



# The Shadow of the Cathedral: On a Systematic Exposition of Mormon Theology

by Jacob Baker

## INTRODUCTION

One recent topic in Mormon studies that has generated a fair amount of interest and debate is the place of theology in Latter-day Saint scholarly discourse. Specifically, the question has reemerged as to whether Mormons should or can “do theology.” In fact, I have sometimes heard Mormons say that they are “allergic” to theology. This topic is relevant because it can be influential with regard to both internal and external discourse. It can influence internal discourse by both describing and prescribing what and how we believe as believers. It can influence external discourse by shaping the way that we furnish our beliefs to outsiders.

Mormons sometimes suffer (no differently from insiders of other faiths) from the form of cognitive dissonance known as the “fallacy of the native exegete.”<sup>1</sup> This means that, as insiders, our exegeses of our religion, our theologies, our scriptures, etc., are necessarily informed by our experiences *qua* insiders. While we understand ourselves, our experiences, etc., in ways that could not be noticed or articulated by those outside the community, we are inherently limited by this position. Thus, it is no simple thing to adequately and sufficiently describe our point of view, our religion, or a particular theology to an outsider due to the limitations of being a “native.” Of course, the outsider, in seeking either to understand or describe Mormonism,

suffers from what we could perhaps call the “fallacy of the foreign exegete.” The outsider is limited by her position as well. However, unlike the native exegete, the foreigner has no burden to describe or understand Mormonism. That burden falls squarely on the shoulders of Mormons themselves, and to the extent there is miscommunication between the native and the foreigner, it will always be the native who will be most interested in repairing the interpretive breach, inasmuch as the native has the most to lose by being misunderstood. One goal of this paper is to address this breach and suggest a possible way forward.

The issues swirling around the question of theology in Mormonism, though relatively recent, are nevertheless complex. It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a detailed analysis of this complexity, though I will refer to some of the relevant literature. Instead, I wish to focus on what I consider to be the heart of many Mormon thinkers’ disdain for theology, which is an approach to theology that is systematic in nature. Among those Mormon scholars who are aware of the variety of competing theologies through which religious ideas can be expressed, this is the one method of theology that is considered most problematic, even dangerous in Mormonism. Why is this? What are the potential consequences of presenting Mormon thought systematically? In this paper I will consider what it means for a theology to be systematic, outlining why some Mormon thinkers consider this approach to Mormon theology to be both practically and ethically inappropriate. I will then turn to defenses of systematic theology utilizing the philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead and Friedrich Schleiermacher to present the idea of an “open system.” An open system retains the basic infrastructure of a systematized exposition of theology but is structured to allow creative novelty to continually reshape and redefine the system. Hence, the system is as much eventive as it is systematic. Finally, I will compare open systems that allow for novelty with the Mormon idea of continuing revelation, which allows for the divine will to directly inform and guide Mormon thought and practice.

I should clarify at this point what this paper is and is not. First, this paper is not an attempt to actually *construct* a Mormon systematic theology. Rather, it is an attempt to show how this may be possible. But perhaps I should use stronger language here. After all, LDS systematic theologies have been formulated in the past and continue to be promulgated today. Thus, I wish to show that not only are systematic expositions of LDS thought possible, but that in certain circumstances they are even *desirable*. Second, I will not defend the view that a systematic approach Mormon theology is the best method (as noted above).<sup>2</sup> I do not know what it means to say that there is a “best” (or

most appropriate) method or model for expressing Mormon theology. When we select one method as exclusively better than any others we run the risk of missing important ways of seeing and articulating Mormon thought. Perhaps an illustration will more clearly explain what I mean.

The Rouen Cathedral, a High Gothic cathedral in Rouen, France, has been the muse of many well-known artists, among them Roy Lichtenstein, Gustave Flaubert, and the famous Impressionist painter Claude Monet. Monet produced 28 paintings of one side of the Cathedral, painted at different times of the day. Taken together, Monet's paintings of the Cathedral allow for a more or less complete picture of one side of the Cathedral.

In 1972 distinguished professors of law Guido Calabresi and Douglas Malamed authored a landmark legal publication on property rights entitled, "Property Rules, Liability Rules, and Inalienability: One View of the Cathedral." For our present purposes the content of this article is irrelevant. What I will point to is the authors' appropriation of Monet's paintings of the Cathedral in order to demonstrate that their thesis is only "one view of the Cathedral," one way of viewing or understanding an area of the law that ultimately requires multiple viewings under a variety of circumstances in order to understand it fully. Calabresi and Malamed note that

Framework or model building has two shortcomings. The first is that models can be mistaken for the total view of phenomena, like legal relationships, which are too complex to be painted in any one picture. The second is that models generate boxes into which one then feels compelled to force situations which do not truly fit... This approach affords only one view of the Cathedral.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps there are few that would assert that Mormon theology *must* be articulated and expounded according to one and only one particular method or model. However, it would equally be unwise and unnecessary to insist that one particular method, system, or model is always, under every conceivable circumstance, inappropriate or impossible. Eschewing certain methods of articulating Mormon theology affords only one view of the "theological cathedral," where multiple views are necessary to paint a more accurate picture of what Mormon theology is or could be. This paper is an attempt to lay some groundwork for one such view of the LDS theological cathedral that many have deemed inappropriate and even dangerous to Mormonism.

## SYSTEMS AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGIES

The Western world in general has long had a complex love/hate relationship with the idea of system. Since Plato, system has been the “goal of Western intellectual striving”<sup>4</sup> which has long felt compelled to categorize and classify reality. The goal of system is to locate particularities within a conceptualized whole that is greater than their sum.<sup>5</sup> In Western systems in particular, the search for, and the articulation of, the Absolute is a constitutive feature of system. Among Idealists and the Romantics, this search for the Absolute within system served to unite (Idealism) or to distinguish between (Romanticism) philosophical and theological systems.

In theological systems, the God-world relationship is combined with the individual to form the foundational triad of western theology. Christine Helmer has argued that among Western theologians and philosophers, the individual has held a privileged, unique place in the world and in the divine cosmology. The integrated locus of matter and spirit coincide in the individual, and therefore reality demands to be known and loved by individuals who understand themselves to be historically constituted, thereby allowing the individual an awareness of particular questions centering on the self/God/world relationship. Helmer asserts that these onto-anthropological features of the human individual drive the individual towards system and categorization in an attempt to coherently integrate reason and experience.<sup>6</sup>

Not all, however, have been so taken with the utilization of system for understanding reality. Opponents such as Schlegel and the early Schleiermacher resisted the notion that reason could comprehend reality in its totality, “on the ground that finite reason was not capable of transcending its boundaries in order to comprehend its ground.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it is difficult to see how “systemic prettiness” can account for the messiness of life and nature in the face of the jagged rawness of suffering and the infinite movement and evolution of language. Thus, it seems that the apparent rational homeostasis of system-building has a difficult time accounting for the ebb and flow of living experience.

Concerning systematic theology, many Christian theologians have seen both its dangers and benefits. For example, Roger Haight writes that his book, *Jesus: Symbol of God*, is a work of systematic theology that does not subject his theological considerations to the finalizing totality of a system: “The systematic character of this work is defined, first, by a consistent perspective and method. . . . Second, the work is systematic also because it deals with a certain range of topics that are deemed relatively adequate

to constitute a broad treatment of the subject matter. . . . But these same two indicators [consistency and breadth] underline the severe limitations of this and any other systematic work. There are other legitimate perspectives and methods in Christian theology and Christology that will yield other genuine insights.”<sup>8</sup> Haight points to what he sees as a benefit of systematic theology – presenting concepts in a way that is consistent and broad, and hence more understandable – but also as severely limiting inasmuch as one might ignore other ways of doing theology.<sup>9</sup> As Julia Lamm observes, any systematic theology would need to be both consistent and broad. However, these are necessary, not sufficient criteria for a systematic theology. Systematic theologians often exhibit the fallacious tendency to consider coherency, logical applicability, etc. as both necessary and sufficient criteria.<sup>10</sup> The problem is that theology is packaged as adequate and complete, and thus “closed” to other possibilities. A theological system may even begin as “open;” but upon gathering the “necessary” components for her system, the theologian may in essence declare that no more gathering is required.<sup>11</sup>

## THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY IN MORMONISM AND THE DISTRUST OF SYSTEM

Mormon scholars have been among those dissatisfied with the failings and shortcomings of system as an accurate way of understanding Mormon theology. James E. Faulconer (professor of Philosophy at Brigham Young University) has been among the most outspoken and articulate proponents of this view. Faulconer has argued that, far from embracing any sort of theology as traditionally construed, Mormonism is in fact “atheological.” He describes atheology as follows: “We are ‘a-theological’ – which means that we are without a church-sanctioned, church-approved, or even church-encouraged systematic theology – and that is as it should be because systematic theology is dangerous.”<sup>12</sup> Faulconer does not mean that Mormonism is utterly devoid of theology; Mormons engage in theological discourse just as any other group associated in any way with Christianity. Faulconer is instead attempting to argue that Mormons do theology differently, view it differently than other Christian religions traditionally have done. However, this is also why the term “atheology,” although somewhat pithy and memorable, does not accurately describe what goes on in Mormonism when Mormons talk about their religion. It carries negative connotations inasmuch as foreigners might sense that, as Martin Marty puts it, “Mormons note and *sometimes even brag* that they do not have a theology, nor do they ‘do’ theology.”<sup>13</sup> What Faulconer is actually

arguing against, as I will detail shortly and he clearly explains, is a systematic approach to Mormon theology, not that Mormons do not make theological statements.<sup>14</sup> Faulconer defines systematic theology as one that “begins with belief and uses the methods of rational philosophy to give support to that belief.”<sup>15</sup> This interpretation is not intended to be exhaustive; much more could easily be said in defining systematic theology. But Faulconer’s definition is sufficient to lay the groundwork for his suspicion and distaste for utilizing systematic theology to express how Mormons articulate and reflect upon their faith.

## FAULCONER’S ARGUMENTS AGAINST A MORMON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY; HUFF’S POLYSYSTEMATICS AS RESPONSE

The core of Faulconer’s opposition to a Mormon systematic theology can be summed up under three sub-headings: Prophets, Practice, and Scripture. I will briefly elaborate upon each of these in order to more clearly present his overall argument against system.

### **I. Prophets.**

One non-negotiable theological concept in Mormonism is the idea of continuing revelation through living prophets, who are said to guide the Church in accordance with God’s will. According to Faulconer, this idea is inconsistent with having a well-developed systematic theology. Why? As LDS general authority Spencer J. Condie has written, “Change is an inevitable consequence of continuous revelation.”<sup>16</sup> For Faulconer, a rational system “gives the appearance of being complete,”<sup>17</sup> which is at odds with the change that inevitably accompanies *continuing* revelation.

### **II. Practice.**

For Latter-day Saints, there is a much greater emphasis on practice than on the precise explication of what Mormons believe. Beliefs are said to gain their significance through practice and ritual. Construction of a systematic theology – especially one that is officially sanctioned and accepted--would relegate the vital importance of religious practice as effectuated in Mormonism.

### **III. Scriptures.**

Faulconer’s approach precludes rational explanation as fundamental to scriptural theology.<sup>18</sup> Scripture (which is decidedly unsystematic) calls us to

a life *in* faith rather than an assent to a set of rational propositions *about* faith.<sup>19</sup>

Despite his misgivings with systematic theology, Faulconer acknowledges that some Mormons, both historically and currently, have attempted to systematize Mormon thought. In fact, he even agrees in principle that systematic theology has a legitimate place in Mormon thought: “systematic theology has an important place in apologetics as well as in critical theology, for it explains our beliefs to others and helps us understand the limits of our claims about God.”<sup>20</sup> Why then is systematic theology so dangerous? Because a focus on belief over practice runs the risk that our theology will become a “species of idolatry” inasmuch as we become unaware or ignore the reasons we do theology in the first place.<sup>21</sup> Is it the case that our theologizing becomes a mere intellectual exercise to satisfy our curiosity or vanity? Or do we engage in theology against the apocalyptic shadow of the real return of God to the earth? For Faulconer, the danger in systematic theology is manifest in its effects upon our character and our intentions, not necessarily in its methodology *per se*.

Nevertheless, Faulconer singles out systematic theology as being particularly susceptible to this shortcoming of what we might call “theoretical posturing.” It cannot capture the “essence” of faith; its focus on propositions precludes such an accomplishment. Instead, one “becomes competent in the various ways in which words and actions are tied together in the various practices of religious adherents.”<sup>22</sup> This alternative, and rather unsystematic approach to Mormon thought presumably comes closer to describing religious practice and allows room for a plausible explanation of continuing revelation and a hermeneutical integration of scripture into religious life.

Still, Faulconer has conceded that systematic theology may be useful in some circumstances, particularly those that require a coherent exposition of Mormon beliefs to outsiders. But is this concession consistent with his assertion that systematic theology is ultimately dangerous and not up to the task of describing Mormon doctrine? This is a tension that cannot be ignored.

But first, some discussion of the middle ground is in order. Faulconer points out that contemporary Mormon philosophers David Paulsen and Blake Ostler engage in just the systematization of Mormon thought that he has described, with “interesting and well-respected results.”<sup>23</sup> However, these two thinkers have made little comment concerning their method in articulating theology, nor have they so much as admitted (at least to my knowledge) that

the type of theology they do is systematic. Nevertheless, Benjamin Huff has recently defended systematic theology as a way of engaging and understanding Mormon thought. He argues that not only is theology incapable of subverting the place of revelation in Mormon theology, but that it never even aims to do so in the first place.<sup>24</sup> With notable qualifications, Huff recognizes the importance of a systematic approach to theology.

Huff first notes that a systematic approach to theology can play an appropriate role in Mormonism, but only “within a larger, broadly hermeneutic process.”<sup>25</sup> Recognizing the appeal and efficaciousness of a more narrative, practice-centric approach to Mormon thought, he nevertheless acknowledges that “as humans we inevitably understand these [narratives and practices] through rational concepts. That some of these concepts defy explicit definition and hence require practical judgment or *phronesis* to be properly applied does not prevent their being systematically related.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Huff advocates what he calls a “polysystematic” approach to theology. A “monosystematic” approach--the effort to contain all knowledge within one comprehensive system--is rejected in favor of an approach that envisions the construction of a system of thought with the caveat that it will eventually be obsolete. When this occurs, another more adequate system is constructed to take its place, with the same caveat, and so on. The polysystematic approach recognizes human fallibility; while it accepts continuing divine revelation, how it interprets and applies revelation is subject to rationality, which is often error-prone; hence, the importance of a system to aid us in our interpretation. Huff makes this clear: “If one set of concepts is inadequate, then we should work toward a better set. The new set may also be inadequate, yet still be an improvement. To refuse to think through one’s understanding systematically at all, I suggest, is to risk simply consigning oneself to confusion.”<sup>27</sup>

While I agree with Huff’s general conclusions, I would shift the burden of understanding to our exposition of a systematic understanding of Mormon theology to an outsider; that is, I think his observations and conclusions apply more directly to theological communication among natives and outsiders, rather than intra-theological discourse among natives. This is because I believe that a narrative or even declarative method of theologizing amongst Mormons themselves has been successful in communicating what Mormons have wanted to say to one another about their doctrines and beliefs.<sup>28</sup> Huff’s notion of “polysystematic” theology is in fact an excellent springboard to a conceptualization of system that does not simply try to account for human interpretive error, but additionally *expects* unanticipated creative novelty as a necessary component of its system. I will now turn to the notion of an

“open system” and its applicability to a possible Mormon systematic theology that can potentially escape the “danger” Faulconer observes in systematic theologies.

## OPEN SYSTEMS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR A MORMON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Christine Helmer writes that “the fitting of a system to reality is a process that is never definitively closed.”<sup>29</sup> This is because reality is ever-changing, unfixed, and messy. Historically, system-builders have not realized this fact. Thus, as one system is abandoned because it could not accommodate itself to reality, another one would simply be built to take its place. But this process has come to be seen by many philosophers and theologians as self-defeating. Of what use is a system that must of necessity face annihilation? Or are we so vain that with the construction of each system we say once again, “this time it’s foolproof; this time it will work?” Consequently, some thinkers have sought for a redefinition of system, a more humble admission that reality cannot be fully encapsulated and contained. They have “posed the question of system’s openness to experiential polyvalence.”<sup>30</sup> But this question is not framed as a causal result of the recognition that human-constructed systems are inevitably prone to error; rather, the question is framed as a result of the recognition of the dynamic novelty displayed in nature and human beings. System was still necessary in order to coherently understand a world staggering in its complexity and immensity. But a reframing or recasting of system was vital in order to account for the rather “unsystematic” nature of experience. In order to illustrate further this integration of systemic coherency and dynamic novelty, I will briefly elucidate the thought systems of two thinkers who attempted to construct just such an open system: Friedrich Schleiermacher and Alfred North Whitehead.

## EARLY AND LATER SCHLEIERMACHER: FOR AND AGAINST SYSTEM

In his early writings Schleiermacher was utterly opposed to a systematic expression of religion or theology. He wrote, “I continue to remain aloof from craving a system, a system which would provide me with definitive answers to all the questions which can be posed.”<sup>31</sup> Jack Verheyden argues that Schleiermacher’s rejection of system is a major theme in his seminal work, *On Religion*. Schleiermacher further elaborates: “Religion by its whole

nature is just as far removed from all that is systematic as philosophy is by its very nature inclined toward it.”<sup>32</sup> Verheyden observes that Schleiermacher gives four reasons for rejecting systems: 1) Religious life is too immediate as it is lived out to be grasped by a system, which requires distance to be constructed; 2) A system naturally reaches to grasp the universal, thereby ignoring the individual; 3) System strangles that which is new and different, forcing everything to fit its mold; 4) Schleiermacher rejects the transcendental principle that deduces reality from an intellectual principle.<sup>33</sup>

The later Schleiermacher, however, lost his disinclination toward systems. In 1830 Schleiermacher wrote *The Christian Faith*, a mostly systematic presentation of Christian doctrine. The individual became critically important in Schleiermacher’s thought with this and subsequent writings, and Schleiermacher found it useful to elaborate his doctrine of the individual by way of a system. In fact, he sought to separately create both philosophical and theological systems on the basis of what he considered to be distinct fields of study. But his systems were uniquely “open” in the ways in which I am attempting to explicate open systems. Concerning the individual, knowledge of the individual presupposes structures of identity for a correspondence between the system of thought and the system of the totality of reality. Though he eventually embraced system as an effective means of understanding and relating Christian doctrines to one another, Schleiermacher’s later works aim at a systematic presentation of doctrine that remains open to both the history of a lived religion and the historical location of any theological articulation. System would not trump the lived experience of religion; it could only serve to help explain it at a particular time and location. This point is somewhat similar to one elucidated by Reformed Evangelical theologian and philosopher Stephen T. Davis at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology: “I don’t see why the words of Mormon theologians or even official church-sanctioned theological statements cannot be indexed to a certain time. The point could be made or implicitly understood that any such statement is subject to revision by later revelation or authoritative interpretation.”<sup>34</sup>

## WHITEHEAD AND EVENT-BASED SYSTEMS

Where the openness of Schleiermacher’s system was often more implicit than explicit, there is no ambiguity present in A.N. Whitehead’s conception of an open system. According to Process theologian Roland Faber, Whitehead strove to construct a system while simultaneously understanding

the limited value of systematization. Whitehead affirmed systematization as an organic process that, at the same time, confirms and deconstructs system.<sup>35</sup> His concept of system is that of interpretation that essentially includes infinite revision.

Whitehead expressed clearly in his writings what he saw as the limitations of system: “One can never produce that final adjustment of well-defined generalities which constitute a complete metaphysics.”<sup>36</sup> Whitehead saw reality as the constant process of becoming, and such “becoming reality” cannot be analyzed into a coherent system; “it must be understood as a living whole beyond structure, form, and logic; its is an organism.”<sup>37</sup> Faber further notes that “the aim of system [in Whitehead’s thought] is process itself that, as life, includes structure.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, Whitehead’s system has traditionally been understood as self-creative event: the system’s event contains structures to protect the process from oppression of “despotizing unity.”<sup>39</sup>

Faber points to the dual tendencies in Western philosophy between system’s “self-confirmation,” based on systematic criteria of reason, and its “self-relativization,” based on reality’s subversion of system by its constant circumvention of rational comprehension.<sup>40</sup> Whitehead seeks a balance between the desire for system and the drive to keep system open to process, flux, change, and novelty. Thus, the need to discard “failed” systems and start again is precluded in Whitehead’s thought by the observation that system is nothing more than a reservoir of potential developments, that, in its abstraction from experience, cannot and does not seek to describe the whole of reality, but recognizes the constant ebb and flow of reality.

Theologian Marjorie Suchocki describes process as “system without certainty.” A system must of necessity be open and figured away from any sort of dogmatic finality for the simple reason that it is impossible to incorporate clearly all that we experience. A closed system is, by virtue of its closedness, inadequate. The more open system is, the more adequate it becomes, but its adequacy is entirely provisional; the system can never be complete.<sup>41</sup>

The longing for permanence in system-building has traditionally been considered at odds with openness. For Whitehead, however, this situation shows the importance of novelty. Novelty (or creativity) is not a synonym for chaos; rather, the multiple and the one flow into one another in creative process, mutually enhancing both unity and multiplicity. Thus, Whitehead’s system satisfies the longing for permanence and the longing for novelty.

## TOWARDS A MORMON OPEN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

The integration of open systematic thought into a systematic exposition of Mormon theology is not a smooth one-to-one correspondence. Primarily, this is because the tasks of Whitehead and Schleiermacher in constructing their systems are vastly different from the tasks of theology in Mormonism. By this I mean that where Mormons will be concerned with preserving the notion of continuing personal and prophetic revelation and elucidating religious practices, Whitehead was concerned with building a system that met the criteria of coherency and took into account the infinite complexity of the world. Schleiermacher, in contrast to both Mormonism and Whitehead, sought a balance between a clear, interrelated articulation of Christian doctrines in light of religious history and lived religious experience.

Nevertheless, all three modes of thought display a concern with openness and novelty, and this is the component that relates and connects them to one another. In order to construct a Mormon systematic theology in which continuing revelation is paramount, they will have to appropriate open systematic theologies in unique ways. One immediate concern will be how to address the dangers that James Faulconer sees with systematic theology in general. Can a novel reconstruction of systematic theology escape these dangers? On my account, the concern with one's inability to accommodate the drastic change of new revelation is mitigated by the very nature of event-based open systems wherein the structuring principle is the anticipation of change. But can such theologies address Faulconer's other main concern, namely that theologians are so concerned with coherency and precision that theology is done in ignorance or even open disdain for the Apocalypse? My answer is a tentative yes, they can address this concern. I answer in the affirmative because the very notion of a system subject to expected radical changes affirms a certain inherent humility concerning the ability of human beings to understand and predict their world. The world is complex and in constant flux and the divine will can be manifest at any time and in multiple forms. In the face of such uncertainty, humility and the desire to learn seem to be the appropriate responses.<sup>42</sup> The answer is tentative because, in the open systems discussed above, there is still an inordinate concern with coherency, adequacy, and consistency. Thus, the danger still exists with being overly "taken" with constructing a system based on these prerequisites while de-emphasizing the space for creativity, novelty, revelation. Any Mormon appropriation of open systems would need to be cognizant of these cautionary boundaries.

Once again, my argument has not been to defend open systematic theology as the primary way of doing Mormon theology. Nor, in advocating that open systematic theology can and should in certain circumstances be done, am I saying that the Church or Mormons generally should adopt, even provisionally, this approach. However, I do believe that systematic theology, at least in regard to “first contact” with outsiders is possibly the best way to assist them in understanding Mormon thought. Perhaps later, after sustained dialogue, Mormons could express themselves in less systematic ways that are more meaningful and expressive of their faith. But, as Paul Owen puts it, “Both Latter-day Saints and Classical Christians ought to maintain the factuality of religious knowledge, *and the potential for substantive theological dialogue based upon objective points of reference.*”<sup>43</sup> A systematic presentation of Mormon theology, in my opinion, seems to be the most efficacious way of accomplishing this worthy goal, but, as I have attempted to show, Mormons can engage in a systematic presentation of their beliefs that does justice to the important Mormon emphasis on continuing revelation, while avoiding the pitfalls of closed systematic theologies. Consequently, we may find ways to consider and concretize our beliefs, as Professor Faulconer eloquently put it, in the shadow of the apocalypse, as well as in the shadow of the Cathedral.

*Jacob Baker is...*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I borrow this phrase from a former classmate at Claremont Graduate University, Roy Whittaker, who used the term in a class on “Mormonism and Christian Theology.”

<sup>2</sup> Along with certain other Mormon scholars I have much sympathy, for example, for narrative theology being an especially appropriate method for articulating Mormon theology.

<sup>3</sup> Guido Calabresi and A. Douglas Malamed, “Property Rules, Liability Rules, and Inalienability: One View of the Cathedral,” 85 *Harvard Law Review*, 1128 (1972).

<sup>4</sup> Christine Helmer, “Introduction,” in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Haight’s criticism of systematic theology is weak and trivial, inasmuch as too intense advocacy of any method of approaching theology could be cause for ignoring other theologies. It is not a criticism of the methodology of systematic

theology itself, but rather of all theological methodologies.

<sup>10</sup> Julia A. Lamm, “The Force of Dialogue and the Dialogue of Forces: Resources for Open Theological Systems,” in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 238.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 15, 37, 57, 170, 228; where Tracy discusses several such components such as “criteria of relative adequacy,” “motif-research,” “the history of religion and culture,” as necessary components, among others, for a systematic theology.

<sup>12</sup> James E. Faulconer, “Rethinking Theology: The Shadow of the Apocalypse,” in *The FARMS Review of Books* 19/1 (2007): 179. .

<sup>13</sup> Martin E. Marty, “Foreward,” in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, ed. Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), vii, emphasis mine.

<sup>14</sup> Consequently, though it hasn’t attracted a huge following outside Mormon scholarly circles, I think the term should be jettisoned from LDS theological discourse.

<sup>15</sup> James E. Faulconer, “Why a Mormon Won’t Drink Coffee But Might Have a Coke: The Atheological Character of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Element* 2.2 (Fall 2006), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Spencer J. Condie, *In Perfect Balance* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993), 106; quoted in James E. Faulconer, “Response to Professor Tracy,” in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, ed. Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 2007), 474.

<sup>17</sup> Faulconer, “Rethinking Theology,” 179.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>22</sup> Brian D. Birch, “Theological Method and the Question of Truth: A Postliberal Approach to Mormon Doctrine and Practice,” in *Discourses in Mormon Theology: Philosophical and Theological Possibilities*, ed. James McLachlan and Loyd Ericson (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 111.

<sup>23</sup> Faulconer, “Rethinking Theology,” 182. See also, *idem*, “Response to Professor Tracy,” 472.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Huff, “Theology in the Light of Continuing Revelation,” in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, ed. Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen (Macon, GA: Mercer UP, 2007), 478.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 485.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>28</sup> However, this is not to say that even here there has not been a good deal of confusion that a more systematic approach may help to alleviate.

<sup>29</sup> Helmer, "Introduction," 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Eternal Covenant: Schleiermacher's Experiment in Cultural Theology*, trans. Gerhard Spiegler (NY: Harper, 1967), 39; quoted in Jack C. Verheyden, "Mapping the Land of Beginning Again," in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 19.

<sup>32</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, ed. and trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>33</sup> Verheyden, "Mapping the Land," 21.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen T. Davis, "Philosophical Theology for Mormons: Some Suggestions From an Outsider," paper presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology, 16. Forthcoming in *Element*.

<sup>35</sup> Roland Faber, "Whitehead at Infinite Speed: Deconstructing System as Event," in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 47.

<sup>36</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 145.

<sup>37</sup> Faber, "Whitehead at Infinite Speed," 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>40</sup> See Helmer, "Introduction," 11.

<sup>41</sup> Marjorie Suchocki, "System without Certainty," in *Schleiermacher and Whitehead: Open Systems in Dialogue*, ed. Christine Helmer (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 129.

<sup>42</sup> Of course, many Mormons might cringe at my attempt to find a place for "uncertainty" in Mormon theology. However, an honest assessment of what we do and do not know in Mormonism must conclude that, in spite of our firm convictions (and in many cases because of them) there is much of which to be uncertain in Mormon theology.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Owen, "Can Mormon Theology Be Systematic?" Paper delivered at Yale University Divinity School conference, "God, Humanity, and Revelation: Perspectives from Mormon Philosophy and History," March 29, 2003. Electronic copy in my possession, quoted with permission from author.

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