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READERS' FORUM

THE LIAHONA SAINT

THANK YOU, SUNSTONE and Tom Alexander, for the memorial to our father, Richard Poll, and for printing his final paper, "A Liahona Latter-day Saint" (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994). As children, we were primarily impressed by what we superficially regarded as the glamour of Dad's causes. As adults, we came to appreciate the pivotal influence he had on many by living a life dedicated to his church, while also asserting that dedication may have many faces. After his and Mother's passing, we have been comforted by the public and private testimonies of the positive effect they had on many.

Dad thrived on Church and gospel-related discussions and found in SUNSTONE, its symposiums, and publications a source of intellectual excitement, spiritual strength, and some of his closest personal ties, based on kinship in the same eternal quest. SUNSTONE fills a need in the lives of many, and we hope to see it continue to thrive as a facilitator for the expression of the diverse voices of the LDS community.

MARILYN BELL

NANETTE ALLEN

JENNIFER CRAWFORD

be not because we have the only true and living metaphors with which God is well pleased, but because we are the best at continually improving our metaphors through casting off the old and making better ones—our God-like act of creating heaven here.

However, I am not sure that is the case about Mormonism today. Yes, Joseph Smith did do that, albeit chaotically (is there any other way?), but are we continually making new and better metaphors today, at least consciously? It may be that the gradual evolution of Church practices as it grows and becomes world-wide is that act of creation, but it seems more an act of accommodation.

Hence, I am now less sure of Mormonism, but I am even more less sure about all other religions. But I don't have the confidence to go religion alone—sans a church—especially since Abbott points out (as does Elbert Peck) that we collectively, socially, construct our metaphors through our shared language.

Perhaps the social processes of myth-making are longer or more complex than I can observe during my life. If so, that fact is little comfort for one who has to work out her salvation now, here. I feel adrift. Thanks!

MELANIE JONES

Phoenix, AZ

HOME FRIENDING

ELBERT PECK's right: We've cut church so much that in what remains we need to make sure hearts touch ("It's the Community, Folks!" SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995). We need to stop talking at each other and start talking with each other by sharing experiences and thoughts in open discussions—especially in home teaching. When home teachers read the First Presidency message and then leave, we have oversimplified the program. Better are home teachers who share their lives and invite me to share mine. Hearts touch, we explore the gospel in an intimate way, and I am connected to them later at church or in the grocery store. I don't need another lesson, but I can always use another friend.

TOM BROCK

San Francisco

CHARITY FOR ALL

THANKS FOR THE touching tribute, "Ezra Taft Benson: A Grandson's Remembrance" by Steve Benson (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995). I still don't agree with President Benson, but now I see him as a human being who cares and tries, however imperfectly, to be a person of God. I now have charity for him and can forgive him his weaknesses.

Thanks, too, for helping me feel better about his "traitor" grandson. I don't agree with his journey, but I better understand it and see how his judgments and pronouncements of integrity come from his family upbringing: he's a true Benson, even if a black sheep. I feel charity toward him, too.

Because of my change of heart, I feel more charity toward myself, too, in my failing attempts to live right. And I feel God's love and charity toward us all. Flannery O'Connor may be right in "Revelation" that God will eventually burn away all the imperfections that we use to classify and judge each other.

I even feel kinder toward SUNSTONE and all its stupid editorial decisions. It does perhaps just as much good and harm as did President Benson in his zealous life, and at

POSTMODERN DRIFT

SCOTT ABBOTT'S "Will We Find Zion or Make It?" (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995) troubles my faith. If everything is of human creation, including all our metaphors of religion, then the only reason to stay a Mormon would

this moment I am not sure I would want a Mormonism that excluded either participant.

JOSEPH STEPHANO
Sydney, Australia

MORMON ANTI-SEMITISM

I SHARE Jacob Neusner's admiration for Steven Epperson's excellent book on Mormons and Jews ("Toward a Common Goal," SUNSTONE, Dec. 1994). Epperson makes a good case that the early LDS theological view was philo-Judaic and non-conversionist—regarding Jews as fellow members of the House of Israel, destined to fulfill the biblical promise of a return to the Land of Israel.

He also recognizes the "two divergent traditions" in Mormon leaders' views of Jews and Judaism, one irenically positive, the other inimically negative. He explains that the negative tradition came from European converts with a heritage of anti-Semitism. This interesting speculation is hardly cogent, since he demonstrates the intense theological hostility toward Jews in the American culture from which Mormonism emerged.

But the worst LDS expressions against

Jews are attributable not to converts but to the Book of Mormon. In 1 and 2 Nephi, the Jews are held culpable for the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. For not believing in his Messiahship, they are to be punished by dispersal and sufferings—a familiar Christian line. Moreover, in a prophetic text supposedly written in the sixth century B.C.E., it is predicted that Christ will "come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him . . . and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God." (2 Ne. 10:3.) Would Epperson grant that this is a vilification of the Jews, justifying anti-Jewish feeling, if not action—what historian Jules Isaac called "the teaching of contempt?"

As for the non-conversionist stance and the proto-Zionism he attributes early LDS leaders, we find that the Jews will return to Jerusalem only when they acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. (2 Ne. 10:7-8.) Elsewhere, the House of Israel is limited to those Jews and non-Jews who accept Jesus as Messiah and son of God. What Epperson gets from early leaders such as Joseph Smith and Orson Hyde is taken away by the Book of Mormon.

Working within the frame of the claimed sixth-century B.C.E. story of the persecution of Lehi and his family by Jerusalem Jews, Epperson finds the book's bitterness quite natural. This seems a long way around to an attitude and justification that goes back to the beginnings of the Christian church. What we are getting in the Book of Mormon may be New Testament accounts given a fabulous sixth-century B.C.E. context. A more probable explanation of anti-Semitism among some Mormons is that they are Americans, and this spiritual plague is as American as apple pie.

Shouldn't there have been striking experiences of "cognitive dissonance" among Saints faced with such contradictory messages from their leaders and the Book of Mormon?

SEYMOUR CAIN
San Diego, CA

SCHINDLERGATE

THE DECISION BY Brigham Young University officials to scuttle an on-campus screening of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* unless the filmmaker would snip out "the starkness, the nudity, the violence" is almost





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impossible to comprehend ("Schindler's Taken off BYU's List," SUNSTONE, Apr. 1995). Apparently, they had a Saturday morning of the Holocaust in mind. Fortunately, and not surprisingly, Spielberg said, "Hell no!"

It is no small irony that BYU, affiliated with the historically persecuted LDS church, would have demanded such injudicious edits of the most morally instructive film of our time. How is *Schindler's List*, with its monumental ethical lessons, suitable for Mormon youth only after emasculation, while the film *Beethoven's 2nd* is okay?

That any university, which should open the universe to its students, would react so close-mindedly is wrong. That a religious university, ostensibly founded on abiding moral principles, would do so is unconscionable. Even Pat Robertson's ultraconservative "The 700 Club," which refuses to endorse R-rated films, urged its adherents to see it.

Mormon bashing has been in the news lately, thanks to Ted Kennedy's swipes at Mitt Romney. It is often wrong to make sweeping generalizations about any group, and Mormon bashing is as insidious as any other form of bigotry. But there's a reason why a Gallup poll in the late 1980s found that Mormonism had the least favorable image of any religion in the country, with only a 6 percent favorable rating. Decisions like the one regarding *Schindler's List* offer vivid explanation.

Several Mormon friends are horribly embarrassed over the *Schindler* fiasco, and a few urged me to write this letter. They're afraid to. Those who criticize their Church face excommunication, the religious equivalent of a Holocaust-style execution.

No matter how much ranting there is from outsiders, the LDS church will evolve at its own pace. I encourage Church leaders to take a long, hard look at their actions regarding Schindlergate and indulge in a little quiet reflection. Out of the chaos of life, we all crave guidance, direction, and purpose. Religions are in the business of teaching people how to live. Culture, too, can provide a vital adjunct, *Schindler's List* being a prime example. It is nothing short of sacrilege to order tomorrow's leaders to turn away from it.

To BYU's leadership: Waive your abstinence from caffeine this once and consider an intravenous coffee drip. It's time to wake up.

MICHAEL LEVINE
Los Angeles

THE THREE

NOWHERE IN the news story "Elder Packer Names Gays/Lesbians, Feminists, and 'So-called' Scholars Three Main Dangers"

(SUNSTONE, Nov. 1993) is Elder Packer quoted as saying that gays/lesbians, feminists, and intellectuals are the three main dangers to the Church (or even that they explicitly are main dangers). What exactly did he say? I don't see those groups as main dangers to the Church, nor are homophobia, misogyny, and anti-intellectualism. I nominate ethnocentrism, poverty, and sexism.

MARK ASHURST-MCGEE
Provo, UT

Editors' reply:

Elder Packer said: "There are three areas where members of the Church, influenced by social and political unrest, are being caught up and led away. . . . The dangers I speak of come from the gay-lesbian movement, the feminist movement, and the ever-present challenge from the so-called scholars or intellectuals."

Elder Packer said he named the three because "they have made major invasions into the membership of the Church" and "local leaders must deal with all three of them with ever-increasing frequency."



"Dear President Hinckley: Knowing that letters to general authorities are sent down channels, please tell my husband/bishop that his wife misses him very much."



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become inadequate. Prior learns that God has abandoned those institutions because they are fixated on the status quo. He rejects the establishment because it has forsaken truth; it has forsaken life.

Life is change, movement, and migration. That is what this play means to tell us. God is interested only in life forms that are evolving. In the Council Room of Heaven scene, Prior says, "Take back your book. Anti-Migration, that's so feeble, I can't believe you couldn't do better than that. . . ." Prior stands for the spirit of prophetic courage. "The Great Trek" diorama scene of the play, set in an LDS visitors' center, is exquisitely comic, but beneath the humor is something profound and inspiring. It is here that Prior is exposed to the idea of migration in response to affliction. It is the idea he takes to heaven.

The most interesting thing about the play, and which will bother LDS audiences, is its fantastic synthesis of sacred and profane elements, its ambivalent fusion of praise and condemnation. In it, Mormonism can be both admirable and deplorable at the same time. In a *Salt Lake Tribune* interview, Kushner reveals his ambivalence toward Mormons when he talks about a young Latter-day Saint he taught: "She was a great kid—incredibly energetic, straightforward, sincere, intelligent—characteristics I associate with Mormons. Her family, however, held conservative views that were deeply distasteful to me. They were decent people who nevertheless oppose what I consider to be a generally progressive agenda."

In an interview for the gay community, Kushner said he admired how Joseph Smith single-handedly created an American religious tradition complete with ancient roots. "What is more gay," he said in effect, "than rewriting your past when reality doesn't suit you?" Kushner is saying that Mormonism could teach the gay community a valuable lesson on the importance of creating myth and the way faith shapes people's destiny.


In *Angels*, even the unsavory Roy Cohn, a traitor to Jews and homosexuals, has something to teach—the art of wheeling and deal-

ing with those you hate in order to get things done. In his perverted way, Cohn stands for a rejection of deadly immobility; that is why he is marginally redeemed—not because, as Evenden says, he is a victim of AIDS.

This is how Kushner's play embraces diversity. Its message, to the gay community in particular, is that we must learn to use strategies from diverse sources, even our worst enemies; we must try whatever works and learn from it. That is evolution, adaptation, migration; the essential nature of life, and our only guarantee of survival.

Evenden notes how in *Angels* the domestic crisis of the gay couple Louis and Prior contrasts with the LDS couple Joe and Harper. Both Louis and Joe leave their spouses, but Louis has committed a sin, whereas homosexual Joe has merely taken an inevitable step in his quest for wholeness. Evenden takes this as evidence of the play's skewed sense of right. It is proof that for Kushner, "loyalty to afflicted gay men is the one fixed moral criterion." Joe is justified in his abandonment of his "helpless and irrational wife, apparently because she is a suffering straight woman," Evenden alleges. But Evenden leaves out the crucial difference. Harper's emotional pain is caused largely by her husband's heterosexual masquerade. Surely, the long-term moral solution to their crisis is not more of what has made them both sick.

Evenden observes that in the epilogue, no Mormons who are still loyal to the values of the Church have been included in the community of friends sharing Prior's dispensation: "Kushner is not reconciliatory [at the fundamental level] with those he considers the enemies of his people." Is that so unfair? How many faithful Latter-day Saints can Evenden name who can cry, in solidarity with Prior, "We will be citizens. The time has come," and remain completely loyal to their Church, which sponsors "reparative therapy" for homosexuals, works to uphold Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2, and urges the defeat of a Hawaii initiative that would permit same-sex marriage? No wonder Hannah must leave the political values of her faith to

 Pontius' Puddle



partake in Kushner's new millennium.

There are liberal Mormons. Brother Evenden is one, but even he admits that his loyalties are riven by the irreconcilability of gay liberation and the heterosexually centered values of the Church. His solution, or more accurately, the starting place is this: Mormons must respect the spontaneous, unchosen nature of same-sex orientation just as gays and lesbians must understand that for many Mormons, "religion operates at the same level of unbidden discovery." By equating sexual orientation with "spiritual orientation" Evenden reveals that he still does not grasp the nature of sexual predisposition.

As an LDS gay man, born into the faith, active in the gay community and the Church, I affirm that there is more poetry than truth in his comparison. It is not that sexuality is the only source of identity, but sexuality is as basic to a person's identity as race. Religious preference is a philosophic affinity nurtured by a person's will to believe. There is a vast difference between an immutable characteristic and a belief, even a foreordained one. It is not that all religiously prompted denial of sexual desire is doomed to failure; it is that most people suffer a fundamental diminishment of spiritual identity when they are less than authentic in their sexual lives.

It is hard for even a sympathetic heterosexual to appreciate the depth in which this phenomenon operates. He or she has been swimming with the current since birth. It is easy to overestimate your strength as a swimmer and underestimate the force of the flow until you've gone against it. Heterosexual Mormons frequently equate the *management* of their own impulses with the total *suppression* of same-sexual behavior. Until straight Latter-day Saints appreciate the disproportionate share of burden the Church binds upon homosexuals, the dialogue even Evenden proposes can accomplish little.

DAVID H. CALLAHAN
Los Angeles

Michael Evenden responds:

I agree that Kushner's fusion of the sacred and profane is provocatively pleasurable and disturbing, a key trait of a remarkable work. My frustration is largely with Kushner's insistence on sorting these complexities out in order to give his play a morally simple, tendentious ending, and also with those critics who (I believe) miss his point—that in the end, codified religion is judged as static and dead, and that spirituality resides instead in one who chooses to "curse God [or at least—profane humor again—to sue him] and live." For me, a part of this forcible rush to the ending is Kushner's last-minute, and too-

simple, determination that Harper's instability is a mere result of her inauthentic marriage to Joe, a convenient shortcut to her final, reassuring exit from the play.

While there is much for us to think about in Kushner's depiction of Mormons, including how far we've traveled from our radically innovative beginnings, we cannot celebrate Kushner's use of Mormon symbols without acknowledging that in the end he rejects them, both in the play and in a review in *American Theater* where he briskly dismisses Mormon theology, symbols, and ritual as "so dumb." I am not surprised that Kushner depicts Mormonism as a failure, and ultimately an enemy to a healthy, progressive community; I am surprised that few acknowledge that that is his point.

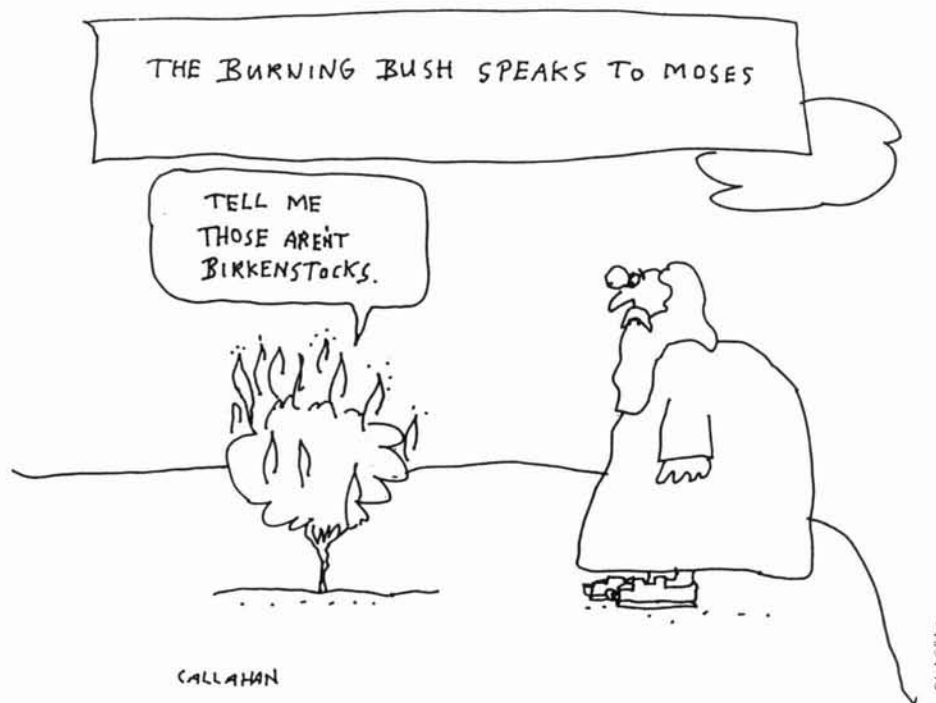
I also thank Brother Callahan for his words on the larger issues Kushner raises, including the necessity for adaptation, change, growth (including learning from our enemies), and, obviously, the challenges of understanding spiritual and sexual difference. In proposing "spiritual orientation" as a companion term to "sexual orientation," I was only attempting to offer neutral language for a respectful and evenhanded dialogue between traditional Mormonism and gay liberation—a hypothetical interchange that I concede may be nothing more than a fantasy. Dialogue, after all, requires a willingness by all concerned to lay down defenses, to learn, and to acknowledge previously unrecognized truth. But just as Mormons don't want to believe that gays and lesbians can still have vital spiritual lives, Callahan apparently

doesn't want to concede that any gay Mormons might find fulfillment while being "less than authentic in their sexual lives." Perhaps one side is absolutely right (and I am committed to a general belief in prophetic authority, which has certainly taken sides); yet I am—and here, if anywhere, lies my liberalism—congenitally uneasy with sweeping pronouncements about other people's inner lives, and both sides in this debate come armed with such pronouncements and a deep determination to win the argument.

One way out of stalemate might be for more people who have negotiated this unmarked terrain to find a broad forum in which to share more fully—and without clichés—their personal experience, whatever the individual conclusion. This, at least, would build on the Mormon tradition of members sharing personal experience and reflection. But unless we are willing to really listen to such unanticipated experiences, we will not only learn nothing, we will fail to learn whether we had anything to learn.

I'M A SHELL

VIEWING *Angels in America* was an incredible and powerful experience. For me, the most significant segment begins with Harper's hallucination that she shares with Prior when he "reveals" to her that her husband's a homo." In this scene, which is split, Harper asks Joe whether he is gay, while at the other end of the stage, Prior and Louis discuss the proper basis of judgment and Irish immigrants being tossed into the sea:



JOE: I think we ought to pray. Ask God for help. Ask him together . . .

HARPER: God won't talk to me. I have to make up people to talk to me.

JOE: You have to keep asking.

HARPER: I forgot the question. Oh yeah. God, is my husband a . . .

JOE (*Scary*): Stop it. Stop it. I'm warning you. Does it make any difference? That I might be one thing deep within, no matter how wrong or ugly that thing is, so long as I have fought, with everything I have, to kill it. What do you want from me? . . . For God's sake, there's nothing left, I'm a shell. There's nothing left to kill. As long as my behavior is what I know it has to be. Decent. Correct. That alone in the eyes of God.

And later in the scene:

PRIOR: One of my ancestors was a ship's captain who made money bringing whale oil to Europe and returning with immigrants—Irish mostly, packed in tight, so many dollars per head. The last ship he captained foundered off the coast of Nova Scotia in a winter tempest and sank to the bottom. He went down with the ship—la Grande Geste—but his crew took seventy women and kids in . . . this big, open rowboat, and when . . . and they thought the boat was overcrowded, the crew started lifting people up and hurling them into the sea. Until they got the ballast right. . . . [W]hen the boat rode low in the water they'd grab the nearest passenger and throw them into the sea. The boat was leaky, see; seventy people; they ar-

rived in Halifax with nine people on board . . . I think about that story a lot now. People in a boat, waiting, terrified, while implacable, unsmiling men, irresistibly strong, seize . . . maybe the person next to you, maybe you, and with no warning at all, with time only for a quick intake of air you are pitched into freezing, turbulent water and salt and darkness to drown.

When I saw the play, this sequence moved me powerfully. Homosexuality is not a "demon" with which I deal. However, I have wrestled, and continue to wrestle, with my own demons. Each of us has our own internal struggles, some of which consist of efforts to be authentic to ourselves while at the same time trying to "face the right way," as Elder Packer says. For me, gazing inward and exploring my own feelings, intuitions, beliefs, and urges—in a blatantly honest and excruciatingly painful and intensely focused manner—is part of my being. However, as I responded to these inner promptings, they led me beyond the comfortable bounds set by Correlation. I asked myself questions whose answers indicated that the theological foundations upon which I had constructed my life were not "black and white," as I had been taught in childhood and had instructed others in adulthood.

But I simply could not allow myself to disagree with the cultural and doctrinal views expressed by my Church leaders. The result, a Procrustean cutting off of certain parts of my intellectual and spiritual self, was both damning and painful. If we ignore and

repress parts of our souls, we are psychologically walking up and down our own longboat, and when threatened by a thought or feeling, we toss it into the sea. We eventually get to the point where we cry, "For God's sake, there's nothing left, I'm a shell. There's nothing left to kill. As long as my behavior is what I know it has to be. Decent. Correct. That alone in the eyes of God."

KEN ANDERSON
Houston, TX

EASTER MOURNING

THE LOSS OF ceremony and seasonal ritual when I joined the LDS church three years ago was profound: no Advent, no Christmas season, no Lent, and no Easter.

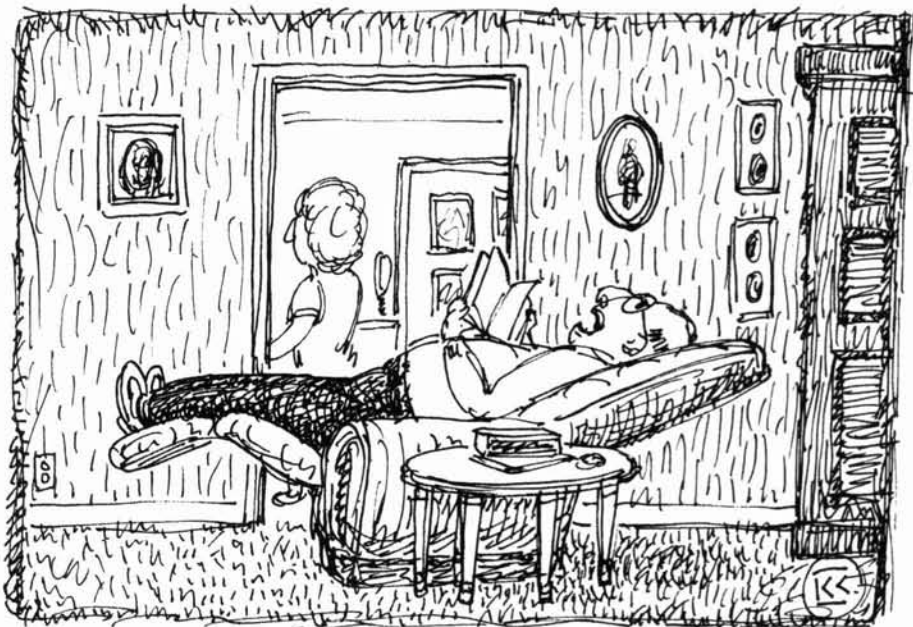
I feel, as Chris Sexton seems to, that these celebrations linked to the equinoxes were "utterly proper and indeed powerful" ("Easter Has Been Canceled This Year," *SUNSTONE* Sept. 1994). All these special church seasons revolve around the symbolism of light and dark, which touch a part of me no televised conference can ever reach.

While some traditions can translate from the congregation to the home, that change robs the season of the joy and solidarity of celebrating in community. I attend Protestant churches in my area for Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, or Good Friday just to recapture the sharing of drama and faith with other believers in Christ.

The loss of Easter is the hardest. Often general conference incorporates no recounting of the drama of the resurrection, no homage to new life. And, most astounding, there is no sacrament. If we can sing hymns during the broadcast or taped replay, if we can bow our heads in long-distance prayer, can't we partake of the sacrament in memory of Christ on the day commemorating his resurrection?

I also notice a knowledge gap in the Christ's life among Mormons. We study gospel doctrines, read scripture stories, and listen to talks and testimonies—all good—but few members I know have the foundational familiarity with the Savior's that comes from year-after-year repetition of his birth, ministry, death, and triumph over sin and death.

When I see Christmas lights in the dark of winter, my thoughts turn to the return of our Light in the world's time of tribulation. When I sit in a bare and darkened sanctuary on Good Friday, I feel the devastation of the loss of his light. When I see the Easter lilies surrounding an altar that had been stripped bare the Friday before, I see the new life that left the tomb empty, and I rejoice in the life everlasting.



"If anyone from the ward calls, tell 'em I'm at the temple."

Watching television with others is not community worship. TV isolates rather than unites viewers. It destroys family interaction, and I cringe when I it destroys my Church family. Rather than passing the bread and the water in the light to one another, when one

sits in the Tabernacle, or on folding chairs in a darkened meetinghouse watching the glow of the set, or on a living room sofa, it may be reverent, but it is not worshipful.

HEIDI N. BRUGGER
Freedom, ME

SUNSTONE WELCOMES LETTERS. ADDRESS THEM TO "READERS' FORUM" (FAX: 801/355-4043). WE VALUE SHORT LETTERS, AND WE EDIT FOR CLARITY, TONE, AND SPACE. LETTERS ADDRESSED TO AUTHORS WILL BE FORWARDED, UNOPENED, TO THEM.

OF GOOD REPORT

"We Have Been Part of a Civil and Ecclesial Tradition That Has Offended against Women."

At the 34th General Congregation in its 461-year history, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) released, on 22 March 1995, the remarkable two-page document, "Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society" (excerpted below), which apologized for its past complicity in offenses against women and committed the religious order to work to remedy the situation.

We wish to consider . . . the "unjust treatment and exploitation of women" . . . This is principally because, assisted by the general rise on consciousness concerning this issue, we are more aware than previously that it is indeed a central concern of any contemporary mission which seeks to integrate faith and justice. . . .

The Situation. The dominance of men in their relationship with women has found expression in many ways. It has included discrimination against women in educational opportunities, the disproportionate burden they are called upon to bear in family life, paying them a lesser wage for the same work, limiting their access to the positions of influence when admitted to public life and, sadly, and only too frequently, outright violence against . . . women. . . .

This situation, however, has begun to change, chiefly because of the critical awakening and courageous protest of women themselves. . . . Nonetheless, we still have with us the legacy of systematic discrimination against women. . . .

The Church Addresses the Situation. . . . The original plan of God was for a loving relationship of respect, mutuality and equality between men and women, and we are called to fulfill this plan. The tone of this [Catholic] ecclesial reflection on Scripture [Gen. 1:27] makes it clear that there is an urgency in the challenge to translate theory into practice not only outside, but also within, the church itself.

Role and Responsibility of Jesuits. The society of Jesus accepts this challenge and our responsibility for doing what we can as men and as a male religious order. We do not pretend or claim to speak for women. However, we do speak out of what we have learned from women about ourselves and our relationship with them.

. . . We respond, too, out of the acknowledgment of our own limited but significant influence a Jesuits and as male religious within the church. We are conscious of the damage to the people of God brought about by the alienation of women in some cultures who no longer feel at home in the Church and who are not able with integrity to transmit Catholic values to their families, friends and colleagues.

Conversion. In response, we Jesuits first ask God for grace of conversion. We have been part of a civil and ecclesial tradition that has offended against women. And, like many men, we have a tendency to convince ourselves that there is no problem. However unwittingly, we have often been complicit in a form of clericalism which has reinforced male domination with an ostensibly divine

sanction. By making this declaration we wish to react personally and collectively, and do what we can to change this regrettable situation.

Appreciation. We know that the nurturing of our own faith and much of our own ministry would be greatly diminished without the dedication, generosity and joy that women bring to the schools, parishes and other fields in which we labor together. . . . Many women have helped to reshape our theological tradition in a way that has liberated both men and women. We wish to express our appreciation for this profound contribution of women. . . .

Ways Forward. . . . We do not presume that there is any one model of male-female relationship to be recommended, much less imposed, throughout the world or even within a given culture. . . . We must be careful not to interfere in a way that alienates the culture, but rather we must endeavor to facilitate a more organic process of change. . . .

In the first instance, we invite all Jesuits to listen carefully and courageously to the experience of women. . . . There is no substitute for such listening. More than anything else it will bring about change. Without listening, action in this area, no matter how well-intentioned, is likely to bypass the real concerns of women and to confirm male condescension and reinforce male dominance. . . .

Second, we invite all Jesuits, as individuals and through their institutions, to align themselves in solidarity with women. The practical ways of doing this will vary from place to place and from culture to culture, but many examples come readily to mind:

- Explicit teaching of the essential equality of women and men...
- Support for liberation movements for women which oppose their exploitation and encourage their entry into political and social life.
- Specific attention to the phenomenon of violence. . . .
- Genuine involvement of women in consultation and decision making in our Jesuit ministries.
- Respectful collaboration with our female colleagues. . . .
- Use of appropriately inclusive language. . . .
- Promotion of the education of women and . . . the elimination of all forms of illegitimate discrimination between boys and girls....

Conclusion. . . . We know that a reflective and sustained commitment to bring about this respectful reconciliation can flow only from our God of love and justice, who reconciles all and promises a world in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).