I REMEMBER VIRGINIA

I MET Virginia Sorensen Waugh (SUNSTONE 16:1) in the fall of 1990 at her home in Hendersonville, North Carolina, when I was doing research on women's writing in Mormon fiction. She was a gracious host. Waugh and I lapsed into "Mormon talk"—reminiscing about her youth in Utah, sharing stories about growing up in the West and in the Church, and enjoying the rewards from living not only in the shadows of the mountains, but also re-living the courage and faith of our shared pioneer heritage.

We taped a three-hour interview that reveals how much Waugh was still a member of the Mormon community. She said she had never read the "proper" Mormon books, nor "those articles in Dialogue," and she "wouldn't be caught dead in a discussion of Mormon doctrine or thought." Yet there was fondness in her recollections of Manti, energy in her family stories about polygamy, emigration, and homesteading, and conviction in and gratitude for the values and character she gained and the talents she developed in the Sanpete countryside and on the Provo campus, that I remarked that she sounded very "Mormon." She disagreed: "It's all so universal now. It's a universal concern, and thank goodness."

Waugh told stories that illustrate how connected she remained with the Mormon culture and religion. She said that before she got married to Fred Sorensen in the Salt Lake Temple, she admitted to a BYU instructor that she was nervous about the temple ceremony, and did not look forward to wearing the temple garments. This instructor assured her that her husband had felt much the same way, and that because it was the symbols or markings that were important, he advised her to do as he had done—cut the markings out and sew them on her underwear. This made perfect sense to Waugh, and so she did as the instructor suggested. Everything went fine until Waugh's mother-in-law, who lived with Fred were about to go down to the wedding reception, Fred turned to her and said, "Let us go down." "I knew then I'd married the right man," she said. There was no irreverence in Waugh's voice as she shared these stories, no mockery or disgust or disrespect or disdain—only a bemused recollection.

In Waugh's children's book, Plain Girl, a young Amish man, Dan, returns to his family and community after spending some time away. He explains the reasons for his return to his sister who is also struggling with the conflict between the attractions of the outside world and the security and simplicity of Amish living. "The thing is," says Dan, "there are so many good things to keep! When you go away you begin to see them." There was a lot of Virginia Sorensen Waugh in that line. Waugh never forgot the many good things about her Mormon childhood. "I don't think there's any place in the world that provides a better childhood than a Mormon community," she told me. "They give them things to do, wonderful things. I remember being fairy queen in the Primary show, and that's an unforgettable thing. I remember going to the Beehive camp, girls' camp. Of course, it was kind of nice to be away from the boys a few days and own the mountain." She talked about writing verses in the tree branches outside her home, her close relationship with her sisters and Grandma Blackett, and quilting for days on quilts framed on tops of chairs. These are only a few of the many good things that I believe kept Waugh "active" in the Church.

I went to Waugh's home with the hope of discovering how she as a Mormon woman wrote. She did not have an answer for me. "I'm interested in how I write, too," she laughed. "I just wish I could learn it [writing] again. But I think it's a spirit, you know. It's not only a talent." She lamented, "After a lifetime of trying, writing shouldn't be this hard. It should stay."

Waugh was a good mother. I left her home feeling that despite her many books, travels, friends, experiences, and awards, it was her family, her children Fred and Beth, who meant the most to her, and she felt a continued responsibility for their care. "When you create a child," she said, "you want to see it through. The feeling remains all your life. And I believe that," she said. "I feel
I must maintain this little nest."

Before I left, Waugh kissed my cheek and said, "I'll count you as one of my friends." She was a good friend to have. Her books are good friends as well; they bond me with others who struggled with their humanness—sometimes stumbling, often times triumphing—but they always affirm one's commitment to interrelationships and care. Perhaps with her passing more members of the Church will reacquaint themselves with both this remarkable Mormon writer and those "Mormon" elements still found in her work.

GRANT T. SMITH
Iowa City, IA

MERCY AND JUSTICE

EUGENE ENGLAND'S "Healing And Making Peace—In The World And The Church" (SUNSTONE 15:6) described a workable, though limited, stop-gap perspective. Here is a paradigm that suits us better if we are to, as Joseph Smith said in the King Follett Discourse, "learn how to become Gods."

England would replace justice with mercy: "We should give mercy instead of justice to enemies because that is the only hope to move them to give mercy back." He even imposes this patronizing paradigm on Shakespeare.

However, most things can be taken to extremes and that's what England has done. Early in his article he says, "the only lasting peace between enemies in modern times" has come from "two acts of mercy": (1) the Marshall Plan to help rebuild the United States former World War II enemies' economies; and (2) Anwar Sadat's sacrifices, including the sacrifice of his life. Who other than England would describe the Middle East as "lasting peace"?

England should have thought further on the Marshall Plan. What created the opportunity for us to extend mercy after the war was that certain U.S. soldiers were willing to march under the "title of liberty" mentioned in Alma 46:36. Indeed we may say that they marched "in memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children...." (Alma 46:12, 36). Only after this physical and violent reproval could we sensibly "show forth afterwards an increase of love" (D&C 121:43). Don't get the order wrong. An increase of love first toward the Pearl Harbor invaders, Auschwitz operators, and Mussolini would have changed the outcome of history.

There is wisdom and merit in both justice and mercy: "In peace there's nothing so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility. But when the blast of war blows in our ears, then imitate the action of the tiger...disguise fair nature with hard favor'd rage...be copy now to men of grosser blood, and teach them how to war." (Henry VIII.i.3-end.)

Finally, England argues that "force...almost always begets force." This, too, is wrong. "He to-day that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother, be he ne'er so vile, this day shall gentle his condition," said King Henry (Henry V IV.III.27-80). Similarly, the Nephites "were sorry to take up arms...because they did not delight in the shedding of blood...they were sorry...nevertheless, they could not suffer to lay down their lives, that their wives and their children should be massacred" (Alma 48:23,24).

Examining England's paradigm, then, we find it wanting though sincere and passably workable. Now let me point to a paradigm I believe could be part of a "required course" in a school of the prophets. It's a mixture of select gospel principles.


god is love

SECRET MEMBER FILE

BISHOP

RESEARCH CHURCH LEADERS

GROUNDAHL
SUNSTONE

AUGUST 1992
First, God employs a principle of time and place: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Therefore we should be open to a time for both justice and mercy. Open to when mercy should "season justice" (The Merchant of Venice, IV.i.185-237). God employs both principles. So should we. In Ecclesiastes 3:3 it even says there is a time to kill, which England finds repugnant.

Secondly, Nephi teaches us that "all things must needs be a compound in one ..." He says, "If it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having ... no sense nor insensibility" (2 Nephi 2:11). Mercy and justice make a good compound, with only their relative proportions at issue. However, keep in mind that Shakespeare described mercy as seasoning justice, and not justice seasoning mercy (The Merchant of Venice. IV.i.185-237).

A third principle to employ, more frequently than mercy, is tolerance. A speeder cuts in front of us on the freeway; someone says they’ll call us and they don’t; a man bumps into us while we’re standing in line. To say we’re exercising mercy toward these offenders is melodramatic; day-to-day living usually calls for plain old tolerance. Tolerance differs from mercy in that tolerance may assume that no offense was intended and that, therefore, no offense should be taken. Unlike tolerance, mercy connotes situations where fault may have already been determined and the offended party now decides appropriate action, such as justice or mercy.

“It mattereth not unto me" (D&C 60:5) reflects my fourth principle. We should also employ it frequently for more tranquil and peaceful day-to-day living. Call it a principle of appropriate indifference. There is more than one instance where this idea is expressed (see 1 Nephi 6:3; Jacob 5:8, 13; Alma 40:5, 8; 58:37; 61:9; Mormon 8:4, 31; Ether 12:37; 15:34; D&C 27.2; 60:5; 61:22; 62:5; 63:40; 80:3; and 135:5).

As we review the lives of those we admire in the scriptures, they generally prefer peace. We should, too. Keep in mind, though, that they employed violence at key times, when it was required of them.

Michael G. M. Dang
Costa Mesa, CA

INTERPRETING TEXTS

I WAS INTRIGUED by Malcolm R. Thorp’s invocation of the metaphor of reflection in his title, "Some Reflections on New Mormon History and the Possibilities of a ‘New’ Traditional History" (SUNSTONE 15:5). Historians tend to understand their role and task in visual terms—the historian acts as mirror, revealing the image of the past. David Bohn has challenged the New Mormon Historian faithfulness to the image of the “original.” I was disappointed that, rather than responding to Bohn, Thorp sought instead to deflect Bohn’s criticism (“[T]his is a more appropriate criticism when applied to Traditional Mormon history”), or even to turn it back against Bohn, going on the offensive. Almost entirely absent, however, is any attempt to salvage the truth and value claims of the New Mormon History.

Thorp’s article is not utterly devoid of justification, however. He occasionally, without elaboration, alludes to the virtuosity of historians in archival research and of their ability to rigorously and faithfully read a text. Unfortunately, Thorp neither presents a theoretical defense of his reliance on the "historian’s craft," nor does he demonstrate it. Thorp apparently expects the reader to take it on faith that the "texts themselves remain important, even the dominant, determinants in historical construction." It is all the more poignant that Thorp’s reading of Bohn reflects a fundamental inability to interpret in good faith.

Thorp, for example, works no small violence on Gadamer when he describes Gadamer’s hermeneutics as “an ecumenical endeavor aimed at clarifying the process in which understanding takes place.” Since Thorp’s Gadamer is thereby stripped of critical bite, Thorp reproaches Bohn for using Gadamer to critique the methodology of the New Mormon Historians. Even the most superficial reading of Gadamer, however, would allow one to discern that his “hermeneutical position” is not merely descriptive. Gadamer frequently criticizes historical positivism:

If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always subject to the effects of effective-history. It determines in advance both what seems to us worth enquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there—in fact we miss the whole truth of the phe-
nomenon when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth. . . . Historical objectivism, in appealing to its critical method, conceals the involvement of the historical consciousness itself in effective-history. By the method of its foundational criticism . . . it preserves its conscience by failing to recognize those presuppositions—certainly not arbitrary, but still fundamental—that govern its own approach to understanding, and hence falls short of reaching that truth which, despite the finite nature of our understanding, could be reached. (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* [New York: Crossroad, 1975], 267-68.)

Equally surprising was Thorp's assertion that Gadamer's hermeneutics demand the suspension of prejudice. Gadamer, to the contrary, recognizes that understanding requires prejudice (Gadamer, 245-74).

In an apparent attempt to preserve the New Mormon History's claim to value, Thorp cites David Couzens Hoy's *The Critical Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) for the proposition that "there will always be stronger and weaker formulations that will arise out of rigorous criticism of sources and the significance of interpretation." Hoy does indeed use the phrase, but Hoy refers, however, to stronger and weaker formulations of relativism:

Certainly the humanistic, historical disciplines would be in severe straits if interpretation came down to saying "this is what the text means to me." . . . Yet not all positions short of absolutism are committed to such a radical relativism, and in order to avoid oversimplifications, stronger and weaker formulations must be distinguished.

In the case of relativism, two positions may serve as a start. (Hoy, 68.)

Hoy goes on to explain that a stronger formulation of relativism, which he names contextualism, would be one in which interpretation depends on its context, nevertheless leaving "the choice of the context for an interpretation . . . underdetermined by the evidence" (Hoy, 69). I concede that within a given context Thorp correctly notes that "stronger and weaker" interpretations of texts exist. Hoy's real issue, however, deals with whether the choice of framework or context itself can be justified (Hoy, 69).
Second, without trying to defend this or that detail of Bohn’s work on history, let me offer, via the work of someone else, a defense of his general thesis. In Feminist Thought and the Structure of Knowledge, Emily Grosholz has given this reductio ad absurdum of the usual understanding of history, a critique that I think coincides reasonably well with Bohn’s and that shows that Bohn is not offering us the devil’s choice of either a return to the naive objectivist history of much traditional LDS history writing or a history where “anything goes”.

Suppose, to hypothesize the opposite, that there is an Ideal Chronicle in which all events are recorded as they happen, in complete and accurate detail. Wouldn’t such a chronicle put the squabbling historians out of business and bury the past where it belongs, in the vaults of necessity and exact description?

Suppose we allow that this chronicle is written in a language rich enough to include the way in which historians normally pick out, characterize, and link events. This language contains a whole class of descriptions that characterize people and events in terms of their future vicissitudes as well as terms like “causes,” “anticipates,” “begins,” “precedes,” “ends,” which no historian could forgo without lapsing into silence. But such descriptions and terms are not available to the eyewitness of events, who describes them at the edge of time on which they occur. The description of an event changes with time because the event comes to stand in different relations to those that come after it; and the new relations in turn may point to novel ways of associating that event with contemporary and antecedent events or indeed to novel ways of construing the components of a spatiotemporally diffused event as one thing. . . . Allowing a sufficiently rich language for the Ideal Chronicle violates the original supposition about how the chronicle is to be written.

Yet, if we then insist that the chronicle be written in a language impoverished enough to meet the stringent conditions of its writing, we find that it is reduced to an account of matter in motion; the subject matter of history, people and the events they figure in, has dissolved. Then the chronicle is no longer about history, and we are only doing a version of descriptive physics (if indeed we are doing anything at all). If we want to do history, events must be related to their pasts and futures, must be construed as significant and therefore drawn into the circle of the essentially contestable. Then we are engaged in a process of deliberating about the past, and the past is alive in the present.

Once again, though history now appears as an endless process of deliberation, it is not therefore true that one can say anything at all about the past. This process, in which relations among events shift and are contested, exhibits an important kind of stability. We enter the debate only by locating ourselves with respect to previous historiography and the partly determinate, partly ambiguous physical record; the persuasive moves we make in this context are severely constrained by them. We argue within a shapely but revisable structure, if we want to make our novel construals of history effective and practical. (“Women, History, and Practical Deliberation,” Feminist Thought and the Structure of Knowledge, ed. M. M. Gergen [New York University, 1988], 177-78.)

Bohn has been arguing for a position based on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and this piece from Grosholz summarizes Gadamer’s position well. As I understand it, Bohn asks several related and sometimes theoretical questions: What is the effect of the language in which we write our histories on those histories? What about the relation of our membership in the LDS church to the necessary construal of that history? How do we fit our novel construals of history into the context of previous historiographies? And, if Grosholz is right that our construals of history must change with time because they are matters of construing the significance of events, why not also assume that those construals must change with the background and history of the historian, given the importance of such things as beliefs and experience to significance? These are the kinds of questions that Bohn’s critics have yet to take up, but they are the questions he addresses.

JAMES E. FAULCONER
Provo, UT

KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING

I was puzzled by the tone and argu-
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ment made by Malcolm Thorp. The source of my puzzlement comes from Thorp's (mis)understanding and use of hermeneutics in general and Gadamer in particular. Ultimately this misunderstanding undermines the main point that he wants to make in his argument: "let historical pluralism flourish, recognize that there never was a 'a story,' but many stories open to a multiplicity of interpretations."

Thorp argues that the hermeneutical position "is an ecumenical endeavor aimed at clarifying the process in which understanding takes places...." Thorp then goes on to argue that such a position is not meant to create divisions but "reconciliation and multi-perspectival understanding." Based on this characterization, a hermeneutical position is a wise judge mediating disputes that occur between fractious litigants—in this case competing worldviews. Such a characterization also implies that the scientific process, implicit with its understandings about the causal ordering of the world, is simply one of many competing worldviews.

However, a scientific understanding claims to be, with its code of objectivity and its reliance on empirical data, not just another way of looking at the world, but the only correct way to look at the world. Interpretations that do not make the same assumptions about causality are dismissed as unscientific. A hermeneutical critique of the sciences, and this largely includes the social sciences as well, dispels the myth that there is only one language in which human endeavors can be disclosed. This is where Thorp makes his mistake.

Thorp uses hermeneutics to establish his case for "multi-perspectival understanding." But the rest of the argument simply denies the possibility that other assumptions about history or about the way in which individuals might think about the place of God in history can be carried out. Why is there a problem with these other possibilities? Because they do not make assumptions about knowledge that conform to the standards of rigorous and empirical research that Thorp contends are legitimate and important to the historical craft. This is most apparent when he discusses the possibility of new understandings of historical phenomena. He writes that "scholars' minds are influenced by the texts they read, that new approaches are made possible by such readings that completely change the direction of one's thought, even breaking with previous historiographical assumptions." The point to be made here is that new approaches to history may still rely on the same epistemological assumptions. In this case, the new approaches would simply exist within an old framework of assumptions, not anything radically new. This is really not a "multi-perspectival understanding" at all since all of the perspectives rest on the same assumptions about cause and effect, etc. Hermeneutics provides a genuine multi-perspectival understanding by demonstrating that our history need not be disclosed to us in only one language. Therefore, history contains many possibilities other than just a scientific one.

I readily welcome such theoretical pieces by historians like Thorp. It demonstrates that there are actually historians who think about the thorny issues of knowledge and understanding. Too many historians arrogantly reject other genuinely new possibilities because they do not follow the proper methods. Although this article falls far short of rescuing the efforts of New Mormon Historians from the powerful critique of history that can be made using hermeneutics, it does demonstrate that dialogue on these issues with some historians may be possible.

Kelly D. Patterson
Wilmington, DE

NEW, TRADITIONAL,
AND SPIRITUAL
MORMON HISTORY

Malcolm Thorp's recent response to David Bohn's critique of the philosophy of the New Mormon History was a meaningful contribution to a debate that for years has resembled a political campaign more than a rational dialogue. Respondents on both sides have often been more shrill than sensible; and Thorp's side in particular has often seemed deliberately to be misreading opposing arguments. Reading Thorp's careful essay, though, makes it apparent that he and those he writes to support have never understood where and how post-modernist philosophy subverts their enterprise. I will try to clarify a part of the argument, though that will necessarily involve oversimplification.

Thorp maintains that New Mormon History is superior to Traditional Mormon History, in part, because of the standards of interpretation that define the limits of historical discourse. These modern historical methods are superior because they rely on carefully defined strategies for interpreting documentary (which Thorp thoughtlessly calls "textual") and physical evidence. When assiduously followed, these standards produce a rationally legitimate, limited, and controllable interpretation of past events. Some might even go so far as to say that such accounts accurately represent the past. According to such a view, the weakness of Traditional Mormon History is its unwillingness to adopt these standards and to wistfully rely on talk about the supernatural. Instead of relying on physical evidence and the rules of reason, the Traditionalists inject metaphysics into their work.

Post-modernist philosophy becomes directly relevant at this point of impasse. Post-modernism challenges the authority of claims to objectivity in an argument that parallels Thorp's rejection of the authority of Mormon metaphysics in writing history. It generally relativizes all claims to authority.
based on scientific methods (objectivity, positivism, historicism, etc.) because science broadly defined is supported by a metaphysics of its own. I take it that, in their most radical form, post-modernist arguments maintain that authority of the sort respected by Thorp has no greater claim on the production of knowledge than the authority of religious metaphysics Thorp rejects. So it follows that there is no greater intellectual authority for either side of the argument in this debate. Post-modernism renders absurd Thorp's sentence, "it is not for historians to assign divine significance to those events..." because the system that validates the sentence's meaning is itself "divine." This means that the historical playing field is level for all versions of metaphysics. From that perspective, Thorp's claims to greater authority for his special metaphysics are groundless.

Does this mean that New Mormon History ought not to be written? Not at all. In fact, no post-modernist would demand that anybody stop writing anything. But it does mean that the dogmatic claims of the New Mormon Historians to an intellectually more correct methodology are hollow and empty. In fact, with the exception of claims of greater individual facility or creativity as writers, their claims have no more intellectual force than the claims of more traditional historians.

But the implications of this view for believing Mormons move at least one step further. Since intellectual authority has been relativized, other forms of authority may attempt to fill the void vacated by naturalism's loss of status. And we should not be terribly surprised to see the traditional forms of God's authority vying for that place within the Mormon community. So some Mormon intellectuals, who are just as intelligent, honest, and sincere as their New Mormon Historian counterparts, wonder why it is so difficult to write Mormon history that openly supports, or at least accepts as legitimate, traditional claims about God's role in the restoration and building of the kingdom.

Thorp further confuses this argument when he maintains that the fundamental question at stake here concerns the ontological status of past events. Certainly some post-modern philosophers, especially followers of Heidegger like Gadamer and Jauss, have addressed the question of whether the past can exist in the present as the past. However, the post-modernist critique of the New Mormon History has focused on epistemology. It poses the question, "Does one methodology certify knowledge better than another?" Post-modernists deny all claims to better or truer knowledge by virtue of the methodology of any science or social science. For them, all methods are always already contingent and, therefore, not capable of producing any knowledge that can claim the universal force of Truth.

Thus, post-modernism puts both sides in an uneasy quandary. If you adopt a post-modernist view, you can claim no special intellectual authority in historical matters, unless that claim might rest on a subjective category like the individual creative genius of a given writer. No historical paradigm or school can claim extraordinary epistemological authority. This means that the claims of Traditional Mormon History have no special intellectual or rational force either. I believe, however, that the non-intellectual grounds of spiritual authority can still have authority in the debate, even though that authority will not have any practical extension beyond the community of believers.

So, from this post-modernist/Mormon perspective, in matters of Mormon history, intellectual authority gives way to spiritual authority. And if there are spiritual concerns appropriate to the writing of interpretations of what happened in the Mormon past, those spiritual concerns will necessarily have to be articulated by people endowed with spiritual and probably also ecclesiastical authority. Thus, we cannot be too surprised that Elders Dallin Oaks and Boyd Packer, along with President Ezra Taft Benson, have addressed questions of historiography. Nor can we blithely assert that they have no authority or expertise in these matters. Ultimately, then, the argument seems to come down to which authority we expect Mormon historians to subscribe to: intellectual or spiritual.

But we all know it isn't that simple—spirit and intellect interact. Our task is to continue to try finding intellectually challenging and invigorating ways to write spiritual Mormon history. The large majority of New Mormon Historians are deeply sincere in their desire to write the Church's history as well as possible. Pure motives, however, do not inoculate them against intellectual and spiritual criticism, nor can they alone even be the best judges of the content of their work. Open publication will generate positive and negative, fair and unfair, response; that is the risk of scholarship.

In conclusion, I believe Thorp to be absolutely right about the tone of this debate. It has often been much too rancorous, paranoiac, and deliberately slanderous. We need to adopt a more temperate, reasonable, and yes, Christian rhetoric and even admit room for give and take. I fail to see how we can talk so high-and-mightily about pluralism and then try as hard as we can to silence others through attacks in presses or the use of positions on editorial boards to keep ideas from reaching print. Until we all develop more maturity, even in the face of what appears to us to be utter stupidity, this important debate will continue to be characterized primarily
by bad will and bad faith instead of clear thinking and sister- and brotherhood.

Neal W. Kramer
Rexburg, ID

NIT-PICKY HISTORIANS

THANK YOU for sharing Malcolm Thors's article on the writing of Mormon history. Frankly, I am tired of the nit-picky criticisms of New Mormon Historians by Traditional Historians. I understand their points that no text can be interpreted without a context that is unavoidably created by the biases and beliefs of the historian, and hence the paramount need for faithful historians to interpret Mormon history from the true vantage point of its faith claims. Nevertheless, the critical tools of professional historians go far in approximately recreating from the sources available a biography or history, and they do not presume to be complete or exhaustive.

For example, using documents and interviews with friends, a thoughtful and careful scholar could write a biography of me that after reading it I would say things like, "Yes, that's a close description of my life, although it misses some points and distorts emphasis," and, "You're probably right that those concepts influenced my career choices more than I had recognized." Without having to definitively identify the actions of Providence, my biographer could quote my own theological interpretation and understanding of God's work in my life to show his hand, as Richard Bushman did in his biography of Joseph Smith. If I were an important person, such a historical work, however limited, would be a genuine contribution, showing my human quest for God in a world of multiple causes and motivations. Who could ask for anything more?

Let's concede the significant, albeit inherently limited, contributions New Mormon Historians have made in the last three decades, thank them for their solitary pains, and encourage them to bless our lives with future works. Even if every nuance of interpretation is not perfect, the best of these historians will get it basically right and provide us with mortal models that we can better identify with and learn from.

Sean Johnson
Los Angeles

MORAL SCHIZOPHRENIA

AS IF TO prove that tolerance of abortion is consistent with reverence for human life, Ed Firmage Jr. observes that rabbis "of

THE TWELVE DOING THE WAVE FOR A STRETCH BREAK

Death and Atonement

I REALIZE Wendy Ulrich wrote from the standpoint of a psychotherapist, not a theologian ("Not for Adam's Transgression: Paths to Intergenerational Peace," Sunstone 15:5), but I couldn't help noticing her im-
MORMON ONE-ACT PLAY CONTEST

Since the first issue of Sunstone featured the complete script of Bob Elliott's Fires of the Mind, the Sunstone Foundation has been a patron of Mormon theater by annually publishing a Mormon play and by featuring productions at its symposiums. Now Sunstone is sponsoring the Mormon One-Act Play Contest. Contest winners will be awarded up to $500 each and their plays will be premiered at the August 1993 Sunstone symposium in Salt Lake City.

CONTEST RULES

1. **NEW WORKS.** Entries must be new works that have not been published previously and have had at most limited trial productions. One playwright may submit no more than two entries.

2. **CONTENT.** Plays should deal in some general way with the Mormon experience or world view and may create real or fictional Mormons as characters. Settings in previous dispensations (e.g., Bible and Book of Mormon) are acceptable. Other historical, contemporary, or futuristic settings that are not explicitly Mormon may be used as long as the themes of the play clearly explore the LDS approach to life and God. All styles of theater are acceptable: realism, impressionism, absurdism, etc.

3. **COVER PAGE.** Each entry must have its own cover page. Each cover page must attest that the entry is the playwright's work, that it has not been previously published, that it will not be considered for publication elsewhere until the contest results have been announced. The cover letter must also give Sunstone one-time publication and production rights in the event the entry wins the contest.

4. **FORMAT.** Entries must be typewritten on single-sided 8 1/2 x 11 inch white paper and bound by staples only. The playwright's name must appear on the cover page only; the play's title and page number should appear on each page. The format should have the characters name on the left in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS: Followed by single-spaced dialogue. A blank line should separate different speakers. (Stage and acting directions should be put in parentheses.) Plays must be capable of being performed in under an hour, about thirty manuscript pages, depending upon the time taken by stage directions. Plays longer than one-hour will not be considered.

5. **JUDGING.** Plays will be judged by an anonymous panel of expert Mormon playwrights, actors, and directors.

6. **DATES AND DEADLINES.** Entries must be delivered to the Sunstone Foundation between January 1 and January 10, 1993. Winners will be announced in early April 1993. All authors will be notified of the results by mail; entries will not be returned. Cash awards will be determined by the judges and may be up to $500 for each play. Winning entries will be produced and performed at the Salt Lake Sunstone symposium in August 1993 and will be subsequently published in Sunstone magazine.

SUNSTONE, 331 SOUTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE 206, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84101-1136 (801/366-9928)
plicit faith in the accuracy of the orthodox Christian idea of the Atonement wherein an innocent person suffers and dies for the sins of a guilty third-party sinner.

Orthodox Christians have yet to explain how Jesus' death did anyone, human or divine, any good. I can understand how Jesus' resurrection did much good for many, but not Jesus' death. If Jesus' death were necessary in order for God the Father to forgive humans of their sins, then God has a problem with moral forgiveness, since God apparently cannot forgive sin unless there be massive punishment for that sin. Why must God demand punishment for sin before he forgives sin? Human fathers do not require such massive punishment of their children before forgiving the latter for their sins, even grave sins.

And if God the Father demands heinous punishment for the evil of sinfulness amongst his human creations, how can God's punishment be faithful or just when directed against an innocent third party (Jesus) who was sinless?

For God to establish that human sin cannot be forgiven except upon the principles of personal human punishment, then to obviate that personal human punishment by providing himself a third-party strawman to act as the agent for punishment for all humans, is simply for God to play an immoral game at humankind's expense. Why can't God simply forgive the sin in the first place without the ritual immorality of punishing a totally innocent third party in the process? In common legal terms, this orthodox Christian procedure violates Jesus' due process.

Nor does it matter that Jesus concurs in the procedure. That the innocent third party allows himself to be punished for others' sins does not render the procedure moral in the slightest. It remains a wholly immoral procedure because the wrong persons are being punished.

Most orthodox Christians haven't begun to examine the gross immorality of their concept of divine Atonement. Mormon Christianity doesn't partake of this gross immorality, of the foregoing procedure. The correct Mormon Christian view of the Atonement is largely portrayed by John Hick, a Protestant professor of theology, in what he calls "Irenaean" as opposed to "Augustinian" theodicy:

Irenaeus suggests that man was created as an imperfect, immature creature who was to undergo moral development and growth and finally be brought to the perfection intended for him by his Maker. Instead of the fall of Adam being presented, as in the Augustinian tradition as an utterly malignant and catastrophic event, completely disrupting God's plan, Irenaeus pictures it as something that occurred in the childhood of the race, an understandable lapse due to weakness and immaturity rather than an adult crime full of malice and pregnant with perpetual guilt. And instead of the Augustinian view of life's trials as a divine punishment for Adam's sin, Irenaeus sees our world of mingled good and evil as a divinely appointed environment for man's development towards the perfection that represents the fulfillment of God's good purpose for him. (John Hick, Evil and the God of Love [New York: Harper & Row, 1966] 217-21.)

I suggest Mormons follow Hick's "Irenaean" view of Atonement, which involves no tragic "fall" at all but which otherwise must be recompensed in Christ's infinite atonement.

Once we realize that all humans—parents and children—are "only potentially perfect" in this mortal self-chosen process of opposition and refinement (or in Hick's words: "moral development and growth"), we may come to see imperfection in parents as well as children to be the norm, hence no basis for "intergenerational pain.

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JUST FOR THE ASKING

GOD WILL NOT reveal new scripture to us until we ask for it. We will not ask for it unless we become sufficiently frustrated with the present situation. I believe the lack of female references in the Book of Mormon (Peculiar People, SUNSTONE 15:6) was the result of deliberate instruction from God. God has in store for us further light and knowledge, but is waiting until we are ready to receive it.

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