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YEA, YEA  NAY, NAY



INSIDE THE COVER

I AM DEEPLY OFFENDED by the cover of the last issue (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1997). How could you ridicule the Church membership, President Gordon Hinckley, and the ordinance of baptism? And what is wrong with Church growth? I think I have a sense of humor, and I laugh at most of Sunstone's cartoons, but this one went way over the line. I've been a long-time subscriber, but I don't think I will renew my subscription next time.

A LONG-TIME READER
North Carolina

Editors' response:

Several readers accused us of mean-spiritedness about that cover. We were shocked. Our intentions were as follows: A long-time subscriber to the *New Yorker*, SUNSTONE editor Elbert Peck envies its custom of featuring a whimsical drawing on its covers that usually has no relationship to an inside article; in contrast, we, and most magazines, illustrate an article on the cover. This time, when we considered what article to spotlight, we discussed how the magazine's cartoons are just like articles in that they stand alone and don't illustrate something else—why not run a cartoon? Eventually, we decided to run a stand-alone humorous drawing. We chose a current, widely known topic—LDS church membership reaching ten million.

In discussing this demographic benchmark, we thought of how a McDonald's might welcome its millionth customer. It seemed a light-hearted match to the joyous

feelings Mormons had about their ten millionth member, so we had Mark Pett make everybody happy and welcoming, in a Mormon party mood (the red punch), including the proudest of all Mormons, President Hinckley. Humor juxtaposes two usually incongruous things, and, for us, this idea worked, but we meant to build on the joy of the event, not to criticize it. We then added another incongruity: the joy of the many versus the disorientation of the one being baptized, for whom water in the nose and eyes and the wet hair not infrequently make the ritual better in memory than in actuality.

No mean-spiritedness, no heavy message: all light whimsy, fun in a situation that would never happen, just as a recent *New Yorker* cover had Fidel Castro and Pope John Paul II sitting in beach chairs, smoking cigars, and reflecting together as long-time friends as the sun set over the Caribbean. It's never going to happen; all you are expected to do is smile at the impossibility as you open the magazine.

Perhaps some readers had trouble interpreting the cover because this kind of stand-alone cover drawing had no precedent in SUNSTONE. Also, since Mormon cartooning grew out of the works of Calvin Grondahl and Pat Bagley, both political cartoonists whose craft is to make a sharper point, understandably some may have expected, looked for, and found a negative message never intended. And of course, some may assume (falsely) that the message in SUNSTONE would have to be cynical. Well, this is a different form of humor—less pointed, more whimsical, and captionless, visual.

Mormonism has a strong verbal tradition, and the cartoons our culture has produced reflect that by having much of the joke be in the caption's words. We are expanding the tradition. Consider the cover drawing on this issue by New York artist Kent Christensen, a Mormon. The drawing is an homage to the well-known Manhattan drawing by the late artist Alan E. Cober. The slight humor is simply in modifying the Manhattan skyline to resemble the Salt Lake Temple. It could be a metaphor of the Church putting temples everywhere, or it could be a celebration of the recently created New York New York Stake, or it could just be a Mormon respect to a famous artist. Smile, and turn the page.

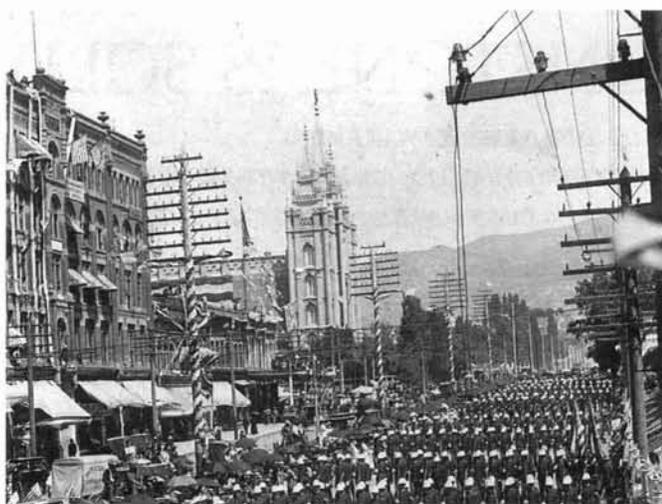
The point of this long discourse: SUNSTONE will periodically feature these kinds of covers. We're excited about developing a new sub-genre of Mormon humor—the visual, humorous drawing. Enjoy.

EARS TO HEAR

I FOUND the criticism in a recent letter to the editor of Apostle Russell M. Nelson's talk at BYU unfortunate both as to substance and tone ("Walkman on the Tower," by Troy D. Williams, *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1997). When Elder Nelson used an earpiece to deliver without notes a text he had prerecorded, the letter imputes to him a trick, an intent to deceive, a "show" of manufactured fluency to impress people.

Why assume the discreditable motivation? It seems to me a good deal more likely that Elder Nelson wanted to make a good, effective presentation and simply used a new technological means to do so. Although the letter writer did not notice him insert the earpiece, an acquaintance did. For me that runs counter to the idea that trickery was involved.

EDWARD L. KIMBALL
Provo, Utah



Up," *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1997), this photograph, taken during the July 1896 Statehood Mid-summer Carnival parade, shows the flag decorating the temple. The flag is said to have been displayed on the Salt Lake Temple for a number of years during Pioneer Day celebrations. The photograph Cahoon refers to was quite possibly taken during one of those years. However, photographs taken during the 1897 Pioneer Jubilee do not show any display of the statehood flag.

JAMES LAKE
Salt Lake City

TEMPLE CITES

CONTRARY TO Doug Cahoon's contention that the large, Utah statehood flag was first placed on the Salt Lake Temple in 1897 for the Pioneer Jubilee ("All Hung

OOPS

WHEN I saw the recent *SUNSTONE* cover that featured the temple spires framing the Utah State Capitol Building, it



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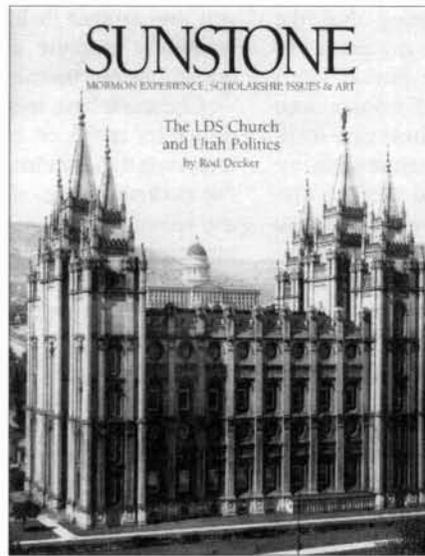
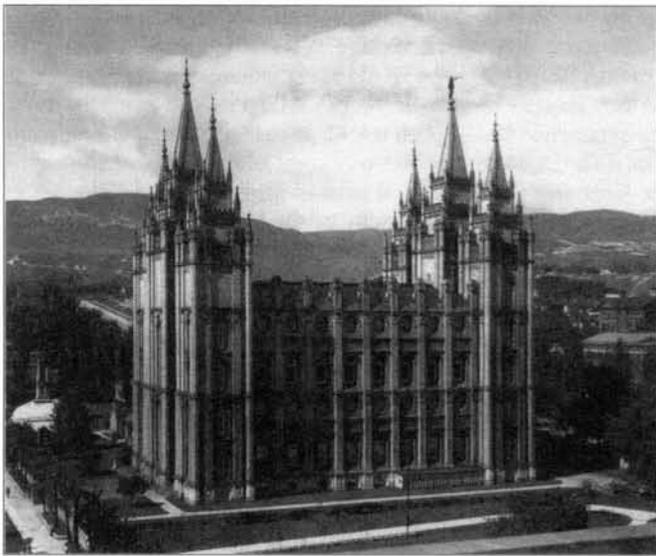
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looked familiar. After flipping through recent Mormon publications, sure enough, in a 1997 issue of *BYU Studies* (36:2, 202), I saw the same photograph. Well, almost the same photograph—the State Capitol was missing, which seems strange since *BYU Studies* dates the photograph as “about 1917,” one year after the Capitol was dedicated, and, therefore, it should be in the picture. A careful examination of the *BYU Studies* version clearly shows that, for whatever reasons, the Capitol has been removed. If they didn’t want the Capitol in the picture, why didn’t they just use a different photograph?

As to the photo’s actual date, neither *BYU Studies* or *SUNSTONE* has it correctly. In the larger, non-cropped original, you can see the Joseph F. Smith Memorial Building on the campus of the old LDS University, which was completed in 1918, and also the old Lafayette School Building, which burned down in 1922. So around 1920 is a more accurate date.

MATT LEWALLEN
Burbank, Calif.

BYU Studies’ response:

Thanks for the sharp eye. A time crunch led to a production decision to adapt this photograph to fit the subject matter of the article it illustrated. We should have mentioned in our caption our modification of the photo, and we sent apologies a year ago to the Historical Society. Thanks also for clarifying the date of the image.

MUGGING GOOD PEOPLE

THERE IS A big difference between President Gordon B. Hinckley’s approach to homosexuality in the *Los Angeles Times* (“Musings of the Main Mormon,” *SUNSTONE*, Sept. 1997) and Gary Watts’s (“Mugged by Reality,” *SUNSTONE*, Nov. 1997). President Hinckley seems to be genuinely compassionate in holding homosexuals, whom he calls “good people,” to the same standards the Church does all singles—“abstinence before marriage and total fidelity following marriage.” To most moderate LDS heterosexuals, that stance seems fair and reasonable. But be-

ing a Mormon gay means more than celibacy.

Perhaps President Hinckley hasn’t considered all the implications of his standard, for in his comments, as in those of most straights about gays, he focuses on what to do if gays become involved in “transgression,” by which I assume he means sexual intercourse. But if President Hinckley really drew the “line” at intercourse for gays, then, as with straights, he would have no problem with faithful, single-adult, active lesbians and gays dat-

ing, kissing, making out, falling in love, and courting. But I suspect he would, and does, have a problem with non-sexual, same-sex romance (while he encourages it for straights). So, orientation, not sex, is still the real issue, but celibacy-for-gays is a position that sounds much fairer than the earlier reparative therapy, which required gays to try to change their genetic coding.

But both President Hinckley and Apostle Dallin H. Oaks have basically said that for most gays, sexual identity (and therefore attraction) is not a thing that can be changed and is not a sin, whether it is caused genetically or in very early, pre-age-of-accountabil-

THE REAL REASON MARTIN'S TERM AS THE PROPHET'S SCRIBE WAS BRIEF



ity childhood. And in accepting that, the Church then puts itself and its gay Saints in a dilemma when it draws the line at intercourse. By holding men and women who have no determination over these core inclinations to the standards of heterosexuals, we create a scenario where "good people" who have been courting eventually must choose between personal love and Church activity. (Really, we tell them that to be a member, they must not only be celibate as a single with no hope for marriage but that they must turn off their feelings. Something we don't tell to the oldest maid who still hopes for true love. So the standard isn't the same.) Essentially, gays are faced with the choice Adam had after Eve had eaten the fruit: the hard life of expulsion with relationship or a lonely Eden of Church activity. Like Adam, most choose love (and expulsion).

But not only gays make that Adamic choice. In a recent fund-raising letter, SUNSTONE editor Elbert Peck reported how one orthodox Mormon father attended the gay-related symposium sessions and changed his mind concerning holding his gay son to the Church's no-marriage-no-sex standard. The father told his son that he wanted him to be in a relationship because he didn't want him to "live his life without love." That experience is what Watts calls being "mugged by the reality of the lives of our gay children." Individuals so mugged grow in compassion,

and they temper their views on how to live seemingly absolute commandments given our ambiguous human situations.

Christians have redefined their practice of principles based on real-life experience before, even if they didn't change their theology. For example, while on earth, Jesus didn't say any recorded thing about homosexuality, but his hardline commands against divorce were unequivocal. Yet Christians have come to live with the necessity of divorce because we have been "mugged by the reality" of the lives of individuals stuck in harmful marriages.

Another example is circumcision. The Jewish Christians insisted that the Apostle Paul's adult, male gentile converts be circumcised or they "cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Paul complained, and there was strong debate because some believed "that it was needful to circumcise them, and command them to keep the law of Moses" (15:5). Peter silenced the controversy by noting that God had "put no difference between us and them" because He had purified the gentile converts' hearts just as he had done the Jewish Christians' (15:9). "Therefore," Peter concluded, "why tempt God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (15:10). If circumcising adult males was an unbearable yoke other believers would not put on themselves, and thus was eliminated, perhaps requiring our gay Saints—"good people"—to

live lives without love, to stifle every romantic impulse, is a similar unreasonable burden we would never require of ourselves.

If we can moderate our practices of explicit teachings of the Savior and long-established, core commandments, perhaps when a critical mass of Saints have been mugged by the reality of the lives of their gay children, siblings, and friends, then instead of fighting gay marriages, as President Hinckley defended in the *L. A. Times* interview, we will accommodate and allow gay marriages in the Church (even if just for time and *not* eternity), leaving the sticky theological points to God, because we don't want to force our fellow "good people," whom God has accepted as evidenced by the Spirit in their lives, to live their lives without love, and without us.

SEAN CAMPBELL

Los Angeles

TUGGED BY REALITY

GARY WATTS'S title, "Mugged by Reality" is incomplete because it does not specify which "reality" he was mugged by. A better title may be, "Mugged by My Personal Reality." We all live in our own intimate "realities," which are products of the veil and of our own thoughts and experiences. Yet there is another "reality," which is much more useful and far more "real." It includes everything inside the veil and everything outside of the veil in eternity (see D&C 93:24). Brigham Young explained: "Here is time, where is eternity? It is here, just as much as anywhere in all the expanse of space; a measured space of time is only a part of eternity" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 47). Prophets have been teaching about this reality for millennia.

To fully embrace this "reality," we would need to recall our premortal past—the ages and eons we prepared for mortality as spirits with distinct genders. We would also benefit from a look forward to the spirit world, the judgment, the resurrection, and beyond. Of course, seeing beyond the veil would allow us to view God as we used to, and also to plainly acknowledge the presence of Satan and the billions of his followers who are "encompassing us roundabout" (D&C 76:29) with temptations. Addressing homosexuality in relation to this "reality" might be more useful. These teachings about eternal realities (when taught with the Holy Spirit) may be the only thing with sufficient power to combat the emotional momentum inherently found within homosexual behavior.

Some people might think it cold-hearted to suggest that rapists and men guilty of incest should be surgically emasculated. Yet,



"Oh, that food down there, that's my two-day food storage.
You see, I'm a Mormon."

symbolically, that is exactly what the resurrection does to all men (and women, if you will) who do not follow God's directives, including (1) being sealed by proper authority to a spouse of opposite gender and (2) strictly obeying the law of chastity, which is defined as no sexual relations with anyone but a lawful husband or wife. Only those individuals are promised "eternal increase" after the resurrection (D&C 132:19-20).

Through diligent, prayerful study and holiness, all can grasp the eternal reality, but it is now known in detail to few. Regardless, it will someday "mug" countless individuals who ignore its presence (D&C 38:8). At that day, will God's love be able to nullify the commandments he has repeatedly given through his prophets concerning homosexuality? Only time (and eternity) will tell.

BRIAN HALES
Layton, Utah

YOUNG IN ART

MARGARET BLAIR YOUNG'S "Grace and Truth in Mormon Art," (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1997) is extraordinary. The essay contains the logic of a well reasoned treatise, the imagery and elegance of poetry, and the compassion of a psalm. I have seldom read anything so stimulating.

I was introduced to her through "Zoo Sounds" (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1996). That riveting account of pain and redemption brought a tear in my eye and a smile on my lips. It made me search my soul. "Zoo Sounds" is in *Love Chains*, Young's new collection of short stories that are as good as any current fiction I've read—Mormon or non-Mormon.

LARRY DAY
Milton, Fla.

Publisher's comment:

It is a great book; use the convenient form on the inside back cover to order it. :)

SUNSTONED

WHEN I ATTENDED the 1997 Sunstone Symposium, I was a Sunstone "virgin." I came to the SUNSTONE/Dialogue thing rather late in life. I grew up in Norwich, England, became disillusioned with the Church, and stopped considering myself Mormon. Several years later, as I began research for a Ph.D. in social anthropology, I chose to look at aspects of Mormonism in England. My adventures in the worldwide-web led to meeting the Internet "Ward from Hell," a.k.a. "elwc-plus" (featured in a symposium panel discussion; tape

#SL95-363). One new Internet friend sent me a copy of SUNSTONE, and I was hooked.

Here was a publication I could relate to as a person and as a Mormon. For the first time in years, I felt Mormon, and I felt good about it. I laughed at the cartoons—humor that took hours to explain, unsuccessfully, to my Methodist/atheist-reared husband. I cried at the stories. I felt uplifted by the faith of the contributors—whatever form that faith took.

I scheduled a research trip to Salt Lake in early August so I could attend the symposium. There, I felt a connection to the Mormon world. I felt a strong sense of community with other symposium-goers and how important it was to them. I felt more "spiritual" than I had ever felt with other Mormons—something about the honesty with which people shared their experiences. When Mike Quinn detailed the consequences of his writing about Mormon history (tape #SL97-336), when Angela Toscano, Christian Anderson, and Nephi Allred shared the pain caused by the excommunication of their parents (tape #SL97-152), when people listened to "less-active" members (tape

#SL97-371), or when Karin Anderson England bared her hopes and fears (tape #SL97-291), I was deeply moved.

I felt closer to the people, and, perhaps, closer to God. The words of the prayers, chosen so carefully to say what was in the heart, touched me. I couldn't sing all of the hymns because of the lump in my throat. When I did, I sang from my heart—as everyone did.

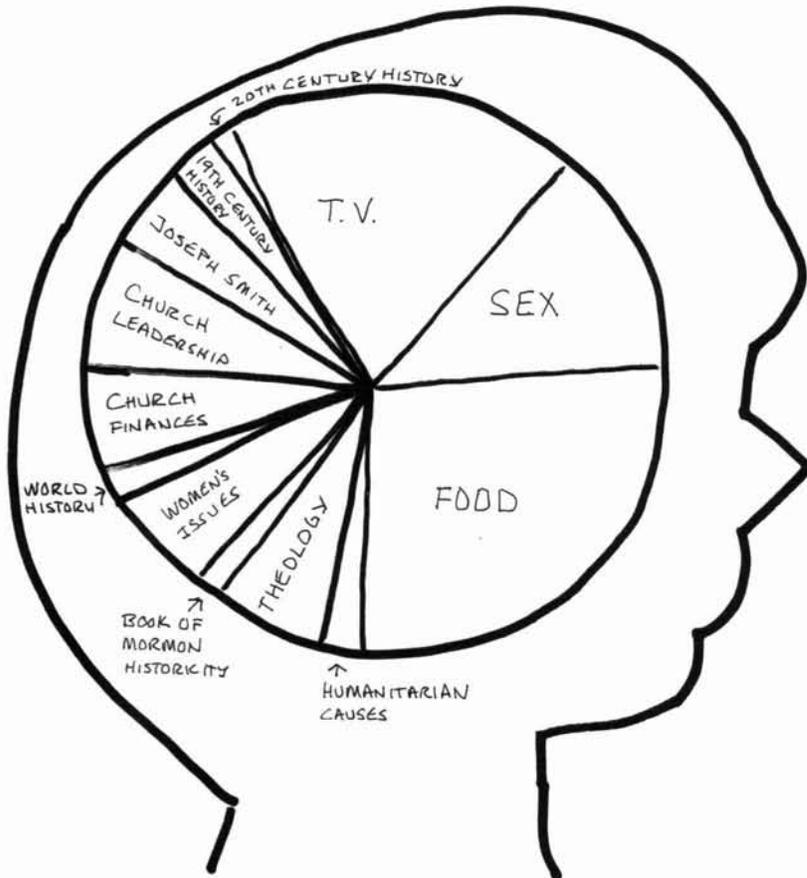
My heart still sings to know that there are Mormons "out there" who want so much to be Mormon that they risk official sanction or social ostracism to create an arena where they can be the kind of Mormon they think they should be. I don't think I ever wanted to be Mormon that much, but in company with them, I can accept the Mormonness in me.

Please, all of you, continue this work.

HILDI MITCHELL
Brighton, East Sussex, England

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