

# Readers' Forum

## Stunning Product

After thoroughly reading the current issue of your magazine, I felt obliged to let you know of my admiration for your efforts and devotion to the magazine. Your editorial direction and palpable commitment to intellectual endeavor and excellence is everywhere evident in the current issue; it is simply a stunning product.

I trust and hope that future issues will be of this calibre and I wish you every good fortune in pursuing that goal. If there is anything that I can do for you, I will be pleased to assist in that regard.

Mark S. Gustavson  
Salt Lake City, Utah

## No Fear for Membership

Your Update article, "Mormons and ERA in the Media," creates the impression that pro-ERA supporters within the Church are being pressured, ostracized, and involuntarily excommunicated. My own experience has been otherwise.

I have spoken publicly in favor of the ERA and following Sonia Johnson's excommunication I had a letter published in the *L.A. Times* in which I announced my support for the ERA.

Following a speech given by Barbara Smith on the ERA in Santa Barbara in January of 1980, I spoke to her and told her that I did not agree with her conclusions. She answered, "That's your privilege."

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, in response to a letter I had written to the First Presidency on the question of Church financial support for anti-ERA groups, stated to me that each member of the Church "is at liberty to accept or reject the counsel" of the Brethren on the ERA or any other issue. He quoted my *Times* letter and was therefore well aware of my position.

I possess a current temple recommend.

I am active. I teach Relief Society and am a visiting teacher. Rather than curtail my Church jobs, my Bishop has asked me to take additional ones.

I do not believe that I am unique.

While friends outside the Church frequently ask me whether the ax has fallen yet, I continue in my active support for the ERA without fear for my membership.

Many regard Santa Barbara as a paradise because of its beauty and climate. Can it be that the Church here is also more paradisiacal than elsewhere?

Susan W. Howard  
Santa Barbara, California

## Editor's Note

*The Update section often summarizes news media accounts about the Church. A summary of the Knight-Ridder article by Vera Glaser, which dealt with purported pressure on Mormon ERA supporters was, therefore, included in Volume 5 Number 2. The truthfulness of attitudes or allegations thus reported in SUNSTONE remains the responsibility of the author of the original article. SUNSTONE will continue to summarize reports which come to our attention as accurately and objectively as possible. Subscribers can help by writing to us regarding media coverage and news-worthy items about the Church in their areas.*

## Homes for Elderly

I read the Mormonage article by Kevin Barnhurst in *Sunstone* and really agreed with what he so courageously said—even though he got such a critical response. I was interested in homes for the elderly back in the Forties—not that my mother needed one, but many of her friends did. When I told her Bishop about my ideas he was shocked. He said that it was not in accordance with the Church's teachings to put the old people in homes. As a result, aside from the home on 1st North which the Church owns, everyone I know has to live in St. Joseph's Villa. But I believe the day will come when this need will be met by the Church.

Myrtle McDonald  
Encino, California

## Student Writes

Today I read with intense interest a wide variety of articles in your magazine. Congratulations, it is very refreshing for me as a student to experience the mental stimulation that the articles in your magazine encourage.

Janet R. Cornwall  
Salt Lake City, Utah

## Different Dispositions

John L. Smith's reply to my letter concerning supernatural intervention in the black priesthood revelation reflects the typical views of those who have apostatized and now hold the theories critical of the church, no matter how invalid, as holy scripture. I spoke with LeGrand Richards long before the interview in question was made and know his views. The fact is, he had little to do with the decision other than being a sounding board. It was not merely a "corporate decision" or something that can be filed as a "declaration" (other than the official statement). Something supernatural, divine if you will, was involved, as I reported. We can well do without the smug ignorance of those like the letter writer who drew conclusions based on partial information.

Scott S. Smith  
Calle Roble, California

## Christ of the Center

Gerry Ensley, in his letter titled by you "Christ at the Periphery" in Vol. 5 no. 2, has written false doctrine while claiming to speak for the "plan of salvation as Mormons understand it." I have been saddened and deeply angered as I read Mr. Ensley's remarks, and I finished the letter with one thought in mind: "How dare he?" How dare he seek to strip the Christ of his saving power and relegate him to the role of mere teacher? I am reminded of the prophet Alma's words: "Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction" (Alma 13:20). Ensley, apparently without reservation has rejected much, if not most, of the New Testament (viewing it as an organ of suppression of true Christian doctrine) and taken the Nag Hammadi apocryphal texts (his understanding of which I seriously question) as his standard of truth. He similarly dismisses certain unspecified "erroneous (N. Test.) notions carried inadvertently into other Mormon scriptures." If Ensley has read the scriptures he does not understand them. He does not understand what it means to have humility before God, to have a broken heart and contrite spirit—a state of being sprung from awareness of our fallen condition and the awesome price Christ has paid to redeem us; he inaccurately believes the gifts of the spirit to be generated within ourselves by individual effort independent of God's aid, forgetting the Book of Mormon reminder: "If there be one among you that doeth good *he shall work by the power and gifts of God*" (Moroni 10:25.) In his reverence of human agency

he has overlooked King Benjamin's statements regarding God's role in our ability to use that agency: "(God) has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another. . . . Now I ask can ye say aught of yourselves? I say unto you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth" (Mosiah 2:21, 25.)

The gospel teachings about man's free agency are exhilarating. The truth that we are eternal, individual intelligences with the right, responsibility and capacity—not to be infringed upon, but rather upheld and quickened, by God—to choose the course of our own lives is mind-blowing. But God has not merely *shown* us the ways of salvation: he has promised us that if we will choose to receive him as may be granted spiritual rebirth, our hearts turned and tuned to his will; we may ultimately be *endowed* with his attributes and power: "As many as *received* him, to them *gave* he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12.) Christ said to his ancient apostles: "Abide in me and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. . . . *without me ye can do nothing*" (John 15:4, 5.)

Let there be no misunderstanding: I say nothing which denies the inherent dignity and beauty of man and the power available to him through righteous use of agency. I do not "wrest" the truths of free will. I speak against antichrist teachings: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists. . . . they went out from us, but they were not of us. . . . who is the liar but he that denieth that *Jesus is the Christ*? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:18, 19, 22.) As clearly as I am able to see this matter, I see that Mr. Ensley has denied the Savior and the absolute vitality of the atoning sacrifice. In his affirmation of our need for a teacher—"a pilot"—he has denied our all-pervasive need of a redeemer, one with whom we may *couple* our most fervent energies and efforts in the process of reconciliation with God. Salvation cannot be achieved solitarily—it cannot be obtained for us by Christ alone, nor for ourselves by the isolated self. We may be saved only through *union*—intimate, purposive, giving-receiving—with the Lord. We should not be content with attempts to merely *follow* Christ's teachings, but must desire, and strive to be caught up with

him in, the rapture of spiritual embrace, of fusion.

I have not written as a scholar, although Ensley's letter could be refuted on nearly all points. My purpose has not been to compose a treatise—the scriptures, both ancient and modern, do not need my defense. I suggest that Mr. Ensley read them, study them, pray about them. His comprehension of the gospel "as Mormons understand it" is tragically unbalanced and riddled with fault, and unfortunately he writes with an assurance and seeming lucidity that belies the error of his position, to the possible harm of susceptible readers. Mr. Ensley, re-examine your thought and your statements carefully in light of God's past and present revelation to his prophets. Do not be misled: Jesus is a teacher; he is also the Savior. *Through* him repentance is possible to all people. Do not be deceived: Jesus is the Christ.

Dian Saderup  
Provo, Utah

#### Observations On Translation

I had a few observations come to mind after reading in your Mar.-Apr. issue Mr. Ashment's article on Joseph Smith's wording of the English of the Book of Mormon.

1. Early support for the contrasting "naive" view (that the English was given to the Prophet) came from associates of Joseph. Mr. Ashment has made a strong point that these cannot be trusted, since their reports were made when they were old (dramatized by the fuzzy pictures of several of these people when they were very old), and were given many years after the fact. This helps us know where we should stand with respect to our Church leadership, as many of them are also at quite an advanced age.

2. Mr. Ashment may not realize he used a bad quote. The reference on page 12 from very early in Church history was actually quoted from a BYU professor writing in 1973. Prof. Quinn translated a German letter from Rev. Willers written to expose the "dangerous new sect." However, the quote was from the translator's editorial comments, not from the early letter. Just a few pages further the original letter said that the Mormons were proclaiming the Book of Mormon came to Joseph Smith by the Holy Ghost revealing to him "*the translation in the English language.*" (p. 326 of *New York History* 54, vol. 3, July, 1973). However, this does not help the author's point very much.

3. Mr. Ashment dismisses any influence of Semitic languages in the English Book of Mormon. His point is that it has differences when compared with

anything he has studied from the ancient Middle East. This confirms what the Book of Mormon engravers claimed: that the book is different from any known writing. (see, Mormon 9:34). However, he also side-steps the issue of the many similarities. Of course differences can be found. But what of the pervasive examples of features that are not natural English (even uneducated English), and yet can be recognized by even a beginning student of Hebrew, for example, as having similarities with that language.

4. While on the subject of assumptions that can be systematically investigated (as opposed to theorized upon), I note that the author also avoids the findings of statistical text analysis that quite conclusively show the English came from many authors, none of them being Joseph Smith or his early associates. (See, *New Era*, Nov. 1979, p. 10, and *BYU Studies*, Spring, 1980, p. 225.)

5. That reflections of King James Bible language are found in the Book of Mormon is presented as evidence that Joseph Smith formed the Book of Mormon English. On the other hand, it could also be a testimony of the inspiration under which the King James translators worked. After all, it all goes back to the same divine source.

6. Mr. Ashment helps us know how to interpret Joseph Smith. Where the Prophet explains that the title page was the "literal translation" of material on the plates, (*History of the Church*, 1: 71), this author feels he meant it was "the literal rendition of the ideas" (p. 13). Translation of ideas we recognize as the general definition of "free" translation, the opposite of "literal." So what is required when reading Joseph Smith is to interpret what he says in its opposite sense.

Frederick D. Archibald  
Provo, Utah

#### Nugatory Comet

"The heavens blaze forth the death of princes." So said Will Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*. Mark Twain believed that comets served as vehicles for transporting human souls between the heavens and the Earth. Having been born in 1835, when the Comet Haley appeared in the sky, he correctly predicted his own death for 1910, when the comet appeared next.

1973 was a year of great disappointments. I lost my girlfriend. There was Watergate. And there was that nugatory comet, Kohoutek, which was supposed to be a display of celestial glory but instead was almost invisible.

It came from the direction of the constellation Leo. The astrologers and "psychics" dusted off their quaint and curious volumes of forgotten lore (I'm quoting Poe) and read this bit of Medieval wisdom: "A comet coming from the direction of the constellation Leo means the death of a Prince of the Church." With almost universal agreement; these professional clairvoyants predicted the death of Pope Paul VI, alias Gianbattista Montini, for that year. But those near-unanimous predictions, read by millions across America, were false. Montini lived for five more years, for an extraordinarily long reign of 15 years, during which time he was able to do plenty of damage to his own church. The astrologists had fallen flat on their faces.

Comet Kohoutek went behind the sun on December 26, 1973, the day after Christmas.

On that day, President Harold B. Lee, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, who had until then enjoyed excellent health, suddenly became ill and was rushed to the hospital.

By the time the comet had come out from behind the sun, President Lee had passed away. The Saints were shocked. He had been expected to lead us for at least 20 years more.

President Spencer W. Kimball, the humblest of men, who had never wanted or expected to become an apostle or prophet, expressed his feelings about President Lee, a man he had loved and followed devotedly, and whom he was now called to succeed:

"President Harold B. Lee was a mighty Prince among us."

Benjamin Urrutia  
New York City

#### Theories on Book of Abraham

Thanks for your excellent magazine. I hope you will consider printing the following comments concerning your most recent issue featuring the Book of Abraham Facsimilies:

*Another possibility:* Joseph Smith had in his possession both the Egyptian Book of the Dead and the original Book of Abraham: "At my office exhibiting the Book of Abraham in the original to Brother Reuben Hedlock, so that he might take the size of the several plates or cuts, and prepare the blocks for the Times and Seasons; and also gave instruction concerning the arrangement of the writing on the large cut, illustrating the principles of astronomy" (i.e., Facsimilie 2, History of the Church

4:543). It is obvious from the recent discoveries that he also had the Book of the Dead.

*Theory:* After translation, Abraham's original ms, like the plates of gold, could not be kept around for public display (too sacred, knowledge would replace faith, no necessity to live by faith after verification by modern Egyptologists, etc.) Therefore Abraham's ms was also probably "hidden up" or taken away by a heavenly messenger. (Perhaps a heavenly messenger brought it to Joseph Smith in the first place. Or perhaps it arrived with the mummies and the Book of the Dead.)

*Problem:* Joseph Smith and/or his associates wanted illustrations to go along with the translation to enhance interest and credibility.

*Solution:* With Abraham's original ms on one side of the table, and The Book of the Dead on the other, Joseph Smith and Reuben Hedlock (see above quote) were able to alter (by paper, paste, and pencil) the Book of the Dead facsimilies (no need for them to be "hidden up" or taken away). After alteration, they resembled and represented Abraham's facsimilies.

*Further Speculation:* Joseph Smith may have thought the Book of the Dead was a corruption of the true Book of Abraham, i.e., as paganism is a corruption of the true Christianity practiced originally by Adam and his righteous descendants. Therefore Joseph Smith made modifications to correct the apostate documents. His alphabet may have been an attempt to relate what he suspected or knew were corrupt or incorrect passages to the correct ones from the Book of Abraham. Or perhaps he believed the Book of the Dead papyri contained Abraham's true (uncorrupted) account in coded form. If Dr. Hugh Nibley thought of this possibility a few years back, let us not rule out the possibility that Joseph Smith may also have thought of it long before. So what if they both were wrong? Neither was attempting to perpetrate a deception. Each tried to determine whether a correlation could be made between the Book of the Dead and the Book of Abraham. So each attempted an "alphabet" and apparently each gave up after a gallant try. But, heaven forbid, let us not accuse either of fraud or simplemindedness or take away from their outstanding achievements in their areas of expertise.

David E. Richardson  
Salt Lake City, Utah



#### Own Theory

While Ashment's article on the translation of the Book of Mormon raises some good points undercutting those who criticize "changes" and "mistakes" in the text, he displays a strange naivete, given his field, about linguistic aspects of the Book. If Joseph had truly read all the things his critics claim could have been sources for the Book of Mormon his speaking and writing in general would have reflected this—and they don't. No matter how much he read the Bible it is quite far-fetched to believe that the peculiar non-English phrases and syntax were simply the result of that. The evidence for authentic ancient language ties for the text is quite overwhelming but later this year a book by Wallace and Vestal will bring forth more information on this subject that should seal the debate. Aside from problems with the original writers and editors of the Book some of the "mistakes" could very well be the Lord's method of testing us—with plenty of evidence of the authenticity of the text just enough doubt is allowed to be a stumbling block, requiring faith. Those who choose not to believe, in the face of the evidence, are allowed that choice. My own theory as to the general method of translation is that the seer stones or Urim and Thummim gave Joseph pictures of whose sentences (avoiding the problem of literal translation of each word), but this was a reflection of his understanding of the text, which he understood as best he could because he was given the gift of knowing the original language, like any translator. This theory allows mistakes, allows a semi-literal translation that is flexible, accounts for the definite ancient language aspects of the text.

Vicki Freed Smith  
Thousand Oaks, CA

#### Mugwumpery

Thank you for Richard Cracroft's perceptive and significant article on Mormon humor, "A Freshet in the Dearth." Dr. Cracroft has kept many of us chuckling at his own funny-house mirrors (which reflect all too truly). Certainly he is right in his assertion that more Mormon laughter is essential to our collective and individual mental health, as well as pure pleasure. His reasons why we *don't* laugh are similarly on target:

Still, I stand amazed that the author, in naming names about current Mormon humorists (running the gamut from cartoonists to fiction writers) overlooked Eloise Bell in the same English Department at BYU. No one better exemplifies Dr. Cracroft's insistence that

Mormon humorists are invaluable in reaching and teaching the Gentile world that Mormons are not such bad folk after all, as well as giving us glimpses, with flashcube clarity, of ourselves as we really are.

In workshops and speeches, from the pages of *Network* and other periodicals, Dr. Bell has spanned the chasm between Mormons and Gentiles (particularly in Utah) and has repeatedly crossed that swaying bridge herself, taking some of us—her readers—along that delicate and enlightening route. An expert in “mugwumpery,” she has encouraged us all to see the fences between armed

camp as viable resting places or even assailable hurdles. Utah, in these last three years, would have been a more painful place for many of us without Dr. Bell’s resounding laughter from the middle of the IWY plane, and her light-hearted signals from the barbed wire fence between the overly-defended trenches.

Cracroft, Marshall, Bell, Pearson, Grondahl, bless them all and all the others. *Don’t* Mormons believe in the “Clown(s) of God?”

Linda Sillitoe  
Salt Lake City, Utah

The passing of Roberts and Talmage in the 1930s seemed to mark an unofficial end to theological inquiry among most of the General Authorities. Even John A. Widstoe, returning after a long service in the supervision of the European Missions, seemed less interested in such projects. One possible explanation for this shift is suggested by Dale C. LeCheminant:

Those were the days when men of Widstoe’s professional stature were invited and entrusted to write on their own, manuals for the church, which freely stood on the writer’s individual thought and experience and which bore their names. Now manuals are written anonymously by committees and emphasize the authority of the scripture and the statements of contemporary general authorities of the Church. Those were also the days when faithful men from academic life were chosen to be general authorities, certainly because of their devotion, but also presumably because of their learning. That this was so is seen in the fact that during part of Widstoe’s ministry four of the twelve apostles had PhD’s in science and were academicians: James E. Talmage, John A. Widstoe, Joseph F. Merrill, and Richard R. Lyman. Now that the Church is extended throughout the world as a multifaceted corporation, men with managerial abilities are apparently needed more.

Dale C. LeCheminant, “John A. Widstoe: Rational Apologist,” (PhD. dissertation, Univ. of Utah, 1977) p. 24.

Development and description of doctrine after the period of Roberts, Talmage, and Widstoe has generally been carried on by the lay sector of the Church. Today books authored by General Authorities, though far outnumbering those of fifty years ago, deal largely with morals, character, achieving happiness, fundamental doctrines, and general commentary. Theological exposition is no longer a best seller or a high priority. Works by Joseph Fielding Smith and others have tended to narrow doctrine to a rather finite set of non-controversial issues. Where differing opinions exist, such writers are likely to emphasize the more current belief. Educators such as Hugh Nibley, Sterling McMurrin, and Lowell Bennion are the ones who have been particularly sensitive to the intellectual possibilities of Mormonism more recently.

A doctrinal history, drawing from the best of books, manuals, and articles by both General Authority and lay theologians, has yet to be written. The following extracts will help to introduce the beginning student to some of the best works from Mormonism’s period of “creative adaptation.”

# Sunday School Supplement

## Creative Adaptation

The open mind is the sign of growth and progress. To stand before the known and undiscovered universe, in full desire for truth, and ready to accept it, insistent only that it must be the truth and nothing else, that has been and ever will be the attitude of those who have done most for the human race. The open mind is ready to accept truth; but more ready to reject error. It tests and tries; it verifies and makes certain; it philosophizes and prays; then it goes on its way rejoicing, ready for more truth at the next turn of the road.

And those who love truth will yield themselves to it, with gratitude in their hearts.

John A. Widstoe, *In Search of Truth*, (SLC, Utah: Deseret Book, 1930), p. 104.

In a classic treatment of LDS intellectualism, Leonard J. Arrington divided Mormonism into four periods: (1) the “formative stage” from 1830-1844, (2) the “elaboration stage” from 1844-1867, (3) the “stage of purification” from 1867-1896, and (4) the “stage of creative adaptation” from 1896 to the present. (See: Leonard J. Arrington, “The Intellectual Tradition of the Latter-day Saints,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Spring 1969): 13-26.) This supplement deals with the twentieth century period of “creative adaptation.”

Arrington’s article lists the results of a survey in which he asked some fellow scholars to list the five most eminent intellectuals in Mormon history. The choices with the number of votes received are as follows:

- 35 B. H. Roberts
- 30 Orson Pratt
- 19 Joseph Smith
- 18 Sterling McMurrin
- 17 James E. Talmage
- 14 John A. Widstoe
- 11 Lowell Bennion
- 10 Hugh Nibley
- 5 Parley P. Pratt
- 4 E. E. Ericksen
- 4 W. H. Chamberlin
- 3 J. Rueben Clark, Jr.

Although the sample group was small and somewhat selective, it does show some interesting results. Of the top twelve choices, seven were General Authorities and five were educators. As Arrington comments, many respondents were unsure of how to consider Joseph Smith. E. E. Ericksen and W. H. Chamberlin are probably unfamiliar to most Mormons. Of the twelve choices, nine of them lived during part of the twentieth century. Of the nine, five are lay members in the Church. Of the twentieth century set of intellectuals the three still living are all lay members.

Intellectual activity in the early years of the twentieth century or period of creative adaptation was led by B. H. Roberts, James E. Talmage, and John Widstoe, all General Authorities. Writing personal expositions of science and theology, as well as official Church manuals, these men were widely read and respected, even though agreement with their ideas was not always universal.

### Some Excerpts

That there is an active, purposive intelligence pervading all Nature is confirmed broadly by the fact of the continuous maintenance of Nature in its unity, for such maintenance through endless changes implies a constant adjustment and correlation of parts and functions. There is, too, the further fact that as a result of these adjustments and correlations, modifications take place directly or progressively, and, in general, more detailed and more effective structures come into being. The general fact of orderly change and evolution in Nature strongly supports the idea that Nature is controlled by an active, growing mind or spirit, just as "the growth force of an embryo of many somatic cells clearly controls the energies in all the included 'inorganic elements.'" However, in contemplating Nature in sections, we are confronted by the fact that its activity seems to be mechanical or determined, to conform to rigid sequences or general laws, and to lack that spontaneity we associate with living things or those free causes, selves. There is the insistent demand that it be shown in what way such facts as the permanent, bound energies constituting the elements, and the existence of the fixed modes of activity, or laws, of the inorganic world are to be reconciled, with the view that the greater, all-embracing cosmic power is purposive or personal in character.

Ralph V. Chamberlin, *Life and Philosophy of W. H. Chamberlin*, (SLC, UT: Deseret News Press, 1925), pp. 312-13.

We have already seen that God cannot be considered as absolutely infinite, because we are taught by the facts of revelation that absolute infinity cannot hold as to God; as a person, God has limitations, and that which has limitations is not absolutely infinite. If God is conceived of as absolutely infinite, in his substance as in his attributes, then all idea of personality respecting him must be given up; for personality implies limitations.

B. H. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, (SLC: Deseret News, 1908), p. 49.

The Mormon position is that the whole man, body and spirit, constitutes man in mortality. Mortal man is the natural man. Limiting the meaning of the term "natural man" to the physical aspect of man's nature is a misuse of language in Mormon discourse, resulting in ambiguities which lead to confusion and misunderstanding. Further, our argument is that the nature of anything, including mortal man, is determined by its essential character or constitution, and inasmuch as mortal man is

constituted of both body and spirit the spiritual factor cannot be deleted from any adequate description of his nature. We shall therefore use the term "natural man" to mean man as he is constituted of body and spirit in mortality. . . .

The natural man, then, is the righteous man. And, to live naturally means to live in accordance with moral and spiritual laws, the observance of which is the only way man can actualize his divine potentialities. The sinful, wicked life is the abnormal, unnatural life for the simple reason that wickedness and sinfulness thwart the natural growth and eventual fulfillment of man. The wicked man, not the righteous man, is the abnormal man and to that extent he is unnatural. We believe, therefore, that the man who conforms his life to the will of God is involved in a natural process, and is giving the highest and truest expression to his nature.

James B. Allen, Dale C. LeCheminant and David J. Whittaker, compilers and editors, *Views On Man and Religion: Collected Essays of George T. Boyd*, (Provo, Utah: Friends of G. T. Boyd, 1979), pp. 29-30.



If the youth of Mormonism remain content with the mere rationalization and criticism of their inherited institutions, nothing worth while will be accomplished; they will end where they began, in mere reflection. What Mormonism needs today is the vitalization of its institutions, which need to be put into use rather than merely contemplated. They should function as means rather than be analyzed as ends. When Mormonism finds more glory in working out new social ideals than in the contemplating of past achievements or the beauty of its own theological system, it will begin to feel its old-time strength. The group spirit will reappear in a new form.

Mormonism of today needs to emphasize its social problems, those which are felt to be vital by all its classes, its sentimentalists, its rationalists, its critics. It needs to emphasize problems

which will engage the attention of all of these; one which will unify the varied interests and at the same time force the attention away from itself. They must be problems to which every member of the church will respond. They should stimulate feeling and thought, and above all, they must stimulate action.

There is a demand for a leadership which not only possesses the sentiments of the group but which is responsive to the social and moral impulses of the times. The men who feel the spirit and needs of the hour, who are in direct contact with all the new relations of life, may be able to unite the contending factions and become the leaders of the present and future generations of Mormonism.

E. E. Ericksen, *The Psychological and Ethical Aspects of Mormon Group Life*, (SLC, UT: U of U Press, 1975), pp. 99-100.

In metaphysics, the best explanations inevitably create new problems of their own. Nevertheless, for Mormonism the die of pluralistic metaphysics and finitistic theology is clearly cast, whatever the arguments of the absolutists and whatever the emotions of those Mormon writers who lust after the linguistic fleshpots of orthodoxy.

Within the framework of such a theology, it may be held not only that God is not the author of evil, but that evil is genuinely and positively real; that it is real, not just relative to man's limited experience or limited perspective, but is real from any standpoint that may be conceived. And it is possible, moreover, with such theological premises, to believe that God is totally set against all the evils of the world and is committed to their destruction, which destruction is in process as the concomitant production of good is also in process. Within such a theology the absolute goodness of God can be declared while the dignity and creative power and moral responsibility of man are upheld.

This type of theology does not, of course, eliminate all the questions that arise from human experience as men face their daily tasks or the supreme tragedies of their lives. The existence of evil remains a mystery, as the existence of the world itself is a mystery. But the non-absolutistic concept of God affords a foundation for a basic reasoned solution to the theoretical problem of evil and makes it possible at one and the same moment to affirm a faith in an ultimate goodness in the universe while facing squarely the evils that inevitably come upon all men. It is the task of theology and philosophy to attempt the explanation. But it is the task of religion to achieve in men that nobility of character that enables them not only to

live through their severest adversity but at times even to accomplish that divine alchemy whereby they transmute loss and sorrow and tragedy into some moral good for the universe.

Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion*, (SLC: U of U Press, 1965), p. 109.

Man's Help to God. The progress of intelligent beings is a mutual affair. A lone God in the universe cannot find great joy in his power. God, being in harmony with eternal laws, can progress best as the whole universe becomes more complex, or advances. The development of intelligence increases the complexity of the universe, for each active individual may bring new relationships into view, and increases many-fold the body of acquired truth. In that sense, the man who progresses through his increase in knowledge and power, becomes a colaborer with God, and may be said, indeed, to be a help to God. It is a comforting thought, not only that we need God but also that God needs us. True, the need God has of us is relatively small, and the help he gives us is infinitely large, yet the relation exists for the comfort and assurance of man.

John A. Widstoe, *Rational Theology*, (SLC: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915), p. 26.

Faith should not be considered a substitute for knowledge. Whenever knowledge is available, it should be used. For it is generally better to live by knowledge in particular things than by faith, if knowledge is available. A man would rather know that he has money in the bank when he writes a check than to write it in the faith that the money is there. It is better for a man to know that his bride-to-be has a good character than to marry her without knowledge of this fact. It would be better to know the cause of cancer than merely to have faith that by refraining from eating certain foods one would not become a victim. An appreciation for the great role of faith in life should never deter us in our search for knowledge. *It is knowing the truth that makes men free.* Faith is a means of reaching out to gain more knowledge, like a searchlight casting its beam ahead into the "uncharted region of our existence." Man lives in a law-abiding universe. This is the faith of both the scientist and the religionist. Man satisfies his needs and attains his goals by learning and by lending obedience to both the laws of nature and the moral laws of God. Faith was never intended to be a blind substitute for knowledge, but rather an impelling motivation to seek and to know reality.

Lowell L. Bennion, *Religion and the Pursuit of Truth*, (SLC: Deseret Book, 1959), p. 128.

I maintain that "simple faith"—which is so often ignorant and simpering acquiescence, and not faith at all—but simple faith taken at its highest value, which is faith without understanding of the thing believed, is not equal to intelligent faith, the faith that is the gift of God, supplemented by earnest endeavor to find through prayerful thought and research a rational ground for faith—for acceptance of truth; and hence the duty of striving for a rational faith in which the intellect as well as the faith—the feeling—has a place and is a factor.

B. H. Roberts, *The Seventy's Course in Theology, Fifth Year—Divine Immanence and the Holy Ghost* (1912), p. v.

According to the conception of geologists the earth passed through ages of preparation, to us unmeasured and immeasurable, during which countless generations of plants and animals existed in great variety and profusion and gave in part the very substance of their bodies to help form certain strata which are still existent as such.

The oldest, that is to say the earliest, rocks thus far identified in land masses reveal the fossilized remains of once living organisms, plant and animal. The coal strata, upon which the world of industry so largely depends, are essentially but highly compressed and chemically changed vegetable substance. The whole series of chalk deposits and many of our deep-sea limestones contain the skeletal remains of animals. These lived and died, age after age, while the earth was yet unfit for human habitation.

James E. Talmage, *The Earth and Man*, (Provo, UT: BYU Press, n.d.), p. 2.

It is reasonable to believe, in the absence of direct revelation by which alone absolute knowledge of the matter could be acquired, that, in accordance with God's plan of eternal progression, advancement from grade to grade within any kingdom, and from kingdom to kingdom, will be provided for. But if the recipients of a lower glory be enabled to advance, surely the intelligences of higher rank will not be stopped in their progress; and thus we may conclude, that degrees and grades will ever characterize the kingdoms of our God. Eternity is progressive; perfection is relative; the essential feature of God's living purpose is its associated power of eternal increase.

James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, (SLC: Church . . . , 1899), p. 421.

Now, literalism better than any other one word, sums up the charges against the restored Church since the first message of its first prophet in these latter days, over a century ago. And just as the periodic return to literalism in times of crisis in the past have vindicated the prophets of old and kept the import of their message from ever being lost, so the present-day return to literalism in the face of world crisis is a clear vindication, after a hundred years of fierce denunciation, of the Latter-day Saint point of view. Time has vindicated the prophets.

Hugh Nibley, *The World and The Prophets*, (SLC: Deseret Book, 1974), p. 182.

# A Mormon Associations

## Mormon History Association

The 1979 *Journal of Mormon History* is off the press. At 146 pages, it includes a healthy clutch of articles about women: Lawrence Foster follows Mormon women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries "From Frontier Activities to Neo-Victorian Domesticity." Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippets Avery's article on Emma Smith and the authorship of the controversial *New York Sun* letter was a highlight of the 1979 MHA meeting in Lamoni, Iowa. Nancy Hiles Ishakawa will introduce readers to one of the great ladies of the RLDS church: Alice Smith Edwards. Malcolm

Thorpe discusses Winifred Graham, an anti-Mormon writer. And Carol Cornwall Madsen and David Whittaker offer a useful bibliographic essay on women in Mormon History.

Rounding out the selection are James B. Allen's analysis of William B. Clayton in Nauvoo, Lori Hefner's examination of Amasa M. Lyman's experiments with spiritualism that gradually led him further from the Church, and Bruce Blumell's history of the Church's pre-Depression welfare activities.

This issue is available for \$5 from Larry C. Porter, Box 7010, University Station, Provo, Utah 84602. The 1980 journal,

which will also be mailed this year, comes with the price of membership: \$7.50

### Fall AMCAP Conference

AMCAP's annual meeting will be held October 2nd-3rd at the U of U's East Institute. A pre-convention workshop on Thursday will feature a presentation by Charles Madsen from Florida State University. This is to be followed by the regular convention session which will cover a variety of topics. For additional information contact Richard Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer at C-273 ASB BYU.

### Beehive Exhibition

The Great Beehive Exhibition, sponsored by the Utah Arts Council, the Salt Lake Art Center, and Utah

Designer/Craftsmen, will explore the historical and contemporary use of the beehive symbol in Utah. Showings run September 12 to October 19 in the new galleries of the Salt Lake Art Center. (Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.: April 24 to December 13, 1981.) The U of U Press will publish an exhibition catalog to be available September, 1980.

### Association for Mormon Letters

The Association for Mormon Letters has tentatively scheduled the 1981 Eastern Meeting for late April in the Washington, D.C. area. Papers dealing with all aspects of Mormon literature will be welcome. Creative work—poetry, drama, narrative, essay—will also be read.

# Update

### Appeal Denied Sonia

Equal Rights Amendment advocate Sonia Johnson appealed to President Spencer W. Kimball to overturn her December 5th excommunication, charging that she was not invited to the high council court to defend herself and that her bishop, Jeffrey Willis, divulged testimony from the bishop's court to Beverly Campbell of McLean, Virginia, who has been traveling the country for the Church defending its position on Sonia's excommunication and the ERA. Sonia's appeal was denied and the excommunication was pronounced final on June 28. Church officials did not give Mrs. Johnson a copy of the letter from the First Presidency denying the appeal but read parts of it to her. A prior appeal to Oakton Virginia Stake President Earl J. Roueche was also turned down. Roueche said that her appeal had been presented to a high council court and that "your conduct has been observed to ascertain if there was an attitudinal change concerning the Church leadership and its position on moral issues, or if there were expressions of repentance. I regret that I have not found any such change."

### At BYU

Several national figures were rejected as speakers at BYU for moral or political reasons according to the campus newspaper, *The Daily Universe*, in spite of university policies prohibiting politics as a criterion for selecting speakers. Those rejected were Senator Edward Kennedy, because of his "reputation,"

the newspaper said, and former first lady Betty Ford, because of her statements on pre-marital sex. In addition, the *Universe* quoted Academic Vice-President Robert K. Thomas as saying that "Ezra Taft Benson would hit the ceiling if George McGovern spoke on campus." Consumer advocate Ralph Nader was also rejected because the university "should not pay for his carping." Critics of the speaker selection system point to politics and an "arbitrary power" in the academic vice president's office as major weaknesses in the process of choosing speakers.

In a related story the staff of the *Daily Universe* published an open letter in which they charged that journalism teachers at BYU teach freedom of the press in the classroom but censor the school newspaper to avoid the wrath of administrators. The letter said a story on a leaked campus traffic report was censored, but the newspaper's executive editor, William Porter, said he decided to keep the story out because he was told that figures in the report had been changed from the version leaked to the paper. The open letter also said Porter has exclusive power to hire students, and potential troublemakers are weeded out. "Whether or not a student objects to the system is often a major factor in his employment, rather than whether or not he will be a good journalist," the staff said.

In another matter, BYU is considering disciplinary action against former student body president Dave Litster for

his use of a news release on a BYU letterhead in support of the re-election of Senator Frank Church, D-Idaho. University spokesman David Sorenson said the endorsing of political candidates by student body officers and use of university letterheads for non-official purposes violate school policy. The 1979-1980 student body president said he still supports Church but added, "In no way did I say I was representing students at BYU. I was only giving my personal support." He said, however, the news release should have included a disclaimer saying he wasn't representing the students. But Litster added that numerous elected officials nationwide endorse other candidates.

Also at BYU, a \$19,300 gift from BYU students to Cambodian refugees may be used to build huts in refugee camps for use by Mormon Church welfare missionaries. The money is being held by the Church's Welfare Services Department to study a number of proposals for its use, including the one to build huts "to make sure the money isn't used up in administrative costs," Richard Linford, director of the office, said.

### Refugee Relief Fund

The First Presidency of the LDS Church announced the establishment of an LDS Refugee Relief Fund to help refugees of any religion throughout the world. A letter by the First Presidency says, "While the needs of our members are being met, the plight of thousands of refugees from all over the world is worsening. Vietnamese boat people, Cambodian and Laotian refugees, Afgan, Haitian, Somalik, and now Cuban refugees are among the displaced."

The Church's General Welfare Services Committee will administer the LDS Refugee Relief Fund from area councils of the Church throughout the world. Funds will be used for health, education, and other services in refugee camps or wherever need is demonstrated. A strength of the LDS fund is that it is administered through existing Church councils and will therefore have low overhead costs. No administrative salaries will come from the fund. Also, the fund will be administered to meet needs as determined by local councils. This means that people closely in touch with refugees' situations will request allocations.

Anyone, regardless of religious affiliation, may contribute to the fund, and the Church encourages its members to "give as they are able to the charity of their choice." Those who wish may send contributions to the LDS Refugee Relief



Fund, seventh floor, 50 East North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84150.

### Missionaries and the Draft

Instructions have been issued by the LDS Church for missionaries born in 1960 or 1961 and serving in countries other than the United States to register in person at a US embassy or consulate where they are accessible. Those who do not have access to an embassy or consulate in their assigned area will not register during the terms of their mission but will register within thirty days from the time they return to the US. (This procedure has been approved by government officials.) Missionaries in the US will be required to register between July 21 and August 2, at the nearest US post office, according to instructions issued by the federal government.

### A National Quest

"The Search for Something to Believe In," an article in the *Washington Star* of 6 July 1980 by Pat Lewis, described the appeal of the Mormon Church to those looking for personal values in the chaos of modern society. The following paragraphs are excerpted from the article:

There are signs that people are going beyond themselves for protection. Having only recently discarded a value system, parts of society now seem to be frantically searching for something to believe in.

"Religious movements that are offering some kind of spiritual and social security are gaining tremendous adherence, and probably the most dramatic example of that is the growth of the Mormon Church," said Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner, professor of human development, family studies, and psychology at Cornell University.

"I talked to the head prophet of the church," Bronfenbrenner said. "When I asked him, 'How do you account for your growth?' he gave a lovely answer. He said, 'Well, there are two things. We have 30,000

young people out there proselytizing all over the world. And,' he said smiling, 'we have the truth.'"

We find that, in our data, the families that can take the stress are the families that believe in something. And what they believe in is some ideal of what human life should be like . . . emphasizing the importance of loving thy neighbor as thyself and that we're all children of God. Well, that's sort of helpful in chaos," Bronfenbrenner said.

### Benson Misinterpreted

To imply that the president of the Mormon Church dictates laws on all issues, including politics, is "simply not true" and contrary to a basic tenet of the religion, freedom to choose for one's self, according to Church spokesman Don LeFevre.

LeFevre's comments were in response to a UPI account of a speech by Ezra Taft Benson to BYU students. Benson was directly quoted as saying, "Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government." LeFevre termed the news interpretation of Benson's speech "misleading." Nowhere in the speech did Benson say the Church president's word is law on all issues, LeFevre said.

In regard to the press account that Benson told the University audience that a Church president must be obeyed even when he contradicts scripture or statements of past prophets, LeFevre said that the prophet's word is scripture, as far as the Church is concerned, and the living prophet's words take precedence in interpreting the written scripture as it applies to the present. (*Ogden Standard-Examiner* 27 February 1980)



### LDS and Gambling

A high-ranking Mormon said on a Las Vegas television show that some members who have chosen careers in the gambling field could be denied Church rites.

John H. Groberg, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, said a casino dealer, for example, could not be a Church member in good standing. "If you were a casino dealer and that was the occupation you planned to spend the rest of your life in, the Church probably would not allow you to be married in the temple," Groberg said. He said if a member were an owner in the gambling industry, his Church status would "depend on the activity."

"The general feeling is the Church would not want prominent members involved," Groberg said when asked whether Mormons could remain in good standing and work as executives of corporations directly involved in gambling. (*UPI Salt Lake Tribune* 17 March 1980)

### Informed Voters League

A new political action group, the Informed Voters League, has spun off from the Freeman Institute (See *SUNSTONE* Update 5:3) and hopes to swing three percent of the vote in selected races this year and fifteen percent of the national vote by 1984. "We hope to be powerful enough to at least influence the selection of the vice president, at the bare minimum. We have our eyes on the presidency," says League executive director, Glenn Kimball.

Because the Freeman Institute was becoming more and more political and because such action threatened its tax-exempt status, the Informed Voters League was established, said Kimball. Mac Haddow, a staffer to Senator Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, quit his congressional job, moved to Salt Lake City, and became the IVL's chairman.

The IVL's goal, said Kimball, is to consolidate all the right-wing factions and single-issue groups—like the Pro-Family Coalition, Pro-Life and Stop-ERA groups—into one potent national political force. He envisions an

IVL director in every state with a chapter in every major city. "We're seeking support from good, God-fearing people from all walks of life," said Kimball.

The IVL recently began a newspaper, then merged it with the conservative Utah Independent. The new paper, the National Independent Voters League Sentinel, has a circulation of 3000. (AP *Salt Lake Tribune* 15 June 1980)

### Reports About Utah Future

Reports that Utah leads the nation in illegitimate births, alcoholism, divorce, and drug abuse are untrue, the Salt Lake Kiwanis Club was told recently.

Dr. Harry L. Gibbons, director of the Salt Lake City-County Health Department, told the Kiwanians Utah is now listed as one of the most desirable states in which to live. However, he said, disturbing reports have circulated listing the state as having serious problems.

"What's the truth?" he asked. "On illegitimate births of 38 states reporting, Utah is the lowest with 10.3 per 1000," he said. Utah also has few abortions, he said. "True, we do have a problem (with teen-age births) and so I support family planning—which is preferable to abortion . . ."

Reports that Utah leads the nation in venereal disease are also untrue: "We have the lowest rate in the nation." Utah has a low drug abuse rate and has trouble finding funding for programs because so few people are involved.

Utah has less than half the rate for consumption of alcohol and is 46th in alcoholism. Divorce and suicide rates follow closely the national averages, he said, varying only a few percentage points. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 20 June 1980)

### IRS And BYU

The Internal Revenue Service cannot force Brigham Young University to turn over names and addresses of those who have donated to the school, U.S. District Judge David K. Winder has ruled. The ruling overturns a recommendation to the contrary made earlier by U.S. Magistrate Daniel A. Alsup.

The government had argued that since every one of the returns of 162 BYU donors-in-kind audited to date had shown overvaluation, there existed suspicious circumstances which created the likelihood that the other donors-in-kind had overvalued their donations. "The court rejects this contention and holds that there is no reasonable basis to believe that one or more BYU donors have overvalued their gifts simply because one or more donors have overvalued theirs," said Winder.

Government officials said any appeal of the decision by the government to the U.S. Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals will be up to the U.S. Department of Justice.

### Women and the Draft

With sentiment that mirrors her opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, Barbara B. Smith, president of the Relief Society, has attacked the notion of registering women for the draft. Women should not be obliged to both defend and rear civilization, she said at a University of Utah forum. "Such a conscription would further eliminate sex differences, leading to the disintegration of the very foundation of society," she said. She fears that training women to be brutal and uncaring and to be capable of hurting and killing will jeopardize their ability to return home and rear the next generation. "The men should protect the country, and the women should protect the babies," she quoted a friend of hers. President Smith said the LDS Church has not announced an official position on the draft issue. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 February 1980.)

### McConkie Warns of Heresies

Elder Bruce R. McConkie told the audience at a BYU fourteen-stake fireside in June that seven great heresies exist within the Church today which can affect salvation if Church members are not aware of them and the falsehoods they contain.

One heresy is that God is progressing in knowledge and is learning new truths. Elder McConkie said, "God is not a student. He has graduated to that state of exaltation which consists of knowing all things and having all power."

According to Elder McConkie, anyone who believes this heresy "has the intellect of an ant, and the understanding of a clod of miry clay in a primordial swamp."

Another heresy, according to Elder McConkie, is that revealed religion and organic evolution can be harmonized. He said the theories of men cannot be harmonized with the revealed truths of God concerning the origin of man.

Among other heresies were the Adam-God theory and progression between kingdoms in the next world. (*Daily Universe*, 3 June 1980)

### Man "Ordains" Wife

On July 6 in a brief noon ceremony outside Temple Square, 22-year-old Debbie Hart was "ordained" into the LDS priesthood by her husband in order to protest Mormon policies regarding women.

Don LeFevre, spokesman for the Church, called the ordination invalid. He said all priesthood candidates must first be screened by ward and stake officials before ordinations can be sanctioned.

Mr. Hart, though an elder in the Church, said he has not been active since about a year ago "when I began to question their honesty." The couple was married in the temple. He also said LDS officials have "financial and political motives for opposing ERA."

Despite his disillusionment, Mr. Hart decided he must bestow the priesthood on another member. "I realize there is a certain hypocrisy. But the Church has avoided these issues for a long time and I feel this might encourage them to deal with these problems." (*Salt Lake Tribune* 7 July, 1980) A week later both of the Harts were excommunicated in a stake-level Church court. "I am happy to be out of it," said Phil Hart.

### RLDS and Women

Efforts to allow ordination of women as ministers in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints were ruled out of order by the Church's president at the biennial world conference in April.

But delegates to the conference moments later overwhelmingly rejected a resolution that would have barred women from the ministry. The moves mean that although women still cannot be ordained in the Church, the question remains open for future conferences to decide. Church spokesman Maurice Draper said the large vote against closing the ministry to women indicated growing sentiment in favor of women ministers.

In declaring out of order two resolutions favoring ordination of women, Church president Wallace B. Smith said that to discuss them would be inconsistent with previous actions by the Church. The two resolutions, offered by national Church organizations in Australia and New Zealand, asked permission for ordination of women in those countries before the issue was decided by the Church as a whole.

Smith cited a resolution adopted by the Church in 1976 which deferred the issue of ordaining women until, in the judgment of the ruling First Presidency, the Church appeared ready to accept such a change. He said Church leaders did not think that time has come. (AP *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 April 1980)

