because, since you were born, I've tasted fruit
I never knew could grow from the thin root
of my cold life. I've savored all your grins,
your honeyed sleep, the freshness of your skin—
delicious. This new fruit is more than sweet;
my tongue prickles with terror as I eat.
But even terror lends a tang: it's joy,
since you were born. My son, it tastes like joy. (227)

Notes

1. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), Project Gutenberg, http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?fk_files=16875&pageno=424 (accessed December 20, 2008).

2. "In Hebrew *segullah* signifies a cherished personal possession that is set apart and diligently cared for; it is a term the Lord has used with affection to describe His covenant people (Exodus 19:5, Psalms 135:4), and one we use here in remembrance of the blessings and responsibilities we receive in relationship with Him." http://segullah.org/about_segullah.php (accessed January 8, 2009).

3. See, e.g., Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986); Anne Lamott, *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994); Camille Peri and Kate Moses, eds., *Mothers Who Think: Tales of Real-life Parenthood* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1999).

4. See, for example, Mary Lythgoe Bradford's fine exposition, "I, Eye, Aye: A Personal Essay on Personal Essays," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 81–89.

5. Frederic Jameson, "Imaginary Resolution," in *The Jameson Reader,* edited by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (2000), http://books.google.com/books?id=5PHqYHpGcBAC&pg=PA38&lpg=PA38&dq=imaginary+resolution+real+contradiction&source=web&ots=ou5Zpqwiyv&sig=vctQrDrkifqUgGkVrcvoNI_M4FI&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=7&ct=result#PPA39,M1 (accessed December 10, 2008).

Gazing into the Face of the Other

Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen, eds. *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies.* Macon, Ga.: Mercer

University Press, 2007. 553 pp. Paper: $25.00; ISBN: 0-88146-116-4

Reviewed by Richard T. Livingston

The publication of *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies* in November 2007 marked an auspicious moment in Mormon studies. While Mormon studies, especially in the area of theological discourse, is still very much in its infancy, the prospects for its success have never been higher. For example, academic courses, programs of study, conferences, organizations, and publications are all increasing in number and scope. Emblematic of these developments, one of the most commendable features of this volume is that it brings together some of the brightest minds who have helped set the agenda for current theological reflection about and within Mormonism—e.g., Truman Madsen, the late Eugene England, David Paulsen, James Faulconer, and James McLachlan. What's more, with few exceptions, the scholars[1] representing Mormon points of view in this volume demonstrate a high level of competence in the subject matter of their discussion partners and show themselves to be capable interlocutors as they explore twentieth-century Christian theologians and themes. As such, *Mormonism in Dialogue* provides one more example that optimism in the future of Mormon studies is neither naive nor misguided.

In addition, comparative studies, interreligious dialogue, and interfaith interactions are very much in vogue throughout the contemporary landscape of the thought, practice, and scholarship of religion. In academic, ecclesiastical-institutional, and lay modes of discourse, broad trends indicate that extreme forms of isolationism and exclusivism are out—i.e., becoming increasingly marginalized—while ecumenism and inclusivism are very much in. *Mormonism in Dialogue* is exemplary in this respect as well, because just as the scholars of Mormonism are among the finest, the Christian contributors are also some of the best-respected in their particular fields—e.g., David Ray Griffin, Robert McAfee Brown, David Tracy, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Dwight Hopkins, Gary Dorrien, and Clark Pinnock. Indeed, one of the academy's most eminent scholars of religion and culture, Martin Marty, provides a

very concise, cogent, and complimentary foreword to the volume. Marty is generous in his praise of Mormonism in Dialogue, stating, among other things, that he "hopes that the richness of the essays in this book will inspire study in theological schools and schools of religion so that a new generation can be poised to do as well as this one in dealing with 'the other'" (ix). He concludes his brief reflection with a ringing endorsement, noting his unexpected satisfaction with the "scope, detail, and depth" of the volume, and his desire that others will come to see that it represents a gift "to everyone who has an interest in and concern for 'the other' in religious thought" (x). With such talented individuals on both sides and such timely topics, Mormonism in Dialogue not only offers an excellent example of critically constructive interfaith conversations, but also the sort of bridge-building and mutual enrichment that can occur when such dialogical encounters are at their best.

Marty's employment of the term "other" is significant, because that notion provides part of the fabric with which the entire text is implicitly interwoven. Always situated within a historical situation and conditioned by a cultural context, one's most basic understandings of the world emerge out of the interaction and interdependency of the "mirrors" and "windows" that are placed on the walls of one's existential space. Whether the light is refracted through the penetrating stare into the mirror or the poignant gaze through the pane of glass at the lives and faces of those who may initially seem so peculiar, these "lenses" rarely allow for anything like perfect clarity and comprehension. In other words, one subtext that allows a book like this to hang together coherently is the complementary relationship between self-reflection and the attempt to step into the horizon of, and fully engage with, modes of thinking about and being in the world that are unknown, unfamiliar, and often unsettling. Mormonism in Dialogue is important, therefore, because it shows both how and why reflections on the images that appear in the mirror, the imaginative wonder at those which lie beyond the window, and the interpenetration of the open window of dialogical discourse, are inexorably intertwined in a constant dialectical movement that shapes one's being-in-the-world. As such, constructively critical conversations allow for an unfolding and enfolding of horizons that might otherwise be impossible.

The work of Stephen Robinson and Robert Millet with the Evangelical community has produced, for example, Stephen E. Robinson and Craig L. Blomberg, *How Wide the Divide?: A Mormon & an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998); Robert L. Millet and Gerald R. McDermott, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007); Robert L. Millet and Gregory Johnson, *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical* (Rhinebeck, N.Y.: Monkfish Book Publishing, 2007); and Robert L. Millet, *A Different Jesus?: The Christ of the Latter-day Saints* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing, 2005). Still, in many respects *Mormonism in Dialogue* stands as a pioneering effort. This achievement is important to note, because the relative newness of and ambivalence toward theological reflection among Mormons, as well as their relative lack of experience with scholarly interfaith conversations, lead to moments in which the dialogues display misunderstandings, confusions, and momentary lapses into monologues, devotional depictions, and even polemics. For example, recall the rhetorical and intellectual disconnect that took place during the the concluding moments of the symposium on Joseph Smith, held at the Library of Congress in March 2005, when Douglas Davies posed one of the most memorable questions of the entire event. In response to a somewhat awkward moment, in which it had become apparent that one of the Mormon panelists had stepped beyond the type of discourse appropriate to academia, Davies commented, good-naturedly but pointedly, "I think the most important thing I want to say is, What are we doing here? What kind of event is this? What kind of a symposium? Is it academic, or is it evangelistic?" Like several of the participants at that event, it is apparent that some of the Mormon writers here are still working to develop a scholarly voice that can comfortably and coherently situate them between their religious and academic commitments, or find a position that is some combination of both.

Without a doubt, however, this reaching for a common vocabulary, syntax, and tone was a challenge for both groups of interlocutors, and thus I think that Marty is also correct to point out that, in

general, "the LDS scholars are far more at home with . . . Christian thought than vice versa. . . . The Christians here with few exceptions give little evidence that they boned up on LDS thought with the present project in view" (ix). Their lack of expertise in Mormonism is regularly acknowledged, however, so genuine admissions of ignorance, attempts at clarification, and proposals for continued exploration are quite common. In short, intellectual honesty and academic integrity are manifest throughout. Regardless, this less-than-ideal dynamic keeps "the Latter-day Saint scholars in a kind of responsive-defensive mode" (ix). Such deficiencies certainly aren't an insurmountable barrier to dialogue, but the attempt to achieve a significant measure of nuance, richness, and creativity is somewhat stultified when either side is not intimately acquainted with the other. Thus, if the Christian scholars had demonstrated a greater familiarity with the religious community that was outside their "windows," the text would have benefitted immensely.

In addition, I expected more mutual exploration, one in which each side reflected on itself and the other all the way through. Instead, in all but the final dialogue between Clark Pinnock and David Paulsen on openness theology, the essay that begins each conversation was written long before the idea for this volume had been conceived. In fact, each was originally presented at BYU as part of a series of lectures hosted by Paulsen, who was then Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding, so they were intended only to provide an introductory summary of a twentieth-century Christian theologian or school of thought. Because those original encounters did not formally involve two-sided investigations, readers should be prepared for a lack of direct, substantive, or extended engagement with LDS thought, history, or practice in the overviews by the Christian thinkers.

Mormonism in Dialogue is divided into three sets of dialogues. The first covers prominent twentieth-century figures: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Neibuhr, and Langdon Gilkey. The second introduces the family of liberation theologies: liberation theology itself, and then the sub-genres of feminist theology, womanist theology, and black theology. The final set of essays focuses on theological questions surrounding revelation and reason: process theology, theology as hermeneutics, and openness theology. The format of each dialogue is roughly as follows: an

overview of the Christian theologian or theology, a response by a Mormon scholar, a rejoinder by the Christian thinker, and a final reply by the Mormon thinker. As Paulsen notes, the "point is not to give one or the other the final word," but rather the "format is to encourage sincere inquiry and interest in each other" (17). Thus, *Mormonism in Dialogue* ably attempts to create a forum in which Christians and Mormons alike not only illuminate their own understandings, but also help each other to "clarify and refine their respective theological formulations" (13). Once again, the hope is that the mirror and the window will hang together to allow for a sort of fusion of horizons to emerge.

Adherence to that basic template, however, is not consistent, which makes for some awkward and even disappointing moments. The first deviation occurs in the dialogue on Paul Tillich, which contains no final reply by Truman Madsen. Second, in the dialogue on womanist theology, neither a rejoinder nor a final reply is provided—i.e., there is only an overview and a response—so it is difficult to say that a "dialogue" actually occurred. Third, there is no final reply by Eugene England in the dialogue on black theology (perhaps because of England's untimely passing in 2001). Fourth, in response to David Tracy's essay on theology as hermeneutics, not just one, but three Mormon thinkers (Kent Robson, James Faulconer, and Benjamin Huff) provide a response, yet there is no rejoinder to any of them from Tracy. Tracy mentions Mormonism in his overview, but only in an incidental way; because he does not attempt a substantial engagement with LDS philosophy or theology, a conversation never really gets off the ground. In one final example, Kent Robson responded to Gary Dorrien's piece on Langdon Gilkey's myth-creative liberal theology, and Dorrien provided a rejoinder. However, another response also unexpectedly appears, this time from James Faulconer, which is in turn followed by a rejoinder, not from Dorrien, but from an entirely different thinker, Gregory Sapp. The dialogue then concludes with a final reply by Faulconer. No explanation is offered for the variation.

Perhaps the unusual format would not have been so disconcerting if it weren't for the fact that Robson's response is one of the weaker essays from among the Mormon scholars. Summarily

stated, Robson's response demonstrates several important misunderstandings of Dorrien/Gilkey, raises several tangential counterpoints, and fails to recognize the complexities involved in his own (Robson's) assessment of both the Christian tradition and LDS understandings. I thus think Dorrien is correct in rejecting Robson's exaggerated view of "the influence of Augustine's arguments about original sin over 'all the rest of Christianity'" (420), in calling into question Robson's (mis)characterizations of Neibuhr and Gilkey, and in clarifying why both he and Gilkey "are far removed from the doctrine of God expounded in Professor Robson's paper" (422). Faulconer's response then poses several interesting questions for Dorrien/Gilkey–e.g., Martin Heidegger's argument that God must be *a* being rather than Being Itself; how it is that phenomenology can speak of transcendence; and the relation between secular reason and mythic-theological reflection. Still, his contribution is somewhat marred by his explicit admission that he does "not have firsthand knowledge of Gilkey himself" (445) as well as his own lack of engagement with Mormon thought. Faulconer's lack of expertise with primary sources and his choice to focus exclusively on Dorrien's account of Gilkey, however, was not nearly as unfortunate as Robson's failing to adequately appreciate or engage with the main points of Dorrien's essay.

On a more positive note, however, Faulconer's response to David Tracy's article on hermeneutical theology was one of the very best in the entire volume. Tracy opens his overview with an expression of puzzlement: "As an interested reader of the distinguished history of Latter-day Saint philosophical reflection, I have found it fascinating but difficult to try and understand the complex relationships between philosophy and theology in Mormon thought" (449). My initial reaction to that statement was wondering exactly who or what Tracy had in mind when speaking of "the distinguished history of Latter-day Saint philosophical reflection," because it's difficult for me to think of many Mormons who have actually done philosophical reflection–i.e., produced philosophical works from an explicitly Mormon point of view. Regardless, his basic point is well taken, and it is certainly a common reaction by many observers of Mormon thought. Trying to discern Mormonism's understanding of and relationship to philoso-

phy and theology individually is challenging enough. Even more challenging is making sense of the messiness of their interplay in LDS discourse. The sentiment thus seems quite justified.

Nonetheless, Tracy then goes on to explore that relationship from his perspective as a Catholic theologian and shows why a more in-depth review of the positions held by some theologians who are commonly thrown into the extreme camps of fideism and rationalism reveals a more complex portrait than such reductive labels allow for. While it is surely the case that many thinkers lean (perhaps heavily) toward either a fideist or rationalist trajectory, pure examples of either are extremely difficult to find, which is an indication that neither necessarily excludes the other. For Tracy, theology must be revelational, that is, it must affirm the centrality of revelation as "an event of divine self-manifestation in the event and person of Jesus the Christ" (453). His central thesis is that "hermeneutical philosophy provides the kind of contemporary philosophy needed by a revelational theology" (459), and he provides five reasons which incisively support that view. He concludes with a brief reflection on how such an exegetical approach can help unite "theory to the praxis of spiritual exercises" (461), reason with faith, or theology with philosophy.

Unsurprisingly, each of the three respondents takes up the challenge evoked by Tracy's puzzlement, and their responses neatly exemplify the difficulty involved in gaining a clear sense for what that relationship is like for Mormons. James Siebach takes a somewhat polemical, dogmatic, and simplistic tack, describing the entire history of Christianity as little more than a misguided attempt at a synthesis of Platonic thinking with Christian theology. He concludes that "such marriages are *always,* in the LDS view, transformative of both philosophy and scripture and, as such, *a departure from revealed truth,* for philosophical systems are relative to culture in a manner that revelation is not, even though revelation takes place in a particular culture and time" (466–67; emphasis mine). *Always* a departure from revealed truth? Siebach provides little justification for this sweeping declaration. For him, Joseph Smith's visionary encounters serve to clarify rather than obscure, and the many divine disclosures disseminated through Smith generate a tradition of an "uninterrupted,

ongoing stream of revelation from God to his people through a prophet who leads and guides the LDS Church" (465). An *uninterrupted* and *ongoing* stream? Given the difference between much of Smith's work—e.g., the dissemination of visions and revelations, and the production of scripture—and that of his successors as Church president, it's difficult to know what to make of this type of claim.

Regardless, for Siebach, such prophetic hearing necessarily coincides with a realization that God is known only through revelation. In contrast to the blending of Platonism and Christian theology, whereby concepts like *hypostasis* and *ousia* only served to "obscure rather than illuminate the divine nature" (464), the LDS understanding of God flows out of Smith's first vision, which provides a "clear description of the Father and the Son as distinct and separately embodied persons" (464). Unwilling to acknowledge any potential difficulties in the Mormon conception of multiple, finite deities, Siebach argues that any synthesis between philosophy and theology is "ultimately deleterious to a true understanding of the divine nature" (464). As such, while the attempt to bring hermeneutical philosophy and a theology of revelation together may provide some benefit at the individual level, he argues that such efforts cannot be the "procedure by which LDS doctrine is to be established or *clarified*" (467; emphasis mine). He thus holds that LDS discourse on the divine must maintain a "refusal to incorporate philosophical analysis into the formulation of LDS church doctrine" (467) and that LDS God-talk is ultimately *atheological.* Mormons should thus be deeply suspicious of Tracy's proposal for unifying such disparate and mutually exclusive modes of discourse.

Unfortunately, Siebach does very little to elucidate what revelation at either the prophetic or the personal level finally amounts to. Has it always meant the same thing throughout LDS history? Again, what does the notion of an "uninterrupted stream" mean? Have there been additional moments like Joseph Smith's theophany that have significantly shaped LDS self-understanding? Have revelations in the form that they are presented in the Doctrine and Covenants been given to or experienced by either some or all of Joseph Smith's successors? If the answer is yes to either one of those last two questions, what is the evidence for that claim? If not all LDS prophets have reported such encounters,

what does prophetic disclosure of the divine mean in the contemporary setting? And, how does that understanding relate to individual communication with deity? Nor does he provide any helpful indicators about how one might identify when revelatory moments come to an end and rational ones begin, and vice versa. All that we're told, in effect, is that revelation always and necessarily trumps reason, so it just isn't clear to me what the division of labor ultimately comes to. Furthermore, far too many of Siebach's statements are given as little more than bald assertions and dogmatic claims. As such, it was one of those "What are we doing here?" moments in which the mirror may have been granted an undue level of prominence.

Fortunately, James Faulconer's response is much more balanced, nuanced, and cogent. He begins with an excellent clarification of the multiple senses of the term "revelation" itself in Mormon discourse—a description that was sorely needed in a text where the term is ubiquitously employed but in which useful articulations of its distinctive character in either community were surprisingly rare. He then offers a concise elucidation of the various understandings of theology among Mormons and follows with five insightful suggestions why they have done so little theological work. First, the Church itself is still relatively young. Second, "fideism has grown in popularity among contemporary Church leaders" (473) (and I think Siebach's piece nicely represents this common tendency). Third, the LDS concept of continuing revelation "makes theology more challenging"—at least "if theology means rational theology" (474)—but it doesn't render it impossible.

Fourth, and closely related to number three, he points out that Latter-day Saints often have a mistaken view of the nature of scripture. They often treat scripture as "a set of propositions that are poorly expressed or, at best, poetic," he observes. "We then try to discover the propositional content (doctrines) that we assume is behind those poorly expressed or poetic expressions" (475). Instead, the sacred texts of Mormonism allow for a primordial questioning of self and world, demand a response in faith, and thus call for interpretive appropriation and meditative discipleship. Such an approach is "inherently theological, albeit not strictly rational" (475), and is, of course, very much in accord with the main

thrust of Tracy's proposal to unify philosophy and theology by a hermeneutical methodology.

Fifth, and perhaps most important for Faulconer, is that the Latter-day Saint experience of religion "is fundamentally practical, and, so, does not lend itself readily to theological reflection as most Mormons understand that term" (476). Mormonism is much more concerned with practice than it is with intellectual explication of dogma, which has—perhaps somewhat ironically, and maybe even a bit unnaturally—been the most common approach to doing theology in those relatively few instances when it has been attempted. Examples of this type of approach would include Orson Pratt, B. H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, and Bruce R. McConkie. And, although Blake Ostler, easily the most prolific contemporary Mormon theologian, offers a much more sophisticated type of theologizing than has been done in the past, his philosophical theology does manifest a similar impulse.

Faulconer then concludes with a brief review of the diversity of methodologies that have appeared recently, affirming those that he holds to be most conducive to and fruitful for the Mormon mode of being-in-the-world: "Mormon theology is beginning to take part in the larger theological discussion, moving more in the direction of multiple theologies and, particularly, theologies that, as Tracy so well puts it, 'accord priority to "possibility" over "actuality,"' 'take history and historicity with full seriousness,' and recognize truth as manifestation, disclosure, or disclosure-concealment" (478). Simply put, Faulconer's essay was careful, concise, and convincing. What's especially fascinating about this group of essays is that Benjamin Huff then rounds out the continuum of perspectives by actually arguing in favor of a systematic approach to LDS theology, albeit in a modified sense—one that recognizes its inherently provisional status and that allows narrative, practical, and conceptual considerations to complement and illuminate rather than exclude or prohibit one another.

Another moment that provides a good example of the high caliber of engagement in *Mormonism in Dialogue* is the dialogue on the theology of Paul Tillich. Joseph Price provides a very good introduction to Tillich's career and thought, which was framed around Tillich's "understanding of theology, especially as manifest in the development of his theological method of correlation,"

his conception of "God as being-itself," and his "understanding of faith as the dynamic state of being ultimately concerned" (124). After a short review of Tillich's background, Price followed through on each of those three central threads quite skillfully. Truman Madsen's response to Price takes a decidedly critical stance toward several axiomatic components around which Tillich's entire corpus pivots. First, he raises serious questions about Tillich's conception of symbol. The problem, according to Madsen, is that Tillich maintains *in theory* "that religious symbols cannot be transcribed or reduced to ordinary language" (148) and thus cannot be explicated; yet explication is precisely what he does with them *in practice.* "A primal question," Madsen therefore asks, "is how Tillich, given this untranslatability thesis, can emerge from symbolic solipsism; that is, from the subjective circle which he imposes on religious awareness" (148).

Second, Madsen offers a stinging critique of Tillich's formulation of the divine as "ultimate concern," "being itself," the "ground of being," or the "power of being." Madsen's main worry here, as it is with his suspicion of symbols, is just how to coherently account for the cognitive content of the notion of being-itself, particularly in light of Tillich's shifting and reshifting position on how to articulate the status of this most basic ontological assumption. In other words, how can the proposition "God is being-itself" ultimately overcome the charge that it is a vacuous and meaningless statement? On Madsen's reading, Tillich has gone through three different stages of understanding on this question, each of them either inadequate or incoherent. Madsen's bigger, even "holistic," worry, however, is this: "Does Ultimate Concern have ultimate concern for me?" (150) Nothing less than the consummate problem of the simultaneity of God's transcendence from and immanence in the world is a stake in Madsen's critique. No theology can escape a confrontation with this fundamental challenge, and he offers two major responses from an LDS perspective. However, in doing so Madsen isn't nearly as self-critical as he is with Tillich and thus fails to point out the potentially problematic areas with his own counter-claims. Nonetheless, in my judgment, his general arguments against Tillich are compelling, and, if sound, potentially devastating. Unfortunately, Price's rejoinder to Madsen's

brief and trenchant essay is wholly unsatisfactory, because he largely sidesteps Madsen's main arguments.

Before turning to what, for me at least, were the two high points in the volume, I want to offer a few comments on what I felt was the low point in text—the dialogue on feminist theology. This was another conversation in which the format was slightly altered; two overview essays rather than one were given by Rosemary Radford Ruether. Each calls for a radical reinterpretation of God-language. The first focuses on a reimaging of Christological understandings and the second on a complete revisioning of Christianity's root metaphors for God. In my judgment, both pieces are interesting and insightful in terms of their historical, sociological, and cultural reflections. Even if a greater recognition of the diversity of vantage points of the events and structures she addresses may have been desirable at times—i.e., the feminist lens through which she frames her subject matter is in very sharp focus throughout—her critiques are consistently incisive. She demonstrates a very thoughtful and creative impulse with (1) her reformulation of Christology in terms of an integration with egalitarian anthropology, and not just in terms of gender, but also ethnicity and culture (262); (2) her reconception of God as both male and female, simultaneously Father and Mother, and the Divine Parent (255, 256, 262, 270, 274); and (3) her reinterpretation of God "in terms of liberating, loving, and mutual human relationships" (275).

While I found much to be praised in Reuther's call for theological and Christological rethinking, the radicality of her revisions and the centrality of her metaphorical conceptuality call for a particularly skilled and sensitive Mormon feminist to find equally creative ways to engage with her thought, achieve mutual understanding, and foster constructively critical growth. Unfortunately, I don't feel that respondent Camille Williams was able to achieve that level of discourse. Given that Reuther's theological proposals cut right to the heart of so much that is axiomatic in Mormon discourse—e.g., her absolute rejection of literalistic conceptions of God and utter repudiation of gender essentialism at both the theological and anthropological levels—almost any LDS response would inevitably produce some very strong moments of divergence. The fact that Williams made such divergences clear was not the problem with her retort; rather, it was the manner in

which and the substance with which she highlighted her disagreements. Her inability to sufficiently recognize potential moments of convergence, and her general lack of theological creativity. My basic concerns then are roughly as follows: (1) She fails to adequately appreciate, understand, or engage with the thrust of Reuther's main deconstructive and constructive movements; (2) Her historical, sociological, and cultural assessments lack a sufficient degree of sophistication and self-criticism; and (3) Her overall presentation is decidedly dogmatic in tenor, often crossing the line into a devotional mode of discourse.

With respect to my first concern with Williams's response, Reuther offers both theological criticism and constructive counter-proposals in her essays, but Williams primarily engaged with them only indirectly and thus could not successfully show why Reuther's formulations were either untenable or incoherent on their own terms. In other words, when the scholarly task required Williams to peer out the window at the unknown and discomfiting, it seemed that she was willing only to refract her account through a constant glance over her shoulder at the mirror. What she offers then is a very simplistic account of commonly held LDS points of view, without either critically acknowledging or assessing potentially problematic areas of the Mormon ideas she attempts to elucidate. Nor does she seem to recognize the possibility that the history of Mormon theology allows for a multiplicity of conceptions and creative reinterpretations in many relevant areas.

As a second and closely related problem, Williams does not successfully show why Reuther's historical, social, and cultural critique is mistaken, nor does she offer any critical assessment of the origins and evolution of the sociological and theological constructs that have served to shape Mormonism's own self-understanding about gender identity and roles. As such, I think Reuther is right in her rejoinder to Williams when she says, "On family and gender roles she sometimes resorts to caricature of a feminism that represents neither my position, nor that of mainstream feminism" (296). A further weakness is the absence of discussion of the LDS Church's strained relation with the feminist movements of the last third of the twentieth century. Indeed, to the best of my

reading, she does not draw on any nondevotional LDS feminist scholarship in her piece.

Third, and finally, Williams persistently uses language more appropriate to a devotional setting. Examples of such rhetoric show themselves in such statements as: "Reuther's claim . . . 'that all of our images of God are human projections,' is not supported by LDS doctrine, nor is the view that we are at liberty to reconstruct the 'images of God' to better suit contemporary sensibilities. Joseph Smith saw two separate *embodied* personages: God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ" (278; emphasis hers). Once again, Davies's question is entirely apropos. Reuther trenchantly captures their disparity:

> The real crux of the difference between my views and those of Camille Williams is her rejection of social analysis and ideology critique. Basically she wishes to reduce the problem of abuse of women in family and society to exceptional individuals, men or women, who fail in their responsibilities. But she rejects both the possibility of distorted historical social structures that are inherently unjust and false ideologies designed to justify and sanction unjust social structures. Most particularly she rejects any possibility of social or ideological critique of the LDS tradition and its family and social patterns, seeing these as divinely revealed and hence infallible. (297)

In sum, the language, style, and substance of Williams's essay, while likely familiar to and accepted by many Latter-day Saints, is the sort that tends to end conversations rather than lead to mutual appreciation, exploration, and enrichment.

In direct contrast, the essay most exemplary of self-criticism was, without a doubt, Eugene England's response to Dwight Hopkins's treatment of black theology. Hopkins's piece was largely a historical overview of the origins and development of black theology in the latter half of the twentieth century, primarily focusing on the work of its leading figures. I considered this essay an especially helpful introduction to the movement and would strongly recommend it to anyone interested in gaining a basic sense of its formative stages and constituent themes. In the opening lines of his poignant response, England asserts that black theology stands as nothing less than an indirect "*rebuke* of Mormon popular theology and behavior in three major ways" (370; emphasis his). First, if one considers "the large mass of unofficial sermons, writings, jokes,

folk-tales, actions, opinions, and other expressions," Mormonism has been "at best self-contradictory about race and at worst openly racist" (370). Second, Mormon leaders and members alike occasionally contributed to the oppression of black people in America, which led to the emergence of the civil rights movement. And third, black theology reminds Latter-day Saints that the Church, as an institution, has yet to officially, explicitly, and unambiguously repudiate "the racist theology and popular beliefs that grew up as rationales for that discrimination" (371).

Although England's critique is clear and incisive, it is not simply a one-sided condemnation. After reviewing some of the notable events and highlighting various written works on both sides of the debate leading up to and including the June 1978 revelation, England expresses his profound appreciation to the black community for its role in the progress and reconciliation that has been made: "Let me try to be so clear on this matter that I cannot be misunderstood. We Mormons owe an enormous and as yet unexpressed debt of gratitude to black people for helping liberate us from false and destructive ideas about race, for saving our souls from the sins of racism and oppression, and for making possible the world-wide expansion and growth of the Church that we prize so much" (376).

For England, the civil rights and black power movements not only saved America but also enabled the divine disclosure through which the priesthood ban was removed, which "in turn made possible the explosive growth of Mormonism since" (376). At the same time, there is still a lot of work to be done, because although "behavior has changed dramatically, the false ideas that were invented to rationalize racist practices are still with us" (377)—e.g., the entry on "Races of Man" in Bruce R. McConkie's (still in-print and massively influential) *Mormon Doctrine* (2d ed., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966). In the remaining pages of the essay, England turns his attention to an engagement with black theology itself in relation to Mormon teaching and ideals. He offers several constructive suggestions to black theologians, such as more carefully avoiding the temptation to reinforce the extreme polarization of victim and perpetrator, instead striving for a greater recognition of the universality of sinfulness. "A quest for

liberation," writes England, "can easily turn self-righteous, have its own blind-spots, and even perpetuate oppression in new forms" (380). One must, therefore, look *both* in the mirror at one's self *and* out the window at the other, and maintain an equally Christlike stance toward each when doing so.

In his rejoinder Dwight Hopkins expressed how completely struck he was at the forcefulness of England's admissions. "It is rare to admit publicly previous white supremacist thought and practice that, to my knowledge," writes Hopkins, "no other white or predominantly white institution, religious or otherwise, has undertaken in such a thorough and revealing manner. What it underscores is the character of the Latter-day Saints, at least as enunciated by Eugene England" (382). That final phrase is key, because the Church, as an institution, has never been as forthright and self-critical as England and has yet to formally and specifically repudiate the racial teachings used to justify the ban—the April 2006 general conference address by Gordon B. Hinckley notwithstanding. Thus, the question of whether the ban was a doctrine or a policy continues to loom large. Nonetheless, Hopkins was deeply impressed and noted that what this type of honesty reveals is "the ability to look at the facts about oneself, affirm the best of one's religious tradition, and embrace the evil in order to transform it" (382). In short, such honesty is the very "substance and depth of liberation" itself (382).

He goes on to draw some comparisons between the black community and Latter-day Saints, notes how impressed he was to learn of the narratives and themes of liberation that are contained in scripture unique to Mormonism, and suggests that liberation in both groups must push beyond race and become just as committed to gender equality. Hopkins concludes with a question that could very easily set the stage for some future conversation: "I want to know why there was a discrepancy in Joseph Smith's courageous belief and practice regarding black equality with whites, on the one hand, and the wretched borrowing of pro-slavery theology by Latter-day Saints, on the other?" (383–84).

Let me conclude now with a few words about the dialogue that I felt was the most impressive in *Mormonism in Dialogue.* Indeed, I have absolutely no hesitation in saying that I think it should be held up as a model for all future interactions like this. Given the tremen-

dous number of similarities in several of its core positions, undoubtedly openness or free will theism lends itself to just this sort of exchange. Another contributing factor, as mentioned at the outset, is that this was the one dialogue specifically prepared for publication in *Mormonism in Dialogue.* However, what truly made the difference, I think, is that Clark Pinnock, more than any other Christian theologian in this volume, demonstrates that he had indeed "boned up" on LDS history, teaching, and practice. Furthermore, he represents an uncommonly concerted effort to achieve mutual progress. "I am genuinely interested both in hearing and learning from what Latter-day Saints have to say on the matters I will present," he states, "and am hopeful that the interaction will be enriching" (491). He thus issues a call to fellow Christian theologians and Mormon scholars alike to increasingly consider the profound insights of one another. In my experience, this sort of openness to learning, not only about the other, but also from one's interlocutors–i.e., the creation of a space for genuinely transformative moments to occur–is truly rare.

I must admit, I was somewhat surprised by Pinnock's ability to recognize some of the subtleties of Mormonism, noting early on his recognition that there are disagreements among Latter-day Saints themselves about their beliefs. Contrary to the common assumption held by both insiders and outsiders, Mormonism is neither a simplistic nor a monolithic movement. Furthermore, LDS beliefs and practices have changed over the years, he observes, and those changes should be taken into consideration whenever one attempts to give an account of them: "LDS thinking does not stand still, and we [Christians] should not impute to them things that they do not now hold or practice" (492). His account of Mormon beliefs was, to the best of my reading, fair, accurate, and nuanced. After introducing some of the central claims of open and relational theologies–e.g., God is intensely affected by and intimately related to the world; the future is genuinely open, unsettled, and unknown, even to God–Pinnock frames the formal dialogue portion of his comments around the following theological issues: divine embodiment, Gods other than Yahweh, theosis or deification, God's omniscience, God and gender, tradition and interpretation, the trinity, the relation between God and the

world, God's power, and theodicy. He highlights moments of convergence and divergence with a markedly measured and appreciative tone throughout. I think any Mormon who has never read Pinnock will find some of the theological possibilities that he (as an Evangelical) is open to quite surprising and refreshing.

Paulsen's response was equally respectful, insightful, and cogent. He eloquently articulates positions well within the plausible possibilities available to Latter-day Saints and generally notes instances in which there are alternative opinions available. While I think there are problematic aspects in some of Paulsen's conclusions—e.g., his assertion that Mormon theology has the resources to provide a solution to the problem of evil—in my view, he successfully demonstrates a recognition of the complexities of the issues involved and provides solid reasoning for his own positions. Pinnock's brief rejoinder and Paulsen's final reply each offer helpful clarifications and elucidations, but what I want to close with are their personal reflections on the dialogue itself. Says Pinnock, "I appreciate interacting with Dr. Paulsen very much . . . and am richer for it as a theologian and as a person. I appreciate both the convergences and divergences of our positions and detect room for growth in myself and (I think) in Dr. Paulsen" (542). Replies Paulsen, "I am learning much as a result of my dialogue with Professor Clark Pinnock. He is an ideal conversation partner. He takes my ideas seriously, and his responses are always respectful yet thought-provoking and challenging, compelling me to rethink and refine my ideas. I too am richer both as a person and as a thinker for our interactions" (545–46). Such moments of appropriation and transformation as one gazes squarely into the face of the other, while faithfully maintaining the distinctive images in the mirror, lie at the very heart of what this sort of interfaith interaction is ideally meant to engender. Let us hope that *Mormonism in Dialogue* is the first of many such engagements between Mormons and major world religions.

Note

1. The introduction itself notes how problematic the issue of identification is (xiii–xiv), and indeed, it is simply a subset of the much larger and more complex question surrounding Mormonism's relationship to Christianity. Acknowledging that opinions will (and should) differ, and

after giving the question careful consideration, I felt that there was no better alternative to using the terms "Mormon thinkers/scholars" and "Christian thinkers/theologians" when speaking of the scholars as a group. Further, unless she or he self-identified otherwise, I employed that same basic designation when referring to the scholars individually. This approach is not intended to make any judgments or to implicitly offer an opinion on the matter one way or the other but is rather an attempt to accurately and adequately reflect the texts and conversations themselves.

Marrow: Richard Dutcher's Mormon Films

Reviewed by Dallas Robbins

He that sings a lasting song
Thinks in a marrow-bone.
—W. B. Yeats, "A Prayer for Old Age"

In Richard Dutcher's latest film *Falling*, a rich scene revealing the subtle conflict between the demands of commerce and artistic endeavor is focused around the word *marrow*. The protagonist, lapsed Mormon Eric Boyle, a suffering videographer and aspiring screenwriter, is failing to sell his latest story to a well-tanned and successful Hollywood producer. After rejecting Eric's work, the producer complains to him that if he wants to make it in the film business, he needs to do something different, something new. It goes like this:

> *Producer:* Last year somebody shows blood. This year you gotta show bone. Next year you gotta show inside the bones—whatever that shit's called.
>
> *Eric* [slight contempt in his eyes and a little exasperation in his voice]: Marrow.
>
> *Producer:* Right, I don't know what that shit is—I don't know what it looks like—you gotta show it to me. . . Something new, that's all anyone wants to see. . . . You gotta push it further than anyone has pushed it before. . . . Show me some marrow."[1]

Unsettled by the encounter, Eric leaves, conflicted about sacrificing his artistic integrity to the poolside Hollywood gods. Not