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Mormonism: Views from Without and Within*

Leonard J. Arrington**

There must be an opposition in all things, says 2 Nephi, and a discussion of the changing image of Mormonism since 1830 helps to demonstrate that principle. On the one hand, the Church sought to establish a favorable image through missionary work and the preparation and distribution of tracts and other literature. On the other hand, those opposed to the Church, its doctrines and practices, also prepared and distributed tracts, pamphlets, and other literature conveying an unfavorable image. Thus, a literary history of Mormonism is largely a story of creative plot and counterplot.

The public image of the Saints went through three phases during the first 135 years of the Church's history. The image was a product of the reports about the dominating personality of Joseph Smith: Was he a gifted and inspired man of God, as his followers claimed, or was he a blasphemous imposter, as his enemies and detractors contended? The second phase, covering the years after the Saints had settled in the Great Basin, was influenced primarily by image-makers who knew little about the Mormons but used them as a foil, as a symbol, as a means of working out their personal aggressions and social

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philosophies. Since the Saints were not aggressive and resourceful in their own image creations—they produced mainly exposition and proselyting polemics—the prevailing image was one of disloyalty, criminality, and degradation. The third phase began in the 1930s when some scholars and writers, products of our culture, having received their undergraduate education in Utah, wrote theses and dissertations in eastern graduate schools, wrote works of fiction and non-fiction, and created works of art which helped the nation to understand that Mormons were human, rational, loyal as other Americans were loyal, and basically honest, hard working, and friendly. The nationwide broadcasts of Richard L. Evans and the Tabernacle Choir added substantially to this image.¹

About 1967 when the Mormon Arts Festival was inaugurated, there was a cultural explosion among the Latter-day Saints, still under way, which promises to create a far more favorable image—an image of vitality, sensitivity, and vigor. *Dialogue* and *BYU Studies* have given the Church a new intellectual image, and young people, many of them graduates of BYU, have achieved national and international stature in the dance, the theater, music, and the graphic arts, painting, the plastic arts, and the literary arts. Our new Church publications: *The Ensign*, *The New Era*, and *The Friend*, reflect and contribute to this new image of a vibrant and warmly sophisticated culture. This year's Mormon Arts Festival gives promise that this creative explosion is as alive as ever and that we are in the process of a most remarkable period in the cultural history of the Church.

Let us look back at the first period of our cultural history. We were not hesitant about taking the initiative in creating a positive image of the Restored Church. We published the Book of Mormon and took it to the people as our numbers would permit; this was a period when, literally, every member was a missionary. Ever aware of the importance of literary symbols, Joseph Smith worked on a revision of the Bible, published the Book of Abraham, published works of his own

¹In a Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Utah, "The Changing Image of Mormonism in Periodical Literature" (1969), Dennis Lythgoe found a renewal of severe criticism of Mormonism in the 1960s because of its so-called "Negro doctrine." My own impression is that this criticism has moderated as writers have found little evidence of anti-black prejudice among Latter-day Saints.

with poetic qualities, and encouraged our finest literary people, Parley Pratt and Orson Pratt, to publish tracts and pamphlets, some of which had distinct literary merit. In the war of images, it seems to me, the Church won out. To the constant persecution, the Prophet and his associates responded with things of the mind and spirit. When problems developed in Kirtland, he sent apostles to England. When there were troubles in Missouri, he directed the Saints in building the beautiful city of Nauvoo.

This period saw nothing of significance produced by the anti-Mormons. There were a few tracts and pamphlets and some exposes, but nothing of literary merit directed against the Church. In the field of prose fiction, there were only two works published during the lifetime of the Prophet. They were *Monsieur Violet* by Frederick Marryat, and *Der Prophet* by Amalie Schoppe. Subtitled *Travels and Adventures Among the Snake Indians and Wild Tribes of the Great Western Prairies*, *Monsieur Violet* is a rambling romance by a former British naval captain who wrote sixteen novels during the 1830s and 1840s. A story of the exploits of a young Frenchman among the Indians of the Great Plains and Southwest, the novel deals only obliquely with the Mormons in an episode in which Violet, as the representative of an Indian chief, seeks to interest Joseph Smith in uniting with the Indians to extend the Mormon empire. Although the Mormon episode comprises about fifteen percent of the total volume, it is not well integrated and appears to have been an afterthought. Comparison shows the Mormon section of Captain Marryat's book to be almost identical to sections in John C. Bennett's *History of the Saints* (New York, 1842) which is in turn essentially a reprint of *Mormonism Portrayed*, a pamphlet published in 1841 by William Harris and probably written by Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*. Sharp was one of the men tried for the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith.

Der Prophet, subtitled *An Historical Novel from Modern-day North America*, was published in Jena in 1846. Although it is what the Germans call a *Hinterreppenroman*, the author was not entirely unknown in German literary circles. The plot revolves around a young German immigrant by the name of Arnold, who wanders among the Indians in the Midwest and ends up as a surveyor in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith, it turns

out, is really a former Dr. Adalbert Braun, of Germany. Amassing a well-armed and well-trained military force in Nauvoo, he tries to make himself dictator of the American West. He lays seige to the capital of Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri, and eventually captures several cities. The young engineer, in combination with troops of Chippewa and Sioux Indians and the state militias of Illinois and Missouri, retakes the cities captured by the Mormons and mortally wounds the Prophet. On his deathbed Joseph Smith admits his German origin and even confesses that he is the natural father of Arnold. While this revelation does not necessarily please Arnold, he marries the lovely daughter of Governor Boggs of Missouri and presumably lives happily ever after.

The theme of this and many European novels which followed was that American democracy was in reality a form of demagoguery in which intelligent, educated, and handsome men like Joseph Smith, ruthlessly and arrogantly took advantage of the ignorant, easily-deceived, and fanatical masses to lead lives of debauchery and self-gratification. But real German culture proves in the end to be superior, as the impeccable hero—brave, tender, and cultured—eventually triumphs and establishes something equivalent to a benevolent monarchy.

The second phase of the changing image of Mormonism began with the removal of the Saints to the Great Basin in 1847. While the Saints were busy establishing the basis for life—building roads, constructing canals, planting crops, and building their herds of livestock—anti-Mormons viewed this settlement as equivalent to a nest of snakes in America's Garden of Eden. The limited communications of the time, along with the relative isolation of Mormon settlements in the West, insured that the images of the Saints commonly accepted by many Americans were formulated and expressed primarily by imaginative writers rather than by objective on-the-spot reporters. And even the personal experience and travelers' narratives were often permeated with elements of make-believe and thus merged into fiction. The effect was cyclical: Anti-Mormon propaganda frequently borrowed from fiction; fiction in turn fed on propaganda. Thus, the contemporary image of the Mormons was largely a fabrication of imaginative literature—prose fiction.

The fascination of outsiders for the Mormon community

was like that of children when they look into a snake pit; or similar to that of the woman with her eye glued to the telescope focused on a neighboring apartment who keeps repeating, "Isn't it disgusting!" The image was one of hateful intolerance, but the fascination was such that an enormous literature was produced. More than two hundred book-length accounts were published detailing travel through Mormon country; more than a hundred novels were printed giving fictional accounts of experiences with Mormons; and perhaps a dozen books of anti-Mormon humor were published. No local group in America had ever been the object of such interest and concern. And the image of the Mormons conveyed in these works, which were written by persons, many of whom had never met a Mormon, was almost completely unfavorable. The men were ugly, dirty, lustful, and cruel. The women were ignorant, submissive, and shameful. The narratives featured episodes involving Danites, concubines, and consummate knavery. In all of these, the Mormons were portrayed as seething cauldrons of sexual passion, cruelty, and fanaticism.

For Latter-day Saints this literary preoccupation was unfortunate because the subject was of sufficient interest to attract not only hack writers, but some great artists as well. The anti-Mormon works of the period include some of our great national literature, which is another way of saying that the anti-Mormon cause had some very visible, very articulate spokesmen. Consider the following:

1. The first appearance of Sherlock Holmes was in an anti-Mormon story, "A Study in Scarlet." Arthur Conan Doyle created the character to deal with a vengeful group of Mormons. Holmes was such a successful character that the host of stories featuring him then followed and the clever detective was established.

2. Joaquin Miller made his national and international reputation largely on an anti-Mormon novel he wrote in England in 1871 entitled *First Families of the Sierras*. Miller's novel was so successful that he later wrote a play from it, *Danites of the Sierras*, which played on Broadway for several months. A rewritten play based on the same theme, *The Mormon Maid*, appeared in 1917 as one of the motion picture films.

3. The book which really "made" Mark Twain nationally was *Roughing It*, first published in 1871, and the section

which created the most excitement and interest, still often quoted, was that relating to his visit in Salt Lake City.

4. The first novel of Meta Victoria Fuller Victor, who later wrote scores of books for the Beadle series of dime novels, was an anti-Mormon polygamy novel, first published in 1855. Other feminine writers who included commentary, mainly anti-pathetic, about Mormons in their works on suffrage, temperance, and better home life included: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Livermore, Kate Field, Etta Luce Gilchrist, Mrs. J. H. Hudson, and Cornelia Paddock.

5. His hilarious lectures on the Mormons caused Artemus Ward to become recognized as America's greatest humorist—he was the Bob Hope or the Will Rogers of his day. And his famous London "Mormon" lecture was attended by Queen Victoria, cabinet ministers, and other leading figures. Oscar Wilde treated Mormonism, as did the humorist Bill Nye and Marietta Holley.

6. The man often recognized to be the father of the land grant colleges—Jonathan B. Turner—launched his career as president of an Illinois college, by writing an anti-Mormon book, *Mormonism in All Ages*.

7. What Carl Van Doren calls the first really fine novel of the West was the anti-Mormon novel *John Brent*, written by Theodore Winthrop and published in 1861. Winthrop is still regarded highly as an American novelist. Other Western novels have followed in profusion. The most prolific writer of them, Zane Grey, wrote his first Western, *Heritage of the Desert*, on an anti-Mormon theme. His second, and most successful of all, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, was also an anti-Mormon book. This one has been produced several times as a motion picture.

Most other Western novelists have tried at least one anti-Mormon book: Hoffman Birney, Forrester Blake, Dane Coolidge, Mayne Reid, Percy Bolinbroke St. John, Noah Brooks, Bernard DeVoto, and many others.

8. In the 1870s appeared in Great Britain a Robert Buchanan poem, for many years mistakenly attributed to James Russell Lowell, entitled *St. Abe and His Seven Wives*. Bayard Taylor, playwright, poet, and literary lion wrote a book-length dramatic poem, which he named *The Prophet*, and Albion Tourgee wrote *Button's Inn*.

9. Prosper Mérimée, who wrote the story around which Bizet's opera *Carmen* was based, was the man who first interpreted the Mormons to the French. His sixty-page article appeared in the leading French magazine of the time.

10. Some among the notable literary figures defended the Mormons in their religious prerogatives. The foremost British intellectual of the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill, in his book-sized essay *On Liberty* discusses the Mormons and whether they should be permitted freedom to pursue their peculiar practices. The father of Bertrand Russell, John Russell, the Viscount of Amberley, was another of the few Britishers to defend the right of the Mormons to believe and practice their religion, which he did in a brilliant series for a leading British periodical, *The Fortnightly Review*.

There can be no questioning that American and European intellectuals were curious about the new religion, and some were perhaps excited about the attraction which drew thousands of people into its sphere. Its leadership, its experiments in social and economic reform, and its capacity for bold and unified endeavor intrigued the intellectually curious, many of whom made pilgrimages to Utah.² These distinguished visitors saw the Mormons developing a separate culture and civilization in the heart of the Rockies and wrote what they saw with a mixture of fascination and condescension. In any case, Salt Lake City was on the must list for world travelers.

Prior to and concurrent with the publication of these accounts, however, were the scurrilous novels which drew suggestions from the first-hand accounts, but based their interpretations on anti-Mormon sentiments. The plots of the hundred or more anti-Mormon novels of the period revolve around a number of different motifs. There is the personal experience motif, in which a lovely and high-principled woman becomes associated in some way with the Mormons, and tells of her various experiences with the sect, all of which are designed to demonstrate that the Mormons were cruel, treacherous, and

²Travel accounts include: Jules Rémy, *Journey to Great Salt Lake*; Richard Burton, *City of the Saints*; Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveler*; Hepworth Dixon, *New America*; Mark Twain, *Roughing It*; Phil Robinson, *Sinners and Saints*; John Codman, *Mormon Country*, and works of Rudyard Kipling, Mrs. Frank Leslie, Oscar Wilde, Emily Faithful, Florence Merriam Bailey, and Samuel Bowles. For a good introduction to these, see Edwina Snow, "A Study of Accounts of the Mormons by Travelers Visiting Salt Lake City, 1847-1869" (M.A. thesis, George Washington University, 1971).

depraved. Or there is a flight-escape motif, in which the narrative features encounters with vengeful Danites, and thrilling escapes as the Destroying Angels pursue the pure-hearted heroine, in some cases across the seas. A third type is the loosely-drawn portrait of life in a polygamous household; polygamous husbands are shown to be materialistic, insensitive, and lecherous. In most treatments the Mormons are represented by two stereotypes: a hierarchy of wily, insincere leaders, and the rabble of ignorant, fanatical followers. The plots are designed to reveal numerous examples of cunning deceit and deluded obedience.

The following notes suggest the general image presented by these works:

1. That the Mormon community was a personal dictatorship with terroristic police, which explains why the people smart enough to be aware of the humbuggery did not leave it.
2. That the converts were deluded fanatics—ignorant, poor, filthy, and immoral. In particular the women were degraded—totally devoid of nobility of character.
3. That the appeal of Mormonism was not to intellect, but to emotion and the baser passions.

Several considerations help explain the preponderance of anti-Mormon sentiment in the nineteenth century novels: (a) There is a snobbishness involved: an easterner cuts down a westerner by trying to show the latter that he is uncivilized. Mormons were an ideal scapegoat. (b) People, writers included, tend to think in terms of stereotypes. Not knowing anything about the Mormons, and not really wanting to find out, they based their view about polygamy on the image of the similarly polygamous Turks, about whom much salacious literature was written. (c) The "facts" upon which views of the Mormons were based were presented by the enemies of the Church. Writers learned about the Mormons from Missourians, and Missourians based many of their stories on the alleged activities of the Danites—a small group of militants who were not even acknowledged by the Church. (d) Finally, much of the literature presented a pandering to a vitiated literary taste.

There is in every literature an undercurrent of "wicked" writings—those whose appeal is to the anti-moral and a-social of the public taste. Nineteenth century Americans, Victorian

descendants of Puritan forebears as they were, found in anti-Mormon literature what the present generation finds in pornography: a way of experiencing sex and sin without participating in the wickedness. They could enjoy the evil while still feeling quite smug and superior. With frequent descriptions of flaggelations and indecencies, anti-Mormon novels were an interesting combination of self-righteous piety and titillating suggestiveness. They remind one of Biblical movies of recent years, in which nine-tenths of the footage consists of the dance of Salome and her seven veils, the fleshpots of Babylon, and the sins of Sodom, while the last tenth closes piously on a message of Moses or David or Jesus. Anti-Mormon novels, apparently, could be read by the self-righteous women and girls in all good conscience, because their avowed purpose was the identification and rooting out of evil. The market for prurient descriptions of lust, licentiousness, and sensuality was as wide then as ever.

In short, anti-Mormon fiction tells more about the people who wrote it and read it than about the Mormons they were writing and reading about. The novels tell us that women hate their husbands and/or fathers, but the novelists didn't dare say it in that way. So they pictured Mormon polygamists with the qualities they saw in their own husbands and fathers, putting into the Mormon content the evils they saw in their own society. The projection is a common one. If the Mormons hadn't been around the novelists would have written in the same manner about some other group. But it was among the Mormons they set their scurrilous novels, and it was the Mormons whose public image was defamed.

In the face of this barrage of unfavorable literature, what was our LDS response? Whether or not it was the most effective under the circumstances, our response in this second period was a continuation of hard-sell missionary work and the distribution of a few tracts which answered in a straightforward way the charges of our enemies. Articles were published in the national press by George Q. Cannon, Theodore Curtis, and Susa Young Gates. The most effective writing to project a pro-Mormon stance was done by Edward Tullidge, who published several articles in eastern literary magazines; and Colonel Thomas L. Kane, that great and good friend of the Saints, who wrote and delivered a marvelous Emersonian-

type lecture in Philadelphia entitled "The Mormons." The three letters of biting satire which Colonel Kane published in the New York *Herald* in 1851 under the name of Jedediah M. Grant, then mayor of Salt Lake City, were marvelous in their literary quality and had an electrical effect on a wide reading public. Colonel Kane's wife, Elizabeth, also gave favorable coverage in her *Twelve Mormon Homes* (New York, 1874).

This is not to deny that we did a superior job of generating expository and other works designed to retain the loyalty of our own members. We produced some outstanding hymns, sermons, apologetic pamphlets, and a great volume of poetry, not all of it doggerel. Beginning in the 1890s we also produced some creditable novels, particularly those by Susa Young Gates and Nephi Anderson, all, however, intended for the local market. There were group celebrations and other rituals which were successful in maintaining a high degree of devotion and allegiance. Thus, so far as the local community was concerned, we were effective in constructing symbols of worth and permanence.

The point is, however, that the Latter-day Saints produced no imaginative literature for the national market. For all practical purposes, for the hundred years from the death of Joseph Smith to 1938, virtually no imaginative literature of our own creation went outside our own group.

The most obvious explanation for this neglect is that Utah's pioneers, even the most sensitive creative artists, were involved in the desperate struggle to wrest a livelihood from the rugged mountains and desert wasteland that comprised the "Great Basin Kingdom." Another explanation might posit that the literalistic community leaders of the Saints had inherited the Puritan prejudice against prose fiction and believed fiction to be a "tall story" unworthy of a great people who had migrated several thousands of miles to form a society based on righteousness and truth. The bias against reading fiction was strong; that against writing it was even stronger.

But popular impressions are based on the imagery of myth as well as on the power of logic. That truth may be expressed more enduringly in the form of literary and artistic symbols than in selective "factual history" was well understood by Joseph Smith, but Latter-day Saints seem to have forgotten or neglected that tradition for a long time. In appraising the re-

markable achievements of Utah's pioneers one senses that a major deficiency was their failure to encourage or produce, for publication, a body of literature describing the variety, richness, and quality of pioneer life. It is at least conceivable that if the Latter-day Saint community had supported, on a regular basis, the labor and genius of a handful of loyal and imaginative writers, the enormous investment and loss involved in the Utah War, the Underground of the 1880s, and the incessant sparring with federal officials throughout the nineteenth century might have been avoided, or, at least, materially lessened.

By not producing their own imaginative literature the Latter-day Saints lost the image-battle during the period of their western pioneering. In fact, it was not until the 1930s that the literary image began to change substantially. The Mormon scholars in eastern schools, the Tabernacle Choir broadcasts, and increased tourism helped people know us better. Publicity surrounding the Church Welfare Plan during the Great Depression helped change the image of the present-day Saints, and the uncovering and publishing of pioneer diaries and histories by Andrew Jenson, Juanita Brooks, Preston Nibley, Dale Morgan, and Nels Anderson told the impressive stories of the once-maligned early-day Saints.

Above all, it seems to me our image changed as a result of our production of a significant body of high-quality imaginative literature by a number of people reared in our own culture. Stimulated by Bernard DeVoto, that talented, brilliant, and opinionated child of a Mormon mother and Catholic father, and based on a reading of pioneer journals and immersion in pioneer folklore, Maurine Whipple won a Houghton Mifflin literary fellowship in 1938 to write *The Giant Joshua*, and Vardis Fisher won the Harper prize with *Children of God* in 1939. These were followed in rapid succession by Ray West, Virginia Sorensen, Richard Scowcroft, and others. At the same time, we contributed a significant body of appreciative folklore under the energetic leadership of Thomas Cheney, Hector Lee, Wayland Hand, and Austin and Alta Fife.

These and others have taught and inspired a host of young writers who are now producing a veritable explosion of creative and imaginative works—works which are clearly evident in this 1973 Festival of Mormon Arts. To name those in the-

ater alone, we have marvelous productions of Clinton Larson, Orson Scott Card, Carol Lynn Pearson, and Thom Duncan. Clearly, our talented young writers are placing a new image before the public, an image of cultural excitement and creativity, a vision of souls on fire. We must encourage this exploding creativity with every resource at our command. The embodiment of ideas of permanent and universal interest in popular and artistic forms is an object of the highest and finest leadership. A nation, a sub-culture, or a religious community which neglects it does so at its own peril. The enduring images by which people live—symbols of credibility, integrity, and artistic excellence—are the products of a people with qualities of greatness.

In the few minutes remaining I should like to offer an historian's comment on three kinds of images that imaginative writers may draw from our rich pioneer past.

First, the pioneer image of man's relationship to nature. It is fashionable these days for writers to denigrate science and technology. Science and technology, we are told, are destructive and immoral; they do not relate to social values. They have polluted the environment, involved us in an inexcusable war, and dehumanized our civilization. Down with science, they say. Our Latter-day Saint heritage helps us to put this in a more realistic framework. Faced with an inhospitable environment, we had to channel water to make life possible in our Promised Valleys; we had to conquer distance to escape our isolation; we had to fight deadly bacteria which brought premature death; we had to develop new varieties of crops and new breeds of livestock that would provide food and clothing. Our science and technology, crude as they may have been, were our way of making nature serve us instead of fighting us. Those who long for the pastoral world of nature are children of the city who have not realized, as our pioneer ancestors realized, that science and technology can be used in solving problems which will make it possible for us to become more human, more spiritual. The designs of our tools and machines, in fact, are no less a product of our creative imaginations than are works of art and literature. Their purpose, as that of art and literature, is to help individuals and society in developing their potentialities. They are an extension of our physical strength, the use of our intellects in

solving the problems of survival. The long view which sees the historic facts of man's adaption to and of his environment puts them both in clearer, truer relationship: man and nature coexist beneficially.

This brings me to a second insight. Our pioneer heritage teaches us of the importance of things of the spirit, the intangible, the things that can't be coded and computerized. As one reads pioneer diaries and reminiscences, he cannot but be impressed that the pioneers were not ashamed of their mystical experiences—of the experiences which enabled them to move out of the imprisonment of their environment. Mormon lore is rich in emotion, in excitement, in mysticism, a healthy departure from the undeviating march of contemporary society toward materialism and rationalism. Joseph Smith had demonstrated to them, as the Gospel has demonstrated to all of us, that religious ecstasy need not be a negation of reason; it does not destroy the rational structure of the mind. The writings of the pioneers demonstrate that the Gospel helped in separating creative reasonableness from mad rationality—we can use our minds without losing our senses. The cultivation of scientific rationality—what somebody called the search for objective truth with no holds barred—is important and desirable, but it does not provide the only reliable access to the truth—to a reality “out there” in a realm presumed to exist independent of human perceivers. Our heritage tells us there is another access to truth—revelation, contemplation, intuition, ceremony, transcendental experience.

This brings us to a third insight. The frequency with which our healthy and practical pioneer diarists and sermonizers mentioned spiritual experiences is verification that such experiences are not necessarily manifestations of sick minds. They are evidence, and the distinguished psychologist, the late Abraham Maslow, supported the view, that the Freudian model that tended to interpret extraordinary behavior as the manifestation of deep-seated neuroses or disorder, is mistaken. To put the pioneer view in modern psychological terminology, the unconscious is the source of our higher energies, a sacred reservoir of the self that can be, at times, unhealthy, but that in the end must be recognized as life-giving and essentially beneficial to man. Devout Latter-day Saints—men and women who may be prophets, apostles, patriarchs, Relief Society presi-

dents and Primary teachers—are not abnormal or irrational; they are normal persons who have grown beyond the rest of us. They are supernormals—Maslow uses the term “more-than-normal.” The reality of the subjective life of Latter-day Saints, in other words, leads us to the realization, so clear in imaginative literature, that it is here, in the soul, inside the fantastically complex phenomenon of man, that the salvation of the entire world will take place. Let us follow the pioneers; instead of hiding our spiritual and inexplicable experiences, we must learn to articulate and share them.

I like the symbolism in a story given in the book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament. Nehemiah felt that it was a disgrace for Jerusalem to be in ruins and helpless, her wall broken down, her gates burned, her spirit and pride dead. And so he sought to revive pride—and a measure of sovereignty—to the people by getting them to repair and reconstruct the walls and set up the gates once more. The various enemies of the Israelites plotted and planned measures to prevent the rebuilding of the wall. But Nehemiah and his builders were prepared for them. Half the men went on with the work and the other half held the spears, shields, and bows. The builders of the wall were also armed, says the chronicler, carrying on the work with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. As Nehemiah described it: “While the building was going on, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon in his hand.”

This is a magnificent symbol. It suggests that we must never slacken in our defense of the Gospel. Once it was important to fight for the Gospel in a physical way; but the great need today, it seems to me, is to carry the Gospel in ways that are more sophisticated, more deeply spiritual, more artistic and imaginative. The arts—literature, music, the visual expressions—are at once the modern weapons of our defense and the tools with which we build the Kingdom. We must craft the tools with care, and hone the weapons finely. Let us, then, go about our assignments with open souls and keen intellects—with a symbolic pen or brush in one hand and the sword of truth and righteousness in the other. In this way, in our deeply-felt intellectual and spiritual experiences, we shall prepare ourselves and others for exaltation.