

## An Arizona Saint Reviews the Mormon Response to Evan Mecham

# RAZING ARIZONA: THE CLASH IN THE CHURCH OVER EVAN MECHAM

*By Eduardo Pagán*

CLEARLY, EVAN MECHAM'S ABRASIVE MANNER GENERATED many of the political problems which characterized his administration, and ultimately resulted in his removal from office. Yet members of the Church repeatedly battled over the first Mormon governor in Arizona, dividing families and friends. Mecham's critics argued that his controversial behavior cast a damaging reflection upon the Church, and questioned the appropriateness of assigning a spiritual significance to his administration. The Mecham supporters, on the other hand, defended his "unpopular, no compromise defense of constitutional law and moral principles," questioned the patriotism and spirituality of his Mormon critics, and accused the media and Phoenix businessmen of conspiring to oust the governor from office. The wake of that clash, which subsided after the impeached governor left office, found many in the Church withdrawn to their ideological corners to dress their wounds and assess the damage.<sup>1</sup>

The Mecham campaign laid the groundwork for the controversy in the Church by utilizing a religious motif, however tangentially, in Evan Mecham's bid for the governorship. Reports circulated in reverent tones among Mecham supporters that, for example, the gubernatorial candidate received a personal witness that he would one day ascend to the governorship. "I'm sure if you were to visit with [the governor] personally," reflected Crismon Lewis, editor of the *Latter-day Sentinel*, after the election, "he would share with you his story of why he decided to run. To the world, it looked like vain ambition. To the many who try to follow [spiritual] promptings in their lives, they knew there was another dimension to the decision."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, W. Cleon Skousen solemnly affirmed to a largely Mormon audience during a fundraising dinner for the Mecham campaign that God foretold the

gubernatorial candidate that he would attain the governorship to help save America from going to hell in the handbasket of socialism.<sup>3</sup>

Mecham draws much of his ideological inspiration from Skousen, whom many revere as the political guru of right-wing Mormonism. "I owe him a debt of gratitude for enhancing my knowledge," wrote Mecham in his book, *Come Back America*, "and [for] his generous permission to borrow freely from his work."<sup>4</sup> One of the basic tenets of Skousen's philosophy is that America has strayed from the Constitution, which, Mecham told a television reporter, was given to mankind because "God in heaven wanted his children to be free."<sup>5</sup> Skousen also holds that only a repudiation of American socialism will save this nation from certain destruction, a position which apparently is based upon the "hanging by a thread" prophecy attributed to Joseph Smith<sup>6</sup> Clearly Mecham also believes in the prophesied fate of the nation, which is the motive behind his relentless insistence upon "constitutionalism," a call to repent and return to the original intent of the Constitution.<sup>7</sup> The former governor's plan of national salvation, outlined in *Come Back America*, also mirrors the faith and philosophy of his mentor.

The religious foundation of the political philosophy which both Mecham and Skousen share, however, is not unique to them. It stems from the very roots of Mormonism. By staunchly asserting the divinity of the Constitution since the days of Joseph Smith and by fusing "super-patriotism" since the days of Joseph Smith with Mormonism, the Church has projected its religious theme of apostasy and restoration onto the political past and future of the United States.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, this message teaches that the founding fathers descended from the Constitutional Convention like secular patriarchs with an inspired document in hand. Evil and designing men, however, fell away from the "plain and precious truth" of the Constitution and led the nation into

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*EDUARDO PAGAN is a graduate student in American history at the University of Arizona.*

political apostasy. Yet in the last days, the Elders of Israel will rise up to save the nation and bring about a political restitution "of all things as at first."<sup>9</sup>

Mormonism's union of religion and politics is perpetuated in numerous works by Church leaders and scholars. Because of the status ascribed to the authors of these books, such as current LDS church President Ezra Taft Benson, former First Presidency member J. Reuben Clark, and conservative activist/author W. Cleon Skousen, many Mormons therefore view these authors' political conclusions as a tangential theology of Mormonism. Many in the Church also rely on such books as unofficial yet authoritative sources on the correct political perspective for active Mormons.

Mecham's campaign artfully instilled the same sense of destiny in his Mormon constituents by reiterating Mormonism's "crisis theology."<sup>10</sup> Like a voice crying in the political wilderness, Mecham's message harkened to the theme of apostasy and restoration. He vowed in his campaign to wrest control of state government from the "big business and special interest group" conspiracy and to restore Jacksonian democracy to Arizona. He denounced the encroachment of "national socialism," and promised to support the "New Federalism" of President Reagan. He called the state to repentance and promised to usher in an era of moral leadership and "good government."

By also allowing news of his personal revelation to be used on the campaign trail, Mecham further appealed to the spirituality of Mormon voters. Do not the scriptures admonish the Saints to elect "good men and wise men?"<sup>11</sup> Who better, then, than a former bishop and devout constitutionalist to help bring about the prophesied restoration of "good government?" By incorporating the "tangential theology" of Mormonism, the Mecham campaign also seemed, to many Mormons, to have the tacit approval of the Church.

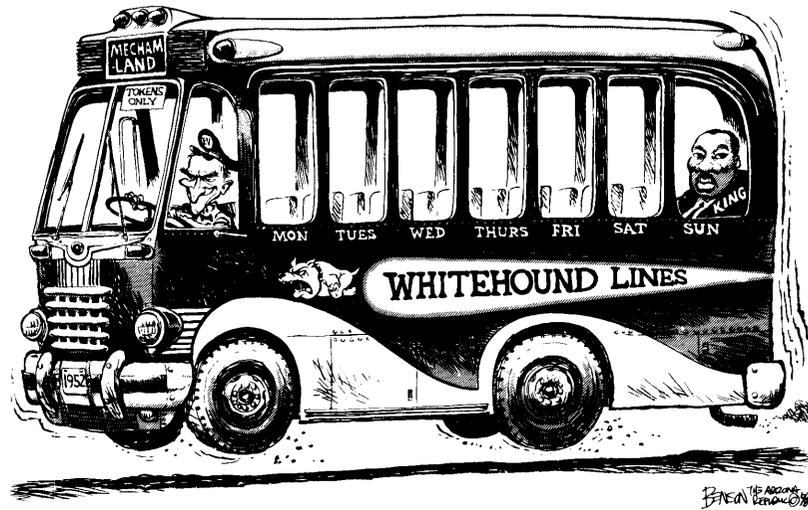
The Mecham campaign appeared to be providentially directed, as Mecham wrought miracle after miracle on the way to the state capitol. After first defeating the heavily-favored Speaker of the House in the Republican primary, the political outsider Evan Mecham then won the support of Senator Barry Goldwater, father of the Republican party in Arizona and former presidential candidate. In November of 1986, Mecham defeated two other rivals for the governorship in a closely contested race.<sup>12</sup> "When he was elected the world called it luck," wrote editor Crismon Lewis, "but thousands knelt in thanks that finally there was someone leading the government who wanted to cut taxes, stop

the spread of pornography and abortion, and, in general, take a stand for the family."<sup>13</sup>

The thanksgiving within the Church was short-lived, however, as Governor Mecham increasingly alienated his constituency. Mecham first offended the black community by rescinding the holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., stating that King did not deserve one, and by defending the historical use of the term "pickaninny" in Cleon Skousen's *The Making of America*. He then hired a liaison to the hispanic community not because of her qualifications, but because he "was dazzled by her beauty."<sup>14</sup> Mecham offended women's groups by endorsing an aide's remark that "working women caused divorce," and the homosexual community by making homophobic remarks on a radio talk show. He joked about the shape of Japanese eyes while speaking at a Rotary Club, and bore his testimony to a Jewish congregation that Jesus Christ is the lord of this nation.<sup>15</sup>

In August 1987, the *Latter-day Sentinel* published a letter to the editor by the present author which warned that Mecham's behavior could potentially harm the missionary effort in Arizona, and argued that members of the Church, should, in fact, be "actively working to sequester him." "Regardless of his good character, or his good intentions," the letter continued, "many detractors of the Church have taken advantage of his situation to tear at the Church, reviving the old accusations that the Church is racist, sexist, hopelessly conservative, and incompetent in the real world." "While members of the Church understand that Mecham is not a representative of the Church per se," the letter further argued, "non-members do not easily separate the actions of one Mormon from the rest. Therefore, if we wish to avoid further embarrassment to the Church, Mecham . . . must change or he must go."<sup>16</sup>

The subsequent debate in the *Sentinel's* pages over Mormon support for Governor Mecham grew increasingly acrimonious. Shirley Whitlock, president of the Arizona Eagle Forum, lamented "how sad it is to see a member of the Church join the stone throwers of the media in their campaign to vilify and destroy Gov. Evan Mecham." Whitlock charged that Mormon critics of Evan Mecham were a greater threat to the Church than Mecham was, and associated them with "fault-finders, shirkers, commandment-breakers, and apostate cliques." "Evan Mecham needs our prayers," she concluded, "not our criticism."<sup>17</sup> Other letters echoed this view. "I wonder if [he] wants to sequester Gov.



Mecham because he perceives Mecham as an embarrassment to the Church," wrote one reader, "or, if it is really that he disagrees with Mecham's 'politics.'" <sup>18</sup> "The letter from [Mecham's critic], as far as I'm concerned, is bunk," wrote another reader, "It sounds like [he] is only looking at the bad . . . It sounds like he is a quitter . . . If so, he is bringing harm to the Church."<sup>19</sup>

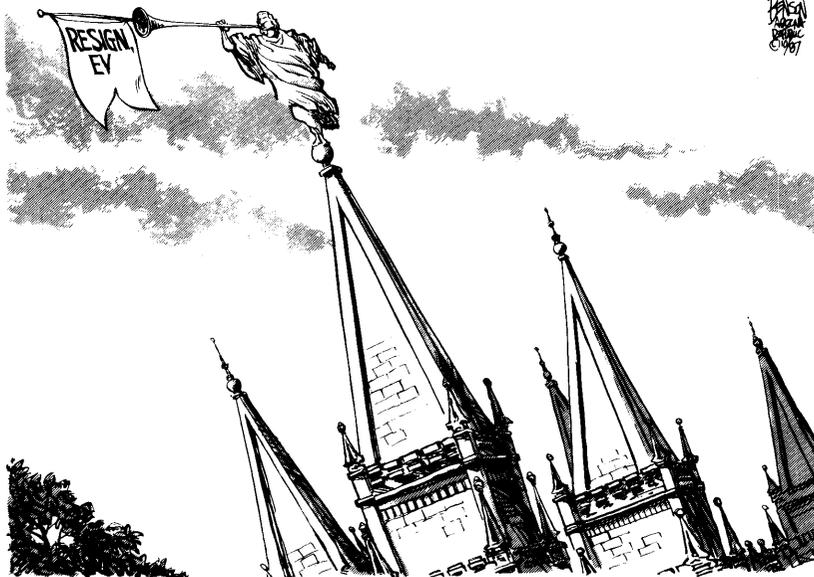
However, other letters to the *Latter-day Sentinel* revealed a growing concern over the governor's conduct and its impact on the Church. " 'My country, right or wrong. My Republican governor, right or wrong,' so it seems to be said by so many of us," wrote a concerned reader, "Is it possible for our governor to see himself ever in error?

. . . Is it possible for him to see the consequences of his actions?"<sup>20</sup> Another reader also shared her frustration because "this publicity is so damaging—and it will be difficult to counter-balance." "This 'guilt by association' is an inaccurate representation of the Church and its political position," she wrote, "as I have discussed this issue with my non-member friends, I find them to be pleasantly surprised the LDS have more than one opinion."<sup>21</sup> Another reader wrote in response "to those who feel that it is somehow un-Christian or less-Mormon to support the recall effort of Gov. Evan Mecham." "I am thankful for my God-given right," he said, "to disagree and help remove from office one who lacks the wisdom to lead this great state."<sup>22</sup>

The *Latter-day Sentinel* openly abandoned its own policy of not endorsing politicians and joined in the fray by throwing its weight behind the governor. "We broke it when everyone was ganging up on Mecham," said Crismon Lewis, "We went to bat for him."<sup>23</sup> The *Sentinel* ran a number of editorials that staunchly supported and defended the governor, as well as publishing other articles designed to counter the reporting of the "liberal media," stories on the activities of the Mecham supporters, and full page ads soliciting support for the beleaguered governor.<sup>24</sup>

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The LDS community became further polarized when political cartoonist Steve Benson, grandson of Ezra Taft Benson, openly sided with the Mecham critics. The *Latter-day Sentinel* reprinted Benson's cartoon, which appeared in the *Arizona Republic*, showing a banner hanging from the trumpet of the Moroni statue on the Salt Lake Temple, saying "RESIGN, EV."<sup>25</sup> Accompanying the drawing was an editorial by Crismon Lewis, which included excerpts from a telephone interview with Steve Benson. "Have you talked to your grandfather about the matter?" asked Lewis,



"Do you really feel that leaders are worried about the Church's image?" "Yes," responded Benson, "I wish I could feel at liberty to repeat what he has said about the governor. I just know grandpa has been watching the situation down here and there's reason to be concerned." "I'm not in the position to divulge everything I know because there are people in positions of authority, who wish not to go on record," Benson reportedly said to Lewis, "but there's a growing number of Mormons who are privately now wishing that the governor would best be served by stepping down."<sup>26</sup>

The wording of the reported interview sparked a showdown

between Benson and Lewis, which one *Newsweek* article labeled an "Arizona holy war."<sup>27</sup> "Steve Benson Says, 'Oops,'" read the title of Lewis's next column, suggesting that Benson retracted his remarks.<sup>28</sup> "Steve Benson Responds" read a bold headline in the following issue. "I did not apologize for remarks made in an earlier interview," said Benson, who also accused Lewis of "attempting to create a juicier story at the expense of accuracy."<sup>29</sup> "We stand by our story," Lewis retorted in a follow-up editorial. "The notes, with your verbatim remarks are here in our office. Would your *Arizona Republic* reporters be willing to offer such a courtesy to me or my staff?"<sup>30</sup>

Outraged by the "holy war," the Mecham supporters lashed out at Benson and resoundingly condemned the "liberal grandson who is prone to gross exaggeration."<sup>31</sup> "Never has any article in the *Sentinel* so infuriated me as did the Q&A with Steve Benson," wrote an anonymous letter to the *Sentinel*. "His answers read like every anti Mormon book I've ever seen."<sup>32</sup> Another reader scolded Benson for ignoring his grandfather's admonition in the previous General Conference to "trifle not with sacred things."<sup>33</sup> One reader even suggested that Benson should be taken out behind the proverbial barn and given a good thrashing instead of waiting for Moroni to do it at the judgement bar.<sup>34</sup>

While decrying the heresy, the Mecham supporters also sought to explain the cause of Governor Mecham's difficulties by first attributing his troubles to his moral integrity, as if morality was anathema to Arizona politics. "He is an honest, moral, (misrepresented) out-spoken, fighter for Constitutional government and a victim of a hostile news media," wrote Shirley Whitlock.<sup>35</sup> Another Mecham supporter professed that "Mecham just met with [President] Benson six weeks ago—the prophet said that he would win [a recall election] if he continued to do what's right. The problem with you is that he's honest, unlike ninety-nine percent of the politicians in the country!"<sup>36</sup>

Along with exalting the personal attributes of Governor Mecham, the Mechamites also seemed to justify their support for Mecham by closely identifying him with religious figures. "Hang in there, Gov. Mecham," admonished a *Latter-day Sentinel* reader, "Don't sell your birthright for a mess of pottage! Joseph Smith did not."<sup>37</sup> Cleon Skousen referred to Mecham as "a modern-day Isaiah," who also was "beaten, spat upon, and persecuted for being a prophet."<sup>38</sup> Twice, a *Mesa Tribune* columnist noted, Mecham supporters referred to him as their "Christ child."<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, many in Arizona hailed Evan Mecham as a political messiah, and the apparent similarities between the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and the political ministry of Evan Mecham have not escaped the notice of a few Mechamites. Mecham began his mission believing that he was a divinely directed voice crying repentance in the political wilderness. He performed political miracles which afforded him a brief season of popularity. He "cleared the temple" of state government and engaged in verbal battle with the "scribes" (media) and "pharisees" (politicians). Close aids betrayed

him<sup>40</sup> and members of the Church deserted him. The impeachment trial, the Mechamites claim, was an illegal assembly hurriedly convened to convict the governor. They also view his impeachment as a political martyrdom for the cause of truth. They see his fate, not unlike the atonement which bridged the gap between heaven and man, as an ultimate sacrifice to bring the return of democracy in Arizona by exposing the corruption and conspiracies in state government.

Though it is unknown if Mecham supporters openly articulate these parallels with one another, it is apparent by their actions that they share at least an inchoate association. Of the varying themes on the protest signs carried by the Mechamites throughout Mecham's impeachment trial, for example, the religious/political theme clearly prevailed. "George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Evan Mecham—True Patriots All!" read one sign. "Jesus Christ Had His Judas, Evan Mecham Has His [Attorney General] Bob Corbin, [House Prosecutor] William French, and [Department of Public Safety Director] Ralph Milstead," read another. "Fight Satan, Destroy the [Arizona] Republic and [Phoenix] Gazette!" read yet another.

Clearly, the Mechamites framed the governor's circumstances within a distinctly Mormon reference. Utilizing the message throughout the Book of Mormon that "secret oaths and combinations" constantly plot against the righteous, not unlike the official history of the Church, Mecham supporters frequently accused

various groups in Arizona of conspiring to "destroy Gov. Evan Mecham" as the effort to recall the governor grew in strength. Crismon Lewis, for example, echoed the popular belief that the recall effort was "a homosexual plot."<sup>41</sup> The media, both state and national, were also a favorite target: "Are you judging Evan Mecham by what you *know* he has said or done—or what the media (hostile media, I must add) chooses to present to you?" Shirley Whitlock challenged this article's author. "If all your 'facts' come from the media . . . then you have a very distorted picture of the truth."<sup>42</sup> Along with the media, dissident Democrats, drug pushers, organized crime, Communists, and even Satan himself

were also linked to the recall efforts and impeachment proceedings. One *Latter-day Sentinel* reader writing to "especially the priesthood," warned that the media "is fast becoming a super-power answerable only unto itself. It is obviously Satan's mouthpiece in the latter days."<sup>43</sup>

As the House Select Committee on Impeachment hearings convened at the state capitol in January 1988, Mecham supporters increasingly assigned a cosmic significance to his circumstance by reaching

deeper into Mormon consciousness to explain it. "Mecham is no longer the issue!" cried out Crismon Lewis, " 'the railroad job' we're seeing in the state legislature right now is the most evil conspiracy to date."<sup>44</sup> Other readers also echoed the same apocalyptic message in their letters to the *Latter-day Sentinel*. "It is no longer a matter of whether or not we like Governor Mecham, but whether or not we like freedom," wrote one couple. Warning that the parallels between the Nephite destruction and the Mecham impeachment hearings were too great, they concluded: "Will we again . . . let the evil forces voice a 51 percent vote to show that we are ripe for destruction?"<sup>45</sup> "Clearly, members of the Church, and especially readers of the Book of Mormon," wrote another reader, "recognize the fiasco as another battle between righteousness and the forces of evil as have been prophesied would happen in our day."<sup>46</sup> Another Mecham supporter also endeavored to convince this author that "everything that's taking place is a continuation of the War in Heaven—read Ether in the Book of Mormon!"<sup>47</sup>

Understanding the dichromatic vision of the Mechamites—framing Evan Mecham's circumstance within a "good versus evil" reference—also elucidates how they inter-related with the Mormon critics of the governor. Mecham supporters closely associated their political rivals in the Church with Ed Buck, the homosexual leader of the recall movement. "The previous issue featured an interview with Steve Buck — oops!

### CAN YOU FIND THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ARIZONA IN THIS PICTURE ?



... Oh, now I remember, it was Steve Benson," wrote a Mecham supporter.<sup>48</sup> An apologetic Mark Augustine of the *Latter-day Sentinel* telephoned a Mecham critic to verify his membership in the Church. "Someone called into the *Sentinel*," he explained, "and said that your letter was really written by Ed Buck."<sup>49</sup> Another Mecham critic also related how members of his ward baited him into discussing his views by commenting: "I hear you and Ed Buck have something going on."<sup>50</sup>

Although the Mecham critics were less vitriolic in characterizing the Mecham supporters, most agreed that the Mechamites were "right-wing" zealots within the Church. "You've always got this real wild 5 or 10 percent," said one member, "and since they have a hero, a figurehead, they've become real prominent."<sup>51</sup> Steve Benson agreed that those Mormons who pressured him to back off the governor were "the ultra-conservative sect of the Church—not the mainstream."<sup>52</sup> "Mormonism's far right," wrote another Mecham critic, "is the most militant sector in supporting and defending Mecham."<sup>53</sup>

Along with characterizing the Mechamites as extremists, the Mecham critics also invoked the image of the emperor with no clothes to describe the governor.<sup>54</sup> Some, however, went further in criticizing Mecham. "They wonder," one member reflected, "how you can be against such a fine man. To me, he is an embodiment of everything I don't want to be and everything that . . . the Church teaches that you shouldn't be."<sup>55</sup> Stan Turley, former president of the Senate, described Mecham as an "ethical pygmy."<sup>56</sup> And Representative Mark Killian of Mesa, although voting against impeaching the governor, also denounced Mecham "and everything he stands for." "The way I was raised," Killian emotionally said on the floor of the House of Representatives, "is nothing at all the way I see Mr. Mecham conduct his affairs. He has continually skated along the lowest common denominator of social behavior, and that's barely eking by the law . . . And his outlandish, rude, classless, John Birch accusations . . . turn my stomach."<sup>57</sup>

In the final months, Mecham's use of his Church affiliation to create a positive image eventually involved the Church headquarters. In April 1988 the media reported that Mecham's attorneys Fred Kraft and Jerris Leonard proposed a plea bargain to the state attorney general that included a promise that Mecham would instruct his followers not to seek revenge in the fall election, never run again for a state political office, and go on a

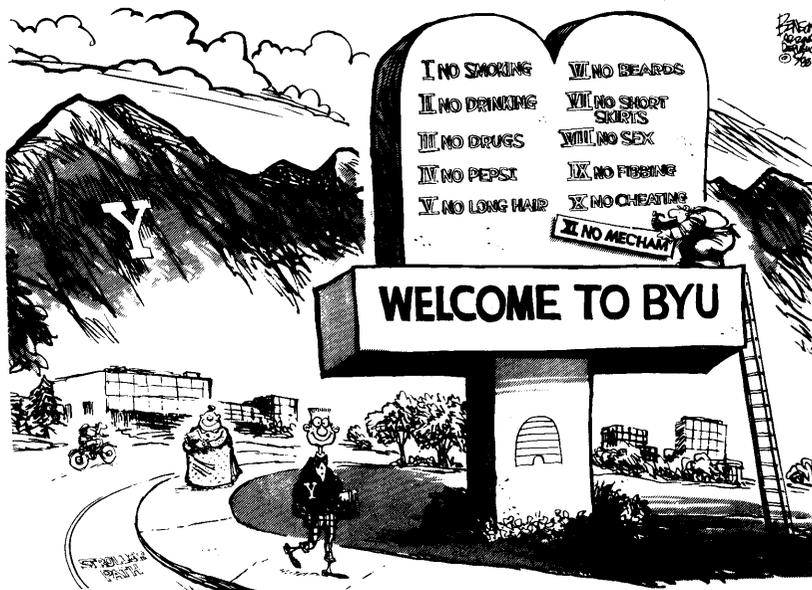
two-year mission for the LDS church. Mecham said he was "flabbergasted" by the idea of a plea bargain, although he did not deny that his attorneys made the proposal without his explicit knowledge, nor did his attorney deny that the meeting took place. Attorney General Robert Corbin would not comment.<sup>58</sup> In response, LDS Public Communications Director Richard P. Lindsay wrote the *Arizona Republic* denying any Church collaboration and strongly affirmed that mission calls are issued only by the Church president and are not available for plea bargains.<sup>59</sup>

A month later, Mecham was denied permission to speak at Brigham Young University. Initially, the school's College Republicans request to have Mecham speak was denied by their faculty advisor because he thought that Mecham violated the schools ethics policy, which is supposed to apply to all outside speakers. Later BYU Associate Academic Vice President LaMond Tullis explained that Mecham had not been banned from BYU, but that the university did not confirm the club's request to bring Mecham because BYU does not invite anyone who is indicted or under legal proceedings. The

invitation would have to wait until after the trial. (Privately, school officials acknowledged that they wanted to keep distance between the Church school and Mecham so as not to legitimize him.) Mecham bristled at the decision; responding to the advisor's implication about his ethics he said, "I still have my (Mormon) temple recommend. If I had moral problems I wouldn't still have a temple recommend."<sup>60</sup>

The clash in the Church over the Mecham administration culminated with Evan Mecham's impeachment and dissipated with his conviction. The effect and profundity of the division between Arizona Mormons, however, is challenging to assess. Except for an informal survey conducted by the *Latter-day Sentinel*, which showed 84 percent of their readers supporting Mecham,<sup>61</sup> no surveys exist to indicate the Mormon reaction to Evan Mecham, to the debate which ensued within the Church, or to the impeachment and conviction of the first Mormon governor. Certainly the dispute among the members garnered the attention of the national media,<sup>62</sup> but how representative were the readers of the *Latter-day Sentinel* of the mainstream Mormon perspective, when only one in twenty Mormons in Arizona subscribe to the paper?<sup>63</sup>

The editorials and letters in the *Latter-day Sentinel*, which expressed frustration over the lack of Mormon support for the



governor, suggest that the majority of Mormons were less sympathetic to Evan Mecham's plight. "Does Anyone Care?" mourned Crismon Lewis at the lack of indignation over the Arizona Senate's vote to impeach Governor Mecham. "Our only hope," his editorial concluded, "is that somewhere, someday, somebody will care."<sup>64</sup> The *Latter-day Sentinel* also printed a letter accusing Mormons of being too involved in church work to rally behind the governor, or to care that "Communism is on the doorstep of our nation." "I am witnessing a blatant display of apathy among the LDS," decried a Mecham supporter. "After placing many phone calls, there are only a few LDS people showing an interest in good government."<sup>65</sup>

Although many ignored the cacophony in the Church, they were nevertheless affected to some degree by the debate. Talk of Evan Mecham was frequently overheard at Mormon social gatherings. Many expressed frustration and remorse over Governor Mecham's imprudence. Yet they also mistrusted the press, and believed that the "worldly and liberal" media conspired to take advantage of the governor's misfortune. Many also expressed their concern over the issues, yet took comfort in knowing that if this is God's church, then He would take care of the matter one way or the other.

Ironically, although the Mechamites assigned an eternal significance to the Mecham crisis, and rallied behind the governor for religious reasons, they too believed that the Church would emerge unscathed by the controversy. "We have a real strong feeling that this is the true church." Crismon Lewis told *Newsweek*, "This church is greater than anything one man can do."<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the Church in Arizona will remain untouched by the turmoil over Evan Mecham as the members believe. However, despite some *Sentinel* articles to the contrary, numerous stake missionaries have complained about increased difficulty in teaching lessons and declining missionary activity. "All they want to do," said one counselor in a stake mission presidency, "is talk about Evan Mecham."<sup>67</sup> The attendance at the Mesa Temple Easter Pageant also decreased this last March by ten thousand visitors.<sup>68</sup> The noticeably smaller Easter edition of the *Latter-day Sentinel*, which is traditionally the largest issue during the year, caused some to wonder if the newspaper has faced a drop in advertising sales.<sup>69</sup>

Even if the Church in Arizona, as an institution, remains cohesive after the division over Evan Mecham, individual members have been deeply affected. Some remain suspicious of one

another. Questions of loyalty do not fade quickly. Others have expressed feelings of frustration, isolation, and anxiety over the Mecham controversy. "Are we the only ones losing sleep over this?" one Mecham critic asked.<sup>70</sup> Representative Mark Killian even broke down and wept before the Arizona legislature while explaining that "this is one of the most difficult times of my life." "I felt very uncomfortable as a fellow member of the Church," he later explained, "to be put in a position of judging [Evan Mecham]." Another Mecham critic agreed that the controversy was a "gut wrenching" experience for members of the Church.<sup>72</sup>

While Mormons try to rebuild the bridges of fellowship in



Arizona, the Mecham controversy uncovered many disturbing questions about Mormon political life. How much of Evan Mecham's messianic vision and self righteous zeal was a product of his religion? Can Mormons truly separate church and state? Can Mormons live "not of the world" and still function in worldly politics? The divisive tremor in Arizona may also foreshadow a potentially deeper schism between politics and religion that Mormons may someday face. In spite of the official Church policy of institutional neutrality, would the nationwide membership experience a similar reaction if a devout Mormon felt a "call" to run for the U.S. presidency?

## NOTES

1. This article could not have been completed without the help of Karen Pagán, Karen Coates, and Steve Benson.
2. Editorial, *Latter-day Sentinel*, (Phoenix) 12 December 1987, p. 2.
3. *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix) 6 March 1988, pp. C1-C6.
4. *Come Back America*, (Glendale: MP Press, 1982), "Acknowledgment," no page number given.
5. *Arizona Republic*, 18 May 1987, as cited in *The World According to Evan Mecham* (Mesa: Blue Sky Press, 1987), p. 81.
6. Many Mormon writers refer to the "hanging by a thread" prophecy attributed to Joseph Smith. For a good bibliographical sketch of these works, see William O. Nels, *The Charter of Liberty* (Salt Lake: Deseret, 1987), pp. 145-46.
7. *Come Back America*, pp. i-iv.
8. R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America* (New York: Oxford, 1986), p. 26.
9. William O. Nels, *The Charter of Liberty*, pp. 1-3. Nels's book gives a good interpretation of American history from the Mormon view.
10. The phrase "crisis theology," in this context, is taken from O. Kendall White Jr., *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy* (Salt Lake: Signature books, 1987).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 98:10 (Salt Lake: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1977 edition).
12. The *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson) provides a good chronology of Evan Mecham's rise and fall in the 6 April 1988, section C.
13. Editorial, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 12 December 1987, p. 2.
14. Letter to the Editor from Mike DeWitt, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 28 November 1987, p. 3.
15. *Arizona Daily Star*: 6 April 1988, p. C2.
16. Letter to the editor from Eduardo Pagán, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 22 August 1987, p. 2.
17. Letter to the editor, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 31 October 1987, p. 2.

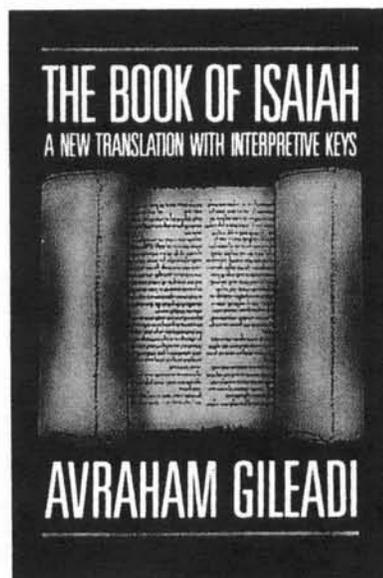
18. Letter to the editor from Vernon Whiting, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 19 September 1987, p. 2.
19. Letter to the editor from Veldon Dodge, *Ibid.*
20. Letter to the editor from Sidney Macombe, *Ibid.*, p. 3.
21. Letter to the editor from Karen Coates, *Ibid.*, 31 October 1987, p. 2.
22. Letter to the editor from Mike DeWitt, *Ibid.*, p. 9.
23. *Arizona Republic*, 6 March 1988, p. C3.
24. Sample articles highlighting the activities of Mecham supporters can be found in 19 September 1987, p. 14; 14 November 1987, pp. 1, 32-33; and 12 December 1987, p. 18. For reports critical of the Phoenix media, see 19 September 1987, p. 4, and 28 November 1987, pp. 18-19. For full page ads, see 19 September 1987, p. 13, and 31 October 1987, p. 22.
25. *Latter-day Sentinel*, 14 November 1987, p. 2.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Newsweek*, 1 February 1988, p. 28.
28. Editorial, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 28 November 1987, p. 2.
29. Letter to the editor from Steve Benson, *Ibid.*, 12 December 1987, p. 2.
30. Editorial, *Ibid.*
31. Letter to the editor from "Name Withheld by Request" from Joseph City, Arizona, *Ibid.*, p. 39.
32. *Ibid.* 33. Letter to the editor from Maude Schnepf, *Ibid.*, p. 39.
34. Letter to the editor from David Jones, *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
35. Letter to the editor from Shirley Whitlock, *Ibid.*, 12 December 1987, p. 39.
36. Personal correspondence from Lance Standiford to Eduardo Pagán, dated 28 September 1987, in possession of the author.
37. Letter to the editor from Steve Sadler, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 31 October 1987, p. A9.
38. *Arizona Republic*, 6 March 1988, p. C3.
39. Commentary, Doug MacEachern, *Mesa Tribune*, 10 January 1988, p.A9.
40. Certainly the unsavory pasts of many of governor Mecham's appointed aides cast serious doubt on Mecham's judgement. The impeachment trial of Governor Mecham, however, revealed that Lee Watkins, former fund raiser for the Mecham campaign and close aide, was, in the words of Mecham's defense lawyer, "a one-man wrecking crew" to the Mecham administration. The record-keeping skills, or lack thereof, of the governor's brother Willard eventually brought about the downfall of the Mecham administration.
41. *Latter-day Sentinel*, 28 November 1987, p. 2.
42. Personal correspondence from Shirley Whitlock to Eduardo Pagán, dated 29 August 1987, in possession of the author.
43. Letter to the editor from Mike Veejvoda, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 23 January 1988, p. 19.
44. Editorial, *Ibid.*, p. 2.
45. Letter to the editor from Gerald and Della Smith, *Ibid.*, 6 February 1988, p. 3.
46. Letter to the editor from Gloria Anderson, *Ibid.*, 20 February 1988, p. 3.
47. Personal correspondence from Lance Standiford to Eduardo Pagán, dated 28 September 1987, in possession of the author.
48. Letter to the editor from Daryl Colvin, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 28 November 1987, p. 13.
49. Telephone conversation with Mark Augustine, 24 August 1987.
50. *Arizona Republic*, 6 March 1988, p. C3.
51. *Ibid.* 52. *Arizona Daily Star*, 6 March 1988, p. A13.
53. Personal correspondence from Eduardo Pagán to Kim Sue Lia Perks, dated 6 February 1988, in the possession of the author.
54. Letter to the editor from Mike DeWitt, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 20 November 1987, p. 3.
55. *Arizona Republic*, 6 March 1988, p. C3.
56. *Mesa Tribune*, 7 February 1988, p. A10.
57. *Ibid.*
58. "Mecham Attorney's Seek Deal to Dismiss Charges," *Phoenix Gazette*, 14 April 1988, p. A1.
59. Letter to the Editor from Richard P. Lindsay, *Arizona Republic*, 6 May 1988, p. A14.
60. Gurwell, Lance, "Mecham Goes Home Again to Speak to Class of 1988 at Utah High School," *Arizona Republic*, 28 May 1988, p. A8.
61. *Latter-day Sentinel*, 31 October 1987, p. 8.
62. *Newsweek*, 1 February 1988, p. 28. Associated Press also picked up the story and ran it on their news wire.
63. *Phoenix Gazette*, 11 January 1988, p. reports the circulation of the *Latter-day Sentinel* is 200,000. Certainly, this question has been raised before by the media, with varying answers. I believe that the paper is an accurate barometer of the Church in Arizona. A look at the Advisory Board of the newspaper, printed on 22 August, 1987, p. 2, reads like a who's who of the Mormon community. Among them are very respected bishops, stake presidents, patriarchs, and the current temple president.
64. Editorial, *Latter-day Sentinel*, 16 April 1988, p. 2.
65. Letter to the editor from Marilyn Rencher Ralph, *Ibid.*
66. *Newsweek*, 1 February 1988, p. 28.
67. Telephone conversation with Steve Benson, 9 May 1988.
68. *Latter-day Sentinel*, 19 March 1988 issue. Interestingly, the Easter Pageant was also celebrating its fiftieth anniversary.
69. *Ibid.*, 16 April 1988, p. 6.
70. Telephone conversation with Karen Coates, 7 May 1988.
71. *Mesa Tribune*, 7 February 1988, p. A10.
72. *Arizona Daily Star*, 6 March 1988, p. A13.

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