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## APOLOGY

ORSON SCOTT CARD recently wrote to complain that SUNSTONE had, without his permission, reprinted in our "Twenty Years Ago Column" an excerpt from an early SUNSTONE piece of his ("Beauty and Ugliness," June 1998). We liked what he had to say, didn't even think of the copyright issue involved in excerpting from our own magazine, and assumed that he wouldn't mind the spotlight; he did. We apologize.

ELBERT EUGENE PECK  
Editor

## WONDER BREAD WRESTLING

HOW COULD YOU let Wayne Booth get away with his statement "the failed conversations now going on among—or flatly denied by—Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews"? (See "Confessions of an Aging, Hypocritical Ex-Missionary," SUNSTONE Mar. 1998.)

How about a little humility here. Booth may find his own personal wrestling with his faith to be something new, astounding, and worthy of note. However, blind adherence to dogma is intellectual death in the Jewish community. If you don't wrestle with your faith, you're not practicing it.

Mormonism is still in its infancy. We have a lot to learn from those who have been wrestling with God for thousands of years. I'd recommend you tell Booth to shake the Wonder Bread from between his ears, for it is remarks like his that promote anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

MARY ANN SUST  
Washington, D.C.

### Wayne Booth's response:

Mary Ann Sust misread my point in referring to Jewish controversy. Receiving her letter on the day of my return from the Bat Mitzvah of my Jewish granddaughter, I am a bit puzzled about her claim that my sentence is anti-Semitic.

Her attack does make me wonder if a different wording might have been clearer, leaving her more comfortable: "think of the failed conversations now going on when many devout Reform and Conservative Jews attempt dialogue with devout Orthodox Jews," or "I might refer here to the complaints of some of my close Jewish friends and relatives about how some Orthodox Jews refuse to tolerate

differences and even refuse to have contact with them."

Meanwhile, I'll do my best to prevent my two Jewish grandchildren from seeing Sust's unhumble letter. I don't want them to discover that I have Wonder Bread between my ears—whatever that metaphor is supposed to mean.

## THINK, LAUGH, SNIFFLE

IT ISN'T OFTEN a negative review fires me up to read a book, but Kathryn Kidd's review of Susan Palmer's *The Tabernacle Bar* did just that (SUNSTONE Mar. 1998). Kidd compares Susan Palmer's book unfavorably to Jan Karon's—and any book described as the well-written antithesis to the Mitford series warrants the effort to hunt it down.

I have rarely been so rewarded. From the moment Jessie picks up her Aunt Claire's iridescent glass egg, passing it from hand to hand, I was in the hands of the story, reading into the pale hours of the morning.

Kathryn Kidd is right: clarity of writing, passages of beauty, misguided characters, less savory facts and half-facts of our history, rough language—it's all there. Kidd is also wrong: I count myself among "the unenlightened" who actually believe Sunday School doctrine, but I think *The Tabernacle Bar* is wildly fun, thought-provoking, witty, true, and spiritually uplifting as the pabulum of the Mitford books could never be. I wouldn't quote some passages to my Relief Society, but the language seems wholly character-appropriate. True, practicing Mormons are not presented in Susan Palmer's mirror as they'd wish—but when was that a requirement for effective literature (or for mirrors)?

One of the great things about this book is Palmer's protagonist, the unkind, socially irresponsible Jessie. More than that: loving such a contrary, promiscuous, unreliable character—delighting in her fierceness (I cheered when she rushed, angrily and without thinking, to rescue an inebriated coed from rape), her flippancy (I wish I could think of as good comebacks as the one she gives Melody's mother) and feeling for her disillusionment, her self-disgust—made me feel, in a way I hadn't before, that God must, after all, love me even at my most unlovable. I was struck, thinking over this book weeks after reading it, how so many characters became worthy of concern: Melody, Daniel, Ben, Nephi, even sleazy Max, even Jessie's disappointed parents, even the grieving,

vengeful Mrs. Moondance Stardust.

All of them precious in the eyes of the book. How did Susan Palmer do that? How was Palmer able to write a book that values Nephi's dream quest and Max's haunting and Jessie's thrashings, without making a bathos of Melody's courtship/conversion or of Daniel's grief and wrongheaded defense of righteousness, without making a fool of Jessie's devout grandfather? Was it because she had such fun with each of them? Or was it because by the end, she had even-handedly taken away from almost all of them the thing they wanted most?

Susan Palmer may well have written a lasting book. Not only for the wit and writing, the quick-moving plot, and each wonderful character, but also for the book's spirited inquiry into the nature and responsibilities of authentic spiritual power. That question in different forms is picked up and tossed back and forth in the hands of each of the characters: Jessie questioning her middle-of-the-roader Uncle Alden after reading her

stake patriarch grandfather's deskful of blessings; Ben talking with his charmingly ancient tai chi teacher, Felice; Nephi listening to the Shoshone elder/car mechanic, John Tyhee. On top of that, this is the most doctrinally accurate novel I've read—and it is a good device that most of the explanations about what Mormons believe come from Ben, a well-informed, trustworthy outsider.

The quip on the first page about the "smooth-skinned, Nordic-blond, empty-eyed Utah gal, guaranteed to inspire wholesome thoughts, all the while breeding like gangbusters" had me worried that I was entering a morass of stereotypes. Instead, I found a clear-eyed, sympathetic portrayal of people I love and recognize (I was chastened that most of the Jessies I've encountered would consider me another Aunt Claire).

I anticipate the promised second novel. I want to know how the "warmth of God's love" will shine on Daniel's blighted path and if Nephi will find peace for himself. Mostly, I want to see Jessie's second attempt at running

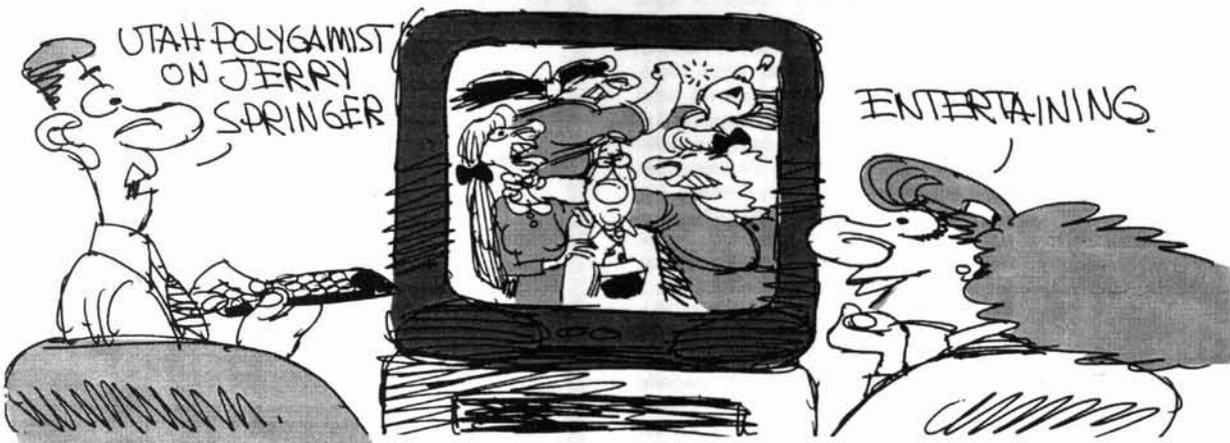
the Tabernacle Bar, what she makes of living in her hometown by choice. Kathryn Kidd is most wrong when she says the protagonist never changes. I am curious how Palmer's heroine will begin to be what is true instead of just being the opposite of what is false.

A book that makes me think and laugh and snifle and nod in recognition and draw in my breath with a sudden realization—written with clarity and outrageous humor and a strange but deep compassion—is a good book.

JAN AMRY  
Portland, Oregon

### UNCORRELATED WORSHIP

WHILE I recognize Mormonism's paucity of organic ritual, linked to the cycle of a religious rather than an institutional calendar (Elbert Peck, "Brass-ful Thinking" Mar. 1998), I find Eric Stone's depiction of a grass-roots movement toward a global celebration of Pioneer Day problem-



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atic ("Grassroots Holiday," June 1998). Yes, the one-hundred-and fiftieth anniversary last year was celebrated worldwide by local service projects, but, in England, anyway, there was little sense of a link between these activities and the Utah celebration of Pioneer Day.

In that same issue (June), several articles looked at the globalization of Mormonism, particularly growth in Africa (Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS in Africa: Growing Membership Sees American Church with Unique Vision"). The contrast was striking. On one hand, the expansion of the Church into new environments is celebrated. On the other, there is a call for a Utah holiday to be embraced by all cultures. The call to gather to Zion has long been replaced by the call to be pioneers in our own lands. Simply exporting a Utah holiday designed to celebrate the origins of that state implicitly denies the pioneering efforts of those who are native to what Utahns persist in calling the "mission field."

Elbert Peck suggests that "brass in Church . . . would be nice." So would balalaikas, and pipes and drums. Let's not allow correlation of worship style. Let Africans, Europeans, and other non-Utahns, worship, and celebrate, "how, where, or what they may." This truly would be a grass-roots movement.

HILDI MITCHELL  
East Sussex, England

## BLASPHEMY

A FEW few comments about Eugene England's article, "Becoming a World Religion" (SUNSTONE, June 1998). I was extremely disappointed at his display of doctrinal ignorance and deception. He has mistakenly allocated doctrinal beliefs on subjects that distort the outcome of your current beliefs.

First, Daniel 2:44-45 is talking about the fulness of the priesthood that breaks in pieces the nations of the earth, *not* the temporal Church. Many recent LDS leaders have used this connection to assume that the LDS church through its missionary effort is fulfilling this prophecy.

In so many words, England called Brigham Young, John Taylor, and all of the succeeding prophets until Spencer W. Kimball racists, as if we should feel heavy guilt for our adherence to an eternal doctrine for over one hundred fifty years. Be careful, Brother England, you are

speaking evil of the Lord's anointed. Official Declarations 1 and 2 were verifiably *political* maneuvers to take pressure off of the Church and render her more acceptable to the demands of the world and Babylon.

Regarding Blacks and the priesthood, England operates in a myopic disadvantage, not understanding God's eternal plan regarding the human family. He, along with the LDS culture, only allow for one mortal probation for God's children, thus concluding it to be unfair that God would curse some of his children during their "only" sojourn on earth. He wrongly concludes that this "unfair" situation needs to be corrected before the Millennium. But this particular probation on the earth is *not* the only one we will have in our eternal progression; everyone is at a different level of obedience and valiance. It is myopic to think that all of this must be rectified and "made fair" during this earth's temporal existence, or else, as England says, it makes God unfair. God is fair and just, Brother England, always has been, always will be. He created the lineages for a reason, and he gave notice for the prophets to specifically avoid the race of Cain. In due time, the Black race will receive their opportunity to come out from under the curse upon them, but each of us is where we are in mortality because of performance and "cause and effect" in eternity. To truly adhere to the statements in the article calls God's plan racist and foolish. It is England who is foolish and naked regarding the knowledge of eternal things.

England's section on "Asenath" (married to Joseph in Egypt) was most loathsome and

false. Taking his premise seriously means that Jesus Christ had the blood of Cain in him. This is blasphemy! Christ was a perfect and unblemished offering. England has completely lost the guidance of the Holy Ghost. He will be held accountable before God and the Holy Prophets for his ignorant stand on this issue, for he mocks God to his face.

Equally deceptive and untenable was England's implication that Joseph Smith "ordained" Elijah Abel to the priesthood. This is false, and he cannot defend his position. Joseph did not perform such.

The LDS apostasy is alive and well today. Every principle and doctrine that would establish Zion has been repudiated and cast away by the very covenant people who should have kept their covenants. England's mindset and words only further illuminate such current darkness and apostasy. Repent, Brother England, and wake up to your awful situation, as Moroni warns. You have built up Babylon, not Zion. You and the LDS hierarchy seek the praise of the world and your place in the Telestial order; thus, you have your reward. But by so doing, you have settled for a mess of pottage and have left the cause of Zion and the Terrestrial order. When the sweeping judgments of an offended God descend upon the earth in greater fury, the LDS will be the most surprised when it falls upon them first (D&C 112:23-26).

JEFF HANKS  
PRESIDENT, QUORUM OF TWELVE  
THE TRUE AND LIVING CHURCH OF JESUS  
CHRIST OF SAINTS OF THE LAST DAYS  
Manti, Utah



"Well, that just destroys the belief that public relations runs the Church."

## ETERNAL GENDER

GARY WATTS'S opinions on homosexuality are way out of line with Church teachings ("Mugged By Reality," *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1997). Just because his son seems destined to lose his First Estate, the author himself need not apostatize and miss the Celestial Kingdom.

Faithful Mormons live by a clear moral code spelled out in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles: "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose." The proclamation explains that the genders are in God's "divine design" and homosexuality is not.

TOM GARCIA  
Tucson, Arizona

## MUGGED BY REASON

NONE could fail to have been moved by Gary Watts's "Mugged by Reality." For me, the central point of his argument is

the assertion by Bruce Dahlberg, "that citations of God to back up either side of a debate, is to imagine that religious belief is somehow privileged and need not be argued on its own merits."

This opens the case much wider than the issue of same-sex relationships. Church disciplinary policy proceeds in a stereotyped fashion all of the time, assuming that virtue is fixed in the model of a standardized person with predictable tastes and attributes. Surely we are well-enough educated to realize that human behavior is inordinately complex. The reason why some people encounter "difficulty" in areas where others do not is a function of a whole panoply of environmental-, physiological-, psychological-, and social-conditioned inputs.

Not only parents of children with homosexual orientations suffer. Those of teenagers excommunicated for having heterosexual relations often feel angry and bereft, especially if matters are clumsily handled. And let us not underestimate the pain of excommunication to both the excommunicants and their families, even when it is from an organization

in which they have ceased to be a believing participant.

What needs changing is more fundamental than the subject that Gary Watts addresses. The question in the first place really should be "Why do we attempt to monitor so-called 'worthiness'?" Even if we understood what it was, I doubt we could accurately identify it in people. If our God is the progressive one of reason and fairness as Watts so lucidly argues, he will perfectly understand any reticence on our part to rush to judgment. (Did Jesus not counsel us, "for with what judgment ye judge . . ."? [Matt. 7:2]) As things stand, I know of no other Christian organization that slams the door on supposed sinners quite the way we do.

CHRIS SEXTON  
United Kingdom

## MY OWN PRIVATE REALITY

IN RESPONSE to Gary Watts's "Mugged By Reality": I have my own reality. Several years ago I learned that I have bipolar mood disorder, or manic-depression. I did not choose this; it has horribly disrupted my life. I have been hospitalized twice, nearly taken my life, been denied more children, had my marriage nearly ruined, and been fired from a couple of jobs.

I keep in the closet about it. At first, I wanted to educate the world about bipolar illness. Because I used to work at the Utah State Hospital, I had been on the other side; now I was one of "them." I learned the hard way that people didn't know what to say, how to associate with me, or if they were going to catch "it" from being around me. Some were sincere and patronized me; others made no big whoop about it; still others treated me like I couldn't function in a normal world.

I have now decided that the less I tell people, the happier I am. Most people view me as an energetic, creative, and witty person. But once I inform them of my condition, they feel a need to watch out for me. Many see my energy as mania instead of who I really am. When I am quiet and reserved, then they worry I'm in depression. Ha!

I often tell myself that I should not be ashamed of who or what I am. Why should I keep my secret to myself? My son is also bipolar, and it has been hell educating him and helping him through his own manias and suicidal ideations since he was six. He is now



"Is he the God of the Old or the New Testament this morning?"

twelve, but I will have to coach him for a long time.

I have had to make many changes. I no longer work full-time. I still monitor my behavior when stressed. My thoughts can still get out of whack, and I have to be careful not to run circles around others. I used to attend group therapy, but it became a pity party. I

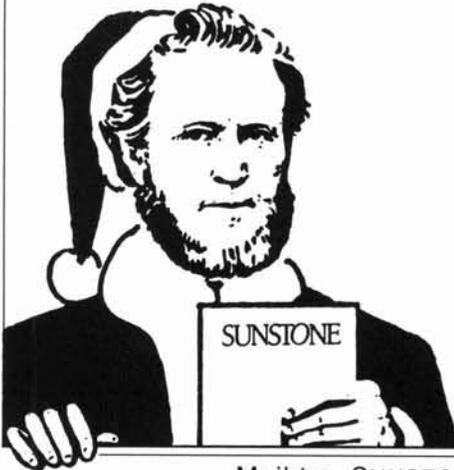
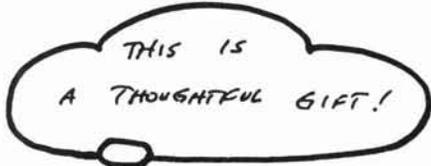
would go home feeling more depressed than when I went. But I cannot be a victim of it; I have to move on.

Many extraordinary people in history were bipolar—a fact unknown to many. If people did know this, I truly think that these extraordinary people would not be nearly as appreciated or as famous. But they con-

tributed to society regardless of their reality.

My point is that gay people and their families are not the only ones with problems. I understand that it is a mind-blowing experience to realize you are gay, but it doesn't need to be announced to the world. I don't go around announcing my condition, and I don't care to be informed about anyone's sex

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life, gay or straight.

I have a family member who recently died of AIDS. No one in the family knew that he was gay or what he was dying from until his last days. It didn't become a family discussion; it didn't matter. We just saw him as our Craig who was sick and dying. Nothing else mattered. We loved him just as much when we learned he had AIDS.

My experience has also affected me spiritually. When in the hospital, I could barely pray. All I could say was "How could you let

me be in this position? I have served a mission, married in the temple, had a wonderful marriage and two great boys. I have served as Primary president and many other Church callings. Where are you when I need you? How could you let me get to the point of suicide?" My mind was like mush. I barely hung onto life because of my kids.

I know through the Holy Ghost that for ten years, I have gradually been led to where I am now. I am stronger because of my illness. I'm glad to have this condition. It nearly

became the death of me, and now it is my strength. I strongly believe that all our challenges in life can be our strengths.

GARY GUY  
City withheld

LETTERS IDENTIFIED FOR PUBLICATION ARE EDITED FOR CLARITY, TONE, DUPLICATION, AND VERBOSITY. LETTERS ADDRESSED TO AUTHORS WILL BE FORWARDED, UNOPENED. (fax: 801/355-4043; SunstoneUt@aol.com)

## SUNSTONE CALENDAR

**1998 Chicago Symposium** will feature Wayne Booth and new *Dialogue* editors Rebecca and Neal Chandler on the Saturday evening of 7 November on the campus of the Loyola Water Tower Campus (25 E. Pearson, Chicago, IL). Contact Susan Paxman Hatch (708/482-3518; <dhatch@bsd.medctr.luc.edu>).

**1998 Northwest Sunstone Symposium** will feature speakers, including Pat Bagley and Robert Kirby, Eugene England, and Ronald Walker on 14 November at the home of Molly Bennion (1150 22nd Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98112; 206/325-6868; <Bennion@Bennion-seanet.com>).

**1998 Washington, D.C., Symposium** will feature Trevor Southey and Todd Compton on 20-21 November at the Arlington Hilton Towers, 950 N. Stafford Street (Ballston Metro stop). Hotel rooms are \$105 (703/812-5111). Contact Sunstone to receive preliminary program (343 N. Third West, Salt Lake City, UT 84103; 801/355-5926; fax 801/355-4043; <SunstoneUT@aol.com>).

**1999 Symposium West.** The conference will be on 16-17 April at the San Francisco Airport Clarion. Contact Richard Rands (415/969-6567; <rands7@aol.com>).

**1999 Sunstone Symposium.** 1999 marks the silver anniversary of Sunstone, and its annual symposium will be held at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City on 14-17 July 1999. Proposals now being accepted. Contact Sunstone to be on the preliminary program mailing list.

## THE MORMON UNIVERSE

**The Association for Mormon Letters** will hold its annual conference on Saturday, 20 February 1999, at Westminster College (1840 S. 1300 E., Salt Lake City). There will be sessions both morning and afternoon, a luncheon at which the awards will be presented, and an evening social where award-winners will read from their works. For more information, contact Neal Kramer (1025 JKHB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602; 801/378-8606; <neal\_kramer@byu.edu>).

## WORD BAZAAR

### MORMON ORGANIZATIONS

#### MORMON ALLIANCE

Ecclesiastical/spiritual abuse occurs when a Church officer, acting in his calling and using the weight of his office, coerces compliance, imposes his personal opinions as Church doctrine or policy, or resorts to such power plays as threats and intimidation to insure that his views prevail in a conflict of opinions. The suggestion is that the member's faith is weak, testimony inadequate, and commitment to the Church lacking. The member who wants to talk about the issue frequently finds that the leader accuses him or her of "not supporting Church leaders."

The Alliance listens to people who want to talk about such experiences. By documenting cases, we hope to encourage more sensitive leaders and more empowered members.

To report cases, write to the Mormon Alliance (6337 Highland Drive, Box 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121) or telephone Lavina Fielding Anderson (801/467-1617). Subscriptions are \$30 per calendar year and include four newsletters and the annual volume of case reports. 111

#### STUDENT REVIEW

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