

**MORMON
EXPERIENCE
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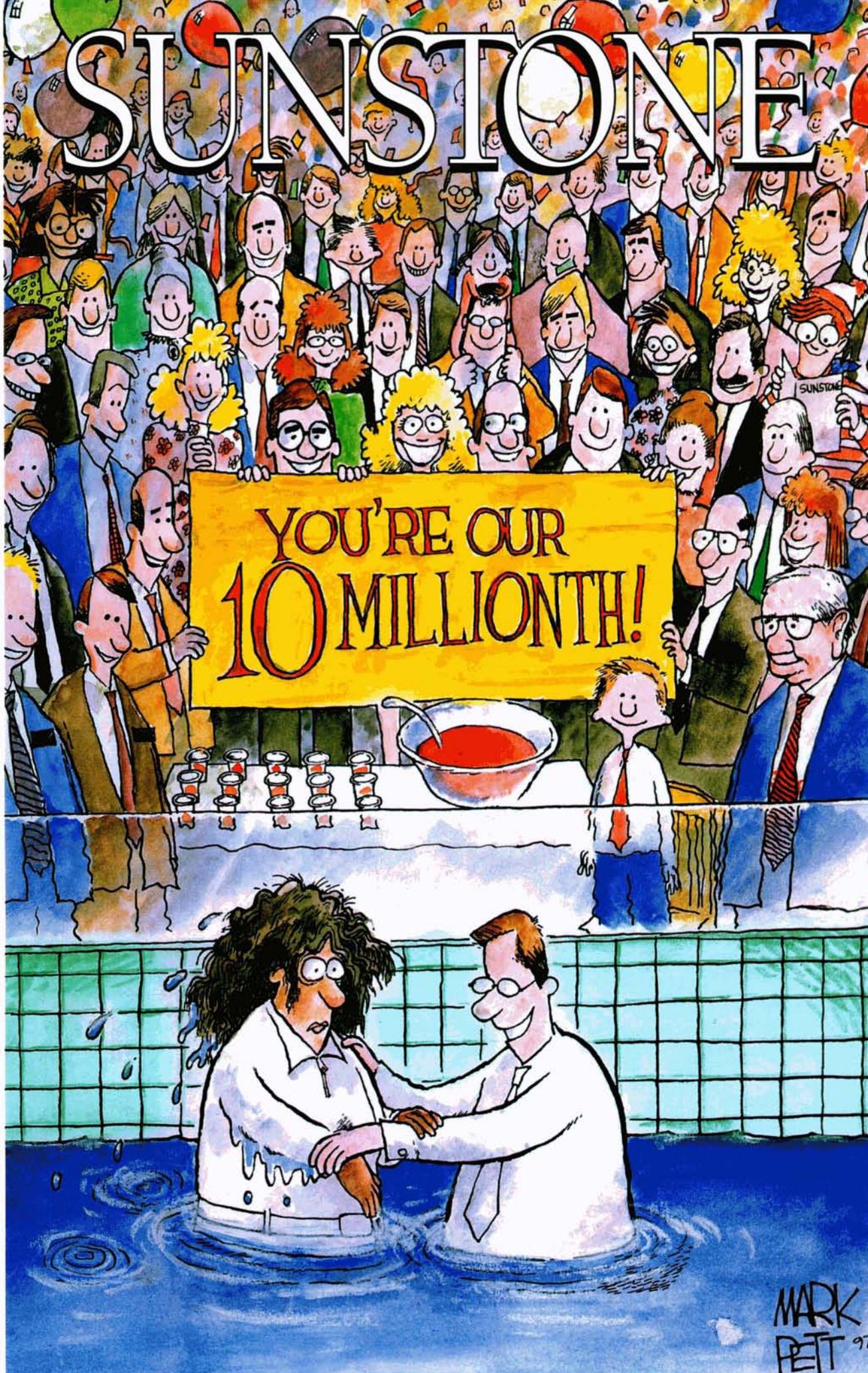
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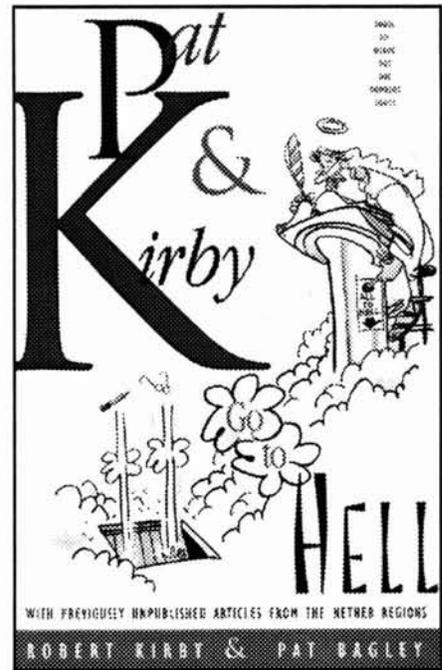
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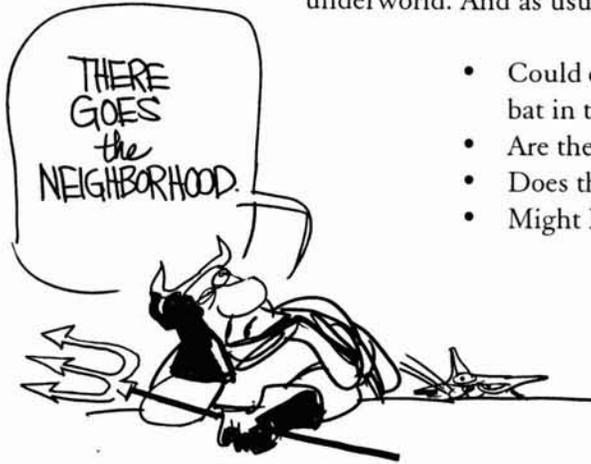


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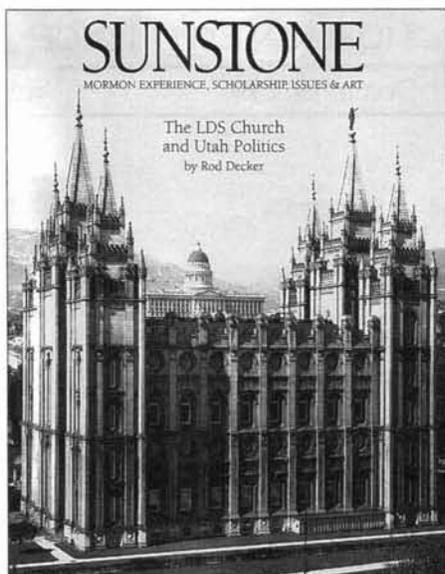
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YEA, YEA  NAY, NAY



UNAIDED TRUTH

MY ROOMMATE and I have been trying to figure out if the clever, almost-too-appropriate cover "photograph" on the previous issue (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1997) is an actual photograph. To wit: can one (did you?) really take a picture with the Utah State Capitol building positioned between the temple's spires? Or did you compose the image with your nifty computer graphics package, purchased of course by a generous donor who'd like to see the magazine come out more regularly?

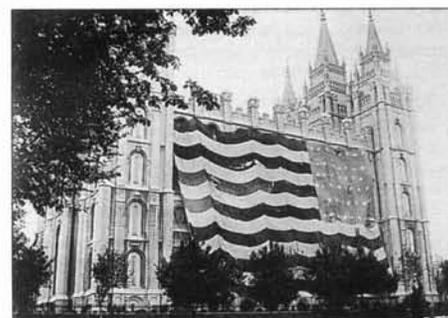
MIKE BRANSON
West Hollywood, Calif.

Editors' response:

Yep, it's an actual photograph that we borrowed from Pat Bagley; but after we went to press, we discovered a copy is in the Utah

State Historical Society's photo-archives. It's several decades old—obviously taken before the temple was sandblasted and, by the wood structure attached to the temple, before the annex was constructed. Both events occurred in the 1960s. The copy in the Society's archives is in a collection donated by L. V. McNeely, a *Deseret News* photographer, now deceased, and the archivists assume that he took the picture.

We wish some donor would enhance our computer graphic system; we need to air-brush some wrinkles off our personal photographs.

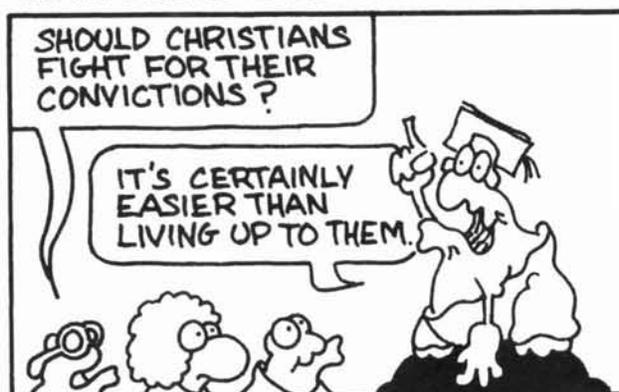


ALL HUNG UP

I JUST RECEIVED the latest issue of SUNSTONE and was browsing through the articles and noticed a photograph with an erroneous caption. I was a Utah resident during much of the centennial statehood celebration. Many times I saw the photograph on page 36 [above] with a similar statehood caption. I believe the photo is of the June/July 1897 jubilee (fifty-year) celebration of the Pioneers and not of the 1896 statehood celebration. The flag on the side of the Salt Lake Temple was originally hung from the Tabernacle ceiling from January 1896 until late spring or early summer of 1897. It was then taken down and hung on the Temple for the jubilee celebration. Note that the trees in the photo appear to be more of a June/July time than a January (statehood) time. Some have suggested that it was hung "backwards" because there was not a standard established for displaying the flag. More



Pontius' Puddle



likely, the hooks left from hanging it in the Tabernacle only allowed the flag to be hung "backwards." After the jubilee celebration, the flag, torn and in disrepair, was taken to a corner of Temple Square and burned.

DOUG CAHOON
Plano, Tex.

WALKMAN ON THE TOWER

"NEITHER TAKE ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man" (D&C 84:85).

On 11 October, I attended BYU's annual Sperry Symposium. The plenary session was given by Apostle Russell M. Nelson. Prior to Nelson's talk, there was a line of young students asking him to sign autographs, sign his book, and have their picture taken with him. I casually mentioned to a friend that Elder

Nelson was treated more like a celebrity than a spiritual leader. A woman sitting in front of me turned around and rebuked me. She declared that people need role-models and that general authorities are better than rock and sports stars. "These men are heroes!" she boldly testified, and turned back around before I could rebut. I sat there, stunned. Later, I learned that Elder Nelson's wife was sitting next to her. Whoops.

For the opening hymn, we sang "Come Listen to a Prophet's Voice." His talk was titled "Remnants Gathered, Covenants Fulfilled." It was a dynamic address. I didn't agree with his interpretation of various scriptures, and I was suspicious of some of his conclusions, but I was absolutely in awe of his presentation.

Elder Nelson delivered a highly structured discourse without the use of monitors, TelePrompTer, or written text. He quoted verbatim long passages of scripture, elaborated on obscure facts (such as how many times Isaiah is quoted in the Book of Mormon), expounded on the English mean-

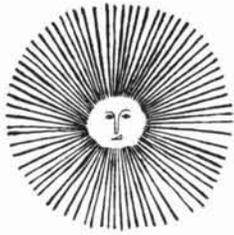
ing of Hebrew and Latin words, and integrated faith-promoting anecdotes. Even I, the incurable skeptic, was impressed. He would start quoting a verse as he was turning to it, instantly find it, and finish reading it from the scriptures. All without missing a beat.

I left the presentation absolutely stunned and conceded that, indeed, Elder Nelson was a knowledgeable and learned man. It was a masterful delivery that captivated the audience and left us all enthralled. I thought to myself that perhaps I had misjudged the man (after being completely offended by one of his general conference talks).

Later that day, I met a young man who had noticed something that I had missed. Elder Nelson had discreetly planted an earpiece in his ear, which he listened to while giving his address. I quickly confirmed this fact with a symposium organizer, who casually noted that Nelson did indeed use an earpiece and that his entire talk was pre-recorded. He delivered his address verbally while hearing it via his Walkman! Stunned, I now knew how Dorothy felt when the Oz-



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curtain was drawn back and the true Wizard was revealed.

Now that technology has advanced, I guess one no longer has to "treasure up the words of life." Move over Holy Ghost; now there's something more efficient. It's a Sony Walkman! Is it live, or is it Mormonex? Now I understand how he was able to keep on going and going and going! Nothing outlasts the revelator! We are entering into the age of Technotopia, and the company that will bring it to us? The LDS church. Who could have guessed?

I couldn't believe that I had bought into the whole presentation. The congregation left wowed, convinced that they had heard the words of a man who is so obviously a master of scripture, Hebrew, Latin, and doctrinal exegesis. As it turns out, he was really just master of the "play" button on his Sony. I later engaged wicked, comic thoughts that I had the telekinetic power to speed up the recorder during his talk.

Despite the passionate testimony of the woman in front of me, this is not good role-

modeling. Elder Nelson gives the impression that he is something that he is not. Students leave with the impression that apostles have incredible fluency with the scriptures and mastery of knowledge that the layman will probably never attain. The stature of a G.A. is elevated so high as to be nearly unreachable in the simple lives of average Mormons. One of my mentors in life warned me to be cautious of "cult-personalities." This is why.

I suppose there is nothing horribly wrong with Elder Nelson's approach. It's a pragmatic use of technology, to say the least, and not so different from the screen-monitors used in general conference (which sometimes create the same effect). But people are so enamored by personality that they mistake showmanship for spirituality. I am not impressed with manufactured charisma and technologically enhanced chutzpah.

Maybe we'll have to revise our scriptures for the twenty-first century. I have a suggestion:

"Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say; but stick in your ear continually

the prerecorded words of life, and it shall appear to be given you in the very hour that portion that ye shall mete out to every man" (A/C D/C 84:85).

TROY D. WILL
Provo, Utah

TREK LIGHTING

I WANT to be the first geeky Star Trek fan to point out that footnote 13 in Elbert Peck's column, "Touched By the Masters' Hands" (SUNSTONE, Sept. 1997), got the episode title wrong: it's "The Inner Light" (not "The Light Inside"). But it's a darn good episode to cite, anyway.

BOB WOOLLEY
St. Paul, Minn.

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OF GOOD REPORT

"THE SYMBOLIC WITHIN THE LITERAL"

Why sacred history must be symbolic as well as literal.

YOU SPEAK about a kind of listening to the Word that does not require advanced biblical criticism. But many Christians experience serious difficulties with such an immediate encounter with stories and claims—the specific words—of a faith that originated in a remote past in a cultural context that appears so removed from today's reality. In many ways, it seems easier to be religious in a general sort of way rather than believing according to the specifics of a particular historical faith.

THAT HAS INDEED BECOME A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR our contemporaries. I would attribute it in large part to an exclusive and mistaken literalism in our encounter with the sources of revelation. One of the more ominous signs of the spiritual impoverishment of our time is that believers have lost much of the sensitivity needed to perceive the symbolic within the literal. They tend to oppose one to the other: events and words are either symbolic or they are literal. But such a disjunction is fatal. The purely literal reading deprives the paradigmatic events of our faith of their enduring redemptive significance today and reduces an historical religion, such as ours is, to a mere memory. A purely symbolic reading weakens historical events and words to the point where they become simply occasions for creating new symbols for our own age. Many contemporaries caught between the horns of this false dilemma flee their historical faith to take refuge in some kind

of abstract deism. But the historical need not be exclusive of the symbolic, and precisely thereby it attains contemporaneity for all times.

An older conception of religious symbols understood them as both concrete, historical realities in their own right and signs referring to an invisible reality. That conception still survives in the Christian theology of the sacraments, according to which ordinary actions become extraordinary in signifying a new conveyance of divine grace. Unfortunately, in their encounter with the equally sacramental words of scripture Christians appear to have largely lost the symbolic meaning. Yet if the words and events of the Gospel narratives are to have more than a historical meaning, subject to the rules of historical criticism, they also must be read as sanctifying symbols that religiously address today's believer.

The concept of a nonspecific general "religiosity" has proven to be untenable. Religion cannot survive on mere feelings or moral intentions. It needs symbols of transcendence, and symbols are by their very nature specific. ☐

LOUIS DUPRÉ
from an interview in the Christian Century
July 16–23, 1997, 658–659

Sunstone welcomes submissions for this section.

FROM THE CHAIR & THE EDITOR

A FAITHFUL SUPPLEMENT



A conversation between Stan Christensen and Elbert Eugene Peck

This summer, international negotiation advisor and mediator Stan Christensen was elected chair of the Sunstone Foundation's board of trustees. For many years, he and SUNSTONE editor Elbert Peck, who is also the executive director of the foundation, have had conversations about Sunstone, its roles, purposes, challenges, and public image. Stan often emphasizes the issues that Sunstone needs to better address; while Elbert often focuses on the dynamics of our established system and community. Here are excerpts from a recent discussion.

Stan is in normal type; Elbert is in italics.

LET'S START by talking about the purpose of Sunstone.

I LIKE Lowell Bennion's idea that faith is a product of one's total experience. Sunstone seeks to give people more experience and to build true faith through better understanding of the gospel. This kind of faith requires questioning and dialogue.

Sunstone helps in this process by providing forums for the independent expression of Mormon experience through scholarship and art. As we do this, we need to complement the Church's mission and be part of that community, in contrast to being seen as detractors or outsiders. Unfortunately many people assume that sponsoring independent discussion and faithfulness are mutually exclusive. I think this assumption is worth questioning.

I AGREE, but the inherent tension between institutional religion and independent discussion needs to be acknowledged, since not all scholarship will confirm Church positions. Tension is also evident in the differing definitions individuals have of core terms, such as faithful, Church, kingdom, and gospel, etcetera. People understand such things very differently, and unless we allow for a broad (self)understanding of, say, "faith," we're going to be drawing narrow lines that are inherently divisive, and I think Sunstone should be inclusive. I take an expansive view for Sunstone: we welcome the sharing of diverging views and faith journeys, as well as competent

scholarship, in the belief that the authentic, informed discussion of differences, in good will, is constructive.

COMPLETE INCLUSIVENESS creates as many problems as exclusiveness does. In reality, we do have boundaries at Sunstone, and we could do a better job of defining and managing them. For example, as with the Church, Sunstone draws a line at helping people whose agenda is to bring down the Church. We also draw a line at criticizing Church leaders.

There has been a lot of criticism of Church leaders in the intellectual community of late, and I think it's the wrong focus. Our very human Church leadership is one of our strengths. I know that in leadership positions I have held I've made numerous mistakes, and I hope for forgiveness rather than judgment. Leadership issues are often subtle and complex, and too often we jump to conclusions without understanding the nuances.

I'M ALSO uncomfortable with individuals who pronounce judgment on Church leaders—this one's bad, that one's stupid, or whatever. Still, we need honest, charitable discussion of differences of opinion within Mormonism, and that's going to mean disagreeing with some Church policies and some statements by Church leaders. We need to learn to distinguish between difference and dissent or disloyalty; we need to learn to speak the truth in love. We need a place, for example, where women and children can state that the

Church's policies on abuse are ineffective.

I take a family metaphor for the Church; that openly sharing views and pain is healthy, albeit uncomfortable, and that silencing them creates worse dysfunctions. As in a family, some discussions occasionally will be uncivil, as much as we want them to be otherwise. But to try to control all discourse so that discord never happens is to try to script all expression to be general conference sermons, and that would deaden our corporate religious life.

I'M NOT pushing for absolute control, but I think that how we have this dialogue is important, and Sunstone has a role and responsibility in framing that process. Members need to ask good questions rather than just criticize, and Church leaders need to both encourage questions and engage in dialogue. The communication needs to be two-way.

BUT ONE PERSON'S open discussion is another's outright criticism.

TAKE THE role of women in Church leadership. A dialogue of how to better utilize the many strengths women bring to our organization is much easier to have, and more likely to be productive, than a statement or position that women must receive the priesthood. Many of the major organizational changes in our church have come from grassroots discussions. Take the creation of the Relief Society, for example. Dialogue is much more likely to produce change, and it is a much less painful process than criticisms.

THERE ARE indeed more and less helpful ways to explore a topic, and we do need to improve our discussion styles, but we also need to distinguish between what Sunstone does officially and what individuals do through it. Sunstone is about discussion, not advocacy. We have no interest as an organization in telling Church leaders what to do about women's roles in leadership or in anything else. But in our forums, individuals will express strong, thoughtful opinions that clearly advocate a position. We try for balance by inviting differing views rather than censoring strong, responsible views. It's important to remember that much in Sunstone's forums is not simply opinion; much of it is scholarship, which can sometimes be controversial, too, and can implicitly call for revision of official positions.

WHILE IT'S easy to say that we don't take editorial stances, I think that many people in the Mormon community perceive otherwise, and responsibility begs us to deal with those perceptions. I don't want to avoid controversy, but I also don't want to promote it by

confirming assumptions that we take an adversarial or criticizing approach to the gospel. More clearly communicating appropriate guidelines should help with this.

IT'S HARD for me to know exactly what lines you mean. Some years ago, we had Esther Peterson speak. She's had a distinguished career in public service; she's an alumna of BYU, although she is not permitted to speak on campus; she hasn't been active in her adult life, and yet she attributes all her social do-gooding to her Mormon upbringing. I'm sure there were Church leaders and others who felt confirmed in their assumptions that we promote unfaithful lifestyles because we had her speak. Should we, then, to avoid promoting that assumption, not have invited her?

FAITH, even if it could be measured, is obviously not the criteria we should use when deciding whom to include in the dialogue. Just as bishops don't exclude members from bearing their testimonies based on their level of faith, neither should we.

In my experience, probably 60 to 75 percent of those who attend symposiums or subscribe to the magazine are active, participating members of the Church. Probably no ward in the Church has that activity level. Unfortunately, Sunstone is often judged for the 2 percent who are detractors of the Church. My point is that we generally reach people who are solidly within the established Mormon community, and we need to reflect that in our programs.

I worry about being judged for the 2 per-

cent who are detractors at Sunstone, just as I do when I bring a non-member friend to my ward. Sometimes I wish a bishop or a gospel doctrine teacher would pull aside people who make particularly unhelpful or doctrinally unsound comments that detract from the spirit. As leaders of Sunstone, we should do the same at symposiums in an effort to increase the chance that participants will have faith-promoting experiences.

Our recent effort to send advance letters to symposium participants encouraging that the tone of their sessions should respect the gospel and not to criticize Church leaders is an example of moving in this direction.

I THINK the vast majority of our programs do reflect Latter-day Saints who are established in the Mormon community; the controversial sessions or articles are the small minority. But we do need to encourage a better critical culture. I'm interested in influencing how something is said, not in controlling what is said. I'm committed to helping us acquire better skills of thought and expression, but I am not into telling people what thoughts they should have or restricting their sharing heterodox views because they might decrease the chance that attenders or readers would have a "faith-promoting experience."

Life is messy, and we should all develop a healthy tolerance for human differences. We may wince that the investigator we brought to church has to listen to the ward quack in testimony meeting, but that open mike is an important part of the community, and we shouldn't apologize for it. I believe in an open society within Mormonism and will allow any reasonable, responsible voice

to speak through our forums. We have standards of quality and scholarship that we enforce; there are clearly people who have crossed the lines of what's appropriate, and we closely scrutinize them in the future—that's exercising judgment, not censorship. The goal is to create a critical culture where inappropriate behavior is just not accepted by the audience and other presenters.

I, too, desire a "faithful" outcome, but I see that best achieved indirectly through the approving of responsible participants. In asking "is this faith-promoting?" we just might conclude that a Levi Peterson—whose Pillars of My Faith, "A Christian by Yearning," was essentially a well-written "I don't believe anything, but I hope for the resurrection"—might just push more orthodox people out of the tent. For me, individuals like Levi are part of the family, they're faithful in their own unorthodox way, they've a place at the Sunstone table, and we're interested in hearing them share the story of their authentic faith journey. Trying to determine in advance whether one reasonable Saint will be offended by another reasonable Saint—which happens all the time!—is a silly game. It could lead to wholesale censoring of intelligent voices and broad topics, such as Mother in Heaven, homosexuality, Book of Mormon historicity, gender roles, sexual mores in Nauvoo, or—and here's the really difficult area—humor.

Even if we had a symposium graced with respectful language and tone and 99 percent of the sessions were BYU Education Week—worthy, many would be offended enough to quit the event because of one session they found objectionable. The LDS intolerance for controversial topics is appalling; everyone's a thought police—liberals and conservatives. One person's tolerance is another's heresy, apostasy, laxness, or disobedience. A current challenge for Sunstone is to bring to its forums a wider diversity of Mormon experience, expression, and scholarship, including conservative voices. To have not only the people who can't speak at BYU but also the BYU-kind speaking on the things they can't talk about there and speaking on the orthodox things that even the Ensign would publish. I want every thoughtful, reasonable voice to be in our tent, talking to each other about the full-range of issues. I believe that the outcome will be spiritually affirming, even if uncontrollable and chaotic.

I'M A LITTLE less optimistic. While I like your criteria of thoughtful, reasonable, and responsible, I worry that unbridled openness might actually shrink the tent and push people out. Entropy leads to chaos, and I guess I'm a little more risk-averse than you are in this area.

While we want to be inclusive rather than exclusive, since the outcome is so important,



"And the calling of bishop goes to . . ."

we just can't let randomness drive either the form or content of our discussion. From a content perspective, I think there are certain topics that we should avoid completely. For example, since it is difficult to frame a discussion of the sacred processes and rituals of the temple in an appropriate way, I would rather censor that discussion completely.

I also think we could do a better job of representing differing viewpoints of the topics we do decide are appropriate.

WE DON'T abdicate control to "random chaos." We set a lot of direction through organizing plenary and other symposium sessions and by balancing articles in an issue of the magazine. Being open to responsible voices doesn't mean abandoning responsibility. For the symposium, we accept all responsible proposals, but we dedicate staff resources primarily to filling our deficit areas, which means recruiting conservatives—that's influencing without controlling or censoring. Dilemmas arise when someone proposes a groundbreaking, important, but controversial and liberal paper on, say, Book of Mormon historicity, and we can't get a counter-balancing conservative voice to respond to it. Should we allow that paper to be presented or published, hoping balance will come through the more conservative journals that wouldn't publish this liberal piece? There've been several recent cases where it was impossible to get the two main opposing voices in the same forum.

TOUGH QUESTION. I'm not sure we need to always present opposing views on the topics we choose to include—that seems a bit forced. I do think we need the magazine to be balanced as a whole, and I think that means more articles from more diverse viewpoints.

"Conservative" and "liberal" are labels that oversimplify diversity. Such oversimplification leads to prejudice, and, in my experience, prejudice leads to abuse. A lot of the work that I do as a mediator in political and ethnic conflicts is the result of this type of misunderstanding and the resulting stereotyping.

Sunstone is uniquely positioned to provide a useful forum for different viewpoints as the Church continues to expand into diverse cultures with different viewpoints. The liberal-conservative dichotomy is unhelpful and increasingly irrelevant in a church that is becoming as diverse as ours is.

The media is a willing agent in such non-constructive labeling. They have perhaps contributed more to a negative perception of the Sunstone community than anything that's been written or said in our forums. I don't

meet many people who are critical of Sunstone who have actually read the magazine or attended a symposium. Since many people form their opinions about Sunstone through the media, they are likely to see it as an extreme or marginal organization. Most of what happens at the symposiums is consistent with the gospel and is faithful, but the media isn't interested in reporting on mainstream, faith-promoting discussions. I suppose subtlety and faithfulness don't sell newspapers.

WHILE THAT'S TRUE, I'm not so hard on the media. They do focus on the controversial, on the different. It's how the news media functions, and it generally serves our society well. Breaking news particularly focuses on controversy and often misses larger trends and issues. You know the old maxim: dog bites man is not news; man bites dog is. Well, that happens with Sunstone. Michael Quinn presents a groundbreaking, controversial paper on Ezra Taft Benson—that gets reported. Someone gives a faith-inspiring devotional—that's not news. Our news media is better than it has ever been in the history of the Republic, and while I don't like the lumps it sometimes gives Sunstone, that is the cheap price of an open society. Even so, we try to educate reporters who cover us and to better publicize "faith-promoting" sessions, and we can do better.

However, Sunstone's public relations challenges have come not so much from bad media reporting as they have from official Church speeches, statements, and excommunications. Because of them, whenever anything "negative" is reported, whether by the media, word of mouth, or reading in the magazine or symposium program, the negative impression is confirmed. And it only takes one negative incident of one-hundred other positive ones for the stereotype to be confirmed. That, to me, is the much larger P.R. challenge, and it's one we can't entirely control no matter how much spin we put on our positive sessions.

NEVERTHELESS, an open society doesn't need to be accompanied by irresponsibility, and I question the accountability and responsibility of the media. I have recently been doing conflict resolution work in Chechnya, and I am continually amazed how irresponsible reporting—often only through the emphasis reporters put on a person or event—increases the difficulty of resolving conflicts.

STILL THE MEDIA is usually not covering Sunstone per se—it's covering a particular Sunstone speaker or article—one event, one topic, one story. It's not in the purview of that particular story to report on the larger issue of the magazine or symposium. In fact, when Sunstone has been the focus of a news story, generally we've been treated very favorably.

Still, when the religion editor of Time interviews me for hours, and has a good understanding of Sunstone, and praises our almost-unique-among-religions role of honest, intelligent, loyal, insider reflections, and then in Time he summarizes us only as having an "edgy relationship" with the Church, I wince. He's not malicious, nor is he unaware of the faithful dynamic involved in Sunstone. But, for his context, he's not inaccurate either, even if his summary doesn't help our image.



DUFF FREEMAN

I THINK intent needs to be separated from impact. I don't ascribe negative intent to the media, I just think responsible reporting includes some attention to impact.

I'm not putting all of the blame on them. I think Sunstone could do a much better job of managing the media and creating public relations that more accurately communicate who we are and what our mission is. We could learn a lot from the Church in this regard. President Hinckley has clearly used his leadership to invest in public relations, and the success the Church has had in this area will help in the process of building the kingdom.

WELL, media management is very hard to do if you don't want to try to get into the business of controlling the media, which, for me, is an obnoxious enterprise. I do agree that we can better model President Hinckley in highlighting to the press Sunstone's positive attributes, but I don't like what LDS Public Affairs does in keeping information from the media. I've watched it firsthand, and much of it is distasteful, manipulative, and, well, dishonest. They don't believe in the democratic process of open knowledge—they're very selective in the information that they allow to be out and discussed. Sunstone should not be like that. We shouldn't say to reporters, "You can report on these sessions, but you can't cover these," which is exactly what the Church does.

I AGREE with your assessment of the dangers of public relations, but I still want to put an accurate spin on our activities. We're horribly misrepresented currently. We need to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" in pursuit of the media, and so far we are only harmless.

Another pressing issue for me at Sunstone is the need to provide our services to younger people in the Mormon community. The average age of participants in this organization is fifty plus. President Hinckley recently said, "We are an intellectually curious people." But sometimes, I wonder. Typically, people start to become intellectually curious in their twenties and thirties, but Sunstone gets little participation at that level. We Church members seem to bloom intellectually later in life.

SADLY, THAT'S true. Partly, I think it reflects the national culture. In the '70s, '80s and '90s, professors nationwide have lamented that students weren't as inquisitive as was the sixties generation. But concerning Mormon culture, particularly with religion, Mormons are taught to learn the answers, not to ask questions. We don't start thinking critically and self-reflectively about our religious life until we have a lived experience that allows us to look back and say,

"Oh, that's not always true, and that doesn't work." That doesn't happen until one's out of college, with a family, or other complex life situation. Then, some start saying, "Things are not always the way I thought they were."

SO IT'S the ability to contextualize experience and contextualize faith through experience. I guess we all have different levels of intensity in this journey; I'd just like to think that we as a people were more rigorous in the pursuit of faith and truth. Light and learning can be found in so many different places, and I think Sunstone is one of those places.

FOR SOME PEOPLE, Sunstone is such a place, but not for most. "Truth" is such a difficult and elusive thing: it is only understood within one's constructed reality, and you can't change that in someone else overnight, and maybe you shouldn't even try. I wish we had more youth involved, and we need to be more accessible to students whose intellectual journeys coincide with the issues Sunstone addresses. But I have reservations about being evangelical to the average educated Mormon who does just fine without Sunstone. Regardless, it's difficult to get students involved. We have tried symposium scholarships; we've invited subscribers to give very cheap, ten-dollar subscriptions to collegiates; we've offered ten-dollar subscriptions to BYU students through the Student Review—in each case, the response has been minimal.

Stan, you got into Sunstone as a student. What has it done for you personally?

SUNSTONE HAS clearly increased my faith in the restored gospel and has helped me adhere more to the commandments. As I learn from the experiences of others, whether it's their successes or their struggles, I'm enriched. I think it was Ben Franklin who said, "Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other." I have been the beneficiary of others' experiences. People like Lowell Bennion, whom I wouldn't have known as much about without Sunstone, have been of great benefit to me in my journey. These people have helped me access a part of the LDS community I otherwise wouldn't have. I'm more likely to think about and reflect on gospel principles after I read an article or a poem in SUNSTONE. For me, Sunstone doesn't replace any Church activity or publication; it's an additive—a supplement. Being involved in Sunstone helps me focus more on things spiritual, and asks that I do so in a rigorous, adult way. So it focuses my abilities and attention on gospel issues.

SUNSTONE should be a supplement. I get frus-

trated with people who say, "Sunstone is my Church." By itself, Sunstone is a terrible religious diet—no ritual, no on-going, interconnected community, and so forth. But Sunstone is a fine supplement for individuals with an intellectual bent. Some things in Sunstone could not appear anywhere else—even BYU Studies doesn't publish theological treatises, such as those by Eugene England, Arthur Bassett, or Lowell Bennion. What Sunstone does offer that the more official forums can't is individual personality, individual thinking and ideas. For someone to say, "here I am; here's where I've been; here's how I make sense of it," using critical tools and without any sense of "Oh, I'm supposed to say it this way," is of great value. It's like getting to know a friend: when you know them, you listen to their words because you value their individual journeys.

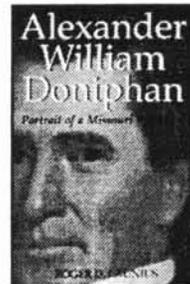
WE PROVIDE information that helps people make informed choices, but we're not telling them what choices to make. Institutions that attempt to control peoples' choices often end up producing frustration and anxiety. We need to be trusted to choose—free agency is an essential component of spiritual growth, and in my life Sunstone has helped with this important process.

ALEXANDER WILLIAM DONIPHAN

Portrait of a Missouri Moderate

Roger D. Launius

Alexander William Doniphan (1808–1887)—Missouri attorney, military figure, politician, and businessman—is one of the most significant figures in antebellum Missouri. Launius shows the key to



Doniphan's importance was his persistent moderation on the critical issues of his day. He is also recognized by the Mormons for his assistance to their beleaguered church during Missouri's "Mormon War" and for his refusal to execute Joseph Smith when ordered to do so by his commanding officer.

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TURNING THE TIME OVER TO...

THE SERIOUS SIDE OF HUMOR

By Robert Kirby



If God can get angry, it stands to reason that he can also laugh, and do so in equal measures.

HUMOR IS A VERY SERIOUS business, particularly when it comes to organized religion. This occurred to me most poignantly in 1991 while working as a humor columnist for a small newspaper in Utah County.

Shortly after the appearance of a column in which I likened the sound of Mormon hymn singing as something akin to the noise of an anesthetized dairy herd, I received a call from an irate reader. When the caller identi-

ROBERT KIRBY, author of Sunday of the Living Dead, and Wake Me For the Resurrection, is a columnist for the Salt Lake Tribune. He welcomes e-mail at rkirby@itsnet.com. This article was originally presented as an address to the Association of Mormon Letters, 1 February 1997, and is printed by permission.

fied herself, I recognized her immediately as a new member of my ward. It was plainly clear, however, that she was unaware of who I was.

"I can only assume that you aren't Mormon," the caller said. "Because if you knew anything at all about Mormons, you wouldn't have said that about us."

When I explained that I was a Mormon, the woman insisted that I could only be an "inactive" Mormon or, worse, an apostate. I replied that I attended church regularly and wasn't inclined toward leaving the fold. When she continued to press me regarding my status in the Church, I pulled out the big guns.

"Not only do I go to church every Sunday, Sister Wake," I said, "I'm also in your bishopric."

After some brief stammering, Sister Wake hung up. She called back a few minutes later to tell me that she had read the column again, "and I did find some humor in it." She was hard pressed, however, to explain why she saw the humor only after discovering my position in her ward.

I assumed that she needed some form of ecclesiastical approval before laughing at herself and the behavior of her fellow churchgoers.

It's an ailment that afflicts most religious groups, some worse than others. Mormons should know better since we believe in a god of "body, parts, and passions." If God can get angry, it stands to reason that he can also laugh, and do so in equal measures.

The trouble is that Mormons don't act like God can have a good time. Religion—and this applies to all faiths—has done an excellent job of educating us as to the things that can make God mad enough to kill us, but nothing is ever said about the things that might make God laugh.

Organized religion is the sole culprit for this lopsided view of God. More directly, gospel bureaucrats, ancient and modern, who have produced a view of God today as that of a mean-spirited bean counter who if really possessed of a sense of humor, it could only be of a kind utterly superfluous to the natural order of things.

Perhaps this occurs because of human nature; namely, that it is far easier to make someone afraid than it is to make them laugh. On a more organized level, fear has proven to be a far more effective tool for religion than laughter or, for that matter, than even love.

Niccolo Machiavelli knew this in the fifteenth century when he wrote, "I conclude, therefore, with regard to being feared and loved, that men love at their own free will, but fear at the will of the prince, and that a wise prince must rely on what is in his power and not on what is in the power of others."¹

Members of the LDS church have long been exhorted to refrain from lightminded behavior. Which is good when the subject is one of sacred matters. Like all human attributes, humor is double-edged. It can, if misused, lead to mockery and a cheapening of things holy. It can even mask the serious good in things. Proof is that while most Mormons are familiar with at least one or two ribald J. Golden Kimball anecdotes, almost none can cite the man's more spiritual contributions to modern Church doctrine. Kimball today is known almost solely as the "cussing general authority."

But if humor can be dangerous, an ab-

sence of it can be disastrous. It's no coincidence that humorists are not renowned for their ability to lead jihads, pogroms, and crusades. Humor does not lend itself well to religious excesses and this, perhaps more than anything, explains its absolute necessity within the realm of faith. If comedians aren't completely welcome in sacrament meeting, they certainly wouldn't have stood themselves in good stead at Mountain Meadows.

Religious humor finds its best footing in irony—the difference between the way the faithful should behave and the way we really do. This means that human behavior as it relates to gospel principles is fair game; whereas, the principles and ordinances themselves should be off-limits.

A self-deprecating sense of humor remains the best way of avoiding the excesses of behavior. The value of such a sense of humor can't necessarily be measured by the reactions of those being lampooned. That is because much of what the faithful hold as dear and precious is frequently really nothing more than their own self-importance; and also because convictions are often greater enemies of the truth than outright lies. Lampooning those convictions and their corresponding behaviors is perhaps the best way of revealing them for what they are.

Nothing less than a colossal sense of self-importance could possibly lead someone to believe that poking fun of them is the same thing as mocking God. And only arrogance could possibly lead someone to believe that the same sins of absurd behavior and bone-headedness that afflicted the Israelites and the Nephites don't also find a home among Mormonites. One of the greatest of all gospel ironies is that while people are comfortable with the scripture-documented, moronic behavior of God's chosen of old, we're less comfortable being told today that our own clothes are also invisible.

This occurs in part because of spiritual stagnation. If the nature of being spiritual has its ultimate reward in eternal life and the power to create, then self-importance is the true mark of the beast. "The compulsion to take ourselves seriously is in inverse proportion to our creative capacity. When the creative [or spiritual] flow dries up, all we have left is our importance."²

It goes without saying that an appreciation for humor changes from person to person. Nor does the level of that humor necessarily detract from the level of spirituality. Thankfully, it's not even the same from prophet to prophet. Brigham Young once claimed that the act of laughing out loud was something to be ashamed of: "Never give way

to vain laughter. I have seldom laughed aloud for twenty or thirty years without regretting it, and I always blush for those who laugh aloud without meaning."³

On the other hand, President Gordon B. Hinckley's biography makes plain the current prophet's disposition to laughing uproariously at a good joke. "He had a good sense of humor, and he would come home from the office and repeat jokes he had heard that made him laugh so hard he couldn't catch his breath."⁴

And why not? The benefits of humor have been well documented by medical researchers. Studies by Dr. Lee Beck and Dr. Stanley Tan, of Loma Linda University in California, have shown that "laughing lowers blood pressure, increases muscle flexation and triggers a flood of beta endorphins, the brain's natural morphine-like compounds

that can induce a sense of euphoria."⁵ Furthermore, natural killer cells that destroy viruses and tumors actually increase during a state of mirth. Gamma-interferon, a disease-fighting protein, rises with laughter as do B-cells, which produce disease destroying antibodies, and T-cells, which orchestrate the immune system.

Move over Word of Wisdom. ☒

NOTES

1. *The Prince*, Machiavelli.
2. "Thoughts of Eric Hoffer, including 'Absolute Faith Corrupts Absolutely,'" *New York Times Magazine*, 25 Apr. 1971, 52.
3. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widstoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1951), chapter 21, "Happiness and Social Engagements," 235-44.
4. Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996).
5. Associated Press story by Delthia Ricks of the *Orlando Sentinel*, which appeared in the *The Daily Herald*, 6 Nov 1996.



LONELINESS

There's something square at the center of it
That makes me afraid,
Not of the time hanging
Like rags of regret,
Or the metronome of human life—
Wiping dust off objects,
Moving a mop across the floor,
Staring at my face in the mirror,
Unkempt and strange.

It's the self in the solitariness
Of my own communion
That I lick around the edges of,
Like a flame on a wet day
That sizzles and regresses in a hiss.
And, naked, like the boundaries
Between good and evil really are,
A choice hinging on a simple action
Like biting into an apple,
The real meaning of Eden,
My self glistens like a fruit
Swaying before a hand plucks it
And decides whether the taste
Is like a pale, sweet remembrance
Or like ash.

—KIM BRIDGFORD



CORNUCOPIA

Out of the Best Books

“SO WHAT” IF IT’S “JUST SO”?



Hordes of humor readers throughout Mormondom have grown accustomed to a Christmas-time fix from those zany satirists, Robert Kirby and Pat Bagley. Keeping with tradition, their third and latest book, *Pat and Kirby Go to Hell*, brings holiday cheer to the somewhat less-reverent again this year. Here is an excerpt:

“WHEN GOD CREATED US, HE BALANCED Man’s “so what” attitude with Woman’s “just so” nature. As such, women are good at making stuff out of nothing whereas men are good at making nothing out of stuff. . . . For example. . . . When Mormon women want to hold a meeting, it requires posters and clever invitations hand-delivered to the homes of all involved. Women stress out if a sister wasn’t notified right up to the last minute.

“Meetings for men are conducted on a much simpler level. Technically speaking, a meeting is considered held if at least two people remember to show up, both of whom arrived hoping that no one else would. . . .

“Do you see what I’m getting at here? Put women in charge of the LDS church and things would get so complicated that only women would have the temperament (or even the inclination) to run them.

“There’s a bright side. Maybe then men could stay home.”

My Creed

MORE OR LESS A CREED

AS I HAVE CONSIDERED WHAT MIGHT BE MY “personal creed,” my recurring thoughts have been about non-creeds and meta-creeds. Non-creeds? Well, simply put, it is far easier and less complicated to say, I do not believe *Fascinating Womanhood* is worth the paper it is printed on than it is to say, I believe the Bible is the word of God. And as for meta-creeds? Why do creeds at all? Why give static form to beliefs that are changing, evanescent, subject to interpretation and reinvention? Creeds always sound to me a little too close to dogma. While reflection, story-telling, and reinterpretation are things I am given to, creed-writing is not. So, here more-or-less is a creed from someone who is—in her bones—Mormon, feminist, and intellectual:

1. *I believe in living responsibly and ethically, in taking responsibility for life’s actions, in attempting to live authentically, and in bearing our own burdens as the scriptures instruct.*

2. *I believe in communities, in families, in friends, in colleagues, in churches, in neighborhoods, and in electronic communities. In addition to bearing our own burdens, scripture also tells us to bear one another’s, and it is in communities that we do this. In communities we have joy, and in communities we face sorrow.*

3. *I believe that understanding one another—in addition to caring for one another—is the most important and difficult task we have as human beings. Understanding another person requires that we inhabit our own selves, our own skins, our culture, our gender, our experience, and it requires, at the same time, that we step out of them. It requires us to hear others’ distinctive voices, to listen rather than to assume, to suspend judgment as well as to use it, to recognize that other’s experiences—different from our own—can also be true.*

4. *I believe that the most meaningful idea of God is of a being who loves all without distinction. This is an incredibly powerful idea: to love without being constrained by notions of normality, intellectualism, ethnicity, race, or gender. I have thought often about what it means to love God. I’m not sure, but I think that to love God is probably to desire to develop a state of mind and condition of heart to enable god-like love within ourselves.*

5. *I believe in the life of the mind, tempered by the heart, and that asking questions thoughtfully, rigorously, and sincerely is usually more important than settling on answers. Thinking critically and caringly about our identities, our communities, our cultures, and our gods is something I cannot imagine shutting off,*

nor would I want to. Finding the richest questions and diving into them is crucial to better understanding who we are and to living better and richer lives.

6. *I believe in narrative, not in dogma.* I am more persuaded, more touched, more inspired by thinking that is critical and open-ended, by thinking that involves hearing other stories than I am by statements that expect me silently to nod my head in assent. I believe in story-telling.

7. *I believe in the idea of faith, but I'm not exactly sure why.* And this part of the creed I've been working on for a long time, and I still am. I am troubled by and fail to understand much that is done by, and in the name of, faith. At the same time, I would describe myself as blessed by a faith that I describe as a confidence in life's potential for purposefulness and joy.

8. *I believe in humor, levity, wit, irony.* They balance our gravity; they keep us from taking ourselves too seriously.

9. *I believe in the holy and the sacred.* We find these in moments of immediate communion with other humans or with

the divine in unexpected places and in everyday ways. I believe the holy and the sacred come threaded with the secular and the profane, the authentic with the unauthentic, the superlative with the ordinary. I experience the holy and the sacred as transient and evanescent; it is perhaps for that reason that they are so profound and so difficult to talk about.

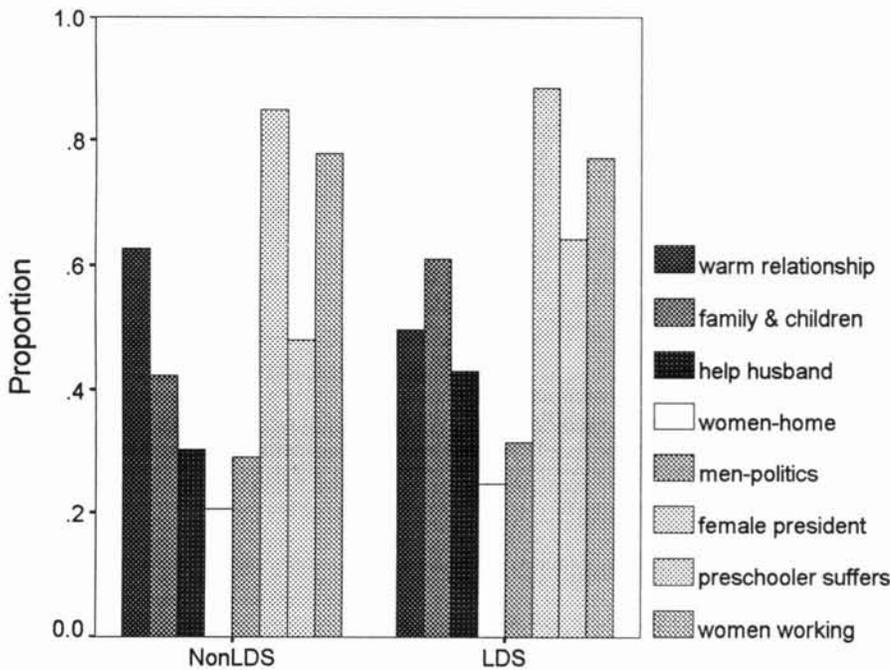
—STACY BURTON

Critical Matters

TWO CHEERS FOR THE VIOLENT LITERATI

FEW TOPICS IN MORMON LITERATURE HAVE ever received as much attention as the question of violence recently has. The 1996 *Annual* of the Association for Mormon Letters contains Susan Howe's AML presidential address, "The Moral Imagination," a meditation about violence

Peculiar People



ATTITUDES ABOUT GENDER ROLES

ALTHOUGH MEMBERS OF THE LDS church tend to be conservative in their attitudes regarding gender roles, they are similar to the national average in some important respects. This finding comes from responses to the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago from 1972 to 1996. The cumulative survey includes over 35,000 responses, 452 of which said they were LDS. Respondents to national surveys were asked several questions including: "Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country up to men" (women-home), "Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if

she has a husband capable of supporting her" (women working), "If your party nominated a woman for President, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job" (female president), "Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women" (men-politics), "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work" (warm relationship), "It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself" (help husband), "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works" (preschooler suffers), and "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family" (family and children). Mormons are more likely to think that preschoolers suffer and that it is harder to have a warm relationship with children if the mother works. They are also more likely to emphasize the role of homemaker for women. On the other hand, LDS respondents were a little more likely than the national average to say they would vote for a female president. Their attitudes were also comparable to the national average in believing it is okay for married women to work and that men are not necessarily better suited for politics.

in literature that contains her uncompromising poem "To the Violent Literati." The *Annual* also contains the full proceedings from the AML 1995 Sunstone Symposium panel about the work of Brian Evenson, including remarks and readings by Evenson and papers by Scott Abbott, Bruce Jorgensen, Brian Evenson, Marni Asplund-Campbell, and Susan Howe (tape #SL95-170). Howe's presidential address was also published in the December 1995 issue of *SUNSTONE* along with Neil LaBute's violent play *Bash* and a response to the play by Neal Chandler. The AML-List, the association's internet group, has had its own discussions of Evenson's *Altmann's Tongue* and of Dave Veloz's script for *Natural Born Killers*, and in sum, you had a whopping amount of discussion about an issue that has only very recently become an issue in Mormon letters.

All of this discussion has made me rethink my own position on this issue. On the AML-List, I defended *Altmann's Tongue* and like works as good, moral texts whose virtues we should recognize. I still believe this is true, but I no longer believe that

they are unambiguously good or unproblematically moral. The objections raised by Susan Howe and Marni Asplund-Campbell have not been answered entirely to my satisfaction. It is possible to read moral lessons into these violent texts, they tell us, but it requires a degree of reading that many lack. For many readers, these texts will serve immoral ends: they may decrease our sensitivity to violence, especially violence against women, or they may simply disturb us with their violent worlds without offering anything positive in exchange. They may, in other words, end up doing harm, despite their authors' best intentions to do good.

It is tempting to stop here to argue that no author can possibly be held accountable for every possible misreading of his or her text. Is Shakespeare responsible for the fourteen-year-old girl who after reading *Romeo and Juliet* kills herself over a boyfriend? At some level, though, I think that he is. The creator always bears some responsibility for the created. In the same way that I think scientists must take some responsibility

Translated Correctly

"MY CUP BRIMS OVER"

KING JAMES VERSION

"PSALM 23

A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

THE NEW JPS TRANSLATION

The Jewish Publication Society, 1985

23 A psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd;
I lack nothing.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me to water in places of
repose;

³He renews my life;
He guides me in right paths
as befits His name

⁴Though I walk through a valley of deepest
darkness,

I fear no harm, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort
me.

⁵You spread a table for me in full view of
my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;
my drink is abundant.

⁶Only goodness and steadfast love shall
pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the
LORD
for many long years.

THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE

Doubleday, 1985

PSALM 23 The Good Shepherd

Psalm Of David

Yahweh is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
In grassy meadows he lets me lie.

By tranquil streams he leads me
to restore my spirit.
He guides me in paths of saving justice
as befits his name.

Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as
death

I should fear no danger, for you are at my
side.

Your staff and your crook are there to
soothe me.

You prepare a table for me
under the eyes of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup brims over.

Kindness and faithful love pursue me
every day of my life.
I make my home in the house of Yahweh
for all time to come.

for the possible misuses of technology, writers must take their share of responsibility for the possible misuses of ideas. Otherwise we sound like the literary equivalent of the NRA: "Texts don't kill people; people kill people."

But the moral equations are never easy. I certainly don't expect authors to forgo publishing anything that could be misinterpreted and misused; this would deprive us of all the good that moral readings can accomplish. What I have discovered, though, is that good criticism is as important to moral reading as is good writing. The papers in the *AML Annual* and in *SUNSTONE*—especially the papers that have been critical of the works in question—have done a great deal to generate moral readings. Without this critical give and take, we would all be deprived of some excellent strategies for reading these difficult texts. And without the voices of opposition—who have been very brave in attacking what has become intellectually fashionable to defend—we might easily fall into the trap of overpraising the works and ignoring their very real pitfalls. It is through discussion, persuasion, and debate that genuinely moral readings of any work emerge.

So, where I once offered three cheers to Brian Evenson, Neil LaBute, and their defenders, I now give only two. One cheer for writing works that can be read morally, and one more for offering moral readings of their works. The third cheer goes to the loyal opposition—to Susan Howe, to Marni Asplund-Campbell, and to the rest of the critics who, in pointing out the potential immorality of these writings, have done a great deal to help the rest of us read them well. And no cheers at all to those whose zeal to protect us from potentially immoral readings of a work cause them to attempt to stifle discussion and impose silence at precisely the moment when critical discussion matters most.

—MICHAEL AUSTIN

A version of this appeared on the AML-List.

Top Ten

TOP TEN NUMBERS OF THE BEAST

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT 666 IS THE NUMBER of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13:18. But beware of these nasty variations as well, as supplied by the folks at our home office in Mercur, Utah:

10. 666,000,000 The Megabeast's number
9. 0.6 The Beastling's number
8. 670 The approximate number of the Beast
7. 666.0000 The number of the High Precision Beast
6. -0.8090169943749 The Sine of the Beast
5. 0.5877852522925 The Cosine of the Beast
4. $-666^{(1/2)}$ The imaginary number of the Beast
3. $/666$ The common denominator of the Beast
2. 2, 3, 3, 37 The Prime Factorization of the Beast



and the number one number of the beast. . .

1. DCLXVI The Roman Numeral of the Beast

Twenty Years Ago in Sunstone

TO BE OR NOT TO BE . . . A REPORTER

IN THE SIXTH ISSUE OF *SUNSTONE* (SUMMER 1977), a letter by Samuel Taylor encouraged *SUNSTONE* to fill a needed niche by being a "reporter" of Mormon Culture. An unattributed reply by "the editors," probably written by Orson Scott Card, pictured *SUNSTONE*'s role differently. Here are excerpts from the exchange:

"In talking to an independent motion picture producer about a proposed film, he [the producer] said, 'What we have to do is what MGM can't do.' This, I think, must be your [*SUNSTONE*]'s role also. You can't compete with *BYU Studies*, *Utah Historical Quarterly*, the *Church News*, *Ensign*, or *Dialogue*. So you won't try to publish what they do. And what remains?

"What remains is the Mormon culture. The 'official' press presents the official facade. But this is the press-agent version, not the real scoop. You will present the culture as it is, not as we wish it to be.

"The difference is that the primary job of a press agent is to suppress the facts, while the job of a reporter is to print them. . . .

"Is there a market for a quarterly devoted to culture? I believe so. . . .

"Our scholars admit that we haven't 'matured' in the arts. Why? Well, we never will mature under a managed media, any more than will Russia. Let's face it, and not blame it on 'lack of spirituality,' as was recently done. . . .

"In Russia, with its managed media, there is a lively samiz-

dat of underground literature. The Salt Lake samizdat also thrives. . . .

Good luck,
Samuel W. Taylor”

The editors' response:

“The distinction between press agent and reporter may be valid, but SUNSTONE professes to be neither. Our purpose is not to sell the Church, and no one is hoping to get rich from selling the magazine, either. There may be a market for the exposé reporting you describe, but we are unconvinced that is what is needed.

“The problems are readily available for all to see—in our wards and stakes, our families, and our private chambers. We do not try to conceal them (witness our articles on Mormon drug abuse, working mothers, historic site preservation, and theatre and visual arts, among others); we try to be part of the solution. Our purpose is not to rub salt in open wounds, not to lay them bare for all to watch them bleed, but rather to help them heal.

“Better a Little Red Hen than Chicken Little. . . .

“If there is an alarming dropout rate among returned missionaries, SUNSTONE's job is not to shout about how the Church is failing. Our job is to present the kind of article, the kind of thought, that will help some of those potential or actual dropouts realize that the problems they found, though real, are not insurmountable. . . .

“There is much good in the Mormon people and their way of life. And while SUNSTONE tries to suggest remedies for some of the ills of our brothers and sisters, we will continue to offer material that says, cheerfully, that a lot of good things are going on, too. That's not hype; that's the way it is.

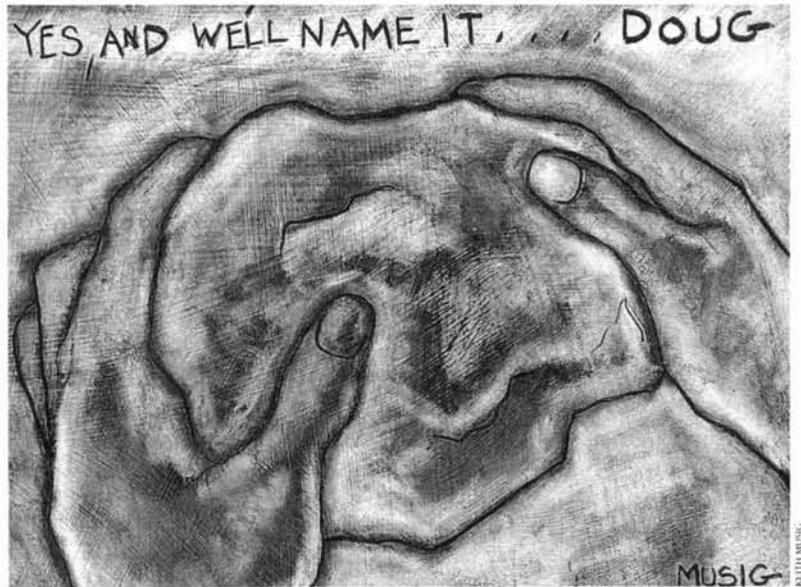
“It takes courage to criticize. It also takes courage to be optimistic. We hope SUNSTONE has enough of both kinds of courage to be a vigorous, positive influence among Latter-day Saints for years to come.”

Book of Mormon Musings

A STONE TURNED

And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations. (Alma 37:23.)

WHEN I ASKED MY GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS whether Gazelem is a person or a stone, someone said it is like the man with a wooden leg named “Smith,” a dangling modifier. But I have known families that have named their cars, homes, and other possessions. It may



“If I ever get a seerstone . . . I think I'll name it, if God hasn't already.”

be that God prepared a stone he named Gazelem for his servant rather than that a man named Gazelem received a stone God prepared for him.

In Mormon history, two general authorities have actually interpreted the Gazelem passage in both possible ways. Wilford Woodruff said the stone is named Gazelem whereas Orson Pratt said the servant is named Gazelem (see D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, [Signature Books, 1987], 147–48). I doubt whether it was a burning issue at the pulpit in frontier Utah, but research may prove me wrong. We do know from Mormon history that Joseph Smith wasn't the only one to own a seer stone. Perhaps seer stone owners were divided into two different camps: those who named their stones versus those who had unnamed stones. I hope no one got too upset. People have lost faith over less important things: Simonds Ryder, an early convert to the restored Church, lost faith when Joseph Smith misspelled his name (Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* [Seventy's Mission, 1981], 81).

We also know from Mormon history as well as from the scriptures that Gazelem is not the only topic on which Church leaders have had differing opinions. If we assume otherwise, our understanding of human nature is flawed. Of course they agree on the important things: there is a God; God loves us; God speaks to us through prophetic voices. B. H. Roberts said: “In essentials, let there be unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, charity” (*Conference Reports*, 5 Oct. 1919, 30). I guess someone could disagree with Brother Roberts on that, though.

If I ever get a seer stone—and they *are* promised to celestial kingdom inhabitants—I think I'll name it, if God hasn't already.

—EDGAR C. SNOW JR.

Plotting ZionUP AND DOWN SIDES OF
MORMON COMMUNALISM

DONALD PITZER'S JUST RELEASED *AMERICA'S COMMUNAL Utopias* (University of North Carolina Press, 1997), includes a chapter by University of Utah professor of history Dean L. May, "One Heart and Mind: Communal Life and Values among the Mormons." Here is one of May's concluding paragraphs:

"At the present, Mormon communalism is most evident in the welfare program and in the structure and operations of church government, which are larded with terms and metaphors drawn from the Law of Consecration and Stewardship. Mormon congregations or wards are geographically defined and deliberately limited in size. The preoccupation of members with the ward community often causes non-Mormons to see them, quite accu-

rately, as clannish and inward looking. There may be other negative consequences of that communal impulse. In the arts Mormons seem more accomplished in ensemble than individual expression: bands, choirs, the theater, and dance over painting, sculpture, or creative writing. Employers complain at times that Mormons are good followers but poor innovators. Visitors to Brigham Young University campus are impressed by its tidiness but wonder if such order and apparent unity are conducive to creative thought. To the degree that these widely held impressions reflect reality, they may indicate trade-offs communal societies make for the mutual support, efficiency, and strength their common endeavor affords. And though many in today's liberal society would not be willing to make that trade, it may be that such communalists possess the means to mitigate the great fear Alexis de Tocqueville, writing in the 1830s, had for America, that 'each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart.'"

MORMON INDEX

- Percentage of LDS men and U.S. men who feel they are very happy: 56 : 57
- Number of Mormon missionaries airlifted by United States military from Albania amidst civil unrest: 35
- Percentage of Quorum of the Twelve who attended the University of Utah: 50
- Percent of Quorum of the Twelve who attended BYU: 25
- Percentage of Quorum of the Twelve who attended Harvard or Yale: 25
- Ratio of dogs to women in first pioneer company: 5.7 to 1
- Percentage the Church grew during the decade of the 1980s: 67
- Percentage the Church grew in Latin America during the 1980s: 421
- Number of certificates of divorce Brigham Young issued for unhappy polygamous marriages: 1,600
- Amount Brigham Young charged husbands when their unhappy plural wives requested divorce: \$10
- Estimated total value of Church assets: \$30 billion
- Estimated value of all financial investments and farmland held by the LDS church: \$11 billion
- Ranking of Polynesian Cultural Center among Hawaii's paid visitor attractions: 1
- Annual revenues of the Polynesian Cultural Center: \$40 million
- Number of ACT tests last year on which BYU was listed as first preference: 16,000
- Number of boxes of director Cecil B. De Mille's personal papers archived at BYU's Lee Library: 1,200
- Amount paid for an original Nauvoo Temple "sunstone" by the Smithsonian Institution: \$100,000
- Percentage of April general conferences receiving measurable precipitation: 67
- Percentage of October general conferences receiving measurable precipitation: 44
- Chances that an 1847 pioneer over seventeen years old was married: 3 in 4
- Chances that a U.S. Mormon over seventeen years old in 1990 was married: 3 in 5
- Percentage of attendees at the 1997 Hill Cumorah Pageant who were not LDS: 61

1 T. Heaton, K. Goodman, T. Holman, "In Search of a Peculiar People: Are Mormon Families Really that Different?" in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives* (Illinois), 112; 2 *LDS Church News*, 22 Mar. 1997, 3; 3,4,5,6 *1997-1998 Church Almanac* (Deseret News); 7,8 Rodney Stark, "Modernization and Mormon Growth: The Secularization Thesis Revisited" in *Contemporary Mormonism*, 14, 18; 9,10 D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Signature), 758; 11,12,13,14 *Time*, 4 Aug. 1997, 52-54; 15 *Deseret News*, 7 Jan. 1997, B2; 16 *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 July 1997, D3; 17 *Deseret News*, 10 July 1997, A1; 18,19 Ed. Dan Pope and Clayton Brough, *Utah's Weather and Climate*, 51, 77; 20,21 *1997-1998 Church Almanac* (Deseret News); 22 *LDS Church News*, 19 July 1997, 4.

Whom do you welcome, and with whom do you share food? That implicit Pharisaic question summons these three tales—The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Prodigal Son. It is a question of hospitality.

“THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS”: MORAL STORYTELLING IN LUKE 15

By B. W. Jorgensen

THE TEXT

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

2 And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. (Luke 15:1–2.)

LET THE FIRST TWO VERSES OF LUKE CHAPTER 15 stand for the entire text of my sermon; in a sense, they might be the entire text. Here at the outset they remind us where we stand: somewhere “near” enough “to hear him.” The question is: Who are we? Who am I, and who are you? Publican? Sinner? Pharisee? Scribe?

As always, I style myself a scribe and not one having authority. As scribe, devotee of texts, I want to hear what the text, which does have authority, says.

I’ve been paying attention to the three tales in Luke 15, to how they’re told, and trying to tell my students about them since the fall of 1986, when in an Honors freshman colloquium one day I stumbled, unplanned, into a retelling and started to hear what was going on in the tales. I’ve gone on doing that, retelling and talking about the telling (usually without plan but of course with an increasing number of decreasingly spontaneous performances behind me) whenever in a literature or writing class it has seemed pertinent or helpful to try to say what two moral storytellers, Luke and Jesus, do in this chapter. Maybe there are more than two: maybe we should include the lost son and the father in the third tale, and also

B. W. Jorgensen lives, teaches, reads, and writes stories, poems, and critical essays in Utah Valley. A version of this paper was presented at the 1995 Sunstone Symposium (tape SL95-324).

the shepherd and the housewife in the first two; and why not the servant and the elder son in the third? Tell me: who ain’t a storyteller in this world, from Adam and Eve on down to you and me?

“THIS man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” Whom do you welcome, and with whom do you share food? That implicit Pharisaic question is the occasion of these three tales, the ones we call The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Prodigal Son. The occasion and context is a question about hospitality. In attending to the occasion of these parables, I’m glad to discover that I follow the habit of Joseph Smith, who, specifically “in reference to the prodigal son,” said he had “a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what is the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable.” For him, the Pharisees’ saying was “the key word which unlocks the parable of the prodigal son.”¹ So: Why does this man receive sinners, and eat with them?

HOW THE TALES ARE TOLD

The first two are didactically told with interpretive conclusions that nail down the message.

YET I won’t focus first on that question. Rather than themes or messages or answers, I will attend first to *how* the tales are told. But that can’t be detached from *to whom?* and *to what question?* To the Pharisees, and to their complaint with its implied question, which the tales answer: “Why?” Why does this supposed holy man, this teacher and healer, welcome sinners and eat with them? Luke’s preceding chapter, which begins with Jesus dining at “the house of one of the chief Pharisees,” has been centrally concerned with hospitality, with what to do “when thou art bidden” (14:8, 10) or



GUSTAV DREBE

Heaven may be a kingdom,
with all the structure and hierarchy
that the word implies. But with
so many other figures Jesus uses
elsewhere in the gospels, these
tales say heaven is a feast, and
Jesus is welcoming us.

“when thou makest a dinner or a supper” (14:12), with where to sit and whom to invite. But there’s no time for that context here and now.

The main thing, the largest thing, to notice about Jesus’ three tales in this chapter is how different in structure the first two are from the third. I’m assuming, for this discussion, that whether or not all three *were* told on a single historical occasion, Luke has framed them as he does because he *wants* us to see their relationships, their continuity and discontinuity, their similarity and difference. (The next chapter is “said also unto his disciples” [16:1], clearly demarcating its contents from these tales told unto the Pharisees, and thus justifying the traditional chapter division.)

The first two tales begin as questions: “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them . . . doth not . . . go after that which is lost, until he find it?” (15:4); “Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not . . . seek diligently till she find it?” (15:8). The address of such questions to their hearers, Jesus’ Pharisaic challengers, is quite direct, aggressively so with the emphatic second person, “What man of you.” And both of these first two tales conclude with the teller explaining the tale. Of the lost sheep: “I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (15:7). No mistaking the point here, and no mistaking at whom it aims: those Pharisees who have just presented themselves as “just persons, which need no repentance,” standing apart from the “sinners” whom Jesus “receiveth” and “eateth with.” The explanatory close of the second tale pulls back from that to declare simply, without any comparative “more than,” “Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (15:10). Structurally, tactically, these tales stop just short of the hortatory; despite their aggressive second-person address, “What man of you” and (twice) “I say unto you,” they are not in the imperative, not in the mode of command or of moral exhortation. Just barely. And either by itself might suffice to answer the Pharisees’ implied question: Why do you receive sinners and eat with them?² I’m glad to receive and eat

with sinners who turn to me. Isn’t God? Aren’t the angels? Wouldn’t you be?

The third tale, on both these counts, is radically different: no second-person address by the teller to the hearers, and no interpretive conclusion to nail down the message; to begin, just Luke’s “And he said,” leading straight into Jesus’ “A certain man had two sons” (15:11); and to end, only silence, both Jesus and Luke (15:32).

BUT before taking up the third tale, look at some other features of structure and sequence in the first two. Most noticeably, each focuses on a single protagonist—a “man” (shepherd) and a “woman” (housewife)—and on a similar series of acts by each—losing, seeking, finding, calling friends and neighbors to rejoice. Within the teller’s second-person address to his audience, each tale is told in a third-person “objective” point of view, simply the deeds and one speech by each protagonist, which rather directly imply two obvious motives: desire to find what was lost and desire to share joy when it is restored: “Rejoice with me; for I have found . . .” (15:6, 9). Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees’ disparagement of his habits as host and guest should be equally, glaringly obvious. Why do I receive and eat with sinners? Why don’t you join us?

The differences between the first two tales seem less important than their shared differences from the third. A sheep may get “lost” by its own straying. Sheep are stupid, and sometimes stupidly obstinate. I learned that one hot, dust-choked summer afternoon in my teens, trying with a couple of cousins to herd a bunch for my Uncle John from the Salina auction pens to his feedyard across the Sevier River, stalled for hours at the bridge till Uncle John, over six feet and maybe 300 pounds but even then carrying an oxygen bottle and respirator mask in his truck, just waded into the bunch and started lugging them across bodily. That’s my one shepherding story. A coin has to get “lost” by its owner’s carelessness or neglect. Whether that difference should matter when the tales’ protagonists both stand for the God who rejoices when sinners repent, I leave for more authoritative minds to declare.³ The point this scribe

sees is to rejoice generously when the lost is found.

WITH that point so clearly made in the voice of the teller, perhaps the third tale can stand as it does, bare of direct second-person address and authoritative interpretation; yet an already-established thematic context won't account for all of the last tale's complex difference. We may get closer to that if we move through the first two tales not as thematic prelude or frame but as in themselves a dynamic narrative sequence (which may actually have happened but in any case is here constructed by Luke), an interplay between teller and (silent) hearers which brings the teller to the point where the tale of "a certain man" with "two sons" is his last, best shot, all the more effective for not being aimed so straight at his audience.

It's not clear just where Jesus is when he tells these tales. A couple chapters earlier "he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem" (13:22); at one point, when he still anticipates a three-day walk to arrive there (13:33), he utters a lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets" (13:34), again underscoring the theme of reception or rejection, hearing or not hearing a teller; and two chapters later he's still "pass[ing] through the midst of Samaria and Galilee" (17:1) on his way to Jerusalem. A chapter before his tales to the Pharisees he has eaten "bread on the Sabbath day" in "the house of one of the chief Pharisees" (14:1). All my fuss at this is to suggest that the setting of Luke 15 might be urban, though not the capital. Supposing that, and reading (perhaps over-reading) Luke's silences about the Pharisees' reaction to any of the tales as strategic rather than mere default, I see something like this: The first tale is too up-country for an audience of town Pharisees; it's a hick story, a shepherder story; in a word, pastoral. So, met with silence as with a blank look, the teller next tries an indoor, domestic setting, a house in a city or village, for a tale focused on a more urban form of wealth and loss, cash. Again I suppose a space of



THE LOST SHEEP

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

—Luke 15:4–7

you care about either the shepherd or the housewife? Did you *feel with* either one's loss, or either one's joy in finding what was lost? Are you ready, after those tales, to "exceed the righteousness of the . . . Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20) by "receiv[ing] sinners,

silence after the teller's interpretive conclusion, and then over-read that silence as yet another glum stare from the Pharisees, even though this time he has held back the mild, indirect affront of "just persons, which need no repentance," which he may have seen did not go down well the first time. If they get his point, they're still not taking it.

Still, the trouble getting through to these hard, Pharisaic hearts may not have so much to do with subject or setting or protagonist—first rural, then domestic but feminine—as with narrative moves. Direct address and flat-out interpretation aren't *visibly* working. Or so I take Luke's silences to say. We are free not to take the silences that way, free not to suppose silences at all, free to take the series of three tales as a single continuous discourse, with the audience sitting as stolidly quiet while the teacher plods on, as in the dullest gospel doctrine class you've squirmed in lately. (This is not the pattern in traditional oral story-telling situations, which often involve lively interplay between teller and audience, and in which the teller acutely watches the audience's reaction and gauges the telling to that.⁴) We are free to respond and interpret as we will—and that, I hope to imply, will be a large part of the point.

I choose to hear brief narrative silences, on Luke's part and on Jesus' part, after each of the first two tales, and I rather aggressively *read* those silences as signifying that the tales failed. You may doubt me; and to be sure, there's no question these tales do each unmistakably illustrate the teller's explicit theme that there is festal joy in heaven when a sinner repents, so why murmur if Jesus eats with sinners. The first two tales might prove unpersuasive if closely attended to: throw a party because you've found a lost lamb? or spend on a party more than the value of the lost coin you've found? But more, ask yourself: How much did



The first two tales are formally didactic: the teller's stance is always implicitly or explicitly "*I say unto you*": the teller has wisdom, has truth, and hands it down. Tales told this way to exemplify flat-out truths leave us flat.

and eat[ing] with them"? If so, welcome. If not, the teller has one more tale to try you with.

The trouble with the first two tales lies in just the kind of success each so obviously and efficiently goes for: the clear illustration of a stated theme. Both tales are formally didactic: concrete illustrations or exempla or figures of the storable, propositional truth that concludes them. In formally didactic tales, the teller's stance is always implicitly or explicitly "*I say unto you*": the teller has wisdom, has truth, and hands it down, *ex cathedra*, to the hearers. It's invariably a superior-inferior relation, structurally, with built-in structural resistance to change, and perhaps built-in resentment. It's no surprise if tales told this way to exemplify flat-out truths leave us flat. Right where we started, structurally: inferior, down-here.

THE THIRD TALE

Moral storytelling—giving each agent his due.

THE most obvious difference of the third tale from the first two is length: it visibly takes up two-thirds of the chapter, twice as much as the other two combined, twenty-two verses against eight, not counting the two introductory verses. The immensely greater length is largely a function of narrative technique, which in turn is the sign and method of an entirely different mode of moral teaching. All three stories are in one sense "moral"—they seek the moral improvement of their hearers—but they differ in the ways they are moral: the first two are tales told *with* "morals," told to illustrate the teller's propositional truth; the third (and here I must seem to strain the language for a distinction) is *told morally*. I'll have to explain, and I can do so in terms of the third tale's substance and especially its greatly more generous narrative technique, its more generous telling. In this tale, Jesus as teller becomes more like the shepherd and housewife he holds up in the first two tales as figures of a divine seeker and finder of the lost, who rejoices and calls others to rejoice when the lost is found.

Two signs of this are the absences I've already noted: no direct second-person address to the hearers, and no authorial in-

terpretation to close, and close down, the tale. Here the teller leaves us free to take up the tale or not, and free to make our own meanings in it. Jean Paul Sartre must feel odd to be brought into Jesus' company at this point, but in the terms of his essay "Why Write?," this third tale declines to coerce or manipulate us and offers itself, rather, as a "gift" or "pact of generosity" between teller and hearer.⁵ Jesus as teller in this third instance is again the welcoming host of sinners that Pharisees resent him for being; and here, rather than lecturing them in the mode of "*I say unto you*," he will welcome them into his tale, to find whatever place they can. He and Luke offer us the same invitation.

The largest narrative signs of the teller's generosity, which result in this tale's greater length, are the tale's much longer, more complex, and more complexly presented action, and its distribution of narrative focus or point of view over three principal characters, the "man" and his "two sons," one "lost" and repentant and "found," the other (so the teller seems to allow) just and needing no repentance. With the hortatory or didactic "*I say unto you*" stance left behind (unless *we choose* still to invoke it contextually), the third tale more generously invites us to *feel with* and be moved by its three principal agents. The greater, and different, success of this method, I think, is sufficiently attested by the needful recourse and loving memory of two millenia of hearers (including St. Augustine in his *Confessions*,⁶ Rainer Maria Rilke in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*,⁷ and, I trust, many of us). I think it's a safe guess that "The Prodigal Son" is Jesus' favorite parable among Christians of every variety; in any case, it's my own favorite. Our referring to it as "The Prodigal Son" says much about our moral relation to it—we "identify" most strongly with the "lost" and repentant, "found" and forgiven—though this also may narrow too straitly our possible moral response. It's interesting that three LDS interpretations by prominent general authorities, Apostles James E. Talmage, Spencer W. Kimball (later president and prophet), and Bruce R. McConkie, stress the greater righteousness and greater reward of the elder son.⁸ Perhaps lay members of the Church identify most strongly with the errant and returning son, in technical terms, because

the tale gives us a more intimate sense of his inner life, his spiritual trajectory.

The first difference we can notice in this tale, after the absence of a question aimed at us, is that rather than focusing on the loser and finder, it invites us to “identify” with the “lost,” and not a sheep or a coin but a younger son (15:12): we’re bidden here to look at “lost” and “found” from the other side; the finder’s side seems to have failed to persuade us, so the teller tries the “lost.” It’s also a very large difference that the “lost” here is no item of wealth, neither an animate sheep nor an inanimate coin, a symbolic token of exchange, but a person, an agent like ourselves, a soul of infinite worth lost by his own agency, and lost from the familial—the paternal-filial and fraternal—web of personal relations. This makes an enormous difference, conceptually, in tale-telling: it’s one thing to tell of a single self, seeking its lost property, finding it, and calling friends and neighbors to celebrate; it’s quite another to tell of a father and sons, brothers, each with his own “agenda” (which every “agent” has), and let each speak in his own voice. In the first two tales, there are no *others*: the protagonist’s voice calls *to* them, but the teller does not bring them into the tale. Here, in the third tale, the teller enters the dangerous terrain of life as we know it, the real world that is the world of many agents, each with his or her own voice and choice, where all the agents risk everything, and perhaps the teller does, too.

MY best move here might be just to tell the tale and fall silent, as Jesus and Luke are confident enough to honor our free intelligence by doing. But I’ll continue in my own dangerously analytic mode, with as much brevity and clarity as I can manage. Beautifully proportioned, the third tale breaks near its halfway point, verse 20, where its first phase, the younger son’s departure, desolation, and return, modulates into a second phase, the father’s welcome. This modulation, by the way, is carried by a deftly chiasmic pattern that balances “And he arose, and came to his father” with “his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran . . .” (15:20): lost and finder converge on the pivot of the chiasm.



THE LOST COIN

8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

—Luke 15:8–10

takes himself and us about as far into the “lost” as we can go, imagining the private or inner voice of this self-desolated younger son. Without once addressing us in the second person, the tale is asking us, Can you imagine “lost”? You ever *been* lost?

This first phase culminates in the son’s rehearsal of the speech he will make to his father:

The tale’s last half itself divides again just short of its midpoint, with a surprising and much more abrupt shift from the merriment of the welcome-home party to the “elder son” and his resentment on hearing the “musick and dancing” and learning what it means (25, 28). This last phase culminates in an open-ended dialogue between the father and the elder son (28–32)—open-ended in that the teller does not tell its outcome, no more than Luke tells the effect of the tale upon its hearers.⁹

In the first phase, which also divides sharply near its midpoint (17), we may come to know what it is not to lose but to be “lost,” as we follow in the tale’s sentences the younger son’s request and receipt of his “portion” (one third, the elder brother being entitled to a double share), and then his “journey into a far country” where he “waste[s] his substance with riotous living,” then begins “to be in want” and “join[s] himself to a citizen of that country” and gets sent “into his fields to feed swine” (13–15). The worst loss is not to have “spent all” (14) the cash you turned your “portion of goods” (12) into, but to find that you “would fain have filled [your] belly with the husks that the swine did eat” (16). If you’re a Jew, swine are unclean to you. You’ve sunk as low as you can, to a starving hireling swineherd whom “no man gave unto” (16). So it’s a major turn in the tale’s plot (as Augustine recognized)¹⁰ when “he came to himself” and “said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!” (17). (It’s my understanding that “hired servant” would be the lowest possible status in the ancient world; a household servant is part of the household, a member of the *familia* or *oikos*, but a hired slave has no such settled status.)¹¹ The teller here



All three stories are in one sense “moral”— they seek the moral improvement of their hearers—but they differ in the *ways* they are moral: the first two are tales told *with* “morals,” told to illustrate the teller’s propositional truth; the third is *told morally*.

I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. (18–19)

What a difference in “say unto” here: the intention of a protagonist, what *he* means to say and do, *his* expectation and hope, it arouses our own hope and expectation. As the teller goes on, he seems to confirm the success of the protagonist’s intent: “I will arise and go to my father” becomes “And he arose, and came to his father” (20) (“came” adumbrates the shift in point of view to the receiving father). But the world, life as we might know it, is not so simple, and action isn’t at the determination of a single protagonist; there are other agents, other agendas.

So the teller turns his tale on the word “but” and subordinates the tale’s first agent to the first one it had named, that “certain man”: “But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him” (20). Like the searching shepherd and housewife of the first two tales, here “his father,” seeking the lost and rejoicing to find, is the subject of a series of urgently active verbs, which heavily overbalance this second member of the chiasm on the side of the father’s joy. We’re on somewhat familiar ground here, but invited to draw nearer, to become intimately part of the moment of finding. No concern for patriarchal dignity, only the rush of a heart breaking with compassion and joy and welcome. Can we feel it now?

This would bring us about as far as the first two tales had:¹² Why does Jesus receive sinners? Why shall there be “joy . . . in heaven”? But now the tale, having opened two points of view, followed two principal agents, breaks fully into the dramatic mode, an exchange of gestures and speeches. The son begins the speech he has carefully prepared: “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (21).¹³ (The small shift in idiom from “before thee” to “in thy sight” seems to underscore *where* the lost son now finds himself: directly in the father’s gaze.) This sentence, tense between “Father, I” and “no more worthy to be called thy son,” is the last we’ll hear of his voice, the last he’ll be mentioned by the teller, though the father, a servant, and the elder

son will all speak of him yet; his being in the tale will be entirely the creation of their words, as he is re-made a member in the web of relation. But half his prepared speech is all he gets out before the father

said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. (22–24)

With this long speech (the teller really spreads himself) we are still about where we were with the final speeches of the first two tales: the glad voice of the finder calling “us” to “eat, and be merry.” But with a huge difference: this is the world not of lost and found property but of filial relation restored; wider, deeper, more harrowing and joyous, “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” This son has come home ragged or bare, head to foot, to a richly generous welcome, to be called “this my son.”

Even so, all narrative and emotional differences allowed, we are thematically about where we were at the tale’s opening. Except that the differences do make an enormous difference, such that our feeling-with these agents has to have richly qualified, if not utterly swamped, our sense of the “truth” the teller already illustrated much more flatly. We’re not looking at illustrations or flannelboard cutouts here; we’re in the thick of an imagined experience, told and lived in the telling and hearing.

And the teller does not stop. While “they began to be merry” (24), he makes his most surprising shift (deft as any modernist writer’s) to focus on the “elder son” out working “in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing” (25), the sound of the merriment, which we now hear as he does, though we already know what it means. If the tale’s agents so far, father and younger son, can be likened to finder and lost in the first two parables, to Jesus and the sinners he receives, who is this third agent? Who but the Pharisees, whose “murmur” called forth this series of tales? What but the other relevant point of view already given in the occasion? The teller gives the Pharisees’ self-righteousness full

play in the story, as the elder son calls a servant and learns what the “musick” means—“Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound” (27); an honest report, if just the bare facts, with a notable stress on fraternal and filial relation in “thy brother” and “thy father.” But hearing the report, this brother “was angry, and would not go in” (28). That’s about where we came in, on Luke’s view of those surly Pharisees standing back from “this man receiv[ing] sinners, and eat[ing] with them” (2).

But “therefore came his father out, and intreated him” (28). Here this tale has folded itself back over the entire episode, if you will: Jesus “intreating” the Pharisees to at least understand why he receives and eats with sinners. I suspect I’m making this all look more narratively self-conscious on Jesus’ and Luke’s parts than you can believe it might have been; yet it’s hard for me not to see these thick interconnections between this complex tale and the urgent occasion it answers to.

Now the teller risks the entire tale’s desired effect by risking the alienation of his hearers when he lets the truculent voice of the elder brother take over (in a speech longer than the father’s), to tell his version of both his and his brother’s stories:

And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. (29–30)

Resentment, accusation, self-praise, and a sharp eye on consumable property are not a very winning combination. The elder son implicitly disclaims his fraternal relation with “this thy son” (negatively echoing the father’s “this my son,” yet ironically affirming the very relation the lost son declared himself unworthy of) and exaggerates

THE PRODIGAL SON

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and

dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

—Luke 15:11–32



REMBRANDT



Moral storytelling appeals to our freedom to make and know the tale with the teller and to lend our feeling to the agents it imagines; it welcomes all points of view that have any claim on our attention and gives each its due, declining to assert the finality of an authorial interpretation.

facts he may know nothing about in “hath devoured thy living with harlots”: he knows as we do that the father “divided unto them his living” (12); of the younger son’s “portion” all we know is the teller’s milder “wasted his substance with riotous living” (13), no mention of “harlots.” The elder son has practically declared himself out of the family, and we might expect he’ll get a stinging rebuke.

So here’s the teller’s last surprise. Maybe we should have seen it coming; it’s consistent with his message at the end of the first two tales and with the generous father’s character as we’ve already seen it dramatized in welcoming home the lost son. But its very mildness might stun us, its lack of resentment at resentment, its welcome of this complainer, its lack of the faintest hint of rebuke even as it corrects one misstatement—“Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine” (31): literal fact, since the father “divided unto them his living” at the start of the story and the younger son’s portion has been “wasted.” The father barely responds to the elder son’s denial of brotherhood, simply transforms his resentful “this thy son” to “this thy brother,” reaffirming their fraternal bond as he reaffirms his paternal bond to both of them. The accusation of harlotry he ignores completely: “It was meet that we make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (32). To the father, it matters far more than *was*; as to Jesus it matters less what “publicans and sinners” have been than that they now draw “near unto him . . . for to hear him.” Does the demonstrative “this” used by both the elder son and the father indicate that the lost and found son has also come out to be a silent actor in this scene? It’s a little painful to think so; yet harder, perhaps, not to think so. Trained as we are on a myriad clincher scenes at the ends of movies and TV sitcoms, our imaginations may want to see the screen darken and hear the strings crescendo on a final family hug.

Jesus doesn’t give us that; on the father’s last syllable he stops, leaves it all wide open. As Luke in his turn does the same. We are left to choose, to write our own scripts. Who are you? the tale has asked us. Lost? Found? Finder? Always at home and never transgressing? Welcome, then. “It [is] meet

that we should make merry, and be glad.”

A MORAL APPEAL

THAT, I will say, is moral storytelling: appealing to our freedom to make and know the tale with the teller and to lend our feeling to the agents it imagines, generous to all the points of view that have any claim on the teller’s attention, giving all their due, declining to assert the finality of an authorial interpretation. Not even in the voice of a teller most Christians would regard as above all “having authority.” My friend John Bennion says that this one tale is his model for fiction writing.¹⁴ He could hardly do better, and he is not alone and not the first to take this as his model.

Heaven may be a kingdom, with all of structure and hierarchy that the word implies. But with so many other figures Jesus uses elsewhere in the gospels, these tales say heaven is a feast, and we are welcome. May we heed the bidding of the teller whose telling is generous enough to receive all our tales.



NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974) 5:261–2; cf. 5:368. I owe the first citation here to James Faulconer, who passed it on to me after hearing me talk about my approach to Luke 15. I should mention, too, that any reader of Apostle James E. Talmage’s *Jesus the Christ* will recognize my persistent debt to his discussion, which I first read in my teens and early twenties and have re-read in writing the second draft of this sermon. As of this writing, I still have not seen any recent Church-sponsored film treatment of The Prodigal Son. I do recall that Franco Zeffirelli has presented it as told in the company of Peter and Matthew, clearly inviting Peter to be reconciled to the publican. In an unpublished essay, “The Prodigal Son Story in Text and Film: From Lana Turner to Mikhail Baryshnikov and Beyond,” Jay Fox discusses early Hollywood versions as well as a ballet version, Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth* and recent denominationally-sponsored films.

2. Interestingly, Joseph Smith’s discussion takes up the first two parables as responses to the Pharisees’ question but, except for stating that The Prodigal Son is not “national” (apparently this was the substance of the Elders’ questions about it) but “was for men in an individual capacity,” he is silent on the third parable, as if, like Jesus, he wanted his hearers to work it out.

3. Talmage reads the shepherd and housewife as symbolic of the Pharisees and scribes, as stewards of God’s people; in terms of the parables’ application to

their audience this makes perfect sense, Jesus inviting his hearers to act as the shepherd and housewife do. Yet it seems clear in context that Jesus draws a parallel between God himself and the protagonists of the first two tales; the rejoicing angels of the second tale's interpretation would readily correspond to the housewife's neighbors.

4. I'm thinking, for example, of Sherwood Anderson's account in *A Story Teller's Story* (New York: Huebsch, 1924) of his father's storytelling habits: "He pushed out little experimental sentences and then watched his audience narrowly" (359). Except for his legendary blindness, that could have been Homer's habit as well.

5. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* (1947), trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Harper, 1965), 40–50, esp. 47, 49. Actually, Sartre at one point makes explicit a relation between his literary theory and the Christian story: "The belief which I accord the tale is freely assented to. It is a Passion, in the Christian sense of the word, that is, a freedom which resolutely puts itself into a state of passiveness to obtain a certain transcendent effect by this sacrifice" (44).

6. I'll cite a few fairly obvious passages by book, chapter and paragraph from Augustine's *Confessions*, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960): 1:18 (28); 2:10 (18); 3:4 (7); 3:6 (11); 4:16 (30); 5:13 (23); 7:10 (16); 8:3 (6); 10:31 (45). Most of book 8, culminating in Augustine's conversion in the garden in Milan, might be read as a huge expansion of "he came to himself."

7. Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Random, 1983; Vintage, 1985), 251–60. In the novel's final passage, Rilke's narrator Malte says, "It would be difficult to persuade me that the story of the Prodigal Son is not the legend of a man who didn't want to be loved" (251). Rather than be loved, Malte wants to love, to perdure in (this is too simple) desire; and his rather free but fearsomely poignant "interpretation" of the parable seems to me to justify, if not decree, Malte's own damnation-as-despair. The novel's last lines read: "He was now terribly difficult to love, and he felt that only One would be capable of it. But He was not yet willing." (260). Malte seems to me a figure of the poet Rilke had to avoid becoming in order to reach the *Duino Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*. Interestingly, the German text of *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Frankfurt/Main: Insel, 1963) calls The Prodigal Son "die Geschichte des verlorenen Sohnes" (217), the story of the lost son.

I can't resist mentioning, too, Karl Marx's angrily ironic appeal to the parable of the prodigal son on the first page of part VIII of *Capital*, where he begins to expose "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation," capitalism's self-justifying myth of the origin of economic inequality: "In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. . . . Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins."

8. See James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1915, 1962): 454–61, esp. 460–61; Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 307–11; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980) 3:244–53, esp. 251, 253. All three (Talmage implicitly, I think) also accept the elder son's accusation, "devoured thy living with harlots," as true. To these readings the only canonical response I know of is Jesus' searing warning in the Sermon on the Mount: "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). It seems clear that the elder son's righteousness is Pharisaic, and at the tale's abrupt end, despite the father's "all that I have is thine," we are left to guess whether he joins the party or sulks outside. Read in sequence, these three interpretations might suggest a marked increase in LDS Pharisaic righteousness through the twentieth century. Joseph Smith's curt remark on the "ninety-and-nine just persons that are so righteous" was "they will be damned anyhow, you cannot save them" (*History of the Church* 5:262)—which itself might be a bit too pharisaically judgmental toward Pharisees.

9. Here, surprisingly, given his usual contextual care, Talmage extrapolates confidently: "The elder son . . . stood unmoved by the [father's] emotional and loving outburst" (460); and the "Pharisees and scribes . . . must have taken to themselves its personal application," yet "They cared not who or how many were lost, so long as they were undisturbed in heirship and possession by the return of penitent prodigals" (460).

10. Cf. *Confessions* 8:7 (16), immediately before Augustine, weeping under a fig tree, hears the voice in the garden: "you, O Lord, turned me back upon myself."

11. In *Odyssey* 11:489–91, great Achilles in the Underworld tells "shining Odysseus" that he "would rather follow the plow as thrall to another man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on, than be a king over all the perished dead" (Lattimore trans.:180). M. I. Finley in *The World of Odysseus*, 2nd ed.

(Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1979), says that a *thes*, the word Lattimore translates with "thrall," "was the lowest creature on earth that Achilles could think of," since a *thes* was "no part of an *oikos*" (57–58). I may be extrapolating too far from the eighth century B.C.E. to the first century C.E., but I suspect not.

12. James Talmage, in *Jesus the Christ* (459), also recognized this.

13. At this point, Talmage sees the son as foregoing his offer to become a hired servant and, because "the father's joy was too sacred to be thus marred," "placing himself unreservedly at that father's disposal" (459). Kimball suggests that "He did not ask for servant status as he had thought to do, perhaps because with such a warm welcome he may have had hopes of total reinstatement" (308). Here, as elsewhere in scripture, our interpretations reveal as much about us as they do about the text.

14. John Bennion briefly discusses the parable in his essay "Faithful and Ambiguous Fiction: Can Weyland and Whipple Dance Together in the House of Fiction?" *AML Annual 1995* (Provo: Association for Mormon Letters, 1995), 277.



NEVER A PLACID CHORE

Your axe strokes ring from the ridge
on a warm day with mud thawed and drying.
I was east this time,
poking along a creekbottom
not getting much done—then
from a rhythm so steady
I forget you are working,
a yelp—
straightens me up.
High-pitched cry.
You got hurt?
The mind breaks, drops brush clippers,
crashes to the top running for you.
I wait, poised.
But nothing.
And into that a resumption, axe in action
against wood.
So it strikes me late,
your victory
yip.
And my pleasure when it comes
bursts freely as the log you lay open—
falls in place around me
to the sound of your
continued practice.

—TRINA SCHIMMOELLER

Mormonism, as a missionary faith, would have to make investigators prove their worthiness with background checks and fingerprints to avoid predators like Bob Kleasen. It is miraculous we haven't experienced more tragedies like this.

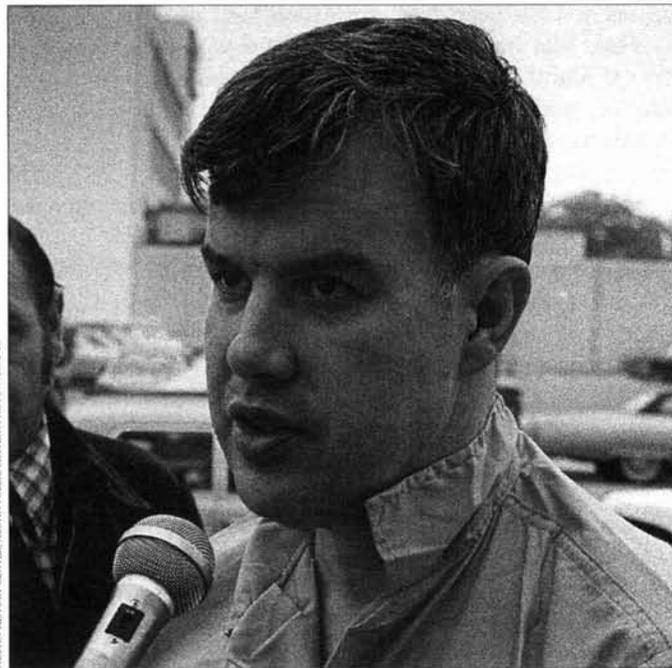
THE 1974 TEXAS MISSIONARY MURDERS: WHO WAS BOB KLEASEN AND WHAT MOTIVATED HIM?

By Ken Driggs

ON MONDAY AFTER-noon, 28 October 1974, two young men serving missions in Austin, Texas, for the LDS church left a group of their friends on the University of Texas campus. They planned to have dinner with a troubled recent convert they had been fellowshipping. The two were never seen or heard from again.

Twenty-year-old Gary Darley was the senior companion. He had entered the mission field from the Santa Susana Third Ward in Simi Valley, California, and had served in the Texas-San Antonio Mission for about nine months. Mark Fischer, who was nineteen, came from a faithful convert family and had been in the mission field only five weeks. He was from the Milwaukee [Wisconsin] Ward, now the Milwaukee First Ward.

Darley had recently befriended the difficult man. Missionaries before Darley had taken on Robert Elmer Kleasen as a project, hoping to reactivate him and bring him the per-



Bob Kleasen, the deranged murderer of two Mormon missionaries, speaks with reporters before his 1975 Motion for New Trial Hearing.

sonal testimony that thus far had eluded him. Recently they had done so in spite of the increasing concerns of local ward and stake leaders.

Within a few days, other missionaries and local Church leaders missed the two young men. Within a week, their American Motors car was found, abandoned and stripped, in the parking lot of a south Austin apartment complex. (It still had a "Happiness Is Family Home Evening" bumper sticker on it.)¹

Police investigators were initially slow to see anything more than high-spirited boys running off, but after the car was found and FBI agent and LDS church member Bruce Yarborough began pushing, enormous investigative effort was expended.

Bob Kleasen was immediately a suspect. He denied having seen the missionaries and gave conflicting statements as to whether they had been expected as dinner guests at his rural Travis County trailer home. The more police investigated his history, the more Kleasen looked like a potential killer.

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Agent Yarborough encouraged other federal and state agencies to get involved in the case. They soon learned that Kleasen was a well-known game poacher in the Texas Hill Country just west of Austin. Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms found that Kleasen had bought a series of firearms in the area, that he was a fugitive from a New York felony assault charge, and that he used aliases. Finally, they learned that, three years earlier, ATF agents had raided his Buffalo, New York, home to seize large quantities of illegal explosives and firearms, including Thompson submachine guns. They also learned that he had a history of psychiatric treatment.

Kleasen lived in a small camper-trailer parked behind the rural Austin Taxidermy Studio in Oak Hill. Owner Lem Rathbone allowed Kleasen to stay there in exchange for his being a night watchman and doing some light custodial work. He had keys and complete access to the taxidermy facilities. Kleasen was expected to burn all the trash from the taxidermy shop, a job he did every weekend. Police later learned that his camper had been stolen from a local consignment trailer lot a year earlier, just about the time Kleasen moved it onto the property.

About ten days after the missionaries had last been seen, a teenaged employee of the taxidermy shop² was walking in the tall grass not far from Kleasen's trailer. He found the distinctive plastic nametag of one of the missionaries, reading "Elder M. J. Fischer" and "Texas-San Antonio Mission, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." It had a bullet hole in it. The nametag was found in an area where Kleasen had constructed a personal shooting range. He had often shown off his firearms skills to admiring guests there.

Aware of publicity about the two missing missionaries, the teenager called the Austin police. A squad of officers immediately responded and, with Rathbone's permission, searched the property. They found little of value.

Within hours of this find, law enforcement decided they had to move. ATF had confirmed Kleasen's illegal purchase of at least two firearms. Agents sought a search warrant for those weapons from a federal magistrate. Local police and Texas Rangers were invited to join the weapon search, which was clearly driven by a desire to account for the missing missionaries.

ATF agents found what they wanted in Kleasen's trailer, along with several items of the missionaries' personal property. Among these was a letter from Darley, confirming the 28 October dinner engagement.

About 10:00 P.M. that Tuesday, 5 November 1974, Kleasen was arrested on federal firearms charges as he left a Pentecostal church meeting in Burnet, Texas. More weapons were found in his car. Kleasen seemed stunned by his arrest.³ He would remain in custody until 6 May 1988.

At about 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. Kleasen was booked by Austin chief homicide detective Colon Jordan. Jordan suspected mental illness, and, reaching for a possible alter ego named Richard Raadt, whose identity papers had been found in the trailer, he asked Kleasen if Raadt had any suggestions on

where to look for the bodies of the two missionaries. Kleasen's cryptic answer still mystifies Jordan: "I'd look over the barrel and in the bush," the arrested man said.⁴

For a few weeks, the police conducted intensive searches of Kleasen's trailer home, the taxidermy shop and grounds, and hundreds of miles of rural roads. As many as one thousand Mormons joined in the highly organized searches, including LDS servicemen in helicopters from nearby Fort Hood.⁵

The bodies were never found, although the blood-spattered watches of the missionaries were recovered from inside the camper-trailer, as were some of their missionary teaching materials. The tires and other items from the car were recovered from sheds around the trailer, along with some of Kleasen's clothing with human blood and hair on it, and several incriminating documents.

Most chilling of all, investigators seized from the taxidermist's studio a bandsaw used to cut deer horns. Rathbone had reported someone's having badly misused the machine about the time of the disappearances to the degree that the blade had to be replaced. The housing, plate, and other parts of the bandsaw were covered with biological materials, which proved to be human blood, tissue, and head hair that were positively identified as Darley's and Fischer's.⁶ That was as close as anyone would ever come to finding the bodies. All hope was abandoned on 13 November, when Kleasen was charged with both murders. Bond was set at \$100,000.⁷

THE TRIAL

Kleasen's conviction was almost a forgone conclusion.

IN the nine months between the murders and the trial, Kleasen's mental condition was repeatedly questioned. He was examined by several mental health experts, all of whom pretty much agreed that he had a mental illness—most likely paranoid schizophrenia—but were divided as to whether he was competent to stand trial. He fired every defense lawyer who even suggested he was not fully sane, and a Texas jury ruled he was competent after only five minutes of deliberation.⁸

Just before the murder trial, Kleasen granted an interview to the Associated Press, in which he claimed a long and colorful career as an international spy and assassin.⁹ Kleasen's erratic behavior made his conviction and death sentence almost a foregone conclusion. The prosecution rested after calling forty-five witnesses, none of whom told the jury the details of Kleasen's extended orbit around the LDS community. A handful of defense witnesses claimed to have seen or talked to the missionaries after 28 October. Kleasen did not testify.

The State's most damaging testimony about the human substances found on the band saw and Kleasen's clothing, went unchallenged by the defense. The jury returned a guilty verdict on 2 June 1975.¹⁰

Kleasen took the stand for several hours at the day-long punishment phase¹¹ of the trial and told a packed courtroom that he knew nothing of the missionaries' fate. However, on cross-examination, District Attorney Robert O. Smith pushed all of

Kleasen's schizophrenic buttons. His rambling testimony was filled with boasting about his fantasy life as a master spy and CIA assassin,¹² as a scholar who held multiple graduate degrees from European universities and spoke several languages, and about an international conspiracy to keep him from telling all he knew about government misconduct.¹³ The performance undoubtedly frightened the jury, who took just twenty-one minutes to return a verdict that mandated a death sentence.¹⁴

Kleasen's sentence was never executed. In 1975, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals reversed the conviction, saying that the search warrant used at his trailer was invalid.¹⁵ The evidence seized from the trailer consisted of the missionaries' bloodstained watches, some of their missionary materials, and a letter from Darley to Kleasen confirming their dinner engagement of 28 October 1974. The band saw, the bullet-pierced nametag, the tires and other parts taken from the car, and Kleasen's clothing, with the victims' hair and blood on it, were not affected by the search warrant decision.

The court left the door open for a second prosecution without the illegally seized evidence. After the trial, Ronnie Earle had replaced Smith as the Travis County District Attorney. Following a fierce internal debate among his assistants and law enforcement, Earle made the decision not to prosecute.¹⁶

There were other charges outstanding on Kleasen. He was convicted first on the federal firearms charges, receiving a nine-year prison sentence.¹⁷ For the old New York assault charge, he received an indeterminate sentence of up to seven years.¹⁸ He remained in prison until a controversial May 1988 parole to Buffalo, New York.¹⁹

On 8 September 1990, Kleasen was released from supervision, a burned-out 325-pound man in very poor health, just two weeks shy of his fifty-eighth birthday. He immediately left for England to see an older woman with whom he had corresponded and who allegedly bought his plane ticket. The last indications of his whereabouts are post cards mailed, in 1992, from England to Buffalo and Austin contacts. A Northern Ireland correspondent wrote Kleasen at the England address as late as 1993 or 1994.

If he is still alive, Bob Kleasen is sixty-five years old.

BOB KLEASEN'S PRE-MORMON PAST

Psychiatric wards; violent, broken marriages; weapons violations.

WHO was Bob Kleasen, and how could he do such an awful thing to two completely innocent young men?

Kleasen's parents were Elmer and Lydia Kleasen; they married in Buffalo, New York, in 1913. They were both of working-class German stock. The first nineteen years of the marriage brought no children until, unexpectedly, Lydia became pregnant with a son. Robert Elmer Kleasen was born on 20 September 1932. Both his parents were then forty-two years old.

Little is known about Kleasen's childhood. His parents were poor, as were many families during the Great Depression. Both parents were apparently gun enthusiasts, and there were lots of firearms in the home. There are strong indications that the father beat both his wife and son. He was also institutionalized when Bob Kleasen was an adult, suggesting that there may have been a genetic component to his son's mental illness.²⁰

A psychiatrist, who later evaluated Kleasen, reported stories about Kleasen's entertaining himself as a boy by taking a BB gun into the attic of his Victoria Avenue home, where he would plunk away, unobserved, at other children on the street.

On Christmas Eve, Sunday, in 1950, when Kleasen was eighteen, he went berserk in a hospital while awaiting treatment for a foot injury. He stormed into the emergency room brandishing a shotgun, cornered a nurse, fired the shotgun into the walls and ceiling around her five times, and finally was wrestled to the floor by staff. After the incident, police raided his home and seized a number of firearms, swords, and knives.²¹

Kleasen was first locked in a local psychiatric ward, then committed to the Gowanda State Hospital. He remained there as a resident and outpatient for the next two years. Kleasen was diagnosed as psychotic with a psychopathic personality. Hospital staff recorded that Kleasen had a long-standing mental disease and that the prognosis for full recovery was poor.

In the 1950s and early '60s, Kleasen worked at a series of low-skill jobs in New York, Arkansas, and Texas. He came to love Texas, especially the many hunting opportunities he found in the Hill Country west of Austin. In 1957, Kleasen also "graduated" from a mail-order taxidermy school, and he developed a relationship with an Austin taxidermist named Lem Rathbone.

In 1962, Kleasen began work as an Erie County, New York, deputy sheriff. The department likely did no background check, or they would have discovered the 1950 emergency room shooting incident. Kleasen was a jail guard, a position that did not normally expose him to the public. Yet the sheriff's

"I F THIS STAKE
PRESIDENT WANTS A HELL OF
A FIGHT HE'S MY MAN. . . I
DO NOT WANT A PAT ON THE
HEAD AND A PAW SHAKE, I
WANT BLOOD. . . FEW
THOUGHT OF ME WHEN I
BEGGED FOR HELP, NOW I
LISTEN TO NO ONE, I GO FOR
THE KILL." —EXCERPTS FROM A
KLEASEN LETTER WRITTEN TWO
MONTHS BEFORE THE MURDERS

department still received a steady stream of public complaints about his violent behavior. In 1964, Kleasen resigned rather than be fired.

Kleasen was married at least three times, each time to a foreign national. He had a daughter by his first wife, who was from Mexico. His second wife was from Ecuador and was a good friend of the first wife. His third wife was from Sweden. All three indicated that he was violent and terrorized them during their marriages. They also witnessed him beating his elderly mother.

Kleasen enrolled at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he graduated with a degree in sociology, on 1 June 1970. He enrolled in graduate school, even though he had been an average student at best, and he told associates that he was studying pornography. He did, in fact possess a considerable collection of pornography, but ATF agents who raided his home in 1971 noted that there was no sign of "study" and that indications showed that he was merely a consumer.

He traveled to Europe, where he met his third wife, a retail clerk in a Swedish pornography business. He was about thirty-nine, she was eighteen or nineteen. In the spring of 1971, she came to the United States. His abusive instincts almost immediately took over.

During the period of his marriages and college studies, Kleasen was often in outpatient psychiatric care for severe depression. Much of the time, he was taking medication for his mental illness, although it was not always successful at controlling his violent outbursts.

KLEASEN AS A MORMON

A thug preys upon unsuspecting Saints.

IN 1966, Kleasen's mother acquired a seventy-five-acre farm in Wayne County, New York, which he often visited. Wayne County is near Palmyra, and I suspect that Kleasen's obsession with Joseph Smith and the LDS faith began there as well. It was about this time that he also began showing up in LDS wards in Williamson and Buffalo, after being tracted out by center-city missionaries in the spring of 1971. Two of the guests at his 1 July 1971 wedding to the Swedish woman were missionaries. He also had shown off his substantial gun collection and gun works to these missionaries, telling them he was a CIA operative.

On 12 June 1971, while Kleasen, his Swedish fiancée, and another friend were at the Wayne County farm, Kleasen got into an armed confrontation with two local men on a nearby road. He shot one of them in the foot, causing him to be hospitalized for ten days.²² Kleasen was prosecuted for armed assault and spent several months in jail awaiting trial.

On 30 September 1971, as Kleasen sat in jail, his Buffalo home (he never lived anywhere but at his parents' center-city Victoria Avenue home) was raided by ATF agents. The dollar value of the weapons seized was hotly debated for years, but ATF records reflect that over 150 firearms were seized, including a number of Thompson submachine guns, hand grenades, forty-two thousand rounds of ammunition, and ex-

plosives. The agent in charge announced to the press that the firearms seized were worth \$300,000.²³ Federal charges were never filed, and state firearms charges were later dropped when Kleasen was convicted in Texas.

On 12 January 1972, police officers rescued the third wife, who was now a virtual prisoner in Kleasen's home. She had managed to write the Swedish Embassy pleading for help. Before leaving the country, she briefed police on Kleasen's increasingly erratic and violent behavior.²⁴

Kleasen hired and then fired several lawyers on the assault charge. By March 1972, when it finally became evident that he would be going to prison on the charge, he jumped bail and fled to Europe. He presented himself to the Copenhagen, Denmark, LDS Ward as a baptized Mormon named John T. Williamson. The name, one of Kleasen's favorite aliases, belonged to a cousin of his who had died in 1951. He carried a passport in Williamson's name. Local leaders seeking membership records were told by Salt Lake City that no such member existed. At about the same time, on 20 August 1972, Kleasen violently beat a young LDS woman to whom he had attached himself. The woman was hospitalized.

Danish authorities jailed him, determined his passport was a fake, and began to both prosecute and expel him from the country. He was also prosecuted for forgery and two bicycle thefts.²⁵ During the several months he was in a Copenhagen jail, Kleasen corresponded with an English speaking LDS family, who saved all his letters. The local mission president, Grant R. Ipsen, went to considerable lengths to assist Danish law enforcement in the case.

By November 1972, Kleasen was expelled from the country. Instead of going back to the United States, he somehow ended up in Lebanon, accompanying a Lebanese national he had met in the Copenhagen jail. He had apparently convinced the man and his friends that he could secure guns for them.

It didn't take the Lebanese long to determine that Kleasen was a fraud; they dumped him at the United States Embassy in Beirut on 24 November 1972. A State Department cable asking Washington, D.C., for guidance on Kleasen describes him as "emotionally disturbed" and "uncooperative."²⁶

Kleasen was repatriated to Washington, D.C., by the embassy, then went to western Canada—long enough to be expelled by that country.

By January 1973, he showed up penniless at Lem Rathbone's Austin Taxidermy Studio. Rathbone let him sleep in an unused office in the taxidermy business.²⁷ On 26 April 1973, Kleasen stole the used twenty-two-foot camper-trailer, where the missionaries' effects were later found, and set it up behind the shop.²⁸

The Mormon family in Copenhagen, whom he continued to write, finally told him they wanted nothing more to do with him. In a blunt letter, dated 2 February 1973, they wrote two lines: "We're not supposed to have contact with Apostates. Please don't ever contact us again."²⁹

Kleasen did not handle this rejection well and became obsessed with convincing the family that he was a faithful Mormon in spite of all evidence to the contrary.



Kleasen seated at the defense table during a break in the trial. Note the taxidermy band saw which he used in October 1974 to cut up the bodies of the missionaries.

He presented himself to the Austin First Ward of the Church asking to be baptized. At first, a pair of missionaries were assigned to teach him, but they were rotated out before his baptism. He continued to show up at church on an irregular basis—people recall him always wearing jeans and a clean white T-shirt to meetings. He was next taught by the local high priests' quorum.

Finally, on 20 September 1973, Kleasen was baptized by Bishop Bruce Smith, and three days later, ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. Kleasen then prevailed upon his new bishop to write a letter, dated 6 October 1973, to the Danish family, informing them that he was now a member in good standing of the Austin First Ward. The next day, Kleasen wrote them a letter of his own, enclosing a photocopy of his certificate of ordination as a priest.³⁰

UNRAVELING LIES AND A CHURCH COURT *Raging threats preceded the murders.*

HAVING concluded that Kleasen was every bit the thug the Danish mission president felt he was, the couple took this most recent letter, along with all the other letters they had saved, to the mission office. President Ipsen wrote the Presiding Bishop in Salt Lake City, on 27

October 1973, to warn the Church about Kleasen.

He wrote:

I know we are supposed to forgive people and that they are forgiven their transgressions when they are baptized, but I believe that this is something that the Church should be aware of and I feel that you will know where it should go if it needs to [be] followed up further.

The letter went on to outline Kleasen's conduct in Denmark in rather circumspect terms.³¹

On 12 November 1973, the Presiding Bishop wrote the Austin First Ward bishop, enclosing a copy of President Ipsen's letter and urging him to determine if Kleasen had fully confessed his conduct in Denmark.³² Kleasen, of course, had said nothing of it.

Thus began a year-long deterioration in Kleasen's already troubled relationship with Texas Mormons.

On 7 December 1973, Kleasen had been arrested on yet another poaching offense. Kleasen and a friend had shot a buffalo at the Diamond X Ranch, in 1969, carting off the head and hide to be mounted. The buffalo belonged to Texas millionaire and Lyndon Johnson intimate A. W. Moursand.³³ Kleasen sat in a series of small rural Texas jails for several months on the charge. During that time, he wrote a steady stream of letters to

LDS church contacts, demanding that they post his bail and secure an LDS attorney to represent him. His bishop and home teachers visited him in jail, sometimes bringing him food because he complained that the jailers fed him poorly.³⁴

An attorney was appointed, and the buffalo shooting matter was finally resolved by spring. Still New York authorities demanded Kleasen's extradition for trial on the assault charge. In a move that later ruined more than one political career, Texas authorities refused the request in the apparent belief that Kleasen was a persecuted gun enthusiast and not a dangerous assailant.³⁵ Kleasen would often insist that this refusal amounted to a full pardon on the New York crime by the Texas authorities.³⁶

By the summer of 1974, Kleasen seemed to be getting out of his legal troubles, while his problems with the LDS church continued. His former, more conciliatory bishop had been succeeded by a University of Texas transportation professor, Frank McCullough. Concluding that Kleasen was a dishonest, unrepentant, troublemaker who had divided the ward, Bishop McCullough initiated a Church court.³⁷ Kleasen had begun attending Pentecostal meetings in Burnet, Texas, and more than a few Mormons suggested to him that maybe he would be happier in another denomination anyway.

But the missionaries hoped to reactivate Kleasen. They and a few young members of the ward took an interest in this unhappy man and tried to fellowship him. Their inexperience in life allowed them to accept his CIA stories, giving him the kind of attention he craved.

In one letter Kleasen mailed to a missionary over two months before the murders, he wrote:

If this Stake president wants a hell of a fight, he's my man, but no andy-pandy. . . . I do not want a pat on the head and a paw shake, I want BLOOD. I want to go in and finish this mess one way or the other. Either some athority [sic] will get up on his two legs and vindicate me publically [sic], or they can excommunicate me. . . . I want to go after my false accusers now and bring them to dis-honor, disgrace, and if possible excommunication. This is how I feel, I have no mercy, I feel no pangues [sic] of pity, I want their heads. . . . If it has not, and if the Church does not want to set the matter streight [sic] then I have no recourse than to continue to be inactive or they can do what they like. . . . Few thought of me when I begged for help, now I listen to no one, I go for the Kill.³⁸

Kleasen wrote Bishop McCullough letters demanding that

the bishop meet him alone at his rural trailer. The bishop judged the letters to be threatening and refused such a meeting.³⁹

A few days before 28 October, Bishop McCullough called Elder Darley and urged that he and his companion not meet further with Kleasen. While McCullough could not fully explain his thinking to Elder Darley, he knew of the planned Church court and of the increasingly violent letters Kleasen had mailed to local Mormon leaders. Elder Darley told the bishop that he and Elder Fischer had accepted the 28 October dinner invitation from Kleasen and felt they should at least keep that commitment.⁴⁰

On Wednesday, 23 October 1974, young Mormon Jack Paris and his wife had their home teachers over for dinner and fellowship. Part way through the meal, Kleasen showed up for Paris's promised help with a chore. The same home teachers were also assigned to Kleasen. One of them had even visited Kleasen in jail, bringing him food. But almost as soon as Kleasen entered the door, he berated the home teachers with such violence that everyone feared that a physical attack would follow.

After the home teachers diplomatically excused themselves and Kleasen had stormed off in a huff, Paris and the home teachers talked in the darkened apartment parking lot about what they should do. They were well aware of Kleasen's skills with firearms and his frequent

boasts of having killed for the CIA. Kleasen had really scared them. They decided his threats were serious enough that they should move away from their residences and live with relatives until Kleasen cooled off.⁴¹

That Wednesday night is the last account I have found of Kleasen before the murders on the following Monday.

CONCLUSIONS

Unanswered questions remain.

BOB Kleasen was a mentally unstable individual with an attachment to the LDS community of several years duration. This attachment was not based on a personal religious experience but rather on his own low self-esteem and need for the kind of attention Church members often shower on investigators and new converts. A well-meaning local Mormon community was understandably slow to appreciate the dangers in Kleasen's case. It is not a set of circumstances peculiar to Mormons.

There are several questions I am asked about this matter. Here are the conclusions I have reached about them.

THE HOUSING AND
OTHER PARTS OF THE
BANDSAW WERE COVERED
WITH BIOLOGICAL
MATERIALS, WHICH PROVED
TO BE HUMAN BLOOD AND
TISSUE POSITIVELY
IDENTIFIED AS DARLEY'S
AND FISCHER'S. THAT WAS
AS CLOSE AS ANYONE
WOULD EVER COME TO
FINDING THE BODIES.

Did Bob Kleasen kill these two missionaries?

While there are more than a few unanswered questions, I have found nothing consistent with any other killers. The police never had any other suspects. Certainly, the explanations Kleasen offered lack any credibility. There is no support for his occasionally advanced claim that the two young men were still alive and in hiding.⁴² Nor is it likely they were killed by the CIA, as Kleasen sometimes implied.

Was Kleasen insane?

There is little doubt that he was mentally ill. While I have seen several diagnostic terms applied to him over the years, little about his life suggests he was normal.

But saying he was mentally ill does not answer the question of whether he was legally competent to stand trial or innocent by reason of insanity. My hindsight impression is that he was competent to stand trial and that he knew right from wrong, but that his control over his violent impulses was minimal at best.

In fact, he was every defense lawyer's worst nightmare, a legally competent but controlling, paranoid, and crazy client who resists rational representation.

Was the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals right to reverse his conviction?

Even as a committed defense lawyer, I see this case as a close call, but I think the reversal was correct. The Kleasen decision has almost never been used as precedent for other search and seizure issues by the Texas courts. It appears to me that the appellate record was not adequately developed by prosecutors on this point at the state trial.

The same issue came up in Kleasen's federal prosecution, which relied on evidence obtained under the same search warrant. Federal prosecutors developed their record thoroughly, and Kleasen's appeal was rejected by the Fifth Circuit in an unpublished opinion.

What about the decision not to retry Kleasen?

This is the decision that I am still unable to satisfactorily answer. The District Attorney's Office has lost the file, so I was unable to review their internal thinking on a retrial. After twenty years, memories have faded, and people are unable to fully reconstruct the decision.

I know that a full new search was made for the bodies, in 1976, without any success. There likely were other factors not generally discussed on the record that influenced the decision.

The decision surely was greatly influenced by the fact that Kleasen faced other significant prosecutions in cases that were easy convictions for the government. Kleasen received heavy sentences in those cases.

What could the Church have done to prevent this tragedy?

Frankly, nothing. I honestly find nothing here I am prepared to second guess. Mormonism is a missionary faith. The faithful send missionaries out to save souls and win converts without qualifying who they might be. Unless we take a country club attitude toward religious investigators, making them prove their fitness to become Latter-day Saints with background checks and fingerprints, we will encounter our

share of predators. The Church does a pretty good job of policing this kind of problem; in this case, clear steps were taken to alert local Mormons to the need to look closely at Kleasen.

The real point to be made is that, in an increasingly violent world, it is miraculous that we haven't experienced tragedies like this more often. ☐

NOTES

1. Wendell Fuqua, "Missing Missionaries' Stripped Car Located," *Austin American-Statesman*, 5 November 1974, 1.

2. Bill Bluntzer, who testified at the 1975 murder trial. His testimony can be found in the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Kleasen file at the Statement of the Facts (S.F.), vol. IV, 1174-87.

3. Wendell Fuqua and Billie Veach, "Suspect to be interrogated on missionaries' disappearance," *Austin American-Statesman*, 6 November 1974, 1.

4. Author's interviews with Jordan, who is now retired.

5. "Mormons Search for Pair," *Austin American-Statesman*, 10 November 1974, A-15, and author's interviews with Eddie Davis.

6. When they received their mission calls, both boys had longish hair. Family members cut their hair just before they departed for the Missionary Training Center and their girlfriends had saved the hair as mementos. Family members and the girlfriends would testify at the trial about these events. Assistant District Attorney Charlie Craig, who helped prosecute Kleasen for the murders, told me that "no where else but with Mormons" would prosecutors be so fortunate as to have such perfectly preserved recent hair samples for scientific comparison.

7. Carol Fowler, "Charges Filed in Deaths of Missionaries," *Austin Citizen*, 14 November 1974, 1.

8. Mike Cox, "Kleasen Ruled Sane," *Austin American-Statesman*, 19 March 1975, 1. Under Texas law, when a defendant's competence is questioned, a jury is formed to hear evidence and render a verdict of competent or incompetent. If the defendant is found to be competent, a different jury will then hear the criminal charge and renders a final verdict. This system is presently codified at art. 46.02, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.

9. Robert Heard, "Kleasen Says CIA to Blame for Murder Charges," *Austin American-Statesman*, Sunday, 30 March 1975 [eve.], A-13, A-14.

10. John Sutton, "Kleasen Begs for Life," *Austin American-Statesman*, 3 June 1975, 1.

11. Kleasen testified at S.F. VI, 2050-2170. In death penalty trials, once the jury returns a guilty verdict in the first or guilt phase, they continue with a punishment phase, in which a second verdict determines if the convicted man will receive a death sentence or life in prison.

12. I have a 4 August 1995 letter from the CIA stating that: "While it is the policy of this Agency to neither confirm nor deny employment or association with named individuals, the public interest may require that we address claims involving allegations of heinous criminal activity. In this instance, we have reviewed relevant files and there is no indication that Robert Elmer Kleasen was an employee of or otherwise associated with this Agency."

13. Kleasen's murder trial testimony at S.F. VI, 2050-170.

14. John Sutton, "Kleasen sentence: The Electric Chair," *Austin American-Statesman*, 4 June 1975, 1.

15. *Kleasen v. State*, 560 S.W.2d 938 (Tex.Cr.App.1977); Rosemary Beales, "Kleasen murder conviction erased," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 24, 1977, pg. 1.

16. "No Retrial in Slaying of 2 Missionaries," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 February 1978.

17. Rosemary Beales, "Kleasen Draws 9-Year Sentence in Firearms Case," *Austin American-Statesman*, Saturday, 29 April 1978, A-1. Kleasen was convicted of all six counts on which he was charged. An appeal to the Federal Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals was denied without an opinion on 8 May 1979, in case no. 78-5293.

18. Kleasen's New York state conviction was for assault, second degree, and reckless endangerment, second degree. He was sentenced on 26 June 1979, by Judge Harold J. Stiles, to indeterminate sentence with a maximum of seven years and a minimum of two and one-third years. This ran consecutive to his federal sentence. After the trial, Kleasen was returned to the psychiatric facilities at the Federal Medical Center, in Springfield, Missouri.

19. Note that there was extensive news coverage on his parole in the Buffalo print and electronic media from 6 to 20 May 1988. Buffalo television stations incorrectly reported that Kleasen and this crime were the inspiration of the cult movie *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

20. Elmer M. Kleasen experienced what court papers call a "severe mental breakdown" and was removed to a hospital by police on 10 July 1956. He was released from a state psychiatric hospital in 1962. He did not return home to his wife in Buffalo, but instead lived a transient life in boarding homes and hotels. He died 25 August 1968, in a rented single room in Dunkirk, New York, near Buffalo.

21. "Youth Fires Shotgun in Meyer, Terrifies Nurses and Visitors," *The Buffalo Evening News*, Tuesday, 26 December 1950, 17.

22. The victim was Dennis Lee DuBois.

23. Marty O'Neil, "\$300,000 Arsenal Is Seized by State, U.S. Raiders Here," *Buffalo Courier*, 1 October 1971, 1.

24. One of the officers she briefed was a Buffalo police officer and district attorney's investigator named Dick Murphy, now retired. Murphy gathered a great deal of information about Kleasen and assisted in the 1974 Texas investigation. He has been especially generous in providing information to me, and I am greatly indebted to him.

25. Within a month of his arrest, Danish prosecutors indicted "American Citizen Robert Elmer Kleasen" in the City of Copenhagen Court. The charges were for attempted forgery (he had tried to alter his passport to reflect permanent residence); for two counts of stealing motor-assisted bicycles, in late July and August of 1972; and for the assault and battery of the LDS woman. The third count of the indictment described that assault as by "pressing one hand against her throat and pushing her down on to a bed, where she came to lie on her back, whereupon he sat down on her chest and hit her several times in her head with the flat of his hand and with his fist, took stranglehold on her, and again hit her in the face, by which time the person assaulted contracted several marks from strangling on the front of her throat, spot hemorrhages in her eyes, and a wound at the left-hand corner of her mouth."

26. State Department cable, dated 24 November 1972, courtesy of retired Buffalo police officer Dick Murphy.

27. Rathbone murder trial testimony, S.F. IV, 1202–1255.

28. Murder trial testimony of trailer owner Odell Brown, S.F. IV, 1279–85, and Deputy Sheriff Robert Nestoroff, S.F. IV, 1285–93.

29. Original in LDS church Archives.

30. Originals in LDS Archives.

31. Original in LDS Archives.

32. Original in LDS Archives.

33. Blanco County, Texas, County Court file for case no. 716 (misdemeanor charge in 1969) and no. 131-A (felony charge in 1970). Located in the County Courthouse in Johnson City, Texas.

34. Author's interviews with former bishop Bruce Smith and former home teacher Eddie Davis.

35. Wendell Fuqua, "Kleasen's Strange Odyssey: How Suspect in Mormon Deaths Came to Austin," *Austin American-Statesman*, 15 November 1974, 1.

36. Kleasen testified at his murder trial: "Well, when I was granted amnesty in the State of Texas — maybe I'm using the wrong word. I'm not sure if I'm using the right word. I was granted that — they couldn't take me out of the State of Texas

— by the governor. I couldn't be extradited or anything else on that offense. I assumed that this — this was a true and accurate statement that I made." S.F. VI, 2078.

37. Author's interviews with former Bishop Frank McCullough, who now serves in the Austin, Texas, Oak Hill Stake Presidency.

38. Kleasen letter to missionary Blaire Bell, dated 17 August 1974. The original was introduced at trial and is now in the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals file.

39. McCullough interviews.

40. McCullough interviews.

41. Author's interview with Eddie Davis and Jack Paris; murder trial testimony, S.F. IV, 1071–1122.

42. Two examples are at his 27 March 1978 sentencing on the federal firearms convictions. Kleasen told the judge that law enforcement "still refuse[s] to accept the truth; that these men who are missing . . . are no doubt alive today. I have no reason to believe that they are dead at all." See pages 5–6 of sentencing transcript, case no. A-78-CR-10, United States District Court, Western District of Texas, Austin Division. During a 15 August 1988 deposition in a New York civil suit he filed, Kleasen said "I didn't kill anybody. There never was a body in the case. There never was a weapon in the case. There never was a motive in the case. There never was a witness in the case. It was the sort of a case put together with chewing gum and bailing wire[,] and on appeal, why, it fell apart, and the District Attorney had nothing to try the case again."



MISANTHROPY AT TEN

And if fictions consumed me, each purple-green hill I mounted
 featured Howard Roark's face superimposed against balding grass,
 against the rotting roots I stumbled across,
 that fat novel clutched in my arms until each dream
 of that pale-and-crimson face sequestered into visions of the artist
 I longed to become. Everything dull-normal drowned
 in my intensity while I thumbed pages faster,
 faster, discovering my destiny.
 Insomnia-charged nights on a battered rickety chair
 my dead father'd fashioned. Sweetening summer mornings.
 Slants of pallid sun in a sky of fragile azure,
 an exotic, cracking plate: and Howard Roark railing
 against the mediocre masses, my plump body supine
 on a hill scorched to absence.

—TERRI BROWN-DAVIDSON

1994 Brookie and D. K. Brown Fiction Contest Sunstone Award

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

By Julie Nichols

The women behind hospital desks are trained in cold. They reassure me not at all. I have tried thinking of the stars over camp, the backlit faces of my girls at evening fire, the feel and scent of dry pine needles in dust under my feet, but I'm not comforted. I long for the hands of my friends extended to save me, as if it were I battling the shallow rapids of the Snake where it runs past Jordan Camp, as if it were Riva extending herself to me from land, pulling me safely home. I press my hands into my forehead, where the stuff of my brain feels unprotected, soft, spilling upward into the night. I think of the hands of my friends on my head and I want to crush myself into them, reshaped and reformed, forgiven for letting this happen—forgiven for letting Kate go.

I WAS NAMED AFTER MY MOTHER, VERA ANN. V. Annie Macdougall. I took this job to earn money, of course, but also to make the break with her once and for all, out in the open, up front, as if it hadn't been made years ago in my mind. I know plenty of women my age who are reconciled with their mothers, with the idea of Mother: Bitty Seamons broke every crystal goblet and Noritake serving piece in her mother's china cabinet when she was fourteen in a fit of fury about Rob Kendall, but she married him in the Mormon temple a year ago and her mother is busy tying quilts for the baby that's due next month, proud to be a grandmother at last. Renee Malton ran away from home, once all the way to Reno, but now she's at the Community College the same as me, living at home, but unlike me she goes shopping with her mother as if they were the same age, laughing and giggling and having lunch at the mall like peers. Patrice Chenard, too—when her mother put her in a school for "troubled teens" I thought she'd never speak to her again. But now she sides with her mother on the issue of her younger sister, Collie, who's one of the most active dealers of the drugs kids should say no to at Lincoln Junior High.

JULIE NICHOLS is a writer living in Provo, Utah.

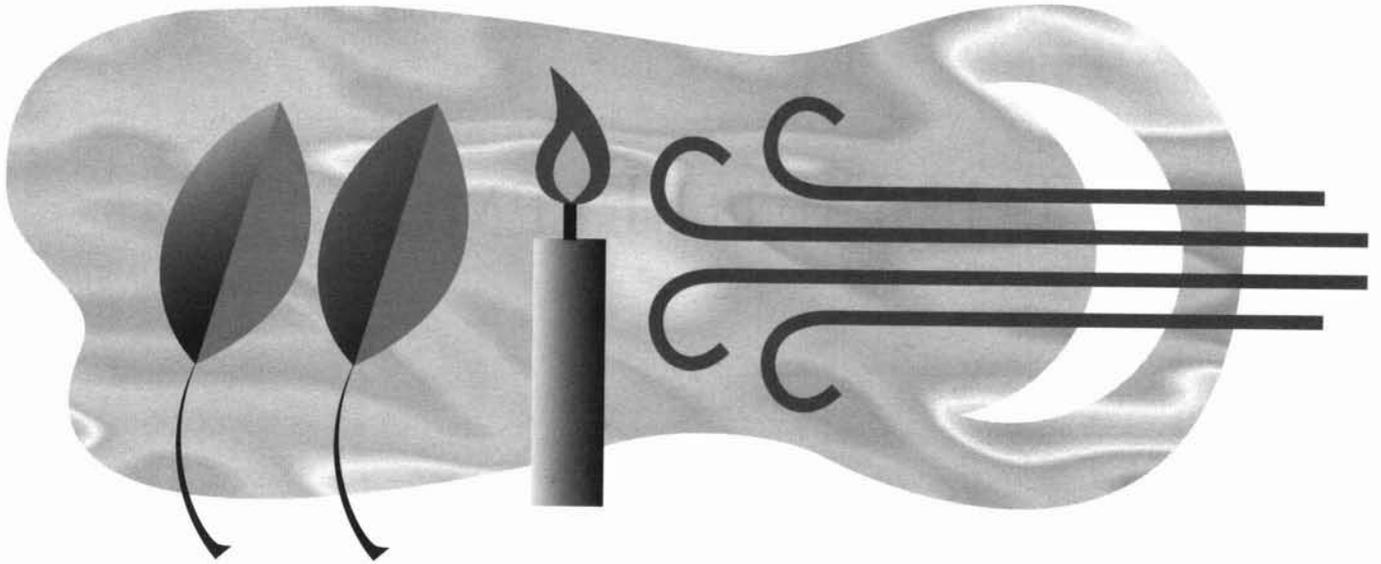
It's clear to me now that the glitches in my friends' mother-daughter relations were only diversions. Those forays into rage and destruction never meant anything. Should I, I wonder, have sabotaged my mother's life's work, erased the files on her computer, written a scathing exposé of my mother's life (what would I have said? She's the salt of the earth), and published it anonymously in the *Chronicle* for everyone to see? Then would my head be clear now, this gaping hole filled in forever by the clean expression of my childish wrath?

But I never thought to erase my mother's files. She writes recipes for the national press. Tomato pies, hot pickles, whole wheat cinnamon rolls, soufflés with zucchini and celery. Her food is wholesome, inexpensive, quick to fix, calculated to earn a fame acceptable to Mormon mothers, and, above all, delicious. Another daughter might have joined her enterprise enthusiastically, brilliantly. But the sets of our literary leanings—my *logos* and hers—never intersected. From the beginning I loved poems more than God.

Even when I was seven I knew that the lists of ingredients and measurements on her typewriter platen were sacred to her in some way analogous to the way certain poems were to me. Once, because I couldn't find any clean paper, I typed a poem I knew, not even one of my own, onto a half-finished recipe card.

"What's this?" she said. "How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot? Where did you hear that?" I showed her the copy of Blake I'd found in the school library. She looked him up, and when she saw that his engravings were sometimes of naked people in copulation, sometimes of angels he said he saw (poor deluded poet), she used her typewriter to write letters that removed him from the district's inventory. Some other mothers rallied around her. My second grade teacher said nothing kind to me when I gave her back the book under duress.

Alone, then, I kept looking for poems I would understand and remember. They were voices humming at me, magnets drawing me to them—spells, maybe. Like a child, I excused my mother for depriving me of my own most sacred words. I



BRIAN BEANS

This was our first ritual, our first party celebrating our own sacred things. In that and in many similar moments over the next two months, without knowing the word “grace,” I became a new person. For the first time I had permission to enjoy publicly what had always been sacred, but never yet named to me.

thought she simply had different taste. I still don't think her censorship was born of malice, exactly—just a strange kind of protectionism wrongly directed, generated by fear, brought to fruit in the acceptable place of power—the home, the child.

One Sunday my mother woke up with the flu. She had to call the Sunday School people to tell them she wouldn't be able to teach my class as usual. Till I was three she took care of the children in the nursery while other mothers went to their own church classes. Then she taught each of the classes for my age group—four-year-olds, five-year-olds, six. I knew all the right answers about God and Jesus and Joseph Smith and not another child in the neighborhood had read the Book of Mormon at as young an age as I. All the other mothers were more than willing to let Vera Ann teach us. The fruits of her labor were perfect.

That day my mother had the flu, someone new in the ward found Riva (also new in the ward) to substitute, and Riva brought her woman friend Nina. In my Sunday School class we were seven-year-olds turning eight. The lessons in the manual provided by the central committee in Salt Lake had titles like “We Will Be Baptized Like Jesus.” “Brigham Young Was a Great Prophet.” “The Pioneers Came across the Plains.” By this time we'd heard them all at least seven times, once during every year of our lives. My mother put up flannel board figures, posters. I don't know who drew the original flannel Moses and Miriam, but the posters—miniatures of which could be found in my Book of Mormon—were all by some 1940s artist who seemed not to recognize the non-Caucasian origin of the Book of Mormon characters. But I didn't know this till later. At seven I knew only that the format for Sunday School was familiar and predictable and, in a mildly irritating

way, boring: my mother showing pictures, telling stories brightly, waiting for us to pipe up with the right answers (God help us if we didn't have them by the time we were seven).

So it was a shock, the morning of the flu at our house, to see Riva and Nina sitting there. They wore pants, first of all, which you don't do in our corner of Mormondom. I think it's done on the coasts, perhaps, but not where we were. Riva had short curly hair all over her head, and Nina's was in braids and she wore overalls. I felt—interested.

Riva said, first thing, “Do any of you have a favorite story?”

Bitty and Robbie and Patricia and Renee stared off into space. There were a couple of other little boys, Billy and somebody else. They stared off into space too. Riva looked at us one at a time but mine were the only eyes she could get to meet hers. I wanted to tell her about my favorite story, but I knew there was a right answer. I said, “The Good Samaritan is a good one (there was a poster about this that my mother often hung before us in the classroom), but what I really like is Jabberwocky.”

Nina cried out, startling the other children:

“One, two! One, two! And through and through
His vorpal sword went snicker-snack!”
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back!”¹

“Yes!” I said, laughing.

“Come to my arms, my beamish—girl,” Nina said. I was too shy to go. Riva carried on with the lesson, about parables in general and the one in the Book of Mormon about the olive tree in particular. But I wasn't finished with these women. I

knew I had found a source, a way to replenish and affirm the truth of my own peculiar power, the chant of words, the voice of rhythm making more than the meaning of the sounds.

O *THE*RS waiting come and go. A small boy screams over the gash in his leg, and his father, a young, tired gas station attendant by the look of his uniform, holds him, but not close. An old woman presses a handkerchief to her neck, the skin of her arms hanging below her bones like a limp, unusable organ. Like the lungs of my Katie-girl, filled with water, the stuff from which once she burst to life and from which she now must suffer. Because I let her go. Because I thought falsely she could handle the river. She said she was unafraid of the river, so now I suffer, too; I see above me the surface of the water receding even as I reach; even as I strain, the roiling white surface shatters me downward and I try to remember the way up, the way up, and my ears and my nose are full and I remember in despair the beautiful emptiness of air but it eludes me in this water and I can't reach it. The work of the water is death.

TWO weeks after that Sunday was the autumn equinox. Riva called me on the telephone and said, "Nina and I want you to come to a party with poems and food to celebrate the way the earth is turning." It made sense to me. The earth turns, school starts, we put on warmer clothes and poems repeat the rhythms of this change. It sounded interesting, useful. Anyway, I liked Riva and Nina. I'd received a letter from them after that Sunday:

Dear Annie Macdougall: Do you know the one about the moon and the seven-year-old girl? Here it is if you don't, because you are seven and you should know. Love, Riva and Nina

There's no dew left on the daisies and clover
There's no rain left in heaven.
I've said my "seven times" over and over:
Seven times one are seven.

I am old—so old I can write a letter;
My birthday lessons are done.
The lambs play always—they know no better;
They are only one times one.

O Moon! in the night I have seen you sailing
And shining so round and low.
You were bright—ah, bright—but your light is
failing:
You are nothing now but a bow.

You Moon! have you done something wrong in
heaven,
That God has hidden your face?
I hope, if you have, you will soon be forgiven,
And shine again in your place . . .

There was more, and I still know it by heart. "I am old, you

may trust me, linnet, linnet—I am seven times one today." Why has this stayed so long, in my body and in my brain? Is seven truly the magical number so much in myth says it is? Is eight the Mormon age of accountability and baptism due to some subliminal recognition that the deepest rhythms of the first seven years have made their mark and cannot be erased except we be reborn?

I don't know now, and I didn't have the words to think about it then. I said to my mother, "Sister Galsworthy and her friend have invited me to a party. Can I go?"

Vera Ann believes in granting the benefit of the doubt until guilt is doubtless. "Some kind of Sunday School party?" she asked. "Certainly. Go and have fun."

Nina's house was, is, a square, white structure behind Riva's, almost like a playhouse, I thought, or servants' quarters, though Nina is not Riva's servant. Riva's two children and her sometimes husband made her home look more like ours, with a porch and a fireplace chimney and checkered curtains in the windows and bedrooms upstairs. But Nina's reminded me of the houses of grandmothers, a lone woman's house. The kind of house I wanted for myself: my own small kitchen, my own living room with a rocker and many books, and a bedroom with flowers and cupboards full of the things that made up me.

Or in this case Nina. I know now what's in those cupboards—the dried verbena and coriander in jars she throws herself in the fourth room of the house, a room pink with the dust of clay and color-wild on the days she glazes. I know the smell as sandalwood and sage; even when the incense isn't lit the scent circles the rooms and lifts them off the earth of this town where they're grounded. Vanilla and bayberry candles, next to the cupboard full of wicks and wax by which they're made on certain days of the year; pine, cinnamon, gardenia—light brown, rust, white—these also circle the room, now as they did that day, so that I knew it was no house like I'd ever been in before, and better suited for poems than anyplace I might ever be again.

We sat in the living room: an ordinary brown and white rag rug on the floor, a round small table in the middle, set with flowers—blue cosmos of late summer—and two Shaker chairs and one fine overstuffed, green recliner drawn up close. In a miniature fondue pot, potpourri simmered there on the table, a small white candle flickering underneath.

"It's earth, air, fire, and water all at once," Riva said. "The potpourri is the stuff of the earth, simmering in water by the heat of the fire and steaming off into the air. Like it?"

I said I loved it, which I did, though the references to earth and so on meant nothing to me.

"TREASURE hunt first thing," said Nina. She handed me the first clue, a quatrain about going outside and looking in the walnut tree and finding a treasure and a pleasure for me. The next clue told me to bring back the shell of a well-eaten walnut, and the rest of the clues were like that: in every hiding place I received a gift from the earth or the air or the water or the fire (Nina's kiln contained



BRIAN BEAN

Why have Sister Galsworthy's strange spells stayed so long with me? Is eight the Mormon age of accountability because the deepest rhythms of the first seven years cannot be erased except we be reborn?

bits of throwaway clay), and finally, when my arms were full of value from the elements, we reconvened around the little table in the living room and I placed these offerings on the altar and Riva and Nina took turns reading poems to me about autumn—Keats, Bishop, Dickinson. They named the authors to me so that I would know my colleagues in poetry-making, and when I asked, they helped me memorize the Dickinson: “The morns are meeker than they were. . .” When we had eaten—a spicy pumpkin cake made with whole-wheat flour, which I knew my mother would want the recipe for—my new friends asked me if I had any poems of my own to share. No one had ever asked me this before. I promised to bring some next time. I was wild with pleasure: there would be a next time, and I could show my poems.

This was our first ritual, our first party celebrating our own sacred things. In that and in many similar moments over the next two months, without knowing the word “grace,” I became a new person. For the first time I had permission to enjoy publicly what had always been sacred, but never yet named to me. I found it very good.

“I’M afraid of the water, Annie Macdougall,” Katie says. “Afraid?” I can’t imagine being afraid: the water, like the earth, is my friend. How many years now have I known the water in all its forms, brought it to the altar, mingled it with air-forms, fire-forms, earth? I even think of skiing as a kind of swimming, a moving through water as powder and ice, and I celebrate water summer and winter.

“So you can’t swim?” I say. “I’ll teach you.”

I am confident. Teaching little girls seems to be a calling, it comes so easily: stringing beads on a loom in blue and black bird patterns;

biscuits on sticks over the Coleman stove; pyramids of kindling and tinder the basis for effective small campfires. Songs—the easiest of all, my favorite to teach, the words first, then I play guitar. I sing to her now: “’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fear relieved . . .” The wrinkle between her eyes eases. She likes these words too. She believes I can help her. She believes in my grace.

THE nearer I got to eight, the nearer November came, the more intensely my mother drove home to us in Sunday School the saving power of the gospel, the importance of baptism by a man who has authority, the new possibility of repentance once we had received the Holy Ghost. I got this not only at Sunday School but at home, too. My father would baptize me—counselor to the bishop, he was, a busy and important man in his business and in our church ward, and I was privileged to have his authority in my house. My mother told me this often. To me, he seemed far away, tall and good-looking but from some other world.

My behavior for his world differed subtly from my behavior at home without him. When he was at work, I showed respect for recipes, computers, quiet reading, Vera Ann’s plans. At Nina’s my behavior was different yet again: games outside in the elements, laughter, poems. But for my father I affected formality, propriety, soberness. These affectations were represented to me as right and proper. No girl child behaves the same for her father, and sometimes not even for her mother, as she does for her friends. Halloween morning broke frosty. I wore a black turtleneck and an orange skirt—my mother dressed me classily, put my hair in fashionable twists with ribbons of the appropriate colors—and I said to Vera Ann, “Can I

take some black-cat cookies to a party at Sister Galsworthy's after school?"

"Didn't you go there day before yesterday?" she said.

"It's an important day," I said, "Halloween."

"When will you go trick-or-treating?"

"After dark," I said. "I'll be home before dinner. Can I take the cookies?" I'd helped make them.

She shook her head. It meant, "Well, all right, but if you really loved me you wouldn't." She put six black cats on an orange paper plate decorated with silhouettes of witches. "What's the attraction over there?" she said.

I started to tell her, but then I didn't.

When I got to Nina's in the afternoon, the wind chill had blasted me into winter, even in my black leggings. I drank the rose hip tea she gave me with pleasure. Herb teas, she said, not only warmed you but also gave you health, and I had no compunction about drinking tea in her house, though black tea and coffee were forbidden in our own. "The nutmeg in it will warm you up," she said. "It's full of Vitamin C. The sun in a cup."

We did the things we always did: made a potpourri, gathered gifts, representatives of the elements, from the now-dying garden, read poems. Some days we also walked a little way up into the canyon behind the house, but today I had to think of trick-or-treating and being home before dark. Even though we didn't go anywhere, I was late getting home, because Nina showed me some ways to play with my new poems to make them better. I had brought two. Riva shook her head over us. She meant, "You are so remarkable, you makers of poems and pots!" I ran home smiling.

But Vera Ann was furious. "It's six-thirty!" she said. "What can you have been thinking about? What about your piano? Your homework?"

My father was angry too. His placid home life had been disrupted. Vera Ann's very recipe-writing had gone sour because of me and had leaked over into their angry, childless dinner. He dropped me off at the corner of the next street over and told me to go on trick-or-treating by myself while he waited in the car, and hurry. The road was slippery. Frozen drops fell from time to time. I ran from the Chenards' to the Maltons' and slipped in the middle of the street. In my black witch's robe I suppose I was invisible to my father, who in a flurry of regret turned up the street in his Lincoln as I fell and hit me gently with the right front bumper. I slid twenty feet. The ice and asphalt sliced my leg and arm like glass.

My father, not a man to be hysterical, flung me into the back of his car and he would have screeched home if the ice had not made him slide instead. My mother said, "Will you give her a blessing?" My father said, "Let's take her to the emergency room and see. If we have to we'll call Brother Chenard." He was our neighbor, and you always needed two men for a blessing. That was how it was done. But at the emergency room he decided I was not seriously enough injured to require a blessing. My left leg required stitches, though, and it hurt. I thought I could remember Nina telling me what herbs soothed pain and I wanted warm tea, not the fat brown pills the emer-

gency room nurse tried to give me. I asked my mother to call Riva.

She was there with Nina in five minutes. They held my hands. My mother left for a moment to ask a nurse about something and Nina said, "We're going to give you a blessing." I had no time to say, "My father says there's no need, and you have to have the proper authority, anyway, two men, one to pour the sealing oil, one to say the proper words." Instead they put their hands on my leg, the stitched part of me, and Riva said, "In the name of the Mother and the Father and all that is, we bless you with health and a quick recovery to carry on your pleasure and your work."

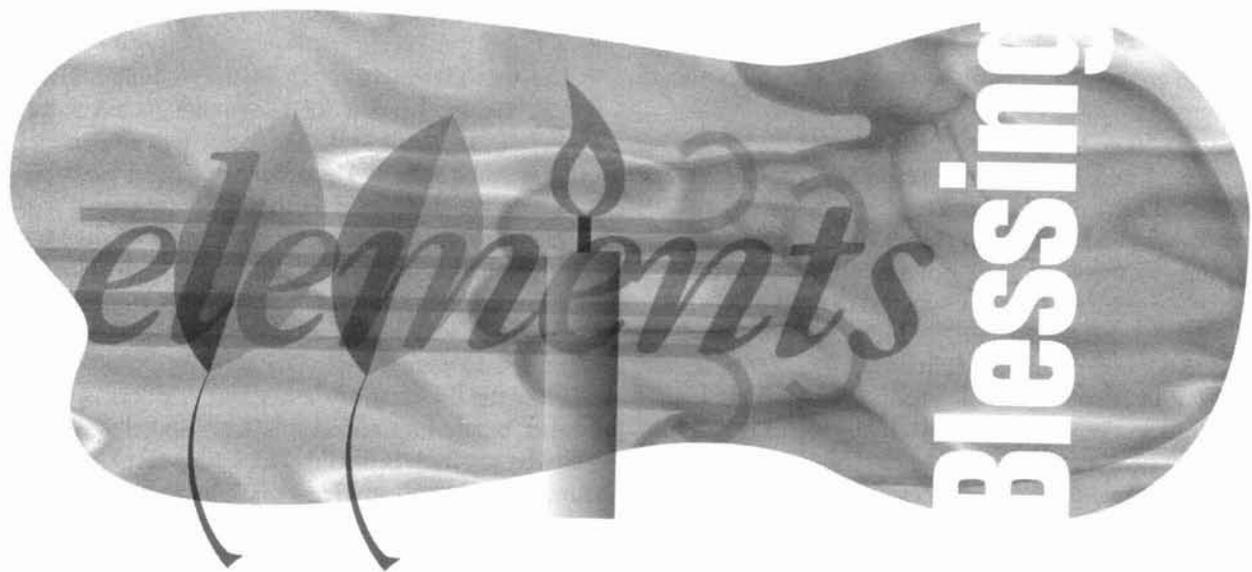
From the doorway my father said, "Get out of here," and my mother beside him added, "Please." And that, they said later, was why my friends would not be allowed to come to my baptism, even though my leg healed in about three days and it never hurt and I was back at school the very next day.

MY baptism was to be an extended-family celebration. I had no siblings, but I went to the baptisms of every first, second, and third cousin in a two-hundred-mile radius to watch them in their white overalls be immersed in a warm font of water by their fathers or older brothers or uncles in white overalls. They always invited everyone: family, of course—Macdougals cover this state in all their variety and they always play bagpipes and often they sing, one or more of them in groups so practiced they sound professional. Also invited are the bishop of the ward the child lives in and the bishop's counselors, if they want to come; the Sunday School teacher of the child to be baptized, and all his or her Sunday School class, and their parents; and special friends who might not already be in any of these categories.

By special permission I was to be baptized on Thanksgiving morning, so that the traditional after-ceremony meal could be a holiday one attended by all the closely related Macdougals. Holiday baptisms are not prescribed, and I think my father would have been just as happy if we had done it the normal way, with all the new eight-year-olds of several wards sitting together at the front of the Primary room with their many families filling the folding chairs, and their fathers one by one taking them to stand waist-deep in the font in the proper stance, saying the baptism words as they appear in the Doctrine and Covenants. Usually, too, the after-baptism meals are potluck, but Vera Ann wanted to show off her recipes, and my father agreed to show off his home, and they took it upon themselves to do all the work.

We planned on forty guests. I went shopping with my mother to seven different stores for the best grocery selections and to more stores than I could keep track of for the finest white baptism dress for me. I wanted to quote something to my mother about "in all her finery, hee hee!" but I didn't. I had chores to do, tables to set, dishes to place on the elegant tables when the time came. We were all kept very busy.

My mother planned my program. Dobie and Mike Macdougall, the bagpipers, were invited to play "Praise to the Man," a hymn straight from the days of Nauvoo, an old fa-



BRIAN BEAN

"Has there been a blessing? I'll go get your father," Vera Ann says. Her recipe for rightness: go get a father. It's written in all the manuals; how could I have forgotten?

vorite at these affairs because it's perfect for bagpipes (the attribution for the music says "Old Scottish tune") while it honors Joseph Smith. In order to spread around the honor of performing at my baptism, Vera Ann also chose two younger second cousins, who had been baptized in the last year or so, to talk about the Holy Ghost and Jesus. Naturally the entire visiting congregation would sing a song or two together, under the direction of my mother's sister Rayelle, whose clear soprano I had always liked and whose calling in life was to be the chorister for the Primary in every ward she ever attended.

I said, "Can Riva and Nina speak instead of Lizzie and Ty?" "Not this time," said Vera Ann.

"I want them to come," I said.

Vera Ann looked angry. "This is for *family*," she said.

RIVA called me the night before. "Do you want me and Nina to come to your baptism, Annie Macdougall?" she asked.

"They won't let me ask you," I said.

"Your mother and father do what they think they have to," she said after a minute. "Nina and I are not in the formula." She let me think about that. "Do you want to come over here right now?" she said.

Vera Ann was typing. She still had deadlines, and the worst of the work for tomorrow was done. Her study door was closed. I left a note saying I would be home soon, love Annie. I was at the little house behind Riva's in seven minutes.

They were both waiting on the porch. Nina held a package wrapped in gold foil. I ran up the walk, but I went slowly up the steps, panting. "We wanted to give you this," Nina said. She smelled earthy, like good clay. "It doesn't matter to-

morrow," she said, "whether we're there or not. Right?"

"It matters," I said. "I hate them." I took the package.

"Don't hate them," Nina said.

"Open it now," Riva said.

It was a pendant on a gold chain, a ball smaller than half an inch in diameter, heavy like crystal and filmy and changeful as if it were filled with pale green water.

"I wish I could stay here," I said.

"You could if it were up to us," Nina said.

Riva said, "Some things are important for reasons that seem very strange. It works two ways: why we're important is strange to your mother, why she's important is strange to you now, when you're eight. But she is. So is this baptism. It needs to please more than just you. Write a poem about it later." But I cried all the way back to my parents' house.

SO you can see that Riva and Nina recognized as well as I did my true motive for becoming a counselor at Jordan Camp. As usual, they seemed merely to rejoice in my good fortune, the same way they did when I won writing awards and finally a scholarship to a small Eastern university for my poetry. There were blessings and rituals for these occasions, of course, but only rare mention of my parents. If my mother objected to the camping trips we took, the birthday and holiday parties we held over at Nina's, she found subtle ways to say so: Sundays are for family; you need to be at home for holidays, dear, your father expects it; of course we rejoice in your awards and scholarships, dear, isn't that why we take you to dinner? Good girl.

When I told her I had applied to be a counselor at the girls' camp, she said, "That will be a pleasant summer job for you."

My father said, "Why don't you get a good job writing for IBM?" I believe he regretted having turned down an opportunity in Washington, D.C. His daughter and IBM seemed like a suitable substitute partnership.

Camp Jordan is known for its democratic clientele. Rich little girls' parents pay the full tuition, but less fortunate children are subsidized if their application forms indicate suitable aptitude and desire for "experience in theory and practice of environmental responsibility, astronomical issues and affairs, and physical well-being." The camp lies halfway up a ten-thousand-foot mountain raked by ski trails in winter and crisscrossed in summer by family recreational vehicles with license plates from Manitoba to Mexico. We lived just over the mountain from it—ten minutes by small plane, two hours by bus. Sometimes the green camp bus came down into our city for a play or planetarium performance, and I watched the girls with something less than envy. I didn't need to go to camp to love the mountains and the stars, and I hiked everywhere, my essential tools in my backpack, without having to pay any kind of tuition, full or subsidized.

But once I saw the poster at the community college, that summer before I went away to the East, the idea of counseling at the camp fascinated me. I had no idea Riva's daughter would be there.

Of course I had met Riva's children. As I understand it, her husband and she had a congenial arrangement, neither divorce nor cohabitation, once Riva admitted the nature of her relationship to Nina. There were two children, a boy and a girl, very young when this all started, and they lived with their father in another town several hours away from both our town and Camp Jordan. Apparently Riva went with them to family affairs, their own baptisms and priesthood ordinations and family reunions and so on. Occasionally Riva's children came to stay with their mother briefly while their father went on a business trip or somewhere, and it was at those times that I learned from Nina to like them, though in a strange way, disinterested, since I was neither their rival nor really their friend. I was part of Riva's life in ways very different than they were—maybe the daughter she'd meant hers to be but had waited till too late to train. I don't know. But there was still something important about her children to Riva, something different than what I was important for. That was why she couldn't give them up, and it also explained why the marriage had not been legally dissolved. Riva was, is, Mormon, after all: husband and children are the crowning glory. It's to Nina's great credit that she understood this well enough to accept Riva's strange marital status without complaint.

But the point is that I knew Katie, and Christopher her brother as well. Katie was twelve at Camp Jordan, a very small and quiet and conventional twelve. She wanted to do everything right, and she wanted to have friends. She seemed happy to see me that first afternoon because I was a familiar face.

"Annie Macdougall!" she called across the crafts classroom.

"Katie Maynard Galsworthy, as I live and breathe," I called back. "Are you doing your weaving correctly?"

Which of course she was. She did everything correctly. Not like her mother in the eyes of the Church; not like me in the eyes of my own mother.

And because she was there, I took her under my wing, like Jesus would have Jerusalem. I made her mine, for Riva's sake. I thought: "now I can pay Riva back."

We began to do rituals. But—like Riva and Nina—I did not call them rituals. I called them activities, and we included as many of the other twelve-year-old girls as wanted to come. There were always treasure hunts, gifts from the earth. We talked about the elements—the original four and the chemical hundred-and-six and the poetic seven and the camp three (physical, astronomical, environmental). We started calling ourselves the Fifth Element, which is Spirit. On one trip back to town I even got us T-shirts with our name in neon green. To me, Katie began to look more and more like her mother.

"**H**AS there been a blessing?" Vera Ann demands, suddenly here, in the hospital waiting room, a surprise and yet not a surprise, "Why are you sitting here crying? Where is this little girl's father? Should your father come with the bishop? She isn't dead, is she?"

I shake my head no to everything. Riva should be here, not you, but she is out East somewhere with Nina at a women's music festival and I am so afraid.

"I'll go get your father," Vera Ann says. Her recipe for rightness: go get a father. It's written in all the manuals; how could I have forgotten? She walks away briskly, her huaraches slapping the linoleum correctly.

And once she is gone I know what to do.

"**K**ATIE MAYNARD," I whisper to the child through the glass. She is in intensive care. A machine is breathing for her. I will not let my brain be filled with the fluid of fear. I put both hands on the glass between us, not caring who's watching, what nurse, what aide, what intern. Glass is only silicon, only sand, and can't stop the healing I send to her. I feel my palms sweating against the double pane, but I also feel them tingling, and I know my mind is set. "Katie Maynard," I whisper. "In the name of our Lord and Mother I send you the power to be free as air. Warm as fire. Live as earth. One with water. I promise it won't hurt you and you'll know how close you've been. I love you. Your mother loves you. In the name of Jesus, Amen."

We've gone around and around about Jesus, Riva and I. But his maleness doesn't bother me at all. I told her I think the Mormon story is simply not complete; it only knows his air and fire forms, though his earth form, his water form, is Mother, and I can pray in the name of Her and to Jesus both and Christian or Mormon or pagan or what you will, the powers will hear and Katie will be healed without offense to anyone. So I say this prayer and send the waves of all my health to her through glass, through iron.

“IS this the Galsworthy girl?” my father asks the intern at the door. He nods. My father shows a card. “I’m here to give a blessing.” Even the interns here are Mormon and he nods without a shrug. In fact, when he sees there is only my father, not the requisite two priesthood holders, he offers to help. My father accepts. It is what he wanted. My father nods at me as we go in. My hands are still plastered to the glass.

I want to be able to hear, and I can. The intern pours oil on her head and seals her for the blessing. It is in the manuals; it is how they do the blessings for the sick, these men, this lay priesthood of my mother Vera’s church. Then my father says the words. I strain to hear. After the ritual invoking of the priesthood and the name of God, he says, “We bless you, Katie Galsworthy . . .” His voice trails off. I know her middle name. I know what it means to her mother. I know what he has to say next and I wait for him to say it.

“God is with you,” he says. “You are not to die. There is something working in you . . . the . . . elements conspire in your behalf. I bless you to accept them and be whole.”

There is a pause. These are words I’ve never heard my father use before; they’re certainly not part of any Mormon blessing. I am holding my breath, and my hands are still plastered to the glass.

He finishes with the ritual ending: “In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.” With his hands still on Katie’s head, he opens his eyes and says to the intern, “I have no idea what I meant.” They come out of the room after the intern checks her pulse, which is, apparently, all right. My father stares at me as he passes. It’s as if he has no idea who I am. 

NOTE

1. “Seven Times One,” Jean Ingelow, in *Untermeyer’s Golden Treasury of Poetry* (1959), 14.



THE BIRTHING FIELD: OAHU ISLAND

“A rose pretends, a rock tells how it is.”

—William Stafford

On a map this place is nowhere.
To get here, take two turns
and plow your car into the field
of pineapple where a crop of stones
hides and streams with stains
the rains have deepened like legend.
The life-force kicks and pushes
beside a red tractor. On a high rock
are two plumeria leis, chains of young skin.
There is no other monument here
for Kahihiokalani, chief’s wife,
or any woman who lay on stone
while a child washed up in the surf
of Hoolonopahu drumbeats, was plucked
from the waters with wrap of red feathers,
was divine by place, in a chief’s hard realm.
It is an inheritance for island women
wherever women are, whatever waters
define them.

—DAWN BAKER BRIMLEY

A Mormon father relates how confronting his son's homosexuality has realigned much of his theology and sense of morality.

MUGGED BY REALITY

By Gary M. Watts

MY SENTINEL EXPERIENCE WITH HOMOSEXUALITY occurred in early December 1989, when our then twenty-three-year-old son, Craig, found the courage to confide in my wife and me that he was homosexual. I vividly remember that night. I was caught by complete surprise. At times, it seems like just yesterday; other times, it seems like an eternity ago when, through tears, Craig said, "I've been trying for several years to get rid of these feelings without success. I feel like I have cancer or cerebral palsy or some incurable disease."

So began our incredible journey. Here we are, eight years later, sharing our experience, still trying to understand. Our strong faith in the inherent goodness of our son is a common thread that has kept us going, motivated our study, and helped us persevere. The reality of Craig's life and his integrity in dealing openly and honestly with his same-sex attraction has altered our world-view and opened vistas of thought and action that would have been otherwise impossible. I hope these thoughts will be educational. As a prelude, I share excerpts from a letter Craig wrote to his sister Becky in 1992:

When you called me on Christmas Eve, I had a chance to talk to Dad alone for a few minutes. He asked whether I wanted him to tell you that I'm gay. My only option at that point would have been to have told you myself amidst all that holiday cheer. I just didn't feel like pouring out my soul, recounting my own horror, disgust, and agony—I have done enough of that, and it isn't doing anyone a favor. The truth is there are and have always been people like me. From my point of view (which may differ greatly from yours—which is part of the reason I hesitated to tell you), the problem is not in me (I certainly didn't choose this) but in a culture that refuses to get information or look at hard facts that exist in the world.

GARY M. WATTS is an M.D. He and his wife are co-chairs of Family Fellowship, a support organization for Mormon homosexuals and their families. This paper was presented at the 1996 Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City (tape #SL96-255).

It all started a long time ago. I always felt different from everyone else. I had a string of crushes, mostly on teachers throughout high school. When friends started making out, I couldn't understand what they were doing or why. The bewilderment soon gave way to anxiety because being different is dangerous in high school, and I didn't want to be different. But I didn't want to kiss girls, either. I forced myself to kiss my date after the Junior Prom to see if some magical transformation might occur—nothing. Anxiety built again until I gave it another try, bumping teeth (a very awkward attempt at a kiss) with my date after the Senior Dinner Dance.

At about the time I graduated, Dr. Ruth [Westheimer] (of all people) ushered me into the realm of knowing. A [radio] caller asked what it meant that his man friend had sexual fantasies that involved only other men. Dr. Ruth wisely suggested, "Perhaps your friend is gay." An electric shock went through my body, and I knew perfectly that I was gay. The problem was that the only gay people I had seen were reprobate losers with greasy hair, no shirts, marching around San Francisco obnoxiously. I was not one of them.

But I was. I am. There are lots of us, all kinds of us. We're everywhere—even in sleepy old Provo. I didn't know anyone else who was gay, and I would die before telling anyone. I still thought of it as wrong, as a disease I needed to be cured of. I went on a mission, in part to try to get over it without telling a soul.

A year after my mission, I told Mom and Dad, went to psychiatrists, worried. Slowly I told friends and collected my self-esteem. Now I don't cry anymore when I tell people. I don't think of it as the worst thing in the world I could possibly tell someone about myself. I think of it as just one more of the quirks in life that we never seem to finish running up against. . . . I think it's a shame that sexuality is so hushed up in Mormon culture. I went through a lot of misery that could have been avoided. I worry about the others like me who

are stuck there now, unable to tell anyone (that is the most perfect state of loneliness), perhaps contemplating suicide or marriage as the only way out.

Texas is probably a lot like Utah. Ignorance equals fear equals hate. I want people to know, to challenge them to think about homosexuality as an issue that has been shunned, silenced, misunderstood, feared. . . . I can't expect you to automatically agree with me and accept the fact that I fall in love with men, but I do expect to hear more about your opinion and expect you to have some information on it. I'm afraid Mike would disapprove, but I want him to know. This discussion is to be continued, I hope.

Love, Craig

The title of this talk is not original; I decided upon it before I wrote this talk. I was reading an article written during the 1996 Republican primaries about Pat Buchanan's sister, Bay, who was his campaign manager. She is Mormon and has been described as a feminist. Apparently, she married a Mormon attorney, converted, and has subsequently divorced, but she has maintained her membership and loyalty to the Church. She is, according to this article, a single mother with primary custody of her two children. Commenting on the apparent incongruity of her Mormonism and feminism, the author simply explained Bay's feminism because "a feminist is a woman who, more or less, has been mugged by reality."

As Mormon parents of gay children, we, too, have been "mugged" by the reality of the lives of our gay children and their attempts to reconcile their same-sex attractions with broad-based Church and societal disapproval. We are viewed by many of our fellow Church members as peculiar, as something other than mainstream, as something less than the "whole package," as people to be wary of, people whose opinions are suspect, people to commiserate with, people whose parenting skills are questionable, people to be treated a little differently than others. We are recognized by most others for what they perceive we are: accidental activists who are doing our best as supportive parents playing a role in which they hope and pray, and fully expect, they themselves will never be cast.

When our daughter, Lori, saw the title of my talk, she im-

The lives of our
gay children
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as parents, into a
complete overhaul
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of good and evil.

mediately interpreted it negatively, assuming from the word "mugged" that, for a parent, having gay children must be similar to "taking a beating." Instead, I'm talking about how the reality of the lives of our gay children has "mugged" us, as parents, into a complete overhaul of our own world-views, our understanding of good and evil, our views about "following the Brethren," and even our political party affiliations.

What follows is a description of how our views have changed. I will speak frankly about issues that are deeply meaningful to me. These ideas are mine; they are not necessarily espoused or even supported by Family Fellowship, with which I am associated. Family Fellowship does not take an advocacy position on any issue and has, from its in-

ception, tried to promote only love and understanding and respect for all decisions made by those dealing with homosexuality in their families.

A THREAT TO FAMILY AND SOCIETY?

Is same-sex attraction morally neutral?

HERE is what I currently believe about homosexuality:

1. It occurs in a small, finite percentage of human beings and other mammalian species. It has always been present and will continue to be so.

2. Its causes are poorly understood.

3. It is rarely chosen by those affected by it.

4. It is not amenable to significant change. (By "it," I mean the same-sex attraction, the core longings, and not behavior, which is clearly alterable.)

5. It is morally neutral.

Most thoughtful people I know share my belief about the first four items, but disagree with the fifth. As long as there is a generalized, ongoing disagreement over the moral neutrality of homosexuality, the discrimination and disenfranchisement of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals will continue. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of people are beginning to realize that gay people can, indeed, be moral in their relationships, but the great majority of people who recognize this are hesitant to speak up because they do not want to appear to be at odds with the prevailing moral order. Timur

Kuran explores this phenomenon at some length in his recent book, *Private Truths, Public Lies*.¹ To maintain acceptance and respect, individuals feel a need to demonstrate that they accept society's basic institutions and share its fundamental objectives and perceptions. We saw this phenomenon in the recent lopsided passage by the U.S. Congress of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. Doubtless, few politicians were willing to vote their private preferences, recognizing that a "no" vote might cost them politically.

I've gradually concluded that to promote greater understanding of gays and lesbians, our efforts must center on making mainstream the reality that, just like heterosexuals, gays and lesbians are capable of moral relationships. I am continually amazed at how much common ground there is with my conservative friends when we discuss homosexuality. Most truly do agree with the first four beliefs. The problems they see largely stem from their belief that homosexual behavior is, *de novo*, immoral.

My business partner, Rod Petersen, who is a doctor and an LDS bishop, is a man with great compassion and respect for others and for his church. He recently told me, "I've gradually formed my own impression. I'm satisfied that homosexuality is largely biologic, is not often chosen, and is not changeable. I'm still uncertain about its expression." I had a long telephone conversation with Howard Stephenson, the Utah State Republican senator from Draper, who was one of the most outspoken legislators during a recent Utah legislative brouhaha about homosexuality. He basically shares Rod Petersen's sentiment, but because of his difficulty with the fifth item, he believes that public policy should continue to discourage homosexual behavior. Why? Because most people are uncomfortable with homosexuality. They have been taught that it is wrong. They recognize the difficulties of being gay in our society and church and sincerely want to discourage it as a choice. But they don't understand the complexities of being homosexual. They intuitively think that all gay people will be happier by repressing their attractions and living as heterosexuals. They believe that sanctioning same-sex relationships will undermine the moral fabric of our society and adversely affect the nuclear family. They simply do not understand that homosexuals are not a threat to the family, that the real threat is people's profound ignorance about homosexuality and their reluctance to face the truth about it.

RE-EVALUATING OUR PARADIGMS

"No matter who says what, don't believe it if it don't make no sense."

WELL, how do we go about helping people become comfortable about homosexuality? Liberating people from their discomfort with homosexuality, their automatic tendency to think of homosexuals in terms of perverse sex, and their often bizarre notion of who gay people are, what gay people value, and how gay people live is a huge, daunting task. A recent comment made to the recent *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan, who is openly gay, by conser-

vative commentator Pat Buchanan in a debate epitomizes how many feel: "Andrew, it's not who you are. It is what you do!"

We must begin, first, with ourselves. Most of us, as parents, have similar difficulty with item five. Let me share a little subtlety that demonstrates how most of us feel and why I think we have to be willing to constantly rethink our positions. We all have a tendency to cling to and promote the idea that choice is not operative in the lives of our children. We all want to emphasize that our children did not choose to be homosexual—that in some way they are victims of biology. Recently, Family Fellowship invited Dr. Roger Gorski to our parent conference because we all know intuitively that something biological in our gay children contributes to or has resulted in their same-sex attractions. We are anxious for the scientific community to corroborate these feelings. Why? Are we guilty of the same thing I challenged Utah State Representative David Bresnahan about earlier this year? Trying to find an *excuse* for our children's or our sibling's homosexuality? To a degree, we are. Why? Because we can't quite feel comfortable with the idea that same-sex relationships have the capacity for morality whether or not they are chosen.

I used to get incensed when some in the gay community claimed they had chosen to be homosexual. I simply did not believe them and saw their statements as being counter-productive. I now recognize why some make such claims. They understand that same-sex relationships are, indeed, morally neutral and that they need not apologize for them, whether they were chosen or not; that claiming they simply had no choice reinforced society's deep aversions, and perhaps our own, to homosexuality, and left those aversions in place. They don't want tolerance because they are victims; they see themselves, rightly, as rational, moral individuals with a right to love whomever they will. They have made it through the morass of anti-gay rhetoric, tradition, and perception and have arrived, appropriately, at the position that the morality of relationships is based on the way those relationships are conducted, not on who is involved in them.

Who could be critical of a relationship that can provoke the kind of elation that is obvious in this line in a recent letter we received from a gay friend who has just begun a committed relationship: "I am so happy that I can't even explain it in words. And to think that only a couple of years ago I was thinking that I had nothing to live for. I'm so happy to have friends like you guys and that I can share this type of news with you." I find it sad that this type of news has to be shared so discreetly and that our friend is unable to share the joy of his relationship with his own mother and father. When some try to tell me that gay people can't have a moral relationship, I often think of an old cowboy adage: "No matter who says what, don't believe it if it don't make no sense."

When discussing homosexuality, I ask friends and colleagues if they think it is possible for a gay person to have a moral relationship in this lifetime. Almost everyone hesitates, because, intuitively, it just doesn't make sense to say no. Americans, along with most other people I know, put a high value on being fair. While most have incorporated into their belief system the per-

ception that homosexuality is wrong, they generally haven't given much thought as to what that means to someone who is gay. It means that any gay or lesbian must deny himself or herself any moral, loving, affirming relationship with someone attractive. By imagining such celibate conditions upon themselves, heterosexuals can understand just how enormous is the request for homosexual celibacy.

National gay author Bruce Bawer has compared the building of acceptance of homosexuals to teaching a language:

When gays speak about themselves, they are speaking one language; when most straight people speak about gays, they are speaking another. Most heterosexuals look at gay lives the way I look

at a page of German. I may be able to pick out a few familiar words, but I feel awkward when I use them, and if I try to put together a sentence, I'm likely to find myself saying something offensive or hurtful. There's only one way to get past that feeling of confusion: tireless, meticulous dedication to study. You can't learn a foreign language overnight, and you can't teach it by screaming it at people. You teach it word by word, until bit by bit, they feel comfortable speaking it and can find their way around the country where it's spoken.²

Consider this beautiful essay by Bishop Mel Wheatley Jr. of the United Methodist Church, entitled "I Do Not Believe Homosexuality a Sin."

I am an enthusiastically heterosexual male. Is my heterosexuality a virtue? A sign of righteousness? Either an accomplishment or a victory of some kind on my part? Of course not. I had nothing whatsoever to do with my being heterosexual. It is a mysterious gift of God's grace communicated through an exceedingly complex set of chemical, biological, chromosomal, hormonal, environmental, developmental factors—totally outside my control. My heterosexuality is a gift—neither a virtue nor a sin.

What I do with my heterosexuality, however, is my personal, moral, and spiritual responsibility. My behavior as a heterosexual may be, therefore, very sinful—brutal, exploitative, selfish, promiscuous, superficial. My behavior as

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a heterosexual, on the other hand, may be beautiful—tender, considerate, loyal, other-centered, profound.

Precisely this distinction between being a heterosexual and behaving as a heterosexual applies to homosexual persons as well, unless you and I are guilty of that lowest blow of all, and that is to work by double standards.

Homosexuality, quite like heterosexuality, is neither a virtue nor an accomplishment. It is a mysterious gift of God's grace communicated through an exceedingly complex set of chemical, biological, chromosomal, hormonal, environmental, developmental

factors totally outside my homosexual friend's control. His or her homosexuality is a gift—neither a virtue nor a sin. What she or he does with their homosexuality, however, is their personal, moral, and spiritual responsibility.

Their behavior as a homosexual may, therefore, be very sinful—brutal, exploitative, selfish, promiscuous, superficial. Their behavior as a homosexual, on the other hand, may be beautiful—tender, considerate, loyal, other-centered, profound.

With this interpretation of the mystery that must be attributed to sexual orientation, both heterosexual and homosexual, I clearly do not believe that homosexuality is a sin.³

I find his conclusions interesting and wonder what it is about this particular minister that has enabled him to overcome tradition, prophetic utterances, and biblical references to arrive at his conclusions.

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

It is time to look past Moses; the greater law superseded much of the Old Testament

I NOW digress to share some relevant observations. First, consider this statement by President Gordon B. Hinckley in his interview with Mike Wallace on the CBS News magazine *60 Minutes*:

MW: From 1830 to 1978, blacks could not become priests in the Mormon church. Right?

GBH: That's correct.

MW: Why?

GBH: Because the leaders of the church interpreted the doctrine that way.

MW: Church policy had it that blacks had the mark of Cain. Brigham Young said, "Cain slew his brother, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and the black skin."

GBH: It's behind us. Look, that's behind us. Don't worry about those little flecks of history.

MW: Skeptics will suggest, "Well, look, if we're going to expand, we can't keep the blacks out."

GBH: Pure speculation.

Different people will make different interpretations of what President Hinckley really meant. I see his comments as a gentle rebuke to previous Church leaders in much the same way I see Jesus' "good news" as a gentle rebuke to the Old Testament prophets, especially Moses. The implication to me is clearly similar—that was then; now, we have a higher law. That's behind us, and we're not going to look back.

Moses has played a pivotal role in the Judeo-Christian belief that homosexuality is immoral. Virtually everything in scripture concerning the immorality of homosexuality has its origin in the Pentateuch, which is popularly credited to Moses' authorship. I have great difficulty understanding why his writings about homosexuality are accepted so literally by the Judeo-Christian community and our own church. Most thoughtful individuals, when reading the first five books of the Bible, discount much of what Moses records. Many Latter-day Saints no longer accept the literal interpretation of his accounts of the Creation, the Flood, the confusion of tongues, or the parting of the Red Sea. We have long since abandoned his requirement of the death penalty for those who break the Sabbath or commit adultery, incest, fornication, homosexuality, and bestiality. It was Moses who said that God opposed interracial marriage, who sanctioned plural marriage, and who even pronounced the death penalty on animals involved in bestiality with humans. We have here, literally, an eye-for-an-eye kind of person, one who was strongly opinionated, dogmatic, and, yes, even vindictive; a person whom Jesus was correct in gently, but firmly, rebuking. If asked by a contemporary figure, such as Mike Wallace, about these past practices that seemed too severe, too prejudiced and inappropriate, might Jesus have replied, "Because Moses interpreted the doctrine that way"? Isn't it interesting that so many of our friends, neighbors, and ecclesiastical leaders are willing to insist that because Moses said homosexuality was an abomination, it is? It is time to look past Moses. The greater law superseded much in the Old Testament.

The other morning, I awakened rather early and was thinking about the morality of homosexuality. Even though it was about 4:30 A.M., I nudged my wife, Millie, and asked, "Do you think right and wrong exist independent of God? Does he make these judgments arbitrarily, or is there something else on

which he relies?" Has God really declared homosexuality immoral? If so, why? What is there inherently immoral in someone loving someone of the same sex? It seems like such a monstrous trick for God to allow such strong feelings to exist in some of our fellow human beings and then provide no sanction whatsoever for them to follow those feelings.

Einstein repeatedly said that the most important human endeavor is to strive for morality in our actions. I was thinking about the difficulty of relying on the word of God as a basis on which to make ethical judgments about appropriate and inappropriate responses to controversial moral questions. Bruce Dahlberg, a religion professor at Smith College, recently said:

Citations of God to back up either side of a debate, whether over private morality or public policy, is to imagine that religious belief is somehow privileged and need not be argued on its own merits in the marketplace. A major discouragement to open discussion and debate is the idea that to settle the question one has merely to "quote God." When we do not discuss in good faith, without prejudice and without claims to privilege for our views, that is—well, discussion in bad faith. In an almost autistic way it fails to comprehend that among the believers' opponents are those who also take the Bible seriously, believe in the same God, but precisely from such premises come to different conclusions about morals and public policy. It also ignores the reality that human knowledge of God—however devout, however respected, however Biblical—is imperfect and incomplete.⁴

It's obvious that different people arrive at different conclusions about what God has said and what he hasn't said. Mormons are admonished to simply follow the prophet and are promised that he will never lead us astray. In fact, in a recent BYU devotional, Apostle M. Russell Ballard said, "To you I have only one question: Are you going to follow the true and living prophets or not? It really isn't any more complicated than that. . . . [w]e will not lead you astray. We cannot."⁵ When I shared this quote with one of my more irreverent colleagues, he replied, "Aw, shucks, he's too hard on himself. He's simply not giving himself enough credit."

The problem is in the word "never." What conclusions may we draw from President Hinckley's response to Mike Wallace? Some will conclude that, in the matter of race, insofar as prophetic leadership is concerned, there may well have been some misinterpretation. The ministry of Christ is viewed by some as a repudiation of Moses' eye-for-an-eye philosophy. I am not implying that we should not listen to our prophets. They are wise and sincerely interested in helping us make correct decisions that will lead to the greatest happiness. Sensible? Yes. Erudite? Yes. Sincere? Yes. Infallible? Unlikely. If my own search leads me to conclude that homosexuality has the same capacity for morality as heterosexuality, and my Church leaders say otherwise, what is my responsibility? Is it permissible for me to dissent? Am I automatically an apostate? Are there others who share my view? Is there room for dialogue? Should I leave the Church? Should I stay and voice my con-

clusions? Or stay and keep them to myself? Almost everyone has wrestled with these questions over some issue. People are obviously going to respond differently depending on their own experience.

MAKING SPACE

I want to belong to a "decent society." The Church's treatment of its gay and lesbian members falls far short.

I CONVERSED the other day with a devout Mormon colleague with immense intellect. I told him that a significant number of parents in Family Fellowship struggle with that dilemma of adding views differing from those of Church leaders, who they know can be fallible. He told me that mistakes certainly have been made, generally, when Church leaders have been preoccupied with more pressing issues and have not taken the time to research and pray about a specific problem.

He attributed Brigham Young's comments on race to the fact that race wasn't a "burning" issue at that time. He was so preoccupied with so many other problems that race matters were simply put on the back burner until they became more relevant for the Church. Once race surfaced as a major issue for the growing Church, in the 1960s and '70s, Church leaders focused on it and made the appropriate adjustment. Unfortunately, some statements made before that adjustment became codified, making the transition to a correct policy more difficult.

I think that my colleague has it right. Homosexuality has become a major concern nationally and in the Church only in the past twenty years. As a bona fide matter demanding real consideration, it is still in its infancy. The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights are barely two-hundred years old. Prior to their writing, human rights were in incubation. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights changed—and are still changing—the world. Totalitarian forms of government are gradually crumbling. Respect for all human beings as individuals is on the rise and will not be turned back. While the wheels of justice may turn slowly, they are turning. We are gradually becoming a more just, more understanding people.

The question of the morality of homosexuality is not just a Mormon challenge. Many Catholics, Jews, and Protestants deal

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that will lead to the
greatest happiness.

Sensible? Yes.

Erudite? Yes.

Sincere? Yes.

Infallible?

Unlikely.

with questions of infallibility and strict obedience. Everyone is striving to fashion a correct moral response to this dilemma. Listen to the musings of Andrew Sullivan, a gay Catholic man, about his own struggle to reconcile his homosexuality with his religion:

[The demand that homosexual attractions not be acted upon] raises the central question of any Catholic homosexual life: How intelligible is the church's theological and moral position on the blamelessness of homosexuality and the moral depravity of homosexual acts? This question is one I wrestled with in my early 20's, as the increasing aridity of my emotional life began to conflict with the possibility of my living a moral life.

The distinction made

some kind of sense in theory, but in practice, the command to love oneself as a person of dignity yet hate the core longings that could make one emotionally whole demanded a sense of detachment or a sense of cynicism that seemed inimical to *Christian* life. To deny lust was one thing; to deny love was another. And to deny love in the context of Christian doctrine seemed particularly perverse.⁶

This e-mail message, which Millie and I received recently, demonstrates most poignantly the similar dilemma faced by gay Mormons.

I started coming out of the closet about a month ago. Since then, I have told my straight housemate, two of my best straight friends from Church, a couple of friends from school and, of course, the wonderful members of Affirmation. I am wondering what your thoughts (and personal experiences) are regarding coming out to one's bishop and family. My bishop is a sterling guy—loving, caring, and very understanding. I was called to be Elder's Quorum president the same day he was called to be bishop. I served for two years and then was called to be the ward mission leader for another year. From the three years I met with him in PEC [priesthood executive committee] meetings, and

from his comments regarding homosexual members of our ward (who still remain anonymous, at least to me), I think he will be understanding. I also have the added advantage (if you want to call it that) of being in a position where the church really can't do anything about my membership—I'm a 32-year old gay Mormon virgin—that's gotta put me in one of the smallest minorities ever! (Please, no offense whatsoever is intended toward those of you who have chosen a different path while still active in your membership; being gay and Mormon has taught me nothing if not to "judge not, lest ye be judged.") If I get excommunicated, it will be because I have asked to be released from my Temple covenants so that I might seek a partner with cleanness of conscience (again, no offense intended!). I'm pretty sure that this is the path I want to take. I don't think I'm strong enough to stay in the Church and remain celibate until I die (though I guess that would depend on how long it will be before "I get called home"), and I don't know that I would really want to, even if I thought I could.

At present, gay Mormons are faced with a veritable Sophie's choice: Do I choose my child of Church membership or my child of "core longings" for survival? It's a decision no one should have to make—especially when the child of Church membership is supposedly built on a foundation of love. To further quote Andrew Sullivan:

To dismiss the possibility of a loving union for homosexuals at all—to banish from the minds and hearts of countless gay men and women the idea that they, too, can find solace and love in one another—is to create an etiolation that no Christian community can contemplate without remorse. . . . These doctrines could not in practice do what they wanted to do: they could not both affirm human dignity and deny human love . . . to observe these things, to affirm their truth, is not to oppose the Church, but to hope in it, to believe in it as a human institution that is yet the eternal vessel of God's love. It is to say that such lives as those of countless gay men and lesbians must ultimately affect the Church not because our lives are perfect, or without contradiction, or without sin, but because our lives are in some sense also the life of the church.⁷

In a recent *New Republic* article concerning the efforts of some members of a Jewish synagogue to find a way to sanction same-sex relations for its gay members, Emily Brazelton writes that "the most important thing about these couples is that they are two Jews committed to being part of the Jewish community. We've got to find a way to make room for them."

Here are classic examples from Catholic, Mormon, and Jewish perspectives of the horrible conundrum faced by their gay members. I agree with Brazelton: we've got to make room for them. Making room for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and trans-

gendered individuals in the Church and in society requires a major paradigm shift but one I'm confident we are capable of accomplishing.

Jewish philosopher Avishai Margalit's wonderful new book, *The Decent Society*, is not specifically about homosexuality, but it is about the way society and institutions should treat minorities. Margalit talks about the importance of self-respect and honor in the lives of human beings. He describes a decent society as one whose institutions do not humiliate its members. He defines humiliation as "injury to self-respect, that is, to the respect a human being deserves for the very fact of being human." A decent society, he says, is one that fights conditions that justify its dependents' humiliation. Margalit's comments about encompassing others have relevance to groups such as the LDS church.

Belonging to encompassing groups, such as the church, is one way that people give their life meaning. Rejection from a legitimate encompassing group is thus liable to be a humiliating act. An encompassing group is a mediating element between the individual and the general society. Such groups are meant to support and elevate the individual, but they may turn out in practice to be oppressive and humiliating. When we evaluate the behavior of encompassing groups we can distinguish between two dimensions. One is the dimension of voice—the price an individual in the group pays for criticizing its institutions and members. The second dimension is exit—the price the individual pays for leaving the group. Encompassing groups are oppressive when both sorts of price are high.⁸

By Margalit's criteria, the Church's treatment of its gay members can be described only as oppressive and humiliating—not appropriate in a decent society.

The concept of a decent society appeals to me. Too often, we fall far short. There is a plethora of natural causes in our lives for self-humiliation, including poverty and poor health we do not need humiliation from each other. I want very much to be a member of a decent society. It seems self-evident that the Church should be the most decent of all societies. Its treatment of gay and lesbian members, however, leaves much to be desired. At the first conference we attended on homosexuality and Mormonism, in 1993, there was a panel discussion about relationships between the Church and its gay members. Responding to a question about how those relationships could be improved, a young gay man speculated that "the only way those relationships can be improved is for the Church to offer an apology to its gay members for the way they have been treated." The most unchristian thing that has happened to me in my lifetime was the excommunication of my son from the Church. Why excommunication? So the Church could announce to the world that it abhorred homosexuality and could not and would not allow such individuals to remain members. I still can't understand how allowing gay people in committed relationships to remain members would harm the Church. In fact, present Church policy does considerably more harm.

Membership in the Church is so important to so many gay members that they try heterosexual marriage, unwittingly dragging a spouse and any resulting children into a maelstrom. The carnage thus produced is simply incalculable.

OUT AND ABOUT

How can society ever change its perceptions if people can't see and know others who are homosexual, or their parents and friends?

PEOPLE are never going to get comfortable with homosexuality until they become acquainted with homosexuals and with their parents and friends. Some, like me, must be "mugged by reality" to have their eyes opened. Every one of us is at a different stage of understanding. We all carry our own unique backpack of past experiences, and the contents of our backpacks, to a large extent, determine how we respond to our options. Those of us with gay children certainly have a different backpack than those who haven't, and the responses to the idea of same-sex attractions will differ accordingly. One of our jobs as parents is to articulate our experience to help those not similarly affected to see. To do that, we have to be out, we have to be public. People who are not dealing with homosexuality first-hand will look around and make their judgments based on what they see. They hear the figures: some claim that as many as 10 percent of the population is gay, but they see only a tiny fraction, the fraction that, too often, has come to resent their disenfranchisement from society and have developed an in-your-face attitude, which contributes to the negative perception that is already out there. How can society ever change its perceptions if people can't see and know others who are homosexual, or their parents and friends? Only then can they begin to understand that many gays and lesbians, too, are moral and that they do have and deserve a place in society.

I remember the story of the football game between the big

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Is there room for
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with these questions
over some issue.

animals and the little animals. The little animals had been thoroughly dominated by the big animals and were trailing 38-0 at half-time. The big animals began the second half from their own twenty-yard line and sent the rhinoceros off right tackle. When he got to the line of scrimmage, he was met with a bang, and down he went. No gain. "Who made that tackle?" queried the rabbit. "I did!" replied the centipede. On the second play, the big animals sent the elephant off left tackle. Whop. He was met at the line of scrimmage again. No gain. "Who made that tackle?" asked the rabbit again. "I did!" said the centipede. On the third play, the big animals sent the lion up the middle. Bang. Down again, no gain. "Who made that tackle?" cried the rabbit again. "I did!" replied the centipede. "Where were you in the first half?" "I was in the locker room lacing up my shoes!"

Too many gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and their parents and friends are still in the locker room lacing up their shoes. We need everyone playing the game. It is always easy to find an excuse, to rationalize not sharing your personal account with a homophobic relative or friend. Out is

better. Take it from someone who has lived it both ways. When you are out, good things happen. People are willing to share their own intimate stories when they realize that you are someone with a sympathetic ear. You no longer need to live in fear, fear that someone will discover your little secret. Too often, someone will be hurt and not be able to understand why you chose to keep them uninformed. Having an opportunity to hear someone's story and share your own perspective is tremendously rewarding. The morning after Craig and I were featured on a local TV news program, I got three calls from fellow physicians thanking me for sharing our story and telling me about a sibling or child of their own who was homosexual. As members of the informed citizenry, we must work together,

first to get comfortable with the concept that homosexuals are just as capable of moral relationships as are heterosexuals, and, second, to be willing to articulate that position publicly.

Finally, I pay tribute to our straight friends who have stood by us and offered their support and acceptance, as well as to members of our own extended family for their unconditional love. A special thanks, most recently, to Ed Firmage for his courageous stand on the steps of the Utah State Capitol Building, in 1996, and for the moving account of his own evolution from a position of uninterested, uninformed spectator to an outspoken, public crusader. To parents struggling with the knowledge that a child is gay: without you, our lives would be so barren. Thank you for loving, for supporting, and for making the effort to get solid information on which to make your own judgments about this complex, fascinating phenomenon.

I also express my own deepest disappointment that we don't have more Ed Firmages out there. Too many of our good Church members stand by and watch the hurt and anguish inflicted on our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered brothers and sisters, and on us, their parents and friends, by unthinking, insensitive, uninformed individuals. Too many declare for themselves an "ethical exemption," and simply decide to not get involved. I often think of Bob Dylan's lament: "How many times can a man turn his head and pretend he just doesn't see? . . . How many ears must one man have, before he can hear people cry? The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind, the answer is blowin' in the wind."

The closing lines to the musical *Les Misérables* articulate my hopes and feelings about this issue:

Do you hear the people sing
Lost in the valley of the night?
It is the music of a people
Who are climbing to the light.

For the wretched of the earth
There is a flame that never dies.
Even the darkest night will end
And the sun will rise.

They will live again in freedom
In the garden of the Lord.
They will walk behind the plough-share
They will put away the sword.
The chain will be broken
And all men will have their reward.

Will you join in our crusade?
Who will be strong and stand with me?
Somewhere beyond the barricade
Is there a world you long to see?
Do you hear the people sing
Say, do you hear that distant drums?
It is the future that they bring
When tomorrow comes!⁹



NOTES

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7. Andrew Sullivan, 55.
8. Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).
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AN ACHE

What shall I do with this green
territory, and blue vale of your body?
I know, I can no longer fidget or flounder about.
Would I had lips enough to know
how kisses inflame the weeds of ageing
and rafters of our wisdom and knowledge!
Would I had mouths enough to mouth
your froth-bedecked swirl of hunger in the dark!
No, no, death is no longer a toy I can play with.
Between the promontory of my bone's whiteness
and this evening moon's inchoate coyness,
your whispers are hung like an ache!

—NIRANJAN MOHANTY

What if Latter-day Saint artists took our prophet at his word, abandoned the safe parameters, and did what Shakespeare did? Would we Mormons pay attention to the artistic vision, or would we label it “irreverent,” “unworthy” and “too earthy”?

GRACE AND TRUTH AND MORMON ART

By Margaret Blair Young

WHEN I WAS DOING A BOOK-SIGNING FOR *House Without Walls*, my first novel, a slim and cynical-looking woman approached me, introduced herself as a librarian, and said she had recommended my book to a patron—a woman who liked “safe” fiction. “I thought your book would be safe,” she said with a lean and hungry smile.

I rate that among the top five insults I’ve ever received. Right after the valentine David Mabey gave me in sixth grade that pictured his hand-drawn raccoon and penciled message: “You are the ugliest thing I’ve ever seen.”

What is there about that word—“safe”—that makes me wince? My own pride, I suppose. Or my own desire to write good fiction. And my absolute belief that the best fiction is not “safe.” Fiction simply won’t work—not lastingly—unless it challenges us to our very cores, brings us face to face with ourselves in all our horror or all our splendor. Which is risky business.

So what made her think my book would be—that word? Simple: It was a Deseret Book—published, Mormon book. And we Mormons like safety. We Mormons are no longer crossing the plains or fighting for our fundamental human rights. We are firmly, comfortably, prosperously established in the tops of the mountains—even in the benches of the mountains.

Such was not the case in the beginning of the Church. It was downright dangerous to be a Mormon then. It demanded life-draining pilgrimages across oceans, and then across an unfenced, sometimes uncharted, wilderness. It’s hardly surprising that the doctrines and literature introduced were likewise dangerous—unorthodox, even earth-shattering. Imagine the audacity of a woman poet of that time suggesting that

there’s a Mother as well as a Father in Heaven.¹ Think of the astounding idea William Phelps versified in “If You Could Hie to Kolob”—that “there is no end to matter” and “no man has found pure space,” that there is eternal progression, with godhood the attainable goal. Or of the doctrine that God has a body like ours.³ These are amazing ideas; they fly in the face of nineteenth-century religious thought.

But things have gotten pretty simple and straightforward for us later pioneers. We wing our way easily over oceans and deserts. And those remarkable poetic statements are safely contained in our hymnbook; we sing them without much thought. The earth-shattering doctrines that Joseph Smith introduced have been codified; we quote them easily—and often (again) without much thought. We have our own religious vocabulary, seminary classes to introduce us to the vernacular and symbols of the Book of Mormon, and a set of prescribed questions we answer annually to declare our temple-worthiness. We have learned our missionary discussions; we can fill in the blanks on our religion tests and easily answer the Sunday School teacher. In short, we are fully canonized, and most of us preach the correct, restored, orthodox religion.

And though such institutionalized measures of our faith can’t actually measure our faith, they can predict the kind of literature we’ll produce: Safe. Easy to cross-reference with the Mormon canon (see 1 Ne. 1:1—gospel topics: family, fatherhood, education), easy to fit into the Mormon code, easy to correlate in the Church Office Building. Literature, in other words, where hard questions are likely to be answered in a prayer and a paragraph, fiction where the protagonist has a sudden realization, a quick epiphany, or just a surge of tears before things get resolved and he manufactures the right answer.

I don’t believe we Mormons are shallow. But we have been

MARGARET BLAIR YOUNG’s most recent book is *Love Chains*, a short story collection published by Signature Books.

inculcated with our settled culture's phrases and structures. Many of us (including me) address each other with clichés—even when bearing our sacred testimonies—or rely on “faith-promoting” stories (sometimes confusing testimony with folklore) and fit our learning into a three-hour block of Sunday time.

The prophetic vision of our literary possibilities, however, goes far beyond safe fiction. President Spencer W. Kimball, in “Education for Eternity,” audaciously declared that we Mormons can produce even another Shakespeare. “Our writers . . .” he said, “with the inspiration of Heaven, should tomorrow be able to produce a masterpiece which would live forever. Our own talent . . . could put into such a story life and heartbeats and emotions and love and pathos, drama, suffering, fear, courage. . . .”⁵ That’s a wonderful definition of what literature ought to do: open our hearts and our imaginations with “life and heartbeats and emotions and love and pathos.”

I wonder, though, if President Kimball remembered, when he suggested we could produce another Shakespeare, that the Bard—probably with “the inspiration of Heaven”—created one of the fullest pictures of evil the world has ever seen in *Iago*. That Shakespeare depicted adultery, attempted rape, murder, self-mutilation, debauchery, all kinds of treachery. I believe the prophet did remember. I believe President Gordon B. Hinckley, a lover of good literature, also knows the subjects Shakespeare presented.

So what if we writers took our prophet at his word, abandoned the safe parameters and did what Shakespeare did? What if one of us created, for example, a violent world where characters do vile things to each other? Maybe they don't poke each other's eyes out as some of Shakespeare's characters do, but they might do awful things involving, say, beehives. Would we call him courageous? Or would we send him off to—gee, I don't know—Oklahoma? What if one of us showed a man with confused loyalties—rather like Angelo in *Measure for Measure*—whose epiphany includes seeing God (or the Duke) disguised as a man like himself coming out of—oh let's say—a latrine. Would we pay attention to the artistic vision, or would we label it “irreverent,” “unworthy,” and encourage our artists to avoid such earthiness?

NOW I'll examine some little controversies my own work has faced. I don't wish to offend or hurt anyone, and since I'm going to be hard on someone who is in fact a good man, I choose to name him “Professor X.”

This story begins when I married Bruce and met his sister, Nancy, who was in a wheelchair because of her multiple sclerosis. Over the first decade of our marriage, Bruce and I watched helplessly as Nancy degenerated to complete paralysis and muteness. Her husband (whom I won't name either) decided she would have to go to a rest home, and that in order for Medicaid to pay, they would have to be divorced. Two days after the divorce was final, he remarried. He was subsequently excommunicated for adultery. Since then, Bruce and I witnessed the disintegration not only of Nancy's nervous system,

but of her family as well—which touched and hurt us deeply.

Because I'm a writer, Nancy's story made its way into my mind and heart, out my fingers, and onto my computer keyboard. Both my short story collections have MS stories. My temptation, frankly, was to use my god-given talents to zap Nancy's husband. I wanted to write a story where this jerk puts his wife in a rest home and then gets in a car crash himself on his way to the grocery store, becoming a quadriplegic and ending up in the same rest home as his wife. (BANG! How do you like your blue-eyed boy, Mr. Wheelchair?)

Eventually, though, I resisted that temptation and did what I had to do. I looked squarely at the husband's pain: what would it be like—really—to deal with your wife's body—for years—only in the context of helping her go to the bathroom or bathing or feeding her?—and she may choke on the food, because her throat is becoming paralyzed, too. And this “other woman”? What if she's not a selfish, little whore but a nice person with good intentions?

The result was my novel *Dear Stone* (forthcoming from Signature Books), which I subsequently reworked into a play of the same name. After I worked it over in BYU's Producers-Directors-Actors workshop with my buddies Tim Slover and Bob Nelson, it was accepted for the Margetts Theatre season (BYU).

That is, until Professor X read it. Reportedly, Professor X found my play completely implausible. He simply couldn't see that any man with an understanding of the gospel would do such a thing to his wife. The play, he said, showed a bunch of people making lousy choices without a moral context—the stuff of soap operas. The husband commits adultery, but his repentance is hardly mentioned. His repentance should be the core of the action, shouldn't it? The play was to be canceled, he said.

The assigned director, whose own play had survived full censorship by a thread, asked me with some desperation if I would be willing to omit the adultery from my work. I answered that there were two answers to that question: either “No” or “Hell, no.”

Then I took the bull by the horns, wrote Professor X a rather bold letter and gave him the story behind the play. I also told him the sad statistic a nurse had relayed to me: 95 percent of the couples who deal with MS in its worst form (such as Nancy's) eventually divorce. I quote from my letter:

I suppose my biggest concern is that you and I seem to have quite different visions of what the play is and what it's trying to do. Perhaps you can help me better understand your vision as we pursue our discussion. For my part, let me say that I see my play as being fundamentally about a family dealing with their wife/mother's incapacities resulting from MS and what happens when a stranger appears who offers a false sort of “healing.” The question for me is not “Will [the husband] yield to [the other woman's] seductions?” nearly so much as “How much pain can love bear?” Not “Will he repent?” but “What does it mean to be truly married—or part of an eternal

family?” And the bigger, undergirding question of the whole play—introduced in Act I, repeated in Act II, and finally answered in Act III is, “Can we believe in God—and by implication God’s revealed morality—in the face of horrors like MS?”

Professor X, who is a fair man, decided he might have misjudged the play and agreed to re-read it. When I met with him, he had some profitable suggestions for my work. But I found myself deeply troubled by a number of his statements. Throughout our discussion, he seemed to be asking for the various characters to bear their testimonies in some way. And, he explained, it was essential that the audience understand that the disloyal husband would go through the Church disciplinary system, fully repent, and feel very good about his spiritual progress.

I sensed that Professor X still did not understand what the play was doing, even what it was really about. He was imposing a particular Mormon construct on my art—one which did not understand the pain I had witnessed as I watched Nancy’s disease take her body and then her family. He was trying—understandably—to make *Dear Stone* “safe” for a BYU audience.

WITH that story as the backdrop, I come now to my first metaphor, a painting of an old, partially-bald Chinese man. You see only his head and a bit past his shoulders. His eyes are watery, weary, sad. His mouth droops. He is posed at an angle, so his cheekbones look almost sharp, his skin leathery and sallow. This is one of seven paintings the artist gave to my father during the year Dad taught English in the People’s Republic of China. Because the artist was considered a dissident (he has assumed the title “The Artist of the Poor”—which obviously shouldn’t be a possibility in a Communist country), he asked Dad to take his work to America, where other artists might review it, as nobody in China would. The artist describes this particular picture as “an old man who was happy before 1949,” the year of the Communist Revolution.

It’s no wonder “The Party” wouldn’t look at this artist’s work! Especially when you consider that—at least when my parents were in China—the “official” artists were creating either “workers’ art” (usually cartoonish depictions of Mao Zedong and happy throngs striding happily forward to move mountains) or pale imitations of past styles. But “The Artist of the Poor” felt it would be a violation of his gift to draw masses of happy stereotypes. What he saw in his artistic vision were individual faces: The old man. A young, crippled man. Two naked boys on a deserted beach. He could not bring himself to use his talent to fulfill the state’s political agenda. He risked even his “iron rice bowl” to work outside the communist canon. He was heroic—and instructive—to all of us seeking ways to convey our own artistic visions. The truth is, even if a particular agenda (political, religious, or monetary) is a worthy one, when the art is sacrificed to promote that agenda, it “gives up the ghost”—meaning the artist’s own spirit. It ceases to participate in the creative process as it yields itself to a vision im-

posed by someone else. Such work may be safe, but it’s not true, because it’s not true to the artist’s vision.

I am not suggesting that good LDS artists shouldn’t be faithful to their Mormon world view, only that Mormonism, with its cultural constructs and insistences and easy answers, must not define the parameters of the art. The consistent result (as any quick perusal of the Mormon Lit shelves at Deseret Book will show) is fiction with quick fixes, *deus ex machina* resolutions, and portable tear-jerkers. Workers’ art. Which cheats us readers of the ocean and the desert by zooming us past them—and probably through clouds which obscure our vision of anything but the illusion of solid white. Ultimately, “workers’ art” lies to us, and is therefore inconsistent with the Plan of Salvation. For none of us moved from Eden to a theme park, complete with fake witches, sexist pirates, and all the “themes” spelled out in neon lights; we entered the lone and dreary world, where we would learn from our own experience to distinguish the good from the evil. And a savior, full of grace and truth, was provided for us, who would descend below all things so he could love and understand and redeem us. He meets us not in Eden, not in Disneyworld, but in the wilderness.

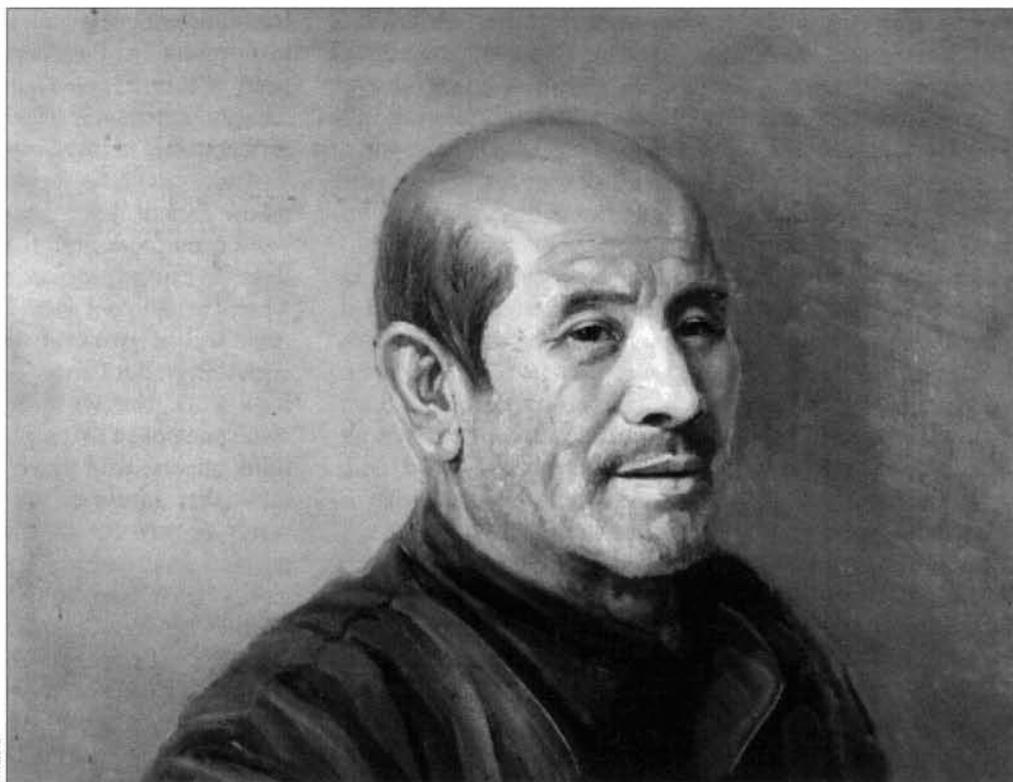
I love that Nephi and Lehi are in the wilderness when they have the vision of the Tree of Life. I love that the vision itself begins with another wilderness—a “dark and dreary waste” (1 Ne. 8:7). That setting matters. And when Nephi wants to know the meaning of the dream, it matters that he be willing to fully participate in the vision. The angel asks him before proceeding any further, “Believest thou that thy father saw the tree of which he hath spoken?” (1 Ne. 11:4). Which we might translate as: “You willing to suspend your disbelief, boy?”

Laman and Lemuel were not willing to suspend their disbelief. As far as they were concerned, their old man was a “visionary.” They wanted to return to the safety and comfort of Jerusalem, where all things were familiar and easy. Where they knew the answers, where they understood the constructs.

But Nephi was a risk taker. He declared his willingness to let his imagination expand to include his father’s dreams. So the angel was able to lead him to the same vision Lehi had had. And when Nephi asked to know the meaning of the tree, the angel did not abruptly pass him a sharp stick and a gold plate and quote the correct answer. (“Memorize it; it’ll be on the mid-term!”) He showed Nephi a vision not of trees, but of Christ, then asked if he had grasped the meaning of the tree. And Nephi did know—not by rote, but by his heart: “Yea, it is the love of God which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men” (1 Ne. 11:22).

Likewise, our best artists open their visions to us as we open our hearts to them. We suspend our disbelief, stretch our empathetic imagination, and let the truth of their dream swell within us, expanding our understanding. We willingly follow their characters on their various pilgrimages, allow them to touch and teach us, and then we return to our own tents or houses, enlightened and changed. It is not a quick trip. It doesn’t come with easy answers. When Nephi suspended his disbelief and let the angel open his eyes to the vision, he wit-

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An old man who was happy before 1949

nessed the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the destruction of his own progeny.

SEVERAL winters ago, when I was a Laurel advisor, one of my Laurels ran away from home, wearing only shorts and a T-shirt. She was eventually found and transported to a mental hospital, where it was discovered that over several years she had been sexually abused. I found it almost impossible to communicate with her; her face was utterly unresponsive. As it happened, during this time, I read part of a Mormon novel about sexual abuse. I didn't finish it because I found myself getting angry at the author. His well-intentioned novel offered the typical, easy resolution to this problem that, for me, had a very real, beautiful, betrayed, unresponsive face. I was seeing sexual abuse in all its tragedy and complexity. The author was cheating me and, even more, cheating—even mocking—this young woman by pretending to understand her pain. His book simply lacked the depth to help her. The Savior, full of grace and truth, could help my Laurel. But this book was full of clichés. It would encourage its readers to spout such helpful phrases as, "I'm sure if you pray about it, Dear. . . ." It would not enlarge their hearts so they could truly give comfort or bear this young woman's burdens.

I recall a sad-looking woman asking a prominent Mormon writer when we would have someone write realistically about divorce. With a self-effacing smile, the writer announced he had done just that, then described his forthcoming book: a couple in process of a divorce end up in a near-fatal plane

crash and ultimately decide they can rebuild their marriage.

Sorry, but that's not a book about divorce; it's a book about reconciliation. Of course, since that time there have been other fiction titles which have addressed the issue more squarely—thank goodness—but such is an example of easy resolution to a very difficult issue—even a *deus ex machina* (God in the form of a crashing Cessna) resolution.

When I went through my divorce, I remember talking to a friend who wanted me to know she didn't judge me. She explained that her marriage had been really hard, too, and she had thought about divorce herself, though they were working things out.

Far from being comforted, I felt mocked. I felt like she was comparing her little financial troubles and squabbles to the hell I had just gone through. I felt like shouting, "You have NO IDEA what it's like!" When friends said to me, "Sorry your marriage didn't work out," it seemed tantamount to a fireman telling a screaming victim—burning before his eyes—"Sorry things didn't work out for you."

Might someone who had just gone through an excruciating divorce feel similarly mocked by reading a book "about divorce" which concludes with a happily-ever-after reconciliation? Such a book gives the orthodox message, but certainly doesn't lead its readers to understand the pain of divorce. It may, in fact, be ironically lacking in both truth and grace.

Those words—"grace" and "truth"—are for me the hallmarks of great literature. They describe Shakespeare's works and Goethe's (two of the authors President Kimball mentions

in his discourse), and—for me—much of Levi Peterson's, Michael Fillerup's, Susan Howe's, Doug Thayer's, Scott Card's, Bruce Jorgensen's, Leslie Norris's, Alice Munro's, Ethan Canin's.

Since I've mentioned Brian Evenson by implication in this essay, I will boldly state that I find him one of our most gifted writers, and I have ever since we studied together under Leslie Norris—when *Altman's Tongue* was just a little gleam in his eye. I find Brian's fiction full of truth, but not much grace. Yet I see grace in Brian's own life and demeanor. I'd love some of that to make its way into his fiction. Still, I resent the fact that someone took the time to yellow-ink all the naughty words and potentially offensive passages in *Altman's Tongue*.⁵ (Brian has reportedly seen one of those marked-up texts.) Such colorful censorship shows an eye single to controversy and dissects Brian's artistic vision into easy categories—good, bad, ugly. It does not—cannot—see the whole of what Brian is doing in his stories.

My own favorite author is Toni Morrison. However, when I wrote an article for *Deseret Book* about good literature, I was not allowed to mention her. The editors let me cite Dostoevsky and Shakespeare, who were (here comes the word again—and, yes, they really used it) “safe” because they wrote so long ago and are comfortably canonized. But not Morrison. So I mention her here as one of the great writers of this world, who illuminates the scriptural themes of captivity and deliverance with hearthwrenching vividness. She writes with grace and truth as her character Sethe journeys from slavery (in many forms) to redemption.

I am not suggesting that *Deseret* ought to be publishing Levi Peterson and recommending that all its readers pick up a copy of Morrison's *Beloved*. I know *Deseret's* audience, and Bookcraft's. I know the editors there get nasty letters if a phrase like “make love” somehow survives their processes and gets into the final printout. And yet, even with those imposed parameters, both presses have published some fine fiction and will continue to do so. There are good authors who can write appropriately and well for those audiences.

(I'm reminded of Clint Larson, our late, beloved, eccentric poet. I recall hearing him tell of submitting one of his poetic plays to *The Donny and Marie Show* because he felt they needed to raise their literary standards. He proudly read us his rejection slip, wherein the staff had complimented his lovely writing but, sadly, declined the script as not meeting their needs. Clint thought he was condemning the writers of *Donny and Marie* as he read us the rejection. I thought Clint was a clunkhead for not understanding the audience that show was aimed at.)

But Levi Peterson and the others of us who are trying to do good—not necessarily safe—fiction have an audience, too, an audience whom God loves, and such writers can have a powerful effect for good in a reader. Of course, Levi is not for everyone. I'm not either. We've both offended people. But there are some readers who will find Levi's work (and maybe even mine) epiphanal. No one can deny readers that experience. No one should. Not even a general authority can decree an epiphany out of bounds because the work which yielded it

is insufficiently reverent. (“Are you now or have you ever been inspired by *The Backslider*?”) We need good artists, and they need a forum. SUNSTONE. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought. Exponent II. Signature Books*. These presses are necessary precisely because they are “unofficial.”

And—ironic as it seems—the artists who are trying to follow President Kimball's mandate and move beyond “safe” work need protection. Honestly, I have all sorts of ideas about how we can protect our artists, but the ideas seem a bit silly when I actually set them down. I do know our artists need forums and safety nets. I wish there was an easy way to provide such things, but I know controversies will continue. I thought, for a while, that we writers were safe from the sort of action some outspoken BYU professors have received, because I didn't think anyone paid much attention to what we wrote. I don't think that anymore. We need defenders, because there will surely be prosecutors. And I see no conflict, incidentally, between defending good art and condemning pornography. The words “grace” and “truth” emerge again as the most important dividers between the beautiful and the banal.

PICTURED on the next page is one more painting from “The Artist of the Poor.” This one depicts a church with a simple, brown steeple. It sits as though in mists; the clouds, says the artist, cover a polluted village. To the side of the steeple, two doves circle. The artist has titled this work “The Hope of China.” Imagine how it might have been received by the Communist regime in the PRC! But here it is, the truth of what the artist envisions—despite the Communist constructs around him that provide precious little space for any church.

I share that vision with “The Artist of the Poor.” The idea of hope—grace—is fundamental to me as a Mormon and as an artist. So is truth—which is often earth-shattering, often painful, and usually glorious in all its depth and complexity and horror and beauty.

IRETURN now to my play, *Dear Stone*, as its production became for me and my husband—as well as for the director and cast and many audience members—a powerful spiritual experience. It would have been a serious thing, I believe, for that show to have been canceled.

On the morning of May 16, the day *Dear Stone* was scheduled to open, Bruce and I received a call that Nancy was not doing well. After Bruce left to give her a blessing, I phoned the care center and spoke with a nurse. I asked about Nancy's condition and was told, “I'm not a doctor, so I can't make a diagnosis. I can only say she's not doing well.” I pursued it: “Could you give me your gut feeling, then? Is she going to die?” There was a pause, a sigh, and then, “Yes. She's going to die.” Nancy's pulse at that moment was 135. By the time I arrived two hours later, it was thirty. Her temperature was 106. She was badly jaundiced, as her organs were failing. Her oldest son was there, as were her parents, sister, brothers (Bruce and Larry) and I. It seems amazing in retrospect, but all of us in the room with this dying woman carried on pretty trivial chatter—mostly teasing



The Hope of China

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Nancy's son about his girlfriend—as Nancy tried to die, struggling with each breath. And it was not a quick or pretty process. Periodically, someone would go to her and say, "You know who's here, don't you, Nancy? Mom and Dad are here. Larry's here. Chris is. Bruce. Margaret. Lynda." We don't know if she understood what we were saying; she was unresponsive. Still, it was important for her to know she was surrounded by people who loved her—or perhaps it was just important for us to witness our presence and love to each other, to say our names as those who were attending Nancy on her death day. My father-in-law adjusted her pillow, stroked her forehead, and wiped her nose as she struggled to die. At three o'clock, her visiting teacher arrived, instantly taking in the situation. Weeping, she approached Nancy and said, "I knew I had to come today." Then she gave a message from the *Ensign*, unsure if Nancy was hearing a thing. "Thy faith hath made thee whole, and made thy children whole," she read. We who had been exchanging silly banter began weeping at once; we had been weaving between the sublime and the ridiculous, the painful and the beautiful, for hours; tears were always close.

At 5:10 P.M., Nancy stopped breathing.

It was not a beautiful death. Six hours of struggle. And though she looked peaceful after the struggle ceased, she was not beautiful—her skin still yellow, her mouth and eyes still open.

Just over two hours later, *Dear Stone* opened. I don't believe that was coincidental. I believe—truly and gratefully—that God had intended my play all along as a tribute to Nancy. Though it was not her specific story, her essence imbued the production. Here she was: Nancy—this remarkable woman who had been abandoned by her husband, placed in a care center, forgotten by many who had been dear to her. For ten days, beginning with her death day, audiences would fill BYU's Margetts Theatre and pay some attention to her—even if only through reading Bruce's program notes, which described her specifically. The audience would include three of Nancy's children, several of her nurses, her siblings, her parents, and hundreds of others who never knew her but who would feel her faith as the character she inspired—Merry Morgan—said, "We have to see the light in the darkness, answer the hardest questions not with a word or a sigh but with our whole souls. We become the answer." Nancy had become the answer: grace, dignity, love, faith, in the face of the worst trials I've ever witnessed.

But after all this talk of verisimilitude, this obeisance to brutal truth unflinchingly told, I here confess that I lessened the brutality of Nancy's situation as I fictionalized it in *Dear Stone*.

There are two very important differences between my play/novel and Nancy's true story. In *Dear Stone*, I bring the husband back to his wife—though he does commit adultery

first. By contrast, I didn't orchestrate a spousal reconciliation in my two short stories which prepared me for *Dear Stone*. In both "Guaymas" (*Elegies and Love Songs*)⁶ and "Balance Beam" (*Love Chains*)⁷, the husband effectually abandons his sick wife. That is what happened in Nancy's life. Frankly, it was not an easy decision to end the play (or novel) with the husband at his dying wife's bedside, telling her (though he's not sure she can hear him) that he's there, that he's not leaving. I like verisimilitude. Truth. The way it really is. And that's not the way it really was.

Yet I defend my decision in the name of grace—which Nancy personified. Nancy considered herself still married to the man who had abandoned her, as their temple sealing had not been canceled. I believe that, true to Nancy's grace and God's, I needed to show the husband's splendid and eternal possibilities at the same moment I showed Merry's glorious release from her disease. To have told the truth without that graceful vision would, in a very real way, have been untrue to Nancy's inspiration.

In another bow to grace, I freely admit that my play doesn't end with six hours of an unbeautiful, gasping struggle towards death. It ends with Merry/Nancy's liberation, juxtaposed to Shakespeare's lines from *The Winter's Tale*:

Tis time, descend, be stone no more—approach!
Strike all who look upon with marvel.
Bequeath to death your numbness, for from him
Dear life redeems you! You perceive she stirs.⁸

Still, though some may disagree with me, I believe I have told the truth in *Dear Stone*. I think, given the more comprehensive space of the novel/play format, I was able to adequately address the pain of Nancy's disease without cheating my audiences into a quick, happily-ever-after. But I also believe I have been true to Nancy's vision of things, which is full—so full—of grace. *Dear Stone* is from and for her.

So, with Nancy's life and worldview as a fundamental defense of my art, I return to my title words: Grace and Truth. I say simply that our art must be bravely—and unsafely—full of both.

I close with my testimony. I believe I came here to this earth willing to risk my eternal future for the chance to make this dangerous pilgrimage through mortality. I believe a savior was provided for me, that he will meet me in the desert of my need, that he will understand my pain through his own experience. I believe he wants me to understand others' pain either through my own experience, or by proxy. I believe I can do that as I read true and graceful works. Like Dostoevsky. Like Shakespeare. Like Goethe. Like Morrison. And I believe there are others—even among us—who can be as great, and as full of grace and truth, as they. I hope to be a pathbuilder for them.



NOTES

1. Eliza R. Snow, "O My Father" in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), hymn 292.

2. William W. Phelps, "If You Could Hie to Kolob" in *Hymns*, hymn 284.
3. Manwaring, 26.
4. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Gospel Vision of the Arts," *Ensign*, 7:7 (July 1977): 5.
5. Brian Evenson, *Altmann's Tongue: Stories and a Novella* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).
6. Margaret Young, *Elegies and Love Songs* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 1992).
7. Margaret Young, *Love Chains* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).
8. William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 5.3.99–103.



AT POINT OF THE MOUNTAIN, UTAH

To the east, the freedom
of hang-gliders; to the west,
the State Prison. This is not
the place; this is only
a place between two valleys,
where the wind always blows
harder, and the snow flies faster;
where even in summer you feel
a little lucky just to have gotten
through without falling from the sky,
or getting locked up, or having
your car collapse—where just
as you come around and start
down, going either way, you always
feel a kind of relief, a blessing;
like maybe the pioneers felt, sort of.

—R. A. CHRISTMAS

L I G H T E R M I N D S

WHAT IF "RUDOLF THE RED-NOSED REINDEER" WERE A GENERAL CONFERENCE TALK?

By Elder Bob Cratchit



"It was felt by the branch presidency, President Dasher and Brothers Dancer and Prancer that, since Brother Rudolf was not attending sacrament meeting regularly—much less, fulfilling his branch calling of working in the kennel, er, nursery, he should not be allowed to play Church basketball—or, for that matter, any other reindeer games—until such time as these matters were resolved with the proper Church authorities."

MY BELOVED brothers and sisters, we welcome you to the two hundred and second semi-annual conference of the Church. All the officers of the Church are seated here on the stand on this beautiful autumn day here on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, in their plush, red, comfortable chairs, and don't you wish you were here in the Tabernacle, too? We wish to thank all the Church leaders who lead this church so well, and especially today, we wish to thank the wonderful translators who are

serving as translators, who translate all the wonderful addresses we will hear today which need translating—which is all of them, of course, except the talk of Elder Dmitri Poliakov whom no one in our midst understands well enough to translate. We also wish to thank all civic and community leaders, whoever they are, that are in attendance, for doing whatever it is they do so well and with such dedication. Finally, let me extend our special gratitude to the wonderful young men who are providing the music for

this session of conference, the Combined Salt Lake Area Street Gangs Choir—and especially for their spirited rendition of "Onward Christian Soldiers" which opened this meeting.

Now, brothers and sisters, I would like to make a few, well-chosen remarks to begin this session of the conference on as high a spiritual note as I'm sure we all hope and pray it will continue on. As some of you know, I have recently returned from the newly created Aurora Borealis District of the newly opened North Pole Mission. As many of you know, up until a few scant years ago, these wonderful, heretofore godless people were living in igloos, huddled together in extended family groups behind vast ice walls, in almost a communal situation. But since the collapse of communalism and the tearing down of the walls, our wonderful, dedicated missionaries, all of them burning with fervent testimonies, and it's a good thing up there, let me tell you!, have been able to teach and baptize the people. My wife Lavinia and I travelled to that great land aboard a wonderful blessing of technology in our lives, the airplane, and, upon touching down at the airport, were greeted warmly by a marvellous and touching scene which smote our eyes, and I do not mean the howling, gale-force winds, though there was that, too. No, it was the sight of literally hundreds or dozens or, in any event, more than just a couple of the newly baptized and faithful Saints of that far distant land smiling broadly in the cold—or else, perhaps, grinning fixedly as the plane was three hours late—and holding signs welcoming us to their wonderful if godforsaken icebox of a country. Each and every one of that marvellous welcoming party asked that they be remembered to you Saints back here in the land of the living, er, the home stakes. Also they asked for hymnals and sacrament trays and chapels like we have down here, and dynamic youth fireside speakers, and honestly, who do they think they are? Here they've been organized as a district for about ten minutes and they want a temple, for heavens sake!, as if all of us at the Church Office Building are ready to just drop everything and . . . well. Truly the work in that far distant and spectacular land is progressing marvellously. Lives are being changed; testimonies are being built; welfare orders are being filled.

I feel moved to tell you a faith-promoting and heart-rending story—and not just because it's there on the teleprompter—about one good brother who attends church at little but faithful Frigid Branch there in the Aurora

Borealis Stake, a Brother Rudolf. Now, Brother Rudolf, who is, by the way a reindeer, and though this is not a group specifically mentioned in Elder Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* as being worthy, they have recently been extended the blessings of the priesthood. That's the male reindeer; the female reindeer, of course, retain their alternate blessing of motherhood—and stripping the bark off trees for food. Well, Brother Rudolf was a less active member of Frigid Branch, a prospective elder who, frankly, was not attending his Sunday meetings regularly. Moreover, it is probable that he had a little Word of Wisdom problem, as evidenced by a chronically red nose. Brother Rudolf was interested in playing Church basketball, but it was felt by the branch presidency, President Dasher and Brothers Dancer and Prancer that, since he was not attending sacrament meeting regularly—much less, fulfilling his branch calling of working in the kennel, er, nursery, he should not be allowed to play Church basketball—or, for that matter, any other reindeer games—until such time as these matters were resolved with the proper Church authorities.

Well, brothers and sisters, you know how the wonderful youth of our church can be. Those who have persevered and earned their eagles and duty-to-God and Church-in-action and distinguished-fast-offering-collection awards—and whose families have set aside, as the prophet has commanded, one evening a week to fight together or watch football, those youth generally serve fine missions—though I hope my grandson doesn't have to serve in that godforsaken North Pole Mission, and he won't if my pull around here makes any difference, and it certainly ought to considering what I gave up to . . . well.

Well, as I was saying, the youth in the Frigid Branch began laughing at Brother Rudolf behind his, uh, flank and calling him names—well, not so much calling him names as passing him hymn books that asked him to turn to various pages in succession until he got to the back of the book where it said, "You're stupid. And you've got a red nose." The youth, of course, are a chosen and choice generation raised up specially by the Lord for the trials of these last days, but they're also pains in the neck as Brother Rudolf found out.

Now Brother Rudolf could easily have slipped through the frozen cracks of the Frigid Branch. He could easily have become another statistical casualty that makes us all look so bad up here, but, thankfully, he had wonderful home teachers who visited him

not just every month, but often two or three times a month to borrow his snow blower. And these good brothers, Brother Comet and Brother Cupid, brought up Brother Rudolf in quorum meeting, and everyone in the quorum decided what they ought to do for him, which was to have the quorum president, President Blitzen bring him up in priesthood correlation meeting and correlation council meeting. After much fasting and prayer and marvellous outpourings of the spirit, the PEC and members of the CC felt impressed to take the matter to the district presidency.

The district president, a wonderful brother named President Claus, moved up to the North Pole from the Old Country, decided to take matters into his capable, mittened hands. President Claus is a toymaker and distributor of organic health and beauty products by profession.

And I might say, he makes available to faithful couples, such as Lavinia and myself, special opportunities to purchase at what is admittedly a pretty steep price franchises to sell his fine product line directly to the public, and if this is interesting to you, you might just fill out the slips of paper you'll find taped under your seats in the Tabernacle and Marriot Center and . . . well. President Claus was preparing to make a business trip to every house in the world with his wonderful and healthful product line which has taken years off Lavinia, I can tell you!, and he noticed that it was a little hard to see out of the window of his tenth-story, penthouse office with real leather walls. Normally, the visibility at the North Pole is about two feet, and now it was down to one.

He had hired a private sleigh to fly himself and his business associates—every one a good member of the Church—Brothers Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Cupid, Blitzen, and President Claus's two councilors, Brother Vixen and Brother Donner—down to their sales opportunities. Now due to inclement weather it looked as though the trip would have to be postponed.

President Claus was particularly disappointed because he had never missed his business trip before—the weather had always held, just like at the Cumorah Pageant. But then the inspired thought came to him, a way to help Brother Rudolf back into activity and at the same time, maximize his own business opportunities: he would ask Brother Rudolf to fly with his team—provided Brother Rudolf was willing to make the best decision he had ever made in his life and become a franchisee like Lavinia and myself, who are generously supplementing our

monthly Church stipend, and you can make this kind of money, too.

Well, brothers and sisters, Brother Rudolf, that good brother of the Frigid Branch, took President Claus's kind offer. Hearts were softened that night; testimonies were built; substantial profits were realized. And Brother Rudolf, a happy, active member of the Frigid Branch now, wrote this faith-promoting story in his personal history. ☐



THE DAMAGE OF WONDER

As a child I'd waken
in the yellow flannel
of streetlamps, and hold
still, my eyes blinking,
testing the light for warmth,
for a clue to the Being
who'd soon appear.

I imagined Him coming
for me, like a thief
searching for my
silvery skin.
His heart dangling
from a chain,
His eyes beaming
flowers.
He'd take me away
from my father,
and love me in
the den of His Father's
mansion.

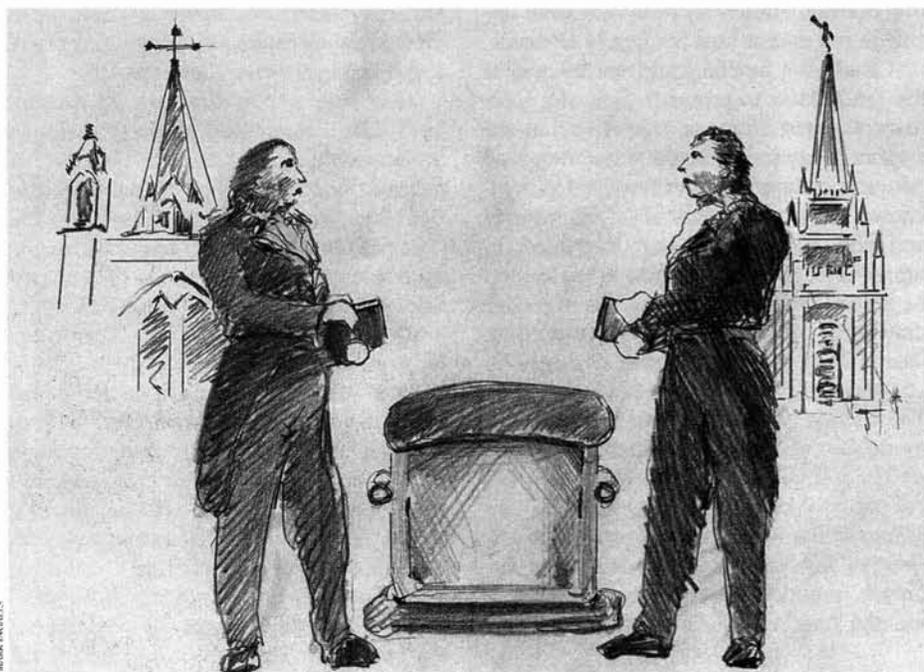
At dawn, the
light, the wonder
disappeared,
and I'd sink back
into bed dripping
with burns,
and plans
for floating away.

—ROBERT ERICHSEN

THIS SIDE OF THE TRACTS

ON BEING BRANCH UNDERTAKER

By Dean R. Louder



David's brothers would not hear of a Mormon funeral. They said David had spent sixty-five years as a Catholic—joining the Mormons for a year was no reason to deprive him of a Catholic mass.

IN NOVEMBER OF 1970, I was completing my doctoral studies in Seattle and with my wife, deciding whether to take an assistant professorship of geography, which Laval University in Quebec had just offered. Inasmuch as the Church had always been central to our lives, and would be to that of our three young children, we felt compelled, before accepting, to seek more

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information about the status of the Church in Quebec. We therefore wrote to the president of the Canadian Mission in Toronto. His answer was not long in coming. Unfortunately I did not keep the letter, but its contents remain etched in my memory:

- (1) The Church in Quebec City is practically non-existent;
- (2) Missionaries have extreme difficulty spreading the Gospel message there;
- (3) It is not a good place to rear young Latter-day Saints;
- (4) I advise against your moving there.

Pioneers, which we were to become, accept challenges. And so, nine months later, we trekked eastward across the continent to

the cradle of French civilization in America, Québec, swelling the ranks of Latter-day Saints in that city to twenty-two. I was immediately called to assist Jerald R. Izatt, another American professor, as counselor in the branch presidency, along with Georges Bourget, a local convert of two weeks. I would occupy this position on two other occasions under two different presidents, François Tremblay and Denis Couture.

In those days, the branch met in the feculence of an underbudgeted YMCA, whose director gladly "loaned" the locale for a modest sum to the scavenging Saints. Some Sundays there would be no key to open the front door, but, fortunately, a window eight feet above street level would usually be unlocked. I would lift up my five-year-old son, who would then crawl through the transom-like aperture and open the fire door at the rear of the building, thus letting in the faithful, who spent the next fifteen minutes disposing of empty soft drink cans, emptying smelly butts from heavy-laden ashtrays, sweeping floors, lining up chairs, searching for the tiny key to open the piano keyboard lock, and setting in place the fragile portable masonite pulpit.

In 1973, we obtained our own church building, which we fashioned with our own hands from the bowels of a former newspaper office located downtown, two floors above a tannery that eventually became an auto parts dealership. It was a proud moment when we negotiated the stairway's hairpin turn, bearing the beautiful oak benches just purchased from St-Martyrs Canadiens parish, where diminishing attendance had made them available. The branch sisters removed the small crucifixes from the arm rests and sanded and revarnished the benches, leaving not a trace. We were at home in our own Mormon chapel!

Since March 1983, la branche de Québec has met in a new building in a middle-class suburb not far from the airport, about eight miles from city center. Our pioneer days appear to be drawing to a close. Perhaps the ultimate test will come when one of our members dies and a genuine Mormon funeral is held in the new authentic Mormon chapel. We'll then see if our prickliest of problems has disappeared.

THE four deaths of local Saints, occurring between 1969, the year of the branch's foundation, and 1982, profoundly marked Mormon life in Quebec City. Not only were there moments of anguish for the immediate families of the deceased but, more particularly, for the local leaders, whose task it became, under calamitous conditions,

to provide dignified obsequies for the departed. The completion of the new chapel has eliminated the most obvious difficulty, but three others remain:

(1) Many Mormon burial practices are unknown and foreign to mortuary personnel in Quebec.

(2) Most members of the extended family of the deceased are not Latter-day Saints and prefer religious services according to their own tradition.

(3) Local leaders, most of whom have been LDS for fewer than five years, are likewise unfamiliar with Mormon burial rites and have access to little guidance about them.

As a result of the superhuman efforts of a few and the superlative collaboration of many, the small branch has always succeeded in bidding adieu in a fitting manner to its departed faithful: Gertrude Deschesnes, David Plante, Edmond Comeau, and Jean-Baptiste Collin.

Sister and Brother Deschesnes, along with the Plantes, were baptized in the spring of 1971. These baptisms were singularly significant events, because they denoted the first "family conversions," in contrast to random single, child, or part-member family conversions so frequent in the mission field. Gertrude had never been healthy. Fragile, thin, and petite, she died six months later, at the age of fifty-five, leaving her husband, teenage daughter, and a houseful of oil paint-

ings and watercolors that few members had had the opportunity to appreciate.

This first death in the infant branch constituted a major challenge. It was important to show that the Church, so newly implanted in the St. Lawrence Valley, could indeed provide for its membership funeral services that could equal in dignity and respect those offered by the Catholic Church. The Saints—almost all recent converts—were, with reason, very anxious. Family and friends of the Deschesnes would obviously never take the Mormon church seriously if it were unable to pay decent final homage to Gertrude.

Clearly, the funeral could not be held at the YMCA. How to proceed? Generally, mortuary administrators are cooperative in the extreme. They seek to be understanding of all customs, traditions, and institutional idiosyncrasies. As the plight of the Deschesnes family and the LDS church was recounted to Monsieur Lépine, a smile came to his lips and he benevolently proposed the use of a large drawing room in his mortuary on Avenue des Quatre-Bourgeois. The organ, important to LDS services, was another matter, however. The branch presidency rented one from a music store at nearby Place Laurier.

The funeral lasted only forty minutes, but the memory of it will remain eternally engraven in the minds of those who attended. Georges Bourget, second counselor in the branch presidency and a convert of two months, reached beyond his own under-

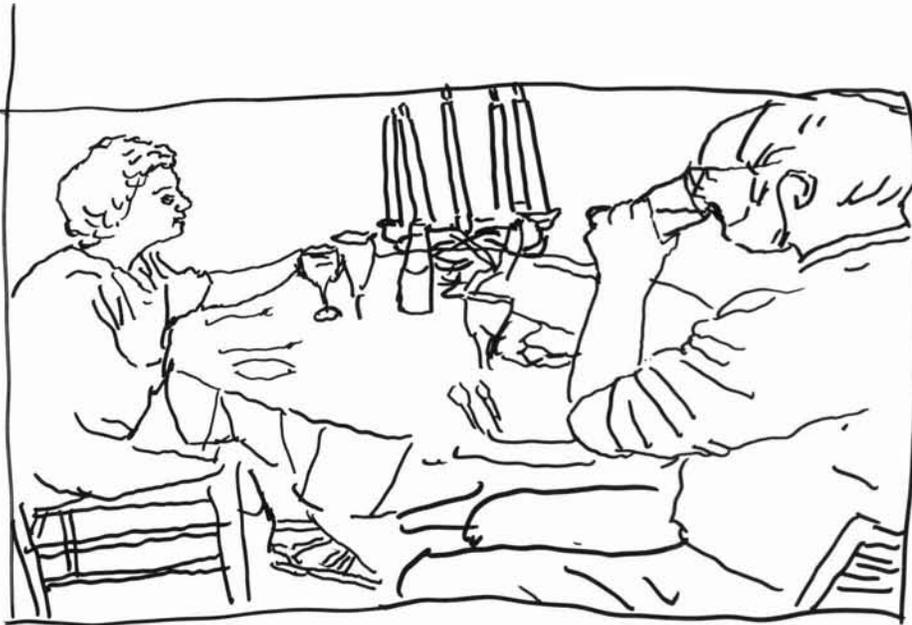
standing of gospel principles in discussing the significance of death and resurrection. Given the circumstances, his moving discourse on the Plan of Salvation was easily the equal of that uttered by the Prophet Joseph at the passing of his friend King Follett! A neighbor of the Izatt family, and a stranger to most of us, consented to play sacred heavenly strains on the harp for this special occasion. At the end, we were hesitant to quit these celestial surroundings. Nevertheless, the funeral procession wended its way to St-Michel Cemetery on Chemin St-Louis, where the body of Gertrude Deschesnes was placed at rest as a light November snow fell.

Less than a year later, on 23 October 1972, David Plante died of cancer in Hôpital St-Sacrament. He and his wife, Blanche, had realized one of the dreams of their early married years, that of leaving the poor working class neighborhoods of the basse-ville to take up residence en campagne (in the countryside). It was in their little home directly beneath the railroad trestle in Cap-Rouge, today an affluent suburb, that Elders Bell and Buehler met them and taught them the principles of Mormonism. David loved to tease and took great pleasure in baiting his young friends, the missionaries. He was ordained a teacher at age sixty-six and delighted in passing the sacrament in the company of the branch's two young deacons.

This time, we were not worried about a place to hold the funeral. We had learned that mortuary directors would collaborate and that their drawing room could be more than adequate. The funeral was to be held at the Sylvio Marceau mortuary on Rue St-Vallier. But the relatives of Frère Plante, especially his brothers, would not hear of it! They reminded all who wished to hear that David had spent sixty-five years in the Catholic Church and that if he had been sufficiently inane to "join the Mormons" for a year, that was no reason to deprive him of a Catholic mass. In any case, his brothers maintained, David always did let himself be overly influenced by his wife!

The local leadership faced a dilemma: respect the wishes of the widow, who wanted a religious service "just like that of Sœur Deschesnes," or allow the Plantes to take possession of the body and hold traditional Catholic rites. In order to conserve some semblance of serenity in this situation, which worsened by the hour, President Izatt and I met at the rectory with the Cap-Rouge parish priest, enlisting his aid to calm the Catholics.

In the meantime, insult and invective were the order of the day. The Plantes went so far as to threaten legal action. The situa-



"You know, you're quite spiritual. And, coming from a radical feminist, that's quite a compliment."

"How are ya gonna dress Edmond?" asked the mortician. "He's been dead for three days." "That doesn't matter," said President Tremblay. "We'll open the casket, stand him up, and dress him right."

tion finally came to a head when Yvan Gallant, a convert of a few months who had replaced Georges Bourget in the branch presidency, had had enough. Looking the Plantes right in the eye and using the same foul language and strident tone of voice as they, he made them understand that we (the Mormons) wouldn't back down! The brothers Plantes caught on and quieted immediately. We often wondered whether or not the priest had intervened. In any case, a compromise was reached. We would keep the body and hold the Mormon service chez Marceau. The Plantes would hold a memorial mass at the church in Cap-Rouge, and the two contingents would meet at cimeti re St-Charles for the interment. Except for some sloppy synchronism, which necessitated the Mormons waiting unduly at the gate, the proceedings went without a hitch. Some of the parties even managed a cool handshake after the casket had been lowered into the earth!

EDMOND Comeau had been born in Tracadie, New Brunswick, but had spent most of his life in the *belle province*. This six-foot three-inch, 220-pound, seventy-year-old Acadian with sparkling eyes and a raucous laugh joined the Church in 1975. His ascendancy through the priesthood ranks was meteoric, culminated by his ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood and, shortly thereafter, a visit to the temple.

Fr re Comeau enjoyed a very special relationship with the young boys of the branch. He taught the Blazers in Primary and could usually be found swapping tales with them at branch activities. When Teddy P pin, who was almost three years overdue for baptism because he was afraid of water, finally decided to take the dip, he requested that the ordinance be performed by Edmond. It was his last official act as a priesthood bearer. He died a month later, on 13 March 1977.

His death presented a problem that the branch had never faced. Of course, we had long since taken leave of the YMCA, but it was still impossible to hold a funeral in our "chapel" because the narrow turn in the stairway impeded the passage of a casket. The funeral would be held as usual at the mortuary. The problem was dressing

Edmond Comeau in temple attire. No one within hundreds of miles had ever done such a thing, and of the few men in the branch who could potentially do it, only two had themselves been to the temple more than once. Further, no temple clothes were available in Quebec City.

The first dilemma was clearly less serious than the second. Once permission to dress the body had been obtained from the mortician (an ordeal itself) and three elders were designated to carry out what for them seemed a macabre task, it was still, without the appropriate raiment, impossible to proceed.

The absence of temple clothing can be explained simply. According to the general priesthood handbook that served as guide to all branch presidents and bishops in the Church in 1977, it was the responsibility of the stake Relief Society president to have and care for temple clothing reserved for the deceased. A telephone call to the district president in Montreal revealed, after verification with the district Relief Society president, that there were no temple clothes in Montreal. Try Ottawa, 120 miles farther down the road. In the meantime, District President G rard Pelchat offered this advice: Be patient! That was hardly possible, given that Fr re Edmond was to be viewed in a few hours and three other times over the next two days.

As it became clear that the clothing would not arrive that day nor the following morning, those delegated to dress the corpse (Yvan Gallant, President Fran ois Tremblay, and I) sought to make do. We had located garments and a white shirt in one of Fr re Comeau's drawers and found a white tie and socks in the branch's meager supply of baptism apparel. I purchased a pair of white trousers, which we eventually cut out in the back to stretch around this big man. These would have to do until such time as the sacred habit arrived, hopefully before the funeral!

Two days later, scarcely an hour before the final viewing session, a call from the bus station confirmed that a package had just arrived from Ottawa. We hastened to the station and thence to the mortuary. Surprised at our breathless arrival, the mortuary personnel enquired as to our purpose.

"We gotta finish dressing Edmond," one

said.

"And how are ya gonna do that?" asked the assistant mortician. "He's been dead for three days."

"That doesn't matter," said President Tremblay. "We'll open the casket, stand him up, and dress him right."

Unable to believe what he was hearing, the assistant turned on his heel, shouting as he left the room, "Hey, this is incredible. Do what you gotta do, but I'm getting the hell out of here."

Half an hour later, the incredible had indeed been accomplished. Edmond reposed peacefully, clothed in the robes of the Holy Priesthood. The next morning, accompanied by the sacred strains of "Oh My Father," his brothers, sisters, and friends paid their last respects to Fr re Comeau, who was carried to his rest upon the shoulders of the young boys of the Quebec City branch. The benediction was pronounced by Jean-Baptiste Collin who, three years later, would join his friend Edmond in death.

JEAN-BAPTISTE and his cousin, Gabriel, two dashing gentlemen whose ostentatious dress and immaculately coiffed hair set them apart, had begun frequenting the chapel in the summer of 1975. They shared an apartment on rue Beno t XV in the Limoilou section of the city, where the retired Jean-Baptiste kept house while the younger Gaby brought home the bacon. Their baptism, in October, brought new life to the branch. Both were skilled entertainers and musicians, especially the former, whose ability to mimic, sing, and dance had served him well during his long career at Radio-Canada and as a member of a touring artistic troupe that had criss-crossed Canada.

In 1978, Jean-Baptiste decided to return to Montreal, where he had enjoyed his greatest success. Since hindsight is usually better than foresight, it is easy to say now that Jean erred. He did not find in la m tropole the spirit of former times, the artistic community of his active years. The Church, which many had said to be stronger in Montreal, proved a disappointment to him. The old man that Jean-Baptiste was becoming missed the heated discussions, the fraternity, and the pure unadulterated fun that had characterized his branch in Quebec

City. Ill and saddened, he decided to return to the vieille capitale, but, unfortunately, he never made it alive. Jean-Baptiste was interred beside his friend Edmond Comeau in June 1980.

Clothing his bony, gnarled body in temple clothes as a curious laboratory attendant looked on, I reminisced over the decade I had lived in Quebec. I had come a stranger and foreigner and had almost become one of them! Four people I had grown to love had died. In three of the four cases, I had been called to their bedside to give healing blessings, only to see them die the very next day.

A couple of years later, Jean-Marie Côté, the most generous person I had ever known, passed away at the age of fifty-seven. Jean was a rough, crude man who, before falling critically ill, took delight in speed and risk. At no time was he happier than when speeding down the Transcanadienne at 100 miles per hour. The Church had temporarily turned his life around before he became wayward and fell back into old habits. We had known each other in good times and bad. The worst—but perhaps the best—came in February of 1983, when I was called to the emergency room of St-Sacrament hospital to place my hands upon the head of Jean-Marie, who was technically dead. The doctors and nurses made a small path for “his clergyman,” and I blessed him in the midst of their thumping his chest as he lay naked upon a sanitized table. He came back to life but, once again, only technically. Two weeks later, when the life-sustaining apparatus were removed, Jean died “naturally.”

These days, I’m asked to do very little in the branch, perhaps a further sign of the Church’s coming of age in Quebec and the end of a pioneer era. Others are able to do today what maybe only I could do a short while ago. I await the next funeral to test this hypothesis.* Branch undertaker is not a formal calling, but it is nevertheless one which I have assumed and one from which I have gained understanding and compassion. ☐

* In the fourteen years since this was written to celebrate the dedication of the Quebec City chapel, there have been four additional funerals. A sister in her mid-forties died of cancer, an elderly brother passed on through natural causes, and two young men committed suicide. In each instance, the LDS funeral went off without a hitch. On the other hand, in 1993, the body of a ninety-three-year-old sister, who had joined the LDS church in 1967 and had practiced faithfully for twenty years before whiling away the last five years of her life in a nursing home, with little contact from the Saints, was turned over to the Catholic Church for burial. By the time local LDS authorities learned of her death, she had already been in the ground for a month.



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

There are those who say
When we come to that part in the Book
That God suffers
Bad things to happen
To good people
To justify His punishment
Of the wicked.
But that doesn't rest with those
Like me
Who, on rainy afternoons long ago,
And sunny ones,
(Which still lurk ahead
Around blind corners)
Were knocked from our senses
More by pressure
Than impact.

I watch
From my perch,
Where the walls meet the ceiling,
The little girl
Furtively dismantled
Until only the bare, vital parts function,
Until living means not feeling,
Until years bring no healing,
Until now,
Sitting halfly at this gathering,
I hear the others
Dismiss such tragedy
By rote.
The sun slowly crashes into the moon
In my skull,
And there is no seeing
There is no hearing
And no thinking,
But rage, rage,
Rage against the One
They say is so merciful
But would make only
Half a sacrifice
Of me,
To scrape from my flesh
Years of evidence
Against the defense,
And then let me go on,
Dragging this glassy-eyed little one
Around my neck
Who is finally sharing the pain
She was unable to feel.

—KIRSTEN T. CRAM

R E V I E W S

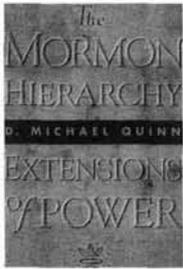
ONLY PART OF THE STORY

THE MORMON HIERARCHY: EXTENSIONS OF POWER

by D. Michael Quinn

Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1997
928 pages, \$44.95

Reviewed by Thomas G. Alexander



"I am concerned that the text offers only part of the story of the 'Extensions of Power.' A complete text must also tell more of the circumstances of revelations and other spiritual experiences."

N O ONE has mined the rich and varied sources of the Latter-day Saint past more thoroughly than has Michael Quinn. Years of service on the staff of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an appointment as a professor of history at Brigham Young University, and more recent research in large numbers of libraries and archives have led him into sources that most of us can only dream of seeing. Many do not achieve that dream because we are unwilling to commit the time that Quinn has spent. Quinn writes that "every day" he did this research "was Christmas" (vii). He does not exaggerate.

Quinn's prodigious research is evident in the notes for *Extensions of Power*. Pages 409

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through 630 are citations for the text, which runs only through page 408.

Extensions of Power considers principally the secular side of the experiences of the men who have led the Church since the apostolic interregnum of 1844–47 and, most particularly, since the beginning of Brigham Young's presidency. Although Quinn generally avoids an explicit discussion of religious experiences among the general authorities, he argues that his "approach can be faith-promoting for believers seeking to understand their religious community as led by fallible humans who struggle to achieve God's will" (viii).

I use the word "generally" with respect to Quinn's discussion of religious experience advisedly. For instance, Quinn offers no discussion of Wilford Woodruff's religious experiences in connection with issuing the Manifesto (see 48–49, 328–29). He does allude to revelation in association with the

1978 announcement of the change in policy that allowed all worthy males, regardless of race, to receive the priesthood (16). Even in writing about this seminal revelation, however, Quinn subordinates the discussion of spiritual experiences to a consideration of the human struggles President Spencer W. Kimball endured as he reconsidered the previous denial of the priesthood to African-Americans (15–16).

In this connection, a large part of the lives of religious leaders occurs in the secular world. Moreover, there is—as Quinn argues in the first chapter—a tension between "the charismatic calling of the Quorum of the Twelve as special witnesses of the risen Christ and the requirement that they should be united in all of their decisions" which involves a sort of give and take during discussions (1). In emphasizing the secular side, Quinn argues that the charismatic character of the apostolic calling, generally stated as the need to see Christ in a personal vision, tended to decline in the twentieth century. At the same time, he believes that the requirement for unity tended to intensify. In a sense, he seems to argue, the achievement of unanimity was in itself viewed by the leadership as evidence of revelation.

Even with that understanding, Quinn seems to organize his discussion around secular categories. His chapters are entitled: "The Twin Charges of the Apostleship"; "Tensions among the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve"; "Ezra Taft Benson: A Study of Inter-Quorum Conflict"; "Presiding Patriarch, Presiding Bishop, the Seventy, and an Expanding Bureaucracy"; "Family Relationships"; "Church Finances"; "Post-1844 Theocracy and a Culture of Violence"; "Priesthood Rule and Shadow Governments"; "Partisan Politics"; and "A National Force, 1970s–1990s."

In the case of the tensions among the First Presidency and Twelve, he argues that by emphasizing the conflicts, he "provides insight into the nature of an institution. Dispute indicates areas that are still being negotiated" (21). He understands that this "approach may leave the false impression that the presiding councils of the LDS church are in a constant state of disagreement," and he believes that "an equally comprehensive and representative study could be titled *Harmony or Camaraderie* that would just as accurately illustrate those qualities among the general authorities" (21).

The major problem with this approach, it seems to me, is not that it leaves the impression that the church leaders were "in a constant state of disagreement," but rather that it

***“The story of the ‘extensions of power’ . . . must convey
an understanding of the spiritual power of the
leaders of the Church.”***

fails to convey an understanding of the spiritual power that harmony can generate. This is one of the points that I attempted to make in “To Maintain Harmony: Adjusting to External and Internal Stress, 1890–1930.”¹ It seems unlikely to me that any voluntary organization—especially a religious organization—can grow and prosper and at the same time maintain its spiritual power while its leaders remain in a state of constant internal conflict.

In this context, I suspect that Quinn could have gained additional insight had he chosen to view the Mormon hierarchy from a comparative perspective. Several examples from the recent history of other churches come to mind. They include the recent divisions in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints over a number of matters including the understanding of the Book of Mormon and the ordination of women, the divisions within the Southern Baptists over traditional and modern understandings of the church’s mission, and the conflicts within the Presbyterian Church over human sexuality.

Quinn chose to write this book without reference to such comparative examples. Given that choice, had he chosen to draw more fully on examples of harmony within the LDS church, he could have helped us to gain a more thorough understanding of the workings—and the “extensions of power” of the Church leadership.

This is not to say that an understanding of conflict is not important. No honest history of the Church would fail to include disagreements over First Presidency Counselor J. Reuben Clark’s views on government and overgrazing, over President David O. McKay’s policies on education and management of the church debt, and over then-Apostle Ezra Taft Benson’s views on politics and land stewardship.

On the other hand, if we are to understand “the extensions of power,” we must also perceive the spiritual side of the struggle to achieve harmony and to maintain godly power under often trying circumstances. Quinn’s narrative helps very little with that understanding.

NEVERTHELESS, Quinn does offer a valuable discussion of a number of important topics. For instance,

many Latter-day Saints do not understand what he calls the “theological rationale for the influence of kinship on appointments to the LDS hierarchy.” Although the office of Patriarch to the Church or Presiding Patriarch has recently been abolished or furloughed, that office provides the most obvious example. Quinn offers a summary of the history of that office for which Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith provide a more complete discussion in their recent book *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch*.² Moreover, most members probably do not know that Brigham Young and other Church leaders argued for an entitlement of priesthood keys on the basis of lineage (164).

Likewise, members today are often unaware of or ignore the secular power of the LDS Church. Quinn argues that “Theologically, Mormonism has never accepted the ‘worldly’ distinctions between secular versus religious, civil versus theocratic, mundane versus divine” (198). On that basis, he is clearly justified in considering the business connections and political activities of the LDS leadership. He is also quite warranted in including a discussion of the Church’s controversial role in the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Had Quinn chosen to write from a comparative perspective, however, he could have shown that the LDS Church is not unique among religious organizations in the exercise of secular political and economic power. In the nineteenth century, for instance, Protestantism was essentially the established religion in the United States, and Protestant ministers exercised enormous political and economic power. More recently, the political activities of the Christian Coalition and of the Reverends Pat Robertson and Jesse Jackson provide rather clear examples of other ecclesiastical organizations exercising religious power in the secular realm.

The most disconcerting section of the book was that dealing with authorizations for murder in nineteenth-century Utah. Most particularly, I am skeptical of the allegations that William A. Hickman committed his numerous murders with either the specific or tacit approval of Brigham Young and the Church leadership. Frankly, I would like to see more direct evidence for such allegations

than Hickman’s self-serving autobiography and hearsay.

I AM also quite skeptical of Quinn’s belief that First Presidency Counselor George Q. Cannon manipulated President Wilford Woodruff. As Quinn admits, it was Woodruff who sought to change precedent by rapidly reorganizing the First Presidency after President John Taylor’s death. Controversy over Cannon’s role in the Taylor administration and his potential role in Woodruff’s administration prevented that. Nevertheless, after resolving that controversy and reorganizing the presidency, Woodruff issued instructions that the reorganization was to take place immediately after his death and that the senior apostle should become Church president. That has happened in every administration since.

Moreover, Quinn also agrees that it was President Woodruff, himself, who led the First Presidency and Twelve in the adoption of the Manifesto. He moved rapidly on the question by securing approval from his counselors and from those apostles present in Salt Lake City at the time, while ignoring the absent apostles. Moreover, contrary to Quinn’s assertion that Woodruff did this “rather than risk a repetition of the Twelve’s rejection of such a proposal,” I am convinced—as I have argued elsewhere—that Woodruff moved rapidly on this matter because of his conviction, supported by ample secular evidence and personal revelation, that the Church stood in imminent danger of losing its temples and suffering other afflictions.³

Most significantly, as I have argued and as Quinn has shown elsewhere, Woodruff moved much more rapidly on the issue of ending plural marriages than did the Twelve or his counselors, including George Q. Cannon. This hardly sustains the charge that Cannon manipulated Woodruff.⁴

In addition to the information in the formal text, Quinn gives us five appendices, which run from pages 631 through 898. The information they offer includes: “General Officers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1845–1996”; “Biographical Sketches of General Officers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Appointed 1849–1932”; “Appointments to the Theo-

cratic Council of Fifty through 1884"; "Family Relationships among 101 Current General Authorities and Their Wives, 1996"; and "Selected Chronology of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1848–1996."

Unfortunately, the first two appendixes are misnamed. They include the general authorities of the Church, but they exclude many of the general officers. General officers such as general presidents and general board members of the Relief Society, Young Womens' Mutual Improvement Association, Primary, and Young Mens' Mutual Improvement Association are included only in as far as general authorities served in those positions.

These exclusions highlight a major shortcoming of *Extensions of Power* that derives from its failure to consider the role of women in the Church's leadership. I realize that it is fashionable in some circles today to dismiss the male leadership of the Church as oppressive patriarchs who subordinated women under an iron thumb.

In view of the extensive research by a large group of intelligent and insightful contemporary Latter-day Saint women, however, it seems to me that we must conclude that far from being oppressed vassals, Mormon women leaders constituted a vibrant, intelligent, and effective body.⁵ Clearly, although Mormon women operated within a structure established by men, they exercised considerable independent authority and extended the Church's power especially through the Relief Society and Primary organizations and in movements such as women suffrage.

In connection with the title of one of the appendixes and of the practice Quinn generally—though not exclusively—adopted in the text, I find disconcerting the use of the various forms of the infinitive "to appoint" in connection with the selection of Church leaders. The proper designation should be a form of the infinitive "to call." In the Church, people are called to serve rather than appointed as in a business, university, or other secular organization.

As should be clear from this review, I have mixed feelings about *Extensions of Power*. The reader should be clear, however, that I am not concerned about disagreements with Quinn over matters of interpretation such as Woodruff's role, or violence. Such differences are part of the substance of any scholarly discourse. Moreover, the information the book offers on the conflicts within the Church organization, the secular roles of the Church leadership, and the family connections of the general authorities and their wives is extremely valuable. All who expect

to understand the Latter-day Saint past ought to familiarize themselves with this book.

Rather, I am concerned that the text offers only part of the story of the "extensions of power." A complete text must also tell more of the circumstances of revelations and other spiritual experiences. Moreover, and most important, it must convey an understanding of the spiritual power of the leaders of the Church. It must also consider the role of the female half of the Church membership in both secular and spiritual roles. Perhaps Quinn will complete the story. If he does not, someone else surely should. ☐

NOTES

1. Thomas G. Alexander, "To Maintain Harmony: Adjusting to External and Internal Stress, 1890–1930," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 [winter 1982]: 44–58, which Quinn edited and reprinted in *The New Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991).

2. Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

3. See Thomas G. Alexander "The Odyssey of a Latter-day Prophet: Willford Woodruff and the Manifesto of 1890," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 169–206.

4. D. Michael Quinn, "LDS Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890–1904," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (spring 1985): 36–49.

5. Examples of that research and the contemporary women that come readily to mind include: Claudia L. Bushman, *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah* (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline Press, 1976); Vicky Burgess-Olson, *Sister Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978); Carol Cornwall Madsen, "A Mormon Woman in Victorian America" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1985); Lavina Fielding Anderson, with Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Eliza and her Sisters* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1991); Janeth Russell Cannon, with Jill Mulvay Derr and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of the Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); Lola Van Wagenen, "Sister-wives and Suffragists: Polygamy and the Politics of Woman Suffrage, 1870–1896" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1994); and Jill Mulvay Derr, "Brigham Young and the Awakening of Mormon Women in the 1870s," *The Lion of the Lord: Essays on the Life of Brigham Young*, eds. Susan Easton Black and Larry C. Porter (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995).



INTERSTATE

(Return from the Nursing Home)

Taillights rush red, laned
and twisting against ridgelines all
wishing Mom still talked.

Hills hold their breath blue
beneath a bloated moon slow to
orbit above mist

uncertain as her
murmurs in air roasted thick from
one day's lost landscapes.

Tires hum asphalt to
dusk resolving absence to night.
Far streetlamps pinhead

hints of towns bywayed
behind dry hills. Headlights flash, fade
and bend, but never

breach median dark
bracing decades between voices
and miles between eyes.

—R. S. CARLSON

MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

THE MORMON HIERARCHY: EXTENSIONS OF POWER

by D. Michael Quinn

Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997

928 pages, \$44.95



Reviewed by Armand L. Mauss



Despite a shortage of theoretical interpretation, a redundant compounding of hierarchy failings, and a surplus of tangential notes, this solid book will be very important to those seeking depth in Mormon history.

THIS IS THE long-awaited companion volume to Quinn's 1995 book, *Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, which took the history of the hierarchy up only to the beginning of Brigham Young's administration. The present work, a nine-hundred-plus-page document, including text, notes, photos, five appendices, and an index, still dwells largely on nineteenth-century Utah but includes much important twentieth-century material as well. Both volumes grow out of Quinn's doctoral dissertation from two decades ago. In many ways, this volume is more interesting than the earlier one, not only because of its more contemporary coverage, but also because the longer time frame permits the author to organize his writing topically (in part), rather than simply chronologically. The book's 408 pages of text

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are arranged in ten chapters of uneven length, augmented by half again as many pages of notes. Five of the chapters deal with the development of the various echelons of LDS hierarchy, with particular focus on the tensions arising from competing or contradictory interests, ideologies, personalities, or role demands within the hierarchy.

The remaining chapters focus chronologically on special topics: Ezra Taft Benson's turbulent apostolic career; family and kinship ties among the general authorities and their wives; Church finances; partisan politics; and the contemporary participation of the Church in the national political scene, with special reference to the campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment. The appendices constitute a valuable collection of biographical and family data on general authorities and other leaders from the 1840s to the present, plus a "selected chronology" of events in LDS history. The information on family relationships, however, is not continuous: Quinn outlines those relationships from 1832 to 1932 in chapter 5, and appendix 4

contains family information only for general authorities alive and serving in 1996. The gap is disappointing to anyone wondering about family relationships of leaders appointed after 1932 but no longer living (e.g., Bruce R. McConkie).

SINCE the assessment that follows might seem somewhat ambivalent, I want to make clear at the outset that I admire Quinn's work very much, especially (but by no means only) this two-volume series on the hierarchy. It is an enormous accomplishment. The delay (for whatever reasons) in the appearance of the two volumes has unfortunately deprived this work (especially volume two) of much of its "cutting edge," at least for scholars who will already have become acquainted with Quinn's earlier work (and that of others) on such topics as theocracy, the statehood campaign, the Council of Fifty, polygamy (post-Manifesto and otherwise), Church finances, Ezra Taft Benson, and the ERA campaign. Even so, Quinn has made a tremendous contribution to LDS historical literature by collecting, sifting, interpreting, and condensing so much detailed information on these and other sensitive topics into two volumes, and his extensive notes will launch and guide further explorations.

Undoubtedly there is much in this second volume, as in the first, that Church leaders would prefer to have remained in obscurity. The behavior of individual leaders, whether historical or contemporary, sometimes comes across, in Quinn's work, as petty at best and mean-spirited at worst. A few episodes, indeed, reflect badly on the hierarchy collectively and upon many local leaders as well. In this second volume, as in the first, Quinn reveals far more examples and details about human fallibility than are necessary to make his main points, such that the work, as a whole, takes on a somewhat salacious quality, at times bordering on sheer gossip. On the whole, this is not "faith-promoting" work, but there is no need for the guardians of the faithful to worry, since few of the Saints at the grassroots are likely to come across these books. Even if they do, only the most sheltered and naive among them will find anything that they have not encountered before, or at least suspected. Those who have learned, through their own reading of history, and their own experiences in the Church, to appreciate and make allowances for the human element in the Lord's kingdom will not be especially troubled by any discoveries here.

Though I am a fairly seasoned consumer

of LDS historical research, I found still further enlightenment and new appreciation for several broad themes of this second volume: the great variety of techniques that have evolved to achieve unanimity in decision-making among the Brethren (including the occasional and deliberate timing of council meetings to coincide with the absence of hold-outs!); the actual, as opposed to the legitimate, power that can be exercised by assertive and obstreperous individual leaders (even to the detriment of the collective whole) when their peers or superiors are unable or unwilling to restrain them; the usefulness of seeing Utah family relationships among the Brethren as *dynastic* in nature, rather than simply nepotistic; the enduring (if unintended) significance of these family relationships as built-in constraints against diversity in the culture and network of the hierarchy, even into the twenty-first century; the consistently tenuous nature of the Church's financial condition until only three decades ago, despite members' historical perception of their leaders as thrifty if not penurious; the persistence among the Brethren of the concept of a literal earthly kingdom (including theocracy) even into modern times, long after vehicles like the Council of Fifty had become merely symbolic; and the survival of the kingdom idea even now through various manifestations of "shadow government" and covert political interventions and alliances.

The account of Ezra Taft Benson's political initiatives in the 1960s (chapter 3) will not be entirely new to anyone who lived through those days or who read Quinn's 1993 *Dialogue* article on the same topic.¹ It is a fascinating and troubling revelation on two levels: the personal power of senior members of the hierarchy to ride roughshod over the collective wishes of their peers and the systemic opportunities for that situation to arise whenever there is a vacillating or weakened president or First Presidency. Elder Benson was probably not much more conservative politically than many of his colleagues, but he was much more ideologically driven than the hierarchy as a whole, which tends to be pragmatic. Indeed, it does not require a great reach from this account to infer that if Elder Benson had been president of the Church during the 1960s, we might well have seen a public alliance between the LDS church and the John Birch Society! An afterclap of this turbulent chapter in the history of the hierarchy can be seen in the single-minded devotion to 1960s Bensonism on the parts of some LDS schismatics who were excommunicated in 1992.²

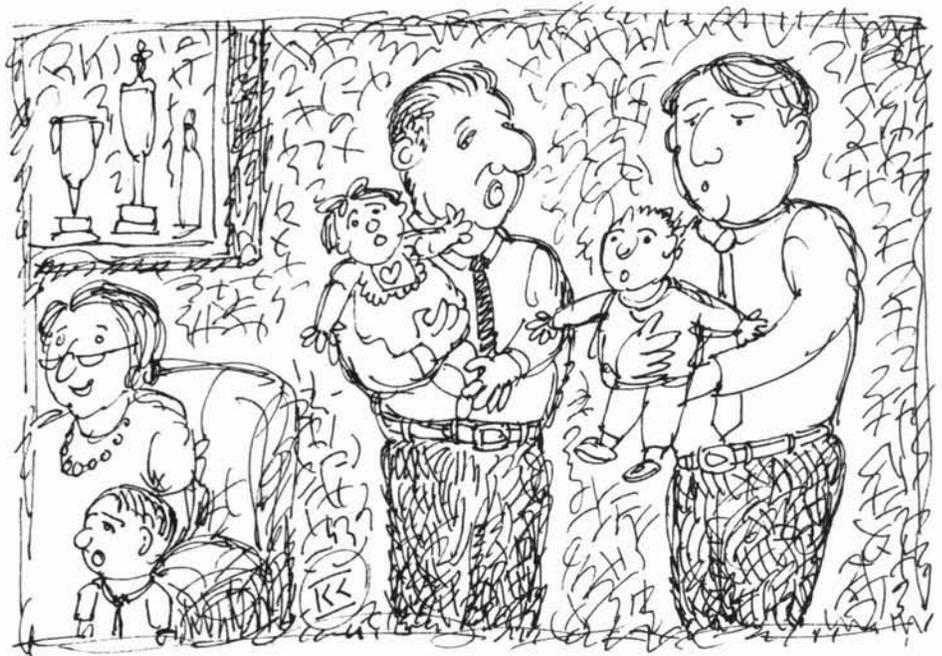
RICH as Quinn's treatment is of many important topics, I am disappointed at his omission or slighting of several other topics that I would have expected to receive more attention in a book purporting to examine the hierarchy and its leadership in the twentieth century. The correlation movement and its consequences are scarcely mentioned. Also given short shrift is one of the most important decisions of the hierarchy in modern times, the dropping of the priesthood ban against members of African descent. The matter is discussed briefly, in the first chapter, as an illustration of the difficulty in getting unanimity among the Brethren on controversial issues, but we are told little that we did not already know, except perhaps for the key part played by Elder Lee in preventing a policy change in 1969.

The salaried bureaucracy (or "Church civil service," as I like to call it) is briefly described in four or five pages at the end of chapter 4, with disproportionate attention to presidents' secretaries. Yet there is little analysis of the variety of tensions within this bureaucracy, or between the bureaucracy and the hierarchy, and no assessment of the manifest significance of the several bureaucracies (especially the Church Education System) as formative extra-priesthood institutions in LDS life, as "vested interest" groups, or as recruiting conduits into the hierarchy itself. Also, for all the details in chapter 5 on general authority family connections, Quinn

gives little analysis of the operational significance of those relationships. (Why should we care who is third cousin to whose wife if there is no manifest influence on decision-making?) Also, given the continued geographic clustering of the founding LDS families in Utah and Idaho, one is left to wonder whether it is geography that produces dynasty, or vice-versa.

Another major twentieth-century development crying out for consideration is the rapid internationalization of the Church as it affects the hierarchy and its decision-making. I am not referring merely to the obvious issue of growth per se (to which Quinn does pay some attention) but, more important, to the management of cultural conflict, both within the hierarchy itself (with its small percentage of non-American members) and between the hierarchy and regional or stake leaders on various continents. One suspects that such cultural conflict is kept under control, in part, by selective recruitment of leaders who have already demonstrated a degree of "Americanization" through obedient service in the trenches of the overseas salaried "Church civil service." Is there systematic evidence for such a hypothesis? If so, are there unintended and problematic consequences, in either the shorter or the longer term? How else does the hierarchy deal with cultural conflict in its decision-making?

In fairness, I acknowledge that authors are entitled to write their own books, making



"I don't know. I always wanted Church leadership positions, but now I prefer just to appear to be worthy of them"

their own decisions about what to include and exclude. Reviewers can always find some grounds to complain that an author should have written a different kind of book. Yet the reader does expect some reasonable criteria for an author's decision about what he or she includes or excludes in a book (or series) with such a sweeping title as Quinn's. In this case, a principal criterion might have been simply what was readily available in Quinn's celebrated personal archives, gathered during his sojourn in the "Camelot" of LDS history (during Leonard Arrington's tenure as Church Historian) and in the two decades since. In any case, the reader should be prepared for a certain amount of disappointment over the omissions I have mentioned (and perhaps others) while still appreciating the substance and virtuosity of what is included.

TWO general qualities would have made this volume more effective: first, regular use of relevant comparisons, and second, periodic application of theories or interpretative frameworks drawn from the social sciences. In fairness, I must note that Quinn himself recognizes these missing ingredients (ix) and asks the reader's

understanding for his deliberate decision to forego them in favor of making adequate room for the historical data and evidence, themselves already too extensive to be included in full. Any author will sympathize with the frustration imposed by space limitations; for a scholar like Quinn, so meticulous and thorough in gathering and documenting his evidence, the frustration must have been especially great. Yet the addition of only a few paragraphs of comparative and interpretive material in each chapter would have greatly enhanced the meaning of all these data for the reader. (Below, I shall offer some suggestions on what might have been sacrificed to save space.)

Setting certain policies or episodes of the hierarchy into comparative perspective, rather than seeming to portray them as singular phenomena, would have made a better explanation of the human qualities that the Brethren share with all of us. Quinn's rare offerings of such comparisons have an ad hoc quality and tend to occur only in passing, as afterthoughts at the end of a chapter, rather than at its beginning. For a comparative framework really to inform a chapter or an episode, it should be provided at the begin-

ning in order to set the stage. The need for such a comparative context seems to me especially necessary in Quinn's handling of frontier violence in early Utah and in his extensive treatment of overt and covert political machinations of past and present Church leaders (including the issue of "bribery" then and now).

For example, most of chapter 7 is devoted to what Quinn calls a "culture of violence" in early Utah, with special focus on bloody vigilante reprisals supposedly inspired by the doctrine of blood atonement. Readers familiar with earlier accounts (quite aside from anti-Mormon ones) about the exploits of Bill Hickman, Porter Rockwell, and the Danites, among others, will not be too surprised at what they find here. Much in official discourse of the time also had a violent tinge, but Quinn makes no allowances for any hyperbole in this discourse, whether inspired by eschatological enthusiasm or by the indignation of a refugee people. It was all part of a "culture of violence." Nor can we tell how unique such violence was to Utah. Instead of establishing a context by beginning with some general paragraphs outlining American "frontier justice" (including, perhaps, some of the Old Testament notions that certainly informed the Mormon understanding of "blood atonement"), Quinn simply leads us through a series of well-documented anecdotes about vengeance killings and castrations. Only at the end of the chapter does he acknowledge, very briefly, that there were "relatively few [such] instances" by ecclesiastical authority (257); that "it will always be impossible to determine how many violent deaths occurred for theocratic reasons and how many merely reflected the American West's pattern of justice" (260); and that "the historical evidence indicates that most early Mormons avoided violence and were saddened by the news of such incidents" (261). The reader can only appreciate these candid and mitigating acknowledgements. Had they been offered earlier and more extensively in the chapter, they might have provided some badly needed balance. Of course, they might also have seriously undermined the "culture of violence" argument, for if there were "relatively few" instances of official violence, and if "most early Mormons avoided violence," the "culture" could not have been terribly pervasive.

Again, in the book's final two chapters, which cover the hierarchy's multitude of political involvements (culminating in the strenuous anti-ERA campaign), Quinn properly acknowledges, but only in passing (373), that the kind of "grass-roots mobiliza-



"I had a nice time, Eric, and may I say that I found you to be every bit as spiritual, religious, Christ-centered, temple recommend holding, tithes-paying, 100-percent home teaching, trustworthly, thrifty, loyal, and brave as your LDS Singles ad promised you were."

“On the whole, this is not ‘faith-promoting’ work, but those who make allowances for the human element in the Lord’s kingdom will not be especially troubled by any discoveries here.”

tion” used by the hierarchy is “typical of the American political system” and, at the end of the final chapter (401), that “[p]olitically active churches . . . are simply examples of special-interest lobbying in the United States . . . [and simply part of] . . . the costs and advantages of the democratic system.” In some of these political involvements, Quinn evidently thinks the hierarchy went too far, at least ethically. I agree. However, the reader would have been in a far better position to assess what is “normal” for a religious organization if the author had initially provided just two or three paragraphs about (1) the evolving legal constraints (and lack of same) on political activity in the United States by churches and other charitable, tax-exempt organizations and foundations, and (2) examples of comparable political advocacy and lobbying in recent decades by the National Council of Churches, the American Catholic Church, and other religious organizations.

Such context is necessary to clarify the hierarchy’s pervasive political influence and intervention in Utah, its own backyard (compare the Catholic hierarchy’s role in many eastern U.S. cities, or that of the Southern Baptists in many southern U.S. cities). Especially in a national context, however, it is important for the reader to recognize the difference between the hierarchy’s earnest pulpit-preaching or published proclamations, on the one hand, and the more strenuous kinds of interference, on the other hand, represented by the campaign against the ERA. Quinn himself (589, 600) glosses over this difference; he seems to disagree with my earlier observation that such strenuous involvement by the LDS hierarchy in national politics has been relatively rare in this century—relative, that is, to the activities of other religious and charitable “special interests.”

THE book would have benefitted also by the application of certain theoretical interpretive frameworks from the social sciences, as I suggest above. Quinn begins the book by postulating a general framework of “potential tension and conflict” between the ideal of “charisma” and the ideal of “unity” (unanimity) among the Brethren. If such tension is intended as an organizing principle for all the “subsequent chapters”

(1), the logic is not entirely clear to me. Charisma and unanimity are not inherently in any “tension,” for they do not operate on the same dimension of organizational life (i.e., a dimension with charisma at one pole and unanimity at the other). Each has its own dimension, on which variation can occur independently of the other dimension. In chapter 1, the chief manifestation of charisma is the claim (explicit or implicit) of personal encounters by apostles with the risen Christ, a claim which Quinn demonstrates has become less common and less explicit with the passage of time. Of course, this development is nothing but an aspect of the secularization process that occurs across time in all new religious movements; it is not necessarily related to the hierarchy’s quest for unanimity. Indeed, as Quinn points out, the charge given by the President to each new apostle made personal encounters with Christ almost obligatory for the “especial witnesses” until well into the twentieth century. This charge constituted a collective mandate and formula for such encounters that might itself be understood as a means of “containing charisma,” but it has nothing necessarily to do with the quest for unanimity in decision-making.

Weberian theory could have provided a more effective framework for emphasizing the inherent qualities of bureaucracy, especially the constraints that bureaucratic (or hierarchical) roles impose upon individual preferences and behavior. A natural organizing framework for this book might have been the ongoing tension, interaction, and reciprocal influences between *hierarchy* and *dynasty* as two different (and sometimes competing) modes of leadership. This somewhat higher level of abstraction would have permitted Quinn’s readers to see in a different light—i.e., as systemic—some of the behavior among the hierarchy that otherwise comes across as merely arbitrary, jealous, or petulant. Especially useful would have been a brief analysis of the many unintended organizational implications of the alternating power differential between the First Presidency and the Twelve; that is, the presidency is ostensibly the more powerful operationally (if the president himself is present and functioning), while the Twelve is the more powerful ultimately because it is self-

perpetuating and able to assert its will against a weakened presidency. A more organizational context would also have offered an alternative way to understand the differential effectiveness in individual Church leaders, which Quinn tends to attribute to personal qualities (see e.g., David O. McKay [31–35] and Heber J. Grant [358–59]).

IF Quinn resorts infrequently to such general interpretive frameworks, he does not shrink on occasion from interpretations of a more concrete and ad hoc variety, in which he attributes certain motives. Most of his implications are plausible enough, but some seem to reflect value judgments (to which every author is entitled) or at least inadequate consideration of alternative interpretations. One such instance can be seen in Quinn’s discussion (363–67) of what he calls the “adoration of the LDS president,” which deals mainly with the growing tendency in recent decades toward attributing a form of infallibility to the Brethren in general and to the President in particular. Quinn makes the interesting observation that historically, in Church sermons and literature, “the Prophet” was a term reserved for Joseph Smith. Only during President McKay’s administration did that term begin to be applied routinely to all Church presidents, a development which Quinn finds was aided and abetted by McKay’s own physical and personal qualities, including his tendency to enjoy basking in the adoration of his people (363). Quinn does acknowledge, in passing (366), the interpretation I favor, which places this change into the context of the more general process of retrenchment that began during this same period, rather than seeing it as an outgrowth of McKay’s individual attributes.

More fundamentally, however, I find it peculiar that this discussion of “infallibility” would appear in a chapter entitled “Partisan Politics,” for, in my experience, political counsel from the Brethren is among the least likely to be obeyed by the Saints—if only because of the demonstrable variety of political opinions among the Brethren themselves, apart from a few issues like the ERA. Even in a strictly religious realm, though, one need not interpret every claim of collective prophetic wisdom as a claim to infallibility. For scholars to do so, indeed, is to abet unwittingly the

very tendency that Quinn and I both deplore, namely, the grassroots tendency of the Saints to read claims of infallibility into occasional statements such as "when the prophet speaks, the debate is over" (511). Were the CEO of General Motors to say something equivalent, it would likely be taken simply as a call for organizational unity and employee loyalty, not as a claim to infallibility. Similarly, if we are told that "the united voice of [the Brethren] . . . will never lead the Saints astray" (418), we can interpret that as a solemn commitment rather than as a claim to infallibility (it is certainly not a claim to individual infallibility, in any case).

The more abrasive 1945 ward teaching message, "when our leaders speak, the thinking has been done," was apparently not a product of the Twelve, who complained that they had nothing to do with the ward teaching program (138); the statement was subsequently repudiated by President George Albert Smith, a correction that does not satisfy Quinn because it occurred in a private letter rather than in a public declara-

tion. Yet presumably Quinn would acknowledge the public and official nature of J. Reuben Clark's 1940 general conference statement, "We are not infallible in our judgment, and we err" (7, 413). It is bad enough that many Mormons read claims of infallibility into the counsel of our leaders, and that some leaders might not do enough to discourage such readings; scholars like Quinn need not give confirmation to such folk understandings.

Space does not permit many other examples of questionable interpretations by Quinn, but one more can be found in chapter 10, where Quinn discusses implications of the LDS church position as a potent national (and even international) political force, especially in contrast to the Utah arena, where it has always figured large in politics. Quinn uses the campaign against the ERA as a model of things to come, and he is probably right in seeing in the hierarchy an increasing willingness to influence the outcome of national political conflicts that they see as morally crucial. He identifies, also cor-

rectly, the same-sex marriage issue as a "new crusade" for the hierarchy (402-6). However, rather than crediting the Brethren with motives drawn from the LDS moral and theological worldview, he sees their initiatives as simply "anti-gay" and "homophobic" (404-05). In doing so, he adopts the pejorative rhetoric of the gay rights lobby, whose agenda does not necessarily reflect the views of all homosexual persons or exhaust the range of civilized and humane ways of addressing the homosexual condition.

It is always hazardous to identify a specific public policy position with a generic character trait like bigotry. Just as I would not consider opposition to the Church's position on abortion or the ERA to be inherently "anti-Mormon," or disagreement with the NAACP on affirmative action as inherently "racist," so I would not consider opposition to legitimizing same-sex marriage as inherently "homophobic," and probably neither would all homosexuals. To be sure, once the Brethren begin flexing political muscle, they are injecting religious interests into politics,

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whether or not they claim that an issue is "moral"; and, as Quinn points out, they must be willing to pay a price in popular disapproval for being politically incorrect. Yet, one need not interpret their motives as inhumane or bigoted.

NOW a few words on less substantial matters. Some reallocation of space in the book might have allowed room for some of the comparative and theoretical additions I called for above. To begin with, the selected chronology (appendix 5), although a colorful collection both of important events and of Mormon trivia, could have been reduced in size considerably by applying some criteria of saliency. In most instances, the saliency seems clear, but in others it is hard to understand the selection criteria. It is as though Quinn had simply emptied out his accumulated files of clippings. On the one hand, the chronology regularly mentions salacious items of dubious historical moment, like the 1848 excommunication (and subsequent rebaptism) of a bishop for the sexual abuse of his two foster daughters. On the other hand, the chronology overlooks the 1989 policy decision to let defectors "resign" their Church membership without excommunication; also missing is the 1996 interview of President Gordon B. Hinckley on *Sixty Minutes*.

Quinn might also have easily saved some space in his voluminous notes. One of his trademarks is exhaustive documentation, a fine scholarly trait in general; but there is such a thing as overkill. An example is Quinn's tendency to cite numerous (as opposed to two or three) published versions of the same syndicated newspaper article, which often may take up half a page or more. Another example is digressionary lists of works only tenuously connected to the topic under discussion. Why three full pages of notes on right-wing ideology and activities in the United States at large? Why three pages on the subjugation of Native American Indians by whites? Or on 1960s radicalism, the history of U.S. feminism, or the Christian (Protestant) Right? Adequate documentation does not call for such extensive bibliographic lists on general, non-Mormon topics.

At the other extreme, one could argue with the instances in which Quinn relies on only one source, such as Ernest Wilkinson, Francis Gibbons, or Samuel W. Taylor, to establish an important point. These three sources have known biases, but they are at least knowledgeable on things Mormon, unlike William Appleman Williams, who has a conspicuous political bias and no known cre-

entials for assessing the motives of LDS leaders (617, note 131). Serious citational gaffes are rare (e.g. "Warren P. Wadsworth" for Warner P. Woodworth, 489, note 282), but there is a recurring problem, presumably with the word-processing software, in which an extra "ap" was added to the letters "ch"; thus one finds strange words like "churchap," "speechchap," and "Marchap" appearing now and then. More thorough proofreading could have eliminated those. All in all, however, both author and editor are to be congratulated for a dense collection of notes and citations remarkably free of errors, at least on a per-page basis.

Finally, the writing, while generally good enough, suffered from a studied avoidance, by either Quinn or his editor, of the present-perfect and past-perfect tenses. I encountered many places in which greater temporal precision would have been achieved by the

insertion of a "has" or a "had" with a past participle, rather than the simple (but temporally ambiguous) past tense.

All in all, despite a shortage of comparative and theoretical interpretation, a redundant compounding of hierarchy failings and foibles, and a surplus of tangential notes, this is a very solid and important book. Anyone seeking real depth in Mormon history will want this two-volume series in his or her library. 

NOTES

1. D. Michael Quinn, "Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon Political Conflicts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26:2 (summer 1993): 1-87.

2. See account by Becky Johns, "The Manti Mormons: Rise of the Latest Mormon Church," *SUNSTONE* 19:2 (June 1996): 30-36.



STARVED ROCK

The listening-watch passed without
any movement. Then at first light
one of us went out slow
to circle the rock
wishing hard for a track or two
or any sign.

A twig-break might bring our
minds all together. Our hearts—
light as arrows spinning on their way
through shadow, through sun—
quelled every want to speak.

Something you don't have to see
those ghosts down there—
you know.

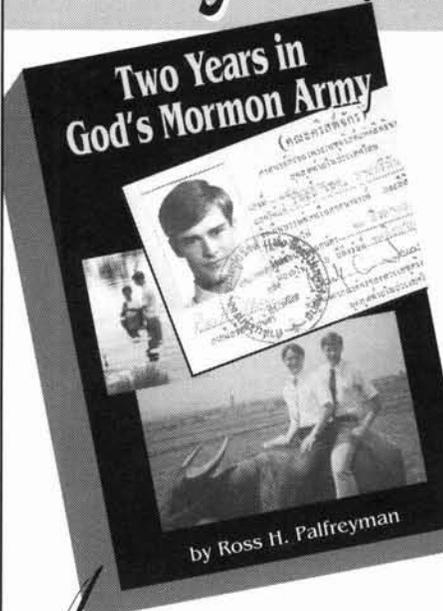
We went to the sun, we held that
rock smooth all night.
We fed her our only touch
past sorrow, surrender, hope
until rain-tongues slept inside
our last mouths and she spoke
to our backs, our wing bones
her murmur-lilt in that whisper
to never die, to never leave.

—MARK MITCHELL

BOOK  NOTES

Two Years in God's Mormon Army

by
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THIS IS THE PLACE

by Peter Rock
Anchor Books, 1997
245 pages, \$12.00 paperback

Reviewed by Paul Rawlins



WHEN PETER ROCK read from *This Is the Place* at the King's English bookstore, he recited the first paragraph from memory:

No one is satisfied where they are. Even the angels descend

slowly through the clouds to put their feet on the ground. Swimming delights them; their wings shed water and, splashing clumsily, they terrify fish. For angels, clumsiness is a welcome relief—sometimes they lose their balance, but they must practice their stumbling, trick their grace. Yes, they drag their wings through the desert, across the salt flats, they gather along the border to watch what will happen.

Last winter, Peter Rock's editor said she would send me a copy of a book she thought I would like. Because the author was from Utah, and the book was full of Mormons and the West. When I read that first paragraph, I didn't know what I might be in for in terms of story, but with prose that beautiful and flawless, I didn't much care. However, Rock delivers on the narrative level, too. His novel is a solid and complete package.

This Is the Place is a beautiful and disturbing book, with surprising images that linger. You won't forget the ending, either. The story Rock tells is a love story—albeit love of a malignant, one-sided sort. It is an old man's love story, sinister and obsessive, always with something wrong about it. The narrator is a nearly nameless, seventy-year-old, Wendover, Nevada, blackjack dealer, "an old man, a ragged culmination, and that's an interesting thing to be." His obsession is Charlotte, a nineteen-year-old Mormon girl from Bountiful, Utah. He circles round her in Wendover, follows her to Las Vegas and later on to Utah. He is certain of their destiny together, a certainty that gives him patience and, when necessary, justification.

Rock's title, *This is the Place*, presents an irony that strikes me as so obvious and

fraught with potential I wonder why I have never seen it used before. Wendover Will, a sixty-foot metal giant, stands outside the Stateline Casino, one arm cocked in a wave and the other pointing to the casino. Beneath him, a sign declares, "This is the place." Over one hundred miles to the east stands his counterpart, Brigham Young, making the same declaration. The road between them is moral and metaphoric, as well as literal, and all these roads have their place in the narrator's journey toward Charlotte and in Charlotte's own journeys.

The book is full of exact and remarkable detail, mingled with the bizarre and the grotesque, as is the narrator's mind. Mystics, crop circles, cryptic messages in the desert salt, and the narrator himself all make their home in the Nevada desert. For the most part, the combination of well-wrought prose, detail, and story line is fascinating, though perhaps a bit strained in spots—Charlotte's encounter with the showgirl and her dress, the happenings in the ghost town. Though everything is made to fit, the story lists a bit toward strangeness for strangeness sake. But this is a strange world.

Charlotte's being a Mormon introduces Mormonism into that world, as she tests her upbringing. The narrator has his own ends for religion: "I read every last word [of the Book of Mormon], of course, searching for clues, hoping for leverage on Charlotte. . . . At the end you are asked to look into your heart, to ask if these things are true. They count on people surprising themselves, being disconcerted, but I know my heart well. Where else could I go, where would I find myself?" The narrator, imagining a celestial kingdom he could share with Charlotte, knows what the cost would be. It's a pleasant fantasy. He discourses on angels, noting that Mormon angels are the hardest to recognize—no wings. Such theology is woven throughout and becomes a vital part of the novel's world, but not the whole. This world, this place, is ultimately the narrator's.

In the end, the novel is disturbing—it's a disturbing story, made more so by being beautifully told. But it's a good read, too. I imagine *This Is the Place* to be a sign in its own right, a sign of a powerful young author who, I hope, will have more to offer.

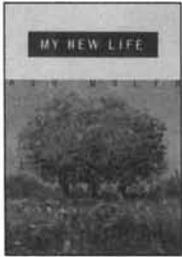
PAUL RAWLINS is a senior editor with Aspen Books and author of *No Lie Like Love* (University of Georgia Press), a collection of short stories.

MY NEW LIFE

by Ron Molen

Signature Books, 1996
235 pages, \$14.95 paperback

Reviewed by Eric Jones



A TALE of boys and tomboys, tree-houses, swords and BB guns, dead cats and railroad tracks, Ron Molen's *My New Life* is a *Tom Sawyer*-esque, *Stand by Me*-ish recollective journey back into the narrator's idyllic Indiana

childhood of the Great Depression. As his new life begins, the seven-year-old, Mormon Tom Bradshaw—"Wart" to his buddies—has just moved with his family into a new Chicago suburb, and he immediately falls in with the rag-tags who run and play and fight in the back yards and empty lots around their homes. Their first misdeed? A bonfire burning—of almost religious import to these kids—of their newly built dirt, grass, and wood fortress—lest the "bastards" from across the tracks get the satisfaction of tearing it down. "Grumble struck the match on a rock that had some ritual meaning, then lit the torch. . . . Faces orange by the flames recorded a primitive joy, mouths open, eyes glistening. . . . Then the spell was broken. A man across the alley called, 'Fire!' and all hell broke loose. . . . I realized then that life beyond the back yard was frightening, confusing, unpredictable. I knew I never wanted to go back." (8–9).

My New Life is tom-foolery and a good-time tale. The first time I read it, aloud, as my brother and I drove from Salt Lake to Los Angeles, we laughed til we hurt. But Molen's tale also reaches into and underneath a young boy's growing up and what that grow means to the recounting narrator. For while the narrator, Tom Bradshaw fifty years later, is largely absent from the telling, there is an occasional and subtle glimpse of the grown-up Wart as he interprets the events of his childhood: "To see the cluster of trees in silhouette at sunset, with hairless, chirping primates [Wart's buddies] moving easily from tree to tree, was a spiritual experience—a direct revelation on the origin of the species" (19). This "revelation on the origin of the species" is, I think, the best reason to read *My New Life*, and begs two questions: Of what "species" is the narrator speaking? and Where does the species come from, what is its origin?

On one level, the narrator is talking about the origin of the human species—how these kids flying through the air like monkeys must tell us something about our human evolution and also about our longings for flying and freedom. But, another level is a revelation about these particular kids, how one grew up to narrate *My New Life*. What species of person is Wart, and who is Tom Bradshaw? Who is this sympathetic, but not sentimental, narrator? Wart is that eight-year-old-boy who learned that he never wanted to go back to the predictable, the safe. The species that emerges in Wart's new life is the kind of person who, not only through scratched knees and practical jokes but also by observing racism and crime in the confusing adult world around him, desires this new, though frightening and confusing, life.

The Wart that will eventually emerge to narrate the tale reminds me of the Pat Bagley cartoon wherein the liberal, free-spirit ex-

horts the timid man in the egg shell: "Come out of your shell! Experience life with all its complexity, angst, transcendence, vicissitudes, joy, anguish, uncertainty, and existential tragedy and comic paradox!" (*Sunstone*, Dec. 1996). *My New Life* is the story of one such free-spirit fondly remembering childhood and those two years which he can look back upon as his psychological coming-out into the frightening world. The tale is full of ritualistic games, primitive emotions, freedoms and losses, all told by the subtle voice of an understanding adult.

This book is a ripping boyhood adventure story that succeeds in being more. It takes readers into their own childhoods, and to seeing the pranks and quirks of childhood as spiritual elements, as the foundation for adulthood responses to life's complexities.

ERIC JONES is managing editor for SUNSTONE.



"No, a question period will not follow!"

DRAWING BY WOODMAN. COPYRIGHT 1996
THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE, INC.

N E W S

BYU BANS RODIN NUDES

BYU IS once again engaged in a debate over allowing classroom-appropriate material to be accessible to the general public.

Over a decade ago, the BYU administration agreed to change its policy at the campus's Varsity Theater from running only G-rated fare suitable for faculty children to running adult films targeted at college students. One of the first films shown under the new policy was *Lion in Winter*, which coincidentally ran during the annual Women's Conference. Its openness about the homosexuality of a future British king outraged some of the female visitors on campus and threatened the new policy.

Three years ago BYU made national news when administrators refused to show *Schindler's List* because producer/director Steven Spielberg would not allow the violence and nudity to be edited out of the acclaimed film about one Nazi's rescuing Jews from Polish death camps.

And now, this past fall, the Lord's university drew national and local media derision when school administrators decided to ban from campus four sculptures of a touring exhibition of Rodin. The traveling collection had been requested, authorized, and paid for by BYU about eighteen months ago, but the decision to censor parts of the exhibit was made over the two months preceding the exhibition's opening on 27 October. The censored

pieces will remain in crates through the exhibition's 24 January 1998 closing at the BYU Museum of Art.

"We knew we were going to get attention for this, and on the surface it seems like an unusual decision," admitted museum director Campbell Gray to the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

CENSORED SCULPTURES

Four male nudes left in crates.

Francois August Rene Rodin (1840-1917), a French sculptor, is most famous for his piece "The Thinker." This sublime piece depicts a nude male in contemplation; it is not included in the exhibit, "The Hands of Rodin, a Tribute to B. Gerald Cantor." But another of Rodin's more famous works, "The Kiss," is included in the exhibit and was one of the pieces BYU refuses to display.

"The Kiss" is an erotic piece depicting a nude man and woman in embrace. The marble sculpture is considered to be one of Rodin's most moving and passionate pieces. Other banned pieces in the exhibit are "The Prodigal Son," "Monument to Balzac," and "Saint John The Baptist Preaching."

"Monument to Balzac" was described by BYU President Merrill J. Bateman as a "nude male in the act of self-gratification," according to an Associated Press story. Honore Balzac was an early nineteenth-century French author and



philosopher. Other people have offered alternate interpretations of "Monument to Balzac" than Bateman's. Some have simply described this Rodin piece as an unflattering, obese portrayal of Balzac, without any mention of "self-gratification."

The other two sculptures left in crates are also of nude males. "Saint John The Baptist Preaching" depicts the prophet walking naked in the desert and is often thought to be showing the prophet's mortality. Gray told the AP that, "Everyone knows the prophet is mortal. . . . [b]ut this conception of [John the Baptist] is made less than what we would regard as reverent or honorable. It doesn't show the prophet side of the man at all."

About fifty other Rodin sculptures in the exhibition are on display at the BYU Museum of Art.

ANNOUNCING THE BAN

University's action surprises many.

"The Hands of Rodin" exhibition had been seen in many different venues across North America before its arrival at BYU. But at no other venue, including other religiously affiliated schools, had any piece of the collection been censored.

On 27 October, opening day of the exhibition, the decision

to ban certain works of Rodin was made public. An AP story, which was picked up nationally by newspapers such as *USA Today*, quoted Gray as saying, "We have felt that the nature of those works are such that the viewer will be concentrating on them in a way that is not good for us."

That same day the Church-owned *Deseret News* further quoted Gray as saying that the excluded pieces did not convey a positive message about either Rodin or the exhibition. "Nudity isn't the issue, it's more the latter [lack of dignity]."

The *Salt Lake Tribune* also quoted the museum director in an enigmatic statement: [The decision to exclude] "is more a process of trying to ensure that the integrity of the exhibit is maintained."

The *Tribune* also noted that Gray denied that censorship is occurring and quoted him further: "Censorship connotes a sense of fear. If we had a sense of fear, we wouldn't do this because of the media attention we are drawing."

AFTERMATH

Exhibit's owners cringe; students protest.

Rachel Blackburn, curator for the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, which owns the exhibition's contents, was quoted in the AP story as saying, "We

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haven't had any other institutions that felt the need to not exhibit any pieces by Rodin. I can't say that we weren't surprised. We were."

The foundation's spokesperson, Jeffrey W. Schneider, told the *Tribune*, "We're not interested in getting into a position of criticizing BYU. We just think it is unfortunate that they made this decision."

Others, however, felt fine about criticizing the decision. News stories, letters to editors, and the Internet were filled with attacks and defenses of the policy.

Some feminists noted that the university felt uncomfortable about male nudes but let Rodin's female nudes remain in the exhibit.

Others ironically noted that the museum gift shop sells books that contain photographs of the banned statues and that BYU humanities and art courses discuss the statues. Official and unofficial defenders countered that it wasn't BYU students who were being protected by the ban but children who frequently visit the museum, often in school field trips, who might unknowingly stumble upon the nudes.

The *Tribune* noted that Clare Vincent, national art expert and associate curator of European sculpture for New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, is mystified by the BYU decision. "I wouldn't have thought that it was still very controversial. There are a great many things that are more shocking on television."

Some BYU students are likewise mystified. Justin Jones applied for a permit to stage in front of the Abraham Smoot Administration Building a student demonstration against the banning. Jones was told that his permit request would take a minimum of five days to process, and, since he had already planned the demonstration for a few days sooner, he and his group demonstrated sans permit. Campus police were present but did not intervene.

"Don't ban Rodin," was the chant de jour for the estimated

two hundred, demonstrating BYU students. Placards they carried voiced the messages "Would we have to put shorts on the David [by Michelangelo]?" and "We can protect ourselves," according to the *News*.

University administrators meanwhile passed out fliers describing how they had offered to meet with the protest's organizers to discuss the situation, but their offer had been rebuffed. The *News* reported that Academic Vice President Alan Wilkins promised students an "opportunity to air their concerns before administrators in a meeting large enough to accommodate all who desire to attend."

According to an anonymous source who was present, the demonstration lost momentum when one person, not affiliated with the organizers nor apparently in their camp, started to yell the "f-word" and threatened to strip. By then, the demonstrating students had voiced their opinions about Rodin's nudity and seemed uninterested in the real thing.

MAKING THE DECISION *Bateman reveals the details.*

Wilkins's promised meeting took shape on 13 November 1997, in the form of a question-and-answer session with President Bateman. While the session was open to any and all student questions, it was specifically devoted to concerns about the exhibition ban.

In the Q-&-A session, Bateman confirmed that even before the exhibition arrived at BYU, university administrators had considered censoring it. Bateman elaborated upon the decision-making process. Reportedly, museum director Gray had warned



Bateman two months in advance that certain pieces might be inappropriate. However, Bateman and other administrators waited until the statues actually arrived on campus in October before finalizing their decision to exclude the specific Rodin works.

Gray had earlier been quoted in the university's student newspaper, the *Daily Universe*, as saying, "This has been a process that has taken some months to consider."

"There have been various people in the university administration, the Board of Trustees, all meeting together on a regular basis looking at it. And that's the standard process, not that people are involved that extensively, in a lot of cases."

Still, after letting Gray defend and explain the decision for the initial, firey day, Bateman, in his meeting with students, at last took final responsibility for the decision to ban. "In the end, a decision was taken in which I was involved and ultimately responsible for, to take those pieces out and keep them crated. That was what we did," the *Tribune* quoted.

And in the *Universe* report, Bateman criticized those students who had publicly demonstrated, but he simultaneously validated their disagreement. "We expect different views, we'd be disappointed if you did not have dif-

ferent views, but the way we resolve the difference is not a protest."

Bateman also admitted to error in the process. "This [the Rodin exhibition] came through without adequate screening," Bateman said, adding that the university will avoid such problems in the future by simply refusing to contract with any such exhibitions that may contain questionable materials.

PRESIDENTIAL CENSURE *Church leader disagrees with student actions.*

Nine days before Bateman's session with students, LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley addressed twenty-two thousand students in the university's Marriott Center. While gearing his remarks toward Church-sponsored education in general, Hinckley obliquely referred to the BYU student demonstrators: "Sometimes I wish we could support a dozen institutions such as this, then I pick up the paper and I'm glad we're not." The prophet also said that many students with whom he had recently visited at Utah State University were as worthy of celestial blessings as were BYU students. "They were much better behaved than some of you I saw on the television the other night," the *Tribune* quoted

UPDATE

FARMS AND BYU UNITE

THE FOUNDATION for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), an organization dedicated to scholarly Mormon scripture research, has long had a de facto association with BYU. But in October 1997, President Gordon B. Hinckley and the BYU board of trustees invited FARMS to associate de jure with BYU.

President Hinckley said FARMS "began modestly many years ago and represents the efforts of sincere and dedicated scholars. It has grown to provide strong support and defense of the Church on a professional basis. . . . [with] salutary effects both in addressing the Church's critics and in bolstering members who may be wavering. . . . I see a bright future for this effort now through the University."

The FARMS board voted to accept the invitation and begin negotiating the relationship. Privately, however, some FARMS members are not happy about joining BYU and fear their research will be censored.

FARMS began in California eighteen years ago under the leadership of John W. Welch. But when Welch became a law professor at BYU, FARMS moved with him to Provo. Since then, FARMS has had "a fruitful relationship" with BYU. FARMS staff has largely been BYU faculty or employees, and BYU once provided space on campus for the group. Still, the recent invitation culminated years of friction between official BYU institutions—especially Religious Education—and the independent FARMS, whose scholarship often rivaled that of authorized Church researchers and instructors. Several years ago, FARMS and BYU agreed to a formal protocol outlining their relationship; now that relationship is made a marriage.

Under the new arrangement, FARMS will receive financial and institutional benefits of being under the BYU umbrella, although it will continue its own fundraising. FARMS will not be placed under any existing university department or college, and the FARMS board and president will report directly to the BYU vice president for research. BYU President Merrill Bateman said, "Bringing FARMS into the University will give both entities more visibility. I am excited about the work that we will be able to do together."

BYU officials have promised not to interfere with FARMS' editorial policies or administration, but the *Salt Lake Tribune* reports that some concern remains. "FARMS has often had a polemical edge and we are curious to see how or whether that will be accommodated," said Daniel Peterson, FARMS chair and BYU professor of Islamic studies and Arabic. "The minute I write something offensive, we'll see if I get a call." Nevertheless, Peterson is "cautiously optimistic" and adds that BYU sponsorship "will open up interesting possibilities."

CHURCH BREAKS GROUND FOR NEW GENERAL CONFERENCE MEETING HALL

ON JULY 24, President Gordon B. Hinckley broke ground for a new assembly building on the block immediately north of Temple Square. The square already includes two meeting buildings—the smaller Assembly Hall, which is still used for some Salt Lake stake conferences, and the larger Tabernacle, which seats six thousand and has housed general conferences since its completion in 1867.

The new, stone and glass building with landscaped rooftop terraces will house a twenty-one-thousand-seat auditorium, with orchestra, mezzanine, and balcony levels. It will also house a one-thousand-seat theater for dramatic productions like those previ-

ously staged in the Promised Valley Playhouse. Four levels of underground parking will lie below the auditoriums, and a utility tunnel will connect the building to Temple Square. In addition to general conferences, the assembly building will host religious pageants, theatrical productions, cultural performances, and other Church conferences, such as regional and area conferences and special firesides. It is projected to be in use for April general conference in 2000.

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that the estimated cost of the building is nearly \$250 million. A similar, nineteen-thousand-seat structure was considered for the same city block in 1940 by then-Church President Heber J. Grant, but it was rejected because of expense and because Church growth made even such a building too small. While the Church hasn't yet settled on an official name for the structure, President Hinckley jokingly referred to the Romans' killing of Christians and said it would not be called a coliseum. Some Salt Lake City wags have nick-named it the Supernacle.

CHURCH REACHES TEN MILLION

GROWING FROM an original six members in 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints topped the ten-million mark sometime during the first week of November 1997, according to Church statisticians. The Church took 117 years to reach the one-million-member mark, but the latest million took just three years, according to the *Deseret News*. The Church is now officially in 160 countries, and with only 4,890,000 members in the United States, more than half of all Saints reside elsewhere.

CHURCH MAY HELP LATIN AMERICA GROUP PROMOTE HEALTH

THE PAN AMERICAN Health Organization recently invited the Church to consider becoming its partner on disease prevention and health promotion. In August 1997, George A. O. Alleyne, director of the health agency, visited Church leaders and urged them to use their existing structures to help address severe health problems in Latin America, where the Church has a strong presence. He told the *Deseret News* that it is unusual for his organization to partner with churches, "but we have come to the conclusion that if we want to make a permanent impact . . . we will need partners." The organization has also extended invitations to Catholic and Jewish leaders.

Alleyne said the First Presidency expressed interest and asked him to come up with specific proposals. Isaac C. Ferguson, director of LDS Humanitarian Services, said the Church's emphasis on family health and literacy fit with Alleyne's desire to work with existing programs. The Church has twenty thousand missionaries in Latin America. The Pan American Health Organization hopes to tackle basic sanitation and adolescent health issues, among others. "We like to think if we put our hands and souls and hearts together, we can make some difference for health in the Americas," Alleyne told the *News*.

CHURCH HELPS FUND STUDY

SALT LAKE CITY Mayor DeeDee Corradini—who in times past has been accused of unethically using her position to coerce business leaders into contributing money toward her personal debts—once again had her back against the wall, needing to come up with

\$600,000. This time, she asked the LDS church for the money.

However, no one will accuse Corradini of padding her own fortunes with Church money. The city's redevelopment agency was contributing \$1 million toward a study of a light-rail line between the Salt Lake International Airport and the University of Utah, passing by the LDS church headquarters. But the city had to raise another \$600,000 in order for the federal government to put up the remainder of the study's \$8 million price tag.

"When I described the dilemma [of the study] and said we needed some immediate help, they were quick to respond," Corradini told the *Deseret News*. The Church pledged its gift on 14 November 1997.

The Church, which is neutral on the light-rail issue, donated the money through its Deseret Management Corporation, which oversees the Church's profit-making enterprises and its Salt Lake real estate holdings. "The gift will include no tithing monies," said Rodney H. Brady, president of the corporation.

With the study now under way, the rail line could conceivably be completed by the year 2002, when Salt Lake City will host the Winter Olympics. The Church's contribution to the study is being praised by many Utahns, both Mormon and non-Mormon.

"It means a lot that the church would see the wisdom of promoting transit in our region and that we should move along with studies on sensible planning for alternatives," said Roger Borgenicht, a non-Mormon director of the planning group Assist, Inc. "A nod from the church is important."

BYU FORMS FAMILY VOICE

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY'S J. Reuben Clark Law School and David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies have formed Family Voice, a non-governmental organization (NGO) to promote family issues around the world. Family Voice has articulated a three-part mission.

First, the group advocates family causes before international governmental bodies. Family Voice has applied for accreditation to lobby U.N. conferences. According to the *Deseret News*, Family Voice monitors United Nations documents for anti-family language, including policies that are pro-same-sex marriage and that pit women against men or children against their parents. According to the *News*, BYU law professor Richard G. Wilkins said that some organizations that lobby the U.N. believe that families oppress children and should be replaced by governments. Family Voice co-director Cory Leonard said many nations "are surprised that there are academics from a university in the United States who stand up" for the traditional family.

Second, Family Voice educates people about the importance of the family and the dangers of its enemies. This informational mission may include hosting academic conferences, scholarly exchanges, and a family-law training center. Recently, Wilkins, Leonard, and law school Dean H. Reese Hansen spent ten days discussing with Romanian officials ways that BYU can help eastern European families.

Third, Family Voice facilitates outreach programs for direct assistance to the world's families. "We're not just going to stand around and say, 'We ought to have stronger families,' and leave it to platitudes," Wilkins told the *News*. The organization will coordinate projects between BYU's Ezra Taft Benson Agriculture and Food Institute and the

Church's humanitarian NGO organization, LDS Charities.

Family Voice is guided by the "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve.

CARTER SAYS MORMONS ARE CHRISTIANS

DISAGREEING WITH the leadership of his own church, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said, when questioned by a *Deseret News* reporter, that Mormons are indeed Christians.

"I think that . . . among the worst things we can do, as believers in Christ, is to spend our time condemning others, who profess faith in Christ and try to have a very narrow definition of who is and who is not an acceptable believer and a child of God.

"I think this is one of the main reasons that Christ not only said once, but repeated on other occasions, that we should not judge others, we should let God be the judge of the sincerity of a human mind or heart, and let us spend our time trying to alleviate suffering. . . ."

Next summer, SBC will hold its annual conference in Salt Lake City, and fifteen thousand Baptists will flood Utah. Door-to-door witnessing is expected to be part of the program. Carter feels a personal mandate to share Jesus with those who don't know about him. But as for proselytizing other Christians, Carter's attitude is in line with his own congregation which, while more liberal than the SBC norm, would "have no interest in . . . trying to convert Mormons to be good old Baptists like me," he said.

POP DIVA FINDS DIVINE IN MORMONISM

GLADYS KNIGHT, of " . . . and the Pips" fame (she's been a solo act since 1989), has recently released her memoir, *Between Each Line of Pain and Glory: My Life Story* (Hyperion, \$24.95). The *San Jose Mercury News* (Cal.) reported that Knight's third husband filed for divorce just before the book went to press, and Knight had to rewrite the final chapter. Knight said that through this divorce, "Heavenly Father's seen fit to bless me to get to him, his light."

Knight joined the LDS church in August 1997, after having previously been a Baptist, a Catholic, and a member of the Church of God in Christ. *Between Each Line of Pain and Glory* does not contain an account of Knight's conversion to Mormonism, although according to the *News*, she wears her Mormon "affiliation on her sleeve as brazenly as she does that nail color."

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St. Louis Temple, as seen from next door.

FALSE WITNESS

MARK TWAIN said, "There are 869 forms of lying, but only one of them has been squarely forbidden. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.'"

WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY . . .

NOT LONG AGO, syndicated sports columnist Michael Wilbon wrote about the Chicago Bulls' Dennis Rodman and his trashing of Mormons, but Wilbon's column took a surprising detour and quoted lengthy excerpts from 2 Nephi 5:21-24 to show a racist side of Mormon doctrine. When the *Washington Post* ran the column, two Mormons came to our aid. Michael Barrett defended the faith in his usual style by raking muck the Brethren want kept on the bottom. (An earlier act got him excommunicated, see SUNSTONE 17:2[Sept. 1994].) But Les Crue's racist defense of our anti-racism defies all logic:

"Wilbon takes special exception to a scripture . . . that seems racially insensitive to him. By quoting out of context, he implies that Mormons are racists. We certainly are not. In the parts that Wilbon does not quote, the verses explain that the people called the Lamanites received the blackness of skin because they disobeyed God. This was done to keep them from affecting the Nephite people.

"Another verse that Wilbon doesn't quote explains the 'cursing' that would ensue from interfaith and mixed-race marriages. Even today such marriages are much more difficult, and as a result, end in divorce more often. I don't know if that's the definition of 'cursing,' but I imagine it's a good example.

"In the future, I would ask Wilbon to quote fully and directly . . ."

ORRIN BETTER ROCK WELL

THE BEATLES had George Martin. The Velvet Underground had Andy Warhol. And The Free Agency had Orrin Hatch. That's right, Orrin Hatch. Before his tenure as a U.S. senator from Utah, Hatch had a brief stint as rock band manager. Called The Free Agency, the group was comprised of "former drug users who became converts to

the LDS Church," Hatch told a senate committee holding a hearing on copyright law. Hatch said the group, who sought his financial backing and legal assistance when he was an attorney in Utah, "wrote gospel lyrics to a moderate beat. . . . They could have made it, if they[d] had a better impresario." Hatch's disclosure came as he questioned the Eagles' lead singer, Don Henley. Interestingly enough, Henley did not seek Hatch's help, legal or otherwise, for the Eagles.

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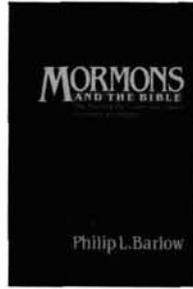
What's a Mother to Do? by Ann Edwards Cannon ~~\$12.95~~ \$11.65

Parenting may not seem all that humorous to some people—namely mothers—but in drawing upon her own life's experiences, popular Mormon humorist Ann Cannon demonstrates that raising kids can be as unpredictable and hilarious as is any sit-com. For, as mothers know, it's our "goofy" genes that get passed on to the kids! (Signature Books)

Utah in the 1990s: A Demographic Perspective

by Tim B. Heaton, Thomas A. Hirschl, and Bruce A. Chadwick ~~\$19.95~~ \$17.95

From the profound to the humorous, this look at the "land of milk and home-baked cookies," er, Utah, offers bedrock information for both policy-makers and historians and insights for general readers. (Signature Books)

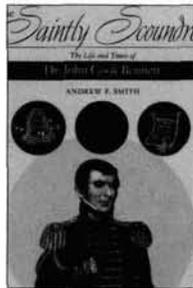


Letting Loose the Hounds by Brady Udall, ~~\$22.00~~ \$19.80

This collection of eleven highly acclaimed and big-hearted tales is set in the small towns of Arizona and Utah. Udall's darkly comic stories move from familiar ground to far-out destinations, taking the reader on a wild, unflinching ride. (W. W. Norton and Co.)

Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion by Philip Barlow

~~\$15.95~~ \$14.35 Back in print, now in paperback! This classic study analyzes key Mormon leaders' approaches to the Bible and demonstrates Mormonism's extraordinary mix of conservative, liberal, and radical ingredients. (Oxford University Press)



God the Mother and Other Theological Essays

by Janice Allred ~~\$24.95~~ \$22.45

From her perspective as a housewife and mother of nine, Allred expounds upon LDS beliefs. Whether or not you agree with her views, you must admit to Allred's skill in stimulating thought-provoking possibilities for empowering women and all Latter-day Saints. (Signature Books)

The Saintry Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett

by Andrew F. Smith ~~\$26.95~~ \$24.25

Bennett, whose roles ranged from Mayor of Nauvoo to "man the Mormons loved to hate," is revealed as "over-baked in the mold of P. T. Barnum." This first-ever Bennett biography shows him to have been a dazzling propagandist and turncoat, even by twentieth-century standards. (University of Illinois Press)

OTHER NEW AND WORTHY BOOKS

- Battle for the Ballot: Essays on Woman Suffrage in Utah, 1870-1896** ed. by Carol Cornwall Madsen, cloth ~~\$39.95~~ \$35.95, paper ~~\$19.95~~ \$17.95
- In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith** ground-breaking, controversial history by Todd Compton, ~~\$29.95~~ \$26.95
- Din of Celestial Birds** stories by Brian Evenson, ~~\$19.95~~ \$9.85
- He's Not My Companion/Defiance** humorous mission video, ~~\$16.95~~ \$15.25
- Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints** essays by Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis ~~\$49.95~~ \$44.95
- Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail** ed. by Carol Cornwall Madsen, ~~\$25.95~~ \$23.35
- Making Space for the Mormons** by Richard L. Bushman, ~~\$6.95~~ \$5.35
- The Mormon Battalion: U.S. Army of the West, 1846-1848** by Norma Baldwin Ricketts, ~~\$22.95~~ \$20.65
- Mormon Sisters** ed. by Claudia L. Bushman, ~~\$17.95~~ \$16.15 (new, 2nd edition)

- My New Life** novel by Ron Molen, ~~\$14.95~~ \$13.45 (See review on p. 74.)
 - No Lie Like Love** short stories by Paul Rawlins, ~~\$24.95~~ \$22.45 (See p. 74.)
 - Stone Spirits** poetry by Susan Howe, ~~\$9.95~~ \$8.95
 - The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power** by D. Michael Quinn, ~~\$44.95~~ \$40.45 (See reviews on pp. 65, 68.)
 - The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power** by D. Michael Quinn, ~~\$29.95~~ \$27.00
 - This is the Place** novel by Peter Rock, ~~\$12.00~~ \$10.80 (See review on p. 75.)
 - Trail of Hope, The Story of the Mormon Trail** by William Slaughter, ~~\$34.95~~ \$31.45
 - Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy** by Terry L. Givens, ~~\$36.00~~ \$31.50
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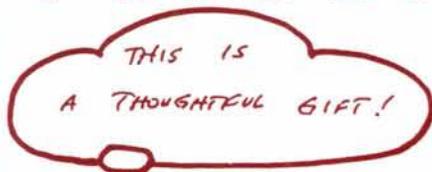
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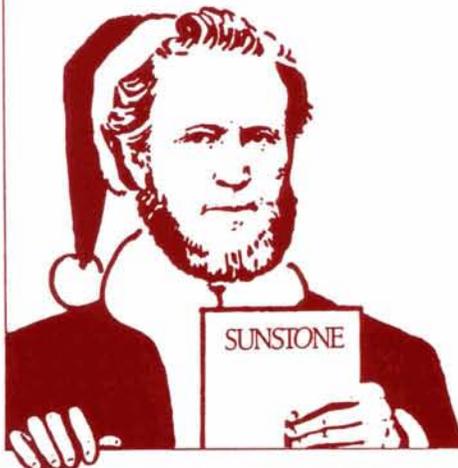
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