

## LETTERS

### ON THE SHOULDERS OF *NEW PERSPECTIVES*

*Joseph B. Romney—Department of Religious Education*

Just as BYU-Idaho must look to its heritage from Ricks College in order for it to best fulfill its new calling, so must *Perspective* look to its heritage from *New Perspectives* in order for it to best fulfill its new calling.

BYU-Idaho is not springing out of potato fields as it lays its foundations. It looks to the heritage, often conveniently characterized The Spirit of Ricks, in order to maintain those qualities that justify confidence that it can properly take the next step in its development. In the process, the inherited qualities are honed to the requirements of the new calling. Likewise, *Perspective* is not springing out of a barren literary field. It builds on the heritage that began twenty-seven years ago with volume 1, number 1 of *New Perspectives*. It will now hone qualities developed during that time to meet the requirements of its new calling.

Begun in November of 1973 with four articles on four pages, *New Perspectives* served the campus community and began an outreach to schools and individuals with twice yearly issues through the winter semester, 2000. This foundation publication which has provided the opportunity of a published voice for on-campus faculty and staff, some visitors to the campus including General Authorities, and others interested in Ricks College was initiated by editors Dean Sorensen and David Allen, who were followed by Phillip Harmon, Dorla R. Jenkins, Ralph L. McBride, David L. Crowder, John D. Nielson, Larry G. Thompson, and Eugene Thompson.

These editors, their assistants and associates, contributors, and institutional supporters of *New Perspectives* have provided the shoulders upon which the very commendable *Perspective* now stands. This new *Perspective* shows promise of standing tall.



### AN OPEN INVITATION

*Michael Farnworth—Department of Family Science*

Reading Robert Millet's *BYU as a Covenant Community*, I was struck anew by our attempt to play both sides of the street. We claim we are not of the world while we clamor for the world's approval and recognition. We say we are not of the world even as we embrace mechanistic-materialistic paradigms of reality. We make a point of dichotomizing ourselves against

the world but we have absorbed quantities of its thinking, values and views. Reading the article awakened an old issue for me.

My question revolves around our understanding of truth and its nature. If our purpose as an institution of higher learning, with strong religious ties, is to seek after the truth, then our definition of truth becomes a critical issue relative to our mission.

I have thought about this question for years, trying unsuccessfully to resolve it. As I explore the nature of truth, it is difficult to escape existing cultural paradigms of it. The notion that facts, knowledge, ideas, and information (mathematical, philosophical, religious, historical, scientific, engineering, medical, scriptural, or otherwise) are the essence of truth runs strong and deep in western industrialized society. I cannot escape the uncomfortable feeling that truth is more than knowledge about things. I keep feeling that I am missing an element, blinded to the potential of our theology.

In a nutshell here is my quandary. I have heard and read myriad times that the Mormon definition of truth is “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were and as they are to come” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 93:24). This definition fits so well the mechanistic truth of the scientific method that it disturbs me. “Things” sounds materialistic, “knowledge” sounds like facts and figures, and together they match the materialist paradigm of truth, based upon Cartesian and Newtonian philosophies, systems of secular truth from the 17th and 18th centuries. That said, what if there is more to it and we are stopping short, seduced by our cultural paradigm and failing to develop understanding of revealed truth? What if truth is another order of reality? The scriptures invite a different comprehension than that served up by secular culture.

Here is a little more context of our Mormon definition of truth:

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth; And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning. The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth...All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it...

The first snippet I quoted above was not only reduced from its chapter, but from its sentence! Have we done well by isolating a bit of a sentence that happens to match a cultural paradigm? Have we missed some profound doctrine?

This section, on the nature of truth, intelligence, spirit, glory, light and existence, seems to teach about relationships, not just things. Relationships are alive and constantly in flux. Our relationship with the Truth (Christ)

is central to our mortal experience, and our relationships with each other are just as central, being the second great commandment.

Wouldn't it be sad if we academics spent our lives trampling the poor, the sinners, the children, the sick (spirits of truth) in pursuit of mechanistic truth, ignoring the Truth (Christ), discovering too late our error? *Doctrine and Covenants* 93 suggests that truth is grounded in relationships, not things.

Could you offer me insight on the following:

1. A larger definition of truth from *Doctrine and Covenants* 93.
2. The nature of truth in relation to Christ and others. What do the scriptures teach of truth when our start point is the fact of Christ at the center?
3. What do scriptural teachings on truth imply about Cartesian/Newtonian thinking? I am not dismissing this category of truth but asking if its paradigms and metaphors have blinded us to spiritual truths.



WINNING: A RESPONSE TO LORI WOODLAND'S "LADY VIKING BASKETBALL"  
*Karl Edwards—Learning Assistance Labs*

I have long admired the esteem that the Lady Vikings have for their basketball coach. I have had several of the players in my classes, and without exception they indicate that they are spiritually stronger for their association with the team. In her article last semester, Lori Woodland says, "I want to win games and my players know it; however, they also know...I will not sacrifice [my] priorities to win." Her priorities include building spiritually and academically stronger women.

Winning is inherent to competition. The good thing about Sister Woodland's determination to win is that it is not her first priority. But the issue of winning raises a concern with the new athletic program at BYU-Idaho. First, what is winning? Is the only winner the one who has the most points at the end of the contest? Second, what will our teams be like if they are left without the modeling and molding that comes from coaches, like Lori, who understand that their role is to build character first?

I am reminded of a ward team that, after some years of development, was finally on the brink of winning the stake championship. Everyone knew that this ward would have the winning team that year. Only the strongest players remained on the team, without the limitation of weaker boys and the necessity of including them in the games. Then

a handicapped young man moved into the ward and wanted to play basketball. He could barely dribble with two hands. It was clear that if he played, the team would never win the championship. But after considerable teaching, coaching, and discussion, the young man was included and allowed to play as much as any other member of the team. The boys didn't win the stake championship. They lost more games than they won. But they loved this handicapped young man, and he loved them. Were they losers? I suggest that what they won was much more important than points on a scoreboard.

Church athletic competitions have often been a source of embarrassment as far as spiritual growth is concerned, not to mention social behavior. Any competition has the potential to destroy as much as it builds, and athletic competition left to itself has the potential to mimic the world. If we are to have team competitions at BYU-Idaho, how will the Woodland priorities be promoted? Is the experience going to build character or build ego? I hope that any who subscribe to the Lombardi value: "Winning isn't everything, its the only thing," will come to understand what winning really means.

