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YEA, YEA



NAY, NAY

PICKY, PICKY

I THOROUGHLY enjoyed P. Q. Bliss on the selectivity of the Brigham Young quotes in the 1998-1999 priesthood/Relief Society manual ("Bracketing Out [Mess],"*SUNSTONE*, June 1999). Hear! Hear! to his (her?) insight that we should expect the Church to pick quotes that reinforce today's Mormon agenda. We all do the same in our teaching moments: anyone who's used a quotation in a talk or lesson picked it because it made the point they wanted to make. Well . . . yeah!

Quote selecting only becomes sinister when one knowingly misuses a quote (including strategic cuts and starting/stopping points) to make the quote's author seem to believe or support something she or he never did. Well-intentioned innocents, most of us are immunized from this prevalent LDS sin by our ignorance of the people we quote.

JAKE ANDREWS
San Francisco

MEAN-SPIRITED HUMOR

IN REPLY to the request for comments on humor: I've always enjoyed the humor in *SUNSTONE*, Kirby's pieces or the cartoons. They point out our oddities and foibles and that being chosen may not be all it's cracked up to be. The exception was the mean-spirited hymn parody, "Has Paul Dunn Any Good in the World Today?" by Paul Toscano. I still remember how angry it made me. Elder Dunn's stories made a positive impression on me as a teenager. When I read of his fabrications, I felt sorry for his shame and humiliation. But that attempt at humor at his expense was too much. Nothing he had supposedly done justified that attack. I thought about canceling my subscription, but I didn't since one reason I read *SUNSTONE* is that I don't have to agree with everything in it. I appreciate your efforts very much.

BRUCE SMITH
Gig Harbor, Washington

THE PATTERNS OF PRAYER

ROBERT REES'S remarkable essay, "Going to Church" (*SUNSTONE*, June 1999), comparing the liturgical experience of Anglican and LDS worship, affords access, all too rare, to the inner life of Christian piety. In the study of comparative liturgy and theology, his article may surely claim the position

of a classic. At the same time, I was struck, in both settings portrayed here, by the implicit definition of prayer: what we do when we pray, why God wants our prayer and responds. Specifically, I was puzzled by the utter absence of the dimension of obligation, of prayer as an act of liturgy, in the exact sense of the Greek: labor. The focus of the essay rested on what prayer does for the worshipper, and not on why God wants us to pray. Prayer is represented as subjective and votive, not objective and obligatory.

But for much of Judaic, Islamic, and Christian piety, prayer is obligatory, not votive, called for by God's commandments, not by man's impulse. That is to say, prayer in Islam and Judaism, as well as in Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, represents an act of obligation: words God wants us to say, in just this way, at just this moment, in community, in the Christian and Judaic contexts, prayer in the model of an offering. The governing metaphor then is the sacrifice of the Temple, instituted by God in the Torah that he revealed to Moses: however you feel, this is what you must do. And the implicit context of prayer is community: what we do together to carry out our obligation to God. The least important datum, then, is feeling "the need to cleanse myself."

And yet, when I hear Mormon hymnody, I am struck by the ambient tone of the communal offering to God of the music and words well sung that animates the singing. When Mormons sing, they lay on God's altar the power and the beauty of their voices. So if I could have asked Rees to extend his essay, I should have wanted him to comment not so much on the subjective feelings he entertained at Anglican and LDS prayer, as the objective response that, in his faith, he takes God to have made that day, those hours. I mean to suggest a context for his reflection, in particular, on the hymn-singing of that day: LDS humility, not Anglican pomp, is the embodiment of the LDS community in song that forms the cathedral without walls that truly soars to heaven. At any rate, that is this Rabbi's reflection on the matter.

JACOB NEUSNER
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Robert Rees responds:

Professor Neusner raises some interesting questions about prayer. I understand the distinction he makes between obligatory and

votive prayers, although I believe that a prayer can be both at the same time.

Neusner raises the question as to why God wants us to pray. While one could argue that God needs our prayers, it seems more likely that, as with other commandments, the obligatory nature of the prayer may be the least important part. I believe God invites us to pray because he recognizes that in praying truly, we must go outside of and beyond ourselves, and that in focusing on holiness, on goodness, on God-ness in an outward, otherward way, we focus less on ourselves. In other words, God commands (and sometimes invites) us to pray because he knows that this is one of the ways in which we can be spiritually nurtured and thus grow in holiness. Of course, the problem with so many prayers (including Mormon prayers) is that they are egocentric and thus do not achieve this higher purpose. On the other hand, if our subjective focus in prayer is to make us more worthy to commune with God, more

able to praise him, then the votive nature of such prayers may be a necessary prelude to prayer as offering. As Rabbi David Wolpe says, "Prayer is a process of self-discovery, by which the storm of a self pours forth. Prayer is unbinding. It is in tefillah, in prayer, that a turbulent spirit can say what it wishes, and what it needs" (*In Speech and Silence: The Jewish Quest for God*, 154). So I would argue that rather than cleansing ourselves being one of the least important parts of (or motives for) prayer, it may in fact be one of the most important, if the process of cleansing makes us more fit to commune with God. (It was in the entire service, by the way, and not just the prayer that I sought purification that day at Westminster, although I was grateful that the prayer of the priest included the words "cleans the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee. . . .")

If the Rabbis saw prayer as "the service of the heart" (Wolpe, *The Healer of Shattered*

Hearts, 98), then whether presented to God as an offering, as a plea, an expression of thanksgiving, or a desperate call for help, it is the heart's intent that is important. In other words, it is the heart that is at the heart of prayer—what is important is what happens to our hearts when we say particular words, in a particular way, in a particular place, or when we simply pour out our hearts to God. Heart researchers at the Institute of HeartMath in Boulder Creek, California, have demonstrated in laboratory tests that the activity that places the human heart in its most restful and harmonious state is the expression of gratitude or appreciation (<www.heartmath.com>). It is interesting to speculate that, with God's having created us in this way, his wish to have us express thanksgiving and gratitude through prayer is one of the ways in which he has designed that our hearts can be placed in harmony with our minds and bodies, as well as in harmony with him.



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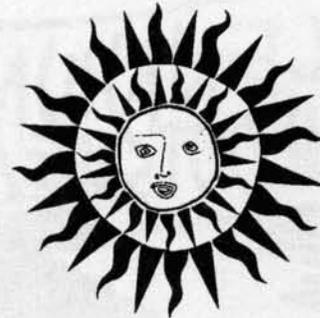
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I believe that prayer can be many things, that it can take many forms: it can be a chant, a silent meditation, a psalm, words spoken before a congregation, words of admonition or encouragement expressed in family prayer, a hymn, a blessing pronounced upon the head of someone who is ill, a shout of hosanna to the heavens, a cry for help in the darkness, or words as simple as those spoken by Christ, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (Luke 11:41). Most of all, I believe that prayer is an expression of love—God's and ours. Ultimately, perhaps our prayers would evolve to the kind of prayer offered by Abu Yazid Al-Bistami (c. 874), who said, "For thirty years I used to say, 'Do this,' and 'Give that'; but when I reached the first stage of wisdom, I said, 'O God, be mine and do whatever you want.'"

I have been deeply touched by prayers from the hearts and mouths of believers in many churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, as well as by those uttered by my children at family gatherings, by my grandchildren over meals, and by my wife when we kneel by our bedside each night. It is, one might argue, the prayers of all the righteous people in the world, of whatever religious persuasion, that keep the world in whatever delicate balance it may be said to have.

CIRCLES OR BARRIERS

TODD COMPTON'S proposal for an "open temple" was interesting—for a few minutes (SUNSTONE, Apr. 1999). For several reasons, I don't think the Church will adopt his well-meaning but wrong-headed suggestion. Not the least of these is a fundamental overhaul in our thinking about the concepts "sacred" and "profane."

Almost as far back as recorded history goes, the concept of "temple" permeated religious and cultural lives of disparate groups of people. Central to a "temple" is the idea of the "center" of the universe, together with all of its cosmological implications. Mircea Eliade, the great anthropologist of religion, following Sir James Frazier's *The Golden Bough*, finds in the symbolism of "center" three connected and complementary things:

1. The "sacred mountain" where heaven and earth meet. See Micah 4:1–2, for the idea of the temple as "the mountain of the Lord," to be erected in the "tops of the mountains."
2. Every temple or sacred edifice becomes an extension of the mountain of the Lord, and by implication, another "center."
3. The temple as the point through which the Axis Mundi passes, becoming a junction

of heaven, earth, and hell. (See *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1996, 375). In Mormon thought, this point has been elucidated by Hugh Nibley (*Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, 1–41).

Inherent in this worldview is a system of concentric circles or barriers radiating outward from the sacred center, or temple, until one reaches the profane world ("profane" derives from two Latin words, *pro*, "outside" or "before;" and *fanum*, "temple"). Going inward, each circle or barrier also partakes of higher degrees of holiness, until one reaches the Holy of Holies at the center of the temple.

These circles or barriers perform several functions. They clearly separate the sacred from the profane. Eliade also points out another purpose: To keep "chaos" from the "center," safeguarding magico-religious limits and order within the temple precincts. This idea also permeates the Mormon concept of the sacred: we view God's creative act as bringing order to chaos, not as a creation *ex nihilo*. This is a theme repeated throughout the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 1:1–2:4; Job 38:8–11; Ps. 74:12–17). It is also voiced in the Doctrine and Covenants (88:119; 132:8).

A related idea is that of protection, not only for those within the bounds of the sacred, but also for the profane man who exposes himself to danger by coming into contact with the sacred without "due care" or what Eliade terms the "gestures of approach" (370–71). Eliade sees a paradigm in God's statement to Moses at the burning bush: "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5). Thus, the rites and requirements to enter the temple are as much to protect the uninitiated as to safeguard the sanctity of the holy place.

These are not abstract concepts. They are real. History bears witness to humanity's need for temples, from Sumeria and Mesopotamia, to Israel and Egypt, to the Far East, to Mesoamerica. In this millennium, the temple-building impulse sprang anew among French and English Catholics in the form of the great cathedrals, awe-inspiring monuments to our need for contact with the divine. Joseph Smith's immediate desire to build temples, his glorious vision of the new Zion—the center place—and Mormonism's great push within the last two years to build even more temples all witness that the Church has tapped an ancient well.

Only by rethinking these religious fundamentals and replacing them with something far different could Compton's idea ever work.



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By then, the temple would not be a temple in the classic anthropological and religious senses. It would no longer be the "center," the "Mountain of the Lord," the connection between Heaven and Earth. It would be only another secular building, albeit elaborate and richly adorned. Given the religious significance of temple ordinances, I do not foresee the Church abandoning its temple theology. But finally, I do not know if the Church or its members could ever abandon our "temple-ism," even if we wanted. If one accepts Jung's theory of "archetypes," then surely the temple as "sacred space" is one of the deepest and most commonly found of these.

ALAN E. BARBER
Edwardsville, Illinois

WHAT PRICE CREDIBILITY?

I ATTENDED THE 1999 Sunstone Symposium in July and was delighted to see the continuing shift toward a more moderate Sunstone community.

In an ideal world, Sunstone could meet needs for the entire range of Mormon experience. But the present Church environment means credibility for Sunstone and its participants may come at the price of lesser accommodation to dissidents. Such credibility means a great deal to the large number of critically thinking Latter-day Saints who are committed members of the Church and desperately need a place to work out their questions and conflicts.

Sunstone has been a lifeline for me for nearly twenty years. I long for the day when Church leaders no longer marginalize honest seekers of truth who need outlets like

Sunstone to keep their faith alive. Imagine being able to quote a SUNSTONE article in a church meeting without disapproving glares or later being "called in."

I realize that detente between Sunstone and the Church without compromising honest inquiry will not be easy. But because the line between capitulation and autonomy is difficult to draw doesn't mean it isn't worth the effort, even if first attempts are clumsy and/or objectionable to some.

I, for one, am grateful for the more temperate tone. If Sunstone can continue moving toward the more orthodox Church, perhaps eventually the Church will be willing to take a few steps toward Sunstone. If so, I can see only benefits for both.

SUE BERGIN
American Fork, Utah

EVER-GR . . .

MY NAME WOULD be Miguel Peña if Dad hadn't felt life-long shame for being Mexican-American. That was the name of his older brother, the one born in Mexico. When I was sixteen, Dad said: "He is dead to me. Never mention him again." But this concealed brother was very much alive, despite his alter ego's denial.

When Dad ventured from the Mexican-American *barrio* as a teenager, "white" boys called him "spic" and "wetback." He vowed to escape from being loathed by the vast majority and from the poverty he thought typical of his own people. Eventually, he shunned his family and anyone else who willfully identified as Mexican-American. This included the teenage friend whose last

name Dad took for his own. Years later, Hollywood actor Anthony Quinn told me about their youthful years together in the Los Angeles *barrio*.

Dad adopted an alias he thought was acceptable to America's White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. He never changed his name legally. My guess is he didn't want anyone—especially a courtroom judge—to know his secret, the shame-filled identity he strived to smother.

Claiming to be "dark" Irish, Dad married a blue-eyed redhead who fit that stereotype. Before marrying, he told Mom that both his parents were dead. After my birth, Mom discovered that his mother was alive but unable to speak English.

Dad's speech betrayed no hint of his native Spanish, certainly no Castilian lisp. With malice, he often told me that "California's illegal immigrants are ruining this country." This was self-hatred masquerading as WASP prejudice.

No one advised Dad to do so, but he concluded on his own that he must cease to be Mexican-American to progress and achieve his full potential. Decades before the dominant culture had "support groups" to help people change behaviors, he changed his lifestyle. Even if he was born Mexican-American, he certainly was not going to live that way.

I've wondered what it would have been like for my father if an "ethnic reorientation" support-group had existed back then. It would perhaps have had a name like "EverWhite," and a meeting might have gone something like this:

Standing in front of the "EverWhite banner, the speaker's face and mannerisms resembled those of Pancho Villa. Nevertheless, he announced: "I used to regard myself as Mexican-American, but now I am a *former Chicano*. I dislike even using the word 'Chicano' because it is just a political label. I was deceived by the activists of the 'Chicano-and-Chicana Movement' into adopting this false label for myself. In EverWhite, we reject the lie that any of God's children are so-called Mexican-Americans. Instead, there are some Americans with Mexican tendencies. Some of us were once caught up in the so-called Mexican-American lifestyle. We may even have participated in a parade of so-called 'Chicano pride.' Some of us have 'acted out' our so-called Chicano tendencies in various ways, including intimate relationship with those who also regarded themselves as Mexican-American. We may even have thought we were sharing love, but in EverWhite, we know these are inappropriate



"Hold on—I forgot to stamp your hand."

and destructive behaviors that make it impossible for us to reach the highest rewards of the United States. And so, we must struggle as other so-called Mexican-Americans are unwilling to do. All of us can tell about unpleasant experiences we have had in this minority, but we have learned in EverWhite that real happiness and success occur when we have the faith to be like the majority. I thank God for EverWhite. I am happy to say that I now have a regular American wife who loves me enough to help me triumph over Mexican-American temptations." The speaker then introduced his blue-eyed blonde wife. She didn't seem to mind being married to a former *Chicano*.

That's how it might have been in my father's day if he had had access to a support group for overcoming Mexican-Americanism. There might even have been a Chicanos Anonymous twelve-step program to help struggling persons overcome "compulsive" desires to eat a burrito.

For those of us who accept "who we are" and think eating a burrito is okay, it's easy to be critical of such support groups. But we are guilty of a prejudice as harmful as the discrimination we have often felt. These organizations exist to give compassionate service to those who are desperate to change the pattern of their lives and to erase the self-identity they never wanted. I may disagree with that goal, but I also feel compassion and understanding.

While I acknowledge my father's willpower and sincerity, I grieve for him and for those who have followed a similar path. In self-loathing anguish, they deny their basic nature in order to obtain acceptance by the majority population and to maintain the hope of ultimate reward. Like my father, they have rejected the love of "their kind" and abandoned those who are Family. Many believe this is necessary for self-worth and the blessings our culture promises to those who conform.

However, I think of Dad's childhood friend. Anthony Quinn preserved his Mexican identity and succeeded in America. This was not easy, but even those who regarded him as a "spic" and "wetback" ultimately acknowledged his achievements.

My father's path was not easy, either, but this Mexican-American blue-collar worker died happy, wealthy, and "white." At least in his own eyes. Still, I believe he should have affirmed his inner reality the best he could, even though our society's vast majority would not accept who he was nor really understand his experience. There are many kinds of "struggle," many kinds of loss, and

many kinds of success.

There is spiritual truth in this, as well. Jesus said: "In my Father's house are many mansions." Then he added, "I go to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2.) The Savior did not teach us to dread that we might not get the "highest" mansion possible. Any mansion is a mansion. If there is a "least" of God's kingdoms, it is still a divine kingdom where any of us would be happy to dwell with others who are really "our kind." Forever.

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KNOPF, ALREADY!

IN SUNSTONE'S "Twenty Years Ago" column (June 1999), the original publisher of Leonard Arrington's and Davis Bitton's *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (1979) was misidentified. It was published by Alfred A. Knopf.

Mormons owe a debt of gratitude to Alfred and Blanche Knopf whose firm—one of the English-speaking world's most presti-

gious publishing houses—brought Mormons and an international readership literary works as diverse as Virginia Sornensen's *A Little Lower than the Angels* (1942), Rodello Hunter's *A House of Many Rooms* (1965) and, more recently, Brian Evenson's *Altmann's Tongue* (1994). They issued Fawn Brodie's controversial *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (1944) as well as William Mulder and Russell Mortensen's monumental *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers* (1958).

Indeed, the Knopf imprimatur significantly contributed to the respectability—however modest—now attached to Mormon literature and historiography. In the Knopfs, Mormonism found two of its most influential non-Mormon allies of the twentieth century.

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"No, elder. We can't go without our coats unless it's 100 degrees."