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The Dawning of a Brighter Day: Mormon Literature after 150 Years

Eugene England

I ask you to consider the following: Mormonism is a genuine religious movement, with persistent and characteristic religious and cultural experiences growing out of a unique and coherent theology and a true and thus powerful mythic vision, and it has already produced and is producing the kinds and quality of literature that such experiences and vision might be expected to produce; it is, in fact, right now enjoying a kind of bright dawning, if not a flowering then certainly a profuse and lovely budding, in its literary history.

Many of us, at least until recently, could be excused for not knowing there is a Mormon literature. A serious anthology of Mormon literature, providing a full view of the quality and variety over our nearly 150-year history, was first published only a few years ago. That was Richard Cracroft and Neal Lambert's *A Believing People*.¹ At about the same time, these two scholars inaugurated, at Brigham Young University, the first course in Mormon literature. The Association for Mormon Letters, the first professional organization intended to study and encourage Mormon literature, is only a few years old. We have as yet no scholarly bibliography of Mormon literature, no full-scale literary history or developed esthetic principles, little practical and less theoretical literary criticism. The most basic scholarly work—the unearthing and editing of texts, development of biographical materials, and serious literary analysis of our acknowledged classics—is still largely undone.

But then again, many things *are* happening, and perhaps there is now less excuse for any continued ignorance or inaction. The anthology has had a second printing, the Mormon literature class continues

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This article is a shortened version of the Charles C. Redd Address presented at BYU in February 1980. The complete talk is published as part of the Charles C. Redd Lecture Series, No. 13, *Mormonism after 150 Years*. His title is taken from the chorus of Parley P. Pratt's hymn, "The Morning Breaks."

¹Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (1974; reprint ed., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979).

to prosper, and Mormon classics are being used in other literature and humanities courses. New journals like *Exponent II*, *Sunstone*, and *Sunstone Review* are succeeding and are following the older *Dialogue* and *BYU Studies* in publishing good Mormon literature and criticism. Official Church magazines like the *Ensign* publish serious Mormon stories and poetry more often than previously. We have seen the publication and widespread approval of the biography of Spencer W. Kimball, the first Mormon study of a general Church leader that meets the essential criterion for genuine literary biography phrased by Virginia Woolf, "those truths which transmit personality."² And now others are being published that do the same for past Church leaders.³

In the last few years three books by established Mormon poets (Clinton Larson, Ed Hart, and Marden Clark) have been published, and some impressive younger poetic voices have appeared in the journals.⁴ Douglas Thayer has expanded his range to an experimental novel (still in draft) dealing with the development of consciousness of evil and redemption in a young Mormon. Bruce Jorgensen has written a well-crafted, mature story on baptism and initiation that is fine literature, not merely Mormon.⁵ Bela Petsco has published a collection of stories centered in missionary experience.⁶ The small body of serious Mormon drama has been augmented by performances of Thomas Rogers's *Reunion*, a study of classic Mormon family conflicts. Ed Geary, working to stretch and develop the genre I think most congenial to the Mormon vision and experience, the personal essay, has made good on his earlier promise in "Goodbye to Poplarhaven"⁷ with an even better exploration of Mormon consciousness, called "Hying to Kolob," that is fine literature accessible to both Mormons and others.⁸ So my hope is high: "The morning breaks."

But, you may rightly be saying, one, or even three, bursting forth do not make a spring—nor a Larson and a Thayer and a Geary a flowering of literature, Mormon or not. And others of you might

²Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography," *Granite and Rainbow* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), pp. 149–50.

³Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr., *Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977); Eugene England, *Brother Brigham* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980); Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980); Frank W. Fox, *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980).

⁴See appended bibliography.

⁵Bruce Jorgensen, "Born of the Water," *Sunstone* 5 (January–February 1980): 20–25.

⁶Bela Petsco, *Nothing Very Important and Other Stories* (Provo: Meservydale Publishing Co., 1979).

⁷Edward Geary, "Goodbye to Poplarhaven," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Summer 1973): 56–62; reprinted in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, pp. 242–47.

⁸Edward Geary, "Hying to Kolob," *Dialogue* 13 (Fall 1980): 93–101.

ask, “What is this ‘Mormon’ literature anyway—something like ‘Lutheran’ literature or ‘Christian Science’ literature?” If you have been exposed to some of the agonizing that has been going on for some twenty years about our not having an obviously impressive literature, you might ask, “Aren’t we too young a culture or too small a community to expect to have a literature—or aren’t Mormons too superficially happy, too anxiety- and conflict-free, to produce a literature, or too busy, or too smug, or too anti-intellectual, or too materialistic, or too censored?” The answer to all these questions is “No.” We do in fact have a literature—one whose shape, dimensions, and quality are becoming more and more apparent and impressive. These questions and anxieties are now simply outdated; reality has long passed them by, and good theoretical thinking has caught up with them. The real question now is not how good *is* what we have, but *how* is it good, how, in fact, do we *judge* how it is good? And how do we prepare better to respond to it and to encourage more of the good?

But some might still be saying, “Suppose we do have some good writers. Why talk about *Mormon* literature rather than American literature or, better yet, just literature? Shouldn’t our writers just do their best, write honestly and well about the universal human concerns, and address themselves to mankind in general?” Perhaps, but let me suggest another case: Shakespeare and Milton had access to audiences, a *literate* community, smaller than that which is now made up of well-educated English-speaking Mormons (which is probably approaching three million); does it in any way count against those great poets that they spoke directly and consciously to that limited audience from a base in particular problems, perspectives, and convictions that were essentially English? Or does it count against Dostoevski that he was consciously, even self-consciously, Russian, or Faulkner that he was consciously Southern?

The only way to the universal is through the particular. The only honesty, ultimately, is honesty to that which we know in our own bones and blood and spirit, our own land and faith, our own doubts and battles and victories and defeats. Mormonism cannot be separated from these things because, unlike religions such as Lutheranism or Christian Science, it makes a large number of rather absolute claims about the nature of the universe and God and human beings, about specific historical events, past and future, about language and form and content—and because it is grounded in a sufficiently unusual and cohesive and extended historical and cultural experience growing directly from those claims that it has become like

a nation, an ethnic culture as well as a religion. We can speak of a Mormon literature at least as surely as we can of a Jewish or Southern literature. And it is as legitimate, as promising, for a writer to be consciously Mormon as it has been for Flannery O'Connor to be Southern Catholic or for Isaac Bashevis Singer to be emigré Polish and Jewish.

Mormon writers have much to learn from both of these writers: skills and vision, of course, but also how not to be so universal they lose contact with their roots, so antiparochial they adopt the worst kind of parochialism—that of not knowing oneself and one's own generic community. They can learn from them how to translate religious commitment and the tragedy of religious struggle and paradox into honesty and craft, into fictive creations rather than packaged preachments. As O'Connor has said: "I see from the standpoint of Christian orthodoxy. This means that for me the meaning of life is centered in our Redemption by Christ and what I see in the world I see in its relation to that. I don't think that this is a position that can be taken halfway or one that is particularly easy in these times to make transparent in fiction."⁹ But of course her special Catholic vision, however effectively pointing beyond itself to the universal, cannot be adopted by the Mormon writer. The Mormon vision has unique and equally powerful implications for both form and content. What are they? Just what is *Mormon* literature?

I think Karl Keller is right in suggesting that Mormon writers—possibly due to that parochial antiparochialism I mentioned and an understandable aversion to didactic, simplistically preachy Mormon writing—have produced fiction that is by and large irrelevant to the doctrinal interests of Mormonism. He calls most of what we've written "jack-fiction."¹⁰ In contrast to Flannery O'Connor, many Mormon writers seem to have strained, in the fashion of various schools of emancipated realism, to be far from orthodoxy. Even the "orthodox" have not written imaginative visions of the possibilities of our theology; it is not really *Mormon* fiction. By way of contrast, this is O'Connor describing what she feels she must work out imaginatively in *her* fiction:

It makes a great difference to the look of a novel whether its author believes that the world came late into being and continues to come by a creative act of God, or whether he believes that the world and ourselves are the product of a cosmic accident. It makes a great difference to his novel whether he believes that we are created in God's image, or

⁹Flannery O'Connor, "The Church and the Fiction Writer," *Mystery and Manners*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969), p. 148, quoted in Karl Keller, "The Example of Flannery O'Connor," *Dialogue* 9 (Winter 1974): 62.

¹⁰Keller, "Example of Flannery O'Connor," p. 62.

whether he believes we create God in our own. It makes a great difference whether he believes that our wills are free, or bound like those of the other animals.¹¹

Surely we could make an equally specific list for a Mormon writer. But notice that neither O'Connor nor Keller are suggesting some sophisticated form of packaged message. Any artist's first responsibility is to the form, the embodiment, the word made flesh. If he or she cannot do justice to the visible world and make of it fictions that are believable, he or she cannot be trusted to bear witness to the invisible world; like Flannery O'Connor, Mormon writers must see and imagine steadily and whole—and in convincing formal structures—the surface, including oppositions and evil, the terror in natural human experience, before they can see and imagine how the supernatural supports or intrudes upon that surface.

But if Keller is right, we may have a major explanation for the unfulfilled promise of Mormon fiction. It has effectively imagined the Mormon past and some of the conflicts inherent in contemporary Mormon public and private life but has left Mormonism's unique God and the dramatic and unusual Mormon view of man's cosmic dilemma and destiny out of the picture. The fact that some are making a beginning in those new directions is a major reason I expect the dawning of a brighter day.

Let me try here to expand our awareness of fruitful possibilities in these new directions. And though it is ultimately impossible to separate form and content, and dangerous to try, let me begin with a few comments on form. In the "King Follett Discourse," itself a classic piece of Mormon literature, Joseph Smith refers to "chaotic matter—which is element and in which dwells all the glory."¹² That helps bring into imaginative focus the hints throughout scripture and the writings of Mormon thinkers that suggest a certain metaphysics of form; order is wrought from a pluralistic chaos but a chaos that is *potent*, genuinely responsive to the creative powers of God and man embodied in mind and language, characteristics God and his children share as literally related beings. The Doctrine and Covenants, section 88:6–11, ties together the divine mind and cosmic creative power of Christ with man's perception through the media of physical and spiritual light, which are pronounced to be fundamentally the same. All this suggests the seeds of a philosophy of form at least as

¹¹O'Connor, "Novelist and Believer," *Mystery and Manners*, pp. 156–57, in Keller, "Example of Flannery O'Connor," p. 68.

¹²Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Winter 1978): 203.

interesting and defensible as the epistemological skepticism that has contributed to the breakdown in structure characteristic of modern literature. A truly Mormon literature would stand firm against secular man's increasing anxiety about the ability of language to get at the irreducible otherness of things outside the mind—to make sense, and beauty, of that “chaotic matter—which is element.”

If Mormon writers take seriously their faith that language is a gift from God the creator, a gift that gives them access to the “glory” that dwells in matter and in other intelligences, including God's, they can confidently use language, not like others merely to imitate (albeit with compassionate despair) the separated, meaningless, raw elements and experiences of a doomed universe but to create genuinely new things, verbal structures of element and intelligence and experience that include understanding and judgment as well as imitation and empathy. We can, like our contemporaries, create of words what Wallace Stevens called “things that do not exist without the words,”¹³ but we can do so without his undermining fear that what he was doing was merely an ephemeral human activity, a game to occupy until final doom; we can be sustained by the faith that what we are doing is rooted in the nature of the cosmos and shared by God.

In other words there should be in Mormon writers a special respect for language and form, attention to their tragic limitations but also to their real possibilities. This would mean, I would think, a rather conservative respect for proven traditional forms until they are genuinely understood and surpassed. At least it would mean unusual resistance to the flight from form, from faith in language, toward obscurity and proud assertion of the purely personal vision that afflicts much writing in our time and energizes the popular form of criticism called “deconstruction.”

Now what about content? Obviously, Mormon literature will draw, as much of it already has, on certain specially evocative characteristics of Mormon history and scriptural narrative. I don't mean irrigation and polygamy and Lamanite warriors but rather a certain epic consciousness and mythic identification with ancient peoples and processes: the theme of exile and return, of the fruitful journey into the wilderness; the pilgrim traveling the dark and misty way to the tree of salvation; the lonely quest for selfhood that leads to conversion and then to the paradox of community; the desert as crucible in which to make saints, not gold; the sacramental life that persists in

¹³Wallace Stevens, *The Language of Poetry*, ed. Allen Tate (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 122.

spiritual experience and guileless charity despite physical and cultural deprivation; the fortunate fall from innocence and comfort into a lone and dreary world where opposition and tragic struggle can produce virtue and salvation. Much remains to be done with these. And it would be *Mormon* literature—though, of course, not exclusively so, since we share forms of these mythic truths with various others.

Then there are certain contemporary implications of our underlying cultural heritage and beliefs that provide unusually rich, though again not unique, dramatic possibilities: for instance, both the unusual sense of order and also the openings to tragic failure provided a life by the making of covenants, of promises to self and God in baptism and weekly communion through bread and water; or the fearful, solemn, and nobly exciting dimension given marriage by promises of obedience and fidelity and consecration made before God and angels on holy ground. What can be done with a physical and mental landscape peopled perhaps even more literally than Isaac Bashevis Singer's with devils, with embodiments of ultimate, intransigent evil who mock and betray, and also peopled with translated beings from ancient America who bemuse folklorists and bless simple folk from Panguitch and Downey, and also with angels who bring glad tidings to wise and holy men and women and children, who are thus inspired to speak great and marvelous, unspeakable things? And what can be done with the Mormon animism that hears the earth groan with its wickedness or the mountains shout for joy, that moves people to bless oxen and crops, even automobiles and trees? What can be made of the spiritual literalness that hears a daughter calling for help on the other side of the world or takes in stride faithfulness that is stronger than the cords of death and brings dead friends and family on privileged visits back to comfort and instruct?

Fine non-Mormon poets, W. S. Merwin for one, have written beautifully of the deep yearning we have for the miracle of a loved one's return to us—and of the strange possibility.¹⁴ Mormons with a more literal belief have the resources to do as well and better, if they have the courage of their convictions and the discipline to work as hard to create an honest visible world that the invisible world can break through; it is because for Mormons, as for Gerard Manley

¹⁴W. S. Merwin, "Come Back," quoted and discussed in Robert Pinsky, *The Situation of Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 95. See also Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, *The Complete Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman*, ed. N. Scott Momaday (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 15, 35, 36.

Hopkins, "the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."¹⁵

But there is even a deeper layer, as yet hardly touched in Mormon literature but with, I believe, the greatest potential for uniqueness and power, the one suggested directly by Flannery O'Connor's list. It would require more theological literacy and more imaginative response to our theology. Karl Keller, in the essay mentioned earlier, suggests that Mormon writers should begin with careful reading of Sterling McMurrin's *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*, which he calls "essentially an outline of esthetic possibilities of Mormon articles of belief."¹⁶ I would recommend Joseph Smith and B. H. Roberts, and John Widtsoe and Hugh B. Brown and Truman Madsen and, yes, Brigham Young and Joseph Fielding Smith and Spencer W. Kimball and the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price and, from the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2 and Alma 42, and so forth. And what would that do for a Mormon writer, other than tempt him toward a suicidal didacticism? It could nurture his imagination with the most challenging and liberating set of metaphysical possibilities and paradoxes I have been able to discover in all human thought. Consider only a few, beginning with the keystone: that human beings, like the gods, are at core uncreated and underived, individual intelligences, without beginning or end; they are possessed of truly infinite potential, literal gods in embryo, but are bound inescapably in a real environment of spirit and element and other beings that impinge upon them and that, as they learn successfully to relate to the environment, exact real costs in suffering and loss and bring real joy in relationship and growth. Freedom, for a Mormon writer—or fictional character—is not a mysterious illusion, as it must be for traditional Christians with their absolute, omnipotent God, nor is it a pragmatic tautology, as it must be for existentialists who define existence, however temporary, as freedom. Freedom is ultimate and inescapable responsibility in a real world that is neither a shadow of something more real lying beyond it that God determines at will nor a doomed accident.

The consequences for dramatic action and lyric reflection seem to be considerable: for one thing, as I think Truman Madsen has said, "Suicide is just a change of scenery." For another, as the Mormon theologian B. F. Cummings put it, "The Self is insubordinate,

¹⁵Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Robert Bridges and W. H. Gardner (New York: Oxford University Press, 3d ed., 1948), p. 70.

¹⁶Keller, "Example of Flannery O'Connor," p. 70; Sterling McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965).

wandering, imperially aloof, solitary, lonely, withdrawn, unvisited, impenetrable"; it "cannot escape from existence nor can it escape from the awareness of its existence" nor from the "inevitable sense of solitude" that is "born of the very fact of individuality," of "being an eternally identical one."¹⁷ Put that together with the equally firm teaching that man without God is nothing, less than the dust of the earth (for the elements are at least obedient to God's creative will), that mortals are utterly dependent on God, who sustains, moment by moment, their existence in mortality though not their eternal essence and who provides the only way of salvation through relation to his Son. And put it together with that strange paradox of Atonement, the fortunate fall: each individual *must* lose innocence, experience opposition and sin, know failure, struggle with justice and guilt, before he or she will let Christ break the bonds of justice, tear down barriers within to bring the bowels of mercy—and so accept himself in love and thus have strength to develop the conscious, intelligent virtues of Christ. And put all this together with the idea that, imperially alone and impenetrable as the individual is, he and she cannot fully and ultimately realize their own true nature and achieve their fullest potential and joy except in the ongoing achievement of an eternal, fully sexual, companionship—an idea authenticated by the Mormon image of God as being God precisely and only in such a female and male oneness.

I am *not* proposing a formal creed for Mormon writers. I am merely suggesting that there is available to Mormon writers, part of what they in fact already are, a rich loam—a topsoil of historical experience, mythic consciousness, and unique theology—as rich as that available to any other writers, more rich than that of most of their gentile contemporaries. To change the image to one that has characteristically been made into a Mormon cliché, I suggest we put down our buckets where we are rather than complaining of thirst or rowing so madly for foreign shores. Even if rooting ourselves in that rich topsoil would tend to limit us to a Mormon or traditional Christian audience—and I am not, on the example of O'Connor and Singer, ready to grant that—even so, that is a large enough and worthy enough audience, and one that needs as much as any to be served by the values that literature can provide. We in the Mormon community need to be brought out of our existential loneliness, to experience what other Mormons feel, to understand imaginatively and

¹⁷B. F. Cummings, *The Eternal Individual Self* (Salt Lake City: Utah Publishing Co., 1968), pp. 7, 69, 70, quoted in Bruce Jorgensen, "'Herself Moving beside Herself, Out There Alone': The Shape of Mormon Belief in Virginia Sorensen's *The Evening and the Morning*," *Dialogue* 13 (Fall 1980): 43–61.

share with each other our fears and doubts and joys and visions and small victories in the communal and individual working out of our salvation. For those who believe the gospel is true in any essential sense, there need be no greater ambition for Mormon literature—at least to begin with—than to speak truly and well, about what is essential, to Mormons.

These suggestions I have made about a definition of Mormon literature and about a Mormon esthetic are, again, only preliminary, but even with this small beginning we have, I think, enough on which to base some useful outlines for a literary history. Let me suggest, based on this definition, one scheme that may be helpful conceptually and may evoke further study. One way of seeing our literary history is in terms of three fifty-year periods and three kinds of rebels. During the first fifty years or so—into the 1880s—a uniquely Mormon, nontraditional literature was produced by men and women caught up in the restored gospel's rebellion against the world, against Babylon. For them it was literally and ecstatically true, as one of their fine hymns expressed it, that "the morning breaks, the shadows flee" and that "the glory bursting from afar, wide o'er the nations soon will shine."¹⁸ They rejected, with powerful arguments, the economic, political, and moral conditions of England, Europe, and America; and with incredible courage and self-sacrifice they built genuine alternatives that continue to thrill us. And, I submit, they produced an extraordinary and valuable literature about their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, literature we have too long neglected but are beginning to recover and appreciate—to learn *how* to appreciate—as we should.

Many of us who study literature professionally have become increasingly uneasy in the past twenty years about the inadequacy of formalist criteria, that is, those concerned mainly with esthetic qualities—such as structure, style, organization—the matters emphasized in the New Criticism that held sway in mid-twentieth century literary criticism. We have discovered their inadequacy to account for our experiences—and that of our students—with certain literature, such as that, for instance, called to our attention as ethnic or women's literature, some of which has powerfully affected us despite its apparent lack of great formal or esthetic qualities. We have been brought slowly to recognize that there are also, in good

¹⁸Parley P. Pratt, "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 269 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948).

have been brought slowly to recognize that there are also, in good literature, important social and religious and moral values. These are sometimes bound inseparably with the formal perfections; they sometimes provide some compensation for lack of formal training or traditional stylistic ability; and sometimes these values actually push naive or inexperienced writers toward formal qualities they did not consciously work for. For instance, in the powerful reminiscences of Mary Goble Pay,¹⁹ the moving formal purity of understatement comes, I believe, from her own religious and moral qualities and the religious and moral extremity of the situation, not from any literary training or models, most of which would have been bad anyway. Ironically, it has been mainly non-Mormon scholars who have done the most to help us deal with these new problems and possibilities. Critics like Yvor Winters, Ian Watt, Wayne Booth, Robert Scholes, E. D. Hirsch, and John Gardner have explored some of the neglected social, moral, and religious values in literature and the critical means for understanding and evaluating literature in terms of them. If we are to evaluate properly, or ever understand and appreciate, our Mormon literature, particularly in its first fifty years, we must build on their work.

The second fifty years, from about 1880 to 1930, is a barren period in Mormon literature with, I believe, hardly anything of lasting value published or written (at least in the usual literary genres). But there are important literary as well as historical questions to be answered by a study of that period, questions about the nature of the Church after the disappointment of the popular expectation of Christ's coming in 1890, the Manifesto of that year (in the view of many a capitulation to the government and secular American society), and the period of accommodation to American styles and values that followed statehood in 1896. Historians and literary critics need to work together to understand the relations between Church and culture in this difficult period. And one phenomenon they will need to look at carefully is that during this time there was an outpouring of poems, stories, and novels, mainly in the Church magazines and press, that were known as "home literature" and were designed for the edification of the Saints. At first look, many have assumed that such literature was so bad and so deadening an influence on Mormon literary culture in general because it was too Mormon; I believe it was not Mormon enough. Edward Geary is right in making a distinction that applies to that literature and from which we can learn some

¹⁹Pay, Mary Goble, "Death Strikes the Handcart Company," in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, pp. 143-50.

lessons that apply directly today, when we face the same dangers as well as the equally great danger of overreaction to those dangers. In his landmark essay on Mormon regional fiction, Geary notes that the home literature movement, which began in the 1880s, was an explicit instrument for spreading the gospel, one which, in Apostle and poet Orson Whitney's words, "like all else with which we have to do, must be made subserviant to the building up of Zion."²⁰ In explaining why that movement has not met Elder Whitney's hope that Mormonism would produce "Miltons and Shakespeares of our own" Geary writes:

It is one thing to ask the artist to put his religious duties before his literary vocation or to write from his deepest convictions. It is quite another to insist that he create from a base in dogma rather than a base in experience. . . . [Home literature] is not a powerful literature artistically, nor is it pure. In most cases its distinctive Mormon characteristics are only skin deep, masking an underlying vision which is as foreign to the gospel as it is to real life.²¹

For example, think of the popular, entertaining, and "edifying" *Saturday's Warrior*, with its slick sophistication, its misleading if not heretical theology, and its stereotyping toward bigotry in the social references—under the skin as foreign to the gospel as to real life. Geary continues, "The early home literature borrowed the techniques of popular sentimental fiction and the values of the genteel tradition with a superficial adaptation to Mormon themes, and this practice continues only slightly modified."

You can easily see the continuing influence of that movement in the official magazines and in Church press novels of today; but it is perhaps at least as unfortunate that the reaction against that movement, however well intentioned, also too often fails to see the superior Mormon literature available or the importance and possibility of trying to produce it. We forget Geary's distinction—that though it is illegitimate and destructive to insist that a writer create from dogma rather than experience it might well be legitimate and valuable to ask him, as I think the Church properly does, to put his religious duties before his literary vocation and to write from his deepest convictions.

After that long hiatus in the middle of Mormon literature, we have had a period of about fifty years of considerable output and

²⁰Orson F. Whitney, "Home Literature," *Contributor* (July 1888); reprinted in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, p. 205.

²¹Edward Geary, "The Poetics of Provincialism: Mormon Regional Fiction," *Dialogue* 11 (Summer 1978): 15.

much quality, but by two quite different kinds of rebels from two *literary* generations that overlap. The first of these began most prominently with Vardis Fisher in the 1930s and has lingered, in Samuel Taylor, up into the early 1970s; it has been aptly characterized by Ed Geary as Mormondom's "lost generation."²² And Geary has shown that the writers were, like American literature's "lost generation" of twenty years before, defined by various degrees of rebellion against their "provincial" culture, by a patronizing alienation infused with nostalgia for a vanishing way of life that would not let them turn completely away to other loyalties and subject matter, even when they became in one way or another expatriated. They were the first generation of the twentieth century, growing up when Mormon isolation was breaking down, rural Mormondom was depopulating, and urban Mormonism was apparently becoming crassly materialistic. It was easy for them to see the Church, however heroic in the nineteenth century, as failing, the Mormon experiment as rapidly ending. And they saw themselves as the first well-educated generation of Mormonism, able to look with some amusement upon the naiveté of Mormon thought.

Such rather adolescent alienation has persisted in many intellectuals of that generation. It has persisted despite the refutations provided by historical analysis that recently has been done—and despite the achievements that were being made even *during* that period in such areas as well-written theology and history, by B. H. Roberts, John A. Widtsoe, and others.

The "lost generation" of writers, and those who shared their sense of Mormonism's decline, actually thought there would not be another generation after them. And as late as 1969 Dale Morgan, writing on Mormon literature, could say, "A lot of the urgency has gone out of [the Mormon] sense of mission as the millennial expectation has subsided and the powerful 'gathering' phase of Mormon history has run its course."²³ That was written just before the remarkable new missionary energies, the growth to genuine world status and millennial vision, that have come in the 1970s. As Geary writes, "From the viewpoint of the present, expansionist period in Mormon history, the dead-end vision [of the lost generation] seems rather quaint."²⁴ But he adds a warning—that each generation has its own provinciality, that just as the views of those writers of the

²²Edward Geary, "Mormondom's Lost Generation: The Novelists of the 1940s," *BYU Studies* 18 (Fall 1977): 89–98.

²³Dale L. Morgan, "Literature in the History of the Church: The Importance of Involvement," *Dialogue* 4 (Autumn 1969): 32.

²⁴Geary, "Poetics of Provincialism," p. 24.

1940s now seem as naive to us as their parents' views seemed to them, so our own views may appear naive to our children. It is certain that despite my criticism of various kinds of provincialism I have my own kind. My best hope is to help us all guard against provinciality by suggesting additional possibilities, more and better perceived options, for our thinking about Mormonism and its literary tradition.

One other option, less provincial, I believe, because more inclusive than that of the Mormon novelists of the 1940s, is the direction taken by the third literary generation of rebels in my historical scheme. It is the second one within the past fifty years of renewed life in Mormon literature after the empty—or perhaps, given the harvest that followed, what could be called the “fallow”—middle fifty-year period. This generation overlaps with the “lost generation” somewhat and is, I believe, the one coming into flower right now, carrying my hope for the “dawning of a brighter day.” These writers are characterized by various kinds of degrees of sincere commitment to the unique and demanding religious claims of Mormonism as well as to its people, history, and culture. Yet they are as clear-sighted and devastating in their analysis and criticism of Mormon mistakes and tragedies, both historical and present, as were the “lost generation”—in some cases *more* incisive because less naive and more emphatically involved themselves in Mormon conflicts and mistakes.

For instance, Richard Bushman, in his important essay ten years ago called “Faithful History,” suggested some innovative, characteristically Mormon, approaches to writing history; one of those sees the fundamental dramatic tension in religious history not (in the way most Mormon history has been written) as that between an all-righteous Church and an evil world but (as in fact most scriptural history is written) as that between God and his church: “In the second, the Lord tries to establish his kingdom, but the stubborn people whom He favors with revelation ignore him much of the time and must be brought up short.”²⁵ Here is one area where Mormon literature is perhaps ahead of Mormon historiography, because many of this latest generation of what I have called “rebels” are writing with just that perspective, focusing, like the prophets, on the struggles with faith and righteousness among the so-called chosen people as well as in the world. But, with these (unlike the “lost generation”), there is no patronization, no superior pointing of fingers, but rather full identification; they draw much of their power of specification from their own experience, their own conflicts and

²⁵Richard L. Bushman, “Faithful History,” *Dialogue* 4 (Winter 1969): 18.

failures—and also the redemptive charity that comes from their own genuine attempts in their own lives to repent, to live out the conflicts and sacrificial duties faith demands. Bushman concludes his essay with a suggestion that the finest Mormon history would be written not by writers who simply transfer various Mormon ideas or perspectives into their work or merely use certain techniques they think are Mormon, but by real changes in *all* things that shape their vision of the world in response to the self within, which they encounter in moments of genuine faith. In a challenging inversion of the traditional Mormon axiom about being saved no faster than we gain knowledge, Bushman suggests that a Mormon cannot improve as a historian (I would add writer) without improving as a human being—in moral insights, spiritual commitment, and critical intelligence: As writers, “we gain knowledge no faster than we are saved.” I believe this latest generation’s growing quality is related to that kind of wholeness; they are finding out, tentatively and awkwardly, but surely, what it can mean for an artist to be a Latter-day Saint—a genuine follower of Christ.

It ought to mean something for Mormon literature that Mormonism *begins* with a *book*. But that book is one which has been laughed at, villified, and ignored—as well as one which has dramatically changed the lives of millions of people. Most surprising, despite its obvious verbal weight and complexity, the Book of Mormon has until fairly recently not been carefully read as a *literary* text, even by Mormons. Ironically it was a *non-Mormon*, Douglas Wilson, who ten years ago reviewed this rather amazing situation and predicted that critical scrutiny from an “archetypal” perspective would be very productive.²⁶ That work has now begun and is proceeding apace: Bruce Jorgensen, Dilworth Rust, and George Tate have done some exciting work on the controlling mythic structures, the power and unity of the typological patterns (to use a concept from the book’s narrators themselves) and their controlling vision, centering on Lehi’s dream as an archetypal source for much of the history and teaching of the entire book. Others, such as Robert Thomas, Jack Welch, and Steven Sondrup, have looked at specific poetic structures and at the rhetorical consistency and power which even we who are the book’s defenders, trained in quite a different rhetorical tradition than that of the

²⁶Douglas Wilson, “Prospects for the Study of the Book of Mormon as a Work of American Literature,” *Dialogue* 3 (Spring 1968): 37–41.

Hebrews, or the nineteenth century, have tended to be somewhat uneasy about. Steven Walker has even set about to convince us that in rhetorical concentration the Book of Mormon compares favorably with the King James Bible, even when we include all those “And it came to passes” and “Look and behold.”²⁷ And not only that, but John Seelye, the fine Melville scholar, has joined with Dilworth Rust in a project to prepare and publish with a national press a “Handbook of the Book of Mormon as Literature.”

But what of the other early writings, those indubitably by Joseph Smith himself? Let me spend a moment on “The King Follet Discourse,” perhaps the best piece of discursive literature yet produced in the Church and one of the finest anywhere. Fortunately, historians have stepped over into the neglected stewardship of literary scholars to give us a professionally amalgamated and edited text and have very helpfully provided the historical and philosophical background that enables us better to understand the sense of personal vulnerability and of cosmic import that thrills us in the sermon itself. But there still remains the task of literary analysis and judgment that would promote wider reading of this valuable text and better understanding of its powerful literary qualities: the loosened and spontaneous, characteristically Mormon, version of Puritan sermon structure, the laying of a foundation stone for a Mormon esthetic in references to the glory that dwells in matter, the creation of enduring Mormon symbols, both visual and sensual, such as Joseph’s dramatically removing and using his own ring as an image of eternal personal identity, his talk of the *taste* of good doctrine and of the paradoxical *burnings* (in the breast of the righteous *and* in the mind of the damned). And finally this:

You never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot do it. I shall never undertake it. I don’t blame you for not believing my history. If I had not experienced what I have, I could not have believed it myself. I never did harm any man since I have been born in the world. My voice is always for peace. I cannot lie down until my work is finished. I never think evil nor think anything to the harm of my fellowman. When I am called at the trump and weighed in the balance, you will know me then.²⁸

We have here a piercing cry from a person discovering himself, whom we do not yet know as fully as we might if we knew him as a great writer.

²⁷Steven C. Walker, “More Than Meets the Eye: Concentration of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 20 (Winter 1980): 199–205.

²⁸Stan Larson, “The King Follett Discourse,” p. 208.

In that sermon Joseph Smith also establishes—both through the theology and his literary creation—what seems the most promising central theme for Mormon literature: the search for self. I do not mean the unconscious revelation of various selves of the author, or the creation of personae, or the investigation of identity crises, all popular themes in recent literature, but rather the author's own successful search for and creation of his best personal resources in the process of his own writing. Mormon theology, as I have already suggested, provides the most radically individualistic doctrine of self accepted by any religion or philosophical persuasion. The Mormon ontology of self, contained in the doctrine of eternalism, is uniquely powerful to energize and direct the quest for self. That is why I believe Mormon theology is, *all other things being equal*, an exceptionally positive aid toward better literature—and why the best Mormon literature would tend to be characterized by that quest, like, for instance, those fine examples from the first generation, Mary Goble Pay's reminiscences and Eliza R. Snow's "Pioneer Diary."²⁹

But we have yet to explore in our recent literature, our fiction and poetry and drama, the most demanding spiritual frontiers for *modern* Mormons, possible equivalents to those Brigham Young found—and created—on the physical frontiers of our beginnings as a people that produced the authentic personal literature of that time. One place that definitely *can* stimulate an authentic search for self that can be true to our theology, as well as our deepest reality and needs, is the mission field. I mean of course not that pale, demeaning search most often meant in our time when someone says that horribly self-indulgent, "I want to get in touch with my real self," and then, too often with expensive self-help therapy, defines himself by his worst imaginings, doubts, and desires, as if his truest self were a static minimum, his lowest common demoninator, which he must then conform to. I mean rather that discovery of one's inner dynamic, his creatable and creative core, his eternally grounded potential, his swelling, growing seed-self.

With such a focus the missionary experience, as reality and archetype, can do more for Mormon life and letters than serve as an exotic area for exploring religious identity crises. Of course, it is natural and necessary that modern Mormon writers find their true subject matter and their craft in their own way. But there *are* useful models: what I am suggesting has already been done remarkably well in some

²⁹Pay, "Death Strikes the Handcart Company," in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, pp. 143–50; Eliza R. Snow, *Eliza R. Snow, an Immortal: Selected Writings* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan, Sr., Foundation, 1957), p. 292–370.

missionary diaries, such as that of Joseph Millett. He gives us a day-by-day account of his discovery and development of self as an eighteen-year-old called on a mission in 1852, who made his way alone and mainly afoot across the continent to Nova Scotia, found his Savior on his own, learned the gospel, developed his own resources, and lived a life of remarkable spiritual perception and of pure service. An entry at the end of his journal, chosen from an earlier experience to summarize his life, captures the central moral vision and sense of self acquired by one who has lived a true religion. His life is capped both religiously and artistically by his telling of this story from the hard days of his settlement of Spring Valley, Nevada, where he was called to pioneer by Brigham Young after returning from his mission and where his daughter had died and many had suffered great sickness and hunger:

One of my children came in, said that Brother Newton Hall's folks were out of bread. Had none that day. I put . . . our flour in sack to send up to Brother Hall's. Just then Brother Hall came in. Says I, "Brother Hall, how are you out for flour." "Brother Millett, we have none." "Well, Brother Hall, there is some in that sack. I have divided and was going to send it to you. Your children told mine that you were out." Brother Hall began to cry. Said he had tried others. Could not get any. Went to the cedars and prayed to the Lord and the Lord told him to go to Joseph Millett. "Well, Brother Hall, you needn't bring this back if the Lord sent you for it. You don't owe me for it." You can't tell how good it made me feel to know that the Lord knew that there was such a person as Joseph Millett.³⁰

That way of telling that experience not only created a new version of what it means to find oneself through losing oneself but *embodied* it movingly in real experience, authentically and artistically recreated it in words—certainly fine literature.

While the first generation's contribution was mainly in sermons and diaries, the "lost generation's" literary achievement was almost totally in fiction. The finest examples are Maureen Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* and Virginia Sorenson's *The Evening and the Morning*.³¹ *Joshua* is the richest, fullest, most moving, the *truest* fiction about the pioneer experience of anyone, not just Mormons.

³⁰Journal of Joseph Millett, Library-Archives, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, pp. 88-89. Millett's journal is partially reprinted in Eugene England, "Without Purse or Scrip: A Nineteen-Year-Old Missionary in 1853," *New Era* (July 1975), pp. 20-28, and Eugene England, "Great Books or True Religion? Defining the Mormon Scholar," *Dialogue* 9 (Winter 1974): 44-46.

³¹Maureen Whipple, *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941); Virginia Sorenson, *The Evening and the Morning* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949).

But Whipple finally remains too much a part of that second major generation of Mormon writers, like them properly energized by her independence and disillusionment with her people and church but not finally reconciled to her characters and subject in the way great art requires, and the novel falls off badly in the last hundred pages—her powerful theme of human struggle and her fine central characters are a victim of the sentimental Emersonian Romanticism she substitutes for a genuine Mormon theology, and finally the muscular plot is betrayed by melodrama. But if it is true, as some say, that one cannot understand the Mormon experience without understanding the struggle of the Dixie Mission—the human cost and the faith that was willing to meet the cost and the human results won in the struggle, then we have in *The Giant Joshua* a most direct and perceptive means for understanding Mormon experience; it is our finest fictional access to our roots as Mormons and as Rocky Mountain, high-desert people, our most profound imaginative knowledge of the spiritual ancestors of all Mormons, the Dixie pioneers.

Virginia Sorensen's novel, if not quite as remarkable as Whipple's flawed masterpiece, is certainly the best novel yet about twentieth-century Mormon experience. Sorensen shares some of Whipple's "lost generation" flaws, such as a certain patronizing attitude toward Mormon thought, which she obviously doesn't understand too well. It occurs to me for instance that Sorensen, and her protagonist Kate Alexander, understand sin very well, its complex beginnings in small, tragic misunderstandings and impulses, its way of continuing even when the pains and costs become much greater than the pleasures and rewards. But Sorensen does not seem to understand the Atonement—the processes, costs, and unique Christian resources that make up repentance. On the other hand, our first generation seems to have understood the Atonement quite well, at least its power in their initial change, as they came out of the world into Zion, but they apparently did not understand much about individual sin—the "mystery of iniquity"—and its continuing challenge in their lives. My greater hope for the third generation of writers is that they understand sin well enough—both that of the world and their own—and they also understand the Atonement and can struggle to make its grandeur part of their art. Sorensen once identified herself with writers " 'in the middle'—incapable of severe orthodoxies"³²; I think the greatest Mormon literature will be written

³²Virginia Sorensen, "Is It True?—The Novelist and His Materials," *Western Humanities Review* 7 (1953): 285.

by those who, like the first generation, are capable of severe orthodoxies, but who are also able to transcend the narrowness and limitations orthodoxy implies into new freedom, enlarged possibilities. Some are learning this, and one fine place for them—and their potential audience—to learn is from *The Evening and the Morning*. As Ed Geary has commented, we are not likely to have better novels than those of Whipple and Sorensen until we learn what they have to teach.³³ One besides Geary who is helping us is Bruce Jorgensen, who has written—about *The Evening and the Morning*, why it is Mormon and what it achieves—one of the subtlest and most useful pieces of literary criticism I have read.³⁴

Eileen Kump is one in the *third* generation who has shown her ability to learn from her Mormon literary tradition and go beyond; her few slowly crafted short stories, especially “The Willows” (on a smaller scale than *Giant Joshua* but without its problems), reach the heights of Whipple’s achievements with fiction as a mode of historical apprehension.³⁵ Doug Thayer and Don Marshall have shown what they have learned in remarkable meditations on initiation into the complexities of inner evil and of the demands of outer reality, including one’s family and community.³⁶ And younger writers of fiction are coming along with authentic skills and also the grounding in Mormon thought and conviction that I think characterize the third generation. I will mention only one example, the finely tuned, uncompromising but compassionate story about a young Mormon mother published recently by Dian Saderup.³⁷ These writers still have some things to learn from the second generation, mainly about handling significant Mormon materials on a large canvas, the size of a novel.

That process of learning from but moving beyond the second generation has in some ways been more fully accomplished by our poets, but they still face some of the same great challenges and could also use much more of our support and help. Clinton Larson was the first real Mormon poet, the groundbreaker for the third literary generation in achieving a uniquely Mormon poetic, and is still, by

³³Geary, “Poetics of Provincialism,” p. 24.

³⁴Jorgensen, “‘Herself Moving beside Herself, Out There Alone,’ ” pp. 43–61.

³⁵Eileen Kump, *Bread and Milk and Other Stories* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979).

³⁶Douglas Thayer, *Under the Cottonwoods and Other Mormon Stories* (Provo: Frankson Books, 1977); Donald R. Marshall, *The Rummage Sale: Collections and Recollections* (Provo: Heirloom Publications, 1972); Donald R. Marshall, *Frost in the Orchard* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977).

³⁷Dian Saderup, “A Blessing of Duty,” *Sunstone* 4 (May–June 1979): 17–20.

virtue of both quantity and quality of work, our foremost literary artist. He is a writer I respect and love for both his genius and his personal sacrifice in making his difficult and costly way essentially alone. Certainly only a part of his work is first-rate, but he has produced a significant number and variety of poems that will stand with the best written by anyone in his time: for instance “Homestead in Idaho,”³⁸ which captures with great power unique qualities of our pioneer heritage—that intense, faith-testing loneliness and loss, that incredible will to take chances and their consequences, even to be defeated, the challenge posed by experience to our too easy security within the plan, the seeing how the tragic implications of our theology are borne out in mortality. And Larson’s range goes all the way from that long narrative work to a perfectly cut jewel like “To a Dying Girl.”³⁹

To a Dying Girl

How quickly must she go?
 She calls dark swans from mirrors everywhere:
 From halls and porticos, from pools of air.
 How quickly must she know?
 They wander through the fathoms of her eye,
 Waning southerly until their cry
 Is gone where she must go.
 How quickly does the cloudfire streak the sky,
 Tremble on the peaks, then cool and die?
 She moves like evening into night,
 Forgetful as the swans forget their flight
 Or spring the fragile snow,
 So quickly she must go.

“To a Dying Girl” develops, with the ultimately irrational, unanalyzable poignancy of pure lyricism, the same theme that preoccupied Emily Dickinson in her finest work—the incomprehensible, imperceptible change of being from one state to another, symbolized most powerfully for her in the change of seasons but felt most directly in the mysterious, adamant change of death. Her best work on this theme, such as “Farther in Summer than the Birds” and “There’s a Certain Slant of Light,” lives in the mind as a constant antidote to

³⁸Clinton F. Larson, “Homestead in Idaho,” in *The Lord of Experience* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), pp. 70–74. Also in Clinton F. Larson and William Stafford, eds., *Modern Poetry of Western America*, (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), pp. 87–92.

³⁹Larson, “To a Dying Girl,” in *The Lord of Experience*, p. 21. Also in Larson and Stafford, *Modern Poetry*, p. 92.

both sentimentality and despair about death's change. Larson uses a wider multiplicity of images ("She moves like evening into night, / Forgetful as the swans forget their flight"), but with similar metrical brilliance, varying the line lengths to bring up the rhymes in special intervals and dropping the first slack syllable from certain of his pentameter lines in order to image the balanced hesitation and release of emotion he wants to create. Read it a few times and it will live in your mind as surely and deservedly as Dickinson's best work.

Two poems by younger poets show characteristic third-generation devotional Mormon themes and the variety of stylistic handling. See Linda Sillitoe's "Letter to a Four-Year-Old Daughter," *BYU Studies* 16 (Winter 1976): 234, and the following by Bruce Jorgenson:

A Litany for the Dark Solstice

Dead of winter,
Dead of night,
Neither center,
Left, nor right.

Teach me error
Within reason;
Stay me with terror
Out of season.
When I have most,
Whirl it as dust.
Salt be the taste
Of all I love best
In earth, and rust
Be the iron I trust.

In my distress,
Bless me to bless.
On urgent water,
Gone oar and rudder,
Still me this rest:

Break me to Christ.

The differences I have described between the first and third generations are well exemplified in the differences between the essays

produced by the two groups. The first generation was too uniformly embattled against the outside world for the kinds of complex revelations of personal feelings and differences, or the subtle examinations of more universal problems existing *within* as well as without the Church, that characterize the modern Mormon personal essay. Only a beginning has been made at describing this genre and evaluating its examples, but we have Mary Bradford's provocative analysis of what has been written⁴⁰ and Ed Geary's and Laurel Ulrich's and others' experiments with the form. The experiments show how the essay can work not so much to convey information as to give the reader vicarious experience (like other forms of imaginative literature) and yet still retain its unique abilities to deal directly with the most challenging dimensions of Mormon theology.

For instance, as Clifton Jolley has pointed out,⁴¹ Mormon thought exposes those who know it and take it seriously to the consequences of living in an ultimately paradoxical, because nonabsolutistic, universe, where opposition "must needs be" or otherwise there is no existence, where God cannot achieve his purposes through his will alone and therefore has problems and suffers, not only through choice but through necessity, because he has perfect power to bring salvation with our cooperation—but not without it. The consequences include terror and awful responsibility as well as the hope of exciting eternal adventure. The Mormon personal essay can have both a substantive and a formal advantage over any other approach to the terror of life because, while lacking somewhat the *indirection* in other forms, it can combine many of those forms' other virtues (the rich textural element of fiction, for instance) without separating itself from the directness and responsibility involved in dealing with the *literally* true, as well as *fictively* true, experience. As Jolley writes, "The personal essay is utterly responsible, its point of view is owned. In it, one may take neither comfort nor refuge in the satisfactions of pose or form; one must face the beast, naked and alone."⁴² I have faith that the personal essay, developed into new dimensions and powers by Mormon writers, may serve as our most productive genre, the one best tuned to the particular strengths and tendencies of Mormon thought and experience, including of course the search for self; it provides naturally for the widest possible appreciation by Mormon readers and the widest involvement by Mormon writers because of its

⁴⁰Mary Bradford, "I, Eye, Aye: A Personal Essay on Personal Essays," *Dialogue* 11 (Summer 1978): 81–89.

⁴¹Clifton Holt Jolley, "Mormons and the Beast," *Dialogue* 11 (Autumn 1978): 137–39.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 138.

accessible but powerful form, and it may well be our most important contribution to the wider world literary culture.

Now let me conclude with some problems and possibilities. I realize that the challenge of properly relating scholarship and artistic achievement to moral character or religious faith—of connecting truth and goodness to beauty—is a huge and treacherous one, one that has not been met with very great success by many, past or present. But I find, even at Brigham Young University, a surprising lack of interest in trying to meet the challenge, an almost secularist distrust, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, of any attempt to directly apply gospel perspectives and standards to scholarship or artistry. Part of that distrust stems from a very proper revulsion (which I share fully) at seeing such combinations made naively or superficially or self-righteously, but we are untrue to our professional responsibilities as well as our faith if we do not somehow come to terms with the charge given us by the chairman of the BYU Board of Trustees, President Spencer W. Kimball, in his “Second Century Address”:

We surely cannot give up our concerns with character and conduct without also giving up on mankind. Much misery results from flaws in character, not from failures in technology. We cannot give in to the ways of the world with regard to the realm of art. . . . Our art must be the kind which edifies man, which takes into account his immortal nature, and which prepares us for heaven.⁴³

I feel certain President Kimball was not talking about simple piety, superficial Mormonism of the kind our home literature has fostered. Later that day when he asked the Lord to “let the morality of the graduates of this University provide the music of hope for the inhabitants of this planet,”⁴⁴ it was a beautiful and lucid but also very challenging moment that we have not yet come to terms with. And we *will* not if we on the one hand resist that charge as too pious and unacademic for serious scholars or on the other hand think it only has to do with the Word of Wisdom and dress standards, rather than the serious and extremely difficult moral issues our graduates will face in the world—such as the increasingly shrill and violent struggles of various groups for and against certain “rights,” the overwhelming hopelessness of the poor and ignorant and suppressed, and “the wars and the perplexities of the nations” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:79).

⁴³Spencer W. Kimball, “Second Century Address,” *BYU Studies* 16 (Summer 1976): 454.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 457.

President Kimball was speaking in a great tradition of the latter-day prophets, a tradition we sometimes forget. Listen to Brigham Young:

There is not, has not been, and never can be any method, scheme, or plan devised by any being in this world for intelligence to eternally exist and obtain an exaltation, without knowing the good and the evil—without tasting the bitter and the sweet. Can the people understand that it is actually necessary for opposite principles to be placed before them, or this state of being would be no probation, and we should have no opportunity for exercising the agency given us? Can they understand that we cannot obtain eternal life unless we actually know and comprehend by our experience the principle of good and the principle of evil, the light and the darkness, truth, virtue, and holiness—also vice, wickedness and corruption?⁴⁵

Or listen to Joseph Smith:

The things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O Man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss and the broad expanse of eternity.⁴⁶

Nothing superficial or pious or sentimental there; it would be hard to find better statements of what the greatest, the most *challenging*, literature and other works of art succeed in doing. And for these purposes the kind of art I have been describing and proposing to you—that is, genuine Mormon literature—is, I believe, one of our richest and most direct resources. Such literature has unique and long-proven ability to teach not only moral rigor and sensitivity but to teach specific moral intelligence. But we who are the teachers, the critics, the literate audience must not be overly optimistic, too easy in our criticism, slothful in our expectations of what a truly Mormon literature will be and will cost. I trust I am not guilty of those faults here: I have really been trying to show that it is *not easier* to be a good Christian or Mormon writer, but more difficult; piety will not take the place of inner gifts or tough thinking or hard training and work.

The dangers of mixing religion and art are clear and present—from both sides. Literature is not a substitute for religion and making it such is a sure road to hell; and just as surely religious authority is no

⁴⁵Brigham Young et al., *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–1886), 7:237.

⁴⁶Joseph Smith to the Church from Liberty Jail, March 1839, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1932–1950), 3:295.

substitute for honest literary perception and judgment—and didactic, apologetic, or sentimental writing, however “true” in some literal sense, is no substitute for real literature in its power to grasp and change. In the direction of such sentimentalism lies spiritual suicide. We must stop rewarding the “pious trash,” as Flannery O’Connor called much Catholic literature—a phrase that well describes much of our own; and we must, on the other hand, also stop awarding prizes to those stories which, for instance, in reaching for unearned maturity, use sexual explicitness or sophomoric skepticism as faddish, but phony, symbols of intellectual and moral sophistication and freedom—or merely to titillate their Mormon audience. Various forms of Scylla and Charybdis threaten all about, and we must proceed with some caution along straight and narrow courses.

But we should also have the courage of our supposed convictions. People outside the Church are calling Mormonism such things as the only successful American religious movement or recognizing Joseph Smith as the most interesting religious mind in America or Brigham Young as one of the world’s most impressive empire builders and practical thinkers. Many of us have even stronger convictions about the inherent greatness and interest of our heritage and its people. We now need to be willing to do the scholarship; to recover and explicate the texts; to write the biographies, the literary criticism, the theory; to teach—even to do the simple reading—that will help bring to full flower a culture commensurate with our great religious and historical roots.

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Emmeline B. Wells: “Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?”

Carol Cornwall Madsen

Two thousand suffragists packed DeGuiver's opera house in Atlanta, Georgia, for the annual convention of the National-American Woman's Suffrage Association on 2 February 1895. Emmeline B. Wells, delegate from Utah, had just concluded her report on the status of woman's suffrage in Utah Territory. With Utah's constitutional convention only a month away, she expressed confidence the convention delegates would see fit to include woman's suffrage in the organic law of the new state. She reviewed the work of the Utah Woman's Suffrage Association, which she headed, in achieving a favorable disposition of the convention delegates toward this issue and expressed hope that Utah would join Wyoming and Colorado as the only three states in the Union granting suffrage to women.

It was a satisfying and long-awaited occasion for the Mormon suffragist. But the moment was marked indelibly as a milestone when Susan B. Anthony, the grande dame of the suffrage movement, came forward and put her arm around the Utah delegate. The stately suffrage leader towered above the tiny Emmeline, but their dedication to the cause of women knew no such disparity. Enthusiastically endorsing the work of her Utah colleague, the elder Anthony spoke with such fervor that the audience was visibly moved by this spontaneous display of deep affection.¹

For Emmeline Wells it was the capstone to twenty-five years of public work in behalf of women matched only, fifteen years later, by another expression of confidence in her leadership. In 1910, at eighty-two, she was appointed general president of the Relief Society, the highest ecclesiastical position available to Mormon women.

How did it happen that this tiny Mormon woman could rise to such prominence in two seemingly diverse spheres of activities? The

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¹“Convention in Atlanta,” *Woman's Exponent* 23 (1 and 15 February 1895): 237. See also Emmeline B. Wells Diary, 2 February 1895, photocopy, Library-Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter referred to as Church Archives). Originals are located in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

answer lies in the fact that to Emmeline B. Wells they were not so dissimilar. They were tributaries of the same stream, following their own course toward the advancement of women. Appraising the broadened opportunities for women that had occurred during her lifetime, she linked those achievements with the purposes God had for his children. "The inspiring influences that have been causing this uplifting," she wrote in a 1902 Relief Society handbook,

are all in the program marked out for the children of our Father in Heaven; let those who *dare*, deny it! but as sure as the Scriptures are true, and they *are true*, so sure woman must be instrumental in bringing about the restoration of that equality which existed when the world was created. . . . Perfect equality then and so it must be when all things are restored as they were in the beginning.²

Emmeline Wells's entrance into these two public spheres came almost by chance. The circumstances of her life, her interest in writing, and her deep concern for the condition of women all merged propitiously with the vehicle that would provide her passage into these spheres, the *Woman's Exponent*. Established in 1872 as a Mormon woman's journal to provide a forum of public expression on women's issues, the *Woman's Exponent* spread a network of communication to women throughout Utah Territory and even beyond and became a broker of information for the three women's organizations of the Church: the Relief Society, the Young Woman's Mutual Improvement Association, and the Primary.

First a contributor, later associate editor, and within five years editor, Emmeline Wells used the thirty-seven years of her editorship to speak clearly and boldly on issues of greatest concern to her as a Mormon woman. It is through these editorials and her forty-seven diaries, now located in the Brigham Young University archives, that she is best studied and most completely understood. She became a leading exponent of the Mormon cause and served for more than thirty years as a connection between the women of the Church and the national women's councils.

Near the end of her life she wrote in an editorial: "I believe in women, especially thinking women."³ Her faith was well placed, for she had learned early in life the necessity for women to think and act for themselves. Deserted by her husband and deprived of her newborn son by the time she was sixteen, Emmeline stepped into a whirlwind of events which would carry her a long way from the pleasant, stable, and secure New England setting of her childhood.

²*The General Relief Society, Officers, Objects and Status* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1902), pp. 74-75.

³"Why, Ah! Why," *Woman's Exponent* 3 (30 September [1 October] 1874): 67.



Courtesy of LDS Church Archives

Emmeline B. Wells
(Circa 1878-1880)

Born on 29 February 1838 in Petersham, Massachusetts, Emmeline Belos Woodward joined the Church as a girl of fourteen. The next year she married James Harris and moved with him and his parents the following spring to Nauvoo, Illinois. Six months later the Prophet Joseph Smith was dead, her parents-in-law had apostatized, and Emmeline had lost both child and husband. The following year, at seventeen, she became a plural wife of fifty-year-old Newel K. Whitney, and in 1846 she joined the exodus of Saints to the West.

Emmeline bore Newel two daughters after arriving in Utah but was then thrown again on her own resources upon his death in 1850. Marrying a third time, in 1852, as the seventh wife of Daniel H. Wells, she seemed to have finally found a measure of security. The prosperous Wells was at various times a counselor to Brigham Young, mayor of Salt Lake City, superintendent of Public Works, chancellor of the University of Deseret, and lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion. His other wives shared a large home on South Temple Street known as the "big house," while Emmeline and her five daughters—three more were born to her after her marriage to Daniel H. Wells—lived in a smaller home several blocks away.

When Wells's financial circumstances faltered, Emmeline was obliged to make adjustments. Like many other women, she found it difficult to meet the exigencies that often accompanied plural marriage. Learning to become both economically and emotionally self-reliant was a painful process for her and caused her frequently and apologetically to explain, "No wonder I'm forced to be strong minded."⁴ A resolution evolved from this self-appraisal which eventually became her own course of action:

I am determined to train my girls to habits of independence so that they never need to trust blindly but understand for themselves and have sufficient energy of purpose to carry out plans for their own welfare and happiness.⁵

The process toward independence was expedited by her association with the *Woman's Exponent*, and though nearly a decade of diaries is filled with feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and constant need for "the shelter and protection of a strong arm," such entries became fewer after 1879 and disappeared altogether within a few years.

Her focus began to move outward; her attention transferred from the dissatisfactions she felt in her own life to those experienced by women generally. At this time she expressed what would become her

⁴Wells Diary, 6 January 1878.

⁵Ibid., 7 January 1878.

primary motivation for half a century: “I desire to do all in my power to help elevate the condition of my own people, especially women,” adding later, and to “better her condition mentally, morally, spiritually, temporally.”⁶ Igniting and fueling this commitment was the continual flow of calumny from the eastern press and pulpit against LDS women, giving Emmeline the determination to counter the attacks along with a similar determination to expose the social inequities undermining the position of women generally.

An unusual set of circumstances arose which enabled Emmeline Wells to serve both purposes simultaneously, circumstances which inadvertently united the cause of national suffragists with that of Mormon women, an unlikely alliance at the outset. In 1870 Utah women were given the right to vote by the territorial legislature. For the previous three years various members of Congress had proposed bills granting women suffrage in the territories primarily as an experiment but also as a ploy to enable Mormon women in Utah Territory to unshackle themselves from the chains of polygamy, hopefully stamping out the practice altogether. While Congress vacillated, the Utah Territorial Legislature acted upon the proposed measure and passed it unanimously. Woman suffrage became law in Utah on 12 February 1870. The motives for adopting such progressive legislation may have been varied, but it was obvious that taking the initiative for such a gesture measurably countered the “enslaved” image of Mormon women. A hidden bonus for this action came in the form of unforeseen support for the Mormon cause by national suffragists when suffrage became the scapegoat of polygamy. For, unlike the prognosis of antipolygamists, Mormon women did not rise up *en masse* and vote down the practice. Congressional strategy thus made an about-face. The new posture was to strengthen existing antipolygamy legislation by adding stiffer penalties, including disfranchisement of Mormon women. Declaring they were ready “to render all the aid in their power to fight this proposition,”⁷ national suffragists increased their efforts each time Congress considered disfranchising Utah women.

While the United States Supreme Court was deliberating the constitutionality of antipolygamy legislation in the Reynolds case of 1878, the time seemed propitious for Mormons to reinforce the battle on the national scene with supplementary support for their

⁶Ibid., 4 January 1878; “Why a Woman Should Desire to Be a Mormon,” *Woman's Exponent* 36 (January 1908): 48.

⁷George Q. Cannon to John Taylor, 14 January 1882, Cannon Papers, Church Archives, as quoted in Beverly Beeton, “Woman Suffrage in the American West, 1869–1896” (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1976), p. 101.

congressional delegate. Though other Utah women had made the initial contact with national suffragists as early as 1869, their independent efforts had not been recognized by Mormon officials or by suffragists as representative of the territory.⁸ Thus it was that Emmeline Wells and Zina Y. Williams were selected by Church leaders to perform a two-fold mission to Washington in 1879. The first was to memorialize Congress against proposed antipolygamy legislation that would invalidate existing plural marriages and illegitimatize the children of such unions. Secondly, the two women were to attend the annual suffrage convention in order to cement relations with national suffragists in their common suffrage cause.

It was not easy for these two representatives of the much maligned women of Utah to brave the ridicule and derogation of easterners. They were, however, cordially met by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and given opportunity to speak at the convention. Not everyone was pleased to have the controversial Mormons join the suffrage cause. An article in the *Boston Woman's Journal*, organ of the American Woman's Suffrage Association, criticized these two women's presence at the convention, an attitude which noticeably disturbed the liberal Elizabeth Stanton. She answered, "If George Q. Cannon [Utah's delegate to Congress] can sit in the Congress of the United States without compromising that body on the question of Polygamy, I should think Mormon women might sit on our platform without making us responsible for their religious faith."⁹ Suffragists always made clear that their sympathies were not with the Mormon cause, per se, only against any move to use woman's suffrage as a weapon to strike at polygamy.¹⁰ Despite efforts of both Mormon women and national suffragists, the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, along with outlawing polygamy, carried among its stringent enforcement measures the repeal of woman's suffrage.

Emmeline Wells used the *Woman's Exponent* as a vehicle through which to express her views on suffrage and on woman's position in the social order. Her first efforts for the *Woman's Exponent* were strong feminist arguments submitted under the name Blanche Beechwood. When she became editor, she used the editorial column to express these views and soon dropped her pseudonym. But,

⁸Annie Thompson Godbe, Mary Hampton Godbe, and Charlotte Ives Cobb Godbe, plural wives of William S. Godbe, were all active in the suffrage movement and associated with the liberal splinter group, the Godbeites. Charlotte remained the most active and visible of the three in the woman's rights movement. For additional information, see Beeton, "Woman Suffrage," pp. 43-46.

⁹"Mrs. Stanton and Mormon Women," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (15 May 1879): 240.

¹⁰"Mormon Ladies Calling at the White House," *Philadelphia Times*, 19 January 1879, reprinted in *Woman's Exponent* 7 (15 March 1879): 212.

interestingly, she added a new one, “Aunt Em.” In tracing these writings, one finds an interesting literary dichotomy—a dichotomy which characterized Emmeline herself. While articles by Blanche Beechwood and editorials by Emmeline B. Wells voiced primarily feminist ideas, “Aunt Em” provided a balancing counterpoint. Reflecting the ideals of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, a popular woman’s magazine of the day, she wrote the typical sentimental pieces of that genre, eulogizing friends, romanticizing the past, and extolling nature as the source of cosmic truths.

Emmeline the woman was both of these voices. As feminist, suffragist, and organizer, she was a rebel with a cause. But she was also a romantic, embodying more the traces of the romantic literary legacy inherited by the Victorians than the ideals of womanhood developed by them. Measured by Barbara Welter’s definition of the “true Victorian woman,” Emmeline was only halfway in the fold. Both pious and pure, she was never domestic and only selectively submissive.¹¹

Her dyadic nature is beautifully demonstrated by two pieces of her writing, one, a diary entry, and the other, an *Exponent* article, written within days of each other. On 30 September 1874 an article by Blanche Beechwood appeared, posing the question:

Is there then nothing worth living for, but to be petted, humored and caressed, by a man? That is all very well as far as it goes, but that man is the only thing in existence worth living for I fail to see. All honor and reverence to good men; but they and their attentions are not the only source of happiness on the earth, and need not fill up every thought of woman. And when men see that women can exist without their being constantly at hand, that they can learn to be self-reliant or depend upon each other for more or less happiness, it will perhaps take a little of the conceit out of some of them.¹²

On the day this article appeared Emmeline wrote an extensive entry in her diary. Part of it reads:

Oh if my husband could only love me even a little and not seem so perfectly indifferent to any sensation of that kind, he cannot know the craving of my nature, he is surrounded with love on every side, and I am cast out. O my poor aching heart Where shall it rest its burden, only on the Lord, only to Him can I look every other avenue seems closed against me. . . . I have no one to go to for comfort or shelter no strong arm to lean upon no bosom bared for me, no protection or comfort in my husband.¹³

¹¹For a full description of “true womanhood” in the Victorian era, see Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” in *Dainty Convictions* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 21–41.

¹²“Why, Ah! Why,” *Woman’s Exponent* 3 (30 September [1 October] 1874): 67.

¹³Wells Diary, 30 September 1874.

Her feminism served as a catharsis for these feelings as she struggled to come to terms with the conditions of her life which she could not control. Consciously or unconsciously, she addressed this and similar articles to her own husband, whose attention was a desired but absent element in her life. Thus the *Exponent* became in effect a game board for her, the opposing elements of both her nature and her situation the pawns she moved about at will.

As a feminist theorist and activist, Emmeline used both pen and petition, combining the “conservative and moralistic” stance of her contemporaries with the “libertarian and rationalist” style of the early feminist theorists.¹⁴ Her feminism reflected the major themes of the “woman question” that historian Nancy Cott identified and labeled as “sexual equality” and “sexual propriety.”¹⁵ Emmeline believed wholly in the principle of “sexual equality” espoused by Mary Wollstonecraft and other early theorists. As explained by Wollstonecraft, this idea was predicated on the assumption that both women and men partake of a common humanity, both are endowed by the creator with the capacity for rational thought, and both are responsible for their own “perfectability.” Restraints on individual growth and progress for either sex could not be justified. Almost a century later Emmeline explained this idea to her *Exponent* readers. “[Woman’s] highest motive is,” she wrote, “that she may be recognized as a responsible being, capable of judging for and maintaining herself, and standing upon just as broad, grand and elevated a platform as man.”¹⁶ Only by overcoming centuries of custom would women be able to “comprehend the advantage arising from the progress of independence of thought and action, and a knowledge for themselves.”¹⁷ She was convinced that if women had “the same opportunities for an education, observation and experience in public and private for a succession of years” it would be obvious that they are “equally endowed with man and prepared to bear [their] part on all general questions socially, politically, industrially, and educationally, as well as spiritually.”¹⁸ Her mission was to raise the consciousness of women to the point where they would no longer let lie dormant “the highest faculty of [their] nature—thought.” Women must be responsible for their own progress. “May it not be

¹⁴Alice S. Rossi, ed., *The Feminist Papers* (New York: Columbia University Press, Bantam Press, 1974), p. 6.

¹⁵For further elaboration of this analysis, see Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood, Woman’s Sphere in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 202–205.

¹⁶“Woman’s Expectations,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (1 July 1877): 20.

¹⁷“Woman’s Progression,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (15 February 1878): 140.

¹⁸“Action or Indifference,” *Woman’s Exponent* 5 (1 September 1876): 54.

said of any of us . . . ,” she counseled, “that we neglected to improve the talent committed to our care.”¹⁹

Woman’s distinctiveness rather than her similarity to man was the basis for the second major feminist theme, “sexual propriety.” This view assumed a unique woman’s sphere in which women performed specifically designated female duties, different from male responsibilities but equally valued. As long as women could justify their activities as essentially “female” in nature, they could expand the perimeters of that sphere. The emphasis on differences thus circumvented, at least at the outset, the issue of inferiority and superiority. The concept of an extended woman’s sphere not only gave it a socially acceptable instrumentality but did so while reinforcing its distinctive qualities.²⁰ Elements of both theories, equality and propriety, constituted feminism in the last century. Recognizing the inherent variances in the two views, Emmeline Wells borrowed discretely from both. That logical lapses occasionally occurred in her position only placed her more squarely in the mainstream of nineteenth century feminism whose parameters underwent repeated re-examination and definition throughout the century.

Emmeline saw that to function with excellence in either the home or in society, women needed to be educated and experienced. Many of the important issues of the day—reform, temperance, the woman question—all pointed significantly to the home, she told her readers, and she argued that

in the name of justice, reason and common sense, let woman be fortified and strengthened by every possible advantage, that she may be adequately and thoroughly fitted not only to grace the drawing room, and manage every department of her household, but to perform with skill and wisdom the arduous and elaborate work of molding and fashioning the fabrics of which society is to be woven.²¹

Thus women, whose mental capabilities were equal to those of men, should not be fettered in their efforts to obtain the skills and knowledge necessary for them to take an equal part in “the work of the world.” But she envisaged this partnership as beginning at home. Critical of the submissive or subservient role imposed on women by prevailing Victorian standards, she urged her *Exponent* readers to be something more than just a “toy,” a “painted doll,” a

¹⁹“Why, Ah! Why,” *Woman’s Exponent* 3 (30 September [1 October] 1874): 67.

²⁰Feminists of the last century did not see the advancement of women in contradiction to woman’s domestic role. This was always considered woman’s first duty, the one in which society most highly esteemed her and from which she herself attained most legitimacy.

²¹“Impromptu Ideas of Home,” *Woman’s Exponent* 4 (15 May 1876): 191.

“household deity,” or “a subject” rather than “a joint-partner in the domestic firm.”²² When women have learned to be “self-reliant and self-sustaining, and comprehend that in marriage there is a higher purpose than being a man’s pet or even housekeeper,” she averred, “they will . . . choose to become the wives of men who are living for lofty purposes.”²³ Almost plaintively, she queried: “Why is it not possible for man and woman to love each other truly, and dwell together in harmony, each according to the other all the freedom of thought, feeling, and expression they would grant to one who was not bound to them by indissoluble ties?”²⁴ She firmly believed that if men would recognize the advantages to themselves they would help develop woman’s powers rather than placing “almost insurmountable barriers to hinder their progress.”²⁵ Educating both men and women in the new definition of woman’s place was basic to the feminists’ task.

A third dimension of Emmeline’s feminist philosophy found its roots in her Mormon beliefs, which not only encompassed elements of the first two ideologies but also broadened the base from which Emmeline viewed woman’s place and purpose in life. The concept of individual progression and accountability, a foundation stone of Mormonism’s plan of salvation, had no gender-based restrictions or limitations. It derived from the eternal principle of individual agency, explained by Apostle Erastus Snow in 1883:

We have come to the understanding that every soul of man, both male and female, high and low, is the offspring of God, that their spirits are immortal, eternal, intelligent beings, and that their entity depends upon their agency and independent action, which is neither trammelled by God himself nor allowed to be restrained by any of His creatures with His action and approval.²⁶

It was not the partiality of God, she affirmed, that created inequality of the sexes but the denial of opportunity to women to develop and utilize the rational powers with which they had been endowed. Any artificial barriers to individual growth and development were deplorable. No limits are set for what men can do, she observed. Women should enjoy similar freedom. “It is this longing for

²²“Woman, A Subject,” *Woman’s Exponent* 3 (1 November 1874): 82; and “Real Women,” *Woman’s Exponent* 2 (1 January 1874): 118.

²³“A Mormon Woman’s View of Marriage,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (1 September 1877): 54.

²⁴“Woman’s Progression,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (15 February 1878): 140.

²⁵“Woman, A Subject,” *Woman’s Exponent* 3 (1 November 1874): 82.

²⁶*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–1886; reprint ed., 1967), 24:69.

freedom," she explained, "that is inspiring . . . women . . . to make war against the bondage with which they have been enslaved, and seek, by every available means, to inspire a universal feeling among men and women for equal rights and privileges in the sphere God has assigned them."²⁷ And for Mormon women, woman's sphere was not the tightly defined domestic circle of the middle-class Victorians. Building a commonwealth in the West, they were constantly advised, was a mutual effort of women and men requiring business, mathematical, merchandising, medical, legal, educational, administrative, and organizational skills, especially from women, releasing men to use their strength in the harsh demands of building the physical structure of that commonwealth.²⁸

Emmeline and other Mormon feminists thus found institutional support for their views, and at a Relief Society conference in 1895, Joseph F. Smith further clarified his opinion regarding the woman question: "Why shall one [sex] be admitted to all the avenues of mental and physical progress and prosperity and the other be prohibited, and prescribed within certain narrow limits?" Affirming the right of a woman to be whatever she had capacity to be, he had a word for those who would restrain her:

Women may be found who seem to glory in their enthralled condition, and who caress and fondle the very chains and manacles which fetter and enslave them! Let those who love this helpless dependent condition and prefer to remain in it and enjoy it; but for conscience and for mercy's sake let them not stand in the way of those of their sisters who would be, and of right ought to be *free*.²⁹

While the Relief Society offered a means whereby women participated in the nontraditional vocations demanded by empire-building, its organization in Nauvoo was an event of singular importance to Mormon feminists. Although ostensibly formed for benevolent purposes, as its name indicates, the organization in time became an educational, economic, and spiritual resource for its members as well as for the general Church membership. Benevolent and reform societies had been formed as early as the late eighteenth century and proliferated in the area in which Mormonism was born.³⁰

²⁷"Special Life Missions," *Woman's Exponent* 6 (1 March 1878): 148.

²⁸See, for example, Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 8 April 1867, 12:32; 8 December 1867, 12:116; 18 July 1869, 13:61; 7 April 1873, 16:16.

²⁹"Relief Society Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 24 (15 August 1895): 45.

³⁰Studies in early women's organizations include Keith E. Melder, *Beginnings of Sisterhood, The American Woman's Rights Movement, 1800-1850* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, "The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Spring 1979): 66-85; Mary P. Ryan, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Religion and the Families of Utica, New York, 1800-1840," *American Quarterly* 30 (Winter 1978): 602-23; Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood*, pp. 126-59.

Thus, many Mormon women were well acquainted with the structure and purposes of such an organization. But the women of Nauvoo were informed that the Relief Society was not to be another charitable or moral reform association. Formed “after the pattern of the priesthood,” which the women understood as the saving power of God, it had been “organized according to the law of heaven,” explained John Taylor, present at its inception. Joseph Smith himself had told the women that the Church was not fully organized until the women were; and Elder Reynolds Cahoon, addressing the society, stated: “There are many Benevolent Societies abroad designed to do good, but not as this. Ours is according to the order of God, connected with the priesthood, according to the same good principles. Knowledge will grow out of it.”³¹ Thus, while many of its functions and procedures resembled those of other women’s groups of the period and while some members may well have belonged to such groups, this organization was perceived as distinct in origin and design.

Although Emmeline Wells did not participate in the Relief Society in Nauvoo, she learned of its beginnings from her life-long association with her plural sister-wife Elizabeth Ann Whitney, counselor to Emma Smith in the first Relief Society presidency. She heard the oft-repeated words of Joseph Smith to the women of the Society on 28 April 1842: “I now turn the key to you in the name of God and this Society shall rejoice and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time—this is the beginning of better days to this Society.”³² For Emmeline and numerous other Mormon women those words had prophetic meaning. Imposing a literal and universal interpretation on that symbolic gesture, they attached a direct relationship between that event in Nauvoo in 1842 and the Seneca Falls convention six years later, which marked the beginning of an organized woman’s movement and gave to the world a “Declaration of Sentiments” enumerating woman’s legal and social disabilities. The Declaration, patterned after the Declaration of Independence, cited man as having usurped woman’s autonomy by denying “her inalienable right to the elective franchise”; by declaring her “civilly dead” upon marriage, thus denying her any claim to her own or her husband’s property, wages, or children; by limiting her access to education and employment; by allowing her “a subordinate position” and participation in the churches; and by assigning her to “a sphere of action” independent of her own choice, thereby

³¹Minutes, Nauvoo Female Relief Society, 17 March 1842, p. 8, and 13 August 1843, p. 91, Church Archives.

³²Ibid., 28 April 1842, p. 32.

coming “to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.”³³ The organization of the Relief Society, Emmeline noted years later, opened

one of the most important eras in the history of woman. It presented the great woman-question to the Latter-day Saints, previous to the woman’s rights organizations. The question did not present itself in any aggressive form as woman opposed to man, but as a co-worker and helpmeet in all that relates to the well-being and advancement of both, and mutual promoting of the best interests of the community at large.³⁴

For Emmeline and other LDS feminists, the nascent woman’s movement was but a secular manifestation of the organization of Mormon women, both heralding a new age for women. Looking back at the two events, she was persuaded that “the key of knowledge was turned for her [woman], and men no longer had the same absolute sway.”³⁵

Others perceived the same relationship. Louisa Lula Greene Richards, first editor of the *Woman’s Exponent*, wrote in 1901:

[Joseph] declared when he organized the Sisterhood of the Church into the Relief Society, that he “turned the key in favor of woman.” Since that time what a noble work has been accomplished in woman’s favor by hundreds of heroic women in this and other nations, including many of the Society which the Prophet organized.³⁶

Susa Young Gates, daughter of Brigham Young, remarked, “From the hour the key was given, great and restless activity has marked every phase of womanly life.”³⁷ Sarah M. Kimball, one-time president of the Utah Woman’s Suffrage Association and long-time president of the Fifteenth Ward Relief Society, declared in 1870, when Utah women were enfranchised, that she had always been a “woman’s rights woman”; and she later stated, “The sure foundations of the suffrage cause were deeply and permanently laid on the 17th of March, 1842.”³⁸

Some of the brethren concurred. Apostle Orson F. Whitney, long-time advocate for women, opined that the

³³Susan B. Anthony et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 vols. (Rochester, N.Y.: Susan B. Anthony, 1881), 1:70–71.

³⁴“Women’s Organizations,” *Woman’s Exponent* 8 (15 January 1880): 122. See also “Stray Notes,” *Woman’s Exponent* 8 (15 July 1879): 28, for her ideas on how the Relief Society qualified women for the responsibility of suffrage and other rights. See also John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1943), p. 245, for a further interpretation of the broad purposes of the Relief Society.

³⁵“A Wonderful Age,” *Woman’s Exponent* 27 (1 February 1899): 100.

³⁶*Woman’s Exponent* 29 (1 January 1900 [1901]): 69.

³⁷“What Hath the Century Wrought,” *Woman’s Exponent* 29 (1 January 1900 [1901]): 71.

³⁸Woman Suffrage Leaflet (Salt Lake City, January 1892), p. 3.

lifting of the women of Zion . . . was the beginning of a work for the elevation of womankind throughout the world. "I have turned the key," said the Prophet on that historic occasion, and from what has since taken place we are justified in believing that the words were big with fate.³⁹

As late as 1945 President George Albert Smith in a Relief Society general conference told the sisters:

You were the first women to have the franchise; the first women to have a voice in the work of a church. It was God that gave it to you and it came as a result of revelation to a Prophet of the Lord. Since that time, think what benefits the women of this world have enjoyed. Not only you belonging to this Church have enjoyed the blessing of equality, but when the Prophet Joseph Smith turned the key for the emancipation of womankind, it was turned for all the world. And from generation to generation the number of women who can enjoy the blessings of religious liberty and civil liberty has been increasing.⁴⁰

It is little wonder that Emmeline Wells could conclude that the women of the world were "acted upon by an influence many comprehend[ed] not which [was] working for their redemption from under the curse."⁴¹

The curse to which she referred was the nemesis of Bible-believing feminists. The biblical edict pronouncing Eve's subjugation to Adam because of her disobedience in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:16) had long been the basis for defining male-female relationships in Jewish and Christian cultures. So thoroughly embedded in traditional attitudes was the concept of woman's secondary status not only in the church but in marriage and in society that only when the traditional relationship of men and women was challenged by nineteenth century feminists did it become necessary to invoke Genesis from the pulpit to reinforce the status quo.

From her Mormonism Emmeline found assurance on the dilemma posed by Eve. Eve's punishment for disobedience in the garden presupposed a different status before the Fall. As Emmeline explained in a talk to a woman's group in New York, Eve's curse was not perpetual, and when the conditions of redemption were met, men and women would again be equal.⁴² The punishment, a requisite of law, was temporal, a part of mortality, not an eternal

³⁹*Young Woman's Journal* 17 (July 1906): 295.

⁴⁰*Relief Society Magazine* 32 (December 1945): 717.

⁴¹"Self-Made Women," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (1 March 1881): 148.

⁴²In answer to a request from the Women's Clubs of New York, Emmeline Wells wrote "Why a Woman Should Desire to Be a Mormon," in which she discussed in length her viewpoints on the redemption of women from the curse, emphasizing her belief that women would be instrumental in their own behalf and that the curse was only temporary (see *Woman's Exponent* 36 [December 1907]: 39-40, and 37 [January 1908]: 46-48).

condition and in no way represented the essential nature of woman. Moreover, while Eve was blamed for the subordination of women, she was also honored as the mother of the human race. Brigham Young in 1869 explained her important role to the Saints:

We understand . . . why God permitted Mother Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit. We should not have been here to-day if she had not; we could never have possessed wisdom and intelligence if she had not done it. It was all in the economy of heaven; and we need not talk about it; it is all right. We should never blame Mother Eve, not [in] the least.⁴³

Emmeline Wells preached the same principle to her audience in New York, explaining that Eve was a “willing instrument in effecting a grand purpose for the ultimate good of the human family.”⁴⁴ A Relief Society lesson in 1916, written during Emmeline’s presidency, also praised Eve as a woman who “dared to disobey,” a “compound of curiosity and unselfish willingness to suffer that her loved ones might enjoy.”⁴⁵ Eve thus presented a mixed message of subordination through disobedience and honor through self-sacrifice. While her subordination was temporal, her honor was eternal.⁴⁶

Overcoming the “curse” of Eve inexplicably found a corollary in the principle of plural marriage. Mormon women continually affirmed the possibility of redeeming themselves from the effects of Eve’s transgression and returning to a station of equality with man. Joseph had been given the keys of this last dispensation which would bring forth the restitution of all things. In giving the key of knowledge and intelligence to women, he gave them the power to regain that original equality. Eliza R. Snow explained how this could be done:

The Lord has placed the means into our hands, in the Gospel, whereby we can regain our lost position. But how? . . . It was through disobedience that woman came into her present position, and and it is only by obedience, honoring God in all the institutions he has

⁴³*Journal of Discourses*, 11 July 1869, 13:145.

⁴⁴“Why a Woman Should Desire to Be a Mormon,” *Woman’s Exponent* 36 (December 1907): 40.

⁴⁵*Relief Society Magazine* 2 (December 1915): 548.

⁴⁶There is a similarity in the Mormon and Puritan attitudes toward Eve. Cotton Mather wrote of her in 1713:

And that brave woman, being styled, The Mother of all living, it has induced Learned Man to conceive, That EVE was, by being the First of them all, in a peculiar manner, the Mother of all that live unto God; and that she was on this account, (Oh! Most Happy Woman!) a Mother to her own Husband, and the Instrument of bringing him to Believe on the great Redeemer. (Tabitha Rediviva, *An Essay to Describe and Commend the Good Works of a Virtuous Woman* [Boston: n.p., 1713], p. 23.)

This point is elaborated in Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), pp. 146–63.

revealed to us, that we can come out from under that curse, regain the position originally occupied by Eve, and attain to a fulness of exaltation in the presence of God.⁴⁷

Plural marriage was one of those institutions to which Eliza referred, and it became the pivotal measure of obedience for Mormon women. Polygamy, Emmeline wrote, required “the most pure-minded and high souled women,” who could sufficiently “comprehend the designs of these covenants to endure the trials and temptations which are incident to a higher spiritual development.”⁴⁸ Plural wife of Joseph Horne, Mary Isabella Horne acknowledged those trials: “No one can ever feel the full weight of the curse,” she wrote, “till she enters into polygamy.”⁴⁹ But the promise of redemption from the curse, Emmeline affirmed, was “worth all the sacrifices it is possible to make.”⁵⁰

In a sermon on celestial marriage given in 1869, George Q. Cannon confirmed the principle as the route to redemption. Plural marriage, he said, “will exalt woman until she is redeemed from the effects of the Fall, and from that curse pronounced upon her in the beginning.”⁵¹ On another occasion he prophesied that “as the generations roll by nobler types of womanhood will be developed, until the penalty that was laid upon woman in the beginning, that ‘thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee,’ will be repealed, and she will stand side by side with man, full of that queenly dignity and self control which will make her his suitable companion rather than his inferior.”⁵²

Although the evolutionary ramifications of Cannon’s statement raise more questions than the statement answers, his willingness to

⁴⁷*LDS Millennial Star* 33 (12 September 1871): 578.

⁴⁸“Patriarchal Marriage,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (15 August 1877): 44.

⁴⁹From an autobiographical sketch located in the Bancroft Collection, Huntington Library, typescript copy, Church Archives. One of the earliest recorded statements of a Mormon woman concerning the curse was made by Emma Smith in a blessing Joseph asked her to write for herself which he would sign. In it she expressed the hope that “through humility she would be enabled to overcome the curse which was pronounced upon the daughters of Eve.” (Emma Smith Blessing in Vesta P. Crawford Papers, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.)

⁵⁰“A Few Thoughts,” *Woman’s Exponent* 13 (1 June 1884): 4. Another view was expressed by Prescinda Kimball in 1870. She exclaimed: “The day is approaching when woman shall be redeemed from the curse placed upon Eve, and I have often thought that our daughters who are in polygamy will be the first redeemed.” (Minutes of a General Meeting of the Female Relief Society, 19 February 1870, as recorded in Edward W. Tullidge, *Women of Mormondom* [New York: Tullidge & Crandall, 1877], pp. 503–504.)

⁵¹*Journal of Discourses*, 9 October 1869, 13:207.

⁵²*Juvenile Instructor* 19 (1 February 1884): 38–39. Another example of the employment of this essentially Darwinian notion in connection with woman’s nature and consequent place in society appeared in a publication *Men and Women*, edited in Salt Lake City by Apostle Orson F. Whitney and Calvin Reasoner. The article states that the woman’s movement “is a stage in the order of the divine evolution of humanity, that it is as truly a part of progress as the revelation of Christianity or the vast unfoldment of the wonders and treasures of the material world which has signalized the advancement of the last two centuries. The granting to women the privilege to vote under our institutions is a necessary part, but is a very small part of the enlargement that is to be given to her sphere and mission in the world.” (*Men and Women* 1 [14 May 1895]: 8.)

acknowledge that equality of the sexes was indeed a potential reality even in this life, however developed, was beyond the prophetic scope of most of the clergy of his time. Subscribing to at least part of his argument, Emmeline Wells urged women to educate themselves for that day. “The very genius and spirit of the age is in keeping with the cry of woman, for recognition of her position by the side of man,” she wrote. “It is the consciousness in woman everywhere, if even a latent spark of her inherent divinity lingers, that the hour is hastening when the curse will be removed.”⁵³

The Adam and Eve model, however, continued to set the pattern for male–female relationships in the nineteenth century, and Mormonism reinforced this pattern with its priesthood-based patriarchal system. Always advocating a mutually supportive marriage relationship, Emmeline seldom addressed the uses of patriarchal or priesthood authority in a Mormon marriage. Her own experience could only have underscored the desirability of strong, decision-making women, adequately fortified to bear the responsibilities for their own families. Polygamous marriages virtually demanded such self-reliance.

The Mormon theological concept of the eternity of the marriage relationship gave further impetus to Emmeline’s views. The promises of exaltation bound men and women inextricably together in their pursuit of godhood in which both would have “all power . . . and be above all, because all things are subject unto them” (D&C 132:20). The possibilities of such an awesome celestial union undoubtedly defined Emmeline’s perspective of its temporal beginnings. Marriage, for her, was but a microcosm of the relationship of the sexes in all aspects of life in this world and in the next. Thus it should provide for both men and women unrestricted opportunity for continuing development, full and equal participation, and the free exercise of rational and spiritual powers. In one of her more poetic passages, she expressed her hope of this ideal:

Do you not see the morning star of woman’s destiny in the ascendant? Why the whole civilized world is becoming enlightened with its beams. . . . There are some wise men who recognize the star, and who even say “peace and good will” to woman, and take her by the hand and welcome her to their circle, and would fain assign to her all that nature gave her intelligence and capacity to do, would lift her up to their level . . . and say there is room for us both, let us walk side by side.⁵⁴

⁵³“Patriarchal Marriage,” *Woman’s Exponent* 6 (15 August 1877): 44.

⁵⁴“Peace and Good Will,” *Woman’s Exponent* 7 (15 September 1878): 60.

Emmeline's attempt to resolve the tension between spiritual equality and social inequality sometimes resulted in compromise or inconsistency. But her struggles to reconcile those inconsistencies put her among a host of other religious feminists whose loyalties to both traditions posed continual dilemmas. As one historian of patristic writings explained, "The logic of Christian doctrine required a commitment to sexual equality." The difficulty lay in reconciling that doctrine "with the practical conditions of life" burdened as they were with the effects "of the curses of Adam and Eve."⁵⁵

Under no illusions that her religious feminism was logically unassailable, Emmeline seemed to find sufficient reinforcement within Mormon theology to transcend the obvious difficulty of coalescing an egalitarian philosophy with an authoritarian theocracy; but perhaps their disparity was no greater than those disparate elements which characterized Mormonism itself. From the outset, as historian Gordon Wood's analysis of Mormonism observes, it was a religion "in tension, poised like a steel spring by the contradictory forces pulling within it." Creating this tension, he explained, were elements both "mystical and secular, restorationist and progressive; communitarian and individualistic; hierarchical and congregational; authoritarian and democratic; antinomian and arminian; anti-clerical and priestly; revelatory and empirical; utopian and practical; ecumenical and nationalist."⁵⁶

Somewhere within the antitheses of this intricately balanced religious structure Emmeline found a niche for her own belief system. In her efforts to accommodate the dialectic between religion and feminism, she was not unique in her time, but her time was unique in Mormon history.

⁵⁵JoAnn McNamara, "Sexual Equality and the Cult of Virginity in Early Christian Thought," *Feminist Studies* 3 (Spring-Summer 1976): 145.

⁵⁶Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61 (October 1980): 380.

The Challenge and Craft of Mormon Biography

Ronald W. Walker

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest.

[Ezekiel 37:3]

Ezekiel saw a valley full of dry and lifeless forms, but with the promise of becoming. No doubt filled with mausoleums and alabaster statuary, its name is not given, though the prophet probably glimpsed the valley of Mormon biography. Lytton Strachey, whose verve and mood did so much to father modern biography, assaulted Victorian life-writing with similar metaphors, and his lamentation is not ill-fitting here. He wrote of “those two fat volumes with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead—who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, or design? They are as familiar as the cortege of the undertaker and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism.”¹

During the past several months, with increasing exasperation and distemper, I have asked what possibly could have possessed me to assume this role. Like Henry Higgins, I am a “very gentle man, . . . the sort who never could, ever would let an insulting remark escape his lips.” Yet here I stand gracelessly impugning my mentors and betters. At the outset I acknowledge their talent and integrity, but that is not the larger problem. Biography is a demanding art form which rarely surrenders itself to excellence, and religious biography only escalates these odds.

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¹Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: The Modern Library, 1918), p. *xiii*. While Mormon biography is largely ignored as a critical study, there are signs of growing interest. See James B. Allen, “Writing Mormon Biographies,” *World Conference on Records: Preserving Our Heritage*, Series 116 (August 1980): 1–16; and Davis Bitton, “Mormon Biography,” *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1981): 1–16.

My bleakness flows partially from my definition of biography. Carlyle used a similar debater's trick when, after demanding impossible standards, he held a well-written life was almost as rare as a well-spent one (prompting Andre Maurois to declare that the Scotsman thereby revealed himself to be "as much an optimist in his criticism as he was a pessimist in his ethics"²). To be sure, biography requires Merlin's alchemy. With deceptive simplicity the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as "the history of the lives of individual men [and presumably women], as a branch of literature." But these elements seldom mix. Few biographies have produced both the science of history and the creative illusions of literature to simulate accurately a human life. Fewer Mormon works have even tried.

On one hand the canons of history are overwhelming. Hot on the trail for additional Samuel Johnson source material, James Clifford tells of his delicate maneuvers which won his admittance to the cavernous vaults of London's Barclay Bank where he toiled with huge and dusty ledgers—all for what became a single sentence in his book.³ Modern biography requires back-breaking research with the impossible aim of comprehensiveness, and then it is expected to speak without mealy-mouthing or dissimulation. At least during an initial stage, the life-writer will assume an adversary relationship with his materials. "The biographer does not trust his witnesses, living or dead," one critic has written. "He may drip with the milk of human kindness, believe everything that his wife and his friends and his children tell him, enjoy his neighbors and embrace the universe—but in the workshop he must be as ruthless as a board meeting smelling out embezzlement [and] as suspicious as a secret agent riding the Simplon-Orient express."⁴

To history's touchstones of thoroughness, candor, and tough-minded accuracy, the biographer adds the grace of art. A narrative flow cannot be created by simple-minded, beaverlike piling of facts. The life-writer should allow his research to suggest a controlling point of view, passion, or insight, which must be arrived at independently of any preconception. Then as the narrative is written, it can be shaped, paced, and perhaps rearranged through flashback. A subject's inner thoughts might be probed by reverie, by use of the subjunctive mood, or by psychological montage. Scene, description,

²Andre Maurois, *Aspects of Biography*, trans. Sidney Castle Roberts (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1939), p. 204.

³James L. Clifford, *From Puzzles to Portraits: Problems of a Literary Biographer*, John W. Harrelson Lectures (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 62-64.

⁴Paul Murray Kendall, *The Art of Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), pp. 22-23.

density of detail, idiom, and even authentically obtained dialogue may create the illusion of life. But if the modern biographer apes the novelist and dramatist, his purposes are dissimilar. Paul Murray Kendall has pointed out that these older literary arts “seek to evoke reality from illusion,” but “biography hopes to fasten illusion upon reality, to elicit, from the coldness of paper, the warmth of a life being lived.”⁵

This twentieth century amalgam of history and literature has produced unprecedented biography both in terms of quality and numbers and has led some critics to declare that the art form now deserves literary attention as a distinct *genre*. But there have been unhappy results also. The novelist-working-as-biographer, used to the freedom of unrestricted imagination, has found historical facts to be vexing and at times irrelevant. “When Livy said he would have made Pompey win the battle of Pharsalia if the turn of the sentence required it,” Strachey held, “he was not talking utter nonsense, but simply expressing an important truth in a highly paradoxical way—that the first duty of a historian is to be an artist.”⁶ Strachey was speaking autobiographically, for he frequently allowed the artist within him to overwhelm the historian. However brilliant his prose and, subsequently, the writing of those who have followed him (some even fictionalizing to the point of inventing scene and dialogue), the inevitable result is ersatz biography. For when a life-writer reaches beyond his materials, he destroys the dramatic veracity unique to his mode. “The value of every story,” Dr. Johnson lectured on the need for verisimilitude, “depends on its being true . . . ; if it be false, it is a picture of nothing.”⁷ In biography, truthfulness, or sticking with “the facts and nothing but the facts,” is a basic and preeminent law.

There is yet another quality of life-writing potentially more trying, even exasperating, to Mormons and the religious-minded. Einhard suggested it in his *Charlemagne*. “Here you have a book containing the life of that great and glorious man,” the monk prefaced his volume over eleven centuries ago. “There is nothing for you to wonder at or admire except his deeds.”⁸ Instead of heavy-handed didacticism, institutional glorification, or religious myth-making, Einhard and his modern successors write about human life as it actually was lived. Their subjects are fallible individuals—

⁵Ibid., p. 28.

⁶Cited in John A. Garraty, *The Nature of Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 122.

⁷James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. George Birkbeck Hall, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 2:433.

⁸A. J. Grant, ed. and trans., *Early Lives of Charlemagne by Eginhard and the Monk of St. Gall* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966), p. 6.

unfathomable in complexity and contradiction, at times torn with tension, pulled periodically heavenward or downward by what Faust described as the two souls working within his breast. Biography understands that men grow and atrophy, that virtue to have any meaning must be tested.

Such human realism requires the life-writer to paint, as Oliver Cromwell demanded of his own portraitist, "warts and all." This is not a prescription for voyeurism or debunking—as poet Stephen Spender reminds, "Warts are not the same as intestines."⁹ Still, a modern audience cannot be satisfied by cardboard, one-dimensional personality. Unless the character is portrayed with some depth, the audience can have no empathy for him. "If nothing but the bright side of characters should be shewn," to quote again Dr. Johnson, who remains one of biography's most astute critics, "we should sit down in despondency, and think it utterly impossible to imitate them in *any thing*."¹⁰

The accurate portrayal of human personality is not easily achieved. Pressures constantly weigh upon biography to depart from this primary role and instead serve as commemoration or homily. In each case the temptation to tamper with evidence or retouch a portrait is almost beyond the power to withstand if an author is working for hire. Today, outright prevarication is infrequent; but by selectivity, arrangement, and the use of emphasis, a more satisfactory or useful character can be created. The resulting biography usually will correspond to a preconceived view, with occasional foibles squeezed into the text to render apparent balance and truthfulness. "I would rather be a dog and bay at the moon," American biographer Henry S. Randall disparagingly said over a century ago, "than write in that sickly, silly, adulatory, mutual-admiration-society, mutual scratch-back, tickle-me-Billy-&-I'll-tickle-you-Billy spirit in which most of our American biographies have been written."¹¹ Similar results occur when biography attempts to evangelize. Fervid passions not only distort personality but often refocus a book into something which is no longer biography. The religious movement or philosophy replaces the subject-person at center stage, and whatever is deleterious to the higher cause is screened from view.

⁹Stephen Spender, "How Much Should a Biographer Tell?" *Saturday Review*, 25 January 1964, p. 16.

¹⁰Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 4:53.

¹¹Cited in Garraty, *Nature of Biography*, p. 173. Randall's experiences with the Jefferson family, which prompted the quotation, are described in F. J. and F. W. Klingberg, eds., *The Correspondence of Henry Stephens Randall and Hugh Blair Grigsby* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), pp. 15, 65, 110–11.

This warping of human emotion led English biographer Harold Nicholson to lay down this primary rule: "So long as the intellect is undisturbed by emotion you have good biography. The moment, however, that any emotion (such as reverence, affection, ethical desires, religious belief) intrudes . . . , that biography is doomed."¹² No doubt the antireligion of Sir Harold's time prompted him to overstate things—it is difficult to imagine any intellect sanitized completely from emotion, whether religious or skeptical in its variety. Our present generation understands the need for voice and perspective; and a reverential, affectionate, and even religious view, if tempered with openness, scholarly detachment, and a gentle narrative hand, can produce fine biography. Yet, Nicholson's verdict largely stands. Religionists and religious times do not do well at life-writing. The religiously inclined Medieval and Victorian periods produced hagiography and commemoration which by vigorously sandpapering personality created an endless shelf of stylized and faceless figurines. Their blandness, impeccability, and consequent lack of humanity stand in contrast with the flesh and blood of good biography.

II

Biography has limitless variety—like the men and women it describes. We have sketched but one strain, an ideal hybrid that might be called "narrative-biography," which has history (science), literature (art), and human realism as its three primary qualities. Strachey and the twenties had a hand in creating it by introducing into biography wit and fancy. (In 1918 a British warden was disturbed by the uproarious glee of a prisoner—it was the pacifist, Bertrand Russell, relishing his first introduction to *Eminent Victorians*.) Serious-minded historians made the next advance, aware of the supercilious, contrived and at times unfair techniques of the debunkers yet also cognizant of their literary flourishes. This twentieth-century mixing of literati and historians has produced a wide spectrum of biography—from the historical novel at one extreme to the dry-boned catalogue of biographical facts on the other. Somewhere in the middle lies narrative-biography.

Over a half dozen Mormon biographers have produced works at various points on the history–literature continuum—but few if any at the solid center. Samuel Taylor's portraits of his father and

¹²Harold Nicholson, *The Development of English Biography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p. 110.

grandfather, the fictionalized *Family Kingdom* [John W. Taylor] (1951) and the more history-minded *The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon* (1976), exhibit the cares and techniques of the novelist. In contrast, academic-scholarly books are more numerous. Leonard Arrington's *Charles C. Rich: Mormon General and Western Frontiersman* (1974) and *From Quaker to Latter-day Saint: Bishop Edwin D. Woolley* (1976); Juanita Brooks's *John Doyle Lee: Zealot—Pioneer Builder—Scapegoat* (1962); Donna Hill's *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (1977); Stanley B. Kimball's *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (1981); and Karl Larson's *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church* (1971) are examples of solidly (sometimes stolidly) undertaken research. (Larson's verbosity is fitting given the legendary discursiveness of Snow's sermonizing.) Nearer the middle, combining narrative talent with able but controversial research, are Harold Schindler's *Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder* (1966) and Fawn Brodie's *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (1945). Although its focus is on the Mormon periphery, Frank Fox's recent *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years* (1980) also agreeably combines history and fine writing.

Using the criteria of science and literature, these books represent some of the best of Mormon biography. Obviously, LDS life-writing is a product of the present generation, reflects a strong nineteenth-century, male, Church-leader bias, and is very much tilted toward the writing by historians. It is possible, however, that Samuel Taylor may yet play a Strachean role, both in forcing an increased literary consciousness and in setting a precedent for mixing "facts" and "poetry" into a blend which seems neither.¹³

Taylor is not alone. Much of the best-written and researched Mormon biography receives lower marks when judged by the third touchstone in life-writing, the question of truth. Pilate ironically asked of its nature and then turned aside without a response. "Perhaps he did well to make a joke of it," Rupert Hughes, a seasoned biographical campaigner of the twenties and thirties acknowledged, "since, if he had stayed for an answer, he would be staying yet."¹⁴ Certainly the first generation of Mormon biographers would not have helped much. Typified by Edward Tullidge, George Q. Cannon, Matthias Cowley, and Bryant S. Hinckley, they chiseled their heroes

¹³The phrasing and astute critique are those of Robert B. Flanders, "Review of *Nightfall at Nauvoo*," *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought, and Action* 2 (Winter 1972): 393-96. While a review of one of Taylor's historical novels, Flanders's comment seems equally apropos to Taylor's biographies. For Taylor's reply, see *ibid.*, 3 (Fall 1972): 62-63.

¹⁴Rupert Hughes, "Pitfalls of the Biographer," *Pacific Historical Review* 2 (March 1933): 2.

to be demigods—truth lay in the unfolding of social and religious causes in which the actors played a larger than human role. The very things which biographically matter most, like the Victorians' exposed ankle, were thought better unseen: personality, psychology, physiology and health, sexuality, religious striving, and human relationships, especially among Church leaders and family members. These taboos were not evenly applied, but clearly the closer an LDS subject-character was to the locus of power the less the likelihood of careful probing. Early Mormon biography provided a helpful point of departure for further research, but its characters were as heavily shrouded by the mists of darkness as those of Lehi's dream.¹⁵

Well-intentioned obscurantism continues in Mormon biography, though today with a softer hand and subtler technique. Some authors meet the issue head-on. "After some reflection, personalities, hundreds of which have entered my life, have been almost entirely omitted," Apostle John A. Widtsoe prefaced his autobiography. "If mentioned, comments would probably follow. That might hurt the feelings of some."¹⁶ Equally forthright is Richard Poll, whose recent volume on Howard J. Stoddard is one of the best of the commemorative books. This biography "accents the positive," Poll unblushingly admits, "but the reader will have no difficulty discovering why Howard Stoddard was a controversial figure."¹⁷ More ominously, however, reticence is implicitly conveyed by the selectivity of facts or by the lack of balance. Truman Madsen's *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (1980) is in many ways artful and courageous. Recorded are Roberts's early struggles with alcohol (it "would not only beat him to his knees but to his elbows and chin"), his well-intentioned but maladroit attempts at husbandhood and fatherhood, and his unremitting cycles of pugnacity and reconciliation. Madsen rightly subordinates these tendencies to Roberts's strengths. Yet the feeling is inescapable that the information of several "evil-bearing" footnotes belong in the text,

¹⁵George Q. Cannon, *The Life of Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor, 1888); Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff . . . History of His Life and Labors . . .* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1909); Bryant S. Hinckley, *Heber J. Grant: Highlights in the Life of a Great Leader* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951); Bryant S. Hinckley, *Brian Stringham and His People* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1949); Bryant S. Hinckley, *Daniel Hanmer Wells and Events of His Time* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1942); Edward W. Tullidge, *Life of Brigham Young; or, Utah and Her Founders* (New York: n.p., 1876); Edward W. Tullidge, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (New York: n.p., 1878); Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: n.p., 1877).

¹⁶John A. Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land: The Autobiography of John A. Widtsoe* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1952), p. viii.

¹⁷Richard D. Poll, *Howard J. Stoddard: Founder, Michigan National Bank* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1980), p. vii.

that some nonchalant and understated sentences should actually be paragraphs, and that likewise a few paragraphs could be transformed with advantage into chapters. The unfortunate result is an undercurrent of defensiveness which prevents a good book from becoming something of a classic.¹⁸

Madsen is representative of a general tendency. Many conscientious LDS biographers are solicitous of the “art of telling,” that is, how they can place important and disturbing facts into the record without giving offense. Their byword: “Anything may be said if said rightly.” And while a few stylists such as John Henry Evans and Leonard Arrington have managed to balance truth with fine phrasing, the less skillful and less knowledgeable have generally fumbled the act. Their caution and sleight of hand produce a simple and harmonious portrait where simplicity and harmony often are out of place. The real Brigham Young, for example, will not be found by neatly counterposing his strengths and weaknesses and seeking within him some kind of common denominator of behavior. Like that of many men, the edges of Young’s personality cannot be smoothed. His complexity and incongruity should be frankly acknowledged.

Mormon biography lacks the telling anecdote, the offhand comment, the characteristic trivia that great biographers have seized upon to reveal their subjects. It might be the excited platform style of an introverted Daniel Wells—struggling to control his flinging arms as they move perilously close to the scriptures stacked beside him on the podium. Or it could be the self-confident Charles Nibley cracking a salty joke as he lay dying. What could be more descriptive of Brother Brigham than his motto: “I’ve got the grit in me to do it”? And what better way to summarize the saintly and other-worldly life of Wilford Woodruff than by speaking of his favorite hymn: “God Moves in a Mysterious Way”? This sense of detail and anecdote is not a part of our tradition, partly because of the failure of art but more largely because of a hesitancy to penetrate the inner man.¹⁹

The bland quality of Mormon biography—its spirit of understatement, harmony, and circumspection—is explained only partly by the didactic and commemorative tendency of religious literature. Biography conforms as closely to its *Zeitgeist* as any other art form,

¹⁸Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), pp. 70, 254, 273, and 275.

¹⁹Wells: Heber J. Grant to Hannah C. Wells, 25 February 1902, Letterpress Copybook, 35:55, Heber J. Grant Papers, Library-Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as Church Archives). Young: John Taylor, sermon, 1 November 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1855–1886), 6:18. Woodruff: Heber J. Grant to Ed [?] H. Snow, 22 January 1915, Letterpress Copybook, 50:606–607, Church Archives. Nibley: Heber J. Grant to W. W. Wilson, 14 December 1931, Letterpress Copybook, 69:274, Church Archives.

and the spirit of the LDS times has understandably been defensive. The Saints have been a persecuted and persecuted-minded people, and while possessed with a towering and unsettling sense of destiny, they are only now emerging from their insecure and intellectually adolescent world. Consequently, they have enjoyed the assurance of a heroic biography, with clean lines, strong contrasts, and flattering hues.

The Mormon concern with genealogy and family history has increased this impulse. Mr. Everyman, in this case, Mr. Every Family, has picked up a pen or sat at the typewriter. "This is amateur history, basically chronicle and vignette, not interpretation," historian Mark Leone observed. "Its skeleton is kinship, not politics or economics, and it is unreservedly uncritical."²⁰ Besides fostering inexacting standards, family history by building upon the Mormons' already strong sense of family and tradition has promoted a feeling of proprietary guardianship about the past. The result is the cramping of the already confined atmosphere.

Despite these inhibiting conditions, there are signs of growing candor. Perhaps Pilate should have paused after all. John Henry Evans's *Joseph Smith, an American Prophet* (1933) spoke with remarkable detachment for its time, but its promise only lately has been realized. Edward and Andrew Kimball's *Spencer W. Kimball* (1977) and Caroline Eyring Miner and Edward Kimball's *Camilla: A Biography of Camilla Eyring Kimball* (1980) cast Mormondom's "first brother and sister" into the texture of real life. Here are struggling personality, the depiction of genuine emotion, and homely details which are at times stark (during President Kimball's subdural hematoma operation "the pressure [on his skull] was so great that fluid spurted out two feet").²¹ More scholarly but equally revealing is Fox's treatment of J. Reuben Clark, which probably owes a large debt to its sponsor. "Any biographer of President Clark must write the truth about him," penned an insistent Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, in the foreword.

To tell more or less than the truth would violate a governing principle in his life. When I first met with those who are writing his biography, I explained that I did not want them to produce a mere collection of uplifting experiences about President Clark. . . . I wanted a biography of the man himself, as he was, written with the same kind of courage, honesty, and frankness that J. Reuben Clark himself would have shown.

²⁰Mark P. Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 194.

²¹Caroline Eyring Miner and Edward L. Kimball, *Camilla: A Biography of Camilla Eyring Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980), p. 203.

An account of his life should tell of the decisions and indecisions, sorrows and joys, regrets and aspirations, reverses and accomplishments, and, above all, his constant striving.²²

These words may be inscribed and immortalized as the Mormon biographer's credo.

III

As LDS biography matures in research, technique, and realism, it will confront additional challenges. The massive bulk of today's manuscript collections, once a life-writer's fondest reverie, has become an illusory nightmare—an embarrassment of riches. The Joseph Smith material is stored in the LDS Library–Archives in six boxes occupying several feet of shelving. In contrast, Heber J. Grant's papers require almost two hundred boxes and one hundred linear feet—while the three-times-larger David O. McKay collection would run the length of a football field.²³ In 1924 Morris Werner was granted access to the Brigham Young papers, an intermediate-sized collection, and, like at least one other subsequent Brigham Young biographer, decided he could do very well without it.²⁴ The question increasingly looms whether a single biographer can begin to master the sources before him.

But try he must. LDS biography is filled with a second or third tier of books, perhaps best uncited, that have little to recommend them except their saleability. Often chapbook in size, slapdash in preparation, and abetted by tolerant publishing standards, these books have hardly a speaking acquaintance with their subjects. Within a few pages a recent publication imaginatively placed the hero's mother at his father's funeral (she was home critically ill), miscounted his siblings, created his father's estate largely out of fancy, and failed to report his hero's subsequent mental and physical collapse. Classic biography has often been achieved by writers who knew their subject personally and intimately. But for most, only interminable digging in the historical trenches will do, a labor one biographer, Eleanor

²²Marion G. Romney in Frank W. Fox, *J. Reuben Clark: The Public Years* (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Brigham Young University Press, 1980), p. xi.

²³I am indebted to Jeffrey O. Johnson of the Church Archives, who undertook an informal survey of some of the principal Mormon and Mormon-related manuscript collections. His computations are in linear feet. Church Archives: Joseph F. Smith, 50 feet; Hugh B. Brown, 50 feet; Henry D. Moyle, 50 feet; Brigham Young, 80 feet; Heber J. Grant, 100 feet; Joseph Fielding Smith, 50 feet; John A. Widtsoe, 140 feet; and David O. McKay, 320 feet. University of Utah: Sherman Lloyd, 65 feet; George Albert Smith, 85 feet; and Frank Moss, 380 feet. Brigham Young University: Reed Smoot, 80 feet; J. Reuben Clark, Jr., 250 feet; and Wallace F. Bennett, 500 feet.

²⁴Heber J. Grant Diary, 19 May 1924, p. 129, typescript, Church Archives.

Ruggles, estimated to be at least two years before the subject-character “becomes alive.”²⁵ Then actual writing might commence.

Even as he searches into the behemoth manuscript collections now at hand, the biographer has never been so unsure of himself. Non-Mormon writers no longer ask “How much can be told?” but the still more perplexing question, “How much in fact can be known?”²⁶ The problem lies not in establishing a chronicle but in grasping the intimacy of a life in its totality, sensing the interior and sometimes the hidded aspects of a career. Dostoevsky’s observation in *Notes from Underground* still pertains: “In the reminiscences of every man there are some things that he does not reveal to anyone except possibly to friends. Then there are some that he will not even reveal to friends, but only to himself, and even so in secret. But finally there are some that a man is afraid to reveal even to himself.”²⁷

Fortunately, the life-writer is not left empty-handed in his quest. “All sorts of keys to human behavior have been handed to the biographer,” Paul Murray Kendall observed, “which, it is true, he has sometimes used to open the wrong door, or has thrown away, or has played with like a small boy, uttering squeals of delight.”²⁸ With Marxists vying with Freudians, and preachers with philosophers, the biographer asks which key he should grasp—with Mormons usually grasping none at all. Brodie’s study of Joseph Smith, the primary exception, was explicitly psychoanalytical, but her era which vaunted technical analysis within biography has largely given way. It is difficult enough to pronounce a diagnosis with the patient emitting a stream of consciousness on the couch without being a biographer separated from a subject by time and distance. Nevertheless, the twentieth century speaks of defense mechanisms, inferiority complexes, repressions, rationalizations, and sublimations, and these insights have an important and unfulfilled role in Mormon biography. James Clifford’s advice is probably best: “Be sensitive to possible psychological quirks of character, and give all of the relevant evidence, but make no attempts at technical analysis.”²⁹ And a further matter of advice: Since a biographer often interprets his subject in his own image or at least as a reflection of his own concerns, “the first method

²⁵Garraty, *Nature of Biography*, pp. 24–25, 215. Examples of classic biography by intimates are Einhard’s *Charlemagne*, Vasari’s *Lives of the Painters*, Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, and Ernest Jones’s *Life of Sigmund Freud*.

²⁶Alan Shelston, *Biography* (London: Methuen & Company, 1977), pp. 8–9.

²⁷Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, ed. Robert G. Durgy and trans. Serge Shishkoff (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), pp. 37–38.

²⁸Kendall, *Art of Biography*, p. 116.

²⁹Clifford, *From Portraits to Puzzles*, p. 131.

of modern biography . . . is self-analysis.”³⁰ By seeking to understand his personal motivation in subject, thesis, and fact selection, in short, by psychoanalyzing self, the author may avoid distortions in interpretation. Had she so analyzed herself, Brodie might have softened her portrait of Joseph Smith and perhaps those of her other biographical subjects as well.

Other weapons in the modern biographer’s armory could be used to advantage. Remembering Tolstoy’s warning that Napoleon did not lose the battle of Borodino simply because of a head cold, Mormon biography could make use of an infirmary. The medical history of LDS Presidents, in fact, is largely unexplored—a startling omission since biographers must judge the contributions of these men during their declining and disease-prone years. Could the elderly John Taylor’s irascibility and inconsistency be attributed in part to his final (and largely unknown) disease? Too, the life-writer might seek personality clues from less apparent sources. Handwriting analysis no doubt would reveal much about President Grant’s moods, as his penmanship widely varied from a careful Spencerian script to a wild scrawling as during the crisis-ridden Panic of 1893. And if a biography is ever undertaken of that brilliant scoundrel Frank Cannon, content analysis of *Life of Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (officially authored by his father, George Q. Cannon, but in part ghosted by Frank) might provide interesting glimpses of the father-son relationship as well as the latter’s early religious convictions.

But of all the challenges and opportunities facing the LDS biographer, none is as tormenting as how he should treat his own religious faith—if at all. While richly variegated, the fabric of most modern biography is decidedly secular, nonjudgmental, and more than faintly skeptical. Can a religiously committed biographer write against this current, exploring what one LDS scholar described as “the complexities of the God-man partnership”?³¹ Or must he stay his hand, concealing as best he can his culture’s values and expectations?

At stake is the question of “faithful biography.” The phrase is a contradiction in terms if “faithful” is taken to mean gilding the lily, miracle mongering, tracing grand theological designs, ignoring historical context, or supplanting characterization with religious ends and emotions. These practices may have their place but not within the modest habitation of biography. Here characters must have their

³⁰Robert Gittings, *The Nature of Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), pp. 42–43.

³¹Douglas F. Tobler, “Sacred and Profane: Writing Mormon History in a Secular Age,” unpublished paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, 1978, Logan, Utah.

feet firmly planted upon the earth, even if their faces are turned heavenward.

Still, religious values have a place. There is no reason why an author should be less a Christian because of his vocation. After all, patience, diligence, humility, charity, indeed godliness are virtues which admirably serve the biographer's craft. They can also provide the life-writer with empathy for a religiously inclined subject. Too often the reverse is true. The secular writer caricatures, disclaims, or simply ignores religious striving and mystic experience. Marvin Hill has shown this flaw to be present in the seminal work of Brodie; and lesser biographers, some with an ostensible Mormon perspective, are as culpable.³² The resulting biographical sin is as deadly as the bowdlerism of the misguided religionist.

Richard Bushman has noted that "virtually everyone who has shown the 'human side' of the Church and its leaders has believed the enterprise was strictly human." Of course this need not be so. Bushman suggests that historians are needed "who will mourn the failings of the Saints out of honor for God instead of relishing the warts because they show the Church was earthbound after all."³³ Perhaps a clever biographer will manage this highly sophisticated task, though arguing God's cause, or even mourning in his behalf, is filled with hagiographic dangers. Other biographers may take a safer course. They will wish to give the transcendent its proper due, and while providing historical context for such phenomena, they will allow the biographical subject and his peers largely to speak for themselves. Judgment of such an event will be left to those with spiritual eyes to see, with readers, not authors, mourning God's cause. Such an unobtrusive and unassuming manner may offend many. Gone will be the thunderous undulations of the nineteenth-century stylist who with Olympian sureness described the pattern of God's hand. Left to the biographer is a more discrete task, freer from conceit and hubris, of describing earthly events as a caring mortal fully aware of his own fallibility.

Even on this limited stage, the biographer has scope for his virtuosity. For life-writing is the stage of everyday life, where the abstract forces of the social scientist, philosopher, and theologian come to center in the existence of a human being. If a microcosm, biography also celebrates human life. It declares with Shakespeare

³²Marvin S. Hill, "Brodie Revisited: A Reappraisal," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7 (Winter 1972): 72-85 and "Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of *No Man Knows My History*," *Church History* 43 (March 1974): 78-96.

³³Richard L. Bushman, "Faithful History," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4 (Winter 1969): 18.

“What a piece of work is a man” and upholds the life of any individual to be of worth—and worthy of preservation. To the religious-minded, it may even suggest the pattern of mankind’s eternal struggle. For these reasons it retains tremendous appeal. That is why every public library has long rows of shelves of biography and why, at least in part, the Kimball biographies have become an LDS marketing phenomena and Schindler’s *Rockwell* remains the all-time best seller at the University of Utah Press.

Biography is a limited and cumbersome craft. Its heroes are recreated imperfectly. Its truths speak in a more precise yet modest voice than those of literature. But even within this limited realm, Mormon biography has fallen short. Only recently has it begun to fuse investigation, technique, and openness—the three essentials of biography—and make use of the tools of the social sciences. Yet because of the maturing confidence of LDS culture and because of biography’s continuing appeal, the visionary hope remains of a more substantial and artistic achievement.

Panorama Paintings in the 1840s of the Mormon Temple in Nauvoo

Joseph Earl Arrington

The national movement of panorama painting in mid-nineteenth century America yielded a number of important paintings of the Mormon city of Nauvoo and its temple. There were four major artists who created Mississippi River panoramas before 1850: John Rowson Smith, Samuel B. Stockwell, Leon de Pomarede, and Henry Lewis. Each of these men painted the upper river where Nauvoo is located, including scenes of the city and of the Mormon temple in their panoramas. These were literally moving panoramas: the painted canvas was unrolled from one cylinder and rerolled onto another across a stage. These panoramas were produced and taken to the people by traveling exhibitors for public entertainment, mass education, and group artistic enjoyment. Each of these panoramas received extensive patronage in America, and two of them were taken abroad. These pictorial displays of the Mississippi River were seen by hundreds of thousands of people in America and probably millions on both continents.

JOHN ROWSON SMITH

One of the first Mississippi River panoramists was John Rowson Smith, who was born in Boston in 1810, the son of engraver John Reuben Smith, and the grandson of the famous English engraver, John Raphael Smith (1740–1811). Growing up in this artistic tradition, young John lived in Boston until his fifth year, where his father's engraving business was located. Then the family moved to Brooklyn, where his father was engaged for ten years painting portraits, engraving, and conducting a drawing school. The son entered a private school and then studied art in his father's academy. The

Joseph Earl Arrington has written extensively about the Nauvoo Temple. This article is adapted from a chapter of his book *The Architecture of the Great Mormon Temple of Nauvoo*. The chapter has been adapted for this article by Mr. Arrington's nephew, Leonard J. Arrington, director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History, Brigham Young University.

family then moved to Philadelphia to continue the father's engraving career and later returned to New York, where John, Sr., died in 1849.¹

John Rowson Smith began his own career as a scenic artist in the National Theater of Philadelphia in the 1830s. He also painted theatrical scenery in New Orleans, St. Louis, New York, and Boston. He later became interested in painting western scenery and claimed to be the originator of the Mississippi panorama. His own panorama was exhibited in Boston, and on its 200-foot length were views from the Lower Mississippi and the Ohio rivers. He had sketched at intervals the whole river and, with the help of some assistants, finished his masterpiece in August 1848. It was divided into three sections: "Corn Region," from the head of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Ohio; "Cotton Region," from the Ohio to the Natchez; and "Sugar Region," from Natchez to the Gulf of Mexico. The Smith panorama was described as a "Leviathan panorama of the Mississippi River: Painted by John R. Smith, Esq., Extending from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico, a course of 2,000 miles, running through nine States of the Union." The scenery along the "Father of Waters" covered an area of 20,000 square feet of canvas and was advertised as "a four-mile panorama in single linear footage."² Exhibited before fashionable and wealthy audiences in America, Smith's panorama had a good start in Saratoga, New York, in August 1848, taking in \$20,000 in six weeks.

The great Mormon temple of Nauvoo was included with a few other scenes that local editors felt were worth the price of admission. The itinerary moved across the state to Troy, New York, where crowded audiences were said to have had two hours of "unbroken delight," viewing river cities like Nauvoo "all before you in life-like and natural aspect."³ The panorama was taken to Philadelphia later in 1848, before the artist went abroad for a tour of Europe from 1849 to 1852. It was "exhibited with distinguished success" in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Paris, Brussels, Rouen, Berlin, Antwerp, Vienna, Christiania (Oslo), and other places.⁴ While in England, the artist won the favor of the Royal Family and, by invitation of Queen Victoria, showed the panorama at Balmoral for her pleasure.

¹Mantle Fielding, *Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Subscribers, 1926), p. 339; John Francis McDermott, *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 47-67.

²John Rowson Smith, *A Descriptive Pamphlet of Smith's Leviathan Panorama of the Mississippi River Now Exhibiting at Mason Hall, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1848), pp. 3-4.

³Ibid., pp. 30-31.

⁴John Rowson Smith, *Descriptive Book of a Tour of Europe* (New York: Pettiner & Gray, 1855).

Thereafter, it was seen by “huge audiences” in England and on the continent. While he was in Europe, John Rowson Smith completed a panorama of Europe which he began showing to American audiences upon his return in 1853. He then returned to his former craft of theatrical scene painting and died in Philadelphia in 1864.⁵

Nauvoo, one of the larger river towns represented in the Smith panorama, was described in the exhibition guide as

A Mormon city and settlement now deserted. It is one of the finest locations for a town upon the river. . . . The great Mormon Temple stands out conspicuous. It is the finest Building in the west, and if paid for, would have cost over half a million dollars. It is built of a white stone, resembling marble, 80 feet front by 150 deep; and 200 feet to the top of the spire. The caps of the pilasters represent the sun; the base of them, the half moon with Joe Smith's profile. The windows between the pilasters represent stars. A large female figure with a bible in one hand is the vane. An inscription on the front, in large gilt letters, reads as follows:—“The House of the Lord built by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Commenced April 6, 1841. Holiness to the Lord.” There is in the basement of the temple a large stone basin, supported by twelve oxen of colossal size, about fifteen feet high altogether, all of white stone and respectably carved. A stair case leads up to the top of the basin. It is the fount where all the Mormons were baptized. It is seen in the Panorama standing aside the Temple, *but in the basement is its real situation*. The first view is Nauvoo and the temple in the distance. The next, a large architectural elevation of the Temple, showing all its details.⁶

In showings after 9 October 1848, the lecturer included the fact that “this splendid edifice was entirely destroyed by fire.”⁷

Nauvoo received more space in Rowson's panoramas than did some of the other river towns because of the wide publicity the famous city had received. The public was anxious to see the great temple, and it was featured twice on the canvas. The scale on which it was painted is suggested by the fact that a common Mississippi riverboat that was only twelve feet long in real life was sixteen feet long on the canvas.⁸

Although the exact number of people who saw Smith's “Leviathan Panorama” is not known, statistics are available concerning other panoramas which were exhibited at about the same time as that of Smith's. For example, a panorama produced by John Banvard

⁵*Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Dumas Malone, 10 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1935), 9:306.

⁶Smith, *Descriptive Pamphlet*, p. 11.

⁷McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, pp. 59–69. (Italics in the original.)

⁸Daniel C. Haskell under the direction of I. N. Phelps Stokes, *American Historical Prints* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1927), p. 120.

was seen by 400,000 people in Boston and New York alone, and by 600,000 in London.⁹ Most likely Smith's production enjoyed more popularity than did Banvard's, since Smith's was larger and more pretentious and showed scenes from the entire length of the river, whereas Banvard's contained scenes from only the lower part of the river. Those who have studied these early panoramas agree that the total viewers "must have numbered high in the hundreds of thousands."¹⁰

Smith's panorama is lost, but his painting of the Nauvoo Temple has been preserved by an engraving found in *Graham's American Monthly Magazine* for April 1849, just a few months after the temple was destroyed (see page 197). The editor explained that "by permission of Mr. J. R. Smith, we have caused a view of the Mormon Temple at Nauvoo to be engraved from his splendid Panorama of the Mississippi, and we give the engraving in this number. As the building has been recently destroyed by fire, our engraving, the first ever published, acquires additional value."¹¹

The Smith painting shows the temple from the customary front and side views, with the side disproportionately longer than the actual structure. The relatively low walls may have been an adjustment to the canvas space. The building is generalized in many of its parts. There are no moonstone bases for the pilasters, or stars on the triglyphs. The basement story is unusually high, and the roof balustrade pedestals are so high as to cover much of the chimney's height above the roof.

In comparison with photographs of the temple, the steeple has a revealed base, a shortened clock section, a lengthened observatory, and a low dome. The angel over the dome faces the side rather than the front. Smith places the baptistry outside for visibility, and shows one stairway and some of the oxen on either side.

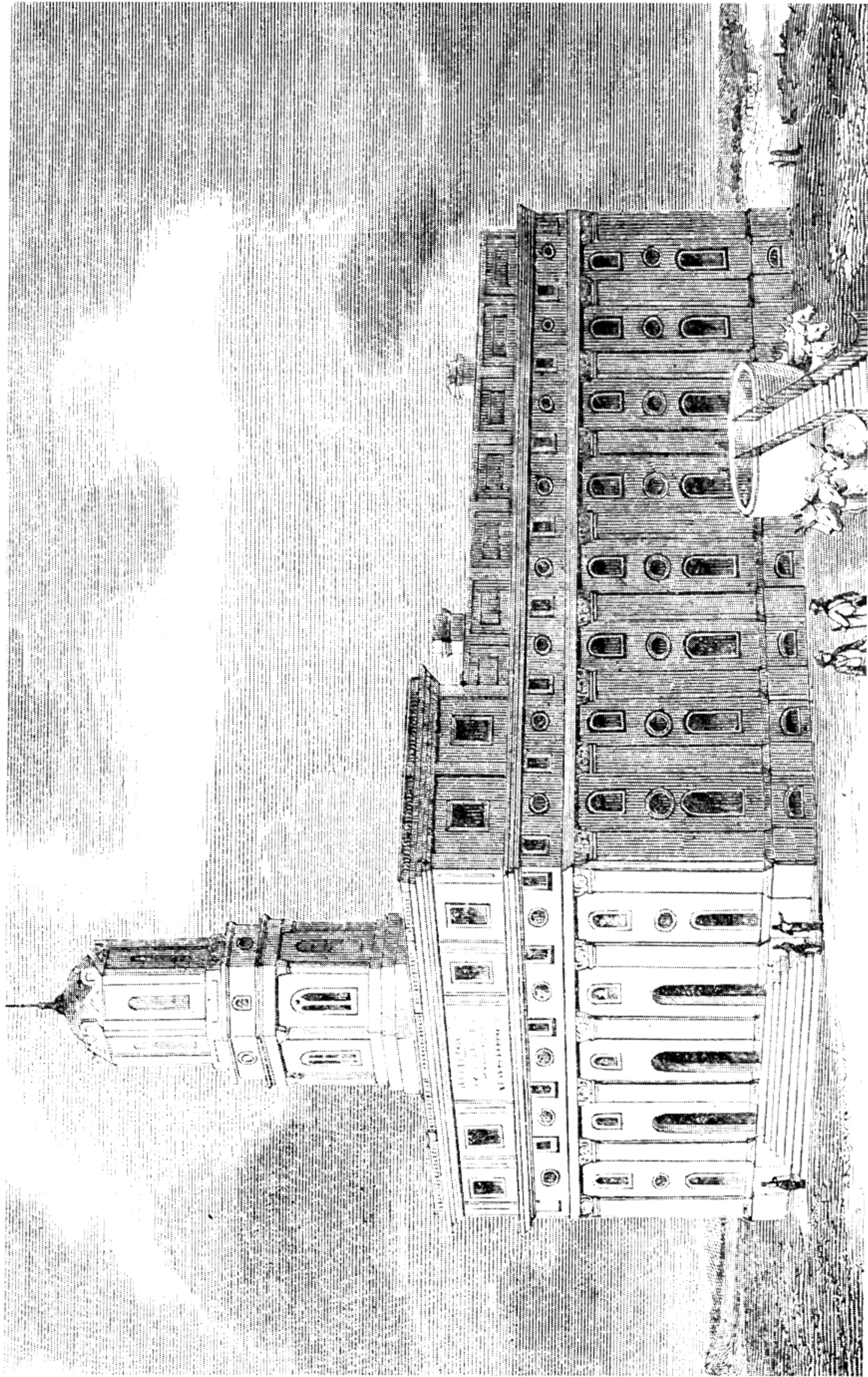
SAMUEL B. STOCKWELL

The second Mississippi panoramist who painted Nauvoo and its temple was Samuel B. Stockwell. He was born in Boston in 1813, the son of Samuel Stockwell, an actor in the New York theaters. Before his twentieth year, young Samuel became a scene painter at the old

⁹Bertha L. Heilbron, *The Making of a Motion Picture in 1848* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1936), p. 4; also Joseph Earl Arrington, "John Banvard's Moving Panorama of the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio Rivers," *The Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 32 (July 1958): 207-40.

¹⁰John F. McDermott to Joseph Earl Arrington, St. Louis, Missouri, 11 June 1950.

¹¹*Graham's American Monthly Magazine* 34 (April 1849): 256-57. This engraving was reproduced in McDermott's *Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* in 1958, p. 59, and in the *Improvement Era* in July 1962, pp. 513-17.



Nauvoo Temple and Baptistry
Painted by John Rowson Smith for His Mississippi River Panorama c1846

Tremont Theater in Boston, where many celebrities—Edwin Forst, J. B. Booth, Jenny Lind, John Howard Payne, Daniel Webster, and Charles Dickens—were to appear as actors, singers, and orators.¹² Stockwell was acknowledged as “a most gifted and accomplished artist” who “executed many fine scenic pieces in the palmy days of the ‘old Tremont.’ ”¹³ He remained with the theater during the 1830 decade and then was called into the service of other theaters of the South and West. He was scenic artist for the Ludlow and Smith theaters in New Orleans, Mobile, and St. Louis from 1843 to 1846 and acquired the reputation of being “one of the cleverest scenic artists in the country.”¹⁴

Before leaving his native Boston in 1841, Stockwell already had ideas about painting the Mississippi River, and his theatrical work helped to prepare him for that project, which he undertook in 1847 and 1848. Stockwell lived in a skiff on the river for some eight months taking sketches and was occupied over eighteen months in designing and painting. The lower river was finished from March to July of 1848, and the upper river from August to October of the same year. Although he did all the sketching alone, Stockwell had the help of John R. Johnston, the landscape painter from Cincinnati, in painting it. While it was in progress, veteran captains and river pilots visited Stockwell’s studio in St. Louis and gave “high and enthusiastic opinions of the merits of his work.”¹⁵

The completed canvas measured 625 yards in length and twelve feet high. It was cut into four sections and wound around as many rollers. The rollers corresponded to the different parts of the 3,500 miles of river scenery. According to the *Boston Transcript*, the first section portrayed about 1,000 miles on the lower river and “commences with a view of the Gulf of Mexico, . . . passes by Gen. Stonewall Jackson’s battle ground to the City of New Orleans, then by Lafayette, Natchez, Gen. Taylor’s plantation, Vicksburg, Memphis, to Cairo and Ohio City. The second section shows the west bank of the upper Mississippi, the mouth of the Missouri, a view at sunset of Rock Island, Davenport, and Rock Island Town, &c. The third and fourth sections contain views of Fort Snelling, Lake Pepin, the Falls of St. Anthony, Galena, at sunset, the Mormon City of

¹²George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New York Historical Society’s Dictionary of Artists in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 606.

¹³*Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, 27 August and 3 October 1849.

¹⁴*Boston Transcript*, 20 August 1849; see also McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, pp. 69–70; and *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 16 December 1843.

¹⁵*St. Louis Reveille*, 29 October 1848; see also Joseph Earl Arrington, “The Story of Stockwell’s Panorama,” *Minnesota History* 33 (Autumn 1953): 284–90; and McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, p. 192.

Nauvoo, and fifty other picturesque and memorable points” along the upper river.¹⁶ Nauvoo and its temple were thus near the end of the panorama that covered the east bank of the Mississippi.

Although parts of Stockwell’s panorama were previewed in July, the whole of it was not presented until October 1848. The St. Louis citizens were interested in both the lower river, since it was their commercial outlet to the sea, and the upper river, dominated by St. Louis shipping, which attracted many fashionable sightseeing tours. The painting was taken downriver, arriving at New Orleans early in December 1848 and remaining until February 1849. The newspapers called public attention to the river towns depicted, including “the Mormon City of Nauvoo, with the Temple, etc.,” on the upper river.¹⁷ Viewers felt they had “rarely seen anything more beautiful and interesting than it is from the mouth of the Ohio to the Falls of St. Anthony.”¹⁸ In February 1849 the exhibition moved to Mobile, Alabama, where it was shown for two weeks and had increased patronage.¹⁹ Then in March it was booked for passage up the Alabama River on the boat *Emperor* to Montgomery, the capital, where it was displayed for a week. It then went by railroad and stagecoach to Macon and Savannah, Georgia, in April. It was in Charleston, South Carolina, in May, and in Baltimore in July. The high point came in Boston with a four-month run from August to December 1849, where a reporter wrote that its immense size “excites our wonder.”²⁰ It was taken to Cuba in 1850, but that adventure was financially unsuccessful. The plans to take it to Europe were not carried out, probably because other Mississippi panoramists were already on the Continent. Then in 1853 this panorama “was sold for a small sum,” at a substantial loss. Stockwell had returned to his theatrical work in St. Louis in 1852, and in 1854 he died of yellow fever in Savannah. He was eulogized as “an untiring student of his profession, who left no superior and few equals behind him.”²¹

No illustration of Stockwell’s painting of the Nauvoo Temple has come to light, nor any clues as to the present existence or the past destruction of his famous painting. Although it is hazardous to speculate on the specific forms Stockwell depicts of the Nauvoo Temple, there are clues. The press listing of “Nauvoo with the temple” suggests views of both city and temple in a summer setting. And

¹⁶*Boston Transcript*, 27 August 1849.

¹⁷*New Orleans Picayune*, 7 December 1848.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 16 February 1849.

¹⁹*Mobile Press Register*, 21 February–7 March 1849.

²⁰*Boston Chronotype*, 31 October 1849.

²¹McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, pp. 68–80.

from the artist's method of using striking effects of light on his scenes, we may assume that they were painted in some picturesque form of sunlight or moonlight. It is probable that his sketches were made in 1848 while the temple was still standing.

LEON DE POMAREDE

Leon de Pomarede was the third major artist who painted Nauvoo and the temple as part of a Mississippi River panorama. Pomarede was born in Tarbes, France, about 1807, studied "in the best schools in Paris, Germany and Italy" for an artistic career and emigrated to America, arriving in New Orleans in 1830.²² Two years later he went to St. Louis, where he painted an early view of that city and in 1834 decorated the St. Louis Cathedral. Then he opened a studio in New Orleans, and by 1841 he had decorated the new St. Patrick Cathedral and married the daughter of a prominent artist, Antonio Mondelli. He opened a permanent studio in St. Louis in 1843, beginning a lifetime of service to that community. In 1850 artistic works by this "Parisian Knight of the easel" adorned many public and private edifices of the Far West.²³

Pomarede also wanted to produce a work of art "representing the scenery upon one of the mightiest rivers in the world."²⁴ While he was on a journey to the Upper Mississippi in 1844, "the picturesque grandeur of the scenery upon its borders and its other peculiarities struck him as a subject worthy of his pencil." Two years later he made definite plans for the project, which he carried out from June 1848 to September 1849. "After a long time spent upon the deck of a flat boat, ascending and descending this 'Father of Rivers,' and taking the necessary sketches, he commenced the work of transferring them to canvas at St. Louis, and after four years of incessant labor, he finished it."²⁵ He had tried to cooperate with Henry Lewis in this undertaking, but when that collaboration failed, he enlisted the services of Charles Courtenay, his studio associate, and Charles Wimar, a young and promising protégé.

Pomarede painted only the Upper Mississippi, including both banks of the river. The completed work was on a canvas 625 yards in length, similar to Stockwell's, and represented the continuous river,

²²*New Orleans Picayune*, 8 December 1849.

²³*Bulletin of the City Art Museum of St. Louis*, Winter 1949, pp. 9-12; *Newark (New Jersey) Advertiser*, 19 November 1850; Joseph Earl Arrington, "Leon D. Pomarede's Original Panorama of the Mississippi River," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin*, April 1953, pp. 261-73.

²⁴*New Orleans Picayune*, 8 December 1849.

²⁵*Newark Advertiser*, 19 November 1850.

prairie, and other scenery from the mouth of the upper river at Cairo to the Falls of St. Anthony, a distance of 1500 miles.²⁶ The double route, up the west bank and down the east bank, increased the coverage to 3,000 miles. Pomarede's guidebook lists four sections, or rolls, of scenery: "Section Fourth: Bad Axe River; Rock and Battle; Cassville; Mouth of Fever River; Galena; Water Power Mills on the Upper Rapids; New Boston, Illinois; Nauvoo, the Mormon City; Warsaw, Illinois; Quincy, Illinois; Hamburg, Illinois; Mouth of Illinois River; Grafton; Bluffs above Alton; Alton; Bloody Island; and Conflagration of St. Louis."²⁷ The *New York Herald* notes additional scenes and details: a "Grand buffalo hunt, by Indians," "the Mormon Temple," "Upper Ferry by Sunset," and "Grand Dissolving View of the City of St. Louis on fire . . . which happened on the 17th of May, 1849, and destroyed 23 steamboats, and 400 houses."²⁸

A brief preview of some parts of Pomarede's panoramic painting was shown in St. Louis in August, and the entire canvas was exhibited there in September 1849, for a six-week run. It is estimated that three-fourths of the city's population of 50,000 people saw it.²⁹ The intinerary then moved along the southern route toward the east, similar to the route Stockwell had followed earlier. It arrived in New Orleans on 26 November 1849 and remained there until 5 January 1850. The panorama received "unparalleled success and patronage," because of its "handsome villages and towering cities" and "new beauties upon every yard of canvas."³⁰ The route then included Mobile and Montgomery, Alabama; Columbus and Savannah, Georgia; Charleston, South Carolina; Wilmington, Fayette, and Raleigh, North Carolina; and Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia. It arrived in New York City in September 1850, where the people turned out in full assemblies to see the new, little-known views of the Upper Mississippi River.³¹ The artist opened his exhibition in Newark, New Jersey, on 14 October for a six-week run to crowded houses. Then on 19 November 1850, the hall and panorama were consumed by fire. Leon de Pomarede returned to his home in St. Louis determined to reproduce the famous painting, but he never did. He resumed his long studio and theater career which came to an

²⁶*The Western Journal* (St. Louis, Mo.), October 1849, p. 70; *Newark Advertiser*, 19 November 1850.

²⁷McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, p. 156.

²⁸*New York Herald*, 7 September 1850.

²⁹*Newark Advertiser*, 19 November 1850; J. Calvin Smith, *Harper's Statistical Gazetteer of the World* (New York: 1855), p. 1528.

³⁰*New Orleans Picayune*, 8 December 1849.

³¹*New York Herald*, 7 September 1850.

end in 1892, after sixty years devoted to art. The Mississippi panorama was his masterpiece.³²

Pomarede painted Nauvoo and its temple as being situated between New Boston and Warsaw, Illinois. The guidebook captioned it, "Nauvoo, the Mormon's City, 191 miles above St. Louis." Pomarede took most of his information about Nauvoo from Charles Lanman's *Summer in the Wilderness* in 1846.³³ The guidebook mentions the growth of Nauvoo to 20,000 inhabitants and its later decline to 500 souls. The city was in decay, yet in the midst of this scene of ruins stood the temple, "one of the finest buildings in America." After a description of the temple, its style, its baptistry, and its cost, he stated that "in the fall of 1848, this object of architectural beauty and monument of fanaticism, was destroyed by fire."³⁴

It is doubtful that the picture of the Nauvoo Temple by Leon de Pomarede is extant; most of the panorama was destroyed and no remnant has come to light. Nor has any engraving of it been reported. Although the time of the Nauvoo drawing is indefinite, the artist worked on the whole panorama from 1844 to 1849. Thus the temple could have been shown under construction, as it was in 1844 to 1845; or fully completed, as it stood from 1846 to 1848; or in ruins, as it was in 1848 and 1849. Since the guidebook deals with Nauvoo after the Mormon exodus, it is probable that the full temple structure was shown in an abandoned Nauvoo. It is also probable that Nauvoo and its temple were painted with special lighting effects, in keeping with Pomarede's other panoramic scenes. His program seems to have followed the regular daily sequence of light as the boat advanced up and down the river. The Nauvoo Temple was painted in the last section of the panorama, which was made on the return voyage southward from the head of the river. Section Three ends with a night scene of a prairie on fire and Section Four shows a sunset some distance below Nauvoo.³⁵ Nauvoo could have been painted in a moonlight scene, showing the temple in ruins, or in a full daylight scene depicting the great edifice in abandonment.

HENRY LEWIS

The fourth panorama artist who sketched and painted the Nauvoo Temple was Henry Lewis. Born in Scarborough, England, on

³²*Bulletin of the City Art Museum of St. Louis*, Winter 1949, pp. 8, 14-18, 110.

³³Charles Lanman, *Summer in the Wilderness: Embracing a Canoe Voyage up the Mississippi and around Lake Superior* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1847).

³⁴*Pomarede's Original Panorama of the Mississippi River, from the North of the Ohio River to the Falls of St. Anthony* (New York: Minnesota Historical Society, 1849).

³⁵*New York Herald*, 7 September 1850.

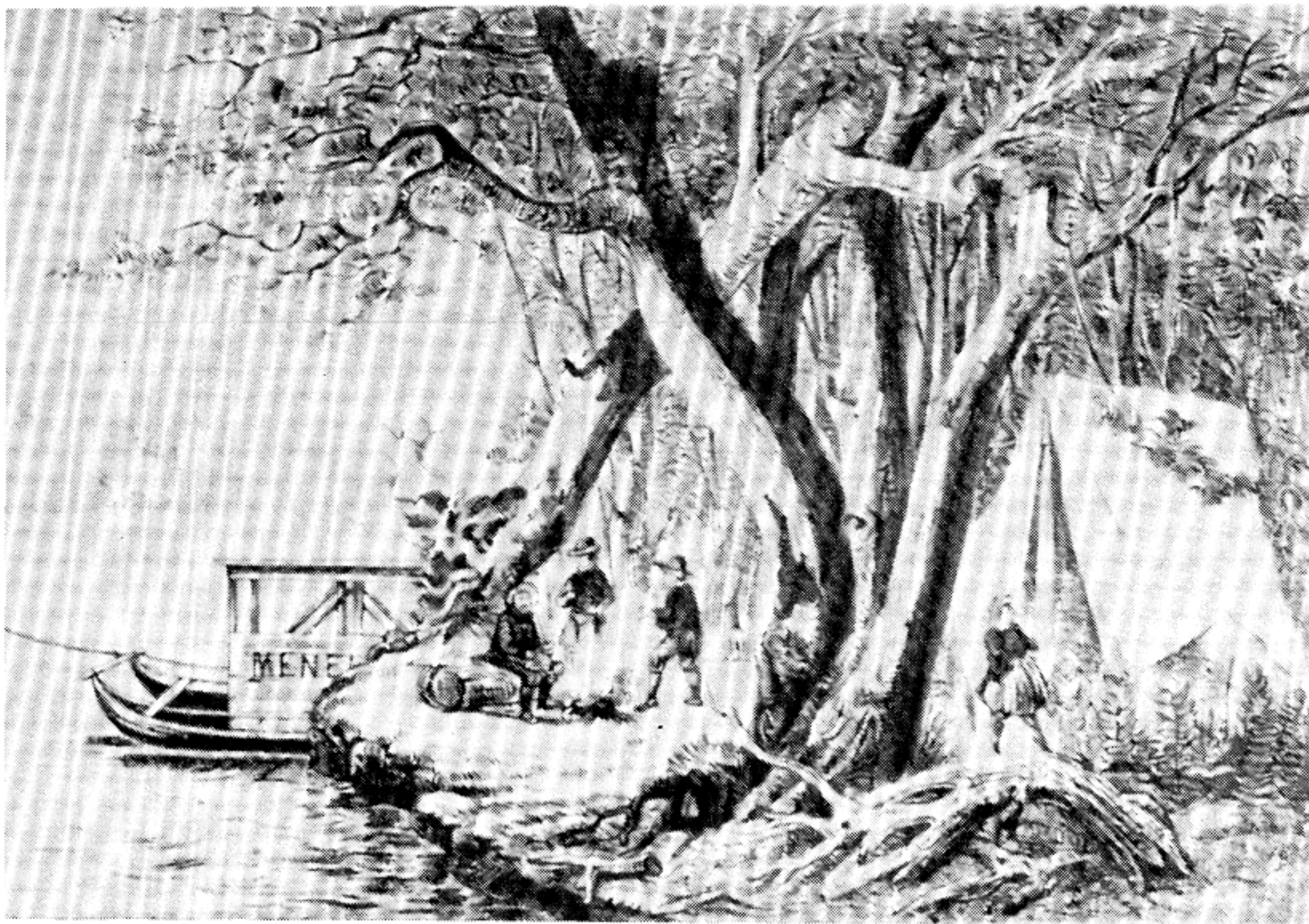
12 January 1819, the son of Thomas G. Lewis, Henry came to America at the age of ten with his father and two brothers. He lived in Boston from 1829 to 1836, the last two years as an apprentice to a carpenter. Then he went to St. Louis with the family and gained employment as a stage carpenter at the Opera House. It was there he came in contact with theatrical artists, whose scenic paintings fascinated him. By 1844 he had decided to become an artist himself. By 1845, as a self-taught painter, Henry had made such progress and gained such proficiency that he opened his own studio, sharing it with another artist, James F. Wilkins. He began painting local landscapes, including a panoramic view of St. Louis. Receiving much encouragement for his productions, he soon began fruitful associations with a small cluster of scenic painters. This small group developed into a western school of panoramists, gaining national importance for their Mississippi River subjects.³⁶

Like the other panorama artists, Lewis devised ambitious plans for producing “a gigantic and continuous painting of the Mississippi River,” from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Gulf of Mexico. He made preliminary sketching trips on the Upper Mississippi in 1846 and 1847, returning with a number of painted scenes. He had tried to cooperate with both Stockwell and Pomarede in the project, but clashing temperaments and plans soon dissolved each of those partnerships. Finally, he and Charles Rogers teamed up in 1848 for the systematic sketching of the whole river. Early in that year, Rogers worked on the lower river and both sketched the upper river during the summer while floating down the river on a specially designed boat, the *Menehabah*. Having the sketches in hand, Lewis decided to produce the panorama in Cincinnati, where another group of panorama artists was in residence and available. They were John L. Leslie and John R. Johnston, scene painters at the local National Theater; Edwin F. Durang, who had worked in the New York theaters; and James B. Laidlaw, the talented artist from Drury Lane in London. They each worked in their specialties, with Johnston doing figures, boats, and cities. The upper river was painted from September 1848 to May 1849 and the lower river was painted later, mostly from June to August 1849. Charles Rogers joined the staff at this point, and Laidlaw is credited with adding the burning of St. Louis to the end of the lower section.³⁷

It was planned to have the panorama painted on 100,000 square feet of canvas by including both the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

³⁶McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, pp. 81–84; see also Heilbron, *Making of a Motion Picture*, introduction.

³⁷McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, pp. 85–86, 88, 192 n.70.



ARTIST'S EN CAMPMENT.

DES KÜNSTLERS FELDLAGER.



H. Lewis



JOHN R. JOHNSTON

Upper—Sketching boat *Mene-ha-hah* on the Upper Mississippi. From Lewis' *Das Mississippithal*. (Courtesy of New York Public Library). Lower—Artists who painted the Mississippi panorama. Portrait on the left from *Minnesota History*. (Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society); right from *New York Cosmopolitan Art Journal*. (Courtesy of New York Public Library).

Since the latter river did not become a part of the painting, the size of the completed canvas was reduced to only 75,000 square feet. The lower river painting was 30,000 square feet or an actual length of 2,500 feet and height of twelve feet, while the upper river painting was 3,750 feet in length and 45,000 square feet altogether. The total length of both parts was more than a mile—several times longer than any of the other Mississippi panoramas.³⁸ Lewis's panorama covered 3,500 miles of scenery along the banks of the whole length of the river. It was divided into six and sometimes seven sections or rolls, each spanning a convenient length of the river—three for the lower and four for the upper river. The subject matter included the geographical regions along the banks, the cities and towns, river crafts and traffic, agriculture, business and industries, Indian life, and picturesque landscapes—all in “the colors of nature.”³⁹

The Upper Mississippi panorama was exhibited first in Cincinnati, in April and May 1849, where crowds gathered to view it with a pleasure mixed with fear at being in a large group during a cholera epidemic.⁴⁰ In June it was taken to Louisville, Kentucky, where the artist received \$429 for twelve performances. The painting returned to Cincinnati for the summer. Then “the splendid Lower Mississippi” was exhibited on 18 August for the first time, after which it remained in the background until December, when it became a regular part of dual exhibitions. Other Mississippi panoramas were taken up the Ohio and down the Mississippi rivers; but Lewis, in order to avoid these routes and maximize patronage, decided on the northern itinerary. He opened at St. Louis on 27 August and closed on 26 September, the river scenes affording much pride to his fellow citizens there. Then he went up the Illinois River to Peoria and on to Chicago, where the mayor welcomed the pictorial river for a ten-day run. An editor reported, specifically, that “the architectural view of the Nauvoo Temple is a magnificent work.”⁴¹

The exhibition moved eastward along the Great Lakes route, stopping at Milwaukee, Detroit, and arriving in Buffalo in December 1849. Here in the area of Mormon origins, the temple attracted special attention. As the viewers watched the giant canvas pass by,

³⁸*Western Journal*, October 1849; Henry Lewis, “Guidebook of the Lower Mississippi River Panorama,” MS in Edgar and Emile Stehle Collection, Upper Montclair, New Jersey; see also McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, p. 85.

³⁹Playbill of Warren, Lewis & Co. of the Upper and Lower Mississippi River, at Worcester, Mass., dated Worcester, 7–10 September 1850. Specimen in American Antiquarian Society, Boston. See p. 206.

⁴⁰McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, p. 130.

⁴¹*Buffalo* (New York) *Express*, 21 December 1849; see also McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, pp. 130–31, 136.

WARREN, LEWIS & CO.'S
NEW AND SPLENDID
MAJESTIC
PANORAMA
 OF THE
UPPER & LOWER
MISSISSIPPI
RIVERS!

WILL BE EXHIBITED AT
THE CITY HALL
 WORCESTER,
 TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY,
 (AFTERNOON AND EVENING.)
 Sept. 7, 8, 9 and 10,—commencing Tuesday Evening.

THIS PANORAMA IS
NEARLY FOUR MILES LONG!
 And decidedly the **LARGEST PICTURE** IN EUROPE OR AMERICA, and faithfully
 represents a view of country
3500 MILES IN LENGTH,
 EXTENDING FROM THE
GULF OF MEXICO
 Through Ten States of the Union, and embraces over **FIFTEEN DEGREES OF LATITUDE** in its progress to the
FALLS OF SAINT ANTHONY.

The **DRAWINGS ARE ENTIRELY ORIGINAL**, and were made by distinguished Artists, from actual observation, and are truthful copies of some of the
Most Magnificent Scenery in the World!

A Historical, Geographical and Anecdotal Explanation of the numerous places, will be given as the Picture passes before the audience.

This is the **FIRST and ONLY PAINTING** which faithfully illustrates the
GREAT VALLEY OF THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI
 WITH THE INDIAN NATION.

THE NEW TERRITORY OF MINNESOTA.
 The immense Mineral Regions of Lead, Iron and Copper, with the Bluffs, Mountains, Indian Villages, Trading Posts, Military Stations, and in short, every point of Romance or Interest to the tourist, the land speculator, or man of business.

Both sides of the River are represented above St. Louis, thus presenting over **TWO THOUSAND MILES** of country bordering on the Mississippi, which has **NEVER BEEN EXHIBITED BEFORE.** The vast Agricultural resources of the "MIGHTY WEST," the Noble Prairies of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, &c., are vividly depicted. All the Cities, Towns, Villages and Landings, with over 1500 different Steamboats, Flat Boats, Sloops and Canoes, together with a variety of INDIAN GROUPS IN FULL COSTUME, INDIAN ENCAMPMENTS, and every varied phase of life as seen on a trip from the BALIZE, or Mouth of the Mississippi, to the very head of navigation—THE FALLS OF SAINT ANTHONY. The Picture is represented with the changes from **SUNRISE TO SUNSET, WITH MOONLIGHTS, FOGS, &c.**, that every striking feature of the great **FATHER OF WATERS** may be fully illustrated in this magnificent Painting.

The Panorama was exhibited in ST. LOUIS and NEW ORLEANS last fall and winter, over Four Months, and passed **TRUMPHANTLY** through a severe ordeal, where nearly every person is familiar with the Scenes represented, and have pronounced it an **Extraordinary, Wonderful and Wonderful** general representation of the entire navigable Mississippi River.

During the changes of the different sections, there will be
 Singing, by Mrs. Warren, accompanied by Miss Hardy, Pianist.
 Also, Comic Songs, by Master F. C. Reynolds.

ADMISSION 25 CENTS. - - - CHILDREN 15 CENTS.
 LIBERAL ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE MADE WITH SCHOOLS.
 Doors open at 3 and 7 P. M. Panoramas will more precisely at 5 and 7 1/2 o'clock
 N. B.—The Panorama commences moving punctually at the hour advertised.
 Care: Hamilton, Patten, Patten & Co., 11 and 13 Central Exchange, Worcester.

PROGRAMME
 OF THE
PANORAMA!

FIRST SECTION.—The Panorama commences with a view of the
GULF OF MEXICO

And different Passes to the Mississippi, with ships in offing at anchor, &c. (The EAST BANK is represented.)
 Pilot Boats going out by the S. W. Pass. Tow Boat Mississippi. "PILOT STATION" Ships signalling for
 a Pilot. Fisherman's Caves. The different Passes. Tow Boat with two ships—Mary Ann of Boston and
 "Monopole" of Philadelphia. The Great Prairie. Tow Boat with two ships. Jersey Point. Plantations. Mc-
 Call's Point. United States "Fighting Squadron" bound for Vera Cruz. Tow Boat coming up S. E. Pass. The
 "English Turn" in the foreground. Tow Boat with the ship Union of New York.

GENERAL JACKSON'S BATTLE GROUND IN 1815.
 City Point: Sugar Cane. Gen. Jackson's Head Quarters. S. Barracks. U. S. SLOOP OF WAR at Anchor.
 Algiers Dry Dock in foreground. Steam Boats in the distance.

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS,
 With all its endless variety of SHIPPING, STEAM BOATS, &c. occupying ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY
FEET (in length) OF CANVAS.

CITY OF LAFAYETTE
 CARROLLTON AND THE RACE COURSE. S. R. Automobiles are the apparatus with her great freight of 5000
 Hales of Cotton! Red Church. S. B. Salina. Baptist Church. Protest's Paragon. S. B. Salina.
 Church of St. Gabriel and Plantations, at sunset. BATON ROUGE by moonlight. U. S. Barracks. Red
 River. Ellis Cliffs, morning.

CITY OF NATCHEZ.
 SUNRISE AT THE
MOUTH OF THE OHIO.
CITY OF CAIRO AND OHIO CITY,
 Thus giving at one view, prominent points of three different States, viz: KENTUCKY, ILLINOIS & MISSOURI
 with the steamers Paris, Jewess and Declaration. End of the First Section.

SECOND SECTION.—(East Bank continued.) Commences at the
CITY OF ALTON.
MORMON CITY OF NAUVOO.
 Crows and Prairie, New Boston, Boston Bay. (The River in a Fog.) Rock Island, Davenport, Hampton,
 (Fort Byron, Cordova, New Albany, Fulton City, Savannah and Huntsville) by moonlight.

INTRODUCTION.
 (A view of the Mississippi River on Fever River, six miles from the Mississippi, of the celebrated mineral region
 and city of GALENA, at sunrise.)
 After viewing Galena we return to the Mississippi. Mouth of Fever River, Bluffs, Castville, Wisconsin River,
 Prairie De Chien, "Fort Genard," Wisconsin, and Axon Mountains (celebrated in the history of the Black Hawk
 War.) Prairie de Camp, Mouth of the Black River, Solitaires Peak, Nally's Peak, La Montagne que trompe a
 France, or "The Smoking Mountain," Nelson's Landing, Mouth of the Chippewa River, & Bogus Creek, (the former
 resort of trappers.)

LAKE PEPIN.
TERRITORY OF MINNESOTA
TOWN OF ST. PAUL, BY MOONLIGHT.
 This ends the second section.

SECTION THIRD.—Commences with a sunrise view of the
FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY.
FORT SNELLING.
 The highest point of Steamboat navigation on the Mississippi River, two thousand and fifty miles from the Battique
 or Gulf of Mexico, (the point where the picture commenced.) This is the Indian Nation.
The Beautiful Valley of St. Peters.
 This ends the third Section.

The **FOURTH SECTION** commences with a most beautiful Dioramic picture of
ROCK ISLAND TOWN
 Rock Island, with Fort Armstrong, where the treaty was made between Gen. Scott and Black Hawk, and the
 town of Davenport, (by sunrise) with the various steamboats, flat boats, rafts, &c. Buffalo, Fairport, Salem,
 Wyoming, Bloomington, Fort Louisa, Burlington, Fort Madison, Montross, (at the head of the lower rapids). A
 Dioramic view of KEOKUK, at the foot of the rapids, showing the point where the river sweeps round the town.
 Des Moines River, the dividing line between Iowa and Missouri—Churchville—Tully—Canton—La Grange—
 Marion City—Hannibal—Towns of Louisiana and Clarksville by moonlight—Wood Yard—Growth of Cotton
 Wood Trees—Steamboat Wading, &c.—The Mouth of the

GREAT MISSOURI RIVER.
 Above this point the water is clear; below, the Mississippi takes the character of the Missouri, from the volume of
 mud which it empties out. We now arrive at the **EMPIRE CITY OF THE WEST,**
SAINT LOUIS.
 This picture alone occupies over One Hundred feet of Canvas, in length, introducing
 the innumerable Steam Boats, Ferry Boats, Barges, Wood Boats, Flat Boats, Rafts, &c.,
 together with a correct picture of the "GEN. PIKE," the first steamboat that ever came to
 Saint Louis. She arrived in 1817, and is introduced to show the improvement in boat
 building since that period, and to contrast her with the splendid mammoth steamboat
MISSOURI.

Playbill of Warren, Lewis & Co.
 of the Upper and Lower Mississippi River
 at Worcester, Mass., dated Worcester, 7-10 September 1850

“the magnificent building seems to be placed directly before the eye. Its white marble walls glitter with beauty, and its enormous dimensions stand out almost like a city itself.”⁴² In Buffalo the lower river section was now ready and added as a second exhibition. Then the dual shows crossed New York, with stops at Rochester, Oswego, Syracuse, and Utica. John Rowson Smith had been in this area more than a year before, so the exhibition was taken next to Washington, D.C., in April and May 1850, where it was “viewed by President Zachary Taylor, Senators, and other officials” of the government.⁴³

After a two-week trip to Richmond, Virginia, the panorama passed through New England, probably bypassing Boston where patronage had been captured already by three of the other panoramists. It was shown in Worcester and Salem, Massachusetts, in the summer and then in Portland, Maine, in September and October 1850. Editors pointed out the “surprising prairie view and Mormon Temple” that occupied the whole frame on the stage, as being “well worthy of the attention of the lovers of the beautiful.”⁴⁴ It was not a barnstorming tour, however, because this was the fourth Mississippi River painting to cross the continent. The itinerary moved across Canada during the winter of 1850–1851, with stops at Halifax, Toronto, Kingston, Quebec, and Montreal. In October 1851 the whole exhibition was placed aboard a boat at Montreal and shipped to Liverpool for openings there and elsewhere in England. The panorama of the great river was shown to the people in the Netherlands and Germany in 1852 and 1853 to conclude the European itinerary. Henry Lewis decided to get more training in art in Dusseldorf, Germany, a place so congenial that he lived there the rest of his long life, which ended in 1904. His famous panorama was sold and taken to the Orient, where it became lost to history. Much of his painting was preserved in book form and published in Germany as *Das Mississippithal*, which was reprinted in America and is still influential today.

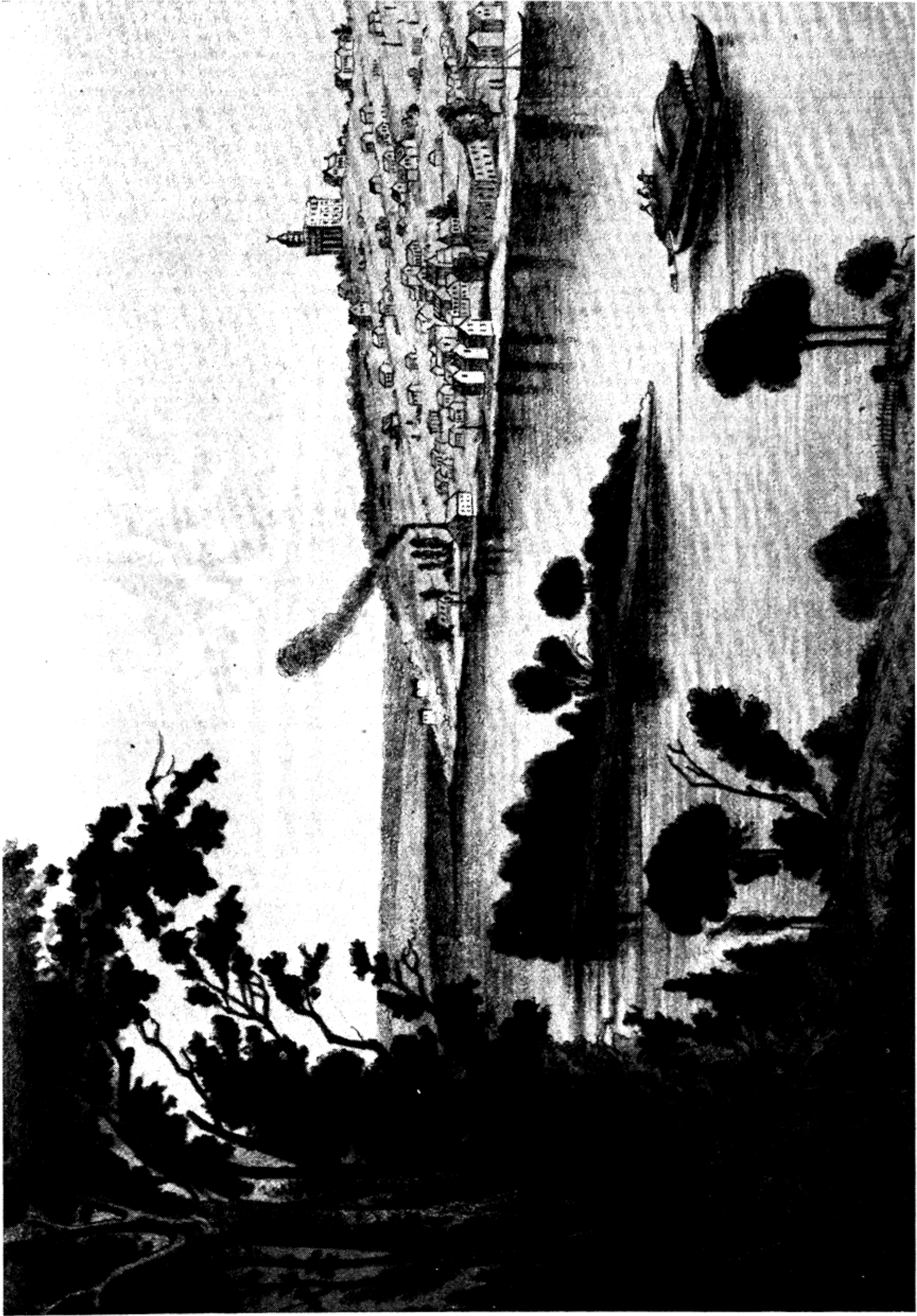
Some of the sketchbooks of Henry Lewis are at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, and six sketches of Nauvoo and its temple are among them: two each of the building, the baptistry, and the city.⁴⁵ It is fortunate that his exhibition pamphlets contain lithographs of the river scenes, including a view of the Nauvoo Temple at a distance separately, in its finished form. They

⁴²*Buffalo Express*, 20 and 21 December 1849.

⁴³*Missouri Historical Review* 29 (April 1935): 248–49.

⁴⁴*Portland (Maine) Advertiser*, 7 and 13 September 1850.

⁴⁵Letters of Marjory Douglas, 23 November, 15 and 21 December 1949, Missouri Historical Society.



View of Nauvoo and the Temple
Painted by Henry Lewis c1846

reflect the views found in the panorama.⁴⁶ His views of Nauvoo and the temple have been reproduced.⁴⁷

The diary of Henry Lewis, which gives an account of his sketching journey down the river, has also been preserved. The artist passed Nauvoo 16 June 1848 on his way up the river and stopped only briefly. He wrote,

[I] came in sight of Nauvoo, just as the sun was an hour up. The scene was beautiful in the extreme, as the history of this unfortunate city is a melancholy one. We staid a short time, but not long enough to get a sketch of the place.

The sketches of Nauvoo were made 28 to 30 July on the return voyage. He wrote:

We came to the celebrated city of Nauvoo, where, as the sun was just setting, we encamped and I immediately hurried up to take a look at the temple and see it by sunset. The next morning, July 30th, we started from our encampment and floated down to the lower end of Nauvoo city. We stopped to take a look at the town and finish our examination of the temple by exploring the interior.⁴⁸

He recorded his response to the temple:

Taking into consideration the circumstances under which it was built it is a wonderful building and considering too that it is of no particular style it does [does] not in the least offend the eye by its uniqueness like all most all innovation from old establish'd standards do. . . . It bears a nearer remseblance to the Bysantium of [or] Roman Grecian style than any other altho' the capitals and bases are entirely unique still the cornices are Grecian in part.⁴⁹

Lewis's notebook sketch of the whole temple is fragmentary, but it contains some of the essential elements of the building and its ornament as an architect would record them. It shows the main body of the walls, with the cornice and attic front, without the steeple or roof balustrades. It has a high basement, requiring eight front steps to reach the portals. Only some of the pilasters, windows, and triglyphs are drawn to indicate the ornamentation for the whole wall. Ten side pilasters are suggested, one more than the actual number. The cornice is shown, with its great projection, and a detail of its composition

⁴⁶Letter of Stewart Leonard, 7 February 1950, City Art Museum of St. Louis.

⁴⁷Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America*, 4 vols. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1915), 4:1239; "Papers in Illinois History and Transportation" for 1937, p. 170, Illinois State Historical Society; David E. and Della S. Miller, *Nauvoo: The City of Joseph* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1974), p. 82; *Improvement Era* (July 1962): 512-17.

⁴⁸Henry Lewis Diary, 16 June, 28-30 July 1848, quoted in Heilbron, *Making a Motion Picture*, p. 20, 51.

⁴⁹Henry Lewis Diary, pp. 51-52, quoted in McDermott, *Lost Panoramas*, p. 114.

is set in. The attic front shows only its pilasters, with the balustrade pedestals suggested above.

The artist probably made other sketches of the temple, as this one is incomplete. There were some changes from this preliminary sketch to the final lithograph. At first the steps were only in front of the entrance, whereas later they mounted from each side of the portals, as well as in front of them. The number of side pilasters was changed to nine. Some details of the sketch, like the arched window transoms and the four keystones of the frieze windows, are not found in the generalized forms of the complete drawing.

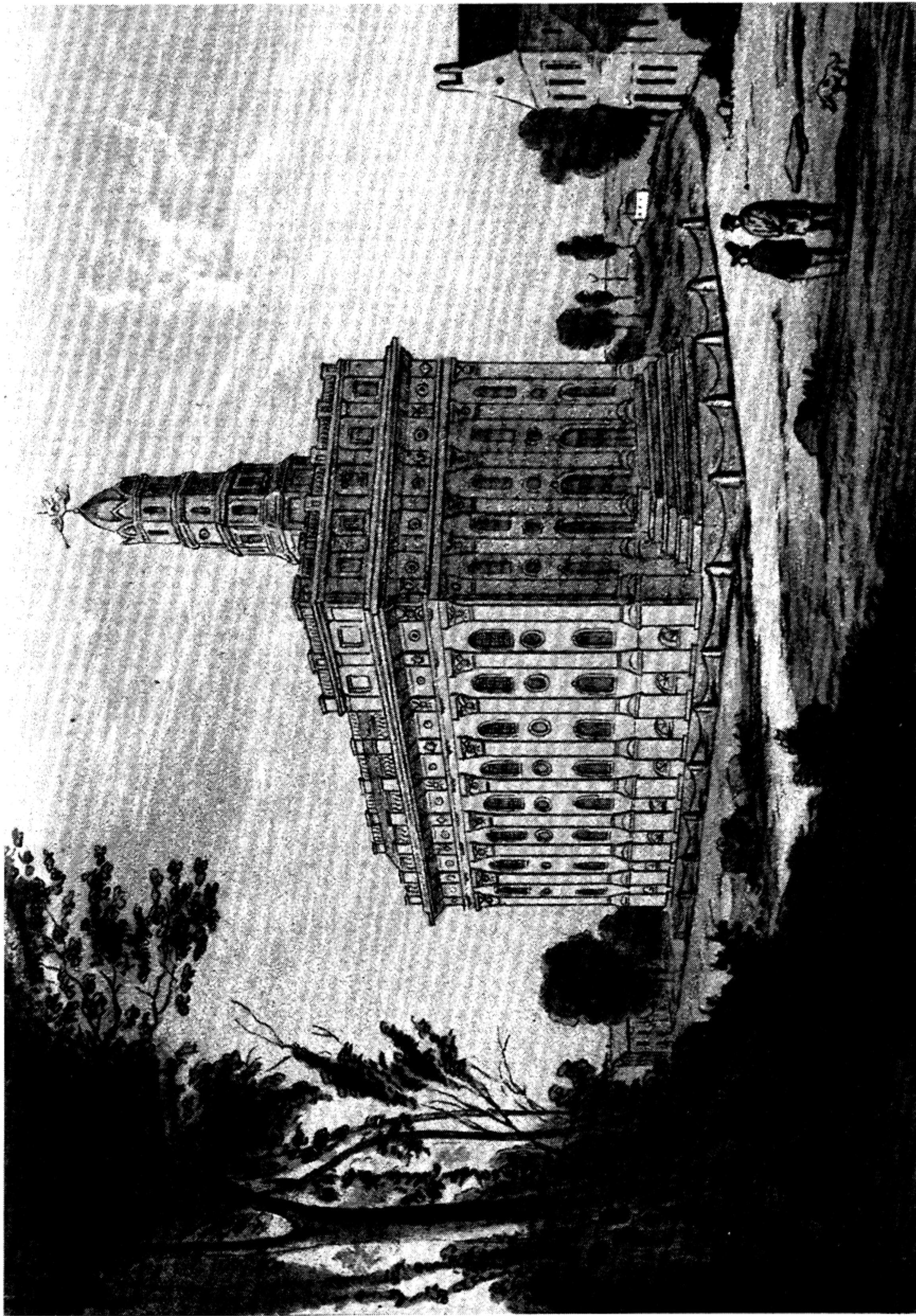
The Lewis sketchbooks, first publicly displayed in the St. Louis Art Museum in 1949, furnish new materials on the Nauvoo Temple not previously seen by the public. The guidebook to Lewis's panorama, also displayed simultaneously, contains some contemporary information about Nauvoo and its temple, none of which is new.⁵⁰ The finished painting of the temple shows a pretentious building that in several respects differs from the constructed building. It is rather high and narrow, and the length also falls short proportionately. The basement foundation seems unusually high. The three large circular windows, immediately over the front portals, and the central rectangular window in the inscription space of the pediment are not found in the temple photograph. The steeple has vertical panels on the sides of the base section. The clock section is of equal height when compared to the other steeple sections. The high cupola has rather tall pediments around its base.

The well-ornamented temple is given a luxuriant environment. There are large trees overhanging on the left front, with small trees to the right and in the rear. A large home is on the right front, with smaller ones on the side and in the rear. A fence of posts, connected with chains, surrounds the temple on the front and side. Two spectators and a dog are seen in the front yard. The temple stands on a prominent site and is yellowish in color. The colors of its surroundings are naturalistic—the green and brownish foliage of late summer, blue sky and white clouds above⁵¹ (see page 211).

As the panorama movement spread, other artists selected the Nauvoo Temple as a subject for their paintings. Unquestionably, it was regarded as one of the great sights along the Mississippi River.

⁵⁰Letter of Charles van Revenswaay, 2 February 1965, Old Sturbridge (Mass.) Village; Letters of Marjory Douglas, 15 and 21 December 1949, Missouri Historical Society; Charles Gaylor [Gayler], *Lewis' Panorama: A Description of Lewis' Mammoth Panorama of the Mississippi River . . .* (Cincinnati: Printed at the Dispatch Office, 1849), pp. 12–13.

⁵¹Henry Lewis and George Douglas, *Das Illustrierte Mississippithal* (Dusseldorf: Institut von Arnz and Company, 1857), p. 230.



Nauvoo Temple
Painted by Henry Lewis in 1848 for His Mississippi River Panorama

Resurrection

I

Our grievous hearts we spend
Gnawing against unalterables,
Making loud crescendo louder
Until the echoing question
Batters the bounds of infinity,
Ricocheting,
Smashing against itself,
Turning interrogative into imperative
Why!

II

Then hangs silence, heavy.
Mind and heart insatiable—
No answer to feed upon—
Turn carnivorous
Upon indigestible self.

III

Still
hangs the silence,
heavy,
Hangs, and waits—
Waits the heart hush,
The earth logic to be stilled,
To free feeling-hearings
For soft whispering,
Ministering along veins, tissue,
And all between, pricking
The quick of thorny primeval knowing:
Energy from agony
And opposition!

Allie Howe is an associate professor of English, Brigham Young University.

A new knowing of the old,
A resurrection, a surge, rising
From red coals and ash, white-hot,
A virtue, refined, fired
From gut pains and seared edges,
A fiber, toughened, yet
Tender to the Everlasting Fire,
Yielding,
“I do, I will,
Thou sayest.”

—Allie Howe

Golgotha's Dawn Comes Ever Slow

When my heart breaks for sudden hurt to death for pride,
The death-pain's late. At the piercing tide
My spirit shrivels—shamed—but blessed blind
I live the dying. Dark is kind.

Unfrocking will waits—weak—awake,
Want's harsh glare bites. I writhe—
Pull back—and, loathing, shrink
The tearing vivisection's brink.

Penance prongs me. Why stand I still?
Who thorns me—docile
Dumb?
Who crucifies *me*? Who dares?
Is't I? Pride? Other's wares?
Stiff seconds scourge . . . and seethe . . . and—kill—
Come
You, little empty ones— Come
Stroke the red raw resurrected flesh—
Come, stroke my life—

Stumble, thou dumbweightedcorpse—
Self-willedbleedingspirit, stumble. . . .
Spread coldbludgeoned—stark—displayed
Nakedhanging . . . death, afraid. . . .

Lord, whence comes the blow?
Above? Below?
Who shafts it?
Is't I, Lord?

The light's too bright.
My heart hurts. Oh—
Golgotha's dawn comes ever slow

For me—

And painful—

—Richard G. Ellsworth

Richard G. Ellsworth, associate editor of *BYU Studies*, is a professor in the English Department, Brigham Young University.

The First Presidency Statement on MX in Perspective

Steven A. Hildreth

On 5 May 1981 the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a statement on basing of the MX missile.¹ Although it took many people by surprise and simultaneously evoked widespread national criticism and praise, the statement was neither considered hastily nor did it lack precedent. Since the earliest days of the Restoration, Church leaders have exercised their rights and responsibilities in speaking out consistently on the moral issues of war, arms, and peace. Their persistent pronouncements, consonant with Christ's teachings, have always demonstrated deep, spiritual concern for mankind.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of love and peace. While on the earth, the Savior pleaded with mankind to preserve peace, making it clear that contention among men or nations arises from the rejection of his teachings. He indicated that peace and happiness, yearned for by man, will come about only when humanity follows the teachings and principles embodied in the gospel. Apostle John A. Widtsoe once said, "There is no other way."² The gospel of peace has been preserved and promulgated in this dispensation by the First Presidency and other Church authorities,³ who have explicated how the gospel comprises the solutions to the fundamental causes of conflict and disharmony.

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¹"First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, 5 May 1981. Reprinted in the *Ensign* 11 (June 1981): 76.

²John A. Widtsoe, "Is War Ever Justified?" *Improvement Era* 55 (July 1952): 502.

³Wilford Woodruff said, "The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as president of the Church to lead you astray" (G. Homer Durham, ed., *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], pp. 212–13). Marion G. Romney said of the First Presidency, "What they say as a presidency is what the Lord would say if he were here in person . . . and it is scripture" ("Thus Saith the Lord," in Conference Report, April 1945, p. 90). Joseph Fielding Smith said, "Neither the President of the Church, nor the First Presidency, nor the united voice of the First Presidency and the Twelve will ever lead the Saints astray or send forth counsel to the world that is contrary to the mind and will of the Lord" ("Eternal Keys and the Right to Preside," *Ensign* 2 [July 1972]: 88).

The MX statement is another historically important link in a chain of long-standing Church declarations on arms, defense, and the general issue of war in all its stages. In order for one to understand better its importance, the First Presidency's MX message must be placed in a historical context with similar Church authority statements.

“RENOUNCE WAR AND PROCLAIM PEACE”

The renunciation of the idea that belligerency is justification to reconcile disputes and the proclamation of the belief that peace will be attained only through adherence to gospel principles have proven the nexus of nearly all Church pronouncements on war and peace since the Church's organization in 1830. During periods of international tensions, Church leaders have urged long-suffering, restraint and negotiation, while delineating the limitations and conditions whereby the righteous are justified to wage war. They have explicated also fundamental causes of war.

Struggling through a period of mob violence and consequent dejection at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith received and recorded a revelation to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16). The Lord also indicated that persecution and even physical abuse should be endured patiently, with resultant exponential blessings, to a point wherein the righteous use of force is justified. The Lord said that before he would give a commandment to justify battle against one's enemies that a “standard of peace” should be lifted several times to those who would fight his own, and then “the Lord would fight their battles” (see D&C 98:23–44). Immediate retaliation or revenge exonerates the original injustice. Only under such conditions as specified in this revelation can war be justified.

Two instances characterize Joseph Smith's faithful resolve during those troubled times. On one occasion he wrote that a mob was “armed with weapons of war, . . . whereupon the Elders, led by the Spirit of God . . . [to] stop the effusion of blood, entered into a treaty with the mob, to leave the county within a certain time.”⁴ A few years later, a letter to the Brethren in Missouri from the Prophet and his counselors said, “We advise that you be not the first aggressors. . . . If the people will let you, dispose of your property, settle your affairs and go in peace. You have thus far had an asylum,

⁴Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1932–1951), 1:394.

and now seek another, as God may direct. . . . Preserve peace with all men . . . show yourselves men of God.”⁵

President Brigham Young, distressed by the senseless waste in the Civil War, said that each side was destroying the other, “all to satiate their unhallowed and hellish appetite for blood,”⁶ and he later reaffirmed that peace would come only when the people turned to God and ceased “to do wickedly.”⁷ After the war, he observed, “Of one thing I am sure: God never institutes war; God is not the author of confusion or of war; they are the results of the acts of the children of men. Confusion and war necessarily come as the results of the foolish acts and policy of men; but they do not come because God desires they should come.”⁸

In 1898 and again at the outbreak of World War I, the First Presidency made similar statements renouncing war and proclaiming peace through conformity to Christ’s standards.⁹

President Heber J. Grant, during World War I, requested the *Improvement Era*, a Church publication, to publish several articles on war to express his sentiments as he felt they would “be of great value to the youth of Israel who are trying to follow the teachings of the Prince of Peace.” President Grant said he was grateful to the Lord for the impressions these stories made upon him in his youth because they “gave me a loathing and a horror of war which has never left me.”¹⁰ Apostle James E. Talmage said this war was Lucifer’s belated attempt to renew the issue of enforcing unrighteous domain and despotism upon mankind.¹¹ George Albert Smith, as an Apostle, agreed, stating the adversary was whispering, “This is the thing to do.”¹²

In 1941 President David O. McKay referred to the rejection of Christ’s gospel of love, which brought on the war in 1914 and the subsequent smouldering hatred in German hearts against other nations for imposing perceived “unjust terms of peace,” as the root cause of World War II.¹³ Throughout World War II, the First

⁵Ibid., 2:455. On another occasion the Prophet passed near a wooded area where he “felt much depressed in spirit,” for “there had been a great deal of bloodshed in that place. . . . [He remarked that] whenever a man of God is in a place where many have been killed, he will feel lonesome and unpleasant, and his spirits will sink” (Ibid., 2:66).

⁶*Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter Day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–1886), 10:256.

⁷Ibid., 10:295.

⁸Ibid., 13:149.

⁹James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1975): 3:298–99; 5:52.

¹⁰“War and Peace,” *Improvement Era* 18 (July 1915): 777.

¹¹James E. Talmage, “‘Mormonism’ and the War,” *Improvement Era* 21 (October 1918): 1030.

¹²George Albert Smith, in Conference Report, April 1918, p. 41.

¹³David O. McKay, “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,” *Improvement Era* 44 (December 1941): pp. 715, 764.

Presidency reiterated formally the admonishment to “renounce war.”¹⁴ They recognized that the Saints’ only course of action was to “support that government to which they hold allegiance” and to pray that God would turn their leaders to peace, for “God is not pleased either with war, or with the wickedness which always heralds it.”¹⁵ President McKay told Church members that they could not perform any single act to eradicate global hate and war but that they could individually promote peace by living the gospel. He explained the controversy between “interventionists” and “isolationists,” and their different approaches to terminate war, saying, “My message . . . today is to keep hate and enmity out of the controversy.”¹⁶

During the period from Korea to pre-Vietnam, a number of Church leaders explained that the causes of war were men’s desires for personal power,¹⁷ their hatred and their hunger for revenge,¹⁸ their disobedience of the first two commandments,¹⁹ their desire to rule by force and not by love,²⁰ and their “world-wide lack of trust,” making it possible to “change the ‘cold war’ into a contest of actual physical war.”²¹ Apostle Ezra Taft Benson said that peace “can come only by following the teachings and the example of the Prince of Peace.”²²

During the Vietnam era, Apostle Boyd K. Packer reviewed the admonition to “renounce war and proclaim peace,” calling war “a heinous, hideous, ugly thing!”²³ He referred to the 1942 First Presidency statement on war, stating: “The Church is and must be against war. . . . It cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes; these should and could be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiations and adjustments.”²⁴ On Memorial Day in 1971, President Harold B. Lee stated that the 1942 First Presidency statement was just as valid in our time as it was then. He concluded, “The true Christian’s position on war is clearly set

¹⁴See James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:116–19, 139, 140–41, 148–63 (passim), 182–83, 189, 216–17, and 219.

¹⁵“To a World at War,” *Improvement Era* 43 (December 1940): 712, from General Conference, 4 October 1940.

¹⁶McKay, “Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,” p. 764. Elder Stephen L Richards stated, “When . . . men’s minds are enlightened, . . . [they will] not permit themselves to be poisoned by the most deadly virus in all the world—hate and enmity. Let us never forget that love is ordained as the saving grace for all mankind.” (Stephen L Richards, *The Church in War and Peace* [Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Co., 1943], p. 181.)

¹⁷Widtsoe, “Is War Ever Justified?” p. 503.

¹⁸Spencer W. Kimball, “To You . . . Our Kinsmen,” *Improvement Era* 62 (December 1959): 939.

¹⁹Joseph Fielding Smith, “War and the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Improvement Era* 63 (January 1960): 16.

²⁰David O. McKay, “For a Better World,” *Improvement Era* 63 (October 1960): 702.

²¹Alvin R. Dyer, *The Fallacy* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), p. 85.

²²Ezra Taft Benson, “A World Message,” *Improvement Era* 64 (June 1961): 433.

²³Boyd K. Packer, “The Member and the Military,” *Improvement Era* 71 (June 1968): 58.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 60; “Message of the First Presidency,” *Improvement Era* 45 (May 1932): 348.

forth by a declaration in which the Lord says, ‘Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace.’ ’’²⁵

SUBJECTION TO PRESIDENTS AND KINGS

The twelfth article of faith states LDS belief in being obedient and subject to civil authority.²⁶ The Church also believes “in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land” (D&C 98:6); the Lord will hold “men accountable for their acts in relation” to their civil government (D&C 134:1). In light of the Savior’s teachings regarding warfare, military service is necessarily an important, moral issue. In the past, where a formal “call to arms” was issued, Church authorities have urged members to serve their respective countries, if required.

In both the Mexican–American War (1846) and the Spanish–American War (1898), when the United States government asked for volunteers, the First Presidency gave its consent to those Mormons who desired to serve.²⁷ During World War I, President Joseph F. Smith urged those who would serve to remain “men of honor,” without a “blood-thirsty desire to kill and to destroy.”²⁸ After the war, Utah’s “brave sons” were praised for their “patriotic devotion.”²⁹ During World War II, the First Presidency praised Church members for their generous, charitable contributions in support of the government’s war efforts.³⁰ A formal, constitutional call to armed service was felt by Church leaders to be an obligation of the “highest civic duty” and was acceptable as long as men remained “men of honor.”³¹ Elder Packer, after quoting the previous statement, added, “A man does not necessarily have to volunteer.” It was hoped that the Church’s youth would have the “strengthening, stabilizing development of missionary service” and schooling before they entered, “if indeed they are required to do so at all.”³² This stand remained unaltered through the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

Although the “honorable” soldier who wages war in defense of his country and on behalf of his government is guiltless, nevertheless there is accountability for warfare. The First Presidency has said:

²⁵Harold B. Lee, “From the Valley of Despair to the Peaks of Hope,” *New Era* 1 (August 1971): 4 and 5.

²⁶Joseph Smith, Jr., “The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” in *History of the Church*, 4:541.

²⁷See James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 1:294–304; and 3:29, 298–99.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 5:52.

²⁹“Special Notice,” James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:171; and James E. Talmage, “Mormonism and the War,” p. 1029.

³⁰“The Church’s Part in Defense,” James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:163–64.

³¹“Message of the First Presidency,” *Improvement Era* 45 (May 1942): 348–49.

³²See Packer, “Member and the Military,” pp. 58–61; and Gordon B. Hinckley, “A Silver Thread in the Dark Tapestry of War,” *Improvement Era* 71 (June 1968): 48–50.

That sin, as Moroni of old said, is to the condemnation of those who “sit in their places of power in a state of thoughtless stupor,” those rulers in the world who in a frenzy of hate and lust for unrighteous power and dominion over their fellow men, put into motion eternal forces they do not comprehend and cannot control. God, in His own due time, will pass sentence upon them.³³

“UNHOLY RULE OF FORCE”

Church leaders have warned that wartime activities and militarism should not affect postwar attitudes and behavior in working for peace, or war could break out again. Elder Widtsoe noted that “man’s unappeased greed” and selfishness cause war, and with its subsequent defeat, “greed is transmuted into hate,” and wars recur again. “Such is the ungodly, downward sequence.”³⁴ The First Presidency, disappointed with continuing European hostilities after World Wars I and II, said, “The sword has not been fully sheathed; the voice of suspicion and strife has not been entirely stilled.”³⁵

Following World War II, nearly eighty percent of the American people supported a one-year “universal military training” program.³⁶ Opposing this proposition, the First Presidency warned, “The possession of great military power always breeds thirst for domination, for empire and for a rule by might not right. . . . By building a huge armed establishment, *we shall belie our protestations of peace and peaceful intent and force other nations to a like course of militarism.*”³⁷

President J. Reuben Clark, a counselor to Church presidents, a brilliant statesman³⁸ and “spiritual leader,” said, “This is the unholy rule of force, the unholy rule that ‘might makes right.’ This is the rule that has lain behind every great empire.”³⁹ President McKay proposed that in order for peace to come the world “must supplant the rule of force by the rule of love.”⁴⁰

³³“The Church’s Part in Defense,” James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:160–61.

³⁴John A. Widtsoe, “Foundations of Peace,” *Improvement Era* 43 (February 1940): 125.

³⁵James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:185.

³⁶George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1972) 3:723–24.

³⁷James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:241–42. (Italics added.)

³⁸James E. Talmage said J. Reuben Clark “possessed the brightest mind to ever leave Utah” (see *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 [Spring 1973]: 425). Marion G. Romney referred to President Clark’s spiritual greatness in his foreword to J. Reuben Clark, *Stand Fast by Our Constitution* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962), pp. v–vii.

³⁹J. Reuben Clark, Jr., “In Time of War,” *Improvement Era* 42 (November 1939): 657.

⁴⁰McKay, “For a Better World,” p. 702. Elder Widtsoe said the weapons for fighting a “righteous war should be the teaching of truth and right and the exclusion of the unrighteous from association with the righteous. The bloody wars in which we have engaged on earth are really a type of murder unacceptable to the Lord of Heaven.” (“Is War Ever Justified?” p. 503).

Church leaders recognized that militarism, with its consequent propensity for war and enmity, is not a valid gospel approach to secure peace. Postwar behavior dictates the nonantagonistic pursuit of peaceful solutions. Recognizing that partisan rivalry and hard-line opposition to the post-World War I treaties and League of Nations threatened future peace, President Heber J. Grant said he regretted the utilization of the standard works by some to oppose the treaty, for such use had nearly polarized the Church.⁴¹ He felt the pursuit of world peace should not be superseded by politics or other less important considerations.

“INSTRUMENTS OF DEATH”

Invariably arms are employed; their peacetime buildup encumbers men's progress. Their use, both threatened and real, must be limited by moral constraints. This is especially true for nuclear weapons.

President Brigham Young said, while civil war loomed, “From the authority of all history, the deadly weapons now stored up and being manufactured will be used until the people are wasted away.”⁴² Nations which manufacture “instruments of death” eventually use them. A year later he added, “A large share of the ingenuity of the world is taxed to invent weapons of war. What a set of fools!”⁴³ President Lorenzo Snow in 1901 urged world leaders to disband their armies and “turn their weapons of strife” into implements of industry.⁴⁴ In 1937, while Europe prepared again for war, the First Presidency warned the nations they were “sitting on a mountain of explosives accumulated in defiance of Christ's teachings.”⁴⁵

During World War II, the First Presidency noted that the war could no longer be settled peaceably (although they renewed their hopes for such a solution) but that it would end only with “superior armed forces, by increased number of swifter planes, by more shattering bombs and other weapons of destruction; but *Peace will be maintained only by nobler men and by more Christ-like nations.*”⁴⁶ In

⁴¹Heber J. Grant, “The Treaty of Peace—Restoration of the Gospel,” *Improvement Era* 23 (December 1919): 109.

⁴²*Journal of Discourses*, 8:157.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 8:324.

⁴⁴James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:334.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 6:39. During this time, Elder Widtsoe said, “It is folly to build great armaments of steel, for defense or offense, and fail to build the mightier weapons that issue from obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Peace. Warships, airships, or diplomacy may end a war, but warfare . . . will not cease until men obey His word, and seek unselfishly and in might to love one another.” (“Foundations of Peace,” p. 125.)

⁴⁶James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6:183 and 189. (Italics in original.)

the post-World War II era, the attention of Church leaders to questions of nuclear warfare and development were most clearly articulated by President J. Reuben Clark, who saw nuclear weapons as part of the ongoing abandonment of humanizing principles:

We have been among the leaders in developing the great principles of the laws of war, that went to the humanizing of war, most of which went into the discard when we entered World War I, and most that were left went when we entered World War II. We had developed since the time of Grotius, the doctrines that tended to control and limit the destruction of noncombatants, old men, women, children. All that went by the board at Hiroshima.⁴⁷

Nuclear weapons were considered “the greatest potential curse that man has yet known.”⁴⁸ None of the General Authorities of the Church during the 1960s and 1970s modified President Clark’s observations.

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND MX

Since the time Joseph Smith copied into his journal an article on the British–Chinese War and wrote, “Oh, the horrors of Christian warfare!” the Church has demonstrated consistency in opposing war and arms proliferation. Most recently, President Spencer W. Kimball said:

When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrications of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications— . . . When threatened, we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan’s counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior’s teachings.⁴⁹

Since the proposed MX plan was announced, the First Presidency has twice denounced the nuclear arms race. Their 1980 Christmas message expressed dismay at growing international tensions and the “unrestricted building of arsenals of war, including huge and threatening nuclear weaponry.”⁵⁰ They expressed confidence in the

⁴⁷J. Reuben Clark, Jr., “Our Dwindling Sovereignty,” address delivered at the 4th Annual Pi Sigma Alpha Lecture at the Institute of Government, University of Utah, 13 February 1952, p. 22.

⁴⁸As quoted in Edwin Firmage and Christopher Blakesly, “J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Law and International Order,” *BYU Studies* 13 (Spring 1973): 306n. The article contains many of Clark’s statements (pp. 273–346).

⁴⁹Spencer W. Kimball, “The False Gods We Worship,” *Ensign* 6 (June 1976): 4. In 1900, Heber J. Grant said, “How natural it is for us to bow down and almost worship the warrior! But with humble and faithful men like the brethren referred to, a warrior, who is such not from a high sense of duty and patriotism, but simply from an ambition to be great in the eyes of his fellows, or to make a name for future generations . . . is a pigmy in comparison.” (“Humble Devotion vs. Military Glory,” *Improvement Era* 3 [February 1900]: 301–302.)

⁵⁰“Christmas Message from the First Presidency,” *Church News, Deseret News*, 20 December 1980, p. 3.

negotiating process of conflict resolution, which could “save the world from a holocaust.” Their 1981 Easter message warned of increasing global tensions and the escalation of arms. They urged U.S. and other world leaders to resolve their differences through negotiation.⁵¹

The MX statement was issued after the Brethren had spent considerable effort examining the “secular” issues of the MX basing mode while reaching a “spiritual” consensus. This statement warned of the inevitable consequences of arms proliferation, even when defensive in intent. Its fundamental thrust, however, was concern over the physical, socio-economic, and human survival problems inherent in the current MX plan. The First Presidency stressed that it would be “ironic” to base these weapons of mass destruction in the same general area where the Church carries forth “the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth.” They concluded:

With the most serious concern over the pressing moral question of possible nuclear conflict, we plead with our national leaders to marshal the genius of the nation to find *viable alternatives* which will secure at an earlier date and with fewer hazards the protection from possible enemy aggression, which is our common concern.⁵²

The arms race is of intense concern to the Brethren, and they deplore nuclear weapons proliferation. They stress the dangers of MX to U.S. national security.⁵³ Placed in historical perspective, the First Presidency statement on MX clearly advocates an end to the arms race, urges reconsideration of alternatives (not necessarily alternative modes of MX), and emphasizes negotiation.

“VIABLE ALTERNATIVES”

A number of alternatives to MX can be conceived; these fall within three general areas. Each presupposes certain assumptions which the reader must consider. Each set of assumptions possesses its own unique prospects and problems.

The first area, embodied by the dictum “peace through strength,” includes all aspects of coercive persuasion. In the international environment “persuasion . . . long suffering . . . and love unfeigned” (see D&C 121:30–43) are not often mentioned. This area includes all forms of nuclear, nonnuclear, and conventional

⁵¹“Easter Message—A Plea for Peace,” *Deseret News*, 18 April 1981, p. 3.

⁵²“First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile,” p. 76. (Italics added.)

⁵³Jerry Cahill, LDS church spokesman, Church Office Building, Salt Lake City, Utah, telephone conversations on 6, 13, and 27 May 1981.

deterrence, in addition to any nonmilitary compulsory modes of pressure.

The second area includes arms control and disarmament efforts. These seek to reduce through stability in the balance of power the chance of war. In earlier years, President J. Reuben Clark said, "We are being generously dosed with that sovereign narcotic, which designing militarists have in the past always administered to their peoples, the doctrine that to ensure peace we must maintain a great army and gigantic armaments."⁵⁴

The third area, the gospel of peace, is best summarized in the context of this article by three statements. President McKay stated that "the most ominous threat to the peace of mankind . . . is not the probable misuse of the atomic bomb, but the dwindling in men's hearts of faith in God."⁵⁵ President Clark said, "You cannot bring the millennium by negotiating a treaty," but only by placing "the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the hearts of all mankind."⁵⁶ Marion G. Romney, as an Apostle, similarly remarked, "This is the way peace comes in this world. It can be obtained in no other way. The promised peace of our text emanates from Christ. He is the source of it. His spirit is the essence of it."⁵⁷ True and permanent global security can neither be purchased with force, nor can it be negotiated. It will come only in following Christ. Only obedience to gospel principles will resolve the fundamental causes of war and bring about true and permanent global security.

CONCLUSION

As the Church expands, rolling forth "as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands . . . until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2; see also Daniel 2:34), so shall the eyes of an increasingly troubled world turn, searching for peace, a peace ultimately to be found only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church will emerge as the standard of Christ's gospel and will "stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world" (D&C 78:14). Individually, as citizens of Church and state and world, we must remember to

⁵⁴J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Stand Fast by Our Constitution*, p. 71. He also referred to "the excess burden of armaments which is now bowing our backs to the breaking point" (Ibid., p. 131).

⁵⁵David O. McKay, "Faith Triumphant," *Improvement Era* 50 (August 1947): 507.

⁵⁶Clark, "Dangers of the Treaty Pointed Out," quoted in James B. Allen, "J. Reuben Clark, Jr., on American Sovereignty and International Organizations," *BYU Studies* 13 (Spring 1973): 353.

⁵⁷Marion G. Romney, "Peace in This World," *Improvement Era* 70 (June 1967): 79.

keep hate and enmity out of the controversy. . . . [There is] no better way to bring about harmony . . . [and] peace in our country and in the world than for every man and woman first to eliminate from his or her heart the enemies of harmony and peace such as hatred, selfishness, greed, animosity; and envy.⁵⁸

Certainly, the First Presidency had every right prophetically and historically to make this official statement on MX. That statement is but one more prophetic warning among many such warnings and admonitions. It is completely consistent in tone and message with all that the preceding prophets have said.

⁵⁸McKay, "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled," p. 764.

Leaving Sunday School

Brightly pastel, as if tufting the air, she twirls
 At the door, beribbons her hair, and pats her dress
 Going out. As if in gossamer, she smiles distress
 That her shoelaces, undone, bounce like curls
 As she runs. There, by a sycamore tree, squirrels
 Turn and dart before her, up the bark to impress
 Sparrows, robins, and wrens observing not less
 Than spring, and her especially, who furls
 A lilac, with dextrous twist, around her finger.
 As I say she should run, she does, down a walk,
 But then I wish I had asked her to stop and talk,
 To tell me why she should not solemnly linger
 To consider furry and feathery creatures up there,
 How she could saucily teach them how better to care
 For each other.

—Clinton F. Larson

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Mormon Bibliography 1981

Scott H. Duvall

In 1978 approximately 220 books, pamphlets, and articles were published on Mormon topics. In 1979 the figure rose to 335, and in 1980 it increased to 367. This burst of publishing which took place during the 1979–1980 years occurred in large measure, we at Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library thought, because of the Sesquicentennial celebration. Frankly, we expected a decrease in Mormon publication in 1981. We were wrong. Of the 531 items in this "Mormon Bibliography 1981," 452 were published in 1981. The rest appeared in 1980 and are included in the figure for that year. (Several of these were Masters' theses and Ph.D. dissertations which were not included in last year's bibliography.) The interest in Mormon topics by the non-Mormon as well as the Mormon audience is still growing.

An analysis of the different sections of this bibliography and a comparison with last year's bibliography will aid the reader's understanding of this growth. For example, in the Arts and Literature section this year there are fifty-four entries compared with forty-four last year. The publication of "Mormon" novels in 1981 surpassed the record set in 1980. There seems to be an audience for novels which are set in Mormon experience, whether that experience be in the past or the present.

The largest increase over last year's bibliography occurred in the Contemporary books and articles section (121 compared to 69). Articles on Sonia Johnson, the E.R.A., Mormon women's concerns, the MX missile issue, and the Joseph Smith III blessing were the major topics which attracted national and Church attention. In fact, these issues prompted more national press coverage in 1981 than did the Sesquicentennial activities of 1980.

Although in the Inspirational section of the bibliography the same number of entries appear this year as did last year, the overall emphasis among these publications shifted. In 1980 the majority of

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items listed in this section aimed at encouraging people to live better personal lives (see, for example, Paul H. Dunn's *I Challenge You . . . I Promise You*, the Ellsworths' *Getting to Know the Real You*, or Randall Mehew's *To Lengthen One's Stride: A Personal Guide to Better Living*). In 1981, however, the amount of publication of this nature decreased while several more items pointed specifically to marriage and family relationships.

Change also occurred this year among those books and articles listed under the Doctrinal heading. Not only did the amount of material in this section increase from forty-nine to ninety-two but also publications appeared on topics not treated last year. For instance, the coverage of marriage, family, and priesthood from a doctrinal viewpoint marks a change in publishing and writing emphasis. In addition, several items appeared which dealt with various Church doctrines in their historical settings (see, for example, Thomas G. Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," *Dialogue* 14 (Fall 1981): 78-88, or Linda K. Newell, "A Gift Given, A Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick among Mormon Women," *Sunstone* 6 (September-October 1981): 16-25.

In short, the amount of publication on Mormon topics continued unabated in 1981. Some shifts of emphasis and some increases in the amount of material listed in different sections of the "Mormon Bibliography 1981" have been noted. It is hoped this analysis will aid those students of current Mormonism who watch for such changes, however subtle these changes may be.

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NEW PERIODICALS

- Inscape: A Brigham Young University Student Journal*. Published by the BYU English Department. Box 96, SFLC, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.
- Polylog: A Journal of LDS Student Thought*. Published by the Latter-day Saint Student Association. LDS Institute, 856 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90024.

Notes and Comments

The husband and children of Grace Fort Arrington, a member of the Mormon History Association who died in March, have established the "Grace Arrington Award for Historical Excellence." A prize of \$500 will be awarded annually in honor of Grace "to that person who during the previous calendar year published a book or article of distinction or performed other service which in the opinion of the judges represents a signal contribution to understanding of the Mormon past." Judges are Leonard Arrington, Davis Bitton, and James B. Allen.

The first recipient of the award is Dean C. Jessee, senior research historian with the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History and associate professor of history and Church history at Brigham Young University. Dean Jessee is editor of the volume *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons*, published by Deseret Book Company in 1974, and author of articles of distinction that have appeared in *Journal of Mormon History*, *Western Historical Quarterly*, *Brigham Young University Studies*, *Dialogue*, the *Ensign*, and other Church and professional magazines and journals.

Book Reviews

CLEMENT, RUSSELL T., comp. *Mormons in the Pacific: A Bibliography*. Laie, Hawaii: The institute for Polynesian Studies, 1981. 239 pp. \$12.95 hardbound. \$7.95 paperback.

Reviewed by R. Lanier Britsch, professor of history, Brigham Young University, Provo Campus.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., called the first four missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the islands of the Pacific in 1843. The result of that act has been 139 years of continuous Mormon history with a peculiar Pacific or Polynesian bent. Few parts of the world have captured the imagination of contemporary Latter-day Saints more than Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, Tahiti, and New Zealand. But, ironically, few geographical areas have received less scholarly attention than these exotic places.

Although I doubt that great numbers of new researchers and writers will now immerse themselves in the waters of Pacific LDS history simply because Russell T. Clement has published *Mormons in the Pacific: A Bibliography*, I do believe he has made the job considerably easier for those few who do take the plunge. *Mormons in the Pacific* provides a useful research tool. Carefully researched itself, it includes 2873 entries, including books, pamphlets, periodicals, personal diaries, journals, mission histories, ephemera, and so forth. Many of the items are voluminous and merit extensive research. Scholars interested in the various island missions, schools, building projects, travels of missionaries, and the almost countless topics that exist in this area, will find that *Mormons in the Pacific* is the best place to begin.

In addition to the LDS materials, Clement lists a number of Reorganized LDS sources. Because the bibliography was compiled from three libraries and archives—the Joseph F. Smith Library at BYU–Hawaii, LDS Church Archives in Salt Lake City, and the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU in Provo—it is obvious that many sources may have been overlooked, both LDS and RLDS. Clement encourages

further compiling of sources and items that can lead to a comprehensive bibliography in the future.

Mormons in the Pacific is generally well organized and useful. However, several problems will bother some users. For example, Clement fails to list all of the "Manuscript Histories" compiled by Assistant LDS Church Historian Andrew Jensen. Item 655 instructs the user to look under name of church unit to find each "Manuscript History" by country. But a spot check reveals that the items are generally not listed elsewhere. Likewise, item 656 suggests checking names of church units to find "details regarding minutes, ledgers, and historical records." Again the records seem to be absent from the bibliography. Both of these categories of information are extremely important to Pacific historians. Perhaps because of size and production limitations the bibliography is not cross-referenced or indexed to a very specific degree.

But even with its limitations, I recommend *Mormons in the Pacific* for all research libraries and for scholars with any degree of interest in LDS Pacific history.

MATHESON, PETER, ed. *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches: A Documentary Account of the Christian Resistance and Complicity during the Nazi Era.* Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981. 103 pp. \$5.95 paperback.

Reviewed by Douglas F. Tobler, professor of history, Brigham Young University.

In *The Third Reich and the Christian Churches*, Peter Matheson has presented us with the first collection of documents in English on the complex relationship between the Christian churches and the Hitler regime. Even the subtitle, *A Documentary Account of the Christian Resistance and Complicity (I would have exchanged the order of these last two nouns) during the Nazi Era*, accurately reflects the difficult and problematic nature of that relationship from the very beginning. Even though some excellent English monographs (John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*; Gunter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany*; and, more recently, Ernst C. Helmreich, *The German Churches under Hitler*) with extensive use of documentary material have been available for some time, teachers, students, and *aficionados* generally will, I think, welcome an opportunity to read this kind of a cross section of documents for themselves.

Reviewers are justly warned to beware of being too critical of what the author, or, in this case, editor, did not intend to do. Certainly in the choice of what to include and what to leave out, there is considerable room for differences of opinion and taste. Nevertheless, a suggestion or two may not be out of place.

Matheson's spectrum of representative documents for the two major churches—Evangelical and Catholic, together comprising over ninety percent of the German population—and for the specific twelve-year period seems adequate enough. I cite the following excellent and informative selections: (1) the Central Office of the Federation of Protestant churches June 1933 memorandum which vividly portrays the prevalent negative Protestant opinion about life and church life during the Weimar years; (2) the Roman Catholic Conference meeting with Hitler, 25–26 April 1933, where he mesmerized Catholic prelates while reaching for their jugular vein on the Jewish question. (Hitler complained to the prelates that “he had frequently been reproached with opposition to Christianity, and the reproach had hurt him deeply! For he was absolutely convinced that neither personal life nor the state could be built up without Christianity; . . . He [Hitler] had been attacked because of the handling of the Jewish question. The Catholic Church had regarded the Jews as parasites for 1500 years. . . . At that time the Jews had been seen for what they really were. In the era of Liberalism this danger had no longer been seen. I return to the previous period, to what was done for 1500 years” [p. 20].) Here one is reminded of Israel Zangwill's sardonic comment that “the Jews are a frightened people. Nineteen centuries of Christian love have broken down their nerves”¹; (3) Rudolf Hess's *Silencing of the Churches*, 12 September 1938, where much of Hitler's real attitude toward religion and the churches is finally expressed semipublicly to the *Gauleiters*. Other documents—there are sixty-eight in all—of equal significance could be cited.

But the collection is not quite complete. It does not include Hitler's early frank evaluations of Christianity and the churches in *Mein Kampf* or his *Table Talk* and conversations with Danzig Mayor Hermann Rauschning. (“Neither of the denominations—Catholic or Protestant, they are both the same—has any future left. At least not for the Germans. Fascism [Italian] may perhaps make its peace with the Church in God's name. I will do it too. Why not? But that

¹Israel Zangwill, *The War for the World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), p. 416.

won't stop me [from] stamping out Christianity in Germany, root and branch. One is either a Christian or a German. You can't be both."²) Another possible inclusion is the infamous "Ordinance on Religious Associations and Societies in the *Reichsgau* Wartheland, 13 September 1941," widely reviewed as the prototype for the Nazi-church relationship of the future after World War II was successfully over, which would have effectively destroyed the traditional churches as they had existed up to that time. Finally, such a collection hardly seems complete without the Stuttgart Confession of October 1945 where Protestants did public penance for their complicity ("We accuse ourselves for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently"³). The struggle was over; the evil had been destroyed—but the guilt remained.

One improvement in this collection over comparable German-speaking anthologies is the inclusion of two documents concerning the brutal treatment of the Jehovah's Witnesses by the Nazis. But, perhaps a document or two on Christian Science, the Salvation Army, the New Apostolic Church, or even the Mormons—all like the Witnesses, viewed as "dangerous" in Gestapo reports but treated less harshly—would illuminate the manner in which the different sects were perceived, while at the same time rounding out the larger church-state question.

More important than this representation of the sects, however, is the need for an introductory essay to aid students and laymen—the presumed audience—in understanding the larger setting of which the documents are an integral part and for a brief, synthetic, analytical epilogue where some of the important political and moral issues that have been raised would be discussed. The introduction, for example, might well call the reader's attention to the unhappy relationship of the churches with the Weimar Republic. To Protestants, many of the Republic's strongest supporters were godless liberals, internationalists, Bolsheviks or worse; Catholics had similar concerns and particularly lamented the failure of the Vatican to achieve a Concordat with Weimar Germany similar to the 1929 agreement with Mussolini as a protection for their own believers and institutions. Both Catholics and Protestants decried the German national humiliation since Versailles, the political weakness of the government and moral decadence symbolized in Berlin's loose cabaret life. Against

²John S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-45* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1968), p. 15.

³*Ibid.*, p. 332.

this background, the seductiveness of Hitler's "national renewal" and "positive Christianity" is more understandable. Such additional information, it seems to me, would enhance the reader's appreciation of the documentary content and the actual historical circumstances at the time and would preclude the ever-tempting "rush to judgment."

Finally, this historical episode raises some of life's big questions, especially for Christians. What responsibilities do we and our churches have in the political realm? Why did all the German Christian churches do so little for the Jews? Does this experience provide us—individual Christians—with any guidance for the moral and political issues of our own time? Can today's Christian churches continue their traditional fratricidal war in the face of secular challenges potentially more destructive than Hitler? At what point may accommodation with earthly powers constitute betrayal of the duty to be a witness for Christ? Matheson has undoubtedly thought about these and other questions; I would like to see a brief epilogue exploring some of them. Neither facts nor documents ever speak completely for themselves and being able to read his insights would not destroy our own independence of mind.

Mormon readers will, I believe, find this collection of more than usual interest. The lessons for individual Christians most certainly apply to us, but the experiences of the larger churches have taken on a new meaning as the LDS church has become significant enough, at least in part of the world, to exert an influence on some political/moral issues of our own day.

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