

LETTERS

Seek Understanding

I read Gary Watts's review of the fall 1993 issue of the *AMCAP Journal* in the fall 1994 issue of *Dialogue*. Upon reading his comments regarding the article I wrote with Dean Byrd, I can only conclude that he did not read the article thoroughly and therefore misunderstood its purpose. He proposed that the article may be part of an attempt "to answer the assertion of Melvin Sabshun, medical director of the American Psychiatric Association, that 'there is no published scientific evidence to support the efficacy of reparative therapy as a treatment to change one's sexual orientation.'"

My goal was not to offer scientific evidence to support the efficacy of reparative therapy. From my perspective, the purpose of the article was to present a rich picture of the struggle faced by men and women in the church who want to remain true to their moral beliefs and yet find themselves faced with ongoing homosexual attractions. In my own experience doing therapy with such individuals, I found that I gained respect and compassion for them and their struggle. I assumed that this increased understanding was the natural result of getting to know them as individuals. Dr. Byrd and I concluded, therefore, that a qualitative summary of the life stories of such individuals might serve to help others gain a deeper understanding of their struggle as well.

Increased understanding often leads to a recognition of the complexity of an issue. Rather than face that complexity, it is much easier to do as Dr. Watts and many others have done: oversimplify the topic, treating the entire matter as a "debate" about nature versus nurture. (Ironically, even if the

etiology of homosexuality were understood completely, many men and women would be left with the same dilemma: "Now I know how I got here, but I still have to decide where to go from here.")

Dr. Watts also seems to have oversimplified the nature of psychotherapy with individuals struggling with a conflict between their sexual orientation and religious values, just as many "reparative therapists" have done. To me, the real question is not, does therapy with these individuals succeed or fail? Once again, reality does not lend itself to such simplistic formulations. I have worked with dozens of individuals struggling to understand and/or change a variety of things about their sexual feelings, fantasies, and behavior. To speak of the "success" or "failure" of any one of these individuals would belittle their soul-searching, gut-wrenching struggle to explore, understand, and control what many of us merely take for granted.

The scientific debate on this topic will rage on. If scientific rigor can overcome homophobia on the one hand and political correctness on the other, the debate may prove beneficial. But regardless of how much we scientific types would like to see this entire issue put to rest by some grand research experiment, it won't happen. The most important conclusions regarding this topic will not be made in a laboratory. They are being made every day in the lives of individual men and women. To ignore this and focus instead on determinism—whether biological or environmental—is to deny the dignity and capacity of the human spirit.

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Mormons and Templars

I am always astonished at the fascinating variety of articles in *Dialogue*. I just received my fall 1994 issue and immediately turned to the Michael Homer piece on the relationship of Freemasonry and Mormonism.

While no one can expect every writer on every topic to draw on every book or article on a particular subject under discussion, I was surprised to find but two brief citations of Cecil McGavin's groundbreaking *Mormonism and Masonry* in Homer's article, which sets out to cover the relationship between the two movements—the whole thrust of the McGavin book published almost sixty years ago. More surprising perhaps was Homer's failure to cite Michael Baignet's *The Temple and the Lodge*, of more recent publication.

Baignet, who has also published impressive work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, engaged in significant research in the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris, the library of the British Museum in London, and extensive on-the-spot archeological digs in Scotland to persuasively establish the connection between the Knights Templars and early Freemasonry which Homer so casually dismisses (5). Of clear interest to Mormons, Baignet asserts that the Templars, during their hundred years in the Holy Land, were brought into intimate contact with the remnants of Primitive Christianity (as well as Islam), quickly observing the departure of the Roman church from the more simple teachings of James (who I think most LDS can readily accept, with Christian traditionalists, as having served as first bishop of Jerusalem—just as owing to a shortage of priesthood, Heber J. Grant, an apostle,

served simultaneously as president of the Tooele Stake and Apostle Charles C. Rich as president of the Bear Lake Stake). He further asserts that Templar ritual and teachings, drawn from their Middle East experience, came to depart so substantially from Catholic practice that they brought down upon themselves the enmity of the church and St. Bartholomew's Night, with the virtual destruction of the Templar movement. Baignet persuasively traces the escape of forewarned Templar remnants to the Low Countries and Scotland (where he uncovered on remote Scottish islands extensive Templar graveyards known to locals, but knowledge of which had been carefully concealed for generations—presumably to avoid persecution first by the Catholic church and later the puritanical Church of Scotland). He purports that Templars, in order to survive, were compelled to give up their vows of celibacy, intermarrying with tribal Scotswomen. In the process the Templar movement became transmuted into Freemasonry, preserving the essentials of temple ritual and Jamesian Christianity from Templar times in Palestine. Following much the same sources and logic of the Homer article, Baignet then shows how Freemasonry split into "craft" masonry and "speculative" masonry and went on to become one of the impressive chapters in the restructuring of British politics, as leading figures from every level of society became associated with the democratizing elements of the Masonic movement. Baignet goes so far as to assert that virtually every scientific, political, and social leader of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century in Great Britain, including Newton, Boyle, and a succession of royal

princes were active Masons; that it was from Masonry that the Royal Society took root; and that, indeed, it was the sympathy of Masonic General Howe rather than scrambled marching orders from London which accounted for the success of the American Revolution.

If one is prepared to accept even a scintilla of the Bagnet story, it becomes a fascinating chapter in how an element (if considerably corrupted) of priesthood ritual was preserved "continuing . . . in all generations" (D&C 84:17) to our time. This virtual "folk memory," once encountered by the Lord's anointed, was thereupon purified and restored to its primitive form, just as encountering the burial scrolls accompanying Michael Chandler's mummies set off the thinking that led to the Joseph Smith version of the Bible and the Book of Abraham.

I, for one, see no problem in accepting the relationship of Nauvoo Masonry and Mormon temple ritual, any more than accepting the mental stimulation provided to the prophet by participation in Professor Seixas's Hebrew classes set off inquiries which resulted in "Nauvoo theology" and Mormon Mother God doctrine.

David B. Timmins
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More on Mormonism and Freemasonry

I have received several inquiries concerning my essay on Mormonism and Freemasonry which appeared in the fall 1994 issue of *Dialogue*. Some of these have related to the propriety of publishing portions of the temple ritual and/or specifically comparing it,

word for word, with other rituals, including the rituals of Freemasonry.

In my essay I did not quote specific language from either ritual or make specific comparisons between them. I believed it would be improper to quote from the temple ceremony, although I recognize that there are many published exposés and that some Masonic historians use eighteenth-century exposés to study the development of the Craft's ritual. I recognize that no such liberties are extended to those who have participated in the Mormon temple endowment.

The thesis of my *Dialogue* essay is consistent with what Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Franklin D. Richards, and Hugh Nibley have all acknowledged: that Masonic "rites present unmistakable parallels to those of the temple" (Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1987], 369). This does not mean (and I did not conclude in my essay) that common language means that the two rituals have the same religious or spiritual experience or that either depends on the other for its origin or content. In fact, Mormonism and Freemasonry are entirely different anthropological and spiritual experiences and are not part of the same cultural family. As both Massimo Introvigne and Armand Mauss have demonstrated, a ritual is a narrative and the *content* and *language* of a narrative are often very different.

This is not inconsistent with Nibley's conclusion (or similar statements by general authorities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) that the "Saints had entered an order in which even the idealism of Free Masonry 'was superseded by a more perfect fraternity found in the vows and

covenants which the endowment in the House of God afforded members of the Church" (Nibley, *Approaching Zion* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1989] 352, quoting Matthias Cowley, *The Life of Wilford Woodruff* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964], 160); and that in "the fourth decade of the nineteenth century the idea of the temple suddenly emerged full-blown in its perfection . . . which rewarded the faithful by showing them the full scope and meaning of the plan of salvation" (Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 370).

For these reasons I believe that specific comparisons between Mormon and Masonic rituals are ultimately irrelevant. What I wrote on the dust jacket of David John Buerger's recently published *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), that "[t]he primary documents relating to Mormon temple rituals and comparisons made to Masonic and other precursors provide Mormon readers with a long-overdue basis for understanding historical context and evaluating traditional exegesis associated with the subject," referred specifically to material that had originally appeared in Buerger's two *Dialogue* articles (Spring 1983, Winter 1987), not to quotations from a nineteenth-century exposé of the temple ceremony and its parallel comparison with a contemporary ritual of Freemasonry which appeared in the book. Some Mormons disagree with reprinting what purports to be exact language from the endowment, and I personally would not have done so.

Michael W. Homer
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An Egyptian Clarification

A statement in my essay in the spring 1995 issue of *Dialogue* about the difficulties which the interpretation of the figures of a hypocephalus (Fac. 2 of the Book of Abraham, PGP) presents has turned out to be prophetic. On page 150 of that essay I stated that "the sun is always a masculine deity in Egyptian religion," which is misleading. The main solar god Re is masculine, but he does have feminine counterparts, one of which is Raet (see E. Homung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. by J. Baines [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982], 84-95). Texts from the Greco-Roman period in Egypt describe Hathor as a "female sun" (see P. Derchain, *Hathor Quadri-fons: Recherches sur la syntaxe d'un mythe Égyptien* [Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut in het Nabije Oosten, 1972], 36-37). If I had followed my own advice and held the interpretation of the figures of Facsimile 2 to the context of Book of the Dead spell 162, then figure 5 could only be interpreted as *Ḥ.t-wr.t*, the mother of the sun-god, since the other goddesses I mention do not occur in this spell.

Also, there is a very close (but not exact) parallel to figure 4 in Facsimile 2 in a New Kingdom tomb at Deir el-Medina which identifies this figure as the god Ptah-Solar. For this figure, see M. Saleh, *Das Totenbuch in den thebanischen Beamtengräbern des Neuen Reiches*. AVDAIK 46 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1984), p. 92, fig. 121. Sokar was primarily a funerary deity associated with the underworld.

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More on Treasure Seeking

John H. Wittorf's comments in the summer 1995 issue about my article "The Locations of Joseph Smith's Early Treasure Quests," which appeared in the fall 1994 issue, deserve a response. Wittorf is particularly troubled by my suggestion that some early residents of Palmyra/Manchester mistook the northeastern excavation on the hill Cumorah for the place where Joseph Smith had extracted the plates. I quoted Lorenzo Saunders to show that there was only one excavation on the hill, which had been dug one or two years before Smith's taking the plates from the hill in September 1827. This certainly corrected Frederick G. Mathers's claim that the northeastern excavation had been dug by Smith in 1827; it also tended to bring into question the claim of David Whitmer's 1828 informants who said they had seen the place on the hill from which the plates had been taken. In a footnote (56) I suggested that perhaps Whitmer's informants were among those who had understandably identified the wrong location. Wittorf, however, takes exception to my suggestion.

Wittorf draws inferences from the sources that I did not make in my article, stating that the conflicting sources "leave some ambiguity as to what part of the hill Whitmer was referring and whether anything had actually been recovered there by Joseph Smith." Instead, Wittorf wants us to believe that the stone box remained intact and in full view for several years after Smith had removed the plates, and that both David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery saw the box in that condition. To support his assertion, Wittorf quotes indiscriminately

from Lyndon Cook's *David Whitmer Interviews* (DWI), where Whitmer is represented as claiming that he saw the "receptacle" or "casket" in the hill. However, Wittorf's use of the sources is problematic.

Wittorf's first source—*Chicago Tribune*, 17 Dec. 1885—is a highly inaccurate account where the reporter jumbles dates, places, and events to the point that it is barely recognizable. Little wonder Whitmer criticized this interview as inaccurate (DWI:187). In the portion under discussion the reporter mixes details from Whitmer's 1828 visit to Manchester, New York, with Cowdery's trip to Harmony, Pennsylvania, in early April 1829 and Whitmer's transporting Smith and Cowdery to Fayette, New York, in early June 1829. Instead of Whitmer being told about the place on the hill (as Wittorf mistakenly brackets in his quote), it is Cowdery who is informed about the "receptacle." It is also claimed that both Whitmer and Cowdery were taken to the hill where they saw the "receptacle" for themselves. This certainly could not have happened during Whitmer's 1828 visit since Cowdery said he did not visit the hill until 1830 (*Messenger and Advocate* 2 [Oct. 1835]: 196). Wittorf even suggests that Cowdery's visit to the hill "lends additional credibility" to his 1835 description of the stone box. Yet Cowdery in describing the hill and box does not mention seeing either the box or its remains, a point he would have certainly mentioned in favor of Smith's claims if he had been in possession of such evidence. Wittorf also fails to mention that Cowdery's description of the box was different than Smith's: Cowdery stating that in the bottom of the box were three pillars upon which the plates sat and

Smith that there were two stones that lay crosswise.

In Wittorf's second source—*St. Louis Republican*, 16 July 1884—Whitmer is quoted as stating that he saw the "stone which formed the box or receptacle," which probably means that he saw the stones on the side of the hill that were believed to have originally formed the box, not that he necessarily saw the box intact.

Wittorf's third source—P. Wilhelm Poulson's letter in *Deseret Evening News*, 16 Aug. 1878—is the clearest source in support of Wittorf's belief that Whitmer saw the box intact, with the stones apparently "cemented together." However, the accuracy of this source is highly questionable. In a letter to S. T. Mouch, dated 18 November 1882, David Whitmer accused Poulson of inventing dialogue (DWI:241). In some instances, Poulson's account is at variance with other well-established facts.

Wittorf's last source—*Chicago Times*, 7 Aug. 1875—states that Whitmer had been to the hill Cumorah three times and had seen the "casket" that once "contained the tablets, and the seer-stone." Of course the box did not contain Smith's seer stone, but rather the spectacles or Urim and Thummim. This is perhaps among the "few minor errors" of which Whitmer spoke when he described the interview as "substantially correct" (DWI:235-36). Concerning the box, the *Times* adds: "Eventually the casket had been washed down to the foot of the hill, but it was to be seen when he [Whitmer] last visited the historic place." This is consistent with what Edward Stevenson was told during an 1871 visit to the hill: that some large flat stones had been found at the bottom of the hill but that they had long

since been carried off (*Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City, 1893], 13). When the *Times* reporter describes the "casket" at the bottom of the hill when last Whitmer saw it, he uses the singular "it" although the stones were certainly in a scattered condition. The source is therefore unclear as to whether or not Whitmer had ever seen the box intact.

In the source that I used—*Kansas City Journal*, 5 June 1881—which was corrected by Whitmer (DWI:71-73), Whitmer does not say he visited the hill himself in 1828 but apparently relied on the word of his informants, who only mentioned seeing the "place" without saying anything about a box. This is also true of Whitmer's interview in the *Chicago Times*, 17 Oct. 1881, which Whitmer said contained "only two trifling errors" (DWI:209-10).

Against Wittorf's interpretation is the consistent testimony of visitors to the hill—such as Lorenzo Saunders in 1827, Oliver Cowdery in 1830, W. W. Phelps and James Gordon Bennett in 1831—who either describe one excavation in the hill or fail to mention seeing the box. Wittorf therefore would do well to seek proof for Joseph Smith's claims elsewhere—it is simply not here.

In the last half of his comments, Wittorf uses Whitmer's descriptions of Joseph Smith translating in the open with his face buried in his hat and no book or manuscript before him to argue that Smith's dictation of some eighteen chapters from the book of Isaiah almost verbatim proves that Smith was either "an extremely gifted individual with an extraordinary memory" or a truly inspired prophet.

Wittorf—and some others—

make too much of Whitmer's statement, which was designed to combat the claim that Smith had used the Spaulding manuscript in producing the Book of Mormon. Whitmer's description only applies to Smith's general method of translation and does not necessarily preclude use of the Bible. Whitmer admitted that he was not always present during the translation (compare DWI:62 / 72). Even if Whitmer had seen Smith read to Cowdery from the Bible, Whitmer would not have interpreted it as a source for the Book of Mormon but as an aid in translating, perhaps an opportunity for Joseph to rest his eyes. Regardless, there are other elements in Whitmer's description of the translation process that are inaccurate—such as the words not disappearing from the seer stone until written correctly—that result from Whitmer's tendency to exaggerate for apologetic purposes.

Rather than being used apologetically to prove the either/or reduction of memory versus inspiration, the closeness of the Book of Mormon's Isaiah text to the King James Version, including its many errors, has been interpreted by some, including the late Sidney B. Sperry, as proof that Smith at some time took his head out of the hat and read from the Bible. The tendency for the variant readings in the Book of Mormon's Isaiah text to be above the line additions argues for its being originally copied from the Bible, perhaps in Smith's absence. Regardless, rather than providing proof of Joseph Smith's inspiration, the existence of the Isaiah text in the Book of Mormon, including the errors of the King James Version, actually creates some serious problems.

Wittorf seems unable to deal directly with the historical fact of Joseph

Smith's being a treasure seer since he resorts to indirect sarcasm: "If Joseph spent as much time searching for buried treasure as has been alleged, he must have been an extremely 'quick study' with respect to internalizing biblical text . . ." The important thing is not how much time Joseph spent in searching for buried treasure, but that he spent more time than he was later willing to admit. He also obscured his central role in those operations as the gifted treasure seer. The diggers dug at his command in locations he pointed out through the aid of his stone, the same stone he used in producing the Book of Mormon. This tells us something about Joseph Smith that he apparently did not want to reveal himself.

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"Small Isn't Always Beautiful"

I read with interest Donald H. Gibbon's article entitled "Famine Relief, the Church, and the Environment" in the summer 1995 issue. The title is sweeping, but my uneasiness is not found with this technicality. It is found in the first sentence of the last paragraph: "We can teach the world's crowded people to feed themselves more effectively without turning the planet into a giant agri-business project." He goes on to state: "I believe it can be done."

I agree with his next sentence: "One of the most common condemnations of Mormons is that they ignore the ticking of the 'population bomb' by encouraging large families." He concludes that if Mormons demonstrated the capacity to feed them-

selves, they would enhance their acceptability "among mainstream environmental thinkers" and others.

Apparently Donald L. Gibbon is a technocrat. He advances in his article "an alternative model for self-sufficiency/development" based on the notion of organic agriculture and small endeavors. He draws heavily upon the experience of a private relief organization, Land and Water Resources International (LAWRI), in advancing basic tenets for "mutually-enhancing relationships with the earth," a quote he used from a John Berry (104).

It borders on absurdity to believe that "the planet" could ever be "turned into a giant agri-business project." By implication this appears to be a great evil. Without debating this supposedly great evil, as a young person I lived under the circumstances Donald L. Gibbon proposes. Because of an acute shortage of land and water, and masses of people, nineteenth-century Mormons lived on miniature twenty- or so acre farms. The church's agrarian policy collapsed during the Great Depression. Only Mississippi had more poor on its relief rolls than Utah.

My family cultivated every inch of our twenty-acre field. Even the ditch banks provided grazing for a few cows and horses. Kids herded milk cows which grazed on roadside patches of grass, clover, and alfalfa. In the early spring Russian thistle and sheet grass provided the only grazing, poor as it was.

Our corral was a massive compost pile where pigs fed on excreta of cows and horses, and chickens further scratched through the waste. In watching pigs and chickens scavenge the pile of filthy waste, we often pon-

dered which "critter" was the most vile.

In discussing our depressed lot my scholarly-oriented father would say: "Poor people have poor ways." Under the circumstances of calorie production, as later ascertained in my studies of simple agricultural practices worldwide, we were very efficient, nearly 100 percent so. We got about one calorie of energy output for one calorie of input. We were organic farmers because we had no money to purchase fertilizers and pesticides. Our horses survived the winters on open range. In the spring they were feeble animals. A lot of sheer human energy was expended in cultivating and harvesting. The hardest work was cleaning the irrigation ditches by shovel.

My mother slaved many hours over the wood-fired stove, bottling each year a thousand or more quarts of fruit and vegetables. There was nothing romantic about it. The same may be said for milking the scrawny cows, killing the pig, and hoeing the garden rows. Churning butter and baking bread took hours of family time.

What I recall most was the "hellish" fly population. Local wags would say: "We ought to package them up and sell them for raisins."

For three decades I wrestled off-and-on with the design of small-scale irrigated agriculture. I reached the conclusion that if the rate of calorie production is the critical measure, and this is basically what organic agriculture is all about, then one better carefully understand the nature of the indigenous practice/system before rushing off to make some proposed innovations. I have no recommendations to make, however, on how to

cope with the fly populations, since poor people's ways generate flies.

I am grateful for American agribusiness, which liberated me and several million others in my lot of life from the drudgery of small-scale, low-technology agriculture. This even includes the kind which Gibbon observed in Switzerland with every space of land utilized. If he really wished to see such intensive land use, he should visit the Island of Java, with its near 100 million people living on an area near the size of New York state.

The evil in today's world, and this is my expression, not Gibbon's, is an excessive population compounded by an excessive rate of growth. For this reason America's agri-business achievement will find increased difficulties in being exported abroad—especially to those agrarian societies already burdened with masses of surplus people. There is no hope for a country such as Bangladesh.

Nevertheless in such situations, and this encompasses the majority of the world's population, Gibbon's suggestions make good sense along with offering a palliative for social irresponsibility.

Quality, not quantity, should be the criterion for human reproduction. Three healthy children per couple is more than enough procreation to insure the perpetuation of the human

species.

In sum, I do not believe that any amount of small-scale food production and processing by pronatalist Mormons in the United States, with their proclivity to live in big houses with two or more TVs and several motor vehicles parked in the driveway, will win "acceptability among mainstream environmental thinkers" (109). Required is a radical change in the Mormon ethic. The only consoling thought is that sexually-active Mormons with a pronatalist belief constitute an insignificant number in the total world population. In this reference small, indeed, may be considered beautiful.

It is written in Mormon thought and doctrine that perilous times are ahead. I suggest that they are now. Until the population matter is constructively resolved, massive socio-disorder will occur, and it will take many different forms, from drive-by shootings to ethnic cleansing. As an expediency Gibbon's proposal makes good sense. As a form of development with human beings rising to lofty potential, I see in it little utility. It is another band-aid treatment for a distressing world social ill: too many people.

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