

NEWS

CHURCH AND STATE TUSSLE OVER THE PAPERS OF LEONARD J. ARRINGTON

ON 11 OCTOBER 2001, amid great fanfare, the Merrill Library at Utah State University officially opened the Leonard J. Arrington Historical Archive, an extensive collection of notes, papers, diaries, books, and documents donated by the late LDS Church Historian. The collection, consisting of 658 archival boxes and valued at over \$100,000, documented every aspect of Arrington's life, career, and research. (For the archive's scope and list of contents, see <www.usu.edu / specol/ manuscript/Arrington/LJAH1/scope./html>.)

The celebratory mood did not linger long, however. On 15 October, four days after the opening, eight LDS Church Archives' workers began a four-day examination of the collection. And on 24 October, Church and university officials released a joint statement declaring the Church "has learned that the Arrington collection includes some private and confidential materials which the church believes are owned by the church or its affiliated entities, and not owned by Leonard Arrington or subject to his disposition." At this same time, USU officials said they had agreed to "temporarily sequester" some of the material until ownership issues could be resolved.

USU provost Stan Albrecht indicated to the *Salt Lake Tribune* that the Church was concerned primarily with three categories of material: "papers it says Arrington had access to but was never given permission to copy; material sent to Arrington in his official capacity as church historian; and material created or generated by Arrington in that capacity."

The first indication that the ownership disputes might become acrimonious came the next day as Church attorneys disclosed to the press that Arrington had signed an agreement to the effect that, after his retirement, he would return to the Church any copies or transcripts of journals or diaries he had acquired or commissioned as Church Historian. The 26 October *Deseret News* reported the timing of this announcement was very upsetting to USU legal counsel Craig Simper: "This is exactly the

Bitton, and Brigham Madsen, quickly rushed to Arrington's defense. In a *Tribune* op-ed column, May wrote: "Let no one be mistaken. Leonard J. Arrington was a humane, generous, careful scholar, thoroughly honest both in his use of and handling of historical documents and in his research and writing. . . . In my judgment [the Church's] concerns could have been handled in a way that did not impugn the integrity of the former Church Historian."

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—CRAIG SIMPER, USU attorney

kind of documentation that I asked the attorney for the church to produce some days ago, and I got no response whatsoever. Now they leak it to the press, and we have to play it all out in public. All I can say is this merely starts the discussions. It certainly doesn't end them."

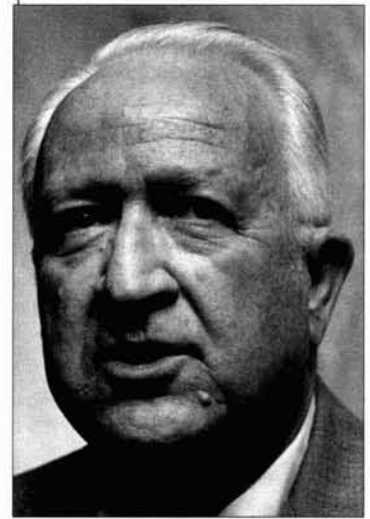
Upon examining the document, Simper acknowledged that Arrington did indeed sign an agreement on 8 July 1980, but Simper didn't concur with Church attorneys and historians whether the agreement covered the disputed material.

The disagreement between the Church and USU seemed to many Arrington friends to unfairly question the historian's integrity by raising the question, did Arrington actually *do* what he promised? Historians, including Dean May, Will Bagley, Davis

THE DISPUTED DOCUMENTS

THE day after the story broke, USU provided a list of materials the Church had asked them to sequester. The list involved documents from 148 of the collection's 658 boxes, including minutes from meetings of the Council of the Twelve, minutes from the School of the Prophets, letters, journals, and diaries of past Church Presidents Brigham Young, Lorenzo Snow, Wilford Woodruff, and Joseph F. Smith, and similar papers of other Church leaders, including Hyrum Smith, Samuel Smith, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and Edward Partridge.

A subset of the larger dispute concerned an extensive set of transcripts created by Edyth Romney. Romney was a long-time volunteer in the Church's



Leonard J. Arrington

Nearly three years after his death, the late LDS Church Historian is still at the center of the debate about open access to historical documents.

historical department and later—after Arrington's retirement—a transcriptionist paid by the Mormon History Trust Fund, an account created and maintained by Arrington's and other historians' royalties. Church representatives had presented to USU officials a separate agreement signed by Arrington in 1989 regarding the Romney transcripts that had led the university to turn over forty-five bound copies of the Romney transcripts two years earlier. However, this new search of the collection turned up another copy of the Romney transcripts. According to Ronald Esplin, current managing director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University, no one knows how this extra copy of the Romney materials came into the collection that went on public display, whether it was USU archivists or Arrington himself who authorized the additional copy.

RAMPANT SPECULATION

AFTER the initial flurry of announcements, little else emerged from official channels for the next ten days or so. But the lack of new disclosures did not stop

people from continuing to debate and speculate about issues raised by the conflict. Immediately after the story broke, several themes dominated occasional news stories and very active email and electronic bulletin board discussions.

Many contended this dispute was not really about "who rightfully owns what," but about the Church's trying to "suppress" material that might damage its reputation or complicate the way it has presented its history. In an interview with the *Tribune*, Lavina Fielding Anderson, a friend and collaborator of

rogant and legalistic attitude by Church representatives.

A STEP FORWARD

ON 9 November, university and Church officials announced they would try to avoid a court battle by appointing a board of eight members—four representatives from each side—to study each questionable document and make recommendations to USU President Kermit L. Hall and Church President Gordon B. Hinckley. The presidents would then make final decisions on the disputed materials.

Book of Anointings and a small portion of Heber C. Kimball's diary, both of which contained information about LDS temple rituals, and what Daines referred to as a "smattering" of minutes of meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "We concluded that these documents were never part of Dr. Arrington's collection," Daines said, adding that the family "regrets this error." He also stressed that none of the heirs knew these items were in the collection.

After the conference, Arrington's daughter Susan Arrington Madsen summed up the family's feelings about the resolution: "We're very, very pleased. It's a great day for the Arrington collection and the Arrington family. This is what my father wanted—to have his collection intact."

Offering the university's point of view, Hall said "this matter is now closed," adding that the



KERMIT L. HALL

THE USU president was upset by the "bluff, bluster, and threats" of some Church representatives, yet had high praise for the leadership of President Hinckley and two other general authorities.

way some LDS representatives handled the negotiations, whose behavior he described as 'bluff, bluster, threats and near total disdain for the academic mission of the university.'" He was upset by

"Who owns a people's history? What happens to a history-based faith if the primary message about its history is that it's scary and dangerous and has to be so carefully controlled?"
—LAVINA FIELDING ANDERSON, historian

Arrington's, spoke to this larger issue: "Who owns a people's history? What happens to a history-based faith if the primary message about its history is that it's scary and dangerous and has to be so carefully controlled? Where's the line between preserving documents and suppressing the information they contain?"

Others defended Church interests, arguing that certain information should rightfully remain closed to research. In a 11 November *Tribune* op-ed, director of Church Archives Steven R. Sorenson suggested that those "who cry most shrilly about 'censorship' . . . would do well to examine themselves and ask if they would be willing to sign a document allowing the public full access to all information about themselves: medical records, school records . . . salary data, bank records . . . religious confessions—you get the picture."

Sarcastic as it was, Sorenson's editorial itself became a sore issue, seeming to illustrate an ar-

USU and the Arrington family were represented on the board by USU provost Albrecht, historian F. Ross Peterson, USU attorney Simper, and Arrington family attorney N. George Daines.

Church interests were forwarded by Elders W. Rolfe Kerr and Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy, managing director of the Family and Church History Department Richard Turley, and Church attorney Berne S. Broadbent.

The board eventually met four times, three in person and once by phone, but because of an agreement not to discuss their deliberations, very little is known of them.

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION was announced at a Saturday, 24 November press conference. Daines said the Arrington family had asked the university to return several documents mistakenly included among the donated items. The specific items to be turned over to the Church were: a copy of the

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agreement achieves USU's goals going into the negotiations of preserving the university's scholarly integrity and public trust and to upholding its contract with the Arrington family.

Through spokesperson, Michael Otterson, the Church issued a statement: "We are satisfied that the principal issues have been resolved fairly and amicably. We appreciate the good will displayed on all sides."

POST RESOLUTION COMMENTARY

IN candid comments to the *Tribune* shortly before the final announcement, Hall recounted events. The *Tribune* reported, Hall "expressed dismay at the

the "very aggressive" actions of officials in going public with the 1980 Arrington agreement and touting in the press that they had an "almost ironclad case."

Ultimately, however, Hall praised the efforts of President Hinckley, who, as tensions escalated, called Hall to ask if there wasn't some way to settle without going to court. The two then agreed to create the eight-member board. Of negotiations with President Hinckley and Elders Kerr and Cooke, Hall added: "Once we sat down with them, we were able to negotiate in good faith." Then, singling out President Hinckley, Hall commented: "I cannot say enough about the hand of moderation he extended." ☺

UPDATE

LDS LEADERS GIVE REASSURANCE,
TEACH DOCTRINE OF INCLUSION

HELD LESS THAN one month after the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history, the October 2001 General Conference of the LDS church focused on messages of reassurance, tolerance, and inclusion. On Sunday morning, 7 October, President Gordon B. Hinckley referred to current war events shortly after an NBC news flash had interrupted the conference's broadcast on Church-owned KSL Channel 5 TV to announce the first U.S. attack in Afghanistan.

President Hinckley said, "I have just been handed a note that says that a U.S. missile attack is underway." Then he closed the meeting in a Conference Center filled to capacity. "I need not remind you that we live in perilous times. I desire to speak concerning these times and our circumstances as members of this Church."

President Hinckley compared terrorists to the Gadianton robbers spoken of in the Book of Mormon. "In their day, they did all in their power, by whatever means available, to bring down the Church, to woo the people with sophistry, and to take control of the society. We see the same thing in the present situation."

On Sunday afternoon, President Hinckley referred again to the current conflict with terrorism. "We have been a very quarrelsome and difficult people in our conflicts one with another," he said referring to past wars. "We so need to turn to the Lord and look to Him." In an unusual move, President Hinckley closed his remarks with a prayer and asked a blessing upon "those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle."

On Saturday morning, President Hinckley had reassured members that the Church is not changing direction. "Those who observe us say that we are moving into the mainstream of religion," said President Hinckley. "We are not changing. The world's perception of us is changing." His comments seemed a direct response to a recent *Newsweek* cover story on Mormonism (10 Sept. 2001). According to *Newsweek* religion editor Kenneth L. Woodward, LDS leaders are placing a new emphasis on Jesus Christ. (See also SUNSTONE, Nov. 2001, 74–75.)

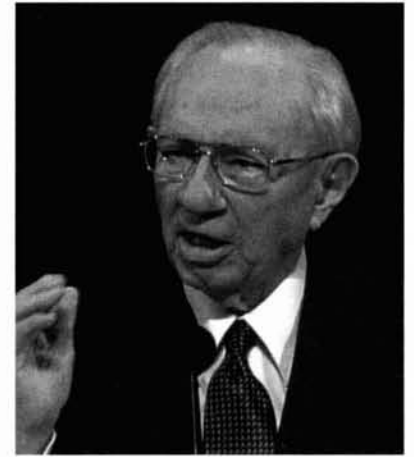
During the priesthood session, President Hinckley reported on the Perpetual Education Fund, a Church program established to grant low-interest education loans to returned missionaries, both male and female, who live in developing countries. He announced that the program is already up and running in a number of countries, including Peru, Chile, Mexico, and Bolivia. By the end of 2001, the fund was expected to help twelve hundred people.

ELDER BALLARD TEACHES "DOCTRINE OF INCLUSION"

ELDER Russell M. Ballard, of the Quorum of the Twelve, taught what he called "the doctrine of inclusion" as he counseled members to eliminate the words *nonmember* and *non-Mormon* from their language. "Such phrases can be demeaning and even belittling," he said. "Personally, I don't consider myself to be a 'non-Catholic' or a 'non-Jew.' I am a Christian. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is how I prefer to be identified—for who and what I am, as opposed to being identified for what I am not. Let

us extend that same courtesy to those who live among us." Elder Ballard advised members to use the term "neighbors" instead.

Elder Ballard counseled members to get to know their neighbors "without being pushy and without any ulterior motives." He also asked Utah members to never ask their neighbors to move out of the state. "If neighbors become testy or frustrated because of some disagreement with [t]he Church . . . or with some law we support for moral reasons, please don't suggest to them—even in a humorous way—that they consider moving someplace else. . . . If our history teaches us nothing else, it should teach us to respect the rights of all people to peacefully coexist with one another."



President Gordon B. Hinckley tells Saints that the Church is not "moving into the mainstream of religion. . . . [Rather] the world's perception of us is changing."

THE MORMON ALLIANCE PRESENTS REVIEW

ON 8 October, the Monday following General Conference, the Mormon Alliance met in the Salt Lake City Public Library for its regular conference review. The Mormon Alliance is a Utah-based organization dedicated to countering spiritual and ecclesiastical abuse and to protecting the LDS church against defamatory actions. The General Conference reviews are regular public forums where members can exchange impressions, put the conference in perspective, and analyze the meaning of the messages.

Several participants praised a talk by Elder Wayne S. Peterson of the Seventy. Elder Peterson exhorted members to refrain from responding angrily to real or imagined affronts, and he quoted Jesus' commandment to love our enemies. Other participants commended President Boyd K. Packer's address on the Book of Mormon and President James E. Faust's talk on the Atonement.

The participants also noticed the new regulations on Mormon language. In addition to Elder Ballard's instruction against the words *nonmember* and *non-Mormon*, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Twelve discouraged members from talking about *missionary tools* and suggested that the expression "sharing the gospel" might be better than *missionary work*. According to Mormon Alliance trustee Lavina Fielding Anderson, "These terms thus join 'free agency' (now moral agency), 'plan of salvation' (now plan of happiness), and 'inactive' (now less active) on the scrap heap of obsolete terminology."

Some participants were puzzled by the nationalism expressed in a conference that is intended for members around the world. Others were troubled by the polarized thinking that seemed to underlie statements about rooting out evil. "How do you define evil?" queried

