

## UPDATE

GENERAL CONFERENCE BRINGS  
COMFORT, COUNSEL

DURING OCTOBER GENERAL CONFERENCE, WHICH took place a few weeks after Hurricane Katrina devastated the U.S. Gulf Coast killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands, President Gordon B. Hinckley said he did not believe the tragedy was retribution by an angry God. “I do not say or infer that what happened is the punishment of the Lord,” said President Hinckley during the priesthood session.

In this, President Hinckley appears more progressive than evangelical preachers who had dubbed New Orleans a den of sin. Televangelist Pat Robertson had gone so far as to suggest that Katrina showed God was angry at Democratic senators who wanted a pro-choice Supreme Court justice when conservative judge John G. Roberts had first been nominated for a vacancy in the Court.

The 95-year-old Hinckley closed the Sunday morning session by thanking “my Father in Heaven that he has prolonged my life to be a part of these challenging times.” He also gave a report of the recent trip that had taken him to Alaska, Russia, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, and Nigeria. President Hinckley also dedicated temples in Newport Beach, California, and in Samoa. “I do not enjoy travel,” he added, “but it is my wish to get out among our people to extend appreciation and encouragement, and to bear testimony of the divinity of the Lord’s work.”

President Hinckley then addressed the topic of forgiveness, quoting from the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Sermon on the Mount, and a recent news story in which a woman insisted on offering a plea deal to her assailant, a 19-year-old man who disfigured her and forced her to undergo painful face reconstruction surgery.

“There are hardened criminals who may have to be locked up,” President Hinckley commented. “There are unspeakable crimes, such as deliberate murder and rape, that justify harsh penalties. But there are some who could be saved from long, stultifying years in prison because of an unthoughtful, foolish act. Somehow forgiveness, with love and tolerance, accomplishes miracles that can happen in no other way.”

CITING SOURCES AS diverse as the scriptures, *Teen People* magazine, and Hollywood actress Halle Berry, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve addressed the topic of young women and body image—the first time the subject has been discussed in detail in general conference.

“Frankly, the world has been brutal with you in this regard,” Elder Holland told the Church’s young women as he discussed society’s current fixation with the perfect body. “You are bombarded in movies, television, fashion magazines, and advertisements with the message that looks are everything!”

“In terms of preoccupation with self and a fixation on the physical, this is more than social insanity; it is spiritually destructive, and it accounts for much of the unhappiness

women, including young women, face in the modern world.”

Elder Holland fell short of mentioning eating disorders by name, but he did address the current trend to improve appearances through plastic surgery. “If adults are preoccupied with appearance—tucking and nipping and implanting and remodeling everything that can be remodeled—those pressures and anxieties will certainly seep through to children.”



PHOTO: TOM SMART, DESERET NEWS

*Elder Jeffrey R. Holland counsels that “looks aren’t everything” and advises against cosmetic surgery.*

THE OCTOBER CONFERENCE marked the ten-year anniversary of the Proclamation on the Family. In the Saturday afternoon session, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve denounced “Satan’s aggression against the family” and lamented that “institutions that used to support and strengthen families now try to supplant and even sabotage the very families they were created to serve.”

“In the name of ‘tolerance,’ the definition of family has been expanded beyond recognition,” Elder Ballard added, “to the point that ‘family’ can be any individuals of any gender who live together with or without commitment or children or attention to consequence.”

Within days after the conference, Affirmation: Gay & Lesbian Mormons issued a statement responding to Elder Ballard and assessing the Church’s activities in the decade since the Proclamation was issued. “Ten years ago, the LDS Church didn’t need a proclamation to protect the family,” they write. “However, LDS leaders did need a proclamation to justify the aggressive political campaign that they were carrying out against same-sex families.”

The statement concludes: “As gay and lesbian Mormons, we too grew up in LDS homes where we learned about the importance of the family. We do not wish to destroy anyone’s family. But we wish that LDS leaders would stop using the Proclamation on the Family to attempt to destroy ours.”

## CHURCH PROVIDES RELIEF TO HURRICANE VICTIMS

THE CHURCH LAUNCHED A MASSIVE RESPONSE TO assist victims of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast. On 29 August, only hours after the devastating hurricane hit, two members of the Welfare Services emergency response team were on their way to the disaster area, where they visited towns and delivered assistance. Apostles Boyd K. Packer and



PHOTO: JOHN HART, LDS CHURCH NEWS

Elder M. Russell Ballard, President Packer, John M. Huntsman Sr., Bishop H. David Burton, and Elder D. Todd Christofferson visit a Red Cross relief center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

M. Russell Ballard, along with D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy and Presiding Bishop H. David Burton, also flew to the area and visited an evacuation center in downtown Baton Rouge .

Between 5,000 and 10,000 Latter-day Saints live in the areas affected by Katrina. Missionaries were evacuated from the damaged areas and are all accounted for. Three members are known to have died during the hurricane.

LDS-owned buildings in Louisiana and Mississippi were used to shelter displaced people and to serve as distribution points for supplies. Church facilities were lost to hurricane damage in New Orleans and Slidell Louisiana stakes. Some chapels in nearby areas experienced wind and flood damage. The Baton Rouge Louisiana Temple and adjacent stake center were unharmed.

According to the Church's website, [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org), LDS volunteers have to date provided 17,402 man-days of relief service, completing nearly 7,100 work orders. 4,000-person work crews, known as "chain saw warriors" have descended on afflicted areas, clearing debris, removing fallen trees, and making minor roof repairs. The Church called the project, "the largest response ever by the Church to a disaster in the United States."

## MISSIONARIES LEAVE VENEZUELA

ON 24 OCTOBER, THE CHURCH COMPLETED THE transfer of 220 non-native missionaries from Venezuela to other missions. The move comes as relations between the governments of Venezuela and the United States continue to deteriorate.

Church spokesperson Dale Bills said that for some time, the Church has had trouble securing visas for new U.S. missionaries called to serve in Venezuela and in renewing visas for those already in the country.

The Church has begun calling eighteen-year-old native Venezuelan missionaries to supplement the ranks of other Venezuelan missionaries who will remain in the country and continue working there.

## CHURCH OPPOSES NUCLEAR DUMP

SHORTLY AFTER THE NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION authorized a nuclear waste site in a Tooele County Indian reservation, the Church issued a statement opposing the plan to build the facility in Utah's west desert.

"We regret the decision by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to authorize the issuance of a license that would allow storage of radioactive waste in Skull Valley," reads the statement. "Storage of nuclear waste in Utah is a matter of significant public interest that requires thorough scrutiny."

In May 1981, the First Presidency issued a similar statement opposing the MX missile system which would have deployed nuclear warhead missiles in Utah and Nevada.

Private Fuel Storage LLC, the group of utilities behind the project, had promised the impoverished 121 members of the Goshute Skull Valley band hundreds of millions of dollars if they would allow the waste facility on their lands.

## PLAZA FIGHT FINALLY COMES TO END



PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS of contentious litigation, the legal battle over the sale of a block of Salt Lake City's Main Street has come to an end. Lawyers for the Church and the city of Salt Lake are now breathing more easily as a federal court validated the sale and the right of the Church to build a plaza that places restrictions on some forms of speech and behavior.

The ACLU sued over the sale, arguing that the plaza was a public sidewalk and therefore the city had no right to sell the block to the Church.

In its ruling, the court wrote that "the asserted purpose of the plaza, unlike that of a normal sidewalk or other public forum, is to act as an ecclesiastical park."

## THE JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH INSTITUTE IS HISTORY

THE JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH INSTITUTE, ONCE A MAJOR center for the study of Mormon history at BYU, has been closed. All those working on the Joseph Smith Papers Project have been moved to the Church History Department at Church headquarters.

Managing Director Jill Derr told the *Deseret Morning News* the Church History Department has been “planning for several months or years how to make church history available to a wider audience of church members and others. [The Church History Department’s] growing strength as a center for church-sponsored history has had an impact on us.”

“I don’t see this move as any effort to suppress information,” she added. “That would destroy the whole purpose in doing the papers, which is to make all the documents available.”

According to one source, the move had been anticipated for the past several years because some high-ranking administrators in BYU’s College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences had come to see the Institute as a drain, both in terms of finances and staffing. While many college-sponsored centers and institutes around the country regularly rotate their faculty from throughout the college, thus sharing the economic burden, the Smith Institute had a permanent staff of full-time faculty and other employees dedicated solely to the Institute’s objectives.

## CHURCH LEADER GIVES CANDID INTERVIEW ON RADIO CALL-IN SHOW



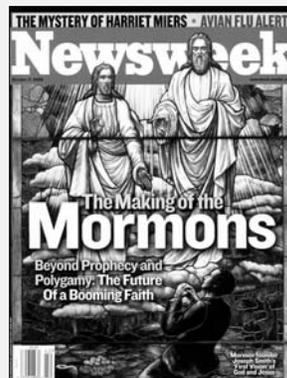
IN A RARE EVENT, AN LDS general authority was a guest on a radio call-in show, fielding questions from the host as well as callers—not all of whom were friendly to his message. In an appearance on “Radio West,” a daily call-in show hosted by Doug Fabrizio on KUER, a Salt Lake City NPR station, Elder Merrill Bateman of the First Quorum of Seventy defended the way the LDS Church counts its members and disputed a

*Salt Lake Tribune* story about the number of Church members in Utah (see SUNSTONE, September 2005, 74). In the course of the hour-long interview, Elder Bateman also addressed a number of topics ranging from missionary work and the Church’s “raising the bar” initiative to the LDS stand on the war to policies about having one’s name removed from Church records.

“The Church is not interested in growth for growth’s sake,” Bateman emphasized. “We do not prepare growth projections. We obviously look at the numbers—we are interested in the numbers—but more interesting for us is what happens to individuals.” Bateman confirmed some statistics reported in the recent *Tribune* articles but contested others. Whereas the articles claim that only 62.5 of Utahns are Mormon, Bateman

## Mormon Media Image

### NEWSWEEK, TODAY SHOW LOOK AT MORMONISM



WHEN LATTER-DAY SAINT Elise Soukup, an assistant editor for *Newsweek* magazine approached her bosses about writing a story on her own religion for the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith, the editors embraced the idea—so much, in fact, that they made it a cover story. With a stained-glass depiction of the First Vision on the magazine cover, the story, entitled “The

Making of the Mormon—Beyond Prophecy and Polygamy: The Future of a Booming Faith,” was published 17 October.

Soukup is being both praised and criticized for having written a piece that doesn’t shy away from Joseph Smith’s controversial legacy—including the Prophet’s marriage to some thirty women and his reputation as a “prophet and polygamist, mesmerizer and rabble-rouser, saint and sinner.” Despite these unflattering admissions, the Church released a statement expressing appreciation for “*Newsweek*’s effort to bring this remarkable story and its implications to the attention of their readers.” In another significant gesture of approval, the 22 October *Church News* issue featured a story about the article, and the Public Affairs department placed a link to the story in the online LDS newsroom at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org).

The article mentions events such as the “September Six” disciplines of 1993, as well as DNA and other challenges to Book of Mormon historicity and skeptical assessments about the divine origins of polygamy, such as that given by Community of Christ historian Mark Scherer: “[Joseph Smith] figured out a way to commit adultery and to do it sacramentally.” But the article also celebrates Mormonism’s most visible successes, including its power to make people “find themselves part of a network of mutual concern.”

“In Mormon theology, everyone is a minister of a kind,” writes Soukup. “Everyone is empowered in some way to do good to others, and to have good done unto them: it is a 21st-century covenant of caring.”

Soukup says writing the article had been “a fascinating journey for myself.” Even though she was forced to cut out some sections of what she called “inside baseball” (such as conversations with Joseph Smith skeptic Grant Palmer and oft-quoted religion professor Jan Shipp), Soukup told the LDS-themed blog *MillennialStar.org* that she is pleased *Newsweek* “tried to outline the controversial issues in an even-handed way.”

As part of her research, Soukup interviewed President Gordon B. Hinckley and Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Jeffrey R. Holland. “President Hinckley was very understanding,” says Soukup. “It’s just a little scary to walk into a room and ask your spiritual leader if, for example, his revelations are ‘convenient.’ But he didn’t shy away from any of the questions. Neither did Elder Oaks or Elder Holland, and I really hit them with the hardest ones.”

“Of course we are Christians,” President Hinckley responds in the published version of the interview when asked about the claims made by some to the contrary. But according to Soukup, when she first asked him the question, he quipped, “You know all about that. Why are you asking me?”

“If the Church is true, you shouldn’t be afraid of looking into its history, and that was something I learned for myself,” Soukup told the *Deseret Morning News*. “In the end, it definitely made me a stronger Latter-day Saint.”

**REACTIONS.** The 31 October *Newsweek* includes fifteen letters in response to its story on Mormonism, some positive but most critical of Mormonism doctrine or culture. “Many readers took exception to calling Mormonism a Christian denomination,” *Newsweek* reported, “and others criticized the church for its secret ceremonies and exclusivity. Joseph Smith was also the target of criticism: one reader called him ‘a boy magician and latter-day con man.’”

Two published letters suggest that LDS policies and practices actually weaken, rather than strengthen, families. “There is no mention of families torn apart when a family member leaves the church, no mention of nonpracticing Mormons being barred from their children’s weddings in temples,” write Ted and Bebe Ottinger, of Seattle, Washington. Their letter goes on to call the Church an organization with “a history based on racism, sexism and homophobia.”

“My childhood was spent being reviled and teased mercilessly by other children because I was a Christian,” wrote a Lutheran who grew up in a small southern Utah town. “It astounds me that during the past 20 years or so the church has begun to sell itself as a Christian denomination, and it is embarrassing that *Newsweek* would print such a blatantly biased article.”

A non-Mormon from Indianapolis praises the support network Mormons enjoy: “When my [LDS] neighbors moved here from Utah, they were welcomed by their new LDS ward and immediately had a network of support. . . . Other churches could learn a lot from this practice of just being there.” But another reader complains that “Mormons are unlike the Lutherans or Catholics who, with their huge social-service programs, take care of anyone in need. Caring for all, not just one’s own church members, is what Jesus taught his followers to do.”

Latter-day Saint Christine Kopp, from Miami, Florida, blasts the article for including the reference to the September Six, who “do not represent the same opinions as the re-

maining 12 million members.” She also takes issue with the Community of Christ’s Mark Scherer’s comment about polygamy. She puts his title of “historian” between quotation marks. “This article makes us look like blind, barefoot and pregnant, ignorant hillbillies,” she complained. “All we want is to practice our faith in peace.”

Not all Mormons agree that the article presents Mormonism in a bad light. “It is so wonderful to see the media treating us with sincere interest and respect,” writes Sara Thurgood from Hoover, Alabama. “I feel elated to witness my faith rising out of obscurity into the mainstream of Christianity.”

“No claims have ever been made that the church or its prophets are perfect,” remarks a reader from Southfield, Michigan. “Joseph Smith wasn’t, and neither is Gordon B. Hinckley. But their teachings speak for them, and they truly are making positive, society-changing contributions. It is nice to see that recognized.”

ONLY DAYS AFTER *NEWSWEEK* PUBLISHED ITS PIECE ON Mormonism, NBC’s *Today* followed suit with a segment on the Church for its series, “Mysterious Faiths.” The title of the series may confirm what LDS leaders have feared: that for mainstream America, Mormonism continues to be exactly that—*mysterious*. The show grouped the Church with faiths such as Scientology and Opus Dei, and the resurgence of Kabbalah.



*A kinder, gentler spin on salvation. LDS stake president Brent Belnap on the Today Show*

In a segment pre-recorded in Salt Lake City, reporter Carl Quintanilla provided viewers with basics—the fact that the Church abandoned polygamy more than a century ago, the Church’s emphasis on family life, and the healthy lifestyle of its members. But truth stumbled when Quintanilla explained, over footage of President Hinckley waving at a crowd, that Latter-day Saints “believe their current leader to be divine.”

Another claim many Saints would question came from stake president Brent Belnap, who told *Today* host Matt Lauer that Mormonism is merely one “alternative” for salvation.

“Are you saying that the Church of Latter-day Saints is the only path to God and salvation, or are you presenting it as an alternative?” Lauer asked.

“I think it’s more like an alternative,” Belnap replied. “We do believe that everyone will resurrect because of Jesus Christ. There are those who will be also exalted in the hereafter, if they follow the teachings of Jesus Christ and repent from their mistakes, but that’s a choice that every individual should make.”

claims the *Tribune* excluded “in-transit members” (people who are moving). “When you include those, we’re at 70 percent.”

Elder Bateman said that the number of missionaries has been dropping significantly (from more than 61,000 in 2002 to about 56,000 in 2004), but that Church leaders knew all along this would happen. He suggested this drop is the reason why the percentage of worldwide converts has been dropping as well. “It is a cycle,” he explained. “It goes up and down, it depends on demographic factors, for the most part.”

In a follow-up question on missionary numbers, Elder Bateman suggested that by using the expression “raising the bar,” Church leaders merely mean that the Church wants better prepared missionaries. “To some extent that may for a period of time cause a reduction in the missionary force,” he said but added that such reduction for these reasons “hasn’t been major.”

Bateman also challenged a 2001 City University of New York survey indicating that the number of new LDS converts is the same as the number of those leaving the Church. Instead, Bateman suggested that the number of those leaving the Church is actually dropping. “Sacrament meeting attendance is going up. The number of full-tithe payers, both in percentage and in numbers, is going up. The number of people worshipping in the temple is going up. Our numbers suggest that we are not static—that we are retaining people.”

Fabrizio suggested to Bateman that some inactive members feel that the Church won’t leave them alone. “We are under mandate not only to make a record for [new members], but also continue to remember them and nourish them,” Bateman replied. “We continue to visit people who don’t consider themselves active.”

“Now,” he added, “if a person does write and says, ‘We want to have our name taken off Church records,’ we will honor that. For the most part, we want people to have a little bit of time, to make sure that’s where they want to go, but we’ll honor their request.”

Two callers to the show took issue with Elder Bateman’s claim that the Church cares more about individuals than numbers. “Our zone conferences were pep rallies to bring our numbers up,” complained a returned missionary who had served in Chile. Another returned missionary said that in Guatemala, elders would take children to play soccer and then take them to the baptismal font with the excuse of “cooling off.”

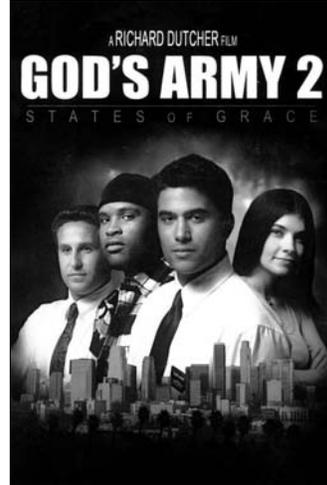
Bateman admitted that “there have been instances of these things occurring,” but he reassured listeners that “we have taken care of them once we’ve learned about them. We’ve not been shy to step in and stop them.”

“The Church hierarchy doesn’t go around talking about it because we’re not proud of it,” he added. “And it’s not widespread—it’s happened in a few places here and there over a long period of time.”

A caller asked Bateman whether the fact that the Church doesn’t have a stand on the war in Iraq has an effect on its membership. “Our position in the Church is that we support the government in which we live,” Bateman replied. “We are supportive of the government of the United States. . . . but also

we need to make sure that we’re fighting—we hope we’re fighting for the right causes.”

## DUTCHER’S ARMY IS BACK— BUT CAN IT STAY?



THE SEQUEL TO RICHARD Dutcher’s genre-launching Mormon film sensation *God’s Army* has just been released, and reviewers are giving it high praise. Arriving five-and-a-half years after the original, *God’s Army 2: States of Grace* again focuses on LDS missionaries preaching in an area of Los Angeles. But this time, it focuses less on missionary life and more on an exploration of faith and redemption in the lives of the missionaries as well as a member of a street gang, a

struggling actress, and a homeless preacher. “All these characters are pulled into a relationship because of the events that happen,” Dutcher explains in a SunstonePodcast interview. “I hope the film [gives viewers the chance to spend time] with some good and interesting [characters who face] some very unusual circumstances.”

Intended as a cross-over that can be enjoyed by non-LDS audiences as well, the film will be released nationally with the shorter title, *States of Grace*, in cities with large Mormon populations but in typical “Bible belt” regions as well. For details, watch the website, [www.zionfilms.com](http://www.zionfilms.com).

Dutcher prefers to call the movie a “follow-up”—not a sequel. In speaking with *Deseret Morning News* film reviewer Jeff Vice, he said “it was important to have some continuity with the first film, but I didn’t want to use the same main characters. In essence, I’d be making the same movie over and over again, and I didn’t have any interest in that.”

He didn’t make the same film. Of the main subject matter, *News* columnist Jerry Johnston writes, “Dutcher apparently believes one can’t soft-pedal sin without trivializing redemption. And I’m with him on that.” Speaking to the film’s darker themes and Dutcher’s approach to honest storytelling rather than pandering to the kind of sweet specialness that some Latter-day Saints might wish for, Johnston continues: “Some will say the barrage of bad behavior tars the image of the church and missionary work. But I know branch presidents who will see the film and think Richard Dutcher has been reading their mail.”

Despite the film’s critical success—consistently earning three-and-a-half to four stars—its early box office revenues have been disappointing. After it opened on thirty-three screens in Utah and Idaho, Dutcher reports that four theaters dropped it after the first week. And despite huge increases in per-screen averages its second week in release (up to 75 per-

## People



**Deceased.** WAYNE C. BOOTH, 84, one of the most celebrated and influential literary critics of the twentieth century, at his home on 10 October. Born in American Fork, Utah, he served an LDS mission in Chicago. Following a bachelor's degree from BYU, he returned to his mission area, earning both a master's and doctorate from the University of Chicago, where he also taught the last dozen years of his distinguished career.

Among his many writings, two of Booth's books still stand as towering works, part of the core English curriculum at universities around the world: *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) and *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988). Booth coined terms such as "implied author" and "unreliable narrator" that are now common parlance in literary criticism. In a reflection on Booth for the *New York Times*, Margalit Fox writes: "Literature was not so much words on paper as it was a complex ethical act. He saw the novel as a kind of compact between author and reader: intimate and rewarding, but rarely easy."

Booth is survived by his wife of fifty-nine years, Phyllis, and two daughters, Katherine and Alison. Their son, John Richard, died in 1969 at age eighteen. Booth's memoir, titled *My Many Selves*, is due out soon from Utah University Press.



**Sworn in.** 2 August 2005, as Under Secretary of the Treasury for Domestic Finance, RANDAL K. QUARLES. A native Utahn and Latter-day Saint, Quarles takes this position after a distinguished career in international finance in both the private and public sector. Quarles is remembered by some in SUNSTONE circles for his piece, "A Religion of Clerks or I've Got Those Stuffing, Stapling Blues" (November-December 1980), a letter he wrote to the Church's membership department while serving as membership clerk in the Manhattan First Ward. To the delight of countless other clerks, his letter's serious but tongue-in-cheek prose actually led to positive changes.



**Arrested and released.** SETH JEFFS, 32, brother of fugitive FLDS Church prophet Warren Jeffs, in Colorado, on charges of harboring a fugitive. Police found in Seth's car \$142,000 in cash, cell-phone cards, many letters addressed to Warren Jeffs, and a donation jar labeled "Pennies for the Prophet." After spending ten days in custody, Seth was freed on a \$25,000 bond. Warren Jeffs has been a fugitive since his June indictment on charges of arranging a marriage between a 16-year-old girl and a man who was already married.

**Speculating.** STEVEN E. JONES, BYU physics professor, that the actual cause of the 9-11 collapses of the two World Trade Center towers was "pre-positioned explosives." Among evidences he lists in an article posted at [www.physics.byu.edu/research/energy/htm7.net](http://www.physics.byu.edu/research/energy/htm7.net), and which is scheduled for publication in a peer-reviewed book, *The Hidden History of 9-11*, Jones argues that the symmetrical way in which the buildings collapsed and the inability of jet fuel and office materials to generate enough heat to melt steel supports, lead him to believe that shortly after the planes flew into the towers, pre-set explosives were detonated.



**Selected.** For publication, JEANETTE ATWOOD'S entry in the *2005 24-Hour Comic Highlights Anthology*. Atwood's work, "Puzzles," was chosen from more than 800 entries as one of twenty-four stories to be included in this year's book. A 24-hour comic contest is considered the ultimate smackdown challenge for cartoonists, who, without pre-planning, write and draw a 24-page comic book in 24 hours. "Just finishing is considered an honor," says Atwood, "To have my story actually selected for this year's anthology is a huge thrill." Atwood, a returned LDS missionary and graduate of Sheridan College's classical animation program, is a regular contributor to SUNSTONE.

cent in many theaters), he reports that the film will likely be playing only on a dozen screens during Thanksgiving week.

"It's such a highly competitive marketplace right now, there's no such thing really as a film being able to find its audience any more. Or to grow," Dutcher says in the podcast interview. "You have one weekend, maybe two, to prove yourself. After that [theater owners] just want to push you out the door so they can get something else in."

Dutcher, along with others, including *Deseret Morning News* columnist Lee Benson, speculates that the film's poor box office showing comes from the low expectations audiences now

have for LDS-themed films, given the glut of poor-quality movies (with few exceptions) that followed in Dutcher's wake. It's a shame, Benson claims, for "where other films go for humor by making fun of the culture, Dutcher finds humor in the culture. Where other films preach didactically or self-righteously, . . . Dutcher is as direct as a Picasso painting." Dubbing him, "Cecil B. DeMormon," Benson continues, "Dutcher is so good, let's forgive him for opening the path that made *Charly 2* possible. Just as long as there's not a *Charly 2*."

To hear the SunstonePodcast interview with Dutcher, visit the Sunstone blog at [www.sunstoneblog.com](http://www.sunstoneblog.com).