

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feast of Friends

My compliments to the cooks! The latest issue is a feast! (Vol. 36, No 2, Summer 2003) The cover art by my beloved friend, Frank McEntire, is stunning. As you point out, he was art editor during *Dialogue's* DC years, tirelessly working behind the scenes. Whenever I am in Utah, I take in his latest installations and visit his studio where his deep, abiding creativity never ceases to move me.

Karl Sandburg's poetry lances my heart. He knew "Mr. Death" was breathing on his neck, and he faced his final passage with courage and humor.

At almost every meeting of MHA and Sunstone, he was the first to greet me with the words, "Come into my arms!" I was lucky enough to be snowed in with him and a few other intrepid Sunstoners at my home in Virginia one spring when a freak storm closed all the airports on the East Coast. In long meaningful conversations, I realized that he and I shared a passion for French food and the works of Robertson Davies and Lowell Bennion. He prepared his delicious *coq au vin* and regaled us with his own Davies-like stories. When he and I shared our writing ambitions, I saw what a great mentor and motivator he was. How I wish I could tell him that I am finally working on the novel he urged me to write!

Karl's wife, Dawn, was not with

us that time, but she and I have often commiserated. She is a Bennion, and it was she who showed me the site of the pioneer Bennion homes in Taylorsville, Utah. Like Karl, she is a poet and a healer.

Karl Christian Sandburg—so aptly named—why is it that your absence is such a palpable presence!

Mary L. Bradford,
Leesburg, Virginia

Toward a Latter-day Saint Poetics

I appreciated reading Robert Hughes' essay, "Poetry Matters in Mormon Culture" (Vol. 36, No. 2). I am impressed that a business executive could write about poetry with both understanding and clarity. With Hughes I lament the decline in poetry in Mormon culture, but I disagree that this decline can be blamed on the poets themselves or on the fact that so many contemporary poets are rooted in the academic world. Were it not for the academy, the state of poetry at the beginning of the twenty-first century would be even more dire than it is.

While Hughes is nostalgic for previous eras when poets wrote in more traditional forms and when, apparently, poetry was more popular in Mormon culture than it is now, as a

thoughtful critic he must agree that much of what passed for poetry in the *Improvement Era*, the *Relief Society Magazine*, and other church publications tended to be maudlin, sentimental verse that celebrated Mormon religion and culture but, to borrow a line from Emily Dickinson, left no "internal differences where the meanings are." There may be many reasons the audience for serious poetry in Mormon culture is small (and even shrinking), but it isn't confined to poetry; the audience for serious music, art, architecture, dance, etc. is limited as well.

To decry the flowering of free verse and more open forms of poetic expression as Hughes does is akin to decrying modern experimentation and exploration in all the arts. What would modern architecture be like if its only models were those from the past? (What would Mormon architecture look like if it were suddenly free of the stale formulaic structures which dot the landscape?) I am thinking of such modern buildings as Gaudi's *Sagrada Família* Church in Barcelona and Frank Gehry's new museum of art in Bilbao. What would modern music be like were it not for the wild atonal music of Stravinsky or the free forms of such composers as Cage and Adams? If modern painting had been restricted to the representation and palette of previous ages, we would not have such masterpieces as Picasso's "Guerinica" or Dali's "Sacrament of the Last Supper."

Hughes' identification of the problem with poetry's popularity as the decline in more traditional poetic forms

and styles and the rise of free verse seem oversimplified. While I appreciate poetry in its more formal, traditional forms (sonnets, villanelle, sestinas, etc. written in iambic meters), I am grateful that modern poetry has been freed from a slavish reliance on fixed forms and "the tyranny of the iamb." The more open forms of modern poetry have expanded the boundaries of what Wallace Stevens has called "the supreme fiction." The fact remains that to compose a worthy poem in either fixed or open forms, in blank or free verse takes skill, imagination, thought, a lot of hard work and, if the poet is fortunate, luck. The best free verse tends to conform to certain limits, but as Pound suggested these relate to "the sequence of the musical phrase, not. . . the sequence of the metronome." Fortunately, we don't have to choose but can take equal delight in the poetry of Yeats and Stevens, of Wordsworth and Whitman, of Frost and Plath, and of Richard Wilbur and Adrienne Rich.

Two examples from recent issues of *Dialogue* demonstrate that both traditional and open forms allow for significant poetic expression. An example of the former is Karl Sandberg's "Shadow" in the same issue in which Hughes' commentary appears. Written in a loose iambic meter, irregular line length, and a loose rhyme scheme (abcdbefegf), the poem also includes alliteration, assonance, and allusion (the last line borrowed from e. e. cummings' "Buffalo Bill's Defunct"). But what makes the poem so successful is the contrast between the diction of the first nine lines and that of the last line:

as we begin reading, we expect this to be a love poem with its archaic language and romantic imagery and therefore are shocked to find that it is death (addressed formally as "Mr.") and not a lover who casts a shadow over the poet.

An excellent example of a successful poem written in free verse is Eugene England's "Two Trains and a Dream" in the special issue of *Dialogue* devoted to him (Vol. 35, No. 1). Although without noticeable form (three stanzas of irregular length) or regular meter, the poem is nonetheless powerful in its expression of an important experience. There is a tension in the poem between the matter of fact recitation of events associated with both trains, the diction flat as a journalist's report, and the detail in the dream section of the poem where objective fact gives way to image ("a green satin French provincial/Couch, in a room painted by Watteau) and allusion ("The transition room in Kubrick's *2001*") where the detail is subjective ("I notice he is luminous under his robe,/And his face is serene beyond all description") and where the diction is rich and biblical (e.g., England using the phrase from Isaiah 50:7 "like flint" in the last line). The poem works so well because of the disquietude set up between the idea that God would send personal revelation to spare a prophet's life but apparently be unwilling to intervene to save a mother and her children, only to have the tension resolved in the third stanza with the revelation that, inexplicably, both "trains, children" were in God's hands. The last word of the poem,

"All," expands the idea even further to suggest that even though it may not appear so to our limited vision, all trains and all people are in Christ's hands (which England ironically and dramatically changes in the last stanza to "on your hands"). The poem causes us to wrestle with our set ideas of how God operates in the world (symbolized by the fixed iron tracks) and the mystery of his love in a tragic world (symbolized by the tears in Christ's eyes and the drops of blood falling from every pore and by the inexplicable yet ultimately possible world of dreams).

Rather than concentrating on forms, we should judge a poem by the effect it has on our minds and hearts. As Emily Dickinson argued: "If I read [a book of poetry] and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?" But to get to such experiences often requires a certain level of sophistication and a degree of experience in reading poetry. Many general or casual readers of poetry are likely to miss much that a complex or deep poem has to offer. The good news is that anyone who wishes can learn to read a poem.

While, as Hughes notes, some free verse is inexact, imprecise, and obscure in its expression and while a good deal of free verse relies too heavily on linguistic pyrotechnics or academic obtuseness (what Carl Sandberg spoke of as "poetry sealed in plastic bags labeled 'not touched by human

hands"), the same could be said of some poetic expressions written in traditional forms. While modern free verse may not please us in the same way traditional verse does (with regular rhythmic lines, rime, and set forms), it pleases us in other ways (with invention, open musicality, and experimentation with language). Any poem which is able to capture and convey a significant "thought-felt" experience, to use Frost's term, has the power to enlighten, delight, and surprise us. X.J. Kennedy speaks of the advantage of free verse: "Free to use white space for emphasis, able to shorten or lengthen lines as the sense seems to require, the poet lets the poem discover its shape as it goes along, moving as water flows downhill, adjusting to its terrain, engulfing obstacles."

One of the reasons there is not more of an audience for serious poetry in our culture is that we have given too much of our hearts to the market place, to management, to entertainment, to correlation. Perhaps this is no more evident than in the way we approach the scriptures. Even though sixty percent of the Old Testament and significant sections of the New are poetry, in our scripture study, lesson manuals, and addresses, we focus on the literal, the familiar, and the dogmatic while we ignore what the Psalmist called "the beauty of holiness." Wallace Stevens said that poetry is "a revelation in words by means of the words." When we can re-discover the deep power of language, when we can learn to celebrate the imagination's endless possibilities, when we can understand that, as Frost

said, "the figure [for poetry] is the same as for love" (both of which begin "in delight" and end "in a clarification of life")—only then can we hope for poetry and an audience for poetry that are worthy of our expansive theology and our truly radical religion.

Robert Rees
Brookdale, California

Beyond Reservations and Obstacles

I wish to thank Michael Warner for his thought-provoking letter and the perspective he provides in response to my two-part article "Moving Zion Southward" addressing the potential through church welfare for eliminating malnutrition and childhood disease in the LDS children of less developed countries (Vol. 35, No. 4 and Vol. 36, No. 1). I would also like to discuss a number of the issues Warner raises.

(1) The Cost of World Health Organization (WHO) intervention package as proposed in "Moving Zion Southward"—Warner writes that my "estimation of \$33 million for basic interventions is probably five times too little": I would encourage those deriving cost estimates for an intervention package to research the documents from WHO, the World Bank, or Harvard's publication *The Global Burden of Diseases*, as the estimates are counterintuitive for someone from a wealthy country (they surprised me when I researched them). "Moving Zion Southward" proposed \$90 per person year, quite conservative compared with published estimates of \$70,

or even as low as \$50, per person year. As an example, humanitarian organizations advertise that for \$15 per month, one can provide a child not only with the minimal package as proposed, but also with education and food staples (\$180 per person year). The income level of the malnourished children in the study was 25-50 cents per day or annually \$90-\$180. If one were to spend five times the estimate of \$90 per person year (\$450 per person year), the income level of these children would be more than doubled, and in some cases more than quadrupled.

(2) Economic Conversions—"Any time services are subsidized, demand increases significantly": I agree it is imperative to avoid economic conversion, and, if necessary, the package must be combined with a work requirement (I felt economic conversions to be unlikely with this particular package for the large majority of current church poor). In any case, would it not be preferable to give church parents a chance to alleviate the malnutrition of their children through a work program rather than simply remaining on the sidelines as witnesses to their suffering?

(3) Logistic difficulties—"Administration of the program. would be a practical nightmare. Volunteer organizations are notoriously inefficient, poorly managed, and have difficulty sustaining programs even when beneficial": I see no reason the church could not operate an intervention package at a high level of efficiency similar to that of Catholic Relief Services, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, CARE, Christian Children's Fund, and OXFAM, to name a

few. Of course there will be logistical difficulties. That is true of missionary work in these same countries, but that hasn't prevented us from attempting to reach every individual living in those countries with a pair of missionaries. And the church should have no more difficulty sustaining operations than it does sustaining missionary work.

(4) Administration of the program—"Local leaders do not have the training or capacity to administer a medical or food program": I agree and therefore proposed that an organization similar to LDS Family Services administer the program.

(5) LDS church's intentions—"I do not believe the institutional church has the energy, the time, or commitment to initiate such a program": I believe our church leaders would like to intervene but are paralyzed by fear of the cost and consequences. Could a few efficient "demonstration projects" show them the way?

(6) What's the next step?—"How do we meet and explore the possibilities": Currently multiple "ad-hoc" efforts are in place, most of them not following efficiency guidelines and simultaneously failing to reach the large majority of malnourished children with any intervention. I do not mean to demean these efforts as I have been involved in one of them myself over a period of years. Nevertheless, this is the question I would ask: Can a program be implemented to systematically eliminate malnutrition in LDS children and pregnant women in a cost effective manner without at least tacit church approval or involvement? I would answer no. However, it is conceivable that a group of individuals in

Utah with appropriate church connections and with administrative backgrounds in international assistance could organize such an effort, raise the necessary \$33 million annually, and convince church leaders to at least tacitly support their private efforts. Thus, they would gain approved access to church leaders and members in less-developed countries. Like Michael Warner, I do not have the correct background or political connections to undertake this, but I would be happy to donate to such an effort.

Finally, for groups of ex-missionaries considering "organizing something," they might consider imitating the effort being made on behalf of malnourished LDS children in Guayaquil, Ecuador, consequent to the "Moving Zion Southward" study. (You can contact Bob Rees at brees@heart-math.org in the U.S. or Teresa Fuentes at teresavfuentes@yahoo.com in Ecuador or, alternatively, Brad Walker at kwalker22@aol.com.) The goal is to spend \$70 per person year, purchasing food supplements, and to monitor and eliminate malnutrition in LDS children and pregnant women in Guayaquil (as funding allows), all via local purchase and local volunteer workers. Subsequently, we intend to publish a study documenting the improved nutrition status of these children. Our guidelines emphasize children from weaning to age three and pregnant women. This humanitarian organization "fundacion" in Ecuador consists at this point strictly of volunteers from multiple stakes. With perhaps 4% of all malnourished LDS children living in Guayaquil and surrounding areas, a comprehensive ef-

fort would conservatively cost \$250,000 annually. But of course, we are not expecting funding anywhere near that level (perhaps \$15,000 can be raised), so the humanitarian organization in Ecuador will have to select a group of perhaps 200 children to receive the assistance and leave the other approximately 2000 children malnourished.

Brad Walker
Las Vegas, Nevada

*"Either/Or"? Vogel's
False Dilemma*

Dan Vogel may be the unabashed leader of "New Mormon History" and an intrepid collector/editor of early Mormon documents, but his critique of Mark Thomas' form-critical analysis of Joseph Smith's 1823 vision of the Angel Moroni (Letters, Vol. 36: No. 1) champions his own self-imposed "either/or" approach over Thomas's less dogmatic "both/and," (i.e. *both* historico-critical analysis *and* historically grounded faith in Smith's divine calling) with misplaced methodological self-assurance.

Is there anything "wrong" with Joseph Smith's "[b]eing confused about which passages [of Malachi] the angel quoted in 1823"? Who says true prophets cannot be "confused" before clarifying revelation is later forthcoming? Smith was no bibliophile. His mother, Lucy, characterized Joseph as "much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation

and deep study." Joseph likely had to review those numerous and orally repeated 1823 Malachi quotations, compare them with published English Bible(s) before recognizing the quotations were *not* standard, but variant; hence, the classical Biblical text of Malachi was misleading and unreliable. The latter took time, Bible study, reflection, as part of young Smith's later growing realization that he was not limited merely to obtaining and translating gold plates. There was much more in store in God's enterprise of gospel Restoration. Smith's knowing that he was directly and manifestly "called" of God to do important work didn't at all manifest what the nature of that future work might be. For Vogel to fault Smith as "manipulative" for the latter's natural and normal delay in realizing, as a 17-year-old teenager, the broader scope of his own divine calling is to fault human limitations generally, especially Smith's "inability" to see precisely into his own future.

How, exactly, is Smith supposed to correct the foundational errors of centuries-old orthodox Christianity without "manipulating" (Vogel's word) Biblical and/or Christian history? More precisely, how is Smith to do that massive "correction" (Restoration) when, as yet, he doesn't realize the miasma of orthodox Christian error from which he has been called of God. Meanwhile his family is locally scorned, he becomes a target of orthodox hatred, physical and moral assault, calculated vilification, and is tainted with "glasslooking," "necromancy" (Vogel's word), "money-digging," and lately a ridiculed "magic

world view." It took time, observation, and deep thought (besides divine revelation) for Smith gradually to "understand" Jesus' Gospel to be already fragmented, lost, and altered down the Christian centuries. Indeed, it wasn't until shortly before his 1844 murder in the King Follett Discourse that he fully discovered the "great secret" revealing fully anthropomorphic aspects of God, and hence God's own natural limitations, including "contingent" omniscience.

It's not fair to fault Smith in 1823 with incompleteness in his understanding of his own calling. Prophets must learn gradually "line upon line" in their own due time, precisely as the rest of us. We all may have "anachronistic elements" in our later comprehension as we come to realize and appreciate earlier elements forming our present understanding. This is surely true for Smith's 1823 "Malachi." Vogel appears to misunderstand the "great secret" of God's natural limits as well as Smith's gradually developing understanding of himself and the scope of his divine calling.

Vogel's stated assumption that Smith's 1823 "necromantic encounter" with the Angel Moroni was founded upon Smith's "treasure-guardian spirit" in a "purely treasure-seeking context" (*xi*) falls unwitting victim to the innate incredibility of Howe's 1834 published "affidavits" deliberately gathered against the Smith family by admittedly virulent and excommunicated "Doctor" Hurlbut (he wasn't a "doctor," rather that was his given *name*) for the express purpose of discrediting Smith and his family.

We know the Hurlbut affidavits were inordinately biased against the Smith family because of (1) Hurlbut's anger and deception at being excommunicated from the LDS church, and (2) Hurlbut's proven violent threats against Smith's personal safety. Vogel himself admits that Hurlbut sought solely a "specific kind of [anti-Smith] testimony" (Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2, p. 14).

According to Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The story of [Hurlbut's] obtaining these statements must leave an impression of crumbling foundations of any study erected upon these" (*Dialogue*, Vol 4., No. 2 [summer 1969]: 15). Hurlbut had a thesis to prove; in fact, he set out to create a calculated deception. In modern criminal trials in most states, it is mandatory to instruct the jury to the effect that a "*witness willfully false in part of his or her testimony may be distrusted or disregarded in all of it.*" Failure of a criminal trial judge to instruct the jury on this point of evidence requires mandatory reversal of any defendant's conviction on appeal. The "jury instruction" on trial evidence, derived from centuries of Anglo-American trial experience, doesn't allow objective "detachment" or "segmentation" of willfully false statements. Some witnesses are so animated by personal bias, partiality, and prepossessing intolerance that they cannot present objective "evidence" at all. Such is the case with Hurlbut and his most important "witnesses."

Hurlbut personally selected, drafted, and prepared both the "witnesses" themselves and their written "testimony." The affiants themselves

may also have been "willfully false" or otherwise evilly disposed, but even ignoring their individual motivation, scholars, like jurists, should and can not be allowed to admit Hurlbut's own malicious and "willful falsity" while simultaneously imputing seeming "independence" to those affiants who were selectively chosen solely by Hurlbut. This is especially the case where many Smith "neighbors" were specifically *not* selected by Hurlbut because of their pro-Smith opinions.

"Historians," writes Vogel in *Early Mormon Documents* (1:xv) "do not automatically exclude hearsay, perjured, or even biased (or interested) testimony." In other words, historians may "prove" whatever they wish by relying upon "junk" evidence if they so choose—truth and justice be damned! Let us remember that Mormon history has been set upon (and not only recently) by unscrupulous "evidence seekers" (e.g. Mark Hoffmann) who were not above forging entire documents in order to make Smith and/or Mormonism appear dishonorable. I claim no Hurlbut "forgeries." But where to draw the line between Hurlbut's extreme bias and the affiants' own purportedly "independent" recollections is difficult to guess. Hurlbut plainly discussed each anti-Smith tidbit with many affiant detractors. Hurlbut's group statements alone (co-signed by many hearsay "witnesses" at once) are plain evidence that Hurlbut "organized" and drafted those group responses so as to cross-fertilize each other. Hurlbut may have done so with individual statements and individual "affidavits" as well.

The primary source for Vogel's "treasure-guardian spirit" (peepstoning, treasure seeking) assumption with its foundation in those same Hurlbut affidavits is the so-called "1826 trial" of Joseph Smith. This was, in fact, not a "trial" at all, was won entirely by Smith, produced no "trial record" nor official "transcript" at all, and cannot result in condemning Smith for glasslooking (peepstoning, treasure seeking) as consensus historians now mistakenly assume. Vogel and other published Smith critics expressly rely heavily upon the so-called "March 1826 court transcript," a document, not at all a "court transcript," uncovered by Rev. Wesley Walters in 1971, to cement (wrongfully) their certainty of Joseph Smith treasure seeking. I have no objection to the authenticity of Rev. Walters's documentary discoveries. My complaint is with his blatantly distorted misinterpretation of the discovered documents. This fiasco was the result of Walters's failure to notice one important word in the so-called "bill of costs"—the word "trial." Where the judge in question, Judge Neely, participated in a "trial" he plainly listed it as such in that very document. Where he conducted a "trial," he plainly said so. Indeed, it was in Neely's pecuniary interest to mention "trial" whenever such occurred, for "trial" usually produced the largest amount of judicial time, effort, and services (\$3.68). "Examinations" were less work, less complex, than "trials" and brought in the lesser amount (\$2.68) listed for the Smith litigation.

Neely's "bill" to the county was

for \$2.68 for his judicial services in the "examination" of the Joseph Smith litigation. Was it a "trial"? Not at all. It was an "examination," also called a "preliminary examination" or a "preliminary hearing." The evidentiary difference (burden of proof) between an "examination" and a "trial" is much like the difference between a foothill and Mt. Everest. All that was required March 20, 1826, in order to "bind over" Joseph Smith for later trial was that the prosecution show that Smith appear moderately "guilty" of a misdemeanor, one by the way which the document does not specify. We ignore here the problem of an unspecified "misdemeanor" because, in fact, Smith won the litigation, and hence Neely felt no need to specify exactly what "misdemeanor" might have been originally charged. The prosecution was unable to produce enough, or convincing enough, evidence at Smith's 1826 "examination" even to meet the minimal "probable cause" standard of proof.

The Neely-invoice "bill" to Chenango County "for my services" discovered (but wholly mischaracterized) by Rev. Walters and virtually every anti-Smith critic since its discovery in 1971 demonstrates conclusively that the Smith litigation was not a trial. It was a preliminary "examination" which *Smith won hands down*. No "trial" followed. Walters's own investigation verified the absence of such a trial before Justice Neely (or anyone else) in Chenango County, N.Y. at any time between 1826 and 1830.

I wrote *Dialogue* in 1971 or 1972 my own complete analysis of the then

newly discovered Walters's documents, explaining precisely why the Neely "bill of costs" was a purely fiscal document for Neely's income, telling us nothing whatever about the nature of the charge against Smith nor if it involved "glass looking." Here are the important points: (1) the 1826 litigation was not a "trial" but rather an "examination" which Smith won; (2) Smith could not possibly have been found "guilty" of anything since guilt is not in issue at a preliminary "examination"; (3) it is extremely unlikely that Smith actually testified at his own preliminary examination whereby he would necessarily have waived his Fifth Amendment rights (state and federal) to silence at both that hearing and later at trial, should he have been "bound over" for trial at a later date; (4) there was no "official record" of that examination (official court reporters or stenographers did not then exist), rather any purported "record" of testimony was happenstance note-taking (or, worse, biased, "planted" recordings provided by interested litigants themselves); (5) there is no official Neely "court docket," or if so, Neely's fiscal notation to his paymaster uncovered by Rev. Walters was not it; (6) Neely's handwritten "glass looker" notation (intended for his eyes

only and/or perhaps his county's comptroller/paymaster) was merely Neely's own reminder of which Joseph Smith was involved in that litigation, there being many "Joseph Smiths" including Joseph's father, "Joseph Smith," who reportedly appeared and testified at that examination; (7) if "glass looking" were involved in that criminal "examination," Neely plainly decided in favor of Smith and against "glass looking" based upon the evidence presented. Smith was immediately released from custody and not "bound over for trial."

Vogel's mistaken assumption that Smith "began" as a wholly secular "treasure seeker" (even in 1823), later transforming himself into the Mormon religious prophet is largely misshapen by Vogel's undue reliance upon both the largely unreliable Hurlbut affidavits and the purported 1826 "examination" testimony which was so insubstantial as to require Justice Neely to dismiss all charges against Smith. As Vogel noted above, historians are not required to obey judicial rules of evidence. But I respectfully suggest that they choose to abandon such rules at the probable cost of historic truth.

Gerry L. Ensley
Los Alamitos, California

www.urimandthummim.com

Marc Schindler's lengthy comment ("Errors of Men," Vol. 36, No. 2) on my letter ("Translated Correctly," Vol. 36., No. 1) about Earl M. Wunderli's "Critique of a Limited Geography for

Book of Mormon Events" (Vol 35, No. 3) requires a response since Schindler completely misunderstands my point and, in trying to refute it, makes factually incorrect or irrelevant assertions.

My comment was about the translation of the plates, not about the orig-

inal text on the plates. Schindler completely misses the distinction. He seems to think that I am demanding that the Book of Mormon be "inerrant," which I nowhere implied. My only suggestion was that the *translation* was supposed to be correct. That certainly is in accord with Mormon teachings. The Eighth Article of Faith suggests that although the Bible is reliable "as far as it is translated correctly," no such qualification need apply to the Book of Mormon.

The church has consistently taught that the translation of the plates was done "through the power of God." (D&C 1:29, 20:8). One must ask, then, how a translation done "through the power of God" would differ from one done simply by human intelligence alone. One would think that a translation done with divine power would be correct, at least to the extent that "horse" would not appear where "deer" or "tapir" would have been more accurate. But what is a "correct" translation? Having spent my professional life as a linguist, and having taught translating at the graduate school level, and having worked professionally as a translator, I know something about translating. A good translator must know both the language and culture of the people where the original text was produced, and the language and culture of the audience which will be reading the translation. A good translator must do more than the automatic translating machines one finds nowadays on the Internet. For example, if the Nephites had a word which originally meant "north" but changed its meaning to mean

"west," it would be a gross translation error mechanically to translate that word as "north" for an audience where "north" means in the general direction of the Pole Star rather than towards the setting sun. Perhaps Schindler is suggesting that the Urim and Thummim was simply a dictionary look-up device that God provided, leaving Joseph Smith to make the blunders that a first-year language student might make?

Schindler wonders whether "that person [referring to me] has actually read the Book of Mormon. It is full of references to the 'errors of men'. . ." And I must wonder whether this Schindler person has actually read the Book of Mormon, since the phrase "errors of men" never occurs in the text. There is only a single passage in the entire body of the text that is even similar, at Mormon 8:17, prophesying of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon: "And if there be faults, they be the faults of a man." Schindler then also refers to "Joseph Smith's introductory material [which] also makes such references." Schindler may be referring to the title page of the Book of Mormon where the same sentence occurs (with "mistakes of men" rather than "faults of a man"). But now one must also wonder whether this Schindler person has read the *History of the Church* or the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* since the Prophet clearly stated that the title page is a translation from the plates (HC 1:71, TPJS 7).

These two statements are the *only* such passages in the Book of Mormon, which hardly supports Schindler's as-

sertion that the book is "full" of such references. But even these two statements, written by Mormon, cannot be referring to mistakes in the English translation, since that translation did not yet exist. Mormon is obviously talking about his own writings as he wrote them in his own language. Schindler does not seem to be able to make this distinction. A mistaken translation obviously has nothing to do with the original text.

Most of Schindler's other comments have to do with the human tendency to use words inaccurately sometimes. But that thoroughly human weakness is quite irrelevant to what is supposed to be a divinely inspired translation. Doesn't God (and his divinely aided translator) know the correct meanings of English words? Is it

too much to assume that a divinely inspired translation should be a *correct* translation, as the Eighth Article of Faith suggests?

Schindler sarcastically suggests that I take a marking pen to an animal preserve and change the "buffalo" signs to "bison." One must ask whether Schindler has likewise corrected his copy of the Book of Mormon by changing "north" to "west," "south" to "east" and "horse" to "tapir" so that they are now correctly translated (or I suppose he could simply add the phrase "as far as it is translated correctly" to the reference to the Book of Mormon in his copy of the Eighth Article of Faith).

Richard Packham
Roseburg, Oregon