



CORNUCOPIA

SUNSTONE invites short musings: chatty reports, cultural trend sightings, theological meditations. All lovely things of good report, please share them. Send to: <stephen@sunstone magazine.com>

Department of Steinbeck allusions

OF BOOKS AND MEN

MY MUSCLES WERE NOT FULLY RESPONDING as I stumbled toward the light in the living room. Sitting quietly on the couch was a handsome man with a pleasant demeanor. I'm not sure why I noticed all the little details—a skinny black tie, a silk handkerchief in his front jacket pocket, spiffy black polished shoes that shone softly as he sat cross-legged. It must have been the just-after-midnight monochrome light that made him look as though he had jumped out of one of those 1950s black-and-white war movies that I used to watch with my folks as a kid. In the fog between waking and sleep, finding this man sitting on my couch in the middle of the night didn't seem to alarm me.

Cradled in his hand was one of the small antique books from my library. The fact that he was thumbing through the pages as though they were old friends seemed so natural that I felt immediately at ease. I stepped forward, catching his eye, and made my way to a seat across from him. The growing expression on his face made it clear that he longed to convey something, but no words passed between us. Yet despite our loss for words, there was not a hint of exasperation in his demeanor.

The man sitting across from me was a stranger only because somehow the rage, fear, and disappointment that had characterized his life had been stripped away. The simple fact is that I have always known this man. This is my father: the way all fathers want to be but can't. At peace with himself and his surroundings—not that angry pugilist, raised by his older siblings on violent Salt Lake City streets during the height of the Great Depression; or for that matter, the property owner who squabbled with delinquent tenants and was never up for a hike or fishing with his boys.

Some fathers and sons share something like baseball as a neutral ground for bonding. My father and I shared a small

JESUS CHRIST, BROADWAY STAR?

HOW DOES A MORMON WHO WAS ONCE the voice of Jesus in an LDS church film turn into a hippy ringleader in the controversial musical *Hair*? Ask Will Swenson, the 35-year-old actor who played in clean LDS comedies such as *The Singles Ward* and is the grandson of Utah community theater founders Ruth and Nathan Hale.

No longer active in the Church, Swenson has recently been sporting a scanty loincloth (and sometimes not even that) to play hippie George Berger in the 40th anniversary Broadway revival of *Hair*, the sacrilegious 1960s-era celebration of nudity, sex, and drugs which once prompted protests across the country and was censored in other parts of the world.

Even though the role garnered Swenson a nomination for a Tony Award, for many Mormon fans, his highest achievement may be the 2000 film *The Testaments*, for which he provided the voice of Jesus (as the actor selected for that part spoke with a Danish accent). Given that background, a certain irony results when on Broadway, the long-haired Swenson sings the song that gives the musical its name: "My hair like Jesus wore it/



Swenson in one of his more clothed dances in the recently revived musical, Hair.

Hallelujah, I adore it."

"If you go to Salt Lake to the big Mormon visitor's center, they play a big movie and I'm the voice of Jesus in that," Swenson recently told *New York* magazine. "Of course, they'll probably shut it down knowing I'm doing *Hair* on Broadway."

Mormon book collection in the hallway of our home. Unfortunately for us, books became yet another battleground. But all this was some time ago. Looking back at my father holding one of his old books, I'm comforted that our war over generation and culture is at last put to rest, and that our love for books, the great communicator across generations and cultures, are once again common ground.

I woke the next morning and stood in front of the books, genuinely missing my father.

TOM KIMBALL
Salt Lake City, Utah

A place for every truth

RESISTANCE TO THE READY REFERENCES

This regular Cornucopia column features incidents from and glimpses into the life and ministry of Elder James E. Talmage as compiled by James P. Harris, who is currently working on a full-length biography of this fascinating Mormon apostle. The column title is adopted from the statement inscribed on Elder Talmage's tombstone: "Within the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is room and place for every truth thus far learned by man or yet to be made known."

ELDERS JAMES E. TALMAGE AND JOSEPH Fielding Smith "acted as a committee" to produce the Ready References that were inserted into Bibles published for the LDS Church. The Ready References section was used by LDS members and missionaries for a number of years until 1981, when the Church published the new, cross-referenced scriptures with study aids.

The first sets of these Bibles were published by the Oxford and the Cambridge presses in 1917. On 20 June 1917, Elder Talmage wrote the following in his journal:

We all [the General Authorities] deem it a very great advantage to have our Ready References, which are classified quotations sustaining the principles of the Gospel, published in these two standard styles of Bibles. The initiative in the matter was taken by the Bible publishers themselves, and we have received assurances of appreciation from both of the houses. As was to be expected, however, oppositions have been raised by opponents of the Church. As the References are incorporated as a distinct insert between the Old and the New Testaments, with a title page bearing the imprint of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and on the reverse a copyright notice by Joseph F. Smith, Trustee-in-Trust of the Church, it is difficult to find justification for opposition, since every person is at liberty to purchase the style of Bible he chooses.

On this same date, Talmage received a letter from Oxford University Press that he felt "ought to be preserved."

My dear Sir,

We regret exceedingly that we must discontinue to make the line of Bibles we have been making for you with the Ready References inserted.

This arrangement has raised such a storm of criticism and denunciation from our customers, on the ground that we are using the Oxford Bible (whose freedom from sectarian bias recommends it for general use) to advance the propaganda of one faith.

We did not realize, when we accepted your manuscript of the Ready References, that the notes scattered among the references would have this effect, but so it is.

So for pure business reasons we are forced to this decision. The result of our continuing this book would be disastrous to us.

The stock on hand made for you we can send you, if you will kindly allow us to tip in a title page in the Bible with the imprint as in the Ready References, and also on the outside of the boxes.

We would strongly advise that you make your own book, as you are so well able to do. The Ready Reference plates and sheets we can turn over to you on a satisfactory basis.

We are deeply sorry for this unfortunate ending of our service to you, as we have never met with more courteous and considerate treatment in any business connection, than we have been privileged to enjoy from yours.

Yours very truly,
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Pontius' Puddle



IT'S FANTASTIC TO BE FREED FROM
EARTHLY FETTERS SUCH AS HUNGER, BUT
FRANKLY, I REALLY MISS THE POTLUCKS.