

N. L. Nelson and The Mormon Point of View

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In 1904 Utah saw the publication of a periodical entitled *The Mormon Point of View*. Its "editor" was Nels Lars (usually known as N. L.) Nelson, a professor of English at Brigham Young University. Intended to provide intellectual food for Latter-day Saints, the quarterly appeared just four times. The story of this brief venture provides a glimpse into the preoccupations of the Church at the beginning of the century. It also exemplifies some of the perennial hazards faced by those who publish magazines addressed to a limited audience.

N. L. Nelson was born in Goshen, Utah, in 1862. He seemed destined to a life of toil and hardship. However, responding to the strong desire of his mother that he continue his education, he worked in the mines at Eureka to make money for tuition, walked to Provo, and there at the Brigham Young Academy became a devoted follower of Karl G. Maeser. In 1882 he graduated. The following year he was placed in charge of the Intermediate Department. After serving as a missionary in the Southern States during 1885-87 he returned to Brigham Young Academy. He taught there until 1920 and for several years served as secretary to the faculty.¹

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¹Basic biographical information is outlined in T. Earl Pardoe, *Sons of Brigham* (Provo, Utah, 1969). Nelson provided some autobiographical glimpses in "A Boy's Experience in Pioneer Life," *Juvenile Instructor*, 28 (15 December 1893), pp. 765-70. Although his main teaching duties at Brigham Young Academy (Brigham Young University after 1903) were with the English Department, he was versatile. In 1906 he was listed as Professor of Philosophy in the *Brigham Young University Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 4, 1 May 1906, and in 1916 he taught the first journalism course at B. Y. U.

Even before 1904 he was becoming known for his writing. He published several articles in Church magazines during the 1880s and 1890s. In 1898 he published *Preaching and Public Speaking*, a book full of practical advice on improving sermons and mental cultivation in general. And in 1904, the very year during which he put out *The Mormon Point of View*, Nelson published his most noteworthy book, *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism*.² We can safely say that Nelson's name was well known in the Mormon community.

On 1 December 1903 he wrote to President Joseph F. Smith, enclosing a lengthy statement on "Why This Magazine Is Needed," and asking whether it would "help the cause of God to start such a magazine."³

His statement contrasted the religion of the Latter-day Saints to that of the world. Religion generally, according to Nelson, had accepted the notions that "bliss is an ethereal something located in a still more ethereal somewhere," that man could do nothing to effect his own salvation, and that secular affairs, "the really vital relations affecting the destiny of mankind," should be left in the hands of the irreligious. The Latter-day Saints had a much more practical orientation, he said, believing "that salvation is a progressive coming into harmony with law; that heaven, the expression of that harmony, is a state of the soul, which inevitably causes gravitation towards a place; that both state and place are now, and ever will be, on this earth." Mormonism thus should have no use for the artificialities of other religions.

But in practice the Saints often forgot their basic beliefs, looking skyward and forgetting practical applications:

They are still in Babylon. They are still struggling with the tide of heredity. Their heads are above water, truly enough—which is to say, they see the better way; but their bodies are swept onward by the almost resistless current of tradition and convention.

The members of the Church, he continued, needed to bring

²Nelson's publications in the church periodicals included occasional stories as well as articles. *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism* presented the author with difficult problems, first in getting it published and then in paying for it when the sales were not up to expectations.

³Manuscript archives of the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah. "Why This Magazine Is Needed" was published as a brochure for advance publicity but is most readily available in the first issue of *The Mormon Point of View*.

about "the unfolding of the Gospel far down into its social, educational, and economic bearings."

Nelson did not believe that the Saints had nothing to learn from the world. As far as knowledge was concerned, he said, "we need to borrow in most directions, rather than to give." What Mormonism provided was an orientation that could synthesize the multifarious and confusing facets of worldly knowledge.

It is in this particular, then, that Mormonism can best help the world: it can contribute a point of view that shall unify and marshal into one grand, eternal perspective, all the fragmentary truths which now serve mainly to distract mankind.

What was needed was "the redistribution of the world's knowledge according to the Mormon point of view."

Besides bringing the gospel to bear on real life and seeing truths on all sides from perspective, the new magazine would assist the Mormon missionary program. Changing conditions had created the need for a different kind of proselyting literature.

Hitherto it has sufficed to present the truth from its purely scriptural aspect. As a result, we have succeeded in gathering just that class of people—simple, honest, guileless, spiritual-minded Nathanaels—whom it was desirable to have as foundation stones for this new order of society. But there are others no less worthy: hard-headed thinkers, trained in the exact methods of modern schools; doubting Thomases of art, science, mechanics, and business, who value unsupported authority as nothing, even though it be Biblical; without whom, nevertheless, no scheme of social reform can pass very far beyond the speculative stage. Indeed, considering the constantly diminishing returns of our missionary work, it is pretty evident that the world has, during the last half century, veered almost completely around from the Nathanael to the Thomas type of mind.

Scriptural argument would not convince such an audience. Mormon ideals had to be presented in terms of natural sciences and philosophy. By this Nelson did not mean abstruse metaphysics. He was confident that "if the principles underlying our religion can be identified with the facts involved in economic, educational, and sociological processes, then they will listen; for just now the relations of man to his fellow man is the one absorbing theme of humanity."

It is not inconsistent with these aims that an even more practical purpose was mentioned in Nelson's letter to President Smith: "Should this project succeed, the income would go far to keep me and my family, till such time as my name should be established."

The First Presidency responded with a qualified endorsement:

We feel very much gratified by the spirit of your letter, and pleased with the article setting forth the reasons why the magazine, which you propose to publish, is needed. As far as we are concerned, we should very much like to see a magazine published such as you have outlined; it would undoubtedly be a credit both to you as its publisher and to our community. But will it pay financially, and can it be done without financial injury to yourself and family? . . . To be frank with you, we are afraid it will not pay.⁴

This response of the First Presidency is remarkable both for its ready acceptance of the new magazine in principle and also for its realistic assessment of the financial problems.

Undeterred, N. L. Nelson obtained permission from the First Presidency to add their statement to his prospectus entitled "Why This Magazine Is Needed." He sent out for distribution possibly as many as 10,000 copies of the article and went to work to get the first issue—announced for 1 January 1904—printed and distributed.⁵ On 19 January a statement in the *Deseret News* explained the mechanical reasons for the tardiness of the first issue. Already he was plagued by one of the characteristic diseases of such periodicals. He begged indulgence of "the large number of people who have befriended his literary venture by sending in their subscriptions."⁶

The magazine that greeted its subscribers a few days later was 100 pages in length. Its format was small—6 by 3½ inches. Besides reprinting his essay "Why This Magazine Is Needed" Nelson included only two articles, both to be continued in the following issue. The subsequent three issues were substantially the same. By the fourth and final issue a

⁴The letter from the First Presidency is not in the Church Historian's Office, although it is likely available in duplicate in the files of the First Presidency. Nelson published it at the close of "Why This Magazine Is Needed."

⁵Letter from Nelson to President Joseph F. Smith, 24 December 1903. All of Nelson's correspondence cited in the present article is located in the manuscript archives of the Church Historian's Office.

⁶*Deseret News*, 19 January 1904.

total of nine articles, stories, or poems had been published. They are worth examining one by one.⁷

1. "The Ministers and the Mormons." Called the "leading article," this was an extended work of 56 pages. Noticing that the most vehement foes of Mormonism were the ministers of other faiths, Nelson proceeded to defend his people. The attacks against them he regarded as religious bigotry. Anticipating a new "crusade," he sought to show why it "ought not to be made, and if made, why it ought to fail, as it surely will." To defend Mormonism's right to survival the author proposed to judge it by the criterion of its "social effectiveness or inherent power to help usher in the millennium; not on some world-to-be, but here on the third planet of the solar system."

Such an approach allowed the author to elaborate some basic aspects of Mormon theology. An exposition of the Mormon conception of God was followed by a portrayal of Mormonism as a religion "vitally inter-related with all real things; indeed, an interpreter of all things in their relation to the soul . . ." Nelson's orientation was this-worldly and pragmatic:

He obeys God best who learns most of the present world, but in such order and relation that the link between him and his maker becomes daily brighter and stronger; he is in the highest heaven who sees most beauty, feels most harmony, in the creations immediately around him.

For Nelson Mormonism was more comprehensive and satisfying than the puerile Christianity that was presented as an alternative. The ministers stood little chance of success in their desire to "crush" Mormonism. He urged upon them the counsel of Gamaliel: "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (Acts 5:38-39.)

2. "The Dictionary of Slander." Starting in the first and continuing in the second issue of the magazine, this was a long, critical review of W. A. Linn, *The Story of the Mor-*

⁷Bound in a single volume, *The Mormon Point of View* is available in the libraries of the Church Historian's Office, the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, U.C.L.A., and doubtless other institutions.

mons (New York, 1902). Although Linn's work assumed a "judicial tone" and claimed to be objective, it was written with the conviction that Mormonism was a fraud. Linn's stance was cynical: "If Mr. Linn ever saw a good quality in a Mormon or in Mormonism, he does not betray the fact by a single line, nor by a single epithet. Not once does he relent toward the charitable view of a transaction." Nelson challenged Linn's treatment of the character of the Smith family, money digging, the Spaulding theory, Rigdon's role in producing the Book of Mormon, and the reliability of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. What Linn had done, the author continued, was to bring out all the old lies and give them new respectability.

3. "Human Side of the Book of Mormon." Appearing in the issue of April 1904, this article dealt with the question of "changes" in the Book of Mormon text. For Nelson scripture did not exist apart from a human element. He readily admitted the existence of faults in Book of Mormon language and style, some attributable to the original writers, some to Mormon as abridger, and some to Joseph Smith as translator. But verbal errors and faulty diction "no more invalidate the glorious message it contains than would a few harmless leaves pollute a pure stream." He then offered an explanation for the presence in the Book of Mormon of biblical passages that were basically drawn from the King James version: Joseph Smith had remembered whole chapters of the Bible, "which sprang verbatim into consciousness when brought into association with the thought that originally inspired them." Finally, Nelson discussed the use of the "interpreters." In essence Nelson conceded that the mind of Joseph Smith contributed enormously to the Book of Mormon. The work reflected his inadequate education; it was repetitious, prolix, even ungrammatical. Yet Joseph's mind was untrammelled, his simple style was well suited to the kind of audience for whom the book was intended, and all of the "blemishes" did not hide "the beauty and symmetry of its inner truths to the soul that is earnestly seeking the way of life."

4. "Learn to Read Up Hill." This whole piece was apparently prompted by complaints from some readers that the magazine was too difficult. Unsympathetic to such a reaction, the author chastized the "ordinary reader" for his mental in-

dolence. "I cannot and will not reduce the whole thing down to thin soup once more, to suit his watery mental digestion," he said. "I let it go, in the hope that it may prove a tonic to his undisciplined mind." The reader should improve his vocabulary by constant use of the dictionary and select his reading carefully. Nelson betrayed the common bias against novels or fiction. He admitted a few great exceptions, but in general there was "no easier way to get into the comfortable circle of mental mediocrity than to become a devotee of popular fiction."

5. "The Spiritual Life." This 78-page article in the July issue discussed different aspects of the spiritual life. Nelson's approach was to analyze several metaphors of the New Testament, as for example, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." (Matthew 6:28-29.) His comment on this passage:

The natural, organic, frictionless evolution of the lily, is a fine type of the spiritual life in its relation to the universe; the labored, artificial nailed-together pomp and circumstance of Solomon, stands equally for the natural life.

The concepts of Christ within us, the kingdom of God within us, free agency, eternal law, eternal life, the natural world, the social world, the Holy Ghost, the danger of Pharisaism—all these were similarly analyzed and discussed. By this time *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism* had been published, and Nelson referred his readers to it for a fuller exposition of these ideas.

6. "The Harris-Anthon Episode." Also in the July issue, this article examined the conflicting statements of Martin Harris and Charles Anthon regarding their interview. Its main point: Anthon had contradicted himself; the Harris version was therefore plausible and probably accurate.

7. "A Roundelay of Salt Lake" by Joaquin Miller. Published in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, this verse was a work of occasion prompted by President Theodore Roosevelt's recent visit to Utah. T. R. had publicly deplored the national tendency towards having small families. When he came to Salt Lake the women greeted him "with thousands of babes in

their arms." These "pink-faced infants cooed a welcome that must have filled his big heart with joy." The Utah women, in the words of the poem, brought the President not trumpets or guns but

Just babies, babies, healthful, fair,
From where the Wasatch lion leaps,
From sunless snows, from desert deeps,
Just babies, babies, everywhere.

National concern for the population explosion and its ecological repercussions was still far in the future.

8. "For Conscience Sake." This short story was written by a young lady in one of Nelson's English classes. John Trueman, who had three wives and fifteen children, has been sentenced to serve a term in the penitentiary. He is allowed a few days grace because of the illness of an infant son. When the child dies the family grieves, but the other wives help the young wife to sustain her loss. Young Deputy Gray, "as vile a character as the scum of the Mormon-haters could produce," is suspicious. Accompanied by his uncle, Judge Strong, and Donald Lester, a recent law graduate who has come to observe the Mormons, he spies on the Trueman family, only to see an idyllic picture of family love and hear a moving family prayer. Two years pass. Lester, the outsider, falls in love with Maud, the prettiest daughter of the family, and the two plan to elope. Emily, the "old maid" sister, discovers the plans, goes into Maud's room at night and tells of her own tragic love of past years. Maud reveals her love for Lester, but now recognizes that marriage must wait. Meanwhile, in his prison cell, John Trueman has a vision of Maud standing before a deep, dark chasm. His spirit leaves his body and appears to Maud just as she is about to give in to temptation by going away with Lester. Fortified, she tells Lester she will not go. With an awful oath he reveals his true character. Later, at Christmas time, the family gathers to welcome the father on his return from prison. They sing together, "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform," and kneel together in family prayer. As John Trueman kisses Maud goodnight, she whispers, "Papa, I, too, have found the joy of suffering for conscience sake."

This story was the only piece of fiction included in the four issues of *The Mormon Point of View*. Nelson justified

including it by explaining its two-fold purpose: first, to portray an aspect of Mormon family life purposely left out of his other article in the issue; and secondly, "to indicate that no true Latter-day Saint is ashamed of a past social relation which has given to Mormondom many of its noblest and brightest men and women of today."

9. "The Mormon Family." In this last article in the last issue of the magazine, Nelson cited example after example of the "fruitfulness" of Mormon families. He was especially impressed by the families of such polygamists as Lorin Farr, who had 258 descendants at the age of 83. But even monogamous Mormon families, he said, boasted between 5 and 12 children for each mother. The nation, by comparison, was committing "race suicide."

At this point Nelson offered a short defense for Mormon plural marriage. Admitting that the two sexes were about equal in number at birth, he maintained that many men were disabled, unwilling to marry, or disqualified by "thriftless and vicious habits." The result was that many pure, high-minded women were left as old maids. Mormonism had provided a means by which "all true women within its fold might escape such a fate." But for Nelson the central feature of the Mormon family ideal was not polygamy as such but the "natural, the untrammelled birth of children, and their careful bringing up for social service." Polygamy without these characteristics would have no excuse.

It is noteworthy that none of these articles dealt specifically with the title of the magazine. Nelson had planned to write an essay explaining what he meant by the "Mormon point of view" but did not get it published in the brief period of the magazine's existence. In a way, perhaps, the meaning is obvious. But we do have some clues to the more specific notion the author had in mind. In his prospectus he had claimed that Mormonism could draw from the knowledge of the world, contributing a "point of view that shall unify and marshal into one grand, eternal perspective, all the fragmentary truths which now serve mainly to distract mankind." In his earlier book *Preaching and Public Speaking* Nelson had also devoted several pages to the concept "point of view." The main assertions were as follows: (a) what we see depends on the point of view of the observer; (b) there have been points

of view that have had great explanatory power in science; (c) in their "remoter connections" such explanatory systems have required artificial bolstering and eventually are replaced by a new system; (d) it is possible to accept "facts" without accepting the accompanying theory; (e) religion and science are similar in that "men draw opposite systems" from the same facts, encounter difficulty in fitting some data into their paradigm, and then go through twisting and forcing in order to keep the system; (f) Mormonism provides the key, the "true point of view," comparable to "the summit of eternity."

God himself sees things in their true relation only by the Spirit of truth; whoever has this Spirit in its fulness has the key to the universe; and every man will see the true point of view in exact proportion as he has the Spirit . . . This is the point the Elder must ever keep in view. Whatever be his topic, he must seek to see it as God sees it—from the summit of eternity; and not as man sees it, amid the fog and smoke of mortality.⁸

It seems certain that the promised essay would have discussed the concept along these same lines. To synthesize the knowledge of the world and to view the problems of existence *sub specie aeternitatis* are objectives which could scarcely have been achieved in one year. In fact, only occasionally do we find this purpose glimmering through the actual articles that were published. Nevertheless, it was an objective with a nobility and scope that might still serve as an inspiration to editors and writers in the Church.

This, then, was N. L. Nelson's *The Mormon Point of View* as it appeared in four issues during 1904. Before attempting to account for its demise, let us note that it aroused a good deal of commendation and praise. The endorsement from the First Presidency has already been mentioned. In the April issue some excerpts from letters from readers were printed. Professor B. S. Hinckley said, "Accept my sincere wishes for the complete success of your great enterprise." Someone in the headquarters of the Southern States Mission wrote that the magazine would "fill a long felt want." An elder from California saw the magazine as a means of helping to place the gospel "before the higher class of people."

The distinction between Thomases and Nathanaels con-

⁸*Preaching and Public Speaking* (1898), p. 67.

tained in the essay "Why This Magazine Is Needed" prompted one missionary to write: "This state is full of the Thomas type of individuals, with scarcely any of the Nathaniel class." A sister from Parowan said that she herself was one of the simple Nathanaels but had "many dear ones who are not of that class, but who belong to the doubters; and I am sure your magazine is just what I am looking for."

President McQuarrie of the Eastern States Mission wrote a lengthy letter, including the following:

I appreciate your view point and feel sure you are working along the proper lines. I have long been convinced that we have reached a point in our own development where we must study the philosophy underlying the principles of the Gospel, and learn what these principles are,—how they appeal to our lives and how they affect the lives of others,—rather than continue proving that Peter, James, John and Paul taught them. . . . [most people] want to know *why* they should act, before they move, and what the result will be. This spirit is manifest not only in the world, but also among our own young people.

McQuarrie recognized that there would be a hard financial struggle, saying "I haven't much to offer you, Brother Nelson; but if my faith and confidence, and what little influence I possess, will be of service to you, I take pleasure in offering you the latter, and assuring you of the former."

Another welcome endorsement came in a *Deseret News* editorial of 28 July 1904. It described the July issue of the magazine as "fully up to the high standard of previous numbers." The editors did not know whether the magazine would pay "in a pecuniary sense," but their concluding statement did not imply any other reservations: "We commend it to everybody."⁹

Despite the plaudits of individual readers and the endorsement of the First Presidency and the *Deseret News*, the magazine did not continue after the fourth issue. The doubts

⁹Sometime between the April and July issues Nelson got out a flyer entitled *The Mormon Point of View: A Short Account of Prof. Nelson's Magazine*. (A copy is available in the archives of the Brigham Young University Library.) The flyer included additional endorsements by Joseph E. Robinson, George H. Brimhall, and John A. Widtsoe. Obviously Nelson had enthusiastic readers. In 1918, when he was arranging for a new edition of *Scientific Aspects*, Professor Ernest Bramwell of Snow College at Ephraim wrote that it was "the best book of the twentieth century." *The White and Blue*, 21 (18 May 1918), p. 474.

about its financial viability expressed by the First Presidency, by President McQuarrie, and by the *Deseret News* were well justified. When Nelson referred to "the large numbers of people" who had subscribed he must have been whistling in the dark.

Although there are apparently no surviving subscription records, some excerpts from Nelson's correspondence enable us to piece together his general financial hopes and contrasting disappointment. We can be fairly certain that he had 2,000 copies of the first issue printed, that the cost to him for this one issue was \$110, and that his deficit at the end of the year, the unpaid balance still owed to the printer, was \$200.¹⁰

Several unknown factors make these figures difficult to interpret. If he had the subsequent three issues printed in the same quantity and at the same rate, his overall bill from the printer would have been \$440. But there must also have been a charge for the 10,000 copies of the prospectus and for another blurb published between the second and third issues of the magazine. On the other hand, he may have reduced the size of the printing after the first issue, which would have reduced his deficit to some extent. We know that subscriptions were offered at \$1.00 per year, but we do not know how much of this was kept as a commission by the agents. Another cost we are unable to compute is suggested by his offer in 1904 to send for \$1.00 not only the four numbers of the magazine but also "a draw-back check entitling him [the subscriber] to have them bound in cloth free of cost."¹¹ And who knows the number of individual copies that may have been sold.

If we guess that his advertising costs were in the vicinity of \$100, his overall costs to the printer came close to \$540. Assuming a commission of 25 to 50 percent, he would have needed 800-1,000 subscribers (or the equivalent in individual purchases) to break even. Had he been able to sell his 2,000 copies, he would have emerged with a profit of several hundred dollars. Supposedly such was what Nelson had in mind when he wrote to President Joseph F. Smith: "Should this project succeed, the income would go far to keep me and

¹⁰These financial details are found in Nelson's letters to President Joseph F. Smith dated 24 December 1903, and 3 January 1905.

¹¹Flyer cited in footnote 9.

my family, till such a time as my name should be established."¹² But he was short by an average of \$50 per issue, if we can assume that he did apply all income to paying the printer. By the fourth issue he was forced to give up. Probably the printer, faced with a deficit that grew with each issue, refused to go on without firm guarantees.

Even if financial subsidy had been forthcoming, it is doubtful that the magazine would ever have been a real success. Consider the following:

1. *The Mormon Point of View* was essentially a one-man production. Except for the roundelay by Joaquin Miller and the short story published anonymously by one of Nelson's students, Nelson himself wrote every word of every issue. If he had had a more neutral, impersonal style, this might not have been so noticeable. But his style was highly idiosyncratic. There was an unmistakable tone and cadence. Many readers, to judge from his defensive reaction, regarded his writing as difficult. Even those who enjoyed his style likely found this too much of a good thing. If variety and change of pace enhance interest, the simple fact of his single authorship was a deterrent to the magazine's success.

2. It was highly polemical. For the most part Nelson was defending the Latter-day Saints against the attacks of their enemies. As one who had served a mission in the tense 1880s, who had tried to improve the presentation of the Mormon message in sermons, and who was himself a polygamist, he was bound to react strongly to outside criticism. Nor did these issues appear to be dead. A call for Mormonism's destruction had been issued in 1903, and in 1904 the election of Senator Reed Smoot set off a controversy that lasted for many months. However, in ways that were probably not at all obvious at the time, an era of good feeling was beginning. Although an occasional article defending the Saints could still be valuable, a magazine that offered only polemic in 1904 probably ruled out much of its potential audience.

3. There may have been some theological opposition. At least Nelson's *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism* aroused some strictures, and the lengthy article on "The Spiritual Life" was drawn from that book. His view of the Holy Ghost as a

¹²Nelson to President Joseph F. Smith, 1 December 1903.

pervasive force rather than a person and his conception of Christ as an office rather than an individual seem inconsistent with the interpretations of President Joseph F. Smith. Nelson insisted that he was defending the truth as he saw it and if he was wrong asked only to be corrected. But he admitted the existence of a widespread notion that the book was "not trustworthy in its exposition of Mormonism."¹³ If this reputation of the book rubbed off on the magazine, or if the magazine in some way contributed to these suspicions, his chances of success were further impeded.

4. Existing Church magazines provided tough competition for *The Mormon Point of View*. He was not really aiming at readers who were inactive Mormons and worldly skeptics. If some of these were still susceptible to a missionary appeal, his magazine might help to reach them. But in general it appears that his readers were young Latter-day Saints, with a bit more education than their parents, including some of his former and present students at Brigham Young Academy. They needed strengthening in the faith and wished to see their religion presented as rationally as possible. But for such readers the *Improvement Era*, *Woman's Exponent*, and *Young Woman's Journal* were already doing a remarkably successful job. Drawing on the best authors in the Church and opening their pages to spokesmen for other faiths, these magazines were in their heyday. To many readers it must have appeared that they provided everything promised by *The Mormon Point of View* but more frequently, and with greater diversity and vitality.

In his prospectus Nelson had made a brave statement: "As for the outcome, I am fully aware that no moral bolstering ever yet succeeded in keeping alive that which intrinsically deserved to die, and consequently that my journalistic venture must, in the end, survive or perish by that merciless, but still on the whole very beneficent law—survival of the fittest." After four issues the magazine perished in a Darwinian struggle for existence.

If *The Mormon Point of View* did not have a long life, it obviously gave nourishment to its readers. One can be thankful for many thoughtful passages of which the following is a single example:

¹³Nelson to President Joseph F. Smith, 3 January 1905.

Not only is the natural world the best place to perfect the spiritual man, it is the only place for intelligences organized as we are now. Were this not so, God would have given us that other place instead of this one. Here and here only, so far as we are concerned, are the problems physical, intellectual, moral and social, the overcoming of which is the means of making us perfect as God is perfect. To sigh for a purer, better world in order to be more spiritual-minded, is flatly to lie down and give up the fight. Thank God for the admirable world of sin, in which he has placed us; but thank him more for showing how to carve heaven out of it.¹⁴

Even at this date, when strident polemic appears to come from another world, another time, there are many who find some of N. L. Nelson's words speaking to their souls as music from the spheres.

¹⁴*The Mormon Point of View*, pp. 270-71.