

POLITICS AND PIETY:



AN INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR ORRIN HATCH

With the rise of "New Right" organizations in the United States, an increasing number of conservatives are entering the political limelight. Supported by such groups, a previously unknown attorney, Orrin Hatch, was lifted to Republican Party candidacy and eventual victory over three-term Senator Frank Moss in the 1976 race for Utah's U.S. Senate seat.

Since then, Senator Hatch, a Utah native, committed Mormon, and father of six children, has been named by the *National Journal* as one of five most effective young senators. He was appointed by his party leadership to serve on five committees in the 96th Congress, including the Judiciary Committee, the Labor and Human Resources Committee, the Budget Committee, the Senate Select Small Business Committee, and the governing board of the Office of Technology Assessment.

The following interview was conducted by Susan Staker Oman and John Sillito on August 13, 1980.

SUNSTONE: Why did you leave a lucrative law practice here in Salt Lake City to become a United States Senator?

HATCH: I felt that our country was in trouble, and I was concerned about the type of leadership we have had. I got tired of standing on the sidelines and complaining. I decided that I could win and that if I believed strongly I should get involved.

SUNSTONE: After four years would you advise other people to seek elective office?

HATCH: Well, the only ones I would advise to seek elective office are honest, decent people who really want to do something to correct the ills in our country. It is a very difficult life, but you can make it whatever you want. If you work hard (and some don't) and you are in the middle of most of the battles that occur on the floor of the United States Senate, it's an overwhelming thing. I come back to the state on a regular basis, generally traveling on the weekends. I used to spend that time with my family and I used to attend church regularly with my family. It's very difficult on family life.

SUNSTONE: As one of a handful of Mormons in Congress, do you see yourself as a representative for all Mormons as well as Utahns?

HATCH: Well, my first obligation is to represent Utah as a whole. I try to live my particular religious beliefs. If I do that, that's all my church can expect of me. I feel when you're in politics you represent all the people and not just special interest groups.

SUNSTONE: Do the Mormon members of Congress work together on issues that might be of interest to the Church?

HATCH: No more than any other congressional delegation for their constituents. As long as our constituents are right in their desires, whether it's the Mormon church or Catholic church or atheist groups, then of course we would do everything in our power to serve and help them.

SUNSTONE: Do you think the Church has helped shape your political beliefs? Does Mormon theology point a person toward a certain political philosophy?

HATCH: Well, I was a liberal Democrat for most of my life, and I have been a member of the Mormon Church all my life. So, the answer is yes and no.

SUNSTONE: How did you make that transition?

HATCH: I came to the conclusion that the Democratic party was hurting this country because of its emphasis on central power and federal government solution. I felt that they had left me, not that I had left them. Though we have terrific people in the Church from all political persuasions, I think that in the Intermountain West we do tend to be more conservative, and the reason for that is that we're individualistic. We like to be left alone; we don't want federal intrusions; we don't like regulations. The West is now leading a movement for such ideas, and I think we are winning that battle.

SUNSTONE: Do you think that it is theology or history that has made us that way?

HATCH: I think it is more history. Some of my best friends in the Church are very liberal, many of them are moderates. I know a number of people who consider me a moderate conservative because they really know me. For instance, I led the battle for the institutional civil rights bill. It wouldn't have passed without me, much to the chagrin of many of my conservative colleagues. I voted to give pregnancy disability benefits to pregnant women, much to the resentment of my conservative colleagues. Liberals and moderates might think, my gosh, he's been painted a little far to the right by the media.

SUNSTONE: You spoke earlier of the West fighting against federal intrusion. There has been some confusion over why you sponsored S 1680—the sagebrush rebellion. Some of your critics claim that it was merely an attempt to turn public land over to private owners. How do you respond to that? What are your motives for promoting the sagebrush rebellion?

HATCH: Of course I don't want to turn public land over to private interests. I want to turn public lands back to the states where they belong. I have yet to see the state that gave away its public domain. The real purpose for S

1680—I prefer to call it states' rights rebellion—is to bring to the attention of the American people the fact that vast lands in the West are being tied up and, frankly, ruined by some of the environmentalist extremists through federal government control. The people are losing control over their own lives and in the process losing the benefits that could come from alleviating dependence on foreign oil, gas, and mineral suppliers. My bill does not interfere with reasonably balanced environmental concerns. Environmentalists can still try to control state legislatures. What it does do is decentralize the power of the federal government so the local people can control their destinies.

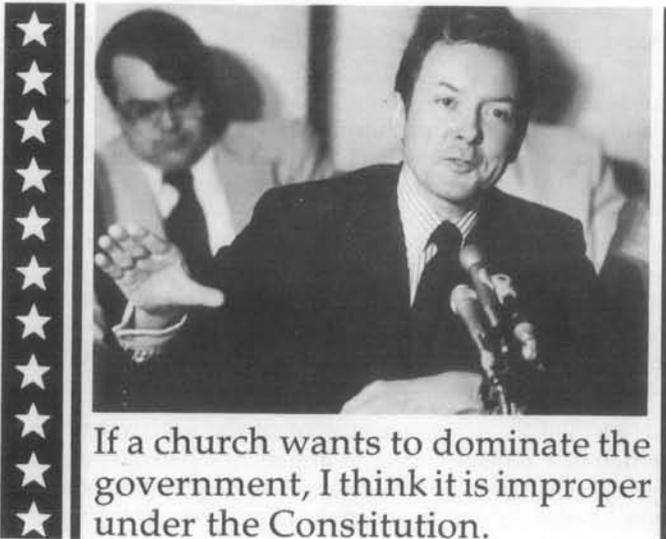
SUNSTONE: A representative of the Christian Voice, which is a conservative, evangelical Christian political group, was quoted in the press as saying that no Mormon would ever hold a policy-making position in their group because Mormons aren't actually Christians. How do you feel about making political alliances with groups that theologically oppose the Church or perhaps consider it a cult?

HATCH: First of all that was a misquote. I called the Christian Voice people, and they directly apologized, wondering how anybody could construe anything they said to mean that. Secondly, I feel it is important to motivate fifty to sixty million evangelical Christians to get involved in politics. I think it would be wonderful if every person of every religion—Christian, Jewish, and others—would get involved in politics. Whether they agree with me or not, I think it is a healthy thing for society. Besides that quote is logically rebutted by the fact that I was the first person the Christian Voice came to and asked for help. I have my misgivings. I don't want any religious group to use my name improperly. I know that I'm not going to agree with everything they do. I think some of their rating system is ridiculous. But on the other hand, their attempts to get people interested in politics are very worthwhile. I think it would be difficult for someone like me that wants *everybody* to get involved with politics, whether they agree with me or not, to criticize a particular group for getting involved.

SUNSTONE: Does it concern you that some of these same groups which support conservative politics may also be supporting anti-Mormon activities—publishing books, supporting missionaries?

HATCH: No, because you're always going to have problems with certain selected people in every group. Members of other groups believe in their churches just like Mormons believe in theirs. They have the right to believe the Mormon church is not as right as their own church. But I don't think that you could show that any of those groups are actively anti-Mormon. Now there may be individual ministers, but they have the right to feel any way they want to. And I would fight to protect their rights to feel that way, or to write about it, or do whatever they want to.

SUNSTONE: There has been a great deal of discussion recently about the relationship between church and state. How do you feel about the controversy surrounding the Church and the Equal Rights Amendment, for example?



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HATCH: Well, I think that the Church has taken the position on the Equal Rights Amendment that it is a moral issue. I think that churches have the obligation to stand up for their moral beliefs. I think that obligation continues even if it is difficult to do so, and even if they come under public scrutiny and criticism. What are churches for anyway?

SUNSTONE: Do you think there should be a separation of church and state?

HATCH: I don't think any church should dictate how a state or federal government should act. I don't think that they should utilize their funds, for instance, to elect public officials. I don't think that churches should per se get involved in politics to the degree that they are trying to control state legislatures or other separated powers in our country. In the early days of our country the church people were very much involved. The ministers were involved; there was a prayer in the meetings. Separation of church and state is basically to keep any one church from dominating the political life of our country. The founding fathers came from countries where the principal church dominated the political, spiritual, and moral life of the country. I think churches have an obligation to speak out on what they consider to be a moral issue. But if they want to dominate the government then I think that is improper under the Constitution.

SUNSTONE: What about the alleged Mormon church activity in Florida elections, supporting candidates who were anti-ERA?

HATCH: I think that losers in politics continually try to find some scapegoat to take blame for their losses. If you're talking about the Equal Rights Amendment in Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, or Illinois, I don't think the Mormon church has directed its members to participate in defeating the Equal Rights Amendment. I think the position of the Church leadership has been that all Church members should get involved. I think that individual leaders who feel strongly on those issues, without the umbrella of the Church, have participated in opposing some of those issues—and that's their right. There is only one person that binds the Mormon church and that is the president of the Church. So individual leaders, in-

dividual workers, individual members in individual states have the right to act any way they want to.

SUNSTONE: Then you don't think it is proper for a church to direct their members in those kinds of political activities?

HATCH: Oh, I don't know if it's improper. If a church feels strongly that a moral issue has been acutely violated then I think that church is obligated to do its best to stand up for its belief. And I don't see anything wrong with trying to influence others.

SUNSTONE: Let me ask a hypothetical question. Let's say you had been in the United States Senate in 1970 and you were convinced that the Equal Rights Amendment was a good and proper thing. You endorsed that issue. You sponsored it in the Senate. Subsequently the president of the Mormon church took a position opposing it. What sort of a quandary would that put you in as a political figure and as a Mormon?

HATCH: It would be a difficult quandary.

SUNSTONE: What would you do?

HATCH: I don't know. Honestly I don't know what I would do. But I don't think that I would have been for the amendment in 1970 because of my constitutional law background.

SUNSTONE: As a political person, you are constantly taking stands on specific issues. In general, what would you do if the Church were to take a position against something you strongly supported?

HATCH: I don't know. I don't know because I have never been placed in that position. I think if I were undecided, I would first ask what my constituents would want me to do. Beyond that I would have to completely reexamine my position. It would be just like any other position. If I came to the conclusion that I was wrong, then I wouldn't be ashamed to stand up and say so.

SUNSTONE: Do you think that a Mormon can actively support the Equal Rights Amendment and really, honestly live in harmony within the Church?

HATCH: Sure. The Church has not made that an issue to the degree that a person would be excommunicated merely because he or she believes in the amendment. If the Church did, that could be very difficult. I think a person can live the Mormon church teachings and believe in the amendment. I think it is more difficult for them to have total acceptance in the church if they do because the First Presidency has spoken out on this issue. If you venerate and respect and love and follow the First Presidency then that creates a natural dilemma for you—within your own conscience and with the people who feel that they are supporting the Church leadership.

However, the Equal Rights Amendment does pose a problem for a Mormon politician like myself who believes in equal rights for all and especially for women. When people come out and say that because I am not for the amendment I am not for equal rights, nothing could be further from the truth. You hate to go through that, but on the other hand there are millions of people in this country who disagree with the Equal Rights Amendment, men and women. My experience has been that it is mostly women who disagree.

SUNSTONE: Nationally the Church is increasingly perceived as lobbying for certain political positions. Do you think that might affect the possibility of Mormons being chosen for positions such as cabinet members or federal judges—particularly if the general perception is that members of the Church must look to the leader of the Church for guidance on specific issues?

HATCH: I don't think that the Church really does thrust itself politically upon individuals. The only way I can see it doing that is if it tried to control the legislature or tried to exert power to the detriment of people who did not believe in the Church. I think there has been an attempt by some elements in our national media to say that the Mormon church is trying to do that when in fact that isn't true. I don't see how anybody could say that is true.

SUNSTONE: Whether or not it is true, it affects perceptions of the church. Isn't that becoming a problem for Mormons who might be involved in politics?

HATCH: Well, one of the big problems that all Mormon politicians had was the Mormon stand on priesthood for blacks. I received a call while on the floor of the Senate from one of the General Authorities who told me that President Kimball had declared that all worthy males could hold the priesthood. Nobody could have been happier. That meant so much to me because it had always been a difficult issue for me. But I do think the Mormon church is sometimes singled out when many other churches also feel strongly about issues. If a Mormon makes a mistake and commits an immoral act, his name and the Church's name are all over the newspapers. If someone from another religion does, the media rarely mentions his particular religion. I think part of the reason for that is because Mormons are so straightforward about their beliefs. Also I think some like to show that Mormons are the same as everybody else and not as good as some people say they are. In either event, it isn't just, but, nevertheless, a fact of life.

SUNSTONE: At a devotional at BYU, President Benson stated "those that would remove prophets from politics would remove God from government." What role do you think prophets should play in politics?

HATCH: The same role that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets of the Old Testament played. They spoke to kings. I remember when Nathan came in after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and he said, "David thou art the man." He certainly laid into David. Now I don't see anything wrong with a true prophet letting the political leaders know that on certain moral issues they are wrong. He has an obligation to do it.

SUNSTONE: But President Benson is not talking specifically about moral issues. He says that a prophet should be involved in politics. Would you want the President of the Church taking political stands on every issue?

HATCH: I don't think you have ever seen presidents of the Church do that, not even Joseph Smith when he ran for president of the United States. No, I think that all he is saying is, don't expect the president of the Church to ignore the fact that we live in a very complex political atmosphere which affects every moral judgment and every moral thought that everybody in this country has. I don't think that President Benson meant by that statement that



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President Kimball is going to run for President or for governor of the state of Utah. I think he is saying that a church leader should speak out. The Pope came to America and spoke on all kinds of political and social issues. I haven't seen him criticized in our Utah media. I have to admit I enjoyed everything the Pope said, and I think he did our society a tremendous amount of good by emphasizing moral values. I think he and President Kimball would get along very well on these moral issues—I know the Pope and I would. Now if he could do that, why should Utah get upset because the Presidency says that we believe that the Equal Rights Amendment is detrimental to families? Or that abortion, except to save the life of the mother and for rape and incest, is detrimental to morality in our society? In the whole four years that I have been in the Senate, I have yet to have any General Authority give me any instructions concerning how I should vote back in Washington, and I would be shocked if one did.

Let me make another point. I do get a little tired of some of the atmosphere in Utah—as though the Mormon church is the only church in the world that speaks out on moral issues. This just isn't right. Jerry Falwell speaks to twenty-five million people a week on moral issues. He speaks on many political issues too, and I don't see anything wrong with that. He believes in what he's doing, and he believes that there are moral issues that transcend even the pulpit. He believes that this country is an inspired country, the freest land in the world. He believes that the free enterprise system has made this country the greatest country in the world and is the basis of our thinking. I think our First Presidency does too, and I've seen a lot of comments about the free enterprise system, about our great system of government, our great system of business, our great system of economic life. Those statements have not been particularly criticized as being political. But whenever the Church comes out on a moral issue, all of a sudden those that may not agree (even some who do) get all upset. And generally these people who overreact couldn't care less about the Church to begin with.

SUNSTONE: At a rally in Scottsdale, Arizona (which I believe you participated in), President Benson said that "the Lord blesses the work of the Freeman Institute." Was that hyperbole?



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HATCH: I think he believes that is literally so. He may very well be right. I don't quite view it that way. But I'll say this. If there is a greater man than Spencer Kimball or Ezra Taft Benson in this country, I would like to meet him. Whatever President Benson wants to say is fine with me. He's one person who has always been willing to put his neck on the line and stand up for what he believes. There have been times when I felt I disagreed with him politically, but I haven't seen a person who is willing to take the flack for what he believes any more than that great person. And I admire him for it.

SUNSTONE: Do you think it is appropriate to invoke the Lord's blessings on a political group?

HATCH: Sure, if you feel strongly about it. I see religious leaders every day praying for certain groups that they feel are beneficial to this country. But you know you only hear about it when a Mormon leader does it. Why is that? I've never quite understood that.

SUNSTONE: One last question on the Freeman Institute. Do you think you would have been nominated for Senator without the help of the Freeman Institute?

HATCH: Yes sir. Cleon Skousen was beneficial to me primarily in the nominating segment of the campaign. I can name fifteen other groups that helped too. And some may have done even more than Skousen. All the other people who were running went to him, and every other opinion leader in Utah, asking for support. I was fortunate enough to convince Cleon that probably I would serve the best if elected. By the way, those who know me know I didn't promise anything for those votes other than that I would do the very best I could to stand up for the Constitution. And as the ranking minority member of the Constitution sub-committee, I'm doing everything I can to stick up for Constitutional principles.

SUNSTONE: A question about the place of government. How much should the government become involved in legislating morality?

HATCH: The big question is whether the federal government should inject itself into the family life of the people in this country. Of course I don't like having battered wives or battered children exist in our society. But on the other hand I don't want the federal government

coming in and telling the family what they can or cannot do. Take an issue like abortion. I believe that abortion is the wrongful taking of viable human life (with others like the President and the Catholic church). So I try to stop taxpayer dollars (fifty percent of the taxpayers are totally opposed to abortion) from being used to pay for 300,000 abortions a year in America and indirectly millions worldwide through American foreign aid. I don't have any qualms fighting for these principles. The people who are pro-abortion are fighting for principles that are alien to morality in the eyes of many of us. I believe I am doing what my constituents really want me to do.

SUNSTONE: Then you are willing to let the government get involved if you feel strongly enough about the principle?

HATCH: Every issue in government to me involves morality. Every issue involves folkways and mores; every issue involves religious belief and non-religious belief. There is no such thing as a purely political issue that doesn't involve alternative beliefs of various people. And I'm willing to admit that I may be wrong in some of my approaches, but I don't believe so or I wouldn't fight as hard as I do for them. But if I can be shown that I am wrong, I will admit that I am wrong in public and go on from there. I think good representatives should do that. We can't be right in everything.

I had never run for a public office before I was elected Senator. I thought things were much more black and white than they really are. I wasn't even quite sure about the necessity of compromise, but compromise is an absolute principle in the legislative process, and I guess in a great many other processes as well. I've learned that I didn't know as much as I thought I knew. Not that I was cocky; I wasn't. But I've learned that there are some grays and alternative points of view that you have to consider. Sometimes you can't get everything you want so you do the best you can, and you compromise.

But I've also learned that you can compromise too much. You have to finally draw the line and you have to stand up and fight for your constituents and for your country. Labor law reform is the perfect illustration because it involves morality and immorality, politics and non-politics, power and the lack of power. We were willing to sit down and see if we could compromise with the labor leaders, but they weren't willing to compromise. Finally we had to say, "Well, we'll have to draw a line then." We did, and it was a horrendous battle, on the Senate floor twenty hours a day for six weeks. I still have not recovered the health that I had before that battle, because I was there every second, leading the fight as a freshmen senator. It fell my lot to lead because I was the highest ranking minority person opposed to the bill on the Labor and Human Resource committee. And as you know we won that battle even though it was a tough fight.

What I'm trying to say is that, yes there is a compromise. We have to continually study, continually listen to committee testimony and hearings. We have to continually try to understand the feelings, beliefs, and motivations of our colleagues and their constituents. In the process, we try to do what's right. That's the bottom line. In the end, hopefully we represent our own constituents in the best possible way.