



## THEN AND NOW

WHILE TRAVELING IN A POLICE-ESCORTED motorcade in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, on 21 January 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley and his wife Marjorie were involved in a minor traffic accident. The *Deseret News* reported that Sister Hinckley suffered a few light scratches while the president escaped with merely rattled nerves. The Hinckley's car was struck by "loose aluminum beams" sliding off the roof of a quickly halting truck. The beams shattered a window, spraying the Hinckleys with glass.

Times certainly have changed. Official police escorts were out of the question for the Prophet Joseph Smith in his travels, except when parading at the head of the Nauvoo Legion or when on his way to jail. In November 1839, Joseph went to the U.S. capital to visit President Martin Van Buren. En route to Washington, the passenger coach he was on paused at a tavern. The driver—who according to the Prophet "was drunk but once, and that however was most of the time" (*History of the Church*, 4:41)—went inside for a "grog." With the driver absent, the horses bolted, taking coach and passengers on a

dangerous and terrifying three-mile romp. Joseph, in John Wayne fashion, saved the day. "The passengers were exceedingly agitated," he wrote (or a Church historian did in his voice), "but I used every persuasion to calm their feelings; and opening the door, I secured my hold on the side of the coach the best way I could, and succeeded in placing myself in the coachman's seat, and reigning up the horses . . . neither coach, horses, or passengers received any injury" (23). In assuaging the passengers' fears, the Prophet apparently saved the life of an infant by preventing the child's mother from tossing the babe out the window. Certain members of Congress, who were also aboard the stage, proposed giving Joseph a congressional commendation. The offer, however, was quickly retracted when the congressmen discovered the identity of their hero: to officially praise the Mormon prophet, even for an act of bravery, was just as anathema as giving him an official escort was unthinkable.

Something's lost while something's gained. Today, Church presidents are awash in awards, honors, and escorts, but could even the relatively robust, eighty-six-year-old Gordon Hinckley single-handedly rescue a run-away coach?

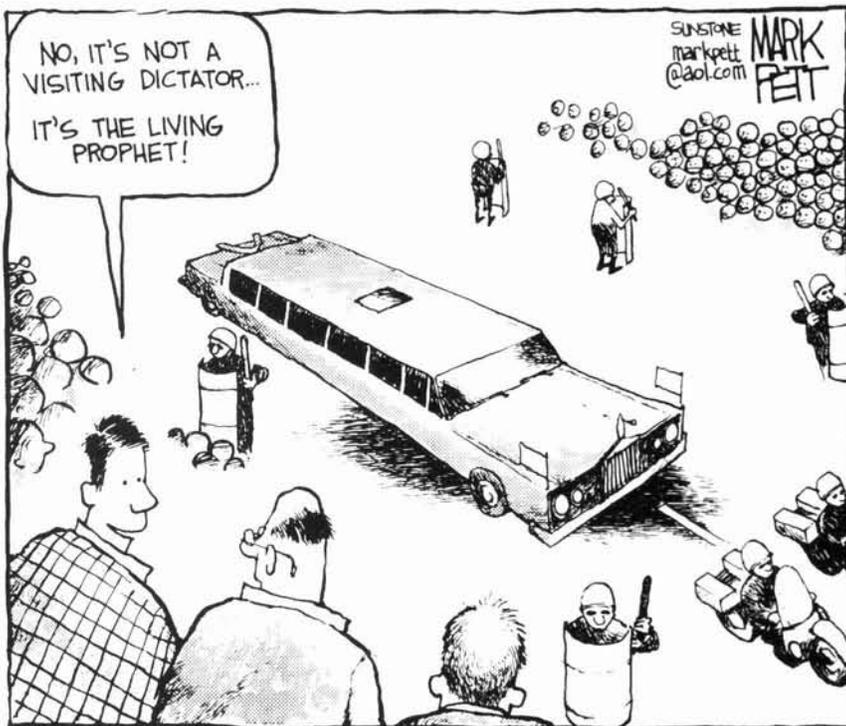
### My Creed

## AND YET . . .

HOW DOES ONE SET UP A CREED when his beliefs are so fluid that he can't call them a creed? A creed is formal, fixed, solid—as in Nicene Creed. Mine is closer to a personal articles of faith than to a creed. Maybe I'm more an "And yet . . ." or a "But . . ." Mormon than a straight Mormon.

1. *Neither I nor my creed nor my church is a finished product yet. Nor will ever be. I can subscribe to nearly everything the Church stands for and does. And yet . . .* The sense of a fluid, developing religion goes against much of what the Church seems to be standing for. I get the impression that it is moving ever closer to a formal creed, though I doubt that any of the leaders would see it that way. Our growth internationally may make such a development inevitable. But I will never be comfortable with it.

2. *Yes, I believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. And yet . . .* I nearly always have to qualify it by emphasizing *believe* and by adding some such ex-



pression as "That is the faith I live by." With this, as with so much else, I envy at times those who can say with such absolute assurance, "I know . . .". But at other times I feel deeply that faith may be an even higher thing than knowledge where religion is concerned.

3. *Yes, I believe the Church is true and I sustain President Gordon B. Hinckley and the other Church leaders.* But . . . I'm not quite sure what "true" and "sustain" mean in this context. I certainly don't believe that either the Church or its leaders is infallible. And I'm uncomfortable with what seems to be movement toward claims of infallibility. I can't help feeling that much of what we hear from leaders has political or economic or social sources and implications that have little to do with gospel principles. I also dislike the defensiveness that seems to motivate responses to things like SUNSTONE and *Dialogue* or any other off-beat writing or activity.

4. *I believe that war is evil—almost any war for any reason, but especially war fomented for power or for gain.* I honor President Spencer W. Kimball for that powerful denunciation of us as a "warlike people" ("The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976). But I see little evidence that our people take his statement to heart. Instead, we seem to be some of the strongest supporters of our bloated military and its budgets, and the first to raise a fuss if any of it is threatened.

5. *I believe our scriptures are the word of God. I love them.* But I'm bothered by our using "so far as it is translated correctly" to avoid really coming to terms with many problems in the Bible,

**I**n a First Presidency Message in the June 1976 *Ensign*, President Spencer W. Kimball spoke of "The False Gods We Worship." "We are a warlike people," he said, "easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. . . . [W]e become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God." (6.)



and by the heavy insistence on literal readings of all the scriptures—as though the prophets were glorified scribes who took down every word in our scriptures just as they fell—in strangely archaic English—from the lips of divine creatures.

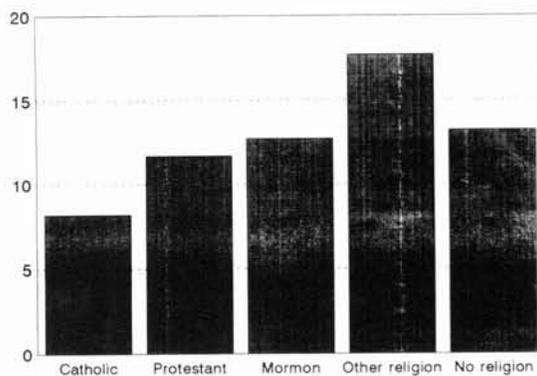
6. *I do not believe that our faith should be in people.* And yet . . . When the skeptic in me threatens to overcome the believer, it is nearly always to people, including Church leaders, that I look for sustenance, for the evidence of divinity in man, and hence in God. Yes, and also for the evidence of the infernal, of Satan at work in the universe.

7. *I believe in an afterlife, the Second Coming, and eternal progress.* These are perhaps the most spiritually demanding of beliefs, even if the idea of eternal time and space may get easier to see—though not to understand—as the Hubbel telescope probes farther and farther into time and space. In the right mood, I can positively drool over Mormon concepts.

Peculiar People

SEXUAL ABUSE

**Sexual Abuse**  
Percent of Women Reporting Sexual Abuse as Children



DATA FROM THE PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE Survey indicate that Mormon women are about as likely to report been sexually abused as children as are Protestant women and women with no religious affiliation. Catholics are below average, but women in other religious groups report above average risk of sexual abuse. These rates may not necessarily give an accurate reflection of the population as a whole because the data is not based on representative sampling. Most people who take this survey are college students seriously thinking about marriage. The sample was over 90 percent Caucasian with a mean age of 21. The sample included 2742 Mormons, 1893 Protestants, 1213 Catholics, 248 with another religious affiliation, and 262 with no affiliation. Results reported here are from the question "At times sexual activities occur in families such as touching children in inappropriate places or performing sexual acts with children. Did these things ever happen to you while you grew up?"



*Most of us would probably not write anything any better than Chemish did trying to stall for time to get inspired.*

And, yet, I hardly expect the Lord to pronounce judgment over me: rather, I fear, if anything, that he will just open my spiritual eyes to let me see myself completely—what I have become, what I have made of myself in this marvelous opportunity for life on earth. And I quail before the usual extension of eternal life to include some kind of ultimate godhood, maybe even a planet of my own to run. I, a man who can't even “run” his own family and who makes a mess of almost anything he tries to run. The thought of that kind of ultimate responsibility freezes most of my ardor for eternal progression.

8. *I believe profoundly that I am created with a mind that I must use as best I can to examine the Church's and my beliefs.* But I find myself moved far more by the subjective arts, especially music, than by the logic of belief. In these I find the highest expression of man's creativity, hence the deepest source of love for divine creativity.

9. *I believe profoundly that God is Love and that my highest worship of him is to love him.* And yet . . . I find it distressingly difficult to feel that love, except as something that I will to feel.

10. *I believe that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and that we are merely (both absolutely and simply) temporary stewards of whatever of that fullness we “own.”* I wouldn't expect many Mormons to disagree with such a simple belief. But I see and hear precious little real commitment to that stewardship, except for the championing of the right to unrestricted exploitation of the fullness thereof.

These affirmations hardly constitute a creed, but they do sum up much of what I am. Yes, I am full of *buts* and *and yet's*. And yet I think of myself as a sincere, believing, deeply committed, mainstream Mormon. I may be uncomfortable with some Mormon beliefs and especially with the way some are interpreted, but I see no other belief system or non-belief system that even tempts me away from my Mormon-ness. And, in spite of point 8 above, I'm not looking for one.

—MARDEN J. CLARK  
BYU professor of English (retired)

## Book of Mormon Musings

### NEPHITE WRITER'S CRAMP

Now I, Chemish, write what few things I write, in the same book with my brother; for behold, I saw the last which he wrote, that he wrote it with his own hand; and he wrote it in the day that he delivered them unto me. And after this manner we keep the records, for it is according to the commandments of our fathers. And I make an end. (Omni 9.)

**I**F YOU'VE NEVER HAD TO REPORT ON A TOPIC about which you knew nothing or if you've never found yourself unable to say anything except the obvious, I doubt that you will ever be sympathetic to the plight of Chemish. After having read the lofty and beautiful poetry, philosophy, and allegory or the marvelous visions and revelations of Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, or Enos, and feeling duty-bound to write something important before you pass the small plates along (I felt this way when I was asked to sign my classmates' yearbook in eighth grade), most of us would probably not write anything any better than Chemish did trying to stall for time to get inspired.

Chemish also reveals that he is conscious of self—not self-conscious. He writes as if he is having an out-of-body experience, viewing himself writing on metal plates as he is floating above himself, looking down. I imagine as he learned how to write that he practiced writing sentences such as “I am not writing this sentence” and snickered with his fellow scribal classmates.

In my experience, inspiration is not something that most people find easily; it's not like turning a water faucet on and off. Joseph Smith has remarked that revelation is a principle that is learned over time.<sup>1</sup> I hope (since I have done it) that it is better to have written something less inspired and stalled for time like Chemish than to have written nothing at all.

—EDGAR C. SNOW JR

1. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 5–6.

## 20 Years Ago in Sunstone

### THE HUMAN ASPECT OF SCRIPTURE

**I**N THE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1977 ISSUE, SCOTT Kenney, SUNSTONE's editor primogenitor, challenged Latter-day Saints to utilize higher criticism:

“What have the marriage customs of the ancient Near East to do with twentieth-century Latter-day Saints? Or the number of animals taken aboard the ark? Very little. And if higher crit-

icism had no more significance than explaining biblical trivia, it would be deserving of the oblivion to which Mormons have consigned it for the past century. But, in fact, higher criticism goes much farther.

"By providing a historical framework for the authorship and development of the Old Testament, biblical scholars have opened the door to understanding the different theological orientations of scriptural writers. These differences play an important role in accounting for 'historical' as well as doctrinal discrepancies.

"It was important for the Yahwist tradition, for instance, that Noah have enough animals aboard the ark to offer sacrifices and still have sufficient to propagate the species. The Priestly writer, on the other hand, was more concerned with the centrality of the Covenant, a unifying theme he emphasized throughout Israel's history.

"In this case neither the historical nor the theological differences are of much significance for Latter-day Saints. But what may be instructive is the way these differences were handled.

Neither account was laundered or sanitized to avoid embarrassing conflicts. The differences disqualified neither as an inspired voice in Israel.

"Apparently, it was their point of agreement which validated these witnesses—belief in the one true God and his participation in the life of Israel. The compilers of the Old Testament recognized the value of retaining each legitimate perspective—perhaps because they believed that the purpose of sacred history and theology is not to provide clarity of consistency or empirical facticity, but rather to bring people to God.

"The value of higher criticism is its ability to disclose the human aspect of scripture. As readers come to understand the point of view of the various authors and see the points they are trying to make in writing sacred history, readers enter into the process themselves and become participants with the Yahwist and the Elohist and the Priestly writer. Scripture is not an end, but a means to God. Biblical scholarship can illuminate elements of that revelatory process that have long been ignored by Latter-day Saints."

## MORMON INDEX

- Percentage of 1847 Mormon pioneers born in New York state: 21
- Percentage of 1990 U.S./Canadian Saints born in New York: 11
- Rankings of Utah and Rhode Island among states most dominated by a single religious group: 1, 2
- Percentage of Utahns who are Mormons vs. Rhode Islanders who are Catholics: 69.2:61.7
- Number of individuals in the Bible who were raised from the dead: 8
- Number of individuals in the Bible who were stoned to death: 7
- Percentage of LDS men vs. LDS women who believe pre-schoolers suffer if the mother is employed: 72:54
- Percentage of BYU students who are from Utah: 24.7
- Percentage of BYU students who were from Utah twenty-five years ago: 25.8
- Number of acts of adultery Brigham Young said it takes to be guilty: 10
- Percentage of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists who "often" silently pray for patients: 62
- Percentage of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists who "often" pray with their patients: 5
- Number of currently existing "churches" that are in some way part of Joseph Smith's "Latter Day Saint Movement": 62
- Percentage of Americans, in an LDS church commissioned survey, who read their scriptures "at least daily": 21
- Chances that any excommunicated member of the Quorum of the Twelve was later rebaptized: 5 in 12
- Number of times more likely a North American non-LDS male is to die from cancer, than a North American LDS male: 2
- Percentage of Mormons who remain active throughout their entire lifetimes: 22
- Ratio of LDS females to males among singles over 30 who attend church weekly: 5 to 1
- Ranking of Church President David O. McKay in Gallop Poll of most admired religious leaders: 2
- Percentage of ward tithing donations Church President John Taylor allowed bishops to personally keep: 8
- Percentage of stake tithing donations stake presidents were allowed to keep: 2

1,2 1997-1998 *Church Almanac* (*Deseret News*), 100; 3,4 Lawrence A. Young, "The Religious Landscape" in *Utah in the 1990s: A Demographic Perspective* (Signature Books), 158; 5,6 Jay Parry, Larry Morris, *The Mormon Book of Lists* (Bookcraft), 106, 102; 7 Tim B. Heaton, Kristen L. Goodman, Thomas B. Holman, "In Search of a Peculiar People: Are Mormon Families Really that Different?" in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives* (Illinois), 103; 8,9 *Deseret News*, B1, 7 Jan. 97; 10 D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Signature), 746; 11,12 P. Scott Richards, Richard W. Potts, "Spiritual Interventions in Psychotherapy" in *AMCAP Journal*, vol. 21, no. 1-1995, 45; 13 *Journal of Latter Day Saint History*, vol. 9 (1997), 63-64; 14 *Deseret News*, A1, 19 Dec. 96; 15 1997-1998 *Church Almanac*; 16 Tim B. Heaton, "Vital Statistics," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (Macmillan Publishing), 1525; 17,18 Tim B. Heaton, "Vital Statistics," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (Macmillan), 1527; 19,20,21 *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, 858, 783, 783.