

UPDATE



11 SEPTEMBER 2001

CHURCH REACTS TO TERRORIST ATTACKS

LEADERS OF THE Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint reacted promptly to the 11 September 2001 attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City and part of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The First Presidency released statements, held services, and increased security on Temple Square. President Gordon B. Hinckley made a number of public and private appearances in Salt Lake City, Washington, D.C., and on CNN. By suggestion of the First Presidency, many LDS wards changed their 16 September sacrament meetings into memorial services.

On the day of the attacks, the First Presidency stepped up security at Church headquarters and ordered the closure of administration facilities in Salt Lake City and of temples from Ogden to Provo, as well as the Washington, D.C., Temple. All Church-owned facilities reopened the following day.

In Provo, Brigham Young University officials canceled the usual devotional and held a prayer meeting instead. In Salt Lake City, a scheduled concert by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir became a memorial service that included words from President Hinckley: "Today has been a day that will be remembered always in the annals of our beloved nation. . . . Many have been wounded, and this, our nation, has been seriously injured and insulted."

Within hours of the attacks, the First Presidency also released a statement. "In this hour of sorrow, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints expresses profound sympathy to those whose loved ones, friends and associates were lost or injured in today's senseless acts of violence. . . . We offer our prayers in behalf of the innocent victims of these vicious attacks. We ask our Heavenly Father to guide President Bush and his advisors as they respond to these devastating incidents."

Two days after the attack, President Hinckley flew by private jet to

Washington, D.C., where he joined other religious leaders in a White House meeting with President Bush. "I just want you to know, Mr. President, that we are behind you," said President Hinckley. "We pray for you. We love this 'nation under God.'"

On Friday, 14 September, the Church held two memorial services in the Mormon Tabernacle. The identical services were aired live on KSL-TV and broadcast to stake centers across the country. The services, which began with the Nauvoo Bell ringing for three minutes, included remarks by President Hinckley. Elders Boyd K. Packer and Henry B. Eyring read Bible passages, and breaking with traditional Mormon practice, Presidents Thomas S. Monson and James E. Faust offered previously written prayers.

That evening, President Hinckley appeared on CNN's "Larry King Live." His comments on the tragedy were aired live via satellite from KSL-TV studios in Salt Lake City. This was President Hinckley's third appearance on the show. In his conversation with King, President Hinckley declared, "I believe [God is] all powerful . . . [but] I don't know His will. . . . I don't know how He operates. . . . But I have confidence, overwhelming confidence, in the fact that He, in [the] true and eternal sense, will provide for those who suffer."

On 21 September, the Church released the following statement:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has enjoyed a long and mutually respectful relationship with many of the leaders and followers of Islam. We recognize that those responsible for the reprehensible actions of September 11 in no way represent the views of millions of Muslims throughout the world. We are grieved to hear of instances where innocent members of this and other faiths have been singled out for retribution. We condemn such acts as wrong and immoral. The Church urges its members and people everywhere to extend kindness and love to all sons and daughters of God.

Pontius' Puddle



JOEL KAUFFMANN



CAL GRONDAHL, COURTESY OF THE STANDARD EXAMINER

CHURCH SETTLES LAWSUIT FOR \$3 MILLION

THE CHURCH HAS agreed to pay \$3 million to an Oregon man who was the victim of sexual abuse at age eleven. Jeremiah Scott, now twenty-two, and his mother, Sandra Scott, claim their LDS bishop knew ward member Franklin Richard Curtis had a history of sexually abusing children but failed to warn the Scotts when they asked his advice about inviting Curtis to move into their home. Curtis repeatedly abused the boy in the early 1990s.

Although the Church has settled similar lawsuits in recent years, this is the first settlement amount ever disclosed publicly. Ms. Scott and the attorneys for her son said they agreed to settle only on the condition they be allowed to freely discuss the evidence they would have presented at trial. Had the case moved forward, the Church may have been forced to release records of its financial holdings—information LDS officials have kept confidential since 1959.

According to Church attorney Von Keetch, the current LDS record-keeping system safeguards children from sexual abuse. “If today I confess child abuse to priesthood leaders, my membership record will be annotated,” said Keetch. “I may be forgiven and may be able to repent and come back and be a member of the Church, but what I can’t do is ever work with children again.”

Shortly after the settlement announcement, the plaintiff’s mother and three lawyers flew to Salt Lake City. “We cannot put our children at the mercy of the Church’s sense of judgment,” said Ms. Scott during a press conference. “People need to know when there are severe criminals in their church; that’s not something you conceal.”

Marion Smith, former director of the Intermountain Specialized Abuse Treatment Center, author of *Riptide*, and co-author of *Healing*

from *Sexual Abuse in Mormon Neighborhoods*, agrees that this settlement is important. In an interview with SUNSTONE, she stated, “I know personally of at least twenty-five cases where a perpetrator of child sexual abuse has been protected [by the Church]. . . . Harm would never have happened if the bishop had acted according to the law.”

According to Smith, leaders can protect children without invading the sacred nature of the confessional relationship. “It is the law that if any person other than the perpetrator reports abuse to the bishop, including the victim or the perpetrator’s family, the bishop must report it. If the law were followed, the number of cases like these would be greatly reduced.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF HUGO OLAIZ

Flanked by two of the family’s lawyers, Sandra Scott addresses the media.

All-Seeing Eye



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEREMY HARMON/DAILY UTAH CHRONICLE

With stylish cane in hand, President Hinckley gets out and about. Here, he previews an exhibit, "The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936," at the University of Utah's Marriott Library.

BACK-UP SYSTEM

SINCE APRIL, PRESIDENT Hinckley has been seen sporting a cane. "Well, I saw that Brigham Young used a cane. John Taylor had a cane, and Wilford Woodruff had a cane, and President Grant had a cane in his old age. And I've seen President McKay with a cane and Spencer Kimball with a cane, and I'm just trying to get in style," joked President Hinckley as he closed the April 2001 conference. "I have a little vertigo," he explained. Between sessions of the same conference, President Hinckley reportedly provoked laughter from those assembled by taking a few mock swings at members of the Twelve.

SERVE YE CLEAN-SHAVEN

DID YOU NOTICE a jump in Gillette stock? If so, it might have been due to a recent policy change that now requires all temple workers to serve clean shaven or not at all. Newly outlawed are beards as well as mustaches for workers at all hundred-plus temples worldwide.

This new mandate further complicates the already historically hairy issue of the relationship between whiskers and the perception of one's righteousness. Church spokespersons refuse to comment on reasons for the new regulation or even when it was issued. (Letters announcing the policy seem to have gone out in March and April 2001.) In the absence of official statements, Church members have been left to speculate for themselves. In a 5 May *Salt Lake Tribune* article, former Logan Temple president Jack Kidd is quoted as saying he suspects the shift might have been motivated by "young folks [who] justify their bizarre kinds of [facial hair] by looking at some of the elderly people who have beards." In the same article, Mormon sociologist Armand Mauss wonders if the change "may suggest that in order to enjoy the increased spiritual prestige of being a temple

worker, you have to give up one of the few remaining signs and symbols of individuality."

In the 1960s, facial hair was seen as a sign of rebellion, leading Church leaders to issue a 1969 policy disallowing beards at Church-owned colleges. However, then, as now, students and faculty on these campuses could sport neatly trimmed mustaches. This new policy for temple workers is even stricter than the honor code of Church schools.

GROUP HELPS MEET SOCIAL NEEDS FOR GAY LDS YOUTH

A NEW GROUP has recently been launched to meet the social needs of gay Mormons ages eighteen to thirty. The group, called "Gay LDS Youth," was created in March 2001 by Aaron Cloward, a Salt Lake City returned missionary. The group has a website (www.gaylds-youth.com) and a mailing list of 270 subscribers.

Gay LDS Youth meets weekly for social purposes and upholds LDS standards during the meetings. Attendance at activities averages twenty people. Even though events are attended mostly by young men, the group is open also to lesbian and transgendered youth. Cloward estimates 30 to 40 percent of those who participate are active or semi-active in the Church.

"One of the main points of the Gay LDS Youth group is to be able to have a place where people can go and not get involved with alcohol, tobacco, and things like that," says Cloward. "After we started this group, a lot of my friends were very happy about that. They said, 'It's so nice to meet somebody who is not drunk or high on drugs.'"



Returned missionary Aaron Cloward is providing a Word-of-Wisdom-friendly haven for gay LDS young adults.

DESERT DISSENT

*Some now say the folk in La Verkin
Have turned sotted and sour as a gherkin.
With the stroke of a pen,
They have banned the U.N.
And claim Communist kooks keep on lurkin.'*

THE PROPHESED DAY when the U.S. Constitution will hang by a thread is closer than many Latter-day Saints think. At least that's what many in the small, Mormon-dominated, southwestern Utah town of La Verkin seem to believe. The city council, in taking upon itself the task of preserving American freedoms while hindering "liberal" evildoers, passed a city ordinance this past 4 July making their town a "United Nations-free Zone." The move, a largely symbolic act against the notion of a "one-world government," prohibits the display of U.N. symbols, quartering of the U.N.'s blue-helmeted troops, the drafting of any townfolk into U.N. peacekeeping activities, and any aid from town funds to the U.N.

In a letter signed in late June, the La Verkin City Council wrote, "While the council doesn't believe the United Nations poses a direct threat to La Verkin, the political entity fosters a liberal agenda counter to most of the residents living in this rural community. . . . Primarily Republicans, the majority of residents living in southern Utah embrace conservative values, such as family, property rights and the right to bear arms." In contrast, they declare, "the U.N. supports population control, radical environmentalism including the taking of private property and the disarmament of Americans."

This statement, especially its final two points, illustrates attitudes that prompted the new law. Residents in Southern Utah still feel the effects of President Clinton's unilateral 1996 creation of the 1.9-million acre Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and they fear similar "land-grabs" in the future. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reports Jay Willard Lee, mayor of nearby Virgin, Utah, as declaring: "The U.N. wants the Virgin River. The global elite are using the United Nations and organizations that were set up to help the environment to lock up private property. It is time to fight back."

However, not everyone in the area sympathizes with these sentiments. Mayor Phillip Bimstein of Springdale, Utah, is disgusted with the issue. In a *Tribune* article, he calls the affair an "incredible but creepy southern Utah BirchFest," referring to the anti-communist John Birch Society. Eliot Hill, a seven-year resident, says, "All this does is make us look like a bunch of kooks." And as a protest over the new ordinance, two part-time La Verkin police officers have resigned.

But Virgin, too, just as La Verkin, has made national, even international, headline news in its campaign to enforce American freedoms: last year, Virgin's city council passed a law requiring all households to own a gun.

Said Andy Anderson, who moved to the area eight years ago: "The last place I would want to go is someplace that has declared war on the U.N. at the same time they are arming themselves."

In Our Sites...



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAX G. KEARSE

I SAW ANOTHER ANGEL FLY

WORK IS STEADILY progressing on the Nauvoo Temple, which is scheduled to be dedicated in June 2002. On 21 September 2001, crews placed the *vertical* Angel Moroni. (The nineteenth-century Nauvoo Moroni flew horizontally, of course, as a weather vane, with, ahem, compass and square.)

In Memoriam



Charlotte England helps granddaughter Amelia at UVSC tree-planting ceremony. Memorial plaque (inset).

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich presented the first "England lecture." As she began, she noted similarities between "Gene" England and the beautiful tree planted earlier. Both are deeply rooted with branches that always reach upward and outward. And like leaves continually turning toward light and energy, Gene was someone continually drawn to new ideas and a search for new ways to express them.

REACHING TOWARD HEAVEN

IN HONOR OF former professor Eugene England (see pages 5-7), officials at Utah Valley State College have renamed a lecture series that he had started. The series' new name is the "Eugene England Religious Studies Lecture Series: Knowing Ourselves and Each Other," and is a tribute to England's many efforts to promote religious tolerance and understanding of others.

On 3 October 2001, in celebration of the change, UVSC held a tree-planting ceremony attended by about fifty England family members, colleagues, and invited guests. Participants took turns shoveling soil around the base of a London Plane (sycamore), one of England's favorite trees.

Later that evening, Harvard professor and Pulitzer Prize-winning historian



Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

A “TENANT” OF OUR FAITH

IN AUGUST, CONTROVERSY about LDS views and the treatment of blacks flared in Harlem where the Church plans to build a four-story chapel. Problem: one of the buildings they plan to tear down has one, just-found, tenant—Victor Parker, a 56-year-old, Black handyman.

According to the *New York Times*, Parker has been living in the building alone since 1993 when all the other tenants were evicted for not paying rent. Changes in building ownership over the next few years then caused Parker to lose track of who to pay the \$215 rent to, and no landlord has since asked for it. The Church bought the buildings in February and, believing them to be empty, asked the utility companies to shut off water and power. The power company said it could not shut it off—one tenant was faithfully paying his bill.

The Church has agreed to do only asbestos removal from the building until Mr. Parker has a new place to live—although with an income of only about \$300 per month, he may have difficulty finding a place he can afford.

This episode is relatively minor, yet some have used it to raise questions about why a “white” church like the Mormons would want to establish such a large presence in Harlem. The *Times* quotes Harlem community board chairman Stanley Gleaton: “Historically, [the LDS Church is] not known to embrace black and Latino populations, so I am surprised they want to come here.”

Further fueling the issue is the fact that Federal programs are allowing inner-city land to be bought at fire sale prices. And whites are buying. Real estate prices are rising and, if they continue, will gradually eliminate low-rent housing for people like Parker.

Mormon Media Image

COVERED



ANTICIPATING INCREASED ATTENTION to the Church with the approach of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Newsweek sent its long-time religion editor Kenneth Woodward to write a cover story for its 10 September 2001 issue. The result is an eight-page examination of LDS theology and history, and a focus on recent Church efforts to alter its public image. Woodward is especially interested in its push to be seen as a “Christian” denomination. This catches his attention, for “Mormons still inhabit a very different religious world. . . . [The Church] has doctrines about God, salvation and the priesthood that differ radically from traditional Christianity.”

Except for one issue, reactions to the article have mostly been neutral or positive. In a letter to Newsweek editors issued the Sunday the story was posted on the Internet, LDS church spokesman Michael Otterson decried Woodward’s implied message that the new emphasis on Jesus Christ is driven primarily by image concerns. “To support his thesis that the Church has a new emphasis on Jesus Christ and is courting public favor, Woodward wonders why the huge new Conference Center and many of our chapels depict Christ rather than Joseph Smith. . . . Could it be for the simple reason

that these are buildings of worship for a church that has borne the name of Jesus Christ since its founding 170 years ago?”

During Woodward’s research visit to Salt Lake City, which included dropping in on a few Salt Lake symposium sessions and interviewing some of the attendees, several of us at Sunstone enjoyed visiting with “Ken.” We were very grateful when, several weeks after the release of the story, he agreed to respond via e-mail to a few of our questions.

When you met with us, you mentioned you were hoping to discover the internal logic of LDS theology. Do you feel you were able to find it and, if so, what are the key features of this logic?

I don’t think it wise for me to go into second thoughts on a published article. That said, I do think there were places where I was able to write at least somewhat from “inside” the faith—or at least the culture. One was by showing the way that the Book of Mormon answered questions many people had on their minds at the time it came forth—an approach I took from Leonard Arrington’s book, *Great Basin Kingdom*. Another was to point out how Joseph Smith appropriated and fleshed out for himself and his followers the twin promises God gave to Abraham of land and progeny, especially how he translated the latter into plural wives. And again, I was able to cite Anne Wilde, a current-day plural wife, to show how this was a cherished belief and practice that was difficult to jettison.

But while I try to report from “inside” the religion I am writing about—this is a tricky business. Every religion makes sense and is

coherent when you get inside it. But first I had to show—rightly or wrongly—how the religion is seen by outsiders and had to indicate what specifically makes Mormonism in this case radically different from traditional Christianity. That in itself may have made some Mormon readers upset since they do not normally see themselves as others see them. This is the reverse of writing in order to better communicate a religion’s own understanding of itself and the world. Obviously with more space, I could have done more of the latter.

You close your article with: “. . . there’ll be reporters wondering what lies behind the church’s many veils. It could be Mormonism’s moment of truth.” In your opinion, how “veiled” is Mormonism in comparison to most other world faiths?

This question reminds me of the Mormon who wrote to me to say that I should have used the word “sacred” instead “secret” when talking about temple rituals. Obviously they are both. All religions have their sacred time and space, but what makes Mormons different

is that outsiders are not allowed to see that space—i.e., the temple during sacred times for Mormons. In that, I think they are unique. It comes to this: a non-Mormon invited to a Mormon wedding in the temple cannot really attend the ceremony (as several non-Mormons mentioned anecdotally to me while I was preparing the story). I venture to guess this has something to do with the Masonic influence on Mormonism. Masons were and are big on secret ceremonies, and in both cases, I think there is a mistaken connection between the sacred and the secret. It all feels very 19th century to me.

In general, Mormons more than most other believers have an inside/outside attitude. They talk one way among themselves, another in public. That's the sort of thing outsiders—especially journalists—are quick to notice. That's why I think it was important for *Newsweek* to explain what Mormons believe and how that belief developed, rather than talk about money and empire and the rest, which others have done too much of already. Had I thought of it, I might have shown the similarity between what Muhammad did for the Arabs—giving them a revealed book and a lineage back to Abraham—and what Joseph Smith did for the religious seekers of his era.

Armand Mauss has written: “If . . . Mormonism [is] the beginning of a new world religion, then sooner or later, the Mormons will have to acknowledge their separateness from the Christian family, rather than merely their distinctiveness in that family.” In your opinion, how well is the current Church message about Mormon Christianity working in walking this delicate line?

Well, the thing is that the people who called or wrote in criticisms want to have it as the Church wants to have it: both ways. They want to be different from, but not “other” than Christian. But which form of traditional Christianity do they want to be different from?

This question raises in my mind a question: How much do Mormons know about traditional Christianity? I do think the Church's official spokespersons spend more time positioning themselves *vis a vis* Protestantism than Catholicism. Maybe because Smith was born into a Protestant America or maybe because he was so insistent that the great “apostasy” began at the beginning of the Catholicizing of early Christianity. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is very much a part of the old Reformation polemics against anything Catholic. On that point, I decided from reading LDS literature that Mormons really are very wrong about the Greek influence and hence the falling away from early Christian teachings. It is of the essence of Hebraic religion that God is wholly other than His creation. So one cannot say that it was Greek thought that made the separation between the two. Had I the space in the article, I would have liked to note that where traditional Christianity says with the Jews that man is made in the image of God, Mormon doctrine says the opposite is also true. I would also have liked to point out how literalistic, pedestrian, how unmoving and unimaginative, many, perhaps most, outsiders find Mormon sacred art.

“Mormons, more than most other believers, have an inside/outside attitude. They talk one way among themselves, another in public. That's the sort of thing outsiders—especially journalists—are quick to notice.”

Through that art one can see how the Mormon imagination buttresses the doctrine that the next life is essentially more of the same.

Had you been given a chance to sit down with President Hinckley for an interview, what would you have done to try to convince him that it was in the Church's best interest for him to speak candidly with you?

I guess I would have said that he could trust me not to misunderstand or misrepresent him in my effort to tell others what Mormons believe and why they believe it.

I believe the Church's PR department tried very hard to get a General Authority to speak to me, but since none of the General Authorities have to agree to such requests, I had to take what I was given. If I could have sat down with one of the apostles or the prophet, however, I would have asked him to answer the theological questions by speaking from his heart as well as his head. Had I been able to interview one or more of them, we might have been able to publish quotes that spoke to both the hearts and heads of readers.

It seems to me that most of the General Authorities are not accustomed to talking to outsiders, much less the press, but it would have been useful for the story and the Church if someone like Elder Dallin A. Oaks had spoken to me and—this is essential—talked about his faith in the candid, personal way that I know he did with his non-Mormon colleagues at the University of Chicago. You cannot communicate at a distance.

Besides the few you have mentioned, what other criticisms of your article have you received from Church spokespersons or members?

Mostly they claim I said the Church was changing its doctrine, when in fact I never said that. They have assumed, I guess, that a shift in emphasis is the same as a change of doctrine. I'd say that if there was one weakness in the article it was the possibility that people could read it as saying the new public emphasis on Jesus Christ was driven primarily by image concerns. I do think this is a real shift in emphasis, but I don't blame the Church PR department person for objecting to how that might be read. Still, as the story indicates, Mormon history reveals many shifts in emphasis. Mormons have a prophet whose job it is to receive new revelations, so why should anyone be so concerned about changes since that is what the office provides for?

I suppose most criticisms go back to the old observation that Mormons cannot decide whether they want to be loved or hated—and when the chips are down, they opt for the latter. (That is a view that is not by any means limited to Mormons; it's inherent in any religion, I think.)



Kenneth Woodward