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Nature Among the Mormons:
An Ecocritical Approach to Mormon Literature

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of English

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Gail D. Ballard

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This thesis by Gail D. Ballard is accepted in its present form by the Department of English of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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I

Introduction

Over the last thirty or forty years, an increasing number of scholars have focused their sights on environmental issues. Every discipline from science to sociology, from literature to religion, has entered the environmental arena to search, question, and enlighten attitudes inherently damaging to our ecological well-being. Scientists claim our ecological crisis has reached cataclysmic proportions. Politicians blame the opposition party. Feminists blame men. Economists blame greedy capitalists. The educated blame the ignorant and the poor blame the wealthy. Amidst this furor of conflicting voices, Lynn White, professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote his pivotal essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." Focusing on Judeo-Christian traditions, White claims that our Western theology has created our current environmental crisis. What Christians need to do, posits White, is "find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (1206).

Neither White, nor the many critics who followed in his wake, recognized that just such a "rethinking" had occurred. In the spring of 1820, a young boy named Joseph Smith, began the process of restoration. Claiming that years of apostasy had plunged the earth into spiritual ignorance, he initiated a restitution of spiritual truth and organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Popularly known as Mormonism, the doctrines and precepts of this religion directly address White's arguments against Christian theology. Interestingly, Mormons seem no more environmentally gifted than adherents of other religions, which leads us to question whether the general population

of the Church was or is aware of its environmental "rethinking."

Unquestionably the unique history and relative isolation of early Mormon settlements provides us with a unique opportunity to evaluate the influence of religion on environmental ethics. In this paper I will first examine the indictments made by White (and others) against Judeo-Christian tradition. I will then discuss the doctrines and precepts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they relate to these issues. Using the resulting paradigm, I will critique popular Mormon literature during successive generations of LDS writers to measure how effectively these environmental doctrines filtered into Mormon culture. Finally, my research will lead me to conclusions about the role of religion in creating and eventually solving the environmental crisis.

II

Dominion vs. Stewardship

Dominion Condemned

No single Judeo-Christian doctrine draws more fire from environmentalists than God's Biblical injunction found in Genesis 1:28:

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Claiming "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen," Lynn White sent theologians scrambling for proof that his indictment against Western religion is unfounded. Unfortunately the environmental abuse of Western culture is damning and rather than attacking White's arguments head on many of his critics circumvent modern Christianity and hearken to earlier eras of Christian thinking for proof that Judeo-Christian tradition is fundamentally earth conscious. Interestingly, even White comments that the roots of environmental responsibility may lie within an earlier era of Christianity. He cites instances in the life of St. Francis of Assisi indicating a healthier ecological attitude. We will discuss these in a later chapter.

Expanding on White's original essay, H. Paul Santmire concluded that there are political and economic forces also implicated in our current environmental crisis. His study, "Historical Dimensions of the American Crisis," argued that the "American mind still suffers from a kind of schizophrenia" because we both worship and exploit nature (82). He supported White's contention that our Puritan predecessors actively applied the

doctrine of dominion, thus encouraging the exploitation and abuse of natural resources. Men justified technological advances on religious grounds because the doctrine of dominion legitimized man's conquest of nature. This doctrine proved especially providential for industrialists who reaped the profits of fertile resources by claiming that it was God's will and man's destiny to civilize the wilderness.

America's environmental dichotomy flowered during the early years of the nineteenth century when the love of nature became nearly a religion. Poetry and prose lauded the virtues of a pastoral life, the joys of a sylvan landscape, the transcendent goodness of pristine nature. Concurrently, industrialists, scientists, and politicians claimed victory over the primitive, the wild, and the uncivilized. To further man's manifest destiny over nature, individualism and self-achievement became essential elements of democracy. The collective good took a back seat to personal prosperity. This philosophy was further supported by the American Protestant ethic: "God helps those who help themselves." Rugged individualism and personal success became the essential religion of industrial America as workers embraced the philosophy that man acquires material blessings because God wills it so. Civilization and technology are the destiny of man and while nature is lovely and provides a setting for aesthetic contemplation, technology is the answer to men's troubles. The popularity of Emerson bespeaks this environmental dichotomy as he becomes one of the most vocal spokesmen for both the worship of nature and the virtues of technological progress.

Such a cultural dichotomy succeeds in making the general population ambivalent towards ecological planning. Indeed, our culture continues to vacillate between the

demands of civilization and the needs of our environment. One moment our eyes turn to the wilderness and we breathe sacramental prayers. The next moment we are lured into a bigger, better, brighter technological tomorrowland. In the tumult of conflicting attitudes, Americans generally ignore our individual environmental responsibility.

In the conclusion of his essay, Santmire suggests an answer to this dilemma. Isaiah, the biblical prophet, neither denied the rights of civilization nor man's obligation to his environment. "The prophetic tradition blends both social justice and cosmic redemption" (91). Santmire contends, "Ancient biblical tradition could help us grow out of our ecological schizophrenia." He echoes White's belief that "the remedy [to our ecological crisis] must also be essentially religious" (1207). Both men call on Judeo-Christian tradition to reevaluate and forge a modern version of St. Francis of Assisi combined with Isaiah's vision of a "Kingdom of peace and justice in nature when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb" (Santmire, 91). Santmire and White agree that the first doctrine to be shed during this religious "rethinking" is the doctrine of dominion.

Organized religion rises to the challenge of these two scholars. During the last two decades nearly all the major religious denominations have issued doctrinal statements or positions encouraging their membership to "rethink" the doctrine of dominion. The American Baptist Churches' publication, "Creation and the Covenant of Caring," encourages members to "Acknowledge our responsibility for stewardship of the Creator's good earth" (241). The World Council of Churches expresses its sentiments in "Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology" and calls on Christians everywhere to "abandon domination and exploitation as a style of relating both

to one another and to the rest of creation" (259). The Evangelical Lutheran Church's statement, "Basis for Our Caring," articulates the general belief that stewardship must replace the doctrine of dominion:

> As with the Garden of Eden, God entrusts the earth to us to serve and to protect. Serving and protecting are sacred tasks. . . . Stewardship, in this environmental context, means serving life-giving cycles and rhythms of creation through restrained and creative intervention. (248)

Pope John Paul writes, "I wish to repeat that the ecological crisis is a moral issue," which supports Lynn White's contention that "the roots of our trouble are so largely religious." While the causes of our environmental dilemma may be many and varied, the solutions must come from individuals who accept personal responsibility in applying the Christian attitudes of charity, humility, and service. The Pope's message, "The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility," encourages all men and "Christians, in particular, [to] realize that their responsibility with creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith" (236).

The common thread in these religious statements is the reevaluation of the doctrine of dominion and the confirmation of stewardship as a life-affirming principle. Interestingly, the principle of stewardship has been a part of our Western theology for as long as the doctrine of dominion. Modern theology is merely taking it out of storage, dusting it off, and applying it to our current environmental dilemma. As proof of this, David Kinsley, a professor of religious studies, has written two provocative essays--"Christianity as Ecologically Harmful" and "Christianity as Ecologically Responsible." The first of these essays recounts the history of Judeo-Christian environmentalism.

Citing the writings of early Christian theologians, he explains how the doctrine of dominion slowly transformed from an environmentally sound ethic of stewardship to one of abuse and neglect. Recording the writings of successive generations of theologians--Origen, Thomas Aquinas, St Bonaventure, Dante, Luther and Calvin--Kinsley chronicles the slow doctrinal apostasy which occurred largely because "the Bible and Christianity were called upon to support and reinforce aspects of modernism, such as technology, science, and colonialism" (112). Kinsley summarizes his first essay:

> For several centuries the rightness of these views [dominion over nature] was hardly questioned. Some cranks did object to what they viewed as human arrogance and pride, but for the most part human beings felt quite self-righteous in their quest to tame, civilize, and otherwise dominate nature even if that meant destroying large parts of it. Recently, attitudes have begun to change. Many religiously minded people have tried to find ecologically positive aspects to the biblical and Christian traditions in an attempt to harmonize their reverence for both the Bible and nature. (116)

Kinsley's second essay is a discussion of some few Christian voices expressing more environmentally healthy attitudes--Irenaeus, Augustine, and Francis of Assisi. Kinsley also highlights biblical passages which suggest ancient Christianity and Judaism were sensitive to the earth and all of God's creations. He articulates what other scholars also suggest, that our view of nature in negative terms may be a product of pagan and Greek thought rather than biblical tradition (119). Early Judeo-Christian doctrines reflected healthy environmental attitudes but the intrusion of pagan and Greek culture brought about a gradual apostasy. Roderick Nash gives further credence to this idea when he declares, "stewardship was notable chiefly by its absence in the thousand years of Christian thought following St. Benedict" (Nash,"Greening," 202).

Stewardship holds a new and prominent position among Christians and contemporary ecotheologians look to this principle as the dike holding back the flood of environmental criticism. A common definition of steward is a manager acting for the owner. Thus the ecological explanation of Genesis 1:28 can be more appropriately found in Genesis 2: 15. "And the Lord took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." The one makes man Lord over the earth while the other makes him the servant or steward.

The basic difference between the doctrine of dominion and the principle of stewardship is the attitude of ownership. In "The Greening of Religion," Roderick Nash writes, "The bottom line of stewardship was that the world belonged to God" (201). God's injunction in Genesis 1:28 allows the misconception that the earth was presented to mankind as a gift. There was an implied transferral of ownership. However, early scripture negates the concept of human ownership and claims "that the earth is the Lord's" (Exodus 9:29). "God is the King of all the earth" (Psalm 47:9). "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). For ancient Israel and modern Christians a belief in anything other than God's ownership of the earth becomes an open display of human arrogance.

Another essential component of the law of stewardship is humility and service. Theologians posit that Christ himself sets the example of perfect stewardship. He did not come to earth to rule but to serve. Our relationship with nature should have the same expression of service (Hall). This would certainly be supported by White's view of St. Francis. "The key to an understanding of Francis is his belief in the virtue of

humility" (1206).

Complimenting the concept of service and humility is Santmire's belief that nature has its own membership in the Kingdom of God and that humans, as stewards, must allow the earth the right to fulfill its reason for existence ("Greening",209). I will discuss this idea in greater depth in the next chapter.

Without question, the ideology of stewardship offers one answer to our environmental dilemma. Contemporary environmentalists embrace the concepts of service and humility. Christianity is revitalizing its belief in God's supreme ownership of the earth. As stewards, humans must assume greater responsibility for the maintenance and care of all the earth. In light of this "rethinking," Wendell Berry and John Hart, two of our more notable American environmentalists, have instituted the Land Stewardship Project "to develop and encourage a public dialogue on a sustainable land ethic in the Midwest" (quoted by Nash, 213). These are just two in a long line of ecologically minded Christians who recognize the virtue of stewardship. Although such a change in Christian attitude offers exciting possibilities, it is interesting that the critics of Judeo-Christian tradition are unaware that the doctrine of stewardship, and the "rethinking" called for by White, was articulated by leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints more than a hundred years before White wrote his essay.

Stewardship Applied

Joseph Smith officially established The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 6, 1830 and proclaimed himself "apostle of Jesus Christ" and "the first elder of the church" (D&C 20:2). Over the next fourteen years, Smith received many

revelations restoring doctrines lost to the world through apostasy. One such doctrine concerned the law of stewardship. Not only did Joseph Smith preach the doctrine of stewardship, he tried to apply its principles through an economic program called the United Order.

The Church began in New England but persecution and Joseph Smith's vision of Zion sent early members westward to Ohio, then on to Jackson County, Missouri, and eventually to Nauvoo, Illinois. It was in Kirtland, Ohio, that Joseph established the United Order. This new commandment is articulated in section 104 of The Doctrine and Covenants. (Most of Joseph's doctrinal prophecies and revealed scripture are contained in the two books entitled, The Doctrine and Covenants and The Pearl of Great Price.) In section 104, the Lord enjoins Joseph:

> It is wisdom in me; therefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship. That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him. For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. (D&C 104:11-14)

The revelation continues with an exhortation to the Saints to impart of their substance to the poor and needy.

This principle of stewardship was repeatedly articulated by Joseph Smith, always with the stipulation that the Saints were to use the blessings of the earth "with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion" (D&C 59:20). "In nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and

obey not his commandments" (D&C 59:21). According to Smith and his followers, the United Order was integrally connected to the laws of God. Stewardship was not merely an economic program but a divinely inspired order instituted for the purpose of building up the Kingdom of God on the earth.

The actual implementation of this Order met with varying degrees of success. Individual members of the Church were called upon to consecrate all personal property to the church. In turn they received what they needed for their own sustenance, the surplus being used to sustain the poor and to support the demands of growing church membership. The Order was a strictly voluntary program. Those who chose not to consecrate all their property could either contribute their surplus to the Church or pay tithes and offerings from their surplus. While Smith counseled his followers to live the higher law of complete consecration, he nonetheless recognized human nature and often settled for what he considered the lesser law of tithes and offerings.

The United Order was an attempt by the Latter-day Saints to live the principles of stewardship. Like Isaiah of old, Smith recognized the inherent rights of civilization without negating the needs of nature:

> For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance. But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin. And wo be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need. (D&C 49:19-21)

Caring for the earth and using moderation in the consumption of material blessings were essential components of Smith's stewardship doctrine.

With the martyrdom of Joseph Smith in June 1844, and the subsequent expulsion of the Saints from Nauvoo, Illinois, the principles of stewardship and the vision of the United order were transported to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles at the time of Joseph's death, eventually became Smith's successor as prophet, seer and revelator. It is in the writings of Brigham Young that the principles of stewardship are fully articulated. It is also during Young's administration that we see the most conscientious effort, to date, to implement the doctrines of the United Order.

It may seem to the critical eye that the doctrines espoused by Smith and later by Young are merely disguised versions of the concept of man's dominion over nature. Certainly, both men, as well as other early Mormon leaders, reaffirmed the idea that the earth was created for the pleasure, blessing, and benefit of man. However, as discussed earlier, Smith and Young, like Isaiah of old, recognized the demands of civilization can't be neglected with any less impunity than the rights of nature. Paul Santmire suggests in "Historical Dimensions":

> Isaiah did not approach nature as a mere thing, whose only *raison d'etre* is to be dominated by man for the sake of economic justice. Isaiah looked for a Kingdom of peace and justice *in nature*, when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, when nature's own bondage would be redeemed. (91)

What both White and Santmire call for in their arguments against Judeo-Christian tradition is a new kind of theology that balances human needs with the needs of nature. The prophetic vision of Isaiah calls for the creation of a Kingdom of God based on equality for all forms of life. The creation of such a Kingdom is one of the fundamental

doctrines of Mormon theology and the very essence of the millennial vision. A belief in a world redeemed from the effects of the fall was articulated by Joseph Smith in one of the Articles of Faith:

> We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory. (Pearl of Great Price)

The establishment of the United Order and the implementation of the law of stewardship was merely one step in the process of earthly renewal. Brigham Young clearly states that the task of Latter-day Saints is "to beautify the face of the earth, until it [becomes] like the Garden of Eden." (*JD* 1:345:53)[1]. Young goes on to exhort:

> Every moment of human life should be devoted to doing good somewhere and in some way. We are all dependent upon a Being greater than ourselves, and we owe, our talent, time and every pulse of our nature to the Supreme of the Universe. We have nothing of our own, and ought to devote ourselves to usefulness; we ought to learn to be economical, which coupled with industry, will make us wealthy. And while we are handling the things of this world, let us not neglect to become rich in faith, in humility, and to learn the ways of God, and be constantly and actively devoted to his service and the building up of his kingdom upon the earth, or the riches of this world will do us no good. (*JD* 9:296)

The human need for planting, mining, hunting, and manufacturing often came into direct conflict with the needs of a delicate desert landscape but Young leaned toward the encouragement of human industries particularly if they were used to benefit the Kingdom. He consistently encouraged the introduction of new species of plants and

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[1]All further *Journal of Discourse* notations will be indicated by *JD*, followed by the volume and then the page number.

animals into the Great Basin in an effort to make the desert "blossom like a rose." The industry of the Saints was to be moderated by humility and unselfishness. "Keep your valley pure, keep our towns as pure as you possibly can, keep your hearts pure," Young counseled the early Saints (*JD* 8:80). With the vision of a modern-day Eden firmly entrenched, Young established the principle of stewardship in various communities in Utah and surrounding territories.

One of the most enthusiastic attempts to live the United Order took place in a small community in Southern Utah--Orderville. Members consecrated all their properties to the Order. Manufacturing, farming, and business were done by united effort. Even meals were served in a common dining room and laundry done by group assignment. All families were given sufficient food and supplies to meet their needs and surplus goods and commodities were used to sustain others in the community or sold outside the community to provide capital for more land or equipment. Basic to the community was a commitment to building a Kingdom of God on the earth. Everything belonged to God. The Order was organized to manage and use earthly gifts and blessings for the benefit of all. It was literally the first step in creating the millennial earth.

Other communities in the Great Basin met the challenge of stewardship to varying degrees. Brigham Young never lost sight of the virtues of the United Order but the coming of the railroad in 1869 and the subsequent influx of nonmember influences, the appeal of worldly luxuries, the lure of the goldfields, the inability of some to enjoy communal living and the powerful inroads made by the encroaching United States economy, eventually disrupted Young's vision. By the latter part of the nineteenth

century, attempts to live the United Order dissolved into the broader American economic philosophy of private enterprise.

Early Church authorities, and contemporary general authorities, still feel stewardship and consecration are divine laws. Members believe the influences of an evil and selfish world hinder the implementation of these principles. However, it is the dream of many Latter-day Saints that the United Order will in the future be reinstated. Until that time, members are encouraged to live the spirit of the law by paying tithes and offerings and acknowledging God's ownership of all earthly blessings. Prophets and apostles continue to exhort members of the Church to use earthly resources with wisdom and care. Spencer W. Kimball, president of the LDS Church, made such a plea in the 1976 General Conference. Kimball quoted extensively from the works of Brigham Young, encouraging Saints to plant gardens, clean yards and neighborhoods, cease the killing of animals for sport, and to continue the wise use of God's blessings.

More recently, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, commented that "man's task of establishing dominion over the earth is not to be achieved by arbitrarily imposing his will on his environment, but by acting in harmony with law"(9). The law upon which man must base his actions is stewardship and as a recent article in *The Church News* counsels:

> Humans were to have dominion over the earth, but they were also expected to be wise and reverent, and to acknowledge the Lord's generosity toward them. . . . It is no small thing to be made the caretaker of the Lord house and overseer of His creations. (Feb. 17, 1996, pg. 16)

Unquestionably the attitudes of humility, service, and responsibility engendered

by stewardship are more life affirming and environmentally healthy. Yet the application of stewardship as an economic system seems to have little chance of success when competing with the benefits of capitalism. Human nature is easily enticed by the anthropocentric virtues of domination and subjugation. White's arguments against the environmental turpitude of Judeo-Christian tradition neglects the more motivating factors of profit and personal power achieved through *laissez faire* economics. Yet White is essentially right in his belief that the answers to our environmental difficulties must come from the religious community. Joseph Smith knew this. Brigham Young taught this. And modern-day prophets and apostles continue to exhort mankind to rid themselves of selfishness, greed, and pride. The bottom line for White, Santmire, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Pope John, and a multitude of other religious leaders, is that each person must individually recommit to live the principles of humility and service reflected in the principle of stewardship.

III

The Spirit in All Things

Man's Spiritual Elitism

The most controversial argument Lynn White treats in his criticism of Judeo-Christian tradition is the claim that man is unique among animal species because he possesses an eternal spiritual identity. This assumption places man above other species and makes him the pinnacle of all creation. The by-product of such thinking is human arrogance. White argues that this attitude of superiority encourages antipathy towards plants and animals. He compares the anthropocentric tendency of this belief with the animism of pagan religions:

> In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirts were accessible to men, but were very unlike men . . . Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or damned a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation . . . The spirits in natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man evaporated. Man's effective monopoly on spirit in this world was confirmed and the old inhibitions to the exploitation of nature crumbled. (1205)

White maintains that Eastern religions and native cultures tend to be more sensitive to other forms of life because they incorporate variations of this pagan animism into their belief system. Other ecocritics support White's argument against Western religion. Endowing only the human family with a spiritual identity suggests that animals and plants are merely here on this earth for the pleasure and use of man. Environmentalists contend that this theologic principle, coupled with the doctrine of dominion, allows man to abuse the resources of this earth without regard to the feelings

and needs of other creatures. The chain of being philosophy of Western theology gives man higher value in relation to other forms of life.

Modern theologians, in countering White's assertions, remain firmly committed to a belief that other forms of life are devoid of spirit. None of the environmental treatises written by the ecclesiastical entities mentioned earlier in this paper recant the belief that other forms of life are devoid of spirit. Humans remain superior in this regard. However, most religions now agree that humans owe other forms of life a greater reverence because they reflect the handiwork of God and are evidence of his masterful creation.

White submits that St. Francis still remains a unique voice within Western theology. Contemporary Christians attempt to align with St. Francis's ideals. Pope John Paul II proclaimed Saint Francis the Patron Saint of ecology and maintained that "he offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation" ("The Ecological Crisis,"236). As mentioned previously, White posits:

> The key to an understanding of Francis is his belief in the virtue of humility--not merely for the individual but for man as a species. Francis tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's creatures. (1206)

The Evangelical Lutheran church clarifies its position in the treatise mentioned earlier. "Humanity is formed from dust of the ground. . . . Out of the same ground the Creator causes trees to grow and makes beasts and birds. In creation, humans are connected to the earth and other living things" ("Basis for Our Caring," 245). Similarly, the Baptists call on men to "affirm the goodness and beauty of God's creation" ("Creation and the Covenant of Caring," 241).

Despite these tentative commitments, modern Christianity still holds firmly to the belief that man is divinely endowed with spirit while all other forms of life are merely temporal entities. The damaging character of this doctrine is multiplied by the concept of life as a testing ground. The ultimate destination of mankind is an unearthly realm--heaven. All earthly commodities will eventually pass into oblivion for heaven is a place devoid of other forms of life. This *other world* attitude increases man's propensity to think of this earth as disposable. The temporary character of plants and animals and the earth itself encourages a user ethic. While Christians are encouraged to use care and sensitivity in their relationship with the earth, they are taught the transcendence of human life and the transitory nature of all other creatures.

Earth as a testing ground is a fundamental belief in Judeo-Christian tradition. Mankind is sent to the earth to be tested and tried. Environmentalists argue that such a belief encourages men to view the earth as inherently evil. This argument is articulated in Roderick Nash's text, *Wilderness and the American Mind:* "If paradise was early man's greatest good, wilderness, as its antipode, was his greatest evil" (9). The beauty of the Garden of Eden is contrasted with *the lone and dreary world*. The Garden was a place where God could dwell but the fallen earth was environed by the devil. The tribes of ancient Israel saw the wilderness as foreboding, desolate, and filled with evil spirits. Modern theologians have done little to change man's perspective of the fallen earth.

In addition, the Judeo-Christian tradition encourages the pitting of oneself against the evils of nature as a means of measuring discipleship. The concept of purification through wilderness experience is mirrored in the biblical accounts of Israel's forty year

travail in the wilderness, the austerity of the Essenes, and the unconventional lifestyle of John the Baptist. Even Christ enters the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Naturally, environmentalists argue, this attitude encourages antipathy towards the wilds of nature. However, it can also be argued that Judeo-Christians value wilderness as an environment conducive to contemplation, and spiritual rejuvenation.

Many of these attitudes are still reflected in Judeo-Christian culture. Devout Jews and Christians look toward their heavenly reward as the culmination of a good earthly experience. The plea by environmentalists to care for and nurture this earth is countered by the belief that the earth is a temporary habitation full of sin and evil. Thus the call by Western religion for environmental sensitivity becomes little more than an appeal for humans to be kind for kindness' sake.

Environmentalists also argue that the counsel given by current Christian churches for increased respect for the earth remains typically anthropocentric in character. Showing respect for the earth's ecosystem is based on the special interests of our own species. We realize how human life is but a part of a greater web of life. To maintain the dignity of our biosphere we must promote balance. However, the need for such balance is neither motivated by selflessness nor a belief in the equality of other forms of life. For most Christians, humans remain the only significant other.

Many environmentalists embrace attitudes found predominately in Native American cultures and Eastern religions. Many of these border on animism or are pantheistic in character. They are in principle more charitable to other species. Unfortunately pagan animism may appear more environmentally sound but offers little

chance of being accepted by the majority of modern Christians. Eastern religions offer more life-affirming attitudes about Mother Earth but for most Westerners these religions remain steeped in mysticism and mystery.

Americans have embraced forms of transcendental thought but these have generally come from occidental philosophers and while they appear to encourage a reverence and respect for nature, they are decidedly anthropocentric in character. They promote nature as a tool or vehicle for achieving higher levels of human consciousness. Additionally, western transcendentalism sets nature against society thus re-establishing the age-old dichotomy. Taken to an extreme transcendentalism moves towards pantheism or animism which set it at odds with traditional Judeo-Christian theology.

All Things are Spiritual

In answer to White's allegations against the Judeo-Christian doctrine of man's spiritual elitism, the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stand alone. No other Christian religion believes all things were created spiritually before they were created physically. Joseph Smith revealed this doctrine in a number of modern revelations:

> The paradise of God, the happiness of man, and of beast, and of creeping things, and of the fowls of the air, that which is spiritual being in the likeness of that which is temporal; and that which is temporal in the likeness of that which is spiritual; the spirit of man in the likeness of his person, and also the spirit of the beast, and every other creature which God has created. (D&C 77:2)

He repeats this in The Pearl of Great Price. Speaking of the creation of the earth, the Lord tells Moses:

> And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. For I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth. And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them' and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air. (Moses 3:5)

Joseph's modern revelations relating to the doctrines of the Apostle John also teach this principle. He clarifies what John means when he speaks of the "four individual beasts" representing an order of beings destined to live in "eternal felicity" (D&C 77:2-4). Speaking of what will happen to animals after this life, Joseph explains:

> Says one, "I cannot believe in the salvation of beasts." Any man who would tell you this could not be, would tell you that the revelations are not true. John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them. God who made the beasts could understand every language spoken by them. The four beasts were four of the most noble animals that filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect. They were like angels in their sphere, we are not told where they came from, and I do not know; but they were seen and heard by John praising and glorifying God. (*History of the Church* V, 343-44)[1]

The prophet gives further clarification of this doctrine in a sermon delivered at the annual conference of the Church in April, 1843. "God glorified himself by saving all that his hands had made, whether beasts, fowl, fishes, or men" (*HC* V, 343). Joseph includes rocks, plants, trees, animals, and everything the Lord created--even the earth itself--as recipients of eternal life.

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[1] All notations of *History of the Church* will be indicated by *HC*, followed by volume and page number.

Another significant doctrine taught by Joseph was the eventual restoration of the earth to a garden paradise. The tenth Article of Faith specifically declares "that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" (Pearl of Great Price). Man was to be an active participant in this process. "Who placed the dark stain of sin upon this fair creation? Man. Who but man shall remove the foul blot, and restore all things to their primeval purity and innocence?" (*JD* 10,301)

One of the many experiences told about Joseph Smith in relation to this principle occurs during a march of Mormon Elders known as "Zion's Camp." It is recorded that during camp one night, three rattlesnakes were found and some of the men were going to kill them when Joseph intervened. "Let them alone--don't hurt them! How will the serpent ever lose his venom, while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war upon it? Man must become harmless, before the brute creation" *(HC* II, 71).

Joseph had the millennial vision spoken of by Isaiah. The Doctrine and Covenants 101:26 speaks of an earthly paradise where " the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts, yea, the enmity of all flesh, shall cease from before my face." Joseph consistently encouraged the Saints to eat meat "sparingly" and to abstain from the needless killing of animals and the eating of flesh. All this was preparation for a millennial paradise where "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

With the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young assumed the position of

Prophet and President of the Church. During the exodus of the Saints from their home in Nauvoo, Illinois, to the Great Salt Lake Valley, Brigham repeatedly entreated the members of the Church to treat their animals with kindness. He discouraged the killing of buffalo or wild game except as needed for food. On several occasions he counseled the Saints to use the power of the Priesthood to bless and heal animals recognizing that the spirit within these animals would respond to priesthood authority.

Brigham, like Joseph, taught that everything possesses a spirit. He clearly declared, "Always keep in view that the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms--the earth and its fulness--will all, except the children of man, abide their creation--the law by which they were made, and will receive their exaltation" (*JD* 8:191). He reiterated Joseph's belief in the natural purity of the earth and its elements (*JD* 8:341) and the polluting influences of man (*JD* 12:118). He told church members:

> There is a great work for the Saints to do. Progress, and improve upon, and make beautiful everything around you. Cultivate the earth and cultivate your mind. Build cities, adorn your habitations. make gardens, orchards, and vineyards, and render the earth so pleasant that when you look upon your labours you may do so with pleasure, and that angels may delight to come and visit your beautiful locations. (*JD* 8:83)

The work of the Saints, Brigham explained, is "to beautify the face of the earth, until it shall become like the Garden of Eden" (*JD* 1:345). Once more, the millennial vision became the central focus of the restored gospel.

The doctrines set forth by Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were reinforced by other Apostles and Prophets. Apostle Orson Pratt taught that, "The earth was so constructed that it was capable of existing as a living being to all eternity, with all the

swarms of animals, fowls, and fishes that were first placed upon the face thereof" (*JD* 1:281). With reference to spiritual equality, Pratt declares:

> The lion, the leopard, the kid, and the cow; it was so with the feathered tribes of creation, as well as those that swim in the vast ocean of waters; all were immortal and eternal in their nature; and the earth itself, as a living being, was immortal and eternal in its nature. (*JD* 1:281)

George Q. Cannon, first counselor to Presidents John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow, was editor of the *Juvenile Instructor* and often filled the periodical with editorials and articles entreating the Saints to show kindness towards animals.

> No man or woman, no boy or girl, who has any kind feelings will inflict unnecessary pain upon any creature. Such persons will not hurt a worm. Animals feel pain very acutely. They know when they are treated kindly and when they are abused. God has given them this feeling, and if men or boys abuse them, He will condemn and punish them for so doing. They prove themselves unworthy of the power they have, and, by their cruelty, they sink beneath the brute. (*Juvenile Instructor*, III: Sept.2, 1868, 132)

Concern for the welfare of all animals, prompted the Sunday School organization of the Church to institute "Humane Day" in 1897. Members were counseled against cruelty and taught that kindness and love were measures of a righteous man. "We are a part of all life and should study carefully our relationship to it . . .The unnecessary destruction of life is a distinct spiritual loss to the human family. Men cannot worship the Creator and look with careless indifference upon his creation" (*Juvenile Instructor*, 53, April 1918, 183). The observation of Humane Day continued well into this century.

Possibly the most outspoken advocate of environmental sensitivity was the Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. In the October 1928 General Conference of the Church he

declared:

> So we see that the Lord intends to save, not only the earth and the heavens, not only man who dwells upon the earth, but all things which he has created. The animals, the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, as well as man, are to be resurrected, or renewed through the resurrection, for they too are living souls. (*Conference Report*, 99-100)

Elder Smith also comments on the millennial features of man and other creatures:

> What did Isaiah say? Before you get through asking I will answer. The lion, as well as the lamb, these animals that are now so filled with vicious habits will then be at peace, and so it says here there will be no enmity between man and beast, and we will not delight to go off and kill deer when that time comes. (*Signs*, 36)

An opponent of hunting, Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. felt "it was intended that all creatures should be happy in their several elements. Therefore to take the life of these creatures wantonly is a sin before the Lord" (*Improvement Era* Aug 1961, 568). In his doctrinal writings *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Smith articulates his position in relation to the animal kingdom and hunting:

> I do not believe any man should kill animals or birds unless he needs them for food, and then he should not kill innocent little birds that are not intended for food for man. I think it is wicked for men to thirst in their souls to kill almost everything which possesses animal life. It is wrong. I have been surprised at prominent men whom I have seen whose very souls seemed to be athirst for the shedding of animal blood. They go off hunting deer, antelope, elk, anything they can find, and what for? Just the fun of it! Not that they are hungry and need the flesh of their prey, but just because they love to shoot and destroy life. (Vol.3, 203)

Many current members of the Church remember the plea of President Spencer W. Kimball in April 1977 General Conference to avoid the needless killing of little birds. This address was followed the preceding year by counsel to the Priesthood brethren to

avoid the willful destruction of wildlife. The Lord "thought it was important that all these animals be on the earth" and to kill them is "wicked" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 44-45).

Most recently, Elder Neal A. Maxwell has spoken out on environmental issues in his book *For the Power Is In Them.* His ideas bear a strong resemblance to Joseph Smith's teaching that man is responsible for the "dark stain" placed upon the earth:

> This concern with man's developing a more harmonious relationship with nature by abiding by its physical laws is timely and legitimate. When we interrupt or destroy the larger ecology of man's relationship to God and to his fellowmen, we are violating transcendental laws that are as immutable and as inevitable as those breeched laws of nature for which we are now beginning to pay a terrible price. (Later installments will be even more severe.) That we do not fully understand these transcendental spiritual laws neither excuses us from learning of them, nor excuses us from their harsh consequences when we violate them. (10)

Unquestionably, the doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are in harmony with the "rethinking" White calls for in his essay. All the righteous-- including man, rocks, trees, plants, animals, organic and inorganic matter-- will inherit a heavenly home. Along with this concept the prophets have made it clear that man's final home will not be some other place. It will be here. Brigham Young clarifies this point:

> Our business is not merely to prepare to go to another planet. This is our home (*JD* 8:297). We are for the kingdom of God and are not going to the moon, nor to any other planet pertaining to this solar system. . . . This earth is the home he has prepared for us, and we are to prepare ourselves and our habitations for the celestial glory in store for the faithful. (*JD* 8:293)

This statement counters the criticism by environmentalists relating to the Christian preoccupation with the *other world.* Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and succeeding prophets have made it clear that the earth will be the domain of the righteous not only

during the thousand year millennial reign of Jesus Christ but even after the final resurrection. The earth will be celestialized and become the home of celestial beings.

In answer to the indictment against the Christian belief that the world is inherently evil, Brigham Young proclaims:

> The earth is very good in and of itself, and has abided a celestial law; consequently, we should not despise it, nor desire to leave it; but rather desire and strive to obey the same law that the earth abides. (*JD* 2:302)

Rather than viewing the earth as a test or ordeal, Saints are encouraged to think of the earth as a school. "Field and mountains, trees and flowers, and all that fly, swim, or move upon the ground are lessons for study in the great school of our Heavenly Father" (*JD* 9:320) counsels Brigham Young. Man's task then is not to gain mastery over the elements but to work in harmony with the natural laws of God. As men come to understand the inter-relationship of organisms and the complex workings of the natural world, they will increase in divine intelligence. "It is one of the most happifying subjects that can be named," says Young, "for a person, or people, to have the privilege of gaining wisdom enough while in their mortal tabernacle . . . and understand the design of the Great Maker of this beautiful creation" (*JD* 1:111). Young continually exhorts the Saints to learn everything possible about a wide variety of subjects--all this to prepare men for godhood. Joseph Smith instructs the Saints in Section 130 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

> Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much

the advantage in the world to come. (18-19)

The "world to come" spoken of by Joseph is the celestialized earth--the realm of those who live righteous lives during their mortal probation.

For the early Latter-day Saints, the wilderness remained a means of testing discipleship. The trek across the plains of America was a legacy of sacrifice and devotion. The early Saints considered their trials a willing payment for eternal life. The choice to settle in the barren, desolate deserts of the West was a deliberate move on the part of Brigham Young, to test and try the Saints to see if they would remain obedient and humble. However, the wilderness was never considered evil. Young states:

> It is all good, the air, the water, the gold and silver; the wheat, the fine flour, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are all good. . . . But the moment that men seek to build up themselves . . . and seek to hoard up riches it proves that their hearts are weaned from their God; and their riches will perish in their fingers, and they with them. (*JD* 1:272)

This ethic remains intact within the contemporary society of Saints. The world is inherently good. Man must learn to master his own will and conform it to the will of God. Hugh Nibley quotes a noted Latter-day Saint astronomer. "Pollution and environmental deterioration are primarily moral and spiritual problems, rather than problems of technology" ("Brigham Young," 4). Saints continue to receive counsel against the polluting effects of pride and arrogance--the pride that would allow Judeo-Christians to promote a belief in spiritual elitism and the arrogance of supposing the earth *belongs* to man. Quoting again from Brigham Young:

If the people will not serve the devil another moment whilst they live,

> if this congregation is possessed of that spirit and resolution, here in this house is the Millennium. Let the inhabitants of this city be possessed of that spirit, let the people of the territory be possessed of that spirit, and here is the Millennium. Let the whole people of the United States be possessed of that spirit, and here is the Millennium, and so will it spread over all the world. (*JD* 1:203)

Latter-day Saint doctrines encourage a broader vision of the earth and of all God's creations by recognizing the unique spiritual identity inherent in everything. This places humans in a position of humility and equality. Additionally, the belief that all things are eternal fosters an ethic of fellowship and service. The earth is inherently good and the chief task of humankind is to learn and to conform to natural laws. While we are in our temporal state, we are being schooled for Godhood and the wisdom we acquire in dealing with earthly blessings will entitle us to share, with all other creatures and creations, the blessings of eternal life.

IV

The Mormon Paradigm

The foregoing suggests that Mormonism is one of the most environmentally healthy Christian denominations. The Latter-day Saint environmental paradigm encompasses three important doctrinal features:

(1) Latter-day Saints believe in the imminent reality of a millennium and in the second coming of Jesus Christ. Mormons believe humankind must actively participate in the creation of a Zion society by practicing the principles of stewardship and consecration. The millennial vision anticipates the creation of a paradisiacal earth where enmity between humankind and earthly elements will end. Relationships among humans and other forms of life must reflect attitudes of equality and harmony.

(2) Latter-day Saints believe that all of God's creations possess a divine spirit. Humans therefore have a responsibility to exhibit reverence and respect for all life--whether organic or inorganic--and to allow all creation to fulfill its divine potential. Every form of life will be heir to the blessings of the resurrection.

(3) Latter-day Saints believe that this earth will someday achieve celestial glory and become the final home of all the righteous--human or otherwise. As God is, man can become by learning and living in harmony with the eternal laws governing the universe. Life is a preparatory school for Godhood.

In consideration of the foregoing paradigm, Latter-day Saints should be a most environmentally progressive people. Yet Utah, which is predominately LDS, remains unimpressive in its environmental record. One hundred and fifty years ago, pioneer

settlers were unaware of the ecological dangers of manipulating the desert landscape. Early Mormon settlers introduced a wide variety of non-native plants and animals into the Great Basin. At the same time they systematically rooted out native species. During the first few decades, Mormon pioneers killed off large numbers of wolves, foxes, mink, hawks, owls, eagles and crows (Arrington, 59). The introduction of sheep grazing caused the erosion of sensitive desert landscape. Tempted by the monetary rewards of mining Utah's mineral resources, mining companies built a flood of smelters which polluted the air in the Salt Lake Valley. In the early years of the twentieth century "Salt Lake City had become the rival of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis as a smoke-plagued sink hole" (Alexander, 357).

Today we need only travel through the state to find evidence that Utah suffers from the same environmental problems plaguing surrounding states--littering, poor zoning, over industrialization, and urban sprawl, with its accompanying problems of air and water pollution. Monetary profits still significantly influence environmental policy as the state attempts to balance human demand and the needs of nature.

In light of this environmental negligence, we must question whether the doctrines espoused by the leaders of the Church filtered into popular Mormon culture. The LDS literary tradition affords an opportunity to examine this issue if we overlay the Church's environmental paradigm on the works of successive generations of Mormon writers. For convenience we will divide Mormon literary history into four general eras: (1)Non-fiction from 1839-1880, (2) Home Literature Movement, (3) The Lost Generation, and (4) Contemporary LDS fiction. Within these four eras, I will examine representative literary

works for possible evidence of popular LDS environmental attitudes.

V

Early Era of Non-Fiction

Early Mormon literature reads much like early Puritan literature. The Saints were discouraged from writing fiction because it represented a deviation from truth. Truth was the focus of the restored gospel and to encourage the writing of fiction seemed antithetical to the truth-seeking ideal of a chosen people. For this reason, the first fifty years of Mormon literature consists largely of personal journals, religious tracts, articles in church periodicals, poetry, and sacred hymns.

Even a cursory study of early LDS church literature can prove intimidating to the scholar because there is so much of it. Nearly every Saint kept some kind of diary or record. Additionally, the necessity of disseminating information about doctrines of the church proliferated the publication of religious tracts and periodicals. The teachings of this new religion required a unique language and discourse. The gathering of Zion, the vision of a millennial earth, the restitution of doctrines lost through apostasy were peculiar to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was essential this new religious order have its own form of expression.

Scattered amid the non-fiction prose, were poems and hymns capturing the religious zeal of early converts. Because music was an essential part of Mormon society, the hymns written during this period provide a means of measuring how well environmental doctrines filtered into popular culture. Significantly, many of the early hymnologists were closely associated with Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other Church leaders, suggesting a strong inclination to support Church doctrine. However,

we will find that the environmental doctrines articulated by these hymnologists gradually assume some decidedly traditional Judeo-Christian characteristics.

Latter-day Saint Hymnology

The distinctive character of the Church's doctrines required a new hymnology. In July, 1830, Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph, was counseled to "make a selection of sacred hymns, as it shall be given thee, which is pleasing unto me, to be had in my church" (D&C 25: 11). The first volume of hymns, containing ninety selections, was published in 1835. Most of these hymns were not peculiar to the LDS church. However, a number of talented LDS hymnologists began producing songs and their work became a part of the second hymnal published in 1841. The most notable of these hymnologists were W. W. Phelps and Parley P. Pratt. Later hymnals introduced the poetic works of Eliza R. Snow, William Clayton, Charles Penrose, Emmeline Wells, and Evan Stephens. Many of the early hymns were written as poems and subsequently set to popular melodies, folk tunes, etc.

The most prolific LDS hymnologist was undoubtedly William Wines Phelps. Phelps joined the Church in 1831 and assisted the Prophet Joseph in establishing the church in Jackson County, Missouri. He was excommunicated for a brief time but was later restored to full fellowship. His close association with the Prophet Joseph suggests a strong doctrinal foundation. The most enduring of all his hymns, "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning," was sung at the dedication of the first temple in Kirtland, Ohio and has been sung at all subsequent temple dedications. It was one of the few LDS hymns included in Emma's first hymnal.

"Spirit" recounts the restoration of truth to the world. It envisions the spreading of the gospel to the four corners of the earth, the expanding of knowledge and power from God, and the promise of inheriting the blessings and glories of God. The final verse speaks pointedly of Isaiah's prophecies concerning the millennial earth:

> How blessed the day when the lamb and the lion
> Shall lie down together without any ire,
> And Ephraim be crowned with his blessing in Zion,
> As Jesus descends with His chariot of fire. (Hymns, 2)

Phelps reconfirms early Church doctrine by drawing directly from Isaiah's vision. The creation of a millennial society where "the lamb and the lion shall lie down together without any ire" was a believed to be achievable reality. This millennial vision becomes central to most of Phelps' hymns.

Phelps' makes reference to Ephraim and thus relates to the LDS doctrine whereby baptism allows the gentile to become an adopted member of the Israelite tribe of Ephraim. Israel, the gathering of the ten tribes, the covenant children of God, and the establishment of Zion, are all a part of the consciousness of early church members. They believed they were literally members of the House of Israel working to bring about the second coming of Christ and the ushering in of the millennium.

The same millennial theme becomes the subject of Phelps' hymn "Redeemer of Israel," which captures something of the old Judeo-Christian attitude of wilderness purification:

> We know He is coming to gather His sheep
> And lead them to Zion in love;
> For why in the valley of death should they weep,
> Or in the lone wilderness rove?

How long we have wandered as strangers in sin,
And cried in the desert for Thee!
Our foes have rejoiced when our sorrows they've seen,
But Israel will shortly be free.

"Redeemer" makes obvious references to the earth as a place of sorrow and sin. The images of "the lone wilderness" and "the desert" compare the Latter-day Saint trials to Israel's forty-year sojourn in the wilderness. The final line of this hymn suggests that the Saints would "shortly be free" from the sorrows of this world because Christ would appear and restore the earth to a millennial paradise. Obviously, Phelps had not extricated himself from the early Judeo-Christian attitude of wilderness as evil and full of sorrow. He merely appends the millennial vision to traditional Christian thought.

The most popular hymn written by Phelps was entitled, "The Earth Was Once a Garden Place." Commonly called "Adam-Ondi-Ahman" this hymn was sung by the early Saints more frequently than any other (Poulter, 22):

The earth was once a garden place,
With all her glories common;
And men did live a holy race,
And worship Jesus face to face,
In Adam-ondi-Ahman

We read that Enoch walked with God,
Above the pow'r of mammon,
While Zion spread herself abroad,
And Saints and angels sang aloud,
In Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Her land was good and greatly blest,
Beyond all Israel's Canaan;
Her fame was known from east to west,
Her peace was great, and pure the rest
Of Adam-ondi-Ahman.

Hosanna to such days to come,
The Savior's second coming,
When all the earth in glorious bloom,
Affords the Saints a holy home,
Like Adam-ondi-Ahman. (*Hymns* 49)

Adam-ondi-Ahman, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph, was the Garden of Eden, and its location was in Jackson County, Missouri. The Saints were preparing this area for the eventual return of Jesus Christ. "Adam-ondi Ahman" proclaims that the earth prior to the fall was good and filled with peace. Additionally, in the days of the Old Testament prophet Enoch, the people became righteous and turned from worshiping the devil or mammon and the peace and beauty of the Garden was restored within the city of Enoch. The final verse is the prophetic image of an earth once more restored to her "glorious bloom." or paradisiacal glory. Phelps has again articulated his belief in the impending millennium but he supports Joseph Smith's belief that man brought about the stain upon the earth and that it is man who must work to revitalize earth's original purity.

"Now Let Us Rejoice," another of Phelps' hymns reiterates the same millennial ideal, speaking clearly of the restoration of the earth. All three verses end with this millennial message:

And earth will appear as the Garden of Eden,
And Jesus will say to all Israel, "Come Home." (*Hymns* 3)

Phelps wrote or adapted nearly fifty hymns. The predominant message in nearly all of them is the restoration of Zion and the creation of a millennial earth. His support of the millennial vision is clear.

The millennium is also the prevailing theme in the hymns of Parley P. Pratt.

Pratt's "The Morning Breaks" sings of "Zion's light bursting forth" and "Israel's blessings" being close at hand, and the gathering of the tribes of Israel will bring about "the dawning of a brighter day." While Phelps tends to focus on the eventual transformation of the earth, Pratt chronicles the restoration of gospel truths in preparation for the second coming. His hymn "An Angel from on High" recounts the visitation of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith, the translation of the Book of Mormon, and the spreading of the gospel throughout the world. The last verse captures Pratt's enthusiasm for the Latter-day restoration:

> Lo! Israel filled with joy
> Shall now be gathered home,
> Their wealth and means employ
> To build Jerusalem.
> While Zion shall arise and shine
> And fill the earth with truth divine.
> While Zion shall arise and shine
> And fill the earth with truth divine. (*Hymns*, 13)

In the early Church, Zion was a specific place--a city where the purity of the Garden will be reestablished. In "An Angel From On High," Pratt calls on members of the Church to use all their wealth and means to build the New Jerusalem, yet another name for the city of Zion to be located in Jackson County, Missouri, from whence its influence will flow throughout the earth. Pratt is once again confirming the millennial vision.

The words to the hymn, "Come, O Thou King of Kings" were written during a period of severe persecution in Jackson County, Missouri--the exact date is unknown but the hymn was included in the Emma's 1835 hymnal. Pratt makes an impassioned plea to the God of Israel, to redeem the earth from sin:

Come, O thou King of Kings!
We've waited long for thee,
With healing in thy wings
To set they people free.
Come, thou desire of nations, come;
Let Israel now be gathered home.

Come, make an end to sin
And cleanse the earth by fire,
And righteousness bring in,
That Saints may tune the lyre,
With songs of joy,
A happier strain,
To welcome in thy peaceful reign.

The hymn's two remaining verses continue this millennial ideology. There is a tone of urgency in Pratt's words as he pleads for the Savior to come quickly. Many of the Saints, including Pratt, had been driven from their homes in Missouri and had endured tremendous hardship during their winter exodus to Illinois. Some died from exposure and hunger while others were murdered by mobs. Feeling certain that the second coming was imminent, Pratt hoped to see the enemies of the church consumed by the purifying fires of the last days. Pratt was assassinated in 1857, while traveling on church assignment in Arkansas. He never gave up his certitude about the approaching millennium. He, like Phelps, believed that he would live to see the restoration of the earth to a state of paradisiacal glory.

There was a lull in hymn writing during the Nauvoo years. Perhaps members were too engaged in the practical matters of home building and commerce to spend their time creating poetry. However, after the Saints were expelled from Nauvoo, poetry became the means of expressing the sorrows of a persecuted people. The tenor of LDS

hymns changed. The message of a gathering Zion and the establishment of Adam-ondi-Ahman in Jackson, Missouri, was supplanted by themes of wilderness trial. The most famous hymn written during this period is undoubtedly William Clayton's "Come, Come Ye Saints."

Come, come, ye Saints, no toil or labor fear;
But with joy wend your way.
Though hard to you this journey may appear,
Grace shall be as your day.
'Tis better far for us to strive
Our useless cares from us to drive;
Do this and joy your hearts will swell--
All is well! All is well!

Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?
'Tis not so; all is right.
Why should we think to earn a great reward
If we now shun the fight?
Gird up your loins; fresh courage take.
Our God will never us forsake;
And soon we'll have this tale to tell--
All is well! All is well!

We'll find a place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West,
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.
We'll make the air with music ring,
Shout praises to our God and King;
Above the rest these words we'll tell--
All is well! All is well!

And should we die before our journey's through,
Happy day! All is well!
We then are free from toil and sorrow, too;
With the just we shall dwell!
But if our lives are spared again
To see the Saints their rest obtain,
Oh how we'll make this chorus swell--
All is well! All is well! (*Hymns* 30)

There is a curious absence of millennial imagery in this hymn which reflects an attitude shift among the Saints. The pioneers began to emphasize their Israelite persona. Envisioning themselves as martyrs, they saw themselves as disciples tested in the wilderness--a persecuted and smitten people. The seclusion of the Western territories became their *promise land,* while the deserts provided the struggling Saints with a means of testing personal commitment and devotion. This change in vision is best reflected in the poems of Eliza R. Snow.

Eliza was a prolific writer of poetry from the day of her baptism on April 5, 1835. Widely published, she remains one of the most significant poets in early Mormon literature. Her hymn, "Though Deep'ning Trials Throng Your Way," was first published in the *Times and Seasons*, January, 1841, well before the Saints' expulsion from Nauvoo. The trials Eliza alludes to in this particular hymn are the persecutions and the consequent hardships suffered by the Saints living in Missouri. However, the hymn reflects the sentiments felt by the Saints during the later exodus from Illinois. The third verse is representative of the hymn's message:

> Lift up your hearts in praise to God,
> Let your rejoicings never cease;
> Though tribulations rage abroad,
> Christ says, "In Me ye shall have peace. (*Hymns* 122)

Eliza felt confident the struggles of the Saints would prove them worthy of eternal rewards. She wrote countless eulogies as expressions of sympathy for friends who lost loved ones during the hardships of the western exodus. Without exception, these poems promise the deceased a sure place within the mansions of God. None of these was set

to music but some lines bear repeating because of their obvious message:

> Mary's gone--she's gone: but wither?
> To the paradise of love: (Beecher 160)
>
> They are gone--they are gone to a kingdom of rest--
> They are gone--they are gone to the home of the blest
> Far away from the ills of this lower abode--
> They are gone to reside in a mansion of God. (Beecher 150)
>
> They sweetly sleep--'tis their dust that is sleeping,
> Their spirits move in the courts above: (Beecher 169)

It is significant that Eliza articulates the Judeo-Christian attitude of a heavenly after-life. Mormons believe the human spirit, upon leaving mortality, will dwell in either paradise or spirit prison until the resurrection. Eliza was undoubtedly articulating this belief. However, her poems could be interpreted as supporting the *other world* attitude prevalent in Christian tradition. Unquestionably, Eliza knew the doctrine relative to earth becoming the final home of the righteous. She also knew the millennium would restore the earth to an Edenic state. But she prefers to comfort her bereaved friends with visions of "the courts above" and the "mansion of God." This reflects the strong influence of Protestant doctrines among the early Saints. Heaven--as traditionally portrayed--allows a more comfortable and familiar place of peace and tranquility than the unfamiliar vision of a celestialized earth.

Although Eliza's poems were filled with allusions to ancient Israel and the building of Zion, missing from her poetry is a preoccupation with the millennium. Additionally, Zion was no longer a particular place located in Jackson County, but became the dwelling place of the Saints--whereever that may be. Her poem "A Journeying Song for

the Camp of Israel" articulates this change in vision. The poem is long and repetitive but just a few verses will convey Eliza's message:

> [Chorus] Thou Camp of Israel, onward move
> O Jacob, rise and sing--
> Ye saints, the world's salvation prove,
> All hail to Zion's king.
>
> We go to choice and goodly lands,
> With rich & fertile soil:
> That with the labor of our hands
> Will yield us wine and oil.
>
> We go beside the mountain cliffs
> Where purest waters flow---
> Where nature will her precious gifts
> Abundantly bestow.
>
> We'll find a climate pure & free
> Producing life & health;
> Where steady care & industry
> Will be the source of wealth. (Beecher, 126)

Environmentalists would take issue with Snow's "Camp of Israel" and her undertones of exploitation. The "choice and goodly lands" were to be given to the Saints so they could acquire wealth. Nature would "abundantly bestow" her "precious gifts" as the Saints applied themselves to the task of taming the wilderness through "steady care and industry." Snow articulates an attitude prevalent in the larger American scene--man's dominion over the earth. Whether this was the intended message of Snow's poem is not the issue. Her inferred message supports an attitude of dominion and subjugation.

In fact, there is a lack of millennial imagery not only in Eliza Snow's poetry but in nearly all the hymns written after 1847. With the arrival of the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley, the vision of modern Israel's sojourn in the western wilderness is replaced by

romantic descriptions of the Saints' newfound home as hymnologists became enamored with the mountain wilderness. Charles Penrose's "Oh Ye Mountains High," published in 1856, has the distinction of rallying the Saints to defense of their mountain home, when the impending threat of Johnston's Army in 1857, disturbs their respite from persecution. The first verse is representative of the entire hymn:

> Oh ye mountains high, where the clear blue sky,
> Arches over the vales of the free,
> Where the pure breezes blow and the clear streamlets flow,
> How I've longed to your bosom to flee!
> Oh Zion! dear Zion! Land of the free,
> Now my own mountain home, unto thee I have come--
> All my fond hopes are centered in thee.

Penrose's anthem becomes the pattern for a number of other hymns. Emmeline Wells' "Our Mountain Home, So Dear" is filled with such lyrical romanticism that one wonders if Wells didn't paint such a picture of sylvan beauty to help defer the obvious realities of the desert landscape. However, many of these Latter-day Saints had suffered persecution and privation and unquestionably felt a deep reverence and love for the barren solitude of the Great Basin. It protected them from intrusion by hostile gentiles. Wells' hymn articulates just such devotion:

> Our mountain home, so dear.
> Where crystal waters clear
> Flow ever free.
> While through the valleys wide,
> The flower on ev'ry side,
> Blooming in stately pride,
> Are fair to see.
>
> We'll roam the verdant hills,
> And by the sparkling rills
> Pluck the wild flowers;

The fragrance on the air,
The landscape bright and fair,
And sunshine everywhere,
  Make pleasant hours.

In sylvan depth and shade,
In forest and in glade,
  Where'er we pass,
The hand of God we see,
In leaf, and bud, and tree,
Or bird or humming bee,
  Or blade of grass.

The streamlet, flower and sod
Bespeak the works of God,
  And all combine
With most exquisite grace,
His handiwork to trace,
Through nature's smiling face,
In art divine.

Other hymns expressing the same sentiments as "O Ye Mountains High" and "Our Mountain Home, So Dear" include "Zion Stands With Hills Surrounded," "Beautiful Zion, Built Above," "A Wintry Day, Descending to Its Close," and "O Home Beloved." This last hymn was written by Evan Stephens. Its final verse is a poignant representation of these settlement hymns.

Ye valleys fair and snow-capped mountains,
Ye peaceful hamlets 'mid the trees,
Ye murm'ring streams and crystal fountains,
Kissed by the cool, soft, balmy breeze,
Words cannot tell how well I love thee
Nor speak my longing when I roam,
My heart alone can cry to heaven,
"God bless my own dear mountain home." (*Hymns* 337)

Many of these hymns have an Emersonian quality: nature draws one closer to God, God's spirit is transcendent in the peaceful mountains and valleys of the Wasatch

front. This may be a reflection of literary romanticism or simply poetic propaganda to encourage converts to emigrate to Utah. More likely these hymns were filling an essential need for the Saints. The unfulfilled vision of the millennium and the second coming of Christ had to be replaced by something more tangible. The task of selling Zion was necessarily improved by the promise of actual real estate.

Transformation

Early Mormon hymns reflect some interesting dichotomies. Certainly central to the earliest hymns was the creation of a millennial earth. Hymns declaring the eventual restitution of a garden paradise, where enmity is replaced by harmony, support early church doctrine. Furthermore, these hymns articulate the need for each Saint to be an active participant in the process of restoration. While the hymns don't always specify how the task is to be performed, they nonetheless encouraged the Saints to focus on the millennial vision. Religious tracts, articles in the Church periodicals, and discourses by leading church authorities provided more detailed instruction. The hymns were to inspire the Saints to action.

The intensity of the millennial message strikes one with the sense of urgency these early Saints felt. They believed they would witness the second coming of Christ and usher in His millennial reign. The restoration of Adam-ondi-Ahman was an imminent event. This vision might have encouraged a better environmental ethic had the Saints been given sufficient time to implement their millennial dream. Persecution effectively stifled the millennial zeal felt by early Church members.

When the Saints were finally expelled from Missouri and the extermination order

destroyed all hope of establishing Adam-ondi-Ahman, the Saints strengthened their persona as modern Israelites. Persecutions might temporarily deter the coming of the Messiah but Saints would still be about the task of building the kingdom. Trials and tribulations suffered in the wilderness only served to purify hearts and forge determination. During this era, the earth lost its paradisiacal possibility and became, instead, a testing ground for the righteous.

There was a tremendous influx of converts during this period, which might serve to explain why the millennial vision gave way to traditional Judeo-Christian attitudes of earth as a dreary wilderness beset with sin. The hymns of this era entreat the Saints to persevere in the hope of receiving increased earthly blessings or blessings in the hereafter. The *other world* ethic is often articulated, especially in the writings of Eliza R. Snow.

Also introduced by Snow was the old Judeo-Christian attitude of dominion and subjugation. The doctrines of stewardship and consecration were abandoned by Saints more concerned with survival than equal distribution of property. The economic principles articulated by Joseph Smith were necessarily shelved until the Saints could find a home secure from gentile intrusion. The hymns of the exodus expressed hope in finding eventual peace in the mountains of the West.

The privation of wilderness living left the Saints with little time or energy to contemplate the value of one species over another--especially when human life was at stake. Whatever plants or animals could be secured on the westward migration became providential blessings meant for the benefit and use of man. "Persevere" became the

prevailing theme of pioneer hymnology.

Once established in the Salt Lake Valley, the Saints fell back into old patterns of Christian thinking. The millennial promise was supplanted by a call to come to Zion. The conversion and subsequent emigration of large numbers of European Protestants diluted the millennial zeal. The practical task of the Mormon pioneer was not to create the Garden but to *make* the desert blossom as a rose: even if it wasn't meant to blossom as a rose. Rather than working with the principles of nature, the Saints forced their vision onto the desert landscape. It is easy to be critical of their environmental practices, but in light of the physical realities of failure, the Saints had to produce or die. Interestingly, the hymns during this period became increasingly romantic and unrealistic, perhaps to compensate for the austerity of the barren land. It was a form of mass hypnosis: believe hard enough and maybe sagebrush *will* become rosebush.

The first generation of Mormons knew the doctrines influencing environmental ethics. They had heard them from the mouth of Joseph, Brigham, and other church authorities. They wanted to live the law of consecration and stewardship. They believed in the eventual restoration of the earth. They knew God's creations were good. Yet, reality outweighed vision: necessity overcame possibility. Idealism would have to wait until the house was built, the field was plowed, and the larder was full. Tomorrow they would live those other laws.

VI

Home Literature Movement

Until the later part of the nineteenth century, Church authorities remained fairly firm in their commitment to keep fiction from contaminating Mormon culture. However, the influence of gentile literature among LDS youth was on the rise and to counteract its negative message, various church leaders questioned the wisdom of excluding fictional literature from Mormon society. Two of the most notable church authorities to address this issue were Orson F. Whitney and B.H. Roberts. Whitney's editorial in the July 1888 issue of the *Contributor* is generally considered the beginning of the Home Literature Movement. Whitney promoted the writing of Mormon fiction as a means of spreading the gospel and strengthening the Saints. "We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own" (206), he exclaims.

The most notable writers during this period of Mormon literature are B.H. Roberts, Susa Young Gates, Nephi Anderson, and Josephine Spencer. Neither Roberts nor Spencer shows substantive evidence of the Church's environmental attitudes. However, Nephi Anderson's works reflect a strong doctrinal foundation and incorporate many of the environmental teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. At the same time, Susa Young Gates' one major literary contribution, "John Steven's Courtship," echoes the lyrical romanticism and traditional Judeo-Christian attitudes expressed by Eliza Snow and Emmeline Wells.

Nephi Anderson

Nephi Anderson was born in 1865 to convert parents in Christiania, Norway. Six

years later his family emigrated to America and settled in Northern Utah. An educator by profession, he served in various positions within the Church. His first fictional work, *Added Upon*, was published in 1898, and remains his most read contribution to the Home Literature movement and all ten of his novels hold a central position in early Mormon literature. His works are unquestionably didactic and drip with Mormon doctrine.

Added Upon is an account of several souls as they journey from the pre-existent world to the temporal earth and then to spirit paradise. In "Part Third" Anderson begins with a theological treatise on the eternal spirit found in all things. Much of what he writes is directly from the Book of Moses found in the Pearl of Great Price, and articulates the doctrine that all things were created spiritually before they were created temporally.

The spirits in paradise described in "Part Third" are given tasks to perform. They live in houses, stroll through heavenly gardens, preach the gospel to still progressing spirits, carry on romances, and even practice celestial horticulture. "Flowers bloomed and birds sang in the garden" (160). David, one of these spiritual beings, tends one of these gardens. "You know I have been experimenting with my roses," he explains to his mother. "I believe I have obtained some wonderful color effects" (162). Without question Anderson is promoting the doctrines taught by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other authorities relating to the eternal spirit found in all matter.

Anderson's central protagonist, Rupert, is a farmer during his earthly existence and he works with a passion to better his land. "He . . . . conjectured that in this world his mission was to make the physical deserts to blossom as the rose" (99). The culmination

of his efforts and the efforts of other worthy Saints is described in the last few chapters of the book. A paradisiacal city is achieved and the king of Poland takes a tour. One descriptive passage from this portion of the book will be suffice:

> Although nothing in the city was cramped or crowded for room, the place where they now alighted was planned on an unusually large scale. Immense buildings stood upon a large tract of land, planted with trees, grass, and flowers. Here were breathing room and playground. A number of streams of clear water flowed through the grounds, and small ponds were alive with fish and swimming birds. Fountains played, and statues of marble gleamed through the foliage.
>
> "See, what is that?" exclaimed Remand, as he caught sight of a huge, shaggy beast lying under a tree.
>
> "Just a brown bear," said Paulus. "We have some lions and a few of the rarest animals on these grounds--but I am forgetting that these scenes must be strange to you. In Poland you have not wholly shaken off the old world and its way. It takes time of course."
>
> "Well," replied Remand, "although the enmity between man and beast is nearly gone, we have not yet adopted bears and lions as pets for our children to play with." (183)

Paulus later tells Remand:

> "My friend, the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. He is the only proprietor. How can weak, mortal man own any part of this earth! No . . . . we are only stewards over the Lord's possession."(191)

Unquestionably Anderson lacks subtlety, but he is nonetheless firmly grounded in the doctrines of the restored church. *Added Upon* is as close to a religious tract as any work of fiction dare come. It reestablishes the millennial vision, reconfirms the earth as inherently good, promotes the doctrine of stewardship, and articulates a belief in the spiritual identity of all creation.

Anderson's other novels show more literary refinement, but they too are substantially didactic. Anderson managed to weave romance and doctrine in his two

novels, *The Castle Builder* and *Dorian*. Both of these novels have a great deal to say about environmental attitudes.

The Castle Builder is the story of Harald Gundersen, a Norwegian boy, and a dreamer from a poor family. He determines to get an education and make something of his life. In the pursuit of this goal, he falls in love and manages to stumble onto the gospel of the restored church.

Harald is prepared for his conversion by a long sequence of experiences. Most of these have to do with the natural world. Harald "reveled in the wild nature around him" (32).

> The call of a bird on a summer's morning; the murmur of the creek; the roar of the waterfall; the sighing of the wind in the tree tops; the sight of a pretty flower; the reddening of the sky; the soft shadows of a departing day--such were the magic keys that let him out into the everlasting dominion of time and space, and gave into his possession all that God has created wherewith to build for himself castles of wondrous beauty and grandeur. (32)

Courted by the beauties of the earth, Harald is tutored by a natural world conspiring with God to bring him to the truth. There is a decidedly transcendental quality to this passage. This may indicate an interest in conforming to literary styles and subjects popular in the larger American literary culture. This is certainly supported by the next passage from the book.

While working on a fishing boat with his cousin Johan, he spends time contemplating religion. Johan, considered a non-believer by the local minister, shows his true spirit to Harald:

> So, you do not think I am religious but I claim to be quite religious. I

> believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe in the doctrine which he taught, but I do not believe much of the stuff that is preached now-a-days. . . . My notion of religion is that it should be a divine essence that permeates all things--yet that does not define it. It should be something we could not put on and off, as the priest does his surplice. It should not be apart from nature, from science, or from any known truth, but should harmonize with them all. It should smile from the flower; sing from the brook; shine from the stars in heaven; encompass the whole human family, past, present, and future; be the safety anchor in every storm, the Father whisper to the son; and it should answer some of my soul's innermost questions on the mystery of my being. (77)

Undoubtedly Anderson was supporting his belief in the spiritual identity of all God's creations but this passage sounds suspiciously transcendental in character. This is doubly damning because in the final scene of the book, as Harald and his young bride-to-be contemplate marriage and their eventual journey to Zion, Anderson has his hero envision life in the eternities and concludes, "we [will] be truly powerful, for nature's secrets will be to us as an open book, and the elements will be in our hands as clay in the hands of the potter" (237). This suggests an attitude of subjugation. However, Anderson may have been referring to man's ultimate ability to achieve Godhood and to create worlds of his own.

The Castle Builder is more subtle than *Added Upon*. It doesn't expound on millennial doctrine but it does glorify the natural world as a place of communion and revelation. It shows an inclination by Anderson to incorporate some of the literary themes and styles of late nineteenth century popular literature. However, in doing so Anderson creates doctrinal ambiguities and moves closer to traditional Judeo-Christian thought.

Dorian has plot similar to that of *The Castle Builder.* It too is a romance. The central character is one Dorian Trent-- a lover of books and learning. He and his mother

live in a fictional community of Saints. His great mentor is the local deep-thinker, Uncle Zed. Anderson uses Uncle Zed as a vehicle for teaching church doctrine. Zed and Dorian spend long hours discussing everything from politics to science. Uncle Zed hopes that Dorian will carry on his life-long search of knowledge. He asks Dorian, "If I were but a young man like you, do you know what I'd do?" To Dorian's "What?" Uncle Zed replies:

> I would devote all my mind, might and strength to the learning of truth, of scientific truth. I would cover every branch of science possible in the limits of one life, especially the natural sciences. Then with my knowledge of the gospel and the lamp of inspiration which the priesthood entitles me to, I could harmonize the great body of truth coming from any and every source. (74)

Uncle Zed enjoins Dorian to begin just such a search and Dorian responds to the call.

During his early life, Dorian acquires some success as a farmer. "He liked the work. He could with pleasure be a farmer all his life. But should a man's business be all of life? Dorian realized . . . that the accumulating of worldly riches was only a means to the accomplishing of other and greater ends of life" (81). Those greater ends were the acquisition of knowledge and the wisdom to use it in harmony with God's natural laws.

Under the continued tutelage of Uncle Zed, Dorian begins to understand the workings of the natural world. Uncle Zed explains:

> The Spirit has taught us Dorian, that this world is God's world, and that the laws which govern here and now are the same eternal laws which have always been in operation; that we have come to this world of element to get in touch with earthly forms of matter and become acquainted with the laws with govern them. (119)

He teaches Dorian to love all that God has created and to unselfishly give service not

only to other men but to all living creatures.

After Uncle Zed dies, Dorian finds among his papers a letter which becomes at once the central message of Anderson's novel:

> Mother Earth, why should not I love you? Why should not I get close to you? Why should I plan to live always in the clouds above you, gazing at other far-distant worlds, and neglecting you? Why did I, with others, shout with joy when I learned that I was coming here from the world of spirits? I answer, because I knew that 'spirit and element inseparately connected receiveth a fulness of joy.' I was then to get in touch with 'element' as I had been with 'spirit.' . . . . Nature is what I came here to know. Nature, wild or tamed, is my school-room--the earth with its hills and valleys and plains, with its clouds and rain, with its rivers and lakes and oceans, with its trees and fruits and flowers, its life--about all these I must learn what I can at first hand. (135-36)

Dorian is inspired by Uncle Zed's letter and resolves to accomplish Zed's unfulfilled dream.

Dorian is Anderson's last novel, published in 1921, and reflects Anderson's commitment to Church doctrine. He clearly believes that all life has an eternal spirit, that man has a divine stewardship, and that this earth is inherently good and that this earth will become the final home for the righteous. His characters articulate a belief that earth-life is not a contest against nature but a school where man must learn to obey natural laws. His characters embrace a commitment to the creation of a millennial earth. Anderson shows a strong inclination to support the environmental attitudes of Church authorities. That his works were central to the Home Literature movement suggests that many of these attitudes filtered into popular Mormon culture.

Susa Young Gates

Susa Young Gates was born March 18, 1856, the second daughter of Brigham

Young's twenty-second wife. While it might appear that such a distinction would relegate her to a life of obscurity, Susa became a woman of great influence within the community of Utah Saints. A strong advocate of women's rights and education, she was at the forefront of many progressive programs including the environmental cleanup of the Salt Lake Valley in the early years of this century. She was founder and editor of the *Young Woman's Journal* and the *Relief Society Magazine*. She was also founder of the Utah Woman's Press Club. She was an active participant in civic organizations including the Salt Lake City Council of Women.

As a writer of fiction, she was not unusually gifted but remains an influential voice in the Home Literature movement because of her social status and popularity. Her significant novel, *John Stevens' Courtship. A Story of the Echo Canyon War,* was written in 1909, and is a romantic account of an event which occurred ten years after the Saints settled in the Salt Lake Valley. Unquestionably, Susa recognized the value of fiction in instructing the youth of the Church on moral issues, as *Courtship's* central message deals with moral transgression and the evil devices of a gentile world. However, it also reflects many of the same environmental attitudes expressed in the poetry of Eliza R. Snow and in Emmeline Well's hymn, "Our Mountain Home, So Dear."

The opening scenes of the novel find the Saints preparing for a celebration. "It was the evening of the 21st of July, 1857. All Salt Lake was astir with preparation for the famous outing to Big Cottonwood Canyon, where the Twenty-fourth--Pioneer day--was to be observed" (4). For weeks the pioneers prepare for this retreat into the mountains. It requires two days of arduous climbing to arrive at the mountain meadow cradled between

pine-covered peaks. The main character, Diantha, and her close friend, Ellen, are two fickle young women searching for romance. On their way to the celebration, they admire the beauty of their mountain home:

> The girls climbed from point to point, always going upward, but keeping out of the way of passing teams. Their arms were soon filled with the blooms of riotous colors and perfume which intoxicated them with the blush and glory of the color song of peak and mountain vale. (16)

Susa describes the "fairy scene" with poetic romanticism:

> An emerald-tinted valley with a silvery lake empearled on its western rim lay before them, cupped in a circle of embracing hills and snow-covered crags. The summits of the eastern and western hills were crowned with pine, which here and there, like dusky sentinels, traced their lines down, down to the water's edge. That gleaming, brilliant, silent water! Every tree upon its brink was reproduced, and even the clouds above floated again in soft, tremulous pictures beneath the surface of this beautiful mountain mirror. Sheer above the lake on the south towered white granite cliffs, hold here and there a whiter bloom of snow in their pale embrace. (18-19)

The two girls are enchanted by the scene and Ellen exclaims, "Oh Dian, I never thought there was so much beauty in all Utah" (19).

When all the Saints arrive at their destination, Brigham Young offers counsel:

> Here are swings and boweries prepared for your enjoyment; here are most beautiful groves, meandering streams, and lovely sheets of water, amid the towering peaks of the Wasatch mountains. Here are the stupendous works of the God of Nature. (25)

Susa continues to paint a picture of sylvan beauty and transcendent peace. Her words echo the romanticism of Emmeline Well's, Evan Stephan's, and other LDS hymnologists.

The tranquility of the Saints during their Pioneer Day celebration is interrupted by word of the impending approach of Johnston's Army--military troops sent to take control

of the territory. The remainder of the novel relates the history of the Echo Canyon War. Brigham Young orders all the Saints to leave their homes and retreat into the wilderness. Houses, sheds, and barns are all prepared for burning as the Saints are instructed to destroy everything if the troops attempt military force. The heartbroken pioneers pack up their belongings and make a southward exodus. The conflict is eventually settled when the troops agree to locate outside Salt Lake Valley in what becomes Camp Floyd, and the Saints return to the Salt Lake Valley.

In the course of this larger drama, Susa relates the romantic adventures of her two heroines thus making *Courtship* an essentially fictional treatise on the sorrows of sexual transgression and the folly of gentile entanglements. However, it also reflects some of the environmental attitudes voiced earlier by Eliza R. Snow and William Clayton. Having established a comfortable settlement in the valley, the Saints were beginning to appreciate the beauties of their mountain home. Only ten years had passed since the first company of Saints rolled into Salt Lake but the same cliffs that posed a terrible impediment to the early refugees now assume an aspect of wonder and awe. When Johnston Army sends the Saints out into the barren wilderness, they once more assume the persona of Israelites suffering from a forced exodus. The wilderness assumes the more traditional aspect of "the lone and dreary world."

Courtship accentuates an environmental dichotomy because events happen in quick succession. Within a matter of just a few pages, Susa replaces the romantic beauty of nature with a picture of barren wilderness. As with the earlier exodus from Nauvoo, the Saints in 1858 become martyrs for a righteous cause. The wilderness

becomes a testing ground for personal worthiness. The Saints suffer the challenges of nature as an offering of humility and obedience. They experience the love-hate relationship found in traditional Judeo-Christian thought. Nature is at one moment beautiful and idyllic while in the next moment it becomes fallen and full of sorrow.

Roderick Nash, in his study, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, explains:

> Constant exposure to wilderness gave rise to fear and hatred on the part of those who had to fight it for survival and success. Although there were a few exceptions, American frontiersmen rarely judged wilderness with criteria other than the utilitarian or spoke of their relation to it in other than a military metaphor. It was their children and grandchildren, removed from the wilderness condition, who began to sense its ethical and aesthetic values. (43).

Gates reflects this shift in attitude. Open exposure to the wilderness invited antipathy toward nature. Once secure in their homes, the Saints could enjoy the beauty of their mountain home.

Gates shows little evidence of support for the environmental teachings of Church leaders--this despite her close association with Brigham Young. She more often emphasizes traditional Christian attitudes about nature. There is little discussion of stewardship, the millennium, the spiritual dimension of creation, or individual environmental responsibility. Whereas, Anderson addresses all these issues, Gates' remains silent or at least non-committal. That both of these writers were widely read may indicate the struggle second generation Saints faced in finding a solid environmental ethic. Vacillating between the revealed environmental doctrines of the Church and the strong pull of traditional Judeo-Christian attitudes, the Saints suffered from the same

form of schizophrenia afflicting the larger American culture. They both loved and exploited the wilderness. The surfacing of these conflicting attitudes suggests that by the early twentieth century, Latter-day Saints were amalgamating into the American scene.

Moving into this century, LDS literature began to lose its distinctive voice. The increasing influence of gentile trade and the loss of Utah's isolation, arising from the introduction of the railroad, pushed the Saints into the world. By the late 1930s, a new generation of LDS writers poked and prodded the dynamics of Mormon culture in an effort to question the value of remaining doctrinally peculiar. This moved Mormons away from the revealed environmental teachings of church authorities and eased members into traditional Judeo-Christian patterns of thought.

VII

The Lost Generation

There was fictional silence for nearly two decades after Anderson and Gates. No significant LDS novels were written during the 1920s and 30s. However, within the community of Saints there was a tremendous transformation taking place. Nearly all the old pioneer settlers had died and the religious fervor that once sustained the early Saints cooled to a comfortable and settled complacency. Towns were losing large numbers of members to Eastern cities and to California. It was often difficult for these emigrants to remain committed to a religion that seemed inextricably connected to Utah. For many, leaving Utah meant leaving the Church. Some of these exiled members began to write (or rewrite) the Mormon story.

Professor Edward A. Geary dubbed the LDS writers of the 1940s, "The Lost Generation" because they resembled "the so-called 'lost generation' of the 1920s" (92). They were disillusioned Church members who struggled with the failed promise of a millennial society. As second and third generation Mormons they were enticed by the heroic dimensions of the western exodus and the settlement stories of the early pioneers, but questioned why the early Saints had to face these struggles. Polygamy, the United Order, pioneer settlement practices, and the integrity of local ecclesiastical leaders came under scrutiny. For these writers the most central question became, "Were Joseph Smith and Brigham Young divinely inspired or were they merely visionary men?" The regularity of this theme produced as many as twenty novels during the 1940s which were so similar in content that, as Geary suggests, "it is possible to outline a single 'story' with

certain basic figures that reappear in different forms" (93).

Three significant works produced during this era were Maureen Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*, Virginia Sorensen's *A Little Lower Than the Angels*, and Lorene Pearson's *The Harvest Waits."* As representative writers of the lost generation, Whipple, Sorensen, and Pearson offer an opportunity to judge how this literary era handled attitudes relating to the environment. As earlier suggested, these writers questioned the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, but in addition, they encouraged the slow transformation of Mormon environmental idealism to more traditional Christian thought.

To avoid confusion, I will give a brief summary of each of the three novels under discussion. As Geary suggests, there are substantial similarities between all three works; however, characters and settings vary. Once we have clarified setting and character, we will throw all three novels back into the same pot and examine environmental doctrines and attitudes reflected in the texts as a whole.

Virginia Sorensen's novel *A Little Lower Than the Angels*" is set in Nauvoo during a period just prior to and including Joseph Smith's martyrdom and the eventual expulsion of the Saints from Illinois. The main character is Mercy Baker, the wife Simon Baker, a zealous but kindly man. Simon is entirely committed to his Mormon faith but Mercy silently questions the doctrines of her new religion. She becomes a member out of a sense of duty to her husband and family, rather than from any firm belief in Latter-day Saint theology. She recognizes the tremendous magnetism of the Prophet Joseph and the power he possesses over the hearts of his followers. Yet she questions Joseph's

divine calling and also that of his successor, Brigham. When Simon is called to take a second wife, Mercy suffers from the realities of sharing her husband and family with another woman and chafes under the dictates of church leaders. However, her loyalty to Simon and her children drives her from her sickbed to join the Saints as they begin their western exodus. Weakened by months of illness, she is unable to bear separation from her Nauvoo home, and she dies as the wagons turn westward.

In Maureen Whipple's novel, *The Giant Joshua*, the character of Mercy Baker is replaced by Clory MacIntyre. Early in the novel, Clory becomes the third wife of Abijah MacIntyre. Abijah is a dictatorial zealot who is called to settle the St. George area. Clory, like Mercy, is uncommitted to the religious theology of Mormonism but is resigned to throw her bedroll into Abijah's household because she has no where else to go. The novel chronicles Clory's infatuation with Abijah's oldest son, her struggles with the principle of polygamy, her devotion to her daughter who eventually dies from fever, as well as the larger drama of settling the desert wilderness. After years of faithful devotion, she is abandoned by Abijah, who leaves St. George with a new and younger wife to commence a life of luxury in the Salt Lake Valley. Unwilling to manipulate Abijah into returning to St. George by telling him of her pregnancy, Clory dies some months later while giving birth to Abijah's child.

The similarities between *The Giant Joshua* and Lorene Pearson's *The Harvest Waits* are evident within the first few chapters. Angus Bastian is a tyrannical spiritual leader called by Church authorities to build a community based upon the United Order. His wife, Sarah, hasn't Angus's same religious commitment, but follows him to the new

settlement out of a sense of duty and the hope of something better for her children. Set in the fictional town of Joppa, *Harvest* explores the virtues and vices of polygamy, the challenges of communal living, and the gradual decline of Mormon provincialism. Angus dies half-way into the book and his community vision is usurped by Hiram Watt. Hiram is a very different sort of character--a blend of gentile opportunist and Mormon devotee. *Harvest* lacks the polished structure of *The Giant Joshua* yet it has much the same feel and content.

All three novels question the authoritarian control of the Church leaders. In *Angels*, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young take on more human dimensions and calls to question their position as divinely appointed prophets. Both this novel and *The Giant Joshua* paint Brigham as a strong-willed idealist, bent on creating his own kingdom. *Harvest* doesn't put a human face to church authority but it does question the validity of an institution that one day encourages a zealous devotion to the United Order and polygamy and the next day abandons these practices in the face of outside pressure.

There is a decidedly piqued tone in these novels. Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and the teachings of these two men become suspiciously ambitious and obsessive. This is not only true of the doctrines relating to polygamy (which is the central issue for all three novels), but it is also true of the heavy-handed control wielded by both men in settling Nauvoo, and later, the western territory. This anti-authority attitude is clearly reflected in an episode in Sorensen's novel. Mercy's son, Menzo, chances to meet the prophet Joseph Smith on an island some distance from Nauvoo. Sorensen uses this encounter to explore the real inspiration behind the law of consecration and the United

Order. Repeatedly she has Joseph articulating the doctrines of consecration and stewardship as *his* vision. As Joseph explains the eternal progression of man, he concludes by saying, "That's the way I have it figured out" (193). He asks Menzo to envision his dream. "We're going to make a place where people can come and get all the food and ideas they want. We're going to have schools and universities and churches and factories and gardens and fields for everybody" (193). Joseph continues to paint a millennial picture for young Menzo, but behind the discourse, Sorensen subtly questions the divinity of Joseph's vision.

> Joseph leaned back against his tree, sighing. "I thought you'd like it," he said contentedly. "Anybody who loves the world would like it. I've been thinking about it ever since I was a boy, not much older than you are now. I don't want to make just another religion. . . . I want to make another society." (195)

The questioning of church authority articulated in these novels indicates a growing ambivalence towards the heroic figures of early church history and towards the doctrines they taught. Writers took issue with the prophet's right of authority and questioned the validity of Mormon revelation.

In addition to their anti-authoritarian attitudes, these writers devalued the millennial vision by portraying it as impractical and ineffectual. As surely as Parley Pratt and William Phelps believed in the reality of a millennial earth, Pearson, Whipple, and Sorensen, articulated antipathy toward the restrictive collectivism of the law of consecration. *Harvest,* in particular, plays the unyielding dictatorial Angus Bastian against the worldly Hiram Watt. Bastian goes to any extreme to achieve his vision of the United Order. He nearly destroys the very community he is trying to create because of

his unbending devotion to the law of consecration and the principles of stewardship. Just as he begins to see the millennial possibility become a reality, church authorities send word that the United Order is to be dismantled and the collective properties distributed among the citizens of Joppa. Bastian suffers disillusionment and dies questioning why he was called to build Joppa. Hiram Watt, on the other hand, is already familiar with the intricacies of capitalist economics. Too worldly wise to enter into the Order, he waits out what he knows will be the inevitable demise of consecration and stewardship. Pearson's final blow to the millennial vision comes when Watt replaces Bastian as spiritual leader of Joppa. The message is clear--capitalism is a more practical and realistic economic institution. The law of consecration and the principles of stewardship are only the dreams of visionary men.

This attitude is similarly portrayed in *The Giant Joshua* but the deterioration of the millennial vision, the law of consecration, and the principles of stewardship, come about because of the lure of gold mining and the insinuation of gentile trade into the St. George economy. Similarly, in *A Little Lower Than the Angels,* Sorensen questions an economic system so peculiar in character that it incites hatred in the surrounding gentile communities and encourages persecution.

In questioning the credibility of church authorities and the practicality of applying the principles of stewardship and consecration in preparation for a millennial earth, the writers of this generation help Latter-day Saints slip comfortably into the larger American community. The Saints are no longer a peculiar people with a peculiar social order. They are Christians just like everybody else. As part of the larger Christian community,

Whipple, Pearson, and Sorensen articulate more conventional Judeo-Christian attitudes about the wilderness and nature. The seeds of Protestantism reflected in the works of Eliza R. Snow and Susa Young Gates reach full bloom with this generation of writers.

A passage in Sorensen's novel clearly indicates the influence of outside cultural attitudes. Mercy is reflecting on her early childhood. Her mother was a staunch Christian while her father was a free-spirited non-conformist. When Mercy's mother is confined to bed with an illness, she entreats her husband to take young Mercy to church. He dutifully takes Mercy to the door of the church and tells her:

> Now, you and I came here to see God and Jesus and all I want is to be sure They're here all right. See? You go in and look around. If They aren't there, you come right back out and we'll go see if we can find Them. I really doubt if They'll be in there on such a good day. (53)

When Mercy returns a few minutes later and tells her father she didn't find God and Jesus inside the church, he takes her in search of Them. Reflecting on this experience from her perspective as a mature woman, Mercy says:

> He *was* right, after all. We saw God and Jesus in the corner of John Graham's meadow, but when we got right close They had gone on to another corner, leaving white violets to show where They had been standing. We kept seeing Them ahead of us. We kept seeing things They had done to show us we were going the right way. (54)

The transcendental character of this passage reflects the attitudes of the larger American culture. Similar patterns of thinking are found in the other two novels, as the main characters use nature as a refuge from the constraints of a restrictive community. Nature is a means of achieving closeness to God--a place of quiet contemplation.

The love of nature is in itself a positive environmental attitude but these novels reintroduce the love hate dichotomy spoken of by Santmire. All three novels indicate a preoccupation with controlling and manipulating the environment. The old ambivalence articulated by Eliza Snow and later by Susa Gates, becomes substantive in the works of the lost generation. Nature is at once wonderful and terrible.

Looking at the novels as a whole suggests that all three texts are a typological study of human and wilderness oppression. Just as Mercy, Sarah, and Clory are forced to conform to Church authority, nature is forced to conform to a questionable vision of paradisiacal splendor. In this sense, the draining of the swamp-lands around Nauvoo in *A Little Lower Than the Angels*, the damming of the Santa Clara river in *The Giant Joshua*, and the completion of an irrigation system in *The Harvest Waits*, could represent the constrained submission of Mercy, Clory, and Sarah Bastian. This also confirms an attitude held by current ecofeminists that nature and women have a common heritage of oppression and subjugation.

Additionally, all three novels use nature as a foil against which the larger drama of individuality versus conformity is played. Especially with Pearson and Whipple, flooding, drought, locusts, and oppressive heat act as antagonists--testing and trying the ability of the Saints to remain committed to Church authority. The Judeo-Christian tradition of wilderness purification is a prevailing feature in all three novels.

All this suggests a wandering from the Latter-day Saint environmental paradigm. A loss of faith in the leadership of the Church also meant the loss of an environmental ethic articulated by those leaders. Antipathy towards the millennial vision necessarily

inhibited the achievement of a paradisiacal world of equality. Silence about the spiritual identity found in all of God's creations lent support to the Christian attitude of humankind's spiritual elitism.

For Whipple, Pearson, and Sorensen, the earth was austere and filled with hardships and struggles. Their characters lived by the belief that the most one can hope to gain in this life, is peace in the life to come. The *other life* attitude of traditional Judeo-Christian thought is implied in the closing scenes of their novels. All of this represents a decided turn from the environmental beliefs of the church.

Yet more than merely turning from the doctrines of the Church, these writers supplant the gospel teachings with the belief system of the larger community. Humanism became their religion. Individualism was applauded. Collectivism was suspected. Capitalism was the preferred economic institution. Skepticism replaced faith.

The literature of the lost generation reflects a loss of religious zeal. Over one hundred years of Church history have passed and the embers of the fire have cooled. Doctrines that once excited and inspired men and women to sacrifice everything now become diluted in the stream of American culture. As we move into the contemporary scene of Mormon literature, the once unique Mormon identity becomes ambiguous. Faith in the doctrines of the restored Church hangs tenuously.

VIII

Contemporary Mormon Literature

After the 1940s there was a proliferation of Mormon literature. By the 1960's literally hundreds of novels flooded the LDS literary market. Some of these reverted back to the didacticism of the Home Literature movement while others continued the skeptic traditions of the Lost Generation. The prodigious quantity of novels makes selecting representative voices from the contemporary scene of Mormon literature an intimidating task. As with the study of Early Mormon literature, the limitations of this paper require us to narrow our focus and arbitrarily draw the names of three contemporary LDS authors--Levi Peterson, Douglas Thayer, and Terry Tempest Williams. All three are considered some of the best writers on the current LDS literary scene.

Interestingly, the skepticism and disillusionment of the Lost Generation are markedly softened in the novels of these three contemporary writers. There is still substantial questioning. However, this is done not to discredit or supplant Mormonism but to add other dimensions to LDS theology. Peterson explores institutional Mormonism in an attempt to redefine the parameters of faith. Thayer articulates many of the doctrinal elements of the Church's environmental paradigm but offers no moral imperatives. Terry Tempest Williams introduces a decidedly contemporary feminist twist to Mormon environmental issues. Unlike the lost generation, these three authors are so different in style and substance that we must look at each separately.

Levi Peterson

Peterson *knows* LDS theology. His novels articulate doctrine while exploring the

validity of culturally imbedded traditions. His people are heavily drawn caricatures of Mormon provincialism. His best known work is a collection of short stories entitled, *The Canyons of Grace.* He's also written two full-length novels, *The Backslider* and *Aspen Marooney*, as well as another collection of short stories *Night Soil.*

The central issue in most of Peterson's works is guilt--especially as it relates to sexual transgression. His characters seek redemption and struggle to find a feeling of worth within the constraints of orthodox Mormon theology. Sprinkled within his stories of moral turpitude is evidence of a strong environmental ethic. Peterson creates his own blend of Mormon doctrine and transcendental animism. No other story articulates this better than "The Canyons of Grace."

Arabella Gurney is the central character in "Grace." She is a thirty-year-old single Mormon working on a summer archeological dig in Southern Utah. She meets an irreverent non-Mormon who teases her into sexual transgression. She struggles with the moral strictures of her Mormon upbringing and plays with immorality like a new toy. She reflects:

> Her father and mother were amazingly alike: reverent in the extreme, scrupulous in keeping the commandments, and doubtful of their salvation. Arabella loathed them for their subservience, yet she also loved them, needed their approval, and understood perfectly that God was to be feared . . . she wondered whether she could reconcile herself to God's will. And again she marveled at her unrelenting, desperate compulsion to persist in her freedom--to the point of perdition, if necessary. (109)

The demand for individuality remains the pervasive theme in most of Peterson's works. We sense that Peterson himself is struggling with the issue of subservience. He

balks at the confining dogma of the Church. Like the writers of the lost generation he appears to question Church authority. Yet despite Peterson's compulsion to remain free and unrestricted he doesn't cast off his Mormoness but rather adds his own unique dimension to the doctrines of the church. This is obvious as we continue to examine "The Canyons of Grace."

Arabella goes through a form of sacramental redemption. She first transgresses the law and commits sexual sin. Next she comes under the power of a fanatical polygamist leader who claims her for his wife. Within his face she sees the tyrannical features of *her* God and kills him by crashing a water pitcher over his head. She flees her constrained vision of God, only to find a new God reflected in the beauty of the natural world:

> Arabella was immeasurably relieved. Looking at a berry-laden juniper and a tall-stemmed yucca, she could almost believe they were friends who regarded her with warm affection. The wilderness bore her no grudge, was still willing to bless her. She was alive, and the universe was holy. . . she went forward free and filled with grace. (135)

God assumes transcendental proportions and one can sense Arabella's move toward faith. Rather than replacing Mormonism, Peterson blends transcendentalism with the Mormon belief in the spiritual identity of all of creation.

This same battle for individual freedom is expressed by another of Peterson's characters in "The Confessions of Augustine." In the same way Arabella breaks the confining moral straight-jacket of Mormonism, Fremont Dunham also intentionally courts sexual sin. At eighteen he spends the summer working in Southern Utah where he

meets a non-Mormon girl and has an affair that results in her pregnancy. Fremont contemplates the balance between freedom and submission:

> Joseph Smith said that, in the beginning, there was inchoate matter and there were intelligences. One of these intelligences was superior, and He became God. He organized matter and made stars, suns, and worlds. He gave spiritual bodies to other intelligences, and they became his children in the pre-existence. Then, to give them a perfect being like His own, He prepared a mortal existence for them to test who would obey Him and who would not.
>
> It is the inchoate matter that troubles me. It is coeval with God. It does not owe his being to Him. It has an obduracy, an impulse of its own, a will to be other that what God wills. How do I otherwise account for myself at eighteen? (9)

It could be argued that Peterson is showing the same distrust of Church authority reflected in the writers of the lost generation. Yet despite Peterson's doctrinal manipulation his characters choose to remain with the Church. Arabella doesn't deny God in favor of humanism. Fremont doesn't forsake Mormonism but returns home and marries a Mormon girl in the temple. Similarly, the characters in *Backslider* and *Aspen Marooney* all return to the Mormon nest--each with a reformed vision of Mormon theology. Unlike the characters portrayed by the Lost Generation, Peterson's characters don't have to die to escape church authority. They adapt.

Peterson's novel *The Backslider* is a study of just such adapting. His main character, Frank Windham, is a confused Mormon boy who struggles to find a relationship with a God he can neither understand nor wholly accept. Frank moves from confusion to complacency. He contemplates open rebellion but settles for reserved commitment. There seems no answers to Frank's questions about himself or about life

until he experiences epiphany--Jesus Christ appears on a horse, dressed as a cowboy. Frank's remarkable conversation with a very human and down-to-earth Christ reflects Peterson's need to view God and Mormonism outside the constrained traditions of Mormon orthodoxy. In the end, Frank Windham doesn't leave the Church. He merely adapts and addends his own vision of God onto Mormon theology.

A characteristic of Peterson's novels is that they evade formalism. Just as we begin to assume an understanding of Peterson's position on a particular doctrine he shoots off in another direction. His works are a deconstructionist's heaven. He avoids closure and prefers instead to dance about in areas of play--all the while examining the intricacies of Mormon culture.

Yet there is one over-riding environmental principle in Peterson's works. He values elemental earth. He sees nature as an expression of God. He remains committed to the LDS concept of eternal spirit. His characters articulate this doctrine more than any other Mormon theological belief. Peterson may vacillate on other doctrinal issues but he is devotedly constant about the goodness and Godness manifest in nature.

Along with Peterson's devotion to the earth is his fundamental commitment to Mormonism. He, like his characters, moves about the parameters of Mormon orthodoxy testing and adapting his faith. There is an implied devotion to his heritage. Peterson's character Frank Windham, may best express Peterson's own feelings about the church. In describing his wife's recent conversion Frank says, "It won't hurt her any to be a Mormon" (356).

A casual reading of Peterson's novels might make one assume that he better

fits among the writers of the Lost Generation. His flagrant irreverence would shock most mainstream Mormons and call into question his obedience to Church authority. However, Peterson isn't taking issue with Church authority or the divine right of the prophet to receive revelation or the validity of any particular doctrine. He remains ambiguous on most doctrinal issues. His beliefs don't seek to supplant Mormonism but to add other voices and broader interpretations. He is unerring in his belief in eternal spirit. For this one reason, he stands firmly imbedded in the Mormon environmental paradigm.

Douglas Thayer

In sharp contrast to Levi Peterson's sometimes shocking departure from Mormon propriety, Douglas Thayer deftly examines contemporary issues within the bounds of mainstream Mormonism. His stories are straightforward studies of church culture and you might find his characters in any LDS Sunday School class. He has written two short story collections, *Under the Cottonwoods* and *Mr. Wahlquist in Yellowstone* and a novel, *Summer Fire.*

Thayer's support of the Church's environmental doctrines is at once evident in two stories found in *Under the Cottonwoods*. "Opening Day" relates the story of Troy, a young returned missionary. It is opening day of the annual deer hunt. While on his mission he's decided to stop hunting but participates in the annual event out of a sense of duty to his father. The Utah deer hunt is integrally connected to the cultural traditions of Mormonism. Despite teachings to the contrary, hunting has retained an almost religious significance. It is part of the "rite of passage" ritual for many rural youth and it

serves to strengthen father-son relationships. Thayer examines this spiritual and cultural dichotomy.

Troy articulates the doctrinal attitudes of the Church early in the story:

> Every day preaching the gospel of Christ changed me. I felt guilty because of all the rabbits, pheasants, ducks, geese, and deer I had killed, which were beautiful and had a right to live. All things had been created spiritually before they were physically. Our family ate meat, but we didn't need it. We weren't pioneers or Indians, and we were commanded to eat meat mostly in time of famine anyway and then with thanksgiving . . . To kill was to deny the influence of the Holy Ghost. (19)

He goes on:

> Although I wouldn't hunt I planned to do a lot of back-packing, learn the names of all the Rocky Mountain flora and fauna, and at night study the stars. When I got married and had sons, I wanted them to see the real beauty, design and completeness of Nature, which God had created. I wanted to be as close to my sons as my father had been to me, but without guns and killing. I wouldn't let them carry .22s or varmint rifles to kill the hawks, rabbits, rock chucks, and squirrels they saw, as my father had let me. (30)

Unfortunately Troy's resolve suddenly diminishes when four bucks suddenly move into gun range. Even as he pulls the trigger and downs all four bucks he cries, "Oh no, no, no." The tension between belief and behavior is evident.

Thayer's "Opening Day," examines the moral dimensions of hunting. It is an indictment of culturally imbedded traditions that have neither doctrinal support nor ethical validity. Troy's indiscriminate slaughter shows the difficulty of living higher spiritual laws in face of compulsive human behavior. Thayer suggests that distance between what Mormon's believe and what they practice is still wide and difficult to traverse.

Thayer's second story "The Rabbit Hunt" is about Allen, a Sunday School teacher, who plans a rabbit hunting excursion with his class of young boys. The appointed Saturday arrives and Allen drives the group out to the West desert in search of rabbits. The entire tenor of the story is distastefully blood-thirsty. In the final scene of carnage the young boys are caught up in a rabbit hunting frenzy and indiscriminately shoot in every direction. Allen is caught in the cross-fire and shot in the stomach and chest. As he slips into unconsciousness he becomes painfully aware of the suffering caused by a bullet.

Thayer's anti-hunting message could not be more clear if it had been spoken by Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. in a General Conference. Pointedly Allen discourages the boys from telling dirty stories or from swearing but doesn't relate the wanton killing of animals to immoral behavior. He counsels the young boys not to kill any birds but then picks up his rifle and shows his shooting skills by downing a hawk. Thayer is again examining the gap between belief and behavior.

In *Summer Fire* Thayer continues to examine environmental issues. Owen Williams is a young man possessed of a naive innocence and self-righteous determination to perfect himself. He and his cousin, Randy, are sent to work on a ranch in Nevada during the summer of his sixteenth year. Confronted by the rough, unprincipled ranch foreman, Staver, Owen is tested to the very limits of his moral conviction.

From the very beginning of the novel we see evidence that Owen understands the environmental doctrines of the church. "I'm an Explorer [scout]. But I don't want to kill

anything," Owen tells one of the ranch hands. Owen reflects:

> Birds and animals had spirits, just like human beings, and they would be resurrected, too. It was wrong to kill animals if you didn't have to. I didn't ever want to kill anything. (25)

Owen's simple and devoted belief in gospel teachings is in sharp contrast to his cousin Randy. The boys are the same age but Randy wants to belong to the society of ranch hands. He has no problem dropping his Mormon boy persona. He reads "Playboy" magazines, has no compunction about killing animals, drinks a little, swears a lot, and fantasizes about sexual encounters. Owen feels a moral obligation to keep Randy from making any major transgressions and is constantly reminding him of his duty to set a good example. Randy brushes this off with careless disdain--a rather direct attack by Thayer on the lack of spiritual commitment by some members.

Owen is repeatedly tested by Staver. "'Let's see you drop that magpie out of the top of that dead cottonwood over there. It's about fifty yards,' says Staver. Owen holds the rifle. "I don't kill birds'"(49). This is but one of many confrontations Owen has with Staver. Staver finally compels Owen to kill gophers and rabbits but Owen, who is a good marksman, makes sure he makes a clean kill so the animals won't suffer. In another instance Staver has the long standing tradition of providing fish for local fish fries. To obtain enough fish he resorts to dynamiting the fishing holes on the ranch. Owen is appalled and commits to restocking the ponds by catching minnows and transplanting them back into the holes.

By the end of the summer a showdown between Staver and Owen becomes an imminent event. It is finally precipitated by Staver taking Randy into town for a final

celebration and Randy loses his virginity while in a drunken stupor and returns to the ranch overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. Owen is so angered he challenges Staver to a fist-fight. Owen loses and in a fit of anger goes back to the bunk house, gets his gun and vows to kill Staver. Suddenly he is hit by the realization of what he's about to do. Confronted by passions he's never experienced before he recognizes how close he is to violating everything he believes in. He turns and walks back to his room. When he returns to Provo a few days later he realizes that the summer has tested his resolve and he has remain committed.

There is nothing too deep about *Summer Fire.* Like Thayer's other two stories, it examines the capacity of a Latter-day Saint to remain constant in the face of worldly temptations. There isn't the didacticism of the Home Literature movement in Thayer's writings but his message is unmistakable. Latter-day Saints should and can live the doctrines of the church. The vision of a world without enmity is possible if each person commits to avoid the wanton killing of animals and assumes responsibility for caring for all of God's creations.

The typological struggle between Staver and Owen represents the struggle all Latter-day Saints and Christians face in implementing environmental programs and policies. Just as the voice of one young man had little lasting effect on a Nevada ranch, the commitment to live higher environmental laws often seems insignificant and ineffectual. Yet humans must begin somewhere. Ignoring the vision of a millennial world because it seems unattainable will necessarily destroy all hope of achieving a society based on equality and justice for all creation. Denying the possibility of living the

environmental principles espoused by St. Francis, articulated by Isaiah, and taught by Latter-day apostles and prophets because some men--some many men--don't live those principles admits defeat before the fight begins. Thayer invites possibility as Owen's outward battle is lost but his inward war is won.

As did Peterson, Thayer centers his environmental ethic on the doctrine of spiritual equality. He exposes the immorality of human dominion and abuse and encourages Latter-day Saints to examine cultural traditions that violate a higher level of spiritual devotion . His belief in the spiritual dignity and value of all forms of life gives added weight to a contemporary environmental philosophy based on humility and service.

Terry Tempest Williams

Terry Tempest Williams is a naturalist by profession. A resident of Salt Lake she is a member of a long-established LDS family. "I come from a family with deep roots in the American West," she writes. "My ancestors were part of these original 'handcart companies' in the 1850's. . . . It was a small sacrifice in the name of religious freedom. Almost one hundred and fifty years later, we are still here" (*Refuge*, 13). She continues:

> I have known five of my great-grandparents intimately. They tutored me in stories with a belief that lineage mattered. Genealogy is in our blood. As a people and as a family, we have a sense of history. And our history is tied to land. (14)

Williams' non-fictional essay, *Refuge*, is an account of the flooding of the Salt Lake Valley which occurred in 1983. Conjoining this story of natural disaster is a personal account of her mother's death from cancer. She unobtrusively weaves her LDS

theology into this story of death and renewal and adds to the LDS environmental paradigm a distinctly feminine voice.

Her doctrinal foundation is apparent almost from the very beginning of the book. She relates:

> I was raised to believe in a spirit world, that life exists before the earth, and will continue to exist afterward, that each human being, bird, and bulrush, along with all other life forms had a spirit life before it came to dwell physically on earth. Each occupied an assigned sphere of influence, each has a place and a purpose.
> It made sense to a child. And if the natural world was assigned spiritual values, then those days spent in wilderness were sacred. We learned at an early age that God can be found wherever you are, especially outside. Family worship was not just relegated to Sunday in a chapel. (14)

Williams defines herself in terms of her relationship to others. She is daughter, a granddaughter, a friend, a wife. These relationships extend beyond the human world. She says, "I am mountains. I am Great Salt Lake" (29). "I could not separate the Bird Refuge from my family" (40). "The heartbeats I felt in the womb--two heartbeats, at once, my mother's and my own--are heartbeats of the land. All of life drums and beats, at once, sustaining a rhythm audible only to the spirit" (85). At intervals in the novel, she attempts to understand these "other" lives. She lies beside a dead swan and tries to imagine "The great white bird in flight" (121). She lies beside her dying mother and "Mother and I become one" (230). She imagines the lives of the Fremont Indians, the African natives, birds, and the Lake. In all of these relationships she feels no need to create a system of hierarchy or domination. She has an attitude of complementary dualism.

Williams' desire to understand her relationship to others gives rise to an ethic of

caring as she asks, "How do we empathize with the Earth when so much is ravaging her" (85)? She tenderly dresses the body of a dead swan for burial. She lovingly cares for her mother. It's this caring that becomes her refuge. "My refuge exists in my capacity to love" (178).

In this desire to build a close and caring relationship Williams recognizes that she is a separate entity. She allows for difference when she suggests that, "There are other languages being spoken by wind, water, and wings. There are other lives to consider: avocets, stilts, and stones" (29). She expresses the belief that diversity in nature is necessary and enriching.

Williams gives a feminist perspective to her views about nature. She articulates the belief held by many ecofeminists that many of our environmental problems have been creation of a male dominated society. She relates a conversation with one of her friends. "We spoke of rage. Of women and landscape. How our bodies and the body of the earth have been mined. 'Many men have forgotten what they are connected to,' my friend added. 'Subjugation of women and nature may be a loss of intimacy with themselves'" (10).

Her antipathy toward the doctrine of dominion is further reflected in her account of the Salt Lake pumping project. To ease the effects of flooding Governor Bangerter authorizes the pumping of Salt Lake water into the west desert. "'We've harnessed the lake!" exclaims Governor Bangerter. "We are finally in control'" (247). There is little doubt that Williams finds the manipulation and control of natural processes offensive. She speaks her disapproval of a legislative plan to create a huge freshwater lake in the

Salt Lake Valley--the Lake Wasatch project. "Lake Wasatch is a chamber of commerce dream. Finally the Great Salt Lake would be worth something. What about the birds" (265)? The inferred message is that the subjugation of nature must cease. Our attitude as humans shouldn't be one of domination but of humility and concern for other forms of life.

Later she expresses a belief very different from traditional LDS theology. "If we could introduce the Motherbody as a spiritual counterpoint to the Godhead, perhaps our inspiration and devotion would no longer be directed to the stars, but our worship could return to the Earth" (241). Latter-day Saints do believe in a Mother in heaven but she isn't directly connected to the Godhead. Yet Williams' point is well taken. Encouraging the feminine characteristics of nurturing and mothering into our religious paradigm, might reestablish a sense of home to our planet.

While Williams doesn't directly address every issue of the Latter-day Saint environmental paradigm--there is no specific mention of a millennial earth, stewardship, the law of consecration, or life as a preparation for Godhood--she clearly defines the spiritual dimensions of all God's creations. She expresses the need to reverence and respect all of life. She seeks to replace attitudes of domination and subjugation with the life affirming qualities of humility and service.

Rededication

Unlike the writers of the Lost Generation our three contemporary LDS writers deliberately focus on the differences between Mormonism and mainstream Christianity. They focus on the cultural and spiritual dimensions that make Mormons a peculiar

people. Mormoness is apparent in all of their works.

Peterson remains ambiguous about his belief in some Church doctrine, but his works invite Latter-day Saints to experiment with different ways of believing and expressing their faith. He values nature not only for its aesthetic and contemplative qualities, but for its ability to draw one closer to God. He leans toward transcendentalism not as a replacement for the doctrines of the Church but as an addendum to Mormon beliefs. His probing encourages a rethinking of Latter-day Saint commitment.

Thayer explores the complexities of living within the world while maintaining a vision of paradisiacal possibility. He focuses on church environmental doctrine possibly more than any current LDS author. He reconfirms the value of stewardship. He envisions a world without enmity. He supports the opinion of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other general authorities that men bear the responsibility for removing the blot of sin. Without the heavy didacticism of Nephi Anderson he encourages Latter-day Saints to remain constant in applying the doctrines peculiar to the Church's environmental paradigm.

Terry Tempest Williams sensitively expresses her commitment to nurture and love all of God's creations. She lives her belief in the spiritual dimension of all life and allows all creation to fulfill its divine potential. She decries the attitudes of domination and subjugation which have brought about our ecological dilemma. She exemplifies the principles of humility inherent in stewardship. She modernizes the belief that earth is our eternal home. She calls on humankind to learn and live in harmony with the eternal laws governing the universe.

Peterson, Thayer and Williams place a belief in the spiritual identity found in all of God's creations at the very center of contemporary Mormon environmental thought. This suggests a move toward creating the world envisioned by Isaiah where enmity between man and beast will end. It also reflects a commitment to applying attitudes of charity and service exemplified in the life of St. Francis. It answers the challenge made by White and other environmentalists and encourages a "rethinking" of traditional Judeo-Christian attitudes. Stewardship replaces dominion. The earth assumes divine character. Humans acquire the life-affirming attitude of humility. In light of our current ecological crisis contemporary LDS writers present exciting environmental possibilities.

IX

A Summary and Conclusion

Summary

Lynn White speaks of modern Christianity's incapacity to value the sacred character of the earth. He says,"To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact. The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West" (1206). But White is wrong. For over nine million Latter-day Saints, a small wooded knoll near Palmyra, New York, is literally the sacred grove. It was here that a young boy knelt in prayer and received a visitation of God the Father and Jesus Christ. This event began what Latter-day Saints believe was a restitution of the doctrinal truths of primitive Judeo-Christian theology. The unique environmental doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints not only address White's concerns about the environmental validity of Judeo-Christian tradition, but they also provide an increased understanding of humankind's relationship to the earth.

The Mormon environmental paradigm encompasses three important issues. 1) The millennial reign of Jesus Christ is an imminent event which will restore earth to paradisiacal glory and end enmity between man and beast. The principle of stewardship is an essential component of this millennial vision. 2) Every form of life, whether organic or inorganic, is possessed of an eternal spirit. All creation will be heir to the blessings of the resurrection and is entitled to fulfill its divine potential. 3) The earth is eternal and will someday receive celestial glory. Humans must learn to live in harmony with the laws governing all creation--this in preparation for Godhood.

Such a paradigm suggests that Latter-day Saints should evince enlightened ecological practices but the Mormon environmental record remains unimpressive. In surveying 160 years of Latter-day Saint literature, it becomes painfully obvious that Mormons struggle to remain devoted to the inspired doctrines of the Church. Early church leaders felt an intense commitment to church doctrine. The millennial vision and the possibility of creating a world free from enmity and greed, captivated the earliest LDS converts. When persecution hampered the millennial possibility, Latter-day Saints shifted into other more traditional Christian attitudes. Heaven or the *other world* became enticing visions for the suffering Saints. The world was a lone and dreary testing ground. The Saints assumed the persona of a modern-day Israel and in doing so, they reacquired a whole array of other Judeo-Christian attitudes.

There were occasional voices (Nephi Anderson) rearticulating the doctrines of the restoration but generally the strong influence of the larger Christian community diluted Mormonism's unique doctrinal character. By the 1940s, some Mormon writers directly questioned the validity of prophetic revelations and supplanted the Mormon environmental paradigm with humanism and realism.

Today Latter-day Saints are awakening to the virtues of Mormon environmental doctrines. In face of the world's ecological crisis inspired Latter-day teachings in relation to the earth have become timely and significant--particularly, the doctrine of eternal spirit. Contemporary LDS writers focus on the life-affirming qualities inherent in this doctrine. They also encourage Latter-day Saints to recognize and maintain their unique Mormon identity.

The complexities of our ecological dilemma argue against White's assumption that the Judeo-Christian tradition is responsible for Western culture's environmental antipathy. We are beginning to see in the now developing nations of the East, increasing evidence of environmental abuse and destruction. Eastern nations are facing tremendous ecological problems despite their supposedly enlightened religious beliefs. Native cultures everywhere are struggling to maintain their earth values in face of industrialization and technology. This suggests that Western theology is not the essential cause of the world environmental dilemma. There are undoubtedly a multitude of other factors influencing world environmental policy. In narrowing our vision to one specific religion or gender or economic institution, we over-simplify and lose our capacity to find lasting solutions.

However, White is right in one sense. The answers to our ecological problems must begin within the religious community. Environmental degradation is a moral issue. Every religion must encourage the life-affirming attitudes of service, humility, and equality for all life. The belief system embodied in the Latter-day Saint environmental paradigm could have tremendous influence on worldwide environmental policy.

Conclusion

There are inherent weaknesses in writing a paper as broad as this study. The limitation of space requires a tremendous synthesizing of materials. Some very significant literary voices remain silent. Some conclusions become assumptions. Some specifics become generalizations. Yet the virgin territory of both Mormon literature and ecocritical theory suggests no alternative but to leap in with intensity and enthusiasm.

Despite its daunting dimensions three goals have remained constant in my writing and research.

First, I hope to encourage the study and application of ecocritical theory. Evaluating literature in terms of how it treats nature awakens us to an array of social and cultural traditions that are neither healthy nor necessary. Society cannot heal the wounds of ecological abuse unless we begin to understand the roots of our environmental problems--whether they be religious, philosophical, economic, or political. Literature, as a reflection societal attitudes, is a good place to begin diagnosing environmental illness.

Secondly, I want to encourage Mormon writers and readers to love Mormoness. A whole army of creative, talented LDS writers promises a resurgence of interest in our unique Mormon identity. Mormons needn't stand in the shadows of Christian culture. There are exciting dimensions to the Latter-day Saint belief system that must be articulated.

Thirdly, as a Latter-day Saint, I've wanted to rid myself of the complacency of ignorance. The inspired doctrines of Latter-day prophets are rich with possibilities. Christ's second coming is still an imminent event and the creation of a millennial society is still attainable. This earth is a sacred place. I am eternally connected to this world. It is my home. As I live the principles of humility and charity I know I'll feel deeper devotion for this beautiful planet.

Reflecting on my research, I feel enriched by this experience. I've gained a deep appreciation for Latter-day prophets and for the doctrines of the restoration. I am

overwhelmed by the integrity of our Mormon heritage. I am encouraged by the message of contemporary LDS writers. There is one final thought that makes its way to the stage of my mind. I know--now I must apply.

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Nature Among the Mormons:

An Ecocritical Approach to Mormon Literature

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, environmentalists have focused on Judeo-Christian tradition as the cause of Western culture's ecological crisis. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the charges against Judeo-Christian tradition and to show how the revealed doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provide possible solutions to environmental challenges. The resulting Latter-day Saint environmental paradigm will be superimposed on selected Mormon literature to determine how effectively the doctrines taught by Church authorities filtered into popular Mormon culture.

Despite the inspired teachings of Latter-day Saint prophets, Mormons remain unimpressive in their environmental practices. My research will show that while Church environmental doctrines did indeed filter into popular Mormon culture, outside influences and disillusionment with Church authority gradually moved Church members toward more traditional Judeo-Christian environmental attitudes. However, contemporary Mormon literature suggests an increased awareness of and renewed dedication to the Latter-day Saint environmental paradigm.

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