



CORNUCOPIA

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The Bible according to baseball

GOOD WOMAN

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

Proverbs 31:10

IN OCTOBER, I WATCHED PART OF A NATIONAL League Championship Series game with my 13-year-old son. A passionate San Francisco *Giants* fan, he already had tracked 160 games that season, not including his fantasy team. During the 7th inning stretch, the TV cameras panned the crowd for images of baseball fans: kids waving pennants, heavysset guys eating hot dogs, two men and a woman wearing matching *Phillies* jerseys with names in red lettering on the back. Then the cameras homed in on those names: Bride, Groom, and Priest. As the organ played “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” the older man—Priest—said something, and Bride and Groom answered. Then a few people in nearby seats began to applaud, and it was time for a commercial break.

“Good woman,” my son said, nodding.

Good woman, indeed. My son is part of a long line of people dating back at least as far as Plato who have weighed in on this subject, but he is too young to know how treacherous, how laden it is. He has not spent years of his life sitting through Young Women and Relief Society lessons where the culture wars are dramatized, week after week, as one-sided routs of straw women. I have. And in moments of meandering or willful inattention, I have developed my own rendering of Proverbs 31.

WHO CAN FIND a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. She appreciates a good metaphor, but she expects to be paid in legal tender and at market rate. She knows her worth, and she asks for it.

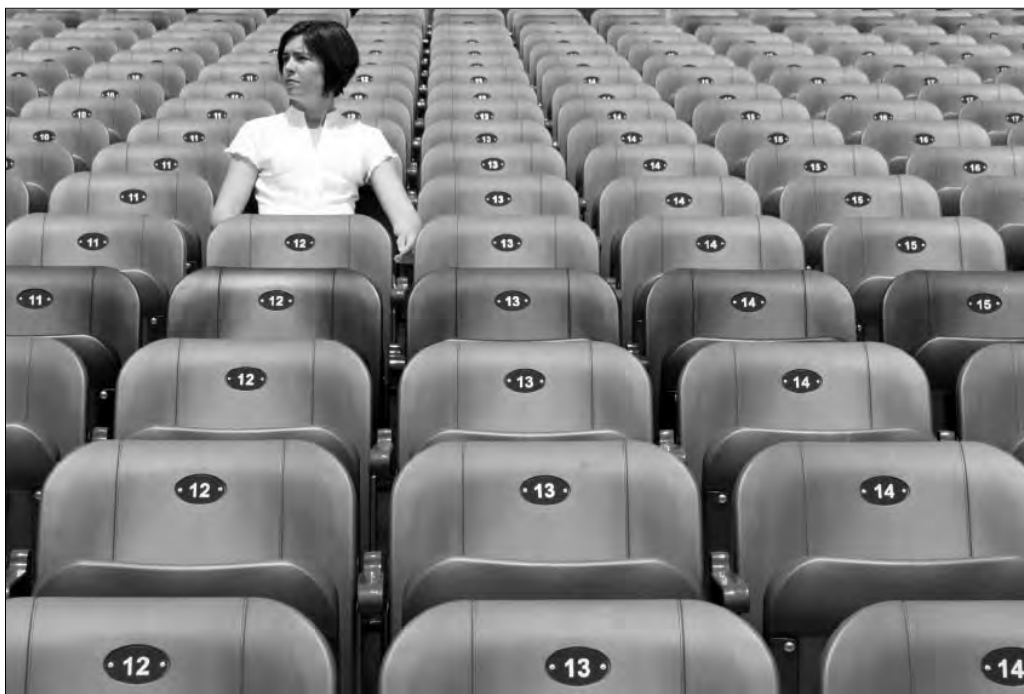
She lives providently by investing in her own education and career skills. As every flight attendant knows, she must secure her own oxygen mask before she can help others.

She looks for love as a master woodworker seeks a fine piece of cherry or mahogany that can age into something cherished. She knows that pine and poplar will not last and that it is better to keep both hands free than to clutch a load of cheap veneer in order to hold onto something.

Marriage, she may come to know, is a froth of olive oil and lemon juice. Shaken together, they form a tangy dressing for all kinds of greens, but in quiet moments, they always tend toward their own natures. She respects the line that appears between them and the permeable boundary it affords.

A good gardener, she knows a plant that bears fruit too early may snap under weight its limbs cannot yet support. She waits for the last frost date and plants no more than she is confident her small field can nourish.

If she has children, she studies their natures as a surveyor seeks to understand and appreciate the contours of the land.



ERIC MICHAUD

If she had hoped for a level field but finds a grassy knoll instead, she resists the urge to drive in a backhoe. She respects God's landscapes.

She prepares her children to live resiliently in a world she cannot predict or control, like a woman packing clothes for October on a bright June morning. Without expectation or anxiety, she folds them neatly and lays them in an open suitcase.

She knows the difference between nonfiction and fantasy, and she makes decisions based on her life as it is and not on hope or magical thinking. She does not speak as a child when she is no longer a child.

When she can see with her own eyes that the emperor has no clothes, she does not feel obligated to comment on their beauty or utility. She states her opinions without apology and trusts the authority of her own life experience.

If she wakes up one morning and realizes that the life she is living and the template she had sketched for herself are not congruous, she considers the options for bringing the angles and sides into alignment. Then she picks up a sharp pencil with a soft pink eraser, purses her lips, and begins to revise: template, life, or both.

When she is stricken, when life breaks her heart, she grieves. She grieves until she is done, until she can bear to take up her life again, broken as it is. If fear and pain lie at the foot of her bed at night like faithful dogs, she learns to breathe their slow, inexorable rhythm until sleep comes, or dawn.

She knows that mortality can be a solitary walk across the desert in blistering heat and coldest dark. She finds joy and solace in companionship, but she does not expect anyone else to make her happy or silence her existential questions. She carries those thirsts and whatever bottled water she has prepared in her own rucksack.

Whatever else she is, a virtuous woman is her own woman. If there is anything lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, she seeks after these things, on her terms. Her own works praise her in the gates.

AT THIS MOMENT in his life, my son thinks a good woman is a bride wearing a ball cap with her pony tail threaded through the back. If he ever changes his mind, I will feel a little sad: I like a man who appreciates a woman who wears her true colors right on her jersey.

DANA HAIGHT CATTANI
Bloomington, Indiana

A place for every truth

CHURCH AND POLITICS — 1932

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 adapted 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."

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1932 PROVED to be especially contentious among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nationwide, the country was in the midst of the Great Depression, which historically began on Black Tuesday, 29 October 1929, when the stock market crashed. Herbert Hoover was the sitting president, running for reelection.

In Utah, Elder Reed Smoot of the Quorum of the Twelve was running for reelection as a U.S. senator. Smoot was the Dean of the U.S. Senate, being the longest serving. In 1930, Smoot and Willis C. Hawley (R-Oregon) helped pass into law the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which many felt exacerbated the effects of the Great Depression. Along with Smoot's Senate seat, the Utah governorship was also open.

Since the death of Heber J. Grant's second counselor, Charles W. Nibley, in December 1931, there had been no second counselor in the First Presidency, and Grant himself was suffering from prostate issues and was recovering from surgery.

On Saturday, 29 October 1932, James E. Talmage recorded in his journal that

the campaign incident to the current presidential election is characterized by an unusual degree of partisan feeling, and many rumors are afloat . . . In Utah the election of a United States Senator is being hotly contested. Our present senior senator, Reed Smoot, is a candidate for reelection on the Republican ticket and is opposed by Elbert D. Thomas, of the University of Utah Faculty, on the Democratic ticket. One of the rumors recently set in circulation is to the effect that the Church Authorities desire the defeat of Senator Reed Smoot in this election so that he can remain at home and attend to his Church duties, and that moreover, he is to be the choice for the second counselorship in the First Presidency.

In reaction to the whispering campaign, the First Presidency published the following in the *Deseret News* on 29 October 1932:

CHURCH OFFICIALS MAKE STATEMENT REGARDING ELECTION

Reports have reached us to the effect that our names are being used by politicians in support of, and against candidates and parties in the present political campaign.

We wish it distinctly understood that in our official capacities we neither aid nor oppose any candidate or party.

We offer no counsel to members of the church

which may be considered partisan in its nature. We urge all to a dispassionate, intelligent and honest use of the ballot, but we do not attempt to influence the choice of any voter.

Moreover, we discountenance the use of any Church agency or facility in favor of or against any partisan or political interest. We trust that all Church authorities and officers will co-operate with us in an effort to maintain, officially, an attitude of neutrality and fairness that shall justify no criticism or offense on the part of opposing candidates, or parties, in the present election.

In view of reports that are being circulated, we desire to say that the result of the forthcoming election will have no bearing on the selection of a counselor in the Presidency of the Church, for the reason that the selection was made months ago and accepted, subject only to the approval of the Church membership when the proper time comes.

The statement was signed by President Grant, his first counselor Anthony W. Ivins, and Rudger Clawson, president of the Quorum of the Twelve. The individual who, according to the announcement, had already been selected as second counselor was J. Reuben Clark, who was subsequently sustained at the April 1933 General Conference.

On 30 October, Talmage gave a speech at the Tabernacle, eliciting two news reports. The *Deseret News* of 5 November printed the complete text, titling it "Midst Scenes of Confusion, Turmoil and Strife," and the *Salt Lake Tribune* of 31 October printed an article headlined "Citizens Urged to Cast Votes as They Desire."

In his journal entry of 7 November, Talmage said that the Salt Lake papers of that day carried the previous statement from the L.D.S. Church regarding the election, "with an additional paragraph signed by President Heber J. Grant himself." The additional paragraph read "Any other statement by the president or any other officer of the church is his personal preference and is not intended



JEANETTE ATWOOD

to influence members of the church.” Talmage added that the statement was in answer to “the impression that President Grant desires the people to vote for certain Republican candidates. It seems difficult to avoid the imputation for partisan preference. Even I am not exempt, for a portion of my address in the Tabernacle on Sunday, October 30, is quoted in full page advertisements as favorable to the Democratic Party, whereas my remarks urged independent action on the part of the voters without any thought of Church influence or partisan coercion.”

In a 31 October entry, Talmage reflected on how weary he was of the constant campaigning:

“The political campaign is characterized by increasing heat and bitterness in both nation and state. The radio brings us the addresses of the President of the United States—who is running for reelection—his opponent on the Democratic ticket, and prominent speakers on both sides. The flood of speech-making—a little of which may be called oratory—would be overwhelming as brought to us by the radio but for the pleasing fact that by a turn of the knob we can cut it all off. Criminations and recriminations, startling declarations and heated denials, come through the air every evening, at frequent intervals between 6 o’clock and midnight.”

On Monday, 7 November, Herbert Hoover came to Salt Lake City and “participated in a great Republican rally at the Tabernacle, at which . . . he delivered what was announced as the last of his major addresses in the present campaign. It is both unusual and significant that in the course of the campaign the President and Vice President of the United States, three members of the President’s cabinet, and other prominent Republicans of national eminence, have spoken in Utah, a State that is numerically small, having but four votes in the electoral college. The principal object of these visitations is understood to be the advocacy of U.S. Senator Reed Smoot.”

When the election results came in on the evening of 8 November, Talmage wrote:

“Before 8 o’clock tonight, Mountain Time, the air was burdened with proclamations of a great Democratic victory. As the reports increased, it soon became evident that the Republican Party had been completely defeated in nation and in most of the states. Senator Reed Smoot, who had been called the dean of the U.S. Senate, and whom President Hoover designated as the doyen of that body, has clearly gone down to defeat, with the election by a great preponderance of votes of Dr. Elbert D. Thomas, Professor of Political Economy

at the University of Utah, and formerly President of the Japanese Mission.

In his journal entry the next day, Talmage would also include that Henry H. Blood was the new governor of Utah. “All of these are Democrats, and among the candidates for varied offices in many states the rule has been that by the voice of the people Democrats only are victorious. President-elect Roosevelt is at present Governor of the State of New York, and the elected Vice President, John N. Garner, is the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Henry H. Blood has long been and is the head of the Utah State Road commission, and President of the North Davis Stake.”

In a Thursday, 10 November, entry, Talmage stated, “It is hoped that the animosities and rancor aroused by partisan differences will speedily abate, though it is to be feared that the memories of some of the regrettable features will prove ineffaceable. Naturally Senator Reed Smoot is severely affected by his defeat. In Utah, of course, the vote for U.S. Senator loomed big in the minds of the people. Some of the campaigners tried to make the Latter-day Saints believe that it was their duty to vote for Senator Smoot because of his and their Church membership, and every such attempt was hotly resented by the other side. The Church had no candidate nor did the General Authorities of the Church attempt to impress or influence the people as to their choice. It is likely that the Democratic administration will experience difficult sailing.”

In the world

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO UTAH, JAMIE WYETH decided to take a walk around the famed Temple Square. While considering the Seagull Monument, possibly intrigued by the bas-relief sculpture by Mahonri Young, he was approached by two sister missionaries who asked him, “Have you ever heard the story of the seagulls?” In fact, Jamie Wyeth was in town for the premiere of his art exhibition, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, where seagulls are depicted as allegories of anger, sloth, greed, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. Wyeth shared his dark vision of seagull sin with the young missionaries, and later remarked to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, “I probably told them a little too much . . . I think their heads are still spinning.”

Jamie Wyeth is a celebrated painter from a hailed American artistic dynasty, which also includes, most notably, his father Andrew Wyeth and grandfather N.C. Wyeth. His art has been shown in the National Gallery of Art, National Portrait Gallery, John F. Kennedy Library, and Museum of Modern Art, a prestigious list to which the Salt Lake ART Center can now be added.

Seagulls have been a lifelong interest for Wyeth, having painted or drawn close to 200 over his career. This particular exhibit germinated as he began seeing seagulls in a darker light—"It always bothered me the way gulls have been depicted through the years and particularly in Maine art they're made to look like white doves and in fact gulls are scavengers. They can be evil."¹

But when Jamie Wyeth started to dream of seagulls, little did he imagine that his dark vision would find itself in the land of Zion, where seagulls are honored as state bird for the part they played in saving the crops of the Mormon pioneers.

As the story is told in Sunday School and sacrament meeting talks, the winter of 1847 was especially difficult for the pioneers due to low crop yields and a dwindling livestock population suffering from wolf attacks and Indian raids. The pioneers survived on crow, wolf, tree bark, and any random root they could dig up. After the pioneers had planted new crops in the spring of 1848, the upcoming harvest looked promising. But then the crickets came, described by one pioneer as a cross between a spider and a buffalo, overtaking the crops and eating up the Saints' security.

Orson Pratt recalled in an 1880 sermon how the crickets

came in immense droves, so that men and women with brush could make no headway against them; but we cried unto the Lord in our afflictions, and the Lord heard us, and sent thousands and tens of thousands of a small white bird . . . And what did they do for us? They went to work, and by thousands and tens of thousands, began to devour them up, and still we thought that even they could not prevail against so large and mighty an army. But we noticed, that when they had apparently filled themselves with these crickets, they would go and vomit them up, and again go to work and fill themselves, and so they continued to do, until the land was cleared of crickets, and our crops were saved. There are those who will say that this was one of the natural courses of events, that there was no miracle in it. Let that be as it may, we esteemed it as a blessing from the hand of God.²

Jamie Wyeth might wonder: without the vice of gluttony would the gulls have been able to clear the fields of all those crickets?



Taking some time off from saving pioneers from starvation, seagulls occupy center stage in artist Jamie Wyeth's exploration of the Seven Deadly Sins, on display at the Salt Lake ART Center.

HAVING LIVED ON the Maine coast, Wyeth has observed all kinds of startling behavior from gulls. As his obsession developed, his interest dovetailed with the Seven Deadly Sins, which he first encountered in the 1960s. Wyeth recounts, "I could really pin it to Lincoln Kirstein of the New York City Ballet who was sort of a mentor of mine . . . in the hallway of his house in Gramercy Park were the *Seven Deadly Sins* by Paul Cadmus . . . and I was intrigued by those. They were very small temperas, kind of more cartoon-like than really interested me, but sort of horrifying and impressive."

When first visiting the exhibition at the Salt Lake ART Center, I was immediately attracted to a larger-than-life piece, titled *Inferno*, depicting a child burning garbage amid a flock of gulls. The image was inspired by a real scene that Wyeth had encountered: "To burn the garbage on the island,

ANGIER, 2005. COMBINED MEDIUMS ON HAND-MADE, TONED PAPER MOUNTED ON ARCHIVAL BOARD. 34 1/2 X 24 1/2 INCHES

they created this moveable tank, an oil tank they cut a hole in it and then put wheels on. I remember when I first saw it I just about fainted. I mean, it was something out of Wagner . . . It stunk [sic], and the gulls were streaking in, and here is this angelic boy shoving the garbage in with his oar.

As this image haunted his imagination, he painted it several times. The *Inferno* and the *Sins* “really sort of evolved together, because although I started with the *Inferno*, the idea built and built and finally culminated with the *Sins*. It’s not that I did it as an addendum to the sins, it was just my state of mind.”

This state of mind revolved around reading Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and Dante’s *Inferno*. Wyeth studied how the *Sins* were depicted in Western art, particularly by Hieronymus Bosch and Peter Brughel. He says, “I was really just consumed with it. I didn’t want to anthropomorphize. I didn’t want to say how cute these birds are and oh, they’re doing dirty things. I tried to keep in the world with the knowledge of Bosch and Dante.”

The first Sin in the exhibition is *Anger*, with two seagulls, one confronting the viewer and the other partially within frame, shrieking with ferocity. They are a good metaphor for how the exhibition confronts our ideas of sin among human and animal nature. *Greed* portrays a seagull standing over a picnicker’s pile of pie and ice cream, raising its voice in victory, while other birds look on, separated by the lack of possessions. A favorite of mine, *Envy*, depicts a trio of gulls, two at the top cavorting, while the odd one out sits with its eyes closed in desperate jealousy. Jamie clearly has inherited his father’s devotion to realism and his grandfather’s instinct for illustrative action, making each of these pieces an immediate and visceral experience. In addition to the *Sins*, the exhibition includes other pieces exploring the world of seagulls, with the same haunting quality exemplified by the rest of the exhibit.

The *Seven Deadly Sins* collection speaks close to the truth of their subject. While in contemporary art, meaning is blithely relative and ambiguous, sometimes bordering on nihilism, Wyeth’s seagulls carry a weight of meaning as heavy as the burden of sins they embody. There is darkness amid loneliness and isolation, resulting from the chaos and discord of mortal frailty. In the land of Zion, where self-proclaimed visionaries are not uncommon, Wyeth’s *Sins* are a singular and beautiful vision to behold.

The exhibition at the Salt Lake ART Center runs until May 22nd, 2010. Visit www.slartcenter.org for more information.

DALLAS ROBBINS
Salt Lake City UT

NOTES

1. Quotations attributed to Jamie Wyeth come from the exhibition catalog, *Jamie Wyeth: Seven Deadly Sins*, (Rockland, ME: Farnsworth Art Museum, 2009).

2. Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:276–77.

Scripture notes

WAS EVE CREATED AS A HELPER FOR ADAM?

In this regular column, Michael Vinson, a master’s graduate of the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge and resident of Star Valley, Wyoming, delves into personal and scholarly aspects of scripture.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him.

KJV Genesis 2:18

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW EXHAUSTED Adam probably felt after his first day of working in the garden. After all, he had to tend, cultivate, and then name everything by himself. Did he complain about having to do all the work by himself? Did he hope for a companion to help with the work? Was he disappointed when the Lord said, “Look, here’s a wife instead”?

Mark Twain had a little fun with this story in his novella, *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*. In it, Twain’s Adam becomes increasingly annoyed as he has to change his behaviors to accommodate the preferences of a new “woman creature” in the garden (i.e. he must wash himself, clean his dwelling, and, most tediously, listen to her talk). She claims she was taken from his rib (though Adam slyly notes that none of his ribs are missing) and calls herself Eve. At one point, worn out from interacting with her, he has an epiphany. “She says it is ordered that we work for our living hereafter. She will be useful. I will superintend.”

Twain’s Adam is not the only man guilty of wistfully imagining that he will supervise the woman. The ancient Jewish rabbis sometimes read their own desires into the verse, “It is not good that man should be alone,” as in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis: “It is not right that Adam should sleep alone.” But let us set aside what men have traditionally written about the role of Eve and take a closer look at the scriptural context.

First, the creation of Adam is the only instance in the creation that God declares “not good.” For every element of the creation thus far, there has been something that corresponds to and completes it. For example, the seas are incomplete until the fish are created; the sky is incomplete without the sun, the stars, and the birds. Accordingly, God declares that man is incomplete without the woman. Indeed, it seems that even God is incomplete without both the man and the woman, as Genesis 1:27 reads, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” Thus, the creation of man is “not good” (or incomplete) until woman is created.

The problems in understanding the role of Eve derive from our understanding of the scriptural phrase “an help

meet for him.” This is perhaps one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. The traditional interpretation—that Eve was created to be Adam’s helper—is prevalent in Bible translations, as in the King James Version quoted above. It is also found in the Revised Standard Version as “helper fit for him;” in the New King James Version as “helper comparable to him;” and in the NJPS Torah Commentary Genesis as “fitting helper for him.” This traditional interpretation is also common among LDS General Authorities as a simple Internet search of how this verse is used in Conference talks will show; a modern exception is President Hinckley, who said of Eve: “I do not regard her as being in second place to Adam.”

This Hebrew word, עֵזֶר or ‘ezer, which is popularly translated as “helper,” can be better understood by looking at its other usages in the Old Testament. For example, in Exodus 18:4, the word denotes the power of God when humanity requires his assistance. Moses names his son Eliezer, meaning “my God is help,” referring to the times Moses was delivered from Pharaoh’s sword (see also Deut. 33:7 and many of the Psalms).

The meaning implicit in the usages of ‘ezer can be seen more formally as a cooperative partnership when the power of one is inadequate; in the case of the Hebrew Bible, this is usually rendered as “Divine aid.” The ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint) translates ‘ezer as βοηθός or *boethos*, a word that includes usages such as “help from a stronger one.” In the New Testament, for example, *boethos* is used in Hebrews 13:16, in relationship to God as “helper” of the righteous (Psalms 117:6), and to refer to the healings of Jesus (Mark 9:22). This word is also used in the classical world to refer to help from a physician (Epictetus *Discourses*, II:15,16). Thus, God created a “strength” or “power” in the form of a woman, whose assistance to Adam could be seen as similar to God’s aid to his people.

But then why does the Bible say “help meet?” The Old English definition of “meet” is “fit to” or “corresponding.” It was probably inevitable that “helpmate” would slip into the discourse and further confuse the real meaning (because “meet” is so close to “mate”). The Hebrew עֵזֶר or *kenegdo* is a preposition which is more properly translated literally as “in front of him,” or “that which corresponds to.” The Hebrew root of this word, עָזַר or NGD, which would be rendered in English as “before,” has legal and covenantal connotations in the Old Testament—as in swearing an oath before the Lord. The creation of Eve “before” Adam could be seen as the fulfillment of an unwritten promise between God and Adam to end his isolation.

Thus, the creation of Eve is best seen in the Old Testament as the female manifestation of God’s strength, and the completion of the creation of God’s image. We can read Eve as a “helper” in the same sense that God “helps” mankind, not in the manner of waiting on us, but in the sense of saving Adam and mankind from both our isolation and incompleteness before God.

Though Twain could write tongue-in-cheek about the re-

lationship of Adam and Eve, I like to believe that he saw in his fictional Adam some of his own deep feeling about the tragic loss of his spouse (Twain’s wife, Olivia, died in 1904; the *Diaries* were published in 1906). When Twain’s Adam stands at Eve’s grave, he gives voice to the importance of Eve in his life, and to the women in men’s lives: “Wheresoever she was, there was Eden.”

Notes from abroad

ISLAND OF THE MISFIT MORMONS

ON 25 OCTOBER 2009, THE ARIZONA CHAPTER of Sunstone met for a regional conference. But that’s the boring way to put it. The tales told that evening were, as one participant put it, “exhilarating”. Imagine a room full of people all practicing—or not—their Mormon faith as they see fit. Oh how lovely was the evening.

Sitting in a rough circle in Doe Daughtrey’s living room, people talked about their legacies in the Church, their conversions to the Church, and, most important, their place in the Church. Now that the Internet has shed light on the myriad issues of Mormonism, the religion has become a much bigger tent; where does one fit in?

The tent was certainly large that evening, containing an assorted group of misfits: Internet Mormons, Chapel Mormons, Ex-Mormons, Post Mormons, Feminist Mormons, Gay Mormons, and a couple of Catholics thrown in to add some diversity. The Catholics must have wondered what all the hubbub was about. The hubbub was about widening the definition of what it is to be Mormon.

As the evening progressed, it became clear that, the definition of a Mormon is difficult to pin down precisely. One woman talked about her re-baptism and her need to feel re-connected to the Church after many years outside it, but on *her* terms this time. An older gay man spoke of sending his letter of resignation from the Church as a protest against Prop 8. Many women spoke of their feminist awakenings and how those new discoveries motivated their activity or inactivity in the Church. Another woman didn’t speak at all, taking it all in silently.

Small as the group was, maybe 25 to 30 people, we felt united in our experiences of being Mormon—Sunstone Mormons. There is a difference you know. Sunstone Mormons are willing to ask questions, wanting to contribute their talents even if their views differ from the mainstream of the Church.

Some had to leave early to get back to life and children. Some could have stayed all night, talking and sharing what is certainly the most influential thing in their lives: Mormonism.

Oh how lovely was the evening. An evening of open wounds and hearts.

JOHN WILCOX
Phoenix, Arizona