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READERS' FORUM

CORRECTION

RICHARD POLL deserved your fine tribute in (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994). A puzzled friend called my attention to an ambiguous sentence that has me suggesting that "Mormon intellectual" is an oxymoron. You do say "citing his wife's quip," but there is no other way to read the sentence than that it is in my view, by way of the quip. You should have said "Helen Mulder's suggestion that . . ." She would have enjoyed the credit, and it would have been unambiguous. Names in this instance are, in any case, gratuitous. You could have made your point by saying "Dick Poll would have found most unperceptive the suggestion by some that . . ."

As Emily Dickinson says, "A word dropped careless on a page . . . Infection in the sentence breeds." You know, and my friends know, that I am as much an advocate of Mormon intellectuals as was Poll.

WILLIAM MULDER

Salt Lake City

he would visit them and use coercive language to harangue them into being baptized. Afterward, he would use coercive language on us—we must not be living the mission rules or our contacts would all have testimonies and be living up to their commitments.

Three years after my mission, I went back to all my areas and checked up on the sixty individuals I baptized. Only one was completely active; two were partially active.

In general, however, I think the missionary program of the Church gathers many good people. Missionary work also develops interpersonal skills. My two sons recently completed missions and have reported none of the problems I experienced. Of course, I never reported any of these things when I was their age either. We are taught to report only the positive and faith-promoting experiences. There is wisdom in this, but we also need a forum to report these things so changes may be made for the benefit of all.

JUSTIN TALCOTT

Idaho Falls, ID

MISSIONARY MEMORIES

AS I READ and enjoyed Michael Quinn's "The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era" (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1993), I thought, finally, someone is telling the truth. I entered the Northwestern States Mission in January 1964. I never saw any "baseball baptisms," but the older missionaries were disappointed at the elimination, prior to my arrival, of the Youth Missionary Committees because they had been a good source of baptisms. By the end of my mission, baptisms had decreased from 1,000 to 300 per month.

Other trappings in the article were still present. At zone conferences Mission President Ivan J. Barrett had us to stand with our right arm to the square and covenant to baptize a family a week. (He preferred a large family of ten per week.) Except for one elder, who concentrated on migrant farm workers, everyone broke that covenant. I did not feel good about making it, but I submitted, hoping that God would fill me with the power of the Spirit like he had Peter and Paul.

Every night at 9:45 our district leader would call and ask, "How many have you got in the water this week, Elder?" He reviewed our list of contacts and asked what we did for them that day and if we were sure that their estimated baptismal date was firm. When we explained their problems with smoking, etc.,

1930S BASEBALL BAPTISMS

MICHAEL QUINN'S article rang bells in my head, registering similar experiences that occurred in the South African Mission in the 1930s. As one of the first elders returning there after World War II, I found countless names of members no one knew anything about. The mission president of the 1930s had used quota techniques and baptism goals that focused on baseball and friendship skills. Even newspaper and magazine articles blazoned, "Mormons Introduce Baseball to South Africa." To get young people to the games and participate was primary. Then baptisms were handled expeditiously, even with trips to the "cool drinks" shops as extra incentives.

In 1949 in Johannesburg, my companion and I were assigned two hundred names of baptized members from the "friendship baseball" period to locate. We were to determine their interest in the Church. I don't remember one of them having the slightest idea of what, in their youth, they had committed to.

The baptism quota techniques of Brothers Moyle, Dyer, and Woodbury had long precedence with much the same results. It's too bad that we often lose the meaning behind spreading the Master's message.

C. LAVARR ROCKWOOD

Lindon, UT

STAMP OF APPROVAL

I ENJOYED David Bohn's "The Larger Issue" (SUNSTONE, Feb. 1994) more than anything you have printed in a long time.

Bohn convincingly points out the fallacy of current "revisionist" historians' claims to greater objectivity by quoting the current philosophers of history and language, who state that all discourse is time-and-culture-bound, and no form of discourse can claim any "higher ground." This all applies to what Bohn calls revisionist history because it is based on the same assumption that all truth is relative. But Bohn does not point out strongly enough that faithful history (and the gospel itself) assumes that there is absolute truth, which we can intuitively perceive when we come in contact with it because we are it. (We are basically intelligence, the light of truth, and truth cleaves to truth. [D&C

93:36.] We have the light of Christ to light us in this dark world. [Mor. 7:16.]

This unapologetic stance is propounded by Mormon and the historians of the Old and New Testaments. Perhaps their presumptuousness in speaking for God is the very thing that gives many historians trouble with scripture as history. To me, it is the stamp of their authenticity. If they were tentative and offered their own version of an approximation of how things must have been, I would know they were just the "philosophies of men."

KATHLEEN R. SNOW
Seattle, WA

DIE-HARD TALES??

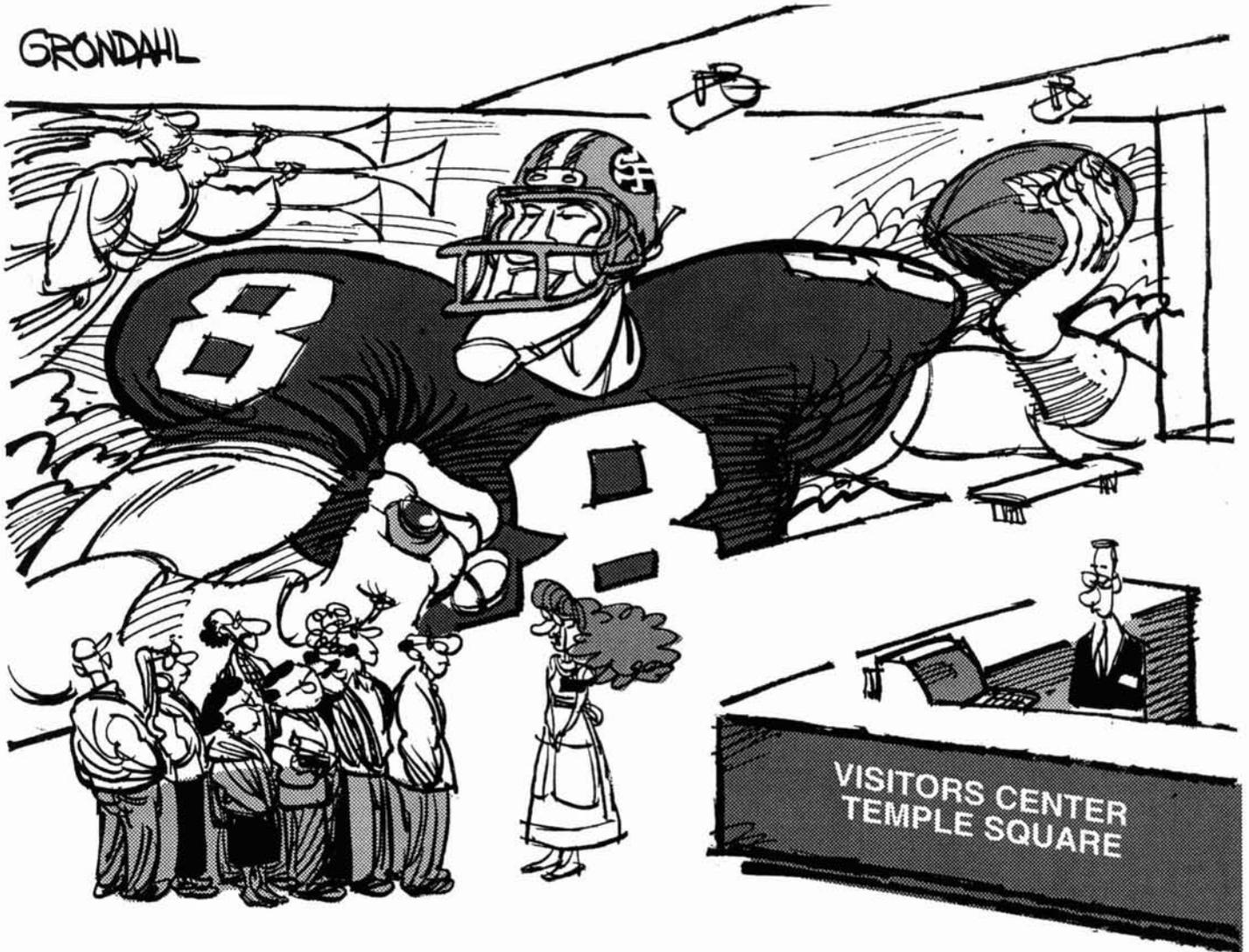
I ENJOYED D. Michael Quinn's "Dilemmas of Feminists and Intellectuals in the Contemporary LDS Church" (SUNSTONE, June 1994), but it contains an error of fact. Quinn says that during Joseph's time it was

possible to disagree with Church leadership "and remain a loyal Mormon. This was true of the entire general conference in 1843 that refused to sustain Joseph Smith's proposal to remove Sidney Rigdon as his counselor." Wilford Woodruff's journal says that "Joseph Smith arose and said, 'I have thrown him off my shoulders, and you have again put him on me. You may carry him, but I will not.'"

But the Church paper at Nauvoo reported that "President Joseph Smith arose and satisfactorily explained to the congregation the supposed treacherous correspondence with ex-Governor Carlin, which wholly removed suspicion from Elder Sidney Rigdon, and from every other person. He expressed entire willingness to have Sidney Rigdon retain his station." (Times & Seasons 4:330.) Quinn's version dies hard; it is repeated in B. H. Roberts's *Comprehensive History*.

SAMUEL W. TAYLOR
Redwood City, CA

GRONDAHL



"There are other Mormon heroes. But we can't remember who they are at the moment."

SUN SET, SUN RISE

WHAT HAS BECOME of the interesting, thought-provoking SUNSTONE? It has digressed into a celebration of worldly experience, intellectual snobbery, and agendas. I expect better, and I used to receive it.

Why, for example, were twelve pages of

the September 1994 issue dedicated to a rehash of private correspondence regarding David P. Wright? It is none of our business, and is an example of tabloid journalism.

SUNSTONE has always been different from "the party line," and such diversity has much potential. But by focusing on the disaffected, the bitter, and those who disobey

gospel standards, you have little to offer.

I strongly considered becoming a subscriber, but am pleased with my hesitation, and consider it money well saved. I anticipate a future when SUNSTONE will again be useful, interesting, and thought provoking.

GREGORY S. PRINCE
St. Paul, MN



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JEWISH TOLERANCE

I'VE ATTENDED LDS meetings in Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Arizona, California, Utah, and Italy. It was comfortable to find things the same everywhere. The only problem is that if a person disagrees—bam! He or she is excluded instantly.

For the past year, I've attended synagogue with my spouse, studying Hebrew and attending the rabbi's "Introduction to Judaism" class. I am amazed at the number of willing converts (over a hundred in this congregation alone) who come with no proselytizing, but I am even more amazed at the incredible tolerance shown to different ideas.

Much Jewish literature of the past two millennia is composed of doctrinal and philosophical debate. Jews are not forced to believe only one thing. They can have "one faith" without needing to have "one belief." Jews are not threatened by debate or reason. Maimonides said that nothing rational would ever conflict with religious truth.

LDS leaders are so afraid of honest debate that their only reaction is to excommunicate. If they don't, they say, the Church will be defiled and cease to exist. Jews accept the challenge of intellect, and they've survived twice as long as any Christian religion.

JOHNNY TOWNSEND
New Orleans, LA

PIOUS NONSENSE

IN HIS INTRODUCTION to *The Truth, The Way, The Life* (published by BYU Studies), which he edited, John W. Welch wrote:

In 1985, Sterling McMurrin commented briefly on TWL. Viewing Roberts as a rational intellectual who was usually a writer of "uncommon good sense, determined to distinguish fact from fiction," McMurrin described TWL as a "serious lapse," a "piece of fantasy," and an "aberration" (xxxiii).

I am not sure whether this statement of Welch's is an intentional distortion of my comments or simply the result of incompetence and irresponsibility, or both. My references were not to Roberts's TWL as Welch says, but to his theory in that work that Adam and Eve were transplanted to this earth from another planet (TWL, ch. XXXII). It was this idea, involving pre-Adamites on the earth, that was the chief ground for the Church's refusal to publish TWL when Roberts was living. Now it has been published almost simultaneously by both *BYU Studies* and *Smith Research Associates*, the latter

volume edited by Stan Larson.

The statement Welch refers to is in my introductory essay, "B. H. Roberts: A Biographical Essay," to B. H. Roberts's *Studies of the Book of Mormon* (1985), edited by Brigham D. Madsen:

On the whole, Roberts appears as a writer of uncommon good sense, determined to distinguish fact from fiction, history from legend, and meaningful doctrine from meaninglessness. But he had serious lapses, caused especially by his deficiencies in biblical scholarship and his inability to escape the yoke of a sometimes abject biblical literalism. In his final treatment of the problem of Mormonism and evolution, for instance—a problem that should have posed for him no great difficulties, since the Mormon Church had not then and has not since taken an official stand against organic evolution—his thought was reduced at one point to the level of proposing that Adam and Eve were transplanted full grown from another planet. This piece of fantasy was part of his effort to come to terms with science by way of arguing for a race of pre-Adamites, humans who had been obliterated by some natural catastrophe. Despite such nonsense, Roberts's instincts were generally good. . . (xxviii).

The term "aberration" that Welch mentions is a footnote on page xxxi, note 15—"This aberration appears in Roberts's late unpublished work, 'The Truth, The Way, The

Life,' " which refers to the pre-Adamite stuff written in the 1920s. In my introductory essay on Roberts's theology in the Stan Larson volume of TWL, I called the Adam-Eve transplantation a "piece of pious nonsense." Welch can add this in his next edition of TWL. "This was a piece of pious nonsense which, fortunately, did not convince the president of the church and other ecclesiastical colleagues" (xxiv). To make matters worse, I also called Roberts's transplantation theory "fanciful and nonsensical" (xxiii).

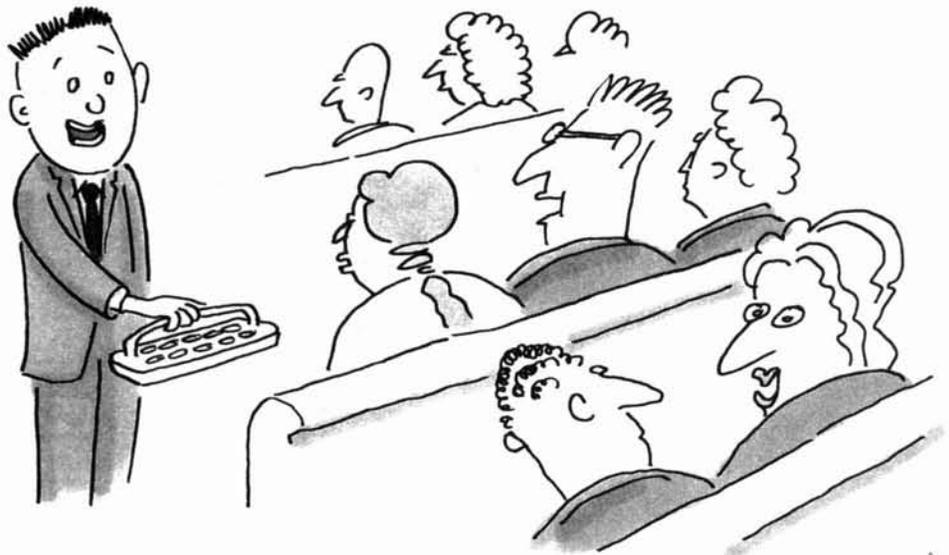
STERLING M. MCMURRIN
Salt Lake City

BATHROOM LITERATURE

I AM NOT so certain all SUNSTONE and *Dialogue* writers share Carol Lynn Pearson's fondness for the sunny porch of our house/church ("Backyard Clean-Up," SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994). She may be amazed that general authorities think the Church "so fragile it cannot bear honest evaluation," but I am equally amazed—to change the analogy—that some writers see the proctologist's view of the Church as the only accurate one, let alone the most desirable (if, at times, necessary to prevent cancer).

While the infantile excommunications abhor me, I would also ask many writers why no topic seems to interest them unless it embarrasses half a dozen general authorities?

I remember the days when no Wright/Metcalf (Toscano/Quinn, etc.) article would be touted in SUNSTONE ads as if it were the majority opinion of the informed, or even printed at all without a



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Nibley/F.A.R.M.S. response—or vice versa (or am I just fantasizing?). I never expected to get both sides in the *Ensign*, but was I naive to expect better from SUNSTONE and *Dialogue*?

This year, the SUNSTONE symposium was scheduled in direct competition with BYU Education Week. Is it really so inconceivable that someone might want to attend both?

While "the Brethren" pretend anal openings aren't part of God's creations and don't exist at all, SUNSTONE and *Dialogue* sometimes seem equally intent on portraying them as our only organ. Meanwhile, what's left for the rest of us to read in the, uh, john?

J. CHRISTOPHER
Los Angeles

Elbert Peck responds:

The Sunstone Foundation is committed to balance in all our forums. Our Salt Lake symposium schedule is determined by hotel availability and patron schedules. Sunstone never intentionally conflicts with Education Week. Fortunately, this summer they don't conflict. The 1995 Sunstone Symposium is August 9–12; as always, it will host a wide variety of differing Mormon perspectives. I hope Mr. Christopher can attend, or at least order tapes to listen to while taking a bath.

A REBEL TAKES PAUSE

I GLADLY RENEW my subscription and make a few comments. I am unequivocally grounded in my faith in just about every "controversial" subject. I am a creationist, an absolute Book of Mormon historicist, and revel in the divine power that flows through the general authorities. I've heard or read every word given at general conference for twenty-three years, and every one has confirmed my faith in how God governs.

I twice risked all of my faith in enterprises that turned out to be false, and I never want to be fooled again. I want to know what's going on in the Church, especially at the "fringes." The best attacks can be mounted by insiders who know potential weak spots. In SUNSTONE, along with the majority of entries by those whose faith in what for me are

cornerstones is questionable, you provide just enough balance for someone like me to go through a process whereby I can, by study and faith, strengthen my beliefs.

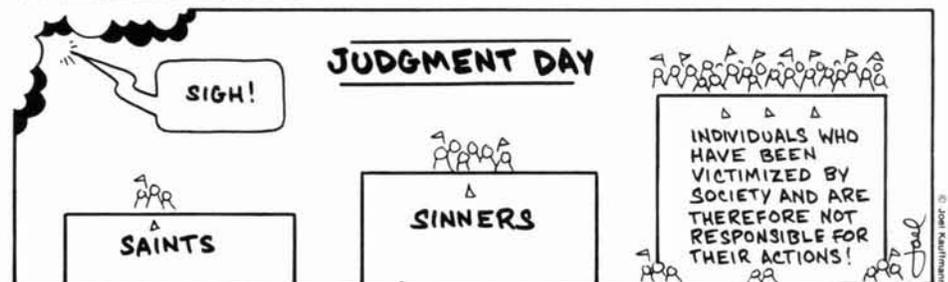
I loved the Cracroft-Jorgensen debate ("Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice" and "To Tell and Hear Stories," SUNSTONE, July 1993) and the David Bohn article ("The Larger Issue," SUNSTONE, Feb. 1994). Cracroft and Bohn spoke for me. My favorite section is "current events," where I can keep up on the hottest "fringe" issues, scratch my intellectual itch, and stay prepared to defend the Lord's anointed. Thanks in the latest issue for your "Recently Released" list of current publications (I am reading *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* with great empathy and relish), and those Wright excommunication documents. (Compare his stance to President Hunter's printed talk from Nauvoo in the *Ensign* on "Pillars of Our Faith.")

As a youth, I was a big rebel, bigger than the toughest ones you publish. However, like Alma the younger, I was "a young man." I know one of the celebrated "September Six," and, believe me, I'm not impressed. Two of my BYU professors in my major field were "doubters" back then. What a surprise for me, while in Utah seven years ago, to see the first give a BYU devotional address on KBYU, beautifully proclaiming his "orthodox" faith while obliquely documenting his struggle in obtaining it. And the second is occasionally published by you as a staunch defender of orthodoxy.

I suspect there is a greater chance that the bulk of your fascinating team of doubters will eventually go the way of these two professors than there is that the "doubting doctrines" of the present will become the future orthodoxy of the Church. While I have fun with SUNSTONE, I know also that doubt takes at least a temporary human toll. I hope the Lord is as merciful with you intellectual rebels as he has been to me. Keep publishing a few things for me to hold onto, and I'll continue to subscribe.

GREG KNOX
Redlands, CA

Pontius' Puddle



YOU SAY SYMPOSIA, I SAY SYMPOSIUMS . . .

BASIC TO MORMON culture are deeply ingrained values for education and change. Both require the availability of new information and ideas on a reasonably regular basis. Among the alternative locations, the Sunstone symposiums are the most important, for they provide a verbal forum for exploring the gospel.

A singular event at this year's Salt Lake symposium was the large group of excommunicated Manti Saints who had just announced the formation of the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days. When, a few years earlier, church founder Jim Harmston began inviting people to his home in Manti for gospel study sessions, it was a reaction to the information wasteland of Church Correlation, and it was never intended that things proceed to the present situation. Good Latter-day Saints honestly seeking to know more had to look elsewhere (a home study group) because the correlated climate in the Church provided no forum for open and honest discussion. It was all downhill thereafter.

In contrast, consider the importance of Sunstone symposiums. Seeing and listening to our non-Mormon friends, like Jan Shipps and Mario DePillis, along with the many Mormons who gave presentations is important for the folk who attend the symposiums. The best of these presentations find their way into print and are distributed to an even wider audience. However, an overriding experience leads me to argue that symposiums must be preserved at all costs.

Instead of purchasing tapes of the sessions I had missed, I got copies of two that so impressed me that I had to share them with my wife. [See tape order form in *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1994.] While driving home and listening to the tapes, I realized that the power of the event did not come through. In the Pillars of My Faith session, I was particularly struck with the presentations of Michael Quinn and Cecilia Konchar Farr. Would that I could hear such testimonies on any Fast Sunday. Their testimonies have been reforged in a crucible few of us have experienced. Because of that, they created an impact on my soul like no other testimonies I have ever heard. The power and spirit conveyed in that public setting is not conveyed on the tapes, nor will it be conveyed in the written versions.

Finally, we must never lose Mormon comedian Laurie Johnson. Bureaucracies are notoriously humorless, and whatever humor

may have been present in the Church bureaucracy some years back has completely vanished. Much of the symposium centered on the theme of healing. For that to actually happen, the Church must learn not to take itself so seriously. Self-examination is called for, and the mirror into which the Church must look will convey the least pain if the image seen there is that of someone like Johnson's Sister Fonda Alamode.

DEE GREEN
Alturas, CA

MORMONS AND ANGELS

CONCERNING Michael Evenden's "Angels in a Mormon Gaze" (*SUNSTONE*,

Sept. 1994): Weh ist mir! Once again a contributor apologizes for his Mormonhood. In an otherwise well-reasoned review, he leaves a couple of holes. Boy, are they doozies!

First, Evenden's call for a dialogue between "Mormon[s] and [the] gay communit[y]" sounds broad-minded and tolerant, and is, therefore, devoutly to be wished. Right? What he carelessly forgets, however, is that the sexual practices of gays are sin. Any dialogue, no matter how tolerant of the sinner, must also recognize the sin for what it is.

Next, it seems we must outgrow our Mormon identity, ignore the scriptural proscriptions, and strip ourselves of our concepts of right and wrong before we are worthy to participate in Evenden's dialogue. Evenden

THE PRIESTHOOD EXERCISING CONTROL & DOMINION



implicitly argues this while expressly accusing Kushner of the same thing. Does he really mean to call belief in prophetic dictum "unexamined prejudice?" Isn't it better to love and tolerate the sinner than to beat ourselves up finding excuses for the sin? Isn't it wiser to maintain our beliefs and our identity while comforting the afflicted?

Come on, folks, let's be a little less "PC" and a little more Mormon.

RONALD L. DUNN
Salt Lake City

Michael Evenden responds:

Brother Dunn either misreads, or sees sweeping consequences in small concessions. I proposed, in the context of an hypothetical conversation, only that we acknowledge that overcoming deeply rooted homosexual feelings may involve a more complex challenge (or choice) than, say, resisting an occasional temptation to shoplift. I neither said, mean, nor meant to imply that we should cavalierly abandon sexual ethics, prophetic dicta, scripture, or religious identity. That Brother Dunn would find such dire risks where I see few or none suggests that we are of different religious temperaments; nevertheless, we share more than we differ, and I am glad for his addition to the ongoing discussion that Kushner's play will provoke.

EMBARRASSING FACTS

I WAS SHOCKED and saddened by the excommunication of Michael Barrett. Even as an investigator, I was puzzled by the LDS church's chameleon-like attempts to blend in with surrounding Christian churches. We are not wolves—why must we disguise ourselves to walk among other sheep?

The Church's apparent policy of concealing selected facts about its doctrine and history will eventually backfire, and those who dislike us for our doctrines will detest us for our duplicity. The embarrassment of our "embarrassing facts" will only be compounded when we're caught lying about them. Mainstream Christians aren't stupid.

JANICE HABER
Sterling, VA

A LOVE LETTER

THE same people whom the Church is excommunicating for apostasy are the ones who have kept me enthused about my membership for thirty-one years.

I grew up in Maine and was the first convert from Bethel since the 1800s. Not one of us Latter-day Saints in that part of the world in the late 1960s knew much about the

Church, so car pools to church (twenty-five miles each way) and to widely scattered events (sometimes to Boston) were opportunities to discuss and learn together. We shared beliefs and questioned one another about the scriptures and the books we devoured, relying on contemplation and the spirit of the Lord. It was a wonderful time and place to be a Mormon.

When I went to college in 1968, I attended a ward with people from a nearby Air Force base. So many things there seemed incongruous with the gospel and the beautiful teachings I had discovered in Maine. One man prayed that God would help us "kill all the gooks and bring our boys home soon," and almost everyone automatically said "amen" to this heartfelt plea. We got into discussions with members about whether poverty and hunger existed in the United States. And, of course, there were endless discussions about blacks and the priesthood.

Right and wrong do not come out of a manual, but are in the heart of every son and daughter of God. I knew beyond any doubt that the Lord was not withholding the priesthood from blacks, but that bigoted people were exercising their free agency. God was not prejudiced—people were.

God has not changed. Right and wrong have not changed. The search for truth and knowledge is at the heart of our religion, always has been and always will be. I know just as surely now that God does not sanction the excommunications and persecution that are taking place in the LDS church. Jesus, Joseph Smith, and the early Saints were so persecuted, often by their own people.

Rather, the Lord has to put up with the narrow-mindedness and bigotry of his children because they have free agency. They have the right to reject the search for truth in order to protect, "as they suppose," the institution as it exists. This life and the Lord's lay ministry (where all are called to positions of responsibility) are part of a great sifting process. "Many are called but few are chosen" (D&C 121:40) is an eternal concept. Many in local and Church-wide leadership, if they use their authority unrighteously, will prove themselves unworthy to have authority in the Lord's eternal kingdom.

My brother once said that he never felt so close to God as during periods when times were hard, yet he did not blame God for his troubles. I think about that often, and wonder if the true test of faith is to love God and one another despite the unrighteous domin-



FROM ZEN'S CAMP BY RICK LYBETT, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION

ion sometimes exercised by those in authority. The Lord set the example when he said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.)

NED ROBERTSON
Cleveland Heights, OH

CONFIDENTIALLY . . .

YOUR NEWS STORY, "Talks with Bishops Barred from Utah Courts" (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994) reported a 1994 Utah Supreme Court decision that "non-confessional" conversations with LDS bishops cannot be used as evidence in court. Thus, in Utah, virtually every conversation with one's bishop is protected as private.

However, here in New Jersey, prior to confession, well-read Latter-day Saints have begun asking themselves, "How much do I trust my bishop?"

Last May, in *State v. Sezemple*, the New Jersey Supreme Court said: "The clergy person is the sole holder of the priest-penitent privilege and the decision whether to reveal a confidential communication and waive the privilege rests with the clergy person."

In 1955, the Committee on the Revision of the Law feared that placing the privilege with the penitent could force a priest to testify if the penitent declined. Not only could that breach the cleric's free exercise of religion, but a defendant would be able to lie to a priest, then waive the privilege so that the priest could then testify favorably for the defendant.

In a concurring opinion, Justice Clifford

wrote that clerics keep confidences "not because any secular law gives them a privilege to do so but because their churchly obligation . . . requires it of them. The dereliction of a sorely misguided priest who chooses to ignore that obligation becomes a matter for the priest's church, not for the courts."

But in a dissent, Justice Daniel O'Hern wrote: "To conclude that the penitent has no privilege, one must infer that the Legislature intended that the most privileged of all communications be converted into the least."

New Jersey Saints should be advised that any confession, once made, may be used against them in court. One devious New Jersey bishop, in my opinion, involved himself in a court matter strictly to find a way to reveal a penitent's confession. With the subsequent blessing of the Church attorneys, he revealed the penitent's confession to an "expert" witness, who subsequently made it a part of his report to the court.

New Jersey Saints be forewarned! What you tell your priesthood leader is as confidential as what you tell your bartender.

ROBERT WEIR
Pitman, NJ

RACIST GUILT

EUGENE ENGLAND may think it's noble to just stand and be slaughtered by aggressive enemies ("What Covenant Will God Receive in the Desert?," SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994), but I'm not about to let my children be harmed so I can claim a moral victory. If that puts me on a lower ethical level, so be it.

Despite thousands of years of history

proving that evil people are seldom deterred by reason, some still argue with tyrants.

Further, I'm tired of uninformed, well-meaning people perpetuating the myth that all Indians were living in peaceful, back-to-nature bliss when white settlers arrived. Many Indian cultures encouraged the torture, slavery, and mutilation of their enemies, and most were not favorable to women. Whites were not always the peace-loving, tolerant Christians they professed to be, either.

Somehow, too many Americans of Northern European descent have been convinced that all the world's ills can be attributed to us and that we should be striving desperately to atone to everyone else. At this point, what difference does it make?

TAMMI WRIGHT
Beaverton, OR

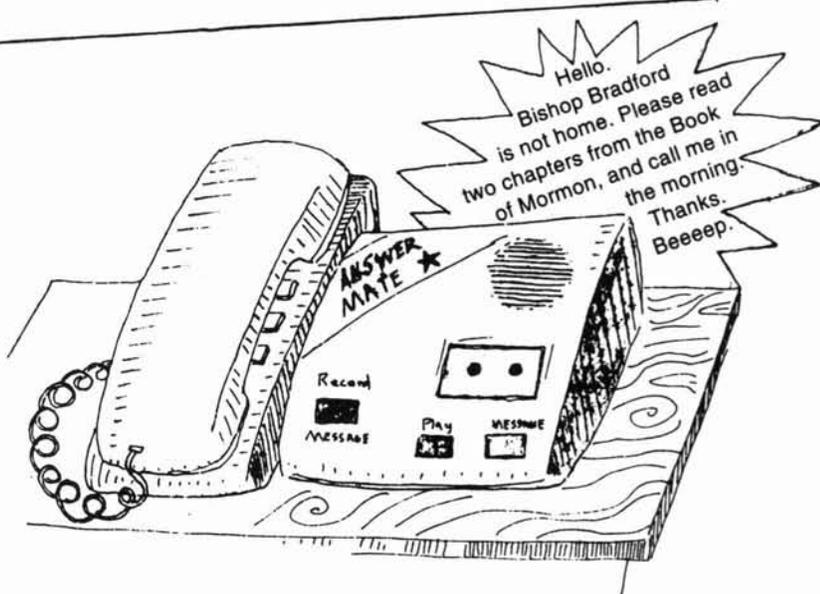
THE FORCE FOR GOOD

LIKE CAPTAINS Mormon and Moroni, modern soldiers often express their hatred of war and love of peace. Those emotions surely run as deep as they do in Eugene England and other participants in the Mormon Peace Gathering. Since soldiers and peace marchers share a commitment to peace, the only issue is how peace is best achieved, not whether it is desirable.

Since World War II, North America and Western Europe have experienced an unparalleled period of peace and prosperity. There have been foreign conflicts, of course, but hundreds of millions have enjoyed the blessing of domestic peace under armed deterrence. This largely successful policy might not be easily replaced by unarmed submission to aggression, an Anti-Nephi-Lehi policy England seems to advocate.

Unarmed moral suasion has had its successes, but as Richard Grenier observed in *Commentary*, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were fortunate—not every victim of aggression has had oppressors who respect human rights. Unlike the rage of the Lamanites who attacked the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, the bloodlust of Stalin, Hitler, the Khmer Rouge, the Bosnian Serbs, and the Rwandan Hutus has not been assuaged by the deaths of a thousand or even a million innocent, unresisting victims. Stopping this genocide has required armed resistance.

In both contemporary and Book of Mormon history, many have tried unarmed nonaggression and concluded it is the wrong policy. Having agonized over the fact that millions went to their death with almost no resistance (except in the Warsaw Ghetto), the



Jews have sworn that never again will they die passively. They could not have survived in the Middle East, where peace may at last be dawning, if they had not adopted this more aggressive posture. And the Anti-Nephi-Lehies ultimately withdrew behind Nephite military lines to avoid complete destruction. They later regretted the oath, and rather than endure this morally questionable benefit, they sent their children into battle.

England rejects "the false idea that force can defeat force." Does he believe, then, that the police—officers of the peace—should throw down their weapons? If it is not legitimate to forcibly restrain the big thugs with big guns and millions of victims, why is it legitimate to restrain small time thugs?

Historically, the left has underestimated the human capacity for evil. For them, evil inheres in things like nuclear weapons or bad social structures, not in the human heart. The right holds that evil must sometimes be restrained by force. Once hearts and minds change, the weapons take care of themselves. Thus, though most Soviet weapons still exist, we are massively disarming, as is Russia's new, more enlightened leadership. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union was not the only threat to peace in the world.

Unlike England, I have never assumed that American leaders were without sin or guile, so I haven't been disillusioned when they sometimes lie or deceive the people. But though Americans are fallible and have made

both domestic and foreign mistakes, it is clear to me—and to the East Germans, Poles, Czechs, and Hungarians who now want to base their security on NATO membership, not on more marches in the streets—that American power has been and is a force for good.

VAL LARSEN
Blacksburg, VA

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OF GOOD REPORT

THE POWER THAT MEMORY GIVES US

God's chief purpose in giving us memory is to enable us to go back in time so that if we didn't play those roles right the first time round, we can still have another go at it now.

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, to say that God is mightily present even in such private events as these does not mean that he makes events happen to us which move us in certain directions like chessmen. Instead, events happen under their own steam as random as rain, which means that God is present in them not as their cause but as the one who even in the hardest and most hair-raising of them offers us the possibility of that new life and healing which I believe is what salvation is. For instance I cannot believe that a God of love and mercy in any sense willed my father's suicide; it was only my father himself who willed it as the only way out available to him from a life that for various reasons he had come to find unbearable . . . , but I believe that God was present in what happened. . . . I can speak with some assurance only of how God was present in that dark time for me in the sense that I was not destroyed by it but came out of it with scars that I bear to this day, to be sure, but also somehow the wiser and the stronger for it. . . . [T]hrough the loss of him all those long years ago I think that I learned something about how even tragedy can be a means of grace that I might never have come to any other way. As I see it, in other words, God acts in history and in your and my brief histories not as the puppeteer who sets the scene and works the strings but rather as the great director who no matter what role fate casts us in conveys to us somehow from the wings, if we have our eyes, ears, hearts open and sometimes even if we don't, how we can play those roles in a way to enrich and ennoble and hallow the whole vast drama of things including our own small but crucial parts in it.

In fact I am inclined to believe that God's chief purpose in giving us memory is to enable us to go back in time so that if we didn't play those roles right the first time round, we can still have another go at it now. We cannot undo our old mistakes or their consequences any more than we can erase old wounds that we have both suffered and inflicted, but through the power that memory gives us of thinking, feeling, imagining our way back through time we can at long last finally finish with the past in the

sense of removing its power to hurt us and other people and to stunt our growth as human beings.

The sad things that happened long ago will always remain part of what we are just as the glad and gracious things will too, but instead of being a burden of guilt, recrimination, and regret that make us constantly stumble as we go, even the saddest things can become, once we have made peace with them, a source of wisdom and strength for the journey that still lies ahead. It is through memory that we are able to reclaim much of our lives that we have long since written off by finding that in everything that has happened to us over the years God was offering us possibilities of new life and healing which, though we may have missed them at the time, we can still choose and be brought to life by and healed by all these years later.

Another way of saying it, perhaps, is that memory makes it possible for us both to bless the past, even those parts of it that we have always felt cursed by, and also to be blessed by it. If this kind of remembering sounds like what psychotherapy is all about, it is because of course it is, but I think it is also what the forgiveness of sins is all about—the interplay of God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of God and each other. To see how God's mercy was for me buried deep even in my father's death was not just to be able to forgive my father for dying and God for letting him die so young and without hope and all the people like my mother who were involved in his death but also to be able to forgive myself for all the years I had failed to air my crippling secret so that then, however slowly and uncertainly, I could start to find healing. It is in the experience of such healing that I believe we experience also God's loving forgiveness of us and insofar as memory is the doorway to both experiences, it becomes not just therapeutic but sacred.

FREDERICK BUECHNER
from "The Dwarves in the Stable," in *Telling Secrets*
HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1991
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