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READERS FORUM

CORRELATING INDEPENDENT STUDY GROUPS

AS A CO-FOUNDER and managing director of a local LDS study group, I started wondering what other groups were in existence, what they did, how they were organized and financed, and who was leading the discussions or speaking to the groups?

Our group has primarily invited speakers on Mormon history to come to our area and talk to the group about their field. We have had Leonard Arrington, Mike Quinn, Jan Shippis, Paul Edwards, Elder Dallin H. Oaks (then Utah Supreme Court Justice Oaks), Elder Eldred G. Smith, Ron Walker, Jim Allen, and many other speakers over the past eight years. Although most of our speakers have come from Utah, we have also had speakers from the East Coast and from other areas of California.

I am interested in hearing from the leaders of other groups throughout the U.S., and even overseas, to share ideas on format, topics of discussion, and methods of funding the general costs of programs. If any of your readers have organized a group such as ours, and would like to share ideas, please drop me a line. If there aren't too many, perhaps we can exchange newsletters on a regular basis.

I have found SUNSTONE to be a rich source of ideas and a great source of speakers for our group. Without such publications, my job would be much harder, if not impossible.

*Stephen L. Eccles, managing director
The Miller-Eccles Study Group
91482 Winston Court
Upland, CA 91786*

GLASNOST AND THE BYU BOOKSTORE

I WAS HARDLY surprised to hear about the BYU Bookstore's attempt to . . . first cancel and then relocate and downplay the autographing session for Calvin Grondahl's recently released *Marketing Precedes the Miracle*.

In 1987-1988, when I attended BYU as a freshman (I'm presently serving a mission) the bookstore decided to discontinue their line of Soviet Union t-shirts. This decision coin-

cided with pressure from a political organization called "The College Americans." One day several of the members of this right-wing group went to the bookstore and bought out all the t-shirts. One member said: "You might as well have a pro-Soviet rally out in front of the library."

The *Student Review* never got a hold on the story, but several people I worked with politically in the "peace vigil" and "Response Club" did some investigating. They found that the management of the bookstore told the producer of the t-shirts that ". . . they had received some complaints about the Soviet t-shirts, and it was their policy to cancel a product when consumers complain." When we talked to the producer, he seemed to think that was a hint to stop producing the Soviet shirts. Of course, he didn't want to lose his other business so he promptly discontinued the Soviet shirts. Later, when we asked the management why they had stopped selling Soviet shirts they merely explained that "the producer had quit making them."

This was a sly move, and we had the information to blow it all open. However, we restrained our overwhelming desires to bring this matter to light because we didn't want to endanger "our source's" business. Ironically, the Missionary Emporium in University Mall (in Orem) now carries the shirts. I bought one for my P-days.

*Elder Dennis Potter
Porto, Portugal*

BORN AGAIN MORMON ORTHODOXY

WHO TOOK MY church away?" demanded Armand Mauss in his review of Kendall White's *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology*. I got the feeling that when he lays his hands on the culprit, it won't be a pretty sight.

For Mauss, Neo-Orthodoxy is not merely misguided, it is the enemy. It is a criminal conspiracy. It is a disease. His message is in his metaphors. Though an occasional general authority has "given aid and comfort to the movement," he observes, "general authorities are not much implicated in it." And he writes, "This theological syndrome is called 'neo-orthodoxy.'"

As a neo-orthodox Mormon, I'm not sure

whether Brother Mauss wants to attack me, arrest me, or medicate me. But perhaps that's the kind of violent reaction Kendall White would predict from a believer in the midst of a crisis.

Because of what White calls traditional Mormonism—Mauss's church—the Church is in crisis today. Its liberal catechism ultimately abandoned Jesus Christ, and even Joseph Smith, except for a single piercing, luminous insight into man's godly potential. That one insight seemed to satisfy, even liberate, Mauss's generation, especially those in academe.

But many Mormons now find building upon the human foundation at once too difficult and too facile. Too difficult because it denies the sinful side of our nature; too facile because it denies the paradoxical nature of our world. Hence the resurgence of interest in Neo-Orthodox—Christian—Mormonism: the dying God silently answers more questions than the god-in-embryo sees.

As for Kendall White's analysis, it is splendid as far as it goes. The book was unfortunately dated on publication because only the earliest expressions of current Neo-Orthodox writers were available at the time.

Neo-Orthodoxy has now laid, or rather exposed, the Christian foundations of the Mormon religion. This is not the final statement, but the opening statement, of Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy.

Mormon humanism is moribund. Something more inclusive, more tolerant, more Christian, is trying to be born. White's traditional Mormons would do well to lend a hand. Or at least not stand in the way.

*J. Frederic Voros, Jr.
Salt Lake City, UT*

Armand Mauss replies:

Brother Voros correctly perceives my hostility to Neo-orthodoxy, whether the Protestant strain or its Mormon derivative. As a believing Mormon, I can hardly be expected to look with equanimity upon the apparently growing influence in Mormonism of doctrines which Joseph Smith was told were "an abomination" in the sight of God. Yet, I suppose it is inevitable that if reasonable people can disagree over what Jesus *really* taught, they can also disagree over what Joseph Smith really taught.

I am puzzled, though, by Voros's dismis-

sal of "traditional Mormonism" as "humanism" and "liberal catechism." Perhaps I shouldn't be, since these are the standard pejoratives used by today's Protestant fundamentalists (especially if the humanism is "secular"!). Yet, I don't see how the teachings of Mormonism during its first 75-80 years (which is what I mean by "traditional Mormonism") can be reduced to such characterizations. Humanitarianism is more than humanism, and libertarianism more than liberalism. So, I plead not guilty on that count, as I do also to any suspicion that I would like either to attack, arrest, or medicate the Neo-fundamentalists. I will, however, plead guilty as charged to standing in their way as long and as vigorously as I can, lest my Mormon grandchildren end up thinking like Southern Baptists.

My next obstructionist effort in this regard will appear in the Spring 1989 issue of *Dialogue*. If Brother Voros believes that "Neo-orthodoxy has . . . exposed the Christian foundations" of the Mormon religion," I would say that White and I have exposed the sectarian sources of Mormon Neo-orthodoxy, which has been borrowed in large part from Protestant fundamentalism. It is the resort of



"What kind of church is this . . . when the first thing they do after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley is build a basketball court?"

a spiritually and intellectually insecure folk and is ultimately alien to both the spirit and the letter of traditional Mormonism.

A WIFE'S STORY

I WAS INTERESTED in reading Ron Ker-shaw's article on serving homosexuals with AIDS (SUNSTONE 12:3). Much has been said and written about the homosexual and this is good. But what about the spouses of homosexuals? I am 27 years old and my real name is not Lynn Conley. I use a fictitious name because my husband is gay. Jim (also fictitious) and I have been married a little over three years, and we have a 20 month old son. We have filed for divorce which will be finalized 1 January 1989. I don't blame Jim for what has happened in my life. I went through a stage where I wanted to blame anyone and everyone, but not any more.

I was born into an active Mormon family, and lived a typical Mormon life including going to BYU, completing a degree in nursing, and serving a full-time mission. I continued to follow this path by marrying in the temple a fine young man with many talents and spiritual qualities. We had a wonderful marriage. It wasn't perfect, but we are now fond of saying that we had a better marriage in three years than many couples have in a lifetime.

Jim first expressed his true feelings to me when our son was two weeks old. Even though he didn't completely understand his desires, he believed that the Church held the solutions to help him. To this point he had been true to his marriage vows and had never been sexually involved with another man. He knew he had some homosexual feelings growing up, but comforted himself by concluding that others must have similar feelings, and that an active sexual relationship with a woman would decrease his homosexual urges. With time, righteous living, and a temple marriage, he was led to believe these feelings would pass. They did not, they intensified. That was not because of lack of trying. He has always been a good person. He fulfilled a productive mission and was called to be an assistant to the president. He has served well in many responsible positions in the Church, and at the time of our marriage Jim was a member of the bishopric. I realize these are only titles, but I knew the man behind them and he truly strived to be a man of God.

Homosexuality—the word had hardly entered my sheltered life and now it consumed me. I searched my mind desperately

for information connected with this word. Something about evil people and strange men waiting in the dark to abduct children. It made no sense and it was all too much for me to face, so we put it aside, almost pretending it didn't exist. Jim continued to be faithful, but he grew restless and extremely depressed.

Life was a nightmare of confusion and pain. Finally we had to have some answers. Jim was always afraid to ask because his greatest fear was that there were no answers. Many months and thousands of dollars later his fear was confirmed. This was a time of great hope, severe disappointment, and bitter despair. Counselors both in and out of the Church basically told us there was nothing that could be done to change Jim's sexual orientation. And yet we continued, because we both desperately wanted to stay married and continue our family. As bitter as it all has been, at least we can look back without regret and with the assurance that we tried everything we could.

During this time of searching, we had decided not to tell anyone. It was a very long and painful year of silence. Jim knew I needed to talk to someone. I had felt that I was the only one in the universe who had gone through this. After hearing Carol Lynn Pearson speak at a conference, Jim knew she would be understanding and empathetic. It took me three months to get up the courage to write her. Thank God for Carol Lynn! Two days later her letter was in my mailbox. I drove to the hills. I remember sitting there looking at it and shaking. Finally I opened it and read. She didn't say anything earth-shattering. She didn't even have the answers to my questions, but it was like the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders. Someone else had gone through what I was going through, and survived it.

I love the Church, but in all honesty it was not there for Jim and me in this time of crisis. We finally spoke to our bishop who couldn't have been more supportive. God was also there for me, as he always is for his children. I had many more questions than God felt I should have answered, but he gave me what I needed to make it through. Early on, God let me know this was something I was supposed to be going through, which brought some comfort. He also let me know that he loves homosexuals and that he expected me to love them also.

Love them? I didn't even know who they were. At first I hated them. They were the enemy. Whoever they were, it was their fault that my life was falling apart. And yet, I felt a desire to know them and understand them.

I started by joining an AIDS task force, which has become one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I also met with the other gay people both in and out of the Church. I was afraid at first. What would they do to me? How would they accept me? What would we say? It now seems silly asking these questions because I have many gay friends. Although homosexuals are as varied as heterosexuals, I find that generally they are a very kind, loving, and caring group of human beings. I am grateful for the blessings that this trial has brought into my life.

I felt guided to start a support group. When I had looked for something—anything—there was nothing to be found. I felt strongly about providing support for other women who might also be making this same journey. This was a challenge for me because I had never gone to any support, let alone start one of my own. My biggest challenge was finding the women. We are a very closeted group. When a husband "comes out of the closet" his wife goes in. I didn't know where the wives were but I knew where some of the husbands were. I made flyers and posted them in the gay bars and gave information to gay groups, gay publications, and other community organizations.

Slowly I started getting calls. My life will never be the same. I wish that I could express the hurt and pain of these women. I am constantly amazed at the stories I hear and the number of women who call. Our group meets twice a month and we have a phone list that can be used by both those who attend and those who cannot. Some women drive over 70 miles and rarely miss a meeting. I have had calls from throughout the United States, even from men married to lesbian women.

I need to mention the issue of openness and honesty. This was one of the hardest things I had to deal with. I believe that no matter what comes along, if you deal with it honestly it can be dealt with. Fictitious names and secret lives go against my way of thinking. Yet, did I have a choice due to the misunderstandings of the Church and society? I have slowly been able to open up to family and friends as I have gotten over my own paranoia and become more self-confident. Only then did the healing begin. I hope soon to stand open to the Church and society as who I really am—the wife of a gay man. I am not alone in these feelings. Others from my group have expressed the desire for "no more lies" and "no more hiding."

I hope we can all work together for a better understanding of each other, regardless of our situation, so we can live honestly and love unconditionally as Christ taught us.

For more information on the support group or if you have any questions, please call me at 415/432-9123.

Lynn Conley
Contra Costa County, CA

A POOR WAYFARING MAN WITH AIDS

I ENJOYED THE frankness of Ronald Kershaw's article, "AIDS, Leprosy, and Disease: The Christian Resoponse" (SUNSTONE 12:3), and am discouraged that the response of some Mormons towards homosexuals and persons with AIDS is uncharitable. Consider a 1980s parable of the Good Samaritan (a person in Jesus' day who was considered not chosen by God).

"John," a person travelling on life's journey, is stricken with AIDS and falls to the side of the road. A Mormon bishop sees John lying by the road and says, "He's done wrong. I cannot give him welfare because he will be excommunicated." The bishop turns away and hurriedly walks past on his way to a Priesthood Correlation Committee meeting.

Next, a band of Mormons approach and walk past John. They are on their way to picket a Gay Pride celebration. As they hurry along, John sees the messages of their homemade sign, "AIDS is God's Punishment," and "Homosexuality is Sin: Go Back Into the Closet."

John lies near death by the road. It is getting late in the day. A Mormon who isn't currently active in the Church approaches John on the road. John's sores are bandaged by the person who takes John to a hospice for further medical treatment. At the hospice, John is cared for, regardless of his past, his religious standing, or religious interest.

Which person was living their religion?

Thank you for publishing Mr. Kershaw's article.

Judy Yoshiko Shim
West Hollywood, CA

CALL FOR PAPERS

I AM PRESENTLY compiling a collection of personal essays celebrating the complexities of homosexuality among Mormons. Issues to be treated include relationship, feelings, attitudes, peer reactions, etc. These essays will help to enlarge the reader's understanding of the uniqueness of gay individuals, their challenges and joys, their contributions to

church and society. Such a compilation is long overdue. If you are interested in contributing to such a work please contact me.

Phillippe Lussier
4014 South Highland Drive #442
Salt Lake City, UT 84124-1617

BOOK OF MORMON CONVERSION STORIES NEEDED

AT THE BEGINNING of October General Conference, President Benson challenged "our Church writers, teachers, and leaders to relate more Book of Mormon conversion stories that will strengthen our faith and prepare great missionaries" and to "let us know how [the Book of Mormon] leads us to Christ." My heart immediately responded, and I have arranged with Deseret Book to edit a collection of personal narratives of conversion to Christ and his Gospel through the Book of Mormon, with a focus on first-person accounts from all over the world-wide Church. Royalties will go to the family Book of Mormon program. This is an invitation to SUNSTONE readers to participate.

If you are willing to have your own conversion story considered, please send it to me as soon as you can. Please encourage others to send such testimonies, also. Tell your story in your own words, simply but completely,

with as many specific details about what happened and what you felt as you can provide. I want to include not only accounts of initial conversion to Christ, but also accounts of the impact and continuing influence of the Book of Mormon as members of the Church come to know Christ better and try to live his Gospel.

I deeply appreciate any assistance. I believe this proposed collection of testimonies can help President Benson's goal "to move the Book of Mormon forward now in a marvelous manner" and that our efforts can be one way to respond to his charge to "help with this burden and with this blessing which [God] has placed on the whole Church."

Eugene England
1775 Andrus Lane
Provo, UT 84604

OUR MOTHER IN HEAVEN

I AM PREPARING a paper on personal experiences with Mother in Heaven to be presented at the February Mormon Women's Forum. I invite Mormon women (and men) to send their personal experiences with Mother God to me, c/o SUNSTONE.

Martha Pierce
Salt Lake City



"I'm your 'computer-matched' escort to the singles' dance.
We both read *Exponent III*!"



Choose the Write!

THE 1989 BROOKIE & D.K. BROWN MEMORIAL FICTION CONTEST

SUNSTONE'S annual fiction contest is sponsored in behalf of the memory of Brookie and Donald Kenneth Brown, a nationally respected law enforcement officer and locally admired Arizona religious leader with a great love for literature.

Sunstone encourages any interested writer to submit material. All entries should relate in some manner to the experience of the Latter-day Saints. All varieties of theme, tone, and attitude are encouraged. Both traditional and experimental short story forms will be considered. Entries will be judged by a board of independent judges. Awards will be announced at the concluding banquet at the Sunstone Symposium on 26 August 1989.

RULES

1. The Brookie & D.K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest is open to all writers. Entries must be delivered to the Sunstone Foundation office or be postmarked by 15 June 1989.
2. Stories must be typewritten, double-spaced, on one side of 8-1/2 by 11 inch paper (not onion skin). Since manuscripts will not be returned, contestants should keep a copy of their entry. The stories should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages. One author may submit no more than three stories.
3. Each entry must be accompanied by a signed statement from the author attesting that it is the author's original work, that it is not being considered elsewhere for publication, and that it will not be submitted elsewhere until the contest results have been announced. Contest winners will be published in Sunstone magazine.

1988 BROOKIE & D.K. BROWN AWARDS

FIRST PLACE	Susan Howe	"Getting to Disneyland"
SECOND PLACE	Lewis Horne	"Mona's Family"
THIRD PLACE	Michael Fillerup	"Daddy-Daughter Date"

SUNSTONE was gratified by the number of excellent entries submitted to the 1988 fiction contest. On behalf of the Brown estate, the first place winner will receive \$500, second place \$250, third place \$100.