

Appendix D

Letter to Sterling M. McMurrin, 23 August 1967

Note: On 31 July 1967, Sterling McMurrin wrote Hugh about plans for “a piece on Mormon philosophy” that he was working on that would feature the views of Orson Pratt, W. H. Chamberlin, B. H. Roberts, E. E. Erickson, Hugh Nibley, and W. P. Read. McMurrin invited Hugh to list “those writings which you regard as most effectively representing your position with respect to philosophy matters in general and in particular the philosophy of religion” or to “jot down a few paragraphs that epitomize” his position.¹ So far as I know, McMurrin’s essay was never completed, but this letter was Hugh’s response.

August 23, 1967

Dear Sterling,

I have been away—first visit to southern California in 20 years—so here we are back again and forced to think about a religious philosophy. I can see that there would be a place for my peculiar views in your interesting Roman salad if only for contrast: “If a man will compare the richness and variety of the universe,” wrote A. E. Housman, “and inspire his mind with a due measure of wonder and of awe, he must contemplate the human intellect not only in its heights of genius but in its abysses of ineptitude.” Let that be my passport to your august company while I list, in no particular order, a few propositions that express my religious position at the moment.

Proposition No. 1. We are participating in a vivid little drama being enacted in empty space. If blind chance can set this stage, put the characters on it, and set the plot in motion, then there is nothing that blind chance cannot do, including the staging of innumerable other plays on other worlds; and blind chance may very well have arranged to

¹Sterling McMurrin, Letter to Hugh Nibley, 31 July 1967, Sterling McMurrin Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.