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MORMONISM AS PRAXIS

by Phyllis Barber,
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John Dewey Remy,
Jana Riess, and
Holly Welker (p.16)

KEEPING FAITH AND READING KAFKA and THE WALLS LEFT STANDING

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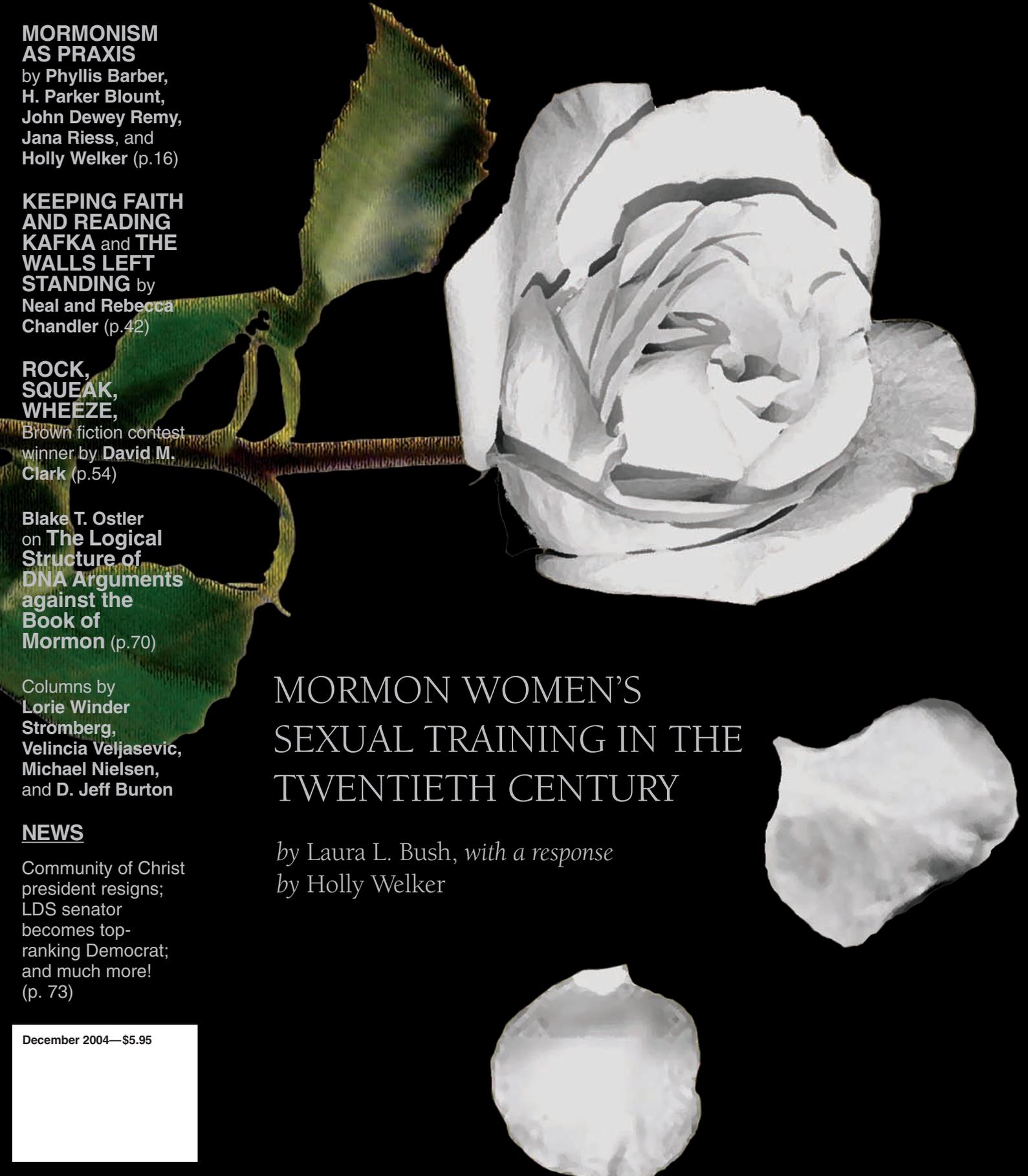
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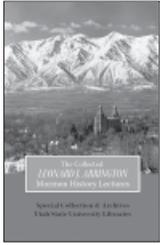
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and much more!
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by Laura L. Bush, *with a response*
by Holly Welker

December 2004—\$5.95





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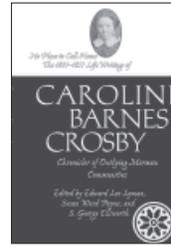
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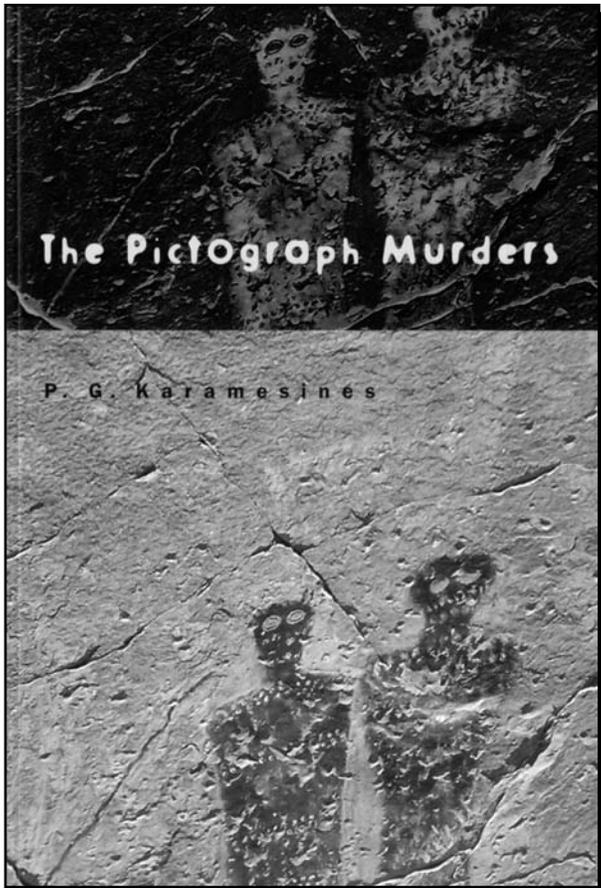
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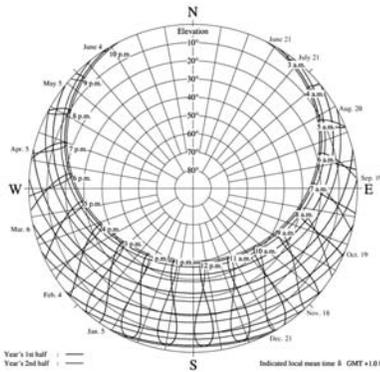
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YEA, YEA  NAY, NAY

STRIKING A BALANCE

DUANE JEFFERY'S ARTICLE ON NOAH'S Flood (SUNSTONE, October 2004) serves as a wonderful reminder that there are still many subjects yet to be explored in Mormonism. Jeffery could have simply compared the scientific record with the biblical and apocryphal accounts of the Flood. But this approach might only have made believers in the Flood myth look foolish, and some may have construed Jeffery as ridiculing those who choose to accept the traditional version of the story. Instead, after presenting some of the scientific challenges, Jeffery delves into theories proposing where the Flood myth might have originated. By doing so, he introduces us to the fascinating Black Sea hypothesis.

All too often, those of us of a more skeptical bent are busy trying to debunk biblical tales and faith-promoting stories so that others may "see the light" as we have. Perhaps this stems from our own insecurity about our disbelief, paralleling the need of believers to reassure themselves by converting others to their way of thinking. Both sides of this same coin become so mired in questions of historicity or accuracy that they miss out on the value religious stories and traditions have to offer us. Jeffery's fine article can help us take a step towards more fully appreciating biblical myths.

Admittedly, after reading this unique article, I was initially disappointed to come upon yet more articles on the "blacks and the priesthood" issue. I'm not so naive as to believe the issue is behind us and that, as some suggest, we just need to get over it. But I wonder how much there is left to say. Of course, this puts publications such as SUNSTONE in a bind—damned if you do, damned if you don't. Yet the two reflections in the October issue do have important things to say. Armand Mauss's article, although not loaded with new information, is nonetheless important. By using a question and answer format, it clarifies the issue and avoids the easy route of bashing the Church or accusing it of racism. Mauss's approach is a good reminder that it's not necessarily what you say, but how you say it.

Despite looking at an old subject, Robert Rees's article found new things to say. Progressive Mormons have been crowing for years for an apology for past racist teachings. We've been so busy cataloguing a list of abuses and horror stories, we haven't both-

ered to offer important precedents for official apologies and renunciations. By reminding us of the strength, not weakness, manifest in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation work, as well as specific recent apologies to the LDS Church from the state of Illinois and certain Christian groups, Rees's article strengthens the case for the Church to apologize for its past. So although my initial reaction might have been a groan and muttering of, "Not again," Rees showed there is much more to say and do around this issue.

PAUL H. JOHNSTON
Phoenix, Arizona

THE GENDER CABOOSE

I ENJOYED GLEN LAMBERT'S "TEN Issues in Mormon Marriages" (SUNSTONE, October 2004). His description of "hearing at least four men . . . tearfully share the 'beautiful' story of how they proposed to their wives: 'God and the church come first in my life. Would you be willing to be second or third?'" reminded me of a pre-marriage-ceremony talk I once heard. In his remarks, the temple sealer equated marriage with a toy train. He cast the husband as the engine who by himself would doubtless go too fast and derail. The husband-engine would definitely need a caboose to provide the "drag" to keep him on track.

The sealer didn't discuss any other rolling stock—his train was only engine and caboose. And obviously the brother had no idea what purpose the no-longer-used cabooses had served. But clearly very pleased with his image, he asked, "Would the bride be willing to be that caboose?"

Maybe the brothers present thought the analogy was beautiful. Maybe not all of us sisters rolled our eyes. How I wish I'd had the chance to advise that sealer that one railroad-slang term for caboose is "crummy."

BARBARA J. BANNER
Los Angeles, California

SEEING WITH NEW EYES

THE OCTOBER 2004 SUNSTONE arrived today. I have just finished reading two wonderful items—the devotional, "Self-Righteousness: A Parable for Our Time," by Frances Lee Menlove, and the editorial, "Shifting," by Dan Wotherspoon. For me, both are closely related.

I easily see Menlove's parable addressed to the majority of active Church members as

Pharisees and to gay and lesbian Mormons as the tax collectors. A beautiful and stunning realization came as I also saw that we could just as easily reverse the roles, seeing many of us gay and lesbian Mormons as Pharisees and Church members as tax collectors. Many of us have been as guilty of exclusiveness towards Latter-day Saints, particularly active Mormons, as the Church hierarchy has been to us. Thank you, Sister Menlove.

And am I in the situation *Wotherspoon* describes? Do I need a similar paradigm shift followed by behavior change concerning a felt need to more earnestly pray for Church leaders? Yes, I see the need for such a change. But also, no, for I am no longer “staying.” I have left. Sanely, justifiably, wisely, I will now stay out, freed from ecclesiastical and spiritual abuse. Nevertheless, I should apply Christ’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. With sincerity and humility, I should pray for those who have harmed me. Thank you, Brother *Wotherspoon*, for this reminder.

JAMES F. CARTWRIGHT
Honolulu, Hawaii

A LEGACY OF WISDOM

I WAS BAPTIZED A MEMBER OF THE Church in December 1968. As someone who loves to read, I immediately went to the public library and checked out every book on its shelves about the Mormons. A short time later, my bishop’s wife, Brookie B. Brown, came to visit in my home. When she saw a book about Porter Rockwell, she said simply, “I’ll return this book to the library for you.” I accepted her hint to wait a while to read this book. She and her husband D. K. (who twiced served as my bishop) were kind, inclusive leaders—and wise.

Later on, after I’d grown more in the gospel, another caring leader, who was soon to be my stake patriarch, recommended that I subscribe to *SUNSTONE*. I promptly followed his advice! Many times I have sat and read, in one afternoon, from cover-to-cover, my newest issue—embracing some articles while rejecting others.

Through their legacy of respecting the abilities of people to digest information and opinions, and their broad-minded spirituality, D.K. and Brookie Brown

(whose family sponsors the *SUNSTONE* fiction contest) continue to give to me and countless others. Thank you, *SUNSTONE*, for giving me things to read, learn from, evaluate, and keep my spirit alive. Because of *SUNSTONE*, I continue to be a member of the Church and to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ.

BARBARA G. SMITH
Jacksonville, Florida

HIDING OUR LIGHT

A FEW MONTHS AGO, I WAS teaching my Primary class of eight- to ten-year-olds, and because we had gotten a bit ahead of the syllabus, I threw the lesson open to them to ask any gospel questions they’d always wanted to have answered. In just two minutes, they had come up with:

- (1) How did God make Jesus?
There’s not a Mrs. God, is there?
- (2) Why do only boys have the priesthood?
- (3) Where did God come from?
- (4) Why are there bullies?

Wow! When our children stop nagging for chocolate long enough to have a quick think, they see really important issues very clearly and are not afraid to ask sensible questions about them.

A FEW weeks later, I was up early on a Saturday morning reading Margaret Merril Toscano’s thoughtful and enlightening article about Heavenly Mother (*SUNSTONE*, July 2004) and feeling the Spirit and my mind engaged in a liberating dialogue. I thought it would be very cool to be able to give a sacrament talk about some of the things I was understanding more clearly, and I started preparing one in my head. No more than twenty minutes later, a member of the bishopric called and asked if I could be the final sacrament meeting speaker the next day! I’ve learned not to second-guess the small miracles in life, so I took this request as pretty clear permission from “Upstairs” to “go for it.”

As prompted, I gave a talk about the children’s questions and what I knew or felt to be sensible answers to them. Of course there’s a Mrs. God, whose nature and attributes I perhaps know better than those of my Heavenly Father because I have always been surrounded by them in the older and wiser sisters who have profoundly shaped my life in the gospel. And why not pray to her? Well, it may be the traditional English manners in me, but I would consider it spectacularly rude to go up to my Queen and start having a chat unless she had first invited me to do so, as any loyal subject of a good Queen



JEANNETTE ATWOOD, BASED ON CONCEPT BY HUGO LAITZ

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knows. Maybe some of you colonials have forgotten your manners! We have not yet collectively received that invitation.

Boys have the priesthood because they need training in skills that come more naturally to girls, and to test them to see whether they will choose servanthood rather than power and control over people when both are offered on a plate.

God has always existed like us, at first as a person of light and truth, then a spirit body, and then with a physical body, and now he is helping us to go through the same life cycle.

Bullies exist because we are free, and we can only learn some important things when bad stuff happens to us.

If eight-year-olds can see apparent injustices in the Church and spontaneously ask perfectly obvious, sensible questions about gender issues that grownups think are too deep to talk and teach about openly, it's time for the grownups to grow up and start giving them and each other sensible answers.

The irony is that we already have those answers in our doctrines but are sometimes reluctant to say so. Are we hiding some of our best light under bushels? My Christian friends in other denominations wouldn't know where to begin answering some of those enquiries. I had the privilege of bringing a college friend, an exemplary, informed, and spiritual Evangelical Christian into the LDS Church through a process that started with weeks of intensive discussions wading through the most thorough and sophisticated anti-Mormon literature (during which I thanked God every day for Mormon apologists and SUNSTONE), dealing only with our more esoteric doctrines. He was pretty much converted before he even picked up a Book of Mormon and got back to basics. So what are we afraid of?

Steven Hanson, whose letter in the October 2004 issue describing Margaret

Toscano's Heavenly Mother essay as an outdated "feminist whine" without relevance to "the understanding or practice of Christianity," doesn't seem to live in the same Church world I do. The issues Toscano raises are urgently relevant to how Latter-day Saints understand and practice Christianity. All my life I have been surrounded by spiritual giants with exemplary faith, who should never for a moment have to question whether they have value in God's kingdom or a right to be heard. But because they are women, even when they hold senior callings, their ability to function and contribute depends entirely on the mindset and basic social skills of their priesthood line-managers. They are forced to keep going through personal crises of confidence and testimony as they hit these glass ceilings and train yet another crop of male leaders who should have already been trained to listen to them. It wears them down. When my own mother—like so many others, a tireless pioneer and role model who has devoted her life to raising children in the gospel and dragging the Church from a spiritual and organizational Dark Ages to the thriving institution it is in Britain today—has started to seriously wonder whether women really are second-class citizens in the celestial kingdom, alarm bells ring with me. Something has gone seriously wrong. With the self-confidence our doctrines should give her, how could she become so demoralized?

Of all Christians, we have the teachings about eternal life that are most empowering and inclusive of women in our understanding of deity and human potential. Feminists should be flocking to the Church; we should be a beacon in Christendom of a people who from the start have credibly sorted out our doctrines about gender and God. We've created within our structures a ministry specifically led by women for women combined with opportunities for women to teach and



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preach to everyone. Most other denominations I watch are tearing themselves apart over these issues, and without a concept of continuing revelation, the only way they will be able to make peace is by dumping large chunks of their traditions and history with no better justification for the losses than political correctness.

YET WE STILL have a long way to go. We have too many men who still need to learn the basics about our beautiful, empowering doctrines. A startling example occurred recently when our visiting high council speaker suggested, as his opinion, that if women wanted husbands in the next life who would be proper kings whose authority was respected in the celestial kingdom (since women would be able to instruct their servants only by invoking their husbands' authority), then we should all start treating them like royalty. We should stop questioning or challenging the decisions of our young men and husbands, giving them free reign to practice the ultimate decision-making (apparently without consulting

anyone else) that will define their role in the hereafter.

I kid you not. I couldn't make this stuff up! And spiritual carnage was unleashed. To their credit, the bishopric was appalled, two of my faithful sisters sobbed, and when his mother asked one of my genius Primary pupils what he thought the talk was about, he said, "Boys are more important than girls."

How could a man who had grown up in the Church, served in high offices, and who is actually wonderfully insightful on many other issues, be such an unreconstructed male chauvinist? It's because of the silence that Margaret Toscano was writing about. When has he had thorough discussions about gender roles? Been told specifically that despite what we regularly heard from the pulpit in the 1970s and 80s, the current definition of "patriarch in the home" is more about taking responsibility for the spiritual life of the family than being the final decision-maker? Had his attitudes challenged by male leaders whom he might listen to? Probably never, because unless one is already sensitive to these issues or women's perspec-

tives, one will hear precious little in our everyday dialogues about men's status in the family and the next life that isn't unnecessarily vague. Our culture too often does not do justice to our doctrines!

I AM UNSPEAKABLY grateful for the Restoration, and for SUNSTONE's providing me with an umbilical cord to connect with the heart of my religion's spiritual and intellectual culture. Without it, I would not have been comfortable beginning an answer to my pupils' questions. I wouldn't know much about the history and implications behind those questions. I wouldn't know the various perspectives and opinions about them, nor how their consequences have helped and hurt people. I would not have been able to reach balanced conclusions for myself, nor learned not to be afraid to ask. My testimony and experience of my religion is so much richer because of the food for thought SUNSTONE has given me over the years. Thank you.

PETER BLEAKLEY
Erith, Kent, England

"To Whom Shall We Go?"
Historical Patterns of Restoration Believers with Serious Doubts

D. Michael Quinn

Fourth Annual
Eugene England
Memorial Lecture

Utah Valley State College
Liberal Arts Building Room 101 Thursday, February 3, 7-9 pm

The Utah Valley State College Religious Studies Program presents the Fifth Annual Mormon Studies Conference:

**ALL ARE ALIKE UNTO GOD:
Mormonism and Social Justice**

Keynote by Bill Martin, DePaul University: "Mormon Radical Communitarianism: the LDS trajectory seen through Sartre's categories." Other participants include: Richley Crapo, USU; Jill Mulvay Derr, BYU; Armand Mauss, Emeritus Washington State U; Bonner Ritchie, Emeritus BYU; Darron Smith, UVSC; Margaret Toscano, U of U; and Lynn Wardle, BYU Law School.

March 3–5, 2005
Utah Valley State College
Orem, Utah

For more information, contact Dennis Potter at <potterde@uvsc.edu>

FROM THE PUBLISHER

e-VOLUTION

By William Stanford

ELECTRONIC PAGETURNER

SUNSTONE IS MOVING INTO 2005 with plans to celebrate our thirty years by sharing our wonderful magazine and symposium presentations with a much broader audience. The power of the Internet gives us the means to economically share Sunstone with the world. During 2004, we placed issues 1 through 95 of SUNSTONE online in text format. We plan to add issues 96 through 129 during 2005.

Even as we progress in offering past issues online, SUNSTONE will continue to be a printed magazine, one you can still display proudly on your living room table when your home teachers visit. Current plans are to maintain a one-year gap between the printed versions and those available online. In other words, apart from our current practice of offering two sample items from each new issue, we will not place a full version of any issue of the magazine online until one year from its publication date.

The one exception to this rule involves our international subscribers. Rising costs for mailing SUNSTONE abroad have driven our international subscription rates through the roof, so beginning with this issue, international subscribers will have the option to receive an online version of the current issue. When you visit the Sunstone website, www.sunstoneonline.com, you will see a "Subscribers Login" prompt. (See above.) This is a restricted area where non-U.S. subscribers will be able to see either a text-only version of the magazine or an Adobe PDF version (an electronic replica of the printed magazine, including all the graphics, cartoons, and advertisements). International subscribers who choose the online option will also be given free access to all back issues that are available in Adobe PDF format.

VOICES FROM THE DISK

EVEN more exciting than these changes in the magazine's availability via the Internet is the progress toward our goal of sharing online our audio library of Sunstone symposiums dating back to 1979—all 3,300-plus sessions. We currently have more than 500 sessions digitized in MP3 format and available, either free or at a minimal charge, for downloading to your computer or portable media player.

Currently we are charging only for sessions from the past three years of symposiums, asking \$4.00 for current-year

symposium sessions, \$3.00 for sessions from the previous year, and \$2.00 for those two years back. All sessions from three or more years ago are available *free*. Audio from the sessions is downloadable for later playback, but the sessions available for no charge can also be listened to immediately with just a simple mouse click. (See below.)

For those unfamiliar with digital technologies, here is a brief overview of the processes involved in getting these symposium sessions online. Since all symposium recordings to date have been made in analog form on cassette tapes, we must convert these recordings to a digital format for computer storage and playback. Digitizing allows us to store the audio recordings indefinitely, whereas cassette tapes deteriorate. The digitizing process itself involves playing the tapes on a cassette deck at real-time speed into a computer and recording the sound in the MP3 compressed format. Because sessions must be recorded in real time, at most we Sunstone staffers have been able to digitize about fifteen sessions per day. Fortunately, we have found two great friends, Nelson Henderson and Scott Willis, who have been volunteering their time and home computers to assist in this project. But we certainly could use several more volunteers to reach our goal of making all sessions available for downloading by the end of 2005. If you have a cassette deck that can interface with your

\$0.00

SL89101, The Fundamentalist Mormon & After the Manifesto - All participants: Ogden Kraut, Ken Driggs - symposium: 1989 Salt Lake Symposium ([Play mp3](#))

\$3.00

SL03326, Thou Mayest Choose for Thyself: An LDS Reflection on Evil, Bad Acts, and Self-Destructive Behavior - All participants: Ken Driggs, Bill Hansen - symposium: 2003 Salt Lake Symposium - excerpt: "Mormon doctrine rejects original sin and emphasizes free agency, that we are free to make conscious choices between good and evil in life. These choices mark our spiritual growth in this life and largely determine our station in post-mortal existence. Driggs, a career criminal lawyer simple. His experience with hundreds of poor criminal defendants, including a substantial number of death penalt . . ."

\$4.00

SL04355, WHAT DO WE MAKE OF THE NEWS OUT OF COLORADO CITY? - All participants: KEN DRIGGS, HILLARY GROUTAGE - symposium: 2004 Salt Lake Symposium - excerpt: "For more than a year, news accounts have portrayed the Fundamentalist Mormon community at Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah, as a cesspool of sexual molestation, open rebellion against the law, welfare thievery, and potentially another Waco or Jonestown. These characterizations have been made by embittered former members, politicians, muckraking journalists, and a writer of wilderness an . . ."

Sample result of MP3 search

computer and would like to help in this project, please contact me at the Sunstone office (801-355-5926).

If Sunstone's budget allows, we will soon purchase digital recording and duplicating equipment to record future symposiums in a digital format, allowing us to offer CDs during the symposium. For the immediate future, we will continue to record in analog format as well, making cassette tapes available as we have done in the past.

JESUS WANTS ME FOR A SUNSPEAKER

IN response to regular requests, Sunstone is launching a new service to support the tremendous speaking talent we enjoy at the symposiums each year—a speakers bureau! Many Sunstone participants have discovered that outside speaking engagements can become an important source of income. And we would like to assist others who might profit from their research interests and dynamic personalities. The Sunstone Speakers Bureau aims to become a forum for showcasing talent and helping build careers. At the same time, Sunstone will be able to modestly share in the rewards of providing a fee-based service to both top-quality speakers and event organizers.

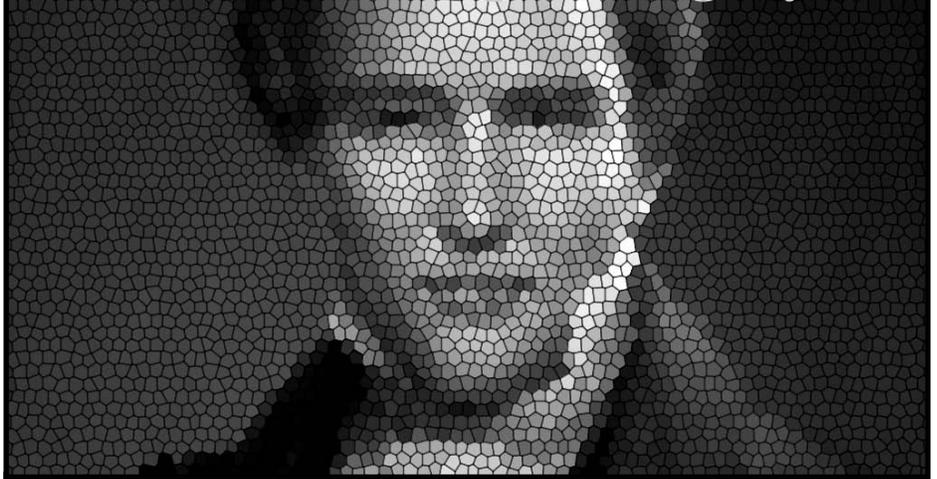
Whether you are already a “hot” national or regional speaker or someone who would like to explore how to become one, we invite you to take a look at what we are offering and join right away. Visit www.sunspeakers.com for the full story on what Sunstone is bringing to the community. There are no exclusive contracts and no up-front costs. But there are additional benefits members will find attractive, such as a unique interactive electronic business card (which, with one click, allows recipients access to audio and video clips and/or your personal website) and a low-cost supplement to someone's large-deductible medical insurance (currently under negotiation). Speakers can sign up online, and we can assist them in building a unique and powerful web presence showcasing their speaking talents.

THESE are exciting times at Sunstone as we use new technologies to further carry out the foundation's mission to provide forums for expressing the richness of Mormon thought and culture. The website is continually e-evolving, with new and more helpful features being added all the time. We hope you'll visit the website regularly to browse, research, laugh at the cartoons—and shop! 

A CALL FOR PAPERS

Joseph Smith

and His Complex Legacy



In commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of Joseph Smith's birth, the John Whitmer Historical Association's 2005 Conference will address the theme: Joseph Smith and His Complex Legacy. We invite you to participate by submitting papers that focus on:

- Joseph Smith, his life work, and influence he had on individuals inside and out of Mormonism;
- Smith's legacy and the many divergent expressions of the Restoration (followers of James Strang, Lyman Wight, Joseph Smith III, etc.)
- Comparisons between Smith and other founders or leaders of religious movements;
- Dynamics between Smith and the Mormons and non-Mormon residents during the Illinois period.

Young scholars are especially invited to submit papers — JWHA will fund 8 travel stipends for students to attend this year's conference!

Address your 1-2 page proposal to:

Newell G. Bringhurst, Program Chair
Department of History
College of the Sequoias
Visalia, CA 93277
Or e-mail Newell: newellgb@hotmail.com

Submission Deadline is February 28, 2005.

The Conference will be held in Springfield, Illinois,
September 29 – October 2, 2005.

John Whitmer Historical Association
www.JWHA.info

FROM THE EDITOR

SIZE

By Dan Wotherspoon



FAREWELL. With great thanks and best wishes, we bid Godspeed to our managing editor and Sunstone symposium coordinator, JOHN HATCH. In his almost three years with us, John has become a great friend and a highly valued member of the Sunstone team. During his tenure, he ably assisted in the design and production of thirteen magazine issues and oversaw details of three Salt Lake symposiums and more than ten regional events. He's also been a jack-of-all-trades in our office, and in concert with William, he has been a driving force in our efforts to digitize all past and future symposium presentations.

A talented young historian (he's just now completing the editing of the Anthon Lund journals to be published this spring by Signature Books), John leaves us to devote more time to his studies. As he wrote to Sunstone friends before leaving, "I've decided that after calling myself a student for six years, the time has come to actually do more than take a night class every few semesters." We agree, but still, letting him go has not been easy. Luckily, John's a certified conference junkie, and we know we'll get to see and hear him at our symposiums and other Mormon-related gatherings for many years to come!

WELCOME. As we say goodbye to one friend, we welcome another! With this SUNSTONE issue, we say hello to ALLEN HILL. We feel really fortunate to have him aboard, having lured him from Utah Valley State College, where he'd been working as a teaching assistant and publications designer in their Center for the Study of Ethics. A recent graduate in philosophy, Allen also founded and for the past four years edited the undergraduate philosophy journal, Sophia.

We know you'll all enjoy getting to know Allen. His creativity and aesthetic sense can be found in the design of many pages in this issue, and we look forward to his continued influence. He's very organized (a trait I pray will rub off on me!), and we're confident you'll find him an enjoyable and prompt correspondent as we move in the coming weeks into "symposium season." Transitions are never easy, but with John and Allen, we feel doubly blessed.



I HAVE BEEN deeply moved by W. Grant McMurray's surprise resignation as president of the Community of Christ. (See story, page 73; also www.cofchrist.org.) I don't know Grant (as he prefers to be called) personally, but I've heard him speak on several occasions and have read many of his writings. In each encounter, I have enjoyed Grant's good humor and active intellect and marveled at his ability to convey deep, powerful insights with seemingly remarkable ease. By every account I've read and heard, Grant's been an extraordinary church leader, a brave and caring pastor who has lovingly and effectively shepherded his flock through rapidly changing terrain, calling and leading them to new and greener pastures.

I know nothing more about Grant's decision to step down nor the circumstances which led him to feel unable "to function un-

reservedly in [his] office and calling" than what I've read in his resignation letter and have gathered from the Community of Christ website. In no way do I want to minimize or appear to lightly dismiss any of the pain and sadness he, his family, and his church are feeling at this difficult time. My heart breaks when I think of their grief; I mourn with them this unexpected and unwelcome turn in their world.

Yet even as I attempt to fully share and honor their sorrow, I also find myself humbled and inspired by Grant's forthrightness in his decision to face head-on the truths of his life—the heartening as well as the dark and hidden. I am moved by his recognition in himself of "the need for a time for personal renewal and healing."

In the preface to *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis writes about life choices, comparing

them to forks in the road and branches in trees, where with each decision, we travel or grow in new directions. And if we find ourselves moving along a bitter path, Lewis argues that we can't just cross from that road to the other, or jump directly from that branch to one with the better fruit. Instead, any "putting right" involves "going back till [we] find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply going on."¹ As Grant climbs down to begin again on a new branch, I trust he'll find the healing he seeks, for his tree and roots are strong, planted in good soil and growing under the sunlight of God's grace.

GRANT'S decision to voluntarily surrender position and priesthood, and to risk personal scrutiny by openly admitting his vulnerability, has called me to renewed reflection on what it means to be truly powerful. For as much as I admired Grant's talents and strengths before, I see him as even more powerful now.

How can this be? Why do admissions of weakness sometimes feel like strength? What strange criterion of value honors someone's recognition of imperfection? I propose that we consider the notion of "size." The idea of size as a value category first came to my attention through the writings of Bernard Loomer, a seminal thinker in the movement known as "process theology," but someone whose radical empiricism and willingness to speculate on matters that don't always lend themselves easily to traditional theological reflection have, in my view, left the richness of his thought relatively underappreciated.

In his most famous essay, "Two Conceptions of Power,"² Loomer develops an extended critique of what he sees as the dominant understanding of power throughout history: "the ability to produce an effect, . . . the strength to exert a shaping and determining influence on the other, whatever or whoever the other might be" (6). Loomer labels this type of power "linear" or "unilateral power" because it recognizes only one direction to power—an active agent creating an effect in a passive recipient. This kind of power is the "capacity to influence another, in contrast to being influenced" (8).

Loomer argues that while we cannot deny this understanding of power, it is ultimately inadequate, for it fails to recognize that "the capacity to absorb an influence is as truly a mark of power as the strength involved in exerting an influence" (17). And this is where the notion of size comes in, for one quality of something of considerable size is its ability to receive—whether we might be speaking of



With profound sadness, and yet with a strong assurance of the rightness of this action, I hereby submit my resignation as president of the Community of Christ. . . .

As we move now to a new era, my fervent prayers will be to sustain and strengthen our church and its leaders in fulfilling its divine call to be a people of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit.

—W. GRANT MCMURRAY
29 November 2004

largeness as akin to roominess and the ability to hold something within, or as substantialness and the ability to “take a blow.”

Loomer coins the term “relational power” to accommodate the larger, “both/and” nature of genuine power. He defines relational power as “the ability both to produce and to undergo an effect. It is the capacity both to influence others and to be influenced by others. Relational power involves both a giving and a receiving” (17). Loomer’s ultimate thesis is that “the practice of relational power both requires and exemplifies greater size than that called for by the practice of unilateral power.”

Loomer’s distinction between types of power, and even the judgment that one conception is larger than the other, is insightful on an analytical level. But I’m far more interested in the ability of the notion of size to get at the “felt” character of what it means to be truly powerful. Even though he’ll forever be diminished by external criteria such as “office and calling” and the platform church leadership provides, Grant in his vulnerability *feels* to me somehow “bigger,” more powerful than before. How can this be?

“Two Conceptions of Power” is a treasure trove of possible angles from which to reach toward this and broader questions, but I don’t have space here to even come close to doing Loomer’s essay justice. Instead, I will focus on the matter of trust that is essential to genuine, mutually enhancing, relationships of size.

IN his section on “relational power as size,” Loomer writes: “The ultimate aim of relational power is the creation and enhancement of those relationships in which all participating members are transformed into individuals and groups of greater stature” (26). This is a wonderful goal. But as an empiricist keenly attuned to life’s many ambiguities, Loomer knows that relationships of greater size run the risk of those in

relationship experiencing both higher highs and lower lows. This is because individuals and groups

include the full plenum of conditions the human spirit is heir to, . . . [which] run the gamut from triumphant breakthroughs to crippling regressions, from life-restoring laughter to life-denying despair, from the beauty of the gracious heart to the debasing cruelty of the small mind and smaller soul.

Loomer recognizes further that virtues and vices are intermixed, that our

individual weaknesses are the other side of [our] strengths. Like the biblical parable of the wheat and tares they grow together. . . . The evil cannot be cut out of [our] spirit without weakening the strength of [our] goodness. . . . The failure to recognize the depth of ambiguity in all matters of the spirit leads us to live moralistically, without compassion, and without adequate understanding of others or, more pitifully, of ourselves. (27–29)

A relationship of greater size fully understands this ambiguity yet *still risks being in genuine relationship*. That’s why a relationship of this type is more powerful than one based primarily on just a one-directional flow of energy, whether that directionality is conceived as from top to bottom, strong to weak, or any other notion drawn from a hierarchical model. Relationships of greater size are characterized by those in relationship taking greater risks.

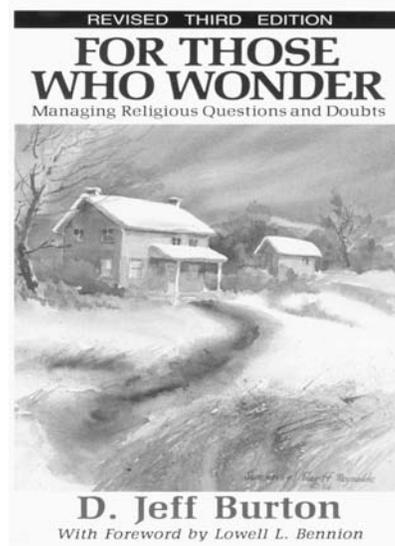
Grant feels bigger to me because of his willingness to risk loss of love, respect, and pulpit in order to gain a fuller understanding of himself and of just how deep grace might reach. His was an act of trust, of faith—in God, in the love of family and friends, in the members of his church. The Community of Christ feels bigger to me as I read the pow-

erful expressions of love and support from Grant’s counselors in the First Presidency and from other church leaders and members. Acts of trust are not always reciprocated, but they are always powerful. To Grant, to the Community of Christ—thank you for this glimpse into the largeness of your souls and the strength of your relationship. ☺

NOTES

1. C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 6.
2. Bernard Loomer, “Two Conceptions of Power,” *Process Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1976), 5–32; The full text is also available online at <www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2359>.

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CORNUCOPIA

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

Righteous Dominion

COLUMN EDITOR'S NOTE: Please continue to send your stories of leaders and others who are true exemplars of the love of Christ, who have touched your life through their flexibility or their understanding that people are more important than programs. Email your stories to: <StewartSLC@aol.com>

—ALAN AND VICKIE EASTMAN

A BISHOP IN SNEAKERS

ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, I MOVED FROM PROVO to Seattle, Washington, for graduate school. My church experiences in Provo had been difficult. I'm a member of the "Borderlands," to use the term D. Jeff Burton coined for his SUNSTONE column, and I'd felt a bit isolated in Provo. I eagerly hoped to move into a ward where I could feel a sense of spiritual and social community.

The first hint that my new ward would be different from my Provo ward was when the bishop's son came to help us move in and mentioned that he was planning to study theology in graduate school. This impression was strengthened on my first Sunday when I noticed that every member of the bishopric had facial hair! I later learned that it was a running joke in the ward: any man who wanted a leadership position should grow a beard.

A few weeks later, during an emotionally difficult time, I left sacrament meeting a few minutes early in tears. A sister had chosen to speak about priesthood and had given an exceptionally authoritarian talk. She insisted that obedience to the priesthood included dutifully submitting to all requests by all priesthood holders, even when that request was as mundane as a husband's food preferences. In Utah, I just shrugged such talks off, but I had come with hope that things might be different here. That night, the bishop called, asking to meet with me. With trepidation, I drove to his home that evening, wondering if his call that night were merely a coincidence. When I walked into his study, he asked how I was doing and said he noticed I had left sacrament meeting early. He paused for a few moments. I said nothing, either. Then he spoke, softly, contemplatively. He said that he had considered stepping up to the stand after this sister's talk to disagree with her, but he felt that

people should be allowed to speak their minds, even if not everyone agreed. At first, I couldn't believe my ears. The bishop didn't hold that men alone had all the authority? The bishop thought that we should be allowed to express dissent? Either one was a bombshell, but together the statements were nothing short of miraculous!

A few months later, I was invited to join a small discussion group that met once a month at the bishop's home. The subject, not too unusual, was a New Testament commentary. The unusual part is that this particular commentary had been written by Friedrich Weinreb, a Ph.D. economist imbued in the ancient Jewish tradition, and that the reading was my bishop's own translation from the original German. I looked forward to that monthly meeting, where we discussed points from the commentary and how it related to the Mormon perspective.

This bishop admitted that he and other leaders were not always inspired and could make mistakes. He has published articles in *Dialogue*, and I've heard him disagree, privately, with men above him in the Church's hierarchy. He reminded me that I was not the only one in the Church or even in our ward who sometimes found certain doctrinal and cultural issues troublesome. For the first time in my life, I felt I had a bishop in whom I could confide without carefully measuring my words.

Sometimes I find it frustrating that I clutch small signs of nonconformity with such fervor. Honestly, what does it really matter if I've seen the bishop come to church wearing white sneakers colorfully emblazoned with the names of all the Primary children, or if he joked one Sunday that he expected me to be with a six-pack down at the lake watching boat races instead of sitting decorously in Relief Society? For whatever reason, this bishop's individuality and humor set up an environment that encouraged spiritual growth for me, and, I believe, for most of the ward.

The time of my move to Seattle coincided with a personal crisis of faith. Because of my frustrations with institutional practices, I had allowed my personal relationship with God to languish. I will forever be grateful to this bishop whose kind and wise leadership allowed me time and space to foster my testimony of core gospel principles. I now feel my beliefs are strong enough that I can actively create a nurturing spiritual environment instead of being entirely shaped by my surroundings. Without the church experience shaped in large part by this bishop, I'm not sure if I would have found that strength.

This man is no longer the bishop, and I'm not sure I'll ever have another ecclesiastical leader quite like him. But I'm com-

All-seeing Eye

CAPTAIN MORONI TO GADIANTON 4

FIRST THERE WAS THE BOOK OF MORMON MOVIE. NOW LDS entrepreneurs have brought us the Book of Mormon chess set. The ancient battle between good and evil can be reenacted on your living room table—and with the right moves, maybe this time the Nephites will win.

One set, distributed by Covenant Communications for \$99.95, features red-clad Nephites under the command of Father Lehi, who, with the Liahona in his hands and wearing a Tree of Life apron (right), takes the role of the white king. Sariah, his wife is queen. Eight stripling warriors—having become white and delightful—serve as the red team's pawns. Nephi and Moroni bearing golden plates fill in as bishops; Helaman and Captain Moroni are knights. The green (black) team is led by Laman, of course, who is ably assisted by bishops Gadianton and Kishkumen (far right), and an array of other evil-doers.

If you think Covenant's set is expensive, consider the set marketed by Latter Day Designs. It sells the same concept, with pieces of 24-carat gold and pewter, for \$500. How rare a possession indeed! No word on whether the pieces will retain their brightness.



forted to know that he's continuing to shape the church's future—his last act as bishop was to arrange to have himself called as a worker in the Primary nursery, where he has remained for the past two years.

SARAH RAY ALLRED
Seattle, Washington

Blogwatch

ON SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

The following reflection by Kristine Haglund Harris was posted 12 November 2004 to the LDS blog *Times and Seasons* <www.timesandseasons.org> and is reprinted by permission.

TEN MINUTES OR SO AFTER MY FIRST POSITIVE pregnancy test, I was at the bookstore, perusing the shelves of parenting titles, a pastime I've continued

with some regularity for nearly a decade now. One of my favorite of these books is called *10 Principles of Spiritual Parenting*, by Mimi Doe and Marsha F. Walch (HarperCollins, 1998). It's a little too New Agey for me; I can't quite bring myself to do guided meditations with my children. But what I really like in the book is the perspective that spirituality is innately present in children—that it is something to be cultivated, rather than instilled.

In Primary and in much of the Mormon approach to teaching children, I find a different underlying assumption—that children need to be taught what to believe and how to be spiritual. We pay lip service to the idea that children have access to the light of Christ and spiritual gifts—unfortunately, this often comes in the form of sentimental imaginings about what infants would tell us, if only they could speak. But most of our time and energy in Primary is devoted to getting children to be quiet and listen to us, so we can teach them. And our teaching is directed almost entirely to the children's "intel-

Parents in Zion

TRAIN UP A CHILD . . .



YOU'VE BLESSED YOUR infant son to grow up to be worthy of priesthood responsibilities, so why not have him start dressing the part? After all, in just eleven short years, he'll be a deacon!

These "Tiny-Ties Onesies," white (of course!) and with five different embroidered neck ties to choose from, are available from LDSliving.com in three sizes, from infant through eighteen months.

soon to think and talk in adult terms about what they sense and feel, they will more and more have only those experiences we have told them are acceptable. If our children's heads are too full of the sound of *our* voices explaining doctrine to them, will they still be able to hear the voice of God as they grow? If we spend their Primary years teaching them rules and formulas for talking about the Spirit, will they still be able to describe their *own* sense of the Spirit that "blows where it listeth" when we finally turn them loose to gain their own testimonies as teenagers.

As always in the high-wire act of bringing up children, parents and

lect"; we talk and talk and talk at them, and we believe that they understand spiritual concepts if they can talk about them.

We love to watch them perform in Primary programs, which often consist of their repeating words they can barely understand, reading parts their parents and teachers wrote for them. Even the beloved anthem of Mormon childhood, "I Am a Child of God," is completely beyond the understanding of most of the children who sing it. (I can't be the only person who ever thought the words were "Teach me all that I'm a stew" or "And so my knees are great.") It's a great song to learn, but I think it's hard to truly appreciate the doctrine it teaches until well after Primary graduation. The correlated Primary curriculum seems driven by a strong desire to "cover" as many important doctrinal points as possible, as early as possible. This is a noble impulse, but I fear that our eagerness to cram content into our children sometimes overrides our respect for the natural curve of their development.

There is almost no room in our approach for quiet, unarticulated wonder or gratitude. We are always in such a hurry to attach words—our words—to our children's feelings. The result, too often, is the ghastly spectacle of the five-year-old bearing "his" testimony with his mother whispering in his ear: "I love my mom and dad; I know the Church is true; I know that Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet; in the name of Jesus Christ amen." Cute, maybe; good practice, possibly. But really, really unlikely to reflect the child's authentic spiritual feelings. Worst of all, I think that teaching children to parrot adult understandings, praising them for singing and saying the words we most want to hear, can sometimes deaden their capacity for genuine spiritual experience. If we teach them too

teachers must achieve a delicate balance—if we don't teach our children anything, they have no framework in which to understand their deepest spiritual experiences. I wouldn't turn a kid of mine loose to express herself on the violin without plenty of instruction in basic technique and some hours logged practicing scales. But I think in some ways, we do things exactly backwards in our teaching of children. We'd be better off to tell the younger children more stories from the scriptures without always explicitly telling them what the moral of the story is; we should sing more songs about flowers and Jesus and fewer about pre-mortal existence and the Atonement. Then when they're teenagers, they would have more spiritual experiences to which they'd just need to attach words and concepts, instead of having to try so hard to produce the kinds of spiritual experiences we've taught them they're supposed to have.

KRISTINE HAGLUND HARRIS
Swampscott, Massachusetts

In the Belly of the Whale"THOU SHALT NOT . . . BECAUSE
THOU ART MORMON"

In this column, "In the Belly of the Whale," Todd Robert Petersen investigates Mormon culture, art, and politics from the perspective of a baptized outsider. Todd is a writer and humorist who teaches at Southern Utah University and is an editor-at-large for *The Sugar Beet*, a satirical publication of Mormon news and culture. This is the third column in the series.

Media Watch

BUFF SUPERHEROES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HAVE YOU EVER WISHED NEPHI were a superhero? Now he is, sort of, as Mike Allred, a world-renowned comic book artist and Latter-day Saint, has launched his latest project, *The Golden Plates: The Book of Mormon in Pictures and Words*. *The Golden Plates* is a twelve-volume set that will be released over the next several years. Volume One, covering First Nephi 1–14, is just out.

The images are original but strive for familiarity, as they clearly evoke classic paintings most Mormons know. Thus, in Allred's renderings of Nephi rebuking his brothers, Samuel preaching from the city walls, and Mormon mourning a lost nation, the costumes and settings follow rather closely Friberg's famous paintings (see illustration at right).

"Think *It's A Wonderful Life* meets *Conan the Barbarian!*" says Allred, according to a story posted at NewsARama.com. "There's no other book that is so rich with adventure, action, romance, courage, beauty, and spiritual enlightenment; at least, none that I'm aware of. At the very least, it's a phenomenal story rich with visual power. So, if I pull it off, it'll be the most significant thing I'll ever be a part of."



In Mike Allred's art, Arnold Friberg meets Arnold Schwarzenegger.

IT'S NOT LIKE ME TO BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD, because (a) I don't like it, and (b) I spend so much time in a state of ready outrage that I'm hypersensitive to just about everything. This is necessary equipment for a satirist (and a liberal), like the olfactory bulbs of a turkey vulture. A brother has to be ready to sniff out folly before he's been scooped—nothing smells worse than an old joke somebody thinks is fresh. If you're out of the loop for even a month, you're dead meat. Jokes, like egg salad, have a short shelf life.

Now that I'm a columnist with the duty to keep up with my Mormon kitsch, I feel an extra responsibility to stay abreast of

Zion in her outrageous garb. So, you can imagine how upset I was to discover something had passed completely under my radar.

After a brain-addling fall semester and an exhausting battery of finals, I rose from my chair, nodded to my Silver Surfer figurine, and headed upstairs to con my buddy Kyle into sneaking away for a Coke. In the hall, I found a girl sitting cross-legged on one of the couches in the English department. She was reading Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* with the kind of intensity most students reserve for more important things like changing the ring tones on their cell phones. She turned the

All-seeing Eye

THE ADAM-JOSEPH THEORY?



WHILE WATCHING A RECENT documentary on former New Wave rocker Adam Ant, Connell O'Donovan spotted this picture of Adam (far left) and thought for a second that it was Joseph Smith. So he went online and found this daguerreotype believed by many to be an image of Joseph (left), which is strikingly similar, even down to some of the clothing. Spooky?

Adding to the intrigue, Adam's most famous lyric: "You don't drink, you don't smoke—what do you do?"

page, stuck the tip of one of her braids between her lips, and lowered the book. Pasted across her chest in white sans-serif type against a field of the chastest, most adolescent pink you could imagine was the simple message: "I can't . . . I'm Mormon."

As cool as I prefer to think of myself (I was hip to *Napoleon Dynamite* when it was a short film called *Peluca*), I hadn't heard a thing about these shirts or the kerfuffle they had caused at BYU (outraged students, swift ejection of an ad from the student paper), not one flipping word. In fact, this very nice, very studious girl in moderately stylish clothes was the first person I'd ever seen wearing anything that signified that they were Mormon besides a missionary name tag or BYU *Cougars*-garb.

"I can't . . . I'm Mormon" was not a new sentiment to me; that's not what alarmed me. I'd heard this kind of thing bandied about in university wards about eighteen million times until I was forced by my age and my pending marriage to begin attending a family ward with my then-future in-laws. Even once I was married and started going to church with little kids and old people, I heard so many versions of this ethic you'd think someone had added it to the Doctrine and Covenants. Some guy turned down a drink at a business meeting, and the boss thought he had real character, so he made him a partner. Some girl walked out on a filthy DVD being played at a slumber party, and her home teacher, while giving her a ride home, would tell her that she wasn't a panty-waist but a Mormon Joan of Arc driving unwholesomeness from the ward. Whatever the story, it seemed like people's sense of Mormon-ness was negatively defined. *We are what we reject*. Every Mormon knows that, especially converts.

It's a safe bet that a T-shirt like this doesn't exist because somebody thought a nice girl reading Thackeray at Southern Utah University needed a reminder of her duties to reject Babylon. A shirt like this gets made because somebody thinks that (a) people say that kind of thing a lot, and (b) it's nuts to do so. So, when somebody makes a shirt like this for these reasons, they must on some level refute the idea that being Mormon is the shield. My problem with the whole thing was

that I couldn't get my head around why this particular girl on this particular bench was wearing this particular T-shirt. Did she think that "we are what we reject," or did she think the slogan was a silly thing to say?

A week later, after some digging around, I discovered that BYU's offense at the shirt had to do with the intimation that our religion is the only thing that keeps us from drinking booze or coffee or from sleeping around, or watching/downloading/reading pornography. I'm not offended by this notion; I'm ambivalent about it. I usually want to embrace anything that offends someone at BYU, but with this T-shirt, it became abundantly clear to me that offense was much too simple a response for BYU, or for me, because if conference talks are any evidence, our religion *doesn't* really make us moral.

Case in point: Some friends of mine have adopted two lovely girls from unwed mothers through LDS family services. We were chatting over Christmas break, and I bounced around the idea that our religion doesn't guarantee that we'll be moral. My friend Jeff laughed and said, "Both of our birth mothers are LDS." To make matters more complex, he lifted his three-month-old and peddled her on one hand and said, "I'm sort of glad they did fool around—is that a terrible thing to say?"

THE LONGER I stood in that hallway, staring at that pink T-shirt, the more I questioned myself and my people. The notion that simply being Mormon is enough to save us never made sense to me. Any bishop in this world knows that being Mormon isn't enough. If it were, he'd have a lot more free time on his hands. So clearly I was missing the joke, but I felt as if I were at the still point of the moving world, having an epiphany handed to me on a pink platter. The epiphany was this: the world knows what we *don't* do, but do they know what we *do* do? Given that there are just about twelve million of us on this planet, what makes a Mormon a Mormon? I guess we can kind of rely on some assent to the Articles of Faith, but those statements are abstract and vague in a way, and they don't do all that much to clarify who we are at work and on the freeway.

The problem with defining Mormons by what we reject is that some Mormons do, in fact, drink, and some Mormons cook meth, and some Mormons traffic in child pornography, and some Mormons are crooked businessmen, and some Mormons don't hometeach, and some Mormons don't prepare their lessons, and some Mormons don't fast on fast Sundays, and some Mormons don't look out for their neighbors' best interests. On the other hand, some Mormons don't *trick* people into hearing the missionary discussions on a non-stop flight from Chicago to Salt Lake. Some Mormons listen to Elvis Costello, some Mormons read Samuel Beckett and hate Jell-O and can't stand funeral potatoes and gag at the thought of even a sip of pineapple sherbet punch. Some Mormons actually vote Democrat, and some don't believe in the IRS or in a currency that isn't backed by a gold or silver standard. Some Mormons want only one or two kids, and some Mormons recycle. Some Mormons don't care for the Del Parsons red-robed Jesus—they much prefer the Minerva Teichert.

Lots of Mormons do lots of things, and lots don't. The more I thought about it, the less I could actually point to and say, "This is what Mormons do; this is what we all have in common." At a basic level, we have Jesus (but so do lots of Christians), Joseph Smith (but so do the splinter groups), and the Book of Mormon (ditto the splinter groups). We do have some common history but not much. A friend who was a professor of veterinary medicine in what was then southern Rhodesia once told me that the African Saints didn't have the same reverence for the pioneers that American Saints do. The Africans don't have much experience with snow, and they walk everywhere—so, what's the big deal?

The more I thought about it, the less I felt there was something out there that Mormons either do or don't do.

WHAT BEGAN AS simple outrage at some well-intended Mormon kitsch ended up being a pretty heavy ontological moment for me. All of this bubbled through my head as I stood there staring, but there was nothing for me to do with it. These thoughts were just a rant, perhaps even an elaborate excuse for leering at a nice-looking girl. In fact, I sort of wish that had been the major issue for me. That way it wouldn't have been too much of a stretch to start shifting this essay to explore how Mormons don't leer at the chests of people almost half their age. Even if I wasn't physically leering, I was leering *philosophically*, but is that any better?

When you get down to it, what I wish had happened is this: The girl, coming to the end of her novel, closes the book and thinks for a moment about Becky Sharpe until she sees me there, staring at her. She holds the book (the movie version) to her chest, Reese Witherspoon's come-hither look making my eyes go straight to the ceiling. I blush, naturally, and then point to her chest, which is now book-covered. I stammer, "Your shirt-I was-just-um-you-know-it's really kind of funny . . . if you think about it." She storms off, not sure if I am a fool or a pervert or both. I either sulk or throw my hands in the air and feel like a silly, middle-aged dunderhead for a few days. An

ending like that would have had thematic power, would have allowed me to create some real ironic distance, to implicate myself in my narrative, like David Foster Wallace or Charlie Kauffman, and put myself on trial as a writer and a man.

But nothing so dramatic happened.

Instead, my thoughts and confusion faded, and I turned from the girl and headed upstairs, where I wedged myself into the doorway of Kyle's office and said, "You seen the T-shirt that goes *I can't . . . I'm Mormon?*"

Without looking up, he clicked his mouse and said, "Yeah, there was some brouhaha up at BYU a while ago. For crying out loud, it's a T-shirt, not a Rodin."

"You want to go get a Coke?" I asked, feeling a day late and a dollar short.

Kyle grinned. "I can't," he said. "I'm Mormon."

TODD ROBERT PETERSEN
Cedar City, Utah

APOLOGY

An October 2004 SUNSTONE Cornucopia item, "Blogwatch: *Eternal Jeopardy*," an excerpt from an interview all-time Jeopardy! champion Ken Jennings gave to the LDS blog, *Times and Seasons* <www.timesandseasons.org>, was intended by Jennings to be a blog posting and never a SUNSTONE article. In running as large a portion of the interview as we did without express permission, SUNSTONE violated "fair use" guidelines, which we deeply regret. We extend our sincerest apologies to Ken Jennings and the *Times and Seasons* listowners.

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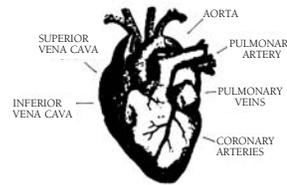
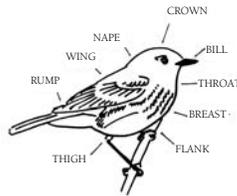
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Leaving aside questions of belief, how do religious practices transform lives?

MORMONISM AS PRAXIS

By Phyllis Barber, H. Parker Blount,
John Dewey Remy, Jana K. Riess, Holly Welker



EDITOR'S NOTE: *The short essays in this section were given as part of a panel discussion, "Doing Things that Change Us: Mormonism as Praxis," conceived and organized by Holly Welker and presented in a slightly different format at the 2004 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium. The session was a wonderful success, with several seasoned symposium attendees telling Sunstone staff members that it was among the best sessions they'd ever attended. As fate would have it, however, our taping equipment for this session failed. We're very excited to offer the full symposium session here with only minor editing.*

INTRODUCTION

by Holly Welker

IN *THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE*, KAREN ARMSTRONG, A former Roman Catholic nun, acclaimed author of *A History of God* and *The Battle for God*, and noted biographer of both Muhammad and the Buddha, recounts the research she began in the 1980s after being hired to write and present a six-part documentary on Saint Paul. Early on she realizes she doesn't know enough about Judaism, so she meets with Jewish scholar Hyam Maccoby. Arguing against the New Testament depiction of the Pharisees, Maccoby "[points] out that in all likelihood Jesus had been a Pharisee himself" and "could well have belonged to the school of Rabbi Hillel," a prominent Pharisee who had lived half a century or so before Jesus. As evidence, Maccoby notes that "Jesus had, after all, taught a version of Hillel's Golden Rule" and relates this anecdote:

Some pagans came to Hillel and told him that they would convert to his faith if he could recite the whole of Jewish teaching while he stood on one leg. So Hillel obligingly stood on one leg like a stork and said, "Do not do unto others as you would not have done unto you. That is the Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn it."

Armstrong is troubled by the story and wants to know where faith and belief come into play—how on earth could all of Jewish theology and doctrine be reduced to one sentence? Maccoby replies that "Theology just is not that important in Judaism. . . . There's no orthodoxy as you have it in the Catholic Church. No complicated creeds to which everybody must subscribe. No infallible pronouncement by a pope. Nobody can tell Jews what to believe."¹

Armstrong then focuses on her own astonishment:

I could not imagine religion without belief. Ever since I had grown up and started to think, my Christian life had been a continuous struggle to accept the official doctrines. Without true belief you could not be a member of the church, you could not be saved. Faith was the starting point, the *sine qua non*, the indispensable requirement, and for me it had been a major stumbling block.

"No official theology?" I repeatedly stupidly. "None at all? How can you *be* religious without a set of ideas—about God, salvation and so on—as a basis?"

"We have orthopraxy instead of orthodoxy," Hyam replied calmly. . . . "Right practice" rather than 'right belief.' That's all. You Christians make such a fuss about theology, but it's just not important in the way you think. It's just poetry, really, ways of talking about the inexpressible. We Jews don't bother much about

what we believe. We just *do* it instead.”²

Armstrong later details insights that eventually evolved from that discussion. She writes:

Religion is not about accepting twenty impossible propositions before breakfast, but about doing things that change you. It’s a moral aesthetic, an ethical alchemy. If you behave a certain way, you will be transformed. The myths and laws of religion are not true because they conform to some metaphysical, scientific, or historical reality, but because they are life enhancing. They tell you how human nature functions, but you will not discover their truth unless you apply these myths and doctrines to your own life and put them into practice. The myths of the hero, for example, are not meant to give us historical information about Prometheus or Achilles—or for that matter, about Jesus or the Buddha. Their purpose is to compel us to act in such a way that we bring out our own heroic potential.³

Or, to paraphrase using a more familiar statement: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:17–18).

THE SELECTIONS BELOW, presented in alphabetical order by the author’s last name, explore how Mormonism’s “moral aesthetic” and “ethical alchemy” can help transform us into beings more closely allied with the divine. The authors leave aside questions of testimony and belief, and consider the special benefits offered by cultivating religious habits and behaviors either unique to Mormonism or approached in a uniquely Mormon way.

NOTES

1. Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 235.
2. *Ibid.*, 236.
3. *Ibid.*, 270.

THE PRACTICE OF SIMPLE FAITH

by Phyllis Barber

TWO UTTERANCES OF my faith, sung in the voice of my childhood:

In whatever corner we may chance to grow,
Whether cold or warm the wind may ever blow.
Dark the day or sunny, we must try, try, try.
Just one spot to gladden, you and I.

—“Little Purple Pansies”

Out in the desert they wander,
Hungry and helpless and cold. . . .
Off to the rescue He hastens
Bringing them back to the fold
—“Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd”

I consider myself well-introduced to faith, a child of the faith, a child of faith, a person who believes deeply in a God who wants us to share, a person who desires to brighten one spot in this earthly garden wherever that might be.

As I thought about faith for this essay, a precept mentioned often in my formative years, I realized that much of my introduction to faith came through music. It came through those songs we sang time and time again until they were worn into our synapses and into our minds and pulses like grooves in an old phonograph record.

After being totally active in the LDS Church for thirty-eight years of my life and being a never-miss-a-meeting, accept-every-call-you’re-given kind of Mormon, my life changed dramatically. All of a sudden, there was a one-hundred-foot waterfall in the river’s course. Too high to keep my boat on the river. Time to jump raft and portage.

In an effort to save my marriage to a man whom I’d married in the St. George temple and who had many surprising-to-me doubts, angers, and frustrations with the LDS way of life, at the age of thirty-eight, I stopped attending church. I thought it wise to maintain a more neutral ground, to step out of the war zone, the never-ending loop. Together, we looked at other possibilities of worshiping God. On my part, I believed in God and had faith in what I’d learned as a child and in the songs that I’d sung. God’s love shone over the rich and the poor, the wise men and the sinners. God didn’t have to reside solely in an LDS meetinghouse.

But, as fate would have it, the end of our marriage was imminent and a three-year separation, then divorce, would follow. Still, I didn’t want to believe that could happen. I’d always felt we were committed to each other forever, that we could work through any problem, that my faith in my ability to do anything I set out to do (with God’s help, of course), would hold us in good stead. One of my greatest stumbling blocks in the marriage was my inability to face, literally, the truth of my situation. I held onto the ideal as if it were a life boat and couldn’t see that we’d been stuck for years, locked in a grid and unable to shift from our positions. Something needed to change.

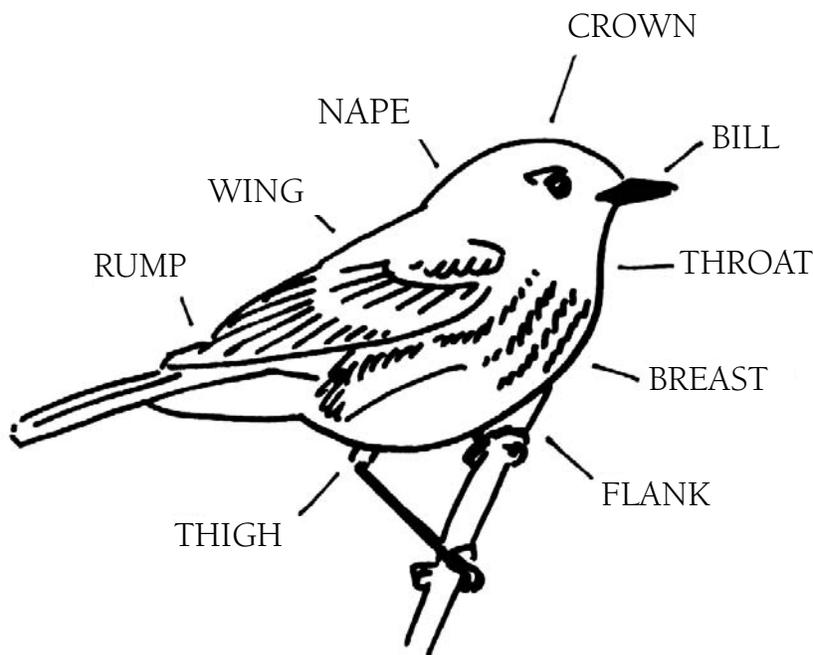
Over a period of ten years, the waterfall which we didn’t get out of the river in time to avoid, was in front of us. We stopped going to church. I went into a long period of aberrant depression when I realized things were falling apart. My husband and I left Salt Lake City, where we’d lived for twenty years and where we’d raised our three children, and moved with our youngest teenaged son to the mountains of Colorado. We gave up a beautiful home and network of friends and moved into a dark, claustrophobic condo that was supposed to be temporary. After three years there, we separated and I moved to

Denver where I knew no one, where I was determined to make a new life, and where I had no intention of relying on my roots or my church for help.

TOTALLY UNAWARE, I entered into a dark labyrinth of a thousand-plus miles. From the fatted years of my life, I found myself in the proverbial lean years. Very lean years, where there were times I sank to the utter bottom of the bottom and didn't think I'd find my way back.

black churches—the Second Baptists, African Methodist Episcopal, charismatic Christians. One church had a sign out front that read, “Sinners Welcome Here,” and I turned into the parking lot eagerly, relieved to feel welcome in a church. I loved the heartbeat of the gospel music, the choir rocking down the aisle, the connection to people who were honest about their place as sinners. I loved being able to worship, to shout, “I love you, Jesus.”

In 1994, I taught at the University of Missouri in Columbia



FAITH

(ALMA 7:23-27)

I didn't call it pride at the time, but I convinced myself that the LDS Church wasn't a place for someone whose life had broken to pieces. The Church was something I'd left behind. It wasn't a place for a single person about to be divorced, nor for someone who was reckless and heedless and a sinner determined to find a new configuration in which to be whole again. I was in my own little rowboat, frantically rowing toward something—yes, I did believe in something. There had to be a place where I could worship God. Where I could feel communion with Him. Where I could exercise the faith I once had.

Sunday mornings were the hardest hours of the week, as I'd spent so much of my life getting up on Sunday mornings, ironing my dress, curling my hair, preparing to go to church. My loneliness trebled on those mornings, so I attended all kinds of churches in Denver. Most of them felt cold or too contrived or too soul-less.

Something about the way the African-Americans had suffered made me feel simpatico with them, so I searched out the

for a semester and attended black churches there by myself, sometimes the only Caucasian, and I loved sitting shoulder to shoulder with impeccably groomed women, some of them old and bent with pillbox hats, some of them fancy in broad-brimmed hats and sequined dresses.

When I moved to Minnesota for a brief time, Sunday mornings still found me yearning for a religious community. Even though I lived with a man to whom I wasn't married, I needed a brief touch with my own church again. When one of the bishop's counselors called to welcome me to the ward, I told him I wasn't active but that I'd like to drop into church once in a while, just so I could feel a sense of community and sing the songs I loved again. I wouldn't take the sacrament, I told him, because I wasn't a worthy member, but I did want to come.

“That's strange,” he said, “but,” he paused, “okay. That's possible.”

As if a person needs to be granted the privilege of walking through church doors to commune with our Lord and Savior,

I thought when I hung up the phone, angry all over again at how I perceived some people in the church having such tunnel vision.

At my first of a total of four sacrament meetings during my year-and-a-half in Minnesota, I couldn't sing the hymns. Emotion would well up inside me. I choked on the words. My voice cracked. I tried to hide the tears streaming down my face. The flood. I was embarrassed. I couldn't hide.

Singing this music was like negotiating a one-inch passageway through the balled root of a gigantic tree with thousands of strands and fibers all attached to the trunk of the tree called me. I knew I was enmeshed by the large and small roots, and yet this felt fragile, feeble, tenuous, and even dangerous. I still believed I was Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd even though I was the one who was "hungry and helpless and cold" this time around, not some fictional stranger in the hymn book. I believed He was out in the wilderness looking for me, even if I felt an unfit gift for God.

I'M GRATEFUL THAT faith was planted so deeply into my heart, my bones, my blood, my breath. I'm grateful that I believed and still do believe in the Shepherd. I'm grateful that I finally understand that it takes a crack in the armor for God to move through pride and hurt. I've been proud, even arrogant in my quiet way. I've been stubborn.

But whatever the stories of our lives—the betrayals, hurts, disappointments, and losses—the great gift of faith in a God who waits for us to open the door, for us to comprehend How Great Thou Art, is there for each of us. Whatever any of us chooses to do about attendance at the ward house, faith helps us know that God understands our suffering. Furthermore, it gives us an inkling that we can understand God and His ways only when we walk some of the same paths as Jesus Christ who suffered for the sins of the world. ☺

WHY I READ THE SCRIPTURES

by H. Parker Blount

IN ONE OF our LDS Primary hymns, we sing, "Teach me all the things I must do. . . ." One of the things I do, among the many things I do not, is read the scriptures. It is a practice I acquired from my membership in the Church, although my earliest exposure to the scriptures had come from my Baptist grandfather, who, each evening, would read a chapter from the Bible as we sat around the table following dinner. It was not then an entirely enjoyable experience for a little boy who would rather be outside exploring the farm. But now I enjoy exploring the scriptures just as I then enjoyed my tramping about outside.

I come from that part of the country where the Bible is considered inerrant. Many of my fellow Southerners believe God dictated it and ultimately it was printed precisely as God wanted it. The Testaments, they believe, say what they say clearly and without danger of being misread, misunderstood, or misinterpreted.

My LDS background, however, teaches me that the Bible, though the word of God, has errors due to mistranslations. In addition, "plain and precious things" have been deleted. The problem is I don't know which parts have been mistranslated. In fact, I don't even know if anything is ever correctly translated.

Frankly I think a claim to an inerrant and infallible Bible (not to mention popes and prophets) is bizarre—but even so, it is an idea I sympathize with. I like the idea of a father—earthly or heavenly—who makes clear to his children what the rules and expectations are. He doesn't deliver mixed messages, and everyone who reads his proclamations arrives at the same understanding.

That is what I would like from the ruler of heaven and earth. That isn't what I get. I agree with Carolyn Myss who says that the language of the spirit is the language of paradox. The same can be said of the scriptures. For example, think about "If you are prepared, ye shall not fear" alongside "Take no thought for your life. . . ."

SOME HALF-DOZEN years ago, our bishop asked me to speak in sacrament meeting. At the time, I attended meetings a bit more frequently than I do now. He said he knew I read the scriptures regularly, and he wanted me to speak on why I read the scriptures. Well my wife and I were going away that weekend, so I was, so to speak, off the hook.

But I wasn't. I was hooked. I couldn't get the topic out of my mind. Why *do* I read the scriptures? What do I get out of them? Why do I feel my day is incomplete if I don't spend at least a few minutes with the scriptures? It wasn't that I hadn't considered those questions. I had, at least to some extent; but I hadn't considered them deeply. As I did, what I discovered surprised me. For one thing, I discovered that over time, the lenses through which I read the scriptures changed. Furthermore, I changed lenses according to which of the standard works I was reading.

I acquired my first set of scriptures when I was thirteen or fourteen, purchasing them with the money I had earned working on our neighbor's farm during the summer. This was long before we Church members became a scripture-toting and daily-scripture-reading people. I read them sporadically until I went on a mission. I have read them regularly since.

Initially, I read the scriptures, particularly the Bible, to buttress the claim that the Church was the only true church with the only true doctrine. Later I tried to read the scriptures as a guide for life. The scriptures, I was told, held all the answers to life's problems. So I would read and search for the best way to handle various problems. I was also told that as I read the scriptures, I should liken them unto myself.

I TEND TO read verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter. How I engage the scriptures as I read is varied, though. Often I read them as metaphors. I can't help but think, for example, when I read of Lot's wife looking back and being turned into a pillar of salt, that one just can't spend too much time in the past. I also read them wondering what the author was trying to achieve, or why Israel wanted to tell that particular story. I read them, too, as though they were written by men who have gone deep into their souls and who wrote, like most of us who write, to discover what we know and believe. Occasionally I read them as if literal, but I am mostly on the side of the person who said only fools read the Bible literally.

This issue of biblical inerrancy brings to mind the begats, which I usually skip but sometime not long ago chose to read. As I made my way through Matthew's begats, I discovered an interesting thing. In this patriarchal lineage, Matthew includes five women: Tamar, Rachab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. "Why," I asked myself? What did the Lord want us to know? What did Matthew want us to know? Why did Matthew include, for example, Tamar, who played the harlot to conceive a child by her father-in-law? Are we being warned that we can choke on the ideal—the voice that says, "If only people would live the gospel we wouldn't have these problems?" Are we being reminded of the paradox of having to stray the path to stay the path? Or are we being subtly told something of the profundity and the mystery of the workings of the Spirit? Or was something lost in translation? I don't know for sure, but Jesus seems to have had some grandmothers who definitely would not be the Relief Society sister of the month, and that intrigued me.

One night my wife and I were lying in bed (don't worry, I am finished with the begat stuff), and she said she was memorizing the Twenty-third Psalm and wanted to practice it. She began:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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

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

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.

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

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.

Then she said, "Amen." I said, "It doesn't have an 'Amen.'" She said, "It should have."

In that single instance, the Twenty-third Psalm was transformed and illuminated in ways I had not seen before. I had never thought of it as a prayer, but it is, both an invocation and a benediction. Later, at the Sunstone Symposium, D. Michael Quinn, in his address during the "Spiritual Paths after September 1993" session, said he would like to conclude his

remarks with his testimony. He then read the Twenty-third Psalm. It was transformed again as I thought, "Yes, of course, it is a testimony." It wasn't just the Twenty-third Psalm that was transformed. I was transformed.

The outcome from the bishop's asking me to speak was that I realized I read and value the scriptures because they take me to another place. I realized that having scriptural proof of LDS doctrine and teachings isn't that important to me. In fact, I have come to believe that the scriptures don't prove anything. I also realized the scriptures seldom have an immediate answer for my immediate problems. Furthermore, it is tedious to try to apply every scripture to my life.

To show you how sideways I have become, I feel as though I know as much about the plan of salvation as I want to know. Having finer details about the degrees of glory really makes little difference to me. Heaven is whatever heaven is. The resurrection—morning of the first day, afternoon of the second day—is whatever it is, and knowing more doesn't make me more of a spiritual person. What I want are the intimacies of salvation, not a blueprint. To use church language, my desire is to walk in the Spirit.

The scriptures, as I experience them, serve not as a daily guide, but as a daily (if I am fortunate) transformation. What I want from the scriptures is not the surface meaning but their soul. I see the scriptures as the steward of the mysteries of a godly consciousness and the passageway into those mysteries. There is a distinct difference between knowing Church doctrine and being obedient to rules and commandments, on the one hand, and being taught and transformed by the Spirit on the other.

It isn't as important to comprehend the surface meaning as to apprehend the soul of the scriptures. As Karen Armstrong says in her book on Islam, "Reading or listening to the Qu'ran is not a cerebral experience to get information or to receive a clear directive, but a spiritual discipline." Or, as a rabbi observed, "Whoever busies himself in the Torah for its own sake, his Torah becomes for him an elixir of life."

ONE SATURDAY THIS past August, I intended to go first thing to the store and purchase seeds and fertilizer for my garden. It had been the first year in more years than I can remember that I hadn't had a garden. In our part of the country, we can easily have a spring and a fall garden. Since I hadn't planted in the spring, I thought I should do it now. Somehow, however, I couldn't get in the spirit of the thing, and it troubled me. Intending to tell my wife I was going to the seed store, I walked outside onto the deck where she was sitting. Ordinarily August is very hot in Georgia, but somehow nature had given us an October day. I sat down on the edge of the deck, enjoying the cool morning and the warmth of the early morning sun just clearing the Georgia pines. This was more enjoyable than going to the store. I went back inside looking for something to read, picked up a book of poetry I had just checked out of the library, and returned to my spot on the deck and began to read. I would pause between poems, enjoying the pleasant morning but fretting over the garden. "I re-

ally should go to the store and get what I need and plant the garden,” I would tell myself, “it is the right thing to do.” On the other hand, I really didn’t want to face the Saturday morning bustle and then spend the morning preparing and planting, and then later weeding, hoeing, and tending. I was puzzled, for I had always enjoyed my garden and considered it a spiritual component of my life. I felt as though I was rejecting something basic to who I am. As I turned from my thoughts to read another poem, I remembered Robert Frost’s comment that poetry is what gets lost in translation.

Poetry, the language of allusions, enchantments, rhythms, incantations, and symbols, is the life force of words as well as gardens. I realized I had lost, at least for this season, the poetry of gardening. When we take the scriptures too literally, the poetry is lost there as well. Even if the words have been incorrectly translated, as long as the poetry is there, the words have the keys to take us beyond ourselves and transform us—not an intellectual change but a felt change.

That is why I read the scriptures. ☺

A SKEPTIC’S PRACTICE OF PRAYER

by John Dewey Remy

I DIDN’T ALWAYS pray. I began my spiritual life as a pre-teen skeptic but converted to Mormonism about the time my voice stopped cracking. Now I’m way past puberty, and I’m a doubter once again but with one key difference: I still pray a lot. I’m a rational mystic, a praying Mormon atheist, a peculiarity among an already-peculiar people. Prayer is a hard habit to break. And I think this is a good thing.

I became a prayeraholic on my mission to Japan. I was nicknamed, I hope with affection, “*Inori Chôrô*,” or “The Praying Elder.” I loved the rich honorific language we used to address *Tenpu no Chichi naru Kamisama*, explicitly exalting God and belittling ourselves with each carefully chosen pronoun, modifier, or verb ending. Japanese is still the language of my spirit. I made my companions fold their arms and bow their heads on the street before we began knocking on doors or cold contacting. And it wasn’t just a benediction—I would really try to feel for the wispy touch of the Spirit both after the “ahmen” and while we moved up the street, scanning homes or faces for instant golden converts (at the beginning of the day) or even just someone to take a freakin’ Book of Mormon (at the end of the day).

When I married Jana five months after my mission, it was only natural that I continue my good missionary habits with my new eternal, non-transferable companion. We’ve missed few prayers through almost thirteen years of marriage. Even when one of us is traveling, we still try to get our daily prayer in. One example from my online journal:

I introduced Jana to the wonders of instant messaging a little over a week ago [August 2001]. I thought that it would keep the phone bills down while she is in Utah, but it’s just made us more accessible to each other—we just spend more time chatting with each other, on the phone or online (the perils of putting two very verbal people in one relationship). We’ve already made both sacred and profane use of this technology.

Here’s an example of the former, excerpts from a prayer via MSN Messenger:

Jana says: Whose turn to pray?

John says: Your turn!

Jana says: Me???

John says: I prayed on the phone last.

Jana says: I did it last time on the phone!

John says: I think.

Jana says: Nope

Jana says: It was me in the hotel room with mom

John says: No prob.

John says: I’ll pray.

...

John says: Dear Heavenly Father

...

John says: Please bless Aunt Madge for her hospitality, bless her with companionship in her loneliness.

John says: Please bless Tom and his family during this new trial,

John says: And please help us to serve him by building a good site for him.

...

John says: We thank thee for people who create works which inspire and lift and help us to think.

John says: We’re grateful for the examples of hard work, dedication and sacrifice and service which surround us.

...

John says: We’re grateful that thou hast blessed our lives with such wonderful little ones.

John says: I’m grateful that thou hast blessed my life with my wonderful, radiant, talented, compassionate Jana.

John says: Please help us to have the energy to use our talents, our time, our resources to serve others.

John says: Please continue to bless our family with safety and peace of mind.

John says: In the name of Jesus Christ,

John says: Amen

Jana says: That was beautiful

Jana says: Thank you

Jana says: Just what I needed tonite

John says: Say “amen”

Jana says: Really

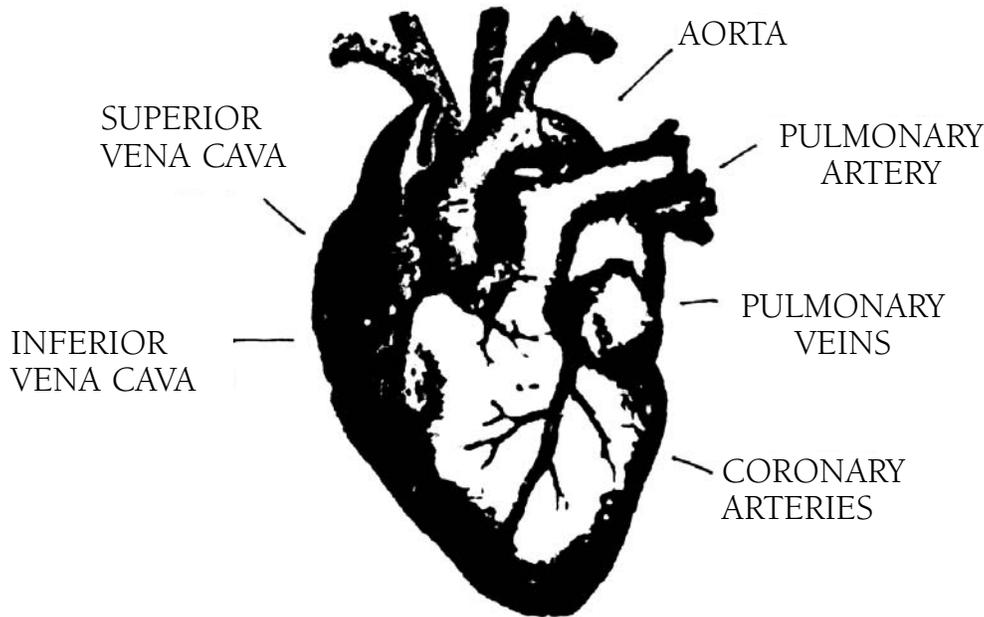
Jana says: Oh, amen. I forgot

Jana says: God bless you John
John says: Thanks.

OUR FAMILY HAS a system. The adults pray on even days, the kids on odd days. We have to come up with some new thing to be thankful for each time we pray. This was really easy the first couple of weeks, but now, after long silences, I find that my children are extremely grateful for shoelaces, carpet, string, cat toys, and other things I suspect are visible through downcast eyes on the living room floor.

all of the Bad Stuff I had done throughout the day. (The list was especially long when I was in the middle of *Miracle of Forgiveness*.) Prayer became my period of mental self-flagellation, my psychic hairshirt.

Over the years, as God became more distant to me, my attempts to reach out to him diversified. My weekly sacrament experience is inspired by the Quaker practice of community meditation. I sit in silence, seeking the divine light within me and feeling it not only there, but also becoming aware that there are hundreds of little flames burning brightly in the



PRAYER

(D & C 8:2-3)

Has the practice of regular family prayer transformed our family? I believe it has. It is a centering mechanism. No matter how irritated we might be with each other before prayer, soon we are reminded that we are grateful for one another, that we want each other to be happy, and to succeed. Prayer is also a form of communication with each other, even a teaching tool. The children know that we want peace in the Middle East and that we are grateful for our student apartment. Jana and I gain insights into Emma's love for our cats and Christian's desire for safety. And it is one of the primary ways that their skeptic dad can teach them about faith.

While the Remy practice of family prayer might pass Church correlation, my personal practice is perhaps more problematic. Though I am a practicing Mormon, my methods of supplicating God are a syncretistic, schizo mix of methods.

In the old days, my communication with God, especially in the evenings (when I had the most time), was pretty straightforward. I used to kneel down and make a mental checklist of

hearts of all of who are sitting around me. I practice various Buddhist meditations, sometimes chanting mantras with prayer beads in hand the way I watched my Japanese grandmother do while growing up.

I also have set prayers that I recite. This Tibetan prayer fits nicely in our tradition:

May I become at all times, both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need.

I have others from St. Francis of Assisi, from the Dalai Lama, from Emily Dickinson and Yeats, and ones I've created from the lyrics of rock groups such as Rush and the Beastie

Boys. I may repeat these over and over, but I've selected those which are the most meaningful to me, those words which ignite the spark of the divine within me and which expand my awareness of and my compassion for the teeming human divinity (or divine humanity) all about me. They have more meaning to me, and at this stage of my life, more power to transform me than does the sacramental prayer.

SOME YEARS AGO in Salt Lake County, five little girls trapped themselves in the trunk of a car on a hot summer day. As soon as the mother watching the children realized that they were missing, she drove around the neighborhood in a frantic search, without realizing they were dying in the trunk.

As a parent, I know that mother was praying hard to find them. Why didn't God answer her prayers and prompt her to open that trunk and find the children while there was still a chance to save them? If God wouldn't heed her prayers, then why would he respond to my trivial requests? Father and I had had a troubled relationship before that, but this marked a falling out between us.

I have tried in this presentation to separate belief and discipline, to focus on the benefits of prayer as praxis. The irony is that this is the greatest alchemy that the act of prayer works upon me—that, in spite of my doubts and unbelief, I still pray. Most of the time, while my heart struggles with the pain that fills this world, and my rational mind analyzes and synthesizes, I live in a random, indifferent world, a vast universe with a distant or non-existent God. My prayers are my tentative phone calls home, where I suspend disbelief, and hesitatingly dial out, hoping that someone, *someone* will pick up. ☺

“MORE FULLY UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD”: THOUGHTS ON SABBATH KEEPING

By Jana Riess

I AM A late convert to the spiritual practice of Sabbath-keeping. I was raised by goodly atheist parents for whom Sundays represented an opportunity to catch up on gardening, shopping, work, or household chores. No one went to church, although when I was nine, my mother started taking my brother and me to Quaker meetings a couple of Sundays a month. She was wary of organized religion, and Quaker meeting was just about the closest she could get to giving us some education in religion and the Bible. Because, as she put it to me later, if she didn't expose us to some kind of religion in childhood, what would we have to rebel against when we became teenagers?

It's no surprise then, that when I joined the LDS Church in 1993, I was mystified by the strict sabbatarianism I observed around me. I was startled to see Church members get so uptight about what to do—or, as seemed more emphasized, *not do*—on Sundays. I remember one sacrament meeting speaker fretting aloud about whether it was okay to tape a football game televised on Sunday to watch on a later day. He wasn't watching it on Sunday, but was it kosher to tape it if all these godless heathen football players were actually *playing* the game on a Sunday? Because, as Eric Liddell's character admonishes in *Chariots of Fire*, “The Sabbath's no' a day for playin' football.” Though I disagreed in spirit with the fear and anxiety that lay behind some people's strict interpretations of the Sabbath, I began to realize I'd never given much thought to what, if anything, the Sabbath was supposed to mean in my life.

Spiritual practices have the potential to be a soul-nurturing constant, but their importance will wax and wane in different periods of our lives. When my husband, Phil, and I lived in New Jersey, for example, we practiced the spiritual discipline of hospitality, of welcoming the stranger as well as the friend. We hosted open Thanksgiving meals and invited many people to stay, sometimes for months at a time. Now we live in Kentucky, and—ironically enough for a region of the country most known for its hospitality—no one ever comes to see us. In five years of living here, a scant handful of our friends have made the trek down south to visit. It's not that we don't have other opportunities for practicing the discipline of hospitality—as the Rule of St. Benedict puts it, of welcoming every person who crosses our threshold as if she were Christ himself—but there has been a discernible inward shift. Since we had a child and moved to Kentucky, our approach has been much more attuned to the quiet demarcation of time spent only with each other. Our lives are more self-contained, introverted, introspective. And in this context, we have started keeping the Sabbath holy.

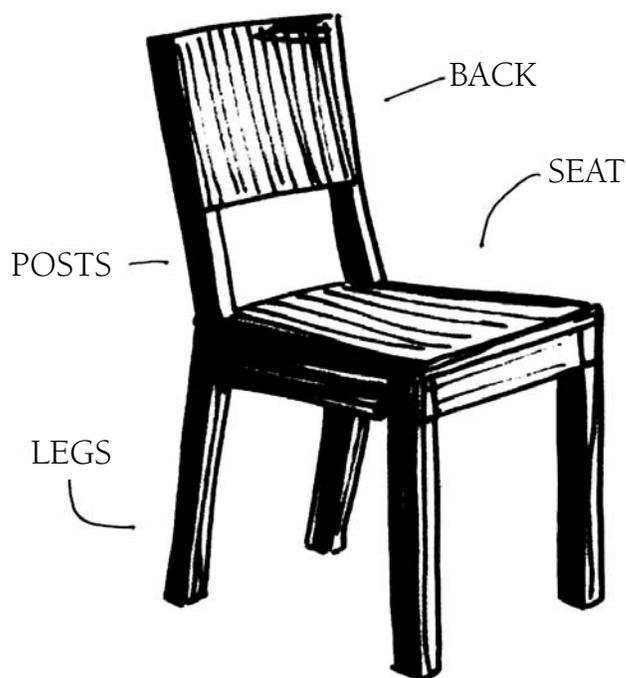
As Esther de Waal might say, the Sabbath is an inherent borderland, a site of exchange and openness, a time when we relinquish control in order to see beyond the mists of the everyday into something liminal, something undefined.¹ Sunday is the day where, on the surface, it seems that I am most restricted. It's a day that could easily be characterized by all of the things I've gradually decided not to do on the Sabbath: I (generally) don't shop, don't open my email or even turn on my computer, don't work, don't pay bills, don't talk about business, don't think about money or future purchases. It's a long list of don'ts that I've come to take pretty seriously for the perfectly selfish reason that I know the rhythm of my life has been improved immensely by keeping the Sabbath.

IN SPITE OF the fact that it's a day of apparent restrictions, I have come to see Sunday as the day when I am the most free. The Sabbath becomes a day when, if I am very lucky, *kairos* time steals into *chronos* time and affords me a glimpse of something eternal. My usual life, dictated fully by *chronos* time, by lists and demands and missed deadlines, allows no possibility for those stolen insights. Sunday is the only day of the week

when every hour of my day is not scheduled. It is the only day of my week where spontaneous phone calls and dinner plans and visits to friends are even possible. It's one of only two days of the week, Saturday being the other, where my cooking has the potential to become a lavish gift of love rather than a mere hustle to get something nutritious on the table. It's also the only day when, as a writer, I routinely find unexpected and unsought insights suddenly crowding my mind, which is usually too cluttered to receive such astonishing gifts of discernment.

New York Times at the kitchen table. *That* was a Sunday of renewal.

When I emerged from my year-long cocoon, it was with a refreshed sense of eagerness and joy. The first few weeks of church activity after my return were a bit tentative. Members of the ward who thought I'd merely backslidden—and didn't know that I may be the only Mormon ever to live up to the remarkably active term we have for backsliders, those who intentionally "go inactive"—didn't know quite what to make of



REST

(D&C 59:9-13)

The resonance of the Sabbath is not just for Sundays. Right now, I am in a tremendously lush period in my spiritual life. Not to sound Pollyannish, but it feels like springtime, in fact. I am renewed by the insights of gospel study and prayer. I feel closer to God than I have felt in a long time, perhaps since my conversion eleven years ago. But one of the major reasons for this sense of renewal, I know, is that I recently took a year-long sabbatical from church activity. From September 2000 to August 2001, I didn't go to meetings, participate in ward life or take the LDS sacrament. I realized that after seven years of church activity, I was burned out, and it was time for a break. (Traditionally, a sabbatical year is supposed to come after six years of labor, not seven, but what can I say? I was on Mormon Standard Time.) My sabbatical year was a time of dormancy and calm, when I continued reading but stopped running. I remember one perfect Sunday morning when I sent Phil and Jerusha off to his Methodist church and read back issues of the

me. I mostly kept silent about my sabbatical, but people noticed that when I returned to church, it was with a fresh sense of what I could accomplish as a member and why I wanted to be a Mormon in the first place.

Just a few weeks after I came back to full activity, September 11th happened. I found myself dreading the notion that the following Sunday the ward might entirely ignore the most devastating tragedy that had occurred in our nation's recent history in favor of such pressing topics as organizing food storage or subscribing to the *Ensign*. But instead of simply tuning out or sleeping in, which would have been my pre-sabbatical defense mechanism, I picked up the phone and called the counselor in the bishopric who was responsible for planning the meeting. I gave it to him straight: "If we're going to spend Sunday ignoring this event instead of helping people to process it, I'm not coming," I told him. "I'll go to a service where people are paying attention to more than their little slice

RECOMMENDED READING

of the world.” He readily agreed, which was very gratifying, and immediately enlisted me to give a talk, which was not. But it needed to be done, so why not me? Giving the talk was a very difficult experience, as I felt deeply affected by September 11th even before I learned that one of my former students at Columbia had been killed in the twin towers. But I was able to give what I felt was one of the most honest homilies of my life precisely because my sabbatical had stripped away any platitudes and easy thinking that I might have been prone to a year before. When we are tired, when we are burned out, there is a danger that we will gravitate toward easy answers. We stop thinking deeply because we are simply too tired to think.

For me, Sundays represent a chance to live that sabbatical year again in microcosm, to devote myself to reading and to shift downward for at least a day. Some weeks I also do a half-day enclosure on Wednesday, following an ancient Benedictine practice of devoting Wednesday afternoon to reading. But even when this is not possible, I always have Sunday to look forward to. In a nutshell, the Sabbath has become a life-giving time of renewal for me, a day I guard jealously.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT. I’m concerned about the tenor of the discussion about Sabbath-keeping in Mormon culture. Conservative, self-described “orthodox” Mormons give talks and discourses, both officially and unofficially, in which they focus on the laundry list of things to do and to avoid doing on the Sabbath. I always find myself wincing at these talks, because invariably, the way that I interpret the Sabbath and the way they do differs, and their dogmatism about what is right and what is wrong makes me feel lonely and judged.

One would think that the counterpart of this would be that liberal Mormons focus on the peace of the Sabbath without sweating the small stuff; that Liahonas could talk about obtaining Sabbath rest and other-ness without being judgmental about the details of what is acceptable and what is not. However, I don’t hear liberal Mormons talking much about the Sabbath at all. They’re not writing about it; they’re not publishing articles on it that I have seen. I’d love to be wrong about this, so by all means, if they exist, please point me to appropriate sources.

This is such a missed opportunity for a dialogue about the Sabbath, because those who rigidly fixate on the nuts and bolts of Sabbath observance risk missing the whole point of why we do what we do, and clinging to a dead legalism. Liberal Mormons, however, either by not talking about the Sabbath at all or not engaging the kinds of specific questions that seem to attract more conservative Saints, also fail to appreciate a fact that Orthodox Jews know so well: God is in the details. The God we believe in *does* care about whether we should drive a car or turn on a light switch or use a Crock-Pot on the Sabbath. So let’s talk about it. ☺

NOTE

1. Esther de Waal, *To Pause at the Threshold: Meditations for Living on the Border* (Morehouse, 2004).

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting by Marva Dawn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989). In this modern classic, Dawn explores the potential for the Sabbath to be a spiritual resource for Christians, who can find rest and spiritual solace from its weekly observance.

The Fourth Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day by Francine Klagsbrun (New York: Harmony/Crown, 2002). Klagsbrun looks at the Sabbath in Jewish texts and traditions, drawing from Torah, Talmud, and midrash as she investigates Sabbath observance in the modern world.

Mudhouse Sabbath: Eleven Spiritual Practices I Learned from Judaism by Lauren Winner (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2003). The first chapter of my friend Lauren Winner’s lovely collection of autobiographical vignettes deals with Shabbat, or the Sabbath—one of the spiritual practices she carried with her when she converted from Orthodox Judaism to Anglican Christianity.

Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest by Lynne M. Baab (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005). Baab draws on her experience of having lived for a year and a half in Israel, where everything shuts down on Friday afternoon, and discusses how her participation in these Jewish Sabbaths informed and transformed her Christian journey.

A JOURNAL WORTH KEEPING (WHETHER THE ANGELS QUOTE FROM IT OR NOT)

by Holly Welker

ALTHOUGH I AM no longer an active or believing Mormon, I still live a lot like one. OK, I drink an occasional beer, though I have never been able to cultivate any interest in substance abuse. I don’t worry about the ratings of the movies I watch, though I have enough sense to avoid films that are obviously crap. I don’t go to church on Sunday, though I have tried to find a congregation where I feel at home, but I can’t help noticing other meetings’ shortcomings when compared to a Mormon service: I hate having to stand, then sit, then kneel, then stand again; or I hate that other worshipers sing stupid hymns accompanied by guitars or recordings, like it’s some group karaoke thing; or I hate that people show up in T-shirts and shorts, like it’s the grocery store.

But I still write down goals. I still strive to be scrupulously honest in my business dealings and to give a good portion of my earnings to charity. I still buy groceries in bulk. I still can’t throw away anything, from a scrap of fabric to a cardboard box, without asking myself, “Is there some possible use left in this thing?” I still keep a journal.

For many years, I kept a journal for the same reason I flossed, made good grades, and exercised: because somebody told me that when I was seventy, I’d be glad I’d done such things in my youth. In general, the journal has given me more pleasure than the flossing. I was eleven when President Kimball issued his encouragement to

get a notebook . . . a journal that will last through all

time, and maybe the angels will quote from it for eternity. Begin today and write in it your goings and comings, your deepest thoughts, your achievements and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies.

I'm now on volume thirteen, and I still look at old volumes from time to time. For instance, volume five, my mission journal, is almost 100,000 words long and quite hefty. I wrote in it my goings and comings, my deepest thoughts, and things such as this, from 14 June 1986: "I have decided that the angels will not even flip the pages of this journal, though imperfect beings might find something of interest here."

Many people consider a journal the most private and intimate of texts. In certain ways, my journal is intensely intimate, in that it contains personal details and deep yearnings and struggles. Nonetheless, I was affected very early and very thoroughly by the Mormon view that journals are documents providing personal accounts of shared experiences—an example being the diaries or journals kept by those who crossed the plains—and are in some ways intended to be shared, just like the experiences they record. I took to heart the admonition that someday, when I am dead, someone, somewhere, might come upon my journals and use them—as faith-promoting stories, as cautionary tales, or simply as historical documents. Thus I have long been acutely aware of audience—it's a concept I understood instantly when teachers tried to explain it in composition courses. And even though I began to suspect early on that the angels would not quote from my journal, filled as it was with doubt and dissent, still, I couldn't help wanting, at the very least, to entertain and edify those other potential readers, the human ones—to give them an occasional good laugh, or pose from time to time a difficult question worth pondering.

In short, I wanted to give them reasons to keep reading, and give myself reasons to keep writing. I felt an obligation to make the record of my life relevant and compelling, both for myself and for that future audience, and I don't think that sense of obligation hurt either my journal in particular or my writing in general—or my cognitive skills, for that matter. I've learned that to be a good journaler, one must develop an eye for what is interesting and meaningful in one's daily life, as well as some skill and insight into analyzing one's own behaviors, utterances, and relationships. I believe that a journal should accurately capture not merely what happened, but the mood it left you in, the effect. Anyone who has kept a journal for very long knows that a journal that does nothing but record events makes for singularly dull reading—and yes, I have resorted to that minimalist strategy from time to time when I'm feeling lazy or overwhelmed; I do it primarily to maintain my habit, not because I imagine that such entries are particularly valuable in and of themselves.

I no longer attend much to a future audience (if someone really wants to read through all those thousands of pages once I'm gone, s/he is welcome to, but I'm not planning on it); these days I write my journal mainly for myself, but I haven't lost my sense that my journal needs to be, on the whole, worth not

only writing in the first place, but reading again later—even if I'm the only one ever to read it. Which raises the question: what makes my journal, for me, worth the writing and reading of it? I won't deny that I find keeping a journal a pleasant and entertaining use of my time, and that I do it in part simply because I enjoy it. But I believe that a journal can indeed perform a spiritual function, and I find that aspect extremely valuable. A journal can be written with a specifically spiritual bent, as an inventory of our efforts to live morally and behave appropriately, what Catholics call "an examination of conscience." It can be a meditation upon issues that interest us, topics that trouble us. It can be a way to pose important questions and seek answers for them—as well as a place to record those answers when they come, so that years later, we can look back and be amazed by a youthful wisdom we somehow managed to forget.

As a writing teacher, I also believe that spiritual discipline can be built into the endeavor of writing well: although my students don't always believe me, I remain convinced that good writing is carefully crafted and coherent, and makes use of things such as 1) transitions, 2) support for ideas in the form of specific and apt examples, 3) musical, rhythmic prose, and 4) syntax that is lively and varied. Any account of your life will, of necessity, be molded and shaped, whether poorly or ill, and the transitions you use, the examples you select, even the vocabulary you employ, can help you see a pattern to your life you might otherwise miss. I can't imagine how I would make sense of my life without the profound and useful insights that come upon me as I wrestle to bring inchoate sensations and unconnected experiences, ranging from the devastating to the delightful, under the greater order of organized prose. Sometimes these insights arrive years after I've written a journal entry, when I'm thinking about a new situation that bears some similarity to an old experience. I'll haul out an old volume, read through it, and some mental flash will suddenly illuminate both situations in remarkable and useful ways—an event I often then record in the new volume, also quoting the old passage that sparked the insight.

IN HER ESSAY, "On Keeping a Notebook," Joan Didion writes, "The point of my keeping a notebook has never been, nor is it now, to have an accurate factual record of what I have been doing and thinking." Instead, she says the point is to remember

How it felt to be me: that is getting closer to the truth about a notebook. . . . I think we are well-advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and surprise us, come hammering on the mind's door at 4 a.m. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them, who betrayed them, who is going to make amends.

While I agree with Didion that it's wise to remain familiar with the people we used to be, I am, unlike her, interested in having "an accurate factual record of what I have been doing and thinking"—as the descendent of Mormon pioneers and

genealogers, how could I be otherwise? In *Faithful Transgressions in the American West: Six Twentieth-Century Mormon Women's Autobiographical Acts*, Laura L. Bush points out that

Mormon autobiographers pay close attention to “truth” and to “accurate” history. They often begin their narratives with recitals of their precise ancestry and exact place of birth, carefully researching and marking the progression of the story of their lives until ending the story with a formal testament of faith in God. . . . Mormon autobiographers’ meticulous attention to testifying of God and to producing accurate historical details . . . follows biblical and Book of Mormon writing traditions.

I confess: I’ve written an autobiography of sorts, a memoir of my mission, and I was not the least bit surprised to discover that my book adheres to the formula Bush describes, since I was very aware at the time of following a tradition. I wanted my book to be as accurate as I could possibly make it, especially since when I wrote it, I imagined it as the defense I would muster in my behalf at the final judgment, and God would be well aware of any conscious lie I might tell. I was trying to produce a work of art, but it was also a deadly serious moral enterprise. My first act in writing my book was to transcribe every word of my mission journal—in which I had meticulously recorded entire conversations, detailed impressions, and the dates, places, and times of significant events; I had even included supporting documents such as letters, zone conference programs, and those yellow planners on which we scheduled our work.

At a writing conference in June 2004, I met a woman who, like me, is a scholar and writer of literary nonfiction, and who, like me, had her heart well and truly broken by a man she was ready to marry, and who, like me, suffers from insomnia. She told me that to help herself unwind, clear her mind and prepare to sleep each night, before bed she would write in a spiral notebook, usually about how upset she was with Michael, her ex, and how devastated she was that as soon as the engagement ring was on her finger, he turned into someone else, someone she couldn’t marry. She wrote pages and pages, she said, about how she hated him, loved him, resented him, could never forget him although she wanted nothing more than to erase him from her memory. I sympathized, with the difficulty in falling asleep, with the heartbreak, with the confused writing. But then she mentioned that when she got to the end of each notebook, she threw it away. “You threw it away?” I repeated, dazed.

“Yeah,” she said. “It was just my ranting about Michael. It’s not like the world needs any of that.”

“But what if there was . . . an insight? Or a good line? And you threw it away?” I asked slowly, attempting to resist the horror of it all.

“There wasn’t,” she said. And since I was having difficulty breathing, having just heard someone be so cavalier about an action absolutely inimical to my worldview, I made no reply and the conversation moved on to other topics.

I tell this story to call attention to one part of keeping a journal: the *keeping* part. As I mentioned, my journal does contain boring, uninspired passages; I haven’t deleted them and I don’t intend to. For one thing, when I’m overwrought, it’s kind of nice to remember times when nothing much happened; it’s also good to remind myself how flat even the most exciting events can seem later if I don’t render them fully. Furthermore, preserving what you produce is built into the activity: keeping a journal means you not merely write but hang on to the journal. And that keeping is also a spiritual practice: finding the discipline to make writing a habit, to live with a growing and ongoing document that demonstrates who you were, who you thought you’d become, and who you actually ended up being. If you’re lucky, it might also help you figure out who you want to be next and how to achieve it.

I’LL END WITH Job, who, if he lived at all, lived before paper was readily available: “Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!” (Job 19:23–24)

We don’t have to be so desperate. If we want something written, we can write it. We have plenty of paper, plenty of ink, and really fast computers. All of which make keeping a journal so easy that it’s something of a luxury, a way of acknowledging how blessed—and I use that word advisedly—we are.

In conclusion, I bear testimony of the power of a journal to help us live with more awareness of who we are and who we want to be. I will always be grateful that I followed President Kimball’s advice to keep a journal. It has enriched my life immeasurably. ☺



PHYLLIS BARBER likes Irish Oatmeal, bicycles, her rock-and-roll sons, great storytellers, and the exquisitely wrought sentence.



H. PARKER BLOUNT was eighteen before he learned “oil” was not pronounced “awl.” He still prefers “ya’ll” to “you guys.” Grits and chocolate are foods of choice.



JOHN DEWEY REMY’S greatest aspiration in life is to be a mystic Mormon hippie. He is a struggling vegetarian, a part-time Quaker, a lapsed Republican, and a compulsive book junkie. He can be found, virtually, at www.mindonfire.com (web) or john@mindonfire.com (email).



JANA RIESS’S New Year’s resolution is to do more yoga and eat more yogurt, though not necessarily at the same time.



HOLLY WELKER’S favorite song is “I Feel Loved” by Depeche Mode, a catchy dance tune about the dark night of the soul.

Two authors illustrate the conflicting messages about sex that Mormon women receive from church and culture.

FROM BUNKERVILLE TO BABYLON:

JUANITA BROOKS AND PHYLLIS BARBER
TELL THE STORY OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY
MORMON WOMEN'S SEXUAL TRAINING

By Laura L. Bush, with a response by Holly Welker

EDITOR'S PREFATORY NOTE: *This article by Laura Bush synthesizes sections from two chapters of her groundbreaking work, Faithful Transgressions in the American West: Six Twentieth-Century Mormon Women's Autobiographical Acts (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004). Bush's interdisciplinary analysis of gender, race, religion, and women's authority in the life writing of Mary Ann Hafen, Annie Clark Tanner, Juanita Brooks, Wynetta Willis Martin, Terry Tempest Williams, and Phyllis Barber illuminates the context in which they wrote, while also demonstrating how each author had significant rhetorical and artistic goals beyond merely sharing the story of her life.*

An earlier version of this article was given at the 2004 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium (tape SL04-322). During that session, Holly Welker responded to Bush's presentation. At Bush's request, an updated version of Welker's response is reprinted here.

EVER SINCE NINETEENTH-CENTURY LATTER-DAY Saints openly acknowledged their anti-Victorian practice of polygamy, the public has been curious about Mormon women's sexuality. And even though the mainstream Church has long since abandoned polygamy, outsiders'



scrutiny continues today, as evidenced by the success of Deborah Laake's 1993 autobiography, *Secret Ceremonies: A Mormon Woman's Intimate Diary of Marriage and Beyond*. Laake's book became a "sizzling" *New York Times* bestseller at least in part because it provides readers titillating access to "shocking" insider information about Mormon temple ceremonies and the "graphic" details of a disaffected Mormon woman's sexual mis-education, depressions, divorces, and eventual departure from her Mormon faith.

Although Laake's autobiography makes a notable, yet controversial, contribution to information about Mormon women's sexual experience, readers will gain a broader understanding of Mormon women's sexual training by studying Juanita Brooks's *Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* and Phyllis Barber's *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir*. As they narrate the story of their lives growing up in Nevada, Brooks (1898-1989) and Barber (1944-) illustrate the strained position twentieth-century Mormon women find themselves in with regard to their sexuality, alternately working to achieve the Victorian-Mormon ideal of women's chastity, while also shaping themselves to become the object of men's desire and, at times, the survivors of men's sexual exploitation. Comparing and contrasting key scenes from the two autobiographies demonstrates the often-conflicted and contradictory nature of twentieth-century Mormon women's sex education.



LAURA L. BUSH, Ph.D., is a faculty associate in the Department of English at Arizona State University and an instructional professional at ASU's Center for Learning and Teaching Excellence.

No one, I repeat no one, wants a used rose. Your husband will want a girl who's fresh as the morning dew, sparkling, alive, brand new. Don't let them handle your body.

OF ROTTEN PEACHES

Is it a woman's responsibility to maintain the sexual standards her community mandates?

FOR A MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY Mormon woman, Brooks writes in groundbreaking ways about sexism, sexual harassment, spousal abuse, and even rape, although she never uses those terms to characterize the incidents she depicts as having occurred in her own or other women's lives. She also fails to provide much critical reflection on the issue of Mormon women's sexuality and sex training. The restrained language and often cryptic manner in which Brooks narrates these scenes reflects much about her own upbringing in a Victorian-minded religion. Yet she still dares to speak what her peers often omit or gloss over.

Her coming-of-age story demonstrates how, despite her father's otherwise liberal-minded ways, he nevertheless trains his daughter toward strict sexual abstinence. She writes, "Without seeming to do so, he kept me conscious of my relations with the boys by occasional comments made as we stood together at the corral fence or waited for a horse to finish his grain" (185). Like the Mormons whose attitudes he is meant to represent, Brooks's father believes girls who indulge in sexual relations before reaching adulthood and marriage are to blame for being talked about or even victimized by boys. During a key chapter about adolescence, loss, and her journey from innocence to experience, Brooks reconstructs an illuminating scene during which her father assures her that if she behaves herself, she will be safe from an unknown man she saw in the pasture. From a twenty-first century perspective, his views sound frighteningly naïve and blatantly sexist:

You don't have no call to be afraid. No grown man is going to harm a little girl like you. No man will molest a girl who don't invite it. If you know where you're going, and set out to go there, ain't no man going to stop you. It's the girl who dawdles along and giggles and accidentally drops her handkerchief that gets picked up. The girl that gets taken advantage of usually gives a come-on herself. (171)

In another scene, Brooks continues using direct dialogue to capture the vividness of her memory about his opinions: "I'd hate to have the fellows discuss my daughter like they did one girl this afternoon. If she knew the things the boys say about



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHYLLIS BARBER

ROSE NIGHT, LAS VEGAS 5TH WARD, 1957
Mia Maid Phyllis is seated on far right of second row.



her, she'd be less free with her favors" (185). This father's backhanded "admonition" to his daughter illustrates much about Mormon cultural views concerning young women's chastity and the responsibility they bear to maintain the sexual standards their religious community mandates. Brooks narrates the scene without reflecting on its potentially sexist implications. The dialogue also depicts a metaphor pervasive in one form or another among Mormons to the present day: "Nobody wants a girl that everybody can handle," says her father. "She's like a peach. After a few have squeezed it, it gets soft and rotten and nobody wants it. If a fellow respects you, he may learn to like you; if he doesn't, he'll still respect you." According to Brooks, "Without elaboration, without further preaching, Pa dropped such remarks and changed the subject, leaving me to ponder them as I might" (185). The open-ended nature of these interchanges leaves her own adult views ambiguous in the text; she never expresses clear agreement or disagreement with her father's position or sex education tactics, leaving readers to wonder and "ponder" themselves about her own adult views.

"ROSE NIGHT"

Sex training rituals in Mormonism

ISSUES ABOUT MORMON girls' education in proper gender performance pervade Barber's coming-of-age story, *How I Got Cultured*. The most explicit chapter about her sex education and her training to remain chaste until marriage is entitled, "The Rose." Recalling Brooks's peach metaphor and Mormons' anxious desire to constrain a young girl's passions, Barber reconstructs a ritual familiar to modern teenage girls in which their adult leaders try to persuade them to preserve their virginity for their husbands by passing around a single white rose on one special evening. During the "Rose Night" ritual, Barber describes the circle of girls touching and contem-



PHOTO COURTESY OF PHYLLIS BARBER

THE NELSON FAMILY, 1956

Clockwise from top: Phyllis, Elaine, Herman, Kathy, Thora, and Stephen.

plating the flower's beauty, which is, of course, damaged by all the handling. After focusing the teenagers' attention on the rose's drooping head, Sister Bradshaw "looked at us rather sternly." She then intoned,

No one, I repeat no one, wants a used rose. Your husband will want a girl who's fresh as the morning dew, sparkling, alive, brand new. Don't let them handle your body. Don't let them touch you in private places. Those places are yours to save for the man who'll be your husband. . . . He'll reverence you above all women because you've saved yourself just for him and your eternal marriage, the kind that lasts forever. (156)

Following Sister Bradshaw's speech, Barber portrays her fourteen-year-old self thrown into a rapid review of her past for any sexual misdeeds that might require confession. First she recalls playing doctor at five with her friend Marie; then there was the brief incident when she was nine and her cousin Lee touched her with his penis in the barn (157); and finally, at twelve, she remembers her neighbor Leonard "crawling" on top of her like a snail, "its body suctioned to my face" (158). Barber depicts herself that night coming to the happy conclusion that she had, in fact, remained unsullied—so far. "By the end of Mary Lynn's closing prayer," she writes, "I could honestly say I was a pristine rose. I'd kept all invaders away. Of course," she admits, "not many had tried to bruise my petals, at least nobody I was interested in. But I was still an undefiled rose, an untouched one just beginning to blossom from a tightly wrapped bud of pale yellow" (159).

VIRGINS OR WHORES

The deleterious effects of rigid, inequitable moral codes

BARBER'S HUMOROUS DEPICTION of Rose Night along with the girls-as-fruit or girls-as-flowers metaphor make twentieth-century Mormon girls' sexual training seem rather harmless on the surface. However, her ironic depiction is certainly meant to raise serious ques-

My mother sighed. "Young people think they're different, that they can break rules. I'm telling you this to help you, my dear. We're all on that train. Nobody gets off. Don't kid yourself, because you'll make things harder if you do."

tions about how and why such rituals continue in Mormon culture and what Mormons presumably continue to believe about the benefits of these ritualized sex trainings. In fact, the rigid, inequitable moral codes ingrained in impressionable Mormon girls are shown to have deleterious effects, as played out in subsequent chapters of both Barber's and Brooks's autobiographies.

For example, Brooks writes about the sexual exploitation of a female student whom she counseled briefly while serving as Dean of Women at Dixie Junior College in St. George, Utah, then a Church-sponsored school of mostly Mormon students. The narrative reinforces traditional notions about women's obligation to take sexual responsibility for community standards. In her classic treatment, *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett explains the long, historical nature of this concept in all patriarchal societies: "The large quantity of guilt attached to sexuality in patriarchy is overwhelmingly placed upon the female, who is, culturally speaking, held to be the culpable or the more culpable party in nearly any sexual liaison, whatever the extenuating circumstances."³

In this particular story, Brooks relates the "case" of a "little girl" who had been nicknamed "California Rose." "She was small, and so pale as to be ashen, though her hair, too, was light. She looked so out of place in that audience of healthy, vigorous young people" (310). Devoting only five short paragraphs to the story, Brooks documents yet another poignant but understated page in the history of women's sexual oppression. In this scene, the depersonalized "California Rose" is the culpable party. She had given at least six boys a "disease," which everyone said they got from her. In other words, the boys, not the girl, are figured to be the victims. In fact, as Brooks constructs the story, the community had dismissed this supposedly wayward young woman as having been "rotten before she was ripe" (311). Using clipped language and indirect dialogue, Brooks writes:

I asked her about the charge that she had gone out with boys. Yes, they would whistle for her and she would go out and get into the cars. Did she know their names? No, they just called each other by their nicknames. Where did they go? To a building in the field just a little ways away; it was empty now but it had been shelter for a hired man. There was a quilt folded on the floor, and a cot in the corner. Then what happened? They would each take a turn. Did they pay anything? Once when she held back they gave her a dime; other times they gave her a candy bar. (311)

Relating this event is significant because Brooks makes public a story of scandal kept private at a Mormon-sponsored college, although the religious background of these students is not stated. Besides the painful details of this girls' plight, the most disconcerting thing about the narration, however, is that the tenor and focus of the account does not show Brooks taking a clear stand on the girl's behalf. She does write that she was "disappointed not to get the names of the boys involved, but," she notes, "Doctor McGregor said that was not necessary; he had them all. Everyone had come in for treatment . . ." (311). She also does not explicitly or implicitly express much concern for the girl's welfare or her reputation, which has clearly been destroyed. She does, however, mention the doctor's apprehension about the boys' good names: "He seemed concerned, for one or two were from prominent families." Overall, Brooks concludes the incident with restraint: "no matter who they were, it was a bad situation for everyone" (311).

While this ambiguous retelling of what amounts to sexual exploitation or even gang rape seems overly sympathetic to the boys and bordering on mere pity (or implied blame) for the girl, the choice to include the account is uncommonly frank for a Mormon woman's life narrative. It is also evidence of the unequal and sexist treatment of unmarried girls in a culture that classifies them as either virgins or whores (and nothing in between). Further, the community, and perhaps even Brooks herself, assumes a young woman such as the California Rose can freely decide to be sexual or not—to be a virgin or a whore. Yet anyone moderately familiar with a history of sexual abuse could identify this young person as someone who early in life had likely been robbed of her sense of freedom to choose who would have access to her body. Regardless of her actual ability to choose to have sex or not, the boys clearly choose to take their opportunity to use a female who, according to *their* sexual training, deserves exactly what she "asks for."

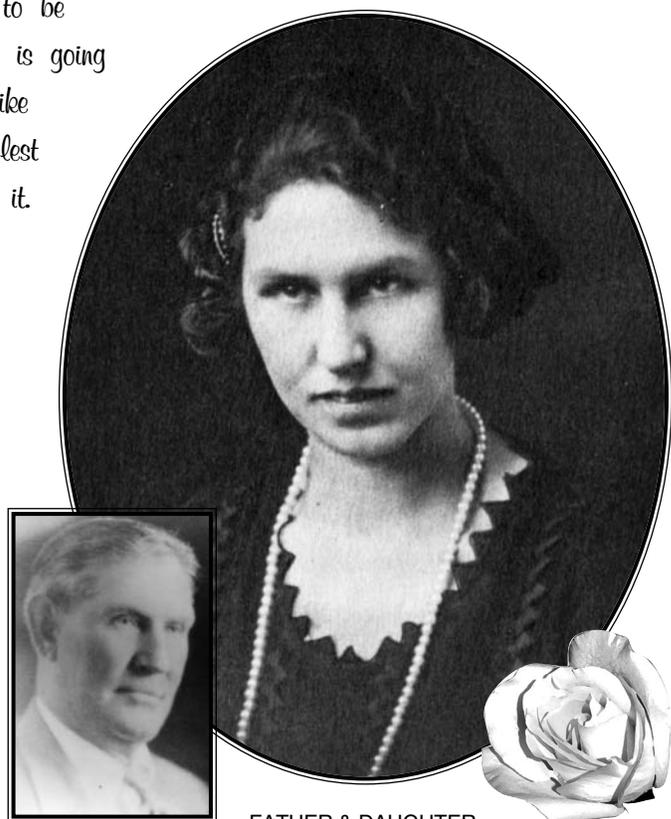
One of the most personal stories that Brooks narrates about gender relations and what turn out to be her own limited choices as a woman involves the sexual harassment she endures from a man she calls "Judas." Most women who read her chapter (ironically entitled "In the Virgin Valley") will recognize the age-old problem of having to deal with uninvited, unwanted, and aggressive sexual advances by a recalcitrant man. Her encounters with "Judas" begin as annoying or unsettling incidents but soon escalate to threatening episodes in which she feels afraid and vulnerable. One purpose in telling the

story is to share what she had previously kept private; another purpose (which is only implied, but which she makes clear through strategically placed details) is to provide evidence of God's help and protection on her behalf. The story demonstrates that Mormons delude themselves when they believe, without qualification, that controlling one's own sexuality will control the sexual advances of another human being.

Brooks explains that one summer with the help of her husband's brother, Howard, she took a position as a "second cook" for about one hundred employees at the "Gyp Camp in lower Nevada" (265). Her first husband, Ernest, had died, and she needed to work to support her young son, Ernie. Juanita and Mable, the head cook, had begun to refer to one of the hired men as "Judas" because they "disliked him heartily" (267). His first target, writes Brooks, was her new friend. "He would want to pinch her or get hold of her whenever he could. She avoided him like the plague and so did I, though I must admit that he had never yet had an opportunity to get near me" (267). Soon, however, he corners her "in a supply room digging out lard for the day's cakes." Fortunately, she had been using a long butcher knife "to cut out chunks" of the lard from a deep barrel. Then the drama of her account begins: "I thought I heard something behind me so I pulled myself up and at the same instant heard him say, 'Oh-ho! So now I've got you just where I want you! You'll not get away so easy this time!'" After recognizing his voice, she writes, "I turned around quickly, the butcher knife still in my hands, and faced

*Y*ou don't have no call to be afraid. No grown man is going to harm a little girl like you. No man will molest a girl who don't invite it.

It's the girl who dawdles along and giggles and accidentally drops her handkerchief that gets picked up.



FATHER & DAUGHTER

Left, Henry Leavitt; Right, Juanita, ca. 1920.

IMAGE USED BY PERMISSION, UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

him.” Working to capture the intensity of the encounter, she claims to remember her exact words:

“Damn your dirty heart!” I said slowly, “You dare to touch me, and I’ll split you from stern to gudgeon!”

“By God! I believe you would!” he said, backing off. “I just believe you would!” And he walked away. (267)

Trying to maintain the usual decorum of her text, she concludes by remarking that she didn’t know where she came up with “that phrase or what it actually meant, but I find from the dictionary that it was exact and appropriate” (267). She also notes that her firm tactic worked to warn him away, and she “studiously avoided him” from then on. Thus, Brooks limits her own freedom in order to avoid this man. No restrictions she places on herself, however, have any effect on him. She can be as modest, moral, virginal, and Victorian as possible, but she can only hope to avoid a self-serving, immoral person who wants control over her. Later, for example, when she must find a ride home north, Judas reappears with a vengeance.

Although she tells the story of her difficult experiences with Judas in her autobiography, at the time, Brooks did what many a woman has done in similar circumstances—she keeps the encounters to herself or shares them only with a close woman friend, trying to manage a badly behaving man on her own, hoping the problem will go away on its own and fearing if she dares to complain she will just be blamed.

As the mail truck driver, Judas is the only person she can get to take her to Moapa on her way back to Utah, where she would be teaching during the school year. “I hadn’t told Howard of my experience with this man,” she admits, “nor indicated that I had any reason to be afraid of him.” In fact, she believed she would be safe traveling with her son for a “less-than-three-hour trip” (269). Not surprisingly, she was wrong.

According to Brooks, they weren’t very far on their way when the trouble began. The paragraph she writes about his shocking insistence on having sex with her at a “fine little grassy area” along the way is memorable not only for Judas’s audacity, but also for the frank details Brooks includes. She does not fictionalize the dialogue. Instead, she focuses on the nature of his conversation using indirect description of his matter-of-fact attitude and outrageous justifications for sex during what she characterizes as a frightening situation for her:

We were started when Old Judas began to tell me that it was his custom to take one short rest stop on the way out; there was a fine little grassy area with a forest of old, spreading mesquite trees and a pool around a slough with flags and grass and blackbirds—a very pleasant stop. And this time he didn’t mean to be cheated as he had been once before. Had I forgotten what an exciting experience it was to “have connection”? I had been married; I ought to know that some sex experience was necessary for good health. It was the finest, most genuine thrill that life could offer. (269)

Unlike the previous encounter in which she fortuitously held a protective knife, Brooks writes, “This time I had no de-

fense; I did not care to argue or discuss this matter; I could only pray silently: ‘Dear Lord, God help me!’” With her son asleep on her lap, she recalls that when they arrived at the “oasis,” she had determined that she “would remain where I was; he would have to drag me out” (269). Once they did stop, Brooks’s telling heightens the suspense and fear of her story to its climax: her unexpected rescue by a stranger who had no inkling (and never would) about the distressing situation he had just walked into. Just by showing up, he and his lame horse would save Juanita from her sexual nemesis:

“I’ll put some water into the carburetor,” [sic] Judas said, picking up a gallon brass bucket from the back. “It’s nearly empty, and we might want to get off in a hurry.”

Before he had the cap screwed back on, help came. A man leading a limping horse rounded the base of a knoll just ahead.

“How lucky can I be!” he called out. “To find water, and a man with a bucket, besides. We were jogging along when she reared back, and wouldn’t put her foot to the ground.” (270)

Of course, the dramatic irony in this passage is that both the man with the mysteriously lame horse and Juanita herself are “lucky” to have crossed paths at just this moment. Yet her passionate plea for the Lord’s help, recorded just four brief paragraphs earlier, implies that Brooks attributes the stranger’s appearance to more than mere chance. “Looks like I’ll have to leave her here and go on to Moapa with you.” Brooks recalls, in fact, that “he didn’t ask permission; he just assumed that he could go along with us” (270). She reconstructs the palpable relief she felt in the chapter’s denouement, writing that she sensed Judas was “annoyed by the baby,” took a “ten-dollar bill” from the young man for the ride, and overcharged her five dollars for the trip when she had “heard him tell Howard that the regular one-way fare was two dollars.” After such a narrow escape, she concludes the story about Old Judas with characteristic understatement: “I did not question [his charging]. I was just too happy to reach Moapa, which had not changed much since I had been here so long, long ago” (271).

MIXED MESSAGES

*Is it possible to be both sexually pure
and sexually appealing?*

SIMILAR TO BROOKS’S autobiography, Barber’s life writing illustrates the often limiting, even repressive, sexual and moral codes of Mormonism, with its rigid gender roles for women and men.⁴ In addition, Barber constructs her life story to illustrate the equally oppressive dominant Western culture’s messages about all women being trained to look at themselves and each other for lessons in beauty (i.e. sexual attraction) to entice men’s attention. The teenage Barber confesses, after all, that she, like many young women, “wanted someone to bend me backwards, inhale me, and kiss me for a long, long time” (161). Her autobiography reveals how she has been trained to discipline her body to be-

have according to at least two seemingly opposite gender scripts for girls: one, sexual purity, learned from her Mormon culture, and the other, sex appeal, learned from the larger Western culture of which she is also a part. Living according to opposing messages such as these produces understandable emotional conflict. It also raises a question about whether young Mormon women—or older Mormon women for that matter—can manage to be both sexually pure and sexually appealing. Is such a paradox allowable or attainable without emotional consequences?

Many times, for example, Barber portrays herself gazing at the bodies of other girls or women, longing for the freedom she sees expressed in their daring clothing and seemingly casual ease with nudity. In contrast, she feels the boundaries placed around her own body by her mother and the Victorian nature of her Mormon culture, which teaches her strict adherence to personal modesty and sexual purity. After being hired to play piano for a dance studio, Barber writes about a time

A tiny moment of claustrophobia flashed through my head. It had to do with eighteen dancing dolls and their choreography. I felt shut in for a brief second. What had I purchased? Another train ticket?

they dashed past me as if no etiquette had been breached, as if their bodies were everyday things, not sacred temples as I'd been taught from childhood" (94). For Barber, this and other moments of curious voyeurism create longing and awe as she watches women freely expose themselves to others' view. She watches them use their bodies without being bound by the strict control she has been trained under. Clearly, these women's ease is vastly different from her mother's and her Mormon culture's teachings about bodies and sex. Contemplating the show girls, the young Barber thinks,

There was pure defiance beneath their stretched Danskins—a different world from canning peaches with my mother, baking bread, and sniffing golden loaves. Brother this and Sister that when we greeted each other at church meetings. A strange wind blew through the windows of my mind and shook the panes etched with the Sunday School words: "Choose the Right when a choice is placed before you." (95)

In the first chapters of the autobiography, Barber depicts her mother's efforts to dissuade her from trying out for the Las Vegas Rhythmettes, a high school dance team sometimes invited for public appearances to greet dignitaries or perform on the Ed Sullivan Show. Barber's mother valorizes the Victorian ideals of female domesticity, motherhood, and sexual purity that have permeated Mormon culture from its beginnings. "Jesus didn't need to be a Rhythmette to be loved," declares her



LAS VEGAS HIGH SCHOOL RHYTHMETTES, 1960

Rhythmettes in formation in front of Las Vegas High School auditorium curtain. Phyllis is first in line in the left flank.

when several show girls from the Las Vegas "Strip" arrive at the studio. In the dressing room, she sees one of the show girls "unabashedly naked, her shorts pooled around her ankles." Others were undressing easily in her presence. "I'd been drilled about modesty at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," she writes, "but I couldn't take my eyes off their bodies sliding into their tights without any underwear. Then

mother. "Neither do you. The real joy in this life is in God's plan—being a mother and multiplying and replenishing the earth. Not in some trumped-up organization like the Las Vegas Rhythmettes. It's phony" (131).

As Barber writes about longing to become a Rhythmette, she describes her experience within a context of body imagery. Just as she had watched the Las Vegas show girls, Barber is,

once again, looking at other girls' appearance, longing for their freedom, beauty, and what her autobiographical narrator implies is abundant sex appeal: "When I entered Las Vegas High School the next year," she writes, "I watched the Rhythmettes in the girls' locker room slip in and out of the sleeves of their Rhythmette sweaters. I watched them walk gracefully around the school with their long flowing hair and manicured fingernails. I watched them dance at the halftimes of the football and basketball games" (130). Besides gazing at them directly, she and other students are able to look at these girls' pictures on the high school walls. The Rhythmettes become models of beauty and icons of fame through their personal popularity and their occasional meetings with famous people or government officials. "I often paused at the bulletin board in Miss Stuckey's office in the gym. She'd tacked up rows of pictures of her girls marching in parades and shaking hands with Frank Sinatra" (130).

This gazing at other high school girls' pictures is reminiscent of women gazing at other women in fashion magazines. Diana Fuss observes that fashion photography "presumably" means for women "to desire to be the woman, not to have her." However, she argues that the repression of "lesbian eroticism" in fashion magazines is "transparent." This homospectatorial quality demonstrates how "women are encouraged to consume, in voyeuristic if not vampiristic fashion, the images of other women."⁶

Appropriately, Barber uses multiple metaphors involving trains to describe her experience getting "cultured" or "trained" to be a good Mormon girl. With naive determination and will, she depicts her young self as like a train coming up against the religious dictates of her parents, who resist any hint that their daughter might express unseemly pride in her personal accomplishments. Barber writes:

Always right, father, mother, always right to stop trains in their tracks, trains chugging to somewhere, stop them quickly, suddenly, unavoidably, to remind them to be humble and not chug with too much bravado, not to make too much of any accomplishment lest the Lord take it away, lest the Lord frown, lest, lest, lest. (40)

Another formidable Mormon "train" that Barber feels she must ride is the train that Mormon girls take to become proper wives and mothers, not the dancer Barber longs to become. She characterizes her mother as indignant over her daughter's wish for something that could lead her away from the family lifestyle that she has been taught to value and that she now believes she must teach her daughter to value as well.

Feminist theorist Nancy Chodorow argues that the compulsion to train daughters to become mothers does not occur because of biology or "intentional role-training" but rather through "social structurally induced psychological processes." Using the "psychoanalytic account of female and male personality development," she demonstrates that "women's mothering reproduces itself cyclically. As mothers, women produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother. These capacities and needs are built into and grow out of the

mother-daughter relationship itself."⁵ When daughters such as Barber resist the desire to mother, especially in Mormon culture, conflict erupts. One scene in particular illustrates the problems that crop up between Barber's Latter-day Saint mother and her own rebellious self:

"Have you ever seen an old show girl? Marriage and family last forever, but legs, waistlines, and breasts don't, your highness."

"So maybe I don't want marriage and family. It's a moving train with no windows or doors."

My mother sighed. "Young people think they're different, that they can break rules. I'm telling you this to help you, my dear. We're all on that train. Nobody gets off. Don't kid yourself, because you'll make things harder if you do."

"But what's wrong with dancing?"

"Nothing," she said. "We dance here at home."

"But I want to really dance. Leap up and fly out the window. That kind of dancing."

"You're dancing any time you move to music, dear." (97)

Although at first, Mormonism (represented by her mother) appears to be the only culture impeding the path to Barber's dreams, her text soon reveals that cultural training outside of religion also threatens to limit a girl's personal freedom and expression. Perhaps, the autobiographical stories point out, Barber's disapproving mother is not so wrong to be concerned about her daughter's choice to become a Rhythmette. Perhaps such a pursuit is not the ticket to freedom the teenage Barber expected. In fact, her coming-of-age story illustrates her narrow Mormon training toward domesticity, sexual purity, and motherhood coming into direct conflict with the similarly problematic training of young women in the larger Western culture to make themselves attractive objects for men. Her teenage self may erroneously believe that other women enjoy the freedom to use their bodies as they wish, but the stories the adult Barber tells point readers toward equally unhappy conclusions: no female, Mormon or not, is in complete control of how she uses her body. Depicting her adolescent female journey as an attempt to sort through these often conflicting gender scripts that contribute to women's oppression, her writing illustrates the narrow ideals available to females both inside and outside the Mormon Church.⁷

The minute that Barber makes the Rhythmette dance team during her second try-out, for example, her younger self has second thoughts about her seemingly remarkable accomplishment. In a fleeting moment of teenage insight, young Phyllis suddenly realizes that dancing with the Rhythmettes, like growing up a Mormon, may just be another ride on a different lock-step train:

Squeezed between two other girls, shoulder to shoulder, I started across the floor. But a tiny moment of claustrophobia flashed through my head, so small I only remember it now. It had to do with eighteen dancing dolls and their choreography—always using the left foot to begin, turning their heads every eight

counts, holding their shoulders back, tucking in their stomachs, smiling, always smiling as instructed by Miss Stuckey.

Crushed into my place in line and thinking in sets of four and measures of eight, I felt shut in for a brief second. What had I purchased? Another train ticket? For one small second I felt myself marching away from real rhythm where dancers threw themselves against the shadows of fire while the earth and the moon beat the drums. (142)

Barber characterizes this teenage epiphany as brief, but from her wiser adult perspective, she reflects back on her sex education more fully:

We were Baby Rs on our way to being grown-up and bounteous and leggy and ready for the grown-up world where our prancing legs would someday spread apart to make babies and birth babies or avoid babies or wonder why we couldn't have babies, all in accordance with the plan. We were being danced on our way by our hormones, by the mandate for procreation, by the rhythm of life, not knowing it was bigger than we were. (142–43)

With the advantage of time, this scene makes an ironic connection between Barber's Mormon cultural training to adopt the ideals of pure motherhood and the larger Western cultural training for her to develop sex appeal in order to attract men. After mature reflection, the adult Barber admits the Rhythmettes were

Dancing fools, me first among them, kicking headlong into our purpose on earth—to multiply and replenish. Miss Stuckey doing her part by preparing us with manners and stage presence, but really preparing us as gifts for the men who watched, men subject to their own hormones as we strutted and paraded across the stage, displaying our wares for them, the particular curve of our hips, the winning smiles. (143)

Barber's storytelling shows that for her, a conflicted Mormon girl, the mandates to maintain sexual purity while also striving to achieve sex appeal were two seemingly opposite but actually similar ways of training women to seek the attention and favor of men: "I was one of the girls," writes Barber with irony. "A Las Vegas Rhythmette. I was somebody, and the football players and James Deans would have to reckon with me" (143).

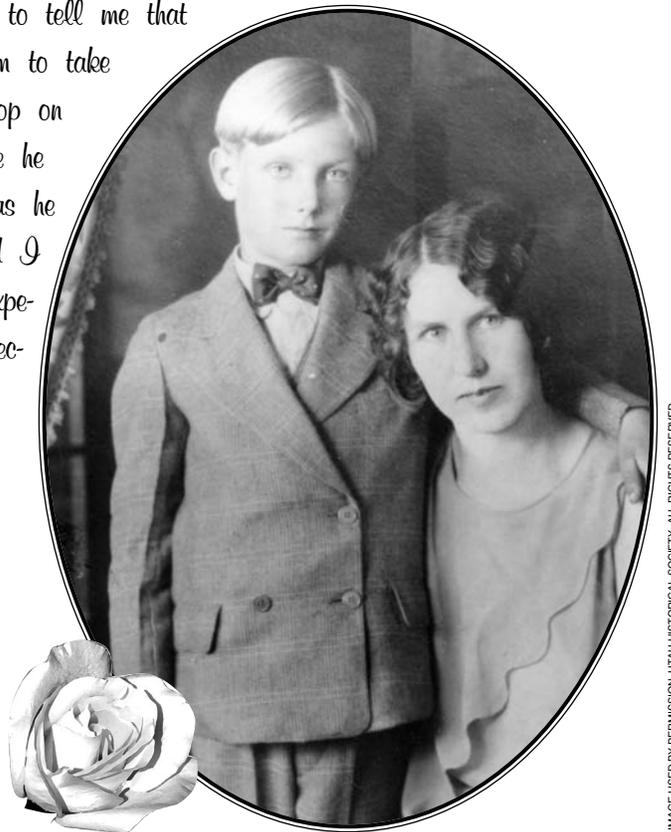
As a teenager, Barber is just beginning to recognize the con-

sequences of her situation as a young woman. "I suspected I'd be forever running alongside the wrong train while I could hear the whistle of the right train off in the distance" (98). Both locomotives chug on—the promised train of attention that encourages her to fashion her body for men's pleasure and the opposing train of Mormon restraint that warns her to keep her body in check. "I, too, scented the major leagues," she recalls, "a chance to jump the never-stopping train I was on where the rolling wheels repeated mile after mile: 'Obey God's word, obey God's word'" (131).

Toward the end of her autobiography, Barber depicts an experience in which she and her friend Karen begin modeling for Betty's House of Furs in order to finance their first year at Brigham Young University. In this key scene, she writes about choosing to expose her thinly-clad body to public view. During modeling lessons, she had learned how to "strike a pose" (185). At eighteen, she finally dares to perform an act that she has watched show girls, Rhythmettes, and other models perform all her life. When her friend Karen first models one of the fur coats wearing nothing but a bikini bathing suit underneath, Barber views her friend from a new perspective.

Suddenly she was an exotic hybrid—lush, intriguing. I'd never seen her like this before. She was beautiful. But the people in the restaurant [where the girls were modeling] had no idea that a flower had opened right

Old Judas began to tell me that it was his custom to take one short rest stop on the way out. And this time he didn't mean to be cheated as he had been once before. Had I forgotten what an exciting experience it was to "have connection"? I had been married; I ought to know that sex was the finest, most genuine thrill that life could offer.



MOTHER & SON

Juanita and son, Ernie, ca. 1928, about six years after the "Old Judas" incident.

IMAGE USED BY PERMISSION, UTAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

in front of them. They busied themselves with their green, red, and yellow melon balls and the excision of the pineapple's tough core from their tidbits. (185)

Because the display of women's bodies for public consumption is ubiquitous, Karen's exposure goes mostly unnoticed by anyone other than her friend Phyllis, who is beginning to realize that she, too, is experiencing her own blossoming beauty and sex appeal under the gaze of indifferent public appraisal.

Reflecting on the scene, Barber remembers the questions she had as an adolescent struggling toward the threshold of womanhood: "Was I blooming like Karen? Was I changing as I'd always been promised in my heart-to-heart talks with my mother? And just who was this underneath this fur, and why was she wearing a bikini?" (186). After contemplating her own motives and identity, Barber reconstructs the transgressive step she took of walking down a runway, daring to display her own body for an audience of people who barely notice. During this moment of exposure, she examines what she had been taught as a Mormon girl and how those teachings contributed to a sense of having multiple and emerging identities. "I wasn't Thora and Herman Nelson's daughter. She wouldn't be doing this. I must not be a very good Mormon because I was wearing a bikini under this fur coat and was about to show it to everyone. I wasn't anybody I'd ever known" (186). Here she also offers readers a glimpse into the emotional confusion of living in two different worlds—Mormon and non-Mormon—with two sets of rules, resulting in often conflicting, competing identities.

Ironically, even though the audience does not seem to notice Phyllis or Karen, Barber writes about both teens being conscious of the threat of some Mormon leader seeing them, of being found out. "What if Bishop Huntington saw us doing this?" asks Karen (185). Despite the fear of Mormon surveillance and the disappointment over audience indifference, Barber characterizes her moment of exposure as a mixed blessing since it comes as a moment of both wonder and fear:

I finally arrived at the staircase where I was supposed to reveal myself and my silver bikini to these passive people chewing on white bread and tomatoes. I climbed to the top of the three-stair case, smiling somebody else's smile. I took a deep breath and slowly unwrapped the fox. Air, sweet precious manufactured air, vacuumed the sweat from my face and arms and rejuvenated my clammy skin as the fur peeled away. Goose flesh prickled my arms and stomach. (187)

After the announcer calls Phyllis a "doll" and a "lovely little model," the sensation she basks in is tinged with caution. Describing herself as having "turned on the staircase—a slow, languid turn as if I were a windup doll revolving on a music box pedestal" (187)—the adult feminist writer and thinker constructs her former self as participating in a common feminine ideal for women: the beautiful doll on a pedestal, being mechanically rotated for other people's pleasure. Barber also constructs the scene as though she herself felt separated into mere body parts. She feels watched by an audience so saturated with the public exhibition of women's bodies that this

particular display seems unremarkable to them. In contrast, the moment feels literally and figuratively pivotal for Phyllis. "Slowly, slowly—the legs, the arms, one side, the back, the other side, the front, as people ate and talked and sometimes glanced. But no one was attuned to the fact that something important was happening, that a soul was swimming in unknown waters" (187). For the audience, a woman displaying her body in this way is to be expected. For a young Mormon girl, however, the act of display is transgressive. Barber's purposeful use of the word "soul," with its spiritual and moral overtones, emphasizes the border her teenage self chooses to cross. Young Phyllis knows her blossoming sexuality is not supposed to occur in the public eye. She feels caught between two opposing impulses: to enjoy and benefit from the moment of her "blossoming" or to do what her LDS parents and leaders tell her to do by shielding her body and sexuality from casual exposure or use.

One of the final scenes in Barber's book occurs after her climactic decision to throw off the "cocoon" of her fur coat in front of an audience. When spectators seem unimpressed, she deliberately seeks at least one affirming look from an appreciative male observer. He turns out to be an anonymous card dealer in a casino. She writes, "He shuffled the cards as if they were water and as if water were his game." Elaborating on her feminine strategy for getting this man's attention, she says,

I stood absolutely still until he lifted his eyes my way for one quick second. His eyes returned to the game, but I stood even more still until he looked up again. This time, the deck of cards in hand, he raised his chin slightly and kissed the air as if it were mine. He nodded his head in a slow yes. That was enough. (188)

To reinforce her nascent feeling of empowerment as a sexual being, she seeks affirmation from this man's eyes. With that one approving glance, Barber constructs her teenage self as having been initiated into a world of womanhood. However, the text does not portray the male gaze neutrally nor her behavior to gain his validation without consequences. Rather, her autobiographical narrative critiques her own participation in a society of men looking and women being looked at. In contrast to Barber's feminist critique of the motives and strategies she employed herself in this brief scene of female seduction, Helen B. Andelin's book, *The Fascinating Girl* (1969), offers a specific script for training girls like Phyllis to attract men's attention.⁸ The handbook and others like it encourage females to perform their gender role according to a "feminine" ideal. Read by many girls contemporary to Barber, Andelin's handbook was written to teach girls how to win husbands and achieve "celestial love" through cultivating ideal womanhood. Urging them to become "domestic goddesses" who understood the art of feminine grace, charm, and dependency, the handbook reflects common assumptions about female roles often perpetuated in Mormon culture. In contrast, the life narrative that Barber writes conveys an ironic stance toward her training to become either a model of sexual purity and a goddess of domesticity or a sexual object for men's pleasure.

CONTINUING DILEMMAS AND CONTRADICTIONS

*If a woman controls herself and her exposure to sex,
will she be protected from harm and exploitation?*

MORMON WOMEN'S SEXUAL education in the twenty-first century seems to have changed very little from that of Brooks and Barber. Informal and formal teaching about maintaining complete chastity before marriage persists within Mormon culture. A 2003 *BYU Magazine* article entitled, "Protecting Purity: A BYU Study Offers Insight into How Friends, Faith, and Family Influence the Sexual Morality of Youth," summarizes findings from a recent Brigham Young University study of the premarital sexual activity of more than 5,000 LDS teenagers from Utah County, the East Coast, the Pacific Northwest, Great Britain, and Mexico.⁹ Authors Brent L. Top, Ruth A. Chadwick, and Matthew T. Evans report "two-thirds of graduating high school students have engaged in premarital sexual intercourse and that about 20 percent of young teens have sexual intercourse by age 15." According to the concerned authors, "These frightening trends" were the impetus behind the study and "generate[d] questions about how Latter-day Saint (LDS) teens are faring in this morally polluted environment." The researchers were relieved (but still troubled) to learn that ten percent of LDS high school students, as compared to half of high school students nationwide, are "sexually experienced."¹⁰

Although Mormon concerns about teen sex are understandable, adults might better assist their teens by reflecting more critically on the quality of formal and informal conversations they have with their children about human sexuality. Moreover, Latter-day Saints could benefit from examining the negative effects of a hyper-conscious and often implicitly sexist moral code that has the potential to do as much harm as good. Many well-meaning Church members, for instance, continue to believe that if a girl is not sexually experienced, that if she herself or the adults in her life control her exposure to sex, she will be well protected from personal harm and exploitation. Characters and scenes from Barber's and Brooks's life narratives, however, depict the opposite. In fact, they illustrate the problems and serious dilemmas Mormon women continue to face growing up in such limiting, dichotomizing, and contradictory contexts. ☹

NOTES

1. Juanita Brooks, *Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992).
2. Phyllis Barber, *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992).
3. Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics: The Classic Analysis of the Interplay Between Men, Women, and Culture* (New York: Touchstone, 1990), 54.
4. Gender theorist Judith Butler would argue against the Mormon ideology that maintains a strict male/female binary as "natural" or preexisting to identity. Instead, she posits, "[G]ender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 140. These acts become "performative," says Butler, as they reiterate "a norm or set of norms" such as those consciously and unconsciously trained into Mormon youth by their cultural upbringing. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 12.
5. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 7. "By contrast," writes Chodorow, "women as mothers (and men as not-mothers) produce sons whose nurturant capacities and needs have been systematically curtailed and repressed."
6. Diana Fuss, "Fashion and the Homospectatorial Look," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 716, 713.
7. For a critique of the beauty rituals, consumerism, and heterosexual romantic aims to which many female adolescents are conditioned, see Angela McRobbie, "Just Like a Jackie Story," in *Feminism for Girls: An Adventure Story* (London: Routledge, 1981).
8. Helen B. Andelin, *The Fascinating Girl* (Santa Barbara, CA: Pacific Press, 1969).
9. Brent L. Top, Ruth A. Chadwick, Matthew T. Evans, "Protecting Purity: A BYU Study Offers Insight into How Friends, Faith, and Family Influence the Sexual Morality of Youth," *BYU Magazine* 57, no. 3 (2003): 46–54.
10. *Ibid.*, 46–47.



*"So does this mean they pass around a manhandled banana
for Young Men's Standards Night?"*

JEANNETTE ATWOOD

What does it mean for a Mormon woman to claim status as a sexual object?

SEXUAL SUBJECTS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY OR, RIPE PEACHES AND PEACH SCHNAPPS: JUST SAY NO

A response to Laura L. Bush by Holly Welker

TAKE A MOMENT TO PAINT FOR YOURSELF a picture of a sexually attractive woman as she deals with the mundane requirements of the world. Don't create an image of a woman intent on seduction; rather, imagine what an attractive woman looks like when she runs errands, does chores, goes to work. Complete the details: What's she wearing? How is she groomed? What's the expression on her face?

Once you have a clear image in your mind, see how many of the following details are part of the likeness you constructed:

1. She has been sweating freely for days because it is summer in the desert, and she bakes bread in a wood stove burning at more than 300 degrees, in a kitchen with no air-conditioning.
2. She rarely bathes, and on those rare occasions when she does, she uses as little water as possible, since it is in short supply.
3. She is tired, having risen very early in order to prepare breakfast for more than a hundred men.
4. She has been scraping globs of congealed hog fat out of a wooden barrel.
5. She is looking at you with hearty and genuine loathing.

Perhaps there is a reader willing to confess to creating a picture that matches the one I've just sketched. As we've learned from Laura L. Bush's analysis of Juanita Brooks's *Quicksand and*



Cactus, someone managed to find such a prospect sexually enticing. And it was not the lard nor the loathing but the butcher knife Juanita Brooks held that prevented "Judas" from acting on the sexual desire he felt.

AT SOME POINT, I discovered that sexual proclivities run the gamut from the officially sanctioned (which in our culture means adult, monogamous, heterosexual sex with a person with whom you have established a healthy and acknowledged emotional connection) to the exotic (fetishes where someone must have

partners who are of a particular race, or disabled in a particular way, or morbidly obese, or elderly, and so forth) to the downright criminal (child molesters and rapists). Virtually everyone in the world will be attractive to someone else, though not necessarily in a good way.

Bush asks, "Is it possible to be both sexually pure and sexually appealing?" Think again of that sexually attractive woman going about her daily tasks I asked you to imagine. Given SUNSTONE's readership, a great many of you might well have envisioned a woman who is in fact sexually pure. Indeed, after considering the issues Bush raises, I find it more appropriate to ask, is it possible to be sexually pure and *avoid* being sexually appealing?

Isn't that the logic behind the ideal of female chastity, that a woman who is sexually pure will be more appealing to the one man who owns her sexuality? Think of the burka or the chador, the long garments that cover women from head to toe in some Muslim societies, keeping them pure so that their husbands will still want and trust them. Our culture does not hide women behind veils and scarves, but it certainly has its share



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of sexually pure, and therefore sexually appealing, females. Think of the way Britney Spears sexualized the schoolgirl look in the video for “Hit Me Baby One More Time.” One reason that move succeeded was that there already existed a belief that eleven- and twelve-year-old girls in kilts and knee socks are sexy. Think of Elizabeth Smart in photos from before, during, and after her abduction. Someone felt that at age fourteen, she was ready to become a wife. Think of nuns. That’s right, nuns. Karen Armstrong, who was a cloistered nun for seven years, writes in her memoir, *Beginning the World*, of her horrified astonishment when she learns that nuns are “a turn-on.” She listens to a group of young men rhapsodize about “those thick black skirts, heavy underskirts, flannel petticoats. . . . Black lisle stockings . . . [garters]. . . . And white, white flesh, hidden for ever from the world!” “Imagine,” one of the men exclaims, “a houseful of young virgins, young, beautiful creatures in starched wimples, chains round their waists, crucifix over the bed. All longing for it.”

This image, of course, does not square with Armstrong’s experience in the convent. Thinking of her fellow nuns, she remembers

the eyeglasses, the huge waists, the lumpy figures under the capes, Reverend Mother Provincial’s beaky nose, Mother Frances’ rolling seaman’s gait and their brisk matter-of-factness. A houseful of beautiful virgins! All longing for it! I looked round the table of young men, and gave way to a great gust of mirth.

“They were splendid, brave women,” I finally managed to sputter, “but not what you mean by virgins!” Again I started to giggle at the absurdity.

“Aw! Don’t disillusion us,” someone pleaded, “you’ll ruin my sex life if you go on like that. Leave us a little room for fantasy.”¹

In views such as the one Armstrong encounters here, it is not really accurate to say that women are either whores or virgins—rather, to the men who hold these views, women are either whores who embrace their nature or whores who deny it. The same view seems to belong to Judas, who believes that since Brooks has been married, she will know and be willing to act upon her knowledge of “what an exciting experience it was to ‘have connection,’” that sex “was the finest, most genuine thrill that life could offer.”

Early in my graduate career, the professor in a com-

munications class stated that although it would be inappropriate for him to treat his wife like a sexual object in daily interactions, it was perfectly acceptable for him to make her into a sexual object in the bedroom. I don’t remember the context that prompted that statement—it was a class on the evolution of rhetorical studies since the Renaissance—but I do remember my sense that what he’d said wasn’t quite adequate.

A few semesters later, someone finally expressed the matter in a way that voiced my discomfort with the professor’s statement. A woman argued that both men and women should be considered *sexual subjects* rather than *sexual objects*. In other words, women should be treated as agents empowered with the right to act upon conscious, informed choices regarding sex, rather than as passive entities who are acted upon, and then told that any ensuing victimization is *their* fault. After all, it is not logical or just to condemn someone for failing to act appropriately when you have tried your darnedest to teach them not to act at all.

Think again of Brooks’s encounters with Judas. Remember, she knew what he was like yet still accepted a ride with him to Moapa. Imagine that the unfortunate stranger had not made his fortunate appearance. Imagine that she had not succeeded in fighting Judas off. Imagine that she became pregnant and the rape became known. Imagine also that people learned that Judas had made advances, had revealed himself as a bad man, and Brooks had still gotten in the vehicle with him. Imagine that the scenario happened this year and that the girl pressed charges of rape. What do you think the chances of conviction would be? After all, let’s say, just for the sake of argument, that she really wasn’t willing to do what he wanted, even though she knew from the get-go exactly what he wanted. Surely you



“Oh well, at least the boys respect us!”

can imagine someone hearing the story and responding, “You gotta admit, it’s hard to feel sorry for any girl stupid enough to get in a car with someone like that, no matter how desperate she is to get home. What’d she expect? Divine intervention?” Certainly, divine intervention is nice when it happens, but it also seems to me that we could try to create a culture that does not punish women and girls for the sin of foolishly believing that men can and should control their sexual urges, a culture that likewise often absolves men of the vice of preying on the helpless and weak.

Thus, as I contemplated the questions Bush asks in her paper, further questions arose, including: What does it mean for a Mormon woman to claim status as a sexual subject? What conditions must be met in order for Mormon women to claim that status?

BUSH’S ANALYSIS OF Brooks and Barber demonstrates how young Mormon women are trained to imagine themselves as objects—objects to be handled, or not; to be passed around and face ruin, like a mushy peach or a tattered rose, or not. Notice that Brooks does not quote her father as saying, “Nobody wants a girl who fools around”; rather, his line is, “Nobody [not merely no man, but nobody] wants a girl that everybody can handle.” He can scarcely imagine a girl

taking initiative in sexual matters—but that lack of initiative does not in any way make her less culpable than the young men she corrupts through her failure to just say no.

Notice that Barber does not write, “I wanted to grab some cute boy by the lapels of his leather jacket, stare him into submission, and kiss him until he kissed me back.” No, she writes, “I wanted someone to bend me backwards, inhale me, and kiss me for a long, long time.” She does not allow herself any initiative, even in the scene where she seeks approval from a card dealer: she merely waits for him to acknowledge her. Or, to use myself as an example: I never imagined myself choosing someone; my teenage desire was always that I be chosen. At the same time that I could recognize how cheesy and insulting the LDS seminary movie *Johnny Lingo* is, I still wanted some guy to come along, recognize and reveal, even to me, the incredible physical beauty I possessed but managed to hide with braces, modest clothes, and typical teenage skin. No doubt some of you have seen women in T-shirts that read “Eight Cow Woman,” a proud declaration that the women had no worth until their husbands conferred it upon them.

Bush writes that although the training Brooks and Barber received might seem harmless (if not positive, I’m sure some would want to add), still “the rigid, inequitable moral codes ingrained in impressionable Mormon girls can have deleterious effects, which get played out in subsequent chapters of each autobiography.” Indeed, it seems that the only way in which young Mormon women are taught to be sexual subjects is by being allowed, if they’re lucky, to decide when, where, and by whom they will be treated as sexual objects. Furthermore, I think there are ways in which this is still true for young women in general. Consider the finding Bush mentions, that “two-thirds of graduating high school students have engaged in premarital sexual intercourse.” Consider as well that the majority of the remaining one-third who retained their chastity throughout high school will relinquish it in college.

Now add alcohol to the mix, the substance sometimes known as “liquid courage.” This type of courage is used not only by “the college guy who gets drunk so he won’t feel funny about approaching a woman”² but also by the woman who might be approached. One co-ed put it this way: “We’re in college, we’re high-achieving young women, and we’re supposed to be liberated, modern, and comfortable with ourselves sexually. But many of us have inhibitions. If I’m in a situation where I want to be sexual, I drink intentionally to loosen up.”³

This reliance on alcohol as a social lubricant and sexual aid is certainly capitalized on by the alcohol industry, which produces ads wherein women are usually cast in the role of



It seems that the only way in which young Mormon women are taught to be sexual subjects is by being allowed, if they're lucky, to decide when, where, and by whom they will be treated as sexual objects.

sex object. Alcohol ads promote sexual stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and implicitly portray sexual relationships as casual encounters void of commitment or emotional attachment. There is nothing subtle in the messages of most of these advertisements.

In many ads, then, women are offered up mainly as bait to the binge drinking crowd, an image that many young women are themselves susceptible to.⁴

In other words (as I can attest from my experience as a student at two public universities and an instructor at three), it is common practice on college campuses for young (frequently underage) women to go to parties or bars and get rip-roaring drunk, since that it is the easiest way to endure the depressing, demoralizing ickiness of being goods on the meat market, while young men get drunk at these venues because that is the best way to muster the courage necessary to chat up and seduce (or even, occasionally, date rape) some girl they hardly know. The bleary aftermath of a "successful" night at such a party is known as "the walk of shame": the trip back to one's dorm room or apartment the morning after spending the night at the home of a casual sex partner. Essential elements of this shameful walk are that one is wearing yesterday's clothes and is still hungover.⁵

Shame is built, at least on the linguistic level, into fulfilling the goal of a ubiquitous type of college socializing. It hardly seems necessary to point out that there is something wrong with this. Countless sources, from churches to women's health centers to college advocacy groups to alcohol abuse prevention organizations, work to convince young women that a system so injurious to their psychological well-being—as well as their physical health, considering the risks for assault, injury, STDs, and pregnancy involved in drunken sex—should be changed, immediately.

But despite profound dissatisfaction with the system among young women, they often claim to see no way of opting out of it; to them, it is just the way things are, and all they have to work with if they want to have a social life. Look at *Exile in Guyville*, the 1993 debut album from Liz Phair.⁶ Phair has said that she composed *Guyville* the way she would a thesis, answering the intellectual construction of male domination/female submission expressed in the Rolling Stones' *Exile on Main Street*. *Guyville* won acclaim for lyrics combining an intellectual and verbal complexity with a frank, explicit sexuality that makes Madonna look like a demure matron and makes Britney Spears look like she's still the immaculate Mouseketeer. Phair's "Flower," for instance, details a young girl's aspirations for sexual conquest of a boy whose youthful good looks, honesty,

humor, and meanness (yes, the fact that he manages to be both funny and mean is noted with approval) appeal to her so much that she wants to become his "blow-job queen" and plans to "f--k" him until part of his anatomy turns blue.

But that song, as cheerfully bawdy as it is, can't quite answer the pain, self-loathing, and regret expressed in "F--k and Run," a song about waking up, disoriented and rueful, in the bed of yet another one-night stand who has no real desire to see, ever again, the woman he's just slept with. What the girl in the song really wants, she tells us, is "a boyfriend," a genuine boyfriend who will court her (buying her sodas and sending her love letters) and love her. She knows, unfortunately, that she won't get that: "F--k and Run" is all life has had to offer her—even at age 12—and so she'll live and die alone. It is not, to put it mildly, a sexual training we're invited to envy.

LET'S RETURN NOW to the sexual training of Mormon women Bush discusses. She calls attention to the fact that Brooks refuses (or fails) to draw conclusions about her sexual training and as a result, "leaves her own adult views ambiguous in the text; she never expresses clear agreement or disagreement with her father's position on his sex education tactics." Not so with Barber. Bush underscores the quite obvious distinction in Barber's work between the young, naive Phyllis who has experiences and the mature adult, conversant in feminist theory, who writes about and analyzes those experiences years later. Given that young women in the culture at large still suffer from their refusal and/or failure to express clear agreement or disagreement with sexual mores and habits, or even to opt out of mores they find hurtful, I'm glad Barber gives us a strong critique of things like *Rose Nights* and *Rhythmettes*, and that Bush provides an analysis of how that critique operates. I think I'm not venturing too far out on a limb here by saying that being trained to imagine yourself as a peach in danger of bruising is still better than being trained to get drunk on peach schnapps a few weekends a month so you can endure the debasement involved in sleeping with some drunk frat boy you hardly know. Still, I believe that it is only by critiquing both extremes, both the ripe peach and the peach schnapps, that we will understand how to train young women to become sexual subjects—responsible, informed, acting agents, not passive fruit or flowers. Perhaps in thirty years we will see a different kind of autobiography written by Mormon women. ☞

NOTES

1. Karen Armstrong, *Beginning the World* (London: MacMillan London, 1983), 56–57.
2. Henry Wechsler and Bernice Wuethrich, *Dying to Drink* (New York: Rodale, 2002), 197.
3. *Ibid.*, 195.
4. *Ibid.*, 207.
5. *Ibid.*, 193.
6. Liz Phair, *Exile in Guyville*, Matador, 1993.

War and ideology have left many Germans averse to religion. Can the Mormon message connect with the realities of their lived history? Should we keep deploying valuable missionary assets there?

KEEPING FAITH AND READING KAFKA

By Neal Chandler

I HAVE SPENT NEARLY SIX YEARS IN GERMANY, roughly a tithe of my expended life and, as we like to flatter tithing, surely among the best investments I have made. As a new missionary, I arrived in Hamburg in September of 1961, less than a month after the Wall had begun to go up. There would come a time when, speaking to students, I would have to identify which “wall” I meant, recount its history and relevance, but then and for three decades thereafter, no one needed a footnote when “The Wall” was mentioned. West Germany in 1961 was a showcase of postwar reconstruction, an “economic miracle” fueled by the Marshall Plan and showboating competition with the socialist East.

Hamburg, bombed to smoking chaos during the war, had re-emerged with a teeming business district, a state opera, subsidized theaters, art museums, an enormous university. There were two mass-transit rail systems—one elevated, one subterranean—a world-class harbor and soccer team. A fabled red-light district. A brand-new LDS stake center. My mission president saw my enthusiasm for Hamburg and sensibly sent me off to the far northwest corner of the country, as far away—within mission boundaries—as he could possibly send me. I went to Emden, a small harbor town just across the mouth of the Ems River from Holland. The people were East Friesians, related by blood and proximity to the Dutch. They were notoriously taciturn and skeptical and difficult just to talk to, let alone to convert. Their standard and surely favorite response to religious faith, if you could get them to respond at all, was a question. “Do you want to know what I believe?” they would ask and plod on in dialect. “I believe that a pound of meat makes a decent soup. And that’s all.” There was defiant satisfaction in this pronouncement.



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As for church—and virtually everyone, religious and not, was nominally Lutheran or Dutch Reformed—the Friesians would explain there were three kinds of churchgoers. There were a few old women who ran to church every Sunday. The verb in this sentence was invariably “run.” Then there were numerous reliable attenders who went faithfully to church every Christmas and Easter. And finally there were those church members, who, like the teller, generously saved wear and tear on the facilities by restricting the number of lifetime visits to four. They went to be christened, to be confirmed, to be married, and finally to appear at their own funerals. The speaker counted the visits off on his fingers, and after a canny pause, supplied the afterburner ending: “And for half of those visits, young man, we have to be carried in.” The line was delivered with a satisfied, discussion-terminating smile.

If we could really get someone to talk to us, to be open and frank—which was even rarer, particularly since we lacked the cultural leverage of springing for a beer—he or she would surely recount horrific experiences from the war, then only sixteen years past and fresh on everyone’s mind. They described things I could not even imagine. “If there were a God,” the summation always began in resolutely subjunctive mode, “such things could not happen.” We, in our turn, would try to explain what we did not then know was called “theodicy,” the problem of evil. I had been in the military myself—for six months—in California. My companion and I were Mormon American missionaries with a special message. We were not conscientious objectors, but we were in favor of peace. We were respectively nineteen and twenty years old.

Yet for all our naiveté and inexperience, we did have some success. There were occasionally baptisms, though not many. Later, when I’d entered the mission’s traveling management corps, I helped do the numbers. We discovered that the 232 missionaries in the North German mission were averaging 1.6 baptisms over a two-and-a-half year term of service. That comes to .64 convert baptisms per missionary per year. And

inasmuch as some fortunate elders baptized beyond average—baptized families or even families and friends—you can imagine that many, many others served full thirty-month missions and returned home without ever having baptized a soul. You can also imagine that the overall member growth rate was not staggering, perhaps not even measurable. Branches were most often small, lacking leadership, sapped by emigration to the U.S. In my first seven months, my senior companion and I presided over two branches ourselves, one in Emden and one thirty kilometers away in Norden, another small coastal city. Easily 90 percent of the members in both branches were women, mostly old women, just the sort—you will remember—who “run” every Sunday to church. We reminded ourselves often that the field was ripe and ready to harvest, and indeed in some periods before the war, *Die Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage* had grown rapidly. But by the early '60s, the mature crop so conspicuous in the past and in scripture was nowhere evident in the cobbled streets of northern Germany.

IN 1967, I returned to Europe as a graduate student in the university town of Göttingen. It was a turbulent time, and America's civil rights turmoil together with the U.S. war in Vietnam were on every television and every mind. I found myself continually on the defense, rallying to causes and practices and political policies in which I did not myself believe, trying at minimum to maintain that the path to any trouble can be paved with reasonable, even honorable intentions. Meanwhile, students in Germany were staging an upheaval of their own, attempting to overturn the deeply conservative structure of the university and its oligarchical professorate. They disrupted lectures and took over seminars, demanding attention, demanding discussion, demanding revolutionary change. There were marches and riots, and even in the theological seminaries there was insurrection in the air.

One movement that held my attention called itself Christian Atheism. Its proponents were theology students openly committed to the institution of the church, the social mission of the gospel, and the notion of religious community, but nonetheless also resigned to the predominating belief that God was unlikely to exist or, at best, having turned up absent from lived history, was indifferent to human enterprise. I spent some bemused time in discussion with these students, trying to make sense of their enthusiasm for “faith” without belief. I joked about this later with friends both religious and not. Meanwhile, as far as I could tell, the predominating, affirmative religion at the university was Marxism/Maoism. Chairman Mao's little red book *Worte des Vorsitzenden Mao Tse-Tung* was as ubiquitous at rallies, demonstrations, and even seminars as triple-combinations at a missionary conference. Everyone had been studying. Everyone bore testimony. Everyone could quote chapter and verse. I was in a culture professing religion without God and propagating atheist philosophy in the manner in which my own people proclaimed religion. There seemed to me then a root silliness in all this irony. Now, almost four decades later, I'm not so sure.

Christian Atheism was perhaps neither so remarkable nor, for that matter, nonsensical as I supposed. In a violently fractured culture, haunted by calamity, in which the absence of a loving creator seemed so fully evident to so very many, how was one to respond to religious yearning, a root human hunger common in some degree to every culture, even resistant ones. Was it so surprising or even unwelcome to find nascent believers making up surrogate religion or making secular attempts at the sacred?

Meanwhile, neither the American war in Vietnam nor the state of U.S. race relations did much to persuade my discussion partners that an American religion might offer a more promising route to salvation. German students, in fact Germans generally, were appalled by both U.S. militarism and racism. I did not share with them the wisdom then common among Mormons that God had, unequivocally, taken the American side in the Vietnamese conflict or that, as a matter of priesthood, he had also long since come out four-square against racial equality. I kept this information to myself. Some explanations seemed more trouble than they were worth, more fuel on the fire, more motivation, finally, for religious atheism and a Godless church.

The LDS branch in Göttingen was small, still made up mostly of those old ladies who “run” to their meetings. But with some young people as well and a few priesthood holders, we formed a tight countercultural village in this university city. And we took good care of our missionaries who, because their successes were few and fragile, needed reassurance. Not much had changed since my own mission. Baptisms were rare. People, the missionaries explained, did not get very exercised over which church was true when they didn't believe in God. I nodded. I knew what they meant. The Word of Wisdom, tithing, premarital chastity were hard to market in the land of Martin Luther and Johann Sebastian Bach, but the really tough sell was religion.

IT WOULD BE twenty years before I returned again to Germany, this time on a research grant and with other, more secular, things on my mind. In the West German Parliament in 1986 there was a lot of political talk about German reunification. But it was all political, and it was all talk. Nobody believed it. Returning to the U.S., I assured my students we would not see Germany reunited, not in my lifetime, anyway, and probably not in theirs. Just three years later, my wife and I sat up late in bed, watching the Berlin wall come down in chunks while East Germans streamed past the Brandenburg Gate into West Berlin. It was past midnight, but we made the children get up and come join us in front of the television. We were both in tears, and they asked if we were all right. They also wanted to know if there were any brownies left and could they go back to bed. We let them eat, but made them stay up and watch.

Yet another ten years later, thirty-eight after my first arrival in Germany, I traveled with my wife to the former Soviet Zone. I had a grant to teach for a year at a university on the Baltic not far from the Polish border. The university in Greifswald is

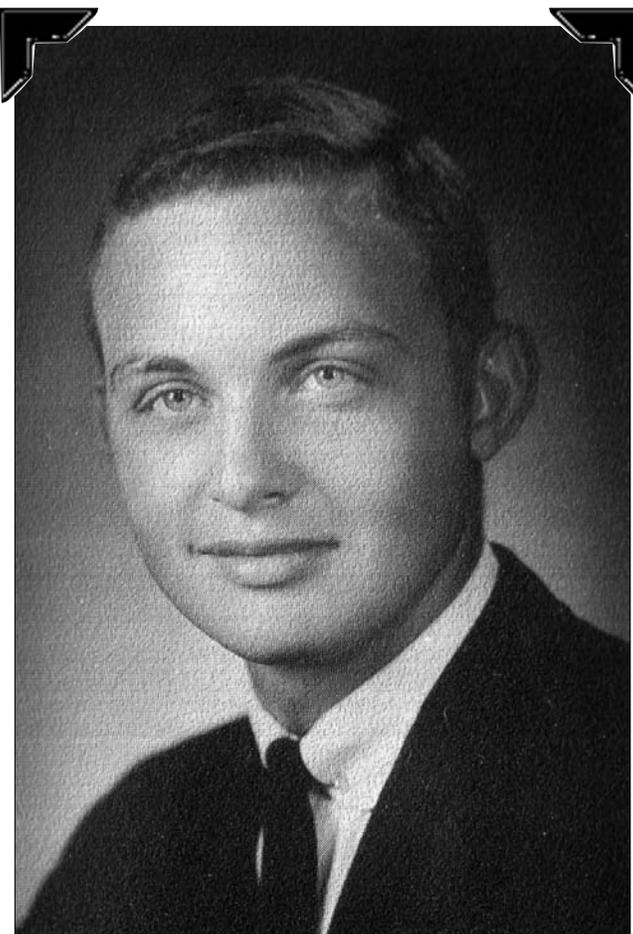
small and medieval and was painfully neglected during forty years of Communist rule. Its new American Studies program was popular but very understaffed. There was plenty for me to do. The LDS branch in the city was fledgling. With only nine members and four missionaries, it was barely staffed at all. We found ourselves needed and welcome at both institutions and quickly found friends. Yet those friendships arrayed themselves across an enormous divide, one of class as well as conviction. It is said of young European Mormons that at high school graduation, they face a Rubicon decision: either to remain faithful to their church or to pursue a higher education. One cannot, it is commonly understood, do both. And this parting is not just about Mormonism. I often warned my German students that if they ignored religion altogether, if they bracketed it out of their studies and thinking, they would never understand the United States, not its history, not its culture or literature, and certainly not its politics. Still, they resisted. The aversion was almost physical. When I recommended a book to my best, most ambitious student, one who read everything I suggested, everything she could get her hands on, she looked at her feet, "That's the one you said was about religion."

"Right," I said.

She squirmed and kept her eyes on her toes. "I'd rather not."

What, I wondered, is the problem? Is it still the war, over half a century later, or is it forty years of Communist indoctrination?

"It's neither," a colleague finally explained. "And it's both. My friend, we like you very much. We are happy to have you here. But we have to shake our heads and forgive you your religion. To us, you are naive. When someone announces a plan of salvation, admonishes people to have and to live by faith, when this means obedience to some elect authority and requires commitment and sacrifice in this life for the sake of some better life to come—I have to tell you quite literally that in this country, we've heard that all before, twice just in this century. And if those messiahs were secular, *all* those before



Elder Neal C. Chandler

Mission Address
North German Mission
Am Hirschsprung 60
Berlin-Dahlem
Germany

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL CHANDLER

them came on behalf of the Lord with the same kind of talk and the same kind of thinking. It was all lies. And it makes our skin crawl."

What does one say to so much lived history? How does a missionary approach someone so deeply and so reasonably wary? We had just shared a long meal and a long talk-filled evening of a kind rare among frenetic Americans. And we had done so in a home beautifully reclaimed through hard physical work and sublimely pragmatic invention from the dowdiness of Soviet construction. It had been the kind of evening in the kind of place with the kind of friends that sets a benchmark for quality of life. Yet in some welcoming worlds, as in some realms of terrible experience, clearly all prophets are false and unwanted. I asked myself then and ask now how useful it is to chafe over "stiffneckedness" in people so existentially scarred. Are they really being arrogant and unteachable? Or have they, instead, learned a hard lesson for which we have neither trained ears to hear nor schooled eyes to see.

One might, of course, avoid all such hand-wringing and simply be practical. Cost-benefit analysis may challenge the whole northern European missionary enterprise. From conversations

with missionaries in Greifswald and elsewhere in Germany and Holland and Scandinavia, I surmise that conversion and baptismal rates are almost precisely where they were forty years ago. Dismal. Congregations persist but are mostly small, activity patchy. Given the high rates of conversion and growth in other parts of the world, South America, Africa, Micronesia, where demographic studies tell us the religion market is exploding, one might ask if the deployment of valuable missionary assets to a country so generally intolerant of religion is justified. Why bother?

Of course, my own commitment to Germany is personal and sentimental. I loved my mission years, my time as a student and then as a teacher, the branches I lived in, the members, the few people I helped convert, the one or two who are still active, my atheist students, and a number of wonderful, warm, actively irreligious friends. Beyond my personal invest-

A colleague told me, "We like you very much. We are happy to have you here. But we have to shake our heads and forgive you your religion. To us, you are naive. In this country, we've heard that all before. It was all lies. And it makes our skin crawl."

ment, however, I think there is a larger, encompassing set of reasons to stay what seems an unproductive course. Mormons have had a missionary presence in Germany since 1852. According to Gilbert Scharffs's 1970 history, *Mormonism in Germany*, "more Germans [had then] joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than [had] the citizens of any [other] non-English speaking country."¹ Even today, membership there persists at roughly 36,000 but has for decades been stagnant and tending toward decline. There have been some sporadic bursts of growth. There may be again. But even if this were never to happen, I see at least three good reasons for Mormonism to persist in a country and culture of unbelief.

First, in such a place, the Church provides a haven for the minority faithful—not least of all those church-running ladies, but also for those few convert believers who need refuge from the prevailing irreligion. Many, perhaps most of these, are literal political refugees from North Africa or Eastern Europe, ill-adapted to a religionless environment. Some, however, are native exceptions, not unlike the believing homosexuals in contemporary Mormondom, who need respite both in and from the community to which they are native. If their foreordained gift is faith, they need someplace to turn where that destiny is a blessing instead of a burden. You will find such refugees active and gratefully at home in LDS congregations in Germany.

My second reason is to me a matter of some surprise. If I have a spiritual gift, I have long suspected that it is skepticism. In our household of testimony, I have sought out my communities of refuge among those who take their religious enthusiasms with a dose of industrial salt. And yet, I have come to believe that the struggling church in Germany provides a habitat for miracles, albeit small and often awkward in kind, and that these, like other endangered species, deserve preservation. I'll recount just two such wonders here, bookends to my experience, though I'm aware of others.

At the time of my German mission, the bishop of the Altoona Ward in Hamburg seemed to me a kind of miracle, partly because he was a Mormon at all, and partly because he was a bishop. He counts certainly among the most educated men I have met. His interest in religion was tempered by an analytical mind and natural cultural pessimism. Yet that interest was piqued when he ran across an ad in the newspaper. "Anyone interested in religion, write to this address." Strange ad, but it made him curious, and he wrote, whereupon two Mormon missionaries appeared at his door. They were pleasant young men from America, so he heard them out. Of

course their story was ridiculous. And their grounding in history shaky. Their claims were, he felt, easy to refute. He thanked his young guests and excused himself from further meetings. He was really not interested. Yet in the following week, he found he could not get those young men or their story out of his mind. So he contacted them again, had them come by, in order to reassure himself, as indeed he did, that their story was fabrication, their religion improbable. Again he sent them away with his thanks and the assurance that he really was not interested. As the bishop told the story, within a week, he had called them back again. And sent them away. Back and away, again and again, each time convinced that the message was sham, and each time unable to put it out of his mind. When finally months later he was baptized, it was a matter of exhaustion, capitulation. He'd been drawn by that curious ad onto a road to Damascus that would revolutionize his life.

That much was miraculous already, but what stunned me altogether was that this man, who was older, university educated, tastefully affluent, unmarried, and by profession a coffee importer, had been called as a bishop. It did not occur to me then to speculate in ways that would seem natural now that he might well be divorced or even gay or quite possibly both. Though if neither, he still fell so far outside institutional norms of marital and class and professional status that only a miracle could explain his election. I like to think that those authorities who called him were equally surprised, indeed, that they resisted an inspiration so radically counterintuitive, acceding only as a matter of exhaustion and capitulation. This was, of course, a modest miracle, and once installed, the new bishop seemed as natural as mahogany banisters and carved moldings in the elegant mansion that served as a chapel on Hamburg's baronial Elbschausee. For all kinds of happy reasons, this man was precisely the leader needed by that congregation in a turbulent time.

The second miracle is recent and minor and personal but important to me and my family. Preparing to travel to Germany in 1999, I remembered hearing of a journal, *Die Betrachtungen*, which was a German counterpart to *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, of which my wife and I had just become editors. It would, in other words, be an independent German language journal for research and thinking and creative writing about Mormonism and Mormons. Through a friend, I secured an email address for the editor and sent him a message saying we would love to meet with him and possibly talk about exchanges between the journals. I received no an-

Elder Moyle asked us missionaries, "How many have read Schiller? Kant? Nietzsche? . . . The German people have a thousand years of history and culture. How do you think you are going to talk to them, get to their hearts and minds, when you know nothing about them?"

swer, and we resolved that once established overseas, we could travel to Berlin, attend church there, and inquire among members. Surely, somewhere in a city as large and cosmopolitan as Berlin, there must be a *Dialogue* sort of Mormon, someone who could show us a copy of this journal and perhaps even direct us to the editor.

The first order of business, however, was moving to Greifswald, finding an apartment, and getting started at the university. When we called the mission home in Berlin to inquire about the nearest congregation, we were surprised to learn there was actually a branch in Greifswald. We found a city map and made our way to the address we'd been given. The rented hall was not crowded. Counting ourselves, we numbered thirteen, yet among that tiny band was a young man, recently called to teach Gospel Doctrine, who from his tone and copious preparation, struck us as someone who just might have heard of *Die Betrachtungen*, might even have seen it.

After the meeting, my wife and I approached him and I asked him if he knew of the publication. He looked at me very strangely, and I hastened to reassure him that the journal, as I understood it, was an outlet for thoughtful writing about our faith. I was curious and had some questions and would just very much like to get in touch with the editor. His look didn't change. After a moment he said, "My name is Jörg Dittberner. I am the editor of *Die Betrachtungen*." All three of us were stunned. He was, in fact, not from Greifswald, but from a very large university city in the west of the country. The federal government had assigned him to this remote town to serve a brief internship for his teaching degree. I, in turn, had arranged my grant residency through a professional connection in America. Moreover, I'd had to defer our visit for a year. There was a very brief window of time during which our paths might have crossed. Yet in a country the size of Montana with more than 80 million inhabitants and 36,000 LDS, on our very first visit to church, in a minuscule branch in this remote corner of the former Soviet Zone, we were encountering the very Mormon we most wanted to meet. It was a coincidence of such improbable magnitude as to give even a hardcore skeptic pause. It was also a gift that would anchor our happy encounter with the German church and lead to the very exchanges we had so hoped for.

Beyond these matters of sanctuary and of miracle, there is, I think, yet one more good reason, perhaps the most important one, for continuing, in effect, to proselytize a stone: the intractable and always unfinished business of humility. I remember being told once by a bishop's wife in New Jersey that

it had stunned her and shaken her faith to discover that her non-member neighbors were such decent people. It violated the understanding of the world she had acquired growing up in Idaho. How could people be so dauntingly good without the gospel? According to a recent survey, 61 percent of Americans believe it is necessary to believe in God in order to live a moral life, yet among journalists, whose job it is to track and report on human behavior, the proportion who believe this drops to 9 percent. In the latter statistic, one suspects, ideology has been tempered by grim experience. We might easily ask how people can be decent and forthright and principled, not only without religion, but often in their resolve to resist it. The uncomfortable truth is, the world has often found itself better off for its heretics.

In 1961, Elder Henry D. Moyle traveled throughout Europe, visiting missions. At a conference in Hamburg, he spoke for more than four hours, a talk that inspired me, a talk that would now be unthinkable. After promising, in what I would later come to recognize as missionary boilerplate, that if we worked harder, studied longer, made ourselves more receptive to the Spirit, we would baptize, he continued on with a truly exceptional question. "You want to teach the German people something about life and religion," he said, shaking his head, "but what do you know about these people? How many of you have read anything by Johann Wolfgang Goethe?" There were more than two hundred missionaries in that room. Not a single hand went up. "How many have read Friedrich Schiller?" No one. "Gotthold Ephraim Lessing? Immanuel Kant? Friedrich Nietzsche?" We sat chastened and silent. He stared at us glumly. "The German people have a thousand years of history and culture. How do you think you are going to talk to them, get to their hearts and minds, when you know nothing about them?"

It seemed to me then a crucial question, and I hurried back to the small city of my first assignment, going straight to a bookstore. "I've got to read something basic and important in German literature," I told the clerk. "Where do I start? What do you recommend?" The young man thought a while then handed me a thin paperback book, one that looked as though I might manage it. He assured me it was important. As a new missionary, I resolved to make it a staple in my daily regimen, and following language study, scripture study, and the endless memorizing of lessons, I found myself thumbing back and forth through *Cassell's German-English Dictionary* and slowly reading Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. Such reading is forbidden to missionaries today, and to me, then, it was surely disquieting.

Like all of Kafka's writing, the book's core is religious, but it narrates a nightmare gospel in which all revelation is profane and condemnatory and religion provides the precise antithesis to comfort.

I was fascinated though not greatly enlightened at nineteen. Still, the book gave me pause. It led me on to other books. It gave me something to challenge my certainties, and in an indirect way to help me appreciate the deep cultural mistrust of religion I encountered daily. I came to suspect as a missionary that it wasn't so much that people failed to hear our message as that our message and manner were deeply disconnected from the realities that had ravaged their history and molded their thinking. We could talk *to* them—we did every day—but somehow not *with* them.

THE EMDEN TOWN HALL featured in its lobby photographs of the city at the close of the war. As far as the eye could see, loose, charred, rubble-choked apocalypse. By the beginning of my mission in 1961, the city had been given a new face, but a face irrevocably pocked and scarred by hideous, concrete bunkers so massive and indestructible that the British occupation abandoned hope of ever blowing them up. In the streets we tracted through, scars of deep disillusionment deployed their veteran forces against the fresh-faced, freshly certain assurances of faith: "You know what I believe, young man. I believe that a pound of meat makes a decent soup." It was an honest, educated answer. It resonates still today and far beyond Germany.

For the nurtured believer of affirmed and affirming religious origins, it is difficult to concede faith as the substance only of things hoped for, evidence only of things not seen. But in a larger world of compounding, countervailing, all-too-visible evidence, what could be more honest? For the world at large, we hardly speak with a voice of authority. Not only our persisting religiosity, but our persisting American-ness stand in the way. More than forty years later, another preemptive American war and American treatment of minorities still transfix and appall Europeans. Mormon cultural and institutional complicity are still not likely to impress them. The German people in particular have had to face down terrible sins of their own and the rationalizations that enabled them. They've developed a nose for hubris and a deep ideology aversion. Perhaps we must learn to proceed in some more respectful, less dogmatic and instructional way. Not because we are right, and not just because we are naive, but because we may, in fact, be needed—to provide sanctuary, to enable small miracles, to listen and reach out over the quite reasonable and growing divide between schooled disillusionment and improbable belief. It's humbling work, demanding faith without privileging faith. We might have a hard lesson to learn. It may take a while. ☺

NOTE

1. Gilbert Scharffs, *Mormonism in Germany* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), ix.



TEST RESULTS

Between clouded glass and storm window
a fly's shell hung in a frosted web:
painless flight in the vacuum
of a December afternoon,
five years ago.

Constant tick and jerking hands
of the plastic clock. Worn Bible
from the attic, offering
visions and cures
set in black and white.

The furnace rumbled to life,
shaking the floor. In the basement
knickknacks, old pictures, letters,
discarded manuscript
were sprinkled with dust.

On the arctic landscape
of the table's white marble:
manila envelope
with a language mocking message
in which positive is negative.

I pulled boots, parka,
pocketed the Colt, headed out
across drifted field to the woods.
Stubble sticking through snow,
deep ruts, blood pumping in ears,
muscle tight in calf and thigh.

Wind rushed through white space;
a shadow swept over.
I looked up. A red-tailed hawk
glided, looped, soared,
leaving no messy tracks, just light
as it disappeared into the sun.

—EDWARD BEATTY

Growing up during the Cold War, I knew that some people had visited Communist countries. I just didn't expect to ever be one of them.

THE WALLS LEFT STANDING: NOTES FROM MY EAST GERMAN JOURNAL, 1999–2000

By Rebecca Chandler

ONE OF MY FAVORITE WRITERS, ANNE LAMOTT, is also a teacher of writing and occasionally writes about that experience. Because I also teach writing, I have found some of her observations helpful. On one occasion, she reports, she was trying to get her students to write with more feeling and with greater appeal to the emotions of their readers. So she structured a lesson plan around writing about fear. “Think of a time you were really afraid,” she began, “and try to think about all the sensory images surrounding that experience.” She was met with vacant looks. “OK,” she persisted, “think about the dentist. There you go, think about the mounting dread you have all week long when you know you have a dentist appointment. Think about that dialogue that goes on inside your head when you try to convince yourself that maybe it won’t be all *that* bad this time . . . and the little voice that keeps retorting that it actually might be worse. . . .” More blank looks. Forging ahead she continued, “And then think about what it is you really really *hate* about the dentist’s office. Think about the antiseptic smell of the waiting room and the cold slippery vinyl chair. . . and the dentist’s instruments all lined up glinting in the overhead light that he is about to aim *directly* into your eyes. . . (still no reaction). And the sound of the *drill*? How does that make you *feel*?” Her class simply stared at her, blinking a little bit, when suddenly it dawned on her: These young college students had no idea what she was talking about. This was northern California in the early 1990s, and these kids had grown up with fluoride in their drinking water. Tooth decay was virtually unheard of in their generation. Except for routine checkups and maybe a

little orthodontia, they had never even been to the dentist. The dentist was, in fact, their friend. If Lamott wanted her students to write about their fears, she would have to help them look somewhere else.

I particularly enjoyed reading this account because I had had a remarkably similar experience in my own class of seventh graders. The subject was witchcraft in colonial America. The kids had been horrified to learn about the huntings down and hangings—about suspicion and pointless persecution of suspected “witches” in seventeenth-century New England. They wanted reassurance that such activities and the mindset that had enabled them to occur were far away in the past and that nothing like that had ever happened since or ever would. I was happy to reassure them on the generally enlightened state of contemporary American society, though I thought that to be perfectly honest with them, I should at least mention the McCarthy hearings—when the hysteria hadn’t been over witchcraft, but rather Communism. Anyone might be suspected of having Communist connections, and loyalty to God and country was difficult to prove. While there had been no actual bloodshed, I told them, families and friendships, reputations and often careers had been damaged, even destroyed, until the public finally recognized that things had gone too far (just as in Salem and Andover) and had demanded that these investigations stop.

Silence. OK, I thought. That’s a tough little bit to swallow, but they’ll deal with it. Maybe encountering this episode will help them “understand” Watergate in their upper school history classes. . . . I was ready to move on when one little girl raised her hand. “I’m probably the only person in the room who doesn’t know this,” she demurred, “but what’s Communism?”

What’s *Communism*? Was she kidding? Her earnest look assured me that she was not. I was stunned that an American teenager needed to ask a question like that. Still, I rallied, and I bluffed: “Good for you! It’s hard to ask a question that you think everyone else can answer. But, if you don’t ask questions,



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I was taught that America was a land choice above all other lands. I knew that the U.S. Constitution had been divinely inspired to safeguard God-given freedoms for those who had lived worthily in the pre-existence and, as a reward, had been born into Mormon homes in this free land.

you'll never learn." Then turning to her classmates and trying to keep condescension out of my voice, I issued the general invitation: "Who would like to explain what we mean when we use the word 'Communism?'" I was fully confident that every other kid in the class could do exactly that. But, in fact, no one could. Not one student. They had fragments of information. Someone thought Communists wore ugly brown uniforms. Someone thought they built big, boring buildings. Several had heard that Communists were "mean." But that was it. No dictionary definition of Communism as an economic system. No sense of opposition to the American way of life. Nothing. I had gone from head-shaking incredulity at one student's lack of information to complete and utter shock over an entire classroom of students who shared that naiveté. Luckily the bell rang just then, and I was able to sink into a student desk and try to comprehend what had just happened.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED was a generation gap—a veritable chasm wider than I would have ever realized. If Anne Lamott's students represented the fluoride generation who knew no fear of the dentist, these kids were all that and more. They were also growing up without the political fears that had colored my childhood. I didn't go to a private college preparatory middle school that required an entrance examination, like this one, but I don't think it would have been possible to find—anywhere in my public junior high school—a student who couldn't tell you *something* about Communism. We had plenty of misinformation to be sure, but we knew one thing: we knew that we were scared. If there wasn't a Communist under every bed (now that the McCarthy hearings were behind us) we knew there were plenty of them around. And we "knew" that they threatened, not only our cherished freedoms, but our very lives. Television shows such as *Mission Impossible* portrayed characters with eastern European accents as manipulative, conniving, and yes—evil. The first release of *The Manchurian Candidate* showed how well organized, how powerful, how insidious, and how incredibly ruthless these Communists were.

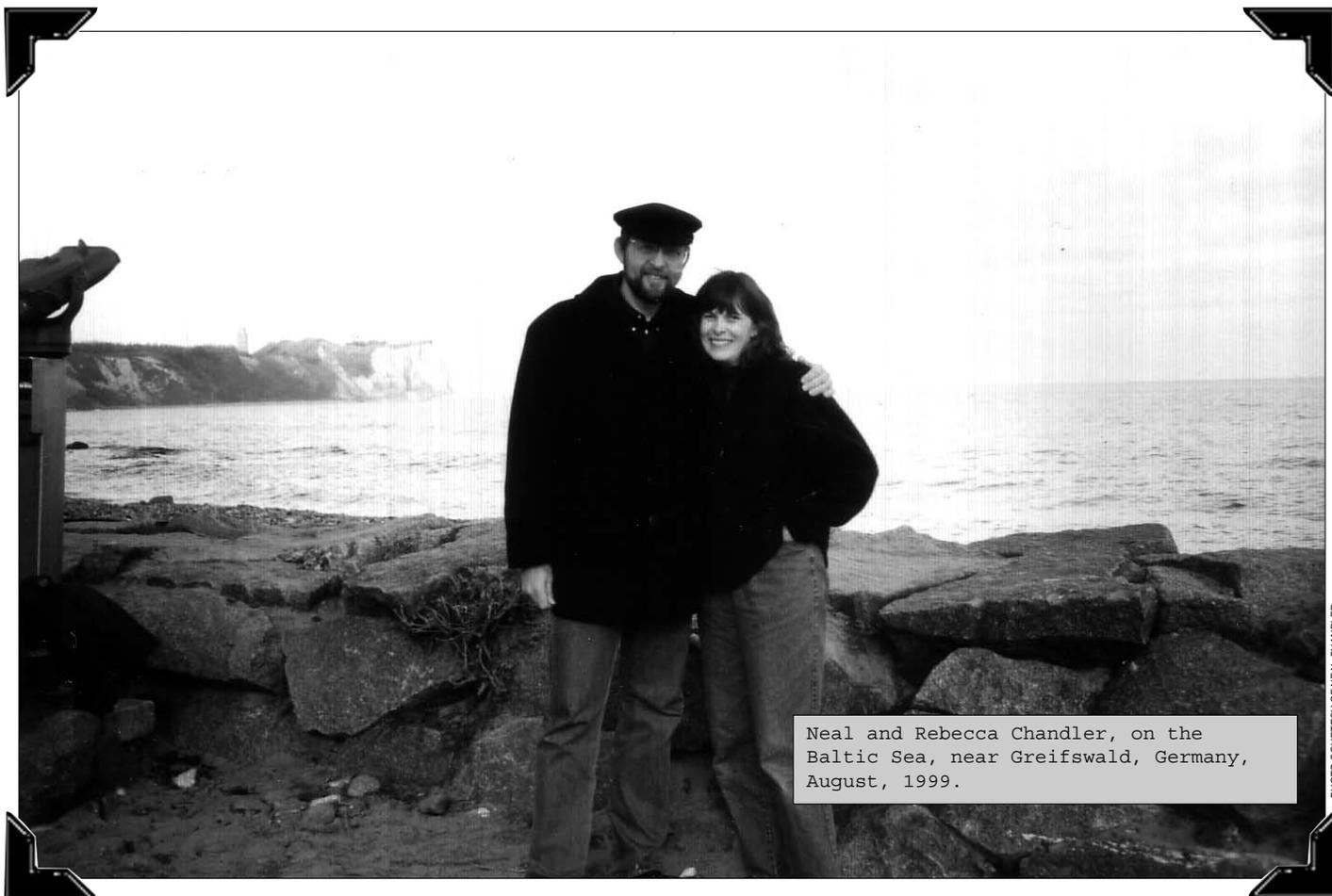
Many of us knew political refugees—actual people with horror stories to tell about escaping from Iron Curtain countries, always against a backdrop of concrete blocks and barbed wire. In response to our fears, we built bomb shelters, stored food, and raced the Russians into space, keeping a wary eye on the world map which seemed to be hemorrhaging red ink as one nation after another came under Communist domination. I watched the young men of my generation plan their lives

around our country's involvement in a war in Vietnam, which we were ostensibly fighting to keep one more domino from falling and spilling yet more red ink.

Nothing I heard in church served to assuage the general climate of fear. As a matter of fact, in many ways, LDS teachings raised the threat to apocalyptic proportions. I was taught that America was a land choice above all other lands. I knew that the U.S. Constitution had been divinely inspired to safeguard God-given freedoms for those who had lived worthily in the pre-existence and, as a reward, had been born into Mormon homes in this free land. The U.S. provided a cradle of liberty for the restored gospel, but whenever the God of heaven reveals His gospel to mankind, Satan introduces a counterfeit. Communism was that false substitute for true religion. I knew Communist governments were officially atheistic and that people who wished to practice their religion and teach their children about God were persecuted for doing so. Whole nations refused to let our missionaries in, thus holding up the prophecies that the gospel would be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Communism had enslaved millions. It would be a death knell to freedom and all we hold dear. This was all foreseen in scripture, and we could expect an ultimate confrontation between the world's two great superpowers—a clash of biblical dimension between slavery and freedom, between the Lion and the Bear, between Gog and Magog—that could come at almost any moment. Yet for all that, I knew that there were some few people who had visited Communist countries and had lived to tell about it. I just didn't expect to ever be one of them.

Then in 1989, unaccountably, after almost two generations of fear, European communism collapsed pretty much under its own weight. A decade later, in the fall of 1999, on the tenth anniversary of what Germans call "*die Wende*," or "the turn" from one world order to another, I set off with my husband Neal for Germany, with the background I've just described as baggage. Our destination was Greifswald, a tiny city in the northeastern corner of the country on the Baltic Sea, very near the Polish border and in the former East Zone. Neal was to be a senior teaching fellow in American Studies at the Arnst Moritz University, pulling together several separate strands of his career—his German mission, his doctoral work and twenty years of teaching German, his interest in American fiction, and his current position as director of the creative writing program at Cleveland State University.

I was the one facing a brand new experience. I didn't speak German comfortably, and the part of the world to which we



Neal and Rebecca Chandler, on the Baltic Sea, near Greifswald, Germany, August, 1999.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEAL CHANDLER

were traveling would have felt very foreign to me even if I had not encountered it as a child of the Cold War.

Initially we were treated as tourists. We flew into Berlin—that city's name still gave me chills—and were greeted by the Fulbright organization and possibly sixty or seventy other Fulbright scholars. Most of them were young and idealistic college graduates who wanted to help further understanding among nations, primarily as teachers and journalists. We were given a tour of the city, including the infamous Checkpoint Charlie where access to and from the walled section of Berlin had been so carefully controlled. The wall itself is gone now, having been gleefully torn apart by German citizens (on internationally televised broadcasts) in 1989, but an outline of its borders has been preserved with a narrow band of blue stone. We noticed that tracery again and again as we moved throughout the city and tried to imagine what it would have been like to have been walled in or walled out. The center of government had just been moved from Bonn, and we visited the newly constructed Bundestag, climbing a spiral staircase to an all-glass enclosure at the top of the building symbolizing the openness of the government of the newly reunited German Republic. From that vantage point, I counted possibly seventy cranes—all of Berlin seemed to be a massive construction site.

We also visited the Jewish Quarter and were heartened to hear about the growth and reestablishment of that culture

since the terrors of the last World War. Germany seems determined to learn from its own history: We saw Holocaust memorials under construction and World War II documentaries aired on television, and we were quite taken by the sight of armed German guards positioned prominently outside Jewish centers, synagogues, and historical sites. The neo-Nazi movement is one we had heard about but did not encounter, though clearly the German government is well prepared for any activity from this group.

Our orientation completed, we boarded a train for the four-hour trip to Greifswald and began to encounter the country on a much more personal level. Two hours into our journey, we struck up a conversation with a gentleman from the West who was traveling to Anklam to oversee construction of a new section of the Autobahn. That was when we began to learn about the problems of reunification. Under Communism, there had been “full employment,” but not everyone actually worked, and many did work of little value for just a few hours a day. Technology had lagged far behind, and now the “Wessies” (West Germans) were trying to help the “Ossies” (East Germans) get caught up, but not without some serious resentment. East Germans were not delighted to have “outsiders” coming in and taking over, telling them what to do in what often seemed to them a rather high-handed manner. Westerners, for their own part, were not impressed with the

work ethic (or lack thereof) that they encountered and were mindful of the incredible drain on West German coffers it was going to take to effect all this change. Those Westerners moving (often being moved by the government or their employers) into eastern cities generally arrived with some resentment and not a little condescension over the living conditions they were finding.

For us, however, daily life was a delight. We enjoyed such aspects of a European lifestyle as walking virtually everywhere we went, finding bakeries on just about every corner and fresh markets in the square. There were three medieval churches in the town, each with its own concert series, and good music was available often several times a week. The university—itsself a warren of crumbling structures—had invested early in an apartment complex for foreign teachers and students. We had a beautifully constructed and well-appointed little apartment near campus, and within weeks, we counted Swedes, Aussies, Ethiopians, Indians, and many others as friends and neighbors. A university women's auxiliary kept planning gatherings of various kinds, and we took full advantage of the social opportunities they provided.

Neal's colleagues in the Institute for British and American Studies had all spent some time in the United States or Canada and were very open and friendly. One of my own American colleagues had been born in Greifswald and had arranged to spend the five years immediately after the *Wende* in her hometown teaching. She helped broker relationships and teaching opportunities for us we might not otherwise have had. We also had the Church—a tiny branch that welcomed us literally with open arms. We were fortunate to meet and to count as friends some very interesting and truly lovely people.

AS ACQUAINTANCES DEEPENED and we learned to trust one other and talk openly, we were able to pose more and more questions about life during the days of the German Democratic Republic: What was it *really* like growing up under Communism? How has your life changed since the *Wende*? How do you feel about the changes that have come to your country? What are your hopes and concerns for the future? As we were able to engage in conversations like this, myths were shattered!

I had been led to believe that whole nations of benighted souls behind the Iron Curtain were on their knees daily praying for what we had—for what, in Utah parlance, we took “for granite.” Mothers were forced to work, we were told, and children were placed in daycare centers where they were brainwashed into believing Communist ideology. My first surprise was that not everyone had been miserable for the past fifty years. When I asked one of Neal's colleagues how her life had changed, she replied, “Well, the cost of a VCR has come down from 25,000 to 5000 marks [still a great deal of money!], but the price of bread has gone up seven times, and my rent has more than doubled twice. This is an improvement?” She also questioned whether the new order would be better than any of the older ones. “Germans certainly like their bureaucracies,” she observed. “Maybe this one won't be that

different after all.” Her sense of uncertainty about the future is fairly typical, I learned, and it affects all kinds of decisions. Unemployment has skyrocketed, and the birth rate, always higher in East Germany than in the west, has dropped precipitously. Many people described their plans as being on hold for now, and there was a general skepticism about all the promises that are being made.

I spoke with one young man who was very bitter about what had happened to his family—his father in particular—over the last decade. His father had been a very respected mathematician (and Party member), and theirs had been lives of relative privilege. The family was large by European standards—with four children, but because of the many government programs, his parents had been able to choose the size of family they wanted. He described an almost idyllic childhood, surrounded by “many loving people” during the day while his parents worked. He and his siblings enjoyed school, various youth programs, and the opportunity to go away to camp every summer for a month or more. Now, all these things cost money, and his little nephew was bored at home with his sister all day. Only wealthy families could afford what he and his friends had taken for granted as children. His father was home pretty much all day as well, because the mathematics he knew and had used and taught were all out of date, and he had been deemed too old to retrain. The government had given him a comfortable pension, but he had lost his status in his field, in his community, and quite frankly within his family as well.

We met people who mourned the loss of what they called the “old idealism.” Under Communism, there had been a sense of camaraderie that had now been replaced by competition. Salary schedules for most government jobs had then been published. There were no enormous disparities and no great mystery about what people were paid. Now salaries were negotiated, and everyone was uncomfortable talking about money, which seemed to be a new and unhealthy preoccupation. When I would counter with evidence of positive change—the phenomenal building and remodeling projects that we literally picked our way around each time we left the apartment, I was surprised by the lack of enthusiasm I encountered. “I can't wait to come back in five years and see how everything looks,” I would exclaim, only to hear the ubiquitous “We'll see. . . .” What people did seem to appreciate—at least those for whom a market economy was working well—were opportunities to travel to other parts of the world. And many were kind enough to remark that under the old system, we never would have met each other, and that would have been a loss.

I WAS CURIOUS TO know what they thought of us—of the American visitors they had met in Germany and of American life as seen by those who had traveled to the United States. Once again, myths collapsed. Most of the people we spoke with weren't nearly as impressed with our culture and lifestyle as I had been encouraged to believe they should be. What probably impressed them the most was the sheer size of our country. Everything in the states seemed big

to them—from refrigerators and washing machines to football stadiums and the western landscape. They acknowledged the great natural beauty within our borders. They were also impressed with the openness and hospitality of many Americans.¹ They liked bagels and Mexican food. And that was about it.

When we pressed them to share their less flattering observations honestly, we got a pretty good earful: “America is a country with no history and no culture” was a summary theme that kept emerging. We seem to have problems as individuals as well: Americans are condescending. They think they know everything. They are wasteful. “It’s a big country,” one young man observed, “but do you have to clutter it up the way you do?” He had attended a picnic in the U.S. and had been appalled by what was being bagged up as “trash.” Americans are lazy. They can’t go anywhere or do anything without their cars. Nothing thrills them more than finding a parking place directly in front of the store they want to patronize. Americans are superficial and insincere. They will say to you, “We really need to get together for lunch,” but they don’t mean it, and they won’t make any effort to actually do it. (I had to wince on that one.) Americans are hypocritical. They say one thing and do something else. The best example I got for this particular generalization was the disconnect between the very visible health craze that features Americans in running shoes everywhere . . . and the menu at McDonalds. Here I finally had to take exception. “Hypocrisy” is a pretty strong word in our language, and I don’t really see my fellow citizens as hypocrites. When someone orders, say a Big Mac, double fries. . . and a Diet Coke, I don’t see that as hypocrisy; I just think of it as a rather endearing and minor national idiosyncrasy.

I found myself defending Americans and American sensibilities in other situations as well. Once I made the mistake of asking a young man who had spent an exchange year in a Midwestern high school what he thought of American girls. His answer surprised me: “They’re prudish,” he told me. He pronounced the word as I have just spelled it, but I knew immediately what he meant because he was referring to one of the major disconnects I had already noticed about daily life in much of Europe. Europeans will tell you that they are very comfortable with their bodies and that Americans are, by contrast, repressed to an unhealthy and ridiculous degree. I had noticed magazines openly displayed in kiosks and corner stores that would be wrapped in plain brown paper and kept under the counter here. It was disconcerting to me but didn’t seem to bother anyone else. Where is the line? I wondered.

On one occasion, when we were invited to spend an afternoon with another family, picnicking and enjoying the beach on some nearby islands, we demurred at the suggestion that we all have a swim by pointing out that we had not brought our swimming suits. Neither had they. We were just supposed to go swimming together—all of us, including our teenaged children. No one in my family could imagine a worse way to spend an afternoon, and we were trying to figure a diplomatic way out of the situation when—to our host’s great regret and our enormous relief—inclement weather prevailed, calling for

a change of plans. I decided that if these lovely people were a product of their culture and conditioning, so was I, and if that meant that I was strait-laced, repressed, and yes, “prudish,” so be it.

One particularly thoughtful young person called attention to what he saw as an even more fundamental difference between the European and the American mindsets—and one that had surprised him to discover. During a year he had attended high school in rural Vermont, there had been a horrific storm. The gale-force winds and sheets of rain provided an experience unlike anything he had ever seen—but it was the aftermath that intrigued him even more. When the storm itself had blown through, neighbors gathered to take stock of the damage. The area was littered with branches, and one entire tree had been uprooted and lay across the main road to the town. After all the comments on the size and age of the tree and on the storm as it had been experienced in various households—a communal experience that would be universal to just about any locale—something else occurred. Instead of standing around wondering what government agency should now be called to deal with the downed tree, the neighbors started taking matters into their own hands. Someone wandered back to his garage and returned with a block and tackle. Someone else brought a chain saw. A neighbor who could get at his jeep backed it up to the base of the tree, and just about everyone else got busy clearing something up. Before very long, the road was clear, and piles of firewood were stacked free to anyone who wanted to come and get them.

Listening to this story, I felt a quiver of recognition. “I know these people,” I thought. “These are my people, and yes, this is exactly what would happen here. Moreover, if such a situation were to occur in my neighborhood or anywhere in the U.S. that has a good block association, someone would get out the street volleyball net, someone would order pizza, someone would make lemonade . . . or tap a keg . . . and someone would form an *ad hoc* committee to make sure such a disaster occurred the following year so they could do it all over again.” Moreover, if for some reason we lacked manpower, I could always call my home teachers, the elders, the missionaries.

In Germany, my young friend reflected, people would have waited for weeks if necessary until some government service finally appeared to deal with such a matter. It’s not that we don’t have agencies to call, but some combination of Yankee ingenuity and perhaps our Protestant work ethic makes us impatient and prompts us to roll up our sleeves and have at it ourselves. And I would argue that as Latter-day Saints, we probably have a double dose of that quality—as evidenced by our welfare program, the often remarkable efforts of priesthood quorums to help members move, repair property, or perhaps organize a search, and the steady ongoing guardianship of our home and visiting teaching programs.

It was, in fact, encounters with American volunteerism that provoked some of the greatest surprise among the people we met. One of our daughters had just graduated from college and had begun a two-year program with AmeriCorps working in an “under-resourced school” in Houston, Texas. Her older

When I asked one of Neal's colleagues how her life had changed, she replied, "Well, the cost of a VCR has come down from 25,000 to 5000 marks, but the price of bread has gone up seven times, and my rent has more than doubled twice. This is an improvement?"

sister had spent a year with Habitat for Humanity building low income housing in East Oakland and was actively seeking out international service venues while we were abroad.² And Mormon missionaries were everywhere in evidence. Why, we were asked, would these kids give up this much time to do this kind of work at this time of their lives? The selfish answers, "Well, it's a good experience. . . It looks good on a resume . . ." didn't satisfy, and there just didn't seem to be anything comparable for young people in Europe. (Germany has something called "national service," but it's merely an option for those who want a way out of the mandatory year of military service.) Such conversations gave me further opportunity to reflect on what's right about America. Our German friends are not incorrect in their candid observations about our way of life and about us as human beings. And we have plenty of problems beyond those that are apparent to visitors. But as long as we care enough about addressing those issues to donate time and money, to roll up our sleeves and do what we can to help, we have good reason to be hopeful and optimistic.

My experiences as a sometimes guest instructor at a local gymnasium (a college preparatory public secondary school) provided more opportunities for positive reflection. When I learned that students and teachers universally defined a "capitalist" as someone who "thinks only about money," I was able to offer a somewhat broader and less pejorative definition. I also surprised my audience by telling them that a majority of American teenagers will have held a paying job by the time they graduate from high school. Even babysitting or cutting a neighbor's lawn is uncommon for a young person in that part of the world.

The most memorable afternoon I spent teaching was with a group of ninth graders who had encountered a chapter in their social studies book entitled, "The American Dream." Teachers had asked me to explain what that concept was—not just to their students, but to them as well. This was a new book (textbooks throughout Eastern Europe are being rewritten at a furious pace), and this chapter baffled them. I have taught about American immigration many times in my career, and I was sorry I didn't have access to the many visual aids I have accumulated, but I devised a lesson plan around my own students—the ones I had left behind to make this trip. I told my audience about Sonia Tchernova who had come from Moscow with her parents so they could work at the Cleveland Clinic doing research at a level not possible in Russia; of Samantha Ying whose family had left Hong Kong, fearful of impending changes there; of three delightful sisters who had left a difficult

life in Cuba, one family member at a time, to live in the U.S. Ingrid Rosiuta had stayed with her grandparents in Rumania for two years while her parents completed their immigration, and her father was currently retraining as an engineer, but they were happy with their new life in the states. I got brave and mentioned the many, many Jewish students I have taught whose parents or grandparents had fled Russian pogroms—or the Nazi government—and, finally, of my own Scottish ancestors who had wanted to join a uniquely American church.

As I concluded my lesson, I learned that the question the students had prepared for me before I arrived was, "Have you ever met an immigrant?" as if it might be an anomaly. Needless to say, they were a little overwhelmed at my response. While allowing that each person's "American dream" may be slightly different from another's, I was pleased to be able to tell them that, for the most part, all these new Americans manage to live quite productively and quite happily together in the U.S.

AND SO IT was that I was able to return home chastened and perhaps a bit wiser but without feeling as much like the Ugly American as I might have. When I arrived at Kennedy Airport, I heard . . . Spanish . . . on the public address system, and I knew I was home. I was dealing with customs for the first time and looked for a sympathetic—or at least a benign—official to get me through this process and recognized something I hadn't seen for many weeks—a black face. The official seemed to be in a good mood and was getting people through pretty expeditiously, so I chose his line. When I handed over my passport, he flashed a broad smile, and quipped, "How 'bout those *Indians*?" I was momentarily thrown completely off guard, not just because I would have expected him to be a *Yankees* fan, but because I hadn't had one of those friendly "pick-up" kinds of conversations since leaving the U.S. All things considered, it felt good to be home and home in a world where the once terrifying and intractable menace of Gog versus Magog had resolved into a disagreement among friends over the relative merits of swimsuits and do-it-yourself. ☺

NOTE

1. Of course, this was five years ago. As I write this now, U.S. popularity in Europe is at a very low ebb due to intense and almost universal dislike of the Bush administration—especially the invasion of Iraq. Still, most people try to make a distinction between individual Americans and their government and its policies.

2. Ironically, one such project she found and very much enjoyed involved rebuilding a portion of the Berlin Wall to serve as a memorial.

2001 Brookie & D. K. Brown Fiction Contest Moonstone Winner

ROCK, SQUEAK, WHEEZE

By David M. Clark

EVERY DAY THIS SUMMER IS THE SAME. WAKE UP at 8. Watch *The Jeffersons* at 8:30. Eat breakfast while Mom bugs me about memorizing the Articles of Faith. Go swimming until lunch time. Eat lunch while Mom bugs me some more about memorizing the Articles of Faith. *I Love Lucy*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, and *The Andy Griffith Show* are on right after lunch. I hate those shows. Lucy is a mutant cross between Daffy Duck and Sister Hansen, our annoying red-headed Primary chorister. Dick Van Dyke is a doof. I think Barney and Gomer may both be retarded. The only good thing about that show is Andy and Opie walking with their fishing poles during the whistling.

After lunch, I go back out swimming until *Gilligan's Island* comes on. Next is the *Brady Bunch*. Then the *Big Valley*. *Big Valley* lasts for an hour. It's about the Barkleys—some ranchers in Stockton, California. Jared is the oldest. He's the smart Mama's Boy. Nick is the middle brother with a bad temper. And Heath is the youngest brother. Lisa says Heath is a fox. Heath is also the Six Million Dollar Man. Audra is the sister that is supposed to be beautiful, but she looks like an albino. Mrs. Barkley scares me. She wears a black hat and a black leather coat when she rides her horse. They never tell you what happened to Mr. Barkley. I bet Mrs. Barkley had him killed so she could have the ranch.

The rest of the day is more swimming. Jason, T.J., Andy, and Michael usually come over. After the swimming, Mom usually starts bugging me again about memorizing the Articles of Faith.

The best part of swimming is hopping out really fast and lying down on the hot deck after you've been in for a while. It burns your bare stomach at first and then your whole body starts to tingle. You can feel the skin on your back get tight and warm, like the Sunday dinner rolls you can see rising and browning through the glass oven door.

The best is lying on your stomach, resting your chin on the

back of your hands and looking close up at the deck. It looks like a mini Grand Canyon. Lots of canyons and side-canyons. You can watch the water dripping off your nose fill up one canyon and spill over to the next one, washing away little pieces of dirt and grass that have collected on the deck. The little brown ants that make a trail from the garden along the ridge of the deck run away from the flood like the Teton Dam just broke.

Great-Grandma Willey used to live in Sugar City, Idaho, and her house washed away a few years ago when the dam broke. She calls it the damn dam. She used to make us ginger-snaps whenever we visited. She had a stroke about a year ago, and now she swears a lot. After the dam broke, Great-Grandma Willey ate pickled beets and canned apricots for two weeks straight. Some stake in Kaysville, Utah, gave three trucks full of food from the bishop's storehouse to help the people in her stake. For about a year, Dad talked non-stop about how great the bishop's storehouse is. Darren still teases Dad about it.

"Dad, I'm feeling a bit irregular and wondered if you could get me some prunes from the bishop's storehouse. There's no more ex-lax in the medicine cabinet."

"Fools mock, but they shall mourn, Darren. Remember that. If you want, I can prescribe you a little something to keep you on the john until Christmas, smart guy."

Dad is a doctor.

Every Sunday of the summer, Dad announces the ward's annual bishop's storehouse project, which happens in August. Even when it isn't his turn to conduct, he makes sure he personally makes the announcement. By the first week of July, everyone in sacrament meeting rolls their eyes when the counselor who is conducting says, "And now the bishop would like to make a very special announcement." They all know he's going to blab on about the bishop's storehouse. This is Dad's fifth summer as bishop. Mom knows what's coming. She bows her head and won't even look at the pulpit when he starts with the announcement. She acts like she's shooshing one of us or looking for something in the diaper bag, but she's really just too embarrassed to look at Dad or make eye contact with anyone else.

DAVID M. CLARK is a twelve-year-old trapped in a thirty-something-year-old mergers and acquisitions lawyer's body. He is especially grateful to Kent Christensen for his illustrations and Richard Cracroft for his encouragement.

Brothers and sisters, we've got a very special opportunity on Saturday the 25th to participate in the Mesa 49th Ward annual summer bishop's storehouse project—a service project that will provide others with the very bread of life. It will provide spiritual sustenance for you and may literally serve as manna did to the children of Israel for the nameless and faceless saints that you will be providing for. Brothers and sisters, I promise you four things. You will be hot! You will be sweaty! You will be dirty! But, oh, brothers and sisters, what a great and marvelous opportunity! For brothers and sisters, you will feel the Spirit of the Lord!

Brothers and sisters, let me tell you. When the Teton Dam broke near Rexburg, Idaho, four years ago, my own family was blessed by the divinely inspired bishop's storehouse program. My Grandmother Willey was left homeless. She was one of the hundreds who lost her home. She was left without shelter. Without food. That's when the good Saints of Kaysville, Utah, sent truckloads of food to the flood-stricken saints of Sugar City. Let me ask you something. On that appointed Saturday afternoon, did Brother John Doe of the Kaysville Umpteenth Ward of the Kaysville Umpteenth Stake know that the apricots he picked would help feed an anemic widow hundreds of miles away? No, he did not. Did Sister Jane Doe know that pears she canned would feed that same anemic widow hundreds of miles away? No, she did not. But their dedicated service literally saved lives. Brothers and sisters, I hope you will join me on the 25th of August.

After that, the whole congregation breathes a sigh of relief.

After church, Mom always tells Dad he sounded like Elmer Gantry. I have no idea who Brother Gantry is.

I WOKE UP early Monday morning and went into the kitchen. Mom was all alone reading the newspaper. Dad is a wacko. He gets four newspapers every day—the *Tribune*, the *Republic*, the *Gazette*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Mom only reads the *Tribune*.

"Todd, let's start right now on those Articles of Faith."

"Yeah, right, I'll go back to bed if you want."

"Todd, I'm serious. You need to focus on the Articles of Faith so you can pass them off." She put down the paper and stood up to put the milk back in the fridge. "C'mon Todd, what is the first Article of Faith?"

"Mom, please give me a break. Why do I have to memorize all of these stupid things anyway? 'We believe.' 'We believe.' 'We believe.' I don't even think I'm part of the 'we.' Maybe I'll stand up in sacrament meeting and say, 'My mom believes,' or 'My dad believes.'"

"Todd, you're being ridiculous. Do you want to graduate from Primary?"

"Yeah. Just so I won't have to sing any more stupid pioneer songs."

"Then you have to memorize all thirteen Articles of Faith, pass them off to Sister Smiley, and then say one in sacrament meeting. That's the deal. Now please, for heaven's sake, just tell me the first Article of Faith. I know you know it. I'll even give you a hint. It starts with, 'We believe.'"

"Thanks a lot."

Deep breath.

"We believe"

Pause.

"ingodtheeternalfatherandinhissonjesuschristandinthe-holyghostamen."

Exhale.

"Good, but say it about ten times slower."

"Weeeee beeeelieeeeeevve iiiinnnn —"

"Todd, will you please just cooperate with me? You could have been done ten minutes ago if you would just say it in your normal voice."

"We believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. Amen. Hallelujah."

"Very good, Todd! But I don't think there's a Hallelujah in there."

She smiled and then poured me some orange juice.

MOM TOLD US today that Grandpa is sick. He had a heart attack this afternoon at 1:15. She's been on the phone all afternoon with Grandma and Uncle Ted. Dad is on his way home from work. Mom is going up to Utah tomorrow morning to help Grandma take care of him. The doctor said that the heart attack was mild, but it is more serious than normal because of Grandpa's asthma. He wheezes and coughs a lot. Even when he is just sitting in a chair watching the news, he breathes like he's getting ready to do something really scary. He breathes very slowly but takes deep breaths. It's like he's concentrating about every breath. It reminds me of how I breathe when I go to the doctor and he puts the freezing cold stethoscope all over my back and chest. I get nervous and concentrate on my breaths.

"Okay, Todd. Deep breath."

Inhale. Pause. Exhale.

"Good. Again."

Inhale. Pause. Exhale.

"Good, and again."

Inhale. Pause. Exhale.

"Good job, one more."

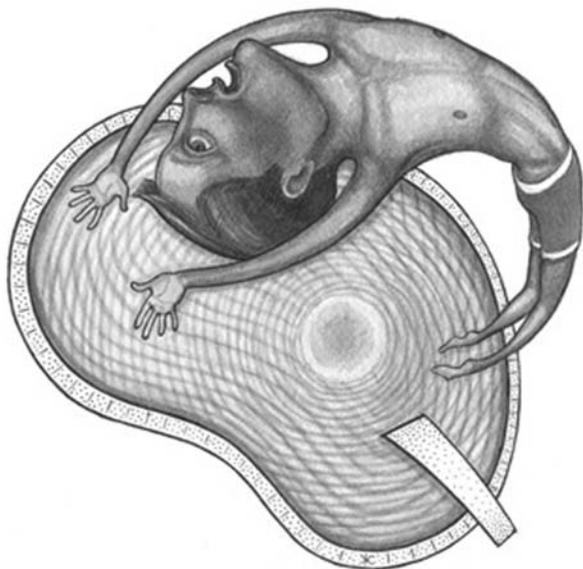
Inhale. Pause. Exhale.

"All right, sounds fine."

Every time I see Grandpa, I tell him a new joke. He loves jokes even though whenever he laughs, his asthma makes him cough for about three minutes. After he finishes coughing, he always says it was worth it. His favorite is the one about the stalker in the church. I told it to him last summer when we were in Provo.

"Hey, Grandpa, did you hear about the stalker in the church?"

"No, I don't believe I did hear about a stalker in the church."



Maybe
I'll
stand
up in
sacrament
meeting
and say,
"My mom
believes,"
or "My dad
believes."

He calls into Grandma.

"Em, did you know there was a streaker in the church?"

He was just playing along.

Then, faintly, we hear Grandma calling back, "George, you'll have to come in. I can't hear a word you're saying!"

"Sorry, Todd. What about that streaker in the church?"

"They caught him by the organ."

He had one burst of laughter, and then he started to heave and cough. For that one burst of laughter, he sounded just like Darren does when he laughs. Like he was young. He coughed and slapped his knee at the same time. He didn't stop coughing for about five minutes. Grandma even came out from the kitchen to see if he was OK. She was wearing an apron with flowers on it and had a paring knife in her hand. He just kept coughing and waved his hand at her to go back to the kitchen.

"Boy oh boy, Todd, that was a good one. It was worth it. Definitely worth it."

After dinner, we sat out on the porch swing and watched the reflection of the sun setting on the snow caps of Mt. Timpanogos. He always does that after dinner. He gently swings, back and forth, back and forth, perfectly timed with a deep asthmatic breath between each swing. Rock, squeak, wheeze. Rock, squeak, wheeze. Rock, squeak, wheeze.

"They caught him by the organ, did they?"

"Yup, that's what they say."

"That sure was a good one, Todd, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, pretty good, I guess."

I gave Mom a joke to take to Grandpa in the hospital. I wrote it down so she wouldn't forget.

Grandpa: What are pigskins used for most? (*turn the page over for the answer*)

Answer: To hold pigs together. (*Did you think footballs?*)

I know it's a dumb joke. I could've given her a funnier one, but I don't want Grandpa to laugh and cough since he's sick. After

he reads it, he'll probably just crack a smile and nod his head. That's what he does sometimes.

WHENEVER MOM IS gone, we get to eat out for dinner and have cold cereal for breakfast. Mom doesn't let us have Trix, Froot Loops, Lucky Charms, or Frosted Flakes. She says they have too much sugar and aren't healthy. If we want cold cereal, it has to be Cheerios, Raisin Bran, Shredded Wheat, or All-Bran.

Whenever Mom goes out of town, the first thing Dad does on the way home from the airport is stop at Circle K and buy extra milk and whatever cereal we want.

For dinner, we get to choose where we want to go. Dad hates eating out, but he doesn't know how to cook, so when Mom is gone, he has no choice.

The first night, the girls get to pick because they're girls. They always choose Kentucky Fried Chicken. Kentucky Fried Chicken is OK. But I think Dad hates it. He gets only mashed potatoes and gravy.

On the boys night, we always choose Mexican food. Dad likes Mexican food, too. He always gets a chimichanga. I always get shredded beef tacos. Darren gets tostadas. The girls always eat too much hot sauce before the food gets there and then whine the whole time that their mouths burn.

The only time Dad ever cooks is on campouts. He usually just packs the basics—Lipton's Cup-o-Soup, beef jerky, and black licorice.

Mom left after we went to school. Her bags were next to the kitchen table.

"Hurry up and pass the bacon, Piglet."

Katie was taking forever.

Dad wrinkled his forehead and gave me a look.

"Dad, she's taking forever, and she's fondling every piece of bacon. Look! I'm telling you, she's a molester. Pass it over, Katie."

"Excuse me, Todd?"

"Please, please, please, please pass the bacon."

"Don't pass it to him, Katie. We don't understand heathens."

"Please pass the bacon, sir. By the way, sir, what is a heathen, sir? Do tell."

I said it with an English accent. He almost laughed. You could tell.

"A heathen is someone with no manners."

He was trying to look too strict. I think he was trying to show off for Mom. He was trying to show her that he would be able to handle us for four days all alone.

"Please pass the bacon."

He passed it.

"Much better."

Mom had her purse on the counter and was counting some money.

"Todd, when I get back, I expect you to have memorized the second and third Articles of Faith. The fourth would be nice, too."

THE FIRST NIGHT we had Kentucky Fried Chicken. Whenever we all drive in the Suburban, Dad turns off the radio and tries to quiz us on something.

"Janie..."

"Yes, Daddy?"

"What iiiss . . ."

He always waits on purpose, acting like he's trying to think up a really hard question.

"What is, hmmm, let me think... What is three plus two?"

"Oh, that is so easy Daddy!"

"Lisa, I wasn't asking you honey".

"But, Daddy, it's so simple!"

"Five!"

"Nice job, Janie."

"You're a dope if you don't get that one."

"Be quiet, Todd."

"Yeah, Todd, shut up."

"You shutup, Lisa."

"Okay, okay, you two. Todd, tell us the second Article of Faith."

"Oh, brother, Dad."

"Come on. I'm serious. You must not know it."

"I know it."

"You're a dope if you don't get this one."

"I didn't ask you, Lisa."

"Come on, Todd. Tell us. Enlighten us."

"We believe that Kentucky Fried Chicken stinks."

Everybody laughed except for Dad.

"Come on, Todd. You're stalling. You must not know it."

"I know it."

"Then spit it out. Prove it."

"We believe that men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression and that Kentucky Fried Chicken stinks."

"Good job, Todd. That's exactly right."

I knew he didn't like Kentucky Fried Chicken.

On the way home, Dad made me say the third one, too.

THE FOURTH ARTICLE of Faith is the easiest one of all. It's the fourth one, and you just have to remember four things.

I said it to Mom when I was watching *Gilligan's Island*. She was surprised. Mom likes it when you go out of your way to talk to her. Especially about church stuff.

I was sitting on the couch with the green and red afghan around me. If you sit on the couch after you've been in the pool, you have to make sure that your towel is under your bum. Mom gets mad if you get the couch wet. Sometimes it's cool to get the cushion wet. There's a perfect wet shape of two butt cheeks on the couch. After you've been in the pool all day and you come into the house in your wet swimsuit, the air conditioning hits you and you can get really cold. That's why I always watch *Gilligan's Island* with the afghan around me.

I was sitting on the couch with the afghan around me, and Mom came in. The Skipper was chasing Gilligan around trying to hit him over the head with his skipper's hat. Skipper should kick him in the nuts once. That would make Gilligan shape up.

"Hey, Mom."

I was still staring at the television.

"We believe the first four principles and ordinances of the gospel are: first [I stuck out my index finger like a salesman], faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, repentance [I jumped up on my feet and stuck out two fingers]; third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins [three fingers]; fourth [four fingers and in the voice of a preacher], the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

"Todd, that is just peeerrrrfect!"

She sounded like a contented little kitten when she said it.

Darren walked in right at the end, looked at both of us, and rolled his eyes. "What a dork," he said and then walked out of the room.

Mom was excited, though. I had caught her off guard. I like to surprise people. Mom remembers junk like that. She thinks you're an angel if you say something out of the blue about the Church. After that, I watched *Big Valley*.

WE HAD ANOTHER new Primary teacher last Sunday. Her name is Sister Mason. She cried, too. That's been four teachers in a row we made cry. It took us only seventeen minutes. T.J. has a stopwatch on his watch. I think it's a new record. There should be a Guinness Book of World Records for the Church. That would be cool. Sister Hammond would be in it for longest prayer. She even blesses flowers.

"We thank thee, our kind and loving Father, for the lovely petunias, whose budding blossoms testify to the birth and resurrection of thy dear beloved Son. We ask thee to remind us, dear Father, that even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed as one of these."

She goes on forever. It's too bad you have to close your eyes when you pray, because the little red light on the pulpit could come in handy when she says the prayer.

Jeffrey Peterson would be in the book for most times saying

the sacrament prayer in one sacrament meeting. He had to resay it four times once. He said “excuse me” twice and “dangit” once. By the time he finally got it right, all of the deacons were laughing. Dad said it was a fiasco.

Sister Bybee would hold the record for most crying. We all call her Sister Bawlbybee. She moans and weeps every fast and testimony meeting. Every month she makes it to the pulpit without incident, adjusts the microphone, calmly smiles and then stands there in silence for about 30 seconds trying to hold back the inevitable. It almost hurts to watch. She looks like she is using all of her concentration to hold back a seizure or something. Then she raises her hand as if to say “just a minute, I’m in control” and ekes out “I promised myself I wasn’t going to cry.”

Yeah, right. She cries about everything. One time she even tried to sing her testimony. It was that song, “O That I Were an Angel.” Her voice cracked, and then she started bawling so badly that nobody could understand her. She was slobbering and singing at the same time. It was gross. Dad calls her the Book of Lamentations. I don’t really get it. Mom thinks it’s funny, though.

And Sister Mason would definitely be in for shortest time ever for being a Targeteer teacher. She works at a grocery store, and she brought her scriptures and lesson manual and a picture of Ammon in a Michelob Light box. Trevor was the first one to notice the box.

“Sister Mason, do you drink beer?”

“What?”

Confused, she looked down at the box. She smiled as if to start to explain, but Trevor interrupted before she could start.

“Sister Mason drinks Michelob!”

“Sister Mason drinks Michelob!”

After that, Trevor kept singing the Michelob Light commercial that’s on during all of the football games. The one where people bet each other for a Michelob Light.

“Michelob Light for the winner! Michelob Light for the winner!”

“You’re a beer drinker!”

“No, listen boys. I just picked it up on my way out from work at Smitty’s.”

“Yeah, Brother Mason does have a beer belly doesn’t he!”

Everybody laughed. Even the girls. The girls bowed their heads like they were embarrassed, but they were really laughing, too.

Sister Doyle tried to laugh about it, but we had her. No one listened to her lesson except for the part where Ammon chops off the arms of the Lamanites.

We all started yelling and karate chopping each others’ arms. And Trevor kept singing “Michelob Light for the winner! Michelob Light for the winner! Michelob Light for the winner!”

“Please, boys, please! Do you want me to go find your mothers in Relief Society?”

That made us quiet for a few more minutes. She started telling us how King Lamoni asked to see Ammon. Then Trevor finished her off. She asked for someone to read Alma 18:15.

Trevor raised his hand like he was being polite and serious. He started to read.

“And it came to pass that Ammon said unto him again: What desirest thou of me? But King Lamoni answered him not. And then Ammon said, ‘King, do you have any Michelob Light?’ And it came to pass that the King said, ‘Yes, I always have Michelob Light for the winner! Michelob Light for the winner!’”

Now he was singing it again and dancing a jig.

“Michelob Light for the winner! Michelob Light for the winner!”

“You kids! Stop!”

That’s when she started to cry. She ran out of the room.

Trevor shrugged his shoulders, said “Oops,” and sat down.

DAD, DARREN, AND I went to O’Malley’s on Saturday afternoon to buy some stuff for the garden. When we pulled into the garage, Mom was sitting, waiting for us on the wooden toy chest that Grandpa Carter had made. She was pale and looked sick. She went out on to the driveway with Dad while we unloaded the stuff from O’Malley’s. They both came in the garage. Dad was holding her hand. I’d never seen them just stand and hold hands before.

“Grandpa died this morning. Mom’s going to fly up to Utah tonight. We’ll drive up early tomorrow morning.”

Mom said nothing and went inside. Dad watched her go in and then looked at us again. His lip started to quiver.

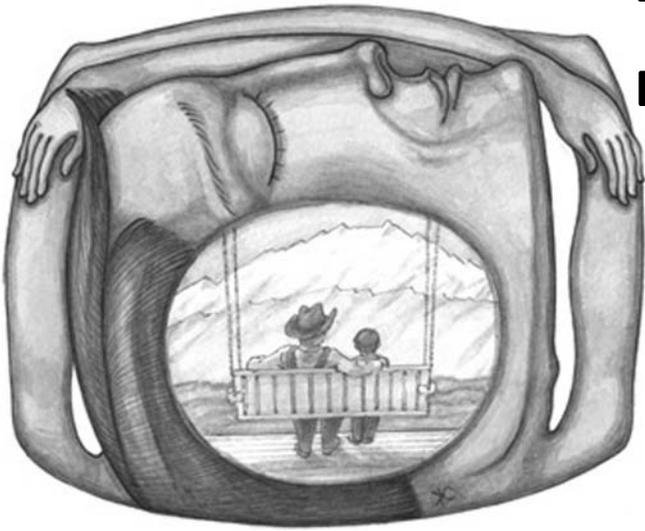
“Todd, I need you to clean out the Suburban. Darren, I need you to mow the lawn and then clean the pool. It needs chlorine, too.”

Dad went inside. We said nothing.

Mom flew up to Utah that night. Dad came in at 3 a.m. the next morning and woke us up. He’s a morning person. He always gets up at 4:30 a.m. to get all the newspapers. But it was early for him, too. I barely remember him coming in. He had put the middle seat in the Suburban down and made beds for us. The girls and I were on sleeping bags where the floor and the middle seat usually were, and Darren slept on the back seat. Dad drove up front alone. I only remember it being dark and then feeling the slight jerk backward when he put the Suburban in reverse.

When I woke up, we were in Kanab getting gas at Chevron. Dad was tired. Darren and the girls were still asleep. I knelt up and peered over the front seat, and saw the sun rising. I yawned, and so did Dad. He knew I was awake. Dad kept his left hand on the steering wheel, stretched his right arm out along the top of the front seat, and then extended his hand signaling me to give him five. Some dads hug; some dads even kiss. Dad gives us five. Dad will walk past you and stick out his hand as you pass him. That means give him five. I slap him five real hard when we’re joking or when he’s in a good mood. But usually it’s just a soft five, and then he squeezes my hand really fast—as quick as a heart beat. I gave him a soft five, and he squeezed my hand, but he didn’t let go. He held it for a while. And then let go.

“Wanna help me stay awake?”



HE had one burst of laughter, and then he started to heave and cough. He didn't stop coughing for about five minutes. "Boy oh boy, Todd, that was a good one. It was worth it. Definitely worth it."

He curled up his hand into a fist and stuck out his pinky. I grabbed it and squeezed it. He didn't say anything more, but I squeezed it until we got to Panguitch. I didn't see him yawn after that.

WE GOT TO Provo around lunchtime. Grandma had been crying. She was wearing an apron with ducks on it. She kissed us. So did Mom. Uncle Ted, Uncle Gary, and Aunt Charlotte were there, too.

The funeral was on Tuesday at Grandma's ward building. There was a viewing in the Relief Society room. At first, I couldn't look at Grandpa. It was too weird. He looked like wax, like a candle with his face carved into it, or one of those stuffed animals that you see in museums. He looked only half real.

He was dressed in an outfit that I'd never seen him wear before. Dad said it was his temple clothes. He looked goofy being dead and in those clothes. He looked best in his blue jeans and his hat. He's the only grandpa I've ever seen who wore blue jeans. He used to sit in his jeans and hat out on the front porch, on his yellow porch swing and look at Timpanogos.

Rock, squeak, wheeeeeze.

Rock, squeak, wheeeeeze.

Rock, squeak, wheeeeeze.

I'd like to hear that again.

I sat on the swing next to Uncle Ted, but he rocked it differently. The rock was too quick, and the squeak wasn't there. Neither was the wheeze.

After the viewing was over, they closed the door in the Relief Society room. Only family was allowed in. Uncle Ted said a prayer. Then Grandma took Grandpa's wedding ring off his finger. Softly crying, she stroked the hair on his head three times and then kissed him on the lips. Uncle Ted closed the casket. Mom buried her head in Dad's chest and started to cry.

We moved the casket out of the Relief Society room and up

to the front of the chapel. I was an honorary pallbearer. So was Darren. Darren and I walked in front while my older cousins carried Grandpa into the chapel.

Grandpa's bishop spoke. His name is Bishop Tanner. I don't think he knew Grandpa very well because he just read a bunch of scriptures. Dad spoke too. He talked about how the first time he took Mom out on a date Grandpa was mowing the lawn and asked Dad to help him out. Mom came outside and there was Dad in a shirt and tie raking grass. She hadn't even known he was there yet. Dad also told how Grandpa would always walk with Darren and me down University Avenue to 7-Eleven to get cherry Slurpees and Cracker Jacks. He loved Cracker Jacks. He also told how Grandpa was so poor that he worked in a coal mine in Park City for two years before he got married. He saved every penny to pay for the ring that he bought to give to Grandma. I looked out from the stand and saw Mom. She was crying again. So was Grandma.

Then there was a song. "Abide with Me." Then it was my turn. I was sitting next to Dad. He had his arm around me. When the song was over, he squeezed my shoulder. I stood up and walked over to the podium. I was nervous but sad, too. The bishop lowered the microphone.

I cleared my throat.

"We beeliee—"

I cleared my throat again.

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in his son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. I love you, Grandpa. Name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

"Amen."

I walked back to my seat and sat down. Dad put his right arm around me and put his left hand, palm up, on my left thigh. He stretched it out. I gave him a soft five. He held my hand. I looked up and saw Grandma. She was still crying. Then I looked at Mom. She wiped her eyes and looked up at me. She was smiling. ☺

TURNING THE TIME OVER TO. . .

Lorie Winder Stromberg

POWER HUNGRY



IN “WHY DON’T Women Hold the Priesthood? A Brief but Insightful Interview,” Betina Lindsey wrote:

On a June morning in 1988, I was cooking pancakes for my eleven-year-old son and his friends after a sleepover. Twelve-year-old David had recently been ordained to the priesthood, and the other boys were asking how many times he’d passed the sacrament. While slapping a few more pancakes on their plates, I asked, “Why don’t women hold the priesthood?” Their answers were as follows:

DAVID: (age 12) “Men have better looks.”

ROBERT (age 13) “Some women have their priorities wrong, and men are more distinguished.”

STRYDER: (age 11) “My sister’s Sunday School teacher said giving women the priesthood would be like giving them an open-ended credit card.”

RICKY: (age 11) “My grandpa says maybe they’ll get it in heaven.”

ROBERT: “Women aren’t strong enough because it would fatigue them like when Jesus blessed people, he would get weak.”

DAVID: “Yeah, if women had the priesthood, they might beat the men up.”

ROBERT: “And women have

their times when they aren’t cooperative, and I give you my permission to quote me.” (He’s a lawyer’s son.)

ERIC: (age 8—interrupting impatiently) “Hey, you guys, let’s go play Power Lords.”

RICKY: (Hurriedly stuffing the last bit of pancake into his mouth) “Well, I think (long pause with a shake of his head) I don’t know why.”

End of pancakes. End of interview. Exit Power Lords.¹

David’s comment, “If women had the priesthood, they might beat up the men,” is revealing. In David’s mind, and the minds of countless others, power is perceived as devouring and dominating. This is why feminists are derisively accused of being power hungry, as if wanting power were necessarily a bad thing. And it is, if power is seen only as coercive and controlling. But I’ve spent too many years on the defensive. It’s time I owned the term. Perhaps I am power hungry. And my question is: Why aren’t we all?

If by power hungry you mean I desire the ability not only to accept responsibilities in the institutional Church but also to be part of defining those responsibilities, then, yes, I’m power hungry. Over the years, many Church leaders have asserted that we should be talking more about taking responsibility than exercising or demanding rights.² But for women, this priv-

ileging of responsibility over rights is problematic. In a discussion I had with Margaret Toscano, she suggested that Mormon women seem to have plenty of delegated responsibilities. What is lacking is their right within the organization to oversee and establish their responsibilities. Responsibility devoid of rights is servitude.

I’m weary of the false dichotomies set up for women in the Church. Former Relief Society General President Barbara B. Smith and Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve have both suggested that Mormon women ought to choose integrity over visibility, charity over charisma.³ What is wrong with having both integrity *and* visibility, both charity *and* charisma? Members of the Church’s male hierarchy don’t have to make such choices, so why should women?

If by power hungry you mean I believe women must have a voice in the Church, then, yes, I’m power hungry. In a 1993 BYU Women’s Conference panel discussion on working with women, several male panelists admitted that they had never been forced to take women seriously until they became colleagues.⁴ While the panelists’ experiences were from secular settings, the question and answer period exploded with faithful, mainstream Mormon women wondering how they could get their Church leaders to listen to them. It was obvious to me, and I said so during this session, that women in the Church will never have a voice until, as in the secular arena, they are seen as colleagues—in this case, spiritual colleagues—within the power structure of the Church. How else will women truly be heard?

If by power hungry you mean I believe that women should not only be represented but should also be an integral part of every major decision-making body of the Church, then, yes, I’m power hungry. I’ve often said that I’m passionately ambivalent about priesthood. I’m not fond of hierarchies and am leery of structures that promote them because they are almost always abusive. However, having power within an institution is preferable to institutional powerlessness, particularly if we are able as women to bring to the center of our religious community the consciousness of what it is like on the margins.

Positional power in the Church is granted primarily to those who hold the priesthood. This is particularly true above the local level. While a charismatic woman might have significant influence on a ward or perhaps even a stake level, beyond that point, positional power for women evaporates. Since, for the



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most part, we as a Church no longer recognize charismatic power—only positional power—is it possible for women to have equal status to men in the Church without being ordained to the priesthood?

Perhaps recognizing the inequity inherent in an all-male priesthood, Bruce Hafen tried to minimize its importance. In his keynote address, “Women, Feminism, and the Blessings of the Priesthood,” given at the 1985 BYU Women’s Conference, Hafen listed several of the blessings that were available to both men and women in the Church. As if it were a mere trifle, he added, “The one category of blessing in which the role of women is not the same as that of men holding the priesthood is that of administering the gospel and *governing all things*” (my emphasis). As I read this, I wondered, how could Hafen deliver this line with a straight face, and perhaps more disturbing, how could an audience of women listen to it in silence?

If by power hungry you mean I would welcome a heightened ability to bless the lives of others, then, yes, I’m power hungry. Aside from its administrative function, if priesthood is merely a sort of temporal permission to tap spiritual resources already available to the faithful, then it is superfluous. If, however, priesthood truly is a real, bestowed power that can enhance our ability to bring comfort and peace and joy into the world, then, yes, I’m power hungry and unambivalently so. Who would not righteously want such a power?

Finally, if by power hungry you mean I want the ability to participate in a model of power based on partnership rather than patriarchy, based on empowerment rather than domination, then, yes, I’m power hungry. Scott Bartchy, UCLA professor of Christian origins and early church history gave a Sunstone symposium presentation in which he asserted that Christ came to overthrow traditional models of power, which were based on dominance, coercion, and control.⁵ In their place, Jesus offered a model in which power is used to empower. Power used to dominate, coerce, or control will always burn itself out, Bartchy suggests. Only power used to empower is everlasting.

BY now I’ve given sufficient weight to the word *power* in the term “power hungry.” Alas, I’ve neglected the word *hungry*. Just as by *power*, I do not mean domination or coercion, but rather voice and influence and empowerment, so by *hungry* I do not mean gluttony.⁶ Rather, I’m talking about sustenance. I’m talking about a soul-

deep yearning for a life-sustaining, sacramental meal to which all are invited. ☪

NOTES

1. Betina Lindsey, “Why Don’t Women Hold the Priesthood: A Brief but Insightful Interview,” *Mormon Women’s Forum*, 1, no. 1 (October 1989): 5.

2. See Gordon B. Hinckley, “Ten Gifts from the Lord,” Relief Society General Women’s Meeting, 28 September 1985, published in *Ensign*, November 1985, 86; Patricia T. Holland, “A Woman’s Perspective on the Priesthood,” *Tambuli*, 6, no. 5 (June 1982): 21; Russell M. Nelson, “Woman—of

Infinite Worth,” *Ensign*, November 1989, 20.

3. Nelson, “Woman,” 20; Barbara B. Smith, “The Legacy Remembered and Renewed,” Relief Society General Women’s Meeting, 27 March 1982.

4. “Relating to the Other: Building Bridges, Working Together,” panel discussion with Kate Kirkham, Todd Britsch, Olani Durrant, Mack Lawrence, and Steven C. Walker, BYU Women’s Conference, 29 April 1993.

5. Scott Bartchy, “Jesus, Power, and Gender Roles,” Sunstone Symposium, 18 August 1994 (tape SL94–190).

6. The material in this paragraph was developed during a discussion with Stacy Burton.



RECITATIVE OF A MOMENT’S FUGUE

after Hart Crane

In Havana the old street vendors
 sell their coconut death masks,
 fiber-wigged, a kiss of crimson lips
 by the barbershops and news-stands,
 cluttered street corner trash,
 a boy holds a cage of *azulejos*,
 blue buntings captured in the distant
 mountains where the royal palms sway,
 another sells orchids
 The color of love’s breath (heaven’s perhaps)
 his eyes milked to so much regret,
 of having cut the stem
 from the flower, desire flung from the cathedral’s
 bell tower, shattered on the cobble stones,
 this daily exchange of mortals
 what is ravaged from this land, beyond the vendors,
 birds, flowers, beyond anguish,
el desespero de cada día,
 each day’s despair, broken, swollen, a rock
 thrown at memory’s crystal veneer,
 fractured light everywhere.

—VIRGIL SUAREZ

THE LONG-PROMISED DAY?

ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

By *Velincia Veljasevic*

MANY STUDENTS COME to BYU for the Church doctrines instilled through activities and classes. Some come to find spouses. I came for a different reason and have had an experience many students will never have.

I am half Serbian and half African-American, a minority female. I am not here for athletics. I am not a Mormon. I have a religion of my own. I chose BYU because of the status a degree from this institution has, the high standards students must abide by, the scenery, and because of a high-school relationship that appeared to have a promising future. In addition to the challenges of being far removed from my parents in Texas and Chicago, I came to BYU knowing I would be exposed to another religion that I would have to take classes in, that people would try to get me to join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that as a student in a large, private university with an entrenched religion, I would face many adversities. I welcomed the challenge.

To soften the blow of so many changes, I chose to live in the dorms so I could build up a community of friends for support. I soon found that many of my dormmates had had very little experience with racial differences of any kind. Throughout my brief stay in the dorms, I was the first and only person of color many of them had known.

When I arrived at BYU, I did not know anything about the culture or attitudes of LDS members. The first week of school, I was bombarded with a flurry of new terms and activities—Relief Society, family home evenings, three-hour church sessions, and visiting teachers. The second week came, and the dorm phone list arrived with information I found to be unnecessary printed right by each person's name: LDS or non-LDS. Normally, someone might consider this to be useful information, but to me it was detri-

mental. I was once more being categorized in a way I did not welcome.

During the first few weeks in the dorms, several girls invited me to activities clearly hoping that this would lead to my attending church services and eventually being baptized. After their initial attempts failed, most stopped coming to see me. When they'd meet me coming up the elevators as I returned from my own church services, they'd remark about how dressed up I was and would ask where I'd been. I wondered: did they imagine that there were no other religious denominations in Provo besides theirs?

Rather than accept the fact that I had my own faith, many of them treated me indifferently after they realized I was not going to convert. Many would avoid me in the halls and elevator. Worse, deep into the semester, students from other dorm floors would treat me as a visitor because they hadn't gotten to know me through Church-sponsored activities. I felt like an alien. I wasn't treated horribly; but feeling that I was on the outside of dorm life was difficult for me. A few young women reached out to me, but only one person in my dorm seemed to accept the fact that I had my own religious convictions.

MY first week on campus, all I saw was blonde hair, khaki pants, and black shirts. No one I met stood out to me. I felt a bit like I had walked into a GAP commercial. The campus seemed to be a giant collage of one idea: *Do everything you can to fit in.*

Early on, I went to a Mormon service just to see what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had to offer. As I sat through the talks and sang the hymns, I decided that what drove the conformity I had encountered on campus was the Church. Everybody knew what uniform to wear—white shirts and ties for men; conservative

blouses and skirts for women. Everybody knew to look down after the hymn was finished and to sit completely still and look straight forward during the service. There was no time during the service in which worshippers interacted with each other. They appeared like soldiers to me, fulfilling their duty of sitting through a meeting.

The second hour of meetings was dedicated to a lesson on how to live according to Church teachings. For the third hour, men and women were separated to receive instruction about the appropriate roles God wants each gender to follow. The experience left me thinking: How can anyone who goes to a church like this be an individual? How can people make their own decisions when they are constantly being told how to feel and what to do?

I wrote an article for the school newspaper explaining my experiences as a non-LDS student at BYU. The day the story appeared, a student emailed me to say he had just returned from his mission and was questioning his own faith. He said he was glad there were other people on campus who were not LDS, as he was considering leaving the Church. He said he could not handle all of the pressures put on him as a returned missionary.

During my time at BYU, I have also been struck by the pressure on students to marry. BYU directories and sports programs are filled with ads offering discounts at jewelers, floral shops, and invitation printers. There is even a chance to win a wedding ring if you are sitting in the right seat at the game. As someone who did not grow up being drilled to marry, and who did not imagine marrying until I had finished my education, I found this aspect of BYU culture odd. But I have to admit that I have not been fully immune to Provo's marriage climate, for there were times, especially when I was still struggling to find my own identity at BYU, that I found myself pressuring my boyfriend to pop the question. Does this emphasis on marriage exist at other universities? Do other institutions pressure their students to take on so quickly the adult responsibilities marriage entails?

I KNOW women who wear a diamond ring to deter men they are not interested in. They have told me that when they wear the ring, they receive no attention from the opposite sex. But when the ring comes off, they will be asked out, even that same day. At BYU, people recognize a ring as signifying that a person is committed to someone else and should not be tampered with. (I wish this were true of the entire American culture.)



VELINCIA VELJASEVIC is a senior at BYU who will graduate in April 2005 with a B.A. in communications studies and a B.S. in sociology, both obtained in three years. She hopes to enroll in graduate school in the fall and eventually move back to Texas, where she was raised.

My “ring” is a white gold crucifix that I wear around my neck. Like a wedding ring, the cross changes the way people interact with me. I wear the cross for several reasons. One is to alert people who meet me that I am of another faith and am proud of my beliefs. Another reason I wear the cross is to represent accomplishments of which I am proud: being accepted into BYU as a student, attending a private school run by a church which is not my faith, being a double minority and succeeding in a predominately white society.

Wearing my cross symbolizes my uniqueness. Sometimes I wear it out of spite, just to show students there are other religious denominations represented at their school. At times, my cross prompts disgusted looks, as if I am going against the grain of LDS society. People have stopped me to ask if it is really a cross I’m wearing so boldly. But occasionally I receive what seem to be admiring stares for being brave enough to wear a crucifix in such a predominately LDS environment. Whatever the looks are for, I shrug them off and keep moving. I have decided that these situations will make me stronger in the long run. All my life, I will have to deal with different types of people and their attitudes toward me.

WHEN classmates figure out I am not LDS, rarely do they ask what religion I am (though they may ask if I have a “religion” at all). Instead, they want to know why I am here at BYU. Often they assume that because I am non-LDS and a member of a minority group, I must be an athlete.

I am amazed by the media coverage BYU athletes receive. BYU is such a large school in such a small area that all the athletes’ lives are highly publicized. We know when the players get married and when they get into legal trouble.

I was surprised to learn from an athlete friend that when he got into legal trouble and was suspended from school and the team, the head coach told him that it would be a good idea for him to come back the next semester married. In the head coach’s view, married players get into less trouble off the field and perform better in school. I would have thought the opposite, that given the extra responsibility of supporting his family, marriage would hamper his performance.

Minority athletes (many of whom are not LDS) come to BYU unaware of what they will encounter. During their recruiting trips to campus, they are taken to parties. When they come to BYU to start practice and attend

classes, they are hit full force by the conservative atmosphere, the lack of diversity, and the prevailing religion. They are very surprised to find out that half of the team is married. Many express great dismay that they are not at a “real college.” To them, a “real college” involves wild parties, late nights, drinking, and so forth—things that the BYU Honor Code does not allow.

At times, my cross prompts disgusted looks, as if I am going against the grain of LDS society. People have stopped me to ask if it is really a cross I’m wearing so boldly.

Unfortunately, many new student athletes choose to rebel. I have seen this every year that I have been at BYU: these young men see what life is really like here and start breaking the rules. Some shape up while others stop caring about why they are here and the education they are receiving. They rebel against being controlled so tightly and watched so closely. Experienced athletes who have chosen to comply with BYU rules try to warn them about partying and participating in sexual activities, but many of the newcomers end up breaking the rules anyway, leading to investigations and scandals. A recent example occurred in February 2004, when six minority athletes were removed from the school and football program.

Scandal after scandal has occurred while I have been at BYU. The highly publicized ones—the ones the public reads about—usually involve non-LDS, minority athletes. I know of scandalous actions by LDS players as well, but their stories have not been publi-

cized as widely, perhaps out of concern for the Church’s reputation.

I feel sorry for the athletes who are caught and punished, but ultimately I have decided that if I can follow the rules, they can too. I try to learn from others’ mistakes and because of this have made fewer of my own.

AT BYU, being surrounded by the LDS faith has caused me to become more active in my own Christianity. In much the same way, I have come to identify more with my African-American side. Most of my life, I had been accepted by all people in different groups. But at BYU, since I am not a member of the LDS Church, I found myself hanging out with others who are not in the Church and who are mainly minorities (mostly African-American). Soon after arriving at BYU, I felt I had to choose a side and make a choice that before I rarely had to make—which side of my heritage I would claim.

This is my third year at BYU, and I have undergone several changes in my personal outlook. I have turned my experiences into positives rather than negatives. I have again learned to be my whole self and not to choose one side of my heritage over another. I have chosen to face every adversity with the attitude that I can learn important lessons from any situation.

I love BYU for who it has helped me become. My whole family and I feel lucky that I have been able to attend this institution. The relationship I came here to continue pursuing ended last year. I do not regret that either, because I have grown in character from it. Through that ending, I have had to experience being alone in Utah with no family here as a support system. My experiences here have made me stronger and thus have helped prepare me to survive in the business world. BYU is a great institution, and I do not regret any of the experiences I have had here in Provo. I hope that in the future, BYU will become more diverse and open-minded so that students of all backgrounds can feel as comfortable as I have learned to feel.

Pontius’ Puddle



NONSTANDARD DEVIATIONS

INSPIRATION AND DESPERATION

By Michael Nielsen

MY WARD NOW has a new bishopric. As the previous trio had served in their callings for five years, the change had been looming on the horizon for months. It seems that after five years, most bishops have endured nearly all of the blessings they can stand, so God inspires the stake president to replace them.

In my ward's case, it happened rather strangely. The stake president wanted strict secrecy and so instructed the bishop-to-be and his wife not to tell anyone. Apparently that goal was achieved, because both of the outgoing bishop's counselors were away on vacations that had been planned for weeks. The stake president managed to telephone the one who continues as a counselor in the new bishopric. But the other counselor was released in absentia and learned of it from his children, who were away at college and heard from friends here at home.

Obviously, this is a less-than-ideal way to learn about being released from a calling. After all, he didn't get the reward of seeing our congregation's perfunctory "raising of the right hand" to thank him for his good service. At least the bishop was in town, so he could hear directly from the stake president that he was being released. There were other annoyances at how the transition was handled, but it's past and best forgotten.

As happens in all wards, many members had begun to speculate about the change before it happened. Who? When? Questions like this were discussed in the foyer, hallways, and elsewhere.

THERE is a saying that "all politics is local." Maybe the same is true with church leadership. For the average Latter-day Saint, a bishop's actions have a more immediate impact than do those of the stake president, who in turn typically creates

more of an effect than do general Church leaders. When something extraordinary happens, such as the 1978 change in the priesthood policy, or when a new temple in your city is announced, the president of the Church affects the typical member's religious life. But for better or worse, local Church leaders affect my life more than do general ones.

So, what makes a leader effective? Classic books on organizational behavior often suggest that leaders have the most success when they match their style to the situation. For example, some situations demand a focus on the task at hand, while others require more attention to the people involved.¹ Another view emphasizes differences in the style of leadership, such as how autocratic or collaborative the leader is, and how well that style matches subordinates' needs.² In other words, leadership is not "one size fits all."

Theories like these are sometimes applied to religious organizations. One example is found in *Prophetic Charisma*, by Len Oakes.³ According to Oakes, the style of leadership needed in a small, new religious movement is charismatic and energetic; more established religions need stability and predictability.

We can see this in LDS Church leadership. The early years of the Church were marked by significant and rapid changes in doctrine and practice. People had easy access to the prophet and other general authorities. Men went to conference wondering whether they would be called to leave their wives and children behind in order to serve a mission. Lesson materials were unstandardized. Polygamy came and went.

But with the passage of time and church growth, access to general authorities has diminished to the point that we're now asked *not* to contact them. Announcing the thousands of new mission calls in general conference is unthinkable. Correlation has

standardized and homogenized our lessons. Whenever the opportunity arises, the Church now seems to distance itself from polygamy. As an institution, the Church has changed through the years, just as any organization would be expected to change from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.

What about our leaders? Many tasks Church leaders faced early in the Church's history are quite different from those they face now. We no longer have mass migrations. The Church has a good relationship with the government and does not face bankruptcy nor the confiscation of its assets. No army is marching to Salt Lake City. Now the Church needs administrators skilled at managing buildings and budgets, people familiar with purchasing shopping malls and the like. I mean no disrespect by this remark, but with just a few exceptions, the general Church leaders now seem nearly indistinguishable from one another, like distant figureheads. I am not saying that this is good or bad; it just is.

Even though bishops and other local leaders have different personalities and interests, there is great pressure toward sameness among them. Correlation has left us with not only with interchangeable lesson manuals but also, sometimes, interchangeable leaders. Whether it is how to conduct an interview, how to bare (or bear) one's testimony, or how to dress, leaders and other Church members feel pressure from both ends of the LDS hierarchy to do it *the* right way. That's too bad, because leading a ward is a demanding and complex job. And as in most things, there is more than one way to achieve good results.

A friend who served in a bishopric once let show some of the challenges that go with local leadership positions. While announcing some callings and asking for people's sustaining vote, he neglected to ask if there were any objections to the new callings. When reminded, he said something along the lines of, "If there are any objections to these callings, raise your right hand. But this has been a hard set of callings to get filled, so please don't object unless you would like to serve in these positions yourself!" He said it with his wonderful, dry sense of humor, but I think the entire congregation knew that it was, indeed, hard to staff positions in a small and growing ward.

J. Golden Kimball told many colorful stories about the trials of serving in ward leadership positions. He once went to Cedar City to call a new bishop, without knowing beforehand whom to call. He looked out at the congregation and picked Will Corey, an inactive man. Asked later about his selection of



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Corey, Golden replied “Well, I know he isn’t a church man, but I tell you something: I wanted a man who could kick the hell out of those people, and he looked like just the sort to do it.”⁴ Corey is said to have served as bishop for twenty-five years. Either he did a good job, or he wore out his boots from all of the kicking.

As another “Golden” anecdote illustrates, local leaders can cause tremendous problems. Kimball went to Spring City to help the ward there. It seems the Relief Society president was basically running the ward. Things went so far that she told the bishop whether or not someone should be called to the Sunday School because they failed to return borrowed items. Apparently, the bishop did enough of her bidding that people’s complaints alerted Church headquarters. After talking with the bishop and Relief Society president, Kimball took care of things in sacrament meeting.

At the close of the meeting Golden was called to speak. “I want to ask you all a question. Would you please show by the raise of hands: How many of you have ever had a sliver in your ass?”

One little girl who’d recently gotten one going down a slippery slide raised her hand. Slowly other people started raising theirs.

Good—you know you need somebody else to help you take it out. You can’t do it by yourself. Well, that’s why I’m here. You have a sliver in your ass, brothers and sisters, and I’m here to help you take it out.

Now, all who can release Sister Brown as the Relief Society president, would you do so by the usual sign? Are there any opposed? Good. Thank you.⁵

I WAS reminded of this issue of leadership styles in a conversation with a friend from my ward. While catching up on what was new, he mentioned that the advice he’d received years ago from a particular bishop had really helped him get through some tough times.

“Really?” I thought to myself. While that same man had been bishop, I had attended my meetings in spite of him. To me, he represented what is sometimes called the Nazi Mormon who zealously, rigidly, and dogmatically applies rules to all situations. In many ways he struck me as an authoritarian, eager to hold bishop’s courts to sit in “righteous” judgment of others, substituting hurt for Jesus’s message of help and healing.

He had presided at my daughter’s baptism. Many tears flowed in the room that day, especially from me. The bishop commented about the tears of joy and the strong spirit that was obviously present. What he didn’t know was that my tears were from a conflict I felt. I didn’t want to baptize her into a church where the bishop made me feel so unwelcome. Others’ tears that day may have been expressions of happiness. Mine were angst.

Hearing my friend describe the good things he learned from that same bishop reminded me that needs differ greatly within a ward as well as from one ward to the next. I’m glad to know that our former bishop helped at least one of my fellow ward members.

Do you ever wonder whether it is inspiration or desperation that determines who is called to a given position? J. Golden Kimball seems to have

sided with *inspiration* in at least one instance. When Reed Smoot was called to be an apostle, Golden told him, “You truly were called of God, Reed, because no one else would have thought of you.”⁶ On the other hand, Kimball’s encounter with Will Corey might illustrate *desperation*.

Whatever the reasons, there often is little surprise when a calling is announced. Maybe this is because inspiration usually works in predictable rather than in mysterious ways. Or maybe it is because God leaves people to their own judgment more often than we might realize. I don’t claim to know the answer to this question, but it seems to be one worth pondering.

NOTES

1. Fred E. Fiedler, *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).
2. Victor H. Vroom and Phillip W. Yetton, *Leadership and Decision Making* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).
3. Len Oakes, *Prophetic Charisma: The Psychology of Revolutionary Religious Perspectives* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997). See my review, “What Makes a Prophet?” in *SUNSTONE*, March 1999), 71–73.
4. James Kimball and Pat Bagley, *More J. Golden Kimball Stories* (Salt Lake City: White Horse Books, 2002), 110.
5. James Kimball and Pat Bagley, *J. Golden Kimball Stories* (Salt Lake City: White Horse Books, 1999), 47.
6. *Ibid.*, 57.

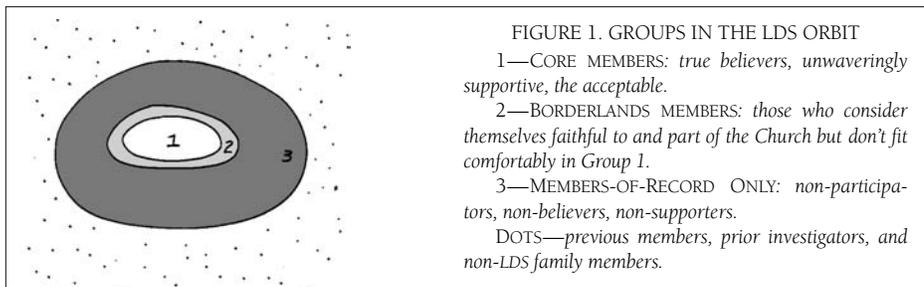


Thank you, Smith Family, for ten percent of your income. Here, have a chocolate!

BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

DOUBT PROVING FAITH

By D. Jeff Burton



OVER THE PAST several months, I've received a few questions as well as offers from some writers for me to share their Borderlander experiences in a future column.¹ In this column, I respond to two of the questions. In answering one, I offer a taste of one Borderlander's experiences that I'll relate in greater detail in the future.²

QUESTION 1: *Why do you write the Borderlands column?*

I write, hoping to serve those who live in the Borderlands by showing them that they are not alone, that someone or some organization such as Sunstone cares and understands their dilemmas. Borderlanders almost always have ties to the Church which make it difficult to move on beyond the Borderlands.

The following communication suggests several important reasons that many find themselves in the Borderlands (and why I write this column). The writer, whom I call Mary Ann, has agreed to share her full story in one of my upcoming columns. It is for people like Mary Ann (and you, and me) that I write this column. Some details have been changed here to protect her identity and privacy.

I am a forty-eight-year-old mother of three. I was raised in a part-member family, but I have been temple-married to a wonderful, faithful returned missionary for the past twenty-two years. I love this man with all my heart.

Although I attend church every week and have callings, I no longer

believe. Somewhere along the way, it just stopped making sense to me. I don't believe, for example, that the Book of Mormon is historical, and I don't know that Joseph Smith talked to God or angels. It just isn't there for me anymore.

But I love the Church. It is my safety net, and I don't want another lifestyle. I am grateful to be able to raise my children in the church.

I don't discuss my feelings with my husband. I won't do anything to hurt him, and I know this would. He knows that I have doubts, but I speak of the Church only in positive terms. In other words, I hold a great deal inside. It has been a very lonely journey for me, but my discovery of SUNSTONE three years ago has been a wonderful support. I feel much less alone now.

I also recognize that I might be a hypocrite. To get a temple recommend, I agree to statements that I don't really believe. In essence, I lie. I do not like this, but I do not believe any greater good would be served by my quitting the Church and hurting my husband and children. There is nothing in my lifestyle that would prevent me from getting the temple recommend. Looking in from the outside, I am the model Latter-day Saint sister and mother.

Tonight, one of my sons (who is

almost twenty-two-years-old) approached me about his going on a mission. His younger brother is serving one now, but he (the older boy) did not feel ready on his nineteenth birthday. He asked me point blank about my feelings concerning a mission and the Church. What I said would have made any bishop in the Church proud. I do think a mission can be a positive thing, but I expressed beliefs to him that were fabrications. Now I feel like my soul is tied between two poles—one that continues to pretend, and the other that longs to express my true feelings. I am tearing in half.

I am by nature a quiet person. I've never expressed these doubts to another person and likely never will. I don't know what I expect as a response from you. Perhaps your assurance that I am not a bad person despite my duplicity . . . and maybe some encouragement to continue in my present course and tough it out. Perhaps just writing this is enough to ease the torment I feel today. Anyway, thanks for being a fellow Mormon to whom I can express myself at a very honest level. Please protect my anonymity.

QUESTION 2. *In a recent October General Conference address, Elder M. Russell Ballard said, "Doubt is a tool of Satan." Could you respond?*

It is very important to pay attention to our general authority leaders when they speak. But we also must try to understand the context within which they speak. The word "doubt" has many meanings. Doubt can be a tool of Satan if it drives people to sin, do evil, or avoid doing good. Many of us know of people who have lost faith in God or themselves and then have behaved foolishly or sinfully as a result. For instance, a man who doubts God's instructions to be honest and then conducts dishonest business dealings is certainly playing into the metaphorical hands of Satan.

I think if you read Elder Ballard's entire address, "Pure Testimony," you'll see that he goes much deeper than that simple six-word statement. He says, for example, that "having a testimony" is a "profound blessing," which might suggest that a testimony may not be experienced by everyone. He also stresses that "testimonies grow and develop through

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experience,” suggesting the continuing need for faith as confidence builds. His actual statement, “Doubt and fear are tools of Satan,” seems (to me) to refer to true believers who are lacking in boldness in bearing their testimonies. It doesn’t seem to apply to those of us willing to live the gospel by faith alone.

I like the way Robert Browning relates doubt to faith:

You call for faith:

I show you doubt, to prove that
faith exists.

The more of doubt, the stronger
faith, I say,

If faith o’ercomes doubt.³

Introducing the term “ultimate concern” to refer to genuine, lasting faith, Paul Tillich expands on Robert Browning’s coupling of doubt and faith.⁴ According to Tillich, doubt (or uncertainty) is unremovable and must be accepted as part of any act of faith. It takes courage to accept doubt, for with it is the potential for failure. In every act of faith, this risk of failure is present (with possibly devastating results if the faith act fails). The courage of faith is made possible because people “are never able to bridge the infinite distance between the infinite and the finite from the side of the finite.”⁵ But we are willing to take the risk of using faith because even failure cannot separate us from our concerns—such as life, meaning, and relationships.

All of this suggests the relationship between doubt and faith. Tillich contends:

If faith is understood as belief that something is true, doubt is incompatible with the act of faith. If faith is understood as being ultimately concerned, doubt is a necessary element in it. It is a consequence of the risk of faith. [But] the doubt which is implicit in faith is not a doubt about facts or conclusions. It is not the same as doubt which is the life blood of scientific research.⁶

The doubt Tillich defines is neither one of skepticism nor one of rejection. Rather, it is the doubt associated with risk.

It is not the permanent doubt of the scientist, and not the transitory doubt of the skeptic, but it is the doubt of him who is ultimately concerned . . . the existential doubt. [Faithful doubt] does not question whether a proposition is true or false. It does not reject truth, but is aware of the element of insecurity in truth. At the same time, the doubt of faith accepts this

insecurity and takes it into itself in an act of courage.⁷

Tillich’s insight on doubt has a practical significance for Mormons who doubt. Many feel unwarranted guilt, anxiety, and despair about their perceived “loss of faith.” But better understood, doubt is a confirmation of faith.

One member suggested to me that there is a “quiet certainty” associated with his exercise of faith that has resulted in a “lack of doubt,” or more accurately, his not worrying about doubts. Many of us find a certain serenity in being faithful. But even among those for whom such a state of faithfulness has been achieved, an element of undeniable doubt still remains. And so it continues for those of us who have yet to receive the “blessing of having a testimony” described by Elder Ballard.

Tillich’s writing raises an important question for members of the Church. Can a community of faith such as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accept a faith which includes doubt as an intrinsic element of faith and calls the seriousness of doubt an expression of faith? And even if the Church could allow such an attitude among its ordinary members, could it permit the same in its leaders? Today, the answers might be “maybe” to the first and “no” to the second. Such a position captures the very heart of why many members find themselves in the Borderlands. ☹

NOTES

1. In the first column, we introduced the Borderland member as one who may have an unusual but LDS-compatible outlook on life, a distinctive way of thinking about faith, belief, and testimony, a different view of LDS history, questions about a particular aspect of the Church, reduced or modified activity, or feelings of not meeting Group 1 acceptability criteria.

2. When people volunteer to share their story, I usually like to conduct an interview by phone or by email. During that interview, I usually ask them to start to think about the following basic questions:

1. How would you describe your upbringing in the Church? (Please set the stage, giving background information about things such as activity level, parents and extended family, friends, mission, and temple marriage.)

2. What is your current status in the Church (activity level, temple recommend status, callings, and so forth)?

3. Using the three-part model employed by the “Braving the Borderlands” column, what issues/events/actions/concerns caused you to move into (or beyond) the “Borderlands?”

4. In what ways or at what times do/did you consider yourself in the “Borderlands?” What group(s) do you

consider yourself in now?

5. How did/does this affect you?

6. How did/do you presently cope with those issues/events/concerns?

7. How did/does this affect you?

8. How open or honest are you with others (such as spouse, children, parents, neighbors, ward members, friends) about your situation or about your issues/events/actions/concerns?

9. How did/does this affect your relationships with various people in your life?

10. If you’ve shared your issues with them, how have they responded?

11. (If applicable) what did/do you do to stay in—or move back to—Group 1 or 2?

12. What does your personal religion look like now?

13. What would you suggest to others now having the same experiences/thoughts/emotions/concerns you’ve had?

14. What do you believe you’ll do about your situation vis-a-vis the Church in the future?

15. What would you like to see the Church do about members who wrestle with doubts?

16. What else do you think we should know or would you like to say?

If you like to share your experiences, please send me an email.

3. Robert Browning, *Bishop Blougram’s Apology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931); the poem appears also in many Browning anthologies.

4. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957). If all other personal concerns are subject to this ultimate concern (faith), then this type of concern promises total fulfillment. A good example of this is the ultimate concern of many LDS—pleasing, obeying, and loving God the Father. He is the one in whose name the great commandment is given: “Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and strength.” There can be no faith without a content to which it is directed—faith must always have a purpose. This approach may, on first reading, seem narrow, cold, methodical, and inflexible. But Tillich proceeds throughout his book to soften, humanize, enliven, enrich, and personalize his definition of faith. For Tillich, faith as ultimate concern is the commitment of the total person—the emotional, the intellectual, and the physical. The ultimate concern becomes the center of life and includes all life’s elements. Faith thus becomes the most personal and intimate of all personal acts—unconscious and conscious, and freely performed.

5. Tillich, 105.

6. *Ibid.*, 18–19.

7. *Ibid.*, 20.

Please send me any of your experiences, or tales from life in the Borderlands.

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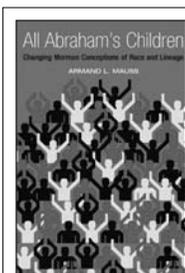
BOOK REVIEW

A SOCIOLOGIST SORTS OUT
MORMON RACIALISMALL ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN: CHANGING MORMON
CONCEPTIONS OF RACE AND LINEAGE

by Armand L. Mauss

University of Illinois Press, 2003

360 pages, \$36.95

Reviewed by Gary Shepherd

Armand Mauss's approach is an accurate projection of his own personal life as a Mormon with questions but with an ultimate commitment to his faith.

ALL ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN: *Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*—Armand Mauss's heralded magnum opus and winner of the 2004 Mormon History Association's Best Book Award—has been available from Illinois Press for more than a year now. It has been widely reviewed in various forums (to which a number of SUNSTONE readers and symposium participants have already been exposed) and has been roundly praised in virtually all of these. Deservedly so. This is a complex book that addresses many significant, interwoven themes in the history of Mormon institutional development. It is exhaustively researched, exceptionally well written, and cogently framed and organized. The serious, careful, and thorough reader will be rewarded with a plenitude of insights, small and specific as well as large and generic.

Most criticisms of *All Abraham's Children* I have seen or heard (including mine as one of the Illinois Press evaluators of the original

manuscript) are relatively minor. Most of these quibbles have tended to be, I believe, more revealing of each critic's own biases and the natural tendency to want the author to have written the book they imagine they would have written. For example, I have read or heard it said that Mauss is too soft on Brigham Young's racism and Young's central role as the progenitor of the priesthood ban on blacks. Or that Mauss doesn't achieve enough historical depth in tracing the LDS Church's adoptive policies towards Indians in the nineteenth century. Or why didn't Mauss explore Native Americans' own self-definitions, and what conversion to Mormonism means to people of non-Western cultures? What about the Book of Mormon's historicity in light of changing conceptions of geographic location of Book of Mormon events and Lamanite identity? And so on.

These and many other points may be quite legitimate. One may, of course, argue over the identification and interpretation of any number of historical facts that Mauss

chooses to either include or ignore in his own treatment. And one should also note the issues he raises but does not fully pursue within the scope of his argument. However, there are limits to what one can feasibly cover in a single work. Further, this is not simply an exhaustive account of Mormon race relations, although it does, of necessity, cover a great deal of history.

Nitpicking over particular details should not distract us from appreciating more general truths revealed by Mauss's focused analysis, for his book is an attempt to identify and explain the larger patterns of key historical events within a sociological framework. It attempts to show how core ideas shape behavioral and organizational tendencies and how, over time, these are, in turn, reciprocally changed by behavioral and organizational experience. In spite of occasional inaccuracies, gaps, and other flaws inherent in any book, the overall level of analytical discourse in *All Abraham's Children* is of a very high order and is richly satisfying at both concrete informational and abstract theoretical levels.

SO what are some of the larger, thematic patterns Mauss discerns and discusses?

Any Mormon, or outside observer of Mormonism, might deduce from the title that this book deals with the history of the LDS Church's relationship with peoples of African descent. This deduction would be bolstered among those who know Armand Mauss as one of a handful of morally courageous Mormon scholars who, in the 1960s and 1970s, made persuasive and influential critiques of the LDS Church's then-longstanding policy to deny priesthood ordination (and attendant privileges) to black males. *All Abraham's Children* does deal with the history of Mormonism and the "black question," but it also deals with other significant racial issues in addition to this one and, as previously noted, is more than just a narration of these several issues.

Of the book's ten chapters, two deal explicitly with Mormonism and blacks. Three chapters address the changing status of "Lamanite" in Mormon belief and policy and the implications of these changes for contemporary church proselyting activities. Two of these three chapters on Lamanites focus on North American "Indians," and the remaining one presents an expanded definition of Lamanite that embraces native peoples of South America and the South Pacific. Two additional chapters examine Mormon attitudes and practices related to Jews, and an-



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other chapter delineates early Mormonism's profoundly important identification of itself as a literal and gathering remnant of the House of Israel.

This identification with Israel allowed Mormons to conceive of themselves as heirs to the Hebrew designation of "chosen people" and therefore as recipients of all of the blessings promised by God to his people through the words attributed to ancient Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament. This identification also motivated Mormons to seek out "from the nations" other presumed descendants of the house of Israel, those who, in the last days, would be most responsive by birthright to the gospel's call. It is this latter impulse, so central to the LDS missionary enterprise over most of its history, that Mauss shows has finally begun to moderate as a result of actual success and failure patterns of Mormon conversion among different peoples around the world.

Mauss reviews the historical context in which these Mormon assumptions about race and lineage emerged and identifies various external influences on Mormon thinking about these topics, including the nineteenth-century ideologies of British Israelism and Anglo Saxon triumphalism. He shows the manifest significance of these assumptions for Mormonism past, present, and future and reveals the complex processes through which these assumptions have changed and are still changing as today's LDS Church continues its worldwide expansion through massive missionary efforts. In fact, Mauss convincingly argues that a substantial fraction of this growth is itself both product and producer of changes in Mormon thought on the divine meaning of lineage and ethnic-racial categories.

More specifically, *All Abraham's Children* expands our understanding of (1) the origins and subsequent development of key Mormon theological assumptions on the divine implications of group lineage; (2) the way these theological assumptions have, over time, generated substantial impact on major organizational policies and programs, particularly missionary efforts; (3) the dynamics involved in racial-ethnic relationships as the Church continues to expand among non-European peoples of the world; (4) the socio-historical events and processes that have created pressure for modifying Mormon thought and practice concerning race and ethnicity; and (5) the emergence in the late twentieth century of a universalistic orientation to peoples of all races that brings contemporary Mormonism more into alignment with mainstream Christian attitudes on this subject.

Through Mauss's careful treatment, these issues and outcomes expand their value to a wider audience beyond specialists in Mormon studies. Scholars of American history will find much in these pages that adds to their grasp of significant social forces and movements operating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Social scientists, too, will



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discover much about Mormonism as a heuristic case study that illuminates such core theoretical topics as identity construction and transformation, minority versus majority relationships, ethnic and racial conflict, and the dynamics of social accommodation and change. Finally, through a careful reading of Mauss's book, anyone who grasps the significance of modern Mormon global expansion will acquire an enlarged understanding of foundational premises that have fueled and are now challenged by this same expansion.

Thus, far from constituting a disparate set of stories about how Mormonism has intersected throughout its history with different ethnic groups, Mauss connects these strands into an overarching conceptual framework which explains the very notion of group identity, based on assumptions of race and lineage. This analysis is linked to the emergence of both primal Mormon practices and

the basic historical facts of Mormon growth and development from the nineteenth century through the beginnings of the present century. This development is shown to eventually culminate in an unexpected positive outcome, namely a gradual shedding of racist assumptions and an emphasis on exclusive lineage identity in favor of a more inclusive, non-lineage-based identity that embraces all peoples as legitimate heirs of "Abraham's promise."

SOME LDS readers struggling with questions of faith and belief may find themselves further challenged by *All Abraham's Children*. This is certainly not Mauss's intent, but his book is a work of objective scholarship emphasizing the role of "natural forces" (historical, social, and psychological) that affect modes of thinking and decision-making, even for religious leaders who claim divine guidance. Nevertheless, within the analytic framework Mauss employs (which is not presented as a debunking of cherished assumptions), room is left for a Mormon of faith to find both comfort and even inspiration. Mauss's work does not rule out the possibility that God works *through* these "natural" forces in society and people, just as God may work in the physical world and larger universe through the principles of physics, chemistry, and biology.

Mauss does suggest that Mormonism—at least as a formal belief and organizational system—may be evolving towards something more universalistic and tolerant and therefore truer to the gospel principles announced by Jesus. In this sense, then, Mauss is often quite sympathetic with official Mormonism's struggles with sensitive ethnic topics that lie at the heart of Mormon identity. Even though "silence and selective forgetting" is one way LDS officials continue to deal with past racist practices and attitudes that previously held sway—and that continue to flourish informally—*All Abraham's Children* concludes by projecting an increasingly positive potential future for the institutionalization of ethnic diversity within the formal programs of the Church.

All of Mauss's scholarly work is an extension of his own personal life as a Mormon with questions but with an ultimate commitment to his faith. *All Abraham's Children* is a model of objective detachment. Although Mauss is a man of faith, in the realm of scholarship, he is first and foremost a faithful sociologist who has mastered his craft and has the faith to apply it to his own religious tradition in ways that yield greater appreciation for that tradition's human dimension. ☺

YEA, YEA  NAY, NAY

ASSESSING THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF DNA ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE BOOK OF MORMON

By Blake T. Ostler

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is the first installment of a two-part essay in which LDS philosopher and theologian Blake T. Ostler employs the tools of logic and formal argumentation to assess recent claims against Book of Mormon historicity.*

IN HIS SUMMARIES of studies about the DNA of aboriginal populations in the Americas, Thomas W. Murphy argues that these findings challenge the belief that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be—an ancient text written by inhabitants in America covering a timeframe of about 2000 B.C. to about 421 A.D.¹ Murphy's claims about the relevance of DNA studies for evaluating the Book of Mormon have received moderate notoriety even outside LDS circles and have generated a variety of responses from Book of Mormon defenders.

Because of my training in law and philosophy, whenever I encounter an argument, I assess it by translating it into its logical form. This exercise allows me to focus on an argument's ability to show what it claims. Since much in the recent discussions center on just what DNA studies can show, it is important to make explicit both the form and premises of the arguments so we can assess the truth claims made or assumed in them. In this essay, I concentrate on the premises and logical structures of the two main arguments Murphy advances regarding DNA and the Book of Mormon. I believe it will be evident that DNA studies have little or no bearing on the question of Book of Mormon historicity.

THE DEDUCTIVE DNA ARGUMENT AGAINST THE BOOK OF MORMON

MURPHY'S initial claim is that DNA evi-

dence shows that the Book of Mormon's antiquity is virtually "impossible." In an interview with Living Hope Ministries, Murphy states:

We, as Mormons, were mistaken about who American Indians are and where they came from. We have based our beliefs upon the Book of Mormon, which we thought was an accurate ancient historical record. The genetic evidence has pretty conclusively shown that that is not possibly the case.

Well, with all these problems, I think to be honest, we have to admit them. We have to stop pretending that they're not there. We need to stop looking for plausible reasons that the evidence doesn't exist, and I think we need to acknowledge a nineteenth-century origin of the Book of Mormon. That is, we can, I think, admit that Joseph Smith produced the Book of Mormon in the nineteenth century, and I, as a Mormon scholar, am not afraid to say that.

I think the most difficult problem with a nineteenth-century view of the Book of Mormon is that we have to confront not just the possibility, but the almost inevitability, that Joseph Smith was attempting to deceive people—at least at certain periods of time. When he pretended to have actual plates, for example. It is pretty clear he was being deceptive at that time.²

Murphy makes several assertions in this small excerpt that are simply irresponsible. However, I am more interested in the structure and logic of Murphy's arguments when he claims that "the genetic evidence has pretty conclusively shown that [the view that the Book of Mormon is an ancient historical record] is not possibly the case."³ What kind of argument could support such a strong claim?

I have perused the arguments of Murphy and those who follow him in claiming DNA evidence challenges the assertion that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be. In so doing, I have found that those who employ DNA evidence in this manner are vague about the logical form that their argument takes. Indeed, I do not see any evidence that those using a DNA argument against Book of Mormon antiquity are even aware of the form their argument takes. However, this is fairly easy to reconstruct. The deductive argument against the Book of Mormon is:

- P1. The Book of Mormon claims that all aboriginal inhabitants of ancient America are of Hebrew descent.
- P2. DNA studies show that all inhabitants of ancient America are of Asiatic, not Hebrew, descent.
- P3. DNA studies are accurate.
- P4. P1 cannot be true, given P2 and P3.
- C1. Therefore, the Book of Mormon claim stated in premise P1 is false.

This argument has a valid deductive form. That is, if the Book of Mormon asserts that all inhabitants of the Americas are of Hebrew descent, and if DNA evidence reliably shows that this is not true, then it follows that one of the premises must be false. In asserting this, Murphy and those who follow his lead are, of course, banking on people trusting DNA evidence more than they trust the Book of Mormon itself with respect to claims about the inhabitants of ancient America. Understand that Murphy does not *assert* this argument; rather, it is *presupposed* in the claim that the genetic evidence shows the Book of Mormon cannot possibly be ancient and therefore Joseph Smith was a fraud. Murphy has accepted each of the premises of the argument and arrived at the conclusion C1.

Even if an argument has a valid deductive structure, this does not mean the argument is sound. Such is the case here. This argument



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does not succeed as a disproof of the Book of Mormon's claim about the inhabitants of Ancient America for two reasons.

First, premise P2 is not an accurate statement of what DNA evidence can show. What is true is actually P2*: *Amerindian DNA is consistent with an Asiatic ancestry, and there is no persuasive evidence to support Hebrew ancestry.*⁴ But P2 is a very different assertion from P2*, for P2* is simply a statement of the *lack of evidence* of Hebrew ancestry, not an assertion that there is conclusive evidence Amerindians *do not* have Hebrew ancestors. This distinction is crucial. Once P2 is replaced with P2*, the argument is no longer valid. Thus, the deductive DNA argument against the Book of Mormon cannot succeed as disproof of Hebrew ancestry for Amerindians and is, at most, a statement for a lack of evidence.

There is another reason that this deductive argument cannot succeed: premise P1 is false. Any person who believes that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be will also take seriously what the Book of Mormon itself claims with respect to its geography. For those who have taken the time to actually map out and look at the distances involved in the Book of Mormon, the assertion that the Book of Mormon claims to be a history of all inhabitants of ancient America is absurd on its face. And even if the writers of the Book of Mormon made such a claim, clearly those involved in the record keeping (assuming these to be historical persons) could not possibly have known from their epistemic position that their assertion was true. They simply did not have the extensive geographical knowledge necessary to make such a claim. I see no persuasive evidence that the Book of Mormon claims that all Amerindians are of Hebrew descent, and, as I will discuss in detail in Part II of this essay (to be published in the next SUNSTONE issue), there are rather clear indications that the Book of Mormon claims the contrary.

THE INDUCTIVE DNA ARGUMENT AGAINST THE BOOK OF MORMON

AFTER asserting that DNA evidence shows it is impossible that any inhabitants of the ancient Americas are of Hebrew descent, Murphy then claims that DNA evidence shows the Book of Mormon to be "implausible."⁵ A claim is deemed "implausible" if it is not probable given the evidence.

In making his assertion, Murphy speaks of "parsimonious" claims about the text, meaning that he believes his claim that the Book of Mormon was written by Joseph

Smith is the simplest explanation given the evidence regarding its origins. This claim is meaningless, for Murphy has not dealt with all of the relevant evidence to be in a position to make such an assessment. For example, he hasn't dealt with any of the evidence showing that the author(s) of the Book of Mormon was (were) acquainted with Hebrew literary forms such as the prophetic call or Hebrew ritual forms such as the covenant renewal festival or Israelite judicial procedures and substantive law.⁶ Such features of the book require an explanation, but someone who uses DNA evidence as primary support for his or her view that Joseph Smith is the book's



Nothing can be proven from an invalid argument. Recognizing that DNA arguments against the Book of Mormon are both invalid and unsound demonstrates that those who rely on DNA evidence to discredit the Book of Mormon are claiming more than they can know.

author fails to address all of the relevant evidence and is therefore not in a position to make claims about which explanation is most "parsimonious."

The claim that the Book of Mormon's having been translated from an ancient text is "implausible" amounts to asserting that it is not just "not probable" but actually *improbable*, given the evidence. In other words, it is based on an inductive argument. However, as I will show, if it is based solely upon genetic evidence, this inductive argument doesn't have a chance of success.

As with the deductive argument, Murphy never presents his inductive argument in a logical form; and indeed, he never presents his argument as a conclusion based on steps of reasoning or inductive proof. Rather, he merely assumes that DNA evidence of Asiatic origin and lack of evidence of Hebrew origin is evidence against the claims that the Book of Mormon makes for itself. Nevertheless, based on his claims that DNA evidence shows an Israelite origin for Amerindians is "implausible," it is fairly clear what logical form his argument must take:

M1. "There is no genetic evidence to support the view that the

ancient inhabitants of the Americas were of Semitic descent."⁷

- M2. If there had been peoples of Semitic descent in the ancient Americas, then it is highly probable that genetic evidence showing such Semitic descent would appear among the DNA samplings that have been collected so far.
- M3. Therefore, it is highly improbable that there were any people of Semitic descent in ancient America.

This argument has a valid inductive form. However, it fails as a proof, for premise M2 is not known to be true. Moreover, we simply don't have sufficient grasp of the evidence to know how we could know M2 to be true. That is, we don't know what the probability is that if peoples of Semitic descent were in ancient America we would find genetic markers of that descent among the DNA samples collected to date. Yet that is the crucial question that must be answered to determine whether premise M2 of this inductive argument is true. Moreover, we don't know what kind of evidence it would take to be able to make the assertion contained in premise M2. Without knowing the probability that if there had been descendants of Lehi and Nephi in ancient America we would find markers of Semitic descent among populations from whom DNA has been collected, we have no epistemological basis for assessing the strength of the probabilities asserted in the argument. Murphy's implied claim about probability cannot be quantified and is therefore vacuous.

Without knowing whether it is probable or improbable that today we would find Semitic genetic markers among DNA samples if there had been ancient Americans of Semitic descent, we cannot know if we should expect to find any. That is the crucial point. The inductive argument derives its force from the assumption that if the Book of Mormon peoples were a Semitic population, we should expect today to find Semitic DNA. But we don't know that we should have that expectation. The argument assumes that we should expect Semitic DNA evidence, but for the argument to have any real persuasive power, it must prove that point and not assume it.

I want to make clear that while Murphy and others employing DNA arguments rather plainly assert premise M1 and conclude M3, they have not expressly asserted premise M2.

Further, it is rather clear why they avoid asserting or analyzing premise M2. It is because M2 shows that their argument is stranded on a premise that makes an undefended, and at this point indefensible, assertion about probability. On the other hand, if they feel that asserting M1 is all that is necessary to prove their case (as Murphy seems to do in his assertion that “anthropologists” have long ago disproven the historical claims of the Book of Mormon),⁸ then they simply fail to make the distinction between evidence *against* a proposition and the lack of evidence *for* it.

FOR the foregoing reasons, I do not believe arguments from DNA are enlightening with respect to the historicity of the Book of Mormon. They are enlightening with respect to whether *all* of the peoples who inhabited the ancient Americas were *solely* of Semitic descent. Clearly, they were not. However, I can see no reason that the person who believes the Book of Mormon to be what it claims is obligated, upon pain of lack of integrity or epistemic accuracy, to believe that the Book of Mormon cannot be true unless all inhabitants of ancient America are exclusively descended from Semitic ancestry.

Nothing can be proven from an invalid argument. Recognizing that DNA arguments against the Book of Mormon are both invalid and unsound demonstrates that those who rely on DNA evidence to discredit the Book of Mormon are claiming more than they can know.

I believe one of the main reasons DNA arguments against the Book of Mormon have made headlines, despite their clear lack of logical soundness, is the informal link in many people’s minds between the issue of Amerindian origins and *what they have been taught* the Book of Mormon says about ancient American peoples. That is, when confronted with DNA evidence that doesn’t track with what they’ve been taught about the inhabitants of Ancient America, many people confuse the issue of “that’s not what I’ve been taught” with the question of “what the Book of Mormon actually says about its peoples.”

Part II of this essay deals directly with this confusion, clarifying distinctions that will show the importance of weighing DNA and other studies against what the Book of Mormon actually says about itself instead of against naive views of what it says, even if those views have been taught by Church leaders. The Book of Mormon must be tested by what it says for itself and not by what others may believe about it. ☞

NOTES

1. Thomas W. Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” in Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, eds., *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 47–77. In my view, Murphy is disingenuous in his arguments. In “Inventing Galileo,” *SUNSTONE*, March 2004, 58–62, Murphy denies that he had argued that the Book of Mormon is disproven by DNA evidence. However, when he responded to a charge by Daniel Peterson that he has attempted “to show that the Book of Mormon cannot be reconciled with the findings of contemporary biology,” Murphy responds, “To the contrary, I believe that we can reconcile the biological evidence with the Book of Mormon by approaching the scripture as nineteenth century pseudopigrapha. . . .” *Ibid.*, 59. Such a response is disingenuous. Surely Murphy was aware that Peterson was arguing that Murphy maintains the biological evidence is irreconcilable with the claim that the Book of Mormon is a true ancient story of Nephites. Murphy’s suggestion that Peterson has misrepresented his position is misleading. Moreover, he claims that “DNA is not a ‘Galileo event’” because “the anthropological community” had “already rejected the idea that American Indians originated in Israel” more than a century ago. However, this assertion is sloppy logic for the simple reason that *rejection* of a view is not a *disproof* of a view.

2. Video interview with Thomas Murphy, hosted at www.mormonchallenge.com. This partial transcript is taken from the clip entitled, “Dealing with Evidence.”

3. *Ibid.* See also Thomas Murphy, “Simply Implausible: DNA and the Mesoamerican Setting for the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 109–31; Murphy, “Inventing Galileo,” 60. It seems to me that Murphy has attempted to dodge criticisms of his view by masking it as something that it is not. For example, he states that BYU geneticist Michael Whiting “misrepresents” his view when Whiting asserts that Murphy claims “modern DNA science has conclusively proven the Book of Mormon false and that Joseph Smith is a fraud.” In response, Murphy maintains that:

To the contrary, I believe that infallible humans interpret DNA evidence, and such interpretations are inevitably affected by cultural assumptions and preformed expectations. It would be an abuse of science to contend that one has conclusively proven anything. Thus, I have maintained that the nineteenth-century origin of the Book of Mormon is the most parsimonious explanation of existing scientific and historical data. The scripture, though, may be historical fiction and still contain inspired spiritual truths emanating from a prophet of God. (58)

Yet that is not what Murphy claimed in the Living Hope Ministries video, and Whiting has not misrepresented his statements. It is Murphy who is attempting to dodge a valid criticism by pretending that he never stated what he rather clearly did state. Murphy was not as careful in his statements to Living Hope Ministries as he has attempted to be in later articles. In making a claim about which view of the Book of Mormon is most parsimonious, Murphy is making a claim about probability. However, such a claim is inconsistent with his later, more decisive as-

sertions that “there is no genetic evidence to support the Book of Mormon, and most of us do not expect any to be forthcoming.” *Ibid.*, 60.

4. See Trent D. Stevens, “Now What?” *SUNSTONE*, March 2004, 26–29; Michael F. Whiting, “DNA and the Book of Mormon: A Phylogenetic Perspective,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 24–35; D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens, “Who Are the Children of Lehi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 38–51; David A. McLellan, “Detecting Lehi’s Genetic Signature: Possible or Not?” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 (2003): 35–90; Dean H. Leavitt, Jonathan C. Marshall, and Keith A. Crandall, “The Search for the Seed of Lehi: How Defining Alternative Models Helps in the Interpretation of Genetic Data,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 133–50.

5. Murphy, “Simply Implausible.”

6. A good overview of these and many other matters Murphy would have to account for before being qualified to claim what is parsimonious with regard to the Book of Mormon is my article, “The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 66–123. On a Hebrew covenant renewal festival in the book of Mosiah, see Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” in John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, *King Benjamin’s Speech* (Provo: FARMS, 1998), 147–224; Stephen D. Ricks, “Kingship, Coronation and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6,” *Ibid.*, 233–76; Stephen D. Ricks, “The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin’s Speech,” *BYU Studies* 24, no. 2 (1984): 151–62; Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 295–310; John A. Tvedtnes, “King Benjamin’s Speech: A Classic Ancient Farewell Address,” and “Coronation of Kings,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, John W. Welch, ed., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 114–26; and Gordon C. Thomasson, “Mosiah: The Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993), 21–38. For the various prophetic lawsuit forms in the Book of Mormon, see my “Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source,” 93–98; John W. Welch, “Benjamin’s Speech as a Prophetic Lawsuit,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech*, 225–32; Richard R. McGuire, “Prophetic Lawsuits in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon,” *Preliminary Report* (Provo: FARMS, 1982). For the form-critical aspects of Lehi’s vision as a prophetic call, see Blake T. Ostler, “The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis,” *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 67–87; Stephen D. Ricks, “Heavenly Visions and Prophetic Calls in Isaiah 6, the Book of Mormon and the Revelation of John,” in Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo: FARMS, 1998), 171–190; John W. Welch, “The Calling of a Prophet,” *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds. (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1988), 35–54; and John W. Welch, “The Calling of Lehi as a Prophet in the World of Jerusalem,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, Jo Ann H. Seely, eds. (Provo: FARMS, 2004), 421–448.

7. Murphy, “Inventing Galileo,” 60.

8. *Ibid.*, 59. See also my note 1.

UPDATE

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LEADER
STEPS DOWN

W. Grant McMurray

W. GRANT MCMURRAY, president of the Community of Christ (formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), resigned abruptly on November 29.

“For a matter of several years I have struggled with personal and family issues that have impacted my ability to function unreservedly in my office and calling,” wrote McMurray in a cryptic resignation letter that falls one step short of being an open apology. “I have done my very best to

fulfill my responsibilities in accordance with the needs of the church and believe that God has graciously blessed me in that effort. However, along the way I have made some inappropriate choices, and the circumstances of my life are now such that I cannot continue to effectively lead the church. I deeply regret the difficulties that this causes for the church I love.” McMurray’s letter also notes that he had just recently been diagnosed with early onset Parkinson’s disease but indicated that the diagnosis was not an overriding factor in his decision to step down.

McMurray did not name a successor. His two counselors, Peter A. Judd and Kenneth N. Robinson, accepted the resignation and will lead the 250,000-member church as co-presidents until a successor is named.

In McMurray’s eight years as church president, the Community of Christ experienced several dramatic achievements that include changing the name of the church, softening policies against gays, and ordaining three women to the Quorum of the Twelve.

These changes are seen as a continuation of a process initiated by the previous president, Wallace B. Smith. The last of Joseph Smith’s descendants to preside over the church, Wallace Smith led the transformation of the church from its Restorationist origins into something approaching a mainstream Christian denomination. In 1994, Smith completed the temple in Independence, Missouri, which the Community of Christ sees as the fulfillment of prophecies in section 57 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

In a statement prepared for SUNSTONE, Bill Russell, a history professor at Graceland University, wrote: “Grant articulated a new vision for the Community of Christ with skill and wit. His leadership will be missed. It is a sad day for the Community of Christ.”

EVANGELICAL LEADER APOLOGIZES
TO MORMONS; CREATES STIR

“WE HAVE SINNED against you.” That was the startling statement made by Fuller Theological Seminary president Richard J. Mouw to his audience 14 November at the Mormon Tabernacle. “The God of the Scriptures makes it clear that it is a terrible thing to bear false witness against our neighbors,” Mouw continued, “and we have been guilty of that sort of transgression in things we have said about you. We have told you what you believe without making a sincere effort first of all to ask you what you believe.”

Mouw was one of the speakers during “An Evening of Friendship,” an event co-sponsored by Standing Together, a network of fifty evangelical churches, and by BYU’s Richard L. Evans Chair for Religious Understanding. Mouw reminded his audience that “there are very real issues of disagreement between us—and . . . some of these issues are matters of eternal significance. But we can now discuss these topics as friends.”



Richard J. Mouw

Mouw’s remarks did not sit well with all attendees. In a Baptist Press article, Tim Clark, executive director of the Utah-Idaho Baptist Convention, suggests that given his status as an evangelical leader, Mouw’s statements “muddy the waters” by giving “credence to the Mormon message.”

In an email to the Baptist Press, Mouw defended his remarks as serving dialogue opportunities with Latter-day Saints on salvation through Jesus Christ alone and Christ’s atoning work on the cross.

Other speakers at the gathering included Ravi Zacharias, a prominent author whose presence some perceived as controversial. Zacharias co-edited the most recent version of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, a book that depicts the LDS Church, Islam, Hinduism, and Jehovah’s Witnesses as cults. “Basically, he agreed to lend his name to [the book], but didn’t write any of it,” BYU religion professor Robert Millet told the *Deseret Morning News*. Millet has been arranging private meetings between BYU religion professors and evangelical counterparts since 1997. In that year, Denver Seminary’s Craig Blomberg and BYU’s Stephen Robinson coauthored *How Wide the Divide: A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*.

The Tabernacle event was not advertised by the Church, but stories previewing it appeared in the *Deseret Morning News* and other venues. Days later, the media section of the LDS Church website posted links to stories about the speech that appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Christianity Today*, and *Beliefnet.com*, which has a complete transcript of Mouw’s remarks.

With an evangelical scholar as keynote speaker, the meeting is believed to be the first such event since Dwight L. Moody, founder of the Bible Institute in Chicago, appeared in the Tabernacle in 1871.

LDS CHURCH SENDS HELP TO TSUNAMI VICTIMS



Mark Tuttle (left), director of public relations for the Church poses with Dr. Mohamed Abul-Magd (right), general manager of Islamic Relief USA.

WITH THE SUPPORT of Mormons and non-Mormons alike, the LDS Church has mounted a plan to help survivors of the tsunami that devastated southeast Asia on 26 December.

Hours after learning of the disaster, Garry Flake, director of emergency response for the Church, flew to the disaster regions to assess needs in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, and India.

In a joint effort between Mormons and Muslims, the LDS Church loaded more than seventy tons of relief supplies into an Indonesian-bound plane chartered by the California-based Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW). The Church and the IRW have also partnered in the past, sending help to Iraq, Bangladesh, and Sudan.

The First Presidency prepared a statement asking members to be “most generous” in their January fast offerings, as the Church pours money, food, medical supplies, and hygiene items to the disaster areas. The Church is also gathering donations via the official website at www.lds.org.

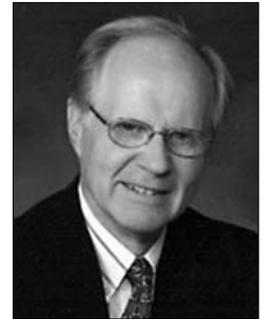
MORMON SCHOLAR DISFELLOWSHIPED

A FORMER LDS INSTITUTE director was disciplined 13 December for his writings on the origins of Mormonism. After a six-hour disciplinary hearing, Grant Palmer, 64, was disfellowshipped for having written *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*, in which he argues that the Book of Mormon is better explained as a nineteenth-century document than as an ancient record.

“I regard myself as heretical regarding some of the Church's teachings, but I don't view myself as an apostate,” said Palmer shortly after learning he was being charged with apostasy.

A year ago, Palmer's stake president Keith Adams received a dossier on Palmer from the Strengthening Church Members Committee, but for reasons that are unclear to Palmer, Adams chose to delay the proceedings.

One week before the hearing, a group of LDS supporters posted a web page calling Palmer an “author, historian, and true Christian” and inviting members to sign a petition. “The Gospel has nothing to fear from truth,” reads the page, posted at www.supportgrantpalmer2.net-firms.com. “We can only progress if each of us has the courage to stand up for what we have learned through our mortal existence.”



Grant Palmer

In *An Insider's View*, Palmer states that there is no evidence Joseph Smith ever translated correctly any ancient record, and he concludes that the Book of Mormon “reflects the intellectual and cultural environment of Joseph's own time and place” (p. 259).

Following his disfellowshippment, Palmer received a letter from the stake leadership inviting him to pray and read the scriptures so he might fully understand the nature of his transgression. Palmer has repeatedly said he doesn't know how to repent for saying things that he feels are true.

During a 2003 Sunstone Symposium session in Salt Lake City, Palmer alleged that he knows a dozen seminary and institute teachers in the Salt Lake Valley alone who also do not believe in the historicity of the Book of Mormon (tape SL03-275).

MORMON BECOMES TOP DEMOCRAT; TAKES HEAT FOR “INBRED” LDS RACISM



Harry Reid

LDS SENATOR HARRY Reid, D-Nev., became the highest-ranking Mormon in the history of American politics when he was recently installed as U.S. Senate minority leader, replacing Senator Tom Daschle who lost his November reelection bid. The son of a hard-rock miner from Searchlight, Nevada, Reid earned two degrees from Utah colleges and was declared an “environmental champion” by the League of Conservation Voters for his adamant opposition to nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain.

With his elevation, Reid becomes arguably the most powerful Democrat in Washington, creating a spotlight on his opinions and actions that is certain to get hotter. And a conservative African-American columnist has taken the first swing.

In an opinion column posted 14 December at WorldNetDaily.com, Mychal Massie claims that Reid's recent criticisms of black Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas were influenced by Reid's Mormonism. In a 5 December interview on *Meet the Press*, Reid had called Thomas “an embarrassment to the Supreme Court.” He then explained, saying: “I think that his opinions are poorly written. I just don't think that he's done a good job as a Supreme Court justice.”

“Reid's comments should surprise no one,” writes Massie.

“He is simply being true to his inbred familial heritage.” In order to bolster the view that Mormons are inherently racist, Massie quotes statements on the cursed nature of blacks by Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, and Joseph Fielding Smith, among others.

In a recent *Salt Lake Tribune* article, columnist Paul Rolly notes that while Massie is eager to play the religion card on Reid, he refrained from doing the same when LDS Senator Orrin Hatch opposed some of Bill Clinton’s African-American judicial nominees. “Reid, as a liberal, is attacked as a racist for expressing philosophical differences,” writes Rolly, “while Hatch escaped such dangerous criticism because Hatch is a fellow conservative.”

LDS VOTERS UTILIZE INTERNET IN 2004 ELECTION

MUCH HAS BEEN written about how the Internet revolutionized the 2004 presidential election. It also had an effect on LDS voters, uniting them in ways that have never happened before. At the grassroots level, many LDS voters organized themselves on email lists. On the left, two prominent lists began at Yahoogroups. In November 2003, Ryan Roberts began the list LDS-Left as a place to bring together members of the Church with “leanings to the left.” Roberts’s list eventually attracted more than a hundred members with a variety of political perspectives. MormonsforKerry brought together members of the

People

Ended. On 30 November, the record-breaking *Jeopardy!* performance of KEN JENNINGS, a Latter-day Saint computer software designer from Salt Lake City. Jennings finally lost on his seventy-fifth show, finishing his run with a winnings total of \$2,520,700, which surpassed the previous all-time game show tally of \$2.18 million, won by Dr. Kevin Olmstead on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*



Hoping to capitalize even more on the ratings bonanza generated by Jennings’s appearances, and the desire by many to see how Jennings might fare against past *Jeopardy!* champions, the show’s producers have announced plans for a “Super Tournament.” The competition, which will begin airing in February or March, will feature matches between nearly 150 past champions, with plans to have the two surviving winners face Jennings in a final match sometime in May.



Resigned. At the urging of athletic department officials, GARY CROWTON, on 1 December, as head coach of the Brigham Young University football team. Crowton’s up-then-down tenure with the *Cougars* began in 2000 with twelve consecutive wins, followed by two disappointing losses at the end of that first campaign. Fortunes never turned for the better for Crowton-led teams, who in the next three seasons compiled a combined 14–21 win-loss record. On 13 December, BYU announced the hiring of new head coach BRONCO MENDENHALL, who for the past two seasons had served as Crowton’s defensive coordinator. The hire makes Mendenhall, at age 38, the second-youngest NCAA Division IA football coach.

Nominated. Latter-day Saint MICHAEL LEAVITT, to head the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. After eleven years as Utah governor, Leavitt moved to Washington last

year when appointed head of the Environment Protection Agency. If confirmed to his new post, Leavitt will be involved in policies that regulate controversial moral issues such as abortion funding and stem-cell research.



Divorced. LDS former Marine JASON JOHNSON and Bahraini royal MERIAM AL-KHALIFA, the couple whose story provided the basis for the made-for-television movie *The Princess and the Marine*. The couple met in 1999 in Bahrain, an island kingdom off the coast of Saudi Arabia, where Johnson was stationed. Johnson was later court-martialed for his role in helping Al-Khalifa enter the U.S. using forged documents. The couple married in Las Vegas in November 1999.

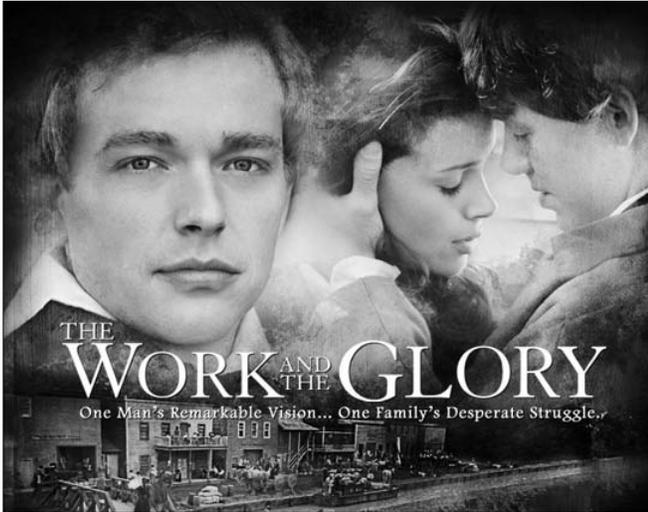
Arrested. Imposter teenager KENNETH LICKISS, on charges of theft and forgery. After serving an LDS mission in Poland, 25-year old Lickiss successfully impersonated a 15-year-old boy and lived on the streets of Los Angeles. Befriended by an LDS missionary in 1994, the “teenager” was baptized a second time. Under the assumed name of Scott Davion, Lickiss lived for four years with an LDS family in Salt Lake City, where he went to high school, took a date to the prom, and scored a perfect 36 on his ACT.



Excommunicated. Chilean gay leader BRUS LEGUAS CONTRERAS, on charges of apostasy and conduct unbecoming a member of the Church, after Contreras refused to resign as president of Chile’s chapter of Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons. The disciplinary actions were reportedly started by the LDS Area Presidency in Chile, which was alleged to have prepared a dossier detailing Contreras’s activities with Affirmation.

Media Watch

THE WORK AND THE GLORY IS NOW A MOVIE



THE FIRST OF Gerald Lund's nine-volume series, *The Work and the Glory*, has made the jump from the printed page to celluloid. With the financial support of Salt Lake business mogul Larry Miller, the \$8.5 million adaptation is considered the most expensive LDS film ever produced for a general audience. Filmed in Tennessee, *The Work and the Glory* follows Joshua and Nathan Steed, two brothers on a journey near Palmyra, New York, where they compete for the same love interest and meet Joseph Smith.

"If we made this picture for a million dollars, people would be burning the book in the streets, and us in effigy," said producer Scott Swofford to the *Deseret Morning News*. "So it really had to be a larger film, epic in nature, and it had to look incredible."

According to industry insiders, financier Miller will make his investment back only if the film grosses about \$5 million at the box office and sells 600,000 DVDs. The film, which has grossed \$1.6 million since its Thanksgiving release in Utah, opens nationwide 21 January.

CHURCH PRODUCING "DOCTRINALLY SOUND" MOVIE ON JOSEPH SMITH

WHILE RICHARD DUTCHER'S planned film about the life of Joseph Smith is still at the storyboard stage, LDS leaders have announced the production of a lavish, one-hour movie on the same subject. *Joseph Smith: Prophet of the Restoration* is scheduled to premiere in December 2005, the two-hundredth anniversary of the prophet's birth.

The project is being carried forward with heavy involvement by the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Church's correlation department. "Members of the First

Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have taken a very personal role to be comfortable with the way the life of Joseph Smith is portrayed," says Elder Donald L. Hallstrom, executive director of the Church audiovisual department. "It is doctrinally sound, historically accurate, and very appealing, very engaging. Hopefully people will learn some things and feel some things and like it."

Very little has been released about the script, but stories in the *Deseret Morning News* suggest that the film will cover most of Joseph Smith's life, from age seven to his martyrdom at thirty-eight. Four actors have been tapped to depict the prophet at different stages of his life, including his painful leg surgery.

At the closing session of the 2002 Sunstone Symposium, LDS auteur Richard Dutcher described the task of shooting the life of Joseph Smith as "the Mount Everest of Mormon filmmaking" (tape SL02-371).

Once completed, the film will screen at the Legacy Theater in Temple Square, replacing *The Testaments: Of One Fold and One Shepherd*, which has been playing since March 2000.

DESERET BOOK TO BUY EXCEL ENTERTAINMENT

HAS THE BIG FISH eaten the little fish? Some say yes after LDS-owned Desert Book announced in November that it will buy Excel Entertainment, a private distributor of Mormon-themed films and music. The deal puts in the Church's hands the distribution rights to musicians such as Kenneth Cope and Julie de Azevedo, as well as movies such as *God's Army* and *The Work and the Glory*.

Even though the film group will retain the Excel name, some worry about the impact this deal will have on Excel's tradition of celebrating the popular side of Mormon culture. Would an LDS-owned group allow anything like the scatological humor that provoked laughter during *God's Army*, or the violence that made audiences cry during *Saints and Soldiers*?

The *Deseret Morning News* quotes Excel President Jeff Simpson as saying that Desert Book won't exert any "more control than we exercise ourselves."

MORMON-THEMED MOVIES PROTESTED

ACCORDING TO STORIES circulating in print and the Internet, two recent Mormon-themed movies are being boy-



Prophetic smile: Nathan Mitchell portrays the adult Joseph Smith.



TOO MORMON
FOR CABLE?
*The Starz network's
showing of the
LDS-themed adventure
The Other Side
of Heaven has
elicited complaints
from some
subscribers.*

cotted, but the protestors seem to come from two completely different fronts. Writer/director Mitch Davis wrote in an email that people who recently saw *The Other Side of Heaven* on Starz cable network “have already begun complaining to Starz about their decision to air a movie with Mormon themes.” “Our movie has many friends and a few enemies,” laments Davis.

While critics of *The Other Side* seem to be largely anti-Mormons, the gay romantic comedy *Latter Days* is being protested by many Mormon faithful. Latter-day Saint Alyson Johnson has organized a protest against Blockbuster for distributing the film, and Logan resident Jacob Ricks sent a letter to the *Deseret Morning News* asking readers to boycott Borders, one of the bookstores carrying the movie. *Latter Days* is no stranger to controversy, as the premiere was delayed last year in Salt Lake City when Madstone Theaters first agreed and then refused to screen it.

LDS MUSIC FESTIVAL DRAWS SAINTS TO SIN CITY



SEVERAL THOUSAND LATTER-day Saints and friends flocked to the Orleans Arena in Las Vegas on 4 December for the first LDS Music Festival. The all-day event featured best-selling Mormon artists including Kenneth Cope,

Julie de Azevedo, and Maureen Ord, and the groups *Jericho Road*, *Providence*, and *Eclipse*. Also contributing to the atmosphere celebrating “all things Mormon” were nearly fifty vendors of LDS-themed products.

In an effort to spread the word before the festival, organizers offered a free “This Ain’t No Fireside!” T-shirt to anyone who provided them with twenty-five email addresses of people who might enjoy coming. Pleased with the event’s success, sponsors have emailed supporters to watch for further information about the “2005 LDS Music Festival and Mormonpalooza!”

Church who supported John Kerry. After Kerry’s loss, the group was renamed MormonsforPoliticalChange. On the right, a website, LDS4Bush.com, united voters supporting Bush. And Washington insiders Steve Barringer, a Democrat, and Bart Marcois, a Republican, teamed up to create www.anxiouslyengaged.org. as an effort to rally LDS campaign volunteers.

At the national level, Republicans did a better job of reaching out to Mormons, which is not surprising since a strong majority of Latter-day Saints generally support Republican candidates and policies. The Republican National Committee set up webpages targeting specific religious groups. KerryWrongforMormons.com (with sister sites KerryWrongforChristians and KerryWrongforEvangelicals) detailed issues where the RNC felt Kerry strayed from religious values. The sites were all very similar, with little content specific to the individual religions, but the Mormon site did have one major difference: across the top of the page, there was a link for Latter-day Saints to become part of a 72-hour volunteer task force. By contrast, John Kerry’s official campaign webpage had a more general link devoted to “People of Faith” that featured relevant excerpts from Kerry’s convention acceptance speech and a plea that believing Democrats host “People of Faith Potlucks” to join together with “family and friends for food, prayer, and discussion.”

CLAREMONT MOVING FORWARD ON MORMON STUDIES

THE MOMENTUM TOWARD the establishment of a Mormon studies program at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California, continues to gain strength. A conference, “Positioning Mormonism in Religious Studies and American History,” was held 24–26 October, bringing to the campus prominent LDS thinkers together with religion scholars from various southern California universities.

The conference was designed with the dual goal of being a “working conference,” in which the participants posed questions and discussed issues with one another, while also serving as a good introduction for non-academics of the kinds of approaches one might expect to find in a university

Mormon studies program. Toward that end, the conference’s opening session was a lecture, “Is This Safe? Mormon History and the Secular Academy,” by Grant Underwood, of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Latter-day Saint History. Underwood’s lecture was geared toward alleviating hesitation among Church members who are wary of potential dangers to testimony inherent in academic approaches to religion.

Following each of the conference’s main “working sessions,” the conference also featured optional hour-long, “break-out group” sessions where non-specialists could discuss the various issues raised during the scholarly presentations and exchanges.



Grant Underwood explains why it's "safe" to study Mormonism in an academic setting.

Besides Underwood, featured LDS speakers were Kathleen Flake, Terryl Givens, Philip Barlow, and Kathryn Daynes. Notable respondents to their papers included Ivan Strenski, Vincent Wimbush, Catherine Albanese, William Deverell, and Robert Ellwood.

Futher progress toward establishing a Mormon studies presence on the CGU campus is evidenced by a graduate seminar, "Mormonism in the History of the American West," taught by LDS professor emeritus Armand L. Mauss, scheduled to begin 18 January.

The Council on the Study of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized as advisors and fundraisers for Mormon studies on the campus, has announced that a fall 2005 conference will center on the career of Joseph Smith as a

prophet within a larger theme of prophecy in a multi-religious context. The council expects to be ready at that conference to formally announce the establishment of an endowed chair in Mormon studies, a position they anticipate having filled in 2006.

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY APPEARS ON LARRY KING LIVE—AGAIN!

FOR THE FOURTH time since 1998, President Gordon B. Hinckley appeared on CNN's "Larry King Live." The interview, pre-taped at the Conference Center in Temple Square, aired on 26 December. In 1997, Larry King married Shawn Engemann, a Mormon twenty-seven years his junior, and in the ensuing

MR. MOORE GOES TO UTAH COUNTY

AMID CONTROVERSY, OSCAR-WINNING filmmaker Michael Moore appeared 20 October before a sell-out audience of 8,000 at Utah Valley State College, in Orem, Utah. To the delight of the largely liberal, approving crowd, Moore, director of the documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* and well-known for his blistering criticisms of the Bush administration, delivered plenty of jabs at all the expected targets. But he also showed a gentle and patriotic side, reading emotional letters from soldiers stationed in Iraq and then asking all veterans in the audience to stand, before leading an extended ovation.

The weeks before Moore's visit were dominated by a firestorm of protests from conservative students, parents, and other Utah County residents who objected to the public university's paying \$40,000 to bring in Moore, whose positions, it was argued, did not reflect community values in the predominately Republican county and state. One resident, Kay Anderson, even offered student leaders a cashier's check of \$25,000 (later raised to \$40,000) to cancel the event. The student leaders refused, a move which drew this effusive praise from Moore: "They have this radical belief that Utah is still in the United States of America."

In an effort to provide a balance to Moore's radial liberalism, UVSC agreed to invite conservative Fox news personality and political pundit Sean Hannity to campus. Hannity agreed, and, in a mixed gesture, waived his usual \$100,000 speaking fee but ultimately stuck the school with a \$50,000 bill for travel expenses. The visit was Hannity's second in less than four months, as he had been a featured participant in Provo's July 4th "Stadium of Fire" spectacular.

Utah Valley State College continues to suffer the fallout from the controversy as Joe Vogel, the college's student body academic vice president and the one who was the most instrumental in bringing Moore to campus, has been forced to resign after making public comments about a book he is writing on the experience.



Michael Moore



years became acquainted with President Hinckley. Some highlights from the recent interview (source, CNN.com):

On President Bush and Prayer

KING: Is it important to you that the president be as—for want of a better term—religious as he is? Does that comfort you that politics and religion somehow have come together in this administration?

HINCKLEY: . . . Yes. I'm glad to see that he is religious, that he does pray. I believe in prayer, in divine power. And I'm grateful that he's a prayerful man, yes.

KING: When you pray, what is that? What's occurring? Are you talking to God? You're a prophet, so God talks to you.

HINCKLEY: I'm talking to God, yes. I do pray. Of course I do.

KING: What do you do when they're not answered?

HINCKLEY: Well, they are answered, but not always just the way you'd want them.

KING: Sometimes it's no.

HINCKLEY: Sometimes it's no.

On Gay People and Gay Marriage

KING: I know that the Church is opposed to gay marriage.

HINCKLEY: Yes.

KING: Do you have an alternative? Do you like the idea of civil unions?

HINCKLEY: Well, we're not anti-gay. We are pro-family. Let me put it that way. And we love these people and try to work with them and help them. We know they have a problem. We want to help them solve that problem.

KING: A problem they caused, or they were born with?

HINCKLEY: I don't know. I'm not an expert on these things.

I don't pretend to be an expert on these things. The fact is, they have a problem.

KING: Do you favor some sort of state union?

HINCKLEY: Well, we want to be very careful about that, because that—whatever may lead to gay marriage, we're not in favor of. We—many people don't get married. Goodness sakes alive. You know that. Many people who have to discipline themselves. If they transgress, they become subject to the discipline of the Church. But we try in every way that we know how to help them, to assist them, to bless their lives.

On Women and Blacks

KING: The Mormons' public image in dealing with stereotypes. One, women are regarded lesser in the Church.

HINCKLEY: Oh, there's no substance to it. Ask the women. You'll get the answer.

KING: They can't get your job, though.

HINCKLEY: No, they can't. They've got one of their own, and that's a very responsible job. They have their own organization. They have their own board. It's the largest women's organization in the world with four million members. There's nothing like it anywhere else in the world. And they run a tremendous organization.

KING: How is the Church doing with black membership?

HINCKLEY: Wonderfully. Wonderfully. I was in Africa last January, dedicated a temple in Accra, Ghana. We have a great facility there. I'll be back in Nigeria sometime this coming year to dedicate a new temple there. And that temple will be devoted almost exclusively for the work that black people will do there.

KING: Do you envision someday a black prophet?

HINCKLEY: Could well be within the realm of possibility.

Solar Flare

MORMON GUINNESS FEATURES THE WONDERFUL, THE WORST, AND THE WEIRD

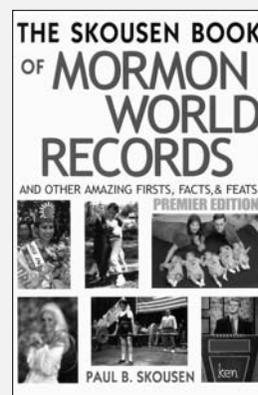
DO YOU KNOW which is the only dinosaur named after an LDS apostle?¹ Which general authority saw his plane hijacked and diverted to Cuba?² Who was the Mormon who lent a paper shredder to Oliver North during the Iran-Contra affair?³ These are three of the 1,600 entries in *The Skousen Book of Mormon World Records and Other Amazing Firsts, Facts, & Feats*, a book of odd facts about all things Mormon.

The book contains more conventional records as well. For instance, the first Latter-day Saint to become Miss Universe was Linda Bement, in 1960. Richard Jones, from Sandy, Utah, was the oldest person to ever cross the Atlantic in a boat (named "Brother of Jared"). In 1988, Nate J. Anderson, a Mormon from Alaska, caught the largest king salmon ever hauled in with a 80-lb. test fishing line—and has a picture to prove it.

"A person would have to be insane and have serious obsessive compulsive behavior issues to want to do something like this—which I guess I have," says author Paul Skousen, who worked on his book for sixteen years. He says he wrote his book on weekends, late at night, and during his lunch hours. "And sometimes during a boring high councilman talk," he quips, Well, sometimes I had a notepad with me."

For more amazing and not-so-amazing facts, visit www.mormonworldrecords.com.

Answers. 1. The Torvosaurus tanneri, named after N. Eldon Tanner. 2. Elder William H. Bennett in 1972.
3. Paul Skousen, who worked as a spy for the CIA.



AN OLIVE LEAF

A LIVING THING

By Juanita Brooks

The following reflection is excerpted from *Quicksand and Cactus: A Memoir of the Southern Mormon Frontier*, by Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1982), 151–60.

I WAS ALWAYS GLAD WHEN IT WAS MY turn to take the milk in to Grandpa's [Dudley Leavitt] house. I liked to linger a while, just to learn more about Pa's folks. . . . From Pa we had heard many of the stories of Grandpa's work as an Indian missionary, of his bravery and his endurance. . . . Though [Grandpa] never talked directly to me, I think he was conscious of my interest and told many stories for my benefit. . . .

Grandpa had come with the first Mormon missionaries to the southern Indians in 1854, living first on the Santa Clara Creek, and moving down onto the Virgin River to live the United Order. . . . Mostly he talked of his work among the Indians, his labors "in this part of the Lord's Vineyard. . . ."

Grandpa's religion was really a living thing. When he prayed, he talked man-to-man with God; when he sang the hymns, they took on a special meaning; and when he quoted Scripture, rolling the sentences and speaking in a voice that was groomed to fill all outdoors, I was filled with awe.

GRANDPA CONSIDERED HIMSELF important in the general scheme of things. As he figured it, God had work that He wanted done in this part of His Vineyard, and it took men like Grandpa to do it. If the kingdom were ever to be established on the earth, he must help to establish it.

A visiting brother once looked over a field of wheat on nearly-cleared land. "That is a good crop that you have been able to raise, Brother Leavitt," he said. "You have had the help of the Lord. Between you and the Lord, you have done alright."

"Brother," Grandpa said gently, "you should have seen that piece of land when the Lord was trying to run it without me. . . ."

Grandpa thought of all his life as a mission. Whether he was preaching to Indians or chasing them, whether stampeding cattle or building a dam, he thought he was laboring in the Lord's Vineyard. Sometimes it looked like he was trying to es-



establish a vineyard where the Lord never intended one to be. He broke the ground, cleared off the brush and rocks, struggled with the river, killed the rattlesnakes, and left his part of the Lord's Vineyard better than he found it.

He knew that try as they would, his children could never become wealthy here; they could hardly become situated comfortably. For him, wealth had no value except as it might aid in promoting God's work, the establishment of the Kingdom. If his children could raise families who were honest, who walked uprightly, who paid their debts and helped their neighbors, who kept the Word of Wisdom and were prayerful, they would

have succeeded. And only in this way could Grandpa succeed in his labors in the vineyard of the Lord.

ONE EVENING AS I sat on the floor before the fireplace, he began to sing. . . . He often sang. But in some intangible way, this was different. He began the hymn, "Come, Let Us Anew." When he came to the last verse

I have fought my way through
I have finished the work
Thou didst give me to do

I felt as if I were listening to the death chant of some warrior. It was his announcement of the end. I found myself trembling. The next lines

And that each from his Lord
Should receive the glad word
"Well and faithfully done,

Enter into My joy and sit down on My throne."

expressed his faith that he would be greeted by a kind friend who would approve his day's work. . . .

"That is how it will be with me soon," he said. "One of these days I shall step out of this old shell and be free. It will be a welcome release—a Promotion, that's what it will be. . . ."

At the close of the funeral, . . . I could see only peace on his face, and dignity as though he knew he were being looked at and held a pose for it. Why should they cry so? . . . I could think only of his own eagerness for the end, and the one word he used to describe it: "Promoted." 

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION
is pleased to announce

THE 2005 BROOKIE & D.K. BROWN
FICTION CONTEST

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION invites writers to enter its annual fiction contest, which is made possible by a grant from the Brookie and D. K. Brown family. All entries must relate to adult Latter-day Saint experience, theology, or worldview. All varieties of form are welcome. Stories, sans author identification, will be judged by noted Mormon authors and professors of literature. Winners will be announced in *SUNSTONE* and on the foundation's website, www.sunstoneonline.com; winners only will be notified by mail. After the announcement, all other entrants will be free to submit their stories elsewhere. Winning stories will be published in *SUNSTONE* magazine.

PRIZES will be awarded in two categories: short-short story—fewer than 1,500 words; short story—fewer than 6,000 words. Prize money varies (up to \$400 each) depending on the number of winners announced.

RULES: 1. Up to three entries may be submitted by any one author. Four copies of each entry must be delivered (or postmarked) to *SUNSTONE* by 30 June 2005. Entries will not be returned. A \$5 fee must accompany



each entry. No email submissions will be accepted.

2. Each story must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white paper and be stapled in the upper left corner. The author's name must not appear on any page of the manuscript.

3. Each entry must be accompanied by a cover letter that states the story's title and the author's name, address, telephone number, and email (if available). This cover letter must be signed by the author and attest that the entry is her or his own work, that it has not been previously published, that it is not being considered for publication elsewhere and will not be submitted to other publishers until after the contest, and that, if the entry wins, *SUNSTONE* magazine has one-time, first-publication rights. Cover letters must also grant permission for the manuscript to be filed in the Sunstone Collection at the Marriott Library of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The author retains all literary rights. *SUNSTONE* discourages the use of pseudonyms; if used, the author must identify the real and pen names and the reasons for writing under the pseudonym.

Failure to comply with rules will result in disqualification.

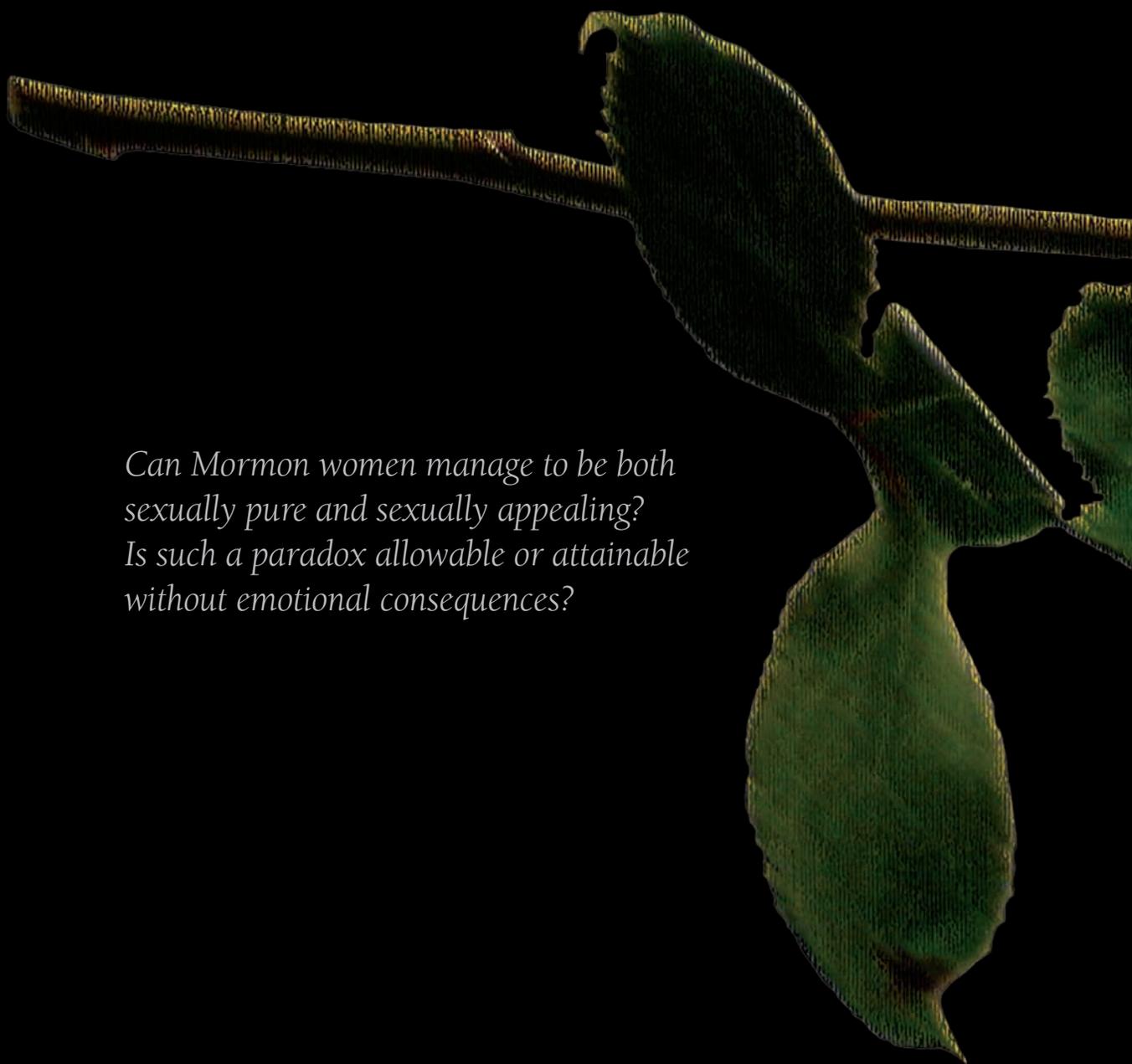
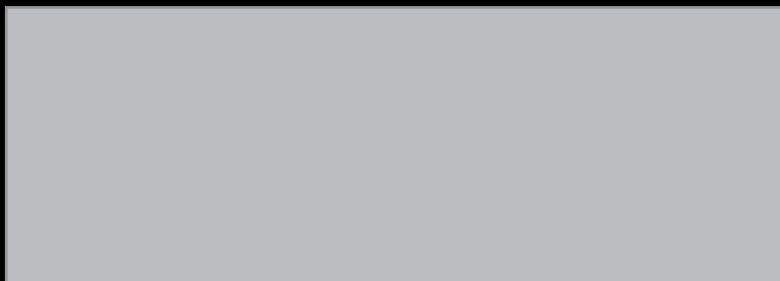
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*Can Mormon women manage to be both
sexually pure and sexually appealing?
Is such a paradox allowable or attainable
without emotional consequences?*