

THE NEW MORMON HISTORY
by
Richard Stephen Marshall

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by

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THE NEW MORMON HISTORY

Secularism

Professor Klaus J. Hansen has observed that "Mormonism in 1974 differs fundamentally from the Mormonism of 1890 even though no theoretical change in doctrine may have occurred."¹ This fundamental difference is obvious to any person who has studied the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with any degree of intensity. Many would attribute the changes the Church has undergone since its organization in 1830 to the influence of contemporary secular forces. The Mormon Church is not the first religion to feel the effects of secularism. The major protestant and Catholic Churches have undergone degrees of secularizing in past centuries. The intellectual enlightenment of the Age of Reason was directly opposed by the Catholic Church, which viewed advances in science and the openness of intellectual inquiry with distrust and suspicion. Such things were not only dangerous to faith, but also tended to weaken the authoritarian grip with which the Church compelled obedience from its members.

Ernst Benz, professor of religion at the University of Marburg, Germany, notes that most sociologists understand secularization as a process through which:

religion in all its historical forms is more and more disappearing from modern society and from the consciousness of modern man, which means that modern life and secularization are identical.

¹Klaus J. Hansen, Quest For Empire (University of Nebraska Press, Bison Book ed., 1974), p. xv.

Secularization not only concerns the shrinking influence of religious institutions, especially of the institutional churches, on the public life, but also the diminishing influence of religion on the self-understanding of modern man and especially on his ethical behavior. Secularization in this broadest sense is desacralization--the loss of the consciousness of the holiness of life not only in the social structures, but also in the private sphere of man. Of special importance is the assertion that this process is irreversible, it cannot be stopped anymore, and that means religion has no future at all; it still survives as a vanishing phenomenon in some marginal fields of society, in some areas of cultural hinterland, but its destiny is sealed.²

Benz traces the rise of a "strong process of secularization" in modern times:

This process began in its conspicuous form in the time of enlightenment of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries as a direct consequence and reaction upon the terrific religious wars, during which the Christian gospel of love was so thoroughly compromised by the fighting Christian churches themselves. There arose a sharp criticism of the traditional religions and of their established institutions among the leading spirits of the epoch. The criticism of religious doctrines and institutions of the "First Enlightenment" was at first represented by only a small minority of intellectuals and scholars, but with the spreading of the modern natural sciences and the extension of public education of the modern school and university system in the following centuries, we reach today the epoch of the so-called "Second Enlightenment," which means that the state of merely rationalistic and scientific interpretation of nature, history, and man has now reached the broad masses and modelled the whole consciousness of modern society. We have to admit that the religious institutions were by themselves the main reason and stumbling block of the general criticism of religion because of the discrepancy of their own theological pretension and highly sublime self-interpretation on the one side and the deficiency of their practical behavior on the other side.³

John T. Flint defined secularization as a process which "has usually

²Ernst Benz, *BYU Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 627-628. Taken from an address given March 20, 1976, at BYU.

³*Ibid.*, p. 628.

referred to the developments of the past century or so during which what might be termed a kind of naturalistic humanism has gradually displaced life orientations of a theistic character with those focusing on the rational empirical mastery of the human condition in the here and now."⁴

That the Mormon Church has gone through a type of "naturalistic humanism" is evidenced by the treatment its history has been receiving in recent years by scholars both within and without the Church, as well as in the many doctrinal, political and social changes which the Church has undergone since its organization.

Christopher Lasch argued in the New York Review of Books (January 26, 1967) that

It is not as a religious force that Mormonism now makes itself felt precisely in the degree to which Mormon influence has ceased to be distinguishable from any other vested influence. As long as the Mormons were different from their neighbors, their neighbors hounded them mercilessly. Only when they gave up the chief distinguishing features of their faith did the Latter-day Saints establish themselves as a fixture of the ecclesiastical scene, another tolerated minority.⁵

Most members of the Church today are unaware that the Church has changed in the last one hundred years, that it has given up any distinguishing features, or that it has adapted itself to American society, a thing abhorrent to the early leaders of the Church. Hansen notes in this regard, "Social change can sometimes be rationalized most effectively under the pretense that it isn't going on."⁶

⁴Leonard Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring, 1966), p. 21.

⁵Klaus Hansen, "Are We Still Mormons?" Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring, 1969), p. 103.

⁶Klaus Hansen, Quest For Empire, p. xv.

Davis Bitton, who has been an Assistant Church Historian since 1972, wrote in 1966 concerning the efforts of the Church to adapt itself to contemporary society after the turn of the century:

The Church entered the twentieth century in anxious pursuit of respectability. The Mormons have long been accused of being immoral and un-American. Now they were free to enter the "mainstream" of American life. The old grim days of dust, crickets, and homespun seemed farther and farther in the past. At last the Saints could be "respectable." They became zealously monogamous. They became not only loyal Americans but patriots, determined to prove their Americanism to any doubter. Soon after the turn of the century the new Boy Scouts of America program was adopted by the Church with great enthusiasm. Thousands of Mormon boys could now pledge to do their duty to God and country, with none of the old schizophrenia. The Mormons were becoming middle class with a vengeance. . . . From 1830 to 1890, at least, the Saints had seen themselves as persecuted defenders of Zion, holding a beachhead where the Kingdom of God could be established as a prelude to the Second Coming and the millennial reign. . . . But with accommodation Zion had apparently succumbed to monogamy, free enterprise, and political party maneuvers of Babylon.⁷

These changes have been gradual and subtle. They are reflective of the secularization process which the Church has undergone. This process, in the case of the Mormon Church, would be synonymous with Americanization. Such a thing would have shocked Brigham Young and his fellow Saints in Utah, who anxiously awaited the destruction of the United States during the civil war, when, in the words of Brigham Young, "Utah will be able to assume her rights and place among the family of nations."⁸ The Church has passed through some significant changes since those days. there are few organizations, today, more patronizing of the United States. Members are encouraged to "obey, honor and sustain the laws of the land,"

⁷Davis Bitton, "Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 126.

⁸Hansen, pp. 165-171.

vigorously by Church leaders.

Dennis Lythgoe speaks of the replacements of spiritual values in the Church with secular ones:

Over the years, however, we as Mormons have modified our ideas on society and self-sufficiency. Since the abandonment of polygamy, we have been largely assimilated into the social cultural scene and have, from a sociological standpoint, accommodated to society. This, understandably, has even been a chief objection of many apostate groups, who have left Mormonism on grounds that it has adjusted too much to society, and has forsaken spiritual values for secular ones. But while accommodation has disturbed some Mormons, it undoubtedly has pleased many outsiders, as evidenced by the height of favorable publicity accorded the Church in the 1950's.⁹

The Mass media in recent years has lauded the Church for its morality and patriotism. Hansen notes that "To the mass media Mormonism has become yet another American success story in a society that measures success largely by material standards: Mormons have become eminently adept at imitating and assimilating American middle-class values; therefore, Mormons are okay."¹⁰ Hansen emphasizes this theme in Quest For Empire when he says: "Not until Mormons had given up their means--the political kingdom, communitarianism, and polygamy--were they considered as eligible to join the pluralistic American community. . . . What apologists do not want to admit is that Mormonism itself had to undergo fundamental changes in order to make possible its acceptance by

⁹Dennis Lythgoe, "The Changing Image of Mormonism," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 3, no. 4, (Winter, 1968), p. 54.

¹⁰Hansen, "Are We Still Mormons?", pp. 102-103. For a fuller treatment of the contributions of the mass media to the new image of Mormonism see Dennis Lythgoe, pp. 45-58.

society at large."¹¹

Dr. Hugh Nibley, in his short book written as a polemic against Fawn Brodie's, No Man Knows My History, has said that:

If Joseph Smith were to walk into a conference of the Mormon Church today he would find himself completely at home; and if he were to address the congregation they would never for a moment detect anything the least bit strange, unfamiliar or old-fashioned in his teaching.

Yet for all this incredible doctrinal stability, the Mormons have been of all people the least disposed to fight change--no one insists more emphatically on their passion for progress than Brodie herself. Moreover the Saints have always had more than their share of crackpots, and these have always been given a hearing. Yet of all churches in the world only this one has not found it necessary to readjust any part of its doctrine in the last hundred years. . . .

The gospel as the Mormons know it sprang fullgrown from the words of Joseph Smith. It has never been worked over or touched up in any way, and is free of revisions and alterations.¹²

Nibley's statement that there have been no doctrinal changes or alterations seems to be controverted by the statement of Harold B. Lee, who gave an address in 1964, as a member of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. He said:

I recall when President McKay announced to the Church that the First Council of Seventy was being ordained high priests in order to extend their usefulness and to give them authority to act when no other General Authority could be present. I went down to Phoenix, Arizona, and I found a Seventy who was very much disturbed. He said to me, "Didn't the Prophet Joseph Smith say that this was contrary to the

¹¹Hansen, Quest For Empire, p. xiii, p. 149. See O. Kendall White Jr., "The Transformation of Mormon Theology," for an analysis of the influence of Protestant fundamentalism upon the theology of the Church, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 5, no. 2, p. 9.

¹²Hugh Nibley, No Ma'am That's Not History, Bookcraft, 1946, pp. 46, 61-62.

order of heaven to name high priests as presidents of the First Council of Seventy when they were named in the beginning?" And I said, "Well, I had understood that he did, but had you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960?" You see, he had not thought of that. He again was following a dead prophet, and he was forgetting that there was a living prophet today. Hence the importance of our stressing the word "living."¹³

S. Dilworth Young, of the First Council of Seventy of the Mormon Church, expressed ideas similar to those of Lee in an address given at Brigham Young University in 1974:

I would like to remind you though that if you get engrossed in the history and how they did things in that day, do not attempt to figure out why they do not do it the same way today. We have what is called modern revelation which means the living prophet always is the one who tells us what we are to do, the manner in which we are to do it, the manner in which we are supposed to be organized, and the manner in which the revelation is to be interpreted. Thus, the way they interpreted the revelations in those days has no particular bearing on the way the revelations are being interpreted today. It is sad to know that many men have gone on the rocks of apostasy because they could not see that point, that principle. They have said Joseph Smith did it this way. That is not true at all. Joseph Smith did it one way for his day, and Brigham Young did it another way for his day, and John Taylor did it a third way for his day; and today we are doing it the way President Spencer W. Kimball wants it to be. We listen to him. What they did in that day does not bind us at all. If no change has been made by any living prophet, then the original method of doing things stands. You find that true with the doctrine of plural marriage, don't you? Wilford Woodruff changed the method of handling marriage and his word stood until Joseph F. Smith enlarged it. Now his word stands. No one has changed it since then so we now obey the law as Joseph F. Smith promulgated it. That is modern revelation. May I repeat? Modern revelation is what President Joseph Smith said, unless President Spencer W. Kimball says

¹³Harold B. Lee, "The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator," Address to Seminary and Institute of Religion Faculty, Brigham Young University, July 8, 1964. Transcription is in possession of writer.

differently.¹⁴

It is obvious that these Church leaders recognize the changes that have taken place as being inspired, the divine will of the Lord. The secularization of the Church is therefore easily rationalized as an appropriate act of God in adjusting the Church to fit with contemporary society. James L. Clayton, a professor of history at the University of Utah, sees this process as ultimately destroying most differentiating aspects between mainstream protestantism and Mormonism. Eugene England, a teacher at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, disagreed, saying that no matter how far the Church goes down the secular road there will always be certain fundamental doctrines which will remain unchanged and constant--impervious to influence from secularizing forces. This "Everlasting Gospel" which Joseph Smith called the "ancient order of things" in the words of Eugene England, "does not evolve or decay but is revealed again and again in its original power to spread that Everlasting Gospel from the Kingdom throughout the whole earth."

Dr. Asael C. Lambert, a former dean at Brigham Young University, has noted that one of the effects of secularism has been to produce a brand of Mormons which he calls "realists" or "variant Mormons."¹⁶

¹⁴S. Dilworth Young, BYU Ten Stake Fireside Address, May 5, 1974, Transcription in possession of writer.

¹⁵Eugene England, Brigham Young--Essays in Appreciation, unpublished MS, 1977, Chapter VI, p. 5.

¹⁶Asael C. Lambert, "Liberalism--Orthodoxy," n.p., private notebook, Box 40, Western Americana Dept., Marriott Library, University of Utah.

These variant Mormons have seen an entire people move around and away from "divinely commanded" polygamy, and abandon it. They have seen the Mormon people develop and maintain a distinctive system of monogamous family life, and a system of private enterprise that dissolved completely a divinely commanded "consecration of all thy properties" to the church and its officers.

These variant Mormons have seen the size of the Mormon family steadily decrease, and many of them have themselves limited the number of their own children, and all of this has been against the firm authoritative thunderings and warnings about cosmic penalties to come from (?) by the highest high priests, prophets, seers, and revelators of the Mormon Church.

These variant Mormons have become inwardly free from their early fears of authoritative withholding of eternal salvation that can be accomplished by aggrieved priests who possess all the keys, they say, and who guard all the doors to the kingdom of God, and especially to the highest or celestial degree of glory within that kingdom.

One Church rule that these growing Mormons come to depart from is that of required unquestioning belief in the "voice of authority," and the commands laid down by the ruling officers, most particularly the top authorities who hold office for life, regardless of age or competence, and who speak as if for and with the literal voice of God.

As these thinking Mormons mature in years, in knowledge, and in experience, they depart from the rule that they should take all their problems and worries to the "sure voice of authority," and have their questions settled and their minds calmed by instructions from the brethren and the Priesthood.¹⁷

In rather ascerbic language he speaks of those who depart from the required "unquestioning belief in the voice of authority, and the commands laid down by the ruling officers."¹⁸ Lambert, as a scholar and intellectual, was evidently offended by the anti-intellectual orientation of the Church, more of which will be said later in this paper. He

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

traced the changes in the Church, the Americanization and secularization, as a process understood by "thinking and well-educated Mormons" who have

learned that the traditionally infallible voice of authority originated, and perpetuated with finality over long periods of years, such things as polygamy, "consecration of all thy properties," the law of "adopting" men and their families to leading Church officials instead of to their own blood ancestors, a positive plan to establish not only a Mormon Church but a kingdom independent of all earthly governments, blood atonement, enmity toward all man-made learning, denunciation of organic evolution, historical geology, and secular history about the American Indians as false doctrines initiated by the Devil.¹⁹

A. C. Lambert typifies many Mormon intellectuals. The conflict is an age-old one between the intellect and faith, between matters of the mind and those of the spirit, between science and religion, between one who desires intellectual freedom and one who wants to be subservient to religious authoritarianism. His dilemma is real, and is shared by many Mormon scholars.

Dr. Anita Baker pointed out to this writer that all organized systems tend to become increasingly bureaucratic, and that all bureaucracies tend to be more secular in time. She said she had been watching the Mormon Church with interest, and that according to her observations it was falling into the pattern she had predicted. She had observed this same process in similar organizations throughout history. Scholars writing within an organization who attempt to achieve a degree of objectivity generally have a great deal of trouble she explained. Their desires for objectivity make them look neutral. This evident neutrality is easily misinterpreted, by the leaders of the system, and according

¹⁹Ibid.

to Baker, it is anathema to the scholars in systems such as exist under communistic or totalitarian regimes.²⁰

Ernst Benz describes a type of positive secularization through which God's spirit "will penetrate the matter of the world to model and shape it according to his own will, for modelling mankind, for building up His kingdom."²¹ The Mormons epitomized this type of secularization marvelously, according to Benz, who says:

Considering this type of secularization we must as historians admit that Mormonism is the best example of this positive secularization of the Christian gospel because it was driven from its very beginning by the aim to prepare and even to anticipate the promise of the coming kingdom of God. . . . they began to anticipate it on the American soil by cultivating vast areas, by building cities after cities in which they gathered their people as citizens of the coming kingdom of God. The persecution and the destruction of their holy places drove them finally into the western desert, and there they fulfilled the most admirable and astonishing work of making, as you say, the desert blossom under the most atrocious exterior conditions of nature, of climate, of absence of material resources.

.
Mormonism is the producer and the most realistic and practical result of the positive way of secularization of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven at hand in America, including, in the most advanced point of secularization, the printing of their own dollar bills of the Kirtland Safety Society, Antibanking Company, signed by Joseph Smith, Israelite.²²

Many scholars do not, therefore, see that the Americanization or the Mormon Church is necessarily a prelude to its quasi-absorption into secular society. They see it as a positive force which will result in

²⁰Anita Baker, interview, April 3, 1977.

²¹Benz, p. 629

²²Ibid., pp. 629-630, 633.

a beneficent, almost symbiotic, relationship between contemporary social forms, patterns, institutions and the Church.

The New Mormon History

Recent years have seen the emergence of a widespread new approach to Mormon history. Though this new movement remains unnamed by most scholars participating in it, or commenting on it, it seems fitting to apply the appellation of "The New Mormon History" as does Robert Flanders.¹

Latter-day Saint Church Historian, Leonard Arrington, explained to This writer that to call this type of history a "New History" "gets us into trouble with the General Authorities." He says they prefer to look at it as a reinforcement of the traditional history, emphasizing continuity.² Reed Durham, of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, said that the only reason this type of historical writing can be called "New" is because there are so many new documents, journals and other sources of historical information which have come to light in recent years. He prefers to call it a "reinterpretation of Mormon history" on the basis of this new information, a "renaissance."³ For the purposes of this paper the title "New History" will serve as a descriptive term denoting this newly emergence style, reinterpretation, reinforcement and renaissance in Mormon historical writing.

In order to understand this new genre, which is characterized by a scholarly objectivism, it is necessary to understand that up to its

¹Robert Flanders, "Reflections on the New Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 9, p. 34.

²Leonard Arrington, Interview, April 11, 1977.

³Reed Durham, Interview, April 11, 1977.

emergence Mormon history was generally used either by apologists or by anti-Mormons--neither of which are noted for their objectivity.

Richard Bushman says that although "an occasional author stood apart from the fighting and left a record which can be read without heavy discounting, for the most part works of history were tracts in crusades either to destroy the Mormons or to defend them."⁴ Robert Flanders says basically the same thing, noting that the practitioners of the "Old Mormon History" tended to divide into two types: "Defenders of the Faith (whatever their faith might be) and Yellow Journalists."⁵ Leonard Arrington adds an additional category of writings about the Mormons: "The 'curiosa' literature of writers who were impressed with the peculiar characteristics of the Mormons and their religion and who wrote about the Mormons and their settlements as other journalists and travelers wrote about the Hottentots, the hairy Ainu, and the wild men of Borneo."⁶

Arrington points out elsewhere that traditional Mormon history has been influenced by several "built-in biases," which the New History would try to circumvent in its attempt at historical discovery.⁷

⁴Richard Bushman, "The Future of Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 23.

⁵Robert Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 9, no. 1, (Winter, 1973), p. 34.

⁶Leonard Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), p. 16.

⁷Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 3, no. 2, (Summer, 1968), pp. 61-64.

These biases are briefly:

1. The theological marionette bias. "One gets the impression from some of our literature and sermons that the Prophets and their associates in the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve were pious personages who responded somewhat mechanically, as if by conditioned reflex, to explicit instructions from On High, and that God manipulated the leaders much as marionettes in a puppet show."

2. The male bias. "This is the notion that men hold all the important policy-making positions. . . . Priesthood is responsible for everything that happens." Mormon women have suffered a long neglect in Mormon history, many of whom were devout, intelligent, heroic and creative to match the greatest of the prophets.

3. The solid achievement bias. We remember "the tangible, the material, the visible, simply because these have had greater survival value." Durable achievements such as "canals and dams, temples and meetinghouses, houses and cooperative stores are the things we look to as reminders of our pioneer heritage. We have forgotten that the pioneers also made contributions in thought, in human relations, in education. From the evidence of pioneer life still surviving, we are led to conclude that the Mormons were good farmers and engineers, but poor poets and philosophers."

4. The centrifugal bias. "The notion that the important influences and forces in Mormon history originated in the center and moved outward from there." Arrington notes that the Relief Society was first organized as a voluntary ladies aid society which was quickly reconstituted by the Prophet Joseph Smith as an official organization. He also says, in

substantiating this bias, that the "Woman's Exponent, first magazine west of the Mississippi . . . originated as a semi-private venture in which the leading part was played by a twenty-two year old girl journalist from Smithfield, Utah." This writer would add that there has been much neglect of the "Churches of the Dispersion," those several sects which sprang into existence immediately after the death of Joseph Smith. Robert Flanders, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is rightly concerned over this neglect. He says that "The modern self-identities of most Latter-day Saints are based in part upon discrete sectarian polarities growing out of an historical fragmentation."⁸ Flanders believes that the New Mormon History can help different L.D.S. sects understand one another to a greater degree: "Viewed in the traditional sectarian frame, this New History dialogue is a threat to sectarian boundaries. The threat is real."⁹

5. The unanimity bias. "This is the notion that Mormon society has, from the earliest years, been characterized by concert in thought and behavior--by cooperation, concord, and concensus." This final bias of the traditional history is most vigorously opposed by the New History. One who studies Mormon history with any degree of intensity cannot help but notice that there has always been a certain amount of dissent in the Church--both among the General Authorities and the ordinary members.

⁸Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," p. 34.

⁹Ibid., p. 41. See also Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," p. 24.

With respect to this last bias Arrington says: "There is now, as in early epochs, a certain amount of dissent. . . . We cannot deny the uneasiness which these strains and conflicts produce. But anxiety seems so much easier when we understand the magnitude of the tensions and challenges of earlier generations. . . . the Church has grown and prospered precisely because of the dissent and discord, the obstacles and difficulties."¹⁰ Flanders also notes in this regard:

A crippling feature of the work of Utah Mormon historians and those influenced by them is that they tend to dismiss dissensions and conflicts within the Church and to ignore the schisms and divergent sects that resulted. Dissenters were apostates, and thus "enemies"--outside the purview of historical concern. This omission is a grievous one, since internal conflict and controversy were as influential in shaping Mormonism as was strife with the gentile world. There were "apostasies" at Kirtland, at Far West, and several times in Utah.¹¹

This single theme seems to be the area where the old and new Mormon histories are most divergent. Traditional history is saccharin. It allows for no error, no mistake in judgment on the part of a past Church leader, no conflict among the brethren. Arrington said, of these kinds of histories, that they are "undeviating pictures of sweetness and light. These err even more on the side of incredulity than the blacker portraits of the anti's."¹² Richard Bushman said that it was not until recent years that "many Mormon historians have readily admitted there

¹⁰Arrington, "The Search for Meaning and Truth in Mormon History," p. 65.

¹¹Robert Flanders, "Writing on the Mormon Past," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 53.

¹²Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," p. 25.

were some faults in the early leaders. . . ."13

There are many reasons explaining the emergence of the New Mormon History, so-called. William Mulder exclaims rather exultantly: "The fiddles are tuning in Mormon historiography. Not only is there a great deal of activity as new histories are being written and old classics revived; there is, more importantly, a new professionalism. Mormon scholars have come of age: they have learned the tools of their trade and have achieved a certain objectivity and composure in dealing with their extraordinary history."¹⁴ Robert Flanders joins with Mulder saying that "The time is ripe for the study of Mormon history to emerge on a new plane of maturity."¹⁵ According to Flanders the New History differs from the traditional history principally in its "shift of interest and emphasis from polemics, from attacking or defending assumptions of faith. It is a shift from an evangelical towards a humanistic interest."¹⁶ Moses Rischin, Fulbright Professor of History at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, has described his view of what Mulder called "the tuning of the fiddles:" "In the course of the past decade, Mormon history has for the first time attracted an array of sophisticated scholars within and without the Mormon fold that has no parallel in the history of any other religious group in America--with

¹³Bushman, p. 24.

¹⁴William Mulder, "Fatherly Advice," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 9, no. 4. (Winter, 1975), p. 77.

¹⁵Flanders, "Writing on the Mormon Past," p. 47.

¹⁶Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," p. 34.

the single exception of the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, the grandfather of us all."¹⁷ Rischin speaks also of the recent secularization of religious history in America, and of its effect upon Mormon historical writing:

Despite broadened views, the true secularization and pluralist exploration of America's religious past have been slow in coming. Candor, depth, and intellectual poise have been missing. Church history, of whatever denomination, has suggested parochialism. Protestant historians have written about Protestantism, Catholic historians about Catholicism, Jewish historians about Judaism. But Protestant, Catholic, and Jew, no less than Mormon, have written Mormon history. Indeed, despite its vaunted ethnocentrism, Mormon history seems unique in its magnetic fascination and imaginative challenge to Mormon and non-Mormon alike.

Doubtless, the recent Mormon experience of cultural shock has compounded the allure of Mormon history for serious scholars. For the first time in a century, Mormondom's persistent cohesiveness, Old Testament concreteness, and cultural isolation have been confronting a numerous Mormon diaspora eager to retain its identity and yet to be intimately and actively at home among the avant garde Gentiles. In this encounter the highly visible and explicit tensions between past and present, community and individual, faith and reason, may tell us as much about the American condition as about the Mormon dilemma.¹⁸

Leonard Arrington's Great Basin Kingdom was a work which remarkably demonstrated the neutrality and objectivity of the New History. This is shown by the reaction the book brought, as described by Arrington:

I found that some of those who had read Great Basin Kingdom wanted to know whether I was a Mormon. A number of Mormon students wrote to congratulate me that a non-Mormon had written such a fair book. At the same time some non-Mormon readers wrote to express surprise that a Mormon could

¹⁷Moses Rischin, "The New Mormon History," The American West, Vol. 6, March 1969, p. 49.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 49.

could produce such an objective work.¹⁹

Because of traditional Mormon historians there has been a certain amount of historical data which has been ignored. There have been "historical questions which the Church would prefer to sweep under the rug."²⁰ An increased openness in Mormon history will have a tendency to arouse questions which could prove uncomfortable, and no doubt, it is this uncomfotability which has caused some people to frown upon the new objectivity. They are used to the Old History, which Arrington calls "sugary." Phillip A. M. Taylor explains that "Mormons have written little that can be called history: believing in Joseph Smith's prophetic status and in the divine overruling of their Church's development, they have felt little need of mundane explanations."²¹

Arrington has also pointed out that "our historians were perhaps unduly respectful of certain authorities, placing credence in accounts that should have subjected to critical analysis."²² Not only have Mormon historians been unduly respectful of certain writers, they have also neglected others, perhaps to the degree that much important material was overlooked. Although anti-Mormon literature is strongly characterized by a vein of invective and bitterness, much of it contains

¹⁹Leonard Arrington, "Historian as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay," Unpublished Ms to be published in an upcoming issue of BYU Studies, p. 9.

²⁰Klaus Hansen, "Are We Still Mormons?" p. 103.

²¹Phillip A. M. Taylor, Arizona and the West, Vol. 4, (1962), p. 249.

²²Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," p. 59.

important primary source information. David Whitmer, E. D. Howe, John Corril, John C. Bennett, John Hyde, T. B. H. Stenhouse, and Frank J. Cannon, to name a few, were men closely associated with the Church at different periods, who left it (with the exception of Howe, who was a non-Mormon from the start.) Their writings have been largely disregarded by traditional historians, even though they were first-hand witnesses.

Recently this writer had a question concerning a statement made by David Whitmer in his pamphlet, An Address to All Believers in Christ, (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), in which he is strongly critical of Joseph Smith and the path the Church took after 1835. The question had to do with Whitmer's description of the method of translation of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith, using the seer stone. The statement contradicted what several modern Church leaders have said. Upon asking one of the teachers at the L.D.S. Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, Dr. Frank Gonzales, about Whitmer's statement this writer was informed that what he had said could not be taken seriously because he was an apostate, his being one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon notwithstanding. This lack of regard for a primary source is typical of the traditional history and evinces grounds for additional criticism from the more objective historians.

Leonard Arrington has briefly traced the evolution of Mormon historical writings in this century. He says that "it may be fairly said that 'objective,' and 'systematic' treatises on the Mormons and their culture began in this century as a product of work toward the Ph.D in

history and the social sciences."²³ More than any other single aspect the influence of secular educational institutions has had the greatest single effect on the emergence of the New History. Klaus Hansen notes that "a generation of church historians trained in secular graduate schools clearly has gained a sufficient respect for 'facts' and their role in the historical method not to allow suppression or dismissal of those that may prove uncomfortable, even painful."²⁴

Arrington notes that Professor E. E. Erickson predicted in The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life (Chicago, 1922) that as the Church became more secularized "Church history would become more defensive, doctrinaire, and theological."²⁵ Nevertheless he also points out that Erickson "failed to foresee the outpouring of scholarly secular studies by Mormon Ph.D. candidates in non-church universities."²⁶ This outpouring had a great effect on the overall secularization of the Church. Richard Bushman has also noted with a fair amount of candor: "in my experience, religious faith has little influence on Mormon historians for an obvious reason: we are not simply Mormons but also middle class American intellectuals trained for the most part in secular institutions . . . historians who are Mormons write history as they were taught in graduate school rather than as Mormons."²⁷

²³Arrington, "Scholarly Studies in Mormonism," pp. 16-17.

²⁴Hansen, Quest for Empire, pp. x-xi.

²⁵Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," p. 21.

²⁶Ibid., p. 21.

²⁷Richard Bushman, "Faithful History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 4, no. 4, (Winter, 1969), p. 16.

A. C. Lambert describes the influx of Mormons educated in secular institutions this way:

Having been themselves educated in good modern high schools, modern colleges and the inescapably "scientific" universities and foundations, Mormon men and women who do not remain absolutely annealed against new knowledge and thinking for one's self, face and accept the modern sciences of objective history, geology, anthropology, archaeology, genetics, medicine, and comparative anatomy.²⁸

The example of Dennis Michael Quinn demonstrates aptly the writings of a Mormon who has received his training in a secular institution. His masters thesis entitled Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy 1832-1932--A Prosopographical Study, was completed at the University of Utah in 1973. The introduction contains the following statement:

This study is intended as a secular approach to the Mormon hierarchy, rather than a faith-promoting apologia or an iconoclastic polemic. Nevertheless, the inevitably religious environment of this group makes the question of my bias relevant. Although I consider myself to be a believing and loyal member of the LDS Church, I have sought in the present study to submerge personal biases and to be guided strictly by the weight of evidence in the presentation of data and interpretation.²⁹

This desire to set aside personal faith to a degree in order to write objective history epitomizes the case of many who write on the Mormon past today.

Although much objective Mormon history has been written since the

²⁸Lambert Papers, Box 40, pp. 18-19.

²⁹Dennis Michael Quinn, Organizational Development and Social Origins of the Mormon Hierarchy 1832-1932--A Prosopographical Study, University of Utah, 1973, p. 5.

turn of the century both Flanders and Hansen point to the publication of Fawn McKay Brodie's No Man Knows My History as an event of great significance in the history of the New Mormon History. Most Latter-day Saints have classified her book as an anti-Mormon work, due to the fact that she treats Joseph Smith in a very secular way. Her pen-portrait makes him appear very unprophet-like. Robert Flanders calls the book "a landmark . . . a transitional work," linking both the Old and the New Histories. He adds that a "new era dawned with her book. All subsequent serious studies of early Mormonism have necessarily had Brodie as a reference point."³⁰ Flanders also describes Brodie's book as the starting place for the New History:

In the generation since Mrs. Brodie wrote, the appearance of a whole new corpus of professional works has begun to revolutionize Mormon historiography. Some are authored by juring Mormons, some by Mormons only nominal in affiliation, and some by gentiles. They tend to have in common a desire to free the writing of Mormon history from the various parochial strictures of the past and to make it a part of a larger historical whole.³¹

Klaus Hansen speculates that the reason his Quest for Empire was not more controversial was because "Fawn Brodie's excessively maligned biography of Joseph Smith may well have preempted most of the shock value of the secular approach for Mormons. What might have been cause for excommunication in 1945, was, in 1967, merely occasion for the privately expressed if stinging rebuke by a General Authority of the

³⁰Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," p. 35.

³¹Flanders, "Writing on the Mormon Past," p. 59.

Mormon Church."³² Max Parkin initially intended to do his master's thesis on Brodie's work, in an attempt to show that she had misinterpreted and misquoted her sources. It soon became evident to him, however, that she was correct in her use of original sources. Parkin abandoned his thesis because "I didn't want my name attached to a thesis which vindicated Fawn Brodie."³³

Another event which has given great impetus to the New History movement was the founding, in 1966, of Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. This was a response by young Mormon intellectuals to the need for competent professional history and commentary. Though the creation of this periodical caused a degree of controversy among the conservative Mormon community, including the General Authorities, it was welcomed by many members as the fulfillment of an intellectual need in the Church, unrequited by the official Church magazines, such as the Improvement Era, and the Ensign. Though Dialogue has had some difficulties, mostly financial, it is still being published, somewhat sporadically.

Time magazine did an article on Dialogue not long after it began publishing, which touched on the need for such a periodical in the Church, and the effect it could have:

Unquestioned belief rather than critical self-examination has always been the Mormon style. Breaking with this tradition, a group of young Mormon intellectuals, all of whom went either

³²Hansen, Quest for Empire, p. x. For other reviews critical of Brodie's book see the Deseret News, May 11, 1946; Hugh Nibley, No Ma'am, That's Not History, (Salt Lake City, 1946), and F. L. Stewart, Exploding the Myth About Joseph Smith, (New York, 1967).

³³Max Parkin, Interview, March 1, 1977.

to Harvard or Stanford, have brought out Dialogue, a learned quarterly dedicated to the proposition that the faith of the Latter-day Saints is compatible with reasoned inquiry.

The first unabashedly highbrow publication in Mormon History, Dialogue, gets no financial support from the Church, is designed to keep intelligent, educated Mormons who might otherwise fall by the way side within the community of Saints. Its tone contrasts sharply with that of the vast array of official Mormon publications--ranging from Salt Lake City's daily Deseret News to Relief Society Magazine, a women's monthly--which reads like house organs and propogate what one Dialogue editor calls "the myth of the unruffled Mormon," impervious to doubt. In reality, argues Dialogue's book review editor, Richard Bushman, a history Professor at BYU, plenty of young Mormons have become estranged from the Church for intellectual reasons.

Cautious as such criticism is, it represents something so unusual in Mormonism that one Church leader has ominously declared: "Dialogue can't help but hurt the Church." Nonetheless, Dialogue's growing subscriptions list now stands at more than 3,000, and its editors insist that Mormonism has nothing to fear from self-appraisal.³⁴

Brigham Young University Studies was founded in 1959 and caused a stir with the publication of its first issue, as this writer understands it, because of the article by Leonard Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the 'Word of Wisdom.'" The periodical obviously succumbed to pressure from above and did not publish anything for a year. Then it reappeared in 1961 with an entirely new board of editors. In recent years BYU Studies has tended toward the kind of objectivity characterized by Dialogue. James Clayton notes that it was predicted that one of the things Dialogue would do would be to drive BYU Studies to the left, which it appears has happened. Robert Flanders says that in the pages of these two periodicals "The New History has been exemplified in many articles,

³⁴Time Magazine, August 26, 1966, p. 59.

and described and discussed in numerous reviews, critiques, symposia, etc."³⁵

Another important event in the rise of the New History was the creation of the Mormon History Association on December 28, 1965, in San Francisco. Leonard Arrington was elected its first president. This association has dedicated itself "to the development of an understanding of Mormon History (in the broadest interpretation) and the placing of that history in a reasonable and proper context within the history of the United States and the World. . . . It has pursued this task by offering primary encouragement to students, scholars, researchers (if these are different activities) through publication, public meetings, personal exchange, and recently the publication of its own journal, The Journal of Mormon History."³⁶ Arrington notes that the stated purpose of the organization "was the promotion of understanding, scholarship, and publication in the field of Mormon history. . . . The Association now has a membership of 750 including nearly all professional LDS historians, many Seminary and Institute of Religion teachers, Reorganized LDS historians, and a few persons from other faiths and fields."³⁷

Arrington has noted that those involved in these activities, mentioned above, are mostly "practicing Latter-day Saints; they share basic

³⁵Flanders, "Some Reflections on the New Mormon History," p. 41, footnote no. 2.

³⁶Paul M. Edwards, "Message from the Editor," Mormon History Association Newsletter, July 30, 1975, p. 1.

³⁷Arrington, "History as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay," pp. 12-13.

agreements that the Mormon religion and its history are subject to discussion, if not to argument, and that any particular feature of Mormon life is fair game for detached examination and clarification. They believe that the details of Mormon history and culture can be studied in human or naturalistic terms--indeed, must be so studied--and without thus rejecting the divinity of the Church's origin and work."³⁸

One tremendously influential landmark in the writing of Mormon history was the professionalization of the Church Historian's Office, under the direction of the First Presidency of the Church. In 1972 they chose Leonard Arrington to serve as the Church Historian, and to be responsible for its expansion. Arrington is a professional historian and scholar who describes himself as "a rigorously trained social scientist, bitten rather strongly by the bug of cynicism to which his training had exposed him."³⁹ In an autobiographical article he describes this expansion and work being done by the Church Historian's Office:

For the first time he (the Church Historian) was to have a professionally trained staff of researchers and writers to produce articles, monographs, and books of a scholarly nature. Based on original source materials, many previously untouched, these publications were bound to have a significant impact on the understanding not only of Mormon history but also of Western American history.

That was five years ago. From that time, my career as historical administrator has been amply rewarded. Since 1972 staff members of our History Division have published fifteen books, sixty-two articles in professional journals or chapters in scholarly books, twenty-two reviews in professional journals,

³⁸Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," p. 28.

³⁹Arrington, May and Fox, Building the City of God, Deseret Book, 1976, p. 358.

and seventy-one articles in Church publications. Five books and many more articles are scheduled for publication in 1976.⁴⁰

Arrington describes the structure and accomplishments of the Church History Division:

The Historical Department as it now stands includes four divisions: Church Library, consisting of published works about Mormon history; Church Archives, comprising the unpublished works--letters, diaries, minute books, financial ledgers, photographs, films, and phonograph records and tapes; Church Curator's Division, with charge of the Church's historic sites and its collection of art and artifacts; and Church History Division, under my direction, in which there are fourteen full-time historians and six secretaries and typists. Our mission is to do in-depth research and compile and write books and articles for church publication and for professional journals. Eight of our fourteen historians have the Ph.D., and others are working toward that goal.

Our History Division staff in the Historical Department is both professionally trained and personally complementary. James Allen is a talented writer and loyal associate. With an extensive background in American history and a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California, Dr. Allen has had experience in the Church's Institute system and at BYU. He is probably the most informed student of twentieth-century Mormon history among Mormon scholars. Davis Bitton, after receiving the Ph.D. from Princeton, taught Renaissance and Reformation history at the University of Texas and at UCSB before coming to the University of Utah. In the preparation of a monumental bibliography (soon to be published) he has read or supervised the reading of every known Mormon diary of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and he has a marvelous capability for critiquing historical manuscripts. Our editor, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Utah, served as managing editor of the Western Humanities Review and taught at the University of Utah before joining our staff. She is a warm attractive personality, as well as a skillful literary critic.

With our own appointments in 1972, we members of the History Division sensed we were on the brink of a new era of Mormon and Western American historiography. And our

⁴⁰Arrington, "Historian as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay," pp. 2-3.

expectations are being fulfilled. Within the first year of operations we:

1. Inaugurated a sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Latter-day Saints, signing contracts with sixteen Mormon scholars and authors located at various universities throughout the nation.

2. Began a Mormon Heritage series of important edited documents, beginning with Brigham Young's letters to his sons.

3. Discovered and catalogued more than fifty boxes of previously unknown materials containing especially valuable Brigham Young documents.

4. Assisted archivists with the preparation of registers and guides to archives collections.

5. Produced articles for several magazines and professional journals.

In the years since 1973, we have worked on biographies, community and area histories, demographic studies, monographs on special topics, and various in-house historical background reports. We have conducted an Oral History Program and have taped more than 2,000 hours with some 800 persons thus far. Our program of work is developed by James B. Allen, Davis Bitton, and myself, in consultation with our professional staff and with ecclesiastical superiors (who have been infallingly supportive of our efforts). We have also assisted others to do research in our archives by granting a number of \$1,000 fellowships each year. We have also assigned certain book projects to professors at Brigham Young University and elsewhere and have thus involved the entire community of Mormon historians in a systematic program of exploring and publishing materials on Mormon history.⁴¹

This renaissance of Mormon history has also seen many old Mormon works revived and republished. Wilford Wood has republished the original editions of the Book of Mormon and the Book of Commandments, under the title, Joseph Smith Begins His Work. Various works of Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor, Joseph Smith, David Whitmer, George Reynolds, to name a few, have been reproduced and made available by various historians and publishing companies. In addition several of the early Church periodicals such as the Evening and Morning Star, the Times

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 17-19.

and Seasons, The Elders' Journal, and The Messenger and Advocate have been republished. Many sermons, speeches, messages, and epistles of the early leaders of the Church have also been redone, a prominent example of which is the Journal of Discourses, a compilation of many of the sermons of the Mormon leaders in Utah from 1852 to 1876.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner have spent much of their efforts toward the republishing of early LDS works. More will be said of them later.

Although Arrington says that the efforts of the Historians Office have received unfailing support from their ecclesiastical leaders, there have been some conflicts created by the desires of Mormon historians to write more open history. This conflict between leaders and historians is simply a restatement of the traditional conflict between the secular and the spiritual.

Conflict

Most of the New Mormon Historians see an increased openness in Mormon historical research as something which need not detract from one's faith in the divinity of the Church. Indeed many of them see the New History as a means through which the Church can gain a type of vindication.

Bushman addresses this issue saying that up until now "virtually everyone who has shown 'the human side' of the Church and its leaders has believed the enterprise was strictly human. To defend the faith, Mormon historians have thought they must prove the Church to be inhumanly righteous. We need historians who will mourn the failings of the Saints out of honor for God instead of relishing the warts because they show the Church was earthbound after all."¹ Leonard Arrington, in a very pointed statement seemingly justifies an in-depth probing into the Mormon past: "My own impression is that an intensive study of Church history, while it will dispel certain myths or half-myths sometimes perpetuated in Sunday school (and other classes) will build testimonies rather than weaken them."²

There are many who do not share that opinion, including a good portion of the General Authorities. There is some logical justification for their lack of regard for a totally open approach to Mormon history.

¹Richard Bushman, "Faithful History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 4, no. 4, (Winter, 1969), p. 18.

²Leonard Arrington, "The Search for Truth and Meaning in Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 3, no. 2, (Summer, 1968), p. 65.

There is some evidence that those who examine it with any degree of intensity will indeed have a greater chance of losing their faith. It is the opinion of this writer that the study of history has an innate tendency to replace absolutistic ideas and philosophies with those which are relativistic by nature. Klaus Hansen has noted the effect of history upon faith in this way:

I am of course, one of those who have contended that the Church Historian's Office as well as other Church depositories may well contain important secret documents whose release might have a profound effect on Mormon historiography if not on Mormon history. The possible, even probable, existence of further records of the Council of Fifty and the political kingdom of God--beyond those to which I inadvertently gained access--is perhaps the most obvious example. . . . the fact is that an unvarnished version of the history of the Church that lets the chips fall where they may is potential dynamite. If historians, therefore, do not necessarily agree with the still relatively conservative and restrictive policies of the Church Historian's Office they should at least understand that these proceed from an internal logic.³

Frances Lee Menlove speaks in a similar vein of the old Mormon history:

Perhaps because the history is so fraught with theological significance, it has been smoothed and whittled down, a wrinkle removed here and a sharp edge there. In many ways, it has assumed the character of a myth. That these courageous and inspired men shared the shortcomings of all men cannot be seriously doubted. That the Saints were not perfect nor their leaders without error is evident to anyone who cares to read the original records of the Church. But the myths and the mythmaking persist. Striking evidence for this is found in the fact that currently one of the most successful anti-Mormon proselyting techniques is merely to bring to light obscure or suppressed historical documents. Reading these historical documents arouses a considerable amount of incredulity, concern, and disenchantment among Mormons under the spell of this mythological view of history. That individuals find these bits and pieces of history so shocking and faith-shattering is at once the meat of the fundamentalistic heresies

³Klaus Hansen, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, (Summer, 1970), p. 65.

and an indictment of the quasisuppression of historical reality which propagates the one-sided view of Mormon history.

The relevance of this to honesty is obvious. The net result of mythologizing our history is that the hard truth is concealed. It is deception to select only congenial facts or to wrest their meaning so that error becomes wisdom, or to pretend that the Church exists now and has existed in a vacuum, uninfluenced by cultural values, passing fashions, and political ideologies.⁴

Leonard Arrington was asked the question, "is it really possible to humanize all phases of Mormon history without destroying Church doctrines regarding historical events?"⁵ The opinion of this writer is that the answer to that question is no, at this point in time. However, if there were a Churchwide emphasis on openness in its history and the dispelling of myths, then indeed the New History would become less dangerous. The danger at present lies in the fact that it has the ability to shatter previously held notions about former events and leaders. It is the shock that accompanies that shattering which can induce a lack of faith. Dr. James L. Clayton, of the History Department at the University of Utah asks, "is the shock rooted in the materials or in the deception of Church leaders who distorted them? If the latter then openness could cause permanent damage. Also the methods of inquiry may do damage, as Benson suggests."⁶ Is the answer to make a clean

⁴Frances Lee Menlove, "The Challenge of Honesty," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), pp. 49-50.

⁵Leonard Arrington, "Scholarly Studies of Mormonism," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), p. 28.
Footnote: Sandra Tanner asked the question this way: "How far can you humanize Joseph Smith before you are forced to reject his prophetic calling?" (Interview, April 19, 1977).

⁶James L. Clayton, Marginal note to the rough draft of this paper, p. 28.

sweep and open the archives to all? Or is it to maintain the atmosphere of conflict which now exists between the Church's Official History and the New History? The immediate future is unpredictable. Hugh Nibley says that "Nothing would delight me more than to see all the Church records made available to those who would know how to use them."⁷

In a recent address to all teachers in the seminaries and institutes in this area Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, issued several indictments against the tendency to treat Mormon history with a merely secular methodology. His talk was a major statement against the New History:

I believe most, if not all teachers, will be in agreement with this counsel. The problem occurs on occasion when, in the pursuit of higher degrees, one becomes so imbued with the terminology and methods of a secular discipline, that almost without realizing it, the gospel message becomes compromised. The simple principles of the gospel should always be our basis for truth, not the disciplines of men.

When a teacher feels he must blend worldly sophistication and erudition to the simple principles of the gospel or our Church history so his message will have more appeal and respectability to the academically learned, he has compromised his message. . . . But let us not forget that disaffection from the gospel and the Lord's Church was brought about in the past by the attempts to reconcile the pure gospel with the secular philosophies of men. . . .

Sometimes gospel principles are written with such erudition that the gospel is hardly recognizable in them. Worldly phraseology and authorities replace scriptures and the prophets. . . .

Some of our teachers have said, "I can see how the

⁷Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? Salt Lake City, 1972, Modern Microfilm Company, p. 12.

counsel to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ is applicable to gospel subjects; but what about subjects that deal in facts such as Church history?" I would answer this by saying that facts should not only be taught as facts; they should be taught to increase one's faith in the gospel, to build testimony. . . .

"There have been and continue to be attempts to bring (a humanistic) philosophy into our own Church history. . . . the emphasis is to underplay revelation and God's intervention in significant events, and to inordinately humanize the prophets of God so that their human frailties become more evident than their spiritual qualities."⁸

We would warn you teachers of this trend, which seems to be an effort to reinterpret the history of the Church so that it is more rationally appealing to the world. We must never forget that ours is a prophetic history. Our students need to understand this prophetic history. . . .

We have had on occasion a teacher or two who have questioned this position with this challenge: "When and where can we begin to tell them our real story?" Inferred in that question is the accusation that the Church has not been telling the truth. A few (and I emphasize that word "few") have delighted in digging up alleged facts about certain Church leaders to expose their frailties. . . .

We would hope that if you feel you must write for the scholarly journals, you always defend the faith. Avoid expressions and terminology which offend the Brethren and Church members. I refer to such expressions as "he alleged" when a President of the Church described a revelation or manifestation; or other expression such as "experimental systems," "communal life," or "communitarianism" as they describe sacred revelations dealing with the United Order and Law of Consecration. A revelation of God is not an experiment.⁹

This talk seems to have been given on the genuine idea that one's faith is endangered when one delves too deeply into the Mormon past.

⁸Ezra Taft Benson, Twelve Stake Fireside, BYU, March 28, 1976.

⁹Ezra Taft Benson, "The Gospel Teacher and His Message," delivered September 17, 1976, pp. 6-8. Transcript in Western Americana Department, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

It appears as though present LDS authorities only encourage knowledge to the extent that it will produce faith. A case in point is found in the obvious omission of any discussion of polygamy in Sunday school manuals. Knowledge which detracts from faith is knowledge better not learned. There is a self-preservation instinct among the leaders of the Church. The Church will only be able to resist total secularization as long as it can keep its collective faith. Therefore anything which endangers faith is bad, and to be avoided. It is better to be ignorant than to know--if the knowing will lead away from salvation.

The New Historians find themselves in a unique position, much as the Brahmin in Voltaire's The Story of a Good Brahmin. The story tells of a wise Hindu philosopher who spent his whole life searching for truth, and, finally realizing that there are no absolute truths and that it is impossible to know anything for a certainty, fell into a deep despair: "The brighter the light of his understanding, the greater was his unhappiness." There was an old woman who lived next door to the Brahmin who was never perplexed by such questions as troubled him. "She had never reflected for a single moment of her life on any one of those points which tormented the Brahmin; she believed in the metamorphoses of Vishnu with all her heart." The Brahmin said to his friend, "I have told myself a hundred times that I should be happy if I were as stupid as my neighbor, and yet somehow I have no wish to attain such happiness . . . if we value happiness, we value reason even more."¹⁰ Such is the case also of many intellectuals in the Church

¹⁰Voltaire, Candide and Other Writings, Random House, 1956, pp. 108-109.

who respond to the advance of secularism, to the detriment, often, of their faith. A. C. Lambert wrote in a private notebook the following, which is reminiscent of Voltaire's story, and a very honest thing for a scholar to admit, even in a journal:

" . . . it could be that if I repented, as it were, of some of my own liberal views, and conformed even more genuinely both in thought and in action to the patterns of my consistently orthodox parents, I too would find a happy, consistent, satisfying life. At least I wouldn't be gnawed inside at times by what I now think are clear fallacies or even tyrannies in the strictly authoritarian pattern. There may be something to this "complete surrender" of mind to "the will of God."¹¹

One can perhaps see the reason the traditionalists say history should be taught so as to inculcate faith, and that if it does not result in greater testimony, then it should not be taught in that manner. Often this philosophy leads to the distortion of Mormon history, and to the selection of only those historical facts which cast a favorable light on the Church and its leaders.

It is this attitude on the part of Church leaders which undoubtedly led Ezra Taft Benson to ask that The Story of the Latter-day Saints, by James Allen and Glen Leonard, be shredded. (James Allen told this writer that his book created a stir primarily because he and Leonard had treated the Word of Wisdom in a historical as well as a spiritual manner, and also because they did not call the story of the crickets and the seagulls a miracle.) Eugene England told this writer that many of his colleagues at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah

¹¹Asael C. Lambert, "Liberalism--Orthodoxy," n.p., private notebook, Box 40, Western Americana Dept., Marriott Library, University of Utah.

were "disturbed" by Benson's talk, above quoted, and that some of the more conservative teachers felt "vindicated." Max Parkin, of the same institution remarked that many of the instructors "closed their ears and refused to listen" to Benson's talk. This conflict is underscored by the distinct possibility that Elder Benson will become the thirteenth president of the Church in the event of the death of Spencer W. Kimball. That could turn out to be an unlucky number indeed for LDS historians who want to publish objective New History.

One of the most repeated complaints of scholars who want to write Mormon history is that the Church Historian's Office does not make its records more available. Ralph W. Hansen, in an address before the Mormon History Association in 1966 remarked that "Mormon historians have a problem not faced by brethren in their craft: some of their coal is protected behind granite walls."¹² Phillip A. M. Taylor says that "secrecy does more harm to the Church's reputation than could result from disclosures from the archives."¹³ He adds in an almost pleading tone:

Mormon history has already been largely re-written in my lifetime. Scholars are no longer obsessed by the question of the validity of Mormon theology or the authenticity of Joseph Smith's claims. They are far more willing than half a century ago to accept Mormonism as one historical faith among others and to study its effects. They can give full value to the Mormon achievement in the West. They can

¹²Ralph Hansen, "New Sources in Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), p. 157.

¹³P.A.M. Taylor, "The Life of Brigham Young--A Biography Which Will Not be Written," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 110.

feel sympathy for the Saints' hardships, perhaps even for their endless rehearsing of them. The Church, therefore, has little to fear from a change of policy, from a freeing of the archives which might result in the exposure of a few discreditable episodes which occurred in a context a century old. What institution, after all, can claim innocence for every detail of its past record?¹⁴

The process of opening the archives to anyone who wanted to go there would create problems not foreseen by Taylor, or some of the other complaining historians. Some of these difficulties are described by the Church Historian, Leonard Arrington:

There is one problem which may be more characteristic of a Church research center such as ours than of many historical archives. Under what circumstances are we justified in making confidential materials available to professional historians? There are lodged in our archives many hundreds of letters which were written on a confidential basis to the President of the Church or to other high Church officials. Some of these contain confessions of murder, adultery, fornication, burglary, or other crimes. Are we violating the deceased's right to privacy by making such material available to scholars? Other documents contain minutes of church trials where details of wrongdoing are spelled out. Still other minutes tell of disputes between Church officials and record statements made in the heat of passion which the officials must later have regretted. . . . It requires the wisdom of a Solomon to determine the delicate balance between right to privacy and the public's right to know. Personally I have no wish to be in the position of suppressing useful and relevant information. On the other hand, it would not be proper for me--nor would I wish--to expose the Church, its leaders, and its members to unfair or sensational disclosures about their personal lives. It is inevitable that in my present position I should occasionally feel like the Grand Inquisitor in the Brothers Karamozov. Not only are the administrative problems weighty; the ethical problems require soul-searching.¹⁵

¹⁴P.A.M. Taylor, Ibid.

¹⁵Leonard Arrington, "Historian as Entrepreneur: A Personal Essay," Unpublished Ms to be published in an upcoming issue of BYU Studies, pp. 19-21.

Asael C. Lambert is a Mormon scholar who typifies the conflict between the secular and the spiritual. His journals and papers reveal many inner strugglings. For him the conflict seems to have been an inner one. He considered himself a liberal. At the same time he was active in the Mormon Church, holding many positions in it. He also has held positions of administration and teaching at Brigham Young University, including Dean of the Summer School from 1936-1950. Until recently he was a consultant and writer of Special Research Reports for the president of BYU. The conflict was for him a real one; he wrote about it again and again. In one place he notes: "Those liberals pay the price of life-long search for facts, even for the facts concerning the origins of Mormonism. They pay the price of long and sober soul-searching about arriving at conclusions and about speaking about those conclusions."¹⁶ He said, in the same journal, in the same poignant tone:

That man must undergo many inner personal tensions and wrestlings. He must finally reintegrate his own mind and his own conscience. He must wrestle with his own sets of values and with the consequences of alternative decisions. These are not simple costs of either energy, time, or serenity. They are exceedingly large costs.¹⁷

Speaking of the problems of others of his kind, in the Church he said: "The so-called 'liberal' among the Mormons finds himself in a dilemma. If the Mormon 'liberal' is liberal enough to entertain evidence and facts that are somewhat outside the approved history, he

¹⁶Lambert Papers, op. cit., n.p.

¹⁷Ibid.

encounters cases where the Church leaders clearly were side-stepping issues, or were lying. If they would lie on one major issue why not on another? One example is Joseph Smith's lying about the practice of polygamy. Other leaders lied about it also."¹⁸

His position at BYU made his following comments about "authoritarian reprisal" especially meaningful: "But if the 'liberal' learns about those things and then says anything about it, he has to defend himself against criticism and against reprisal, either at the hands of certain 'authorities' or at the hands of wide-talking orthodox members or plain fanatics.

"Chiefly he has to defend himself against the whispered but wide-running charge of suspected weak faith, and the charge of upsetting the faith of young Mormons."¹⁹

Lambert wrote in his journal that a liberal Mormon who speaks openly about his beliefs

. . . discovers that an exceedingly common, and an indefensible technique is used by many defenders of the faith whose highly cherished dogmas are being questioned. This technique is to pin bad names upon the questioners, very bad names, instead of facing the facts of the issues that are being raised. The technique is not to hunt and face the facts of questionable history, or of organic evolution, as examples, but to proceed at once in loud, vituperative language to denounce the questioner as a person of weak faith, a vile person, a liar, a God-hated questioner, a child of Satan, a follower of sin, a victim of wicked habits (no doubt), an enemy of God's established priesthood, a materialist, an egoist, a sinner supreme, etc., etc., instead of hunting for the facts and

¹⁸Ibid., typed Ms entitled "Liberals."

¹⁹Ibid., handwritten Ms.

facing them.²⁰

In another place he adds that the "objective-minded student of early Mormon history" is attacked by the authorities of the Church as being:

Contaminated with worldly learning; infected with the dangerous virus of doubt; flirting with apostasy; inviting church discipline . . . ; substitution sophisticated learning for simple, commendable faith; weakening the faith of young church members . . . who should not be disturbed by any other views; giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the Church; exhibiting actual disobedience to instructions given by "the authorities" not to study early church history.²¹

Lambert indicts the Church in vigorous language. Certainly, the times have changed since he wrote these things over two decades ago, and yet the spirit of the present-day conflict is conveyed in his bitter, almost painful words. He accuses the Church of keeping "one approved story perpetually present before all members, by keeping control over all of the critical original sources of church history; by issuing only one body of approved and censored church history; by neglecting or by playing down the negative instances; by discounting or by eliminating dissenters and critics; reserved to one group and virtually to one family only the exclusive right to have custody of all historical material relating to the church and its early leaders, and to have the exclusive right to write history"²²

Lambert, perhaps, would have been pleased had he been able to look

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

ahead and see the changes which have been made. Yet for all the new openness, there are still problems, inherent in the re-examination of Mormon history.

The New History in its effort to discover the "truth" about 19th century Mormonism finds a divergence between what the present Church says and what history indicates is fact. The historians, in trying to determine what actually happened, tread on sensitive ground.

It must be admitted that although an historian may have much historical evidence, the process of interpreting that evidence and determining what indeed took place is difficult at best. James Allen spoke of this difficulty in a thought-provoking manner, in the introduction to his, as yet unpublished, biography of William Clayton:

. . . "an objective historian (if, indeed there is such an animal) is eventually supposed to rise above both his and his subject's prejudices and tell it as it was--blemishes and all." This I find impossible to do, if for no other reason than that the record is so sketchy. Not only do we not have even a fraction of Clayton's total life revealed in the documents, but also we cannot be certain that either the "gems" or the "blemishes" revealed in the fragmentary record can be interpreted with complete accuracy by the historian. . . . The historian is the first to recognize that all history is interpretation: that is, a particular historian's view of whatever he is studying in the past. . . . Merely by deciding which "facts" are necessary or unnecessary to include (recognizing that not every scrap of information can or ought to be included in any study) the historian has interpreted something for his reader. Moreover, there is probably no subject on which all the facts (or even a major portion of them) are available to the historian.²³

There are many problem areas in the study of Church history.

²³James Allen, Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, A Mormon, unpublished Ms, 1977, n.p., quotation taken from the Forward.

Several of them will be touched on here to illustrate the dilemma, described by Lambert, in which a scholar finds himself caught between present church statement, and what history indicates to him actually occurred. These problems in Mormon history have all been given fuller treatment elsewhere. Here they serve only to illustrate a point.

The problem over the Negro and the priesthood has raged during the past decade. Some scholars are disturbed over it because history would show to them that the practice was not divinely inspired, but simply a result of the influence on the Church during the 1830's of southern fundamentalist beliefs. Stephen Taggart says that "The weight of the evidence suggests that God did not place a curse upon the Negro--that his white children did. The evidence also suggests that the time for correcting the situation is long past due."²⁴ This is a case where an examination of history has indeed injured the faith of some, if not many, and has led them into open criticism of the Church leaders today.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre is another historical occurrence which has recently emerged in a new form. Juanita Brooks has contributed greatly toward a new understanding of the incident, which took place in 1857. Her book The Mountain Meadows Massacre was first published in 1950. (It has since been republished by the University of Oklahoma Press, 1962). In its pages she describes some difficulties she had in obtaining information from the Church:

²⁴Stephen Taggart, Mormonism's Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins, University of Utah Press, 1970, p. 76. See also Lester Bush, Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 8, no. 1, p. 11; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality, pp. 262-293.

Some time before his death, the late Judge David H. Morris, of St. George, Utah, told the writer of affidavits which he had taken at the order of the First Presidency of the Church from the participants in the massacre who still lived in southern Utah. He suggested that "sometime when it is convenient" he would show these to her.

After his death, the writer asked his daughter, Mrs. Paul Hafen, about them and learned that in compliance with the advice of her attorney, Orval Hafen, she had taken the affidavits to Salt Lake City and given them to David O. McKay of the first presidency of the Latter-day Saints Church.

After two unsuccessful attempts to get an interview with President McKay, the writer made an appointment by long distance telephone. After traveling more than three hundred miles to keep that appointment, she was refused audience as soon as the office girl learned "specifically, what is it you wish to speak to him about?"

The writer then asked for another appointment, offering to stay in the city indefinitely, if necessary. This was refused. She was however permitted to talk to Mr. Joseph Anderson, private secretary to the first presidency, who listened to her request and promised to do what he could for her. He asked her to return the next morning.

At that time, Mr. Anderson said that he and President J. Reuben Clark had read the affidavits and President Clark had decided that they should not be made available. The large, worn envelope which contained them and the telegram authorizing them lay on the table during this conversation. The most difficult thing to understand about all this is not so much the refusal to show the affidavits as the consistent and repeated refusal to discuss the question.²⁵

In an interview with Dialogue she tells of the reaction the book brought from the Church:

Dialogue: "What about your activity in the Church? Had you been active up to that time?"

Brooks: "Oh, I had been stake president of Relief Society

²⁵Juanita Brooks, The Mountain Meadows Massacre, University of Oklahoma Press, 1962, pp. 217-218, footnote.

for seven years. And on the MIA board before that all the time."

Dialogue: "After the book appeared, were you called to any other position?"

Brooks: "No."

Dialogue: "Do you figure it's because of the book?"

Brooks: "Oh I don't know. I think it isn't like it was when it first came out."

Dialogue: "Well, now, this book . . ."

Brooks: "This book branded me as an apostate."

Dialogue: "Why do you think that was? It's not an attack on the Church."

Brooks: "I know. But it's an open discussion of it, and it hasn't been done before."

Dialogue: "Do you feel personally that the book has harmed the Church in any way?"

Brooks: "I hope not. I didn't want to harm the Church. I think always the truth is better."²⁶

The Rev. Wesley P. Walters, in cooperation with Jerald and Sandra Tanner have leveled some serious accusations against the Church with regard to the story of Joseph Smith's First Vision. They said the story is fabrication, and that the several different accounts of the vision are contradictory. Walters has also gone to some lengths to show that it can not be proven historically that there was a revival in the year 1820 around Palmyra, New York, as Joseph Smith stated.²⁷

²⁶"Riding Herd: A Conversation with Juanita Brooks," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 9, no. 1, 1974, pp. 21-22, 29.

²⁷See Jerald And Sandra Tanner, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? for a comprehensive summarization of both sides of the issue, pp. 143-162.

This was one case where an anti-Mormon did initial research which gave impetus to a whole new area of Mormon historical research. Richard Bushman's response to Walters' findings reveal an interesting facet of a New Historian's honest approach to a difficult problem.

The Reverend Mr. Walters' article on the first vision raised quite a stir among Mormon scholars when an early version circulated about a year and a half ago. . . . He foregoes the attacks on Joseph's character and the credibility or veracity of his followers. He candidly presents his argument and bluntly tells Mormons to reevaluate the foundations of their church. That kind of frankness is far more disarming than the more pretentious variety.

The article also set us back because Mr. Walters took an entirely new track and followed it with admirable care. Instead of hauling out the tiresome affidavits and reviving the moneydigger stories, for the most part he passed over these and concentrated on a brand-new question: Were there revivals in 1819-20 in the vicinity of Palmyra as Joseph said? Everyone up until now had assumed that of course there were. Walters said no, and the sources of his answer were impressive. They stood apart from the biased materials on which most anti-Mormon work is based. They were contemporaneous with the event, and they were right to the point. Our consternation was a genuine compliment to the quality of Mr. Walters' work.

While Mr. Walters has put us on the spot for the moment, in the long run Mormon scholarship will benefit from his attack. Not only was there an immediate effort to answer the question of an 1819 revival, but Mormon historians asked themselves how many other questions about our early history remain unasked as well as unanswered. Not long after we saw his essay, a committee on "Mormon History in New York" sent a group of scholars east for special research. The results of the first year's efforts will soon be published in Brigham Young University Studies, and presumably like investigations will continue. Without wholly intending it, Mr. Walters may have done as much to advance the cause of Mormon history within the Church as anyone in recent years.²⁸

²⁸Richard Bushman, "Roundtable: The Question of the Palmyra Revival," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, (Spring, 1969), pp. 82-83. Walters' initial article appears in same issue, p. 60.

The special committee mentioned by Bushman, under the leadership of Truman Madsen, Director of the Institute of Mormon Studies at BYU, travelled to New York and undertook a concentrated research of the available records there which were relevant to Mormon history. The initial results of this research were published in BYU Studies, Spring issue of 1969. The issue included articles on the First Vision and on the revival question by James Allen, Leonard Arrington, Dean Jesse, Milton Backman, T. Edgar Lyon, Marvin S. Hill, and Richard Anderson. The responses were characterized by the same scholarly approach found in Walters' initial article. This is an excellent example of how a great wealth of new information on Mormon origins came to light because Mormon historians accepted the fact that there was a problem which needed examination, and responded with vigor. Although evidence of a revival was discovered, there are still some problems unanswered dealing with the first vision story. Research in this area is ongoing.

Walters also published information in 1974 with regard to the so-called Bainbridge Trial of Joseph Smith in 1826.²⁹ Supposedly Joseph Smith was brought to court on the charges of being "a disorderly person and an imposter," and a money digger. Walters had discovered the bill of costs for the trial in which Joseph Smith was listed as a "glass-looker." That was a very incriminating discovery. Hugh Nibley remarked in The Myth Makers that if "the court record

²⁹Wesley P. Walters, "Joseph Smith's Bainbridge, N.Y., Court Trials, Westminister Theological Journal, Vol. 36, no. 2; republished by Modern Microfilm Co.; See also Tanners, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? pp. 32-38.

(published in Frazer's Magazine in 1873 and in the Schaaf-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, in 1883) is authentic it is the most damning evidence in existence against Joseph Smith."³⁰ The discovery of the bill of costs for the trial is at least partial evidence that there was a trial and that the incriminating court records might be accurate. Again Mormon scholars reacted to Walters' discovery. Marvin Hill published an article in BYU Studies entitled "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties." His concluding paragraph is very compromising and shows Joseph Smith in an extremely humanistic light, typical of the New History. Hill quotes the following paragraph from a letter Joseph Smith wrote to his wife Emma in 1832 and comments that "It is time historians began to study this aspect of Joseph's personality. No one who ignores it can understand him:"³¹

I have visited a grove which is just back of the town almost every day where I can be Secluded from the eyes of any mortal and there give vent to all the feelings of my heart in deadication (sic) and praize (sic) I have called to mind all the past moments of my life and am left to morn (sic) and Shed tears of sorrow for my folly in sufering (sic) the adversary of my Soul to have so much power over me as he has had in times past but God is merciful and has forgiven my sins and I rejoyce that he Sendeth forth the Conferter (sic) unto as many as believe and humbleth themselves before him.³²

³⁰Hugh Nibley, Myth Makers, Bookcraft, 1962, p. 142.

³¹Marvin Hill, "Joseph Smith and the 1826 Trial: New Evidence and New Difficulties," BYU Studies, (Winter, 1972), p. 233.

³²BYU Studies, (Winter, 1972), p. 233.

This is a succinct example of the New History, and its tendency to humanize past leaders of the Church.

Dr. Reed Durham of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah is a highly respected scholar who has encountered some difficulty with Church leaders because of his open attitude toward Mormon history. On April 20, 1974, in Nauvoo, Illinois, Durham delivered the presidential address of the Mormon History Association. His talk was entitled "Is There No Help For the Widow's Son?" It was an examination of Mormonism and Masonry, and an historical analysis of the influence of the latter upon the former.

He was evidently aware of the fact that he was treading on controversial ground in delivering his paper. He said at the beginning: "regardless of the possible incriminations and stigma that might ensue, I should like, in this paper, to interpose some unorthodox findings and fancies upon the more traditional and canonical propaganda of the faith."³³

The following statement by Durham is indicative of the sensitivity of his topic and typical of his sensational manner of exposition:

There is absolutely no question in my mind that the Mormon ceremony which came to be known as the Endowment, introduced by Joseph Smith to Mormon Masons initially, just a little over one month after he became a Mason, had an immediate inspiration from Masonry. This is not to suggest that no other source of inspiration could have been involved, but the

³³Transcription of Durham's talk prepared by Mervin B. Hogan of the Research Lodge of Utah, Masonic Temple, p. 1. The talk was also published in David C. Martin's Mormon Miscellaneous, Nauvoo, Illinois, Vol. 1, no. 1. Durham derived most of his information from LaMar Petersen, and some from the A. C. Lambert collection, manuscript division, Western Americana Department, Marriott Library, University of Utah.

similarities between the two ceremonies are so apparent and overwhelming that some dependent relationship cannot be denied. They are so similar, in fact that one writer was led to refer to the Endowment as "Celestial Masonry."³⁴

He closed his paper with an appeal for an increased openness in the examination of Mormon history: "There are many questions which still demand answers. I earnestly hope I have raised some questions. Perhaps I have answered a few. But if we, as Mormon historians, respond to these questions and myriads like them relative to Masonry in an ostrich-like fashion, with our heads buried in the traditional sand, then I submit: there never will be 'any help for the widow's son.'"³⁵

David Martin adds an editorial comment at the end of Durham's paper, as printed in Mormon Miscellaneous. He says:

In the year and a half since the above talk was given, the head in the sand attitude has prevailed. . . . Dr. Durham has been chastised by the church and made apology. And his talk has done a brisk business on the Mormon History underground.³⁶

Sandra Tanner, in a interview with this writer (February 4, 1977) said that Reed Durham was a very honest man, and a little naive because he thought Mormons would be more open minded than they were. She said that he had been under scrutiny for some time and that after he gave his paper on masonry he was called in to see President Spencer W. Kimball. Shortly thereafter he wrote a letter and circulated it

³⁴Ibid., p. 4.

³⁵Ibid., p. 18.

³⁶Mormon Miscellaneous, Vol. 1, no. 1, p. 16.

reaffirming his faith in the Church, its temple ceremony and the present leaders.³⁷

³⁷His letter is as follows; addressed "To Whom It May Concern":

On Saturday, April 20, 1974, at the Mormon History Association Annual Meeting at Nauvoo, Illinois, I delivered the Presidential Address entitled, "Is There No Help for the Widow's Son?" At that time I was gravely concerned that the presentation of my findings and conclusions, as a result of long months of research, would not be properly interpreted; and that regardless of what I attempted to say, misunderstandings would occur. My concerns were justified. I have been informed of instances where even my own colleagues in the Mormon History Association, and also some close friends within the Church misinterpreted what I said, and more important to me, in some cases even questioned my faith in Joseph Smith and the Church.

Of course, I assume the full responsibility for creating those questions, concerns, and misunderstandings. It was because I was not skillful enough, erudite enough, nor perhaps prayerful enough to make my personal position and feelings clearly known.

Therefore, regardless of what I said, or what interpretations were placed upon what I said, let it be known at this time, that:

1. I know that Joseph Smith was/is indeed a true prophet of God-- the one called under direction of Jesus Christ to usher in this dispensation of the fullness of times.
2. I know further that Temple Work, with all its ramifications including Eternal Marriage and the Endowment ceremony is divinely inspired.
3. Because of the personal witness I have received by the Spirit (which has been complemented and supported by continual study and experience), the prime criterion or standard of judgement I am committed to employ as an explanation of any aspect of the Church--either of Joseph Smith and/or the Temple ceremonies-- is that of divine revelation.

Had I delivered my address in Nauvoo, making sure that my knowledge and conviction of the above three statements was clearly reflected in the subject matter of my address, I am confident that fewer misunderstandings would have been occasioned; and my address would have more clearly approximated my honest feelings. I am deeply sorry that such was not the case. Sincerely, (signed) Reed C. Durham, Jr.

(continued on next page)

He was then given a year's sabbatical leave from the Institute to write a book, and returned not as Director, as he had been, but as a teacher. Max Parkin, in an interview told this writer that the rumors to the effect that Durham had been released because of his talk in Nauvoo were without any truth. He said that it was his own decision not to return as Director of the Institute, so that he could devote more time to research.³⁸

Reed Durham's philosophy is typical of many other Mormon scholars, and his dilemma has been indicative of the conflict between leaders and intellectuals. In a review of Joseph Smith and the Restoration by Ivin J. Barrett, (BYU Press, 1967) which was written as a text for undergraduate students at BYU, Durham details, to a degree, his own viewpoint on Mormon history. The importance of this statement justifies a rather extensive quotation from the review:

Probably no other text on Church history accomplished so completely and effectively its basic stated objectives as does Joseph Smith and the Restoration. This fact alone makes the work exceptionally commendable. In the concluding paragraph of his introduction, Professor Barrett expounds the overall purpose and objective of his text:

"To appreciate the Church, to love its teachings, to believe its divine origin, we must know its history. From the records of the past we can see our own course more clearly. It is men and women at their best who inspire us. Many a life has been transformed by the careful study and deliberate contemplation of great lives. In building for ourselves a

³⁷(Continued) Dr. Durham told this writer, in reference to his letter, that "I had to write that. They wanted me to bear my testimony. I hadn't done that in my talk. They had me do that so people would know where I stood." (Interview, April 11, 1977).

³⁸Max Parkin, Interview, March 9, 1977.

strong and wholesome philosophy of living we need the inspiration of those who have lived gloriously. From out of the pages of Church history come such mighty ones. Let us walk, as it were, into the great portrait gallery of the noble Saints of the Latter-days--let us gaze into the faces of men and women who endured the contumely of the world to bequeath to us the truth; let us catch the fire and enthusiasm in their eyes; let us note the expression of hope and expectancy and mark the depth of courage and determination engraved upon their countenances. As we vicariously experience their faith, courage, loyalty, and persistence in righteousness we will be strengthened to lay aside every weight and run with majestic valor and sublime patience the race of life before us." (Emphasis Dr. Durham's).

His purpose and objective seem self-explanatory. Professor Barrett has developed a basic philosophy about what historical information should or should not be presented in writing Church history for college youths at Brigham Young University.

From my analysis and appraisal of the text, together with the author's above stated overall objective, several general guidelines seem to have been followed in the writing of his text. (1) No inspiration nor profitable learning can come to a student of Church history by seeing men and women at their worst. (2) We should only emphasize the "fire and enthusiasm," the "hopes and expectancies," the "courage and determination," The "faith," the "loyalty," and "persistence in righteousness" of the "great lives," those who "lived gloriously," the "mighty ones," or the "noble Saints of the latter days." (3) Never become iconoclastic, but support and maintain the "tradition" at all times. (4) Do not delve into, analyze, or critically introduce any distasteful, suspicious, or questionable history that in any way will hinder the accomplishment of guidelines 1 and 2 above. (5) Always be sure that our Church history be interpreted and presented in the light of our theology. There must always be agreement and consistency with each other. (6) Remember that the Saints are God's people and are on the side of right. They are the victorious and they are they who will stand blameless at the last day.

Each of these guidelines consistently reveals itself through the pages of the text, and taken together, the guidelines seem to produce a very positive approach to Church history. In fact, a presentation of Church history using the opposite approach to any of these guidelines would be considered by many to be negative.

From my own personal experience in teaching LDS Church

history to college students, I have asked myself the questions as to whether, in the long-range look, the student should be exposed to both approaches--the stated guidelines and their opposites--but, of course, in an atmosphere of faith. Can there be learning and profit by also seeing men and women at their worst in Church history? Can knowing the despair, the humanness, the "real-down-to-earth-like-me-ness" do anything positive for my students? If they are constantly being exposed to the "problem areas" of Church history "across the way," attitude? I seriously wonder which of the two approaches is the more negative or positive in the long run. Time and experience may reveal this to us.³⁹

³⁹Reed Durham, Brigham Young University Studies, Vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 344-345.

The Tanners

Recent years have seen the emergence of a new kind of anti-Mormon literature which uses Mormon historical records (history has long been used to attack the Church) to try to show that the Church was more human than divine. This new kind of literature is best typified by Jerald and Sandra Tanner and their Modern Microfilm Publishing Company located in Salt Lake City. They have been prolific since 1961 and have, at present, a world-wide reputation. This writer encountered materials published by them while living in Australia several years ago. Max Parkin, of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah calls them "publishers extraordinary,"¹ and notes that one of their most recent volumes, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? is the finest, most comprehensive and hard-hitting anti-Mormon book in history.

A recent leaflet printed by the Tanners entitled 20,000 Books Met With Silence notes the lack of official response from the Church to Mormonism--Shadow or Reality?

In the last issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger we announced that we had sold almost 15,000 copies of our work Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? We are now happy to report that almost 20,000 copies have been sold. Mormon leaders seem to feel that it is best to ignore this book. This silent treatment, however, has proved to be completely ineffective and our sales have continued to increase at a rapid rate. As a result many people are leaving the Mormon Church, and many others are beginning to wonder if the Church

¹See Robert Black, Bibliography on Jerald and Sandra Tanner and the Modern Microfilm Company, Provo, Utah, 1970, copy in Western Americana Department, Marriott Library, University of Utah, for a bibliography of the Tanners' publications from 1960-1970, their most prolific period.

has any answers to the serious charges contained in this book.²

Both Jerald and Sandra Tanner are former Mormons, he having been excommunicated at his own request in August, 1960, and she at her own request in July, 1960, both for apostasy. Jerald Tanner was born in Provo, Utah, in 1938, and is a relation to N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency of the Mormon Church. Jerald began to lose interest in the Church at the age of thirteen, after having been ordained a deacon in the Mormon Aaronic Priesthood. He decided he wanted to be a magician, but soon abandoned that desire. Robert Black notes that he began drinking at the age of fourteen, which soon became excessive. He had problems with marijuana also.³ In 1958 he became a member of the Pauline Hancock group, which believes in the Book of Mormon but renounces every other doctrine which distinguishes Mormonism from protestantism. He began holding meetings at night to teach the doctrines of the Pauline Hancock group--and it was at one of these meetings that he met his wife.

Sandra Lucille McGee was born in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1941. She is a great great grand-daughter of Brigham Young. She was very active in the Mormon Church until she was in high school, at which point she began to have some questions about the Church. She says: "When I started college I enrolled in the Mormon Institute of Religion class. I started asking questions in class, trying to find answers to

²Jerald and Sandra Tanner, 20,000 Books Met With Silence, Modern Microfilm Company, Salt Lake City, 1976, 1 p.

³Black, p. ii.

my doubts. But one day my institute teacher took me aside and told me to stop asking questions. There was a girl attending the class who was thinking of joining the Church, and I was disturbing her with my questions."⁴ Sandra eventually met Jerald at one of the religious meetings he conducted. Initially, she says, "When I met Jerald I was more interested in him than I was in his religion. It seemed the only way I was going to get to him, though, was through his religion."⁵

Soon after they were married she felt that the Mormon Church was false and was excommunicated at her request as a consequence. Their publishing career began in California when Sandra's friends expressed shock that she had left the Church. In an effort to inform their friends, the Tanners began to publish the reasons for their having left the Church.

Soon thereafter they gave up their belief in the Book of Mormon completely, moved to Salt Lake City, and established the Modern Microfilm Company.

"The future is rather uncertain," for the Modern Microfilm Company. They want to continue publishing, but "whether or not they can do this

⁴Quoted in Gilbert K. Westgard II, Jerald and Sandra Tanner: The Modern Microfilm Company, August, 1970, Modern Mimeographing, p. 4, copy in Western Americana Dept, Marriott Library. See also Robert Black, Bibliography on Jerald and Sandra Tanner and the Modern Microfilm Co., 1970, Provo, Utah, copy in Western Americana Dept; Jerald Tanner, Is There a Personal God? Modern Microfilm Co., 1967, Salt Lake City; Jack Houston, "The Jerald Tanners vs. Mormonism," in Power for Living, Vol. 28, no. 2, 1970, Wheaton, Ill., p. 3. Note the Tanners own account of their history and goals in Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? Salt Lake City, 1972, pp. 570-576.

⁵Black, p. iii.

depends upon Jerald's health. He has an intestinal problem which may be quite serious and could hamper their publishing career. This would, indeed, be unfortunate as many people within and without the Church have been stimulated to study seriously Church history by the efforts of this publishing partnership."⁶

The Tanners' writing is characterized by tremendous albeit one-sided scholarship. They only print material which is well documented and should they find that something they have printed is in error, they are not slow to print a retraction or apology.⁷ The Tanners genuinely believe that the Mormon Church can be proved false simply by exposing its history, a view exactly opposite the view taken by Leonard Arrington, who believes that faith will increase through an examination of Mormon history. Sandra Tanner told this writer that Mormon history, accurately presented will "drive intellectual and thinking Mormons from the Church. The main masses of members won't be affected because they don't read."⁸ James Allen said that the Tanners have had an effect upon historians in the Church in helping them to be more open.⁹

⁶Ibid., p. v.

⁷An example of a retraction is found in Westgard, p. 6, in which a letter from Sandra Tanner is quoted as follows: "Some time ago I wrote a letter stating my reasons for withdrawing from the Church. In it I stated that there was no Mormon or anti-Mormon literature published before 1870 which identified the personages in the first vision as God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I would like to apologize, for I have found that an anti-Mormon writer name John Hyde, in his book, 'Mormonism', published in 1857, states that Joseph saw God and Christ in 1820."

⁸Sandra Tanner, Interview, April 18, 1977.

⁹James Allen, Interview, April 11, 1977.

Many prominent Mormons have expressed a high regard for the work the Tanners have done. Robert Black, a fundamentalist Mormon, said that in his opinion, the Tanners are the Church's "finest historians," and that if he could he would pay tithing to them.¹⁰ T. Edgar Lyon, a Mormon historian and long-time teacher at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah told this writer he thought the Church should subsidize the Tanners, although he said it tongue-in-cheek.¹¹

Reed Durham using virtually the same words as Lyon said that he thought the Church should subsidize the Tanners because of all the historical research they do for it. He teaches a class at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah on the problems of Mormon history called "Special Studies in Mormon History." He uses the Tanners' book, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? as the text for the class. Formerly he would purchase copies of the book in quantity from Modern Microfilm through the Institute. Because it did not look very good for the Institute to be purchasing quantities of an anti-Mormon work he now encourages his students to go down to Modern Microfilm (1350 South West Temple, Salt Lake City,) and buy the book on their own.

Durham said he would like to write a book answering the accusations of the Tanners point by point. To do so, however, would require certain admissions that Mormon history is not exactly as the Church has taught it was, that there were things taught and practiced in the nineteenth century of which the general Church membership is unaware.

¹⁰Robert Black, Interview, April 7, 1977.

¹¹T. Edgar Lyon, Interview, April 14, 1977.

He said the Church is not ready to admit that yet. He also said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian's Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners including advice on how to read anti-Mormon literature. This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. Because the article is an open and honest approach to the problem, although it by no means answers all of the questions raised by the Tanners, it will probably be published anonymously, to avoid any difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency.¹²

Durham responded enthusiastically to the work of the Tanners in a talk given at the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, March 7, 1972. He says of the Tanners and their contribution to Mormon historical research:

One of the best ways to let you Mormons know what really was taught or/and practiced and believed in the early Church is to reprint documents of your own faith--that is, go to the primary sources and reproduce them for the Mormons, because by in large Mormons don't operate on primary sources. They operate on secondary sources, secondary, secondary, secondary sources. Indeed, if you were to pick up a manual of a Sunday School class in Church history you wouldn't know what a primary source was, it was so secondary. And so one of the main things they've done is to reproduce primary sources--primary documents. They aren't anti-Mormon's stuff, they're our stuff.

¹²Reed Durham, Interview, April 11, 1977.

Now let me show you . . . here are the Millennial Stars, . . . the great piece of literature in England. They have the first seven volumes reproduced. I can't go buy an original Millennial Star. . . . So I pay the Tanners for the Millennial Star, because I want to study the original Millennial Stars. It's part of my heritage. . . . there's the first Pearl of Great Price, in my Church. I want the first one. I want to study it. I want to compare it with my present Pearl of Great Price . . . all kinds of changes, but I want to understand the changes. I want to know what they are. So do they want me to know what they are! . . . the first time I could get an Evening and Morning Star was from Jerald and Sandra Tanner, a photo-mechanically reproduced Evening and Morning Star. That's my first newspaper; that's my first Church Section; that's my first Improvement Era . . . and by darn, I'm going to get it if I'm a student of Mormonism, and if they're the only ones producing it I'm going to buy it from them. Shame! Shame on me! The Confessions of John D. Lee, . . . I never had one, . . . now I do, photo-mechanically reproduced. I don't have to worry about any hanky-panky in the reproduction. . . .

Lucy Mack's history of the Church . . . which was condemned by Brigham Young and revamped by Brigham Young, reproduced in 1901, reproduced in 1921, with changes . . . and deletions all the way down through time. I want to see what the original looked like. I'd like to see the stuff we took out, just for kicks, just for my interest and for my information. The first edition of Lucy Mack's history was reproduced verbatim by the Tanners . . . The Temple Lot Case, that whole case from the documents of the court and all the testimony that was there have all been reproduced for me . . . Here's the Messenger and Advocate. That was my second newspaper, or official journal in the Church . . . and the Elder's Journal. All of these primary sources of my church . . . have been reproduced by them for me to read. The idea is that if I read the primary sources and see all the differences with today, I'm supposed to lose my testimony . . .

Now, in order to get their licks in even stronger than simply letting you read for yourself, they will pull out of these primary quotes on all the going problems. So you have books on the Negroes, . . . The Negro in Mormon Theology, Joseph Smith's Curse Upon the Negro, Joseph Smith and Polygamy (a great big one, that's a good one, my that is really a good one), Falsification of Joseph Smith's History, Joseph Smith's 1826 trial, Joseph Smith and Money Digging (that's one of their latest), The Bible and Mormon Doctrine, and then--this is one they like, they like to show you the

changes . . . so they'll take the Key to Theology as we used to print it and show you how we print it now, and we have really doctored some other man's book after all he's dead and gone . . . Changes in Joseph Smith's History, Changes in the Pearl of Great Price . . . they photo the Pearl of Great Price and mark all the changes out in the margin for you to look at . . . 3,913 Changes in the Book of Mormon, this is an original 1830 photomechanically reproduced Book of Mormon, an 1830 Book of Mormon, and then in the margins they've pointed out all the changes that were there. Well, on and on they go. . . .

Lehi said "there must needs be opposition in all things." I can't help but think that what they're doing, though it has done damage--I've had people in my office who've been just totally devastated with things they raised. A Mormon who had never heard of Blood Atonement. And so now comes Blood Atonement crashing through the pages of primary sources, from the words of our own General Authorities, our own Presidents of the Church and it's devastating to lots of Mormons. Some Mormons don't even believe Joseph Smith was a polygamist. We have come so far from those days to the present time. And then all of the evidence about polygamy and all of the issues, and then to get crushed with actually seeing the changes in Joseph Smith's History or in the Book of Mormon or the Pearl of Great Price. I tell you, though you may not believe it, I have seen people get utterly crushed, almost devastated with some of the material that the Tanners have reproduced. They have made their mark in many of our own people. I wouldn't in a group like this, but I could name to you professors . . . and some of their wives who read this and eat it up and have lost totally their testimony on this kind of thing, I will tell you, there was an Institute teacher here, not long ago, . . . who lost his testimony and went out of the Church on the basis of this stuff. Oh, this stuff is dynamite!

I can't help but think that when they raise these issues it does something to us to have to defend. . . . When I see something that counters what I've been taught or what I know or what I understand or what I feel, the way to counter research . . . unpleasant to me is not by sticking my head in the sand like an ostrich, but by more research. I may have to revamp, and knowledge sometimes is a dangerous thing. But I will revamp, and I will understand better my heritage. And in a sense, what I'm trying to say is that they have become, in a sense, catalysts to sharpen our own historical understanding. We've had to get on the stick and do some study, and do some homework that sometimes we haven't done. If we don't do the homework that will kill us. "Leave it

alone, don't touch it," see that's a kind of philosophy . . . All right, you leave it alone, but in this world of knowledge and mass communications lots of other people are going to read it, and you'll be exposed to it, where's the best place to be exposed to it? Over there, next door, some meeting, some well-meaning friend, or maybe right here to be exposed to it. Bring the issues up here weigh them carefully. Do research. Have it in a framework of testimony and faith. That's where I think we should be exposed to it.¹³

Sandra Tanner told this writer that she considers Reed Durham to be a close personal friend.¹⁴ Although they have an axe to grind, their writings are remarkably clear of the invective and animosity which typically clouds anti-Mormon literature. There are other anti-writers who have also been very objective and scholarly in their writings. Reverend Wesley P. Walters, Lamar Peterson, Dee Jay Nelson, (and the anti-Book of Abraham Group, Grant S. Heward and Michael Marquart), Einar Anderson, Stanley Ivins and Wallace Turner, to name a few. In summary, the statement of Frances Lee Menlove is again appropriate: ". . . currently one of the most successful anti-Mormon proselyting techniques is merely to bring to light obscure or suppressed historical documents."¹⁵

The Tanners seem to be motivated by a desire to show members of the Mormon Church that they are in error. Both Jerald and Sandra evince a type of faith which is strongly oriented toward protestant

¹³Tanners, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? pp. 571-572.

¹⁴Sandra Tanner, Interview, February 4, 1977.

¹⁵Frances Lee Menlove, "The Challenge of Honesty," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), p. 50.

fundamentalism. They found that although the Mormon Church has good morals, "they had not taught me much concerning the power of Christ which could change my life. There was much talk about Joseph Smith, but very little talk about Christ."¹⁶ They feel that Mormonism opposes true principles of Christianity, and all their efforts are directed toward the goal of showing the Mormons, and all those interested in the Mormon Church, the "error of their ways." Their works are strongly biased. They print only things which are negative and which cast the Mormon Church in a bad light, and in their quotations they emphasize certain words and phrases by making use of underlining and capital letters. Often the original intent of the quotation is liable to distortion because of the liberties they take in emphasizing. The following example of their writing should illustrate this, and also give the reader an idea as to why their works are attracting so much interest:

BRIGHAM YOUNG AS KING

The practice of ordaining the President of the Mormon Church as "KING ON EARTH" did not cease with the death of Joseph Smith. It is reported that Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, was ordained KING, and the Mormon Apostle Abraham H. Cannon states that there was a discussion in the Council of Fifty as to whether John Taylor, the third President of the Church, should be ordained KING: "Father (George Q. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency) said Moses Thatcher's drawing away from his brethren commenced as far as his knowledge concerning it went, at a time when the COUNCIL OF FIFTY met in the old City Hall, and Moses opposed the proposition to ANNOINT JOHN TAYLOR as Prophet, Priest and KING, and Moses' opposition prevailed at that time. Moses has constantly opposed the increase of power in the hands of the President of the Church." ("Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon." Dec. 2, 1895, page 198; original at Brigham Young University Library)

¹⁶Tanners, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? p. 568.

With regard to John Taylor being anointed KING, our attention has been called to a typed copy of an entry from the journal of Franklin D. Richards--the original journal is in the Church Historian's Office. Richards was a member of the Council of Fifty, and under the date of Feb. 4, 1885 he recorded this statement in his journal:

"Feb. 4, 1885 At 8 p.m. Attended council at Endowment House where we had prayers consecrated oil and Prest. Jno Taylor was ANOINTED K.P.R. of C.Z. & K."

This reference seems to show that John Taylor was ANOINTED KING on Feb. 4, 1885.

It would appear, then, that at least three of the Mormon leaders were ordain as KINGS. Whether the practice continued after Taylor's death is not known.

Of the three men known to have been ordained KINGS only Brigham Young was able to reign over the Mormon people for any length of time. The Mormon writer Klaus J. Hansen seems to feel that Brigham Young was ordained KING shortly after the Mormons came to Utah: ". . . the prophet (Joseph Smith) apparently had himself ordained as 'KING ON EARTH.' Brigham Young, upon his arrival in the Sale Lake Valley, likewise reportedly had this ceremony performed in the Council of Fifty." (Quest for Empire, page 66) On page 200, footnote 74, of the same book, Hansen gives this information:

"Former Bishop Andrew Cahoon, whose father Reynolds Cahoon had been a member of the Council of Fifty, testified in 1889: 'The King of that Kingdom that was set up on the earth was the head of the Church. Brigham Young proclaimed himself KING here in Salt Lake Valley before there was a house built, in 1847.'"

Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency, may have been refering to Brigham Young's ordination to be "KING" when he made these statements in 1856:

"The Church and kingdom to which we belong will become the kingdom of our God and his Christ, and brother Brigham Young WILL BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

"(Voices responded, 'Amen.')

"And I tell you he WILL BE SOMETHING MORE; but we do not now WANT TO GIVE HIM THE NAME: BUT HE IS CALLED AND ORDAINED TO A FAR GREATER STATION THAN THAT, and he is foreordained to take that station, and he has got it; and I AM VICE-PRESIDENT, and brother Wells is the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR--yes, and of all the armies in the flesh.

"You don't believe that; but I can tell you it is one of the smallest things that I can think of. You may think that

I am joking; but I am perfectly willing that brother Long should write every word of it; for I can see it as naturally as I see the earth and the productions thereof." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 5, p. 219)

On another occasion Heber C. Kimball stated that "the President of the United States WILL BOW TO US and come to CONSULT THE AUTHORITIES OF THIS CHURCH to know what he had best do for his people.

"You don't believe this. WAIT AND SEE: . . ." (Ibid., Vol. 5, page 93)

The historian Hurbert Howe Bancroft made this statement concerning an incident that happened on July 24, 1857: "All eyes turned at once to Brigham . . . Gathering the people around him, he repeated the words uttered the years before, prophesying even now that at no distant day he would HIMSELF BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, OR DICTATE WHO SHOULD BE PRESIDENT." (History of Utah, photomechanical reprint of 1889 edition, page 505)

Brigham Young even referred to himself as a "dictator." The following quotations are taken from some of his sermons:

"As formerly, I presented myself before you . . . acknowledged and sustained by you as THE DICTATOR. (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 9, page 267)

"You may say it is hard that I should DICTATE you in your temporal affairs. IS IT NOT MY PRIVILEGE TO DICTATE YOU?" (Ibid., Vol. 12, page 59)

"I sometimes say to my brethren, 'I have been YOUR DICTATOR for twenty-seven years--over a quarter of a century I have DICTATED this people; that ought to be some evidence that my course is onward and upward.'" (Ibid., Vol. 14, p. 205).¹⁷

¹⁷Tanners, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? pp. 417-418. Emphasis in original.

Fundamentalism

There is another kind of history which is being written which not only has influenced to a degree the New Mormon History, but also illustrates its danger to a person's faith in the Mormon Church as it is organized today. It is being written by members of dissident Mormon sects. The creation of many of these schismatic movements was a direct result of the process of secularization, wherein the Church abandoned some of its major nineteenth century doctrines. Dennis Lythgoe notes that "Since the abandonment of polygamy, we have been largely assimilated into the social and cultural scene and have, from a sociological standpoint, accommodated to society. This, understandably, has even been a chief objection of many apostate groups, who have left Mormonism on grounds that it has adjusted too much to society, and has forsaken spiritual values for secular ones."¹

Since these "fundamentalist dissidents" base much of their doctrine on nineteenth century Mormon values, concepts and practices, it logically follows that their ability to justify their "apostasy" is proportional to their ability to show historically that those things were indeed taught and practiced under Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor. Thus it can be assumed that much research into Church history will be done by these groups, as indeed has been the case. Like the Tanners they use history because they have an axe to grind--but this time it is an apologetic axe. They have been instrumental in promoting

¹Dennis Lythgoe, "The Changing Image of Mormonism," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 3, no. 4, (Winter, 1969), p. 54. See also Klaus Hansen, Quest For Empire, Bison Book Ed., Lincoln City, Nebraska, 1972, p. xi.

an openness in history, which has led to greater objectivity among Mormon intellectuals and scholars.

This writer has had interviews with several of these fundamentalist Mormons. They have very powerful claims as well as an incredible amount of research to substantiate what they believe. To this writer they seemed puritanic, however, even fanatic. It was as though they had been transplanted from the nineteenth century to the present time, and were anachronistically attempting a restoration of old and forgotten Mormon doctrines. Much has been written on the claims of these fundamentalistic groups in an attempt to examine their claims in an objective manner.² There has also been a considerable amount of literature written both by members of the mainstream church and by those who have joined fundamentalist sects in attempts to justify their own beliefs.³

The danger to the Church that would result from an increased openness in its history is lucidly illustrated by fundamentalist claims. Robert Black told this writer that he estimates that an average of one

² Notably: Russell R. Rich, Little Known Schisms of the Restoration, Dept. of Continuing Education, BYU, Provo, 1962; Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Kate Barker, president, Denominations that Base Their Beliefs on the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Salt Lake City, 1962; Lyle O. Wright, Origins and Development of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, unpublished master's thesis, Provo, BYU, 1963.

³ Several "answers" to fundamentalism have been written: Henry W. Richards, A Reply to The Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times, Deseret News Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1965; Paul Reimann, Plural Marriage Limited, Salt Lake City, 1974; Clair Wyatt, ". . . Some That Trouble You . . ." Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1974; Max J. Anderson, Mormon Fundamentalism: A Study in the Foundational Claims of Contemporary Polygamous Sub-Cultures, Publishing House, n.d., Salt Lake City.

family per stake per year leaves the Church to join with a fundamentalist group. As was mentioned, these dissidents try to show that the Church has gone too far down the road to secularization in changing some of its earlier doctrines and practices. They abort the whole institution because of these changes. Using history to prove their claims they produce evidence which is often contradictory to what present officials of the Church say. It is this contradiction between present official statements and the evidence of historical sources that can make the Church look, to these dissidents, biased and covert in trying to overlook, cover-up, or whitewash its history. And that is dangerous to members who naively accept the idea that present policy and statement is perfect and unchanged since the days of Joseph Smith.

This contradiction is epitomized by several fundamentalist claims. One is the so-called Adam-God Theory. On April 9, 1852 Brigham Young stated that Adam is "our father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do," and that he is the father of all the spirits of the human race, as well as the father of Jesus Christ in the flesh. There has been great controversy over the accuracy of the reporting of those talks. The official statement of the Church with respect to Young's statement is expressed in Mark E. Peterson's recent book, Adam--Who Is He? (Deseret Book, Salt Lake City, 1975). He says that Brigham Young is misquoted and that he did not really teach that Adam was our God.

Michael Marquart, an anti-Mormon writer, wrote a letter to the First Presidency of the Mormon Church recently under the assumed name of Janice Wilden, asking about the Adam-God Theory. It was answered by Francis M. Gibbons, secretary to the First Presidency, as follows:

"Dear Sister Wilden: I have been asked to acknowledge your letter dated December 3, 1976, to President Kimball about the so-called Adam-God theory, and to suggest that you obtain a copy of the book, Adam--Who Is He? by Elder Mark E. Petersen, which fully discusses the questions you raise."⁴ Elder Petersen's book seems therefore, to be at least a quasi-official statement of the Church with regard to Adam-God.

The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the fact that Brigham Young was not misquoted, and that he taught the theory many other times. He claimed to have received it as a revelation.⁵ Many of the leading brethren also taught the doctrine, in the United States, England and Australia. There has been a significant amount of research done to show that the theory was taught.⁶ One of the most important writings on this subject was done by Rodney Turner, at BYU, as a master's thesis, entitled The Position of Adam in the Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology (1953). Turner examined the evidence and concluded that "Brigham Young has not been mis-quoted in the official publications

⁴Copy of letter in possession of this writer.

⁵Brigham Young, sermon given June 8, 1873, quoted in the Deseret News, Salt Lake City, June 18, 1873.

⁶Joseph Musser, Michael Our Father and Our God, Truth Publishing Co., 1963, Salt Lake City; Ogden Kraut, Michael--Adam, n.d., Pioneer Press, Dugway, Utah; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? pp. 173-178; Fred C. Collier, Gospel of the Father, unpublished Ms, Salt Lake City, January 1973, copy in possession of writer; The Mormon God, unpublished Ms, n.d., Salt Lake City, copy in possession of writer; See Adam-God, a Bibliography of materials in the Library of Robert R. Black, unpublished Ms, n.d., Salt Lake City, copy in possession of writer, for extensive bibliography on the Adam-God Theory; One of the best examinations of the Theory is found in Father Adam, authorship unknown, March, 1973, unpublished Ms in possession of writer.

of the Church."⁷ He also notes that "A careful, detached study of his available statements, as found in the official publications of the Church, will admit no other conclusion than that the identification of Adam with God the Father by President Brigham Young is an irrefutable fact."⁸

With respect to the Adam-God Theory Max Parkin says that he liked the open attitude of President Harold B. Lee. He had said on occasion, according to Parkin, that "Brigham Young had an opinion regarding Adam. It was only an opinion which he taught. It was not orthodoxy. Today we repudiate Brigham Young's opinion." Parkin said he would like to see that kind of attitude continued, and that kind of approach, taken today.⁹

As the amount of evidence grows and becomes increasingly available to the public, a disparity between what some Church leaders today say and what actually happened will become more and more evident. This disparity could make the leaders look as though they were trying to cover up the past, and casting them in that kind of light could have a detrimental effect on the faith of many people. Little wonder that Ezra Taft Benson would discourage the writing of objective, secular Church history and that he would ask that no one buy any fundamentalist, apostate literature. It is merely an interest in the self-preservation of the

⁷Rodney Turner, The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture, unpublished master's thesis, Provo, Utah, BYU, 1953, p. 47.

⁸Ibid., p. 58

⁹Max Parkin, Interview, February 26, 1977.

faith of the members of the Church. In 1976 Elder Benson said:

Now, on another related matter. It has come to our attention that some of our teachers, particularly in our university programs, are purchasing writings from known apostates, or other liberal sources, in an effort to become informed about certain points of view, or to glean from their research. You must realize that when you purchase their writings, or subscribe to their periodicals, you help sustain their cause. We would hope that their writings not be on your Seminary and Institute or personal bookshelves. We are entrusting you to represent the Lord and the First Presidency to your students, not the views of the Church's detractors.¹⁰

There are other doctrines and historic practices emphasized by fundamentalist sects which contradict current Church statements. Among these polygamy rank as one of the most publicized and controversial. The Church claims the Manifesto issued by Wilford Woodruff in 1890, stopping the performance of plural marriages, was inspired--the result of revelation to Woodruff.¹¹ For some, however, there are many problems revolving around polygamy. Today there are many fundamentalist sects which believe polygamy was an eternal principle revealed by Joseph Smith, designed to never be taken from the face of the earth. The Tanners, in their sensational style have emphasized the divergence between what the nineteenth century leaders said and what the present day leaders say concerning polygamy:

". . . we are not ashamed here in this great metropolis of America . . . to declare that we are POLYGAMISTS. We are

¹⁰Ezra Taft Benson, "The Gospel Teacher and His Message," delivered September 17, 1976, Salt Lake City, p. 9, transcript in Western Americana Dept., Marriott Library, University of Utah.

¹¹John Widstoe, Evidences and Reconcilliations, Bookcraft, 1943, Salt Lake City, p. 85.

not ashamed to proclaim to this great nation, to rulers and people, to the president, senators, legislators, judges; to high and low, rich and poor, priests and people, that WE ARE FIRM, CONSCIENTIOUS BELIEVERS IN POLYGAMY, and that it is part and parcel of our religious creed." (Life of John Taylor, page 255)

Brigham Young, the second President of the Mormon Church, once stated: "THE ONLY MEN WHO BECOME GODS, even the Sons of God, ARE THOSE WHO ENTER INTO POLYGAMY." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 11, p. 269)

Today the Mormon leaders teach that "PLURAL MARRIAGE IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION OR EXALTATION." (Mormon Doctrine, 1958, page 523) Bruce R. McConkie also stated that "ANY who pretend or assume to ENGAGE IN PLURAL MARRIAGE IN THIS DAY, . . . ARE LIVING IN ADULTERY, HAVE ALREADY SOLD THEIR SOULS TO SATAN, AND . . . WILL BE DAMNED IN ETERNITY." (Ibid., pp. 522-523)¹²

The fundamentalists look upon the Manifesto as a sign of Wilford Woodruff's apostasy. They point to the fact that many plural marriages were performed by Church leaders after the Manifesto, until Joseph F. Smith issued a second manifesto in 1904, terminating the practice totally. Since that day anyone discovered living in polygamy has been excommunicated. Many thousands of fundamentalists have been excommunicated since then, for believing that God required them to live the principle, and that the Manifesto was nothing more than a political maneuver.¹³

¹²Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism--Shadow or Reality? p. 5, emphasis in original.

¹³Regarding plural marriage see Robert Black, Plural Marriage, A Bibliography of Materials in the Library of Robert Black, unpublished Ms, 8 pps., Salt Lake City, 1977; Gilbert Fulton, The Most Holy Principle, Gems publishing Co., 1970-1975, 4 vols., Salt Lake City; Gilbert Fulton, Plural Marriage, A Political Issue and Its Effect on Corporate Franchise, unpublished, n.d., 275 pps; That Manifesto, Salt Lake City, Deseret Publishing Co., 1974; Gustav O. Larson, The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood, San Marion Calif., Huntington

(continued on next page)

They point to a revelation purportedly given to John Taylor, in 1886, at Centerville, Utah, in which the Lord says, "I have not revoked my law, nor will I." The fundamentalists interpret this as meaning plural marriage was not intended to be taken away. The official Church position on the 1886 revelation is that it never was given and does not exist. This was shown in an undated letter, sent several years back, to all leaders of the Church in the Western United States and Western Canada from the First Presidency. The letter was regarding Mark E. Petersen's book, The Way of the Master. It said:

We call particular attention to chapters 8 through 15 which may be helpful to you in counseling with members of the Church who may be influenced by false doctrine being disseminated by apostate cultist groups. We admonish you to be alert in order that no member of the Church be led astray by those who dovertly try to teach falsehoods.¹⁴

Elder Petersen's book calls the 1886 revelation spurious. Historical evidence would seem to indicate, in contradiction to the book, that the revelation was given and is at present moment contained in the Church archives.¹⁵

¹³(Continued) Library, 1971; Stanley Ivins, Notes on Mormon Polygamy, unpublished, n.d., Salt Lake City; Dean Jesse, A Comparative Study and Evaluation of the Latter-day Saints and "Fundamentalist" Views Pertaining to the Practice of Plural Marriage, Provo, unpublished master's thesis, BYU, August, 1959; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Mormonism-- Shadow or Reality? Salt Lake City, Modern Microfilm, 1972, pp. 202-230; Truth, Truth Publishing Co., 1935-1956; Joseph Musser, Celestial Marriage, Truth Publishing Co.

¹⁴Copy of letter in possession of writer.

¹⁵See Robert Black and Fred Collier, The Trials for the Membership of John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley, Salt Lake City, 1976; The Four Hidden Revelations, Truth Publishing Co., Salt Lake City, n.d.; Ogden Kraut, Revelations 1880-1890.

Reed Durham told this writer that it is "an out and out lie" to say that the 1886 revelation does not exist. He said, "I could stand before the Bar of God and prove that revelation was given. I have minutes of the meetings of the First Presidency and of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles refering to it."¹⁶

While Durham calls it an "out and out lie" to deny the revelation was given, Max Parkin, one of his colleagues, calls it a "lie of expediency." He says that the mandate to carry the gospel, as taught by the Church, to all the nations of the world, is compelling to the degree that historic doctrines which could prove embarrassing to the Church, and thus hinder missionary work, are better covered or disavowed.

Robert Black and Fred C. Collier have both been excommunicated from the Mormon Church because their study of Mormon history convinced them that the Church had wrongfully abandoned important doctrines and practices once extant among the Latter-day Saints. They want to live the doctrines the way they were lived in the nineteenth century.

In an interview with this writer Black said, in response to a question as to why he passed out leaflets on the Adam-God Theory at the April, 1977, LDS General Conference:

I'm afraid that the people of the Church have gotten to the point where they trust so much in what their leaders tell them that they don't inquire on their own. When a point of doctrine which is vital to our salvation and exaltation is denied, then an effort should be made to bring it to the attention of the general membership of the Church so they can wrestle with it on their own. In the early days of the Church it was easier to be an apostate. There was a lot more independent thinking, especially among the brethren. The

¹⁶Reed Durham, Interview, April 11, 1977.

situation today is not that way. If the president says something then it must be God's will. We have become a nation of sheep, rather than a nation of rams.¹⁷

When asked concerning the New Mormon History, he replied:

I'm not sure that the New Mormon History is necessarily a good thing. I think that history should be pertinent and readable. There is a tendency in the New History to write history that is unreadable. Stan Kimball writes objective history, but it's irrelevant. I think you could put a lot of it in a bag and hide it in a closet and nobody would miss it. Juanita Brooks has done a great service to the Church in vindicating John D. Lee and the Church. Klaus Hansen's work was invaluable. Eugene Campbell is trying to debunk the cricket story. I wonder what the relevancy is, what lesson we are supposed to learn from this, although I feel that the truth ought to be brought out, and discovered. I might be in sympathy with the traditional Mormon attitude of covering things up. If its going to destroy a person's faith It perhaps could destroy a person's faith if a person has believed a fairy tale all his life, and associates that fairy tale with the Church, and finds out that that fairy tale is false, then he might throw out the baby with the bathwater, and apostatize. . . . This is one of the dangers in suppressing information or concocting false stories. The cricket story never should have been told in the first place. But now that it's told I don't know what the utility is in debunking it. I know for a fact that the debunking of the Cricket Story affects peoples' testimonies.¹⁸

Black recently purchased an offset printing press and wants to start a "Mormon underground press." Asked why, he said:

I want to bring out some of the records which have been buried, which show what happened in the early history of the Church. . . . Some of these doctrines which used to be taught: Plural marriage. The Church was very heavy on plural marriage one hundred years ago. . . . Adam-God is an obvious one. I was excommunicated because I believed in Adam-God. I believed it because I believed that Brigham Young was a prophet of God.¹⁹

¹⁷Robert Black, Taped interview, April 7, 1977.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

He goes on to mention other early doctrines such as the Law of Consecration, the Law of Adoption, the Holy Order, the Council of Fifty, and Second Anointings, as doctrines he feels should be lived today as they were lived under Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Robert Black was converted to the Church of the Firstborn by Fred C. Collier. Collier wanted to get into the Church Archives in 1971, before he was excommunicated, but had a great deal of trouble doing so. He was finally let in by Ron Watt, who gave him permission to see the manuscript sermons of Brigham Young. Collier says that, "He said I could take notes. Well, I took extensive notes. I recorded all the sermons I read, word for word. I got about thirty hours worth of recording. I really wouldn't want to say how many I've got. Let me just say I've got almost all of them."²⁰

When asked about the New Mormon History, he said,

My feelings about history are that I can understand their policies of the past. I have a lot of empathy for Brigham Young and Joseph Smith. Joseph Fielding Smith was really a man of their day. He was a hundred years old when he died. He had seen his father in persecution, hiding from the law. He knew about it. He was there. And so secrecy was important to them for the protection of their own lives, and for the protection of the Saints as a body. Therefore secrecy had a purpose. . . . I've been as miserable as I've ever been in my life since I've been into fundamentalism. It's totally wound my life up so that I have not made a living, decently. . . . I disagree with the policies the Church has taken, with their stands. I realize that as far as doctrine goes, they are not in harmony with the early Church. . . . Their efforts to hide the records only creates mistrust. I believed the Wooley Story, when it wasn't true. Most of it isn't true. I found out that the '86 revelation was true and they were secretive about it, and wouldn't let it out. I think in the long run

²⁰Fred C. Collier, Taped interview, April 13, 1977.

they would be better off if they just let the whole thing out.²¹

When asked why he was excommunicated, he read the letter from his Stake President informing him of the action taken by the High Council court which excommunicated him. The letter, in part, reads:

9 April 1975. Dear Brother Collier: This letter is to officially inform you of the actions of the high council court held on 8 April 1975, in which you were charged with advocating false doctrines. The court found you guilty of these charges and after serious deliberations and prayer, you were excommunicated. The court found you guilty of believing, advocating and discussing many doctrines which are not in harmony with the Church. The following are some of these teachings:

a. That Joseph Smith was the Holy Ghost in bodily shape; that Adam is the Eternal Father, and the Father of our spirits; that Christ is the Son of God and that these three comprise the Godhead.

b. That the Adam-God doctrine is true and that the last several prophets of the Church have been in error in not teaching it.

c. That additional blessings can be obtained through the patriarchal priesthood. And that there are additional anointings which are not given today in the Church.²²

With regard to Collier's purpose in publishing the things he does, and what he wants to accomplish, he says:

The purpose of the Church is to teach the people to know God. The Church teaches men that the President of the Church will never lead the Church astray. It teaches men to know the President of the Church rather than God. It teaches that the president is infallible. . . . President Kimball doesn't know very much about the fulness of the Gospel, so I'm not going to be obedient to him. . . . The reason I am publishing a book is because I want to gather around me people who, like myself, are willing to live all the laws of God. I can only

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

do this through educating them myself. I do this by quoting from Church history, old journals and documents. I do it this way because I'm no prophet to them. They don't know me. Who's Fred Collier? He's nothing. If Fred Collier says Adam is God, well, he's just a lunatic. But if Brigham Young said it, and he is a prophet of God, and I can show that Brigham Young said it, then they're going to have to sit up and take notes. . . . The first step I have to do . . . is to undo the feelings of security which have been developed in their minds about being obedient to the living oracles. I have to point out reasons why they can't get to the Celestial Kingdom by being obedient. To do that I have to point out wherein the leading oracles are in error. . . . Unfortunately there are times when I feel kind of bitter. I was excommunicated for that reason. The reason I was cut off was because I was bitter. I was bitter against the leading authorities of the Church for the use they made of their influence.²³

He believes the humanization of the early leaders is a good thing, provided "They are humanized under the influence of the Spirit of God."

I believe Mormonism is true. I believe that Brigham Young and Joseph Smith were prophets of God. I believe you ought to do just what they taught you should do, and that it should never be taken away. I believe they took it away and when you become informed about that, you find out that something's wrong. The history shows they have changed. History shows mistakes have been made. . . .²⁴

The problem Fundamentalists and other types of dissidents have with the Church comes simply because they do not accept the fact that the Church can change, that it can decry doctrines today which were once believed by the Latter-day Saints. To them, the secularization of the Church is a sign of the apostasy of the Church.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

The Scholars

Mormon scholars have generally had difficulty being accepted by the mainstream Mormon community, who are largely conservative and middle class. Reed Durham would add that they are largely ignorant as well. In an interview, he told this writer that Mormon history has been distorted and mythologized in order for it to conform to twentieth century society. These myths are made and perpetuated by General Authorities who teach the things they have learned in Sunday school, said Durham. He acknowledged that they are busy men and don't have time to keep up with new developments in Mormon historical research. When a General Authority teaches a myth it is ratified, to a degree, by the fact that it was taught by a Church leader, and there is a certain stigma placed upon a historian who would try to controvert this myth.¹

Other Mormon scholars are not quite so vocal in their criticism. Leonard Arrington, in an interview with the writer, tried to downplay any conflict between scholars and the General Authorities. He emphasized the continuity between present day historical activities and those practiced by Joseph Fielding Smith, former Church Historian. He did point out that whenever a new volume of Mormon history has appeared it has been criticised. He said Joseph Fielding Smith's Essentials in Church History came under sharp criticism when it was first published, as did B. H. Roberts' Comprehensive History of the

¹Reed Durham, Interview, April 11, 1977.

Church. Arrington believes that faith can increase through a study of history. He believes that the trend is toward more openness. "The direction is set," he said. The Church has professionalized its Historical Department. He explained that he does not believe that to humanize Mormon history is to secularize it. To him there is no such thing as secular or sacred language. If "communitarianism" were mentioned in a revelation, then it would become a sacred word. Arrington explained that he did not think the Church had "whitewashed" its history, but that it had "cosmetized" it.²

James Allen, assistant Church Historian, agreed with Arrington generally. He told this writer that if the Church treated its history in an open and sensitive manner there would be no shock effect for people who were reading New History. He admitted that some people of the general Church membership are naive to the degree that they might be disturbed by such things as Adam-God Theory. "We need people who will withhold judgment until all the facts are known, and who won't just toss everything out when some new information comes out."³

The whole tenor of the interview with Allen and Arrington was to down-play any conflict with Church leaders and to emphasize the positive aspects of objective history. Their situation undoubtedly does not allow them to be critical to any great degree.

Eugene England has expressed concern over the conservative stand of the General Authorities. He said that they spend all their time

²Leonard Arrington, Interview, April 11, 1977.

³James Allen, Interview, April 11, 1977.

travelling throughout the Church, spending much time in the mission field and the peripheral areas of the Church. "They get a mind-set and think that everyone is like that, and they forget that there are third and fourth generation members of the Church here who want to know more." The leaders, he said, treat everyone as they do the newly baptised members in the mission field.⁴

T. Edgar Lyon, who is writing the volume of the new Church history being published, on Nauvoo, said that "I am going to be as objective as I know how in that book. If it's true, why can't we tell it the way it is, without making it bad. . . . If a person made a mistake, we have to admit it. Joseph Smith made mistakes." Lyon pointed out that we should examine early Church leaders in the light of their times. Joseph Smith was affected by American "millenarism." "He couldn't have helped it. Manifest destiny had a great influence on him too, as did expansionism." Joseph Smith's thought, said Lyon, was filled with contemporary currents. Lyon is all for open history, realizing that some knowledge is like a sharp knife, however, and that one should be careful not to use it to "whittle up the religious furniture of someone's faith."⁵

Virtually all scholars interviewed by this writer were of the opinion that history should be open and honest. He did, however, interview a member of the faculty of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, who teaches Church history. When asked what his

⁴Eugene England, Interview, April 11, 1977.

⁵T. Edgar Lyon, Interview, April 14, 1977.

opinion was he replied: "You say you've talked to Arrington, Parkin, and Durham? Well, take the exact opposite view from them and put me down for that." He asked to remain unnamed in this paper because "I've already gotten too much criticism for my views. I don't want to get any more than I have to." He told this writer: "If you do your research right you'll discover that almost all scholars want to open the history of the Church right up. Virtually all LDS historians agree with Arrington and Durham." He appeared to be almost bitter as he spoke. His own philosophy is "exactly as outlined by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve," Ezra Taft Benson. "We don't need to tell everything we know. Some things just don't need to be told."

On the whole, however, most people with whom this writer has come in contact who write or teach history would agree with the intent, if not the product, of the New Mormon History.

Many of the scholars are critical of the Church's attitudes as expressed by leaders such as Ezra Taft Benson. Some would say that it is a reflection of an anti-intellectual attitude. Traditionally the Church has encouraged learning and the gaining of knowledge. Joseph Smith said that "a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge."⁶ Brigham Young said:

Not only does the religion of Jesus Christ make the people acquainted with the things of God, and develop within them moral excellence and purity, but it holds out every encouragement and inducement possible, for them to increase in knowledge and intelligence, in every branch of mechanism,

⁶Joseph Fielding Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Deseret Press, Salt Lake City, 1938, p. 217.

or in the arts and sciences, for all wisdom, and all the arts and sciences in the world are from God, and are designed for the good of His people.⁷

For all that emphasis on learning there seems to be a type of negative stigma placed upon Mormon intellectuals. The attitude seems to be one reflected in the statement of Billy Sunday: "When the word of God says one thing and scholarship says another, scholarship can go to hell!"⁸

Bitton elaborates on this theme in a vitriolic statement:

. . . it is hard to deny that the general attitude, judged by many criteria, is still strongly anti-intellectual. To demonstrate this would be a thankless task. It would require discussion of sermons, of periodicals, of current exegesis, of apologetics, of the incursion of the New Thought, the recrudescence of discredited nineteenth-century Biblical anthropology, political maneuverings, efforts by some to declare discussion of Gospel topics out of bounds, uninformed dogmatism, and lack of respect for scholarly standards of accuracy and proper attribution. More significant in a sense are the many small clues, trivial individually, which have the cumulative effect of denigrating the life of the mind. It is no denial of the Church's many splendid qualities to recognize that in many respects it has not proved congenial to free inquiry and that its prejudices tend to be anti-intellectual.⁹

He continues in the same vein and speaks of "a substratum of aversion to intellect:"

Since it is the nature of intellect to evaluate and criticize,

⁷Brigham Young, Brigham Young University Studies, (Summer, 1976), p. 638.

⁸Billy Sunday, Quoted in Davis Bitton, "Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 123.

⁹Ibid., p. 130.

it is inevitable that some tension exist between the intellectual and his fellow men. By his activities as teacher or writer he helps to conserve the values of society--is, in the present instance, of the Church. But by training and instinct he is constantly thinking, evaluating, criticizing, trying to separate the wheat from the chaff. This can lead to conflict with those who have a vested interest in old forms, who dislike hearing cherished customs described as obsolete or unessential, or who misconstrue faith to mean unthinking acceptance. The intellectual is not at ease in Zion. By the very nature of his reading and comparing, he confronts views which are different from his own.¹⁰

James Allen in a reply to Bitton's article, said:

The implication of all this is that the "true" intellectual cannot be unalterably devoted to any one idea or program. To the extent that he is so devoted, he becomes anti-intellectual, for he is not longer raising questions, he is promoting answers. With this kind of definition, of course, it would probably be impossible to find a "true" intellectual, but it nevertheless raises the question as to just how far the Mormon intellectual would go in supporting even his own ideas once he presented them, and just how practical his contribution to the programs and objectives of the Church could be. I rather suspect that the intellectuals will always remain a minority group within the Church, as will the anti-intellectuals.¹¹

Bitton, in rejoinder, said:

What I have meant to say is that nineteenth-century Mormon intellectuals, such as they were in the context of that time, found their religion compatible with their intellectual commitments in several respects (not totally); and, further, that various changes have made a similar feeling of compatibility much more difficult (although not impossible) in the present century.¹²

Eugene England is quoted in Time Magazine (August 26, 1966, p. 59)

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 131-132.

¹¹James Allen, "Thoughts on Anti-Intellectualism: A Response," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 139.

¹²Davis Bitton, "Rejoinder", Ibid., p. 140.

as saying that "A man need not relinquish his faith to be intellectually respectable, nor his intellect to be faithful." He has since told this writer that he would revise that statement and say that "sometimes a man must need to relinquish his faith to be intellectually honest and there are some points on some issues where a man would need to give up his intellect to be faithful."¹³

Reed Durham, in speaking on the subject of anti-intellectualism in the Church, said that the Church is structured so that people learn from priesthood and Sunday school manuals and nowhere else. He pointed out that the Church doesn't encourage people to study history on their own, and that the Church creates "dumb, ignorant members." He called it an injustice to give members "milk" and nothing else.¹⁴

A. C. Lambert notes in this regard that "Happiness sometimes is a very real associate of a certain amount of ignorance; if the children are happy in not knowing things, far be it from me to upset them. Let them stay reasonably ignorant; always perhaps; or else stay that way until they grow up and happen to find out for themselves."¹⁵

Hugh Nibley, a professor at Brigham Young University is openly critical of an anti-intellectual atmosphere at BYU, and in the Church generally. He says:

Some years ago, when it was pointed out that BYU graduates

¹³Eugene England, Interview, April 11, 1977.

¹⁴Reed Durham, Interview, April 11, 1977.

¹⁵A. C. Lambert, papers, "Orthodoxy--Liberalism," Box 40, Manuscript Division, Western Americana, Marriott Library, University of Utah, n.p.

were the lowest in the nation in all categories of the Graduate Record Examination, the institution characteristically met the challenge by abolishing the examination. It was done on the grounds that the test did not sufficiently measure our unique "spirituality." We talked extensively about "the education of the whole man," and deplored the educational imbalance that comes when students' heads are merely stuffed with facts--as if there was any danger of that here!

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Yet Joseph Smith commends their (the Jews) intellectual efforts as a corrective to the Latter-day Saints, who lean too far in the other direction, giving their young people and old awards for zeal alone, zeal without knowledge--for sitting in endless meetings, for dedicated conformity, and unlimited capacity for suffering boredom. We think it more commendable to get up at 5 a.m. to write a bad book than to get up at 9 o'clock to write a good one--that is pure zeal and tends to breed a race of insufferable self-righteous prigs and barren minds. One has only to consider the present outpouring of "inspirational" books in the Church which bring little new in the way of knowledge: truisms, and platitudes, kitsch, and cliches have become our everyday diet. The peophet would never settle for that. "I advise you to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness. . . . It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for my hearers." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 345). It actually happens at BYU, and that not rarely, that students come to a teacher, usually at the beginning of a term, with the sincere request that he refrain from teaching them anything new. They have no desire, they explain, to hear what they don't already know! I cannot imagine that happening at any other school, but maybe it does. Unless we go on to other things, we are stifling our powers.¹⁶

¹⁶Hugh Nibley, "Zeal Without Knowledge," delivered June 26, 1975, BYU, Provo, pp. 10-11, 13-14, transcript in possession of writer.

Conclusion

The trend is set. Although there has been and will be resistance to the changes which are taking place in the writing of Mormon history, the direction is secular, and the thrust derived from Mormons, who have themselves, been educated in secular historical methodology. Many people are perhaps justifiably concerned with seeing Mormon history presented in a less apologetic, more open manner. Robert Flanders notes that this openness is encountering some difficulties today because "The prevailing climate within Mormondom is as yet characterized by unconcern or timidity about" questions on the Mormon past.¹ He notes also that "mature historical writing is most likely to result when thoughtful people raise important questions about the present which can only be answered by a resort to the past."²

Klaus Hansen views the historian as "acting as memory and conscience." He says that

Obviously the stake president can't do that. For the regular establishment simply has to uphold the various myths that serve a useful function--in fact, without which no society can survive for long. As time goes on, however, the function of the myth is often forgotten, and the servant becomes the master, myth becomes a substitute for history. Hitler's most fatal mistake, ultimately, was to believe his own propaganda. Leave it to the historian to remind us of what is propaganda and what history.³

Although there are many difficulties, conflicts and controversies

¹Robert Flanders, "Writing on the Mormon Past," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 3, (Autumn, 1966), p. 61.

²Ibid.

³Klaus Hansen, "Reflections on the Writing of Mormon History," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), p. 159.

created by this "renaissance" in Mormon history, the general attitude seems to be positive. Arrington says in this regard:

Thus while Mormon history has been "secularized" as a result of its study in secular graduate schools, a positive attempt is being made to promote research and writing which will give the Mormon heritage a fuller and more sympathetic hearing.⁴

Max Parkin told this writer that honest history does not demand the secularization of the Church. "A person doesn't have to be naive to be non-secular. The New History does not compel us to be secular." He emphasized that it is possible to "gain faith through understanding."⁵

Parkin stresses the fact that it is hard for a secular historian to really grasp the spiritual nature of Mormon history. The devotion, faith and religion of those early Saints plays a significant role in the molding of their history. Secular historians, says Eugene England, sometimes overlook these matters of faith and tend to attribute historical occurrences to economics, politics or to contemporary social movements rather than simply to the faith of the people. Some secular historians, he says, overlook the "spiritual history" of the Latter-day Saints, and in secularizing Mormon history totally they do an injustice to the Mormon people. There are spiritual aspects to their history which are hard to demonstrate by factual empirical evidence.

Mormon history is a singular type of history, involving many facets, meriting many different approaches. The Mormon people are a singular people and are characterized by their diversity and by their

⁴Leonard Arrington, "Scholarly Studies on Mormonism," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Vol. 1, no. 1, (Spring, 1966), p. 28.

⁵Max Parkin, Interview, February 26, 1977.

cohesiveness. The New Mormon History is not simply an attempt to secularize an approach to the Mormon past. It is an effort to examine it as a complex, dynamic process of evolution, taking into account the many factors which have combined to make the Church what it is today. Professor Rischin summarizes the possibilities of this effort in an optimistic, positive manner, reflective of the attitude of many Mormon scholars today who are seeking to understand, in a new way, the depth of their past, and their heritage:

This seems to be only a beginning. A giant step from church history to religious and intellectual history seems in the offing. As Mormon continuities and discontinuities are reassessed from entirely fresh perspectives and with a potentially greater audience than ever, other Americans and Mormons may better come to understand themselves.⁶

⁶Moses Rischin, "The New Mormon History," The American West, Vol. 6, (March 1969), p. 49.

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