

# Notes and Comments

*Edited by Joseph Jeppson*

*Notes and comments are not merely short articles or long letters; they are varied, informal glimpses of Mormon thought and life. The Editors welcome news, profiles, opinions, accounts, speeches and other items that seem appropriate.*

## MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION

*Leonard J. Arrington was named president of the new Mormon History Association at the group's organizational meeting, which was held in San Francisco in conjunction with the December meetings of the American Historical Association. Other officers elected were Eugene E. Campbell of B.Y.U. and James L. Clayton of the University of Utah, vice presidents; Dello G. Dayton of Weber State College, secretary-treasurer; and councilmen Robert B. Flanders of Graceland College, Davis Bitton of the University of California at Santa Barbara, Alfred Bush of Princeton, and Merle Wells of the Idaho State Historical Society. The association extends its invitation of membership to whoever sends the \$2 annual dues to the secretary-treasurer, Dr. Dayton, Weber State College, Ogden, Utah.*

*The feature event of the first Mormon History Association meeting was a panel discussion moderated by B.Y.U. Professor James B. Allen, whose outstanding article on Joseph Smith's first vision will appear in the next issue of Dialogue. Panelists were Ralph W. Hansen, Archivist and Manuscripts Librarian at Stanford University, and Klaus J. Hansen, Visiting Assistant Professor at Utah State University; texts of their remarks follow:*

## NEW SOURCES OF MORMON HISTORY

*Ralph W. Hansen*

While collecting my thoughts regarding the relationship of archivists to historians, I came upon a simple simile which touches upon a problem of modern scholarship. In my story I liken historical research to laboring in the boiler room of an ocean-going vessel. The boilers (scholars) run on coal (manuscript and other original sources) or oil (secondary sources). The stokers are archivists and manuscript librarians such as myself. The boilers indiscriminantly burn coal and oil in large quantities with the same results — a fire (book or thesis). On most ships oil, easy to use, has apparently won over coal as the

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favorite fuel of the boilers. However, upon close inspection it is apparent that oil burns as a slick rehash of previous knowledge, while the use of raw coal results in new knowledge or a fuller understanding of known facts.

It has been my experience at two of the world's greatest universities, Brigham Young University and Stanford University, that altogether too many historians (including Mormon historians) are content to slip through on oil rather than labor in the coal mines. Indeed, Mormon historians have a problem not faced by their brethren in the craft: some of their coal is protected behind granite walls. Be that as it may, there are veins which may be followed until the proper engineer opens the way into the main body of fuel.

Utah history is inseparably tied to Mormon history. Thus, while important sources in Mormon history are denied the scholar, avenues of investigation in Utah history are abundant and interesting. For six years I had the privilege of collecting manuscripts in Utah, and I found records on mining history (including Cabon County Coal Company records), transportation records, and personal papers of twentieth century personalities relatively easy to come by. It is apparent that the Utah Historical Society, custodian of the State Archives, is in a strong position to provide "coal" and that university and business archives, when tapped, will provide additional resources for future generations of scholars.

Not all of the sources for in-depth studies of Utah and the Mormons are confined to the Great Basin. Excellent collections of books and manuscripts on Mormonism are found at Yale, Harvard, and Princeton in the East, and at Bancroft and Huntington Libraries in California. Yale and Huntington are actively adding to their collection. Even Stanford, which by choice confines its collecting to the Pacific Coast, has, in its DeVoto Papers and Jackling Papers, two large collections of Mormon interest. Doubtless other examples may be found. It is quite evident that enough original sources are available for most scholarly pursuits.

In conclusion may I offer a few suggestions for the Mormon History Association. First, by its very existence it can act as a clearing house for writers, especially for non-Mormons who continue to find Mormon history a subject of fascinating interest. In this role the Association can direct scholars to available sources and, even more important, encourage the publication of bibliographical guides. Hopefully it can undertake (or encourage institutions to undertake) the publication of important original sources. Along this line it should encourage the collection and preservation of historical records by Utahns for Utah institutions. It is probably too late to rectify the mistakes which permitted pioneer records to leave the state. It is not too late to direct modern-day records to Utah libraries. I would further suggest that cooperative collecting of original sources by the major collegiate institutions and historical agencies of Utah would be better than the haphazard collecting now practiced.

Because of the relative inaccessibility to scholars of the files of the Church Historian's Office, my discussion here has centered around the collecting and use of modern records. My final suggestion to the Mormon History Association is to work patiently with those who can provide entry into unknown or closed "mines" of Mormon history. Access to these vital collections will insure a supply of "coal" for much better "fires" in the future.

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### REFLECTIONS ON THE WRITING OF MORMON HISTORY

Klaus J. Hansen

This afternoon, in the privacy of my hotel room, it suddenly occurred to me that I would face a group including most of the leading Mormon historians in the country. My heart sank into my stomach. Hence, if I was going to say anything at all, I decided, I simply couldn't take myself too seriously. The following remarks, then, are to be taken as a kind of brainstorming rather than the presentation of a fixed and final position. If anything at all, I hope they may perhaps provide a point of departure for a discussion of the role of the historian in Mormon society. I am sure, I even hope, that some of you will disagree vigorously with my position. Because most of those assembled here are L.D.S. historians, my observations are primarily directed towards them.

Mormon historians have been fortunate, indeed, that in recent years scholars who are not L.D.S. have begun to take Mormonism seriously, not only as a sociological phenomenon but as a religion. As a result, I submit, L.D.S. historians may now relax a little and take themselves and their investigations less seriously. In spite of some notable exceptions, too many of us are still pompously engaged in saving the Church from the Gentiles, as if the Church couldn't take care of itself. Too many of us still conceive of Clio as an *ancilla theologiae*, forgetting that she is a muse. I believe that one major criterion of intelligence is the ability to laugh about oneself — an ability, for example, that Joseph Smith shared with John F. Kennedy. Goethe once coined a marvelous pun: "*Wer sich nicht selbst zum Besten haben kann, gehoert gewiss nicht zu den Besten.*" (Unfortunately, the pun can't be translated; a literal version is, "If you can't make fun of yourself, you have no place among the best.")

Only if we, as historians, can acquire this capacity, will we be able to approach the kind of detachment that is indispensable for the kind of history I believe we ought to write. I do not labor under the illusion that it is possible to write what the nineteenth century called "scientific history." None of us can be truly objective, if for no other reason than that we are captives of our *Zeitgeist*. Moreover, I would hold any historian who lacks commitments to certain ideals suspect. The best we can do is state our case as vigorously and honestly as possible. Nevertheless, I do not believe that history has to become propaganda, no matter how noble the cause. I am not so sure the Mormon historians have always acted on that principle.

Perhaps even more seriously, Mormon historians frequently have tried to assume the role of priest and prophet. To a generation raised under the influence of Charles A. Beard, Carl Becker, and James Harvey Robinson, this was perhaps inevitable. What is past is prologue: how tempting for the historian to become the architect of the future. And yet, how arrogant and impossible a position in Mormon society.

I wonder if we have not here a latent source of friction. I may not speak for all of us, but it seems to me no secret that many of us share a certain feeling of alienation from our society. We attribute our problems to the fact that one of our main responsibilities is to act as critics of our culture — ever a major if not the primary role of the historian. And yet, I wonder how many of us really act on this premise. Are we not, rather, attempting to substitute our intellectual methods for those of the priest and the prophet? I wonder if too many of us simply haven't yet learned that religion is not amenable to the processes of ratiocination.

There can be no question that in our society historians, by and large, are treated at best with suspicion and at worst with indifference. Perhaps this cannot be changed. Perhaps the serious study of history is impossible in a society reared and sustained by faith. Mormonism, it seems to me, has much in common with Transcendentalism. To Thoreau, the past was so much garbage to be discarded in favor of eternal truths that needed no precedent. The Transcendentalists were forever striving for the eternal present. *Sub specie aeternitatis*, history simply ceases to exist, and nature, such as Walden Pond, for example, becomes the laboratory of truth. How many Mormons, for instance, have made distinguished names for themselves as historians? Yet, on the other hand, how many Mormon scientists are listed in *Who's Who*?

The odds against the Mormon historian, then, are formidable indeed. And yet, we might try. We might, for example, take more seriously our role as critics. As paradoxical as this may sound, I believe that we would improve our position. (I can veritably feel the mental shudders of some of you and am reminded of my missionary days, when the dictum "criticism is the devil's tool" became almost a *leitmotif*.)

Nevertheless, I believe that as Mormon society is maturing criticism is increasingly becoming not only a tolerated but a necessary function. As John Gardner recently pointed out in *Harper's*, any viable institution disregards its critics, particularly its internal ones, at its own peril, standing in great danger of dying of what he called "institutional dry rot." The worst enemies of Mormonism, clearly, are not its critics, either external or internal. I hope that it is not merely wishful thinking that makes me believe that the leadership of the Church knows this, too, and that the perhaps unconscious reasons for their suspicion of us historians comes from another direction entirely, namely the supposition that the intellectual wants to compete with the priest and the prophet.

On that point, I believe we can be reassuring: we do not want to compete. But what of our role as critics? It seems to me that one of our major concerns should be a matter of style. Each society, each culture, has its own formalized "ritual." All its members, consciously, or unconsciously, learn to "play the game," as it were. At the medieval court, the jester played a stylized role as critic. He could say things for which ordinary subjects would lose their heads.

Perhaps, in our own society, the historian could play that role, could say things for which one might expect him to lose at least his fellowship if he were, let us say, a second counselor in a stake presidency who sells insurance for a living. This may sound as if I want to create a special class in our society; far from it. If the second counselor stands in danger of losing his membership, then it is only because he lacks the proper style and perspective for criticism.

The historian, by acting as memory and conscience, can serve that function adequately if he does not take himself too seriously. Obviously, a 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.

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There are those who argue that in order to create successfully for the future, one has to let sleeping dogs lie. Why talk about the Council of Fifty in 1966? Yet who are we to judge, to determine the needs of our children? I believe it the moral responsibility of the historian to provide access to the entire past, regardless of whatever we perceive to be our special needs of the moment. To do that, he needs a sense of humor, has to be sensitive to the irony inherent in life itself. We have come full circle, then. Ultimately, a disregard for the "responsible, constructive" position is the highest responsibility a historian can assume. To write history slightly tongue-in-cheek, then, is to write serious history — at least serious Mormon history.

### THE ARIZONA HERALD

*Following the lead of California and Idaho, Arizona now has a privately published L.D.S. newspaper, The Arizona Herald, designed to serve the 125,000 members of the Church in the state. Publisher and editor of the bi-weekly is Donald J. Kenney, a Phoenix attorney. The first issue (January 16, 1966) displayed the headline, "Is L.D.S. Music Up To Par?" A smaller headline added "Critic Says 'No'." But the text of the article revealed a softer theme — that L.D.S. choirs in the Phoenix area might not be as excellent as those in Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. The paper includes a theological column, sports, women's news, features about L.D.S. personalities and projects, etc. Editorial offices are located at 913 Del Webb Building, Phoenix, Arizona.*

### THE WHITE HOUSE FELLOWSHIP

*The White House Fellows Program was initiated by President Johnson in 1964 to give highly qualified young persons an opportunity to gain first-hand, high-level experience with the workings of the Federal Government and to increase their sense of participation in national affairs. This year, two of the fifteen selected were L.D.S. professors: Robert R. Lee, Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering at Stanford University and Edwin B. Firmage, Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Missouri. Dr. Firmage, who was assigned to work with Vice President Hubert Humphrey, reports his experience as follows:*

During my few months with the Vice President my activities have largely centered on problems of civil rights and poverty. I have done extensive work on the President's Youth Opportunity Campaign to seek employment of youth and curb school dropout. I have attended staff meetings with Sargent Shriver and the Office of Economic Opportunity, met with senators from mid-West states on rural poverty problems, and helped plan meetings for the Vice President with mayors of cities and civic leaders on youth employment and the school dropout. I worked on and attended the White House Conference on Civil Rights . . . attended the White House Conference on International Cooperation with the Vice President (and) toured Job Corps centers both with and for him. . . .

In relating my experiences to those who share my Mormon culture, I would make several observations. First, in working with the acute and volatile problems of poverty and civil rights, a realization that started within me during my school days at Chicago has come more forcibly to me here. I have had the chance to talk with many Job Corps boys, with recipients of various kinds of

governmental programs and welfare, with the leaders of civil rights movement, and with mayors, union leaders, industrialists and other men who deal intimately with the incredibly complex and critical urban problems which now seem so insoluble. Coming as I do from a small Mormon city in Utah, I had no real comprehension of the problems which confront a government official who must contend with and provide for hundreds of thousands of people of strikingly different races and cultures and levels of education.

By 1985, 180 million Americans will live in 216 cities. This means that in the next twenty years we will add fifty-four million people to existing cities. What this means in terms of race tension, pollution of the atmosphere, ghettos, school dropouts, unemployment and swollen relief rolls can hardly be imagined.

Statistics apart, a ticking off of some of the human factors which go into the equation of urban life highlights the problems. American Negroes and Puerto Ricans, caucasians and orientals, Americans recently from Europe or South America, or (just as much an immigrant in lack of preparation for our urban life) the Negro from the South or the poor farmer from the Ozarks — all these trying to seek fulfillment in the close confines of the city. The aged; the woman who heads a household with children at home; the unskilled and illiterate; the middle-aged, skilled workman who is replaced by automation; the young child born into such social deprivation that he enters school without having seen a crayon or writing paper, without having heard a complete sentence in five years of life; these, along with crushing problems of mass transportation, sanitation, maintenance of law and order, provision of adequate shelter and a host of equally baffling issues, are the challenges to government at all levels and to the private sector in the years ahead.

As the population of the Church, like the population of the country as a whole, becomes increasingly urbanized, these problems will personally confront a growing percentage of our people. This does not call for any change in the basic moral and spiritual teachings of the Church, which remain as eternally true as they have always been since the Gospel of the Master was presented before the creation of this earth. However, personally held notions of some people on the role of government in society, the proper relationship between the public and private sectors, and other related concepts which have their origin in rural life rather than in the eternal principles of the Gospel will have to be re-evaluated as the transitory concepts which in fact they are. These ideas must change with a changing society.

Unnecessary pullings and tuggings on the testimonies of our young people will be avoided as the Church develops a resistance to those who would inextricably link the principles of the Gospel with their own personal political predilections. The latter are transitory, of this world, and of miniscule importance when compared to the former, which are eternal, not only pertain to this world but untold worlds, and are of incomparably greater importance.

I have had no problem in harmonizing my religious beliefs with the problems which confront the Federal Government. Rather, I am profoundly impressed by the inspired wisdom which has marked the teachings of the prophets of our time from the beginning of this dispensation. As but one specific, I would cite the great stress which Church leaders from the Prophet Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to the present have placed upon the necessity of an impregnable family as the basic building block of society, not only in this life but through eternity. Especially from the time of Joseph F. Smith, whom I personally rate

with the Prophet Joseph, Brigham, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and J. Reuben Clark as one of the giants of the Church, has this teaching been repeatedly stressed. Today, with revitalized home teaching, the family home evening program and its refreshingly new and well-written manuals, and the increasing emphasis upon the role of the Priesthood, this principle is emphasized more strongly than ever.

With my work in the interconnected areas of civil rights and poverty, I have been able to observe, both personally and statistically, the results of the breakdown of the family. As one attempts to break the cycle of poverty, each element — unemployment, lack of education, complete social deprivation — seems to demand as a prerequisite to its elimination the solution of another. It is maddeningly difficult to break into this cycle. And at the root of much of it is a breakdown of the family unit. Teachings that might have seemed platitudinous and Polonius-like in my youth now seem rich, basic, and full of hidden wisdom.

#### THE WATTS RIOT

*Robert Christmas, whose essay on Parley P. Pratt appears in this issue, reports from Los Angeles that last fall the L.D.S. Institute of Religion at the University of Southern California sponsored a series of lectures on the Watts riot, which occurred in the vicinity of the University in August. His report follows:*

Professor Kent Lloyd of UCLA, Bishop of the Morningside Park Ward in Los Angeles, criticized the general apathy of Mormons towards the Watts problem. He challenged members of the Church to become informed, to stand up for their values as Christians and citizens by participating and becoming leaders in the areas of civil rights, poverty, and public affairs in general. He pointed out that in the last decade the civil rights revolution has become an urban revolution; that it is no longer really necessary to demonstrate for civil rights, but for "dignity without poverty"; and that this applies to other urban minorities besides Negroes. In Lloyd's opinion members of the Church missed an excellent opportunity to counteract the bad publicity about our attitudes toward Negroes when we did not extend at least some temporary welfare to the people of Watts at the time of the riot — even a few cars of elders and supplies might have done much to correct the national misunderstanding on this issue.

Inspector James G. Fisk of the Los Angeles Police Department noted that resentment and disregard of police authority has increased throughout society, not simply in the Negro community, but that in the case of the Negro particularly the police have become a symbol of the power of a society that has denied him equal rights. In dealing with Negroes, the police often face a contempt fed by many other sources; and, as we might expect in such a hazardous atmosphere, this has sometimes led to the use of "excessive force" to restore order. But what the Negroes chiefly object to is the lack of dignity connected with many of their encounters with the police: for example, being searched on the street and embarrassed in front of their friends. According to Fisk, his department is making every effort to improve the situation. In a related area, Chief Charles W. Bahme, a Bureau Commander in the Los Angeles Fire Department, stated the policy of the Fire Department not to involve itself in police activity. During the riot the firemen spent all of their time putting out fires; no hoses

were turned on people and on only one occasion was a fireman discovered carrying a weapon.

Mr. John Lyons, Assistant Administrator for the Commission on Human Relations, and Mr. Prince, a human relations consultant, focused on the riot from the point-of-view of the Negro. Mr. Lyons traced the history of the Negro community in Los Angeles and the factors which led to the concentration of Negroes in certain areas of the city and county. He also outlined the history of the Commission on Human Relations and its efforts to help Negroes find an equal footing in society. Mr. Prince pointed out that slavery virtually destroyed the structure of the Negro family by its arbitrary and brutal separation of husbands, wives, and children; and that the Negro family has yet to overcome this damage because of new factors in the modern environment: for example, the fact that it is generally easier for Negro women to get work, which creates a matriarchal family, with the males aimless and frustrated at the edges. Mr. Prince also enlivened and deepened his discussion with an account of the development of his own personal hatred for white people, his efforts to understand why he hated, and the resolution of his hatred in a determination to eliminate its causes.

Mr. Gene Jacobs, an L.D.S. Seventy who is Legal Counsel for the Los Angeles Urban Renewal Program, emphasized that urban renewal in California would continue to be a grave problem — especially until there is a legal ruling that Proposition Fourteen<sup>1</sup> is unconstitutional or not applicable to Federal housing projects. As things stand, there is no way in which we can use Federal funds for urban renewal. Jacobs sharply criticized recent squabbles in local government that have slowed progress in this matter. In another direction he noted that there appeared to be a pattern of some kind in much of the burning and looting in the Watts area and elsewhere during the riot, based, it would appear, on the Negroes' estimate of the unfair practices of some of the merchants. He noted that poor quality merchandise and unfair credit management were undoubtedly factors which contributed to the uprising and the "selective burnings"; in many cases the fires were first started in the credit department, then the building was looted and finally set completely on fire. Jacobs added that whether or not there were abuses, the important thing is that the people involved thought there were; riots do not happen just because of the way things are, but because of the way things seem to be.

Finally, Ellsworth Johnson, who is currently writing a dissertation at USC on the War on Poverty in Los Angeles, criticized the report of the McCone Commission<sup>2</sup> for being so "politically clean" that it failed to be either as precise or as critical as it easily could have been. In his opinion the report tends merely to restate some of the obvious needs in the Watts area — educational programs directed to the particular problems of the community, employment, better social services in the fields of health, transportation, recreation, and so on. The extreme generality of most of the recommendations of the McCone Commission leads Johnson to suspect that, in the interest of political neutrality, the Commission may have ignored many of the unpleasant particulars — things

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<sup>1</sup> A recently passed amendment to the California constitution which makes it illegal to limit the right of an owner to be selective, on whatever basis he chooses, in renting or selling property. Because this amendment makes it impossible to use the law to prevent racial discrimination in housing, Federal funds for housing have been tied up. [Ed.]

<sup>2</sup> Appointed by California's Governor Pat Brown to report on the Watts riot. [Ed.]



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that a staff-worker, or even a private citizen, might gather from a few hours of field work in Watts itself.

### BISHOPS' LECTURES

*Douglas D. Alder, Assistant Professor of History at Utah State University and a bishop in the student stake, informs us that certain bishops, who are also professors at Utah State University, are participating in a lecture series initiated by Stake President Reed Bullen as a feature of the monthly High Priests meeting. The fall quarter speakers were John R. Simmons, "The L.D.S. Student Examines Evolution"; Bishop Alder, "Improving Music Performed in L.D.S. Services" and Lawrence O. Cannon, "The L.D.S. Student and National Student Unrest."*

### NAUVOO EXPOSITOR

*Dallin H. Oaks, Professor of Law at the University of Chicago, has written an article for the Winter 1966 issue of the University of Utah Law Review entitled "Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor." Marvin S. Hill, Assistant Professor of History at East Carolina College, comments as follows:*

Professor Oaks describes ably the events leading up to the destruction of the apostate Mormon publication and explains the reasoning of the Nauvoo City Council in its decision to destroy not only the copies of the newspaper already printed but the press as well. He then dissects the legal implications of the City Council's action, both from the standpoint of Illinois state law and from the broader view of United States legal history. Mormon scholars will particularly appreciate the delineation of the many complexities of law involved in the summary disposal of this anti-Mormon spokesman within Nauvoo; they may be quite surprised at Oaks's conclusion that there was considerable legal justification for much of what the Mormon leaders did on that fateful day, June 10, 1844. Students of American civil liberties will also be impressed with Oaks's assessment of the Nauvoo affair in the evolution of United States constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press. It may be that some cautious historians will ponder Professor Oaks's suggestion that events following the destruction of the *Expositor* demonstrate that mob action was imminent and the security of the city at stake and that this was a justification for the crushing of the apostate press. Nonetheless, they will be heavily in Mr. Oaks's debt for his thorough exposition of what the law would and would not allow. Professor Oaks has here opened a field of inquiry that could bear much fruit. Students of Mormon history have long needed a professional evaluation of the legal rights of the Saints in the numerous controversies in which they were embroiled in the early history of the Church. This is an important beginning that no student will want to miss.

### NON-EDITORIAL POSTLUDE

*Joseph Jeppson*

I am tremendously concerned about the weighty precepts and lofty thoughts which our editors and writers have thrust upon the Mormon people in this issue. And I think I should write a few words to pick up the spirits of the faithful. Outvoted at every turn, I saw the manuscripts of the solid and inspired writers overlooked in favor of those of evil and designing authors who

have absolutely no appreciation for the cultivated anti-intellectual viewpoint (with two exceptions).

Suppose that the religious principles which are most profound in their effect are those to which a man subscribes *unconsciously*. Such principles, then, tend to lose some of their power when a man becomes aware that they are "religious." Suppose too that true and everlasting religion is best glimpsed at the moment when a man asks himself, "What can I think and do which is most worthwhile?" If he responds to this question honestly, he has an opportunity to face up to his existential anxieties, to self-actualize himself, and to participate thereafter in the ground of all being on an I-Thou basis. But to do this he needs the help of his Home Teacher.

Now it is one of my own religious beliefs that happiness often visits a man during his process of striving for worthwhile things; happiness is most often an appendage to something else (i.e. — to the striving for the worthwhile). But if true religion stems primarily from postulates which one accepts unconsciously, then I must apologize for advising you to seek something "worthwhile." For by telling you to do that, I have moved a religious principle from your unconsciousness to your consciousness, setting it up for a patterned process of decline and eventual extinction. You might be better off, then, if you followed my other piece of advice, which I won't give you.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Non-simplified explanation: Honest religionists should welcome the demise of that spiritual ecstasy which is born of non-supernatural ineffability. On the other hand, those for whom non-supernaturalism has become a religious commitment, and who take delight in discovering the temporal springs of some men's religious principles, should not think themselves justified in believing that all faith which rises from ineffability is necessarily anchored in *non-supernatural* unconsciousness.