

On Mormon Laughter

Shawn R. Tucker

From the time that I spent as both a missionary and as a teacher at Provo's Missionary Training Center, I recall several discussions about loud laughter. Many hours a day in a small classroom with the same eight to twelve people can make anyone a little stir-crazy, and by the end of such long days, missionaries could become rather silly, laughing at the least provocation. I recall one particular conversation in which several missionaries and instructors disagreed about the connection between that jovial silliness and the scripturally prohibited excess of laughter. I wonder what that same conversation about loud laughter might have been like had it happened after the October 2008 General Conference. It was during that conference that Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin gave an address entitled "Come What May and Love it." In this talk, the Apostle affirmed how "over the years I have learned a few things that have helped me through times of testing and trial. I would like to share them with you. The first thing we can do is learn to laugh."¹ To illustrate the value of laughter, Elder Wirthlin offered many experiences that elicited loud laughter from the congregation at the Conference Center.

The conflict created by the scriptural injunction against laughter and an Apostle commanding its value is difficult to resolve.² In fact, retaining some of that conflict might be worthwhile. Without trying to resolve the conflict completely, what follows begins with a brief contextualization of some of the commands against laughter and an examination of laughter's potential dangers. To this examination I will try to add insights from current social science research about laughter in relationships. That research reveals the conflictive nature of laughter, including its positive and negative potentials.

Shawn R. Tucker

I grew up in a home with lots of joyous, good-natured laughter, so commands against “loud laughter” puzzled and troubled me. I had largely set those concerns aside, until I began teaching a seminar on laughter here at Elon University (in Elon, North Carolina). Teaching the course brought back those old questions, but this time I had some tools to re-examine them. In this research process, I am grateful for insights provided by Jacob Baker, the encouragement of Joe Spencer at the Mormon Scholars in the Humanities conference, and the manuscript reviewer’s comments. As you can see from the photograph of me with my youngest son, we love to laugh.



One of those positive potentials is how laughter may help individuals gain insights into themselves. Laughter can be a pleasant way to recognize one’s flaws and shortcomings, and it may also be a powerful tool for inviting others to reflect and grow. An appreciation for laughter’s connection with growth and humility opens yet another connection, the connection between laughter and *Sehnsucht*, or spiritual longing.³ Such a connection between laughter and *Sehnsucht* elevates laughter to its highest celestial potential, a potential that is perhaps nowhere more powerfully expressed than in the personal account by F. Enzio Busche that concludes this essay.

Commands against Laughter

The most commonly cited scriptural commands against laughter come in the eighty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you; cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter far from you” (D&C 88:69). Several verses later the section further elaborates: “Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings” (D&C

88:121). In these verses, laughter or excess of laughter combine with light speeches, lustful desires, pride, light-mindedness, and wicked doings. This is pretty nefarious company. The commands in this section and elsewhere prompt us to take laughter seriously and examine it critically.

It is Thomas Hobbes who is most closely associated with the dangerous ways that laughter mixes with pride. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes concludes that “*Sudden Glory*, is the passion which maketh those *Grimaces* called Laughter: and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves.”⁴ Hobbes’s view expresses what has been called the superiority theory of laughter, the core of which is that laughter’s explosive response is triggered by the sudden realization of one’s preeminence over another.⁵ Among the contemporary thinkers who have extended Hobbes’s observations is Joseph Boskin, who explores laughter’s aggressive aspects, especially how effective it is in transmitting and perpetuating stereotypes.⁶

The injunction against laughter in section 88 not only links laughter with pride, a connection made clearer with Hobbes’s views on laughter, but it also links it with idle thoughts, light speeches, wicked doings, and lustful desires. Some insight into the particular historical and cultural context for section 88 may also shed light on these injunctions. Richard Bushman, talking about this section, has said, “The School of the Prophets tells more about the desired texture of Joseph’s holy society than anything he had done thus far—and more of what he was up against. The directions to quell excessive laughter and all light-mindedness implicitly reflect the rough-hewn characters who had joined him in the great cause. Few were polished—and he would never teach them gentility—but he wanted order, peace, and virtue.”⁷ Along with Bushman’s insight that this revelation spoke to “rough-hewn characters” who were rather unpolished, we can note that two months after receiving this revelation Joseph received the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom.

Given Bushman’s observation about the rather coarse early Saints who were given this revelation as well as the revelation’s timing, we could surmise that the Lord is condemning what we might call carousing. The kind of drinking and raucousness associated with carousing seems rather foreign to the contemporary Latter-day Saint experience.⁸ If contemporary Mormons differ from the “rough-hewn characters” of eighteenth-century frontier America, and if contemporary Mormons instead abide by the Word of Wisdom and eschew derisive, ribald, and sacrilegious laughter, then we could conclude that the nature of the laughter that the Lord condemns is quite

different from how contemporary Mormons generally laugh. The jovial and light-hearted yet loud laughter of exhausted and stressed missionaries-in-training, though silly, does not seem to fit the loud laughter prohibited in the Doctrine and Covenants and other places. While these conclusions about contemporary Mormon laughter may be accurate, such conclusions should not take the seriousness out of the Lord's condemnation of laughter that accompanies pride, lust, and, we could add, disrespect of others and of all that is holy. If God's people laugh, such laughter, to use a phrase from section 88, should be "sanctified from all unrighteousness" (D&C 88:18). The danger lies in how one may not recognize pride and unrighteousness seeping into what one might believe to be innocuous laughter.

Positive and Negative Laughter

One place where we can see the pitfalls and the positive potentials of laughter is in current social science research about its role in relationships. Such insights bring out how laughter can damage relationships and encourage our pride, but that same research shows how it can create positive bonds. Bethany Butzer and Nicholas A. Kuiper's research connects relationship satisfaction with the types of humor that romantic couples use. While Butzer and Kuiper examine humor instead of laughter, their use of the term "humor" seems to include both that which evokes laughter and the nature of the laughter itself. Thus these researchers examine different types of humor, including what they call "negative humor," or humor that "is used to express hostility towards one's partner," positive humor, which is "used to feel closer to one's partner and to ease tension," and avoiding humor, which "is used to either minimize or avoid conflict entirely, often by changing the focus of conversation."⁹ Couples who use positive humor employ language, gestures, allusions, inside jokes, and laughter itself to affirm their bond and increase intimacy. Butzer and Kuiper built their research on previous work that had linked positive humor with greater relationship satisfaction. That same research had linked negative humor, which is "a form of aggression or manipulation against their partner," to decreased satisfaction.¹⁰ These researchers examined whether the nature of the humor changed when individuals were in pleasant or in conflictive events. What they found was that, whether they were in pleasant or conflictive events, individuals with high satisfaction in their romantic relationships had very high levels of positive humor and low levels of avoiding or negative humor. By the same token, the situations did not alter the negative and avoiding humor of those who reported low relationship satisfaction.

There are three insights that emerge from this research. One insight is that it is interesting to have some empirical evidence for what we may naturally assume is true—that positive, supportive, bonding humor corresponds with high relationship satisfaction. Another is the frightening insight into relationships where humor is a tool of aggression and manipulation. Such humor could start with subtle derision and put-downs, escalating to increasingly cold and bitter sarcasm. This humor is all the more painful because of the intimacy of the perpetrators and victims. These are weapons that cut so deep because they are wielded in such close proximity. The third insight this research offers is a partial explanation for some of the experiences that Elder Wirthlin described in his final general conference address. Butzer and Kuiper examine the role of laughter in conflict events, pointing out that even in such events there is a prevalence of positive humor for those who report high relationship satisfaction. In his talk, Elder Wirthlin described two conflictive events. In one event, the family got lost on a long car trip, and in the other, a daughter mistook a man coming to pick up a sibling to babysit as her blind date.¹¹ The accounts are very funny in Elder Wirthlin's telling. Elder Wirthlin also noted that the participants did not choose to get angry or to feel humiliated. Instead, everyone laughed. Elder Wirthlin reported that these experiences became fond family memories. Butzer and Kuiper's empirical research corroborates how this positive humor is part of a high-satisfaction family relationship.

Laughter, Pedantry, and Proportion

The warnings and commands about laughter—warnings and commands that equally apply to humor—invite us to examine laughter critically and to take it seriously. These commands, supported by some empirical research, encourage us to search out overt and subtle evils in our laughter, including any ways that such laughter may accompany lust, pride, anger, derision, manipulation, and resentment. That same research and Elder Wirthlin's injunction encourage us to seek and cultivate laughter that builds bonds and helps us "love" whatever may come our way. Another benefit of cultivating the right kind of laughter is that it can help us overcome what Arthur Schopenhauer calls "pedantry."

According to Schopenhauer, pedantry is a form of intellectual arrogance, where one "tries always to proceed from general concepts, rules, and maxims, and to confine himself [or herself] strictly to them in life, in art, and even in moral conduct."¹² For Schopenhauer, such abstract, general concepts fail to account for real particulars. What causes laughter, according to Schopenhauer, is how "the incongruity then between the concept

and reality soon shows itself here, and it becomes evident that the former never condescends to the particular case, and that with its generality and rigid definiteness it can never accurately apply to the fine distinctions of difference and innumerable modification of the actual.”¹³ The incongruity that arises from the failure of the general to account for the particular is always funnier given how the pedant, “with his [or her] general maxims, almost always misses the mark in life, shows himself [or herself] to be foolish, awkward, useless.”¹⁴ While these may be somewhat harsh words, Schopenhauer gives the humorous example of Don Quixote to further illustrate his point.¹⁵ Quixote has so filled his mind with tales of knights and damsels and is therefore so set on these general concepts that he fails to see how the actual people and events in his life, the particulars, do not correspond with his general concepts. Quixote’s foolishness is that of the pedant, and we laugh at his failure to recognize the incongruity.¹⁶

A personal experience may further illustrate Schopenhauer’s insights. While serving as a missionary, I was not as effective as I could have been because I was not sleeping well. I was waking up in the night very frequently because, as I would shift in bed, one cold foot would touch the other leg, a startling sensation that would wake me up. During a rather drowsy teaching day, the scripture from James about lacking wisdom and asking God suddenly struck me. I could ask God. That night I fervently prayed, laying out my problem, assured that the inspiration of divine wisdom would make me a better instrument in God’s hands. I received a sudden answer: “Shawn, put on socks.” This answer, of course, made me laugh. God really did answer my prayer, but it did not conform to the *gravitas* of my expectations of the divine or divine inspiration. In fact, I felt as if God were smiling, lovingly, at my pedantry.¹⁷ Diana Mahoney and Marla Corson seem to report a similar experience when they tell of a forty-six-year-old LDS woman who reported, “I also had an experience where I *know* that Heavenly Father was chuckling at something I did. I will always remember the feeling of surprise I felt.”¹⁸

Laughing at our immaturity or at the limitations of our understanding and experience is a valuable and healthy response to some of the difficulties we encounter. This could be part of the reason why Elder Wirthlin recommended learning to laugh as part of learning how to love whatever may come our way. Laughing at our limited notions of God, especially while God challenges those notions, can invite us to seek a more mature and sophisticated relationship with God.¹⁹

An additional benefit this sort of laughter may offer is that it helps us to not take ourselves too seriously. Laughter seems to have a way of putting

things back in perspective. The way that laughter acts as an antidote to our pedantry and brings proper perspective is mirrored in the advice that C. S. Lewis's demonic Screwtape gives to his pupil Wormwood.²⁰ When talking about humility, Screwtape counsels Wormwood to get the "patient" to become aware of his own humility as a way to develop pride in that very humility. Screwtape shows how any virtue can become a vice when we are proudly aware that we possess it. But when talking about raising such awareness again and again, Screwtape warns, "Don't try this too long, for fear you awake his sense of humor and proportion, in which case he will merely laugh at you and go to bed."²¹ Lewis's demon seems to see how a sense of humor is, at least in part, the ability to recognize one's foolishness or pedantry, to laugh at it, and to find thereby proper perspective and proportion.

Laughter's Humble Persuasion

Besides revealing limitations and bringing perspective, there is another role that laughter may play in one's growth, and the best example of this role is also drawn from C. S. Lewis's fiction. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* is the imaginative account of various characters confronting invitations to heaven. One character is a very small man with a large ventriloquist's dummy. The man, whom the narrator calls the "Dwarf," with a puppet called the "Tragedian," meets a glorious being who turns out to have been his earthly wife. That radiant Lady does all she can to persuade her husband to set aside the pride and self-pity that are embodied in the grotesque puppet. While trying to persuade him, the narrator describes how "merriment danced in her eyes" as "she was sharing a joke with the Dwarf, right over the head of the Tragedian."²² In response to her love and her joke, "something not at all unlike a smile struggled to appear on the Dwarf's face. For he was looking at her now. Her laughter was past his first defenses."²³ It is the combination of all of those elements, including her love, her genuine concern for her husband, and her laughter that gives the wife's invitation the power to penetrate, initially, her husband's pride and self-pity.

This account makes clear that, when combined with love and humility, laughter can circumvent, if only momentarily, resistant attitudes. In this respect, laughter can be persuasive, for it can make joy and humility seem sweet and inviting.²⁴ Laughter can combine with long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge to encourage the best in others (see D&C 121:41–42). But laughter is a tool of humble persuasion. Of course we should not mock others as a self-righteous way to manipulate them into doing what we believe they should do.²⁵ Still, even

when laughter is used with genuine love, there is no guarantee that those who hear its invitation will be persuaded. In Lewis's story, the husband ultimately rejects the invitation, accusing his wife of laughing at him.²⁶ The Lady could not control how he received her joke and her laughter as an invitation, and, although it penetrated his first defenses, the Dwarf's pride and self-pity finally transformed her gift into an insult.

Laughter and *Sehnsucht*

Not only can laughter gently and pleasantly draw others toward what is good, but, as it comes with the realization of our pedantry, it can also delightfully beckon us to a humility born of the recognition of our limited expectations and ideas. When laughter is mixed with pride, it can be a debilitating poison that destroys lives and relationships; when laughter is accompanied by love, it can be a healing, curing, and bonding agent. But there is yet another role that laughter may play, that of offering us a foretaste of heaven. Laughter can evoke a longing for the divine, a longing that is often identified with the German word for longing, *Sehnsucht*.

One of the thinkers most closely associated with *Sehnsucht* is, again, C. S. Lewis.²⁷ Lewis's autobiography traces his vague longing for something that no mortal experience could satisfy. As he came to embrace theism and then Christianity, he associated this longing with an emptiness that only God could fill. Lewis described this desire: "We cannot tell it because it is a desire for something that has never actually appeared in our experience. We cannot hide it because our experience is constantly suggesting it, and we betray ourselves like lovers at the mention of a name."²⁸ Lewis further elaborates that there are common yet inaccurate names that we give to this constant yet vague desire:

Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. Wordsworth's expedient was to identify it with certain moments in his own past. But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited.²⁹

The longing that Lewis described is evoked by experiences with beauty, for example, but for Lewis those experiences give a taste of the divine but are not identical with it.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell seems to draw upon Lewis's ideas when he talks about the need to be patient in mortality:

I have struggled to find adequate words to express these concluding feelings and thoughts about our need to be patient with ourselves and our circumstances in this second estate. Some of us have been momentarily wrenched by the sound of a train whistle spilling into the night air—and we have been inexplicably subdued by the mix of feelings this evokes. Or perhaps we have been beckoned by a lighted cottage across a snow-covered meadow at dusk. Or we have heard the warm and drawing laughter of children at a nearby playground. Or we have been tugged at by the strains of congregational singing from a nearby church. Or we have encountered a particular fragrance which has awakened memories deep within us of things which once were. In such moments we have felt a deep yearning—as if we were temporarily outside something to which we actually belonged and of which we so much wanted again to be a part.³⁰

Elder Maxwell notes our need for patience as a response to so many experiences that may evoke the very longing or *Sehnsucht* that he and Lewis associate with a taste of the divine.

Maxwell mentions hearing the “warm and drawing laughter of children” as one experience that might evoke a powerful sense of belonging, a belonging that we want to be part of again. While it may be true that hearing such laughter, like so many other experiences that Maxwell cites, could evoke that longing, what about our own experience of laughing? Could the act of laughing also evoke *Sehnsucht*? When Lewis talks about the connection between beauty and *Sehnsucht*, he says, “We do not want merely to *see* beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”³¹ Such a complete union with beauty may also describe the wholeness and fullness that we may feel with laughter. During the moment of laughter, it can almost seem as if all existence were temporarily suspended, as the spontaneous joy, delight, and wonder of whatever triggers the laughter, for a split second, allows us to be caught up in the laugh and to feel connected with the divine, seamlessly a part of the whole. In the best moments of our laughter, we seem to pass into something heavenly, receive it, bathe in it, and become part of it.

If laughter can indeed trigger the *Sehnsucht* for the divine, then it makes sense that God would place commands around its use. Such a powerful

means of contacting the divine should be edifying, encouraging, and positive. It should lift us toward the divine and encourage the best bonds with those around us. The joyous experience of laughter that might, to use Elder Maxwell's words, awaken "memories deep within us of things which once were," can also strongly bond friends, families, missionaries, and others. If, at its best, laughter does have such a power, then it should not surprise us to find Satan's counterfeit in laughter that belittles, coerces, cuts, or destroys, degrading *Sehnsucht* into despair. Laughter can, in a delightful way, reveal weaknesses and limitations for the humble; it should not flatter the proud. Laughter can draw people together toward the divine; it should not divide or manipulate. If laughter, by its very nature, can evoke the longing for the divine, then it is a natural complement to love, friendships, families, marriage, and God's great plan of happiness. And if that is the case, so can the pairing of laughter and objectifying lust create a powerful, devilish, and damning imitation.

God's Laughter and Satan's Seriousness

The contrast between laughter's divine potential and satanic seriousness is perhaps nowhere more evident than in a personal experience that Elder F. Enzio Busche's recounts in his memoir *Yearning for the Living God*. In what he describes as one of the most sacred experiences of his life, Elder Busche explains that as a new General Authority, he was visiting a mission when one of the elders became possessed by an evil spirit. Elder Busche was called to assist. When he arrived, the missionary was shaking all over and foaming at the mouth, while his companion, the mission president, and the president's family looked on in shock and fear. Elder Busche recounts that at that moment he felt he had a decision to make. He then explains, "I knew immediately what decision it was. I had to decide whether to join the fear and amazement and helplessness or to let faith act and let courage come in."³²

Wanting to respond with faith and courage, Elder Busche recalled scriptures about how perfect love casts out fear and that one could pray to be filled with such love. In his own words, Elder Busche recounts what happened next and what he learned:

I prayed with all the energy of my heart, "Father, fill my soul with love." I cried from the depths of my being, without wasting any time. It all happened in a split second. After that it was as if my skull was opened and a warm feeling poured down into my soul—down my head, my neck, my chest. As it was pouring down, it drove out all of the fear. My shivering knees stopped shaking. I stood there, a big smile came to my face—a smile of deep, satisfying joy and confidence.

Suddenly, those in the room looked not scary, but amusing. It was just funny to see them all there. I learned in that moment that when we are under the influence of the Spirit, we can find a sense of humor and the ability to smile and not take ourselves too seriously, and we can laugh at ourselves. Then it dawned on me that the adversary's weapons are sarcasm, irony, and cynicism, but that the Lord's power is a gentle sense of humor. I have learned more and more since then that the adversary cannot deal with a sense of humor. He does not have a sense of humor; he does not even know what that is. He is always dead serious, and when you have a sense of humor, you are in control of the adversary's influence.³³

With Elder Busche's act of faith and love came an endowment of joy and confidence. With that joy and confidence came the insight about the connection between the Spirit and a sense of humor. This sense of humor corresponds with Elder Wirthlin's commendation about learning to laugh. Such a sense of humor or faculty for laughter, can, as Elder Busche describes, be a heavenly gift that delightfully frees us from a seriousness that would cause us to lose perspective and proportion and to be lost in foolishness, pedantry, and fear. The Lord's gift and faculty for laughter is building and encouraging. This divine laughter contrasts as sharply as good contrasts with evil when compared with Satan's sarcasm, irony, and cynicism.

As Elder Busche concludes his account, he states that after the evil spirit had left the missionary, "for about an hour after that, we had a spontaneous sharing of testimonies, jubilantly praising God and singing and praying. It was an exuberant experience of the workings of the spirit of love, which is the Spirit of Christ and by it overcoming all evil."³⁴ Their jubilation, naturally, included joyous, divine laughter. One of the things Elder Busche learned, dramatically, was Satan's seriousness and his perverted form of laughter, a laughter that is cold, cynical, derisive, and belittling. It is a perversion of a God-given faculty that should delightfully lift and edify. When used and enjoyed properly, that same faculty for laughter, like other faculties that God gives to bless his children, builds bonds, delightfully instructs, and gently persuades, at the same time that it offers a foretaste of divine oneness, joy, and power.

Shawn R. Tucker (who can be contacted via email at byustudies@byu.edu) is Associate Professor of fine arts at Elon University. He earned a PhD and MA at Florida State University and a BA at Brigham Young University. He presented "On Mormon Laughter" at the Conference of the Mormon Scholars in the Humanities, Orem, Utah, March 2011. His scholarly publications include "Contrasting Utopias: Toward a Theoretical Framework for Modernism, the Avant-Garde, and Postmodernism," *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 60–78; and "Passing

Around—Running the Offense—Generating the Offense: Improving All Levels of Humanities Instruction,” *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 88–97.

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign* 38 (November 2008): 26. Please note that “laughter” in this essay refers to the particular reaction to certain stimuli, while “humor” refers to that which seeks to provoke laughter. When Elder Wirthlin encourages Latter-day Saints to “learn to laugh,” he seems to mean, among other things, that they should find appropriate humor even in life’s difficulties. It is interesting to note that the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* includes an entry on humor but not one on laughter. ▲

2. For more on laughter, humor, and Mormonism, see William A. Wilson, “The Seriousness of Mormon Humor,” *Sunstone* 10, no. 1 (1985): 6–13; and Diana L. Mahony and Marla D. Corson, “Light-Mindedness versus Lightheartedness: Conflicting Conceptions of Laughter among Latter-Day Saints,” *BYU Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003): 115–29. ▲

3. For more on the connections between laughter, spirituality, and religion, see Karl-Josef Kushel’s insightful and foundational treatment, including his history of laughter in the West, in *Laughter: A Theological Essay* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Patrick Laude’s excellent exploration of the role of ambiguity and surprise in spiritual enlightenment in *Divine Play, Sacred Laughter, and Spiritual Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Peter L. Berger’s study of how laughter can point toward a transcendent, redemptive reality in *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1997); Ingvild Sælid Gilhus’s examination of the history of laughter and religion in *Laughing Gods, Weeping Virgins: Laughter in the History of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1997); as well as James Martin’s recent scholarly affirmation of the centrality of laughter in spiritual life in *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011). ▲

4. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 37. ▲

5. For a discussion of the superiority theory of laughter, see John Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); and John Morreall, *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987). It should also be noted that these two books, as foundational explorations of laughter, explore other theories of laughter, including relief theory and incongruity theory. ▲

6. Joseph Boskin, “The Complicity of Humor: The Life and Death of Sambo,” in Morreall, *Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*, 250–63. ▲

7. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 211–12. ▲

8. The “foreignness” of carousing in contemporary LDS experience is perhaps nowhere more evident than in BYU’s consistently high ranking as the most “stone-cold sober” institution of higher learning in college guides like the *Princeton Review*. ▲

9. Bethany Butzer and Nicholas A. Kuiper, “Humor Use in Romantic Relationships: The Effects of Relationship Satisfaction and Pleasant Versus Conflict Situations,” *Journal of Psychology* 142, no. 3 (2008): 246. ▲

10. Butzer and Kuiper, “Humor Use,” 246. ▲

11. Wirthlin, "Come What May," 26–27. [▲]
12. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, trans. R. B. Haldane and John Kemp (London: Trübner and Co., 1883), 78. Laude does not mention Schopenhauer, but Schopenhauer's idea of laughter as revealing the incongruity between abstractions and realities fits nicely with Laude's arguments about how the unexpected, the surprising, and even the scandalous that are at play in laughter can lead to spiritual awakening and rebirth. See Laude, *Divine Play*. [▲]
13. Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Idea*, 78. Schopenhauer is one of the thinkers associated with the incongruity theory of laughter. For more on this theory, see Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously*, 15–19; and *Philosophy of Laughter and Humor*. [▲]
14. Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Idea*, 78. [▲]
15. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), 97. [▲]
16. In *Redeeming Laughter*, Berger places Don Quixote in the tradition of the holy fool and the Kierkegaardian "knight of faith," one who sees and lives by a transcendent, redeemed reality that contrasts, starkly and comically, with the rational, mundane, and unredeemed everyday world (193–95). [▲]
17. This example also fits well with the idea of humor as the gentle art of reframing that Donald Capps puts forward in his book *A Time to Laugh: The Religion of Humor* (New York: Continuum, 2005). [▲]
18. Mahoney and Corson, "Light-Mindedness versus Lightheartedness," 126. [▲]
19. I prefer to charitably imagine that this laughing at one's pantry and limited understanding describes the nature of Abraham and Sarah's laughter in response to the announcement of Isaac's birth (see Gen. 17:15–21; 18:1–15). [▲]
20. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 53–56. As this essay draws on many of C. S. Lewis's ideas and insights, it is important to note the scholarship that differentiates several of Lewis's ideas from Mormon theology, scholarship that includes Evan Stephenson, "The Last Battle: C. S. Lewis and Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30, no. 4 (1997): 43–69; and Blair Dee Hodges, "All Find What They Truly Seek": C. S. Lewis, Latter-day Saints, and the Virtuous Unbeliever," *Dialogue* 43, no. 3 (2010): 21–61. While that scholarship is important in seeing that Lewis's ideas and Mormon theology are not synonymous, Lewis's insights that are part of this essay do show a fruitful overlap. See also Andrew C. Skinner and Robert L. Millet, eds., *C. S. Lewis: The Man and His Message* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999). [▲]
21. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 69–70. [▲]
22. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 126. [▲]
23. Lewis, *Great Divorce*, 126–27. [▲]
24. There is substantial scholarship on the role of laughter in the therapeutic process, a process that is also concerned with nurturing the growth of others, often by carefully revealing maladaptive patterns. This scholarship includes Waleed A. Salameh and William F. Fry Jr., *Humor and Wellness in Clinical Intervention* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001); Frank M. Lachmann, *Transforming Narcissism: Reflections on Empathy, Humor, and Expectations* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and Rachelle G. Berg, Gerald Parr, Loretta J. Bradley, and Jeremy J. Berry, "Humor: A Therapeutic Intervention for Child Counseling," *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 4 (2009): 225–36. [▲]

25. See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 121–28, for a discussion of how pride can be used to cure “minor vices,” but, unfortunately, in ways that give one spiritual “cancer” instead of just spiritual “plantar’s warts.” [▲]
26. Lewis, *Great Divorce*, 129. [▲]
27. For a thorough examination of the relationship between Lewis and *Sehnsucht*, see Corbin Scott Carnell, *Bright Shadow of Reality: Spiritual Longing in C. S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974). [▲]
28. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 30. [▲]
29. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 30–31. [▲]
30. Neal A. Maxwell, “Patience,” in *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1979), 215–20. [▲]
31. Lewis, *Weight of Glory*, 42. [▲]
32. F. Enzio Busche, *Yearning for the Living God: Reflections from the Life of F. Enzio Busche*, ed. Tracie A. Lamb (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 270. [▲]
33. Busche, *Yearning*, 270–71. [▲]
34. Busche, *Yearning*, 271. [▲]