

NEWS

SIX INTELLECTUALS DISCIPLINED FOR APOSTASY

DURING SEPTEMBER, six Mormon scholars were disciplined by the Church for apostasy. The events dramatically explored the dynamic between the individual and the institution, drew national media attention to tensions between the Church and its intellectuals and feminists, raised questions about dissent, loyalty, and free speech, and highlighted pluralistic challenges for the monolithic organization.

Intimations of the excommunications appeared earlier. Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn was called to a disciplinary council in May on charges of apostasy for recent writings on women and the priesthood in *Mormon Women and Authority* and for a *SUNSTONE* article on the history of censoring Mormon authors. Quinn refused to attend because he did not feel it was right to be disciplined for writing history, and he felt the council's decisions were predetermined by high Church authorities.

The council put him on probation with a thirty-day time limit to meet with his stake president, Paul A. Hanks. When he didn't, the council disfellowshipped him a month later for not complying with its instructions, and gave him another thirty days to meet with the stake president. In the meantime, Quinn had gained increased notoriety for his lengthy article on the right-wing politics of Apostle Ezra Taft Benson in the 1960s (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1993).

In June, Margaret Toscano spoke on *Mother in Heaven* to BYU's student feminist group VOICE. The *Daily Universe* ran a front-page report, for which it apologized a few days later. Later in July, Toscano's stake president, Kerry Heinz, instructed her to stop speaking, writing, or making media appearances on subjects involving Church theology or policy. When she publicly

repeated his instructions and warnings of a disciplinary council, further meetings ensued, and threats of Church actions were dropped.

DISCIPLINARY COUNCILS

LYNNE KANAHEL WHITESIDES, Mormon Women's Forum president, received a letter on 31 August from Bishop Virgil Merrill stating that a disciplinary council for apostasy was scheduled for 2 September; at her request he rescheduled it for the 14th.

Whitesides has regularly spoken on women and priesthood, *Mother in Heaven*, and other feminist issues. On a Salt Lake TV talk show this summer she said: "If you excommunicate one of us, there will be ten more to step up and take her place. Excommunicate those ten and there will be 100 to take their places."

When she asked her bishop who her accusers were she was informed that there were none but her own words from public addresses, of which he had transcripts and cassette recordings. To prepare her defense, she asked which of her statements would be used; she was told that she knew what she said.

Although Merrill told her that he had not received *direction* from his superiors, he had been contacted repeatedly by a general authority concerning Whitesides and had been sent materials, such as copies of news reports about her. When he received a full transcript of a television interview Whitesides had given, with yellow highlighted passages, he immediately set a date for the disciplinary council.

By the time of Whitesides's council, four other individuals had received trial notices: conservative Isaiah scholar Avraham Gileadi; Maxine Hanks, editor of *Mormon Women and Authority*; Lavina Fielding Anderson, editor of the *Journal of Mormon History*; and Salt Lake attorney Paul Toscano, Mormon Alliance president.



The evening of Whitesides's council, 150 individuals gathered on the church lawn to hold a vigil. They sang hymns, made speeches, shared testimonies, heard progress reports from witnesses, and kept candles lit during the four-hour process. Early in the evening, it was reported that although Merrill had previously told Whitesides that she could have a friend with her throughout the meeting, he now refused to allow anyone to be with her, including her husband.

After three hours, Whitesides came out and expressed gratitude. She said it helped to hear the strains of a hymn during the meeting, and that Merrill had said that the support of so many friends had an impact on him.

An hour later, the court called Whitesides back and shortly she reappeared and announced she had been disfellowshipped. In addition to the traditional restrictions on not speaking in Church or taking the sacrament, she said she was told to "be careful" in public speaking, specifically on the topics of *Mother in Heaven* and general authorities. She believed that the five-man council genuinely loved her and that they felt they were doing the right thing.

In a follow-up letter, Merrill stipulated that to be reinstated Whitesides should not "take any active role in groups or organizations that encourage you or others to do anything that would be viewed as violating these admonitions" against praying to *Mother in Heaven*, making derogatory public remarks about Church leaders, or advocating female priesthood ordination.

Whitesides wrote back saying that all she agreed to was to "be careful" in her public statements, that the bishop was trying to "silence her." She wrote, "Speaking is one of my greatest gifts from God. To deny that gift would be to ask me to stop being who I am." Later she told the *New York Times*, "Changes never come about unless noise is made. . . . And those who speak the loudest pay the biggest price." "I have disagreed with general authorities," she told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "But I respect these men and don't feel it is apostasy to disagree."

The next day, Michael Quinn's stake president notified him by mail of his disciplinary council on the charges of "apostasy and conduct unbecoming a member."

AVRAHAM GILEADI was told in 1992 by his stake president, Randall Gibb, to stop publishing his commentaries on the prophecies of Isaiah and the Last Days. Gibb's actions were prompted by numerous conversations with Area President Malcom Jeppson. Apparently Gibb was satisfied by Gileadi's compliance with his request, but sources told the *Tribune* that Elder Boyd K. Packer wasn't. This June, after serving six years, Gibb was released in what he says was a normal rotation. Elder Packer selected Leau G. Otten as the new stake president. Otten is a member of BYU's religion faculty, which has had a longstanding theological feud with Gileadi. In August, Otten summoned Gileadi to a disciplinary council on 15 September. The Sunday after the court, leaders in priesthood and Relief Society

meetings in his Santaquin Utah Stake announced that Gileadi had been excommunicated for apostasy. Gileadi won't comment publicly, but reportedly he was told he was excommunicated for teaching false doctrine, being predatory in teaching his theology, and for believing dead prophets over living ones.

PAUL JAMES TOSCANO'S disciplinary council met Sunday morning, 19 September. At 6:00 A.M. over 100 individuals gathered in the parking lot of the Cottonwood Stake Center to once again keep vigil by singing hymns and sharing comments.

At the trial's start, Toscano made four requests: the proceed-

ings be public; his witnesses be present throughout the hearing; his wife be present throughout; and an independent party take notes. All requests were denied.

The vigil candles flickered out as the dawn rose, people came and went, attending to their own Church callings, and orange juice replaced hot chocolate. At 12:30 P.M. Toscano emerged from his six-and-a-half hour trial and spoke to the crowd. He said the discussion centered on his recent Sunstone symposium speech, "All is Not Well in Zion: False Teachings of the True Church," of which the council had made a transcription from a purchased cassette. They focused and disagreed on the interpretation of

supposedly derogatory comments he had made about general authorities. He said the interchange was genuine and that the high councilors asked hard but fair-minded questions. He felt that they loved him and he expressed his love for them.

After hours of deliberation, at 3:00 P.M. Heinz told Toscano that his decision to excommunicate him for apostasy was sustained unanimously by the high council.

MAXINE HANKS'S disciplinary council met the same afternoon. The meeting was the climax in a series of encounters and discussions with Salt Lake Stake President Paul Hanks (a distant relative), including a meeting

with Area President Loren Dunn three years earlier.

Maxine Hanks has spoken strongly against the Church's ban on female priesthood ordination, but she doesn't feel that she is an apostate. "According to the dictionary, apostasy means to abandon one's faith," she later told the *Deseret News*. "I have abandoned church policy and false authority, but I am in harmony with my faith in God."

Upon her court date notice, she asked that her name be removed from the Church's records. President Hanks deferred the request until after the disciplinary council, which she did not attend. After a four-hour high council meeting, President Hanks reported to her

ECCLESIASTICAL ABUSE

An excerpt from Lavina Fielding Anderson's testimony at Paul Toscano's disciplinary council.

IN APRIL 1993, I published a long article in *Dialogue* documenting more than a hundred cases of ecclesiastical and spiritual abuse. Most of these cases were writers and scholars, either personally known to me or people with whose work I was familiar. In the past five months, over a hundred other people, most of them "ordinary" members—not writers or scholars, not known to me—have volunteered their own experiences of spiritual and ecclesiastical abuse. In coordinating the documentation of these cases and doing a great deal of the initial interviews and, in some cases, repeated follow-up interviews, I have become aware of patterns and characteristics that make it possible to identify a more or less typical profile of ecclesiastical abuse. This is why I say I am an expert witness.

You are probably more familiar with the term "unrighteous dominion," as forbidden in the scriptures. Sometimes it is easier to understand an old phenomenon under a new name, and I will continue to use the term "ecclesiastical and/or spiritual abuse." I find it significant that the scriptures, while forbidding unrighteous dominion, do not encourage "righteous dominion." I believe this should suggest to us that the perils of exercising unrighteous dominion are so great that the phenomenon of righteous dominion is virtually nonexistent. This view may find reinforcement in the same section of the Doctrine and Covenants which warns that "almost all men" will fail to resist the temptation to exercise unrighteous dominion, if they have the chance (D&C 121:39).

Ecclesiastical abuse occurs when a Church

officer, acting in his calling and using the weight of his office, coerces compliance, imposes his personal opinions as Church doctrine or policy, or resorts to such power plays as threats and intimidation to insure that his views prevail in a conflict of opinions. The suggestion is always that the member's faith is weak, testimony inadequate, and commitment to the Church lacking.

Seven factors characterize most abusive encounters:

1. A difference of opinion is not simply a difference of opinion but is treated as a revelation of moral inadequacy on the part of the member. If the difference of opinion stems from scholarship on the member's part or the application of professional tools to an aspect of Mormon studies, the officer seldom has the technical expertise to discuss the point at issue. Frequently he shifts the grounds of the discussion to the dangers of promulgating any perspective but the traditional one and insists that there is something bad or wrong about holding alternative views.

2. A request for help on the part of a member is seen as an invitation to judge the member's worthiness on the part of the officer.

3. No matter what the content of the initial issue, any issue can escalate with terrifying quickness into a power struggle in which the ecclesiastical officer demands compliance because of his office and accuses the member of not sustaining his leaders and/or of apostasy. These charges, in turn, lead to threats to confiscate temple recommends, to release the member from callings, and to conduct disciplinary councils.

4. If the member protests such actions and refuses to yield to the officer's power, then the very act of protest or the expressed desire to continue the discussion is seen as evidence of the charges. The officer feels justified in refusing to explain the reasons for taking the action and unilaterally terminates the discussion by citing his authority. The member, rather than having a problem, has become the problem.

5. If another ecclesiastical leader, such as a stake president or an area president, becomes aware of and involved in the situation, the original leader almost always controls the flow of information to this second leader. The opportunities to present biased information, reframe the issue as one of disobedience, and portray the member as a trouble-maker are legion. The first leader seldom suggests a group discussion or meeting that involves a mediator or a referee; rather, he is usually able to win the weight of the second officer's office and power to reinforce his own in the effort to achieve the member's capitulation.

6. The member feels unjustly treated. Feelings of helplessness, betrayal, anger, and depression frequently follow. Expressions of "increased love" seldom if ever follow "rebukes" from abusive ecclesiastical officers, only additional warnings about conformity that increase the sense of unfairness and powerlessness.

7. If the member in pain withdraws from church activity to protect himself, herself, and/or the family from this assault upon their spiritual well-being, the withdrawal is seen as evidence of the member's lack of worthiness, not as a cry for help or

that she had been excommunicated for "conduct contrary to the laws and order of the Church."

LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON chose not to attend her 23 September disciplinary council because she felt that since the problem was not at the stake level it couldn't be solved there. Earlier in the year she had met with her stake president, Marlin Miller, who said her membership was in jeopardy if she continued to collect and publicize incidents of ecclesiastical abuse directed primarily against feminists, intellectuals, and scholars, as she had done at last year's Sunstone symposium (published in *Dialogue*, Spring 1993). She said that she could not stop. At the 1993 Sun-

stone symposium this August, she gave an "atrocities update" at the Mormon Alliance session, on whose board she serves.

On 11 September she received a letter from Miller inviting her to a disciplinary council to defend herself against charges of "conduct unbecoming a member of this Church." On 24 September, the day after her court, a letter informed her that she was excommunicated; no reason was given. When she inquired about the grounds, Miller said she was excommunicated for apostasy.

In lieu of a vigil, the night before Anderson's council a prayer meeting was held at the White Chapel, a publicly owned pioneer meeting-

house reconstructed across the street from the Utah State Capitol. It was a deeply moving event filled with spirit, love, pain, and faith. Approximately 200 gathered to sing, pray, and listen to sermons by five of the "September Six" and audience remarks.

Kate Call announced a petition for people who wanted to join her in removing their names from the Church's rolls. Similarly, in a heartfelt address, Scott Kenney said he had independently begun the process to remove his name. This hard decision was years in the making and a matter of personal integrity. The meeting closed with a powerful singing of the Lord's Prayer and a benediction by Jack Newell.

Anderson describes herself as "totally orthodox, and totally believing. I accept Joseph Smith's proof claims, the divinity of the Book of Mormon, and I'm fully active in my ward. . . . In every way a typical Mormon, except for my intellectual interests." After excommunication she released a statement that said: "This action has brought great sorrow upon me and my family, but we feel sustained by the love of God easing our pain. In searching my conscience over the last few days to know if I have acted out of pride or stubbornness, I have felt peace. I have done what I feel is right.

"I will continue to attend church with my family and participate to

as a symptom of abuse in the system. Here are brief summaries of cases that manifest characteristics typical of this profile:

A man who chairs a quarterly Mormon studies group was called in by his stake president and instructed to disband it. He refused. The stake president was unable to show that the group injured any attenders, violated any churchwide policy, promulgated false doctrine, or caused the chair to neglect his family or church duties. As he successfully refuted each "reason" the stake president gave, the stake president became angry, insisted that the member comply because to do otherwise was a failure to sustain his leaders, and confiscated the member's recommend. After several months, the member asked to appeal to the area president, who requested that the member forward to him a complete account of the disagreement and his notes on this meeting. The area president wrote a letter that responded to none of the member's questions and contained no internal evidence that he had read the materials. Instead he instructed the member to work things out with the stake president. For the next six months (or to date) the stake president has not approached the member directly and the situation is still not resolved. This example shows the shifting of the issue from the merits of study groups to the issue of sustaining the church leader, with subsequent threats and sanctions if the member does not comply.

A man in another country, who was teaching English and learning the other language, gave a sacrament meeting talk in the local ward about the temple. When his bishop asked why he did not attend the temple, he explained that he was homosexual. The

bishop accepted this information calmly, but said he would like the man to speak to the stake president and made an appointment. When the man arrived, three strangers and the bishop were present; and the presiding officer informed him that it was a disciplinary council. He was required to defend himself in the language he was learning, since only one of the men spoke English. Other procedural errors were also committed. He was excommunicated. As this example shows, the needs of the institution are met at the expense of the needs of the member.

Amy (a pseudonym) was raped by an acquaintance and infected with Herpes III, an incurable condition which will require Caesarian-section delivery of any future children who will, even so, run about a 50 percent chance of infection. When Amy sought comfort from her bishop of the previous year, he received her coldly, pointed out that she had been less than fully active, and suggested that her inactivity had brought the rape upon her. When a friend in whom Amy confided, shocked at the bishop's response, went to her own stake president, the stake president remarked that the case occurred outside his jurisdiction and that Amy's bishop "knew what he was doing." The bishop's punitive attitude toward Amy in her hour of need constitutes spiritual abuse. The stake president's dismissive attitude toward her friend shows the closing of ranks to safeguard the ecclesiastical hierarchy, rather than dealing with the spiritual needs of members.

Such cases can be multiplied. I have gone into this level of detail because I think it is relevant information for you to have in the case currently before you. Paul and Margaret

Toscano have been marginalized, stigmatized, and their faithfulness attacked in many settings over the past twenty years. I believe that the potential for new abuse is very high in the current situation. I ask for your consideration of the abuse dynamic as part of your work.

I believe that the parallels between ecclesiastical abuse and sexual abuse are a useful matrix. The biggest problem is denial. People simply do not want to believe that church officers can behave as some have behaved. They want to deny the behavior, blame the victim, assure themselves that someone is not telling the truth because such a thing could not happen in the Lord's church. I think it masks an enormous fear—the same fear that prompts denial of child sexual abuse or spouse battering. This fear is: "If this can happen to someone else, could it happen to me?" The answer is yes. Church leaders, covering fears of their own inadequacies with pride instead of with love and humility, cover up for each other.

I have come to the conclusion, in the course of this last year, that the Church works very well 99 percent of the time. But the Church as a system offers no organizational protection against the 1 percent of ecclesiastical officers who develop an appetite for unrighteous dominion. Where, besides the Savior, do you go when your priesthood leaders turn against you? There is no alternative to the priesthood pipeline. There is no back-up system. There is no ombudsman. There is no advocate, no mediator, no referee, no arbiter. The stronger the victim's testimony, the more likely he or she is to cling to the Church, believe that "this is all a misunderstanding," demand justice, and be rebetrayed, revictimized, rebrutalized by the system.



"Purge? Purge? What Purge? I don't know anything about a purge..."



the degree that it is permitted. I will also continue to work toward resolving the problems of ecclesiastical and spiritual abuse.

"I know that this procedure was a very painful one for my stake president. I feel no resentment toward him. I accept that he was acting out of loyalty to the Church and out of sincere conviction that I was wrong.

"I believe that someday all of us who have lived through this month, leaders and members alike, will look back and see it as a time when truth and courage meant very different things to very different but equally honorable people. Until that understanding comes, I pray for increased love in our community."

Anderson told the *News* that her stake president had been respectful and courteous before, during, and after her council. "But why does this feel so unloving?" she asked. "I have to be honest, this feels like punishment."

MICHAEL QUINN's court was held 26 September. He did not attend, and was notified by certified mail that he was excommunicated for "apostasy and conduct unbecoming a member."

Speaking about being excommunicated, Quinn told the *Tribune*, "I'm a DNA Mormon. It's in me, whether they accept or remove me. This is true for converts as well as those who are born into the church." He likened the Church to a dysfunctional family where the parent kicks out a child. "But the relationship does not end," he said. "My personal feeling is that we are all indispen-

sable to God. No one can be written off. No one is unimportant."

Toscano, Gileadi, Anderson, and Whitesides all are appealing the actions of their councils.

RESPONSES

THE *New York Times* ran several stories on the excommunications. A front-page story put the disciplines in larger contexts, including confronting the inevitable pluralism emerging from the Church's incredible growth. It focused on how the LDS Mother in Heaven doctrine allows Mormon feminists to explore the feminine in deity and other feminist principles current in American feminism, but which the LDS church resists because of its desire to situate Mormonism in the conservative American mainstream. Many other media carried stories about The Purge, as some called it, prompting endless analyses.

In discerning a pattern, some noted that all were disciplined for public actions that disagreed with or criticized authorities. Others said it was a coordinated assault on the leaders of "dissident" organizations such as the Mormon Alliance and the Mormon Women's Forum.

Still others noted the connection with the Sunstone symposium: excepting Gileadi and Quinn, whose actions preceded the conference, the others had given strong addresses at the conference; these actions patterned those of last fall where over a dozen speakers were called in and talked to about their comments by their local leaders at the instruction of the apostle-led Strengthening the Members Committee.

A common belief was that the local leaders were instructed by Church leaders to hold the councils. Many pointed to Apostle Boyd K. Packer, who, in a recent talk that condemned gays, feminists, and intellectuals, said, "Our local leaders must deal with all three of them with ever-increasing frequency" (see next story).

Some noted the apparent inequities in the Church-court system where on the same page the *Tribune* ran two stories, one about the excommunication of individuals for speaking their ideas and one about the disfellowshipment of Dr. Sherman Johnson, who police believe murdered a woman and who was convicted of manslaughter and embezzeling \$48,000 from the LDS church.

In a different news story, psychiatrist Richard Ferre told the *Tribune*, "None of us is in a position to decide who is right and who is wrong. . . . I feel the legitimate struggle of those leaders who are trying to maintain the integrity of the church. I also feel the pain for the person who is outside the system."

Church leaders denied that there was a top-level orchestrated purge. Church spokesperson Don LeFevre said that disciplinary matters are not handled by general authorities. "That's the policy. What, if any, action is to be taken is up to local Church leaders, who also are bound by policy to maintain confidentiality," he told the *Tribune*.

"Apparently several of these instances have converged as local

authorities have felt it their duty to act," LDS Church Public Affairs Director Bruce Olsen told the *Times*.

If the Church didn't direct the outcomes, many speculated, it probably instructed the courts to be held, and local leaders knew what was expected of them. The timing wasn't entirely coincidental, but reflected a coordinated "housecleaning," as Anderson called it.

At the Salt Lake-based B. H. Roberts Society, LDS historian Martha Bradley said, "While Church public relations maintains that this is not a purge, it sure feels like a purge!" "This action is destructive, it is mean-spirited and vengeful," she said. It is a "potent indictment against powerful women, against those who choose to do Mormon studies, against those with diverse and colorful voices. . . . I wonder why there isn't a huge and violent outcry."

Phoenix attorney Michael Clyde told the *Republic*, "The whole question of discipline is very difficult. I am a devout Mormon who has sat on [church] courts, and I am certainly troubled by any suggestion that they are being used to quiet an issue."

In contrast, David Mimmick told the *Tribune*: "I don't feel limited in what I want to think or believe about the church. . . . I have many ideas that may go against standard [LDS] teachings, but I feel comfortable within the church." But Mimmick, a postal worker, feels that there is a limit where you have to break with the Church if your beliefs are "contrary to the basics."

At the vigils and in numerous conversations, people often quoted

Joseph Smith on Pelatiah Brown's high council trial for his beliefs about the four beasts in Daniel: "I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist, and not like the Latter-day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of thinking and believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trammelled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine." (*History of the Church*, 5:340.)

National Public Radio reported that the six were disciplined for discussing publicly the patriarchal nature of Mormonism, praying to Mother in Heaven, exposing the inconsistencies in the official Mormon story and the frailties of the Mormon prophet. The report said that the Mormon belief in free agency—the right to think and act freely while praying for divine guidance—was being challenged: "God doesn't want little robots," Anderson told NPR. "He sent us here to be free human beings and to use our freedom wisely, so I think that anything that places limitations on the expression of freedom, not only in a theological sense, but in every other sense, too, will eventually dissolve. Because that is not the direction that God wants human beings to move in."

Apostle Dallin Oaks told NPR that what was happening was simple discipline of wayward members who contradict Church leaders and doctrine. "There is no purge of feminists. There is no purge of scholars. There is no purge. A church of about eight million has church discipline of a handful, and people begin to call it a purge. That is an exaggerated and perhaps self-serving characterization."

Historian Jan Shipp gave NPR a different reason than Oaks: "Obviously there is some kind of message being sent. But I think the message being sent is to stay in the middle of the road. It's to say: concentrate on the gospel as it is now clearly defined. And I think it's a message that is a reaction to the need to keep the focus as the

church grows bigger and bigger and bigger. . . . It's necessary to keep the gospel simple. And to keep its absolutes essential so that they can easily be translated from one language to another and communicated from one leader to another."

The reporter from NPR commented that "it's hard to keep the message simple if it's continually reinterpreted by feminists and intellectuals. And they're not alone. Last year hundreds of conservative Mormons were reportedly disciplined for their own excesses. For focusing too much attention on Armageddon, survivalism, and international conspiracies."

In the same NPR report, Elder Oaks responded: "Jan Shipp has given a pragmatic explanation of what she observes. I don't agree with that. . . . My explanation is on doctrine alone. Along with other leaders of the Church I have a responsibility to look after the purity of the doctrine to make sure that wolves do not enter the flock, to use the scriptural metaphor, and that there is nothing pragmatic about this at all. Pragmatism dictates peace, serenity, you're O.K.—I'm O.K., and don't make waves. That's not the current situation."

NPR concluded with Anderson: "The friends that I have who are feminists and intellectuals and homosexuals, they are not a danger to the Church. The Church is refuge to them. It's home to them. They are attached to it. They love it. It provides the context in which they live out their commitments to Jesus Christ. So there is something that I don't understand about the fear that is being manifest by this fall housecleaning, but I do know that fear is at the root of it somehow. And that means they will never be able to excommunicate enough people to stop being afraid."

DALLIN OAKS

THE Church-owned *Deseret News* ended its month-long silence on 2 October, the first day of the October semi-annual general conference, with an interview with Elder Oaks, who repeated his repudiation of the term purge: "Purge is loaded with meaning and a dirty piece of

name-calling. . . . It has been put on by people trying to gather a following."

In response to accusations that Elder Packer was behind the recent expulsions, Elder Oaks said, "I deplore that. It's scapegoating." However, he acknowledged that local leaders are informed by the Strengthening the Members Committee about members who may be violating Church standards. The *News* said the committee "pores over newspapers and other publications and identifies members accused of crimes, preaching false doctrine, criticizing leadership or other problems. That information is forwarded on to the person's bishop or stake president, who is charged with helping them overcome problems and stay active in the Church."

Later, in the *Arizona Republic*, Elder Oaks called the committee's actions a "clipping service." "It's a way of keeping busy bishops informed," he told the *News*. "But it is up to the bishop to handle it. Bishops don't report back." He said the information comes with no instructions to take specific action. He compared it to his teaching judges how to be judges during his tenure as a Utah Supreme Court justice, but not telling them what verdict to reach.

He denounced speculations that Church authorities are cracking down on liberal and conservative dissidents just to keep the Church focused as it grows. The *News* said that he explained that LDS scriptures teach that general and local Church leaders are responsible to see that members stick

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SALT LAKE BOOK SIGNINGS

Leslie Norris will read from his recent work and sign copies of *An Open World* and his own books 4 Dec. in Provo, UT (Atticus Books), and 9 Dec. in Salt Lake (A Woman's Place at Foothill Village), both at 7:30 p.m.

to approved Church doctrine when they teach or speak, and weed out those who persist in publicly preaching false doctrine or criticizing leaders. "This business about disciplinary action casting a pall over free speech and dissent is just inaccurate and self-serving," he said, noting that press coverage proves the Church can't quiet dissent. "They are trying to get a movement started by exaggerating their grievances. . . . [.] They are trying to get every person who has a question about church doctrine [to believe] that the general authorities will cast them into outer darkness." "The issue isn't disagreement, it's how you handle it," he said, noting that there have always been differences of opinion in the Church but that they should be taken up privately. The *News* quoted from his 1987 BYU talk: "Public debate—the means of resolving differences in a democratic government—is not appropriate in our church government." The apostle said that other options were to keep differences to oneself and to patiently ponder and pray about a resolution.

Responding to Elder Oaks's counsel, Michael Quinn told the

News that as a historian he couldn't work in the environment Elder Oaks described. Quinn said he never criticized Church leaders in his works, but merely stated what they did or are currently doing. "In my wildest fears, I never thought I would be excommunicated for publicizing an article on the status of Mormon women and the priesthood," he said, noting that since he didn't attend his court only his stake leaders know the evidence that resulted in excommunication.

Elder Oaks told the *News* that he didn't know the evidence in any of the six cases, but he said the news reports of public criticism of Church leaders and the embracing of false doctrine indicate that those disciplined were guilty of apostasy as defined by the *General Handbook of Instructions* (which he helped write).

"What we have had in the past several years is a deliberate frontal assault on the church and on its doctrine and its leaders by a number of different people and organizations," Elder Oaks told the *News*. "It is not a phenomenon of the past 30 days."

"I know some of these people,"

he said. "They are valued by the Lord and by the church. The thing I want most is to have all these good people straighten out their thinking, change their course and get back into full fellowship."

GENERAL CONFERENCE

THE Church's semi-annual general conference on 2-3 October featured talks that, in part, addressed the September controversies, including intellectualism, Church discipline, and the role of dissent. Showing sensitivities to a growing segment of discontented women, general authorities affirmed the equal value of women and encouraged the increased participation of women in Church councils, but they also strongly affirmed women's primary role of mother.

Twice President Gordon B. Hinckley mentioned critics "who never seem to recognize that knowledge of things divine comes by the power of the Spirit and not the wisdom of men."

In his Saturday morning talk on apostasy, Apostle Neal A. Maxwell counseled Saints "to be wary about accommodating revealed theology to conventional wis-

dom." He noted that "self siftings do occur," and then quoted nineteenth-century First Presidency counselor George Q. Cannon:

"I am thankful that God allows those who do not keep his commandments to fall away, so that his Church may be cleansed, and in this respect, this Church is different from any other that is upon the earth. . . . The sifting or weeding process has been going on from the commencement of this Church until the present time." (*Journal of Discourses*, 18:84.)

Elder Packer spoke on the different but complementary roles of men and women, "instituted from before the foundation of the world. They are eternal, as are the consequences for either obeying or disobeying them. They are not based on social or political considerations. They cannot be changed. No pressure, no protest, no legislation can alter them."

He said that the "responsibilities of the priesthood, which have to do with the administration of the Church, of necessity function outside the home. By divine decree, they have been entrusted to men. It has been that

KEEPING COVENANTS AND HONORING THE PRIESTHOOD

Elder James E. Faust

(Excerpt from priesthood session general conference talk, 2 October 1993)

IN some legislative assemblies of the world, there are groups termed the "loyal opposition." I find no such principle in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Savior gave this solemn warning: "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). The Lord made it clear that in the presiding quorums every decision "must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is every member in each quorum must be agreed in its decisions" (D&C 107:27). This means that after frank and open discussion, decisions are reached in council under the direction of the presiding officer who has the ultimate authority to decide. That decision is then sustained because our unity comes from full agreement with righteous principles and general response to the operation of the spirit of God.

Free discussion and expression are encouraged in the Church. Certainly the open expressions in most Fast and Testimony meetings, or Sunday School, Relief Society,

and priesthood meetings attest to that principle. However, the privilege of free expression should operate within limits. In 1869, George Q. Cannon explained the limits of individual expression in the Church:

"A friend . . . wished to know whether we . . . considered an honest difference of opinion between a member of the Church and the authorities of the Church was apostasy. . . . We replied that we could conceive of a man honestly differing in opinion from the authorities of the Church and yet not be an apostate; but we could not conceive of a man publishing those differences of opinion, and seeking by arguments, sophistry and special pleading to enforce them upon the people to produce division and strife, and to place the acts and counsels of the authorities of the Church, if possible, in a wrong light, and not be an apostate, for such conduct was apostasy as we understood the term." (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, vol. 2, 276-77.)

[Quoted definition of apostasy from *General Handbook of Instructions*.]

Those men and women who persist in publicly challenging basic doctrines, practices, and establishment of the Church sever themselves from the Spirit of the Lord and forfeit their right to place and influence in the Church. Members are encouraged to study the principles and the doctrines of the Church so that they understand them. Then, if questions arise and there are honest differences of opinion, members are encouraged to discuss these matters privately with priesthood leaders.

There is a certain arrogance in thinking that any of us may be more spiritually intelligent, more learned, or more righteous than the Councils called to preside over us. Those Councils are more in tune with the Lord than any individual persons they preside over, and the individual members of those Councils are generally guided by those Councils.

way since the beginning, for the Lord revealed that 'The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, . . . This order was instituted in the days of Adam' (D&C 107:40-41; see also 84:14, 16)."

Reflecting Apostle M. Russell Ballard's address to the general Relief Society meeting a week earlier that explicitly said men have priesthood and fatherhood, and women have motherhood (but did not equate priesthood to motherhood), Elder Packer told a strange, sexually-loaded fable where men have two keys and women one key and only by using all three different keys are they able to obtain their treasure.

Interestingly, and in contrast to Elder Packer's absolutist stance, a week after general conference, General Relief Society President Elaine Jack told the *Republic* that the number of dissenting women in the Church is less than 1 percent. The women she knows "accepted the church with its current makeup because they believe in the teachings that priesthood is for men at this time." Obviously aware that a statement with a window for change in woman's status could be controversial, she referred to the 1978 revelation granting priesthood to blacks and said, "There has been on-going revelation. . . . I worry about how I might be misconstrued, but I do believe in continuing revelation."

Apostle James Faust's priesthood address quoted former First Presidency counselor J. Reuben Clark that loyalty requires surrendering one's own preferences. Elder Faust stressed that those who hold priesthood keys are responsible to protect the flock. "Those who have keys, which include judicial or disciplinary authority, have the responsibility for keeping the Church cleansed from all iniquity (see D&C 20:54; 43:11). Bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, and others who have responsibility of keeping the Church pure must perform this labor in the spirit of love and kindness. It should be done in a spirit of helping, not punishing. However, it is no kindness to a

brother or sister in transgression for their presiding officers to look the other way."

Referring Church leaders to the *General Handbook of Instructions*, Elder Faust noted that items for Church discipline included "deliberate disobedience to the rules and regulations of the Church, advocating or practicing polygamy, apostasy, or other unchristianlike conduct, including defiance or ridicule of the Lord's anointed, contrary to the law of the Lord and the order of the Church." (See side bar next page for quote from handbook.)

Regarding public disagreements with Church leaders, Elder Faust instructed Saints to keep disagreements private and to submit to the collective wisdom of priesthood councils (see Faust side bar).

He said women have always made great and marvelous contributions to the work of the Lord and that in the future their contributions will be needed more in the Church and society. "They need to know that they are valued, honored, and appreciated. The sisters who serve as leaders need to be invited to participate and be listened to and included in our stake and ward council meetings." He counseled priesthood holders that in families "[o]ur wives need to be cherished. They need to hear their husbands call them blessed, and children need to hear their fathers generously praise their mothers (Proverbs 31:28). The Lord values his daughters just as much as he does his sons. In marriage neither is superior; each has different primary and divine responsibilities. Chief among these different responsibilities for wives is the calling of motherhood."

Perhaps having in mind the complaints by many intellectuals that addressing grievances privately is just not possible because of the inaccessibility of leaders, Elder Ballard instructed local leaders in their meetings to "promote free and open discussion. Such expression is essential if we are to achieve the purpose of councils. Leaders and parents should establish a climate that is conducive to openness where every person is important



ONE THOUSAND WHITE ROSES

Irene Bates and Shirley Paxman present their gift of peace to Presiding Bishop Robert D. Hales, who accepted on behalf of the Church. The ad below ran in both Salt Lake newspapers on general conference Sunday, 3 October 1993.

At 12:30 on Saturday, October 2, a thousand white roses were delivered to the General Authorities of the LDS Church with the following letter:

In the spirit of peace, we Latter-day Saints from around the world send these thousand white roses to the General Authorities who have been called to serve Jesus Christ and the members of his Church. We entreat you to accept these flowers as a symbol of our devotion to Christ's Gospel of love, mercy, faith and hope. The roses symbolize our support both of the Church and of the members who have recently had disciplinary action taken against them. Therefore, in the spirit of peace, we make this appeal: let the fear and reprisals end. Though the times are challenging and difficult, we find hope in the belief that we can face such challenges with dignity and grace and with the belief that God cherishes diversity, that He loves all his children, and that He does not seek to exclude any who love him from membership in his Church.

Each flower represents an individual or family from the following and other places around the world:*

Chelmsford, Massachusetts	Madison, Wisconsin	Torrington, Connecticut	Reno, Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada	Belmont, Massachusetts	Ogden, Utah	Atlanta, Georgia
Seattle, Washington	Downey, Idaho	Rapid City, South Dakota	Star Valley, Wyoming
Cottage Grove, Oregon	River Heights, Utah	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Los Angeles, California
Salt Lake City, Utah	San Jose, California	Boulder, Colorado	Salem, Oregon
Provo, Utah	Boise, Idaho	Bellevue, Washington	Cleveland, Ohio
Irvine, California	Richmond, Virginia	American Fork, Utah	Hollywood, California
Sandy, Utah	Cupertino, California	Rochester, New York	Bountiful, Utah
Moab, Utah	Hawthorne, California	Orem, Utah	Santa Monica, California
Alpine, Utah	Logan, Utah	Payson, Utah	Billings, Montana
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	San Diego, California	Newport Beach, California	Downey, Idaho
Menlo Park, California	Mount Pleasant, Utah	Boston, Massachusetts	Honolulu, Hawaii
Tacoma, Washington	Pleasant Grove, Utah	Edmonds, Washington	Berlin, Germany
Kirkland, Washington	Colorado Springs, Colorado	Federal Way, Washington	Phoenix, Arizona
Spokane, Washington	Snowflake, Arizona	Lancaster, Pennsylvania	Springfield, Oregon
Columbia, Maryland	Japan	Washington D.C.	Brookline, Massachusetts
East Lansing, Michigan	Somerville, Massachusetts	Gilbert, Arizona	Cambridge, Massachusetts
Mesa, Arizona	St. George, Utah	Pacific Palisades, California	Newtonville, Massachusetts
New York City, New York	Claremont, California	Austin, Texas	Sugarland, Texas
Park City, Utah	Acton, Massachusetts	Ann Arbor, Michigan	Midvale, Utah
Tulare, California	Weston, Massachusetts	Melbourne, Australia	Tucson, Arizona
London, Great Britain	Palo Alto, California	Kaysville, Utah	Mt. Clemens, Michigan
Kennebunkport, Maine	Linz, Austria	Canada	Bell, California
Hudson, New York	Eugene, Oregon	Menlow Park, Maryland	Evanston, Illinois
Polso, Washington	Brattleboro, Vermont	Chicago, Illinois	Santa Barbara, California
Rexburg, Idaho	Sun Valley, Idaho	Portland, Oregon	Mexico City, Mexico
Toluca Lake, California	Carmel, California	Durham, New Hampshire	St. Anthony, Idaho
Lexington, Massachusetts	Arlington, Massachusetts	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Hesperia, California
El Paso, Texas	Arlington, Virginia	Warrick, Rhode Island	Lawrence, Kansas
		La Paz, Bolivia	

*Other contributions will be given to charitable organizations.

Paid for by the White Roses Campaign

and every opinion valued." He said most questions at stake leadership meetings could be answered in ward meetings. "Yet rarely do those asking the questions feel that they have had an opportunity in ward council meetings to raise their questions, voice their concerns, and offer their suggestions," he admitted. "Priesthood is for service, not servitude; compassion, not compulsion; caring, not control."

A THOUSAND ROSES
BETWEEN the Saturday sessions of general conference, 1,000 white roses were presented to the Church as a "gesture of peace" by an ad-hoc coalition. The group, formed by telephone and electronic mail contacts, also published its official statement in the general conference Sunday editions of both Salt Lake newspapers (see side bar on next page).

"The roses symbolize our support both of the church and of the members who have recently had disciplinary actions taken against them," said Shirley Paxman, one of the two individu-

als representing more than 400 people from around the world who donated to purchase the roses. "This is not a protest. This is an expression of love from devoted Church members."

Irene Bates, a Church member from Southern California, said that "it's not apostasy when someone believes in the Church, loves the Church, and does not want to leave the Church."

Presiding Bishop Robert D. Hales accepted the gift from Bates and Paxman "for and in behalf of all those concerned about our brothers and sisters. The door is always open for them to come back with love and appreciation," he said. Don LeFevre said it was unprecedented for a general authority to meet with a group protesting a Church policy on Church property.

STEVE BENSON

A WEEK after general conference, in the *Arizona Republic's* front-page story on the disciplines, Elder Oaks reaffirmed that the sanctions were not part of an orchestrated effort to si-

lence critics, but he did not deny that Elder Packer may have improperly met with Toscano's stake president, Kerry Heinz (see side bar for text of interview).

In a written statement, from which the *Republic* quoted, Elder Packer explained: "Late in June, President Kerry Heinz asked his regional representative if he could arrange an appointment with me. We had served together in the seminary program 35 years ago.

"Even though general authorities of the church are free to contact or respond to local leaders on any subject, I felt there may be some sensitivity about his request. . . . I therefore, in a meeting of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, raised the question as to whether I should see him. The brethren felt I could not very well decline to see a stake president.

"I therefore consented but asked President Heinz if he would feel all right about his file leader, President Loren Dunn, being present. He readily agreed. . . .

"We talked doctrine and phi-

losophy. . . . I absolutely did not instruct him to hold a disciplinary council and did not then, nor have I ever, directed any verdict. By church policy that is left entirely to local leaders. When he left, I did not know what he would do."

Two days after the *Republic* story, an Associated Press story reported that Elder Oaks had originally told the *Republic* that "I have no knowledge of whether he [Elder Packer] did" meet with Heinz. When Pulitzer Prize winning *Republic* cartoonist Steve Benson heard about the quote, he faxed Elder Oaks a letter reminding him that in a confidential September meeting with Benson and Elders Oaks and Maxwell, Elder Oaks had said, speaking about Elder Packer, "You can't stage manage a grizzly bear," adding that "it was a mistake for Packer to meet with Heinz and a mistake for Heinz to ask for the meeting."

Benson went on to remind Elder Oaks that he had "further acknowledged that you later talked directly to Elder Packer and told him that you felt it was wrong and

STATEMENT BY THE COUNCIL OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

IN LIGHT of extensive publicity given to six recent Church disciplinary councils in Utah, we believe it helpful to reaffirm the position of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We deeply regret the loss of Church membership on the part of anyone. The attendant consequences felt over time by the individuals and their families are very real.

In their leadership responsibilities, local Church officers may seek clarification and other guidance from General Authorities of the Church. General Authorities have an obligation to teach principles and policies and to provide information that may be helpful in counseling members for whom local leaders are responsible. In matters of Church discipline, the General Authorities do not direct the decisions of local disciplinary councils. Furthermore, the right of appeal is open to anyone who feels he or she has been unfairly treated by a disciplinary council.

It is difficult to explain Church disciplinary action to representatives of the media. Consideration of confidentiality restrain public comment by Church leaders in such private matters. We have the responsibility to preserve the

doctrinal purity of the Church. We are united in this objective. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught an eternal principle when he explained: "That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that that man is in the high road to apostasy." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 156.) In instructing His Twelve Disciples in the new world about those who would not repent, the Savior said, "But if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people, that he may not destroy my people. . . ." (3 Nephi 18:31, see also Mosiah 26:36, and Alma 5:59.) The Prophet also remarked that "from apostates the faithful have received the severest persecutions." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 67.) This continues to be the case today.

The long standing policy of Church discipline is outlined in the Doctrine and Covenants: "We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members . . . according to the rules and regulations of such societies; provided that such dealings be for fellowship and good standing; . . . They can only excommunicate them from their society,

and withdraw from them their fellowship." (Doctrine and Covenants 134:10.)

Faithful members of the Church can distinguish between mere difference of opinion and those activities formally defined as apostasy. Apostasy refers to Church members who "(1) repeatedly act in clear, open and deliberate public opposition to the Church or its leaders; or (2) persist in teaching as Church doctrine information that is not Church doctrine after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority, or (3) continue to follow the teachings of apostate cults (such as those that advocate plural marriage) after being corrected by their bishops or higher authority." (*General Handbook of Instructions*, 10-3.)

The general and local officers of the Church will continue to do their duty, and faithful members will understand.

As leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we reach out in love to all and constantly pray that the Lord, whose Church this is, will bless those who love and seek divine truth.

THE COUNCIL OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY
AND THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

violated church disciplinary procedures for Elder Packer to have been in contact with President Heinz.”

After receiving Benson’s letter, Elder Oaks refused to discuss most of its contents; however, concerning his “no knowledge” quote about the Packer/Heinz meeting, he said it was a statement “I could not defend. . . . It was not a truthful statement.” The quote was pulled from the *Republic* story and first appeared in the follow-up AP story.

On Steve Benson’s broken promise of confidentiality, Elder Oaks told AP reporter Vern Anderson, “Steve Benson is just going to have to carry the responsibility for whatever he relates about a confidential meeting.”

Elder Oaks later told the *News* that he was disappointed that the AP story dwelled on his admission

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPTION OF OAKS INTERVIEW

(Provided by Elder Oaks
to the *Deseret News*)

The *Arizona Republic*: “In the case of Toscano . . . do you have any evidence that Elder Packer [was] involved in any way in the decision-making process in the disciplining of [Toscano]?”

Oaks: “as for Elder Packer, Elder Packer does not have a specific responsibility for any area of the church. . . . So, if Elder Packer is having any conversation with Kerry Heinz, it is outside the normal channel. That’s all I can say. I have no knowledge of whether he did. But if he did and if he gave a directed verdict or anything like that, that is contrary to policy. It is irregular and it’s contrary to what I know of Elder Packer and the way he operates. . . . He’s a forthright and plain-spoken man, but Elder Packer is far too sophisticated and sensitive a man to call a stake president and tell him what he has to do in a church discipline case. I just don’t believe that. What’s possible is that a stake president might think he had heard such a thing; nobody can dismiss that possibility . . . that kind of slippage happens in communication.”

that he made a statement he couldn’t defend, and downplayed his efforts to promptly correct his unintentional error: “It impugned my integrity and seriously distorted the account of the facts as it was presented.” Elder Oaks said he didn’t willfully mislead the *Republic* news reporter, and when he learned from Benson that he had misspoken during a hourlong interview he immediately corrected the fact. “I can’t give any better explanation than the fact that I was talking a mile a minute and I just said something that on mature reflection I [concluded], ‘I can’t defend the truthfulness of that,’” he said.

In the AP story, Benson said that he felt acutely the moral dilemma of having promised confidentiality, but when he saw deliberate attempts to mislead the public about Elder Packer’s role in the Toscano affair he said, “I had to decide to be a party to the coverup or be faithful to my own convictions. . . . I had to let Elder Oaks walk a plank of his own making.”

Later Benson said that he went public about his confidential meeting with Elder Oaks even after Oaks retracted his statement because the apostle let stand three other statements that also troubled Benson. “I am tired of playing the little game,” Benson told the *News*. “The Church needs to respect its members. . . . It wants to muzzle its members.” In a follow-up letter to Elder Oaks, Benson explained: “I feel you violated the trust and faith between not only you and me, but between the church leadership and the members at large. I therefore felt it my moral obligation to break the silence that otherwise would have served only to perpetuate falsehood and false faith.”

The *Republic* also reported that Benson, oldest grandchild of LDS President Ezra Taft Benson, and his wife, Mary Ann Benson, had resigned from the Church in protest of what they believe is an increasingly intolerant Church leadership. Benson said he had been coming to this decision for a decade, and that the flap with Elder Oaks and a five-day visit to Salt Lake City in September only helped him decide to

do it now, as did his experience last summer in publicizing the inability of President Benson to lead the Church due to his mental health.

“In order to be truly obedient, one must be allowed the right to think, question, doubt, and search for truth. The modern church is intolerant of these God-given rights,” he told the *Republic*. “I didn’t leave the church. The church left me.”

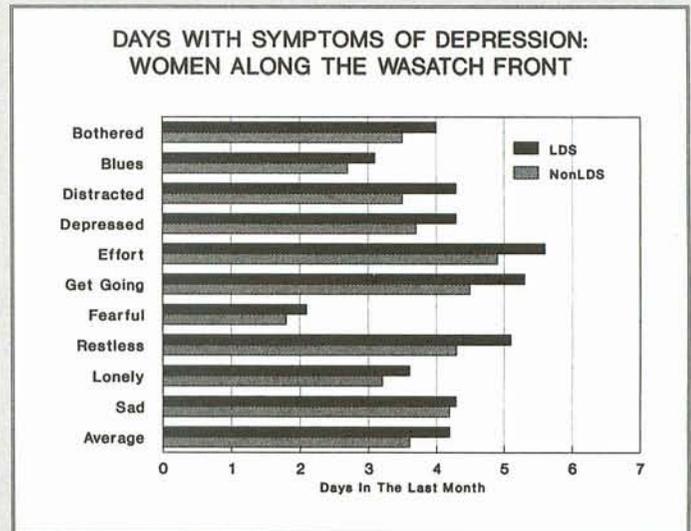
All these public events and statements leave members reading much between the lines. While publicly saying that the excommunications were local decisions, privately at least several apostles have made statements that have essentially said, “we had to keep the Church pure,” and left the hearers with the clear impression that the

Twelve had discussed and approved the actions.

Even if more were known about the behind-the-scenes actions, there probably would not be a consensus on what is appropriate. These events raise questions about the dynamic chemistry of a human, believing community of Christians, about appropriate administrative procedures, about individual rights and institutional needs, about diversity and apostasy in an expanding and evolving church, about orthodoxy and conscience, about public and private spheres, about loyalty to leaders, self, and God, about honesty and confidentiality. Final answers will never come, but as Michael Clyde told the *Republic*, “The radicals of this world move things forward.”

PECULIAR PEOPLE

DAYS WITH SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION: WOMEN ALONG THE WASATCH FRONT



A 1991 SURVEY of approximately 1,400 randomly selected women living along the Wasatch Front indicates that LDS women report somewhat more frequent symptoms of depression than do non-LDS women. Respondents were asked how many days in the last month they: “feel bothered by things that don’t usually bother you”; “feel that you could not shake off the blues”; “have trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing”; “feel depressed”; “feel that everything you did was an effort”; “feel that you could not get going”; “feel fearful”; “sleep restlessly”; “feel lonely”; and “feel sad.” Being fearful was the least common experience. The most common experience reported suggests a lack of energy or motivation. LDS women were a little more likely, on average, to have each of these feelings than were non-LDS women.

ELDER PACKER NAMES GAYS/LESBIANS, FEMINISTS, AND "SO-CALLED" SCHOLARS THREE MAIN DANGERS

IN A May 1993 address to the All-Church Coordinating Council—comprised of department heads and senior personnel in the Church Office Building—Elder Boyd K. Packer called for Church employees to willingly embrace correlation and to decide “to face the right way,” cautioning them against three “dangers” that have “made major invasions into the membership of the Church”: “the gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement, . . . and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals.” While he acknowledged that many in these groups may be “members [who] are hurting,” he warned that to sympathize with them may “turn [you] about [to] face the wrong way.”

Elder Packer began his talk with the text: “God gave unto them commandments, *after* [first] having made known unto them the plan of redemption” (Alma 12:32 [his emphasis and insertion]). From this, Elder Packer went on to recount personal anecdotes to suggest the importance of correlation—that all Church activity take place in the context of “the plan of redemption.” He told of advice he received when called as the supervisor of seminaries and institutes from Harold B. Lee: “You must decide now which way you face,” [Elder Lee] said. “Either you represent the teachers and students and champion their causes or you represent the Brethren who appointed you.

You need to decide *now* which way you face.’ Then he added, ‘Some of your predecessors faced the wrong way.’”

Elder Packer also spoke of the difficulty he has had accepting criticism from editors and correlators, but admitted that even he “need[s] a correlating hand,” asking employees in various departments to likewise accept correlation. “However much you know about your work,” he told employees, “I doubt that you know, or have the time to learn, as much as do the Correlation staff about how your work interacts with everything else that is going on.”

The Correlation Committee is composed of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and its executive committee is the president of the Twelve and the next two senior apostles—one of whom is Elder Packer.

He continued his talk: “The

principle of correlation is a sound principle. Except for its having been established, we could not now possibly administer an ever-growing multi-national and multi-lingual church. The full purpose for its having been established, I know, is yet to be realized. If we neglect it, we will pay a very, very heavy price one day. . . . The greatest use of [correlation] is yet to come.”

Correlation—“simplification and reduction”—will counter, according to Elder Packer, “the worldwide evaporation of values and standards from politics, government, society, entertainment, schools.” He asked employees, “Could you, in working for the Church, not be conscious of or have ignored [scriptural] warnings [concerning the last days]? Could you be blind to the drift that is taking place?”

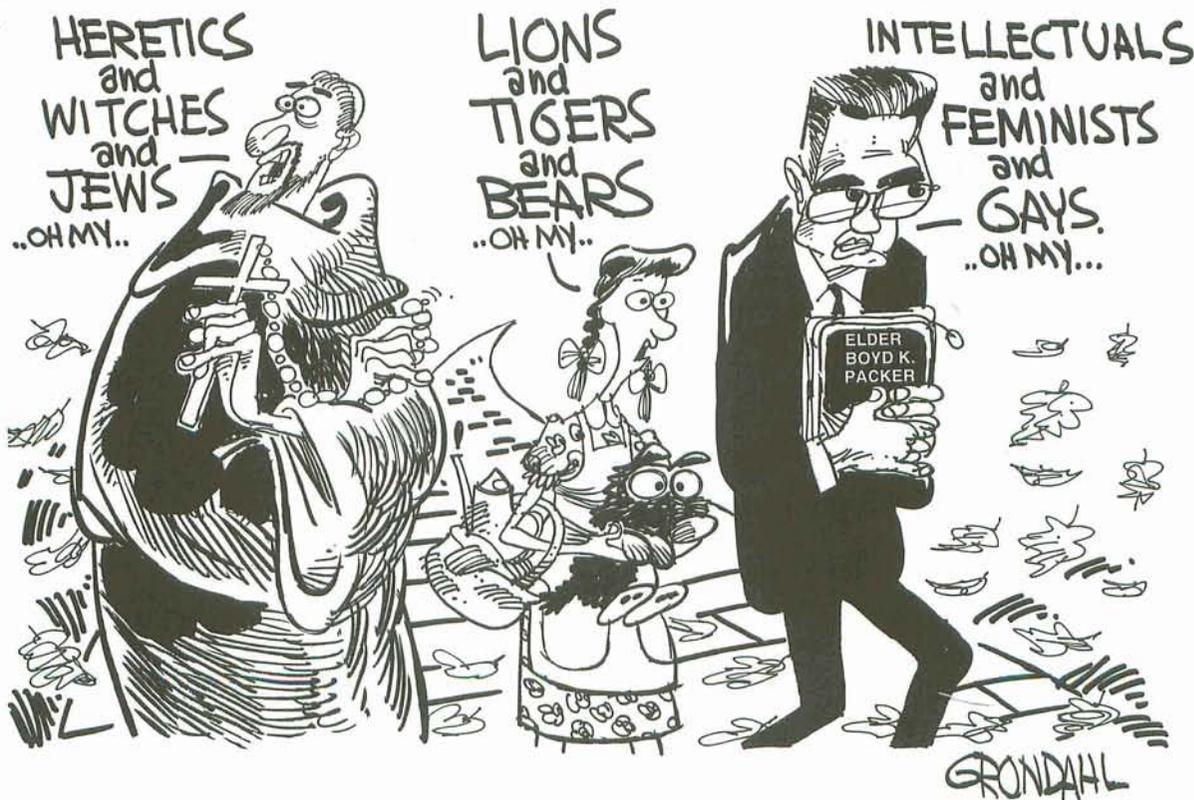
“It is so easy to be turned about without realizing that it has happened to us,” Elder Packer continued, citing the three areas “where members of the Church, influenced by social and political unrest, are being caught up and led away.” With each of the three “dangers,” there is a “temptation . . . for us to turn

about and face the wrong way, and it is hard to resist, for doing it seems so reasonable and right.”

In each of the three groups—the gay/lesbian movement, the feminist movement, and the scholars—are “members who are hurting [who] have the conviction that the Church somehow is doing something wrong *to* members or that the Church is not doing enough *for* them.”

Elder Packer used letters written to the Church to represent each group. The first letter was “a young man, possibly a gay rights activist,” who volunteered to share his experiences and insights as a gay Latter-day Saint “in a spirit of friendship.”

The second letter came “from a woman who is hurting, and perhaps wonders if anyone but the feminists care about her problems.” It described her frustration with Church leaders who continue to counsel her to remain in an abusive relationship. The woman wrote, in part: “I need some comfort, I need solace, need hope, need to know Heavenly Father sees all I have endured. What hope do I have for a chance to live with Heavenly Father? If temple marriage is the key to the celestial



[kingdom], where am I? Outside gnashing my teeth for eternity? Help me."

The third letter, from "a self-described intellectual," extended "an offer to you to be a peacemaker between the Brethren and the scholars, if you wish me to attempt it, since I know many in both groups [and] understand the mind-sets of both groups."

"Those who are hurting," Elder Packer continued, "think they are not understood. They are looking for a champion, an advocate, someone with office and influence from whom they can receive comfort. They ask us to speak about their troubles in general conference, to put something in the curriculum, or to provide a special program to support them in their problems or with their activism."

Although "it is easy to convince ourselves that we are justified, even duty bound, to use the influence of our appointment or our calling to somehow represent

them," to do so reverses the channels of revelation, and "[i]n our efforts to comfort them, we lose our bearings and leave that segment of the line to which we are assigned unprotected."

That such people "need help and comfort . . . goes without saying," Elder Packer continued; the question remains how to help without "giving license" to people who aren't justified to receive it. As an example Elder Packer cited "some mothers [who] must work out of the home," and are justified because "[t]here is no other way." In sympathizing with their "plight," though, Church leaders and employees cannot "abandon a position that has been taught by the prophets from the beginning of this dispensation. . . . To point out so-called success stories inferring that a career out of the home has no negative effect on a family is an invitation to many to stray from what has been taught by the prophets and thus cause members to reap

disappointment by and by. . . . If we are not very careful, we will think we are giving comfort to those few who are justified and actually we will be giving license to the many who are not." He said the "way to give comfort that is needed" is through private ministry, not public statements.

Returning to his original text from Alma, Elder Packer explained how it applies to the example of working mothers and to the three "dangers" he had cited.

"There are many things that cannot be understood nor taught nor explained unless it is in terms of the plan of redemption. The three areas I mentioned are among them. . . . That young man with gender disorientation needs to know that gender was not assigned at mortal birth, that we were sons and daughters of God in the premortal state."

The woman in the abusive relationship "needs to see the eternal nature of things and to know that her trials—however hard to

bear—in the eternal scheme of things may be compared to a very, very bad experience in the second semester of the first grade. She will find no enduring peace in the feminist movement. There she will have no hope. If she knows the plan of redemption, she can be filled with hope."

Responding to the letter from the scholar, Elder Packer explained that the person "needs to understand that the doctrines of the gospel are revealed through the Spirit to prophets, not through the intellect to scholars."

The "invasions" launched by gays, feminists, and scholars, Elder Packer concluded, are "of the intensity and seriousness that we have not faced before. There is a need to be united with everyone facing the same way. Then the sunlight of truth, coming over our shoulders, will mark the path ahead. If we perchance turn the wrong way, we will shade our eyes from that light and we will fail in our ministries." ☐

SUNSTONE CALENDAR

THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS will hold its 1994 Symposium on **22 January 1994**, at Westminster College, Salt Lake City. Contact: AML, 1346 South 1800 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84108, or call Linda Brummett (801/378-6001).

BYU STUDIES has scheduled the Sperry Symposium on the Old Testament for **13 November 1993**. Contact: 2246 SFLC, Provo, UT 84602 (801/378-6691).

The deadline for submissions for *BYU Studies' Articles, Short Stories, Personal Essays, & Poetry Contest* is **15 November 1993**. Awards/prizes will be given for the best writings, which will include a five-volume edition of *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, two sets of WordPerfect Presentations software, and the *LDS History & Doctrine* CD-ROMs. Mail entries to *BYU Studies*, 2246 SFLC, Provo, UT 84602.

DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT has issued a call for papers for its 1995 special issue entitled "The LDS Church in the Twenty-First Century." Papers on this theme may come from various disciplines and perspectives; especially those dealing with the future of Mormonism outside of North America. Papers will be accepted for the next few months, and will be selected by the editorial board and a special guest editor. Send completed papers or extensive abstracts to the *Dialogue*, P.O. Box 658, Salt Lake City, UT 84110-0658.

THE MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION has requested that books and articles be *nominated* for consideration of MHA awards. A formal letter of nomination, along with five copies of the article or three copies of the book, from authors, friends of authors, or pub-

lishers must be sent to Newell Bringhurst, awards committee chair, social science division, College of the Sequoias, Visalia, CA 93277.

NINTH ANNUAL BOOK OF MORMON SYMPOSIUM has been scheduled for **11-12 February 1994**, on the campus of BYU. The symposium topic comes from the text of *Fourth Nephi - Moroni 10* "From Zion to Destruction." Free to the public. Contact: The Religious Studies Center, BYU, 270 JSB, Provo, UT 84602.

SUNSTONE CONFERENCES

CHICAGO SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held on **22-23 October 1993**. Contact: Kirk and Becky Linford, 961 Elm Court, Naperville, IL 60540 (708/778-9551).

NORTHWEST SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held **29-30 October 1993** at the Mountaineers Building in Seattle, WA. Contact: Molly Bennion, 1150 22nd Ave East, Seattle, WA 98112-3517 (206/325-6868).

NORTHEAST SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held **12-13 November 1993** at the Burlington Marriott Hotel. Contact: Don Gustavson, 413 Clearview Avenue, Torrington, CT 06790 (203/496-7090).

SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM WEST will be held **11-12 March 1994** at the Burbank Airport Hilton.

WASHINGTON, D.C., SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held **18-19 March 1994**, at the American University Campus. Send proposals for papers or panels to Kathy Okerlund, 1832 Biltmore St. N.W. #B2, Washington, D.C. 20009 (202/797-9113).

FORTY MORMONS ARRESTED AT NEVADA TEST SITE DURING FIRST MORMON PEACE GATHERING

By Russell Fox

"WE ARE here today because we have literally poisoned the land and breathed death at the Nevada Test Site," said keynote speaker Eugene England at the Mormon Peace Gathering weekend retreat in Las Vegas. "We have broken a covenant with the God of the land, with the land itself. We cannot pollute the land without polluting ourselves."

Close to eighty Mormons attended the gathering sponsored by Nevada Desert Experience (NDE), 26-28 March, to protest the U.S. government's testing of nuclear weapons. The faith-based protest, which ended with arrests for trespassing on high-security government land, generated respect and condemnation.

LDS sociologists Larry Young and Jim Duke and several others organized the Mormon Peace Gathering (MPG) in conjunction with NDE. Since 1984 NDE has sponsored non-violent protests at Nevada's Nuclear Weapons Test Site and elsewhere with the goal of pushing the U.S. government toward signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by 1995 as the first step toward universal disarmament. Operating out of Las Vegas and originally

composed of Catholic and Jesuit groups, NDE's Lenten Desert Experience (protests conducted during Lent) has grown to involve numerous religious groups, including Buddhists, Methodists, Quakers, Episcopalians, and Jews. This marked "the first time a group within the Mormon tradition has participated in NDE," said Pamela Meidell, Pepperdine University professor and NDE executive director. "Their addition has made for a much richer chorus of protest."

The retreat preceding the actual protest involved training in consensus building and non-violent civil disobedience. Those arrested for trespassing since 1987 have consistently been processed and released on the site, without fines, conflicts, or jail terms. The weekend encouraged individual meditation, worship, and testimony bearing about weapons testing and the scriptural call to "renounce war and proclaim peace" (D&C 98:16). The means for this sharing included poetry ("Stone, Bread, Rose, Cross," composed for the event by Mormon poet Susan Howe, invoked symbols of worship, community, land, and witnessing), video

presentations on the worldwide anti-testing movement, and speeches against the United States' current policy.

St. George, Utah, "downwinder" Claudia Peterson lost a sister, a six-year-old daughter, and many friends and neighbors to radiation-induced cancer. She told how her growing activism took her from Mercury, Nevada (the location of the test site), to Washington, D.C., to the former Soviet Union, where Kazakh civil disobedience closed the Semipalatinsk test site in 1989.

Eugene England considered whether the period of LDS accommodation to the United States and its policy of constructing and testing weapons of mass destruction had come to an end. Remembering that the early LDS church had been in a state of "radical restoration" that had stood in opposition to "this world's violence," England argued that "after a hundred years of perhaps necessary detour" to preserve the Church in a hostile world, we now "have the security and courage as Mormons to obey fully . . . the call to come out of Babylon, which includes the United States, and to approach

Zion, which is wherever in the world we create it."

Other speakers included Meidell, University of Utah law professor Edwin Firmage Sr., and representatives of the Western Shoshone, who claim the desert area north of Las Vegas by treaty and have protested nuclear weapons testing for many years. Bill Rosse, long-time Shoshone activist, participated in the gathering throughout the weekend.

Corbin Harney, a Western Shoshone spiritual leader, spoke at the Sunday morning service. "You are on sacred ground," he said. "You are here to stop the poison, to stop the evil. . . . We have been fighting for 500 years to stop the pollution of our land, but we have run out of strength. You have the strength to stop this." Harney then blessed the group in his native tongue.

Near the entrance to the test site, under a light rain, the Sunday worship service gathered in a half-circle along the barbed-wire fence that separated public land from test site property. During hymns, scripture readings, and testimony bearing, "those who feel so called," as Young phrased it, demonstrated their witness by "crossing the line" in an act of non-violent direct action. Forty participants, including more than a dozen BYU students and faculty, stepped through the fence and completed the witness circle. Many carried a rose with them onto the test site to symbolize the call to heal the polluted



Protesters on both sides of the fence walking hand in hand to the gate, singing "Come, Come Ye Saints."



Edwin Firmage Sr., speaker at the retreat.

deseret. Then, in pairs holding hands across the fence, all protesters walked to the entrance gate singing, "Come, Come Ye Saints." Those trespassing were arrested, ticketed, and released within an hour.

MPG organizers stress that civil disobedience differs from general law breaking because it is a form of conscience-led political

protest. Protesters inform police in advance of their plans, are non-violent, willingly accept all arrests and punishments, and only break laws connected with the issue they are protesting.

News coverage elicited strong negative and positive responses from students, professors, and ecclesiastical leaders. One letter to *BYUs Daily Universe* described

the protestors as "frenzied." Another student confessed admiration for those willing to "sacrifice for their beliefs" and, persuaded of the errors of nuclear tests by such writers as Terry Tempest Williams, said "perhaps I'll join you next year." The *Universe's* house editorial "commend[ed] the group for its acts of civil disobedience" and resulted in at

least one student editor being reprimanded for contradicting an unofficial statement by Elder Loren C. Dunn that discouraged Church members from civil disobedience. No Church action was taken against any protestor.

MPG organizers hope this event begins what England called "a new tradition of peace in Mormonism." 

UPDATE

GRANDSON DISPUTES PROPHET'S STATE

PULITZER PRIZE-winning political cartoonist Steve Benson, oldest grandchild of Ezra Taft Benson, told the press in July that the ninety-four-year-old Church president is no longer physically or mentally capable to participate in the Church's leadership, and that he had already suffered some memory loss when he succeeded Spencer W. Kimball in 1985. The public statement, unprecedented in its frankness, raised questions for many regarding the rigid order of presidential succession.

Benson's decision to speak out was motivated, he told the Associated Press, by his thirteen-year-old son's question why, if the aging leader were no longer capable to lead, the Church continued to call him a prophet. Also contributing to his decision was his belief that "the church strives mightily to perpetuate the myth, the fable, the fantasy that President Benson, if not operating on all cylinders, at least is functioning effectively enough, even with just a nod of his head, to be regarded by the saints as a living, functioning prophet." In contrast, Benson said in the AP report, "the last time I saw him [in March 1993], he said virtually nothing to me."

In the wake of controversy generated by the original article's publication, Benson appeared on a Salt Lake TV talk show to discuss the issue further. When asked if he were not just saying publicly what most Church members already acknowledged privately, he noted the many angry responses he has received at his Arizona home from members who refuse to believe what he has to say. He also said that while Church leaders have acknowledged President Benson's declining condition, they usually speak in terms of "physical" decline, and he wished to stress that the deterioration was mental as well.

While Steve Benson believes the "system" of presidential succession "obviously isn't working," and that apostles and presidents should be granted emeritus status like other general authorities, Church spokesperson Don LeFevre said such a change would require a revelation from "the Lord to his prophet." President Gordon B. Hinckley has stressed, in recent conferences, the security of the divine "back-up system" that is in place, which allows the counselors the privilege to keep the Church on course. But some wonder what would happen if the back-up system also failed to function. According to the Associated Press, the four presidents before Benson averaged eighty-eight years of age at death. Many see the present system as a "gerontocracy" that has developed steadily since Joseph Smith's death at age thirty-eight.

Official Church response to Steve Benson's statements evolved. Initially LeFevre affirmed that President Benson's counselors "report to him" and "review with him major decisions before those decisions

become final." Later comments acknowledged Benson's "physical and mental" decline. A 31 July *LDS Church News* article featured photos of Benson shaking hands with children, but acknowledged that "ill health during the past few years has prohibited President Benson from attending to the daily duties of his office," and that as his health began to decline "he frequently said it was his desire that the Lord not permit him to live longer than his wife," who died last year. "The Lord's desire, apparently, is that he remain a while longer," the article noted.

An interesting sidenote to Steve Benson's assertions is the recent trend for First Presidency statements to contain only the signatures of Presidents Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson, as is the case with a 28 May letter to local authorities prohibiting members from marking commercial underclothing as temple garments. Church spokesperson Don LeFevre said, however, that to his knowledge all mission calls retain President Benson's signature.

An interview with Steve Benson slated for publication in *Brigham Young Magazine* (formerly *BYU Today*) was postponed then canceled "for space reasons" following Benson's public statements, making Benson the second LDS Pulitzer Prize winner to be blacklisted by *BYU* this year, after historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich was denied as a speaker for *BYUs* annual women's conference.

ELDER OAKS ON MULTICULTURALISM

IN A recent interview with the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Apostle Dallin Oaks acknowledged the Church's multicultural "growing pains." Membership outside the U.S. has grown over 30 percent in the past forty years and total Church membership is predicted at 265 million by the year 2080. To confront increasing cultural tension between Wasatch Front Mormonism and indigenous cultures, Oaks says the Church must maintain a "controlled flexibility."

"You can't build a Bountiful Third Ward in Seoul, Korea," says Oaks. Building generic church buildings worldwide "is not the best way to serve the members." Politically, standardized building plans may be as disastrous as harsh political statements from Church leaders. "If you don't like American policy and there's a recognizable building that you associate with America, you can come by and drop a bomb on the doorstep." Besides, Oaks continued, "I can't find any scriptural evidence that a tent is any less a holy place than a cinderblock A-frame."

Clothing styles for worship services may vary from country to country as well. But some things are less flexible than others. According to Elder Oaks, music has "something to do with the spirit of the Lord" and "should be uniform."

DIALOGUE EDITOR RESIGNS FROM BYU

IN THE wake of the Cecilia Konchar Farr and David Knowlton firings at BYU, historian Martha Sonntag Bradley notified the university of her refusal to renew her contract for the upcoming school year. Bradley, co-editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, says she would have expected treatment similar to Knowlton's and Farr's when she would have come up for third-year review next year. "The way this has been handled with Cecilia and Dave is disgraceful," Bradley told the Associated Press. Bradley was mildly chastised for her participation on a panel discussing Mormon feminism on a Salt Lake talk show. She suspects her feminism, coupled with her editorial position on *Dialogue*—placing her in two of the three groups named as dangerous by Boyd K. Packer—would have ensured an eventual dismissal. "I prefer to leave with my record intact," she said.

FOUNDATION SERVES THIRD WORLD

PROVO-BASED Deseret International Foundation has given hope to thousands of people worldwide. The foundation is composed of medical personal who donate their time to facilitate major surgeries, dental work, and hospices in the Philippines, India, Thailand, China, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Tonga, and Indonesia. The foundation, run on a volunteer basis, works with a relatively small budget, and cannot sponsor expensive operations like heart surgery; instead the focus is on deformities and injuries such as cataracts, crossed eyes, cleft lips and palates, club feet, etc. Foundation president E. William Jackson said that the foundation recruits local people and designs individual programs to meet each country's needs.

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE DIRECTOR FIRED

AFTER FIVE years as director of BYU's annual Women's Conference, Carol Lee Hawkins was informed this summer that her contract will not be renewed. In 1993, the conference—jointly sponsored by BYU and the Relief Society for the last two years—attracted 6,000 women. University administrators say the decision to fire Hawkins was a campus decision—a routine "rotation" of assignment—but informed insiders say the decision was made by the apostle-led Priesthood Executive Council, which supervises the Relief Society and auxiliaries.

Many conference participants and organizers were stunned by the action. "I was shocked by the action against Carol Lee," Gail Houston, an assistant professor of English told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "Carol Lee is one of the most moderate and loyal defenders of the Church. Her firing sends a strong message to all the women in our community."

Like Houston, many see the firing as but one more in a series of events that indicate an anti-feminist trend in BYU and Church administration. Other recent examples are the rejection of Pulitzer Prize winner Laurel Thatcher Ulrich as speaker for the Women's Conference and BYU's denial of "continuing status" to feminist professor Cecilia Konchar Farr. Campus women also cite the lack of women in administrative positions as indicative of an anti-woman bias.

Martha Nibley Beck, whose work in BYU's sociology department has focused on Mormon women, submitted her resignation in protest of the firing, saying she can no longer accomplish her goals at BYU. "I came here to understand and improve the quality of Mormon women's lives," Beck told the *Tribune*. "Carol Lee has made the Women's Conference a vehicle for that effort. If she of all people is prohibited from doing that, I doubt that I will be able to have a

positive impact." BYU English professor Susan Howe agrees. "This decision is very hurtful to the women faculty because we are all solidly behind Carol Lee's efforts."

Although campus feminists met recently with Provost Bruce Hafen, most think the worst is yet to come. Many women who have previously assisted with planning and organizing the conference privately express their intentions to discontinue association with the conference. Others talk of following Beck's lead and leaving BYU. And talk is afoot of a large scale class action discrimination suit to be filed against the university. Although reactions are diverse, BYU women seem to agree in their support for Hawkins. As the *Tribune* reported, "She was a bridge builder among factions."

GOD MAKERS II DRAWS ANTAGONISM

THE DECEMBER 1992 release of *The God Makers II* generated dramatic reaction from all quarters of the Mormon and anti-Mormon communities. The film, which cost \$100,000 to produce, is narrated by Ed Decker, head of the Issaquah, Washington-based Saints Alive in Jesus. It focuses on standard anti-Mormon topics such as polygamy, Adam-God, and blood atonement, but adds newer angles, such as Bishop Glen Pace's memo regarding satanism and allegations of sexual immorality against a high ranking general authority.

Many non-Mormon groups were among the first to respond negatively to the film. Before its first public showing, the National Conference of Christians and Jews labeled the film "an affront to religious understanding."

"Like its predecessor," the statement reads, "God Makers II presents an intemperate polemic against the Mormon faith disguised as an objective documentary. Using a carefully selected mix of sensational and unsubstantiated first-person accounts, lurid allegations, and a highly subjective interpretation of Mormon teachings, God Makers II draws the incendiary arsenal of religious bigotry."

Anti-Mormon groups have condemned the film as well. Former Mormon Richard Baer, who co-produced the original *God Makers* over a decade ago, told the *Sacramento Union* that he finds the sequel ineffective in its "embellishment and focusing on the bizarre and sensational."

Regarding the allegations against the general authority, Jerald and Sandra Tanner of Utah Lighthouse Ministry released a statement in 1989 that "the case against Elder Accused [they refused to disclose his name] seems to be based on some very questionable statements. Since there is no hard evidence to support it, we would advise all those working with Mormons to refrain from disseminating the story." The Tanners reaffirmed this stance in their April 1993 newsletter and added refutations of other portions of the film. They also released a pamphlet, *Problems in the Godmakers II*, containing more extensive arguments.

Apparently Jeremiah Films and Ed Decker granted the case of "Elder Accused" more validity, but the film's inclusion of the allegations spurred the Church to threaten legal action. In a 1 February letter to Jeremiah Films, Salt Lake attorney Patrick Shea, representing the Church, called the allegations "utterly without support" and warned that continued distribution of the film would warrant legal action.

Douglas Wallace, attorney for Jeremiah Films, replied in a letter to Shea that, should a lawsuit take place, "massive evidence will bury your client," and that Jeremiah Films, Inc., "stand[s] firm in their commitment to truth and accuracy." Wallace identified himself as "a former Mormon Missionary and High Priest."

Wallace also voiced his disappointment with the Tanners in an 10

April letter to them, warning that "If the 'Church' fails to bring such action, then I will be looking elsewhere to expose the fraud by seizing opportunity to file a lawsuit against slanderous articles such as you have written." Decker, in his April Saints Alive newsletter called the Tanners' attack a "two-by-four across the back of my head," referred to the Tanners as "some so-called brother and sister in Christ," and concluded, "arsenic is a whole lot easier to swallow [than their criticism]."

Decker was a member of the LDS church for twenty years until he was excommunicated in 1976, a year after his conversion to evangelical Christianity. In addition to examining Mormonism, Decker also writes about Freemasonry.

SONIA JOHNSON'S UTOPIA TROUBLED

FEMINIST SONIA JOHNSON, excommunicated in 1979 from the LDS church for activities connected with her support of the Equal Rights Amendment, founded what she hoped would be a lesbian utopia. Named Wildfire, this retreat is in an old monastery midway up a mountain in New Mexico. For several of Johnson's followers, however, the experience became a nightmare instead of the hoped-for dream. Drawn to Johnson's charismatic personality and her passionate hate for patriarchy, some women followed Johnson to Wildfire and invested a great deal of money, time, and emotion into making the dream a reality. According to an article by Masha Gessen published in the national gay periodical *Out* (June/July 1993), some women have not only pulled out of the commune, but now refer to Wildfire as a cult and say that Johnson's behavior was often antithetical to her stated beliefs, adding that they felt psychologically abused.

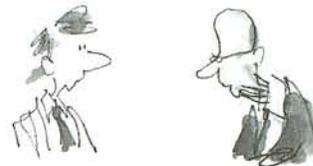
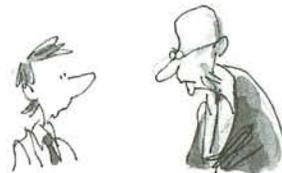
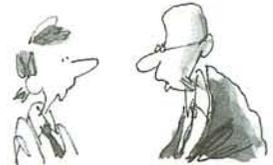
Johnson, on the other hand, has no patience for these women she describes as not taking responsibility for their own lives. "I'm sick of women acting like they have no choice! I want to see women with some power around here. Some women who say, 'They can't destroy me! . . . I am rising in my power and nothing can stop me.'"

It was the disparity between Johnson's visions and her actions that compelled the women to leave and to speak out. One of Johnson's ex-followers advises would-be devotees, "Pay attention. I thought I was paying attention, but I didn't do a good job of extricating myself before damage had really happened—emotional damage, stress-related physical damage, and a huge monetary damage."

IF YOU LEAVE THE FAITH, LEAVE BYU

EX-BYU STUDENT Michelle Warner learned the hard way that there is a very important difference between simply requesting the removal of one's name from the records of the Church and formal excommunication. Up until now, formal excommunication has meant expulsion from the university as well; but simply having one's name removed from Church records did not require leaving BYU. Not long after arriving in Provo, she called her bishop in her home ward in Oregon and instructed him to remove her name from Church records. He chose to excommunicate her. However, she assumed she could continue as a student based on precedent set by two former missionaries who also had their names removed, but continued as students: Brendan Terry, who graduated in August 1992, and Tod Anderson, who graduated last April. Because of the incident, BYU now has a newly written policy that states that students who have their names removed from Church records cannot attend BYU. The only route to reinstatement is through rebaptism.

OXYMORMONS



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