A Sophic and a Mantic People

H. Curtis Wright

In the early sixties the manuscripts for what are now the last two chapters of Hugh Nibley's *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*[1] came into my possession. In them Nibley describes the ancient conflict between Western naturalism and Eastern supernaturalism, a conflict which has given rise to modern civilization with its polluted atmosphere of secular righteousness and split-level churches and which pits the academic religion of culture against the prophetic culture of revealed religion. This paper is a response to those chapters.

The fundamental ambivalence of Western civilization consists of a permanent conflict of spiritualities derived from the human condition itself. The assumptions underlying this conflict have created *the mantic world view of vertical supernaturalism,* a dualistic metaphysic that includes not only the natural order, but also another world order which transcends it, and *the sophic world view of horizontal naturalism,* a monistic metaphysic that confines all realities to the natural order. The antithetical spiritualities implicit in these disparate perspectives became explicit at the dawn of human existence, when our first parents, following their expulsion from Eden, taught the revealed word of God to their children, only to face formidable opposition when "Satan came among them, saying: . . . Believe it not; and they believed it not."[2] Thus, unbelief arose as a counter to faith in anything that is not experienced naturally, for Adam witnessed in his immediate family the decisive split between skepticism and belief which has since polarized the human race. The issue exercising unbelievers, therefore, has always been their refusal to accept any kind of information revealed by God to the faithful. This issue is clearly seen in the contrast between the mantic Abel and the sophic Cain, who were born after the gospel and antigospel traditions were both in place. Thus, "Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord" as a man

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of faith, but Cain was a skeptic who "rejected the greater counsel which was had from God" and "hearkened not [to the words of the Lord], saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?"[3] When the Lord subsequently rejected Cain's sacrifice, which was prompted not by the revealed spirit of faith, but by the natural spirit of unbelief, "Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother," nor to anyone else "who walked in holiness before the Lord," and he was "shut out from the presence of the Lord"—not because the Lord rejected him, but because he rejected the Lord.[4]

The sophic and mantic spiritualities are thoroughly confused in modern life, but they are regarded as ontologically distinct and logically separate by all of the ancient and most of the modern prophets. The saints of God are the holy ones (*hoi hagioi*), people who are sanctified by a revealed spirituality because they live by the supernatural gift of faith, whereas the natural man, who lives solely by reason and the senses, is any person whose spirituality is naturalistic. The Greek text of 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 and its Latin translation are explicit as to these two kinds of spirituality. Since *psychikos anthropos* (*animalis homo*) refers to the spiritual psyche of a human being and not to the physical body, the "natural man" constitutes the secular version of the spiritual man, which Paul compares to the *pneumatikos* [*anthropos*] (*spiritualis* [*homo*])—the Christian version of the spiritual man whose spirit (*pneuma, spiritus*) descends from above as a charismatic gift. The natural man is thus a spiritual man, the human being as *psyche* (*anima*), not as *soma* (*corpus*). We confirm this distinction every day by discussing sophic manifestations of the human "spirit" in the liberal arts and elsewhere without referring in any way at all to the mantic spirit of revealed religion. A "full" translation of this text which incorporates forgotten subtleties like these into itself might read as follows:

> We are not animated by the natural spirit of the cosmos, but by the Spirit that comes from God, so that we may distinguish God's free gifts to us [from the provisions of nature]. We speak openly of God's gifts, but not in words that generate instruction from humanly originated wisdom: we use instead the words that communicate information derived from the Holy Spirit; and we also utilize the Holy Spirit as a criterion for determining what is and is not revealed. But the man whose spirituality is naturalistic rejects as absurd everything derived from the Spirit of God: he is incapable of experiencing such things himself, and has no means of evaluating them in others in the absence of revelation.[5]

The spiritual conflict of naturalism and revealed religion permeates the scriptures of the Latter-day Saints and as Hugh

Nibley's writings have shown, is attested in one guise or another in virtually all of the world's cultures.[6] It has created the head-on collisions of Athens with Jerusalem,[7] for example, which pervade the whole of Western intellectual history. The sophic view, which eventually prevailed in Greece, has thus given birth to Greco-Roman naturalism, whereas the Egypto-Mesopotamian supernaturalism which produced the Judeo-Christian tradition is the issue of the mantic outlook. The radically different perspectives on reality which underlie this clash of spiritualities cannot be held at the same time by a rational human being. It is possible to vacillate between them because vacillation is sequential, not simultaneous, but it remains forever impossible to believe simultaneously that *the natural order is all there is* and that *there is something other than the natural order*.

These conflicting world views, however, are not the simple opposites of one another. The Judeo-Christian view is perforce inclusionary, for example, because no one can believe in a supernatural order that transcends the natural order without also believing in the natural order. But the Greco-Roman view is intentionally exclusionary because intellectuals in the sixth century B.C., who despised the presence of Oriental mystery religions in Greece, made a determined effort to exclude all forms of Near Eastern supernaturalism from their cultural traditions.[8] They were not completely successful in the short run, but how well they succeeded in the long run may be inferred from a study of Occidental irreligion significantly entitled *The Alternative Tradition*. The title is purposely suggestive, for naturalism is indeed a reactive tradition which must be studied in relation to the tradition it reacts against. Thus, the instances of naturalism, such as the recurring conflicts of science with religion, "can be understood only against the background of the religious belief . . . [they] question or deny."[9] The influence of the religious and skeptical traditions on each other, moreover, has never been identical. The overall tendency of their interaction is always one-sided—toward the naturalization of religion, not toward the supernaturalizing of science or scholarship—since naturalism is committed to the *extermination* of supernaturalism (something it can never hope to accomplish) and reacts only negatively to religious criticism. Supernaturalists, on the other hand, have always seen some value—and often great value—in naturalism: the monastic preservation of the classical heritage through the perils of the early middle ages is sufficient proof of that. The story of Western civilization would have been very different if the great skeptics of the alternative tradition had been given an opportunity to let Christianity sink into oblivion.

Thrower says about the uneven nature of the responses of naturalism and religion to each other that

> much of the ongoing development of religion has been in response to the critique which naturalism has brought against it. Rarely, however, has the reverse been the case. Naturalism has developed almost entirely by its own momentum, conditioned only by . . . the external world; for naturalism holds the meaning of the world to lie—in *all* spheres—within itself. It makes no reference to those "powers" . . . beyond space and time . . . which . . . [religions] hold to be operative in history determining the destiny of men. The whole meaning of man's life is, for naturalism, to be found . . . within *this* world. Herein lies the crux of the ongoing argument between a religious and a non-religious response to . . . [reality].[10]

In studying "the growth of a . . . naturalistic view of the world," Thrower also had to study "the outlook on the world which naturalism seeks to supplant."[11] That outlook is exemplified, according to Nibley, by an Egyptian pharaoh who was known to his contemporaries as a *sophos kai mantikos aner,* "a sophic and a mantic man."[12] But the religious attitudes of people like the pharaoh, who combine natural and supernatural realities in a single world view, have always been repugnant to the naturalists, who describe them as mythological since "the premises upon which they base their whole response to the world are different from the premises upon which . . . [we] base our understanding of the world today."[13] In fact, "much contemporary religious language is still mythological . . . in that events . . . , both past and present, are interpreted in terms of a mixed, natural/supernatural language."[14] The sticking point for the secular mentality is the *mix,* which, no matter how minute the mantic element, contaminates the sophic point of view.

The question remains "whether events in the world are to be understood as resulting from natural causes . . . or whether we can discern in events, and in the world process, divine activity and purpose."[15] The Judeo-Christian tradition, says Thrower, "has answered this question in the affirmative," since it has always claimed that "there is . . . divine purpose and providence in the world," and that at least "some events are the outcome of direct divine intervention." But Thrower, himself, is not convinced, for "the whole . . . development of our understanding of both the world and of history has, . . . since the sixteenth century, been away from this response to the world."[16] This "modern" attitude has been institutionalized in Bultmann's *Formgeschichte,* which has discredited the older source criticism and its naïve belief in the historicity of scripture:

> The whole conception of the world which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New Testament generally is mythological. . . . We call [it] mythological because it is different from the conception of the world . . . developed by science since its inception in ancient Greece and which has been accepted by all modern men. . . . Modern science does not believe that the course of nature can be interrupted . . . by supernatural powers. The same is true of the modern study of history, which does not take into account any intervention of God . . . or of demons in the [historical process]. . . . Modern men take it for granted that the course of nature and of history . . . is *nowhere* interrupted by the intervention of supernatural powers. . . . For modern man the mythological conception of the world, the conceptions of eschatology, of redeemer and of redemption, are over and done with.[17]

The traditions of naturalism and revealed religion have always divided "those who saw the world as created and directed by a transcendent God and those who did not."[18] But straddling this great divide in order to counterpose these two traditions for the critical study of skepticism and faith is no easy task, as "the growth of this juxtaposition is long and complex," as old as humanity itself. The sophic spirit, like its mantic counterpart, "can be found from the time of man's earliest recorded speculations; . . . always it has been there, in all cultures and at all times—for it is one polarity of the questing human spirit."[19] Thus, the ambitious purpose of Thrower's study is to delineate the beginnings and subsequent growth of the natural tradition throughout antiquity "in contradistinction to the . . . religious tradition."[20]

Greek culture moves from religion through mythology to philosophy, where it splits into *matter philosophy*, which creates the natural and physical sciences, and *form philosophy*, which creates humanistic scholarship.[21] It was the "new" world view of the Ionian materialists that triggered the shift from mythology to philosophy—a shift that radically altered Western thought by interrupting its fascination with the "old" world view of Oriental supernaturalism and by diverting its attention to the natural order: "The 'new understanding of the world' consisted in the substitution of natural for mythological causes. . . . ['Nature' is thenceforth seen as] something essentially internal and intrinsic to the world, the [operating] principle of its growth and present organization, [which is] identified at this early stage with its material constituent."[22] Philosophy was therefore born when the old mythological beliefs (which personified the forces of nature as suprahuman agents) were overthrown by a new metaphysical conviction "that the apparent chaos of events" conceals an "underlying order" of its own "and that this order is the product of impersonal forces."[23]

This conviction consigns all conceivable causes and their effects throughout the whole of reality to the natural order itself; beyond the natural order, if this conviction is taken seriously, there is absolutely nothing that exists or is real. Thus, the seedlings of empiricism, with its dogged refusal to tolerate transcendent propositions of any kind, were sown in the sixth century B.C., for without "systematic enquiry into the workings of the [physical] world," coupled with "a [conceptual] grasp of the fundamental unity of natural processes" and "their independence of supernatural interference,"[24] the rise of modern science would have been impossible. This whole scenario, moreover, was reenacted on a grand scale in early modern times, when "the 'new philosophy' of nature . . . was to undermine the . . . Christian mythico-religious understanding of the world on just such an account," and it is therefore "the gradual recovery of this outlook . . . that brings to fruition the . . . naturalism of our own time."[25] The sophic spirituality of Greek naturalism, in other words, which was obscured by the sophic-mantic confusions of neoplatonism and Christianity for more than a millennium, "will be revived and developed in Western Europe from the sixteenth century onwards," and "the issues which it raises for religion are . . . very much alive today."[26]

The twentieth-century breakdown of religion, according to Thrower, has led to the widespread conviction that we "live today in a post-religious age, and are . . . the first persons in . . . history . . . to do so."[27] The modern horizontalists, certainly, have been relentless in their criticism of the vertical tradition. They have launched a devastating attack on Christianity and on "the . . . mythico-religious response to which it is allied, . . . which sees the world as admixed with . . . supernatural forces."[28] Their frontal assaults on revealed religion, "combined with positive speculation into the origin of the world and into natural processes," have produced "the first glimmerings of the alternative tradition" in modern times, "which . . . finally reaches fruition in our own day"—and does so "*only* within Western culture."[29] This sophic tradition has subsequently emasculated Occidental revelationism and, as noted by Karl Marx, secularized its mantic institutions:

> All criticism is derived from the criticism of religion. . . . Criticism, accordingly, has removed the imaginary flowers [of Christianity] from the chain [of the supernatural tradition], thus enabling man to throw off the cheerless drudgery of his shackles and pluck the living flower [of naturalism]. The criticism of religion disillusions man, causing him to think, to act, and to construct his reality like a disillusioned man who has come to his senses; and he thenceforth revolves around himself, his true sun, since religion is merely the illusion of a sun that revolves around man only if man does not

> revolve around himself. Once the other world of [supposititious] truth has been discredited, furthermore, the function of history is to establish the truth of this world; and the most basic function of philosophy, which serves as the hierodule of history, is to expose the secular forms of human self-alienation, once its religious form has been exposed. The criticism of heaven therefore descends to earth, where [primary] criticisms of religion and theology are transmuted into the [secondary] criticisms of legal and political institutions.[30]

The process of horizontalizing the vertical tradition, "needless to say, is not, as yet, complete."[31] The "as yet" makes it clear, however, that the naturalists can never rest until it *is* complete.

This incompleteness poses a fundamental problem for intellectual history. Thrower focuses the problem by making the seemingly arrogant claim that his account of metaphysical naturalism constitutes "the first . . . attempt [ever] made to survey this field."[32] That claim, surely, is not *sensu stricto* true. Or is it? My own attempts to locate accounts like Thrower's had been systematically frustrated for at least thirty years before I stumbled onto a Festschrift edited by Warren Wagar, which identified Franklin L. Baumer of Yale University as an intellectual historian who had devoted his entire academic career to this very problem.[33] The Baumer Festschrift underscores the problem posed above: whereas everyone seems to realize that "the axial themes of religious and antireligious thought relate somehow to fundamental human needs,"[34] says Wagar, it is very difficult to study either of those themes as a whole, to say nothing of studying their complex *interactions*. Thus, Baumer, writing in the late fifties, found a formidable dearth of information on this problem, a dearth which has persisted into the nineties. The horizontal scholars, it seems, whose idea of "objectivity" is to criticize everybody *else's* assumptions, have produced the critical histories of everything in sight, including Christianity, with one important exception—they have not produced a single critical history of their own tradition:

> [The skeptical tradition] is clearly one of the most important traditions in modern European history—and one of the most neglected. Other traditions, such as the classical tradition, the romantic tradition, the Christian tradition, the humanistic tradition, the scientific tradition, the conservative, liberal, democratic, and socialist traditions, have found their historians. To my knowledge, however, *no one has properly identified and charted the course of the sceptical tradition down to the present.*[35]

I was stunned to learn this fact from Baumer, for it means that scholarly naturalists, whatever their disciplines, have been free to criticize the assumptions of the Judeo-Christian tradition, whereas

the assumptions of the Greco-Roman tradition have never been seriously challenged in modern times. A large part of the reason for this oversight, it seems to me, is that the ruling ideas of the scientific revolt against metaphysical dualism have favored the world view of the Greco-Roman tradition, which rejects the supernatural realities of Judeo-Christian revelation. To cite one example from Western thought: the burden of proving the existence of God has always fallen on the believer, and the unbeliever has never been confronted with the necessity of proving the *nonexistence* of God. This is unmistakably a lopsided situation. It obtains because all of the arguments both for and against the existence or nonexistence of transcendent realities are derived from the axiomatic assumptions which underlie the ancient quarrel of naturalism with supernaturalism. But axioms are not things we think about: they are assumptions we think *with*, the deep gut reactions to the inscrutable mystery of our own existence which constitute the metaphysical starting points that determine how we think about everything. They can neither be proven nor disproven, to be sure, because they lurk somewhere in the darkest recesses of the human mind, where they govern all of its brilliant demonstrations of rational logic and systematic evaluations of empirical evidence. If the ground assumptions and root metaphors of the horizontal tradition are hidden from view today, it is not because they constitute the only fountainheads of truth or falsity: it is because the "nimbly shifting *Zeitgeist*," as someone has called the prevailing spirit of the times, has exposed the foundations of the vertical tradition to critical examination while protecting those of the horizontal tradition from scrutiny.

There is a crucially important risk which inheres in ignoring such a glaring omission, for "the contemporary religious problem is simply unintelligible," and may indeed be unsolvable, "without full awareness of it."[36] The unbelievers, however, are not to blame for this problem, for the believers, who have been put on the defensive by the rise of skepticism, have not done their homework: they should be thoroughly familiar, even *fascinated,* with the dynamics of unbelief, more interested in their opponents, perhaps, than in anything except revealed religion itself. This neglect has always been one of the greatest weaknesses of believers: they simply do not know the history of the Western intellect, with all of its perversions and weaknesses; and they are therefore constantly wandering unawares into its blind alleys and dead ends, marvelling that strange things are happening to them, wondering how they got into the messes they are in, and speechless as to why things should be this way.

Baumer launched a determined effort to begin closing this "gap," as he calls it, by tracing the modern development of the horizontal tradition in order "to show how and by whom it was generated, and how it grew and gained momentum up to and including the present 'crisis' which Jung, Tillich, Joad, and others so vividly describe."[37] The result is illuminating, for it shows, without whitewashing the excesses of the religious camp in any way, how desperately the naturalist needs the supernaturalist as a kind of straight man or whipping boy to play against. Unlike Thrower, however, whose naturalistic bias is blatantly transparent, Baumer withdraws from both traditions in order to study their mutual interactions, but he really belongs to *both* of them, and he struggles to understand the "why" and the "how" of this belonging. He reminds us of Barbara Ward's warning that "faith will not be restored in the West because people believe it to be useful. It will return only when they find that it is true."[38] And Baumer follows that warning with a searching question of his own: "In view of the rise of scepticism during the last four hundred years," is "modern man" really no longer capable of accepting even the slightest possibility that there might be some truth, however meager, in religion?[39] This question, Baumer points out,

> is the real nub of the problem. . . . "Modern man" . . . is the heir of a great tradition, . . . *the sceptical tradition,* which at crucial points challenges another great tradition, the . . . Judaeo-Christian tradition. . . . In the present epoch a large . . . number of Europeans have expressed a desire to return . . . to "the sheltering womb" of the religious tradition, or at least to something approximating it—partly for reasons of psychic health, partly because they suspect that it may be essential to "civilization" to do so. . . . [But] this new "will to believe" . . . conflicts with their [modern] world view. Whenever they take it into their heads to "return," the shades of all the great sceptics, Pierre Bayle and Voltaire, Ernest Renan and Sigmund Freud and the rest, rise up around them and persuade them . . . that they cannot go back. This is the religious dilemma of "modern man," and it cannot be solved . . . by utilitarian arguments.[40]

Baumer is onto something here, for the conflict of disparate spiritualities caused by the infiltration of each by the other is both intricate and paradoxical, raising the eyebrows of naturalists and supernaturalists alike. But the either-or disjunction is definitely out, because no one can live either with nothing but religion or completely without religion. The naturalists have tried the latter, only to create "what Baumer calls the 'humanistic faith' of the Enlightenment and its heirs, the 'ersatz-religions' of the nineteenth century"[41] (with their deification of such "gods" as Science, Mankind, Society, Nature, History, and Culture), which subsequently

failed miserably to perform the functions of religion; and the supernaturalists have proven the former by demonstrating the folly of regarding our involvement with the two traditions as "the melodrama of a war to the death between implacable foes."[42] Western cultural history, as a matter of fact, is fairly permeated with paradoxes of this kind. For example, the Reformers, driven by an immense desire to bring religion down to earth, "sacrificed otherworldliness for a holy secularity"[43] which, by its essential worldliness, transformed their followers into apostles of self-aggrandizement and commercial opportunism: because "good works" were the only means of manifesting their faith to the world, they learned *to produce as much as possible*, because industry was a virtue and indolence was sinful; *to consume as little as possible*, since waste was a vice and gluttony was one of the seven deadly sins; and *to lay up the difference*, for obscure reasons having something to do with "righteousness."

The ambitious overachievers of Christianity, by virtue of their thrift and industry, have created the very capital which has drastically altered the social and economic institutions of the West and driven almost everybody into the modern secular city—the most worldly place on the face of this planet—where the accumulation of capital is widely interpreted as a symptom of "spirituality" and "most of the best minds in Christendom have learned to manage quite well without the Christian faith."[44] That faith has always suffered more in urban centers than in rural settings, for the city dweller "is everywhere the most secularized citizen of a modern state, and the least secularized are the people who remain tied to the land . . . in areas least affected by modernizing forces."[45] The rest of us "are citizens of the secular city. No yearning for past simplicities, which are mostly imaginary [anyway] . . . , can call more than a few of us back to the sacred village of our fathers. . . . We can be bombed out of our city, and perhaps we shall be."[46] We can build a bigger and better city, and we may have to do that, too. But "the city is our home," and the city belongs to the skeptical tradition, whose advocates include the "twentieth-century sociologists and anthropologists of religion" who say that "man can live without this or that particular . . . religious belief and practice, . . . but not without religion of any kind."[47]

Thus the paradoxical relations between these two traditions are neither simple nor simplistic. How could it be otherwise when "the absence of God in a Kafka novel or a Beckett play is . . . so conspicuous and overwhelming . . . that it can do more to awaken religious consciousness than whole libraries of theology"?[48] There is no escaping Wagar's argument that "religious faith has both

influenced, and been influenced by, the growth of secular belief systems and institutions."[49] Wagar adds, "The interaction in modern Western history between religion (however defined) and secularity (however defined) cannot be reduced to a struggle between sharply opposed and clearly distinguishable forces. The degree of interpenetration is astonishing, and . . . both 'sides' have undergone . . . [remarkable] transformations."[50]

It is surely time to examine our "religion of culture"[51] by exposing the ground assumptions of its sophic world view to critical evaluation. Some naturalists are actually beginning to do this, while the Latter-day Saints, who have more intellectual freedom to question their secular heritage than any people on earth,[52] return time and again from the world's universities as apologists for the great skeptics, openly advocating their skeptical views in academic circles, even—perhaps even *especially*—at Brigham Young University, instead of offering gospel alternatives to them. The reason for this tendency is unfortunately clear: the greatest sins of the Latter-day Saints, according to the Lord himself, are *the vanity of misplaced faith,* or believing more in themselves than in the things they have received by revelation—taking all of the wrong things seriously, as Hugh Nibley would say, and *just plain unbelief,* or the fact that they simply do not have the faith they ought to have. These sins of vanity and unbelief, which are more basic and far more deadly than the behavioral sins which follow in their wake, have brought the whole Church under a condemnation that has never been lifted and will persist until the children of Zion repent and remember the New and Everlasting Covenant, which not only binds the Father and the Son to the conditions of their redemption, but also constitutes the subject matter of the Book of Mormon.[53] The Lord has issued a solemn warning to the world that includes a pointed reference to unbelievers in his church who prefer the murky wisdom of man to the revealed light of redemptive truth.

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face.
>
> Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, . . . a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth.
>
> . . . upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth . . . ;
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> First among those among you . . . who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.[54]

Those are harsh words; they plainly mean that the Latter-day Saints cannot contribute significantly to, much less orchestrate, the critical evaluation of unbelief unless they become a sophic and a mantic people who have overcome their own lack of faith. Hugh Nibley, meanwhile, comes closer than any Latter-day Saint I have ever known personally to the ideal of a *sophos kai mantikos aner*.

Dr. Nibley's little corpus of sophic-mantic studies may constitute the most insightful thing he has ever done. The great importance of his larger works cannot be minimized, but the sophic-mantic principle, which informs virtually all of his researches, lies at the feeling heart of human thought and action, where the whole of history is generated: it is assuredly far more basic than the epistemological disjunction of reason and the senses which underlies the classic world view of ancient Greece.[55] The spiritual outlooks of the world's axial civilizations, for example, are thereby characterized as essentially sophic in China and the West, as predominantly mantic in India, and as a sophic-mantic confluence of irreconcilable Sino-Occidental and Asianic spiritualities in the mesothetic cultures of the Near East—that strange medley of variegated territories stretching from the Nile River to the Oxus Basin. The sophic-mantic principle also clarifies the recurring confrontations of natural and revealed wisdom in human history generally, illuminates a fundamental creative influence in the formation and maintenance of all cultural institutions, and especially if not exclusively in Europe, isolates the major sources of antagonism between the philosophical and theological traditions of Western intellectual history. The history of Western intellection can admittedly be written from various points of view, but the sophic-mantic principle is omnipresent in Baumer's kind of intellectual history and is indispensable to anyone who wants to understand the complex interactions of Greco-Roman naturalism with Judeo-Christian supernaturalism and to preserve the best of both traditions.

I recognized the essential timelessness of Dr. Nibley's sophic-mantic studies in the early sixties, when his rather casual attitude toward what he had already written, together with his powerful sense of urgency in relation to his current researches, threatened the loss of something too valuable to lose. I therefore secured his reluctant permission to copy any manuscripts I could still locate, and others made similar attempts to preserve whatever they could. I also obtained his permission to edit these manuscripts for publication, but I left Provo shortly thereafter to pursue doctoral studies in Ohio and returned four years later to the new improved Brigham Young University, where I soon discovered that I would

never be allowed time for the "unimportant" labor of working on another man's work. I therefore showed copies of these manuscripts to Gary Gillum, who made copies of my copies for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.); though these manuscripts were (and still are) a disheveled mess, I am very pleased to know that F.A.R.M.S., at long last, has edited and published them. "For the study of 'Sophic and Mantic,'" Dr. Nibley told us belatedly in 1964, "the patient reader must await forthcoming publication of the delinquent writer. It is quite a subject."[56] It is indeed, and for his patient readers it has also been quite a wait. But F.A.R.M.S. has finally brought forth a publication that is long overdue, and the wait has been worth it, as Hugh Nibley's sophic-mantic studies have both retained their perennial appeal and will continue to interest readers a hundred years from now.

NOTES

[1]"Three Shrines: Mantic, Sophic, and Sophistic" and "Paths That Stray: Some Notes on Sophic and Mantic" in Hugh Nibley, *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry, vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991).

[2]Moses 5:13. This paper incorporates most of H. Curtis Wright, "The Central Problem of Intellectual History," *Scholar and Educator* 12 (Fall 1988): 52–68; and draws on two other articles: H. Curtis Wright, "Naturalism and Revealed Religion," *Scholar and Educator* 13 (Fall 1989): 7–31; and H. Curtis Wright, "The Sophic-Mantic Problem at BYU: A Case Study," *Scholar and Educator* 14 (Spring 1991): 57–82.

[3]Moses 5:17, 25, 16.

[4]Moses 5:26, 41.

[5]1 Corinthians 2:12–14, adding in verses 15–16 that people whose spirituality is actually revealed make critical judgments about all things, both natural and supernatural, without being subjected to judgment themselves, because they possess the mind of Christ. More on the natural man in 1 Corinthians 15:42–46; Ephesians 2:3; 2 Peter 1:4, 2:12; Jude 10, 18–19; Ether 3:2; Enos 20; Mosiah 3:16–19, 16:1–5; Alma 19:6, 26:21, 41:4, 11–12, 42:9–10, etc.

[6]This realization stems largely from Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), who disclosed in the 1940s the existence of a previously unknown kind of Judaism that differed radically from both the Halachic Judaism created by the Rabbis and presented in standard histories of the Jews and from the thirteen-volume study of ritual by Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953–1968), which holds that vertical and horizontal religions are the only religions possible for human beings. See also Frank Moore Cross, "New Directions in the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Brigham Young University Studies* 25 (Summer 1985): 9: "Scholem shocked our generation by his demonstration of the survivals of apocalyptic mysticism in the era of Rabbi Akiba [late first and early second centuries C.E.], and in the coming generation . . . these insights into the importance of apocalypticism for both primitive Christianity and early Judaism will be confirmed and extended." Later instances of similar problems in Islam and China are discussed by Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "Speculation: Falsafah [philosophy] and Kalam [theology], c. 750–945," in his *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:410–43; and by Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), who describes the sophic-mantic chaos caused by text-critical methods brought into Chinese scholarship by the Jesuits. The impact on human history of the sophic and mantic outlooks, according to Nibley, "completely dominates the world" ("A Conversation with Hugh Nibley," *Dialogue* 12 [Winter 1979]: 19).

[7]See two books by Lev Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. Bernard Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966); and *Speculation and Revelation*, trans. Bernard Martin (Athens, Ohio: Ohio

University Press, 1982). But the symbolism of Athens and Jerusalem, as Nibley once remarked, easily breaks down in the sophic scholars, who, unlike Shestov, only rarely seem to realize that "the Hebrews themselves were often naturalistic," especially if influenced by the cultural spirituality of Alexandria ("A Conversation with Hugh Nibley," 20), and that Jerusalem, far from being a mantic city, was if anything more sophic than Athens throughout most of its history. Prophets were hated in Athens as in Jerusalem, for example, but they were not stoned to death in Athens.

[8]The mystery religions of the sixth century B.C., which brought Greek thought to a fork in the road where it had to go one way or the other, are discussed by Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, trans. L. R. Palmer, 13th ed., rev. by W. Nestle (New York: Dover, 1980), 12–19.

[9]James Thrower, *The Alternative Tradition: Religion and the Rejection of Religion in the Ancient World* (The Hague: Mouton, 1980), 36.

[10]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 9; italics added.

[11]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 15.

[12]Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I.236. Nibley has converted this phrase, which occurs in the accusative as *ton sophon kai mantikon andra*, to the nominative case. See also Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I.256, where the same terms refer to a seer consulted by the pharaoh.

[13]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 21.

[14]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 229.

[15]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 229.

[16]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 229.

[17]Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 15–17; italics added. For a brief but adequate account of Bultmann's whole program of demythologization, see his *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

[18]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 35. Thrower adds that even among the Hindus "the great monistic tradition of the *advaita* (or nondualistic) Vedanta . . . denied the existence of a transcendent God" as did "Jainism and Buddhism, which broke . . . from Hinduism in the sixth century BC."

[19]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 9.

[20]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 8.

[21]I have discussed the philosophical aspect of this development in "The Symbol and Its Referent," *Library Trends* 34 (Spring 1986): 730–37.

[22]W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962–1981), 1:83. Guthrie adds that "the primary assumption is not simply that it [the world] consists of a single material substance, but that the diversity of its present order is not from eternity, but has evolved from something radically simpler . . . in time."

[23]Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* 1:26.

[24]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 114.

[25]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 19, 114.

[26]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 229. Thrower adds that "the origins of the alternative . . . approach lie . . . in the Classical period of European thought."

[27]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 8.

[28]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 253.

[29]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 253, 137; italics added. Thrower adds that "the naturalistic approach comes to systematic fruition" in Western thought, where it actually "supercedes the . . . religious outlook on life."

[30]Karl Marx, *Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe, März 1843 bis August 1844, Text*, Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe (Mega), Abt. 1, Bd. 2 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1982), 170–71 (author's translation).

[31]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 254.

[32]Thrower, *Alternative Tradition*, 10.

[33]See W. Warren Wagar, ed., *The Secular Mind: Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe; Essays Presented to Franklin L. Baumer* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982).

[34]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 1.

[35]Franklin L. Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960), 21; italics added. Baumer consistently employed "scepticism" as a synonym for "secularism, or religious scepticism" (Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism*, 9), and I have followed his usage throughout this paper. I nevertheless recommend a healthier form of skepticism (< Gr. *skeptomai*, "look over carefully") which implies the close observation of anything from all angles in order to avoid the pitfalls of either religious or intellectual gullibility.

[36]Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism*, 22.

[37]Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism*, 22.

[38]Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism*, 19.

[39]Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism*, 19.

[40]Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism*, 19–20; italics in original.

[41]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 4.

[42]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 9.

[43]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 2. "Berger's argument [is] that the Protestant rebellion helped to discredit . . . traditional Christian otherworldliness, and helped to encourage vigorous involvement in secular vocations" (Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 9). Wagar is here citing Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967).

[44]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 9.

[45]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 7. This tendency was also true throughout antiquity, when the landed aristocracies, who were fiercely protective of their holdings in the plains and valleys, were always squabbling with the freewheeling monied aristocrats in the coastal areas.

[46]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 9–10.

[47]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 10, 4.

[48]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 9.

[49]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 5.

[50]Wagar, *The Secular Mind*, 5.

[51]A term for "the spirit of classical paganism" used by C. N. Cochrane in *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 29, where the natural "religion of culture" and "the culture of [revealed] religion" are compared.

[52]See statements by Stan Albrecht and Dallin Oaks in Wright, "The Sophic-Mantic Problem at BYU," 75–76.

[53]See Doctrine and Covenants 84:54–59; and Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988), vii–viii, 6–7, 9, 17, 22, 75, 79, etc.

[54]Doctrine and Covenants 112:23–26.

[55]On the classic world view, see Eduard Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1920–1923), 1:195–96.

[56]Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964), xii n. 2.