

## Individuality

Of the political doctrines that form the basis of governments, only one is founded on the principle of relativism: democracy. Only in a democracy do people acknowledge the absoluteness of equivocation. Democratic peoples universally believe that no political leader has access to an absolute source of knowledge, that no political leader's actions are infallible, and that every political leader's judgment, whether king, emperor, president, or legislator, is subject to error. In short, democratic people believe that the judgment of any politician of whatever stripe or color can be, and in one way or another inevitably will be, wrong.

The reason for a separation of church and state in a democracy is that the principles of monotheism are based on absolutism while the principles of democracy are based on relativism. The two obviously not only do not mix but if put together will inevitably conflict with each other. The long-standing claim that the constitution of the United States was founded on Christian principles is easily dismissed once one realizes that democracy is founded on relativism, the singular ideology that denies all ideologies (including Christianity) except the one that says there are no ideologies.

The foundation of democracy is equivocation, and the structure of democratic constitutions conforms to this singular foundational principle. In a democracy power is purposely designed to be equivocal. The balance of power provides that no final conclusion to any question can ever be reached. Democratic governments lean this way and that way. In a democracy the political pendulum is forever swinging. Whatever democratic governments decide today, they will decide something different tomorrow.

Democracy is founded on the principle of equality. In a democracy people are equal because each person's absolute difference is universally recognized. In a democracy people are all the same (equal) because they are all different. Because people are without exception all different, their groupings are never absolute. In a democracy, the grouping of people is always equivocal. No person is absolutely loyal to a group because every person is different from every other person in the group. The interests of the group never coincide exactly with the interests of an individual person. It is the inability of the individual to adhere absolutely to the principles advocated by any group that accounts for the absolute equality of individuals.

In a democracy the majority rules, but the majority is never stable. The membership of the majority is constantly changing, and it is this constant shifting of allegiances that makes people equal. People are absolutely equal because they are absolutely different, and their absolute difference precludes the absolute allegiance of any person to any group or cause advanced by any group.

Because people are absolutely different they are absolutely separate. Each person is absolutely distinct from every other person. At no time are two people the same. They are always different, and therefore they are all separate. Nonetheless, rather than existing separately, people exist in relation to each other. No man or woman exists alone. Everybody exists in relation to everybody else. People's interaction with each other negates the absoluteness of their differences. It's not that their absolute differences are circumvented by their relationships but rather that in relation to each other people are relative to each other. To interact with each other, people have to "put their differences aside." In a relationship people's differences are relative to each other. In a relationship their differences are not absolute. If absolute, their differences would make their relationships impossible.

Because people are absolutely different they are absolutely equal, but because the absoluteness of their differences is set aside in a relationship and because people exist in relation to each other, people are not, as long as they exist in relation to each other, absolutely equal. In principle people are absolutely equal; in practice the absoluteness of their equality turns into equivocation. In a democracy, relative equality is demonstrated by the majority looking out for some people's interests at the expense of others. The interests of the majority will always go against the interests of the individual because as an individual the individual's interests are absolute.

Many people have, for a variety of reasons, questioned Jefferson's claim in the Declaration of Independence that the "truth" that "all men are created equal" is "self-evident." Saint Augustine did not believe that God created people equal. He rather believed that God predestined some to salvation and some to damnation. People can doubt that they are equal for any number of reasons because in practice people's equality is equivocal. It is only in principle that it is absolute. Difference is both absolute and relative. As absolutely distinct entities people are absolutely equal; as relative entities their equality is equivocal. Equality and inequality are bipolar qualities. They are both absolute and relative at the same time. Together they form a compound in one.

In a democracy, even though equality is in practice equivocal, and even though the majority will, in favoring its own interests, go against the interests of the minority, people are, nonetheless, believed to be absolute individuals. In a democracy, nobody is regarded as dispensable. The equivocation of a person's indispensability is evidenced by the majority's willingness to go against the interests of the individual, but the absoluteness of a person's indispensability is evidenced by an unwillingness to go against the rights of an individual on any other than lawful grounds. In a democracy people view their rights in absolute terms, believ-

ing that if one individual's rights are violated in practice, everybody's rights have been violated in principle.

The recognition of the absolute indispensability of the individual is a recognition of the absolute reality of the individual. To "eliminate" an individual is, from a metaphysical perspective, impossible. One person can kill another person, but no person can "do away with" (annihilate) another person. Democratic people believe that an individual, alive or dead, continues to exist in some metaphysical sense. A belief in the indispensability of the individual is the same as a belief in the equality of the individual. Individuals are equal because the existence of the individual is absolute. People must be recognized as equals because every individual exists in an absolute sense, and therefore all individuals are equally indispensable in an absolute sense.

It is true, of course, that in practice absolute indispensability turns into equivocal indispensability, but that does not negate the principle of absolute existence. A person can take advantage of his neighbor without believing that his neighbor can be or should be "eliminated." Even though one's neighbor can be put into a position of subordination, one's neighbor exists, nonetheless, on the same basis as oneself. The individual exists on a self-existent principle: the individual's absolute individuality or difference. The individual exists absolutely because the individual's individuality is absolute.

Relationships are always relative; they are never absolute. Like people's political relationships their personal relationships are subject to the bipolar qualities that characterize them. As an individual a person is absolute. As a person in relation to another person a person is relative. As an individual one person is absolutely separate and distinct from every other person. As individuals no two people are absolutely bonded together. The absolute distinction between them precludes it. As two people who exist in relation to each other, these two people are relative to each

other. In relation to each other their differences are relative as opposed to absolute. Their differences being relative their sameness is also relative, and consequently, their relationship is relative. Whether a relationship is viewed from the perspective of two absolutely separate individuals or from the perspective of two individuals in relation to each other, their relationship is always relative; it is never absolute.

In a marriage, a relationship may be consummated physically but not metaphysically. Married couples cannot “cement” their relationship metaphysically because the absoluteness of their relationship would negate the absoluteness of their individuality. They cannot be absolutely together and absolutely apart at the same time. Because difference is at once both relative and absolute, they can be and are relatively apart and relatively together at the same time. Their relationship because it is based on relativity is always relative.

Is the ideal relationship where two people are absolutely one or where they are absolutely two? If they are absolutely one there is no relationship because one thing cannot relate to itself. (The bipolar unit has imploded.) If they are absolutely two there is no relationship because the absolute difference between them makes relationship impossible. (The bipolar unit has exploded.) Those who attempt to achieve the ideal relationship by considering themselves as either absolutely the same or absolutely different will fail. Both absolute difference and absolute sameness negate the possibility of relationship.

Is there such a thing as an ideal or absolute relationship, and if so how is it achieved? An ideal or absolute relationship is one where the *balance* between a couple’s absolute coming together and their absolute going apart is absolute. In an absolute relationship one is absolutely repelled by and absolutely drawn to the other person such that the pushing and pulling are *perfectly* balanced!

The ideal relationship is achieved by at once confirming the absolute difference *and* the absolute sameness of the two people. How is this possible? Only by acknowledging absolute equivocation. When one can neither take a person nor leave a person, in the absolute sense of what it means to take or to leave, *that* is the ideal relationship! But isn't *fully* consummating the relationship (both physically and metaphysically) the way to ensure that it is the ideal relationship? No, because to make consummation the purpose of the relationship is to found the relationship on synthetic rather than aesthetic experience. If the relationship exists not for the relationship itself but for what either or both of the partners can get out of it then the relationship is synthetic as opposed to aesthetic. The relationship exists not for itself but for what can be obtained in a subsequent experience from it.

*Omnia secundum litem fiunt.* All things are done in accord with contention (Heraclitus). All things wonderful, all things beautiful, and all things truly romantic are done in accord with absolute contention. Absolute contention is contention that never ends because it is absolute. Absolute contention is aesthetic contention because it is the contention itself that matters. Not to resolve but to leave forever unresolved, *that* is the ideal relationship! The vast majority of people never know the ideal relationship because they look for the easy way out. They want fulfillment. The average man says to the average lady, "Let us put our differences aside and come together as one." The ideal man says to the ideal lady, "may our differences remain intact forever that our struggle to put them aside and come together may never end!" True romance is founded on absolute irresolvability. To the ideal man and the ideal woman the ideal relationship is built on unresolved struggle because it is the struggle itself, the ongoing, *eternal*, interaction between them that matters!

Absolute irresolvability is the only source of *real* fulfillment because it is the only source of *metaphysical* ful-

fillment, and metaphysical fulfillment is achievable only by those who know they are metaphysically real. One senses that one is metaphysically real, but how does one gain a knowledge of it? On what does one establish the metaphysical reality of one's existence? Alone one cannot establish it. Alone one cannot know it. A knowledge of the reality of one's existence is gained only by a knowledge of one's existence in relation to someone else. For that knowledge to be sure it must be based on the experience of a relationship that exists for its own sake. It cannot be based on what can come from the relationship. Only in the ongoing struggle to relate to one another can the partners of a relationship confirm the reality of their individual existence. That is the case because a knowledge of one's metaphysical reality is attained only by experiencing the ongoing struggle, the ongoing tension stretched tight between two people whose relationship is forever because they are forever struggling to both come together and remain apart.

## Knowledge

Although tomorrow's knowledge will be no better than today's, people look to tomorrow for solutions to today's problems. They do it hoping that tomorrow they will know something they don't know today. They hope in vain. All knowledge is limited to equivocation, and equivocation is absolute. Every claim to knowledge, modern or otherwise, is equivocal. Nobody's knowledge claims are certain. Every claim to knowledge is challengeable.

Modern people, like their counterparts of the past, claim to have knowledge, and yet the purpose of modern education, erudition, and specialization is not to know anything for sure. It is instead an attempt to "manage" equivocation. Today's experts are not concerned with what is; their pronouncements are limited to what is most likely. If one were to remove the word *probability* from modern parlance the modern world would be mute. If all that could be heard in the world today were people talking about what they know for sure the world would be silent.

The distinctions moderns make between what they claim to know and what they claim to believe are of no consequence. The difference between the two is equivocal, and therefore the two coalesce into one. The most definitive of modern observations is never final. No modern statement is absolute. As soon as one hikes the ball in today's game of absolute knowledge there are a thousand flags on the play. In response to the most obvious statement, such as "Today the sun is shining," come a barrage of challengers, hecklers, and naysayers. Nothing anybody claims to know is for sure. Nothing, that is, but equivocation.

But not to complain. Equivocation needs no apologies. From equivocation comes opportunity. Because people are always wrong they must be continually righting them-

selves. Because they are continuously mistaken they must look for ways of correcting themselves. The world has fostered equivocation unwittingly—without really realizing it or knowing what the consequences of it would be. The consequences are not surprising. They are just what one would expect them to be: both good and bad at the same time.

Equivocation is mankind's most abundant, most available resource. It flows freely from people's every pronouncement, venture, and accomplishment. It serves as a cornerstone and a foundation. It is the rock on which humanity itself is structured.

Equivocation is both the wonder and the folly of the world: the wonder because from it comes challenge, excitement, and innovation, the folly because people see it as secondary—useful only for purposes of getting ahead. People miss out when it comes to appreciating it for what it is in and of itself. They pass it by without thinking that it could be worth something.

Equivocation is relationship. Things are equivocal because they are experienced in relation to each other. In a relationship things are relative to each other and are therefore equivocal. The parts of a relationship are equivocal, but what about the relationship itself? What if instead of looking at what is related one looks at the relationship itself? Is the relationship equivocal? That's the same as asking if equivocation is equivocal. No, equivocation is the one thing that isn't equivocal. Equivocation is for sure. And because equivocation is a relationship, relationships are for sure.

Just as there is only one true ideology: that there are no ideologies, so too is knowledge limited to equivocation. Everything that people know is equivocal. They have no knowledge except of equivocation—of relationships. Relationships are equivocal, and therefore from every relationship comes the one thing that is for sure: equivocation.

Because experience is relational and because relationships are equivocal, experience is equivocal. Because experience is equivocal the knowledge gained from experience is equivocal. In vain does one attempt to get around the equivocation of knowledge. One cannot get around it or push it aside because it is absolute. There is no alternative to the equivocation of knowledge. Rather than attempting to avoid equivocation one must confront it head-on. One must not wince. One must take equivocation seriously—for what it is.

Equivocation is what is left after every claim to knowledge has been stripped away. It is what one has when one finally realizes that *all* of one's claims to knowledge are spurious. When every claim to certainty has been duly buried and its tombstone securely set in place, then one can take up equivocation and consider it on its own terms. Then one can begin to appreciate it for what it is.

The process can be methodical. To take a specific example, in 1652 Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, an Italian sculptor, completed a rendition of Saint Teresa de Ávila, a famous Christian mystic and Carmelite monastic reformer of sixteenth-century Spain. Bernini recreated a scene depicted in Teresa's autobiography. Teresa describes a visitation. She says,

I saw at my side an angel in human form.... He was of short stature and very handsome; his countenance was burning as one of those angels of the highest level that are all of fire.... He carried in his hand a great sword of gold, the point appearing to be a burning coal. It seemed to me that for some moments he thrust the sword into my heart and pierced my vitals and, when he removed the sword, it seemed they would escape with it, and I felt a burning of the great love of God. The ache was so intense that it made me moan, but at the same time, the sweetness of that excessive throbbing was so extraordinary that I did not want to free myself from it.



**The Ecstasy of St. Teresa**

Teresa maintained that her soul, following this appearance, was “satisfied with nothing less than God.” She said that the pain she experienced was not bodily but spiritual, but then adds that her physical body nonetheless had “its share in it.” She says that, “It (the pain) is a caressing of love so sweet which now takes place between the soul and

God, that I pray God of his goodness to make him experience it who may think that I am lying.”

Rather than question the truthfulness of Teresa’s report, one can ask whether there is any part of her story that cannot be denied. Is there any part of it that is certain after every aspect of it that lacks certainty has been put aside?

Which, if any, of her claims can’t be doubted? She said she saw an angel, that he held a golden sword (or, as in Bernini’s version, an arrow), that its tip glowed like a hot coal, that the angel drove the weapon into her heart and other parts, that when he withdrew it she thought her entrails would go with it, that she felt a burning of the “great love of God,” that the ache was so intense she moaned, and that the sweetness of the throbs were so extraordinary she didn’t want them to stop.

This experience, like all experiences, was relational. She experienced herself in relation to something else. Each of the things she experienced including herself was relative. All were relative to each other, and therefore none can be identified as a separately-existing entity. None of the details she experienced can be separated from the act of experiencing them. The subjectivity and the objectivity of the experience are relative to each other. The angel, the golden sword, the burning tip, the piercing and withdrawal, the pain, the moan, and the throbbing were as subjective as they were objective. Because what she experienced was relational there is not a way to either separate the things she experienced or to bring them together into one. The separateness and the togetherness of what she experienced remain forever suspended. The difference between the separateness and the togetherness can *never* be resolved.

Nothing can be either denied or confirmed regarding her reported experience. What is left that is for sure is the equivocation of the experience—the irresolvability of the difference between the elements of the experience. This irresolvability, this equivocation, is certain, and because it is certain, it is forever. The experience will never explode

because the difference between the elements pushed them apart or implode because the difference between them pulled them together. They will remain forever suspended.

What is certain is not what was suspended but the suspension itself. It is true that something has to be suspended for the suspension to be possible, but the identity of what was suspended can't be determined. No one can know (including Teresa) that there was or was not an angel, a sword, or a fiery tip. One cannot know that there was or was not a "real" ache, moan, or throbbing. What one can know for sure is that there was something because without that something the experience would not have been possible.

Was Teresa a dreamer? Was this "vision" nothing more than the figment of her imagination, or did the angel really come? Did a holy personage really stand before her? Was the penetration she described real? What if she had been examined by a physician? Would that have settled the question? No, it would have settled nothing. If an angel can appear miraculously then the "wounds" could have disappeared just as miraculously. What if the physical markings of the experience were verified? What if they were "real"? Would either the absence or the presence of them have been sufficient to either prove or disprove her claims? Obviously not. No evidence of any kind whatsoever could either prove or disprove anything.

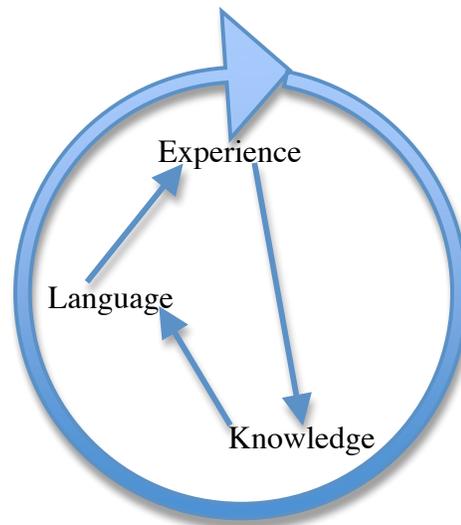
Even if all that Teresa experienced was imaginary, even if none of it was "real," she nonetheless had an experience, and the experience cannot be denied. The experience *itself* cannot be doubted. Any claim as to any aspect of the experience can be put aside. None need be taken seriously. But the experience itself cannot be put aside. It cannot be dismissed. The experience itself was absolutely equivocal, and *therefore* it was absolutely real!

That being the case, what then can one say that knowledge is? One can say that knowledge is experience. One can say that all one knows is experience. One doesn't know

*what* one experiences; one only knows *that* one experiences. The only knowledge one has is the knowledge of experience itself. Any conclusion that someone assumes *results from* or *because of* an experience can be set aside. No conclusion apart from the experience itself is confirmable. An experience confirms nothing apart from the experience itself. All one knows is that one experiences. All one experiences is experience itself. An experience is its own evidence. It reaches its own conclusions. Its truth need not be established or confirmed by something apart from it. It is sufficient within itself.

## Language

Language is expression that makes experience whole. Experience is circular. There is a one-to-one ratio between experience and knowledge. One's knowledge is of one's experience. There is a one-to-one ratio between knowledge and language. One's language expresses one's knowledge. An expression is an experience that completes the experience from which comes the knowledge that language expresses. When one expresses knowledge of one's experience, one's experience is whole.



Expression is the means of experiencing knowledge. Knowledge comes from experience, but unless one expresses what one knows one's knowledge is never experienced and therefore never known. People often excuse themselves saying they know something but are unable to express themselves concerning it. The knowledge of something cannot be separated from the expression of the

knowledge. If one knows something one is able to express oneself regarding what it is that one knows.

Expression is a relationship between the tangible and the intangible. Experience is relational. In an expression the relationship between the tangible and the intangible makes the expression experienceable. Whereas the intangibility of language is the content or knowledge that is expressed, the tangibility of language is the means by which expression is accomplished. Without both a tangible means of expression and an intangible content to be expressed, knowledge isn't expressible, and if it isn't expressible it isn't experienceable, and if it isn't experienceable it isn't known.

Reality is a relationship. Experience is a relationship. Experience is real. Neither the absolutely tangible nor the absolutely intangible is real because that which is absolutely tangible cannot relate to that which is absolutely intangible and vice versa. This means, for example, that the absolutely intangible Platonic forms, the absolutely intangible monotheistic God, and the absolutely tangible universe are not experienceable and therefore not real. To experience them one would have to express oneself concerning them, something one cannot do because an expression regarding an absolute tangible or an absolute intangible is not possible. Neither the absolutely tangible nor the absolutely intangible is knowable because expression is a relationship between the tangible and the intangible, and it is only by expression—language—that something is experienceable and therefore knowable.

Two painters stand before a landscape. In awe they bask in its beauty. The one smiles to the other, each one with the thought, "I know what I shall paint." Then they take up their canvases, colors, and brushes. They work apart, each developing the scene that flows out of the brush onto the canvass. Hours later they compare their work and smile again. "I thought I knew what I would paint before hand, but now *look* what I have done!" they each confess.

What was first in the mind has evolved, grown into something still more. "Old things are done away;/All have become new!" The painters marvel to each other. And so it is too with a poet's words, a musician's notes, and a dancer's movements. These become something more in the expression than they were in the mind beforehand.

Platonic love is expressionless love—love that is never known. A Platonic lover is one who, having never sampled love, knows neither the bitterness nor the sweetness of it. Platonic love is for the non-lover who believes that love is something to be contemplated. A Platonic lover is like a would-be swimmer who never gets into the water but stays on the bank content, with eyes closed, imagining the water's reflected clouds that move across the water's reflected sky. Platonic love is for those who take no chances. It's for those who put the protection of self above the enhancement of self. Expressed love is for the brave at heart, the risk-takers who invest in love for growth, enlargement, and for the sheer joy of discovering oneself in the love of one's lover.

After Socrates drank the hemlock and entered into a purely metaphysical existence, what was his report? There was, of course, no report. A report is an expression, and an expression is the relationship between the tangible and the intangible. And so too is experience. In his purely metaphysical existence Socrates experienced nothing, knew nothing, and therefore could express nothing. There is literally no language that can express the "Platonic ecstasy" of a purely metaphysical existence because whatever Platonic ecstasy is, it is never experienced.

Who was the true saint, Socrates or Teresa? Socrates entered into that never-never realm from which "no traveler returns." Teresa not only came back from her ecstasy but gave her report. Her experience, because it was of both the tangible and the intangible, was real. She may be unsure as to whether her visitor was an angel from heaven or one from across the way, but in either case her experience

was expressible, and whatever that expression was, whether of words alone or of deeds and of words, it was more—much more—than mere metaphysics. It was both tangible *and* intangible and therefore real.

A painter cannot reach out and touch a landscape. A nearby tree or the water in the creek can be touched but the landscape itself is untouchable. It is untouchable except with the painter's eye and the painter's brush. Whatever the landscape is the painter makes it anew with line, form, and color. The painter's art is the touchable and the untouchable put together.

Teresa's "love affair" may have been in her mind only, but her words were not in her mind only. She put them on the page and then poured water on it to keep it from catching fire! One will never know what Teresa did, but one does know what she said, and nun or not, one knows she *was* a woman of experience! And who would deny her? She was a poet, and a poet writes from experience. Teresa was a poet who expressed the passion of her experience, whatever that experience was.

Do scientists write about facts? What kind of facts does a *real* scientist write about? the facts of which his predilections consist! After years of burdensome research a scientist only produces facts?—nothing more than cold, hard facts? No, no, what scientist could be more biased, more opinionated, or more "convinced" than one who has spent years in laborious research! There is no such thing as "scientific objectivity." So-called scientifically objective statements fall from the mouths and pens of subjective researchers for whom *pure* objectivity is not a possibility. Yes, they want to be objective, but they mix that objectivity with subjectivity. From the oven they take the plain pastry of objective facts and then smother it with a topping that drips with the prejudice inherent in their subjective opinions.

Professional artists have no corner on language. Amateurs are expressers as well. To live is to express oneself.

One seizes one's life with all one's "might, mind, and strength." One mixes one's mind with one's might and strength. Life is more than physical sensation, more than intellect, and more than sentiments. Life is all these wrapped up together. Life is the expression of the tangible and the intangible. It is the language of living.

One holds a babe in one's arms. What comes in the package is a potential tangible and a potential intangible that when grown will express itself and make experience whole. Language is embedded in living things. Everything that is alive expresses itself. Everything that lives expresses something and therefore experiences something and knows something. Living things are both tangible and intangible. Language is both tangible and intangible. In the expression of living things is the language that makes knowledge known and experience whole.

Is life a mystery? Only to the extent that experience is a mystery. What is life? It is experience. Whence comes life? It comes from something capable of experience. What is the purpose of life? It is to experience. A person of great worth is a person whose experiences are great. Great experiences are whole experiences—experiences made whole by language, which is the expression of knowledge. Those whose lives are rich are those who, because they are rich in language are rich in experience, and those who because their experience is rich possess a wealth of knowledge.

## Antecedents

Human beings never shed their skin, their upbringing, or their youthful inculcations. I was born into a society immersed in Mormon religious, philosophical, and cultural views. My little town was a Mormon oasis nestled in the folds of the Rocky Mountains that join the high plateaus of a predominantly rough and ready, cowboy culture. As a young man I went away to college to broaden my outlook, and in my more mature years I broadened it still more. Many of the points of view with which I became acquainted were clearly at odds with what I grew up with, but nonetheless those early impressions stuck. Now, as I enter advanced years when one is as mature as one is going to get, I can't help but be highly impressed with the resilience of certain core beliefs that became a part of me in my youth. They are foundational. The ideas herein presented naturally flow out of them.

Unique among Mormon scriptures is a highly descriptive, though not thoroughly developed, account of the role that difference plays in experience. This passage is unique and quite unexpected when viewed in the context of the extended pages of the *Book of Mormon*. If one substitutes the term *difference* for the phrase *opposition in all things*, one cannot fail to recognize in it some of the phraseology as well as the attitudes and general modes of thinking that are central to relativism.

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my first-born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither

death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation....

And if ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin. If ye shall say there is no sin, ye shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness, there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away.

...And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would have not fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end.

And they (Adam and Eve) would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin.

But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi, verses 11 to 25).

These words, dictated to scribes by Joseph Smith (because his writing skills were not up to the task) were published in 1830 in upstate New York. The language was stylistically familiar to “backwoods” people living in the “Burned-Over District,” an area subject to intense religious revivalism and competition among religious sects. The text is heretical from a classical Christian perspective because it puts difference (an opposition in all things) ahead of God: “And if these things are not there is no God.”

The passage lapses into self-contradiction when it says, "And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end." The text previously indicated that without difference (an opposition in all things) nothing would have been possible in the first place.

Regarding the phrase "him who knoweth all things," one can debate whether it refers to the classical Christian God or to existence itself of which difference or opposition in all things (not, according to the text, a monotheistic God) is the essential ingredient. One interpretation of the text could be that difference is itself personified as an intelligent being or "god."

The phrase "a compound in one" is also, from a classical, monotheistic, Christian point of view, heretical. As previously stated, the idea that existence is a compound in one is a denial of the idea that God is one. To the extent that existence is a compound in one, neither a compound nor one exists by itself. If God exists at all he is, as the essence of existence, two things and one thing at the same time. Many readers of the Book of Mormon, because they are not acquainted with classical Christianity, fail to recognize the heresy of this passage from a classical Christian perspective. They fail to realize just how revolutionary, far-reaching, and insightful the text is. Christianity and this text cannot coexist together. The one cancels the other out.

The passage is revolutionary not only because it denies what both Protestant and Catholic Christians claim to believe. Its denial goes much further than that. It denies that there is such a thing as truth. It is saying that no religion, philosophy, or belief of any kind is true no matter what the claim attached to it might be. The declaration that everything is a compound in one is a declaration that whatever is true is also false. Truth and falsity form a compound and yet they are one at the same time.

This is a seminal passage out of which grows the one, singular doctrine that is irrefutable: the doctrine that all doctrines are refutable. When one realizes that these words came out of the mouth of an inexperienced youth with limited language skills and philosophical capabilities, one is dumbstruck with amazement. Did he know what he was saying? To what extent was the passage premeditated, to what extent was it impromptu, and to what extent was it the sprouting of seeds planted by New England pilgrims two-hundred years before? The passage is a clear delineation of American pluralistic thought. It is as much a defense of the pluralistic ideals of American democracy as it is a repudiation of absolutism of whatever stripe or color.

Yet for all its insight and originality few have grasped the height, breadth, and depth of its meaning. One can justifiably ask who, either in or out of Mormondom, takes the statement “there is an opposition in all things” seriously? People fail to grasp the far-reaching meaning of the phrase. They think it merely means that to be experienced qualities must contrast with each other. But no, it says an opposition in “*all* things,” which all-inclusiveness rules out the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic God, the Platonic forms, science, and any and all beliefs that rely on absolutes! It rules out every conclusion, because whatever conclusion one comes to it is subject to “an opposition in all things”! This is a blanket rejection of all ideologies. It leaves every question unanswered. There are no final answers to anything, and therefore no ideologies, *except* the one, singular ideology: that there is an opposition in all things.

That Joseph Smith didn’t realize the far-reaching impact of this passage is evident in that it is as much against Mormon ideologies as it is any others. The passage is really revolutionary to the core, and at the same time one that, in the context of American pluralistic ideals, can’t be ignored.

Few would have thought that the twenty-three-year-old Joseph Smith dictating to scribes in 1829 could have been *that* revolutionary, but there was more to come. In the fi-

nal conference sermon delivered in Nauvoo, Illinois, in April 1844 shortly before his assassination, the famous *King Follett Discourse*, Joseph Smith puts a final touch on, and effectively sums up, his life's effort to reshape religious, philosophical, political, and social perspectives. He says:

...God himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves—that is the great secret....

...I want to reason more on the spirit of man for I am dwelling on the immutability of the spirit and on the body of man—on the subject of the dead. Is it logical to say that a spirit is immortal and yet have a beginning? Because if a spirit of man had a beginning, it will have an end, but it does not have beginning or end. This is good logic and is illustrated by my ring. I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man—the immortal spirit—because it has no beginning or end. Suppose you cut it in two—as the Lord lives there would be a beginning and an end. So it is with man. All the fools and learned and wise men from the beginning of creation, who come and say that man had a beginning, prove that he must have an end. If that doctrine be true, then the doctrine of annihilation would be true. But if I am right, then I might with boldness proclaim from the housetop that *God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all* (my italics). God himself could not create himself. Intelligence is eternal and exists on a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it (*BYU Studies*, volume 18, number 2, pp. 200, 204).

These may well be Joseph Smith's most famous words, and they are among the most daring, the most avant-garde, of any uttered by any religious figure in American (or world) history. They constitute a direct attack on absolutist views. No one that I know has put them in the context of the above-quoted Book of Mormon passage. To do so reveals something that no Mormon or non-Mormon that I know of has thought possible: that the "immortal spirit," the "mind of man," is founded on or embodied in the *differ-*

*ence* (opposition in all things) that every person experiences! God “never had the power to create the spirit of man” because whatever the “spirit” of man is it is manifest in the difference a person experiences and that difference precedes *everything* else! From that difference comes existence itself because without difference existence couldn’t be experienced and would therefore be impossible!

A reader of the King Follett Discourse could conclude that Joseph Smith was an atheist. To be sure he was a bold and outspoken critic of orthodox Christian doctrines, but to label him an atheist ignores what I assume most atheists claim to believe: that when one dies there is nothing. Atheism is absolutely non-metaphysical. It assumes that death is the end of everything including all atheists. Joseph Smith doesn’t believe that. He believes that “Intelligence is eternal and exists on a self-existent principle.” And what is the basis of intelligence? It is difference (an opposition in all things). Difference is the Master Intelligible that underlies intelligence. Difference, enigmatic as it may be, is the basis of intelligence. It is metaphysical and “eternal and exists on a self-existent principle.”

The King Follett Discourse is a funeral oration. It addresses questions concerning life after death but says nothing about what it means to be dead or what the difference between a dead person and a live person is. When coupled with the Book of Mormon passage, it leads to where even Joseph Smith was not at the moment prepared to go. It says that spirit (difference), which is fundamental and unique to each individual person, has no beginning or end and that just what “happens” to a person’s “spirit” (difference) when a person dies is a matter of conjecture. One thing is for sure, an opposition in all things rules out any and all answers (ideologies) regarding the question.

And there is an additional, perhaps still more heretical, Christian heresy intimated in this passage. One can conclude that what is meant by the claim that “God is a man” is that knowledge consists of what *people* know. To the ex-

tent that God is a person, to that same extent a person is a god. According to this sermon, there are not two kinds of existents, God and people; there is only one: people-gods or god-people. People are everything—“of the people, by the people, and for the people,” as Lincoln put it. There is no such thing as knowledge apart from the knowledge that comes from people’s experience. There is nothing above or other than what people experience. People’s experience is not only not inferior to something else; it is *all* there is. Either what people experience is real or there is no reality. Either what people experience is worth considering in and of itself or nothing is worth considering.

I realize that Joseph Smith made many statements to the effect that God’s wisdom is greater than man’s (indeed in the King Follett Discourse itself). Joseph Smith was a transitional figure. He grew up in the midst of a highly charged, revivalistic society that was steeped in a mixture of Christian innovation and orthodoxy. Added to that was the frontier American belief in individuality and its twin belief in equality. When all of the Christian and democratic beliefs that Joseph Smith was subject to were stirred up together what came out was a hodgepodge that helped itself to some of everything on frontier America’s cultural plate. Of course Joseph Smith contradicted himself. He was the product of his times, and his times were highly contradictory. Christianity and democracy don’t mix, but who on the American frontier knew that? As daring and as bold as Joseph Smith was, and though willing and able to step out of the mold of orthodoxy, he nonetheless couched his heresies in the commonplace inconsistencies of his day. They came to him naturally and innocently. Whatever else American frontier culture was it was naïve, and Joseph Smith was naïve along with it.

Joseph Smith was not only a natural-born philosopher he was an unusually gifted “religion maker.” He infused into Mormonism both absolute and relative elements, the first for absolutist institutional purposes, the second for

relativist philosophical reasons. The two could not coexist equally, and in the decades following its founder's death the Mormon Church became increasingly absolutistic both doctrinally and institutionally. In recent decades Mormonism's absolutism has hardened, and yet its relativistic doctrines persist. Mormons still believe that "the elements are eternal" and that the Gods "organized and formed the heavens and the earth" out of existing materials. They believe that "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be." They believe that existence is "one eternal round," that "men shall be gods," that "The glory of God is intelligence," and that if "there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they (ad infinitum)."

From the time of its humble beginnings in upstate New York, Mormonism's goal has been to "establish the Kingdom of God on earth." Mormons have been intent on acquiring economic wealth and wielding political power. The result of their efforts has been to establish a powerbase in the mountain west. Their success at expanding their influence beyond that, however, has been minimal. Mormonism is recognized as one of several important American religious sects but has remained secondary to American Evangelicalism and has achieved nothing compared to the prominence and worldwide stature of the Catholic Church.

Mormonism's eclecticism has made it appear disingenuous. Ongoing arguments as to whether Mormons are Christians are symptomatic. Mormons today aren't sure what they are. They know they are not like their Protestant and Catholic counterparts, and yet hesitate to single themselves out as different or unusual. They want to be accepted and yet cannot forget their past or deny their differences. And so Mormonism today suffers from a case of identity crisis. It has doubts about who it is and what it really stands for. It wonders what its real mission is and what if anything it is accomplishing. The longer it boasts of

spectacular growth but is unable to turn higher membership numbers into greater wealth, power, and influence, the more its ambitions appear to be frustrated. Adding more names to the rolls may only be adding more burdens to the budget. The day when the Kingdom of God will be “established in the tops of the mountains” seems today as far away as ever.

As absolutists, Mormons have joined hands with the religious right and the ultra-conservative wing of the Republican Party. Here they play second shotgun to the much larger, more pervasive, and more mainstream evangelical churches. Mormonism’s political and social conservative views have resulted in a mediocre me-tooism that follows roads paved by fundamentalist Christian churches. There is little if any difference between the Mormon Church’s position on abortion and gay marriage and that of conservatives in general. As an absolutist religious organization modern Mormonism has lost itself in a sea of traditional absolutist American religious conservatism.

Mormonism is unique because of its relativism and its beliefs in the autonomy of the individual. No other religious movement in America or the world over shares a commonality with the principles of the American Declaration of Independence in the way that Mormonism does. No other religion provides the religious and philosophical groundwork that serves as a foundation for American democracy. Mormonism is the quintessential American democratic religion, and yet for over a century now Mormonism has staked its fortunes on absolutistic, anti-democratic views.

That’s because people don’t associate religion with democracy. The separation of church and state keeps the two apart. Modern Mormons think the burden of reshaping people’s views in this regard too high a hurdle to jump. Consequently, Mormonism has tried to shed itself of its relativistic, pluralistic doctrines. It has chosen to blend itself into the larger, more predominant, and more widely

accepted religious right. It should, of course, not have been so timid—so afraid and so unlike its bold, revolutionary founder. It should have done the opposite of what it did.

As opposed to claiming that the Mormon Church is the “only true church” Mormons should be proclaiming that there is no such thing as a true church! Common sense tells everybody that churches are no truer than dictionaries. Everybody knows that the Mormon Church, like all other churches, makes mistakes and does things wrong. Nobody’s fooled by pious, steeped in institutional formality, claims to the contrary.

What people in the twenty-first century know that people in the nineteenth century didn’t acknowledge is that people are not perfect and they’re not going to be perfect. Benjamin Franklin’s attempt at moral perfection was a spoof, and Mormonism’s is as comical as it is ridiculous. Once Mormons admit their obvious blunders and acknowledge that their claims to divine guidance are as laughable as they are incongruous, they can begin to distinguish themselves in ways in which they are truly distinguishable.

Mormons have much to be ashamed of and, at the same time, much to be proud of. They have unwittingly and unfortunately focused on the former while ignoring the latter.

The relativism that is today coming to the fore was imbedded in Mormon scriptures nearly two centuries ago. When it comes to relativism Mormons have a head start and an inculcated-from-birth understanding that nobody else has. As opposed to attempting to prove something to be true that is as false as it is true, Mormons should be shouting from the roof top that there is only one truth: that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Mormonism is the singular religion that can embrace both relativism and pluralism and claim them as its own. It is the singular religion that can rise up as an alternative to monotheism.

Mormons have never been monotheistic, and yet they have never bothered to definitively deny the omnipotence of God. Now is the time to do that. A god that is dependent

on difference (an opposition in all things) isn't omnipotent and therefore isn't God. Mormons don't believe in God, but they do believe in gods. They believe that every Mormon (and non-Mormon) is a god-in-embryo who is subject to the travesties of mortality just as the Greek and Roman gods were, their assumed immortality and supernatural powers to the contrary.

Now is the time for Mormons to admit they took the wrong road, the one well trodden. Can Mormons do an about face? Some can and some will. The times are ripe for it. The clock has struck twelve. The alarm is sounding. As one looks into the horizon one sees that the firmament is relativistic. Now is the time for Mormon relativism and Mormon pluralism to come to the fore and for Mormons to bury their past absolutist incongruities once and for all.

All Mormons need now is to be their relativistic selves. They only need to be different in the way Mormons have always been different. All they need to do is stand up for and be proud of what is unique about their religion. The rest will be history and *that* will take care of itself!

## Finale

A relationship is self-contradictory. It is forever inconclusive—equivocal. To understand it one should approach it from the direction it isn't being approached. A relationship is unstable but only ambiguously so. It is stable but only equivocally so. It is as likely to break into two as to merge into one. On the verge of explosion it doesn't explode. On the verge of implosion it doesn't implode. If it appears to be one it's two. If it appears to be two it's one. It really isn't either because it's both at the same time. Within it difference is constantly pushing and pulling but to no conclusive effect. It pushes in to make the relationship one and pulls out to make it two, yet the relationship never becomes one and never becomes two. A relationship isn't one and isn't two; it is a relationship.

*What* a relationship is is uncertain. *That* it is is certain. Relationships are equivocal as to condition but certain as to existence. The whole of the relationship is real, but the parts are unknowable. They are characterized by such opposites as change and constancy, tangibility and intangibility, objectivity and subjectivity, particularity and universality, and separability and inseparability. And yet these characteristics can't be known because they are equally present at the same time. In a relationship the changing is constant, the tangible is intangible, the objective is subjective, the particular is universal, and the separable is inseparable. A relationship's qualities can't be known not because, as was once thought, they are constantly changing but because they are both changing and constant at the same time.

A relationship exists in an absolute state of ambiguity. It exists in that always-never land where its metaphysical existence extends beyond the summit while its experiential existence never gets to the top. Its termination is clearly in

sight experientially and yet never arrives metaphysically. Evidence is everywhere pointing to a certain time when and a certain place where a relationship will meet its final fate, but the evidence, however abundant, is never sufficient to prove that the fate it meets is final.

The equivocation of relationships is verified by what I experience. The absoluteness of relationships is verified by what I sense. Nothing I experience is certain, but everything I sense is for sure. My table is little by little disintegrating; my chair is step-by-step falling apart. The time will come when they will be heaps of dust that will blow away, and yet out of the dust will grow a tree and from the tree will come a table and chair. I experience tables and chairs as constantly ending, and yet I sense that they are never ending.

How does one live in a world in which everything is experientially coming to an end but which metaphysically never ends? How does one deal with a world that in its forever-ending is its never-ending? How does one cope with a world that is experientially unwinding but metaphysically rewinding at the same time? There is a way, but the way is neither to believe in it nor to try to figure it out. Neither of these goes anywhere. The world is a giant, complex, multifaceted relationship, and a relationship is a conundrum, and a conundrum can neither be believed in nor figured out.

One cannot have faith in a conundrum for the simple reason that it is constantly contradicting itself. If one has faith in this what about that? If one has faith in that what about this? One can plant a mustard seed but what grows from it isn't faith; it is a conundrum—one that is as likely to punch one in the nose as it is to pat one on the back. Those who claim to have faith in a conundrum also claim that the world some day will be a utopia where there will be no more relationships because everything is one.

One cannot decipher a conundrum. It is known in advance to be undecipherable. One can, however, reach pro-

visional (hypothetical) conclusions concerning it, and one can use those conclusions in certain circumstances to explain things in part, predict things in part, and control things in part. These explanations, predictions, and controls, though limited, may be regarded as highly beneficial or as highly detrimental. People can use them for good or for ill. Because these preliminary findings have practical application people have believed that the would-be decipherers are “on the right track.” People have believed that “progress is being made” and that it’s only a matter of time until the world will be changed from a conundrum into a utopia where there will be no more ignorance, error, or misery.

People get carried away. A conundrum can’t be believed in because no matter what a person believes it to be it is something else. It can’t be figured out because it is neither this nor that but both at the same time. One can feign faith in it and sit back saying, “God is in his heavens.” One can feign knowledge of it and bask on the sands of pragmatic beaches. Nonetheless, from feigned faith only comes a feigned God who rules in a feigned heaven, and from feigned knowledge only comes feigned explanations, feigned predictions, and feigned controls over inexplicable, unpredictable, and uncontrollable eventualities.

One can never be too careful when dealing with a relationship—a conundrum. One can’t be sure that it isn’t what it is or that it is what it isn’t. One can be fooled. It may be the other way around! Because a conundrum is both metaphysical and experiential at the same time, it is there when one can’t see it and not there when one can. A conundrum is the evidence of what isn’t, the illusion of what is.

In addition to believing in conundrums and trying to figure them out, people try to judge them morally. Because people are conundrums their moral commitments are at once certain and equivocal. When couples marry they are both sure and unsure. Promises fail to take everything into account. “For better or for worse” and “in sickness and in

health” the bride and the groom pledge aloud to each other. In sotto voce they speak privately to themselves. Promises aside, will this relationship last forever? Metaphysically it will. Experientially it will not. It is a conundrum: experientially one can’t ever really have it; metaphysically one can’t ever really not have it.

When one makes moral judgments one shows one’s prejudices. People are morally complete—whole. Their morals run the gamut and are only as good as they are not bad and as bad as they are not good. To be a judge is to be partial—to see the good as opposed to the bad or vice versa. To judge is to lean this way or that. Whoever takes everything into account puts moral judgments away—sets them aside as incongruous. The more one-sided one is the more prone one is to judge. The more all-encompassing one’s view the more irrelevant moral judgments become. From a relativistic perspective moral judgments *always* miss the mark.

If one can’t effectively believe in, decipher, or morally judge a conundrum what can one effectively do with it? One can appreciate it, stand in awe of it, and marvel at it. One can experience it, and having experienced it, one can express the sentiments, the wonder, and the meaning that arises from the experience. When one experiences a relationship one experiences all of it. One doesn’t see in it only what one wants to believe concerning it; one doesn’t disassemble it or attempt to reduce it to a common denominator; and one doesn’t pass judgment on it. One experiences it whole for what it is.

The world is incomprehensible, and it is its incomprehensibility that makes it infinitely fresh, new, and original. The world is constantly renewing itself and therefore it is constantly new. The world can be imagined in the context of its past—that it is what it is because of what it has been. It can be imagined in the context of the future—that what it is now will lead to what it will yet become. The experiencer of necessity experiences it in the context of the present—a

never-ending present. Experientially the world doesn't have an age because it is at every instant a new world. It has no past and knows no future. It exists in a now that extends out infinitely in every direction. From an experiential perspective now is forever.

From this perspective every utterance, gesture, shape, movement, and sound created by the perceiver is an expression. Everything the perceiver does is a response to what the perceiver perceives. Because every experience is fresh and new so too is every expression. Because everything is new there is no such thing as repetition. Nothing happens twice. Every happening is a new happening, and the excitement of the newness is expressed in everything a perceiver is, everything a perceiver perceives, and everything a perceiver does.

Aesthetic values are whole values because an experienter takes the whole of experience into account. Experientially change can't be separated from constancy, tangibility from intangibility, objectivity from subjectivity, particularity from universality, or separability from inseparability. In an experience all these come intertwined, pushing apart to maintain their separateness and pulling together to become one. An experienter experiences each of these in the context of the other, and it is from this context that knowledge is possible.

A great chef doesn't cook for the tongue and the palette alone. A great chef's cuisine is for the eyes, for the ears, and of course for the nose—and then for still more—for the tastefulness of the mind and the delicateness of the imagination. Great food surpasses the recipe. It mixes not only the ingredients of the food but those of the day and of the moment. A great chef makes the present experienceable by mixing it with tradition and lore and at the same time hints at the future with a dash of innovation. Great cookery is all encompassing. To eat well one eats for strength *and* for insight. Exclusive taste is all-inclusive and all-encompassing. It's for the visceral and the jovial, the sen-

sual and the consensual, the marrow and the morrow, good health and good times, pleasantries and pageantries, refinements for the mind, nutrients for the body, and sustenance for the soul.

A great soul lives a whole life, knowing that the physical is so big and so broad it spills over into the metaphysical and vice versa. Here is a soul that looks past the objective into the subjective—a soul that knows the two are so intertwined and so intermixed that splitting them would cause a cataclysm so extensive as to annihilate existence itself. A great soul knows that some things are meant to be forever and that,

The Destinee, minister general,  
 That executeth in the world overal  
 The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,  
 So strong it is, that though the world had sworn  
 The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,  
 Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day  
 That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeere.  
 For certainly, oure appetites heere,  
 Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,  
 Al this is reuled by the sighte above.  
 (Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*, part two)

Aesthetic experience keeps the entirety of experience intact, and from this entirety comes the aesthetic meaning of experience. What something means aesthetically is intimately wrapped up in what it is and vice versa. Aesthetic meaning has to do with the value of something—a value that is always original because its newness is at every moment created afresh.

In the discovery of this newly-created value is a sense of divinity. As a discoverer, a creator of a world that is constantly new, one senses one's divinity—one senses that one is a god. The monotheistic God couldn't create the world because before he could get to it its discoverers, its experiencers, and its perceivers had already created it time and

time again! The world is new because it is a relationship that never grows old. Had a mono-God created it, it would only have been half there. It would have been half a relationship that would have been old from its birth. It would be all good, all true, and all boring. No, the mono-God didn't create the world. He turned and smiled, saying, "I didn't need to create it. The plural-gods are creating it anew every day and at every moment. Their creative cries are heard from afar: 'Let there be...,' and it is—again and again—a new heaven and a new earth!"

The experiencers, the perceivers of the world are the creators of the world's great societies. They go beyond equality and full employment. The societies they create are those that, excluding exclusivity, experience the whole of experience, the whole of relationships, and the whole of conundrums!

Great societies are afraid of neither contradiction nor equivocation. Rather than fear them they stand in awe of them. They marvel at them. Where did these come from? How did they come to be? The experiencers, the creators of great societies know that some things just are. They neither begin nor end. They are forever. They serve as the tools of creation. They are the bricks and mortar that form the foundation of the world. They constitute the cornerstone, the groundwork, the fundament. They are the rock on which the house created anew stands unmolested and indestructible.

As the enemy approaches, the brilliance of the edifice is overwhelming. But then, suddenly, before they can make their attack, it's gone! It has disappeared! Confused, they marvel and then in frustration hear the bombers coming. They order them to turn back. "No, no, it's no use, you fools!" But it's too late. There is a blinding flash, a deafening reverberation, and a giant plume that ascends ominously above them.

Hours later all is quiet. The attackers walk away in wonder and dismay. They look searchingly at each other.

Then one stops, turns, and looks back. “Oh, my...,” he murmurs softly. There it is again before them...as new, as fresh, and as unblemished as ever. The world is there—the entire world—complete, with none of it left out—majestic and shining—on a hill, in all its glory!

## Afterword

Old things are done away;  
All have become new.  
Earth, sky, and passion's cry  
Have pierced them thru and thru!

Somewhere along the way people got off track, trying to do what they could never do and to know what they could never know. From Joseph Smith, who in 1829 was but a youth of twenty-three, came the first two of the above lines. Another poet was of similar age when he penned the following some ten years earlier:

v

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.  
(John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*)