



CORNUCOPIA

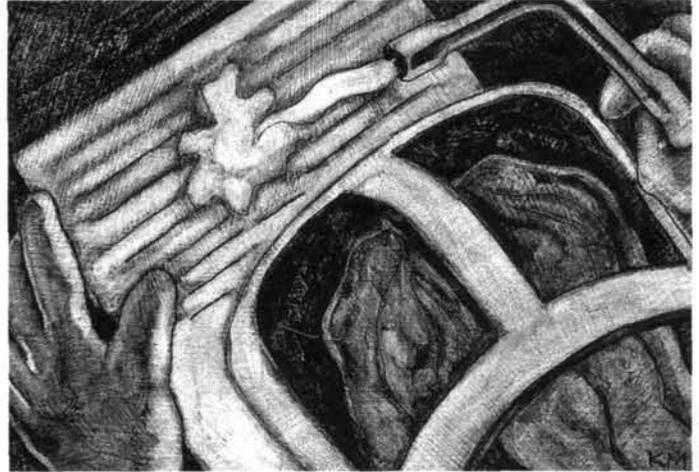
Book of Mormon Musings

REFORMED EGYPTIAN DRUTHERS

And it came to pass that they took him; and his name was Nehor; and they carried him upon the top of the hill Manti, and there he was caused, *or rather* did acknowledge, between the heavens and the earth, that what he had taught to the people was contrary to the word of God; and there he suffered an ignominious death. (Alma 1:15, emphasis added.)

And now behold, I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon, who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, *or rather* by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord; and they had been brought down into the land of Zarahemla, and had ever since been protected by the Nephites. (Alma 53:10, emphasis added.)

AS I SAT AND WROTE THOSE WORDS ON MY computer, I took for granted the ability to correct the text as I typed. When I write with a pencil or a pen I can pick up my eraser or bottle of white-out and make correc-

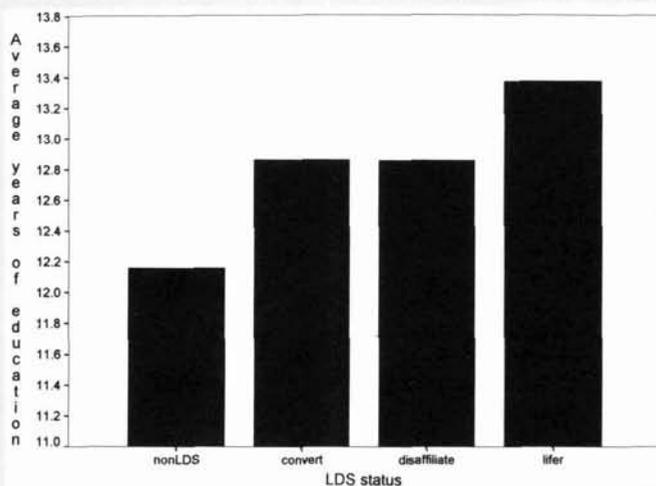


"I think a blowtorch is the closest thing to an eraser Nephi or Mormon may have had when they were writing the Book of Mormon text."

tions. But what about correcting on metal plates? I think a blowtorch would be the closest thing to an eraser Nephi or Mormon would have had when they were writing the Book of Mormon text. As far as I know, no archaeologist has discovered a pre-Columbian blowtorch.

It is difficult to know how Book of Mormon scribes would have written on the plates. We can compare their techniques and frustrations with those experienced by other ancient

Peculiar People



MORMONS MORE EDUCATED

LIFETIME MEMBERS OF THE LDS CHURCH HAVE higher educational attainment than either converts or disaffiliates. All three groups tend to be more educated than is the national population.

Results were obtained by combining many national probability surveys of adults taken by the National Opinion Research Center between 1970 and 1991. Respondents were classified on the basis of religious affiliation at age 16 and at the time of the survey. "Lifers" reported being LDS at both times. "Converts" were not LDS at 16 but had joined by the survey date. "Disaffiliates" said they had been LDS at age 16 but no longer are. Everyone else was classified as non-LDS.

scribes who wrote on metal. One archeological discovery of a room full of discarded plates suggests that some scribes wrote out their text in ink first, and then inscribed the plates by tracing the ink. Their frustration was evident when a scribe could not follow the inked text with the metal carving tool. (See Hugh Nibley's *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*.) And imagine the poor wives of the scribes who may have reacted to the sound of metal writing the same way we might respond to fingernails across a chalkboard.

Even though we don't have the golden plates or any detailed description of their surface that might reveal inscription techniques, we have some hints of the process from the translated text itself. Certain apparent slips of the tongue are corrected or ambiguous passages are clarified by Book of Mormon authors using the phrase "or rather" as the passages I have quoted demonstrate, or rather, suggest. The Book of Mormon authors were apparently less exacting in this regard than we might be (or our grammar teachers or editors forced us to be). That the Book of Mormon contains such grammatical backpedaling should not be viewed as a weakness; on the contrary, it should impress us with the great skill of the authors in creating a complex document on metal—in apparently only one draft—with so few instances of grammatical back-pedaling. If my essays can survive editorial scrutiny with a proportionate number of grammatical mistakes discovered, I will be proud.

—EDGAR C. SNOW JR.

Sunstone Top Ten

MORMON MALAPROPISMS

DIRECT FROM OUR HOME OFFICE IN MERCUR, Utah—the top ten Mormon book title malapropisms as collected by Will Quist, formerly of Benchmark Books, now proprietor of Alpha Books:

10. *The Black Slider*
9. *A Tie to Choose*
8. *A Nation of Sheep*
7. *Thy Virgin Past of the Restoration*
6. *The Temple in Iniquity*
5. *The Lows of Success*
4. *Women of the Priesthood*
3. *Handcrafts to Zion*
2. *Irrational Theology*

and the number one Mormon book title malapropism is . . .

1. *Stepping Stones to an Abrupt Life!*

10. *The Backslider* (Peterson) 9. *A Time to Choose* (Maxwell) 8. *A Nation of Sheep* (Turner) 7. *Divergent Paths of the Restoration* (Shields) 6. *The Temple in Iniquity* (ed. Madsen) 5. *The Laws of Success* (Sill) 4. *Woman and the Priesthood* (Turner) 3. *Handcrafts to Zion* (Hafen & Hafen) 2. *A Rational Theology* (Widstoe) 1. *Stepping Stones to an Abundant Life* (McKay)

OLD TESTAMENT SUNSTONE, NEW TESTAMENT SUNSTONE

THE SEPTEMBER MASSACRE WAS A DEFINING moment in the uneasy relationship between the Mormon intellectual community and the institutional Church. Relations have remained strained since then and show no signs of easing. In a very dramatic way, it brought home the point that, frankly, the Mormon intellectual community faces extinction. We have ourselves to blame.

In the interest of increasing our survival options and preventing further disintegration, I suggest the following strategy. The ideas are difficult to implement. They may sound simplistic. But I think they will work.

First, we need to acknowledge our weaknesses. The single greatest cause of biological extinction is overspecialization. Our community is too specialized. We have treated important issues in the past, it is true, but most of them have been done to death. I am not suggesting we abandon those issues, but it is time to diversify.

Perhaps our greatest weakness is that, despite our intellectual activity, we have misunderstood our charter to learn. Learning should be used in the service of God, and that goes way beyond merely giving symposium papers. It should be self-evident that problems like nuclear proliferation, world hunger, domestic violence, environmental degradation, national chauvinism, human rights abuses, and homelessness are directly relevant to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why, then, do we not say more about these issues in our symposiums, magazines, and journals? Where is the group activism that must follow from learning about these problems?

I have heard people compare Sunstone and liberal/intellectual Mormonism in general with the Old Testament prophets: Like them, we denounce abuses, share pains and joys, and enjoin members to confront their institutional history, policies, and shortcomings with their eyes wide open. It's time now for us to make a transition from "Old Testament Sunstone" to



"We need to stop merely *talking* to each other and start *acting* like all our theologizing and historicizing make a difference."

"New Testament Sunstone." The critical, questioning voices crying in the modern wilderness must make way for activists who break with tradition for the benefit of the downtrodden. We need to stop merely *talking* to each other and start *acting* like all our theologizing and historicizing make a difference.

For example, at gatherings like the Sunstone Symposium, there should be tables for the Nature Conservancy, Habitat for Humanity, Greenpeace, Oxfam, or Planned Parenthood. I would love to see a letter-writing table for Amnesty International. How about collection boxes for donations of food and clothing for local food banks and homeless shelters?

SUNSTONE magazine could become an information clearinghouse to help like-minded individuals collaborate on projects. There could be articles about the nuts and bolts of organized service. Even better would be a flurry of smaller, more specialized publications serving a cadre of service organizations and networks.

The Mormon intellectual community is a community in pain. I believe the quickest way out of that pain is to inflict goodness on the world. When we do good of our own volition, we take responsibility for defining our spirituality. And, more important, we change the ground rules by which our spirituality is defined—and judged—by the Church, the world, ourselves, and our God.

—SHELDON GREAVES

Twenty Years Ago

GOLDEN CALLS A BISHOP

JAMES N. KIMBALL SHARED THE FOLLOWING story about his uncle J. Golden Kimball in SUNSTONE (vol. 1, no. 3): "Some years ago I hired a Mr. Jensen to bring his tractor to my home in Salt Lake City and plough an adjacent field. . . . When he finished he asked me if I was related to the Kimballs in the Church, and I said yes. He then said, 'Golden Kimball?,' and again I said yes—that he was a great-uncle. As is often the case, Mr. Jensen smiled and proceeded to tell me a story of how Uncle Golden had touched his life. When he was a young man, he said, Golden was the visiting general authority of his ward on one Sunday. He remembers sitting near the front and watching this tall, thin man address the saints with a shrill voice. Uncle Golden had come to the ward that day to call a new bishopric and set it apart. After interviewing several of the recommended brethren, Uncle Golden made the choice, announced to the congregation who the new bishop would be, and asked for their sustaining vote. Mr. Jensen related, however, that the congregation had its own ideas about their new bishop and would not give a sustaining vote to Uncle Golden's choice. Uncle Golden looked at them long and hard without saying a word, then turned from the pulpit and invited the brethren back into the bishop's office for another conference. They returned shortly thereafter. Uncle Golden again stood at the pulpit and announced the second choice. Again, he did not

receive a sustaining vote. Golden then grabbed the pulpit and in his high shrill voice said, 'Well, then, who the hell do you want?' A representative from the congregation nervously came



"Well, then, who the hell do you want," Uncle Golden asked the ward members after they had refused to sustain his second choice for bishop.

forward and told who the man was they thought would be a good bishop. The man he mentioned was virtually inactive since he had to work on his farm each Sunday. Uncle Golden asked where he could find the man and directions were given. He immediately left the meeting and drove his Model A to the man's house, where he found him in the fields irrigating. He approached the man, introduced himself, and called him to be the new bishop. The surprised man said he was not a good member of the Church and that he had many problems. Uncle Golden told him he had

come as the anointed of the Lord and he was calling this man as the new bishop. Golden told him that we all have weaknesses and that opportunities are given to serve so that these weaknesses might be overcome. The man accepted the call and returned with Uncle Golden in the Model A to the meetinghouse, where the congregation was still waiting. Uncle Golden took the man, who was still in his overalls and irrigation boots, to the stand and said, 'Is this the man you want?' The congregation responded favorably, the sustaining vote was given, and Uncle Golden set him apart right there on the stand. Mr. Jensen told me that from that time on, the ward always remembered Uncle Golden for his willingness to respond to their needs without constraint and to bend his ecclesiastical authority to accommodate."

WRITING JOURNALS ON WOOD

MARILYN BARKER'S NEWLY PUBLISHED *THE Legacy of Mormon Furniture* (Gibbs Smith) celebrates the Pioneer faith as evidenced in woodworking, with pews, tables, bookcases, etc., featuring such Mormon symbols as beehives, seagulls, grapes, and sunbursts. The following is an excerpt about one carpenter:

"[Ralph] Ramsay's life is best summarized as one where his devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ, manifested in Mormonism, was at all times the dominant theological, social, and economic motivation for him and his family. He had five wives in his lifetime. One died in England and he was divorced



SCOTT PETERSON, THE LEGACY OF MORMON FURNITURE

The trials and sorrows of settling a new territory are clearly observable on the face Ramsay carved on this footboard.

from another. The two wives who were the mothers of his living children at that time were important to each community in which he lived, for one was an herbalist and doctor, and the other was a midwife and nurse.

"The moving around due to hardships and church callings is reflected in Ramsay's furniture. It is easy to attribute the carving of animals and plants to the specific areas in which he and his family lived. The bed he carved for himself from pieces of woods indigenous to each of the places where he lived is truly original and personal. He worked on the bed from 1860–87, carting it with him when he moved from Salt Lake City in 1874 to Richfield in Sevier County, where he was a director in a cooperative movement called the United Order. When that order dissolved, he moved his family to St. Johns, Arizona. He lived there until 1885, when he moved to Colonial Juarez in Chihuahua, Old Mexico, because polygamy was outlawed by the U.S. government. Ramsay wanted to preserve his entire family. When laws were changed, he moved back to Arizona in 1887 and built a home in Snowflake, in 1891.

"The bed is covered with carvings of the flora and fauna he observed with relocation. There are also faces of people moved with emotion, though it is less easy to identify who these individuals were. The difficulties and sorrows people experienced in their trials of settling a new territory and surviving the hardships of harassment for their beliefs and practices are clearly observable on the faces of Ramsay's bed carvings."

IN EVERY TONGUE

FOCUS GROUPS AND MARKET RESEARCH HAVE produced an onslaught of consumer-specific goods, from tennis shoes for the backwards walker to magazines for the Chia Pet collector. It was only a matter of time before the Good Book caught up. The growing list of

interpretations includes the recently released *New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, which features disability-sensitive language and a God called the Father-Mother. There's also the *Couple's Devotional Bible*—whatever that is—and the *New International Reader's Version*, complete with illustrations "as seen through the eyes of a child"—the first Bible written at a 2.9-grade reading level, the lowest available. And finally, there's the not-to-be-missed *Rappin' With Jesus: The Good News According to the Four Brothers*—the New Testament written for black teenagers. Here's a look at Matthew 1:18–23:

Rappin' With Jesus

A sister named Mary was to be married to a brother whose name was Joseph. It was Joseph, you see, who was a descendant of Abraham. It turned out that Mary was already pregnant, and Joseph, wasn't happy about it—especially since the kid wasn't his.

But, Joseph was a pretty cool brother. Although he coulda dissed the sister big time and had her sent away, he decided that Mary was an all right sister (although she *did* have a big problem). For her sake, he decided that he wasn't gonna tell everybody her business.

So while he sat and thought about just how he would send Mary away without everybody knowing what was happenin', an angel of the Almighty stood before him.

"Brother man, don't do this thing you're thinking. Believe me when I tell you, the kid Mary is carrying is a holy kid. Just like a brother named Isaiah said a long time ago, 'A virgin will get pregnant, though not by any brother, and when the kid is born His name shall be called Immanuel,' which is the name of the Almighty Hissself!"

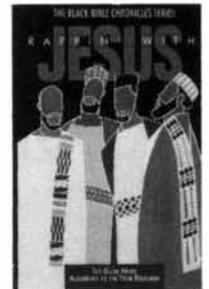
New International Reader's Version

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹Her husband Joseph was a godly man. He did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins."

²²All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, ²³"The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And they will call him Immanuel," which means "God with us."



"And they called the little brother Jesus."



John baptizes Jesus.