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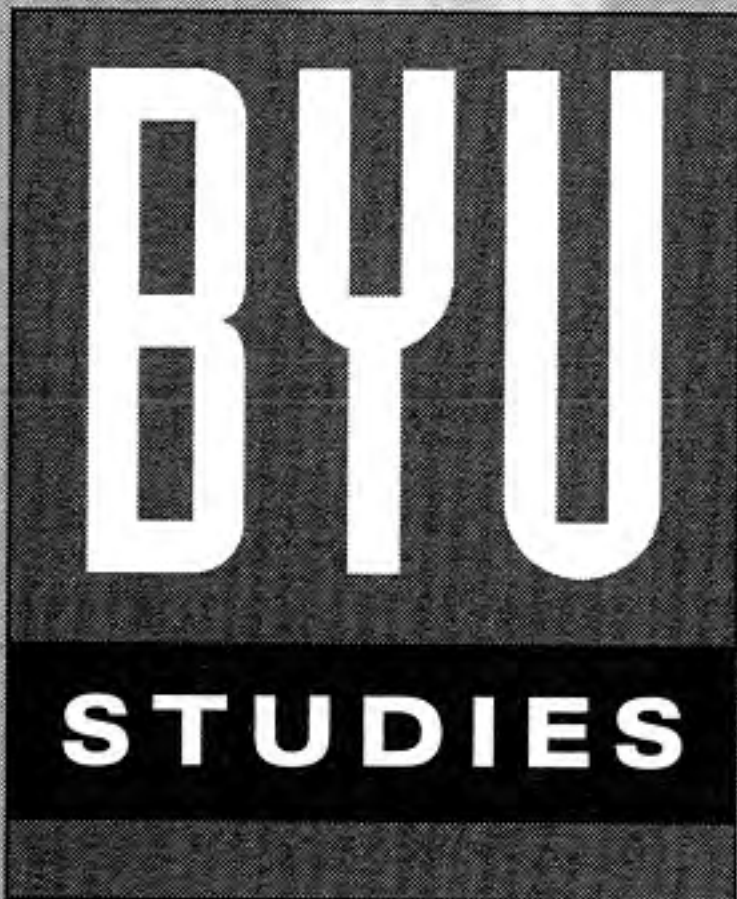
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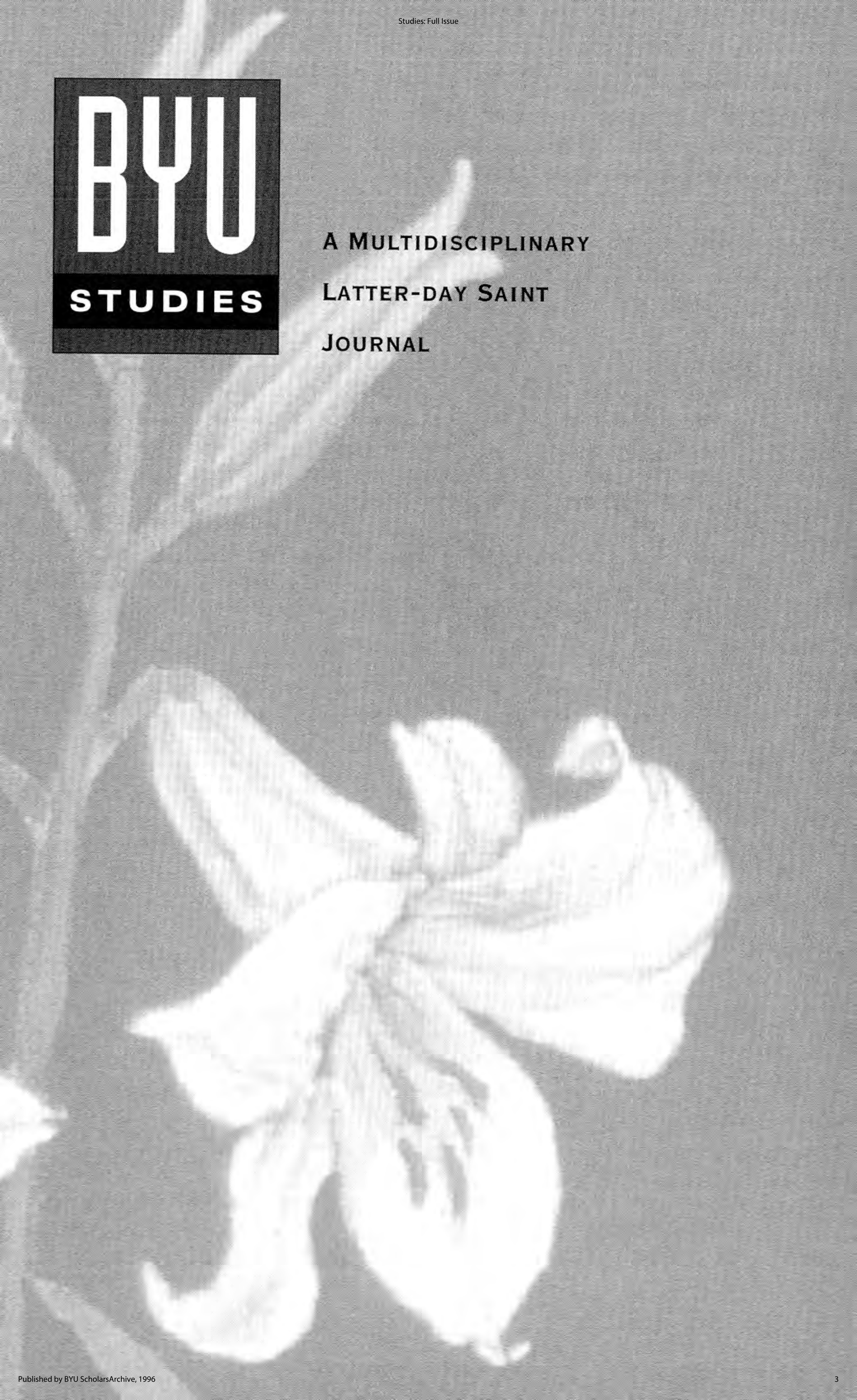


BYU
STUDIES

PRACTICE OF CONFESSION
OTHER SAYINGS OF JESUS
SALT LAKE TEMPLE STUDIES
FEMINISM IN THE GOSPEL LIGHT
EIGHT PREGNANCY NARRATIVES
VISIONS IN LITERATURE



A MULTIDISCIPLINARY
LATTER-DAY SAINT
JOURNAL



TO OUR READERS:

BYU Studies is dedicated to the correlation of revealed and discovered truth and to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious avenues of knowledge. This periodical strives to explore scholarly perspectives on LDS topics. It is committed to seeking truth "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118) and recognizes that all knowledge without charity is nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). It proceeds on the premise that faith and reason, revelation and scholarly learning, obedience and creativity are compatible; they are "many members, yet but one body" (1 Cor. 12:20).

Contributions from all fields of learning are invited. *BYU Studies* strives to publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view and are obviously relevant to subjects of general interest to Latter-day Saints, while conforming to high scholarly standards. *BYU Studies* invites personal essays dealing with the life of the mind, reflections on personal and spiritual responses to academic experiences, intellectual choices, values, responsibilities, and methods, as well as quality fiction, short stories, poetry, and drama. Short studies and notes are also welcomed.

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At the Gate of Heaven

*A la puerta del cielo venden zapatos
Para los angelitos que andan descalzos*

—lullaby*

Wince and tremble, take my place in line
to make my bargain; before me, Valiant-for-Truth;
behind me, Faust. I have done all I could
to earn the currency of the exchange.

You say you took us from commerce long ago.
I fear—I hold back pride, some small sins.
Then, when all my trying is not good enough,
I can say it was not my best effort, anyway.

Just in case,
I beat myself with many stripes, pay my own price.
The marks and scars I carry with me,
I inflicted: if I am not good enough,
maybe I will have suffered enough.

Enough to win through to some quiet place.
Enough, perhaps, to be healed.

*After this, it was noised abroad
that Mr. Valiant-for-Truth was taken with a summons
... “my marks and scars I carry with me to be
a witness for me, that I have fought his battles,
who now will be my rewarder.”
... So he passed over,
and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*

—Lisa Bolin Hawkins

* “At the gate of Heav’n, little shoes they are selling
For the little barefooted angels there dwelling.”

The italicized final lines are from John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Confession in LDS Doctrine and Practice

While the form of confession in the LDS Church has changed from public admission of sin to confession to a bishop, the doctrine and necessary functions of confession remain unchanged.

Edward L. Kimball

In the Christian understanding, all are sinners (Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:22); consequently, in order that all may be forgiven, repentance is one of the first principles of the gospel. A key element of repentance is confession: "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them" (D&C 58:43). Accordingly, confession is one of the five steps of repentance outlined by Spencer W. Kimball: (1) conviction of and sorrow for sin, (2) abandonment of sin, (3) confession of sin, (4) restitution for sin, (5) doing the will of the Lord.¹ Confession is not a mechanical requirement, nor is it an ordinance, like baptism.² Undertaken in obedience to commandment, confession either to a bishop, to God, or to offended parties is a concomitant of the change of heart that constitutes true repentance and results in reconciliation with God. Pride and fear prevent confession, but if one has truly repented and received the Spirit of the Lord, pride and fear will be overcome.³

¹Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 180. For a sensitive treatment of repentance and confession, see Brent L. Top, *Though Your Sins Be as Scarlet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 43–66; revised as *Forgiveness: Christ's Priceless Gift* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996).

²Indeed, no vicarious confession is required prior to performing the vicarious ordinance of baptism for the dead. While repentance is needed for all sins, major or minor, formal confession is not required for minor sins.

³J. Richard Clarke, "Confession: A Requirement for Forgiveness," in *Repentance*, ed. Ezra Taft Benson and others (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 91–94; Brad Wilcox, "Broken Arms, Broken Hearts, and Confession," in *Finding*

While this requirement that a person acknowledge guilt seems at first simple and straightforward, in fact it poses many questions. The obligation to confess is basic doctrine, but the scriptures prove silent or ambiguous when the question shifts to what, when, where, to whom, and even why to confess. This article examines current and past Latter-day Saint doctrine and practice, the reasons why Latter-day Saints confess, the scriptural background, and confession in other Christian churches. While the accompanying summaries and descriptions of authoritative Church statements, instructions, and various comments about this vital religious practice constitute the opinions of this author, hopefully this information will be useful to lawyers, counselors, other professionals, scholars, and Latter-day Saints in general.

Current LDS Doctrine and Practice

A look at the LDS practice of confession identifies certain variations over time, principally in the decline of public confession and the institutionalization of confession to one's bishop. But these variations have always been consistent with the basic commandment to confess one's sins.

To Whom Is Confession Made?

Today in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, penitents confess to God in prayer (for example, Ps. 32:5-6; Dan. 9:3-6, 20-23; Alma 17:4; D&C 64:7), to individuals they have hurt,⁴ and to their ward bishop. The last of these is the primary focus of this study. Statements about confession do not always specify which mode of confession is intended, but it is clear that several forms may be involved. The scriptures say, "I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me and ask forgiveness"

the Light in Deep Waters and Dark Times (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 57-66. Wilcox says, "In confession, we . . . strip ourselves of pride. In that moment when . . . shame [is] most intense, . . . God will clothe us . . . in . . . forgiveness" (65-66).

⁴Doctrine and Covenants 42:88-92 teaches that an individual offended is to confront the wrongdoer to give an "opportunity to confess in secret to him or her whom he or she has offended, and to God, that the church may not speak reproachfully of him or her." See also Matthew 5:24.

(D&C 64:7). They also instruct that a Sabbath-day obligation is to “offer . . . thy sacraments . . . confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord” (D&C 59:12). Therefore a duty exists to confess not only to God in all events, but also in certain circumstances to the Church, the organization that God has established for the welfare of his children. The modern Latter-day Saint application of the latter obligation is that “confession to a church official (in most cases the bishop) is necessary whenever one’s transgression is of a nature for which the Church might impose loss of membership or other disciplinary action.”⁵

While bishops and branch presidents are the principal recipients of confidential confessions, their priesthood leaders—stake presidents and General Authorities—may on occasion also receive such confessions.⁶ If a bishop’s counselors come to know while

⁵“Bible Dictionary,” King James Version of the Bible, LDS edition (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), s.v. “confession,” 649. See also Boyd K. Packer, “Why Stay Morally Clean?” *Ensign* 2 (July 1972): 111-13: “You can stand clean. . . . Go to your bishop. He holds the key to this cleansing power.” H. Burke Peterson counsels, “When necessary, receive the blessing that comes in the confession process. Too many are harboring the inner feeling of guilt resulting from unrepented mistakes. Part of the repentance process is confession. If you happen to be one of those who has this need, I plead with you to go see your bishop before the sun sets tomorrow.” Peterson, “Touch Not the Evil Gift, nor the Unclean Thing,” *Ensign* 23 (November 1993): 42-44. See also *General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 10-2; Ezra T. Benson, “The Law of Chastity,” in *Morality* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 85-90 (relating to confession of sexual sins); Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 179-80; Edward L. Kimball, ed., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 85, 93-94, 97; Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 220-21; and *Child Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 5. The last publication refers the reader to Mosiah 26:29, Doctrine and Covenants 58:43 and 59:12, and 1 John 1:9; however, these verses do not directly establish the proposition for which they are cited.

⁶If a person cannot bear confiding in the bishop because he or she and the bishop are too close or not close enough, it is permissible to approach the stake president to discuss the matter. Vaughn J. Featherstone, *A Generation of Excellence* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), 97-98. However, Stephen L. Richards said, “Is the offender justified in by-passing his immediate Church authority and judge, and going to those who do not know him so well to make his confession? Almost universally, I think the answer should be No.” *124th Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1954), 12 (hereafter cited as *Conference Reports*).

interviewing that there is something to be confessed, they refer the matter to the bishop.⁷ A stake president's counselors, on the other hand, are not quite so restricted, depending on their charge from their stake president. The taking of confessions is a responsibility of priesthood leadership in line authority over the confessor.⁸

In rare instances, after private confession the bishop may require public confession for the well-being of the Church or interpersonal confession to facilitate resolution of hard feelings among the affected parties. The bishop may require a public confession because, in addition to the responsibility he has toward the individual seeking forgiveness, he has a responsibility to protect the good name of the Church,⁹ to quell unsettling rumors, and to promote peace.

⁷Beginning with *Bulletin 1991-1* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1991, no. 1), the bishop's counselors can regularly interview previously endowed members for temple recommends but are instructed not to deal with confessions. Counselors also routinely extend callings to serve in ward organizations and interview young people, circumstances that could trigger spontaneous confessions.

⁸President Kimball stated the responsibility of members to confess to the proper priesthood authority:

No priest nor elder is authorized by virtue of that calling to perform this act [of receiving confession] for the Church. The Lord has a consistent, orderly plan. Every soul in the organized stakes is given a bishop who, by the very nature of his calling and his ordination, is a 'judge in Israel.' In the missions a branch president fills that responsibility. (S. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 181-82)

In the Church, some questioning by others than the bishop is common. The visiting teaching supervisor asks whether a visit has been completed; the welfare coordinator asks whether a canning assignment has been filled. These queries are much different in character from a bishop's interview and are an ordinary part of organizational life without any particular doctrinal significance.

⁹Reasons given for disciplinary action include protecting the Church's reputation by demonstrating abhorrence of wrongdoing. Excommunication can also help wrongdoers realize the gravity of their sin or expiate their guilt as part of the process of repentance and salvation. The lesser sanction of disfellowshipment also frees people from other Church responsibilities so that they can concentrate on their own situation. Doctrine and Covenants 42:79, 84-86 indicates that the killer, robber, thief, and liar are to be delivered up to the civil law; others are to be dealt with by Church procedures. The delivering up serves to distance the Church from the depredations of serious wrongdoers. See, for example, the cooperation of the Church with the government in the conviction of John D. Lee for his part in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, rev. ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), 184-99, 219-20.

Unlike the Catholic tradition of making confession in a confessional booth¹⁰ and using formulaic words, the LDS tradition is wholly informal and face-to-face with the bishop. The confession is conducted in a private setting so that discussion can be confidential.

What Needs To Be Confessed?

Latter-day Saints are free to confess to their bishop any kind of misdeed that weighs upon their souls,¹¹ but what *needs* to be confessed to him varies with the circumstances. Specific guidelines come into effect mainly in connection with preparations to receive priesthood ordinances.¹²

For Baptism. At the time of baptism, at least a general confession is required:

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church. (D&C 20:37; see also Alma 32:16)

This passage is not taken to mean that a public profession of faith and confession of sins is required before baptism. Rather candidates are interviewed privately¹³ —children of members by their bishop and converts by a mission leader—about their commitment

¹⁰As discussed below in note 206, Vatican II reduced the formalistic character of Catholic confession and made the use of the confessional booth optional.

¹¹I acknowledge the danger that “to focus on the *action* of confession in the absence of the *attitude* of confession would be to view it merely as another ‘step’ in the ‘checklist’ of repentance, rather than as a natural outgrowth of godly sorrow. Questions such as ‘Do I have to confess my sins? What sins must I confess? To whom should I confess?’ may reflect this overemphasis on the action of confession at the expense of the attitude.” Top, “*Sins Be as Scarlet*,” 55.

¹²There may be still higher levels of expectations for participation in additional special activities. For example, in 1883 specific requirements for participation in the School of the Prophets were tithing, observance of the Word of Wisdom, Sabbath observance, no profanity, justice and kindness in families, and plural marriage. Merle H. Graffam, ed., *Salt Lake School of the Prophets: Minute Book 1883* (Palm Desert, Calif.: ULC Press, 1981), 55, 57.

¹³In the case of John the Baptist, “then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan,

to the gospel generally and about certain external indications of resolve: meeting attendance, tithing, and the Word of Wisdom. They are not asked to detail all their past wrongful conduct. However, adult candidates are to be asked expressly about three things that are considered sufficiently serious to call for extra assurance that Church standards are understood and accepted. The three are commission of serious crime, involvement with abortion, and homosexual acts.¹⁴ Assuming repentance, none of these is in itself disqualifying, with the possible exception of murder, but they do call for an interview with the mission president and, in some circumstances, with higher authorities.¹⁵

confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:5-6). It is unclear how or to whom these confessions were made. In connection with Philip's baptism of the eunuch, faith and desire are mentioned but not confession (Acts 8:35-39).

¹⁴*Missionary Guide* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), 234-35. Since 1987 all convert baptism interviews are handled by full-time missionaries, not by local members.

Converts to Catholicism who are not yet baptized are not required to confess sins committed before baptism; confession will apply only to those sins committed afterward. Frans van de Paverd, "Testimonies from the Christian East to the Possibility of Self-Reconciliation," in *The Fate of Confession*, ed. Mary Collins and David Power (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, 1987), 96; Rev. Raymond C. O'Brien, telephone conversation with author, April 3, 1992. Catholics, unlike Mormons (D&C 22:2-3), recognize the efficacy of baptism by other trinitarian Christians. Converts who have been previously baptized are required to confess sins in preparation for reception into full communion with the Catholic Church but do not need to be rebaptized. Since Mormon baptism is trinitarian in form but not in intention, there is a question whether a Mormon convert to Catholicism requires baptism.

¹⁵Joseph Smith taught that intentional murderers who repented might eventually be forgiven but only after suffering for their crimes until Christ should come again, and thus at this time they "could not be baptized *for the remission of sins*, for they had shed innocent blood." Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 188-89, 339 (italics added; hereafter cited as *TPJS*). The Lamanites who had committed murders before being converted to the law of God were absolved from their curse (Alma 23:5-8, 18), although they adopted an extraordinary oath to prevent their suspended bloodguilt from returning (Alma 24:13). For one who murders "against the light and knowledge of God, . . . it is not easy . . . to obtain forgiveness" (Alma 39:6).

The 1989 instructions for the Church say that those who have been convicted of or who have confessed to homicide (even if only in a private confession to a priesthood leader) cannot be baptized without permission from the First Presidency, which is based on a review of all pertinent details. *General Handbook of*

For Baptized Members. A baptized member must, as a matter of formal Church teaching, confess to God all failings, admit to other individuals the ways in which the member's conduct has injured them,¹⁶ and reveal spontaneously or disclose voluntarily to the bishop anything that might justify Church discipline.¹⁷

Instructions (1989), 5-2. All the general handbooks that appear under slightly variant titles—for example, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: General Handbook of Instructions* 18—will hereafter be cited as the *General Handbook of Instructions* number [if applicable] (year).

From 1899 to 1910, instructions for bishops were published annually. After 1910 they were published every five years. Frank O. May, "General Handbook of Instructions," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:541 (hereafter cited as *EM*). At first, the handbooks related to tithing, property, and record keeping. With the 1921 edition, these written instructions began to include items on the spiritual roles of bishops, including receiving confessions. Over time, the instructions became more and more inclusive and specific.

The *General Handbook of Instructions* (sometimes called the Bishop's Handbook) is intended primarily for the use of priesthood leaders and therefore is not in general circulation, but it is available in some libraries. When appropriate, the Church quotes from it in court documents, for example, to establish the Church's position on confidentiality of confessions. See briefs and submissions in *Scott v. Hammock*, 133 F.R.D. 610 (D. Utah 1990), in both federal and state courts. Substantial excerpts of instructions pertaining to Church members in general are also quoted in *EM*, 3:1095-97 and on other similar occasions. Limited access to the *Handbook* may reflect reluctance to have outdated versions in circulation, disinclination to explain changes from one edition to another, concern over spelling out policies that are subject to discretion, or the irrelevance of much of the *Handbook* to the general membership.

¹⁶S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 185. D&C 42:88-92 teaches private reconciliation as the first resort. It appears that this section is talking of conduct that is offensive to an individual but does not amount to serious sin, because for serious sin, such as adultery or iniquity (verses 75, 80-81, 87), the person is to be delivered to the law of God. In contrast, for killing, robbing, stealing, or lying (verses 79, 84-86), the offender is to be delivered to the law of the land. Since verse 89 says that those who refuse to make amends privately are to be reported to the elders, such recalcitrant refusal is also treated as a serious offense.

I know of no answer to the question whether only serious sins or major offenses that affect others must be confessed to them or when or how confessions to others should be made.

¹⁷Since only serious sins need to be confessed to one's bishop, it appears that such confession is a means to an end, not a universal requirement for forgiveness of all sin. If all sin had to be confessed to the bishop, it would be very difficult to draw the line between conduct that was simply unwise and that which was sinful. At what point does close personal contact that is sexually stimulating become sin? What of things on the edge of the Word of Wisdom (eating chocolate or too much meat, gorging)?

Currently, the last category is further described¹⁸ as including any sexual relations outside marriage,¹⁹ involvement with abortions (subject to some exceptions²⁰), and any deliberate and major offense against the law (such as murder, burglary, theft or fraud, sale of drugs, and serious bodily harm to another—particularly physical or sexual abuse of spouse or child). Other acts may, under their own circumstances, be just as serious. Failures to live up to some of the commitments made at baptism such as paying tithing, attending meetings, paying debts, avoiding contention, or obeying the Word of Wisdom are normally not matters that call for formal Church discipline,²¹ but confession may still be encouraged.²² Confession has been urged if someone even contemplates serious wrongdoing: “If someone has . . . even considered abusing or

¹⁸For what might justify discipline, the source is *General Handbook of Instructions*, most recently published in 1989, and changes announced in subsequent priesthood bulletins.

¹⁹The definition of sexual relations calling for confession to the bishop is intentionally somewhat vague but clearly includes impure or unnatural practices (1 Cor. 6:9) and probably heavy petting and persistent masturbation. The latter is a “weakness” that should be abandoned “before he goes on a mission or receives the holy priesthood or goes in the temple for his blessings.” Spencer W. Kimball, “President Kimball Speaks Out on Morality,” *Ensign* 10 (November 1980): 97. See also S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 77–78. Such evils are difficult to overcome without confession and open commitment to change.

²⁰Currently, abortion may be excused if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, the mother’s health is in jeopardy, or the fetus is known to have fatal birth defects. Even in these cases, parents should seek divine confirmation of the decision. *EM*, 1:7; *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-4, 11-4; *Bulletin 1990-1*.

²¹*General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-4 .

²²The generalization is often made that young people should disclose freely to their bishop not only serious matters, but also lesser ones, in the interest of receiving guidance and warning. For example, in 1974, President Kimball said:

If there is any young person who has had misfortune to break the commandments of the Lord, let him or her seek an interview with the bishop on a very confidential basis. [He is] . . . named by your Heavenly Father through processes to be your common judge. It isn’t a matter of just another man. He’s the bishop; he has the responsibility, and you have the privilege of going to the bishop for a confidential interview. . . . There is sometimes disciplinary action, but the bishop is entitled to the revelations of the Lord to make that judgment. (E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 93)

If more is confessed than needs to be, the bishop can still offer guidance, reassurance, and support.

offending a child [sexually], may he, this day, confess and repent and forsake such evil thoughts or actions.”²³

For Ordination or Temple Recommend Renewal. One who desires to receive priesthood ordination or to participate in temple ordinances must meet a set of high religious standards. For Aaronic Priesthood ordination, interviews with boys twelve to sixteen are likely to be less pointed than are those with adults, although the standards are nominally the same. In interviewing adults for temple recommends, the bishop or stake leader asks a set of detailed questions²⁴ about matters of faith,²⁵ loyalty, and obedience.²⁶ The bishop is instructed to use great care in interviewing so that no unworthy person is given a recommend.²⁷ Dishonestly

²³David B. Haight, “Personal Morality,” in *Morality*, 121. See similarly Matthew 5:28 on lust.

²⁴Interviewers are instructed generally not to deviate from the recommend questions. To reduce evasion, interviewers are to ask the specific questions. “Instructions for Issuing Recommends to Enter a Temple” (1976, 1996). All interview instructions regardless of any variations in title will hereafter be cited as “Instructions for Issuing Recommends.”

²⁵In 1985, questions were first added that directly addressed matters of belief in the Godhead and in the restored gospel; in 1996, a question was added concerning testimony of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

²⁶In a temple recommend interview, a member is also asked about sustaining the President of the Church and the other leaders of the Church; living the law of chastity; conducting family relations in harmony with the teachings of the Church; not affiliating with any whose teachings or practices are contrary to those accepted by the Church; doing one’s duty in the Church; attending meetings; obeying the commandments of the gospel; dealing honestly; paying a full tithe; keeping the Word of Wisdom; keeping any obligations in connection with a divorce; keeping temple covenants; resolving any sin or misdeed; and considering oneself worthy to enter the temple.

²⁷“Instructions for Issuing Recommends” (1963, 1968, 1996). See also *EM*, 2:697–98. A letter of October 15, 1982, instructed that bishops should avoid asking about intimate sexual practices between married couples. Expanding on the general admonition to stay with the listed questions, the present instructions state:

When interviewing an applicant for a recommend, do not inquire into personal, intimate matters about marital relations between a husband and his wife. . . . If, during an interview, an applicant asks about the propriety of specific conduct, do not pursue the matter. Merely suggest that if the applicant has enough anxiety about the propriety of the conduct to ask about it, the best course would be to discontinue it. If you are sensitive and wise, you usually can prevent those being interviewed from asking such explicit questions. (“Instructions for Issuing Recommends” [April 1996])

answering the questions asked by the bishop, who stands as a representative of God, and entering the temple unworthily are grievous sins compounding the original sin.²⁸ In addition to the serious sins listed above that might call for Church discipline, the temple interview questions are also concerned with whether a candidate is presently living the general standards of the Church. Thus, if a person has not previously confessed and resolved any significant religious transgressions or moral failings, the questions asked in these interviews are designed to prompt the person to confess those sins.

Indeed, in such interviews, people also frequently tell the bishop voluntarily about matters he does not need to hear about and possibly would prefer not to hear about.²⁹ Partly because there is some uncertainty about just what should and should not be confessed, some confess more, others less; a person with a scrupulous conscience tends to err on the side of saying too much rather than too little.³⁰ Also, there is little publicity concerning even the

²⁸One who obtains a temple recommend by misrepresentation commits a new and often more serious sin:

Those who lie to Church leaders forget or ignore . . . that when [the Lord] has called men to high places in his kingdom and has placed on them the mantle of authority, a lie to them is tantamount to a lie to the Lord; a half-truth to his officials is like a half-truth to the Lord; a rebellion against his servants is comparable with a rebellion against the Lord; and any infraction against the Brethren who hold the gospel keys is a thought or an act against the Lord. (S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 183)

See also David B. Haight, who warns that obtaining a recommend dishonestly “compounds the seriousness of concealed sins.” Haight, “Come to the House of the Lord,” *Ensign* 22 (May 1992): 15. And also see Neal A. Maxwell, who says, “Partial disclosure to appointed leaders brings full accountability.” Quoting from Wilford Woodruff’s journal, Elder Maxwell continues, “The Prophet Joseph said, ‘We ought to . . . keep nothing back.’” Maxwell, “Repentance,” *Ensign* 21 (November 1991): 32. It is understood, however, that vicarious temple ordinances performed by an unworthy surrogate are nonetheless efficacious, just as are ordinances performed by an unworthy priesthood holder. See Matthew 23:2-3.

²⁹While confessing minor matters to the bishop might sometimes be helpful, it can lead to distortion, even scrupulosity.

³⁰In striving to keep *all* the commandments, one can lose sight of the fact that some conduct is much more serious than other conduct. In my experience, a young woman who freely admitted sexual promiscuity could, ironically, barely bring herself to admit to even occasional masturbation. Some feel great guilt even

guidelines that are clear, perhaps out of concern that such might appear too legalistic and that identifying some sins as not serious enough to require confession to the bishop might be understood as labeling them inconsequential.³¹

For Missionary Service. Those being considered for a missionary calling must meet additional criteria.³² Generally, once something has been properly resolved with priesthood authorities, it need never be mentioned again;³³ but in the interview with

though they were not morally culpable. A victim of incest wrote, "I feel so guilty. I could've took control of the situation and I didn't. I was a stupid little scared girl. I hate myself so much." Statement in parole file of Utah State Prison inmate. The First Presidency has made explicit that the victim of rape [or incest] is guilty of no moral offense simply because she does not die rather than submit. First Presidency to all General Authorities; Regional Representatives; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops; and Branch Presidents, February 7, 1985; superseding letter of June 4, 1984. Child abuse may come to light when the child, feeling guilty, "confesses" to her bishop. C. Ross Clement, "Steps to Recovery and Repentance," in *Confronting Abuse*, ed. Anne L. Horton, B. Kent Harrison, and Barry L. Johnson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 318–26.

³¹Legalism is a serious danger. One commentator suggested to youth:

Too many are willing to offer clear-cut lists of just what needs to be talked about with the bishop and what doesn't. Be cautious, for all sin is wrong. Making a distinction between "bad" sins that we must talk to a bishop about and "okay" sins that we don't [is ridiculous]. . . . "Whenever you wonder whether you should or shouldn't, you should." If a list is needed . . . it is appropriate and important to talk with a bishop about any violation of the standards clearly outlined in that booklet [*For the Strength of Youth*]. (Wilcox, "Broken Hearts," 60–61)

A church that believes in striving for perfection can hardly list all possible sins (see Mosiah 4:29) or label any sin or flaw inconsequential.

³²The focus in this study is on moral criteria. There are, of course, other requirements for missionary service, such as physical and mental health. Further, young men and women, ages 19–26, who are divorced are not called as full-time missionaries, and men and women who, while members of the Church, have been involved with abortions resulting from their immorality will not be called on missions—irrespective of repentance—without First Presidency approval. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 7-1; repeated in *Bulletin 1991-1*.

³³"Providing there has been no repetition of the offense, nor a commission of any other serious transgression [circumstances that might call for review of previous conduct], usually the matter may be considered settled." S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 187. The temple recommend question asks only about sins that have not previously been resolved with one's bishop (see note 26).

prospective missionaries, a few matters are considered so significant that, even if previously confessed and resolved, they are the subject of further inquiry to ascertain that confession and repentance has been complete. These include adultery, fornication, heavy petting, homosexual activities, or other sexual immoralities; drug misuse; or a serious violation of the civil law.³⁴

When Should Confessions Be Made?

Anyone with personal concerns is always free to arrange a time to meet privately with the bishop, but there are many other opportunities for confession. Some, such as tithing settlement and temple recommend interviews, normally occur at the initiative of the member. But other occasions are initiated by the bishop or his counselors, such as callings to Church positions or priesthood offices and periodic youth interviews (ideally once or twice a year for each young person). All these provide recurring private opportunities to talk.³⁵ If the bishop has reason to believe there is a problem, he may, of course, request an otherwise unscheduled interview for the specific purpose of discussing the perceived problem.

The ideal is for confessions to be spontaneous, motivated by conscience alone. But often they come when triggered by an interview initiated by the bishop³⁶ or by encouragement or pressure from family members or friends who are aware of a problem. Confessions may also occur during an investigative inquiry³⁷ or in a Church disciplinary proceeding after formal accusation.³⁸

³⁴*General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 7-1. The expectation of clearance by a General Authority was withdrawn by an attachment to a First Presidency letter. First Presidency to General Authorities; Regional Representatives; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops; and Branch Presidents, October 19, 1993.

³⁵Tithing settlement is often done with couples or families. Home teachers or visiting teachers could also be recipients of confessions, but they are instructed to refer any such matters immediately to the bishop rather than involve themselves further. Compare to the role of teachers in the Aaronic priesthood of the nineteenth century. William G. Hartley, "Ordained and Acting Teachers in the Lesser Priesthood, 1851-1883," *BYU Studies* 16 (spring 1976): 375-98.

³⁶The bishop may be acting spontaneously or in response to a complaint by a member who has been offended by one who refuses to make amends (D&C 42:88-89).

When asked about improper conduct, a person who is at fault can confess, lie, or refuse to answer. But since a refusal to answer would be perceived as an indirect admission, that option is rarely chosen unless the person is at the point of withdrawal from the Church.³⁹ Consequently, the real choices are to tell the truth or to lie, and to lie is itself compounding the sin.⁴⁰ A believer is thus under great moral and personal pressure to confess whenever a priesthood leader asks directly about misconduct.

Who Grants Forgiveness?

Christ gave his apostles power to bind or loose on earth, and told them, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:18). This power included authority to remit or retain sins on earth, and they would be remitted or retained in heaven (John 20:23). Latter-day Saints understand that in New Testament times Christ granted to his apostles more than a power merely to recommend forgiveness;⁴¹ Christ vested a present spiritual power

³⁷Consider Joshua's interrogation of Achan in Joshua 7:16-25. Church discipline of those who are unrepentant about having offended other people shades off into civil disputes. While Church leaders may try to help resolve civil disputes, they are instructed to act unofficially as private advisers and not to involve the Church. Church courts are today only for ecclesiastical discipline. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1983), 51, 52.

³⁸See also Mosiah 26, especially verses 34-35; D&C 42:24-26, 80, 91. In a disciplinary council, the member is given an opportunity to admit the alleged misconduct. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-7. Voluntary confession is much preferred over coerced admission, but even the latter may be an important first step in repenting.

³⁹See also Garland Hurt to Governor Cumming, in David L. Bigler, "Garland Hurt, the American Friend of the Utahs," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 62 (spring 1994): 162 n. 52.

⁴⁰Stephen L. Richards, *Conference Reports* (April 1959), 47. Note also the strictness with which belated confessions of serious sins committed by missionaries are treated. Even with a prompt confession, unless unusual extenuating circumstances are present, the missionary will be sent home until at least a year has passed since the last incident. First Presidency to General Authorities; Regional Representatives; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops; and Branch Presidents, March 4, 1993, reaffirmed October 14, 1994.

⁴¹Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 1:857; See also J. Reuben Clark Jr., *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 170, 386. The only

in the apostles and in their successors and assigns that is itself efficacious.⁴² In the restoration of the gospel, God gave the same powers to the Prophet Joseph Smith⁴³ and to his successor prophets and those to whom the prophets may delegate the power of absolution. The power to forgive on behalf of the Lord has not, however, been delegated to stake presidents or bishops. They may waive penalties that the Church is entitled to exact, but they are not empowered to absolve.⁴⁴ Those who can forgive or remit sins are extremely few in this world:

reference in the Book of Mormon to power to seal or loose is in Helaman 10:7, where God gave such power to Nephi, son of Helaman, but that appears to be related only to power over natural forces, so as to “smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction.” Third Nephi does not expressly state that Jesus gave power to absolve sin to his twelve Book of Mormon disciples.

⁴²Catholicism shares that view, illustrated by St. Thomas Aquinas’s reference to absolved sins being “hidden even from the sight of God.” J. L. McCarthy, “Confession, Seal of,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. William J. McDonald, 17 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 4:134. Even as a metaphor that phrase says a great deal in a theology attributing omniscience to God.

One commonly held Protestant interpretation of John 20:23, which explicitly deals with forgiveness of sins, is that Christ gave the apostles not the power to absolve sin, but both the power to deliver someone over to Satan and the power of life and death (exercised in Peter’s condemnation of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-10). Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, reproduction of 1824 U.S. printing), 3:658. In Protestant view, the passages referring to the power of binding and loosing (Matthew 16:19 and 18:18) relate to forbidding and permitting conduct that was commanded or forbidden by the law of Moses, such as circumcision and eating strangled meat. That is, Christ was delegating to his apostles the right to instruct disciples in an authoritative way. Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, 1:171-72, 184-85. According to the *Interpreter’s Bible*, “later Christian tradition extended this principle [that Peter could declare what parts of the Law continued binding] to include the power to forgive or retain sins, but this was not its original meaning.” “Matthew,” in *Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick and others, 12 vols. (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1951), 7:453. See also “John,” in *Interpreter’s Bible*, 8:798, which states that the power to forgive is rather an insight into whether God has already forgiven.

⁴³The Lord said to Joseph Smith that by priesthood power “whosoever sins ye remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens” (D&C 132:46).

⁴⁴“LDS Bible Dictionary,” s.v. “confession,” 649. President Packer notes, “Bishops can guide you through the steps required to obtain forgiveness insofar as the Church is concerned. Each one of us must work out individually forgiveness from the Lord.” Boyd K. Packer, “The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” *Ensign* 25 (November 1995): 19. See also Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 236. Priesthood acts performed by mortals are conditional because mortals are fallible and God is just.

The bishop, and others in comparable positions, can forgive in the sense of waiving the [Church] penalties. In our loose connotation we sometimes call this forgiveness, but it is not forgiveness in the sense of 'wiping out' or absolution. . . . It is the Lord . . . who forgives sin. . . . Let it be said in emphasis that even the First Presidency and the apostles do not make a practice of absolving sins.⁴⁵

What Confessions Are Confidential?

It appears that confidentiality is more a matter of Church policy and practice than of doctrine, although a general religious obligation exists to keep all sacred things private to an appropriate extent (Matt. 7:6). A bishop is generally expected to maintain strict secrecy,⁴⁶ not voluntarily to disclose anything told to him, without the confessor's consent, even if the matter confessed is a crime. However, the LDS bishop is expected normally to conform to the compulsion of law, if it requires divulgence of confidential matter.

Frequently a person confesses without stating any reservations and with no specific expectations about confidentiality, simply trusting the bishop to do whatever ought be done. Such a confessor may be willing, in pursuit of forgiveness, to do whatever is asked—submit to excommunication, make public confession, report to the police, or offer restitution.

But sometimes the confessor has spoken only reluctantly and is unable, at that time, to accept the full consequences of confession. The bishop then is free to encourage openness but not to insist on it. A common occurrence is for young people to confide in the bishop but to balk initially at his urging that they disclose their conduct to their parents. If the confessor refuses to let the bishop divulge the confession, it cannot be used, even in an internal Church disciplinary council.⁴⁷ In that situation, it is not clear

⁴⁵S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 332-33. See also E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 101 (December 16, 1964). In the School of the Prophets, as one example of modern apostolic ablution, the ordinance of washing of feet took place, and in that context sins were expressly forgiven. Graffam, *School of the Prophets*, 31, 50-51, 64.

⁴⁶*General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-2; see also Proverbs 11:13.

⁴⁷*General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-2, specifies that a confidential confession cannot be used as evidence in a disciplinary council without the member's permission. In seeking this permission, bishops emphasize that

whether the bishop can properly divulge the information even to his administrative superior, the stake president.⁴⁸ Such a bishop might well feel a need to seek advice on how to proceed, but that normally can be obtained without identifying the person involved. The difficulty is compounded when the bishop has not asked permission and thus has not been formally forbidden by the confessor to discuss the case.⁴⁹

The insistence of the confessor that the bishop tell no one (or no one outside the Church disciplinary mechanism) does not ordinarily create any legal problems for the bishop, since the law does not impose on citizens any general duty to report a crime to the police, no matter how serious.⁵⁰

Child abuse, however, is a major legal exception. As of 1995, fifteen states made it a misdemeanor for any person, including clergy, to fail to report information received about physical or sexual abuse of a child.⁵¹ If, for example, the bishop is told by a

refusal reflects a lack of contrition that prevents justice and mercy from operating fully. If permission is not given, the bishop can still impose informal discipline on the basis of the confession. Of course, other evidence may independently justify disciplinary action. See also *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-7.

⁴⁸Confidential information given in confessions and interviews is to be shared only with authorized ecclesiastical leaders. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-2. Legally, the bishop can divulge information. The question is whether this divulgence would run counter to the reasonable expectations of the confessor.

⁴⁹Margaret Battin says that, in light of widespread awareness of the unconditional nature of the seal of the Catholic confessional, a Mormon confessing to a bishop may erroneously believe that he or she has the same unlimited promise of confidentiality. She is critical of Mormon confession practice because members are usually not told about the limits of confidentiality and bishops may push too hard to persuade members to allow the confession to be used to confront others involved with the confessor. Margaret P. Battin, *Ethics in the Sanctuary: Examining the Practices of Organized Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 48-60.

⁵⁰Rollin M. Perkins, *Criminal Law*, 2d ed. (Mineola, N.Y.: Foundation, 1969), 512-17. But see Leviticus 5:1.

⁵¹Sexual abuse is a fairly clear category, but physical abuse is much less so. The Utah statute defines child abuse as "damage or threatened damage to the physical or emotional health and welfare of a child through neglect or abuse, and includes causing nonaccidental physical or mental injury . . . or repeated negligent treatment or maltreatment." Utah Code Annotated § 62A-4-502.

confessor that he or she sexually abused a child, the law in those states requires the bishop to report that fact to public authorities, if the confessor will not. In another ten states, the bishop need not report the confession itself, but he must report information about abuse if it comes to him from some other source, such as the offender's spouse or child. And in the remaining half of the states, the bishop has no legal obligation to report⁵² and generally does not, because of his ecclesiastical obligation of confidentiality.⁵³

A few of the states that make it a crime to fail to report child abuse also threaten civil liability for any further injury to the child victim that would not have occurred if the required report had been made. So many uncertainties are involved in such cases that clergy have so far generally escaped civil liability,⁵⁴ but the prospect of litigation itself creates another pressure to breach confidentiality and report the abuse.

⁵²The obligation to report is imposed by some states only on those professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and psychologists, who are involved in child care.

⁵³States vary widely. Depending on the local law, the bishop may be prohibited from reporting, allowed to report, or required to report. However, uncertainties about the legal requirements are no longer so great a problem for LDS leaders, since a Presiding Bishopric letter of May 10, 1995, and a subsequently published Church brochure notified bishops and stake presidents of a toll-free number that would give access to social services and legal specialists to guide them. See also *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995), 1, 3.

⁵⁴Even without special statute, in the case of threatened serious physical injury a lurking possibility exists that civil liability may be imposed on the bishop and/or the Church if the bishop fails to prevent the harm that he knows, through confession, might well occur. The harm could be either the suicide of the confessor or injury to someone else. In *Nally v. Grace Community Church*, 763 P.2d 948 (Cal. 1988), a divided court held that pastoral counselors had no duty to get help for a potential suicide. On the other hand, *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California*, 551 P.2d 334 (Cal. 1976), held that there is an affirmative duty for a psychiatrist to breach confidentiality to warn a particular person whom it is reasonably believed is endangered by the patient.

At the same time, there is also threatened liability for excessive disclosure. If confession leads to public announcement of wrongdoing (or announcement of unwillingness to confess when accused), then the confessor may sue for invasion of rights of privacy. See Lynn Buzzard, "Scarlet Letter Lawsuits: Private Affairs and Public Judgments," *Campbell Law Review* 10 (1987): 1-62.

When faced with the question of reporting crime, presumably even with respect to people dangerous to themselves or others, the LDS bishop is advised to maintain silence if the law allows.⁵⁵ In order to do this, if called as a witness to testify in court, he would first invoke the confessor's priest-penitent privilege to maintain the secrecy of confessions;⁵⁶ and second, the bishop could assert his own constitutional right to the "free exercise of religion" on the grounds that he is under Church obligation to keep confidences secret.

However, if the legal demand to report or testify is determined to be constitutional, it is then logical for the bishop to comply with the law, even though this violates the confessor's expectations and runs counter to the bishop's normal practice.⁵⁷ If the bishop knows in advance that he will be legally obligated to breach confidentiality, he is advised to inform the member of that

⁵⁵*Child Abuse*, 5-6. The status of this booklet is unclear. It is no longer in print, but the later publication, *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders*, while covering much of the same ground, does not "repeal" it. Obviously, in case of conflict, the later instruction would govern, but it is uncertain whether nonconflicting instructions have been superseded. The reason for maintaining silence even in unappealing circumstances is that if a person cannot rely on confidentiality there will be reluctance to divulge incriminating information. If the bishop knows about the threatened misconduct, he may be able to persuade the confessor of right action. It is believed that by maintaining trust clergy can prevent more harm than would be prevented if all such intimations were reported to the state authorities.

⁵⁶In every state, the privilege applies at least to the kind of private admission of sin associated with the Catholic confessional. In most states, the privilege applies also to the kind of spiritual counseling all pastors perform. If the admission is made in the context of marriage counseling that is indistinguishable from that done by lay counselors or is made while others are present, the applicability of the privilege becomes doubtful. William Harold Tiemann and John C. Bush, *The Right to Silence* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2d. ed., 1983), 207-32, and West Virginia Code §49-6A-2.

⁵⁷*Child Abuse*, 5. Legal demand is not addressed in *Responding to Abuse*, which merely refers bishops to the "hot line." LDS Church practice is to advise the bishop to comply with the law, although conflict between the law and Church practice is no new problem, as LDS resistance to laws on polygamy illustrates. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 343-47, 356-58, 390-415; Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 129-260.

duty as soon as the bishop becomes alerted to this possibility by the direction of the conversation.⁵⁸

The issues just discussed do not exhaust the moral or ethical problems. There may be highly unusual circumstances, aside from legal compulsion or the confessor's consent, in which a bishop might feel bound to breach confidentiality. Sometimes the expectation of confidentiality is unreasonable. For example, one who makes a statement to the bishop as a neighbor (rather than as bishop) or makes a statement in defiance rather than in confession might be entitled to no protective secrecy.⁵⁹ Or the confessor may threaten future harm of such gravity as to tip the balance. If he or she were to confess the serious contemplation of suicide, the inability to resist hurting someone, an intention to commit an abortion, or a plan to marry without disclosing to the marriage partner a sexually transmissible disease, the balance may favor the bishop's disclosure,⁶⁰ even at the cost of decreasing some people's trust in the bishop as one who will maintain strict confidence.⁶¹

Functions of Confession, Sincere and Insincere

Confession serves several functions. Sincere confession effects change as part of the repentance process, reconciles and supports, relieves psychic tension, and is an important factor in determining Church sanctions. Occasionally, insincere confession is used to deceive and manipulate.

⁵⁸*Child Abuse*, 5.

⁵⁹However, what appears to be defiance may be just an opening gambit of a counseling session. Willingness to meet with the bishop suggests an openness to discussion.

⁶⁰In some states, one is legally obligated to report knowledge of HIV infection. In Utah, which has such a statute, there is no exception for clergy. Utah Code Annotated §§ 26-6-6, 26-23-3, 26-23-6. The Church's instruction to its bishops in those circumstances is to obey the law.

⁶¹This is in contrast to the Catholic "seal of confession," which recognizes no exceptions. The Council of Trent in 1551 elaborated the obligation of confidentiality. Canons 983 and 984 (formerly canons 889 and 890), *Code of Canon Law* (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1983). Even so, not all confessions are under the seal—the penitent may consent to divulgence, the confession may have been made in pursuit of counseling and not absolution, or the confession may be somehow designed to harm the priest. Caspar E. Schieler, *Theory and Practice of the Confessional*, 2d ed. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1905), 468–70.

Aid to Change⁶²

The scriptures repeatedly command confession of failures to obey God's mandates: "I command you again to repent . . . and . . . confess your sins" (D&C 19:20). However, people approach confession with a wide range of attitudes: some confess out of fear of Church penalties or God's wrath; others confess in mechanical obedience to commandment or in search of help to overcome temptation or out of a desire to please God. When confession is understood to be an element of repentance and thus a prelude to God's forgiveness, the person who can overcome fears of the possible earthly consequences will confess in order to obtain the spiritual benefit.⁶³

Confession to one's bishop does sometimes avoid penalties and does please God, but its greater importance may be in its capacity to aid change. Such confession helps bring about the humility and submission that is part of harmonizing human will with God's will.⁶⁴ Confession helps break down pride, since one cannot easily admit error and remain proud.⁶⁵ Humbling is especially likely if one

⁶²Especially helpful in this area is Top, "Sins Be as Scarlet," 42-66.

⁶³In some other faiths, confession may be conceived rather as a *fruit* of repentance. After one has acknowledged to God weakness and dependence on Christ's grace and feels God's forgiveness, there is no longer shame or embarrassment in admitting one's past; gratitude for God's grace makes one unashamed. According to this view, confession will often follow forgiveness but is not a prerequisite to forgiveness, and while confession in a counseling relationship may be useful to one struggling with sin and guilt, no formal confession to another human being (aside from one who has been injured) is necessary in obtaining forgiveness.

⁶⁴Part of confession is acknowledging not only specific acts, but also more general imperfection and dependence on God. A Catholic without mortal sins is encouraged to engage in the "confession of devotion," in which one confesses venial sins and even sins for which one has already received absolution, as a means of perfecting oneself. John J. Dietzen, *The New Question Box: Catholic Life for the Nineties* (Peoria, Ill.: Guildhall, 1988), 402, 405. For a plea for revitalization of the confession of devotion, which suffered steep decline after Vatican II, see Arthur Barker Chappell, *Regular Confession* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992).

⁶⁵"Let not any man publish his own righteousness . . . ; sooner let him confess his sins." *TPJS*, 194. President Kimball said, "I am sure you are proud and it will take much courage to admit your errors and to accept assistance. My door will be open when you come." E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 93. Confession requires humility. James A. Cullimore, "Confession and Forsaking: Elements of Genuine Repentance," *Ensign* 1 (December 1971): 85. Confession requires courage. "Q&A," *New Era* 21 (October 1989): 16.

admits weakness to a bishop whose regard the confessor values.⁶⁶ Public confession would involve additional social humbling.⁶⁷ Confession reminds people of their own weaknesses and God's strength, the acknowledgment of which is itself commanded.⁶⁸

Articulation of fault strengthens resolve to change. It gives a name to the enemy.⁶⁹ As a marker of commitment, it reinforces a determination not to slip back. It indicates acceptance of responsibility for one's conduct. It helps to assure the contrite that they have really repented and are ready to move on. Even reluctant or partial

⁶⁶People sometimes excuse their failure to confess by expressing mistrust of the mortal who receives confession, but this rationalization indicates incomplete repentance. One who is truly repentant yearns so much for the benefits that can come through confession that pride is sacrificed. Embarrassment is a lesser concern. S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 178. George Q. Cannon stated, "We should not be afraid to confess our sins; for there is no man among us that is not a sinner." Cannon, *Conference Reports* (October 6, 1897), 69, quoted in Jerreld L. Newquist, comp., *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 1:176. See also a letter to Wilford Woodruff in 1857 alluding to a transgression that the writer had discussed with Woodruff. He wrote that he would go to his local leaders if required, but he feared they would be less understanding. Thomas G. Alexander, "Wilford Woodruff and the Mormon Reformation of 1855-57," *Dialogue* 25 (summer 1992): 33.

Ultimately all our sins will be known. Doctrine and Covenants 1:3 says of the rebellious that in the last dispensation their "iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed." See also 2 Nephi 30:16-17.

⁶⁷Wilcox relates the experience of a young man who confessed drinking beer despite his assumption that the bishop would announce that fact in his ward. Wilcox, "Broken Hearts," 64.

⁶⁸"And in nothing doth man offend God . . . save those who confess [that is, acknowledge] not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21).

Roman Catholic theologians make a distinction between confession of *sin* (acknowledgment of humankind's fallen state, contingency, and differences and distance from God) and confession of *sins* (admitting one's breaches of rules set by God). Michel, "Confess," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 5:202-5; Dieter Fürst, "Confess," in *The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975), 1:344. Catholics confess sin in the liturgy but sins in the confessional. Gail Ramshaw-Schmidt, "Sin: One Image of Human Limitation," in Collins and Power, *Fate of Confession*, 4.

⁶⁹Sissela Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 76-77.

confession opens the door. It gives the bishop an opportunity to persuade the confessing party of the desirability of full confession and repentance.⁷⁰

Though most people probably err on the side of too little self-disclosure, some cannot feel satisfied, and they confess repeatedly, wondering compulsively whether their confession was adequate, legalistically cataloging every failing, unable to trust in the principle of forgiveness.⁷¹

Reconciliation and Support

A person confessing offense against another will ordinarily⁷² be instructed by the bishop to seek out the offended person, acknowledge fault spontaneously, and ask forgiveness.⁷³ Such action opens a door to reconciliation, which lies near the heart of the Christian gospel. Christ prayed fervently for the unity of believers (John 17:20-22).

⁷⁰Of voluntary confession, Spencer W. Kimball says:

The voluntary confession is infinitely more acceptable in the sight of the Lord than is forced admission, lacking humility, wrung from an individual by questioning when guilt is evident. . . . Even making the admission upon confrontation is better than continuing to lie and evade the truth. In fact, many of those forced sooner or later to admit their sins do come to a full, sincere repentance. (S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 181-82)

⁷¹Brigham Young said, "Some people will come and confess to me things as simple [that is, as innocent] as it would be for a woman to take the last egg from her hen's nest . . . and talk about that which the Lord cares nothing about." Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855-86), 4:286, March 15, 1857 (hereafter cited as *JD*).

Catholic confession of devotion is to be distinguished from the fault of "scrupulosity," in which one sees sin where there is none or wrongly exaggerates one's fault. Scrupulosity is not a matter of having too tender a conscience, but of making the error of distortion.

⁷²It is possible, if the offended person is unaware of the breach of trust, that confession might do more harm than good. While the *General Handbook of Instructions* 18 (1960), 97, specified that an adulterer must confess to his or her spouse, a supplement to the *General Handbook of Instructions* 21 (1976), 5, recognized that under special circumstances informing the spouse would be unwise. *General Handbook Supplement*, no. 1, July 1, 1976. The *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989) states that confession to the spouse is generally indicated (10-2).

⁷³Neal A. Maxwell, "Insights," *New Era* 8 (April 1978): 4-6. If the offended person fails to forgive, the greater sin remains in him or her (D&C 64:9).

People called to teach may sometimes use their own past or present weaknesses for illustrative purposes. Confession of this sort can teach humility by example and demonstrate both that good people are flawed and that flawed people can become good.⁷⁴ Such openness may lead to discussion that benefits class members who may have been discouraged because they perceive everyone else as perfect or who may have interpreted Church members' reluctance to admit to failings as hypocrisy.

Confession to a receptive, sympathetic individual or group can have the effect of mobilizing support, both psychic and personal.⁷⁵ A secular analog is seen in Alcoholics Anonymous and the many programs patterned after AA, where group help is available to those who admit their need.⁷⁶

But openness is not without risk. Hearing public confession of others in Church could lead to rationalizing sin: "No one is perfect! I can go through a rebellious time and still turn out all right." Furthermore, there is tension between the idea that adopting the appearance of good leads one to do good and the idea that appearing good when one is not constitutes hypocrisy.

Relief

One who seeks to abandon sin may feel a need to pay for the wrong done, and confession is one means of expiation through suffering humiliation by the exposure of one's shame. By confessing, such a person may feel that he or she has personally paid off

⁷⁴For example, Joseph Smith (JS-H 1:28-29), Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah (Mosiah 27:30, 35), and Paul (Acts 26:9-11). Benjamin Johnson recounts that once while preaching his mind went blank and he realized how proud he had been of his eloquence. He was moved to confess to the congregation that the Holy Ghost had left him. He closed the meeting but asked the congregation whether they would hear him on another occasion, and they agreed. Benjamin Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's Printing, 1979), 73-74. See also the fictional account in Michael Fillerup, "Gifts of the Spirit," *Dialogue* 26 (fall 1993): 199-213.

⁷⁵"If we confess to one or more fellow believers, they can support, encourage and pray for us." Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1980), 110.

⁷⁶Paul E. Johnson, *Psychology of Pastoral Care* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 104-6, additionally notes that confession is difficult and many people will avoid it or approach it legalistically.

some cosmic debt. On the other hand, when one realizes that the debt is beyond one's ability to pay (Mosiah 2:23–24; 4:19), he or she may experience relief through understanding that godly sorrow and confession open one up to divine forgiveness through Christ's atonement.⁷⁷ That forgiveness is symbolized in the ordinances of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Confession can bring great psychological relief, just as exposure of a sore to air and light generally helps in the healing,⁷⁸ although excess can do harm. Sometimes full revelation of oneself is not therapeutic.⁷⁹ Brigham Young said:

⁷⁷People who see confession, rather than change and atonement, as the main ingredient in the repentance process misunderstand. See S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, especially chapters 10–15. The Atonement and the repentance process are efficacious to wash scarlet sins white as snow (Isa. 1:18; see also Alma 42:29).

⁷⁸If, as Joseph Smith said, "a man is his own tormenter," confession should bring relief. *TPJS*, 357. Many have noted the relief that comes from confession to one's bishop. See E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 93; Vaughn J. Featherstone, "Forgive Them, I Pray Thee," in Benson, *Repentance*, 57–65; J. R. Clarke, "Confession," 91–94; Norman C. Hill, *The Road Back* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989); S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 187; "Q&A," *New Era* 21 (October 1989), 16–17.

Voluntary confession of long-past sins coupled with years of good living that demonstrate repentance may make the holding of a disciplinary council unnecessary. Confession can thus finally dissipate the fear of consequences that has made life miserable for so long. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-4, 10-10.

Sometimes relief may come for the wrong reason. There is some risk of feeling that once the fault has been articulated, the process of repentance is completed—that vocalization is a magic bullet to kill the evil. Ezra Taft Benson, *God, Family, Country* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974], 196. After listening to a young man's confession, I told him that a disciplinary council would have to be held; he said in alarm, "You can't do that; I confessed!" He thought confession would be like pressing the delete key on a computer. One can see something of "legalistic morality" in those LDS youths who expect to sow their wild oats, "live it up with the boys, and then settle down for a short season before . . . missionary service." L. Tom Perry, "Called to Serve," *Ensign* 21 (May 1991): 39; see also Bruce C. Hafen and Marie K. Hafen, "Repentance," in *The Fight for Right: Strength for Youth in the Latter Days* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 83–88. Some would delay their repentance in order to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25).

⁷⁹In *Bulletin 1989-3* and again in *Bulletin 1993-2*, the Church warned against involvement in questionable self-awareness groups whose methodology includes "open confession or disclosure of personal information normally discussed only in confidential settings." The latter notice is quoted in *Ensign* 24

Confess your faults . . . not on the house tops. . . . If persons lose confidence in themselves, it takes away the strength, faith and confidence that others have in them; it leaves a space that we call weakness. . . . The enemy . . . would . . . say, 'Here is your wickedness made manifest,' and would overcome you and destroy all the confidence you have in yourselves and in your God.⁸⁰

Pursuit of human counseling may be one result of confession.⁸¹ The bishop can, through pastoral counseling, help a person

(March 1994): 80. See also Ezra Taft Benson, *Conference Reports* (April 4, 1969), 13-14; and Alvin R. Dyer, *Conference Reports* (April 4, 1969), 56.

⁸⁰Young, in *JD*, 4:78-79, November 9, 1856; see also *JD*, 8:361-62, March 10, 1860.

⁸¹Counseling may be sought for secular reasons—to deal with character or social problems rather than spiritual sins. Thus a person asking a bishop for help in obtaining treatment may acknowledge addiction, or a person seeking marital counseling may admit adultery without seeing the addiction or adultery as anything more than a foolish mistake.

Secular psychotherapy associated with Hobart Mowrer urges that confession of "sins" to other persons helps overcome the burden of guilt and results in reintegration of the personality. O. Hobart Mowrer, *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1961), 81-102. Mowrer notes approvingly that Latter-day Saints have a monthly testimony meeting for "open confession." He also praises the Catholic confession as helpful, but criticizes Protestant churches for adopting a Freudian attitude that sin is to be dealt with inwardly and therefore considered as essentially imaginary (208-9). See also Erik Berggren who claims that an "innate psychic need for unity" can be satisfied by confession. Erik Berggren, *The Psychology of Confession* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 211.

Karl Menninger decries the loss of a sense of sin and its concomitant feeling of individual responsibility and capacity for change. He subscribes to Mowrer's view that, as an extension of the necessary self-disclosure to a psychotherapist, confession is a valuable aspect of therapy for believers. Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973), 182, 195-98. Some Christian counselors, however, criticize Mowrer's technique as offering only temporary relief, urging that permanent relief from sin can come only by accepting Christ's forgiveness. Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1973), 86-89; Walter J. Koehler, *Counseling and Confession* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), 20-21.

Similarities and differences between psychotherapy and Catholic confession are explored in Robert J. Lovinger, *Working with Religious Issues in Therapy* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1984), 140-42, 175-76, 184-85.

Carl Jung urged that secret guilt isolates us from others, while confession of our fallibility reestablishes community. Carl G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1933), 33-36. See also Julienne McLean, "The Role of the Confessional Process in Psychotherapy," in *Confession and Absolution*, ed. Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell (London: SPCK, 1990), 168-78.

change from sinful to righteous living. Although the bishop may lack professional training, he can draw on his personal and practical experience to console and advise, and he also has access to inspiration. To a person who believes the bishop's calling is divinely recognized, the bishop's advice carries extra authority. The bishop may also properly refer the confessor to professional counselors.⁸²

A Consideration in Church Discipline

Confession to the bishop has a special relationship to Church discipline, since the sins one must disclose to the bishop may well result in institutional discipline. The bishop, as a common judge in Israel, has the responsibility to make a decision about consequences appropriate to the sin confessed or reported to him. The ordeal of real repentance and confession may itself be enough, but the bishop may feel it appropriate for the person to also be placed on informal probation. If that is not enough, the bishop may refer the matter to a ward or stake disciplinary council (formerly called a bishop's court or a high council court), which has authority to impose three sanctions: formal probation, disfellowshipment, or excommunication.⁸³

After formal sanction, a member's restoration to full status may require substantial time and activity in the way of restitution and proof of sincerity. Conditions of probation may include self-reporting of criminal conduct to the police but usually not public confession.⁸⁴

Sanctions imposed may depend on the degree of repentance the bishop perceives, which perception in turn might be influenced

⁸²S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 187-88.

⁸³Disciplinary councils must be held in cases of murder, incest, and apostasy; for serious transgressions that are predatory, repetitive, well known, or committed while the transgressor serves as a bishop or holds some other prominent Church position; for transsexual surgery; and for inexcusable abortion. Councils are generally not necessary for old sins followed by full reformation or for inactivity in the Church, withdrawal from the Church, lawful business difficulties, or civil disputes. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-3 to 10-5. Even when a council must be held, only deliberate homicide requires excommunication. The outcome of each case is otherwise individually determined.

⁸⁴On reporting to police, see *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-2. Public confession is no longer mentioned in the *Handbook* as a requirement for forgiveness by God, although provision is made for announcement of discipline to a limited circle in cases involving predatory conduct or teaching

by the spontaneity of confession or willingness to confess when asked. Spontaneous confession is a very strong indication of repentance. "Therefore, blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble" (Alma 32:16). But confession in a disciplinary proceeding, especially if made only after extensive questioning or confrontation with evidence, may not reflect a sincere desire to repent. Conversely, where there is abundant evidence of a member's repentance before confession, conduct that might otherwise have called for a severe sanction may be treated more gently.⁸⁵

When the purpose of confession or discipline has been served, Church sanctions end, and eventually full status may be restored. The bishop may say he believes God has forgiven the transgressor, but the bishop does not himself extend absolution. If he says that *he* forgives, he can mean only that he waives penalties that the Church is entitled to exact; forgiveness belongs to God.⁸⁶

of false doctrine (to warn the unwary) or flagrant transgressions (to inform members that the conduct has not been ignored). It may still be true that if the conduct has created scandal, public explanation of the situation is needed. "And if any one offend openly, he or she shall be rebuked openly, that he or she may be ashamed" (D&C 42:91). Compare to the sons of Mosiah's public confession of their scandalous past (Mosiah 27:35).

⁸⁵When years of faithfulness and service demonstrate full reformation and repentance, a disciplinary council is often not necessary. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-4. That member will probably have suffered years of distress or of missed opportunities, knowing that confession was called for and must eventually be made yet being unable to take that step.

Unless there is a need to warn Church members of danger from teaching false doctrine or predatory conduct, a decision to disfellowship or excommunicate is generally disclosed only to those who need to know. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-8. That means specifically the ward priesthood executive committee and, in case of a woman, the Relief Society president. Circumstances may dictate a larger group. This policy, justified by a desire to make the return to full status as easy as possible, is reinforced by the possibility of successful lawsuit by the disciplined person, claiming the Church violated privacy rights through giving the conduct or discipline unnecessary publicity. In *Guinn v. Church of Christ of Collinsville*, 775 P.2d 766 (Okla. 1989), a church's elders announced to the congregation a woman's sexual misconduct *after* she had withdrawn from the church. The jury awarded her \$390,000. See Buzzard, "Scarlet Letter Lawsuits," 1-4.

⁸⁶See note 44 above.

Deception

Not all confession is sincere. For example, when people have been accused of wrongdoing, they may confess in mere pretense of repentance, or they may make a partial confession to prevent revelation of the whole truth.⁸⁷ Their sin having been discovered, they may see confession as a device to persuade others that repentance has taken place, thus avoiding discipline or other consequences.⁸⁸

Confession in Scriptures

We turn now to the history and practice of confession in various dispensations of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Modern Latter-day Saints have been reared to see the need for confession to one's bishop as almost self-evident, but the scriptural and historical records paint a more varied picture. The present LDS practice of confession to one's bishop relies primarily on the authority of tradition and modern-day inspiration, rather than on a specific instruction found in the standard works.⁸⁹

Of the several kinds of confession—to God (in prayer), to a person offended (seeking reconciliation), to the Church congregation (either confessing specific acts or making only a general acknowledgment of wrongdoing), and to the bishop (seeking consolation, advice, and/or forgiveness)—the first three are referred to repeatedly in the scriptures. But private confession to a bishop or analogous Church officer is not ever clearly commanded, although there are several passages describing what could be private confession. The silence in the scriptures is ambiguous. It can mean that there was no regular practice of private confession, that the practice of private confession was so common as to be unre-

⁸⁷Wilcox, "Broken Hearts," 64-65.

⁸⁸A factually false confession is possible, although rare. A manipulative or disturbed person could confess in a play for sympathy or notoriety.

⁸⁹Russell M. Nelson, "Standards of the Lord's Standard-Bearers," *Ensign* 21 (August 1991): 11; and Neal A. Maxwell, "Repentance," 31-32, declare and encourage this practice without effort to show a scriptural basis for private confession. The latter says, "All sins are to be confessed to the Lord, some to a Church official, some to others, and some to all of these. A few may require public confession." Their emphasis in these talks to the general Church membership was on personal change, not on administrative procedure.

markable, or that the practice came into use so gradually that no one thought to comment on it.

Bible

The Old Testament features various forms of confession.⁹⁰ The most prominent cases involve collective acknowledgments of sin or guilt by the assemblies of Israel. Sometimes the priest or prophet acted as voice for all. For example, once each year during the Day of Atonement ceremonies, the high priest was required to lay his hands on the head of a live goat and “confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins” (Lev. 16:21),⁹¹ in particular their “premeditated, intentional sins.”⁹² Confession transformed brazen sins “into inadvertencies,” thus making them the kind of transgression that could be expiated by sacrifice.⁹³ Other times the people themselves admitted their wrongdoings. Upon their return from Babylon, the Jews assembled together. Ezra “confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God,” and the people answered, “We have trespassed against our God” (Ezra 10:1-2; see also Neh. 9:2; Lev. 26:40).⁹⁴

⁹⁰See generally Raffaele Pettazzoni, *La Confessione dei Peccati*, 2 vols. (Bologna: Forni, 1936). I am indebted to John W. Welch for his help, particularly in development of the biblical material.

⁹¹The liturgy of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) included repeated recitation by the congregation of a common confession of sin. Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge: Liturgical Parallels in Synagogue and Early Church* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970; originally published by Columbia University Press, 1959), 12-13. The outward signs of humiliation, such as sackcloth and ashes (Neh. 9:1-3), made a public general acknowledgment of one’s sinfulness. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., s.v. “confession.” There was also group acknowledgment of sinfulness by the whole people (Num. 21:7) and by the Levites (2 Chr. 30:22).

⁹²Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 25.

⁹³Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 1043. Also, after Israel had been in captivity seventy years, Daniel prayed and confessed the sins of Israel to God (Dan. 9:3-6).

⁹⁴Some Christian commentators believe public confession of individual sins was also expected. Michel, “Confess,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 5:202, 204-5, cites Jewish, Greek, Babylonian, and Egyptian practices of public confession before priest and the congregation. He cites Nehemiah 9:3, Daniel 9:4, 20, and Ezra 10:11, but more to the point is Ezra 9:1-2. See also Ugo Bianchi, “Confession of Sins,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, 16 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 4:1-7.

There are also frequent references in the Old Testament to the confession of sins in prayer. In making these confessions, the penitent was encouraged to hold back nothing from the Lord. David sings, "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5).

In addition, the Old Testament refers to individual confession in connection with sacrifice. Leviticus says of the penitent, "When he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing: And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin . . . and the priest shall make an atonement for him [by sacrifice]" (Lev. 5:5-6; see also Num. 5:7-8).⁹⁵ Commentaries emphasize the importance of verbalizing such confessions,⁹⁶ saying, "A guilt-offering requires the laying on of hands [by the sinner], as do all private animal sacrifices. . . . He confesses over it the sin of which he is guilty. . . . The guilt-offering requires a particular (expressed) intention that it shall atone for the sin on account of which it is offered."⁹⁷

An obvious connection existed between confession and sacrifice, but a personal connection did not necessarily exist between confession and the Israelite priest. If the confession were spoken aloud, the priest undoubtedly heard it, as might others attending the sacrifice, but the Old Testament does not indicate that the confession was made to the priest as such or to the public. Since the priest was concerned with the sacrifice and apparently had no

⁹⁵"The sacrificial cult provided for a sin-offering, which was brought to the altar by the offender, who made a confession of his misdeeds while laying both hands upon the head of the sacrificial animal." Isaac Landman, "Confession," in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Issac Landman, 10 vols. (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1941), 3:328. See also Jacob Milgrom, "Repentance," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, 17 vols. (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), 14:73-78.

⁹⁶Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 301.

⁹⁷Meyer Berlin, ed., *Encyclopedia Talmudica*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Talmudic Encyclopedia Institute, 1978), 3:133. The sin offering made atonement for the person, whereas the trespass offering atoned for a specific offense committed through ignorance or where the wrongdoer voluntarily confessed. The law offered no atonement for intentional wrongs without confession. Alfred Ederheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at the Time of Jesus Christ* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1874), 100-101.

counseling role with respect to the confessed information, it appears that the confession was directed solely to God,⁹⁸ not only in the form of an admission of guilt, but also in praise of God. The English word *confession* has several meanings, religious, legal, and social, but the Hebrew word *yadah* has an even broader range of meanings. While it often means to confess sin, its root concept is to acknowledge, such as to recognize one's human nature, to confess or extol God's character, to praise or to give thanks.⁹⁹

The later Rabbinic tradition held that "public confession of sin was frowned upon as displaying a lack of shame except when the transgressions were committed publicly."¹⁰⁰ In Judaism, generally, "confession, whether collective or individual, is always made directly to God and never through an intermediary,"¹⁰¹ unless a required confession to an injured party is rejected by that person, in which case the confession may be made to "a quorum of ten, and God would then forgive."¹⁰²

There are also biblical incidents of involuntary confession in response to accusation. Joshua singled out Achan, who had disobediently hidden spoils from the conquest of Jericho, and said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me" (Josh. 7:19). Thus challenged, Achan confessed his wrong and was consequently executed (Josh. 7:16-25). Similarly, in the face of accusation, Saul made confession to the

⁹⁸The offerer of the sacrifice laid hands on the animal and prayed, "I entreat, O Jehovah: I have sinned, I have done perversely, I have rebelled, I have committed [naming the sin]; but I return in repentance, and let this be for my atonement." Edersheim, *The Temple at the Time of Jesus Christ*, 88.

⁹⁹See G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986-), 5:427-43. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:364.

¹⁰⁰Milgrom, "Repentance," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 14:75.

¹⁰¹"Confession of Sins," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 5:879. In the two thousand years since the destruction of Herod's temple, there has been no priestly function of sacrifice; if private confession ever was used, it has no place in the ongoing Judaic tradition. Rabbis are teachers, not priests, and have no responsibility to receive confessions. They may, of course, in counseling hear admissions of wrongdoing in the same way Protestant ministers do.

¹⁰²Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 303.

prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 15:24), and David confessed to the prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 12:13).¹⁰³ In whatever manner, sins must be brought to light and purged. The wisdom of Proverbs admonishes: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

In the New Testament, the most common meanings of the word *exomologeō*, “to confess openly,” are to make a solemn statement of faith, to confess Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:11), to testify, to agree, to admit, or to praise God (Rom. 15:7-13).¹⁰⁴ The word also means to confess sin, without implying when or how. James admonished the Saints, “Confess your faults one to another” (James 5:16), apparently calling for public confession, either general¹⁰⁵ or specific, within the Church setting.¹⁰⁶ People who went to the river to be baptized by John the Baptist confessed their sins (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5), whether privately, publicly, or silently we are not told.¹⁰⁷ Elsewhere in the New Testament there are indications of communal acknowledgment of sin, individual reconciling with

¹⁰³In the face of death, Yucatec Indians publicly confessed their acts of homicide, theft, adultery, and so on—confessions that posed serious problems for them if they survived. Francisco Guerra, *The Pre-Columbian Mind* (London and New York: Seminar, 1971) quoted in Karl Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973), 182-83. See also H. H. Cohn, *Human Rights in Jewish Law* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1984), 216, which states, “Before a death sentence is executed, the accused is asked to confess before God in order that he may not lose his share in the world-to-come.” Compare to the public confession of Sherem (Jacob 7:19). These confessions are of somewhat different character than those induced by inner persuasion alone.

¹⁰⁴Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 5:199-220.

¹⁰⁵Group liturgical confession of fault was a Judaic practice that carried over into Christianity. Joseph A. Favazza, *The Order of Penitents* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1988), 120.

¹⁰⁶Acts 19:18-19 tells that, when certain Ephesians believed, they “confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men.”

¹⁰⁷The covenant ceremony for entry into the Qumran community involved a ritual confession of shared responsibility for the sins of the children of Israel and a baptism. Michael A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 82-83, 85, 92 (citing 1 QS 1:24). See also James C. Vanderkam, “Implications for the History of Judaism and Christianity,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Forty Years*, ed. Hershel Shanks and others (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archeology Society, 1991), 34.

a brother whom one has offended, and also public confession, but there is no commandment to make private confession to a priestly officer. However, the lack of a commandment in the New Testament does not mean private confession did not occur, considering that today private confession is the norm without any direct command from the scriptures.¹⁰⁸

Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon teaches general confession—acknowledging wrongdoing without necessarily giving specifics. For example, when the multitude to whom King Benjamin preached comprehended their nothingness, they made general confession: “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins” (Mosiah 4:2). Christ commanded reconciliation, which may involve the sinner confessing to those offended: “[If thou] rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—Go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you” (3 Ne. 12:23–24; see also Matt. 5:23–24). Moroni described general confession to the Church: “Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins” (Moro. 6:2).¹⁰⁹

A passage strongly suggesting private confession to a Church leader tells that when the preaching of Samuel the Lamanite brought people to repentance, “they confessed unto [Nephi] their

¹⁰⁸Christ’s giving his apostles power to forgive sins sets the scene for private confession, but does not in itself require it. Christian historians find no direct evidence of auricular (private) confession. Favazza, *Order of Penitents*, 77, 81. But some from the Catholic tradition infer its existence. Jeffrey John, “‘Authority Given to Men’: The Doctrinal Basis of Ministerial Absolution in the New Testament,” in Dudley and Rowell, *Confession and Absolution*, 33–36.

¹⁰⁹These passages appear to involve general liturgical confessions rather than detailed descriptions of specific sins. Other Book of Mormon scriptures involving confession of wrong are Alma 1:15 (involuntary confession prior to execution); Alma 17:4 (confess sins before God); Alma 39:13 (confess to people offended); Helaman 9:17, 35, 37 (confession of crime to the judges); 3 Nephi 1:25 (believers confessed faults).

sins” as a prelude to receiving baptism (Hel. 16:1, 5).¹¹⁰ While the passage does not specify that the confession was private and particular, it could well have been.

Confessions were also to be made to Alma in order to avoid excommunication (Mosiah 26:29, 35). Bruce R. McConkie generalizes from this text a duty of private confession,¹¹¹ but the specific context is a case involving only people who had been taken in iniquity and stood publicly accused. Their confession before Alma may well have been made in public (see Moro. 6:7), inasmuch as the public confessions of the sons of Mosiah were part of their effort to repair the injuries to the Church caused by their earlier public conduct (Mosiah 27:35). In any event, none of the relevant passages undertake to define what *should* be the practice universally; they primarily describe what *did* happen on those occasions.¹¹² That which has been approved on one occasion is generally permissible on another, but not necessarily required.

Doctrine and Covenants

In the Doctrine and Covenants, most passages are general statements of the importance of confession,¹¹³ but some relate specifically to confession to God,¹¹⁴ to persons offended (D&C 42:88–92 and 64:12),¹¹⁵ and to “thy brethren” (D&C 59:12). None appear to call for confession to a Church officer in so many words, although again that may be implied.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰See also Helaman 5:17, where confession was followed by baptism, but nothing indicates to whom confession was made.

¹¹¹McConkie, *A New Witness*, 236–37.

¹¹²The ancient scriptures are heavy on exhortation and doctrine, light on procedure (with some exceptions, such as the Pentateuch and Moroni 2–6). Consequently, one must be cautious about inferences from silence.

¹¹³Doctrine and Covenants 19:20 (Martin Harris must repent and confess his sins) and 58:43 (a sign of repentance is confession and forsaking sins). Similar statements are found in 58:60 and 61:2.

¹¹⁴“I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who confess their sins before me” (D&C 64:7).

¹¹⁵If the offender confesses to wrongdoing, the injured person is expected to be reconciled, but if the offender does not admit the wrong, he or she should be brought before the Church for censure.

¹¹⁶Hoyt Brewster cites passages in the Doctrine and Covenants (19:20, 42:88, 58:42–43, 64:7) supporting the making of confession to God and to the person offended, but for confession to a priesthood leader, he cites Marion G. Romney,

The phrase “confessing thy sins unto thy brethren” in section 59 has been interpreted doctrinally as referring to confession to a bishop,¹¹⁷ but historically it appears to be speaking of public confession, that is, confession to other Church members, such as evidently occurred in early testimony meetings.¹¹⁸ Confession was listed as a Sabbath activity for when the Saints met together.¹¹⁹

Look to God and Live: Discourses of Marion G. Romney (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 106–7. Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., in *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), s.v. “confess,” 96.

¹¹⁷“From the Lord’s word to modern Israel—‘confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord’ (D&C 59:12)—it is plain that there are two confessions to make: one to the Lord and the other to ‘the brethren,’ meaning the proper ecclesiastical officers.” Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 179–80. President Kimball also points out that the commandment to confess to the Lord is not inconsistent with an expectation that confession *also* be made to the bishop. But see the following note.

¹¹⁸Concerning testimony meeting, Spencer W. Kimball said in 1948, “The privilege is here granted for the members to bear testimony, with a ‘broken heart and a contrite spirit,’ with thanksgiving and a cheerful heart, confessing to the Lord and the brethren their imperfections, and worshipping with the brethren and sisters. The meeting belongs to the people.” E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 138 and also see pages 96–97.

Of Doctrine and Covenants 59:12, President Kimball said, “This, of course, does not mean that the people must detail their major sins and crimes, but as has often been heard in testimonies, on fast day and otherwise, [they acknowledge weakness].” E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 516. Specific confession is not necessarily inappropriate. Heber J. Grant recounts approvingly a testimony meeting in which the widow of one of the Apostles confessed at age 83 that she had recently overcome a coffee habit. Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Heber J. Grant*, comp. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941), 284–85; Heber J. Grant, *Conference Reports* (October 4, 1907), 22.

¹¹⁹Hyrum Smith interpreted the phrase as referring to confession of faults to one another. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 6:299 (hereafter cited as *HC*). And Brigham Young repeatedly and consistently alluded to this commandment when he spoke of the Sabbath as a day on which the Saints were to meet and confess to one another. Young, in *JD*, 6:278, August 29, 1852; 9:369, August 31, 1862; 10:187, May 31, 1863; 15:82, June 2, 1872; 16:168, August 31, 1873. Compare to his expressed concern that public confession in excess can also be unwise. Young, in *JD*, 4:78–79, November 9, 1856; 8:362, March 10, 1860.

Other recognitions that the Saints are to confess to one another are found in Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1919), 245; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), s.v. “fast meetings,” 277; Newquist, *Gospel Truth*, 176.

Furthermore, in 1831, when the revelation in section 59 was received, Edward Partridge was the only bishop in the Church, having been called a few months earlier with responsibility to be concerned about the temporal affairs of the whole Church, not to minister to the spiritual needs of individuals (D&C 41:9). The various organized branches of the Church were under the direction of a presiding elder, analogous in function to the modern bishop,¹²⁰ but nowhere is the responsibility of receiving private confession formally given to the presiding elder, either. If private confession occurred, it was a matter of unrecorded practice.

There is no mention of confession in the Pearl of Great Price.

Confession in LDS Church History

Foundation Years

The precise LDS understanding and practice of confession in the early years of the Church are not easily established.¹²¹ Nor were they necessarily uniform. Understanding of doctrine, organizational structure, and practice changed over time as experience, new revelations, and growth necessitated adapting previous perceptions.

Early Mormon journals refer to confession at baptism. Sometimes apparently what was meant is simply being repentant or perhaps it is acknowledging in a general open way one's sinfulness and expressing a desire to live righteously and make a commitment to God in baptism. The descriptions of early missionary activity seem to indicate that baptism followed belief and desire but not

¹²⁰James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837-1841* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 102. See also James B. Allen and Thomas G. Alexander, eds., *Manchester Mormons: The Journal of William Clayton, 1840 to 1842* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1974), relating Clayton's activities as presiding elder in Manchester, England.

¹²¹*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* contains no entry that relates specifically to private confession, although Joseph Smith taught that a person should confess to another he had injured, and he also spoke of the obligation of the Twelve and all Saints to "be willing to confess all their sins, and not keep back a part." *TPJS*, 155.

private confession.¹²² There is a sense of drawing in believers, not of screening out the unworthy. If people, however sinful in the past, heard and accepted the gospel and wished to undertake the covenant of baptism in this small, unpopular, even persecuted sect, that was evidence enough of repentance without detailing their preconversion sins to anyone but God.¹²³ As with current instructions, which only a few kinds of previous misconduct need be disclosed by the person applying for baptism, early Church practice apparently did not involve rehearsing to one person prior to one's baptism a list of sinful acts.¹²⁴

Wards were first designated in Nauvoo in 1839. The bishops of those wards were to look out for the physical welfare of people

¹²²For purposes of comparison, the Campbellites received members "on confession [of faith] and baptism, without further examination, whereas Baptists required the telling of an 'experience' and a vote by the church." Winfred E. Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Bethany, 1958), 204. The Methodists required prospective members to pass through a probationary period and to participate in "class meetings," which were weekly gatherings of a group of about a dozen under direction of a leader who would ask members individually about their lives and temptations, expecting voluntary confession in this small group. Halford E. Luccock and Paul Hutchinson, *The Story of Methodism* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1926), 168-73.

¹²³George Morris details the confession he made to God before his baptism: "About a week before I was baptized [on June 28, 1841] . . . I prayed to my Heavenly Father in secret and confessed my sins . . . as I lay prostrate on the ground." George Morris, autobiography, typescript, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 15 (hereafter cited as BYU Archives). The emphasis seems to be on commitment and change. Silence about the necessity for either private or public confession of specific sins leaves open both possibilities—that it was required and that it was not—although the more likely explanation for silence is that no such particularized confession was expected.

¹²⁴A man seeking a sign was accused by Joseph Smith of adultery, to which the man confessed when he was later baptized. The way this unusual event is reported suggests it was a public confession. The man, who had been publicly accused, might have wanted now, as a believer, to vindicate the Prophet by making public confession. *TPJS*, 278.

At an 1839 conference, "John Gaylord was admitted into the Church upon his confession." This suggests public confession as a requirement for baptism, but it is not clear whether that was a confession of sins or a confession of faith. *HC*, 4:13. Orson Pratt, however, more specifically reported, "There were two who came forward repenting and confessing their sins, and were baptized." Orson Pratt, *Orson Pratt Journals*, comp. Elden J. Watson (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1975), 37.

in their area, particularly the poor. They did not conduct worship services or have primary responsibility for spiritual matters; they were almost exclusively temporal officers.¹²⁵ Bishops left spiritual matters to the high priests. Worship services were held not by wards, but by groups meeting in private homes, by priesthood quorums, or by the whole community.¹²⁶

While there is no clear documentary indication in early practice that confessing sin privately to the presiding elder of a branch was expected,¹²⁷ numerous indications exist of public confession—either of individuals before the congregation or of small groups in mutual confessions—as an exercise in piety or reconciliation. The Doctrine and Covenants reference to the Sabbath day as a time for “confessing thy sins before thy brethren” could apply to either or both. Various occasions for confession can be documented—apologizing to persons offended,¹²⁸ working out of interpersonal relations,¹²⁹ responding

¹²⁵The three wards and bishops in 1839 increased to ten in 1845. Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 161–63. William Clayton records the appointment of four bishops for Nauvoo in 1841. Allen and Alexander, *Manchester Mormons*, 206–7. See also William G. Hartley, “Nauvoo Stake, Priesthood Quorums, and the Church’s First Wards,” *BYU Studies* 32 (winter/spring 1992): 60–63; William G. Hartley, “Mormon Sundays,” *Ensign* 18 (January 1978): 21.

¹²⁶Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 78. See also David C. Bradford, “Bishop, History of the Office,” in *EM*, 1:119.

¹²⁷William Clayton was presiding elder in Manchester, England and much involved in the personal lives of Church members, conferring about their doubts, struggles, and sins. He describes public admission of wrongdoing (particularly after accusation or excommunication), public reconciliation (by confession) with persons offended, and admissions of guilt to him as presiding elder when he inquired about allegations of wrongdoing. He does not mention private confessions made to him spontaneously as a prerequisite to receiving God’s forgiveness, although his account also does not rule that out. See Allen and Alexander, *Manchester Mormons*, 65, 71, 73, 92, 130, 199, 205.

¹²⁸Gregory R. Knight, “Journal of Thomas Bullock,” *BYU Studies* 31 (winter 1991): 75. Bullock and his wife Lucy mutually asked forgiveness “for all past offenses.”

¹²⁹When Hyrum Smith pointed out that carping among a group of Saints traveling together created bad feelings, “we saw the evil, felt humble and readily confessed to each other and to God and with uplifted hands covenanted to forget and forgive.” “Journey of the Church of Pontiac on Its Journey to Zion,” 1834, typescript, Archives Division Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, 3 (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

to demands of Church discipline,¹³⁰ and preparing to partake of the sacrament.¹³¹

People who had been found guilty by a Church court were often asked to make public confession. For example, in 1840 the

On another occasion, Warren Foote reported:

After meeting . . . they thought it best to have a general settling up, and confessions. There were considerable wrangling, but they succeeded in getting things fixed up by twelve o'clock at night. Not being a member of the church, of course I had nothing to say. . . . We had trouble in the camp again. After considerable talking in tongues, and confessions, it was again settled. (Warren Foote, *Warren Foote Autobiography*, comp. Garth Homer Killpack, typescript, 3 vols., BYU Archives, 1:17, 18)

¹³⁰In the late 1830s in England, transgressors “were asked to confess their transgressions in open meeting”—although perhaps not in explicit detail—and thereby help from the Saints was mobilized. Allen and others, *Men with a Mission*, 103; James B. Allen, *Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 26, 31–32. See also Doctrine and Covenants 20:69 (1830) and 46:4 (1831).

In the congregation at Ramus, Illinois, several men who had disrupted the meeting “concluded to make a partial confession which they did to keep themselves from being disfellowshipped by the Church.” Joel Johnson, excerpts from autobiography, 1802–1868, typescript, BYU Archives, 9.

¹³¹W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, October 27, 1835, demonstrates that the Saints met to “partake of the sacrament of the Lord Jesus, confessing their sins according to the commandments.” Bruce A. Van Orden, ed., “Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835–1836),” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 3 (1993): 567.

At a Sunday meeting in Montrose, “Uncle John Smith . . . called upon all who had hardness and who had transgressed to confess and repent. . . . After many had confessed he called upon myself and Brother Nickerson to break bread and administer which was done.” William Clayton diary, March 28, 1841, typescript, BYU Archives, 99–100.

John R. Winder said that when he first attended church as a new member, “time was given [by the presiding officer] for any who had been overtaken in a fault to make confession before partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper.” Winder, *Conference Reports* (October 6, 1902), 82.

During a shipboard meeting, March 7, 1841, the presiding elder admonished none to take the sacrament unless they were reconciled. Hiram [Hyrum] Clark, who had been accused of acting “unseemingly” toward some of the women, “begged their forgiveness. Many shed tears at his humility. His case was not put to a vote.” Alexander Neibaur diary, 1841–62, typescript, BYU Archives, 4.

At a meeting of the Massachusetts Conference (1835), Elder Chase was deprived of his membership “because of gambling for money, and then breaking bread to the Saints before he confessed his sins.” *HC*, 2:241.

Kirtland elders quorum “voted [Charles Wood’s] Licence be taken from him and withheld untill he make satisfaction by confession to the Church.”¹³² Similarly, in 1841 Hyland Davis “come before the meeting and made confession and on the sabbath following went before the congregation and made his acknowledgment and was forgiven and the hand of fellowship was restored.”¹³³ And the same year, “it was voted that Brother Kerr was out of order on the last Sabauth and that he make a publick confesion of the Same.”¹³⁴ The same practice is reflected in the *Far West Record*.¹³⁵ In each case, the confession responded to an accusation, and sometimes, at least, the council voted on whether the acknowledgment was satisfactory. On occasion, the confession was found to be inadequate.¹³⁶

Voluntary mutual confession (not required or in response to accusation) also occurred in the Kirtland elders quorum. Joseph Smith, on January 23, 1836, recorded, “Elder Alma Beaman had been tempted to doubt the things [spiritual experiences] which we received the evenings before, and he made an humble confession, and asked forgiveness of the school, which was joyfully accorded him, and he said he would try to resist Satan in the future.”¹³⁷ And the next day, the Prophet recorded that he “called upon the High Council of Kirtland to proceed and confess their sins, as they might

In a Sunday meeting, “a number of the church then expressed their feelings by way of confessions. . . . We broke bread and then closed. . . . [In a Friday meeting,] a number of confessions were made of Coldness and a want of attention to prayrs &c.” Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831-1836* (BYU Studies and University of Illinois Press: Provo, Utah, and Urbana, 1994), 144, 146.

¹³²Lyndon W. Cook and Milton V. Backman Jr., eds., *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record: 1836-1841* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1985), 50 (March 13, 1840). In another case, Dr. P. Hurlburt was restored (June 21, 1833) to good standing in the Church upon his confession to the Church court that was considering his case on appeal. George A. Smith, in *JD*, 11:8, November 15, 1864; *HC*, 1:354.

¹³³Cook and Backman, *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record* (March 1, 1841), 53.

¹³⁴Cook and Backman, *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record* (July 11, 1841), 60.

¹³⁵“Whatever the charge, a humble confession was, almost without exception, rewarded with forgiveness.” Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), xiv.

¹³⁶For example, see *HC*, 2:346, 510.

¹³⁷*HC*, 2:384-85. See also Cook and Backman, *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record*, 2 n. 1.

be directed by the Spirit, and they occupied the first part of the day, and confessed and exhorted as the Spirit led.”¹³⁸

We do not know how explicit these confessions were. Responses to accusations are in their nature specific, but spontaneous confessions may be more general. The only wholly voluntary confession whose content was reported in the *Far West Record* is Heber C. Kimball’s statement that “wherein he had been out of the way, in any manner, he ment to mend in that thing.”¹³⁹ However, on one occasion William Smith and several others made public confession that they had wrongly believed Joseph was in transgression.¹⁴⁰ And when called to be in the high council across the river from Nauvoo, Ephraim Owens apparently declined,

¹³⁸*HC*, 2:385; Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 149. Oliver Cowdery’s diary for January 17, 1836, says, “The quorums of the Church were organized in the presence of the Church, and commenced confessing their faults and asking forgiveness. The Holy Spirit rested upon us.” Leonard J. Arrington, ed., “Oliver Cowdery’s Kirtland, Ohio, ‘Sketch Book,’” *BYU Studies* 12 (summer 1972): 416. In a letter, William Phelps describes the January 16 meeting of the Presidency, the Kirtland and Zion high councils, the Twelve, the seven Presidents of the Seventy, and the two bishops and their counselors: “The presidents commenced the meeting by confessing their sins and forgiving their brethren and the world. . . . The Lord poured out his Spirit in such a manner as you never witnessed. . . . When I was speaking, which was but few words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me so that I could not speak, and I cried as little children cry in earnest.” Van Orden, “Writing to Zion,” 576.

The *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record* refers to mutual confessions but only in the first few weeks of meetings, suggesting that the practice continued only in the quorum’s organizational phase. Less than voluntary confessions also occurred when one was found guilty of improper behavior and acknowledged that wrong as a condition of continued fellowship in the quorum. Cook and Backman, *Kirtland Elders’ Quorum Record*, 2, 6, 8, 10, and 43, 52, 56.

¹³⁹Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 221. Jared Carter confessed publicly. “He did not, however, state what he had done that was wrong; nevertheless his confession was received.” Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1995), 212; reprint of 1853 publication. It was public knowledge that Carter had opposed Joseph Smith in Kirtland.

¹⁴⁰Daniel Tyler, “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” *Juvenile Instructor* 27 (February 15, 1892): 128. Joseph had prophesied that those who believed him to be in transgression would receive a testimony to the contrary. The next week his brother William and others confessed they had done so.

confessing publicly that he had disobeyed the Word of Wisdom.¹⁴¹ Similarly, Luke Johnson asked to be excused from sitting on a council “because he had been previously tempted on some matters, and that he had sinned, and wished to make a more public confession than he could make here.”¹⁴² At a meeting on the plains, Orson Hyde “preached his celebrated bogus sermon, denouncing all bogus makers, counterfeiters thieves &c & commanding all such & all who knew of any such to come forth with and tell him & also absolved them from all former acts and covenants to keep secrets. This made quite a stir & caused some to ‘confess their sins.’”¹⁴³

Early Pioneer Period

Although before and during the Nauvoo period, bishops were mainly temporal officers, concerned with Church properties and caring for the poor, in Winter Quarters during the move westward, the bishop’s role began to change. Five hundred men had left to serve in the Mormon Battalion, leaving many families behind who needed attention. In establishing Winter Quarters, the city council, under direction of Brigham Young, organized the city first into thirteen wards¹⁴⁴ and then into twenty-two,¹⁴⁵ each with a bishop to “see that none suffer” and “to have meetings in their several Wards for the men women & children once a week also to . . . have schools in their Wards.”¹⁴⁶

In Utah the spiritual responsibility of bishops continued to increase.¹⁴⁷ Salt Lake City had five wards in 1847,¹⁴⁸ which

¹⁴¹Joseph G. Stevenson, ed., *The Life and History, Elder Edward Stevenson*, October 5, 1839, holograph, LDS Church Archives, 178 (page 74 of typescript).

¹⁴²*HC*, 2:151.

¹⁴³Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout, 1844-1861*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:261 (June 20, 1847).

¹⁴⁴Brooks, *Hosea Stout*, 1:203, 205 (October 2 and 18, 1846).

¹⁴⁵Brooks, *Hosea Stout*, 1:213-14, 222 (November 25-26, 1846, and January 2, 1847).

¹⁴⁶Brooks, *Hosea Stout*, 1:217-18 (December 13, 1846). See also Bradford, “Bishop, History of the Office,” in *EM*, 1:119.

¹⁴⁷When Albert Thurber in 1849 asked a friend to baptize him, the friend had to get permission from his bishop. Helen Thurber Dalton, “Journal and Diary of Albert King Thurber,” *Treasures of Pioneer History* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1954), 3:272. See also Hartley, “Mormon Sundays,”

increased to nineteen in 1849,¹⁴⁹ and the bishops began to assume religious leadership in the community, holding weekly meetings and a monthly testimony meeting.¹⁵⁰ In that context, there came to be a mix of public and private confession.¹⁵¹

The “Mormon Reformation”

During the powerful revival of 1856–57, commonly called by historians the Mormon Reformation,¹⁵² great emphasis was placed

22–23: “Meetinghouses for each ward made ward sacrament meetings and Sunday Schools possible for the first time. . . . Gradually community (or stake) sacrament meetings were replaced by ward meetings.”

¹⁴⁸Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 18–19.

¹⁴⁹Campbell, *Establishing Zion*, 159.

¹⁵⁰Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 276–77. The nineteen city wards and six rural wards of the Salt Lake Stake remained static until 1877, when ten new wards were organized to help serve the greatly increased population of 20,000. [Howard] Stansbury, *Exploration of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 131, says that bishops “exercised not only a spiritual but temporal authority.” B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century One*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Corporation of the President, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1965), 3:452 n. 10 (hereafter cited as *CHC*).

¹⁵¹A statement by Orson Hyde in 1855 suggests that private confession may have been more prevalent than revealed by the record. In speaking of Heber Kimball and Jedediah Grant’s criticism of some people, he said, “I will not say by what means they were posted [became informed], whether by private confession of some conscience-smitten guilty participant in things not right, or by the common and ordinary means of knowledge.” Orson Hyde, in *JD*, 2:207, March 18, 1855. See also the letter to Wilford Woodruff cited in note 66, and Brigham Young’s statement, “I mourn and lament when any of my brethren come to me and confess that they have been guilty of this or that crime.” Young, in *JD*, 10:2, September 28, 1862.

¹⁵²Paul H. Peterson, “The Mormon Reformation of 1856–57: The Rhetoric and the Reality,” *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 59–87. This reformation period is strongly reminiscent of Alma 5–6, and Alma 45:22. After burning feverishly through the latter part of 1856, the height of the revival was over by spring, particularly with the approach of Johnston’s Army. However, “thousands of Saints had submitted to the catechism, had openly confessed their sins of commission and omission, and had gone again into the waters of baptism for a renewal of their covenants.” Gene A. Sessions, *Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 259. Wilford Woodruff wrote that “some of the fruits are, all have confessed their sins either great or small, restored their stolen property; all have been baptized from the Presidency down; all are trying to pay their tithing.” Wilford Woodruff to George A. Smith, April, 1, 1857, in Sessions, *Mormon Thunder*, 259.

on a spiritual housecleaning. Early in that revivalist movement spearheaded by President Jedediah M. Grant,¹⁵³ there were some overzealous expectations of public confession,¹⁵⁴ but public confession was soon replaced with private confession¹⁵⁵ to a bishop or block teacher.¹⁵⁶ Richard Ballantine reported during early December of 1856:

During the week we met the people of each block in private houses each day at ten o'clock. We had power given us to melt the hearts of

¹⁵³Sessions, *Mormon Thunder*, 270, 272. Wilford Woodruff was also much involved. Alexander, "Wilford Woodruff and the Mormon Reformation of 1855-57," *Dialogue* 32 (summer 1992): 25-39. According to Woodruff's journal, he confessed his faults to his families and "told my families theirs." Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898, Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-84), 4:474 (hereafter cited as *WWJ*).

¹⁵⁴Daniel Wood indicated that "thirty-seven people confessed to having wronged [him] by stealing, telling lies, etc." Davis Bitton, *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1977), 388.

Jedediah Grant stated, "In some of the wards men will rise up and confess their sins, and after a week's reflection, they will go to meeting and commence parrying [*sic*], and make themselves as good as an angel." Jedediah M. Grant, in *JD*, 4:74, November 2, 1856. During the Reformation, people were sometimes called on to speak in meetings and were expected to confess their sins. Rachel Lee notes confession of sloth (April 27, 1856), opposition to leaders (February 5, 1857), and faults (June 27, 1958). *Journal of Rachel Andora Woolsey Lee, 1856-1860* (BYU Archives). An incident of public confession of adultery is reported in [William W. Bishop, ed.,] *Mormonism Unveiled: Life and Confessions of John D. Lee* (St. Louis: James H. Mason, 1891), 280-83.

¹⁵⁵Heber C. Kimball, January 11, 1857, gave the following instructions:

Call upon the High Priests, the Seventies, Elders, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons, and first cleanse those ruling members, those that hold the Priesthood; and if you find those that deserve to be severed from the Church, sever them. Do not call in the females, when catechizing the males; but when you have done with them, then call the females together and talk to them and show them their duty. . . . Do not make that public . . . which should be kept private, lest you do more harm than good. (Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 4:172, January 11, 1857)

¹⁵⁶"And all the bishops [or teachers they assigned] had to get the people one by one by themselves and ask them these questions that were on the code of laws. And if the people had broken any of these laws, they were told to do so no more, and they were all forgiven for what they had done." John Lowe Butler *Autobiography*, quoted in William G. Hartley, *My Best for the Kingdom: History of John Lowe Butler, a Mormon Frontiersman* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1993), 299. See also Allen, *Trials of Discipleship*, 270.

the people. . . . Many confessed their sins in part and resolved to work righteousness. We had power in some meetings to tell each one by name of their condition and of their besetting sins. Afterward we blessed them.¹⁵⁷

Although bishops were sometimes involved, the person normally assigned in the Reformation to question ward members and to receive such confession was the teacher,¹⁵⁸ who went from house

¹⁵⁷Journal of Richard Ballantine, quoted in *Biography of Richard Ballantine*, typescript, LDS Church Archives, 105. Although this sounds like public confession, he also wrote a week earlier, on November 28, about catechizing sixteen teachers of the First Ward: "There was no lack of confidence in revealing their feelings, though they were not called upon nor allowed to reveal individual acts except in so far as they were public." *Biography of Richard Ballantine*, 104.

Hannah King, a critical observer, wrote, "The people . . . were told to get up in meeting and confess their sins. They did so 'till it was sickening, and brought disease." King expressed relief when what she perceived to be bullying of the people was over. *Hannah King Journals*, October 8, 1856, quoted in *Sessions, Mormon Thunder*, 221, 259. A discussion of King's reaction appears also in Rebecca Bartholomew, *Audacious Women: Early British Mormon Immigrants* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 207.

That the pressure to confess might have been distressing is suggested by a letter from an anti-Mormon Indian agent named Garland Hurt to non-Mormon Governor Cumming. Hurt states that in October 1856

a proclamation issued from the Lord's anointed, announcing the solemn fact that the people had violated their covenants with God and commanding them indiscriminately to bow at the Confessional, and repair to the streams of the mountains and be baptized forth with. . . . I have seen men and women, weeping in the utterest agonies of soul, and when I attempted to console them would say, they abhorred the idea of being forced into a confessional but dare not refuse. (Bigler, "Garland Hurt," 162 n. 52)

The strictness of these expectations led some members to apostatize. Anna Jean Backus, *Mountain Meadows Witness: The Life and Times of Bishop Philip Klingensmith* (Spokane: Arthur H. Clark, 1995), 94. Opponents of the Church made much of the rhetoric about the sinfulness of the Saints, without taking into account the high standards aspired to and the zeal to motivate the Saints that may have led leaders to exaggeration. *CHC*, 4:124.

¹⁵⁸While this interrogation by the teachers was more formal and more extensive than ever before, the responsibility of teachers from the beginning was to be overseers of conduct. Among other things, "the teacher's duty is to watch over the church always . . . And see that there is no iniquity in the church, . . . and also see that all the members do their duty" (D&C 20:53–55). See also Mosiah 26:7, where wrongdoers among Church members were "delivered up unto the priests by the teachers."

to house with a printed list, asking twenty-seven questions.¹⁵⁹ Thirteen questions dealt with various forms of dishonesty (not paying debts, using others' water, oppressing employees, branding strays, and the like); the remainder asked about murder, betrayal, adultery, swearing, coveting, intoxication,¹⁶⁰ tithing, teaching one's family the gospel, disloyalty to the Church and its teachings, praying, Sabbath observance, attendance at meetings, being a good parent, and bathing.

In 1860, Brigham Young reflected concern for the possible negative effects of detailed public confession:

Were I to relate here to you my private faults from day to day, it would . . . not strengthen either the speaker or the hearer, and would give the enemy more power. Thus far, I would say, we are justified in what some call dissembling. . . . Many of the brethren chew tobacco . . . If you must use tobacco, put a small portion in your mouth when no person sees you. . . .

But if you have stolen your neighbour's cattle, own it, and restore the property, with fourfold if it is requested. . . . I believe in

In the nineteenth century, the teacher was an adult with the specific calling to visit the homes of the members. This function has been known by various names: block teacher, ward teacher, and home teacher. On the shift from adult teachers to youthful teachers, see William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young's Last Achievement," *BYU Studies* 20 (fall 1979): 23; and Hartley, "Ordained and Acting Teachers," 375-98.

¹⁵⁹Peterson, "The Mormon Reformation," 70. Another version of the catechism, covering nearly the same ground in eighteen questions, was used in May 1857 in Fort Supply. See Brooks, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 12 n. 2. See also Allen, *Trials of Discipleship*, 270, and Sessions, *Mormon Thunder*, 220-21, which states the checklist was administered to General Authorities, bishops, and teachers.

¹⁶⁰The concern only with intoxication reflects the fact that the Word of Wisdom was not yet as important a symbol as it was to become. But see notes 12 and 192. Leonard J. Arrington, "Have the Saints Always Given as Much Emphasis to the Word of Wisdom as They Do Today?" *Ensign* 7 (April 1977): 32; Paul H. Peterson, "An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1972); Robert J. McCue, "Did the Word of Wisdom Become a Commandment in 1851?" *Dialogue* 14 (fall 1981): 66-77; Thomas G. Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom: From Principle to Requirement," *Dialogue* 14 (fall 1981): 78-88. Members were always admonished to observe this wise counsel; strict adherence became an explicit temple recommend requirement in 1921. Alexander, "Word of Wisdom," 82. See also Graffam, *School of the Prophets*, 33 (Apostles negligent as to Word of Wisdom), 42 and 48 (need to set example), and 53 (considered commandment).

coming out and being plain and honest with that which should be made public, and in keeping to yourselves that which should be kept. If you have your weaknesses, keep them hid from your brethren as much as you can. . . . Confess your secret sins to your God, and forsake them, and he will forgive them; confess to your brethren your sins against them, and make all right, and they will forgive, and all will be right.

Keep your follies that do not concern others to yourselves.¹⁶¹

He thought it better for people to try to live up to their public image than to admit their faults in public and thus confirm their secret weaknesses.¹⁶² Still, some degree of public confession persisted. For instance, in 1883 small group confession was practiced among the Twelve and in the School of the Prophets.¹⁶³ The same year, John Taylor referred to an expectation of public confession of adultery or fornication.¹⁶⁴ In connection with the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in April 1893, the First Presidency called for

¹⁶¹Young, in *JD*, 8:361–62, March 10, 1860. See also Young, in *JD*, 4:78–79, November 9, 1856; and 4:286, March 15, 1857.

¹⁶²“[In dealing with members’ shortcomings,] do not make that public . . . which should be kept private, lest you do more harm than good.” H. Kimball, in *JD*, 4:172, January 11, 1857 (see full quote in note 155, above). Spencer W. Kimball told a group of missionaries that people should not talk about their old sins that were previously confessed. Remaining silent about one’s past weakness is not hypocrisy, but proper reticence. E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 96.

¹⁶³Graffam, *School of the Prophets*, 33–36, 48, 59–63.

¹⁶⁴Graffam, *School of the Prophets*, 29. On September 5, 1886, stake president Angus M. Cannon, having learned of the adultery of his nephew John Q. Cannon (who was age twenty-nine and second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric), obtained an admission and immediately took John to the front during a meeting in the tabernacle. There John made a public confession, “laid down his priesthood,” and was excommunicated on vote of the congregation. *Deseret News*, September 6, 1886. His leadership position may have dictated so dramatic and public a confession. A Salt Lake editorial jeered. John was rebaptized two years later. *Deseret News 1987 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1986), 64.

In his diary entry for November 13, 1898, Charles Card reported that in Canada a woman asked forgiveness for adultery and fornication she had committed two years before and for which she had been excommunicated. The congregation voted to forgive her and consented to her rebaptism. Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card, eds., *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years, 1886–1903* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 478.

Isaac Hyde Bishop “was commanded to make public confession for speaking evil of high council.” Susan Easton Black, comp., *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 1830–1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 5:521 (entry for Isaac Hyde Bishop, comment 1).

universal public confession. Members were asked to meet together March 25, 1893, confess their sins, and forgive one another before they went to the temple dedication.¹⁶⁵

The Diminishing Role of Public Confession

While diminishing in use, the practice of public confession continued well into the twentieth century. For example, instructions in 1913 said that public confession was not necessary in all cases for those whose offenses were not generally known.¹⁶⁶ Public confession was most often expected for matters of public knowledge. Accordingly, the instructions in 1921 indicated that no records should be made of minor transgressions of young people, and when a transgression was known to the perpetrator only, the confession to the bishop should not be made public or recorded unless a court was held. But publicly known wrongs were confessed or dealt with at the regular weekly priesthood meeting, keeping the confession as limited as possible.¹⁶⁷ The 1934 *Handbook of Instructions* stated that in a case of public knowledge that a young couple had been immoral but had married, they still should make public confession, but it could be simply to “express the desire to repent and obtain forgiveness for any wrong that they may have done.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 3:241–44. See also *WWJ* (March 18, 1893), 9:244.

¹⁶⁶*Circular of Instructions* 12 ([Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], 1913), 26.

¹⁶⁷*Instructions to Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks* 13 ([Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], 1921), 41, 42.

¹⁶⁸*Handbook of Instructions for Stake Presidencies, Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks* 15 ([Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], 1934), 100. Adults would understand the coded statement. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1960) required the adulterous person always to confess to his spouse, but that was not continued as a requirement in every case (98). *General Handbook Supplement* (1976) states that special circumstances may dictate that involvement of parents or spouse would be unwise (5). And the *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989) says that the repentance of sexual transgression by a married person generally should include seeking forgiveness from the spouse. And a young, unmarried person involved in such transgression should be encouraged to tell his or her parents (10-2). However, sometimes such a disclosure might do more harm than good.

In 1956 instructions allowed for privately imposed probation for either single or married people involved in sexual sin who were repentant,¹⁶⁹ except in the case of public scandal, when the man involved might be asked to stand before a Melchizedek Priesthood meeting and, without divulging the details of the transgression, confess to having violated the rules of the Church, express repentance, and ask forgiveness. Confessions of women might be reported by the bishop in the Melchizedek Priesthood meeting of the ward with such explanation as necessary.¹⁷⁰

In 1976 excommunications and disfellowshipments were to be announced only to the Melchizedek Priesthood of the ward, without specifying detail unless there was need to warn against apostate teaching.¹⁷¹ Since 1976 public confession has not been expected as part of Church discipline, and knowledge of disciplinary action has been limited to those who need to know.¹⁷² Knowledge of such disciplinary actions is to be disclosed only to appropriate men and women leaders, except for instances of predatory action, teaching false doctrine, or flagrant transgressions—things about which the whole congregation knows or needs to be aware.¹⁷³

Spontaneous public confession is still considered a desirable practice if handled sensitively and discretely. It comports with the

¹⁶⁹*Handling the Transgressor* (Salt Lake City: Distributed by the Presiding Bishopric of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), 3–4.

¹⁷⁰*Handling the Transgressor* (1956), 4.

¹⁷¹*General Handbook of Instructions* 21 (1976), 76. While this is not public confession, it would reveal a disciplinary judgment that was often itself the product of confession.

¹⁷²*Handling the Transgressor* (1956), 21, specifies announcement of excommunication in ward sacrament meeting and stake priesthood meeting and says nothing about announcing disfellowshipments. In 1968, excommunications and disfellowshipments of Melchizedek Priesthood holders were to be announced to the Melchizedek Priesthood of the stake; such sanctions against others were announced in the ward Melchizedek Priesthood meeting. *General Handbook of Instructions* (1968), 130.

¹⁷³*General Handbook of Instructions* (1983), 59. An editorial in the *Church News* said, “Confession these days almost seems to require public officials and celebrities calling a news conference to discuss their private lives in public arenas as if privacy no longer matters. What was once only heard in private is now broadcast around the world [in] . . . public chest beating.” *Church News*, August 12, 1995, 16.

description of the Sabbath as a time for “confessing thy sins unto thy brethren” (D&C 59:12). Of confession in testimony meeting, Spencer W. Kimball said:

We do not hear it so much anymore. The Lord so instructed us that we might seek forgiveness of our sins by having confessed them humbly, acknowledging them before the people and the Lord. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Prov. 28:13)¹⁷⁴

However, his advice in 1948 was to make such confession in general terms:

[Members may] bear testimony, with a “broken heart and a contrite spirit,” with thanksgiving and a cheerful heart, confessing. . . . This, of course, does not mean that the people must detail their major sins . . . but . . . say something like this: “I recognize my weaknesses and imperfections and I am striving constantly to overcome them and ask you, my brothers and sisters, to overlook my frailties and errors.”¹⁷⁵

Involvement of Bishops in Receiving Private Confessions

In 1860, Brigham Young began to emphasize a spiritual oversight role for bishops, to “see that all [members of their wards] lived as they should, walking humbly with their God, attending to their prayers, observing the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, and ceasing to swear and steal. There would not be a person in his Ward that he does not know, and he would be acquainted with their circumstances, conduct, and feelings.”¹⁷⁶ In 1862, President Young stated,

¹⁷⁴Spencer W. Kimball, “Except Ye Repent . . . ,” *Improvement Era* 52 (November 1949): 76, quoted in E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 96–97; Spencer W. Kimball, *Conference Reports* (October 2, 1949), 127.

¹⁷⁵E. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 516, 138. This type of general public admission of weakness is not much different in content from the general public confession built into the liturgies of other churches, except the admissions are made individually rather than collectively. “It is not the general practice of the Church for individuals to confess explicit sins in fast and testimony meetings. . . . Members of the Church are not generally encouraged to discuss their sins or those of others before the body of the Church or otherwise publicly.” Marion D. Hanks, “Answers to Questions,” *New Era* 1 (January 1971): 10.

¹⁷⁶Young, in *JD*, 8:146, August 19, 1860. Even so, in a sermon specifically about confession, Brigham Young did not suggest confession to the bishop. On March 10, 1860, he urged confession to God and to those injured (whether an individual, the ward, or the public), but not confession to a Church leader.

“My Bishop has just as good a right to come to my house and demand of me my Tithing, as he has to demand it of any other person in his ward, also to inquire into the state of my family, whether I attend to my prayers, whether I have contention with my neighbours, &c., in his capacity as a Bishop.”¹⁷⁷ In fulfilling these duties, bishops undoubtedly heard many confessions or expressions of concern about all kinds of personal or collective problems.

The calling of bishop continued, as at first, to be concerned with temporal affairs of the kingdom—care of the poor, buildings, tithing, economic development, community political leadership, education, and judging disputes¹⁷⁸— but in Utah, weekly ward

He said, “And if you have sinned against your God, or against yourselves, confess to God, and keep the matter to yourselves, for I do not want to know anything about it.” Young, in *JD*, 8:361–62, March 10, 1860.

Confessions sometimes came to the Church president or other leaders, either because the bishop was not yet firmly established as the proper recipient or because the confession was thought deserving of the prophet’s attention. For example, Brigham “began to receive letters of confession [from people who had been involved in the Mountain Meadows Massacre], and his responses suggest he was not exactly in a mood to forgive and forget.” Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 281. It was also noted that Brigham complained about people coming to him with confession of trivialities. Young, in *JD*, 4:286, March 15, 1857. See also a letter to Wilford Woodruff referring to a confession made to him. Alexander, “Wilford Woodruff and the Mormon Reformation,” 33.

¹⁷⁷Young, in *JD*, 9:281, April 7, 1862. The earliest reference to confessions to the bishop I have found was during the Reformation. Heber C. Kimball said, “Bishops . . . take a course not to expose and ruin men, but let their private sins be privately acknowledged to the Bishop, and he has authority to report them to head quarters. . . . I want the Bishops . . . not to be overbearing and hard on the people.” H. Kimball, in *JD*, 4:177, January 11, 1857.

¹⁷⁸According to the Doctrine and Covenants, the bishop of the Church in the 1830s was to receive consecrated property (42:31; 124:21); to keep the Lord’s storehouse and look after the poor (72:10; 42:33–34; 124:21); to purchase lands and build houses of worship (42:35); to be present at trial by elders if possible (42:82); to be “a judge in Israel” (107:72), sitting “in judgment upon transgressors upon testimony as it shall be laid before him according to the laws” (107:72); and to certify members going to Zion to claim a share of consecrated property (72:17). In sum, the bishop was to be responsible for “administering all temporal things” (107:68). The only distinctly spiritual responsibility placed upon the bishop of the Church was to discern spurious spiritual gifts so as to prevent the Saints being misled (46:27).

Eugene Campbell lists many responsibilities of bishops, who were “the key players in the colonization of the Great Basin.” Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing*

meetings under direction of the bishop became well established,¹⁷⁹ and spiritual counseling became an important part of his responsibilities.¹⁸⁰ Through 1912, the *Circular of Instructions*, predecessor of the *General Handbook of Instructions*, gave bishops guidelines only with respect to tithes and business matters. Then in 1913, for the first time in that series of official written instructions, the bishop was specifically identified as having spiritual as well as temporal responsibilities and having a duty to maintain confidentiality of confessions (except as to matters of public notoriety). The 1913 instructions assume an already well-established practice of confessing to the bishop or bishopric, noting that public confession is not always required when offenses are not generally known.¹⁸¹

The bishop, who was first administrator and judge and then community leader, had become a person to whom one could and should go with personal or spiritual problems. He still looked after the poor and held Church courts for serious or resistant sinners, but he also now provided (as a listed part of his duty) a fatherly listening ear for the troubled soul.

Zion (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 71, 159. See also Dale Beecher, "The Office of Bishop," *Dialogue* 15 (winter 1982): 103; D. Gene Pace, "Community Leadership on the Mormon Frontier: Mormon Bishops" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1983). Erastus Snow stated that the office of bishop was not only to administer in temporal things, care for the poor, and receive tithes, but also to settle disputes as judge. *St. Louis Luminary*, 1 (November 22, 1854): 4. "Though circular letters to stake presidents and bishops around the turn of the century indicated the desire of the First Presidency and Twelve to discontinue use of Church courts for the settlement of temporal disputes, . . . the practice . . . still continued." Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 102.

¹⁷⁹In commenting that Sunday was not much of a day of rest for the Saints, Brigham mentioned prayer meetings, morning service, afternoon meetings, class meetings, prayer meetings, confessing meetings, and so on, from sunrise to 9 P.M. Young, in *JD*, 10:187, May 31, 1863.

¹⁸⁰Beecher, "The Office of Bishop," 112-13. For a long time, the teachers quorums shared oversight of member conduct with the bishop, consistent with Doctrine and Covenants 20:53-55. For example, in Panaca, Nevada, men who made up the teachers quorum "'took up a labor' with family heads and rowdy boys and tried to bring them to their senses and to repentance, including occasionally public confession." Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormons in Nevada* (Las Vegas: Las Vegas Sun, 1979), 31.

¹⁸¹*Circular of Instructions* 12 (1913), 26-27.

Development of Standards for Institutional Discipline and Forgiveness for Baptized Members

As the bishop's modern role in receiving confessions became settled, a need arose to identify which, out of the broad range of undesirable behaviors, needed to be confessed. The matter became quasi-jurisdictional in the sense that private confession is expected for conduct for which possible affirmative sanctions are stipulated. If the behavior is serious enough to warrant Church discipline, the member has the responsibility of confessing to the bishop. Connecting private confession to Church discipline is a way of advising the member when conduct has been such that there is an obligation to report it to the bishop.¹⁸² Because the bishop has to make decisions about a Church member's conduct, the relationship between a Church member and the bishop may become adversarial if that member is accused of wrongdoing and has not confessed. Members are encouraged to accept any resulting sanctions as a means of reconciliation with the institution that bears the God-given responsibility for their spiritual welfare.

The matters serious enough to warrant consideration by a bishop's court have varied. In the early pioneer era, they included not only crimes and sexual misconduct, but also breaches of loyalty to an embattled community. For example, during one period, patronizing gentile merchants could result in Church discipline.¹⁸³

Certain standards for discipline, and by implication for confession, came to be regularized by inclusion in printed instructions given to bishops.¹⁸⁴ In 1928 the instructions stated that the following

¹⁸²In every era, any Church leader, or lay member for that matter, would be willing to counsel with someone who wanted counsel. That is a role friends who are respected for their compassion and wisdom have always played. Matters divulged in such counseling relationships may be more or less serious than those for which private confession is expected, but unless the leader is one within whose jurisdiction the member lives, the divulgence is not considered adequate confession.

¹⁸³See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 248-49; *CHC*, 5:224 n. 13; Young, in *JD*, 12:284-87, October 8, 1868.

¹⁸⁴In 1868 the School of the Prophets (comprised of approximately 5,000 priesthood leaders throughout Utah Territory) proposed a boycott against trade with anti-Mormon gentile merchants, and the proposal was sustained in October

transgressions would ordinarily justify holding a bishop's court: infractions of the moral law (such as fornication and adultery); liquor drinking and bootlegging; criminal acts such as thievery, burglary, or murder; and apostasy or opposition to the Church.¹⁸⁵

In 1934 the instructions added drunkenness, cruelty to wives or children, and promoting polygamy.¹⁸⁶ Subsequent changes were mostly in terminology, although in 1968 homosexual acts were added to the list of sexual sins.¹⁸⁷

In 1976 grounds for discipline were put under two general categories: (1) deliberate disobedience to Church regulations and (2) moral transgressions, with all the previous offenses listed¹⁸⁸ and incest, child molesting, embezzling Church funds, and "un-christianlike conduct" added. In an undated supplement to the 1976 instructions, the list no longer included intemperance but

general conference. The pressures to support the boycott were primarily social, but excommunication was held out as an ultimate threat for noncompliance. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 245-49; *CHC*, 5:224 n. 13. See also Young, in *JD*, 12:281, 284, 289, October 8, 1868; and George Q. Cannon, in *JD*, 13:103, 124, October 8-9, 1868. A prominent Church member, accused before the School of the Prophets of patronizing gentile establishments, confessed, asked forgiveness, and made a commitment to stop. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 494 n. 15.

¹⁸⁵*Handbook of Instructions for Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* 14 ([Salt Lake City], 1928), 75.

¹⁸⁶*Handbook of Instructions* 15 (1934), 97-98. For increased focus of discipline of persons encouraging polygamy, see B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), chapters 9 and 10.

¹⁸⁷*General Handbook of Instructions* 20 (1968), 122. In 1940, after the repeal of prohibition, liquor drinking, drunkenness, and bootlegging were replaced by the general category of intemperance. *Handbook of Instructions* 16 (1940), 138. In 1960 the more general language of "sex sins" (*General Handbook of Instructions* 18 [1960], 97) replaced the previous wording (*Handbook of Instructions* 16 [1940], 138). Lesbianism was also added in the *General Handbook Supplement* (1976) to clarify that not only male homosexual conduct was proscribed. Presiding Bishopric, *Handling the Transgressor* (1956), 4-5, says repeated sexual violations are grounds for court action, citing Doctrine and Covenants 42:24-26, which allows for leniency on the first offense of adultery but not thereafter.

¹⁸⁸*General Handbook of Instructions* (1976). Thievery and burglary, previously listed separately, were covered by general reference to criminal acts.

now specified abortion (subject to exceptions). In 1985 transsexual operations were added to the list.

The 1989 instructions adopted a different format and gave as grounds for discipline a long list of illustrative felonies plus a number of items that would be misdemeanors or noncriminal acts (adultery, fornication, homosexual relations, sex-change operation, spouse abuse, abandonment of family responsibilities, drug misuse, abortion, and apostasy). The only deletion of a major item found in previous instructions was the offense of unchristianlike conduct.¹⁸⁹

Over the years, although two items have been dropped—intemperance in 1976¹⁹⁰ (now seen more as illness or weakness than as serious evil, despite strong Church commitment to the Word of Wisdom) and unchristianlike conduct in 1989 (probably seen as too vague to be applied evenly)—the tendency has been to include more items. The listed sins only illustrate the grounds on which confession is expected of all compliant members. Unspecified offenses of comparable gravity are not excluded from this obligation.

To be worthy for priesthood ordinations or temple recommends, members must meet standards of conduct and belief higher than those listed above. Ordination and recommend interviews have also seen a few modifications over the years,¹⁹¹ but the questions asked by the bishop in these situations relate mainly to present obedience and thus do not call for any confession that is not already expected of all baptized members. However, in these interviews, members are always free to discuss any spiritual concerns.

¹⁸⁹*General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), 10-4.

¹⁹⁰*General Handbook Supplement* (1976).

¹⁹¹An 1856 letter from the First Presidency indicated that qualifications for endowment then were age sixteen, tithing, integrity, loyalty to Church leaders, belief in plural marriage, and living the gospel (that covered all sorts of morality issues). Juanita Brooks, *John Doyle Lee: Zealot-Pioneer Builder-Scapegoat* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1983), 192. See also Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 3:63. The Word of Wisdom came to be a fixed expectation by about 1915. Alexander, "The Word of Wisdom," 82 n. 14. Tithing also was first encouraged; then it became a hallmark of commitment and finally a requirement. In recent years, additional inquiries have concerned sympathy with apostates (especially polygamous groups), proper personal and financial conduct with respect to family, and faith in the Godhead, the Atonement, and the Restoration.

Confession in Other Christian Churches¹⁹²

Roman Catholicism

Private confession of serious sins¹⁹³ was not part of early Christian practice, so far as that practice is described in the New Testament. That is the understanding of nearly all Roman Catholic historians, who describe the norm in early Christianity as public confession of sins and severe penance.¹⁹⁴ The Novatianist schism

¹⁹²Modern Judaism recognizes no intermediaries between man and God, and public confession would be seen as a dysfunctional act. Nonetheless, some sixteenth-century kabbalistic ascetics confessed to one another. "Confession of Sins," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 5:879.

¹⁹³Prayer and good works were always a sufficient solution to everyday sins. Favazza, *Order of Penitents*, 71.

¹⁹⁴For an exhaustive treatment of the history of penance, see Oscar D. Watkins, *A History of Penance* (London, 1920; reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1961); for good summary accounts see John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 3-22; and Quentin Donoghue and Linda Shapiro, *Bless Me, Father, for I Have Sinned* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1984), 17-18. See also Favazza, *Order of Penitents* (on the institution of public nonrepeatable penance); R.C. Mortimer, *The Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939) (on the ending of public nonrepeatable penance); Leonard Geddes and Herbert Thurston, *The Catholic Church and Confession* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 56-84 (Jesuit justification of the changes in confession practice in early and medieval history as consistent with basic doctrine); John M'Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, 12 vols. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1867), s.v. "auricular confession," 1:549-50 (private confession unknown in the first centuries, presbyter began to receive confessions, office abolished in fourth century by Nectarius, Leo encouraged private confession).

Favazza sees a consensus of recent scholarship that private repeatable penance (a repeated sin is able to be absolved any number of times through the sacrament of private penance) is not documented until the late fifth century and believes that the few scholars who urge that auricular (private) confession originated much earlier are driven by apologetic needs. Favazza, *Order of Penitents*, 8, 55.

Ignatius Klug urges that there was always private confession in the church because (1) there is no proof of its having a specific beginning, (2) there is no record of any protest against imposition of a new practice, and (3) tradition relates it to apostolic times. He conceded that confession sometimes had to be public. Ignatius Klug, *Het Katholieke Geloof* (Heemstede, Netherlands: Uitgeverij de Toorts, 1950), 397-98.

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶1447 (English translation, United States Catholic Conference, 1994) follows, as an official statement of the church, the majority view that, in early years, public acknowledgment of serious

resulted from disagreement about whether *any* confession of and penance for serious sin after baptism could be efficacious for those who had through such sin broken their covenant with Christ.¹⁹⁵

Private confession came into use only gradually.¹⁹⁶ There is near consensus¹⁹⁷ that the practice began in the Middle Ages among Celtic and Anglo-Saxon monastics, then was extended to lay Catholics, and finally spread throughout Europe.

sin was necessary for absolution. However, some scholars allege that the existence of public confession might only mean that private confession was not always sufficient. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper, 1958), 216. Others state that while the penance was public the confession was private. John Halliburton, "A Godly Discipline': Penance in the Early Church," in *Confession and Absolution*, 45-46; Nathan Mitchell, "The Many Ways to Reconciliation: An Historical Synopsis of Christian Penance," in *Background and Directions*, The Rite of Penance: Commentaries Series, vol. 3 (Washington: Liturgical Conference, 1978), 23-28.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* sums up the issue of public versus private confession:

Whether confession was secret or public still divides historians. Some hold that up to the end of the 4th century public confession of even secret sins was generally required, and in evidence thereof they cite the *Didascalia*, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Ambrose, and others. But this testimony is inconclusive, since it can be interpreted as imposing public satisfaction or as merely counseling public confession. . . . That secret confession was the more general practice in the early Church is the more common view of scholars. . . . In a letter written in 459 to some Italian bishops, Leo the Great . . . [said] secret confession to priests alone is sufficient. (E. F. Latko, "Confession, Auricular," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:131-32)

¹⁹⁵Favazza, *Order of Penitents*, 178-86. See Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-30. See also 1 John 5:16-18; Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance*, 4; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 5th ed. (London: A. and C. Black, 1977), 198-99; Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, ed., *A History of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), 238.

¹⁹⁶The practice of confession and penance in the early centuries of Christianity is thought to have been much like that described in the New Testament. It is said that public confession and penance were so rigorous that alternatives developed when the church grew beyond a small, persecuted sect. With growth and the inclusion of people from various cultures and with wide variation in depth of commitment, what had been right in the beginning no longer seemed appropriate. Mortimer, *Origins of Private Penance*, 190; McNeill and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, 3-22; F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), s.v. "penance," 1059.

¹⁹⁷Favazza, *Order of Penitents*, 56 n. 173.

Private confession was first criticized,¹⁹⁸ then regulated, and over centuries became the accepted practice. As private confession grew in usage and frequency, public confession and penance essentially disappeared.¹⁹⁹ In 1215 private confession of mortal sins²⁰⁰ received codification in canon law. The Fourth Lateran Council required that, as part of the Sacrament of Penance,²⁰¹ all Catholics past the age of reason²⁰² make private confession to a priest at least once a year²⁰³ in preparation for Easter.²⁰⁴ The Council of

¹⁹⁸In A.D. 589, the Third Council of Toledo called private confession a “detestable way” of seeking forgiveness. Ladislav Orsy, *The Evolving Church and the Sacrament of Penance* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1978), 38.

¹⁹⁹As occasions for confessing mortal sins became more frequent—when in danger of death, during Lent, before taking communion, and even during the week—hearing confession became a major part of the priests’ ministry, and bishops were no longer often personally involved.

²⁰⁰What is considered “mortal sin” is not codified but is understood from the scriptures and tradition. Frederick R. McManus, “The Sacrament of Penance,” in *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, ed. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, and Donald E. Heintschel (New York: Paulist, 1985), 693. Mortal sins are serious, conscious, and fully consented to. “Sins, Venial and Mortal,” in *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, ed. Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 719.

²⁰¹This sacrament involves recognition of sin (“conversion”), confession, absolution, and acts of penance (“satisfaction”). Dionisio Borobio, “The Tridentine Model of Confession in its Historical Context,” in Collins and Power, *Fate of Confession*, 22.

²⁰²Children below about age eight or nine are not capable of grave sin because they do not understand its “real” meaning. At about this same age, children begin to take communion. Norbert Mette, “Children’s Confession—a Plea for a Child-Centred Practice of Penance and Reconciliation,” in Collins and Power, *Fate of Confession*, 67. “A child, even before the age of 7, who can discern between what is morally good and evil and who is capable of grave sin, is bound [to confess].” N. Halligan, “Confession, Frequency of,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:132.

Confession is not only obligatory, it is also a matter of right. Each person has a “right” to personal confrontation with Christ, through the priest. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Redemptor Hominis (Redeemer of Man), *The Papal Encyclicals 1958-1981* (n.p.: McGrath Publishing, 1981), #278 ¶83.

²⁰³“Monthly confession of devotion [that is, confession of venial or previously confessed mortal sins] is a wise norm for the conscientious believer; once a week suffices for fervent souls who communicate daily.” N. Halligan, “Confession, Frequency of,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:133.

²⁰⁴Borobio, “The Tridentine Model of Confession,” 24. “After having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.” *Code of Canon Law* (1983), Canon 989.

Trent, responding in the mid-sixteenth century to the Protestant Reformation and its rejection of private confession, reinforced the doctrine of private confession by asserting that Christ had instituted it when he said to his apostles after the resurrection, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them."²⁰⁵ Catholic doctrine remains essentially the same today.²⁰⁶

The Council of Trent, 1545-63, abolished general absolution in favor of the individualized sacrament and in 1551 pronounced the doctrine that confession is necessary for salvation, but the Council noted that the mode is not immutable. E. F. Latko "Confession, Auricular," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:132.

²⁰⁵John 20:23. The Council of Trent cited this particular passage, as well as Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:18, and tradition. The reasoning was that if a priest is to forgive, he must know what he is forgiving, and knowledge must normally come from confession of the penitent. The Council also indicated that one must make full confession of all mortal sins that can be remembered, that confession must relate numbers of occurrences and their circumstances, and that confession must be secret. As to the last, it was conceded that Christ had not commanded secrecy, but secret confession was thought consistent with Christ's teachings. Borobio, "Tridentine Model of Confession," 27-30; J. L. McCarthy, "Confession, Seal of," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 4:134 (citing Aquinas).

²⁰⁶Vatican II decided that private confession can now be either anonymous (through using the traditional confessional booth) or face-to-face, as the penitent chooses. Effort was made to emphasize the communal nature of confession and to change the focus from individual sin and culpability to God's forgiveness and mercy toward repentant individuals in the new Rite of Reconciliation. However, "individual, integral confession and absolution remain the only ordinary way for the faithful to reconcile themselves with God and the Church" in all but exceptional cases. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States Catholic Conference, 1994), ¶1484. See also Thomas S. Scharbach, "The American Catholic Church since Vatican Council II," *Sunstone* 14 (August 1990): 49-50. I am grateful to Thomas Scharbach for his assistance with these materials on Catholicism.

In practice, penance has become less severe over time and, in spite of lighter penance and the importance of the doctrine, confession has fallen largely into disuse in some countries. It is said, for example, that in Germany "adults no longer do it" and "adult parishioners are hardly having recourse to [individual confession] any more." Mette, "Children's Confession," 65, 68. Chappell makes a plea for revitalization of confession after a steep decline that followed Vatican II. Chappell, *Regular Confession*, multiple references. Reportedly, the number of U.S. Catholics confessing monthly fell from 38 percent in 1964 to 17 percent in 1976. Favazza, *Order of Penitents*, 234 n. 2. And a 1989 report said 19 percent of Roman Catholics who regularly attend Sunday mass no longer go to confession regularly. Dudley and Rowell, *Confession and Absolution*, viii.

An essential sacrament of the Greek Orthodox Church is that of Metanoia (change or repentance). Greek Orthodox Christians believe Metanoia was established by Christ when he entrusted his apostles with the power to forgive. The responsibility to receive confession of moral errors passed from the apostles to

Protestantism

Among most Protestants, private confession is considered optional. Luther taught that people have no essential need for a priest and that going to a priest might sometimes even interfere with the primary relationship between God and believer. He thought that private confession and penance, as he saw them in Catholicism, contributed to works righteousness, an erroneous belief that man can of himself do something about sins, whereas, he believed, only God's grace matters.²⁰⁷ The Catholic practice was also seen as conducive to abuses, as in the inappropriate sale of indulgences.²⁰⁸

However, the Lutheran 1529 catechism, still in use today, recognizes a place for private confession. If penitents find it helpful, they are permitted, even encouraged, to confess to a priest, although it is not doctrinally required and not commonly practiced.²⁰⁹ Instead, group confession of sinfulness and the general

bishops and priests. The Greek and Roman churches separated in 1054, so their earlier history is shared. Orthodoxy does not use a confessional booth but expects the priest to know the penitent and to take what he knows into account in the "consultation." Nikon D. Patrinos, *A Dictionary of Greek Orthodoxy* (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Hellenic Heritage, 1984), s.v. "confession," 94-96. See also Milton V. Backman Jr., *Christian Churches of America: Origins and Beliefs* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 18-19, 28.

²⁰⁷Frank Senn, "The Confession of Sins in the Reformation Churches," in Collins and Power, *Fate of Confession*, 106.

²⁰⁸See also Mormon 8:32, asserting that churches would say, "Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins." Luther considered the manner in which John Tetzel issued indulgences to be highly objectionable. Backman, *Christian Churches of America*, 72. One of Pope Leo's objections to public confession was that "the sins . . . were often not fit to be spoken of in so open a manner." Richard H. Wood, *A Cyclopedic Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Terms according to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (New York: Carlton, 1984), s.v. "confession of sin," 133.

A Protestant criticism of private confession was that "it tends to corrupt both the confessors and the confessed by a foul and particular disclosure of sinful thoughts and actions." M'Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. "auricular confession," 1:550.

²⁰⁹Hjalmar Lindroth, "Confession and Absolution," in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck, 3 vols. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing, 1965), 1:561-65. For a discussion of the value and practice in Lutheranism of confession and absolution, see Koehler, *Counseling and Confession*, 38-77. *The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri*

proclamation of absolution is part of the liturgy used in preparing for communion.²¹⁰

Calvin had a still more skeptical attitude toward confession as a sacrament, although he, too, valued voluntary private confession.²¹¹ In the view of Luther and Calvin, when a priest pronounced absolution, he was merely describing what would occur even without the pronouncement, because, if the penitent had faith, God's forgiveness would come through grace without any priestly intervention.²¹²

Synod (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 1982) gives the following guidelines for private confession:

When, during consultation with the pastor, a person desires individual confession and absolution, the following order may be used. The confession made by the penitent is protected from disclosure. The pastor is at all times obligated to respect the confidential nature of a confession. . . . [After confession] the pastor lays his hand on the head of the penitent and says: 'Receive the forgiveness Christ won for you by his Passion, Death and Resurrection. By the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I, a called and ordained servant of the Word, forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' (310)

²¹⁰After corporate confession, absolution is pronounced in these words: "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." *Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church*, 308.

A 1962 survey showed American Lutheran pastors used absolution to some extent, mostly with the sick. They often hear informal confession in counseling but do not offer absolution in that setting. About 29 percent reported having used confession themselves. Koehler, *Counseling and Confession*, 51-54.

²¹¹Senn, "Confession of Sins," 108. Senn says despite Calvin's personal appreciation of private confession, there is almost no use of such confession in reformed churches, 109.

²¹²"Calvin denied the sacramental nature of private confession, but did admit absolution as a ceremony to confirm faith in the forgiveness of sins." Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 450. See also Cross and Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "absolution," 7-8.

The meaning of absolution is subject to different understandings. In Catholicism it constitutes forgiveness given by Christ's delegated power. In other churches, although the language sounds operative ("I absolve you"), it may be understood as simply declaratory of what has already happened by Christ's grace or what will happen when faith is sufficient. In still others, the priest may use another form, petitioning God ("[May] Christ . . . absolve you"). And a nonpriest who hears confession would simply describe the process ("Christ . . . forgives

For a generation or more after Henry VIII assumed the headship of the Catholic Church in England, the obligation of private confession continued. The 1549 prayer book admonished those who used private confession and those who did not to be tolerant of one another. When the text of the prayer book was finally settled in 1662, such confession was only optional.²¹³ Later, those who urged private confession came under condemnation for reversion to Catholicism.²¹⁴ Modern Anglicans/Episcopalians may be High Church (closer to Roman Catholicism) or Low Church (closer to Reformation sentiments), but even among High Church members, private confession is rare today.²¹⁵ Anglican confession essentially

your sins by the grace of the Holy Spirit"). Senn, "Confession of Sins," 108-9; Cross and Livingstone, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "absolution," 7-8; Hatchett, *American Prayer Book*, 450-51; *The Draft Proposed Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Church Hymnal, 1976), 446-52. Conversely, in some Orthodox rites, the language is "May God forgive," but that petitionary expression is deemed in itself to give absolution. Christine Hall, "A View from the Foothills: Some Observations on Orthodox Practice of the Sacrament of Confession," in Dudley and Rowell, *Confession and Absolution*, 123, 204.

The exact choice of words in declaring absolution is a matter of importance for some, while others consider all formulations to have the same basic meaning. Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977), s.v. "confession of sins," 3:222.

In Catholic doctrine, absolution is conditional on penance but not on sincerity. R. S. Nolan, "Seal of Confession," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (New York: Robert Appleton, 1912), 13:655. Thus the penitent who might obtain absolution by fraud has obtained absolution of that sin, although he or she has in the process committed the new grave sin of sacrilege. Rev. Raymond C. O'Brien, telephone interview.

²¹³Nolan, "Seal of Confession," in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 13:654.

²¹⁴In the Anglican Church, the Oxford Movement (notably John Keble and Edward Pusey) in the early 1800s urged voluntary private confession. Senn, "Confession of Sins," 112. See also Geoffrey Rowell, "The Anglican Tradition: From the Reformation to the Oxford Movement," in Dudley and Rowell, *Confession and Absolution*, 91-119.

²¹⁵The son of an Episcopal priest offered the impression that "even among High Church groups perhaps less than 25 percent of adults might have been to at least one confession with their priest by the time they were 40 years of age; less than 5 percent would be likely to have confessed regularly (for instance, annually)." Philip L. Barlow, letter to author, July 15, 1991. See also Perry Butler, "Introduction: Confession Today," in Dudley and Rowell, *Confession and Absolution*, 1.

followed Luther's view,²¹⁶ and the pronouncement of absolution was only a relief from church sanction, "not the imparting of a Divine forgiveness."

None of the largest Protestant groups require private confession, as Catholics do, although Lutherans and Anglicans make formal provision for optional private confession.²¹⁷ Most Protestants expect believers to make confession only to God, to the public in a general confession forming part of the liturgy, and to people one has injured.

Early in U.S. history, a few groups such as the Lutheran Pietists and Methodists practiced specific public confession of sins—unto the "brethren," as the text reads in D&C 59:12.²¹⁸ That practice continues among other groups, such as Mennonites²¹⁹ and

²¹⁶The Anglican Prayer Book (1552) recognizes voluntary private confession, especially for the sick. Senn, "Confession of Sins," 109. Episcopalians may confess before a deacon or lay person as well as before a priest. Wood, in *A Cyclopedic Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Terms*, s.v. "confession," s.v. "confession of sin," 130, 134.

²¹⁷Some Protestants have seen mandatory private confession as "one of the greatest corruptions of the Romish Church" in that it gives tyrannical power to priests and turns the penitent away from God. M'Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. "auricular confession," 1:550; Episcopal Church Evangelical Education Society, *Distinctive Principles and Methods of Work* (n.p.: n.d.), 69. See also Bob Soileau, "Confession," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Broadman, 1958), 1:305, which states, "Confession is a matter between the individual and God"; and Don F. Newfeld and Julia Neuffer, eds., "Confession," in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Students' Source Book* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962), 9:520, which declares, "The New Testament knows nothing of confession as a formal institution."

²¹⁸Senn, "Confession of Sins," 107. For more on Lutheran Pietists, see Backman, *Christian Churches of America*, 75. Excommunication and public confession as part of discipline to keep the church pure was practiced by the Anabaptists, Calvinists, John Knox in Scotland (Presbyterians), and especially the Puritans. The Puritans feared the practice of private confession would lead to priestly power over people. Senn, "Confession of Sins," 109, 112. Modern Baptists do not practice congregational discipline, but it is part of their tradition. William Harold Tiemann and John C. Bush, *The Right to Silence*, 2d ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 76.

²¹⁹*The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Hillsboro, Kan.: Mennonite Brethren, 1955), s.v. "ban," 1:219.

the Church of the Brethren,²²⁰ as a means to avoid being shunned or excommunicated.²²¹

A continuing appeal of public confession is illustrated by the fact that in 1995 students in many evangelical colleges engaged in lengthy revival meetings at which they felt impelled to confess sins such as cheating, racism, apathy, and pornography.²²²

Conclusion

From the beginning of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, confession has been an element of the fundamental doctrine of repentance. Secret confession to God is always required; when individuals are harmed, forgiveness must be sought from them; and serious sins are the subject of either public or private confession. Which sins need to be confessed, to whom, and the degree of publicity given confessions have changed from time to time.

Public confession had a long history in Christianity. During the revivals of the early 1800s, it was not uncommon to expect repentant souls to confess their sins to other believers, thus to confess "in public."²²³ The confession might be in general terms, but members truly convinced of their guilt would not hold back.²²⁴

²²⁰Public confession is the norm for the Brethren, although it occurs when someone is accused. "The purpose of Brethren church discipline has been . . . to bring about a public confession or acknowledgment to the congregation of that error by the person." Failure results in "avoidance," "ban," or "disfellowshipment." *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia, 1983), s.v. "confession, public," 1:333; s.v. "discipline," 1:386-89; s.v. "acknowledgment," 1:3.

²²¹For a successful lawsuit against a church when the conduct of a woman, unwilling to confess, was announced to the congregation after she had withdrawn from the church, see Buzzard, "Scarlet Letter Lawsuits," 1.

²²²David Briggs, *Deseret News*, April 29, 1995, sec. A, p. 10.

²²³Of 78 converts in Kirtland for whom information is available, 57 (73 percent) were Protestant before conversion, 21 (27 percent) were unchurched, and none were Catholic. The great majority of Americans in that era were unchurched. Protestants grew from 7 percent to 17 percent of the population during the first half of the nineteenth century. Mark R. Grandstaff and Milton V. Backman Jr., "The Social Origins of the Kirtland Mormons," *BYU Studies* 30 (spring 1990): 56, 57.

²²⁴*TPJS*, 155; *HC*, 3:383.

The Restoration occurred in this milieu, and in the Restoration's early days, public confession was practiced extensively.

However, with the creation of the ward as a small ecclesiastical unit and with the entrustment of the spiritual welfare of ward members to the ward bishop, the instructions from Church leaders have identified the normal pattern of repentance for serious sins as requiring private confession to one's bishop. As "a judge in Israel" and one of those set "to watch over the church and to be elders unto the church," he is given the gift and the responsibility to assess, through the gift of discernment, the genuineness of people's profession of spiritual gifts (D&C 46:27). Consistent with that is his responsibility to judge the genuineness of repentance.

Many Christian groups emphasize man's innate sinfulness and focus on his nature more than on his individual sins, whereas LDS doctrine stresses man's original innocence and perfectibility, with focus on his individual shortcomings. But over time, the understanding and practice of confession in the LDS Church came to be similar in some respects to Roman Catholicism.²²⁵ Both moved from using public confession to encouraging private confession and from harsh penance to lighter sanctions as they became less a persecuted people apart ("a community of saints") and more a group with variable commitment ("a training-ground for sinners").²²⁶ Both Catholics and Latter-day Saints require private confession of any serious misconduct to a spiritual counselor as an earthly representative of God. Both groups also believe that Christ gave his apostles power to forgive sin. The Catholics believe the authority was passed down to the Catholic priests, and the Latter-day Saints believe it was given to the modern Apostles (but not to the ward bishops). Thus, the Catholic priest pronounces absolution, whereas the LDS bishop merely waives penalties that might be imposed through Church discipline, leaving absolution to God.

²²⁵Spencer W. Kimball, responding to complaints that confession in the LDS Church was too similar to the practice in other churches, noted that the fact that others do something does not make it wrong. S. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 184-85.

²²⁶Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 201. See also Cunliffe-Jones, *History of Christian Doctrine*, 238.

After hearing a confession, the LDS bishop decides whether to exempt a person from Church discipline on the grounds that repentance is judged to be sincere and no independent justification for discipline appears. Other options are to invoke the jurisdiction of the bishop's disciplinary council²²⁷ or refer the matter to the stake president for a stake disciplinary council.

This century has seen steady escalation in specifying the standards of behavior expected of members of the LDS Church. With respect to the grounds for discipline, the lists of misconduct that call for Church disciplinary council action and hence confession to the bishop have become longer.

Making private, particularized confession is easier than public disclosure of one's sins. A willingness to make public confession requires great conviction, humility, and courage. Perhaps in the earlier years, when all Church members were converts, there was among them a greater fervor, a greater sense of interdependent community with more informality, frankness, humility, and tolerance for confrontation than in more recent years. Sometimes now there may be greater distance between members, more formality, and a more complex structure within the LDS wards and communities than existed in pioneer settlements.

If sin is conceived not only as an offense against God, but also against the community of believers, then confession to that community is consistent with the basic requirement of confession to those who have been hurt.²²⁸ As the community grows larger, sin tends to become popularly viewed less an offense against the group and more an individual matter.²²⁹ At one time, LDS Church discipline was

²²⁷The bishop's disciplinary council can impose any sanctions on any ward member except excommunication of a Melchizedek Priesthood holder.

²²⁸Sergei Hackel states, "In earlier centuries, the Church chose to emphasize the public, communal and ecclesial [*sic*] nature of reconciliation with its body. . . . Thus the sins were necessarily to be acknowledged when the body met." Hackel adds, "On Russian soil developed [among some the concept that] man sins not only against his fellows, but against the cosmos. . . . They would bow to the earth, kiss it, cleanse their hands with it. This was their way to seek forgiveness for any harm which they had done to Mother Earth, to cosmos, to creation." Sergei Hackel, "Paths to Reconciliation: Some Ways and By-ways from the Orthodox Past," *Epiphany Journal* (summer 1986): 32, 34.

²²⁹A Catholic theologian has tied the practice of private confession in his church to, among other things, "anxiety-ridden religious and Church practice . . .

fairly open, with public announcement of disfellowshipment or excommunication and public confession at least sometimes called for. Now, confession to the bishop generally suffices to reconcile the transgressor with the Church, as well as to facilitate forgiveness by God. As little publicity as possible is given to confession and discipline, with only those who have a need to know being notified. This practice seems responsive to the heightened sense of individualism, privacy, and legal liability that exists today.²³⁰

The practice of confession has shifted with changing circumstances, but the basic doctrine of confession has not changed.²³¹ Confession remains one of the essential steps to repentance, and repentance is one of the first principles of salvation.

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[that is] strongly individualistic and sacramentalist." Mette, "Children's Confession," 69. Similar sentiment concerning preoccupation by both priest and penitent with sin is expressed in Bok, *Secrets*, 78.

²³⁰For descriptions of lawsuits against churches for efforts at public discipline, see Buzzard, "Scarlet Letter Lawsuits," 1.

²³¹Stephen L. Richards notes the difference between changing forms and persisting substance in the Church. "Epilogue: Continuing Revelation and Mormon Doctrine," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, ed. Gary James Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 183-85. Boyd K. Packer says, "Changes in organization or procedure are a testimony that revelation is ongoing. While doctrines remain fixed, the methods or procedures do not." Boyd K. Packer, "Revelation in a Changing World," *Ensign* 19 (November 1989): 15.



Agraphon from an unknown gospel. Egerton Papyrus 2, fragment I, verso side. 11.5 cm. x 9.2 cm. Dated middle of the second century.

Fragment I has been translated as follows: “. . . ? And Jesus said] unto the lawyers, [? Punish] every wrongdoer and transgressor, and not me; And turning to the rulers of the people he spake this saying, Search the scriptures, in which ye think that ye have life; these are they which bear witness of me. Think not that I came to accuse you to my Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. And when they said, We know well that God spake unto Moses, but as for thee, we know not whence thou art, Jesus answered and said unto them, Now is your unbelief accused . . . ” H. Idris Bell and T.C. Skeat, eds., *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri* (London: Trustees, British Museum, 1935), 28. Compare to John 5:39, 45, and John 9:29.

The Noncanonical Sayings of Jesus

Of the hundreds of sayings attributed to the mortal Jesus but not found in the New Testament, relatively few that may be genuine offer fresh insight. None are authenticated with certainty.

Stephen E. Robinson

The Greek noun *agraphon*, or *agrapha* in the plural, means “something unwritten.” In the field of biblical studies, this term denotes sayings or quotations attributed anciently to the mortal Jesus¹ but not found in the four canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). In 1889 a German scholar named Alfred Resch caused a minor stir in the world of biblical scholarship with the publication of his book *Agrapha: Aussercanonische Evangelienfragmente* (Agrapha: Extracanonical gospel fragments).² For his book, Resch had drawn together and classified, from patristic authors, variant readings of New Testament manuscripts, apocryphal books, and elsewhere literally hundreds of sayings or variations on those sayings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth but not found in the New Testament Gospels.

Until that time, almost no one had been aware of the large number of such noncanonical sayings that had been preserved, and most had subscribed in one degree or another to the principle of *non in thora, non in mundo*, that is, if it is not contained in the canonical Gospels, Jesus did not say it. The theory behind modern study of the *agrapha* is that in the first century there were oral traditions about Jesus and his teachings out of which the New Testament Gospels were distilled but all of those traditions surely could not have been included in those Gospels. Could not the eyewitnesses who informed Luke of his facts³ also have remembered other incidents and teachings from their time with Jesus? As long as the original disciples of Jesus lived, their fresh reminiscences about him would have continued adding to the body of oral tradition

circulating in the early Church, thereby increasing the possibility of genuine extracanonical sayings.

Unfortunately, many persons felt that the idea of genuine agrapha implied that the New Testament Gospels were incomplete or defective and so resisted any suggestion that genuine sayings of Jesus could exist outside the New Testament. In fact, Resch himself was motivated in his study by the belief that there had indeed been an original gospel that was only imperfectly represented by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

However, the work of Resch was flawed by other biases and by certain methodological errors that further distorted his judgment. Therefore, it remained for an American scholar, J. H. Ropes, to sift through the material presented by Resch with a more critical eye and to present the agrapha to scholars in a form they could work with. This he did in 1896, when he published *Die Sprüche Jesu, die in den kanonischen Evangelien nicht Überliefert sind* (The sayings of Jesus that were not included in the canonical Gospels).⁴ Of the scores of agrapha presented by Resch, Ropes retained only twenty-seven as valuable or possibly valuable, and subsequent scholars have felt that even fewer should be included.⁵

In the same year that Ropes published his work, two archaeologists named Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt discovered a unique fragment of Greek papyrus while working in Egypt at Oxyrhynchus, about 120 miles south of Cairo. The fragment contained eight previously unknown dominical sayings—each beginning with the words “Jesus says.”⁶ In 1904, Grenfell and Hunt published two more manuscript fragments, Oxyrhynchus Papyri 654 and 655, containing between them eight more sayings attributed to Jesus.⁷ Since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices in 1945, scholars have determined that all these sayings come from a Greek version of the Gospel of Thomas that was similar but not identical to the Coptic version in the Nag Hammadi library.⁸ Since the work of Grenfell and Hunt, other material has come to light that has added to the collection of sayings attributed to the mortal Jesus and that adds also to the likelihood that at least some of the agrapha might be genuine. The Coptic Gospel of Thomas alone contributes 114 sayings.⁹ Since it is an article of faith among the Latter-day Saints that the canonical text of the New Testament is

neither entirely complete nor entirely correct, it is understandable that there should be some interest among us in these extracanonical sayings.

So, is it possible then that genuine sayings of Jesus circulated anciently that were not preserved in the canonical Gospels? This is not only possible, it is veritably certain, for the prime examples of such materials can be found in the New Testament itself, though not in the Gospels. In Acts 20:35, Luke records how the Apostle Paul encouraged the elders of Ephesus “to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Since this statement of Jesus is not found in the four Gospels and since we have no reason to doubt either Paul or Luke, the last line in Acts 20:35 must be accepted as a genuine *agraphon*. Further, Paul’s exhortation that the elders “remember” these words of Jesus indicates that they were known to the elders and, therefore, that they circulated in the primitive Church independently of the written text of the four Gospels. Thus Acts 20:35 contains an example of a genuine saying of Jesus that was widely known in the early Church but that would not have been preserved had Paul not quoted it nor Luke remembered that he had done so.

A second example of a saying of Jesus preserved only by Paul can be found in 1 Thessalonians 4:15: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep.” Here again, since Paul is certainly not quoting from the four Gospels, it must be conceded that the early Church knew and used more sayings of Jesus than those preserved in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Yet not all that glitters is gold, and while the possibility of genuine *agrapha* on the model of Acts 20:35 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15 must be granted, most of the *agrapha* collected by Resch and Ropes or discovered since then are almost certainly not genuine. Particularly among the apocryphal gospels do we find recorded supposed sayings of Jesus that clearly serve the theological interests of a later time. Since the authority of Jesus himself was unquestionable for Christians, the temptation on the part of some authors to put their own views in his mouth after the fact seems to

have been irresistible. A prime example of this interpolation in the agrapha can be found in the Gospel of the Ebionites. The Ebionites were a Jewish-Christian sect that practiced vegetarianism. Consequently, we should not be surprised to find in the gospel used by them an agraphon in which Jesus says, when asked by the disciples where he wanted to eat the Passover, "Do I desire with desire at this Passover to eat flesh with you?"¹⁰ Some of the Gnostic material from Nag Hammadi is particularly well known for the blatant manufacture of sayings that serve Gnostic theological ends.¹¹ In another Jewish-Christian gospel, the Gospel of the Hebrews, the redactor was evidently embarrassed that a sinless Jesus should be baptized by John. So he explains that Jesus was pushed into baptism by his mother and then puts these words in Jesus' mouth: "What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless this that I have just said is a sin of ignorance."¹²

Apart from those agrapha that are clearly inventions, there is another class that consists merely of alternate versions of canonical gospel sayings that have been slightly paraphrased or expanded. For example, the saying from Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1 that reads, "Jesus says, 'A city which is built on top of a high mountain and firmly set can neither fall nor stay hidden,'" is certainly a variant of the line in Matthew 5:14 that reads, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." While scholars may debate the significance of the different readings, no one seriously argues that they represent two originally separate sayings. And while this type of agraphon has some importance in the debate over textual transmission, it adds very little to our understanding of the original teachings of Jesus.

Another class of agrapha whose authenticity is suspect are those proverbs, maxims, or clever sayings that may have been attributed to Jesus by mistake, in the same way that so many modern sayings have been transferred to Abraham Lincoln, or in the way a line from LDS President Heber J. Grant is sometimes attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹³ Unfortunately, while this type of transference must certainly have taken place, it is impossible to be certain which of the clever sayings from the agrapha might fall into this category or from what ancient sources they may have been transferred.

An additional complication is that among the agrapha we find several sayings that are apparently taken from the letters of Paul. For

example, Origen, followed by three other writers, attributes to Jesus this passage in Ephesians 4:26: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath."¹⁴ And the passage in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 that says "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" is attributed to Jesus three times in patristic literature.¹⁵ Most scholars see these passages as indisputable cases of transference from Paul to Jesus.

However, since we have already established that Paul has twice quoted the words of Jesus explicitly (Acts 20:35–36; 1 Thes. 4:15), is it not possible, even probable, that he has quoted or paraphrased the words of the Lord elsewhere without citing his source? In fact, the wording of 1 Thessalonians 5:2 seems to support this view, for Paul says, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." The phrase "for yourselves know perfectly that" indicates that what follows is taken from the common tradition of the Church and is not original to Paul.

Moreover, the patristic attribution of this saying to Jesus is supported by the Joseph Smith Translation, where the Prophet added the following words to the King James Version of Luke 12:44: "And now verily I say these things unto you, that ye may know this, that the coming of the Lord is as a thief in the night." Similarly, Paul's interpretation of Deuteronomy 25:4 (1 Cor. 9:9–11; 1 Tim. 5:18) is attributed in the Joseph Smith Translation to Jesus himself in an addition to the King James Version of Luke 12:33.¹⁶ Scholars have long insisted on a sharp distinction between the theology and the teachings of Jesus and those of Paul, but a reexamination of these and other "agrapha of transference" may indicate that the letters of the great Apostle to the Gentiles are influenced by the words and phrases of Jesus to an extent we never suspected.

How then, finally, are we to distinguish between "genuine" agrapha and "false" ones? Frankly, much of the time we cannot. All we can say for certain is that some of the agrapha are more plausible than others, or perhaps that some are less implausible, depending on one's point of view. However, those few agrapha that have impressed scholars as possibly genuine all share certain broad characteristics. First of all, the setting must be appropriate to the life of Jesus, that is, first-century Palestinian Judaism. Conversely, genuine agrapha will be free of the polemical agendas of later

times and other places, for example, of Gnosticism, Ebionism, Neoplatonism, adoptionism, Docetism, asceticism, etc. Also, those agrapha that can be shown to have been attributed to Jesus very early in the tradition of the Church, for example, the Gospel of Thomas and the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, must be given careful consideration. Finally, the greater the number of different or independent sources that attribute a saying to Jesus, the more likely it is to be genuine. The best example of an agraphon that fulfills these criteria is one found first in Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 150–213) and then, in one form or another, in thirty-six other places, though it is not always attributed to Jesus. The agraphon reads as follows: “But be ye proven money changers, rejecting some things but retaining what is good.”¹⁷ The agraphon refers to the money changer, whose livelihood depended on his ability to spot and reject the counterfeit. The setting is plausible, for the money changer was certainly a feature of Palestinian Jewish life. The attribution to Jesus comes fairly early, around A.D. 200, and the number of citations is overwhelming. Thus, this agraphon presents a strong case for authenticity.

Unfortunately, for a great number of the agrapha that have been preserved, there is simply not enough evidence to justify a firm conclusion one way or the other. For example, a saying quoted by Origen—“And Jesus also said, ‘For the sake of the weak I became weak, for the sake of the hungry I hungered, and for the sake of the thirsty I thirsted’”¹⁸—has a nice ring to it, and there certainly is no reason why Jesus could not have said it, but neither is there any really convincing evidence that he did. The following are other agrapha that might be included in this category:

1. From an addition to the text of Luke 22:28 in the famous Codex D: “Increase in my service as one who serves.”¹⁹
2. From the writings of Symeon of Mesopotamia: “As the Lord says, ‘The kingdom of God is plainly on the earth, and men don’t see it.’”²⁰
3. From the *Judicium Petri*: “For he said to us before, when he taught us, ‘What is weak will be saved by what is strong.’”²¹
4. From the *Epistle of Barnabas*: “‘And so,’ he says, ‘those who want to see me and take hold of my kingdom must receive me in afflictions and sufferings.’”²²

5. From Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1: "Jesus says: I stood (up) in the midst of the world, and in the flesh I appeared to them and found them all drunk, and none found I athirst among them, and my soul is troubled (or: feels pain) for the sons of men, because they are blind in their heart and do <not> see."²³

Any of these or several others like them may have been spoken by Jesus, but there is no way to prove or disprove such an attribution.

Nevertheless, a small number of the agrapha have recently received the rather tentative endorsement of some scholars.²⁴ Perhaps the most exciting of these is one that appears to be a fragment of an otherwise unknown gospel. It was found by those tireless searchers, Grenfell and Hunt, and is known as Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840:

First before he does wrong (?) he thinks out everything that is crafty. But be ye on your guard that the same thing may not happen to you as does to them. For not only among the living do evil doers among men receive retribution, but they must also suffer punishment and great torment.

And he took them [the disciples] with him into the place of purification itself and walked about in the Temple court. And a Pharisaic chief priest, Levi (?) by name, fell in with them and s<aid> to the Saviour: Who gave thee leave to <trea>d this place of purification and to look upon <the>se holy utensils without having bathed thyself and even without thy disciples having <wa>shed their f<eet>? On the contrary, being defi<led>, thou hast trodden the Temple court, this clean p<lace>, although no <one who> has <not> first bathed <himself> or <chang>ed his clot<hes> may tread it and <venture> to vi<ew> <these> holy utensils! Forthwith <the Saviour> s<tood> still with h<is> disciples and <answered>: How stands it (then) with thee, thou art forsooth (also) here in the Temple court. Art thou then clean? He said to him: I am clean. For I have bathed myself in the pool of David and have gone down by the one stair and come up by the other and have put on white and clean clothes, and (only) then have I come hither and have viewed these holy utensils. Then said the Saviour to him: Woe unto you blind that see not! Thou hast bathed thyself in water that is poured out, in which dogs and swine lie night and day and thou hast washed thyself and hast chafed thine outer skin, which prostitutes also and flute-girls anoint, bathe, chafe, and rouge, in order to arouse desire in men, but within they are full of scorpions and of <bad>ness <of every kind>. But I and <my disciples>, of whom thou sayest that we have not im<mersed> ourselves, <have been im>mersed in the liv<ing . . . > water which comes down from < . . . B>ut woe unto them that . . .²⁵

When this fragment was first discovered, scholars did not know as much about the Jerusalem Temple and its institutions and rituals as they do now. Consequently, the details of this fragment were thought to be absurd. However, scholars have since learned that the pool of David was part of the purification area and that the bathing, the washing of feet, and the changing into clean white clothing were part of the temple ritual. They have also learned that there were others besides the high priest who were called *archiereis*, including as is likely in this fragment, the *sagan*, or chief of the temple police, whose duties included enforcement of the proper ritual observances.²⁶ Because the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, composition of the unknown gospel from which this very knowledgeable fragment came should probably not be dated much after that time.

Other agrapha that have aroused the interest of at least some scholars include the following: In the writings of Clement of Alexandria, we read: “Ask for the great things, and the little things will be added unto you.”²⁷ Of course this statement may only be a variant of Matthew 6:33/Luke 12:31, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” However, the difference is great enough to justify consideration, especially since a variation of this saying is cited at least seven other times by three additional authors.²⁸ Justin Martyr cites this agraphon in his *Dialogue with Trypho*: “For also our Lord Jesus Christ has said, ‘In whatever circumstances I may catch you, in them also will I judge you.’”²⁹ The saying is also attributed to Jesus in Cyprian and in the Syriac *Book of Degrees*.³⁰ The message of the passage is clear—it’s never too late to change, for the better or for the worse. A lifetime of righteousness avails nothing if you are a sinner when the end comes; a lifetime of sin doesn’t matter if the end finds you converted. You will be judged as you are found.

In addition, in Codex D the story about the disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5) is followed by another short story not found in other manuscripts. It reads, “On the same day, when he saw a man working on the Sabbath, he said to him, ‘Man, blessed are you if you know what you are doing, but if you don’t know, you are cursed and a transgressor of the Law.’”³¹ Jeremias has argued persuasively that the setting for this story, the *Sitz-im-Leben*

and its agraphon, is early Palestinian, and he feels the story may be genuine.³² The message seems to be that if the individual is breaking the Sabbath for a higher cause, he is to be commended for distinguishing between the greater and the lesser. If, on the other hand, his breaking of the Sabbath has no such motivation, he stands condemned. Those who sacrifice the lesser law to live the greater are blessed, but those who live neither law are cursed.

Also, an expanded version of a canonical story that comes with an important agraphon is found in the Gospel of Nazaraeans. Here the story of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23) is told with an intriguing addition. After Jesus says to the young man, "Go and sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me," the Gospel of the Nazaraeans continues:

But the rich man began to scratch his head, and the saying pleased him not. And the Lord said to him, "Why do you say, 'I have kept the law and the prophets?' For it is written in the law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' and behold, many of your brothers, children of Abraham, are dressed in filthy rags and dying of hunger, and your house is full of many good things. Yet nothing at all goes out from it to them."³³

The Gospel of the Nazaraeans then adds the conclusion to the episode that is found in the New Testament Gospels—that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," etc. In the New Testament version of the story, the condemnation of the rich man stems primarily from his refusal to sell all, give it to the poor, and to then follow Jesus. In the apocryphal version, the force of the addition is to emphasize the dire needs of the poor.

Resch lists no fewer than nine citations for an agraphon found first in the writings of Tertullian, although only Tertullian cites it specifically as a saying of Jesus. And it reads, "No one who has not been tempted can inherit the kingdom of heaven." The saying is put into the context of Christ's suffering in Gethsemane and of his abandonment and denial by the apostles and by Peter.³⁴

In his commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, Jerome quotes an agraphon from the Gospel of the Hebrews. It reads, "And never,' he says, 'be joyful except when you look upon your brother in love.'"³⁵

Finally, in the Gospel of Thomas there are several intriguing agrapha, at least one of which, the parable of the great fish, could be mentioned here. The Coptic text, found in the Nag Hammadi codices, reads as follows:

And he said, "Man is like a wise fisherman, who cast his net into the sea and pulled it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a large and good fish. He threw back all the small fish into the sea and chose the large fish without hesitation. He that has ears to hear, let him hear."³⁶

As with several sayings from the Gospel of Thomas, here the setting is appropriate enough—a lone fisherman casting a hand net on the Sea of Galilee. There are no offensive theological intrusions from a later time; in fact, two parables from the canonical Gospels, the parable of the pearl of great price and the parable of the treasure hidden in a field, convey the same message—that the surpassing good fortune of finding the kingdom of God overshadows all other considerations. Also, the Gospel of Thomas is a very early source; some would even place it in the second half of the first century.³⁷

The final class of agrapha remaining to be discussed here are those which are of special interest to the Latter-day Saints. Some of these are also of interest to scholars; some are not. Perhaps we could begin with Jesus' one reference in the agrapha to "his mother in heaven." There are in fact many references to a mother in heaven in early Christian literature, particularly among the Nag Hammadi codices. Unfortunately, some of our more enthusiastic Latter-day Saints have tried to find in these some support for the LDS doctrine of Heavenly Mother. This is certainly a mistake, as a close examination of the passages will show, for in reality these passages refer to the Holy Spirit, a member of the Godhead who does not yet have an exalted body. In Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac the word for spirit, *ruach*, and its cognates are feminine. Consequently, Semitic-speaking Christians and Jews often thought of the Holy Spirit as female, and many Semitic-speaking early Christian groups thought of the godhead as Male-Female-Offspring, or Father-Mother-Son, as well as Father-Son-Holy Ghost. In the Coptic Gospel of Philip from Nag Hammadi, the feminine nature of the Holy Spirit was used as an argument against the belief that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit: "Some said, 'Mary conceived by

the Holy Spirit.' They are in error. They do not know what they are saying. When did a woman ever conceive by a woman?"³⁸ Similarly, the Apocryphon of John speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the mother of the living."³⁹ That the being referred to as the mother in these and other passages is really the Holy Spirit is made explicit in an agraphon from the Gospel of the Hebrews, as cited by Origen: "The Savior himself said, 'My mother the Holy Spirit just now took me by one of my hairs and carried me to the great Mount Tabor.'"⁴⁰ So while it may be true that there is a doctrine of a heavenly mother in the extant literature of early Christianity, it is probably not the LDS doctrine.

However, an LDS doctrine that is often on the lips of Jesus in the agrapha is the doctrine of the Great Apostasy. Two of these are found in the second-century writings of Justin Martyr. The first reports that Jesus warned his disciples that "in the time before his second coming there would be corruptions and false prophets in his name."⁴¹ The second reads, "For he said, 'Many will come in my name dressed outwardly in the skins of sheep, but inwardly they are plundering wolves, and there will be divisions and heresies.'"⁴² This saying is found in four other sources also attributed to Jesus and is considered by scholars to be possibly authentic. If it is genuine, the saying sheds new light on 1 Corinthians 11:18-19, where Paul says, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." A good case could be made that with these verses Paul is applying the formula of Jesus to the Corinthians; that is, when he heard that there were divisions among them, he knew from the dominical saying that heresies would soon follow. And again, if the agraphon is genuine, it argues for Paul's thorough knowledge of the traditional sayings of Jesus.

But the most striking agraphon dealing with the theme of apostasy is found in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas:

Jesus said, "The kingdom of the [father] is like a certain woman who was carrying a [jar] full of meal. While she was walking [on the] road, still some distance from home, the handle of the jar broke and the meal emptied out behind her [on] the road. She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident. When she reached her house, she set the jar down and found it empty."⁴³

Latter-day Saints would say that the true gospel, like the meal from the broken jar, was gradually lost before the great arrival of the Lord due to “divisions and heresies.”

Several of the *agrapha* make reference to the esoteric tradition, both in doctrine and in liturgy, of early Christian groups. Since the Latter-day Saints also have an esoteric tradition, perhaps we should briefly mention these *agrapha*. Clement of Alexandria writes, “The Lord has declared in a certain gospel, ‘My mysteries are for me and for the children of my house.’” Versions of this *agraphon* are found in at least three other authors.⁴⁴ The Coptic Gospel of Thomas quotes Jesus as saying, “I will tell my mysteries to those who are worthy of my mysteries. What thy right hand will do, let not thy left hand know what it does.”⁴⁵ Also from the Gospel of Thomas, saying 17, we read, “I will give you what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard and what hand has not touched and what has not arisen in the heart of man.” Yet another *agraphon* preserved in the Apostolic Fathers reads, “If you didn’t guard what is small, who will give you what is great?” Second Clement interprets this passage to mean “Keep the flesh holy and the token unspotted in order that we might receive eternal life.”⁴⁶ Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655 reads, “You are much better than the lilies that neither card (wool) nor spin. But since you have one garment, what, indeed, do you lack? Who of you can increase his stature? He shall give you each your garment!”⁴⁷

Finally, there are two *agrapha* that may imply the LDS doctrine of the premortal existence. The first of these is found in the writings of Ephraim the Syrian and reads, “Thus he spoke, ‘I chose you before the world was created.’”⁴⁸ Admittedly, this is pretty thin. The second comes from Islamic literature. In the ruined city of Fathpur-Sikri in North India, once the center of the Mogul empire, there is inscribed on an ancient mosque what appears to be a saying attributed to Jesus. It reads, “Jesus, on whom be peace, said, ‘The world is a bridge. Cross over it, but do not build your home there.’”⁴⁹ This saying is also attributed to Jesus in the writings of Al Ghazali, but Abu Talib al-Makki attributes it to the prophet Muhammad. Jeremias believes that some version of this *agraphon* lies behind the otherwise cryptic command of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas “Be passers-by,” that is, be those who pass over the bridge

from one world to the next.⁵⁰ What no one seems to have noticed so far is that if this saying is genuine it clearly implies the doctrine of premortal existence, since a bridge is a passageway connecting two points and does not start in thin air. If this saying is as old as the Gospel of Thomas, it would be very difficult indeed not to understand it in the context of a well-defined belief in the premortal existence of souls found in intertestamental Judaism⁵¹ and later in Gnosticism.⁵²

In conclusion, what is to be said for the noncanonical sayings of Jesus? What contribution is made to our understanding of Jesus of Nazareth and of his original teachings by the surprisingly numerous agrapha presented by Resch, Ropes, Jeremias, and others? The judgment of scholars on that question has been unanimous and is perhaps best represented by a modern proverb: We labored mightily and brought forth a mouse. In the words of Jeremias, "The extra-canonical literature, taken as a whole, manifests a surprising poverty. The bulk of it is legendary, and bears the clear mark of forgery. Only here and there, amid a mass of worthless rubbish, do we come across a priceless jewel."⁵³ Yet even the jewels are liable to be appraised differently by different scholars.

I have my favorites; there are some I think, or hope, to be genuine. But they are precious few when compared with the hundreds of agrapha one must sift through to find them. And even then, with those precious few, there is no way to be certain whether or not they come from Jesus. If some of the doctrines of Jesus have not been preserved in the canonical texts, they have not been preserved at all. Surely we shall not find them, as Resch had hoped, hidden away among the agrapha.

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NOTES

¹Sayings attributed to the risen Christ are generally not included among the agrapha.

²Alfred Resch, *Agrapha: Aussercanonische Evangelienfragmente*, Texte und Untersuchungen 5.4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1889). The second edition is entitled *Agrapha: Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente* (Agrapha: Extracanonical

scripture fragments), *Texte und Untersuchungen* 15.3/4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1906; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967) (hereafter cited as *Agrapha*²). Unless otherwise cited, translations in this article are by the author from documents contained in Resch.

³In the prologue to his gospel (Luke 1:1-3), Luke informs us that he was not an eyewitness to the events he records, but rather is dependent upon those who were.

⁴J. H. Ropes, *Die Sprüche Jesu, die in den kanonischen Evangelien nicht Überliefert sind: Eine Kritische Bearbeitung des von Alfred Resch gesammelten Materials* (The sayings of Jesus which were not included in the canonical Gospels: A critical revision of the material collected by Alfred Resch), *Texte und Untersuchungen* 14.2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896).

⁵See Joachim Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 2d ed., trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 5, especially n. 2. A variant, and in some ways opposite, approach to the search for the words of Jesus is that undertaken by the Jesus Seminar. Instead of searching the *agrapha* for genuine sayings, this group of scholars acted on the premise that some of Jesus' teachings in the four Gospels were inauthentic. They undertook to determine which, out of the 1,500 sayings attributed to Jesus in the canonical Gospels and the Gospel of Thomas, were spoken by Jesus "in a form close to the one preserved for us," which have "suffered modification in transmission," which may only reflect his ideas, and which are inauthentic. Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), ix-x. They decided that relatively few sayings found in these five Gospels are close to Jesus' words. One group of sayings they dismissed are those in which they detected "detailed knowledge of postmortem events" and which therefore must have been formulated "after the fact" (Funk and others, *The Five Gospels*, 25).

⁶Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds. and trans., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 61 vols. (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1898-1995), 1:1-3. This fragment is discussed in greater detail in Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds. and trans., *Logia Iesou: Sayings of Our Lord* (London: Henry Frowde, 1897), though many of their observations have since been proven incorrect with discovery of the Gospel of Thomas (see below).

⁷See Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, eds. and trans., *New Sayings of Jesus and Fragment of a Lost Gospel* (London: Henry Frowde, 1904). The most accessible translation of this material is that of Beate Blatz in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. and ed. (English ed.) R. McL. Wilson, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 1:117-18, 123.

⁸The Coptic text with English translation was made available first in A. Guillaumont and others, eds., *The Gospel according to Thomas* (Leiden: E. J. Brill; New York: Harper, 1959); and most recently in Marvin W. Meyer, ed. and trans., *The Gospel of Thomas: The Hidden Sayings of Jesus*, with an interpretation by Harold Bloom (San Francisco: Harper, 1992). A convenient translation is also found in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 3d ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 124-38.

⁹One must bear in mind, however, that attribution and authenticity are two separate issues.

¹⁰Variation on Luke 22:15 as cited by Epiphanius (*Panarion*, 30.22.4). See Resch, *Agrapha*², 232; and Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:170.

¹¹Namely, "The Book of Thomas the Contender," or "The Dialogue of the Savior," both available in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 199-207, 244-55.

¹²Cited by Jerome, *Against Pelagius*, 3.2. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 233-34.

¹³The frequently misattributed saying is, "That which we persist in doing becomes easier for us to do; not that the nature of the thing itself is changed, but that our power to do is increased." Heber J. Grant, *Gospel Standards*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1941), 355. This writer, in an earlier draft of this paper, was among those who have been fooled concerning the origin of this quote. The erroneous attribution of this saying provides an excellent example of how tricky transference can be.

¹⁴This saying is attributed to Jesus in an early Christian treatise called "Dialogus de recta in Deum fide" (Dialogue concerning proper faith in God), which was ascribed to Origen but was actually written by an opponent with the pseudonym Adamantius. See the references in Resch, *Agrapha*², 136.

¹⁵Cited once by Didymus the Blind (*On the Trinity*, 3.22) and twice by Epiphanius (*Panarion* 69.44.1 and *Ancoratus*, 21); see Resch, *Agrapha*², 146.

¹⁶I am indebted for these two observations to the acknowledged authority on the JST, Robert J. Matthews. See his "A Plainer Translation": *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 241-47.

¹⁷Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.28.177. Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, and see Resch, *Agrapha*², 112-16, for additional references.

¹⁸Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 13.2. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 132-33.

¹⁹Codex D, otherwise known as Codex Bezae, is the chief representative of the Western text of the New Testament. For the agraphon cited and the Greek text of Luke in Codex D, see H.-W. Bartsch, *Codex Bezae versus Codex Sinaiticus im Lukasevangelium* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984), 186.

²⁰See Hermann Dörries, *Symeon von Mesopotamien: Die Überlieferung der messalianischen "Makarios" Schriften*, *Texte und Untersuchungen* 55.1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1941), 224.

²¹Resch, *Agrapha*², 104.

²²Barnabas 7:11. Also cited in Prochorus' *Acta Joannis*; see Resch, *Agrapha*², 89-90.

²³Translated by Blatz in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:121. This agraphon is the Greek equivalent of Logion 28 in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas.

²⁴Jeremias, in the best treatment of the agrapha material in this century, lists twenty possibly authentic sayings in *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*.

²⁵Translated by R. Mcl. Wilson in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:94-95.

²⁶See the discussion in Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 47-60.

²⁷Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 1.24.158.

²⁸That is, Origen, Eusebius, and Ambrose; see Resch, *Agrapha*², 111-12; and the discussion in Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 98-100.

²⁹Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 47. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 102.

³⁰Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 83–88.

³¹See Resch, *Agrapha*², 45–48.

³²Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 61–65.

³³Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 15.14. See also Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:161.

³⁴Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 20. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 130–32.

³⁵Jerome, *On Ephesians*, 5.3,4. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 236.

³⁶Gospel of Thomas, Logion 8. See also Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 127.

³⁷See Helmut Koester, in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 125.

³⁸“The Gospel of Phillip,” in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 143 (55.23–26), and 152 (70.22–26), where it says the spirit given to Adam is his mother: “The soul of Adam came into being by means of a breath. The partner of his soul is the spirit. His mother is the thing that was given to him. His soul was taken from him and replaced by the spirit.”

³⁹See “The Apocryphon of John,” *Nag Hammadi Library*, 110 (10.17–18).

⁴⁰Origen cites this twice, in *Commentary on John*, 2.6 and in *Homily on Jeremiah*, 15.4. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 216.

⁴¹Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 51. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 172–74.

⁴²Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 35. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 100–101. Compare Matthew 7:15 and 25:4; and see the discussion in Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 76–77.

⁴³Gospel of Thomas, Logion 97, as cited in Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 136.

⁴⁴Clement, *Stromata*, 5.10.64. See Resch, *Agrapha*², 108–9.

⁴⁵Gospel of Thomas, Logion 62. See also Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 133.

⁴⁶2 Clement 8:6.

⁴⁷These lines do not appear in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas (they would appear in Logion 36), and they are rather fragmentary in the Greek. My translation follows the reconstruction of Robert A. Kraft, “Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 655 Reconsidered,” *Harvard Theological Review* (1961): 254, though the difficulty of reconstructing these lines is admitted (see Kraft, “Oxyrhynchus,” 258–59). Blatz in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:123, would translate the above as, “Much better are you than the lilies which card not neither do they spin. And have no garment also,” apparently following the suggested reconstruction of Theodor Zahn, “Neue Funde aus der alten Kirche,” *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 16 (1905): 97 n. 1.

⁴⁸See Resch, *Agrapha*², 145–46; compare Ephesians 1:4.

⁴⁹See H. G. C. Moule, “An Agraphon,” *Expository Times* (1899–1900): 507.

⁵⁰Coptic Gospel of Thomas, Logion 42. See the discussion in Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 111–18.

⁵¹See the discussion of the Prayer of Joseph by J. L. Smith in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:703–4. “The term ‘created before’ (lit. ‘pre-created’) occurs only here and in late Christian texts. The notion that wisdom, Torah, or the nation Israel were pre-existent is quite widespread in Jewish materials. Less common is the claim that the patriarchs or Moses were pre-existent” (Charlesworth, *The Old*

Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2:713). Also see the discussion of the Prayer of Joseph in Wilfred L. Knox, *Some Hellenistic Elements in Primitive Christianity* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1944), 49. For discussions of belief in premortal existence in the Dead Sea scrolls, see Dana M. Pike, "Is the Plan of Salvation Attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, forthcoming [1997]); and A. Lange, "Wisdom and Predestination in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Dead Sea Scrolls Discoveries* 2, no. 3 (1995): 340-54.

⁵²For a document that has Gnostic or early Christian elements and implies a belief in premortal existence, see John W. Welch and James V. Garrison, "The 'Hymn of the Pearl': An Ancient Counterpart to 'O My Father,'" *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996-97): 127-38.

⁵³Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 120.

Beverly Custard

Her hand, egg-shell brown-smooth
clean crushing eggs,
counter-click of half shells

yolks filling with white and air,
wire whisk caging them in and out,
speckling sun-specks on her wrist

tap water foaming powder
to milk, wide line
diving splashless from the pitcher

sugar and spice between granules
and vanilla splash,
old bruise fading on the surface

of sugar egg milk—stirred, strained,
tapped with nutmeg, starfield of spice
set to baking

water coming sweet warm with custard scoops
the texture of abdomen skin
after six children

—Casualene R. Meyers

Rendering the Ineffable Effable: Treating Joseph Smith's First Vision in Imaginative Literature

The historical and imaginative renderings of the First Vision suggest individual patterns for seeking divine direction and drawing believers closer to the ultimate goal of knowing God.

Richard H. Cracroft

Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . . When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*¹

This attempt by Joseph Smith Jr. to render effable the sublime and ineffable, to contain in words the appearance of the Father and the Son to him on that long-ago spring morning in 1820, has become not only the foundational document and “fountainhead” of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ,² but also a touchstone of faith and orthodoxy for the Latter-day Saints.³ James B. Allen asserts that for faithful members “belief in the vision . . . is second only to belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth.”⁴

The First Vision is the mucilage of Mormonism, especially as Joseph related the experience in his 1838 dictation. This telling of the First Vision would become part of the *History of the Church* and, as canonized in 1880 and included in the Pearl of Great Price, the unifying dynamic common to every Latter-day Saint. All of Joseph Smith's subsequent revelations, as well as those of his successors in the First Presidency, reverberate with that first vision and its complex of significances.

Joseph Smith's account, evolving as it did over time and through numerous tellings, is a powerful literary *tour de force* that centers Joseph's "charismatic authority"⁵ and authenticates and presents compelling evidence for his divine call to prophethood. It also reifies what Harold Bloom has called Joseph Smith's "authentic religious genius" and his "uncanny" religion-making sensibilities as "the most gifted . . . of all American prophets."⁶

As the body of Saints would gradually come to understand, the First Vision also reestablishes the doctrine of an anthropomorphic God and theomorphic humankind. The Vision clarifies the being and relationship among the personages of the Godhead and elucidates the pattern of relationship between the Godhead and human beings through continuing revelation—revelation that comes not only from God to his prophets, but also from God to individual men and women, thereby promoting in every believer the faith-vitalizing expectation of his or her own Sacred Grove experience.

The First Vision is integral to the story of the Latter-day Saints and to their very existence as a people. Repeated and heartfelt recitations of the event, together with testimonies sought, gained, and uttered regarding its divinity, have, over time, transformed the First Vision into the kind of "profound" story that presents—posits cultural commentator Neil Postman—an "organizing framework" and direction for a people and enables them to "make sense out of the world" by providing "a . . . theory about how the world works."⁷

In the century and a half since Joseph Smith was martyred, only twenty-four years after his first vision, several generations of poets, dramatists, and writers of fiction have attempted, with varying success, to come to grips with the Vision literarily. These writers have returned each new generation to the Sacred Grove to recount, redact, review, and rerender Joseph's experience in ways appropriate to changing times and literary purposes.

As the following survey of LDS poetry, drama, and fiction about the First Vision demonstrates, the Vision continues to reverberate among the Latter-day Saints. It serves not only as a foundational document and doctrinal exegesis, but, increasingly, also as a springboard to personal and universal revelation commensurate to the spiritual needs of those generations of Saints "which knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8). The lives of those Saints continue to be affected

by his adventures with Deity and by the implications of Joseph's vision for every faithful Latter-day Saint.

I

In *Religion in America*, his intriguing study of Joseph Smith and Mormonism, Harold Bloom prophesies that "a major American poet . . . some time in the future will write [the Mormon story] as the epic it was." In fact, he asserts, "nothing else in all of American history strikes me as *materia poetica* equal to the early Mormons, to Joseph Smith," and to his followers,⁸ and he calls for "strong poets, major novelists, [and] accomplished dramatists [probably Gentiles] to tell [Joseph's] history."⁹

William Mulder long ago anticipated Bloom's call for a Mormon epic with some hardheaded reality about the challenge of rendering the ineffable effable, about transforming into other forms of literature the powerful stuff of Mormonism and the matter of the First Vision. Mulder wrote, paraphrasing writer-critic Bernard DeVoto, "God, the best storyteller, made a better story out of Joseph and the Mormon wandering than fiction will ever equal."¹⁰ In fact, so strong is the personality of Joseph Smith and so authoritative and definitive is his rendering of the Sacred Grove experience, that subsequent attempts at retelling the First Vision usually pale and shrink before the power of the original and cause one to ask why anyone would venture to retell, refurbish, or rerender the event.

The challenge is formidable: To capture, in the right words and tone without diminishing or sentimentalizing, trivializing or hyperbolizing, that awe and grandeur that approximate the supernatural experience itself; to render effable the spiritual ineffable; to transform a timeless, vertical event that has become sacralized and mythologized and thus heroic into an accessible and credible horizontal literature. All of this signals an ambitious undertaking that is unlikely to be realized by mere mortals.

Joseph Smith himself refined his written account of the First Vision through his 1832, 1835, 1838, 1842, 1843, and 1844 recountings of the event,¹¹ though he never attempted to render his Sacred Grove experience in any other literary form. However, he may have attempted—probably with the assistance of W. W. Phelps,

if Phelps was not, as I suspect, the actual author—to render in ballad stanzas his 1832 vision of the Lord that is now published as Doctrine and Covenants 76. The ballad is entitled “The Vision”:

I, Joseph, the prophet, in spirit beheld,
 And the eyes of the inner man truly did see
 Eternity sketch'd in a vision from God,
 Of what was, and now is, and yet is to be.

 And the glory of God shone around where I was;
 And there was the Son at the Father's right hand,
 In a fulness of glory and holy applause.¹²

It becomes painfully evident that the strained verse does not rise to the grandeur of its subject. The poem also demonstrates that the poet, anticipating the problem to be faced by future generations of Latter-day Saint (or gentile) writers, is himself subject to historical tyranny—that is, he cannot free himself, even for imaginative, artistic purposes, from the assertive facts of “how it really was.” If the ballad was indeed written by Joseph, his intent in recasting in verse his vision of the three degrees of glory was doubtless the same as most future writers’ intentions in recasting and retelling the First Vision—to teach the uninformed, to remind the believer, to inspire, and to testify. And further, the writer attempts to achieve all of that without irreverencing or disrespecting the original sacred account, without sounding a dissonant note in the minds of faithful Latter-day Saints who resist others’ attempts to alter and thus profane the truths that Joseph saw and recorded.

II

Latter-day Saint writers ventured, at first slowly, then increasingly, to transform Joseph’s first vision into other forms of literature. Joseph Smith’s account of the Vision and George Manwaring’s hymn “Joseph Smith’s First Prayer,” first published in 1878, long imposed a virtual monopoly on the subject. Manwaring’s hymn remains the standard poetic alternative to Joseph’s own prose account of the First Vision. The hymn, inspired in part by one of C. C. A. Christensen’s paintings, “The First Vision,”¹³ has become for many the initial and enduring entry into the Vision. The lyrics set for all time, in beloved narrative verse, the received standard tone

in dealing with the event, a tone reminiscent of W. W. Phelps's laudatory "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" whom "kings shall extol . . . and nations revere."¹⁴ "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," apparently heavily revised by the editors of *The Juvenile Instructor* in which it first appeared,¹⁵ continues to illuminate the Sacred Grove:

Oh how lovely was the morning!
Radiant beamed the sun above.
Bees were humming, sweet birds singing,
Music ringing thru the grove.
When within the shady woodland
Joseph sought the God of love.

Humbly kneeling, sweet appealing—
'Twas the boy's first uttered prayer—
When the pow'rs of sin assailing
Filled his soul with deep despair;
But undaunted, still he trusted
In his Heavenly Father's care.

Suddenly a light descended,
Brighter far than noon-day sun,
And a shining glorious pillar
O'er him fell, around him shone,
While appeared two heav'nly beings,
God the Father and the Son.

"Joseph, this is my Beloved; Hear him!"
Oh, how sweet the word!
Joseph's humble prayer was answered,
And he listened to the Lord.
Oh, what rapture filled his bosom,
For he saw the living God.¹⁶

Because of the primacy of Joseph's own account and the popularity of Manwaring's hymnal rendering, the First Vision, which was reprinted as the long-standing missionary tract *Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story*, remained virtually undisturbed by LDS or gentile authors until well into the twentieth century.

Joseph Smith Jr. himself was often *materia poetica* during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and figured in such various poems as Hannah Topfield King's "An Epic Poem," Louisa L. Greene Richards's "The Three Josephs," and Orson F. Whitney's ambitious but turgid *Elias: An Epic of the Ages*.¹⁷ But not until

Alfred Osmond's epic-length poem, *The Exiles* (1926), do we discover the first of three poetic, decidedly orthodox, and very respectable treatments of the First Vision. Osmond, then professor of English and department chair at Brigham Young University, couched his rendition of the Vision in the oracular jogging rhythms and stanzas of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's popular "Song of Hiawatha," enabling the poem to move towards its inevitable climax with cadenced certitude and power:

Kneeling down to ask the Father
 For the wisdom that he needed,
 He was forced into a conflict,
 With an agency of evil
 That was seeking to destroy him.

 Just how long the struggle lasted
 He perhaps could never answer;
 But when on the verge of falling
 In the hands of his opponent,
 He beheld a light descending
 Brighter than the sun at noonday.
 When it circled round about him,
 He beheld two persons standing
 In the brilliant light above him.
 God the Father, introducing
 His Beloved, the Redeemer,
 Told the boy that he should listen
 To the teachings of the Savior.
 Simple, frank, yet firm and fearless
 Is the strange, supernal story
 Of the boy who sought for wisdom
 In the grove where he encountered
 All the potency of evil;
 And when he was weak and helpless,
 Saw the brilliant light descending,
 Saw the glorified Redeemer,
 Saw the presence of the Godhead,
 And was told he had a mission
 To perform among the people.¹⁸

In 1979, a half-century after Osmond's now-forgotten poetic saga, R. Paul Cracroft published his important, but also virtually ignored, book-length epic, *A Certain Testimony*.¹⁹ In his powerful redaction of the Book of Mormon and its relationship to the Restoration, Cracroft introduces, in Miltonic blank verse, Joseph Smith's role in the book's history through Cracroft's own rendering of the

First Vision. Cracroft's skillful orthodox poetic treatment of the First Vision varies little from Joseph's account, although his Joseph recounts the Vision to his parents, whom Richard Bushman claims were apparently left for some time in the dark regarding specific details of the Vision.²⁰ Blending Miltonic cadences and modern diction, Cracroft's Joseph tells his family:

But at my terror's height
 I saw a shaft of light above my head.
 . . . Inside that light I saw
 Two men I can't describe except to say
 They looked like angels ought to look. One spoke—
 He even knew my name!—and said of Him
 Who stood beside Him in the pillared light,
 "Beloved is my first begotten Son
 Who rules the Heavens with me. Hear ye Him!"

 The vision broke as fast as it had come,
 I found myself supine, the leaves a-dance
 Where stood the shaft of light, the grove at peace—
 As I had found it when I came. I tell
 You this in testimony of the truth
 I've learned: that if God's Church can yet be found
 On earth, *my* hand will help to raise it up.²¹

The third noteworthy twentieth-century poetic treatment of the First Vision is found in four short poems by Elder S. Dilworth Young in "The Vision" section of his book-length sequence of poems *The Long Road: From Vermont to Nauvoo*.²² In "Questions (Winter 1819-20)," young Joseph Smith asks a number of rhetorical questions ranging from "How does one know when destiny / Begins a new course?" to

Of all the churches which is truly
 That of God?
 How does one know which pastor
 Has the truth?²³

In "The Place," the second poem in "The Vision," Young follows the boy to the woods the lad knows best, to places that "heal and comfort / And make whole." And in "The Vision," he continues,

There, on that spring day
 He found a place
 No eye could see
 And, falling on his knees,
 Began to ask of God
 The truth.

Courtesy LDS Church Archives.



S. Dilworth Young

Following Joseph's confrontation with Evil, Young announces the Vision with one terse line: "God Spake!" Then, alternating between clipped, terse lines and lyrically soaring lines, he relates:

Two Beings stood in air
Above his head.
Transcendent glory from Them shone
Their brilliance brighter than the sun.²⁴

One spoke:
This is my Beloved Son,
Hear him!
Like some vast organ swell
His voice ran pure and free

Echoing through the forest,
Filling the vast reaches of eternity.
Gone now was fear,
Terror was no more.
The boy spoke as a boy,
A simple question asked:
Which church is right?
Swift was the reply:
In my sight all have
Gone astray;
None are right.²⁵

The fourth poem in the group, the best of the sequence, follows Joseph "Out of the Forest." The youth leaves

These forest woods,
Made sacred by this visit,
This revelation of the great eternal God
And his exalted Son.

And so the illuminated young man threads "His lonely way / Toward his destiny." Young notes with unadorned power, "In such a simple way / Eternal work begins."²⁶

III

In imaginative fiction as well, Joseph Smith's 1838 account of the First Vision casts a long if infrequent shadow. In Lily Dougall's *The Mormon Prophet* (1899), a little-known, but surprisingly well-written, novel, Joseph Smith is a central and complex character

endowed with seductive psychological and hypnotic powers.²⁷ Joseph appears in other works of fiction—fleetingly in Judith Freeman’s *The Chinchilla Farm*;²⁸ heroically and tenderly in Dean Hughes’s historical novel for young readers, *Under the Same Stars*;²⁹ briefly but movingly in Sharon Downing Jarvis’s *The Kaleidoscope Season*;³⁰ tangentially but meaningfully in Virginia Sorensen’s story of Nauvoo, *A Little Lower Than the Angels*;³¹ importantly in Paul Bailey’s *For This My Glory*;³² and pivotally in Ruth Louise Partridge’s impressive, but virtually unknown, historical novel, *Other Drums*. In this book, Joseph alludes to the First Vision while confessing to Nancy Rigdon that he had plunged into wild currents: “I opened the sluices myself in a wood when I asked wisdom of God as my Bible advised me.” He adds, sagely, “Never pray to God for enlightenment, Sister Nancy, unless you are prepared to take the consequences.”³³

Most writers of modern fiction who venture to employ the First Vision in their stories do so in order to ground their tales in Mormon substrata and thereby create a historic and spiritual foundation that helps explain their characters. In such fiction, the First Vision becomes, as in Mormonism, a touchstone for the characters’ faith in Joseph Smith and the Restoration. Typical of such application is an episode in Maurine Whipple’s novel, *The Giant Joshua*, in which Apostle Erastus Snow introduces the First Vision into his ritual catechizing of St. George Saints. The Saints’ “Sunday evening sing-and-story tell” begins with Snow’s query, “All those here . . . hold up their hands . . . who saw and knew . . . the Prophet Joseph!” After Sister Eardley’s testimony that “the Prophet Joseph . . . warn’t like no ordinary man. There allus seemed to be a light somewheres inside of him—like a candle behind his eyes,” Snow asks, “How old was Joseph when he had his first vision?”

A man’s reply this time: “He was fifteen, and it was 1820, the year of the great religious revival, and he read in the first chapter of James, . . .”

“Where was this?” . . .

“Manchester, New York—Joseph retired to the sacred grove and kneeled down . . .”

The old, old story, but Clory was suddenly feeling the “thick darkness that gathered around,” and hearing the voice from out the blinding light: “This is my beloved Son. Hear Him.”³⁴

Courtesy Eugene England



Maureen Whipple

As with the poetic treatments, most of the fictional renderings of the First Vision are made for didactic and inspirational purposes, for proclaiming and establishing the truth of the Restoration as embodied and illustrated in the Vision. With such didactic intent, two contemporary LDS writers of fiction, Cecilia Jensen and Gerald N. Lund, have woven Joseph Smith's 1838 account almost literally and seamlessly into their fiction. Cecilia Jensen, in her carefully researched and well-written novel, *Joseph in Palmyra*, published privately as the first of a trilogy on the Prophet Joseph (all written, amazingly, in her late eighties), utilizes Joseph's recountings exactly but enriches her account with a plethora of historical, anthropological, and imagined detail gleaned from recent scholarship and her own creative vision. In this sampling of Jensen's Joseph Smith, Joseph tells his family about his vision on the evening following the event:

"Father . . ." Joseph looked from one to the other parent. "Mother . . . This morning I saw the Father and the Son. The living God and his Son, Jesus Christ. They appeared to me." From the utter silence he gathered that no one comprehended what he was telling them. Perhaps it would be better to start at the beginning.

Joseph then recounts in considerable detail his spiritual struggles, his attendance at Dr. Lane's revival meeting, his determination to pray for wisdom, his visit to the grove, and the ensuing events. He continues his narration:

"At that moment," he continued softly, "I saw a light above me: a pillar of light exactly over my head, brighter than the sun. At that moment I found myself released from that awful power."

No one spoke. In the intense silence, he went on. "As the light drew nearer, the brightness increased. And when it reached the treetops the whole area came alive with light. I expected the leaves and boughs to just burn up. But when this did not happen, I thought I would be all right. Descending slowly, the light rested on me."

He paused, wishing he had words to describe the experience. Then he continued. “It produced a peculiar sensation throughout my whole body. Immediately my mind was caught away from the natural objects about me. I was caught up in a heavenly vision and saw two glorious personages, who looked exactly like each other.”

. . . “One called my name, and then pointed to the other, and said, ‘This is my beloved Son. Hear him.’” . . .

. . . In the shadowy candlelight, Joseph saw the awe in their faces.³⁵

Using a technique similar to Cecilia Jensen’s, Gerald N. Lund, in *Pillar of Light*, volume one in his widely read landmark saga of the Restoration, *The Work and the Glory*, has Joseph recount the First Vision in words lifted from Joseph’s 1838 account but including some details taken from earlier accounts. This technique troubles Eugene England in his *This People* review of the book but immediately placates the majority of readers, who would be as unlikely to tolerate another rendering of Joseph’s



Courtesy Eugene England

Gerald N. Lund

vision as Southern Baptists would be to suffer linguistic liberties with the New Testament words of Jesus Christ.

In *Pillar of Light*, Lund’s Joseph Smith tells the story of his first vision to Nathan Steed. The conversation characterizes Joseph, but more importantly for Lund’s prefaced purpose for the saga, it characterizes young Nathan Steed and, later, each member of the Steed family through their varied responses to Joseph’s theophany. Lund’s purpose is to lead readers to confront the question How would I have responded to Joseph Smith, if I were there and if he had told me he had seen a vision?

Lund, with more skill than anyone to date and without doing violence to the reader’s respect for the Prophet Joseph, brings the revered, historical Joseph into conversation with a fictitious and believable Nathan Steed, who vicariously serves in the reader’s stead (thus *Steed?*), and melds canonical text with imagined conversation and Nathan’s imagined responses to quicken a familiar text with personalized meaning.

Joseph begins his account by telling young Steed, "I'll not ask you to believe what I'm about to tell you, Nathan." He describes the camp-meeting fervor in their neighborhood in 1820, his reading of James 1, and his determination to ask God which church he should join:

"And?" Nathan pressed.

"By now it was early in the spring of 1820. . . . It was a beautiful clear morning. I went into the woods, and making sure I was alone, I immediately knelt down to pray."

. . . "To my amazement, I found I couldn't utter a word. It was as though my tongue was swollen in my head."

Nathan blinked. This was not what he had expected to hear.

"Suddenly I thought I heard footsteps behind me, someone walking towards me in the dry leaves. I was startled. I whipped around." Now at last he looked up, directly into Nathan's eyes. "No one was there."

Nathan felt a sudden chill run up and down his spine.

After describing the onslaught of the powers of darkness, Joseph continues, "At the very moment of my deepest despair, as I was about to abandon myself to destruction, at that precise moment, I saw a pillar of light."

Nathan's head snapped up.

Joseph went on steadily now, speaking slowly but with great earnestness. "It was exactly over my head. It was far brighter than the sun at noonday. The light was so intense I thought the very leaves would burst into flame. It descended gradually until it fell upon me. Instantly, the moment the light touched me, I was delivered from the enemy which held me bound."

"When the light rested upon me, I saw two personages—" He stopped, noting the expression on Nathan's face. "I saw two personages," he continued firmly, "whose glory and brightness defy all description. They were standing above me in the air."

Now it was Nathan who involuntarily passed a hand across his eyes. A pillar of light? Two personages?

"The one spoke," Joseph continued, softly now, and more slowly, as though giving Nathan time to digest the words. "He called me by name. 'Joseph,' he said, 'this is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!'"

He stopped, watching Nathan closely.

Nathan's mind was reeling. "Are you saying . . ." He faltered, overwhelmed. "You mean you saw . . ." He could not bring himself to say it.

Joseph nodded with the utmost solemnity. "I saw God and I saw his Son, Jesus Christ." He sighed, suddenly weary. "I know how that must sound to you. But I say again, Nathan, and I say it with all the power of my soul: I saw the Father and I saw his Son." . . .

Nathan leaned back, totally astonished. He could only nod.

Lund then turns Joseph into the teacher, varying from the historic account to lead Nathan through what have become the received standard LDS lessons to be learned from the Vision:

"What did *God* look like?" Nathan's voice was barely a whisper. "I mean, was he a—" He stopped, groping for an adequate word.

"A person?"

"Yes."

"Yes, Nathan. Most assuredly yes, though a personage of glory and majesty beyond belief. But yes, Nathan, God is a person. When he said he created man in his own image, I know now what he meant. He looks like us—" He shook it off. "No, *we look like him!* He is a person. He is our Father." . . .

He stopped. In the distance a meadowlark was calling out its last evening song. The breeze was picking up now, making a soft rustling noise as it danced across the meadow. The stream gurgled cheerfully as it ran past them. But Nathan was aware of none of this. His mind was a wild tumble of thoughts and emotions.³⁶

In *Pillar of Light* and the six succeeding volumes to date, Lund has done a credible job of freeing himself from the chains of historical tyranny at least enough to render the First Vision believable and profoundly moving for another *fin de siècle* generation. Lund's unobtrusively imaginative yet orthodox revisiting of the Sacred Grove revitalizes the Prophet Joseph as an attractive heroic figure who is also believable and inspiring—and blessedly unhampered and undiverted by the anachronistic chains of modern psychology.

IV

In recent years, the First Vision and the revelatory mode so important to the dynamics of Mormonism have begun to suggest

to writers fresh applications of the Vision in the lives of the Latter-day Saints. For example, although former Mormon Vardis Fisher, in his prize-winning, but unsympathetically skewed, *Children of God* (1939),³⁷ follows Joseph's narrative sequence in recounting the First Vision, his essentially poetical handling of the Vision suggests the possibility of additional uses of and meanings in the experience. Fisher introduces readers to a Joseph who is "moved to deep astonishment" at the overwhelming religious fervor that suddenly finds him praying with "strange deep passion"

kneeling here in leaf-depth, and speaking in impassioned wonder to a great blue pasture with its solitary golden sun. After a little, he knew there were tears in his eyes and tears wet and running on his cheeks as the whole world listened to the anxious humble asking of his voice.³⁸

Then the struggle: "There was soft and unreal music in his ears as light and darkness fought to possess his mind. . . . And then very softly his eyelids closed upon the awful terror in his eyes." Then the vision bursts upon him:

He saw first an intimation of brightness far out in the universe; it grew like the softness of morning, like a gentle flowering out of utter darkness, as if heaven were overflowing the wastelands of night as brilliance spilled from God's robe as He walked. For a long moment the light spread and gathered strength and then suddenly fell downward in a broad beam of terrible splendor, in a great and blinding pillar that touched the earth and lay far out in a white column of eternity. Then, with startling swiftness, two persons appeared in this stupendous shaft of light, the Father and the Son; and they were exactly alike in countenance and in the incandescence of their glory. They walked down the beam as down a highway of light; and one called the prostrate lad by name and pointed to his companion and said, "This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!" The Son spoke. He declared in the voice of a great organ that all the creeds of earth were an abomination in His sight. . . . The voice died away in echoes that rolled in solemn music, and the highway of light slowly faded, with Father and Son standing as vanishing silhouettes against the infinite. The light closed like a shutter to a thin wraith of holiness and slowly withdrew to the lone glittering point of a star.³⁹

Vardis Fisher's poetic and engaging liberties with the First Vision prefigure the tendency, quickened in recent years, to push the historical boundaries and the received meanings of the Vision in order to probe the Sacred Grove experience for yet deeper

symbolic and mythic meanings. Most importantly for the Latter-day Saint, however, is the democratizing and universalizing of the experience, the likening “of the scriptures unto us,” as Nephi counsels, “for our profit and learning” (1 Ne. 19:23). Latter-day Saints trace in the Vision the pattern of God’s relationship with his individual children at work in human lives, entering via the Vision into one’s own Sacred Grove, and treading in Joseph’s footsteps toward gaining that “testimony of Jesus, which is,” says John the Revelator, “the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

For example, in “Times of Refreshing: 1820,” poetry enables Allie Howe to approach the Vision from a different angle to portray nature in poetic harmony with the Vision as harbinger of the Restoration:

A wisp of the new morning
Washes across his face
And turns him
To wooded temples. . . .

Where, she continues,

Ancient in days, the awakening mother
Lifts
Against his supplicant knees;
And a breath above,
Reigning all the space around,
The Holiest of Holies
Unveil

And Joseph sups from Their Presence.⁴⁰

Robert P. Tristram Coffin, who published his poem “The Mormons” in 1939, was in the vanguard of those who treat the First Vision as an entry to other meanings. In the “Mormonism is over” impulse of literature of the 1930s made popular by the so-called Lost Generation of expatriate Mormon writers, gentile Coffin embodies the Vision as the invigorating force of Mormonism, a force continued in Brigham Young but dissipating as the Latter-day Saints settle into the staid and visionless period of accommodation:

Joseph Smith, when he was young,
Saw a golden censer swung,

In the sunset saw two wings
Full of eyes and shining things.

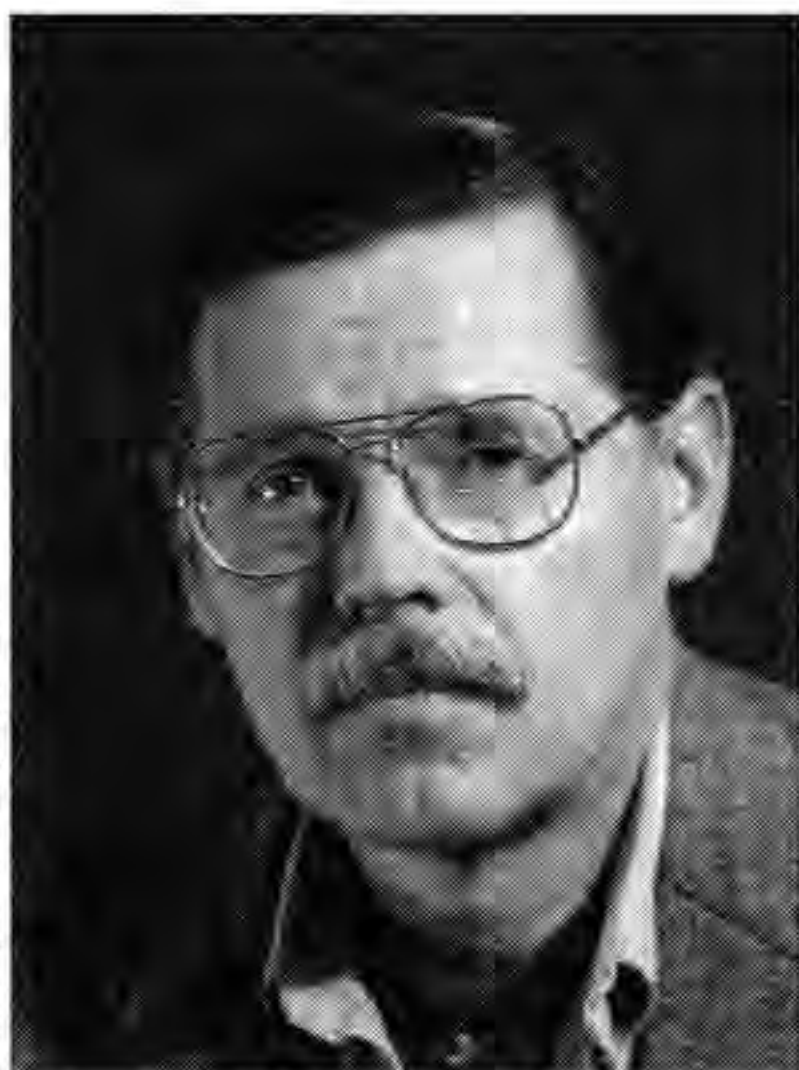
Among the pumpkins in a field
 He found a great book, seven-sealed.
 Treading furrows Joseph trod
 Walked a twilit, comely god. . . .

But the vision fades and

. . . the new age caught them up,
 Stilled the psaltery, drained the cup.
 Mormon's wings grew heavy lead,
 And he sank his graying head . . .
 All the million eyes grew dim
 With the age that crept on him.
 Gone the tents and wives and pride,
 And the youngest god had died.⁴¹

Latter-day Saint poets, reflecting the post-World War II reinvigoration and spread of Mormonism, have also begun in recent years to infuse their poems with the visionary spirit, to probe for broader implications of Joseph's experience in individual lives. In his ballad "The Light Come Down," Bruce Wayne Jorgensen extends the borders of the First Vision by shrinking the canvas and narrowing the focus. In this deceptively simple and multilayered ballad, Jorgensen undertakes to retell the Vision in a folk song:

Just a dusty country boy
 Praying in the trees,
 Knocked out flat and speechless,
 Again upon on his knees
 And the light come down,
 Lord, the light come down.
 Sharper than suns he sweated in,
 It slapped that April mud,
 It withered the one that threatened him
 And stunned him where he stood.
 Yes, the light come down,
 Lord, it did come down.
 And he was just fourteen,
 Mixed up, and read your book
 And took you at your word
 and asked—and Lord,
 You let the light come down,
 O Lord, a comin down.



Courtesy Bruce W. Jorgensen

Bruce Wayne Jorgensen

Then, placing Joseph and his vision in the larger context of God's dealings with his mortal children, Jorgensen continues:

Old Adam had a farmer's son
 And Abraham did too—
 All made of mud but you made em good
 And brought em home to you,
 For the light come down,
 It always did come down.

Jorgensen then urges the Lord to

... look down on country boys
 That stink and puzzle and pray,
 And strike the light to blind their sight
 And make their night your day.

Finally, integrating the First Vision with all of God's children who seek light, Jorgensen concludes,

And bless you, Lord, for country boys,
 Each hungry mother's son
 Treading the furrow his father plowed
 Just like your single son
 When you and him come down,
 When you the light come down.⁴²

Perhaps the most imaginative and complex poetic rendering of the First Vision is found in Emma Lou Thayne's three-part pantoum (a complex poetic form), "Meditations on the Heaven," where she transforms the advent of Halley's Comet into Joseph's Vision and into the painting depicting the Vision that hung in the Emigration Ward chapel of her youth:

Angel wings are on the beach
 I found one shining in the sand
 One late night looking for the comet
 We'd been told would be near Pleiades

Thayne transforms the "ancient icon [of angel wings] like the comet's head" into a "celestial body grounded for our view," which becomes, in turn, an icon representing the light of Joseph Smith's first vision, the images unfolding in the repeated lines characteristic of the pantoum:

Suppose he really saw the vision, God, the angel
 My church owns the story: Joseph in the grove, fourteen

Courtesy Eugene England



Emma Lou Thayne

A supernatural sight of extraordinary
 beauty and significance
 While praying for a truth that had
 eluded others
 My church owns the story: Joseph in
 the grove, fourteen
 Not unlike Joan, young Buddha, or
 Mohammed
 While praying for a truth that had
 eluded others
 From unusual encounter the gift more
 than surprising

.....
 It had to be believed, the unbelievable

Suppose he really saw the vision, God, the angel
 More than white on black that no one else could see
 A supernatural sight of extraordinary beauty and significance.

In section three, “The Comet Is Remembering,” Thayne fuses the comet, the First Vision, and her own youthful memories of a chapel painting of the Sacred Grove to describe the First Vision. The Vision burns with layered density at center of her being, more real than reality:

Not until today this small comet in my scalp:
 The clattering of memory: the painting
 In the chapel of my childhood against the organ loft:
 Joseph kneeling at the elevated feet of the Father and the Son.

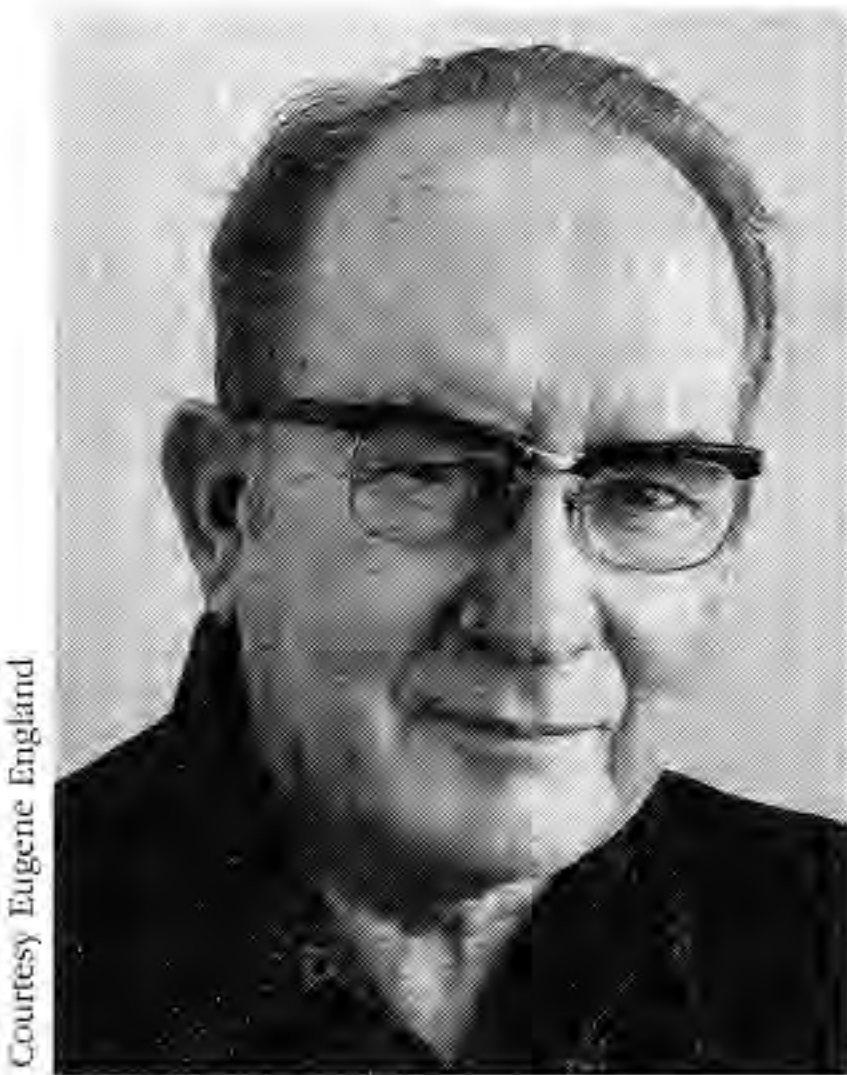
 . . . it rose indigenous as music.
 Did the artist put it in—the vision—or did I?
 In the Sacred Grove, sun streaming on the boy at prayer.

 More real now than the Sacred Grove I occupied one grown-up
 Sunday
 Not until today this small comet in my scalp:
 Indelible on knowing, like the features of a mother giving milk:
 In the chapel of my childhood against the organ loft:
 the vision.⁴³

Thayne the artist fuses in herself the complex of comet, the heavens, the actual and the artistic Sacred Grove, the storied Vision and the artistic Vision to reify indelibly and very personally in her own soul Joseph Smith’s awesome experience. Thayne’s poem is the finest kind of effable artistic expression of an ineffable experience.

V

While playwrights such as Susan Elizabeth Howe, in *Burdens of Earth*,⁴⁴ and the late Clinton F. Larson, in *The Mantle of the Prophet*,⁴⁵ do not recreate the First Vision, their work is informed by the dramatic visionary patterns set in motion in the Sacred Grove and replicated in the lives of Joseph’s followers. These followers can say of Joseph’s visions and their continuing influence on Latter-day Saints, as Brigham Young says to the recently deceased Joseph, in *Mantle of the Prophet*, on receiving Joseph’s actual and spiritual mantles,



Courtesy Eugene England

Clinton F. Larson

Joseph, I feel your ghost, and you have
delivered me

Over the veil into the velvet planes . . .

Before me the people feel the breath of your being:

.

And they weep for the mission before us

And the scroll of the covenants you wrote upon . . .

Joseph, . . .

. . . you are with me in the mission

You brought me to, that I cannot deny.⁴⁶

This same spiritual presence of Joseph’s vision becomes a kind of visionary template overlaid on mundane mortal dailinesses and informing much of contemporary Mormonism and, naturally, Mormon imaginative literature. Wherever one looks in contemporary LDS fiction, one finds, at the crux of these fictions, the expectation or at least the possibility of supernal intervention that replicates the pattern initiated in Joseph’s first vision.

It is surprising to realize how many modern LDS writers evoke visions, dreams, and appearances in their fictions—whether in the comical appearances of angel-in-the-rough Moroni Skinner to his backsliding grandson in Samuel W. Taylor’s *Heaven Knows Why* (1948); or in Amy’s “say-so or sense?” dream or her moving end-of-book vision of her late husband in Eileen G. Kump’s *Bread and Milk* (1979).

Visionary appearances occur in Nephi Nicholes's dreams of his future wife in Jerry M. Young's novel *Eleña* (1992); in Julie's discomfiting apotheosis in Margaret Blair Young's *Salvador* (1992); and in the visions of several of Levi S. Peterson's characters—from Paul's epiphany in "Road to Damascus" and Arabella's vision of the face of God in "Canyons of Grace" to the vernacular Nephite in "The Third Nephite" or Frank's antitype vision of the Cowboy Jesus in *Backslider* (1986). Recently, and more controversial, are the Mormon-like, revelatory angelic appearances in Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America*.

However, the point is clear: contemporary Mormon fiction (and fiction about Mormons) is informed and activated by Joseph Smith's first—and subsequent—visions. In fact, the vision has become characteristic of seeing the world Mormonly.

Orson Scott Card, the most prolific modern LDS fictionist, embodies and illustrates the concept. Card's *Lost Boys* (1992), his first so-called mainstream novel, is centered and concluded in supernal realities. In his *Tales of Alvin Maker* series,⁴⁷ Card transforms the whole religion-engendering story of Joseph Smith into a fantasy world driven by magic and folklore. Alvin Miller Jr., the seventh son of a seventh son, divinely empowered Maker, and destined adversary of the Unmaker, experiences an initiating and focusing vision in which he sees the Shining Man at the foot of his bed. In *Red Prophet*, we learn a rational explanation of the vision from the visionary Shaw-Nee Indian Prophet, Lolla-Wossiky, but only after Alvin's "first" vision has launched the youth into self-discovery and initiated a number of remarkable revelations and white-magic miracles. In a related kind of imaginative soaring, Card, in his *Memories of Earth* series, has transformed the books of First Nephi and Alma, including several of their visions, into a parallel science fiction fantasy. Some of the volumes feature Nefi/Nephi, his brothers (good and bad), father, and, differently, a powerful matriarch in an imaginative recasting of the familiar account.

Though it is not described, the First Vision is likewise obliquely important in Card's important historical novel, *Saints*.⁴⁸ Dinah Kirkham Handy Smith, an English convert to Mormonism and later teacher of the Smith children and plural wife to Joseph, undergoes her own vision. In the same evening that Elder Heber C.

Kimball has related Joseph Smith's first vision, Dinah has her own vision, in which she sees "the face of God, the perfect man"; but the face becomes the face of Joseph Smith, in distant America:

Father, she said softly. Father, Father, Father. She was a young farmboy lying on a bed in his father's house in America, longing for something, knowing it would not come, expecting it to arrive any moment.

The feeling grew and grew until she could not bear it. The light also grew within her, until at last she could see it, a whiteness spreading from her to fill the room. She heard her words become audible, and she finally realized that her angel would not come and stand outside her in the air, that the angel would be within her, and her own lips would speak the message she was meant to hear.⁴⁹

Through her own affirming vision, Dinah gains the testimony of the Restoration she has hitherto resisted. She gains that knowledge by retracing the same visionary path to light and truth that Joseph Smith's first vision exemplifies and patterns for his people.

VI

In 1847, three years after Joseph Smith Jr.'s death and twenty-seven years after the First Vision, John Greenleaf Whittier wrote, after attending a Mormon service in Lowell, Massachusetts:

Once in the world's history we were to have a Yankee prophet, and we have had him in Joe Smith. For good or for evil, he has left his track on the great pathway of life; . . . [and] "knocked out for himself a window in the wall of the nineteenth century," whence his rude, bold, good-humored face will peer out upon the generations to come.⁵⁰

Joseph Smith continues to "peer out" at millions through the window of his first vision, a window of faith that also enables millions to peer in, to confirm Joseph as Prophet of God. While his recounting of that event in the Sacred Grove remains the central access to Mormonism, Joseph's narrative, together with the growing number of imaginative renderings and uses of that narrative, will continue to suggest individual patterns for seeking divine affirmation and direction.

Thus the First Vision and its various treatments in Mormon (and gentile) letters continues to enable Latter-day Saints to soar on eagle wings of effable words and images to ineffable heights of insight, illumination, faith, and testimony. The First Vision, as recorded by

Joseph Smith Jr. and applied by writers of poetry, drama, and fiction, enables individual believers to come nearer to the ultimate goal of knowing God, at the same time enabling “millions,” as the Saints sing in the hymn, to “know ‘Brother Joseph’ again.”⁵¹

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NOTES

¹Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17; italics in original. See also Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 3–8; Dean C. Jessee, “The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 (1969): 275–94; Milton V. Backman Jr., *Joseph Smith’s First Vision: The First Vision in Its Historical Context* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971); and Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Circumstantial Confirmation of the First Vision through Reminiscences,” *BYU Studies* 9, no. 3 (1969): 373–404.

²Milton V. Backman Jr., “First Vision,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:515. See also Backman, *Joseph Smith’s First Vision*; and Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 49–59.

³See James B. Allen, “The Significance of Joseph Smith’s ‘First Vision’ in Mormon Thought,” *Dialogue* 1 (autumn 1966): 29–45; and Neal E. Lambert and Richard H. Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding: Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 31–42; James B. Allen, “The Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Thought,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43–61; and Marvin S. Hill, “A Note on Joseph Smith’s First Vision and Its Import in the Shaping of Early Mormonism,” *Dialogue* 12 (spring 1979): 90–99.

⁴See Allen, “Significance of the First Vision,” 29; Lambert and Cracroft, “Literary Form and Historical Understanding,” 31–42; Allen, “Emergence of a Fundamental,” 43–62; and Hill, “Note on Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” 90–99.

⁵Harold Bloom, *The American Religion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 97.

⁶Bloom, *American Religion*, 82, 110, 127.

⁷Neil Postman, “Learning by Story,” *Atlantic Monthly* 264 (December 1989): 122–23.

⁸Harold Bloom, *Religion in America* (New York: Touchstone with Simon and Schuster, 1993), 79.

⁹Bloom, *Religion in America*, 127.

¹⁰William Mulder, “Mormonism and Literature,” in *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints*, ed. Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 136.

¹¹Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:6-7, 127, 272-73, 429-30, 444, and 448-49.

¹²"From Joseph Smith to W. W. Phelps, Esq.: A Vision," *Millennial Star* 4 (August 1843): 50-55. First published in the *Times and Seasons* 4 (February 1, 1843): 82-83. Also found in N. B. Lundwall, comp., *The Vision* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, n.d.), 156-64; and in Cracroft and Lambert, *A Believing People*, 184-92.

Michael Hicks points conclusively to Phelps as probable poet of "The Vision." See "Joseph Smith, W. W. Phelps, and the Poetric Paraphrase of "The Vision,"" *The Journal of Mormon History* 20 (fall 1994): 63-84.

¹³Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 54.

¹⁴William W. Phelps, "Praise to the Man," in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 27 (hereafter cited as *Hymns*).

¹⁵Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns*, 55.

¹⁶George Manwaring, "Joseph Smith's First Prayer," in *Hymns*, 26.

¹⁷Orson F. Whitney, *Elias: An Epic of the Ages*, 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1914).

¹⁸Alfred Osmond, *The Exiles: A True and Tragic Story of Heroic Struggles and Masterful Achievements* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1926), 20-21.

¹⁹R. Paul Cracroft, *A Certain Testimony: A Mormon Epic in Twelve Books* (Salt Lake City: Epic West, 1979).

²⁰Bushman insists that Joseph's failure to tell the Vision to his parents "gave Lucy a misunderstanding of the sequence of Joseph's vision that she had trouble correcting" and forced her to resort, in her own history, to citing Joseph's already extant description of the Vision. Bushman, *Beginnings of Mormonism*, 58.

²¹Cracroft, *A Certain Testimony*, 12:411-12.

²²S. Dilworth Young, *The Long Road: From Vermont to Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 16-21.

²³Young, *The Long Road*, 17.

²⁴Young, *The Long Road*, 18.

²⁵Young, *The Long Road*, 19.

²⁶Young, *The Long Road*, 20.

²⁷Lily Dougall, *The Mormon Prophet* (New York: D. Appleton, 1899), 24.

²⁸Judith Freeman, *The Chinchilla Farm* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 79.

²⁹Dean Hughes, *Under the Same Stars* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 16.

³⁰Sharon Downing Jarvis, *The Kaleidoscope Season* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 306-7.

³¹Virginia Sorensen, *A Little Lower Than the Angels* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942).

³²Paul Bailey, *For This My Glory: A Story of a Mormon Life* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 128-33.

³³Ruth Louise Partridge, *Other Drums* (Provo: privately published, 1974), 271-72.

³⁴Maurine Whipple, *The Giant Joshua* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1976), 75-76.

³⁵Cecilia Jensen, *Joseph in Palmyra* (Orem, Utah: Keepsake Publishing and The Book of Mormon Research Foundation, 1993), 19-21.

³⁶Gerald N. Lund, *Pillar of Light: A Historical Novel*, vol. 1 of *The Work and the Glory* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 52, 55-58; italics in original.

³⁷Vardis Fisher, *Children of God* (Boise: Opal Laurel Holmes, 1937).

³⁸Fisher, *Children of God*, 7.

³⁹Fisher, *Children of God*, 8.

⁴⁰Allie Howe, "Times of Refreshing: 1820," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 4 (1980): 350.

⁴¹Robert P. Tristram Coffin, "The Mormons," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 51-54.

⁴²Bruce Wayne Jorgensen, "The Light Come Down," in *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*, ed. Eugene England and Dennis Clark (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 260-61.

⁴³Emma Lou Thayne, *Things Happen: Poems of Survival* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991), 61-63.

⁴⁴Susan Elizabeth Howe, *Burdens of Earth*, in *Sunstone* 11 (November 1987): 12-33.

⁴⁵Clinton F. Larson, *The Mantle of the Prophet and Other Plays* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966).

⁴⁶Larson, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, 44-45.

⁴⁷Orson Scott Card, *Seventh Son* (New York: TOR, 1987); Orson Scott Card, *Red Prophet* (New York: TOR, 1988); Orson Scott Card, *Prentice Alvin* (New York: TOR, 1989).

⁴⁸Orson Scott Card, *Saints* (New York: TOR, 1984); first published under the title *A Woman of Destiny* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984).

⁴⁹Card, *Saints*, 206.

⁵⁰John Greenleaf Whittier, "Whittier Attends a Mormon Conventicle," in *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*, ed. William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 156-59.

⁵¹Phelps, "Praise to the Man," in *Hymns*, 27.

Lee Udall Bennion: A Quiet Interview

Doris R. Dant

Introduction

Typical of the way artist Lee Bennion interweaves her family life and her work are the setting and events of the morning of this interview. When I arrived at her Spring City, Utah, home on September 23, 1996, Lee was canning tomatoes from her garden. She seated me at her dining room table for the interview, but her husband, Joe, came in to eat, and Adah, her youngest daughter, asked to have her hair braided. Unflustered by the interruptions, Lee simply offered me a slice of homemade bread and met her family's needs before returning to the business of the interview.

In a sense, *interview* is the wrong word to describe what happened next. Lee needed no prompting beyond a very few questions, even after additional pauses to attend to family matters.

Part I: Balancing Family and Career

Doris

Many people struggle with setting priorities and satisfying the demands of both family and work, especially when demands conflict. How have you resolved those issues?

Lee

When Joe and I started out as young newlyweds and got going with our family and making a living, we didn't have a hard, fast plan of what we would do. I think if we had been able to peek and see where we would be with our careers twenty years ahead (we just celebrated our twentieth anniversary this summer) we would both have been very surprised even at what we were doing. I knew I wanted to be a painter, but I don't think when we got

married Joe had any idea that he would be a potter for a living. He was thinking about elementary ed. Things just sort of evolved and changed.

I had no real aspiration as far as a big career with painting. I just knew I liked doing that and thought, "We'll see where it goes." But the thing that's been important for me—and I think for both of us in our lives—is to do what feels right at the time. And it's kind of difficult to make specific, hard decisions such as, "By the time I'm thirty-five, I'm going to have a career making this amount of money" or "I'm going to be in this or that gallery." At least I could never cope with those kinds of goals and agendas. It's always worked better for me to take one day at a time, one month at a time, one year at a time. Break things up, and do what feels right.

And that's been my approach to how I integrated my artwork and my family. Three or four months after we married, I got pregnant with our oldest daughter and finished out that school year. I was about six months pregnant with her by the time the school year ended in '77. I tried going back to school in the fall because I had a full scholarship between a talent award and an academic scholarship, but I just couldn't handle it. I was trying to commute from here in Spring City, had a nursing baby—my first baby—and I realized that either my efforts at being a mom or my art work was going to have to take a big back seat. I saw no point in being in school. It was obvious to me biologically and spiritually what I wanted to do, and there was no point in staying in school because I'd always been the kind of student that if I couldn't give school my finest effort then I didn't want to do it. So I totally dropped out of college. And I didn't paint at all for six years.

I did do a little bit of drawing of the kids but pretty much left color alone. I'd had only one painting class before I dropped out, so I had gotten just a taste of it. But I did tons and tons of reading during the period when I was nursing babies, and I did lots of growing emotionally and the kind of maturing you do when you have two little kids.

When I decided to go back to school, it was 1983. Joe was going to go back for his M.F.A. We realized that he needed it at that point. We thought he'd get a teaching job somewhere, and at that time, he was in a real rut with his work and needed some

outside stimulus. When I heard he was going to school, my heart just leapt, and I thought, "I want to go back to and finish my B.F.A." I felt a real need to start painting, but I was so scared of it that I knew I wouldn't do it on my own. But I was the kind of student that if I had an assignment I would do it. So I wanted to go back to school and get a jump start on working again. And it worked really well.

By then Zina [Bennion's second child] was four years old and Louisa [her first child] would have been six. They were old enough, and we had Sam [Joe Bennion's brother] living with us. The one night a week when Joe and I were both gone, the children were here with Sam. Lots of driving, juggling schedules, but it would work. It felt doable, much different than it was when the girls were infants.

I started back to work [painting] and finally got my B.F.A. in '86 and have been painting ever since. Adah was born in '88, and there were probably six months right after she was born when I didn't paint. But I got right back in the saddle afterwards. Since then, there've been times when I've been painting hard, three or four paintings a month (that's usually when I've got some kind of a deadline). Then there are the times when I've gone two or three months without painting at all. It just depends on what's going on in my life. That's how I work it.

Actually this year, I think, is going to be a very low output year for me because I'm doing home school with Adah. She wanted to do it. She's in third grade, an age where she still thinks that her mom is the coolest person to hang with all day. She's loving it, and I'm loving it. She's making good progress, but to tell you the truth, I haven't painted since September first [for three weeks]. I've got three paintings out in the studio that are just started, but with canning and home school, there's just not time to work on them right now. I probably won't get as many paintings done this year as I have in years past, but that's okay. She will be young and need me this way for just a few years, and then she's going to be gone before I know it. I know that now because my oldest is gone. But the paintings that I am doing I really like, and I feel good about them. Only the production quantity is down a bit and varies from time to time.

Actually there was a time when I was under contract with somebody, when I was providing about four paintings a month that I had a guaranteed sale for, and that was a very good experience for me. I learned a lot about painting, and I learned about myself and what my limits are. I did a lot of good work then, but I came to the point where I felt I was starting to burn out. I felt I had to be out in the studio so many hours. I didn't like that pressure. I was cutting out other things in my life that actually feed my artwork, and I realized that if I don't have the time to be and do what I want to do there's no point in painting because I'm not happy.

So there's a fine balance, I think, that you'd have to recognize within yourself, and it's going to be different for every person. What works for me will not be right for other women. They might have other needs and desires that are stronger on either side of the fulcrum. I don't think there's one right or wrong solution to finding the balance between work and family. It's what's right for you. So you need to be constantly looking at that and praying about it, and if you feel good, then that's the right thing. That's how I get my answer.

Doris

There's a great tranquillity and peace in your paintings. What do you draw upon to maintain that degree of serenity?

Lee

Well, I'm very happy with my life-style and where I live. In fact, I tell people that I'm living out my childhood dreams. I wanted to be an artist and I wanted to have my horse in my backyard and live out in the country, and that's basically what we're doing. You stop and think about it. Not very many people fulfill those kinds of dreams.

I guess the biggest decision Joe and I made when we first got married was where we wanted to live. To us that was pretty important. We wanted to be close to a temple, we wanted to be out in the country, we wanted to live in a rural setting. When we first came through Spring City—we'd been married two days—it just felt like home. We bought our first house when we'd been married two weeks without really knowing what we would do here, how we would make a living. We were just following a gut feeling that this is a good place for us.

Sometimes young people ask our advice. They say, "We want to be like you guys." I say, "Well, first thing you need to figure out is where you want to be. What are your needs?" For some people, it will be living in a big city. It will be in a different spot than here, but for us it was here. I think you need to figure that out, if you can, if you know that much about yourself at that point in your life. Location is very important.

So I have that as a big plus as far as my peace and tranquillity. Even when things get crazy in the family—we're like everybody else; we have our problems; we have our ups and downs—at least we have this [gestures to surroundings]. That's a big part of it.

I think another part of it is I often look at my paintings as a means to explore myself in ways that I couldn't otherwise. With some of these paintings, I figure out things that I'm thinking and feeling that I don't ever articulate mentally or verbally. Those paintings are kind of therapeutic. There are some paintings that are sad paintings, too. I jokingly refer to them as my therapy paintings. The sadness is there, but they're still beautiful paintings. What's nice about it is I get these feelings out, which is healthy to do, and then I can sell the paintings and get paid for my therapy.

I think that painting is helpful. I have attempted to determine whether I try to hide my problems and not put them in my paintings. Am I only expressing the peace and tranquillity I feel? I'm not sure if that's a conscious effort or not. I tend to paint myself and my kids a lot. These relationships are a big part of my life, of my psyche and who I am. I explore the people in figure paintings and things in still lifes in the context of the world that I know. Even my landscapes and my still lifes are partly self-portraits because they're how I feel about those scenes and objects.

Generally those subject matters are things I love. I love my life, I love my kids, and I love where I live and the places that I paint about. I think a lot of those feelings of affection and love are coming through that would maybe translate to peace and tranquillity. I generally don't like to paint things I don't like. There probably is a little bias. It's not because I have a perfect life and there isn't angst or things that I don't care for. But I'm really hard to offend. There aren't many things where I think, "I don't like that." I generally try to respond and notice things that I do like, and that's what I tend to paint.

Part II: The Artist's View

Doris

Tell us about each of these paintings [the two for the covers and the eight for the color inset].

Lee

Let's start with the painting that will be on your front cover. It's called *The Holy Family*. Joe started working a couple of years ago framing a suite of twelve prints by six New Mexican artists—"Santeros"—who use religious Catholic imagery. I've had these out in my studio, and I feel a lot of kinship with them. In a way, I think they have helped give me the courage to come forth with some of the more overt symbolism that I have felt inside in a lot of my mother and child paintings over the years. Since the Santero prints have been around, I have thought, "I can use halos; I can do this; I can do that, too. It's part of my heritage as well." I grew up in California around a lot of good Catholics. And I've always loved Madonna paintings and paintings of the Holy Family. So last year in the fall—it was getting close to Christmas—I decided I wanted to do one of the Holy Family.

I remember in one of my religion classes at BYU one of the teachers told us that the apocryphal accounts have Christ as a red-head, so I have always painted him as a redheaded baby; plus with Adah I'm used to painting redheads. The geraniums in the foreground are symbolic to me of this mortal life and of the blood that flows through our veins and of Christ's mortality. The lilies behind the family are symbolic of Christ's divine lineage and the gift of the Atonement. The whole picture tells of how we and Christ had to come through the portal of the flesh and yet death and resurrection are looming on the horizon. Only he, a mortal son of God, could bring to pass the Atonement.

The back cover, *Grand Canyon, Cardenas Peak*, is of a place that is fantastic and special to me. I never have taken my paints on any of our river trips. There's just not time and space for it, but quite often I do take a sketchbook and do some quick drawings. I did look at some photos that I took of this place, too, as I did this painting. But if you were to look at the photos and my drawings and then look at this painting, you would find I have taken a lot of

liberties with the scene. The colors are actually quite different than what you'd see in the photograph, but people that see my painting say, "Oh yeah, I know that place." So that's just how it feels. That's what I try to do when I paint landscapes. They are more a record of how I felt about those places, and that often has more to do with the color selection than what the places actually look like.

The Gift [plate 1] is a painting I did a few years back that started out just as a self-portrait. A lot of times when I go into the studio and I'm not sure what I want to do, I'll do a self-portrait because it sort of opens a door for me. This one started out that way. I had a potted lily that a friend had given to me for my birthday, so I thought, "I'll do a painting of myself holding those flowers."

Originally, both hands were around the pot, but when I finished the drawing, I felt that it was a weak composition. There was way too much weight on the right side that was empty and dead, so I thought, "I've got to do something with the figure to activate that space." I began playing around with my arms while looking in the mirror, and I came up with that pose and thought it looked interesting. So I drew my hand like that. Then when I finished the drawing [the charcoal drawing she does before starting a painting], I thought, "Wow, it's starting to say something; it's starting to take on a life of its own."

I just started following the drawing's suggestions, and it became a painting about the gift of life. There's a doorway the woman is standing in front of. To me the woman is symbolic of Eve, our earthly mother, the mother of our bodies, and the door is suggestive of the portal of birth that we all must enter and come through. The figure beckoning is also a reference to the idea of birth and coming through. We all come through the body of a woman. The crosses in the transom behind her and also the lilies—those are all very obvious references to the Savior and to his gift of eternal life. The woman giving us the chance to be born into mortality and then the Savior giving us the chance to be born again in a more eternal sense. Again, the doorway represents that portal, too. Death is a door that we all pass through, and by our mortality, we are invited to pass through it.

Anyway, I really didn't finish or verbalize or intellectualize what all those symbols were for me until I'd had the painting done about six months. It was when someone asked me, "What is that about?" that I kind of stopped. You know, I had had this gut sort of subconscious feeling about it, but it wasn't until I had to put a name on the painting to send it out to show and until people started asking me about it that I was able to articulate my feelings. It was a fun experience to have that happen.

The next painting is *Adah Again* [plate 2]. The title refers to the fact that I paint Adah often. My friend had made this dress for her, and I wanted to do a painting of her in it. She was willing to sit and model for me. It's pretty straightforward—a painting of her out in my studio. I don't necessarily view paintings like this as being much of a portrait. It's actually not a terribly good likeness of her. There's a feeling of her there, but I want my paintings to be good in the sense that other people will enjoy their composition and the feeling and not necessarily feel like they've got a portrait of Adah Bennion in their house. You know, it's more a painting of a girl. It's more a painting of someone sitting and thinking. And I try to make them that way so that they are of interest and don't feel just like mug-shot portraits. They have more of a life of their own as paintings.

Doris

You have her very much in the foreground and your studio very much in the background.

Lee

That's again a lot from my head. I draw her sitting there. I'm in my studio, so I can see what those things look like, but I have purposely played around with the distance and the space, and I think that kind of helps, makes it interesting. I have fun playing with it, so that's why I do it. If I were to just try to capture everything exactly how it is, painting would be really boring, and I might as well just get a camera.

Doris

Are you saying something in the painting about priorities in your life?

Lee

Are you referring to where I put things? Definitely. I can see that now that you mention it. I hadn't thought of it before. But definitely people and animals and those sorts of things are much more important to me than the house or the studio. Housework is not my favorite thing, as you can see by looking around my house or studio. Housework will always wait; the opportunity is never lost.

The next painting [plate 3] is *What's Next in My Life?* Part way through our 1994 raft trip down the Grand Canyon, I got sick and had to be life-flighted out—we thought I had appendicitis. It turned out I had a kidney stone, but I passed it that night. So there I was alone at the South Rim. To make a long story short, I didn't call home. I wanted to get back on the river and finish the trip! I knew the group was going to stop at Havasu Creek, so I decided to hike down Havasu Canyon and meet them. I talked someone into driving me to the trail head and hiked the twenty miles to the Colorado and got to the confluence fifteen minutes before the boats in our group came by. They were so surprised to see me!

I don't know if you would call it a life-changing experience, but it was just an amazing thing for me to do. I'd never done anything like that: taking off on my own, going without any sleeping gear. It was actually quite a rugged hike that included a two-hundred-foot climb. I had never done anything like that without a rope or someone to spot me. I really pushed my limits right to the edge. In that twenty-mile hike, there were probably three or four times when I got to obstacles where I thought, "I don't know if I can make it around there or if I can get through this." And I would pray.

I knew we would run Lava Falls the next day on the trip if I caught up with my party. Normally on our other trips, I've had that rapid on my horizon the whole trip, just dreading it. But on this hike, by the time I got to the last obstacle I had to get around, I was saying, "Okay, God, just help me get over this. I won't bother you at all at Lava. I don't care if we flip there. I just need to get around this thing. Help me." It was funny in the boat the next day, after I reunited with the group. I was totally relaxed. I just slept all day as we approached Lava Falls. I didn't get nervous. Well, I got a little nervous. But I was not as uptight as I usually am because I just thought, "Well, I've been through a lot worse in the last few days." Lava is not as bad as a kidney stone with no pain medication.

Anyway, when I came home from that trip, I went out to my studio to start working. Here I am back home looking in the mirror again, getting ready to start another painting. As I did this one, the thought kept running through my mind, "What's going to be next in my life?" I had realized that interesting things do happen. You never know when, either.

Self with Adah [plate 4] is a painting of Adah and me. I often paint the two of us together. Sometimes even now [Adah is eight] I'll paint her as a small infant or baby in my arms just because I have strong feelings about motherhood and about the mother and a small child. And I represent them by doing paintings of Adah and me together. For this one, I think I actually got her to pose with me for a little while. Not for very long, but long enough to get her drawn in, and then I went back and put myself into the drawing. She's pretty wiggly.

Amaryllis, Antler, and Shell [plate 5] is a still life of some objects that I actually do have. I have the pot, I had the amaryllis, I have the shell, and the antler is one I found on a ride that I took with my horse. Just a few objects that have been kicking around the studio a long time. I wanted to do a painting with the amaryllis; that's originally what I had drawn for the still life, and that's all I had on the canvas. I liked it, but I knew I needed other things to complete the composition to make it interesting. So I started casting my eye around my studio: "What shall I put in?"

I loved the way the antler sort of mirrored some of the lines in the amaryllis, so I played with that until I found where I liked it. Then the shell was a nice focal point, sort of a cup to draw you in and hold you. And it worked well floating between those two images. Then I had to figure out a table. I come at still life kind of backwards, sort of just building them on the canvas. The most difficult thing was trying to figure out an edge for the table. I tried curves. I tried straight across, and it took quite awhile to get it right. The tablecloth is out of my head. I didn't have anything nearly that nice. And I kind of thought about putting wood grain on the table, but I figured that was going to take away from the subtle painting on the shell. So this is strictly a formal painting exercise in design and composition but again one that incorporates things that I love.

The next painting [plate 6] is called *New Potatoes, Peas, and Onions*, which is one of our favorite lunches in the summertime when those three things are in season. I'd just gotten this hat. It's pretty ratty now. I wore it again this summer. It's got holes in the top, but I still like it. It had such a nice shape and such nice lines about it, and I loved looking in the mirror at the different ellipses and curves. I thought, "Oh, that would be fun to use as a prop in a painting," and so I did. I drew the figure in first, and then I had this space around the side that I had to do something with to make it work as a painting. I thought, "Well, that's my gardening hat, so I'll put some of the garden in there."

The frame I had fun with. To me, the floral-type image in the corners is somewhat reminiscent of a pea blossom and the green stems and the straight lines in between them. One thing you'll notice in my later paintings is that in many of them I've done much more intricate work in the frame and drawn imagery from the painting into the frames.

The next painting is *Listening for Lise* [plate 7]. I started the drawing for this painting and then found out two days later that a friend of ours had passed away. She had had a lingering and debilitating illness from which she was never going to recover. It was a question of how long she would exist in the terrible state her body was in. It was a difficult situation. She was a young mother in the prime of her life and not at the age when you expect to see someone leave their family. But again, her condition was so wretched that I believed it was probably an answer to her prayer and probably even her family's to have her released from this life.

I thought of her so much as I started to work on this painting, how so many prayers had been offered on Lise's behalf. And you know some people might think they weren't answered because she passed away. But I feel that they were. There was an answer to her prayer in the way she was able to slip away. And I feel that death is not always the dark angel we think it is. There are times when it's merciful, probably every time even though we don't know it. It's what is to be. So this painting's just a different look at the angel of death.

The last painting [plate 8], *Persephone*, is a painting I did around the same time period as *New Potatoes, Peas, and Onions*

and *The Gift*. I love springtime. I'm excited by it every year, by the thought of new life coming up from the dormant ground. And I've always loved the myth of Persephone and how she comes back and brings with her life to her mother and to the earth. That's basically what this painting is about. This figure coming up from the dark. I wanted to have the background just be darkness representing the death of winter and include all of these bulbs.

I'd gotten a great catalog that had photos of all of these plants with their bulb-and-root systems. I got the idea for the painting while looking through that catalog. So while I painted, I did look at the catalog. I changed things around because I needed a curve here that it didn't have and what not. That's the genesis for the idea of showing the roots. They reminded me of Persephone, too.

Conclusion

What is noticeably missing from Lee Bennion's works and words is a sense that the time for her career is passing too quickly and she must work ever faster to accomplish all that must be done. The ceaseless drive so often behind the accomplishments of creative people is missing. Even if she doesn't paint today or tomorrow or next week, her studio will still be there, and in the meantime, life will nurture her talent. The paintings reproduced here reflect that sense of stillness while remaining vitally connected.

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Plate 1. *The Gift*. Oil on linen, 40" x 32", 1989.



Plate 2. *Adah Again*. Oil on linen, 40" x 30", 1995.

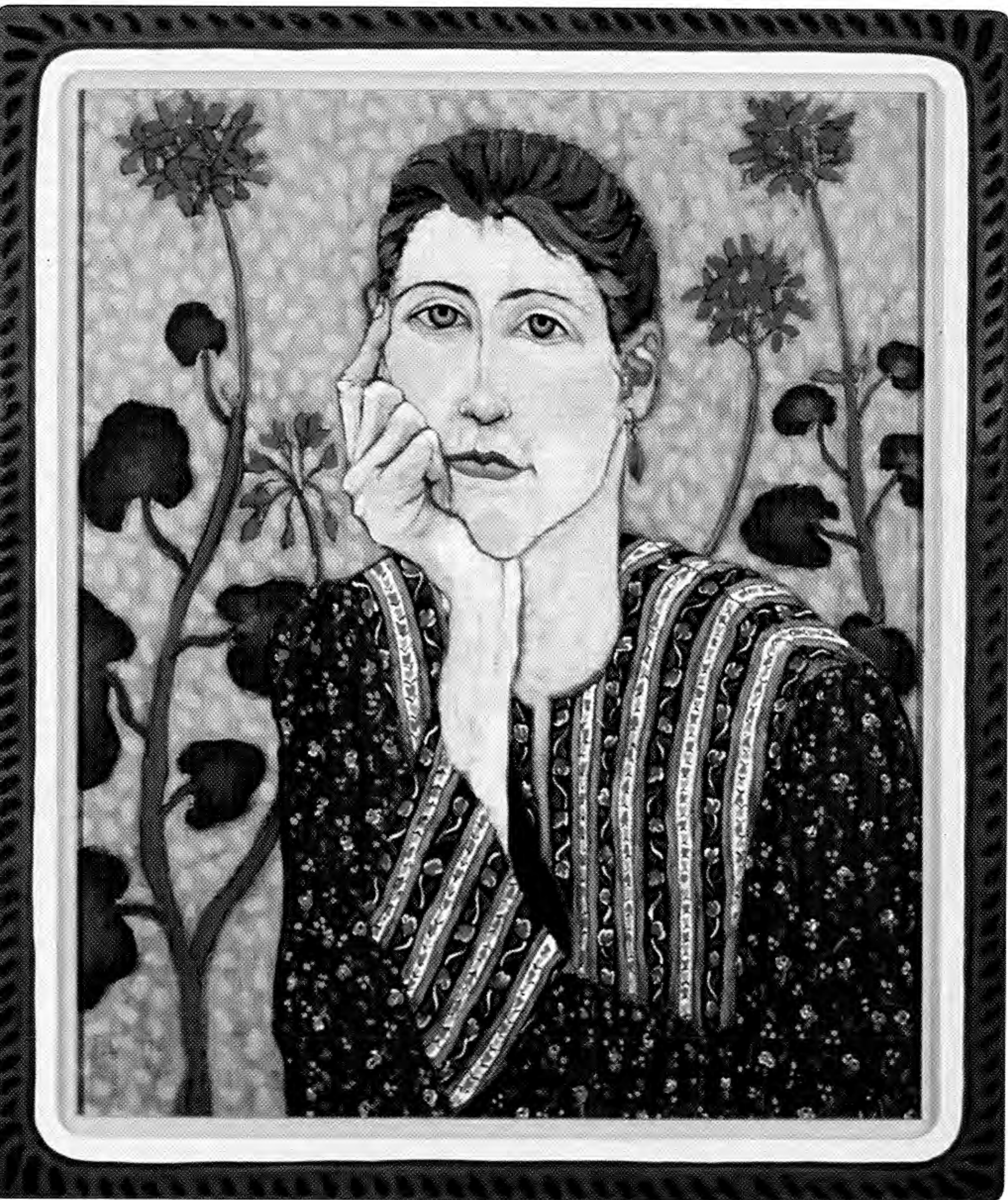


Plate 3. *What's Next in My Life?* Oil on linen, 24" x 20", 1995.



Plate 4. *Self with Adah*. Oil on linen, 30" x 24", 1993.



Plate 5. *Amaryllis, Antler, and Shell*. Oil on linen, 24" x 18", 1995.



Plate 6. *New Potatoes, Peas, and Onions*. Oil on linen, 24" x 30", 1989.



Plate 7. *Listening for Lise*. Oil on linen, 24" x 32", 1995.



Plate 8. *Persephone*. Oil on linen, 58" x 40", 1990.

Plate 9. *Between Heaven and Earth*, by David E. Cassler. Oil and other media on paper, 67" x 24", 1994.

David O. McKay once said that Maurice Maeterlinck's vision (in *The Bluebird*) of unborn children following the sound of their mothers' voices down to earth was not far from the truth. In this painting, the artist attempts to portray that spiritual passage, as a young spirit leaves the world of light to come to its mother through the veil. Celestial colors in the upper right of the painting transition into earthly colors at the lower left.

The hand of the child is outstretched, betokening that the child creates the mother just as surely as the mother creates the child. The mother's eyes are closed, as she seeks to sense what she cannot see, but is real within her. The painting conveys the holiness of this important journey and the spiritual reality behind pregnancy and childbirth.



“But Then Face to Face”: Women’s Issues, Mormon Culture, and Doctrine in Eight Pregnancy Narratives

For a Mormon woman, pregnancy can augment her agency, build charity, and transcend stereotypes. Sharing her narrative can help her organize and own her experience.

Angela Ashurst-McGee

Hoping to uncover information about my past and future, I interviewed eight Mormon women about their pregnancies, asking them questions about everything from their relationship with their unborn babies to their fears about labor.¹ The women, aged twenty-two to seventy, were people I had met at BYU or were from my extended family. Within the first few minutes of each interview, we would delve into the intimate and essential issues of the woman’s story, suggesting not only that she felt at ease, but also that she had already sorted through her experiences and crafted sophisticated narratives. My questions only clarified and expanded her multifaceted narrative, releasing stories that already existed.

After each interview, I was emotionally drained, overwhelmed by the power of what I had heard. My nights filled with dreams of my future pregnancies. I spent my days mourning for the babies that disappeared when I woke up. Part of the impact of these narratives stems from their dazzling complexity. The women described how pregnancy both strengthened their ties to their husbands and demonstrated their essential differences from their husbands. They explained how the experience of pregnancy focused their attention outward, on another individual, while it simultaneously focused their attention inward, toward their own bodies. They expressed social pride and notoriety while admitting embarrassment.

But from these complex, and sometimes paradoxical, strands of the narratives emerged a striking pattern of empowerment. I discovered that pregnancy strengthens the women I talked to, contributing to their feeling of personal power to confidently make decisions and choose from a wide range of options. This empowerment is enhanced by fundamental issues of Mormonism, feminism, and folklore, issues that emerge from these pregnancy narratives. The LDS belief that pregnancy creates eternal, spiritual relationships and follows the example of divine motherhood elevates a pregnant woman above stereotypes of the unfulfilled, depressed housewife. Feminism encourages women to use their agency. Conversely, pregnancy confirms some feminist theory by demonstrating women's agency and unique ethics.

Telling the narratives of their pregnancies provides women a forum to organize and reclaim the significance, beauty, and power of their experiences. As folklorists say, the experience is enhanced by the telling of it. Furthermore, pregnancy narratives can empower the women and men who hear or read them. The narratives can prepare others for the future and reduce fear of the unknown. These functions of pregnancy discourse that I discovered last year are particularly poignant to me now as I enter the last weeks of my own first pregnancy.

Sharing Pregnancy Narratives

I am the oldest of six children and know that I tended my younger siblings while my mother endured months of morning sickness with each of her pregnancies. Yet I do not have one memory of her morning sickness. My youngest sister was born when I was twelve years old—certainly old enough for me to have been aware of what I now know was a very difficult pregnancy for my mother. Yet I have only two snippets of memory: she needed a step stool to climb into our Volkswagen van, and once after a long summer road trip, her feet were swollen. Thus, although I lived with my mother during forty-five months of her pregnancies, much of what I learned in my interviews with pregnant women was still a surprise to me.

Similarly, Elaine, a woman who began raising her five children in the late 1960s, told me that her first pregnancy held many surprises for her. Her mother's stoicism when pregnant had prevented Elaine from learning about the basic experience of pregnancy. In conversations, I have heard many women complain that their mothers never talked to them about pregnancy. They listed the things they had not been told and therefore did not know. Although these mothers had probably shared parts of their pregnancy experiences with their husbands, peers, or mothers, they had not shared their experiences with their daughters. Today, books and classes on the medical and physical phenomenon of pregnancy are widely available, but such treatments cannot capture the full scope of the pregnancy experience. The teacher of the Lamaze class my husband and I attended marveled that after she recounted the averages and patterns of labor and delivery, class members still burst with questions about her own experiences in childbirth.

This yearning for personal information becomes obvious when I tell people I have collected some Mormon women's pregnancy narratives. Some people seem flatly unimpressed by the project, but others respond by gasping, "Oh, how interesting! You've got to show me your drafts!" Many of these are young, newly married women. These women stand at the cusp of the experiences of pregnancy, childbearing, and motherhood. And while many of them look forward to these experiences, they also feel timid and naive. Although the number of sociological and experiential treatments of pregnancy seems to be increasing, many women seem hungry for the information I learned from the interviews: Did the women like being pregnant? How bad are mood swings? What is it like to feel the baby kick?

Young women often long to hear the narratives of experienced mothers. They long for frank evaluations of successes and trials to guide them through their upcoming experiences and reveal parallels between themselves and their mentors. Basic information about physical and emotional events of pregnancy helps them overcome fear of the unknown. They are empowered by hearing narratives that model pregnancy as a beautiful, loving, agency-investing experience. But because pregnancy also includes

the intimate, the private, and the biological, it can be difficult to talk about outside of mothers' peer groups. Nevertheless, shared pregnancy narratives can serve a potent function for those who hear or read them.

The importance of these narratives as shared stories was demonstrated to me personally when, eight months after completing the interviews, I found myself pregnant. My husband and I were both shaken to tears by the news. Pregnancy had suddenly and irreversibly leapt from the subject of my research and from my expectation for the vague future into the concrete reality of now and the rest of my life. The pregnancy immediately asserted itself in a dozen small, physical changes that confirmed that now, everything was different.

As we struggled to internalize the news, we used the pregnancy narratives I had collected to illuminate the unknown. Although I had just spent several months transcribing, thinking about, and writing about the eight interviews, I was surprised at how much information I had overlooked or forgotten. Those first few weeks, I leafed through the transcriptions looking for information and experience to match my own. I hadn't before realized the significance of Sally's statement that she slept up to twelve hours a night. I quickly felt the impact of such a schedule and felt reassured that my voracious appetite for sleep was not laziness, but a pregnancy experience that other women shared. I found myself vocalizing my experience with nearly verbatim quotes from the interviews: As Mark and I watched the store-bought pregnancy test develop, I used Sally's words, "Do you see a pink line?" In the days that followed, I used Tina's words, "I cannot eat enough!" As odd things have happened throughout my pregnancy, I find reassurance from those women who can tell me, "Oh yeah, that happened to me. Isn't it weird? But you get over it."

Pregnancy narratives became even more significant to my husband, Mark, as we entered pregnancy. Mark read the interviews cover to cover, and even though he had long been aware of their content, this reading—motivated, no doubt, by the awing reality of his wife's pregnancy—yielded epiphanies for him. He was able to define his ideal role as a partner and supporter to a pregnant

woman by evaluating the needs and wants the women expressed in their interviews.

For example, Mark was struck by Elaine's statement that she felt more social respect from Mormons and non-Mormons alike when mothering ceased to be her full-time job and she entered the wage-earning work force. Mark noticed the same bias in his opinions of women he knew. He then vowed to respect mothers who mother full time as well as back-to-work mothers. He also admitted that it was easier for him to relate to what the women said about their physical pregnancy—exercise, diet, fetal growth—than what they said about their emotional pregnancy. He realized his focus on the baby had superseded concern for the mother. He concluded, "So I want you to always tell me how you *feel* about the baby." Several times, reading the interviews prompted comments like, "Now I see it from your side—which is different."

I feel grateful that these interviews helped Mark recognize what, to me, constitutes a major role of any partner to a pregnant woman. While husbands certainly have a valid and rich emotional life as they prepare for the birth of a child, the bulk of the pregnancy experience happens in the mind and body of the pregnant woman. Much of a husband's role is to recognize and support the woman's view of these events.

Pregnancy narratives can also benefit the women who tell them. According to folklorists, humans tell stories in order to impose order and significance on the chaotic array of life's experiences. William A. Wilson, one of Mormonism's premier folklorists, writes, "Storytellers themselves recount their narratives . . . to satisfy their own ends and meet their own needs."² He cites Neil Postman: "A story provides a structure for our perceptions; only through stories do facts assume any meaning whatsoever."³

Pregnancy produces a huge spectrum of physical, emotional, and social changes, yet our culture contains few settings where women can perform, or tell, the narratives of their experiences with pregnancy. Women do share pregnancy experiences in small groups of friends but rarely go beyond that restricted stage.⁴ And even in small peer groups, women rarely relate comprehensive narratives that would organize their experiences.

I began each interview by asking the limited question, "Tell me about when you discovered you were pregnant the first time." Yet several women responded with a long speech that described each of their pregnancies in succession and summarized their experiences. Although my next questions covered relatively basic issues such as emotional changes, social relationships, and labor, several women told me they had never thought about some of the issues I raised, indicating that while the narratives were already formed, they had not been shared or critiqued by others.

All the women seemed to enjoy our conversation. Most thanked me for interviewing them. Perhaps they were grateful for an opportunity to talk about, and thus organize and give significance to, an overwhelmingly varied and life-changing experience. The women certainly weren't telling their stories for my benefit alone, but rather for themselves or for their children (although children apparently feel their mothers rarely share such narratives with them).

In addition to organizing experience, forming narratives also allows the teller to own the experience. As women create their narratives, they choose the way their experience will be portrayed. While at the time, pregnancy may have felt like a long, hot summer of involuntary nausea and exhaustion, in their narratives the women portray themselves as independent agents and actors. While at the time, anxiety and worry may have been chief components of pregnancy, in their narratives the women describe themselves as confident decision makers. Throughout the interviews, I was overwhelmed by the women's strength as they nonchalantly described overcoming physical trials and opposition.

For example, when I asked Suzanne, a mother of six, about the worst parts of pregnancy, she shared this experience:

I took Kent and Beth to the dollar movie to see *Return to Oz*, and I was like eight months pregnant. And Kent got scared and jumped on me, and between the weight of the baby and a five-year-old on my lap . . . my hemorrhoids just exploded. And so then I had to go get them tied off. They wouldn't give me any medication because I was pregnant. So I read in twenty-four hours Lincoln's [biography]. . . . I sat in the bathtub for twenty-four hours and ran hot water.

But in her next paragraph, Suzanne asserts, "I just had really good pregnancies. I remember standing in front of the mirror pregnant with Joe and just admiring this expecting body, just so absolutely thrilled that I was growing a child." She balances the negative with statements that portray her as joyfully and actively creating. Crafting narratives allows the women to select and emphasize the details that portray the experience as they choose to remember it and that describe them as the women would like to be.

The value of sharing pregnancy narratives comes from their benefit to both storyteller and audience. While I feel confident of pregnancy theory's valid place in academic discourses like folklore, feminist theory, and Mormon studies, I believe its essential value comes from helping people navigate their lives. Although my pregnancy narratives project had its origin in academia, it was motivated by personal questions about my physical origins, my religion, and my future as a child of God, woman, wife, and mother.

Pregnancy and Mormon Culture and Doctrine

One of the most interesting issues the interviews explore is the complex relationship between a woman's experiences and decisions about pregnancy and her perception of Mormon culture and of her role as a Mormon woman. In the context of this article, Mormon culture describes a wide array of historical and social phenomena experienced by middle-class members of the Church in the United States. Most of these phenomena are not official components of the LDS Church, but rather are the result of personal and cultural interpretation.

Most of the women I talked to emphasized the positive impact of LDS doctrine and culture on their pregnancies. However, two of the women I talked to, women in middle-age speaking with the benefit of hindsight, said they felt Mormon culture exerted some pressure upon their private choices. One of these women was Elaine, whom I visited on a Friday night at her home. Although three of her five children have left home, Elaine continued to mother throughout our interview—as, interestingly, did all of the women I talked to. Elaine's husband periodically stuck his

head in the door to ask questions about a daughter who was having a slumber party downstairs, a son who had just had his wisdom teeth removed, and a son who was making wedding plans.

Much of Elaine's narrative focused on the loving, joyous relationship she has with her children. She told me, "I don't think when you're pregnant the first time that you have any concept—even though you love people and you love your husband—you have no concept of that feeling of love that comes to you when you finally have the baby."

Elaine told me that in the 1960s she rushed her decision to have children because of the pressures she felt. On a social level, almost every woman in her married student ward either had children or was pregnant. All of the women in her ward quit school once they became pregnant. On a more direct level, ward members questioned her each Sunday, always expecting her to announce she was pregnant. When she had been married for six months and still wasn't pregnant, Elaine "cried every month when I would have my period" and "read every book on infertility."

Elaine also used her perception of Mormon doctrine to fashion her pregnancy into a biblical "gift" that she bestowed on her husband. She was embarrassed to admit to me that she rushed into pregnancy partially to fulfill what she perceived as her obligation to give her husband sons. Elaine never indicates that her husband expected sons or shared her feelings about a biblical gift. But as a "traditional" person in a ward comprised of "all young marrieds with little babies or trying to get pregnant," she felt "it was a status . . . that I had to be a mother as soon as I could—for his sake."

While Elaine recognizes that she chose to respond to her own perception of these elements of 1960s Mormon culture and while she willingly remains active in the Church, she still interprets the past pressures to start a family as an influence she dislikes in retrospect: "It also was very much the Mormon ideal. I'm sure your parents understand it. I think kids really don't know what we came out of. Because it was a definite idea that we all accepted and didn't think anything of. . . . I bought right into it."

Elaine says that her ideas about the roles of husbands and wives and her perception of Mormonism have changed since her children were born. If she could do it all again, she says now that

she would wait longer to start her family and she would complete her master's degree before or during her first pregnancies.

Once Elaine's children were born, she found she was a "nester" who loved to curl up at home with her babies. But as her children grew older and she returned to school and work outside the home, she found that her status in the eyes of ward members increased. She concludes:

We pay lip service to motherhood being the most important role a woman can play in the Church, but we don't believe it. It's really too bad. We should put our money where our mouths are! . . . I just know that the whole time there was just a little change in attitude among people who professed motherhood the most important.

Lola was the most direct in blaming her perception of Mormonism for "advocating" certain decisions. I visited Lola on the same night I talked to Elaine. As we talked, she helped her two youngest daughters, now teenagers, choose what to wear and get out the door on their Friday-night dates. Several years ago, Lola had ended a "really terrible" marriage to a man who "was not a kind person." She has now returned to college.

The essential motif of Lola's narrative is her belief that some aspects of Mormon culture reinforced her feelings that her only acceptable option was to remain married and continue having children: "In a way, in the Mormon culture it's just something you do. And if you don't do it, you're a failure." Each time she became pregnant, she felt that her range of choices and her ability to leave her emotionally damaging marriage were reduced: "With every pregnancy, the feelings of being trapped went way, way up. . . . 'I can't get out of this.'" Like Elaine, Lola sees the ward sisters as the main conduit of these pressures: "The men assume this is what you do. Like, 'I go to work; you get pregnant.' But the women tend to be the ones that carry that message. . . . I've never had a bishop say anything about how many children I should have. Although I think I meet their expectation."

Both Elaine's and Lola's critiques indicate that Mormon culture's emphasis on large families started early in marriage can be constrictive. Although Elaine and Lola do not regret having children, they do regret what they perceive as an unduly strong influence on that decision. However, neither of these women denies

that she made her own childbearing choices or that she chose to participate in the culture she criticizes.

Although their experiences are valid and may reveal some flaws in perceived Mormon cultural constructs, Elaine and Lola do share some significant characteristics. Both their narratives look back on childbearing experiences that began in the 1960s. Both women have returned to school, where they are enjoying a humanities education that includes women's studies. Both consider themselves to have grown more liberal and less traditional through time.

Lola and Elaine's complaints, though significant, are a faint strand in the total collection of these narratives. Much more vivid are the descriptions of Mormon doctrine and culture supporting and enriching positive pregnancy experiences. Elaine herself says Mormon doctrine enhanced motherhood by adding a celestial element, by providing both a model in Heavenly Mother and the expectation of eternal families. Tina, a mother in her twenties who was pregnant with her first son while finishing her undergraduate degree, says Mormon doctrine enhanced her pregnancy by helping her understand her unborn baby. During her pregnancy, Tina says that all she knew about him specifically was "he hiccuped a lot." But "of course I'm Mormon. So you know, I think about, Okay, he's a spirit from Heavenly Father, and he's come down to get a body."

Ruth, a mother of five, grandmother of twenty-four, and great-grandmother of one, was converted when her children were young to the LDS Church largely in response to the doctrine of eternal families. She now devotes much time and expertise to developing her own family history and helping others research theirs. One of the main themes of her narrative is the contribution Mormon doctrine has made to her family: "We thought we had a pretty great, well put-together family, and we could never have dreamed what a great difference the gospel would make." When I asked Ruth what differences she notices between her pregnancies and her daughters' pregnancies, she said, "My girls have the added blessing of the gospel in their lives. They know that Heavenly Father has given them this ability to create life and that these little spirits have elected to come to earth. To come to their families." Ruth, Tina, and Elaine seem to agree that by providing information



Denise D. Mongie with her daughter Lydia Mongie. Photographed by Anne Smoot, a prize-winning photography major at Brigham Young University.

about the origin and purpose of pregnancy, by putting pregnancy in the divine context of the plan of salvation, Mormon doctrine enhances the experience.

More than any other of the women, Suzanne expresses gratitude for Mormon cultural and doctrinal influence on her pregnancies. She thanks Mormon culture for supporting her in decisions she believed in fiercely. Throughout her child-rearing years, Suzanne has taught and attended school. Now, with half of her children still at home, Suzanne is working as a middle-school counselor and completing a doctoral degree in family counseling. Although Suzanne has interspersed full-time mothering with large doses of wage-earning and school, she summarizes her life with “it’s like I waited my whole life to have babies.” “I didn’t play with dolls or anything [as a girl]; it was just like I was going to wait for the real event.”

This emotion informs much of her narrative. Yet throughout her childbearing years, colleagues, doctors, and bosses all tried to discourage her from having six children. In response to these social pressures, while she did have the large family she desired, she had her children later and further apart than she wanted. She concludes, “I didn’t do it on my agenda.”

Amidst opposition, Suzanne thanks Mormon doctrine for raising motherhood from what she calls the stereotype of “Dependent, Devalued, and Depressed” to a “sacred,” “eternal relationship.” She cites the gospel as one force she used to support her decision to prioritize family over career: “I think without my feeling of who I was as a child of God and a mother, if I were to take the world view of it, I probably would have struggled a lot more being a full-time homemaker.” She describes consciously immersing herself in Mormon culture and surrounding herself with Mormon friends to “protect” herself from the pain of people who tried to discourage her from fulfilling her cherished role as a mother.

Mormon culture and doctrine helped Suzanne fulfill her goals in two ways: First, it supported her in her childbearing decisions when others discouraged her. Second, it helped her guard against discouragement during her periods of full-time mothering. Because of her strong emphasis on pregnancy and mothering

(which aligns her with cultural expectations), Mormonism became her refuge.

Ruth and Michelle also found that conforming to Mormon motherhood brings joy and gratification. Modeling the counsel of David O. McKay and other Church leaders, Ruth and Michelle locate success in the home. While Michelle is now a full-time administrative assistant whose youngest child is eleven, she spent almost twenty years as a full-time homemaker. Throughout those years, parenting produced feelings of gratification and success:

Although we didn't necessarily always feel success in our career or financial goals or whatever, we did feel like successful parents, like we were producing children that were normal—and better than normal a lot of times—and that we knew what we were doing with them. It was like there was job satisfaction in our parenting for the most part.

Fittingly then, Michelle also expressed the strongest feelings of social gratification from pregnancy: "I always felt kind of special when I was pregnant. I was never embarrassed. . . . It has a certain amount of recognition that comes with it—usually positive recognition." As they consciously followed Mormon ideals, Michelle and her husband created a rewarding parenting experience. Michelle's pregnancies fit into this context and became a source of success and pride. Michelle's narrative repeatedly inverts the model of the unfulfilled housewife.

Ruth also finds gratification and success in the family. Although she is now entering her seventies, she attributes her positive self-image to her father, who "continually told us how wonderful we were." She says, "I was skinny as a rail, wore horn-rimmed glasses, and was very shy. He made me think I was beautiful." She uses a similar contrastive rhetorical pattern to describe how her own family transformed her: "I couldn't carry a tune in a basket with a lid on it. Any plant that is impossible to kill, just takes me a little longer. . . . but I raised a family of righteous, upstanding children. Mothering is my success."

Her feelings of success come not from simply raising children, but from modeling her family according to Church standards: "Other ambitions can never be as fulfilling as raising children who turn out well." "There is no joy in this world that can compare to the pure joy of knowing that in every one of our homes the gospel

is taught.” Her “report card” shows high marks because her children are aligned with the principles of Mormon doctrine.

In the past few months, I have joined this group of women for whom Mormon doctrine enhances pregnancy. For me, the doctrines about the origin of souls and the eternal future of families justify my feelings about pregnancy and motherhood. The baby’s divinely modeled body has functioned correctly through the billions of operations involved in creating even a tiny embryo. The eight-month-old fetus the baby has now become responds to my touch—already a significant member of my eternal family. Mormon doctrine adds to this natural wonder, creating my belief that this child is a gift from Heavenly Parents. I have come to understand the other women’s deep feelings about the beauty and love that are part of pregnancy; our common belief in Mormon doctrine helps explain why we share these feelings.

Perhaps the women who praised Mormon cultural and doctrinal influences on pregnancy are simply the women who conformed to Mormon culture and ideals most closely. Sally, Tina, and I will have had our first child in our early twenties; each of the older women I interviewed have had five or more children. Nevertheless, all the women but Lola perceived Mormonism’s influence as positive.

Although my sample is not representative,⁵ I think Mormon doctrine fuels a powerful cultural drive to create loving families. Some of the women complained when this cultural drive became too strong, but they also found that it reinforced their choice to have children. The women used their perception of Mormon doctrine and culture. In this way, they used Mormonism as a source for empowerment.

Feminism and Pregnancy

The term *feminism* is a catchall for a large and varied group of philosophies and perspectives. I believe many aspects of feminism can be used constructively by Mormon women; other parts of the coagulation known as feminism can be perceived as being in opposition to motherhood. Partly because of the LDS Church’s

doctrinal emphasis on the family, some Mormons express valid concern about feminism's effects on the family.

Several women I talked to, perhaps in response to this tension, prioritized pregnancy by denigrating feminism. But their narratives reveal that studies of pregnancy can do much to further some of feminism's goals. As the women described pregnancy, they exemplified basic tenets of feminism and contributed to developing feminist theory. Pregnancy became a platform on which they demonstrated their ability to control their experience by choosing among many options. And even as they expressed pregnancy's precedence over feminism or any other interest, the women modeled maternal ethics, an important feminist concept, by their primary commitment to their unborn children.

Seven of the eight women I interviewed used a rhetoric of choice and control, affirming their right and ability to make decisions about pregnancy and mothering—specifically, the decision to be pregnant and enjoy mothering.⁶ Suzanne, who perhaps would not normally use such strong language, said of her last pregnancy, "But by —, I was going to have this baby":

I don't want to be hassled. I know I'm forty. I've made this decision. I know I have a one-in-hundred chance of having a [Down's Syndrome] child. . . . This kid is going to be ours no matter what the circumstances are, and I don't want to be hassled.

As Sally put it, "I just kind of laugh and smile. Because it *is* beautiful and it *is* nice, and you shouldn't have to justify wanting a baby."

By asserting their ability to choose among options and follow through on that choice, the women affirmed one of feminism's most basic goals. Suzanne insisted on six children. Tina decided to finish school during her pregnancy. Ruth and Michelle continued having children despite difficult financial circumstances. Sally overrode political and feminist pressure to enjoy her pregnancy. Women overruled the suggestions of friends, family, and political vogue to fulfill a goal they considered top priority. In this way, pregnancy augmented some underpinning ideas of feminism by providing a forum where the women asserted their power. Regardless of how she chose to structure her pregnancy (several children, a few children, schooling, wage work, full-time homemaking), each woman made and defended her personal choice.

But while each woman defended her choices, the younger women (Tina, Sally, and Leslie) did not mention the cultural control that the other women did. They seemed to feel much more comfortable with their decisions to have children and didn't feel pressured by Mormon culture or any other force. They also felt much more comfortable choosing the circumstances in which to have and rear children. Sally is doing wage work full time and plans to start teaching part time after the baby is born. Leslie is staying home with her daughter. Tina is completing her student teaching while her sister watches the baby. Elaine, Lola, and Suzanne expressed admiration for younger mothers who choose when and how to have babies and who finish school, share parenting responsibilities with their husbands, and mix parenting with outside interests.

Perhaps the pressures that Lola and Elaine felt are waning today. I think Sally and Tina's comfort with their autonomy and choice can be attributed in part to feminism. These young women are enjoying the fruits of the labors of feminists and others who have demanded that women's gamut of choices be widened.

Perhaps the most striking (and fortunate) difference I noticed between women of different age-groups is the treatment they received at the doctor's office and hospital. Several women suffered from insensitive health-care providers and now-outdated procedures such as routine enemas and shaving. When Ruth complained of heartburn, her doctor responded, "It's all in your head." He told her women wanted to nurse their babies only to "feed their own ego."

Having children twenty years later, Elaine also complained about insensitive doctors. During her last labor when she complained, "I'm too old for this," Elaine's doctor told her, "I tried to tell you to get an abortion." He "cursed" at her when she resisted having her arms strapped down during labor. He explained the straps were to prevent her from touching the "sterile field"—her own body. When Elaine hemorrhaged after her first labor, the nurse looked at the blood on the floor and scolded her for making a mess.

Suzanne's obstetrician asked her four times if she planned on having her tubes tied. Suzanne finally responded, "You know, I don't know if you're not writing this on the chart or if you're not reading the charts, but you know, this is the fourth time you've

asked me. Please indicate and let's be clear about the fact that I am not through having children." Elaine also had a doctor who pushed the issue of having her tubes tied. Elaine says that childbirth is such an emotionally charged and loving time that "to be surrounded by unloving things is disgusting."

Although I have heard women in their twenties describe similar problems with their health-care providers, particularly during complicated deliveries, knowing the circumstances of these women has made me grateful to be pregnant and give birth today. Today's pregnancy and labor trends encourage pregnant women to choose among many options. Women can prepare for childbirth experiences that range from giving birth in the home attended by a lay midwife to delivering in the hospital with the help of obstetricians, anesthesiologists, and high-technology medical equipment. Husbands have the option of participating significantly in pregnancy by attending doctors' appointments and becoming educated labor coaches.

My husband and I have chosen to see certified nurse-midwives and become trained in the Bradley and Lamaze methods and unmedicated labor. We have decided that our baby will be born in a hospital and that Mark and I will stay with the baby once he is born. We are continually grateful for the nurturing and attentive care we receive from the midwives, all of whom are mothers themselves.

Sally, Tina, and Leslie, also in their twenties, describe positive experiences managing the physical and medical aspects of pregnancy. Tina and Leslie hardly mention their doctors and de-emphasize the pain of labor. Tina says, "I remember laying there on the table going, 'This isn't that bad.'" Sally sees a group of certified nurse-midwives and seems to enjoy it. She expresses a feeling of control over the situation. She concludes, "So the more I'm learning, the more I'm realizing there's a lot of ways to have a baby, and there's a lot of things that can be right for different people." Again, choice and empowerment are central issues. While some women asserted and fought for choice, the younger women seem to be enjoying it more freely.

Sally, my youngest informant, felt the strongest tension between pregnancy and feminism. I talked to Sally when she was just entering the second trimester of her first pregnancy. She and

her husband, Fred, both consider themselves to be active feminists. In their one and one-half years of marriage, they have each worked, studied, and pursued outside interests while striving to contribute equally to their marriage. In that time, Sally has graduated from BYU. Much of Sally's narrative reveals the concerns of a woman crossing a significant life boundary. Although Sally and Fred have settled into a comfortable and happy relationship, pregnancy has introduced many new issues into their marriage. Sally is working to negotiate the relationship between these new circumstances and her feminist values:

That's where it's really hard for me to think about feminism and women's issues and things like that in cases like this. Because they are issues that I never thought that I would face so soon. And then I got pregnant, and then here it is now in my face. And there are times I think he'll [Fred] never know what I'm talking about. He'll never know what it's like to have that baby inside you and what it's like to carry that baby for so long and to think about that baby and read about that baby. And I've put so much research into it and so much time and energy into thinking about it and reading about it and asking questions to people and things like that.

Well, when it finally comes down to it and we have that baby, I feel like I'm going to be more aware of the needs of that baby than he will. And that's where I start to think maybe a woman does know more about raising children. But then that contradicts what I've been trying to learn about equal rights and men can father and men can do this. I don't know. I don't have that one answered.

Sally enjoys the way pregnancy cements her relationship with Fred: "I think of Fred as family now, and I didn't used to. . . . That's kind of exciting to me. Having a family. Connecting with Fred more." However, she also believes that pregnancy reinforces gender stereotypes she wants to avoid. And for her, these stereotypes originate in the body:

I feel it's the most important thing in my whole life, and I would give up anything for that baby. And I know that already. And that's so weird that I would know that already, but I would. And so I think because you make that commitment in the first place to have it in your body and commit that time and energy and know you're putting up, giving up your body. Because it's kind of weird and alien. Something's inside you, just feeding off of you, and you're like, "Okay."

Although Fred supports Sally in her pregnancy, Sally fears he will never attain the intimacy with the baby that her physical closeness ensures. Pregnancy produces undeniable physical changes that cement their differences and seem to suggest that Sally may be better prepared to be her child's primary caretaker. She bristles uncomfortably at the possibility that in some ways pregnancy and feminism are incompatible: "I sound a little frustrated. Maybe I didn't realize I had kind of aggressive feelings about it, because in a lot of other areas Fred and I are really trying to be equal."⁷

Sally seems to resolve this conflict between feminism and motherhood by locating herself apolitically. She realigns her values to prioritize pregnancy: "And for Fred and I, it's a total commitment. It's something we really want, and I'm not willing to sacrifice having a baby for money or schooling or anything like that." As her pregnancy progresses, Sally reacts less to outside forces and creates a new ethics of femininity and motherhood:

I would say it really connects you to a larger purpose. I think it really makes you feel like a lot of things that you bowed yourself down with don't become as important anymore. I mean, you don't have time to fight over everything and to be so concerned about the last article that was written in this paper because of what they could have thought and d'da-d'da-d'da—when you have a baby to play with, and you have things to *do*.

I like that change because it makes you focus on different things. And I like that. . . . We need to get some focus. And I go home and look at . . . my brother and sister-in-law. . . . They have diapers to change and babies to play with and dishes to wash and things like that. And sometimes that can be very important to make that change in your life—at least for me. It makes you really realize what's important, because they have a family. They have love. And there's nothing more important to me than that.

Sally has overturned her priorities. Changing diapers and playing with the baby have become more important than intellectual dialogue and academic discussion.

Suzanne also describes herself as forging new values when her pregnancies violated what was politically correct. She was fired from a teaching job when her superiors learned she was pregnant. Everyone, "even the sweet librarian," expressed shock and even disapproval as her family grew: "'68, '69 was real big ZPG,

zero population growth. . . . And I said I wanted six kids, and it was just like, 'You don't do that anymore. How irresponsible.' Like I was not a responsible person." Although in other spheres Suzanne may conform with contemporary ideologies, her commitment to mothering usurped other priorities.

As Suzanne and Sally prioritize pregnancy over social demands, they confirm the theory of Julia Kristeva and other feminist theorists that through maternity women create and model a system of ethics. Moral ethics require us to respond altruistically and charitably to other people, to make the leap from concern about ourselves to concern about others. As Levinas explains, "I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it."⁸ Similarly, motherhood firmly connects a woman with another individual, the child. Kristeva writes that "maternity is a bridge between singularity and ethics" because the single woman becomes two and "the woman gains the chance to form that relationship with the symbolic and ethic Other."⁹ Other feminists have written that women's experiences with housekeeping and childrearing contribute to a feminine epistemology and a resultant feminine moral vision.¹⁰

Pregnancy aptly illustrates the development of this maternal ethics. Pregnancy epitomizes what Jacques Lacan calls the Imaginary Order, the time when an infant blissfully believes it is one with its mother. As Suzanne says, pregnancy allows unparalleled union with mother and child:

It's a real sweet [experience], I loved it when I'd first feel life. . . . Sleeping was just terrible, but it was like after you have this baby, there's this huge void, not having that baby within you. You carry that baby, you carry it, it's just like it's there, it's yours, and when it's exterior, I really go through this kind of a real separation.

In this case, neither mother nor child perceives differentiation between their identities. Although Kristeva writes that "the start of love" happens with "the arrival of the child" rather than during pregnancy, the women I interviewed indicate that during pregnancy this "imaginary" state of essential union between mother and child establishes a loving and ethical relationship. This relationship then continues beyond the arrival of the child.

Especially as it progresses, pregnancy bridges singularity and ethics. The baby is part of the mother, but also an Other who grows and increasingly asserts its individuality and Other-ness. Michelle describes the developing personality of her unborn babies: "It's this particular individual that is now growing inside of me." "And it was very distinct; it was [the baby's] pattern. . . . It wasn't like this was just a fetus—it was Jennifer!" As a pregnant woman recognizes the baby's individuality while providing for its needs, sometimes before her own, pregnancy models ethics: "I would give up anything for that baby. And I know that already." While pregnancy emphasizes the separateness of men and women and therefore conflicts with some aspects of feminism, the very biological facts that produce difference also affirm feminism and mother-ethics. Not surprisingly, all eight women bore powerful and touching testimonies of this strong love that developed during pregnancy. The women's strong affirmations of joy and love stand out from all other strands of the narratives to inspire me and haunt my dreams.

While Lola does believe that some of her pregnancies were damaging experiences for her, she calls her relationships with her last three daughters "the most wonderful relationships in my life." She says that even when her relationship with her husband was terribly dysfunctional, she loved the opportunity to bond in giving and loving ways with her babies: "I always wanted it [pregnancy] because it was the only really healthy relationship." While pregnancy was one symptom of her troubled marriage, it also produced some of the salve of those years. As she says, "There were a lot more compensations than disadvantages."

Elaine describes unqualified devotion and pure enjoyment of her children. She idealizes the times when her husband was in graduate school and she could nest in the house all day with her babies: "I loved curling up in my house with my children and just being with them. I got a great big rocking chair that I could sit in and, eventually, hold the baby and put the other one beside me. And we would read and read and read." When she was expecting her second boy, she worried that she would never be able to love him as much as her first; after he was born, she "felt guilt for the first one's sake because I loved the second one so much."

Although, given a second chance, she may have made different decisions about the timing of her pregnancies, she reveled in her children once they were born.

Michelle, the forty-two-year-old mother of six, described her love for her unborn babies in terms of looking forward to their birth:

The moment that baby is born, that's what you want. You just want it in your arms so strongly, and that's because of the affection and the emotion that has developed. . . . You sometimes have that feeling where you want to hold somebody else's baby, but it's not the same thing at all as the feeling that you have when you want to hold a baby that's been a part of you, been created by you.

In one of the most beautiful moments of the interviews, Michelle stretched out her arms, then brought her hands to rest on her chest, describing the moment just after the baby is born: "It's them just bringing the baby up and laying it down on your chest. . . . That's the beautiful, most wonderful moment."

Suzanne teared throughout her story as she affirmed again and again how much she loves pregnancy and motherhood: "I like being pregnant. I like knowing I'm pregnant. It was a great sorrow to me to have my last child"; "it's like you're falling in love with this child while you're pregnant." "So every pregnancy was wanted and expected and, I would say, almost magical. . . . Kind of a sacred excitement." Sally seemed almost surprised by her powerful emotions for her baby, "I feel it's the most important thing in my whole life." Her narrative was interrupted as she looked forward to her baby being born: "When you see your own baby and when you—oh my gosh, I'm going to cry."

Ruth, perhaps concerned that I had no children at the time, affirmed repeatedly the unique joy of bearing your own child:

My heart goes out to the women who want children so desperately and don't seem to be able to bear children. There are women who are very, very successful in their careers but who would toss it all away in a minute for the chance to rock their own babies in a rocking chair.

If Ruth was trying to bolster my commitment to motherhood, she was successful. While I recognized the beauty of these sentiments when I conducted the interviews, as I now anticipate the birth of my child, I find these words describe some of the most tender and

deep-set feelings I have ever experienced. I am, like Sally, almost surprised at the intense emotions that well up when I think about the baby and anticipate his birth.

Before I became pregnant, I aspired to Paul’s charity. I thought Paul’s statement “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12) meant that in our unperfected state our outlook on the world is like a mirror¹¹—we see only ourselves—but in our perfected state, we will (as Levinas describes) look out and see others, face to face. I thought that by devoting myself to full-time service to the poor, needy, and orphaned—and therefore postponing having children—I could burn that virtue into my head to carry with me as a model for the rest of my life. My pregnancy stopped all plans for service in exotic lands, but it revealed a more meaningful understanding of charity.

I have enjoyed carrying this child with me, having him with me always, feeling his body grow and his personality develop. I like knowing that we are linked in that what I do affects him (my eating habits, moods, and positions) and what he does affects me (his moods, positions, and periods of energy or lethargy). I describe my pregnancy as easy even though I’m sure that if this array of physical challenges and emotional upheavals were inflicted on me for any other reason than the development and welfare of my baby, I would think the whole ordeal excruciating and torturous. I can’t even fear or dread the pain of labor since I know it will yield his birth.

This closeness reveals a glimpse of true charity. My outlook on the world includes not just myself, but the baby also. While throughout pregnancy I continue to pursue my own projects, interests, and whims and while the baby sucks my energy and kicks apparently without regard for my comfort or well-being, I hardly differentiate between my needs and his. I find myself naturally suffering long, envying not, seeking not my own, not being easily provoked, bearing and enduring all things—in regard to the baby (see 1 Cor. 13:4–7). Now this is the lifetime model that has been burned into my head. Having tasted the sweetness of charity, how can I extend this feeling to even the most casual of acquaintances?

Conclusion

Pregnancy, Mormon doctrine and culture, and true feminist values can work together. The tensions some feel from this triumvirate come from the growth of a fertile relationship. Mormon doctrine affirms the magnificence and eternal significance of the God-modeled family that pregnancy begins. Feminist theory highlights the agency and moral ethics that Mormon doctrine asserts and pregnancy demonstrates. Pregnancy actively and vividly acts out basic tenets of Mormon doctrine and feminism, namely, agency and strong love.

Mormons share a culture that values families, motherhood, and recording our experience for our own and our posterity's benefit. Contemporary women benefit from some of the influences of feminism, which also encourages us to learn about and value the experiences of women. Collecting women's narratives of pregnancy has convinced me of the powerful value of such stories. The narratives reinforced my knowledge that pregnancy is a spiritually beautiful, personally powerful, academically valid, and socially important experience.

The narratives can benefit many groups of people. Sharing their narratives helps mothers organize and think through their experience. Hearing such narratives can provide practical advice and preparation to mothers- and fathers-to-be. Including such experiential information in academic feminist discourse can support and expand developing pregnancy/maternal theory.

My emotions these days seem dominated by discomfort about my torpedo belly, swollen face, and stretched ligaments, and I sometimes feel overwhelmed by the idea that when this baby is born *I* will be the mother. But my own pregnancy narrative is one of accepting God's will, tasting charity, approaching an eternal family, and becoming a strong and fulfilled woman as defined by feminism and the gospel.

Angela Ashurst-McGee is a mother and a free-lance book editor. Roscoe Henry was born on July 10, 1995.

NOTES

¹Although I transcribed only seven interviews, I refer briefly to Leslie, whose interview I did not transcribe. The seven transcriptions and an earlier draft of this paper are found in "Great with Child: Pregnancy Narratives by Mormon Women" (honors thesis, BYU, 1994) at the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Unless otherwise specified, all citations are from this thesis. *Elaine* has a different name in the thesis.

Although my questions varied somewhat, I asked each woman some version of the following: What did you worry about and look forward to during your pregnancies? What were your favorite and least favorite aspects of pregnancy? What emotional experiences marked your pregnancies? How did you feel about your unborn children? How did religion impact your pregnancies? How did you feel as you anticipated labor?

²William A. Wilson, "The Study of Mormon Folklore: An Uncertain Mirror for Truth," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (winter 1989): 97.

³William A. Wilson, "In Praise of Ourselves: Stories to Tell," *BYU Studies* 30 (winter 1990): 7.

⁴Suzanne admits that she doesn't talk about her pregnancy experiences in some settings because she fears lack of understanding or even opposition.

⁵My sample is restricted to a few people I know, and I did not interview any single mothers or women without children.

⁶While the term *choice* is often used to advocate legalized abortion, the term emphasizes women's agency, or right to choose. This same concept—important in Mormon theology—can be affirmed by pregnancy, the opposite of abortion.

⁷Perhaps this response affirms the value of sharing pregnancy narratives. Sally complains that her husband remains distant from her pregnancy experience, yet she became a student of pregnancy only when she became pregnant herself. She wonders, "If he was suddenly having a baby, would I feel like it was his thing?" Similarly, my husband (despite my repeated urgings) never read all the interviews until my own pregnancy. Apparently, pregnancy is discussed only when experience makes it necessary. How would Sally's feelings differ if she and Fred had discussed pregnancy together from the beginning the way they discuss sharing chores? Perhaps like any issue in marriage where the couple wants to be equal and in harmony, pregnancy requires work and advance planning.

⁸Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1985), 98.

⁹Julia Kristeva, "A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident," *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 297. For more on Kristeva and maternity, see her "Stabat Mater," *The Kristeva Reader*, 161-86; *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoel, 1983); "Women's Time," *SIGNS* 7 (autumn 1981): 20-36.

In "A New Type of Intellectual," Kristeva writes:

Real female innovation (in whatever social field) will only come about when maternity, female creation and the link between them are better understood. But for that to happen we must . . . begin the work of specific and detailed analysis which will take us beyond romantic melodrama and beyond complacency. (298)

I agree that a more sophisticated theory of maternity is an important and incumbent step for feminism, yet I question Kristeva's approach to the issue. Her writings, including those on maternity, are highly theoretical and so difficult to read that they are inaccessible and therefore unhelpful to the vast majority of women. I believe that useful pregnancy and maternal discourse should begin with women's own portrayals and analyses of their experiences. Women's own narratives can provide material for "specific and detailed analysis" without "melodrama" or "complacency."

¹⁰See Josephine Donovan, "The New Feminist Moral Vision," in *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism* (New York: Continuum, 1992), 171-86; Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon, 1989); Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi, *The Sacred and the Feminine: Toward a Theology of Housework* (New York: Seabury, 1982); Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers, eds. *Women and Moral Theory* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield), 1987.

¹¹See James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1890), "Main Concordance," 391, "Key Word Comparison," 192; "Greek Dictionary of the New Testament," 33.

Troubled Water

How I'd like to say I've brought a secret
 from the other side. Some message from the ghosts who lumber
 through our sleep. But I have brought back nothing.
 Another child, wordless as a fish, smooth
 as a waxy petal. She is sleeping on a quilt in the middle
 of the lawn, white flower quivering
 through thick water near the bottom of the sea.

Those first mornings while the fat sun swam into the sky
 and I paddled back and forth across the shallow end,
 the child would sometimes bobble up inside the womb.
 Back and forth each morning, I would singsong beneath
 my breath, *Someone swimming in me swimming in . . .*
 Above the glassed-in roof a bird rowed through scuds
 of mist. All around us the watery world, the boom
 and splash of voices over the surface of the pool.

The sky turns gray. The walk outside the clinic
 just long enough to pace between each wave of pain.
 At one end, the deep lawn, fields, an orchard,
 the trees and rooftops of the city. Strips of cloud trail
 onto the mountain to the east: rain, at a distance.
 Wet wind swells across the valley, down
 from the upper slopes where water drops from pine-tips,
 sinks into the grass. Where rain slants through aspens
 into shoals of wild mint, of white columbine bobbing.

Once I forgot how to breathe.
Good, crooned the midwife, *groaning's good*.

Groaning's fine. But the pitch kept rising,
 filling the room with someone else's wail.
 A sound you'd hear at night,
 far from home, belling
 across the water. Not that the even, counted
 breathing absorbs pain. But without it,
 you lose your way. You circle somewhere
 in the middle. You never come home.

Today while this daughter sleeps, I watch the shadows
 sway uneasily beneath the trees. My body is still
 fragile. I've heard other women say they slid
 into eternity, that the hidden mother opened beneath them
 as they opened. I was too busy easing
 my way back to notice. Now, beneath the neighbors' car,
 a small white cat stretches its neck, eyes me as if I knew.
 Rolls itself into the dust, one paw in the air,
 gazes at me over its back. White tail, white head
 twist in and out, a flood of allusive gesture.
 All I can think of—tallest mountains floating
 like a frozen crust on molten rock, deepest sea a film
 of water pooling. Trees on the high ridge ride a wind
 I can't feel. They billow and ripple away
 from me. Already she closes her eyes when I come too near.

—MaryJan Munger

"Troubled Water" was the winner of the 1995 Eisteddfod Chair Competition.

Introduction to “On Being Mormon in Canada and Canadian in Utah”

Nancy R. Lund

As part of the Asael and Maydell Palmer Lecture Series, Canadian Studies at Brigham Young University presented a program on March 14, 1996, entitled “Three Mormon Women: Reflections and Perspectives.” The program featured three outstanding LDS women, all born Canadian—Elaine L. Jack, Ardeth Greene Kapp, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher.

The “reflections and perspectives” of these women provide windows into the experience of Latter-day Saints who grow up in Canada but have ancestral and, more especially, spiritual ties to the United States. Such international ties are not unlike those experienced by many members of the Church who are born in one nation, serve a mission in another, or attend school, work, or live in yet another.

Elaine Jack spoke of growing up in Cardston, a quiet, LDS community dominated by the “presence of the temple.” In this small prairie town, Sister Jack learned there are “things you can count on—like winter and wind. . . . You could count on your home and family being the center of your universe. . . . You could count on looking out for each other. . . . You could count on the Church.” After her marriage to an American, Sister Jack became a U.S. citizen, but of her native Canada, she said:

I always relish the feeling of going home, approaching the Canadian border from Montana, when all the familiar landmarks begin to appear. I have felt this way for 45 years. . . . I love how the land gradually flattens out from the Rocky Mountains into a prairie that grows buttercups and shooting stars and buffalo beans and wild roses and yarrow. . . . Canada made me and centered me.

Ardeth Greene Kapp compared her ability to appreciate the philosophies of both Canada and the U.S. to the capacity to love and be loyal to the two very different philosophies of the families that affected her life—the outgoing, innovative family of her mother and the orderly, peace-loving family of her father. “What are my feelings of loyalty, devotion, and allegiance to two countries and two families? How could I value one over the other?” she asked. “Is not each benefited by the uniqueness of the other?”

Sister Kapp, a U.S. citizen by the time she was called to serve in the Young Women’s General Presidency, also shared having loyalty to both a native and an adopted land with two members of the First Presidency:

One does not lose a sense of loyalty and love for one’s roots. President Romney of the First Presidency, who had his roots in the colonies of Mexico, set me apart. When he finished, President Tanner, also a counselor in the First Presidency and a Canadian by birth, said to President Romney, “Now you know she is a Canadian”; to which President Romney responded with that twinkle in his eye, “Oh, really? When I placed my hands on her head, I was sure she was a Mexican.”

Elaine Jack put into perspective allegiance to different nations and to the gospel by stating, “I was born in Cardston, eighteen miles from the border of Montana and another country. . . . But our lives there were influenced by the Church, and that mattered even more than territorial boundaries.”

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher’s essay, printed here, offers a universal expression of the mixed loyalties touching all who feel an allegiance to more than one country, and beyond national boundaries, to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Personal Essay

On Being Mormon in Canada and Canadian in Utah

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher

Peter Gzowski, a name unpronounceable to Americans, is a byword to Canadians. Weekday mornings, CBC radio listeners hear his wry comments and sage interviews reflecting Canadian life on *Morningside*. In the mid-seventies, when *Morningside* was still *This Country in the Morning*, Gzowski ran a contest asking listeners to finish this sentence: “As Canadian as . . .” Entries poured in: “As Canadian as a toboggan” or “As Canadian as Diefenbaker.” But the grand-slam winner was unforgettable: “As Canadian as possible, under the circumstances.”¹

What is there Canadian in us—Elaine, Ardeth, and me? We were all born north of the forty-ninth parallel, admittedly, but our parents or at least grandparents were emigrants from Utah. I’m not sure about Elaine and Ardeth, but I have spent as much of my life in the United States as I did in Canada, and those years were my most productive. It was Canada, however, that nurtured me, taught me, endured my adolescent peccadilloes, and spewed me forth to do whatever it was I would do with what she created in me. Canada is my motherland—meaningful on many levels.

The other term in my title, “Mormon,” while it is unlike “Canadian” in that it is first and essentially a matter of faith and conversion, still shares with “Canadian” some characteristics of heritage, identity, and ethnicity. “As Mormon as possible, despite the circumstances?” What is it to be Mormon? And for the purposes of today’s consideration, What was it to grow up Mormon in Canada? What is it to be Canadian in Mormon Utah? To approach that question, I need to look beyond myself, to my foremothers.

My Grandmother Harvey, Millie Cluff—a schoolmarm in Utah’s Wasatch County from the time she was sixteen—married

Richard Coope Harvey in 1886. With his own hands, he farmed his own land and that of his widowed mother. He built the little house in Center Creek, just east of Heber, where he and Millie set to housekeeping. Three children were born to them, the oldest not yet four when Richard was called on a mission. Millie returned to teaching to support them all. On Richard's return, farming for a living became increasingly difficult in the increasingly populated valley with its limited arable space. And what would be left for his sons when they became adults?

"Homesteads available in Canada," read a tract which fell into Richard's hand one day. All the way home, the idea reverberated insistently in his mind. "Millie," he announced as he scraped his boots at the kitchen door, "we're going to Canada!"

They waited until Margaret Lucile was born, the baby who would become my mother. She was not yet two months old when, in early April 1900, Millie packed her children, two suitcases, and a huge food hamper and boarded the train for the unknown north. Richard, with the farm machinery, household goods, Millie's pump organ, the cattle, and Mormon Hort to help out, had left two days earlier.

For Richard, Canada was not so mysterious and fearful as it was for Millie. Not only had his father been born and reared in Ontario, but also while returning from his mission, Richard had visited his relatives there. But for Millie, with one babe in arms and four more children, the prospects not only of the journey, but of the arrival must have been terrifying. If indeed she had permitted herself to admit fear.

They arrived at the remote Stirling station in a blizzard (another account says a heavy rainstorm, but either is possible in Alberta in April), and while Millie and the children bedded down in the station house, Richard and Mormon herded cattle all night lest the animals stray in the storm.

Morning light revealed the Alberta prairie in its fearful glory—a full circle of unbroken horizon. Three hundred and sixty degrees of flat grassland. For Richard these were elysian fields—all that grass and nothing to do but feed his cattle. Even without cattle to feed or fields to plow, I share my grandfather's love of the prairies; they expand the vision, stretch the mind, make real the possibility of eternity.

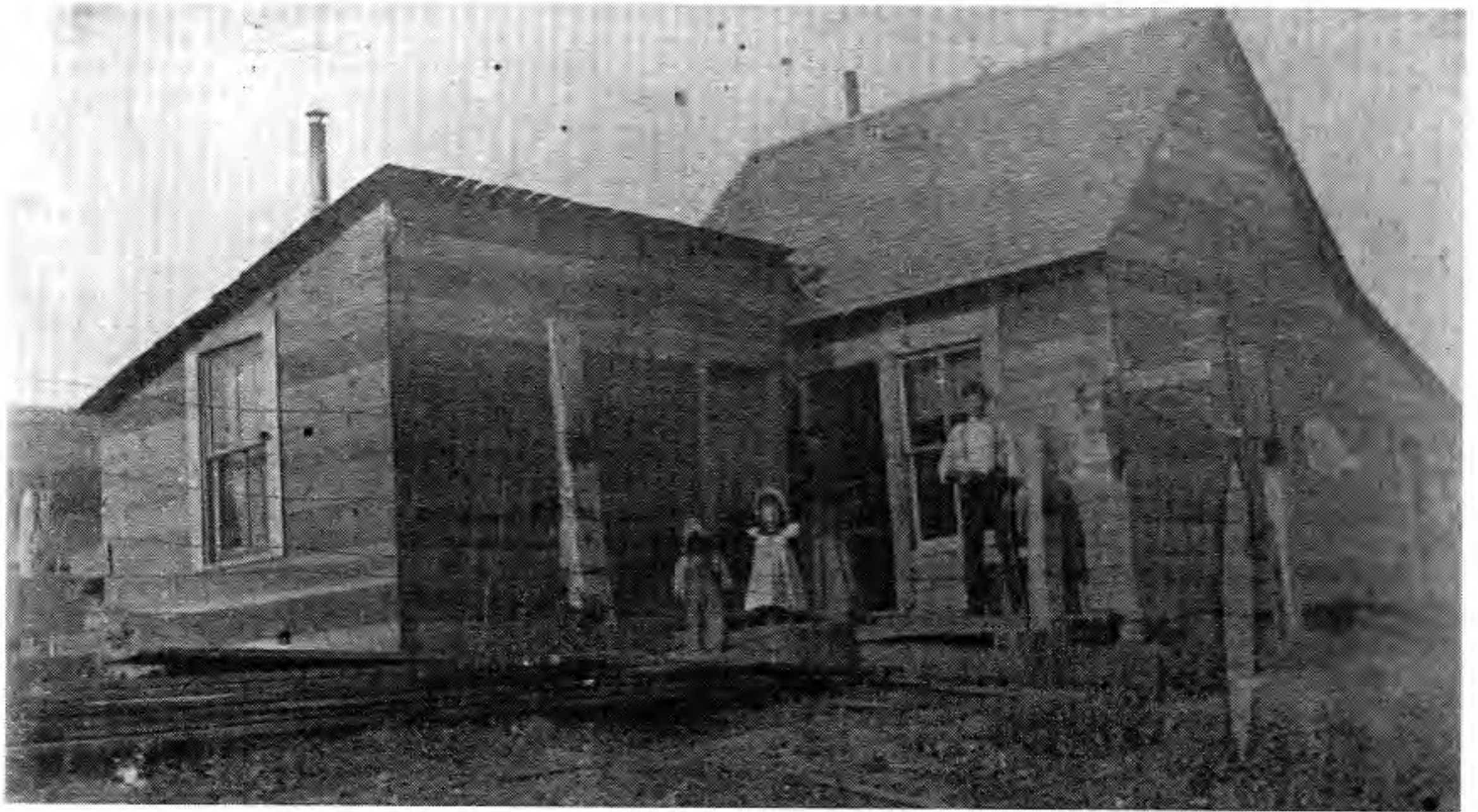


Etzicom Coulee, Alberta. Facing east, July 1995. The rise to the right was the site of the first Harvey home in Canada. Photo by Theron R. Nalder.

But I know, too, the terrifying aloneness of walking a prairie road on a midwinter night under a full moon. I never sing the old song “The Hills of Home” without a twinge of sympathy for Millie, who, however beautiful she might have thought her prairie home, always longed to return to her mountain-bordered valley. Millie would never complain, of course, other than to admit wistfully that “if Richard were to choose to return to Utah, I should be happy to accompany him.”

Richard took up land seven miles south of Stirling. A section on the Etzicom Coulee was perfect—a depression in the prairie that filled each spring with runoff water and, up the hill south, flat fields as far as the eye could see.

Lucile grew up knowing only the prairie. In her sunbonnets—always bright red ones so her mother could track her in the tall grass—she waded in the coulee stream, slid squealing down the hay stacked in the barn, played hide-and-seek in the ruts of the Fort Benton Trail that ran behind the house. At night she and the other children leaned over the open stairwell from the loft to listen to



First Harvey home. On the rise above the Etzicom Coulee, about 1905. *Left to right:* Robert, Lucile, Elma, and John Harvey, children of Richard and Millie Harvey. The room on the right was constructed from railroad ties initially filled with bugs. The built-on room to the left, made from good lumber, was for the first schoolteacher, Mr. Fitch.



Feeding motherless lambs. On the Harvey homestead, about 1908. *Left to right:* Elma, Robert, and Lucile Harvey. Because of Millie's poor health, Elma cared for the household in her stead. Once when Lucile tired of feeding lambs, this circumstance led to her proposal "Let their Elma's feed them."



Baptizing in Etzicom Coulee. Looking southwest toward the second Harvey home, about 1910. By then, Richard Harvey had built a head gate to control and retain the coulee water. There had been no head gate when Lucile was baptized in “just a puddle of water left from the winter.”



Harvey family. *Seated left to right:* Mildred “Millie” Cluff Harvey, Ralph, Richard Coope Harvey, Robert, and Lucile. *Standing:* Foster, Mildred, John, and Elma. 1910.

the grown-ups talking and singing. Growing older, she roamed the rolling prairie on her pony, Buie Anajohn, or went with Foster and Mildred and handsome Ersal Smith to the dances in Stirling.

Unlike the Mormon settlements further west, the coulee was home to so few Latter-day Saints that Sunday School was held in my grandparents' or the Keslers' home until the little schoolhouse was built the year Lucile turned six. The schoolmaster, Mr. Fitch, a Gentile from Ontario, boarded with the Harveys in a lean-to room of the first house and often on snowy mornings carried Lucile, his favorite, the half mile to school.

A diary Lucile kept from her tenth birthday on reveals no distinction in the young girl's mind between LDS and gentile settlers on the coulee—the parties celebrating Christmas or Valentine's Day included everyone, even the four bachelor farmers further along the coulee. The Mormon families were just a part of the mix of coulee society.

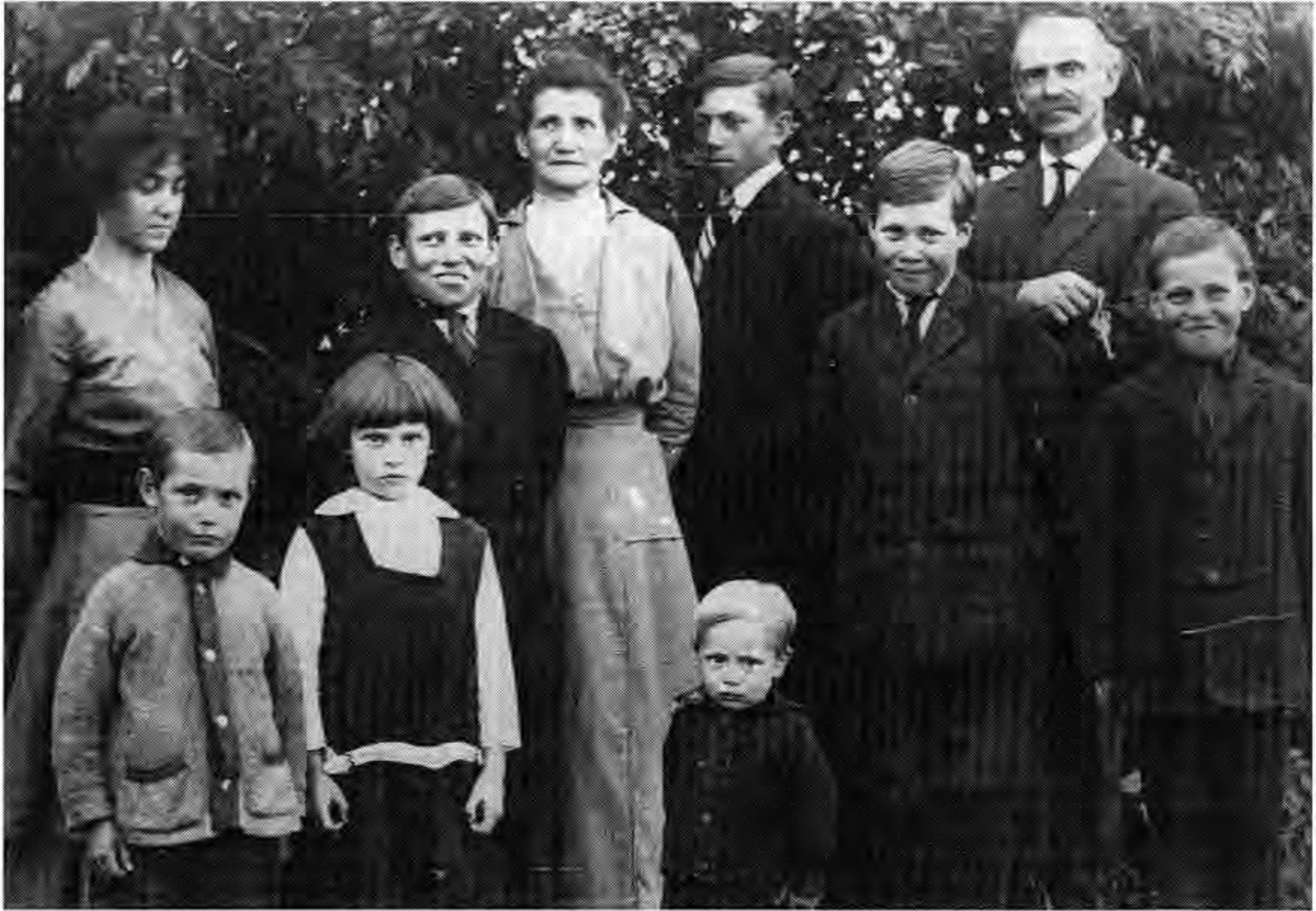
When in her thirteenth year Lucile was sent into Lethbridge to attend high school, therefore, she was unprepared for the harshness of the anti-Mormon bias of that gentile city. Bright and literate



Lucile Harvey Ursenbach. Holding daughter Maureen, 1935, Calgary, Alberta.

though she was, she found herself ill equipped to compete with the city students; worse, she was the only Mormon in her school, and her religion branded her pariah there. Only later in the year, when a Mennonite girl from Grassy Lake moved in, did she have a friend. Lucile never completed high school but went instead to Garbutt Business College and then to work.

But you would never have sensed in her a lack of formal education. From her schoolteacher mother, Lucile had learned early the value of lifelong education, the importance



Ursenbach family. About 1915, a few years after they moved to Raymond, Alberta. *Left to right:* Winona, Grant, Ruth, Dean, Hannah Turner Harvey, Mark, Octave Willis, Charles, Octave Frederick Harvey, and Roy. Missing are Joseph, who remained in Utah, and Grace and Jocile, who are not yet born (Grace will later die in childhood).

of music, the necessity of beauty. I'm not sure her brothers ever got that message, but she and her sister Mildred will always represent to me the highest ideals of never-ending learning, of gracious living.

Ten years after Richard and Millie moved to Canada, my paternal grandparents came as well. Hannah and Octave Ursenbach were part of a third wave of Mormon immigrants to southern Alberta, arriving in a quite-settled Raymond in 1910. Octave had been sent as teacher in the Church-sponsored Knight Academy. My father, sixth of their eleven children, learned the lessons of self-reliance as a youth. After typhoid fever ended his attempt to earn a degree at the University of Utah (in contrast, two of my mother's siblings attended the agricultural college in Guelph, Ontario), my father returned to Alberta, courted my mother, and won her hand.

Sensing widening opportunity, the young Ursenbachs (after Dad had left his young wife while he served a mission, as had my Grandfather Harvey) moved to the Big City. Calgary had then only a

hundred-odd Latter-day Saints but all the more warmth of camaraderie for the paucity of membership. An amalgam of British and northern European immigrants, Canadian converts, and southern Alberta Mormons, the ward grew, built its chapel on Crescent Road. Its growth kept pace with the city's expansion: then, as now, a sparse 1 percent of Calgary's population was LDS. The difference is that now Calgary has half a million inhabitants and six LDS stakes.

The fourth and last of Charles and Lucile's children, I grew up with the Church in Calgary. Like my mother, I was often the only Mormon in my school; unlike her, I don't recall its being an educational disadvantage. Like my daughter, born into white-middle-class Mormon Salt Lake City, I seemed to thrive on being different. Being among Gentiles amplified my Mormonness; being surrounded by Mormons sent my daughter off the Wasatch Front to discover her religious roots.

I grew up not only aware of my Mormon identity, but also having a strong affinity for things American. I sang "God Bless America" while my parents waited impatiently for the United States to enter World War II; I prided myself on the faddish bobby sox my aunt Mildred sent from Utah; and for some unaccountable reason, I never spoke with a "Canajan" accent. ("Eh?" is such a useful shibboleth—I envy those who use it with just the right inflection—it can't be faked!)

Then my north-south axis shifted. Looking eastward, I learned more about Canada beyond the prairie horizon. Living and working in Montreal, I became ever more fond of Canada's polyglot diversity. I understood with greater compassion the complaints of the Québécois: that I could live four years in a city predominantly French-speaking and never have need to speak French makes clear the linguistic tyranny which gave rise to Quebec's overcompensation against English. My Canada is *all* of Canada—had I been there last October, I'd have marched in Montreal in favor of the referendum's² "Non!" side.

Like my daughter, I had to move away for my roots to assert their draw on me, for my grafted-on branches to attain full flower. I have attended universities in both western and eastern Canada and in the United States; I have lived and worked in North America and Europe; I filled a mission in my paternal Switzerland and

visited my maternal origins in Scotland. But always with a maple leaf pin in my coat lapel.

So what does this say about being Mormon in Canada or Canadian in Mormon country? That it's a mixed bag. That the experience is as varied as are we border crossers. That one can harbor more than one intra-national or inter-national loyalty in the same breast, usually without conflict. That like the original Mormon settlers at Lee's Creek,³ one can observe one huge celebration lasting from Canada's July First through the Glorious Fourth.

Heir both to my British Canadian heritage of peace, order, and good government and to my American cause of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, I sense a widened vocabulary of life expressions. I find justification for both evolution and revolution; I am tolerant of some imperialism, knowing it to be a passing phase, and of some violent uprising, realizing that sometimes tyranny demands rebellion. I am equally proud of America's economic largess to evolving countries and of Canada's peace-keeper roles in embattled regions.

The dual national loyalty with which I grew up has created in me a still developing expansiveness. I am sister not only to the inhabitants of one country with two official languages and a dozen ethnic groups and to a continent of three national entities in perpetual détente, but also sibling to people of a world of countless countries. Knowing that I feel connectedness on both sides of one border makes all borders meaningless. The world is my native land; its people of all colors, background, and origin, my brothers and sisters. As my mother used to remind us, I am by descent English, Irish, Scots, Welsh, French, Norman, Saxon, Norse—whatever. When I am in Switzerland, I am Swiss; in London, I am British. I wonder what I will become when I fulfill my dream of living in India.

National and ethnic identity fades in the global awareness born of dual citizenship. Into the space created by a lessening chauvinism comes the other aspect of my identity. I am a Latter-day Saint. I am a daughter of eternal parents, sister to all humankind. I have been taught, have learned, that we are not "one nation under God" or two or twenty. We are a global family. My sisters in Bosnia Herzegovina are experiencing war's aftermath; my brothers in Zaire have overcome the Ebola virus, only to see it spring up in another

village; until last month my feuding siblings in the Middle East were coming closer to sharing their heritage from Father Abraham; and my English-Irish cousins, recently so close to peace, have broken faith again. And I alternately rejoice and weep with them all.

My faith transcends national boundaries, forbids my making of some nations friend, of others enemy. “For there is neither East nor West,” my mother used to recite, “nor border, breed, nor birth.” NAFTA⁴ makes sense to me only as a first step toward global free trade; voting for president or prime minister only makes me wish to have my small say in a world government, a really united United Nations. I can stand and sing “God Save the Queen,” or I can sit and sing “My Country, ’Tis of Thee.” But the lines that catch my breath and resonate through my being remain “Our fathers’ God, to thee, / Author of liberty, / To thee we sing.” Only when the love of God is felt in truth and freedom by “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people” will I feel our work is done.

Knowing all this, I can still joke—I am “as Canadian as possible, under the circumstances”; but my heart beats in a much wider world, and I claim as my nation the whole of humankind, under God, father of us all.

Maureen Ursenbach Beecher is Professor of English and associate at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University. All the photographs are from the collection of Charles and Lucile Ursenbach, now in possession of the author.

NOTES

¹The winning entry was by E. Heather Scott, according to Shelly Ambrose of the *Morningside* staff, telephone interview with the author, October 9, 1996. In 1994 controversy over credit for the quip became so insistent that the *Toronto Globe and Mail* carried letters to the editor on the subject.

²The 1995 referendum gave Quebecers the opportunity to decide whether their province should separate from the rest of Canada. The “No” side won by a margin of less than 1 percent.

³Lee’s Creek, founded in 1887, was the original name of present-day Cardston and was the first Mormon settlement in Alberta.

⁴North American Free Trade Agreement, passed by both the American Congress and Canadian Parliament in 1993.

Introductory Thoughts on Equality

Significant ambiguity stands behind the word equality, a crucial consideration in discussions of social issues such as those explored in the article following these introductory observations.

Frederick Mark Gedicks

In Matthew 20, Jesus relates a perplexing parable. A farmer went down to the marketplace early one morning to hire day laborers for his vineyard. The farmer found some people willing to work and agreed to pay them each a penny for a day's labor. Later in the morning, the farmer noticed others milling about the marketplace, and hired them as well, promising that "whatsoever is right I will give you" (v. 4); he did the same at noon and at mid-afternoon, again promising the latecomers that he would pay them whatever is fair. Finally, "at the eleventh hour," he noticed that there still remained men loitering about the marketplace. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" he asked (v. 6). "Because no man hath hired us," the laborers replied (v. 7). Upon hearing this, the farmer hired the men himself, even though there was only one hour left in the work day: "Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive" (v. 7).

When evening came and the work day had ended, the farmer called the laborers together to give them their pay. To each of those hired last, at the eleventh hour, he gave a penny. One can imagine that such a wage must have raised the spirits of those hired early in the morning; having just witnessed the farmer paying a penny to those hired last, who worked only the last hour of the day, those hired first expected to be paid more. But when it came their turn, "they likewise received each man a penny" (v. 10). Thinking they had been treated unfairly, they complained to the farmer, saying "These last have wrought but one hour, and thou

hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day” (v. 12). The farmer was unmoved:

Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? (vv. 13-15)

One can imagine these workers wandering off into the night, muttering about the injustice of it all.

This parable illustrates, among other things, the illusive character of equality. In one respect, equality seems to be merely a formal characteristic. It attempts to prescribe not how people must be treated, but only that, however they are treated, they all be treated the same. For example, equality cannot tell us what a fair wage should be; it states only that those who do the same amount of work should receive the same wages. What is problematic about the parable of the marketplace from the standpoint of equality—and what tends to trouble Latter-day Saints—is not that the first group of laborers may have received minuscule pay for twelve hours of hard labor (which may have been the going wage), but that those who worked only an hour received the same pay as those who worked the full day.

Yet, merely treating people the same is frequently insufficient to satisfy equality. What is necessary for equality is not merely that people be treated the same, but that they be treated the same with respect to some relevant factor, such as hours worked. Had the first-hired workers been paid \$.12 for their twelve hours of labor, and the last-hired workers \$.01 for their single hour of work, most modern people would agree that the workers had been treated equally even though they were paid different amounts. My intent is not to judge whether the farmer in the parable acted equitably or not—indeed, the smallest unit of time for a legal wage in the first century could have been a day, for all we know. Rather, my point is only this: when people are situated differently with respect to some relevant characteristic, then equality permits, and may demand, different treatment.

Although this principle is obvious in theory, many controversies over equality revolve around attempts to determine in practice the characteristics or situations by which equality should be

measured. For example, while U.S. law holds that it is virtually never legitimate for government to allocate scarce services or opportunities based upon a person's race, it is proper and permissible to ration these things on the basis of relevant intellectual or physical characteristics. Thus, a state university may not consider race in deciding whether to admit a group of applicants, but it may properly admit those applicants with the highest combination of grade point averages and entrance examination scores, and its basketball coach may accept onto the team only the most skilled players. Relevance is not always this obvious, however. Consider two possible applicants, one from a poverty-stricken home who attended a large, crime-ridden public high school and was the first in her family to graduate, and another from a wealthy family with a long tradition of educational excellence who has attended a prestigious private school? Is equality served if the latter student is preferred over the former because she has better grades and test scores? Is the fact that one has overcome considerable obstacles in earning her grades—or, conversely, that one has had few obstacles and many advantages—a factor relevant to university admissions decisions? How are these questions to be answered? The concept of equality alone cannot tell us which characteristics or factors or situations are relevant and thus justify differential treatment; equality can tell us only that once it has been established that a person is differently situated from others in some relevant way, differential treatment is permitted, if not required.

One consequence of this uncertainty about which characteristics or factors are relevant to an equality-driven decision is that one can always make a plausible case for equality or inequality, regardless of how the decision is made, by arguing that factors relevant to the decision were not considered or that irrelevant factors were. If the disadvantaged student is admitted over the advantaged one, it can be argued that academic indicators are the only relevant factors and thus the advantaged student was treated unequally. If the disadvantaged student is rejected in favor of the advantaged one, it can be argued that educational disadvantage is a relevant factor and thus the disadvantaged student was treated unequally.

Another problem is deciding when equality is the value or virtue that should drive the result. Other qualities may also prove

to be important and controlling. For instance, generosity may yield unequal results. A person may rightly give a gift to one friend without bestowing the same favor on all.

As if these perplexities were not already enough, considerations of equality in gospel contexts can become even more confusing. Although in gospel contexts the consistency of decisions or doctrines with the idea of equality must be evaluated according to spiritual criteria, our situation in a fallen world often leads us to think or speak in terms of worldly or secular criteria and rhetoric. Being aware of this circumstance can affect evaluations of equality in a religious setting in at least two ways. First, decisions that seem to violate equality according to worldly criteria may actually affirm equality when considered on the basis of spiritual criteria. Second, worldly criteria may sometimes be mistaken for spiritual criteria, so that inequalities that seem required by spiritual criteria, in fact, are not. Identifying worldly and spiritual criteria and distinguishing their respective effects on gospel decisions or doctrines is as difficult as it is unavoidable.

In the article that follows, Kent Harrison and Mary Stovall Richards consider feminism, which is a term with many meanings but which in all of its manifestations is pervasively about gender equality. They consider the core concerns of feminism “in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” In so doing, they undertake the difficult task of sorting out the mixture of worldly and spiritual criteria on which our judgments of equal treatment in gender issues so often rest. For example, they observe that the Savior often valued eternal perspectives over social conventions governing relations between men and women; from this section we might learn that the Savior desires more sensitivity on our part to the difference between social habits or political definitions and eternal spiritual imperatives. They persuasively argue that the assumptions long relied upon to deny women equal treatment in education and employment are derived from culture rather than scripture. Their attempt to disentangle the spirit from the flesh deserves careful attention from all who wish to ponder how equality figures as one of God’s attributes and a factor in contemporary Latter-day Saint circumstances.

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Feminism in the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

In its most basic form, feminism echoes eternal truths of the gospel, which affirms the equal worth of all people, the equal right to and capacity for spirituality, and the evils of abuse.

B. Kent Harrison and Mary Stovall Richards

Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them . . . who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend.

—Dorothy Sayers¹

For some people, an unbridgeable gap stands between the gospel of Jesus Christ and feminism. To them, a Christian feminist or a Mormon feminist is an oxymoron,² a person who has not thought seriously about either the gospel or feminism. However, there are devoted Latter-day Saints, both women and men, who consider themselves feminists. They declare that, far from being antithetical to the gospel, their feminism arises from their testimony of Christ and commitment to him. Through their personal experience with his love, example, and teachings, they affirm the reality of Christ's devotion to every person as individually significant. Hence, the message of Christ's gospel ordains equality and fairness in all human relationships, including those between the sexes.

While even among feminists there are widely varying interpretations of the meaning of *feminism*,³ we think most feminists would agree on a basic definition, with which we hope readers will concur: feminism advocates the equal treatment of women

and men and states that discrimination, in particular against women, does exist and should be eliminated.⁴ Far from promoting the reverse tyranny of women over men, such feminism simply affirms the equal importance of each individual, regardless of sex.⁵ As scholars, we have tried to bring our academic interests to bear on issues of concern to our religious principles. Our purpose in this essay is to identify fundamental principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ that are consistent with this basic meaning of feminism and to draw certain practical conclusions that follow from those principles.

Valuing Others Equally and Divine Love

In affirming the equal value of men and women, feminism, as defined above, echoes eternal truth. The gospel of Jesus Christ teaches our eternal worth and supreme importance to God: “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10). As Moses 1:39 declares, “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man [and woman].” In fact, it is only through love that God governs, for “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8); he does not govern through coercion or manipulation. And it is God’s supreme, all-encompassing love for us that draws us to him (D&C 121:41–46).

The scriptures show that this love encompasses all persons, who are equal before God regardless of gender, age, class, race, or nationality. Paul taught in his epistle to the Galatians that within the body of Christ, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). In the Western Hemisphere, Nephi explained the same doctrine: God is no respecter of persons. All persons “are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” for “all are alike unto God”—“black and white, bond and free, male and female . . . Jew and Gentile” (2 Ne. 26:28, 33). In practical terms, this doctrine means, as Alma taught those Zoramites who were poor and had been turned out of the synagogues of the wealthy, that the Lord “imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times, which confound the wise and the learned” (Alma 32:23).

In his earthly ministry, the Savior exemplified concern for all persons. In fact, he flouted cultural and legal proscriptions regarding women's spiritual and social place in Jewish culture.⁶ For example, although women were considered so spiritually inferior to men that they were not to read or study the scriptures and some rabbis would not even speak to a woman in public, Christ taught women the gospel. In his parables, he repeatedly paired female and male examples, such as juxtaposing the man who lost his sheep with the woman who misplaced her coin. By doing so, Christ not only couched his teachings in terms relevant to women's lives, but also underscored the eternal worth of women's souls.⁷ Christ revealed himself as the Messiah to a woman (who was also an "unclean" Samaritan)—the first declaration by Christ of his identity that is recorded in the New Testament (John 4:25-26). Christ healed women and raised a woman from the dead (Matt. 15:22-28; Luke 8:49-56). Women were among his most devoted disciples, remaining at the cross and returning to the tomb to anoint his body (Luke 23:49; 24:1).

Further, while under Jewish law women were considered incompetent as legal witnesses, Christ chose to appear first after the Resurrection to a woman, whom he then charged to tell his apostles of the glorious event (John 20:11-17). Previously, he had sanctioned a woman's anointing him prior to his crucifixion (Mark 14:3-9; John 12:3-8), an act that, according to two Mormon authors, "may be seen as the prophetic recognition of Jesus as the Anointed."⁸ Such actions by Christ appear to be deliberately chosen to contravene societal conventions that denied women's equality before God and full personhood. Christ desired to move his followers beyond their dehumanizing and constricting—but perhaps comfortably familiar—cultural mores to eternal truth.

Christ also ignored any sort of precedence that might be conveyed solely by categories, such as age or birth. Not only did he welcome and bless girls and boys during his ministries both in mortality and among the Nephites, but he specifically taught that all persons must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mark 10:13-16; 3 Ne. 17:11-12, 21-24). Christ was quick to point out that pedigree, meaning descent from Abraham, would not save a person if he or she were unrighteous (John 8:33-39).

Indeed, several Gentiles in the New Testament were especially blessed because of their righteousness: the centurion whose servant Christ healed, the Ethiopian whom Philip baptized, and Cornelius, who was baptized by Peter (Matt. 8:5–13; Acts 8:26–40; Acts 10). Prior to Cornelius's baptism, Peter had assumed that the gospel was mainly for the Jews or that it would be necessary for a Gentile to become a Jew before he or she could become a Christian. But after a marvelous vision, Peter learned that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34–35).

Christ's emphasis on individuals, not categories of people,⁹ is instructive to those seeking to follow him. In following his example, one should emulate the same equality of love as that shown by Christ for all humans, since any denigration of another's eternal worth or capacity is an affront to Christ's love. Christ's pattern is therefore not just prescriptive, but should be descriptive of behavior. President Howard W. Hunter counseled:

We are at a time in the history of the world and the growth of the Church when we must think more of holy things and act more like the Savior would expect his disciples to act. We should at every opportunity ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and then act more courageously upon the answer.¹⁰

Thus following Christ's example, we should be kind, considerate, loving. It is important to listen, as did Christ in his response to the Canaanite woman who wished her daughter healed. Despite her cultural status as a woman and a Gentile, Christ listened to her plea and forthwith granted her request (Matt. 15:21–28).¹¹

Christ's and God's love has even more profound implications for all of humankind. *Lectures on Faith* explains that if God were a biased god, favoring certain persons over others, we "could not exercise faith in him. . . . [We] could not tell what [our] privileges were, nor how far [we] were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether [we] were authorized to do it at all. All must be confusion."¹² Brigham Young University political scientist A. Don Sorensen affirms, "If inequality infected divine love—if it singled out any person from others by excluding her from all concern or by not caring for her total welfare or by taking a weakened interest in her well-being—then love ceases to be perfect, and life cannot be full."¹³

In other words, if we could not trust God to love us equally, we could not depend on the efficacy of the plan of salvation—of faith, of repentance, of baptism, of keeping the commandments, or of the Atonement in our lives, since if God were partial in his love toward certain of his children, he could choose those for whom these principles would work.¹⁴ Others would simply be lost, eternally outside the circle of divine love and esteem. The gospel of Christ rejects such doctrines of election. Because we can trust the Lord implicitly, we know that we can come unto him with full confidence that we will be not be turned away but will be enfolded in his love. A favorite saying of Elder Marion D. Hanks is, “To believe in God is to know all the rules will be fair and that there will be wonderful surprises.”¹⁵

Equal Right to Spiritual Observances

In response to God’s love, which encompasses all humans, every able person has the agency and the capacity, both spiritually and intellectually, to understand and accept the gospel of Christ and to participate fully in its blessings. Those who die before the age of accountability or who lack sufficient mental or emotional development to achieve accountability are saved through the atonement of Christ (Mosiah 3:16; 15:25; D&C 137:10). The rest of humankind, however, are moral agents, individually responsible to God for their choices. Thus, it follows that women’s conversions and spiritual lives must be immediate and individual, not derivative. To anchor their testimonies, women must have the witness of the Holy Ghost, must receive personal revelation and possess spiritual gifts, and become, in the words of President Spencer W. Kimball, “scholars of the scriptures.”¹⁶ Salvation is a matter for each person, male or female, who comes to Christ as an individual.

To come to Christ, one must be able to commune with God. All women, men, and children have an equal right to receive answers to their prayers. They have the right to revelation for themselves and for any area of stewardship they have. They may have spiritual gifts (D&C 46:7-33; 1 Cor. 12; and Moro. 10:8-30). Elder Dallin H. Oaks, using the scriptures just cited and other references, stated, “The gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred on both men and women. So are spiritual gifts. . . . The receipt of spiritual

gifts is predicated upon faith, obedience, and personal righteousness.”¹⁷ Men and women have an equal right to attend the temple.¹⁸ Both sexes may pray, speak, and give lessons in church. The youth of both sexes should be taught about the importance of chastity, preparation for marriage, education, service, missions, and the importance of mutual respect and partnership after marriage.

Both women and men have free agency to decide matters for themselves and the knowledge to enable them so to do. Nephi, speaking of “the children of men,” notes that “because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Ne. 2:26). Mormon, quoted by his son Moroni, says, “For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man [woman], that he [she] may know good from evil; wherefore, I show you the way to judge” (Moro. 7:16).

Equal Spiritual Affinity of Both Genders

It is well to remember that the transgression in the Garden of Eden was the result of conscious decisions by both partners (Moses 5:10–11). Keeping both Adam’s and Eve’s decisions in mind precludes any tendency to adopt the view from some cultures that women are inferior or innately sinful because of Eve’s transgression.¹⁹ Furthermore, the principle of individual agency and accountability strikes at the diabolical²⁰ notion that one gender (either female or male) has less capacity or affinity for spirituality and thus must be manipulated, coaxed, or pushed by the other. While culture can cloud spiritual insight, the assumption that God would send half of humanity to earth with an inherently diminished ability to perceive spiritual matters undercuts God’s equal love for all individuals and collides with a key component of the plan of salvation.

Throughout most of Christian history, women have been viewed as the lesser creation, the supposed inheritors of Eve’s susceptible nature, who must be under subjection to men.²¹ Since the nineteenth century, however, American men have been condemned as spiritually suspect as their workplace moved outside the home. Moralists argued that the world contaminated men and

that women had to save them. Women, ensconced in the “sacred sanctuary” of the home, became guardians of their husbands’ and sons’ souls.²²

Priesthood and Gender

In the twentieth century, some Latter-day Saints have greatly broadened this “environmental contamination” thesis to an “inherently deficient male” thesis (our terms). They argue, for example, that spiritually superior women do not “need” to hold the priesthood but defective men do. Such reasoning contradicts itself; according to this logic, those who qualify for godhood—who have all priesthood power (D&C 132:20)—must be the most spiritually impaired of all. This contention also denies the justice and mercy of the gospel by condemning half of humankind as innately flawed. If attempts to explain women’s lack of ordination to priesthood have led to the castigation of the male, they have also led to the patronization of the female. The notion that for mortal women motherhood is the parallel to priesthood is equally spurious, since all women are not mothers; fatherhood, not priesthood, is the male counterpart to motherhood. Furthermore, motherhood and fatherhood are bestowed on the righteous and the wicked alike.

Perhaps the most helpful insight into the issue of priesthood and women has been given by President Gordon B. Hinckley, who, in a powerful address to the 1985 general women’s meeting, refrained from citing dubious folk doctrines as reasons for not ordaining women to priesthood. Instead, he simply said:

A few Latter-day Saint women are asking why they are not entitled to hold the priesthood. To that I can say that only the Lord, through revelation, could alter that situation. He has not done so, so it is profitless for us to speculate and worry about it.²³

Partnership in Marriage

While we come to Christ as individuals, the paradox is that women and men who have endured to the end and overcome the world must be exalted jointly as wives and husbands, following the pattern of our heavenly parents (D&C 131:2). The scriptural

promise of exaltation to husbands and wives contained in Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20 is also a description of the current life of our heavenly parents, who are explicitly characterized as sharing “a fulness” (D&C 132:19):

Then shall *they* be gods, because *they* have no end; therefore shall *they* be from everlasting to everlasting, because *they* continue; then shall *they* be above all, because all things are subject unto *them*. Then shall *they* be gods, because *they* have all power, and the angels are subject unto *them*. (D&C 132:20; italics added)

From this scripture, one may extrapolate that Heavenly Mother is a full and equal partner to Heavenly Father even though our knowledge of her is incomplete.²⁴ Additionally, General Authorities have repeatedly spoken of the eternal relationship between husbands and wives as that of “equal partners.” President Spencer W. Kimball has noted:

Marriage is a partnership. Each is given a part of the work of life to do. . . . When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a *full* partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be *silent* partners or *limited* partners in the eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full* partner.²⁵

This injunction has recently been reaffirmed by Elder Boyd K. Packer and President Howard W. Hunter in the 1994 general conferences and by the First Presidency and Council of Twelve’s proclamation on the family in 1995.²⁶

To specify the practical implications of full partnership, President Kimball remarked on another occasion:

Our sisters do not wish to be indulged or to be treated condescendingly; they desire to be respected and revered as our sisters and our equals. . . . We will be judged, as the Savior said on several occasions, by whether or not we love one another and treat one another accordingly and by whether or not we are of one heart and one mind. We cannot be the Lord’s if we are not one!²⁷

A similar statement is attributed to Elder Packer. When calling a stake president, he advised:

I don’t want you treating your wife like you do the stake. . . . In the stake when a decision is to be made, you will seek the opinion of your counselors and other concerned individuals. Then you will prayerfully reach a decision on the matter, and they will all rally round and support you because you are the president and you have

the mantle of authority. In your family when there is a decision to be made that affects everyone, you and your wife together will seek whatever counsel you might need, and together you will prayerfully come to a unified decision. If you ever pull priesthood rank on her, you will have failed in your leadership.²⁸

Peremptorily to *order* another person to obey, or especially to threaten her with harm or to wield tyranny in the home, exhibits unrighteous dominion or abuse (D&C 121:41–46). President Ezra Taft Benson spoke of “family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God” as a term equivalent to “patriarchal order.”²⁹ This partnership will continue through the eternities, for, as noted above, both men and women may be exalted to godhood status (D&C 132:19–20).

Righteous Leadership

While we may guide, teach, and seek to persuade others, no person has the right to force another’s action or even to attempt it. To so do is unrighteous dominion: “We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men [women], as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion” (D&C 121:39).³⁰ The neighboring verses often are taken to refer to men, as ordained priesthood holders:

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. (D&C 121:41–42)

Perhaps holders of the priesthood are specifically mentioned in this part of Doctrine and Covenants 121 because the authority of the priesthood is so easily misunderstood and wrongly transformed into authoritarianism.

Church leaders may appropriately assume, as a first approximation, that members make decisions about their lives correctly with the Spirit of the Lord. It is not one’s place to force, control, or circumscribe another’s thinking, but rather to allow every soul the freedom to search out his or her destiny. If, for example, a woman is working outside the home, she may be regarded as having made

that decision prayerfully. It is not necessary to assume that she is going against the interests of her family. As Chieko N. Okazaki has reminded us,

Not all situations are ideal. Not all women are mothers, and not all mothers have children at home. Furthermore, not all mothers can make the choice to be home with their children all of the time. Often circumstances constrain their choices. At other times, other responsibilities and opportunities require that difficult decisions be made.³¹

Where there are situations in the Church in which men have a larger voice or role than women—as in general priesthood administration and discipline—efforts to insure fairness are in order. Procedures and policies should be clear to everyone. In general stake and ward councils, both men's and women's advice may be sought and considered, as has been recently emphasized.³²

In order to follow the Savior's example, all members should be as sensitive and believing to one sex as to the other, treating actions by both sexes equally and not regarding behavior by a member of one sex as permissible and the same behavior by the other sex as reprehensible. Statements by both sexes, for example, in marital disputes, generally should be given equal credibility. Accusations of abuse must be taken seriously and not be dismissed because of the alleged perpetrator's church calling or status in the community. Nor should victims be accused of culpability for another's abusive behavior ("What did you do to provoke him?").³³

Elimination of Abuse

It should go without saying that abuse of anyone is wrong. Women are more at risk than men for physical abuse, rape, child sexual abuse, and sexual harassment, although abuse of both sexes and by both sexes does occur. Accordingly, a major concern for feminism is eradicating spouse and other types of physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse. Such abuse has been soundly and repeatedly condemned by Church leaders in general conferences and elsewhere. Elder James E. Faust noted:

Any form of physical or mental abuse to any woman is not worthy of any priesthood holder. President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated, "I feel likewise that it ill becomes any man who holds the priesthood of God to abuse his wife in any way, to demean or injure or take undue

advantage of the woman who is the mother of his children, the companion of his life, and his companion for eternity if he has received that greater blessing.” This, of course, means verbal as well as physical abuse.³⁴

President Howard W. Hunter has stated categorically, “Any man who abuses or demeans his wife physically or spiritually is guilty of grievous sin and in need of sincere and serious repentance.”³⁵ The *General Handbook of Instructions* makes it clear that such abuse may result in Church disciplinary action.³⁶ Similarly, proper conduct toward members of one’s family, as well as payment of alimony and child support as required in divorce settlements, are appropriately reviewed in temple recommend interviews. As the apostle Paul taught, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8).³⁷

The attitudes of those men who presume superiority to women, however, may beget beliefs about shirking responsibilities or tolerating many sorts of abuse, including rape, where such men may believe that they know better than a woman what she wants. Wives may also abuse husbands (although such abuse happens more often verbally than physically). Such behavior is just as reprehensible as husbands’ abuse of wives. *Any* abuse is destructive to the relationship and to the family and is demeaning to the individuals involved.

Overcoming Cultural Limitations

The restoration of the gospel reaffirmed these truths of our equality before God, even though we as a culture do not fully understand them even yet. Two months after the June 1978 revelation on blacks and the priesthood, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, in a talk to religious educators, bravely admitted that he, and perhaps most of the Church, had not comprehended some scriptural passages: “Many of us never imagined or supposed that they [particularly 2 Nephi 26:33] had the extensive and broad meaning that they do have.”³⁸ These scriptures speak not only of racial but of gender equality as well as an “equality of esteem” for all humankind.³⁹ To what extent have we discerned “the extensive and broad meaning” of this verse in relation to the equality of women and men?

To some, it may be reassuring to continue in accustomed cultural patterns, many of which are based on the assumptions of a fallen world, not on those of eternity. One may take great comfort in feeling like a favorite child if a culture has designated preferential status based on particular characteristics; yet, the logical extension of this belief is that those for whom life is differently situated in gender, class, or race are somehow less valiant or even defective in some fashion. We thus pass judgments on each other and ourselves with disastrous spiritual results.⁴⁰

To the contrary, the gospel of Christ requires that we transcend erroneous cultural assumptions to view eternal truth. Recurrent in the Book of Mormon is the warning of the dangers of believing the false traditions of one's culture—the “traditions of [the] fathers, which are not correct” (Mosiah 1:5)—in preference to the full gospel (see also Alma 9:16; 17:9; Hel. 15:7). From a secular perspective, feminism also demands that we reexamine assumptions, particularly those traditions that inhibit our ability to see beyond gender stereotypes and that prescribe and proscribe one's development solely on the basis of sex. Such “assumed truth[s],” according to Lawrence W. Levine, “become so deeply ingrained, so taken for granted, that they do not seem like ideas at all but part of the natural order. Thus when someone comes along who both perceives and *treats* them as ideas, subject to the challenges all ideas should be exposed to, it is as if reason itself were being challenged.”⁴¹

Although one may disagree, feminism argues that inequality is socially constructed and thus can be changed. While women have received the preponderance of the fallout from cultural systems designed to restrict their movement to narrow areas and to limit their access to social, political, and economic power, men too have suffered from narrow definitions of masculine behavior. As an important book on the history of fatherhood in the United States makes clear, men have indeed gained status and power from their role as family breadwinners,⁴² but they have lost in their emotional development as nurturers. According to Robert Griswold, fathers “wedded themselves to a division of labor and a vision of the good life that made father-child closeness problematic. What men gained in the world of power they may have lost in the world of sentiment.

Such was the trade-off at the heart of male breadwinning.”⁴³ The stakes involved in a fundamental transformation of society along equity lines are high for both women and men. Feminism envisions a world in which both sexes are able to achieve full personhood as individuals rather than being rendered as stereotypes.

Gender-Inclusive Language

The weaknesses of language may also need to be overcome. Scholars have determined that using the generic *he* and *man* (one example of gender-exclusive language) affects perceptions—the way women and men read themselves and others into the text.⁴⁴ Gender-exclusive language builds needless cultural walls, whereas gender-inclusive expressions in contemporary discourse are appropriate and desirable, reflecting not only God’s inclusive love for all his children, but also the comprehensive nature of the gospel. Following Christ’s example, both women and men should be included in classroom discussions, and illustrations from both women’s and men’s lives ought to be used in talks and lessons.⁴⁵ Many of Christ’s parables draw lessons from the experiences of women. Moreover, scriptures that speak of “men” often refer to both sexes; that inclusiveness may be pointed out when these scriptures are used, or the scripture can be read to include women explicitly. To cite only one of numerous examples from recent general conferences, Elder Neal A. Maxwell emended 3 Nephi 27:27 to read, “What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, Even as I am.”⁴⁶ By specifically including references to women, one not only reaffirms women’s eternal identity and worth, but one also follows the pattern established by Christ in his mortal ministry.

Equality in Education

Brigham Young spoke extensively about the appropriateness of education for both sexes. Louisa Greene Richards, first editor of the *Woman’s Exponent*, commented:

President Young proves himself [the] most genuine, impartial and practical “Woman’s Rights man” upon the American continent, as he has ever done; his counsels, instructions and advice to women being

always directed toward their progress and advancement in usefulness and the possession of valuable knowledge.⁴⁷

Karen Lynn, at the time director of the Honors Program at Brigham Young University, remarked, "No child of our Father in Heaven can afford, in all conscience, to ignore the responsibility of learning about the world and dealing with it."⁴⁸

The importance of women's education has personal implications for the authors of this article. Neither of us ever considered not pursuing learning; such a course was simply unthinkable. For each of us, education is of great benefit directly, both personally and economically. That one of us is male and the other female is irrelevant to education's significance in our lives. Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, the maternal grandmother of the male author, wrote of her mother's education with Dr. Ellis Shipp to become a midwife. Her mother, Marinda Allen Bateman, saved the little five-dollar gold pieces she earned from delivering over seven hundred babies, and in later years some of that money helped finance the education of her last daughter, Juliaetta.⁴⁹ Juliaetta later earned normal, bachelor's, and master's degrees and taught English literature in the extension divisions at Brigham Young University and the University of Utah for thirty years. She founded the Browning Society in both Provo and in Salt Lake City. Her example influenced thousands of women, as well as her descendants, both male and female. Other Church members have similar stories.

Equality in Employment

Similarly, since all laborers are worthy of their hire (D&C 31:5), one should render to all workers according to their due (Mosiah 4:13) in the culture of the workplace. Such statements prescribe that all employees, whether women or men, should receive equal pay for equal work and should be treated fairly in hiring and promotion. On the surface, equality in employment is merely an economic issue, but it relates to Church matters if Latter-day Saint employers deny employment to women on the basis of marital or familial status, particularly on the belief that the woman is not following the prophet or that she is taking a job away from a man. Questions in job interviews about family situations are not only inappropriate,

but illegal. Similarly, the gospel principle of equal opportunity for mortal experience would require that neither males nor females should be counseled categorically out of “nontraditional” occupations on the basis that such work is not “proper” for their sex or that such occupations for one gender or the other are somehow against Church policy.

Likewise, in employment, school, and church, supervisors, colleagues, and teachers can be of either sex. One may not assume that a leader’s or colleague’s ideas are bad or trivial just because of gender. Men and women have ideas of comparable quality; ideas can be good, no matter the sex of the originator. A woman’s recommendations should not be denigrated because she is not a priesthood holder, nor should a man’s suggestions be dismissed because he is a man or because he is not a bishop or a stake president. Respect for true ideas is appropriate independent of their source. Patronization is demeaning; every individual has as much right to be treated equally and to be heard as anyone else.

Conclusion

We are all children of God. The gospel, in which Christ was one with his father and with the Holy Ghost, clearly proscribes unequal, unrighteous treatment of anyone, by anyone. “Feminism,” as defined and discussed here in the context of our own deeply felt beliefs, simply espouses fair and equal treatment for all of our heavenly parents’ children as wonderful, holy, potentially divine beings.

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NOTES

¹Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 47, quoted in Kathryn H. Shirts, “Women in the Image of the Son: Being Female and Being Like Christ,” in *Women Steadfast in Christ: Talks Selected from the 1991 Women’s Conference Co-sponsored by Brigham Young University and the Relief Society*, ed. Dawn Hall Anderson and Marie Cornwall (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 97.

²Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has also, independently, used this term to describe Mormon feminism in her essay, "Border Crossings," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (summer 1994): 1.

³*Feminism* is an umbrella word, encompassing many disparate approaches to defining and to solving the problem of gender inequity. A helpful analogy is the political party. The terms *Democrat* and *Republican* both contain a wide range of political philosophies so that, on certain issues (civil rights in the 1960s, for example), right-wing Democrats may be far more conservative than liberal or moderate Republicans. In other words, one can no more predict definitively someone's opinion on a specific question by knowing that she is a Democrat than by knowing he is a feminist.

⁴See Mary Stovall Richards, "Feminism," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:506-7; and Elouise Bell, "The Implications of Feminism for BYU," *BYU Studies* 16 (summer 1976): 527-39.

⁵The modern feminist movement, as a coalition of various individuals and groups, includes numerous points of view, some of which contradict gospel principles. Many persons, unfortunately, dismiss the entire movement because of its more radical elements and, in the process, fail to perceive many of its beneficial features.

⁶For an enlightening discussion of Jesus' break with the cultural taboos of his time, see Leonard Swidler, "Jesus Was a Feminist," *Catholic World* 212 (January 1971): 177-83; and the very excellent book from a Mormon perspective by Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, *Sisters at the Well: Women and the Life and Teachings of Jesus* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993).

⁷Luke 15:3-10; and Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, "Choosing the Good Part: Women from Christ to Paul," in *Women Steadfast in Christ*, ed. Anderson and Cornwall, 110; see also Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *Sisters at the Well*, chapter 7.

⁸Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *Sisters at the Well*, 139.

⁹For this point, see Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *Sisters at the Well*, 4.

¹⁰Howard W. Hunter, "Follow the Son of God," *Ensign* 24 (November 1994): 87.

¹¹Holzapfel and Holzapfel, *Sisters at the Well*, 113-14.

¹²Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 69, lecture 3, paragraph 23. Eugene England discusses the implications of this quote in "Are All Alike unto God? Prejudice against Blacks and Women in Popular Mormon Theology," *Sunstone* 14 (April 1990): 21.

¹³A. D. Sorensen, "No Respector of Persons: Equality in the Kingdom," in *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences*, ed. Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 57.

¹⁴See England, "Are All Alike unto God?" 21.

¹⁵Marion D. Hanks, "Equality of Esteem," in *As Women of Faith*, ed. Stovall and Madsen, 35.

¹⁶Spencer W. Kimball, "Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," *Ensign* 8 (November 1978): 102. See also Alma 19:9-10; Alma 32:23; Alma 56:47-48; Luke 2:36-38; and Joel 2:28. On spiritual gifts, see Dallin H. Oaks, "Spiritual Gifts," *Ensign* 16 (September 1986): 68-72; and Linda King Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and*

Cultural Perspective, ed. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 111-50.

¹⁷Oaks, "Spiritual Gifts," 69.

¹⁸President Howard W. Hunter has asked all Latter-day Saints "to look to the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of your membership [in the Church]." Howard W. Hunter, "'Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,'" *Ensign* 24 (November 1994): 8. See also Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit*, ed. Beecher and Anderson, 80-110, for an important discussion of the historical significance of the temple to women.

¹⁹Jolene Edmunds Rockwood, "The Redemption of Eve," in *Sisters in Spirit*, ed. Beecher and Anderson, 3-36. See also "I Have a Question," *Ensign* 24 (February 1994): 63.

²⁰"Diabolical" has been used deliberately since to demean, belittle, or to trivialize another and his or her eternal worth is to play on the devil's turf.

²¹For a discussion of the origins of this view, see Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988).

²²See James Wallace Milden, "The Sacred Sanctuary: Family Life in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1974); Kirk Jeffrey Jr., "Family History: The Middle-Class American Family in the Urban Context, 1830-1870" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1972); and Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), especially 168-69.

²³Gordon B. Hinckley, "Ten Gifts from the Lord," *Ensign* 15 (November 1985): 86.

²⁴See Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Sisters in Spirit*, ed. Beecher and Anderson, 64-77.

²⁵Spencer W. Kimball, *My Beloved Sisters* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 31; italics in original.

²⁶Boyd K. Packer, "The Father and the Family," *Ensign* 24 (May 1994): 21; Howard W. Hunter, "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign* 24 (November 1994): 50; First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," September 23, 1995; printed in *Ensign* 25 (November 1995): 102.

²⁷Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Sisters in the Church," *Ensign* 9 (November 1979): 49.

²⁸Boyd K. Packer, quoted in Carlfred Broderick, *One Flesh, One Heart* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 31-32.

²⁹Ezra Taft Benson, "What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children about the Temple," *Ensign* 15 (August 1985): 9.

³⁰This particular verse refers to both men and women, since a person of either sex may try to dominate another.

³¹Chieko N. Okazaki, "Rowing Your Boat," *Ensign* 24 (November 1994): 92-93.

³²M. Russell Ballard, "Counseling with Our Councils," *Ensign* 24 (May 1994): 24.

³³See B. Kent Harrison, "How Can I Help? Concepts and Cautions for Ecclesiastical Leaders and Others," in *Confronting Abuse*, ed. Anne L. Horton, B. Kent Harrison, and Barry L. Johnson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 215-27; for

the quote, see 217. For personal accounts of abused women, many of whom were not believed by ecclesiastical leaders, see the essays on domestic violence and sexual abuse in *Exponent II* 14, no. 1 (1987).

³⁴James E. Faust, "The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign* 18 (May 1988): 37; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reach Out in Love and Kindness," *Ensign* 12 (November 1982): 77. See also, for example, Gordon B. Hinckley, "Our Solemn Responsibilities," *Ensign* 21 (November 1991): 51; H. Burke Peterson, "Unrighteous Dominion," *Ensign* 19 (July 1989): 6-11; the essays in Horton, Harrison, and Johnson, eds., *Confronting Abuse*.

³⁵Howard W. Hunter, "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," *Ensign* 24 (November 1994): 51; see also Judy C. Olsen, "The Invisible Heartbreaker," *Ensign* 26 (June 1996): 22-27.

³⁶"Members who abuse or are cruel to their spouses, children, or other family members violate the laws of both God and man. . . . Church members who abuse their family members are subject to discipline by the Church. Such members should not be called to positions in the Church and should not be allowed to hold or receive a temple recommend." "Abuse and Cruelty," *General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 11-14.

³⁷See Hunter, "Being a Righteous Husband and Father," 51; and also Doctrine and Covenants 75:28 and 83:4.

³⁸Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike unto God," in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 152.

³⁹The term "equality of esteem" is quoted in Hanks, "Equality of Esteem," 30.

⁴⁰Edward Gardiner has argued that imputing sin to innocent persons may be the reason for Mormon's severe castigation of infant baptism, as discussed in Moroni 8. See Edward Gardiner, "Spiritual Abuse," in *Confronting Abuse*, ed. Horton, Harrison, and Johnson, 170-71.

⁴¹Lawrence W. Levine, "Clio, Canons, and Culture," *Journal of American History* 80 (December 1993): 866; italics in original. Feminist scholars have argued that the definition of gender is one of these "assumed truths." Donald G. Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart found in their study of support for and opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment in North Carolina that proponents and opponents differed on this basic definition: "What historians or anthropologists understand as historically produced and conditioned patterns of behavior and therefore malleable by human action may be understood by fundamentalists to be absolutely normative if thought to be similar to Biblical patterns." *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 178.

⁴²The beginnings of industrialization in the early 1800s in the United States transformed the self-sufficient households of the previous centuries into units of consumption rather than production. Fathers increasingly left the home for work, while mothers became the guardians of the "sacred sanctuary," as domestic moralists termed the home. What many twentieth-century persons have assumed was a timeless system of male breadwinner and domestic spouse is not quite two hundred years old and for much of that period has been true for white middle-class families only. Even then, there was significant variation across regions.

Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg summarize the literature on this development in *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 49-51.

⁴³Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 33.

⁴⁴See Barrie Thorne, Cheri Kramarae, and Nancy Henley, eds., *Language, Gender, and Society* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1983).

⁴⁵For a humorous, but pointed, examination of how gender can marginalize persons in an academic setting, see [Elouise Bell], "The Tables Turned: An Exercise in Consciousness-Raising," *Dialogue* 11 (summer 1978): 113-18.

⁴⁶Neal A. Maxwell, "Settle This in Your Hearts," *Ensign* 22 (November 1992): 65.

⁴⁷Louisa Greene Richards, "Work for Women," *Woman's Exponent* 1 (April 15, 1873): 172, quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Voices in Print: *The Woman's Exponent*, 1872-1914," in *Women Steadfast in Christ*, ed. Anderson and Cornwall, 72.

⁴⁸Karen Lynn, *BYU Daily Universe*, March 26, 1981, 4.

⁴⁹Juliaetta Bateman Jensen, *Little Gold Pieces: The Story of My Mormon Mother's Life* (Salt Lake City: Stanway Printing, 1948), 88-98, 178-180.

In the Corner

In the corner of the blotter
 my great-grandfather left a note:
 “Must divorce Henrietta because she ran
 off with . . .” and the ink fades
 or maybe he couldn’t condescend
 to name the man who bested him.

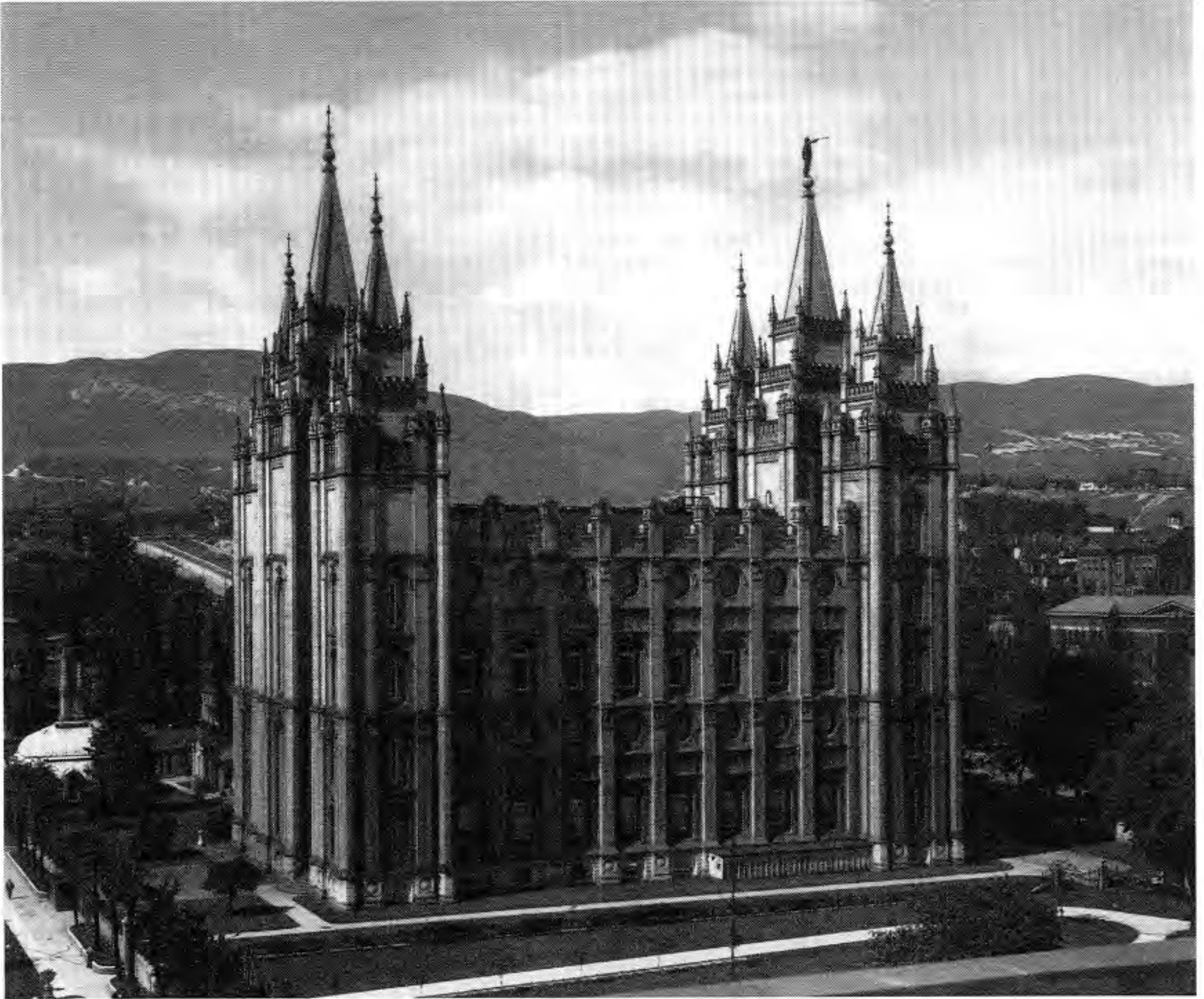
Two children were born to this late
 marriage—he was sixty-three,
 she seventeen. In the ledger
 he wrote, “For Amelia Fordham,
 Henrietta’s mother, I found a house,
 flour, wood, milch cow, groceries
 and some meat. She has the children.
 Furnished them with clothes.”

Successful in everything else
 his luck ran out toward younger women.
 Ann, who died young, was in her twenties
 when Great-Grandfather first married
 at forty-three. Lovina, the next,
 thirty years younger, divorced him
 later. In his will he left a deed
 to a city lot ten rods by ten,
 “out of affection and natural love.”

The third wife, Susanna, blushed
across the altar at twenty-one
and followed him across the plains.
Two children, one my grandfather,
survived of three.

Widowed again, he married Henrietta,
the youngest, fairest, born in New York
City, “educated and refined,”
who graced his home five years
til the man she fell in love with
a second time (or maybe the first)
showed up talking sweet on his way
to Oregon. Henrietta dressed
the children, took them next door,
packed her clothes, and ran.

—Donnell Hunter



Salt Lake Temple. As seen from the south about 1917. Courtesy Utah State Historical Society.

The Salt Lake Temple Infrastructure: Studying It Out in Their Minds

To offer their best to the Lord in constructing even the temple's infrastructure, the Saints researched and incorporated such available technologies as elevators and electricity.

Paul C. Richards

As an inveterate sidewalk superintendent, I have long been enthralled by raw infrastructure. Scrutinizing the innards of mines, engine rooms, bridges, and buildings creates a feeling of awe for the souls, largely unrecognized, who designed and built such works. The architectural infrastructure of the Salt Lake Temple, its foundations, engineering, and use of technology, engender similar feelings in me. Just as the outside of the temple is a tribute to the determination, resourcefulness, and faith of its builders, a great appreciation for them and their work can also be gained by considering details inside, where some of the infrastructure such as parts of the original foundation walls is still visible.

Knowledge of the temple's construction enriches an understanding of its history. An 1893 newspaper article emphasized the important role of the temple construction workers in perpetuating the temple's history:

In the interest of history these [temple construction veterans] should be asked and encouraged to impart and indite bits of experience in connection with the Temple that would otherwise be lost. All that pertains to it at any stage of its construction is sure to find a welcome in the hearts and memories of the people.¹

One hundred years later, the centennial celebration of the temple's 1893 dedication raised new interest in the building's history. Forgotten, little-known, or never-before-published information became available through books, periodicals, historic photographs,

architectural drawings, and a marvelous exhibit at the Museum of Church History and Art.² These recent materials and earlier sources, along with interviews with individuals involved in temple maintenance and refurbishment in this century, clarify and correct some of the commonly told stories about how the temple was built. While many of these accounts intend to be faith promoting, hinting that God dictated minute details of design and infrastructure, many common stories are not factual. Indeed, the stories may detract from the appreciation Latter-day Saints should have for the hard labors of mind and body the temple builders endured. While those builders were inspired, God still expected them to do their homework, to study the challenges in their minds, and they did.

Formulating Plans

Brigham Young's 1847 vision of the temple was general in nature, giving the Saints great latitude in determining particulars. For instance, on the day of the 1853 ground breaking, President Young said:

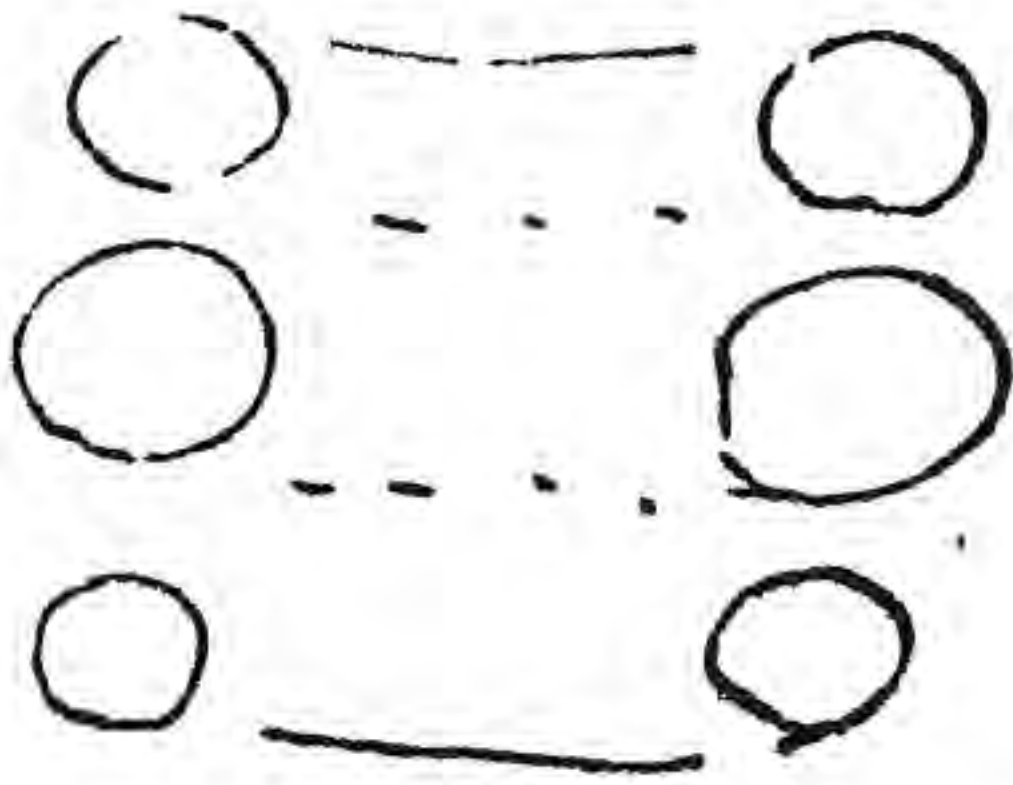
Concerning this house, I wish to say, if we are prospered we will soon show you the likeness of it, at least upon paper, and then if any man can make any improvement in it, or if he has faith enough to bring one of the old Nephites along, or an angel from heaven, and he can introduce improvements, he is at liberty so to do. . . . If any improvement can be made, all good men upon the earth are at liberty to introduce their improvements.³

In this same address, the pragmatic prophet told the Saints that in regard to the temple, they should not wait to be commanded in all things:

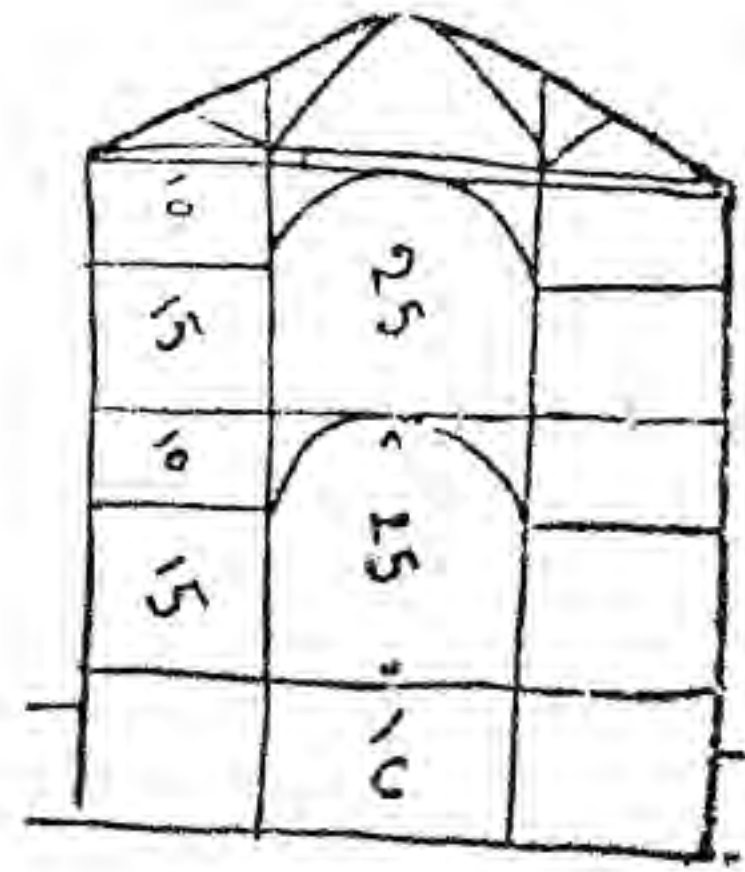
If you should go to work to build a dwelling house, you know you would want a kitchen, a buttry, sitting rooms, bedrooms, halls, passages, and alleys. He [Joseph Smith] said, you might as well ask the Lord to give revelation upon the dimensions and construction of the various apartments of your dwelling houses, as upon the erection of temples, for we know before hand what is necessary.⁴

William W. Ward, who became an assistant to temple architect Truman O. Angell Sr. in the early 1850s, later wrote:

The design was formulated in the following manner: Brigham Young drew upon a slate in the Architect's Office similar to this:



Brigham Young's sketch of the Salt Lake Temple towers. Reproduced from memory in 1892 by William Ward, assistant architect. This rough sketch was intended to show that the central towers would be higher than the flanking towers and that the body of the building would be built between the towers. *Temple Souvenir Album 7* (April 1892): 7.



Rough vertical section of the Salt Lake Temple. Reproduced in 1892 by William Ward, assistant architect. This sketch was drawn by Truman O. Angell Sr. according to President Young's instructions in response to a question about height. *Temple Souvenir Album 7* (April 1892): 7.

[sketch] and said to Truman O. Angell, "There will be three towers on the East, . . . also three similar towers on the West. . . . The body of the building will be between these and pillars will be necessary to support the floors."⁵

Ward continued, "Angell then asked about the height, and drew [a] vertical section [sketch] according to Brigham's instructions." [sketch] The basement containing the baptismal font was to be sixteen feet high. The first and second stories were each to be twenty-five feet high with pillars and a tier of rooms above the side aisles. "The construction of the roof was left to Mr. Angell. . . . Angell's idea and aim was to make [the temple] different to any other known building and I think he succeeded as to the general combination."⁶

Although the overall design followed Brigham Young's vision, it is clear that Angell did not consider the prophet's dictated dimensions sacrosanct. In his 1854 description of the temple, Angell said the two large rooms on the first and second stories were to be thirty-four feet high—not twenty-five feet high as President Young had instructed.⁷ Furthermore, the finished temple did

not have an open assembly room on the first floor, nor did it have tiers of rooms above the aisles in the assembly room on the top floor, even though President Young had called for these structures.

Material for the Walls

That human deliberation was a factor in the temple's construction is also clear from an 1852 address by Heber C. Kimball: "I want a vote from the congregation concerning the temple, whether we shall have it built of the stone from Red Bute, or of adobies [*sic*], or timber, or of the best quality of stone that can be found in the mountains."⁸ President Kimball gave this address before granite had been found in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

Following Heber C. Kimball's address, Brigham Young told the congregation he favored adobes. After naming other options, he stated:

But I give it as my opinion that adobies [*sic*] are the best article to build it of. . . . I want it to stand, and not fall down and decay in twenty or thirty years, like brother Taylor's one would, that he was giving an exposition of; "that when we go within the veil into the heavenly world, we need not be ashamed of it, but when we look down upon it, it will be of solid rock:" but if it is built of San Pete rock, when he looks down to see it he will find it *aint there*, but it is gone, washed into the Jordan.⁹

Adobes were still the material of choice as late as March 1854, as indicated by an architect's note pertaining to the four corner towers, where the circular stairways were to be placed: "The inner line shows where the adobes will be when finished[,] one course to be left out & built up with the stairs after the building is up."¹⁰ But in 1856, Brigham Young told the Saints, "We are going to suspend labor upon the Temple for a year, until we can prepare ourselves more fully for that work. We have abandoned the idea of using adobies in the walls of that building, and intend to use granite."¹¹

The granite quarrying operations that began in 1860¹² are the genesis of one of the most often repeated folktales about the temple's construction, according to Jennifer L. Lund, curator of education at the Museum of Church History and Art. She says members of the Church visiting the 1993 temple exhibit told curators hundreds of stories about the building, including one about quarriers

taking advantage of freezing water to split boulders.¹³ However, freezing water was not actually used, according to Wallace A. Raynor. In 1959 he conducted extensive interviews with William Kuhre, then ninety-seven, who began working in the quarries at age eleven.¹⁴ Raynor concludes:

The popularly told account of filling the drill holes with water and saturated wooden pegs, which upon freezing would split the stone is in no way substantiated by factual findings. It may have been tried, as might well have been many other methods. An objective survey of the weather in this area during the quarrying months [they did not quarry in winter] and the relative[ly] short period of time from the receipt of the rock order sheet until its delivery to Temple Block illustrates the poor logic of such a belief.¹⁵

The Foundation

Between 1853 and the summer of 1855, before granite quarrying began, workers laid 7,478 tons of roughly hewn stones called ashlar¹⁶ from Red Butte Canyon to form the footings of the temple. (This was one-third more rock than was used in the entire Nauvoo Temple.) Even then the footings¹⁷ were only 7.5 feet high,



Salt Lake Temple footings. The 7.5-foot-high footings required 7,478 tons of roughly hewn stones. Conglomerate was used between the main support footings. Photographed in 1960 by Wallace Alan Raynor.

rising from their 16-foot-deep and 16-foot-wide base to a point 8.5 feet below ground level. It was here that sandstone flagging was laid to form the base for the 8-foot-wide foundation wall containing skillfully executed inverted arches.¹⁸ These arches, according to Lund, are also the subject of stories; in these tales, the arches are designed to allow the huge stones in the wall to move during earthquakes. Temple engineer Ken Hacking, whose love for the building can be fully understood only by fellow engineers, has intimate knowledge of the structure.¹⁹ He says that close examination of the arches shows there is absolutely no movement between stones. Their purpose is weight distribution, not movement. As George Q. Cannon wrote, the temple was “built to stand, without crack or quiver, for a thousand years.”²⁰

The first stone containing records, placed in 1857,²¹ rests on top of the sandstone flagging where the southeast tower meets the south main wall of the temple. Its exact location was unknown for many years until summer 1993, when construction workers, under the direction of the Church Historical Department, dug down to the top of the footing and made test drillings into the wall.²² Following James E. Talmage’s description, workers searched the vicinity of “the south-east corner of the building immediately beneath the first layer of granite.”²³ After finally locating the stone in the center of the wall, they drilled a larger hole to remove the contents of the box. The contents, which included books, pamphlets, periodicals, and coins,²⁴ had not been inspected since 1862, when the stone was temporarily removed during repairs of cracks in the foundation. A 1993 *Church News* article states, “Although all the items except the coins were in an advanced state of decay, sufficient fragments remained to allow identification of approximately half the items from the stone’s original inventory.”²⁵

The Plant Conservatory

The area where the construction crew had dug to find the record stone was once a covered plant conservatory outside the garden room. Talmage said, “On the sides of the altar [in the garden room] are large doorways opening directly into a conservatory of



Inverted arch. Placed on a sandstone flagging base, the inverted arches in the Salt Lake Temple's foundation were designed to help distribute the weight of the temple. Photographed in 1960 by Wallace Alan Raynor.

living plants.”²⁶ The conservatory can be seen in a number of historic photographs.²⁷ Robert W. Edwards, who has had a keen interest in the temple's history for several decades, says the doors were used until the late 1920s or early 1930s.²⁸ They are pictured in an interior photograph taken by Ralph Savage in 1911.²⁹

The conservatory is probably a vestige of an earlier plan drawn by Truman O. Angell Sr. for a forty-five-by-seventy-foot greenhouse south of the temple that was to serve as the garden room complete with live plants.³⁰ According to the plan, the creation room was to be located where the garden room is now. From the greenhouse, patrons would enter the temple on the main landing of the grand staircase. Truman O. Angell Jr., who assisted his father, and Joseph Don Carlos Young, who was a son of Brigham Young and who became temple architect after Angell Sr. died, altered the conservatory and other earlier plans to create the present-day layout of the temple.³¹

The Star Stone

Another possible change in the temple's design, though on a smaller scale, is evidenced by a small six-pointed star in the attic of the temple. It is about six and one-half inches across and cut three-eighths of an inch deep in one of the granite stones on the inside of the east center tower.³² The star may have had something to do with the Ursa Major (Big Dipper) pattern on the west tower since it is the same size and shape as the stars in that pattern. Like them, it is angled slightly so as to stand on two of its points, and it is not centered in its stone block. Construction photographs show that the block would have been laid before work on the Big Dipper began. Could it be that the star was an experiment? Perhaps the sunken design was abandoned in favor of stars in raised relief. If so, rather than discard the stone, masons placed it inside where it would not be seen as easily.

Chimneys or Vents

In contrast to the stone in the attic, the eighteen buttresses that rise more than one hundred feet on the north and south walls are both distinctive and readily apparent. Observant Temple Square visitors often ask about openings that can be seen near the tops of alternate buttresses.³³ (There are similar openings in six of the buttresses on the roof side of the temple's corner towers.) Several architectural plans indicate shafts in the buttresses.³⁴ Angell Sr.'s journal entry for May 31, 1867, verifies the plan for shafts: "I propose to start the flues say 10 in[.] in the basement and inlarge to a foot 1st story[,] 14 in[.] next[,] 16 the next and 18 in nex[t] and last."³⁵ Note that Angell Sr. refers to the shafts as flues. Then, in a later undated drawing, he uses the word "chimney" to label a buttress top.³⁶ A photograph by Edward Martin taken around 1870 clearly shows horizontal shafts in the walls of the temple's basement stonework corresponding to alternate buttresses.³⁷

Peter Danzig, who worked on the temple during a major renovation in the early 1960s, found additional evidence that the buttresses were designed to be used as chimneys.³⁸ He says that while he was chipping plaster in the temple a small portion of wall caved in, revealing a horizontal shaft longer than his arm. In the course of



Flued buttress. Note the eleven-inch opening underneath the capstone. Alternate buttresses contain flues intended as chimneys for fireplaces or heating stoves but apparently were never used. Photographed in 1960 by Wallace Alan Raynor.

renovation, workers found several such shafts and could feel air drafting into them. These apparently connected to the vertical shafts in the buttresses. Wallace Raynor, measuring these flues in 1960, found them to be eleven inches in diameter at the top,³⁹ indicating that Angell's plan to increase them to eighteen inches never was implemented.

Talmage mentioned the vertical shafts when he wrote:

Between the end towers, that is to say in the main body of the building, the walls carry nine buttresses or pilasters on both north and south sides. Each . . . is capped by a granite block. . . . Of these pilaster caps, four on either wall are open and constitute the tops of ventilator shafts which extend to the basement.⁴⁰

Citing Talmage's description, some may claim the shafts were to be used for ventilation as was done in the ZCMI building.⁴¹ However, early photographs of the temple's interior do not show gratings or openings in the walls. If the shafts found by Danzig and fellow workers were intended to be used as vents, why had they been plastered over?

Another clue to the purpose of the shafts is the beautiful fireplace, with a bird's-eye maple mantelpiece and base and facings of Utah onyx,⁴² in the western wall of the waiting room suite, south of the celestial room. An inside look at the chimney reveals that it angles south in the wall toward one of the flued buttresses.⁴³ The connection between the chimney and the flued buttress further suggests that the original plan was to use the flues as chimneys for fireplaces or heating stoves. Perhaps as central heating came into vogue, the plan was abandoned. Since the flues had already been incorporated into the stonework from the beginning, they were completed, but it was not necessary to enlarge them as originally proposed by Angell.

Knowledge of Technological Advances

Jennifer Lund at the Museum of Church History and Art says stories proliferate about vertical shafts being constructed in the temple without the pioneer builders knowing their purpose. Later these shafts turned out to be just the right size for elevators. Museum docents have heard similar tales about workmen wondering why they were cutting channels in the granite walls of the temple. Then, the story continues, when electricity was discovered, these shafts were used to run wiring.

What these stories say, in essence, is that Mormon pioneers were unaware of the industrial and technological advances of the nineteenth century. Nothing could be further from the truth. Truman O. Angell Sr. went on an architectural fact-finding mission to England and France in 1856. While there, he not only studied significant buildings and monuments, but also sugar factories, iron works, and shipyards.⁴⁴ At the time of his mission, the following developments had taken place or were about to take place.

The Elevator. In 1743, Louis XV of France installed an elevator at the Palace of Versailles.⁴⁵ In 1829 the Regents Park Coliseum in London began operating a ten-passenger mechanical elevator.⁴⁶ In 1853, Elisha Graves Otis demonstrated the first safety device for an elevator at the Crystal Palace trade exposition in New York City, and in 1857 he used the device on a five-story elevator in a New York department store.⁴⁷

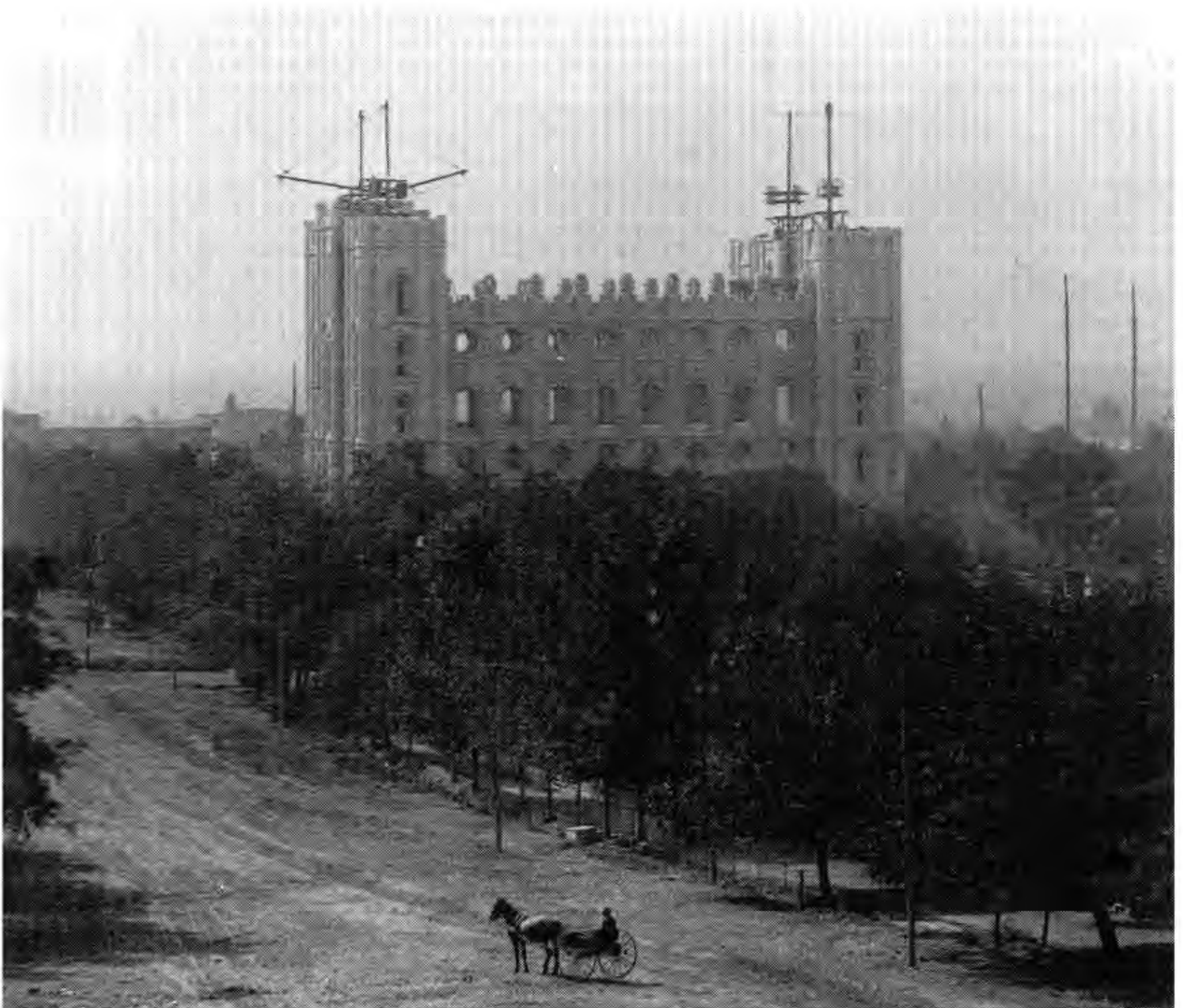
The Telegraph. In 1837 the telegraph became operational in England and the United States,⁴⁸ and in 1842, Samuel Morse laid a telegraph cable in New York harbor between Battery Park and Governor's Island.⁴⁹ A transchannel telegraphic cable was laid between Dover and Calais in 1851.⁵⁰ Brigham Young must have been aware of such developments, for on the day of the temple cornerstone layings in 1853, he said, "This day, and the work we have performed on it, will long be remembered by this people, and be sounded as with a trumpet's voice throughout the world, as far, as loud, and as long as steam, wind, and the electric current can carry it."⁵¹ By 1867, when the temple walls were just reaching above ground, the first successful transatlantic cable was laid.⁵²

Electricity. In 1847, Englishman W. E. Staite invented the electric arc lamp, and in 1857 street lights were installed in Lyons, France.⁵³ With Latter-day Saint missionaries traveling extensively and converts coming to Utah from many parts of the world, it is difficult to imagine the Saints were unaware of these technological advancements. While elevators and electric appliances were not in common usage in the mid-1850s, they certainly were not unknown. In the early 1860s, the Saints gained firsthand knowledge of electrical devices when they helped build the transcontinental telegraph line and then, under sponsorship of the Church, built their own Deseret Telegraph system connecting cities from Logan to St. George.⁵⁴

Elevators

The matter of elevator shafts deserves further examination. The temple was built of stone walls, with large open spaces left to be filled in later with beams, floors, and interior walls. At the completion of the outside walls, the center area of the temple could have been considered a huge, open shaft from basement to battlements. The center towers on the east and west also were constructed with open shafts, such as in bell towers. These open shafts are evident on numerous floor-plan drawings of the temple.⁵⁵

Early plans do not show elevators, but an 1887 drawing by Angell Jr. shows two elevator shafts in the northwest and southwest corners of the west center tower (their present location).⁵⁶



View prior to the construction of the temple's interior. About 1888, looking south along East Temple. The outside walls were built first, leaving a large open space in the interior. From certain angles a person could see clear through the temple, as is the case in this photograph (note the upper windows on the left of the temple). Courtesy Utah State Historical Society.

They occupy less than 20 percent of the floor space in the eighteen-foot-square tower shaft. Since they are in the corners of the tower, they are abutted by granite walls on only two sides—not three sides, as would be the case if shafts had been constructed specifically for them.⁵⁷

Although elevators were not part of early plans, there are four in the temple, not including those in the sealing-room addition, which was constructed during the 1960s renovation. The two already mentioned in the west tower serve eight floors from basement to roof. One just off the west side of the main hallway was built in the 1960s and runs from the basement to the telestial-room level. The last is behind the altar in the garden room and is no longer in use.

As suggested, stories about the west tower elevators abound. Over the years, the author has heard claims that they were hand operated, passengers using a crank inside each car, or that they were not installed until after the turn of the century—in spite of published accounts to the contrary. Eugene Young, a grandson of Brigham Young, toured the temple in 1893 just prior to its dedication and wrote the following for *Harper's Weekly*: “Two large and costly elevators are in the west end of the building.”⁵⁸ That same year, an official description published by Church authorities in the *Deseret News* quoted James H. Anderson’s comments on the machine room’s “motive power” for the two handsome elevators in the central west tower.⁵⁹ In 1912, Talmage also mentioned elevators: “At the west end of the structure are two commodious elevators running in separate shafts of granite from basement to roof. At first hydraulic elevators were installed, but these have been replaced by automatic electric lifts.”⁶⁰

His use of the term “hydraulic” raises questions because modern hydraulic elevators such as the one in the El Cortez Hotel in San Diego have long cylinders, with equally long piston rams, buried in the ground at a depth equal to the height that the elevators rise above the ground. Drilling two shafts near the inside corners of the temple’s west tower to accommodate ninety-six-foot-long cylinders while workmen were erecting stone battlements and spires seems highly improbable.

But in fact, the first elevators were hydraulic. A June 12, 1889, contract proposal to the Church from Otis Brothers and Company, New York, states:

We propose to furnish and erect in a workmanlike and substantial manner Two Standard Hydraulic Passenger Elevators in the Mormon Temple at Salt Lake City to be operated by water pressure, from combined pressure and gravity tank according to the following specifications:

Size of hatchways [elevator shafts] to be about 5 ft x 6 ft. Rise of Cars, from lower to upper floor, being about 96 feet 0 inches.

Each car to be handsomely finished in cabinet work of such style and design as may be decided on by you or the architect.⁶¹

The system included the Otis “Gravity Wedge Safety Apparatus.”⁶²

In those days, Otis did not bury cylinders in the ground as is done now. Instead, the company used sheaves, or grooved wheels, in a pulley arrangement that moved the elevator car three feet for every one foot of travel by the hydraulic ram. This meant that a thirty-two-foot cylinder and ram, plus sheaves, could be erected above ground alongside the elevator shaft well within the height limits of the building. Cables from the pulley system went up to other sheaves at the top of the elevator shafts and down to the cars. The original mounting beams for these sheaves are still in the tower.⁶³ A similar system was used on the Eiffel Tower elevators built by Otis in 1889.⁶⁴ Water pressure of ninety pounds per square inch was produced by gravity feed from a tank at roof level and a steam-driven Blake Duplea pump. The pump drove pistons that were twelve and one-half inches in diameter.

Talmage states that an electric lift system had replaced the hydraulic system by 1912.⁶⁵ Although Talmage failed to document the nature of this change, it is likely that only the driving mechanisms were changed—not the elevator cars and railings. Wallace Raynor, who rode in one of the elevators just prior to the 1960s renovation, says the car was an elaborate wrought-iron, gilded affair typical of early elevators, and the ride was rickety and loose.⁶⁶

Apparently the north elevator ceased to function sometime in the early part of the century because workmen found the old car in the bottom of its shaft as they prepared to install new elevators during the 1960s renovation. Wood floors had been built in the shaft to create closets on each floor. Peter Danzig recalls removing the floors and chiseling out eight-inch-deep columns in the granite at the back and side of each shaft to accommodate counterweight runs and side railings for the new elevators.⁶⁷ The old railings were located diagonally at two corners of each car.⁶⁸

The elevator in the garden room is hydraulic and was originally driven by the city's pressurized water system. Robert Edwards recalls old timers telling of problems with the elevator when the baptismal font was being filled. Apparently the water pressure dropped, leaving the elevator sluggish or nonoperable.⁶⁹ The system was later changed to pump-driven oil hydraulics, and the elevator performed faithfully until sometime between 1982 and 1985, when its use was discontinued.⁷⁰

Electricity

What about the serendipitously placed channels in the walls that were allegedly used for wiring? In 1873 when derricks were first erected, a *Deseret Evening News* article explained, "There will be four of these scaffolds upon which the derricks will be raised, one near each corner of the interior of the building."⁷¹ This meant that construction of interior walls and floors could not take place until about 1886, when the derricks were moved from inside the building to positions between the center and outside towers. Photographs at that time show that one could see clear through the building with nothing to block the view.⁷²

By the time interior construction began in 1886, both the incandescent lamp and the telephone had been in existence a little less than a decade.⁷³ The Salt Lake Power, Light and Heating Company had been established in 1880, ZCMI had installed two voltaic arc lamps at its Main Street location that same year, and the first electric generating plant had been operational since 1881.⁷⁴ Salt Lake City was one of the first cities in the United States to install electric street lights. Other cities of similar size were still using or were just beginning to use gas lights, whereas Salt Lake City had established a gas utility company as early as 1872.⁷⁵

Since work on the walls and floors did not begin until 1886, it was not necessary to cut channels for utilities. It was much easier to route wiring and pipes through the wood and brick interior structures as they were being built during the final seven years of construction. Furthermore, furring for lath⁷⁶ and plaster was mounted on granite walls in many areas of the temple,⁷⁷ providing additional space between the stone and the plaster for routing utilities without having to cut channels in stone.

Truman O. Angell Sr. died October 16, 1887, after nearly four decades of masterminding construction of the temple footings, foundation, and walls. Completion of the spires and interior, plus construction of the annex and boiler house north of the temple,⁷⁸ fell to the lot of Joseph Don Carlos Young, who had earned a degree in engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1879.⁷⁹ It was under his aegis as Church architect that the final decisions were made on heating, electrical, and physical facility matters.⁸⁰

Apparently initial planning called for gas lighting in the temple, according to Robert Edwards.⁸¹ Prior to the renovation of the temple in the early 1960s, Edwards and Raynor were among several volunteers who helped temple engineer Linden W. Millgate conduct a physical plant inventory. While taking measurements, they could not account for a space of about three feet between the south wall of the terrestrial room and a set of restrooms on the other side of the wall. The mystery was soon solved when they discovered a trap door in the floor of an upper hallway that allowed them to climb down into an abandoned utility room. It contained dust-covered gas plumbing and electrical wiring, the latter connected to old-style knife switches⁸² mounted on control panels. The gas plumbing had never been used, and the electrical wiring had long since been disconnected.

When it was in use, the utility closet was accessed through a door just a few steps beyond the top of the grand staircase in the west wall of the upper hallway. Edwards says he does not know when it was sealed off, but it was done in such a way that the entrance appeared to be nothing more than a decorative archway. Today, it forms an alcove for a drinking fountain. A 1911 photo shows a fountain on the wall directly opposite the archway, indicating that the door was in use at that time.⁸³ All of the utility equipment in the closet was removed during renovation.

Printed Descriptions

When the temple was dedicated in 1893, both local and visiting journalists were obviously impressed not only with its overall appearance, but also with its fixtures, utilities, and state-of-the-art infrastructure. “The Temple is fitted throughout with most costly electroliers, for it is lighted entirely with electricity,” wrote Eugene Young.⁸⁴

After examining the finely appointed plumbing arrangements for the baptismal font and adjoining washing and anointing rooms, another journalist said, “The perfection of these arrangements suggests a thought as to the ingenuity employed in other plumbing appliances.”⁸⁵ He described the fifteen onyx wash stands of rare beauty at various places in the building as well as the five unique

and costly drinking fountains of variegated onyx. “The sanitary arrangements throughout are faultless,” he noted.⁸⁶

In regard to plumbing, Angell Sr. and William W. Ward made provisions on several 1855 plans for a water pipe to run under the north wall to the center of the temple where the baptismal font was to be located. There were also two drains exiting three feet eight inches underneath the flagging of the west footing.⁸⁷ Angell drew plans in 1869 for a sewer built of specially shaped stone.⁸⁸

In 1893 the *Deseret Evening News* told of four steam engines and four dynamos⁸⁹ that “repose in drowsy might or move in stately measure” in an underground chamber just west of the temple. Anderson described the machinery as follows:

Two of these engines are seventy-five horse-power, and the other two twenty-five horse-power each. These operate four Edison dynamos. The capacity for electric lighting is two thousand sixteen candle-power lamps, sufficient for the illumination of the Temple, Tabernacle and Assembly Hall, though only the first named building is at the present time supplied from that source.⁹⁰

Anderson also described the boiler house three hundred feet north of the temple as being of “elegant design and commodious and convenient extent.” This two-story structure, with its unique, mosque-style chimney, was designed by Joseph Don Carlos Young. It housed four coal-fired boilers: two for steam to run the dynamos and elevator engine and two for hot water to heat the temple. A twelve-inch pipe ran from the boiler house to the temple through a stone tunnel.

The heating system included an expansion tank in the attic of the temple from which hot water was distributed to radiators in all rooms below.⁹¹ The tank was later removed, but portions of the support beams protruding from the inside wall of the east center tower and support brackets hanging from roof beams are still visible.⁹²

Journalists described the cooling system as being “equally effective” as the heating system, though by modern standards it would have been inadequate. “Ventilation will be secured by pressing electric buttons, which will throw open transoms⁹³ in the various rooms and start sixteen fans, each of one-half horsepower,” one newspaper account stated.⁹⁴

Journalists also were impressed with the fire hoses in the four corner towers, “so that in case [of] the unexpected . . . adequate

remedy and protection would be at hand.”⁹⁵ These were connected to a 7,500-gallon water tank in the northwest tower.⁹⁶ The temple now is equipped with a sprinkler system, so the hoses and tank are gone, but anchor holes in top of the six-foot-diameter granite newel⁹⁷ in the tower are evident.⁹⁸ Many written accounts place the tank in the southwest tower, but insurance maps and the anchor holes indicate otherwise.

Nearly twenty years after the temple’s dedication, people were again impressed with the building’s infrastructure, particularly the heating and cooling systems that had both been changed since the dedication. Talmage in 1912 described “a very efficient apparatus for vacuum cleaning . . . connected with every room in the Temple.”⁹⁹ In that same work, he said that “prior to 1911 the Temple was supplied with heat and light from its own boilers and dynamos. . . . Steam and electricity are now furnished from a central plant situated immediately west of the Temple Block.”¹⁰⁰

The central plant Talmage referred to was the “Hotel Utah Power, Light & Heat Plant” in the center of the block southwest of Temple Square.¹⁰¹ Talmage reported that the plant supplied steam, water, and electricity and ammonia “for cooling purposes” through more than a quarter mile of tunnels to some twenty-five buildings and smaller structures belonging to the Church on and around Temple Square.¹⁰² The temple boilers and dynamos were shut down when the changeover was made. Although Talmage mentions ammonia for cooling, there is some question as to whether air-conditioning was used in the temple at that time. It was not until the 1960s renovation that a large equipment room was excavated under the baptismal font to house air-handling equipment, filters, and ducting.¹⁰³

During the 1960s renovation, workers uncovered a wooden truss supporting the floor above the baptismal font. It was obvious that part of the truss had been burned at one time. Peter Danzig says during the final years of temple construction, work continued year-round, and crews built bucket fires to keep warm in winter. Sometimes wood structures caught fire. This probably happened to the truss. A carpenter had repaired the damage, then signed his name—James R. Wilson.¹⁰⁴



Salt Lake Temple boiler house. Before 1915. Located three hundred feet north of the temple, this structure housed four coal-fired boilers, two each for the electric and heating systems. The engine room's stack is on the left. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.

Conclusion

The history of the Salt Lake Temple building is a rich one, filled with stories of inspiration, practicality, sacrifice, and dedication. The Saints knew God wanted them to build a temple, but they also knew that he expected them to study things out in their minds. As they pursued their labors, they researched available materials and technologies carefully, wanting to offer only the best to the Lord. Even in the most minute details, the facts of the forty-year feat of the intrepid souls who built the temple make a story as fascinating as any folklore.

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NOTES

¹*Deseret Weekly*, April 1, 1893, 45b.

²See *Ensign* 23 (March 1993): 2-43; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, *Every Stone a Sermon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992); Nelson B. Wadsworth, *Set in Stone, Fixed in Glass: The Great Mormon Temple and Its Photographers* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992).

³Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855-86), 1:278, February 14, 1853 (hereafter cited as *JD*).

⁴Young, in *JD*, 1:278.

⁵William Ward to Magazine Printing Co., March 1892, *Temple Souvenir Album* 7 (April 1892): 7-9.

⁶Ward to Magazine Printing Co., 7-9.

⁷Truman O. Angell, Letter to Editor, "The Temple," *Deseret News*, August 17, 1854. This figure represents the sum of the side and center arch heights. In Angell's 1874 description, these rooms were to be thirty-five feet high. See *Millennial Star* 26 (May 5, 1874): 273-75.

⁸Heber C. Kimball, in *JD*, 1:162, October 9, 1852.

⁹Young, in *JD*, 1:220, October 9, 1852; italics in original.

¹⁰Salt Lake Temple Architectural Drawings, Archives Division, Church Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

¹¹Young, in *JD*, 3:249, March 16, 1856.

¹²Wallace Alan Raynor, "History of the Construction of the Salt Lake Temple" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1961), 70. This valuable 229-page thesis is the basis for W. A. Raynor, *The Everlasting Spires: A Story of the Salt Lake Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965).

¹³Jennifer L. Lund, telephone conversation with author, November 15, 1993.

¹⁴Raynor, "History of the Construction," 73 n. 14.

¹⁵Raynor, "History of the Construction," 81 n. 27.

¹⁶Raynor, "History of the Construction," 26-27.

¹⁷A footing is an enlargement at the base of a foundation wall or other supporting structure. The footing distributes the weight on the wall.

¹⁸See photo in Raynor, "History of the Construction," 127; and drawing in [C. Mark Hamilton], *The Salt Lake Temple: A Monument to a People* (Salt Lake City: University Services, 1983), 65.

¹⁹Ken Hacking, interview with author, November 8, 1993, Salt Lake City.

²⁰[George Q. Cannon], *House of the Lord, Historical and Descriptive Sketch of the Salt Lake Temple* ([Salt Lake City]: Geo. Q. Cannon and Sons, 1893), 14.

²¹A stone box placed in the foundation of the Salt Lake Temple on August 13, 1857. "Items Recovered from Stone Box in Temple Foundation," *Church News*, August 21, 1993, 7; Holzapfel, *Every Stone a Sermon*, 19. The second record stone is the capstone, which was placed April 6, 1892. See James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 126.

²²"Items Recovered," 7.

²³Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 148.

²⁴"Items Recovered," 7.

²⁵“Items Recovered,” 7.

²⁶Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 157.

²⁷See Wadsworth, *Set in Stone*, 289; see also photograph 726.14, page 63, photo archives, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

²⁸Robert W. Edwards, telephone conversation with author, November 3, 1993.

²⁹[Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 115.

³⁰[Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 64.

³¹[Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 57.

³²Wallace A. Raynor, telephone conversation with author, October 27, 1993; Peter Danzig, interview with author, March 6, 1970, Provo, Utah.

³³A buttress projects from a structure, such as a wall, and supports it. On the temple, the buttresses are made of stone.

³⁴[Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 64, 70.

³⁵Truman O. Angell Journal, May 31, 1867, LDS Church Archives; italics added.

³⁶Salt Lake Temple Exhibit, Museum of Church History and Art, Salt Lake City, 1993.

³⁷Wadsworth, *Set in Stone*, 63.

³⁸Danzig, interview.

³⁹See photo in Raynor, “History of the Construction,” 171; Raynor, “History of the Construction,” 170.

⁴⁰Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 146–47.

⁴¹A Journal History entry of June 25, 1875, pertaining to the new ZCMI building states: “Inside of the wall, at distances of only 12 feet apart, will be 18 inch square buttresses, in each of which will be two thimbles for ventilation registers, one row about two feet above the footing and the upper one about fifteen inches below the ceiling, to carry away everything in the shape of foul air, the flumes running clear to the roof.” *Deseret Evening News*, June 26, 1875, quoted in Martha Sonntag Bradley, *ZCMI: America’s First Department Store* (Salt Lake City: ZCMI, 1991), 192.

⁴²[Cannon], *House of the Lord*, 20. For a 1911 photograph of the fireplace, see Wadsworth, *Set in Stone*, 366.

⁴³Hacking, interview.

⁴⁴Raynor, “History of the Construction,” 21.

⁴⁵Valerie-Anne Giscard d’Estaing, *The World Almanac Book of Inventions* (New York: World Almanac Publications, 1985), 167.

⁴⁶Giscard d’Estaing, *World Almanac Book of Inventions*, 167.

⁴⁷Derek Birdsall and Carlo M. Cipolla, *The Technology of Man* (London: Wildwood House, 1980), 204.

⁴⁸Giscard d’Estaing, *World Almanac Book of Inventions*, 118–19.

⁴⁹Samuel Irenaeus Prime, *The Life of Samuel F. B. Morse, LL.D.: Inventor of the Electromagnetic Recording Telegraph* (New York: Appleton, 1875), 442–43.

⁵⁰Giscard d’Estaing, *World Almanac Book of Inventions*, 120.

⁵¹Young, in *JD*, 1:132, April 6, 1853.

⁵²Giscard d’Estaing, *World Almanac Book of Inventions*, 120.

⁵³Giscard d’Estaing, *World Almanac Book of Inventions*, 169–70.

⁵⁴Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 228–29.

⁵⁵See [Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 74, 75, 78, 79.

⁵⁶Salt Lake Temple Architectural Drawings, LDS Church Archives; see also [Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 70.

⁵⁷Talmage's statement that there were "two commodious elevators running in separate shafts of granite" might give rise to speculation that shafts were cut specifically to size for each elevator. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 168. Such is not the case since the two elevators occupy only a portion of one large shaft.

⁵⁸Eugene Young, "Inside the New Mormon Temple," *Harper's Weekly*, May 27, 1893, 510. See also [Cannon], *House of the Lord*, 29.

⁵⁹James H. Anderson, "The Salt Lake Temple," *Contributor* 14 (April 1893): 287.

⁶⁰Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 168.

⁶¹Salt Lake Temple Architectural Drawings, LDS Church Archives.

⁶²Salt Lake Temple Architectural Drawings, LDS Church Archives.

⁶³Hacking, interview.

⁶⁴Birdsall and Cipolla, *Technology of Man*, 224.

⁶⁵Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 168.

⁶⁶Raynor, telephone conversation.

⁶⁷Danzig, interview.

⁶⁸Elevator plans from 1889, Salt Lake Temple Architectural Drawings, LDS Church Archives.

⁶⁹Edwards, telephone conversation.

⁷⁰Edwards, telephone conversation.

⁷¹*Deseret Evening News*, August 16, 1873.

⁷²Photograph 726.14, page 19 (taken in 1887), photo archives, Utah State Historical Society. See also *Ensign* 23 (May 1993): 66.

⁷³Giscard d'Estaing, *World Almanac Book of Inventions*, 120, 170.

⁷⁴Kate B. Carter, comp., *Development of Lighting Systems in Utah* ([Salt Lake City]: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1944), 458, 476.

⁷⁵Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City*, The Western Urban History Series, vol. 5 (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing, 1984), 107.

⁷⁶Furring is generally wood or metal mounted on a wall to provide a level surface or an airspace. Lath, in this case pieces of wood, is placed on the furring. Then plastering is spread over the lath, creating a smooth surface.

⁷⁷Hacking, interview.

⁷⁸For plot plan and photographs of these buildings, see Anderson, "The Salt Lake Temple," 245, 283, 286.

⁷⁹Dean C. Jesse, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 264.

⁸⁰Holzapfel, *Every Stone a Sermon*, 34.

⁸¹Edwards, telephone conversation.

⁸²A knife switch consists of four pieces of metal mounted on a plate. Two pieces are mounted above the other two and can be brought into contact with the lower two.

⁸³[Hamilton], *Salt Lake Temple*, 116.

⁸⁴Young, "Inside the New Mormon Temple," 510.

⁸⁵[Cannon], *House of the Lord*, 15.

⁸⁶[Cannon], *House of the Lord*, 15.

⁸⁷Salt Lake Temple Exhibit, Museum of Church History and Art, 1993.

⁸⁸Salt Lake Temple Exhibit, Museum of Church History and Art, 1993.

⁸⁹A dynamo, or dynamoelectric machine, is a generator, changing mechanical energy into electrical energy.

⁹⁰Anderson, "Salt Lake Temple," 283.

⁹¹*Temple Souvenir Album*, 29.

⁹²Hacking, interview.

⁹³A transom is a horizontal crossbar in a window, over a door, or between a door and a window above it.

⁹⁴*Deseret News*, January 1, 1893, 5.

⁹⁵[Cannon], *House of the Lord*, 21.

⁹⁶*Utah Maps II: Urban Salt Lake County, Utah, 1884-1916* in *Fire Insurance Maps of Utah, 1884-1950* (Pelham, N.Y.: [Sanborn Map, 1950]), 1898, microfilm (hereafter cited as Sanborn Maps).

⁹⁷A newel is the post a spiral staircase wraps around or the post at the bottom or on a landing of a straight staircase.

⁹⁸Hacking, interview.

⁹⁹Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 153-54.

¹⁰⁰Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 154 n. 1.

¹⁰¹Sanborn Maps, 1911.

¹⁰²Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 173-74.

¹⁰³Danzig, interview.

¹⁰⁴Danzig, interview.

Missionary covenant.
Before leaving to preach to the Native Americans at the western boundary of the United States, the LDS missionaries signed a covenant regarding their obligations to fulfill their call. Published in the *Ohio Star* (Ravenna, Ohio).

MANCHESTER, Oct. 17, 1830.

I, Oliver, being commanded of the Lord God, to go forth unto the Lamanites, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy unto them, by presenting unto them the fulness of the Gospel, of the only begotten son of God; and also, to rear up a pillar as a witness where the Temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New-Jerusalem; and having certain brothers with me, who are called of God to assist me, whose names are Parley, Peter and Ziba, do therefore most solemnly covenant before God, that I will walk humbly before him, and do this business, and this glorious work according as he shall direct me by the Holy Ghost; ever praying for mine and their prosperity, and deliverance from bonds, and from imprisonments, and whatsoever may befall us, with all patience and faith.—Amen.

OLIVER COWDERY.

We, the undersigned, being called and commanded of the Lord God, to accompany our Brother Oliver Cowdery, to go to the Lamanites, and to assist in the above mentioned glorious work and business. We do, therefore, most solemnly covenant before God, that we will assist him faithfully in this thing, by giving heed unto all his words and advice, which is, or shall be given him by the spirit of truth, ever praying with all prayer and supplication, for our and his prosperity, and our deliverance from bonds, and imprisonments, and whatsoever may come upon us, with all patience and faith.—Amen.

Signed in presence of

JOSEPH SMITH, Jun.
DAVID WHITMER,
P. P. PRATT,
ZIBA PETERSON,
PETER WHITMER.

Manchester, Oct. 17, 1830.

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Signed in presence of

JOSEPH SMITH, Jun.
DAVID WHITMER,
P. P. PRATT,
ZIBA PETERSON,
PETER WHITMER.

Light on the “Mission to the Lamanites”

The 1831 expulsion of Mormon missionaries from Indian territory and their subsequent proposal to establish territorial schools are documented in letters from the contending parties.

Leland H. Gentry

In September 1830, the Lord called Oliver Cowdery by revelation to “go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them” (D&C 28:8). The call came a few months after the United States Congress had passed the Indian Removal Bill, an act providing for the relocation of all tribes within United States borders to points beyond. Long a vigorous proponent of such an act, President Andrew Jackson had signed the bill into law on May 28, 1830.¹

In late September 1830, the second conference of the Church convened in Fayette, New York. Before Church leaders left that conference, Joseph Smith received a revelation instructing Peter Whitmer Jr. to accompany Oliver on this mission (D&C 30:5). News of these calls and of the missionaries’ imminent departure stirred the thoughts of a number of the elders, who realized “that the purposes of God were great” regarding the Lamanites and hoped “that the time had come when the promises of the Almighty in regard to them were about to be accomplished.”² They inquired of the Lord respecting the “propriety of increasing the number of Elders to go among them”³ and received a revelation calling Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson to join the mission to the Lamanites (D&C 32:2-3). When the missionaries arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, Frederick G. Williams, a recent convert, was added to the list.⁴ Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer Jr. were eyewitnesses to the existence of the golden plates, while the other missionaries had stories of conversion that they could relate.

The phrase “borders of the Lamanites” was uniquely Mormon and referred to the boundary line between the western edge of Missouri and present-day Kansas. The Shawnee and Delaware tribes of Ohio, foreseeing the inevitable, had reluctantly vacated their lands in 1828 and 1829 and resettled west of the confluence of the Missouri and Kansas rivers.⁵ The nearest white settlement was the newly platted village of Independence, Missouri, the seat of government for Jackson County.⁶

While this missionary call was welcome news to many members of the Church, no doubt those who shared the popular belief that Indians were thieves and murderers were apprehensive. However, faith in God and trust in the fulfillment of the positive promises he had made prevailed. The newly called missionaries set forth on their journey from New York to Missouri in October 1830.⁷

Following a journey of some fifteen hundred miles, much of it by foot through heavy snow, the missionaries arrived in Independence on January 13, 1831.⁸ “Two of our number now commenced work as tailors in the village of Independence,” wrote Parley P. Pratt, “while the others crossed the frontier line and commenced a mission among the Lamanites.” Following a brief visit to the Shawnees, the travelers “crossed the Kansas River and entered among the Delawares.”⁹

Here the missionaries enjoyed temporary success as well as a lengthy conversation with the chief, William Anderson.¹⁰ Precisely how long the visits continued is not known, but Richard W. Cummins,¹¹ the Indian agent, learned about the elders’ activities and ordered them to desist and leave at once.¹² Government regulations forbade work among the Indians without a special permit¹³ issued by the superintendent of Indian affairs, a regulation with which the elders had failed to comply. Parley Pratt later reported that Cummins was a “difficult man” who carried the law to its extreme and was “some what strenuous respecting our having liberty to visit our brethren the Lamanites.”¹⁴

The elders left as ordered but not before vowing to return. Elder Pratt attributed their eviction to “the jealousy and envy of the Indian agents and sectarian missionaries.”¹⁵ The likelihood that some warm discussion may have ensued between the missionaries and those opposed to their work is suggested by Parley when he

reports that the elders "were soon ordered out of the Indian country as disturbers of the peace; and even threatened with the military in case of non-compliance."¹⁶ The missionaries crossed the river into Missouri and commenced work among the whites. Here, according to Parley, "we were well received, and listened to by many; and some were baptized and added to the Church."¹⁷

On February 14, 1831, Oliver Cowdery wrote to General William Clark,¹⁸ the superintendent of Indian affairs in St. Louis, requesting permission to "have free intercourse with the several tribes" in order to establish schools and Christian instruction for Indian children, one of the principal enterprises being pursued among Indian tribes by many Christian denominations. The following day, Major Richard Cummins wrote a letter of his own explaining his reasons for evicting the men. Both letters represent the earliest written documentation of the Mormon missionaries' actual visit among the Delawares. After the letters' discovery in the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka among the papers of General William Clark, the body of Major Cummins's letter and the main paragraph of Elder Cowdery's letter were published in the *Kansas Historical Quarterly* in 1971.¹⁹ To make them more accessible to those interested in Mormon history, we have printed them below in their entirety.

One of the chief historical values of these letters is their corroboration of the missionaries' claim that they did enter Shawnee and Delaware lands and did preach to the Indians. In addition, Cummins's letter contains the earliest written indication of the Latter-day Saints' interest in the Rocky Mountain region. His letter portrays five men determined to carry out a divinely appointed mission and an equally adamant Indian agent determined to comply with federal regulations. His letter explains the reasons for his refusal to permit the men to proceed, as well as his personal observation that they were "strange." Oliver Cowdery's letter is a simple plea for permission to proceed as planned. As far as is known, no answer to either letter was ever received.

Parley Pratt returned to Ohio, but the rest of the missionaries remained near Independence until the arrival of Joseph Smith and party the following July. In the meantime, the missionaries' interest in the Native Americans did not falter. In writing from Kaw

Township on the western border of Missouri on May 7, 1831, Oliver reported to his brethren in the East that he had recently learned “of another tribe of Lamanites” living about “three hundred miles west of Santa Fe, and are called Navashoes [Navajos].” Oliver indicated that he mentioned this tribe because “I feel under obligation to communicate to my brethren any information concerning the Lamanites that I meet with in my labors and travels.”²⁰

After the missionaries’ unsuccessful petition for a license to establish a school, Church leaders considered other possible avenues for extending contact to the Indians, but these efforts met with little success. A revelation received in July 1831 instructed Sidney Gilbert to “establish a store” and apply for a license to trade or “send goods also unto the Lamanites . . . and then the gospel may be preached unto them.”²¹ An unpublished revelation given to Joseph Smith that same month expressed the will that the Saints “in time” should marry Indian women. According to apostate Ezra Booth, intermarriage was to enable Mormon missionaries to “gain a residence” in Indian country,²² but according to W. W. Phelps, its purpose was that the posterity of the Lamanites and Nephites “become white, delightsome and just.”²³

Leland H. Gentry is a retired Church Educational System educator.

NOTES

¹Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 2:263.

²Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:118 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

³*History of the Church*, 1:118, n. *.

⁴*History of the Church*, 1:125.

⁵Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 470-71.

⁶Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 53, 58; Lamar C. Berrett, “Independence, Missouri,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:679.

⁷*History of the Church*, 1:118-25; Pratt, *Autobiography*, 47, 52; and Andrew Jenson, *Journal History of the Church*, October 1830, 7-9, Archives Division, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

⁸Jenson, *Journal History of the Church*, January 29, 1831, 2, LDS Church Archives.

⁹Pratt, *Autobiography*, 53.

¹⁰Pratt, *Autobiography*, 53-57. William Anderson, a half-breed member of the Turkey clan of Delaware Indians whose Indian name was *Kikthawenung* (Creaking Boughs), became the principal chief of the Delaware Indians around 1805. Thomas Dean, a Quaker who visited Anderson in 1817, described him as "a plain but majestic looking old man." Anderson was a non-Christian. He moved to Kansas in the fall of 1830, only a few months before the missionaries arrived. He died in October 1831. C. A. Weslager, *The Delaware Indian Westward Migration* (Wallingford, Pa: Middle Atlantic, 1978), 51, 58, 62-63, 71, 217, 219.

¹¹In addition to his role as Indian agent, Cummins was actively involved in Missouri politics. He participated in the Missouri Constitutional Convention and in the Missouri State Senate in 1822. Warren A. Jennings, "The First Mormon Mission to the Indians," *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 37 (August 1971): 297, n. 41.

¹²Pratt, *Autobiography*, 57.

¹³The Intercourse Act of 1802 did not specifically address missionary work. Christian missionaries operated dozens of schools among the Indians in the 1820s and 1830s. The act did, however, prohibit American citizens from entering Indian country "without a passport." The act provided, moreover, "that no such citizen, or other person, shall be permitted to reside at any of the towns, or hunting camps, of any of the Indian tribes as a trader, without a license under the hand and seal of the superintendent of the department." Congress by this act also authorized the military "to apprehend every person who shall, or may be found in the Indian country . . . in violation of any of the provisions or regulations of this act." The act was enforced on a selective basis. Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History*, 4 vols. (New York: Random House, 1973), 3:2154-63; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1:89-98, 108-114, 151-54.

¹⁴*Messenger and Advocate*, October 1835.

¹⁵Pratt, *Autobiography*, 57.

¹⁶Pratt, *Autobiography*, 57.

¹⁷Pratt, *Autobiography*, 57.

¹⁸William Clark, best known for his involvement in the Lewis and Clark expedition, also served as Indian agent for Louisiana Territory and as governor for the territory of Missouri. Following his unsuccessful bid for the governorship of the new state of Missouri in 1820, Clark was appointed superintendent of Indian affairs, with headquarters in St. Louis. He held this position until he died in 1838. Jerome O. Steffen, *William Clark: Jeffersonian Man on the Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977).

¹⁹Jennings, "First Mormon Mission to the Indians," 298.

²⁰*History of the Church*, 1:182.

²¹"Book of Commandments, Laws, and Covenants," Book B, LDS Church Archives, and Joseph Smith's Kirtland Revelation Book, verses 9b and 10, LDS Archives, quoted in Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 2:728, 731.

²²*Obio Star*, December 8, 1831, 1; David J. Whittaker, "Mormons and Native Americans: A Historical and Bibliographical Introduction," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (winter 1985): 35.

²³W. W. Phelps to Brigham Young, report of Joseph Smith revelation, July 17, 1831, Revelations Collection, LDS Church Archives.

Letters to General William Clark, Superintendent of Indian Affairs

Independence, Jackson County
Missouri, Feb. 14, 1831

The Superintendent of Indian Affairs

Sir,

While I address your honour by this communication I do it with much pleasure understanding it pleasing your honour to countenance every exertion made by the philanthropist for the instruction of the Indian in the arts of civilized life which is a sure productive of the Gospel of Christ.

As I have been appointed by a society of Christians in the State of New York to superintend the establishing Missions among the Indians I doubt not but I shall have the approbation of your honour and a permit for myself and all who may be recommended to me by that Society to have free intercourse with the several tribes in establishing schools for the instruction of their children and also teaching them the Christian religion without intruding or interfering with any other Mission now established.

With much esteem I subscribe your honor's

Humble Servant

(Signed)

Oliver Cowdery

Delaware & Shawanee Agency

15th. February 1831

Genl. Wm. Clark
Superintendent
Indian Affairs

Sir,

A few days agoe three Men all Strangers to me went among the Indians Shawanees & Delawares, they say for the purpose of preaching to and Instructing them in Religious Matters, they say they are sent by God and must proceed, they have a new Revelation with them, as there Guide in teaching the Indians, which they say was shown to one of their Sects in a Miraculous way, and that an Angel from Heaven appeared to one of their Men and two others of their Sect, and shewed them that the work was from God, and much more &c. I have refused to let them stay or, go among the Indians unless they first obtain permission from you or, some of the officers of the Genl. Government who I am bound to obey. I am informed that they intend to apply to you for permission to go among the Indians, if you refuse, then they will go to the Rocky Mountains, but what they will be with the Indians. The Men act very strange; there came on five to this place, they say, four from the State of New York, and one from Ohio.

Respectfully Your

most Obdnt. Srvnt.

(Signed)

Richd. W. Cummins
Ind. Agent.

Book Reviews

JOHN E. HALLWAS and ROGER D. LAUNIUS, eds. *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois*. Logan: Utah State University, 1995. x, 369 pp. Illustrations, map, bibliographic note, index. \$37.95.

Reviewed by Glen M. Leonard, director of the Museum of Church History and Art.

In this handsomely designed collection, editors John Hallwas and Roger Launius offer ninety documents to represent the disparate viewpoints of participants in what the non-Mormon citizens of Illinois came to know as the Mormon War. Fully half of the entries are drawn from period newspapers or other early published sources. Fifteen documents are reproduced from original manuscripts, most of them found in Midwestern repositories. Probably one-third of the entries will not be familiar to Nauvoo history specialists. Most of these are from regional newspapers of the 1840s, only a half dozen from manuscripts.

Notwithstanding its usefulness to Nauvoo researchers, this documentary examination of the cultural tensions of Hancock County in the 1840s is not intended as a scholarly edition of the texts. The editors present major extracts and delete extraneous data from their offerings. They dismiss explanatory footnotes and choose instead to explain the documents in headnotes. Those introductory comments serve a broader interpretive purpose as well. The book's ultimate objective is to pose a challenge for modern students of Old Nauvoo. In particular, Hallwas and Launius question the religious historiographical perspective of members and historians of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In short, while *Cultures in Conflict* reveals the differences among people in the past, it also reminds us that Nauvoo's history continues to call forth differing visions of historical understanding.¹

The editors are well qualified to tackle their subject. Hallwas, a professor of English and director of regional collections at Western Illinois University in Macomb, has researched and published local history for many years. Launius, chief historian at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in Washington, D.C., has to his credit articles exploring the history of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and a biography of Joseph Smith III.

As with every historical work, this compilation reflects the philosophical orientation of its authors. Launius necessarily sees Nauvoo from his perspective as a member of the Reorganized Church; Hallwas, as a midwesterner from outside the Mormon tradition. In challenging what they term the Latter-day Saint “cultural myth of innocence and righteousness,” Hallwas and Launius share an outsider’s perspective that combines two earlier views. The first was espoused by the anti-Mormon political party of historic Hancock County. Grounded in the assumptions of a secular world, it minimizes the workings of the religious mind.² The second was voiced by internal opponents of Joseph Smith’s doctrinal developments in Nauvoo and represents a religious perspective that finds unacceptable significant doctrinal changes during the Nauvoo years, particularly those associated with the Nauvoo Temple. In other words, the commentary in this volume reflects the views of the secular and spiritual opponents of Joseph Smith’s religious community in Nauvoo.

The editors set forth a reliable thesis for their narrative: that the Mormon conflict in Illinois was an ideological struggle between two cultures. In one of these cultures, a covenant with God created a people who were governed under a theocracy. In the other, a contract among individuals created a government functioning as a democracy. At a basic level, in their selection of documents, the editors attempt balance and fairness in presenting the views of these competing cultures. They allow twenty-eight Latter-day Saints, three dissenters, thirty-nine non-Mormons, and twenty anti-Mormons to speak. After an introductory section on the arrival of the Saints in Illinois, five succeeding parts focus on the book’s central theme—conflict: its origins, the troubles in Nauvoo over plural marriage and the *Expositor*; the murders in Carthage, the

aftermath of violence and political tension, and the exodus and final Battle of Nauvoo.

Despite the presence of alternate historical voices, the compilation's narrators speak loudest of all as advocates for their own interpretive view. Their voices invite Latter-day Saint historians to move beyond their own convictions to include more of the context of secular America and more of the ambiguities and complexities of human experience. The editors argue that there is too much sacred history in the Nauvoo histories written from a Latter-day Saint perspective. And yet, while calling for a broadening (or even abandonment) of the sacred view of history, Hallwas and Launius ultimately fail to broaden their own perspective. Their attempt to correct old inequities creates a new imbalance. They applaud the secular and reformist voices and muffle the Latter-day Saint voices of faith.

The editors argue their case in cogent introductions to each section and each document. In the political arena, they endorse the perspective that sees Nauvoo as a militaristic community where democratic government was blatantly supplanted with theocratic authority (5, 67-68, 244), and they dismiss the opposite perspective (161). They praise the virtues of Thomas Sharp and other political opponents of Nauvoo's growing influence at the polls as men "devoted to individualism and democratic values, which [they] felt were threatened by the theocratic, militaristic community headed by Joseph Smith" (80, 103). They applaud the calming influence of Sheriff Minor Deming but criticize the tactics of Deming's successor, Jacob B. Backenstos, as "both foolish and repressive," concluding that "all he ultimately succeeded in doing was escalating the conflict" (280).

The religious controversy similarly is cast in terms that shift the traditional characterizations of participants. In the contest of words between Joseph Smith and John C. Bennett, the editors, while attempting fairness, allow Bennett to come out ahead (8, 116). Much is made of the "deception" employed by the Prophet in the practice of plural marriage (126, 138, 169), nothing of its religious groundings. Readers are invited to accept the internal religious opposition aired through the *Expositor* newspaper as "an ethical protest . . . against what they believed was oppression from an

ecclesiastical institution gone awry” (111, 112). The reformers “represented well-informed, respectable dissent in Nauvoo” (131), stood for traditional Christian and American values (163–64), and were “some of the most solid and dignified men of the community” (175). In contrast, those who destroyed the *Expositor*, the authors say, were guilty of suppressing freedom “under the guise of preserving liberty” (166).

The editors find unacceptable the Latter-day Saint view that the anti-Mormons engaged in religious persecution of the Saints. For them, “the only documented case of out-and-out religious persecution enacted in Hancock County [was] against the dissenters who dared to point out Mormon shortcomings in their newspaper and demand reform” (6). Hallwas and Launius acknowledge that failure, shortcomings, and human foibles exist in the complex individuals on all sides of the conflict (6, 142, 348). For the Nauvooans who would migrate to Utah, those shortcomings included their inability to recognize their own weaknesses (6, 91, 185, 191), a readiness to blame others (203), “criminal behavior and political clannishness” (262), and the use of scapegoating and the denial of justice for political and religious opponents (7–8, 149–50, 157).

Generally, Hallwas and Launius advise caution against the bias in polemical and mythic texts (126, 138) and warn against the uncritical use of reminiscent accounts (72, 103). In some instances, however, they hold such documents to different standards of reliability when to do so supports their thesis (326). For example, they accept an 1875 reminiscence from the *Carthage Gazette* as an authentic portrait of Nauvoo despite the obvious bias of the author. “Nauvoo in 1846 was characterized by factions, rowdyism, and fear,” Hallwas and Launius conclude (326). Yet they classify as an unconscious reshaping of history a Utah woman’s recollection of the Battle of Nauvoo. Her words, they observe, “sound suspiciously like the kind of thing that is ‘recalled’ when memory becomes the servant of faith” (339).

In presenting their version of “the inevitable conflict between theocratic and democratic government,” Hallwas and Launius fear most “the danger of demonizing other people, and the self-deceptions fostered by the myths of innocence and political righteousness” (8). They observe correctly that both sides in the conflict

sometimes failed in these ways. They rightly argue that the non-Mormons “had justifiable ideological grounds on which to criticize [Joseph] Smith and oppose the spread of Mormon theocracy.” To their credit, the editors acknowledge that when the non-Mormon critique turned to murder, it “breached the very democratic ideals” advocated by the secular opponents of the Latter-day Saint theocratic community. Hallwas and Launius offer mild praise for the community of Latter-day Saints “for their religious idealism, hard work, and personal sacrifice,” while challenging “the antidemocratic tendencies of their dogmatic, crusading spirit” (8). Their portrayal reveals the inner tension within a church that was struggling to maintain a secular view of government as democratic while at the same time advocating the establishment of a religious community founded on theocratic biblical patterns.

As a corrective to some single-minded interpretations of Nauvoo, *Cultures in Conflict* is a helpful addition to the historical literature. It makes readily available many familiar sources and a number of new ones. Unfortunately, by defending the anti-Mormon/dissident perspective and diminishing the view of Nauvoo as religious community, the book polarizes historical discussion. This volume would have been more useful had it built a more balanced understanding of the competing viewpoints as a springboard to tolerance for differences then and now.

From my perspective as a member of the religious community and historiographical world view targeted by Hallwas and Launius, it seems that because Joseph Smith’s vision for Nauvoo was founded in the world of religious ideas—and not for secular purposes—Nauvoo can best be understood through the lens of sacred history. Those of us who see Nauvoo from this view must, however, learn to understand as well the secular and dissident perspectives of the opposing parties to fully understand the complex story of Nauvoo. That understanding can help to eliminate simplistic characterizations of individuals and groups as only good or only evil. It can build bridges of understanding between disparate communities in today’s world.

NOTES

¹For a parallel documentary approach to religious dissent, see Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, eds., *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

²For pertinent background on the historiographical approach taken in *Cultures in Conflict*, consult John E. Hallwas, "Mormon Nauvoo from a Non-Mormon Perspective," *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 53-69; and Roger D. Launius, "Mormon Memory, Mormon Myth, and Mormon History," *Journal of Mormon History* 21 (spring 1995): 1-24.

DAVIS BITTON. *Images of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1996. viii; 198 pp. Bibliography, index. Paperback, \$11.95.

Reviewed by Susan Easton Black, Associate Dean of General Education and Honors and Professor of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University.

Historian Davis Bitton earned his academic spurs during his graduate years at Princeton and his professorial tenure at the University of Utah. Of the ten books he has written, best known to LDS scholars are his co-authored work with Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (1979), and his detailed reference book, *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* (1977). As a past president of the Mormon History Association and as an emeritus professor, Bitton is widely respected for his contribution to Latter-day Saint history.

Images of the Prophet Joseph Smith is the most recent contribution to Mormon literature by Davis Bitton. It is not a conventional biography of the founder of Mormonism. His perceptive approach to the life of Joseph Smith dramatically differs from the monochrome, but faithful, biography by John Henry Evans, the objective work by Donna Hill, and the biased portrayal by Fawn Brodie.¹ Bitton despairs, "How flawed . . . must be any effort to write the life of another person," but then confesses, "We humans keep trying" (vii).

Bitton's newest book is not a treatise on the life of Joseph Smith or his teachings. The purpose is to present alternative explanations for contrasting perceptions of Joseph Smith from his own time to the present. The author includes a chapter on the views of modern interpretive scholars. Bitton is generous in his applause of the contributions of his colleagues Milton V. Backman Jr., Gordon A. Madsen, Hugh Nibley, and Richard L. Anderson.

The author's discussion of portrayals of Joseph Smith from hostile blackguard to Jacksonian hero captivates the reader of *Images* with a panoply of written portraits. The interpretative views of Joseph as mystic, manic-depressive, and arch-deceiver are balanced with testimonials acknowledging him as prophet, revelator, and friend. Bitton does not challenge the perceptions he

presents, for he believes people see what they want to see. As the mosaic unfolds, the author disclaims any personal bias in the recitations, conveniently avoiding a conflict by dubbing himself just a historian.

However, he is quick to concede that the extreme negative images of Joseph Smith are not the view of contemporary admirers outside of the Mormon faith. And just as quickly, Bitton negates the notion that Joseph Smith was a god to his followers in mid-America in the 1840s, despite one possible reading of these lines from a Latter-day Saint hymn: “Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren; Death cannot conquer the hero again.”²

His stance allows each reader to discern whether the viewpoints presented are deficient, inconsistent, shifting, exaggerated, or consonant with personal beliefs. In such a paradigm of reality, it is expected that the sentiments of the serious reader may shift from one perspective to another until the weight of personal bias sways the pendulum of thought. For, the author believes, “People act not according to the way things are but the way they think they are” (165).

To engage his audience, pithy quotes dot the beginning of each chapter. Since the text includes chapters comparing Joseph Smith to ancient prophets, presents other ennobling views, and is sold “wherever LDS books are sold,” it seems curious that Bitton begins his treatise with the hostile views. His litany of negative, attention-grabbing descriptions of Joseph Smith creates a dramatic effect—impostor, pretender, fanatic, and despot. These labels shape the repetitious drumbeat of the anti-Smith rhetoric. Only one label seems original to Joseph’s opponents—fallen prophet. The other labels can also be attributed to the vagrants, scoundrels, and other undesirables in nineteenth-century America.

The chapters on folklore memory and the physical stature of the Prophet are arguably the most original contributions in the text. The posthumous Joseph Smith, as he lived on in the collective memory of his faithful contemporaries, is portrayed with editorial finesse. The carefully selected examples depict the Prophet with a supernatural glow and enough epic qualities to make him an ideal source of inspiration for embellished folklore. “Tall he may have been,” the author concurs, but he then wonders, “How he could have been ‘thin-favored’ and stout and round at the same time” (107)?

Bitton rightfully asks, “What is the value of these stories?” (99). His answer does not discount any story as less than valuable “not in discovering the life of the Prophet,” but in discovering “the popular mind of his people” (100). As historian Bitton entertains a variety of borderline psychological assumptions; he turns from a mere interpretive recitation of facts to armchair psychology. Choosing to divert into the realms of the mind leaves him an easy prey to criticism. Bitton uses phrases and jargon that are in vogue among popular psychologists—“blown the whistle,” “roller coaster existence,” “landed on his feet,” “carries baggage with it” (4, 5, 13, 21)—but are not so readily accepted by cautious colleagues. Nor are his interpretative comments—“Such is the stuff of hero-worship” or “The words of the Book of Mormon passed through the brain of Joseph Smith” (48, 53)—typical of an empirical scholar. His editorial comment, “But the trauma was doubtless severe and profoundly affected Joseph’s psychic development” (2), introduces more speculative questions than Bitton is prepared to answer.

When writing of Joseph Smith as a Jacksonian hero, the author struggles to find the most appropriate heroic yardstick. The five steps to becoming a hero developed by literary scholar Roy Porter are replaced by the myth-making approach of Joseph Campbell. Campbell’s view is discounted, in turn, in favor of the logic of historians Bill Butler and John William Ward. By the end of the brief chapter, a litany of hero-making definitions are discarded, leaving the author to accept the parsimonious theory of sociologist Robert Nisbet: “Without hostile opposition, above all treachery, one cannot possibly become a hero” (47). The chapter proves to be more of a treatise on the definitions of a hero than a focus on the image of Joseph Smith as a Jacksonian hero.

At first glance, it might be presumed that Davis Bitton is not writing to a traditional scholarly audience although what he is writing about is scholarly. However, his broad-stroke recitations of history and even his caveat that “such bare events are easily recited” (2) are unacceptable to the academician searching for documented details. Rather than provide the reader with verifiable observations, the author intentionally recalls events in generalities; for example, “Smith might be telling X that he should go on a preaching mission, warning Y that he should beware of pride” (8). Adding to his difficulties is a general failure to consistently cite source documents.

Even quotations easily identified in the Doctrine and Covenants are not referenced. The first chapter, comprising the chronological accounting of the life of Joseph Smith, includes only four endnotes. Exhaustive referencing, the hallmark of Bitton's academic prowess, is compromised in *Images* by a nonchalant, historic overview.

The weakest chapter is "The Prophet: 'Like Unto . . .'" Within a brief ten pages, Bitton compares the perceived life of Joseph Smith to the lives of Enoch, Abraham, Joseph of Egypt, Moses, John the Baptist, Paul, and Jesus Christ. The comparisons are made without citing any journal or diary entries to support the archetypal theme. Only in an obscure endnote does Bitton acknowledge the literature of typology: "All prophets to one degree or another are in the similitude of the Savior. Prophets stand as living types or models of the Christ" (80 n. 25).

The question "Who was the Prophet Joseph Smith?" is intentionally not answered in *Images*. Bitton challenges the reader to carefully examine the contrasting perceptions presented and reach a personal conclusion about the man. Whether the decision reached is positive or negative, the process of discussion fulfills prophecy. On September 21, 1823, the Angel Moroni said to young Joseph Smith, "[Your] name [shall] be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it [shall] be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (JS-H 1:33). According to Bitton, too often the decision reached is based on images or perceptions and not on asking "God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ" and receiving a manifestation "by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4) as to who Joseph Smith was.

NOTES

¹See John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (New York: Macmillan, 1933); Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith: The First Mormon* (Midvale, Utah: Signature, 1977); and Fawn McKay Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1945).

²"Praise to the Man," in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 27.

DAVID JOHN BUERGER. *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship*. San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994. 234 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Danel W. Bachman, Instructor, Logan Institute of Religion, Logan, Utah, and Kenneth W. Godfrey, historian and writer.

Joseph Smith believed that at the core of restoration theology was temple worship.¹ However, he left behind few documents detailing how and when the endowment was revealed to him. That many Latter-day Saints have an interest in temples and temple ceremonies is evidenced by the fact that large collections of unpublished temple-related documents circulate among historians, theologians, and interested members. Even scholarly books such as Donald W. Parry's *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* and Hugh Nibley's *Temple and Cosmos* enjoy surprisingly brisk sales. Still most Latter-day Saints remain unfamiliar with the antecedents and historical development of modern temple ceremonies. Even revealed sacred rites, we believe, have a history that can be both interesting and instructive.

The Mysteries of Godliness attempts the first historical treatment of the development of the endowment and other temple rites. The preface acknowledges the sensitivity of this theme and promises "to treat the ceremony with respect" in order to "enhance understanding of the temple for both Latter-day Saints and others by providing a history of the endowment" (vii, ix). Yet, "given exaggerated claims about the temple and its origin by some enthusiastic apologists" [just who these persons are and what constitutes their exaggerated claims the author does not tell us], he argues that "a degree of specificity in detail is unavoidable" (viii). Using many unpublished primary sources and published exposés written by anti-Mormons, Buerger traces endowment history from its beginnings in 1831 to the present day. His narrative is specific enough to offend the sensitivities of most devout Mormons, despite his disclaimers.

All sacred texts and sacred ceremonies, when they become the object of historical analysis, should be treated with delicacy and care—somewhat like cultivating a rare flower. This care is

necessary if understanding is to blossom in the hearts of readers who cherish their faith or in the minds of others in terms that are true to the nature of the subject matter. Buerger, attempting to speak through his sources, some of which are openly antagonistic to Joseph Smith and the ceremonies revealed through him, fails to pass the sensitivity test. Nevertheless, basing his history on a plethora of documents (many of which are restricted by the Church because of their sacred content and thus cannot be studied by general researchers to determine their meaning, veracity, or historical setting), he does create an interesting narrative.

Buerger probes the “Kirtland Ceremony” as a precursor for the more complete Nauvoo temple ritual, and he examines the influences of the Book of Abraham and the Book of Moses on the endowment. A large section in one chapter of his book is devoted to Masonic rites and the role they might have played in endowment history. Moreover, he particularizes the contributions of Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, David O. McKay, George F. Richards, and Gordon B. Hinckley to that which transpires in Mormon temples.

Latter-day Saints and scholars alike will learn something new by studying this relatively small volume. Using prose devoid of rancor and sensationalism, Buerger utilizes minutes of Schools of the Prophets, First Presidency letters, and other primary sources to provide some detail in the history of the development of temple ceremonies, including the seldom-mentioned second anointings ritual. Buerger discusses the meaning of many sacred symbols and practices associated with temple worship. David O. McKay, we learn, first explained the symbolism associated with the temple clothing worn by faithful Latter-day Saints. Buerger documents and explains the origin of style changes in temple clothing; however, the historical and religious setting and origin of this clothing is glaringly absent from the pages of this book, as is an explanation of the significance such apparel has for endowed Church members. Buerger also informs us that early Mormons who were married were expected to refrain from intimate relations ten days prior to attending the temple (unmarried Mormons were to refrain altogether). He documents, too, that many deceased women were sealed to high Church officials in the St. George Temple. The historical development of the ordinance of the washing of feet is also

explained, as is the background for the introduction of sophisticated media in today's ritual.

While there is much of value in this volume, it is seriously flawed. Buerger promises a history of Mormon temple worship, but his focus is much more limited, with emphasis on washings, anointings, second anointings, and washing of feet—precisely those things Latter-day Saints believe are most private and thus should not be discussed publicly. At the same time, he neglects other very important aspects of temple worship.² This exclusivity belies the title and promise of the book. Those who study its pages will fail to find anything regarding temple dedications, solemn assemblies, or the experiences of those millions of Mormons who have participated in temple rites since 1842.

The cover, to cite the first example, lacks taste and attempts to titillate the eye. It would be more appropriate for some slick magazine or murder mystery than for a serious history of a sacred ceremony. Other weaknesses in the volume are of a more serious nature.

In chapter one, Buerger argues that “High Priesthood” originated in 1831 “in the mind of Sidney Rigdon” (2). Buerger’s source for this claim is the 1887 publication *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, authored by David Whitmer many years after the introduction of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Better studies, including the writings of Larry C. Porter, conclude that Joseph Smith, not Sidney Rigdon, introduced the Melchizedek Priesthood to Latter-day Saints.³ The description of the second anointing, as performed in temples today, uses as a source a “knowledgeable anonymous individual” (66–68). Serious readers have no way of proving the accuracy of the Buerger account. The author also contends that following 1831, Mormon theology became “predestinarian” (2), using a word that will puzzle most LDS readers. Participating in sealing ordinances in Latter-day Saint temples is not akin to being predestined, nor does the word adequately or accurately describe the Latter-day Saint theological concept of having one’s calling and election made sure. The LDS idea of sealing, Buerger argues, is not totally congruent with New Testament theology regarding sealing. There, God is always the sealing agent, whereas in Mormonism a human intermediary is introduced. Buerger fails to consider how and why this difference came about. For most Latter-day Saints, the

ceremony draws believers to Jesus Christ. Buerger fails to explain how or why sealing came to be at the center of temple worship.

While he searches for antecedents to the temple ceremony in freemasonry, focusing on the signs, tokens, keywords, and penalties (Buerger does admit there was no wholesale borrowing of the endowment from Masonry), he fails to acknowledge the unique theological meaning and the religious and doctrinal content in which they are embedded in the endowment. He also ignores the influence that biblical texts may have had on Joseph Smith's temple thought. There is, as Grant Underwood and Philip Barlow have shown, an intense biblicism that undergirds and pervades the Prophet's thinking.⁴

Furthermore, Buerger ignores the contributions of the Book of Mormon to Latter-day Saint temple worship. Several LDS scholars have shown that there is more in the Book of Mormon about temples and the endowment than a cursory reading might indicate.⁵ Their research leads the careful student to believe that Joseph Smith learned much about temples as he translated ancient texts and worked on his translation of the Bible. An exhaustive study of the endowment must include a thorough study of all Mormon scripture.

Because of the book's fragmentary nature, the author does not provide the reader with an understanding of the plan of salvation that the ceremony is intended to convey. Nor does he clarify why temple rites are the core of Mormonism. The building of temples is another significant part of temple worship which deserves greater attention, including site selection, the laying of cornerstones, the placing of capstones, and the sacrifices involved in constructing these edifices.

Readers who wish to become more knowledgeable about the historical development of the endowment ceremony itself will probably learn something from reading *The Mysteries of Godliness*. However, those who desire to understand the spiritual aspects of temple worship and the impact of temple ceremonies on individual Latter-day Saints will be disappointed with this treatment of temple worship.

NOTES

¹Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman Jr., "Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo," *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1 and 2 (1992): 41-56.

²See Allen Claire Rozsa, "Temple Ordinances," and Immo Luschin, "Latter-day Saint Temple Worship and Activity," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4: 1444, 1447.

³Larry C. Porter, "The Restoration of the Priesthood," *Religious Studies Center Newsletter* 9, no. 3 (May 1995): 10.

⁴See Grant Underwood, "Joseph Smith's Use of the Old Testament," in *The Old Testament and the Latter-day Saints*, Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, 1986 (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1986), 381; and Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁵See John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful," and M. Catherine Thomas, "The Brother of Jared at the Veil," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 297, 388. See also John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990).

CAROL CORNWALL MADSEN. *In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994. xii; 266 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Michelle Stott, Associate Professor of German, Brigham Young University.

A valuable addition to the slowly growing body of published firsthand accounts by early Latter-day Saints, this volume presents a selection of diary extracts, letters, and "reminiscences" or memoirs authored by Mormon women. Given the large volume of extant materials, the editor has limited the scope of these texts to the Nauvoo period in the early 1840s. Madsen has chosen twenty-four representative authors, both women of renown, such as Emmeline Wells, Eliza R. Snow, and Bathsheba Smith, and those who remain essentially unknown.

In retaining the original grammar and spelling in these readings, the editor allows readers insight into the widely varied backgrounds and educational levels of the women represented; the intensity of their experience and emotion is recorded in language ranging from highly polished nineteenth-century prose to the halting expressions of the barely literate. The nature of the writing reminds readers of two very important facts: that Nauvoo was on the frontier and that education beyond minimal reading and writing had not yet become a reality for any but the most privileged. In particular, book learning was not considered to be a necessity for women, whose roles rarely extended beyond the private domain of the home and family. One wonders how many more stories of women in Nauvoo have remained unarticulated and unheard because those who lived the experiences lacked the skills to record them. In this context, Madsen is perhaps overly apologetic concerning the spelling and grammatical deficiencies of some of the writers. A short historical explanation of the educational conventions of the time might have been useful in alleviating this discomfort.

The book is arranged in a format that is easily accessible to general readers, beginning with a lively, informative introduction that establishes a historical context for the readings and the segments of life that they detail. Instead of a monologic summary by a

nonengaged historian, however, this introduction provides a rich mosaic crafted from the words of women whose writings are otherwise not included in the volume, thus expanding the scope of the book beyond just the twenty-four authors from whom lengthier excerpts are drawn.

The rest of the book is divided into three sections: “Diaries,” “Letters,” and “Reminiscences,” each of which is introduced by a short section that discusses the significance and value of women’s diaries, letters, and memoirs as literary genres and provides readers with some basis for an interpretation of the excerpts. In addition, each selection is preceded by a short, informative biography of the woman writer, which locates her in time and place and explains the circumstances surrounding the events in the selection.

All of the introductory materials in the book are skillfully constructed so as to illuminate the “historical limitations of personal discourse” (x). Madsen’s writing reflects a grounding in autobiographical theory; though she presents no formal theoretical discussion, she quietly and subtly breaks down unfounded assumptions and misunderstandings of women’s personal discourse, thus bringing readers to the level of theoretical awareness necessary for a deeper understanding of the works. For those interested in further study, the notes to the individual sections supply information concerning scholarly studies of women’s narrative.

As they sketch the historical conditions surrounding the settling of Nauvoo, the prevailing political and religious climate, and the many challenges and privations encountered by the people, all introductions and explanatory materials offered by the editor speak from squarely within the Latter-day Saint belief system and point of view. However, the text and its accompanying notes offer sufficient explanation to make the volume accessible to people of other beliefs. Notes also explain historical references, customs, or terminology that might not be readily understandable to readers in our century.

In her introductory materials, Madsen also clarifies the basis on which she has selected the women whose works would appear in this volume—for example, she has included only women who were deeply involved in the Latter-day Saint cause and who were supportive of Joseph Smith and, at his death, Brigham Young.

As she notes, “Those who followed other paths have different stories to tell” (x), stories that move far beyond the scope and intent of this work. The result is a focused volume that centers upon faith as a driving, determining force in the lives of the women who are speaking (29). In spite of this unifying center, however, as the preface points out, the excerpts clearly illustrate the individuality of and wide diversity between the women represented here.

In an admirable way, this compilation remains true to the project of letting the women speak of their concerns and interests “in their own words.” As will quickly be noticed by those involved in the comparative study of male- and female-authored works in the centuries prior to our own, men, perhaps because of their generally broader educational opportunities and their activity in the public sphere, have tended in their writing to be more involved with abstract ideas, the political aspects of human society, and professional concerns. Women, however, perhaps because of their relatively restricted realm of experience within the private or home sphere and because of their more limited educational level, have been more concerned with the practicalities of life, with concrete daily experiences, and with the priority of interpersonal relationship. This reality is clearly reflected in the selections presented in this volume. As the editor points out in her preface, “Friends, community, and Church were the binding force of [these women’s] Nauvoo experience” (ix). Those who read these excerpts gain an understanding, not of idealized, larger-than-life Saints and heroines, but rather, of very real human beings who in many cases have become extraordinary through their faith and tenacity in performing the ordinary. In these pages, readers encounter women’s frustrations, sorrows, and light-heartedness coupled with solid wisdom and insight.

Where most traditional histories of the LDS Church focus on the actions of the men who were the missionaries and the leaders of the restored Church, these texts reflect the challenges and privations of the families left behind: the cramped quarters and leaky roofs, the insufficient housing and provisions. The words of these writers reveal clearly the strategies for survival through networks of social contact, systems of trade and bartering, and the traditional female visiting that women developed to strengthen and assist each

other in the absence of the traditional male provider, gone as a result of disease, violence, or mission calls. As Madsen notes, “Family and friends often blended into a single ‘kinship’ network, binding women together in ties of mutual support and companionship” (17). Readers are also greeted with the positive side of life in this vital religious community, with its “camaraderie and social exchange” (12). The excerpts reflect in kaleidoscopic array the excitement of social events in the city, the ways women filled their emotional needs, the kinship developed among plural wives, the spiritual gatherings, women’s groups and alliances for welfare and compassionate service, temple work and worship, and the founding of the Relief Society. Among the accounts of growing persecution and violence, the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith loom as a defining tragedy and a rallying point. Clearly, for these women, all experience is illuminated and enlivened by passionate religious commitment and faith—sometimes as a source of endurance, sometimes almost as a litany intoned to drown out encroaching chaos and the violent disruption of life by mob action.

The one point that leaves readers dissatisfied with this book is the fact that the readings are only excerpts. In their brevity, each selection is a flash, a clearly defined moment in the author’s life; each is enough to convey a glimpse into the personality and heart of the author and a view of the circumstances and events that were significant to her; but the provoking and enlightening tidbits leave readers longing for more. This frustration is of course common to all surveys or anthologies. The editor has compensated by supplying notes and bibliographic materials so that interested readers can seek the originals for further reading. Hopefully, in subsequent publications the complete text of these valuable materials will be made available in an easily accessible form.

Madsen’s project in the compilation of these writings is a successful one. The book is significant for male readers in that it reveals the “other half” of the history of this period, the female experience that is generally excluded from traditional history books. But Madsen intends the work most particularly for a female audience, suggesting that perhaps the nineteenth-century authors “understood that women oftentimes hear their own voices in the voices of other women, and hoped they would be heard across

the generations” (xii). The volume’s “disclosure of these women’s lives, as they perceived them to be, brings woman’s experiences in from the edges of history and enables us to bridge the silence that has separated us, as women, from our past” (xi).

Madsen offers us this volume with the hope that we, reading more than a century later, can still “feel their deep sense of shared faith and loving community as these women speak to us from out of their own writings” (30).

JESSIE L. EMBRY. *Black Saints in a White Church: Contemporary African American Mormons*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994. xv; 270 pp. Appendix, selected readings, index. \$18.95.

Reviewed by Marcus Helvécio T. A. Martins, sociologist, part-time faculty, Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University.

A few years ago, I saw a picture (unfortunately I don't remember where) that immediately caught my attention and made me ponder about it for a long time. The picture showed two women who seemed to be at one of the gates of the Tabernacle in Temple Square, Salt Lake City. One of the women was blonde, tall, and elegantly dressed; the other was Black, shorter than the blonde woman, and simply dressed. The blonde lady was embracing the Black lady in a very tender manner, and since the Black lady wasn't as tall as the other, her head was at the blonde lady's upper chest. The blonde lady had her head leaned and rested over the Black lady's head, while her hands were placed over the other's opposite face.

Since, at that time, I was still grappling with a couple of recent negative experiences involving what I thought to be racial discrimination, my first reaction to that picture was one of a certain uneasiness. Was that picture, I then thought, some sort of prototypical—or maybe stereotypical—view of what the 1978 revelation on priesthood meant to many of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Was that picture a symbol of what non-Black Latter-day Saints in America had in their minds—a condescending acceptance of some presumed lower-class group who needed to “become like us” in order to perhaps (who knows?) gain some form of lower-class existence in a celestial inner city?

A short while after that, my reaction shifted from concern to mere curiosity. After all, time is still a good medication for certain types of misunderstanding, and I found that what had occurred to me might not have involved any racial discrimination at all. What remained was just curiosity regarding what those two ladies in that picture might have been thinking when the picture was taken and what they might have thought—if anything—when they saw the picture published.

Today we can have a glimpse of possible answers to these questions by reading Jessie Embry's *Black Saints in a White Church*. This book is the report of the findings of two major studies: (1) in-depth interviews of 224 Black Latter-day Saints—conducted as part of the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies' LDS Afro-American Oral History Project, and (2) a survey of approximately 200 Black Latter-day Saints in the United States. In Jessie Embry's own words, "The book is a 'group biography' of those who participated in [both studies]."

My first impression was extremely positive. I read her book while on my way to a research trip in Brazil, and for the first time, I wished a plane trip would have been longer. After some thinking, I concluded that this "group biography," as Embry called it, is indispensable to LDS Church leaders, especially those who serve racially mixed congregations. I also thought the book to be historically invaluable. This opinion is based on the following three reasons:

1. The personal accounts featured in the book give us an in-depth view of what it was like to be a member of a racial minority in a racially mixed denomination that at the same time it emphasized Christian fellowship and association was ambiguous regarding the worth of fellows of races other than the dominant one.
2. This study has put on record one major example of what I call the cultural dimension of Mormonism. I have recently argued that this culture grows out of the religion called Mormonism, but as time goes by it tends to develop a life of its own, independent of the original religion and (in great part) of its official doctrines. Parallel to that, since this culture also exists within the context of a broader national culture, it also absorbs many elements of this national identity and psyche.
3. Throughout the book, we find examples of strong faith that can very appropriately be compared to that of the early LDS pioneers of the nineteenth century.

By now, some may be asking to what extent I might be exaggerating in my assessment of the historic value of the contents of this book. I would respond by reminding them of the uniqueness

of the challenge Blacks in general had to overcome in order to become members of the LDS Church. The Native Americans and the Polynesians were recognized as descendants of Lehi and heirs of great promises. The Jews were regarded as the original beneficiaries of the Abrahamic covenant. The Arabs were also considered heirs of Abrahamic blessings through Ishmael. But never was a group so undervalued as were Blacks, a fact subtly but still effectively addressed in chapters 2 and 3 of *Black Saints in a White Church*.¹

A recurring theme throughout *Black Saints*—although not addressed from a doctrinal standpoint by Embry—is the inconsistency that existed (before 1978) between the revealed doctrines of Jesus Christ and the prevailing, racially based social structures. This is not a new subject; in fact, racist thinking has been a part of religious practice throughout history. As extreme examples, we may mention the many “holy” wars that have been undertaken from ancient times until our days. The conflicts in the so-called Middle East, including the Gulf War, and the wars after the breakup of the old Yugoslavia—all these had a religious component that, despite not being addressed by the popular media, was very much a part of the issue in dispute.

Throughout the past two or three centuries, Christian denominations in general supported African slavery, based on existing racist doctrines and explanations. Among the explanations existing in nineteenth-century America, we find one written by Buckner H. Payne² in 1840, published as an article in 1867 and later expanded and published by Charles Carroll³ in book form in 1900, which contended that Blacks were not descendants of Adam and Eve, but were one of the many kinds of “beasts” created by the hand of God. According to Carroll, that would be the reason why Blacks could have been subjected to slavery and also the reason why interracial marriages should be strictly forbidden. Carroll even went to the point of suggesting that interracial marriages were the reason for The Flood and one of the reasons why Christ suffered on the cross. Other Christian denominations discussed whether or not Blacks had an immortal soul that needed to be saved. Many in the scientific world of that time fueled such absurd beliefs with their “findings” based on skull measurements, body shapes, odors, and other variables.

It was in the midst of such a doctrinal-scientific-cultural environment that the early leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints developed their policy in regards to Blacks. Today it is almost impossible to determine to what extent—if any at all—they were affected by the theologians, scientists, and other respected thinkers of their day. As a Black twentieth-century LDS high priest, I want to believe that my brethren in the nineteenth century may have decided to avoid the issue until further revelation on the subject would be granted, a course of action I myself followed on a couple of occasions while serving as a bishop. Under such a hypothesis, the priesthood ban could be understood in our days as a temporary precaution that ended up being mistakenly regarded as a commandment from on high.

Nevertheless, regardless of my hypothesis, the fact is that we can see a subtle connection between general culture and Church policy when we consider such beliefs as the one that says that Blacks have been deprived of certain blessings in this life either (1) because they were “less valiant” in the premortal existence (which belief still survives in the 1990s despite the 1978 revelation), or (2) because Abel had to be vindicated for 6,000 years before Cain’s descendants could be “forgiven” for what Cain did.

By considering such folk doctrines and past sociocultural environments, I arrive at the conclusion that those Blacks who became Latter-day Saints up to the early 1970s—who at times had their inherent and eternal worth and potential denied by a few individuals—and still remained true to the faith despite all logical arguments, rightfully and honorably deserve the title of Modern Mormon Pioneers and Defenders of the Faith. God bless them forever.

Jessie Embry’s book, *Black Saints in a White Church*, records the firsthand accounts of the experiences of some of these men and women of God. We read how they adopted a new life and new beliefs that caused some of them to be ostracized by their families, friends, and communities. But even more important than learning of the opposition they faced, we read about their inner feelings and testimonies as they were fellowshipped in mostly White congregations, about how they formed eternal friendships as Saints and how at times they were hurt by lingering prejudices and stereotypical beliefs.

We also read of their assiduous attendance and faithful service in spite of limitations, even when requested to no longer attend Church meetings with their White brothers and sisters. That led me to conclude that the presence of these Black Saints in places where any degree of racial prejudice had been a historical constant allowed people in those places to better evaluate their own Christlikeness and to learn more about the true nature of God's love for his children.

I should pause here and say that despite these testimonials this book is not written for a general audience looking for a faith-promoting birthday or holiday gift. For example, I recommended the book to my oldest teenage children, but I also told them to read it only after they become more mature in the gospel and in life in general.

A few significant things, in my opinion, are still missing in this study, and I hope to see some of these addressed in the future: Because of my interest in the cultural dimension of Mormonism, I see that in order to get a balanced picture of the subject I need to learn the story of the Black Saints *as seen by* the White Church. The book addresses the perceptions of Black members in relation to their White counterparts, but it doesn't deal (because it was not the original purpose of the Oral History Project) with the perceptions and experiences of the White members (which I have found to be quite diverse) and of those of many other races in the Church in relation to the issues discussed in the book—for example, priesthood ban, prejudice, and cross-cultural communication and socialization.

Other important omissions are (1) information on what those Black members who were not in full fellowship in the LDS Church at the time of the study might have had to say about their experiences, and (2) a commentary on the unauthorized persistence of infamous "pseudo-doctrines," such as the one that says that Blacks will never get to the celestial kingdom despite the 1978 revelation.

From a social scientific standpoint, a few more questions still need to be answered: Are the problems mentioned by the respondents unique to Mormonism? How prevalent are these problems in other religious denominations and in the larger American society? Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reportedly said that the church hour on Sundays is "the most segregated hour of the week" in America.

Thus it is conceivable that any racial concerns in the LDS Church—even if only mild ones—could be the natural result of a combination of two factors: (1) the growth of the LDS Church, which brings thousands of new converts every year from all walks of life, which converts do not abandon their old prejudices overnight; and (2) the fact that the LDS Church does not segregate its congregations, consequently forming racially mixed congregations that may simply bring to light the prejudices that already exist in the larger society.

But all in all it was not the purpose of the Oral History Project to provide definitive answers to these lingering questions. Thus, to be fair, the book must be read and evaluated vis-à-vis its original purposes, in which case it passes with the highest marks.

NOTES

¹For a complete overview—as far as public records allow—read Lester E. Bush Jr.'s "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," in *Neither White nor Black: Mormon Scholars Confront the Race Issue in a Universal Church*, ed. Lester E. Bush Jr. and Armand L. Mauss (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1984).

²Buckner H. Payne, *The Negro: What Is His Ethnological Status? Is He the Progeny of Ham? Is He a Descendant of Adam and Eve? . . . What Is His Relation to the White Race?* (Cincinnati: Published for the Proprietor, 1867).

³Charles Carroll, *"The Negro: A Beast"; or, "In the Image of God" . . . the Negro Not the Son of Ham . . .* (St. Louis: American Book and Bible House, 1900). See also John H. Van Evrie, *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination; or, Negroes, a Subordinate Race, and (So-called) Slavery Its Normal Condition* (New York: Van Evrie, Horton, 1868; reprint, New York: Garland, 1993).

Brief Notices

Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works, by Eldin Ricks, with Charles D. Bush, Junola S. Bush, and L. Kristine N. Ricks (FARMS, 1995)

Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works is a far cry from the thin, pocket-size *Combination Reference* that missionaries carried in the 1960s. This hefty, nine-hundred-page volume "is a concordance of the LDS scriptures comparable to the James Strong Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible—a printed concordance of all occurrences of all words in the scriptural text . . . with a meaningful context phrase" (iii).

For students of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price who have no access to a computer concordance or who find computers inconvenient, inaccessible, or confusing, this hard copy is an amazing resource. It is a concordance that "can go anywhere. . . . It can be taken into the classroom by both teacher and student" (back cover).

Years in the making, the concordance represents an effort begun by Ricks in 1971, when he began inputting the standard works into computer form, using the old key-punched computer cards. Work on

the project went slowly even after Chuck and Junola Bush volunteered to help. In 1992, Ricks asked his daughter-in-law Kristine Ricks to help the Bushes finish the project. Eldin Ricks died a few days later, after reiterating his wish for the completion of the concordance. The publication of this book is the fulfillment of that wish. This book is more than a tool; it is a monument of the study of the holy scriptures.

—Nancy R. Lund

Work, Family, and Religion in Contemporary Society, edited by Nancy Tatom Ammerman and Wade Clark Roof (Routledge, 1995)

This book is a collection of essays mingled with a few demographic and survey data. The contributing scholars from a variety of disciplines share a conviction that the American family is undergoing significant change. The rise of individualism and the large numbers of women entering the labor force during the 1960s and 1970s drastically altered family values. As a consequence, the Ozzie and Harriet family of the 1950s has been replaced by an array of differing marital arrangements. This change does not imply the family is less

important in the eyes of the average citizen. Americans continue to value what families can provide—love, emotional support, and nurturance—and look for these things in the new family forms.

The essays in this volume explore the evolving connectedness between three significant social institutions—the workplace, the church, and the family. They discuss how and to what degree corporate American and organized religion can no longer ignore the family if they are to survive. The workplace and the church must nurture the modern family in order to prosper themselves.

None of the essays focus on Latter-day Saints, and the Catholic and Protestant experiences discussed have only limited relevance to the LDS Church and its members. Nevertheless, if the reader is interested in understanding the emerging, and hopefully more friendly, linkage between these three social institutions, and the ways they affect and are affected by individual family members, workers, and church members, the volume has much to offer.

—Bruce Chadwick

When Truth Was Treason: German Youth against Hitler, compiled, translated, and edited by Blair R. Holmes and Alan F. Keele (University of Illinois Press, 1995)

What we have learned to the present in articles, books, plays, and lectures of what is now being called the Helmuth Hübener Group

might be called the popular Hübener. *When Truth Was Treason* is the scholar's Hübener. The story of the young LDS Helmuth Hübener's resistance to Hitler is told by the last living member of the group, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe. It is a gripping story that takes 141 pages in the telling. The remainder of the 425 pages in the book are photos, documents, notes, and index—all of which provide a fascinating supplement to the story itself.

The foreword by Klaus J. Hansen gives us an insightful look at Germany during the war from one who was there to experience it, and the introduction by Holmes and Keele is a timely contradiction to the current notion receiving so much publicity that the "German nation, as a whole, 'voluntarily associated themselves with or submitted out of cowardice to the tyrannical rule of criminals'" (xxi). The seventy-four documents lead us from the "Decree about Extraordinary Radio Measures" (document 1) adopted by the Nazis in 1939, through the "Nazi party report about the discovery of a Hübener leaflet" (document 5), to the "Nazi party report about the character of Johann Schnibbe" (document 17), through nineteen of Hübener's leaflets and flyers, to a letter from Helmuth. His letter to "Dear Sister Sommerfeld and Family" contains the poignant opening lines: "When you receive this letter I will be dead. But before my execution I have been granted one wish, to write three letters to my loved ones" (240). The documents even contain the "detailed official report

of Hübener's execution" (document 62) with the Nazi's grizzly insistence on exactness and detail.

The book contains 102 pages of notes on the text and 32 pages of index. *When Truth Was Treason* will become the official story of the Helmuth Hübener Group and will remain so for some time to come.

—Garold N. Davis

The MTC: Set Apart, by Benson Y. Parkinson (Aspen Books, 1995)

This engaging novel of missionary life at the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo is written for a faithful, educated LDS audience. Parkinson's purpose is to describe missionary life both realistically and artistically through the actions, conversations, and reminiscences of four elders at the MTC: Harvey Wilberg, a bumbling but good-natured teller of childish jokes, an Iowan with a childlike heart; Cordell (Corry) Anthon, an athlete from Salt Lake City, a natural leader with the power to draw people to him or push them away; Malan Rignell, a quietly witty peacemaker from a ranch in New Mexico, clumsy in company but a calming center for others; and Phil Jeppsen, an Australian convert of one year, a scholar and thinker, one who has a great love for the rigors of the MTC but shies away from interacting with others. These four elders have been set apart for their missions. But will they be able to come together at the MTC? With a tone of gentle parody, Parkinson makes fun of his

missionaries, who often do not see clearly (one nearly leaves the MTC; another is almost sent home), but he doesn't condemn them. The novel assumes an audience that appreciates rich language, symbolism (a compelling discourse about the Provo Temple on Independence Day), and allusion (a subtle retelling of the stories of Jonah, Corianton, and Jacob). The novel demands a sequel, and Parkinson is at work on it now, the second in a planned trilogy describing the whole mission experience.

—Robert M. Hogge

A Flood Cannot Happen Here: The Story of Lower Goose Creek Reservoir, Oakley, Idaho, 1984, by Kathleen Hedberg (Magic Valley Publishers, 1993)

Natural disasters and the destruction that follows in their wake have always been headline news items. Overlooked for lack of a sensational headline, however, were the herculean effort and personal sacrifices of the residents of two small communities who worked together to avoid a natural disaster—a flood that could have devastated a large farming area of south-central Idaho. Basing her work on meticulous grass-roots research, Kathleen Hedberg tells the story of these rural communities summoning all their resources to avert a tragedy.

In the spring of 1984, the Lower Goose Creek Reservoir threatened to overflow. A flood was inevitable. Thousands of acres of farmland and at least two towns,

Oakley and Burley, Idaho, would be inundated. Local officials devised a plan to divert the water from the dam by widening and extending an existing canal nineteen miles and by digging twenty-four miles of new canal in three days through existing farmland to divert the floodwater to Murtaugh Lake and the Snake River. For nearly twenty days, a torrent of water several feet deep and up to seventy feet wide rushed through the Snake River canal, while volunteers sandbagged and patrolled the banks, sometimes twenty-four hours a day.

Hedberg chronicles the painful decision of the farmers along the canal routes to sacrifice crops and land to save their neighbors from the flood. She tells a story of cooperative spirit as churches, civic organizations, and individuals worked together for the community good. Because the area is predominantly Mormon (Oakley, 86 percent; Burley, 50 percent), the efficient organization of the LDS Church played a major role in organizing the massive effort to divert the floodwaters.

One volunteer reported, "Off to the side we could see the water flowing to Murtaugh Lake. In front of us was the canal to the Snake River. It hit me for the first time—the vastness of what had been done. 'We did it,' I remember thinking. 'We built those canals and saved our valley'" (199). Terry Bingham, Cassia County Deputy Sheriff and a volunteer civil defense director, commented, "It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Normally in my job as Deputy Sheriff I see the dark side of people. That project gave me a confirma-

tion of the positive side of the human spirit that is enough to last a lifetime" (276).

Kathleen Hedberg's book is a splendid tribute, worthy of that spirit.

—Nancy R. Lund

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