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READERS' FORUM



CHECKING IT TWICE AND RULE #50

ONCE AGAIN this holiday season, three of my friends received a Sunstone Christmas card from editor Elbert Peck, but not me. It is humiliating when they ask if I've seen it. Now, I've never spoken or volunteered at a symposium, I've never given a donation, and I'm not a subscriber, but I follow Sunstone religiously and wish you would put me on next year's list.

HAL ROCKLAND
Santa Barbara, CA

Elbert Peck responds:

Above is the Calvin Grondahl Christmas card illustration. Although we inevitably miss some people, we tried to send it to last year's donors, magazine contributors, symposium participants, and volunteers. Join one group, and I'll put you on the '96 list.

RULE #74

I ENJOYED Elbert Peck's 100 rules ("Potluck," SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995), but his Christmas card broke rule #74: "Don't run cartoons of Jesus! (Even as a baby.)"

JOHN COX
Alexandria, VA

Elbert Peck responds:

Technically, you see just baby Jesus' hand, and they're *points* not *rules*. A good Pharisee, I kept #52 since it's senior to #74: "Don't give Grondahl or Bagley cartoon suggestions."

HAIL THE HUNDREDTH issue (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1995)—absolutely the best ever! "What a pot pourry!" as my grandmother would have exclaimed. For openers, there is Elbert Eugene's delightful "One hundred . . . lessons . . . learned. . . ." A must, a most entertaining, read for all SUNSTONE contributors past, present, and future—full of hard-won and distilled wit and wisdom. It alone is worth the annual subscription price—(except for Bert's quirky feelings about Greek and Latin plurals—symposiums, really! [Rule #50.] That is as bad, or worse, than condominiums. What next? —agendas, agendums, medias, phenomenums, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, and octopuses, focuses, criterions? And are the singulars agendum, medium, and datum banned, too? Leave us pedants alone.)

And Ben Bennion ("Geographic Dynamics of Mormondom") outdid even himself.

And Courtney Campbell ("The Ordeal and Meaning of Suffering") will make life a hell of a lot easier for many of us old enough to shave.

And what can I say about Quinn on Quinn?—Inadequately, I'll try, "Thanks, ol' buddy, for opening up and bearing your soul!"

And about Dean May's insight that "Faith without doubt is not faith at all. . . ."—quite a few of us, I would guess, have been there and

back (or, maybe, not quite back). His sermon is comforting.

And I have never read more thoroughly thought-out book reviews than those by Marvin Hill and Gregory Prince. I also appreciate Don Gibbon's off-the-wall-style review.

And, and, and. . . Thanx, Bert! I hope to be around to read the Two Hundredth.

STANLEY B. KIMBALL
Glen Carbon, IL

Bert Peck responds:

As they write in their condominium, SUNSTONE pedants may use any archaic Latin plurals they desire, but one. Although past Sunstone gurus Peggy Fletcher and Daniel Rector also preferred *symposia*, since the 1991 "Statement on Symposia," Sunstone uses *symposiums*. Our office dictionary (*American Heritage*, 3rd ed.) now prefers the latter, too.

PUSHING THE BUTTONS

EUGENE ENGLAND'S "What Covenant Will God Receive in the Desert?" (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1994) gave his views on the

evils of nuclear weaponry. I am the deputy director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and England's questioning the moral fiber of those involved in developing nuclear weapons struck close to home.

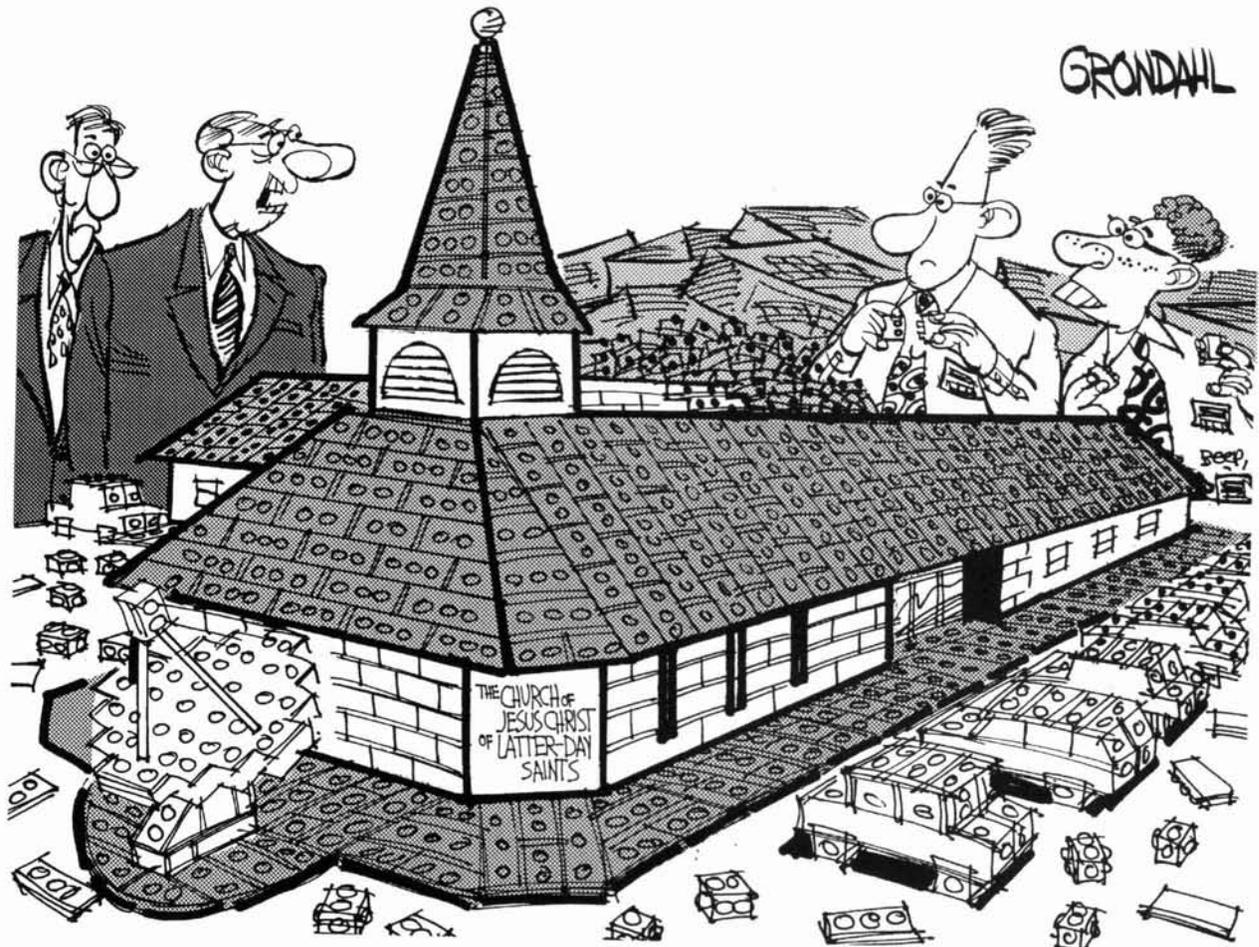
Some of his key themes are that nuclear deterrence is madness, that the nuclear arms race has resulted in massive pollution and incredible debt, and that developing nuclear weapons might have cankered our souls.

First, nuclear weapons have saved countless millions of lives by making global war unthinkable. The number of people killed by warfare increased dramatically during the first half of the century, reaching a total of about 60 million by 1945, when World War II was brought to an early conclusion through the use of nuclear weapons. Global war has not occurred since then, and the number of people killed by warfare has decreased dramatically. The prospects of unleashing nuclear weapons have forced the superpowers to settle conflicts in other ways. Many years ago, a former director of Los Alamos stated that the Laboratory did not design nuclear weapons to kill people but to

buy time until political processes could be put in place to resolve conflict without resorting to world war. The evidence shows that nuclear deterrence has worked.

Second, the facts simply do not support that the nuclear arms race can be blamed for much of the world's current economic difficulty. The United States turned to nuclear weapons partly because they were a bargain. In a free society such as ours, it would have been prohibitively expensive to maintain the huge conventional forces that would have been needed to offset the Soviet threat.

England also overstates the environmental and health aspects of nuclear weapons development. For example, the United Nations sent a team of physicians into the Ukrainian countryside to evaluate the health impact of the nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl on the more distant villages in the path of the radioactive plume. In villages that had been exposed to fallout, they indeed found many people in poor health; the villagers almost invariably blamed it on Chernobyl. The physicians then visited villages that had not received any exposure. When



"No, we said 'New Church Logo' NOT NEW CHURCH LEGO!"

the data were analyzed, there was no discernible impact from the Chernobyl accident.

Finally, England suggests that those of us involved in the nuclear weapons development should be judged in the same light as those who have actually killed millions of innocent citizens (presumably someone such as Hitler). He also speculates that LDS weapons developers have been duped into such a heinous work because of their "unquestioning Mormon superpatriotism." As to judg-

ment, let's leave that to God. As to motives, from firsthand experience, England does LDS weapons developers a disservice by implying they are a bunch of mindless sheep blindfolded by an American flag.

JAMES F. JACKSON
Los Alamos, NM

Eugene England responds:

I apologize for anything in my essay that seemed to question "the moral fiber of those involved in developing nuclear weapons" or

that could be read as "implying they are a bunch of mindless sheep." The essay was given as a speech and used many poetic devices, including hyperbole, to move its audience to new feelings and ways of thinking about the dangers of continuing to acquiesce in programs of nuclear deterrence that seem to me morally and spiritually dangerous for all of us—programs that, in Brother Jackson's own summary of my idea, "might have cankered our souls." My use of "our"



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was crucial; I meant to point fingers at no one but to ask us *all* to rethink our participation (if only through our taxes and our silence), perhaps while doing a little reading: Richard Rhodes's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb* (1988) and his *Dark Sun: The Making of the Hydrogen Bomb* (1995), trace the "lunacy" that led us to stockpile 32,500 warheads (when a few hundred could destroy all civilization) at a cost of \$4 trillion (about equal to the national debt that is tearing our nation apart politically as we argue about how much to cut back on care of children and the poor and elderly)—and, in the words of *Time's* reviewer (1 Jan. 1996) "blundered to a fortunate standoff," though we "came close to making the earth uninhabitable for anything but cockroaches."

This lunacy, which we started and continually escalated, led the equally lunatic Soviets to build 45,000 warheads and bankrupt their economy, at a cost of continuing human suffering that is incalculable and still increasing. A good part of that suffering is in the "environmental and health aspects" of nuclear development, which Brother Jackson claims I overstate. Look at the January 1993 *National Geographic* (for the massive devastation, death, and deformity around Russian test sites) and Carole Gallagher's *American Ground Zero* (for what our own Nevada tests have cost)—and judge for yourselves.

The madness continues. The U.S. and Russia still have missiles aimed at each other and are currently trying to cut their addiction back to "only" 3500 warheads—when nations like Britain and Israel have concluded that 200 is plenty for deterrence. *All* of us are caught up in the madness: as *Time* recently reported (27 Nov. 1995), most Americans *think* we spend as much on foreign aid as we do on arms and want to cut the aid and increase the arms. Actually, we spend only 1 percent of our budget on aid and *eighteen times* that much on arms—though the scriptures and modern prophets make it abundantly clear that arms will not bring peace, only living the gospel of mercy will.

Though Brother Jackson may be right that "WWII was brought to an early conclusion through the use of nuclear weapons," that happened only at a tragic cost in lives, suffering, and moral weakness (as President J. Reuben Clark clearly pointed out). The war *could* have been brought to an end much earlier, through the use of the power of mercy expressed in a willingness to negotiate an armistice instead of insisting on the revenge of "unconditional surrender," and the many wars since, costing millions of lives (which Brother Jackson seems to think acceptable

because nuclear deterrence prevented even worse ones) could also have been prevented if we had learned and developed the powers of making peace rather than building weapons of fear. Nuclear weapons did not, as Brother Jackson claims, "buy time until political processes would be put in place to resolve conflict" but instead provided the superpowers with an excuse for not really trying to make peace. (Witness the massively destructive Gulf War, which could have been prevented by an informed and determined diplomacy throughout the Middle East in the preceding years that was neglected in part through complacent reliance on nuclear and other arms buildup.) If we had invested even one tenth the thought and treasure we wasted on arms, we could have—and still could—find intelligent applications of mercy capable of removing most of the causes of war. I invite Brother Jackson, his co-workers, and all of us, to bend our energies in that direction. God has promised to help.

EX POST FACTO

Some notes concerning Edwin Firmage's "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon" (SUNSTONE, July 1993):

That the brass plates of Laban equate to our Old Testament is never stated explicitly. The best indication to that effect is that "they did contain the five books of Moses" (1 Ne. 5:11), which books, as Firmage states, are not considered by scholars to have been

composed by 600 B.C., let alone by Moses.

However, the Nephites are shown to be unacquainted with the Deuteronomic and Priestly codes in the Bible's version of the books of Moses. Lehi builds an altar in the desert and offers sacrifice (1 Ne. 2:7), activities proscribed by Deuteronomy 12:13–14, which limits the ritual to a central place, and by Leviticus 1–10, which restricts the performance to the priestly descendants of Aaron. The Pentateuch makes adultery a capital offense; the Book of Mormon does not (Alma 30:10). Yet the pre-Christian Nephites frequently assert that they keep the Law of Moses. Nor do they seem to know of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7) when Zarahemla's people submit to the kingship of Mosiah (Omni 12–10). Such incongruities indicate either that Joseph Smith did not know the Bible very well, or that the Nephite "Bible" was not much like ours.

Consider 2 Chronicles 17:9, which suggests that there existed only *one* book called "the book of the law of the LORD." The later book, found in the temple during the reign of King Josiah (2 Chron. 34:15) had wet ink, according to many scholars, and was condemned even by Jeremiah (Jer. 8:8, 2:8). That discovered book is now our Deuteronomy, and it outlawed many long-established practices, such as the offering of domestic sacrifice by family elders of any tribe. The older book, to the extent that it differed from Josiah's, was in danger. If it were made of brass, it might have been con-



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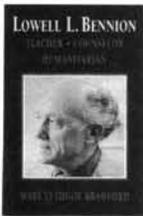
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verted to (bronze) doorknobs. Thus the story of Laban's plates agrees with biblical history in limiting the number of published law codes to a few copies. And Lehi's behavior in the desert is in rough conformity to what higher criticism would predict.

BUTCH FOSTER
Stansbury, UT

Y NOT?

OLIVER ALDEN'S discourse is the best I've read on the pain and problems of the active LDS homosexual ("My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?" Meditations of a Gay Mormon on the 22nd Psalm," SUNSTONE, Aug. 1995). I ache for him and have few answers—mostly more questions.

Consider a recent problem in veterinary medicine in Idaho: Sheep were refusing to mate heterosexually and demonstrated homosexual tendencies. Experiments showed that a deficiency of certain trace elements, including selenium, in the first trimester of gestation caused the malformation of the fetal hypothalamus part of the brain, which apparently caused altered sexual orientation. Application of these principles to human development can only be conjectural, but the widespread deficiency of selenium in the soils of many regions, coupled with the removal of trace minerals in food processing may shed some light on causes and prevention of homosexuality, which in some cases might be thought of as a birth defect.

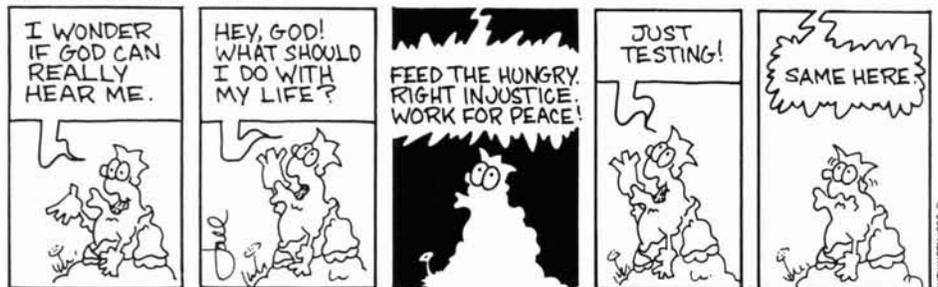
Do we in the Church, or in society, treat other birth defects in a similar way? Only when they affect the sex of an individual. As a physician, I have cared for sexually ambiguous patients—ones whose genitalia were not obviously male or female. Sometimes the sex that the patient will have beyond the age of two months is more a function of the reconstructive surgeon than the findings of the geneticist. I know patients who are beautiful women, happily married, with no question of any sort about their gender, but when we examined them to find the cause of their infertility, we discovered that in place of ova-

ries they have testes, and their genotype is a male's XY. Since none of these patients were LDS, I do not know how the Church would have responded, but some interesting questions arise: Do these women get ordained, since they are genetically males? Must they divorce their husbands? Do children with a Y chromosome but no penis go to the deacon's or to the beehive class? Does an emasculated war veteran lose his priesthood?

These may seem like silly questions, but similar questions do arise in LDS settings. For example, a priesthood holder in Las Vegas, married and with children, developed testicular cancer. Because the tumor was stimulated by testosterone, he was castrated to decrease the growth rate of the cancer. After surgery, he began developing female secondary sexual characteristics, including breasts, decreased body hair, and cyclical mood changes, while his tumor regressed at an unexpected rate. Examination revealed a pair of functional ovaries in his pelvis, which had previously been suppressed by his testes' testosterone production. This is an uncommon finding in autopsies of otherwise sexually normal men. In the midst of his understandable identity crisis, his local priesthood leaders told him that, to avoid excommunication, he must undergo bilateral mastectomy and oophorectomy (castration again!). His physician advised against this, as it would remove the estrogen suppression of the tumor. Castration and anti-testosterone hormonal therapy are standard treatments for male sexual tumors, and it seems unlikely that high-priest-age men with prostate cancer would be subjected to a ultimatum similar to that received by this poor brother. It seems to have been his breast development that the local priesthood, and his wife, objected to. He was subsequently excommunicated, and his wife and children, who were mortified, left him. If something as basic as sex can be so ambiguous, are we surprised that something as subjective as sexual orientation can also become confused?

DAN L. ECKLUND
Viroqua, WI

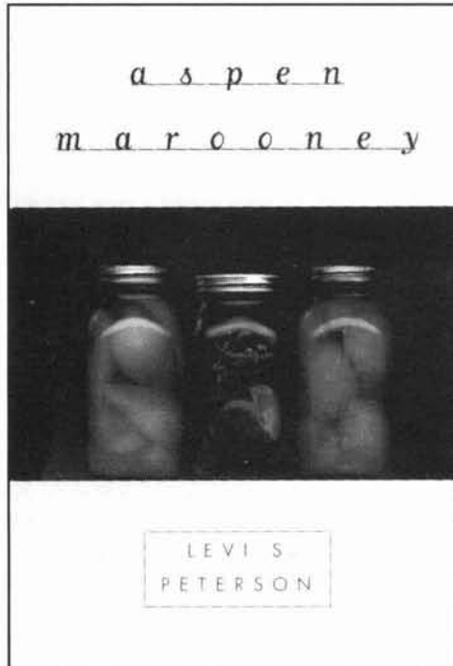
Pontius' Puddle



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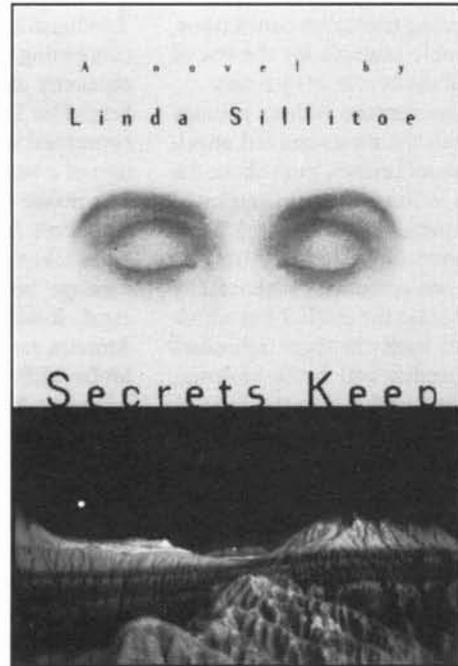
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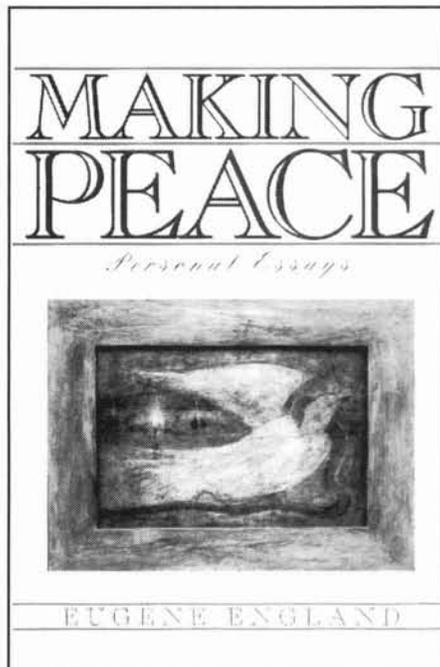
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ENGLAND

EUGENE



BUSHMAN-CARLTON

MARILYN



Signature **Books**

DIVERGENT PATHS

AS A NEW SUBSCRIBER, I was impressed with much of what I read in the August/September 1995 issue. I was particularly moved by Oliver Alden's story. In overcoming the bitterness that comes so naturally to victims of prejudice and persecution, while remaining true to his convictions, he sets a remarkable example for the rest of us. I wish him all the best in his journey.

I can't help but contrast Alden's courage and tolerance with the mean-spirited attack contained in Michael Levine's letter about the BYU decision not to show an uncut version of *Schindler's List*. Levine and his alleged "Mormon friends" regard the BYU administration's decision as "unconscionable," without any empathy whatever for the catch-22 in which the school found itself. To show *Schindler's List* intact, with its nudity and harsh violence, would be to acknowledge that the school's (and its sponsoring church's) prohibition against such material is founded less on principle than on portable guidelines. *Schindler's List* is a powerful and important movie; I don't recall hearing the BYU administration deny that, nor do I recall hearing anyone there tell students that they should not see the film. However, for the university to sponsor a showing would be tantamount to saying that excellent film content makes nudity/violence an acceptable by-product. The school would thereafter be placed in the impossible position of having to inspect and judge the trade-off between merit and objectionable material for every "important" film that came down the pike. As one who saw and was affected by

the film, I nonetheless cannot blame them for declining to take that path.

GARY WIDDISON
Tokyo, Japan

SCHINDLER'S CUT

I WAS AMUSED AT the display of artistic indignation expressed by Michael Levine concerning the request by BYU to edit the obscenity and bare breasts in Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*. If his outrage really concerned artistic values and the preservation of a work of art, he might have a point. The reality is that in five years, we will see *Schindler's List* on television, the offending parts taken out and, I presume, its artistic message bowdlerized and its morality excised. It will be for the sake of mainstream America and at the request of sponsors like McDonald's or G.M. No one will make a whimper. What we see in Mr. Levine's outrage and condescension and in Steven Spielberg's selective integrity is the willingness to humiliate a powerless minority (without losing any money at the box office). I have no doubt the moral courage of people such as Steven Spielberg will vanish in an instant when the time comes to squeeze more money out of the film. The episode concerning BYU and *Schindler's List* is less one of cultural backwardness on the part of the Church than one of intolerance by mainstream America of a religious minority's value system. Who's surprised that the Church can't endorse a movie that shows bare breasts and uses sexual expletives regardless of the film's countervailing virtues? Ultimately it

seems ludicrous and self righteous to claim that excising these few words and scenes would mar the artistic statement of the film. We can watch the TV version and find out.

BRAD TEARE
Providence, UT

SUN WORSHIP

I WAS TOUCHED BY Heidi Brugger's lament on Mormonism's lack of the seasonal ceremonies ("Easter Mourning," *SUNSTONE*, Aug. 1995). How the Christmas lights brighten the dark winter solstice; how the Easter spring engenders feelings of rebirth, renewal, and resurrection. It's nice to feel connected through those rituals back to the Middle Ages and the earliest Christians.

There's just one problem. Here, down-under, Easter is in the fall, and Christmas is in the summer, when the days are the longest! I have never dreamt of a white Christmas, nor do I yearn for one—my fondest Christmas memories are sunny, not dark, days.

President Gordon B. Hinckley recently said that soon half of the Church would live outside the United States. Since many of those Saints are south of the equator, it's probably a good thing that the Church's holiday celebrations have been stripped of European seasonal trappings. What would be nice, however, is for the Church to allow different regions to customize their commemorations. Brugger in England can keep her lights-in-the-dark Christmas rituals; down here, I'd like some beach/ocean ceremony to celebrate the Birth.

Realistically, however, we're not going to develop regional customs; the Church seems heck-bent on having one program for every hamlet anywhere in the world. Being such a modern, corporate, world-wide religion, couldn't we develop new, season-neutral rituals that would better call out our desires for deeper holiday worship than do our current Mormon services, which often are just "theme" sacrament meetings?

BILL HENSON
Sydney, Australia

ADDRESS LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION TO "READERS' FORUM." WE CUT FOR SPACE AND DUPLICATION AND EDIT FOR TONE. LETTERS ADDRESSED TO AUTHORS WILL BE FORWARDED, UNOPENED, TO THEM.



OF GOOD REPORT

SERMON ON PROPERTY

How the cash-strapped, unwealthy Christian can create a surplus to help the poor.

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have.
—Heb. 13:16, RSV

PROPERTY IS JUSTIFIED in so far as it is acquired through work, when it represents accumulated work. On the other hand, however, when I have possessions and see the need of the starving and in my hand the money increases according to the law "To him who has will more be given," I can again become confused and ask myself whether I may keep it. We must also bear in mind the other fact that . . . I own property. . . not only because I have worked or taken over the yield from the work of my parents but also because society gives me the possibility of keeping it. Thus society joins in all ownership as co-owner. All of the property that I own does not belong to me in the sense that I may say to myself, "That is mine. I can do with it what I want," but only in the sense that I say to myself, "That is property which I should administer in a profitable sense for the general public and for which I am obliged before my conscience to be responsible."

Property, therefore, means—and here we come to the question we have to take up for today—*responsibility*.

What ought I to do with that which I own? How far may I use it for myself? How far must I let it go to those who are needy?

. . . I have never spoken of the rich and riches, always only of owners and property in a completely general way. . . Let's leave the rich therefore. We are not their judges, and . . . let's speak about us, the well-off and owners. For most of us, wealth and property begin where our means leave off. Whoever earns three thousand francs, with perhaps also a little set aside in savings, says to himself, "You are a worker or a craftsman. What you earn just reaches for your living needs. You aren't bound to worry about others. Leave that to those who earn ten thousand." . . .

This we speak from one ownership and earnings level to the other, and we lay the responsibility on those who are wealthier than we ourselves. . . This *self-deceit* is the great enemy of reflection about the duties that are laid upon us concerning what we do with what we own and earn. . . An owner is anyone who, when he goes to bed in the evening, has something left over for the next day.

. . . [I]n practical life we all stand *again and again before the one question*: That is, *surplus*, which could have been given to the poor! We buy a piece of furniture or a work of art according to our taste, we treat ourselves to a beautiful book, we celebrate a festival in the circle of our relatives, or we undertake a short trip for relaxation—and precisely when we want to be happy, the idea overtakes us: "What good you could have done with that [money]! May you really use it in that way for yourself?"

. . . Jesus himself defended the *right of "surplus"*, and made it evident that there are cases when it is appropriate. When the woman at Bethany anointed him with spices, the disciples grumbled and complained that she ought to have sold the nard and given the money to the poor. But he said, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has done me a good work." A good work in that she showed him love with an intrinsically unnecessary expense. Thus we, too, have the right to act similarly toward our friends.

And nevertheless these decisions may not be allowed to lull us

for the long haul. . . *Everyone*, even he who only keep a bit, is an *owner*, and he may not rock himself in peace, but must always be troubled about *whether* he can account for and *to what extent* he can account for his having something while others starve. . . I am going to give you laws that are *attainable for everyone* and that would represent a far-reaching solution of the problem of poverty, were they to gain general approbation.

The first is this: *Restrict your living requirements* so that you have something to give. *Review your life-style* and that of your family and see what you could save in order to be rich in doing good. And I say that directly to us who do not number among the wealthy and who so easily come into the temptation to say to ourselves that all that we have is necessary for us ourselves.

What the world lacks is not large sums that this or that rich person keeps but the man small gifts that those who possess little spend unnecessarily. Those are the water drops that ought to fill the stream to water the land. . . .

I dare to set up another law that could be carried through by everyone and be of great importance for the general public if a number of people took it seriously. If you allow yourself something that is not essential to life but rather serves relaxation and satisfaction of the need for the beautiful and the nice, then take approximately the same amount it cost and specify that for good deeds. Do not spend more on such things than you allow for the welfare of others! If you undertake a vacation trip, then set aside a gift that will go to the poor and the sick to get them out of the muggy city air. If you make a celebration for your relatives or friends, then ration your means so that you can offer the hungry the same amount you enjoyed to help them. If you buy a piece of furniture or something else that gives you pleasure, think about granting something in the same value for those who lack the most necessary things, who do not know how they are going to pay their rent. And do this for all the amenities you do not begrudge yourself. I think that to a certain extent we must *share with the needy* in everything that goes beyond the essentials. We need to impose a voluntary secret tax through which we secure for ourselves inwardly the license to utilize for ourselves the property that comes into our hand.

When I say this, I also request those who are young and have no household to reflect concerning this secret sort of buying when they pick up those things that, in their lack of restraint, they select to make their lives attractive. . . .

With that I have now given into our hands something firm and practical to help us find our way in a wide area of the confused question of property and the *use of property*. Let each of us reflect on it! *It can be carried through*, and if we take it seriously in life, we may hope to do something good and to compare to the man in the Gospel to whom his Lord said: "You have been faithful in little."

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

in *A Place for Revelation: Sermons on Reverence for Life*
tr. by David Larrimore; emphasis in original
MacMillan, 1988, 66–77; reprinted by permission

SUNSTONE welcomes submissions of interesting quotations.