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# Of All Things! Classic Quotations from Hugh Nibley

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# Of Nibley

What on earth have a man's name, degree, academic position, and, of all things, opinions, to do with whether a thing is true or not?

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (January 1968): 22

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I began my second decade in Southern California as a compulsive reader, memorizing Shakespeare plays and aspiring to add something to the Bard's modest contribution. But English literature I soon found to be derivative, and so took to Old English to find what was behind it; what was behind it was Latin, and what was behind that was Greek.

"An Intellectual Autobiography," xx

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The book I happen to be reading is the important one.

"Nibley the Scholar," 4

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A true philosopher can no more pass by the open door of a free discussion than an alcoholic can pass by the open door of a saloon. Since my hosts have been kind enough to invite me to say what I think, the highest compliment I can pay to their tolerance and liberality will be to do just that.

This is not going to be a debate. I would be the most unteachable of mortals if at this stage of life I still believed that one could get anywhere arguing with a dialectician. One might as well attempt to pacify or intimidate a walrus by tossing sardines at him as to bait a philosopher with arguments. I have accepted your kind invitation because I think the subject is worth discussing.

"Do Religion and History Conflict?" *CWHN* 12:434

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I have always been furiously active in the Church, but I have also been a nonconformist and have never held any *office* of rank in anything; I have undertaken many assignments given me by the leaders, and much of the work has been anonymous: no rank, no recognition, no anything. While I have been commended for some things, they were never the things which I considered most important—that was entirely a little understanding between me and my Heavenly Father which I have thoroughly enjoyed, though no one else knows anything about it. . . . I would rather be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord than mingle with the top brass in the tents of the wicked.

"The Best Possible Test," *CWHN* 12:535, 537

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I'm no expert. . . . I have to keep quoting documents all the time and letting them speak for me, because I don't know any of this stuff.

"Nibley the Scholar," 8

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I do not suppress the wild rumors that go around about these documents. Anytime you talk about such things, you get wild rumors, completely irresponsible and greatly exaggerated; but on these particular matters, for example, the Gnostic and Coptic texts, I don't think rumors should be suppressed; no matter how wild your story is, it can't be more fantastic than the truth. It goes way beyond what you could exaggerate, so go ahead and spread anything you want! It is better to be ignorant and interested than ignorant and not interested.

"Apocryphal Writings," *CWHN* 12:266

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I shall probably bore you tonight, but the subject shouldn't, because it's a very good one. I am not going to be bored at all. I love to talk about this stuff! I will get all excited, so don't pay any attention to me!

"Apocryphal Writings," *CWHN* 12:264

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"Rightly to be great," says Hamlet, "is not to stir without great argument, but greatly to find quarrel in a straw." I rejoice that some able young men have been willing to embrace the flimsiest of pretexts, to wit, my own achievement of senility, as the straw that stirs them to great argument.

"Some Reasons for the Restored Gospel," 1

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My first assignment—it was so typically Army you must hear about it: It was the eve of Thanksgiving, and I was scrubbing toilets out with a big brush, with a big scrubbing brush. I was busy scrubbing these latrines out and so forth, and an officer came to me and said, "Come with me and bring the brush." It was a huge pile of celery, they were preparing it for the officer's mess the next day. He says, "Clean this celery off." But I said, "But this brush, I just used it for cleaning toilets." "That doesn't make any difference, if it looks shiny and clean, that's the Army, that's all we want to know." So there I was cleaning that celery for the officers the next day for their Thanksgiving dinner with a toilet brush.

"The Faith of an Observer," 15-16

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I spent a week with Apostle Spencer W. Kimball visiting his home state in Arizona. We were gone ten days. We went by train in those early days. We came back to the old Los Angeles station, and in that part of Los Angeles, there were a lot of bookstores, which I knew very well. I bought a whole set, a very rare collection, of Alfonsus De Lingorio, the seventeenth-century Redemptorist writer on probabilism, a very valuable set of ten volumes. I barely made it back to the train by running across a lot. I jumped on the train, plunked down beside Brother Kimball, who was already on the train, and staggered into the drawing room, my arms full of the complete set, which I greatly valued.

As we sat talking about the books, Brother Kimball casually took an immaculate linen handkerchief from the breast pocket of his jacket, and, stooping over, vigorously dusted off my shoes and trousers. It was the most natural thing in the world, and we both took it completely for granted. After all, my shoes were dusty in the race for the train, and Brother Kimball had always told missionaries to keep themselves clean and proper. It was no great thing—*pas d'histoire*. Neither of us said a thing about it, but ever since, that has conditioned my attitude toward the Brethren. I truly believe they are chosen servants of God.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 24

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Well, I have a testimony; I may be ignorant, but I am not lost.

“Do Religion and History Conflict?” CWHN 12:449

# Of the Gospel

## THE JOYFUL MESSAGE

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The gospel is one long shout of hallelujah as far as that goes. . . . The gospel is our being here.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 3

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Nothing is easier than to identify one’s own favorite political, economic, historical, and moral convictions with the gospel. That gives one a neat, convenient, but altogether too easy advantage over one’s fellows. If my ideas are the true ones—and I certainly will not entertain them if I suspect for a moment that they are false!—then, all truth being one, they are also the gospel, and to oppose them is to play the role of Satan. This is simply insisting that our way is God’s way and therefore, the only way. It is the height of impertinence.

“Beyond Politics,” 298

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All of us believe things that aren’t true, things that will be proven false in time to come. Scientists Galileo, Newton, Heisenberg, Planck, Hawking, and Penrose all had differing beliefs about the very nature of our existence, the most fundamental doctrines of reality. Einstein used to bring God into it. But they all respected each other and didn’t damn each other for wrong ideas. Yet throughout history, men have damned and persecuted and banished and imprisoned and burned others on a vast scale, not for any crimes they committed, but purely for having the wrong ideas. The only crime for which persons were brought to trial during the inquisition was heresy. . . . Consider the Christians and Muslims of Lebanon, for example, living together for centuries with each other, sharing the same customs and values. Each knows the other not as a bad person, yet for years they’ve been slaughtering each other purely for having the wrong beliefs; and within that group, the Sunni and the Shiites are both good Muslims who disagree on but one point of tradition, and for that the car bombs and artillery fire have reduced their beautiful city [Beirut] to rubble.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 7

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The unique value of Christianity lies in those things which would never in a million years occur to men if left to themselves.

“Easter and the Prophets,” CWHN 3:160

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The gospel of repentance is a constant reminder that the most righteous are still being tested and may yet fall, and that the most wicked are not yet beyond redemption and may still be saved. And that is what God wants: “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” (Ezekiel 18:23). There are poles for all to see, but in this life no one has reached and few have ever approached either pole, and no one has any idea at what point between his neighbor stands. Only God knows that.

“Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:461-62

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Who is righteous? Anyone who is repenting. No matter how bad he has been, if he is repenting, he is a righteous man. There is hope for him. And no matter how good he has been all his life, if he is not repenting, he is a wicked man. The difference is which way you are facing. The man on the top of the stairs facing down is much worse off than the man on the bottom step who is facing up. The direction we are facing, that is repentance; and that is what determines whether we are good or bad.

“Funeral Address,” *CWHN* 9:301-2

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To be a believer you must be a literalist with a mind open to infinite possibilities.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:314

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Nothing in the restored gospel is more stimulating to the inquiring mind than the infinitely expanded panorama of time and space it spreads before us.

Our existence is viewed as a one-act play, beginning with instantaneous creation of everything out of nothing and ending with its dissolution into the immaterial nothing from which it came (as St. Jerome puts it), but as a series of episodes of which for the present we are allowed to view only a few. The play has always been going on and always will be: the man Adam played other roles and was known by different names before he came here and, after his departure from mortal life, assumes other offices and titles.

Even in this life everyone changes from one to another, gets new names and callings and new identities as he plays his proverbial seven parts—but always preserving his identity as the same conscious living being.

“The Expanding Gospel,” in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*, 21

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The idea of a primordial revelation is that a complete knowledge of the world from its beginning to its end is already written down and has been vouchsafed to certain chosen spirits from time to time.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:463

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I've mentioned the third dimension. The other churches live in a two-dimensional world. But our gospel adds a third dimension, so to speak. We think of the other world as being a reality, and so we actually live in another dimension.

"Rediscovery of the Apocrypha," *CWHN* 12:213

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The message of the restored gospel is that one phase of the earth's existence is coming to a close, and another phase, a phase in which God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven, is about to become the order of life on earth.

"Beyond Politics," 281

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A favorite with LDS schoolmen has been Brigham Young's declaration that "Every art and science known and studied by the children of men is comprised within the gospel." But this does not mean, as is commonly assumed, that anything one chooses to teach is the gospel. That would be as silly as arguing that since all things are made of electrons, protons, neutrons, etc., whenever anyone opens his mouth to speak he gives a lecture on physics. It means rather that all things may be studied and taught in the light of the gospel.

"Educating the Saints," 239

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If we have no professional clergy in the Church, it is not because the Church cannot use expert knowledge, but because all members should be experts where the gospel is concerned, and as such they should make their contribution.

"The Day of the Amateur," 44

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Moroni enumerates the spiritual gifts in the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, yet we rarely ask for these gifts today—they don't particularly interest us. There is only one that we do ask for in all sincerity, and duly receive, and that, for obvious reasons, is the gift of healing. But the other gifts? Who cares for them? We make light of them and prefer the real world of everyday life. We do not even ask for the *temporal* gifts, because we don't want them either—as gifts.

"Work We Must, But the Lunch Is Free," *CWHN* 9:234

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“If everything is given to us, do we have to work?” Of course. The gifts do not excuse us from work. They leave us free to do the real work. . . . The Lord . . . [says], “I’ll give you the stone and the chisel—now you show that you are a Michelangelo.” It is much harder to be a Michelangelo than to work enough to buy a chisel and some stone.

“Gifts,” *CWHN* 9:101

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All belongs to us that we are capable of conceiving, and containing, and enjoying. But what happens? We go and spoil everything, and then in our feelings of guilt, we petulantly slam the door on faith and repentance, and we doggedly pretend to find fulfillment after the “vision splendid” of our immortality has faded into the light of common day, which we smugly call “the real world.”

“Goods of First and Second Intent,” *CWHN* 9:550

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We are commanded *not* to ask for or seek for *office*. Yet nobody seems particularly interested in asking or seeking for gifts, while men constantly plan, scheme, and aspire to office. Martin Harris and others actually left the Church because their services were not recognized by high office—Martin Harris, who had the privilege of standing in the presence of an angel and turning over the plates, wanted an office in the Church, something which would only be temporary and a nuisance. Why, let me talk to Moroni for five minutes and I’ll give you the pleasure of sitting on the stand for evermore!

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 19

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Implicit and explicit in the concept of a gospel taught by degrees instead of all at once—“line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30)—is the idea that the most important, the highest, and the holiest teachings come *last*.

This is the exact opposite of the reasoning of the Christian world today, that the most important teachings must have come *first*, so that everything essential is known while anything that may have escaped is not really vital.

Few would dispute that the higher and holier a teaching is, the fewer are qualified to hear it: One need only recall the Lord’s practice of discussing “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” only with his disciples behind closed doors and of selecting only a few chosen apostles to share in the still greater mysteries such as the transfiguration.

All Christians, indeed, agree that the most glorious manifestations are reserved for the end. But the importance of a teaching is not measured by its depth and wonder but by the particular need of the person receiving it. God does give people at all times what are *for them* the most important teachings that could possibly be given.

“... But Unto Them It Is Not Given,” *CWHN* 7:107-8

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The mysteries are not magic or occultism, but any knowledge that men cannot obtain by their own efforts, knowledge to be had only by revelation. The whole Book of Mormon is such a mystery. There you will find clear, concrete definitions of such daunting words as faith, heaven, hell, creation, atonement, resurrection, redemption, preexistence, hereafter.

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” *CWHN* 8:547

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A mystery, by definition, is something that you keep to yourself; the Greek *muo* means “to shut up.” A mystery is something you’ve been initiated into, and you don’t convey that to the general public.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 5

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The established academician with his tried-and-tested platitudes and truisms is welcome to his world of preaching and posturing, but the greatest appeal of the gospel in every age has been that it is frankly wonderful—one glorious surprise after another.

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (May 1970): 86

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Those who turn from the daily paper and the news broadcasts to con the scriptures for signs of the times, revise their charts of prophetic world events, and plot the course of God in history are wasting their time. This is a shabby little show down here—read a last month’s newspaper if you don’t think so.

As a matter of fact, the human race is at this moment as near to an earthly paradise as it can ever expect to be—unless you honestly think that more televisions and cars and play-school education are going to endow man with the wisdom and forbearance of the angels. After every conceivable improvement and correction in our world has been made, we are still at a loss to imagine any institutional setup or scientific attainment that can make men permanently happy. . . .

If the things of this world are all an empty show, “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,” what is important? The atonement of Jesus Christ—that is the one supreme reality of our life upon this earth!

“Prophets and Glad Tidings,” *CWHN* 3:263-64

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We cannot enjoy optional obedience to the law of God, or place our own limits on the law of sacrifice, or mitigate the charges of righteous conduct connected with the law of the gospel. We cannot be willing to sacrifice only that which is convenient to part with, and then expect a reward. The Atonement is everything; it is not to be had “on the cheap.” God is not mocked in these things; we do not make promises and covenants with mental reservations. Unless we live up to every covenant, we are literally in Satan’s power—a condition easily recognized by the mist of fraud and deception that has enveloped our whole society.

“The Meaning of the Atonement,” *CWHN* 9:590

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You do not have to be an inspired prophet to know that man’s state is parlous, that life is more than we can handle, and that death is more than we can face. Nothing is more real in this life than the constant awareness that things could be better than they are. The Atonement does not take place in this part of the celestial order. The unreality is all on this side of the great and awful gulf. If there is anything manifestly evident about the doings in the great and spacious building, it is the hollow laughter and silly pretensions of the people in it.

“The Meaning of the Atonement,” *CWHN* 9:595

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In its sweep and scope, atonement takes on the aspect of one of the grand constants in nature—omnipresent, unalterable, such as gravity or the speed of light. Like them, it is always there, easily ignored, hard to explain, and hard to believe in without an explanation. Also, we are constantly exposed to its effects whether we are aware of them or not.

“The Meaning of the Atonement,” *CWHN* 9:603

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To be redeemed is to be atoned. From this it should be clear what kind of *oneness* is meant by the Atonement—it is being received in a close embrace of the prodigal son, expressing not only forgiveness but oneness of heart and mind that amounts to identity, like a literal family identity as John sets it forth so vividly in chapters 14 through 17 of his Gospel.

“The Meaning of the Atonement,” *CWHN* 9:567-68

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We are commanded to be joyful because he has borne our sorrows. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief so that we need not be. Our own sins and limitations are the things that make us sad. He had no sins and limitations; he was not sad for his sake, but wholly for ours. Only one could suffer for others who did not deserve to suffer for himself.

If we remain gloomy after what he did for us, it is because we do not accept what he did for us. If we suffer, we deserve to suffer because there is no need for it if we only believe in him.

“Prophets and Glad Tidings,” *CWHN* 8:259

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Jesus actually lived—a man standing out in sharp relief against a totally hostile social environment, for without such a leader no group of men could have come together, formed a society, and propounded a doctrine that ran counter to all their own teaching, upbringing, and experience, both individual and collective. . . .

Since Jesus was *not* a product of his time, is *not* to be explained in terms of his background, and cannot have got his ideas from a society to which they were utterly strange and obnoxious, he must have obtained his perfect conviction from personal experience. For the present, what can we do but accept his own version of the thing? He really had seen the Father; he really had seen Lucifer fall from heaven; he really did speak with Moses and Elias on the mount; he really did receive the ministrations of angels in the desert, and there he really did discourse with Satan; he really was before Abraham's day; and he really was resurrected.

"Easter and the Prophets," *CWHN* 3:161

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I have a testimony of the gospel which I wish to bear. Again, as Brigham Young says, because I say it's true doesn't make it true, does it? But I know it is, and I would recommend you to pursue a way of finding out. And there are ways in which you can come to a knowledge of the truth.

When is a thing proven? When you personally think it's so, and that's all you can do. . . . Then you have your testimony, and all you can do is bear your testimony and point to the evidence. That's *all* you can do. But you can't impose your testimony on another. And you can't make the other person see the evidence as you do. Things that just thrill me through and through in the Book of Mormon leave another person completely cold. And the other way around, too. So we can't use evidence, and we can't say, I know this is true, therefore you'd better know it is true. But I know it is true, and I pray our Heavenly Father that we may all come to a knowledge of the truth, each in his own way.

"Brigham Young as a Theologian," 4

## GOD AND SATAN

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God does not fight Satan: a word from him and Satan is silenced and banished. There is no contest there; in fact we are expressly told that all the power which Satan enjoys here on earth is granted him by God. "We will allow Satan, our common enemy, to try man and to tempt him." It is man's strength that is being tested—not God's.

"Beyond Politics," 288

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[God's permission] has given rise to the favorite proposition of the philosophers that God is either weak because he cannot prevent evil or vicious because he does not want to: an argument which conventional Christianity finds unanswerable. But it all makes sense to Brigham Young: . . . "[It] is not necessary that we should sin because sin is in the world; but, to the contrary, it is necessary that we should resist sin, and for this purpose is sin necessary. . . . Sin is co-eternal with righteousness, for it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things" (*Journal of Discourses*,

10:2-3). The idea that sin should be put within the reach of all who want it is by no means the same thing as saying that all are obliged to sin.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 1:2

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God discusses things with men “in all humility” for the sake of our enlightenment. Satan too loves to “discuss,” but what a different type of discussion! He is not teaching but laying traps; his whole line is a sales pitch with his own advantage as the end. He is not enlightening but manipulating. He does not reason, but bargains: his proposition as put before Adam, Cain, Abraham, Moses, Enoch, and the Lord himself is the same one he puts to Faust and Jabez Stone: “If you will worship me I will give you unlimited power and wealth—everything this world has to offer. All you have to do is sign away your rather dubious expectations for the other world.” If his proposition is refused outright he has no other resort but to have a tantrum, falling down, rending upon the earth, screaming madly, “I am the Son of God! Worship me!”

“Beyond Politics,” 291

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There is an enemy, the enemy of all righteousness—but he is a disembodied spirit. How do we come to grips with him, according to Brigham Young? Very intimately and immediately; he enters, or seeks to enter, right into us individually. There(ore) we cannot engage him by attacking other human beings, no matter how full of the devil they may be. The futility of trying to combat Satan in the persons of those whom we deem to be his human representatives is rendered complete by the circumstance that there is evil as well as good in all of us; and while every man can know for himself what is good and evil in himself, he cannot possibly distinguish with any accuracy what is good and evil in others.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 2:5

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In dealing with this particular enemy, the enemy of all righteousness, the first rule is never to use his methods, for if we do he has already won. He does not care which “side” we are on as long as we act like devils, just as God does not care which side we are on if we keep the great commandments. He held up as the shining example that of a Samaritan who was not a member of the Church, was not even of Israel, and contrasted his behavior (“go thou and do likewise!”) to that of two devout and active churchmen who wanted nothing to do with a drunken bum lying unconscious in the gutter.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 2:1

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What would it be like if I could view and focus on two or more things at once? If I could see at one and the same moment not only what is right before me but equally well what is on my left side, my right side, what is above me and below me? I have the moral certainty that something is there; and as my eyes flicker about, I think I can substantiate that impression. But as to taking calm and deliberate look at more than one thing at a time, that is a

gift denied us at present. I cannot imagine what such a view of the world would be like, but it would be *more* real and correct than the one we have now.

I bring up this obvious point because it is by virtue of this one-dimensional view of things that we magisterially pass judgment on God. The smart atheist and pious schoolman alike can tell us all about God—what he can do and what he cannot, what he must be like and what he cannot be like—on the basis of their one-dimensional experience of reality. Today the astronomers are harping on the old favorite theme of the eighteenth-century encyclopedists, who, upon discovering the universe to be considerably larger than they thought or had been taught, immediately announced that man was a very minor creature indeed, would have to renounce any special claim to divine favor, since there are much bigger worlds than ours for God to be concerned about, and in the end give up his intimate and private God altogether.

This jaunty iconoclasm rested on the assumption that God is subject to the same mental limitations that we are; that if he is thinking of Peter, he can hardly be thinking of Paul at the same time, let alone marking the fall of the sparrow. But once we can see the possibilities that lie in being able to see more than one thing at a time (and in theory, the experts tell us, there is no reason why we should not), the universe takes on new dimensions and God takes over again. Let us remember that quite peculiar to the genius of Mormonism is the doctrine of a God who could preoccupy himself with countless numbers of things. “The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine” (Moses 1:37).

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:64-65

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Meanness of spirit . . . offends God more than anything else. We have no laws ordering men to be charitable and open-handed, or penalizing that meanness of spirit that so often means an enhanced profit, for the obvious reason that no one can know what is in the heart of another. But God knows, and meanness of spirit is the one thing he will not tolerate. If one loved God with all his heart and soul and his neighbor as himself, few if any laws would be necessary; for such love, said the Lord, comprises all the Law and the Prophets; laws against base and contemptible actions are unnecessary for people to whom such actions are themselves unthinkable.

“Work We Must, But the Lunch is Free,” *CWHN* 9:218-19

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The comings and goings of God himself, moving between heaven and earth, must needs be surrounded by an aura of mystery and excitement. Can such things really be? Luke, in his meticulous, almost clinically exact and factual reports, wants us to know once and for all that they really can be. The wonder of it, something akin to the excitement of Christmas, quickens the reader’s pulse, but how could we describe the state of mind of those who actually experienced it? The apocryphal writings go all out to make us feel with them, but it is 3 Nephi who really catches the spirit (3 Nephi 19:1-3).

“Christ among the Ruins,” *CWHN* 8:414-15.

THE RIGHTEOUS LIFE

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It is easy to imagine absolutes, and to think and argue in terms of absolutes, as the theologians have always done: good and evil, light and darkness, hot and cold, black and white. We know exactly what they *are* but in the real world have rarely experienced the pure thing. Our own experience lies between. Yet, standing on that middle ground, we *are* faced with absolute decisions. . . . You are either repenting or not repenting and that is, according to the scriptures, the whole difference between being righteous or being wicked.

“Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:462-63

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This world was organized in the light of infinite knowledge and experience and after due thought and discussion, to offer multiple facilities to an endless variety of creatures and especially to be the home and dominion of a godlike race who would take good care of it and have joy therein. Being a highly favored breed, much was expected of them, and their qualifications for advancement were to be put to the test by allowing an adversary, a common enemy to God and man, to tempt them and try them. It was decided before even the world was that, if man should yield to this temptation and thus lower his defenses and make himself vulnerable to repeated attacks of the adversary, steps would immediately be taken to put into operation a prearranged plan to restore him to his former status.

What God tells us in effect is, “Now that you have fallen and forfeited your paradise by deliberately, knowingly disobeying me, I will give you another chance to get back to that paradise by deliberately and knowingly obeying me. To get back where you were and beyond, you must repent—forever give up doing it your way and decide to live by the law of God, or by the law of obedience, which means doing it my way.”

Adam agreed to do it God’s way, though Satan lost no time in trying to sell him on another plan. Adam’s own children and their posterity, however, chose to achieve salvation *their* way, not God’s way, and ever since then there has been trouble. The Lord Jesus Christ told the young Joseph Smith in the First Vision that men were no longer doing things his way, that as a result that way was no longer upon the earth, but it was about to be brought again.

“Beyond Politics,” 280-81

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I doubt not that when we know the reason for some of the things we do now on faith, the practical value of the actions will be so plain that we will wonder how we could have missed it, and then we shall be heartily glad that we did what we were told to do.

“Prophets and Ritual,” *CWHN* 8:149

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We know that this is not our real existence—even the Gentiles feel that and resent the madness of it all. Here we are nothing, but here we want everything, because we think this is our only chance. And it is indeed our only chance in a sense. Our great day of probation in which we show how we can adjust ourselves to eternity—here is where we do it.

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” *CWHN* 8: 568

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There are certain things of which we never tire, with which we never become bored. Those are the things of eternity. Yet strangely enough it is these which we easily dismiss and neglect as if they were highly expendable.

“Goods of First and Second Intent,” *CWHN* 9:529

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The doctrine of probation is the inescapable choice between two ways, everyone having a perfect knowledge of the way he should go. None may commit his decision to the judgment of a faction, a party, a leader, or a nation; none can delegate his free agency to another.

“Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:462

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The basic elements of religion are . . . man’s awareness of his lost and fallen state—the “Urtragik” (original tragedy) of his existence—and his hopes of escaping from it. Equal awareness of his present misery and potential for glory meets us at every turn in all the nobler products of his mind.

The problem is how to get from the one state to the other; that is the main concern of the mysteries. The dark coffin chamber and the bright celestial room are the beginning and ending of the story, but the fearful passage itself, the most important learning and doing, is found in the “Mittelraum” (middle room) on the way from the one to the other.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 183

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Much of Christ’s discourse in the New Testament is addressed to schoolmen, the Scribes and Pharisees, who apparently often consulted with him; and yet though he converted farmers and soldiers, tax-gatherers, fishermen, shepherds, harlots, and princes, there is no recorded instance of his ever converting one of the Doctors. . . .

The sick did not have to make Peter’s confession before they were healed, but they *did* have to have faith. The people who would not believe in Jesus believed in nothing—they said they believed in the prophets, but they did not: if they believed in the prophets, in the scriptures, in Moses, or in God, they would believe in Christ—but they do not. The greatest Christian convert was a man who believed all the *wrong* things about Christ—it was not what he believed, but his capacity for faith that made Saul of Tarsus eligible for immediate enlightenment.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:331-32

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You are not going to appease God by trying to buy him off, by going through the pious motions of religious observances, your meetings and temple sessions.

It is not for you to decide what to do to please God—it is for him to decide, and he has not required all this display of piety from you. Your most dedicated observances, even following [his] ancient prescriptions, if done in the wrong spirit, are actually iniquity—not to your credit but to your loss.

“Great Are the Words of Isaiah,” *CWHN* 1:219-20

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There are a few absolute and categorical “Thou shalt nots” in the scriptures which we are far from taking to heart.

We have been told that under *no* circumstances are we to contend, accuse, coerce, aspire, or flatter. These practices will be readily recognized as standard procedure in getting to the top in our modern competitive society. What all of them have in common is a feeling of self-righteousness.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 2:7

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Does not one person need repentance more than another? Ezra and Baruch protested to God that while Israel had sinned, the Gentiles had acted much worse, and asked why they should be let off so much more easily. But God was not buying that argument. You can always find somebody who is worse than you are to make you feel virtuous. It's a cheap shot: those awful terrorists, perverts, communists—*they* are the ones who need to repent! Yes, indeed they do, and for them repentance will be a full-time job, exactly as it is for all the rest of us.

“Great Are the Words of Isaiah,” *CWHN* 1:217

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We can afford the luxury of trusting our fellow-man only because we trust in God, who has assured us that if others let us down, he will make it up to us.

“Uses and Abuses of Patriotism,” 195

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Latter-day Saints have always been the greatest advocates of the Christmas spirit; nay, they have shocked and alarmed the world by insisting on recognizing as a real power what the world prefers to regard as a pretty sentiment. Where the seasonal and formal aspect of Christmas is everything, it becomes a hollow mockery. If men *really* want what they say they do, we have it; but faced with accepting a real Savior who has really spoken with men, they draw back, nervous and ill at ease.

In the end, lights, tinsel, and sentimentality are safer, but a sense of possibilities still rankles, so to that we all continue to appeal. For by celebrating Christmas the world serves notice that it is still looking for the gospel.

“Christmas Quest,” 5

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One does not have faith in propositions, creeds, or institutions, to which one is merely loyal. One has faith in God alone—all else is subject to change without notice. Faith does not seek security by boxing itself in with definite and binding creeds, as did the Doctors of the Church in a time of desperate uncertainty and insecurity. . . .

Professor Gaylord Simpson likes to cite the case of Santa Claus as providing the futility of all faith. But has belief in Santa Claus ever closed the door to knowledge as loyalty to a scientific credo so often has? Is it better for a child to believe in Santa Claus with the understanding that someday he is going to revise his views than for him to be taught what is scientifically correct . . . from infancy, so that he will never, never have to revise his views on anything and thus go through life always right about everything? Which course is more liable to lead to disaster, the open-ended Santa Claus, or the ingrained illusion of infallibility?

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:332

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Being perfect in the way means keeping the covenants one has made.

“Churches in the Wilderness,” *CWHN* 8:309

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The word *perfect* (*teleios*) does not mean perfect digestion, perfect eyesight, perfect memory, and so on; it is a special word meaning keeping the *whole* law. What remained for the young man, before he could be really serious (*teleios*), was keeping the law of consecration. If he did not keep that, he could not be perfect in keeping the others either, in other words, the *whole* law, for he could not become one of the Lord’s disciples. So there was nothing but for Jesus to dismiss him—and a very sad occasion it was when they parted.

The Lord observed to the apostles that the rich just can’t take it; nevertheless, any alternative plan, any proposal of compromise, easier payments, or tax write-offs, was out of the question. The Lord did not say, “Come back; perhaps we could make a deal.” No, he had to let the young rich man go. One does not compromise on holy things. Unless we observe every promise we make in the endowment, we put ourselves in Satan’s power.

“Law of Consecration,” *CWHN* 9:438

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As Heber C. Kimball reminded the saints, there are no covenants made between individuals in the church. All promises and agreements are between the individual and our Father in Heaven; all other parties, including the angels, are present only as witnesses. Therefore whether anybody else observes and keeps the promise is not my concern, but if I do not what I have promised, what blessings can I expect?

“Breakthroughs I Would Like to See,” *CWHN* 9:385

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These are the gifts and talents that prescribe our proper activities on this earth: . . .

1. First of all, before anything can happen, one must be aware of being in the world. A measure of awareness is apparently possessed by all living things, and the greater the awareness, the greater the intelligence. If our time here is to have any meaning at all, our brain and intellect must be clear and active. . . .

2. In this life we have too many options. There are thousands of good things any of us could be doing at the moment but will never be allowed to do, because of the shortness of time and the peculiar need we have to focus on just one thing at a time. . . . What can any of us do in such a predicament? We can only “hear the word of the Lord,” and to hear is to obey. . . .

3. . . . “The eye cannot choose but see,” and what it sees is the big picture—it gauges and measures, perceiving ratios and proportions and noting those that are pleasing and those that are not, and it compares and structures all by the awareness of light, the constant and the measure of all things. . . .

4. . . . If an important aspect of our sojourn here is the release of tension, monotony, and drabness by those sensual delights best represented by the nose, it is the *disciplined* taste, smell, and touch as well as hearing and seeing that have, as Brigham Young again informs us, the greatest capacity for enjoyment; and discipline means control. Appetites, desires, and passions can give us the best of what they have to offer only if they are kept within the bounds the Lord has set. . . .

5. . . . What God asks of the mouth and lips . . . is not that they eat the proper food—they have means of sensing that—but that they *never speak guile!*

6. . . . The ancients considered the neck as the tower, a sort of control on the rest of the body, the index of confidence and courage. It is the characteristic mark of the alert and healthy animal. . . .

7. You can expect to have trials and burdens not a few, for that is part of the game; and for that your shoulders and back should be strong—those burdens are necessary to the plan and are meant to be borne. Best of all, they will not hurt you! . . .

8. Along with that, you are to be valiant; mere innocence is not enough, as Brother Brigham said, if you are to realize your potential. The ancient formula blesses the arms to be strong in wielding the symbolic sword of righteousness. . . .

9. Besides the brain, the *phrenos*, the ancients considered the *thumos*, the breast, the main receptacle and processor of our feelings and emotions. It is there that the surges of passion or fear are felt, and it is there that our prevailing attitude to things is engendered. . . .

10. As to our reins (kidneys) and liver, you leave your innards alone; they should perform their proper function on their own, and the less they attract our attention, or anyone else’s, the better! . . .

11. The Hebrew and Egyptian rites place one goal and one delight above all others, the joy in one’s posterity, in patriarchal succession. . . .

12. Lastly comes our means of getting around in the world, feet and legs. The Egyptians place great emphasis on this; the resurrection is finally achieved only when the legs are set in motion on the path of eternity. . . . The Saints

are the most mobile of mortals, *das wandernde Gottesvolk* (God's wandering people), like Abraham, strangers and pilgrims, but missionaries in the world, meant to circulate abroad, to get around and broadcast the good news and spread the stakes of Zion.

"But What Kind of Work?" *CWHN* 9:265-70.

## PRIESTHOOD

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The moment I even *think* of my priesthood as a status symbol or a mark of superiority, it becomes a mere hollow pretense. At the slightest hint to gloating or self-congratulation the priesthood holder is instantly and automatically unfrocked.

"Best Possible Test," *CWHN* 12:536

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As far as the whole world is concerned, the Priesthood is a thing of value which is cruel to withhold from anyone, because it enhances one's status and dignity among his fellows, whether inside the Church or outside. And yet the one thing that renders that Priesthood completely null and void is to treat it as something to aspire to among one's fellows! Priesthood is strictly an arrangement between the individual Priesthood holder and his brethren in the eternal worlds; as personal and private as anything can be.

"Priesthood," 1

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Nothing is more wonderful than the way in which the Spirit operates through the priesthood; especially firm was its foundation in a principle by which the priesthood cannot be abused or misused; its power cannot be applied to further private or party interests or to impose, coerce, or intimidate—the moment it is directed to such ends, it automatically becomes inoperative.

The priesthood is further more invulnerable because it is indivisible. As long as *one* true holder of the higher priesthood is on the earth the potentiality of the church is there. It suggests the idea of cloning, that from one cell one can produce a whole organism; it also suggests present-day ideas of manifestations of energy at various levels.

"How Firm a Foundation!" *CWHN* 9:152

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RELEVANCE is the one thing the world has a right to demand of words delivered by divine revelation, or personally by the hand of an angel who took the trouble to come down, hand over, and explain.

"Some Reasons for the Restored Gospel," 24

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In recent years, one frequently hears (especially in testimony meetings) such things as, “We are thankful for having a Prophet who can tell us exactly what we have to do and think every moment of the day.” The Prophet is a convenient time and trouble saver. Actually, people pester him to death for these things (they always have), as someone ready to bail you out no matter what silly things you’ve done or what a fool you’ve made of yourself. Well, you’re not going to learn anything that way. Let us recall Joseph’s warning the people who were depending on the prophet, hence “darkening their minds, and neglecting the duties devolving upon themselves” as much as the prophet; but he was not to be called on for every emergency. “It is a great thing to inquire at the hands of God, and we feel fearful to approach him, especially about things which men should obtain in all sincerity for themselves by humility and prayer.” Don’t ask me for revelation. You have just as much right to it, he says.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 11

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What the Brethren say is the word and the will of the Lord (D&C 84), but only, as President Clark pointed out no less than twenty-seven times in a speech on the subject, when they are so moved upon by the Holy Ghost. “How can we know that?” asked Brother Clark. By following the oft-repeated principle that everyone must so live that the Holy Ghost will reveal to him whether the others are speaking by the spirit or not. . . . Before I question another or make a direct appeal to God, I must be perfectly sure of my own purity and integrity, because what I’m asking for is the same revelation.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 12

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I think if you live right and keep your mind open—if you ask for revelation . . . and your mind is open, you will receive hints and proddings that are stronger than just normal insights and things like that.

“The Faith of an Observer,” 13

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Ask the Lord and he will tell you what to do as long as you behave yourself. Nothing in the world is more personal than that.

“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 14

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At no time did Smith claim that his gift of translation was permanent; on the contrary, the gifts of the Spirit are given when and where God wills, and men have no control over them. Joseph Smith stated publicly more than once that he had to study languages like anyone else, save for the brief time when he was actually receiving revelation. To say that his interpretation of one document proves or disproves that of another document made many years before, is to introduce one’s own rules into the game.

“On the Pearl of Great Price,” 3

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[Referring to the Wd3t-eye symbol, Facsimile 2, fig. 7] The key of knowledge and life, the secret of the resurrection, the key to the measure of all things, of science itself, the knowledge of “every gift and endowment,” the consummation of every good thing—what comes nearer to “the great keywords of the priesthood”?

“Three Facsimiles from the Book of Abraham,” 67

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Religion becomes magic when the power by which things operate is transferred from God to the things themselves. . . . When men lack revelation they commonly come to think of power as residing in things. . . .

In time the Bible became a magic book in men’s eyes, conveying all knowledge by its own power, without the aid of revelation. So also after a fierce controversy on the matter, priesthood itself acquired the status of a thing that automatically bestows power and grace, regardless of the spiritual or moral qualifications of its possessor—it became a magic thing.

“Some Fairly Foolproof Tests,” *CWHN* 7:261

## PROPHETS AND REVELATION

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The rejection of living prophets and the veneration of dead ones is not a folly limited to one nation or to one generation. It meets us throughout the long history of Israel as a sort of standard procedure. Nor did it cease with the coming of Christ, who promised his disciples that they would be treated as badly and rejected as completely as he.

“How Will It Be When None More Saith ‘I Saw,’” *CWHN* 8:7

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The sectarian world simply cannot understand how it is possible for a prophet of God to make a mistake. They could never see, for example, why Brigham Young, if he was really a prophet, would need to experiment with sugar beets or silkworms. Why should a prophet experiment? Shouldn’t God reveal to him exactly what to do in every instance so that he need never, never, make a mistake? . . .

If God ever permits a prophet to be wrong or to learn by trial and error as the rest of God’s children do, how can we ever be sure whether he is right or not? That, of course, is where revelation comes in.

Every individual must get a testimony for himself and be guided by the Spirit entirely on his own; then, and only then, as Brigham Young so often and so emphatically declared, can the people of God be led by revelation. In the

light of such a doctrine, whether Joseph Smith ever made mistakes or not becomes completely irrelevant. . . . What mortals have ever been more keenly aware of their weaknesses and shortcomings than the prophets?

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (March 1968): 17

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People use perceived imperfections of the Church as a pretext for them to relax their own personal moral standards. The psychologists tell us regarding our own emotional feelings not to keep these feelings bottled up too tight, because it can lead to an explosion. So what should we do? Be like the importunate widow and complain. Itemize your griefs, your doctrinal objections, your personal distastes. Lay them all out in full detail and get it out of your system. (You may wonder why people see me talking so much to myself.) With this understanding—you will do all this before the only Person qualified to judge either you or your tormentors. As you bring your complaints, be fully aware that he knows everything already—including everything there is to know about you.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 23-24

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[Certainly] I would sustain Judas. He was one of the apostles. . . . If we sustained only perfect people, we wouldn't sustain anybody. The Lord has his purposes in these things.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 10

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If you think any of the Brethren seem to be underendowed in any particular gift or knowledge, know that God has chosen that brother for other gifts, and God will endow him with the gifts he needs as the occasion arises.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 20

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The Brethren have their work cut out for them, and strenuous work it is. It calls for studying the gospel, and to see that the greatest possible number of people in all parts of the world get to hear the first principles. This requires constant repetition of first principles to fresh audiences wherever General Authorities go; they cannot be expected to set forth advanced ideas or front-line research.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 21

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It has been common practice to dismiss any saying of [Brigham Young's] of which one disapproves (and he makes no effort to please) by observing that he said so much on so many things that he was bound to contradict himself, and therefore need not be taken too seriously all the time.

No view could be more ill-advised, for there never was a man more undeviatingly consistent and rational in thought and utterance. . . . Granted that Brigham would admonish the Saints to wear overcoats one day, so to speak, and the next day turn around and advise shirtsleeves, the element of scandal and confusion vanishes if we only get the main idea, which is that it is not the rule-book or the administration but the weather that prescribes the proper dress for the day. All the other apparent contradictions in Brother Brigham's teachings likewise vanish when we grasp the main idea behind them.

"Educating the Saints," 230-31

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Was there ever a preacher or leader more willing to admit his fallibility or more emphatic in exhorting his followers *not* to follow him blindly or believe a thing was so because he said it? If there was one teaching that Brigham Young emphasized more than any other it was the importance of the individuals getting a testimony for himself independently of all human guidance, and putting his trust not in the words of any leader but in the Holy Ghost.

"Sounding Brass," in *CWHN* 11:679

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No matter how wildly improbable or paradoxical or utterly impossible a thing may seem to the cleverest people on earth, only by witness and not by reason, theory, or speculation may its truth be ultimately established, whether the truth be scientific or religious. "This is the testimony . . . which we give of him: That he lives! For we saw him . . . and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:22-23).

Compare this testimony of modern prophets with that of the ancients: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen *with our eyes*, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3). After all, it is the testimony of the prophets that gives us the real Easter.

"Easter and the Prophets," *CWHN* 3:162

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Who can draw the line between insight and inspiration believing, as the Latter-day Saints, that all knowledge comes from God at various levels of revelation?

"New Approaches to the Pearl of Great Price" (March 1968): 17

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Eusebius develops the theory that all that is good and desirable in any civilization is actually a survival from some previous age of enlightenment when the Gospel was on the earth and men received light from heaven. Since civilization and the arts are of course older than Christianity, he does not presume that God's gifts to mankind began with Jesus, but conceives of earlier dispensations when the earth was blessed with divine visitations and showered with heavenly gifts, only to be followed in the course of human affairs by inevitable corruption and apostasy.

Dispensationism is a conspicuous item in the Jewish and Christian apocrypha, in the early Christian writings, and now in the Dead Sea Scrolls. A dispensation is not a reformation but a restoration, specifically, a return of revelation—"again the heavens were open."

Whenever revelation is resumed, the holy order of things revives, while that holy order cannot survive after revelation has ceased no matter how hard men try to preserve and imitate its institutions. The sacral order is thus completely dependent on revelation. . . .

All this is important when it comes to understanding the peculiar role of Mormonism in the world.

"Sophic and Mantic," *CWHN* 10:371-72

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The one true religion cannot overlook the existence of other beliefs and practices that have been followed by the vast majority of the human race over many centuries. It cannot be a localized provincial religion such as Roman Catholicism and the extremely limited Protestant sect. That does not mean that it must have a large membership, but that its doctrine should acknowledge and seek to understand the full scope of human experience. Thus Abraham treats the knowledge of the Egyptians and the morality of Pharaoh with reverence and respect; he doesn't share their beliefs but understands their position. Today the existence in prehistoric times of an "archaic religion" or "ancient wisdom" is ever more strongly suspected as comparative studies accumulate. Mormonism is not only a world religion, it is *the* World Religion.

"Egypt and Joseph Smith," 3

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The yearning of Augustine for real revelation and the inadequacy of all substitutes is beautifully brought out in his last conversation with his mother. Here these two saintly people bare their souls, and what they both wish for above all else is a real revelation: what is it like when God really speaks, they ask each other, when he alone speaks, not by any intermediary "but by himself, that we may hear his word *not* through any tongue of flesh nor angel's voice, nor in the sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of the similitude, but we might hear the very One whom we only love in these other things, that we might hear his very self *without* these—and if this thing could be continued on . . . so that life might be forever like that one moment of understanding for which we now sighed—would not that be 'entering into thy Master's joy?' And when shall that ever be?"

In this moment of frank self-revelation Augustine admits that what he really wants is not revelation that comes by the preaching of men or even of angels, nor that comes through his laborious intellectual demonstrations, nor is the manifestation of God in nature—the voice of thunder—nor even the mystic flash of insight which both he and his mother experienced in their last conversation together, for even then they still "sighed after" the real thing and wondered what it was like.

"A Substitute for Revelation," *CWHN* 3:91-92

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In a testimony meeting, it is the spirit who testifies to the individuals there, not me. I may get up and say that I know it's true, and if a person does not receive the spirit there, that will leave him cold.

“Fact and Fancy in the Interpretation of Ancient Records,” 28

## THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH

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The gospel and the Church: we call one the *plan* and the other the *work*. The plan looks to the eternities and must necessarily be perfect; but the *work is right here and is anything but the finished product*. Yet the two are inseparable! “To bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” is the *plan*; to carry it out, “*this is my work and my glory*”—the glory is in the work. We are permitted to take part in the work, to participate like eager but bungling children in the kitchen or the shop—dropping things, doing it all wrong, quarreling, getting in each other’s way, trying the patience of indulgent elders. What a headache! Yet such is the best and happiest arrangement for all concerned, everybody having a wonderful time—and it is found only in the restored Church, where the plan and the work are equally exhilarating and equally sacred. . . .

Yet the plan does not suffer fools gladly. If its object is perfection—eternal progression, no less—nothing could be more retrograde to it than the easy self-congratulation, shallow learning, vanity of office, quest for wealth and recognition, the futile ambition and careerism that characterize our present society. . . . It is the schoolmen and the fundamentalists who stop the process with final answers, satisfied with what they have. Too often the mere fact that the teaching and history of the Church raise unanswered questions is taken as proof positive that something is seriously wrong. And it is wrong if we ever stop seeking.

“Foreword” to England’s *Why the Church Is as True as the Gospel*, CWHN 12:555-56

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Origen, the first and foremost of Christian theologians, divided the church itself into two bodies of members—the “esoteric” and the “exoteric”—corresponding to two different ways of comprehending the teachings. The words are his, and they speak volumes. Both societies shared the common membership, but while the exoteric side made up the popular congregations, the esoteric community was limited to those who understood and could be trusted with the deeper meaning of the doctrine. . . . Throughout the Book of Mormon the church itself regularly split into a worldly society, notably the religion of the Nehors, and another consisting of “a few . . . humble followers of Christ (2 Nephi 28:14) to whom special gifts and revelations were given (Alma 12:9). These were Origen’s exoteric and esoteric churches respectively. That is why true Israel was called a peculiar people; people often ask today in what sense the Latter-day Saints are still peculiar, and it is not always easy to find an answer.

“One Eternal Round,” CWHN 12:386-88

# Of the Temple

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEMPLE

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A temple, good or bad, is a scale-model of the universe. [I believe] the first mention of the word *templum* is by Varro, for whom it designates a building specially designed for interpreting signs in the heavens—a sort of observatory where one gets one’s bearings on the universe.

“What Is a Temple?” *CWHN* 4:357-58

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The contemplation of the unbroken continuity of life “from eternity to eternity” is the very purpose and function of the temple.

*Message of Joseph Smith Papyri, 7*

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Ancient writers assure us repeatedly that the temple is the earthly type of Zion, a holy place removed from contact with the outer world, set apart for ordinances from which the world is excluded. While it is in the world, the temple presents a forbidding front of high gates, formidable walls, narrow doors, and frowning battlements, dramatizing the total withdrawal of Zion from the world and its defensive position over against it. Zion itself, of course, is absolutely impregnable and unassailable since the world has no access to it. Should the world get too close, Zion withdraws.

“What Is Zion?” *CWHN* 9:27-28

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We know now that there are three worlds: the telestial, in which we live; the celestial, to which we aspire; and in between them another world, called the terrestrial. It is of neither the celestial nor the telestial. According to the ancients, this world is represented by the temple, the in-between world where the rites of passage take place.

“The Meaning of the Temple,” *CWHN* 12:27-28

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If the temple represents the principle of order in chaos, it also represents the foothold, you might say, of righteousness in a wicked world. Someone once asked me concerning the Egyptian ordinances contained in the Joseph Smith manuscript, “Is this stuff relevant to the modern world?” My answer was, “No. It is relevant to the eternities.” The modern world is as unstable as a changing isotope, but the temple has always been the same. The ordinances are those taught by an angel to Adam.

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Whether in Kirtland, Far West, Nauvoo, or the valleys of the West, the [Saints’] hearts have been set on activities and observances that, in terms of modern-day progress and success, make no sense at all. The whole temple economy is grotesquely out of place in the present world; there is nothing the least bit practical about it. It is a school to wean us away from the things of the world.

*Abraham in Egypt, 250*

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It is the actual work done within the temple that most perfectly exemplifies the temple idea. For here, all time and space come together; the barriers vanish between this world and the next; between past, present, and future. What is bound here is bound beyond, and only here can the gates be opened to release the dead who are awaiting the saving ordinances. . . . Here the records of the race are assembled as far back in time as they go for a work performed by the present generation to assure that they and their kindred dead shall spend the eternities together in the future. All time becomes one and the worlds join hands in this work of love, which is no mere mechanical bookkeeping.

“What Is a Temple?” CWHN 4:368

## TEMPLE ORDINANCES

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The LDS endowment was not built up of elements brought together by chance, custom, or long research. It is a single, perfectly consistent organic whole, conveying its message without the aid of rationalizing, spiritualizing, allegorizing, or moralizing interpretations.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, xii*

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The Mormon endowment, like the Egyptian, is frankly a model, a presentation in figurative terms. As such it is flexible and adjustable; for example, it may be presented in more languages than one and in more than one medium of communication. But since it does not attempt to be a picture of reality, but only a model or analog to show how things work, setting forth the pattern of man’s life on earth with its fundamental whys and wherefores, it does not need to be changed or adapted greatly through the years; it is a remarkably stable model, which makes its comparison with other forms and traditions, including the more ancient ones, quite valid and instructive.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, xiii*

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The ordinances are mere forms. They do not exalt us; they merely prepare us to be ready in case we ever become eligible.

“The Meaning of the Temple,” *CWHN* 12:26

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Ordinances are more than just symbols—they go beyond that. They can be as simple as a drawing of something that actually is. They always have a double nature: they are or mean something that is real.

You see that as soon as you try, in music and art, to give religious experience a third dimension. The gospel actually *has* that third dimension, of course. But the whole purpose of music and art, and literature too, is to produce the *illusion* of a third dimension, to produce the illusion that there is depth in the picture. That’s what art does. [When ancient painters discovered perspective, people were scandalized—it was a form of deception.] On a two-dimensional canvas you can produce a third dimension. It’s like looking up into the heights of St. Peter’s: you can see the angels floating on the clouds, and you get the illusion of ascending up to heaven.

But that’s the point: it’s all an illusion, a trick of art, you see; and it will always backfire if you try to do that with the gospel, which is the real thing. That’s why I think we’re wasting our time, mostly, to try heightening religious experience by using such devices in the Church. Once you know the real thing, everything else is an anticlimax. The ward choir can never achieve the same effects as a choir of angels, and yet these things go together.

I was truly amazed when I went to the Kirtland Temple. Look at the work that went into it! It looks like nothing much on the outside but not so on the inside: the workmanship, the design, the way the whole thing is conceived, the scope of it all, the size, the proportions—simply astounding! There is something legitimate there. I can see that the Lord, and not just an angel, has deigned to appear there, knowing how the poor people have worked their heads off for these very same things. And it is really so. They are actually working in a third dimension there. It’s more than just dream and illusion. It’s totally unlike these ugly gothic, neogothic churches all over the place, these massive pretentious buildings. But of course, they are not genuine. They are imitation gothic. They try to take you back to the Age of Faith, to the Middle Ages.

“Conversation with Hugh Nibley,” 22

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Temple ordinances . . . put you into an eternal . . . order of things, which the world will not understand. And if you try to make them vulgarized down here and treat them as if they belong to *this* universe of discourse, then you spoil them.

“The Faith of an Observer,” 27

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So universally is religious ritual today burdened with the defects of oddness, incongruity, quaintness, . . . mere traditionalism, obvious faking and filling in, contrived and artificial explanations including myths and allegories,

frankly sensual appeal, and general haziness and confusion, that those regrettable traits have come to be regarded as the very essence of ritual itself.

In contrast we find the Latter-day Saint rites, though full, elaborate, and detailed, to be always perfectly lucid and meaningful, forming an organic whole that contains nothing incongruous, redundant, or mystifying, nothing purely ornamental, arbitrary, abstruse, or merely picturesque.

“What Is a Temple?” *CWHN* 4:369

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No rites offer a richer variety of profound associations than those dealing with water. For water is not only a *symbol* of cleansing, cooling, refreshing, and reviving: it actually *does* all those things, at one and the same time, along with which it is par excellence the medium of passage. Halfway between solid matter and tenuous spirit, it enables bodies to move from one place to another in a state of effortless motion and silent suspension, visibly hovering between the solid earth below and the empty sky above.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 94*

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Sleep, like water, is one of those things in which reality and symbol meet and fuse. It is both the rest of the body and the freeing of the spirit.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 147*

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The garment represents the preexistent glory of the candidate. When he leaves on his earthly mission, it is laid up for him in heaven to await his return. It thus serves as security and lends urgency and weight to the need for following righteous ways on earth. For if one fails here, one loses not only one’s glorious future in the eternities to come, but also the whole accumulation of past deeds and accomplishments in the long ages of preexistence.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 268*

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One of the most puzzling episodes in the Bible has always been the story of Jacob’s wrestling with the Lord. When one considers that the word conventionally translated by “wrestled” (*yeaveq*) can just as well mean “embrace,” and that it was in this ritual embrace that Jacob received a new name and the bestowal of priestly and kingly power at sunrise, the parallel to the Egyptian coronation embrace becomes at once apparent.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 243*

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All the arts and sciences began at the temple. Dance, music, architecture, sculpture, drama, and so forth—they all go back to the temple. One thing that has impressed me is that the early Christian art and early Jewish art is almost uniformly bad; it's terrible. It's so bad in a world of great artistic heritage that it must have been deliberate. They knew that all one could hope for was to indicate the indescribable in symbolic ways. Don't try to give us heaven by secular means. That's what they tried to do in the Baroque. They poured it on, and no matter how magnificent it was, it always fell flat.

*Letters to Smoother, etc., 104*

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In Wulf Barsch's paintings there is a sense of deep concern, an ominous and brooding feeling of admonition and warning. This I find disquieting until I remember that that is exactly the effect the reading of the scriptures has on me. The pictures do not tell a story—there is nothing trivial, contrived, clever, or cute about them; they seem more like a solemn summing-up, with something of both suspense and finality about them. For Plato true art must have *spoudaiotes*, usually rendered "high seriousness." Its opposite is blasphemy; which does not mean thundering denunciation, solemn deprecation, or consuming wrath, but the very opposite—it means not taking holy things seriously, being too stupid or insensitive (*blax* means both) to value anything beyond the business of business.

Was there ever an artist less inclined to show off than Wulf Barsch? He does not hesitate to try again and again to get through to us, not seeking novelty, but fighting for expression and perfectly willing to stay with a problem. It is that, I suppose, that gives his work the sense of deep sincerity that demands to be taken seriously. Strangely enough, with all his moving solemnity, I find some of his things intensely romantic. The constant dialogue of the poplar and the palm is right out of the most ancient traditions of romantic poetry, whether Barsch is aware of it or not, with echoes from the Patriarchal romances of Genesis. The poplar is the tree of the pioneers, marking their farms on all the benches and valleys from the red sands of Moencopi to the plains of Alberta. It is becoming rare as business supplants the noble windbreaks with billboards. And the palm evokes the wandering tribes of Israel (the palms of California are never convincing), for it is their hope and succor in the desert.

"From the Earth Upon Which Thou Standest," *CWHN* 12:552-54

## THE TEMPLE IN ANTIQUITY

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Ancient civilization was "hierocentric"—centered around the temple. The everyday activities of farming, trade, and war were all ritually bound to the cycle of the year and the cosmos. The great periodic rites were of a dramatic nature, but they were nonetheless real. A coronation is the purest ceremony; yet for all that, it is still real recorded history. A war or migration, though only too real to its victims, would be carried out with strict ritual propriety, according to the religious rules of the game. It is hard for us to understand this ritualizing of history, but once it was a very real thing, and one can still find it miraculously surviving among the Hopi.

So when the ancient myths from all over the world show us the same situations and the same adventures and monsters recurring again and again, we may look upon this endless repetition not as discrediting the historicity of those events and situations but as confirming it. These myths tell about such things happening because that was the type of thing that did happen, and the ritual nature of the event guaranteed that it should happen not once but over and over again.

“Myths and the Scriptures,” *CWHN* 1:43-44

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The hierocentric concept that all good things have been conveyed to mankind from above through the divinely appointed operations of holy shrines and persons is immensely appealing even in the abstract. But transcending all theory is the fact, obvious enough to the ancients if not to us, that all the basic institutions of civilization—political, economic, artistic, literary, . . . and scientific—*did* take their rise at the temple.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:319-20

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Men seem unable to leave the dream of a hierocentric state alone. . . . We cannot blame people if they yearn for (1) the grandeur, color, and unity of the great assembly, (2) the lofty and uncompromising certainty of universal kingship, (3) the sense of refuge and well-being in the holy shrine, (4) the high and independent life of a chivalrous aristocracy, (5) the sheer authority of the institutions established and maintained by force. These are the strengths of the hierocentric state. Its weakness is that it doesn't exist.

“Hierocentric State,” *CWHN* 10:133-34

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The archives were known in Egypt as the House of Life, housing the writings upon which the life of all things ultimately depended. It was a powerhouse humming with vital electricity, transmitting cosmic forces from heaven to earth, a place of deadly peril to any mortal not holding the necessary priestly credentials.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:469

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The House of Life where the books were copied and studied had from the earliest times the aspect of a university, a super graduate school. There it was that all questions relating to learned matters were settled. The place was always part of the temple, and the books contain the earliest *poetry*, for *poiema* means “creation” and the business of the Muses at the temple was to sing the creation song with morning stars.

Naturally the hymn was sung to *music*, and some scholars would derive the first writing from musical notation. It was performed in a sacred circle or *chorus*, so that poetry, music, and the *dance* go out to the world from the temple, called by the Greeks the Museon, or shrine of the Muses.

The creation hymn was part of the great dramatic presentation that took place yearly at the temple, dealing with the fall and redemption of man, represented by various forms of combat, making the place the scene of the ritual *athletic* contests sanctified throughout the world. The victor in the contest was the father of the race, the priest-king himself, whose triumphant procession, coronation, and marriage took place on the occasion, making this the seat and source of *government* (the king was always crowned in the temple rather than the palace).

Since the entire race was expected to be present for the event, a busy exchange of goods from various distant regions took place, the booths of pilgrims serving as the market booths for great fairs, while the necessity of converting various and bizarre forms of wealth into acceptable offerings for the temple led to an active banking and exchange in the temple courts; the earliest "money" from the shrine of Juno Moneta at Rome is temple money. Since the place began as an observatory and all things were tied to the calendar and the stars, *mathematics* flourished and *astronomy* was a Muse.

*History* was another Muse, for the rites were meant for the dead as well as the living, and memorials to former great ones (believed to be in attendance) encouraged the production of a marvelous art of portraiture, of *sculpture* and *painting*, which would have flourished anyway as architectural adornments, since the design and measurements (the *middot*) of the temple structure itself as a sort of scale model of the universe and cosmic computer were all-important; the *architecture* of the hierocentric structure was of primary concern.

And since from that central point all the earth was measured and all the lands distributed, *geometry* was essential: "In the Beginning the One God promised Horus that he should inherit the land of Egypt, which was written in the Books by order of the Lord of All. . . . At the Division of the Lands it was decreed in writing."

The writings produced and copied in the House of Life were also discussed there, giving rise to *philosophy* but concerned largely with cosmology and natural science. In short, there is no aspect of our civilization that does not have its rise in the temple, thanks to the power of the written word. In the all-embracing relationships of the Divine Book everything is relevant. Nothing is really dead or forgotten; every detail belongs in the picture, which would be incomplete without it. Lacking such a synthesizing principle, our present-day knowledge becomes ever more fragmented, and our universities and libraries crumble and disintegrate as they expand. Where the temple that gave it birth is missing, civilization itself becomes a hollow shell.

"Genesis of the Written Word," CWHN 12:472-73

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In Egyptian rites everything is in motion; they respect the Heisenberg principle, for they never try to make any two temples, tombs, texts, vignettes, or reliefs exactly alike. It is the modern world that mass-produces on fixed and static patterns.

Every system, no matter how dynamic, must have certain unchanging constants to give it structure: with Einstein, it was the speed of light; with the Egyptians, it was the unchanging identity of the individual. Life was an endless series of exciting episodes through which the individual passes, undergoing many changes to match every changing environment, but he never loses his identity. It is our modern dynamic faith that binds the individual to a single stereotype and gives him only one life, chopped off at both ends as neatly as a piece of dough in an ITT bakery.

In the more exalted realms of higher thought, however, modern thinking moves steadily closer to the Egyptians. For just as it is not possible for us to visualize the incredible forces and particles of a universe describable only in terms of mathematics, so the Egyptians wisely did not attempt to visualize the ultimate, but stuck to models to explain themselves. The whole Egyptian ritual cycle is figurative: "Behold, all things have their likeness," was their motto, "... both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me" (Moses 6:63).

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, xiii*

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Egyptian love of life ... runs through everything, along with a lively recognition of the individual as the representative and vessel of that life. A constant concern of the Egyptian is that his own personal name be recorded, remembered, and repeated on earth and in the beyond. This is no mystic absorption into the blessed nothingness which men farther East and centuries later disciplined themselves to accept. Emptiness and negation held no charm for the Egyptian. This desire for individual eternal life finds expression in three constantly recurring motifs, rarely missing from any significant monument: (1) the family ... , (2) eternity ... [and] (3) cosmology. ... Need we point out that the principal teachings of the Mormon Temple are also concerned with family, eternity, and cosmology?

"There Is Always Egypt," 12

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The three motifs that confront us wherever we turn in temple and tomb are eternity, family, and cosmos. As to family, the gods themselves do not appear in solitary splendor in the great temples, but always have the rest of the family along, as the individual in his tomb wants to be seen in the intimate and loving company of his wife and children; whether gods, kings, or commoners, they hold hands and embrace in an easy and affectionate manner.

"The Greatness of Egypt," 14

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An important feature of Egyptian architecture of temple, tomb, and even palace is a door, sometimes shown as a curtain or lattice, through which a spirit can pass, a means of communication between two worlds; and the literature is full of ceremonial and mythical doors and gates and instructions on how to pass them.

"The Greatness of Egypt," 18

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If we attempt to untangle the probably historical from the fanciful, we soon discover the common ground on which they meet and fuse: it is *ritual*. Myths arise as attempts to explain ritual doings, whose meaning has been forgotten—"What mean these stones?" After much discussion back and forth, the consensus now emerges that it is the rites and ordinances that come first. This should have been clear from the outset, since myths and legends are innumerable while the rites and ordinances found throughout the world are surprisingly few and uniform. ...

Such indeed has always been the Latter-day Saint position. Adam first performed an ordinance and when asked to give an explanation of it replied that he knew of none “save that the Lord hath commanded me.” Then it was that the true explanation came forth from the mouth of a heavenly instructor.

“Myths and the Scriptures,” *CWHN* 1:42

## THE BLESSING OF THE TEMPLE

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The Christian world has been perennially haunted by the ghost of the temple—a ghost in which it does not believe. If the least be said for it, the temple has never lost its power to stir men’s imaginations and excite their emotions, and the emotion which it has most often inspired in Christian breasts has certainly been that of envy, a passion the more dangerous for being suppressed. The temple has cast a shadow over the claims and the confidence of the Christian church from early times, a shadow which is by no means diminishing in our own day. If we seem to have labored the obvious in pointing this out, it is only because the obvious has been so long and so resolutely denied or ignored in high places.

“Christian Envy of the Temple,” 414

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Five days a week between three and four o’clock in the morning, hundreds of elderly people along the Wasatch Front bestir themselves to go up and begin their long hours of work in the temple, where they are ready to greet the first comers at 5:30 a.m. (At that time, long before daylight, the place is packed, you can’t get in, so I virtuously wait until later, much later, in the day.) Whatever they may be up to, here is a band of mortals who are actually engaged in doing something which has not their own comfort, convenience, or profit as its object. Here at last is a phenomenon that commands respect in our day and could safely be put forth among the few valid arguments we have to induce the Deity to spare the human race: thousands of men and women putting themselves out for no ulterior motive. There is a touch of true nobility here.

What draws them to the temple? There is no music, pageantry, or socializing to beguile the time; none of us begins to grasp the full significance of what is going on, yet nobody seems bored. Why is that?

I can only speak for myself, harking back to the subject of hints, those countless impulses with which our perceptors are being bombarded by day and night. For thousands of years the stars have gone on sending us their hints, broadcasting unlimited information if we only knew it; now at last we are reacting to a narrow band on the informational spectrum, putting clues together in a way the ancients never did. But also we are beginning to suspect that there were times when the ancients reacted to another band of the spectrum which is completely lost on us. The temple, as the very name proclaims, is a place where one takes one’s bearings on the universe. What goes on there is confidential and must remain so until both the Mormons and the outside world are in a better position to understand it.

Meanwhile, I write this almost fifty years to the day since the bewildering experience of my own endowment; I have just returned from the temple again where this day I made a most surprising and gratifying discovery. If I

went to the temple five times and nothing happened, I would stop going. But I've gone hundreds of times, and the high hopes of new knowledge with which I go up the hill every week are never disappointed.

"An Intellectual Autobiography," xxvii-xxviii

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We live in Vanity Fair today, and the temple represents the one sober spot in the world. . . . It is my testimony that the gospel has been restored, and the Lord intends to fulfill his purposes in these days. And whatever we ask him for, he will give us. This I tell my family without any reservation whatever. I have never asked the Lord for anything that he didn't give to me. Well, you say, in that case, you surely didn't ask for much. No, I didn't; I was very careful not to ask for much. We don't want to be spoiled brats, do we? We ask for what we need, for what we can't get ourselves, and the Lord will give it to us]. Don't worry. But he also wants us to get in and dig for the rest.

So I pray and hope that the Lord may inspire and help us all to become more engaged—more involved—in the work of these latter-days and visit the temple often and become wiser all the time, because he intends to give us more revelations through that instrumentality.

"The Meaning of the Temple," *CWHN* 12:38

# Of Life's Meaning

Those who ask, “What is the meaning of life?” and get no reassuring answers have been known to conclude that the whole thing is a cruel joke. If we are supposed to find the answers, they say, why are they hidden? Precisely because we are supposed to *find* them, which means we must look for them; the treasure is buried to keep us digging, the pearl of great price lies glittering in the depths where we must seek it out. Treasure hunts can be both instructive and fun, provided the clues are not too discouraging and kind Providence has strewn the most exciting and obvious clues all over the place. It is only when we choose to ignore them, like the pig-headed constable in the English murder-mystery, blind to all but his own opinion, that we court frustration and cynicism.

“An Intellectual Autobiography,” xix

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We are pushed onto this earthly stage in the middle of the play that has been going on for thousands of years; we want to play an intelligent part and, in whispers, ask some of the older actors what this is all about—what are we supposed to be doing? And we soon learn that they know as little about it as we do.

Who can tell us the plot of the play? The sophic mind assures us that the play is simply a product of lighting, rocks, and wind and has no plot aside from the plots we invent for it. In that book things just happen—and there is no way of proving that that is not so. The mystic makes a virtue of the incomprehensibility of the whole thing; he submerges himself in the darkness of unknowing and wallows in his self-induced and self-dramatizing mood of contradictions: he is strictly a sophic, not a mantic, product.

The mantic admits that the play is incomprehensible to people of as little knowledge and experience as ours and insists for that reason that if we are to know anything at all about it, our knowledge must come from a higher source, by revelation. According to the mantic way of thinking, things do *not* just happen—and there is absolutely no way of proving that *that* is not so. The same starry heavens that have supplied the mantic with irrefutable proof since time immemorial that things do not just happen have always been the most self-evident proof in the world to the sophic that things do just happen.

“Sophic and Mantic,” CWHN 10:370-71

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The whole strength and astounding survival of the Hopis lies in their plot, in their scenario by which they live, and my point is that our world does not have such. The scenario was their real life. The vicissitudes of life were a parody, a sideshow, a mock play on the side, and that’s the only play outsiders ever see. Our existence is a parody; it’s not the real play.

“A Stage without a Play,” 1

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Literature and art can help us enjoy or endure the play (of life), but cannot, by their own confession, tell us what it is about. Science as such confines itself rigorously to examining the props on the stage—measuring and describing

tangible objects. It renounces the goal of comprehending the play as a whole. Philosophy would like to tell us what the play is about, but will not allow itself to run out of scientific bounds; it remains a scavenger in the camp of science. Religion alone can, if anything can, tell us the plot of the play from beginning to end—the eschatology without which it has no meaning. Even the layman cannot be indifferent (because):

a) We were made that way; we cannot rest until we know what it is all about (Aristotle, Augustine).

b) Indifference to eschatology is the mark of sterile societies, and can even be dangerous (Avicenna).

c) It is the unknown that appeals most: science and art can only promise more of the same; religion alone has the excitement of infinite possibilities (Whitehead).

Eschatology is not philosophy, ethics, or aesthetics. It deals exclusively with things that really happen.

“Eschatology,” 1-2

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The basic problem is this moral and spiritual one: what are we to do forever and ever? What do you want to do when you do it forever and ever?

“The Philosophical Implications of Automation,” 3

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My sense of urgency comes from the fact that I spend all my days now with the scriptures. And the two marks of the Church I see are and have been for a long time these: a reverence for wealth and a contempt for the scriptures. Naturally, the two go hand in hand. We should call attention to the fact that these things we are doing are against the work of the Lord. There is one saying of Joseph Smith I think of quite often: “If the heavens seem silent at a time when we desperately need revelation, it is because of covetousness in the Church. God has often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness.” And now the Church isn’t just shot through with covetousness, it is *saturated* with covetousness. And so the heavens are going to be closed. We’re told we don’t get revelation if we put our trust in money in the bank.

“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 13

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It is not a case of physical versus “spiritual” values, but of eternal things, physical or not, versus things we know to be passing and therefore unworthy of our ultimate dedication.

“Educating the Saints,” 232

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The comfort of philosophy, the quiet resignation and calm acquiescence with fate are well enough in themselves, but they are what in ancient times distinguished the pagan from the Christian, for the latter amazed the world by

the robust and joyful assurance with which he viewed things of the other world. One of the most striking features of primitive Christianity was its constant and hardheaded insistence on the nearness and reality of the other side.

“Two Ways to Remember the Dead,” *CWHN* 3:164

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If the earth is perfectly adapted and completely outfitted for all our physical and spiritual needs, what is there left for us to do? Won't it weaken our character to have everything handed to us ready and prepared for our use? That question, the most natural one in the world to ask in our society, shows how far removed we are from the celestial order of things. It's the same question that is asked by the small boy who comes to visit you for summer vacation: “If a guy can't break everything around the house and yard, drown kittens, shoot birds, cut down the apple tree, take the baby buggy apart, stick things in the piano, [and] throw rocks at bottles, what can a guy do?”

[That is a good question, and the way we answer it is a measure of our fitness for the kingdom of heaven.] If we advise the little fellow to acquire more sophisticated tastes and follow our example, to seek his diversions more constructively as we do, watching westerns on TV, going hunting, playing golf, going to football games, attending X-rated movies, or driving a car, he can protest that such activities differ from his own only in being more passive and less imaginative, but really they are quite as trivial and immature and unproductive as his. . . .

Pope Gregory VII wrote a letter to the bishop of Rheims in the eleventh century in which he told how the barons of the time were literally destroying Europe in thousands of private wars and feuds and raids on each other's castles and lands and serfs, and how, when he protested what they were doing, they asked him in all seriousness, “If we don't do this, what else is there for us to do? For what other purpose were gentlemen placed upon the earth? What else can a normal man possibly want to do?”

The activities of the modern world that go by the name of work may not have been as spectacularly destructive as those of the barons of the middle ages, yet we are beginning to find out now that they *are* destructive. And it is high time that we begin to ask ourselves, as we ask the little fellow who's spending the summer with us, whether what we are doing is really what we *ought* to be doing.

There is full-time employment for all simply in exploring the world without destroying it, and by the time we begin to understand something of its marvelous richness and complexity, we'll also begin to see that it does have uses that we never suspected and that its main value is what comes to us directly from mere coexistence with living things—the impact on our minds and bodies, subtle and powerful, that goes far beyond the advantages of converting all things into cash or calories.

“Our Glory or Our Condemnation,” *CWHN* 9:8-10

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One would hope that our shopping-mall someday might become the equivalent of the ancient *suq*, the *agora* of the Greeks, or *forum* of the Romans, with their lively exchange not only of goods but of business news and ideas and valuable information. The *suq* and the *agora* were where philosophers preached, and in the *forum* was where the great orations were delivered—the marketplace was an educational place. Will the mall ever become anything like that? Alas, the possibility of that is completely canceled by the imperative of the TV. Here we reach a state of total nihilism; all day long, and half the night, a procession of plots, murders, bedrooms, fights, and lethal explosions

passes before the bemused spectator, sharing time with cunningly calculated interruptions by lavishly contrived commercial sideshows, thus combining the overlapping images of utter depravity with total triviality; and the thundering *Hauptmotif* that runs through it all is *money*. The inversion of the values is complete, for the less important an object is, as the ancient rhetoricians taught, the more fervidly and persistently it must be brought to the public's attention, so that what the new generation gets is a world turned upside down, with the froth as the substance and foundation of reality. They get that all the time, while the perennial base of intelligent thought and action is at best tolerated as a picturesque, elitist, old-fashioned frill of education. We have a complete switch of values: "All is dross that is not Madison Avenue."

"Goods of First and Second Intent," *CWHN* 9:535-36

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The whole eschatological issue can best be explained, we believe, by a brief diversion into one of those little parables for which we have always had a weakness.

Imagine, then, a successful businessman who, responding to some slight but persistent physical discomfort and the urging of an importunate wife, pays a visit to a friend of his—a doctor. Since the man has always considered himself a fairly healthy specimen, it is with an unquiet mind that he descends the steps of the clinic with the assurance, gained after long hours of searching examination, that he has about three weeks to live.

In the days that follow, this man's thinking undergoes a change, not a slow and subtle change—there is no time for that—but a quick and brutal reorientation. By the time he has reached home on that fateful afternoon, the first shock of the news has worn off, and he is already beginning to see things with strange eyes. As he locks the garage door, his long-held ambition to own a Cadillac suddenly seems unspeakably puerile to him, utterly unworthy of a rational, let alone an immortal, being. This leads him to the shocking realization, in the hours that follow, that one can be rich and successful in this world with a perfectly barren mind. With shame and alarm he discovers that he has been making a religion of his career. In a flash of insight he recognizes that seeming and being are two wholly different things, and on his knees discovers that only his Heavenly Father knows him as he is. Abruptly he ceases to care particularly whether anybody thinks he is a good, able, smart, likeable fellow or not; after all, he is not trying to sell anyone anything any more.

Things that once filled him with awe seem strangely trivial, and things which a few days before did not even exist for him now fill his consciousness. For the first time he discovers the almost celestial beauty of the world of nature, not viewed through the glass of cameras and car windows, but as the very element in which he lives. Shapes and colors spring before his senses with a vividness and drama of which he never dreamed.

The perfection of children comes to him like a sudden revelation, and he is appalled by the monstrous perversion that would debauch their minds, overstimulate their appetites, and destroy their sensibilities in unscrupulous plans of sales promotion. Everywhere he looks he gets the feeling that all is passing away—not just relatively because he is saying goodbye to a world he has never seen before, but really and truly. He sees all life and stuff about him involved in a huge ceaseless combustion, a literal and apparent process of oxidation which is turning some things slowly, some rapidly, but all things surely to ashes. He wishes he had studied more and pays a farewell visit to some friends at the university where he is quick to discover, with his new powers of discernment, that their professional posturing and intellectual busywork is no road to discovery but only an alley of escape from responsibility and criticism.

As days pass, days during which that slight but ceaseless physical discomfort allows our moribund hero no momentary lapse into his old ways, he is visited ever more frequently by memories, memories of astonishing clarity and vividness—mostly from his childhood, and he finds himself at the same time slipping ever more easily into speculations, equally vivid, on the world to come and the future of this world. The limits of time begin to melt and fuse until everything seems present but the present. In a word, *his thinking has become eschatological*.

“What has happened to our solid citizen?” his friends ask, perplexed. He has chosen to keep his disease a secret; it would be even more morbid, he decides, to parade his condition. But he cannot conceal his change of heart. As far as his old associates can see, the poor man has left the world of reality. Parties and golf no longer amuse him. TV and movies disgust him. He takes to reading books, of all things—even the Bible! When they engage him in conversation, he makes very disturbing remarks, sometimes sounding quite cynical, as if he didn’t really care, for example, whether peppermint was selling better than wintergreen or whether the big sales campaign went over the top by October. He even becomes careless of his appearance, as if he didn’t know that the key to success is to make a good impression on people. As time passes, these alarming symptoms become ever more pronounced. His sales record drops off sharply. Those who know what is good for their future begin to avoid being seen with him. Like Lehi of old, he is hurting business, and dark hints of subversion are not far in the offing. What is wrong with the man?

As we said, his thinking has become eschatological. He lives in a timeless, spaceless world in which Jack Benny and the World Series simply do not exist. His values are all those of eternity, looking to the “latter end” not only of his own existence but of everything and everybody around him. As he hears the news or walks the streets, he sees, in the words of Joseph Smith, “destruction writ large on everything we behold.” He is no longer interested in “the things of the world.” The ready-smiling, easily adjustable, anxious-to-get-ahead, eager-to-be-accepted, hard-working conformist, who for so many years was such a tangible asset to Nulb, Incorporated, has ceased to exist.

Now the question arises, has this man been jerked out of reality or into it? Has he cut himself off from the real world or has cruel necessity forced him to look in the face what he was running away from before? Is he in a dream now or has he just awakened from one? Has he become an irresponsible child or has he taken the measure of Vanity Fair? Some will answer one way, some another. But if you want to arouse him to wrathful sermons, just try telling the man that it makes no difference which of these worlds one lives in—that they are equally real to the people who live in them. . . .

It will be noted that this eschatological state of mind does not bear the mark of just one school of thought. Once it gets in the blood, all the aspects and concepts of eschatological thinking enter with it. Our businessman, for example, begins to wonder about certain possibilities: What about the hereafter? Will he ever really see the face of the Lord? Is there going to be a judgment? He almost panics at the thought, which has never bothered him before because he has been successful. He becomes preoccupied with history and prophecy, aware for the first time that his whole life is linked not only with D Division of Nulb, Incorporated, but, for better or for worse, with all that happens in the universe; he belongs to history and it to him—“the solemn temples, the great globe itself” are as much his concern as any man’s. These ideas that come to him are all essential parts of the same picture in which one can descry inextricably joined and intermingled apocalyptic, prophecy, millennialism, Messianism, history, and theology—all belong to the same eschatology. . . .

To anyone who does not experience it, the eschatological view of things is pure myth—an invention of an overwrought mind desperately determined to support its own premises. Only what they fail to consider is that those who have had both views of the world interpret things just the other way around: it is, after all, eschatology

that looks hard reality in the face; lazy and timid people take refuge in the busywork of everyday; only strong and disciplined minds are willing to see things as they are, and even they must be forced to it! No wonder the scholars have agreed that whatever else eschatology is, it is not real!

To conclude our parable, what happens to our man of affairs? A second series of tests at the hospital shows that his case was not quite what they thought it was—he may live for many years. Yet he takes the news strangely, for instead of celebrating at a night club or a prize fight as any normal healthy person should, this creature will continue his difficult ways. “This,” he says, “is no pardon. It is but a stay of execution. Soon enough it is going to happen. The situation is not really changed at all.” So he becomes religious, a hopeless case, an eschatological zealot, a Puritan, a monk, a John Bunyan, a primitive Christian, an Essene, a Latter-day Saint. In every age such people with their annoying eschatological beliefs have disturbed the placid (“perfectly adjusted”) waters of the slough of custom and paid dearly for their folly.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:302-7

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The only person you try to impress is your Heavenly Father, and it is awfully hard because he can’t be fooled—not for a minute. I have always felt driven in this way. The gospel is so wonderful. There is so much to find out. It opens the doors to so many things. It is sort of an obsession, a sort of personal thing. As long as you are going to be doing something, why not be doing something that hasn’t been done before?

“Nibley the Scholar,” 2

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Don’t be like anybody else. Be different. Then you can make a contribution. Otherwise, you just echo something; you’re just a reflection.

“Apocryphal Writings,” *CWHN* 12:292

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When I first came here, I went to a few of the apostles, including J. Reuben Clark, Richard L. Evans, and John Widtsoe to ask if it would be better to remain low-key, keep my nose clean, and avoid these things. The answer was always the same: That is the worst thing you could do. We’ve got to have some voices speaking out because everybody knows that all the virtue isn’t on one side of what we’re doing. Since then I haven’t shifted one iota.

“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 14

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I never thought of myself as a participant, but always on the sidelines, always looking on, and always finding myself in a position where I could get a rather good look. But *everybody’s* in that position if they just wanted to take it and realize what they were into. We’re wandering around as strangers looking for things to recognize, and whenever you see something which you know is good, true, and beautiful, that’s an act of recognition. And you recognize it as such not by analyzing it, but it comes to your memory, it hits you: “I’ve seen that, I know that’s right,” and so forth.

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What things should we think about then, and how? . . . In the first place, that question itself is what we should think about. We won't get very far on our way until we have have faced up to it. But as soon as we start seriously thinking about that, we find ourselves covered with confusion, overwhelmed by our feelings of guilt and inadequacy—in other words, repenting for our past delinquency. In this condition, we call upon the Lord for aid and he hears us.

We begin to know what the Prophet Joseph meant about the constant searching, steadily storing our minds with knowledge and information. The more we get of it, the better we are able to judge the proper priorities as we feel our way forward, as we become increasingly alert to the promptings of the Spirit which become ever more clear and more frequent, following the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

And as we go forward, we learn to cope with the hostile world with which our way is sure to bring us into collision in time. That calls for sacrifice, but what of that? Eternal life is not cheaply bought.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:78

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The Church has been put to great trouble and expense through the years by its insistence on sticking to its long and awkward title. Plainly the second part of the name is very important—the Church of the *latter days*. These are the *last days*—the last days of what? Neither we nor the outside world have ever bothered to explore or argue definitions about that—because the answer is obvious: it is the perennial message of the apocalyptic teaching which is now recognized as the very foundation of the Old and New Testaments. The last days are the last days of everything as we know it.

“Beyond Politics,” 292

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The one future that no one could have imagined was what we could read about in the Book of Mormon; but that we tolerantly consigned to a fantastic realm of the long-ago and far-away, a sort of overdone science fantasy. As it turned out, the Book of Mormon was not dashing off into Never-Never Land but bringing us down to reality if we had only believed it. But we did not and we still don't. But the past year has torn aside veils that we would prefer to have left in place, and we find ourselves enacting what our ancestors would have called a mad melodrama.

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” *CWHN* 8:534

## REPENTANCE

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We must keep plugging away at the business of repentance as if the Lord were to come and inspect us today. Until that time, we must withhold judgment of others. Another teaching that is coming into full force just now is the

Book of Mormon admonition to be more patient with the imperfections of the church and less patient with our own. The church is a training school in which everyone is there for the training. So don't waste time criticizing the authorities.

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” *CWHN* 8:564

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Repentance is the main message of the Book of Mormon, which also tells us what repentance is. *Metanoia*, the New Testament word, contains no hint as to how we go about it, but the Greeks had a better instruction in the two great maxims from the temple at Delphi: “Know thyself” and “Nothing in excess.” Both are lamely translated as advice for making friends and influencing people. Actually they are the rules by which the universe is governed; the one sets us on the right track, and the other keeps us there. The Book of Mormon tells us that the essence of repentance is knowing exactly what we are. . . . The very purpose of our being here is repentance, and repentance is an unsettling exercise in self-knowledge: “O how great is the nothingness of . . . men” (Helaman 12:7). This is the time of probation and preparation, though we are born innocent, there are flaws in our nature, and it is the purpose of our earthlife to bring them out in the open through repentance and eradicate them through baptism, to clear the way for further progression. If there is any weakness in our characters, this is the setting in which it is bound to show up, this life is the day of our probation; whether we find ourselves in an unstable and dangerous or a safe and prosperous environment, it makes no difference—the bad stuff in us will come to the surface.

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” *CWHN* 8:565-66

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We're just sort of dabbling around, playing around, being tested for our moral qualities, and above all the two things we can be good at, and no two other things can we do: *We can forgive and we can repent*. It's the gospel of repentance. We're told that the angels envy men their ability both to forgive and to repent, because they can't do either, you see. But nobody's very clever, nobody's very brave, nobody's very strong, nobody's very wise. We're all pretty stupid, you see. Nobody's very *anything*.

“The Faith of an Observer,” 2

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We: Dear Father, whenever the end is scheduled to be, can't you give us an extension of time?

He: Willingly. But tell me first, what will you do with it?

We: Well . . . ah . . . we will go on doing pretty much what we have been doing; after all, isn't that why we are asking for an extension?

He: And isn't that exactly why I want to end it soon—because you show no inclination to change? Why should I reverse the order of nature so that you can go on doing the very things I want to put an end to?

We: But is what we are doing so terribly wrong? The economy seems sound enough. Why shouldn't we go on doing the things which have made this country great?

He: Haven't I made it clear enough to you what kind of greatness I expect of my offspring? Forget the statistics; you are capable of better things—your stirring commercials don't impress me in the least.

We: But why should we repent when all we are doing is what each considers to be for the best good of himself and the nation?

He: Because it is not you but I who decide what that shall be, and I have told you a hundred times what is best for you individually and collectively—and that is repentance, no matter who you are.

We: We find your inference objectionable, Sir—quite unacceptable.

He: I know.

"Beyond Politics," 279-80

# Of the Beginning

## THE PREMORTAL EXISTENCE

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Nothing could be more gratifying to the ego or consoling to the afflicted spirit of mortals than the secret intimation of a glorious past and an exalted parentage. The exciting foster-parent illusion was exploited by the Gnostics for all it was worth, but the idea was no invention of theirs. It was the thought of his preexistent glory that was Job's real comfort—"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth. . . when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" is not a rhetorical question. For it was the recollection of that same creation hymn of joy and their part in that sustained the Sons of Light in the midst of terrible reverses. "If you could see your real image which came into being before you," says a logion of Jesus," then you would be willing to endure anything!" The author of the Thanksgiving Hymn is simply drunk with the idea of his own preexistent glory. Such glory, according to the Johannine writings, belongs not only to the Lord but to all who follow him.

"Treasures in the Heavens," *CWHN* 1:175

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We recognize what is lovely because we have seen it somewhere else, and as we walk through the world, we are constantly on the watch for it with a kind of nostalgia, so that when we see an object or a person that pleases us, it is like recognizing an old friend; it hits us in the solar plexus, and we need no measuring or lecturing to tell us that it is indeed quite perfect. It is something we have long been looking for, something we have seen in another world, memories of how things should be.

"Goods of First and Second Intent," *CWHN* 9:528

## ANCIENT TEACHINGS ABOUT THE CREATION

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The creation process as described in the Pearl of Great Price is open-ended and ongoing, entailing careful planning based on vast experience, long consultations, models, tests, and even trial runs for a complicated system requiring a vast scale of participation by the creatures concerned. The whole operation is dominated by the overriding principle of love.

"Before Adam," *CWHN* 1:69

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*Pistis Sophia*, continuing the Egyptian teachings, [gives us] the picture of a constant remixing going on in the universe in which old, worn-out, contaminated substances, the refuse of worn-out worlds and kingdoms, is first thrown out on the scrap-heap and returned to chaos as "dead" matter, then melted down in a dissolving fire for

many years, by which all the impurities are removed from it, and by which it is “improved,” and is ready to be “poured from one kind of body into another.”

This whole process by which souls as well as substances are “thrown back into the mixing” is under the supervision of Melchizedek, the great reprocessor, purifier, and preparer of worlds. He takes over the refuse of defunct worlds or souls, and under his supervision five great Archons process (literally “knead”) it, separating out its different components, each one specializing in particular elements which they thus recombine in unique and original combinations, so that no new world or soul is exactly like any other. . . .

With all its perfect unity and harmony, the system [of worlds] presents a scene not of monotonous uniformity but rather of endless and delightful variety: “They are all different one from the other, but He hath not made any one of them superfluous; the one exchangeth what is good [in it] with the other.” At a new creation there is a reshuffling of elements, like the rearranging of notes in the musical scale to make a new composition. . . .

Such a thing is possible because of a force that is primal and self-existent, having no dependence on other matter or its qualities. This is that “light-stream” that no power is able to hold down and no matter is able to control in any way. On the contrary, it is this light that imposes form and order on all else; it is the spark by which Melchizedek organizes new worlds; it is the light that purifies contaminated substances, and the light that enables dead matter to live. Reduced to its simplest form, creation is the action of light upon matter. Matter of itself has no power, being burnt-out energy, but light reactivates it. Matter is incapable of changing itself—it has no desire to, and so light forces into the recycling process where it can again work upon it—for light is the organizing principle.

If Melchizedek is in charge of organizing worlds, it is Michael and Gabriel who direct the outpouring of light to those parts of chaos where it is needed. As light emanates out into space in all directions it does not weaken but mysteriously increases more and more, not stopping as long as there is a space to fill. In each world is a gathering of light . . . and as each is the product of a drive towards expansion, each becomes a source of new expansion, “having its part in the expansion of the universe.”

“Treasures in the Heaven,” *CWHN* 1:182-84

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The mere mechanics of the creation process as described in our “treasure” texts display truly remarkable scientific insight. For the making of a world the first requirements, we are told, are a segment of empty space, pure and unencumbered, and a supply of primordial matter to work with. Mere empty space and inert matter are, however, forbidding and profitless things in themselves, disturbing and even dangerous things for humans to be involved with. Contemplating them, the mind is seized with vertigo until some foothold is found in the void. The order and stability of a foundation are achieved through the operation of a “spark.” The spark is sometimes defined as “a small idea” that comes forth from God and makes all the difference between what lives and what does not: “Compared with it all the worlds are but as a shadow, since it is the spark whose light moves all (material) things.” It is the ultimate particle, the “*ennas* which came from the Father of those who are without beginning,” emanating from the treasure house of light from which all life and power is ultimately derived.

“Treasures in the Heavens,” *CWHN* 1:184-85

## ADAM

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Let us consider our Adam. What kind of being is he? The same kind as ourselves—but what is that? He plays a surprising number of roles, each with a different persona, a different name, a different environment, a different office and calling:

1. He was a member of the presidency when the earth project was being discussed.

2. He was on the committee of inspection that came down from time to time to check up on the operation.

3. Then he changed his name and nature to live upon the earth, but it was a very different earth from any we know; it had to be a garden place specially prepared for him.

4. When he left that paradise, he changed his nature again and for the first time began to reckon the passing of time by our measurements, becoming a short-lived creature subject to death.

5. In this condition, he began to receive instructions from heavenly mentors on how to go about changing his condition and status, entering into a covenant that completely changed his mentality and way of life. “The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit,” when “that which is natural” became spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15:45-46.)

6. In time he died and became a spirit being, the head of all his spirit children in the waiting-place according to common Christian tradition as well as our own.

7. Then he became, after Christ, the firstfruits of the resurrection and returned triumphantly to his first and second estates

8. To go on to glory and eternal lives.

In these seven or eight Adams we have another fundamental teaching that sets Mormonism off from all contemporary religion and science. The one views man’s life on earth as a one-act drama: Adam fell, Christ redeemed us, and that is the story; before Adam there was nothing. Science tells us that the drama is pointless, because there is really nothing after it. We, on the other hand, see an ongoing epic of many episodes, each one a play in itself—a dispensation.

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:77

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Mormons have a story to tell before Adam. But the scientists and other churchmen have none—absolutely none. They set the stage, but they have no play—only properties and props. Joseph Smith at least has given us a picture. With nothing going for him and everything going against him, he simply could not lose—he told us what the play is all about. . . . The fact is we never look at it closely, preferring to save a lot of trouble and take sides with the

traditional schools. And yet, Smith gave the world the only creation story that has real substance. . . . The four Adam stories, as found in the Bible, the book of Moses, the book of Abraham, and the LDS temples, are seen from different points of view and, like the four gospels, do not conflict if each is put into proper context. . . .

Before being introduced to his home planet, Abraham is given a view of the cosmos in which he is reminded again and again that distance, directions, and motions are all represented to him in a way relative to his point of view only. The Lord said, "Remember this is in relationship to you; it's not everything." Everything is to be comprehended not in its absolute condition; but only as it appears from one point. . . . Modern revelation teaches us to look at the genesis of Adam carefully. After the great cycle of creation . . . come the small cycles that bring Adam into the picture. And he's living after the Lord's time—not after our time. It was day and night from His point of view—not ours. When Adam was put out of the timeless, changeless paradise, he began to count the hours and the days. Until Adam underwent that change of habitat, body, chemistry, diet, and psyche that went with the fall, nothing is to be measured in our years.

"Candidates for the Search Society," 12-13

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Do not begrudge existence to creatures that looked like men long, long ago, nor deny them a place in God's affection or even a right to exaltation, for our scriptures allow them such. Nor am I overly concerned as to just when they might have lived, for their world is not our world. They have all gone away long before our people ever appeared. God assigned them their proper times and functions.

"Before Adam," *CWHN* 1:82

# Of Sacred Records

I have reached the stage where I have nothing more to say. As far as I am concerned the scriptures say it all.

“Great Are the Words of Isaiah,” *CWHN* 1:215

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To the Saints, the sacred record is a source of joy and delight as well as of instruction and guidance. It is a joy to read, a treat to the mind and the spirit, “for my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and profit of my children” (2 Nephi 4:15).

“A Strange Thing in the Land,” *CWHN* 2:134-35

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President Benson pleads with us to read the scriptures, so we gingerly pick our way through the Book of Mormon, as if we were tiptoeing through a minefield instead of taking each passage to heart. What a trial it must have been for one who had conversed with angels and with the prophets of old to find himself surrounded by a bunch of yahoos who considered themselves very important.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 15

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If you pray for an angel to visit you, you know what he’ll do if he comes. He’ll just quote the scriptures to you—so you know you’re wasting your time waiting for what we already have. Though you are amused by my saying this, I’m quite serious about it.

“Gifts,” *CWHN* 9:87

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Even when God recognizes extenuating circumstances, he still gives us a choice, with precedence going always to the general rule.

“If There Must Needs Be Offense,” 54

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There is no limit to the acts of depravity that might be justified and sanctified by appeal to specific instances in scripture. It is best to allow no latitude whatever to individual interpretation, with its easy rationalizations and sophistries, as long as we have an abundance of clear and specific statements of just what pleases and displeases our Heavenly Father.

“If There Must Needs Be Offense,” 55

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All the scholars are more or less floundering around today in the rising flood of parchments and papyri that has caught everyone by surprise. If we cannot swim or wade in these waters, we can at least venture down to the shore line to see what all the excitement is about.

Preface, note 1, *CWHN* 7:418

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When scholars who pride themselves on their freedom from any religious commitment are found seriously considering the genesis of the written word not only in holy writings but specifically in our own scriptures, it behooves us to pay attention. Whoever reads the Standard Works today has before him the words of God to men from the beginning, in witness of which the very letters on the page are but slightly conventionalized forms of the original symbols in which the message was conveyed. . . . As members of the human race we are bound to approach the scriptures with new feelings of reverence and respect. They are the nearest approach and the best clue thus far discovered to the genesis of the written word.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:482

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We don’t have a professional clergy—a paid ministry that gives official interpretation of the scriptures—as we’ve always said we don’t. There’s no office in the Church that qualifies the holder to give the official interpretation of the Church. We’re to read the scriptures for ourselves, as guided by the Spirit.

“The Terrible Questions,” *CWHN* 12:336-37

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Clergy have always had their favorite themes and passages, about 5 percent of the total, necessarily taken out of context, since the other 95 percent which is overlooked is the context. The scriptures, with modern revelations added, are far more explicit and detailed than most people realize. There are places where they are silent, but how can we know what is missing and what we are missing in them unless we read them all? Within that framework we are free to ponder, speculate, discuss, criticize, check, and control from other sources—it is all perfectly legitimate. Above all, we are not only justified in falling back on the scriptures, but we are obliged to—because there is *no other* framework available to appeal to.

“Breakthroughs I Would Like to See,” *CWHN* 9:378

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The book of Isaiah, historically the most important of all to Jews, Christians and Latter-day Saints, should at present be the object of the most intensive possible examination. From the beginning the leaders of the Church understood what that would mean, and Joseph, Brigham, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff and the rest spent all the time they could in the School of the Prophets, in which the principal key to the Scriptures was considered to be the study of ancient biblical and relevant modern languages.

THE BIBLE

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Revised and improved editions of the Bible are constantly coming from the press, and the Mormons have never believed in an infallible book or an infallible anything in which men have had a hand. God allows fallible humans to be co-workers with him on the road to a far-distant perfection, but he expects them to make lots of mistakes along the way.

“... There Can Be No More Bible,” *CWHN* 7:4

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Students everywhere have been led to the conclusion that the Flood story and the Garden of Eden motifs in ancient records of many people discredit the Bible by showing it to be just another primitive presentation of old myths. What it discredits, however, is their concept of what the Bible should be—a unique, perfect, absolutely complete, flawless source of all knowledge, a thing which the Bible itself never claims for a moment.

“Israel’s Neighbors,” 26

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Everybody has seen a garden, and everybody has been in a heavy rainstorm; so it requires no effort of the imagination for a six-year-old to convert concise, straightforward Sunday School recitals into the vivid images that will stay with him for the rest of his life.

These stories have been discredited as nursery tales because in a sense they *are* nursery tales, retaining forever the forms they take in the imaginations of small children, defended by grownups who refuse to distinguish between childlike faith, and thinking as a child when it is, as Paul says, “time to put away childish things.”

It’s equally easy and deceptive to fall into adolescent disillusionment, especially with “emancipated” teachers [who] smile tolerantly at the simple gullibility of bygone days while passing stern moral judgment on the savage old “tribal god” who, overreacting with impetuous violence, wiped out Noah’s neighbors simply for making fun of his boat-building on a fine summer day. The sophisticated say that these so-called myths were tolerable in bygone days but that now it’s time to grow up.

“Enoch the Prophet,” *CWHN* 2:3-4

## THE APOCRYPHA

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What are the Apocrypha? They are a large body of writings, Jewish and Christian, existing alongside the Bible, each of which has at some time or other been accepted as true revealed scriptures by some Christian or Jewish group.

Where do they come from? The actual manuscripts are as old as our Bible manuscripts and are sometimes written by the same hands, but their contents betray widely scattered sources, some of which are orthodox and some of which are not.

Then why bother about them? Because writers of the Bible respect them and sometimes quote them, thus including excerpts of the Apocrypha in our Bible, while the fathers of the church in the first three centuries accept many of them as genuine and quote them as scripture.

“A New Age of Discovery,” *CWHN* 7:29

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Almost every ancient patriarch, prophet, and apostle is credited with having left behind a “testament” or “apocalypse” bearing his name. . . . Some of these stories are very old, and a consistent pattern emerges from the telling of them, though they are widely scattered in space and time.

Briefly summed up, the general plot is this: a righteous man, sorely distressed by the depravity of the world or of Israel, prays fervidly for light and knowledge, and in due time receives a divine manifestation, when a heavenly messenger comes to teach him and takes him on a celestial journey, climaxing in a theophany, after which he returns to earth and reports his experience to family and friends—often this is just before he dies, and he bestows a patriarchal blessing—his testament—upon his sons. Often he also goes forth to preach to the people, who reject his message with scorn, whereupon he departs into the wilderness with his faithful followers to establish a more righteous if tentative order of things in the desert, a sort of “church of anticipation.” All of which things Lehi also does in due and proper order; the first part of Nephi’s writing, he says, is but an abridgment of his father’s record, which may properly be called the Testament or Apocalypse of Lehi.

“The Lachish Letters,” *CWHN* 8:391-92

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In 1948 world turned a corner. Overnight, modern Israel became a reality, *and so did ancient Israel*. The Battle Scroll appeared just at the moment that Israel was called to arms, and according to [Yigael] Yadin had not only a moral but even a practical value in that great crisis. Suddenly scriptures became “relevant.”

In the same year the oldest Jewish library and the oldest Christian library were discovered. Both were threatened with destruction. Both were challenged as hoaxes. Both were viewed as the work of irresponsible and fanatical sectaries.

Yet through the years there has been a growing respect for both the Nag Hammadi and the Qumran writings, both because of their impressive spiritual content and the number of other pseudepigrapha that are being discovered or rediscovered to confirm their proximity to the authentic Judaism and Christianity that flourished in the days before the Jewish and Christian doctors of Alexandria changed everything.

“Churches in the Wilderness,” *CWHN* 8:299

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If one makes a sketch of a mountain, what is it? A few lines on a piece of paper. But there is a solid reality behind this poor composition. Even if the tattered scrap is picked up later in a street in Tokyo or a gutter in Madrid, it still attests to the artist’s experience of the mountain as a reality. If the sketch should be copied by others who have never seen the original mountain, it still bears witness to its reality.

So it is with the apocryphal writings. Most of them are pretty poor stuff and all of them are copies of copies. But when we compare them we cannot escape the impression that they have a real model behind them, more faithfully represented in some than in others. All we ever get on this earth, Paul reminds us, is a distorted reflection, but it is a reflection of things that really are. Since we are dealing with derivative evidence only, we are not only justified but required to listen to all the witnesses, no matter how shoddy some of them may be.

“The Expanding Gospel,” *CWHN* 12:203-4

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The *Logia* or Sayings of Jesus found in the early Fathers have suffered unmerited neglect through the years, the result of the thesis that our present Bible contains all there is to know. . . . It is unmerited because all the words of Jesus in the Bible can be read in *half an hour*, though Jesus’ actual sermons often lasted for many hours. What good Christian would be such a fool as to walk out on the Lord while he was speaking?

It is also unwarranted because the purported words of Jesus are found in the church writers of the early period. If such men insist on quoting sayings which they actually believe were uttered by the Master, what greater folly can there be than refusing to give them serious attention? Yet it was not until another great papyrus find in Egypt at the turn of the century that serious attention was given to the *Agrapha* (Unwritten Things of Jesus).

“The Illusive Primitive Church,” *CWHN* 7:65-66

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If the story of Christ’s return after the resurrection were only a myth or wishful thinking, we would find either total silence on the matter or else the usual gnostic-philosophic claptrap masquerading as deep mysteries. Instead of that, we find, if we bring the records together, a remarkably consistent exposition of doctrines heretofore unrecognized by the Christian world.

“... But Unto Them It Is Not Given,” *CWHN* 7:110

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The argument most confidently put forth today for the post-resurrectional activity of Jesus is the behavior of the apostles, who before the resurrection were by all accounts unready not only to preach but even to hear “the things of the kingdom,” and yet presently went forth into the world fully laden. But is it not remarkable that *nothing* has come down to us from that wonderful time when the church is supposed to have received all its knowledge and training? Why have we only the opening words of the Lord’s discourse, declaring how badly the disciples needed the instruction that followed (Luke 24:25-27), of which nothing is preserved in the canon?

“Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: Forty-Day Mission of Christ,” *CWHN* 4:12

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The Forty-Day documents have four things in common. First of all, they were *secret*—for the apostles only, not for general knowledge. They were not handed down; that is why they could be faked later on. Of course, people knew the sort of thing the Lord taught, and consequently the sort of thing to fake—so everybody pretended to have the knowledge, but nobody did.

Second, they paint a very *gloomy picture*. In all of these accounts, the apostles ask the Lord, “What’s going to happen to us now? What’s going to happen to the church? Why are we going to all this trouble in this dispensation if it’s all going to be taken away?” The Lord tells them, “This is for two generations now; then it’s going to be taken away. A lesser church will be left in its place; it will be kept on the fire, so to speak. The true church will return later when I return with my Father.” This of course was the doctrine the Christians didn’t like. It was very bad news for the later church to have the Lord telling the apostles that all these things were going to be taken away. Yet he had said the same thing several places in the New Testament. The documents made this very clear; thus these teachings were unpopular.

Third, the Lord taught them *strange doctrines*, and the Christian world didn’t like this sort of thing at all. The churches liked spiritual things, the things that came out of the university of Alexandria.

Fourth (the main thing), the Lord gave the apostles the *ordinances*.

“Apocryphal Writings,” *CWHN* 12:297-98

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Silence in the record is not a proof of ignorance or lack of interest by the writers. The holiest things were not meant for general distribution. . . . Those to whom “the mysteries of the Kingdom” have been imparted have always been bound to secrecy, and the more wonderful the information, the more carefully guarded it was. The pearls are not to be thrown about promiscuously. Such things are given *only* to those who ask for them sincerely; the door is open only to those who knock at it. The treasures are found only by those who seek for them.

“Censoring the Joseph Smith Story,” *CWHN* 11:63

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

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The texts are packed with matter of greatest interest to Latter-day Saints. The people who wrote and hid these records had our own conception of continued revelation, of this life as a probation, of the preexistence and resurrection, of the dispensations of the gospel with falling away and restoration. Their covenants and ordinances closely resemble ours; and their book of doctrine and covenants (now called the Manual of Discipline) is surprisingly like our own, as are their ideas of priesthood, prophecy, heaven and earth, marriage and eternal progeny, etc.

“More Voices from the Dust,” *CWHN* 1:240

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With the Dead Sea Scrolls we have something new under the sun. Even if they simply repeated what we already know, their principal contribution would be the same—a new dimension of reality to our religion. It has been a long time since scholars asked, “Are there really such things as this? Did this really happen?” They have learned to be content with the easy assumption that it really makes no difference in dealing with spiritual, allegorical, moral emblems whether or not there is a physical reality to our stories. The most shocking thing that Joseph Smith brought before the world was the announcement that things men had been talking about for centuries were literally true and would have to be viewed as such. The restoration of the gospel brought a new reality but found few believers. It was more comfortable the old way when you could take things just as you wanted them. But with the scrolls from the caves, the reality of things hits us in the face with a shock. How often does it happen that documents thousands of years have been dug up by the very descendants of the people who wrote those documents, who could actually read them on the spot, not referring them to pedantic decipherment in distant studies and laboratories, but reading them right off as messages from their own grandparents?

“Churches in the Wilderness,” *CWHN* 8:297

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If there is any validity to the thousands of studies appearing on parallels between the scrolls and various biblical and historical writings, the perfectly staggering parallels between the Book of Mormon and the scrolls cannot be brushed aside nor explained away. Here are a few:

1. . . . The tradition of the sacred buried record meets us full-blown in the similar preservation of the scrolls and the Book of Mormon.
2. . . . The community of Qumran was led into the desert by such a man [as Lehi] centuries later, and there is considerable evidence that his was an established and traditional routine of great antiquity.
3. . . . We find the Qumran people offering animal sacrifice and observing the Law of Moses under the direction of legitimate priests, and yet at the same time observing ordinances of a strangely Christian nature. . . . [A] counterpart is found in the Book of Mormon.
4. The Qumran people denounce the Jews at Jerusalem for their corruption and laxity in observing the Law. . . . This is exactly the attitude of Nephi.
5. They keep the Law of Moses but in everything *anticipate* the coming of the Messiah and the new covenant. . . . This parallels the Book of Mormon situation exactly.

6. They see a peculiar significance in going out into the wilderness and in choosing site where they can establish a large and elaborate system of tanks and basins for washings and baptisms. One thinks immediately of Alma's community in the wilderness at the Waters of Mormon.

7. . . . They were organized into a general congregation with a council of twelve laymen headed by three priests. . . .

8. Some scholars believe that the greatest single revelation of the scrolls is the . . . mysterious "Teacher of Righteousness" or "Righteous Teacher," a major prophet whose very existence was unknown until 1950. . . . He was of priestly descent, being of the line of Zadok, another mysterious prophet, whom some believed lived at the time of Moses and who is the type of the true priest who looked forward to the Messiah. . . . The important thing is the discovery not of controversial individuals but an undeniable tradition of a line of persecuted Messianic prophets. This is in perfect agreement with the Zenock and Zenos tradition in the Book of Mormon. . . .

9. For the first time we now learn of the ancient Jewish background of (1) the theological language of the New Testament and Christian apocrypha, (2) their eschatological doctrines, and (3) their organizational and liturgical institutions. . . . All three receive their fullest exposition in 3 Nephi.

"The Dead Sea Scrolls," *CWHN* 1:248-50

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The whole theme of religion is eternal life. But beings who would live forever must be prepared to do so—they must be perfect. Nothing but perfection will do for an order of existence that is to last forever and ever. The striving for perfection is the theme of the Manual of Discipline. The sectaries of Qumran knew that the greatest of all prizes was not to be cheaply bought, that there could be no cheating or cutting of corners; to prepare for eternity, one must be willing to go all the way.

Whatever may have been their human failings, these people, as the Roman Catholic scholar Georg Molin observed, must be taken seriously and viewed with great respect. The proper title for them, the name they gave themselves, he maintains, is "Latter-day Saints"—and he deplores the preemption of that name at the present time by a "so-called Christian sect."

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 255*

# Of the Writing of Records

The technique of writing is the foundation of empire, for only the written document can overcome the limitations of space and carry a ruler's word and authority out of sight and beyond the hills and even defeat the inroads of time on human memory by preserving the words of command and judgment for unlimited numbers of years.

"Genesis of the Written Word," *CWHN* 12:468

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Many scholars have pointed out that the alphabet is the miracle of miracles, the greatest of all inventions, by which even the television and jet planes pale in comparison, and, as such, a thing absolutely unique in time and place; they also agree that it was of Egyptian or West-Semitic origin. It is also argued that by the very nature of the thing it can only have been the work of a single inventor.

"Genesis of the Written Word," *CWHN* 12:458

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Writing is a thoroughly artificial thing—no more a product of evolution than feathers or water or algebra are. . . . Though writing is as old as history, practical people have never yet got used to it, but like the generality of mankind have persisted in viewing it as a sort of magic, . . . an ornamental accomplishment designed for ostentation rather than for use. It is inconceivable that true writing was ever devised as a tool for these people, let alone *by* them.

The really marvelous things that writing does, the astounding feats of thought-stimulation, thought-preservation, and thought-transmission for which it has always been valued by a small and specialized segment of society, "the scribes," are of no interest to practical people. Business records, private letters, school exercises, and the like are periodically consigned to the incinerator by clerks and merchants to whom eternal preservation and limitless transmission mean nothing. The contents of such documents from the beginning show a complete unawareness, almost a visible contempt, for the real capabilities and uses of writing.

It is another and equally ancient type of document that knows how to prize the true merit of the written word, and it is easy to surmise that this wonderful device came to the human family as a gift from parties unknown whose intent was that it should assist the race in a sort of cosmic bookkeeping. At any rate, that actually is the principal use to which the instrument has been put since the beginning of that history which it alone has made possible.

"The Way of the Church," *CWHN* 4:245-47

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The earliest uses of writing for the keeping of accounts are in temple records—sacred things—and right along with them go the ritual texts, with an equal claim to antiquity and a far greater claim to the attention of those priests who have always been the peculiar custodians of the written word. . . .

And when . . . a reader takes it upon himself to convey to others the words of the ancients, he himself becomes a part of the transmission machine—its most vital element, in fact. As far as the general public is concerned, the

effectiveness of the miraculous and age-old machine for thought-transmission depends entirely on the man who is operating it.

“The Way of the Church,” CWHN 4:247-48

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If language followed natural laws, then the area of intuition might be reduced to nothing and a machine for perfect translation be devised. But one of the greatest charms of language is that it may be used waywardly, wantonly, whimsically, ironically, subtly, inanely, or literally to any degree which a writer chooses—and it is the greatest masters of language that take the most liberties with it. . . . Thus, in an endless antiphonal, the spirit rebukes the letter, and the letter checks the spirit, and by the time the machine has caught up with the mind, the mind is already two jumps ahead of it. . . .

The languages men speak today are much harder than they ever need to be; . . . people like it that way, and . . . they find language devoid of challenge to be tasteless to the point of nausea. After all, language, as its name tells us, is something that is on the tongue—it must have flavor and a body, or we spit it out. . . .

The value of a language is not to be measured by its efficiency. The greatest languages are the hardest. . . . Language does more than fill a need for elementary communication. It is mankind’s other world, a dream world, the playing field, the parade ground, the shady retreat, the laboratory, the theater, the forum, the mirror of the cosmos. We must allow it infinite scope and infinite ambition. Along with that it is also a tool, a means of communication of man, not only with his fellows but also with himself.

“The Way of the Church,” CWHN 4:256-59

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How are we to account for yawning gaps in the evolutionary record, the complete absence of those transitional documents that should, according to the theory, be exceedingly numerous?

What about the *sudden* emergence first of hieroglyphic writing and then of the Semitic alphabet, each in its perfectly developed form? Why in the case of admitted human inventions, the work of obvious genius, must we still assume long periods of gradual, accidental, unconscious development if no evidence for such development exists outside of the theory itself?

The oldest writing appears side by side with the oldest legends about writing. Wouldn’t normal curiosity suggest a hearing of those legends? Greek tradition, attributing the origin of the alphabet to Phoenicians, has been thoroughly vindicated; no scholar denies that. Then why not examine other legends seriously, at least until something better turns up?

Why is it that the ancients are unanimous in attributing the origins of writing, including the alphabet, to a heavenly source?

Why are the earliest written documents always found in temples? Why do they always deal with religious matters?

Whence the unfailing identification of reading and writing with divination, that is, with interpreting the will of heaven?

“There is in the very nature of writing something marvelous and mysterious, which at all times has exercised a powerful attraction on thoughtful minds,” writes Sethe. Why then does he insist that the first true writing, the product of an unconscious, mindless, “automatic” process “*can* contain only very trivial matters”? Could anything so “*Wunderbares und Geheimnisvolles*” (wonderful and mysterious) have been invented in a humdrum way for purely humdrum purposes?

The supernatural power of the written symbol is as old as the marking of arrows. How can one comprehend the nature of the earliest writing without considering the miraculous or magical powers it exercised over man and beast?

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:478-79

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To write is to synthesize. The basic idea of writing is that symbols represent sounds and that smaller units make up larger units—not compounds or composites, but true units. Thus a letter by itself is without significance; there must be a reference to something that goes beyond it—other letters making a word or a name. A single letter, heraldic mark, tally, crest, or *wasm* (coat of arms) has no meaning without reference to the official heraldic lists. . . . Even a one-word sentence such as “Alas!” takes its meaning from other unspoken words. The meaning of every sentence also depends on its larger context; even a short aphorism must be understood in its cultural context. For the ancients any self-contained message was a *book*. They were not disturbed by the extreme brevity of many “books” because they regarded every book also as part of a larger context.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:471

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The burning of books is a stock motif of real history. Ray Bradbury’s novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, tells of a time in the future when the government and people of the United States systematically destroy all books, which are the disturbing element in a world dedicated to TV and the avoidance of serious thinking.

But the author misses the main point: the books that are burned are not the sacred depository of which we have been speaking, but the books in the college “Survey of Western Civilization,” a second-growth at best, a covering of beautiful fire-weed that sprang up on the ashes of the holy books that had been burned by the very schoolmen who now sponsor their successors.

The question right now is not whether the sad and moving chorus of the “Great Books,” all admittedly groping in the dark, can answer the great questions of life (by their own admission they cannot), but whether there ever were books that could do so, a lost library that they replaced. Joseph Smith was aware of the blank emptiness that exists between modern man and any such writings.

“A Strange Thing in the Land,” *CWHN* 2:130-31

# Of Christian History

The history of Christian dogma has been one long process of accommodation and deeschatologizing by which one body of belief has been completely displaced by another, eschatological reality being supplanted by sacramental piety.

“The Expanding Gospel,” *CWHN* 12:199

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Every church comes before the world with certain basic historic propositions peculiar to itself. Every church may be judged by those propositions when they are clearly stated. If a group announces that the end of the world is going to come on a certain day or, like Prudentius, predicts victory in a particular battle as proof of its divine leadership, or claims like the Mormons that there once was a prophet named Lehi who did such and such, we can hold that church to account.

“Do Religion and History Conflict?” *CWHN* 12:435

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The things Jesus talked about were entirely outside the range of normal human thought and experience. In time their reality was to be made manifest to all, but meanwhile their rejection was to be emphatic and complete, and pagans could embarrass Christians by chanting about “Jesus the king who never ruled!” A triumphant rule and a triumphant church were not on the program, but the world would settle for nothing less, and of course the world got what it wanted—a church modeled after *its* idea of what a church should be. Such an institution was a clearly prophesied as was the passing away of the true church.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:295

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The constant revival through the centuries of the old stock Gnostic claim that the one true apostolic church has by some miracle of survival come down to the possession of this or that group, is a perpetual reminder of the failure of subsequent Christianity to come up to the expectations of the first Church. For the chronic discontent which haunts the Christian churches is by no means limited to the lunatic fringe. The vigorous beginnings of monasticism and pilgrimage were frankly attempts to return to the first order of the Church, with its unworldly austerities and its spiritual manifestations, and as such were viewed by official Christianity as a clear vote of no-confidence—a rebuke and repudiation of the system.

“The Passing of the Primitive Church,” *CWHN* 4:182-83

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Each of the swarming imposters did everything he could to make the world believe that his and his alone was the true, ancient, and sole surviving heir of the original church and that he alone possessed the secret knowledge

imparted to the apostles after the resurrection; and the smashing success that greeted many of them is a plain indication of how hungry the Christian world was for that very knowledge. . . .

It was a general groping for something everybody felt the church *should* have but obviously no longer did have; Gnosticism was before all else a vacuum phenomenon. The Gnosis rushed in to fill an empty space which did not exist as long as the apostles were still alive. . . .

The trouble with the Gnostics so-called is not that they claimed to possess the wonderful post-resurrection revelations but that they did *not* possess them. They were only faking or wishfully thinking; they didn't have the Gnosis at all, and when the time came to deliver the goods, as it soon did, since they all challenged each other's exclusive claims, they were caught empty-handed. They *had* to come up with something: hence the feverish and irresponsible borrowing of any odds and ends of Oriental lore they could lay their hands on; hence the solemn and impressive appeal to philosophy—especially the recondite and mysterious gospel of neo-Platonism—hence the willingness to make full use of genuine or spurious holy writings or even to forge new ones outright.

What has made the study of Gnosticism so infinitely complex and hopelessly confusing is the willingness of the Gnostics in their need to throw anything into the hopper.

“The Illusive Primitive Church,” *CWHN* 7:72-73

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The hitherto despised and outcast sectaries of the deserts now stand at the door and knock for admission into the company of the orthodox. At the same time the back door by which fastidious scholars have in the past been able to avoid associating with such disreputable people is being effectively blocked as a way of escape. That door was the easy dodge of designating as *Gnostic* anything Jewish or Christian that one didn't happen to like. . . . Whatever we find eccentric, we simply call Gnostic. . . .

If we attempt to classify a document by its teachings we run into a hopeless situation, for half the Gnostic teachings—the preexistent plan, this world as a place of probation, eternal progression, the spiritual creation, the withholding of certain teachings from the world, the divine parentage of man, the preexistent glory of Adam, etc.—were held by the Primitive Church, and the other half—the unknowable and ineffable nature of God, the free use of allegory in interpreting scripture, the appeal of philosophy as a theological foundation, the antithesis of matter (which is evil) and spirit (which is good), the search for God in the mystic way, etc.—were adopted by the later church, so that there are no strictly peculiar Gnostic doctrines to set Gnosticism apart from orthodox Christian views. For some, the very essence of Gnosticism was belief in direct revelation; for others, it was denial of direct revelation.

“The Illusive Primitive Church,” *CWHN* 7:67-70

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Are we to believe that all that authority which Christ himself divided among twelve men, each of whom was an apostle, was one day to be poured into a single vessel? Every Catholic will admit that there have been bad popes, but hasten to point out that there was also a bad apostle. If one strand of a twelve-strand rope is rotten the rope is still strong; but if one link for a chain is bad the entire chain is worthless. Only one man, Jesus Christ, was able to

tread the winepress *alone*. To regard the fullness of his power and authority as concentrated in the single person of a Borgia is simply blasphemous.

[Furthermore], this theory is completely discredited by the fact that great teachers of the Church—Origen, Justin, Tertullian, Augustine, etc.—were universally appealed to, instead of the bishop of Rome, to settle “the more important and difficult questions,” and they in turn do not refer their questioners to Rome as the proper place to seek an answer. Even the official councils of the Church base their decisions on the writings of these “doctors of the Church” who were almost never (and then only incidentally) bishops of Rome.

“Questions on Authority,” 16

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Wherever we look in the ancient world the past has been controlled, but nowhere more rigorously than in the history of the Christian church. The methods of control, wherever we find them, fall under three general heads which might be described as (a) the invention, (b) the destruction, and (c) the alteration of documents.

“The Way of the Church,” CWHN 4:219

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The key to conventional church history is its fair-weather determination not to face up to certain unpleasant, nay, alarming possibilities, in particular the proposition that the church of Christ did not survive in the world long after the apostles. . . .

Christianity has never come anywhere near either converting or saving the world. Instead of the moral reform which the fourth-century fathers promised with such confidence, if the empire would only turn officially Christian, came a disastrous deterioration of morals; instead of world peace (also promised), world war; instead of prosperity, economic collapse; instead of the promised intellectual certainty, violent controversy; instead of faith, speculation and doubt; instead of tolerance and love, ceaseless polemic and persecution; instead of trust in God, cynicism and power politics. The world once Christianized not only remained barbarian, but became also more and more barbaric as it passed from one century of Christian tutelage to the next.

“The Way of the Church,” CWHN 4:263

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The first great doctrinal guide of the Church and the founder of orthodox theology was Origen. All serious questions of doctrine came to him for solution; he kept seven secretaries busy night and day turning out his instructions to the Church. Yet he was only a presbyter whose ordination was not recognized by his own bishop. The significant thing is that he himself claims *no* authority beside his mother wit and learning. [A] typical statement of Origen [is]: “The above are the thoughts which have occurred to us while treating of subjects of such difficulty as the incarnation and godhood of Christ. *If there be anyone* indeed, who can discover something better, and who can establish his assertions by clearer proofs from the holy Scriptures, let his opinion be received in preference to mine.” . . .

Thus the man who is quoted by later Church writers more than any other when speaking of first principles always hedges and qualifies, is always very cautious and very uncertain. What makes this attitude so significant is that he is not speaking on abstruse and minor details but of the very first principles of the gospel. The introduction to his work of that title makes the clear and unequivocal statement that an *understanding of the first principles was not to be had in the church in his day*, since neither the scriptures nor the tradition contained the necessary plain and adequate explanations. . . .

What does Origen take as his guide? Scripture and philosophy. And when the two clash? Scripture must give way. You simply cancel any contrary passage by giving it an allegorical (Origen says “proper” or “mystical”) interpretation. This method is followed by all subsequent theologians.

#### “Questions on Authority,” 8-9

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In the 270 letters of Augustine that have survived, we see the man at work trying to answer the great questions of doctrine and administration that should have been answered by the head of the church. Letters pour in to him from all over the Christian world, and he answers them as best he can. He never refers the questioners to any higher authority, even though the cases are sometimes very serious and have nothing at all to do with his diocese; nor does he personally ever appeal to any higher authority, either in administration or in doctrinal matters, however important they may be. . . . Let us consider briefly the doctrinal perplexity and the complete lack of leadership and direction in the church that is apparent in the *Confessions*.

For twenty years at least, Augustine was never able to find out just what the Christian church believed. He tells how he went to school as a boy and made fun of the things his mother believed, how he joined a strange Christian sect, the Manichaeans, which enjoyed enormous popularity at the time, and for once in his life thought he knew certainty. When he left the Manichaeans, he says the bottom of his world fell out, and he spent the ensuing years in black despair. He joined a group calling themselves the *sancti* [holy, or consecrated], large numbers of whom were living secretly in Rome; and all the time his mother kept after him to return to the church of his birth, but this he could not do because their arguments could not stand up to those of the Manichaeans, from whom in a vague way he still hoped for light. When he finally became a catechumen upon the urging of his mother and St. Ambrose, easily the most important leader in the church of the time, he still did not know what to believe but was “doubting everything, tossed back and forth in it all.”

#### “A Substitute for Revelation,” *CWHN* 3:92-93

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There was a real knock-down, drag-out fight between the “Allegorists” and the “literalizers” in the Church, ending with complete victory for the intellectuals. Henceforth any reviving spark of crackpot sectarian Mantic is attacked by the churchmen with hysterical fury. That group cannot be in the Catholic Church, which claims to have prophets and charismatic gifts, even though it follows all the proper Christian forms. The Mantic has become the very essence of heresy.

The Creeds of the fourth century and after were Sophic, phrased in the jargon of the schools, to the horror of many, if not most, good Christians. There is nothing open-ended about them, since their whole purpose is to settle *all* problems once for all. The mood of the early Fathers is one of desperation rather than of faith. The fantastic

cruelty and intolerance of the fourth century are, Alföldi observes, a natural expression of the thinking of the times: “The victory of abstract ways of thinking, the universal triumph of theory, knows no half-measures; punishment, like everything else, must be a hundred per cent, but even this seemed inadequate.” There was no place for the nonconforming Mantic in this Sophic world of hundred-percenters.

St. Augustine completes the process of de-Manticizing antique culture that began with the sixth century B.C. It was he, we are told, who cast the Christian and antique culture together “once for all in one mighty mold,” thereby achieving that fusion of once hostile traditions which make up the metal of our own civilization to this day. But what the great man put into the crucible was not the whole of the Christian or the Greek heritage but only the Sophic part of each.

Much has been written about Augustine as the man who finally closed the books on chiliastic, charismatic Christianity, but what is not so well known is that at the same time he finished off the lingering traces of Mantic glory in the antique tradition. His famous justification for including the learning of non-Christian antiquity in the curriculum of the Christian schools was the doctrine of “spoiling the Egyptians.” The Egyptians have good stuff which we can use without danger if we make a careful selection.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:353-54

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Let us remember that the schools had reached an all-time intellectual low at the time the church chose to embrace their methods. The church married a sick man, says Duchesne, when she joined forces with the state under Theodosius; she married a much sicker one when she embraced the schools of the same decadent age.

What could the church gain by such a match? It is inconceivable that the wedding could have taken place had either of the parties retained its original vigor and independence—but both, as the writings of the fathers make painfully clear, were in a desperate condition. One of the earliest fragments of church history is Hegesippus’s remark: “Up *until* then the Church had remained a pure and incorrupted virgin.” Up until when? Until the philosophers took over. The last Roman, for Grabmann, was also the first scholastic, who “minted the authentic coin of its Latin terminology”—that noble Boethius, who in his last hour was comforted not by religion but by an allegorical visit from Dame Philosophy.

Now again, why was the marriage with philosophy necessary? Answer: “To overcome the objections of reason to revelation,” that is St. Augustine’s famous reconciliation of classical and Christian learning. But how can you call it reconciliation when it is always the church that gives way? It is always reason that has to be satisfied and revelation that must be manipulated in order to give that satisfaction; this is no compromise but complete surrender.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:366-67

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Once the church historian has picked out the most highly favored passages to call to the witness stand and, as a textual critic, carefully tidied them up and brushed their hair to make a favorable impression for his client (the client being the church of his choice—for most church historians are professional churchmen) a most effective

control still remains; for before the evidence can be heard by the general public, it must be *translated*. Translation is a far more effective and aggressive way of controlling the past than most people suppose.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:216

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Catholic, Protestant and Jewish writers cover the vagueness of their message with a massive lubrication of words which allows them to slip through tight places. They still insist that God has spoken his final word; they deny him the privilege of adding to his own words even if he wants to, while they go on with their commentaries, translations, reinterpetations, explanations, etc., adding here a little and there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept to God’s word.

“Chattanooga,” 1-2

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In vain does the scripture insist—the clergy has made up its mind.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:241

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The last and favorite resort of the clergy when they are questioned too closely [is]: their questioners simply don’t understand; they are “uninstructed and amateurish.” “Unless you accept our interpretation of the texts,” the layman is told, “you obviously do not understand them. And if you don’t understand them, you have no right to question our interpretation of them!”

And so the layman is put in his place. The guarded degree, the closed corporation, the technical vocabulary, these are the inner redoubt, the inviolable stronghold of usurped authority. Locked safe within the massive and forbidding walls of institution and formality lies what the Egyptians called “the king’s secret,” the secret of controlling the past.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:245

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The Christian world has been reconciled for centuries to the belief that certain things were “spiritual” rather than “historical”: the physical resurrection, the literal return of the Lord, supernatural gifts and manifestations, prophecies and revelations. They have been ruled out. They have been the very essence of heresy. . . .

When the Reformation started out they tried to get back to these things. Then Luther, after a very bitter experience, gave it up; so did the [other] great Reformers. They said that they would have to turn back to scholarship, just as St. Augustine and the rest of them did, because they could not deliver the goods. They *wanted* the prophecy; they wanted to get the spirit again; they wanted these gifts and beliefs; but they were out of the church.

“Early Christian Church,” 17-18

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We believe that [Rudolf] Bultmann is quite wrong in choosing to throw away the old Christian eschatology in that the ministry has no chance but to oppose him. But he is quite right in insisting on the terrible truth that if you don't throw it away you have to believe it! There he has the ministry checkmated, or rather they have checkmated themselves, for it is they who for over a century and a quarter have with a single voice hurled against the Mormons the awful charge of actually believing in visions, miracles, and the visitation of angels! And now Bultmann tells them they must believe in those things, too, or else forget about them.

But what now complicates the game, to the embarrassment of both players, is the increasingly frequent and maddeningly unpredictable introduction of new pieces onto the board. New discoveries of documents are “compromising” modern Christianity all the time, making it harder and harder for anyone who would call himself a Christian to brush the old eschatological teachings aside.

At the same time the realities of the hydrogen bomb and the very real possibility of world destruction have occasioned a worldwide resurgence of eschatological thinking. . . .

When the world is topsy-turvy and the danger is real, Christians have a way of suddenly remembering how fundamental to the gospel are those eschatological and Messianic concepts of which official Christianity disapproves. The ancient faith was no summertime religion, and its preoccupation with eschatology—the “end of all things”—no “brain-sick nightmare” but a hard-won decision to consider things as they are.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:311-13

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The Dead Sea Scrolls are teaching us as Christians to sit down to dinner with strange cousins from all over the East—Essenes, Ebionites, Therapeutae, Gnostics, even Moslems—whom a few years ago we turned out of doors as tramps and aliens: Catholics and Protestants are now falling over themselves . . . to hail the forlorn strangers of Qumran as long-lost brothers.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:318

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The world of conventional Christianity lends itself to the most restrained or the most extravagant imaginings of the artist. It is a painted canvas, a two-dimensional world whose lack of reality is smothered in Baroque or Byzantine excesses, or preserved in a Puritan deep-freeze. The Restored Gospel is something else; it adds a third dimension, so to speak, accepting the other world as a reality—quite matter-of-fact. . . . The Book of Mormon cuts through all the dense literary, philological, and theological undergrowth that bars access to the Garden. It shows us first of all the kind of document we should be thinking of when we talk about the scriptures.

“The Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon,” 1

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No one knew better than Joseph Smith that sacred things could be corrupted and changed, surviving in various parts of the world in different degrees of purity. Those traditions are to be held in respect; Joseph reprimanded those who mocked the “old Catholic Church, . . . worth more than all” by the richness of the elements of the history of the ancient order it has preserved.

“One Eternal Round,” *CWHN* 12:425

# Of Joseph Smith

## THE ACHIEVEMENT OF JOSEPH SMITH

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The long, long silence was broken by an angel from on high. At once the whole world exploded in one long hoot of derision—adequate witness to the total novelty of the thing. Here was something utterly alien and retrograde to everything the world taught and believed. It wasn't only that the boy Joseph Smith had an idea about an angel. It was the clear, detailed, factual, clinical account of the visits that left his fellowmen incoherent with rage.

Even more outrageous was his vision of the Father and Son. The mere idea of it was astoundingly original, but again, the simple, straightforward, noble manner in which he reported it left no room for contention; it was “yea, yea, and nay, nay,” for as the only witness to the most astonishing of his experiences, Joseph could not be confounded by any contrary evidence; and by the same token neither could anyone be asked to take him seriously were it not that he came before an unbelieving world with boundless riches in his hands.

“To Open the Last Dispensation,” 3

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The astonishing fulfillment of Moroni's prophecy to a country kid living out in the backwoods, that his name would be known for good and evil among men everywhere, is enough in itself to prove that Joseph Smith was a true prophet. . . . It was mostly Moroni's fault. The night he visited Joseph Smith, he widened the yawning gulf which the First Vision had placed between Joseph and normal people, and removed him from the sphere of established theology and rational thinking.

“Criticizing the Brethren,” 1

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Some kind of an inspired super-devil might have gotten away with some of the things he did, but no blundering, dreaming, undisciplined, shallow, and opportunistic fakir could have left behind what Joseph Smith did, both in men's hearts and on paper.

“No Ma'am, That's Not History,” *CWHN* 11:5

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Everybody says Joseph Smith was lazy because of the things he didn't do, but what about the things he did do? What good does it do to say that you, with your tiny routine of daily busywork, think another man is lazy if that man happens to accomplish more than ten ordinary men in a short lifetime? Joseph Smith's activities are a matter of record and they are phenomenal. You might as well claim that Horowitz doesn't know how to play the piano to a man who owns a library of Horowitz recordings, or that Van Gogh couldn't paint to the owner of an original Van Gogh, or that Dempsey couldn't fight to a man who had fought him, as to maintain that Joseph Smith was a lazy

loafer to the historian who gets dizzy merely trying to follow him through a few short years of his tremendous activity.

I think this constantly reiterated unflinching charge that Joseph Smith was a raggle-taggle, down-at-the-heels, sloppy, lazy, good-for-nothing supplies the best possible test for the honesty and reliability of his critics. Some of them reach almost awesome heights of mendacity and effrontery when, like Mrs. Brodie, they solemnly inform us that Joseph Smith, the laziest man on earth, produced in a short time, by his own efforts, the colossally complex and difficult Book of Mormon.

“Myth Makers,” *CWHN* 11:144-45

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As Christianity has been deeschatologized and demythologized in our own day, so in the fourth century it was thoroughly dematerialized, and ever since then anything smacking of “cosmism,” that is, tending to associate religion with the physical universe in any way, has been instantly condemned by Christian and Jewish clergy alike as paganism and blasphemy. Joseph Smith was taken to task for the crude literalism of his religion—not only talking with angels like regular people, but giving God the aspect attributed to him by the primitive prophets of Israel, and, strangest of all, unhesitatingly bringing other worlds and universes into the picture.

“Treasures in the Heavens,” *CWHN* 1:171

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Why should Joseph Smith have waited so long to tell his story officially? From his own explanation it is apparent that he would not have told it publicly at all had he not been “induced” to do so by all the scandal stories that were circulating.

It was a rule among those possessing the gospel in ancient times that the greater teachings be not publicly divulged. Even at the risk of serious misunderstanding and persecution, the early Christians and Jewish sectaries before them would not reveal the secrets of their religion to the world. The constant charge against the Mormons from the beginning, and especially against Joseph Smith, was that they clothed their affairs and doings in secrecy.

The injunction to secrecy is more a desire to mystify; it is fundamental to all eschatological thinking: “To you it is given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,” Christ told a few elect disciples behind locked doors, “but to them it is *not* given.”

“Censoring the Joseph Smith Story,” *CWHN* 11:61-62

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Constantly beset by the designing and overcurious, Joseph Smith was often obliged to put his questioners off, just as the Lord himself did. Whether it was the sly schoolmen ever striving to catch him in a contradiction or his earnest disciples seeking to know the mysteries, Jesus would put them off, sometimes with a flat rebuke, sometimes with half-answers, but most often with words of hidden meaning: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” As a result, people were constantly puzzled and offended by what he taught them. His disciples wrangled, and the public rioted.

The trouble was, as Brigham Young often points out, that Christ was speaking of the things of eternity to people wholly in thrall to the things of this world. It was utterly impossible to understand the Son without the spirit of revelation from the Father. Once one has that spirit, the truth of things [becomes] clear no matter how deplorable the state of the documents may be; without it, all the “scholarship” in the world is of no avail to determine what really happened.

“Censoring the Joseph Smith Story,” *CWHN* 11:95-96

#### APPRAISING JOSEPH SMITH

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The Joseph Smith controversy is silly for the same reason the Shakespeare controversy is silly. Granted that a simple countryman could not have written the plays that go under the name of Will Shakespeare, who could? If that man is hard to imagine as their author, is it any easier to imagine a courtier, or a London wit, or a doctor of the schools or, just for laughs, a committee of any of the above, as the source of that miraculous outpouring?

Joseph Smith’s achievement is of a different sort, but even more staggering. He challenged the whole world to fault him in his massive sacred history and [in] an unprecedented corpus of apocalyptic books. He took all the initiative and did all the work, withholding nothing and claiming no immunity on religious or any other grounds. He spreads a thousand pages before us and asks us to find something wrong.

And after a century and half with all that material to work on, the learned world comes up with nothing better than the old discredited Solomon Spaulding story it began with. What an astounding tribute to the achievement of the Prophet—that after all this time and with all that evidence his enemies can do no better than that!

“To Open the Last Dispensation,” 1-2

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From the first deriding of the Book of Mormon before 1830, to the latest attacks on the book of Abraham, the approach has always been the same: “Considering who Smith was and the methods he used, it is hardly worth the trouble to examine the writings which he put forth as holy scriptures and ancient histories.”

And so his work remains unread by his critics, and the greatest of all literary anomalies remains not only unexplained but unexamined. But why should his critics not see in Joseph Smith only what they choose to see, since the Mormons themselves do the same?

“Their Portrait of a Prophet,” 213-14

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Joseph Smith was either telling the truth or he was a criminal—not just a fool—and no sentimental compromises will settle anything. It is base subterfuge to refuse to apply the fair tests which the Prophet himself freely invited and which will just as surely condemn him if he is lying as they will vindicate him if he is telling the truth.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” *CWHN* 8:65

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It is no small feat . . . simply to have picked a lot of strange and original names out of the air. But what shall we say of the man who was able to pick the *right* ones?

“Men of the East,” note 7, *CWHN* 5:132

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I cannot help recalling that for Eduard Meyer, who made by far the profoundest study of Mormonism of any non-Mormon, the most striking thing about Joseph Smith is the uncompromising, unwavering, explicit certainty of the things he taught and especially of the histories he introduced. Everything is concrete and straightforward, Meyer finds; whereas every other major religious founder went through a mandatory period of uncertainty and self-doubt, there is in Joseph Smith’s behavior never a moment of doubt or hesitation as to what is what.

“One Eternal Round,” *CWHN* 12:422

#### JOSEPH SMITH AS TRANSLATOR

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The problem of Joseph Smith as an inspired prophet never enters into the discussion at all, since that lies entirely beyond the province of scholarship. The experts must judge him as a translator or not at all.

“Phase One,” 99

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All his life Joseph Smith dealt with ancient documents, constantly stretching his own mind to bridge the gap to the unknown, and then calling upon the Lord when a problem exceeded his powers. It is thus that we grow in knowledge and understanding.

“The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers,” 365

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I’ve always said it was far harder for Joseph Smith to translate with the Urim and Thummim than it is by using a dictionary and grammar because you can master those any time; but to use the Urim and Thummim, that’s another dimension, that’s something else.

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Why then did Joseph Smith need a Urim and Thummim, and why did he go through the greatest pains and perils to get and keep the plates if he didn't really need them? Can't we forget all the hardware and be guided by the Spirit alone? No, because God does not want it that way.

Whether we find it agreeable and rational or not, God makes use of both human agents and physical implements in carrying out his purposes in the earth, not because he needs to but because he wants to help us help ourselves.

We are here among other things to learn, and we will learn precious little if we get all our solutions from the answer book. We must have our faith tested and our skills improved. Being here to gain mastery of new dimensions of existence, we need practice and training in subduing the strange and difficult medium of the flesh, with which, thanks to the resurrection, we are destined to live forever. We cannot ignore physical bodies and physical things.

Let those who are still shocked at the proposition that the Spirit works with and through physical devices consider the visits of the Lord to his disciples after the resurrection. There he stands before them, the source of all knowledge and the wellspring of the scriptures themselves. He could well push the dusty books aside and admonish his listeners to heed him alone, from whom all the books came in the first place.

Instead of that, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Among the Nephites he called for the records and personally inspected them for errors and omissions, admonishing the people to spend their days reading the words of a prophet who had been dead for seven hundred years, "for great are the words of Isaiah!" (3 Nephi 23:1). If the Holy Ghost brings all things to our remembrance, one may well ask, why do we need to record anything at all? Because God has so commanded "for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23).

We must not think that the Lord in giving his servants special devices to assist them was letting them off easy. He did not hand them the answer-book but only a slide rule. It takes far more formidable qualifications and far more intense concentration and cerebration to use a seer-stone than it does to use a dictionary. The existence in our midst of computers does not mean, as some fondly suppose, that mathematicians and translators and genealogists no longer have to think—they have to think harder than ever. A Urim and Thummim, like a dictionary, is only an aid to the translator who knows how to work it and may be gradually dispensed with as he becomes more proficient in his spiritual exercise.

Admittedly, translating with a Urim and Thummim is not the normal way. It does not require philological training but training of a far more exacting sort since, like the seer-stone, it shows "things which are not visible to the natural eye" (Moses 6:35-36). It operates, as Buckminster Fuller would say, by the mind and not by the brain. That requires even greater effort and discipline. "When a man works by faith," said the Prophet, "he works by mental exertion, instead of exerting his physical powers." It is the exertion of the mind, and it is the most strenuous and exacting work of all. Certainly the documents with which Joseph Smith was dealing could be translated in no other way than by the Spirit.

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After all has been said about the art of selecting, censoring, rewriting, and interpreting the records of the past, the fact remains that the greatest opportunity for exercising control over the documents lies not in these mechanical chores but in the business of translating the strange and unfamiliar idioms in which the texts are written. As Joseph Smith knew so well, next to revelation it is language that holds the key to the past.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:245

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In every case in which he has produced a translation, Joseph Smith has made it clear that his inspiration is by no means bound to any ancient text but is free to take wings at any time. To insist, as the critics do, that “translation” may be understood only in the sense in which they choose to understand it while the Prophet clearly demonstrates that he intends it to be taken in a very different sense, is to make up the rules of the game one is playing as well as being the umpire. To stick to the same specifications would brand either Pope’s or Chapman’s or Rouse’s *Iliad*, or all three of them, fraudulent, so wide is their range.

“As Things Stand at the Moment,” 71

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What the philologists have always overlooked is the *positive* contribution of Joseph Smith as a translator . . . in the grand manner, whose calling was to convey the thoughts of the ancients to his own generation by any and all means which the Spirit put at his disposal. The work of restoring all things and “bringing all things together in one,” the last great summing-up in which nothing should be lost, entails a great meeting of cultures and languages, and needs above all things an inspired interpreter. Joseph Smith’s proper title is “Prophet, Seer, Revelator, *and Translator*,” the last referring to his unique and particular work and calling. He understands “translating,” in its broad and proper sense, as the handing on of any part of the heritage of the past from one generation or culture or language to another, in which the rendering of written texts is only part of the process.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 49

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To bridge the cultural and linguistic gap between the hider and the finder, thousands of years apart, special *gifts and implements* are provided, notably the seer-stones and Urim and Thummim. These are no mere mechanical gadgets but “work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith” (2 Nephi 27:23), requiring far greater moral and intellectual qualifications than the manipulation of grammars and dictionaries. They work by “the same power . . . and the same gift” as those by which men wrote the words in the beginning (D&C 17:7, 9:2, 8:11; Moses 6:5).

“A Strange Thing in the Land,” *CWHN* 2:132-33

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The coming forth of some of the Joseph Smith Papyri in our time is a reminder that many channels of light and truth are open to us and that the Spirit chooses its own methods. Latter-day Saints are constantly asking, How did Joseph Smith translate this or that? Do we still have a seer-stone? Will we ever get the Urim and Thummim back?

What about the sealed parts of the plates? Do we have the original text of the book of Abraham? Where is the book of Joseph?—etc., etc. . . .

This writer views all such questions as totally irrelevant to establishing the bona fides of the Prophet. They do not even make sense as expressions of normal human curiosity, since Joseph Smith made it perfectly clear that the vital ingredient in every transmission of ancient or heavenly knowledge is always the Spirit, which places his experiences beyond the comprehension and analysis of ordinary mortals.

But if the Prophet can never be pinned down in matters of sources and method, it is from the nature of the thing and not from any desire on his part to escape examination. Far from it; he was always inviting his critics to put the inspired writings to all such valid and established tests as may be applied to any purportedly ancient document, and he gave them a hundred times more evidence than they would need to determine the measure of their authenticity.

If it mattereth not by what imponderable method Joseph Smith produced his translations, as long as he came up with the right answers, it matters even less from what particular edition of what particular text he was translating.

It is enough at present to know that the Prophet was translating from real books of Abraham, Moses, Enoch, Mosiah, and Zenos, whose teachings now reach us in a huge and growing corpus of newly discovered writings. But instead of matching Joseph Smith's bold and explicit images of the past, "regardless of the way in which they were arrived at," with what is now being found, his critics can still think of no better attack than to go on chanting their monotonous and forlorn refrain: "He was no scholar, he was not one of us, he did not use our methods!"

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 54*

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Go up to the man in the car (it used to be the man in the street) when he stops at a red light and deliver this sober message to him: "Osiris shall be towed toward the interior of that great Pool of Khonsu," which is the first line of the Joseph Smith Papyrus No. XI. If the man gives you a blank look or starts an ominous muttering, explain to him that the great Lake of Khonsu is "probably a liturgical designation of the portion of the Nile that has to be crossed in order to reach the Theban cemetery on the west bank," and that Khonsu or Khons is a youthful moon-god. When the light changes your new friend may proceed on his way knowing as much about the first line of our Book of Breathings as anybody else does, namely, nothing at all. Though as correct and literal as we can make it, the translation . . . is not a translation. It is nonsense.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 47*

## THE FOLLIES OF TRANSLATION

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Let us consider briefly the crippling disadvantages of trying to study church history through the medium of translations.

1. Destroying the clues: . . . The translator is like an officious detective who hands us his written report of the case but refuses to let us see the evidence for ourselves. Granted that the constable is smarter than we are and more experienced at his business, still we want to see the clues for ourselves, for in them lie the charm, challenge, and instruction of the game. . . . He places before us his own handiwork from which all possible interpretations but his own have been removed.

2. Opinions for evidence: There are two things that no translation can convey, namely *what* the author said and *how* he said it. . . . This means that any translation is at best only an *opinion*—one man’s opinion of what another man had in mind. . . . The translator has no right to go beyond the writer’s intent; but the reader of an original is bound by no such obligation—there is no limit to the things that the text might legitimately convey to him. This is no mere rationalization: the experience of any teacher of the classics will confirm the observation, made with wonder and amazement by each succeeding generation, that every reading of an ancient author is a new experience full of the most surprising discoveries. . . .

3. The substitute flavor: . . . Most translations are made by the last men in the world who should be allowed to make them—academic drones who render the text in a stilted and artificial classroom jargon no matter who is speaking it. . . .

4. The illusion of the literal translation: . . . If two words in two different languages had exactly the same meaning in all contexts, then it would be possible to translate the one by the other in any operation. But it is almost impossible to find two words in any two languages that have this perfect one-to-one relationship! . . .

5. The search for shortcuts: Most of the energy and determination that should go into surmounting the language barrier between us and the past is at present being expended in ingenious efforts to circumvent it. A widespread recognition of the limitations of translation has, for example, produced a continual outpouring of bilingual editions, with the original text on one page and the English facing it on the other. Such texts are a pernicious nuisance: if one can read the original, the translation is an impertinence; if not, the original is a rebuke. . . . We are told exactly how to react to every word, when the whole purpose of our study is to enjoy an independent action.

“The Way of the Church,” *CWHN* 4:248-52, 255

# Of the Book of Mormon

No one can know too much about the Book of Mormon

“Introduction to an Unknown Book,” *CWHN* 6:3

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The Book of Mormon is tough. It thrives on investigation. You may kick it around like a football, as many have done; and I promise you it will wear you out long before you ever make a dent in it.

“A Twilight World,” *CWHN* 5:153

## THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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A century and a quarter ago, a young man shocked and angered the world by bringing out a large book that he set up beside the Bible, not as a commentary or a key to the scriptures, but as original scripture—the revealed word of God to men of old—and as genuine history.

The book itself declares that it is an authentic product of the Near East. It gives a full and circumstantial account of its own origin. It declares that it is but one of many, many such books that have been produced in the course of history and may be hidden in sundry places at this day. It places itself in about the middle of a long list of sacred writings, beginning with the patriarchs and continuing down to the end of human history. It cites now-lost prophetic writings of prime importance, giving the names of their authors. It traces its own cultural roots in all directions, emphasizing the immense breadth and complexity of such connections in the world. It belongs to the same class of literature as the Bible, but, along with a sharper and clearer statement of biblical teachings, contains a formidable mass of historical material unknown to biblical writers but well within the range of modern comparative study since it insists on deriving its whole cultural tradition, even in details, directly from a specific time and place in the Old World.

The Book of Mormon is God’s challenge to the world. It was given to the world not as a sign to convert it but as a testimony to convict it. In every dispensation the world must be left without excuse. It is given without reservation or qualification as a true history and the word of God.

“Historicity of the Bible,” *CWHN* 1:15-16

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Where else [but in the Book of Mormon] will one find such inexhaustible invention combined with such unerring accuracy and consistency? To put it facetiously but not unfairly, the artist must not only balance a bowl of goldfish

and three lighted candles on the end of a broomstick while fighting off a swarm of gadflies, but he must at the same time be carving an immortal piece of statuary from a lump of solid diorite.

In an undertaking like this, merely to avoid total confusion and complete disaster would be a superhuman achievement. But that is not the assignment; that is only a coincidental detail to the main business at hand, which is, with all this consummately skillful handling of mere technical detail, to have something significant to say; not merely significant, but profound and moving, and so relevant to the peculiar conditions of our own day as to speak to our ears with a voice of thunder.

“Strange Things Strangely Told,” *CWHN* 7:141

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There is nothing extraneous or afterthought about the religious element in the Book of Mormon, to remove the religious parts of which would be equivalent to removing the rice from a rice pudding. There is really nothing else to it.

“Censoring the Joseph Smith Story,” *CWHN* 11:65

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It is a surprisingly big book, supplying quite enough rope for a charlatan to hang himself a hundred times. As the work of an imposter it must unavoidably bear all the marks of fraud. It should be poorly organized, shallow, artificial, patchy, and unoriginal. It should display a pretentious vocabulary (the Book of Mormon uses only 3,000 words), overdrawn stock characters, melodramatic situations, gaudy and overdone descriptions, and bombastic diction . . .

Whether one believes its story or not, the severest critic of the Book of Mormon, if he reads it with care at all, must admit that it is the exact opposite. . . . It is carefully organized, specific, sober, factual, and perfectly consistent.

“Good People and Bad People,” *CWHN* 7:337-38

## THE BOOK OF MORMON AND OTHER HOLY WRITINGS

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The first and foremost objection to the Book of Mormon was summed up in the first word of Alexander Campbell’s opening blast against it: “Blasphemy!” The first thing that would hit any Christian on opening to the title page was the claim of this book to be nothing less than the word of God—right beside the Bible! . . .

Again the Book of Mormon has the last word. Rare indeed is the Christian scholar today who would maintain that every word declared canonical in the past by committees claiming no inspiration whatever is the absolute word of God or that all the writing given noncanonical status by the same learned conclaves are, when they claim the status of scripture, to be condemned out of hand as fraudulent. That won’t do any more. Today religious journals are full of perplexed and controversial articles on “What is Scripture?”

“Howlers in the Book of Mormon,” CWHN 8:253

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The world today has forgotten that the most shocking and offensive thing about the Book of Mormon was what? For years and years, nobody could find any objectionable teachings in it. So what were they so upset about? It was this: It presented a completely unfamiliar set of scripture and revelation—a completely new idea of scripture. Nobody ever thought of the scriptures being open like that. They said, “Now look, we have the Bible, and this Bible was a concrete monolithic block written by the hand of God and there is nothing else.” Then came the Book of Mormon, not only butting into the picture, but giving a whole new conception of what scripture was, how it had been composed, and how it had been made, how things were built up; it tells us a lot about writing, about recording, about handing down traditions, about how the people thought of the book.

“Rediscovery of the Apocrypha,” CWHN 12:212

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In three ways the Book of Mormon by implication rejected the conventional ideas of what the Bible is supposed to be: (1) by its mere existence it refuted the idea of a “once-for-all” word of God; (2) by allowing for the mistakes of men in the pages of scripture it rejected the idea of an infallible book; (3) and by its free and flexible quotations from the Bible it rejected the idea of a fixed, immutable, letter-perfect text.

“A New Age of Discovery,” CWHN 7:20

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The idea of the holy book that is taken away from the earth and restored from time to time, or is handed down secretly from father to son for generations, or hidden up in the earth, preserved by ingenious methods of storage with precious imperishable materials to be brought forth in a later and more righteous generation, is becoming increasingly familiar with the discovery and publication of ever more ancient apocryphal works, Jewish, Christian, and others. But nowhere does the idea find clearer or completer expression than in the pages of the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” CWHN 12:467-68

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Mark Twain accuses Joseph Smith of having . . . “smouched from the New Testament, and no credit given.” But since the Book of Mormon was written to be read by people who knew and believed the Bible—indeed, one cannot possibly believe the Book of Mormon without believing the Bible—it is hard to see why a deceiver would strew the broadest clues to his pilfering all through a record he claimed was his own.

But of course what Mark Twain did not know was that ancient writing is *formulaic* and that no writer was expected to cite chapter and verse for the word-for-word quotations and set expressions which made up his composition. For one thing, there would be no point to citing one’s immediate source for an idea or expression since that writer in turn was merely borrowing it from another. That was no more pilfering to the ancient mind than taking words out of the dictionary or thesaurus would be for a modern author. This should be obvious to anyone who has read

much of ancient authors in the original—translation, of course, completely effaces the original expressions and makes this kind of investigation clumsy and dubious if not impossible.

“The Bible in the Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 7:111-12

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What about “passages lifted bodily from the King James Version” about which the critics are clamoring? They are simply following the accepted ancient procedure, in which “holy men of God,” when they quote earlier scriptures, favor not the original language or their own translation, but whatever version of the scriptures is most familiar to the people they are addressing. The Book of Mormon was addressed to a society which knew only the King James Version.

“Howlers in the Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:254

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Just as the New Testament clarified the long misunderstood message of the Old, so the Book of Mormon is held to reiterate the messages of both testaments in a way that restores their full meaning.

“The Mormon View of the Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:259-60

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It is as if we were completing a jigsaw puzzle. There is a peculiarly shaped blank which calls for a missing piece designated as the stick of Judah. The Old Testament fits easily into the gap. Then there remains an adjacent blank space to be filled by a missing “stick of Joseph.” Naturally the first thing we do is to try to slip the New Testament into it. But turn it and push it and force it as we will, the New Testament simply does not belong there, for it is not the story of “Joseph and his associates” in contradistinction to that of “Judah and his associates,” which makes up the Bible. If anything it belongs to the latter class, to the stick of Judah.

Since the missing piece refuses to be found, the skillful jigsaw artist simply goes ahead and completes the rest of the picture; and then if the missing piece is still lost, he can infer from the shape of the last empty space and from the design and color of the surrounding areas almost exactly what the missing piece should be. This is what we are attempting here. When the Bible commentators failed to supply the missing piece or to agree on what it should look like, we simply continued to work out the puzzle, putting into position every piece we could find that had to do with sticks and covenants. As a result we are now in a position to make some pretty near guesses as to the shape, size, and color of the missing piece to our puzzle—the baffling “stick of Joseph.”

“The Stick of Judah,” *CWHN* 8:33

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Ezekiel . . . is talking sense when he speaks of the two sticks that become one. Not merely did the ancients have such sticks, but that they used them specifically in the situation described by Ezekiel for a summoning and gathering of the nation and for the establishment of identity and the renewing of contracts. The scattered tribes of Israel are described as apparently lost for good, smashed, dispersed, forgotten, nay, dead—dry bones. This all looks

to a *far future* time, for the *dry* bones show us not a sick nation, not a dying one, nor even one now dead, but one that has been dead for a long, long time. That the nations are depicted as scattered far and wide, having lost their identity and disappeared from history, is noted by the commentators—hence the need for a miracle of resurrection, hence the need for a sure means of identification, symbolized by the identification sticks.

The “extinct” nations are summoned to the great assembly by the Lord’s herald, who takes their marked rods and places them side by side. They fit together perfectly to become *one stick* as the herald performs the joining before the eyes of all the people (Numbers 17:9).

Judah and Joseph are thereby recognized beyond a doubt as parties to the original covenant long after separation and the original unity of the covenant people is thereby restored. The united scepter is then returned to the hand of the king (Ezekiel 37:19, 22-44), where it is to remain forever, all outstanding debts, the price of sin and transgression, having at last been paid off and all old scores settled.

“Stick of Judah,” *CWHN* 8:21-22

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We can say without hesitation that the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, the Testament of Lehi, has the authenticity of a truly ancient pseudepigraphic writing stamped all over it. It is a well-nigh perfect example of the genre.

“To Open the Last Dispensation,” 4

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The Book of Mormon is, as it often reminds us, a selective history. It deals with small groups of pious believers, intensely conservative by nature and tradition, consciously identifying themselves with their ancestors, Israel in the wilderness of long ago. It was this characteristic tendency of the sectaries to identify themselves with earlier trials and tribulations of Israel that at first made the Dead Sea Scrolls so hard to date. The same situations seem to obtain again and again through history, so that the Kittim of the Scrolls might be the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, or Romans.

Though carrying on in the New World, the Book of Mormon people preserve their ancient culture for centuries, which should not surprise us. Do not the present inhabitants of America speak the English, Spanish, and Portuguese and preserve the customs of the Old World after four hundred years? With this strong cultural carry-over, the Nephites are aware of being special and apart—as the sectaries always are—“a lonesome and solemn people” is the moving expression of Nephi’s brother. And strangely enough, they are peculiarly bound to the written word as are the people of Qumran. One of the most important discoveries of the Book of Mormon was the process and techniques of recording, transmitting, concealing, editing, translating, and duplicating ancient writings. Here is something the world refused to see in the Bible, the most sealed of books, but it has been thoroughly vindicated in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

“Churches in the Wilderness,” *CWHN* 8:302

## TEST AND EVIDENCES

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A young man once long ago claimed he had found a large diamond in his field as he was ploughing. He put the stone on display to the public free of charge, and everyone took sides. A psychologist showed, by citing some famous case studies, that the young man was suffering from a well-known form of delusion. An historian showed that other men have also claimed to have found diamonds in fields and been deceived. A geologist proved that there were no diamonds in the area but only quartz. The young man had been fooled by a quartz. When asked to inspect the stone itself, the geologist declined with a weary, tolerant smile and kindly shake of the head. An English professor showed that the young man in describing his stone used the very same language that others had used in describing uncut diamonds. He was, therefore, simply speaking the common language of his time. A sociologist showed that only three out of 177 florists' assistants in four major cities believed the stone was genuine. A clergyman wrote a book to show that it was not the young man but someone else who had found the stone.

Finally an indigent jeweler named Snite pointed out that since the stone was still available for examination the answer to the question of whether it was a diamond or not had absolutely nothing to do with who found it, or whether the finder was honest or sane, or who believed him, or whether he would know a diamond from a brick, or whether diamonds had ever been found in fields, or whether people had ever been fooled by quartz or glass, but was to be answered simply and solely by putting the stone to certain well-known tests for diamonds.

Experts on diamonds were called in. Some of them declared it genuine. The others made nervous jokes about it and declared that they could not very well jeopardize their dignity and reputations by appearing to take the thing too seriously. To hide the bad impression thus made, someone came out with the theory that the stone was really a synthetic diamond, very skillfully made, but a fake just the same. The objection to this is that the production of a good synthetic diamond 120 years ago would have been an even more remarkable feat than the finding of a real one.

“Lehi the Winner,” *CWHN* 5:121-22

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A revealed text in English is infinitely to be preferred to an original in a language that no one on earth could claim as his own. It frees the members and leaders of the Church as it frees the investigating world from the necessity of becoming philologists or, worse still, of having to rely on the judgment of philologists, as a prerequisite to understanding this great book. At the same time, it puts upon the modern world an obligation to study and learn, from which that world could easily plead immunity were the book in an ancient language or couched in the labored and pretentious idiom that learned men adopt when they try to decipher ancient texts.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” *CWHN* 8:97

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It is our conviction that proof of the Book of Mormon *does* lie in Central America, but until the people who study that area can come to some agreement among themselves as to what they have found, the rest of us cannot very well start drawing conclusions. . . . The documents may be already reposing unread in our libraries and archives, awaiting the student with sufficient industry to learn how to use them.

## INTERNAL EVIDENCE

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It is rarely necessary to go any further than the document itself to find enough clues to condemn it, and if the text is a long one, and an historical document in the bargain, the absolute certainty of inner contradictions is enough to assure adequate testing. This makes the Book of Mormon preeminently testable, and we may list the following points on which certainty is obtainable.

1. The mere existence of the book is a powerful argument in favor of its authenticity.

2. In giving us a long book, the author forces us to concede that he is not playing tricks.

3. This writer never falls back on the accepted immunities of double meaning and religious interpretations in the manner of the Swedenborgians or the schoolmen. This refusal to claim any special privileges is an evidence of good faith.

4. Shysters may be diligent enough, in their way, but the object of their trickery is to avoid hard work, and this is not the sort of laborious task they give themselves.

5. Upon close examination all the many apparent contradictions in the Book of Mormon disappear. It passes the sure test of authenticity with flying colors.

6. The style is *not* that of anyone trying to write well. . . . Here is a book with all the elements of an intensely romantic adventure tale of far-away and long-ago, and the author turns down innumerable chances to please his public!

7. There are few plays on words, few rhetorical subtleties, no reveling in abstract terms, no excess of esoteric language or doctrine to require the trained interpreter.

8. Whoever wrote the book must have been a very intelligent and experienced person; yet such people in 1830 did not produce books with rudimentary vocabularies. This cannot be the work of any simple clown, but neither can it be that of an able and educated contemporary.

9. The extremely limited vocabulary suggests another piece of internal evidence to the reader. The Book of Mormon never makes any attempt to be clever.

10. Since it claims to be translated by divine power, the Book of Mormon also claims all the authority—and responsibility—of the original text. The author leaves himself no philological loopholes, though the book, stemming from a number of nations and languages, offers opportunity for many of them.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” CWHN 8:65-69; ellipses omitted

## EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

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Whatever external evidence [a researcher] finds must fulfill three conditions:

1. The Book of Mormon must make clear and specific statements about certain concrete, objective things.
2. Other sources, ancient and modern, must make equally clear and objective statements about the same things, agreeing substantially with what the Book of Mormon says about them.
3. There must be clear proof that there has been no collusion between the two reports, i.e., that Joseph Smith could not possibly have knowledge of the source by which his account is being “controlled” or of any other source that could give him the information contained in the Book of Mormon.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” *CWHN* 8:69-70

## CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

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Entirely apart from the contents of the Book of Mormon and the external evidences that might support it, there are certain circumstances attending its production which cannot be explained on grounds other than those given by Joseph Smith. These may be listed briefly:

1. There is the testimony of the witnesses.
2. The youth and inexperience of Joseph Smith at the time when he took full responsibility for the publication of the book—proof (a) that he could not have produced it himself and (b) that he was not acting for someone else, for his behavior at all times displayed independence.
3. The absence of notes and sources.
4. The short time of production.
5. The fact that there was only one version of the book ever published (with minor changes in each printing). This is most significant. It is now known that the Koran, the only book claiming an equal amount of divine inspiration and accuracy, was completely re-edited at least three times during the lifetime of Mohammed.
6. This brings up the unhesitating and unchanging position of Joseph Smith regarding his revelations. . . . From the day the Book of Mormon came from the press, Joseph Smith never ceased to spread it abroad, and he never changed his attitude towards it. What creative writer would not blush for the production of such youth and

inexperience twenty years after? What imposter would not lie awake nights worrying about the slips and errors of this massive and pretentious product of his youthful indiscretion and roguery? Yet, since the Prophet was having revelations all along, nothing would have been easier, had he the slightest shadow of a misgiving, than to issue a new, revised, and improved edition, or to recall the book altogether, limit its circulation, claim it consisted of mysteries to be grasped by the . . . initiated alone, say it was to be interpreted only in a “religious” sense, or supersede it by something else. The Saints who believed the Prophet were the only ones who took the book seriously anyway.

7. There has never been any air of mystery about the Book of Mormon. There is no secrecy connected with it at the time of publication or today.

8. Finally, though the success of the book is not proof of its divinity, the type of people it has appealed to—sincere, simple, direct, highly unhysterical, and nonmystical—is circumstantial evidence for its honesty. It has very solid supporters. . . .

When one considers that any one of the above arguments makes it very hard to explain the Book of Mormon as a fraud, one wonders if a corresponding list of arguments against the book might not be produced. For such a list one waits with interest but in vain. At present the higher critics are scolding the Book of Mormon for not talking like the dean of a divinity school. We might as well admit it, the Victorian platitudes are simply not there.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” *CWHN* 8:71-72

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The great boldness and originality of writings attributed to Joseph Smith are displayed in their full scope and splendor in the account, contained in what is called 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon, of how the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection visited some of his “other sheep” in the New World and set up his church among them. It would be hard to imagine a project more dangerous to life and limb or perilous to the soul than that of authoring, and recommending to the Christian world as holy scripture, writings purporting to contain an accurate account of the deeds of the Lord among men after his resurrection, including lengthy transcripts of the very words he spoke.

Nothing short of absolute integrity could stand up to the consequences of such daring in nineteenth-century America. We know exactly how his neighbors reacted to the claims of Joseph Smith, and it was not (as it had become customary to insist) with the complacent or sympathetic tolerance of backwoods “Yorkers,” to whom such things were supposedly everyday experience: nothing could equal the indignation and rage excited among them by the name and message of Joseph Smith.

“Christ among the Ruins,” *CWHN* 8:407

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The Liahona was (1) a gift of God, the manner of its delivery causing great astonishment. (2) It was neither mechanical nor self-operating, but worked solely by the power of God. (3) It functioned only in response to the faith, diligence, and heed of those who followed it. (4) And yet there was something ordinary and familiar about it. The thing itself was the “small means” through which God worked; it was not a mysterious or untouchable object but strictly a “temporal thing.” It was so ordinary that the constant tendency of Lehi’s people was to take it for granted—in fact, they spent most of their time ignoring it; hence, according to Alma, their needless, years-long wandering in the desert. (5) The working parts of the device were two spindles or pointers. (6) On these a special

writing would appear from time to time, clarifying and amplifying the message of the pointers. (7) The specific purpose of the traversing indicators was “to point the way they should go.” (8) The two pointers were mounted in a brass sphere whose marvelous workmanship excited great wonder and admiration. Special instructions sometimes appeared on this ball. (9) The device was referred to descriptively as a ball, functionally as a director, and in both senses as a “compass,” or Liahona. (10) On occasion, it saved Lehi’s people from perishing by land and sea—“if they would look they might live” (Alma 37:46). (11) It was preserved “for a wise purpose” (Alma 37:2, 14, 18) long after it had ceased to function, having been prepared specifically to guide Lehi’s party to the promised land. It was a “type and shadow” of man’s relationship to God during his earthly journey.

“Some Fairly Foolproof Tests,” *CWHN* 7:253-54

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER RECORDS

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The idea that the Book of Mormon was simply a product of its time may be a necessary fiction to explain it but it is fiction nonetheless. If they may be trusted in nothing else, the voluminous writings of the anti-Mormons stand as monumental evidence for one fact: that Mormonism and the Book of Mormon were in no way a product of the society in which they arose.

“Just Another Book?” *CWHN* 8:165-66

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In trespassing on scientific grounds or rather, in timidly peeping over the fence, we are only seeking enlightenment. We have heard so often that “science” has disproved, nay “disemboweled,” the Book of Mormon, that we are naturally curious to have a look at some of the more spectacular havoc. Where is it?

We have tiptoed into the archaeology museum and there found nothing that could not be interpreted many ways. We have entered the house of the anthropologists, and there found all in confusion—and the confusion is growing. We have consulted with the more exact or authentic scientists and found them surprisingly hesitant to commit themselves on the Book of Mormon. A definitive refutation must rest on definite conclusions, and of such conclusions scientists are becoming increasingly wary.

“Forever Tentative . . .,” *CWHN* 7:226-27

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Today the literary condemn the Book of Mormon as not being up to the standards of English literature that appeal to them, social scientists condemn it because it fails to display an evolutionary pattern of history, and the exponents of pure thought are disgusted with it because it entirely ignores the heritage of medieval scholasticism and fails to display the Victorian meliorism which should be the mark of any nineteenth-century history of humanity.

“Introduction to an Unknown Book,” *CWHN* 6:7-8

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The writer of 1 Nephi was confronted by a hundred delicately interrelated problems of extreme difficulty. The probability of coming up with a plausible statement by mere guesswork once or twice is dim enough, but the chances of repeating the performance a hundred times in rapid succession are infinitely remote. The world through which Lehi wandered was to the westerner of 1830 a quaking bog without a visible inch of footing, lost in impenetrable fog; the best Bible students were hopelessly misinformed even about Palestine.

“Lehi the Winner,” *CWHN* 5:117

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First Nephi cannot possibly be explained on the grounds of mere coincidence. To illustrate this, let the reader make a simple test. Let him sit down to write a history of life, let us say, in Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century A.D. Let him construct his story wholly on the basis of what he happens to know right now about Tibet in the eleventh century—that will fairly represent what was known about ancient Arabia in 1830, i.e., that there was such a place and that it was very mysterious and romantic.

In composing your Tibetan fantasy you will enjoy one great advantage: since the canvas is an absolute blank, you are free to fill it with anything that strikes your fancy. . . .

But . . . we must insist that you scrupulously observe a number of annoying conditions.

1. You must never make any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statements.
2. When you are finished, you must make no changes in the text—the first edition must stand forever.
3. You must give out that your “smooth narrative” is not fiction but true, nay sacred history.
4. You must invite the ablest orientalists to examine the text with care and strive diligently to see that your book gets into the hands of all those most eager and most competent to expose every flaw in it.

The “author” of the Book of Mormon observes all these terrifying rules most scrupulously.

“Lehi the Winner,” *CWHN* 5:119

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From what oriental romance, then, was the book of 1 Nephi stolen? Compare it with any attempts to seize the letter and the spirit of the glamorous East, from Voltaire to Grillparzer, nay, with the soberest oriental histories of the time, and it will immediately become apparent how unreal, extravagant, overdone, and stereotyped they all are, and how scrupulously Nephi has avoided all the pitfalls into which even the best scholars were sure to fall. There is no point at all to the question: Who wrote the Book of Mormon? It would have been quite as impossible for the most learned man alive in 1830 to have written the book as it was for Joseph Smith.

“Lehi the Winner,” *CWHN* 5:123

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Few people realize that in Joseph Smith's day *no* really ancient manuscripts were known. Egyptian and Babylonian could not be read; the Greek and Latin classics were the oldest literature available, preserved almost entirely in bad medieval copies no older than the Byzantine and Carolingian periods.

"Genesis of the Written Word," *CWHN* 12:453

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There is only one direction from which any ancient writing may be profitably approached. *It must be considered in its original ancient setting and in no other.* Only there, if it is a forgery, will its weakness be revealed, and only there, if it is true, can its claims be vindicated.

"Introduction to an Unknown Book," *CWHN* 6:8

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To the trained eye, every document of considerable length is bound to betray the real setting in which it was produced. This can be illustrated by something Martin Luther wrote two days before his death: "No man can understand the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of Virgil who has not been a herdsman or farmer for at least five years. And no one can understand Cicero's letters, I maintain, who has not been concerned with significant affairs of state for twenty years. And no one can get an adequate feeling for the Scriptures who has not guided religious communities by the prophets for a hundred years."

What is the world of experiences and ideas that one finds behind the Book of Mormon? What is the real *Sitz im Leben* [milieu]? We can start with actual experiences, not merely ideas, but things of a strictly objective and therefore testable nature. For example, the book describes in considerable detail what is supposed to be a great earthquake somewhere in Central America, and another time it sets forth the particulars of ancient olive culture. Here are things we can check up on; but to do so we must go to sources made available by scholars long since the days of Joseph Smith. Where *he* could have learned all about major Central American earthquakes or the fine points of Mediterranean olive culture remains a question.

"Some Fairly Foolproof Tests," *CWHN* 7:231

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If [the Jaredite story] is fiction, it is fiction by one thoroughly familiar with a field of history that nobody in the world knew anything about in 1830. No one's going to produce a skillful forgery of Roman history, for example, unless he actually knows a good deal of genuine Roman history. So if Ether is a forgery, where did its author get the solid knowledge necessary to do a job that could stand up to five minutes of investigation? I have merely skimmed the surface, . . . but if my skates are clumsy, the ice is never thin. Every page is loaded with matter for serious discussion—discussion that would fizzle out promptly in the face of any palpable absurdity.

"A Permanent Heritage," *CWHN* 5:259

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The idea of stones shining in the darkness of the ark was not invented by Joseph Smith or anybody else in the nineteenth century, but can be found in very ancient sources that were for the most part completely inaccessible to Joseph Smith and unknown to his contemporaries. The few sources that might have been available to the prophet were obscure and garbled accounts in texts that not half a dozen men in the world could read, eked out by classical sources that were entirely meaningless until the discovery of the key—the great Gilgamesh Epic—long *after* the appearance of the Book of Mormon. That key ties the Pyrophilus stone, the Alexander Cycle, the Syrian rites, the Babylonian Flood stories and the Urim and Thummim together in a common tradition of immense antiquity and makes the story of the Jaredite stones not only plausible but actually typical.

“Strange Ships and Shining Stones,” 149-50

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The first rule of historical criticism in dealing with the Book of Mormon or any other ancient text is, never oversimplify. For all its simple and straightforward narrative style, this history is packed as few others are with a staggering wealth of detail that completely escapes the casual reader. The whole Book of Mormon is a condensation, and a masterly one. It will take years simply to unravel the thousands of cunning inferences and implications that are wound around its most matter-of-fact statements. Only laziness and vanity lead the student to the early conviction that he has the final answers on what the Book of Mormon contains.

“They Take Up the Sword,” CWHN 5:237

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It is not enough to show, even if [critics] could, that there are mistakes in the Book of Mormon, for all humans make mistakes. What they must explain is how the “author” of the book happened to get so many things right.

“Lehi the Winner,” CWHN 5:122

## LACHISH LETTERS

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What are the chances of the many parallels between the Lachish Letters and the opening chapter of the Book of Mormon being the product of mere coincidence?

1. First consider the fact that only one piece of evidence could possibly bring us into the Lehi picture, and that one piece of evidence happens to be the *only* first-hand writing surviving from the entire scope of Old Testament history. Lehi’s story covers less than ten years in the thousand-year history of the Book of Mormon, and the Lachish Letters cover the same tiny band of a vast spectrum—and they both happen to be the *same* years!
2. Not only in time but in place do they fit neatly into the same narrow slot, and the people with which they deal also belong to the same classes of society and are confronted by the same peculiar problems.

3. With the Book of Mormon account being as detailed and specific as it is, it is quite a piece of luck that there is nothing in the Lachish Letters that in any way contradicts its story—that in itself should be given serious consideration. Is it just luck?
4. Both documents account for their existence by indicating specifically the techniques and usages of writing and recording in their day, telling of the same means of transmitting, editing, and storing records.
5. The proximity of Egypt and its influence on writing has a paramount place in both stories.
6. Both stories confront us with dynastic confusion during a transition of kingship.
7. Both abound in proper names in which the *-yahu* ending is prominent in a number of forms.
8. In both, the religious significance of those names gives indication of a pious reformist movement among the people.
9. The peculiar name of Jaush (Josh), since it is not found in the Bible, is remarkable as the name borne by a high-ranking field officer in both the Lachish Letters and the Book of Mormon.
10. In both reports, prophets of gloom operating in and around Jerusalem are sought by the government as criminals for spreading defeatism.
11. The Rekhabite background is strongly suggested in both accounts, with inspired leaders and their followers fleeing to the hills and caves.
12. Political partisanship and internal connections cause division, recriminations, and heartbreak in the best of families.
13. The conflicting ideologies—practical vs. religious, materialist vs. spiritual—emerge in two views of the religious leader or prophet as a *piqqeah*, “a visionary man,” a term either of praise or of contempt—an impractical dreamer.
14. For some unexplained reason, the anti-king parties both flee not towards Babylon but towards Egypt, “the broken reed.”
15. The offices and doings of Laban and Jaush present a complex parallel, indicative of a special military type and calling not found in the Bible.
16. Almost casual references to certain doings by night create the same atmosphere of tension and danger in both stories.
17. Little Nedabياهو fits almost too well into the slot occupied by the Book of Mormon Mulek, “the little king,” who never came to rule but escaped with a party of refugees to the New World.
18. The whole business of keeping, transmitting, and storing records follows the same procedure in both books.

## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

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I intend to take Moroni as my guide to the present world situation. Why him? Moroni and his father are the principal definitive editors of the Book of Mormon. They not only compiled and edited; they went through and picked out things they felt would be important for us; then they evaluated that and applied it to us and explained everything to us. . . . And both Moroni and his father were concerned with . . . the questions . . . of prosperity and security—the great inseparably related issues of wealth and war.

“Gifts,” *CWHN* 9:88-89

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In my youth I thought the Book of Mormon was much too preoccupied with extreme situations, situations that had little bearing on the real world of everyday life and ordinary human affairs. What on earth could the total extermination of nations have to do with life in the enlightened modern world?

Today no comment on that is necessary. Moroni gives it to us straight: This is the way it was before, and this is the way it is going to be again, unless there is a great repentance.

“Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:468

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Readers of the Book of Mormon often express disgust or at least weariness and impatience at having to wade through 170 pages of wars and alarms in a religious book. This writer must confess to having suffered from the same prejudice. After surviving three years of military intelligence at every level from company to army group, with frequent visits to Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) on the one hand and a muddy foxhole on the other, and after reading and writing thousands of reports on enemy dispositions and tactics from company sector to army front, I have always been inclined to rush through the military parts of the Book of Mormon as painful reminders of an unpleasant past. In twenty years of writing about the Book of Mormon we have studiously ignored the war stories. But that is where we were wrong.

The whole point of Alma’s (or rather Mormon’s) studies in “the work of death” as he calls it, is that they are supposed to be revolting—they are meant to be painful.

“A Rigorous Test: Military History,” *CWHN* 7:291

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In the Book of Mormon, the very questions that now oppress the liberal and fundamentalist alike, to the imminent overthrow of their fondest beliefs, are fully and clearly treated. No other book gives such a perfect and exhaustive explanation of the eschatological problem. Here we learn how the Christian and Jewish traditions fit into the world picture, and how God’s voice has been from the very beginning to all men everywhere. Here alone one may

find a full setting forth of the exact nature of scripture and of the vast range and variety of revelation. Here you will find anticipated and answered every logical objection that the intelligence or vanity of men even in this sophisticated age has been able to devise against the preaching of the world. And here one may find a description of our own age so vivid and so accurate that none can fail to recognize it.

“Historicity of the Bible,” *CWHN* 1:18

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The Book of Mormon is the history of a polarized world in which two irreconcilable ideologies confronted each other. [It] is addressed explicitly to our own age, faced by the same predicament and the same impending threat of destruction. It is a call to faith and repentance couched in the language of history and prophecy; but above all it is a witness of God’s concern for all his children and to the intimate proximity of Jesus Christ to all who will receive him.

“The Mormon View of the Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:262

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When a person suffering from diabetes consults a doctor, the doctor does not prescribe a treatment for cancer, even though cancer is today considered *by far the more dangerous disease*. What we read about in the Book of Mormon is the Nephite disease—and we have it!

We should be glad that we do not have the much worse diseases that infect some other societies and that there is greater hope for us. But diabetes if neglected can kill one just as dead as cancer—after all, the Nephites were terminated. We can be most grateful, therefore, regardless of how sick others may be, that God in the Book of Mormon has diagnosed our sickness for our special benefit and prescribed a cure for us.

It is into our hands that the Book of Mormon has been placed: after more than a century, many people still do not know of its existence. Plainly it is meant for us, as it reminds us many times; it is the story of what happened to the Nephites—and we are the Nephites: “It must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give; but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old” (D&C 38:39). There it is in a nutshell. It is the fate of the Nephites, not of the Lamanites, Greeks, or Chinese, that concerns us; and [their] doom was brought on them by pride which in turn was engendered by the riches of the earth.

There are four portentous danger signals in the Book of Mormon, three internal and one external. . . . The external threat is of course the Lamanites; the internal danger signals are (1) the accumulation of wealth, (2) the appearance on the scene of ambitious men, and (3) the presence in the society of “secret combinations to get power and gain.”

“Good People and Bad People,” *CWHN* 7:354-55

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Since the first step in the Nephite disease is exposure to wealth, the only sure cure or prevention would seem to be strict avoidance of wealth. One can avoid almost any disease by giving up eating altogether, but there must be a better way.

One of Satan's favorite tricks is to send ailing souls after the wrong cure, leading them by his false diagnosis to "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." In this he is ably abetted by those physicians who would force us to choose between their own violent, extreme, and sometimes fantastic remedies and a sure and agonizing death. Either accept the Wackleberrry Cure, they say, or resign yourselves to a frightful and certain end—no other alternative is conceivable. And so by instilling fear with one hand and offering an only hope with the other such practitioners gain a following.

But the Book of Mormon is against violent remedies. It prescribes the gentlest of treatments—charity, accompanied by strong and steady doses of preaching of the gospel. The final analysis of Mormon and Moroni was that the fatal weakness of the Nephites was lack of charity. And whenever the worst epidemics of Nephite disease were brought under control and even stamped out, it was always through a marvelous display of charity and forbearance by such great souls as Alma, Ammon, Moroni, or Nephi or his father Helaman, and specifically through the preaching of the word, which Alma knew was more effective than any surgery.

"Prophecy in the Book of Mormon," *CWHN* 7:392-93

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The wickedness and folly of Israel do not consist of indolence, sloppy dressing, long hair, nonconformity (even the reading of books), radical and liberal unrealistic ideas and programs, irreverence toward custom and property, contempt for established idols, and so on.

The wickedest people in the Book of Mormon are the Zoramites, a very proud, independent, courageous, industrious, enterprising, patriotic, prosperous people who attended strictly to their weekly religious duties with the proper observance of dress standards. Thanking God for all he had given them, they bore testimony to his goodness. They were sustained in all their doings by a perfectly beautiful self-image.

Well, what is wrong with any of that? . . . The Jews observed with strictest regularity all the rules that Moses gave them—"and yet they cry unto thee." *And yet*—they are really thinking of something else. "Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, . . . all their precious things . . .; their hearts are set upon them, *and yet* they cry unto thee and say—We thank thee, O God, for we are chosen people" (Alma 31:27).

"Great Are the Words of Isaiah," *CWHN* 1:221-22

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I have always thought in reading the Book of Mormon, "Woe to the generation that understands this book!" To our fathers, once the great persecutions ceased, the story of the Nephites and the Lamanites was something rather strange, unreal, and faraway—even to the point of being romantic. The last generation did not make much of the Book of Mormon. But now with every passing year this great and portentous story becomes more and more familiar and more frighteningly like our own.

"The Book of Mormon as a Witness," *CWHN* 3:214

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God was their “DEW-line,” their radar, and warning system, and that saved them the need of constant and costly vigilance on all fronts, to say nothing of expensive and wasteful war-plans and war-games. This was Moroni’s policy of preparedness. . . . The keystone of all defense was unity at home.

“A Rigorous Test: Military History,” *CWHN* 7:307

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Why do you think the Book of Mormon was given to us? Angels do not come on trivial errands, to deliver books for occasional light reading to people whom they do not really concern. The matter in the Book of Mormon was selected, as we are often reminded, with scrupulous care and with particular readers in mind. For some reason there has been chosen for our attention a story of how and why two previous civilizations on this continent were utterly destroyed.

Let the modern reader of this sad and disturbing tale from the dust choose to pass lightly over those fearful passages that come too close to home, the main theme is repeated again and again so that almost any Latter-day Saint child can tell you what it is. The people were good so God made them prosperous, and when they were bad, they got wiped out. What few people can tell you are the steps by which the fatal declension took place, without which the story is jejune and naive.

“Freemen and King-men,” *CWHN* 8:365-66

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An extremely important lesson [is] driven home repeatedly in the Book of Mormon, that righteousness does not consist of being identified with this or that nation, party, church, or group. When you find a particularly wicked society in the story, look back a few pages and you will probably find that not many years before those same people were counted righteous. Or, when you find a particular godless and ferocious lot of Lamanites, if you look a few pages ahead you may find them among the most blessed and favored of God’s people.

“Freemen and King-men,” *CWHN* 8:337

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Repeated echoes from the remote past keep reminding us that the office and calling of the bee was to bring about the stirrings of life, reviving the biological cycle in a world that had been totally ravaged by cosmic forces of destruction. Is, then, Deseret waiting in the wings, held in reserve against the day, soon to come, when its salutary services will be required again?

From the first, the symbol of the bee captivated the imagination of the Latter-day Saints in their migrations and their settlements. The emblematic hive became the seal of the territory and state and adorned every important edifice within the vast expanse of “our lovely Deseret.” Finally, by what strange coincidence does the *History of the Church* end with the sign of the bee? After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, “the bodies . . . were removed . . . at Emma’s request, to near the Mansion house, and buried side by side, and the bee house was then moved and placed over their graves.”

## BELIEVING THE BOOK OF MORMON

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How could anyone put up a halfway decent defense of the Book of Mormon without being prejudiced in its favor?

There is nothing wrong with having and admitting two sides in a controversy. By definition every theory is controversial, and the better the theory the more highly controversial. There can be no more constructive approach to a controversial issue like this one than to have each side present the evidence which it finds most convincing, always bearing in mind that authority is not evidence and that name-dropping is as futile as name-calling. Sweeping statements and general impressions are sometimes useful in the process of getting one's bearings and taking up a position, but they cannot serve as evidence because they are expressions of personal impressions which are nontransferable. . . .

The evidence that will prove or disprove the Book of Mormon does not exist. When, indeed, is a thing proven? Only when an individual has accumulated in his own consciousness enough observations, impressions, reasonings, and feelings to satisfy him personally that it is so. The same evidence which convinces one expert may leave another completely unsatisfied; the impressions that build up the definite proof are themselves nontransferable.

Preface to *Since Cumorah*, CWHN 7:xiii-xiv

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The Book of Mormon, like the Bible, is an organic whole. We are asking the literary experts to produce just one modern work which resembles it as such. There are, we believe, plenty of *ancient* parallels, but if the Book of Mormon is a fraud, a cheat, a copy, a theft, and so on, as people have said it is, we have every right to ask for a sampling of the abundant and obvious sources from which it was taken. Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* is no more like the Book of Mormon than a telephone directory. All attempts to find contemporary works which the Book of Mormon even remotely resembles have been conspicuous failures.

So it has been necessary to explain the book as a work of pure and absolute fiction, a nonreligious, money-making romance. But one need only read a page of the book at random to see that it is a religious book through and through, and one need only read the title page of the first edition to see that it is given to the world as holy scripture, no less. Here we come to the crux of the whole matter.

The whole force and meaning of the Book of Mormon rests on one proposition: that it is true. It was written and published to be believed.

People who believe the Book of Mormon (and this writer is one of them) think it is the most wonderful document in the world. But if it were not true, the writer could not imagine a more dismal performance.

There is nothing paradoxical in this. As Aristotle noted, the better a thing is, the more depraved is a spurious imitation of it. An imitation nursery rhyme may be almost as good as an original, but a knowingly faked mathematical equation would be the abomination of desolation. Curves and equations derive all their value not from the hard work they represent or the neatness with which they are presented on paper, but from one fact alone—the fact that they speak the truth and communicate valid knowledge. Without that they are less than

nothing. To those who understand and believe Einstein equation that  $E=mc^2$  [Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared], that statement is a revelation of power. To those who do not understand or believe it (and there are many!) it is nothing short of an insolent and blasphemous fraud. So it is with the Book of Mormon, which if believed is a revelation of power but otherwise is a nonsensical jumble. . . .

It will be said that this merely proves that the greatness of the Book of Mormon lies entirely in the mind of the reader. Not entirely! There are people who loathe Bach and can't stand Beethoven. It was once as popular among clever and educated people to disdain Homer and Shakespeare as barbaric as it is now proper to rhapsodize about them in Great Books clubs. Different readers react differently to these things—but they must have something valid to work on.

We are not laying down rules for taste or saying that the Book of Mormon is good because some people like it or bad because others do not. What we are saying is that the Book of Mormon, whatever one may think of it, is one of the great realities of our time, and that what makes it so is that certain people believe it. Its literary or artistic qualities do not enter into the discussion. It was written to be believed. Its one and only merit is truth. Without that merit, it is all that nonbelievers say it is. With that merit, it is all that believers say it is.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” *CWHN* 8:84-86

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Our prophets spare us the usual clichés about higher spiritual values, the brotherhood of man, and how our problems would be solved if everybody only did this or that. The way out is not to be found in the self-consoling merry-go-round of philosophy, the heroic self-dramatization of literature and art, or the self-reassuring posturings of science and scholarship. Men have tried everything for a long time and the idea that their condition has improved rests entirely on an imaginary reconstruction of the past devised to prove that very proposition. Not that the theory may not be right, but at present we just don't know; and for a world in as dire a predicament as ours that can guarantee no long centuries of quiet research ahead and seems to need some quick and definite assistance if it is to survive at all, it might pay to consider what Mormon and Moroni have to offer.

If mankind is to get any real help it must come from outside, and it does. First of all, *angels*, yes, angels, must come to explain and establish things.

“Momentary Conclusion,” *CWHN* 7:402-3

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An angel is a messenger; when he visits he not only talks with people, he converses with them—that is the word used both in the Book of Mormon and in the Bible. The angels circulated among men, women, and especially the children and chatted with them. That is how they carry out their mission or ministry. Why don't we see angels? The people raise that question in the Book of Mormon, and the answer there is very clear. Angels do not pose ornamental fixtures; they come only to deliver important messages and at moments of crisis. Throughout the Book of Mormon, when things reach a hopeless condition, it is the visit of an angel which moves things off dead center and invariably inaugurates a new turn of things. They appear only to specially qualified persons—men, women, and children—not high officials. But if angels do not come, we are left on our own resources in a perilous condition.

How fortunate that the whole Book of Mormon story begins with Moroni, the clinically specific and detailed account of an angel's visit to Joseph!

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” *CWHN* 8:549

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This is not a handing down of testimony, for each of these messengers calls upon the others to seek testimony for themselves by faith and prayer; there are no second or third-hand testimonies. . . .

Is there anything to this? You will never find out, say our prophets, if you begin denying everything. . . . All that Mormon and Moroni ask of the reader is, don't fight it, don't block it, give it a chance! If it does not work, then you can forget it; but it is not asking too much that men invest a little of their time and effort in an enterprise in which they stand to win everything and lose nothing—especially now, when so many *know* that as things are they stand to win nothing. Let the hesitant consider that the way of faith is the way of science, too: “Ye receive no witness until *after* the trial of your faith,” says Moroni (Ether 12:6). First we “make the experiment” (Alma 32:27) in which it is fair game to hope for results, since without hope nobody would go through with the thing at all (Moroni 10:22), and then we get our answers. That is the way it is done in the laboratory; what could be fairer?

“Momentary Conclusion,” *CWHN* 7:403-4

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Learning is of immense value, and careful study of the Book of Mormon is of *eternal value*. Rather than wasting valuable time reading so much empty drivel, we should be studying things of the eternities.

“F.A.R.M.S. Letter,” 1

# Of the Pearl of Great Price

## THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

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The air of mystery and romance that has always surrounded things Egyptian has never failed to attract swarms of crackpots, cultists, half-baked scholars, self-certified experts, and out-and-out charlatans.

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (February 1968): 15

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Granted its mind-expanding scope, is the Egyptian experience at all relevant to the modern world? The answer is no, and neither is Mormonism relevant to the distracted modern world, which has no concern with the things of the eternities and will soon be forgotten.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 14*

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Life is too short to devote years of study to learning that what went on with the ancients was just more of the same. It is too short to let us live both our lives and theirs from day to day *unless* they have something to add to the story, something we do not have, something quite wonderful and unexpected. Of all people the Egyptians are most likely to supply us with such matter.

*Abraham in Egypt, ix-x*

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The great attraction of Egypt was at all times the exciting combination of religious *and* scientific thinking, mantic and sophic, intuitive and intellectual, the ancient and the progressive. The solid and visible achievements of the ancient Egyptians bade the observer take their message seriously, as it does us today. The Egyptians, Theophrastus observed, are, on the one hand, the most rationally minded of all people, and yet they live in an ambiance submerged in ancient and recondite religious lore. This tradition is deeply religious and at the same time persistently intellectual—the perfect example, one would say today, of the “bicameral” blend.

*Abraham in Egypt, 107*

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There is no exclusive equation between Ham and Pharaoh, or between Ham and Egyptians, or between the Egyptians and the blacks, or between any of the above and any particular curse. What was denied was recognition of patriarchal right to the priesthood made by a claim of matriarchal succession.

*Abraham in Egypt, 219-20*

## JOSEPH SMITH'S ROLE

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Among the Kirtland Egyptian Papers is a small cloth-bound book inscribed "W. W. Phelps, Diary Vc. 1835," containing original renderings of the Bible, of which the Church Historian writes: "These passages of Scriptures from the Bible do not appear to have any connection with the Inspired Revision by the Prophet Joseph Smith. This is no doubt the result of research and study done by Wm. W. Phelps." And why not? Joseph Smith encouraged others to obtain all the gifts that God has bestowed on man.

"The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," 393

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The Mormons are deeply concerned only with what they accept as scripture. Non-Mormons, raised in the tradition of the infallible Bible, are unable to conceive of a man's being a prophet and at the same time a fallible mortal. They persist in thinking . . . that the discovery of any slightest flaw in Joseph Smith's character or his work must necessarily bring the whole structure of Mormonism down in ruins.

It isn't that way at all. All men are subject to vanity, said Joseph Smith, and all must be allowed a generous margin of error to be themselves. But there *are* points on which no such freedom is allowed. There are writings that the Mormons accept as inspired scriptures, and these include the explanation to the facsimiles in the book of Abraham.

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (May 1970): 83

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

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The book that concerns us was purposely called "The Pearl of Great Price," that term being both in scripture and apocrypha the designation of a treasure that is both hidden and inexhaustible. Being hidden, it must be searched out and dug up—brought out of the depths by the strenuous and determined efforts of whoever would possess it. Being inexhaustibly vast, it can never cease to be a source of new wonders to the inquiring mind.

In the past this treasure has been treated more or less like a convenient bit of pocket money, a ready fund of occasional texts to be dipped into for self-serving commentaries. That is not the purpose of the scriptures, which is to tell us what we do not know and often do not want to know.

The Pearl of Great Price is unique among scriptures in that its message is available only to that extent to which God's children choose to make it so, but at the same time it is capable of conveying knowledge of undreamed of scope and significance.

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (May 1970): 94

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The recent flowering of comparative studies that look into long neglected or newly discovered apocryphal writings makes it clear that the concept of recurrent dispensations of light and darkness, restoration and apostasy, is valid for every age of recorded history. Nowhere is the pattern set forth more clearly than in the epic sweep of the Pearl of Great Price.

Surprisingly, the perennial pattern presented there is not limited to Jewish and Christian traditions, but extends to the oldest ritual literature—epic and dramatic—of the human race. Chapter one of our book of Moses is as much an introduction to world literature in general as to our conventional scriptures.

"A Strange Thing in the Land," *CWHN* 2:155

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Find the author of the book of Moses and you have found the author of the Book of Mormon. All other candidates may withdraw. And yet, what a difference! The one is a collection of the writings of pious sectaries in the wilderness—the Rekhabite motif resounds on almost every page: chronicles and annals, letters and sermons, commentaries, hymns and meditations; the other, the voice of Moses booming down the corridors of time as he transmits to us the words that come down to him from the beginning—he sings Enoch's songs, and Noah's and Adam's, to which Abraham's is added in another book.

"To Open the Last Dispensation," 4

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The book of Enoch was given to the Saints as a bonus for their willingness to accept the Book of Mormon and as a reward for their sustained and lively interest in all scriptures, including the lost books. They were searchers, engaging in eager speculation . . . , ever seeking like Adam and Abraham, for "greater [light and] knowledge" (Abraham 1:2).

And we have been told that if we stop seeking we shall not only find no more but lose the treasures we already have. That is why it is not only advisable but urgent that we begin at last to pay attention to the astonishing outpouring of ancient writings which is the peculiar blessing of our generation. Among these writings the first peculiar blessing of our generation. Among these writings the first and most important is the book of Enoch.

"A Strange Thing in the Land," *CWHN* 2:95

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The real question is not whether Joseph Smith knew Egyptian—no one has claimed that he did; or whether the book of Abraham is translated from the Book of Breathings—that, by universal admission, is impossible; or whether Joseph Smith was interested in producing an Egyptian grammar—he emphatically says that he was; or that the Alphabet and Grammar came to nothing—the men of Kirtland found it useless almost immediately and forgot it; or who is an Egyptologist and who is not—no one challenges their translations; but the true significance of the old texts and pictures remains a mystery to the expert and layman alike. . . . It is not Joseph Smith but the book of Abraham that is on trial.

“Judging and Prejudging the Book of Abraham,” 244

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The two rules to follow. . . are (1) to ask the right questions, and (2) to keep looking. What is the one question which the book of Abraham confronts us with before all others? Simply this: Is it a true history? I believe that it is and have always believed it. I am biased. Other people believe that it is not and have always believed that. They have never been able to take the question seriously, let alone look for an answer. So there is a deadlock. We can stop there.

But if either side from idle curiosity should feel inclined to step away from square one, the Big Question must be broken up into little questions that are easier to handle.

“The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham,” 51

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So far no one has asked how [Joseph] Smith came to produce a history of Abraham which can be matched at every point from a wealth of ancient sources—Jewish and Christian apocrypha, Talmud, Mishna, even Gnostic, Hasidic and Cabbalistic writings, Moslem commentators, sectaries of the desert such as Mandaeans and Qumran people, even the church Fathers and Classical writers.

“Phase One,” 105

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Today scholars are becoming aware of an elaborately interlacing mesh of ancient writings from various far-flung centers of culture and religion, which were formerly thought to be completely independent and disconnected productions. These support and explain each other in strange and surprising ways, and right in the center of the great complex is the Book of Breathings.

“What Is ‘The Book of Breathings?’” 187

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As in a hall of mirrors, the Book of Breathings seems to be reflected in an endless procession of documents that fade out of sight in either direction. Behind it lie the Egyptian funerary and temple texts that go back to the

beginning, and after it comes an equally impressive succession of early Christian and Jewish writings that move on down through the patristic literature to our own day.

*Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 255*

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What happens to Abraham and what he does is of enduring effect in the history of the whole human race, past, present, and future. He is one of those key figures in whom all the events of the past are brought into focus as by a burning-glass and whose actions are in turn projected into the future as an ever-expanding image.

What we see here is a moment of immeasurable significance in the history of the race. The messenger-bird is there to represent the Ruler of All. The crocodile is no less necessary to represent the ancient opposition in all things. The lion is (in early Jewish and Christian parlance) the relentless force that consumes all material things. The lotus is the symbol of the righteous man's pilgrimage through a hostile and dangerous world. Everything has a meaning, and the pillars and expanse of heaven remove the whole story from this transient world to its proper relationship in the eternal plan of things.

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (October 1969): 88

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To begin with, Abraham was in the world, a wicked world very much like our own. From childhood to the grave, he was a stranger in his society because he insisted on living by the principles of the gospel and preaching them to others wherever he went, even if it meant getting into trouble. Those principles, teachings, covenants, ordinances, and promises were alien to the world, which was bitterly hostile to them. So Abraham's whole life, as is often stated, was a series of trials or tests, and by example and precept he tells us how to come through victorious.

His object? Not to conquer or impress but to bless all with whom he comes into contact, ultimately shedding the blessing that God gave to him upon the whole human race. For that he is first of all the magnanimous, the great-hearted, the ever-hospitable Abraham, who always does the fair and compassionate thing no matter how badly others may behave toward him. He is the friend of God because he is the friend of man, pleading on his knees for Sodom and Gomorrah. That is the *moral* pattern for all men to follow.

Only by "doing the works of Abraham" can we hope to establish a better order of things on the earth, that order of Zion lost since the days of Noah. This takes courage, tact, unfailing faith, and the constant aid of divine revelation.

It entails more than human contrivance or human wisdom—Abraham must acquire ever more and more knowledge. The guiding principle is intelligence, an awareness of things as they are: the physical world, the structure and nature of the cosmos, and the spiritual realities that are behind everything. For Abraham, everything is a prelude to what lies beyond.

*Abraham in Egypt, 249*

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We must do the works of Abraham. And then we are told specifically in the Doctrine and Covenants that that means sacrificing, if necessary, your own life. Abraham was willing to do that, and everyone at some time or

another will have the opportunity to show that he'd be willing to do that.

"The Faith of an Observer," 28

# Of the Anti-Mormon Tradition

## EARLY OPPONENTS

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Our experts on Joseph Smith would have no difficulty at all condemning Jesus. They could have been of real assistance to the high priest when he was embarrassed because his witnesses contradicted each other. . . . The Sanhedrin could have used the useful theory that such disagreement was proof positive that Jesus had been deceiving all those people. And to what did the diligent perjurers bear witness? It was the old story: “We heard him say . . .” “Once he told me . . .” In vain the Lord pointed out that he did not make secret disclosures to individuals. They convicted him in the end for claiming he was the Messiah—which was legally no crime at all.

“Myth Makers,” *CWHN* 11:276

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The devoted followers of religious leaders are not noted for restraint and objectivity in the things they tell about their adored leaders, and the least reliable class of all are former believers who have turned against a leader. The only authority for what John says is John, and the only acceptable authority for Joseph Smith’s story is Joseph Smith, not the Whitmers or Willard Chase or Pomeroy Tucker.

“Censoring the Joseph Smith Story,” *CWHN* 11:61

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Combine the ambition and jealousy of small souls with the sanctions of religion and you have the most powerful motivation for persecution and chicanery, however the guilty parties may protest their freedom from bias and their Christian motives.

“Myth Makers,” *CWHN* 11:128

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[As portrayed in early anti-Mormon literature] women are the fragile and helpless victims of male brutality, commanding sympathy and attention. Women cannot be questioned too closely in delicate matters. The natural modesty of the sex exonerates them from the task of telling shocking stories or giving any proof for them while at the same time the humanity and idealism of the same sex requires them to be sure to mention the stories and tell *about* them. To be emotional rather than explicit is woman’s prerogative, which no one with a spark of chivalry would question. Small wonder, then, that the *feminine touch* is the hallmark of anti-Mormon creativity.

“Sounding Brass,” *CWHN* 11:550-51

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Far more Christians were martyred under the eyes of prefects, governors, and emperors than by spontaneous mob action, but it was almost invariably done “for fear of the multitude. . . .”

The purest form of the mob is the lynch-mob. But when are such not acting as vigilantes defending law and order? What the Mormons call “the Missouri mob” were in their own eyes defending home and country as they marched under the leadership of duly constituted civil, military, and ecclesiastical officers.

“Acclamatio,” 11

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How can they presume to criticize a religion in which they do not believe? Is that not akin to the folly of criticizing a painting which one has not seen or music which one has not heard? The insider and the outsider do not experience the same thing at all.

Students of Greek religion, however they may yearn for a whiff of incense or asphodel, can smell today nothing but the musk and floorwax of the stacks, the last labyrinthine retreat of the ancient mysteries. . . . There is something in Greek religion which even at this vast remove of time and in spite of the officious and bookish handling of evidence can still reach us and move us. To become aware of this thing, the modern analytic mind must be subjected to a gentle softening process, first by placing it over the low flame of harmless generalization.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:311:12

## THE ANTI-MORMON STYLE

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Some years ago I made a long study of just what objections had been raised against Mormonism in the past. From the beginning it was always the same. Nobody was really worried about polygamy, which was in fact a welcome stick to beat the Mormons with; the ferocious denunciations from press and pulpit, the incitement of mobs, and the stampeding of legislatures always rested on one thing alone—the incredible fact that in an age of modern enlightenment, universal education, and scientific supremacy there should be found coexisting with Christian civilization a community of primitives so ignorant, so deluded, and depraved as to believe in revelations from heaven and the operation of charismatic gifts.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:360-61

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The exotic [anti-Mormon] literature . . . has always been esteemed by Latter-day Saints as something beneath notice, and by their enemies as a treasure beyond price, the value of which, to quote Pomeroy Tucker’s panegyrist, “will increase as time takes the world farther from the origin of the delusion.”

And indeed, the passing of time has invested with an aura of antiquity and hence of authenticity documents which have no other merit than their age. It is these documents which remain to this day the rock on which the critics of

Joseph Smith and the Mormons have built their house. The experts accept them with straight faces because they have no choice. These are not merely the standard sources for early Mormon history, they are virtually the *only* sources, unless one is willing to make the supreme *sacrificium intellectus* [intellectual sacrifice] and listen to the Mormon side of the story.

As the only witnesses against Joseph Smith these poor gossips must be allowed permanent tenure. We can expect that for years to come they will be solemnly quoted in scholarly writings which will in turn be solemnly praised by overworked reviewers who are only too glad to believe that every footnote is authentic and that an appendix is enough to establish the total veracity of any book.

But if some waggish reviewer were to take off a few hours some day to make a spot-check of the references in the latest books and articles on Mormon beginnings, he would soon find out what the fortunate reader of this book is about to discover—that the whole structure of anti-Mormon scholarship rests on trumped-up evidence.

#### Foreword to *Myth Makers*

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The commonest objection to this writer's mystery thriller, *The Myth Makers*, is that the book is waste of paper—less in a literary sense than as a laboring of the over-obvious, the beating of a dead horse. Would that were so!

When friends and enemies protest that the charges against Joseph Smith are brought by witnesses so obviously prejudiced and unprincipled that only a[n] . . . idiot would make an issue of their accusations, it is the writer's painful duty to point out that those accusations are to this day the soul and substance of a large and flourishing school of anti-Mormon literature, most of it going under the banner of serious scholarship.

If the investigator really wants to know how far supposedly intelligent and serious-minded people can go in their myth making, we would recommend a calm appraisal of Mr. Wallace's story of Ann Eliza's wondrous romance with Brigham Young [*The Twenty-seventh Wife*]. As a piece of sheer effrontery it is unsurpassed in the annals of literature, or at least in the literature that this writer has got through in forty years of grimly systematic reading.

Let it be clearly understood, then, that but for one peculiar circumstance the discussion that follows is a total waste of time and paper. The peculiar circumstance is that the drivel we are to survey is taken seriously by large numbers of our fellow citizens and were it to go unchallenged would pass in time as a correct and accurate history, a true portrait of Brigham Young and a true measure of his religion.

"Sounding Brass," *CWHN* 11:581-82

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For your readers, Mormonism is what *you* [the anti-Mormon writer] say it is. It is to establish that thesis that you have been at such pains with your personal buildup. Once entrenched as an official guide, you can take your readers where you please. It is not the *thing* you are showing them from then on, but your *interpretation* of the thing.

It has been the practice of religious polemic in every age to attack not what the opposition practice and preach but our impression of what they practice and preach. "Blasphemy!" was the heading of the first published report on the

Book of Mormon, and Alexander Campbell sincerely believed it *was* blasphemy. The early anti-Christian writers were just as sincere. Blasphemy had been from the beginning the stock charge against Jesus and the apostles, just as it is the favorite word of anti-Mormon writers. Didn't Jesus recommend publicly that those who "offended" should be glad to have a millstone hung about their necks and be cast into the sea? Blood atonement! Didn't he instruct his followers to hate—yes, hate—their own mothers and fathers and children? Horrible, horrible! To hate even their own lives? A cult of suicide, no less! And then to have innocent babes and venerable ancients damned eternally for no other sin than not having had the ridiculous dunking that so shocked Ann Eliza; and to proclaim that an offender should cut off his own hand or pluck out his own eye—a cult of self-mutilation! And didn't the founder spend his time in private "conversations" with women, including women of ill-repute? And weren't his followers the dregs of society, who admitted that respectable people avoided them? Didn't they preach the shocking doctrine of a physical resurrection?—even doctors of the Church like Origen and Jerome squirm uncomfortably. Their notorious "love feasts"—too indecent to write about—show they meant it literally when they called each other "brother" and "sister" and then proceeded to intermarry in a cult of incest.

"Sounding Brass," *CWHN* 11:510-12

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When one is making grave criminal charges, either directly or by broad implication as all anti-Mormon writers do, questions of evidence can be very bothersome unless one has the wisdom and foresight to avoid all such questions. Surprisingly enough this can be done rather easily [as we shall illustrate] . . . in a situation which we shall call "The House That Jack Built":

1. It is common knowledge that Jack built a house. It is that house which we are now discussing.
2. There are rumors that a good deal of malt—very probably stolen—was stored in the house. What lends plausibility to the report is the building of the house itself—by Jack. Why a house, if not to store the stolen malt?
3. It is said that the malt was eaten by rats, and in view of the high nutriment content of malt (see Appendix A for references to scholarly and scientific studies proving beyond a doubt that malt is nutritious), there is no good reason for doubting this report.
4. The rats may very possibly have been killed by a cat, as some believe, and there is certainly nothing intrinsically improbable in the event. On the contrary, studies made at the Rodent Institute of the University of So and So, etc. . . . The report that only *one* rat ate the malt is of course erroneous, since the consumption of such a large quantity of malt would require many years and probably a large number of rats.
5. That the cat was chased by a dog is only to be expected. Only a fanatic would question it.
6. The same applies to the dog's being tossed by a cow, though it is admittedly a less common event.
7. "*At any rate*" (a very useful expression) we can be reasonably certain that the cow was milked by a milkmaid—what other kind of maid could it have been?—and also (since there is no good reason to doubt it) that the milkmaid, whose name may have been Bertha, was wooed by a man all tattered and torn. There are unmistakable references in the newspapers of the time (or at most a generation later) to poorly dressed men known as "tramps" roaming parts of the country. There can therefore be little doubt that Bertha was engaged in a passionate public wooing.

8. The exact date of Bertha's marriage to her tatterdemalion lover is not known, though it *may* have been some time late in January 1858. Certainly the court records of the time are silent on any earlier or later marriage.

9. Though there is no direct evidence that Bertha was mistreated by the man who wooed her so passionately, there is every evidence of cruel neglect both in the proven fact that Bertha apparently had no house to live in (at least there is no record of her having a house in the county archives) and in the character of the man who married and abused her.

It will hardly be necessary to point out to the student the solid advantage of such little touches as "the *exact* date" . . . in No. 8. Since no date at all is known, it is perfectly true to say that the exact date is not known, implying that an approximate date *is* known: "it *may* have been in January 1858"—true again, perfectly true—it may also have been in September 1902 or May 1320. Again, if there is no evidence whatever that Bertha was mistreated (or even that she existed), it is both shrewd and correct to say that there is no *direct* evidence, implying, while not saying, that there is plenty of indirect evidence.

Let the student check the above ten points for evidence. There is none! We have given the world a suffering Bertha and her brutal spouse without having to prove a thing.

"Sounding Brass," *CWHN* 11:495-98

# Of the Mortal Condition

Our Father in Heaven, we thank thee for thy many mercies and kindnesses to us. We thank thee, Father in Heaven, that our lives have been spared, that thou hast lengthened out the hand of thy mercy from day to day, that thou hast prolonged the days of our probation. We thank thee for the church and kingdom which thou hast put here. We thank thee that we are here, Father, where we can speak of the things of the kingdom. We thank thee for the restoration of the gospel through the prophets and thy servants in these latter days. We ask thee to bless the leaders of the work at this time. May thy spirit be with President McKay and his counselors and the missionaries and all of those who labor for the upbuilding of Zion. Father, help us that we here also may be aware of a sense of our calling in the work.

We recognize, Father in Heaven, that our knowledge is small, and our faith is weak, that our judgment is faulty, and our memories are leaky and unreliable and that none of us have seen anything but a tiny segment of speculative, tentative, and fragmentary knowledge. So help us to be wise, Father, in the day of our probation, let us not teach with our learning and deny the Holy Ghost, nor take honor of one another.

Father, we thank thee for the gospel and all that it means to us. We thank thee for the speaker who is here today. Bless him that he may instruct us in the nature of this latter-day work more fully through the example of thy first elect in this dispensation, the great Prophet Joseph Smith, who brought forth the work out of darkness and obscurity in these last times; that through his life our testimonies may be strengthened, that we may be strongly moved to do all things with an eye single to thy glory. Be with us now throughout this assembly, we ask in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Devotional Assembly Prayer”

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[Man:] Weakness is his present condition, glory his everlasting birthright.

“To Open the Last Dispensation,” 5

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Those without faith live in a world of their own which to them seems logical and final. They take the very *unscientific* stand that beyond the realm of their own very limited experience nothing whatever exists!

God’s works to them look small, and they will never be cured of their myopia until they are willing to face facts and pass a test that only the honest in heart can consider without a chill of aversion. The test is this: “If men will come unto me I will show them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . then will I make weak things become strong to them” (Ether 12:27). What man of the world or posturing Ph.D. is ever going to *ask* for weakness? The men of the world seek for the things of the world, the realities they know—and the greatest of these are “power and gain.”

“A Permanent Heritage,” *CWHN* 5:260

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The Lord's Prayer is more than just a way of getting through life, a code of morals or a pattern of behavior. It is an appeal to a Father we have known before and hope to dwell with hereafter. It asks for help in carrying out the first and greatest commandment. In this very short prayer, God, man as the child of God, and fellowman are all put in their proper relationship, which is the closest possible family association, approaching identity. The Tempter and his methods are introduced without which the statement of the Gospel plan would be incomplete; for the prayer by its very nature is an appeal from those in distress who are supplicating for something much better than what they have.

What we want is to dwell in the Father's Kingdom under the sole dominion of his divine will by his power and in his glory forever and ever. Jesus proceeds to explain the relationship to those to whom he imparts the prayer: The Father will deal with you exactly as you deal with other humans; he will even withhold his kindness from you if you withhold it from them. But as far as credit for what you do, you are making no deals with men; you are not out to impress them or make points with them. . . . Any consideration of reward is wholly between you and your Heavenly Father; and any credit you are able to get from man, seeking it deliberately by various means, you will lose with him.

"Chattanooga," 14

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The Lord has often pushed the Saints into the water to make them swim; and when our indolence, which is nothing less than disobedience, gets us into a jam, he lets us stew in our own juice until we do something about it.

"Best Possible Test," CWHN 12:534

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The worst sinners, according to Jesus, are not the harlots and publicans, but the religious leaders with their insistence on proper dress and grooming, their careful observance of all the rules, their precious concern for status symbols, their strict legality, their pious patriotism.

"What Is Zion?" CWHN 9:54

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Sin is waste. It is doing one thing when you should be doing other and better things for which you have the capacity. Hence, there are no innocent, idle thoughts. That is why even the righteous must repent, constantly and progressively, since all fall short of their capacity and calling. . . .

Why do people feel guilty about TV? What is wrong with it? Just this—that it shuts out all the wonderful things of which the mind is capable, leaving it drugged in a state of thoughtless stupor. For the same reason a mediocre school or teacher is a *bad* school or teacher. Last week it was announced in the papers that a large convention concerned with violence and disorder in our schools came to the unanimous conclusion (students and teachers alike) that the main cause of mischief was *boredom*.

Underperformance, the job that does not challenge you, can make you sick. Work that puts repetition and routine in the place of real work begets a sense of guilt. Merely doodling and noodling in committees can give you ulcers,

skin rashes, and heart trouble. God is not pleased with us for merely sitting in meetings: “How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations,” wrote the Prophet Joseph Smith from the Liberty Jail,—“too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters called and chosen of God.”

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:66-67

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Why do we insist on taking ourselves so seriously? Because we are frightened to death of being found out. Men have turned their backs on the atonement of Jesus Christ to make for themselves a world of humbug. To lend dignity and authority to the pretentious fraud, they have invented the solemn business and drudgery of everyday life. To avoid answering questions, we pretend to be very busy—my, how busy!

In every conservatory of music there is the student who practices scales and exercises with dedicated zeal for eight or ten hours a day or works away for months and years with terrifying persistence at a single piece. This is the devoted grind who impresses others by his matchless industry. But don't be fooled: This drudge is not working at all. He is running away from work! His ferocious application to dull routine is but a dodge to avoid the novel and frightening effort of using his head. And never, never for all his years of toil, does he become a real musician.

In the manner of this poor dupe, the whole majestic world goes about its ostentatious enterprises, the important busywork of everyday life which includes, alas, nearly all its religious activities as well.

“Prophets and Glad Tidings,” *CWHN* 3:265

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If you take yourself seriously, you won't take the gospel seriously and the other way around. If you take the gospel seriously then you will say, now I know that man is nothing. . . . Oh, the nothingness of man. We can joke about ourselves once we take the gospel seriously and once we know its blessings and promises. Then we can relax and breathe easily and have some fun, which I don't do enough of.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 2

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Anyone can make his own statistical researches to prove that humanity in a thousand ways declares its almost unanimous preference for drab and depressing routines. If the world is a dark and dreary place, it is because we prefer it that way, for there is nothing in the world that can keep a man from joy if joy is what he wants. Direct access to our Father in Heaven through prayer is always open. But right there we draw back; as soon as we gain a distant glimpse of it, we are not so sure whether we want this joy. It is altogether too much for us to bear. We must learn by degrees to live with it. It is not strange that we are afraid of so great and overpowering a thing—that we are overawed by the feeling that all this is too good for us. The fact is that it *is* too good for us—much too good, and the message of the prophets and the Church to us here is that we must awake and prepare ourselves as good and faithful servants to enter into the joy of the Lord. We are not ready yet.

It was the glory of the Lord shining round about them that made the shepherds sore afraid, so that the angel had to reassure them that he was bringing only joyful news, good tidings of great joy, for he had been sent to announce, as all the prophets have, the coming to earth of the Redeemer. That has been the joyful message of all the prophets. That we may come to support not the burden of great suffering but the much greater impact of limitless joy is the purpose of our training here. “In the world ye shall have tribulation,” says the Lord to his prophets, “but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.”

Let no one imagine that there is no conflict between the World and the Prophets. Throughout the centuries each has been an affliction to the other. What the World teaches us, if we would believe its wisest men (how often the Latin poets have said it!), is to live gracefully in the wan shadow of ever-present sorrow. To the Prophets such teaching is posturing pretense and lame surrender, for they know better; theirs is the far harder task of persuading men to accept, and to live with, boundless and everlasting joy.

“Prophets and Glad Tidings,” *CWHN* 3:266-67

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Brigham Young used to have a black leather couch in his office. A window faced the couch; when people came to see him, they would sit on the couch with Brigham Young’s back to the window, the desk between them. Brigham Young would just look at the person for three minutes, that was all. He was never fooled; he could figure them out every time. After all, they had come to see him; he didn’t ask for them. If they had anything to say, they could talk and he would say nothing. He would just let them talk, and lots of rascals came, people plotting against his life, people wanting to get money from him, all sorts of things. The man never had to talk more than three minutes.

Here is your nondirect interview which is so effective to the psychologist—Brigham had it worked out completely. My grandfather said he was never wrong. After three minutes he knew his man.

“The Book of Mormon: True or False?” *CWHN* 8:237

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Our weaknesses are like dogs, you see. If we walk toward them, they will run away from us. But if we run away from them they’ll chase us.

“Brigham Young as an Educator,” 1

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We have, of all people, Sigmund Freud to thank for showing us how our sins, even if we don’t think of them as sins and cover them up by protestations of noble and selfless motivation, nevertheless abide hidden in the subconscious, to undermine our *confidence*, paralyze action, and lead to all sorts of frustrations, ulcers, rashes, and nervous disorders; only with virtuous thoughts can we proceed with that total confidence which creative work requires.

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:282

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Ours is the active, not the passive part; man is “to act, . . . and not to be acted upon.” We are to take possession, and not to be taken possession of.

“Rediscovery of the Apocrypha,” *CWHN* 12:224

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Change cannot be denied: it may seem like a great paradox or mystery to be constantly changing yet always remaining the same, yet the fact is that we see it all around us every day; the most obvious and undeniable act of life is that “each man in his time plays many parts,” while all the time remaining himself.

“The Greatness of Egypt,” 3

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The Lord has divided our history into dispensations. We live in our own box, so to speak, and what was going on in the other boxes is sometimes something we can’t even imagine, like what life would be like in Egypt. . . . We have come to this world in this dispensation to be tested by questions and situations which are totally alien to others times and places.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 11

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But why this crippling limitation on our thought [thinking of only one thing at a time] if we are God’s children? It is precisely this limitation that is the essence of our mortal existence. If every choice I make expresses a preference, if the world I build up is the world I really love and want, then with every choice I am judging myself, proclaiming all the day long to God, angels, and my fellowmen where my real values lie, where my treasure is, the things to which I give supreme importance. Hence, in this life every moment provides a perfect and foolproof test of your real character, making this life a time of testing and probation.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:66

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Do what Peter tells us to do: Have faith that there is more than you know; repent of all your present shallowness and silliness; wash off everything of this world in the waters of baptism, and be reborn, not in the self-congratulatory one-shot manner of pop religion, but to a course of action requiring perpetual, progressive repentance. Then “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” and get the guidance you need (Acts 2:37-38).

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:283

# Of Our Society

The fatal symptom of our day is not that men do wrong—they always have—and commit crimes, and even recognize their wrongdoing as foolish and unfortunate, but that they have *no intention of repenting*, while God has told us that the first rule that he has given the human race is that all men everywhere must repent.

“Beyond Politics,” 297

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This enervating “mechanical legalistic smoothness” [Solzhenytsin] is nowhere more in evidence than here in our midst, where for years short skirts were modest and long slacks immodest—because the rules said so. Mustaches and beards, mandatory among our grandfather, became by decree carnal, sensual, and devilish. Last week students enrolling in my classes had just one question to ask, “How do we get grades?” Grades are acquisitive, competitive, and phony; but they are the official legal certificates that everyone must have, issued in fixed denominations on mathematically graduated scale, to be converted, it is hoped, hereafter into the legal tender of the land—and that is the only thing that interests these young people in the study of *religion*, of all things!

This is no trifling thing; the seeds of such corruption are all-pervasive.

“Prophetic Book of Mormon,” CWHN 8:456-57

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Was the great last dispensation to be brought on with old shopworn forms and ceremonies? A dispensation is a period of the world’s history during which the church of God with its covenants and ordinances is upon the earth. In the apocalyptic scheme of things it is a comparatively brief period of light following a long period of darkness. What would be an appropriate ensign to announce and inaugurate such a happy time?

The single civilization that embraces the world today, whichever way it turns, sees only itself, a great all-confining cliché in which one can think only of what is being thought and do only what is being done. It cannot imagine a new dispensation, let alone supply one. Like a heavy galleon it labors on into ever-deepening gloom, prodded on its way from time to time by promising puffs of a New Order, New Method, New Education, New Deal, New Life, New Cure, New Light, New Way, etc., but ever and again losing momentum as the fleeting winds quickly blow themselves out, leaving the old scow to wallow on as best it may towards the dawn of nothing. To want something totally new and different is one thing; to supply it is another.

“To Open the Last Dispensation,” 2

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The declining years of ancient civilization were beset by a feverish preoccupation with rhetoric, which suggests nothing so much as a hopeless alcoholic’s devotion to the bottle. Everywhere the ancients give us to understand that rhetoric is their poison, that it is ruining their capacity to work and think, that it disgusts and wearies them, and that they cannot let it alone because it pays too well, and, having destroyed everything else, it is all they have

left of remembered grandeur. It should be immediately apparent that this arresting phenomenon may have more than an academic interest for our own age.

“Victoriosa Loquacitas,” *CWHN* 10:243

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The disease our world is suffering from is not something peculiar to a uniquely scientific and permissive age, but the very same virus that has finished off all the other great societies of which we have record. The ancients call it rhetoric. What it amounts to is the acceptance, for the sake of power and profits, of certain acknowledged standards of lying.

Every profession has these, and all that prevents total collapse of a civilization is an immovable column that stands at the center of everything, a zone of impartial and incorruptible justice guaranteeing the integrity of the entire structure. When those who referee the game become the leading practitioners of deception, the civilization is finished. Nothing stops the corrosive progress of rhetoric once it begins to work, for the highest achievement of the art, the ancients tell us, is that skill which convinces patron, customer, or victim that no rhetoric at all is being used. Its victory is complete when it declares itself abolished. The only counteragent which has had any effect in dealing with this deadly thing is the gospel, which will continue to be effective as long as there are people who read the scriptures for themselves.

Rhetoric, as we shall see, creates an unreal world. That is its great power, like the power of those idols of wood and stone whose appeal was precisely that they could not see or hear but ever remained perfectly compliant to the wishes and purposes of their owners. As with a jet engine, the efficiency of rhetoric steadily increases as its surrounding element approximates more and more to a perfect vacuum. As it destroys the real world around it, the power of rhetoric becomes ever more invincible, moving inexorably towards total supremacy in a total vacuum.

We have almost reached that condition today, for some of our greatest fortunes and mightiest corporations are built not on secret formulas for cola drinks or hamburger patties, but on the conversion of those trifles into symbols of youth, beauty, health, super-fun, family togetherness—the soft caress of a child, the flag unfurled—that is what the rascals are selling, and it is the ultimate triumph of the pure rhetoric in the modern world.

Unpublished introduction to “Victoriosa Loquacitas”

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The case of Lehi teaches us equal respect for thought and action. In our own day thinkers, or technicians, act very little and shun responsibility, while men of action think very little and pride themselves on never finding time to read.

The men of the sixth [century B.C.] and the nineteenth century [A.D.] believed that thinking was more than scheming and planning to get ahead. It was a deep and prayerful contemplation, and they were not ashamed to ask for dreams and visions. The hours they spent alone with the Lord made them mighty in action. . . .

God’s dealings with men are on a scale and in ways that none of us can begin to comprehend. The Lord has favored nations and individuals in times and places we dream not of. So it’s time for us to become aware of this in the twentieth century if we’re to bequeath to history anything greater than commercial jingles.

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Careerism is the determination to reign in hell rather than serve in heaven.

“Patriarchy and Matriarchy,” *CWHN* 1:112

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We think it more commendable to get up at five A.M. to write a bad book than to be up at nine o'clock to write a good one. That is pure zeal that tends to breed a race of insufferable, self-righteous prigs and barren minds. One has only to consider the present outpouring of “inspirational” books in the Church that bring little new in the way of knowledge: truisms, and platitudes, kitsch and clichés have become our everyday diets. . . . We've been assured that it is not too early to start thinking about the things of the eternities. In fact, Latter-day Saints should be taking rapid strides toward setting up that eternal celestial order which the Church must embody to be acceptable to God.

Also, we are repeatedly instructed regarding things we should *not* think about. I would pass this negative thing by lightly, but the scriptures are explicit, outspoken, and emphatic in this matter; and whenever anyone begins to talk about serious matters at the BYU, inevitably someone says, “I would like to spend my time thinking about such things and studying them, but I cannot afford the luxury. I have to think about the really important business of life, which is making a living.”

This is the withering effect of the intimidating challenge thrown out to all of us from childhood: “Do you have any money?” . . . I do not have to tell you where that philosophy came from.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:75-76

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What are the qualities that make for success in the business world? Hard work, dependability, sobriety, firmness, imagination, patience, courage, loyalty, discrimination, intelligence, persistence, ingenuity, dedication, consecration, etc.—you can add to the list.

But these are the *same* qualities necessary to make a successful athlete, artist, soldier, bank robber, musician, international jewel thief, scholar, hit man, spy, teacher, dancer, author, politician, minister, smuggler, con man, general, explorer, chef, physician, engineer, builder, astronaut, scientist, godfather, inventor. Again, you name it. Too often these attributes of character are represented as unique to the business world, putting a stamp of glory on the man in the executive suite. You don't have to go into business to develop a character.

“Gifts,” *CWHN* 9:102

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Work is, after all, not a busy running back and forth in established grooves, though that is the essence of our modern business and academic life, but the supreme energy and disciplined curiosity required to cut *new* grooves.

“Great Are the Words of Isaiah,” CWHN 1:232

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What a machine can do, that a machine should do. But what remains for us? Science without gadgets! That we can do some things that no machine can or conceivably ever could do—therein lies our true dignity and destiny as human beings. The checking and ushering and bookkeeping, all the automatic and repetitious things that make up the day’s work for most modern men, have no business being done by living people. Some day they may be done as they should be, by machines, and then men can really get down to business.

Yet for most of us such a prospect is simply terrifying. The busywork that rightfully belongs to the machine is the refuge of the timid mind, and it is to the gadgetry of scholarship—the pretentious secretarial tasks of compiling, annotating, copying, checking, abridging, and the rest—that the academic world clings to today with a sort of desperation. Regiments of workers equipped with costly machinery are busy searching out, digging up, acquisitioning, classifying, cataloging, preserving, reproducing, disseminating, explaining, displaying, and even selling the documents of the past—doing every conceivable thing with the documents but reading them!

“The Way of the Church,” CWHN 4:259

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Gadgets have accumulated but brains have not. The world swarms with Ph.D.’s, bright, ambitious men, but there are no great men. For degrees are gadgets and can be turned out in any desired amount.

Administration has become a fine art by the third century, but thinking has become a lost art. The third century B.C. was a world of technicians and educators, but as the educators make their courses easier and easier, the number of competent new technicians being turned out became less and less. The slogans of education for living and education for success completely stifled research within two generations of Aristotle, and soon applied research followed suit. Even the modest minimum quota of technicians failed to reproduce itself, and so the amazingly advanced and sophisticated techniques of the ancients, useful and appreciated as they were, were all completely lost.

Let that be a lesson for us.

“The Lesson of the Sixth Century B.C.,” 13-14

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I have been quite half-hearted . . . and much too easily drawn into what I call the *Gentile Dilemma*. That is, when I find myself called upon to stand up and be counted, to declare myself on one side or the other. Which do I prefer—gin or rum, cigarettes or cigars, tea or coffee, heroin or LSD, the Red Rose or the White, Shiz or Coriantumr, wicked Nephites or wicked Lamanites, Whigs or Tories, Catholic or Protestant, Republican or Democrat, black power or white power, land pirates or sea pirates, commissars or corporations, capitalism or communism.

The devilish neatness and simplicity of the thing is the easy illusion that I am choosing between good and evil, when in reality two or more evils by their rivalry distract my attention from the real issue.

“How Firm a Foundation!” CWHN 9:163

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One of my favorite haunts was the sand dunes near Lynndyl: Utter solitude and the dramatically haunting beauty of the place were wonderfully soothing, refreshing, and inspiring to body and mind. Then suddenly the recreational vehicle market was discovered, and overnight it became a Walpurgis of noise, brawling, drinking, drugs, fights, vandalism, theft, and sex, where mindless youth could run riot with their costly mechanical toys. . .

As the culminating abomination of desolation, we find that corner of “Zion,” which to me always recalls that moving phrase, “Holiness to the Lord,” has now been set apart, “consecrated” as it were, for the fantastic MX game, the ultimate in waste, futility, and desecration of the land.

“How Firm a Foundation!” CWHN 9:162-63

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“Costly apparel” is the mark of wicked and morbid perversion in the Book of Mormon. Notice, not beautiful apparel, but costly apparel—the externalization, the emphasis on the look, the “bouncin’ and behavin’ hair.”

This is a mark of decline in the civilization, culminating in the fourth century when everything was for show. Everything was external. Beauty had to be theatrical.

Many buildings were built, but their construction and design were shoddy and bad; surface was everything, coverings of mosaics, jewels, costly fabrics. Everything had to glitter and gleam.

Take the splendor of the rock concert. No matter what [else] they are, they all glitter—plenty of glitter and the hard beat . . . which lead ultimately to the extinction of the soul. No content is allowed; you can’t think or anything else, the noise just knocks you out.

*Letters to Smoother, Etc., 103*

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What are the things of the eternities that we should consider even now? They are the things that no one ever tires of doing, things in themselves lovely and desirable. . . . All the things that are passing away today are the very essence of “the economy,” but they will be missing in Zion. They are already obsolescent. Every one of them is make-work of a temporary and artificial nature for which an artificial demand must be created.

Moreover, few people are really dedicated to them, for as soon as a man has acquired a super-quota of power and gain, he cuts out and leaves the scene of his triumphs, getting as far away as he can from the ugly world he has helped create—preferably to Tahiti.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” CWHN 9:79-80

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There comes a time when the general defilement of a society becomes so great that the rising generation is put under undue pressure and cannot be said to have a fair choice between the way of light and the way of darkness. When such a point is reached, the cup of iniquity is full, and the established order that has passed the point of no return and neither can nor will change its ways must be removed physically and forcibly if necessary from the earth, whether by war, plague, famine, or upheavals of nature.

“The Flight into the Wilderness,” *CWHN* 6:140

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“There is no free lunch,” says Korihor. “It is all free lunch,” says King Benjamin. . . . *If* lunch is the aim and purpose of life, then Korihor is right. . . . But since I accept the gospel, that’s out of the question. Either we believe that the lunch has been taken care of, or we are in for a long, horrible contest, both internal and external, as to who is going to get the most.

“Gifts,” *CWHN* 9:111

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Mice, cockroaches, elephants, butterflies, and dolphins have all solved the economic problem—their mere existence on earth after thousands of years of vicissitudes is adequate proof that they have found the secret of survival. Can we do no better than to dedicate all our time and energy to solving just that one problem, as if our whole object in life were simply lunch? . . .

For today many a TV documentary will show you the beasts of the field not spending their days perpetually seeking out and consuming each other for lunch, as we have been taught, but in pleasant relaxation, play, family fun, bathing, exploring (for many of them have lively curiosity), grooming, sparring, and much happy napping, and so on. Even the most efficient killers hunt only every few days when they are really hungry, kill only weaker members of the herds (thus strengthening the stock), and never take more than they need, usually sharing it with others. We see leopards, lions, and tigers between meals calming loping through herds of exotic ungulates, who hardly bother to look up from their grazing at the passing visitors. It is only the human predator who keeps a twenty-four-hour lookout for victims in the manner prescribed in the flourishing contemporary success literature.

“Work We Must, But the Lunch Is Free,” *CWHN* 9:236

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[Freemen] were not militant. It took a great deal to stir them to action, and they made war with heavy reluctance and without rancor, always keeping the fighting to a minimum. They were peace-loving, noncompetitive, and friendly, appealing to the power of the word above that of the sword. “Taught never to give offense,” and never aggressive, they were terrible indeed when the king-men pushed them too far, but quick to spare and forgive.

They were not class-conscious, but prized equality among the greatest of blessings. In their personal lives they placed no great value on the accumulation of wealth and abhorred displays of status and prestige, e.g., the wearing of fashionable and expensive clothes.

Eschewing ambition, they were not desirous or envious of power and authority. They recognized that they were “despised” by the more success-oriented king-men and thought of themselves as outcasts from the ways of the world. They shunned the climate of secrecy and conspiracy in which the king-men delighted, and avoided aristocratic pretenses and aspirations as well. They sought the solution to all their problems in fervid prayer and repentance.

Q. It sounds rather boring to me—too idealistic and unrealistic.

A. Yes, that is the way it seems to us. We have disqualified ourselves for that kind of life. Nothing short of a fix moves our jaded and overstimulated appetites any more. But may I point out to you that there are still a few societies left on earth, or were until recently, in which the freemen’s way of life survived. I am thinking of certain societies of American Indians and Pacific Islanders.

Q. Come now! They are nature-people, savages.

A. By us they are “despised,” to use Moroni’s expression. But what stable societies from the New England village to the ancient dwellers on the Nile have not been “nature people,” gladly accepting the world that God has given them? It is only in our own day that the bulldozers, freeways, high-rises, parking prairies, shopping palaces, and industrial “parks” have claimed the land in the name of great combinations dedicated to power and gain. And in that denatured and dehumanized setting modern man finds satisfaction in watching, reading, and living out those stories of contention, violence, intrigue, duels for power, grand theft, murder, high fashion, and high sex which have become the daily fare of the millions as they once were for *money* is the name of the game.

But there is a ray of hope in the circumstance that the freemen and the king-men belong to the same race and culture. It is quite possible for people to move from one category to the other, as they often do in the Book of Mormon, where “one very wicked man” can get a huge following in short order and just as quickly lose it. We are all both king-men and freemen at heart, just as we are all potential devils or gods.

“Freemen and King-men,” CWHN 8:371-72

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Apostasy never came by renouncing the gospel but always by corrupting it. No one renounces it today, and so we have the strange paradox of people stoutly proclaiming beliefs and ideals that they have no intention of putting into practice.

1. Every Sunday we thank God for our beautiful surroundings, which in many neighborhoods are being systematically destroyed by developers all around us.
2. We seek knowledge as our greatest treasure, while the poverty of most of our manuals and handbooks defies description.
3. As a Church authority commented to me after the last Conference, the President’s keynote address on the Book of Mormon was hardly mentioned during the rest of the Conference.
4. For years we hailed the Welfare Plan as a living demonstration of continued revelation—and then phased it out in deference to the private sector.

5. Since the days of Joseph Smith, presidents of the Church have made resounding pronouncements against the wicked practice of needlessly killing animals and birds for pleasure, and have been unheeded; we have just passed a law permitting fourteen-year-olds the pleasure of killing big game.
6. A great and inspired bicentennial message by one we called our prophet was instantly swept under the rug.
7. The oldest and best testimony to Joseph Smith's first vision has received no attention whatever by the Latter-day Saints since its discovery in 1969, and so it goes.
8. The prophet Joseph studied biblical languages with dedicated zeal to help him understand the scriptures, but such studies are frowned upon by too many in our religious institutions.

"One Eternal Round," *CWHN* 12:395-96

# Of Zion and Babylon

## THE NATURE OF ZION

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All my life I have shied away from these disturbing and highly unpopular—even offensive—themes. But I cannot do so any longer, because in my old age I have taken to reading the scriptures and there have had it forced upon my reluctant attention that, from the time of Adam to the present day, Zion has been pitted against Babylon, and the name of the game has always been money—“power and gain.”

“What Is Zion?” *CWHN* 9:58

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Zion is a constant in time and place. It belongs to the order of the eternities. We’re not making Zion here, but we’re preparing the ground to receive it. As the Lord says, “My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom” (D&C 136:31). We must be prepared to receive this glory; we don’t produce it ourselves. We must be ready, so that we won’t die of shock when we get it.

“Our Glory or Our Condemnation,” *CWHN* 9:4

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The interest of the Latter-day Saints in the city of Enoch is not simply a literary or even a scientific one. It is historic and prophetic. The city of Enoch is very much our concern. As we read of Enoch’s community, a chorus of persistent questions hums in the background: Just how literally is all this to be taken? How are we to imagine the almost unimaginable events of that far-off time?

We cannot dodge such questions, since we are committed to forming as quickly as possible the closest possible partnership with that society.

“A Strange Thing in the Land,” *CWHN* 2:255

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The two words most commonly used to describe Zion are *beauty* and *joy*, and the same two words most often relate to heaven and paradise. Beauty comes first, for beauty is whatever gives joy.

“Our Glory or Our Condemnation,” *CWHN* 9:7

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[From an old book of Adam, a Syriac text discovered in 1819, translated in 1856]: Zion is a place “without discord or dissent,” where angels wise and gentle, without malice or deceit, come and go on cheerful assignments. There is

a perfect agreement among the worlds, each having its particular glory, and all the inhabitants share their knowledge freely with each other. The worlds average one million *parasangs* (a *parasang* is about four miles) apart, and through the people's common knowledge and their common God, the Lord, they share a common glory. They are all incorruptible, without death. They do not grow old or wear out. Their nature is unailing. They cannot be numbered, and their number is unchanging.

Each of the worlds is a Zion, though each is different, for, most delightful of all, there is [no] monotony. There is a single universal culture which, as described in our own scriptures, "shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made" (Moses 7:64)—the culture of Zion.

Yet variety (as Brigham Young often noted) was the very keynote to that culture. . . . "Magnificent buildings beside tranquil seas, flowing springs of life-giving water, everything vibrates with joy; the wants of the people are few, they move about through the air by the power of flight." They are not overly concerned with technology because their technological knowledge has taken them far beyond our clumsy contraptions. "They are at home with the firmaments, with the 'Jordans' (a special term referring to ordinances), with groves, with kings, with spirits; their beauty is within them and shines out as if they were pure crystal. Force flows through them from the king as they persevere in prayer and in song." (It was a demanding thing; the celestial spirits had to work at it). "They study and meditate constantly. They exhale a fragrance of divine happiness; each is more remarkable than the other, each more illustrious."

"Comments," 26-27

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Awareness of their heavenly parentage sets Israel apart *culturally* as well as doctrinally.

Their ordinances set them apart too. Every ancient civilization is hierocentric; it is the temple that sets it apart from the rest of the world. . . .

What is the gospel culture composed of? Everything good. Like patriotism, it is more inclusive than exclusive. Its peculiarity . . . is a seal set upon whatever it finds desirable, rendering that thing also peculiar. It is the combination, the structure, that is peculiar, not the separate elements.

Our thirteenth Article of Faith sums it up beautifully; we accept everything we put our stamp on. Can anything be more universally appealing, more desirable for the whole human race, than being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous (that's inner culture acceptable to any society), and in doing good to all men? Moreover, we *seek* after every good thing, we are in the market for everything good.

Articles six (dealing with organization, the same organization as the primitive Church), seven (dealing with the spiritual gifts that get the Mormons apart from the rest of the world at this time), and ten, especially (looking forward to another kind of secular environment), all have very strong cultural implications. "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel [the same thing we have already been referring to] and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" (Article of Faith 10). We shall see all these things. These are very special things. . . .

Now, not only is there a single, central celestial culture reserved for the Saints, but such culture has also served as the model for the greatest peaks of human civilization as a whole. Those golden ages, all too few and far between, that have illuminated the long night of history have, I believe, all drawn their nourishment from the memories of lost Zions.

“Comments,” 23-24

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When all the accidentals and incidentals are stripped away, what remains that is quintessentially Zion? Buildings, walls, streets, and gates—even of gold and jasper—do not make Zion; neither do throngs in shining robes. Zion is not a Cecil B. DeMille production; the properties do not make the play, no matter how splendid they may be.

What makes Zion? God has given us the perfect definition: Zion is the pure in heart—the pure in heart, not merely the pure in appearance.

It is not a society or religion of forms and observances, of pious gestures and precious mannerisms. It is strictly a condition of the heart. Above all, Zion is pure, which means “not mixed with any impurities, unalloyed.” It is all Zion and nothing else. It is not achieved wherever a heart is pure or where two or three are pure, because it is all pure—it is a society, a community, and an environment into which no unclean thing can enter. . . .

It is not even pure people in a dirty environment, or pure people with a few impure ones among them; it is the perfectly pure in a perfectly pure environment.

“What Is Zion?” *CWHN* 9:26-27

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Babylon and Zion cannot mix in any degree. A Zion that makes concessions is no longer Zion.

“What Is Zion?” *CWHN* 9:30

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The “Mahan principle” is a frank recognition that the world’s economy is based on the exchange of life for property. This is most apparent, of course, in time of war—a Catch-22. Today the biggest business in the world is the selling of deadly weapons by all to all, with the advantage going to the most efficient killing machines. Not long ago it was drugs, but it is all the same in a descending scale of accountability, where none is free from guilt: the hit man, soldier of fortune, weapons dealer, manufacturer, plundering whole species for raw materials, destroying life in both processing them and getting them (by pollution, dangerous work conditions, and so on), and by distributing them (additives, preservatives). The fearful processes of industry shorten and impoverish life at every level, from forced labor to poisonous air and water. This is the world’s economy, for Satan is “the prince of this world.”

“Law of Consecration,” *CWHN* 9:436-37

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In order to reconcile the ways of Babylon with the ways of Zion, it has been necessary to circumvent the inconvenient barriers of scripture and conscience by the use of the tried and true device of *rhetoric*, defined by Plato as the art of making true things seem false and false things seem true by the use of words. This invaluable art has, since the time of Cain, invested the ways of Babylon with an air of high purpose, solid virtue, and impeccable respectability.

“What Is Zion?” CWHN 9:45

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Every rhetorician knows that his most effective weapons by far are *labels*. He can demolish the opposition with simple and devastating labels such as communism, socialism, or atheism, popery, militarism, or Mormonism, or give his clients’ worst crimes a religious glow with noble labels such as integrity, old-fashioned honesty, tough-mindedness, or free competitive enterprise. “You can get away with anything if you just wave the flag,” a business partner of my father once told me. He called that patriotism.

But the label game reaches its all-time peak of skill and effrontery in the Madison Avenue master stroke of pasting the lovely label of *Zion* on all the most typical institutions of Babylon: Zion’s Loans, Zion’s Real Estate, Zion’s Used Cars, Zion’s Jewelry, Zion’s Supermart, Zion’s Auto Wrecking, Zion’s Outdoor Advertising, Zion’s Gunshop, Zion’s Land and Mining, Zion’s Development, Zion’s Securities. All that is quintessentially Babylon now masquerades as Zion.

“What Is Zion?” CWHN 9:53-54

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Longhairs, beards, and necklaces, LSD and rock, Big Sur and Woodstock come and go, but Babylon is always there: rich, respectable, immovable, with its granite walls and steel vaults, its bronze gates, its onyx trimmings and marble floors (all borrowed from ancient temples, for these are our modern temples) and its bullet-proof glass—the awesome symbols of total security. Keeping her orgies decently private, she presents a front of unalterable propriety to all.

“What Is Zion?” CWHN 9:54-55

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Every step in the direction of increasing one’s personal holdings is a step away from Zion.

“What Is Zion?” CWHN 9:37

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God recognizes only one justification for seeking wealth, and that is with the express intent of helping the poor.

“What Is Zion?” CWHN 9:53

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The first rule of economics is that everyone should provide, as far as possible, for himself. The second, which receives vastly more attention in the scriptures, is that man's wants are few. "Having food and raiment," says Paul, "let us therewith be content" (1 Timothy 6:8). . . . To take more than we need is to take what does not belong to us.

"What Is Zion?" CWHN 9:49-50

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The treasures of the earth are merely to provide us with room and board while we are here at school. [They are] "made for the comfort of the creature, not for his adoration," [says Brigham Young]. "They are made to sustain and preserve the body while procuring the knowledge and wisdom that pertain to God and his kingdom, in order that we may preserve ourselves, and live forever in his presence."

"Educating the Saints," 233

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The Zoramites . . . had many good qualities; they were wonderful people. But they misdirected their virtues, and that made them all the more vicious. Alma found them to be the wickedest people in the world . . . because with all their virtues, they set their hearts upon riches. Alma couldn't stand it. He couldn't look at it anymore. It hurt too much. . . .

"Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold their hearts are set upon them" (Alma 32:28).

"Gifts," CWHN 9:103

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Paradoxically, we are learning to live *without* so that we can learn to live *with* things. . . . As long as we go on accumulating stuff in this life, we are playing the devil's game, for "there is no such thing as a man being truly rich until he has power over death, hell, the grave, and him that hath the power of death, which is the devil." We will have a right to do as we please with our own only "when we can speak to the earth—to the native elements in boundless space, and say to them—'Be ye organized, and planted here, or there, and stay until I command you hence.'"

"Brigham Young on the Environment," 15

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In Zion you labor, to be sure, but not for money, and not for yourself (2 Nephi 26:31), which is the exact opposite of our present version of the work ethic.

"What Is Zion?" CWHN 9:48

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The body serves us best when we are least aware of it, and so with money.

“Gifts,” *CWHN* 9:108

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Of course, the man who devotes himself to the tiring routines of business should be rewarded, but should all others be penalized who do not engage in that particular line of work? . . . Our gifts and talents are to be put at the disposal of the human race, not used to put the race at our disposal.

“What Is Zion?” *CWHN* 9:51-52

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There are over half a million millionaires in the United States today. How many good artists? How many good poets? How many good musicians and composers? Half a dozen? Maybe two or three. We’d be flattered if there were that many in the country, yet we have millionaires by the hundreds “*They deal with reality.*”

*Letters to Smoother, Etc.*, 112

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Money gets quick results, and the effects of newly acquired riches are almost instantaneous. At once the happy recipient of a big promotion is expected to change his lifestyle, move to a better part of town, join different clubs, send his children to different schools, even change his church affiliation for a more fashionable one, or drop an intended bride for one more acceptable to the president’s wife and her exalted circle. The instant pride of the foolish milkmaid in the prospects of a new affluence was the same ambition that made a monster of the noble and generous Macbeth overnight. History, literature, and folklore are full of the fatal gold—the deadly rings, the dragon’s treasure, the golden fleece, etc.—that brings quick and inevitable destruction on those that seek and find it. No, my friends, the Book of Mormon does not exaggerate either the relentless efficiency or the speed with which wealth corrupts all those who set their hearts upon riches and the things of the world.

“Freemen and King-men,” *CWHN* 8:365

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Every book I have ever written I have always said, if there is any doubt about it I don’t care if it is never published. There is only one thing they censor anyway. You can say anything you want about anything but you must never, never, never say anything disrespectful about money. Even if it were a verse of scripture, they would cut it right out.

“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 14

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Samuel the Lamanite sets forth the interesting rule that when the economy becomes the main and engrossing concern of a society—or in the routine Book of Mormon phrase, when “they begin to set their hearts upon their

riches”—the economy will self-destruct. . . . Note well that sequence of folly: first we are well-pleased with ourselves because of our wealth, then comes the game of status and prestige, leading to competitive maneuvers, hatred, dirty tricks, and finally the ultimate solution. Where wealth guarantees respectability, principles melt away as the criminal element rises to the top.

“Freemen and King-men,” *CWHN* 8:349

## CONSECRATION

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Since as countless hymns inform us, God owns the earth and all that is in it, any payments made by men to him are the purest token payments, given not because he needs them but as a gesture acknowledging his ownership.

“Tenting, Toll, and Taxing,” *CWHN* 10:59

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[The law of consecration], the consummation of the laws of obedience and sacrifice, is the threshold of the celestial kingdom, the last and hardest requirement made of men in this life. It is much harder to keep than the rules of chastity and sobriety, for those temptations subside with advancing age, while desire for the security and status of wealth only increase and grow through the years.

“How Firm a Foundation!” *CWHN* 9:168

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Since World War II, it seems that we have been steadily converging with Babylon, while diverging from some of the old teachings. Latter-day Saint children of the rising generation have never heard of their Guardian Angel, or of the recording of our every deed in a book of heaven; they were never told as we were children that “it is a sin to kill a fly,” and have never heard that satirical little verse which General Authorities used to quote in stake conference: “Money, O Money, thy praises I’ll sing! Thou art my Savior, my God and my King!” That would be quite unthinkable today, a kind of sacrilege. Because some of the old teachings are still preserved in the temple, certain anomalies appear to the younger generation. A bishop told me this month that people coming to renew their recommends when they are asked whether they keep all their covenants frequently answer no, explaining that they do not keep the law of consecration. A General Authority recently told me that the important thing is to observe the law of consecration “spiritually.” Yes indeed, say I, and the law of tithing also—how much better to observe *it* spiritually than in a gross, material way—a great comfort to the rich. And yet the express purpose of both those laws is to test the degree of our attachment to material things, not to provide an exercise in “spiritual” semantics.

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:279-80

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There is no point in arguing which other system comes closest to the law of consecration, since I excluded all other systems when I opted for the real thing.

“How Firm a Foundation!” *CWHN* 9:164

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The express purpose of the law of consecration is the building up of Zion; it is God’s plan, and his alone, for doing that. We do not wait until Zion is here to observe it; it is rather the means of bringing us nearer to Zion.

“Breakthroughs I Would Like to See,” *CWHN* 9:390

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Progressive testing takes place along the way in either direction; the same tests in every dispensation and generation mark the progress of the people of God. (1) Do you, first of all, agree to do things *his way* rather than *your way*—to follow the law of God? (2) If so, will you be *obedient* to him, no matter what he asks of you? (3) Will you, specifically, be willing to *sacrifice* anything he asks you for? (4) Will you at all times behave morally and soberly? (5) Finally, if God asks you to part with your worldly possessions by *consecrating* them all to his work, will you give his own back to him to be distributed as he sees fit, not as *you think wise*?

“We Will Still Weep for Zion,” *CWHN* 9:342

## PREPARING FOR ZION

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Quite literally, “Heaven is our destination.” This idea is clearly brought forward in our new home evening manual with its theme “A Bit of Heaven.” That is more than a sentimental Irish tag (though we in the Church today do seem to have an incurable appetite for trite and sentimental “kitsch”). It is an invitation actually to model our domestic life on the celestial order, as God commanded the Saints to do from the first: “And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself” (D&C 105:5).

“Our Glory or Our Condemnation,” *CWHN* 9:2

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The Word of Wisdom is necessary for unity and cooperation. It’s a form of common sense and honesty. Drugs, luxuries, self-indulgence, fashions and wealth: they all go together. The Word of Wisdom is simply a warning to beware of the world, and although it is a temporal revelation, the keeping of it will help us to keep the more eternal covenants we have made with our Heavenly Father.

“The Word of Wisdom,” 6

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It is always the spirit that counts. The celebrations in which everyone is generous and open-handed in recognition of God's bounty are joyous affairs. Sons, daughters, servants, strangers, orphans, and widows must all come together and rejoice and be happy as one big happy *family*. That is the spirit in which this must be done, and that is the spirit of the law of consecration and the United Order.

"How to Get Rich," *CWHN* 9:192

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By a law of natural decline, an entropy from light to dark, birth to death, gods to demons, and heroes to ordinary men, the world has come to its present state. Nevertheless, we are under obligation to realize on earth a copy of that higher order in which all men are brothers.

"The Utopians," *CWHN* 9:492

# Of Education

## THE ADVENTURE OF LEARNING

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A professor is not one who knows, but one who professes to know, and [thus] is constantly in the position of inviting challenge.

He professes publicly where everyone is invited to come and challenge, [and] at any time he must be willing and able to defend it openly against all comers. The degree was originally a chivalric device—a gauntlet of defiance to all rivals—and not a safe rampart or dug-out for a scholar to hide behind in safe immunity from any challenge.

“Fact and Fancy in the Interpretation of Ancient Records,” 24

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In the study of ancient things . . . it is just the fantastic and incongruous which opens the door to discovery. Never forget that. In scholarship as in science, every paradox and anomaly is really a broad hint that new knowledge is awaiting us if we will only go after it.

“There Were Jaredites,” *CWHN* 5:365-66

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There are those who deplore the study of [Egyptology] as “esoteric” and “exotic.” By very definition the unknown is always exotic and the little-known is always esoteric; the terms are relative—to the departmental philosopher even Latin may be esoteric and Greek positively exotic. Now the office and calling of scholarship and science is to investigate the unknown, and people who engage in such work are not ashamed of admitting that it intrigues them. It is exciting and even romantic stuff; the motion is always away from the commonplace and familiar to the strange and wonderful. The established academician with his tried-and-tested platitudes and truisms is welcomed to his world of preaching and posturing, but the greatest appeal of the gospel in every age has been that it is frankly wonderful—one glorious surprise after another.

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (May 1970): 86

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Things that appear unlikely, impossible, or paradoxical from one point of view often make perfectly good sense from another.

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:65

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True knowledge never shuts the door on more knowledge, but zeal often does.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:71

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Is an open mind, then, a negative thing—an empty mind? It is, unless it is a searching mind.

“The Prophets and the Open Mind,” *CWHN* 3:128

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No matter where we begin, if we pursue knowledge diligently and honestly our quest will inevitably lead us from the things of earth to the things of heaven.

“Educating the Saints,” 243

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Must you learn everything? Yes, for if you leave anything out, how will you know that it is not the most important of all, “the stone which the builders rejected” (Matthew 21:42)? This journey may last for ages, and it holds forth the anticipation of wonders and delights that grow as ever-increasing knowledge heightens our capacity to comprehend what we are experiencing. This has nothing to do with the learning of the schools. The tradition of Western education is rhetorical, success oriented, and concerned wholly with appearances; it cost Socrates his life to show the Sophists just how superficial and dishonest their system was.

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:271

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Doctors and trainers often see perfectly developed bodies, but nobody can even begin to imagine what a perfect *mind* would be like; that is where the whole range of progress and growth must take place.

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:277

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All scholarship, like all science, is an ongoing, open-ended discussion in which all conclusions are tentative forever, the principal value and charm of the game being the discovery of the totally unexpected.

“Common Carrier”

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Only if you reach the boundary will the boundary recede before you. And if you don't, if you confine your efforts, the boundary will shrink to accommodate itself to your efforts. And you can only expand your capacities by working to the very limit.

“Brigham Young as Educator,” 1

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Knowledge can be heady stuff, but it easily leads to an excess of zeal!—to illusions of grandeur and a desire to impress others and achieve eminence. . . . Our search for knowledge should be ceaseless, which means that it is open-ended, never resting on laurels, degrees, or past achievements.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:70

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There are three factors involved: intelligence, revelation, *and* hard work; and if the spirit may help in earthly learning, the mind is required to operate in celestial matters.

“Educating the Saints,” 243

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Like other latent forces, intelligence is there and waiting to be released. Note the key words in this statement on the high estate of spirituality. It is peculiarly “powerful in expanding [1] the *mind*, enlightening [2] the *understanding*, and storing [3] the *intellect* with present [4] *knowledge*, of a man who is the literal seed of Abraham.” And if you do not happen to be that, “the pure [5] *spirit of intelligence*,” if one cultivates it, “will make him actually of the seed of Abraham.” It is “[6] the *spirit of revelation* . . . when you feel pure *intelligence* flowing into you, it will give you sudden strokes of [7] *ideas*” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 149-51). It is the merit of the seed of Abraham, with all their stubbornness and backsliding, that above all people treasure the things of the mind. The first commandment given to the Church in modern times was “seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you” (D&C 6:7). It would be hard to imagine a program more repugnant to the present course the world is taking.

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:281-82

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Intellectual curiosity and esthetic feeling are nothing to be ashamed of.

“A Strange Thing in the Land,” *CWHN* 2:135

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At what point does one have “a right to an opinion”? I have never reached that point yet, and yet I go right on having opinions. I have been having them ever since I was a child and knew nothing at all; and I still go right on having them now that I am old and know nothing at all. The ideal thing would be to withhold opinions until all the returns are in, but as Karl Popper reminds us, that day will never come. So there is nothing for it but to go ahead and have our premature opinions, gratefully selecting in support of such the evidence we like best. . . . What is *not* permitted is to make one’s choice on the authority of someone *else*. If you are not concerned in the matter, don’t bother to take a position; but once you have decided to be concerned, you must make your *own* decision, *no matter how limited your knowledge*. All of us have eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, not just the Authorities, and each is

accountable for his own decisions: you cannot delegate your free agency even for a moment. You may go to the expert for information, and that is what he is good for, but not for a final opinion.

“Some Reasons for the Restored Gospel,” 3-4

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What makes a man an authority is not his confidence in giving an opinion, but his ability to supply us with proof that we can understand. And the better the authority, the clearer, the more understandable, the more conclusive the evidence he can give us.

“On the Pearl of Great Price,” 9

#### ABUSES OF SCHOLARSHIP

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The gas-law of learning: . . . any amount of information no matter how small will fill any intellectual void no matter how large.

“Historicity of the Bible,” *CWHN* 1:4

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The faculty [at Berkeley] had but one objective in life—to achieve eminence—and all labored under the pathetic illusion that mere association with a prestigious institution was the nearest thing to human satisfaction that this life could offer.

“An Intellectual Autobiography,” xxv-xxvi

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We are for the most part simply conscientious grinds who got good grades and stayed on at school, moving into departmental slots conveniently vacated by the death of older (and usually better) scholars; then traveling all over to exchange commonplaces and read papers with our peers abroad in the world. As to research, we paw over large deposits of neglected material until we find something that nobody has noticed for a long time. Then we write about it, and that is a contribution.

“An Intellectual Autobiography,” xxviii

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At UCLA I quickly learned the knack of getting grades, a craven surrender to custom, since grades had little to do with learning.

“An Intellectual Autobiography,” xxii

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I can see two totally different pictures of the BYU, each one a reality: From one direction I see high purpose, sobriety, good cheer, dedication and a measure of stability which in this unquiet world is by no means to be despised. Then by shifting my position but slightly I see a carnival of human vanity and folly to which only Gilbert & Sullivan could do justice, with solemn antics before high heaven that make the angels weep. Why take sides or contend? Both of the pictures are genuine!

“Some Reasons for the Restored Gospel,” 7

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Humanism is very ancient. It turns up regularly as an Ersatz for religion when religion goes sour. The settled tradition is that while humanism and science represent straight and honest thinking, religion is a primitive, pre-rational, emotional, wishful type of thinking, essentially superstitious, that humanism and science represent bold new thought while religion represents traditional, hide-bound uncritical thinking. What this view overlooks is the fact that the bold and original thinking of today inevitably becomes the hide-bound authoritarian tradition of tomorrow. So that the theory itself, the belief that we have a body of study that is fresh and forward looking and that we can easily spot it and give allegiance to it, is itself a hoary superstition.

“Humanism and the Gospel,” 1

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The disillusionment of the honest humanist is swift and certain, but only today are we discovering how badly we have misjudged the religious tradition. We have put the whole thing into a single package and thrown the package out of the window. What we have failed to see is that the religion which disgusted the intellectuals was a dishonest religion—vitiating by human weakness and priestcraft.

“Humanism and the Gospel,” 4

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In this vagueness and all-pervasiveness, the term *rhetoric* came very close to our own “business,” or better, “public relations.” No one could say exactly what it was, yet no one had the slightest doubt about its real nature or its absolutely predominant place in the world. The rhetorician was a general promoter, ingratiating himself with powerful individuals or groups to run off with a handsome cut of the profits from clever deals engineered by himself, handling other people’s affairs in the law courts, guiding political opinion, generally flattering and running errands for the great. The god Mercury, the winged messenger and factotum with the money-bags, Hermes the thief, with the ready tongue and winning manners, shows how established the type really is.

“Victoriosa Loquacitas,” *CWHN* 10:255-56

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[The rhetorician] tells them [the audience] funny stories and improving homilies, he boldly rebukes their defects and excesses, orders the huge throng like a child to behave itself, or commends it on its good order and fine

appearance. He delights the city with an outsider's praise of its size and shining beauty or pours withering scorn on its luxury and immorality. He flatters his hearers' intelligence with his confidential manner as the great news commentator who knows the inside stuff, discussing big world issues in clever, conceited, short-winded discourses. And they listen to him for centuries on end because he represents civilization and saves them from boredom.

"Victoriosa Loquacitas," *CWHN* 10:248

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Simplifying, shortening, and spicing—the trade secrets of the ancient rhetor's, as of the modern journalist's success—do have absolute limits, and when these are reached the rhetorical process has done its work. The end-product is something once thought to be typically Oriental—the shadow theater of comic books.

In the typical Oriental romance the labor of reading is supplanted by the efforts of the graphic storyteller, whose American counterpart is a pen-and ink artist capable, like his Eastern colleague, of mass-producing amazingly vivid illustrations at great speed. The skill of both these craftsmen is readily explained by the fact that they are simply drawing the same pictures over and over again. The story is told in brief, repetitive episodes, all strangely alike and all richly spiced with sex and gore. A wanton and meaningless procession of extravagant images passes before us, exaggerated to the point of insanity yet hackneyed to the limit of dullness. . . . Like the passions and appetites it feeds on, rhetoric is one of the great constants in human history. Because it is a constant, nothing can tell us better the direction in which a civilization is moving or how far it is along the way. Like the residue of certain radioactive substances, rhetoric, leaving an unmistakable mark on all that it touches, may yet prove to be the surest guide to the history of our own times.

"Victoriosa Loquacitas," *CWHN* 10:273-74

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By the fifth century the learning and arts of the West present a horrible spectacle. As rhetoric had broken the back of philosophy by systematic sabotage and absorption, so one by one it had occupied every field in which money and fame could be earned.

"Victoriosa Loquacitas," *CWHN* 10:267

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In the business of scholarship, evidence is far more flexible than opinion. The prevailing view of the past is controlled not by evidence but by opinion.

"Historicity of the Bible," *CWHN* 1:4

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Toward the end of the seventeenth century, scholarship lost its former imagination and drive, thanks to the competitive skepticism of experts determined to demonstrate their solid conservatism to each other.

“A Strange Thing in the Land,” CWHN 2:101

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Psychology, being the science of behavior, is the equivalent to religion being the study of bells and steeples, or patriotism being the study of firecrackers. Only the external aspects of the thing can be studied. Therefore, for the sake of convenience, we assume that only the external aspects exist, and of course this leads to trouble.

“Science Fiction and the Gospel,” CWHN 12:511

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Many years ago this writer learned that if he could not make a thing clear to a five-year-old child it was because he did not really understand it himself. Professional jargon and phraseological mazes are the scholar’s refuge from the importunities and the too-searching questions of the layman, but they do have their purposes—they warn the idle onlooker to keep a respectful distance while the research is still going on, and they are a constant reminder to the professional himself that he has not yet got the answers that will make it possible to state the case in clear and simple terms.

“Getting Ready to Begin,” 252-53

A PLEA FOR HUMILITY

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Being self-taught is no disgrace; but being self-certified is another matter.

“It Takes All Kinds,” 5

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Does life on the moon resemble life on Mars? It is a good question, but premature. When I was a little boy we used to sit in a tent on hot summer afternoons and debate loudly and foolishly on just such lofty themes as this one. I think we all felt vaguely uncomfortable about the whole thing, and that made us all the more excitable, dogmatic, and short-tempered.

The trouble was that we were not yet ready. We did not have the necessary knowledge. But when would we be ready? Are we ready yet? If not, we should stop playing this game of naughty boys behind the barn, smoking cornsilk and saying damn and hell to show how emancipated we are. It is much too easy to be a “swearing elder.” Knowledge is not so cheaply bought.

We are *not* free to discuss any imaginable question simply because we say we are. I am not *permitted* to discuss botany with anybody, at any time or place. It is not the jealousy of a reactionary society or the dictates of a narrow church that cramp my style—I just don’t happen to know anything about botany.

“Do Religion and History Conflict?” CWHN 12:448

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No man can learn enough in a lifetime to count for very much, and no one knows that better than the man who diligently seeks knowledge—that is the lesson of *Faust*. How then can any *honest* man believe that his modicum of knowledge can supersede revelation and supplant the authority of the priesthood?

“The Way of the ‘Intellectuals,’” CWHN 6:376

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The very helplessness of the public which makes it necessary for them to consult the experts also makes it impossible for them to judge how expert they are.

“It Takes All Kinds,” 1

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As knowledge increases, the verdict of yesterday must be reversed today, and in the long run the most positive authority is the least to be trusted.

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (July 1968): 54

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The “evolutionistic bias” of modern scholarship has played havoc with ancient history, not only predetermining every reaction of the historian to his text, but also in most cases freeing him from any obligation toward the text at all. Many large college textbooks are brought forth by men who, it is painfully apparent, have never bothered to read through the documents on which their work is supposed to be based. Their confidence in a moth-eaten rule-of-thumb is simply sublime. Why should one waste precious eyesight examining moldy evidence when everybody knows already what the answer is going to be? . . .

The expert feels in his bones that what he says is what is right, unaware that his bones have been undergoing constant conditioning since the day of his birth. He is trained and intelligent. He means to be perfectly scientific and detached. He is constitutionally incapable of wanton error. How then can he be wrong?

Answer: simply by being human! Purity of motive is no guarantee of infallibility. The greatest of errors are by no means intentional and are often made by the ablest of scholars. . . . No scholar alive possesses enough knowledge to speak the final word on anything, and, as to integrity, let us rather call it vanity.

“The Way of the Church,” CWHN 4:234-35

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I refuse to be held responsible for anything I wrote more than three years ago. For heaven’s sake, I hope we are moving forward here! After all, the implication [is] that one mistake and it is all over with. How flattering to think in

forty years I have not made one slip and I am still in business! I would say about four-fifths of everything I put down has changed. Of course!

“The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham,” 49

## RESPONSIBLE SCHOLARSHIP

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Significance is a relative value, measured by the interest of a writing to a reader. There are three types of interest that make a study significant: human interest, scientific interest, and vested interest.

“Writing and Publication in Graduate School,” 5

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Scholarship is an open-ended discussion in which things are never settled. The important thing, therefore, is not to be right on a particular point but to be able to enter into the discussion. It is for this purpose that scholarly journals exist. Until one gets onto the playing-field, one is not in the game—he is merely a spectator, who may cheer for this or that player or shout advice from his classroom bleachers, but never knows what it really is like in the arena. . . .

Every study should be: (1) authentic, (2) original, and (3) significant. Without all three of these characteristics no study should be published. With all three any study is certain to find publication without difficulty.

“Writing and Publication in Graduate School,” 1-2

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Publication is especially important in a church university, for where the severe standards imposed by professional journals are not applied, scholars inevitably succumb to the occupational hazards of the religious teacher, easily lapsing into superficial pseudo-scholarship, irresponsible speculation, ill-informed controversy, and authoritarian pomposity.

“Writing and Publication in Graduate School,” 1

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Not to use all available evidence is to defeat the whole purpose of research, which is to add to the fund of existing knowledge. How can you add to it if you don't know what is already there and what is missing? No future progress is possible where past progress is ignored. What is the advantage of centuries of writing and research that others have put into my subject if I intend to consider only ten percent of it? By what right do I presume to ask others to give my work the respectful attention which I deny to theirs? We cannot honestly add a word to historical writing until we know what needs to be added.

“Writing and Publication in Graduate School,” 4

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It is better to be ignorant and interested than ignorant and not interested, and there's no alternative here.

“Apocryphal Writings,” CWHN 12:266

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All scholarship, like all science, is an ongoing, open-ended discussion in which all conclusions are tentative forever, the principal value and charm of the game being the discovery of the totally unexpected. . . . Confronted with the reality of the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price, whose mere existence is a miracle (what other performance can compare as a sheer tour-de-force?) those who set themselves to put us right confine their performance to demonstrating that these marvelous works were not produced in the conventional manner of the schools (whoever said they were?) and therefore must be a fraud. With endless protestations of integrity and virtue they manage from year to year to avoid all contact with the teeming sources by which these books must be tested, to flaunt with tireless repetition their two or three shopworn but hasty and unexamined charges of indiscretion on the part of the Prophet, producing as evidence the opinions of a mysterious “Mormon Egyptologist” whose credentials they prefer not to discuss. It is the purest Watergate.

“Common Carrier”

## PRODDING THE UNIVERSITY

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The formula for preserving order emerges with striking clarity from an ample mass of documents covering a long period of time. Whoever would avoid serious student protest or dangerous demands has simply to follow the rules of the sophist schools:

1. Free the student from the necessity of any prolonged or strenuous effort.
2. Give him a reasonable assurance that the school is helping him toward a career.
3. Confine moral discipline to the amenities, paying special attention to dress and grooming. The student will have his own sex life anyway.
4. Keep him busy with fun and games—extracurricular is the thing.
5. Allay any subconscious feelings of guilt due to idleness and underachievement by emphasis on the greatness of the institution, which should be frequently dramatized by assemblies and ceremonies. An atmosphere of high purpose and exalted dedication is the best insurance against moments of honest misgiving.

Here, then, was the secret of order and stability in the ancient schools.

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BYU will not prevent you from learning. But it won't make you learn anything either.

“Nibliography,” 56

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The student who tells me that if I refuse to accept his inspired interpretations of the Facsimiles, or the Anthon transcript, or of Book of Mormon geography, or [of] Indian glyphs, I am holding in contempt the doctrine of continued revelation is cheating too, just as is the one who accuses me of denying the power of prayer when I give him the “D” he deserved instead of the “A” he prayed for. What these people forget is that revelation is nontransferable.

“Prolegomena to Any Study of the Book of Mormon,” 175

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As administrative problems have accumulated in a growing church, the authorities have tended to delegate the business of learning to others, and those others have been only too glad to settle for the outward show, the easy and flattering forms, trappings, and ceremonies of education. Worse still, they have chosen business-oriented, career-minded, degree-seeking programs in preference to the strenuous, critical, liberal, mind-stretching exercises that Brigham Young recommended. We have chosen the services of the hired image-maker in preference to unsparing self-criticism, and the first question the student is taught to ask today is John Dewey's golden question: “What is there in it for me?”

“Educating the Saints,” 251-52

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What is the main weakness of our students? Undoubtedly the desire for recognition rather than interest in what they are doing. They are decidedly degree-seeking rather than knowledge-seeking. Eager to be successful, they want to rush into production without any foundation.

The gospel is only for the honest in heart, we are told; to others it shows an infinitely exalted but also remotely distant goal for which they have not the diligence to work or the patience to wait, but whose allure they cannot resist. So they anticipate the goal, sometimes in forms and ceremonies (we take our academic ritual in deadly earnest), sometimes by cultivating an invincibly cocky self-confidence, and sometimes in mental and emotional crackups.

We want to be rewarded and recognized for our study, and that is not a proper motive for learning.

“Writing and Publication in Graduate School,” 7

## KEEPING PERSPECTIVE

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It is important to specialize. It is sound professional policy to deal with something that nobody else understands.

But there are natural limits to specialization. Inevitably one reaches the point at which the study of a single star cannot be pursued further until one has found out about a lot of other stars. The little picture starts expanding into a big picture, and we soon discover that without the big picture the little one cannot be understood at all.

In the study of the ancient world the big picture, long ignored by scholars, has been coming into its own in recent years. For generations students worked with meticulous care on their little specialized pictures in the confident hope that in the end each little piece would fit together with others to give a larger and clearer picture of the world and all that's in it.

The idea worked. The separate studies did show a tendency to fit together and fall into patterns. Instead of gratifying the scholars, however, this alarmed most of them, fearful of the dissolution of sacred departmental bounds. Within the limits of his specialty, the expert is lord and master. Small wonder if he treasures and defends those limits.

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (May 1970): 84

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We are beginning to realize that the Cartesian ideal of breaking things down into discrete particles and measuring mathematical units will not give you the ultimate explanation.

"Bibliography," 56

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Blindness to larger contexts is a constitutional defect of human thinking imposed by the painful necessity of being able to concentrate on only one thing at a time. We forget as we virtuously concentrate on that one thing that hundreds of other things are going on at the same time and on every side of us, things that are just as important as the object of our study and that are all interconnected in ways that we cannot even guess. Sad to say, our picture of the world to the degree to which it has that neatness, precision, and finality so coveted by scholarship is a false one.

I once studied with a famous professor who declared that he deliberately avoided the study of any literature east of Greece lest the new vision destroy the architectonic perfection of his own celebrated construction of the Greek mind. His picture of that mind was immensely impressive but, I strongly suspect, completely misleading.

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (May 1970): 85

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Knowing a lot is not enough. We have heard moving stories of wandering Arabs who have died of thirst in the night only a few feet from water. It makes no difference how far one has come or how near one may be to the water. He

who has not gone all the way cannot drink.

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (May 1968): 55

#### THE SAINTS’ RESPONSIBILITY

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We are under obligation not to become the helpless victims of scholarly attacks on the Church or lose by default whatever advantages are presented in new discoveries. If a new find seems to support or refute a position or claim of the Church, it is sheer imbecility not to point out the connection and discuss its significance. As an open-ended discussion, historical scholarship cannot withhold comment until all issues are settled and agreed on, since things are never settled. The student does not gather information with the mechanical impartiality of a vacuum-cleaner but sees every bit of information as fitting into some pattern or other. Frankly taking a position as his frame of reference, the student unblushingly tries to prove or disprove things; don’t avoid taking a position, but don’t resent it if all the world takes an opposite position. Remember, in order to be original, your contribution should contain something which has never been accepted before, because it has never been known before.

“Writing and Publication in Graduate School,” 6

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It is very important for Latter-day Saints to keep pace, more or less, with the fast-moving developments in the fields of Bible and related studies. By failing to do this we run the risk of laboring to accommodate our religion to scientific and scholarly teachings that have long since been superseded, altered, or completely discarded.

“An Age of Discovery,” 1

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*Expansion* is the theme, and we cannot expand the boundaries unless we first reach those boundaries, which means exerting ourselves to the absolute limit. . . .

To keep the Saints always reaching for the highest and best, the utmost of their capacity, requires enormous motivation—and the gospel supplies it. Nothing can excite men to action like the contemplation of the eternities.

The quality in which the Saints have always excelled is *zeal*. Zeal is the engine that drives the whole vehicle. Without it we would get nowhere. But without clutch, throttle, brakes, and steering wheel, our mighty engine becomes an instrument of destruction, and the more powerful the motor, the more disastrous the inevitable crack-up if the proper knowledge is lacking. There is a natural tendency to let the mighty motor carry us along, to give it its head, to open it up and see what it can do.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” CWHN 9:68-69

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The young, with their limited knowledge, are particularly susceptible to excessive zeal. Why do it the hard way, they ask . . . , when God has given us the answer book? The answer to that is, Because if you use the answer book for your Latin, or your math, or anything else, you will always have a false sense of power and never learn the real thing. . . . No short-cuts or easy lessons here!

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:71-72

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In 1833 the School of the Prophets at Kirtland adopted a basic curriculum of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and for a time some of the brethren, following the example of the Prophet, seriously came to grips with those languages. The program was violently interrupted, but it was enough to serve notice that the Mormons intended to study the hard way and to take advantage of all the resources that are available for the study of the scriptures.

God had told Oliver Cowdery in no uncertain terms that revelation follows study and may never be claimed as a substitute for it (D&C 9:7-8). The bringing forth of the papyrus fragments in 1967 was a reminder to the Saints that they are still expected to do their homework and may claim no special revelation or convenient handout as long as they ignore the vast treasure-house of materials that God has placed within their each.

“New Look at the Pearl of Great Price” (May 1970): 91

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[Study] Greek at a time like this? This of all times, for Greek is the toughest and most enduring monument to the human spirit. After three thousand years of competition it still holds all the top prizes in such things as epic literature, tragedy, comedy, lyric poetry, history, philosophy, fairy stories, hymns, love-songs. . . .

When everything is passing away in an apocalyptic climax, it is comforting and strengthening to get close to something which—itself formed in the crucible of terrible crises and trials—has survived as fresh and vigorous as ever, setting before us the treasures of the other dispensations in the greatest spread of intellectual, artistic, and spiritual nourishment the human race possesses.

We do not study ancient languages in order to translate from them, but to read, ponder, savor, and if possible, sound the depths of those things which cannot be translated but only tentatively paraphrased. Nowhere are they more enticing and challenging than in that most subtle, vivacious, and sensitive of idioms: Greek. . . .

Those who think “practical matters” are more worthy of their time—who would reverse the first commandment given to the Church in this dispensation: “Seek not for riches, but for wisdom: (D&C 1:7)—should be notified that while by common consent the Greeks are indisputably “number one” in wisdom literature, they have also produced an unrivalled gallery of filthy rich tycoons in our own day, and have left us the standard guidebooks and commentaries on matters of politics, business, social problems, and law. If you want to get serious in almost any field of study you cannot escape the Greeks. Every student at some time or other should at least give them a try.

Foreword to *Learn Greek*

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A discussion with God is not a case of agreeing or disagreeing with him—who is in a position to do that?—but of understanding him. What Abraham and Ezra and Enoch asked was, “Why?”

Socrates showed that teaching is a dialogue—a discussion. As long as the learner is in the dark he *should* protest and argue, and question, for that is the best way to bring problems into focus, while the teacher patiently and cheerfully explains, delighted that his pupil has enough interest and understanding to raise questions—the more passionate the more promising. There is a place for discussion and participation in the government of the kingdom; it is *men* who love absolute monarchies.

“Beyond Politics,” 284

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I am mainly working with the inspired works, the scriptures. The woods are crawling with people who can do research on the early Church. I won't spend time on that. But what excites me is when Joseph starts to give us books of Abraham and Enoch and Adam and apocryphal writings and reconstruction of the New Testament and inspired translations of the Bible. Then you can go back to old sources and see if that is comparative, see if he has a leg to stand on. Once you start comparing, there is no end but it gives you such marvelous control over Joseph Smith and his critics. His timing was so perfect.

“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 14

# Of Science

The prestige of science rested on shocking oversimplifications and elaborate tautologies.

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:58

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Science represents a high court from whose judgment there is no appeal, the idea (Freud expresses it in his *The Future of Illusion*) . . . that all other judgments are outmoded traditions; [that] the judges are free from prejudice and bias, and above petty personal interests, if they let the facts speak for themselves; that they suspend all judgment until all the facts have been gathered; that they proceed cautiously and carefully, step by step, making no mistakes, no guesses, never accepting a proposition until it is proven; that to question such a judge is an affront to his dignity and to his high office; that the judges never guess but always know; that they make no pronouncements until they have proven and verified everything; that they begin their investigations by accumulating facts with completely open minds, neither selecting or eliminating as they go; that their procedures and conclusions are in no way colored by any previous experience. That they never trust anything to luck and rarely make mistakes; that their accumulated decisions of the past compose a solid and reliable body of tested and proven knowledge called science; that by following the instructions and example of the judges, our civilization can emancipate itself from the darkness of ignorance; that to accept the decision of the judges as definitive is the mark of an intellectual person; that the knowledge of the judges is so deep and specialized that it cannot be put into ordinary language or understood by the layman but [that] science is a necessary domain of highly specialized experts and so forth. . . .

Well, every one of these propositions is completely false.

“Fact and Fancy in the Interpretation of Ancient Records,” 6-7

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We have all grown up in a world nurtured on the comfortable Victorian doctrine of uniformitarianism, the idea that what happens in this world is all more of the same: what lies ahead is pretty much what lies behind, for the same forces that are at work on the earth today were at work in the same manner, with the same intensity and the same effects at all times past and will go on operating inexorably and irresistibly in just the same way forever hereafter. There is no real cause for alarm in a world where everything is under control beneath the watchful eye of science as evolution takes its undeviating forward course, steady, reliable, imperceptibly slow and gentle, and gratifyingly predictable.

“Genesis of the Written Word,” *CWHN* 12:451

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What kind of science is it that bases its theories on evidence not yet discovered? . . . Our great and thrilling detective drama begins by telling us who did it, right at the beginning, and then expects us to wait around with bated breath while the detective brings the evidence.

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:57

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Science without religion, like philosophy without religion, has nothing to feed on. . . . It is my contention that any branch of human thought without religion soon withers and dies of anemia.

“Science Fiction and the Gospel,” *CWHN* 12:519

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The greatest scientist [Newton] and the greatest scholar [Scaliger] were not humanists at all but always looking for something beyond, always going back again and again to Genesis and Revelation.

“Humanism and the Gospel,” 3

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It’s sad to think how many of those telling points [of evolution] that turned some of our best students away from the gospel have turned out to be dead wrong!

“Before Adam,” *CWHN* 1:57

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When the scientist leaves his closed system and starts talking in eschatological terms, he is exceeding his authority, going beyond the bounds which science proudly sets for all who would play the game according to her rules. Only faith enjoys the luxury of being open-ended.

“Sophic and Mantic,” *CWHN* 10:339

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In . . . a perspective of eternity, the stock questions of controversy between science and religion become meaningless. When did it all begin? Can you set a date? Were there ever human-like creatures who did not belong to the human race? (There still are!) How old is the earth? the universe? How long are they going to last? What will we do in heaven forever? etc.

Nothing is settled yet, not only because the last precincts are never heard from in science—and their report always comes as a shocker—but because we are far from getting the last word in religion either. For us the story remains open-ended—at both ends—in a progression of beginnings and endings without beginning or end, each episode proceeding from what goes before and leading to the next. The absolutes of the University of Alexandria to which the Doctors of the Christians and the Jews were completely in the thrall from the fourth century on simply do not exist for Latter-day Saints. Instead of that, they have a much bigger book to study; it is time they were getting with it.

“The Expanding Gospel,” in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*, 22

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Having renounced all traffic with Religion, the Scientist proceeds to devote hundreds of hours to giving public lectures on "Science and Religion." This is an interesting paradox:

a) The secret of the Scientist's superiority and success is that he pays strict attention to the problem at hand; limiting himself to the laboratory situation, he rejects all else as extraneous and irrelevant.

b) This means that the problem at hand is everything that counts.

c) If that is so, nothing else counts—Science is all in all.

d) Therefore Science alone can give the answers to the ultimate problems of life.

e) But the ultimate problems of life are exactly what Science must renounce in order to be Science!

For a scientist to talk of, for example, "The Relationship between Science and Religion" is as meaningless as for him to lecture on "The Place of the Supernatural in the Laboratory,"—and for the same reason. His function *as a scientist* rules out any consideration of either. The greatest chemist alive knows no more about Man's Origin and Destiny than anybody else does.

The scientist readily admits that he was *wrong yesterday*, but dogmatically insists that he is *right today*. We can believe him when he says he was wrong, but can we believe him when he says he is right today? He said that yesterday, too: *Science cannot be self-correcting* until it knows the *correct answers*. But as long as it is progressing, the answers will be changing—Science is not self-correcting but self-rebuking.

"G-2 Report, No. 2," 4-5

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Until the final returns are in, no one is in a position to make final pronouncements; and as long as science continues to progress, the final returns will remain at the other end of a future of wonders and surprises. In the world of things, we must forever keep an open mind, because we simply don't know the answers.

But we are not claiming that because science does not have the ultimate answers, religion does have them. What we do claim is that the words of the prophets cannot be held to the tentative and defective tests that men have devised for them. Science, philosophy, and common sense all have a right to their day in court. But the last word does not lie with them. Every time men in their wisdom have come forth with the last word, other words have promptly followed.

The last word is a testimony of the gospel that comes only by direct revelation. Our Father in Heaven speaks it; and if it were in perfect agreement with the science of today, it would surely be out of line with the science of tomorrow. Let us not, therefore, seek to hold God to the learned opinions of the moment when he speaks the language of eternity.

"The Prophets and the Open Mind," *CWHN* 3:134

# Of History

If you can control people's ideas of the past, you control their ideas of the present and hence the future.

"The Way of the Church," *CWHN* 4:217

## HISTORICAL APPROACHES

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Taking one's own, contemporary civilization as the very latest civilization (which it is) and therefore the best (which it is not), it is the easiest thing in the world to classify all other civilizations on a scale of proximity to your own in time and spirit.

"Before Adam," *CWHN* 1:80

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The greatest handicap an ancient writer has in trying to tell his story against entrenched opinions of the scholars is that he cannot be present to defend himself. The master himself is dead, the public in ignorance, and the field is left clear to the servants of the household to make themselves magnificent at the expense of their lord.

"The Way of the Church," *CWHN* 4:240

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There is an orthodoxy and a heresy in history as well as religion. History is as much what a man believes as his religion is. History vindicates the proposition that God loves the Jews. With equal force, if you want it that way, it vindicates the proposition that he hates them. History has long been taken as a superbly convincing illustration of the working out of the principle of evolution in human affairs; today some scholars see in it a smashing refutation of any such idea.

"Do Religion and History Conflict?" *CWHN* 12:436

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We look for easier and quicker solutions, as did the sophists of old. And like them we find those solutions in the endless discussions and expensive eyewash of the university. Consider what goes on in the history business.

1. The academic mind wants neatness, tidiness, simplicity, order. . . .
2. The modern college teaches us, if nothing else, to accept history on authority. . . .

3. The insights of men . . . are not to be despised. Do not for a moment think that the only reliable evidence comes from brass instruments. But insight offers no escape from evidence. . . . The learner must come to grips with the real thing at first hand. . . .

4. The most popular attempt to grasp history at a gulp is the Cook's Tour. . . . At best our college humanities are a sentimental journey, a scenic-postcard world of the obvious and theatrical: the Great Books, the Hundred Best Poems, the Greatest Works of the Greatest Minds, etc. . . . It is a cozy and reassuring thing for student and teacher alike to have our neat authoritarian College Outline Series, Syllabi of Western Civilization, Surveys of Great Minds, and what not to fall back on. But please don't point to these pedestrian exercises in skimming and sampling and try to tell me that *they* are a valid refutation of the prophets!

5. To handle problems requiring data beyond the capacity of students and educators impatient to shine, the ancient sophists devised certain very effective discussion techniques. In these, the most important skill was that of presenting evidence by implication or inference only. . . . A limited use of jargon is indispensable in any field: having solved for "x," we do not have to derive "x" every time it is mentioned, but simply to indicate it by a symbol, such as those useful keywords commonly used to power historical discussions: the Medieval Mind, *Sturm und Drang* [Storm and Stress, a movement in German literature], the Frontier, Hellenism, the Enlightenment, Puritanism, the Primitive, Relativity, etc., each of which is supposed to set a whole chorus of bells chiming in our heads—the echoes of deep and thorough reading. . . . My own self-confidence in sounding off on historical matters need not reflect any solid knowledge at all, but may well be the product of a careful grooming, a calculated window-dressing. Today the typical academic historian does most of his training before a mirror. The modern world, like the ancient, is a world peopled largely by zombies. Occasions like this one tonight are not meant to teach but to impress. If it was knowledge we were after, we would all at this time be pursuing the evidence, not listening to me. . . .

6. What about those great historical systems which the giants have erected from time to time. Do not such give a faithful picture of the world? Alas, system is the death of history! . . . When you choose to build one structure rather than another you are not merely rearranging materials in new combinations, you are emphasizing some things at the expense of others. . . .

The *via scholastica* [the way of scholarship] is well marked. First one takes a sampling, merely a sampling, of the evidence. Then as soon as possible one forms a theory (the less the evidence the more brilliant the theory). From then on the scholar spends his days defending his theory and mechanically fitting all subsequent evidence into the bed of Procrustes.

"Do Religion and History Conflict?" CWHN 12:439-45

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We have been conditioned to look for a growth and development in everything and this has crippled the study of the humanities . . . in many fields. Music is not better today than it was in the time of Bach. It may be different, but it is not better.

This is true with . . . written documents, too. The greatest comes first. The experts are forced to admit that it is always the same gospel. . . . There is no development among the prophets from a ritual type of religion to a prophetic type to a poetic type, or the other way around. What Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob preached in the beginning is just what the prophets were preaching later on. It is just what you find in the New Testament. In other words, the same gospel and the same theology and the same morality are characteristic of these three periods.

THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Unique events in history can never be reconstructed with certainty; but characteristic related events—manners, customs, rituals, etc., things that happen not just once but again and again in familiar patterns—may be the object of almost absolute certainty. Hence they, and not particular events, are the hardest things to fake. In testing forgeries and identifying documents it is the general pattern that is all-important.

“Lehi the Winner,” *CWHN* 5:114

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Whether the ancient scenario was spontaneous or whether it was carefully worked out in one place before it spread throughout the world, the phenomenon is equally astounding—tribes and nations around the globe going through the same elaborate rites in the same settings and at the same portentous times—a vast and grandiose spectacle. . . . That primal unity is the one-ness between heaven and earth which we have called atonement.

“One Eternal Round,” *CWHN* 12:381

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The two most important contributions to Ancient history in our time [are] the discovery of changing weather conditions in antiquity and their close correlation with migration, revolution, and war, and the recent comparison and interpretation of ritual texts, calling as they do for a complete reevaluation of ancient thought and letters. We must assume that there is a usable residue of valid knowledge in the half-real, dimly discerned, vaguely-tangible stuff that comes to us from antiquity.

Review of Joseph Ward Swain’s *The Ancient World*, 80-81

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People are prone to expect any civilization described in the records as great and mighty to leave behind majestic ruins. The mighty piles of Egypt and Babylon have fooled us into thinking that the greatness or even the existence of a civilization is to be judged by its physical remains. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The greatness of a civilization consists in its institutions. . . . This has led even the experts to overlook the importance and sometimes the existence of heroic or epic worlds.

“Our Own People,” *CWHN* 5:413-14

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By neglecting to consult the writings of the ancients, we miss the fact that in their trials and triumphs, individually and collectively, they had to undergo exactly the same trials that we do: the props of the plays, the technology and the fashions, wear out and are constantly being replaced, but the issues and the plot always remain the same.

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:275

# Of Men and Women

The *matriarchal* cultures are sedentary (remember that the mother stays home either as Penelope or as the princess confined in the tower), that is, agricultural, chthonian, centering around the Earth Mother. The rites are mostly nocturnal, lunar, voluptuous, and licentious. The classic image is that of the great, rich, corrupt, age-old, and oppressive city Babylon, queen of the world, metropolis, fashion center, super mall, the scarlet woman, the whore of all the earth, whose merchants and bankers are the oppressors of all people.

Though the matriarchy makes for softness and decay, beneath the gentle or beguiling or glittering exterior is the fierce toughness, cunning, and ambition of Miss Piggy. . . .

The *patriarchal* order lends itself to equally impressive abuses. It is nomadic. The hero is the wandering Odysseus or knight errant, the *miles gloriosus* [glorious soldier], the pirate, condotti-è-re, the free enterpriser—not the farmer tied to wife and soil but the hunter and soldier out for adventure, glory, and loot; not the city, but the Golden Horde, the *feralis exercitus* [deadly army] that sweeps down upon the soft and sedentary cultures of the coast and river valley.

Its gods are sky gods with the raging sun at their head. Its depredations are not by decay but by fire and sword. As predatory and greedy as the matriarchy is, it cumulates its wealth not by unquestioned immemorial custom but by sacred and self-serving laws. The perennial routine calls for the patriarchal tribes of the mountains and the steppes to overrun the wealthy and corrupt cities of the plain, only to be absorbed and corrupted by them in turn, so that what we end up with in the long run is the worst of both cultures.

“Patriarchy and Matriarchy,” *CWHN* 1:94

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The carefully kept genealogies, from pharaoh to day-laborer, and the enigmatic ordinances of sealing one’s family to one to be joyfully reunited in the next world, simply underscore the very obvious fact that the Egyptian loves nothing so much as scenes and reminders of the happy circle.

*Abraham in Egypt, 129*

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It is significant that the title of queen does not exist in Egypt. It is always as the mother, the sister, the wife, or the daughter of the god that the woman exercises her power, which is for that reason all the more pervasive. The king can never escape her. She is always right at his side, as his closest relative, bound by perfect ties of love. The matriarchy is there to stay.

*Abraham in Egypt, 171*

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Remarkably enough the Egyptian record never conveys any sense of dominan[ce] and submissi[on] between male and female, even in the stiff formality of the Old Kingdom. . . .

Though there are plenty of ambitious and scheming women in the land, the power and glory of father and mother seem to maintain an even balance, and the fabled rivalry between Hathor and Re is dissolved in a perfect love match. On the Old Kingdom monuments husband and wife are represented as absolute equals.

*Abraham in Egypt, 135-36*

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It is the woman who sees through Satan's disguise of clever hypocrisy, identifies him, and exposes him for what he is. She discovers the principle of opposites by which the world is governed and views it with high-spirited optimism. It is not wrong that there is opposition in everything. It is a constructive principle making it possible for people to be intelligently happy. It is better to know the score than not to know it.

Finally, it is the "seed of the woman" that repels the serpent and embraces the gospel. She it is who first accepts the gospel of repentance. There is no patriarchy or matriarchy in the Garden; the two supervise each other. Adam is given no arbitrary power. Eve is to heed him only insofar as he obeys their Father—and who decides that? She must keep check on him as much as he does on her. It is, if you will, a system of checks and balances in which each party is as distinct and independent in its sphere as are the departments of government under the Constitution—and just as dependent on each other.

"Patriarchy and Matriarchy," *CWHN* 1:92-93

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At God's command, Abraham humbled himself to ask Sarah as a favor to declare herself to be his sister, eligible to marry another and thus save his life. This is only part of the deference that Abraham had to make to his wife, and it left no place for his male pride. Sarah, on the other hand, with equal humility, went to Abraham confessing God's hand in her childlessness and actually begging him to have children by another woman. Can one imagine a greater test of her pride? When both sides of the equation are reduced, the remainder on both sides is only a great love.

"Patriarchy and Matriarchy," *CWHN* 1:99

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In the long line of tragicomic *Odi et amo* ("I can't live with you and I can't live without you!") confrontations, man and woman stage an endless tournament of dirty events with survival as the prize, in all of which there is something very wrong, however much we have come to relish it in novels and TV programs. Can this be the purpose of the marvelous providence that brings men and women together? If we must all live together in the eternities, it can never be in such a spirit.

"Patriarchy and Matriarchy," *CWHN* 1:103

# Of Reverence for Creation

Every way of life produces its own environment and in turn is influenced by that environment. It is possible for a powerful mind to have joy amidst vile surroundings, but it can have greater joy in pleasant surroundings. . . . The story of the Garden of Eden teaches us that environment is important.

“Our Glory or Our Condemnation,” *CWHN* 9:3

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We are being tested to demonstrate to the heavens, to ourselves, and to our fellows just how we would treat the things of a glorious and beautiful world if they were given to us as our very own. . . . We are placed in the position of a lover who is engaged to be married. If he cannot wait until he is properly wed, or if he displays an arrogant and brutal nature toward his promised bride, then the wedding had best be called off—he is not worthy of the prize.

“Brigham Young on the Environment,” 12

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It is through “greater sensibility” that we both enjoy and endure, for the appreciation of beauty is nothing less than the key to survival. Nature has so provided that we actually enjoy most doing and sensing the very things most conducive to our survival.

We delight in performing the most vital functions of life, and so simply by enjoying ourselves, we build up more formidable defenses against the powers of destruction than any accumulation of scientific data or learned admonition could provide. We eat long before we are in danger of dying of hunger and drink long before we reach a critical state of dehydration, simply because we enjoy eating and drinking. If we ate, drank, breathed, and slept only when persuaded by irrefutable scientific demonstration that if we did not do those things we would die, we would not be long for this world.

So it is in all things, and creatures as weak and vulnerable as man must cultivate a salutary sense of what is lovely and desirable and what is wrong and threatening, a feeling that hits them long before they can tell just what a thing is to be welcomed or dreaded.

“Brigham Young on the Environment,” 10

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This earth has been compared by many—most recently by a Latter-day Saint pharmacologist, Dr. A. B. Morrison—to “an exquisitely equipped spaceship.” It is enormously productive and contains unlimited supply for all who come to live on it, as long as they use its bounty “with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion,” the Lord has said (D&C 59:20); that is, properly distributed, without waste or inequality. It contains “all things . . . made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18-19). Notice here that the eye and the heart have priority over the stomach, that taste and smell have claims equal to appetite, that the enlivening of the soul is as important as the strengthening of the body.

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Where men cannot foresee the distant effects of their actions on the environment because of the vastly complicated interrelationships of the balance of nature, what rule of action shall they follow? Brigham was never in doubt: the one sure guide for him was the feeling for beauty. He knew with Plato that the good, the true, and the beautiful are the same; that what looks and feels and sounds and tastes good is to that degree sound, useful, and trustworthy.

“Brigham Young on the Environment,” 9

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Humility is not a feeling of awe and reverence and personal unworthiness in the presence of overpowering majesty—anyone, even the bloody Khan of the Steppes, confesses to being humble in the presence of God. Plain humility is reverence and respect in the presence of the lowest, not the highest, of God’s creatures. Brigham Young said he often felt overawed in the presence of little children or any of his fellowmen—for in them he saw the image of his maker.

“Beyond Politics,” 283-84

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With all things going in one direction, men, stubbornly going in the opposite direction, naturally find themselves in the position of one going the wrong way on the freeway during rush hour; the struggle to live becomes a fight *against* nature. Having made himself allergic to almost everything by the Fall, man is given the choice of changing *his* nature so that the animal and vegetable creation will cease to afflict and torment him, or else of waging a truceless war of extermination against all that annoys him until he renders the earth completely uninhabitable.

“Man’s Dominion,” 30

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Abraham learned compassion both by being an outcast himself and by special instruction, regarding which there are some interesting stories.

When Melchizedek was instructing him in the mysteries of the priesthood, he told him that Noah and his people were permitted to survive in the ark “because they practiced charity.” On whom? Abraham asked, since they were alone in the ark. On the animals, was the answer, since they were constantly concerned with their comfort and welfare.

Again, Abraham once beheld a great vision (described also in the book of Abraham) of all the doings of the human race to come. What he saw appalled him. He had never dreamed that men could be so bad, and in a passionate outburst he asked God why he did not destroy the wicked at once. The answer humbled him: “I defer the death of the sinner, who might possibly repent and live!”

When Abraham saw with prophetic insight the crimes that Ishmael would commit against him and his house, he was about to turn the youth out into the desert, but the voice of God rebuked him: "Thou canst not punish Ishmael or any man for a crime he has not yet committed!" He learned by precept and experience that men are judged by God not as groups but as individuals.

But Abraham's most famous lesson in tolerance was a favorite story of Benjamin Franklin, which has been traced back as far as a thirteenth-century Arabic writer and may be much older. The prologue to the story is the visit of three angels to Abraham, who asked him what he charged for meals; the price was only that the visitor "invoke the name of God before beginning and praise it when you are finished."

But one day the patriarch entertained an old man who would pray neither before eating nor after, explaining to Abraham that he was a fire worshipper. His indignant host thereupon denied him further hospitality, and the old man went his way. But very soon the voice of the Lord came to Abraham, saying: "I have suffered him these hundred years, although he dishonored me; and thou couldst not endure him one night, when he gave thee no trouble?" Overwhelmed with remorse, Abraham rushed out after his guest and brought him back in honor. . . . "No one who is cruel to any creature," says an old formula, "can ever be a descendant of Abraham."

"New Look at the Pearl of Great Price" (November 1969): 123-25

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God will justify the taking of animal life to sustain man's want, but reserves a special blessing for those who place their own nobility before their necessity.

"Brigham Young on the Environment," 23

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Granted there are different levels and degrees that exist within as well as between species, still it is the privilege of every form of life to multiply in its sphere and element and have joy therein. Adam's dominion was a charge to see to it that all went well with God's creatures. It was not a license to exterminate them. . . .

There is a forgotten teaching of the early Jews and Christians that the dominion that God gave to Adam in Eden over his other creatures was nothing less than the holy priesthood, the power to act in God's stead.

"Brigham Young on the Environment," 21

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It is precisely because men now prey upon each other and shed the blood and waste the flesh of other creatures without need that "the world lieth in sin" (D&C 49:19-21).

"Man's Dominion," 31

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All creatures exist in their own particular spheres. . . . We feel a kinship with the animals—and we should. We are going to live with them in the eternities. We should love the critters, and they [will] learn to love us.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 12

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One morning just a week after we had moved into our house on Seventh North, as I was leaving for work, I found a group of shouting, arm-waving boys gathered around the big fir tree in the front yard. They had sticks and stones and in a state of high excitement were fiercely attacking the lowest branches of the tree, which hung to the ground.

“Why?” I asked.

“There was a quail in the tree,” they said in breathless zeal. “A quail!”

“Of course,” said I, “what is wrong with that?”

“But don’t you see, it is a live quail, a wild one!”

So they just had to kill it. They were on their way to the old B.Y. High School, and were Boy Scouts.

Does this story surprise you? What surprised me was when I later went to Chicago and saw squirrels running around the city parks in broad daylight. They would not last a day in Provo. . . . We have taught our children by precept and example that every living thing exists to be converted into cash and that whatever would not yield return should be quickly exterminated to make way for the creatures that do. . . . I have heard important Latter-day Saint leaders express this philosophy and have seen bishops and stake presidents teaching their reluctant boys the delights of hunting for pleasure.

The earth is our enemy, I was taught. Does it not bring forth noxious weeds to afflict and torment man? And who cared if his allergies were the result of the Fall, man’s own doing, and could be corrected only when he corrects himself? But one thing worried me: If God were to despise all things beneath him, as we do, where would that leave us?

Introduction to “Subduing the Earth,” 85-86

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In the snail-darter debate, the ultimate expression of contempt for life came from a senator from Utah who with heavy sarcasm asked, Why not declare the smallpox virus an endangered species? Where business interests are concerned, small living things are to be esteemed as no more than viruses.

“How Firm a Foundation!” *CWHN* 9:167

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It is significant that in the oldest traditions and records of the human race all those men who turned against God and man are represented at the same time as making war against the animals, the birds, and the fishes, and

destroying the forests and defiling the pure waters. This is told of Satan in the beginning, of Cain, of Ham, of Nimrod, of the Egyptian Seth, of the mad huntsmen of the steppes, of Nebuchadnezzar, of Esau, of Caesar, of Assurbanipal, and so on, all of whom sought dominion over others, over all others, and to achieve it only in one way –by force. The code name for such an order of things and such a program is Babylon.

“Our Glory or Our Condemnation,” *CWHN* 9:13-14

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“All things which come of the earth . . . are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18). The pleasing of the eye comes first, the gladdening of the heart next; only then come the food and clothing, and that for the benefit of the fine senses of taste and smell, with not a word about efficiency and convenience but with special attention to the enlivening of the *soul*. In his great Bicentennial message, President Kimball deplored the sad ascendancy in our society of the business mentality over the contemplation of the beauty around us.

“From the Earth Upon Which Thou Standest,” *CWHN* 12:551

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[There has always been a philosophy of hunting peculiar to Latter-day Saints.]. . . It’s a frontier attitude, conquering the West, as it were. But of course the presidency of the Church has consistently bucked that attitude. Brigham Young, Joseph F. Smith, and then President Kimball have all talked against it. Joseph Smith never carry anything larger than a pen knife. He who carries a gun will surely regret it. Brigham Young said if the Mormon people weren’t so ignorant, they’d be damned for their treatment of the creatures. President Kimball’s bicentennial talk against hunting was very exciting but it had almost no effect whatsoever. They swept it under the rug. We say a prophet is a prophet and then freely interpret how we want.

“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues,” 12

# Of Government

## THE DANGER OF POLITICS

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The secret of unity is to find an external foe.

“The Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:447

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The world polarizes around over-rated individuals. . . . As the two poles conceive an ever greater antipathy to each other they become more and more *alike*. Everyone knows that it is like poles that repel each other. As each recognizes itself in the other, it resents the incriminating resemblance.

“The Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:443, 447

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Such a cleanly polarized world gives us supremely simple solutions and supremely confident leaders, whose decisions are as quick and spontaneous as a knee-jerk and as irrevocable as the Ten Commandments—men like Hitler, Stalin, Arafat, Khadafi, Khomeini, Somoza, et al. [and others], who reduce all troubles to one cause and all problems to just one enemy.

What could be more unhealthy than to have all one’s thoughts and actions dictated and conditioned by the policy of another, waiting for him to act so that we can react, noting what he does so that we can do the same, watching his career to know how to plan and direct our own?

Well is Satan called the Adversary, the Destroyer, the Accuser, the Contender. All of his titles describe one who must wait for another to act before he can move.

Nothing is more crippling to creative thinking than obsession with an enemy. The person who can think of only one solution to a given problem is mentally bankrupt. The person who can think of only one solution to *every* problem is doomed.

“The Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:454-55

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It is not the voice of God from Sinai that lays down the rules but our own interest and convenience, as we choose to interpret them. Thus, thou shalt not lie—to your friends, that is. After all, the dictionary definition of strategy is “deception,” in particular with the intention of “killing others, practiced on an enemy,” an enemy being anyone who stands in your way, and whether in business or war, strategy is the name of the game. Thou shalt not kill—people on your side only, of course; for killing others you get medals. Thou shalt not steal—from your friends, naturally. I

seem to recall that the Lord said that if you love only your friends you have no reward, because sinners and publicans do that much (Matthew 5:46-47).

“The Prophetic Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:454

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“All the religious world is boasting of righteousness,” [said Brigham Young.] “It is the doctrine of the devil to retard the human mind, and hinder our progress, by filling us with self-righteousness. . . . We are full of selfishness; the devil flatters us that we are very righteous, when we are feeding on the faults of others.” Here surely is the greatest threat of communism. It puts us to sleep and paralyzes our minds in the comforting assurance that we are the Good People and it is They and not We who need to repent.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 2:7

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Even in the great classic treatises on the state, its image is never without a sinister side. The combination of unlimited power and limited wisdom can never be a reassuring one, but it is the actual behavior of sovereign states and princes that is most disturbing. The key to understanding the behavior of delinquents, we are often told, is an insight into early background and environment. . . . The state spent the most impressionable years of its childhood living as an orphan of the storm in tents of vagabonds where it acquired many of the habits and attitudes that still condition its activities.

“Tenting, Toll, and Taxing,” *CWHN* 10:33

## WAR AND PEACE

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Recently I received from a Brigham Young University professor a list of scriptural passages in which God seemed to favor war. Matching it on the other side of the page was another list of passages in which conflict was forbidden. This seems like a deadlock, a basic contradiction.

But the contradiction is only apparent, for if one examines the passages on both sides throughout the scriptures, they fall clearly into two categories: general principles and special instances. The verses forbidding conflict are of a general and universal nature, while those which countenance it all refer to exceptional cases.

“If There Must Needs Be Offense,” 54

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[I remember] certain dashing, wonderful men who, during World War II, used to brief the various units of the 101st Airborne Division which they were leading into battle. (The classic Leader’s Oration before the Battle

enjoyed a revival in airborne operations where the army, a short hour before the battle, could sit quietly on the grass one hundred miles from the enemy and listen to speeches).

It was the high point of their careers, the thing they had been working and hoping and looking forward to all their lives—to lead a crack regiment or division into battle, and they made the most of it. The feeling of euphoria was almost overpowering. They were smart, sharp, vigorous, compelling, eager, tense, exuding optimism and even humor, but above all excitement. Invariably General Maxwell Taylor would end his oration with: “Good hunting!” It was wonderful, thrilling; you were ready to follow that man anywhere.

*But* before the operation was a day old, every man in the division was heartily wishing that he was anywhere else, doing anything else but that. Everyone knew in his mind and heart that he was not sent to earth to engage in this nasty and immoral business. The heroism and sacrifice were real. The situation was utterly satanic and shameful. The POWs we rounded up to interrogate were men just as good as we were, the victims of a terrible circumstance that the devil’s game of power and gain had woven around them.

“Beyond Politics,” 300

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Real warfare, resorting to overt violence directed against others, defeats the whole purpose of our earthly existence. Heaven is “the peaceable kingdom” from which Satan was thrust “in a twinkling” the moment he resorted to violence. War, utterly wasteful as it is, has the vast appeal of shifting one’s own guilt, of all of which we relieve ourselves as soon as the shooting begins.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 2:2

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How then do we deal with the enemy? Brigham Young, who knew as much about as large a variety of enemies as any man who ever lived, has laid it on the line: If we show our Heavenly Father that we trust him to the point of putting aside all our feelings of malice and revenge towards our fellow men, no matter who they may be or how they feel toward us, he will see to it that “the wicked shall destroy the wicked.” That is a promise that has never failed of fulfillment. The alternative to this is the other game, the most dangerous, futile, and foolish game in the world, the age-old Asiatic game of world conquest, the madmen’s chessmatch as old as history.

It is a game of power and the rules only exist as tricks to trap one’s opponent, and words and courtesies serve only to obfuscate and deceive. The game is endemic to the steppes of Asia, and the Asiatics are better at it than we can ever hope to be: for us to play the game and play it their way is simply suicide.

But this vision of world power, of massive armies and machines engulfing the surface of the earth as they grind all opposition to powder, is an intoxicating one, the ultimate dream that I have many times heard generals talking about among themselves and to their staff. After all, say these realists, it is power that wins in this world. God is on the side of the big battalions.

“Brigham Young and the Enemy,” 2:11

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There's such a thing as good force, and there's an attractive force as well as a compulsive force. . . . If we are obeying the law because we regard it as a holy thing, because we love it, we're still being forced, but we're being attracted rather than compelled in that case. . . .

Can there be some great attractive force that would bring about some sort of world peace without the compulsive force? This is the old Jerusalem formula. It's very ancient, very well-established, and has been given lots of trials and it's still being tried today. . . . It's the doctrine that peace will only come when the law goes forth out of Jerusalem, when all men are drawn toward it, when the law is given to the world as a holy thing. And it can't even be secular. It has to be given as a revealed thing.

"Jerusalem's Formula for Peace," 1-2

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Faith is the source of strength, the very power by which the worlds were created. To say it is helpless without military backing recalls an ancient saw: "I trust God but I feel better with money in the bank." In the spirit of the times we preach that to expect security without a four-man bodyguard is futile, when security is *not* to need a bodyguard; that charity without a guaranteed profit is futile, when charity means asking *no* profit; that free agency without strict supervision is futile.

"The Prophetic Book of Mormon," *CWHN* 8:452-53

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Peace will only come when the law goes forth out of Jerusalem; when all men are drawn toward it; when the law is given to the world as a holy thing. And it can't even be secular; it has to be given as a revealed thing.

"Jerusalem's Formula for Peace," 2

## THE VIRTUE OF POLITICS

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There is . . . virtue in politics even at the human level. The energy, the dedication, courage, loyalty, selflessness, zeal, and industry, the intelligence that have gone into the political actions of men are immense, and the excitement, color, dash, and humor bring out some of the best in human nature. But . . . there are various levels at which the political dialogue takes place—all the way from the *Federalist Papers* to the local crackpot's letters to the editor—and many arenas and different forms of the game, differing as widely as a chess match from a slugging contest.

Let us by all means retain the drive and dedication of politics, but do we still need the placards and the bands, the serpentine parades, funny hats, confetti, squabbling committees, canned speeches, shopworn clichés, patriotic exhibitionism, Madison Avenue slogans, to say nothing of the bitter invective, the poisonous rhetoric, the dirty tricks and shady deals, payoffs, betrayals, the blighted loyalties, the scheming young men on the make, the Gadianon loyalty, the manipulated ovations, and contrived confusion of the Last Hurrah?

The furiously mounting infusion of green stuff into the political carnival in our day is enough to show that the spontaneity is not there; and even if some of it may remain, those running the show know very well from tried and tested statistics that all that sort of thing is to be got with money—lots and lots of money—and with nothing else.

“Beyond Politics,” 286-87

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Whether the Greek pursued philosophy, art, religion, pleasure, science, or money, he was willing to give the search everything he had—sacrificing every convenience and amenity. The ideal of the Greeks was the *sophos* [life of the mind]—completely selfless, oblivious to his own comfort, health, appearance, and appetites as his mind came to grips with the problem of achieving one particular objective. That is why the Greeks were anciently way out in front of others in almost every field of human endeavor—and still remain unsurpassed and even unequalled in many of them.

The Greek citizen not only spent the day in the agora [marketplace], but in the evenings at home he carried on the dialogue in discussion and study groups, for the Greek citizen knew that the only work worthy of the name, a work a hundred times harder than the repetitious routines and seemingly virtuous bootlicking that we call work, was the terribly demanding and exhausting task of cutting new grooves and channels with the sharp edge of the mind.

He felt that if politics was all that important, it was worth [his] best hours.

“Beyond Politics,” 304-5, n. 42

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Our storm-driven ancestors met the challenge of their predicament with two solutions: the one sought to make the earth a permanent home and possess it wholly; the other to move on to some happier home, whatever and wherever that might be. The one philosophy is based on the firm belief that this is our only world, the other on the equally convincing and far more easily demonstrable proposition that we are transients who “here have no abiding kingdom.” The paying of tolls and taxes has made it possible for the two ideologies to coexist in the world; it is an arrangement by which each side humors the other: the payer of taxes concedes to the recipient the right to imagine himself as the owner of the earth, while the other in return for this recognition allows his client the luxury of imagining himself the citizen of another world. The one while ceaselessly ranging abroad in the earth thinks of himself as lord of an immovable possession, while the other, tied to his patch of glebe or dingy workshop, thinks of himself as a courser through the endless expanses of heaven. The common symbol of both, the sign both of possession and of wandering, is the tent.

Living in an atmosphere of emergency and uncertainty, the state has always been obligated to tax to preserve its identity. Taxes are viewed by those who are asked to pay the most as a personal insult and an affront to the sacredness of property. That is exactly what they are, and what they were originally meant to be. An ancient tax-notice, an imperious tap on the shield, was nothing less than an invitation to a sojourner in a land to justify his presence there either by satisfying the claims of the owner to recognition or by meeting him in open combat for possession. We may deplore taxes, but we may not resent them.

“Tenting, Toll, and Taxing,” *CWHN* 10:69-70

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*Conformity* can be had by bribery, flattery, or force, but one can no more legislate loyalty than one can legislate love, of which it is a part. . . . Since the essence of loyalty is *disinterested* devotion, there is something distressing in the attempts of the fourth (or any) century to conjure it up by appeals to interest, fear or expediency. . . .

Loyalty is one of the few words in existence about whose meaning dispute is virtually impossible. Everyone knows what loyalty is, and what a desirable, nay, indispensable thing it is to the survival of any community. Like honor and chastity, it is strongest when least talked about, and thrives only in a climate of uncritical acceptance. A virtuous investigation of loyalty is like a noisy oration in praise of silence, and the appearance of loyalty orders and loyalty legislation . . . [are] a sign of lost confidence, a desperate groping in empty air for something which groping fingers only push farther out of reach.

“Unsolved Loyalty Problem,” *CWHN* 10:224

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To “use” patriotism, treating it as a tool rather than a precious jewel, is to abuse it. Yet like other goods of primary intent, it has a special function. The business of patriotism is to open doors; the *abuse* of patriotism shuts them.

“Uses and Abuses of Patriotism,” 188

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Some have felt that the attempt of the state to implement the ideas of liberty and equality by passing and enforcing laws repugnant to a majority or minority, i.e., laws restraining persecution, discrimination, slavery, and all violence whatever, is an infringement of free agency. But plainly the Nephites did not think so. As we have seen, they believed that no one was ever without his free agency. One can sin or do unrighteously under any form of government whatever. Indeed, the *worse* the government the better the test: after all, we are all being tried and tested on this earth “under the rule of Belial” himself, “the prince of this world”; but since no one can ever make us sin or do right, our free agency is never in the slightest danger.

But free institutions and civil liberties are, as history shows, in constant danger. They are even attacked by those who would justify their actions as a defense of free agency and insist that artificial barriers erected by law to protect the rights of unpopular and weak minorities are an attempt to limit that agency.

How far can men go in “counselling” their fellowmen? God can give life and he can take it, he can judge and he can punish, he can smite the blasphemer and the unbeliever, he can heal and bless at will, he can forgive or condemn whom he will, he can curse and he can segregate, and he can put a mark on whom he pleases, and be avenged on his enemies—all of which we learn from the Book of Mormon.

But *men* may *not* do these things. God has reserved judgment and punishment for himself and pronounced terrible penalties on any man who shall presume to exercise those high offices. In punishing Cain he pronounced seven-fold vengeance upon any mortal who should presume to contribute to that punishment.

“Good People and Bad People,” *CWHN* 7:352-53

## THE CONSTITUTION

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It is more than Fourth of July rhetoric when the Latter-day Saints declare that the Constitution is an inspired document. It actually is the restoration to the earth of that ancient law of liberty which has been preached by the prophets in every age, allowing every man to act in doctrine and principle according to the moral agency which God has given him, to be accountable for his own sins on the day of judgment.

“The Ancient Law of Liberty,” *CWHN* 3:190

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The genius of the Constitution is not that it guarantees every man a chance to “succeed,” as we are often told (has there ever been a government under which clever, determined, and unscrupulous men could not get to the top?), but that it gives the same inviolable rights and immunities to rich and poor alike, the only qualification for their enjoyment being their humanity. They are *human* rights pure and simple.

“Uses and Abuses of Patriotism,” 194

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It was the glorious principles of the Bill of Rights that opened the door to the gospel in this dispensation. That was the indispensable implementation of the gospel, without, however, being part or parcel of that plan which transcends all earthly disciplines.

“How Firm a Foundation!” *CWHN* 9:151