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READERS' FORUM

CORRECTION

OPS. IN OUR list of the six published volumes of the planned sesquicentennial Church history, we only listed four ("What Became of the Sixteen-volume Church History?" (SUNSTONE 14:3). All six volumes in chronological order are: *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* by Richard Bushman (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1984); *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio* by Milton V. Backman (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1983); *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847-1869* by Eugene E. Campbell (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988); *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* by Thomas G. Alexander (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1986); *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* by F. Lamond Tullis (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987); and *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* by R. Lanier Britsch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986).

TALKING ABOUT THE TEMPLE

TWO ITEMS IN recent issues have given me reason to wonder about the line between appropriate and inappropriate talk about the temple ceremony. One was the news report, "Comments on Temple Changes Elicit Church Discipline" (SUNSTONE 14:3) The other was the article by Keith Norman on popular misunderstanding of "blood atonement" in the church, in which he alluded to the endowment ritual ("A Kinder Gentler Mormonism: Moving Beyond the Violence of Our Past," SUNSTONE 14:4).

Church leaders are legitimately concerned about conduct of members, and an interview to ask for an accounting is surely appropriate. It is only when the interview implies or involves an adverse judgment that a real issue arises. Such a judgment may be based on correct or erroneous perception of motive or conduct.

The newspaper quotations SUNSTONE reported, expressing pleasure at the changes in the ceremony, appear to have been intend-

ed as positive comments. If I had been asked by a reporter for comment, I might have said much the same thing. It would be unfortunate if comment were left to only critics and official spokespersons.

It would be sad if adverse judgment were based on some notion that pleasure at change equals criticism, because the fact of change establishes that the Presidency also believed there was room for improvement. It is in the nature of the Church to expect and welcome change, since the Church is a living institution, not a static one, and the endowment will continue to be reshaped under inspiration to suit time and place.

It is not disloyal to suggest that the Church might benefit from changes. Neither leaders nor practices are perfect. That is evident from our history. And I have never known a leader who would say otherwise. Indeed, the existence of an appellate process for Church discipline acknowledges the fallibility of our best efforts to be just. Our ultimate loyalty is to God; loyalty to leaders and organization is derivative. "Supporting the brethren" is not to cease thinking or making suggestions, but to have as one's attitude a humble desire to be helpful.

Sometimes ideas for change come to the leaders directly, sometimes they come from the followers. I recall asking President Kimball about how the consolidated meeting schedule had come about and he said, "We received a letter from a man in Iowa. . . ." Indeed, it is a responsibility of the people to continue to communicate their best, most creative thoughts, so long as they can avoid a spirit of haughty self-assurance. All ideas will not be of equal value, nor will they necessarily be adopted even if good, since many factors must be considered. I have made my share of suggestions, any one of which were received in friendly fashion. Most of them seem to have been politely ignored—but for all I know they were carefully weighed and found wanting. In any event, I felt entitled to express a view, because my motive was to help.

Now, to the specific subject of the uncertainty about what can properly be said about the temple ceremonies. In my view, the Saints are left without clear guidance. There is no doubt that specific symbols are not to be divulged, but beyond that there is only a

general sense that one ought not say much. I have heard people I respect say more than I am comfortable with and heard others be much more guarded than I thought necessary.

I believe that overall we talk too little about the temple, rather than too much. I was heartened when a general authority visitor to our stake conference expressed the same view, emphasizing that people should go to the temple more knowledgeable about what they would find there.

As bishop I felt an obligation to help persons going for their endowment be better prepared than I was. The temple ceremony was so far removed from anything I had experienced in the Church that I had very great difficulty assimilating it. And I know others have had similar reactions. I also found myself expected to make covenants that I had not anticipated.

As bishop I explained that the temple ritual is highly symbolic and quite different from the mode of worship church-goers had experienced. Most of it would be left unexplained, requiring individual meditation to seek out meanings and after many years I continue to struggle for understanding. I also explained the covenants one must be prepared to make. We covenant generally to

live the gospel, but some aspects, such as the law of chastity, are made explicit. The one covenant that goes beyond most people's understanding of "living the gospel" needs to be anticipated so that it can be made earnestly and not lightly. That is the covenant to commit all one has to the kingdom. Few if any of us keep that covenant fully, but at least we are expected to hold that as our firm objective.

For those who had little experience in the Church, I explained about the garment. I did not feel I needed to talk much about temple clothing, but I would not have hesitated, since the clothing is on display in the open casket at the funeral of any faithful Latter-day Saint.

There is no real secret concerning details of the temple ceremonies—baptism, endowment, sealing, washing, anointing, temple garments, signs, tokens, and key words—they have all been published and republished. I explained, however, that it is much preferable to learn those details through experience rather than by reading unauthorized accounts.

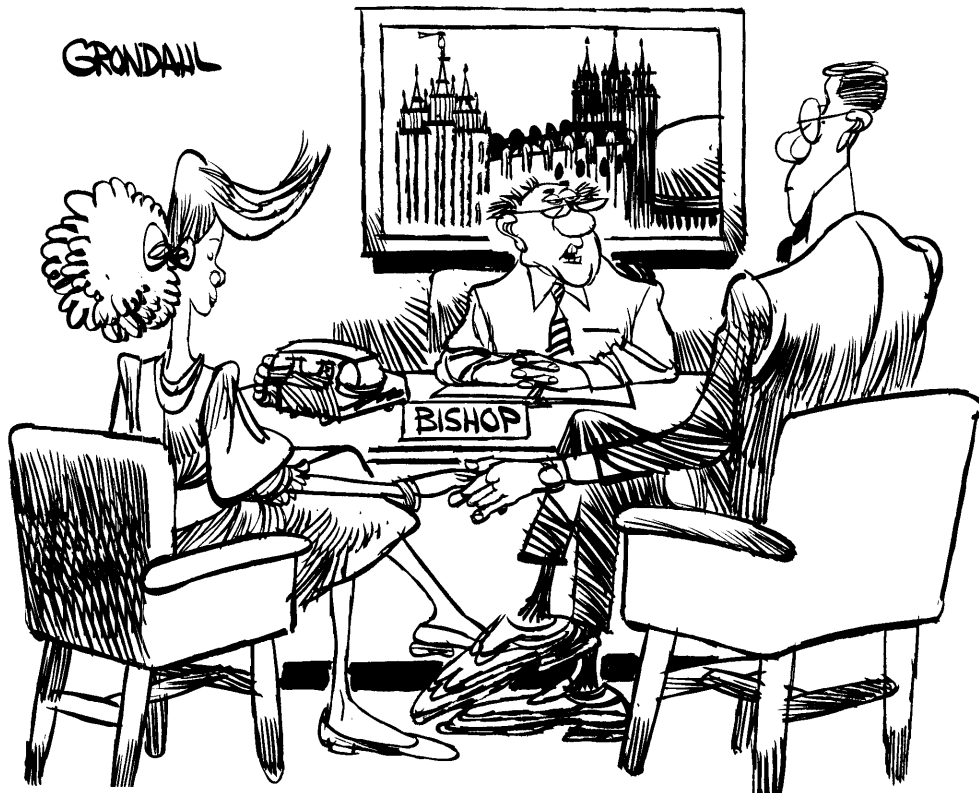
The dilemma of knowing how much it is proper to say is heightened by the fact that although discussion of the ceremony is said to be proper inside the temple, there is no real opportunity for that. The temple is a place for ordinances and there is no private place in

the temple for individuals to engage in discussion or even prayer. A whispered conversation in the celestial room is the extent of opportunity for ordinary Saints, and that is an awkward time and place for such discussion. It is my understanding that temple presidencies no longer engage in question and answer sessions, as they once did.

Keith Norman, in his article, does not intend to disclose what he promised to hold secret, and I believe in a literal sense he has not, but he does give more detail than I am comfortable with. That points out the problem. The line is a difficult one to draw, and I believe the ultimate issue ought to be motive.

I am sorry that Norman's article may be seen only as one about the temple, because it is really the vehicle for making a legitimate suggestion—that the Church might benefit greatly by explicit renunciation of blood atonement as a doctrine.

It appears that Norman is unaware that something close to the renunciation he hoped for does exist. Unfortunately, it is not widely known. In 1978, at the request of the First Presidency, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote a letter for publication about blood atonement. The letter is quoted extensively in Martin Gardner's article, "Mormonism and Capital



"Another change in the temple ceremony. . . . You will consecrate and dedicate everything to her in case of a divorce"

Punishment" (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12:1 (1979), 16-19). Elder McConkie wrote,

We do not believe that it is necessary for men in this day to shed their own blood to receive a remission of sins. This is said with a full awareness of what I and others have written and said on this subject in times past.

. . . You asked if the statements of our leaders of the past . . . represent the official stand of the Church. . . . [T]hey do not. The statements pertain to a theoretical principle that has been neither revealed to nor practiced by us.

I appreciate SUNSTONE's providing a forum for sometimes controversial ideas. I recognize that not everyone shares my attitude, but I believe your availability as a means of expression is important for the health of the Mormon community.

EDWARD L. KIMBALL
Provo, UT

TRANSCENDING HOMOSEXUALITY

ORSON SCOTT CARD'S "The Hypocrites of Homosexuality" (SUNSTONE 14:1)

remains a courageous and clearly expressed critique of current movements within and without the Church to mainstream homosexuality as an equally viable alternative to Heterosexuality. It is not! In spite of the rameumptom letters by Marty Beaudet and others (SUNSTONE 14:3 and 14:4), homosexuality continues to be viewed by the leadership of the Church as a test to be transcended (see Elder Boyd K. Packer's 7 October 1990 conference address).

As one who has personally transcended same sex attraction and is happily married, I applaud the charge of disobedience that Card levels against the gay community. True, he does not make a clear distinction between orientation and behavior, but he clearly expresses his willingness to accept "repentant homosexuals" within the brotherhood of the gospel and society. It is not homophobic to eschew homosexual behavior and attempt to institutionalize that prohibition while still accepting the person who may have same-sex desires but doesn't act on them.

Arnold Loveridge's letter ("Inclining to Carving Acts," SUNSTONE 14:3) is commendable for its tolerance and thoughtfulness; however, he is misinformed. Homosexual orientation can be changed through reparative therapy, and I would encourage all members of the Church so inclined to avail themselves of the

opportunity to "repent" of homosexuality. As a member of the Evergreen Foundation, I witness changes in sexual orientation daily, and I am not the only one who has achieved complete freedom from same sex desires.

Chris Allen's review of the recent "You Don't Have to Be Gay" conference ("Conference on Changing Gay Orientation Stirs Controversy," SUNSTONE 14:3) was well written and conscientiously thoughtful, but his allegiance to the Gay Liberation view of homosexuality was transparently clear in spite of his efforts to include arguments from all sides. He refers to recovered homosexual presenters as "effeminate" and defines self-acceptance as the "task gay people are currently left with." Femiphobia lurks behind Allen's evaluations. Was this the only characteristic that he observed in the presenters? Does this mean that they were not changed as they claimed? Or willfully participating in fraud? As one of those presenters, I declare that this is not the case. My life has been vastly improved and blessed by congruence with the gospel; I hope others with similar life tasks may be so blessed.

Self-acceptance of one's sexual orientation is not the primary task; self-discovery, -congruence, and -actualization are the primary tasks. Ah, but then, we would all be out of the closet. You would find us as members of your ward and have to deal with us. Perhaps you would prefer that we distance ourselves from the Church and move to San Francisco. Be honest now, wouldn't that be more comfortable? Ah, but is this homophobic? Who are you really willing to personally know?

ALAN SEEGMILLER
Centerville, UT



EVERY GARDENER A MISSIONARY

SMALL GROUP POPULATION GROWTH

JOHN C. KUNICH'S article, "Multiply Exceedingly: Book of Mormon Population Sizes" (SUNSTONE 14:3), sheds insight regarding potential numbers of people that may have fought in wars, listened to speeches, and participated in other events. But there is one methodological flaw with serious implications.

The growth formula used by Kunich is very useful for describing trends in large populations. For example, it fits the growth of the LDS church after 1880 quite well. The formula is less useful, however, in describing small groups. One could start with a different set of assumptions that would be very

reasonable for a small group in a pristine environment with a rich food supply, little disease, and an abundance of land. Suppose, for example, that each of the seven couples (Kunich begins with seven couples) has six children which survive to adulthood, that the average age at which mothers bear children is 25, that all of the children marry, and that each successive generation does the same. Then the population would triple in each successive generation. The fourth generation (100 years later) would have 567 people, and the eighth (200 years later) would have nearly 50,000. These are much larger values than anything reported by Kunich, yet the assumptions are just as defensible as is the growth formula. The growth formula might become applicable after 200 years of rapid growth. By then, however, there is a large enough base to sustain the war losses that are reported.

The article also had little to say about periodic statements that Lamanites outnumbered Nephites. My own theory is that the Nephites, being agrarian rather than hunting/gathering, depended more on inheritance of land as a prerequisite to marry. As was common in preindustrial Europe, delayed marriage could have been a major deterrent to high fertility. In other words, Nephites put off starting a family for economic reasons.

Undoubtedly, other explanations for population size, differential growth, and other aspects of population structure, would shed further light on the Book of Mormon. The article by John Kunich is certainly a step in the right direction.

TIM B. HEATON
Springville, UT

WAR, RAPE, AND POPULATION GROWTH

IT IS REFRESHING to see that someone else has taken an interest in the demographics of the scriptures. However, John Kunich has fallen into the trap of other demographers to think that world population sizes evolved slowly from just a handful of people around 8000 B.C. to the 5 billion today; and that this growth was steady with just a few setbacks.

Kunich published a long paragraph on page 39 which theorizes that there is a loss in population growth from war, and he continues this theme throughout his article. We have definite modern proof that this is not the case.

Most people suppose that the limitation to the expansion of population has been natural

disasters and war. Over-population has often been considered the principal cause of war. The real reason was greed. Also the real reasons why war does not change the growth rate is due to the sexual activity of conquering soldiers and occupying troops. In some instances there is even a dramatic increase in population, as in the Korean and Viet Nam wars. This is because of rape and immoral acts by soldiers sent to the war zones. We can find this in accounts of the Roman legions, Assyrians, and Babylonians.

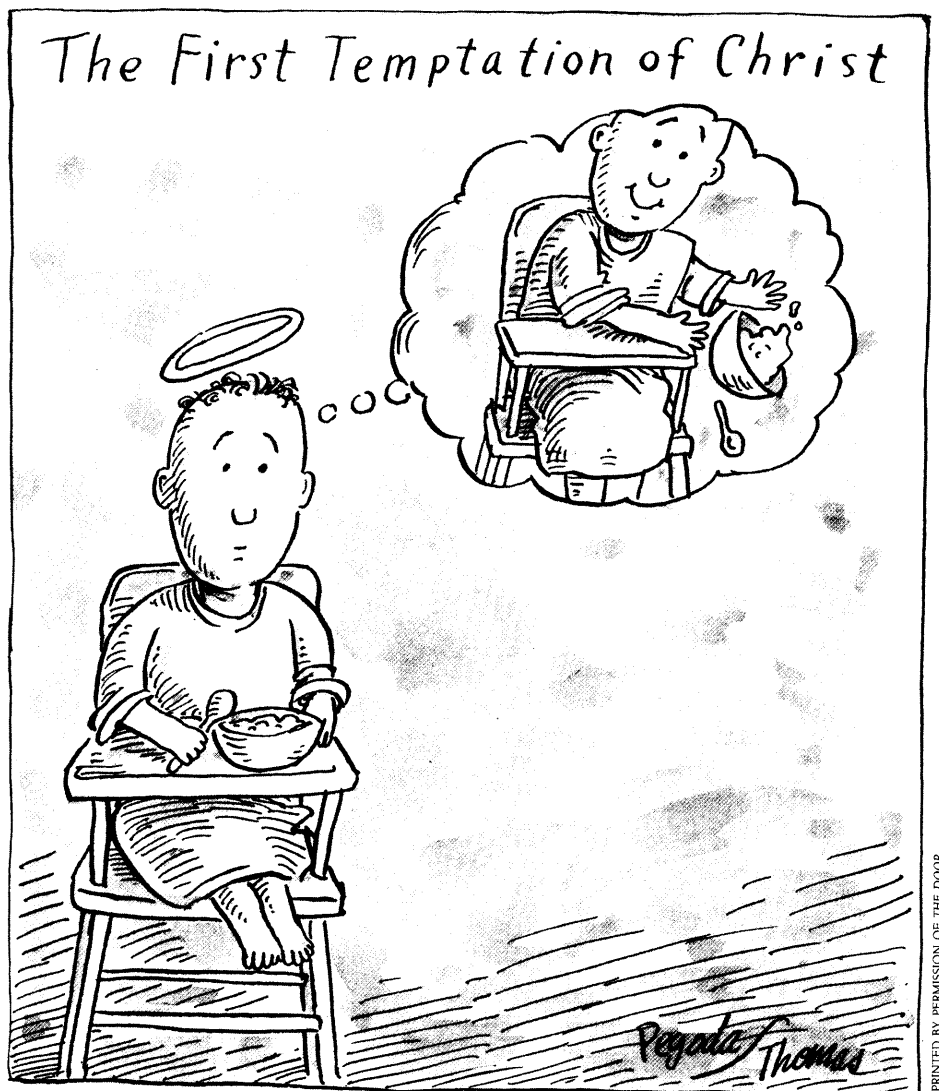
For example, the number of dead in World War II was approximately 15 million. Of this total, the Soviet Union lost 6,115,000 and Germany, 3,250,000. Civilians were probably killed in greater proportion to the total than at any time in history. And yet it is significant to note that the world's population growth rate between 1930 and 1970 didn't seem to miss a beat. It remained at approx-

imately a quarter of 1 percent per year. The Soviet population in 1930 was 152,060,000 and in 1950 it was 165,441,000. Even the years of Stalin's massive purgers (20 to 25 million) didn't affect the growth rate.

CLARE K. OLSEN
West Jordan, UT

John Kunich replies:

Heaton's "just as defensible" scenario, in which the Book of Mormon population triples every generation, might work for lab rats or pet rabbits, but not for people. No human population can expand at that rate for long, regardless of conditions. And the most likely settlement area for the Book of Mormon colonists, i.e., somewhere in Central America, was hardly a utopian, Edenic breeding ground. As indicated in "Multiply Exceedingly," there was much disease, famine, hard work to be done in clearing and farming the wilderness, and,



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from virtually the very beginning, frequent war. This was anything but an ideal reproductive hothouse capable of producing such unheard-of population growth, especially in hunting/gathering and agrarian cultures without the benefit of modern medicine and technology. Human beings just do not multiply that fast, particularly under the conditions described in the Book of Mormon.

Olsen's point that war's dysgenic effects are sometimes counterbalanced by the rape of enemy women is inapplicable in a closed system such as the one in the Book of Mormon. Instead of invaders from other lands, we have only a civil-war type of conflict between self-contained, finite populations. There was no infusion of new life from beyond the Nephite and Lamanite societies, only occasional, random, one-time couplings of peo-

ple who were already part of the Nephite and Lamanite groups. Thus, there was no compensatory counterbalance to the inevitable population-reducing effects of war: military and civilian fatalities, fatherless families, delayed marriage/reproduction, economic/agricultural disruption, and famine. Without an influx of vitality from beyond the Nephite-Lamanite gene pool, any war-related rape of enemy women would not have begun to counteract the enormous downward pull on the populations of the warring factions.

THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF ALL THINGS TRITE & TACKY?

DOES ELBERT PECK realize what he is suggesting when he celebrates the grass-roots revelation expressed in Proverbs' truisms and ponders whether we should have a similar latter-day collection ("Doubt in the Context of Faith," *SUNSTONE* 14:3)? We already have one, and its pearlettes are no great prize. Does Peck really want *Especially for Mormons* to be added to the scriptures, even if only the best of all volumes were distilled by prophet editors into one section in the Doctrine and Covenants?

COLIN CANNON
Chicago

TEMPTED FROM ANONYMITY

IN THE JUNE issue which I received in October, I surprisingly found my "Form Talk for High Councilors" (*SUNSTONE* 14:3). Since it is unlikely, except for my obituary, that my name or another article by me will find its way into print, my ego compels me to confess credit, or blame, for this creation.

For personal amusement, I wrote this Form Talk several years ago during a lunch period. Having received tolerant, if not rave, reviews from office critics, I considered compiling this article, together with other lunchtime compositions (my Muse is most active when I have a sandwich), into my written equivalent of a Calvin Grondahl collection. The literary community lost this contribution when I decided that I would benefit the world more by enhancing my own faith, hope, and charity. Some suggested, also, that numerous high councilmen might insist on royalties.

Nevertheless, through private channels, the talk received surprisingly wide distribution.

My stake president distributed it to the high council; colleagues delivered copies to friends and relatives; one friend delivered a copy to his father, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. I still receive comments and inquiries about the talk and was surprised and somewhat flattered to see the document attain a minor and narrow cult status.

Despite its age and rambling distribution, the talk hit the *SUNSTONE* pages remarkably intact. I confess ambivalence in seeing its publication. While I generally read *SUNSTONE* with interest, I often become impatient with some articles which I perceive to be derisive prejudice cloaked as "intellectualism" and, often, offensive to my deeply-held convictions. I would, therefore, be disappointed if some people, in that same vein, employ this Form Talk as ammunition for ridicule. I am pleased, on the other hand, when people perceive the talk as it was intended—an affectionate nose tweak.

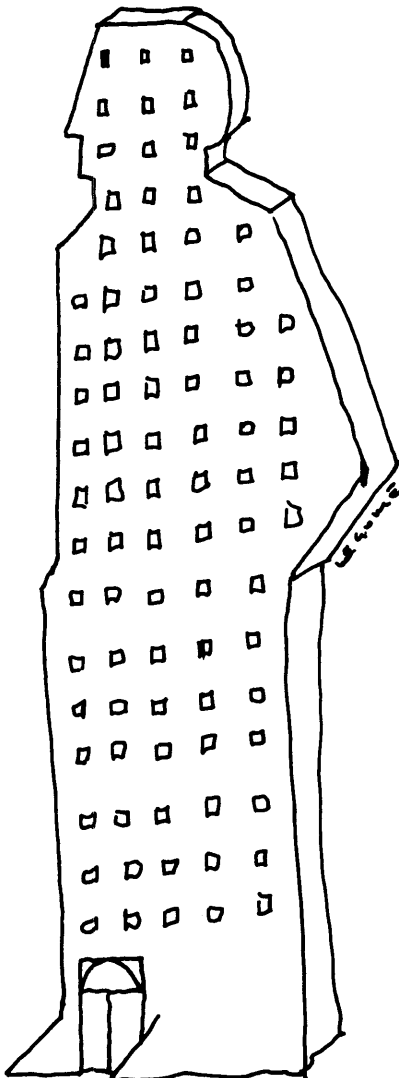
NEIL R. SABIN
Salt Lake City, UT

IN DEFENSE OF POLYGAMY

EUGENE ENGLAND continues to provoke my thoughts and causes me to reevaluate my beliefs and actions with his essays. However, beginning with his "On Fidelity, Polygamy, and Celestial Marriage" (*Dialogue*, 20 (Winter 1987): 138) and his latest article in *SUNSTONE* ("Are All Alike Unto God," 14:2), I find much of his logic concerning plural marriage disturbing.

I fully agree that much of "popular Mormon theology" concerning the issue he has raised is suspect and in many cases degrading. Typical Mormon inquiry ends with a casual perusal of Elder Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*. Fortunately, England wants to move us beyond our stagnation in the water of authoritative orthodoxy, and he does so with such sincerity that I must respect his views and applaud them.

In England's current essay, many of his arguments are based on a strange logic. He wants us to believe that in the very beginning of the "radical restoration" (while Joseph was still alive), plural marriage is to be considered an unimportant, for-mortal-purposes system, a practice which he terms "sexist" yet liberating for many who practiced it. He writes that by "1852 the Church openly adopted a clearly sexist practice—polygamy—and then developed a semi-official sexist theology to



THE J. WILLARD
MARRIOTT BUILDING

support it" (23). Whether or not it was openly practiced in Joseph's life is of little consequence; the fact remains that the doctrine was certainly an important part of the "radical restoration," at least in Brothers Joseph's, Brigham's, John's, Wilford's and Lorenzo's minds. England seems to be trying to wash over that fact, though it's obvious he is aware of it.

Another example of this white-washing is his continued reference to the 1890 Manifesto as a "revelation." Has he failed to read the several recent papers on this issue showing conclusively, at least in my mind, that none of the prophets contemporary with the Manifesto considered it a revelation at all, including those who penned it? Even president Woodruff continued the practice of plural marriage after the Manifesto, as did many other general authorities. I mention these things not to pretend that this is new news to England, but to attempt to point out what I view as glossing over important evidence. In my mind, plural marriage has much the same status as the law of consecration: both are standing laws unto Israel as soon as we are prepared to receive them (as a people I mean, not as individuals). How else am I to understand the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants on the law of consecration, and the various revelations given to Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor on plural marriage? In my opinion, the current theology will remain unchanged until the Church's stance on plural marriage becomes clear. No prophete has ever taught that plural marriage was merely an Abrahamic test for those who practiced it (as if those early saints needed more tests than they had, or more than we), that it was ethically wrong and will never be lived again. Indeed, many prophets taught just the opposite.

That plural marriage is a clearly "sexist" doctrine is certainly debatable. England wants us to judge everything by our own system of ethics, but I must ask how we can capture God's system in our own? Could it be that polygamy is indeed (when lived properly) ethically superior to monogamy? Is it possible that our own theories about equality cause so many people find it offensive. Perhaps our system of ethics is somehow inferior to that of God's; perhaps religion is greater than the ethics which come from it.

It has been our wickedness and selfishness that has caused us to forfeit the blessings of consecration, plural marriage, second anointings, full participation in the true order of prayer, Adam-God, women giving blessings,

etc. No other word but *apostasy* seems to appropriately fit. Please do not misunderstand me. I do not believe change is bad, but castration of the laws and ordinances is. We, too, have changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant. I am not nor do I have to be an apostate fundamentalist to believe in the "radical restoration" doctrines. The only solution I can find is exactly where I started when I was first taught by the missionaries—repentance.

JOSEPH MICHAELS
Provo, UT

FEMINIST CALISTHENICS

DORICE WILLIAMS ELLIOTT'S column "Unto the Least of These"—Another Gender Gap" (SUNSTONE 14:2) says of women that "despite their 'special call' to compassionate service, [they] are not encouraged to take that service beyond their homes and immediate neighborhoods or to direct it toward any but a limited range of problems." Do we require priesthood leaders to design our range of service, or can we be self-initiated, "anxiously engaged in a good cause" (D&C 58:27)?

Elliott says Mormon women "rarely experience the spiritual stretching which major crisis situations tend to foster." I disagree. In this century, rank-and-file LDS women are dealing with innumerable cases in their own families and communities with drug and alcohol abuse as well as other

frightening crimes, with homosexuality and its medical consequences, with new infinitely more grotesque breeds of materialism and selfishness, and with the literal breakdown of the family unit.

I, too, have compared my role as leader, healer, and emissary with the roles of official priesthood leaders. I also know many women who feel the need to protect themselves or be protected from experiences which promote spiritual stretching. These attitudes are more a result of LDS women and their own problematic perceptions of themselves than of inherent and overwhelming injustice. While it is true that the attitudes are a result of sexist acculturation, women are free enough, smart enough, and capable enough to begin to look past the chip on our collective shoulder and constructively assume the spiritual stretching service roles that are our divine right and responsibility. Elliott should not need anything but initiative to prod her out of her comfortable life and into more meaningful service.

ROBYN OPENSHAW-PAY
Orem, UT

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PSALM

MY WILLFUL PRAYER IN THE FALL

O God—
I stray, yoked to warring passions.
Direct events to discipline me (almost against my will).
Make me master of myself—
My feelings and thoughts and actions.
Force me not to be a slave of desire and circumstance.
Give me the strength to will what I choose
That I may be free
To humbly choose to give what I will.
So, unfettered, I can singly submit to you
My heart and mind and service,
And have you as my mentor:
Leading me, your willing disciple,
In a straight path to purity and thee.
Through Christ.

—GEOFFREY ARTHUR JONES