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READERS' FORUM

BRAVA!

IT IS IRONIC that in Deborah Mayhew's letter recommending ways to promote the equality of women and marriage partners in language, she buys into one of its biggest enemies—hierarchy ("Sweet Partners," SUNSTONE, Nov. 1993). Her suggestion that the general Relief Society president be called *President Jack* instead of *Sister Jack* puts an unneeded distance between our leaders and the membership. It is my understanding that the choice of the sister title was made by the women themselves. Brava! Equality doesn't mean sameness, nor copying the corrupt organization of the men. Women better serve the Church by offering their own gifts and insights rather than in counterfeiting the men's.

MELANIE CHAPMAN
Hilo, HI

ORACLES

WHEN I READ your report that the general authorities consider criticism of them to be inappropriate and even grounds for apostasy, I was shocked, shocked! ("Six Intellectuals Disciplined for Apostasy," SUNSTONE, Nov. 1993). Have they assumed an unapproachable, holy status that even God does not demand? Consider the prophets' genuine anger at God reported in the Old Testament. At times, they spewed an uncensored rage to God; they were not afraid to argue with him. Many of their harsh statements sound similar to the lamentations of Paul Toscano against the general authorities.

There is one difference, however. When the prophets bitched, God replied with long answers and arguments, engaging the angry disciples in the dialogue Elbert Peck yearns for ("Lamentations in The Fall," SUNSTONE, Nov. 1993). But when "feminists, gays, and so-called scholars" voice their criticisms, they are fed stones, silenced, and excommunicated—no argument, no dialogue, no relationship. Even Joseph Smith and Jesus directly expressed their doubts ("O God, where art thou?" [D&C 121]; "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [Matt. 27:46]) and received answers. Oracles of God, by definition, should speak, discuss, and, yes, rebuke; but should they reject without having any face to face conversation with genuine responses? Look at how long God labored in dialogue with ancient Israel; it makes the

"patience" of today's leaders seem like a child's.

If God replies to strong criticism with conversation, why should today's living prophets be above such dialogue? They appear to be more like Richard Nixon, stonewalling to "defend the office of the Presidency" than individuals striving to be Godlike.

COLIN FIRTH
Los Angeles

RIGHTS & OBLIGATIONS

IN THE DISCUSSION of the procedures relative to the "September Six," it is remarkable that neither those in favor of the process as it occurred, nor those who oppose it, have focused on an obvious obligation of the Quorum of the Twelve and the right and power of such persons to exercise that obligation; that is, the obligation to keep the Church free from apostasy, and the right to exercise the power to do so. The obligation, right, and power of the Quorum of the Twelve collectively, or an apostle individually, to deal immediately and directly with apostasy seems so obvious as to require no extended justification. The Church is ultimately a kingdom, not something else.

On the merits of the publicized cases and other similar situations, there is much to prompt sadness and introspection and discussion and action. But on the procedures, it seems to me that the basics should be clear.

JOSEPH B. ROMNEY
Rexburg, ID

MORMON ANOREXIA

ELDER OAKS said in a National Public Radio interview that the excommunicating of five of the "September Six" was not a purge, that a handful of individuals out of millions is not a purge. Well, it wasn't China's Cultural Revolution, but my dictionary defines purge as: "to free from impurities, to purify; to remove by or as if by cleansing; to rid . . . people considered undesirable; to cause evacuation of the bowels." Interesting, in that same interview, Elder Oaks asserted his "responsibility to look after the purity of the doctrine to make sure that wolves do not enter the flock." Keeping the Church pure by eliminating the undesirables sure sounds like purging to me. When I cough up a small, irritating chicken bone, my body has purged

itself of something, no matter how small. I wish Elder Oaks would quit being a lawyer and quibbling over words. By his standard, I suppose, the seventeen individuals killed at Haun's Mill hardly makes it a massacre.

THOMAS ADAMS
New Orleans, LA

MODERNIST HERESY

THE BEST I can recommend for those who care about the so-called current crisis that is leading some individuals out of the Church (voluntarily or involuntarily) and creating a need to defend oneself to others, including leaders (local and general), is a three-page book review by James E. Faulconer ("Hans Kung's Theology: Not Quite for the Third Millennium," *SUNSTONE*, Feb. 1990). It considers the situation of a scholar with good intentions trying to reform the Catholic Church. I will summarize what I think Faulconer intended and apply it to the current situation.

Genuine postmodernism is not relativism or nihilism. To be postmodern is to be able to talk, think, discuss, and teach about God and the Church the way prophets and the scriptures do, without detouring into either extreme of modernism: rational theology (which focuses on reason in such forms as scientism and objectivism) or romanticism (which focuses on feeling and intuition in such forms as subjectivism and emotionalism). Oppression is not possible if we understand priesthood as it was revealed to the Prophet Joseph in Doctrine and Covenants 121. The Restoration offered a genuinely postmodern alternative to an apostate modernist world in need of healing.

The current struggles over notions of academic freedom and questioning the disciplining of members who have so-called liberal or conservative views is what results from having our minds decoyed for years by these extremes of modernism. We draw near God with our lips, it seems, but our hearts are far away when we teach the gospel using popular doctrines of the day. All of us need repentance.

Restoration, not reformation, is still required by the Lord, his scriptures, and our prophets. That we will understand the gospel without the baggage of modernism and be converted to it and not to some modern notion of it is my prayer. The libertarian slogan "the lesser of two evils is still evil" still applies. But does that mean that scholarly work is contrary to the gospel? No, as Hugh Nibley has said in many talks and books but God does expect better than the modernistic

stuff we have created to date, whether by leaders (see Elder McConkie's description of a "general authority" in *Mormon Doctrine*) or scholars. We all need repentance; we all need healing from our pride, lack of love, contentiousness, defensiveness, misunderstanding, and judgmentalness. And we all need to forgive others.

Church courts, regardless of how we perceived them in the past, need to become sensitive to the gospel and the Lord's Spirit, and guard against embracing modernism in their judicial responsibilities. Decisions to excommunicate or disfellowship are not acts with consequences like those performed by the Catholic Church against Galileo. They are necessary steps in our full repentance and

lead to renewed, full-souled fellowship following the commission of certain well-marketed sins; they are essential to experiencing the miracle of forgiveness. Acting with priesthood authority and with the Spirit presents an awesome responsibility for any leader, and the scriptures make clear how it works and does not work. The Jaredites, the Nephites, and the Lamanites had the same truths, and they (Church leaders included) fell. Let us all learn from their experiences and extend the olive leaf to those with whom we may be on opposing ends of the modernist heresy. If we can do this, then we are not past feeling; we can still repent.

PAULA A. FINCH
Sicily, Italy



"Do you need some help with your zipper?"



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A GRADUATE MUTUAL

WHILE PHILOSOPHICALLY I couldn't agree more with Scott Abbott's concerns, I believe he writes from a somewhat self-serving perspective and is thus blinded to some of the real reasons for tensions at BYU ("One Lord, One Faith, Two Universities: Tensions between 'Religion' and 'Thought' at BYU," SUNSTONE, Sept. 1992).

Let me share an insight I gained at a recent stake conference from the visiting general authority, Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy. He was asked if the Church would consider establishing a university in the eastern United States (always a predictable question). Elder Kofford answered with the equally predictable, resounding "No." Then he volunteered information regarding the Brethren's real concern about fewer members sending their children to BYU or Ricks College. They are not terribly concerned as to whether Mormon youth get a good education, properly tempered with a spiritual overlay, but whether an environment can be created where Mormon youth can duplicate the match-making potential of BYU/Ricks. Elder Kofford discussed a study conducted by Elders Dallin Oaks and Jeffrey Holland in which they had determined that LDS youth only require a circle of about 300 acquaintances in order to land a mate. Ideas are apparently in the works to create such settings at other universities and even at work sites for the benefit of non-student young adults.

So in spite of the seriousness with which BYU academics, real or pseudo, take themselves, the evidence suggests that at least some members of the board of trustees see the BYU professoriate's mission as little more than that of providing a dating service.

Why do I see Abbott's piece as somewhat self-serving? As a faculty member of a state university in Pennsylvania that is enduring fiscal famine, I read with considerable covetousness his descriptions of the academic bounty enjoyed by the BYU faculty: amply

funded research and travel; "an aggressive acquisitions policy" by the library; gaggles of high profile, nationally famous (and expensive) scholars frequenting campus. Who wouldn't be concerned about a board of directors with such deep pockets displaying dissatisfaction? They could bring this gravy train to an end.

Abbott's analysis of the board's motives charges them with assaulting the academic integrity of BYU, but ignores their primary concern: the general authorities are bean counters; they want bang for the buck. And the bang they want is indoctrinated kids marrying other indoctrinated kids. Anything else is largely secondary.

This brings me to a point that every faculty member at BYU/Ricks, as well as the general authorities, ought to consider: how long should the "widow's mite" from all around the world be used so lavishly to subsidize the faculty and staff at BYU/Ricks for undertaking what Abbott tacitly admits (by his somewhat unctuous description of scholarly activity at BYU, the religion department excepted) is a progressively pseudo-academic undertaking, and which benefits an increasingly smaller percentage of the total membership, consisting primarily of the good Saints of the Intermountain West and California? (Talk about Church welfare for the middle class!)

My proposal will fall hard on most BYU ears. BYU tuition should be raised to something in the neighborhood of \$20,000 per year, which is the going rate for private universities. (Notre Dame is \$16,000 for tuition and fees, plus \$4,150 for room and board.) This would go a long way toward relieving the concerns that Abbott has about interference from general authorities in academic freedom, and would also begin to rectify other festering problems presented by this abundantly supported church school.

First, were the amount of tithes involved at BYU minimized, I'm convinced the general authorities, who necessarily feel a real stewardship about how the Lord's money is spent,

Pontius' Puddle



could back off and be less concerned with the direction of research and writing.

Second, with tuition at \$20,000, Church members would become more discriminating about how to spend their higher education dollars. A few questions might be asked about what gets taught there, and BYU may not strike them as such a good deal, after all.

Third, this higher tuition opens a way for the Church to do a wonderful thing for all young Mormons worldwide: establish a kind of "perpetual education fund" from which low interest, tithing-sensitive loans could be made to deserving Mormons to go to the school of their choice, for the right reasons; that is, to get the best possible education in their discipline. The Brethren often express concern about the lack of testimony exhibited by our youth. Church-sponsored education loans would dramatically affect young people's attitudes about the Church. The youth would believe that the Church had a real interest in their welfare, as opposed to simply being objects of indoctrination.

Finally, Abbott is concerned about the success of the Mormon university experiment. As long as the university depends on Church funding, the experiment will never have been tried. The experiment will prove valid only if the university can succeed, independent of massive Church funding, and still remain Mormon in spirit and reality.

MERLYN CLARKE
E. Stroudsburg, PA

SWITCHING CHANNELERS

ED FIRMAGE JR. presents numerous reasons that support his conviction that the Book of Mormon is a nineteenth-century rather than an ancient document ("Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon: A Personal Encounter," *SUNSTONE*, July 1993). But he is unclear as to an alternate source. Several years ago *SUNSTONE* printed an article showing parallels between the manner in which the Book of Mormon was dictated and the process commonly known as channeling ("Spirit Writing: Another Look at the Book of Mormon," *SUNSTONE*, June 1985). Firmage accepts channeling as an option.

Classifying the Book of Mormon as a channeled work puts it in the same category as several other books that have a similar origin, including the Revelation of John, much of William Blake's writings, the *Urantia Book*, written in the 1930s, and *A Course in Miracles*, written in the late 1960s. Each of these works is best understood within the historical framework of its time. The Book of Mormon is congruent with the paradigm of

nineteenth-century frontier America; the *Urantia Book* is congruent with the evolutionary paradigm; and *A Course in Miracles* is congruent with the quantum paradigm. Yet each of these three fundamentally religious and Christian works is far more than what a single author is capable of producing, and each has given birth to some kind of religious order with devoted believers.

The real question is with the process of channeling, or, for Mormons, revelation. Why are channelers' glimpses of the infinite so culturally defined? Does God just nudge us; does She operate through Jung's collective unconscious to open the deeper parts of our individual minds? There are more questions than answers. Questions, unfortunately, that don't attract much interest.

LON JONES
Plainview, TX

FREE AGENCY

AFTER THE SPIRITUAL bruising of the last two months, I need to affirm the personal probings that have built my own spiritual values. I also need to find my own position in this sad, divisive situation that has set women and men of good will against each other.

As I've struggled to clarify the fundamentals of my spiritual beliefs, the emerging pattern shows me a glorious, God-endowed mosaic that keeps me focused, nourishes my relationship with my Father in Heaven, and

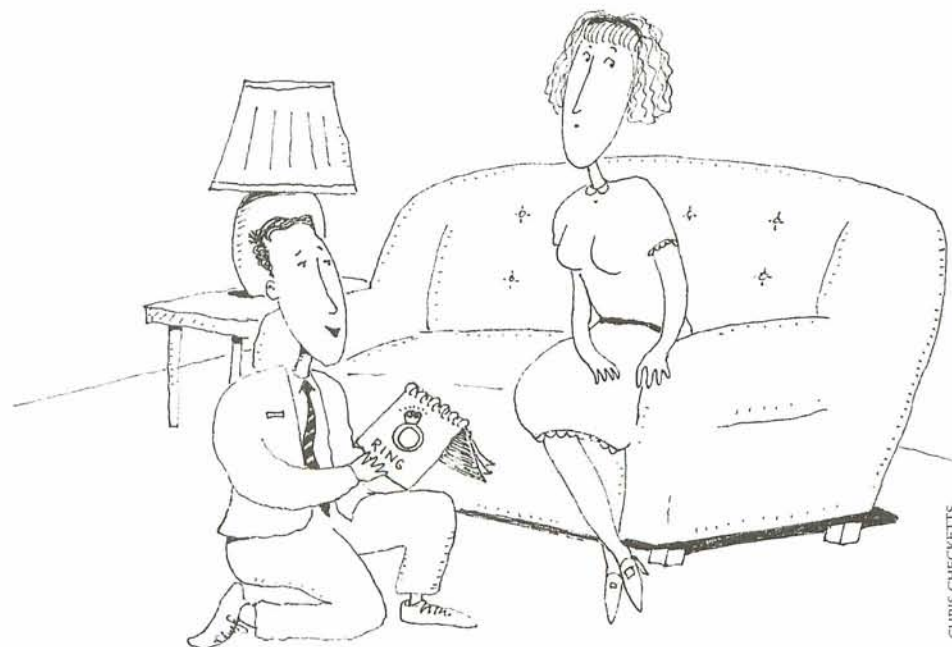
maintains my membership in the Church. Its centerpiece is my core belief: free agency.

Doctrine and Covenants 58:26 has been a touchstone for me: "For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things. . . ." I feel the acute discomfort of the double bind when I compare this with the repressive admonitions that refute independent thinking. Discounting individual inspiration contradicts Brigham Young's declaration: "It is as much my right to differ from other men, as it is theirs to differ from me, in points of doctrine and principle, when our minds cannot at once arrive at the same conclusion." (*Discourses of Brigham Young* 5:54.)

I applaud Elder Neal Maxwell's statement to a 1992 F.A.R.M.S. banquet that "Joseph Smith will go on being vindicated in the essential things associated with his prophetic mission" (emphasis added). God not only allows but expects me to sift carefully and prayerfully through the counsel that is handed down and to keep the "essential things," things of great import, and to weigh what is left for its eternal or saving importance. Not everything is of equal weight.

Elder Boyd K. Packer, in a talk delivered in the early 1970s, declared that "the Church is not on casters, to be wheeled about whither we will." But he abrogates my agency when he counsels us to sing only LDS hymns in sacrament meetings and to ignore classical hymns that also praise God.

He betrays my right to personal revelation when he counsels that our funerals are to be



CHRIS CHECKETTS

"I hope you don't mind, Marti—I just can't talk without using one of these."



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modeled on sacrament meetings, rather than be the very personal "last hurrah" owed to a life that is over. (See Elder Packer's conference address in the October 1988 *Ensign*.)

When Elder Packer ridicules another's personal spiritual experience, no matter how unusual, by calling it "bunk" (his reference to Betty Eadie's book, *Embraced by the Light*, as reported in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 Oct. 1993), he is not allowing me to find my own way in the small, non-essential things. Must I be "commanded in all things"?

How do you stifle a mind without damaging a soul?

ARDIS A. ALDER
Kaysville, UT

CONSIDER YOUR WAYS

TO THE LOYAL opposiiton: I have read your essays, articles, fiction, sarcastic parodies of Church hymns, and irreverent recipe books, in which you express both love for the Church as a human or cultural institution and a clear rejection of its origin. I feel a sincere admiration for your literary talents, your historical research, and your humor. I appreciate the isolated instances when your work has strengthened my testimony through valuable objective information.

On the other hand, your intellectual influence has brought spiritual death to some weak and uninformed Latter-day Saints. And you have done this work of destruction by

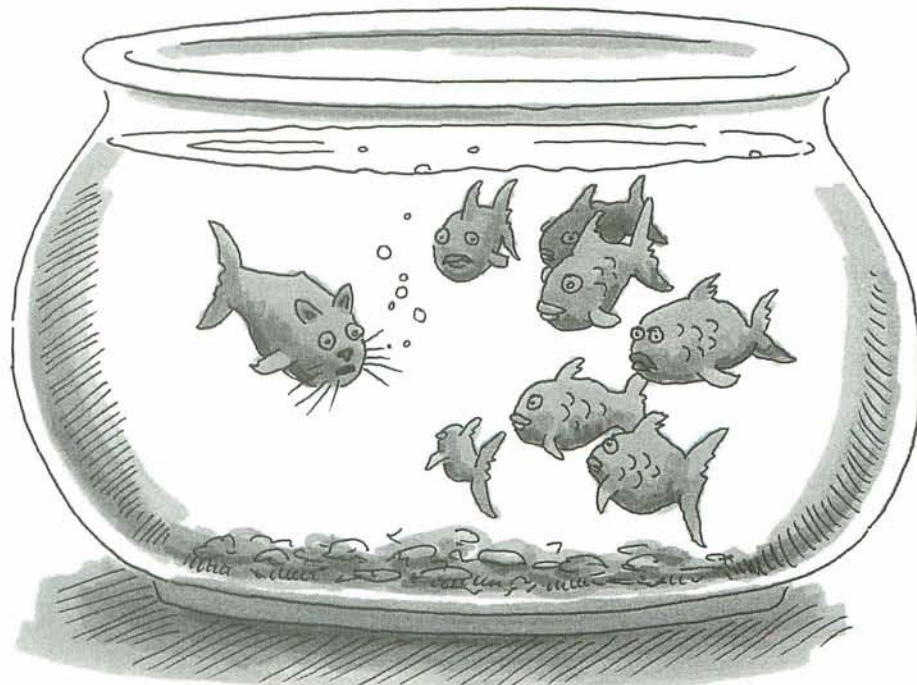
presenting past and present LDS leaders as hypocritical and uninspired men; considering LDS doctrine as one more purely human interpretation of Christianity, and Joseph Smith's visions as mere subjective impressions totally unconnected with objective reality; and trying to incorporate into the gospel of Jesus Christ—among other things—the right to abortion, priesthood for women, and Heavenly Mother worship. Finally, you are claiming to be intellectual Mormons who have long been persecuted by an inquisitorial and fanatical LDS hierarchy.

In spite of all your efforts, you have not been able to bring to light a non-divine origin for the Book of Mormon and, by not doing so, you have absolutely failed in proving your case. I have classified your personal characteristics into four groups:

1. Sincere searchers of truth;
2. The unrepentant who want no guilt;
3. People frustrated by moral restrictions;
4. Extremely intelligent Latter-day Saints who are deeply resentful for not having been called to higher positions.

In view of the above classifications, I have the following counsel:

To the sincere scholars, I say: Don't let the trees hide the total vision of the forest; keep in mind that God performed the restoration of all things "precept upon precept; line upon line." (Isa. 28:10.) I believe we all should feel great love and compassion for those first leaders of the Restoration who



"... For are we not all catfish?"

struggled to understand the spirit, and the letter, of a new and glorious revelation and did the best they could in the midst of severe trials and persecutions.

To those who are unrepentant sinners or who wish to be free from doctrinal and, in some cases, moral restraints, I remind you of the words of Haggai, "Consider your ways." (Hag. 1:7). Repent, go to your bishop, confess, and do what is right, let the consequence follow, and get ready to enjoy again the sweet fruits of the Spirit in your lives.

To those who are resentful for not having been called to higher positions of leadership, please give heed to the words of President Howard W. Hunter in the October 1992 general conference: "Our focus should be on righteousness, not recognition, in service not status," because the calling of a visiting or home teacher "is just as important to the work of the Lord as those who occupy what some see as more prominent positions in the Church. Visibility does not equate to value."

JOSÉ M. OLIVEIRA
A convert from Spain

ALL IN THE FAMILY

FOR DECADES a struggle has existed between The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Christian community at large. The Church wishes recognition as a bona fide "Christian" denomination with full membership in the Christian fold. The LDS church argues that a Christian is one who believes in Jesus Christ and follows his teachings and on that basis Mormons are Christians as much as anyone. "No," say the mainline and fundamentalist Christian denominations, "you can't be Christian because you don't believe in Jesus Christ the way we do. Our Christ is part of the trinity, a concept you reject. You say the same religious words as we do, but you mean different things. Your meanings are alien to us. You don't belong."

Similarly, some Church leaders employ the same exclusionary tactics against LDS intellectuals and liberals. The alternate voices say that they believe in Joseph Smith as a God-inspired prophet who brought forth the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ in whom alone there is salvation. Though they may see some difficulties in the historical facts, many steadfastly hold to the idea in spite of historical anomalies. They want to belong.

Yet the official Church tells intellectuals that they must believe in Christ the way the spokespeople do (with complete and unilateral acceptance of the historical traditions); otherwise they may not be "one of them."

If Church leaders have been puzzled by

the dogmatic, intolerant behavior of Christian fundamentalists toward Mormons, now they can at least understand where the fundamentalists are coming from.

Just how "dangerous" are these alternate voices? In a church of 8.5 million worldwide, how threatening can less than .05 percent of the membership be? When the Jewish nation was troubled by a small group of "alternate voices," one of the Sanhedrin suggested they be left alone on the grounds that error has a way of defeating itself and gradually disappearing from the scene, whereas truth will succeed in spite of efforts to extinguish it. Where is Gamaliel now that we need him? (See Acts 5:34-40.)

The general counsel coming down to the membership regarding opposing voices from outside the Church, "anti-Mormons," etc., is to ignore them. Members are not to dignify them with replies. Why does the Church treat its own worse than outsiders? Because its own is "family?" In the Church, the family is the central unit, the foremost model for governance. Yet social experience reveals that it is in the family where most abuses against individuals occur. It is where free agency is allowed to flourish least. Are official Church actions just a reflection of prevalent, yet unspoken and unendorsed, attitudes toward family members who seem too different?

CHRISTOPHER P. RUSSELL
Salt Lake City

TOLERANT TRUTH?

MAX RAMMELL'S letter "Family Values" (SUNSTONE, Mar. 1993) takes to task the "spiritual emptiness" of the father in the fictional story "Prodigy" by Michael Fillerup (SUNSTONE, Aug. 1992). Rammell's critique typifies a confusion I have found endemic in Latter-day Saints' understanding of moral agency in the face of a claim of faith. In the story, the father character reads the Book of Mormon, prays, and concludes there is nothing to the book. Rammell is troubled by the literary suggestion that one could experience such belief-forming practices and then find oneself believing heterodox or heretical propositions. Rammell defies knowledgeable readers of the Book of Mormon to refute the authenticity and divinity of the book. What interests me is Rammell's presumption that something about his religious belief makes it possible to "defy" someone who holds beliefs that directly oppose his own. Is Rammell suggesting the unbeliever voluntarily change her unbelief to belief? Or is he suggesting that religious belief-forming practices always produce uniformity in beliefs?

Being Mormon means we assent to the primacy of moral agency. We assent in faith to what we can and rationally manage these involuntary religious beliefs with religious belief-forming practices. We pray, attend our meetings, and do our visiting/home-teach-



ing. We give blessings, send children on missions, and attend funerals. We study the scriptures and understand our lives in context with these activities. Here religion can be at its best. But as Rammell typifies, it can also be at its worst.

Our beliefs may be absolutely true. The problem is that we do not know them to be true in a way that allows us to intelligently "defy" anyone who does not happen to believe along with us. It is perfectly plausible that after the unbeliever does participate in religious belief-forming practice, she may still believe in opposition to what we believe.

Our religious epistemic situation, coupled without commitment to the moral agency of the individual, requires tolerance, understanding, and acceptance of those who do not share our beliefs.

SUSAN DOENAUM
Salt Lake City

SHARED FAITH

WILLIAM HAMBLIN charges that David P. Wright's scholarship is based upon "secularist assumptions" that lead him to de-emphasize the divine in Mormon history ("The Final Step," *SUNSTONE*, July 1993). All

scholars work from prior assumptions; attempts to focus discussion about the historicity of the Book of Mormon on any scholar's presuppositions are misguided. Wright began his studies with a traditional Latter-day Saint mindset. Similarly, despite a personal commitment to orthodoxy, my own views evolved away from traditionalism during graduate work in Ancient Near Eastern Studies at BYU. The evidence, not the orthodox presupposition, was decisive.

Hamblin mentions the contributions of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.). Indeed, as F.A.R.M.S. distributes research regarding the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, it educates the Saints about historical issues they may otherwise never encounter and prepares them to hear opposing arguments as well. Church members who limit themselves to F.A.R.M.S. material will be exposed to history that painlessly reaffirms what they already believe. However, when they compare the reasoning behind traditional and untraditional conclusions, many will quickly become aware of substantial difficulties in some traditional LDS interpretations of history.

The silent minority that questions orthodox interpretations of history is undoubtedly

larger than usually recognized. For Saints who already accept the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price as nineteenth-century products, there is little point in endlessly debating Book of Mormon population sizes, geography, plates, King James anachronisms, etc. The discussion is moving beyond rear guard battles with F.A.R.M.S. to a post-critical theology. Unfortunately, given recent disciplinary actions, another several generations may pass before the Church is finally confident enough to be less dogmatic about the literality of its history and its canon.

Most people care about history to the extent that it defines their place in the world. Nephite prophecies of the last days and Bible stories that foreshadow Joseph Smith legitimate the very choices members of the Church have made to be Mormons. Mormonism is, however, almost as much an ethnic group as a religion. When the day comes that a Church president instructs the membership that the truth of the restored gospel is not contingent on Book of Mormon antiquity, such a faithful people will not fly apart. The majority of Saints will remain believers because the community which has arisen from a shared faith will remain more important than facts of distant history.

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SUNSTONE IMPRESSIONS

TAKING THE current issue of *SUNSTONE* (Dec. 1993) as a document of a living religion, and pursuing a long-term interest in the LDS church and world as exemplary of religious vitality, I spent a couple of hours a day for several days reading pretty much every article. These are my impressions:

1. The magazine takes more interest in the politics of the LDS church than in religious issues, if any, that engage the faithful. The only article that expressed an authentic religious and intellectual program was Frank Bruno's ("He Is a Prophet of God: A Personal Encounter with Ezra Taft Benson"), but that was altogether too personal, and the prophet's message proved commonplace and unremarkable. Both religion and theology await serious attention.

2. The magazine's self-definition encompasses opposites: both sustained scholarship (D. Michael Quinn' on "Baseball Baptisms") and poetry; both fiction and polemic (Dallin Oaks's "I've Been A Victim of Double-Decker Deceit"). It needs a clearer focus.

3. You probably pay writers by the word, since they use so many of them to say simple things; you owe your authors much more



The day after the meek inherit the Earth.

rigorous editing. It would be unkind to give examples, but, alas, also superfluous.

On the up-side, the power of the LDS way of life comes through in Elbert Peck's "Hiking to Kolob," and the LDS moral conscience come through in no fewer than half a dozen articles. And more than that you cannot hope to get as praise.

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FROM WHAT PLANET?

AFTER READING the article about the six dissidents who were excommunicated, my only response was to ask, "What planet are these people from?" Since childhood, I

have known that although there is much room for personal opinion in the Church, a public statement of difference with the Church in any aspect is taken as evidence of apostasy.

For the Church to encourage such open dissent would be an abdication of its divine claims. The position "I believe the church is absolutely true; I only want to change it" is at base self-contradictory in a church founded on the principle of prophetic direction and is intellectually untenable, yet that is what I hear in the statements quoted from these people who style themselves intellectuals.

I applaud Brother Gileadi who did not make a media event of his council and did not immediately convene a press conference

to pour invective on the Church, even though he has appealed the decision through established channels. Dissent from the establishment is not the only way, as some otherwise educated people believe, to credential as an intellectual.

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OF GOOD REPORT

POWER, FREEDOM, AND RELATIONSHIP

FOR [MICHEL] FOUCAULT, power is contingent, local, imprecise, relational, and organizational. . . . [Power] does not exist as a substantive entity that can be possessed or wielded. . . .

Foucault defines a relationship of power as a mode of action that does not intend to act directly on persons or things, which is what violence does, but indirectly on actions. The exercise of power is "always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action." It is a matter, therefore, of directing the activity of others, "guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome." To govern, as an example of the exercise of power, is "to structure the possible field of action of others." . . . As such, power relations are deeply embedded in the network of social relations . . . embedded in and dependent upon the level of "micro-relations" of power, the local interactions and petty calculations of daily life.

. . . Foucault argues that relations of power are not simply engendered from the top down, but from the bottom up as well. . . . For example, the establishment and maintenance of the power of kings . . . has to be rooted in preexisting forms of behavior, socialized bodies, and local relations of power, which could not be mere projections of the central power and still effectively maintain and legitimate that power.

In this way, power is neither an entity external to how and where it works, nor is it an effect of the confrontation between two opposed adversaries or a simple dominant-dominated relationship. Indeed, Foucault argues, power is exercised over "free subjects, and only insofar as they are free," that is, with the option of acting differently. If various conditions do away with all options, then it would no longer be a relationship of power per se. Power and freedom do not come to a "face-to-face confrontation" as mutually exclusive states. Their relationship is much more complicated for Foucault. Freedom is the condition, as well as the precondition, for the exercise of power. Freedom is power's "permanent support, since without the possibility of recalcitrance, power would be equivalent to a physical determination." In other

words, the existence of freedom (in the sense of accessible options) is necessary to the exercise of power or else what might be thought to be power is really something much more like the force of necessity. Power must be grasped as quite different from the forces of violence or coercion.

The necessity of freedom to the exercise of power gives rise to Foucault's understanding of resistance. At the heart of power relationships lies an insubordination or resistance, an "essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom," which means that there can be "no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight." Hence, to explore power is to explore a necessary and simultaneous resistance to power that continues to provoke and legitimize its exercise. "Every power relationship implies, at least in *potentia*," he writes, "a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal." Every power relationship implies the potential for struggle or confrontation, a confrontation that participants in the relationship mistakenly think they may win, even though they cannot win *and* remain (as a winner) within a power relationship. Indeed, every confrontation potentially aims at the stabilization of the power relation. A power relationship undoes itself when, pushing to quell completely the insubordination necessary to it, it succeeds in reducing the other to total subservience or in transforming the other into an overt adversary. For Foucault, therefore, the exercise of power is a strategic choice from among ways of interacting and it depends upon a variety of practices chosen by the parties involved to maintain the relationship as one of power.

CATHERINE BELL
in *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*
Oxford University Press, 1992, 199-201

Submissions of interesting quotations are welcome.