

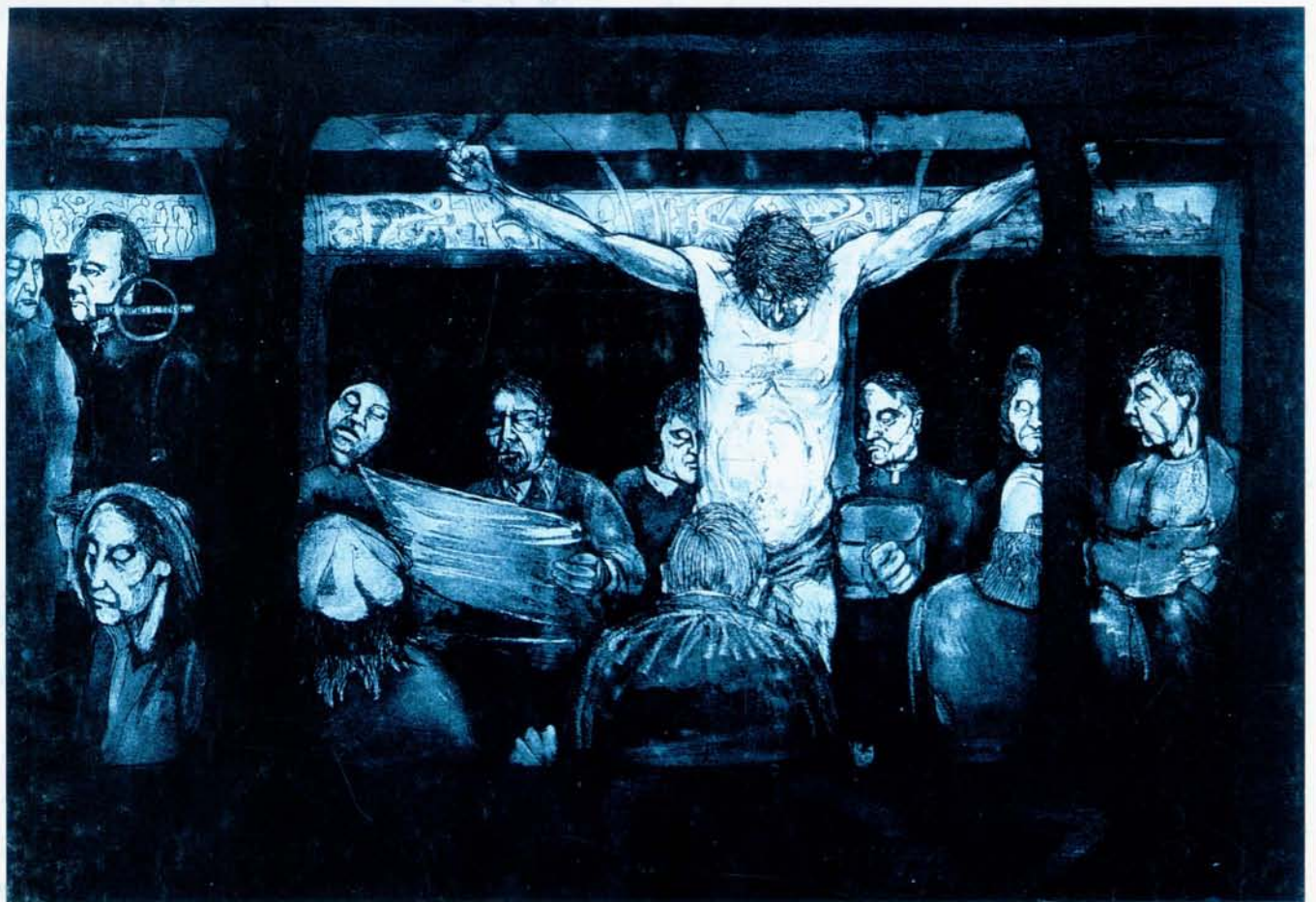
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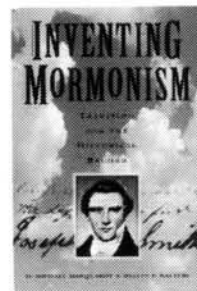
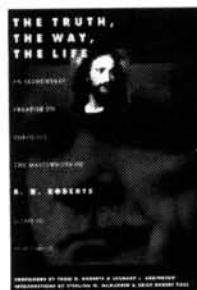
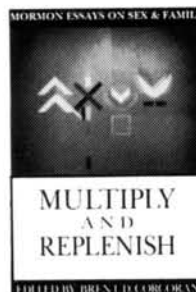
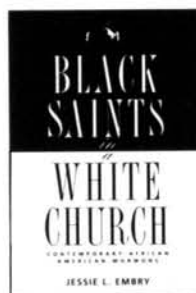
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READERS' FORUM

BACKYARD CLEAN-UP

I, LIKE SO many in these challenging days, have spent more than my usual amount of time examining my "belief in the Church."

I believe that Mormonism can stand like a good house with open doors and invite examination. I believe that we can stand on the front porch and invite neighbors to walk through and look around to their hearts' content. Let the family stroll around as well.

And when they ask if they can poke around in the backyard, I think we can say, "Well, sure, if you want to. It's not perfect, but then whose backyard is? There are weeds in our ditchbanks. We've got some messes on the lawn: post- (and even pre-) Manifesto polygamy; a racist-tainted history; plenty of work on gender equality; Book of Abraham problems and other historical issues; abuses of authority. Lots of weeds.

"But poke around all you want. And when you're through, come to the front porch and sit down, and let's talk about some of the things that we're doing right now. Let us tell you how we try with all our hearts to bear one another's burdens, to truly be sisters and brothers, to take upon ourselves the name of Christ, imperfect though we are. Let us tell about the loving support we can offer from cradle to grave and beyond. Let us tell how we encourage high standards of behavior, of good health, of learning, of fidelity, of community service, and so much more."

I am puzzled that some of the Brethren appear to believe the Church is so fragile it cannot bear honest evaluation. "What?" they say. "What backyard? We don't have a backyard! And don't you dare go poking around back there anyway!"

There used to be a picket fence around the backyard. Now it's barbed-wire and even the family isn't allowed in. Most recently a deadly electric fence was added. I shake my head in amazement. All of us know the backyard is there and that it needs some good cleaning up and a bit of humor about the old unsightly tree stumps. But there's nothing we can do about them now except sit on them and tell their strange and funny stories.

I don't know why I believe in the Church more than some of the Brethren do. But I do. And I will poke around in the backyard insofar as I believe I can assist in the clean-up because this is my house, too. Still, I will spend most of my time out on the front porch visiting with family and neighbors because

it's really quite sunny out there and the conversation can be splendid.

CAROL LYNN PEARSON
Walnut Creek, CA



"Do you need some help with your copper?"

AND HELEN SMILES ON

SOME COMPLAINED about the voluptuous cartoon (SUNSTONE, Feb. 1994), especially when it followed the enigmatic, Mona Lisa-like cover of Helen Candland Stark. But Church teachings themselves foster the dichotomy between the sensuous bride and the scripture-toting, hesitant bridegroom.

Mrs. Newlywed Mormon has been carefully acculturated to make her body desirable. For years she has received Young Womanhood awards and other recognition from bishops and stake presidents who introduce her by saying, "Isn't she lovely?"

In a talk reprinted in Relief Society lessons, President Gordon B. Hinckley counseled women with marital problems to "put a smile on your face and make yourselves attractive." A woman continues to be rated on appearance (so she has breast implants and tanning sessions) and childbearing ability. (Shame on Sarah, Rachel, and all their kind.)

In contrast, when he was off the Scout trail or basketball court, Mr. Newlywed Mormon was counseled in priesthood interviews to be the spiritual leader of the home, to have daily prayer and scripture study. And he's determined to start on that role his wedding night or die—before the next PPI.

Knowing the difficulty of reconciling the opposites, Helen Candland Stark smiles on.

ASHLEY AVIS
West Valley City, UT

SAVING SALVATION

I WAS HAPPY to read "The Joy of Unlimited Salvation" by Eugene England (SUNSTONE, Feb. 1994). I marvel at the unlimited grace and salvation of God's "plan of happiness" when almost no one else in the Church seems to, including general authorities. I applaud England for his broader view and willingness to share the real gospel, or good news, with us all. Most Mormons reject the idea as being too soft on sinners and in conflict with the orthodox teachings. When the word "gospel" is applied to the plan of salvation, it's not really that good of news—breaking up families for all eternity into three separate and inescapable planets or "kingdoms."

I venture just two corrections: (1) England's statement that he "knew a religion that affirms such a universalist God" seems to imply that the Church understands the concept of unlimited salvation, which it does not. (2) His statement that "Doctrine and Covenants 76 provides a snapshot of one certain time in the future" ignores some important clues given in the revelation. If section 76 is viewed with an emphasis on tense, it clearly shows that the vision was not of some future final state but what Joseph and

Sidney saw then and there. The three degrees of glory are not eternal lock-ups, but only states of being, with (as Brother England might say) unlimited salvation offered to all.

JOHN D. JONES
Rigby, ID

Eugene England Responds:

In response to John D. Jones:

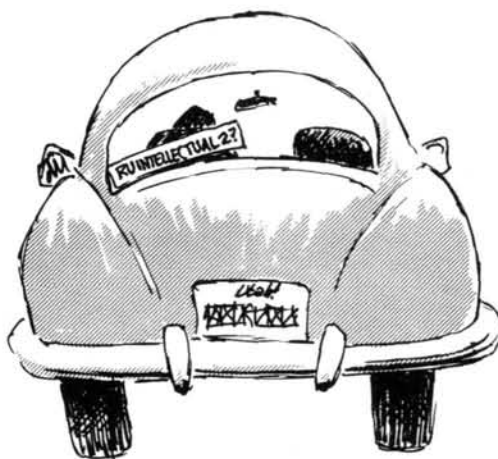
(1) "The Church" is all of us who call ourselves Latter-day Saints—neither a limited group of leaders and teachers (even at BYU) nor a majority of popular opinion. As long as some affirm the God of infinite love and unlimited salvation Joseph Smith and subsequent prophets have revealed and others are able to respond to that good news and be converted, then "the Church" does indeed understand that concept. (Besides, we should all be quite humble about what we claim to "understand" better than others; what matters is whether we treat each other and ourselves as infinitely precious and redeemable, not what our professed beliefs are.)

(2) Doctrine and Covenants 76 seems ambiguous about what "time" the vision it contains describes—whether the conditions in heaven in 1832 (whatever that means), the conditions at some future instant, or a kind

of abstract condition that always obtains. My main point was that it is not a statement that there is no future advancement between kingdoms, as it is usually interpreted. The Church's only official statement about the matter clearly states that the Church has no official position on such advancement. By using the image of a "snapshot," I meant to make clear that, as the section states, "they who are liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loves and makes a lie" (v. 103), at the time when they are such sinners, cannot go "where God and Christ dwell," nor can they do so if they stay sinners, "worlds without end" (v. 111). That is, people *while in their sins*, of course, cannot advance between kingdoms. But the whole import of the gospel of Christ, including this section, is that *when they change into something else, something they are always free and encouraged and helped by God to do, if they will, then they can advance and dwell with God and Christ.*

POKING POSTERiors

AFTER READING L. Jackson Newell's "Scapegoats and Scarecrows in Our Town: When the Interests of Church and Community Collide" (SUNSTONE, Dec. 1993), I be-



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Mormon "closet people"

gan listing its hypocrisies.

Intellectuals are so busy trying to rectify Mormon doctrine with popular culture that they forget to question the validity of that culture. For example, one cannot value sexual differences and be blind to them at the same time. Intellectuals keep one foot on each side of the fence and wonder why they have a picket poking their posteriors.

Intellectuals love to talk about choice, but what they generally want is freedom to impose their choices on everyone else. Plenty of choices exist in the world, but if the LDS church endorsed all, it would be worthless as a religion and moral guide. This is not a call for blind obedience but for more honesty in making choices.

I realize most intellectuals think they are open-minded and tolerant, but my visceral experience of Mormon intellectuals is that

they are the epitome of hypocrisy with their aberrant political agendas. Most are oblivious to any negative fruition their actions perpetrate onto others, or worse, they don't care. Allegations of spiritual abuse from individuals who perpetrate abuse do not inspire confidence or breed respect.

Church leaders are often inept and uninformed, but they seldom base their concern for me upon devotions to their beliefs. In spite of the fact that they may have taken action and have a strong desire that I agree with them, they have not withdrawn love or concern for me as a person when I did not. My experience with intellectuals is that they view compassion as a noun, not a verb, and their commiseration is entirely predicated on my devotion to "the cause." Intellectuals accuse the Church of being controlling; obviously they never listen to their own rhetoric.

To the extent that "Mormon intellectuals" are a vehicle for popular intolerance, Elder Packer correctly uses "so-called." The more I listen to the "Mormon intellectual victim" melodrama, the less I find to hear.

DOUG DANSIE
Layton, UT

GOD'S UNIVERSITY

THE ISSUE BETWEEN Elder Boyd K. Packer's address and L. Jackson Newell's article boils down to, "What is the source of truth?" and "How is truth conveyed?"

Galileo said that "you cannot teach anyone anything. You can only cause them to discover it within themselves." This principle is confirmed by thousands of Mormon missionaries who know that they have no power to convert anyone but that conversion comes



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via the witness of the Holy Ghost.

Not all truth is of the same value. Newell, a professor of higher education at the University of Utah, elevates the value of mere temporal democratic ideals to eternal ideals. It is theocracy, not democracy, that should occupy the minds of Latter-day Saints.

The university is the worst place to seek answers to the three great questions of life. The greatest danger of a university education is the likelihood of considering it as the fountain of knowledge, as Newell suggests.

Moreover, to use Bertrand Russell, author of *Why I Am Not a Christian*, as an example of humility and one who has utilized the resources of the university to the best advantage stretches irony to its limit. How can someone be tapped in to the "fountain of truth" who rejects the "Light of the World"?

Truthfully, Professor Newell, do you really think the universities of men are superior to the university of God?

JOSEPH WYSON
St. George, UT

L. Jackson Newell responds:

I am pleased to respond. Doug Dansie would benefit, I believe, from reading my article more carefully. I don't use terms such as "guilty," "victim," "hypocrisy," or "spiritual abuse," though they litter his sarcastic prose. Nor do I see how he can claim that I seek to "impose [my] choices on everyone else." I simply argue that each of us should strive to think and act in response to our conscience—as it is informed by moral principles and within the bounds of civil laws.

Joseph Wyson's argument springs from assumptions different from my own, but I admire the integrity with which he makes his case. Even so, in dismissing Bertrand Russell's idea of humility simply because he was not a believing Christian seems to contradict an essential, though dying, Mormon principle that we embrace truth wherever it may be found.

The vigorous give-and-take of inquiring minds in universities has a wonder all its own and great power to expand human understanding. Why else did the Saints have the audacity to found the University of Deseret (now the University of Utah) just three years after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley?

I welcome the clash of ideas wherever it happens—including the exchange of letters in this column.

It is silence, especially silence born of fear, that should concern us. The Church's theocracy can thrive only within a political democracy. When it stifles debate, it does so at its own peril.

JUSTIFYING STATUS QUO

DAVID BOHN'S article articulated my concern that secular historians create their own "religious beliefs" about their work, plus attitudes of superiority, hidden agendas, an unwillingness to examine methods, and suppression of other views. (See "The Larger Issue," *SUNSTONE*, Feb. 1994.)

What bothered me about Bohn's approach was his seeming inability to apply the same criteria to "faithful" historians. I was amazed at statements such as: "criticism of revisionist history does not seek to question personal religious beliefs of historians or their right to compose histories in whatever way they please." Try telling that to the "September Six"!

Is Bohn oblivious to the very real "violence" done to those who seek understanding beyond the pabulum spoon-fed by the Church? Perhaps his discomfort with secular history, a discomfort shared by the Church, is only partly from "reframing" history; I suspect it is equally from the revelation of em-

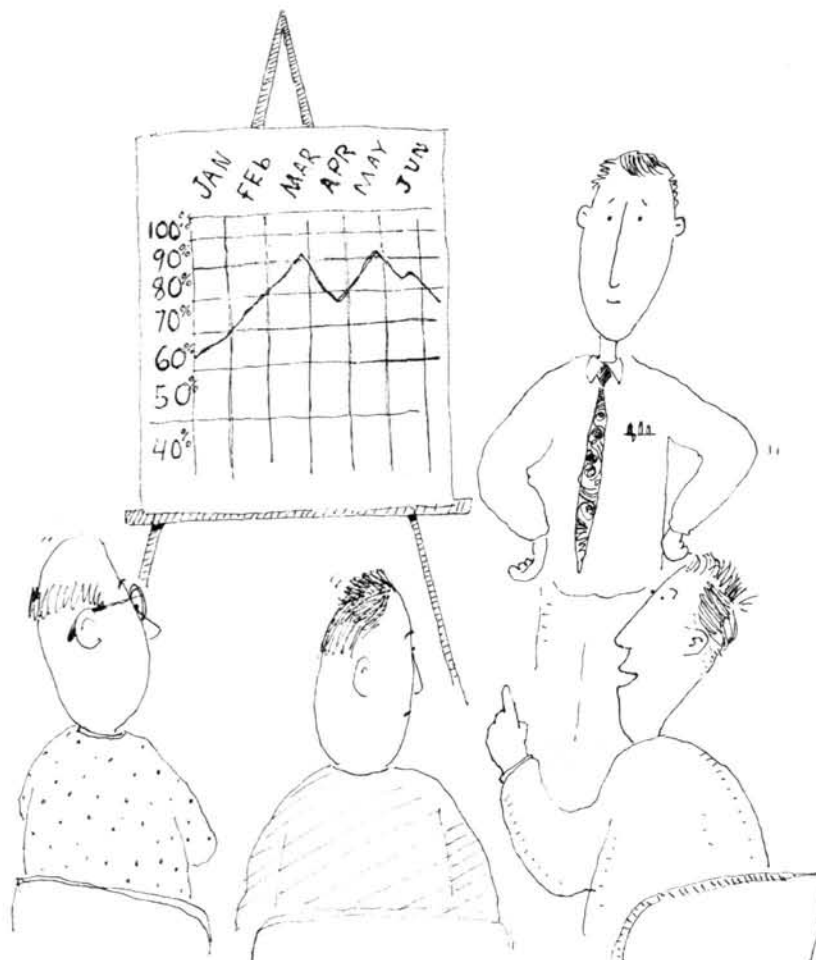
barrassing information that doesn't jibe with the established party line.

For example, I was taught by "sacred history" that President Wilford Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto was the direct result of revelation only, with no outside pressures involved, and that all sanctioned plural marriages ceased immediately. Is Bohn unable to realize that these kinds of deceptions, and there are many, stimulate secular research?

Church historians have had 160-years to produce a credible, faithful history. Their failure has produced a knowledge vacuum others have stepped forward to fill. Bohn's philosophical posturing appears as an attempt to justify the status quo of concealment and misrepresentation. Perhaps Bohn, and the Church, should have more faith that members can handle full disclosure.

I fully agree that "we need to move beyond political discourse toward a space of openness where questioning leads all to a richer understanding."

L. G. MORGAN
Nampa, ID



"I may be an optimist, but I still think we can get 100 percent home teaching."

ARE RUSH LIMBAUGH AND HOWARD STERN

the two latter-day witnesses in Revelations 11, who "tormented them on the earth" for 1,260 days, and will destroy their enemies like "fire proceedeth out of their mouth?" (*Time* magazine cover, 1 Nov. 1993).

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BOHN SPEAKS FOR MANY

DAVID BOHN'S article levels the rhetorical playing field that has been so unfairly one-sided with regard to Mormon history. This thoughtful response to Malcom Thorp (*SUNSTONE*, Nov. 1991) shows just how terribly political "new" Mormon historicism is. The language of D. Michael Quinn and company leaves no room for dialogue because, as Bohn points out, it forces secular "frames" on sacred topics. Such revisionists do violence to the language of our community discourse and make only their understanding possible.

What strikes me as almost funny is that these same people call the Church's historians self-righteous, while they refuse to even consider our ways of understanding.

DAVE NORTON
Orem, UT

TOLERATING PAUL

I ENJOYED Elbert Eugene Peck's sermon on Romans 14 ("The Outer Limits," *SUNSTONE*, Feb. 1994). His exegesis got me reading the epistles, which I haven't done in years. I noted that Paul does not always demonstrate the tolerance toward Jews that Peck expounded. He may have tolerated the celebration of Jewish feast days, as he said in Romans, but Paul made no space for believers of circumcision. Consider this passage from Titus 1:9-14 (New Jerusalem Bible) that also has broader implications for intolerance in the Church for alternate voices:

[The presiding elder] must have a firm grasp of the unchanging message of the tradition, so that he can be both counted on for giving encouragement in sound doctrine and for refuting those who argue against it.

And in fact there are many people who are insubordinate, who talk nonsense and try to make others believe it, particularly among those of the circumcision. They must be silenced: people of this kind upset whole families, by teaching things they ought not to, and doing it for the sake of sordid gain. It was one of themselves, one of their own prophets, who said, "Cretans were never anything but liars, dangerous animals, all greed and laziness"; and that is a true statement. So be severe in correcting them, and make them sound in the faith so that they stop taking notice of Jewish myths and the orders of people who turn away from the truth.

It is hard to know how to take Paul. One could see the above passage, with the Cretan slander and perhaps the reference to circumcision edited out, quoted by today's general authorities as justification for silencing the September Six. But it is statements just like the slam on the Cretans (which sounds like it's a quote taken out of context and used for a message never intended by its Cretan poet



"Elder, would it be a serious strain on our companionship if I asked you not to keep your tanning bronzer beside my toothpaste anymore?"

author) that *require* the reader to have a tolerance for Paul that Paul lacks for others. For if we want to take Paul seriously, we must not only address the writings that seem to be true, but we must painfully dismiss the ones that seem to be mere opinion or culturally bound, such as when he preaches that women should submit to their husbands. Even Paul's order to silence preachers of circumcision must be bracketed because undoubtedly the Christians in Jerusalem headed by Peter and James allowed Saints to continue the practice, even if they did not require it of adult male gentile converts.

So as a modern reader, after dismissing Paul's mere opinion and cultural idiosyncrasy, I am left with his general statements about the need for the presiding elders to keep the Church doctrinally pure; but I reject the very substance that Paul said must be kept pure. What kind of help is that from the scriptures? Does it mean that we must allow today's leaders to enforce today's cultural blindspots that some future generation will see as not only silly but morally repugnant? To some degree, I guess that's unavoidable since there is "no exit" from our times. But while we indulge our leaders in silly things, I suspect reform comes partially from Saints saying, "Hell, no!" to slavery and women's subordination—opposing stands Paul probably would label as "foolish speculations . . . quibbles and disputes" and about which he counseled leaders that "if anyone disputes what you teach, then after a first and second warning have no more to do with him" because he is "warped and self-condemned as a sinner." (Titus 3:9–11.) What kind of tolerance is that? Peck may want to expand the boundaries of tolerance, but Paul really could not tolerate much tolerance, although his maddening epistles necessitate it.

JEFF QUINN
Santa Monica, CA

WHICH SIDE, HAMBLIN?

WILLIAM HAMBLIN ("The Final Step," *SUNSTONE*, July 1993) in responding to David Wright ("Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," *SUNSTONE*, Sept. 1992) made one of the best cases for the secularist argument I've read.

I only disagree when he states that "most people, secularist or supernaturalist, base their conclusions about scripture and history not on a first-hand knowledge of the evidence or analysis, but on authority." He further implies that one must be able to read Hebrew to obtain first-hand knowledge of

texts (presumably the Bible) written in that language. Then he likens *SUNSTONE*-reading secularists who cannot read Hebrew but accept the opinions of those who can to Mormons who "accept the authenticity of the Book of Mormon on the authority of prophets or Latter-day Saint scholars." Every adult Mormon I know who accepts the Book of Mormon's supernatural claims does so based on first-hand, personal experience with the book; the authority of prophets and especially that of LDS scholars seems to matter very little. Otherwise Hamblin's general conclusion seems to be quite correct: It is impossible to put forth a "secularized Mormon" argument explaining Joseph Smith's supernatural experiences that is both "cogent and rational." Only the pure secularist position, which Hamblin's article convincingly supports, can do so.

QUINN BREWSTER
Urbana, IL

GOSPEL AS COMMODITY

AS WITH D. Michael Quinn ("I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon Baseball Baptism Era," *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1993), my mission seriously challenged my testimony. As a teenage convert, I idolized my missionaries and wanted to be just like them. I was ecstatic to receive my own call to serve in southern California from 1966 to 1968.

I soon discovered, however, that I had romanticized missionary life. We went through a sales-training course given by a

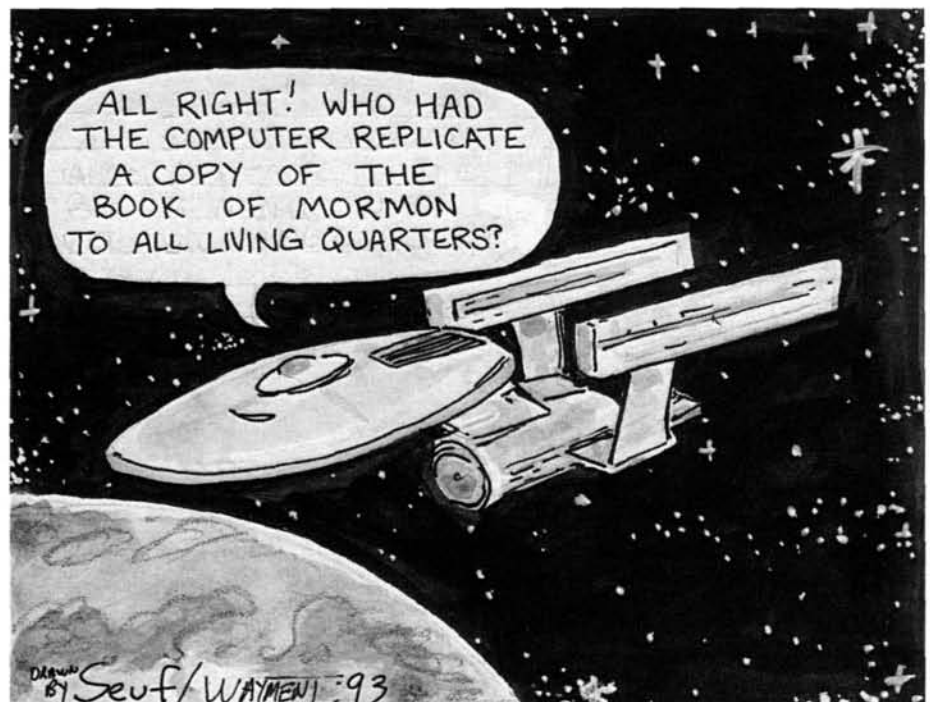
man who made his fortune selling vacuums door-to-door. No effort was made to adapt the material to a spiritual context; the assumption was that, with the right skills, we could sell vacuum cleaners or the gospel.

Missionaries who met baptismal goals were rewarded with trips to major league ball games, recognition in the mission newsletter, and leadership positions. An elder who went home without achieving leadership was considered a failure. I witnessed the kind of statistical manipulation Quinn documents as baptismal certificates were submitted in a later month or swapped to make sure each district team met the quotas.

The missionary discussions were far from *discussions*. They were a catechism of six lessons in which the investigator was boxed into giving canned answers. An investigator who couldn't walk lock-step through the memorized material probably wasn't a true prospect anyway.

I suffered great personal turmoil over this. Was the gospel the spiritual transformation I had experienced during my conversion, or a commodity sold door-to-door with memorized script? I never bought into the gospel-as-commodity philosophy and was black-listed by the leadership, even though my statistics were good. In our final interview, my president told me that he considered my mission a failure and he worried about my future faithfulness. This was a heavy burden for a young man to carry home.

After several years I resolved these issues and am better for it. If I had to do it over, I



would go on a mission again. Like all experiences, my mission had bad and good. I have left the bad behind, remembering primarily the good. The system isn't perfect, and the people in it aren't perfect. To survive in the Lord's true church, one needs a thick skin, a good sense of humor, and a healthy skepticism. Despite an emphasis on numbers in my mission, I witnessed none of the trick baptisms Quinn encountered. I sincerely believe all of the people I taught and baptized were truly converted and had testimonies.

In contrast to then, my oldest son recently

completed a mission in France. He was given no baptismal quotas; the emphasis was on spirituality and genuine conversion. The current missionary lessons are true discussions in which the investigator is encouraged to express opinions and ask questions. My son spent much time reactivating less active members. He was involved in the community and did volunteer work. His mission was a wonderful experience in every way.

As with all human endeavors, mistakes are made in the Church—sometimes big ones. It is still the Lord's work, and we all do

the best we can. Do we learn from our mistakes? We have, and we are all better for it.

MICHAEL RAYBACK
Boulder, CO

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OF GOOD REPORT

RELIGION AND MORAL DEBATE

Religious argument has historically played an important role in secular social change. Unless contemporary religions refuse to accommodate secular society's demands for humanist orthodoxy, religion will become the exclusive realm of the political right, and liberalism will fail in its pluralistic goals.

WHAT IS NEEDED is not a requirement that the religiously devout choose a form of dialogue that liberalism accepts, but that liberalism develop a politics that accepts whatever form of dialogue a member of the public offers. Epistemic diversity, like diversity of other kinds, should be cherished, not ignored, and certainly not abolished. What is needed, then, is a willingness to listen, not because the speaker has *the right voice* but because the speaker has *the right to speak*. Moreover, the willingness to listen must hold out the possibility that the speaker is saying something worth listening to; to do less is to trivialize the forces that shape the moral convictions of tens of millions of Americans.

There is an economy about religious belief—an economy and a tendency toward evolution. Over the centuries, the religious traditions, like traditions of other kinds, tend to abandon what is useless and preserve what is useful. The religions may not measure utility in the same terms that secular society does; but, as many sociologists have suggested, religious traditions that lack any relevance to the human experience are very likely, over time, to wither. This evolution matters because it suggests that a religion that has survived must include some kernel of moral truth that resonates with broader human understanding, whether or not most people share epistemic premises of the religion itself.

Sometimes these resonances may seem trivial or circular—for instance, most established religious traditions in America preach against extramarital sex, and Americans overwhelmingly agree that extramarital sex is wrong—and sometimes, as the sociologist Peter Berger has argued, it may be that churches select their moral teachings *because* they resonate with what parishioners already believe. Often, however, the religious traditions connect more deeply with aspects of the human experience. For example, in the case of abortion, which many different religious traditions teach to be wrong, a majority of Americans, while favoring many restrictions on abortion, reject the idea that the government should control it. (So do I.) At the same time, most Americans endorse a key point in the antiabortion argument of religions—that the fetus is a human being.

Thus we see an important role of religious argument in public debate: even when most members of the public reject the religious tradition itself, many and sometimes most will be moved by the moral claims that religious conviction causes members of a faith to make—even when the religious and the nonreligious disagree on the basis of the moral claims. Indeed, in many cases—and the humanity of the fetus is surely one—the basis of the oral (or one might say factual) claim is probably one that most Americans would debate only uneasily, and then with difficulty. Often the moral claim seems almost instinctual, not argued for, and yet it nevertheless becomes the subject of further inquiry—and the foundation for political action.

Because of this ability of the religions to fire the human imagination, and often the conscience, even of nonbelievers—as, for instance, the civil rights movement did—the religions should not be forced to disguise or remake themselves before they can legitimately be involved in secular political argument. As one who believes deeply in the importance of both religious tradition and liberal dialogue, I consider it vital that this accommodation be made. If it is not, secular political disaster may ensue as more and more religiously devout Americans turn their backs on the intellectual traditions that have built and preserved our free institutions. For unless liberal theory and liberal law develop ways to welcome the religiously devout into public moral debate without demanding that they first deny their religious selves, the caricature of liberalism offered by the radical right will more and more become the truth, for liberalism will continue its slide from a pluralistic theory of politics to a narrow, elitist theory of right results. ☐

STEPHEN L. CARTER
in *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics
Trivialize Religious Devotion*
BasicBooks, 1993, 230–32

Sunstone welcomes submissions of interesting quotations.

FROM THE EDITOR

VOICES FROM THE DUST



By Elbert Eugene Peck

THE first morning rays woke me on my balcony hammock. Hungry, I pulled on jeans and staggered to 7-11 to buy some milk. As I crossed the street in front of my apartment, a woman was carrying potted mums. "For Eliza?" I mumbled. She nodded, a little disturbed that her dawn's early light secret act was revealed.

That Memorial Day I spent sunning on my balcony, reducing my backlog of *New Yorkers*, and pondering prophets. All morning, I monitored the rememberers visiting the Brigham Young Cemetery across the street where America's Moses rests beside some of his wives and children.

People visit at all times and seasons. In the summer, when I sleep outside, I'm often awakened by the idling growl of a tour bus whose two dozen paparazzi disembark, stand in the middle of the street, record a five minute, still-life video-clip of the Salt Lake Temple, then proceed through the small, flowery Mormon Pioneer Memorial park into the center-of-the-block cemetery. Brigham's grave is the only one surrounded by a cast-iron fence, and they head straight to it. After reading the plaque, which reviews Brigham's and the pioneers' faith-motivated exodus, they stand there, silent, staring at the grave. Then they make their way back, noting other headstones: Mary Ann Angel Young, Lucy D. Young, Mary V. Young, Joseph A. Young, Emmeline F. Young, and Eliza R. Snow Smith (no "Young" on her headstone, although she was married to Brigham, too), Mormonism's famous poet, hymnist, and prophetess.

What are their thoughts while they stare at the headstones? I ponder as I watch them. For many tourists, the visit is a been-there-done-that item on their Mormon sites itinerary, and they note the colonizer/prophet/polygamist with little reflection. What does the elderly couple think who use the graves as their daily after-supper walk's rest-and-turn-around point? Or the curious jogger who goes in and pays panting, breathless respect? Or the local Saint who brings friends and provides com-

mentary. There's the vacationing Mormon family, mother holding a map, kids pointing as father drives the van past it. What do those parents tell their kids as they stare? Once a men's group went at night and sang "Oh, My Father" on Eliza's birthday. Each July 24th my stake sponsors a youth sunrise service, and I'm awakened by the Aaronic priesthood clankily setting up chairs and tables while the women arrange tablecloths, flowers, and refreshments; followed by megaphone pioneer tributes, priesthood leader exhortations, singing of "Blessed Honored Pioneer," and finally the noisy striking of the set. It's a nice way to start the holiday, although the stereotypical gender roles would be more appropriate if everyone wore pioneer costumes.

Ultimately, each visit with Brigham is an encounter with what the caller brings with her. The voices from the dust are but the voices from our own soul: devotion, curiosity, gratitude, sexism, indifference, history, boredom, fortitude, inspiration. A headstone is a granite Rorschach inkblot.

My afternoon balcony contemplations leaped a century and turned ninety-degrees when the Associated Press called about the death of Ezra Taft Benson. As I took the news in, I turned from gazing south to the cemetery to west toward The Gateway apartments, the high-security residence of the Church president. Just beyond and towering above, the U.S. flag atop the Joseph Smith Memorial Building was still at half-mast for Richard Nixon, adding an appropriate somber tone.

Throughout the day, I frequently looked at the prophet's apartment and thought about President Benson. (Our next issue will feature his *in memoriam* piece.) I reflected on his talks that engaged me—concurring and disagreeing—his powerful first presidential address; the ones on pride, women, and single adults; one on using the Book of Mormon to strengthen converts colored my mission a decade before he became prophet; and "The Proper Role of Government," with which I contended from high school through my undergraduate years. I thought of his fiery per-

sonality, dogged commitment, conservative views, integrity and old-age kindness. He was not a person with whom I would have chosen to have an on-going, if one-sided, conversation (as I have with Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith), but his prominence and forcefulness in the Church required it, like Nixon's did in government. Nevertheless, the deliberations are fruitful, requiring me to grudgingly change views, to respect and love, and to struggle to understand his puzzling blend of faith, worldview, and motivations. When engaging Brigham there are, of course, as many contraries as with President Benson, but the distance of time makes it easier to select only favorite topics; with contemporaries it's harder to avoid (forget) the vices. Still, like the visitors to Brigham's grave, and like most conversations, I primarily hear from President Benson the issues I want to hear. It takes effort to be open to the whole person.

A week later, we heard the voice of a living prophet. The simple fact of a prophet's speaking requires Saints to listen, consider, and respond. In one day, the Church entered into an incredible dialogue with him; there were energy, hope, commitment, excitement, and a here-and-now perspective looking to the future. Past prophets give needed perspective to today's challenges, but living prophets make the present portentous. We need the individual charisma of a prophet: it is hard to sustain a conversation, even one-sided, with a council. Ideas are connected to persons.

Joseph named Doctrine and Covenants 88 The Olive Leaf because it was "plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us." We feel the same about President Hunter's inaugural words and share them in our first last-page "An Olive Leaf"—a section that will host messages of peace by past and present prophets and prophetesses.

I view my life as a lived conversation with God, in assent and dissent, but always pondering his words, living my response, and listening for his—ever changing my mind and my heart as one does in any on-going, chatty friendship. To a less-animated degree, I engage in one-sided tête-à-têtes of heart and mind with selected other living and dead individuals, pondering how they lived in their time, discovering commonalities, applying their views to my world, concluding when they're wrong or right—freeing myself from the limits of my time. It is possible, as Robert Frost penned in "The Tuft of Flowers," to hold "brotherly speech with one whose thought I had not hoped to reach," for with effort and thought, we do indeed discover that humans "work together," I told him from the heart, "Whether they work together or apart." ☞

IN MEMORIAM

RICHARD DOUGLAS POLL: ADVOCATE FOR MORMON INTELLECTUALS

By Thomas G. Alexander

ON 27 APRIL 1994 when Richard D. Poll passed away in his Provo home, the historical profession, the Church, and public philanthropy all lost an active participant. As John Donne might have said, with the loss of Dick Poll the community lost a part of itself.

I first met Dick in 1965 when I joined the history faculty at Brigham Young University. During five years of working together, we developed a life-long friendship. He provided a model that helped many of us younger teachers mold our careers. A dedicated and inspiring teacher, he inaugurated the American Heritage course on television, which students affectionately called "The Dick Poll Show."

In 1970, Dick and his wife Emogene (Gene) left for Western Illinois University. His friend John Bernhard, who had served as dean of our college, accepted the position of university president, and he enticed Dick away by offering him the job of vice president for administration. In 1975, Dick declined Bernhard's invitation to follow him again, and remained as a history professor at Western Illinois until his retirement in 1983.

Needless to say, we maintained our contact—you did that with Dick and Gene because they always made you feel at home wherever you met. In 1970–71, Marilyn and I took our family to Carbondale for a sabbatical at Southern Illinois University. Dick and Gene invited us to drive north to Macomb for Thanksgiving. Our oldest children remember that experience with fondness.

After retirement, Dick and Gene returned to their Provo roots and settled down on Grandview Hill. There he continued his research and community service, and occasionally taught a history class at BYU.

Dick was utterly devoted to Gene and their three daughters—Marilyn, Nanette, and Jennifer. Last November, when the daughters and their husbands Gary Bell, Terry Allen, and Clayton Crawford honored Dick and Gene with a fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration, no one expected that



Dick and Gene Poll

within six months both Gene and Dick would be gone. Gene passed away early this year, and in a short time Dick followed.

Born in 1918 during World War I and nurtured during the turbulent 1920s, Dick belonged to that generation of scholars whose youth had been severed by economic depression and violent war. Serving as a missionary during the late 1930s, Dick transferred from Germany to Denmark and finally to Canada as the horror of World War II began to engulf western Europe. Like others of his generation (Gene Campbell, Leonard Arrington, George Ellsworth, Everett Cooley, and Brigham Madsen), Dick served in the armed forces. Like the latter three, he returned from the war to earn a Ph.D. in history at the University of California at Berkeley. A brilliant scholar, Dick held the Thompson fellowship and graduated Phi Beta Kappa.

As a child of the Progressive Era and a youth of the Depression, battered by conflicts between scholarly secularism and an active faith, Dick sought to integrate his religious and intellectual lives. Throughout his career,

he sought to understand Mormonism as a personal experience as he probed the relationship of the Latter-day Saints to the larger American society. In his master's thesis at Texas Christian and his Ph.D. dissertation, he investigated the subject that formed the core of his scholarly output, both the thesis and the dissertation examined the nineteenth-century relationship between Mormons and other Americans. Continuing those themes, in the last years of his life, he researched long hours on the Utah War—that misguided but fortunately bloodless conflict between the Mormon people and the American nation. Before his death, he had already begun to sketch the outlines of that study in a Dello G. Dayton Memorial Lecture at Weber State University on Thomas L. Kane and in an article in *BYU Studies* on the massive exodus to Provo, generally called "the move south."

It is no negative reflection on Dick to observe that he placed his role as public intellectual and teacher before his role as scholar. Dick's service to the university and the community reveals his commitment to teaching and service. At BYU, he labored as associate director and as a teacher and mentor in the honors program. The students named him honors professor of the year in 1969. As a public intellectual, he championed at BYU the somewhat unpopular causes of the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Association of University Professors. Later, after he returned to Provo, he immersed himself in the campaign to save the Brigham Young Academy buildings. At the same time, he committed himself to the Provo Library adult literacy program.

Most important, perhaps, as part of his full career he tried to define a role for the intellectual in the Church. As Richard Hofstadter in his seminal book *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* pointed out, genuine intellectuals are uncomfortable with certainty. They prefer to turn answers into questions. This attribute distinguishes intellectuals from apologists who seek to reconcile and defend.

What place do intellectuals who commit their lives to inquiry and questioning have in the LDS church? For Dick, the answer was quite clear: Intellectuals must continue to serve, to believe, and to remain faithful.

What place, Dick asked, do intellectuals who commit their lives to inquiry and questioning have in the LDS church? For him, the answer was quite clear: Intellectuals must continue to serve, to believe, and to remain faithful, while continuing to question and search. As an intellectual and a committed Church member, Dick served—among other callings—in the Oak Hills Second Ward bishopric, on a number of high councils, as president of the Macomb Branch, and as a teacher in the high priests group.

As a service to himself and the community of Mormon intellectuals, he defined a place in the Church for the faithful questioner in a sermon he delivered in the Palo Alto Ward in August 1967, which *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* published in the Winter 1967 issue. For those of us who remain firmly committed both to the Church and to the life of the mind, Dick's "What the Church Means to People Like Me" came as a revelation. He helped us to define ourselves.

His was no mean task. Intellectuals of every generation—Dick's included—have concluded that the soul-wrenching struggle to remain both actively committed to religious faith and to the questioning demanded of true scholars was not worth the cost. Some have taken one of two easy roads out. On the one side, many have chosen to become apologists, deciding that questioning will pay no dividends in the Church. These people decide not to research the hard questions. Committed to authority and central direction, they conform and in doing so ignore or gloss over problems.

On the other side, not a few conclude that commitment to the Church is not worth the struggle and embarrassment. For them, as for the apologists, questioning and commitment to religion becomes ultimately too hard. Certain questions prove too difficult. How do you respond to questions about the Church's previous policy on African-Americans and the priesthood or the practice of polygamy? How do you answer questions about dictation in politics or opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment? What answer do you give when friends quiz you on such matters as public dissent, feminism, or authority? Many intellectuals, uncomfortable about such problems, decide either to slip into in-

activity or to sever their connection with the Church.

Clearly, Dick observed, within the Church those who question and those who do not have difficulty living with each other. This happens, he argued, not on the level of intellectual acceptance, but "at the level of personal communion, of empathy."

Nevertheless, Dick argued, although those who decline to question are uncomfortable around questioners, people who question have a firm place in the Church. He developed this argument by defining two ideal types of committed members. The first he labeled "Iron Rods." These are members for whom "each step of the journey to the tree of life was plainly defined." The second, he called "Liahonas." These are members for whom "the clarity of . . . directions varied with the circumstances of the user." For them there "was no infallible delineator of their course." Where the Iron Rod found answers, the Liahona found questions.

"To the Iron Rod a questioning attitude suggests an imperfect faith; to the Liahona an unquestioning spirit betokens a closed mind." For the Iron Rod, answers to virtually all questions appear in "Scripture, Prophetic Authority, and the Holy Spirit." The Liahona, on the other hand, accepts the concepts "that God lives, that He loves His children, that His knowledge and power are efficacious for salvation, and that He does reveal himself." Nevertheless, the Liahona believes that God's will is mediated by "the arm of flesh." Liahonas find problems in such matters as biblical descriptions of Eve's creation from Adam's rib and in the chronology that places the creation at 4,000 B.C. They are uncomfortable with the selective literalism of the Iron Rods that question the one proposition and testify to the other. As they search Church history, instead of unvarying sweetness and harmony, Liahonas find disagreement among prophets over such matters as the League of Nations, the process of creation, and politics.

Dick placed himself squarely with the Liahonas. He denied that the Liahona type was simply another name for the faithless, the apostate, or the cultural Mormon. Rather, he argued that faith in the Atonement, salvation, and exaltation were true principles as

were agency, freedom, compassion, and love. Moreover, he felt a sense of commitment to the Latter-day Saints as a people, and exercised faith in a set of principles promising a better life here and in the hereafter.

Undoubtedly if questioned, Dick would say that faithless, apostate, or cultural Mormons are people who have taken the road into inactivity or out of the Church. Although they might identify themselves with the Mormon people, they have little faith in the Atonement, salvation, or revelation. Liahonas, on the other hand, are committed Latter-day Saints who have declined to reject the active life of the mind as a price of active membership.

After Dick's death, in reflecting on the Iron Rod/Liahona model, one of my colleagues, Ted Warner, reminded me of the controversy Dick's article had generated at BYU. The pages of the *Daily Universe*, the student newspaper, was filled with letters arguing about Dick's proposition. Some Iron Rods condemned the article as the rantings of an apostate. On the other hand, Henry Nicholes—often a glorious thorn in BYU President Ernest Wilkinson's side—argued that Iron Rods and Liahonas probably constituted only two of a large number of types of faithful members within the Church.

I'm not comfortable labeling myself as either an Iron Rod or a Liahona. Nevertheless, I find in Dick's recognition that the Church offers a place for the faithful, questioning intellectual a modicum of comfort in the otherwise uncomfortable world peopled only sparsely by Mormon intellectuals like myself.

Dick Poll would have found most unperceptive Bill Mulder's suggestion—citing his wife's quip—that the phrase "Mormon intellectual" is an oxymoron. Richard Hofstadter suggested that the hallmark of the intellectual is discomfort with certainties. Dick Poll would have heartily agreed, and he would have added that whether you call Latter-day Saints who search and question "Mormon intellectuals" or "Liahonas," they are faithful subjects in God's Kingdom. If, as I firmly believe, the celestial kingdom has room for all faithful people, Dick Poll will surely find his seat near God's right hand raising questions, for which the loving Father of us all will express his profound gratitude. ☐

IN MEMORIAM

HELEN CANDLAND STARK
WRITER, ACTIVIST, MENTOR

By Shirley B. Paxman

Helen Candland Stark died 25 May 1994 at her home in Provo, Utah. She was in her ninety-fourth year. A life-long supporter of many worthy causes, including publications such as SUNSTONE, Dialogue, and Exponent II, she will be missed by her many friends and admirers, especially LDS women of several generations whom she mentored.

BORN IN 1901, Helen Candland was the oldest of nine children. Gifted with a "sense of place," she has written movingly in prose and poetry about her family, her childhood, her upbringing in a small Mormon farming community, and her school years at the Brigham Young Training School, High School, and University.¹ She earned a bachelor of science degree and a master's degree from BYU and started her teaching career in the late 1920s. After her marriage to Henry Stark, a Ph.D. research chemist with Dupont, she moved with him to Delaware where they adopted three children and reared them to adulthood. They also help found the first Delaware branch of the LDS church and helped it grow to a full-fledged ward and stake under their devoted leadership.

When Henry retired, they returned to the mountains they loved and spent their last years in Salem and Provo, Utah. Henry died in 1988. Helen expressed her love of Utah's mountains in her poem "Homesick."

I was conceived,
in Mountains
By a strong woman and a faithful man,
And by the hills.
For surely then a power fused their seeds,
A magic from the fir trees and the rock,
In the blue air.

I was brought up
With mountains.
Some things just are, like food and sleep and
care,



And like these hills.
They must have fed me and I did not know,
They must have rested me all unaware,
And watched my feet.

I grew to love
The mountains.
I learned the miracle of shade and shape
Taught by the hills—
Thousands of patterns made of cliff and
canyon.
Thousands of subtleties of light and color,
Winter, summer, fall.

But I have left the mountains,
How could I know that I'd cry out in dreams
For these my hills?
What is this pain which will not give me
peace?
I am no child. Let childish fancies go.
But the blue shadows of the pines are in me,
And the tall air, and the grey rocks and the
Deep hollows of the ferns.

Mother or father of the mountains
Inexorable, inviolate, still,
Whose seed in me is in a barren soil.
Without the hills,
With broken feet I walk a level land,
Clutching an empty sky.²

After returning to Utah, Helen and Henry became environmental activists. Helen later wrote, "Because we had observed in Delaware the coarsening encroachment of industry on acre after acre, we have been caught up, here, to speak out against what seems to be a spirit of exploitation. I have spent time writing about conservation for various media, including an article in the *Ensign* on 'Saving the Wetlands.'"³ They decried what she termed the "bull-dozer mentality" of many public officials.

Out of their concern for and commitment to a proper "stewardship" of the land, the Starks endowed the Lytle Preserve in a corner of southwestern Utah. This protected area—a precious 460 acres—serves BYU, the University of Utah, Idaho State University, and universities as far away as Purdue University in Indiana. This scientific outdoor laboratory is an ecological treasure where students and scientists can study the relationship of riparian lives, the desert environment, as well as migratory patterns in the wetlands and marshes.

Other projects endowed by the Starks include the Women in Science scholarships at BYU, and the establishment of the annual Alice Louise Reynolds Lectureship.

Balance, wholeness, and diversity: these words describe Helen Stark. Her creative side was but one dimension of this many-faceted woman. Her contributions to the world of literature—poetry, personal essays, and short stories—are numerous. In grateful recognition of this considerable body of work, the Association for Mormon Letters honored her with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Helen received this with much joy and appreciation.

"Feminist," a word much maligned by Helen's culture and her church, was an endearing word to her, and she embodied all that was good and positive in it. In a most creative and purposeful way, Helen became

PAIN

I

It has been a long cruel winter.
 Bowed with age
 And the grinding, unrelenting pain of shingles
 I look out of my picture window
 At my giant mulberry trees.
 Their branches clack
 Above the dirty snow,
 And I ponder pain.
 I ponder dead-end pain.

II

Across the street a door is flung open.
 Exuberant children pour out
 Intent on building one more snowman.
 Their mother follows slowly.
 Patiently she bends to adjust
 A child's mitten
 Accepting the rhythms of gestation
 She knows pain now,
 She is aware that it will peak to thrust forth
 New life—twins!
 She is content.

III

Eventually, on the bare branches of
 My mulberry trees
 Tight buds will break.
 They will thrust into leaves.

Can it be
 That I am climbing a tall mountain?
 If I finally reach the top
 I shall lay down my burden,
 Turn
 To see at my feet the floor of
 Earth, foothills and fields.
 I shall fling wide my arms,
 It is all right, Lord!

COMPLETION

In Autumn
 the inner core
 of the giant mulberry tree
 sent this message to its leaves:
 Unlatch!
 They fell to the mothering earth
 in a golden curtain.

Now in my wintering autumn—
 Great Arbiter of life and death,
 Speak to my soul your message:
 Let go!
 Gather me to my loved ones,
 My mission done.

an activist very early in the women's movement, energetically aligning herself in women's causes. She wrote letters to editors, general authorities, and politicians and became an articulate and eloquent spokeswoman for women of all ages. She became a confidant and mentor of many women of succeeding generations. She was undaunted by the inevitable criticism that followed her feminism. On one occasion she wrote:

A high moment for me recently was the Sunstone Symposium [session] on the Heavenly Mother. That such a topic could be addressed at all was something of a miracle. I felt that here was the beginning of an answer to Carol Lynn Pearson's poem that begins "I live in a motherless house." I looked around the audience at the cluster of young women who I knew shared [my] search. It was as though I had given birth. Into their competent hands had passed that illusory charge that had been only dimly recognized by my generation. We are beginning to recognize the potential for a new force at work. There are as yet no clear answers, but a viable, profound ferment is infiltrating the mix. Mormon women are writing poems and Mormon women scholars are discovering scriptures that recapture a feminine force, a force that is numinous, overshadowing and endowed with spiritual powers.

Helen herself contributed much to that feminine force, endowing it with her considerable spiritual power. She spent a lifetime making contributions to her causes. At ninety-three, as she recently wrote in the two poems "Pain" and "Completion," she was ready to go home, her mission done. ☞

NOTES

1. See Helen Candland Stark, "The Good Woman Syndrome, or, When Is Enough, Enough?" *Exponent II* (December 1976) and "Reconciling the Opposites," *SUNSTONE* 16:8 (February 1994): 64-71. See also Lavina Fielding Anderson, "A Strenuous Business: The Achievement of Helen Candland Stark," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23:3 (Fall 1990): 12-33.
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3. See Helen Candland Stark, "Another Kind of Tithe," *Ensign* (October 1972): 38-43.

TURNING THE TIME OVER TO...

Tim and Tamlyn Heaton

IS FEMINISM A THREAT TO THE FAMILY?



The deterioration in the quality of family life arising from sexism poses a major threat to the stability and well-being of families in contemporary society. Feminism's war against sexism may thus provide useful tools to strengthen families.

THE FAMILY IN DECLINE

Many scholars agree that recent family decline seriously threatens childrearing.

ALTHOUGH SCHOLARS HAVE long debated the status of the family, most posit that the family is in decline. In the lead article of the August 1993 *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, David Popenoe concludes that "family decline since 1960 has been extraordinarily steep, and its social consequences serious, especially for children."¹ He further concludes "that familism as a cultural value has diminished, and that people

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have become less willing to invest time, money, and energy in family life, turning instead to investments in themselves."² He believes that recent family decline seriously threatens childrearing and provision of affection and companionship. Many other family scholars agree. In a 1987 issue of the *Journal of Family Issues* devoted to the state of the American family, the modal response reflects concern over changes in the family rather than optimism or belief that continuity is more salient than change.³ The issue has also received great attention in the mass media. For example, in the cover article of the April 1993 *Atlantic*, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead concludes that the growing trend in marital disruption is harmful to large numbers of children.⁴

Family decline is a rubric referring to several trends. The two leading indicators of de-

cline are a rapid rise in divorce in the 1960s and 1970s and a continuing rise in the age at marriage, which will most likely result in a decline in the percentage of people who ever marry. Related demographic trends include a decline in the age at first intercourse such that marriage and sex are becoming more distinct, a rise in unwed parenthood, and a reduction in the birthrate that, barring continued immigration, will lead to population decline. So far, however, it is doubtful that voluntary childlessness will spread to a large segment of the population.⁵ Along with behavioral trends, individuals' attitudes are becoming more accepting of premarital sex, unwed parenthood, and marital dissolution.⁶

Several culprits have been blamed for family decline: (1) a growing emphasis on individual fulfillment at the expense of traditional family orientations;⁷ (2) legal changes emphasizing the family's importance to the individual rather than its importance to society;⁸ (3) growing tolerance for diverse family life-styles;⁹ (4) restructuring role orientations that challenge the traditional breadwinner/homemaker division of labor;¹⁰ (5) welfare policies that facilitate single parenting and discourage marriage;¹¹ and (6) structural changes in the labor market that make it more advantageous for women to be employed. More traditional commentators would also add a seventh factor: the feminist attack on patriarchy.

Conflict between feminist agendas and the well-being of families is evident in this list of factors contributing to decline. Blurring of gender boundaries, equality in the work force, support for single parents, opportunity for self-fulfillment, and demise of patriarchy are each goals pursued to varying degrees by feminists. Indeed, some feminists say "good riddance to the family."¹²

As is often the case, rhetoric precedes and exceeds reliable evidence. Family scholars have not yet provided definitive evidence regarding the contributors to family decline. At the societal level, it is clear that several trends are interrelated, but correlation does not prove cause. Women who work are not necessarily more prone to divorce; households with a less traditional division of labor have not been shown to be less stable; attitude changes often are a response to rather than a cause of behavioral change; and studies have not shown a clear link between desire for self-fulfillment and lack of commitment to family values. Nevertheless, there is strong sentiment that feminism poses a serious threat to family well-being because it challenges behaviors and attitudes that are assumed to be the bedrock of stable family life.

Although we admit that the more radical feminist proposals—such as elimination of legal heterosexual marriage—are not compatible with preservation of family units, we argue that many more moderate goals of feminism may contribute to the betterment of family life. We propose that the deterioration in the quality of family life arising from sexism poses a major threat to the stability and well-being of families in contemporary society. Feminism's war against sexism may thus provide useful tools to strengthen families.

SEXISM THREATENS THE FAMILY

Gender bias causes some family members to gain more love, attention, and respect than others, reducing the commitment to stable relationships.

“FAMILY values” has been one of the most used but least defined terms in political rhetoric over the last several years. To avoid confusion, we define family as relationships created by marriage, birth, and adoption. Our explicit assumption is that these relationships are better when those involved love each other, help each other grow and develop, and are committed to remain in the relationship. No

doubt, love, care, and support can occur in other types of relationships, but we will limit our focus to families. Sexism is defined as behavior and/or attitudes that consistently give one gender (usually men) higher value, greater privilege, more power, or more resources. In the following discussion, we describe ways in which sexism harms family relationships. More specifically, we give examples of how sexism reduces the amount of care given to some family members and reduces the commitment to stable relationships.

First, sexism biases the support given to children, often in favor of males. The most extreme cases occur in less developed societies where excess female mortality results from male preference. In India, for example, patriarchal kinship and low female labor-force participation greatly increase the risk of excess female childhood mortality.¹³ Less extreme, but more common, is the tendency to provide more schooling to sons than to daughters. Although progress is being made, men still stay in school longer than women in many areas of the world.¹⁴ Though less easy to document, it appears that sexism reduces other parental investments in their daughters including encouragement to do their best, providing opportunity for growth and devel-

opment, and resources to succeed.¹⁵ In short, sexism detracts from care given to daughters in some Third World settings and from parental encouragement to achieve. Gender inequality is also evident in the U.S. where men are more likely to attend college, to receive encouragement in math and science, and to specialize in fields that pay higher salaries.¹⁶

Second, gender inequality in educational attainment and work experience places children at high risk of poverty by reducing mothers' ability to provide for the family should circumstances require it. In the United States, for example, about 20 percent of the children live below the poverty level and over half of the children in female-headed households live below the poverty level.¹⁷ Lack of marketable skills and work experience are the main reasons single mothers are unable to provide even a modest standard of living for their children.

Third, hierarchical relationships inherent in traditional family models detract from the quality of marriage. “High levels of marital satisfaction occur most frequently among egalitarian couples in comparison to marriages where either the husband or wife is dominant.”¹⁸ Moreover, coercive control leads to marital dissatisfaction.¹⁹ By implication, beliefs that one partner should be the boss or “head” of the household detracts from the benefit each partner derives from marriage.

Fourth, sexism leads to devaluation of the role of motherhood. Historically, women were denied equal access to education and employment because they were believed to be intellectually, rationally, and emotionally inferior to men.²⁰ This devaluation of the potential contribution of women in the public world implies that the role traditionally allocated to women—motherhood and homemaking—is of less value or importance. Even now, the belief that women need to be told to stay at home shows tacit agreement that the homemaking role is less desirable.

The devaluation of women and the roles they play has been reinforced by “science.” In sociology and economics, it has been assumed that the male world of work and production is far more important than what goes on in the household. The family's status was measured by the husband's job. In psychology, developmental models have assumed that women have limited potential, that males are the prototype for human behavior, and that female experience, if different from the male's, is less important.²¹ Research on women centers on reproduction; in contrast, researchers see males as less

HARMONY EIGHTH WARD

any 8th Ward! If you are new to our ward, Waterman's office in the east hallway immergent meeting.

Activity	Location	Rating
Sacrament Meeting	Room 4	PG
Priesthood Meeting	Room 5	PG-13
Relief Society Meeting	R.S. room	NR
Sunday School Classes:	Stage	NR
Gospel Essentials (Brother Toscano)	Bishop's Off	NC-17
Gospel Doctrine (Sister Bagley)	TBA	
Gospel Doctrine (Brother Kimball)		
Genealogy (Bro. and Sis. Ostler)		
Temple Preparation (Bro. Talmage)		
Family Relations (Brother Moench)		

WARD TELEPHONE NUMBERS

A. Waterman	355-0976
st Counselor	322-0227
d Counselor	589 9906
rs Quorum President	887-5501
Society President	785-0498

Comparisons between Mormons and other Americans show little difference in marital satisfaction, time spent with spouse or children, family violence, positive evaluation of family roles, or contact with kin. Clearly, there is room for improvement.

biologically driven. Rather, they are individualistic, rationalistic, and egocentric.²² Thus, females are not desirable research subjects and their development tends to be ignored. Moreover, disciplines that focus on women such as family studies and home economics have lower status than those that focus on men.

Fifth, a traditional delineation of gender roles leads to devaluation of the parental role of fathers. Recent increases in divorce have sparked debate regarding the importance of fathers in their children's lives. Although the weight of evidence demonstrates that children do better in intact families, evidence suggests that fathers do not seem critical to young children's developmental outcomes.²³ This is not to say that fathers cannot be important. On the contrary, fathers can be very beneficial for a broad range of children's outcomes including development of a healthy identity, a strong sense of morality, intellectual capacity, assertiveness, independence, a positive body image, and social competence.²⁴ One possible reason for the discrepancy between the potential and actual role of fathers for their children is that the breadwinner/homemaker distinction diminishes the importance fathers place on their parental role because they assume that making a living constitutes their major contribution to the family. It is worth noting that families with sons are less likely to break up than families without sons.²⁵ The authors conclude that this is because fathers are more invested in their sons' well being. Presumably, if fathers were equally involved with their daughters, marriages would be more stable.

Sixth, sexism rejects the values we teach to children. A majority of parents believe that children should do well in school, be independent, and be responsible. A large majority also believe that parents should encourage independence in daughters as much as sons.²⁶ These values are incongruent with sexist notions that females should be subservient and should be less concerned with achievement. Such incongruity contributes to growing cynicism regarding basic family values by some feminists.

Finally, gender inequality makes marriage a bad bargain for women, thus reducing the desirability of family life. In their book enti-

tled *New Families, No Families*, Frances Goldscheider and Linda Waite argue that the potential double burden of making a living and taking care of a home turns women away from marriage and childbearing.²⁷ It appears unlikely that women's decisions to enter the work force will reverse. Thus, men must become much more involved in the homemaking role or fewer women will opt for marriage and childbearing.

Although the above list is far from exhaustive, it should be clear that sexism does pose a threat to family well-being. Female dependence on male income, restriction of appropriate female roles to homemaking, and promotion of male authority and superiority may create stability in families, but such tactics can only work in a repressive environment. They can also take heavy tolls on the quality of interpersonal relationships. Efforts to eliminate sexism may thus benefit families.

THE FEMINIST AGENDA(S)

Although multiple feminisms exist, feminists agree that improving society begins with eliminating inequality.

TO say there is a single feminist agenda would be a gross oversimplification. Some feminists object so strongly to the way women are treated in traditional family systems that they would be offended by the suggestion that their goals would help families. Indeed, they would support an agenda that is antithetical to families as defined above. Other goals such as greater political representation of women may not have obvious direct benefits for families. There are, however, at least four goals shared by a majority of feminists that directly address the detrimental sexist patterns noted above.

First, increased value needs to be placed on personal characteristics viewed as primarily "female." Individualism and personal achievement, important in the corporate world, are value orientations blamed for undermining family. The "female" world is more concerned with relationships and nurturing. Without a shift in values toward getting along with and helping others in the family, the current decline in the commitment to family will most likely continue.

Second, in addition to placing more value

on female traits, increased recognition needs to be given to the value of homemaking and child care. Such activities do not count as part of the gross national product if labor is not remunerated, and wages in these jobs are low. It appears doubtful that market mechanisms will do much to change the situation, but cultural change remains a possibility. Standards for goodness are constantly being challenged and modified. If values do not change, capitalist consumerism will continue to pull mothers, like fathers, away from family responsibilities.

Third, greater investment in women's educational experience coupled with elimination of discrimination against women in hiring and pay would go a long way toward enhancing the experience of children living in families where mothers work outside the home. It is possible that further improvements in the economic status of women would lead to more divorce, but we must question the quality or desirability of marriages held together by economic necessity. Preservation of marriage should be achieved by improving quality rather than by promoting dependence.

Fourth, more general recognition of the equal worth of men and women underlies the above changes. Preference for male children, belief that men should hold the authority, and assumption that being male is better each play a role in undermining the quality of family relationships. While a more general sense of equal worth is necessary to achieve the above mentioned goals, the more specific changes noted above may also be necessary before a greater sense of equality can be achieved.

THE LDS CONTEXT

By relinquishing insistence on traditional gender roles, the Church could more productively contribute to the revitalization of the family.

THE LDS church has emphasized the family's importance both to society and to individual salvation. Because of the importance given to family life, we might expect LDS members to exhibit desirable family behavior. Yet, LDS families are not much different from the rest of the nation in many respects. Family size is larger, attitudes are more supportive of marriage, and there

are fewer instances of premarital sex, but other measures of stability and quality indicate Mormons are not much different from the rest of the nation. For example, comparisons between Mormons and other Americans show little difference in marital satisfaction, time spent with spouse or children, family violence, positive evaluation of family roles, or contact with kin.²⁸ Clearly, there is room for improvement.

Sexism certainly affects Mormon families. Several examples illustrate the problems created by sexism as noted above. Substantial investment of time and money in the Boy Scouts of America creates many opportunities for boys that most girls do not have. Mormon children are also placed at risk of poverty because of gender inequities in the work place. Mothers are advised to stay home with children while the husbands earn the income, yet single mothers are expected to seek employment. Obviously, the lack of employment experience while staying home reduces the potential income available to women. Mormons seem to vacillate on this issue of authority within the home: at times they are told that a marriage is a partnership and that parents should work together; other times they are taught that men are the heads of households and have the final authority for decision-making. In LDS culture, motherhood is given great lip-service, but the public role models are professional men and women who are recognized because of their contributions to the economy, the community, and the Church, rather than to the family. It is not uncommon to hear fathers with demanding church callings thank their wives for their support. This usually means she takes care of the children while he gives church service. Certainly, the Church functions much better when people serve willingly, but one wonders if the message being sent to men and women is that fatherhood is not that critical or at least not time-intensive, thus diminishing the quality of family life for children. Finally, girls are taught that they are equally valued daughters of God, but unequal treatment sends a different message.

Social forces changing the lives of women nationally also operate in Mormon families. LDS women are about as likely to work outside the home as the national average.²⁹ LDS women are less likely to work full-time than women nationally, and the negative relationship between full-time work and church attendance is stronger among the Mormons. If economic forces continue to encourage employment of LDS women, family and church involvement may suffer unless relationships change.

In sum, feminists stress some of the same values that Mormons believe are central to family well-being, including the importance of relationships and the equal worth of people regardless of gender. Because sexism poses a serious threat to the family, elements of feminism offer solutions to the contemporary crisis of family decline both in the Church and the nation. ☐

NOTES

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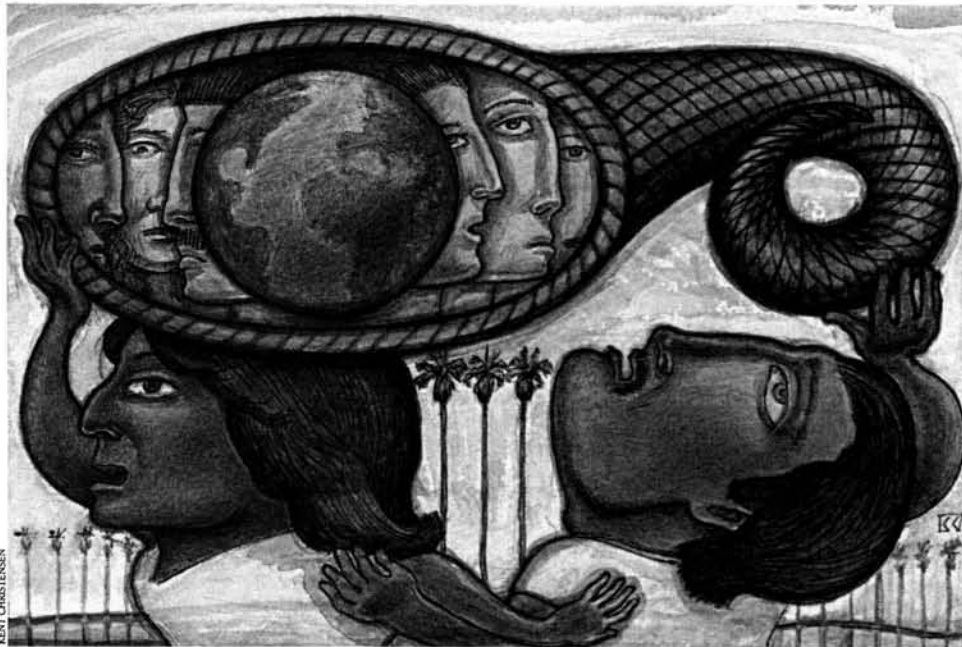
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HARLEQUIN

Scalded with cold,
the maple had given up
until today; a dozen clowns
in masks and crests have brought their circus:
blues and yellows flash from olive green.
These waxwing tumblers remind me of you
in their joy. (Still,
if they were starlings all a-
singing with spring,
I'd catch your name
in speckled feathers.)

—ROSEMARY A. KLEIN



I think the Father and Mother of this various, dangerous, particolored planet are too limited by even our most elegant theorizing. Who says God must be bleached, leached, and etherized?

DE COLORES

I NOW LIVE IN LOS ANGELES, WHERE MANY OF THE good people I meet don't speak my language. When I go to the stake center for meetings, I drive Pico Boulevard, past *carnicerias*, *botanicas*, storefront churches—the small chapels to which the faithful come, carrying shopping bags, to stand on tired feet, to sweat out the week nights evangelical-style, complete with electric guitar.

At the stake center, when the evening descends smoggy and mothy, the kids from the ward swarm under parking lot lights, spinning in games and laughing in Spanish. I am met at the door by women from the Korean ward. We smile, we say "Sister" in greeting, and the word takes on a new tenderness. We have peace here, tentative, hard won. The mufflers on passing cars pop loudly. Red lights flash.

Off this small lot, this city is a sometimes scary place, limned along neighborhood lines that have less to do with neighborliness than fear. I happen to live in a section of the city where the vectors intersect—on my stretch of Fairfax there are five Ethiopian restaurants and two kosher delis. The next block is entirely Latino. Two blocks east the signs are all

printed in Korean.

When I have a day off, I take my car deep into neighborhoods that aren't mine. I go where people don't look like me. I go where white people like me don't go, even during the daytime. I know that in some neighborhoods, people like me aren't welcome, that "tourism" may be taken as a sign of disrespect. But I go, with the greatest respect. Maybe I am willfully stupid, or maybe I am pathologically hopeful, but I go. I go because this is a big city and I refuse to believe that goodness is limited to neighborhoods full of people like me.

What I learn on my day off is that goodness grows everywhere, blooming between the cracks in the sidewalk, stubborn and green. You can see it, especially, in faces. People wait at public phones on street corners. Women nurse babies, waiting for buses. Brides wait in white organza outside a Mexican wedding chapel in East

Hollywood, while street vendors roll by, ringing bells, selling mangoes. Downtown, there is little else to do but wait, and the homeless sit on milk crates outside their cardboard houses, a bright Virgin de Guadalupe mural blooming under blood stains on the wall behind them. In Echo Park on Fridays, lines are especially long outside the Western Union, where people wait to wire money home to Jalisco. In Hancock Park on Saturday mornings, families walk to temple together, heads covered. On Sunday mornings in Pico-Union, the women lead little girls in stiff pink dresses around the piles of rubble in the street.

What I learn on my day off is what God looks like. I've always had a hard time relating to a removed, mysterious God; perhaps abstract thinking isn't all it's been cracked up to be. I think the Father and Mother of this various, dangerous, particolored planet are too limited by even our most elegant theorizing. Who says God must be bleached, leached, and etherized? Whom does this type of thinking serve? To me, the good news of the gospel is that God the Mother and God the Father were once like us and that someday we may be like them.

What I learn on my day off is that God may not look like me. Perhaps our Heavenly Father once worked as a day la-

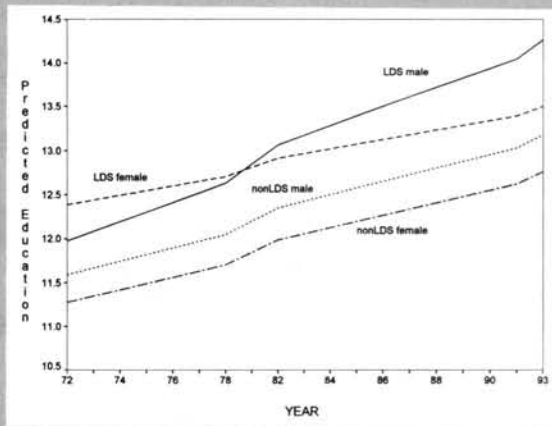
borer. Perhaps our Heavenly Mother jumped double dutch. I can see Her buying a strawberry *raspada* from the street vendors for her little girl. I can see Him under the hood of his Chevy. I can see Them sitting on the couch of their front porch in Boyle Heights, the grandchildren on bikes, the red sun crossed by power lines, steel bridges, dipping behind downtown warehouses, falling into the Pacific Ocean.

Such observations make Them even more holy and marvelous to me. I am made hopeful, confident that my Heavenly Parents are real people with real knowledge of the real joys and crises of the real world. I am also made humble, believing that each person I see is a someday God, regardless of how they appear to me. How beautiful this burnt, broken city is. How great that God blooms in a thousand neighborhoods. How great that the Mother and Father come in so many colors.

—JOANNA BROOKS

PECULIAR PEOPLE

TREND IN LDS EDUCATION



IN THE 1970s, LDS education was higher than the national average, and, unlike the country as a whole, LDS women were more educated than LDS men. Nationally, men and women have improved their education attainment at about the same pace. The pattern for Mormons is quite different. LDS men have improved at a rate above the national average, but the opposite is the case for LDS women. In short, LDS women have not kept up with the education progress of women nationally nor with LDS men.

Data are taken from the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. In most years since 1972, approximately 1,500 randomly selected adults are interviewed. Caution must be used in interpreting the data on Mormons because sample sizes are small (224 LDS females and 171 LDS males). In order to eliminate year-to-year fluctuation created by small samples, a regression line has been fit to show the linear trend over the 20-year period.



Throughout the ages in Europe religion has been attached to the calendar, each season addressing itself aptly to the mood and the needs of humankind. Easter for me is more than a religious festival; it is a rite of spring upon which my personal chemistry depends.

EASTER HAS BEEN CANCELLED THIS YEAR

HAVING GROWN UP IN A RURAL ENGLAND parish in the early 1950s, and having attended the established church as a child, the festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide, as well as Harvest Festival (Thanksgiving) and Remembrance Day Service are deeply imprinted on my memory of childhood.

Each had its own atmosphere, influenced by the seasonal climate, the religious event, and the particular traditions associated with it. At Harvest the church would be decorated with sheaves of corn and produce of every kind whilst we sang, "God our maker doth provide, For our wants to be supplied, All is safely gathered in, Ere the winter storms begin." I remember the October wind whistling and feeling a sense of warmth and snugness inside the draughty old church.

And so it was at Christmas. "The Holly and the Ivy, When they are both full grown, Of all the trees that are in the wood, The Holly bears the crown. Oh, The rising of the sun, the running of the deer, The playing of the merry organ, Sweet singing in the choir." We boy sopranists were chosen not so much for our ability to sing as that our souls would be nurtured. In our

cassocks and surplices we sang angelically, "Whilst shepherds washed their socks by night, All seated 'round the tub, Some bars of soap came tumbling down, And they began to scrub," relying on the older male choristers to drown us out with their correct renderings. We received old fashioned looks from the organist. Carols were sung by candlelight, echoing around the dark and aged pews in the nearly derelict twelfth-century building.

Easter particularly stands out in my memory. In England, days are dark for a large part of the year. April can sometimes (I hasten to add not always) arrive with Wordsworthian splendour. No flowers were allowed in the church during Lent, through Good Friday. Then on Easter Sunday morning, the aisles would be adorned with spring flowers: bluebells, daffodils, primroses. Their scent is still in my nostrils forty years on. A large congregation always filled the church on Easter Sunday. As a child I never minded the fact that most people would only come at Easter, Christmas, weddings, and funerals; at least they came *then*, and it made those occasions seem that much more immense. The church bells stopped their peal. The country parson—who put aside simple vestments and dressed in his finest for the day—would announce the first hymn. The congregation stood as one to acclaim, "Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia." The story of Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb is inseparably connected in my mind with the flowers and the fragrances of those Easter Sunday mornings.

At eighteen I became a Mormon. In the chapel at Gorleston on the sea, Brother Cole, a man in his seventies, saw to it that there were always flowers in the chapel, especially on Easter Sunday. He had been a member for decades but he always ensured that old traditions associated with festivals were maintained. He was a saintly man, and crossed swords with the district president only once when an elderly sister handmade a beautiful lace cloth for the sacrament table and it was rejected by the DP; it was contrary to the rules concerning the plainness of sacrament linen.

That was thirty years ago. This year we were advised by our bishop that there would be no service in our chapel this Easter Sunday. "We will all be going to the stake centre in the afternoon to watch the general conference live from Salt Lake City." Hardly anyone else gave it a second thought, but I feel I speak for a number of members in Britain, and perhaps throughout Europe, when I say how desperately sad I am that little accommodation is made by general authorities for traditional religious festivals. I watched the live satellite broadcast Sunday afternoon. Few references were made to Easter. No seasonal hymns were sung. Breaking the otherwise omnipresent darkness surrounding the podium there appeared on the TV to be some rather expensively produced artificial "all season flora."

Easter for me is more than a religious festival. It is a rite of spring upon which my personal chemistry depends. Eostre, the Anglo Saxon goddess of the dawn, gave her name to the original pagan festival that pre-dated the coming of Christianity to the British Isles. I suppose it has, in a sense, become once again a pagan festival in Britain's modern secular society. Few go to church, but it is nonetheless a four-day

public holiday. Whilst I do not expect to find support for pagan rites among Church leaders, I feel bound to note that I see no possibility for the successful propagation of Christianity if it is pursued in a vacuum, divorced from any cultural surroundings. The same sort of argument applies to Christmas, itself a successor to the pre-Christian celebration of the mid-winter solstice. Throughout the ages in Europe religion has been attached to the calendar, in each season addressing itself aptly to the mood and the needs of humankind.

Spring's arrival can rouse in any sensitive person the sort of passions expressed by the romantic poets. Linking a celebration of Christ's resurrection to the arrival of spring would seem to me to be utterly proper and indeed powerful. I experience a dilemma of choice between an increasingly secular mainstream Christianity, which nonetheless relates to the living world, and Mormon Christianity, which is high in moral principles but in which the formula seems to have become detached not only from traditional cultural forms but from poetic impulse and feeling.

As I have reflected upon what I have written I realise that I may have criticised the very Puritan foundations of the Great Republic. If so, I do apologise. It was not Puritanism that killed Easter this year, it was a more modern and insidious complaint; that is, the enexorable effort to be businesslike at all costs.

—CHRIS SEXTON



ON THE RECENT EXCOMMUNICATIONS

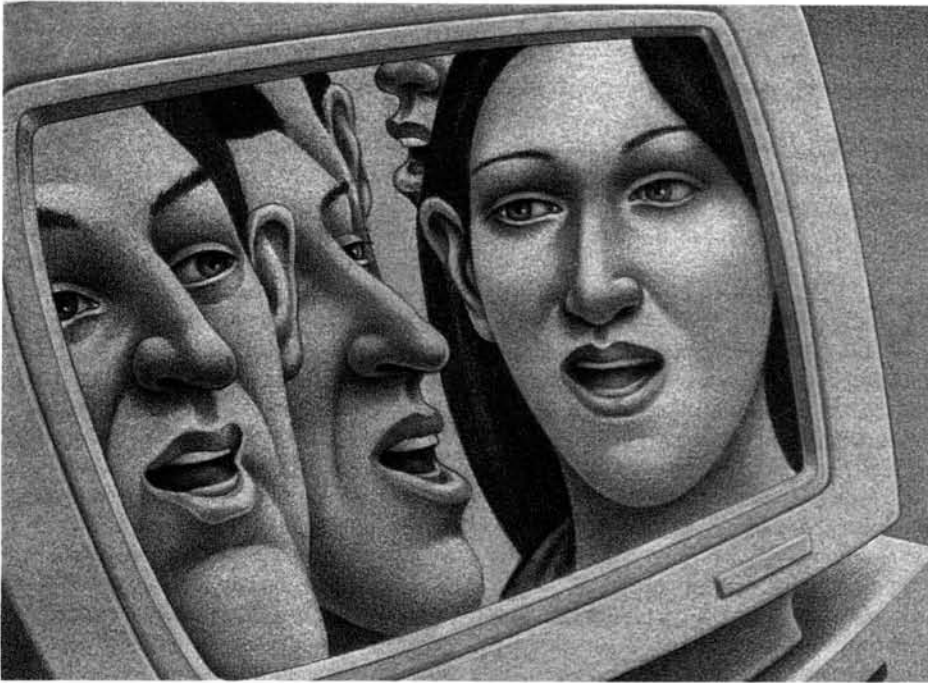
Last evening, walking by the chapel,
I saw a shrub, stripped
of its leaves, where
someone had stabbed a bird
onto a thorned branch—
whose cruelty, I will never know.
But pierced through the heart,
the sparrow shrivelled, small
as an open hand,
its whole body twisted
in unnatural death.

—THE GHOST OF ELIZA R. SNOW

THIS SIDE OF THE TRACTS

CYBERSAINTS: MORMON SETTLEMENTS ON THE ELECTRONIC FRONTIER

By Sheldon Greaves



If Mormon electronic discussion groups are encouraged and allowed to flourish, they could be an incredible contribution to LDS discourse, scholarship, and activism.

DURING OCTOBER general conference 1993, a grassroots coalition of concerned Church members presented one thousand white roses to the general authorities with a request that sanctions against feminists and intellectuals be stopped. During the course of the presentation, some Church officials reportedly asked the coalition representatives who had given them the funds for the roses and the accompanying newspaper ad. They wanted to know how so much money could be raised from so many people so quickly. The coal-

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tion representatives explained that the money came from individuals, many of whom had learned of the project through world-wide electronic mail networks. It was a potent example of the increasing unofficial Mormon presence in that ill-defined phenomenon sometimes known as cyberspace.

CYBERSPACE

It's another world with its own evolving rules where interested individuals are electronically linked around the globe in trivial and substantive conversations.

CYBERSPACE—both the word and concept—often appears in computer-related or “cyberpunk” science fiction popularized by William Gibson,

Bruce Sterling, Neal Stephenson, and others. Sensational news stories of illegal hackers, computer outlaws, and techno-anarchists describe cyberspace as the “place” where computer break-ins and similar antics occur. Another way to define cyberspace is to think of it as the place where a telephone conversation occurs. There is no literal space involved, naturally, but for people who spend time in electronic communications media, it's another world—one with its own rules.

One of the largest tracts of cyberspace is an international computer network called the Internet. The Internet comprises a worldwide network of thousands of smaller networks used by some 20 million people. These smaller networks include commercial, private, government, nonprofit, academic, and military systems. Because these networks are connected, an Internet user has access to an unbelievable amount of information.

The hardest part about using Internet is coping with its size and complexity. The few available indexes are incomplete or out of date. Thousands of public-access data bases and storage areas provide means for people to exchange software and files. Electronic mail (or “e-mail”) systems let people communicate almost instantaneously anywhere in the world using an e-mail address that always has a “@” in it, like the one in my biographical description on this paper. Electronic discussion groups and conferences have become commonplace.

An electronic discussion group works something like this: You join a group by sending e-mail to the computer that manages the list of subscribers (this computer is called a list server). Once your subscription has been processed, you can send or “post” messages through e-mail with your views on (presumably) the topic under discussion. You send your messages to the list server, which in turn forwards it to all the other subscribers. In this way all of the subscribers can follow the subject under discussion, and respond if they want to. Often several subjects are discussed at once, but you just read the postings that interest you. Some lists have digest features that send a summary of the week's discussion to people who don't want to read every posting.

Many discussion groups also have archives available by transferring (or “downloading”) them to your computer. These files might be logs from previous discussions, papers, rants, or general information files that answer Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Very often you don't even have to be a subscriber to download these files. Some groups or member networks also maintain File

Restriction and monitoring goes against a fundamental principle sacred to many in the electronic community: The free flow of information.

Transfer Protocol (FTP) sites with archives available to the public. Once you learn how to use FTP sites, these archives can be rich sources of information on every topic imaginable.

What do you find in these discussion groups? Anything. Everything. Read them long enough and you will inevitably find things that surprise, repel, inspire, gratify, disgust, tickle, and enlighten. There is poetry, humor, ranting and raving, news, gossip, scholarly discussion, political fireworks, lengthy treatises, and responses fired from the hip. In short, the postings are as varied as the Internet community itself.

Mormon-related discussion groups are not much different. The level of discourse ranges from incredibly inane to sublime. Like any other discussion, there is a lot of "noise," as well as some real gems that make you glad you signed up. For late-breaking, detailed news related to the Church, however, you can't beat it. Sometimes differences over doctrine or politics will reduce a few list members to long-winded, vindictive name-calling ("flaming" in Internet parlance). This was partly responsible for the recent demise of the MORM-ANT list. Flaming aside, however, you will find discussion of tithing, both concerning how much one pays and the recent national controversy about whether tithes can be impounded by courts to pay a bankrupt tithe-payer's creditors. People also use lists to locate old friends and relatives, exchange recipes, and share experiences both positive and negative. Other topics include Mother in Heaven, history, and women's issues. The ongoing tensions between the institutional Church and some in the intellectual community provide a lot of grist for extended discussions. There are also fairly open discussions of homosexuality and other sexuality issues. Some of the content of these discussions prompted the forced relocation of the MORMON-L list from its original home on the BYU list server. Recently, a long and quite articulate discussion has taken place on doing proxy baptisms for Jewish Holocaust victims. Both Jewish and LDS opinions have been aired. (See sidebar for extended recent excerpts from MORMON-L. A list of most LDS e-mail groups is at the end of this article.)

The LDS online community is still learning the finer points of discussion on the Internet. "Flame wars" are still to be found, but people seem more aware of them and the

more responsible users try to avoid flaming. It is very easy to be uncharitable toward someone you can't see. Moreover, your own "anonymity" and distance from an antagonist presents further temptation to fill postings with verbal bile. As the level of discussion continues to evolve, many hope that our LDS teachings will more strongly inform the style of what we say and how we say it. Persuasion, kindness, gentleness, and charity inevitably make for the best posts, even if you completely disagree with what is said.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

As more and more people obtain access to Internet and cyberspace in general, Mormon-related forums will multiply.

MORMON-related discussion lists provide a lively forum for discussing Mormonism in depth. For all their activity, however, these groups continue to develop, grow, and change. As the White Rose project demonstrated, these forums offer an effective communications network for grassroots activism. As more and more people obtain access to Internet and cyberspace in general, Mormon-related forums and groups will continue to multiply.

This growth will probably manifest itself in various ways, some of which are visible in other parts of the Internet. For example, some religious organizations maintain unofficial and official sites where users can access Sunday School lesson materials. The Internet provides a remarkably easy place to publish your views, either in a quick diatribe that is easily forgotten, or in a more permanent file stored in a discussion group archive or FTP site. Freedom of the press used to belong to those who owned one, and for the price of a laser printer, any computer user could "publish." Now the cost has plunged to the price of a modem and a telephone line, and distribution barriers are virtually gone. The potential for sharing and publishing information is astonishing. Updates can be sent out at a moment's notice. The delays associated with traditional publishing vanish. More disturbing to some, perhaps, is that correlation, editorial boards, or other forms of content control are impossible to enforce. People will publish and say what they want, which can be positive or negative depending on your point of view. These scenarios reflect only the smallest fraction of the Internet's potential for the LDS

online community.

Recent network traffic includes rumors and allegations that the Church is paying more attention to LDS-related electronic discussion groups. Reportedly, groups are monitored in much the same way as publications like *Dialogue* and *SUNSTONE*, and postings are treated as "publications" by Church officials who monitor "alternate" authors. If these reports are true, expressing your honest opinion on MORMON-L might buy you your very own file with the Strengthening the Church Members Committee. Another concern is that Church officials could easily obtain the subscriber lists for electronic discussion groups, since many groups on the Internet maintain lists. The primary concern, of course, is what one might do with such a list. If subscribers faced censure simply for subscribing to an unauthorized symposium, albeit an electronic one, this would cause considerable concern. On the other hand, network traffic can also help Church officials keep a finger on the pulse of a growing segment of Mormonism. People who have grown used to the free-wheeling, no-holds-barred, largely unrestricted discussions that dominate the Internet find these rumors unsettling. Restriction and monitoring goes against a fundamental principle sacred to many in the electronic community: The free flow of information.

An additional cause for concern is the possibility of what might be called cybernetic sabotage directed at any one list or a segment of the LDS online community. It is fairly easy to forge e-mail messages in such a way that they are almost untraceable to their true source. Using this kind of falsified information, a person or group of persons could place messages on the network claiming to come from a particular person, but which in fact do not. The possibilities for disinformation, "dirty tricks," and character assassination are very real. So far LDS-related discussion groups and forums seem to have been spared this kind of abuse, but unfortunately it may be only a matter of time. Part of the problem lies in the fact that the Internet was built without built-in security safeguards; in its infancy the Internet was used by a handful of researchers who shared a sense of trust and responsibility. Today that is not the case. Verification and encryption technologies exist to make this less of a problem; until they become widely available,

however, the best defense is to maintain a sense of trust within our electronic communities, even with people who completely disagree with you.

Despite these drawbacks, the prospect of more and more conferences discussing Mormonism is an exciting one. If encouraged and allowed to flourish, they could be an incredible boon to LDS discourse, scholarship, and activism. They fill an important need among people who use the networks to find other Mormons who share their interests and concerns. As the number and variety of participants increase, its usefulness as a tool for understanding Mormonism will likewise increase.

HOW TO GET STARTED

The simplest way to get limited access is to sign up with a major online service. Here is a list of current Mormon groups.

FIRST you need a computer, a modem, and telecommunications software. Then you need to sign up with a major online service that offers e-mail access to the Internet. America Online, Compuserve, Genie, and Prodigy all offer at least e-mail access to the Internet. If different subscription options are available, make sure the option you pick includes e-mail access to the Internet. Not all of these services offer other Internet features. For most of the dis-

cussion groups listed below, e-mail will suffice. Once you get used to the e-mail system offered by your service, send e-mail to the group list server that interests you as described below. Some discussion groups are private, and you need to personally contact whoever runs the list if you want to join. Others are by invitation only.

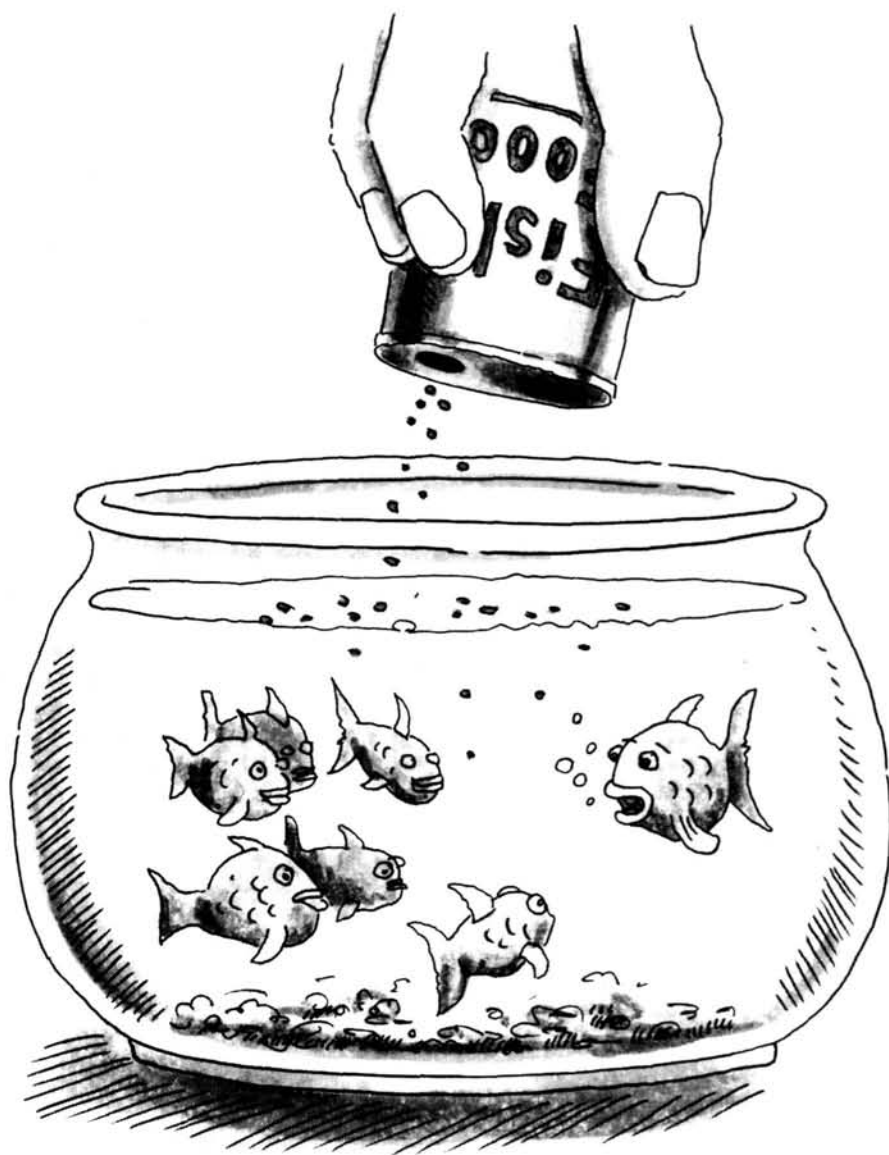
A word of warning, however: the Internet is not for the timid and can be tough on the uninitiated. You might encounter less frustration if you do some background research first. Some useful guides to the Internet are listed at the end of this article, and more appear all the time. You will doubtless have some stumbles getting used to it, but be persistent. The Internet may be techno-nerd heaven, but it also rewards tenacious curiosity. Below is a description of some of the major electronic discussion groups on LDS subjects.

- LDS-Net, the original Mormon Internet group, is a fairly active list averaging about twenty messages a day. This list is run by hand and does not use a list server. The turn-around time for people posting messages or joining the list is about one day. If you want to join, send e-mail expressing your interest to lds-net-request@andrew.cmu.edu. Once you join the list you can post submissions to lds-net@andrew.cmu.edu.

- MORMON-L, the best known active discussion group, averages about fifty messages a day. Until recently it was run by two BYU history professors, Michael Allen and David Wright (not the Brandeis professor David Wright who was recently excommunicated). To join, send a message with no subject heading to the list server, majordomo@teleport.com. The body of the message must consist of the single line:

subscribe mormon-l. MORMON-L also has an extensive archive of previous discussions and other materials available through the list server.

- SAMU-L (Studies in Antiquities and Mormonism [Uncontentious]), a spiritual descendant of the now defunct, F.A.R.M.S.-flavored MORM-ANT. SAMU-L is a new list that describes itself as "a moderated forum for discussion of Mormonism and the past. Its focus is on the Book of Mormon in all its many facets. SAMU-L was created to assist individuals in expanding their understanding of the internal record of the Book of Mormon and the circumstances of its nineteenth-century manifestation, and of external studies, such as archaeology, that shed light on the phenomena. Multi-disciplinary approaches are particularly encouraged." While this list as a whole assumes historicity of the Book of



"God's food comes equally to the just and the unjust."

Excerpts from recent MORMON-L conversations:

Date: Mon, 21 Feb 1994 08:28:25 -0500 (EST)
 From: Gordon Banks <geb@dsl.pitt.edu>
 To: mormon-l@byu.edu
 Cc: Multiple recipients of list <mormon-l@byu.edu>
 Subject Re: moral vs. legal rights
 Message-ID:<Pine.3.89.9402210801.A10991-0100000@cadre.dsl.pitt.edu>

The statement about gay marriage may have been provoked by a Feb 8 vote in the European Parliament recommending that all countries in the community allow gays to marry and adopt children. Nothing about the LDS statement made the Pittsburgh papers, but today there was an article about the pope condemning this ruling.

 From: Clark Goble (dgoble@fox.nstn.ns.ca (Clark Goble))
 Subject: Just another gay

The First Presidency's Letter will do much more to harm families and pull them apart than it ever will to preserve them. Gay and lesbian marriage is not a threat to the family. It is a celebration of it. Homosexuals do not want to destroy the family. They want to take their rightful place as part of it.

 From: Dwight Cook (no address given)
 Subject: Just another gay

But such things must be done on the Lord's terms. What you said in your letter was that you tried to have a family and were physically unable to do so. I wish you and all other homosexuals to take your rightful place as a part of a family also. I simply admit that I don't know how to enable someone to do that.

 From: Christopher Ogden <OGDEN@caedm.et.byu.edu>
 Subject: sex after death

I agree that we must be able to copulate after we die. If this weren't so, then Heavenly Father couldn't have as many spirit children as he does. He couldn't have had all of us as children during his experience in a mortal probation. I am not sure, however, that we can not feel sex, because after resurrection we will have bodies that are more perceptive and have heightened senses.

Considering that Jesus's resurrection apparently showed that gender is indeed among the qualities possessed by resurrected bodies, it seems unreasonable to me to suggest that there should be gender without sex.

 From: Spencer Tasker <stasker@laurel.ocs.mq.edu.au>
 Subject: sex after death
 Isn't this called necrophilia?

 From: Gordon Banks <geb@dsl.pitt>
 Subject: Re: Profanity in the Theatre
 > AP News SALT LAKE CITY (AP) -- A Mormon Church official has protested profanity in a production at the University of Utah's Pioneer Memorial Theatre and has threatened to withdraw an annual church grant.

What was it, a play about J. Golden Kimball?

The eclectic nature of e-mail is obvious as these cyberspace junkies banter about issues ranging from gays and the Church to sex after death to profanity at the Pioneer Memorial Theatre.

Mormon, other viewpoints are apparently accepted as long as no hostility is included. For more information, send e-mail to PACAL@bingymb.cc.binghamton.edu.

- SAINTS-BEST is a recently formed list, but not a discussion group per se. It is better described as "an LDS-related electronic magazine." The editors are David Anderson, Lynn Matthews Anderson, and a few volunteers who comb the postings of other online discussion groups and post what they consider to be the best from each. The volume is quite low—from one to ten messages a day at the most—so it is an excellent alternative for people with limited time who want to stay informed. You cannot post messages to this service, and a digest option is not available. To subscribe, send an e-mail consisting of SUBSCRIBE SAINTS-BEST YOUR NAME, substituting your first and last name for YOUR NAME, to listserv@mainstream.com.

- UNCOMMON-SAINTS deals with doctrinal subjects such as Adam-God, blood atonement, calling and election, etc. Subscriptions are handled through a list server. Send a message to listserv@mainstream.com containing the line: subscribe uncommon-saints Eliza Snow. Substitute your real name (not your e-mail address) for Eliza's. Archival materials are available from the list server.

- ZION, another recent addition to the various LDS discussion groups, is a list for "believing Latter-day Saints and friends." The discourse of this list is of a more conservative bent. You can subscribe to ZION by sending e-mail to: listserv@bolis.sf-bay.org. Leave the subject line blank, and put SUBSCRIBE ZION as the body of the letter. Do not include your name in the subscription line.

- The Cumorah eJournal is a fairly new addition to the online offerings. It is a peer-reviewed, quarterly electronic journal for discussion of a wide variety of topics related to Mormonism. Authors, reviewers, editors, and other volunteers are being solicited. For more information, send e-mail to trey@thelab.biology.rochester.edu.

- JOSEPH (Just Ordinary Saints Endeavoring to Promote Harmony) is another new list that attempts to take a moderate tone. Topics avoid fringe elements on both the Left and the Right. Gospel-related topics are emphasized. "This is not a forum for political or social issues." For information, send e-mail to joseph-req@edu-ssu-cc.cc.ssu.edu.

- MORONI is an unusual addition to the latest bevy of new lists. According to the posting announcing it, "MORONI is an e-mail list for Mormons and their friends to discuss political, conspiratorial, religious issues, etc."

The tenor of this list appears to be very political, controversial, religious, and patriotic. Tone and subjects on the list are determined by a list committee. To subscribe, send a message consisting of the line subscribe moroni to majordomo@zilker.net.

- If you have access to FidoNet, try the MORMON forum for general discussions about Mormonism. The moderator is Malin Jacobs: (malin.jacobs@f438.n104.z1.fidonet.org) 1:104/438.0 -or- 1:104/424.0. The FidoNet MORMON conference is also carried on LDSNET, which also includes LDS Research and LDS Private.

- LDSNET (different than LDS-Net) is part of ECUNET that carries networks for many different religions. For more information contact Larry Allen of BizLink Corp., 1186 Pleasant Ridge Road, Colfax, NC 27235.

- MormoNet is another small FidoNet network running on a network between Bountiful and Logan, Utah. The best way to subscribe is to get an account directly on Dan Bachman's Bulletin Board System (BBS) Zion's Cache. One advantage of a privately-run BBS is that you don't need access to Internet to use it. You can access it directly through the phone lines, although you will have to pay any applicable long-distance charges. Dial (801) 752-5059 with your modem to access this BBS. Other LDS-related forums on MormoNet network include FireSide Chat and GospelStudies (Private).

COMMERCIAL NETWORKS

Many non-Mormon networks have Mormon-related discussion groups on them.

SEVERAL major non-Mormon online services provide active discussion areas for LDS-related topics. Genie has both public and private groups. Contact hays@Genie.geis.com who leads the LDS Categories in Religion Roundtable. Compuserve also offers a Mormon discussion area. Use the command GO RELIGION, section 13. This discussion area is moderated by Keith Irwin (75415.1756@compuserve.com). This is a very active discussion area, averaging fifty to one hundred messages per day. America Online (keyword RELIGION) and Prodigy also have Mormon-related forums and software archives with files specific to Mormonism and of general religious interest. On Prodigy, jump to Religion, and pick Latter-Day Saints from the list.

America Online is also the home of Orson Scott Card's e-ward; however, Card declined to provide any further information for this article. Interested parties should probably contact him directly at orsoncard@aol.com.

If you are interested in general religion, the Internet maintains some remarkable resources. Electronic versions of scripture available for downloading include the LDS standard works, the Koran, the Bible, and other documents. You can also get your own copy of Lynn Matthews Anderson's *Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon*, which you may then read online or print out if you wish. Another valuable resource is Michael Stranglove's monumental "Mystic's Guide to the Internet." This voluminous file is available from a number of FTP sites. It describes religion-related FTP sites, discussion groups, and many other resources especially for Internet users

interested in religious subjects. While not complete, it is still extremely useful. ☐

BOOKS FOR BEGINNING INTERNET USERS

Kehoe, Brendan P. *Zen and the Art of the Internet: A Beginner's Guide*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992. \$22.00. One of the most concise guides to the Internet, this text is also available from various ftp sites and commercial online services.

Krol, Ed. *The Whole Internet User's Guide & Catalog*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates, Inc., 1992. \$24.95. This work is both a guide to using the Internet and a catalogue of services and resources. It's primarily aimed at graduate students who want to use the Internet for doing research.

LaQuey, Tracy, and Jeanne C. Ryer. *The Internet Companion: A Beginner's Guide to Global Networking*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992. \$10.95. One of the least expensive introductory guides.

Online Access is a magazine that deals almost exclusively with online services and products. It's aimed at new or intermediate users. Check your larger bookstores or computer dealers.



THE BODIES OF TREES

Once in a forest,
straight road cutting
to a blue stripe of sky,
I drove until the close trunks
hummed for me to stop,
stare through the dark
slats between trees
where layers of fir
told the light
don't touch,
and the forest floor
kept silent—
hair-root to branch, needle
to sky, communion tapered at
both ends.

I tried to enter
their cones of knowledge—
that yearning from the softness of bones
to turn everything
to marrow
My feet sprouting moss,
I walked the road
toward the vanishing—
trees marching firmly
forever away—
and came almost to touch
the dark light we long for
and fear to know.

—DIXIE PARTRIDGE

*If we come fasting, humble, fragile, peaceful, God can take away
the leanness in our souls. He can help us heal the waste places,
the mines and test caves and missile silos where we have
violated our Mother earth. This can lead to the only covenant
God will receive in this lean and desert place.*

WHAT COVENANT WILL GOD RECEIVE IN THE DESERT?

By Eugene England

WHAT COVENANT WILL GOD RECEIVE IN THE desert? Only a covenant of peace, I believe, a covenant of peace with the land. A covenant is not a bargain, a contract as we have sometimes thought, but a gift of grace from God, which we can accept graciously or refuse. We can, in turn, give gifts to God and his children in righteousness, in peace with each other, in respect for the land.

God gave such a covenant to ancient Israel in the desert, and Isaiah sang, "The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." (Isa. 35:1.) God gave the same covenant to modern Israel, and modern prophets quoted Isaiah: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa. 40:3.) "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he shall make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord." (Isa. 51:3.)

But in this place, at the Nevada test site, the desert has not blossomed with roses, but with mushrooms—huge blooms of death, germinated in dark caves underground. Our chosen nation has departed from the covenant, just as ancient Israel did. The Hebrew psalmist mourned concerning his people, "They soon forgot his works; they waited not for [the Lord's] counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." (Ps. 106:13–15.) We have tempted God in the desert, developing our weapons at Los Alamos and Jackass Flat, and God has given us our request: we have become the mightiest, the *only* superpower—and yet we have missiles still poised to destroy the world and are anxious to test more. Oh, how the mighty have fallen; God has sent leanness into our souls.

EUGENE ENGLAND'S latest book is The Quality of Mercy. This address was given at the first Mormon Peace Gathering at St. James Catholic Church in Las Vegas, Nevada, 27 March 1993.

How did it happen, and what part have we played—can we play—as Mormons?

ACCOMMODATING THE WORLD'S VIOLENCE
*After a century of retrenchment, the Church is now capable
of renouncing violence and taking the gospel of peace
to all the world.*

ON 24 April 1898, Apostle Brigham Young Jr. gave the last in a series of speeches he made against Mormon involvement in the impending Spanish-American War. Consistent with the attitude of his father during the Civil War and Church leaders generally to that point in Mormon history, he urged the Saints to remain aloof from the nation's violence: "If I knew of any young men who wanted to go to this war," he said, "I would call them on a mission to preach the gospel of peace." The next day, Congress declared war, and Elder Young's half-brother, Willard Young, and his nephew, Richard W. Young, both West Point graduates, called on the First Presidency. They objected to Elder Young's remarks of the day before and said they had volunteered for service in the war and intended to recruit other volunteers in Utah.

In response, President Wilford Woodruff departed from the views of his predecessors and announced that "Utah should stand by the government in the present crisis and that our young men should be ready to serve their country when called upon." Of this crucial juncture in Mormon history, President Woodruff's biographer Thomas G. Alexander writes: "Moving in a direction evident at least since the 1887 Constitutional Convention but nevertheless crossing an immense intellectual Rubicon, Woodruff subordinated the ideal of the kingdom of God to the ideal of loyalty to the United States. In order to prove Latter-day Saint patriotism, he proposed to offer the ultimate sacrifice—the blood of Mormon youth—to the nation."¹

During most of the nineteenth century the Church was in a

mode of what historian Jan Shipps has called "radical restoration," with social, political, and moral institutions and attitudes fundamentally at odds with the world, including America. The challenge (and the success) of the Mormon kingdom generated opposition that by 1890 had nearly destroyed the Church. The Church then entered a period of conservative accommodation and preservation, including the end of polygamy and of theocratic politics and economics. This stage of retrenchment was apparently necessary, not only for survival, but to enable us to build in the United States a strong base for taking the gospel to all the world in preparation for Christ's coming. But one of the costs was an accommodation to this world's violence, especially that of a particular nation, the United States.

Now, one hundred years later, we are indeed able to take the gospel to virtually all the world. On 6 March 1993, the Church announced the formation of four new missions in Eastern Europe, bringing to a total of twelve those in the former Soviet-controlled Eastern Bloc. I remember praying in the fifties—and sixties and seventies and eighties, as our leaders constantly exhorted us to—that God would touch the hearts of the leaders of nations that they might open their doors to the gospel. Like many other Mormons, I prayed without much faith, mainly in hope for something far in the future.

But God did touch hearts and open nations. He was aided by the persistent but peaceful efforts of Solidarity in Poland. He was aided by the faith of those hundreds of thousands of non-violent Christians who, carrying candles instead of guns, marched out of their churches into the streets of East Germany and brought down the government. He was aided by the courage of those Russians who stood before the tanks in Moscow, some to be crushed to death before the coup failed and Communism dissolved. It is time, I believe, for us to reaffirm our faith in the God who stands for peace and healing, to make a new covenant here in the desert—not for the Church but for ourselves personally. It is time for each of us to take to heart the symbolism—and literal miracle—in the young pair of elders preaching the gospel of peace together last year in Northern England, one the first missionaries called from Russia, a former soldier of the Soviet Union, the other a former

cadet at West Point, where he was being trained to fight his enemies, the Soviets. Like those two young men, each of us can become a witness for the covenant of peace, as the prophet Alma taught and as we promise to do at baptism—"at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death." (Mosiah 18:9.)

BLIND OBEDIENCE

Mormon loyalty to the United States has required the high price of thousands of nuclear-related deaths.



Unquestioning Mormon superpatriotism has been perhaps the most dangerous result of our accommodation to American values. It has led many Mormons to acquiesce to nuclear testing and even to accept the government's cruel refusal of responsibility when the truth came out.

I GREW up as a Mormon patriot in the middle of the twentieth century, our century of accommodation to the United States. I believed the Second World War was righteous, a crusade against evil, and would have fought in it had I been older. I barely missed the Korean War, but enlisted in ROTC and became an Air Force weather officer. I served in a tactical fighter-bomber squadron at George Air Force Base, on the Mojave desert in California just south of the Nevada test site. The squadron was alerted twice for Vietnam in the early sixties, but didn't go into combat until after I had left the service for graduate work at Stanford. In the library there, I read international press sources that began to counter the belief I had in American

righteousness, in America's right to power to have its own way in small nations far away.

Then, in 1964, quite suddenly I experienced a dramatic paradigm shift, a sea-change in my inner being. The infamous Tonkin Gulf Incident, in which it was claimed that North Vietnamese gunboats attacked an American ship, was used by President Lyndon Johnson as an excuse to bomb Hanoi and as the basis for getting Congressional approval for essentially unlimited powers to escalate the war. The international press sources I read provided convincing evidence that this "incident" was a fabrication by the U.S. government. The lie was later revealed to most other Americans as well; but in the meantime we embarked on a war that killed 58,000 of our own young men and perhaps three million Vietnamese and left a legacy of bitterness and guilt that still brings leanness to our souls.

I had grown up believing that ours is a chosen land, that

our Constitution was inspired, and that our presidents did not lie. When I became convinced that president Johnson had lied, with dire results that literally endangered the life and liberty of myself and other Americans, I crossed a line in my soul. I knew that I could no longer give unquestioning support to my country's wars, because those wars could be evil, could endanger my own eternal salvation as well as my life and the lives of others.

For some of us, the "Downwinders," the costs of our government's lies had already begun by 1964. Above-ground tests were made from 1951 to 1962; many of us driving along U.S. Highway 91 from Salt Lake to Los Angeles or living in Nevada and Utah saw the early dawn flashes. Sheep died mysteriously. The Atomic Energy Commission assured us there was no danger, but thousands of us, mainly Mormons, already had cancer growing in our bodies. Terry Tempest Williams writes in her essay "The Clan of One-Breasted Women": "The fear and inability to question authority that ultimately killed rural communities in Utah during atmospheric testing of atomic weapons is the same fear I saw in my mother's body [as she died of cancer]. Sheep. Dead sheep. The evidence is buried. . . . Tolerating blind obedience in the name of patriotism or religion ultimately takes our lives."²

It is now well-documented that our government, caught up in the hysterical anti-communism of the late 1940s and 1950s, let the goal of "national security" justify a range of evil means: lying about the amount and dangers of the radioactivity the AEC knew about; illegally interfering with independent efforts to test those dangers and silencing or punishing government employees who "blew the whistle"; intentionally refusing to warn potential victims or to provide medical research and care that they knew would alleviate sickness and death. Mormons—including scientists, doctors, and leaders in the government, and the private sector—have collaborated in this process, mainly through silence, in the face of mounting evidence, in a desire to be supportive of the "divinely directed" country.

Such unquestioning Mormon superpatriotism has been perhaps the most dangerous result of our accommodation to American values. It led most Mormons to acquiesce in the testing and even to accept the government's cruel refusal of responsibility when the truth came out. Not only have we paid, in Alexander's words, with "the blood of Mormon youth"—thousands of whom have died in American wars in the past 100 years—but we have paid with thousands of lives of women, men, children and elderly people who have died and will go on dying from cancer. We are paying a price in growing disillusionment and anguish, as individual Mormon Downwinders learn the truth about the betrayal by their government and culture.

Claudia Peterson, a devout Mormon housewife in St. George, lost a daughter to leukemia and a sister and her father-in-law to cancer and was moved by her great pain and loss to rebel against acquiescence and silence. She pored through documents forced out of secrecy by "Freedom of Information" laws and found convincing evidence that the government

chose the Nevada test site location, fully aware of the lethal effects of the fallout, so it could plan its test shots when the wind would take that fallout northeast over Utah. The perfectly clear and cynical reason: government officials knew Mormons to be both patriotic and submissive to authority and assumed they would not complain. They were right. But Claudia Peterson has been transformed by her loss and sense of betrayal into an activist against nuclear testing, joining with increasing numbers of Downwinders from both the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. She tells her story, along with dozens of other Utah and Nevada victims, in *American Ground Zero*, a collection of accounts and photographs with a searing and informative introduction.³

PROPHETIC CALLS

In the last twenty years, Church leaders have repeatedly called us to forsake the idolatry of war, a call the U.S. continues to ignore.

OCCASIONAL blows against the idolatry of putting loyalty before truth, the United States before God, began to be struck by our Mormon prophets during this period. In the 1960s, those who were opposed on moral grounds to fighting in Vietnam received unexpected support that allowed many to win Conscientious Objector status from previously hostile draft boards when the Church issued a statement allowing conscientious objection to violence as an acceptable Mormon position. But the greatest blow to our accommodation to American ways, a rejection both of its materialism and of its violence and the foundation of a new covenant, was delivered by President Spencer W. Kimball in his stunning prophetic sermon published in June 1976:

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus . . . perverting the Savior's teaching: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:44-45.) . . . What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative; to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the Gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.⁴

Five years later, in May 1981, after careful study of the proposed basing of the MX missile in a vast underground system in Utah and Nevada, the First Presidency issued a statement of opposition, recognizing that accommodation to American vio-

lence could go too far, could defeat our very purpose in coming into the desert to build God's kingdom:

Our fathers came to this western area to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth. It is ironic, and a denial of the very essence of that gospel, that in this same general area there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.⁵

It is now time to consider not only how the proposed MX missile system, though Mormon opposition helped stop it, would have perverted the gospel of peace we came to the desert to sustain; we must see as well that the "mammoth weapons system" that our country has built and still maintains, sustained in part by the testing here in Nevada, also constitutes a "denial of the very essence of the gospel" and that Mormon Christians should oppose it as well.

The First Presidency ended their statement of opposition to the MX bases by saying,

With the most serious concern over the pressing moral question of

possible nuclear conflict, we plead with our national leaders to marshal the genius of the nation to find viable alternatives which will secure at an earlier date and with fewer hazards the protection from possible enemy aggression, which is our common concern.

Six months later, in their 1981 Christmas message, the First Presidency became very specific about where our national leaders should look for such alternatives:

To all who seek a resolution to conflict, be it a misunderstanding between individuals or an international difficulty among nations, we commend the counsel of the Prince of Peace, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:44-45.) This principle of loving one another as Jesus Christ loves us will bring peace to the individual, to the home and beyond, even to the nations and to the world.⁶

However, the new United States president that year was Ronald Reagan, and despite the huge percentage of Mormon

votes he garnered and his often expressed appreciation of Mormon values and leaders, he did not follow the First Presidency's counsel about choosing active love and trust of enemies as a viable alternative to mammoth weapons systems. He proceeded to greatly increase our nuclear arsenal and to push development of a Strategic Defense Initiative, both of which were seen by the Soviets as preparation for a first strike, provoking huge spending on their own nuclear arsenal.

Although some credit Reagan's buildup with pushing the

Soviets beyond their economic limits and thus to the collapse of communism in the late eighties, the verdict is far from in, either on what actually brought that collapse or on the long-term effects of the economic chaos and suffering now going on in Eastern Europe, and the effects on our own economy of the \$4 trillion debt the U.S. built up in that arms race. We now see increasing evidence, from former Soviets themselves, of how right the First Presidency was that other methods could have brought peace "at an earlier date and with fewer hazards."

What is becoming clear is how unnecessary the race was and what the costs to both nations have already

been, not just in economic waste but in pollution and in leanness to our souls. In February 1993, former top officials of the United States and the Soviet Union met and discussed a 1983 CIA assessment and a KGB report of the same time and recognized that both had said about the same thing—that the other country was intent on "developing the capability to fight and survive a nuclear war." The Soviets said they had believed Reagan was pursuing an enormous military buildup that "indicated the United States was serious about overwhelming the Soviet Union." The "evil empire" rhetoric was taken seriously in Moscow and they responded in kind.⁷

Three articles in the March 1993 *National Geographic* document some of the ecological and human costs of this arms race, costs for which we bear at least equal responsibility: "Every major river in Russia is polluted, one-fourth of the drinking water is unsafe, and 35 million people live in cities where the air is dangerous to breathe. . . . [As a result] only a quarter of [the children] are in good health . . . [and] life expectancy has fallen in recent years."⁸ Near the huge steel mills, from Poland to Siberia, people live in filth like animals; much of the former empire has been reduced to the level of a hunting



The new ethical standards made by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and in revelation given to modern prophets imply that planning and organizing to kill millions of innocent citizens with nuclear missiles may be the same as actually doing it.

and gathering society.

Of course, that other side of the Cold War produced its Downwinders, too. At the Semipalatinsk test site in north-eastern Kazakhstan, 500 nuclear devices were detonated between 1949 and 1989, bringing a plague of cancer and birth defects. Across from a photograph of a thirteen-year-old boy who has been blind and disfigured from birth, assistant editor Mike Edwards has written: "Close enough to see the mushroom clouds of early above-ground explosions and to suffer the consequences of both those and lethal ventings from later underground tests, thousands have paid a grisly price in the Cold War."⁹ Carole Gallagher reports that from the U.S. and Soviet and other tests there is now circulating throughout the earth's atmosphere and surface waters over twenty-five tons of plutonium, which will remain cancer-inducing and poisonous to life for 250,000 years.

IMITATIVE VIOLENCE

*Christ taught that we should not do anything
"like unto" immoral acts of lust and murder.*

BUT there have been even more serious costs of our complicity, as Americans, in the madness of Mutual Assured Destruction. Jesus Christ clearly warned us about the negative results of imitative violence to our bodies, but also to our *souls*, that would come from the false idea that force can defeat force. In the extremity of his own danger, Jesus rejected Peter's attempt to defend him with the sword, instead healing his enemy's ear and then stating a practical reason for the non-violent ethic: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. 26:52, emphasis added.) Christ calls his disciples to rise above this natural law. In the Sermon on the Mount, he simply makes a pure ethical *demand*: "Resist not evil." (Matt. 5:39.) His apostle, Paul, adds a positive pragmatic purpose to the ethic: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12:21.)

Christ calls us to love our enemies and overcome them with good—by taking the gospel to them, as President Kimball taught, not only with missionaries, but with patient, intelligent diplomacy, preventive conflict resolution, and Christian service. Christ also teaches the *moral* costs of our violent inclinations, why our souls are in danger if we ignore his demand. In Matthew 5:27–28 (NRSV), he defines what might be called "thought sin": "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This could well be paraphrased, "You have heard it was said, 'You shall not commit murder'; but I say to you that everyone who looks on a person to murder him has already committed murder in his heart." Through Joseph Smith, Christ commanded us, "Thou shalt not . . . kill, nor do anything like unto it." (D&C 59:6.)

Though absolute non-violence may not be clearly required by these words from Christ, I believe opposition to nuclear deterrence is required. Christ's new ethical standards in the Sermon on the Mount and in revelation given to modern

prophets imply that planning and organizing to kill millions of innocent citizens with nuclear missiles may be the same as actually doing it. It may be the ultimate dehumanization, targeting for destruction whole cities of people whom we will not face, and we who support such targeting with our taxes and our silence may be guilty of "thought sin" and of something "like unto" murder.

From 1959 to 1961 I was stationed as a weather officer at George AFB, about 150 miles southwest of the Nevada test site. Some of my forecasts may have been used to assess favorable weather and wind conditions so that fallout from tests would go northeast to Utah. A pilot in my fighter-bomber squadron, a member of my elders quorum, regularly went on rotation to Turkey, where he was kept in constant readiness to carry nuclear bombs to targets in Russia. He later told me how he had been prepared to drop a nuclear bomb on a city that would have wiped it out entirely; then he saw a *National Geographic* photo-essay on that city and for the first time saw the faces of the ordinary people—couples and old people and children—he had been prepared to kill. The guilt he felt stayed with him until he left the service.

What is at stake—the violence to ourselves—is captured for me in the 1988 HBO movie *Amazing Grace and Chuck*, starring Gregory Peck and Jamie Leigh Curtis. The main story is a moving, though somewhat sentimental and unrealistic, account of a star little league pitcher in a small town in Montana who decides the nuclear arms race is so wrong that he demonstrates his opposition by refusing to play baseball. Chuck's obscure act, reported in a local newspaper and picked up nationally, comes to the attention of a player for the Boston Celtics named Amazing Grace, who with some friends joins Chuck in the protest. They are able to spread the boycott to athletes world-wide, provoking intensified arms reduction efforts from both U.S. and Soviet leaders—which in turn leads to the assassination of Amazing Grace by U.S. arms merchants.

In response, Chuck announces he will stop speaking until the nuclear weapons are gone, and children all over the world gradually become silent, joining Chuck in what becomes a successful effort to stop the nuclear arms race—apparently because even government leaders have grandchildren. It's not clear whether the message is that children, or silence—or perhaps sports—has more power than nuclear arms and those who profit from them.

But for me the most powerful scene occurs early in the film, when Chuck's father, an Air Force officer at the nearby nuclear missile site in Montana, takes a visiting Congressman on a tour down into one of the launch rooms—and takes Chuck along. Chuck notices that the two officers at the control board both carry guns, and when he gets outside, he asks his father why. He is told that if one officer hesitates when an order to launch comes (which requires them both to act), the other must force him, under the threat of killing him. Chuck immediately perceives what the grown-ups in the film—and most Americans, including Mormons—seem unable to see: that something that requires such constraint against the possible demands of conscience is inherently evil and must be opposed by whatever

non-violent means are available. Chuck refuses to play baseball any more—and later to speak any more. He sees, as a little child, what Terry Tempest Williams saw as she watched the women in her family, including her mother, die of cancer: “The price of obedience has become too high.”

RENOUNCING WAR

The tradition of Mormon literature contains many examples of a non-violent ethic.

BESIDES prophets, other Mormon writers like Williams have called us to an ethic of non-violence, even of renouncing our accommodation to American evils, including thought sin. Clinton Larson, Emma Lou Thayne, Marden Clark, Bruce Jorgensen, Susan Howe, and Dennis Clark are poets who have powerfully described our violence, its costs, and some alternatives. They are part of our non-violent Mormon heritage, which must be constantly reclaimed.

Writers of fiction have also been part of this heritage. One of our first powerful modern writers, Maurine Whipple, wrote the Houghton Mifflin Literary Prize novel for 1941, *The Giant Joshua*, which tells of the Mormon pioneer settling of the Dixie Mission—the attempt to make the desert just northeast of the Nevada test site blossom with, not roses at first, but cotton. The story is told by Clory, a third wife in polygamy, who at one point, with her friend Pal, has decided to leave the community. Pal’s husband finds out and comes to Clory, telling her he’s made a bargain with his wife that if he could show her one beautiful thing in all the desert she’d stay. He then takes the two young wives on horseback at dawn up over Steamboat Mountain. They are led by Tutsegabbett, a chief of the Shoshoni Nation, perhaps an ancestor of Bill Rossi, the Shoshoni who now provides permission forms for protesters to cross into the Nevada test site, land the Shoshoni Nation still claims as its own, land they believe was never legally obtained by the U.S. government.

On the way Chief Tutsegabbett tells Pal and Clory the legend of Neab and Nannoo, two lovers who, with Neab’s father, have tried to stop their people from burying the sick and older Indians in caves to die. The girl becomes extremely ill and is taken to be left in a cave, despite her lover’s pleas. Neab

tells his people that what they are doing is evil and will cause God to take away the rain, but he will go into the cave with his dying friend and intercede for them:

His people begged him to come out, but when the women rolled the boulder back into place, Neab was there to keep Nannoo company. . . . Tutsegabbett pulled up his pony and waited for the others to catch up with him. . . . [He] spread wide his arms.

“[God], pleased with his servant, set His footprint before the cave of Neab to show his stubborn people the way.”

The Indian pony took another dainty step or two. . . . They lined up at the very lip of a huge basin scooped out in the solid rock.

“*See-coe!*” cried Tutsegabbett.

Clory sucked in her breath, transfixed in amazement and delight. . . .

There before them, carpeting the depression, were thousands of fairy bells with lavender hearts, tossing their lovely heads. Flowers wilting at a touch, so delicate as to be almost other-earthly there among



God covenanted with ancient Israel that the desert would bloom, but in this place, at the Nevada test site, the desert has not blossomed with roses, but with mushrooms—huge blooms of death, germinated in dark caves underground.

the black rocks.

Sego lilies! Sown as thickly as a desert sky with stars. Poised like heavenly butterflies there on the grim lava surface as if they needed no roots, would float upward at a breath. . . .

[Tutsegabbett continued,] “. . . The [Shoshonis] resolved never to fight on a battlefield where sego lilies grew: thus the sego lily became an emblem of peace. . . .”

[God’s] mighty footstep before the cave of Neab. Neab, who did not run away.¹⁰

Nearly fifty years after Whipple’s *Giant Joshua*, Orson Scott Card won the World Fantasy Award for the first part of a series of novels based on the life of Joseph Smith, called the *Tales of Alvin Maker*. At the end of the first novel, *Seventh Son*, a drunken, one-eyed Native American, a “Red” in the common language of this alternate frontier America, suddenly appears in Alvin’s room. Alvin touches and heals him of something more than his drunkenness or physical blindness, and he appears in the second volume, *The Red Prophet*, as an absolute

pacifist Christ-figure named Ta-Kumsaw. He gathers his people in a huge town near Alvin's home, preaching the gospel of peace as the only resolution to the growing struggle with the invading "Whites."

That struggle culminates in what is for me one of the most unusual and moving scenes in any literature—an example of the "third way" of responding to violence that increasing numbers of Christian peace activists are advocating as the one taught by Christ, "neither flight nor fight," but loving, non-violent confrontation. The scene is modeled directly on one of the greatest scenes in history—in the Book of Mormon, which tells of a group of Lamanites who are converted by Ammon and decide as a result to refuse any more violence, bury their weapons, and stand forth to be killed. This scene is recreated in a way that brings home to Mormons its emotional and ethical power and relevance to modern life, as the Whites, led by Alvin's father (he has been tricked by Whites to believe the Reds have killed Alvin and has infected his neighbors and others with the revenge spirit) massacre the Reds in a scene common in American history. But there is a profound difference, as the Red Prophet stands forth with his people in a way that absorbs the violence and ultimately stops it, creating a story that testifies to the unique healing power of such redemptive love—and also to its enormous cost.

At times the Book of Mormon shows people living a lower law of defensive war (such as the Nephites under General Moroni) and being helped in their wars by God. At other times Book of Mormon prophets clearly state the higher non-violent ethic and make clear it is higher. In compiling the Book of Mormon, Mormon, though a warrior himself, includes the account of the people of the Lamanites who felt called by their conversion to Christ to refuse further violence, even at the sacrifice of their lives. He then writes, in his usual manner of teaching a lesson, "Thus we see that when these Lamanites were brought to know the truth they were firm, and would suffer even unto death rather than commit sin." (Alma 24:19.) Later Mormon reports Ammon's judgment that these people had reached an ethical level superior to his own Nephites—who, of course, were soon to choose the lower ethic of defensive war, which, even though they were helped by the Lord, did not bring peace and was followed soon by their decline:

For behold, [these Lamanites] had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of an enemy; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their love towards their brethren.

And now behold I say unto you, has there been so great love in all the land? Behold I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites. (Alma 25:32, 33.)

In retelling this story Card adds a dimension to his Book of Mormon source that makes his version particularly poignant for modern Mormon whites. Card intuits the covenant relationship to the land that God desires of us and without which we destroy the land and ourselves and finally our right to the land. The Whites, like the attacking Lamanites in the Book of Mormon, begin to sicken of their carnage and are moved to re-

gret and repentance by the courageous non-violence of those they are killing. Then the Red Prophet stands forth on the face of the stream and calls to his people, both the dead and the living: "Come to me . . . All my people, all who died—Come home, says the land." And those who are dead, "at the Prophet's words, these bodies seemed to shudder, to crumble; they collapsed and sank into the grass of the meadow. It took perhaps a minute, and they were gone, the grass springing up lush and green." Those who are living walk across the water and join the Prophet on the other side of the "Mizzipy River."

But first the Red Prophet calls the repentant Whites to him, all of whose hands and forearms have begun to drip blood:

"Do you want your hands to be clean of the blood of my people?" asked the Prophet. He wasn't shouting anymore, but they all heard him, every word. And yes, yes, they wanted their hands to be clean.

"Then go home and tell this story to your wives and children, to your neighbors, to your friends. Tell the whole story. Leave nothing out. Don't say that someone fooled you—you all knew when you fired on people who had no weapons that what you did was murder. No matter whether you thought some of us might have committed some crime. When you shot at babies in their mothers' arms, little children, old men and women, you were murdering us because we were Red. So tell the story as it happened, and if you tell it true, your hands will be clean. . . . If some stranger comes along, and you don't tell him the whole story before you sleep, then the blood will come back on your hands, and stay there until you do tell him. That's how it will be for the rest of your lives. . . . And if you ever, for any reason, kill another human being, then your hands and face will drip with blood forever, even in the grave. . . . My people, all who still believe in me, we'll go west of the Mizzipy. When you tell your story, tell the White men this—that west of the Mizzipy is Red man's land. Don't come there. The land can't bear the touch of a White man's foot. You breathe out death; your touch is poison; your words are lies; the living land won't have you."¹¹

Of course, this is only Card writing a fantasy—or is it? The White man did, of course, cross the Mississippi and take the land from the Red man—with lies, violence, and the breaking of treaties like the one with the Shoshoni here in Nevada. We are in Nevada for a "Mormon Peace Gathering" because American whites have literally poisoned the land and breathed out death, at the Nevada test site and the Tooele Army Depot and Dugway Proving Ground and the Montana missile sites. Perhaps if some prophet had been able to force us to tell and retell the stories of our massacres, how we massacred little children, old men and women at Wounded Knee and at Bear River and Dresden and Hiroshima and Mountain Meadows and hundreds of other places, how we are right now continuing to build and test missiles that will fire on innocent people who have no weapons—what the Red Prophet calls murder

and Christ says at least is like unto it. Perhaps if that had happened and we had thus perforce become speakers for the dead, we could have stopped. But we are left with the awful burden of choice (our souls, not our bodies, at stake) as to whether we will tell those stories or be silent.

Card, like the modern prophets and all our best poets and Maurine Whipple, has shown us a way and called us with his story-telling back to a new covenant with the land we have killed, so that it and we can live again and live in peace. Alvin, Card's recreation of the Prophet Joseph Smith, reflects as he watches the Red Prophet leave the battlefield:

[The battle] was about White men, and their worthiness to have this land. They might think they won, they might think the Red man slunk away or bowed his head in defeat, but in fact it was the White man who lost, because when Ta-Kumsaw paddled down . . . to the Mizzipy . . . he was taking the land with him, the greensong; what the White man had won with so much blood and dishonesty was not the living land of the Red man, but the corpse of that land. It was decay that the White man won. It would turn to dust in his hands, Alvin knew it.¹²

We have broken a covenant with the God of the land, with the land itself, and with the original inhabitants of the land. Throughout the scriptures the pattern is clear; the land is a necessary part of our covenant-making with the Lord, by which alone salvation comes, and we cannot pollute the land without polluting our souls and inviting natural forces to sweep us off the face of the land.

WHAT COVENANT?

The desert reminds us of many who have made covenants with and received salvation from the Prince of Peace.

WHAT can we do? What new covenant will God receive in the desert? Christ's call is clear, and one we now, perhaps for the first time in 100 years, can have the security and courage as Mormons to obey fully. The call is to come out of Babylon, which includes the United States, and approach Zion, which is wherever in the world we

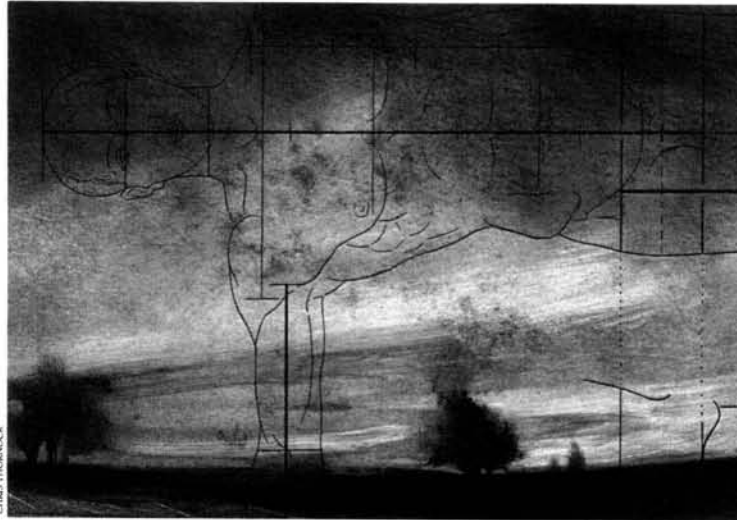
create it. In the book of Revelation, Christ commands, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4.) In the Doctrine and Covenants, he invites us to "renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their [parents], and the hearts of the [parents] to the children." (D&C 98:16.) Then a time will come, Christ promises, when "there shall be gathered [to Zion] out of every nation; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another." (D&C 45:69.) After 100 years of perhaps necessary detour, it is time to talk about how we can return to that goal.

The desert has always been a place for making covenants and creating a new people. Both Moses and Brigham Young recognized the attraction of the desert, a place of isolation and trial, as the best place to make Saints. It is where many—Enoch, Lehi, John the Baptist, Christ, Spencer W. Kimball—have gone to find and renew and rededicate themselves.

Not far from where this Mormon Peace Gathering is being held is the Las Vegas Temple, with six spires and the angel Moroni facing east in expectation of Christ's coming. There thousands of Latter-day Saints, including some who are here at the Gathering, regularly covenant to obey God above all, to have no material or political idols, and to consecrate everything to building Christ's kingdom on earth. Surrounding Las Vegas and extending out through the test site is the desert, a place that reminds us constantly of the fragile web of life and of how dependent we are on the gifts of God to sustain us. Jesus went into the desert to fast, and fasting in the desert doubles our sense of dependency and need that may open us each to a new covenant of peace:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer. 31:31, 33.)

God has told us what kind of fast he requires of us and what blessings will follow a righteous fast and a new covenant of peace in the land and with the land. The desert will blossom, we shall be able to rebuild the waste places, to repair the wounds we have made in the land, between peoples, in our own souls, to become the restorers of proper paths to dwell in. Listen to the word of the Lord to Isaiah:



The land is a necessary part of our covenant-making with the Lord, and we cannot pollute the land without polluting our souls and inviting natural forces to sweep us off the face of the land.

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shalt thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shall thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. . . . And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isa. 58: 6–12.)

This is the covenant God will receive in this lean and desert place. If we come fasting, humble, fragile, peaceful, he can take away the leanness in our souls. He can help us build up the old waste places, the mines and test caves and missile silos where we have violated our Mother earth. We can raise up the foundation of many generations of our children, living in peace with each other and the land. We can repair the breaches between peoples and nations, between races and sexes, between ourselves and the environment. We can be the restorer of paths to dwell in and find at the end of them the footstep of our God, not the cave of death in the desert but the field of sego lilies.

We have dwelt too long in the wrong paths; for nearly 100 years we have accommodated Christ's ways to America's ways. May God help us to heed President Kimball's call to "leave off idolatry," to end our worship of gods of steel and "press forward in faith," in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace.

The organizers of this Mormon Peace Gathering chose four symbols from our Mormon Christian heritage for us to contemplate during our meditation and worship together and have placed them in a handcart here on the stand before us—stone, bread, rose, and cross.

Jesus Christ is the stone. He is the stone rejected by the builders of our nation, who is to become the chief cornerstone of the Kingdom and of each of our lives as we repent and forgive.

Jesus Christ is the bread. He is the bread of life that we eat each Sabbath when we renew our covenants of peace and that we nourish ourselves with when we study and hearken to his words, given in the scriptures and to the prophets.

Jesus Christ is the rose. He is the Rose of Sharon, blooming in the desert, and the blood-red rose who suffered on the wit-

ness tree for our sins.

Jesus Christ is the cross. He is the burden, the easy but heavy burden we must pick up and carry. As the Book of Mormon prophet taught, we are called to "view his death and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world." (Jacob 1:8.)

Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. The first Mormon Peace Gathering and the many I hope will take place in the future are intended to help us who claim to be his followers, members of his Church, find ways, humbly and peaceably, to follow him better. ☐

NOTES

1. Thomas G. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, A Mormon Prophet* (Salt Lake: Signature Books, 1991), 321.
2. Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 286.
3. Carole Gallagher, *American Ground Zero* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), see quotes from Claudia Boshell Peterson, 114–17.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign* (June 1976): 3–6.
5. "First Presidency Message," *Ensign* (June 1981): 76.
6. "First Presidency Message," *Church News*, 19 December 1981, 2.
7. Associated Press, "U.S., Ex-USSR Built Arsenals Because Each Suspected Other Would Attack," *Deseret News*, 10 February 1993, A-5.
8. *National Geographic*, March 1993, 9.
9. *Ibid.*, 23.
10. Maurine Whipple, *The Giant Joshua* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941), 173–74.
11. Orson Scott Card, *The Red Prophet* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1988) 301–02.
12. Card, 304–05.



INTENSIVE CARE

Somewhere in the moonwhite timothy, or under the breath of elms, she must have cried
Touch me, Touch me to be answered

with such earnestness—needles
and machines and a tube stuck deep
in her side like the flame-tipped lance

of Saint Theresa. We stand around her
for our few minutes and the children
in our arms whisper because they don't

understand. Now and then her eyes open
and roll in their sockets—to meet ours!
we believe—we who were pulled from her

body, who woke into a violence
made beautiful by others and spread
our first arms to them, guilty of longing.

—PHILIP WHITE

Pillars of My Faith

My life and my study of history have made me optimistic. Things can be better than they are, and they will be if we rise more resolutely and joyously to the faithful proposition: "I am a child of God." Because I believe that God has an interest in the outcome, I confidently anticipate that this church—my church—will continue to change, repenting and improving in response to continuing revelation.

A LIAHONA LATTER-DAY SAINT

By Richard D. Poll

FOR ME, FAITH IS WHAT AN EARLIER PAUL SAID IT is: "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1.) It transcends empirical knowledge, and because what humanity learns by reason and experience is both finite and fallible, it may even contradict such "knowledge." Where a faith proposition and a knowledge proposition seem contradictory, I feel no compulsion to choose between them *unless* it becomes necessary to *act* upon one or the other. Many issues that strain relations between some good Latter-day Saints who are present tonight and some good Latter-day Saints who are not here do not require resolution. For pragmatic and doctrinal reasons, I believe in suspending judgment in such cases.

I am, in short, a Latter-day Saint who believes that the gospel is true, but has an imperfect and evolving understanding of what the gospel is. My testimony will, I suppose, be of most interest to "people like me"—people for whom neither dogmatic fundamentalism nor dogmatic humanism provides convincing answers to life's most basic questions.

The pillars of my faith are two of the Articles of Faith defined by the Prophet-Founder of my church and an interpretive principle provided by a Founding Father of my country.

The first article of faith affirms: "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."

The ninth article of faith affirms: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

James Madison cautioned: "When the Almighty himself condescends to address mankind in their own language, his

meaning, luminous as it must be, is rendered dim and doubtful by the cloudy medium through which it is communicated."¹ Because I believe with Madison that everyone, including Paul and other prophets, sees eternity "through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12), prophetic infallibility, scriptural inerrancy, and unquestioning obedience are not elements of my faith. I believe in Heavenly Parents who care about me but who will not, perhaps cannot, compel me to obey. I have hope in Christ, and I have drawn strength from the Comforter of whom he spoke. I see history in terms of human strivings to discover divine realities and follow divine principles. Flashes of prophetic insight have elevated those efforts, and Jesus of Nazareth, in his life, death, and resurrection, uniquely embodied those realities. Joseph Smith, a prophet like Moses, Peter, and Alma, gave inspiration and momentum to the gospel dispensation in which, as I have written earlier, I find answers to "enough important questions to live purposefully without answers to the rest."

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints I have found ideas, opportunities, and challenges around which I have organized my life. Next to my family, my church is the most important component of that life. I am proud of its contributions to bettering the human condition and grateful for its contributions to my own. If I were in charge of the Church, I would make some changes. Since I am not, I must be patient, but I need not be passive. As a historian, I know that changes have occurred, and the ninth article of faith assures me that they will yet occur. As I reflect tonight upon the building and testing of my faith, I will offer a few suggestions.

Pivotal in the evolution of my personal testimony was my family's move from Salt Lake City to Texas in 1929, when I was ten years old. In consequence, I had no close Mormon friends, except my younger brother and sister, in junior and senior high school and five years at Texas Christian University. I found many non-smoking, non-drinking friends and in

RICHARD D. POLL was a professor emeritus of history at BYU. This paper was originally presented at the 1993 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City on 13 August. He died 27 April 1994.

the process lost any categorical “we-they” perception of the world that I might have brought with me from Utah. At eighteen I was both superintendent of the Fort Worth Branch Sunday School and president of the TCU Student Christian Association. My two closest male friends were a Bible fundamentalist and a liberal Campbellite, neither of whom was more persuaded by my testimony than I was by theirs. I decided then, and subsequent experience has not changed my mind, that people convert to Mormonism and open themselves to the witness of the Spirit when they are dissatisfied with some important aspect of their tangible or intangible condition, and they remain converted when they find in the Church a sufficient and enduring response to that need. I was confident that I would marry a bright young woman who would be already Mormon or ready to join the Church, either for the gospel’s sake or for mine. As it turned

out, the lovely and intelligent Nebraska Methodist whom I left behind in 1939 for a mission to Germany sent me a “Dear John.” The war that caused me to be transferred to the Canadian mission later brought me, as an Army/Air Force instructor in Miami Beach in 1943, together with a lovely and intelligent Mormon from Utah. Seven weeks later we were married in the Salt Lake Temple by the same Joseph Fielding Smith who had united my parents in 1916. I am reluctant to attribute World War II to a providential design to bring Gene and me together, but now at our golden anniversary we do think that finding each other was some kind of miracle.

TEXAS Christian University had a profound influence on my life and faith. It made me a political liberal, a teacher, historian, football fan, and lover of peace. As a senior I was chosen student body president in an uncontested election because I was the only student council member still on speaking terms with all factions in the controversy that forced my predecessor to resign. Throughout my life I have aspired to be a mediating, moderating, and motivating influence.

At TCU I learned Burke’s warning against apathy: “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good [people] to do nothing,” and Goethe’s warning against zeal without knowledge: “There is nothing so terrible as ignorance in action.” I



I BELIEVE THAT REVELATION MAY COME THROUGH VISIONS, DREAMS, AND VISITATIONS, AS GOD WILLS, BUT MY MADISONIAN SKEPTICISM REJECTS THE NOTION THAT THE MIND OF A PROPHET—ANY PROPHET—IS A FAX MACHINE LINKED TO A DIVINE TRANSMITTER.

BRAD THANE

have quoted both in hundreds of history classes. A course in the New Testament introduced me to another epigram that has influenced my department in Church classes, both as teacher and student: “The function of religion is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” If I were ever asked to speak in general conference, that would be my text.

The primary activities to which I have devoted the last fifty years have all helped to shape and test my faith:

1. My relations with Gene, our three daughters, their partners, and our seven grandchildren have been central to my life. Had I experienced “consciousness raising” earlier, I would probably have been a better husband and father, but Gene and I worked hard at building a traditional LDS home and family and both the effort and the outcomes have brought us happiness. We have faith in the proposition “Families Are Forever,” and we recently watched a grandson sing the

lead in *Saturday’s Warrior* without letting theological questions mar our enjoyment of the occasion.

2. My relations with the Church have included attending meetings regularly, going to the temple occasionally, and accepting callings ranging from branch president, bishop’s counselor, and high council member, to officer and teacher in every organization for which I am gender-qualified. Currently I teach the high priests along with a sweet-spirited and knowledgeable retiree from the BYU religion faculty. The class members seem to find his scripture-based answers and my scripture-based questions equally engaging. If the hours devoted to teaching preparation, informal gospel conversations, and unofficial Church-related gatherings are added to the hours in scheduled meetings, both my income and my time have been tithed, and I begrudge neither offering.

3. Except for the appointment as administrative vice president that took me to Western Illinois University after twenty-two years at BYU, my professional life has been closely linked to Mormonism. As a teacher and writer, I have observed how encountering history affects religious perspectives. It nudges some people toward disbelief and drives others into denial, but it provides more questions than answers. History is hard on myths and traditions that are contradicted by non-Hofmannesque evidence, but it neither proves nor disproves

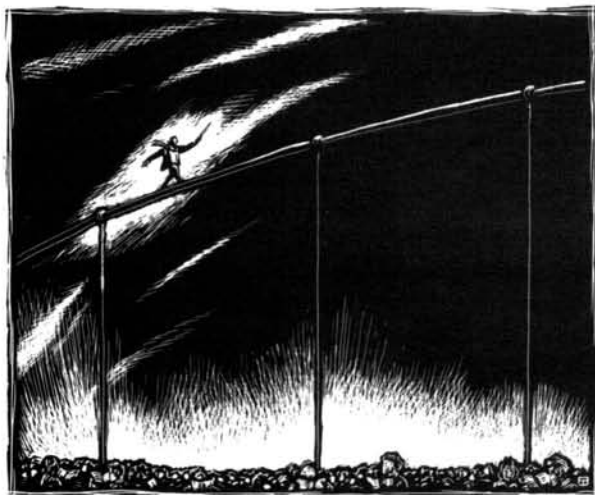
the central faith propositions of the gospel.

MY own life with history, including the history of my own life, leads me to these observations about my church and my personal testimony:

I belong to a church whose past and present leaders, with a few exceptions, have been men and women of ability, integrity, and devotion. I occasionally differ with their collective decisions or think uncharitably about individuals among them, but I believe that they seek to serve God and that, taken as a whole, the fruits of their labors are good. As my brothers and sisters, they are entitled to my sympathy, support, and suggestions.

I sustain fifteen of my church leaders as prophets, although history tells me that leading any organized religion is primarily a priestly rather than a prophetic function. As voices crying in the wilderness, prophets like John the Baptist and Joseph Smith challenged the ecclesiastical status quo. Among recipients of each new dispensation of divine truth, however, there quickly arises concern for preserving and protecting what has been received. Among today's prophet/high priests, there seems to be intense preoccupation with what may happen if unauthorized hands touch the ark of the covenant. There is reluctance to consider any unsolicited suggestion even if "it seems so reasonable and right." I pray that these understandable concerns do not produce insensitivity to changing needs among the Saints and to new possibilities.

I believe that revelation may come through visions, dreams, and visitations, as God wills, but my Madisonian skepticism rejects the notion that the mind of a prophet—any prophet—is a fax machine linked to a divine transmitter. The history and scriptures of the Restoration testify that almost every revelation is confirmatory. It responds to a proposed answer to a pressing question, and the timing and substance of both question and tentative answer are shaped by the character, experiences, and needs of the questioner. I believe this is true even if the petitioner for divine guidance is a prophet. I believe it is my right to help shape the context and content of future prophetic inquiries, even as I have tried to do in the past, and I pray for wisdom and patience in asserting that right.



**I ASPIRE TO LIVE OUT MY LIFE AS
A LIAHONA LATTER-DAY SAINT
HELPING TO PRODUCE A MORMON
CHORUS IN WHICH ALMOST ALL
THE SINGERS HEAR THE
DISSONANT SOUNDS OF THE
ALTERNATE VOICES AS
POLYPHONIC ENRICHMENT OF
THE MESSAGE OF THE
GOSPEL MUSIC.**

BRAD TILAK

I see merit in the apostolic commitment to support decisions once collectively made, but a wonderful range of personal contacts has convinced me that those who wear the prophetic mantle do not all think alike and that they certainly do not always subscribe to the dictum, "When the prophet speaks the thinking has been done." For me, their humanness as individuals makes their collective accomplishments more remarkable. I sustain them in their difficult callings with the realization that, taken as a group, they are neither more nor less single-minded, devoted, and inspired than their predecessors.

Let me illustrate this component of my testimony with three personal experiences:

1. When BYU was recruiting students over forty years ago, John A. and Leah D. Widstoe rode to California with Gene and me in our Model A Ford. It was a great opportunity to get to know the man whose book, *A Rational Theology*, helped shape my own beliefs and the woman primarily responsible for expanding the Word of Wisdom into a comprehensive health code. Sensitive to the situation, Gene and I ordered whole wheat toast with our breakfast. When the Widstoets joined us, they ordered white.

2. In consequence of my publicly criticizing Joseph Fielding Smith's book, *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, Gene and I had the remarkable opportunity to meet privately with Church President David O. McKay and immediately thereafter with President Smith, and to hear them give flatly contradictory answers to the question, "Is the concept of evolution compatible with the gospel?" We remain to this day thankful that the ninth article of faith sheltered us from having to decide which of these venerable prophets was expressing inspired truth.

3. On more than one occasion I heard President Hugh B. Brown speak of the difficult predicament of the counselor in the First Presidency who has "responsibility without authority." Both he and President Henry D. Moyle, his strong-minded predecessor as first counselor to President McKay, were ultimately defeated by it. It is true that the Church has developed a "back-up system" that insures continuity in operations, but it is historically demonstrable that the internal dynamics of the apostolic councils change when the one person

who is doctrinally authorized to speak for God to the whole church is unable to lead effectively. I pray, I hope, and I believe that options for accomplishing for the Church what the twenty-fifth Amendment has achieved in the national government are under consideration among our prophet-leaders, and that an appropriate solution will in due course receive divine confirmation.

I BELONG to a church whose structure, programs, policies, and doctrinal interpretations are in constant flux, as the concept of continuing revelation requires that they be. My testimony has been strengthened by most of the changes that have occurred since I was required to hold my left hand behind my back while passing the sacrament, and I expect to agree with most of the changes that will yet occur. On the premise that recording them here puts them into the context for continuing revelation, I offer two prayerfully considered suggestions:

1. The Sunday meeting schedule should be redesigned to address at least these three shortcomings of the present block plan: The strain on the attention and patience spans of little children and those who teach them; the difficulties inherent in trying to produce two short, safe, significant classes in quick succession; and the insufficiently met need for informal social interaction among ward members.


2. The "woman question," clearly a subject of profound concern among our prophet-leaders today, should be carried beyond the present laudable focus on curbing abuse of women and children to a consideration of the full implications of gender equality in the kingdom of God. Changes requiring only policy modifications might include admitting women to the ritual blessings of babies, enhancing the opportunities and recognition given for teen-age girls, encouraging female children to consider missions, and including active LDS women in decision making—as distinct from decision implementation—at the ward and stake levels.

This is an issue no less fundamental than the plural marriage question that produced a revolutionary revelation a century ago and the racial problem, the revealed solution to which is revolutionizing the Church today. What does the future hold? Surely this is one of the great and important things on which we can anticipate further light and knowledge.

It is exciting and faith promoting to belong to a church in which many, many men and women of ability and commitment face challenges as great as any earlier generation. While our prophet-leaders confront the daunting task of separating traditions and customs from gospel universals, they remodel organizations, policies, programs, even priesthood quorums in ways that suggest both flexibility and inspiration. It seems clear to me that they are asking *many* of the right questions and receiving many excellent answers. Most of their public and private counsel focuses on Christ's precepts for living. When things are said and done that suggest the thirty-ninth verse of Doctrine and Covenants 121 ("We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they

will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion"), or the fable of the king's new clothes, we may still choose, aware of our own spiritual nakedness, to help create a better royal wardrobe rather than abandon the court and the kingdom. Reinforcing my resolve to carry on is my conviction that among our dedicated and prayerful prophet-leaders there must be a growing awareness that the present bureaucratic approach to us Mormon mavericks is not only counter-productive but morally questionable. As we anxiously discuss what to do about the Brethren, we should derive encouragement, I think, from the clear signs that they are anxiously concerned over what to do about us.

My life and my study of history have made me optimistic. Things *can* be better than they are, and they will be if we rise more resolutely and joyously to the faithful proposition: "I am a child of God." They can and will be when those who must "prove all things" (1 Thes. 5:21) and those who steadfastly "hold fast that which is good" realize that they are defending two sides of the same divine formula. Because I believe that God has an interest in the outcome, I confidently anticipate that this church—my church—will continue to change, repenting and improving in response to continuing revelation. In this expectation I close with an adaptation of my remarks at last year's symposium:

Encouraged by the apostle Paul's observation, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:6), I aspire to live out my life as a Liahona Latter-day Saint whose questioning testimony perplexes some and comforts others of his brothers and sisters. I intend to frame my questions, make my suggestions, and bear my witness with charity, humility, and persistence. Thus I hope to help produce a Mormon chorus in which almost all the singers hear the dissonant sounds of the alternate voices as polyphonic enrichment of the message of the gospel music. 

NOTE

1. Quoted in Alpheus T. Mason, "Free Government's Balance Wheel," *Wilson Quarterly* (Spring 1972): 97.



ABOUT HEAVEN

I think more kindly of a cave I know.
We'll break wood and pat ash cakes there,
dip water from the spring.

That will be the place—with the leaves
twittering about us, the honey sticky on
our hands.

—KATHLEEN WEBER

I don't think you can have religious art without the art work having an element of inspiration. And that can only happen if the artist truly pushes the medium, pushes the craft as far as she or he can take it.

SEEING THE CHOICES

A Conversation with Paul Jung

PAUL JUNG was born in South Africa and lived there until he was twelve years old, when his family moved to Salt Lake City. After graduating from Skyline High School in Utah. He moved to Victoria, British Columbia (where he became a Canadian citizen). Paul received a bachelors in education, majoring in art and history, from the University of British Columbia. Last year, after five years of teaching high school art in Victoria, he entered the prestigious Slade School of Fine Arts in London, where he continues his education. He and his wife, Linda, are spending this summer with her family in Salt Lake City. For those interested in acquiring work by Paul, his Salt Lake agent is Phillips Art Gallery (444 E. 200 S., 801/364-8284). This interview was conducted by Steven Epperson and Elbert Peck.

DOES MORMONISM HAVE ITS OWN PARTICULAR AESTHETIC?

Not having lived much in Utah, the extent of my understanding of Church art is from the Visitors' Center. Living in Europe and studying art history, I recognize that the Catholic Church promoted amazing advances in human artistic endeavors. I don't see that the LDS church has ever done that.

While some of the early temples have a great deal of artistic integrity, much of the more recent art and architecture the Church sponsors suffer; they are neither inspiring nor original.



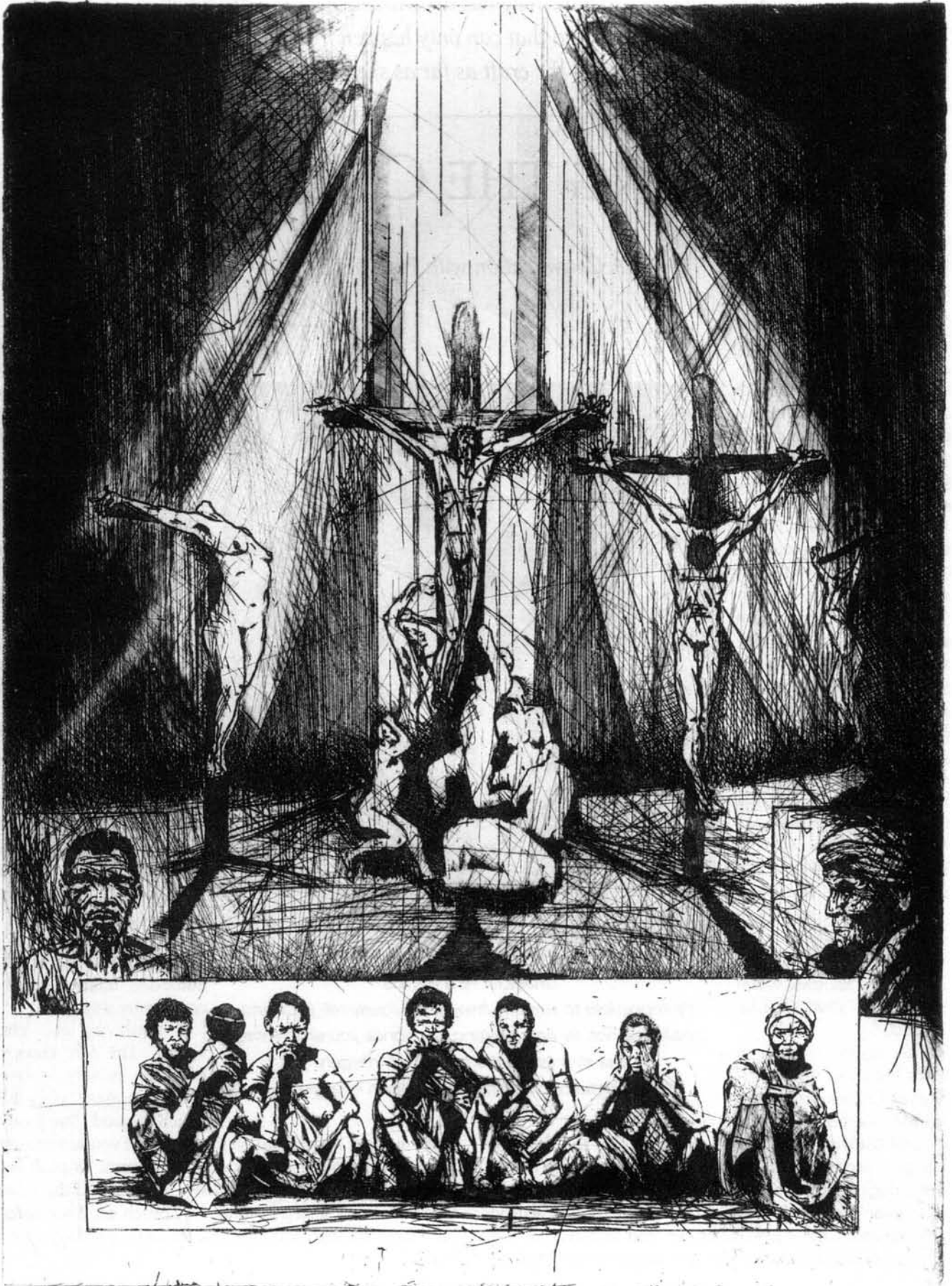
CHARLOTTE'S HANDS

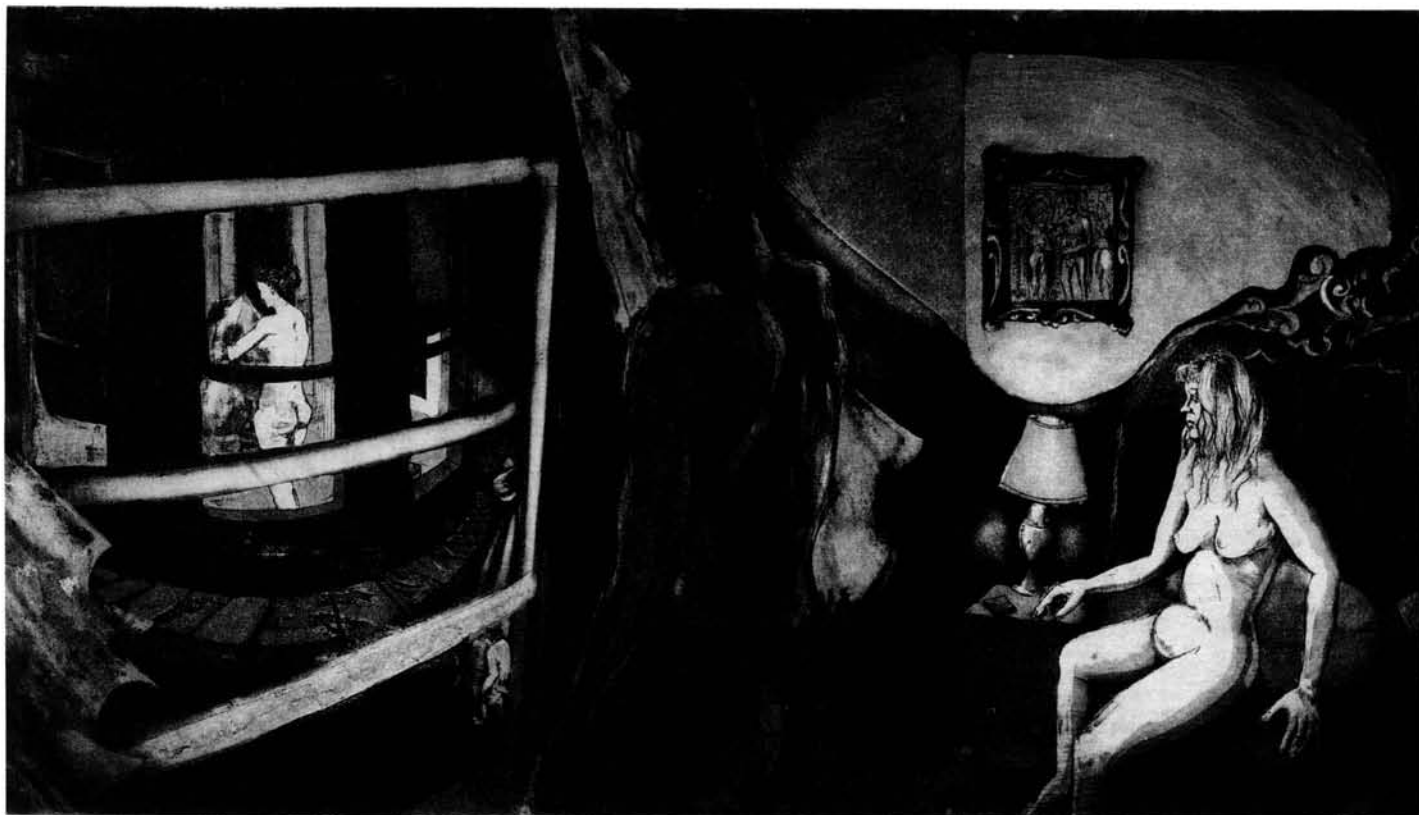
It's impossible to say one thing is obviously religious and another is not. By emphasizing the hands you emphasize the strength in the hands, an integrity. That exploration of the human form is religious.

This is particularly unfortunate as it hinders an important avenue of spiritual growth of both its members and artistic community. When I go to a cathedral, even if it's in a small village, I know that I'm in sacred space. It's amazing—you're transported out of this world. It seems that as a church, we've become so pragmatic that aesthetic concerns aren't that important.

Partly it's a reflection of the Church headquarters being situated in the American West. Perhaps aesthetic concerns aren't as important in this part of the world; we have such beautiful landscape about us that we don't worry about the city, about our interior spaces. If you want to be inspired, you go to the canyon. But if you live in a European city you don't have such access to the outdoors; interior space becomes very important.

I think it's also conservatism. The LDS church art I've seen is very representational; it's about story-telling, which is good. But good narrative art does two things: on the one hand you want to convey the story effectively; on the other, you want to push the art form further. You want to challenge yourself and the viewer to take your work a step beyond. In Church art, I see narrative, but I don't see that pushing of the art form; good art must have both.





VOYEURS

We can treat our spouses or loved ones with respect and dignity or with disregard. When you look at the sorry way we treat people in society, you can see how a police state can occur: the mentality already exists.

SOME SAY THAT BECAUSE RELIGIOUS ART IS COMMISSIONED TO INSTRUCT, IT CAN'T ALSO PUSH THE ARTISTIC BOUNDARIES; THEY ARE CONFLICTING EXPRESSIVE VISIONS.

I think the opposite. Graven images are taboo in Christian culture, yet we use them to sell religion. That's why the Catholic Church commissioned art. They had to find some way to make an impact on the people. Imagery promoted religion and educated. But the Catholic Church wanted to do more than teach Bible stories; it also wanted to cultivate belief and awe. Religious art is meant to inspire. Great art inspires; bad art dulls. The most inspirational art I've seen is religious. "David," by Michelangelo: there's no greater representation of the god-like individual. Michelangelo pushed the art form to its utmost; at the same time, he created religious art.

Michelangelo also did little charcoal sketches of the crucifixion—Christ with Mary by the cross. They're crude, but their simplicity pushes art a step beyond. In contrast, at that same time in the early Baroque period, people were making

grand, perfect representations of thousands of angels, and here is Michelangelo, alone in his studio, an old man, making figurative sketches, crude but inspiring.

I've been working on narrative pieces. To tell a story, you have to set the stage, put drama in the work. One piece is currently titled "I'll Never Forget They Crucified Jesus Christ," a line from Bob Marley. It was an early etching, but I think it's one of my most successful. It came from looking at Grünewald's tortured Christ and Rembrandt's "Three Crosses" (although in mine there's a fourth cross). The main figure is flooded with light, his hands definitely nailed. I included other figures that spoke to my South African background—black and white figures together. In this piece, you have a purely Western crucifixion image juxtaposed with South African bush people. It's up to the viewer to come up with the associations. A female figure is being crucified along with Christ, and a Native American and a bushman. To me, it means Christ died for everyone.

DOES BEING RELIGIOUS AFFECT YOUR WORK?

I can't say being a Latter-day Saint affects everything I do; being human does, and the fact that I'm Mormon is always in the back of my mind. I don't think I've ever drawn a city street without having a steeple somewhere in the background, something to do with religion.

In the small figure pieces, I'm often trying to find new ways

⇐ I'LL NEVER FORGET THEY CRUCIFIED JESUS CHRIST

A female figure, being crucified along with Christ. To me it means Christ died for everyone, a Native American, and a South African bushman.



to depict the body rather than doing anything strictly religious. But we believe that if you're religious, your eye will be single to God's glory; being religious affects your relationships and how you interact with the city. I think it's impossible to say one thing is obviously religious and another is not.

For example, I had been drawing a model named Charlotte for a long time when I finally noticed her hands. She's a dancer, but she has these incredible hands—really bony and strong—and feet as well. So I posed her where her hands became the focus. As an artist—and this is obvious to most people—you don't just depict something in front of you. You use devices to emphasize. Distortion is a way you can emphasize certain elements and downplay others; by emphasizing the hands, you emphasize the strength in hands, an integrity. It's not that one can't draw anatomically correct hands. Sometimes I'll distort and change and focus; I'll play with the human form to make my images more important, more significant. That exploration of the human form is, in a sense, religious.



THE QUILTER

There is beauty and expressiveness in the human form that you just can't get with the clothes on. To paraphrase Michelangelo, "Isn't the human foot more sacred than the sock that's over it?"

DOES YOUR MORMON IDENTITY PUT CONSTRAINTS ON HOW YOU DEPICT THE HUMAN BODY?

Not really, except it makes me self-conscious about drawing nudes—"What is my family going to think?" There's always a bit of that dynamic going on within myself. I don't know what happens with artists with other belief systems, but there's a sense of "Why am I doing this?" "Is this really kosher?" "Should I really show a woman's or a man's genitals?" And "Is that going to offend people?"

↳ DREAM

"Dream" is an example of the sad relationship between people and their church. The church is tilting away from the people; and the people are using umbrellas to insulate themselves from the world.

For my first show, as I prepared an artist's statement, I realized most of my work incorporates nudity to some extent. I knew my Mormon friends would see these works and be surprised, or offended; at least they would take a second look. So I needed some rationale in my statement. It's obvious that painting nudes is something that's part of my work. As an artist, you should do what is instinctive, and I'm instinctively driven to do nudes. Christ was nude on the cross; you can't depict Christ on the cross with all his clothes on. Additionally, there is beauty and expressiveness in the nude human form that you just cannot get with the clothes on. In "Charlotte's Hands," if you put clothes on her, that image would lose all its power. It wouldn't be worth hanging on the wall. But those strong hands over her head, and then her body sketched below—that's integral to the picture. To paraphrase Michelangelo, "Isn't the human foot more sacred than the sock that's over it?" It's part of life. It's who we are. We're nude. I use the nude for the expressive quality—shape, contour lines, the line around the shape. The power

in that line, the outside shape, has the ability to express the feelings and emotions integral to my work.

YOUR WORK DEALS WITH SEVERAL RELIGIOUS THEMES—CHRIST, RELATIONSHIPS, URBAN LIFE—WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU SAYING IN THEM?

It's difficult for me to verbalize that which is visual because it tends to sound trite. But I do believe artists have a responsibility to help viewers enter their drawings so they can discover things on their own.

Look at the etching "Dream." At the top of the picture I added two figures. One is female, her arms, but all we really see is a contour line. We are used to having the male figure crucified, but what if a female figure was crucified? What does that tell us? Both figures, the man and the woman, are important and have to be nude; it wouldn't be right any other way. The line is soft and subtle. At the lowest level the picture says, "Don't be ashamed." Another level is acceptance of sexuality.



KING'S CROSS

We need to learn how to treat other humans with respect, to pay attention to the less fortunate in the center makes you confront him or walk by him. You can either rush by as a car or you can get involved and meet the people of the streets.



e. *The unappealing drunk man
and the commuters.*

Still another level glorifies the individual. As for the woman being crucified, women have been crucified throughout history, and it's important to recognize that they, too, carry Christ's cross. We're such a male-oriented religion; it's important to present women on the same plane.

THE CHURCH BUILDING IN "DREAM" IS PROMINENT BUT DISTANT AND FOREIGN.

I visited the ruins of Tintern Abbey where Wordsworth wrote his great poem. Here was a beautiful cathedral with no roof. It was dead, empty; it was just a facade. That building provides a metaphor for religion today. Religion has become a facade; it's no longer the center of our lives. It's a sacred space, but no one really goes into it. The church is tilting away and falling off the picture plane. I watched a movie about Romero, the archbishop of El Salvador who was killed for his work with common people. He believed the church should be rooted in the people, that if the church can no longer respond to the needs of the people, it's dead. Instead, what often happens is that churches have their own political agendas remote from people. "Dream" is an example of that sad relationship between the people and their church.

I often depict the lowest rungs of the ladder to show that these people have a dignity others often don't. The people in overcoats are covering up themselves. Hiding. A facade. (That might be saying something about nudity—the uncovering of ourselves, presenting everything we have.) They have huge umbrellas, a metaphor for the fact that they are trying to insulate themselves from the world. Street people always impress me because they are exposed to all the elements, exposed to everything. To me that was something to glorify, to look at.

WHAT DOES "KING'S CROSS" SAY ABOUT URBAN LIFE?

We need to pay attention to all people. We can learn from people who have not been successful in traditional terms. They're simply surviving. In religious terms, it's enduring to the end. To endure to the end doesn't mean we have to be successful; it just means we have to survive. There's something in these people worth glorifying.

I got the idea at Christmas. Every night I would walk to King's Cross, a major rail station in England, and draw. It's in one of the rougher parts of London. There's a dichotomy in the picture: on one hand, you have people rushing to catch trains and cabs. King's Cross is a momentary transition in their day between the suburbs and the city. And on the other side of the picture you have people who live in that neighborhood, people who panhandle, who rummage through the garbage, who sleep on the streets, who are the prostitutes.

This glorifies the people who live there, acknowledging that people need our help and have concerns we consciously neglect. I want to pay attention to that: it is our responsibility to meet people's needs. The drawing is social criticism; it's social reality. I'm criticizing the people who rush to catch the trains; to me, they're ugly, insensitive. If you look at the little family in the front, there's a degree of kindness and gentility, an empathy



ON A BUS

It's about isolation in public and private spaces. If only the people could look at one another and talk, then a relationship could occur.

in their faces that doesn't exist in the people who are rushing, the "successful" ones, the ones we usually glorify and paint pictures of. So I consistently distorted them and made them unappealing.

The can of beer held by the elderly man in the foreground is intentional, of course. We consciously judge a person by the outside appearance: "He drinks and smokes; pass him by." Yet, he still has dignity and value even if he's drunk. He's the focus of the picture and the image unfolds around him to convey the power of the individual. So the figures in the background focus on him because he stands apart from the crowd, distinguishes himself from everyone else. I'm sure you could focus on any one of those individuals and do the same thing.

He challenges you, the viewer. You look at that unappealing picture of a drunk man and might pass it off and go on to the next one. Or you could look at him, see him for what he is, and see him as something of worth. Suddenly you're confronted with a choice: you can rush away (like the people catching the trains) or you can get involved with the picture and meet the different people behind him.

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO GET VIEWERS TO CONFRONT IN "ON A BUS"?

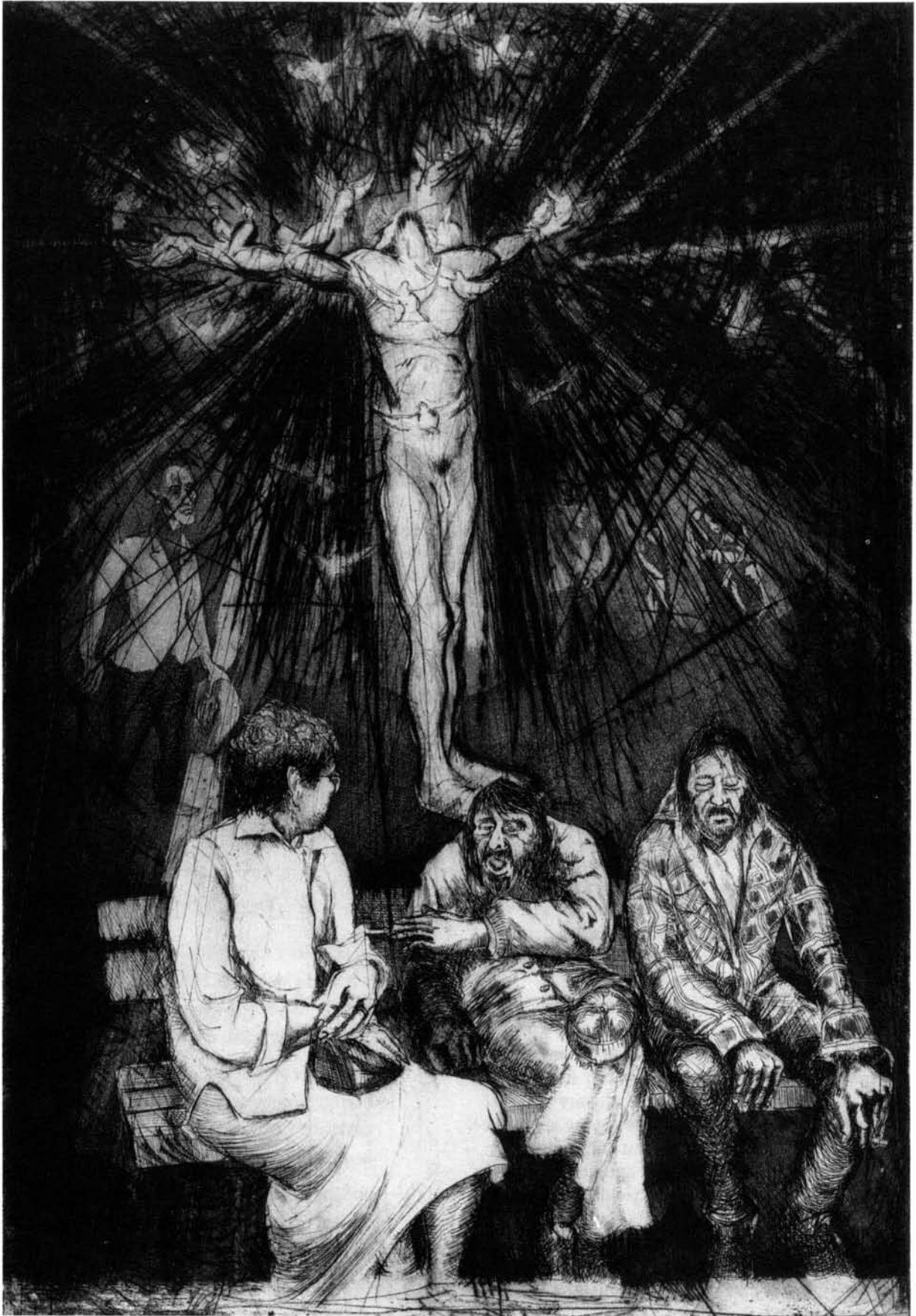
It's really about isolation. After the traveling I've done recently, I've come to believe that we are often isolated, both in public and private spaces. We have a figure on the bus looking

out the window, yet he's in a public space where there are people all around. A sort of angelic female figure is moving out of the bus. Very realistically they could have connected. Yet, either he didn't notice or she didn't. They've gone; they'll never see each other again. It's a loneliness we feel even though we're surrounded by people.

On the right hand panel is a figure you assume is the same man, at the edge of the bed, lighting a cigarette. He obviously just finished making love to a woman, and yet, although the two have been as intimate as human beings can be, still there is a sense of isolation. Everyone in the picture looks in different directions. No one really looks at each other. And you wonder, if only they would communicate! It's frustrating: If only the two had turned their heads and their eyes had met, and they started talking, a relationship could have developed. The same thing on the right panel: both figures on the bed, looking away from each other. In Edward Hopper's work, painting after painting, the figures never connect. A leg never crosses an-

BIRD MAN AND AN ANGEL ⇨

These two men always sat on the same park bench and talked to the tourists. I thought of the crucifixion, which has angels and communications from heaven. In this work, the woman and the two homeless men look like angels.



other figure's body. The figures are isolated in their environments, and there's an incredible feeling of separation and isolation. If only an arm, or something, would cut across the other person's leg, or anything to connect them in space, there would be a feeling of togetherness that doesn't exist in his pictures.

IN "BIRD MAN AND AN ANGEL" YOU HAVE PEOPLE WHO ARE OBVIOUSLY COMMUNICATING.

This is a different piece, a different mood than "On a Bus." For visual and intuitive reasons, these two gentlemen are talking to the woman in the white dress. When I lived in Victoria, these two men were always on the same park bench on the main tourist drag. In the summer, the bench was taken away so the men couldn't hang out there and the tourists wouldn't have to see them. But they always brought their lawn chairs and sat there anyway. Tourists had to confront them, and there's a connection.

I've thought the woman talking to the two men looks like an angel and they're street people. On the other hand, turn it around and they could be the angels and she could be the street person.

The other part of the story in my drawing—the crucifixion—comes from a little boarded-up church in London near our home, where the homeless tended to sit. My wife was walking by the church one day when she saw a man who had covered himself with bread crumbs and pigeons were eating off him. That image was exciting. I like the harmony with nature, birds flying around. You can even think of the Bible, the dove when Christ is baptized. I like the connections of the birds with the man. Maybe the birds are angels.


"THE ALLEGORY OF JESUS OF LONDON" (COVER ART) SEEMS TO SAY WE DON'T NOTICE JESUS IN OUR MIDST.

It's the London underground, the tube, which gets really crowded. When my wife and I traveled on it, you had to hold on to this little round handle to keep from falling down. I would stand in front of my wife and children and fall forward with my arms stretched out. My wife and I used to laugh about this. It struck me one night that this was a nice image, so I went and took some photographs for the picture.

In London I was struck by being in a city with so much inhumanity around; you don't treat an unknown other with respect because you know you'll never see that person again. You can say or do whatever you want. You can just ignore others. To me that Christ figure represents dignity and integrity in a person on the tube; yet, no one is paying attention to what is going on. The man standing in front of him might be noticing, but the people in the background are too concerned with themselves to notice. The man in the back is a priest, actually, holding his briefcase; he doesn't notice at all. Another fellow reads his newspaper. There are one or two sympathetic figures. The picture follows the convention of a triptych—three different panels. There's a figure of a woman on the left hand side that has an empathetic look. For the most part,

though, everyone has a sort of hard edge.

I used some devices, such as the three kingdoms in the advertising panels. The center, celestial kingdom panel uses St. Paul's cathedral dome as Jesus' halo. I was very impressed by primitive aboriginal drawings; the desert is the terrestrial kingdom. Then the lowest kingdom is the man with the gun. In one way, the drawing is serious; in another, it's in jest. To me, it speaks to our need to feel a common sense of humanity.

A similar theme is in "Dream," where you have people shielding themselves with umbrellas—no one else pays attention to what's going on, either. I think of El Salvador or South Africa a few years ago: the system forced people to treat other human beings horribly. In those communities, you face a very definite choice: you either contradict your values or you stand against established authority. Those are incredible decisions. I'm glad I live in a society where I don't have to risk my life in order to stand up for something I believe in. But in our communities we face the same choices on smaller scales in our relationships with spouses or lovers: we can treat them with respect, or we can treat them without respect, without dignity. When you look at the sorry way we treat people in our society—even without government coercion—you realize that should conditions change we'd easily be in the same situation as South Africa or El Salvador because the mentality already exists. We need to treat other humans with respect, to pay attention to the less fortunate. If we are like the person on the tube reading the newspaper, not paying attention to Christ, we find very little that separates our lives from those who live in a police state and are forced to reject other humans. I hope my pictures help viewers see the choices they are asked to make every day. 



INTO BREAD

In the stone chapel (cold stone
where we would later bury
my grandparents) I sat, a
child among hard, chilling stones,

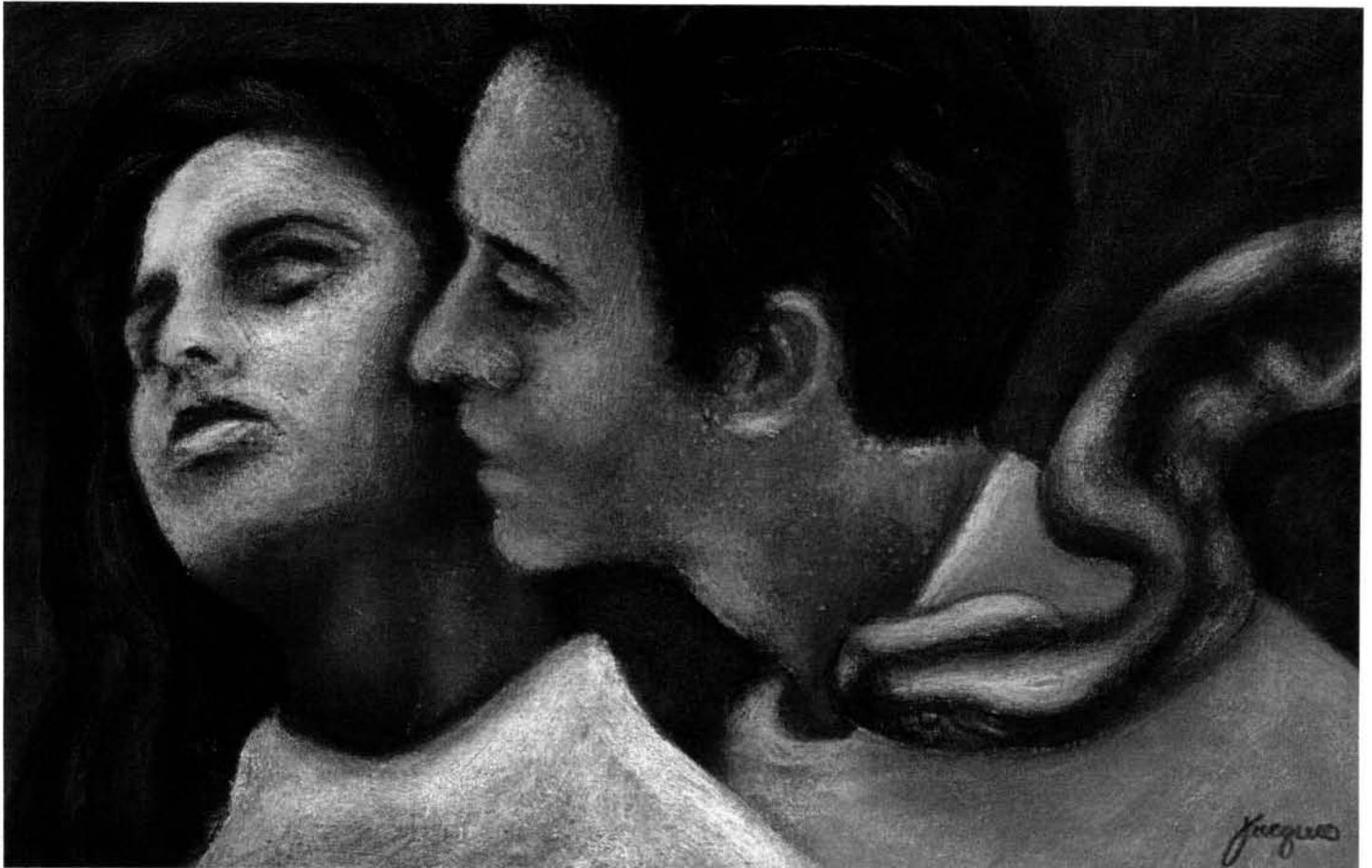
to touch communion with my
curling tongue and taste its sweet
dark life. Light draped smooth shadows
over hand-cut oak-plank pews
and cropped my fingers where they
curved the small glass cup . . . stained them
dark with life and caught a thin
white fleck of Christ on my palm.

—MICHAEL R. COLLINGS

Moonstone Winner, 1992 Brookie and D. K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest

SNAKE MAN

By Angela Wood



I soon discovered this was his secret with the snakes. A few touches with those hands, and I knew why the snakes never gave him any trouble.

FIRST OF ALL, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE MORMONS, whose church I belong to, and then I'll tell you about me and Barc, the non-Mormon man I live with. You see, we Mormons have a lot of rules about sex. Barc wonders why we're so worried about something so simple, but they're good rules, generally, I believe. Basically, the main one is that until you marry, you're not supposed to think, let alone do, anything sexual at all. I am willing to admit, even though no one else is, just how difficult this is.

I know the idea behind the rule is to not hurt anyone, which

ANGELA WOOD is a writer living in Salt Lake City, Utah.

I certainly think is a more than good idea. It's just that the rules never seemed to work out too well for Barc and me, that's all. At least not the no-sex-before-marriage part. We have no problem with being faithful to each other. In all honesty I have to admit that I occasionally feel an impulse toward another member of the opposite sex, but mostly we go by an old Buddhist saying Barc told me. It says that the best way to keep your cow from running away is to put her in a really nice pasture.

For a long time, before I knew him at all, my friends and I just called him the Snake Man. He takes care of all the reptiles here at the Animal Park, but it's easy to see that snakes are his first love. He does a reptile show every day at one and five P.M.

where he tells you all about snakes. Snakes live almost everywhere on the earth. Only a few areas in the world have no snakes. He's absolutely thrilled about this and has no idea that most people would rather not know that the only place snakes can't survive is where the ground stays frozen the year around.

He lets them crawl all over him while he's talking, and you can see from the look on his face that he's as pleased as punch. He lets the other creatures have a little time, too, but mostly it's snakes, snakes, and more snakes. Later, but not until I'd moved in with him, I found out that he is the author of numerous "snake books," as I call them. Not the popular variety, but the kind only the scientists would read, and some general zoology textbooks, too. Not too long ago, he also taught zoology up at the University, but he had to quit because he felt that snakes were going unappreciated up there.

I drive boats here at the Park, to and fro across the lake. My friend Amanda Jane and I take people, their kids mostly, back and forth in the boats out to this little island, where there's some more stuff to see. It's a good job, although summers do get hot out on the pond all day.

That might be why every break and every lunch hour I seemed to end up at the Reptile House. The reptiles have it really good here. There's a courtyard in the center of the building that's teeming with trees and vines. It looks like a jungle. Nonpoisonous snakes that originate in the tropics roam around freely in there. It's walled in and after the show you can go on a little tour with the Snake Man and find them. It's very shady. The Snake Man's always prowling about among the trees, taking something to one of the snakes, who are more or less his babies. You see his skin glistening between the leaves and know it's him out there. My friends at the Park all said that's why I'd go there all the time.

"Allie's in love with the Snake Man," they'd chant, like a bunch of sixth graders.

I still maintain it was just the shade. I hadn't really even noticed Barc then.

Well, I guess the first love of my life at that time was still books, and I was never without at least one, even when I was driving the boats. If the park wasn't too busy, Amanda Jane and I would wait out by the island until the group we'd just dropped off was ready to come home, rather than run constantly back and forth like we did on the busy days. Then it was so nice to stretch out on the prow with a good book and read for a few minutes before they all came clamoring back.

One day I guess I fell asleep doing this, not that it was a boring book, far from it. I was halfway through *The Woman Warrior*, but I'd been out late and before long I was asleep on the prow. That's when Adam Kingfield dumped me and *The Woman Warrior* in. And it was a library book. He's eleven years old, that age when boys think that every obnoxious thing they can think of doing is hilariously funny. Amanda Jane just stood there and let him. She laughed even. My best friend and my boat ferrying partner laughs at this cheap prank, which has put me in debt to the county library system and left me covered with wet muck. I was madder at her than at Adam.

Well, this was all just about closing time, eleven P.M., and so

there I was waiting for the bus (my only form of transportation) soaking wet, feeling as miserable as a one-legged frog on an icy freeway. There's one last outbound bus at 11:16, and I was beginning to think I'd missed it and was not about to ask that traitor Amanda Jane for a ride. (She was given a Porsche by her daddy when she graduated from high school two years ago. Don't ask me why she even bothers with this job. Sometimes I can't believe she's my friend.)

Barc, the Snake Man himself, came by in his Jeep, a white one, the kind with no roof, at least in the summer. I didn't think he'd ever seen me before in his life, but he pulled over.

"You look like you could use a ride," he said.

"Got any snakes in there?" I blurted out the first thing that came to mind.

"Probably a few crawling around somewhere. They have a way of following me."

I was cold and wet and tired and angry and a ride with him sounded a lot better than the bus.

"I know the snakes are crazy about you," I said. "I see your show every day at one while I eat my lunch."

"I know you do," he said. "I see you see my show every day at one while you eat your lunch."

So the Snake Man notices things that don't slither. I gave him my address, and he said he'd take me home.

On the freeway the wind whipped pretty hard and I couldn't stop shivering. I was doing my best to control it, not wanting to look like one of those helpless kinds of females, but it wasn't happening. He pulled over and took off his tee shirt and there was that golden skin I'd seen in the reptile jungle.

"Here," he said, and he started putting his warm, dry shirt over my head.

I made no protest.

"Hard day?" he said, and I nodded.

"Here," he said again, and he leaned my head against his bare shoulder, which was soft and hard at the same time, something I'd say is impossible. I just loved having my face touch his skin.

And then he leaned down and kissed my mouth, the softest, most tender kiss you could imagine and just at the last moment of it, licked my lips even softer with his tongue, just ever so gentle, not the way some guys gag you by sticking the whole thing in. Just the softest, smallest taste of him, like the touch of the lightest feather. And that's how Barc and me began.

Moving in with Barc just seemed like the smart thing to do since I was always over there anyway. I suppose I knew that what I was doing was against the Church. In fact, I'd have to say I knew it would be classified a sin. I did it anyway. It was wonderful to live together. We were partners. When I think of those days it's like there's a gold halo shining over them, and for the life of me I can't figure out why it was supposed to be a sin.

My favorite times were when we'd come home together at eleven P.M. and I'd take off my shoes and we'd eat Haagan-Dazs chocolate ice cream, our one high-fat luxury which neither of us could give up. Then we'd talk or watch Johnny Carson, and he'd rub my feet. I soon discovered this was his secret with the

snakes. A few touches with those hands, and I knew why the snakes never gave him any trouble.

I'd have to say that when Bishop Culver was the bishop, it was as near to living in paradise as I've ever come. I still can't quite make it jibe with Alma 41:10, "wickedness never was happiness," because we sure were happy. Maybe the unhappiness just came later.

Anyway, Bishop Culver lived right across the street from Barc's house, so he already knew Barc a little bit, the way you know a neighbor that you say hello to but that's about it. Still, when I started showing up at their ward, and he'd see me coming and going with Barc, I think it's safe to say he knew what our arrangements were. But it didn't seem to faze him either. And you know, he never once asked me, "So are you two married, or what?"

He and his wife, Sandy, made a big fuss of showing me all around the ward and introducing me and made sure I felt as comfortable as could be. He even called me to be the Cub Scout leader for the Wolf Pack. Now, this was a job! Eleven cub scouts ages eight and nine. I never would have made it without Barc. I have no idea where young males of this age get their energy, but it is truly inexhaustible. I am of the private opinion that we should discontinue all research in the fields of solar and nuclear power and study the Cub Scouts. Of course, they adored Barc. I was optional. They started calling him Snake Man, too, and they put up with me because I was the "Snake Man's wife."

I had more than a few qualms about letting that little misconception go on, but it seemed like the easiest thing to do. I felt that it would be more agreeable to their parents to let them think we were married than to have to explain otherwise, so I kept my mouth shut. I must confess it was a secret enjoyment, too, to hear them call me Barc's wife. Especially when he was around. We talked about marriage once, but neither of us could really see a reason for it at that point, and so that was that.

I loved those days. We'd work and read and eat and walk and hike and if I wasn't working I'd go alone to church on Sundays, which was just fine by me. I felt no compulsion to try and make Barc a Mormon. I just went for the things I loved about it. I didn't mind going alone, in fact I think I prefer it. When I was a little girl I used to ask my mother, the only other churchgoer in my family, to stay after all the meetings so I could sit in the chapel when no one else was there. I just loved being in that big quiet room on a Sunday afternoon. The sun would come through the windows and there I'd sit in the silence, just filling up with love and God and goodness. It was like my own private little worship service.

We were a normal couple though and we had our fights. Barc is a total slob and I tend to be somewhat compulsive when it comes to housecleaning, so there was always friction over the house. Our worst arguments were about snakes. Barc has this ability, when he's concentrating, at least when he's concentrating on snakes, to screen out all other stimuli. Including me. Sometimes I think I played second fiddle to the reptiles. It took some working out.

I'd have to say the trouble all began with Bishop Mills, or more accurately, Bishop Mills's wife, Shirleen. But that's not entirely fair either, since in her book the trouble all began the day I "seduced that nice man [Barc], who probably never had a bad [sexual] thought in his life." Mills got called to be the bishop after Bishop Culver. Their son Parley was in the Wolf Pack, and one day when he called me the Snake Man's wife, Barc made it clear to him and Jimmy Horn that we were not married. I do not to this day know what possessed him to so enlighten the boys. We hadn't ever talked about this little deception or made any sort of plans on it. We more or less just fell into it, which is more or less the way things go for Barc and me, and I just thought he thought it was for the best, too.

Well naturally Parley passed this little tidbit of information along at the Sunday dinner table, and Shirleen just about choked on her pot roast. Forgive me if the bitterness creeps into my voice here, but that woman just about wrecked the best thing I ever had. Of course, she was horrified. Terrifically, absolutely, totally horrified to think that her Parley was being taught the Scout Oath by a couple living in sin. Bishop Mills promised to look into it immediately, although I could swear if it weren't for Shirleen he would have been content to live and let live. A few days later I got the first call asking me to come meet with him, which I said I would be more than happy to do. A lie, I admit, since I had a sort of premonition of impending doom. Once Shirleen knew we weren't married, I pretty much figured we were in for it.

I DON'T know what kind of a Mormon to tell you that I am, although Bishop Mills told me. I'd always thought of the Church a little like English trifle. In a glass bowl. The kind where if you look, you can see all the different layers, strawberries, bananas, whipped cream, jello, cake. It looks so pretty. I always thought Mormons were like that: they come in different layers and all together, it's pretty great.

"You know, Allison," Bishop Mills said to me. No one had called me Allison since the first day of kindergarten, but I knew he was talking to me since no one else was in the room.

His skin had a reddish tone to it and he had this incredibly broad forehead. The fluorescent light in the ceiling gleamed on it and I kept staring at it. He sat behind a brown desk, which seemed immense. I could swear I've never seen a desk that big before.

"I can see from your records that you've been a member of the Lord's church your whole life."

"Yes, that's more or less true," I replied.

"Then I'm sure you already know that you can't sit on the fence in this church."

"The fence?"

"You're either for him or against him," he said, and he started to leaf through the big black triple combination that sat before him on his desk. He used one index finger, which had that same red tone and was fat. When he'd found what he was looking for he started to quote, and his voice changed. It took on the same tone that general authorities have in their voices when they talk at conference. I wondered how he'd learned it.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve," he told me. Joshua 4:15.

Well, the gospel according to Bishop Mills was something you had to be all the way in or all the way out. You couldn't just live part of the rules and forget about the rest. You had to live them all, and that was Mormonism.

Talking to him, I could see that I was a fence-sitter. It was just such a comfortable fence, and it seemed to work so well for me.

Bishop Mills said I was hurting God and the Church by living with Barc without benefit of marriage. It was against the law of the land and the law of the Church. He quoted lots of scriptures, but I could not tell you one of them. I had a cold, hard rock in my stomach, and it got colder and harder while I listened. I guess I should have known this day was coming. I knew what the rules were.

He made it clear that there would be Church disciplinary action if Barc and I continued in our present arrangement. He said that if I came to him in full sorrow, fully repentant, and gave a full confession of my transgression, the Church would probably not be forced to take any actions which would affect my membership, but complete sorrow was necessary.

Then I made one of the biggest mistakes I've ever made in my entire life. I told him the truth.

"But I'm not sorry," I said. Just like that.

"I'm not sorry about living with Barc. I don't feel bad for it. It just doesn't seem to me that Heavenly Father minds my living with Barc." It was what I truly thought.

Needless to say, this did not sit well with Bishop Mills.

I tried to explain to him the way things seemed to me. I told this man about my deepest most sacred feelings that I'd never told anyone, not even the Snake Man. I told him how when I sang the hymns at church I felt an actual connection to everyone else in the congregation holding a hymn book. I told him how I loved the sacrament. I told him what the words "that we may have his spirit to be with us" meant to me. I told him how during the sacrament, reverence would flood all through me and burn in my chest.

"I can see you have a testimony," he said, "but you really should not be partaking of the sacrament when you are doing something so heinous in the Lord's eyes."

I had nothing else to confess. I'd said it all.

He said he'd be in touch. I believed him.

I GUESS you could say from there on out, it was all downhill. I honestly didn't think it would be all that big a deal, or maybe I just didn't let myself know it would. I knew I loved my church, but I didn't know how much a part of me it was.

I came home and told Barc, laughing all the way through the story. It was like I was electric; there was all this energy pouring off me, and it kept coming out in these fits of uncontrollable laughter. I especially couldn't hold it back when I told him about the light on Bishop Mills's big forehead and his big red finger.

I think all that energy ran right into Barc, because he became furious. I didn't really feel all that bad. I felt floaty, like

I was in a dream world. Barc swore a lot, which surprised me because usually it takes something like a snake injury to draw that out of him.

"It's none of their damn business. And who in the hell do they think they are telling us what to do?"

He went on for the whole evening, and after a while I just kept quiet and let him.

"We'll get married when we damn well please and if we damn well please, and not when some fat-ass bishop tells us to."

Here's another confession: his anger made me feel so good. I was positively elated. He was my knight in shining armor out to save my honor. He must care about me at least as much as the almost extinct Indian python. I just sat there and listened to him and didn't say much. I was having too good a time watching him be moved to such passion over something nonreptilian. Besides, what happened at the bishop's office hadn't sunk in yet. I think it was a weird form of shock.

Barc kept storming out of the room, out to the yard where he was pulling weeds. Then he'd come back in and hurl a few more lines at me, as if I was the priesthood holder in question.

"What does he know about us, or what's best for us?" Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

After he'd been in and out about six times, he came in with a big clump of morning glory in one hand.

"I'm not going to let him treat you like this. I'm going to go see him right now."

I found my tongue then.

"No. I don't want you to. There's no point. I'm just not going anymore, that's all. This is our life and I feel fine about it. They can do whatever they want about me and that's that."

From then on, if he brought it up again, I refused to talk about it.

"It's not an issue anymore. I'm just not going. If I'm not all right with them the way I am then I'm not going to be part of them." That's what I would tell Barc. I can see now that it was the only way I could handle the whole thing.

WITHIN the next few weeks we explained to the boys that we would have to quit the Scouts.

"We know," Parley told us. "My mom says you're about to be fired anyway."

They were sad, and the amazing thing was we were, too. I never thought I'd miss that pack. For a while they stopped by anyway just to talk or see the snakes or help me make cookies, but then that stopped, too, probably on parental orders.

I was okay or at least I told myself I was. Every now and then I'd get a sad empty feeling, but when it came I'd just pick up a book. I read a lot on Sundays, everything from Robert Ludlum to W. S. Merwin. I read and I walked and worked and Barc and I went on. At first I didn't really miss church. The only thing I noticed that was different and that gave me any sense of something wrong was Barc and me. We didn't talk. We'd be together, eat, work, play, make love, but we didn't talk about anything more than the grocery list. If he asked me how I was doing, or said anything about the Church, I made a joke

or started to kiss him so I didn't have to answer his questions. It was kind of like the Cold War but with sex. I found out it was possible to make love and have no connection at all to your partner.

That's when my crying jags began. It got so that every time we made love, I'd end up in tears, unable to explain myself. I still felt desire. I still wanted to do it, but more and more I was ending up in tears. I didn't even want to think about why.

"It's part of this whole church thing, isn't it?" Barc said one time. "That bishop's got you thinking you're being bad, and that's why you cry every time."

"You're a Snake Man, not Freud," I told him.

I guess I kind of began to shrivel. I spent more and more time in another world through books, and less and less time in my life. Amanda Jane would try to break through and get me to open up, but I insisted I was just fine. She said I looked gray. Gray and scrawny, which was true, because I was losing weight. It just seemed like so much trouble to chew and swallow. I slept a lot.

That winter still seems like a dream to me. Everything just seemed to have a mist floating all over it. It didn't seem strange to me that I looked gray. Wasn't the whole world gray?

Just after Christmas, my mother called me. This was a rare occasion. I always felt I had some connection to her, even though we had hardly even seen each other since I left home. When I'd turned eighteen, she told me I was now an adult and that it was time for *her* to go out in the world and seek her fortune. She meant it literally. She's a fortune teller for the circus. I'm pretty sure she's the only Mormon circus fortune teller in history. She finds a way to go to church now and then.

I found out later that Barc had asked her to call. He'd tracked her down somewhere in Nebraska and explained the situation. He said he couldn't reach me and would she please try.

"I'm coming in six days," she announced.

"Mom, no," I said. The last thing I wanted right then was to have to face my mother. I could never fake things in front of her. She'd see right through me even without her crystal ball.

"I've seen it in the crystal and in the cards," she said. "You need me, and I'm coming."

I tried to talk her out of it, but if you knew my mother you'd know how futile that was.

We never have to pick my mother up from the airport or the bus station or anything normal like that. She just sort of appears one way or the other. This time a man in a polka dot suit dropped her off. She lugged her mammoth suitcase inside.

She took one look at me and said, "It's worse than I thought."

At first she tried laughing me out of it. She knew I'd always thought her fortunes were ridiculous, so right after she got here, she made up these crazy fortunes for Amanda Jane, Barc, and me. I lay on the couch only half listening, and she pretended to look in the crystal ball. It actually did more for Barc's mood than mine. His future included an early demise but also a promise of reincarnation as some kind of pit viper, which to him was better than going to heaven.

A few days later I came down with the flu. Mother put me straight to bed and proceeded to hover over me for four days. She brought chicken soup and hot water bottles and every other thing she could think of, but had never done when I was little. On the fifth day, I felt much better and got out of bed. That evening after dinner, we were alone in the house. Barc was at the Animal Park.

She told me she was leaving. It was time for her to go.

"It's not worth it, Allie," she told me. "This isn't worth what you're doing to yourself. You've got to go on with your life."

"I'm fine," I told her. "It's just been a long winter, that's all."

"Look at you. You look half dead, and that's a nice way of putting it."

"Thanks, Mom."

"I just want you to think about yourself. It's not worth it."

I didn't say anything else. Mom had never understood my feeling for the Church. I guess I had never understood it either.

She left on a Saturday night and the next day I went to church for the first time in six months. I came just in time for sacrament meeting and took a seat in the back of the chapel. I tried not to look at Bishop Mills. I felt like everyone was staring at me.

When they passed around the bread, I didn't take any. I took the tray and handed it to the person next to me. I waited and waited to feel something. I was empty. I couldn't feel anything. My reverence was gone. I sat there through the rest of the meeting, but nothing seemed to mean anything. I said something to the Culvers, who seemed delighted to see me, and asked where I'd been. While I talked to them I had the strangest feeling. It was as if I was outside myself, listening to a tape recorder play out the words I was saying.

SPRING came, and things got worse. All winter I had stoically existed, steeling myself to go through the motions of my life. When feelings would well up in me, I'd push them away. But when the world came back to life, somehow I couldn't keep the feelings at bay any longer, and I was as sad as I had ever been.

At the park, I'd watch the leaves come out and the crocuses come up and I began to envy them all. Plant envy, no less. They got to be brand new, and I didn't.

Then I got the letter. It had the Church logo on the return address and my hands began to shake as soon as I opened it. It was to inform me, Sister Allison Marsh, that there would be a Church court, held for the purpose of determining my status in the Church in one week's time.

I put it in my pocket and went out the door. I headed for the bus stop. Barc was at work with his snakes, but right now I needed him more.

I was crying all through the bus ride, and I didn't even care if anyone was staring at me. Everything that I had submerged all winter long was surfacing in huge chunks inside of me. At the park, they told me Barc was out in the jungle. One of the snakes from his show had gotten loose; a new assistant hadn't properly secured the cage. They thought it was somewhere in the trees, and Barc was looking for it. They'd closed the reptile

house off to visitors, since it was a poisonous one, but they knew me and let me in. I sat down on the concrete floor that smelled like animals and cried and waited for Barc. I read my letter and cried some more and waited alone in the hall.

He didn't come and didn't come, and I finally decided to go in after him. I went into the jungle. I stayed on the path and started to sweat. What I didn't know was that the missing snake was the African Gabon viper. The viper that was tame for Barc and no one else. We met each other in the southeast corner of the courtyard, and he sunk his fangs in the white flesh of my right forearm. I guess he couldn't tell I was the Snake Man's lover.

I screamed. It hurt, but scared me more, and then Barc was there. He saw what had happened right away, and I was in an ambulance on the way to the hospital pretty quick. But I'll never forget what Barc did before it got there. After doing what he could for me, he got the snake. He took the machete he had been using to search with, and he chopped that snake's head off right then and there. He cut and he cut and he cut until that viper, that was like his best friend, was in one-inch pieces. I couldn't believe my eyes. After he'd finished being mad at the snake, he started getting mad at himself. He was the one that had insisted the snake's fangs be left alone. He never liked snakes to be devenomed. He thought nature was best left as nature.

I was never really in any danger of dying. Barc had gotten first aid for me quickly enough, but it was very painful. I lay there in the hospital bed, my arm so swollen that I thought my skin would burst, and my heart as heavy and sad as my arm was big. Barc found the letter from the Church when the nurses gave him my clothing.

The day I came home from the hospital was the day my court was to be held. I wondered if any of them knew what had happened to me. I got up early that morning and locked myself in our bathroom. Several hours later Barc came to see if I was all right.

"Allie? C'mon out."

I didn't say anything.

"C'mon out Allie. We have to talk."

"I don't want to."

"Why are you doing this? Why are you in there?"

"I like it in here. It's safe," I told him.

"Well, there aren't any snakes out here either," he said.

"That's not what I mean. I'm not afraid of your lousy old snakes."

He went away for a while and then came back to try again. He could hear my crying now.

"Aw, Allie, just let me in, all right?"

I didn't answer.

"At least tell me what's the matter. At least talk to me, at least give me that much."

I guess I began to pity him. He'd lost his best friend, the viper, and his girlfriend, or whatever I was, had been crazy on him for months. I unlocked the door. I went to him.

"I am so alone," I sobbed. "I am so alone."

He held me with those magic hands, and I let it all out.

"I miss my church," I told him. "I miss the hymns, I miss the meetings, I miss my feelings."

He let me go on and on.

"I miss the sacrament," I got out, between hiccups. "I want to take the sacrament again."

He stroked my hurt arm and let me talk. I told him all about my religion. Not its doctrine or how it got started, but what it meant to me. I told him everything I had told old big forehead Mills and much, much more, and he listened and listened and stroked my sore arm.

AND so that's how I ended up marrying the Snake Man. I told him he didn't have to do it, that I'd be all right, but he wouldn't have anything to do with that and said he was marrying me with or without my consent. The other thing that happened just then (Mom says she'd foreseen this in the crystal ball) was that Bishop Culver got made the stake president. He married us in Barc's garden out back. I don't know what he told Bishop Mills, but I guess whatever contrition I had was enough. They never officially kicked me out and so they didn't have to officially let me back in. But I could tell when I was back. Ten days after our wedding I went to church and took the sacrament. My reverence was back and so was I. ☞



HOME

Our house is clean and quiet; silence spreads to every part of every new-cleaned room. Except, that is, the peaceful sound of soap and rinsing water over breakfast plates. My sleeping roommate's inhale-exhale drifts into the kitchen from the frontroom couch.

The August wind and sun sift through the leaves outside the open window—lazy waves of shade that dance through curtains of white gauze and bring the city's rhythm: traffic's hum, a barking dog, the neighbor's ringing phone, a child's laugh, his mother's distant call.

I neatly stack our morning coffee cups with dishes packed inside a cardboard box. Disturbed by dreams, my roommate ends her nap, and asks the time. We pack the truck, then search and wander through the silent rooms. At times, we pause and look for things we've left behind.

—MARK JENSEN

In Angels in America, America is invoked both as a failed experiment and as the brightest hope for a progressive, truly egalitarian and caring society. Tony Kushner weaves reality and dreams, politics and sexual intoxication, religion, visions, ancient scholarship, and profound myth in his canvas of prolific imagination and passionate energy, but his grand vision finally excludes Mormons and all who are not part of the homosexual community.

ANGELS IN A MORMON GAZE OR UTOPIA, RAGE, COMMUNITAS, DREAM DIALOGUE, AND FUNHOUSE-MIRROR AESTHETICS

By Michael Evenden

A major American poet, perhaps one called a Gentile by the Latter-day Saints, sometime in the future will write their . . . story as the epic it was.

—HAROLD BLOOM
The American Religion

AFTER HIGHLY PUBLICIZED performances in London, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, an internationally lauded play that sets the sexual and political ethics of the Mormon community in opposition to those of the gay liberation movement, is now showing on Broadway. In it, the Mormon (the traditional Judeo-Christian) ethic suffers a spectacular defeat. At one time, this would have been inconceivable in a mainstream cultural setting. But those days of unspoken social consensus, are fading, and now Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*—a stirring evocation of a proud gay sensibility in

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The angel visits Prior in his bedroom, reminiscent of Moroni's visit to Joseph Smith.

In borrowing Mormonism's sacred story—angels, hidden scripture, Urim and Thummin, prophet, revelation—and parodying it, playwright Tony Kushner pays tribute to the Mormon imagination and ridicules Mormon teachings in one bold, self-contradictory stroke.

the age of AIDS—has become one of the most highly honored plays in recent memory, winning a Pulitzer, several Tonys, and a Drama Desk award. It has been the subject of a national highbrow media blitz (in 1992–93, an interview with Kushner on National Public Radio, one in the *New Yorker*, and a PBS television special). Now it is on its way to further national exposure—a major-studio film adaptation by Robert Altman is underway, as well as a national theatre tour and regional performances in San Francisco, Seattle, Houston, and Atlanta. Add to this the play's eventual inclusion in college curricula and availability in Barnes and Noble bookstores. Kushner's work constitutes an event in the national culture; further, its use of Mormon characters and beliefs constitutes a special event for Mormons, too.

Many cloistered Church members have put off any direct confrontation with a world of increasingly varied sexual lifestyles. But for a growing number of us, it is no longer possible to avoid the sometimes bewildering task of forging

Kushner is an impassioned, deft, and often brilliant writer, and his vivid language, wide-ranging imagination, shrewd characterization, and undeniable theatrical wit can produce a kind of wonder that at its fullest I associate with only the most skillful and intelligent dramatists.

links with our neighbors, friends, and associates who have different personal and sexual values. More and more of us live, in effect, suspended between communities. In my own case, I am deeply committed to an academic and artistic milieu and also to a church, each of which has taken an unequivocal position—diametrically opposed to the other—on the question of the legitimation of gay and lesbian sexualities. (I have friends on each side who would be appalled to learn that I feel any ambiguity on this issue. I have been, so to speak, in two closets—one Mormon, one politically liberal.)

I, therefore, must (however uncomfortably) position myself as I write about *Angels in America*. Kushner's play demands discussion by both the national and the Mormon communities. However, considering the breadth of coverage in the non-Mormon press and art establishments, the more urgent need is to generate a discussion among Latter-day Saints, which requires an unofficial forum such as SUNSTONE. So I write here as a Mormon, addressing other Mormons—any spillover to the culture at large is incidental. Yet my thoughts are informed by and responsive to a number of gay and lesbian friends and acquaintances. For that reason, I begin from what will be for many Church members an unorthodox assumption: that Kushner, while clearly an opponent of some of our traditional beliefs, may have some observations of value for us as a religious community. This assumption must, however, be complemented by an unorthodox stand regarding my liberal political sympathies: that a view of *Angels* originating within Mormonism may provide needed insights into Kushner's work as well.

I

ROY: Baptist, Catholic?

JOE: Mormon.

ROY: Mormon. Delectable. Absolutely. Only in America.
—*Millennium Approaches*, act 1, scene 3

ANGELS IN AMERICA is the umbrella title of two full-evening plays, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*.¹ *Millennium Approaches* (the title alone could startle Latter-day Saints) is the more conventional play, and in it the Church is invoked more or less peripherally, as a paradigm of the unthinking social conservatism and personal repression in the lives of three characters who happen to be LDS. At first, Mormonism is not so much demonized as made into a passing (although deepening) joke: in the play's New York setting the very existence of Mormons seems incongruous, comic. Given

the play's themes, this slighting view is unsurprising. It is also a minor issue: most audiences will register Mormonism's presence in this play, if at all, only as a sort of fanciful local color characterizing a few frustrated figures in one of several plot lines.

Mormon viewers will likely experience the play differently; they will be surprised and perhaps dismayed by its portrait of Joe Pitt, his wife Harper, and his mother Hannah. Joe, a young lawyer, married, professionally successful (he is an influential chief clerk in a federal court of appeals), a lifelong Mormon and rigidly conventional to the core, is also a tormented closet homosexual² on the verge of leaving behind the life he has known and embracing a lifestyle that he has been taught to abhor. Bottled up, awkward, and emotionally inarticulate, Joe is strongly characterized in this play and comes to resemble a type many of us have known—a desolate, duty-haunted soul, frightened of his own emotions and a stranger to spontaneity. In the course of *Millennium Approaches*, ineluctably worn down by a battle he cannot win, Joe experimentally leaves Harper and begins an affair with Louis, a gay co-worker who is himself haunted by guilt for abandoning his lover, Prior, who is dying of AIDS.

By now, the story of a Church member "coming out" of our community should not shock us in itself; however saddening, it is hardly news. Nor is the Pitt family story unimaginable to us: although they don't constitute a representative sample, most of us will recognize these characters, including Hannah (a dry and condemning Salt Lake widow) and Harper (a valium-addicted agoraphobic). In part, then, *Angels in America* tells a story we may have had to face within our shared lives, but now, thanks to this play, will see depicted more publicly: the failure of Mormon community, family, and theology to sustain and hold on to some of its own. But beyond this discomfort lies a greater one: our faith's fleeting characterization as an irrelevant joke, a sinkhole of dead values.

II

JOE: (*He puts his hand on one side of Louis's face. He holds it there.*) I am going to hell for doing this.

LOUIS: Big deal. You think it could be any worse than New York city?

—*Millennium Approaches*, act 3, scene 7

IT is important to put the Mormon themes in context: *Millennium Approaches* has bigger fish to fry than Mormon-baiting. Joe Pitt's story is only one of several interlinked

explorations of homophobia and failed ethics in what Kushner sees as hypocritical, deplorable inequities, and naked power-grabbing—an American ethos that, under the guise of law, crushes helpless minorities. If the play has a single center, it is not the emotionally blocked, clumsy Joe, but Prior, the gallant, witty, and keenly suffering AIDS patient. AIDS is at the center of this dramatic universe, and consequently the desolation and mad hopes of the dying shape the play's world, so shot through with the fear that not only homosexuality but humanity itself, its waywardness, resourcefulness, kindness, and capacity for survival, is in critical condition, especially in the play's Reaganite 1980s. Consequently, the play is haunted by the kind of death-threats that we now see levelled at whole communities: AIDS, the deteriorating ozone, the death of earlier generations from various old countries. These themes are reflected as if in distorting mirrors: through Harper's sad-funny, valium-induced hallucinations (which begin to incorporate other characters' dreams, in boundary-crossing theatrical absurdity); through Hannah's comic, stonewalling impatience with the messy humanity surrounding her on a visit to New York; through Joe's halting, anguished language and imagery of consuming guilt; through Louis's mad, eloquent bitterness as he finds himself unable to brave the sight of Prior's degeneration; and, perhaps most importantly, through Joe's increasingly compromising professional involvement with the fascinating, diabolical Roy Cohn.

Based on the historical Cohn—high-profile lawyer, government insider, power-broker, former assistant to anti-communist Joseph McCarthy, and dishonest participant in the prosecution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—Cohn is Kushner's demonic and charming antagonist, the virtuosic villain of the piece. As the moral opposite to Prior's victimized innocence, Cohn is a lodestar of personal, political, and spiritual monstrosity, compounded of political ambition, obsessive manipulation, megalomania, dishonor, self-hatred, and (crucially) closeted homosexuality. Throughout both plays Cohn and



Joe Pitt, a Mormon homosexual who is leaving his wife, beginning an affair with Louis, a gay Jew who is abandoning his AIDS-infected lover.

In Angels in America, playwright Tony Kushner makes an eccentric tour through Mormonism with scattered phrases and references but conveys no Mormon culture or belief system beyond the apparatuses of shame.

certain characters and themes are woven from one scene to the next in the redigued bodies and voices of the cast. Eeriness and growing reinforcement of ideas are skillfully merged as Kushner leaps over the influences on his writing (among them Bertolt Brecht, Caryl Churchill, Edward Bond) to arrive at a style that feels distinctly his own, a kind of funhouse-mirror aesthetic in which every kind of human relation might be ironized and put to question.

In the process, the play also becomes a kind of distorting mirror for Mormons, where we examine ourselves in a depiction both familiar and unrecognizable. Certainly any desire to view the play through comfortable and familiar assumptions—for example, to experience Joe's coming out as a tragedy—would contradict Kushner's depiction. For Joe, de-

Prior are dying of AIDS, but Cohn, unwilling to risk his political and social power by identifying with a vilified minority ("Homosexuals are men who know nobody and who nobody knows. Does this sound like me. . .?"), dies desperately (and futilely) trying to disguise his condition as liver cancer and himself as an honest lawyer.

These accumulated elements give the play's movement a morally and politically engaged complexity. Kushner is an impassioned, deft, and often brilliant writer, and his vivid language, wide-ranging imagination, shrewd characterization, and undeniable theatrical wit can produce a kind of wonder that at its fullest I associate with only the most skillful and intelligent dramatists—Ibsen, say, or Schiller. When has an American playwright so directly and skillfully attacked the personal, political, and spiritual in a single work, let alone interrelated them with such relaxed, spontaneous ingenuity? It is an art of interrelations; much of the cumulative richness and power of the play is built on canny strategies of mirroring, doubling, blending, and contrasting plots and characters: Kushner splits the stage for simultaneous scenes, echoes lines from one scene to another, assigns multiple roles to a small company (eight actors handle twenty parts) so that echoes of

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political, and spiritual in a single work, let alone interrelated them with such
relaxed, spontaneous ingenuity?*

spite his pathos, is no tragic protagonist, but often a comic figure, naive, pompous, awkward, and easily embarrassed in his painful, adolescent groping toward sexual self-expression. In this play, then, Joe's movement away from what the playwright considers an unauthentic marriage and a religion of cold personal repression is no decline, but only one of many difficult, inevitable, and possibly hopeful first steps—or leaps—into the unknown that Kushner demands of his characters, and implicitly of his audience as well. Here, hope lies in the unpredictable, the unexpected, the moment of experiment.

Hence, the moral essence of the play: the painful necessity of progressing beyond what Kushner sees as such unworkable social inheritances as majoritarian politics, organized religion, Old-World ethnic identity, governmental ideologies, and the unfulfilled dream of the American family. Above all, it presents an impassioned diatribe against the blindness and self-deceptions of those who long for the ideal, the inhumanly abstract virtues (nationalism, familism, authority-worship, conservatism of various kinds), at the expense of the immediate, the real, the personal and eccentric life in and around all of us.

The second and more daring play, *Perestroika*, is introduced by an aging and feeble "Bolshevik" mourning the "beautiful theory" of communism; he represents all who have invested their faith in deadly, unworkable schemes that have proved oppressive and have finally broken down. Traditions, in this world, are traps; the only hope is in *perestroika*—the dismantling of unworkable and inhumane systems of governance, behavior, and belief.

This insight is inflected, again, through the distorting mirrors of different characters' perspectives: through Harper's inconsolable sorrow ("People who are lonely, people left alone, sit talking nonsense to the air, imagining . . . beautiful systems dying, old fixed orders spiralling apart . . . everywhere, things are collapsing, lies surfacing, systems of defense giving way . . ."); through Prior's campy comedy in the face of death (when he announces to Louis that he has contracted AIDS, he manages a riff of cliché-haunted puns on the disruptive word "lesion"—lesionnaire, foreign lesion, lesionnaire's disease, my troubles are lesion); and through a few eruptions of political rage and hope, in which America is invoked both as a failed experiment and as the promise of a progressive, truly egalitarian and caring society. Here, incorporating the rich melancholy and humor that weave through the two nights of performance, is the unmistakable conviction that fuels this epic work, insisting that if our nation is to become honorable and fit for new life, it must rise above its own cruel history and inadequate traditions.

III

Poets, or at least the strongest among them, . . . can only read themselves. For them, to be judicious is to be weak, and to compare, exactly and fairly, is not to be elect.

—HAROLD BLOOM, *The Anxiety of Influence*

FOR themes this large, the playwright needs a sizable frame of reference, and it is not surprising to find Kushner in effect reinterpreting the cosmos onstage, interweaving reality and dreams, politics and sensual intoxication, or that he appropriates religion, visions, ancient scholarship, and profound myth to give him a canvas worthy of his prolific imagination and passionate energy. What we see here is a created world, not our own but a striking misprision—that is, a strong writer's creative rewriting of inherited texts.³

Misprision is especially evident in Kushner's wrestling with religion. *Millennium Approaches* is encased in religious book-ends, Jewish and Mormon (Kushner often seems to conflate the two, at least as sources of religious imagery). The play begins with the funeral oration of a rabbi over an immigrant woman (Louis's grandmother) who has died in obscurity and silence. ("She was the last of the Mohicans, this one was. Pretty soon . . . all the old will be dead.") From the first, then, religious heritage is on its last legs. We then notice scattered references to Mormons, a phrase here and there to suggest that Kushner has burrowed into the subject—yet it is very clear, to Mormons at least, that he has made his own eccentric tour through our culture, creating his own engaging misreading, where wrong notes and minor omissions abound. Thus Mormonism is oddly reduced to fit Kushner's needs: temple garments are referred to (and even shown), but no bishops; there are abstract and guilt-inducing beliefs but no home or visiting teachers; memories of Bible pictures but no recall of Bible or Book of Mormon stories or figures, no functional families, no rituals of counseling or blessing, no mention of priesthood, no callings, responsibilities, or social or religious activities for these struggling lifetime members. In short there is no Mormon culture, and for that matter, no Mormon belief system beyond the apparatuses of shame. (In a central omission, it is never clear from the text whether Joe is personally religious—we only learn that he prays and is self-hating.) The treatment of Mormonism is therefore a tourist's invention, rather quaint and smart-alecky, like Jean Baudrillard's jabs at the Church visitors' centers and the like in his freewheeling *America*. (Kushner's comic undercutting of visitors' center dioramas in *Perestroika*—Harper runs away from home to live in the pio-

neer display, hoarding vending-machine food, and having dreams in which the mannequins get up and leave the exhibit—has, I must admit, finally and completely destroyed the dioramas for me, my equivocal feelings for them now reduced to mortified hilarity.)

So the first evening of *Angels in America* is, in both quirky and predictable ways, the sort of unsympathetic reading of Mormonism one might expect from Kushner, a gay activist and (one infers) an agnostic. But there is more to come, a second religious scene, positioned as an answering bookend to the first: at the end of *Millennium Approaches*, a series of visionary hints given to the possibly hallucinating Prior culminates in a *coup de théâtre* that shocks:



Prim Mormon Hannah being forced by circumstance to assist the ill Prior at the LDS visitors' center.

Hannah's speech about Joseph Smith is the only place in the plays where Kushner doesn't overturn a conviction of institutional religion. Still, in the end, Hannah is the only Mormon redeemed precisely because her growth has taken her out of her Mormon identity.

(There is a creaking and a groaning from the bedroom ceiling, which rains plaster dust. The bedside light flickers wildly. Then there is a great blaze of triumphal music, heralding. The sky turns an extraordinary harsh, cold, pale blue, then a rich brilliant warm golden color, then a hot, bilious green, and then finally a spectacular royal purple.)

PRIOR (an awestruck whisper): God Almighty . . . Very Steven Spielberg.

(A sound, like a plummeting meteor, tears down from very, very far above the earth, hurtling at an incredible velocity towards the bedroom; the light seems to be sucked out of the room as the projectile approaches; as the room reaches darkness, we hear a terrifying CRASH as something immense strikes earth; the whole building shudders and a part of the bedroom ceiling, lots of plaster and lathe and wiring, crashes to the floor. And then in a shower of unearthly white light; spreading great opalescent grey-silver wings, the Angel descends into the room and floats above the bed.)

ANGEL: Greetings, Prophet; The Great Work begins: The Messenger has arrived.

(Blackout. End of Part One.)

No reviewer I have read has mentioned (probably because none of them has known or particularly cared) that this scene,

and the one that continues it at the start of *Perestroika* (a scene in which the Angel unearths for Prior a book of hidden scripture, to be translated through a Urim and Thummim—which Prior dons—all with the promise of new dispensation of prophecy), directly parodies the founding myth of the LDS church. It amounts, in fact, to a kind of elaborate, obscene burlesque of the First Vision and Moroni's subsequent visits to the young Joseph Smith's bedside. It also lays the ground for the higher philosophical and moral stakes of the second evening of the overarching *Angels in America*; in borrowing our sacred story, Kushner seems both to pay tribute to the Mormon imagination and to ridicule our teachings in one bold, self-contradictory stroke.

For those intimately familiar with the First Vision as a mythic event, the ironic reversals in Kushner's funhouse-mirror view of our theology become overwhelming: where Joseph Smith taught that he diligently sought an answer to a prayer, and received his vision only after much soul-searching and petitioning of the Almighty, Kushner's Angel forces herself on Prior, who responds to the vision, in vaudeville blackout timing, with "Go away!" The Angel's visits are erotically charged, presaged for Prior by unexpected erections and often accompanied, comically, by spontaneous orgasm (the angel does not touch him, by the way, and is referred to as "she," but is apparently multi-gendered, having (although not displaying) eight vaginas and four penises). Whereas Joseph's vision was the start of a new religious tradition and a Moses-like trek to a new promised land, all fueled by the promise of ongoing revelation and communal progression into knowledge of the divine, Prior's vision commands all mortals to stop all movement, to cease the development of new ideas and new forms of social order—Kushner's angels, in short, are bureaucratic but not imaginative (managers but not leaders, in Hugh Nibley's terms) and any earthly intellectual or spiritual adventure threatens their heavens; and centrally, where Joseph's vision began with the arrival of God the Father and led to a changed view of human potential, Kushner's God, the ultimate dysfunctional patriarch, has withdrawn from the world and from heaven; the angels are hoping to lure the old recluse back by preventing any future

Woven with rich melancholy and humor is the unmistakable conviction that
if our nation is to become honorable and fit for new life, it must rise above its
own cruel history and inadequate traditions.

imaginative, social, or political growth on earth, confining all to stasis and tradition, with their new scripture, the "Anti-Migratory Epistle."

Any Mormons who attend *Perestroika* will probably view it with a degree of dismay (even amused horror), since for us it can only be a kind of unexpected comic blasphemy on familiar themes. Much later, at the climax of *Perestroika*, a desperately ailing Prior travels to heaven—ludicrously dressed as Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments*—and gives back the book of new scripture in exactly the words one might expect of a disinterested missionary contact: "I . . . I want to return this. Thank you . . . for sharing it with me, but I don't want to keep it."⁴ The rejection of the book is crucial to the larger meanings of the play: the message of the unwanted scripture, a closed book, is closure itself, the very essence of conservatism and the refusal of life; to reject it is to reject moral and spiritual death. Rejecting the sublime by recourse to the obscene and ridiculous, the playwright takes enormous risks with this strategy and I believe has a kind of heady success. But perhaps only chagrined Mormons will fully get his very elaborate joke.

IV

HARPER: I'm a Mormon.

PRIOR: I'm a homosexual.

HARPER: Oh! In my church we don't believe in homosexuals.

PRIOR: In my church we don't believe in Mormons.

—*Millennium Approaches*, act 1, scene 7

If *Millennium Approaches* is a play of bad news and unravellings (it traces Prior and Cohn's early stages of AIDS illness and the dissolution of the two couples, one Mormon, one gay, in a series of painful conversations, miscommunications, and dreams), then *Perestroika* is an evening of visions and desperate hope. As Cohn comes closer to death he is haunted by the sardonic ghost of Ethel Rosenberg; Prior has visions, and strikes up an unlikely friendship with Joe's mother, Hannah, who prefers the outlandish Prior to her disappointing son and daughter-in-law; Louis, disgusted by Joe's politics and particularly his record of abetting federal circuit court decisions that discriminate against gays and lesbians, throws Joe out and returns to Prior; Harper, after trying to live in a visitors' center diorama (the most artificial and lifeless embodiment of Mormonism), emerges and begins the hard task of pulling herself and her life together without Joe; and Harper's meditation on the ozone hole begins and ends the play—first as a vision of the dissolution of God's protections, and finally as a space for faith and a kind of committed memory of human suffering:

I dreamed we were there. The plane leapt the tropopause, the safe air and attained the outer rim, the ozone, which was ragged and torn, patches of it threadbare as old cheesecloth, and that was frightening. . . .

But I saw something only I could see, because of my astonishing ability to see such things:

Souls were rising, from the earth far below, souls of the dead, of people who had perished, from famine, from war, from the plague, and they floated up, like skydivers in reverse, limbs all akimbo, wheeling and spinning. And the souls of these departed joined hands, clasped ankles, and formed a web, a great net of souls, and the souls were three-atom oxygen molecules, of the stuff of ozone, and the outer rim absorbed them, and was repaired. No loss is irrevocable. See? Nothing's lost forever. In this world, there is a kind of painful progress. Longing for what we've left behind, and dreaming ahead. At least I think that's so.

All that remains after this consoling final speech is a brief, epiphanic epilogue that has become the center of much critical attention (indeed, perhaps a disproportionate amount of attention, as if it were the essence of the work), a scene in which the lives of several characters extend into a pleasant future (January 1990). Prior, Louis, their friend Belize, a gay African-American man and sometime drag-queen, and Hannah, the Salt Lake widow, sit in the winter sun in Central Park on the rim of the Bethesda Fountain, enjoying the pleasures of intimate and informal community—intelligent conversation, reading, political debate, and a hope for a non-sectarian miracle that will cure Prior (who has already asked the angels for "more life," and has survived five years with AIDS). It is Hannah (described in the stage directions as "noticeably different—she looks like a New Yorker, and she is reading *The New York Times*") who promises to take Prior to the original Bethesda fountain in Jerusalem when the Millennium comes, to bathe him and all of the gathered friends clean—implicitly a vision of miraculous cure for all tribulation. In Prior's survival, in Hannah's benediction, in the sweet, familiar rhythms of conversation, *Angels in America* ends in *communitas*, a sense of religious beneficence in a secular gathering.

Most critics have been eager to write about this epilogue as a sunny and expansive affirmation of community in a large, inclusive sense. John Lahr of the *New Yorker* writes that "'Perestroika' ends by celebrating community . . . the community of concern is extended by the author to the human family, not just the gay world."⁵ Hal Gelb of the *Nation* sees the ending as marked by "tolerance not just for gays but for Mormons too."⁶ Kushner has echoed them in interviews, focusing, I

infer, particularly on his ambivalent offering of a kind of final acceptance to Cohn: in a preceding scene, Belize insists that Louis recite Kaddish over Cohn's dead body while Belize steals Cohn's stash of AZT for other, needier patients; Louis recites the prayer haltingly, in unison with the ghost of Ethel Rosenberg, thus acknowledging Cohn's suffering as an AIDS patient—but ending the prayer with “You sonofabitch.” “The question I'm trying to ask is how broad is a community's embrace,” Kushner has said. “How wide does it reach?”⁷

But a Mormon might ask, “What's wrong with this picture?” The answer raises an issue that has been obscured in an understandable wash of critical enthusiasm. For as it happens, this poignant epilogue, like the play it follows, is considerably less inclusive than many have taken it to be—in fact, it may be just as exclusive as Kushner has implicitly accused the LDS church of being. As Louis Marin notes in *Utopiques: jeux d'espace*, it is the tendency of imagined Utopias to reproduce the contradictions they were set up to escape. If Marin is right, then it might be worthwhile to upend this quasi-religious ending, in order to seek out any rigidities, orthodoxy, idealism, and refusal of *communitas* that may linger there in this epilogue's hard-won Utopian space, a space that shuts out not just the homophobia, but in a larger sense the rigidities, the orthodoxies, the dead-at-heart idealist, categorical, and judgmental thinking of organized religion (specifically Mormonism). A subaltern reading of this material through a Mormon gaze may reveal something of the limits of vision and of representation that are the givens of Kushner's polemical misprision.

If one takes an inventory of the characters onstage in this epilogue, it is interesting to note who has been left out, or left behind five years ago with the rest of the action: Joe, at last sight ambiguous about his gayness and still politically unenlightened; Harper, too, is gone, self-exiled. That's two principal figures associated with Mormonism out of the picture; Hannah, the final one, is there, but the accumulations of dialogue, character interaction, and final stage directions strongly suggest that by this point Hannah has grown out of her Mormon identity.⁸ A limited vision of tolerance, then: accepting Mormons so long as they agree to leave their religion behind and stop being Mormon. This Utopian collective of



Louis and Prior in the epilogue at Bethesda Fountain in Central Park.

*What's wrong with the play's ending message?
Kushner's climactic vision of a tolerant
community accepts Mormons only so long
as they agree to leave their religion behind.*

carefully worked out by Kushner, admits no heterosexuals to the space of the play unless they are played in drag (as are a government insider, a doctor, a rabbi, the ghost of a Jewish grandmother [her scene omitted on Broadway], and—in an earlier draft that may resemble the three pre-Broadway productions—in three middle-level Mormon leaders).¹⁰ Even allowing that characters without a defined gay or lesbian sexuality are peripheral to this story (which may be Kushner's witty revenge for the mainstream marginalization and non-representation of gays, an overdue reversal I enjoy), something is nevertheless clearly skewed here; something seems unrepresentable, unthinkable within the project of this play. Here, in a stylistic trope that cultural theorists could elaborate on endlessly, heterosexuality (particularly that of men) is a masquerade, while gayness is an unproblematic construct, an essential, integrated identity.¹¹

On reflection, then, it becomes clear that the only community this play can truly imagine and deal with is that created by gay men and those loyal to them (the latter value is what ultimately saves Hannah, granting her a place in the final tableau). Hence the implicit exclusion of straight men, (who I guess are assumed to be apathetic or enemies to the gay community). Thus the characters disloyal to gayness—Harper, who has impeded Joe, Joe, who has physically beaten Louis in a quarrel over Joe's politics, and Cohn, who has refused to acknowledge his sexuality—are barred from the epiphany. Even more tellingly, everyone left on stage at the end has the distinction of having proven loyal to Prior, who is not just a gay man but an AIDS patient—one who suffers undeservingly for his sexuality.

friendship (an important imaginative site for gays and lesbians and for Mormons, too)⁹ must exclude difference: consciously or not, Kushner apes the Church's way of accepting homosexuals only when they repudiate their difference, their sexuality.

In fact, despite its epic range, *Angels in America* features other striking omissions: what the play excludes throughout its seven hours is anyone outside the gay and lesbian community (although wives and mothers of gay men are given a temporary reprieve until they sort themselves out), except in distanced and parodic representation—the doubling of actors for supporting characters, specified and

These, finally, are the only meaningful relations in Kushner's imagined world, seemingly the only moral experiences available—in an existence marked by AIDS (and Kushner evokes no non-gay AIDS patients), loyalty to afflicted gay men is the one fixed moral criterion. From this, the play's moral logic becomes unmistakable: in parallel scenes, we are given to understand that Louis, for abandoning Prior—because Prior is a suffering gay man—is nearly unredeemable; but Joe, in leaving his helpless and irrational wife—apparently because she is a suffering straight woman—is only taking a necessary, if painful, step into the right community. Kushner exacts stern punishments according to this tendentious ethic: Louis must be beaten up¹² before he can enter even a portion of Prior's good graces (Prior, sitting in judgment, refuses to let Louis move back in with him even then); and Joe, who never follows his tentative coming out with a full embrace of a gay lifestyle and apposite liberal politics, is left in limbo, apparently not yet fit for *communitas*. Yet Cohn, of all people (as Kushner has said), is seen as marginally redeemable in the end, despite his continuing moral grotesquery. Why? Because he is part of the community of AIDS patients. A virus, insofar as it creates community, covers a multitude of sins.

Therefore, if Kushner sincerely reaches for an ethical vision of America, at points his reach exceeds his grasp. The play remains confined to the predictable limits of—to borrow his subtitle—"A Gay Fantasia on National Themes." The principal theme is the imperative of opening our hearts to people with AIDS—no small or unworthy theme, of course; AIDS is one of the crucial issues of our time, and Kushner is to be praised for portraying it with such compelling urgency and for insisting on the right to challenge any governmental, religious, or personal status quo that flatly rejects the sick and the dying. But, granting all this, the critics have nevertheless misrepresented Kushner's achievement—and the sternness of his central vision—in a kind of sentimental approbation: the very strength of Kushner's writing comes in part from its refusal of touchy-feely universality, its clear advocacy of a militant minority position.

The widely touted ecumenical embrace that critics have sensed in the play's conclusion is misguided; clearly, at a fundamental level, Kushner is not reconciliatory with those he considers the enemies of his people. This is a work written in anger by a writer of delicacy who nevertheless wishes not to hobble himself with delicate distinctions. All forms of good and evil finally coalesce into a few images, and in his concluding moral judgments of who is on the side of life and who on that of death, Kushner paints with a very broad brush. Perhaps, then, mainstream critics were wrong to expect anything as meager as tolerance from Kushner in the first place. In misreading this ending as inclusive—rather than still militant and unforgiving of everyone Kushner finds lacking—straight critics have simply invented a kinder, gentler Tony Kushner, out of their own need not to be condemned, a desire to feel includable, even forgivable, in a gay and lesbian Elysium. Kushner's anger seems to be too much for the mainstream to face.

V

JOE: Do you want to be pure or do you want to be effective? Choose.

—*Perestroika*, act 1, scene 7

THIS does not mean, however, that the Kushner whose concerns extend beyond the immediate issues of gay community and the AIDS crisis is simply a critics' fiction: Kushner himself—by sending ideas to resonate through religious, ethnic, and political-ideological registers—touches on a nationwide hunger for a larger vision, one free of tendentious and combative self-positioning, but still grounded in concrete (and therefore limited, positional) experience. The leap from self-understanding to understanding the other is a tough transition to make in America and in much of the rest of the world these days. Commendably, Kushner seems to be struggling with it: the long and tortuous process of rewriting *Perestroika* for Broadway led to some interesting, even tantalizing new moves in the text that hint at a broader view, not least in the softening or excising certain derisive Mormon references. For instance, there is no longer a comic scene of fussy regional general authorities, played in drag, complaining about Harper's invasion of the visitor's center; Prior no longer identifies the visiting angel as the one Joseph Smith mis-identified as Moroni. More importantly, Hannah's discontentment with her life and the Church, while not excised, is certainly lessened: references to Hannah's unsatisfying marriage, her disgust with sex, her memory of a Salt Lake friend who burned down her house in revenge for marital rape, have all been taken away, as has the hint of Hannah's emerging lesbian interest in a female nurse who comes on to her. More, beyond these omissions, Kushner has managed to add a remarkable passage that suggests for the first time that Hannah may actually retain some personal religious conviction (a rare commodity in this play):

HANNAH: One hundred and seventy years ago, which is recent, an angel of God appeared to Joseph Smith in upstate New York, not far from here. People have visions.

PRIOR: But that's preposterous, that's . . .

HANNAH: It's not polite to call other people's beliefs preposterous. He had great need of understanding. Our Prophet. His desire made prayer. His prayer made an angel. The angel was real. I believe that.

This moment is unique in *Angels in America*—perhaps the only time that a conviction of an institutionally supported belief is not immediately overturned by the playwright's mockery. Sitting in the theater, I found Hannah's speech surprising and poignantly out-of-place in a work that made little concession to religious faith. This is not to say that Kushner has managed to turn his play into something genuinely sympathetic to traditional religions—this touching, incongruous moment (which my personal response surely granted disproportionate importance) is minor compared to the overall sym-

bolic movement of Prior's story throughout *Perestroika*: our hero goes to heaven to reject the finished text of codified religion, to reject God as a neglectful and abusive father, and this central story outweighs any momentary concessions to religious sensibilities.

Still, this unintegrated gesture of religious tolerance (that is, tolerance of religion) is interesting, at least as a sign of an unfinished question in the playwright's mind. After all, the writing of *Angels in America* is still, in some sense, unfinished: Kushner, presumably working on the screenplay of the coming film, has mentioned a desire to write more scripts involving some of these characters; even the process of staging the play in various parts of the country under different directors may modestly "rewrite" it through the mediation of new interpretations.¹³ The easy stereotypicality of the play's original depiction of Mormons (Kushner's most obvious failure of imaginative work) may not be the final word we will hear from Kushner on this subject.

VI

PRIOR [to Hannah]: I wish you would be more true to your demographic profile. Life is confusing enough.
—*Perestroika*, act 5, scene 7

HAVING held a critical mirror up to Kushner, however, it would be dishonest (classic mote/beam blindness) not to take the possibly more painful step of examining ourselves again, to study our distorted image in a flawed, but still arguably great, play and see what we can learn. Kushner's examination of Mormon beliefs will lead to difficult questions from the surrounding culture; as a people, we had best prepare.¹⁴ The hardest query will be: "Why does the Church condemn same-sex relations?" The issue is a stirring one for many, and even asking the question might provoke a fundamental outrage; however, I believe we should be ready and able to discuss our tradition, with outsiders and with each other. Here I can only suggest one beginning to that discussion.

For those who, like me, would like to see the Church learn from Kushner's misrepresentation, and who would also like to be able to communicate across the resentment and enmity with which the activist gay and lesbian community regards a faith like ours, there is another possible Elysium glimpsed in *Angels in America*. Early in *Millennium Approaches*, a fantastic and logically inexplicable scene develops between Harper and Prior, in an odd blending of her hallucination and his dream; unexpectedly, a fantasy space is created where the naive Mormon and the dying drag queen can meet and come to know each other in some sort of exchange. ("Threshold of revelation" is a phrase they toss back and forth in this unreal arena.) If we had access to some such space, some level playing field of ideas where the Mormon and gay communities could meet in peace and enter into dialogue,¹⁵ here is what I would most like to make clear: that our two opposed communities share a certain rhetoric, a claim of inner necessity from which

one's identity and community may be derived. This shared rhetoric might be the key to some sort of mutual respect or tolerance. But in order for that tolerance to exist, each community would need to make a boundary-crossing acknowledgment of the validity of more than one source of personal and community identity. Mormons, on the one hand, would have to admit—late in the day—that homosexuality is to some degree spontaneous, not a matter of simple choice, and further that for some, perhaps for many, these unbidden sexual feelings are experienced as fundamental to one's personal makeup, inherent and important to one's essential being. But the assumptions that underlie this belief implicitly beg a further question: is sexuality the only source of identity? Or, is it always the most important one? I would contend that for many of us, religion operates at the same level of unbidden self-discovery: when religious experiences exceed routine and habit, they can be real spiritual events, capable of grounding a life and generating an identity.

This idea of, so to speak, *spiritual* orientation, and its consequences—religious identity and community—are what is missing, unimagined in the dark psyches of Kushner's pseudo-Mormons. Many in the gay and lesbian community want to believe that no refusal of the imperatives of sexual desire can succeed, just as many Mormons would dearly love to believe that no personal testimony of the gospel can be defeated by unmet sexual need. We should each acknowledge that by now we know better, and seek to extend understanding to all, without insisting or oversimplifying the complexity of these issues.¹⁶ For to limit the possibilities of identity, of selfhood, surely this is the real path to orthodoxies and repressions. Kushner seems to assume gay orthodoxies by the handful, and thus produces stereotypes, like the sex-starved, denial-ridden, bitter and utterly lonely Mormons he dreams up. Conversely, most Mormons have had to struggle to think beyond received stereotypes of gays and lesbians. Now that we are on the receiving end of Kushner's brilliant and off-and-on stereotyping, I hope we can respond intelligently and generously, more chastened than defensive, taking the high road of self-examination and open-hearted humility, warned against our own temptation to yield to the comforts of unexamined prejudice. ☞

NOTES

1. I have, perhaps, oversimplified the discussion so far by conflating the two parts under the single title; while Kushner clearly intends the two halves to constitute a single, expansive work, much of the initial critical furor over *Angels* actually centered on the first part, *Millennium Approaches*, which opened in New York in the spring of 1993, joined the following fall by its conclusion, *Perestroika*. *Millennium Approaches* took the Pulitzer (*Perestroika* lost to Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women*); my impression (subjective) is that the general enthusiasm over the second play is a bit muted. Since it is *Perestroika* that particularly wrestles with Mormonism, this complication should be noted.

2. The term "homosexual" is historically problematic, as many gay activists find it redolent of the debatable social construction of same-sex desire that developed with the term's actual emergence in the nineteenth century. For this article, I have accepted Kushner's frequent use of the term, both in the play and elsewhere in print, as license to use it without necessarily incorporating unwanted assumptions. One provocative discussion of the issue may be found in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet* (London: Harvester and Wheatsheaf,

1991), 31–34.

3. The term misprision is a foundational one for the literary critic Harold Bloom, quoted above, whom Kushner credits as a source for one idea in the play; Bloom has written his own mocking/admiring misprision of Mormonism in *The American Religion*—one wonders if Kushner knew this book.

4. Kushner was once the recipient of a copy of the Book of Mormon from a kid he met as a summer camp counselor. He became interested in Mormons, he says, as a “people of the Book”—rigid and more reverent about texts than life. Without that young member’s effort, the Mormon passages of *Angels* might not exist—would-be missionaries take heed!

5. John Lahr, “Beyond Nelly,” *New Yorker* (23 November 1992): 129–30.

6. Hal Gelb, “Theater,” *Nation* (22 February 1993): 247.

7. Quoted by Lahr, “Beyond Nelly,” 129.

8. The suggestion arises from a pattern of details that in Kushner’s weighted universe seem to have symbolic importance: restless and cynical in Salt Lake, skeptical about the Saints, and untouched by love on almost any level, Hannah has, by the end of the combined play, chosen to leave Salt Lake for New York indefinitely (and geographical place and migration do count for a good deal in this play), has changed her look so that Kushner can insist that she seems changed at last, newly adjusted to a secular space (with Salt Lake representing, in this play, a separate Mormon civilization, nothing less). Certainly the religious vision she imparts at the end is very foreign to Mormon tradition.

Further, there were, in the earliest version of *Perestroika* I read, not only more gibes from Hannah about Mormon culture, but also hints of Hannah’s slowly coming to understand herself as a lesbian: in that version, she admitted to preferring the company of women, then confessed that she always hated sex with her husband, then—in a passage that seems to me an egregiously tasteless joke on any number of grounds, and a joke that is preserved in the Broadway version—at the end of one scene, the angel (played, after all, by an actress) kisses her on the mouth and gives Hannah “an enormous orgasm.” (“I have never had a dream like that one,” she remarked later in the earlier draft, inviting audience smirks.) After this, again in the earlier version, she showed an interest in a young lesbian who came on to her, played by the same actress who played the angel. A lesbian relationship, we might well have inferred, may be in her future; and when next we see her, years later, she seems “changed.” There was never any open statement about Hannah’s sexuality—but certainly we were meant, in the earlier version, to register at least a hint.

So is Hannah still a Mormon at the end of the play? Obviously, the Mormon compulsion to distinguish between faithful and unfaithful or former members—a compulsion I fall into here—seems unimportant to Kushner and to the reviewers I’ve read, but its absence leads to a question: when is a Mormon not a Mormon?, and further, what is a Mormon to Tony Kushner? The play’s answers leave much to be desired.

9. See Peter M. Nardi, “That’s What Friends Are For: Friends As Family in the Gay and Lesbian Community,” *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experience*, ed. Ken Plummer (London and New York: Routledge, 1992). I know of no comparable studies of Mormon friendship-networks, although it seems to me a matter ready for investigation, particularly in our age of consolidated meetings and compensatory study-groups. Certainly I would not have been able to finish this article without the encouragement and suggestions of a loose collective of Mormon friends.

10. I am oversimplifying; sometimes actors strongly identified with gay characters play straight roles briefly, as was the case with one of the Mormon managers; but the effect may be more or less the same, and it is certainly a calculated defamiliarizing effect that Kushner intends here in any case.

11. The cast lists of the London production of *Angels* actually lists a ninth actor who took on some of these peripheral roles; nevertheless the (frequently cross-gender) doubling I refer to is specified by Kushner in the published version of the script.

12. In the earlier version, Louis was actually required to beat himself up with a frying pan as a formal penance for abandoning the dying Prior.

13. One wonders how the symbolic geography of the play will read in touring or regional productions: Kushner uses Hannah’s journey from Salt Lake City to New York as a forced pilgrimage from the dark ages into enlightenment—but how many of us in the rest of the country accept New York as the pinnacle of advanced civilization? Kushner’s stage direction in the epilogue, dictating that Hannah should demonstrate her new cultivation by reading the *New York Times*, seems faintly, unintentionally ridiculous. My own fantasy is that some production will let Hannah appear in the final scene reading the Bible—carrying an older kind of wisdom with her as she branches out into new learning, moving ahead without leaving all of her old identity behind.

14. There are other plays besides Kushner’s that challenge the Church’s position on homosexuality. In the 1980s, *Emmett: A One-Mormon Show* by Emmett Foster, about growing up gay in the Church, played at the New York Shakespeare Festival and has been made selectively available by the author/actor on videotape. A play I encountered as a reader for the Seattle Repertory Theater—I’ve forgotten the title—included a struggling adolescent boy who had joined the Church and was confused by its condemnation of his homosexual feelings.

15. My categories may be simplistic; when I delivered a preliminary version of this review essay at the 1994 Washington D.C. Sunstone Symposium, the presence of at least one member of Affirmation (whose members attempt to live in both gay and Mormon communities at once) made the “we” and “they” of my argument dry up in my mouth. This opposition is here employed as a conceptual frame, and may be read as if under erasure.

16. Some in the fields of gay and lesbian studies and activism are beginning to recognize the narrowness of certain simplistic visions of sexuality and identity. See, for example, Kobena Mercer, “Welcome to the Jungle: Identity and Diversity in Postmodern Politics,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 65, and an excellent “theoretical rumination” in Foucauldian terms by Ed Cohen, in “Who Are ‘We’?: Gay ‘Identity’ as Political (E)motion,” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991). As always, such meditations on group identity and difference raise issues the indirectly impact on Mormon identity and internal differences as well.



CATCHING LIGHT

On summer evenings in Indiana
we kids ran through the neighborhood
catching lightning bugs.

Most we put in bottles to
light up the night.

They ran over each other in the jars,
flickering their tiny lights on and off.

The biggest kids ran a contest
to see who could catch the most.

It took a lot to make a satisfactory light.

At six or eight we no longer believed
our mothers’ tales of fairy folk
with lanterns in the night.

We could see they were just
flying bugs, with no feelings and
no purpose but to give us games.

The older kids taught the younger
how to catch the tails of the
bugs just as they lit,
and pinch them off aflame.

If we smeared the little lanterns up our
arms and over our faces
they left streaks of light.

Then in the final darkness,
we ran screaming through the yards,
like lighted demons.

—DONNA R. CHENEY

O N T H E R E C O R D

THE WRIGHT
EXCOMMUNICATION
DOCUMENTS

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

ALMOST A YEAR before his 5 April 1994 excommunication for publishing his belief that the Book of Mormon is a nineteenth-century text, Brandeis professor of Near Eastern Studies David Wright recorded the following in his journal: "Last night [27 April 1993] I met with the bishop of my ward for about two hours. About two weeks ago, the executive secretary called to set up an appointment. He did not know and therefore could not tell me what the meeting was about. So I stewed for two weeks. It could have been about the article I recently published in *SUNSTONE*, it could have been about . . . my daughters . . . storming out of their Young Women's meeting at Ward Conference a couple of weeks ago when a high counselor . . . denigrated gays and said they should not be allowed in the military (and when my daughters were subsequently questioned about their testimonies by a stake Young Woman's [sic] leader in the women's rest room), it could have been about our family's not attending church so regularly in recent months, or it could have been planning for [one son's] ordination and [another's] baptism which are to occur in July. Well, it was about the *SUNSTONE* article. . . ."

The article, "Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth" (*SUNSTONE*, Sept. 1992), originally presented to the B. H. Roberts Society in early 1992, marks one of the few times Wright—a returned missionary and graduate of the University of Utah and Berkeley—had spoken publicly about his Book of Mormon beliefs since his dismissal from BYU in 1988 over that and related issues. (After being fired from BYU, Wright went to Jerusalem on a Fulbright Scholar Research Award, then taught at Middlebury College in Vermont before settling at Brandeis in 1991.) Bishop James Reeder interviewed Wright at the request of the stake president, who had been contacted by a general authority concerning the *SUNSTONE* article. Bishop Reeder determined that Wright's beliefs were "apostate." When the question of Wright's sons' baptism and ordination came up in July, Bishop Reeder determined that Wright, who had not altered his views, was not worthy to perform the ordinances. A friend stood in for Wright, and shortly thereafter the Wright family stopped attending Church meetings.

Wright's second major public discussion of the Book of Mormon was "In Plain Terms That We May Understand: Joseph Smith's Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12–13," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (edited by Brent Metcalfe, Signature Books, 1993), published shortly after the *SUNSTONE* article. In September 1993, Bishop Reeder requested that Wright meet with their stake president, Ned Wheeler. In the interim Reeder had obtained a copy of Metcalfe's

book (which had been widely publicized in an Associated Press article and which Wright had brought to Reeder's attention) and concluded that the stake president should pursue the matter. Although the controversy surrounding the September disciplinary councils for Utah authors made Wright "reticent" to meet with President Wheeler, he did so, and Wheeler encouraged him to "undertake a spiritual discipline so that [he] would become orthodox in [his] thinking."

Hurt by the September excommunications, David declined two invitations in October to meet with his bishop. No further contact was made concerning the issue until February 1994, when Wright declined still another invitation to meet with Bishop Reeder.

Two weeks following this latest invitation, Wright was informed that a bishop's court would be held 20 February to determine what course of action would take place concerning his Church membership. Wright chose not to attend, but sent a letter explaining his position. His wife Dianne sent a letter as well; the two letters were widely distributed and discussed on *MORMON-L*, an LDS electronic discussion network (and are reproduced below). In this larger forum, Wright found both supporters and detractors. "What Br. Wright is really suggesting here is that somehow scholars are above the discipline that regular Mormons face . . . [suggesting] that so long as you can footnote your views they must be somehow correct. If the criticisms of Br. Wright are correct then can there be such a thing as apostasy at all?" wrote one *MORMON-L* participant. Surprisingly, perhaps, Wright garnered some support from members of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.), which had issued a 500-plus page response to Metcalfe's book. The *Salt Lake Tribune* quoted BYU professor and F.A.R.M.S. editor Daniel Peterson as calling Wright's position "intellectually incoherent," adding that although he didn't "want to see this middle position dominate, . . . I am not eager to throw its advocates out of the church."

The bishop's council was featured on the front page of a local Massachusetts newspaper, and Wright explained his reason for not attending the meeting: he saw his case following the patterns of the September excommunications and as an attack on the dignity of his scholarship. The article quoted President Wheeler as suggesting Wright could have faced excommunication for refusing to attend the bishop's council. Further, the stake president said the "whole purpose of a disciplinary council is to help a person see the error of their ways. We want to help heal people. But if they don't want to discuss it, that certainly says something, doesn't it?"

Bishop Reeder moved to take the matter to the stake president and high council, but allowed an informal meeting between Wright, a counselor in the bishopric, and a friend from the Wright's ward. Wright was informed that his wife's letter to the bishop's council had sparked a desire for more open communication between all parties concerned. This and a subsequent meeting were followed by a 29 March meeting among Wright, the bishop, and the stake president. Wright later recalled that after two hours of discussion it had become "clear that I could not satisfy [their] requirements for membership in the Church." When President Wheeler asked how Wright felt about the previous year's meetings with leaders, "I told him that [the meetings] had been spiritually abusive and that they had dissipated what faith I had." Convinced the meeting would lead nowhere, Wright rose, shook their hands, and prepared to leave. "I asked the stake president if he was going to take action to do so quickly," he recalled. "Two days later I received notice of the stake disciplinary council." Wright defended himself before that body on 5 April, along with Dianne Wright, and Stephen Thompson, an LDS Egyptologist from Brown University. On 9 April, Wright received a letter informing him he had been excommunicated for apostasy. The charges against him included his dis-

To be orthodox, David would have to say that the evidence he sees in the scriptures is not there. In other words, from his viewpoint, he would need to lie.

—Dianne Wright

belief in some Biblical events (including a literal flood and Tower of Babel) and contradicting the opinions of modern prophets. "When our Prophets speak in their office and calling, they will be directed by inspiration and when they speak as such all debate should stop," President Wheeler wrote. "Careful attention through fasting, prayer and scripture study will reveal the truth of these things to you and help you to regain full fellowship for which we deeply desire."

Wright's excommunication is the seventh in a series of nationally publicized sanctions against LDS intellectuals and feminists.

The following documents outline his case in greater detail; they serve as a case study of conflicting Mormon world views—firmly rooted but radically different beliefs both parties feel are born of the Spirit. To Wright, Mormonism's claim to embrace all truth makes space for scholarship that cuts against orthodox norms; to Wheeler, the fundamental principle of the gospel is unquestioning obedience to authority, something Wright's pluralistic vision by nature resists. We hope this case study will facilitate a greater understanding of the dynamics involved in recent Church conflicts.

A WIFE'S WITNESS

DIANNE WRIGHT'S LETTER
FOR THE 20 FEB. 1994 BISHOP'S COUNCIL

Wright's wife argues that in order to deny his conclusions, he would have to lie. Rather than force this dishonesty, the Church should be willing to include diversity.

February 20, 1994

Dear Bishop Reeder;

I would like to speak in behalf of my husband, David. As I think about this situation, I realize that none of you know either David or myself. A few of you may have spoken to us three or four times, but none of you know us as people. None of you understand Biblical scholarship, which is the basis of the events that have brought David to this court. I cannot imagine how in a few short hours you can even begin to understand either David or his arguments. Without this understanding, it is impossible to make a righteous judgement.

Given this reservation, I will attempt to help you understand David.

David is an honest conscientious scholar. His honesty is

more important to him than his own personal comfort. David cannot say that there is evidence to support something just to make people like him or even to protect his membership in this church. David's beliefs are based on a careful, detailed study of the scriptures. To be orthodox, David would have to say that the evidence that he sees in the scriptures is not there. In other words, (from his viewpoint) he would need to lie.

David's honesty has cost him dearly. He was fired from BYU because he had the courage and honesty to tell a vice president of BYU his beliefs. David's beliefs are founded on thousands of hours of detailed research. These conclusions did not come easily for David. The church is a great part of his identity. To be a scholar of

integrity one must hold to truth above all else.

This church was founded on the search for truth by Joseph Smith. Joseph used every means available to him to find truth. Indeed, one of the great joys we have on this earth is our quest to find truth.

David has spent much time and devotion in his quest for truth. His journey will continue for the rest of his life. He will use every resource available to him to find it.

To many of you, his search is evil because it does not come to orthodox conclusions. However, can this church really claim to be the only true church and cast out an individual for his sincere search for truth? Is scholarship a problem in the church? I believe with all my heart that scholarship does not need to be a problem. Scholarship will enrich our understanding as well as give us challenges. However, the church will be made much stronger by facing these challenges honestly.

The real problem in the church today is the growing intolerance toward people who don't fit into the orthodox ideal. Intolerance breeds hate. Hate will destroy the church. We need to love and respect each other

more. We need to realize that there is more than one way to be a good Latter-day Saint. Some of us find God by listening and obeying others. Some of us find God by asking questions and then searching for the answers to these questions. Still others are compelled to help the needy. God created all the diverse people of this great world, and he loves all of us. Each of us can serve God in our own way. We do not need to be Mormon clones in order to have unity. Diversity will make us a stronger healthier people. We do not need to all think alike in order to be Jesus' disciples.

The Savior told us how to know if we are his disciples:

By this shall all men [and women] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35

We all need to be more tolerant and loving of people who believe or understand the gospel in a little different way. You may not understand David or his scholarship, but you can help Mormonism become the great religion I have always believed it to be by allowing us the freedom to think about God and search for him in our own way.

Sincerely,

Dianne T. Wright

A YEAR OF CONFLICT

DAVID WRIGHT'S LETTER
FOR THE 20 FEB. 1994 BISHOP'S COUNCIL

Wright chronicles his conflicts with the Church, then outlines his questions about the legitimacy of disciplinary actions against scholars.

February 17, 1994

Dear Bishop Reeder:

I received with sadness and frustration your letter notifying me that a disciplinary council will be held against me for apos-

tasy. It grieved me that I was about to be pushed out of my spiritual and cultural home for my honest and sincere scholarly thought and expression which were motivated by my care for

the Church. I am not sure that I will attend the disciplinary council because I have great reservations about its propriety and moral legitimacy. In this letter I want to explain my understanding of the factors and events that led to the present charge and then outline my reservations about the proceedings.

The chain of events began with our meeting on April 27, 1993. In this meeting you said that a general authority had contacted the stake president and had asked him to inquire after me because of my article "Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," published in *Sunstone* (16/3 [September 1992; appeared February 1993] pp. 28-38). The stake president delegated to you the responsibility of contacting me. In the meeting you showed me a copy of my *Sunstone* article which you said Church headquarters had sent the stake president. Your judgment at that time was that my ideas were apostate. Your main interest was encouraging me to become orthodox in my thinking so that a disciplinary council wouldn't be necessary.

We met again in a formal way July 11. This meeting was to determine if I was orthodox enough to perform the baptism of my eight-year-old son and the priesthood ordination of my twelve-year-old son. You asked me a list of questions, mainly about the priesthood claims of Joseph Smith. I expressed my views positively but felt it necessary to put my answers in the context of my theological thinking that had grown out of my studies. You denied the legitimacy of my theological reconstructions. You said that I could not perform the ordinances if I did not have a conviction of the traditional understanding of the matters about which you questioned me. You said it would be hypocrisy to perform the ordinances without that conviction. Our family went ahead that month with the ordi-

nance work because we felt it was important. I was not asked, or allowed apparently, to participate in the ordinance work either as an official witness or as a silent participant in the confirmation and ordination circles. My family and I ceased going to Church at this time because we felt hurt and marginalized by events to this point.

Our next contact was September 19 when you called and asked me to meet with the stake president that day. I was reticent to do so because at that time in September six other scholars and thinkers in the Church were being brought up in disciplinary councils. I met with the stake president. He indicated that there was no particular impetus from the Church hierarchy for this meeting with him. It seems that your acquisition of the book *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (ed. B. Metcalfe; Salt Lake City: Signature, 1993 [appeared May]) which contained my article "In Plain Terms that We May Understand: Joseph Smith's Transformation of Hebrews in Alma 12-13" (pp. 165-229), which I had told you about in earlier meetings and which the stake president said you had purchased, was what precipitated this particular meeting. The stake president basically urged me to undertake a spiritual discipline so that I would become orthodox in my thinking.

As the decisions came down about the six scholars and thinkers at the end of September (one disfellowshipment and five excommunications), I decided out of principle that I did not want to be a party in the investigation of my scholarship, which had the goal in part of condemning it and implicitly condemning me for it. I did not want to be involved in a situation of negotiations with the Church in which it thought it could put pressure on individuals for their scholarly pursuits.

In October your secretary

called to arrange a meeting with you. I told him that I preferred not to meet. You called a few days later, on October 28, to arrange a meeting. I said that I preferred not to meet. Though we did not set up an appointment, we spent several minutes discussing matters on the phone. You confirmed that the discussions with me since April had come by general authority instigation and that the goal of our meetings and discussions was to lead me to change my historical and related views or suffer disciplinary action. You reiterated that you viewed my publications as apostate. You said that my publications were not scholarship because they did not support the Church's traditional teachings.

No further contacts were made until February 2, 1994, when your secretary called to set up a meeting between me and you. I declined for the same reason as before. He said that you did not call me personally because you did not want to get into a conversation over the phone about the issues, but that you preferred to meet face to face. About February 6, a counselor in the bishopric called to ask if I had objections to my son being called to the deacons' quorum presidency. I said it was up to my son. He said that he would get back in contact with my son in about a week. On February 13 your representatives delivered the notice of the disciplinary council set for February 20 at 4:00 P.M.

The content of the discussions just described and the nature of our interaction over the past year leads me to the conclusion that the charge of apostasy is based mainly on my publications. I also suppose that my unwillingness to meet with you and to a lesser extent my not attending Church for the past six or so months are also considerations.

The foregoing chronology has alluded to some of my reservations for meeting with you as part of a Church investigation of

my scholarship and ideas. I want to add to these and make clearer my view why I think such investigations are improper, morally questionable, and even destructive to the Church.

First of all, scholarship is not some sort of sin, a "failing of the flesh," which an individual recognizes to be an error and which that individual considers to be a blemish to his or her personal integrity. Scholarship, rather, is a constructive activity and is one of the purest expressions of a person's character. Scholarship involves a failing of the flesh, paradoxically, only when one is not forthright with his or her conclusions, when one holds back evidence, when one dissembles about his or her views in the face of social or ecclesiastical pressure. To express one's views, especially when they fly in the face of tradition, in other words, is hardly a sin but rather a virtue. Because Church disciplinary proceedings treat scholarship as if it were sinful, and even employ along the way the polemical myth that sin is what is responsible for a scholar's unorthodox views, the proceedings are an attack on the individual's integrity.

Another objection I have is that these proceedings are a matter of killing the messenger for the message. In my articles I discussed evidence that suggests that some traditional understandings of Mormon history and scripture are in need of revision. The sorts of difficulties I discussed are real. Many scholars have recognized them. And many members of the Church have accepted nontraditional solutions to them similar to mine. The questions and evidence cannot be pushed out of view or made innocuous by disciplinary actions. It is necessary for these issues to be talked about openly and the discussion should go forth without threat of punishment. Punishment especially should be avoided when scholars, such as I, have tried to be constructive. I have had no desire whatsoever to injure

The Church learned several years ago to leave certain controversial professions alone, such as the biological and earth sciences. That is why one can learn about evolution at Brigham Young University from teachers who accept the concept as valid (I hope this is still the case).

—David Wright

our—my!—religious tradition and community. My only desire has been to be honest with regard to the evidence as I have seen it and suggest how this may be viewed positively within our tradition. I would urge you to reread my articles with an eye open to my positive assertions and solutions. You may not accept them, but a positive and constructive attitude is there.

Another reservation I have about these proceedings has to do with the connectedness of my Mormon studies with my professional activity and thought. I am an assistant professor of Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern studies at a highly respected university which is committed to freedom of scholarship. There I teach courses on the Hebrew Bible, on ancient Near Eastern history, and on the languages and thought of the peoples of the ancient Near East, and I conduct research in these areas. The views expressed about the Bible in my articles that you have read are the things that inform all of my professional research and are things that I teach my students every day. My views about Joseph Smith's scriptures have grown out of this and prior professional activity and preparation. The Church's investigation of my scholarship is an indictment of and attack on my profession and scholarship at large. It is an attack which will contribute to the characterization of the Church as anti-intellectual.

The Church learned several years ago to leave certain controversial professions alone, such as the biological and earth sciences, and let them go their way. That is why one can learn about evolution at Brigham Young University from teachers that accept the concept as valid (I hope this is

still the case). Along this line, you yourself said in our first meeting about my publications that you preferred to see scholars go about their work and let that work succeed or fail by peer review and the ongoing process of discovery. I wish that the Church would adopt this perspective in regard to the study of ancient history and religious literature. If it has objections to a particular conclusion, it need not discipline its proponents but simply say that the conclusion is not Church doctrine.

I also question the propriety of the investigation of scholars because the process contradicts some basic Church principles and values. We value free agency. But these proceedings, since they are implicitly coercive, strike at the heart of this principle. The Church, too, values truth. We say that we accept truth from wherever it comes and claim in our scripture that the "glory of God is intelligence," a motto hanging at the gates of Brigham Young University. But investigating and disciplining scholarly activity effectively denies this profession. Mormonism also respects the constitution of this land and even views it as inspired. But disciplinary proceedings against scholars implicitly mock the freedoms enumerated in that document. While the Constitution does not require that religious institutions hold to its principles, great dissonance arises when a member is allowed freedom of expression and conscience outside of the Church but is denied it inside the Church or with regard to Church issues. There is no little irony in the Church's sacrifice of these traditional values to go after scholars when their conclusions are not traditional.

My final point is a reiteration

of something I have said to you before in our conversations. Action against scholars and against other constructive thinkers threatens the faith and commitment of members of the Church just as much as any of the things that scholars and thinkers may say or publish. Indeed, because these actions are conducted by the Church leadership officially, greater consternation may arise. I have heard reports from and about friends and relatives, very orthodox in their perceptions, that they are disturbed at the Church's actions against thinkers over the past year. The actions have the ostensible goal of bringing scholars and thinkers into obedience to Church leaders. But the result is more questioning of the validity of the leaders' authority among the membership.

I conclude by stressing that my membership in the Church is valuable to me. I stress also that my scholarly work on Mormon matters has grown out of concern for the Church and has been guided by commitments I made to contribute constructively to the Church and its life. I have

also been guided by the Church's desire to seek after knowledge and understanding. I hope that commitment to this search will not be used to push me out of my community or to place me in its margins. I had hoped over the past several years as I have kept track of the Church's attitude towards scholarship, and experienced the effects of that attitude personally, that the Church would become more tolerant. The reverse has been the case. It is a dark time, but I still hope for a day when tolerance will increase and unity in our tradition will be gauged, not by uniformity, but by a willingness to work together for a common good in a context of individual diversity.

Sincerely,
David P. Wright

P.S. I have included some publications that will help you set the investigation of my scholarship in the larger context of actions against scholarship in the Church. I hope you can read this material before you make any decisions in my case. Please pass it on to the stake president.

RESEARCH REQUEST



WANTED:

MATERIAL (OFFICIAL OR PERSONAL) RELATING TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM OR WOMEN'S ISSUES AT BYU FROM ANY TIME PERIOD, BUT ESPECIALLY 1985–PRESENT.

CONTACT: BRIAN KAGEL OR BRYAN WATERMAN
SUNSTONE 331 S. RIO GRANDE, SUITE 206
SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84101 801/355-5926

THE MATTER IS TEMPORARILY TABLED

WRIGHT'S MEMO TO 20 FEB. 1994 BISHOP'S COUNCIL
AND LETTER TO WRIGHT FROM 20 FEB. 1994
BISHOP'S COUNCIL

*Wright decides not to attend the bishop's council.
The bishop, disappointed by Wright's refusal to attend the council,
decides to refer the matter to the stake president.*

February 20, 1994

Dear Bishop Reeder:

After serious consideration and prayer, I have decided not to attend the disciplinary council today. I cannot negotiate what cannot be negotiated, my God-given right and ability to think and discover. It is a sad day when those committed to discovery and truth are forced to stand away from the Church. It is a sad day when the search for truth must be pursued outside the Church.

Sincerely,

David P. Wright

February 20, 1994

Dear Brother Wright,

As you know a Disciplinary Council was held in your behalf on Sunday Febrary [sic] 19, 1994 [the meeting occurred 20 February] at 4:00 P.M. in the Littleton First Ward.

We were disappointed in your decision to not attend. We did receive your letter along with that of your wife. We appreciate you both taking the time and effort to

share your thoughts and feelings in this matter. Your letters were read in the council.

I know that this has been difficult for you. I assure you that you were not put on trial through any court procedure [sic]. The disciplinary council as defined by the Lord is a council of love where all who attend participate in council and instruction with the purpose of being edified and inspired to Come unto Christ; to be perfected in Him.

The decision of the Council was to adjourn [sic] and refer the matter to the Stake President. We also thought it would be helpful to arrange less formal meetings with you to further discuss this matter.

I will be calling you for an appointment. I want you to know of my respect, love and concern for you and your family. I encourage you to work with President Wheeler and I to resolve this matter.

Sincerely,

James B. Reeder
Bishop

PRE-COUNCIL CONCERNS

WRIGHT'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT WHEELER
PRIOR TO 5 APRIL 1994 COUNCIL

In anticipation of his upcoming disciplinary council, Wright again outlines his concerns about the court's appropriateness.

March 31, 1994

Dear President Wheeler:

I write this letter because I feel the need to reiterate or bring up some matters that you should have in mind as you consider terminating my membership.

First I want to apologize for leaving somewhat abruptly

Tuesday night, when I stood up in our conversation, shook your hand, wished you well, and then departed. After two hours of meeting with you and the bishop, however, it became clear that I could not satisfy your requirements for membership in the Church, namely, to cease

speaking and publishing ideas (and perhaps also to recant my already published ideas) that did not wholly agree with what the president of the Church has spoken in his prophetic office (which would include, as I gathered from our conversation, views expressed in First Presidency missives, the prophet's General Conference talks, and other such official communications). You convinced me—at least made me existentially resigned to the fact—that I did not belong in the Church. My interest in the search for truth conflicted with your demands for obedience. I had to follow my inner convictions and the authority of my heart; I could not surrender them to the demands of external authority when it seemed unreasonable.

I realize the importance of loyalty in an organization like the Church. But I do not believe loyalty requires a member to give up her or his pursuit and perception of the truth and to be silent especially about problems that require solution for the benefit of the community. Loyalty requires each individual to use his or her talents to build the community. Free expression, even if what is said is not exactly on the mark, is necessary for friendships and relationships to develop that will give strength to the group. Requiring conformity to authority and silence when views differ breeds various reactions including self-doubt, fear, resentment and suspicion. These can only weaken the community. Repression, in my view, creates a weight which can only doom a society or organization to collapse.

Since BYU let me go in 1988–89, I have decided to speak out about my historical conclusions for the benefit of our community. I thought (and still think) that Mormonism would become stronger by discussing these issues. I tried to avoid unbridled speculation and to deal with what I considered to be concrete and significant facts. I offered what in my view were

carefully considered conclusions. In other words, the problems I addressed with regard to the Book of Mormon and other scriptural works were (and are) real and required (and still require) rigorous logical answers. My excommunication will give only brief illusory satisfaction that the problems have been addressed. Other scholars in and out of the Church will bring them up and treat them, and the problems will remain in the public eye. It seems that the Church would do better having its members trying to make sense of these difficulties, even experimenting with some radical perspectives, rather than adopting an [sic] *de facto* obscurantist position and pushing those who would like to offer a constructive solution out of its midst.

Related to this is your argument in our Tuesday meeting that if a common member or investigator read my work and saw my conclusions he or she might think that, since I am a member, my view is right and cease to believe in Mormonism. I am one who believes that logic, reason, and spiritual experience and convictions motivate people in their beliefs, not mere authority. I doubt that people will really adopt a view about the Book of Mormon like mine if they have convictions or evidence otherwise. On the other hand, if my arguments are reasonable, they will continue to be effective even after I am excommunicated. This is to say, it is a specious reason to excommunicate me because it is feared that people will adopt my conclusions because I am a member of the Church.

I should note that while you fear that people will lose their faith because of my conclusions, I have heard by letter or conversation from several individuals who said their faith was buoyed by my work. They saw that a scholar in the Church could deal with these issues critically and find a solution that allowed him or her to have faith that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that

You convinced me—at least made me existentially resigned to the fact—that I did not belong in the Church. My interest in the search for truth conflicted with your demands for obedience.

—David Wright

Mormonism was inspired. These individuals had run into the same sort of evidence as I and were struggling to find a paradigm of faith that allowed them to make sense of the evidence in a logical and rigorous way. As Mormon scholars are expelled from the Church for their honest faith-conserving attempts to make sense of the evidence, these perplexed members and those who will certainly come across the difficulties in the future will only be able to conclude that Mormonism is uninspired and cannot be their home.

Apart from those who recognize the force of evidence of the type I have raised, the excommunication of scholars affects and will affect the faith of their family members, their friends, and other members of the Church who are interested in matters of scholarship in a more general way. People's senses of freedom and fair play are offended by discipline of those seeking after truth. I have read or heard about complaints from some of the most orthodox Latter-day Saints after the disfellowshipment of one and excommunication of five scholars and feminists last September. These orthodox members raised questions about the legitimacy of the Church leaders' actions. Again, these are not scholars or exercised thinkers; these are common ordinary Latter-day Saints who have no particular interest or connection to liberal thought and publications in Mormonism. You need to realize that the further excommunication of scholars will create further distrust of the leadership among the membership of the Church.

Another point to be made is that I do not believe you are as familiar with the intellectual life of members in the Church as may be required to make an informed

decision about my case. I feel I am being judged in a theoretical vacuum. There are many LDS scholars who are writing things which, if one were to make a close investigation, would not square with the (or a) Church president's own official expressions to a greater or lesser degree. These scholars, at BYU and elsewhere, are generally not persecuted, certainly not excommunicated, for their views. There are bishops and stake presidents in the Church who even defend people with views such as mine rather than disciplining them. I feel that if I had moved into another stake I would not have been treated this way. Thus for me there is gross injustice in your actions. I hope that you will become familiar with the intellectual and religious diversity in the Church. You can read SUNSTONE magazine and the journal *Dialogue* to get a sense of this diversity.

In connection with this I also believe that you (including the bishop and the high council) do not have the competence in historical and textual analysis to appreciate the conclusions that I have made. I feel that I am being judged by a jury not composed of my peers. Certainly you have the ability to line up my conclusions against what the prophets have said and decide objectively if my conclusions are consonant or dissonant. But peer judges would also recognize that the evidence that I interpret is significant and would realize that it cannot be simply ignored with a demand for obedience. Their judgment, I think, would be mitigated by their realization that some freedom for working through the evidence must be given. Daniel C. Peterson, who is an Islamicist at BYU, who supervises some of the work of FARMS (Foundation for Ancient

Research and Mormon Studies) which argues for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, and who himself believes in the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, said in a *Salt Lake Tribune* article (Saturday, February 19, 1994) about my case: "I don't want to see this middle position dominate (that Joseph Smith composed the Book of Mormon but that the book is still scriptural, my, D. P. Wright's, position), but I am not eager to throw its advocates out of the church." Professor Peterson is someone I would consider a peer and what he says here is significant.

I recognize that you will use this letter to convict me. But know that my expressions here come out of the moral depths of my heart. The meetings and disciplinary actions bringing my scholarship into ecclesiastical question and your implicit requirement that I give up my conclusions to remain a member of the Church has injured me deeply. To retain integrity I must oppose this inquiry. To use a phrase that was used to entitle a

collection of essays by Václav Havel about resistance to totalitarianism, I must "live in the truth,"¹ the truth as I see it, not as someone outside of me sees it.

I appreciate your and the bishop's concern. I believe that you are acting with integrity out of your understanding of truth. I know that you do not have personal animosity towards me but are pursuing your stewardships in the way you see proper. I respect you for this.

I hope the Church will learn from its mistakes and move forward to forming a more inclusive society. I hope for the day where the Church will allow the individual pursuit of knowledge and not consider this a sin, something worthy of disciplinary action.

Sincerely and cordially,
David P. Wright

¹Václav Havel, *Living in Truth* (ed. Jan Vladislav; London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987). See especially the essay, "The Power of the Powerless" (pp. 36–122). [Footnote part of letter.]

QUESTIONS AND ULTIMATUMS

WRIGHT'S SUMMARY OF 5 APRIL 1994 DISCIPLINARY COUNCIL

Wright documents the council's events—the witnesses' testimonies, the council's interrogation, the stake president's admonitions—the outcome of which is his excommunication.

The disciplinary council was scheduled for 7:30 P.M. I arrived at the Nashua New Hampshire stake center about 7:20, with my wife Dianne, Jill Keeley, a close family friend, and Stephen Thompson, a friend and witness for the evening. I found the stake president and told him that, when appropriate in the meeting, I had a statement to read along with some letters from sup-

porters and that Stephen Thompson, a Mormon with a doctorate in Egyptology from Brown University, and my wife, Dianne, had witness statements to present. He said this would be fine.

We stood in the foyer as the high council met and prepared for the trial. My bishop, James B. Reeder, waited with us. I heard the clinking of metal passing

around the room from outside the door. Apparently they were choosing lots to decide which part of the group was going to act in my favor and which part was going to act in the interests of the Church.

About 7:40 or so the bishop and I were invited into the high council room. We walked to the head of the room and took our position in chairs against the wall by the head of the table where the stake presidency stood and around which the high council was standing. They immediately dropped to a kneeling position for prayer and I followed. The prayer, given by a counselor in the stake presidency, I believe, included a request that things be done right and that we communicate and do so without anger.

After the prayer, the stake president advised me of the charge. He told me simply that I had been judged to be in apostasy. He asked me if I agreed with the charge. I said that I did not believe I was guilty of apostasy. He asked me to present my defense at that point. He did not lay out any evidence against me for the group. Later in the meeting one high council person, when questioning me, stated that the high council had not heard about the matters of this case before that evening. All that the group seemed to know was whatever the stake president might have said in a few minutes before I entered the meeting, from whatever I said in my defense, and from whatever arose during questioning later in the meeting. I began my defense by reading a statement outlining my spiritual and intellectual journey.

After this, I read six of several letters that supporters had sent to the stake president, copies of which I had received. I read these to give the stake president and the group a sense that many in the church were concerned about this case and that it was something that affected many others in the church.

Stephen Thompson came in next to give his witness state-

ment. He read from a letter which he had sent the stake president earlier. His point was that there were several in the church who had come to conclusions about the Book of Mormon and other scripture similar to mine and that the evidence was not negligible. His and my intent was to help the stake president understand the larger context of Mormon scriptural scholarship and that people who have these views are not necessarily unfaithful. There were no questions for Stephen when he was finished with his statement.

My wife Dianne then was brought in. She read her short statement with emotion. She defended my character. "I have known my husband for eighteen years. . . . I have never known him to lie or to be unkind to anyone. If I would fault him with anything, it would be in being too honest. I have known him to spend long hours studying, weighing evidence and trying to help members of the church understand the Old Testament, the other scriptures and history of the church. I have found David to be a model husband and father." She also spoke of how this affects our children and the Church in general: "How do I teach our children that God and this church are correct when they see their father excluded from God's kingdom because he told others what he believed. Is this going to make them feel like telling others about what they believe? How can we trust the church and feel comfortable in it when it is willing to expel someone we love, a sincere seeker of truth, because the church is worried about its missionary work? . . . A true church is not just one that has some true answers, but it is one that is constantly seeking more truth." When Dianne finished, she was excused. This was the end of my formal presentation.

The council at this point began to question me. This lasted from about 8:30 to 10:10. The stake president went first, fol-

lowed by his counselors and then the high councilors. Since I did not take notes in the meeting (I assumed from what I knew about other disciplinary cases that I couldn't take notes), what is portrayed in the following is imperfect. Nevertheless, it comes from notes and journal entries I made after the council that night and the following day.

The stake president was mainly concerned that I trusted scholarship above the prophet. I told him that the scholarly evidence was not easy to dismiss. Because of it I did not think that prophets were infallible. Individual members should have the right to pursue their talents and offer their constructive observations for the benefit of the Church. What I had striven to do was try to find a way to believe and assert faith rather than reject the Church altogether.

This led him to make the point that if the Book of Mormon were not ancient, God would be a liar. I tried to make the point that I did not view matters that way. I reiterated my view of revelation given in my opening statement, that revelation required interpretation by the human prophets and that this interpretation brought in the limited and sometimes erroneous perspectives of the prophets' humanity. I also reiterated what Stephen Thompson brought up, that Jesus used fictional stories for teaching and that the "story" presented in the temple endowment ceremony was fictional. In other words, Mormon theology already had precedents for unhistorical scripture. I also noted, for his theological perspective, that in D&C 19 God admitted to deceiving people, or better, being rhetorically ambiguous. He lets people think that "endless torment" and "eternal damnation" means punishment that lasts forever, rather than punishment coming from him, the "endless" or "eternal" one. He uses this rhetorically, "that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's

glory."

In President Wheeler's questioning about God's deceit he asked about the Noah and flood story. In my meeting with him a week before I told him that I did not believe the flood story and several other Bible stories, such as the creation and the Tower of Babel, were historical. This is why he brought up the flood issue in the disciplinary council. He said that if the flood story weren't historical, God would be a liar. "Why didn't Jesus tell Joseph Smith that the flood wasn't historical?" he asked. If it weren't historical, God would have told Joseph Smith. This question revealed to me the extent of the stake president's conservatism and lack of knowledge about the scholarly study of the Bible. When he asked this question, if I had any thoughts of succeeding that evening, those thoughts fled.

I was asked sternly by a high councilor if I would "sustain" (or, as he explained the term for me, "obey") the stake president if he came out of his deliberations and asked me not to publish anymore. I said I would not give up my right to do research and speak and write about it. Scholars need to be free to search and discuss responsibly. Another reason why I said I could not give up the right to publish was that the stake president's question about the flood implied that even my professional work, in which I question the historicity of a number of events in the Bible, would be proscribed.

The stake president asked me if I thought God could withhold information from us. He said that God often holds back information from us, such as the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon; he doesn't give us everything. He said also that God also gives prophets extensive knowledge, but forbids them to tell the saints all that they know because the saints are not ready. He used this to argue analogically that God and the prophet as his representative could ask us as members

He asked about Noah and the flood. He said that if the flood story weren't historical, God would be a liar. When he asked this question, if I had any thoughts of [reconciling our differences], those thoughts fled.

—David Wright

not to reveal the knowledge that we knew or discovered, including our conclusions from scholarly study. He asked me if I agreed with this perspective. I said that the information about the Book of Mormon is there in the Book of Mormon; God gave us the Book of Mormon with all the problematic information in it. Therefore the basic problem and evidence is not a matter of secrecy. I argued that we have the opportunity and responsibility of making sense of this information.

The stake president also spoke about the duty of members of the Church to represent Christ (and hence the prophet). Because of this, a member could not publicly express ideas different from what the Church believes.

I was also asked the following questions by the stake president or others in the council: (1) Did I believe the gold plates were real? I said that I did not have a definite answer. I explained that some of the witnesses' statements and their larger religious experiences suggest that the plates may have been experienced spiritually rather than objectively. I compared the parchment of John in D&C 7 which was spiritually perceived. (2) Did I believe that the personages that Joseph said appeared to him really did appear to him? I said that I believed Joseph was sincere in his descriptions. I said that I wasn't certain about their ontological reality; I did not deny nor affirm this. My view of revelation allowed visionary and auditory phenomena to be part of the human interpretation of revelation. (3) Do I keep my temple covenants? I hesitated wondering to myself if wearing garments is a temple "covenant" or just a rule outside the specific covenants one makes. Viewing it

as the latter, I answered "Yes." But upon further thought after the meeting, I should have answered "No" if paying tithing is viewed as part of the covenants or if being willing to give one's life for the traditional Church doctrinal structure is a necessary attitude. (4) Do I keep my baptismal covenants? I asked what the questioner meant specifically. He said it means to remember Jesus. I answered "Yes" to this. (5) I was asked how I thought about Jesus. I asked what was meant specifically. The questioner asked if I saw his atonement as a means of salvation. I answered, "In my way of understanding it, yes." (6) One high council member asked if critical study might lead one to conclude that Jesus wasn't the literal son of God. I said that historical scholarship can't easily solve or treat matters that are purely in the divine sphere which I thought this matter was. (7) How do you feel about prophets? I said I consider them wise and instructive individuals but not infallible. Individual members in the church can and should offer light through their studies and experiences. (8) The stake president asked, "Do you believe that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others were prophets?" I answered affirmatively. After thinking about this and receiving his letter following up the disciplinary council, I think he was really asking me whether I believed these individuals existed. (9) A high council person asked: "Why do you want to be a member of the Church?" I answered that it was spiritually valuable to me. I also said that my identity was formed by my Mormon upbringing and my family going back several generations is Mormon. I see Mormonism as something more

than just a system of doctrines. It is a society of people which is beneficial to me and my family. (10) To show my feelings about Joseph Smith, I mentioned that I had reacted adversely to a letter I had recently received from a conservative Christian saying that he was happy I saw Joseph as a fraud and charlatan. I told the council that I wholly reject this conclusion and perspective. Later in the discussion this was brought up against me. A high council person said the critics of the Church are learning about my scholarship and are going to use it against the Church. (11) How would I feel if I became orthodox and traditional in my perspectives and learned that a youth had read my older critical scholarship and had lost faith because of it? I answered I would probably be distressed. But I added that several have been helped in their faith by my work and at the same time many have been hurt in their faith by the simplistic answers or the "unanswers" that leaders and traditional scholars of the Church give to difficult questions.

At the end of the question session, four high councilors were asked to sum up the discussions for the stake president. Two were to speak in my favor and two in favor of the Church. As it turned out, only one spoke in my favor, and the one who did speak in my favor did so weakly. My theoretical supporters were either dead set against me or they were not informed about scriptural scholarship and my way of thinking about religion to offer any cogent arguments in my behalf. I think the latter was the case.

I was excused at this point. The stake president and high council deliberated privately from 10:10 to about 10:55. From

about 10:55 to 11:15 the stake president was apparently in his office in prayer making a decision. During this time I sat in the foyer and heard the high councilors speaking pleasantly and amusingly to one another in the high council room waiting for the stake president to return. The bishop had only been in for the first part of the private deliberations. He came out about 10:30 or so and waited in the foyer with us. He made the comment to a person in my party that "the call was pretty much the stake president's." This was not a new datum; it is what the *General Handbook of Instructions* lays out as proper decision making procedure. After the stake president returned to the high council room and, apparently according to the *Handbook*, after he asked the high council to sustain his decision, I was invited back in.

All were standing as the bishop and I walked to the front of the room by the head of the table. When we were in our positions, standing in front of our chairs, the stake president and the rest following sat down. The stake president leaned over to me and said something like: "It is our prayerful decision that you should be excommunicated." After this he instructed me not to wear the garments any longer and not to pay tithing. He invited me to come to church. He said that the decision was clearly made known to him, meaning that he had a revelation that I should be excommunicated. He said it was a matter of pride on my part. I needed to learn to subordinate scholarship to what the prophet said. The prophet's words spoken in his prophetic office are not contravenable or liable to revision on the basis of scholarship. He

asked me to “start from the beginning and rethink everything” so that I would get a proper spiritual testimony of the church. He said that he and the bishop want to keep track of my progress. He said that he really loved me and that their decision came out of

love. We had a closing prayer, offered by one of the counselors. When we stood up, the stake president and I shook hands and he hugged me. I shook hands with the counselors and then with some of the high counselors.

THE DEFENSE RESTS

WRIGHT'S STATEMENT
TO 5 APRIL 1994 DISCIPLINARY COUNCIL

Wright documents his personal spiritual and intellectual journey from Hugh Nibley disciple to historical critic. He explains his belief that the Book of Mormon can be scripture, even if it is viewed as a nineteenth-century document.

April 5, 1994

I had some difficulty in deciding whether to attend this meeting. I didn't attend the bishop's disciplinary council for reasons of principle which I outlined to him in a letter on February 17, 1994. I thought that for similar reasons I would not attend this meeting. But realizing that this is the venue for a final decision and considering the support I have received from members of the Church and colleagues outside the Church, and considering too my responsibility as a member of the Church and as a scholar and teacher to stand up for the right to pursue truth, I have come to speak a few words of explanation and defense.

My defense will consist of giving you perspective on my faith and my scholarship. Twenty years ago I returned from my mission in Oregon where I had decided to pursue a career in ancient Near Eastern linguistics and history. As a result of some reading I had done there, I wanted to become a “Hugh Nibley”—a defender of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon and other of Joseph Smith's scriptural works. I reentered the University of Utah for undergraduate work to begin to realize this goal. During this work, however, I began to encounter evidential inconsistencies that disturbed me in this quest.

Certain bits of data made it look as though the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, and other of Joseph Smith's ancient scriptures were not ancient. I also found evidence that made me sense that some of our larger official views of antiquity were deficient. This presented such a crisis to me that I reacted with a measure of anti-intellectual verve against scholarship and at one point was almost ready to quit my studies to escape the evidence—to put it on a high shelf or on the back burner, to cease asking questions. But my interest in finding solutions to these evidential challenges combined with the spiritual longings of my soul overcame my fear and I decided to persevere.

One of the things that challenged me at this time was not only the conclusions about matters of antiquity by scholars outside the Church, but conclusions by many scholars in the Church, both those in academic as well as leadership positions. I found that many of their arguments defending traditional positions of the Church regarding antiquity were flawed: i.e., they were generally not rigorous and were sometimes illogical and ignored or misinterpreted significant evidence. I sensed that some of this scholarship was written more for public relations purposes than for the advancement of knowl-

edge. It seemed to be trying to bide time with intellectual sidetracking so that a better defense could perhaps be found and made. As I decided to persevere in my studies I was persuaded, intellectually and spiritually, that I needed to be honest with the evidence. Whatever I did, I needed to give the evidence an honest hearing and discussion and when necessary let my analysis of it go in directions that might not be entirely traditional. This did not mean that at this time I had concluded that the Book of Mormon and other ancient scriptures of Joseph Smith were not ancient. Far from it! Indeed, with this recommitment to careful study I also renewed my commitment to defend the antiquity of Joseph Smith's scriptures by this study.

With my renewed energies I entered the graduate program in Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. I eventually came to choose the Hebrew Bible as my focus because of my religious interests. My present views about the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith's other ancient scriptures came very slowly over the course of my graduate career and despite my desire to see the evidence go the other way. I did not want to admit that these texts were not what Joseph Smith and modern prophets claimed they were. I struggled by doing research and writing papers to myself defending the antiquity of Joseph Smith's scriptures. I read new publications by Hugh Nibley and other defenders of the traditional view and I reread, sometimes several times, the work they had already published. The more I read and studied, however, the severe weaknesses of traditional defenses became more apparent on the one hand and the strength of arguments for seeing these texts as the nineteenth century compositions of Joseph Smith grew on the other. My investigation was not simply an intellectual matter. I spent many hours in prayer pleading for guidance

to find other evidence and for new perspectives about troubling evidence. This prayer buoyed my belief in the scriptural worth of the books, but it never provided refutation of the evidence nor did it weaken its logical effect.

The evidence became so clear to me that a new crisis of faith ensued. My option was to throw away my belief altogether, or to develop for myself a new model for understanding the divinity of Mormonism and the scriptural value of the Book of Mormon and other scripture. Fortunately several of the teachers that I had in graduate school, and many of the biblical scholars whose works I had read, provided personal examples indicating that the critical—meaning the careful historical—study of scripture and accepting nontraditional historical conclusions resulting from this study need not lead one to deny the religious value of scriptural texts. For example, many of my professors were Jewish, and religiously devout, but accepted the critical conclusion that Moses did not write the Pentateuch or Torah (the first five books of the Bible; this is a view, by the way, which is well supported by evidence and is a conclusion I accept, teach, and work with every day in my professional activity). For a Jewish scholar to make this conclusion is the equivalent of a Mormon scholar making the conclusion that the Book of Mormon is not ancient but written by Joseph Smith. Despite these historical conclusions about the Pentateuch or Torah, these Jewish scholars viewed it as the foundation of their religious tradition and devoted much of their work to explicating it and interpreting it in what they considered to be its real historical context. They and a large number of Jews generally viewed their work—their historical critical work—as fulfilling the religious obligation of studying, interpreting, and teaching Torah.

I found that these Jewish, as well as similarly oriented

I believe that you are acting with integrity out of your understanding of truth. I respect you for this. I hope the Church will learn from its mistakes and move forward to form a more inclusive society.
—David Wright

Christian, scholars provided a model that I could employ to escape the requirement of rejecting Mormon tradition. I developed a view of Joseph Smith's scriptural works that allowed me to read them critically and be true to what the evidence indicated but appreciate it [sic] as scripture. I came to see revelation as a more ambiguous matter, involving a significant amount of interpretation on the part of the human recipient of the revelation. I concluded that prophets "translate" revelation into their own words in terms of their cultural situation. Thus a revelation, or rather a product of revelation—a statement, text, etc.—has a certain amount of humanness which can account for error and even misperception on the part of a prophet. This interpretive aspect of revelation for me applied not only to matters of spiritual impression but to visionary and auditory phenomena as well.

When I graduated from Berkeley with my doctorate in Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern studies in 1984, I began my academic career of researching and teaching in biblical and Near Eastern studies. I began at BYU from 1984 to 1989 teaching courses on Hebrew, the Hebrew Bible, and ancient Near Eastern culture and languages; I spent 1989–90 on a Fulbright research fellowship at Hebrew University at Jerusalem studying Near Eastern ritual practices; I was a visiting professor of religion at Middlebury College in Vermont 1990–91 teaching courses on Hebrew Bible and Judaism; and since 1991 I have been at Brandeis University teaching courses on Hebrew Bible and Near Eastern languages, literature, and history. These positions have required and allowed me to pursue re-

search and publish a host of respected works on the Bible and the ancient Near East. I have professional articles in the *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*), the voluminous *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, *Vetus Testamentum* (a journal for Old Testament study), the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (forthcoming), and several articles in various books on the Bible and ancient Near East. These articles deal with subjects such as, the practice of the laying on of hands in the Bible, the ethical and moral basis of the purity laws of the Old Testament, the concept of holiness in ancient Israel, and the elucidation of various difficult passages in the Bible and Near Eastern texts. I have also published a book which deals with the ancient Israelite concepts of purity and impurity.

This opportunity for teaching and research in Bible and the ancient Near East has allowed me to continue my study of the question of the antiquity of Joseph Smith's ancient scriptures. This work has continued to confirm my sense that these works are not ancient. The view of antiquity presented in these scriptures does not accord well with what is known from scholarship otherwise. Other substantial evidence has, on the positive side, tied these works with a nineteenth century context.

The point of this autobiographical survey is to impress upon you the fact that my views are well grounded in careful study. But more than that. My study and resulting views *grow out of a desire to cultivate faith not disbelief*. Let me repeat: my views

grow out of a desire to assert and cultivate faith not out of a desire to generate disbelief and attack the Church. As I have written I have always sought to support faith. Yes, I have been frank in my discussion of matters and have brought up controversial matters. But I have sought to put what I have said in the context of my faith and hope and never to attack the Church. For example, in my article in the volume *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, I write at the end:

Some may think that acceptance of the conclusion that Joseph Smith is author of the Book of Mormon requires rejecting the work as religiously relevant and significant. I append this afterword to make it clear that such a rejection does not follow from this critical judgment. . . . One can adopt an . . . attitude, tempered by the acceptance of critical conclusions . . . , that allows the text to speak a spiritual message. [The Book of Mormon] becomes a "true record," to adapt William James's phrase applied to Jewish and Christian scripture critically read, "of the inner experience of [a] great-souled [person] wrestling with the crises of [his] fate." The Book of Mormon is the apprentice's workshop of [Joseph] Smith's prophetic career. In it we see him becoming a prophet. By careful and critical reading of its chapters against the environment in which it

was produced, we can understand him much more completely and thus appreciate the foundations of the tradition he inaugurated. We can also use this study of Joseph Smith to reflect on our own situations and work out solutions to our questions and problems.

In the article in SUNSTONE ("Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth") I proposed various ways that I dealt with certain critical conclusions in a religiously positive and supporting way. For example, I explicitly supported the prophets' right to interpret prophecy for our time. Realizing that prophecies were often meant for the people who lived at the time when they were spoken, and realizing that they needed to be reinterpreted and reapplied in ensuing generations, I asked: "Who was to 're-vision' these prophecies of old for the present community, particularly our community? I argued that it was to be those who had the same relationship to the community now as those who first spoke the messages had to their communities, i.e., the community's current prophetic leaders" (p. 33).

Thus you can see that in my writings about Mormon scripture I have been positive, trying to describe the way that I have made sense of the evidence and asserted faith and hope. Indeed, despite the crises that I described earlier, my journey of faith has been exhilarating and stimulating, spiritually as well as intellectually. It's unfortunate that this concern over my faith and thinking has occurred. Faith, of whatever character, needs com-

The spirit of inspiration will not give conflicting guidance. When the spirit confirms that the Book of Mormon is true, that same spirit will not confirm that writing in opposition to what the Prophet Joseph has spoken is right. Only the spirit of Satan will do this.

—President Ned Wheeler

munity. Fortunately there are other Mormons like me who have responded recently and given me support. My faith has been uplifted by this. But at the same time I have suffered a loss of community through the recent ecclesiastical suspicion and investigation of my honest work. I have not been encouraged by the investigation and discipline of other scholars and thinkers in the Church, particularly last year. I hope that you will allow me and scholars like me to remain in the community so that our faith may continue to grow.

In all my work I have sought to find an avenue for faith. The evidence that I have encountered

cannot be dismissed by a call for obedience. Nor can it be dismissed by prayer. Certainly it cannot be dismissed by a requirement of remaining silent until answers come. Answers will not be had unless the evidence is carefully laid out and various solutions have been offered. This is why I have published my views and why I continue to support publication of such views.

In sum, if I am guilty of anything, it is of trying to find a way to believe and appreciate my religious tradition, of trying to see Joseph as a prophet and to understand his work as spiritually valuable to me, my family, and my Mormon community.

full impact of the statement "by their fruits ye shall know them." Our actions either affect others for good or ill. If we look around us, observe attitudes and actions of our family and associates, we will see the effects of our actions for good or ill upon their lives. This must be weighed against the standards set by the Lord in keeping all the covenants that we have made with Him. We cannot shift responsibility to others for situations that we have created. We must face our problems squarely and determine if our "fruits["] are producing the results that Heavenly Father has ask [sic] of us. The righteous life will always promote obedience to all that the Lord has asked us to do regardless of outside pressures. A true test of our standing before the Lord can be understood by the scripture found in (D&C: Section 29:7) . . . for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts; . . . the righteous fear them not, for they love the truth and are not shaken. (BofM:2 Nephi 9:40)

The Lord would like you to gain an understanding of what it means to accept membership in His church. We represent the Savior and our Prophets and recognize that they alone have the right and authority through inspiration to direct the affairs on this earth. When our Prophets speak in their office and calling, they will be directed by inspiration and when they speak as such all debate should stop. The Prophet is the only person on the earth authorized to interpret the doctrine of the church.

The Prophet Brigham Young taught that we can be deceived by our five senses no matter how real or convincing they may be but that when the spirit bears witness to us, we will never be

deceived. The Lord has given us a test to determine if we are receiving the spirit. All direction by the spirit of the Lord will always be in total harmony with all the scriptures and with all the prophets. If the inspiration does not meet this criterion, we can be assured that our inspiration is not from the Lord but from the adversary.

Great understanding and perspective comes from scripture where we learn that all truth comes through the spirit and that access to the spirit only comes through obedience. This would suggest and is true that a person who is in tune with the spirit through obedience has knowledge far beyond that of the best educated person in the world. This also suggests and is true that if interpretation of gospel principles and scripture is left to those educated persons who do not follow the principles of the gospel, the truth will never be known even though much rhetoric will be pleasing to the carnal mind. All efforts without the spirit present are fruitless and will lead to false and destructive conclusions.

Understand these sobering words found in Mosiah 3:19. "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."

A clear understanding that our Prophets and Seers have the authority and privilege to see

"EXCOMMUNICATED FOR APOSTASY"

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT WHEELER
REGARDING THE 5 APRIL 1994 COUNCIL

Wright is found guilty of apostasy and is excommunicated. God would be a liar, the stake president argues, if the stories in the scriptures should not be taken literally.

April 6, 1994

Dear Brother Wright,

This letter confirms the decision of the Disiplinary [sic] Council on your behalf 5 April 1994. The Decision of the Council was that you be Excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You may not wear the temple garments nor pay tithes and offerings. You are strongly encouraged to attend meetings however you may not give a talk, offer a public prayer, partake of the sacrament, or vote in the sustaining of Church officers.

You have the right to appeal this decision to the First Presidency if you feel injustice. An appeal should be in writing and should specify errors or un-

fairness claimed in the procedure or decision. This appeal should be presented within 30 days of the above date to the presiding officer of the disiplinary [sic] council, the Stake President.

The following are areas of concern that have been revealed through inspiration as a result of this disiplinary [sic] council procedure. Careful attention through fasting, prayer and scripture study will reveal the truth of these things to you and help you to regain full fellowship for which we deeply desire.

The Lord loves you and your family very much and wants you to be a forever family. The Lord wants you and your family to go to church and learn to walk by faith. He wants you to realize the

into the future, know the present conditions of the world and people, to interpret the past and give every one of us direction from the Lord. Many times this direction will be in opposition to what the world would have us believe. We must exercise our faith in our Savior and accept this guidance even though it may go contrary to our worldly knowledge. In the end, we will come to know that the Prophets will always be right. Many theories have come and gone at the hands of the best scholars and scientist [sic] only to be superseded, disproved and rejected. A true prophets [sic] words will always come to pass. This is why we must compare our earthly learning to the standard of the gospel and not the other way around. If we are not careful we can be as the scripture indicates, ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth, and even walking in darkness at noon day.

The spirit of inspiration will not give conflicting guidance. When the spirit confirms that the Book of Mormon is true, that same spirit will not confirm that writing in opposition to what the Prophet Joseph has spoken is right. Only the spirit of Satan will do this. Satan is most anxious to take any false doctrine and make it logical and acceptable to the human mind.

It is contrary to the laws of heaven that our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ would give guidance and instruction to the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning the bible [sic], the history of mankind, his mission, and mislead or deceive him. This would be the case if certain events or Prophets mentioned in the Bible were actually fictitious.

It is contrary to the laws of Heaven that the Angel Moroni would come and appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith and explain to him that through the Urim and Thummim he would be instrumental in translating the Book of Mormon and then believe that the Book of Mormon

was a 19th century document.

The testimony of the three witnesses and the eight witnesses are true which includes the testimony of the gold plates.

As a member of the Church we covenant to represent the Lord in all things and in all places. This also means that we represent His Prophets. To do this means that we do not run ahead of them in any way to impose our own will or usurp their authority.

Knowledge of things as they really are comes through the spirit and does not depend upon our earthly knowledge to be understood. These things confound the wise and are considered foolishness to many wise and those who are learned.

Satan will take hold of every situation that will bring doubt, generate unbelief, and destroy testimonies of the gospel. Scripture tells us that if we were to offend even one of Heavenly Father's children it would be

better that a millstone were placed [sic] about our neck and we were drowned in the depths of the sea. Satan will feed and encourage anyone who pursues this line of thinking. Satan is the master of deceit, the father of lies, the master counterfeiter. We can only be protected by [sic] his insidious work through fasting, prayer, scripture study and keeping every covenant that we have made with our Heavenly Father. To fall short of any of these things would be to open our armor and let Satan into our lives. Satan rewards us no good thing.

The universal sin of pride as described by our Prophet President Benson in the May 89 *Ensign* is part of everyone's life and must be rooted out if we are to be pure in heart and able to see with pure eyes.

May you understand these words in the spirit for which they are intended. Our only purpose is to speak the words given to us by our Heavenly Father's spirit so

that you can understand what the Lord wants you to learn concerning these truths. I testify that the gospel is true, that we have a true and living Prophet, that Joseph Smith is a true Prophet of God, that our Savior lives and atoned for our sins and that our Heavenly Father hears and answers our prayers. You and your family are precious in the sight of our Heavenly Father. I know that whatever the Lord requires of us is right and for our best good. The Lord wants you back into His kingdom in full fellowship. The items listed above have been indicated through inspiration for your benefit. I pray that you may understand their meaning and significance in your life. May you know of our love for you and of our greatest desire to see you return in full fellowship.

Your Friend and Brother,
Ned Wheeler
President,
Nashua New Hampshire Stake



Some Latter-day Saints believe that when it comes to homosexuality, the glory of God is *ignorance*.

Half a century ago "good" Mormons knew nothing about the lives of lesbians and gays. Many still don't. Now, in the wake of new medical understanding and profound social change, that ignorance is no longer virtuous. We offer two publications that will help you learn more about this important subject.

**Bi-monthly magazine: "A New Direction"
Pamphlet: "Homosexuality and Scripture
From a Latter-day Saint Perspective"**

**Write: *A New Direction*
1608 N. Cahuenga Bl., Suite S-440
Los Angeles, CA 90028**

**For a recorded message and/or to request information
by phone, call: (213) 874-8424**



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RECENTLY RELEASED

Compiled by Will Quist

This section features recent titles from the *Mormon press*; the descriptions are often taken from promotional materials. Submissions are welcome, especially for books of LDS interest not by major LDS publishers. SUNSTONE neither promotes nor sells these titles; contact your local bookseller for information about ordering.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

Catching the Vision: Working Together to Create a Millennial Ward.

By William G. Dyer. Bookcraft, hardback, 288 pages, \$13.95.

Covers "fundamental leadership concerns . . . but it is also applicable for families to read together."

Confronting Abuse: An LDS Perspective on Understanding and Healing Emotional, Physical, Sexual, Psychological, and Spiritual Abuse.

Ed. by Anne L. Horton, B. Kent Harrison, and Barry L. Johnson. Deseret Book, hardback, 389 pages, \$16.95.

In an LDS context, counsels both the abused and those who seek to help them.

HISTORY & BIOGRAPHY

The Church through the Years, vol. 2.

By Richard P. Howard. Herald House, hardback, 531 pages, \$27.50.

Essays by an RLDS Church historian on different aspects of the church's history.

Harold B. Lee: Man of Vision, Prophet of God. By Francis M. Gibbons. Deseret Book, hardback, 525 pages, \$21.95.

About "a man who loved his family, tirelessly served the Lord, and revelled in his association with the youth of the Church."

The Mormon Church. By Roger M. Thompson. Hippocrene Books, hardback, 216 pages, \$14.95.

History, beliefs, and practices for the Hippocrene "Great Religions of the World" series.

Sarah McDonald: "Bishop of the First Ward." By Peggy Petersen Barton and Drew Barton Quinn. Aspen Books, hardback, 113 pages, \$10.95.

The "unflappable mother-in-law of Elder Mark E. Petersen" appears in this "true story of struggle, spirit, and romance."

S. Dilworth Young: General Authority, Scouter, Poet. By Benson Young Parkinsson. Covenant Communications, hardback, 338 pages, \$14.95.

Young's grandson's "portrait of an eminent Church leader, lifelong scouter, superb storyteller, and revered family man."

Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

By Jeff J. Williams. Horizon, hardback, 144 pages, \$10.98.

Corrects ancient Egyptian chronology and identifies the pharaohs of Abraham, Joseph, the Oppression, the Exodus, and others.

SCRIPTURE

Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, "This Is My Gospel." Ed. by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. BYU Religious Studies Center, hardback, 270 pages, \$11.95.

Papers from BYU's 8th annual Book of Mormon Symposium, held in 1993.

Language of the Lord: New Discoveries of Chiasma in the Doctrine and Covenants. By H. Clay Gorton. Horizon, hardback, 351 pages, \$18.98.

Argues that 224 chiasma (an ancient literary form) in the Doctrine and Covenants are evidence of this book's divine origin.

Mormon's Story: An Adaptation Based on the Book of Mormon. By Timothy B. Wilson. Self-published, hardback, 645 pages, \$29.95.

The full, official, and adapted text of the Book of Mormon at the level of young and old readers.

New Insights into the Old Testament.

By Allan K. Burgess. Bookcraft, hardback, 184 pages, \$10.95.

Modern parallels and commentary highlight principles in some of the Old Testament's most impressive stories.

Riches of Eternity. Ed. by John K. Challis and John G. Scott. Aspen Books, hardback, 256 pages, \$14.95.

"Twelve instructors in the Church Education

System [discuss] essential matters contained in the Doctrine and Covenants."

Studies in Scripture, vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi. Ed. by Kent P. Jackson. Deseret Book, hardback, 500 pages, \$18.95.

The last of this eight-volume series features essays by "many well-versed scripture scholars and researchers."

Un-Canonized Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Comp. by Stephen C. Heidt. Oquirrh Mountain Publishing Co., paperback, 48 pages, \$4.70.

"Provide[s] to the general LDS membership the remainder of the *known revelations* of the Prophet [in] a simple compilation."

Written by the Finger of God: A Testimony of Joseph Smith's Translations: Decoding Ancient Languages. By Joe Sampson. Wellspring Publishing, hardback, 355 pages, \$17.95.

A scriptural and linguistic defense of Joseph Smith's translations, especially the Book of Abraham.

THEOLOGY

Our Destiny: The Call and Election of the House of Israel. By Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie. Bookcraft, hardback, 157 pages, \$11.95.

Millet and McConkie discuss the Lord's chosen people in the restored Church.

Whence Came They? Israel, Britain, and the Restoration. By Vaughn E. Hansen. Cedar Fort, hardback, 132 pages, \$11.95.

Reviews the "panorama of Israel's dispersion and migrations" through parts of Europe and Asia.

O, Say What Is Truth?
LAS VEGAS
Affirmation '94

<p>WHO: LDS gay & lesbians, their family & friends</p> <p>WHEN: September 16-18, 1994</p> <p>WHERE: Alexis Park Resort, Las Vegas, Nevada</p> <p>COST: \$110; \$90 before 8/1/94; Day rates available</p>	<p>SELECTED SPEAKERS: Sonja Farnsworth, Marv Peterson, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Ron & Adonna Schow, Laurie Johnson</p> <p>INFORMATION: (702)228-0121 CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED</p>
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NEWS

BYU STUDIES, SMITH RESEARCH ASSOCIATES PUBLISH SEPARATE EDITIONS OF B. H. ROBERTS BOOK

TWO MONTHS before B. H. Roberts's diabetes-related death in September 1933, the aging general authority recorded in his journal his intention to publish his comprehensive theological treatise, *The Truth, the Way, The Life* (TWL), independent of Church support. The manuscript, the subject of much discussion among general authorities, had been rejected for official publication owing mainly to Roberts's belief that pre-Adamic beings had populated the earth prior to the advent of Adam and Eve and that Adam and Eve arrived on earth as translated beings. Roberts's intention to publish the book on his own never came to pass. He died with less than \$500 to his name. Now, sixty years later, his masterwork is published in its entirety for the first time—in two separate editions.

SIXTY YEARS IN HIDING

THE DIFFERING stories surrounding the manuscript's fate reveal in part the reason two editions are now in print. According to Stan Larson, editor of the version published by the San Francisco-based Smith Research Associates, following Elder Roberts's death the manuscript was hurriedly confiscated from his office by Joseph Fielding Smith, Roberts's chief rival and a future Church president. Another version of the story, this one espoused by John Welch, editor of the *BYU Studies* publication of TWL, holds that the manuscript was turned over to the Church, along with the copyright, upon Roberts's death when the Roberts family donated his personal library to the Church archives. While Larson maintains

that no correspondence surrounding the donation of the Roberts library mentions TWL or literary rights thereto, Welch supports his claim with a 12 October 1933 entry in the minutes of a general authority meeting. The entry not only verifies the Church leaders' understanding that the family turned TWL over to the church (although they reserved the rights to protest any changes that might be made to the text), but it records President Grant's continued desire to use TWL as a Church manual, although his desire was never fulfilled.

Between 1933 and 1993, many attempts to publish TWL had been made, but the Church consistently kept the lid on the text, restricting even its availability to researchers. Welch, along with Roberts's biographer Truman Madsen, asked the Church for permission to publish TWL throughout the 1970s and '80s, but with no success. In January 1992 Stan Larson, an archivist at the University of Utah, gained access to a reproduction of the final draft of the manuscript, which was donated to the university by Edwin B. Firmage.

According to Larson's introduction, Firmage had received the copy from his grandfather, former First Presidency member Hugh B. Brown, who had reproduced the text reportedly out of a fear that Joseph Fielding Smith would eventually destroy it. Brown, a former traveling companion and admirer of Roberts, charged Firmage with the manuscript's preservation. Upon the donation of the text to the university library, Larson informed Firmage of his desire to publish, finally, Roberts's work.

THE COPYRIGHT QUESTION: A TALE OF TWO VOLUMES

THE MONTH following Firmage's donation of the manuscript, Larson participated on a panel sponsored by the B. H. Roberts Society and made his first public mention of his intentions to publish TWL. Still, Welch was unaware of Larson's intentions—but fully aware of the manuscript in the University of Utah's possession—when he asked the Church again in June of 1993 for permission to publish. (Welch says he did not know Larson was planning to publish TWL until after Larson presented on the topic at the August 1993 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City.) Larson, meanwhile, made contact with a number of Roberts's descendants to seek the family's permission to publish the work. The separate attempts to gain permission reveal the confusion that apparently exists—or existed—over who holds the copyright.

Welch remains firm in his belief that the copyright was turned over to the Church when the family relinquished Roberts's books and papers. Welch writes in his editor's introduction that when "the Roberts family announced their gift of the Roberts library to the Church [they] acknowledged that TWL belonged to the Church." Accordingly, Welch believes, "anyone seeking use of these materials [including the copy in the University of Utah's possession] should contact the Church."

Larson is not so sure. Even if TWL was among the papers the family turned over—which Larson believes no records fully indicate is the case—the family could have retained the copy-

right even as they transferred possession of the actual documents.

In September 1993 an Associated Press story pitted the two works-in-progress against one another in a sort of "tug of war." AP reporter Peg McIntee, mistakenly identified Larson's publisher as Signature Books. (Smith Research Associates, although it shares Signature's owner and some publishing facilities, is most often described as a separate foundation whose publications Signature often distributes.) The article focused on the copyright issue, although no solution was revealed. "It's likely a judge will have to decide whether the Church . . . owns the document, or whether Roberts' heirs are entitled to let Larson publish the manuscript," McIntee reported, although she concluded that Larson, who had only recently learned about the *BYU Studies* project, had mentioned the possibility of a collaboration.

As with many details of the TWL incident, versions of the collaboration story differ. Both Welch and Larson suggest that the other made the final decision not to join efforts. Welch says Larson wanted too large an editorial role; while *BYU Studies* had a team of researchers preparing the manuscript and a host of introductory essays, Larson wanted the chief editorial position. Larson maintains that his September visit with Welch never came to the point of discussing the project in such detail, and that each had already done too much work independent of the other to make a fair collaboration practical. For a time, Larson considered giving up the project (and even told some people he had) rather than producing what he felt may be a redundant effort. In the end, he decided his investment of time and resources warranted fruition. Larson and Welch both find it

"appropriate" that the two publications debuted simultaneously at Mormon History Association meetings in Park City this May.

COMPARING THE EDITIONS

ARE THE volumes redundant? Although Larson says he finds the idea of two separate volumes "silly," he sees each offering material and perspectives not offered in the other. Welch agrees. Neither sees the events leading to the publications as evidence of an "us versus them" battle, and both point out particular places they feel the other volume succeeds.

The main difference between the two may be found not in the reproduction of Roberts's text, but in the editors' perceived audiences. While both volumes clearly meet high standards of scholarship, each approaches Roberts's text in a different way. On Welch's first introductory page he summarizes TWL: "Roberts is right on many points, wrong on some, and obsolete on others." While Larson and Welch would agree that much of TWL—especially the scientific material—is obsolete, Welch's assessment of Roberts's work in terms of "right" and "wrong" seems to imply the *BYU Studies* volume's audience will interpret TWL in the context of current revealed understanding. Larson, on the other hand, footnotes his volume to place Roberts's work in a "developmental" context with regards to Mormon theology, highlighting Roberts's dependence on or divergence from past and current LDS theologians. Another small difference, but one perhaps indicative of implied audience is the introductory essayists' treatment of Book of Mormon material in TWL. Well in advance of the *BYU Studies* publication, Welch, through the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (which he formerly headed), announced that TWL—Roberts's final work—treats the Book of Mormon as a literal and ancient text, contrary to the conclusions

some have made that Roberts abandoned his faith in the Mormon scripture in his later life. While one essay in Larson's volume—Sterling McMurrin's—acknowledges Roberts's struggle with Book of Mormon historicity, it fails to note the apparent affirmation in TWL.

CONCLUSION

WHAT DOES TWL's publication mean for the LDS community? Welch believes it sets a strong precedent for future Church publishing endeavors. Not only did Welch receive all three drafts of TWL in the Church's possession, one of his essayists—BYU historian James B. Allen—was given access to previously unavailable personal correspondence regarding TWL, and the Church allowed Welch to issue a set of complete reproductions of each draft (the three drafts, printed as three separate volumes, sell together for \$175; both the Smith Research and the *BYU Studies* edited versions list around \$28). "Not only was the Church willing to allow publication," Welch noted in an interview, "they opened everything they had in their possession relative to TWL." Larson summarized the publications with his wish that the authors from both volumes could have been collected in a single volume. He also sees the book's potential impact as overwhelming. "As a child I only knew Mormonism as filtered through Joseph Fielding Smith," he explained. "And here we have for the first time a contemporary work that presents an alternate view to [Smith's] *Man, His Origin and Destiny*," which virtually became the orthodox LDS position in spite of instructions to both Smith and Roberts to let the question of human origins alone. Still, both editors agree, in the end, that the most crucial factor is that what Roberts considered his most important contribution to Mormonism is finally in print. ☐

CIA LAWYER MICHAEL BARRETT EXCOMMUNICATED

WHEN MICHAEL and Kristine Barrett left Salt Lake for Washington, D.C., in 1976 for Michael to take a job with the CIA, they felt the move was divinely inspired. Eighteen years later, Barrett found himself in a Church court charged with apostasy for refusing to stop publishing letters on controversial points of Church doctrine and history. Eventually excommunicated, Barrett contends he was following the Doctrine and Covenants admonition to "Speak freely to all; yea, declare the truth, even with a loud voice." His stake president, T. LaMar Sleight, a former army officer now employed as a Church public affairs spokesperson, claims Barrett's "writings were not an issue"; rather, Barrett refused to obey his priesthood leaders when they asked him to stop writing. Barrett's struggle with Church leaders has spanned a decade. Soon after his arrival in Sterling, Virginia, he was assigned as a home teacher to Sonia Johnson's family. Barrett says that although he disagreed with Johnson's Equal Rights Amendment politics, he tried to be a good Christian; but in befriending the Johnson family he gained the disapproval of many ward members. The experience taught him that "sometimes you have to choose between following Jesus Christ and following the Church," he told the disciplinary council that convened 24 April.

Barrett considers his letter writing campaigns such a choice. Following the publication of articles in which Church spokespersons downplayed the Church's differences from mainstream Christianity, Barrett would typically fire off a letter to the editor setting the record straight. In the past he has written about polygamy, blacks and the priesthood, Brigham Young's Adam-



Michael Barrett

God doctrine, and other topics, in papers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and *USA Today*.

In December 1989 Barrett sent a letter to an anti-Mormon publication, the *Evangel*, in which he chastised the magazine's "purpose and your conclusions about my church," but also expressed disapproval of LDS people who have ignorantly accused the magazine of "misrepresenting our doctrines and history, although I have never observed it in your writings." He then affirmed that LDS leaders had taught a number of now-discarded doctrines, ranging from capital punishment for interracial marriage to the notion that "God literally and physically fathered Jesus through Mary, one of His daughters." He asked that anti-Mormons understand that Mormons' ignorance "is not really their fault," because "they have been misinformed by teachers and priesthood leaders who have been instructed . . . to conceal embarrassing facts." Almost a year later, Barrett received a letter from then Stake President Raul McQuivey, in which McQuivey said he had received as many as fifty calls and letters from members who were "offended" by Barrett's letter to

The following is a Barrett letter titled "Polygamy—Not Just for the Birds" that was published in the 11 April 1994 *Washington Post*:

A statement in the story on polygamy among birds, humans and other wildlife ["Hot Sauce for the Gander," *Outlook*, March 27] may have left the impression that Mormons still practice polygamy. We don't.

That "Mormon lawyer" in Utah who extolled the virtues of plural marriage—as we call it—would have been better described as a lapsed or ex-Mormon, or as just a Utah resident, since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints generally excommunicates practicing polygamists.

We do, however, respect the principle of polygamy. We practiced plural marriage in the late 1800s, and we still believe it was ordained by God. Our Prophet Joseph F. Smith felt so strongly about it that, even after our 1890 Manifesto forbidding polygamy, he allowed the practice to continue. In 1904, he even testified falsely before Congress that there had been no authorized plural marriages since 1890.

This is difficult to comprehend unless you realize how deeply engrained the principle is in our religion. We regarded it as a divine order, and we still revere those early polygamists. We believe their marriages were sealed for eternity and that polygamy is the order of Heaven.

Our leaders have taught that god has at least one wife, our Mother in Heaven, and that Jesus Christ has several wives. And we still perform plural marriages in our temples today—including the Washington Temple—uniting living individuals in polygamous marriages with deceased Mormons.

There are 9 million of us who support our leaders in this, with about 350,000 new converts each year embracing the principle. And although our leaders taught that polygamy would someday return, they might be turning over in their graves if they knew the effort would be spearheaded by the American Civil Liberties Union, which called for legalization in 1991.

Polygamy is definitely not just for the birds.

the anti-Mormon publication. "Oh how I wished," McQuivey wrote, "that you had put your address and telephone number underneath your name. . . . I guess you wanted me to be the recipient of those calls and letters. It worked!"

McQuivey arranged for Barrett to meet with general authorities F. Enzo Busche and F. Burton Howard, who said, according to Barrett, that "we have an obligation to conceal our doctrines; that we are trying to be a mainstream Christian church." Barrett said Elder Howard, "a lawyer," told him "the public had no business knowing what President Joseph F. Smith said in his sworn testimony to Congress about polygamy in 1904. He said that any member of the Church who would reveal that that testimony was false was unworthy of a temple recommend." Accordingly, McQuivey revoked Barrett's temple privileges.

This year, just weeks before his disciplinary council, the 11 April *Washington Post* published a Barrett letter on polygamy (see sidebar).

To Barrett, a philosophy of concealing embarrassing facts sets the stage for "a whole new

breed of anti-Mormon ministries" whose "sole purpose is to expose us as liars, as concealers of the truth, and to thereby turn the public against us."

In contrast, Barrett testified in April before his disciplinary council, he identifies with Joseph Smith, who wrote in his history, "Why persecute me for telling the truth? . . . [W]ho am I that I can withstand God? . . . I knew [the truth], and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it; at least I knew that by doing so I would offend God, and come under condemnation." (Joseph Smith History 1:25.)

Barrett contended that the disciplinary council was convened in the face of a number of procedural abnormalities, including his belief that Sleight's job for Church public affairs created a conflict of interest in Barrett's case. Still, the council supported Sleight in his decision to excommunicate Barrett.

"It is kind of ironic," Barrett told the *Washington Post* following the decision. "I'm fairly well received when I counsel them [the CIA] we have to tell the truth. When I try to tell the same principles to Church leaders, I have a big problem." ☐

UPDATE

RLDS DEDICATE INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI, TEMPLE

IN WHAT RLDS President Wallace Smith recognized as a "fulfillment of prophecy," the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints dedicated its temple in Independence (Jackson County), Missouri, during its April 1994 World Conference. Smith said the temple is to be "the place in which the essential meaning of the Restoration as healing and redeeming agent is given new life and understanding."

Nearly 15,000 people attended dedicatory services for the building that was four years and \$35 million in the making. According to the dedicatory prayer by First Presidency member Howard S. Seehy Jr., the temple "has been erected as an architectural symbol of the life and ministry of . . . Jesus Christ," and is the culmination of the dreams and efforts of "previous generations who yearned for the fulfillment of this day."

The temple is most noted for its "awesome spiral reaching to the heavens," but, reminded W. Grant McMurray, another First Presidency member, the spiral rests on "brick fashioned to represent

every land and every sea and every place throughout God's world." He continued, "We are a diverse people—we do not look alike, we do not talk alike, we do not think alike. We are rich and we are poor. We are men and women. We are young and we are old in years. But by God's grace, by the abundant miracle of God's grace, we are one." Representatives from nearly forty countries participated in the conference and dedication. As McMurray concluded the dedicatory services, 350 homing pigeons were released over the temple, signifying the church's commitment to peace.

During his address, President Smith articulated the temple's pur-



RLDS World Temple

pose and mission: "[The] temple [is] dedicated to the pursuit of peace and to the healing, reconciling, and calling ministries so representative of the life of Jesus Christ." The temple—open to worshippers and to the public as was the Saints' first temple in Kirtland, Ohio—is divided into four ministries: peace, education, worship, and service.

"We had some serious growing to do before we could even consider being the people to whom God would entrust so great a task," said RLDS author Velma Ruch. "We had to understand that we were a 'world church,' not just an 'American church.' We needed to be able to minister without stereotypes and defined roles of male and female. We needed to see human beings in their wholeness, each accepting others in their worthfulness. . . . We needed to develop greater competence in service and be able to be leaders in the movement toward justice and peace."

During the year prior to the building's dedication meetings were held that reflected the temple's multi-purpose nature, including international meetings for women and church youth, the first annual Peace Colloquy (which brought together leaders of world faiths to discuss their common goal of peace), and conferences for various priesthood quorums comprised of called and ordained men and women.

SUU WELCOMES HINCKLEY AFTER CANCELING QUINN

LAST WINTER Southern Utah University canceled D. Michael Quinn's lecture, saying his speech topic violated school policy barring religious topics ("SUU Cancels Quinn Lecture," *SUNSTONE*, Feb. 1994). In an apparent change of philosophy, the Cedar City-based university invited Elder Gordon B. Hinckley to speak at its 3 June baccalaureate ceremony.

"It seems ironic," one professor, asking that his name be withheld, told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. "I have absolutely no objections to President Hinckley coming here and speaking, but when we make such a big deal out of the need to separate church and state and then we don't, I actually have to laugh."

At the ceremony SUU presented Elder Hinckley an honorary doctorate.

MEASLE OUTBREAK CONFINED TO POLYGAMOUS FAMILIES

THE YEAR'S largest national outbreak of red measles is still growing, but confined to a group of Utah polygamous families. The *Salt Lake Tribune* recently reported that seventy people have been infected: twenty-two in Summit County, forty-five in Salt Lake County, and two in Washington County. The Centers for Disease Control predict that the outbreak will continue to spread through the community, since the majority of those involved are philosophically opposed to immunization.

Health officials have pointed out that, in some ways, polygamy has helped contain the outbreak since the majority of those infected do not socialize outside of the community, and most of the children are home schooled.

An interesting footnote to the outbreak has been the unprofessional nature in which Utah health officials and media have disseminated the necessary information. A *Tribune* column chastised those involved for allowing "religious roots [to] derail an honest effort to provide the public with a clear and accurate story." For example, the column cited a city-county health director who described the family as "fundamentalist Christians"; one station, KUTV, said the outbreak

occurred among a group that "socialize[s] together"; KSL, the Church-owned network, reported the "group has family associations."

Eventually the director of state immunization announced that "The victims all are polygamists who refuse to get vaccinated." Once the information was officially out, the *Tribune* and KTVX used the "P" word. "The public interest was too great," KTVX executive producer Ken Connaughton told the *Tribune*. "You can't cover up the facts."

HATCH, LDS OFFICIALS FIGHT COURTS TO PROTECT TITHING

A BATTLE between the Justice Department and a number of religious organizations—including the LDS church—has broken out over whether tithed dollars should be surrendered in bankruptcy proceedings. The case sparking the dispute involves Bruce and Nancy Young, a Minnesota evangelical couple who faithfully donated 10 percent of their income to their church while their contracting business slipped into bankruptcy.

Under current bankruptcy law, any transfer of funds made within a year before bankruptcy can be seized to repay other creditors. Based on that law, the evangelical church has been ordered by the court to turn over the Youngs' \$13,000 in donations. To date, Latter-day Saints, Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, and a litany of evangelical groups have filed briefs with the U.S. Court of Appeals arguing that the recently enacted Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)

TRANSFERRED

- PRESIDENT HOWARD W. HUNTER has been ordained as the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND has been called to serve as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve.
- ELDER BOYD K. PACKER has been called to be the acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve.
- BONNIE BALLIF-SPANVILL is the new director of BYU's Women's Research Institute.
- KAREN B. FANKHAUSER, JUDY S. SMITH, SHIRLEY K. VAN WAGENEN are the new vice presidents of Lambda Delta Sigma—the Church sorority for college women.
- ROBERT C. SLOAN and W. JEFFREY MARSH are the new vice presidents of Sigma Gamma Chi—the Church fraternity for men.
- BILL R. HAYS has been named dean of the Brigham Young University College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences.
- OLANI DURRANT has been named the new academic vice president of BYU-Hawaii.
- MARIE OSMOND is starring in the stage production of "The Sound of Music."

DEATHS

- PRESIDENT EZRA TAFT BENSON died 30 May 1994 of congestive heart failure.
- ELDER STIRLING W. SILL died 25 May 1994 of natural causes.
- RICHARD POLL died 27 April 1994 of congestive heart failure.
- HELEN CANDLAND STARK died 25 May 1994 of natural causes.



Sen. Orrin Hatch

should protect churches from this type of seizure.

This first test of the RFRA, signed only last November, is leaving some Clinton supporters feeling betrayed. For the government, which is supporting the creditors, the issue is a "straight application of the bankruptcy code," White House spokesperson Arthur Jones told the *New York Times*. "Because the code applies to both religious and nonreligious organizations, we don't think there's an implication for the RFRA."

According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Federal attorneys argue that government repossession of the tithes does not "substantially burden" religious exercise because the Youngs still would be able to attend church and worship as they desire.

Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, siding with the LDS church in the fray, finds the government's contention untenable. "Tithing, like prayer and other religious rituals, is a religious act in and of itself," he told the *Tribune*. "The government's interference with this religious act, in my mind, unquestionably and substantially burdens the free exercise of religion."

SALT LAKE CHURCHES UNITE TO STOP GANGS

BEGINNING WITH a December 1993 Interfaith Clergy Luncheon at the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake, Catholic and LDS leaders in Utah have worked together increasingly to end Salt Lake's escalating gang activity. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, between 1,700 and 3,000 gang members are estimated to live in Salt Lake County, a substantial portion of whom are LDS.

Elder John Fowler, Utah Central Area president, said the Church will offer three main resources to the effort. First, the Church's translation services will be made available to inner-city schools and community groups; second, the Church will donate a vacant building to be used by community service organizations; finally, 147 of Utah's LDS stakes will design and implement community-involvement plans to help keep teens productive and out of gangs.

POLL SAYS ACTIVE LDS HAPPIER THAN OTHERS

A STUDY conducted by the University of Utah Survey Research Center reports that of the 600 Utahns polled, active Latter-day Saints lead happier lives than do non-active Mormons or members of other religions. Researchers defined active Mormons as those who attend church at least once a week, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The survey, conducted last summer, made determinations based on questions from categories including health, community, leisure time, financial security, housing, crime, human rights, environment, public education, job security, transportation, and relationships. The only areas when active Mormons appear less content than others is job security and transportation.

TALKS WITH BISHOPS BARRED FROM UTAH COURTS

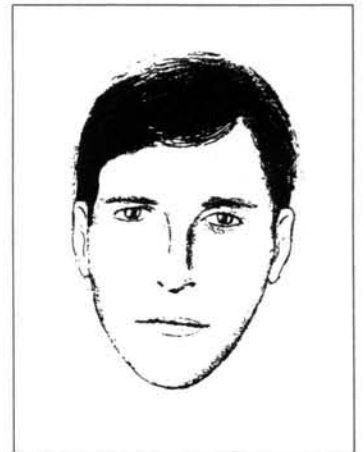
IN A MARCH 1994 ruling, the Utah Supreme Court determined that non-confessional conversation with LDS bishops cannot be used as evidence in court. According to the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Steven LeRoy Hammock pleaded guilty in 1983 to two counts of forcible sexual assault against his two adopted daughters. Hammock was excommunicated from the LDS church, and while criminal charges were pending, he had three conversations with his bishop. When one of the daughters, Michelle Scott, subsequently filed a \$2.5 million civil lawsuit against Hammock, accusing him of sexually abusing her from ages 5 to 15, Hammock denied the abuse took place and invoked clergy-penitent privilege to keep the conversations with his bishop from being used as evidence. Because Hammock admitted that the talks were non-penitential, Scott took the case to Utah's highest court, claiming the conversations could not be protected by a law that covered only confessions. Church lawyers sided with Hammock, however, arguing for the court that "a broader interpretation was necessary to avoid discriminating against religious denominations that do not require formal confessions but offer confidential spiritual advice, counseling and guidance to members." Although the court sided with Hammock, Scott said she will still pursue the lawsuit. Three of the four justices who signed the ruling are LDS.

LDS OFFICIALS HELP POLICE CATCH SUSPECTED SCRIPTURE THIEF

USING HANDWRITING samples from letters written to LDS headquarters, Church officials helped Missouri police apprehend and charge a man with stealing a first edition Book of Mormon. University of Missouri Campus Police Sgt. Frank Brown told the Associated Press that John Hajicek, 30, visited the State Historical Society at the University of Missouri in April 1993 and, using an alias, asked to see a first edition Book of Mormon. A few days later Hajicek returned, requested the rare book again, and "left the building but left some things on the table, including what librarians thought was the book," Brown said. As it turned out, the book on the table was a reprint of the Book of Mormon with the original's call letters copied onto the binding.

After identifying Hajicek from a composite sketch distributed to rare book dealers and Mormon churches across the country, LDS officials called the police. Armed with samples from letters Hajicek had sent to Church headquarters and handwriting from the historical society's checkout records, police soon arrested Hajicek. He told the Associated Press that he did not take the book.

The Book of Mormon has not been recovered, but Missouri police did find an 1856 copy of James Strang's Book of the Law of the Lord. The book, valued at \$2,500 to \$5,000, was one of fifteen rare books reported missing from Graceland, the RLDS college in Lamoni, Iowa.



The composite sketch police used to apprehend suspected rare book thief John Hajicek.

Graceland librarians also recognized Hajicek from a composite sketch as a historian who had used their rare book collection on a number of occasions.

Stealing the rare Book of Mormon—valued at more than \$14,000—is a felony and could result in fines and a jail sentence.

ANTI-MORMON BIAS AT U? SOME PANELISTS THINK SO

DURING A B. H. Roberts Society meeting to discuss the University of Utah's perceived anti-Mormon bias, non-LDS historian Robert Goldberg invited panel participants to consider the following per-

sonal experiences:

- After he was recruited by the U of U in 1980, a faculty member, acting as a guide, pointed out Salt Lake City landmarks like the university and State Capitol. Then, pointing to the Salt Lake Temple, the U. professor said, "There's our version of Disneyland."

- He was told Utah students were "far, far worse than what you encountered at any other state universities," implying that the "local culture had succeeded in destroying brain cells."

- In 1991, while sitting on a committee to recruit a new faculty member, one professor said, "We don't want someone who has breathed the air of Utah."

- A female faculty member told Goldberg that she believed her

THE WORD BAZAAR

WOMEN'S PUBLICATIONS

EXPONENT II

Exponent II, a volunteer organization, publishes a quarterly newspaper addressing women's issues in an LDS context. For 20 years, this personal essay format has provided a forum for women to exchange life experiences in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Past issues have discussed drug abuse, authority, the socialization of young women, and the Mormon male. Regular columns by Judy Dushku, Emma Lou Thayne, and Laurel Ulrich. Edited by Sue Paxman. For a subscription, please send a check for \$15.00 (\$4.00 per issue) to: *Exponent II*, P.O. Box 128, Arlington, MA 02178. 099

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STUDENT REVIEW

BYU's unofficial student magazine is now in its eighth year! Examine the life and issues at BYU through essays written by students and faculty—humorously, sometimes critically, but always sensitively. One-year subscriptions, \$15. *Student Review*, P.O. Box 2217, Provo, UT 84603. 099

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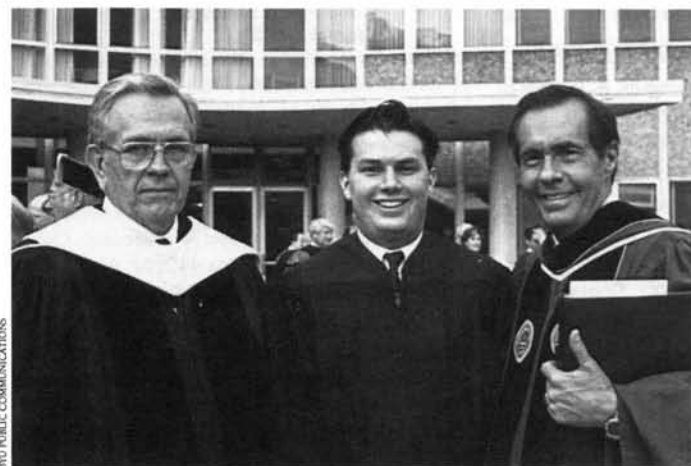
role in the classroom "was to attack the Mormon patriarchy and free her students from ignorance."

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that Goldberg said his Jewish heritage has made him "passionately sensitive" to the slightest hint of discrimination. "The stereotyping of one group has the power to dehumanize and leaves all other groups vulnerable," he said. Goldberg and LDS historian Dean May are researching the history of anti-Mormonism in America.

Another panel participant, U. English Ph.D. candidate Susan Staker, added that the situation is more complex than simple bigotry. "For Mormons, everything tends to be a matter of religion, but for the [academia] everything is secular," she said. "Mormon modes of inquiry are organized and hierarchical."

In an interview with the *Tribune*, Richard Cummings, professor of languages and literature, and director of the U.'s honors program, said he's been associated with the U. since 1957, and has watched it transform from a state university to a national research institution. "There's been a natural swing of the pendulum from a time when there was a tendency to favor local people, who would be mostly LDS, to a tendency to assume that we'd be a lot better off avoiding any inkling of inbreeding," Cummings said. He added that while the U. may be perceived as anti-Mormon for hiring predominantly non-Utahns, every research institution hires faculty and recruits graduate students primarily from outside its geographic area.

The panel attracted nearly 250 people.



Elder Boyd K. Packer, former BYUSA President Mike Lee, and BYU President Rex E. Lee share a jubilant moment following April graduation.

ELDER PACKER TELLS BYU GRADS NOT TO LET FEAR RULE LIFE

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER of the Council of the Twelve told BYU's largest graduating class, "Do not take counsel from your fears." He urged the 5,430 graduates to "learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness." It is then that "the light will appear before you."

According to the *Deseret News*, BYU President Rex E. Lee expressed his gratitude that the April graduates had only taken eleven semesters—one shy of the long-standing twelve-semester average—to graduate. "Thanks to your accomplishment in shortening the average graduation time . . . we have been able to admit over 400 more students than just over one year ago," he said.

SURVEY: BYU FACULTY HAPPY

A RECENT national survey conducted by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute reports that 85 percent of BYU's full-time faculty rate their jobs as satisfactory or very satisfactory. The 1992-93 survey, which polled nearly 30,000 faculty members at 289 different schools, indicates that BYU faculty are much happier than their counterparts at universities across the country. Nationally, 64 percent of professors are satisfied at public institutions and 71 percent are satisfied at private schools. BYU professors also reported satisfaction with their autonomy and independence; nearly 90 percent said they feel independent compared to 85 percent nationally. The 706 BYU respondents also reported higher-than-average levels of satisfaction in areas such as salary, fringe benefits, working conditions, teaching load, quality of students, and opportunities for professional growth.

18% OF BYU WOMEN HARASSED

ONE OF the Higher Education Research Institute's less cheery findings is that nearly 18 percent of BYU's female faculty say they have been sexually harassed. The national percentages were 18.2 percent at public institutions and 16.8 percent at private schools nationwide. BYU spokesperson Brent Harker said the university was surprised by the study's findings. "With our values . . . we expected it to be lower." Harker said the results may have been skewed by the UCLA researchers' broad definition of sexual harassment. "BYU defines sexual harassment and inappropriate gender-based behavior as two different things," he explained. "We think both come under 'sexual harassment.'"

According to BYU's policy, sexual harassment includes flirting, commenting inappropriately on body parts, and telling dirty jokes. However, asking a colleague to do secretarial work just because she is female or any other gender-stereotypical activity would only be considered inappropriate gender-based behavior.

Harker says that while some flirting or inappropriate behavior may occur at the university, "we expect it's fairly low." BYU's high level may be due to challenges found in "a traditional patriarchal society that makes inappropriate gender stereotypes," he said.

In an interview with the *Deseret News*, BYU President Rex E. Lee said, "We are proud of the women here, and we value them highly. In this institution, that percentage should be zero."

JUDY SAYS HE'S SORRY AND MEANT NO HARM

CODY JUDY, the self-proclaimed prophet who threatened to blow up President Howard W. Hunter and more than 15,000 BYU students in 1993 ("Apostle Threatened during BYU Fireside," *SUNSTONE*, Mar. 1993), told his parole board that his actions were misunderstood. Explaining that the "detonator" was a cellular phone wrapped in tape and the "briefcase bomb" only contained scriptures, Judy said, "There was no weapon and I didn't intend to hurt anyone," he said. "I wanted them to believe that there was a scriptural message in the briefcase . . . I think the scriptures can be dynamite." The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that parole board member Curt Gardner didn't buy Judy's explanation and chastised him for creating a situation that placed thousands of people in danger. "There could have been a mass exodus and people could have been trampled," the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported him saying. "And Howard Hunter is an elderly person."

Judy is serving a minimum fifteen-year prison sentence for storming the Marriott Center stage during President Hunter's 7 February 1993 talk. Judy ordered President Hunter to read a letter proclaiming Judy as the next prophet. President Hunter refused and the crowd began singing "We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet," flustering Judy, who believed the crowd was acknowledging his divine calling. Shortly thereafter, an angry student mob subdued him.

When Gardner asked Judy why he threatened Hunter, he said he was angry at Church leaders: a week or so before the Marriott Center attack, Judy left food, guns, and ammunition inside the gates of Salt Lake Temple Square as a gift to President Ezra Taft Benson.

"That gift was the best that I had to give," he told the *Deseret News*, adding that he was hurt when the offering wasn't acknowledged with a meeting.

SUNSTONE CALENDAR



THE 1994 AFFIRMATION GENERAL CONFERENCE will be held 16-18 September 1994 at the Alexis Park in Las Vegas. There is a \$20 discount on the \$110 registration fee if paid by 15 August. Organizers guarantee confidentiality and say an alias can be used. Call 702/228-0121 for further information.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR MORMON LETTERS will present papers during a conjoint session of AML and the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association Annual Meeting, 27-29 October 1994, at Antlers Doubletree Hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado. For more information, contact Susan Howe, Department of English, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.

THE JOHN WHITMER HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION annual meeting is in Nauvoo, Illinois, 23-25 September 1994. Call Lee Pement for more information (816/833-1000, ext. 2338).

THE SOCIETY FOR UTOPIAN STUDIES will hold its 19th annual conference in Toronto, Canada, 13-19 October 1994. For more information, contact Kenneth Roemer, English Department, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019-0035 or call 817/273-2692.

THE MUSEUM OF CHURCH HISTORY AND ART is hosting the third worldwide International Art Competition. The exhibit, which runs until 5 September 1994, comprises 150 religious art works from twenty-two nations and fifteen U.S. states.

THE ASSOCIATION OF MORMON COUNSELORS AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS will hold its fall convention, "Peace Amid Calamity: Building on the Rock," 29-30 September 1994 in Salt Lake City. For more information, call 801/583-6227.

EVERGREEN INTERNATIONAL will hold its annual conference, "Grace and Works: Confronting Homosexuality through Practical Strategies and Alliance with Christ," 12-13 August 1994 at Utah Valley State College, 800 W. 1200 South, Orem, Utah. Call Evergreen for more information (801/535-1658).

THE MORMON WOMEN'S FORUM will hold its second annual Counterpoint Conference 4-5 November in Salt Lake at The University Park Hotel. Final papers must be submitted by 1 October. For more information call 801/297-2120 or 801/370-3839.

THE CANADIAN MORMON STUDIES ASSOCIATION, JOHN WHITMER HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, and MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION will hold a joint meeting in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, 20-24 June 1995. Submit paper abstracts by 1 October 1994 to Jessie Embry at the Charles Redd Center, 4069 HBLL, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

THE NOTTINGHAM MORMON STUDIES CENTER is hosting a conference on all aspects of the Mormon experience 6-8 April 1995. For more information contact Douglas Davies, Director of Mormon Studies, University of Nottingham, NG7 2RD, England.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF

MORMON LIFE, THE SOCIETY FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF RELIGION, and THE RELIGIOUS RESEARCH ASSOCIATION will hold a joint meeting 4-6 November in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For more information contact Perry Cunningham at 801/240-3210.

THE 1994 SPERRY SYMPOSIUM will be held in October at BYU. Papers will cover the apostle Paul's life, works, and influence. For more information, contact Paul Hoskisson, JSB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

LATTER-DAY DIGEST and LATTER-DAY WOMAN MAGAZINE are jointly sponsoring a writing contest. The top three short fiction entries, essays or articles, and profiles of women will be awarded prizes of \$100, \$50, and \$35. The deadline is 31 July; send submissions to P.O. Box 1510 Orem, UT 84059.

SUNSTONE CONFERENCES

1994 SALT LAKE CITY SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held 17-20 August 1994, at the Salt Lake Hilton Hotel. Featured topics include the growth of the international LDS church and reflections on the 20-year history of the Sunstone Foundation. Contact the Sunstone Foundation, 331 Rio Grande Street, Suite 206, Salt Lake City, UT 84101 (801/355-5926; fax 801/355-4043).

PACIFIC NORTHWEST SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held at the Mountaineer Bldg, 300 & 3rd Ave. W, Seattle, WA, 28-29 October 1994. To submit paper and panel proposals, contact Molly Bennion, 1150 22nd Ave. East, Seattle, WA 98112-3517 (206/325-6868).

CHICAGO SUNSTONE SYMPOSIUM will be held at the Marriott Courtyard on State and Hubbard in Chicago on 21-22 October 1994, starting at 7:30 Friday evening through 8:30 Saturday evening. To submit paper and panel proposals, contact Ann Stone, 2705 Thayer, Evanston, IL 60201 (708/ 475-2583) or Colleen Thomas, 2103 Park St., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008.

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MORMON MEDIA IMAGE

MORMONS ARE THE MARRYING KIND

MARRIED COUPLES constitute 73.1 percent of LDS church membership, according to a January *USA Today* poll. Focusing on religious groups with the highest concentrations of married and single members, the poll also revealed that the Church of the Brethren followed Mormons with 70.8 percent, trailed by Assembly of God with 70.4 percent. Muslims had the largest ratio of single members (39 percent), followed by Buddhists (37.8 percent) and Greek Orthodox (31.4 percent).

CHURCH JOINS INTERFAITH RELIEF GROUPS

THE LDS CHURCH, in connection with the Valley Interfaith Council, provided food, clothing, tents, and toys, as well as information and support for San Fernando Valley (California) quake victims in January, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. A representative of Church World Service said that the Valley Interfaith Council "is more organized to meet people's needs than any [relief organization] we have seen in the country."

LDS CANDIDATE'S VIEWS DIFFER WITH CHURCH POLICY

MASSACHUSETTS REPUBLICAN Senate candidate Mitt Romney's Mormon background was challenged in February by Gene Hartigan, aide of rival Republican Janet Jeghelian. The *Boston Globe* reported Hartigan's allegation that Romney's campaign positions contradict LDS church doctrine, particularly on abortion rights. In his campaign announcement speech, Romney said that although the Church is against abortion in most cases, he would not alter existing laws if elected. "Mitt Romney's reputation is one of being an honest, good man. And I guess if he has to fight religious bigotry in this campaign he will do it," countered Romney consultant Charles Manning. In response to a request by the Republican state chair to apologize, Hartigan said he did not attack Romney for being Mormon. "If a bishop in the Catholic church came out and took a pro-choice-like stand in a campaign for office, then there would be an uproar."

PRACTICING ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

CHURCH PRESIDENT Ezra Taft Benson, prior to his death, sometimes traveled to a Nevada clinic to receive homeopathic treatments, according to Salt Lake's *Private Eye Weekly*. The story, by Lynn Packer, does not reveal the extent of Benson's treatments, only that he went and believed in homeopathy (unorthodox treatments, sometimes involving electrotherapy or herbal medicine). Reed Benson, the Prophet's sixty-seven-year-old son, was quoted as saying, "Personally, we've used homeopathy for years. . . . There's a number of prominent people who use [it]." Among them, said the article, is President Benson's grandson Steve. While Steve Benson has used homeopathic remedies, and even once took his son to be diagnosed at the Nevada clinic, he describes himself as a "homeopathic agnostic." The clinic's proprietor, Dr. F. Fuller Royal, who diagnoses patients' illnesses with an "Electro-Dermal Instrument," refused to give specifics about the Prophet's treatments, but did say he would have given up homeopathy without Benson's "spiritual help" and "encouragement."

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Special Citations

RICHARD HOWARD

for thirty years of service as RLDS historian

JESSIE EMBRY

for four years of service as MHA executive secretary

T. EDGAR LYON ARTICLE AWARDS

T. Edgar Lyon Best Article Award

MARK R. GRANDSTAFF

"Having More Learning Than Sense: William McLellin and the Book of Commandments Revisited" (*Dialogue*)

T. Edgar Lyon Award for Excellence in Mormon History

D. MICHAEL QUINN

"Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon Political Conflicts" (*Dialogue*)

T. Edgar Lyon Award for Excellence in Mormon History

RONALD K. ESPLIN

"Discipleship: Brigham Young and Joseph Smith"

in *Joseph Smith, The Prophet, The Man*

(BYU Religious Studies Center)

NON-MHA AWARDS

Grace Forte Arrington Award for Historical Excellence

MAUREEN URSENBACH BEECHER

for a lifetime of outstanding articles, books, and speeches on Mormon history

William Grover and Winnifred Foster Reese Awards

for Best Thesis/Dissertation

WILLIAM P. CONNORS

"Mormon Opposition Literature:

A Historiographical Critique and Case Study"

Brigham Young University, thesis

ISLETA L. PEMENT

"RLDS Missions to Native North America, 1860-1934"

University of Missouri at Kansas City, thesis

WHO HATCHED THIS SPACED-OUT PLOT?

ACCORDING TO A 7 June 1994 *Weekly World News* cover story, a dozen U.S. senators have been exposed as alien spies from outer space. Among them was Utah's own Orrin Hatch. While some of Hatch's peers confessed ("I'm amazed it's taken you so long to find out," said Phil Gramm, a Texas senator), Hatch remained tight-lipped. However, his spokesperson, Paul Smith, did say that Hatch "can't afford to talk about it because [fellow] aliens are watching his every move." Now that the mystery of Hatch's and others' peculiarity is solved, mused a *Deseret News* writer, what are we to make of the other 88?



The *Weekly World News* exposes Sen. Orrin Hatch

PROOF THAT GOD ANSWERED PRAYERS AS LATE AS THE MID-EIGHTIES:

...HAVING HEARD THE CRIES OF HIS PEOPLE, COMMANDS THAT THOU SHALT BUILD IT AFTER THE MANNER WHICH HE SHALL HEREINAFTER SHOW THEE...



MY BIO'S BIGGER THAN YOURS

AFTER THE 1994 BYU/Relief Society Women's Conference programs went into circulation, many people noted the strange—sometimes cryptic—nature of participants' biographical sketches. Most concluded that by listing a participant first as a "clown," for example, emphasis was taken off personal, professional, and educational achievement, reducing tension between stay-at-home moms and career women. This reasoning seems consistent when male participants' biographies are considered; most list professional affiliation first and few list marital or parental status. Compare Eileen Booth—"Mother, psychologist, Young Women leader, gardener, doer, and smiler"—with Rex Lee, who is "President, Brigham Young University; JD, University of Chicago; former Solicitor General of the United States; founding dean, J. Reuben Clark Law School, BYU" (and all he did was extend a welcome to the conference).

PASSING (GRADES) ON SPIRITUALITY

BYU'S 1994-95 admission application includes an addition to the traditional bishop's endorsement. Section D of the new form asks bishops to compare the applicant to other LDS young people in the following areas: Daily life reflects the moral virtues encompassed in the gospel of Jesus Christ; Attends church regularly; Actively strives to serve others; Demonstrates church leadership abilities. Grades fall into categories of Exemplary, Above Average, Average, Minimal, and No Adherence. Apparently, some returning BYU students aren't faring so well when compared spiritually to their children's age brackets. A parent of several BYU students reported being rated "Average" by his bishop on daily spirituality after he watched the film *Schindler's List* against the bishop's advice.

D How would you compare the applicant with all the LDS young people you have known?
Please check the appropriate boxes.

	Exemplary	Above Average	Average	Minimal	No Adherence
Daily life reflects the moral virtues encompassed in the gospel of Jesus Christ	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attends church regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Actively strives to serve others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrates church leadership abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

E Since not all worthy applicants can be offered admission, please share your personal observations regarding the individual's character and spirituality, as well as any other unique factors. Your comments are very important to our evaluation.

AN OLIVE LEAF

*"... plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us."
(See History of the Church, 1:316 and D&C 88.)*

"MORE HUMILITY AND PATIENCE AND FORGIVENESS"

By President Howard W. Hunter

Following the 30 May 1994 death of President Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter read this statement at a press conference on 6 June where it was announced that the Quorum of the Twelve had met and ordained him to be the next Church president.

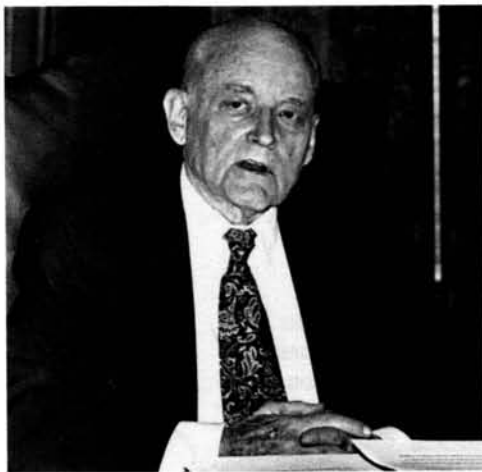
OUR HEARTS HAVE BEEN very tender since the death of our dear friend and brother, Ezra Taft Benson. We love him very much and will miss his company and sweet counsel. I have felt his loss in a particularly personal way in light of the new responsibility that has come to me since his passing. I have shed many tears and have sought my Father in Heaven in earnest prayer with a desire to be equal to the high and holy calling which is now mine.

My greatest strength through these past hours and recent days has been my abiding testimony that this is the work of God and not men, that Jesus Christ is the authorized and living head of this Church and He leads it in word and deed. I pledge my life, my strength, and the full measure of my soul to serving Him fully.

To the membership of the Church in every country of the world and to people everywhere I extend my love.

There are two invitations I would like to leave with the members of the Church as we strive to keep the commandments of God and receive the full measure of His blessings. First of all, I would invite all members of the Church to live with ever-more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed.

I pray that we might treat each other with more kindness, more courtesy, more humility and patience and forgiveness. We do have high expectations of one another, and all can improve. Our world cries out for more disciplined living of the commandments of God. But the way we are to encourage that,




We do have high expectations of one another, but the way we are to encourage is "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned."

as the Lord told the Prophet Joseph in the wintry depths of Liberty Jail, is "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile." (D&C 121:41, 42.)

To those who have transgressed or been offended, we say come back. To those who are hurt and struggling and afraid, we say let us stand with you and dry your tears. To those who are confused and assailed by error on every side, we say come to the God of all truth and the Church of continuing revelation. Come back. Stand with us. Carry on. Be believing. All is well, and all will be well. Feast at the table laid before you in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strive to follow the Good Shepherd who has provided it. Have hope, exert faith, receive—and give—charity, the pure love of Christ.

Secondly, and in that same spirit, I also invite members of the Church to establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my heart to have every member of the Church temple worthy. I would hope that every adult member would be worthy of—and carry—a current temple recommend, even if proximity to a temple does not allow immediate or frequent use of it.

Let us be a temple-attending and a temple-loving people. Let us hasten to the temple as frequently as time and means and personal circumstances allow. Let us go not only for our kindred dead, but let us also go for the personal blessing of temple worship, for the sanctity and safety which is provided within those hallowed and consecrated walls. The temple is a place of beauty, it is a place of revelation, it is a place of peace. It is the house of the Lord. It is holy unto the Lord. It should be holy unto us.

Thank you for your courtesy this morning. 

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