

The BOB LARSON Letters

INTRODUCTION

During my thirty-minute drive home from work in the early 90's, I often tuned my radio to a local Christian station broadcasting "Talk Back" with Bob Larson. As the two letters I wrote to him illustrate, I took Bob quite seriously at first—so much so, in fact, that I regrettably allowed some of my annoyance to show in my writing. But as I learned more about him and as he became mired in scandal, I realized the futility of my efforts to correct his error. Eventually, he fell out of favor with much of his syndicate and was silenced in many radio markets including the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Nevertheless, these letters gave me an opportunity to pen my thoughts on a number of interesting topics.

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The BOB LARSON Letters
LETTER 1

Victor M. Poulsen
Fort Worth, TX

September 18, 1991

Dear Bob Larson,

On occasion over the past several months, I have enjoyed listening to the last 15 minutes of your show as I drive home from work. Theologically, I have found you to be closed-minded and unteachable--among the more lamentable of characteristics. Nor do I believe that open-mindedness precludes resolve. It merely acknowledges point-of-view. I have, however, considered you to be honest and sincere in your efforts to help people and have deemed you the source of much good. I was, therefore, very disappointed in your two shows on Mormonism (Sept. 17th and 18th) which forced me to conclude that you are a liar.

Church Identification

I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - a very specific church known throughout the world as "The Mormons." Yes, there are small splinter churches that also refer to themselves as Mormons. However, they make no claim to, nor are claimed of the LDS church. (Our reaction to their Mormonism might be compared to your reaction to our Christianity). When you speak of the Mormons on your program, your listeners naturally think of the LDS "Utah" church - of blue suited missionary and Tabernacle Choir fame. Yet, you and your guests continually represented splinter group doctrines as being Mormon doctrines knowing full well that your listening audience would be misled by such claims. Such deceit can only be deliberate on your part.

Polygamy

Bob, let me welcome you to this century. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has not practiced polygamy for 100 years. Any member found practicing it promptly loses his membership. Neither do we apologize for having practiced it. Indeed we still believe it to be a correct principle. It is practiced when God commands it and it is sin when he forbids it. It is currently forbidden. As you know, many prophets of old practiced polygamy including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David and others. If you choose to believe that these great men of God lived in continual adulterous relationships with many women during the duration of their prophetic callings, then such is your privilege. Recognize, however, that we do not. Neither does the Lord (see II Samuel 12:7-9). I challenge you to find a scripture that condemns any of these men for their actions. But even if their polygamy was sin (and the affairs of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggert pale in comparison), why does it not prove them false prophets as you continually assert it does for Joseph Smith? Either way, you have a problem.

LDS Women

Then came the discussion of Mormon oppression of women. I believe the discussion came when you were trying to determine why no LDS women called into your show to defend their faith. Did it ever occur to you that your Mormon listening audience is likely sparse at best? None of my friends have ever heard of you. Those that do listen to you probably take you in stride as another in a host of less-than-honest anti-Mormons.

For three days I listened to a local Christian radio show talk about how women should be obedient and submissive to their husbands. Much of their subject matter came from Paul's teachings on the subject. And there is still considerable debate in the Christian community as to what role, if any, women should play in church leadership. Nevertheless, I challenge you to find any major Christian denomination that affords more responsibility and leadership to its average female member than does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Any Mormon will tell you that after its Bishop, the most responsible and challenging position in a congregation of Saints (Ward) is that of Relief Society President - always a woman. In this office, my 29 year old wife was responsible for the welfare of nearly 200 women. With a lay ministry, our church is run by all its members including its women.

Nor is a woman's (or man's) eternal reward limited by her spouse. Your perversion of our doctrine of eternal marriage in this regard provides a window into your true character.

Sure, you can find an example of anything you want to find but speaking as a very typical LDS husband, I assure you that I have nothing but the greatest respect and admiration for my wife. Decisions are OURS to make, money is OURS to spend and children are OURS to raise. I believe that Utah was second after Arizona in giving its women the right to vote. And the LDS Relief Society is one of the largest and oldest women's organizations in the country. Don't kid yourself on this issue Bob. The strength of the Mormon family is well known. We're obviously doing something right.

Perfection

Next topic. YES, God is a glorified man; and YES, we can become glorified men (and women)! And what a beautiful and sublime doctrine this is! NO, God is not learning; and NO, God is not progressing for He knows all things and He possesses all things! He continually glorifies Himself through creation. He is perfect and he has commanded us to become perfect. I was amused at your guest's interpretation of this commandment repeated in Matt. 5:48. There are literally dozens of scriptures that repeat this commandment for perfection in varying contexts. For your enlightenment, note a few of them: Matt. 19:21, John 17:23, 2 Cor. 13:11, Col. 4:12, Heb. 6:1.

Nor are we alone in our recognition of this commandment. Your "house is divided" on this subject. Upon the request of a Christian associate of mine, I read the book, *I'm Glad You Asked, Answers to Difficult Questions About Christianity* by Moody. He discusses this commandment at length and emphasizes that one must, in fact, be perfect to enter into the presence of God. This perfection is achieved through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and presumably occurs at death. On your program, I heard you criticize the Mormons for inconsistency in belief (The proverbial pot calling the kettle black no doubt). Yet, as this story reminds us, the Christian world is a doctrinal

mélange to defy all imagination. The pat response to this criticism, "Yes, but the basics are the same," is an apologetic and unsatisfactory excuse for doctrinal anarchy to say the least. I have come to know the profoundness of this problem living here in the Bible belt. With every new Christian I talk to, I must begin anew just to find out where he's coming from. If you want to see apostasy in action, take a look at the fundamentalist/moderate rift in the Baptist church. If you want to see the results of such apostasy, take a look at the Christian world. Yet Jesus warned, "If ye are not one, ye are not mine."

Indeed, your description of the Christian world as a "religion buffet" could not have been more appropriate. (You will recall its context was that of the Mormon caller who had previously belonged to a number of religions). Just remember that, with a selection of over 700 items on the menu, your particular theology represents but another dish on the Christian banquet table.

Repentance

Furthermore, your guest's deliberate misrepresentation of the facts in the LDS view of attaining perfection is deplorable. I refer to his statement that when a Mormon repents of a sin and then commits another all previous sins return and he must start all over again. This is untrue and he knows it. Mormon theology teaches that part of the repentance process requires that the sin in question be forsaken. If it is repeated, repentance (FROM THAT PARTICULAR SIN) was never accomplished.

Natural Conception

Though not a doctrine of the LDS church, many Mormons believe that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. (And, incidentally, this view is supported by the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip*). If true, their sexual relations are no more our business than yours are mine. The authors of the four gospels have chosen to remain silent on much of the personal lives of the Savior and His 12 Apostles. I don't have a problem with that. Do you?

Furthermore, Your argument that our belief in Jesus natural conception demeans sex was curious if not idiotic. Though you would deny it vehemently, you obviously hold to the misguided view that sex is a necessary evil. In its proper context of marriage, Mormons view sexuality as being a beautiful and sacred gift from God. How then do we demean it by suggesting that the Giver himself also possesses this holy gift? No, it is your shock at the idea of God participating in what YOU demean as a base act that reveals your prudishness.

Personal Revelation

Your logic concerning personal revelation was equally ludicrous. While arguing that it is wrong to pray for doctrinal guidance, you admitted it is appropriate to pray for other kinds of guidance (as if Satan could only deceive us in matters regarding the former). Since you discount spiritual confirmation, obviously your testimony of the gospel must be based on temporal things such as archeological evidences for Biblical history. Yet a host of other religions make similar claims of their sacred scriptures. How then, is the Buddhist who has no social or scientific reasons to embrace the Bible converted to Christianity? If God cannot whisper its truth to his soul then, pray tell, what CAN He do? Your position in this regard reminded me of Paul's description of latter-day

apostates, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II Timothy 3:5). Yet, in His absence, Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost would teach all things (John 14:26) and testify of Him (John 15:26). Perhaps one day you will admit that He is actually able to accomplish this mission. (Luke 24:32)

Adam-God Theory

It is NOT a doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that Adam is God. Adam was a participant in the creation of the world, he has surely been exalted and he is certainly the father and patriarch of the Human race. These true teachings have been perverted into this theory. Nevertheless, Adam is neither Elohim (the Father) nor Jehovah (the Son). Nor is such a notion properly referred to as "theory" for there is no possibility of it being true. Kick and scream if you will Bob, it just ain't so!

Priesthood and Blacks

Mormons don't know why the priesthood was denied certain races of people in the modern church any more than they know why it was denied all but the tribe of Levi anciently. Yet from Joseph Smith to Spencer Kimball, church leaders have ALWAYS taught and anticipated the day that the priesthood would be given to all men without regard to race. (Hardly the attitude of racists). When it finally came, it was met with joy from all. ALL the blessings of eternity have always been within the reach of ALL men. It is not, nor has it ever been a doctrine of the LDS church that blacks were "not valiant" in keeping their first estate. This is a lie, and you are guilty of propagating it!

And, true to the law of "Garbage In - Garbage Out" your own Bonnie Bell concluded that since all those ignoble spirits have come to earth, black couples will have to start giving birth to white children. Such foolishness speaks for itself.

Summary

You really did disappoint me Bob. Everything you say in the future will be just that much more difficult for me to believe. I challenge you in the spirit of honesty and integrity to correct your errors. You owe it to your listeners, you owe it to the Mormon people, but most of all you owe it to yourself. Unfortunately, having heard only a fraction of your two shows on Mormonism, I have only addressed a fraction of your erroneous statements. As I hear but little of your program, I may never know if you corrected your errors, but YOU will - and God will. And ultimately, that's all that really matters.

In summary, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not:

1. confess the doctrines, precepts, or authority of apostate and splinter groups.
2. teach that a woman's place in the eternities is limited by her husband.
3. practice polygamy.
4. teach that God is learning and progressing.
5. teach that all sin returns to the sinner.
6. demean human sexuality.
7. teach that Adam is God.

8. teach that blacks were anything less than faithful followers of God in our pre-mortal existence.
9. teach that black couples will give birth to white children.

Conclusions

I am the expert on this subject Bob. My statements of Mormon beliefs and theology are, by definition, more credible than those of your guests. I am a counselor to my Bishop and a member of the Stake High Council. I have a Masters degree in engineering and an abiding curiosity of science and religion. I have read the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, The Teachings of Buddha, The Bhagavad Gita, assorted Jehovah's Witness and Christian literature, and am currently reading the Holy Quran. I am an avid student of theology but most important of all, I am an everyday Mormon with an unshakable testimony of the gospel. I love the Lord, I love my young family, and I love this church.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now the fastest growing church in many parts of the world. Traditionally, it has doubled its membership every ten years. With such growth trends, it will be among the largest religious denominations in the country by decades end. It has thrived in opposition with statistics that show an increase in church growth in areas of increased anti-Mormon activity. For every one Mormon you lead away, there are literally hundreds of others that come into the fold. Our beliefs, lifestyle, and organization are becoming more and more familiar to others of all walks of life. Your appeals to baser emotions with stories of Mormon conspiracy and evil do more to diminish your credibility than to injure our reputation. Too many of your listeners have Mormon friends and associates.

Such programs as those in question remind me why I sometimes think of "Talk Back" as being a tabloid of religion. On the cover of "National Inquirer," I can read of toddlers giving birth to aliens. While on "Talk Back," I can hear about black Mormons giving birth to white children.

Early in the church one could read about everything from sacrificing virgins in temples to horns on the heads of Mormon Elders. I fear those lies of the past have not been dispelled so much as they have merely adjusted themselves to a more sophisticated audience.

Sincerely,

Victor M. Poulsen
Aerospace Engineer

P.S. The attached paper was my response to an associates written defense of the consubstantial trinity doctrine.

P.S. Does the following *American Heritage Dictionary (1981 College Edition)* definition apply to Christianity?

1. A system or community of religious worship and ritual.
2. Obsessive devotion or

eneration for a person, principle or ideal. 3. An exclusive group of persons sharing an esoteric interest.

The word is "cult" Bob. When you make up your own definitions, you really should represent them as such.

The BOB LARSON Letters
LETTER 2

Victor M. Poulsen
Fort Worth, TX 76137

March 12, 1992

Dear Bob Larson,

This is in response to your January 16th and 17th shows on Mormonism. I know that it has been a while but I was in the midst of purchasing a new home and so you fell pretty low on my priority list. I now ride a bus to and from work and so I am unable to hear any of your show anymore. I noted that there were fewer doctrinal errors made this time around which was not too surprising since the focus of your program was church finances.

On several occasions you mentioned the story about LDS finances in the *Arizona Republic*. As well as being very interesting, I found that the article spoke well of the church. However, you neglected to mention what, in the context of YOUR program, was its bottom line, which can be summarized by the following quotes:

[The church] is apparently free of the kind of financial fraud or personal wealth-building among top officials that frequently is found in organizations with large amounts of money and virtually no accountability.

Nearly all [the Church's income] is spent furthering its religious goals.

Is your bottom line any better than that Bob? About two years ago, the LDS church eliminated several categories of donations for its membership in North America. They told us to STOP giving so much Bob! That has to be without precedence in the history of religion. Perhaps if a greater number of other Christians obeyed the law of tithing and established a lay ministry, they too would realize many financial blessings.

Ed Decker and "GodMakers"

A number of times during your program I got the feeling that you and Ed Decker were a little out of sync with each other. Driving home from work on the 16th, I listened to Ed Decker argue with a returned Mormon missionary that the LDS church was actually growing very slowly. When I arrived home to turn on the tape recording my wife made of your show, you stated, in effect, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is among the wealthiest and FASTEST GROWING churches on the planet." Of course, we both know who was right. In fact, the statistics released by the LDS church to which Ed Decker referred, show church population doubling every ten years.

Ed Decker is a liar Bob, and frankly, it says little of you that you would regularly feature him on your show. The unfortunate thing is that I suspect you already know that. He has an agenda to harm the LDS church and he won't let a little thing like truth stand in his way. I've included the

introduction pages to a book called "The Truth About The GodMakers" by Gilbert W. Scharffs. It is a line by line response to "The GodMakers." I think you would be ashamed if you read it.

Mother In Heaven

Born of his tabloid mentality, Ed Decker said that Mormons believe Jesus was conceived from the sexual union of God and one of his many wives on the planet Kolob. (That's almost as good as black Mormons giving birth to white children--refer to your Sept 17/18th program). The LDS doctrine of a Mother in Heaven comes from a song ("Oh My Father") written by Eliza R. Snow. She wrote:

*I had learned to call thee Father, Thru thy Spirit from on high,
but, until the key of knowledge was restored, I knew not why.
In the heav'ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare!
Truth is reason; truth eternal Tells me I've a mother there.*

The prophet Joseph loved this song and never disputed the doctrine it taught. How one goes from here to Ed Decker's statement is difficult even to imagine. Here are the facts: 1) LDS doctrine claims no knowledge as to how *spirit* children are conceived, 2) God does NOT reside on Kolob, 3) We know from the above song of A Mother in Heaven. That's ALL we know. OK?

New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage

That brings us to the next topic. The New and Everlasting Covenant is the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage is marriage performed with the authority of that restored gospel. When my wife and I were married in the temple, we entered into the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage. When polygamy was being practiced in the church, those marriages were performed with the same authority. D&C 132:20 says of those who abide this covenant:

Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them...

To one caller you challenged, "How can fallen depraved man become a god?" Yours was reminiscent of the aged Sarah's reaction to learning she should give birth to Isaac. I'll give you the same answer she received: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen 18:14) What say you Bob? If God desired to exalt His children above the angels to be like Himself, to be "partakers of the divine nature" and "joint heirs with Jesus Christ," could He do it? Of course He could. To suggest otherwise, as you have unwittingly done, is to deny an omnipotent god. WOULD He do it?.. You can only fain ignorance, but take as a hint your desires for your own children. Ours forms beautiful concept. One that has, to a lesser degree, been lived out in most every family since the beginning of time. But before people like you it becomes a pearl before swine. What greater glory could man bring to God than to become like Him? Think it through.

Masons and Mormons

Your argument that the LDS temple ceremony was stolen from the "non-Christian" Masons certainly is a plausible one. However, it takes little thought to come up with at least two others that are equally plausible. 1) The Masons claim to be the builders of ancient Christian cathedrals. Some even assume a link to Solomon's temple. The Bible says very little about worship within the inner walls of ancient temples. Perhaps Masons preserved this true form of temple worship and Joseph Smith stole and perverted it. 2) Perhaps it was the Masons that perverted temple worship during the centuries since ancient temples were destroyed. It is reasonable that the temple rites would be preserved in SOME form. Either way, similarities in Mormon and Mason ceremonies are a testimony that, ultimately, they have the same origin; and Mormons believe, of course, that origin is God. In any event, there can be little wonder why Joseph was attracted to this organization.

Through all of Biblical history, temple worship was a vital part of life among God's people, yet the modern Christian world wouldn't know what to do with a temple if you gave them one. I realize objectivity is not in your job description Bob, but your credibility will always suffer if you refuse to address other possible arguments. I'm not discounting your argument. I'm merely pointing out that it is NOT conclusive.

Theological Basis for Faith

One of my Christian associates at work was anxious to confront me with your conversation with the newly baptized Mormon girl. You'll recall that you asked her what theological basis she had for embracing Mormonism. From her hesitancy, you concluded that she, along with all Mormons have none. I asked this friend of mine, how he would answer that question. Obviously taken aback by my inquiry, the smirk quickly left his face. When it was obvious to us both that he had no answer either, I pointed out that although it is a good question, few Christians could readily answer it. What do you think Bob? If, after he "came to Christ" on your program, I asked one of your listeners what theological basis he had for his action, would he have a nice little packaged answer for me? You claim to operate in the real world Bob so GET REAL!

How would I answer that question? The theological basis for my faith is the revealed word of God (Matt. 16:17,18). Yours, I suppose, is the Biblical portion of that word. Can you justify that? The Christian world has successfully deafened itself to all else that has been OR MAY BE given. God does not speak to those who WILL not hear. (See note below).

In fact, I was fairly fascinated by your response to a related question. Specifically the listener wanted to know how you could possibly know that the Bible is true or that Jesus rose from the dead. You argued that if it were all a hoax, ONE of the witnesses to these historical events would have blown the whistle. Is that what it all comes down to Bob - the fact that there were no whistle blowers? Isn't that a bit weak? This is a PROFOUNDLY significant question you are addressing since it literally forms the basis for your faith! That's a pretty sandy foundation Bob.

Nevertheless, are you aware of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon? Their testimonies are recorded in the front of every copy. The three men who saw an angel and touched the plates of gold all left the church with bitter feelings toward the prophet Joseph. Most of the eight witnesses who held the golden plates in their hands also left the church some of whom became bitter enemies with

Joseph. Yet none of these men ever denied what he had both seen and heard. In fact, they vigorously reaffirmed their witness on numerous occasions. Why didn't one of them blow the whistle Bob? If it were a hoax, they certainly had every reason to do so. If this type of witness is good enough for the Bible, why isn't it good enough for the Book of Mormon? ... Which well introduces our next topic.

NOTE

I'm always a little bit amused and surprised when someone who allegedly "knows his stuff" uses Rev. 22:18,19 as an argument against other books of scripture. Do you really think that when John wrote those words he intended them to apply to a book that wouldn't even be compiled for another three centuries? Pseudepigraphal writings were a problem among the Jews. John was warning them not to alter HIS book of prophesy. But if you insist on maintaining your naive interpretation, apply it to Deut. 4:2 and convert to Judaism.

"OK for Us But Not for You"

From my numerous discussions with Christians armed with all varieties of anti-Mormon literature, I discovered early that the Christian world, and the Biblical heritage it claims, is guilty of nearly everything it accuses Mormonism of - guilty of everything from polygamy to false prophecies. Many anti-Mormon arguments have Biblical counterparts. Drawing attention to these is, as you might expect, a very effective teaching tool while simultaneously reinforcing our position that we are indeed a RESTORED church. Only when I listened to your show on January 16th did it occur to me that among some, at least, this seeming hypocrisy was actually due to something other than ignorance of the scriptures.

The light clicked on when, in his wearisome effort to expose the supposed Mormon political agenda to overthrow the government, Ed Decker explained how Mormons are encouraged to get actively involved in all aspects of the political process. (See note below). To which you inquired, in effect, "But all Christians are encouraged to get involved in government and to elect other Christians to political office. What is the difference?" "The difference," Ed explained, "is that they're not Christians." End of discussion. What a revealing and fascinating response it was! Essentially this same answer was given when other accusatory remarks were made against Mormonism on topics ranging from temples to tithing. There was, of course, much to be learned from Ed's brief remark.

Believe it or not, I recognize the validity and merit of the argument, "*it's OK for us but not for you*" though most people, including those of your listeners who were perceptive enough to notice, would regard it as hypocrisy and more often than not I suppose they're right. Nevertheless, certainly there are things appropriately practiced in the Kingdom of God that otherwise must be regarded as evil. An obvious example of this was the O.T. practice of animal sacrifice. Mormons believe that ordinances practiced without proper authority are an abomination in the eyes of God. No, it's not the argument itself that is wrong but rather, the abuse of it. It is one thing to say, as we do, that someone does the right thing for the right reason but lacks the proper authorization to do so. It is quite another to say, as you and others do, that we do the right thing for the **WRONG** reason and then invent such reasons necessary to support your argument.

For instance, instead of Mormons getting involved in the political process because it's what

every good Christian SHOULD do, rather, our participation is touted as a conspiracy to overthrow the government. And the LDS church doesn't collect money from its members because God has commanded His people to pay tithes and offerings. Instead, we're portrayed as greedy and materialistic. Mormons don't construct beautiful temples to honor and serve God as His people have ALWAYS done at great personal sacrifice. Rather, we do it because we're vain. Mormons don't bring their children up with the word of God, but instead, we deliberately and systematically indoctrinate them with lies.

Yes, it's a valid argument Bob, but you and others invoke it in a vein of hypocrisy and deceit.

NOTE

Incidentally, Ed's charge that our church leaders tell us who to vote for was false and he knew it when he said it. There are some taboos in the church and one of them is using the church as a political vehicle. Our leaders may not and DO NOT endorse political candidates. Rather, we are encouraged to do our civil duty and to make it a matter of careful consideration and prayer.

LDS Church Leaders

My exposure to anti-Mormon propaganda has also caused me to note, with some interest, the lack of attacks made against our leadership. Yet others of the so-called "cults" are constantly criticized (and often rightfully so) for the abuses and excesses of their leaders. (Though, in fact, this kind of abuse is as easy to find in the Christian community as anywhere). This lack of criticism is, at once, curious and expected. Apparently even the anti-Mormon community recognizes these men to be above reproach.

Yes, there are good honest men at the heads of many churches, but they don't claim to be prophets of God, do they? Our First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve are in a unique position to KNOW if they really are what church membership sustains them to be; that is prophets, seers, and revelators. In your position, it must be difficult to understand why men of such repute would knowingly and without apparent motive, perpetuate the deceit of Joseph Smith.

Answer to Prayer

I happened to catch the final minutes of your February 26th show when you chided a formally inactive Mormon girl for her supposed answer to prayer. You'll recall that she sought on her own to learn the truth of her faith and the wisdom she sought of God was, or so she claimed, given her. You replied, to the effect, "You CANNOT pray about the truth. You can only seek to obtain it through study and investigation."

The necessity of study and investigation is not at issue here. Such provides nourishment to a growing and maturing faith. But to suggest that it is wrong or otherwise futile to kneel before God and ask Him if that which we study is true, is to deny the influence of the Holy Ghost (Jn 14:26;15:26) and to embrace a notion that is rife with the stench of apostasy! I dare you to support it with scripture! You can't, can you? Meanwhile, permit me to refute it with the same.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally,

and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. James 1:5,6

How else can you know whether the Bible you study is accurate or that the story it tells is true?... because there were no whistle blowers? Little wonder that you must HOPE for inerrancy of the Bible. Little wonder that there exists a multitude of churches and doctrines the professors of which apparently wouldn't even consider including God in their quest for the truth.

Your listener took the fruits of her study before God and, because of her faith, received the wisdom He promises. Don't ascribe your lack of faith to others Bob.

Democracy or Theocracy

You charged that the Mormon church is authoritarian. While your use of the word "authoritarian" suggests the absence of freedom and personal agency among the Mormon people (a charge which even you know to be false), it is true that Mormons view obedience to authority, especially divine authority, as a virtue. Though you intended malice with your statement, I'm not sure that most Christians would regard obedience to divine law as a character flaw either. Nevertheless, the dangers of obedience to the wrong authority are acknowledged. But what about your own form of church government? Is it without risk?

Protestant denominations are, (and I don't mean to be flippant or cynical in this presentation) organized with essentially democratic governments and operate in a type of "free-market" environment. (I say "Protestantism" to deliberately exclude the Catholic church which, like Mormonism, has a strong central government). A Baptist church, for instance, is not unlike a bank in the sense that if it serves its patrons well it will prosper and grow. If not, it will stagnate or even close. Among Christians, a given Baptist church is literally in competition for patrons with other surrounding churches even of like denomination. Their product is ministration which includes preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ according to their understanding.

Products produced in a free-market system are, first and foremost, useful and attractive with a price reflective of its quality. Consistent with the principles of democracy, it is the PEOPLE that ultimately determine the fate of a product - whether it becomes a part of everyday life or vanishes forever from the shelves of distributors. It is their multiplicity of likes and needs that drives the production of a multiplicity of products.

If you concede, and I think you must, that Protestantism is, and has been, governed by such principles, then imagine the possible effects on gospel truths after centuries in such an environment. Preachers "walk on eggshells" knowing that the people they must "call to repentance" are the same to whom they owe their living. Such could ill-afford to offend their congregations lest they take their donations and membership to the church down the street. And make no mistake, the truth is offensive to some people.

This type of spiritual democracy would allow "truth" to be established based on public opinion expressed via voting and other support processes, such as is presently occurring with the fundamentalist/moderate rift in the Baptist church. Truth might be amended in the same way we amend our U.S. Constitution. Abortion and other evils are extant in a democratic society, not

because they are right, but because they are popular. One might easily predict that, under these circumstances, the gospel would evolve into a diluted, innocuous, agreeable perversion of the same.

Though I have unavoidably done so, it is not my purpose to suggest that this has happened in the Christian World (or to what degree) but rather to point out, in the context of your criticism of our form of church government, that there are some very real and serious dangers with your own. You might concede the danger of evolving "truth" in a democratic church government but argue that it is tempered if not eliminated by the absoluteness of the Bible. Certainly the Bible has such an effect but to what degree? There are hundreds of denominations that claim membership in the Christian community with each its own unique doctrines and belief systems. As the above mentioned Baptist division demonstrates, the Christian World is living proof that the Bible is subject to interpretation. Yet it is only effective in establishing absolute truth to the degree that its teachings are unmistakable.

In determining the proper form of church government, it might well be asked how the Kingdom of God will be governed when the Savior returns to claim His own. Will it be a democracy where ultimate authority resides with the people or will it be a Theocracy (TJS pp. 250-252.) where ultimate authority resides with God? Yes, your stories of Mormon autocracy and authoritarianism, consistent with their intent, strike fear in the hearts of your listeners who are familiar with a history of despots and dictators who maintained strict obedience to their authority through tyranny and fear. But Mormonism asserts that Jesus Christ stands at the head of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and that its Priesthood structure of authority is filled with men of God whom He has called to serve and whom members vote to sustain.

Don't misunderstand my message. Democracy is an inspired form of civil government. It is the only real option when leaders are imperfect. It is based on the correct and proven principle that collective righteousness is more constant and predictable than individual righteousness. Nevertheless, you don't have to be very old to see that even societal morals change over time. What once was ugly sin is now acceptable behavior and our democratic laws reflect the change. No, democracy is the means by which MEN govern men. Theocracy, which is to a degree authoritarian in nature, is the means by which GOD governs men. And I think that says it all.

Infinite Sin?

There seems to be little disagreement in the Christian community that eternal justice requires that sin be punished and that Jesus intervened for sin laden man by suffering punishment in his stead thus extending mercy to him without compromising justice. The so-called "orthodox" Christian argues that accepting His offering is all that is required to receive it and that those who do not are doomed to Hell for eternity wherein they will suffer punishment for their own sins.

Thus are the laws of justice and mercy realized in the lives of men. But is there not a dilemma in this orthodox view? In his short sojourn in mortality, is man capable of committing infinite sin that God judges him worthy of infinite punishment? If justice requires a millennia in hell in consequence for a single sin this is still but the wink of an eye in eternity. But if man is NOT capable of infinite sin, is it not at once, a violation of the laws of justice and mercy to exact infinite punishment for finite sin? But God is God and is both just and merciful.

These are valid and searching questions the answers to which have far-reaching implications.

How do you respond?

Different Jesus

Do you REALLY believe that God is our FATHER in heaven and that we are created in His likeness and image? Do you REALLY believe that Jesus is the SON of God? (See my "*A Question of the Trinity*"). Do you REALLY believe that He is our mediator and advocate with the Father? Do you REALLY believe that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Savior of ALL men? (1 Tim. 4:10)

You say we believe in a different Jesus, and I have no doubt that you're right.

Conclusions

If it is all a lie, then certainly God would like to see Mormonism vanish from among His children. However, is there any doubt that He would use only truthful and honest means to do so? The end doesn't justify the means Bob. When one listener accused you of "twisting" our religion, you responded that you weren't "twisting anything that wasn't already twisted." Though I'm sure you meant differently with your cutesy answer, it does illustrate an underlying problem with "anti-ism" in general. That is, it is no less honorable to lie about that which is deemed as good than to lie about that which is deemed as evil. Perhaps you should consider this when trying to determine why your listening audience is shrinking.

Sincerely,

Victor M. Poulsen
Aerospace Engineer

The BOB LARSON Letters
LETTER 3

Victor M. Poulsen
Fort Worth, TX 76137

1995

So you're mad because the Mormons might find a cure for cancer; wouldn't that be a tragedy! Since you are concerned with such things, take note.

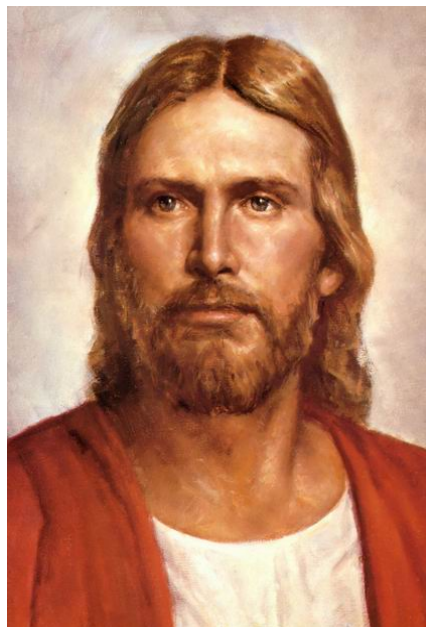
A home-grown Utah boy and BYU student named Philo T. Farnsworth invented television. Verify his patent if you will. You will probably want to stop making TV appearances and giving out videos.

Dr. Harvey Fletcher, former Dean of Engineering Sciences at BYU and head of Bell Labs, invented many things including the hearing aid and stereophonic sound. I suspect that most of your listeners hear you via this Mormon invention so perhaps you will want to move to the AM dial.

Don't compromise on these things, Bob! In fact, you had better do some research as Mormons, who are known as industrious people, are the source of many products you use every day. Do you feel a little silly? Now you know why many Christians can't take you seriously.

By the way, there are fourteen Mormon members of the 104th congress—all of whom support Christian concerns. That must be frustrating to you.

P.S. This picture, completed by Mormon artist Del Parson in 1983, is titled, "The Lord Jesus Christ." Of course, as you are wont to point out, this would be the "other Jesus" that Mormons believe in.



The BOB LARSON Letters
LETTER 4

From: Victor Poulsen
To: Bob Larson
Sent: June 15, 2005
Subject: GeneralInformation

Bob,

Sorry to see that "Talk Back" died; I miss your rantings and ravings. And speaking of misinformation, I've attached a daguerreotype of the "fat and ugly" founding prophet of the Mormon church. It, of course, completely matches his death mask (also attached) and is recognizable by ANY Mormon as their beloved prophet.

As for Hugh Nibley, why would any thinking individual accept, at face value, the word of one family member at the expense of all others? (See <http://www.hughnibleydefense.com/>). In case you haven't noticed, most people view "recovered memories" with suspicion (at best). "Google" the topic and you'll see what I mean. Lasting success will elude you so long as you continue to insult the intelligence of your audience; they are too informed with the advent of Internet.

Victor Poulsen
Staff Engineer
Aerospace Industry

P.S. This message is not intended for you Bob; you know what you're doing. It is intended for that one staff member who will read it and who may not understand why "Talk Back" failed.

