series of local, state and federal anti-discrimination edicts, but which also rendered increasingly untenable and ridiculous a number of traditional racial ideas held by Mormons and others. The racial policy of the

Church was soon attacked by spokesmen of liberal Christianity, who at length had discovered racism in the land;²⁸ it was attacked by the Utah branch of the NAACP;²⁹ it was attacked by important and nationally syndicated journalists;³⁰ and it was even attacked publicly by certain prominent Mormons.³¹ Other internal critics, while agreeing with the official church stance that revelation was the only legitimate vehicle for change, still questioned the historical basis for the priesthood ban against the blacks, and especially the folklore that had traditionally been marshalled to support it.³²

As external criticism grew, the reaction among the Saints was one of uncertainty and some dismay. Cherishing a heritage of persecution and discrimination of their own, Mormons (like Jews) had never been accustomed to thinking of themselves as the offenders in matters of civil rights. Yet church leaders and spokesmen actually had very little to say to their critics. When they responded at all, they fell back on a formal and legalistic position: However unpopular the Mormon policy might be in the rest of the nation, it was nobody else's business, for it was an internal ecclesiastical matter. It was not a civil rights issue, because it had nothing to do with constitutional guarantees of secular, civil equality. Since non-Mormons did not agree that the Mormon priesthood was the exclusively valid one anyway, why did they care who got to hold it? Nor were Mormon blacks complaining. Thus, the continued harrassment of the Mormon Church over its priesthood policies actually constituted interference and infringement, under the First Amendment, of the civil rights of *Mormons*.³³

To say that the world did not accept the Mormon definition of the situation would be a bit of an understatement. The America of the 1960s was not the place or time to try to convince anyone that any aspect of race relations was purely a private matter. The cacaphony of criticism and recrimination directed against the Church intensified steadily and finally spent itself, only at the end of the decade, in a great crescendo. As the decade started, George Romney's 1962 gubernatorial campaign in Michigan gave critics in the media and in the civil rights movement a handy and legitimate occasion to raise questions about the carry-over of racist religious doctrines into political behavior. However, Romney's terms as governor were so progressive in civil rights matters that the issue was left dormant. It arose again during the 1968 presidential primaries, but this time Romney's campaign was aborted early, in part, some have claimed, to avoid putting any more pressure on the Church.³⁴

The Utah chapters of the NAACP played a conspicuous role in the public pressures felt by the Church during these years. A plan for demonstrations at Temple Square during the October, 1963, General Conference, was called off only after private negotiations between President Hugh B. Brown and local NAACP representatives. President Brown's unequivocal statement in advocacy of civil rights, at the opening Sunday session of the conference, was apparently one outcome of these negotiations.³⁵ Similar statements, repeated at subsequent conferences or other public occasions, did not long suffice, however, to dampen the NAACP animus. Under its auspices, pickets marched through downtown Salt Lake City to the old Church Office Building

in early 1965 to demand church support for civil rights measures pending in the state legislature; and later in the same year the Ogden and Salt Lake Branches of the NAACP introduced a resolution at the organization's national meeting strongly condemning the Church, and calling, in particular, for Third World countries to deny visas to Mormon missionaries.³⁶

One such country, Nigeria, had already anticipated the NAACP call. The emergence of the Nigeria story in the midst of all the bad publicity of the time introduced an incredibly ironic note. In response to initiatives from interested Nigerians, dating back as far as 1946, the Church had been sending literature and exchanging letters, without much enthusiasm, until 1959, when a representative from Salt Lake City was sent to evaluate the situation. It was discovered that certain self-converted Nigerians had organized branches of the Church on their own authority and had thereby generated a pool of potential Mormon converts amounting to several thousands. Early in 1963, half a dozen missionaries were set apart for service in Nigeria that would have included not only proselyting, but also the construction and operation of schools and hospitals—then an unprecedented aspect of Mormon missionary work. Before the missionaries could be dispatched, however, the Nigerian government got wind of the traditional racial doctrines and policies of the Church and refused to grant visas. Negotiations over the matter between the government and the Church continued for several years but came to naught as the outbreak of civil war in Nigeria rendered the issue moot for the time being.³⁷ The ironic emergence and outcome of these developments, however, should not distract us from the more important point that the commitments made by the Church under President McKay to a country in Black Africa represented a distinct softening of the traditional policy of non-proselytization in such countries.

The Nigerian developments again occasioned some serious deliberations among the First Presidency in 1962 and 1963 over the feasibility of dropping, at least partially, the ban against blacks in the priesthood. President Brown, then second counselor, urged on his two colleagues that the traditional policy be modified to grant blacks at least the Aaronic Priesthood, pointing to the sudden need for local leadership that had developed in Nigeria. President Moyle, then first counselor, approved of this idea. So did President McKay himself, in principle, though he had qualms that such a piecemeal change might only exacerbate the already serious problem of intermarriage in various places.³⁸ For whatever reasons, these deliberations did not produce a policy change at that time, but they may well have been the basis for the optimism about change that President Brown expressed publicly on more than one occasion in 1963.³⁹ On the other hand, President McKay's own expressed pessimism a year later may have been a reflection of a more realistic awareness on his part of the opposition to policy change that still obtained among some of the Twelve. A hint of that opposition surfaced very briefly around General Conference time in April, 1965, when President Brown and Elder Benson were found to be in public disagreement.⁴⁰

On an official level, though, the presiding brethren seemed at least to stand together on the declarations in President Brown's 1963 General Con-

ference statement. That statement, of course, did not even mention the church priesthood policy; it simply upheld the emergent civil rights doctrine of the nation. Critics both in and out of the Church seemed unwilling to let the brethren off that easily. As the decade drew to a close, the Church was forced to fend off more serious attacks, first on the Book of Abraham (the only scriptural precedent for priesthood denial), and then on Brigham Young University (cf. below). During this period, President Brown moved once again for an administrative decision to drop the priesthood ban. Presumably he was joined by President Tanner, his nephew and colleague in the First Presidency. Throughout the latter part of 1969, Brown strove vigorously to win the concurrence of President McKay, whom he knew to share his view that the priesthood ban could properly be ended administratively. However, McKay was by then fading fast toward his death the next January, and he was not often physically capable of sustained deliberations. The decision-making process this time was complicated not only by President McKay's condition, but also by the fact that the First Presidency had by that time temporarily acquired *five* counselors, rather than the usual two.⁴¹

While we cannot be sure just how much resistance President Brown encountered among the rest of the General Authorities, the other counselors in the First Presidency at that time were Joseph Fielding Smith, Alvin R. Dyer, and Harold B. Lee, all of whom were on record with conservative views on the race question.⁴² In any case, the public statement that ultimately issued from all these deliberations was not an announcement of an end to the priesthood ban against blacks, as Presidents Brown and Tanner had proposed, but rather the letter of December 15, 1969, which, while promising eventual change, actually only reaffirmed the traditional policy.⁴³ As in 1963, President Brown may have allowed his optimism during the deliberations to spill over into his public utterances, for he was widely quoted in the press during December, 1969, as making intimations of imminent change.⁴⁴ The change was not yet to come, however, and President McKay died on January 18, 1970, thereby dissolving the entire First Presidency. A week later, the new President of the Church, Joseph Fielding Smith, assured the world at a formal news conference that his views on church policy and doctrine had "never been altered," and that no changes should be expected.⁴⁵

Anticlimatic as this episode may seem, it would be a mistake to overlook the significance of the document it produced. The December, 1969, statement of the First Presidency (signed only by Presidents Brown and Tanner "for" the First Presidency), dealt with the theological basis of the priesthood ban for the first time in twenty years. This portion of the statement is notable for its parsimony: While referring back vaguely to a pre-mortal life, it said nothing about that life, nothing about the War in Heaven, or about any differential merit having implications for mortality. It said nothing about Cain or Ham or marks or curses or perpetual servitude. It relied almost entirely on the simple claim that the Church had barred Negroes from the priesthood since its earliest days ". . . for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which He has not made fully known to man." Thus, in its first official statement on the controversy in nearly a generation, the Church chose to set

aside almost the entire doctrinal scaffolding that had bolstered its priesthood policy toward blacks for more than a century.⁴⁶

The last doctrinal resort, presumably in support of the traditional priesthood ban, was the Book of Abraham, which contained the only passage in all of Mormon scripture relating explicitly to a lineage denied access to the priesthood: "the Pharaohs' curse," as it were. The acquisition by the Church, late in 1967, of a critical fragment from the papyrus upon which Joseph Smith had based his translation of the Book of Abraham, gave rise to a vigorous controversy, starting in 1968, over the authenticity of the translation. Though the various partisans in the controversy spent their ammunition in rather a short period of time, there was never a conclusive resolution, except for a general agreement that Joseph Smith's rendering of at least the fragments in question had not been even approximately a literal one. While such a disclosure might seem to impeach the doctrinal authenticity of "the Pharaohs' curse," there is as yet no reason to believe that it affected the thinking of President Brown or any of his colleagues. Indeed, it seems rather surprising in retrospect that the implications of the Book of Abraham controversy for the traditional priesthood policy entered only occasionally and peripherally into the literature of that controversy, which seemed almost totally preoccupied instead with the more fundamental issue of Joseph Smith's claims to the gift of translation, and to the prophetic mantle more generally.⁴⁷

As the end of the decade approached, the Church was beginning to appear unassailable and impervious to all forms of outside pressure. The priesthood policy on blacks could not be changed, it was repeatedly explained, without a revelation from the Lord, and it began to appear that the greater the outside clamor for change, the less likely would be the revelation. Then the civil rights movement found a vulnerable secondary target. Brigham Young University began late in 1968 to encounter increasingly hostile demonstrations during athletic contests, chiefly in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona and California. At least two prestigious universities, Stanford and the University of Washington, severed athletic relations with BYU altogether amidst much publicity and controversy, even though investigations by both the Western Athletic Conference and a University of Arizona delegation had exonerated the Mormon school of any discriminatory practices.⁴⁸ It soon became clear that this treatment of its showplace University, whether fair or not, had struck a sensitive Mormon nerve, and the Church began to fight back as it had never done while the issue was strictly an ecclesiastical or theological one. In a rare counterattack, evidently intended to forestall the rupture in athletic relations with the University of Washington, BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson (doubtless with the approval of Church authorities) placed a full-page ad in major Washington newspapers on April 1, 1970. Entitled, "Minorities, Civil Rights, and BYU," the advertisement strikes one as a very persuasive (if futile) public relations piece.⁴⁹

Concomitant with the campaign against BYU, and probably stimulated by it, was the rise of a brief spell of collective jitters in Utah (mainly Salt Lake City) over rumors of impending black "invasions" and violence. It is difficult to assess the magnitude or intensity of this episode. Some people apparently acquired a kind of "siege mentality" as the public campaign against the

Church and BYU intensified during the late 1960s. This mentality expressed itself in a number of ways: vigilante-type groups, called "Neighborhood Emergency Teams" (NETs) were formed in some areas for the "protection" of the citizens from the expected black onslaught;⁵⁰ a folk prophecy attributed to John Taylor, which predicted open warfare and bloodshed in the city streets, was retrieved and reinterpreted to give credence to current rumors; humor at the expense of blacks apparently became more common and more vicious; and rumors were circulated about attacks by blacks, in California and elsewhere, on the occupants of cars with Utah license plates.⁵¹ White mob action, ironically, must have seemed for a time a more realistic prospect in Utah than black mobs ever were!

It is difficult to know how much exaggeration went into accounts of this period by the press and other observers. A Louis Harris poll taken in Utah during 1971, however, found Mormons far more likely than others in the state to give some credence to the existence of "a black conspiracy to destroy the Mormon Church."⁵² One apostle during this period privately expressed fear for the physical safety of church leaders, and another was already well known to have tied the civil rights movement to the international communist conspiracy.⁵³ Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that both church authorities and civil authorities actively opposed the incipient vigilantism of that hectic time, and it did not last long.⁵⁴ Nor is there reason to believe that it had much effect on the Saints outside Utah. While it surely must be counted as a troubling and embarrassing episode in Mormon-black relations, it does seem to have been limited in time and scope, so one must be cautious in attributing to it any general significance for "the Church" or for "the Mormons."⁵⁵

It is ironic that the "twenty years of tempest" just recounted coincided almost exactly with the presidency of David O. McKay. It is difficult to think of a president in the history of Mormonism who more personified the very *antitheses* of racism and social conflict; yet these will always stand as the traits that most marked his regime to the outside world. The storm began largely unnoticed behind a mountain range of ecclesiastical privacy, as President McKay and his colleagues struggled with the implications of adapting race policies developed in the isolation of Utah to the anomalies of exotic places. However expedient those adaptations may have seemed at the time, they were to prove ultimately unsatisfactory, not only in far off places, but in North America, as well.⁵⁶

The national civil rights movement soon blew the storm out into the plains of public visibility and scrutiny. There it buffeted the brethren with blasts in the media from all quarters, including Nigeria; with pickets, protests, and political pressure; with assaults on BYU and the Book of Abraham; and ultimately with a vexing outbreak of mob mentality among the faithful in the heartland. Then, as unexpectedly as it has arisen, the worst of the storm seemed to die with President McKay in early 1970. By the end of Spring that year, nothing more was heard from pickets, protestors, vigilantes, or athletic disruptions. Through it all, the maddening Mormon policy on blacks had stood unchanged. Or had it? A closer look reveals that the policy had been stripped to its bare bones, both theologically and operationally. More change was yet to come.

RESPITE, RECONCILIATION, AND REVELATION

The outstanding developments of the 1970s were the *respite* granted the Mormon Church over the race issue by its critics, black and white; the *reconciliation* between the church and the blacks, in particular; and the *revelation*, late in the decade, ending the discriminatory ban. The civil rights movement in the surrounding society had begun to peak. A less supportive national government had come to power, many of the movement's objectives seemed to have been accomplished and other minorities were now laying claim to some of what the blacks had won for themselves. Accordingly, critics inside and outside the Church backed off noticeably. It was as though they had all decided to give up on the obstinate Mormons and concentrate on other violations of the national equalitarian ethos (one of which, the women's issue, would soon be haunting the Mormons).

A New Sensitivity

When Joseph Fielding Smith succeeded David O. McKay as President of the Church, there was some speculation about the presumably reactionary stance that he might take on racial matters. However, the aged incoming president never publicly reiterated the ideas he had expressed in his more vigorous years. Indeed, in several ways the Church began during his administration to show increasing awareness and sensitivity about race relations generally and relations with blacks in particular.⁵⁷ In late 1972, for example, when the Church was preparing to construct its new high-rise center in New York City, black residents of the area, and black members of the city planning commission, objected to the construction on the grounds that it would serve as a symbol of racism in an otherwise integrated neighborhood. The Church responded with public assurances about its planned relationships with the neighborhood, even offering to compensate a local black resident who felt that the value of his property had been somewhat compromised, and gave guarantees of non-discriminatory employment practices on the construction site. Black opposition thereupon faded rapidly.⁵⁸

Not all such confrontations were so amicably settled. A scheduled tour of the Tabernacle Choir to New England in 1974 had to be cancelled because of protests from black clergymen in the region.⁵⁹ In the same year, the Church inadvertently ran afoul of the Boy Scouts of America through a new organizational arrangement that had the effect of integrating its scout troops more closely with the Aaronic Priesthood groups. The Church and the BSA had earlier agreed on this change, but neither had anticipated the barring of black youths from positions of scout leadership in Mormon troops. (Actually, all non-Mormons in those troops were also barred.) The Church was soon confronted by an NAACP suit over the matter, and corrective action was very fast in coming.⁶⁰ The Church clearly was more responsive now.

At the same time, however, the Church was as insistent as ever that policy change relating to the priesthood itself would still have to come through legitimate channels, and it tolerated little dissent from the inside over this issue. Two active (and theretofore loyal) brethren attracted considerable pub-

licity, one in 1976 and the other in 1977, through certain dramatic gestures of dissent; both were promptly excommunicated for their efforts.⁶¹ Toward the outside, though, there seemed to be an increasingly conciliatory posture on racial matters. It was as though, with the pressure off, the Church could afford to be less defensive about the integrity of its procedures for legitimate change.

A New Look in Public Relations

Much of the Church's more amicable relationship with the outside world during the 1970s may have been attributable to the initiative of the new Public Communications Department, formed in August, 1972, with Wendell J. Ashton as its first Managing Director. Of course, the Church had had public relations efforts before: There had been a Church Information Service and a Press Secretary; and for special public relations projects, a professional firm would be retained. The new PCD, however, was an all-purpose, comprehensive, integrated public relations arm of the Church, with seven separate divisions staffed mainly by professionals, and with literally thousands of representatives located in the stakes and missions.⁶² One of its earliest division heads (and now PCD Managing Director) was Heber G. Wolsey, who had been in charge of public relations at BYU during the sensitive time there a couple of years earlier.⁶³ One of the missions specifically assigned to the PCD from the beginning was "improving the image of the Church." This was to be done, furthermore, not merely by reacting to criticism from the outside (the usual policy in the past), but by taking the initiative at given opportunities.⁶⁴

In line with this new public relations enterprise and policy, Wendell Ashton himself began to appear on the national media (e.g., an NBC Special Report in 1973) and to field in a low key, but sophisticated way some tough questions on the race policy and other matters.⁶⁵ The more embarrassing (from a PR standpoint) doctrinal baggage omitted in the 1969 First Presidency statement remained firmly out of the public arena. It was the PCD itself, furthermore, that arranged for President Kimball to appear on NBC's morning *Today Show* in 1974, where again he was faced with some rather blunt questions on the race policy, women's roles and the family.⁶⁶ Whether entirely through PCD initiatives or not, the public image of the Church by the mid-1970s had greatly improved compared to a decade earlier. Criticism on the black issue, in particular, was far less frequent. The polemics of the sixties were replaced with more restrained and informed critiques.⁶⁷

Black and Delightsome?

Nowhere was this new relaxed public relations posture more evident than in Mormon initiatives toward blacks during the 1970s. In retrospect, it seems clear that the Church, near the beginning of the decade, launched a deliberate and sustained campaign to build bridges with blacks, both inside and outside the Church. If it was not yet ready to end the priesthood ban, it at least felt the need to come to know more blacks better, and to remove the aura of "the

cursed" or "the forbidden" that had accumulated in the consciousness of most white Mormons. It is scarcely possible for outsiders to appreciate the fundamental significance of this development, however gradually it may have occurred; it was, indeed, second in significance only to the later bestowal of the priesthood itself.

A few examples will suffice: Significant efforts to cultivate ties with outside blacks seem to have centered largely on BYU. During the 1969–70 controversy over BYU's athletic ties with other schools, it was already apparent that the Mormon university was recruiting black athletes, many of whom were put in a very difficult position by the hostile pressures from the other schools, and from the black community more generally.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the recruiting efforts continued, eventually bringing several black athletes to BYU, some Mormon and some not, and most on athletic scholarships.⁶⁹ Nor were BYU's efforts all athletic. During the summer of 1971, a black man and wife from Los Angeles were both presented with doctoral degrees from the BYU College of Education.⁷⁰ In March, 1976, BYU students elected their first black student body vice-president.⁷¹ In 1977, the renowned author of *Roots*, Alex Haley, was a commencement speaker at BYU, and in early 1978, Senator Edward Brooke was a special speaker at the University on the subject of relations with South Africa. During his speech (obviously well researched for a Mormon audience), the Senator digressed extensively toward the end for a discussion of Mormon-black relationships in the United States. His comments were remarkable partly for the candor which he felt free to use in reference to the Mormon position on blacks, but mainly for the conciliatory tone which provided the context for that candor. This was all in stark contrast to the hostile terms, and the demands for immediate policy change, which had characterized the comments of the Utah NAACP in 1965, or the Black Student Union indictment of BYU in 1969–70.⁷² Even off campus, BYU students participated significantly in such things as fund-raising activities for black churches in Salt Lake City, thereby earning the appreciation of a prominent black minister, who, while clearly expressing his disagreement with the Church's teachings, was nevertheless ". . . glad that we could get together to show people that we're not going to kill one another about it."⁷³

Perhaps even more remarkable, however, was the new Mormon stance toward its own blacks. After more than a century of having been nearly "invisible," Mormon blacks began to receive attention and promotional coverage in church publications and social circles. *The Church News* had ignored almost entirely things black (or Negro) until 1969. The Index to the *Church News* for the period 1961–1970 shows only one listing on the topic from July of 1962 to January of 1969, but several a year thereafter. Black singers began to appear with increasing frequency in the Tabernacle Choir, and one of these, a recently-converted contralto, was also appointed to the BYU faculty.⁷⁴ Feature articles about Mormon blacks began to appear in Church magazines.⁷⁵ Blacks began to participate more conspicuously, and perhaps more frequently, in some of the lesser temple rituals (e.g., baptisms). One elderly black woman, who had been a Mormon in the Washington, D.C., area for seventy years, was featured in a widely viewed television documentary

about the new temple there.⁷⁶ Several black Mormons published small books during this period, describing their experiences as converts and members in rather positive terms. Though all private published, these books gained fairly wide circulation among Mormons.⁷⁷ Other Mormon blacks freely submitted to interviews with the media, in which they generally defended the Church.⁷⁸

Of special significance was the creation of the Genesis Group late in 1971, an enterprise still very much alive a decade later.⁷⁹ This group was organized as a supplement, not a substitute, for the regular church activities of Mormon blacks in their respective Salt Lake area wards. Led by a group presidency, their program consists of monthly Sunday evening meetings, plus Relief Society, MIA, choir and other auxiliary and recreational activities. With a potential membership of perhaps 200, its participation levels have ranged between about twenty-five and fifty, consisting disproportionately of women, of middle-aged and older people, and of high school-educated skilled and semi-skilled workers.⁸⁰ About half are partners in racially mixed marriages, and the most active members are (with a few important exceptions) blacks converted to Mormonism in adult life, rather than life-long members from the old black families of Utah.⁸¹

The Genesis Group was organized mainly on the initiative of the small band of faithful black Mormons who became its leaders. Three of them approached the Quorum of Twelve with a proposal for an independent black branch, to be led by a few blacks ordained to the priesthood on a trial basis—a proposal, in effect, for a racially segregated branch. The main rationale was that the unique predicament and feeling of Mormon blacks called for more intensive fellowship and mutual support than their residential dispersion would normally allow. While the presiding brethren were not yet willing to go as far as an independent branch, they were very willing to sponsor the kind of group that eventually resulted from these negotiations, irregular though the Genesis Group surely was.⁸²

A special committee of three apostles was appointed to organize the new group and oversee it, though eventually it was placed directly under stake jurisdiction.⁸³ It is not clear just what future the apostles envisioned for the Genesis Group, but to its members it represented the beginning of a whole new era for Mormon blacks, and they chose its name accordingly. While leaders of the group were not ordained to the priesthood, they had the distinct impression—whether on adequate grounds or not—that their organization was a step in the direction of eventual priesthood ordination, and they believed, furthermore, that such an expectation was shared by leading members of the Twelve.⁸⁴

The official mission given the Genesis Group at its inception, however, consisted mainly of the reactivation or proselyting of blacks in the area. Early on, the group inevitably acquired other functions: (1) It came to serve as a kind of unofficial speakers' bureau for wards and stakes in the area seeking more association with Mormon blacks and more acquaintance with their feelings; this, in turn, contributed to the growing visibility of blacks in Utah church circles. Also (2) the group provided a vehicle for mutual support,

counseling, and fellowship among Mormon blacks themselves, and a legitimized forum for the expression of aspirations, frustrations, or even bitterness. There was, of course, the inherent risk that the Genesis Group might move into a more militant form of consciousness-raising. It is a comment on the loyalty of the group members that such did not happen despite occasional outbreaks of acrimony.⁸⁵

Since the end of the priesthood ban, the mutual support function of the group has perforce been expanded to include the counseling and fellowshiping of new black converts from around the nation (by telephone and mail) who are having trouble with both the historical and the residual racism they may have encountered on joining the Church.⁸⁶ One would expect that such activities will become less burdensome as racism recedes, and more black converts join such thriving branches as the one recently organized in the Watts area of southern California.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the Genesis Group has been rendering the Church and its black members a unique and selfless service.

The Year of No Return: 1974

We are not yet in a position to know what cumulative impact the events of the 1970s may have had behind the closed doors of the highest councils of the Church. We have already noted that the relentless public pressures of the 1960s do not seem to have been sustained into the next decade. Not that there was a lack of vexing incidents: the 1972 confrontation with New York City blacks; the cancellation of the Tabernacle Choir tour and the run-in with the Boy Scouts in 1974; and the highly publicized excommunications and related harassments of 1976 and 1977.⁸⁸ These tended to be separate and *ad hoc* in nature, however, and usually could be brought to closure in a limited time with limited public relations damage, unlike the endless and orchestrated barrage of the 1960s.

The external and public episodes of the 1970s are thus not as likely as the internal developments in the Church to provide the explanation for the decline and fall of the priesthood ban on blacks. When the historical documents are made available, we are likely to see the year 1974 emerge from the data as the crucial year of no return: the year, that is, when the decline of the priesthood ban entered a steeper phase, and its end became not only inevitable but imminent. It is not merely that 1974 was the year that Spencer W. Kimball assumed the presidency.⁸⁹ To be sure, President Kimball was to play the most critical role in ending the ban, but it is unlikely that he saw himself in that role as he took office. His 1974 interview on the *Today Show* makes it clear that while he was praying about the matter, he did not think change was imminent.⁹⁰ Still, he was praying about it, and, ultimately, in a manner that Bruce R. McConkie implies may have been unprecedented.⁹¹ Certainly by the time the historic revelation came in mid-1978, President Kimball had been agonizing over the issue for some time.⁹²

For just how long we are not sure. However, he could not long have remained unmindful of the consequences of the decision, made during his very first year as President in 1974, to build a temple in Brazil. By that time,

there were four missions, nine stakes and 41,000 Latter-day Saints in Brazil alone.⁹³ It was a matter of grave concern to the mission presidents and regional representatives who had served recently in Brazil, which they surely must have communicated to President Kimball and his colleagues, that racial intermixing for hundreds of years in that country was making the issue of priesthood eligibility an impossible tangle.⁹⁴ It seems unbelievable that a decision would deliberately have been made to build a temple in the most racially mixed country on the continent without a concomitant realization (or a rapidly emerging one) that the priesthood ban would have to be ended. It is in this sense that 1974 was a year of no turning back, and that is why Jan Shippo and others are probably correct in seeing the eventual revelation of 1978 as far more the product of internal pressures like Brazil than of external pressures from public relations.⁹⁵

The quicksands of the lineage-sorting enterprise also were brought forcibly to the attention of some members of the Quorum of the Twelve by another development in the mid-1970s. While this development fortunately remained an internal one, it could easily have become public, with a high potential for scandal. For some time there had been a group of trained genealogists, full-time church employees, who assumed responsibility for reviewing complicated lineage problems referred from around the Church. These genealogists reported directly to a member of the Twelve, and made recommendations about priesthood eligibility in hard cases. From an internal ecclesiastical point of view, the arrangement made perfectly good sense: few church leaders at either the local or general level felt that they had the expertise to make crucial judgments about lineage in individual cases.

The existence of this screening process became problematic when the Church became aware of proposed legislation pending in Congress which would have prevented access to the 1900 census records stored under the control of the U.S. Archivist. The Church was interested in this legislation because the 1900 census contained information of critical value to genealogists. (Such data were of great interest also to the University of Utah medical school, a major center for the study of family disease histories.) The problem grew more complicated, however, when the head of the Bureau of the Census opposed release of the data because he believed it an invasion of privacy for the Church to use census information for genealogical purposes which ultimately led to "bizarre" temple ceremonies vicariously involving people who were not even Mormons. As the bill moved through committee hearings, certain black members of Congress also opposed the bill because of the priesthood ban on blacks. In such a context, the outside discovery of a church group specializing in black lineage identification not only would have scuttled the Church's legislative efforts, but would also have created a major public relations embarrassment.⁹⁶

As things turned out the three or four year tug-of-war in Congress over the access issue ended indecisively, but in 1976 the hazards of the Church's group of lineage specialists were brought quietly to the attention of certain members of the Twelve.⁹⁷ Some friction among the Brethren subsequently developed, for the lineage screening program, it seems, was a surprise even

to some of the Twelve, and approval for the enterprise was not universal among them. Exactly what ensued thereafter is not clear, but the sensitive screening program at the headquarters level does seem to have been dropped, for an official letter from the First Presidency eventually quietly transferred to stakes and missions the final determination of "whether or not one does have Negro blood."⁹⁸

THE NEW REVELATION AND ITS AFTERMATH

The Stage is Set

In the Spring of 1978, as the new revelation waited in the wings, there was no inkling of its pending dramatic entrance to center stage. The charged deliberations of the presiding brethren during the weeks immediately preceding had obviously been carried on in great secrecy, preventing the preliminary rumors that had been "leaked" during earlier and abortive deliberations in 1963 and 1969. Yet, as we have seen, the new revelation was not as sudden a reversal of the status quo as it may have seemed. The stage had clearly been set. Many trends had merged into a common strain toward greater parsimony, and ever greater limitation on the impact and implications of the traditional priesthood ban. These trends had the effect of preparing both the leaders and the membership of the Church for the new revelation.

First, there was the gradual constriction of the scope of the ban *within* the Church, a casting of the net less broadly, as it were. Whole categories of people were moved out from under the ban, as in the South Pacific. The burden of proof in the case of dubious lineage was shifted from the questionable family or individual to the priesthood leaders and the Church, not only in North America, but also in South Africa and even in the hopelessly mixed countries of Latin America. A certain looseness at the boundaries of the ban was also apparent in the decentralization and delegation of the decision-making about priesthood eligibility, at first partially and then (by February, 1978) totally. Another way of seeing this trend would be to say that by the time Spencer W. Kimball became president, there were far more categories and situations among mankind eligible for the priesthood than had been the case when David O. McKay had assumed the presidency.

Then there was a corresponding trend toward reducing the implications, or damage, as it were, deriving from the priesthood ban in the *external* relationships of the Church with the world. First, starting in the early 1960s, the Church increasingly attempted to strip the priesthood policy of any social or civic implications, embracing the civil rights doctrines of the nation and eventually putting the Church behind progressive legislation in Utah. Every official statement from 1963 on emphatically denied that the internal church policy provided any justification for opposition to civil rights for all races. At least equally important was the deliberate and rapid public redefinition during the 1970s of blacks, Mormon or otherwise, as acceptable and desirable associates and equals. A new media image for blacks always had been part of the thrust of the civil rights movement as a whole in America, but for Mormons the most salient medium was ultimately their religion, and partic-

ularly its public and official posture. As long as the black man appeared to be regarded by Mormon leaders as *persona non grata*, or even as “the invisible man,” Mormons would probably keep their distance, despite a formally proper equalitarian stance in civic affairs. The new message seemed to be, then, that the priesthood ban justified neither the denial of civil rights nor the apprehensive social avoidance of black people.

The third important expression of the trend toward parsimony was the gradual discarding of the traditional theological justifications for priesthood denial. This evolution is obvious from a systematic comparison of official Church statements across time: the First Presidency letters of the 1940s (so reminiscent of the nineteenth century lore distilled by Joseph Fielding Smith in 1931); their counterparts in the 1960s, either avoiding theology altogether or espousing only “reasons which we believe are known to God, but which He has not made fully known to man”; and finally the stark declaration by the Public Communications Director of the Church (presumably on behalf of the First Presidency), on the eve of the new revelation, that “[a]ny reason given . . . [for priesthood denial] . . . except that it comes from God, is supposition, not doctrine.”⁹⁹

The Dramatic Moment Arrives

With the doctrinal scaffolding thus removed, the priesthood ban itself reduced in scope to the bare minimum, and a new visibility and identity created for blacks in the Mormon milieu, all that was left of the residue of racism was a restrictive policy of priesthood eligibility under increasing strain. The public announcement of its demise was dramatic but not elaborate—scarcely 500 words long: It began by citing the expansion of the Church in recent years, and then alluded briefly to the expectations that some church leaders had expressed in earlier years that the priesthood would eventually be extended to all races. Most of the brief statement, however, was devoted to legitimating the policy change by reference to direct communication with Deity, which the prophet and his two counselors “declar[ed] with soberness” that they had experienced “. . . after spending many hours in the upper room of the temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.” After these strenuous efforts, the Lord’s will was revealed, for he “. . . by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood . . . without regard for race or color.”¹⁰⁰

The optimistic (if unsupported) observation of Arrington and Bitton may be true, that the new revelation “was received, almost universally, with elation.”¹⁰¹ Some credence for that observation may be found in a systematic survey of Salt Lake City and San Francisco Mormons more than a decade ago, which found that more than two-thirds of the sample were ready to accept blacks into the priesthood, or at least did not oppose it.¹⁰² If one can accept the proposition that Mormon public opinion had been well prepared for changes in the status and image of blacks, then widespread acquiescence in the new policy would be expected, the more so in a religion stressing the principle of modern revelation.

At the same time, however, in parts of the Mormon heartland, at least, there was a period of discomfiture that expressed itself in the circulation of some rather bad jokes at the expense of our newly enfranchised black brothers and sisters.¹⁰³ And it may well be awhile yet before most white Mormons, at least in North America, will be free of traditional reservations about serving under black bishops, or watching their teenagers dance with black peers at church social events. In all such matters, one can hope that we follow the compelling example of the Saints in New Zealand, where “Mormons are the most successful of all churches in the implementation of a policy of integration . . . This applies to the absolute numbers of Maoris who are in meaningful interaction with Pakehas [whites] in face-to-face religious groups . . . [as well as to] . . . their effectiveness in reaching and moulding their members into cohesive communities . . .”¹⁰⁴

The public relations build-up on blacks was greatly intensified in the year immediately following the new revelation and has only partly slackened since then. The first rush of publicity had to do with the rapid ordination and advancement of many faithful Mormon blacks into the ranks of the priesthood, into stake presidencies and high councils, into the mission field and into regular temple work for themselves and for their dead.¹⁰⁵ Besides the coverage of these events in Church publications, Salt Lake City’s Sunday evening television talk show, *Take Two*, in early June, 1978, featured the entire presidency of the Genesis Group, by then fully ordained, who presented a very upbeat image in expressing their own feelings and in answering numerous “call-in” phone calls.¹⁰⁶ Interest apparently has remained high also in stories about conversions of American blacks to Mormonism: The *Church News* carried a major feature article on this subject in 1979, and another first-person account published in 1980 has sold well in bookstores around Utah.¹⁰⁷ Appearances at BYU by Eldredge Cleaver in February and July of 1981, together with the highly publicized prospects that he might join the Mormon Church, introduced a note of ultimate irony into the continuing Mormon-black detente.¹⁰⁸

At least as much publicity has been lavished on the burgeoning (if belated) proselyting efforts among black populations in Africa and elsewhere. It seemed especially appropriate and symbolic that the first new missions to be opened, just weeks after the new revelation, were in Nigeria and Ghana, where the proselyting efforts of fifteen years earlier had been so tragically aborted. The two mature and experienced missionary couples first sent to West Africa in 1978 literally exhausted themselves baptizing eager new members of the Church. After only a year, they had baptized 1,707 members into five districts and thirty-five branches of the Church in Nigeria and Ghana.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, the rapid growth of the Church already underway in Latin America and the Pacific Islands continued with much publicity toward the day of the dedication of the Brazilian temple late in 1978. The Church was clearly making up for lost time in all such areas, and it was anxious for the world to know it.

Apart from these developments, it seems fair to add that the new revelation has provoked neither the wholesale departure of die-hard traditionalists from

the Church, as one had heard predicted occasionally, nor the thundering and triumphant return of marginal Mormon liberals, who so long had become accustomed to citing the priesthood ban on blacks as the major "reason" for their disaffection. Those disposed to apostatize over the ending of the ban seem already to have done so over the Manifesto of 1890, for polygamous fundamentalists offered the only apparent organized opposition to the new priesthood policy (as just another "retreat" from orthodoxy).¹¹⁰ The liberals, for their part, scarcely had time to notice that their favorite target had been removed before they were handed a new one in the form of the ERA controversy. Mormon intellectuals, whether liberal or not, have reacted predictably with a number of publications (like this one) offering post-mortems on the whole Mormon/black controversy.¹¹¹ Commentators outside the Church generally have shown only mild interest in the new revelation; in fact it was old news within a few days.¹¹²

REFLECTIONS AND RECONCILIATIONS

If the Church, then, has reacted to the new revelation mainly with white acquiescence and black conversion, does that mean that all is well in Zion? The answer depends upon how much we care about certain unresolved historical and ecclesiastical issues. Some of these, of course, have been lingering in the minds of concerned Mormons for decades, as many of us have struggled to understand and somehow explain (if only to ourselves) the anomaly of the pharaohs' curse in the Lord's church. Even the change in policy evokes reflections and questions for the loyal but troubled mind: (1) Why did we have to have a special revelation to change the traditional policy toward blacks; and, if it was going to come anyway, why didn't it come a decade earlier? (2) Since the policy was changed by revelation, must we infer that it also was instituted by revelation? (3) How can we distinguish *authentic doctrine* in the Church from authoritatively promulgated *opinion*? (4) Now that the era of the pharaohs' curse is over, how should we deal with it in our retrospective feelings?

The Necessity and Timing of the New Revelation

There is obviously no point in debating whether a revelation from the Lord "really" occurred. The committed Mormon will take the proposition for granted, while the secular and the cynical will reject it out of hand. In practical terms, it makes little difference whether the Lord or the Prophet was the ultimate source of the revelation, for we are obliged as much to seek understanding about the mind of the one as of the other. It is clear from the reflections of President Kimball and other participants in the revelational process that they all shared a profound spiritual experience, one which swept away life-long contrary predispositions.¹¹³ This experience was apparently a necessity if the priesthood ban ever were to be dropped, if for no other reason than that all earlier attempts to resolve the problem at the *policy* level had bogged down in controversy among the brethren. Only a full-fledged revelation, defined as such by the president himself, would neutralize that con-

trovery and bring the required unanimity among the First Presidency and the Twelve. Moreover, for years nearly all the General Authorities who had spoken publicly on the priesthood ban had been clear in stating that it could be changed only by direct and explicit revelation.

Why didn't the revelation come earlier, before all the public relations damage was done? This is much too complex a question to be answered by the facile conventional wisdom of church critics: namely, that the obstinately backward Mormons finally got their "revelation" when the progressive forces of the outside world applied sufficient pressure.¹¹⁴ Such an "explanation" betrays ignorance of the complex dynamics operating *within* the Church during the 1960s and 1970s, and of certain crucial Mormon ecclesiastical imperatives. Furthermore, it ignores the several years' *respite* from external pressure which the Church had generally enjoyed before 1978, and which, indeed, gave the new revelation much of its quality of surprise.

Prophets in the Mormon tradition do not sit around waiting for revelations. Like church leaders at all levels, they grapple pragmatically with the day-to-day demands and problems that go with their callings, presumably striving to stay as close as possible to the promptings of the Holy Spirit on a routine basis. They are not infallible, and they sometimes make mistakes. They carry the initiative in their communication with Deity, and when they need special guidance they are supposed to ask for it. Even this inquiry is often a *petition for confirmation* of a tentative decision already produced by much individual and collective deliberation.¹¹⁵ That means that prophets are left to do a lot on their own; it means, too, that receiving a special revelation may depend on previously identifying an appropriate solution.

All of this leads to the point that the timing of the new revelation on priesthood eligibility was dependent in large part on the initiative of President Kimball himself, who had to come to a realization, in his own due time, that the Church had a serious problem; then he had to "study . . . out in his mind" a proposed solution to the problem, and only then petition the Lord for confirmation of the proposal.¹¹⁶ Bruce R. McConkie, a direct participant in the process of collective affirmation that followed President Kimball's own solitary spiritual sojourn, described the president's approach very much in these terms, strongly implying furthermore, that he was the first President of the Church to have taken the black problem that far.¹¹⁷ If so, we already have much of the explanation for the timing of the end of the pharaohs' curse.

Given the relatively restrained role of Deity in the revelational process just described, we are then entitled to wonder just what were the considerations that brought President Kimball to frame his proposal and petition the Lord for its confirmation.

I have argued that *inside* pressures from *outside* Utah were probably more compelling than *outside* pressures from *inside* Utah. Brazil was not the only consideration, of course, but it was surely the most immediate and weighty of the Third World examples. When the 1974 decision was made to build a temple in Brazil, the realization among the brethren must have developed rapidly, if indeed it was not there to start with, that the priesthood ban would be untenable and unmanageable. This point has been noted not only by so

astute an outside observer as Jan Shipps, but also explicitly by Apostle LeGrand Richards and implicitly by Bruce R. McConkie and by President Kimball himself.¹¹⁸

The exact timing of the revelation ending the “Negro issue” for the Church, however it is best explained, was providential in a public relations sense as well. Damage to the public image of the Church could probably have been averted altogether only by dropping the priesthood ban before it became a public issue. One viable chance for that, and maybe the last one, was lost when the First Presidency failed to reach consensus in 1954. Once the NAACP and other civil rights partisans took up the issue in the early 1960s, the Church could not have changed the Negro policy without resurrecting from polygamy days the specter of a pressure-induced “revelation on demand”. Even with the pressure off, in the late 1970s, critics of the Church made cynical comments in that vein, but with much less credibility. Had the new revelation come instead a decade earlier, at the height of the political agitation, there would have been little room for anything but a cynical interpretation of how the prophetic office is conducted. It seems certain that to most Mormons, maintaining the integrity and charisma of that office was a more important consideration than either racial equality or societal respectability. There could be no re-enactment, in Mormon vestments, of the assault of *aggiornamento* upon the papacy.¹¹⁹ It seems understandable, then, that the timing of the new revelation should have fallen well after the apex of the civil rights movement, but before a temple opened in Brazil.

Terminal vs. Initial Revelation

There is no known record of any revelation in this dispensation that either denies the priesthood to blacks or ties them to the lineage of the pharaohs. Nor is there any record that the Church had a policy of priesthood denial in the lifetime of Joseph Smith. There is much evidence that the policy developed after Brigham Young took charge of the church.¹²⁰ Was that policy established by revelation? We may never know, but it is not necessary to believe so. There is an especially relevant biblical precedent suggesting that ecclesiastical policies requiring revelation for their *removal* do not necessarily *originate* by revelation. The controversy over circumcision among the New Testament apostles offers us a parallel problem of “racial discrimination.” If Jesus had given some priority in the teaching of the gospel “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,” he certainly never instituted the requirement of circumcision before baptism for the Gentiles, as some of his early apostles apparently believed. In spite of Peter’s vision about “unclean meat,” which should have settled the question, it is clear from Paul’s epistles that the circumcision controversy in the early church lasted for many years.¹²¹ We may well wonder why the Lord “permitted” a racially discriminatory policy to survive so long in either the ancient or the modern church, and what circumstances finally brought about his intervention. It does seem plausible, however, that both the ancient and the modern instances could have had strictly human origin. An open admission of this realization may be the best way to start dealing

with the black issue in Mormon history. There is no reason for even the most orthodox Mormon to be threatened by the realization that the prophets do not do everything by revelation and never have.¹²²

The Issue of Authentic Doctrine

The changing definitions surrounding the black man in Mormon history raise the question, as few other issues have, of just what is authentic doctrine in the Church? That we had an official *policy or practice* of withholding the priesthood from blacks cannot be denied. The *doctrinal rationale* supporting that policy, however, is quite a separate matter. Note, in this connection, that the revelation of June, 1978, actually changed only the *policy* and did not address any doctrine at all, except indirectly by overturning a common belief that priesthood for the blacks could come only in the next life. It is against this background that Presidents McKay and Brown, and like-minded colleagues, seem to have been correct all along (though perhaps beside the point) in considering the priesthood ban a policy and not a doctrine.

Yet the question of authentic doctrine remains. As we have seen, the flow of doctrinal commentary from the days of Brigham Young, reflected in the First Presidency letters of the late 1940s, is clearly followed by an ebb thereafter to the doctrinal nadir of April, 1978, when a spokesman for the Church declared, in effect, that there wasn't any doctrine on the subject at all. In their private beliefs, however, not all of the brethren followed the lead of the First Presidency in this process of doctrinal devolution. Perhaps the most perplexing case in point is Elder McConkie, who, a few weeks after the June, 1978, revelation, counseled us to forget doctrines expounded earlier by himself and others who had spoken "with limited understanding," but then chose to retain virtually all the old Negro doctrines in the 1979 revision of his authoritative reference book!¹²³

In the quest for authentic doctrine, I find it useful to employ a typology or "scale of authenticity," which I have derived from empirical induction, rather than from anything formal. It is thus an operational construct, not a theological one.¹²⁴ At the top of this scale is a category of complete or ultimate authenticity, which I call *canon doctrine*, following conventional Christian terminology. This would include both doctrines and (for these purposes) policy statements which the prophets represent to the Church as having been received by direct revelation, and which are subsequently accepted as such by the sustaining vote of the membership. The four standard works of the Church (with recent addenda) obviously fall into this highest category of authenticity, but it is difficult to think of anything else that does.

A secondary category, nearly as important, is *official doctrine* (and, again, policy). Included here are statements from the president or from the First Presidency, whether to priesthood leaders or to the world as a whole; also, church lesson manuals, magazines, or other publications appearing under the explicit auspices of the First Presidency. General Conference addresses in their oral form should not routinely be included here, or, if so, only tentatively, given the revisions that they have frequently undergone before being allowed to appear in print. There is no assumption of infallibility here, but

only that the legitimate spokesmen for the Church are expressing its official position at a given point in time.¹²⁵

The third category of authenticity I would call *authoritative doctrine*. Here would fall all of the other talks, teachings and publications of authorities on Mormon doctrines and scriptures, whether or not these are published by a church press like Deseret Book. The presumption of authoritativeness may derive either from the speaker's high ecclesiastical office (e.g., Bruce R. McConkie), or from his formal scholarly credentials and research (e.g., Hugh Nibley), or from both (e.g., James E. Talmage).

The lowest (least authentic) category is *popular doctrine*, sometimes called "folklore." This is to some extent a residual category, but it clearly includes the apocryphal prophecies that often circulate around the Church; common beliefs such as that temple garments offer protection from physical injury; and a host of other notions having either local or general circulation. Occasionally a popular doctrine will be considered subversive enough by the General Authorities to warrant official condemnation, but usually folklore flourishes unimpeded by official notice.

Now obviously a particular doctrine can be found in all four categories simultaneously. In fact, such would ideally be the case for canon doctrine, so the "authenticity scale" I have recommended may have a cumulative property in many cases. Indeed, it is rare for a doctrine in a given category not to have some "following" in the *lower* categories. What becomes crucial for us to determine, however, is how *high* up the scale is the *primary source* of a given doctrine or policy. This is a determination rarely made, or even considered, by most church members, who therefore remain very susceptible to folklore, as well as to doctrines that may be authoritative or even official, for a time, but later prove erroneous.

Let us take the traditional "Negro doctrines" as a case in point: These seem to have begun at the level of *folklore* in the earliest days of the Church, imported to a large extent from the traditional racist lore in Christianity more generally.¹²⁶ It is not clear from surviving records how often these doctrines received *authoritative* endorsement by church leaders during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, but there is little reason to believe they ever became official. By 1850, though, they seem to have been elevated to the *official* level, if only because President Brigham Young taught them in his official capacity. Most of them were still officially embraced by First Presidency letters in the late 1940s and widely promulgated at the authoritative and folk levels as well. There they now survive, despite withdrawal of official endorsement. Let us note, for the historical record, that *neither* the priesthood ban itself *nor* its supporting doctrinal justifications were ever *canon* doctrines. No known revelation was ever promulgated to establish the ban, or even to tie it to the curse of the pharaohs in the Book of Abraham.¹²⁷

The historical "career" of the priesthood ban and its accompanying doctrines suggests to us the importance of the *principle of parsimony* in our approach to doctrine. While accepting whole-heartedly the standard works of the Church, we must be very reluctant to "canonize in our own hearts" any doctrines not explicitly included there. We may hold other doctrines as

postulates, as long as we realize that they may in the long run prove erroneous, and that we have no right to consider their acceptance among the criteria of faithfulness. The premises of our church membership also oblige us to act in conformity to *official* policies and teachings of our church leaders; but here we are entitled to entertain reservations and express them to our leaders, since official statements can turn out to be wrong.¹²⁸ It is not blind faith that is required of us, but only that we seek our own spiritual confirmation before questioning official instruction.¹²⁹

As for a teaching that is only authoritative, we owe it nothing more than respectful consideration, and we are perfectly free to reject it thereafter, even if it appears in a book entitled *Mormon Doctrine*. And toward folklore, we should be suspicious and require authentication, but we should never lose our sense of humor! A principle of parsimony thus applied by the Saints is ideally matched by restraint on the parts of leaders and teachers up and down the Church, and particularly on the parts of General Authorities, in the claims made for the authenticity of doctrines outside the four standard works. For despite sincerity and good intentions, much mischief can be done in a situation of doctrinal ambiguity when those in authority claim too much.

Reconsidering the Past

It has been noted that Mormons have yet to “come to terms” with polygamy; our ambivalence toward the “polygamy era” expresses itself in a studied (and sometimes puritanical) effort to “live it down,” while still lionizing the polygamists in our past. How will we “come to terms” with our era of racial discrimination? We must begin, I think, by maintaining a comparative historical perspective. Before we jump too quickly to demand, “Isn’t the Mormon heritage racist?”, let us be sure to ask, “Compared to what?” A sense of historical balance and fairness calls for a comparison of Mormon ways with the ways of others in similar times, places, and circumstances.

Careful review of the history of Mormon racism will reveal that it has followed closely the comparable history for America as a whole, sad as that may be. Ambivalent expressions from our leaders about the status of blacks during our Missouri period were certainly understandable in a border state. After the move to Illinois, Joseph Smith and others who spoke on the subject seemed to share the dominant Northern sentiment of the time, a moderate and gradual abolitionism, rather than either a perpetuation of slavery or the more radical and precipitous solutions of the Abolitionist Movement itself. Even the outspoken racism of Brigham Young and some of his colleagues in Utah, and the relatively benign form of slavery permitted there in the 1850s and 1860s, were close to mainstream opinion in America at the time. Abraham Lincoln himself did not believe in social or political equality for blacks in those days.¹³⁰ After the Civil War, Jim Crow laws spread to Utah and remained entrenched there until the 1950s and 1960s, just as they did in the entire nation.¹³¹ The Jim Crow tradition may have receded more slowly in some respects in Utah than in some other states, but in general about as rapidly as in most places.¹³² Mormon attitudes toward blacks, measured at the height of civil rights controversy in the society, differed little from national norms,

given appropriate statistical “controls” for important demographic differences.¹³³ Thus, the peculiar Mormon priesthood ban did not demonstrably have any “carry-over” into secular, civil race relationships, despite the claims of the NAACP and other critics.¹³⁴

Even the priesthood ban itself must be seen in comparative context: The pragmatic, rather than theological, fact of life is that the churches of America, like most other institutions, have all practiced racial discrimination. At least the major denominations had racially segregated congregations well into the age of civil rights, and blacks have never constituted more than a small proportion of the clergy of any denomination, even to this day.¹³⁵ As in medicine and law, a professional clergy can (and does) restrict black access to power and privilege by the more subtle means of restricting access to the specialized education by which alone the requisite credential (or ordination) can be obtained. In more egalitarian religions like Mormonism, which has no professional priesthood, the functional or sociological equivalent of such institutionalized racism was necessarily and ironically much less subtle: a categorical and formal denial of access to the priesthood altogether. For all of their moral posturing, then, in practice the “liberal” Christian denominations never had appreciably more blacks ordained than the Mormons did.

Let us, then, not look back to hang our heads. If we look back at all, let us do so only to remember the lessons suggested by our struggle with the race issue: the principle of parsimony both in what we believe and in what we teach, lest again we digest dubious doctrine in the service of temporary policy; the human element that must be recognized, appreciated, and endured in the conduct, even of high church office, lest we deify our prophets instead of sustain them; and the ultimate vindication of patient loyalty to our leadership, lest the office of prophet become the pawn of contemporary politics. Let us consider too, with deepest appreciation, the example of sacrifice and subtle efficacy provided all these years by our black brethren and sisters in the gospel. If we can do all these things, we will have nothing to live down but much to live up to.

It is with deepest gratitude that I acknowledge how much my work has benefitted by the generosity of many other scholars who have shared with me their knowledge, suggestions and criticisms. Besides those acknowledged in various Footnotes, other colleagues deserving of my special thanks for their time and trouble are William Hartley, Newell Bringhurst, Gordon Irving, and, above all, Lester Bush.

NOTES

¹Book of Abraham 1:26–27 (the two verses have been reordered here).

²The most important of these are: Stephen G. Taggart, *Mormonism's Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1970); Lester E. Bush, Jr., “Commentary on . . .” Taggart’s book in *Dialogue* IV: 4 (Winter, 1969), pp. 86–103; then Bush’s definitive “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” *Dialogue* VIII: 1 (Spring, 1973), pp. 11–68; Ronald K. Esplin, “Brigham Young and Priesthood Denial to the Blacks,” *BYU Studies* 19: 3 (1979); and Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People within Mormonism, 1820–1980* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, forthcoming in 1982); plus numerous shorter and/or less thoroughly researched articles cited, in turn, by these works.

³Nelson had first been approached by church leaders for his assessment of the feasibility of opening missionary work in Cuba after World War II. His letter grew out of concerns about such an effort, given the Church’s racial policy.

⁴Excerpts from the exchange of correspondence between Nelson and the First Presidency are reproduced in John J. Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro* (Orem, Utah: Bookmark Division, Community Press, 1960), pp. 33, 46, 47 and 54. For more on Nelson's interaction with Church leaders during the 1940s, see his letter in *Dialogue* II: 3 (Autumn, 1967), pp. 8–9, and Bringhamurst, op. cit., Epilogue (and notes).

⁵Stewart, op. cit., Part II, pp. 16–18; Bush, 1973, op. cit., pp. 43–44 and note 199.

⁶Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, 11th Ed. (Salt Lake City: The Genealogical Society, 1958), especially Chapters 7, 15 and 16. The first edition of this book appeared in 1931 and reflects the recorded teachings and opinions of the author's father and sixth church president, Joseph F. Smith, who in turn seems to have adopted many of the ideas of Brigham Young. All such teachings have been given prolonged credibility in more recent years by their repetition in Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd Ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), esp. pp. 526–528.

⁷President McKay's private views on the matter over the years are discussed and documented in Bush, 1973, op. cit., pp. 45–48, with accompanying notes.

⁸Bush, 1973, op. cit., p. 46; and Roger O. Porter, "Educator Cites McKay Statement. . . , " *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 15, 1970.

⁹One major consideration here, in my opinion, was President McKay's apparent preference for a collegial style of administration, as opposed to a more autocratic or assertive one, so that he would not have been inclined to insist very hard on his own policy preferences in the face of much resistance from his counselors or the Twelve.

¹⁰See especially C.1. in the *South African Mission Proselyting Plan*, Disc. #13, December, 1951, compiled by Elder Gilbert G. Tobler, Mowbray, C.P. South Africa.

¹¹This transformation of policy in South Africa, and the importance in particular of President McKay's visit, is laid out in Farrell Ray Monson, *History of the South African Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1853–1970* (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, BYU, 1971), esp. pp. 42–46. See also A. Hamer Reiser oral history interviews by William G. Hartley, 1974, Vol. 2, pp. 165–169 (James Moyle Oral History Program, Archives, Historical Department, LDS Church, Salt Lake City, Utah.)

¹²See above note 8 on the McKay-McMurrin conversation. On deliberations among the General Authorities, also in 1954, see excerpt from Adam S. Bennion papers in Lester Bush, "Compilation on the Negro in Mormonism" (unpublished ms, 1972, in LDS Church Archives or special collections in the BYU Library) in which Apostle Bennion is thanked by Wallace R. Bennett for a recent talk reporting that ". . . the Church leadership is even now undertaking a careful re-evaluation of our [Negro] doctrine . . ." Bush, p. 254, also reports an alleged re-evaluation about 1948, about the time of the Nelson correspondence. This may have led to the 1949 statement and a decision to give Negritos in the Philippines the priesthood. See note 14 below.

¹³Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Introduction" to special section of *Dialogue* XII: 2 (Summer, 1979), note 1, p. 12, and more details on church policy in and around Fiji in Norman Douglas, "Mormon Missionaries and the Fijian: Caution Confusion, and Compromise" (unpublished manuscript, LDS Church Historical Department), where the inconsistencies in Fiji policies across time are set forth in some detail. Additional information for this paragraph comes also from the Manuscript History of the Tonga Mission, March 31, 1959 Quarterly Report, via my personal interview with R. Lanier Britsch on May 31, 1981.

¹⁴The information on the Negritos comes to me via a personal interview with John L. Sorenson, May 31, 1981, and a subsequent letter from him, August 3, 1981. While a missionary in the Pacific in 1948, Sorenson was told by visiting Apostle Matthew Cowley that he was carrying a letter from the First Presidency authorizing the extension of the priesthood to all the peoples of the Philippines, explicitly including the Negritos. The reference to the delay for the West Irians of New Guinea is based on a letter in my files from the mission president in Singapore in 1973 (letter of August 3, 1981). He reported that there was a letter from the First Presidency in the mission files in which the priesthood was authorized for the West Irians as it had been earlier for other Micronesian and Melanesian peoples. Signed by Presidents Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and N. Eldon Tanner, the letter was dated either 1971 or early 1972.

¹⁵Bush, 1973, op. cit., note 209, p. 68.

¹⁶As far as I can tell from personal interviews with missionaries who served in Brazil at various times in the 1950s and 1960s, the genealogical "burden of proof" was shifted from the Saints there to the Church during the term of William G. Bangerter as Mission President (1958–1963).

¹⁷Personal conversation with Mark Grover, June 6, 1981. Grover, who served a mission in Brazil in the late 1960s, is currently working on a doctoral dissertation on church relationships with the Third World, and has interviewed (or read interviews of) a number of the principals in the leadership of the church in Brazil since World War II. Also consulted in assessing the church racial experience in Brazil were transcripts of a dozen or so oral histories taken from various missionaries, mission presidents and local church members who lived or served there and in other Latin American countries during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Since the race relations topic is still considered sensitive by many of these informants, nearly all of whom are still alive. I have deliberately avoided specifying in most cases which information derived from which interviews.

¹⁸Ibid. For an example of one of the versions of the lineage lesson, see pp. 39–42 of the *Handbook: Brazil North Central Mission* (Sao Paulo: n.d., about 1970), which was still in use at least as late as 1975. Excerpts contributed to my files by Mark Grover (cf. above note).

¹⁹See note 17 again.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Bush, 1973, op. cit., p. 45 and notes 207 & 208 on p. 68. I also have personal knowledge of such cases among friends.

²³*The Nation*, May 24, 1952 (174): pp. 488 ff.

²⁴McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* (op. cit.) was first published in 1958, though the second (1966) edition has had much greater circulation. See also, e.g., Mark E. Petersen, "Race Problems—As They Affect the Church," an address given August 27, 1954 at a convention of religion teachers held at BYU; Alvin R. Dyer, "For What Purpose?," an address given at a missionary conference held in Oslo, Norway, March 18, 1961; and John J. Stewart's *Mormonism and the Negro* (1960, op. cit.). An example of the same genre, but published somewhat later, was John L. Lund, *The Church and the Negro* (Jacksonville, Fla.: Paramount Publishers, 1967).

²⁵Bush, 1973, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁶Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Mormons*. (University of Chicago Press, 1957), especially Chapter IX. O'Dea's 1972 essay on the Mormons discussed the race issue at some length, but by then it was obvious to everyone (See "Sources of Strain in Mormon History Reconsidered" in Marvin S. Hill and James B. Allen, eds., *Mormonism and American Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972)).

²⁷See, e.g., Charles S. McCoy, "The Churches and Protest Movements for Racial Justice," in Robert Lee and Martin Marty (eds.), *Religion and Social Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Also: Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965). Anti-black prejudice and some of its consequences among the clergy are described and measured also in Rodney Stark, et al., *Wayward Shepherds: Prejudice and the Protestant Clergy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 111–117.

²⁸E.g., G. W. Davidson, "Mormon Missionaries and the Race Question," *The Christian Century*, Sept. 29, 1965; D. L. Foster, "Unique Gospel in Utah," *The Christian Century*, July 14, 1965; and several articles by Lester Kinsolving in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: June 4, 1966, p. 35; June 24, 1967, p. 26; Dec. 20, 1969, p. 15; and March 21, 1970, p. 17.

²⁹Utah Chapters, NAACP, "Proposed Resolution of Censure Regarding Discrimination Practiced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." See summary of this document in the *San Francisco Examiner*, July 2, 1965, p. 6.

³⁰E.g., Wallace Turner in various syndicated columns and in *The Mormon Establishment* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1966).

³¹Among the most prominent were Sterling M. McMurrin and the brothers Udall, Stewart and Morris. See the several examples of their critical comments in the Epilogue to Bringhurst,

op. cit. See also Stewart Udall's letter in *Dialogue* II: 2 (Summer, 1967), pp. 6–7, and the letter of Samuel W. Taylor in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 11, 1967, p. 32.

³²The lack of canonical basis for the priesthood policy and its supporting doctrines was a major argument advanced in my first article in *Dialogue* II: 4 (Winter, 1967); see also Taggart, op. cit., and Bush, 1969, op. cit.

³³This line of reasoning was articulated most fully in the December, 1969, statement of the First Presidency.

³⁴See discussion of this matter in the Epilogue to Bringhurst, op. cit., especially notes 50 through 57, where a number of other sources are cited on Romney's campaign and its implications for the Church at that time.

³⁵Sterling M. McMurrin, "A Note on the 1963 Civil Rights Statement," *Dialogue* XII: 2 (Summer, 1979), pp. 60–63. It is unlikely, as McMurrin seems to imply (p. 61), that President Brown was unaware of the threat of demonstrations, since the threat had been reported in the Salt Lake City papers (see, e.g., the *Deseret News* for Oct. 5, 1963). For reiterations of the favorable church stand on civil rights in the years after 1963, see references to the same in the April, 1965, General Conference (*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 17, 1965) and in the April, 1966, General Conference (*Dialogue* I: 2, Summer, 1966, back page).

³⁶See note 29 above. Public demonstrations against the Church in 1965 are discussed also in the Epilogue of Bringhurst, op. cit., where he relies mainly on stories in the *Salt Lake Tribune* for March 7 through 10, 1965.

³⁷See accounts of these early Nigeria contacts in Bush, 1972, "Compilation," op. cit., "The Nigerian Mission," pp. 360–368; Bush, 1973, op. cit., p. 45; *Time* magazine, June 18, 1965; Bringhurst, 1982, op. cit., Epilogue, including notes 69–72; and Bringhurst, "Mormonism in Black Africa: Changing Attitudes and Practices, 1830–1981," *Sunstone*, May/June, 1981, pp. 17–18.

³⁸This incident was recounted to me by Eugene E. Campbell, who himself had read the minutes of the First Presidency meetings involved. (Letter in my files from Campbell, April 7, 1981)

³⁹E.g., Wallace Turner, "Mormons Weigh Stand on Negro—May End Ban on Complete Membership in Church," *New York Times* (Western Edition), June 7, 1963, an article widely disseminated in various newspapers around the same time.

⁴⁰"Mormon 'Fight' Over Civil Rights," in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 17, 1965, which refers to the rejection by President Brown of Elder Benson's publicly stated characterizations of the civil rights movement as subversive or even Communist-inspired. The apparent pessimism of President McKay cited here is a reference to his widely quoted prediction during a 1964 visit to the Oakland (Calif.) Temple dedication, that a change in the priesthood policy would not come "in my lifetime or yours."

⁴¹The following all served as counselors in the First Presidency during the final year or so of President McKay's life: Hugh B. Brown, N. Eldon Tanner, Joseph Fielding Smith, Alvin R. Dyer and Thorpe B. Isaacson.

⁴²See notes 6 and 24 above. Lee's views are treated briefly by Bush, 1973, op. cit., pp 47, and notes 195 and 217. The relevant developments during President Lee's later administration as church president remain an area of uncertainty in this history. Bush reports, in personal correspondence, a conversation with a General Authority in 1974 who informed him that Lee had announced in a general meeting of the authorities a decision to allow two black children to be sealed to white parents (in response to a special request). It was the General Authority's feeling that Lee was perceived as moving surprisingly quickly on the whole black issue (given, one presumes, his objections to Brown's initiative in 1969). The inference was that the new insights of the scholarly articles appearing on the subject had played some modest role. Any further developments were aborted by Lee's unexpected death in December 1973.

⁴³The letter is reproduced in *Dialogue* IV: 4 (Winter, 1969), pp. 102–103. The incident which culminated in this letter came to me via Richard Poll, to whom it had been related by a close relative and confidant of a member of the First Presidency involved. I obtained direct verification with his source as recently as August, 1981.

⁴⁴E.g., "LDS Leader Says Curb on Priesthood to Ease," in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 25, 1969, p. 4–D; and a shorter version of the same article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 27, 1969, p. 22.

⁴⁵"Mormons Hold to Doctrine—New Leaders Ban Changes," in the *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle*, Jan. 25, 1970, 14–A.

⁴⁶Bush, 1973, op. cit., pp. 46–47.

⁴⁷For a thorough, if biased, overview of the Book of Abraham controversy, see Chapter 11 of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980). Examples of the scholarly analysis and commentary on the rediscovered papyrus fragments will be found in the following issues of *Dialogue* between 1967 and 1969: II:4, III:2, III:3, IV:1, and IV:4; articles by Hugh Nibley intermittently in the *Improvement Era* from January, 1968, to May, 1970; and Nibley's ponderous but not entirely relevant *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975).

⁴⁸A generally fair review of the BYU controversy will be found in William F. Reed, "The Other Side of 'The Y'", *Sports Illustrated*, January 26, 1970, pp. 38–39. Numerous newspaper articles on the controversy appeared around the West in late 1969 and early 1970, especially in the Utah papers, the San Francisco papers, and the Seattle papers; some of these were quite supportive of BYU (e.g. James J. Kilpatrick, "Stanford's Bigotry toward Mormons," *Chicago Daily News*, Dec. 11, 1969; and Dave Ruben, "Cards React 10 to 1 against Break with BYU," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 9, 1969, p. 5). See also account in the Epilogue of Bringhurst, 1982, op. cit.

⁴⁹The ad can be found, for example, in the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, April 1, 1970, p. 11.

⁵⁰See press coverage of this episode in, for example, the *Salt Lake Tribune* on Feb. 22, 1970; and almost daily, March 3 through 10, 1970. One indication of the total paralysis of any sense of humor during this episode was the apparently sober public reaction to a widely circulated claim by Jerry Ruben, during a visit to Salt Lake City, that both the Yippies and the Black Panthers were moving their headquarters to the city in order to join the war against the Mormons, and that Eldredge Cleaver was already in hiding there!

⁵¹William A. Wilson and Richard C. Poulsen, "The Curse of Cain and Other Stories: Blacks in Mormon Folklore," *Sunstone*, November/December, 1980.

⁵²Reported by Wallace Turner in "Mormons Ease Ban on Blacks," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 8, 1972, p. 38 (*New York Times News Service*).

⁵³Lester Bush has reported to me that one of the Twelve expressed to him fear for the safety church leaders even after this tense period. Better known, of course, is Ezra Taft Benson's claim during the late 1960s, often reiterated, that the civil rights movement was being used by the Communists; see his General Conference address printed in the December, 1967, issue of the *Improvement Era*, and note 40 above.

⁵⁴At least the press coverage of the episode disappeared abruptly about the end of March, 1970.

⁵⁵A tendency to the parochial assumption that Utah or Great Basin Mormons are somehow representative of "the Mormons" can be seen in the handling of the "vigilantism" episode in Wilson and Poulsen, op. cit. (note 51), p. 10; and in O. Kendall White, Jr., & Daryl White, "Abandoning an Unpopular Policy: An Analysis of the Decision Granting the Mormon Priesthood to Blacks," *Sociological Analysis* 41: 3 (Fall, 1980). The treatments in these two articles of Mormon collective reactions to black pressures in Utah indicate well enough the emotional intensity of some of those reactions, but the authors are in no position to judge the pervasiveness of the reactions, since they lack systematic data even from Utah, to say nothing of elsewhere. See also my critical comments on White and White forthcoming in the Fall, 1981, issue of *Sociological Analysis*.

⁵⁶In this respect, Lowry Nelson's misgivings expressed to the First Presidency in the 1940s proved prescient (See notes 3 and 4 above) and somewhat ironic.

⁵⁷Bush, 1973, op. cit., p. 47. See also 1972 article by Wallace Turner in note 52.

⁵⁸Bringhurst, 1982, op. cit., Epilogue.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰See story, e.g., in *Lewiston Tribune* (Idaho), July 19, 1974, III–25, and Bringhurst, 1982, op. cit., Epilogue.

⁶¹An account of the excommunication of Douglas Wallace, and events leading up to it, are recounted in the Spokane (Washington) *Spokesman-Review*, April 10, 1976, p. 6. The same for the excommunication of Byron Marchant are found in the *Lewiston (Idaho) Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1977, p. 8–D. Various papers around the country, especially in the West, carried corresponding stories at about the same time. Marchant, interestingly, had been the Scoutmaster in the Boy Scout troop where the race issue had arisen three years earlier (see above note). A few other excommunications apparently occurred during this same general period, or earlier, over tactics used in opposing the Church's racial policy, but these other cases got little or no publicity outside of Utah. Subsequent to their excommunications, both Wallace and Marchant continued to make local news through their various attempts to draw public attention to their controversy with the Church. See accounts in Tanner and Tanner, op. cit., pp. 320–322, and newspaper stories cited there.

⁶²See *Deseret News*, 1975 *Church Almanac*, p. F–3; 1980 *Church Almanac*, p. 263; and "Church Public Communications Program," in the *Annual Guidelines, 1977–78* (for Church officers).

⁶³William G. Hartley, Interview with Heber G. Wolsey, May 14, 1981; written summary in my files.

⁶⁴"Marketing the Mormon Image: An Interview with Wendell J. Ashton," *Dialogue* X: 3 (Spring, 1977); the interview was conducted in October, 1976. See also note 62 above.

⁶⁵A written excerpt from the NBC interview in my files, courtesy of Lester Bush. For his "explanation" of the Church's priesthood ban on blacks in this interview, Ashton simply fell back on the First Presidency letter of December, 1969. In that connection, it is interesting to note the information in the Wolsey interview (note 63, above) that the Public Communications Department, which reports directly to the First Presidency, is free to speak for the Presidency in any matter where the policy or position is already clearly established (as would have been the case with the reference by Ashton in 1973 to the 1969 First Presidency letter). In any other matter, Wolsey explains, First Presidency clearance must be sought for what the PCD publicly asserts. In either case, it would seem that the PCD speaks officially for the Church.

⁶⁶Ashton interview in *Dialogue* (note 64, above), and the transcript of the *Today Show* interview with President Kimball cited in note 65.

⁶⁷Ashton 1976 interview (see note 64). Also, compare Dennis L. Lythgoe, "The Changing Image of Mormonism," *Dialogue* III: 4 (Winter, 1968), with Stephen Stathis and Dennis Lythgoe, "Mormonism in the 1970s: The Popular Perception," *Dialogue* X: 3 (Spring, 1977).

⁶⁸W. F. Reed, op. cit., (note 48); accordingly, few if any blacks recruited to BYU lasted long until Keith Rice in 1977 (see *BYU Monday Magazine*, Jan. 23, 1978, p. 14). BYU recruiting appeals to black athletes and other students before 1970 seem to have been ambivalent. As reported in a *BYU Daily Universe* sports column for Oct. 31, 1969, young blacks were sometimes warned that they might not be happy in Provo with so few others of their own race. Also, I have from the files of Lester Bush a transcript of a document entitled, "Church Schools and Students of Color," obtained in 1968, ostensibly from the BYU President's office. It appears to be a set of instructions to University staff members involved with student recruiting and includes a sample letter to be sent to black applicants. Even the most optimistic and guileless black applicant would be hard put to find in this letter any other message than "don't come!"

⁶⁹Reed, op. cit.; also *BYU Today*, March, 1970; and the *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, Nov. 26, 1969.

⁷⁰*BYU Today*, August, 1971.

⁷¹*Deseret News*, March 13, 1976, p. 28A.

⁷²The relevant portion of Brooke's address can be found in *Dialogue* XI: 2 (Summer, 1978), pp. 119–120. As late as 1969, if not later, BYU had an administrative policy permitting no more than two black speakers on campus per year, according to a report in the *Daily Universe* (May 5, 1969). This policy resulted in denial of permission to invite both Ralph Abernathy and Julian Bond as speakers in the Spring of 1969. The policy appears to have been changed, perhaps with the change of University presidents in the summer of 1971, but certainly by mid-decade. Senator Brooke's tone during the BYU address was typical of a more general tendency toward moderation apparent in the public comments on Mormons of many black people by the mid-1970s; see, e.g., "Blacks discuss lifestyle in Utah," *Deseret News*, Mar. 13, 1976, 28–A; and Sandra Haggerty (a black columnist), "Mormons and Black Folks," *Los Angeles Times* column carried in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, July 8, 1974, p. 10.

⁷³BYU *Today*, March, 1970, p. 4. In the same vein, there was a little known expression of appreciation for Mormons (perhaps somewhat grudging) by the prominent black separatist, Wallace D. Muhammed (successor to Elijah Muhammed as leader of the Black Muslims) on Oct. 1, 1975, during a national PBS radio program called "Interface." Both Muhammeds cited the Mormons as an example, which they aspired as Muslims to emulate, of a people who had succeeded in building a nation within a nation. Somewhat earlier, a group of black civil rights activists who visited Utah came away expressing admiration for the political and economic separateness that they saw among the Mormons and for the ability of the latter to endure outside criticism without responding in kind, concluding ". . . if we ever [hear] someone say anything against the Mormons again, we [will] defend them, even though they haven't really changed their views on us." See "Race and the City," Santa Barbara, Calif.: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, an interview in the early 1970s by Halleck Hoffman. The quotations are from Lou Smith.

⁷⁴This was Wynetta Martin Clark, author of a book on her conversion, *I am a Negro Mormon*. (Ogden [Utah], 1970). See *BYU Today*, February, 1971, p. 5.

⁷⁵William G. Hartley, "Samuel D. Chambers," *Ensign*, June 1974 (IV : 6), was the first of these in an official Church magazine since 1966, when John Lamb (a black convert) published "My Responsibility," *Improvement Era*, Jan., 1966 (69:1).

⁷⁶Debra E. Richards, "Open the Gates of the Temple," *BYU Daily Universe*, April 12, 1976, p. 3. Actually blacks had been permitted to do baptismal work in the temples since the turn of the century. However, a letter from the First Presidency to stake, ward and mission priesthood leaders, dated Aug. 15, 1966, made it clear that higher ordinance work for deceased blacks was prohibited.

⁷⁷See note 74, above; also, Carey C. Bowles, *A Mormon Negro Views the Church*, (Maplewood, New Jersey, privately published pamphlet, 1968); Alan Gerald Cherry, *It's You and Me, Lord!* (Provo, Utah: Trilogy Arts Publication, 1970); and a somewhat more critical handling of the subject by Daily (David?) Oliver, *A Negro on Mormonism*, 1963. All of these tended to reject the theological rationales traditionally offered for the status of Negroes in the Church, but (except for Oliver) were nevertheless generally appreciative for their membership.

⁷⁸Sally Wright, "The Mormon Issue—Plain as Black and White," a two-part series in the *Concord Transcript* (California), March 11 and 12, 1970. Among other topics, these articles dealt with black Mormons in the area, particularly one Paul Gill, described as "black, proud, and a Mormon."

⁷⁹The information on the Genesis Group in the next several paragraphs comes from the following sources: (1) My interviews with Ruffin Bridgeforth, President of the Genesis Group, on August 20, 1975, and on June 2, 1981; (2) A paper by Wayne Swensen, "The Genesis Group: The Beginning or the End?," submitted in August, 1972, to Professor Eugene E. Campbell, for History 490 at BYU, a paper itself based largely on Swensen's interviews with the main leaders of the Group during summer, 1972; (3) An interview by Dennis L. Lythgoe with Lucille Bankhead, August 10, 1972; (4) Peggy Olsen, "Ruffin Bridgeforth: Leader and Father to Mormon Blacks," *This People*, Winter, 1980; and (5) *History of the Salt Lake Valley View Stake, 1965-1978* (Salt Lake City: Fine Arts Press, 1979), pp. 134, 282, 283.

⁸⁰As of mid-1981, the Genesis Group was thriving again, according to Bridgeforth, after having gone through a period of doldrums just prior to the June, 1978, revelation. See "Black Mormon Group Dwindling," in *Monday Magazine* (Salt Lake City), April 17, 1978.

⁸¹Lucille Bankhead, long-time Relief Society President for the Genesis Group, is obviously an exception to this generalization, having come from one of the oldest pioneer families. President Bridgeforth explained that in general it was easier for blacks converted as adults to remain active in the Church, since they had come in with the discriminatory policy already understood, rather than having to cope with it while growing up black and Mormon.

⁸²Oliver, op cit., p. 12, reports in 1956 an "Elder Peterson, of the Church Offices, held a number of cottage meetings in Negro homes for the purpose of finding out why so few Negroes belonged to the Mormon Church. One of such meetings was held in my home, at which he explained that if sufficient numbers of Negroes would join the Church, they would build them a chapel of their own, where they could worship to themselves." If this is Mark E. Petersen, the incident would seem to anticipate the Genesis Group. Oliver goes on to say, however, that

"Elder Peterson" stipulated that the priesthood leadership of such a branch would all have to be white, though he was hoping for a revelation soon that would make Negroes eligible for the priesthood.

⁸³The three apostles were Gordon B. Hinkley, Thomas S. Monson and Boyd K. Packer. At first the Genesis Group was placed under the jurisdiction of the Liberty Stake (like many other ethnic branches), but eventually it was transferred to the Valley View Stake. See note 79 (5).

⁸⁴See Note 79 (1).

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷The reference here is to the Southwest Los Angeles Branch, an independent branch in the Lawndale Stake of California (Watts area). Its 109 members are nearly all black, owing to the residential location of the branch, but there are also a few families of mixed race and about ten white members. This information was obtained in an interview with the Branch President, Robert L. Lang, on June 10, 1981. At the time, the branch had been going for a year and a half and was considered by its president to be high in morale and activity of all kinds, including missionary work. Furthermore, President Lang said, "We're the only unit in the stake paid up on our budget!"

⁸⁸See above, Notes 58 through 61.

⁸⁹President Kimball actually assumed his post on December 30, 1973.

⁹⁰Note 72, above. Lester Bush reports, furthermore, that as late as 1977, President Kimball still cited the Book of Abraham as the basis for the traditional denial of the priesthood to blacks. That would, of course, still leave him the doctrinal flexibility to end the "pharaohs' curse" at any time.

⁹¹Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike Unto God," a speech delivered August 18, 1978, at a BYU symposium of church educators; copy in my files.

⁹²This is clear from McConkie's speech (1978, *op. cit.*); from various commentaries on the subject in the *Church News*, Jan. 6, 1979, p. 15, including President Kimball's own comments; and from the interview with son Edward L. Kimball on the president's biography in *Dialogue* XI: 4 (Winter, 1978), p. 61.

⁹³*Deseret News*, 1975 *Church Almanac*, A-7; 1980 *Church Almanac*, p. 296, notes that the decision to build the Sao Paulo Temple was officially and publicly announced on March 1, 1975, during an area conference there. Obviously the decision had been made during the previous year.

⁹⁴These concerns had been expressed constantly since the 1940s. See Bringhurst, 1982 *op. cit.*, especially notes 76 and 77, based upon the Adam S. Bennion papers, the full text of which is found in Bush, 1972, "Compilation," see esp. p. 250. See also herein, Note 17. The closer one gets to 1978 in the recorded thoughts of these church leaders experienced in Brazil, the more pointed the dismay becomes about the futility of sorting out lineages.

⁹⁵Jan Shippy, "The Mormons: Looking Forward and Outward," *Christian Century* XCV: 26 (Aug. 16-23, 1978), pp. 761-766; McConkie, 1978 *op. cit.*; and Bush, 1979 *op. cit.*, p. 10 and note 3.

⁹⁶The information in these three paragraphs is based upon conversations with one of the principals associated with this case. Although the Church's primary interest in obtaining the census records was unrelated to the race issue, there was some justification to the concerns expressed about other uses to which the data would be put.

⁹⁷The issue in Congress was finally rendered moot by the automatic expiration of all statutory and regulatory restrictions on the archival census data in question.

⁹⁸First Presidency letter to priesthood leaders, Feb. 22, 1978.

⁹⁹See David Briscoe article in the Ogden (Utah) *Standard-Examiner*, April 30, 1978, p. 22A, quoting Heber G. Wolsey, Public Communications Director for the Church.

¹⁰⁰The revelation was received by the President on June 1, 1978, and ratified a week later by his immediate colleagues, and then announced publicly on June 9th. The topic dominated the

next issue of the *Church News* (June 17, 1978), and the process is also discussed in some detail in McConkie's 1978 speech at BYU (op. cit.). The *Church News* for Jan. 6, 1979, p. 15, had a follow-up story. The handling of the initial coverage of the revelation and policy change in the June 17th *Church News* was curious, almost ambivalent: The cover of the issue featured a full-page picture of three LDS members of an Air Force band (the story of which was buried on page 10); and one of the prominent articles inside, without author byline, consisted of comments and quotations taken out of context from earlier statements by President Kimball advising against racial intermarriage (more on sociological than on theological grounds).

¹⁰¹Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*. New York: Alfred Knopf Co., 1979, p. 324.

¹⁰²See my, "Moderation in All Things: Political and Social Outlooks of Modern, Urban Mormons," *Dialogue* VII: 1 (Spring, 1972), p. 64.

¹⁰³Wilson and Poulsen, op. cit.

¹⁰⁴Hans Mol, *Religion and Race in New Zealand*. Christchurch, N.Z.: National Council of Churches, 1966, pp. 46, 47 and 59.

¹⁰⁵See Salt Lake City newspapers for June 10 through 18, 1978, especially, but other major city newspapers (e.g., in San Francisco) also provided fairly extensive news coverage and editorials during the same general period. See also both *Time* (p. 55) and *Newsweek* (p. 67) for June 19, 1978. Bringhurst (1981 op. cit.) refers to the publicity also covering new Church missionary initiatives in Africa in the months immediately following the new revelation (esp. p. 18 and notes 36 through 42).

¹⁰⁶Personal letter in my files from William G. Hartley, June 13, 1978.

¹⁰⁷See article in *Church News* by Jan Hemming, May 19, 1979, p. 10, on the conversion of author Styne Slade after finishing her photo book, *The Mormon Way*. See also Mary Frances Sturlaugson, *A Soul So Rebellious* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980), which was selling briskly around Utah in mid-1981.

¹⁰⁸Cleaver's serious contacts with the Church apparently have come by way of his participation with Cleon Skousen and others in the programs of the Freeman Institute. He was a featured speaker also at BYU in both February and July, of 1981, and has had some contacts with leaders of the Genesis Group, who assess his interest in the Church as genuine. See articles in various large city newspapers during the first week of April, 1981, e.g., *Deseret News* for April 3 and April 6, 1981, where Cleaver is reported to have declared a definite intention to join the Church. See also Jo Scoffield, "'Symbol of Freedom' says Cleaver of U.S.," *BYU Daily Universe*, Feb. 13, 1981; and John Forster, "Cleaver does about-face on Marxism," *Deseret News*, Feb. 12-13, 1981.

¹⁰⁹Rendell and Rachel Mabey, "A Mission to West Africa," *This People* magazine, Sesqui-centennial Issue (Spring?), 1980, pp. 24-37; and Bringhurst, 1981 op. cit.

¹¹⁰See full-page advertisement by "Concerned Latter-day Saints" (Joseph Jenson, Chairman) in the *Salt Lake Tribune* for Sunday, July 23, 1978, p. A-6.

¹¹¹Among the most interesting of these "post-mortems" are those found in *Dialogue* XII: 2 (Summer, 1979). See also Janet Brigham, "to every worthy member," *Sunstone* 3:5 (July-August, 1978); the interview with Lester Bush, "Mixed Messages on the Negro Doctrine," *Sunstone* 4:3 (May-June, 1979); Wilson and Poulsen, op. cit.; White and White, op. cit.; Jan Shipps, op. cit.; and the forthcoming Bringhurst book (1982 op. cit.).

¹¹²See Note 105, above. Most of the comments in the press were fair and matter-of-fact. Partisan comments tended to partake mostly of the tone, "Well, it's about time those backward Mormons got their so-called 'revelation'!" or, from the excommunicants, "You see? We were right all along, and look how much misery we all went through in the meantime!"

¹¹³Obvious from McConkie, both 1966 op. cit. and 1978 op. cit. President Kimball himself was very candid also about having " . . . a great deal to fight . . . myself, largely, because I had grown up with . . . [the traditional beliefs] . . ." See Gerry Avant, "Pres. Kimball says revelation was clear," *Church News*, Jan. 6, 1979.

¹¹⁴See, e.g., White and White, op. cit., and Tanner and Tanner, op. cit., Chapter 10.

¹¹⁵D & C 9:7–8.

¹¹⁶Notice even the wording of the June, 1978, revelation: “He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long promised day has come . . .” (italics added).

¹¹⁷See Note 91, above. Key passages of McConkie’s remarks are included in Bush, 1979, op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹⁸Shippis, op. cit.; Avant, op. cit.; McConkie, 1978 op. cit.; and Bush, 1979 op. cit., p. 10 and note 3.

¹¹⁹More or less literally translated, “aggiornamento” means “updating” or “modernizing,” and was a term in vogue during the 1960s and 1970s to refer to the various modernizing tendencies going on in the Roman Catholic Church consequent to Vatican Council II.

¹²⁰Bush, 1973, op. cit., and Bringhurst 1982, op. cit. Esplin, 1979 op. cit., has made the most valiant effort to date to tie the origin of the black priesthood exclusion policy back to the Prophet Joseph Smith, but his evidence is only speculative and inferential, resting mainly on the general assumption that everything Brigham Young taught he had learned from Joseph Smith.

¹²¹Explicit New Testament references to this controversy will be found in Acts 15:1–31 and 16:3; Galatians 2:1–15, 5:2–6, and 6:12–16. McConkie, 1978, op. cit., also noted a parallel here between the ancient and the modern Church, but more in terms of any *Gentile access* to the gospel at all, rather than in terms of the circumcision issue.

¹²²The full text of J. Reuben Clark’s magnificent treatise on this subject can now be read in *Dialogue* XII: 2 (Summer, 1979), pp. 68–81.

¹²³See the 25th printing (1979) of McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd Ed., especially pp. 109, 214, 343, 526–529, and 616. On that last page, dark skin color is still explicitly tied to a “degenerate status” and to “racial degeneration,” with what impact on our new black converts one can only wonder!

¹²⁴The word “authentic” as I employ it here is not synonymous with “true” in any ultimate, objective sense. The nature of “truth,” even in an LDS doctrinal context, is an altogether different epistemological issue. By “authentic” here, I mean only that a claim can legitimately be made that a given doctrine or policy has divine origin.

¹²⁵“Official” positions or doctrines may be subsequently changed, repudiated, or proved wrong but are still official at the time they are promulgated.

¹²⁶Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965); and H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But . . . : Racism in Southern Religion, 1780–1910* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1972).

¹²⁷Clearly, though, the Book of Abraham connection had at least “official” status.

¹²⁸One has only to notice the number of times in a year that “corrections” are issued to earlier policy directives coming from the First Presidency to stake and ward leaders. In the case of the policy on blacks, furthermore, the official 1949 letter of the First Presidency explicitly endorsed Brigham Young’s teaching that blacks would not get the priesthood until all the other descendants of Adam had done so—a position obviously proved wrong by the June, 1978, revelation.

¹²⁹Note 115, above.

¹³⁰On development of Mormon attitudes toward blacks during the Missouri Period, see Bringhurst, 1982, op. cit., Chapter Two; also, of course, Bush, 1973, op. cit., and Taggart, 1970, op. cit. On Lincoln’s pre-war views, see Gossett, op. cit., especially p. 254.

¹³¹C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957).

¹³²The overturning of racially discriminatory laws and customs proceeded very unevenly around the entire nation and generally had to be fought out category by category (i.e. housing, jobs, education, etc., each separately). That state of affairs was what produced the pressure, in fact, for the *federal* civil rights acts of 1964 and 1968. Even relatively “liberal” California in 1964

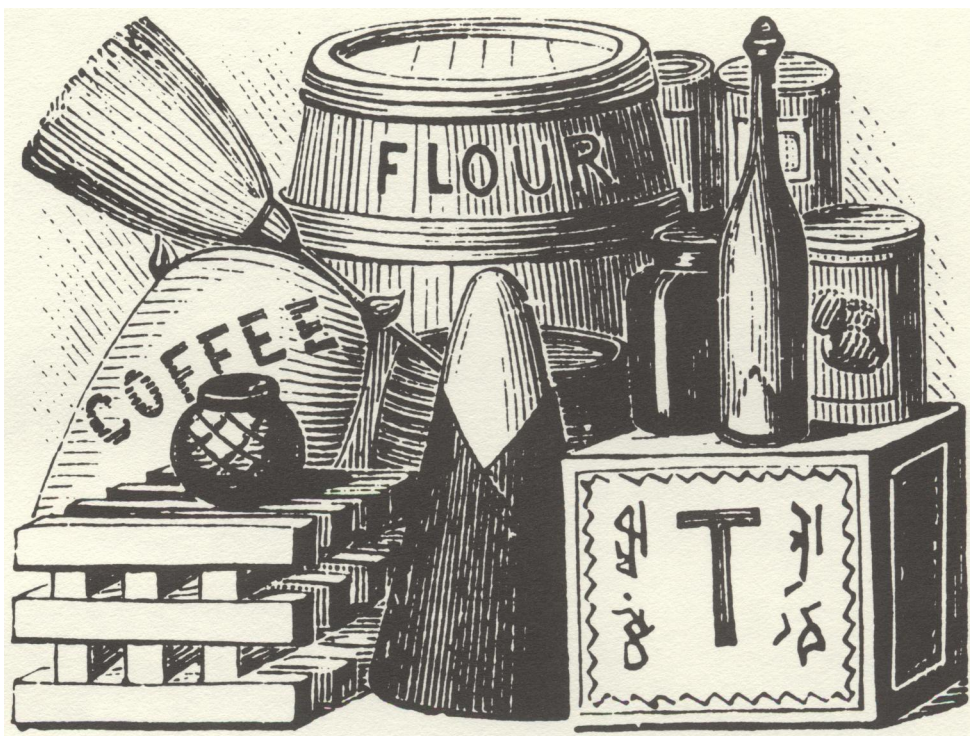
wiped away its entire slate of fair housing legislation with the passage of Proposition 14 by a 2-to-1 margin. It is a gross over-simplification of complex and subtle causal relationships to explain Utah's civil rights history, whatever it may be, by reference to Mormon theology, many critics to the contrary notwithstanding.

¹³³Reported in my "Mormonism and Secular Attitudes toward Negroes," *Pacific Sociological Review* 9:2 (Fall, 1966), and verified in general with more extensive data in my forthcoming *Mormons and Minorities*.

¹³⁴As far as I have been able to determine, none of the claims of "carry-over" was ever substantiated by systematic research. A partial exception to this statement would be the work of David L. Brewer in a doctoral dissertation later summarized in "Religious Resistance to Changing Beliefs about Race," *Pacific Sociological Review* 13:3 (Summer, 1970). Brewer, however, studied Utah elites, not church membership. All elites surveyed were, of course, largely Mormon in religion, but only among the ecclesiastical elite did denomination make a difference in racial attitudes; even here, Brewer failed to make appropriate comparisons by age or generation, obviously important with a Mormon ecclesiastical elite born disproportionately in the nineteenth century.

In general, the available evidence simply does not support an indictment of more racism among Mormons than among others. The point has been made (e.g., Wilson and Poulsen, *op. cit.*, p. 13) that we are entitled to but little comfort from a discovery that we are not worse than most others. This is true, but we are entitled to such comfort as we can take from impeaching the unduly racist picture that has been painted of us by critics inside and outside the Church. That our racism may have taken unique forms is apparent; but this is different from saying it is uniquely virulent or extensive.

¹³⁵I am, of course, excluding black clergymen serving only in segregated congregations. See McCoy, 1964, *op. cit.*



*Despite its high visibility in every day Mormon life, the Word of Wisdom has received remarkably little attention in scholarly journals. Indeed, the last—and only—notable published work to date on the subject came over twenty years ago in Leonard Arrington's excellent "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom" (Volume 1 of **BYU Studies**). Last fall, Brigham Young University's Sesquicentennial Symposium, "A Mosaic of Mormon Culture," included two thoughtful studies which shed new light on many popular assumptions about the Word of Wisdom. They examine the medical context in which the Mormon health code was received and its establishment many decades later as a binding requirement for good standing in the Church. A third essay recently received provides a natural and informative transition between these studies as it examines the doctrinal status of the Word of Wisdom in the latter half of the nineteenth century.*

THE WORD OF WISDOM IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

LESTER E. BUSH, JR.

“[W]ine or strong drink . . . is not good . . . [S]trong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies. . . . [T]obacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle . . . [H]ot drinks are not for the body or belly. . . . [A]ll wholesome herbs [are] for the constitution, nature, and use of man—Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof . . . [F]lesh also of beasts and of the fowls . . . [w]hich nevertheless are to be used sparingly; and . . . only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine. . . .

D&C 89:5–13
February, 1833

THE SUCCESS OF MORMONISM'S “WORD OF WISDOM,” especially its prohibition of tobacco—in promoting Mormon health is now widely acknowledged. Mormons have shown that they experience what medical science would predict from their lifestyle: a longevity several years greater than non-Mormons, with much less cancer and heart disease. Indeed, in a number of areas Mormons do even better than expected,¹ and often take pleasure in noting that scientific “expectations” really didn't measure up to church teachings until recently. As one Mormon physician has written, “in 1833 when the Prophet Joseph Smith received the revelation that tobacco ‘is not good for man’ (D&C 89:8), there was virtually no scientific evidence to support this view. Since then [in reality, since about 1950], many reports have appeared that have established a strong case against smoking.”² In point of fact, however, one looks in vain for any in-depth discussion of the nineteenth-century context in which the Word of Wisdom was announced and applied. How *did* “medical science”

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view the Word of Wisdom a century and a half ago? (I should say, how “might” it have viewed it, because the nineteenth-century medical world actually took little notice of the Mormons, and seemingly no notice at all of their health code.³)

The task is somewhat complicated by the absence of a true counterpart to the scientific medical establishment we know today. “Scientific medicine” itself is largely a product of the last years of the nineteenth century. (Thus it virtually is by definition that “no scientific evidence” existed against smoking in 1833. In the modern sense, no scientific evidence existed on any medical subject.) Several health or medical “systems” were available to early nineteenth-century Americans, none of which seems to have won the allegiance of a majority of the population. Botanic or herbal medicine was more popular at this time than at any other in American history and was preferred by many leading Mormons. Homeopathic medicine, an intriguing approach which amounted to little more than the dispensing of sugar pills and colored water, was just gaining a foothold. Self-help or do-it-yourself home remedy and recipe books accounted for much of the medical care, just as they do today, with the important difference that non-physician health reformers were then very active in promoting certain philosophies of home health care.⁴

The medical practitioners most analogous to twentieth-century physicians were the “regular” or “orthodox” physicians, those actually trained in medical schools (or by private tutors) and granted Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degrees. Lacking any standardization of qualifications, even these “credentialled” doctors were a very heterogeneous group, overlapping considerably with the “sectarians.”⁵ Despite this diversity, the elite among the regular physicians, often but not always professors at major medical schools, unquestionably constituted the most distinguished and influential sub-group of all. They were the medical establishment of their day, and from this line of highly educated medical men ultimately emerged modern scientific medicine.⁶ It is to the views of this group that we must turn in considering the “most informed” opinion of the day.

To judge from the authors of the most influential texts of the day—such as those selected by Robley Dunglison for a popular bibliography in *The Medical Student* (1837) or the initial (1848) American Medical Association bibliography of significant medical works—the leading physicians of Joseph Smith’s day would have found a little to criticize but much more to commend in the Mormon health code.⁷ Indeed, while historians have generally stressed the similarity of the Word of Wisdom to some of the precepts of botanic doctors, or—even more so—the radical health reformers of the day,⁸ as good if not a better match can be made to the mainstream views of orthodox medicine.

Early nineteenth-century medical orthodoxy held that most of what we now know to be different diseases were manifestations of one basic underlying condition—merely different “symptoms,” as it were, of a single disease state. This underlying condition, to oversimplify, was an imbalance in the vital nervous energy believed to determine the health of an individual. An excess of this energy could be brought about by over-stimulation from a variety of sources, and this led to something vaguely analogous to what we

now call hypertension. Among the common manifestations of this internal tension were “fevers,” “inflammations” (especially of the stomach) or simple “dyspepsia.” Depletion of the vital nervous energy led, not surprisingly, to debility. The practical implications of this perspective are not hard to guess. Acutely ill individuals—especially if fever or signs of inflammation were present—needed a reduction in stimulation through dietary adjustment and such relaxing or energy dissipating measures as massive blood-letting, purging with large doses of mercury, and blistering—all to relieve excessive internal pressures. Conversely, those in a debilitated state needed dietary or medicinal stimulation.⁹

Challenging this traditional view was a subtly different notion originally advanced by the dean of American physicians, Benjamin Rush. Late in the eighteenth century Rush concluded that over-stimulation was in fact the only significant cause of disease. Debility was merely the final stages of an unanswered, co-existing over-stimulation. Many, but not all of America’s leading physicians eventually subscribed to this notion, and accordingly treated *all* patients with the theoretically “de-stimulating” depleting measures which became the hallmark of the so-called “heroic” orthodox practice. (The physicians termed their measures heroic; critics thought the term applied more appropriately to the patient.)

The implication of both these orthodox perspectives went beyond treatment, for it was reasonably enough assumed that the ill-advised consumption of stimulants by even those in good health could lead to disease. A full appreciation of this point is essential to any modern understanding of how the LDS health code would initially have been understood—by physicians or by Mormons. Immoderate use of even mildly stimulating foods and drinks was likely to result in symptoms ranging from dyspepsia to nervous debility, and this was especially so in the many individuals of “delicate,” “nervous” or “sanguine” temperament. Young children, pregnant women and those already ill with fevers or other inflammations were particularly at risk, as were those whose jobs were largely sedentary, such as students. The more powerful stimulants, unless prescribed for purely medicinal purposes, posed substantial risks to everyone who consumed them. On these general points, nearly all orthodox physicians were in agreement. They differed only on the *degree* of stimulation associated with such items as ardent spirits, wine, beer, etc., coffee, tea, meat, mustard, pepper and other spices. Although this debate had been going on for many decades, both popular and medical discussion on this subject crested in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, spurred in part by such crises as the world cholera pandemic which swept America in 1832–33, and the not unrelated health reform movements of the day.¹⁰

By 1833 when the Word of Wisdom was announced, at least one element of the debate was largely resolved. Most leading physicians could warmly applaud the assertion that “strong drink” was “not for the belly.” Distilled or ardent spirits, despite their heavy and widespread consumption in the early decades of the century, were regarded by the medical elite as the most dangerous stimulant in general use. In the words of Dr. J. A. Paris’s *A Treatise on Diet* . . . (1828), “the act of extracting alcoholic liquors by distillation from vinous liquors, must be regarded as the greatest curse ever inflicted upon human nature.” Such “spirits,” asserted the eminent and representative Dr.

Daniel Drake in 1831, were “a poison” which “should be proscribed, outlawed and banished forever, from the catalogue of our daily drinks.” “As an article of daily and dietetic use,” admonished the authoritative *Dispensatory of the United States* (1833), “alcoholic liquors produce the most deplorable consequences. Besides the moral degradation which they cause, their habitual use gives rise to dyspepsia, hypochondriasis, visceral obstructions, dropsy, paralysis, and not unfrequently mania.”¹¹



Whether a similar, though perhaps less vigorous indictment should be extended to wine—as the Word of Wisdom suggests—was a subject of less unanimity. Fermented (as distinguished from distilled) drinks such as cider, beer (especially “small beer” which contained only about 1% alcohol), malt liquor and wine long had been recommended by physicians as a benign alternative to hard liquor. While such drinks were “required” by “few constitutions”—in Drake’s view—many physicians believed they could be imbibed freely without risk; some even believed that wine, at least, contained no alcohol. In the 1820s, however, the sentiment grew—notably among the Philadelphia medical establishment then dominant in American medicine—that alcohol in any form posed a real health threat to those of vulnerable age, health or temperament, or to anyone who consumed it intemperately (i.e., it was dangerous to a large segment of society). The excessive use of fermented drinks, wrote the distinguished Dr. Samuel Jackson in his popular text, *The Principles of Medicine* (1832),

terminates in inflammations, either acute or chronic, of the stomach, duodenum, and liver, with the cancerous and other degenerations of these organs. Inflammation of the heart and vessels; the enlargement, and other organic derangement of the one; aneurisms, ossification, &c. of the other, are common results of habitual intemperance. In the brain, its consequences are the production of apoplexies, of convulsions, of mental derangement, and every form of nervous disorder.

“Even in moderation,” continued Dr. Jackson,

the habitual use of fermented drinks is not tolerated by the sanguine and the nervous. They are unnecessary, and should not be employed by those leading sedentary lives; by those in the vigour of life; when the temperature is moderate; and, when the food is sufficiently stimulating for its own digestion. . . .¹²

It was a short additional step from advocacy of temperance (i.e., moderation) to a call for complete abstinence. A decision to “be consistent,” in the

words of an 1831 editorial in the Philadelphia-based *Journal of Health*,¹³ and adopt a uniformly anti-alcohol stance was taken by an influential minority of the medical profession. Most physicians in New York state, in fact, were reportedly teetotalers by 1839. While the majority of leading American medical authorities did not move to this position, nearly all did warn that the use of fermented drinks by many members of society—those more vulnerable to “stimulation”—was “not good.” Overall, therefore, there would have been considerable “medical” support for this facet of the Word of Wisdom.¹⁴

The broader temperance movement of these years, which went well beyond the notions of the orthodox medical community is outside the scope of this article, but it is relevant to recall that from a few thousand advocates late in the 1820s, the American Temperance Society had grown to well over a million members by 1834. Estimated per capita alcohol consumption plummeted during this decade to less than a third its previous level. While the leaders of the movement were most often clergymen and non-physicians, it is notable that the support given by orthodox medical authorities (by demonstrating the health risks) also was in many ways matched (on similar theoretical grounds) by the condemnations of alcohol issued by influential sectarian medical practitioners and do-it-yourself authorities.¹⁵ John Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* and William Buchan’s *Domestic Medicine*, while products of the previous century, still dominated self-help systems in America, and both vigorously condemned strong drinks, sanctioning only “small beer” or dilute wine. Samuel Thompson, father of the contemporary botanic school and indirect mentor to most leading Mormon physicians, was equally convinced that “ardent spirits” was a “slow poison.” And Wooster Beach, a widely read eclectic whose works later were advertised glowingly in Mormon publications, held to this same view. Ultimately Thomsonian journals came to devote as much space to the dangers of alcohol and tobacco as they did to endorsing their own system.¹⁶

Before leaving this aspect of the Word of Wisdom, it is also important to note that physicians during this period of reformist agitation continued to distinguish between the legitimate medicinal use of alcohol—as a tonic or restorative—and its social or dietetic use by the general public. As with the ostensibly teetotaling Mormons,¹⁷ physicians opposed to the general use of alcohol often commended it in a “medical” context. Thus Andrew Combe, in his *The Physiology of Digestion* (1836), after asserting that the use of wine and “stimulant liquors” was *adverse* [emphasis added] to the continuance of health,” goes on to say

But there are many constitutions so inherently defective in energy, as to derive benefit from a moderate daily allowance of wine; and there are many situations in which even the healthiest derive additional security from its occasional use. If, for example, a healthy person is exposed to unusual and continued exertion in the open air, or to the influence of anxious and depressing watchfulness, a moderate quantity of wine along with his food may become the means of warding off actual disease, and enabling him to bear up uninjured, where without it he would have given way. . . .¹⁸

Joseph Smith was in obvious agreement when he rejected charges that “some of the brethren had been drinking whiskey in violation of the Word of Wisdom,” deciding rather to give them money “to replenish the bottle to stimulate them in the fatigues of their sleepless journey.” The same perspective is equally clear in his request, hours before his martyrdom, for wine “to revive us” “for our spirits were dull and heavy.”¹⁹

Thus, while contemporary medicine would have differed with the possible interpretation of the Word of Wisdom that alcohol was therapeutically appropriate *only* “for washing of your bodies,” it would have endorsed the more flexible interpretation actually adopted by the Church. Indeed, the Mormons themselves seem to have applied this aspect of the Word of Wisdom in essential conformity to the received medical opinion of the day.

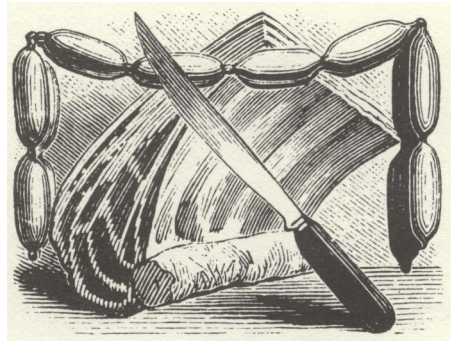
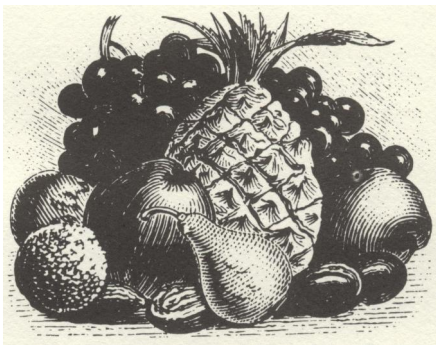
Having broadened their view to encompass controversial stimulants such as the fermented drinks, the more extreme health reformers found it easy and rational to sound grave warnings on other insidious stimulants. Led by such non-physician crusaders as Sylvester Graham (of Graham cracker fame) and the radical Dr. William A. Alcott, and with an occasional distinguished physician in their train, these zealots—for indeed they were—began crusades against the abuse, and more often against *any* use of such stimulants as coffee and tea, all meats, ultimately all condiments and spices—and sex. (Graham also barred white bread and salt.) That such a notion could be popularly acclaimed in the 1830s is as interesting as it is astonishing.²⁰ It had been anticipated in part in some orthodox medical texts and in the long popular writings of Wesley. In 1830 the perceived role of stimulants in the promotion of masturbation—at the time thought to be a major contributor to poor health and early death—apparently provided much of the Grahamist impulse. Graham also believed marital sex was unsafe if indulged in more often than once a month. He advised married people under age thirty, in ill health, or leading sedentary lives to abstain totally from sex and, seemingly, almost everything else.²¹

Orthodox authorities agreed with much of the foregoing only to a point. They believed the specified items were at least mildly stimulating, and that most if not all were potentially harmful to *children*. Sharing, as previously noted, in large measure the same theoretical understanding as did the reformers—and many sectarians—orthodox authorities uniformly recommended against what was apparently a rather commonplace practice of giving young children “excessively” stimulating diets, including coffee, tea, tobacco and alcohol. While the perceived risks extended well beyond those relating to sex, as much as a half century later Mormonism’s own distinguished Doctors Shipp, in a Series of Private Lectures to the Ladies, still sounded remarkably like Sylvester Graham—and orthodox physicians—when they warned that the consumption of “stimulating foods, meats and condiments, tea and coffee” was a cause of “an untimely condition or premature functional state of the reproductive organs.”²²

Medical orthodoxy thus differed from the reformists not so much qualitatively as quantitatively—on the questions of who was at risk, and to what degree. Many stimulants indicted by Graham simply were not viewed as

causes for serious alarm. Thus Graham, who was initially received by some in the medical establishment as a welcome addition to the general hygienic reform efforts then current, was soon abandoned by regular physicians as a fanatic and charlatan. He and others like him, in the words of Daniel Drake, were “better moralists than physiologists.”²³

Given this context, it is apparent that orthodox medical authorities would have commended the *narrow* (relative to the health reformers) proscriptions set forth in the Word of Wisdom that “hot drinks are not for the body or belly,” and that “flesh [is] to be used sparingly . . . only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.” Indeed, the congruence of Mormon and contemporary orthodox views on meat, fruit and vegetables is especially striking.



Meat, which apparently was consumed in vast quantities in those days,²⁴ was almost universally held to be more “stimulating” than fruits or vegetables. Red meat, in turn, such as beef, mutton and pork, was more stimulating than “white” meats such as fish and chicken. There were differences as well among the fruits and vegetables, beyond such obvious offenders as pepper and mustard; unripe fruits were believed potentially very dangerous. Under the alarming circumstances of the cholera threat of 1832, for example, the Special Medical Council of New York City posted handbills and published in all papers a warning against, among other things, the consumption of “crude vegetables and fruits.” As Charles Rosenberg noted in his invaluable study of *The Cholera Years*, “a pineapple or a watermelon” could have been “a death warrant.”²⁵

While reformers like Graham and Alcott opted to condemn everything from meats through the spicier portions of the plant world—even in the absence of “risk factors” such as predisposing temperaments, illness or sedentary occupation—orthodox medicine normally took a much less sweeping stand. Thus, although all agreed that meat was stimulating, and that there was too much meat in the average diet, some “flesh” under the appropriate circumstances was considered safe and entirely proper. This, to quote Dr. Caleb Ticknor’s *The Philosophy of Living* (1836), was most often “in winter, . . . while vegetables are more conducive to health in the summer season . . .”²⁶ More stimulation was required in the winter, as Dr. Combe explained, particularly for “a hard-working unexcitable laborer.” “The system

[needed] to be more braced to resist cold," Edward Hitchcock wrote in *Dyspepsia Forstalled* (1831), "and to endure the more vigorous exercise which is requisite to health. But in spring . . . the food generally, but animal food in particular, should be diminished in quantity. . . ." ²⁷ Combe's "stimulating animal diet" for the hard-working unexcitable laborer, could "prove utterly destructive of health when indulged in during the summer by an inactive and excitable female." ²⁸ Among those who condoned some use of wine or other alcoholic beverages, the same seasonal recommendations were often made. (Some orthodox physicians carried the seasonal recommendations a step further by administering a good purge to assist the body in the spring transition to a lower energy state.)

Contemporary medicine, therefore, could only have applauded the Mormon guidelines on "flesh," indeed would have found this portion of the Word of Wisdom with its companion endorsing herbs and fruit "in the season thereof" (i.e., ripe?) much more pragmatic than a physician reading it today. Dr. Ticknor, as an example, could hardly have been in more literal agreement:

And not only is animal food proper in winter, but the flesh of old, of fullgrown animals, which is much more stimulating than that of the young of the same kind, is then the more suitable for us. As the warm season approaches, nature has provided in her bounty a diet more bland and less exciting, in the tender flesh of young animals; and during the heat of summer she has given us a variety of succulent vegetables and fruits . . . ²⁹

Or rather, "flesh . . . only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine," and "every herb . . . and fruit in the season thereof. . . ." ³⁰

The subject of "hot drinks" is a little more complicated. As noted previously elimination of tea and coffee from the American diet was another health reformist cause at this time. The medical profession appears to have been more ambivalent on this subject than on alcohol and meat. Both tea and coffee were considered mild stimulants (and occasionally used medicinally), but there were major differences of opinion as to their importance as contributors to disease. As one might expect, there were many who considered one or both of these "hot drinks" to be a poison, and thus would have endorsed the Mormon notion that such were "not for the body or belly." ³¹ Unquestionably this notion found more support among regular physicians than did the vegetarian beliefs touted at the time by many health reformers. The medical elite, however, seems not to have subscribed to the extreme view seemingly implicit in the Mormon revelation ("seemingly," for reasons which follow). Once again the establishment response was to encourage abstinence for dyspepsics or those with unsuitable temperaments, and moderation for all others—which, in practice, seems to have been the Mormon view for most of the century. Professor Samuel Jackson, for example, felt the risks of coffee and tea much less than with fermented drinks. He nonetheless asserted that "simple and natural drinks" (basically, water or fruit juice) were "most . . . productive of health and longevity." The latter were "the only drinks that can be employed by those of the sanguine and nervous temperaments" or with any

“inflammatory diseases” without entailing “most serious and distressing affections.”³²

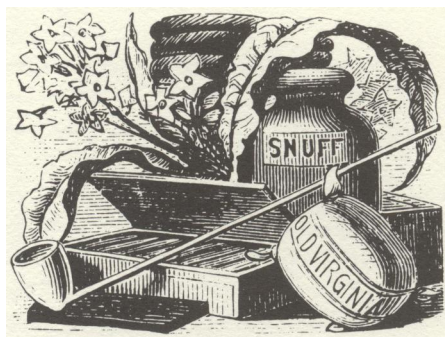
Andrew Combe, in contrast, noted the “many objections . . . to both tea and coffee as an evening beverage,” but attributed any real basis to the charges to the “undue quantity and strength rather than to their temperate use.” This was not to say there were no risks, for “when made very strong, or taken in large quantity, especially late in the evening, they not only ruin the stomach, but very seriously derange the health of the brain and nervous system.”³³ And again, Ticknor, in agreement with Combe and paralleling his own remarks on meat, adds: “There are some peculiarities of constitution that will not tolerate the use of either of these substances [tea and coffee] in the smallest quantity.” A person “in health,” however, can “indulge in their use without risk or injury.”³⁴

One should not infer that orthodox physicians would necessarily have differed with Word of Wisdom guidelines on “hot drinks.” In fact most would probably have felt themselves in full agreement, because on the question of *temperature* there was near unanimity—at least as it related to *high* temperatures. Despite his judgement that “no valid objection” could be made against the temperate consumption of tea and coffee, Combe asserted without qualification that “liquids, such as soup, tea, and coffee, taken at a very high temperature, . . . are injurious.”³⁵ To Ticknor, it was the hot water that was the real culprit, hot tea being “positively less injurious than simple hot water” because its tonic properties partially counteracted the debilitating effects of the latter.³⁶

It was commonly held that the appropriate temperature of food and drink was very little above or below the heat of the blood, possibly adjusted up a little in winter and down in summer. Under some circumstances excessively low temperatures were held by many authorities to be as dangerous as high ones; Combe thought they were potentially more so. It was well known to him—and reported as well by many others—that a copious draught of cold water, taken in a state of perspiration and fatigue, is often instantly fatal.³⁷ (In a single week, eight such deaths were reported from Philadelphia alone!)³⁸ Where some authorities might condemn the Mormon standard, therefore, was not in its denunciation of hot drinks, but rather in its failure to include a warning against very cold ones as well.

As in the case of alcohol, the medical “elite” did not stand alone on the issues of coffee, tea and meat. The popular Wesley self-help guides advised readers to “drink only water if it agrees with your stomach,” and warned that coffee and tea were “extremely harmful” to those with “weak nerves.” Buchan likewise warned against excessive consumption of meat and tea but also noted the appropriate use of the former in “cold countries.” Other family guides to health, such as Thomas Ruble’s *The American Medical Guide for the Use of the Family* (1810), Anthony Benezet’s *Family Physician* (1826), and John C. Gunn’s *Domestic Medicine* (1832) also warned variously (but not unanimously) against hot drinks, excessive meat consumption and too much use of spices. Wooster Beach (1833) thought highly seasoned meat “especially dangerous,” but also believed that tea and coffee taken in moderation, and

neither too strong or too hot, “seldom” did harm. The botanics, while flatly rejecting orthodox therapy, were seemingly closer to orthodoxy than Grahamism on the purely dietetic questions. F. K. Robertson’s *The Book of Health* (1843), for example, rejected the total proscription of meat (opposing, rather, “fatty” meat), and cited as the principle causes of dyspepsia the “habitual use of cathartics, ardent spirits, tobacco, coffee, tea, mercury, opium, and blood-letting, hard indigestible food, new-bread, raw fruits, grease, butter, and exposure to cold.”³⁹



Tobacco, the remaining subject in this brief review, was at once more and less of a problem for the physician of 1830. Although known to be a “poison” in concentrated form, it was not believed to pose the same acute risk as ardent spirits or possibly very cold water. (To be sure, there were reports of cholera striking victims shortly after they took a quid of tobacco!)⁴⁰ Moreover, while critics including some physicians had condemned the recreational use of “the weed” for nearly two centuries, tobacco’s medicinal properties had been extolled even longer. One student of this subject has listed over 250 different maladies—from abdominal pain and snake bite, to madness, piles, scurvy and yaws—allegedly treatable with tobacco, which was applied onto or injected into literally every surface or orifice in the human body.⁴¹ Poultices, plasters, pills and powders all had been used, as well as dozens of other concoctions. Tobacco smoke was thought to protect against the black death in the seventeenth century, and some still recommended cigars to ward off cholera in the nineteenth.

Overall, however, in the nineteenth century tobacco had lost its status as a panacea, and even its use as a specific remedy was beginning to fall into disfavor. Devotees no longer argued that its daily use prolonged life; and tobacco smoke enemas (injected “by means of bellows of a peculiar construction”), for example, while still occasionally recommended for cholera and other ailments, were discredited as an ineffective treatment for drowning. Similar infusions of a preparation of the tobacco leaf itself, formerly recommended for hernias, came to be regarded as too dangerous in all but the most extreme cases of hernial strangulation. A popular anti-tobacco impulse developed around 1830, again led by the health reformers, but with a number of respected orthodox physicians (and botanics) among its spokesmen. In its wake even well-accepted indications—such as indigestion and toothache (a

Brigham Young favorite)—began to be questioned. The effectiveness was sometimes disputed, but more often the perceived problem was the accompanying “involuntary” and “insensible” falling into the “habit of using tobacco.”⁴²

One judges that the popular use of tobacco was viewed by the collected medical establishment in an mixed light somewhere between ardent spirits and coffee or tea. There appears to have been more vigorous opposition to the use of tobacco (varying with whether it was snuffed, chewed, or smoked in cigars or pipes) than to the latter, but then tobacco still had acknowledged value as a therapeutic agent beyond that usually accorded the mild stimulants. This, once again, made sense in the nineteenth century context. The more powerful agents were the most useful therapeutically—and most risky socially.

Thus, the Mormon condemnation of tobacco as “not for the body, neither for the belly” would have been considered good advice by a number of leading physicians such as Caleb Ticknor and Daniel Drake, and reasonable if not necessary by all. The Mormons’ relative deemphasis (in contrast to their attitude toward strong drinks) of this facet of their health code⁴³ would also have found a receptive medical context. A Mormon assertion that tobacco should be used as an “herb for bruises” (a notion dating to at least 1633) would have met more widespread, though diminishing objections, if this were interpreted as the *only* appropriate therapeutic use.⁴⁴

The doctrinal recommendation that tobacco was for “all sick cattle” is more difficult to assess, as there is no convincing indicator of the accepted veterinary wisdom of the day. The use of tobacco for certain diseases in horses was apparently quite common, but its use in cattle is mentioned less frequently. The *New England Farrier and Family Physician* (1828) reported two remedies for cattle sick with “horn-ail” or poisoning with laurel which relied on tobacco (attributed to a “Capt. Joseph Smith of Exeter”!). And S.W. Coles’ *The American Veterinarian*, which appeared two decades later, also recommended a tobacco purgative in the usually fatal “milk sickness” which affected cattle west of the Alleghenies. Coles also reported that tobacco had some value as a diuretic, though—once again—more often “in the treatment of horses, than in cattle practice.”⁴⁵ (He felt that “corn fodder is excellent for cattle,” that oats were “an excellent food” for horses, “giving strength and spirit,” and that confined pigs should be given “green food, such as grass, weeds, and other herbiage.”⁴⁶ He presumably, therefore, would have endorsed the Mormon doctrine of “corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for . . . swine. . . .”)

Having found a considerable initial overlap between conventional (and popular) medical wisdom and Mormon health guides, one is not surprised to find also that the early Mormons did occasionally justify their beliefs in terms of contemporary medical understanding—much as is done today. Such an instance appeared in John Jaques’ *Catechism for Children* (1854) which instructed Mormon youth that wine and strong drink were not good “because they excite men unnaturally, inflame their stomachs, vitiate their appetites, and disorder their whole systems;” that “flesh” should be eaten “in winter,

and in times of famine, and not at other times" because it was "heating to the human system, therefore it is not good to eat flesh in summer . . . ;" that "hot drinks" are not good "because they relax and weaken the stomach, and indeed the whole body" (this medical rationale applied only to *hot* drinks, per se, and not to tea or coffee); and that it was "not good to smoke or chew tobacco" because "those habits are very filthy, and tobacco is of a poisonous nature, and the use of it debases men."⁴⁷

One is tempted to undertake a reconstruction of the evolution of medical thinking on these various points and correlate it with changes in the way Mormons viewed the Word of Wisdom. At a time when compliance with the Word of Wisdom fell to all-time lows in the first decades of the exodus, as an illustration, medical theory and practice increasingly emphasized the *value* of stimulating diet and alcohol in the treatment of many conditions. Brigham Young, it may be recalled, received regular doses of brandy perhaps—the single most widely used drug of that time—during his final illness in 1877.⁴⁸ Even Sylvester Graham before his death at the relatively young age of fifty-seven turned to meat and strong drink in a desperate attempt to restore his own health. There seems also to have been another notable, if partial congruence around the turn of the century when increasing popular and medical concern over alcohol and tobacco coincided with an important transition in Mormon thinking on the subject.⁴⁹

There clearly were other important factors, ecclesiastical as well as economic, in this history, but space precludes any serious effort to unravel the entire 150-year story.⁵⁰ For present purposes, the important point is that notwithstanding the reassuring recent discoveries of medical science, Mormonism's health code has never been more in agreement with the views of the medical establishment than it was at the very outset. The recommendations it contains were generally sound medicine at the time they were first set forth. Where the guidelines were reflective of a minority view, it was a respected minority, and the flexibility with which the Mormons applied such "minority planks" rendered them even more mainstream. The implications of all this would seem to be that despite the reluctance of some to concede the point, Mormons must grant that the Word of Wisdom is not quite as unique a document as we might hope, nor necessarily a reflection of only a few far-seeing reformist ideas.

Having covered to some degree the medical context in which the Word of Wisdom was received, it is important to recall briefly the equally relevant *health* context. Many today are inclined to read the promise of the Word of Wisdom as a sweeping guide to good health rather than the answer to specific questions current in 1833; or, in language which seems in part borrowed from Proverbs, as a literal guarantee of "health in [the] navel and marrow to [the] bones." Both possibilities presumably could be true, and much more so than today, physicians a century and a half ago would have felt this to be the case. Many, in fact, said as much in their writings on diet and hygiene. It is

nonetheless instructive to consider the impact of the Word of Wisdom on the actual health of nineteenth century Saints. I should perhaps say the *potential* impact, since the Word of Wisdom seems not to have dominated the Mormon lifestyle before 1900.⁵¹

By 1980 standards, nineteenth-century Americans, Mormons included, enjoyed rather poor health. Life expectancy in 1830 is estimated at half of what it is today—a mere thirty-five years. By 1900 this had climbed to just under fifty, which is still not up to the standard of many of our so-called underdeveloped countries today.⁵² Recent studies comparing Mormons with non-Mormons suggest that strict adherence to the Word of Wisdom may increase life expectancy by five years, perhaps several more—a remarkable enough effect today, but only a fraction of the difference between overall nineteenth- and twentieth-century longevity.⁵³ Even this relatively modest gain may not have accrued to the most obedient of the early Saints. At least two important factors should be considered. First, the major impact of the Word of Wisdom appears to be on chronic diseases of adulthood such as cancer and heart disease, ailments of relatively little impact in the nineteenth century—because people didn't live long enough to die from them. Whereas over 50% of those born today will still be alive at age seventy-six or more, as late as 1900 over half were dead by fifty-eight; for much of the previous century, most people didn't even reach fifty. Second, the largest single demonstrated factor in favor of twentieth-century Mormon longevity is the failure of Mormons to smoke cigarettes, a custom that became commonplace in America only after the invention of cigarette making machinery very late in the nineteenth century. In many important areas of health, including the major ones affecting mortality, it is not so much that Mormons do "better," but rather that non-Mormons now collectively do worse—because so many of them smoke cigarettes. This cannot be said to be true for most of the nineteenth century because cigarette smoking was not so common, and tobacco chewed, taken as snuff, or even smoked in pipes or cigars has not been shown to carry nearly as great a risk.⁵⁴

Where the nineteenth-century quest for good health really needed help was in warding off infant diarrhea, dysentery, diphtheria, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, influenza and pneumonia, cholera, malaria, yellow fever and smallpox. The Mormons, for example, suffered staggering losses to infant diarrhea and cholera during the early pioneer years; for most of the century, they had high death rates from diphtheria and typhoid fever.⁵⁵ It is possible that their losses to such illnesses would have been reduced slightly had they consumed no coffee, tea, alcohol or tobacco. However, the advantage gained would pale by comparison to that derived from meticulous sanitation, safe water (or boiling what water was available) increased personal hygiene, swamp drainage, upgraded diet (to prevent scurvy), or selective isolation of those affected with certain diseases.⁵⁶

Reporting on the state of health in Salt Lake City as late as the 1870s, Dr. E.P. Vollum wrote that the sickest months were June through September, and perceptively attributed this to the "character of the drinking-water during these months." "The water from wells" at this time, he wrote, "which is

principally used for drinking and culinary purposes, is at its greatest degree of concentration . . .

[of] the organic matters that settle down from the surface of the streets, yards, gutters, drains, water-closets, &c., and pass into the soil without any obstruction to their flow either downward or laterally; and, as a consequence, it becomes a purgative mixture, especially to strangers, and the amount of bowel disease, and deaths from its effects, is simply frightful, particularly among the children.⁵⁷

One can well imagine that such water did give visitors a good purge, as well as a good chance for dysentery and typhoid fever, to name two leading causes of death.

The problem, of course, was that no one knew about germs—bacterial, viral or otherwise—until late in the century. Dr. Vollum indicated the concentration of “salts of lime, potash, soda, and magnesia” along with the “organic matters.” The immediate, or “local” causes of disease (as distinct from the over-riding predisposing causes already discussed) remained completely misunderstood. In America at least, most illness was still tied to miasma or other atmospheric conditions.⁵⁸

Because of the decimating effects on the early Saints of such water-borne diseases as cholera, dysentery, infant diarrhea and typhoid fever alone, one wonders why there was no guidance about the more important subjects (from the mortality standpoint) of clean water and waste disposal. It almost seems that those pioneers who drank coffee and tea would have fared better than their obedient brethren; at least they heated their water (several minutes of boiling would have eliminated the risk of infectious diseases). Some alcoholic beverages, for that matter, would surely have been safer than the alternatives available to the pioneers in Winter Quarters.⁵⁹ We obviously can't know all the answers, but this seems strong circumstantial evidence at least for the notion that the Word of Wisdom represents a response to more specific circumstances than we often assume today.

Two concluding points should be made. The first, which almost goes without saying, is that the last medical word is still not in on the relative value of many Word of Wisdom guidelines, making firm conclusions risky if not foolish.⁶⁰ The second point is that whatever merit or function the Word of Wisdom had for the nineteenth century Mormons, in retrospect we know that circumstances changed around the turn of the century in such a way that its guidelines could unquestionably promote better physical health (i.e., there was more cigarette smoking, and less serious infectious disease). That this development—the implications of which were not apparent to the medical scientists for decades—coincided with a decision by the church leadership to require firm adherence to the Word of Wisdom is quite remarkable. It may well represent their most demonstrably prescient insight to date in helping assure that the “destroying angel” of disease will “pass us by.”

NOTES

¹This is well summarized in Joseph L. Lyon and Steven Nelson, "Mormon Health," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XII No. 3: 84–96, Autumn 1979. Mormon men were reported to live about five years longer than non-Mormon men; Mormon women about three years.

²John H. Holbrook, MD, "Smoking and Health, 1973," *The Ensign*, June 1973, p. 29.

³For what interest was expressed, see Lester E. Bush, Jr., "A Peculiar People: The Physiological Aspects of Mormonism, 1850–1875," *Dialogue* XII No. 3: 61–83, Autumn 1979.

⁴Of the many words addressing this subject, some of the most useful are those collected in Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Sickness & Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Guenter B. Risse, Ronald L. Numbers, and Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Medicine Without Doctors: Home Health Care in American History* (New York: Science History Publications/USA, 1977); and Richard Harrison Shryock, *Medicine in America: Historical Essays* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966). Also especially valuable are John B. Blake, "Health Reform," in Edwin S. Gaustad, ed. *The Rise of Adventism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Stephen Nissenbaum, *Sex, Diet, and Debility in Jacksonian America: Sylvester Graham and Health Reform* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); William G. Rothstein, *American Physicians in the 19th Century: From Sects to Sciences* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972); Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849 and 1866* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962); and Martin Kaufmann, *Homeopathy in America: The Rise and Fall of a Medical Heresy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971). Alex Berman provides the two most insightful articles on the botanics, "The Thomsonian Movement and its Relation to American Pharmacy and Medicine," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 25:405–428, 519–538 (1951), and "Neo-Thomsonianism in the United States," *Journal of the History of Medicine & Allied Sciences* 11:133–155 (1956).

For Mormon attitudes over these years see N. Lee Smith, "Herbal Remedies: God's Medicine?," *Dialogue* XII, No. 3: 37–60 (Autumn 1979).

⁵Elaborated at length in Rothstein, op. cit., and Joseph F. Kett, *The Formation of the American Medical Profession: The Role of Institutions, 1780–1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁶This is not to deny that the general popularity of the orthodox practitioners reached its all time low in the second quarter of the century. The "professors" were still the highest court of appeal for most serious and intractable cases with all but the most committed sectarians.

⁷Robley Dunglison, MD, *The Medical Student; or, Aids to the Study of Medicine* (Philadelphia, 1837), pp. 201–289; "Report of the Committee on Medical Literature," *The Transactions of the American Medical Association* (Philadelphia, 1848), 1:249–288. Dunglison, who had come from England in 1825 at the invitation of Thomas Jefferson to be professor of medicine at the University of Virginia (as well as Jefferson's personal physician), was then a professor at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. The AMA bibliography was the combined effort of seven leading physicians: Oliver Wendall Holmes, Enoch Hale, George C. Shattuck, Jr., Daniel Drake, John Bell, Austin Flint and W. Seldon. Also consulted in assembling my core of authorities were Samuel D. Gross, *History of American Medical Literature . . .* (Philadelphia, 1876), and Edward H. Clarke, Henry J. Bigelow, Samuel D. Gross, T. Gaitland Thomas and J.S. Billings, *a Century of American Medicine, 1776–1876* [1876] (Brinklow, Md.: Old Hickory Bookshop, 1962), especially the chapter on "Literature and Institutions."

⁸This is most convincingly presented in Dean D. McBrien, "The Influence of the Frontier on Joseph Smith," (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, George Washington University, 1929), and Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972).

⁹Most of the observations made in this paper are based on the collective opinions of several dozen books by the authors commended in the bibliographies cited in note 7. Among these are the following, all recognized authorities in 1833: Franklin Bache, John Bell, William Beaumont, John Redman Coxe, Andrew Combe, Daniel Drake, Robley Dunglison, John Eberle, Samuel Jackson, J.A. Paris, Caleb Ticknor and George B. Wood. Most readers will find the secondary sources, such as those cited in note 2, to cover similar material in a much more accessible manner. Therefore, I have regularly given secondary citations for convenience, and have included illus-

trative primary quotations only when they are particularly apropos the points being made. On the heroic approach alluded to in the text, see also Alex Berman, "The Heroic Approach in 19th Century Therapeutics," *Bulletin of the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists* 11:320–327 (1954), and reprinted in Leavitt and Numbers, eds., op. cit., pp. 77–86.

¹⁰A discussion of this can be found in Rosenberg, op. cit., Nissenbaum, op. cit., esp. pp. 86–104, and Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Cause of Cholera: Aspects of Etiological Thought in 19th Century America," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 34:331–354 (1960), and reprinted in Leavitt and Numbers, op. cit., pp. 257–271.

¹¹J.A. Paris, MD, *A Treatise on Diet with a View to Establishing, on Practical Grounds, A System of Rules for the Prevention and Cure of Diseases incident to a disorder of the Digestive Functions* (New York, 1828), p. 104; Daniel Drake, MD, *An Oration on the Causes, Evils, and Prevention of Intemperance* . . . (Columbus, Ohio, 1831), p. 6; George B. Wood, MD, and Franklin Bache, MD, *The Dispensatory of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1833), p. 58. The work by Paris, a highly respected physician in Edinburgh whose works were regularly reprinted in the United States, was faulted by Dunglison as being "too popular." Both Paris and Dunglison are included by William Beaumont as among the "luminaries in the science of physiology" in his landmark *Experiments and Observations on the Gastric Juice and the Physiology of Digestion* (Plattsburg, N.Y., 1833), p. 101. The *Dispensatory*, which went through numerous editions, was termed by Clarke et al, op. cit., in 1876 to be "the most successful medical book every published in this country." Dunglison thought it "ought to be in every office."

¹²Drake, op. 6; Samuel Jackson, MD, *The Principles of Medicine, founded on the Structure and Functions of the Animal Organism* (Philadelphia, 1832), p. 324.

Although Benjamin Rush, for reasons deriving directly from his medical philosophy is often termed the "medical" father of the American temperance movement, he did not hesitate to recommend wine, nor did J.A. Paris, cited in the text.

¹³As quoted in Nissenbaum, op. cit., p. 78. The editor of the *Journal of Health* was Dr. John Bell, another eminent physician from Philadelphia who authored many successful texts.

¹⁴William J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 196–202; and James H. Cassedy, "An Early American Hangover: The Medical Profession and Intemperance, 1800–1860," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 50:405–413 (1976). Better yet are the primary sources. Caleb Ticknor and Andrew Combe, for example, commended by Dunglison for their works on hygiene, both condemn—albeit gently—on physiologic grounds the non-medical use of any alcohol including wine. Caleb Ticknor, MD, *The Philosophy of Living; or, The Way to Enjoy Life and Its Comforts* (New York, 1836), p. 88; Andrew Combe, MD, *The Physiology of Digestion Considered with Relation to the Principles of Dietetics* (New York, 1836), pp. 285–286. Beaumont, op. cit., p. 239, is in apparent agreement.

Several of those addressing these questions, both among regular and sectarian authors, recommended that any fermented drinks consumed be brewed at home, Dunglison, following the lead of William Kitchiner, recommended this for athletes in training; William Buchan and Wooster Beach (noted below) made it a general recommendation. Adulteration with ardent spirits or other undesirable additives was thereby to be avoided. (The same recommendation, of course, is found in the Mormon health code.)

¹⁵See Rorabaugh, op. cit., Nissenbaum, op. cit., pp. 69–85; and more generally, John Allen Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), and Clifford S. Griffin, *Their Brothers Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800–1865* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1960).

¹⁶Buchan's work, reprinted many times in the U.S. (e.g., 1795, 1809, 1816, 1828), was termed the most important domestic self-help book in America by Clarke et al in their centennial retrospective. The influence of Wesley, whose health guide was reprinted many times in nineteenth century America, was almost as great. *Primitive Physic* was first published in 1747; *Domestic Medicine* in 1769. See John B. Blake, "From Buchan to Fishbein: The Literature of Domestic Medicine," in Risse, Numbers, and Leavitt, eds., op. cit., pp. 11–30. Other references are from Samuel Thomson, *New Guide to Health; or, Botanic Family Physician* . . . Fifth Edition (St. Clairsville, 1828), p. 83; Wooster Beach, MD, *The American Practice of Medicine* . . . (New York, 1833) 1:30–32; and Kett, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁷On Mormon practices during this time, see Peterson, op. cit., pp. 22–41.

¹⁸Combe, op. cit., p. 280. Jackson, op. cit., p. 325, felt that fermented drinks were appropriate in "the lymphatic temperament, in which the organs are but little excitable; while engaged in

arduous muscular exertions; with those advanced in life; during extremely cold, or excessively warm weather, enervating the forces; and when the quality of the food is not such as to excite the stomach sufficiently for digestion." Drake, recall, felt that constitutions requiring such drinks, were "few."

¹⁹Peterson, op. cit., p. 38.

²⁰Most notably Nissenbaum, op. cit. On Alcott see James C. Whorton, "'Christian Physiology': William Alcott's Prescription for the Millenium," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 49: 466–481 (1975).

²¹Nissenbaum, op. cit., pp. 30, 105–124; H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., "The Disease of Masturbation: Values and the Concept of Disease," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 48:234–248 (1974), also reprinted in Leavitt and Numbers, eds., op. cit., pp. 15–23.

²²M.B. Shipp, MD, *Infancy and Childhood* (Salt Lake City: Salt Lake Sanitarian, N.D.), p. 25.

²³Drake, op. cit., p. 5; Nissenbaum, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁴Rorabaugh, op. cit., pp. 113–116; Shryock, op. cit., p. 113. The *Medical Repository* asserted in 1818 that more meat was consumed in America than in any other country (19:iii), and Daniel Drake three decades later could still write that "the quantity of animal food consumed in the [Mississippi] Valley is very great. Indeed, it may be affirmed that more is eaten than by any equal number of people in the whole world. With a limited number of exceptions, meat is on the table three times a day, and as often eaten by the great majority." Daniel Drake, *A Systematic Treatise, Historical, Etiological and Practical, on the Principle Diseases of the Interior Valley of North America . . .* (Cincinnati, 1850), 1:654–655.

²⁵Rosenberg, op. cit., pp. 30, 42 (footnote 4).

²⁶Ticknor, op. cit., p. 37.

²⁷Combe, op. cit., p. 227; Edward Hitchcock, *Dyspepsy Forestalled and Resisted, or Lectures on Diet, Regimen, and Employment* (Amherst, 1831), p. 117. Hitchcock, a professor of chemistry and natural history at Amherst College, and later president, was not a physician and is not in the bibliographies. His lectures in many ways reflect the leading medical wisdom of the day and in others are closer to the health crusade then beginning.

²⁸Combe, op. cit., p. 227. An entertaining review of this notion carried to the extreme is James C. Whorton, "'Tempest in a Flesh-Pot': The Formulation of a Physiological Rationale for Vegetarianism," *J. Hist. Med. and Allied Sciences* 32:115–139 (1977), also reprinted in Leavitt and Numbers, eds., op. cit. pp. 315–330.

²⁹Ticknor, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁰D&C 89:13, 11.

³¹Although central to the Grahamite movement, this notion was both broader and older. Some botanics espoused it, and the debate among orthodox physicians is regularly alluded to in texts dealing with diet. Rorabaugh, op. cit., pp. 99–100, notes that coffee and tea consumption was rather limited in comparison to distilled and fermented drinks at this time. Estimated annual per capita coffee consumption in 1830 was only five pounds (*up* significantly over the previous decade), while the same figure for tea in 1832 was less than one pound (or 250 cups).

³²Jackson, op. cit., pp. 322–323.

³³Combe, op. cit., p. 272.

³⁴Ticknor, op. cit., p. 106. The Second Edition of the Bache and Wood *Dispensatory* (1834) was in general agreement, noting that tea when "taken moderately, and by healthy individuals, . . . may be considered perfectly harmless; but long continued in excessive quantity, it is capable of inducing unpleasant nervous and dyspeptic symptoms, the necessary consequences of over excitement of the brain and stomach." Green tea, in particular, was to be avoided by those "whose nervous systems are peculiarly excitable" and "dyspeptic individuals" (p. 667) John Redman Coxe, in *The American Dispensatory* Eighth Edition, (Philadelphia, 1830), p. 216, felt coffee's "more or less wholesome effect greatly depends on the climate, as well as the age, constitution, and other peculiarities of the individual. Hence it cannot be commended to children, or persons of a hot, choleric, nervous, or phthisical habit; nor will it be so useful in warm, as in cold and temperate climates." Looking forward a few years, the same basic assessment is made by Drake, op. cit. (1850), 1:658–661, and the well-respected Jacob Bigelow, in "On Coffee and Tea; and their Medicinal Effects," in his *Nature in Disease* (Boston, 1854), pp. 289–314. Sir William Osler, in reviewing the outstanding contributions of Beaumont's 1833 work, cited among other things his confirmation of "the injurious effects of tea and coffee, when taken in excess." See

Osler's "William Beaumont, A Pioneer American Physiologist," reprinted in the Dover reprint of Beaumont's work (New York, 1959), p. xxvi.

³⁵Combe, op. cit., p. 276.

³⁶Ticknor, op. cit., p. 105. Also see Paris, op. cit., pp. 82, 90; Hitchcock, op. cit., p. 170; and Drake (1850), op. cit., 1:659.

³⁷Combe, op. cit., p. 273. Drake several years later wrestled with the fact that folks down in New Orleans were taking with apparent impunity drinks "cooled down to fifty degrees, a temperature which frequently proves fatal in the higher laltitudes." He concluded that the Southerners must have been mixing their water "with ardent spirit or wine . . . which corrects the effects of a low temperature." Drake (1850), op. cit., 1:662.

³⁸Rorabaugh, op. cit., p. 98.

³⁹John Wesley, *Primitive Physic* . . . 23rd edition (London, 1791), pp. 29–30; William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine* (Exeter, 1828, from "the twenty-second English edition"), pp. 20–21; Thomas Ruble, *The American Medical Guide* . . . (Richmond [Ky], 1810), pp. 59–61; Anthony Benezet, *The Family Physician* . . . (Cincinnati, 1826), pp. 62, 79; John C. Gunn, *Domestic Medicine* (Ohio?, 1832), pp. 145–149; Beach, op. cit., 1:25–27; F. K. Robertson, *The Book of Health* (Bennington, 1843), p. 245.

⁴⁰Rosenberg, op. cit., p. 73.

⁴¹Grace G. Stewart, "A History of the Medicinal Use of Tobacco, 1492–1860," *Medical History* 11:228–268.

⁴²Ticknor, op. cit., pp. 107–118. The 1833 *Dispensatory* (p. 630) reported that excessive use of tobacco "enfeebles the digestive powers, produces emaciation and general debility, and lays the foundation of serious disorders of the nervous system." Over two decades later the range of opinion is illustrated by Drake (1850), op. cit., who advised that tobacco was an "evil" which should be "resisted in every practical way" (1:673–676); and Bigelow (op. cit.) who felt that "when moderately taken," it was "improbable" that tobacco had "much influence in wearing out the constitution, or abridging the usual period of life" (p. 332). The decline of tobacco as a useful therpeutic tool can be traced easily in the successive *Dispensatories* of the period.

⁴³Peterson, op. cit., pp. 26–27.

⁴⁴This narrow interpretation was not made in the early decades after the Word of Wisdom was announced. For the early reference to tobacco in bruises, see Stewart, op. cit., p. 253.

⁴⁵Josiah Richardson, Comp., *The New England Farrier, and Family Physician* . . . (Exeter [N.H.], 1828), p. 362; S.W. Coles, *The American Veterinarian* . . . (Boston, 1849), pp. 35, 212–213.

⁴⁶Coles, op. cit., pp. 93, 175, 271.

⁴⁷John Jaques, *A Catechism for Children* Liverpool, 1854 (and many Salt Lake City editions), p. 63.

⁴⁸Detailed in Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Brigham Young in Life and Death: A Medical Overview," *Journal of Mormon History* 5:79–103 (1978). On changing therapy in general and the increasing use of alcohol in particular, see Charles E. Rosenberg, "The Therapeutic Revolution: Medicine, Meaning, and Social Change in Nineteenth Century America," in Morris J. Vogel and Charles E. Rosenberg, eds., *The Therapeutic Revolution: Essays in the Social History of American Medicine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), pp. 3–25. Also John Harley Warner, "Physiological Theory and Therapeutic Explanation in the 1860's: The British Debate on the Medical Use of Alcohol," *Bull. Hist Med.* 54:235–257 (1980).

Peterson, op. cit., found an ambivalent but overall relaxed atmosphere toward the Word of Wisdom in the decade or so after it was announced. Emphasis in practice was on temperance rather than abstinence, and wine and tobacco were widely tolerated. As the Mormons moved west, their compliance dropped to a low ebb which continued until about 1860. After this time, increased adherence became evident through an apparently economically motivated retrenchment on the health code. The entire century was marked by fluctuating emphasis, with periodic short-lived reforms, but never any absolutely binding requirement that members abstain from condemned items. The practical interpretation most often required only that members be temperate. Overall, compliance increased significantly in the last decades of the century.

⁴⁹See Thomas G. Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," in this issue of *Dialogue*.

⁵⁰Leonard J. Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the 'Word of Wisdom,'" *BYU Studies* 1:37–49 (Winter 1959).

⁵¹See summation of Peterson, *op. cit.*, in Note 48 above. Proverbs 3:1, 2, 8, 16 should be contrasted with D&C 89:18–21.

⁵²"Sickness and Health in America: An Overview," in Leavitt and Numbers, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 3–10.

⁵³Lyon and Nelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–93.

⁵⁴Chewing, an American innovation, dominated the U.S. market throughout the century. On the relative risks see the *Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, 1979*, especially chapters 1, 2, and 13. The third leading tobacco-implicated disease—behind heart disease and cancer—is chronic obstructive lung disease (e.g., emphysema), also tied principally to cigarettes. While the figures are not strictly comparable, some indication of the overwhelming impact of smoking vis-a-vis the Word of Wisdom in general is that non-smokers are estimated to live eight years longer than smokers of two packs or more a day, possibly a greater margin than Mormons have over non-Mormons—in part because half of the non-Mormons don't smoke. An interesting new indictment of "snuff-dipping," which does not change the historical equation significantly, is Deborah M. Winn, et al, "Snuff Dipping and Oral Cancer Among Women in the Southern United States," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 304:745–749 (March 26, 1981); see also the editorial response on pp. 778–779 in the same issue.

⁵⁵Based on my own examination of sexton's reports for Nauvoo and Salt Lake City, but fully corroborated in Ralph T. Richards, *Of Medicine, Hospitals and Doctors* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1953) pp. 140–172; and William J. Reals and Sidney Merlis, "Mormon Winter Quarters: A Medical Note," *Bulletin of the Creighton University School of Medicine* 4:46–49 (1947). On health problems at this time see among others Erwin H. Ackerknecht, "Diseases in the Middle West," in *Essays in the History of Medicine in Honor of David J. Davis, MD, PhD*. (Chicago: Davis Lecture Committee [of the University of Illinois], 1965), pp. 168–181; Raymond N. Doetsch, *Journey to the Green and Golden Lands: The Epic of Survival on the Wagon Train* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1976), pp. 74–98; and Anthony J. Lorenz, "Scurvy in the Gold Rush," *J. Hist. Med. and Allied Sciences* 12:473–510 (1957)

⁵⁶Despite the poor understanding of why such measures were beneficial, some potentially effective versions of all were advocated by contemporaries of the Mormons. Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 259, advocated the potentially invaluable measure of boiling contaminated water as early as 1828. Curiously Brigham Young made a similar recommendation four decades later, though with hardly the same emphasis given the Word of Wisdom. Additionally, the early Mormons attempted some other measures such as swamp drainage, patient isolation and dietary treatments (beyond the Word of Wisdom) for scurvy, but with such flawed understanding that little was accomplished by their efforts.

⁵⁷"Report of Surgeon E. P. Vollum, USA," in John Shaw Billings, *War Department Surgeon General's Office Circular No. 8, "Report on the Hygiene of the United States Army,"* May 1, 1875 (Washington, D.C., 1875), pp. 344–345. Census reports for 1860, 1870 and 1880, to select just a few years, support Vollum's impression, as do the Salt Lake City sexton's reports. Half to two-thirds of reported annual deaths were in those under age five. For comparison, this age group in 1980 accounts for roughly two to three percent of annual deaths.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 344. The general level of contemporary medical understanding is well covered in Phyllis Allen, "Etiological Theory in American Prior to the Civil War," *J. Hist. Med. and Allied Sciences* 2:489–520 (1947); Erwin H. Ackerknecht, "Anticontagionism Between 1821 and 1867," *Bull. Hist. Med.* 22:562–593 (1948); and Phyllis Allen Richmond, "American Attitudes Toward the Germ Theory of Disease (1860–1880)," *J. Hist. Med. and Allied Sciences* 9:428–454 (1954).

⁵⁹Rorabaugh, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–97, briefly discusses this in broader context, and notes that it was "only after the improvement of public water supplies that temperance zealots embraced the idea of 'Cold Water' as a substitute for alcohol."

⁶⁰For example, very recent studies suggest an association between coffee consumption and cancer of the pancreas, and also indicate a link between alcohol, and possibly caffeine, during pregnancy and birth defects. While most medical authorities do not condemn the "temperate" use of these items in healthy adults, if these associations are confirmed new recommendations may be forthcoming.

DID THE WORD OF WISDOM BECOME A COMMANDMENT IN 1851?

ROBERT J. McCUE

JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH, APOSTLE AND CHURCH HISTORIAN, once published an answer to an inquiry about when the Word of Wisdom became a commandment. His response, widely accepted as definitive both then and subsequently, was included in his popular *Answers to Gospel Questions*:

September 9, 1851, President Brigham Young stated that the members of the Church had had sufficient time to be taught the import of this revelation, and that henceforth it was to be considered a divine commandment. This was first put before the male members of the congregation and then before the women and by unanimous vote accepted.¹

Even a casual reading of nineteenth-century diaries and sermons suggests, however, that Smith's perception was not always the accepted view of his predecessors. This article will examine some of these nineteenth-century sources to see if this paradox can be resolved.

As first published, the actual text of the Word of Wisdom contained no explicit guidance on the question of its application. Originally beginning with what is now the fourth verse, the revelation simply stated that the Church had been "warned . . . and [I] forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation." Those who remembered "to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments," were to be blessed with health and "great treasures of knowledge."²

The publication committee which assembled the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835 added an italicized introduction to this revelation (as they did to a number of others) informing members that this instruction was "sent greeting; not by commandment, or constraint, but by revelation and the word of

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wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints. . . . Given for a principle with promise. . . .” For reasons presently unclear, this introduction was included as part of the revelation itself when the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was published and thus was part of the revelatory text canonized in 1880.

Whatever the theoretical implications of these developments, the practical history of the Word of Wisdom followed a seemingly independent course. As Paul Peterson has amply shown, in the 1830s this revelation was preached and followed with very little consistency. Some members clearly viewed compliance with these words of wisdom as obligatory for good standing within the Church, while others unmistakably rejected this notion. While consumption of “strong drink” occasionally turned up among grounds for excommunication, other proscribed items remained widely, if temperately, used throughout the decade. By the 1840s the more tolerant attitude had been adopted by the Church at large. Nauvoo liberalized its liquor control laws, and Joseph Smith demonstrated by words and action that his personal approach was one of moderation rather than abstinence. The latter years of this decade saw a further relaxation of any practical proscription implied in the Mormon health code, and Mormon pioneers who could afford it included tea, coffee and alcohol among the staples they carried west. (The Mormon *Nauvoo Neighbor*, in fact, specifically recommended that each family take a pound of tea, a pound of coffee and a gallon of alcohol.) By 1851, the pivotal year in the Joseph Fielding Smith quotation above, adherence to the Word of Wisdom had been eroded even further by frontier conditions, and compliance may well have been at its nineteenth-century nadir.³

It is in this rather surprising context in a church conference of September 9, 1851, that Brigham Young addressed a theme to which he would periodically return over the coming years and re-emphasized the guidelines set forth in the Word of Wisdom. The published proceedings of that conference, as recorded in Orson Hyde’s *Frontier Guardian* and repeated in the *Millennial Star*, reveal that President Young indeed called for a vote on observance of the Word of Wisdom:

President Young rose to put the motion and called on all the sisters who will leave off the use of Tea, Coffee, etc., to manifest it by raising the right hand; seconded and carried.

And then put the following motion; calling on all the boys who were under ninety years of age who would covenant to leave off the use of Tobacco, Whiskey and all things mentioned in the Word of Wisdom to manifest in it like manner, which was carried unanimously.⁴

President Young also reportedly said that

Those who go with me, will keep the Word of Wisdom, and if the High Priests, the Seventies, the Elders, and others will not serve the Lord, we will sever them from the Church. I will draw the line and know who is for the Lord and who is not, and those who will not keep the Word of Wisdom, I will cut off from the Church; . . .⁵

This seems clear enough, though it must be remembered that the *Guardian* account is a summary rather than a verbatim transcript. Because it does not give exact details, it is open to interpretation, and Joseph Fielding Smith has interpreted the unanimous vote of the conference to be a formal acceptance of the Word of Wisdom as a commandment. Brigham Young's threat to "cut off" violators is therefore a confirmation that he intended it to be accepted as a commandment from that time forward. While Smith's interpretation is entirely consistent with this report of the conference, another interpretation seems to fit even better: that is, the vote was simply a personal commitment by those present to abstain from items condemned in the Word of Wisdom. Since subsequent statements by Brigham Young and his associates can be cited as support for both interpretations, a further examination of the evidence is in order.

In support of the view that after September 9, 1851, the Word of Wisdom was accepted by church leaders as a commandment, one can cite a statement by Parley P. Pratt on December 26, 1853, to the effect that young men who intended to get drunk and cause trouble at every opportunity should be "cut off from the Church."⁶ Even stronger is a statement by Brigham Young himself in October, 1859:

My counsel to the Elders of Israel is to let whiskey, brandy and other strong drinks alone. . . . It is my positive counsel and command that drinking liquor be stopped. . . . In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command the Elders of Israel . . . to cease drinking strong drink from this time henceforth, until you really need it . . . [for medicine]. I now again request the authorities of this church . . . to sever from this society those who will not cease getting drunk.⁷

The following December the president further promised to "cut off from the Church" all "thieves, drunkards, and other offenders against good order, morality, and the well-being of society."⁸ That this was no idle threat is confirmed by Heber C. Kimball, who reported early in January, 1860, that "a few days ago" a drunkard had been severed from the Church, and that others would follow soon if they did not take pains to repent.⁹

Another case where Brigham Young seemingly viewed the Word of Wisdom as a commandment is in an address in May, 1870. In this instance he said that those who thought they "would die" if they could not have their tea would be better off to take to their beds and die than live and break "the requests of Heaven," and those who felt that they would die without their tobacco would die instead with it, "and they will die transgressing the revelations and commands of Heaven." While this sounds quite firm, his next statement considerably softened the position:

Now let us observe the Word of Wisdom. Shall I take a vote on it? Everyone would vote [in favor], but who would observe it? A good many, but not all.¹⁰

Had the vote twenty years earlier made the Word of Wisdom a binding commandment? An apparent answer came later in the sermon:

The observance of the Word of Wisdom, or interpretation of God's requirements on this subject, must be left, partially, with the people. We cannot make laws like the Medes and Persians. We cannot say you shall never drink a cup of tea, or you shall never taste of this, or you shall never taste of that. . . .

The notion of "commandment" is used again in a sermon by Brigham Young in March, 1862:

Why not govern and control the appetite that it may be subject to the law of Christ? But how is it? Why, "I must have some tobacco if I am damned for it . . ." Or, "I must have a cup of tea if I am damned for it . . ." It is like saying to our Heavenly Father, "I will not mind you, I will not obey your commandments, but I will have my own way and follow the bent of my own inclinations."¹¹

Another similarly strong statement came in May, 1867, when Brigham advised the Saints that "the Spirit signifies that we should cease drinking tea, coffee, and liquor, and chewing tobacco."¹²

In further support of a "commandment" interpretation can also be placed the testimony of Daniel H. Wells who, in April, 1869, used the term "covenant" when referring to the Word of Wisdom—reminding the Saints that they had entered into a covenant not to partake of substances condemned in the Word of Wisdom.¹³ Whether he had in mind some implied covenant entered into at baptism or something more specific, such as the vote of 1851, is not clear.

The assertion that the Word of Wisdom was *not* considered a commandment during the lifetime of Brigham Young is supported by a much larger body of evidence than the above. Consider, for example, the very pointed statement of Orson Pratt in May, 1855. After strongly urging his audience to observe the injunctions of the Word of Wisdom and to use their influence on others to do likewise he made this significant qualification: "I am aware that it is not by constraint, and a man should not constrain his family to obey it."¹⁴

As late as September, 1859, Heber C. Kimball complained that it was costing him too much to keep his household supplied with such items as coffee and tea.¹⁵ At about the same time Daniel H. Wells admitted that he liked to keep liquor in his home for use in cases of sickness,¹⁶ an attitude hardly consistent with the strict prohibition of Section 89 but quite consistent with President Young's earlier command to cease using alcohol except in cases of illness.

In an 1860 sermon Brigham Young took the brethren to task for their tobacco chewing, not because it violated a commandment, but because it was uncouth, immodest, filthy and offensive to those who observed the chewer. "If you must use tobacco, put a small portion in your mouth when no person sees you, and be careful that no one sees you chew it. I do not charge you with sin."¹⁷ Indeed it was not until the year of this sermon that Brigham himself gave up the use of tobacco.¹⁸ Three years later Daniel H. Wells scolded the bishops for sending tobacco users to haul stone for the temple,

expecting him to secure tobacco for them, and then failing to pay for it. He requested that in future they “either send men that do not use tobacco, or send them with a supply.”¹⁹

Further evidence that the Mormon leadership did not view the Word of Wisdom as an established commandment is evident in their response to the economic threat of a growing Gentile mercantile establishment. Over a five-year period beginning in 1861, many statements were made by Young, Wells, Kimball and especially Apostle George A. Smith, encouraging local production of tea, coffee, tobacco and alcoholic beverages for the Mormon market in order to save the money that was being sent out of the territory to purchase these items.²⁰

Other statements made by officers of the Church during this time are also consistent with a condemnatory but permissive attitude. For instance, within two years of commanding the elders to stop indulging in strong drink, Brigham Young stated in April, 1861:

Some of the brethren are very strenuous upon the “Word of Wisdom”, and would like to have me preach upon it, and urge it upon the brethren, and make it a test of fellowship. I do not think I shall do so. I have never done so.²¹

Two years later he is reported to have remarked, “You have read that excellent piece of advice called the ‘Word of Wisdom’. I shall not say you must obey it; . . .”²² In June, 1864, he said that he looked forward to the time when pure, locally produced wine would be available for use in the sacrament. “I do not know that it would injure us to drink wine of our own make, although we would be better without it than to drink it to excess.”²³

Further light is shed by an 1865 statement of President Young:

I will not call upon you to enter into a covenant to do this [abstain from the use of tobacco] for some might break their covenants and that would be a sin, . . . yet I have no objection to aged persons, when they are fatigued and feel infirm, taking a little stimulus that will do them good.²⁴

It seems apparent from this statement that as late as October, 1865, the prophet did not consider some non-observance of the Word of Wisdom to be a serious sin unless the individual had made a specific covenant to observe the code.

In the Spring of 1867 the president was somewhat more forceful in his pronouncements, referring to the Word of Wisdom as “the word of the Lord,” and telling his listeners that although they had a great many privileges, indulgence in liquor and other injurious substances was not one of them.²⁵ This position was affirmed in a sermon of Ezra T. Benson at the same conference. He reminded the audience that the Lord does not require anything of his children that they are unable to do, that he had been patient with them in this matter, and it looked as if “He is going to require these things at our hands.” But he stopped short of saying that it was a commandment, explaining instead:

Supposing he had given the Word of Wisdom as a command, how many of us would have been here? I do not know; but he gave this without command or constraint, observing that it would be pleasing in His sight for His people to obey its precepts. Ought we not to try to please our Heavenly Father? . . .²⁶

A third sermon delivered on the same day as the two just noted also dealt with the Word of Wisdom. In this instance George Q. Cannon compared the foolishness of ancient Israel in not observing the *commandment* to sprinkle blood on their door posts with the foolishness of latter-day Israel in not heeding the *counsel* given in the Word of Wisdom.²⁷ The word “commandment” was avoided in the latter instance even though it would have made the comparison to ancient Israel much more forceful. The same type of omission is apparent in an address by the same speaker two weeks later.²⁸ In January, 1868, Brigham Young again appealed for a more strict observance of the Word of Wisdom, referring to it as the will of God, but with no intimation that he considered it to be mandatory.²⁹

The president’s son, Brigham Young, Jr., in October, 1872, remarked that from the way the Word of Wisdom was being ignored he could only conclude that the people did not consider it came from God. He warned that if those called to occupy executive positions in the Church did not observe the Word of Wisdom “it will grieve the Spirit of the Lord, and if they do not turn and repent they will leave the Church. . . . The Presiding Elders of this Church are called to live the Word of Wisdom.”³⁰

The last recorded remarks of Brigham Young on this subject were made in a sermon of April, 1877, shortly before his death. In this he referred to those men who partake of “those things which the Lord has warned us against, and which he has said are not good for man” as a disgrace to themselves and the name of saint,³¹—again, a statement that is in accord with an attitude of advice and counsel rather than a conviction that a positive commandment had been given.

An apparent clincher in this argument comes from George Q. Cannon three years after the death of Brigham Young in an address in Salt Lake City on July 25, 1880. After remarking that it is a very serious thing to trifle with the promise given in the Word of Wisdom, he made the following significant statement:

It [the Word of Wisdom] appeals to our sense of right that a commandment does not, because a commandment comes with strict injunctions which leaves no alternative but to obey; but this is a word of counsel by a kind father. . . .³²

There can be no misunderstanding this statement. Cannon, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles and Brigham Young’s last personal secretary, in mid-1880 did not consider the Word of Wisdom to be a commandment.

Thus there seems to be conclusive evidence that the Word of Wisdom was not thought of as a commandment by Brigham Young, his close associates or by the Church in general during the period of President Young’s leadership. The idea to the contrary is unsupported by any substantial evidence. The vote

of the 1851 conference on the observance of the Word of Wisdom was apparently one of personal, individual commitment rather than acceptance by the Church of the Word of Wisdom as a commandment. On at least two other occasions during Brigham Young's administration, the suggestion was made that such a vote be taken again, but the President refrained from doing so lest the people make a covenant which he feared, from past experience, many would not succeed in keeping.

As Paul Peterson reconstructs the Mormon experience during the years of Young's administration, the last few years saw a temporary improvement in adherence to the Word of Wisdom. The years of President Taylor's administration were marked by much higher compliance. This was in large part a reflection of what Peterson has termed the "Word of Wisdom reformation of 1883-1884." Surprisingly, it was not until this late date that the Quorum of the Twelve pledged to "more fully observe the word of wisdom, as we have all more or less been negligent upon that point."³³

When and how then did some church leaders conclude that the Word of Wisdom had been formally accepted by the Church as a commandment? As a generation of younger men, raised in the Church in Utah, entered the ranks of the General Authorities a stronger position on Word of Wisdom observance developed. These men preached numerous sermons on the subject, urging that its observance be a test of worthiness and fellowship.³⁴ It seems to have been some of these sermons that gave birth to the idea that the Word of Wisdom had been declared by President Brigham Young in 1851 to be a commandment. In the October, 1894, conference Brigham Young, Jr., stated that

If I remember aright, I heard from this stand the servant of God say that the time was when the Word of Wisdom came to us as a word of persuasion and counsel, but now, he said, it is a commandment from God that this people observe it. Does anyone remember hearing those words from this stand more than twenty years ago? I remember it. . . .³⁵

No one immediately responded to Elder Young's query, but the next day Heber J. Grant commented that

Brother Brigham stated to us here yesterday that twenty years ago the Prophet of God laid it down to this people that the Word of Wisdom was no longer given merely by way of constraint [sic], but that it was from that time a commandment of God that we keep it.³⁶

In the next general conference Joseph F. Smith reinforced this idea when he said,

In the beginning it was not given by commandment, lest we should be under condemnation if we did not observe it; . . . In later times, however, it was revealed through President Brigham Young that we had reached a point in our experience when the Word of Wisdom became a law unto the people, and they were required to obey it.³⁷

These statements mark a significant development: Brigham Young, Jr.'s rather imprecise reference to something that happened "more than twenty years ago" apparently was accepted by both Heber J. Grant and Joseph F. Smith, the latter identifying the prophet as Brigham Young.³⁸ It is probably significant that none of these speakers cited any dates, and that Heber J. Grant did not claim to have heard the statement that Brigham Jr. and Joseph F. Smith alluded to. The only known incident which these two could be recalling was the September, 1851, conference; the "more than twenty years" that Young mentioned must really have been forty-three. Brigham Jr. would have been nearly sixteen years of age at that conference, and Joseph F. Smith, nearly fourteen. They were both old enough to have remembered, although imperfectly, the proceedings of that day. Grant, however, was born five years after the conference.³⁹

The statement that the Word of Wisdom was changed to a commandment by Brigham Young has been repeated a number of times in the ensuing years, both in conference addresses and printed articles,⁴⁰ and it is apparent that the question of date has been raised without successful answer. Anthon H. Lund, for example, in the April, 1911, conference said, "We have inquiries from several persons asking us when the Word of Wisdom was made a commandment. I do not know that we can give such information, . . ." ⁴¹ And two and a half years later, ". . . even if you say about the Word of Wisdom, that it was not given as a commandment but is a word of counsel, do not feel that gives you any more liberty to go contrary to the advice given. . . ." ⁴² President Joseph F. Smith did not share his counselor's lack of persuasion in this matter and Lund's failure to affirm that the Word of Wisdom was a commandment brought him to his feet to add that "it was announced from this stand, by President Brigham Young, that the Word of Wisdom was a revelation and a command of the Lord."⁴³ But as late as April, 1918, Lund was still avoiding the use of the word "commandment" with respect to the Word of Wisdom, preferring instead the term "wholesome advice."⁴⁴

Any interest in further documenting the claim that Brigham Young declared the Word of Wisdom to be a commandment was apparently dropped at the death of Anthon H. Lund. David A. Smith spoke of it being "accepted as a revelation and made binding upon the Church,"⁴⁵ and Heber J. Grant talked about "one of the laws of the Gospel of Jesus Christ [being] that each and every Latter-day Saint shall keep what is known as the Word of Wisdom,"⁴⁶ but neither of them mentioned Brigham Young or "commandment."⁴⁷ It seems apparent that it was not until 1957 that someone finally ventured to assign a date to Brigham Young's alleged pronouncement. It was then, in the item with which this discussion began, that Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr., clearly stated that the change was made on September 9, 1851.⁴⁸ It seems appropriate for the son of President Joseph F. Smith to make such a pronouncement.

It can only be concluded from the available evidence that no General Conference of the Church has ever specifically voted to change the status of the Word of Wisdom from counsel to commandment. Indeed, for most of the

nineteenth century, efforts to elevate the Word of Wisdom to a commandment were rejected by church leaders. Around the turn of the century, this philosophy changed, and the notion that Brigham Young had made the Word of Wisdom a commandment became popular. In fact, however, the first president of the Church to publicly declare the Word of Wisdom a commandment apparently was Joseph F. Smith. Thereafter, distinctions were lost. Heber J. Grant, for example, maintained that the Word of Wisdom *must* be lived strictly for a member to be in good standing, but not because Brigham Young or others had said it was a “commandment”—rather because it was the will of God.⁴⁹ This is the position that has tended to prevail since that time, notwithstanding the 1957 resurrection of the Brigham Young story.

Rather than worrying about whether God has changed his mind about the status of the Word of Wisdom, it is perhaps appropriate to think in terms of the distinction between “rules” and “laws” which J. Reuben Clark Jr. outlined in 1935:

. . . the Church cannot change the laws of God. They stand immutable. We may change the rules; we may say that a drunkard . . . [or] he who drinks tea and coffee may go into the temple. These rules we may change. But we cannot change the biological law that he who uses narcotics must pay the penalty somehow, somewhere, sometime. . . .⁵⁰

In the nineteenth century the use of tea or coffee or tobacco or alcohol did not disqualify a member of the Church from holding office or entering the temple as is now the case. That a significant change has taken place is obvious, but a change of rules rather than of law; a change of rules that is, however, in harmony with Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants which proclaims itself to be “adapted to the capacity of the . . . weakest of all . . . who are or can be called saints.”⁵¹

NOTES

¹Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1957), I, p. 198. Joseph Fielding Smith, the son of Joseph F. Smith, became an Apostle in 1910, President of the Twelve in 1951, and was Church Historian when this book was published.

²The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952, p. 154.

³Paul H. Peterson, “An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom,” Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972, pp. 43–45.

⁴*Frontier Guardian*, Kanessville, Iowa, Vol. III, no. 22 (November 28, 1851), [repeated in the *Millennial Star*, Vol XIV, no. 3 (February 1, 1852), p. 35.] [Another account of the conference is contained in the “Sixth General Epistle of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” as recorded in the *Frontier Guardian*, III, no. 21 (November 14, 1851), [repeated in the *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, no. 2 (January 15, 1852), p. 25]. The “Epistle” contributes nothing to clarification of the problem, recording only that “the conference voted to observe the words [sic] of wisdom, and particularly to dispense with the use of tea, coffee, snuff, and tobacco.”]

These accounts have the women, not the men, voting first, as Smith has it.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Parley P. Pratt, Dec. 26, 1853, in G.D. Watts et al., compilers, *Journal of Discourses of Brigham Young, his two Counsellors, The Twelve Apostles and Others* (Liverpool: F.D. and S.W. Richards, 1854–86), VI, p. 252. (Referred to hereafter as *J.D.*) Pratt was a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles from 1835 to 1857.

⁷Brigham Young, Oct. 8, 1859, *ibid.*, VII, p. 337. It will be noted that it is drunkenness which is condemned here, not a general failure to comply with the Word of Wisdom. Even though President Young used the word “commandment” he clearly labelled it as his personal commandment. It could be argued that any statement made by a prophet is equivalent to a commandment from God, but this argument is irrelevant in this case since “command” did not apply to a general observance of the Word of Wisdom.

⁸Brigham Young, Dec. 18, 1859, *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹Heber C. Kimball, Jan. 1, 1860, *ibid.*, p. 350. Kimball was first counselor to Brigham Young from 1847 until his death in 1868.

¹⁰Brigham Young, May 6, 1870, *ibid.*, XIV, p. 20.

¹¹Brigham Young, Mar. 16, 1862, *ibid.*, IX, p. 257.

¹²Brigham Young, May 26, 1867, *ibid.*, XII, p. 51. See also pp. 104, 117.

¹³Daniel H. Wells, Apr. 7, 1869, *ibid.*, XIII, p. 25. Wells was second counselor to Brigham Young from 1857 to 1877.

¹⁴Orson Pratt, May 20, 1855, *ibid.*, III, p. 19. Pratt was a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles from 1835 to 1881.

¹⁵Heber C. Kimball, Sept. 11, 1859, *ibid.*, VII, p. 169.

¹⁶Daniel H. Wells, Oct. 16, 1859, *ibid.*, p. 295.

¹⁷Brigham Young, Mar. 10, 1860, *ibid.*, p. 361.

¹⁸Dean Jessee, *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974, p. 33. See also Brigham Young, Oct. 9, 1865, *J.D.* XI, p. 140.

¹⁹Daniel H. Wells, Apr. 6, 1863, *J.D.* X, p. 139.

²⁰Brigham Young, Apr. 7, 1861, *ibid.*, IX, pp. 35–6; June 7, 1863, *ibid.*, X, p. 202; Apr. 20, 1863, *ibid.*, p. 226; Oct. 9, 1865, *ibid.*, XI, p. 140; George A. Smith, Mar. 10, 1861, *ibid.*, IX, p. 68; Sept. 10, 1861, *ibid.*, p. 113; Daniel H. Wells, Sept. 29, 1961, *ibid.*, IX, pp. 183–4. Leonard Arrington has treated this topic in his “Economic Aspects of the Word of Wisdom,” *Brigham Young University Studies*, Vol. I, no. 1 (Winter 1959), pp. 37–49. George A. Smith was ordained an Apostle in 1839, became Church Historian in 1854, and first counselor to Brigham Young in 1868.

²¹Brigham Young, Apr. 7, 1861, *ibid.*, IX, p. 35.

²²Brigham Young, June 7, 1863, *ibid.*, X, p. 202.

²³Brigham Young, June 4, 1864, *ibid.*, p. 300.

²⁴Brigham Young, Oct. 9, 1865, *J.D.*, XI, p. 140. The prophet’s fears that some might break their covenants is interesting when one remembers what took place in 1851 and the subsequent preaching against the apparent widespread non-observance of the Word of Wisdom. Many apparently broke the covenant made at that time.

²⁵Brigham Young, Apr. 7, 1867, *ibid.*, XII, pp. 29–30.

²⁶Ezra T. Benson, Apr. 7, 1867, *ibid.*, XI, p. 367. Benson was a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles from 1846 to 1869.

²⁷George Q. Cannon, Apr. 7, 1867, *ibid.*, XII, p. 17. (Emphasis added.) Cannon became a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles in 1859 and was personal secretary to Brigham Young when this sermon was given.

²⁸George Q. Cannon, Apr. 21, 1867, *ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁹Brigham Young, Jan. 12, 1868, *ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁰Brigham Young, Jr., Oct. 8, 1872, *ibid.*, XV, pp. 193–95.

³¹Brigham Young, Apr. 29, 1877, *ibid.*, XIX, p. 6.

³²George Q. Cannon, July 25, 1880, *ibid.*, XXII, p. 106.

³³Peterson, “Historical Analysis . . .,” p. 71, and Chapter VI generally. See also Thomas Alexander, “From Principle to Requirement: The Adoption of the Current Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom,” in this issue of *Dialogue* for a discussion of the unlikely notion that John Taylor made the Word of Wisdom a commandment.

³⁴See, for example, talks by the following in “Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” unpublished manuscript (Salt Lake City: Church Historical Department) (cited hereafter as “J.H.”) Heber J. Grant, Oct. 5, 1883, Oct. 10, 1888, Oct. 4, 1889, Oct. 6, 1894, Oct. 4, 1895; J. Golden Kimball, Oct. 7, 1894; Francis M. Lyman, April 8, 1889, Apr. 5, 1890, Apr. 3, 1892, Apr. 5, 1893, Oct. 5, 1894; John Henry Smith, Apr. 3, 1886, Apr. 5, 1890, Oct. 8, 1892, Oct. 5, 1894; Joseph F. Smith, Nov. 12, 1870, Sept. 3, 1871, Apr. 5, 1880, Oct. 8, 1892, Apr. 4, 1893, Oct. 5, 1894, Apr. 7, 1895; Moses Thatcher, Apr. 7, 1883; Brigham Young, Jr., Aug. 25, 1872, Oct. 8, 1872, Apr. 5, 1884, Oct. 5, 1894.

³⁵Brigham Young, Jr., “J.H.,” Oct. 5, 1894.

³⁶Heber J. Grant, *ibid.*, Oct. 6, 1894. Grant became an Apostle in 1882 and was sustained as President of the Twelve in 1916 and President of the Church in 1918. He was the first native son of Utah to hold these latter two offices.

³⁷Joseph F. Smith, *ibid.*, Apr. 7, 1895. Smith was second counselor to Wilford Woodruff in April, 1895. He had been an Apostle since 1866. He subsequently served as a counselor to Lorenzo Snow and became President of the Church in 1901. Acceptance of the Word of Wisdom as a commandment was not new to him, for in a talk of Apr. 4, 1893, he so referred to it. The idea of Brigham Young having declared it a commandment was new.

³⁸J. Golden Kimball also made reference to this alleged incident, but the summary of his remarks is too brief to be of much value. See “J.H.,” Oct. 7, 1894.

³⁹It is curious that President Grant stated fourteen years later, “I was only a boy, however, when President Brigham Young announced that from that time forward it was a commandment.” (Apr. 5, 1908, *Report of the Seventy-Eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1908), p. 56. (Referred to hereafter as C.R.) Note that he still did not say that he heard Young make the supposed statement. He still assumed the alleged declaration to have been made in his lifetime, apparently not having attempted to document it.

Francis M. Lyman stated that he remembered “distinctly” when President Young announced that the Word of Wisdom was henceforth a commandment (Oct. 4, 1908, C.R., *79th Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 55.) He was twelve years old in 1851 and may have been present at the conference.

⁴⁰John Henry Smith, Oct. 4, 1903, C.R., *Seventy-Third Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 19; Matthias F. Cowley, “Counsel to Boys Engaged in Isolated Labor,” *Improvement Era*, VII (1904), p. 366; Francis M. Lyman, Apr. 4, 1908, C.R., *Seventy-Eighth Annual Conference*, p. 14; Joseph F. Smith, Oct. 4, 1908, C.R., *Seventy-Ninth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 5, [see also *Improvement Era*, XII (1909) p. 62]; Heber J. Grant, Apr. 6, 1907, C.R., *Seventy-Seventh Annual Conference*, p. 37; Francis M. Lyman, Oct. 4, 1908, C.R., *Seventy-Ninth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 55; Joseph F. Smith, Oct. 4, 1913, C.R., *Eighty-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 14, [see also *Improvement Era*, XVII (1914) p. 88]; John A. Widstoe, Apr. 5, 1926, C.R., *Ninety-Sixth Annual Conference*, p. 109; David A. Smith, Oct. 3, 1926, C.R., *Ninety-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 45.

⁴¹Antho H. Lund, Apr. 6, 1911, C.R., *Eighty-First Annual Conference*, p. 10. Lund became an Apostle in 1889, Church Historian in 1900, and a counselor to Joseph F. Smith in 1901.

⁴²Antho H. Lund, Oct. 4, 1913, C.R., *Eighty-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 13.

⁴³Joseph F. Smith, Oct. 4, 1913, *ibid.*, p. 14. (See also *Improvement Era*, XVII (1914) p. 88.)

⁴⁴Antho H. Lund, Apr. 5, 1918, C.R., *Eighty-Eighth Annual Conference*, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁵David A. Smith, Oct. 3, 1926, *C.R.*, *Ninety-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 45. David A. was a son of Joseph F. Smith, and a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church from 1908.

⁴⁶Heber J. Grant, Apr. 3, 1927, *C.R.*, *Ninety-Seventh Annual Conference*, p. 15.

⁴⁷Only once in his frequent references to the Word of Wisdom did President Grant remind the Saints that *Joseph F. Smith had said* that Brigham Young had declared the Word of Wisdom to be a commandment to the Church. (Apr. 6, 1933, *C.R.*, *One Hundred and Third Annual Conference*, p. 13.) He earlier had seemed more certain that it was a commandment, particularly before President Lund's 1911 statement. (Apr. 6, 1907, *C.R.*, *Seventy-Eighth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 22.)

⁴⁸See note no. 1.

⁴⁹Heber J. Grant, Oct. 5, 1928, *C.R.*, *Ninety-Ninth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 8. One statement from this talk is particularly to the point: "The Lord has not made this an absolute commandment, but when our Heavenly Father . . . desires us to do a thing, it seems to me that we as Latter-day Saints should do that thing more willingly than though it come as an absolute command to us." See also Apr. 4, 1931, *C.R.*, *One Hundred and First Annual Conference*, p. 12.

⁵⁰J. Reuben Clark Jr., Oct. 6, 1935, *C.R.*, *One Hundred and Sixth Semi-Annual Conference*, p. 92. Clark became second counselor to Heber J. Grant in 1933, an Apostle and first counselor in 1934, and subsequently served as counselor to George Albert Smith and David O. McKay.

⁵¹Doctrine and Covenants, 89:3.

THE WORD OF WISDOM: FROM PRINCIPLE TO REQUIREMENT

THOMAS G. ALEXANDER

THE STATUS OF THE WORD OF WISDOM at the turn of the century is evident from contemporary sources. At a meeting on May 5, 1898, the First Presidency and Twelve discussed the Word of Wisdom. One member read from the twelfth volume of the *Journal of Discourses* a statement by Brigham Young that seemed to support the notion that the Word of Wisdom was a commandment of God. Lorenzo Snow, then President of the Council of the Twelve agreed, saying that he believed the Word of Wisdom was a commandment and that it should be carried out to the letter. In doing so, he said, members should be taught to refrain from eating meat except in dire necessity, because Joseph Smith had taught that animals have spirits. Wilford Woodruff, then President of the Church, said he looked upon the Word of Wisdom as a commandment and that all members should observe it, but for the present, no definite action should be taken except that the members should be taught to refrain from meat. The minutes of the meeting record that "President Woodruff said he regarded the Word of Wisdom in its entirety as given of the Lord for the Latter-day Saints to observe, but he did not think that Bishops should withhold recommends from persons who did not adhere strictly to it."¹

Though it is clear that some church leaders, like Heber J. Grant and Joseph F. Smith, insisted upon complete abstinence from tea, coffee, liquor and tobacco, all General Authorities were not in agreement on all aspects of the Word of Wisdom. During a discussion in 1900 after he became President of the Church, Lorenzo Snow again emphasized the centrality of not eating meat, a point rarely emphasized by others, and in 1901, John Henry Smith and Brigham Young, Jr., of the Twelve both thought that the Church ought not interdict beer, or at least not Danish beer. Other apostles, like Anthon H. Lund and Matthias F. Cowley also enjoyed Danish beer and currant wine. Charles W. Penrose occasionally served wine. Emmeline B. Wells, then a

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member of the presidency and later president of the Relief Society, drank an occasional cup of coffee, and George Albert Smith took brandy for medicinal reasons. Apostle George Teasdale, agreeing with President Woodruff, thought that no one ought to be kept from working in the Sunday School because he drank tea and that eating pork was a more serious breach than drinking tea or coffee.²

The evidence shows a diffuse pattern both in observing and teaching the Word of Wisdom in 1900. Some General Authorities preached quite consistently against the use of tea, coffee, liquor or tobacco and occasionally against the use of meat. None supported drunkenness. In practice, however, they and other members also occasionally drank the beverages that our current interpretation would prohibit. Observance of the Word of Wisdom was urged by way of counsel by President Snow and others. Some Apostles, like John Henry Smith, believed that the more important question was one of free agency and that those who continued to insist upon strict adherence to the Word of Wisdom were ignoring more serious principles. President Snow also opposed sanctions against alcohol and was upset when the General Board of the YMMIA asked for an end to the sale of beer at Saltair.³

Most vocal among General Authorities in his opposition to the use of tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco was Heber J. Grant who would become one of the leaders of the state prohibition movement. He was particularly outraged at the church members who served liquor and at some of the Twelve who opposed the prohibition of liquor at Saltair. He was also concerned with the indifference some of the General Authorities demonstrated to the feelings of Protestant ministers who complained about the Saltair saloon.⁴

The death of Lorenzo Snow brought Joseph F. Smith to the presidency. Smith's views on the Word of Wisdom were close to those of Heber J. Grant and it is to his administration that the path to our current interpretation of the Word of Wisdom leads. Dropping the emphasis on abstaining from meat, he urged the need to refrain from tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco. In 1902, he reversed President Snow's stand and closed the saloon at Saltair, a move which the Protestant clergy heartily approved. Following this lead, in June, 1902, the First Presidency and Twelve agreed not to fellowship anyone who operated or frequented saloons. In the same year, Joseph F. Smith urged stake presidents and others to refuse recommends to flagrant violators but to be somewhat liberal with old men who used tobacco and old ladies who drank tea. Habitual drunkards, however, were to be denied temple recommends.⁵

By mid-1905, members of the Twelve were actively using stake conference visits to promote adherence. In September, 1905, for instance, George Albert Smith advised the Stake Presidency, High Council and Bishops in Star Valley, Wyoming, to refuse "to longer tolerate men in presiding positions who would not keep the Word of Wisdom." George F. Richards preferred the technique of interviewing and urging compliance rather than insisting on lack of toleration. In keeping with the change in emphasis, the First Presidency and Twelve substituted water for wine in the sacrament in their temple meetings, apparently beginning July 5, 1906.⁶

After 1906, a strong prohibition movement developed in the United States, centered in Evangelical Protestant groups. In 1906, only Iowa, Kansas and Maine had statewide prohibition, but by 1919 twenty-six states, principally in the midwest, far west, south and upper New England had adopted the reform. Although increasing scientific evidence on the adverse effects of alcohol helped the movement, moral rather than scientific considerations seem to have sustained it. The period between 1911 and 1916 represented the post-Civil War apogee of alcoholic consumption in the United States and fear of moral decay, broken homes and wasted fortunes fueled the prohibition movement.⁷

As indicated above, the Latter-day Saints were already working internally before 1906 to oppose the consumption of alcoholic beverages and to interdict tea, coffee and tobacco among members. The interpretations given by nineteenth-century leaders to the Word of Wisdom and the then accepted view that Brigham Young had declared it a commandment provided part of the basis for this emphasis in the Church.

Another important motive for those on all sides of the question seems also to have been the desire for acceptance. The strongest opposition to the seating of B. H. Roberts and Reed Smoot in Congress had come from Evangelical Protestant groups, and some leaders, such as Elder Grant, were particularly sensitive to their feelings. In addition, the strongest support for state—and later nationwide—Prohibition among church members was found among Democrats and Progressive Republicans. Mormons of these parties were searching for acceptance by other church members who were increasingly pressured to vote Republican in support of Reed Smoot and his Federal Bunch and for national approval by Protestants who had so long opposed the Church. Among Federal Bunch Republicans, however, the situation was much different. Generally in control of the legislature, the governorship and the congressional and senatorial seats until 1916, Smoot supporters were reluctant to upset their majority position by alienating members of the business community sympathetic to the liquor traffic or by creating a climate congenial to anti-Mormon political parties.⁸

The organization of the statewide prohibition movement in Utah began in December 1907 when the Reverend Dr. George W. Young of Louisville, Kentucky, assistant general superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League of America, came to Utah. Throughout early 1908, the League organized its three departments—agitation, legislation, and law enforcement—in Utah, and Heber J. Grant, who took an early interest in the movement, became a trustee for Utah and an officer of the Utah organization. In the late fall and early winter of 1908, the Reverend Dr. Louis S. Fuller, superintendent of the League for Utah and Idaho, met at various times with members of the First Presidency and Twelve and with Elder Grant. They agreed to support a local option bill in the 1909 legislature.⁹

Initially, Prohibition was widely supported in the Church. Edward H. Anderson expressed surprise in a January 1908 *Improvement Era* editorial that Utah was still one of the completely “wet” states. He thought that the “Latter-day Saints will unitedly and enthusiastically join in bringing about

. . . [the liquor traffic's] complete extermination." A number of the Twelve, meeting with members of an organization called the Salt Lake City Betterment Committee, agreed to implement an October 1907 General Conference resolution, to do all in their power to stop the liquor traffic. As Anthon H. Lund, second counselor in the First Presidency, said, "this means 'prohibition.'" At the temple fast meeting on January 5, 1908, Richard W. Young, president of the Ensign Stake, and Joseph F. Smith both endorsed Prohibition.¹⁰

A number of factors, however, supported the notion that Church leaders should *not* endorse prohibition but should support local option or even oppose public action on the liquor question. William Spry, John Henry Smith and a number of Republican leaders were concerned that not only would Prohibition fail to actually prohibit, but that the law would subject property to confiscation. Some, like Francis M. Lyman, urged individual regeneration rather than Prohibition, though he later changed his mind in favor of Prohibition.¹¹

Perhaps the most important pressure against Prohibition came from gentile Republicans, particularly businessmen whose interests included liquor manufacture or sales. Fred J. Keisel, for instance, said it would be a political blunder to support statewide Prohibition. After June, 1908, the *Intermountain Republican*, the Church-owned organ of Reed Smoot's Federal Bunch, stopped publishing articles favorable to Prohibition, and the Republican Party dumped Governor John C. Cutler, partly because of his support of statewide Prohibition, in favor of William Spry who nominally supported local option.¹²

By the time the legislature met in January, 1909, the church leadership was moving in two directions. Francis M. Lyman, by now converted to Prohibition, called Bishop John M. Whittaker to work with the legislature and with Elder Grant, Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley and others who favored Prohibition. The *Deseret News* published articles and interviews favoring Prohibition. President Joseph F. Smith, Reed Smoot and others more sensitive to the political problems, however, became equivocal in their support. Reed Smoot said he believed the prohibition movement would hurt the Church by bringing further charges of church influence in politics. John Henry Smith opposed Prohibition but considered Smoot's objections somewhat hypocritical because the Apostle-Senator "had no objection to Priesthood influence when he wanted to be elected. Then he said all . . . [the Gentiles] honored was power." Eventually, the legislature sidetracked a prohibition bill introduced by non-Federal Bunch Republican George M. Cannon in favor of a local option bill sponsored by Smoot's lieutenant Carl A. Badger. Though the Badger bill passed, William Spry pocket-vetoed it, to the chagrin of many supporters. In 1911, however the legislature revived and passed the Badger local option bill and this time Spry signed it.¹³

The fight over Prohibition between 1911 and 1917 was almost a replay of the local option battle between 1908 and 1911. Republican church leaders closely allied to the Federal Bunch favored Prohibition in public, but were equivocal in private. Fear of a backlash against the Church which might lead to the creation of a new anti-Mormon party, and fear of alienating gentile

businessmen from the Republican Party seem to have been the principal motives. In 1915, Spry pocket-vetted a widely supported statewide prohibition bill. By 1916, the majority of Republicans could no longer support Spry, and Nephi L. Morris, president of the Salt Lake Stake, Progressive Party gubernatorial candidate in 1912 and an avowed prohibitionist, received the Republican Party nomination but lost the election. By that time local and national support for prohibition had developed to such an extent that virtually all church leaders and a large majority of all Utah citizens also supported Prohibition. Newly elected Democratic Governor Simon Bamberger and the Democratically controlled legislature enacted statewide Prohibition in 1917.

In the meantime, emphasis on the Word of Wisdom during Joseph F. Smith's administration continued essentially as in 1902. In a letter dated December 28, 1915, President Smith said that young "or middle-aged men who have had experience in the Church should not be ordained to the Priesthood nor recommended to the privileges of the House of the Lord unless they will abstain from the use of tobacco and intoxicating drinks." Since Prohibition had outlawed the legal use of alcohol, emphasis in church magazines and talks after 1917 centered on tobacco, and members were urged to support groups like the No-Tobacco League of America, the YMCA and the Salvation Army in their efforts to eradicate the use of tobacco.¹⁴

After the inauguration of Heber J. Grant's administration in 1918, however, the advice became less flexible. In 1921, church leadership made adherence to the Word of Wisdom a requirement for admission to the temple. Before this stake presidents and bishops had been encouraged to in this matter, but exceptions had been made. Apparently under this new emphasis, in March, 1921, George F. Richards, both as apostle and president of the Salt Lake Temple, phoned two Salt Lake City bishops about two tobacco users who had come to the temple and told the bishops "to try to clean them up before they come here again."¹⁵

Between 1921 and 1933, the adherence to the Word of Wisdom for full fellowship in the Church was made even more explicit. The 1928 *General Handbook of Instructions*, to guide bishops and stake presidents on church policy, reads: "It is important that all those who may desire to enter the temple for endowments or other ordinances should be encouraged by the bishopric to observe the principle of tithing as well as all other Gospel principles." The next edition of the *Handbook*, published in 1933, reads that members desiring temple recommends "should observe the law of tithing. The applicant should also observe all other principles of the Gospel, should keep the Word of Wisdom, not use profanity, should not join nor be a member of any secret oath bound organization and should sustain without reservation the general and local authorities of the church." Additionally, both the 1928 and 1934 editions of the *Handbook*—but not previous editions—listed "liquor drinking" and "bootlegging" among the "transgressions which are ordinarily such as to justify consideration by the bishop's court." To these the 1934 edition also added "drunkenness."¹⁶

With Prohibition an accomplished fact, the Church leadership also moved during the 1920s to incorporate the use of tobacco under legal sanctions.

Church members and leaders threw their strong support behind a bill introduced by State Senator Edward Southwick of Lehi to prohibit the sale of tobacco in Utah. The Church's Social Advisory Committee, students from Brigham Young University and other church groups lobbied for the bill which passed in 1921. By early 1922, however, massive disobedience brought about the revision of the Southwick law in 1923. This provided for controlled access and revenue for the state.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the Church continued its campaign against tobacco use. An article in the *Improvement Era*, March, 1923, argued that tobacco users naturally linked themselves with evil persons such as profaners, criminals, vagrants and prostitutes. Other articles argued that men believed women who smoke would become unladylike. In 1923, the MIA adopted anti-tobacco as its annual theme. Appeals to scientific authority were also used, including references to nicotine poisoning and smoke damage to mucus membranes and lungs.¹⁸

Late in the 1920s Church leaders urged alternative anti-tobacco legislation, and in 1927, Elders Richard R. Lyman and Melvin J. Ballard asked church attorney Franklin S. Richards for information on the possibility of legislation preventing the advertising of cigarettes on billboards. Even though Richards believed that the Supreme Court would declare such a law unconstitutional, the 1929 legislature passed one anyway. The *Relief Society Magazine* in May, 1929, said it hoped that the courts would uphold the law and regretted that the Idaho legislature had not passed a similar law. In November, 1929, however, Judge David W. Moffatt of Utah's Third District Court ruled the billboard law unconstitutional.¹⁹

In spite of this legal setback, church leaders continued to preach and act against tobacco. Heber J. Grant in January, 1930, warned bishops that young men using tobacco were not to be called on missions. Ruth May Fox, President of the YWMIA, asked Mormon girls to abstain from smoking and drinking in order to "remove temptation from our husbands and brothers." At the June, 1930, MIA conference, President Grant urged all members to "study and know the laws regulating tobacco, liquor and safety." He said that "cigarettes degenerate the brain in an uncontrollable manner." He particularly urged that girls not be allowed to smoke, because, he said, "it destroys the God-given power to bring forth sons and daughters into this world."²⁰

Undoubtedly the most difficult public problem was the enforcement of state and nationwide Prohibition against those who chose to ignore the Word of Wisdom. At least twice during the 1920s the First Presidency injected itself into election campaigns to assist in defeating candidates for Salt Lake County Sheriff alleged to be lax in the enforcement of Prohibition legislation and in electing those who promised more vigorous action.²¹

Heber J. Grant stood clearly on the side of strict enforcement, and as pressure on prohibition enforcement mounted in the late twenties and early thirties, he assisted with church resources. On January 5, 1928, Stephen L. Richards, Milton Bennion and Heber Chase Smith of the Social Welfare and Betterment League called to discuss conditions in Salt Lake City. They told him of organized crime protected by a pliant police force, and President Grant

confided to his diary that he had lost considerable sleep over the matter. Bennion provided information on law-breaking for *Deseret News* editorials, and Heber J. Grant insisted in conversations with his brother B. F. Grant, the paper's business manager, that the *News* take a strong stand in favor of prohibition enforcement.²²

Some members were disturbed with the actions of the authorities in providing financial support for the League's efforts, but the church leadership continued to help. In August, 1931, the First Presidency, the Sunday School, the Relief Society and the MIA agreed to tax themselves to support League efforts. President Grant felt, however, that they could not continue "perpetually using Church funds for something that ought to be done by the Government."²³

Though the church leadership continued to fight to remain dry, Utah became the thirty-sixth state to vote for repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and thus to seal the end of Prohibition. Church leaders were not uniform in their assessment of the experiment. Heber J. Grant was very upset that Utahns had not followed his counsel to retain Prohibition. Joseph Fielding Smith said that with "all its abuses and corruption," Prohibition had nevertheless "been a boon to society and it would be a calamity of the gravest kind to repeal or modify it now." B. H. Roberts favored repeal, and Anthony W. Ivins, first counselor in the First Presidency, questioned its usefulness. He pointed out that enforcement had cost more than one-half billion dollars by 1931, with which, he thought, the country could have constructed 100,000 miles of paved road, or endowed 500 colleges with one million dollars each.²⁴

In addition to liquor, tobacco, tea and coffee, some members of the Church urged that the prohibitions of the Word of Wisdom ought to be broader. In March, 1917, Frederick J. Pack of the University of Utah published an article in the *Improvement Era* dealing with the question, "Should LDS Drink Coca-Cola?" His answer was no. His argument was not that the Word of Wisdom prohibited such drinks, but that such drinks contained the same drugs as tea and coffee.²⁵

Still, church members were not long in making the link between stimulants and additives on the one hand and the Word of Wisdom on the other. On October 15, 1924, representatives of the Coca-Cola Company called on President Grant to complain that non-Mormon Dr. T. B. Beatty, state Health Director, was using the church organization to assist in an attack on Coca-Cola. They asked President Grant to stop him, but he refused at first, saying that he himself had advised Mormons not to drink the beverage. Beatty, however, had been claiming that there was four to five times as much caffeine in Coke as in coffee, when in fact, as the representatives showed, there were approximately 1.7 grains in a cup of coffee and approximately .43 grains or about a fourth as much in a equivalent amount of Coke. After a second meeting, President Grant said that he was "sure I have not the slightest desire to recommend that the people leave Coca-Cola alone if this amount is absolutely harmless, which they claim it is." Beatty, however, insisted that he would still recommend against its use by children. The question was left

unresolved, and evidence indicates that while the First Presidency has taken no official stand on the use of cola drinks, some members urge abstinence.²⁶

In addition, some scientists and health food faddists insisted that the Word of Wisdom included much more than the church leadership generally supported. In 1930, for instance, John A. Widtsoe published a tract entitled *The Word of Wisdom* which interdicted the use of refined flour and foods and "all drinks containing substances that are unnaturally stimulating." On November 23, 1930, James W. Fitches and Don C. Wood called on President Grant and asked permission to use Widtsoe's tract and to get the First Presidency to invest in their "Nature Way" health food company. Grant refused, saying that many points in Widtsoe's pamphlet and in their campaign "might be criticized because the actual teachings in the Word of Wisdom would hardly justify the conclusions drawn."²⁷

In the latter case, it seems probable that scientific evidence on the harmful effects of certain types of food and food additives played an influential role in the attempt to broaden the coverage of the Word of Wisdom. By the same token, similar scientific evidence also seems to have played an important role in the developing insistence that members abstain from tea, coffee, tobacco and liquor.

What role did revelation play in the matter? It is clear that Section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants was given as a revelation to Joseph Smith. Advice that the members of the Church adhere to the Word of Wisdom was also undoubtedly given under inspiration. There is, however, no known contemporary evidence of which I am aware that a separate new revelation changed the Word of Wisdom from a "principle with promise" to "a commandment" necessary for full participation in all the blessings of church membership. One author on the subject has argued that the vote in 1880 sustaining the Doctrine and Covenants as binding on church membership was equivalent to a vote making the Word of Wisdom a commandment. If, however, the members were voting on the words contained in the book, what they did was to agree that the Word of Wisdom was "a principle with promise" not a commandment.²⁸

It is obvious that the Twelve and First Presidency prayerfully considered the conclusion that the Word of Wisdom ought to be a binding commandment for church members. Nevertheless, the main problem in interpreting the influence of revelation in these deliberations is the absence of references to revelations or even spiritual confirmation of specific positions in the diaries of those who participated in the meetings. The only references are statements or reminiscences of statements by previous authorities. It is much easier, therefore, to find references to previous statements than to see the presence of new, specific revelation. The inclusion of coffee and tea and the exclusion of cocoa, for instance, from the prohibited substances can probably be attributed to statements of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Brigham Young rather than to specific revelations.²⁹

Other influences are much easier to document. Elder Grant's diary reveals the influence of Evangelical Protestant sentiment in his attitudes toward

liquor and tobacco. These attitudes had begun to develop in the Evangelical churches and certain sectors of the business community as early as the 1830s. The nationwide temperance movement of the 1830s and the prohibition movement of the early twentieth century were linked to Evangelical attitudes.³⁰ Utahns in general and Mormons in particular were rather late additions to the prohibition movement rather than its early leaders. The influence of the attitudes of these groups is easiest to see when one contrasts insistence on abstinence from liquor and tobacco with the rather tolerant attitude toward eating meat.

Sources of political attitudes toward the Word of Wisdom are also evident. Few of the General Authorities seem to have opposed the use of the state to enforce their moral code, and although some opposed the use of legal sanctions to enforce health restrictions like vaccination, Elder Grant believed in the use of state power to regulate the quality of milk and to control tuberculosis. He and many others also supported public sanctions against the use of alcohol and tobacco. The political sources of the attitudes of Reed Smoot and Joseph F. Smith in the period before 1916 are also evident. Both feared the tearing apart of the Republican Party and the possible rebirth of a new anti-Mormon party from the ashes of the old Liberal (1870–1893) and American (1904–1911) parties. By 1916, however, public sentiment was so strongly in favor of Prohibition that such fears were secondary to religious beliefs which insisted upon adherence to the Word of Wisdom.

How, then, does one draw all these influences together to understand what happened during the period under consideration, and what part did revelation play? Public and private statements indicate that the Church leaders were concerned about the moral tone of the community in which they lived. In an attempt to improve the tone, they sought guidance from scriptures, from statements of earlier leaders and from the Lord as they carried on their deliberations. In addition, contemporary political and social movements like the prohibition and anti-tobacco movements seemed to offer help in solving the problems they perceived. It was thus a number of forces, religious and secular, rather than a single force which led to the current interpretation of the Word of Wisdom. The decisions made under the confluence of these forces have had an important long range effect since nothing, with the possible exception of the wearing of the temple garments, serves to distinguish Latter-day Saints from the larger community more than does observance of the Word of Wisdom.

An understanding of the way in which the current interpretation of the Word of Wisdom developed is significant because it provides a case study of the usual method of revelation and hence of doctrinal and policy development in the Church. Evidence seems to suggest that change has ordinarily come about through prayerful consideration over time of contemporary problems in the context of tradition (including previous scriptures and statement), immediate conditions (including political, social, and economic problems) and alternative courses of action. Other examples of similar patterns of revelation for which we have good documentation include the decision to locate in Utah, the current Welfare Plan and even the doctrines of God and Man.³¹

Thus, the student of Latter-day Saint doctrinal and policy development will paint a more detailed picture if he conceives his task more broadly than the narrow context of looking only at the scriptures and at public statements of church leaders. If a study of the interpretation of what the Word of Wisdom can tell us anything, it is that such change does not take place in a vacuum.

NOTES

¹Diary of Heber J. Grant, May 5, and June 30, 1898, LDS Church Archives; "Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (JH), May 5, 1898, LDS Church Archives, Microcopy in BYU Library. See George D. Watt, et al. eds *Journal of Discourses*, 26 Vols. (Liverpool, 1855–85), 12: 27ff.

The standard sources on the history of the Word of Wisdom are the excellent studies by Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972), and Leonard J. Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the Word of Wisdom," *BYU Studies* 1 (Winter, 1959), pp. 37–49.

²Journal of Anthon H. Lund, January 9, August 31, and September 2, 1900, July 10, 1901, LDS Church Archives; Journal of Emmeline B. Wells, September 8, 1900, February 4, 1902; February 19, 1903, Special Collections, Brigham Young University Library; George Albert Smith Journal, March 10, 1905, Smith Family Papers, Western Americana Collection, University of Utah Library.

³Brigham Young, Jr., Journal, January 9 and July 9 and 11, 1901, LDS Church Archives; Grant Diary, July 11, 1901. Lorenzo Snow to Ephraim Caffall, March 18, 1901, First Presidency, letters sent, Church Archives.

⁴Grant Diary, June 30, 1898, August 17, 1900, and July 11, 1901.

⁵*Improvement Era*, May, 1902, p. 559; July, 1902, p. 731; Lund Journal, June 26, 1902; First Presidency to C. R. Hakes, August 1, 1902, First Presidency, letters sent; First Presidency to John W. Hess, October 31, 1902, *ibid*; First Presidency to H. S. Allen, November 1, 1902, *ibid*.

⁶First Presidency to L. B. Felt, December 13, 1905, *ibid*; John Henry Smith Journal, July 5, 1906, Smith Family Papers, Western Americana Collection, University of Utah Library; George Albert Smith Journal, August 5, and September 2, 1905; George F. Richards Journal, May 27, June 2, and June 16, 1906, Church Archives.

⁷Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), pp. 31–34, 36, 56, 71, 83, 87, and 100–103; other discussions of the prohibition movement include: Joseph H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900–1920* (New York: Atheneum, 1970) and Norman H. Clark, *Deliver Us from Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976).

⁸This interpretation is a summary of Bruce T. Dyer's "A Study of the Forces Leading to the Adoption of Prohibition in Utah in 1917," (M.A. Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958) and Jan Shipps, "Utah Comes of Age Politically: A Study of the State's Politics in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (Spring, 1967), pp. 91–111.

⁹Dyer, "Adoption of Prohibition," p. 2; John R. Winder to Reed Smoot, December 9, 1907, in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966–1975), 4:163.

¹⁰Edward H. Anderson, "Events and Comments," *Improvement Era*, January, 1908, pp. 234–36; Lund Journal, January 3, 1908; Grant Diary, January 5, 1908.

¹¹*Ibid.* and March 18, 25 and 21, 1908.

¹²Dyer, "Adoption of Prohibition," pp. 14–19.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 10–11 and 43–44; Lund Journal, January 23, 26 and 27, 1909; John Henry Smith Journal, January 26, 1909.

¹⁴Joseph F. Smith to C. Elmo Cluff, December 28, 1915, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks, Church Archives; *Improvement Era*, March 16, 1916, p. 461; *ibid.*, April, 1917, pp. 555–58; *ibid.*, Novem-

ber, 1917, pp. 11, 64; *ibid.*, March 1919, pp. 371–80; *Relief Society Magazine*, February, 1918, p. 160; April, 1919, pp. 238–39; February, 1918, p. 146; September, 1919, pp. 527, 593.

¹⁵George F. Richards Journal, March 26, 1921. Information on the Temple recommend book from K. Heybron Adams, formerly of the LDS Church Archives.

¹⁶LDS Church, *Handbook of Instructions*, No. 14, 1928 (n.p., 1928), p. 11; *idem. Handbook of Instructions*, No. 15, 1934 (n.p., 1933), p. 10.

¹⁷John S. H. Smith, "Cigarette Prohibition in Utah, 1921–23," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 41 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 358–372.

¹⁸*Improvement Era*, March, 1923, p. 472; September, 1923, p. 1041; November, 1923, p. 145; April, 1926, p. 713; November, 1927, pp. 5–19; December, 1927, p. 109.

¹⁹Grant Diary, January 21, 1927; JH, March 26, 27, and 29, and November 24, 1929; *Relief Society Magazine*, May, 1929, p. 245.

²⁰JH, January 29, April 9, and June 8, 1930; *Improvement Era*, August, 1930, pp. 659–60.

²¹Richards Journal, November 1, 1922; Grant Diary, November 1, 1922, October 23, 29, and 30, 1930; James E. Talmage Journal, Special Collections, Brigham Young University Library, November 1, 1922; Reed Smoot Diary, *ibid.*, November 1, 1922, March 29, 1923, October 30, 1930.

²²Grant Diary, January 5, 10 and 14, 1928.

²³*Ibid.*, October 27 and November 17, 1930, July 17 and August 3, 1931.

²⁴JH, October 3, and December 1, 1929; June 9, and November 28, 1930; Journal of Anthony W. Ivins, Utah State Historical Society, Notes for 1931; John Kearnes, "Utah, Sexton of Prohibition," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 47 (Winter, 1979), pp. 17–18.

²⁵*Improvement Era*, March, 1971, pp. 432–35.

²⁶Grant Diary, October 15, November 11, 12, and 16, 1924; First Presidency Letter of May 6, 1971, Edgemont South Stake Letter Files. See also Lester E. Bush, Jr., ed. "Mormon Medical Ethical Guidelines," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* XII (No. 3), pp. 102–104, for the only official guidance to date on cola drinks.

²⁷[John A. Widtsoe] "The Word of Wisdom," (British Mission, 1930); Grant Diary, November 23, 1930.

²⁸Roy W. Doxey, *The Word of Wisdom Today* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1975), pp. 13–14.

²⁹Some of the statements and reminiscences are cited in Doxey, pp. 10–13 and in John A. Widtsoe and Leah D. Widtsoe, *The Word of Wisdom: A Modern Interpretation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1937), p. 28. Here I am speaking of specific revelations rather than the type of revelation mentioned later in this article. I would differentiate between what might be termed instant and unexpected revelations and revelations derived from long and prayerful consideration of a particular problem under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

³⁰On this point see W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) and Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815–1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). Joseph Gusfield in *Symbolic Crusade* has argued that the prohibition movement was part of the attempt of an increasingly displaced Protestant middle class to regain status. It seems to me, however, that Norman Clark in *Deliver Us From Evil* has the better of the argument when he points to the sincere belief that the elimination of alcohol would improve the moral tone of society, and that the support for the movement was extremely widebased.

³¹James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), pp. 213–214; Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May, *Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), pp. 341–348; Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5 (July–August, 1980), pp. 24–33.

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE STRUCTURE OF MORMON IDENTITY

STEVEN L. OLSEN

IN 1838, JOSEPH SMITH reduced to written form the sacred experience which led him to establish Mormonism.¹ This narrative relates a series of heavenly visitations which Smith said had begun eighteen years earlier and had continued until 1829. Although Smith drafted earlier and later accounts of these events, only the 1838 version has been officially recognized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Smith commenced his official *History of the Church* with this narrative. It also appeared in an 1851 collection of sacred and inspirational writings published by the Church in the British Isles. The permanent status of this text in Mormonism was secured in 1880 by its canonization at the hand of John Taylor who had recently succeeded Brigham Young to the Mormon Presidency. Since its canonization, the "Joseph Smith story," as it is known among Mormons, has become a primary document for the explication of Mormon doctrine and the introduction for many proselytes to the Church. The text has come to demand the loyalty of orthodox Mormons and has become one of Mormonism's most sacred texts.

Remarkable is the contrast between the official status of the 1838 version and the general neglect by the Church of the other accounts. This difference in status cannot be explained by the historical accuracy of the respective accounts. Despite some serious challenges to the chronology of the official account, Mormons have firmly defended its historicity, even though several of the non-canonized versions do not suffer from these perceived historical inaccuracies.² Neither can this distinction be demonstrated by the degree of complementarity of the different versions. Although some inconsistencies exist among the accounts, no official attempt has been made to supplement the canonized version with many rich details from the other versions.³ Finally,

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despite the principal use of the official version to validate Mormon doctrine,⁴ other versions could conceivably perform these didactic functions as well. In short, the Mormon Church seems to view the 1838 “Joseph Smith story” as an account apart, a different kind of narrative from the other versions, even from those written by Smith himself. This exclusive and inviolate position reinforces its sacredness in Mormonism.⁵

One possible reason for the considerable contrast in the Mormon attitude between the canonized and all other accounts is their respective relation to Mormon identity. That is, the unquestioned loyalty to the official version may be an expression more of Mormon ideology than of Mormon historiography or theology. One of the most important roles of this text in Mormonism may be the manner in which it articulates Mormonism’s self-conscious mission to mankind.

The social and humanistic disciplines abound with studies of the significance of sacred narratives, often called creation myths, for the expression and maintenance of cultural identity.⁶ Meaning in such narratives has been found to be communicated through symbolic as opposed to propositional logic. That is, sensory elements in the story connected with objects, images, persons and places are combined and recombined in discernible patterns which give the story cultural significance considerably greater than that given by the events themselves. As Alan Heimert has observed,

To discover the meaning of any utterance demands what is in substance a continuing act of literary interpretation, for the language with which an idea is presented, and the imaginative universe by which it is surrounded, often tell us more of an author’s meaning and intention than his declarative propositions.⁷

This imaginative universe or these symbolic patterns constitute the structure of a narrative. This article will seek to analyze in the context of Mormon identity the structures used by Smith to express, and thereby interpret, his early sacred experiences.

Although many structural theories have been developed, the structuralism of Jean Piaget possesses two distinct advantages for the present study.⁸ In the first place, Piaget sees “structuring” as the human process of imposing greater degrees of order upon and deriving additional levels of meaning from preexisting oral, visual, material, written and other cultural traditions. From this perspective, the Joseph Smith story becomes as much the reflection of Smith’s perceptions and intentions within an expanding Mormon world-view as the description of a series of historical occurrences.

Secondly, Piaget identifies three characteristics of a well developed symbolic logic, namely wholeness, transformation and self-regulation. These provide the model with a method of analysis and criteria of falsifiability which allow for a level of scientific rigor unattainable from more impressionistic structural theories.

Piaget’s first principle, wholeness, requires that the structure of a narrative be completely developed within the story. In the same way that a good story

includes all relevant elements for its complete exposition, an adequate symbolic logic must be fully expressed within the narrative.

The symbolic structure of the Joseph Smith story exhibits the quality of wholeness. Briefly, the structure of the text is based on the dynamic contrast between two pairs of opposed yet fundamental concepts in Mormonism, namely Kingdom/World and heaven/earth.⁹ The Joseph Smith story symbolically expresses the ideal Mormon relation between these two binary oppositions. That is, the Kingdom/World distinction is magnified and the heaven/earth distinction is diminished throughout the narrative until the Kingdom overcomes the World and heaven and earth are united. These developments are wholly contained within the narrative.

Piaget's second characteristic, transformation, suggests that the events of the story are ordered not only in chronological and geographical sequence but also in terms of the text's symbolic logic. In the words of the anthropologist Edmund Leach, "the chronological sequence is itself of structural significance."¹⁰

Two transformational principles operate within the Joseph Smith story to produce the ideal relationships between the Kingdom and the World, on the one hand, and between heaven and earth, on the other. The first principle, evolution, is the process of creating a new condition from a quite different and outmoded condition. The evolutionary process in the Joseph Smith story symbolically creates the ideal Kingdom/World contrast. The Kingdom overcomes the World in the narrative by destroying the World's institutions, eliminating the World's influence on members of the Kingdom, and ceasing all communication with the World. The Kingdom establishes itself in the narrative through the evolution of an institutional framework of action with the Kingdom and the regeneration of the individual in the ideal image of the Kingdom.

The second transformational principle of the Joseph Smith story is dialectics, that is, the process of increasingly approximating an ideal state through the resolution of contrasts. Dialectics operate in the narrative to symbolically unify heaven and earth. This is accomplished through the resolution of two pair of contrasting elements characteristic of the heaven/earth opposition, namely light/dark and high/low.

Piaget's third characteristic of a well-developed symbolic logic is self-regulation. Self-regulation refers to the patterns in the narrative, which are analogous to meter and stanzas in poetry and rhythm and movements in music. These patterns help set the mood of the story and reinforce its meaning.

The most obvious rhythms in the Joseph Smith story consist in the division of the narrative into three vignettes, each of which is characterized by a significant heavenly manifestation. More specific devices of self-regulation in the text include repetition, series, climax, and denouement.

The first vignette (vv. 1–26), known to Mormons as the "First Vision," finds young Joseph searching for God's true religion but being confused and bewildered by the organized churches of his day. Strengthened in his resolve to find the truth, Joseph retires to the woods near his home to ask God directly

the whereabouts of the truth. During the prayer, he is assailed by an evil presence which nearly causes his destruction. At the point of Joseph's abandonment, the evil is dispelled by a glorious light in which appear two heavenly beings, identified as God the Father and Jesus Christ. They instruct the lad to avoid all modern religions.

Three years pass before the second vignette begins (vv. 27–54), during which Joseph has been adversely influenced by his friends. Wishing to be cleansed of the resulting taints, Joseph withdraws to the security of his bedroom to seek God's forgiveness. His prayers are answered by the appearance of an angel named Moroni who calls Joseph to restore the Kingdom of God to earth.

The third vignette (vv. 55–75) opens with Joseph digging for buried treasure. Unsuccessful at this enterprise, he withdraws from the working world to begin translating sacred records which Moroni has entrusted to his keeping. This translation is eventually published as the Book of Mormon. Wishing to verify the accuracy of the translation, Joseph sends a sympathetic neighbor, Martin Harris, to Professor Charles Anthon. The professor first attests to the accuracy of the translation, but upon learning of its reputed source, he withdraws his approval in disgust.

Following this rejection, Joseph immerses himself in the work of the Kingdom, and God rewards him first by providing him a scribe, Oliver Cowdery, to assist in the translation, and second by sending the resurrected John the Baptist to authorize Joseph and Oliver to baptize each other and anyone else who believes them. The Joseph Smith story ends with Joseph secure in the heavenly Kingdom he has just restored, yet increasingly persecuted by former friends and strangers alike.

We will now consider how these events are expressed by Joseph Smith in an imaginative universe or symbolic structure which defines Mormonism's self-conscious identity. The Kingdom/World dichotomy is symbolized most dramatically by the demise of the major institutions of the World. In the first vignette, institutionalized religion is overcome by the Kingdom. As the narrative begins, Joseph has no other concern in life than to find God's true church. Instead of truth, Joseph experiences hypocrisy, contention and confusion among the "different religious parties" of the day and feels himself unable "to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong."

To seek an answer, Joseph removes himself from the religions of the World and in a grove of trees near his home communicates with two heavenly beings. They repeat four times the answer to his question of the whereabouts of the true religion. Joseph is told a) he "must join none" of the existing churches; b) "that their creeds were an abomination"; c) "that those professors [of religion] were all corrupt"; and d) again not "to join with any of them" (vv. 19–20). Although Joseph alludes to "many other things" (v. 20) he learned during the "First Vision," the divine condemnation of existing religions is the only information included in the text.

Following his experience with the heavens, Joseph defends his newfound truth not only to the minister of the sect which had once attracted him (v. 21) but to “professors of religion” in general (v. 22) and to the very “powers of darkness” (v. 20) which had so recently nearly proven his demise. From this point in the text, Joseph has no further contact with organized religion. As far as the Kingdom is concerned, this institution of the World has been negated.

The society of the World is at issue in the second vignette. For three years after the “First Vision” Joseph mingles with “all classes of men” (v. 27) and in “all kinds of society” (v. 28). In defending his supernatural experiences, Joseph is persecuted by “those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly . . .” (v. 28). These associations lead Joseph into “all kinds of temptations” (v. 28). Although he confesses that such “foolish errors” and “foibles of human nature” were not serious (v. 28), he seeks forgiveness of God after having withdrawn from the society of the World. His visitation from the angel Moroni takes him out of the World to define his initial status in the Kingdom—translator of sacred records (vv. 34–35). Following his experience with Moroni, Joseph has no further social contacts with any worldly associate. In short, the coming of Moroni negates the society of the World.

The third vignette contains two encounters between the Kingdom and the World. As with previous encounters, the representative of the Kingdom is adversely affected by his involvement with the World. God, however, provides him a means of escape. First of all, Joseph becomes involved with the economy of the World. Although, he is not alone in this enterprise, Joseph refers to his fellow workers only in occupational terms. He does not relate to them in the text as companions or friends (v. 56).

This get-rich-quick scheme earns Joseph nothing but the reputation of being a “money-digger.” Embarrassed, he withdraws from the economy of the World and begins his mission to the Kingdom. From this point in the text, Joseph never again encounters the World’s economies. God, however, provides for his temporal needs by sending a “farmer of respectability,” Martin Harris, with the “timely aid” of fifty dollars (vv. 60–61).

Once Joseph has begun his mission in the Kingdom, the narrative has him no longer personally involved with any institution of the World. As a result, it is Martin Harris who takes a portion of the translated manuscript and some transcribed characters from the plates to a professor of education for verification. The professor approves of both until he learns of their reputed source. Hearing that they came from an angel, he withdraws his support, stating that “there was no such thing now as ministering of angels” (v. 65).

This response climaxes the widening Kingdom/World opposition. At this point, the distinction has become categorical. The World is now the arch-enemy of the Kingdom in principle as well as in practice. Reconciliation between them is no longer possible. Consequently, no further contact with the World is sought by the Kingdom. As far as the Kingdom is concerned, the institutions of the World have been overcome.

From the perspective of the World, however, the principle of opposition becomes the practice of persecution. As the Kingdom progressively overcomes the World's institutions, the World increasingly mobilizes against the Kingdom. Opposition to the Kingdom comes first from a single Methodist preacher (v. 21) and then from "professors of religion" as a group (v. 22). In the second vignette, the source of persecution has expanded to include "all classes of men, both religious and irreligious" (v. 27). By the third vignette, "persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get [the plates] if possible" (v. 60).

Despite the increased opposition, the World's influence on the Kingdom wanes as its institutions are negated. In the first vignette, Joseph is ignorant, isolated and powerless as a result of his involvement with the World. In the second vignette, the World affects only his moral integrity. Joseph's involvement with the economy of the World leaves him embarrassed and penniless but does not assail his character, and the involvement with the education of the World results only in disappointment. The narrative suggests that as the World mobilizes in opposition to the Kingdom, its influence on the Kingdom declines.

Joseph's patterns of communication in the text reinforce this logical progression. In the first vignette, Joseph discusses his spiritual experiences only with the World, in the form of sectarian preachers (vv. 21–22). He comes no closer to communicate his experiences with trusted family members than to inform his mother that her religion was "not true" (v. 20).

The second vignette finds Joseph's communications exclusively with "those who ought to have been my friends" (v. 28). After the visitation of Moroni, however, Joseph initiates open communication with family members and ceases direct communication with the World. In the words of Joseph, Moroni "commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the visions and commandments which I had received" (v. 49).

The World, however, is still informed of the activities of the Kingdom, but only in an oblique manner, as indicated by the use of the passive voice in the text: ". . . no sooner was it known that I had [the plates], than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me" (v. 60). Joseph also indicates that by this time profane communication or "rumor with her ten thousand tongues was all the time employed in circulating falsehoods" about the Kingdom (v. 61).

After Joseph begins to translate the sacred record and after he becomes authorized to enlarge the Kingdom through baptism, communication with the World ceases altogether, and communication within the Kingdom, including that between heaven and earth, becomes well developed.

Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before thought of. In the meantime we were forced to keep secret the circumstances of having

received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood" (v. 74).

In short, as the Kingdom grows, the institutions of the World—religion, society, economy and education—are destroyed until the Kingdom has no more use for the World. The adverse effects of the World upon members of the Kingdom are also progressively eliminated. The increasing rift between the Kingdom and the World is seen as well in the mounting persecution of the Kingdom by the World and in the decreasing communications between them.

In the process of destroying the institutions of the World, the Kingdom recreates the individual in the ideal image of the Kingdom. In this respect, Joseph Smith becomes the model of conversion in this sacred Mormon text. In the first vignette, Joseph describes himself as ignorant of the truth and unable of himself to find it: ". . .so great were the confusion and strife among the different denominations, that it was impossible for a person young as I was, and so unacquainted with men and things, to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong" (v. 8). The "two Personages" in the "sacred grove" give Joseph sufficient knowledge not only to satisfy his own yearnings but to withstand the opposition of the "great ones of the most popular sects of the day" (v. 23) and the very "powers of darkness" (v. 20). After receiving this knowledge and throughout the rest of the narrative, Joseph never lacks for confidence or resources in establishing the Kingdom.

The second vignette is concerned with Joseph's moral integrity. His involvement with the society of the World results in his committing "many foolish errors" and displaying "the weaknesses of youth, and the foibles of human nature" (v. 28). Joseph's repeated visits with the angel Moroni assure him of his acceptance by God. From this point in the narrative, Joseph shows no evidence of any faults in his character.

In the third vignette, Joseph acquires the trait of sociality. Until this point in the narrative, Joseph's companions have been either worldly as with "those who ought to have been my friends . . ." or temporary as with his father and Martin Harris. Oliver Cowdery becomes Joseph's first companion in Kingdom building, assisting the Prophet to translate the plates. Not until Oliver begins his service does Joseph use the first person plural to describe his activities in the Kingdom (v. 68).

A final quality acquired by Joseph in coming to personify the Kingdom is power. Although he experiences the great power of the Kingdom from reading the Bible (vv. 11–12), he does not possess a portion of that power until John the Baptist confers on him the "Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys [authority] of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. . ." (v. 69). Upon being baptized, Joseph also receives the Holy Ghost which becomes an unexpected key of knowledge in establishing the Kingdom.

Joseph's experiences with the Kingdom withdraw him from a declining World and initiate him into the emerging Kingdom by developing in him the qualities of knowledge, purity, sociality and power. By the end of the narrative, Joseph has acquired not only these traits himself, but also the mechanisms in the form of baptism, Priesthood and the Holy Ghost to extend the qualities of conversion to all who will accept the Kingdom.

The evolution of the Kingdom is manifest, finally, on an institutional level in a series of activities having increasing significance for the Kingdom. The first activity, namely instruction, characterizes the Kingdom through the first two vignettes. The "First Vision" and Moroni's repeated visitations are wholly concerned with giving Joseph "instruction and intelligence . . . respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his Kingdom was to be conducted in the last days" (v. 54).

After Joseph receives the plates, the focus of institutional activity shifts to production. That is, Joseph now applies the instruction he has received to produce the first material evidence of the Kingdom's restoration, namely the Book of Mormon.

With the coming of John the Baptist the institutional activity of the Kingdom begins to shift once more from production to reproduction. That is, the Kingdom has evolved to the point at which others can begin to share in its growth. The ordination and baptism of Joseph and Oliver initiate this stage of the Kingdom's expansion.

In sum, the symbolic evolution of the Kingdom in the Joseph Smith story consists of destruction of the institutions of the World and the concurrent construction of the Kingdom. The former consists of the demise of the World's institutions, the World's influence on the Kingdom and its communication with the Kingdom. The latter involves creating the individual member in the image of the Kingdom and developing a framework of institutional activity consistent with the Kingdom's ultimate scope.

The second principle of systematic transformation in the Joseph Smith story is dialectics, which integrate the contrasting elements of heaven and earth in the text. The unification is symbolized first in the contrast of illumination, or light/dark dichotomy. As Joseph prays in the woods to find God's truth, "thick darkness gathered around" him. This darkness signals the presence of "some actual being from the unseen world," whose power causes Joseph nearly to "sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction." Yet "just at this moment of great alarm," a pillar of light appears to dispel the darkness. Joseph reports, "It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound." Within the light are "two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description" (vv. 15-17). A more powerful contrast between light and dark could not be imagined than that which introduced Joseph to the Kingdom.

The light/dark contrast in the coming of Moroni is striking, but less so than in the "First Vision." Moroni comes to Joseph at night, which is simply the absence of light, not the presence of evil. The contrast is further muted by

the light gradually dispelling the darkness. Joseph reports, "a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday" (v. 30). Joseph also uses language less sublime in describing Moroni's appearance than the "First Vision." Joseph describes Moroni's robe as having "a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen" and Moroni's countenance as being "glorious beyond description, and . . . truly like lightning" (vv. 31–32).

In the final manifestation of the Kingdom, John the Baptist appears to Joseph and Oliver during the day. The only contrast between the glory of the Baptist and the surrounding daylight is that John "descended in a cloud of light" (v. 68). Not only is the contrast minimal but it is made without further textual elaboration. In the three successive light/dark oppositions in the narrative, the contrast decreases and is the least at the point in the story when Joseph and Oliver are inducted into the Kingdom. In short, the resolution of the light/dark dichotomy symbolizes the union of heaven and earth which the restoration of the Kingdom was effecting.

Confirmation of this symbolic pattern exists as well in the opposition of elevation, or the contrast of "high" and "low." In the "First Vision," Joseph describes the "pillar of light" as appearing "exactly over my head" and descending "gradually until it fell upon me" (v. 16). The contrast between Joseph's position, namely "lying on my back, looking up into heaven," (v. 20) and the position of the "two Personages," "standing above me in the air," is considerable.

In the second vignette, Moroni appears somewhat elevated above Joseph, but less than the "two Personages." In Joseph's words, Moroni "appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor" (v. 30). The final vignette mentions no specific distinction in elevation between John the Baptist, on the one hand, and Joseph and Oliver, on the other. The only suggestion of a difference is that John lays his hands on Joseph and Oliver to confer on them the "Priesthood of Aaron" (vv. 68–69).

As the Kingdom becomes established, two of the principal symbolic distinctions between heaven and earth, namely light/dark and high/low, are eliminated. The evolution of the Kingdom also destroys all effective opposition so that by the end of the Joseph Smith story the Kingdom is secure in its foundations and optimistic in its directions. At the conclusion of the narrative, Joseph "prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation."

The symbolic logic of the Joseph Smith story expresses a fundamental aspect of Mormonism's self-conscious identity. Mormons believe that the religion founded by Joseph Smith embodies the Kingdom of God restored to earth following a long separation of man from the truth. According to Mormon reckoning, this heavenly kingdom in temporal form is destined to overthrow the kingdoms of the World and literally transform the earth into heaven. In

other words, the 1838 Joseph Smith story not only experientially confirms much of Mormon theology, it symbolically defines its self-conscious identity.

None of the other versions express Mormon identity so simply yet so completely and elegantly as does the 1838 account. In fact, no other Mormon document can serve so well the role of cultural charter or creation myth. Smith's introduction to the 1838 version suggests that he intended to compose an official charter when he began to write.

Owing to the many reports which have been put in circulation by evil-disposing and designing persons in relation to the rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . I have been induced to write this history, to disabuse the public mind, and put all inquirers after truth in possession of the facts . . . so far as I have such facts in my possession (v. 1).

By integrating fundamental aspects of Mormon historical, theological and ideological consciousness into a simple narrative form, the Joseph Smith story becomes the model testimony among a people whose declarations of faith are often expressed in experiential terms. The text also establishes Joseph Smith as the model convert to a religion for which "overcoming the world" and "establishing heaven on earth" are as significant for the individual member as for the entire church. These slogans have been used throughout Mormon history to validate its theology, ethics, social organization and cosmology. Because the ideal Mormon relations between the Kingdom and the World and between heaven and earth are symbolically expressed in the Joseph Smith text, the narrative provides Latter-day Saints with an interpretive framework to order their lives and make meaningful their social and religious experiences.¹¹ The use of the text as an absolute marker of Mormon history and doctrine is largely a function of its ability to articulate the structure of Mormon identity.

NOTES

¹Joseph Smith Jr., *The Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith 2 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), pp. 46–57, originally published serially in *Times and Seasons* (Nauvoo, Illinois), 15 March–1 August 1842. Numbers in parentheses throughout this article refer to the verse(s) in the Joseph Smith text from which the information was taken.

²E.g., Reverend Wesley P. Walters and Richard L. Bushman, "Roundtable: The Question of the Palmyra Revivals," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4 (Spring 1969), pp. 60–100.

³James B. Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision: What do we Learn from Them?" *The Improvement Era* 73 (April 1970), pp. 4–13; Paul R. Cheesman, "An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1965).

⁴James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Autumn 1966), pp. 29–45.

⁵The Durkheimian tradition has viewed sacred phenomena as those which are separated and protected from mundane existence by ritual and moral imperatives, Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1915).

⁶Michael Lane, ed., *An Introduction to Structuralism* (New York: Basic Books, 1970); Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* I, II (New York: Basic Books, 1963, 1976); *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1968 ed., "Myth and Symbol," by Victor Turner.

⁷Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 11.

⁸Jean Piaget, *Structuralism*, trans. Channah Maschler (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970).

⁹For present purposes, "Kingdom," "World," "Heaven" and "earth" are roughly equivalent to "sacred," "secular," "spiritual," and "material," respectively.

¹⁰Edmund Leach, "The Legitimacy of Solomon," in *Genesis as Myth and other Essays* (London: Cape Editions, 1969), p. 79.

¹¹See Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 193–233.



"COME AND KISS ME, MY PRETTY MAID."

Do not deceive yourselves. Do not believe Mormonism is content to rest in Utah. Slowly, surely, the monster is stretching abroad its horrible body. Cautiously those small green eyes, full of cunning, are watching each opportunity [sic] for advance; and from its fanged tongue drops the poison of its accursed creed. The power of its institutions is more wonderful, more absolute, than was ever the Inquisition.

Salt-Lake Fruit: A Latter-Day Romance. By An American [William Loring Spencer]. Boston: Franklin Press, 1884, pp. iv-v.

*SENSATIONAL VIRTUE:
NINETEENTH-CENTURY
MORMON FICTION
AND AMERICAN POPULAR TASTE*

KAREN LYNN

BEFORE 1900, novels about Mormons ranged from the amateurish to the slick, from the scurrilous to the rather even-handed, from the realistic to the wildly imaginary. Their one common thread was that almost all of them condemned Mormons for their greed, their violence, their vulgarity and particularly, of course, for their marriage practices. Leonard Arrington and Jon Haupt conclude their article, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," with a list of no fewer than fifty Mormon novels published before the turn of the century, several of which went through more than one edition.¹ The length of this list—and it does not include plays, short stories, or travelers' accounts—may seem surprising: every year of the last half of the nineteenth century brought forth an average of one novel set in Nauvoo or Salt Lake.

For Mormon readers today, the subject-matter of Mormon novels lends them a peculiar under-the-counter fascination. We search them out, isolate them as curiosities in special lists, and even read them, with a certain smug and smiling amazement. At the same time, of course, we derive valuable historical and sociological information as to how Mormons were perceived. But it is important to realize that these novels do not really constitute a unique literary sub-genre. The more familiar one is with the kind of novel the vast American reading public demanded during these decades, the easier it is to understand the allure that Mormon subject matter held for the novelists who aimed to satisfy this demand.

This discussion will show the place of Mormon novels in the mainstream of American popular fiction in the last half of the nineteenth century. Though their religious and geographical setting may distinguish these fifty novels,

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theme and technique do not; they are simply a small, typical sampling of predictable fictional models. The authors who turned out fiction according to these models were glad for a new locale, a new set of exotic themes supposedly based on fact, and a chance to dust off such stock characters as the brutal husband, the suffering wife, and the innocent child. While Mormons for their part rejoiced in the divine origins of their religion, the novelists, too, welcomed Mormonism as their own kind of godsend: a combination of mysterious doctrines, incredible iniquities, and pathetic human interest that perfectly answered the tastes of millions of nineteenth-century Americans, mostly female, who loved nothing better than to escape into the romance, adventures, and implausibilities of popular fiction.

Most of these novelists, of course, would have had us believe that it was not popular taste that guided them, but rather their moral and Christian duty. When word spread that Mormons were practicing a marriage system that defied centuries of Christian moral sanctions, the antipolygamy cause—and polygamy is the main focus of more than half of these fifty novels—set off an explosion of energy among reform-minded writers. In the East and Midwest were groups of Protestant women organized in what Nancy Cott has termed the “nineteenth-century women’s voluntary movement,” groups that “institutionalized the idea that women’s pious influence . . . could reform the world.”² Since these women were already mobilized on behalf of the poor, the drunk, the fallen, the heathen, and the orphaned, why not add a new set of unfortunates—the wives and children of polygamy—to the list of those who needed rescue? Particularly after the Civil War, when reformers could no longer rally around the cause of Abolition, the second of the twin relics of barbarism became a welcome target for their zeal. Nancy Cott has pointed out the overlap in the personnel of the various reform movements,³ and Arrington and Haupt have commented that “women who wrote anti-polygamy novels were often leaders in the temperance movement.”⁴ Evidently the choice of the particular evil that needed to be stamped out was a secondary matter. More significant, for female writers especially, was the opportunity to do something of consequence, to function in an approved non-ornamental and non-trivial way by writing a novel to arouse the conscience of America.

So every novel, no matter how sensationalist, could claim a social and moral justification. After all, if the Christian community was to realize the enormity of the horror that threatened them on their very continent, then the public must be informed and aroused. Some books carried elaborate endorsements of the writer’s high-minded intentions. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a preface to Mrs. Stenhouse’s widely-read *An Englishwoman in Utah: The Story of A Life’s Experience in Mormonism*: “May we not then hope that the hour is come to loose the bonds of cruel slavery whose chains have cut into the very hearts of thousands of our sisters . . .”⁵ Press notices included in *The Fate of Madame LaTour* expressed the hope that this book would expose polygamy as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had exposed slavery,⁶ and another novel by the same author, *In the Toils*, carried a prefatory note of approval by John Greenleaf Whittier.⁷

Only a cynic would wish to discredit the motives of all of these writers.⁸ But the American public adored the clichés of second-rate fiction, and the fact remains that even the best-intentioned of the Mormon novels falls unmistakably into these clichés. A novel with a Mormon setting was well suited to the requirement of any one of the major sub-genres of the nineteenth-century popular novel, and could even offer the attractions of all these sub-genres in one volume. For gothic preferences, the motifs of pursuit, murder and banditry were well supplied by the Danites, for example; the requisite oversized, gloomy gothic setting was of course the Nauvoo or Salt Lake Temple, or in some instances the caves and canyons of Utah; abduction and imprisonment, secret rites and priestly orders—all these hallmarks of gothic fantasy the Mormons could provide in splendid abundance. The second popular fictional mode, the domestic novel, centered on the triumph of womanly work and devotion amid personal and family trials. What more tragic adversity than polygamy, the antithesis of the hearthside ideal of single-minded romantic devotion and moral example?⁹ And we have already noted the relationship to the third major category of popular fiction, the stepping-heavenward or the exposé-of-wickedness novel. The Mormon novel was, or at least pretended to be, a novel of social and religious betterment. If fiction could fight slavery, liquor, and Catholicism, surely it could fight Mormonism too.

It is not only in their overall fictional type but also in their more specific incidents that the Mormon novels fulfill the well-established popular expectations. Herbert Ross Brown has suggested a “triune of beauties” that lay behind the sentimental attraction of popular fiction: “seduction, suicide, and sensibility.”¹⁰ A Mormon setting provided endless opportunities for variations on these themes. The mere mention of polygamy, of course, suggested all sorts of possibilities for seduction. And the isolation and entrapment of desperate Mormon wives led them frequently to think of the second of the “triune of beauties”—suicide. Women in the Mormon novels often threaten suicide and sometimes carry it out. In *Salt-Lake Fruit: A Latter-Day Romance*, the desperate Mrs. Berry leaps with her little son into a well.¹¹ But usually the brave heroine’s sense of womanly responsibility prevails, and she comes to realize that she can’t just call things off. Helen Woodford, in *The Fate of Madame LaTour*, finds the stream too shallow to drown in after her husband arrives at her door with his two new wives.

‘There are other ways,’ she said aloud, remembering the pistol that was lying in a corner of her trunk. But at last her trance was broken by a voice that she knew—the voice of her first-born. ‘Mother! mother!’ the boy called, in accents of agony and terror. Of what had she been thinking? Was her life her own to end when it became unbearable? No. It belonged to her children, and for them she would live it out.¹²

The third of the “beauties”—sensibility—is perhaps the most interesting and complex of these conventions with regard not only to the Mormon novel



From *Salt-Lake Fruit: A Latter-Day Romance*. By An American.

but also to the popular view of female character. Sensibility was the belief in instincts and sentiments as a guide to truth and conduct. Women, particularly, were expected to feel an innate, infallible attraction toward what was refining and good, and a repulsion toward all that was wicked and low. So even though it may have been her very womanliness (given women's "natural" and proper inclination to trust men and submit to them¹³) that originally led her into polygamy, this womanliness would eventually whisper to her that her situation and her surroundings were unconscionable. The laws of God and nature could never sanction polygamy. Many of the novelists seized the chance to describe the heartbreaking contrast between the crude, callous, insensate Mormon society and the pathetic heroine of sensibility suddenly thrust into its midst. After Margaret Fletcher marries Richard Wilde in *Lives of Female Mormons*, we learn that she tries to accustom herself to life in Salt Lake.

She was very much disappointed in the character of the community generally. She was a stout republican, and yet she felt it impossible to fraternize with some who claimed her friendship. . . . "I cannot forget my Puritan education, Richard, far enough to associate with those women without a shudder."¹⁴

Even her deathbed utterance refers to the tragic gulf between her own well-bred refined sensibility and her uncivilized surroundings: "She prayed for the whole of that polluted city, as Christ prayed upon the cross—Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."¹⁵

Virtually any cliché that can be drawn from popular fiction can be duplicated repeatedly in Mormon fiction. Over and over again, women in these novels sacrifice their happiness upon the altar of duty;¹⁶ little children speak holy truths from their innocent mouths;¹⁷ an unsuspected blood relationship (certainly a strong fictional possibility, given the irregular conduct and multiple marriages of Mormon men) is discovered at the last moment.¹⁸ And the mesmeric influences or "Animal Magnetism" that wove the downfall of so many heroines seemed to be part of the arsenal of any holder of the Mormon priesthood.¹⁹

And what sort of fictional woman was this who found herself the wife of a Mormon polygamist? In discussing images of Mormons in fiction, Arrington and Haupt limit themselves to images of Mormon men. There is not much variety: the abusive and drunken husband, the white slave procurer, the seducer, the lustful Turk, the slaveholder. And a look at the Mormon woman adds up to a stereotype even more uniform. Her most important attribute is that she is blameless. We would surely not expect to see the heroine of our novel enter this nefarious marriage system willingly; how could a reader identify with and weep over the lot of a woman who had done something so contrary to the inner dictates of true, sensitive womanhood? And American readers expected their heroines to be virtuous. In her study *All the Happy Endings*, Helen Papashvily points out that for more than a century

the fallen woman vanished from the novel of native origin. In England and Europe a frail creature might still stoop to folly, but not a popular American heroine. *She* had to be drugged, tricked, coerced, mesmerized, hypnotized, or otherwise ensnared, for never of her own free will and knowledge would a trueborn daughter of the Republic accept a relationship outside of marriage.²⁰

But a blameless heroine is not an invincible heroine, and for the sake of novelistic interest the heroine must be vulnerable to something; she must get into trouble somehow. The guileless woman in a Mormon novel might begin as a trusting young bride who naturally expects to be the first and only wife; perhaps she and her husband have never heard of Mormonism as the novel opens. After the husband takes another wife, having succumbed first to the baleful doctrines of Mormonism and then to the threats of Mormon vigilantes, the heroine is trapped by geographical isolation, by the pressures of Mormon society, and most of all by an obligation every monogamous wife could understand—her duty to her children. Or, less frequently, an innocent woman might find herself married to a Mormon because her helpless and trusting nature has yielded to some mysterious, compelling power. When Richard Wilde announces in *Lives of Female Mormons*, “Maggie, I have had a vision. It has been revealed to me what I must do. But before I tell you, you must promise me to be reconciled to the will of the Lord, as revealed by the Spirit to me,”²¹ he represents just another manifestation of the mysterious power of the magnetic male personality over the naturally submissive female.

Popular fiction almost always takes for granted a benevolent universe, an order of things that will punish wickedness, reward innocence, and restore losses. The erring husband returns to his wife and begs her forgiveness, the patient and industrious orphan marries into wealth, a woman through her unflagging example and devotion reforms an atheistic or alcoholic husband or brother. But the fate of a polygamous wife is an exception. Almost always she meets a tragic death in the final pages of the novel, without justice or restitution, at least in terms of her earthly life. She is not restored to a proper monogamous marriage, or even to the decent “Christian” society that she has so tragically been severed from. Hers is the perfect passive, female triumph, the testimony of her integrity, the only retaliation available to her. The metaphorical statement clearly is that there is no place in society for a woman stained by polygamous associations, innocent though she may have been of any evil motive.

And the heroine’s death carried with it a second metaphorical implication. While the reader may have enjoyed identifying with the pathetically attractive heroine, pretending to *be* this wronged and sensitive woman, she also must have enjoyed *not* being that woman. She could enjoy a feeling of superiority; *she* was not in such a fix; *she* had not blundered into the camp of the Mormons. The message was that though her monogamous responsibilities might be difficult and unglamorous, still they earned her a place in life and in society. As popular fiction must do, the Mormon novel validated her world and reinforced the norms and principles that society expected her to follow.



OVER AT LAST.

From *An Englishwoman in Utah: The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism* by Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse.

Almost invariably, writing that appeals to middle-class tastes will ultimately reinforce accepted values. The novel must finish by exalting and approving right behavior in the framework of religious and ethical beliefs, and so popular fiction does not overtly seek to undermine the social order. But the whole point of popular fiction is to take the reader on a temporary escape from this framework of everyday values,²² to set awry the givens in order to provide wish-fulfillment and fantasy stimulation.

One of the givens often dispensed with in nineteenth-century fiction was that of monogamy. The widespread "multiple spouse" theme was not by any means limited to Mormon novels; polygamy, in both its polyandrous and polygynous varieties, was a mainstay of popular fiction.²³ The mass-market novels, like literature of much higher quality, suggested that "polygamy" of one sort or another might occur for many reasons. In a repetition of the Enoch Arden motif, a shipwrecked husband might return after a long absence to find his wife happily married to another man; in the Rochester motif, the husband of a hopeless and diabolical maniac might be driven to seek a second wife; in the Heathcliff motif, a man might be legally married to one woman but united forever, through what one writer called "Psychological Twinship," to another. Amnesia was always a convenient explanation for unwitting bigamy, or an unscrupulous man could dupe an innocent woman into poly-

gyny through mesmerism, drugs, or a sham wedding ceremony. And of course, wicked Turks or Algerians could always abduct the heroine for a sultan's harem in a type of novel popular long before the Mormons made it possible for writers to set a "harem" story on the North American continent.

Certain of the more shocking of the anti-Mormon novels include descriptions and illustrations of women undergoing various kinds of humiliation and torture at the hands of savage Mormon men. Someone with the necessary training in psychology might wish to investigate fully the really dark side of wish-fulfillment in Mormon fiction. To ask a question about matters not quite so subterranean, how did polygamy itself relate to female wish-fulfillment? It is easy enough to understand why a woman would enjoy wish-fulfillment in reading about polyandry; given the Victorian repression of female sexuality, what more wonderful fantasy than the fantasy of multiple husbands? "Marriage," in some sense, could sanction (at least temporarily) sexual experience with more than one male, a fantasy far removed from any real-life possibility for the average nineteenth-century American housewife.

But polygyny as female wish-fulfillment seems to be a greater puzzle. Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, suggests that many philosophers began to be preoccupied with polygyny in the eighteenth century because the closing of convents, the surplus of women, and the trend toward individual family economic responsibility made the position of the single woman more insecure and distasteful than it had ever been.²⁴ For a woman, *any* kind of marriage was preferable to single life, and therefore, according to Watt, she might find fantasies of polygyny very satisfying. But strong though these pragmatic economic and social currents may have been, I feel that it is more likely that polygyny became an attractive fantasy simply because it was a logical Victorian alternative to the rape fantasy. Rape, for a writer or reader with any pretensions to respectability, was a little too bizarre a wish-fulfillment; but marriage, even if it is a forced or pretended marriage, helped to legitimize the fantasy.

Certain similarities are evident between polygyny fantasy and rape fantasy. In both, the woman is brutally used by men; she is wronged, physically helpless. She has no chance of escape or retaliation. Both rape fantasy and polygyny fantasy represent the dichotomy between what Susan Brownmiller, in her discussion of rape fantasy has called "male ideology . . . (the mass psychology of the conqueror)" and "mirror-image female victim psychology (the mass psychology of the conquered)."²⁵ Both are located somewhere on a spectrum that she terms "a masochistic scale that ranges from passivity to death."²⁶ Given the woman's role as a mere victim whose direct agency never could have contributed to such a happening, both rape and polygyny, as fantasy, provide sensation without responsibility. When a nineteenth-century woman's tastes in fantasy tended toward helpless victimization, then it was accounts of polygyny that could feed them.

As we note that articulate Mormon writers answered the opponents who blasted polygamy on social and moral grounds, we have to ask why no faithful member of the Church took up his pen, or more likely *her* pen, to write a pro-

polygamy novel. After all, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was answered with *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* and with *Uncle Robin in his Cabin in Virginia* and *Tom Without One in Boston*; and American Catholic novelists wrote pro-Catholic fiction to counter the novels of Catholic wickedness. (It seems that only a pro-liquor novel, in answer to the temperance novels, was not a real possibility.) Arrington and Haupt have suggested that Mormons were too busy to write novels and that in Mormon society strong moral misgivings surrounded the whole genre of fiction.²⁷ Both these reasons are undoubtedly important. But Mormons did find time to write other things, including non-fiction defenses of polygamy, and Mormons used fictional forms for in-house purposes—stories published by the *Juvenile Instructor* office about a sturdy young fellow nobly declining the offer of a cigar, for example, I feel that instincts toward this kind of creativity probably ran very high among Mormon women, especially when articles in *The Contributor* and elsewhere betray an undeniable, blue-stocking interest in such figures as Felicia Hemans and Lady Montagu.²⁸ Why didn't one of them write a novel exalting the comforts, advantages, and spiritual rewards of the polygamy that they so often asserted in their expository writings?

I would like to suggest that a Mormon woman capable of such a novel, whatever the other reasons may have been for her reluctance to write it, might also have sensed instinctively that any novel of this sort would inevitably have fed into the wish-fulfillment and fantasies of the readers, simply because it was about polygamy. No matter how sincere the writer, no matter how strong her testimony of polygamy and how spiritual her description, she was defeated before she began; the effect of her novel would not have been to educate and convince, but to titillate and astound. No Gentile reader could have distinguished her work from the already-familiar clichés of popular fiction. How would a Richard Wilde in *her* novel, having had a *real* revelation that he was to take a second wife, have spoken differently to Maggie than he did in *Lives of Female Mormons*? Though the writer might have claimed an extra dimension of fulfillment and joy for a devoted polygamous wife, the already-overworked domestic novel themes of self-sacrifice, duty, and reconciliation could hardly have convinced a reader of anything unique about the supposed rewards of polygamy. Most readers, as I think a thoughtful Mormon woman might have realized immediately, would have enjoyed such a novel as just another behind-the-curtain peep at a shocking lifestyle, a peep that in fact had an additional titillating dimension—that it failed to redeem itself by ultimately condemning what it revealed.

So the Mormon novels stood unchallenged. They intrigue us today because of their subject matter—they are about us. But otherwise their distinction is minimal. They sit comfortably beside their thousands of companion volumes of popular fiction. They are not a distinctive sub-genre, not examples of literary craft, perhaps not even profound shapers of public opinion or raisers of public consciousness, but simply representative indicators of widespread popular taste.

NOTES

¹Leonard Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review*, XXII (Summer 1968), pp. 243–260. The few novels originally published in England, France, or elsewhere usually appeared soon thereafter in an American edition.

I have read three novels that need to be added to Arrington and Haupt's list: Henry J. Latham (pseudonym Ring Jepson), *Among the Mormons* (The San Francisco News Company, 1879); Charles Brewer, *Retribution at Last: A Mormon Tragedy of the Rockies* (Cincinnati: Editor Publishing Co., 1899), and Jeanette Y. Walworth, *The Bar-Sinister: A Mormon Study* (New York: The Marshon Company, 1885, 1900).

²Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (Yale University Press, 1977), p. 149.

³Cott, pp. 144–145.

⁴"Intolerable Zion," p. 246.

⁵Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, *An Englishwoman in Utah: The Story of A Life's Experience in Mormonism* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880) p. vi.

⁶Cornelia Paddock (Mrs. A. G.), *The Fate of Madame LaTour: A Tale of Great Salt Lake* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1881), p. 4.

⁷Quoted in Paddock, p. iv.

⁸But in many cases, the insistence on altruistic purposes is ludicrous. "This little story. . . is told with a nobler motive than usually accompanies the issuing of a book," claims Henry Latham as he begins *Among the Mormons* (The San Francisco News Company, 1879); "its object is not a mercenary, but a purely humanitarian one. It seeks only to disseminate a few truths in reference to the institution of Mormonism (p. 5)." The novel, more nonsensical than really disgusting, then goes on to tell of Kendallton and D'Orsay, two young Wall Street brokers who decide to go to Salt Lake to see for themselves the "gushing young damsels." They meet Mr. Robbins, who describes how amusing it is to watch his wives fight, scratching and biting and throwing one another's false teeth out the window. "I wrote a letter to Barnum last week, asking him if he didn't want to exhibit us around the country as 'The Celebrated Happy Family,'" he tells the visitors (p. 19). He doesn't know the number of his children, but he plans to engage a clerk soon to take inventory. The two young men each marry eight young women, divorce them almost at once, return to New York, and the purely humanitarian novel is over.

⁹The immensely popular domestic novels of Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth centered frequently on the plight of the deserted wife. The taking of a second wife by a Mormon man is, of course, a form of "desertion" and betrayal of the first wife.

¹⁰Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1850* (New York: Pageant Books, Inc., 1959), p. 166 (note).

¹¹William Loring Spencer, *Salt-Lake Fruit: A Latter-Day Romance. By An American* (Boston: Franklin Press, 1884).

¹²Paddock, pp. 44–45.

¹³For an interesting discussion of beliefs surrounding the female character, see Barbara Welter's chapter "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1800–1860," in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976).

¹⁴Metta Victoria Fuller, *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger than Fiction* (Philadelphia: G. G. Evans, 1859), pp. 118, 126.

¹⁵Fuller, pp. 242, 243.

¹⁶Jessie LaTour, in *The Fate of Madame LaTour*, "did not believe in the divinity of the system which called for the cruel sacrifice she was about to make; she felt. . . that Mormonism was a foul superstructure of tyranny and crime, resting upon a foundation of lust and blood; and yet, for her husband's sake, for the sake of the man she had worshipped with a blind devotion since the day he first won her girlish heart, she consented to the last, the most barbarous rite enjoined by his religion (not hers), and went with him to the Endowment House to place in his hand the hand of the bride chosen for him by the prophet" (p. 193; italics appear in the original).

¹⁷In Jennie Switzer's *Elder Northfield's Home; Or, Sacrificed on the Mormon Altar* (Boston: B. B. Russell, 1895), tiny Marion says, "Papa, please don't get another wife; it makes mamma feel so bad. We don't want another mother, and you can't be mamma's husband and hers, too. Isn't mamma a good enough wife, papa?" (pp. 164–165).

¹⁸After little Marion Northfield grows up, she discovers that her fiance, a New York physician named John Saxon, is her half-brother, their father having been the notorious Elder Northfield.

¹⁹The narrator of *Female Life Among the Mormons* begins her tale with an account of a carriage ride with the man who was soon to ensnare her as his polygamous wife: "I became immediately sensible of some unaccountable influence drawing my sympathies towards him. In vain I struggled to break the spell. I was like a fluttering bird before the gaze of the serpent-charmer;" Maria Ward (pseud.), *Female Life Among the Mormons* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, 1866), p. 12.

²⁰Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 32.

²¹Fuller, p. 211.

²²Tania Modleski gives an interesting analysis of the escape process in terms of modern popular fiction in "The Disappearing Act: A Study of Harlequin Romances," *Signs*, V (Spring 1980), 435–448.

²³For an interesting treatment the question of polygamy in popular writing, see Bette B. Roberts, "Marital Fears and Polygamous Fantasies in Eliza Parsons' *Mysterious Warning*," *Journal of Popular Culture*, XII (Summer 1978), pp. 42–51.

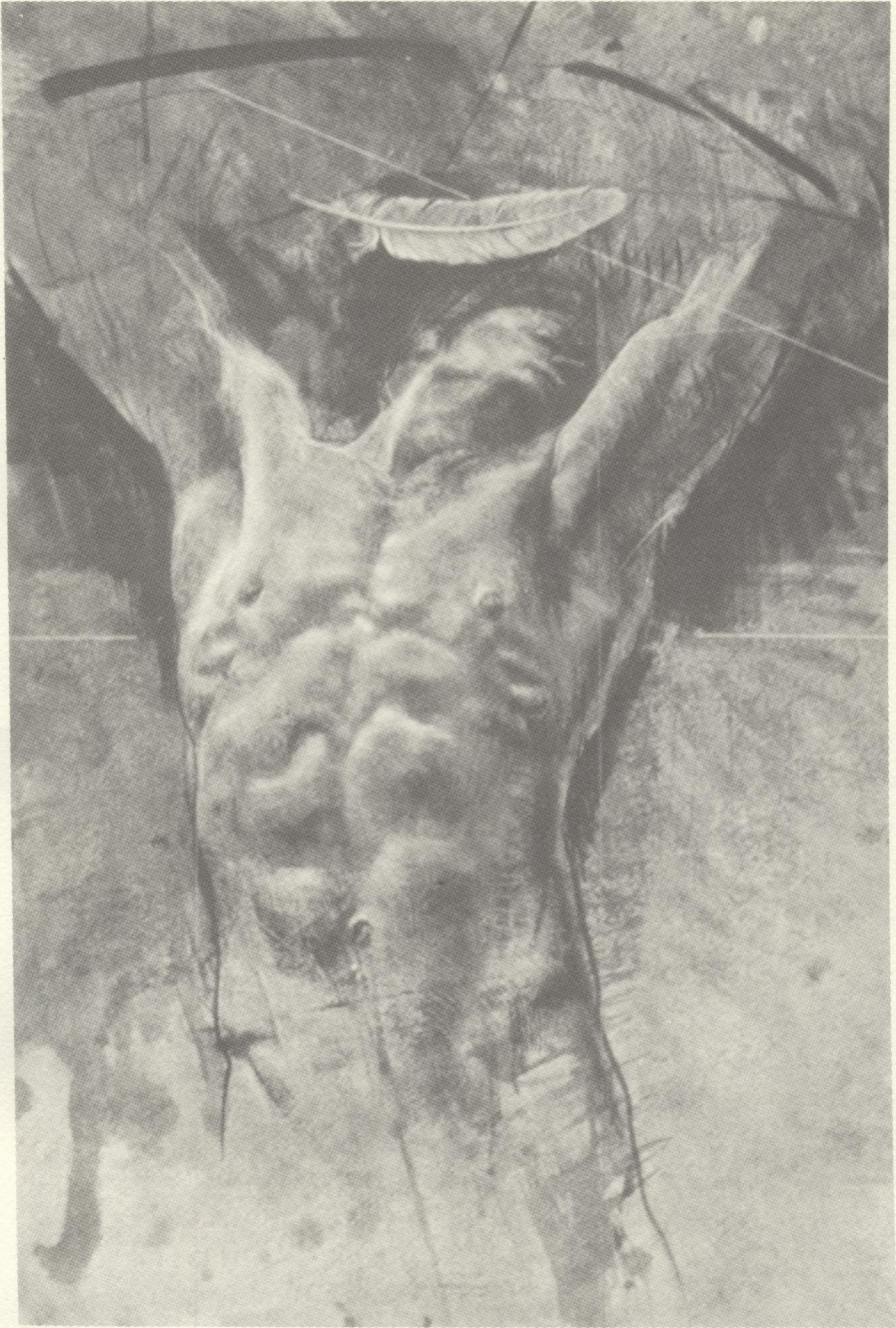
²⁴Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957) pp. 147–148.

²⁵Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), p. 324.

²⁶Brownmiller, p. 324.

²⁷"Intolerable Zion," p. 256.

²⁸Maria M. Miller discusses Felicia Hemans in *Contributor*, I (July 1880), 223–225. Emmeline B. Wells, under the pen name of "Amethyst," writes on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as an "Eminent Woman" in *Contributor*, I (May 1880), 175–177. She faults Lady Montagu only because she "held romantic sentimentality in contempt."



RANDALL L. HALL

Passover: A Mirrored Epiphany

How many years from Bethlehem
Until the awful eloquence
Of wine and lamb
And bitter herbs
Took his breath,
Stunned Him suddenly with knowledge,

Revealing that the blood
Once painted on the lintels and the doorposts
Was his own

And the slain lamb but his shadow and a mirror?

In that moment, bitter herbs,
Dissolving slowly on his tongue,
Insinuated such enormous grief a shudder split his heart
And plumbed towards eternity

Where all night he lay in wonder,
In the center of a hundred billion stars,
Tugged and beckoned by the nascent possibilities
Of love or abdication.

PERSONAL VOICES

Luigi Scali, My Friend

MITCHELL LEE EDWARDS

"LET'S TRY THE PARK for a while; the only people at home now are old ladies who slam doors. Maybe we'll find a family there." I always enjoyed talking to people in Giardini Scotti, a beautiful park with palm trees, fountains, and remains of elaborate stairways within the crumbling walls of a medieval fortress. Even when people stared at us for a few seconds with their "you've got a lot of nerve to talk to me, you worm" arrogance, and then slowly turned their heads away, I enjoyed the park. One refusal no rebuff, said Byron. The splendor and enchantment of the medieval ambience were enough to mask the letdown of refusal.

We saw no people as we passed through the moss-covered, stone arch at the entrance, but wanting to assimilate the atmosphere of the fortress, we continued walking. Late summer is beautiful in Toscana: the palms were swaying in the gentle Italian breeze, and the sun lazily filtered through the leaves. Seeing no one by the staircases, we headed for the fountains. Because the water pressure was low at that time of year, little more than a trickle slid off the marble lips of a yellowing nymph squatting in the middle of a pool. I had always wanted to see the nymph in the spring, when the melting Appenine snow enabled her to produce the regal fountain she was famous for. But the Appenines hadn't even thought about receiving snow yet, let alone about melting it for the sake of the nymph. So, as always, I dropped the thought.

He was sitting on a bench in the shade, smoking a cigarette and watching the pool of water. "Even old people are children of God," I said, and we turned toward him. Looking at the ground to gain my composure and think of the appropriate conjugation of the verb *interessare*, my eyes stumbled onto his

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toenails. In hand-crafted Italian leather sandals, the nails were exposed for all to see. Warped surfboards, I thought. The longest I had ever seen, his toenails extended far beyond the length of his gargantuan toes, and then curled down to touch his sandals. But size was not their only remarkable feature; they had ridges that ran parallel to their length, and in the canyons between the ridges a bright, luminescent purple reflected the light. Purple striped, ridged warped surfboards, I thought.

"Excuse me, um, sir, um, we're missionaries from the Mormon Church. May we speak to you for a moment?" my companion, in Italy for only two weeks, asked him in broken but understandable Italian.

"Cosa?"

My companion must have caught a glimpse of the toenails then, because he didn't repeat his approach. He just stood there, silent, probably in awe. I rescued him with a terse, "We want to speak with you for a few minutes."

"Prego. Accomodatevi."

We sat down on the bench next to him. He was different: tall, overweight, and clumsily dressed in plaid wrinkled slacks and a mismatched, plain smoking jacket. His voice was brash, improper and overbearing, and he would occasionally spit on the ground in front of him. He was, in short, the complete antithesis of mannered class. Yet his sincere answers to our simple questions about God and religion intrigued us, and we asked for an appointment at his house to teach him about the restored gospel.

"Sure, come on over. I'm quite busy with several paintings now, but come anyway. I'm generally at home in the mornings." He left his address, stood, and slowly walked away.

"Did you see those toenails?!" Elder Cantwell exclaimed as soon as he was out of range. We sat in silence and watched him pace away.

Several days later I sat in the Sunday School class next to Sister Salvo, our investigator. I was nervous; I wanted everything to go perfectly, so that she would have a good impression of the Church. All was proceeding calmly and smoothly. Then the door suddenly swung open, and in walked our huge, brash, wild, rough, outspoken artist. With no pause, he launched into a discourse about the weather and the city bus system and the Italian Communists. We all sat in a state of semi-shock. I finally leaped out of my seat, put my arm around him and managed to quiet him down and get him into a seat. Everyone in the class was pink with embarrassment. But he started up again in his thundering voice. No one really knew what to do—I was mortified, and positive that Sister Salvo would never want to set foot again in the church.

The teacher, likewise mortified, managed every now and then to make a comment or two, but only when our artist wasn't rambling. He finally asked the artist to express his feelings about the Church. "With much pleasure," he replied. "I noticed one thing here this morning. Your church is nice and all, but you've got just one problem. There's no doorbell out front." It was too much; we all began to laugh. As he ad-libbed about everything from California to John Wayne (pity he died) to the Aztec Indians. We finally gave up

struggling and laughed at one of the funniest monologues we had ever listened to. He got up and left at the end, while we just sat there, trying to regain our composure. Even Sister Salvo loved it.

One morning, we finally got up the nerve to visit our artist. We didn't even know his name, but he had scribbled his address on a small piece of paper and had told us to come by some morning. Down a small cobblestone road, about one hundred yards from the Arno River, we located the metal plate on his door: "Luigi Scali—painter." He answered our knock in wrinkled boxer shorts and a sweater, a paintbrush in one hand and a cigarette in the other. "Oh, come in!" he shouted.

We walked in, and stopped in our tracks, stunned. Every inch of every wall was covered with paintings. As he showed us through the apartment, our amazement grew. Hundreds and hundreds—perhaps thousands—of the strangest paintings I've ever seen in my life. Now there is a generation of painters in Italy that produces the most bizarre and unique art I've ever seen. Not unique in style: Miro, Duchamp, Dali, and even Kandinsky have already pioneered the style; not unique in medium, and not even unique in subject matter. It is the combination of all three—subject matter, style, and medium that has produced this unique, quite revolting form of art. Scali obviously had joined this company. The motifs of his art were either still-lives of expressionistic fruit, ink and temperas of scenes from Macbeth (witches and kettles of boiling brew), or oils of atomic bombs and monsters. After showing us through the apartment, he took us to the "parlor," and we sat down around a table.

It took me almost two hours to teach him the first half-hour discussion. "Brother Scali," as we called him, had an attention span of no more than two minutes. Literally *no more*. As I slowly made my way, through the Joseph Smith story, he talked about everything else. I am not using hyperbole here. About politics. About seventeenth-century nobility. About the food Napoleon ate. About horse races. About his digestion. About "the war." About art. About automobiles. About the Bible. About domestic pets, and the difficulty in finding good food for them. His mind was incredible. It raced from one end of the globe to the other, from century to century, from one subject matter to another, with no pattern or reason.

Yet despite his cerebral rambling, he seemed to pick up and understand everything he had allowed me to say, even though he'd never give me more than two minutes at a time. I thought it remarkable how well he understood the Joseph Smith story—he recounted it to us at the end. He agreed to pray, and though it wasn't exactly the usual Mormon prayer, it was a good start. There was something about him that caused me to make another appointment. Usually, we'd leave a man like him and look for more "quality men," as our mission leaders called them. We'll do more for the Church if we teach doctors and lawyers and accountants, they always said. Individuals and certain eccentric people just aren't what the Church needs at this point. So often, men like Luigi Scali were quietly left behind in the race for lawyer and family

baptisms. But Scali was not your normal eccentric. He fascinated me, and I wanted to return. And we did—many times.

As we slowly taught him the gospel, he became more and more interesting to us. I learned much from him—at times his brief tirades were as those of college professors. He had incredible knowledge; he just lacked mental organization. I learned to let him talk when he wanted to. At first, I would yell at him in an effort to stop him from talking: “Brother Scali, would you shut up!!” Such efforts were futile and in vain—when he didn’t want to listen, he didn’t. When he did want to listen he did. It was as simple as that. It was just a lesson I had to learn; a lesson in patience and empathy. Lesson learned, however, our encounters became mutual learning experiences, not struggles and conflicts. When we wanted to present him a half-hour discussion, we planned on two hours. He taught us about history and pet food, and we taught him the gospel.

At the end of our very first visit with him, he did something that he continued to do with unerring consistency for the remainder of our visits. After teaching him, listening to him, and praying with him, we would all leave his apartment, and slowly walk down the cobblestone street to a pastry shop on the banks of the Arno River. He would hook our arms with his, as all Italians do, when they take their evening strolls, and we’d ever so slowly saunter towards the river. We’d go into the pastry shop, and he’d buy us a mug of warm, frothy milk and an incredible Italian pastry. We’d smile at each other as we devoured cream-filled eclairs and Napoleoni. The excursion was repeated after every single visit.

Time passed, and his knowledge and appreciation of the gospel grew. Some evenings, after eating our pastries and warm milk, I’d say to Elder Cantwell, “Goodness, I love him.” Scali didn’t blend very well in society, but as I commented the first time I ever saw him, he was a child of God and therefore worthy of all the blessings and joys we know. The members at Church thought he was strange. Some even advised us not to baptize him. I resolved not to let the fickle opinion of men influence our decision or actions. If the members would not eat with the poor in heart, it would just be to their condemnation, I concluded. Christ, eating with publicans and sinners, said “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I will have mercy, not sacrifice.” We asked Brother Scali to be baptized, and he accepted.

When we arrived at his house the morning of his baptism to make the final arrangements, he was in classic form. I asked him to say the opening prayer: “Oh great and wonderful God, we are gathered here together this morning Brother Edoardo, Brother Cantvelli, Brother Eggett, and Brother . . . um . . . let’s see . . . what’s your name? . . . um, yes, aah, Brother Burnham . . .” We all laughed a little, but he didn’t notice it.

We passed by again in the late afternoon to accompany him to the baptism. It was a great trip in the bus; his overpowering voice drew the attention of everyone as he rambled on about Joseph Smith and World War II and the gamblers today who waste all their money at the racetracks, leaving no money for their kids. Scores stared at us, but we ignored them, concluding that

Brother Scali's self-esteem was more important than the opinion of men. We must have been a strange sight, though; two Americans in weird short-sleeved white shirts and a giant, misproportioned, man with a booming voice. After forty-five minutes as the center of attraction we finally got off and walked to the church.

Brother Scali's personality and attention span, though unique and a part of him, worried me some before the baptism. I had a great fear that either during the meeting, during the baptism itself, or during the confirmation, he would embark on some grand discourse. As he pulled my once-beautiful white socks over those incredible purple-ridged toenails, I told him at least ten times that he couldn't say anything during the meeting; there would be hymns, talks, prayers, but he must not say anything. He agreed every time.

". . .dedicate this meeting to thee in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen." Applause. "Applause?" I asked myself. Brother Scali was gleefully clapping, yelling "Bravo bravo!" I stared, mortified, for several seconds, but I finally regained my composure enough to put my arm around him. "You're not supposed to do that in the chapel, especially after a prayer. 'Amen' is all you need to say," I told him. We somehow made it through the meeting without further incident and approached the font.

It was Elder Cantwell's first baptism. They couldn't quite figure out the "arm game," as Brother Scali called it later, but they went ahead. After a nervously-uttered prayer, Elder Cantwell lowered Brother Scali into the font, but his head remained out of the water. Brother Scali seemed confused, so I stooped down and informed him we would be repeating the prayer. As he stood there, all hunched over and tight and confused in the water, he misinterpreted the pause and decided to baptize himself. "Oh God, our Father in Heaven, . . ." and began lowering himself into the water. We quickly stopped him, Elder Cantwell finally managed to baptize him correctly.

As he came up out of the water, he cried out: "Oh, that was wonderful! I felt like I was in Galilee with our Lord Jesus Christ!" Everyone smiled warmly—he was so sincere about it. We changed clothes and turned to the confirmation. I was giving him a blessing, concentrating as hard as I could and trying to listen to the Spirit, when he started thanking me for it. "Oh, what great faith you have in me, Brother Edoardo, to say such beautiful things! Oh, thank you so much!" I continued with my blessing as tears came to my eyes.

We took a bus to his apartment along the banks of the Arno River. As we walked along the cobblestone street under the wrought iron street lights, and he hooked my arm with his, I thought, "I love this country." The moon was large and full, yet low in the sky, as it reflected off the limpid Arno. All was calm, especially our hearts. We had helped the Lord bring another soul into his Church.

FROM THE PULPIT

The Writing of Latter-day Saint History: Problems, Accomplishments and Admonitions

LEONARD J. ARRINGTON

THE CHALLENGE of writing religious history is an old one.¹ The ancient Hebrews incorporated history into their scriptures, and Luke the physician is but one of the historians whose writings were canonized in the Christian New Testament. That the same facts could look quite different when viewed through a variant set of religious glasses was made clear, if it had not been so before, by the writing of St. Augustine's *City of God*. The monastic and ecclesiastical histories of the Middle Ages tended to set forth the drama of salvation, while secular histories, when they finally began to appear, were little more than chronicles or annals of rulers and battles. Histories of families, guilds, towns and nations gave emphasis to the political and economic realities of life but did so with little analysis. Indeed, history was more a branch of literature than of science. To worshipful and believing Christians, history was a vast pool from which could be drawn moral lessons, faith-promoting stories and examples of faith and dedication.

The problem is that facts never speak for themselves. Chronicles and testimonies and stories mean different things to different people. The inevitability of diverse opinions on the meaning of historical events became clear early in Christian history. Could the real bearers of the Christian message be, not the successors to the bishop of Rome, but those who were being persecuted by the established Church—the Waldensians, for example? This version of “a saving remnant” was picked up by the Reformers in the sixteenth century, and the Reformation brought about a great confrontation of different versions of Church history: Catholics vied with Protestants, and Protestants with Protestants. The writers in all camps faced questions about assumptions, about interpreting events, about the metahistorical meaning behind the events. And there were practical, immediate questions. How open should the

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record be? Should the historian include activities by his religious leaders that did not edify? Was this not putting weapons in the hands of the enemy? Would it not destroy the great lesson-teaching capacity of history? Could the historian really establish without question the dealings of God in the affairs of men?

Some of the histories, from all sides, treated the leading personalities as two-dimensional figures, actors in a morality play of right and wrong. Cochlaeus portrayed Martin Luther as a shallow, immoral rake who did not have a religious bone in his body.² The disgraceful immorality in the monasteries, on the other hand, served the Protestants nicely as a counter-theme and drew upon a widespread anti-clerical prejudice. Although imposing in bulk and useful in compiling scattered sources, the ponderous tomes of the *Magdeburg Centuries* (1559-1574) and the *Ecclesiastical Annals* (1588-1607) were but inflated pamphlets in their predictable partisanship. History was a weapon, and both sides—indeed, all sides—made use of it.

But some of the problems would not go away. What did the historian do with sources, with primary documents, that did not fit readily into the interpretation he had already decided upon? And what did one do with documents that turned out to be spurious, as the techniques of textual criticism were brought to bear? We will be better able to understand the mind-set of the sixteenth century if we imagine the historian to be a novelist who feels justified in leaving out anything that doesn't fit his purposes. As the creator of a story, he decides what goes in and what stays out. Confident of their right to decide the content of their works, historians may not have seen themselves as inventing a story, making it up from nothing, but they were positive that God had affirmed the great teaching function of history and that their primary task was to conform to what was consistent with His will.

In this context there appeared a new approach: the secular treatment of religious history. Those aspects of religious history that were properly religious and hence controversial, even emotional and unprovable, were quietly ignored in order to write about such things as changes of administration, the publication of works, the issuing of concordats and other documents, church councils and colloquies, proselyting and conversions, and the establishment of new congregations. This history was administrative, geographic, economic, political. Above all, it was external. It dealt with those matters that could be established clearly and beyond doubt. Sleidan's *Commentaries on the State of Religion and Public Affairs under Emperor Charles V* (1555), the finest work of this kind, "set the tone and methodology of German and European Reformation history at least until the nineteenth century."³

Although political and dynastic bias could affect such external treatments, it was possible to rally substantial agreement on such externals as councils and movements of peoples. What the approach left out—and this is a serious indictment of something that pretends to be religious history—was religion.

Long before the restoration of the gospel in 1830, therefore, a series of questions about the relationship of history to religion had been raised. Was the primary purpose of such history to be faith-promoting? Should it ignore

or leave out items that did not fit the purpose? Should the less than-admirable activities of religious leaders be mentioned? What reliance should be placed on interested testimony? Should the archives of churches be open to research? What does one do when anecdotes purveyed by earlier historians, especially if they filled a moral and faith-promoting purpose, lack credence in the light of later examination and possibly contradictory evidence? Are historians well advised to abandon that which they can get hold of only in part and with the greatest difficulty, namely, the spiritual and supernatural, in order to deal with mundane topics like changing administrations, the construction of chapels, and the establishment of new congregations? Is it possible for a non-believer to write accurate and reliable history about religion? For that matter, is it possible for a believer to write accurate and reliable history about his church? And should the denomination paying the piper—employing the historian—call the tune? Every one of these questions had been raised and wrestled with before the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ in 1830.

WRITING LDS HISTORY, 1830-1890

When the Church was organized on April 6, 1830, the Lord commanded, by revelation, that “a record . . . shall be kept among you.”⁴ In a subsequent revelation the responsibility of the historian was made more explicit: he was to “write and keep a regular history.”⁵ At first, Oliver Cowdery was appointed to supervise their history-gathering efforts. His ecclesiastical responsibilities as Second Elder and, later, as Counselor in the First Presidency, being of a demanding nature, he was soon replaced by John Whitmer. Although he did compile a short chronicle of early activities, Whitmer proved to be not valiant, and George W. Robinson was appointed in his stead. When Willard Richards was appointed Church Historian in 1842, it became an established practice that an apostle serve as Church Historian; that tradition continued through such illustrious officials as George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Albert Carrington, Orson Pratt, Franklin D. Richards, Anthon H. Lund, Joseph Fielding Smith and Howard W. Hunter.⁶

Thus, from the very day of the organization of the Church there was a Church Historian charged with the responsibility of keeping records and writing history. At the same time, at every stage in the history of the Church, others—private individuals independent of Church headquarters—joined in the task of making contributions to the writing and understanding of LDS history. Some of these made substantial contributions.

The first systematic attempt to prepare a history of the growing Church began in 1839 when Joseph Smith and his clerks and associates began the preparation of a multi-volume documentary record called the “History of Joseph Smith.”⁷ The manuscript for this history had progressed to August 5, 1838, when Joseph Smith was murdered on June 27, 1844. The scribes and clerks continued to assemble material and write in the years that followed.

In the meantime, however, the manuscript of “History of Joseph Smith” was published serially in *Times and Seasons* (1842-1846, covering the years

1805-1834); *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (1842-1845, covering years 1805 to 1844); and the *Deseret News* (1851-1858, covering the years 1834-1844).⁸ The process of preparing these for publication in a multivolume bound work began in 1900, when George Q. Cannon was assigned by the First Presidency to begin the compilation. But his death in 1901 interrupted the task and it was reassigned to Brigham H. Roberts who, from 1906 to 1912, prepared "History of Joseph Smith" for publication. Unfortunately, Roberts subtitled this *History of the Church, Period I: "History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, by Himself,"* thus creating a misunderstanding that exists to this day. The entire work was compiled and written by church-employed scribes and clerks, using diaries of Joseph Smith, his clerks and associates, and other documents. Having been instructed to use the pronoun "I" because it was Joseph Smith's history, the clerks continued that practice even after the Prophet's death. The initial portions of the history (1805-1838) presumably benefitted from the perusal of the Prophet, but the remainder, covering the years 1838 to his death in 1844, were compiled and written after his death and could in no sense have had the benefit of his suggestions and corrections. Roberts' edition even included some of his own corrections, deletions, and emendations, sometimes without explanation.⁹

After the "History of Joseph Smith" was completed (in 1856) to the death and burial of Joseph Smith (actually to August 8, 1844), the clerks in the office of the President of the Church continued it as the "History of Brigham Young." As in the case of the Joseph Smith history, this was an "annals" approach to Church history, and documents from a wide variety of sources were used to tell not only the history of Brigham Young but the history of the Church over which he presided.¹⁰ To this date, the only portion of this history, which consists of forty-eight volumes of about one thousand pages each, that has been published is that from 1844 to 1848, issued under the editorship of B. H. Roberts in 1932 as Volume VII of *History of the Church* under the subtitle, "Apostolic Interregnum."¹¹ Hopefully, additional volumes of the massive Brigham Young history will eventually be edited for publication. The volumes are in good quality up to about the year 1858, after which they partake more of the nature of a scrapbook of information. There appears to have been less attention to possible publication in compiling the work after 1858 than had been true during the compilation of the "History of Joseph Smith," the "Apostolic Interregnum," and the first ten years of Brigham Young's presidency.

The most systematic and professional attempt to collect, preserve, and write LDS history was launched in 1891 with the appointment of Andrew Jenson as Assistant Church Historian.¹² Jenson collected and wrote biographies of the founders and subsequent officers of the Church, published as *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols., 1901-1936; prepared a superbly useful encyclopedia of Church history, published in 1941 as *Encyclopedic History of the Church*; directed the preparation of a 700-volume scrapbook record of the day-to-day activities of the Church, with excerpts from available sources, both published and unpublished, called the Journal History

of the Church; and published numerous articles in professional and Church-sponsored periodicals on subjects as varied as "Danes on the Isle of Man," "History of the Las Vegas Mission," "Orderville: An Experiment in a Communistic System, called the 'United Order,'" and "Day by Day with the Utah Pioneers." He also wrote a full history of the Scandinavian Mission, which has stood well the test of time. Jenson's work established the Church Historian's Office as the indispensable and effective source of Latter-day Saint history.

SURVEY HISTORIES, 1879–1930

During Andrew Jenson's lifetime of labor in the Church Historian's Office, other historians, not with Church sponsorship but with Church cooperation, began to write narratives that were to some extent analytical and interpretive. The two principal contributors to Mormon historiography in the nineteenth century were Edward W. Tullidge and Hubert Howe Bancroft. With some access to documents in the Church Archives, Tullidge wrote *The Life of Brigham Young; or Utah and Her Founders* (New York, 1876); *The Women of Mormondom* (New York, 1877); *Life of Joseph the Prophet* (1878; revised ed. 1880); *History of Salt Lake City* (Salt Lake City, 1886); and *History of Northern Utah and Southern Idaho* (Salt Lake City, 1889).¹³ These tend to be adulatory and are heavily documentary, but they are nevertheless valuable sources for early Utah history, and to a lesser extent, for early Mormon history.

Bancroft, in his *History of Utah, 1540 to 1886* (San Francisco, 1889), tells the story of the Mormons during the pre-Utah period as well as the history of Utah after the Mormons settled there. Much of the volume was written by Alfred Bates, one of Bancroft's employees. Bancroft was supplied with a great deal of material by the Church and its members, and his interpretation was regarded as generally favorable to the Church, with the anti-Mormon allegations carefully couched in the footnotes.¹⁴

In the same tradition followed Orson F. Whitney, an apostle and Assistant Church Historian. Whitney's four-volume *History of Utah* (Salt Lake City, 1898 to 1904), written in sesquipedalian prose, is a compelling narrative of Utah's history, from a Mormon point of view.¹⁵

During the same years that Whitney served as Assistant Church Historian (1902-1906), a colleague of equal rank was Brigham H. Roberts. An old-fashioned orator (as was Whitney) with a searching mind and majestic style, Roberts entered upon the writing of a comprehensive history which would counteract the unfavorable image of Mormonism resulting from the long antipolygamy crusade of the 1880s, the controversy over his own election to the House of Representatives in 1899, and the testimony given in the trial of Senator Reed Smoot for seating in the Senate in the early years of this century. Courageous and indefatigable, Roberts wrote a full history which appeared in serial form in the *Americana* magazine from 1909 to 1915. With some updating, this was published with additional material as a six-volume set in connection with the Church's centennial observance in 1930 under the title

A Comprehensive History of the Church: Century One (Salt Lake City, 1930). Roberts' work, while still worth reading, is not a "definitive" work. Many documents since uncovered have altered some of his interpretations, and his preoccupation with the conflict between the Church and the Federal Government, and other personal biases are evident in his reconstruction of a number of critical episodes in Mormon history. Moreover, the volume fails to say much about cultural, social, and economic history, and covers only incompletely the years after 1915. It is an epic work, but not completely satisfactory for 1981 readers.¹⁶

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LDS HISTORY, 1920-1972

While no historian would wish to denigrate or detract from the enormous significance of the histories by Tullidge, Bancroft, and Elders Whitney and Roberts, it is nevertheless essentially true that "objective," "scholarly," and "systematic" treatises on the Mormons and their culture began in this century as a product of students' work toward the Ph.D. in history and the social sciences.¹⁷ One notes, in particular, the sociological dissertations of Ephraim Ericksen, Joseph A. Geddes, Lowry Nelson, and Thomas F. O'Dea; the economic histories of Feramorz Y. Fox and (if I may be so immodest) Leonard Arrington; and the history dissertations of Andrew Love Neff, L. H. Creer, Joel Ricks, Thomas C. Romney, Milton R. Hunter, Richard D. Poll, S. George Ellsworth, Philip A. M. Taylor, Merle E. Wells, Eugene E. Campbell, Kent Fielding, Warren Jennings, Klaus Hansen, Carmon Hardy, Robert Flanders, and Jan Shipp. These are not all of the Mormon-related dissertations written from 1920 to 1972, but they are representative of the large volume of scholarly works written during that period. There are a few other works, such as those of Juanita Brooks, which are fully as scholarly as the doctoral dissertations mentioned. Less defensive than the earlier writers, these authors have been fully professional in identifying and using sources, more persistent in seeking additional information, and more willing to advance honest answers for hard questions.

During the 1960s Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, Church Historian and Recorder, recognized the need for a professionalization of the Church Library and Archives and instructed his Assistant Church Historian, Earl Olson, to join and "be active in" professional library and archival societies.¹⁸ Thus began, particularly after 1963, the employment of professional librarians and archivists, the systematic cataloguing of record books and manuscripts, the adoption of proper security measures and the planning for adequate facilities in the new Church Office Building the construction of which was first announced in 1960. When Elder Smith became president of the Church in 1970, he appointed Elder Howard Hunter, of the Council of the Twelve, as Church Historian and Recorder, with the understanding that Elder Hunter would further these efforts toward "professionalization." As Elder Hunter's Assistant Historian, Earl Olson continued to upgrade the Historian's Office.

Meanwhile, a group of professional Mormon historians and some of their colleagues in the social sciences who were “kindred souls” in historical interest met in San Francisco in December 1965 to form the Mormon History Association. The aim of the Association was “to promote understanding, scholarly research, and publication in the field of Mormon history.” The Association has made annual awards to the authors of the best books and articles, has held meetings each year where scholars can share their research and writing, and sponsors a scholarly journal, *The Journal of Mormon History*, founded in 1974. The Association also undertakes special projects, such as the editing of special issues of other journals. Steadily growing in size, now including in addition to all historians working on Mormon subjects several hundred interested amateurs or “buffs,” the Association has been a powerful motivating and coordinating force in promoting Mormon history.

Simultaneous with the formation of the Mormon History Association was the launching of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. Historians have contributed regularly to the pages of *Dialogue*, which remains a major and welcome outlet for Mormon historical scholarship. Partly because of the competition offered by *Dialogue*, *Brigham Young University Studies*, usually referred to simply as *BYU Studies*, was reinvigorated and began to feature historical essays. An enlarged summer issue, composed primarily of historical articles built around a common theme, has appeared annually since 1969, and “The Historian’s Corner” was inaugurated as a regular feature in 1970. In 1974 LDS women in the Boston area founded *Exponent II*, stimulating historical scholarship with respect to women in the LDS experience. Two years later a young group of Mormon intellectuals founded *Sunstone*. All of these carry articles on Mormon history.

ACTIVITIES OF THE HISTORY DIVISION, 1972-1980

In 1972, with the imminent completion of the Church Office Building, of which the four-story East Wing would be dedicated to Church Library, Archives, and historical endeavors, Church Historian Howard Hunter recommended the organization of the Historical Department. Approved by the First Presidency and Council of Twelve Apostles in March 1972, the department was managed by Elder Alvin R. Dyer, an apostle and former member of the First Presidency. Donald T. Schmidt was appointed Church Librarian, Earl Olson, Church Archivist, and Leonard Arrington, Church Historian, with James B. Allen and Davis Bitton as Assistant Historians. Some time later, Florence Jacobsen was appointed Church Curator. With the exception of Elder Dyer, who served as the ecclesiastical overseer of the department, and Florence Jacobsen, who served on a “dollar a year” basis, the appointees and their staffs were Church employees, paid for their time and expertise.

The principal departure from past tradition was the creation of the History Division which, under the direction of Leonard Arrington, was staffed with a dozen professional historians assigned to conduct research and writing projects on behalf of the Church. With ecclesiastical sanction, these and other

historians, at Brigham Young University and elsewhere, were given full access to the Church Archives and commissioned to write accurate and reliable treatises on a variety of assigned topics. They have published two one-volume histories of Mormonism—the first, a 638-page narrative history primarily for Latter-day Saints; the second, a 400-page topical history, was written primarily for sale to libraries and non-Mormon readers. History Division historians have published four biographies, and four others are on the way; two histories of Church auxiliaries and departments, with one more on the way; and edited two book-length collections of documents, one of which has been published and the other on the way. All in all, History Division staff members, during the period 1972 to 1980, published fifteen books, with six others on the way; approximately one hundred professional articles, with twenty on the way; and published approximately 250 articles in Church magazines, with others on the way. The Division also sponsored a Task Paper Series in which thirty-three occasional papers were published. Division historians have written articles for several encyclopedias, assisted religion editors of several newspapers and magazines, and spoken before many learned societies.

In terms of subject-matter, the History Division has made important contributions to the history of LDS women, the history of priesthood quorums and Church administration, the history of auxiliaries, and the histories of ethnic and national groups. We have done community histories, ward and stake histories, and advanced our knowledge of the roles of many individuals in Church history. One of our most significant contributions to Mormon historiography was the inauguration of an oral history program. Established in 1972, the program later received a large grant from the James Moyle Genealogical and Historical Association, and has since been called the James Moyle Oral History Program. To date the program, currently directed by Gordon Irving, has recorded some 1500 interviews with 750 persons, representing about 3,000 hours on tape. The bulk of the interviews have been conducted in English, but possibly 15 percent have been conducted in other languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, and German. Interviews for the program have been done not only in Salt Lake City and Provo, Utah, but also in several parts of Canada, South America, Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific. Those interviewed have included General Authorities of the Church, administrators of Church programs, mission presidents and missionaries, officers of auxiliary organizations, oldtimers with interesting stories to tell, and articulate members with particular insights that are worth preserving. The task of documenting LDS history is one that will lie continually before us, and as time and resources are available Director Irving intends to continue to document the past and the present so as to preserve a record for the future.

The History Division, I want to emphasize, at no time took the attitude that it should reserve to itself the research and writing of Mormon history. On the contrary, the Division assisted other historians, both Mormons and non-Mormons, by preparing research aids and indexes, by sharing research findings, and by commenting upon manuscripts submitted for “checking.” The Division gave encouragement to many scholars by granting special fel-

lowships and agreeing to serve as co-sponsor of their books. These include several volumes of the projected "History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1980," which have been prepared and approved and hopefully will be published under separate titles in the years to come by Deseret Book Company, BYU Press, and other university and commercial publishers. They also include *The Expanding Church* by Spencer Palmer, published in 1978; the biography of Heber C. Kimball by Stanley Kimball, published by the University of Illinois Press; the biography of Jedediah M. Grant by Gene S. Sessions, recently accepted by the University of Illinois Press; and *Voices of Women* by Ken and Audrey Godfrey and Jill Mulvay Derr, now being published by Deseret Book Company. Several other volumes are in process of preparation.

I hope you will agree with me, on the basis of this recital and the personal knowledge many of you have of our work, that the History Division served well the interests of the Historical Department, the Church, and of Latter-day Saints generally during the period of its existence from 1972 to 1980. Perhaps because of this success, on the assumption that even more can be done in an academic setting, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, in July 1980, transferred the staff of the History Division from the Historical Department to constitute the newly created Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University. President Spencer W. Kimball stated in announcing the transfer:¹⁹

The stature, objectivity and effectiveness of our fine professional historians will be enhanced by association with the church's university, where they can perform their scholarly tasks in a university atmosphere with increased interchange with professional colleagues and the teaching process.

THE RECONCILIATION OF FAITH AND HISTORY

I mentioned at the start of this paper some of the challenges of writing religious history.²⁰ On the one hand the historian must convey the facts of history honestly and straightforwardly. The historian must strive against the conscious or unconscious distortion of events to fit the demands of current fashions; he must renounce wishful thinking. On the other hand, the religious historian wishes also to bear testimony of the reality of spiritual experience. We all know by now that the pretense of "objectivity" can mask a hypocritical dodge to cover up unspoken, perhaps even incorrect, assumptions.

Some tension between our historical training and our religious commitments seems inevitable. Our testimonies tell us that the Lord is in this work, and for this we see abundant supporting evidence. But our historical training warns us that the accurate perception of spiritual phenomena is elusive—not subject to unquestionable verification. We are tempted to wonder if our religious beliefs are intruding beyond their proper limits. Our faith tells us that there is moral meaning and spiritual significance in historical events. But can we be completely confident that any particular judgment or meaning or

significance is unambiguously clear? If God's will cannot be wholly divorced from the actual course of history, can it be positively identified with it? Although we see evidence that God's love and power have frequently broken in upon the ordinary course of human affairs in a direct and self-evident way, our caution in declaring this is reinforced by our justifiable disapproval of chroniclers who take the easy way out and use divine miracles as a short circuit of a causal explanation which is obviously, or at least defensibly, naturalistic. We must not use history as a storehouse from which deceptively simple moral lessons may be drawn at random.

At the same time, I hope that LDS historians will be known for the sense of reverence and responsibility with which they approach their assignments. There should be a certain fidelity toward and respect for the documents. There should exist a certain feeling for human tragedy and triumph. LDS history is the history of Latter-day Saints, in their worship and prayer, in their mutual relationships, in their conflicts and contacts, in their social intercourse and in their solitude and estrangement, in their high aspirations, and in their fumbling weaknesses. We must be responsive to the whole amplitude of human concerns—to human life in all its rich variety and diversity, in all its misery and grandeur, in all its ambiguity and contradictions.

Part of that human life, we must insist, is its religious dimension. The Latter-day Saint historian will not do his subject justice, will not adequately understand the people he is writing about, if he leaves out the power of testimony as a motivating factor in their lives. In his "Second Century Address" at Brigham Young University in 1976, President Kimball gave us wise counsel. "As LDS scholars," he said, "you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things."²¹ The great histories of our people, most of which remain unwritten, will reflect both the rigor of competent scholarship and the sensitivity able to recognize, as the New Testament records, that "the wind bloweth where it listeth."²²

May we as historians lengthen *our* stride as we strive to develop these capacities, which will then enable us to write histories worthy of the marvelous work and a wonder that is our heritage.

NOTES

¹I acknowledge the help of my colleagues in the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, Brigham Young University, in the preparation of this paper. I am particularly grateful for the help of Davis Bitton, Senior Historian, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Professor of History at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

²Johannes Cochlaeus, *Commentaria de Actis et Scriptis Lutheri* (1549).

³A. G. Dickens, *The German Nation and Martin Luther* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 202.

⁴*Doctrine and Covenants of the Church* (Salt Lake City, 1935), 21:1.

⁵Doctrine and Covenants, 41:1.

⁶See Leonard J. Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 3 (Summer 1968): 56-66.

⁷On this and the following paragraph, see "Writing the History of Joseph Smith," in Howard C. Searle, "Early Mormon Historiography: Writing the History of the Mormons, 1830-1858" (Ph. D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1979), pp. 200-336. Also Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies*, 11 (Summer 1971): 439-473.

⁸Searle, p. 220. Also Dean C. Jessee, "The Reliability of Joseph Smith's History," *Journal of Mormon History*, 3 (1976): 23-46.

⁹See Davis Bitton, "B. H. Roberts As an Historian," *Dialogue*, 3 (Winter 1968): 25-44; and David J. Whittaker, "Historians and the Mormon Experience: A Sesquicentennial Perspective," paper presented to the Sidney Sperry Symposium on Church History, Brigham Young University, January 26, 1980, typescript generously furnished by the author.

¹⁰See "The History of Brigham Young," in Searle, pp. 337-357.

¹¹See also Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1801-1844* (Salt Lake City: Privately published, 1968); and Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-1847* (Salt Lake City: Privately published, 1971).

¹²Keith W. Perkins, "Andrew Jenson: Zealous Chronologist" (Ph. D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974); Louis Reinwand, "Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Historian," *BYU Studies*, 14 (Autumn 1973): 29-46; and *Autobiography of Andrew Jenson* (Salt Lake City, 1938).

¹³William F. Lye, "Edward Wheelock Tullidge: The Mormons' Rebel Historian," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 28 (Spring 1960): 56-75; Ronald W. Walker, "Edward Tullidge: Historian of the Mormon Commonwealth," *Journal of Mormon History*, 3 (1976): 55-72.

¹⁴John W. Caughey, *Hubert Howe Bancroft, Historian of the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946); S. George Ellsworth, "Hubert Howe Bancroft and the History of Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, 22 (Autumn 1956): 99-124; and Ellsworth, "A Guide to the Manuscripts in the Bancroft Library Relating to the History of Utah," *ibid.*, 22 (Winter 1956): 197-247.

¹⁵Woodruff C. Thomson, "Orson F. Whitney, Mormon Writer" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1949).

¹⁶Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980); and Davis Bitton, "B. H. Roberts as Historian," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3 (Winter 1968): 25-44.

¹⁷In what follows, see Leonard J. Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism in the Twentieth Century," *Dialogue*, 1 (Spring 1966): 15-28; and Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," *ibid.*, 3 (Summer 1968): 56-65.

¹⁸In what follows see especially Leonard J. Arrington, "Historian as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay," *BYU Studies*, 17 (Winter 1977): 193-209.

¹⁹"New Institute at Y. to Assume Role of Church History Division," *Church News*, 5 July 1980.

²⁰In what follows I have benefitted from reading the essays in C. T. McIntire, ed., *God, History, and Historians: An Anthology of Modern Christian Views of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, 1970); and George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: Reason in Religion* (New York, 1936).

²¹Spencer W. Kimball, "Second Century Address," *BYU Studies*, 16 (Summer 1976): 446.

²²John 3:8.

REVIEWS

A Not So Great Commentary

Great Are the Words of Isaiah. By Monte S. Nyman. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981, 309pp., \$6.95.

Reviewed by KEITH E. NORMAN, who holds a Ph.D. from Duke University in Early Christian Studies and is the gospel doctrine teacher in his Cleveland, Ohio ward.

The "words of Isaiah" constitute a body of some of the greatest religious literature in existence, both in an aesthetic and a spiritual sense. As Monte S. Nyman correctly points out in his introductory chapter, Isaiah's writings are, or at least should be, of special interest to Latter-day Saints. This is primarily due to the emphasis placed upon them in the Book of Mormon, along with citations in other authoritative Mormon writings. Thus the LDS commentator potentially has a unique advantage in determining the meaning of Isaiah.

Unfortunately, it is this very advantage—the additional light and knowledge resulting from modern revelation—which sets a trap for the Mormon scriptural interpreter. Because of our fixation upon the present dispensation as the fullness of times, the gathering together of all truths into one, we ironically tend to restrict the application of ancient scripture to our own era and church. Brother Nyman's commentary is of this all-too-predictable genre. Rather than using the additional sources to broaden our understanding of Isaiah by adding them to the linguistic, cultural and historical studies advocated by D. & C. 88:78–79, he has taken the much easier path which narrows Isaiah into little more than a collection of Mormon proof-texts. Although Nyman casts an occasional glance at alternate versions such as the *Revised Standard* or the *Anchor Bible*, it is only done tentatively. For Nyman, Isaiah has little importance in its ancient historical,

social, cultural or religious context; it is to be interpreted primarily from the viewpoint of modern American Mormons.

Although he recognizes a distinction between application and fulfillment of a prophecy, Nyman goes through Isaiah chapter by chapter, often verse by verse, and focuses on how the Restoration fulfills or is about to fulfill the words of the prophet. The practice of "applying the scriptures to ourselves" is quite legitimate and useful in a community of faith. Mormons such as Nyman are following a Judeo-Christian exegetical tradition evident among the Nephites, the Qumran community, the early Christians and indeed almost all Christian denominations when they read the scriptures as addressed to themselves. It is this universal applicability which is the hallmark of scriptural greatness. The danger is to see such contemporary application as the exclusive correct interpretation or literal fulfillment. Nyman seems oblivious to this problem, and consequently frequently distorts the text.

A Mormon interpretation may be quite valid for a passage like Isaiah 29:11–12, which in light of 2 Nephi 27 appears to be fulfilled specifically in the Martin Harris-Charles Anthon incident. (Nyman of course does not raise the issue of whether or to what extent the incident itself may have influenced Joseph Smith's translation of the corresponding Book of Mormon passage.) Other examples, however, are not quite so clearcut. Isaiah 5:8 reads:

Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.

Nyman sees this as a warning against central government control, which led to Judah's scattering and desolation. This

immediate interpretation is questionable enough, but for Nyman it is only the surface meaning. Actually, he confidently informs us, this passage is really directed against the movement toward socialism in our own day, which would preclude private ownership of property and thus the Law of Consecration and stewardship. In case you are confused by this train of thought, Nyman explains that to “join house to house” is socialistic. May we conclude from this that there will be no condominiums in the Millennium?

Nyman’s standard approach to a passage in Isaiah, however, involves a minimum of risk: follow the brethren. He rarely ventures beyond the safety of previous applications of Mormon scriptures or pronouncements by church leaders, with little attempt at examining their validity or appropriateness. Of Isaiah 3:12, he reports, “Isaiah’s statement about ‘children’ oppressing Judah and causing them to err was used by Elder Ezra Taft Benson as a warning to the women of the Church against the sinful practices of birth control and abortion.” This is a very creative application of a passage which tells of the coming crisis of leadership and breakdown of authority in Judah.

At least the attempts at explicit interpretation such as those just cited, however far-fetched, have the merit of involving the reader’s faculties to think about the passage in question. Elsewhere Nyman simply paraphrases verses with no attempt at analysis, or digresses into a kind of free association. Consider his comment on Isaiah 6:8:

Isaiah’s volunteering exemplifies the great desire one feels to serve the Lord when one comes under the influence of the Spirit. Peter was determined to follow Christ wherever he went, even to the laying down of his own life (see John 13:36–37). It is true that he later denied the Savior, as Christ had prophesied, but after the Holy Ghost came upon Peter, he did lay down his life for Christ.

This sort of thing may be very edifying in the author’s BYU religion classes, but readers may wonder how much they are learning about the book of Isaiah.

Calling this a “scriptural commentary” apparently offers Nyman the ideal vehicle for his rambling, disjointed style, because he feels no need to seek for an overall theme or organization in holy writ, and thus no necessity to organize his thoughts. But even as a devotional or apologetic guide, the book is awkward to use, since Nyman only occasionally quotes the subject text. The reader must spread out two books, Nyman’s and a Bible, alongside each other in order to follow along.

What the book does offer is a collection of tables and indices on the uses or interpretation of Isaiah in Mormon sources, including the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and, selectively, writings and speeches of General Authorities. It is regrettable that this appendix was not expanded into a full-scale topical and historical analysis of Mormon interpretation of Isaiah.

Such an approach could have opened up opportunities for a new level of understanding of how we obtain as well as interpret scripture, particularly with regard to the Book of Mormon. Sydney B. Sperry has made some contributions in this area, but Nyman’s one-sided approach is too dogmatic to advance real solutions to the questions that arise. Nyman can’t quite make up his mind how to defend the messianic application of the famous “virgin birth” prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. First he argues on the basis of similar Book of Mormon prophecies, then on the endorsement of Matthew’s citation of the Septuagint (Greek version), and then on a less-than-cogent contextual argument. It is a scatter-gun effect which hits everything but the scholarly objection itself.

Another major disappointment is his failure to shed new light on the question of who wrote Isaiah. Although the single authorship of Isaiah is now almost universally rejected, Mormons have a special insight (or problem) on this issue. The Book of Mormon, drawing upon the brass plates which were taken from Jerusalem c. 600 B.C., quotes not only from chapters 1–39 (‘First Isaiah,’ attributed to the actual 8th-century prophet),

but also includes several citations from chapters 40–55, now designated ‘Second Isaiah,’ by scholars and dated c. 500 B.C., a century after Lehi’s party left the scene. Contrary to Nyman’s assertion, these Book of Mormon citations do not conclusively establish the complete unity of Isaiah, even on LDS assumptions. In fact, the major textual argument used to date Second Isaiah is the mention of Cyrus, the Persian King who decreed the Jewish return from their Babylonian Captivity (c. 537), by name in Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1. Since these passages are not cited in the Book of Mormon, it remains entirely possible that the material in Second Isaiah was edited at the later date, and that Cyrus was specified in retrospect of the fulfilled prophecy. This would explain both the specific naming of a secular king in a religious prophecy (a feature without scriptural parallel), and the difference in style and emphasis. The Jewish transmitters or teachers responsible for this editing would have been merely applying the scriptures to their own situation, which was a perfectly legitimate practice, as we noted earlier.

Even more striking is the absence of any quotations from chapters 55–66 of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, since there is still some scholarly disagreement as to the distinct identity of a ‘Third Isaiah.’ Considering the focus upon the future and final restoration of Israel in these latter chapters, and the commonality of themes with the Nephite prophets, it is surprising that Moroni or his predecessors didn’t cite any of this portion of Isaiah if it was indeed at hand. Nyman’s argument is that since “the Savior himself” quotes Isaiah 61:1–2 (in Luke 4:17–19), and that passages from ‘Third Isaiah’ are quoted by Paul and cited several times in the Doctrine and Covenants, there can be no question that these chapters are from Isaiah himself. Even assuming the incident described by Luke is historical in detail, the ascription of Jesus’ quote to “the prophet Esaias” is by Luke the narrator, not Christ himself. Moreover, the possibility remains that Jesus knew he was quoting from a later source or version, or even that he mistak-

enly assumed, as did Luke, that the words were Isaiah’s verbatim. As for the Doctrine and Covenants quotations from the latter part of Isaiah, Nyman acknowledges that they do not name the prophet himself as their source. This is automatically taken as proof that the Lord knew there was no need to correct the attribution to Isaiah. Nyman thus ignores the pertinent questions on this issue. To what extent does this silence on the source reflect Joseph Smith’s assumptions, or divine accommodation to the contemporary level of understanding? Why should ‘Third Isaiah’ be invalidated or considered less prophetic than its namesake if it was written later than previously supposed? In fact, the Book of Mormon’s omission of any citations from Isaiah 55–66 provides a striking “argument from silence” in favor of the Third Isaiah theory.

Frankly, I am baffled by the growing attitude among Mormons that insist on such a conservative, anti-scholarly interpretation of the scriptures, evidence to the contrary be damned. Are we to subscribe to the fundamentalist “verbal-inspiration” dogma that every word is dictated (in King James English) by the Holy Spirit, and that all of our received traditions and texts are infallible? Ironically, Joseph Smith was perhaps the first religious leader to dispute this belief in modern times with his radical assertion that the biblical text suffers from corruptions, deletions and mistranslations, that parts were not inspired at all, and that it needed drastic revision. Even though he claimed the Book of Mormon to be “the most correct of any book on earth,” it is clear from the title page on that it contains “faults” which must be attributed to “the mistakes of men.” A refusal to recognize the limitations of scripture is, it seems to me, a manifestation of spiritual insecurity inconsistent with the claim to knowledge “beyond the shadow of a doubt,” and with our avowed ongoing quest for truth. Nyman’s book on Isaiah does not expand our understanding of the truth; it rather reinforces the safe truths—and errors—of the past.

Local History, Well Done

Corinne: The Gentile Capital of Utah by Brigham D. Madsen, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1980. xii + 339 pp., photographs, maps, and index. \$17.50

Reviewed by M. GUY BISHOP, a member of Dialogue's Board of Editors who recently received his Ph.D. in history from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

According to a myth which circulated in Utah during the 1870s, Brigham Young had placed a curse on the town of Corinne and prophesied that the community's ungodly existence would be short-lived. In *Corinne: The Gentile Capital of Utah* Brigham D. Madsen has masterfully chronicled the rise and eventual decline of this colorful frontier town which, for nearly a decade, attempted to challenge Mormon dominance of the Great Basin. Those who associate Corinne only with a peaceful farming village located a few miles west of Brigham City in northern Utah should read this enlightening book about its earlier years.

Local history has achieved a prominent place in the efforts of recent scholars as such diverse communities as revolutionary Concord, Massachusetts, or nineteenth-century Jacksonville, Illinois, have been studied. The success of such an undertaking depends, to a large degree, upon the skill of the author in integrating a seemingly-isolated topic into the regional and national experiences of which it was a part. Professor Madsen has ably accomplished this task. The efforts of a virtual handful of Gentiles to attack the supposed follies of the Mormonism played a major role in the development of this tiny hamlet. Their actions won the applause of some in the eastern United States and served notice to the Latter-day Saint hierarchy that a threat to their ecclesiastical control of the government and economy of Utah Territory was imminent.

Corinne was a child of the transcontinental railroad finally completed at a site north of the Great Salt Lake in May 1869. Non-Mormon entrepreneurs, fearful of rivalry with the LDS competitors in Salt Lake City and Ogden, proposed to construct a gentile capital on the Bear River and to secure a large share of the anticipated trade with Idaho and Montana. But economic considerations were not their only motivation. Many of the initial investors in Corinne also sought to extend Federal jurisdiction over Utah and thus destroy the Mormon kingdom. The creation of a haven for Gentiles was envisioned as a vehicle whereby the territory might be reformed once and for all.

The promotion of Corinne as a legitimate rival to Salt Lake City was a chore to which the town's newspapers applied themselves with vigor. For example, in 1870 the editor of the *Corinne Reporter* boasted that the community ranked second only to Sacramento on the Central Pacific rail line. He went on to predict that within a few years the "burg on the Bear" would rival any city in the western United States. San Francisco and Chicago were described by the local paper as locked into fearsome competition for access to the Corinne trade. As was to be expected, the *Deseret News* and the *Ogden Junction* regularly derided these delusions of the Gentiles, but Corinnethians were confident that a prosperous future was theirs.

The story of the rivalry between Corinne and Utah Mormonism was told on many fronts: in the arenas of politics, cultural development and economics. Gentiles constantly lobbied in Washington, D.C., to seek legislation which would destroy polygamy forever and deprive the Latter-day Saints of political power in Utah. Corinnethians were elated with the introduction of the Cullom bill in Congress in 1869-70. The legislation was intended to abolish the abuses of Mormonism and restore Federal control in

Utah. When the House of Representatives passed the Cullom bill, a massive celebration was held in Corinne. However, when the Senate refused to endorse the act, its Utah proponents looked for other allies.

For a brief period the Corinne Gentiles aligned themselves with the Godbeite schism of the Mormon Church. Both groups shared a common dislike for Brigham Young and his theocratic government, but the Corinnethians never fully accepted the former Saints because of their reluctance to denounce polygamy. A political union between the Gentiles and the Godbeites was attempted with the founding of the Liberal Party in 1870, but it was a dismal failure at the polls. The movement did enjoy some success which it never really appreciated, as it provoked notable reforms within the church-controlled political system of Utah. In response to these non-Mormon pressures, the territorial legislature passed a female suffrage bill in 1870, and the LDS hierarchy encouraged the creation of Republican and Democratic parties in 1872. Because both developments, noble in appearance, were intended to perpetuate Latter-day Saint political power, they were denounced by the Corinnethians.

Professor Madsen's chapter on the cultural development of the Gentile capital is a fascinating study of life in late-nineteenth-century Utah. As was customary for a frontier community trying to bolster its image and provide amusement for its

residents, Corinne completed an opera house in October 1870. The social activity most frequently held in this structure was dances, although occasional dramatic performances took place as well. The opera house also hosted a number of lectures on the popular topic of polygamy. Among the notable orators who addressed that subject were Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse and Ann Eliza Young.

Three fraternal organizations maintained lodges in the community: the Odd Fellows Association; the Good Templars, who were concerned with moral reform movements and, most successfully, the Masonic Order. A number of the founders and later town leaders of Corinne were members of this brotherhood, first organized in 1872 with twenty-nine members, then expanded to forty-five the following year. The eventual decline of the community was accompanied by the disappearance of Masonry.

Just as Corinne had come into existence as an economic appendage of the railroad, it died with the completion of the Utah and Northern Railroad into Montana in 1878. The freighting business so important to Corinnethians quickly became a thing of the past as the population declined from almost fifteen hundred at its peak in the early 1870s to a dismal three hundred by the end of the decade. But for nearly ten years Corinne had served as a symbol of resistance to Mormon control of the Utah Territory. As the faithful Saints would have anticipated all along, Brigham Young's reported curse carried the day.

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