

LETTERS

The Fall: Another View

At some undetermined time in my younger years, I felt bothered by the concept that the fall of Adam and Eve involved a conscious decision to go against the command of God that was to be vindicated because the result was what was originally planned in a premortal setting. The argument seemed to be that it was necessary to break a commandment in order to keep another one, not to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen. 3:17) on the one hand and to multiply and replenish the earth on the other hand (Gen. 1:28). I began to wonder if that meant that perhaps we should break other commandments in order to fulfill other ones we were not quite sure about in that we had not had previous experience to go by in that particular problem. Should I rob the local bank in order to pay my tithing? Should I lie in order to convert someone and get them baptized into the church?

It also seemed to me that there had been a lot of fuzzy discussion trying to justify a definite breach of a command of God. The Fall was described as a "transgression" and not a sin therefore the act was not as serious and excused because of the end. The end justified the means. Just one scriptural reference caused me to reject such verbal acrobatics—1 John 3:4. The definition of sin seems clear, "for sin is the transgression of the law." Why bother with the discussion? Evidently because the theology was bothersome to the extent that some rationalization seemed necessary to excuse the breaking of God's command.

Far simpler (I am converted to Occam's Razor) and more rational, in

my opinion, was a solution which simply involved time. Frequently sin is doing the right thing at the wrong time. There are many instances where the Lord commands with a time limit. Building an ark and storing seven years of grain were not meant to be done at the same time nor evidently at any other time except when commanded. Practicing plurality of wives seemed to be desirable at one period of time but an excommunicatable offense at other times.

An example my students could understand was pre-marital sex. The act itself was encouraged after a marriage ceremony took place. Before the ceremony it was determined wrong. The results in many cases could be the same. Morning sickness, the birth of a baby, and parenthood. A punishment it seems to some if before but a blessed event and reward if after the binding together of two.

This has similarities to the Fall. If the partaking of the fruit would have been after a command from God to do so, the results could have been the same. The only difference would have been they would not have had to repent of doing the right thing at the wrong time. They could have experienced the same trials and difficulties promised and even been separated from the presence of God but it would have been a more acceptable departure away from home and not an expulsion with guilt.

If it was planned in premortality to allow agency in the process, the results of the actions would have been foreknown. God's plan of salvation presumably could not be frustrated in its entirety. But what about Satan? How could he try to derail the program or at least get involved in a way

that would satisfy his desire to become the rebel leader and be an alternate route giver for humans? In many instances Satan just tries to get people to do the right thing at the wrong time or the wrong thing at the right time. If he was aware of what had gone on in other worlds, he could see that an excellent opportunity to get people to follow him was to use the argument that the same thing had been done before in other places but leave out the factor that it was God who had sanctioned it and not him. What if he knew that God would give further revelation in the future that would sanction the partaking of the fruit and becoming mortal? If a revelation had come to Adam and Eve just a week, a month, or whatever, later, the results would have been the same but they would not have had to break a commandment in order to keep another. It was prematurely acting upon the temptation of Satan that could have been avoided. And in order to feel comfortable with the logic and spirit of the situation, I am convinced that that was the other scenerio available. Visits to the temple have encouraged me in this belief.

I have found that most Latter-day Saints are not concerned about the moral dilemma that I see, but in my experience as a teacher I have found between 5 and 10 percent who are bothered and have expressed appreciation for an alternate explanation. It is for this minority of philosophical theologians that this thesis is presented.

Gerald Jones
Concord, California

Ralph Savage and the Salt Lake Temple

The caption on the inside cover of the fall 1996 issue misidentified the photograph of the Salt Lake temple on the back cover. The photograph, which was included because it clearly shows the Garden Room annex on the southeast side of the temple, dates from 1918-22, not 1911, and may or may not have been taken by Ralph Savage, who died in 1928.

Kent Walgren
Salt Lake City, Utah

What's the Point?

I was intrigued at the subjectively conclusive title of Marc A. Schindler's article in the fall 1996 issue: "The Johannine Comma: Bad Translation, Bad Theology." I read with anticipation about "Catholic" corruption of the scriptures, the spinelessness of Erasmus, the fulfillment of Nephi's prophecy that "plain and precious things" would be taken from the Bible. I was waiting for the point. How, specifically, would the writer make his conclusions relevant to readers of " ... *A Journal of Mormon Thought*"?

The most obvious, inescapable direction in which this article was leading (I thought) was toward Joseph Smith's "Inspired Version" of the Bible. Like the reader of an unfinished serial mystery or the impatient listener to a joke without a punchline, I turned the final page of the article with some astonishment and a few suspicions. If ever an article was designed to force us to consider why Joseph Smith failed to catch the

Johannine Comma, this was it! But suddenly the text ended, with a final footnote and some blank space at the bottom of the page.

Rick Grunder
Syracuse, New York

Much Ado About Nothing?

Regarding the article "Embraced by the Church? Betty Eadie, Near-Death Experiences, and Mormonism," by Massimo Introvigne, in the fall 1996 issue.

I see that here is more evidence of how insecure people are in their beliefs. How little trust and faith we actually put in faith and "The Spirit." How little faith we really have that God is in control. How little faith we must have that the church, whichever one to which we may belong, is true.

Why should a book written about one person's near-death experience, which makes no claim to espousing any binding doctrines or specific church, occasion such controversy? It is my assumption that nearly all seriously religious people, certainly Mormons, believe that God is the author of all truth and provides witness to truth through the ministrations of "The Holy Spirit." If we do indeed believe this to be true, then let us leave it at that.

It has always been my understanding that Mormons believe that all religions do indeed contain elements of truth, otherwise they would not be as successful as they are but that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only church authorized and empowered by Jesus Christ to administer his gospel and fully contains his truth as so far re-

vealed. Also, it seems we constantly need to be reminded of the danger inherent in taking as God's word any statement *supposedly* from a general authority of the LDS church and uttered in the context of a private meeting or discussion.

Let us also remember that Mr. Orson Scott Card is a man with an opinion, albeit, an educated one. Nevertheless, we cannot expect that he has an entire grasp of truth as " ... knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24).

It would indeed be wrong to hold Mrs. Eadie responsible if someone were to believe her book to espouse a new "official" religious tradition, unless she herself were to lead or encourage such a movement. Until such an event I hardly think it would be worthwhile for the LDS church to involve itself in the matter. Apparently, we need to be more " ... anxiously engaged in a good cause" (D&C 58:27) if such a matter as this can warrant such attention. Isn't this "much ado about nothing"? Don't we know the essential truth of the matter already?

Todd Sidwell
Hermosa Beach, California

A Dialogue on Dialogue

"Where?"

"It's in *Dialogue* ... but I don't know why you would want to read it."

My friend stands in my doorway with his arms crossed and his normally blue eyes a cool grey. He's late for a meeting, but he's determined to make his point before he leaves.

"The church is masculine and

that's the way it is. It's not an issue for the Mormon women I know ... my mother, my grandmother, my sister, the girls I have talked with ... it's just not an issue for them."

"Do you have the summer issue of *Dialogue*?" I ask the librarian. "I want the issue on Heavenly Mother."

She looks at me a minute, then goes hunting while I admire the ceramic pottery on her office shelf. When she returns with what looks like a thick paperback, I ask her, "Did you make these pots?"

"Oh, no. I buy them, collect them, but I do want to take the pottery class here at the university ..."

"I'm taking it right now," I say.

We talk for a while.

"Listen," she says, as she hands me the book, "don't turn this in to the front desk when you're finished. Give it back directly to me, would you? I would like to read it."

In the ladies' room another student picks up the *Dialogue*.

"You read this garbage?" she says.

"It's not garbage. There are some interesting articles in it. Of course, I don't always agree with everything, but ..."

"Did you know that by reading this you can put your immortal soul at risk? You're better off spending your time reading the scriptures."

"Well, I don't think ..."

"Hey, wait a minute. I know this lady. She wrote this? This is my neighbor! Say, can I borrow this when you're finished with it?"

"Well, sure."

At a conference with one of my professors in her office: "Your last

test," she says, "shows a strong tendency toward ... what's this?" she asks, grabbing the *Dialogue* off the top of my stack of books.

"Well, it's the summer issue of ..."

She gets up and closes her office door. She sits down and looks at me. She starts to talk in a whisper. "Did you know," she says softly, "I used to live in Salt Lake?"

"Well, no, I ..."

"I could have been involved with *Dialogue*, you know. I almost was. The pain in here. Do you feel the pain in this magazine?"

"Well, actually, I ..."

"I had to stop reading it. The pain was too much for me. I do a lot, you know. I teach. I help women. I do what I can."

"Listen, you don't have to explain ..."

"But I'm a good Mormon. The church is very important to me. Do you understand? Listen, don't return this to the library. Can I have it when you're finished?"

"Well, ... sure."

A student sitting on a bench in the sunshine greets me as I walk by. "Let's see your assignment for English class," she says.

As I dig through my bookbag, she sees my *Dialogue*.

"Is this good?" she asks. "We were talking about Heavenly Mother in Institute and ..."

"You were talking about Heavenly Mother in Institute?" I ask.

"Oh, yeah, all the time. There is more than one, you know."

"No, I didn't."

"Well, there is, and teacher says ..."

My pottery teacher looks through *Dialogue*. He immediately recognizes the illustrator, an artist who paints only women, as the wife of a fellow potter and an old student of his.

"What's this about?" he asks.

"It's an issue on Heavenly Mother," I say.

A man of few words, he nods slowly.

I sit at the wheel as the wet clay slowly takes shape under my fingers. I feel the rhythm and start to make up a song as I work. I hum: "The potter's wheel/ turns the clay/ around/ As the Mother/ turns round/ the Son./ And no matter/ the pain./ And no matter/ the fear./ In the end/ we will all/ be one."

As a newcomer to Utah and a woman returning to school after many years, reading *Dialogue* in the university library is like having a friend to turn to during those times when I feel so like an alien. Thank you.

Nylene Schoellborn-Puha
Enoch, Utah

Anthon H. Lund and Plural Marriage

I enjoyed the winter 1996 issue of *Dialogue*, particularly Massimo Introvigne's "Embraced by the Church? Betty Eadie, Near-Death Experiences, and Mormonism" and Kent Walgren's "Inside the Salt Lake Temple: Gisbert Bossard's 1911 Photographs."

Walgren's article contains a quote from Gisbert Bossard which asserts that my great-grandfather Anthon H. Lund was a polygamist, which I do not believe to be true. As the biographical register in volume four of

the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* also identifies him as a polygamist, I would like to set the record straight.

Anthon H. Lund was not a polygamist. I have personally known several of his children, daughters- and son-in-law, and nearly all of his grandchildren, all of whom asserted that Grandpa did not practice plural marriage. In fact, family tradition relates that when Grandpa proposed marriage to my great-grandmother, Sarah Ann Peterson, she made him get down on his knees and promise that he would never take another wife and that she could always drink tea.

Knowing that family tradition is not always accurate, we have carefully combed the forty-two volumes of his diary and other personal papers for any mention of another woman in his life. Family members have also examined temple sealing records for the Endowment House and all four nineteenth-century Utah temples. Although Grandpa had numerous men and women sealed to him under the law of adoption while serving as president of the Manti temple, there is no evidence that any of those sealings involved a plural marriage.

So why did Bossard think that "Pres. [Anthon H.] Lund has two wives at least"? He stated that he and another gardener had both delivered flowers from the temple greenhouse to two Mrs. Lunds, one living on West Temple Street, the other on North Temple Street "across the road from the Temple." I have no doubt that they delivered the flowers as instructed, but they missed the family connection. Sarah Ann Lund, wife of Anthon H., resided at 127 North West Temple Street. Emma C. Jensen Lund, wife of Herbert Z. Lund, M.D., and daughter-in-law of Anthon H., resided at 30

West North Temple directly across the street from the temple. In a sweet gesture, Grandpa sent flowers to his daughter-in-law.

Grandpa and Grandma Lund shared a tender love for more than fifty years. His diaries and personal papers are filled with expressions of devotion for her. He penned numerous love poems, including one final one which was found in his office desk after his death. Grandma was the love of his life, and there is no evidence of any other.

Anthony F. Lund
Murray, Utah

"Hypertextual" Correction

In my review, "Hypertextual Book of Mormon Study" (Winter 1996), I inadvertently ascribed Joseph Smith's authorship to an entry in his diary that is a transcription of a letter written by Orson Hyde (see Joseph Smith Diary, 17 Dec. 1835). Hyde's letter serves as an unwitting example for my observation that the phrase "{or} in other words" was used by Smith's contemporaries (203n19).

Brent Lee Metcalfe
Salt Lake City, Utah

The Broadening Embrace of Mormon Culture

I'd like to respond briefly to Levi

Peterson's article about me in the winter 1996 issue, if I may.

Although I have never enjoyed reading about myself (and hope never to acquire a taste for seeing my name in print), I think that Levi Peterson's "Lavina Fielding Anderson and the Power of a Church in Exile" is an important article. It articulates a hope I think I share with many about the broadening embrace of Mormon culture and the slow creation of a middle ground between the polarized extremes of rigid orthodoxy and dismissive dissidence. It also articulates an appeal that Mormon religious practices not be construed in a way that excludes the demands of conscience.

I would like to clarify one statement which I think may be misleading: "Lavina filed a thirty-seven-page appeal with the First Presidency, which the latter refused to review." It would be more accurate to say that the First Presidency refused to *reverse* the stake president's decision. I have no reason to believe that they refused to review it.

In fact, my father, suspecting that the document had not been read, called the First Presidency's office. F. Michael Watson assured him that President Hinckley and President Monson (then counselors to President Benson, who was ill) had in fact read it carefully. I have no reason to believe that Watson's statement was not true.

Lavina Fielding Anderson
Salt Lake City, Utah