

WIDTSOE "PROPHECY" MAKES THE MORMON FOLKLORE CIRCUIT

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"FAITH PROMOTING rumors" have a way of spreading very quickly in Mormon country. The latest one that is making its rounds in Sunday School classes, sacrament meetings, stake conferences, and numerous private meetings around Utah is called the "Widtsoe Prophecy."

Over the past several months, various Mormons have publicly read this so called "prophecy" and promoted it as "gospel." The reason for its popularity is the steady demise of communism in various parts of the world, now affecting the Soviet Union. As convenient as that seems, all the existing evidence suggests that the "Widtsoe Prophecy" is nothing more than an urban legend.

The background is this: LDS Apostle John A. Widtsoe was President of the European Mission of the Church in 1932. In July he spoke to a group of missionaries

in Czechoslovakia and expressed his feelings about missionary work among Czechs and Russians. Allegedly, eleven missionaries heard him, along with Arthur Gaeth, the mission president.

According to a letter purportedly written on 30 March 1965 by one of those young missionaries, T.R. Holt, the substance of the prophecy is being fulfilled now. According to Holt's account Widtsoe said, "Communism is the work of the devil. The Lord is using it to break down the hold of the Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches over the minds of men."

Elder Widtsoe allegedly continued: "When communism has completed its task of breaking this hold, it will pass out of existence almost over night. And then the church will send missionaries by the hundreds into the Slavic lands of Europe, including the mother land of Russia."

Claiming that there is "more of the blood of Israel in Western Russia than all the rest of Europe

put together," Elder Widtsoe allegedly predicted that people will come into the Church "by the thousands. Whole villages and towns will join the Church in groups."

The Czech mission was said to be "opening the door to the Slavic nations," and the missionaries were told "some of you in this room will be called to do missionary work in Russia."

According to the written version now in circulation, Holt also made an additional comment about the experience in June 1961, remembering that Widtsoe had "instructed the missionaries to record what he was going to say."

Although this may sound like exciting and highly relevant news to Mormons, there are several problems. In the first place, Holt is not alive to talk about the account, and anything written over thirty years after the fact must be regarded with suspicion. People's memories are notoriously unreliable after the passage of many years, especially when asked to quote someone else's words. Besides, the letter itself has been re-typed, and is of uncertain origin. It was said to have been based on Holt's journal account, but his family has been unable to locate a journal.

It seems safe to conclude that Holt, or whoever wrote the letter, was using the interpretation of Russian Communism current in

the 1960s—or even in 1990—to remember the events of thirty-three years earlier. There are at least five more of the original missionaries still alive who are willing to talk about it. Martin Ririe's version parallels the Holt account almost verbatim, except for the addition of the words "evil empire" to Widtsoe's alleged description of communism. Since Ronald Reagan used that term to describe communism in the 1980s, this sounds like a Reagan term artificially placed in Elder Widtsoe's mouth.

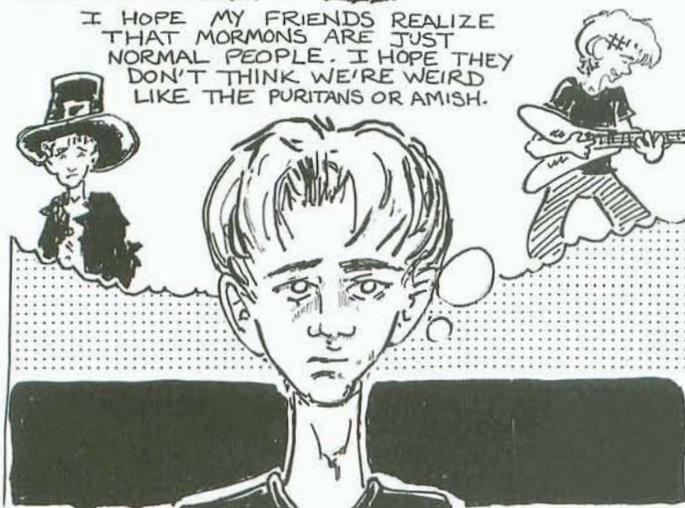
In a conversation with me, the eighty-year-old Ririe, now living in St. George, said that he and other missionaries had a "feeling that some of the people we had met we had seen before. Elder Widtsoe said, 'You brethren volunteered in the pre-existence to serve a mission among the Slavic people.'" Ririe remembers Widtsoe saying that "communism was needed for at least one generation to clear the minds of people of the false religious teachings." Then Ririe added, "I think Gorbachev must have been raised up by the Lord to accomplish this."

When I asked him why he had used the term "evil empire" in his version, he said, "Ronald Reagan called it the 'evil empire,' and I remember growing up in Cache Valley that church leaders called communism an 'evil empire.'"

I asked him if he had written

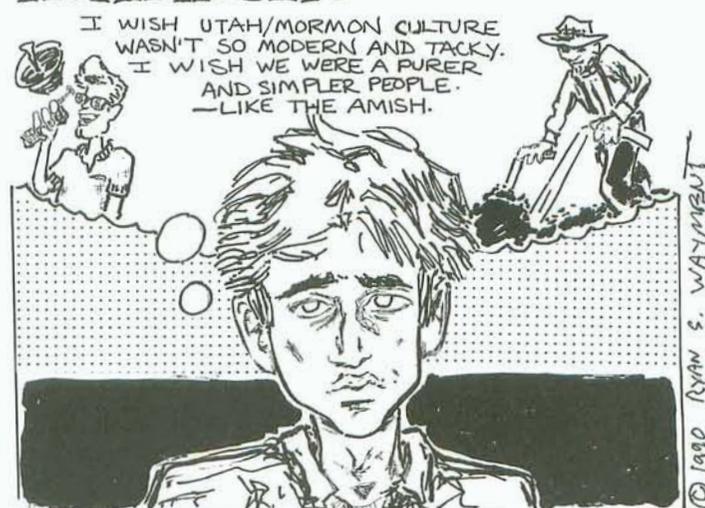
AS A TEENAGER:

I HOPE MY FRIENDS REALIZE THAT MORMONS ARE JUST NORMAL PEOPLE. I HOPE THEY DON'T THINK WE'RE WEIRD LIKE THE PURITANS OR AMISH.



AS AN ADULT:

I WISH UTAH/MORMON CULTURE WASN'T SO MODERN AND TACKY. I WISH WE WERE A PURER AND SIMPLER PEOPLE.—LIKE THE AMISH.



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THE BROOKIE AND D.K. BROWN MEMORIAL FICTION CONTEST deadline for short stories dealing with LDS issues is 15 June 1990. Authors may submit a total of three stories in two categories: short stories (6,000 word limit) and short short stories (1,000 word limit). See the October or December 1989 issues of *SUNSTONE* for the complete announcement or contact the Sunstone Foundation, 331 Rio Grande Street, Suite 30, Salt Lake City, UT 84101-1136 (801/355-5926).

THE CANADIAN MORMON STUDIES ASSOCIATION will be holding a conference in Lethbridge, Alberta, at the University of Lethbridge, June 20-24. The theme of the conference is "Mormons in Canada: Local and Comparative Perspectives."

The conference will include scholarly and folk components, with academic contributors being drawn from various disciplines and professions—architecture and journalism among them. Local and comparative perspectives will be highlighted in four keynote lectures that will consider the Mormon community from the standpoints of anthropology, geography, history and sociology. Another plenary lecture will illuminate the Mormon experience in Canada through an examination of the life histories of four generations of women in a prominent Canadian Mormon family. Clusters of papers will focus on topics as diverse as the Canadian organizational structures of churches of American origin, and Mormons in the history of Upper Canada. Other sessions will include papers on such disparate subjects as Mormons and the Alberta sugar beet industry, perceptions of Mormons in a small Alberta town, Mormon polygyny in Canada, and the Alberta Temple's symbolism. Roundtable sessions will also examine Mormon relations with southern Alberta's Indians, and the scholarly use of the diaries of C.O. Card, the founder of Canada's first Mormon settlement. Lay and academic authorities will draw upon their expertise as participants in the culture as they discuss selected aspects of Canadian Mormon art, writing, drama, filming, music and sport, as well as the creation of family and community histories.

The public is cordially invited to participate in the conference, and may register for the duration or by the day. Enquiries concerning the conference should be addressed to: Conference Services, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, T1K 3M4, or (403/329-2244).

THE LDS AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURAL AWARENESS GROUP publishes *Let's Talk*, a newsletter addressing racial issues in the Church. It aims "to assist in resolving concerns that African-American investigators may have regarding the Church; to assist African-Americans with the transition into the gospel; [to] enhance our African-American culture; to educate Latter-day Saints about African Americans." U.S. subscriptions are \$7.50 per year (six issues); Canada and overseas, \$9.00. Single copies are \$1.25; back issues, \$2.00. Editorial and subscription mailing address: PO Box 50573, Provo, UT 84605-0573.

THE MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION will hold its annual meetings at the BYU-Hawaii campus on 10-17 June 1990. For further information contact program chair Martha Sonntag Bradley, 4611 Belmour Way, Salt Lake City, UT 84117. Larry Gelwix of Morris Travel has arranged for a package which will cost approximately \$825 for six nights and seven days. This includes air travel from Salt Lake City, housing, all meals, and several additional activities. An optional side trip to Maui costs extra. For reservations and information write: Larry Gelwix, Morris Travel, 260 East Morris Avenue, Salt Lake City, UT.

MORMON WOMEN'S FORUM will present *Eliza R. Snow*, a play by Mary Bell, on 26 April 1990 at 7:00 P.M. at the Fine Arts Auditorium, University of Utah. A \$2.00 donation is requested.

THE MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART has announced an international art competition and exhibition to encourage LDS artists to depict scriptural themes in quality works of art. Artists may submit one recent work in any artistic medium. Jurying by a panel of six persons will take place in two stages. Slides for the first round are due at the museum no later than 30 November 1990. The jury will later review a smaller group of actual works selected in the first screening. Up to \$13,000 will be awarded in cash prizes. Up to \$30,000 will be used to purchase art for the museum. Winners will be announced and exhibited on 29 March 1991 and will be exhibited through 2 September 1991. Entry forms containing additional information on submission requirements are available from the Museum of Church History and Art, 45 North West Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150 (801/240-2299).

PLOTTING ZION, a symposium on communal societies, will be sponsored by the Sunstone Foundation on 3-5 May 1990 at the Excelsior Hotel in Provo, UT. Proposals are now being accepted.

WASHINGTON D.C. SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held 7-8 April 1990. For more information or to submit proposals contact Donald Gustavson, 413 Clearfield Avenue, Torrington, CT 06790 (203/496-7090).

The Sunstone Calendar reports events and notices of Mormon-related organizations. Submissions are requested.

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this account in his journal, and he said, "Well, I think I *do* have it." Why, then, did his account compare almost word for word with Holt's account? Ririe said that Holt had been his companion, and Holt's account was much more complete than his own, and so he had used the Holt account to write his own.

A third missionary, Joseph Toronto, Provo, read to me from his journal, and it seems the most credible source. He says the correct day was 11 July 1932, and that Elder Widtsoe claimed there was "more of the blood of Israel in Russia and the Slavic countries than in all of Europe put together, and thousands will come into the church," the phrase common to the other two accounts. That is where the similarity ends. Mr. Toronto recalls no mention of communism, its overnight demise, nor the Catholic or Russian Orthodox Churches. In fact, neither his journal nor an existing letter he wrote home include those terms.

Another missionary, Spencer Taggart, Logan, recalls nothing at all of the Widtsoe statement and is convinced that it is not legitimate. Allen Olsen, also of Logan, said, "T. R. Holt said to me a few years ago, 'Do you remember when Elder Widtsoe talked about communism?' and I said, 'No, I don't,' and he said, 'Well, I do, because I wrote it down.' and that's all I remember about it." Heber E. Hansen of Spanish Fork admits to having been "kinda lax about keeping a journal," but also has no recollection of the prophecy.

The bottom line is that of the five missionaries I could track down, only one supports the prophecy (Ririe) and his credibility is low, because he essentially copied it from the Holt account and inserted Ronald Reagan's modern day phrase into it.

Actually, LDS Apostle Melvin J. Ballard also talked of this same subject in a conference address in April 1930. He said, "I am sure also that God is moving in Russia.

Much as we are disturbed over the tyranny and the oppression that is waged against religion in that land today, it is not a new thing, for that has been the order for ages. But I can see God moving also in preparing the way for other events that are to come. The field that has gone to wild oats needs to be plowed up and harrowed and prepared for a new seed. So in Russia. It may seem appalling to us, but it is God breaking up and destroying an older order of things, and the process will be the accomplishment of God's purposes within a very short period of time, which normally may have taken generations. But that people will come back, for I bear witness that there are thousands of the blood of Israel in that land, and God is preparing the way for them."

Ballard's reference to "a very short period of time, which normally may have taken generations," could be used by apologists for the prophecy to explain the Widtsoe reference to communism passing out of existence "almost over night."

It's true that John A. Widtsoe was in Czechoslovakia in 1932, because he referred to it in his autobiography, *In a Sunlit Land*, published in 1952. He spoke of the Czech mission and the calling of Arthur Gaeth as president. He said, "if the gospel could be brought to the Czechs, a Slavic people, it seemed as if it might be a door to the mighty Slavic nations. Russia, with its great population, must some day hear the gospel."

Widtsoe also recorded in his own journal that he spoke to the missionaries, but he only listed topics he intended to cover, including "proselyting" and "socialism," without elaboration. In neither account did Elder Widtsoe indicate any strong feelings about communism nor repeat the prophecy related by Holt and Ririe.

Historically, it would seem that if there were any truth to the "Widtsoe Prophecy" that the man who uttered it would have thought

it important enough to mention in his own journal, especially if he had instructed the missionaries to record it in theirs. It must be concluded then that current evidence provides no credence at all to this

improbable story.

So from now on, anyone who is tempted to read the "prophecy" over a pulpit and announce it as an exciting new discovery would be better off to cool it. ☒

VOICE FROM ABROAD

AUSTRALIAN MORMON STUDIES ASSOCIATION

By Marjorie Newton
Sunstone Correspondent

AUSTRALIA—I thought you might be interested to know that with encouragement from Leonard Arrington and Brigham Card, a group of us finally got together and on 27 October 1989 organized the Australian Mormon Studies Association, largely modelled on the Canadian Mormon Studies Association.

The first meeting was an interesting experience. About twenty (all LDS) attended for the purpose of formally organizing. When the proposal was put to the vote (I was chairing the meetings) I expected a unanimous vote seeing as that was why we had met. So I was somewhat taken aback when two negative votes were cast. These two were horrified at the idea of papers being given and possibly, watch out for lightning, circulated. They took notes assiduously throughout the meeting. Some felt they were going to rush off and "tell on" us; we are not quite sure to whom. I'm not too worried since our stake president wished us well and wished he had time to be involved. They have come back since and seemed to enjoy themselves.

Anyway, the organization exists and those who attend our monthly meetings are enjoying it. William H. (Bill) Delves, former president of the Sydney Stake, was elected president, with young Sydney solicitor and mother-of-three Kim Rosser as president-

elect. Kim's husband Doug is secretary. Because we have so few LDS academics in Australia, we are covering general LDS topics, but in the Australian context, with the hope of encouraging more research and scholarship on aspects of the Church in Australia. Our meetings are held the first Friday of each month, and everyone is welcome—LDS, RLDS, non-LDS.

February's meeting was a historic occasion—three leading brethren from the RLDS church attended, including the RLDS region president, Jack Irmie. There has been a long history of bitterness between the two groups in Australia, and we felt this was a landmark occasion. One from the RLDS group, Eric Selden, was involved for years in the process which led to the ordination of RLDS women—his wife is now an elder. They agreed to present a paper in April on this topic and its effects on the Church and their lives.

One interesting phenomenon I have noticed is that the Church Education System people, whom I thought would be keenly interested in the organization, are all too busy. I think they may be frightened of being associated with us. Time will either allay the fears of the nervous or convince them they were right to remain aloof. ☒

THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS

Given at the Annual Symposium, Salt Lake City, Utah 27 January 1990.

Special Recognition In 1990 To Sunstone

for continuing support of Mormon drama

In the beginning [Winter 1975] was "Fires of the Mind" followed the next year by "A Summer in the Country" [fall 1976], which led inevitably to "Father, Mother, Mother, Mom" [Summer 1977]—and *Sunstone* stood alone in its support for Mormon Drama.

When in November, 1987, *Sunstone* published "Burdens of Earth" by Susan Howe, the magazine made the drama of its origins an integral part of its future, instituting with that issue the annual publication of a Mormon play. Robert Elliott, David Wright, Orson Scott Card, and Susan Howe have now been joined by Scott Frederick Lauer in 1988 with "Digger" and again in 1989 with "The Beehive State."

As the only LDS publication regularly printing Mormon drama, *Sunstone* performs a valuable service to Mormon letters. For this Quixotic, heroic and unremunerative undertaking, the Association of Mormon Letters wishes to honor *Sunstone* and its editors: Scott Kenney, Allen Roberts, Peggy Fletcher, and Elbert Peck, themselves characters in the continuing drama of Mormon literature.

Special Recognition In 1990 Signature Books

for continuing support of Mormon literature

Over the years, Signature Books has been a strong and generous friend to the Association for Mormon Letters, by donating to the Association's awards and by publishing so many books to which those awards have gone—and more, a friend to all writers and readers of all forms of Mormon literature, by publishing and reprinting much, if not most, of the best we now have: pioneer diaries and letters; bibliographies and indexes; historical and doctrinal studies; novels including Douglas Thayer's *Summer Fire*, Levi Peterson's *The Backslider*, Linda Sillitoe's *Sideways to the Sun*, and Larry Morris's *The Edge of the Reservoir*; personal essays such as Eugene England's *Dialogues with Myself*, Mary Bradford's *Leaving Home*, and the anthology *Personal Voices*; stories such as Thayer's *Under the Cottonwoods*, Marden Clark's *Morgan Triumphs*, Peterson's *Canyons of Grace*, and the anthology *Greening Wheat*; the plays of Tom Rogers in *God's Fools*; the cartoons of Calvin Grandahl and Pat Bagley; and most recently, an augmented edition of Linda Sillitoe and Allen Robert's *Salamander*; Sillitoe's short story collection *Windows on the Sea*, and the abundant *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*, edited by Eugene England and Dennis Clark.

The Association for Mormon Letters congratulates and thanks Signature Books, its publisher, and its editors, for their good service to the community of Mormon readers and their persistent dedication to bringing forth so much that is informative, entertaining, thoughtful, and thought-provoking.

An Award In Criticism For 1989 Dennis Clark

for his series of articles

"Mormon Poetry Now!"

"Mormon Poetry Now." *SUNSTONE* 10:6 (1985);
"Mormon Poetry Now." *SUNSTONE* 10:10 (1985);
"Poems of the Natural and Social World." *SUNSTONE* 11:1 (1987);
"Fantasy as a Response to the World." *SUNSTONE* 13:4 (1989).

These four essays are a remarkable achievement, in that they offer a review of contemporary poetry by Mormon writers that is at once enthusiastic, very knowledgeable, informative and balanced. It is doubtful if there is another critic quite as well qualified as Dennis Clark in this field. He is *Sunstone's* poetry editor, a librarian very widely read in contemporary verse in English, a fine and sensitive critic,

1. Joseph Smith, Letter "To William W. Phelps, November 27, 1832." *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Compiled and edited by Dean C. Jesse. (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1984) 261.

and a good poet in his own right. All his gifts are to be seen in the overview, and he has selected, moreover, work which not only supports his thesis, but offers his readers a small anthology of poems which are impressive at first reading and grow in importance under Clark's skillful handling.

There is a sense in which this must be a pioneer study, but it is hard to imagine a better one at any stage. This long essay—for it develops an obvious unity in its progression—is full of insight and thoughtful generalization. It is also intelligent, clear and beautifully written. It is likely to prove of permanent value. Mormon poets are lucky to have found a critic at once so understanding, careful, and aware of the high seriousness of his task.

An Award In Criticism For 1989 Michael Hicks

Mormonism and Music: A History
Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1989.

During the 1980s, Michael Hicks's curiosity about Mormonism's musical roots, which he pursued while in graduate studies at the University of Illinois, issued in several articles in a variety of journals and magazines on topics ranging from the provenance of hymn texts to setting the record straight on just who really requested John Taylor to sing "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief" in Carthage Jail. Now, as the decade ends, his new book, *Mormonism and Music*, propels him to the forefront of LDS scholarship: somewhere along the way, Michael Hicks—this convert, newcomer, this kid in his early 30s—became the leading authority on Mormon music.

His style rings with passion and poetry, confidence and candor. His conclusions challenge, probe, provoke. In *Mormonism and Music: A History*, we have precisely what Dr. Hicks set out to write: the first scholarly narrative tracing the evolution of this "music of a special kind."

An Award In The Essay For 1989 Emma Lou Thayne

As for Me and My House
Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989.

In a tradition of the personal essay going back to Montaigne, emphasizing the scrutiny of highly individual, sometimes commonplace thoughts and experiences in order to draw out their wider meaning, these "sixteen meditations on housekeeping and homemaking" (xi) evoke an intensely lived life in a simple yet richly suggestive style. "Keeping house" becomes a powerful metaphor for the bond between generations, as the author looks back to the experience of her mother and grandmother and forward to the individual households established by her five daughters. The collection rings several different chords from the brief and delightful "On Being Saved from Domestic Tranquility" to the moving account of the death of a newborn grandson in "On Learning by Being There." But the essays possess a remarkable unity of tone as well, a result of the author's capacity to see her life whole while still retaining a strong sense of its multiplicity.

And Award In Poetry For 1989 Susan Howe

"Things in the Night Sky"

in *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*. Ed.

Eugene England and

Dennis Clark. Salt Lake: Signature, 1989;
p. 195.

In language she has stolen from us when we weren't listening, and worked so sparingly and mercilessly the old trace she left is how the poems fit our mouths like things we know we wish we'd said—and will again, soon—Susan Howe reworks the world we knew we know, and makes it ours to speak of, giving us the challenge of a new world, formed after the old one where we used to live. And, without making us self-conscious about saying so, gives us the words to smash our world.

While she cannot deliver us "from the little narrow prison almost as it were total darkness of paper pen and ink and a crooked broken scattered and imperfect language,"¹ she gives us at the least an adze to hew ourselves a window, whence we stare upon the world as it might be if all our speech were verse. Recalling scattered thought in words disciplined by love and fear she helps us to perform the play of language that was once our only and our chief delight before the burdens of Earth became our occupation.

A Howe poem gives us thought for food.

An Award In The Short Story For 1989 Pauline Mortensen

Back Before the World Turned Nasty
Fayetteville: U. of Arkansas Press, 1989.

Pauline Mortensen's collection *Back before the World Turned Nasty* consists of stories structured like personal essays. They are dramatic meditations, explorations into volition, personal dominion, and the powers of narrative to shape perception. Each piece is deep because Mortensen limits its range and consideration, focusing not on the entire universe but the specific conditions of blood and inheritance. The vice of the first person narrator, as she struggles to clear philosophical space for herself, is one of the most fully realized in Mormon fiction. Mortensen has established a narrative position which transcends cultural limitations. The narrator is complex—at once ironic, loving, cynical, compassionate, and coldly introspective; she accepts with courage and intelligence instead of illusion the forces which impinge on her. Mortensen's other characters are full as well, never caricatures; they speak and work without traces of authorial contrivance. This is accomplished because Mortensen possesses an empathy toward her own roots which goes beyond both apologetics and condescension and because she carefully controls the narrative moment. Despite this control, she relinquishes power to her intuition, allowing the stories to deepen beyond rationality. Because her prose is both highly crafted and exploratory, it is as if she invites readers to create with her, to look over her shoulder as she uses language to shape her unique perceptions, to construct a solitary place to stand. Discovering Mortensen's voice is like finding an arrowhead, so carefully formed that it seems an aspect of nature, as rough and flint-hard as reality.

An Award In The Novel For 1989 Judith Freeman

The Chinchilla Farm
New York: Norton, 1989.

The Chinchilla Farm, a first novel that follows a well-received collection of stories, *Family Attractions* (New York: Viking, 1988), is the story of Verna Flake, a gentle-souled blue-collar woman, who first leaves the Church and then finally Utah, as she embarks on a journey of self-discovery that takes her not only through the American West but also through the landscape of her own memory. Central to those memories is the image of a chinchilla farm run by her old neighbor in northern Utah. As a child, and even later as an adult, Verna is fascinated by the notion that chinchillas mate for life, a behavior that contrasts markedly with the ever-shifting alliances between human beings. "I think," says Verna, "that in some way I never could have imagined, the faithfulness of chinchillas colored my thinking for life. . . . What accounts for such loyalty? Do noble traits surface now and then, choosing as hosts the most unlikely candidates . . . ?" (251)

Some of Judith Freeman's notable achievements include a quietly poetic voice that is nonetheless consistent with Verna's farm community background: a genuine sympathy for her characters, including the Mormons Verna leaves behind; and a startling evocation of the natural world—the shape of trees, the play of light on a wintry Utah day, the smell of animals and air.

The Association for Mormon Letters congratulates Judith Freeman on this strong, vivid debut for her art as a novelist.

AML CELEBRATES MORMON WRITERS

By Jessie Embry

HAVING RECENTLY DONE some research on the literary images of polygamy in *The Giant Joshua*, I decided to present my conclusions to those who regularly critique Mormon works of fiction, the Association for Mormon Letters. The day was a delightful chance to talk to old friends, meet new people, and share reactions to Mormon studies.

The first two papers about the characters in Virginia Sorensen's novels were especially interesting to me since I just read five of her books, including all of the novels that were discussed. LuDene F. Dallimore, a professor of English at Weber State, and Grant T. Smith, a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Iowa, described some of Sorensen's female characters. Dallimore argues that Mercy in *A Little Lower than the Angels*, Zina in *Many Heavens*, and Kate in *The Evening and Mormonism* represent not just three women in a closed society but are examples of all women who struggle to find meaning in a patriarchal society. Smith looked at the communities that Kate rejected and relationships she formed with her daughter and granddaughter during her visit to Sanpete County. Smith commented that many of the remarks were in response to an article Bruce Jorgensen wrote in the 1970s about *The Evening and Morning*. In the question and answer period, Jorgensen explained that with his research on self he had changed some of his views of Kate, but he felt everyone took the last chapter of the novel too symbolically. Having just read the novels for pure enjoyment with an eye for historical accuracy, it was especially interesting to hear discussions of symbolism and details that I had missed. I didn't realize having heroines die in plural marriage novels was a pat-

tern or that Kate's six-day trip was drawn from the six creation days, for example.

The next two papers were on Maurine Whipple. I talked about the "overworked stereotypes" in *The Giant Joshua*. I especially enjoyed the comments afterwards. I was arguing that the MacIntyre family had many of the stereotypes that we cherish about polygamy that I had attempted to disprove in *Mormon Polygamous Families: Life in the Principle*. Linda Sillitoe pointed out that *Joshua's* strength is its ability to deal with the emotionalism that so many people have not been able to talk about in polygamy. John Sillito said that many of the objections I made about *Joshua* were true of histories written during the same time period. Bruce Jorgensen asked if Whipple, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, had used the stereotypes to make a statement about the time, an idea which I had not considered. Katherine Ashton, a graduate of Westminster College (where the conference was held) had written a paper called "Whatever Happened to Maurine Whipple?" Weaving information from Whipple's papers at BYU and an interview she conducted with Maurine in 1988, Ashton described some of Whipple's life experiences. At the time Whipple was living in a retirement complex with her cat Kitty and spent most of her time reading.

In his presidential address, Levi Peterson commented about how much smaller AML was than the Mormon History Association (MHA), but then explained AML was the "Unlikely Skirmisher in the Battle of Books." He divided into two arenas: the marketplace and the forum. While books are published in the marketplace based on a supply and demand, books for the forum are necessary



AML award winners: Dennis Clark, Emma Lou Thayne, Susan Howe, Pauline Mortensen and, Michael Hicks.

for looking deeper into the Mormon experience. AML helps to encourage these books by giving awards and providing opportunities for authors to share ideas.

In the afternoon, Patricia Aikins, an English professor at Westminster College, talked about the stories in Neal Chandler's *Benediction*. Her personal experiences and her reaction to the book had the same effect on me that my paper had on some people. I wanted to read *Benediction* and it sounded like the perfect gift for me to give my sister for Christmas!

John Sillito and Constance Lieber have just published *Letters from Exile*, the letters of Martha Hughes Cannon to her husband Agnes Cannon while she was "on the underground" in England. With excerpts of the Cannon letters, Sillito explained the effects of polygamy on Cannon and pointed out the importance of using letters like hers to better understand Mormon polygamy.

Jean Waterstradt, a retired BYU English professor, noted how gender exclusive language is increasingly offensive to younger ears and lamented that the Church was not more sensitive to desexing its new hymnal. She identified every gender exclusive item in the songbook and noted which ones should not be changed for various reasons (tradition, being one) but showed how most could

be unobtrusively corrected, such as changing "a brother" to "another."

After spending the day with these lettered Mormons, I regret that I could not hear the award winners (see adjoining page) read from the works at a dinner that evening. But as one of the members of that larger organization that Levi Peterson talked about (MHA), I came away with a desire to be involved in AML as well! ☐

RESEARCH REQUESTS

IRENE BATES is doing a study on the office of the Patriarch to the Church and for her chapter on themes contained in patriarchal blessings needs copies of blessings given by the Church Patriarch, especially in the twentieth century. She, of course, will maintain confidentiality and will only quote from them with permission of the receiver or his or her descendant. Contact: Irene Bates, 17727 Tramonto Drive, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272 (213/454-3996).

ONE FOLD

Compiled by Hand Carré

VATICAN WARNS AGAINST YOGA, ZEN

A RECENT Vatican document approved by Pope John Paul II cautions that Eastern meditation such as Zen and yoga "can degenerate into a cult of the body" that debases Christian prayer.

Although "the movement toward openness and exchanges" between religious cultures was not condemned, the use of prescribed techniques for posture and breathing and "concentrating on oneself . . . can create a kind of rut, imprisoning the person praying in a kind of spiritual privatism," the document said.

It warned that "some physical exercises automatically produce a feeling of quiet and relaxing, pleasing sensations, perhaps even phenomena of light and warmth, which resemble spiritual well-being. To take such feeling for the authentic consolations of the Holy Spirit would be a totally erroneous way of conceiving the spiritual life."

Having such an experience, "when the moral condition of the person concerned does not correspond to such an experience . . . would represent a kind of mental schizophrenia which would also lead to psychic disturbance and, at times, moral deviations."

Since many of the initial press reports cited the more harshly-phrased passages, much of the reaction to the letter was negative. But in a *New York Times* column Peter Steinfels, former editor of the Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, said the wording was much more measured than assumed. As an example, he quoted the document's insistence that Eastern approaches should not "be rejected out of hand simply because they are not Christian."

"Union with God is a grace, not something that can be mastered by any spiritual technique" said Steinfels, explaining the content of the document. "Euphoric states must not be confused with prayer or assumed to be signs of the presence of God, a state that should always result in loving service to others. Without these truths . . . meditation, which should be a flight from the self, can degenerate into a form of self-absorption."

Steinfels quoted several clergymen, including Trappist monk Thomas Keating, founder of the Catholic Contemplative Outreach movement, that "Eastern mystics are just as cautious as this document" about mistaking psychological states resulting from meditation "for some great enlightenment."

The document, issued by Vatican orthodox watchdog the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, did not name any individuals or movements that had strayed in the use of Eastern meditation practices.

GOD OF LIGHT AND CELLULOID

CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN movie company Jeremiah Films, which presented *The God Makers* as an "expose of what the Mormon church really believes," is distributing a new film called *Gods of the New Age*.

Jeremiah Films' promotional materials claim the picture reveals "how the paganism that has all but paralyzed India is quickly being absorbed into Western culture. . . . why yoga, meditation, psychological therapy and self-help are turning millions to a pagan worldview while being taught in our seminaries, churches and schoolrooms."

The film contains "interviews with mystical teachers and . . . international authorities on religious movements" to clarify the differences between evangelical Christianity and New Age beliefs, and to enumerate the "alarming similarities between today's society and the Europe that brought forth Adolf Hitler's Third Reich a generation ago," and sees a "one-world religion that is all too quickly emerging—and fulfilling Biblical prophecy in the most astounding detail!"

Like *The God Makers*, which drew considerable response (Gilbert Scharff's *The Truth About The God Makers*), *Gods of the New Age* is eliciting protest from many who feel targeted by it. U.S.-based *Hinduism Today* has received "numerous complaints" about the movie, says managing editor Swami Arumugam Katir, who calls it a "viciously anti-Hindu video."

Although *The God Makers* co-author Dave Hunt calls the film "a gripping and accurate expose of an incredible deception," Katir claims that many of the movie's assertions are "totally false, misleading and inflammatory statements about Hinduism. . . . Were this a film about the Jews, it would be roundly condemned as anti-semitic."

AMERICANS STILL WATCH TELEVANGELISTS

DESPITE WIDESPREAD skepticism toward TV evangelists, many Americans continue to tune in to religious programs. According to a recent Gallup survey, 78 percent of 1,238 respondents said televangelists were untrustworthy, and 71 percent called them dishonest, but 21 percent—down 4 points from 1987—said they had watched some religious programming in the past seven days. Evangelicals, southerners, and individuals over 50 who either do not have a high school diploma or whose annual income was \$20,000 each, comprised between 30 and 38 percent of the continued viewers. As in 1988, 5 percent of the respondents had donated money to a TV minister in the past 13 months. (*Religion Watch*)

BATMAN IN PHILIPPINES RATINGS WAR

SEVERAL THEATER owners in Manila are expecting sellout crowds for the movie *Batman*, but 22 of the city's theaters have forgone the opportunity to cash in on the film's popularity in order to provide another show—church services.

"Church services are becoming increasingly popular because a revival is sweeping the country," says Fred Magbanua, managing director of Far East Broadcasting Company in the Philippines. In other parts of the world, you have churches converted into restaurants or discos. But here we have theaters converted into church buildings."

The charismatic movement has altered Filipino evangelical Christianity significantly, giving impetus to its spread into the middle and upper classes, and apparently influencing the form of the worship in traditional meetings. "Baptists never used to raise their hands or spend thirty minutes singing praise," Magbanua says. Now such charismatic elements are a regular part of the services, which have even lengthened from one to two hours to accommodate more singing, praying, and hour-long sermons.

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SHORTLY AFTER the Church announced that it was building a temple in the Salt Lake City suburb of Bountiful, land speculation near the site bottle-rocketed. The city renamed the street to Temple View Drive, and developers rushed to sell inspirational lots to the faithful. Granada Hills Subdivision, which was already under construction, was no exception, even though Bountiful natives doubt whether one can actually see the new temple from the houses a half-mile away.

LATTER-DAY PROFITS

TWO RECENT commercial transactions for three historic LDS volumes have the Mormon rare books community buzzing about a dramatic increase in prices and the possibility of a resurgence in collecting rare LDS books.

Reports that a first edition Hawaiian Book of Mormon (1855) was sold to dealers Lyndon and Nathaniel Cook for \$15,000 and resold to a private buyer for \$20,000 circulated this January; the same buyer reportedly also purchased a Book of Commandments and Emma Smith's *A Collection of Sacred Hymns for the Church of the Latter-day Saints* together for \$100,000 from a different source. The latter transaction represents a major raise in prices from the last known sale of either item: a Book of Commandments last sold for \$33,000; the last Emma Smith Hymnal to be sold (in which Mark Hofmann forged an inscription on the flyleaf) went for \$18,000.

THE TIMES ARE A CHANGING

In recent *Student Review* editorial, Associate Publisher Eric Wilson listed some evidences of the new winds blowing at BYU.

"Just think, women are wearing jeans; men are going unshaven and sockless with reckless abandon; the Peace Corps is recruiting on campus (which was forbidden under President Wilkinson); *The Daily Universe* has defended the right of someone not to salute the flag; Miss BYU, once the embodiment of feminine virtue, has been branded an exploitation of women; and the attempt to guard against the plague of R-rated video parties and coed jacuzzis with off-campus R.A.s has been squelched by student uprisings. It appears that the boys and girls of the "B.Y." are starting to think they are adults."

