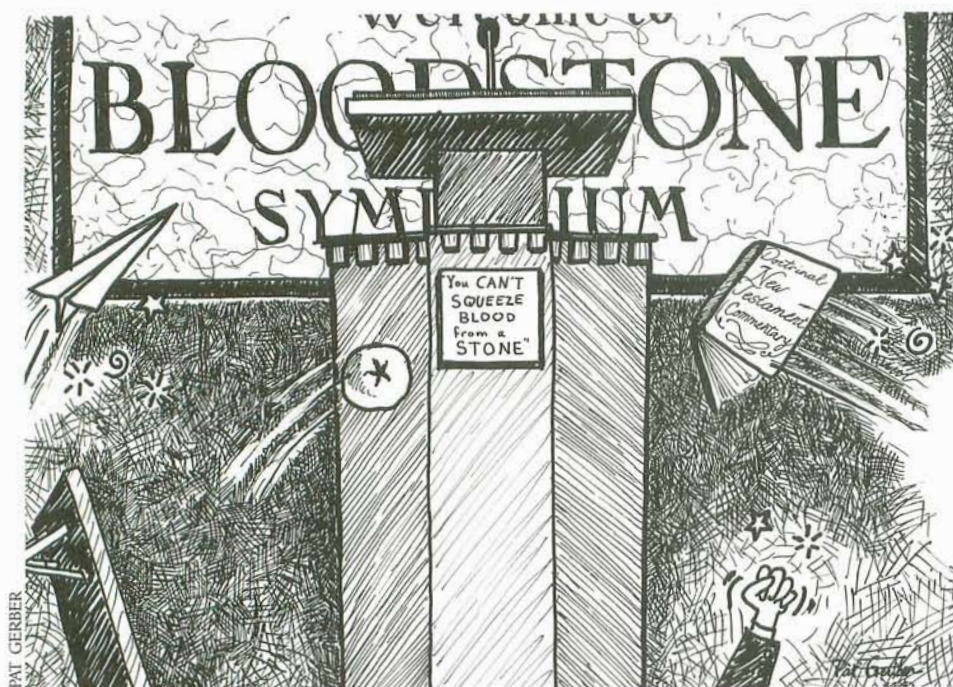


## LIGHTER MINDS

# THE CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS AT IT AGAIN

By Peter J. Sorensen



AT THE SUMMER 1989 meeting of the Bloodstone Foundation (whose motto, you will recall, is "You can't squeeze blood from a stone"), we saw once again that when the chips are down, we Mormon scholars can sling mud with the best of them. The excitement began during the plenary session Friday morning. Professor LaVer E. Narrows, of the religion department, made the tactical error of sitting directly behind Dr. Les Likely, a cynical historian from a gentile institution. Professor Narrows, never a tactful person, indeed a bit of reactionary, stated, quite loudly in fact, "Well, the only reason I'm here is to defend Joseph Smith from those muckraking liberals like—like whatizname, you know who I mean, that historian, that anti-Christ so-and-so, that faith-demoting scholar More Likely."

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"The name's Les Likely," answered the historian. "And that's just the sort of remark I'd expect from you, you pseudo-scholar, you church-office-building lackey, you groveler at the feet of tired tradition!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, such unseemly behavior from two members of the same church!" This from Bob Woodhead, a non-Mormon journalist from *Newsbleak*, whose credits, you will recall, include the scandalous series of articles on the Mormon church, under such ingratiating banners as "Mormon Hierarchy Soaks Ignorant Poor" and "Newly Discovered Text Reveals George Albert Smith Was a Newt." As one, both Dr. Likely and Professor Narrows turned on the Eastern peacemaker: "Aroint hypocrite! Why don't you meddle in your own affairs? Agnostic spoiler! Betrayer of the Saints? Fie on you!"

But at this point the meeting was gavelled to order by Josephus Fieldhouse Niblets, this

year's convention chair, and Professor of Sense at BYU's Center for Cryptography and Ancient Wheat (CCAW), an institute co-sponsored by the agronomy and religion departments.

"We welcome you all, liberals and conservatives, Mormons and non-Mormons, black and white, bond and free, conventional oven or microwave method, ersatz or genuine, to the opening session of the Summer 1989 Bloodstone Convention. This promises to be a most exciting convention, for, as you all know, Phlegm Glendenning, an amateur researcher from Orem, Utah, has discovered the lost 116 manuscript pages—not of the Book of Mormon, unfortunately, but of the Ephraim Fourth Ward High Priest Group minutes, 1861-1897. If ever a document will prove once and for all the validity of the Mormon position, this is it."

Professor Niblets led off with an astounding comparison of the high priests group entries of 1862-1865 to the much-ignored Gnostic document of the Corpus Hernium, "The Wallowing of Diogenes." His argument was weakened only after he admitted under questioning to erasing the word "sycophant" from the pioneer record referring to ward welfare relief efforts, and replacing it with the word "hierophant."

His talk was followed by Professor Narrows, who contended that the high priests group had been asleep for the entire thirty-six years covered by the minutes. "This surely," he summarized, "is the quintessential high priests group, representing archetypally the somnambulance of generations of such groups since that time!" The room came to its feet and cheered, with the exception of some high priests in the back two rows.

The last speaker was the amateur bookhound himself, Phlegm Glendenning, whose exuberance more than made up for his lack of eloquence. He began by tracing his trek from Orem to Ephraim: "It was nothing but snow," he began, and soon trailed off into a pathetic tale of frostbite along the freeway. "I should have thought to take the car, but I just assumed the Lord would provide." During the long journey on I-15, Phlegm's pack horse, a spotted pony, keeled over and died. "The ground was frozen so bad I could not break it with my portable CD player, and I just had to cover the horse with snow to keep the wolves away, not to mention the Food Services staff of the university." The harrowing tale ended with Phlegm's discovery of the group minutes hidden in the false bottom of a dresser owned by Mrs. Martine Harris, a French convert who married a descendant of

one of the original three witnesses (Martell Harris, one of the three witnesses to the dedication of the Ephraim wheat silo).

It was Bob Woodhead who actually started the final mayhem and bloodletting that completely disrupted the conference, when he raised his hand during the question-and-answer session following Phlegm's talk: "Is it true, Mr. Glendenning, that you made a deal to sell this manuscript to the *L.A. Times*?" The audience froze at the thought of another scandal, especially young Dr. Quick, who had already published three articles and a book to demonstrate that all ignorant, uneducated converts to the Church kept minutes, even Brigham Young and Joseph Smith, and even the local Methodist ministers. But Dr. Likely quickly leaped to the defense of Glendenning: "Where do you get off with your shoddy accusations? If anybody in this room would make a profit from a manuscript, it would be you, Woodhead, or maybe that idiot over there from the religion department!"

This was too much for the religion teacher. He bounded from his chair like a mad dog, having endured years of needling from Les Likely, only because Narrows had an Ed.D. while Likely had a genuine Ph.D. (both, unfortunately, from California schools). He clouted Dr. Likely over the head with a copy of McConkie's *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*; Dr. Likely, for his part, aimed a defensive roundhouse at the religion teacher, who had the presence of mind to duck, allowing the blow to land smack against Bob Woodhouse's left ear, which had been itching anyway.

Beefy security guards from the second string football squad at the "Y" were quickly summoned, and the plenary session was gavelled quickly to a halt, to allow the participants to *run*, if possible, to the various panels and smaller group presentations. Since these sessions were usually difficult to find anyway, they made ideal hiding places for any participants who were guilty of more than mudslinging during the opening session.

An older participant approached Professor Niblets as the cleanup crew straightened the chairs in the main meeting room. "Well, how about that wild opening session, Professor?" "Just exactly the effect I had planned on," replied the presiding official. "Enough went awry today to more than substantiate the thesis of my new book, *Riots Are a Part of God's Plan*." "And that thesis is?" queried the participant. "Why, simply that the same precise sorts of haggling and confrontations that afflicted the primitive Christians have been restored in these latter days!" ☞

## ANOTHER VOICE

# VOICE AND LOYALTY

By Marie Cornwall



Brian Bean

IN HIS BOOK, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Albert Hirschman describes the process by which dissatisfied customers make the decision to "exit."<sup>1</sup> In the market place, consumers exit when they "shop around" rather than buy from a particular company. Members exit political parties when they become dissatisfied with party goals or tactics. Members of religious organizations also exit. Although research suggests that most people retain the religious identity of their family of origin, we still find that people exit religion either by not participating, by switching to another religious group, or by simply rejecting all forms of institutional religion.<sup>2</sup>

An alternative to exit, according to Hirschman, is voice. Rather than just leave, the

individual has the option to "kick up a fuss," thereby rectifying the dissatisfaction she or he feels and, in turn, increasing the effectiveness of the organization. Hirschman defines voice as "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge."<sup>3</sup> If a person recognizes opportunity to initiate voice, and feels the prospects for change are good once voice is initiated, she or he will generally delay exit. Exit, therefore, becomes the choice of last resort after voice has failed.

Loyal members or customers are more likely to resort to voice than to exit, even when the prospects of being heard or influencing change is relatively low. Loyalty not only holds exit at bay, but also activates voice.<sup>3</sup> Loyalty pushes women and men to discover creative new ways to exert influence and to push for a more effective organization.

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*Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* presents us with a different perspective when we talk of alternate voices. First, it suggests that the activation of voice by a Church member is a good indication of loyalty. It is the most loyal of Church members who initiate voice when confronted with issues and problems related to their religion; the less committed quietly walk away. Sometimes Church leaders are not responsive to the activation of voice. They feel like, "With friends like you, who needs enemies?" But at other times leaders are more sensitive and understand the use of voice as a signal of loyalty.

*Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* adds further insights about what some refer to as "the problem of intellectuals in the Church." Thomas O'Dea suggested in 1957 that one of the biggest problems facing the Church in the next decades would be the creation of "an unhappy intellectual group."<sup>3</sup> Tim Heaton and Stan Albrecht have demonstrated, however, that among Mormons more education is associated with higher levels of religiosity: more frequent prayer, more frequent church attendance, and stronger belief in its central doctrines.<sup>6</sup> So why do we have this highly vocal group that is always talking about what's wrong with Mormonism? It is precisely because this group is committed to Mormonism. It is not that they are intellectuals so much, but that they are, for the most part, well educated professionals. They are used to speaking out, they understand how to activate voice, they know the channels that are available and how effective their voice can be. They are also used to being heard. They have used voice in their work and in their community service, and they cannot leave it at home when it comes to their most beloved vocation of all—their religion.

To assume that they are "on their way out" of Mormonism would be incorrect. Many members of the Church are "inactive." The vast majority of these "inactive" members retain their Mormon identity, but choose not to participate in worship services or in the ordinances of the gospel. Based on my research over the years, most of these inactive members have exited Mormonism without resorting to voice. They leave as teenagers and young adults; fewer than one in five leave because of "problems with the Church."<sup>7</sup> Most of these less active members are also the less educated and of the working class. Generally less powerful in any country or organization, the option of voice is seldom available or recognized by these people, and they simply exit.

Of course, some of these less active mem-

bers have left because of problems with the Church. They leave after resorting to voice and their pain and anger is made clear to all in the process. I have heard their pain and anger, and I must respond to them, but their experience is very much in the minority. Their defection is in no way typical.

There is also a contingent of Church members, most of them very well educated and very loyal, who have resorted to voice when faced with dissatisfaction with Church policy, programs, practices, and doctrine. It is often difficult to know whether these loyal Church members are in the early stages of apostasy or are truly loyal members trying to influence the organization they love most. We never really know which track we are on. Applying Hirschman's theory, we can predict that these members will not exit but will continue to resort to voice in the face of dissatisfaction, and their use of voice will be determined by their perception of the amount of influence they have. Because of their loyalty, even small accommodations will be sufficient signals that the organization deserves their loyalty.

Members of this contingent are frequently pained and frustrated when their loyalties and commitments are misunderstood and are mislabeled by those who have not taken the time to understand who they are and why they do what they do. Their love of Mormonism is sometimes all-consuming. Having made commitments and sometimes suffered privately because of these commitments, they seek out forums where they can talk freely of their explorations and questions and commitments.

As the Church grows, the size of minority groups—such as the "intellectuals"—also grows. Networks of members begin to form who find one another's company supportive of alternative styles of Mormonism. Population densities and economies of scale begin to provide various minority groups the resources to support newsletters, symposiums, and lectures. Concerned citizens begin to explore alternative ways to exert influence and to push for change. Some choose to activate voice through public forums, including the television and news media.

The organizational response in the face of such change is predictable, and therefore, Elder Dallin Oak's general conference address on alternate voices is not really a surprise. It is what officials do as religious institutions grow-up, seek greater stability, and begin to clarify official doctrines. It reminds members that they must be aware of who is saying what. It requests that we label what is being said. I would be grateful if every Sunday

School, Relief Society, and every priesthood teacher would carefully label what they said. Is it official or is it, too, an alternate voice?

Can we call a truce? sign a treaty? come to some sort of agreement? I doubt it. And not because I am not eagerly seeking one. Individual pursuit of self-interest, even when the goals are righteous, often conflicts with organizational goals. It is just something we have to work out as we go along. In the meantime, I wonder if Elder Oaks sometimes feels he has only as much influence over members of the Church as the parent of a three-year-old pyromaniac. For many are gathered now, matches in hand.

#### NOTES

1. Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1970).
2. See Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada* (Irwin Publishing Inc.: Toronto, Canada, 1987). David G. Rombley (ed.), *Falling from Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religion Apostasy* (Sage: Newbury Park, 1988). Andrew M. Greeley, *Religious Change in America* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1989).
3. Hirschman, 30.
4. Hirschman, 78.
5. Thomas O'Dea, *The Mormon* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1957), 222.
6. Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton, "Secularization, Higher Education, and Religiosity," *Review of Religious Research*, vol. 26, no. 1 (September, 1984).
7. Stan L. Albrecht, Marie Cornwall, Perry H. Cunningham, "Religious leave-taking: Disengagement and disaffiliation among Mormons," Ed. David G. Bromley, *Falling From the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religion Apostasy* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications), 62-80.

# MOVING?



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