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SUNSTONE

ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, MANY CHAT ROOMS

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fiction (p.18)

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MORMONS, THE INTERNET, AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF OPEN SPACES

BY HUGO OLAIZ

December 2002—\$5.95

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Y E A , Y E A



N A Y , N A Y

This is SUNSTONE's 125th issue!
And they said it'd never last. . . .

Thank you for your wonderful support!

ALTERNATE SUBCULTURE

AFTER I READ FRONT TO BACK THE October 2002 SUNSTONE, a long-term gnawing suspicion was confirmed in my mind as fact: Sunstone—the magazine, its supporters, symposiums, and direct attempts to explore “Mormon experience, scholarship, issues, and art”—is but a liberal mirror of the conservative LDS experience. Further, it seems to be mainly supported by socially disaffected and/or frustrated people who, either through some sort of doctrinal grind or resentment at not being called to leadership, really just want to belong. In other words, if a person cannot be one of the elect, he or she should join or form a subculture that essentially mirrors what the elect are doing and call it “alternative but holy.”

To wit, 12.5 percent of the October issue's eighty pages are dedicated to some sort of administrative cause (“We have some ward business to conduct.”). 25 percent (twenty pages) are dedicated to praise of stalwart people who had contributed greatly to the Sunstone cause. (Sounds like stake conference to me.) 31.5 percent, (twenty-five pages) are dedicated to LDS culture or the arts (just like 31.5 percent of our buildings are made up by cultural halls, kitchens, and craft cabinets). And 17.5 percent (fourteen pages) consist of people touting their particular pet gospel hobby (about the same percentage of time people take in Gospel Doctrine class to do the same). Only 5 percent of the pages are geared toward actual testimony (in a round-about, travel-log kinda way—which is very much like a traditional Sunday testimony these days), and only 2.5 percent (pages 27 and 80) actually deal with real doctrine or the

words of prophets. In the end, in my opinion, only 3.75 percent, the article by Jim Sawyer on pages 60–62, is true to the SUNSTONE I have come to love, which coincidentally (or not) is about the same percentage of love I have left for the Church as a whole since my youth. What a shame. What a damn shame.

SHAWN MCCRANEY
Huntington Beach, CA

RACIAL CATCH-22

AS SOMEONE WHO HAS LONG BEEN interested in the issue of race relations in the Church, I've enjoyed the new Darron Smith-edited column, “The Long-Promised Day?” in the July and October issues. I have also attended sessions Smith presented this past year on “whiteness theory,” and I believe we as a Church can learn much from it and from Smith. Although the Church has had many scholars who have been willing to stand up and question Church racism and racial dilemmas, until now, they have all been white. I am relieved that Smith is in the Church trying to help us correct mistakes and improve ourselves.

Still, I have a few concerns with this column so far and Smith's presentations. First, I've heard Smith and his columnists call for open dialogue and discussion, but I can't help but wonder what kind of dialogue interests them. Are they prepared for dialogue that includes criticism of whiteness theory? Are they open to dialogue that challenges the scope of the whiteness lens? So far, both columns have done little more than have white people admit that they're racists (although recovering ones). And while I enjoyed reading the personal journeys of Jay



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Stirling and Joy Smith (Smith's student and Smith's wife), both seemed to mirror the whiteness jargon and Smith's frequent rhetoric that the first step all white people must take is to own up to the ways their whiteness has affected their worldview.

This is where the Catch-22 of whiteness theory comes in. It seems to have a built-in fail-safe—one very similar to the one the Mormon Church uses. We are to believe that the Church is the one true Church. And since it's the one true Church, we cannot question it, otherwise we'll be losing faith in the one true Church. This creates a trap, keeping many members from daring to examine things and find out if they really are in the "one true Church." Whiteness theory appears to have a similar trap. If a white person objects to or criticizes whiteness theory, they will simply be labeled racist and their ideas dismissed. In fact, such persons will simply be seen as further evidence for the truth of whiteness theory. This very real possibility could stifle healthy discussion. Smith can read this letter as one person's opinion and take away from it whatever he chooses. Or he can pass it off as racist and therefore unworthy of his attention.

While I see many, many insightful things in whiteness theory, it is not an all encompassing explanation for racism in life or the Church. Whiteness theory alone does not explain why the racial profiles of General Authorities do not match Church demo-

graphics in general, nor why currently no African-Americans are in these positions. Whiteness theory alone cannot explain the complex, socio-economic conditions in our country.

I believe Darron Smith has great potential as a leader and spokesperson in the Church on issues of race, and I applaud SUNSTONE for encouraging his work. However, I believe he needs to put aside whiteness theory (it is called a "theory" for a reason, after all) and focus on real people in pragmatic ways.

I look forward to future columns and hope they can expand to include more personal stories and more efforts at educating Church members beyond just how they are subconsciously racist. For example, what approaches can we Church members take to dispel the folklore about pre-existence unworthiness of blacks or how they fall under the curse of Cain that continues to exist in the Church? When confronted with this folklore, how do African-American members of the Church respond, especially when much of the folklore has been promoted by past General Authorities? What positive experiences have African-Americans had in the Church? What is the Church doing right in areas of race that it ought to continue? What are some specific things the Church and its members need to do to improve?

JAKE PEDERSEN
Phoenix, Arizona



FROM THE EDITOR

SAVING THE WHOLE WORLD

By Dan Wotherspoon

• Our great thanks to everyone who helped make this year's Sunstone Northwest Symposium such a great success! Molly Bennion was once more our unflappable, good-humored coordinator and gracious host. And Elke and Patrick McKenzie were wonderful, hosting an informal gathering of Sunstone friends in their home the night before.

• This issue sees the launch of two new columns. Alan and Vickie Eastman have graciously agreed to become the editors of a new *Cornucopia* column, "Righteous Dominion" (see page 14 for a description and invitation to send your stories). We're also pleased to introduce Michael Nielsen as a new contributing columnist. We've agreed to call his occasional reflections, "Nonstandard Deviations," (page 60) as a fun nod to his work as a social scientist and statistics teacher, but I trust you'll find his gentle ways and careful observations are anything but deviant.

BESIDES THE CHANCE I had to meet with so many great folks at this year's Northwest symposium, my trek to Seattle came with an additional perk for me, for it brought me back to my mission field for the first time in seventeen years. Like most returned missionaries who've been home a while, I don't think about my mission very much any more. This trip has convinced me that, in my case at least, this is a mistake. So many of the best things in my life have been a direct result of my having served a mission.

As I've taken the chance to reframe my mission these past few weeks, I've thought a lot about the recent shift in the missionary program, as reflected in Elder M. Russell Ballard's remarks during the priesthood session of October general conference:

We don't need spiritually weak and semicommitted young men. We don't need you to just fill a position. . . . This isn't a time for spiritual weaklings. We cannot send you on a mission to be reactivated, reformed, or to receive a testimony. We just don't have time for that. . . . Tonight we call upon you, our young brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood, to rise up, to measure

up, and to be fully prepared to serve the Lord. . . . The bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised. The day of the "repent and go" missionary is over. . . .

Upon you bishops and you stake presidents rests the responsibility to recommend only those young men and women whom you judge to be spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to face today's realities of missionary work. Brethren, judge wisely. . . .

I'm in complete agreement with much of the thinking behind the effort to "raise the bar" for missionary service. We as a church will be better served by missionaries who enter the field with a strong understanding of the gospel and who are fully committed to serve others. And I'm especially pleased with what appears to be a growing understanding among Church leaders that perhaps the choice to serve a full-time mission isn't right for every young person. Local leaders should look at each individual's spiritual, physical, and emotional fitness before recommending them for service. As they fill out the paper work, leaders shouldn't be thinking: "Well, nothing else has worked. Let's try a mission."¹

I confess, though, that I've struggled a bit with Elder Ballard's remarks. Not so much with the remarks themselves, actually, but with how they might be understood. I would hope that concern for the preparedness of missionaries doesn't altogether spell the end for the idea that "missions are as much for the missionaries themselves as they are for the work the missionaries perform." I would hate to see this latest bar-raising as an instance of institutional goals and efficiencies working against the personal development or welfare of the individuals the institution is supposed to be serving. I can see how missionary department leaders might be tempted to think "Sixty thousand missionaries are enough; let's only take the cream of the crop." I hope this otherwise positive development isn't being driven by "corporate think." I hope Elder Ballard's comment, "we just don't have time for that"—in reference to reactivating or re-

forming missionaries—don't cause us to lose sight of the importance of a mission as a place for conscientious young people to become more committed, mature, and spiritual.

My struggle with this policy shift is also personal. In my recent replaying of my mission experiences, I have not been able to escape worrying that, depending on the way different local leaders interpret Elder Ballard's message, under this new mindset, I might never have been given the chance to serve.

The Talmud contains a passage that has been on my mind as I've reflected on my mission and the potential complexities of this new set of standards:

If any man has caused a single soul to perish, Scripture imputes it to him as though he had caused the whole world to perish. And if any man saves alive a single soul, Scripture imputes it to him as though he had saved the whole world. (Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 4.5)

This teaching—that killing or saving a person, either physically or spiritually, irrevocably alters the "whole world" that follows or does not now follow from that person—is something I pray each Church leader will bear in mind as they apply the principles Elder Ballard laid out.

I JOINED the missionary ranks pretty late in the game. I was just a few months shy of twenty-four when I arrived in Seattle. But the whole world that followed my mission owes its genesis to the generosity of two people, George and Janie Wright, who made the insane decision to invite their smelly, unhappy, downward-spiraling twenty-two-year-old nephew to live with them and their family in Mapleton, Utah.

I had become the sad person I was then through what suspect is a fairly typical path. High school rebellion picked up steam as post-graduation pressures to grow up increased in intensity. Since, as age nineteen approached, I absolutely did not want to become a missionary, I naturally began partying even harder. I had determined to make sure my bishop wouldn't even consider me as a candidate for a mission. Over the next several years, I occasionally made gestures toward growing up, but one by one, I found myself crossing every behavior line I had ever drawn for myself as the "furthest I will ever go." By the time the Wrights invited me into their home, I felt trapped. I couldn't find the strength to break away from the friends I hung with, and I had pretty well convinced myself I would never be able to pull out of the ruts I was in.

Slowly but surely, the dynamics of living with a happy family worked its magic on me. I loved my cousins, all younger than me, and I wanted them to think better of me than I did of myself, so I made sure to smoke only in my car (as if they didn't have noses!). Away from old friends and patterns, I wanted desperately to make the most of my new chance in other ways, and I began to try the church thing again. After living with the Wrights for about half a year, my aunt and I attended BYU Education Week together, and something said there motivated me to read the Book of Mormon. The book worked a miracle, screaming to me from every page that I *could* change, that it still wasn't too late for me to become a useful person.

The next thing I knew, I was sitting at the breakfast table with my uncle and heard the words come out of my mouth that I wanted to go on a mission. *That* got his attention! He happened to be my bishop, so we grabbed our juice and went down the hall to his study and got busy working on making it happen. I guess I wasn't a "repent and go" missionary in the sense that Elder Ballard meant in his remarks—I hadn't made it part of my "plan"—but I will be forever grateful that I had a bishop who understood me and knew that, despite my less-than-promising prologue, both the Church *and* I would be blessed by my serving.

RETURNING to the Talmud: no one can predict what worlds will follow from our actions. I doubt the Wrights believed they were doing much beyond acting on a prompting that had told them they might somehow be able to "help Dan." Well, worlds *have* followed.

WORLD ONE: I met my wife, Lorri, while on my mission to Seattle. She was then Sister Hubbard—one of the sharpest sisters in my first zone. We both remember thinking the other person was a good missionary, but our hearts didn't get all aflutter until we'd both been home for more than a year and were asked to head up the committee to plan the next year's mission reunions. That was November 1985. We married March 1986, three weeks before the first reunion we helped arrange. Our world now includes two unique, talented, funny, and wonderful children, Alex and Hope. I've got a good feeling that good and beautiful worlds will someday spring from them as well.

WORLD TWO. Following my mission, I was blessed with the chance to teach for two-and-a-half years at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, working with se-

nior couple and sister missionaries. One day, after dismissing my district for the day, we came upon a small group in the hallway gathered around a sister lying on the ground. Her husband and another elder were administering to her and, by the time I arrived, had reached the point in the blessing where they'd said all the essential things. But she was still in trouble. Her lips and fingers were turning blue, and something inside me made me touch her husband's shoulder and ask him to close the blessing. Just as he did, I caught the eye of the arriving MTC nurse and, without an extra word, we assessed the sister's situation. She was not breathing, nor did she have a pulse or blood pressure. We began two-person CPR, which thankfully kept her going for several minutes until paramedics and the miracle of a defibrillator took over.² My understanding is that this sister later received a pacemaker, and she and her husband were able to serve their mission to England.

WORLD THREE. It is impossible for me to fully thank my aunt and uncle for all they did for me, but I'm excited that I had the opportunity to be a player in their getting blessed back just a little. While living with the Wrights, I got to know my cousin, Amy, well enough to write to her from the mission field (my exact words): "Cancel all your boyfriends. You have to marry my companion, Elder [Scott] Phister." That would have been a pretty dumb story except for the fact that

Amy and Scott *did* get married and now have five children and one of the truly great relationships I've ever witnessed up close. They live in Riverton, Wyoming, and George and Janie moved this summer from Mapleton to Wyoming to spend their golden years nearer this fun gang.

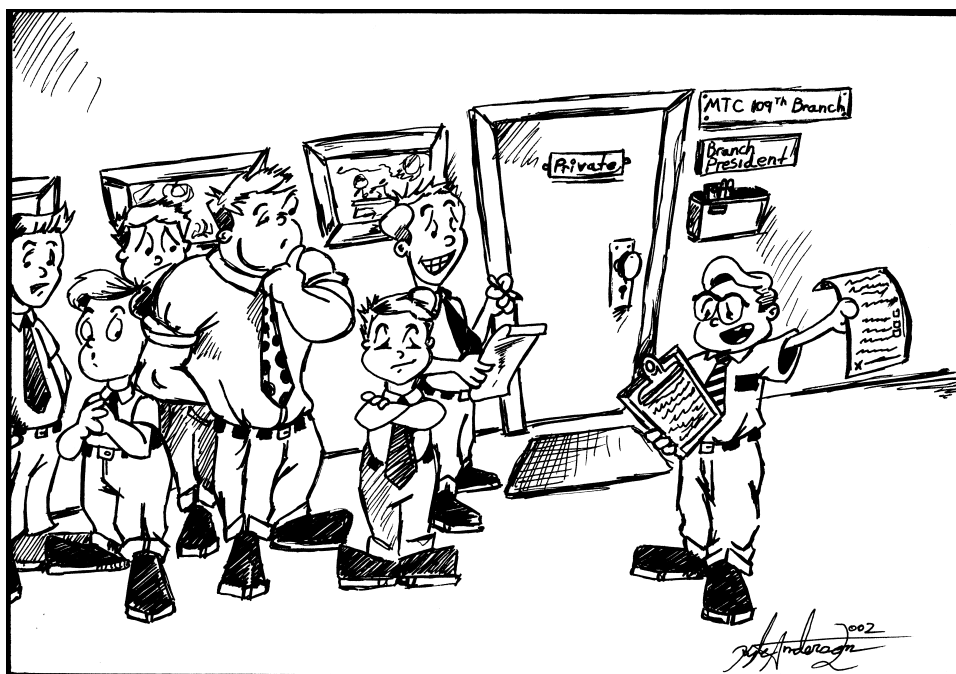
I AM one of those people whose brain begins to hurt when I think too long about eternity, really big numbers, or infinite space. So, I've been hesitant to think much about God's promises that one day we might create "worlds without number." I'm less afraid to consider that now. I think, for all of us, this kind of work has already begun.



NOTES

1. Sunstone has hosted two extremely interesting panels in the past two Salt Lake symposiums dealing with this complex subject. See "Coming Home: Challenges Faced by Returning Missionaries" (tape #SL01-276) and "Ostracize, Condone, or Congratulate? What to do When Missionaries Come Home Early?" (tape #SL02-172). Scott Kenney's recent article about a young Joseph F. Smith shows that, at least in the case of this future Church president, the decision made by exasperated leaders to send him on a mission to help him grow up was a good one (SUNSTONE, Nov. 2001, p. 23, 25, and note 26.)

2. During one of my false starts at being a grown-up before my mission, I had received training as an Emergency Medical Technician.



"To save time, the branch president asks that you first complete this 'Past Sins: What and When?' questionnaire."

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2002 Eugene England Memorial Personal Essay Contest, Second Place Winner

GUITARS IN CHURCH?

By Gael D. Ulrich

THE BISHOP WAS ABRUPT AND OBVIOUSLY irritated when he phoned that Saturday morning. He had just read my email message regarding the music for sacrament meeting the following day. “I notice you have Brother X (a newcomer to the ward) scheduled for prelude. I hope he’s not playing what I think he is.”

“He’s playing the harmonica.”

“No, he’s not,” the bishop fumed.

Our conversation degenerated from there. He insisted the harmonica was not to be played in sacrament meeting, and went on to say the guitar-violin-organ trio I had scheduled a previous Sunday had been inappropriate—that there would be no more guitars in church. After a few more words, one stubborn man had resigned as ward music director and closed the conversation. The other was astonished, I believe, to have our dialogue end as it did.¹

My seven years as ward music director/choir leader had been fulfilling, but there were dark spots. This was not the first time leaders had criticized my style. At times, as in this instance, some had questioned my choice of music and the instrument used to make it. Accusations that I allowed “secular” music in sacrament meeting (leaked from one high councilor’s visit) stung. True, I once scheduled children to play “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” on the violin for prelude music. It was secular music, but I believe Jesus was there. The bishop is a good man and a great leader. He’d had a tough week, and it showed in his voice when he called. Although he had supported me in past instances, I think stake leaders laid down the law after the violin-guitar-organ trio, and he succumbed.

AT THE SAME time I was called to supervise ward music and direct the choir, my wife was asked to be partner and accompanist. She accepted her call and encouraged me to do the same. I did so, but with trepidation. Other than playing the trumpet in high school and singing in



GAEL D. ULRICH is emeritus professor of chemical engineering at the University of New Hampshire. His hobbies include singing, gardening, home repairs, plumbing, and (when emotions prevent sleep) drafting personal essays. Once liberated from hobbies and salvaging rough drafts, he hopes to hibernate in his private laboratory and return to combustion research.

Church choirs and community choruses, I had minimal music education. I had, however, begun voice lessons a few years earlier, eventually singing solo and doing ensemble work with various groups in the community and at the university where I taught.

At the time we received our callings, little was happening musically in the ward other than conventional hymn singing and organ prelude. We focused on three basic objectives:

1. Make the sacrament meeting prelude more effective and inspirational.
2. Promote sacrament meeting special music that is indeed *special*.
3. Develop a successful ward choir.

Since there were few confident organists in our ward, and they were heavily involved with other meetings and responsibilities, we saw the prelude as an opportunity for less-visible musicians to present their offerings in a low-stress setting. Rather than have one person play the organ each week, we rotated assignments, scheduling preludes that involved singing or instruments other than organ and piano. I stretched the limits to involve a convert who played bagpipes. At my request, a versatile supportive organist accompanied her to moderate the sound. Nonetheless, that prelude was electrifying to say the least. Brother X’s harmonica was not *that* earth-shattering. I had heard him play “Green-sleeves” and other hymns on this classical, valved instrument and found it quite moving.

To elevate the importance of preludes, I scheduled them months in advance and sent copies of the lineup to bishopric, performers, and others concerned with music or creating the printed meeting programs. In looking back, I see mostly keyboard presentations, some by people who had never before played publicly in the ward. One musician was a young wife and mother in temporary housing without a piano. She welcomed the incentive to hone her skills. Another was a convert who played largely by intuition and by ear, but with great sensitivity, expression, and skill. He especially liked Brahms, whose music he delivered with feeling and inspiration. One young adult, trained in piano, harpsichord, and voice, had serious performance anxiety caused by discouraging physical problems. She found the prelude less threatening than performing in the meeting itself.

The roster also included one gifted violinist who studied

with a member of the Boston Symphony and taught others using the Suzuki method. She, her children, and her students frequently performed preludes and special numbers that were always beautiful and well-prepared. Several organists and pianists played in rotation. All in all, five or so regulars from the ward and several special guest artists participated. The instrument and performer were usually different each week. Our bagpiper, for instance, found that her mother (who otherwise refused to come to her daughter's new church) was willing to play occasional hammer dulcimer preludes.

During the early days of this new prelude policy, I felt embarrassed to ask people to play amidst the din of members talking and greeting one another loudly as they entered the chapel. A notice in the printed program helped:

Recently, I apologized to one playing the prelude music because of the noise and commotion. Having once played background piano at a restaurant, she replied it didn't really bother her that much.

For the sake of those who prefer to worship in the atmosphere of a sanctuary rather than a restaurant, could we suggest that others who wish to carry on conversations before church do so in the foyer?

—The Ward Music Director

Further reminders from the pulpit, remarkable promptness among young men preparing the sacrament, and leaders who took their places on the stand early and sat quietly listening to the prelude, eventually created a marvelous feeling of quiet and reverence. Glorious floral arrangements, produced independently of our initiative and with great artistry by a woman in the ward, acted synergistically with the music.

The transformation was miraculous. Visitors were almost shocked. In fact, visitors tended to be the offenders when our prelude worship was violated by loud talking. This prompted another announcement in the program:

Visitors may notice that initial greetings are subdued in our ward. This is not a sign of unfriendliness but a tradition of meditation and contemplation during the prelude music. Doors to the chapel are closed fifteen minutes before meeting so that those who wish to enter and meditate can do so undisturbed. Others, who wish to converse and visit are encouraged to do that in the foyer. You are always welcome to join in either activity so long as you do it in the appointed place.

—The Ward Music Director

Increased reverence was illustrated dramatically one Sunday when, by some fluke, we found ourselves without a prelude. People sat in total silence. Many commented afterward how peaceful and spiritual it had been, even with no music.

About this time, the stake presidency issued a proclamation instructing all wards to begin their worship fifteen minutes before sacrament meeting by coming early enough to listen to

prelude music. I don't believe our initiatives were related, but pre-meeting attendance did increase. With such attention from a larger audience, preludes became more daunting to performers, but our first goal—creating a more effective and spiritual introduction to sacrament meeting—had indeed been achieved.

To promote the second objective—more meaningful music in the meeting itself—we began scheduling according to the resources available. A talented high school soprano eagerly sang when invited. Others welcomed the opportunity to perform solo or in small groups. I sang occasionally. Ward youth developed several inspiring musical presentations. One girl brought her high school flute ensemble. The Primary children sang several times a year, and the ward choir averaged once per month.

As momentum developed, we found new volunteers and participants. It was exciting to see these creative energies unleashed. When members praised the inspiration and unity that followed this initiative, I demurred, because the generous outpouring of creativity demanded so little. True, I scheduled people months in advance and followed up with those whose performances were near. I also made sure the calendar was distributed widely so that ward members and leaders were aware of, talking about, and anticipating future presentations. Otherwise, music took care of itself.

For instance, the director of a community youth orchestra that rehearsed in our building on Saturdays wanted to show his appreciation. Accompanied by his wife and others, he performed several exquisite viola solos and string trios. A small semi-professional vocal ensemble that included three members of our ward sang in Sacrament meeting near Christmas-time every year. The majority of singers, though they belonged to other churches, looked forward eagerly to these occasions. A loose combination of members formed a "ward string/flute orchestra" that gave several presentations.

Soon, our ward gained a reputation for having amazing musical talent and reverence. We even found a gifted harpist in our midst. After hearing her prelude, a visitor who was planning to build a house in the area said, "Wow, what a ward this is going to be!" (This brother's wife, a devoted Catholic and professional singer, sang a solo for our next Christmas program and graciously joined her husband in the choir for that occasion.)

More attention to music had a powerful impact on the sacrament meeting atmosphere. It not only lifted spirits in the congregation but inspired speakers to come better prepared, more sensitive to their role in our worship. High councilors often spoke of how, because of its music, they looked forward to visiting our ward. I have no doubt that music promoted better attendance as well as greater spirituality.

WITH SUCH REWARDS in this calling, why did I give it up so abruptly when the bishop called? In the weeks that followed, I pondered the issues that prompted my resignation. This essay is my attempt to understand what happened.

I believe spirituality and creativity go hand in hand. Only

an unfettered mind can find the richer, sometimes hidden, treasures of both holiness and art. The scriptures are full of literary art. The Word of Wisdom, (D&C 89) for example, begins with the prosaic and stretches to the sublime: “And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall . . . find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:18–19).

Successful artistry demands both an elegant creation and a receptive vessel. Some, less tuned to the poetic, might simply read one of President Kimball’s greatest discourses as a “nice sermon about tithing.” He tells of touring a vast ranch in a luxurious limousine with a non-tithe-paying friend. The proud owner’s language is punctuated with “mine,” “mine,” “mine.”

Kimball’s account ends with an ironic description of his friend’s final estate, “a tiny, oblong area the length of a tall man, the width of a heavy one.”²

Without appreciation for its literary images, this is a sermon in black and white—like reading Isaiah or the Gospel of John translated into modern vernacular.

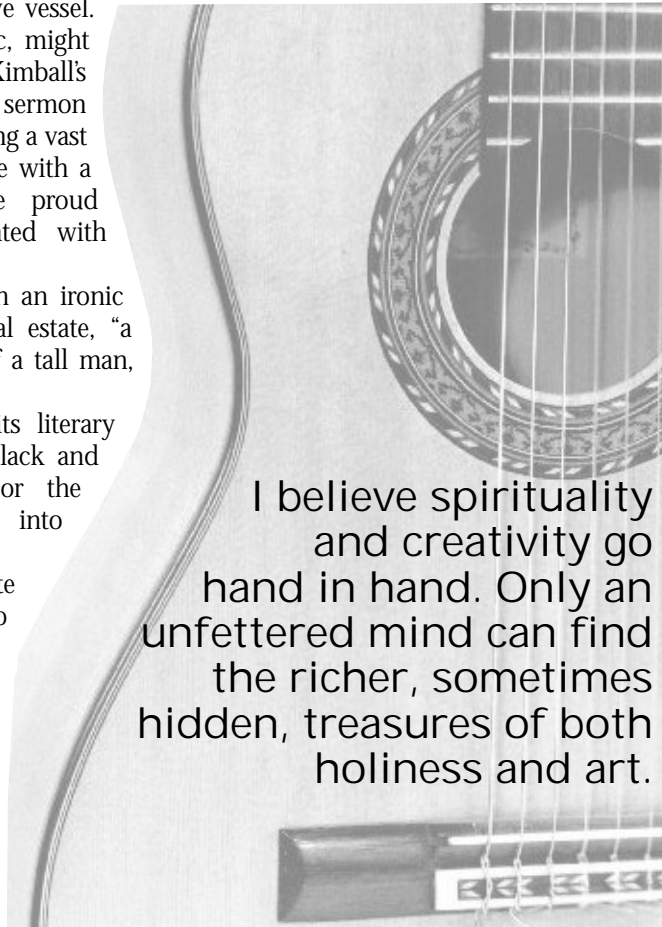
Jesus was the consummate artist. In answer to apostles who asked why he taught in parables, he replied “Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matt. 13:14–15). Attuned to the hidden meanings, certain listeners received in greater abundance, and others, even though listening, “heard not.”

Sometimes, messages from “the Brethren” find questionable priggish translation “in the field.” For example, in a recent *Ensign* article, Merrill M. Bateman describes a visit by Boyd K. Packer many years ago to a stake conference where Elder Bateman was present. The organist was playing “various Bach selections” as prelude music, and the congregation was noisy. President Packer stood, told the organist to stop playing, and asked congregants to cease speaking and take their seats. He then directed the organist to play hymns which, evidently, produced the desired quiet.³

Elder Bateman’s article was an impassioned testimony of how hymns have the power to influence and sanctify. President Packer’s primary intent was to establish reverence. But, as retold in my high priest’s quorum the following week, that story was used to condemn the use of Bach or any music other than hymns in church meetings.

I happen to believe the congregation would have been sub-

dued by scolding from this or any general authority no matter what the organist had played. Let me fantasize a rebuke that conveys the same intent but one tilted toward the thirteenth Article of Faith; “Brothers and sisters, our organist is playing from Bach’s glorious Cantata No. 142, ‘The Bridegroom Cometh.’ I want to listen to this inspiring music and contemplate whether I have extra oil for my lamp or not. I encourage you to cease speaking, take your seats, and do the same.”



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WHAT ARE THE Lord’s feelings regarding music? The most direct answer is found in the Doctrine and Covenants: “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads” (D&C 25:12). And, from the thirteenth Article of Faith, “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.” In light of these passages, any virtuous or lovely music performed in righteousness and from the heart is a prayer that delights God.

I used these standards in selecting sacrament meeting music. Others obviously disagreed with my judgment. Faced with similar conflicts throughout the Church, leaders have given more rules. They are contained in Section 14 of the *Church Handbook of Instructions*.⁴ Following are excerpts relevant to this essay:

“Stake presidencies and bishoprics determine which musical selections or instruments are suitable for a particular meeting.”⁵

- Hymns are our “basic” church music and the “standard for all congregational singing.”

- Hymns are encouraged for prelude and postlude music, choirs, and special selections. “If other musical selections are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns,” and “texts should be doctrinally correct.”

- Music in Church meetings “should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration. Some religiously oriented music in a popular style is not appropriate for sacrament meetings. Also, much sacred music that is suitable for concerts and recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.”

- “Organs and pianos are the standard instruments used in Church meetings. If other instruments are used, their use should be in keeping with the spirit of the meeting. Instruments with a prominent or less worshipful sound, such

as most brass and percussion, are not appropriate for sacrament meeting.”

- Preludes should be “quiet. . . . [The] organist or pianist usually plays hymns or other appropriate music for five to ten minutes before and after a meeting. . . . Occasionally ward or stake choirs may also provide prelude music.”

- For special music, “Selections that are presented by vocal and instrumental soloists and small groups can also enhance Church meetings and can supplement choir music for sacrament meetings. Hymns and other appropriate selections may be used.”

Even these firm guidelines can be widely interpreted. Some have narrowed them even more to exclude from sacrament meeting anything other than a hymn played on organ or piano. I was told of one stake that has a list of “acceptable” musical instruments specifying “piano, organ, stringed instruments that involve stroking with a bow, and flute.” Clarinets are excluded along with other woodwinds, brass, percussion, and plucked strings. (There goes the harp and hammer dulcimer with the guitar. I don’t know if they have a special rule for pizzicato violin.).

Frankly, I see no way that classical guitar and religious compositions of Bach, Beethoven, Dvor’ak, Handel, Mozart,

Schubert, or others can in any way be considered inconsistent with official Church guidelines. Rigid rules map a safe and boring path—good to follow if one wants to avoid risk or growth.

The actual guidelines are not that rigid. Note that words like “encouraged,” “should,” “some,” “much,” “such as,” “occasionally,” “may be” appear often within the framework the *Handbook* creates. I would prefer that for special music official guidelines place less emphasis on hymns and more on Mozart, perhaps, or African American spirituals. On the other hand, I welcome their discouraging rock and roll and Mormon bubble-gum music.

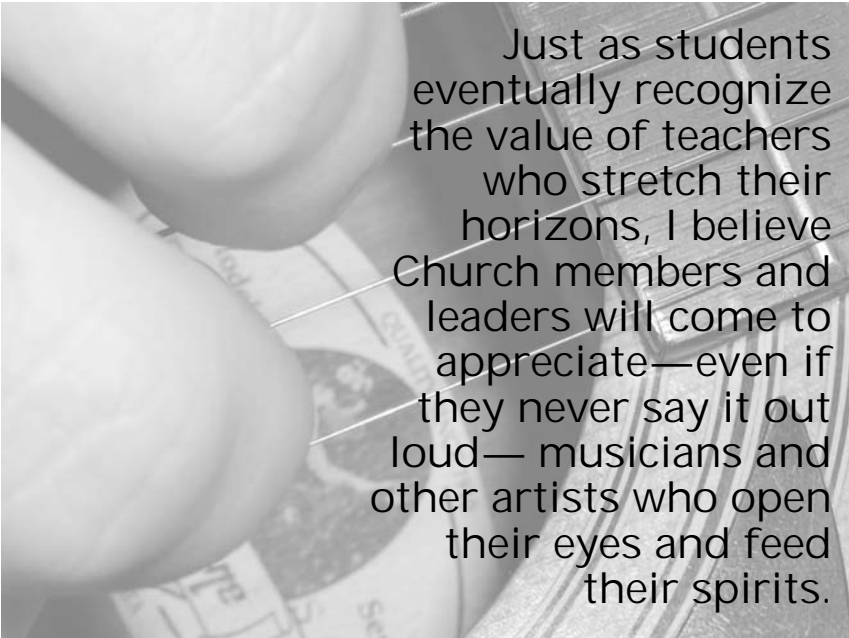
No one can question the emphasis on hymns for congregational and home worship. There is no religious experience like brothers and sisters joining in heartfelt song. As Elder Bateman emphasized, hymns remind us of gospel principles and soothe a troubled heart. But, there is an ethereal realm of inspiring music outside the hymnal. When transcribed to music by Handel and rendered by a gifted soloist or choir, for example,

a one-dimensional scripture becomes a lush multi-dimensional spiritual journey.

I treasure the memory of two precious sacrament meetings (sadly, only two) where Handel’s setting of Job’s affirming exclamation, “I know that my Redeemer liveth” was performed. This cannot be experienced as a hymn. It is beyond the reach of an untrained voice, but rendered by soprano and accompanist, its inspiration falls like the dews of heaven on all. To exclude such sublime music from our worship would be like removing the Gospel of John or the book of Isaiah from our Bible.

Why do many, including some in authority, adopt and promote prosaic, priggish interpretations of music guidelines? I think professional musicians in the Church share some blame. As a chemical engineering professor, I am sub-

ject to administrators who know nothing of what I teach. That’s why they hired me. If they told me to demand less of students because it was too hard or to avoid controversial topics like pollution and industrial safety, I know how I would respond. Just as students eventually recognize the value of teachers who stretch their horizons, I believe Church members and leaders will come to appreciate—even if they never say it out loud—musicians and other artists who open their ears, their eyes, and feed their spirits.



Just as students eventually recognize the value of teachers who stretch their horizons, I believe Church members and leaders will come to appreciate—even if they never say it out loud—musicians and other artists who open their eyes and feed their spirits.

other artists who open their ears, their eyes, and feed their spirits.

Jesus loved his disciples enough to explain hidden meanings in his parables. Having limited aptitude in the visual arts, I appreciate anyone who cares enough about me to explain a painting and open my eyes so that I, looking, can see. Do not those in the Church who hear, owe the same to others—leader and layperson alike? Instead, driven by a most limited interpretation of guidelines, our gifted musicians often direct their talents to converting hymns into dramatic distorted vehicles of performance that are inappropriate and unsuccessful.⁶

I HAD WEATHERED discomfort with narrow limits on music in the past without resigning. What was different this time? Disappointment that leaders did not share my musical values? Frustration at being criticized and micro-managed? Stubbornness? Spite? All of these feelings may have played a role, but this time I was caught between obedience to

authority and seeing serious emotional damage done to one musician.

The guitar-violin-organ trio that I mentioned at the beginning of this essay had been organized at my request by the guitarist. He suffers from a serious mental illness and has experienced loss of family, loneliness, and rejection. When he first began coming to our ward, I was impressed by his sweet, loving spirit. He joined the choir, and sang with sensitivity and skill. One day, after church, I heard him playing his acoustical guitar in the Relief Society room. He jumped at my invitation to do a prelude and, thereafter, played and accompanied several times in our meetings.

Leading up to the fateful Sunday, he asked our accomplished violinist and organist to join him in a medley of hymns. In the choir rehearsal that preceded the prelude, he suggested that singers stay on the stand and blend impromptu with the trio. I rejected his request because I saw it as an impossibly complex undertaking. It took him a few minutes to adjust. This caused delay, a little confusion, and one false start. Finally, when the three were synchronized, it was transforming as we watched two, with their love and confidence, lift up the one. They interacted much as a jazz trio would to produce a “song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous,” a prayer unto God.

I believe the bishop listening *did* hear that day. When he told me guitars were banned, I asked if he had felt the message of that prelude. He was silent. Stake leaders had been present that Sunday. I believe it was at their behest he was forced to tell our brother his guitar was no longer welcome in sacrament meeting.

Soon after his discussion with the bishop, the guitarist met me in the foyer. He said, “I understand—the guitar really is an instrument of the devil—associated as it is with drugs and stuff.”

I replied, “No. The way you play it, it’s an instrument of the Lord.”

I am not sure he heard me.

I carried the burden of his sadness and rejection into my telephone confrontation with the bishop the following week. My friend is now too ill to come to church and has stopped playing his guitar.



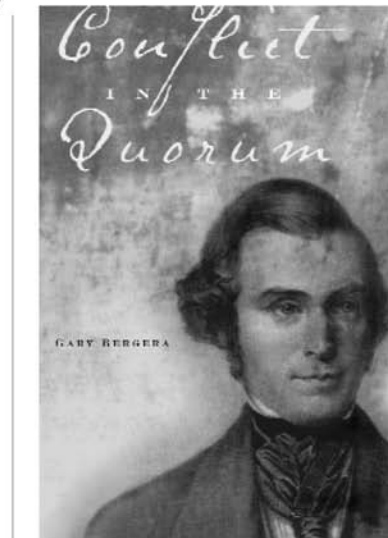
To comment on this essay, or to read comments by others, visit our website: <www.Sunstoneonline.com>.

NOTES

1. We soon reconciled, both apologizing for our impetuous hostility.
2. Spencer W. Kimball, “Render . . . Unto God,” *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1972), 281.
3. Merrill M. Bateman, “The Power of Hymns” *Ensign* (June, 2001):15.
4. *Church Handbook of Instructions*, Book Two, 1998.
5. There is no question that the guidelines give the bishop and stake president the authority to censor sacrament meeting music.
6. Such efforts are like trying to put new wine in old bottles. There are exceptions, of course. Leroy Robertson’s rendition of the “Lord’s Prayer” from his “Oratorio from the Book of Mormon” is a classic example of inspired creativity, and there are many outstanding hymn arrangements where LDS composers have converted worthy vehicles to an artistic level.

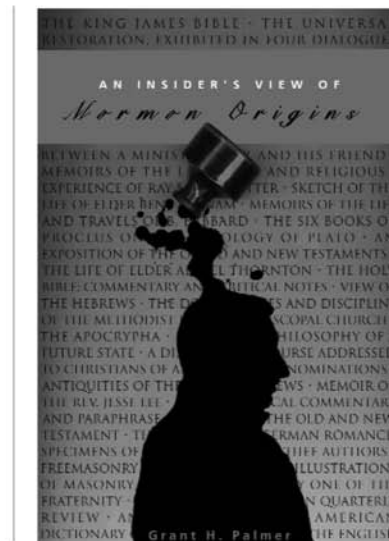
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The Naked Truth

A WIDOW FROM SCIPIO

I WAS MOVED BY MY FRIEND AND BYU COLLEAGUE Douglas Parker's eloquent eulogy honoring the late Karl C. Sandberg (*SUNSTONE*, Apr. 2001). As I read, I had that old wish, felt so often with the passing of acquaintances, that I had known this spiritually and humanistically vital man better. Still, I knew him, in Doug Parker's words, as "a renaissance man with many attractive facets on the diamond of his soul. He was a man whose many serious convictions were often wrapped in humor." For me, Karl will live forever in a pair of linked events which took place in the winter and summer of 1985.

Karl had come to BYU that winter semester as Visiting Professor of Humanities. Following our practice with visiting professors, I, as dean of the College of Humanities, and Garold N. Davis, as associate dean, invited Karl to lunch at the Skyroom of BYU's Wilkinson Center. As we perused the menu, Garold said, dripping with all the magnanimity of a host with a budget-supported charge card in his pocket, "Have anything you like, Karl."

"But," I added in a deanly, admonitory, and archly pious voice, "just remember that your meal today will be paid with money donated by a little old widow in Scipio who gave her last dollar to the Church. But don't let that bother you in the least."

"Thanks," grimaced Karl, "I think I'll have a salad." We laughed and then ordered what we pleased, regardless, for we in the humanities are *carpe diemists a la cart*—if that means we "seize the day, by the cart-load!" And that was the end of the matter. Or so we thought.

In April, Karl finished his teaching assignment at BYU and headed immediately to France, where he was to teach literature at the Sorbonne during summer term.

One morning in July, my secretary, Jeri, came rushing in, blushing, rattled, and visibly perplexed. She held a postcard in her hand, which she seemed hesitant to give me, shielding it from my view as she said, "I don't know if I should give this to you or not; someone has sent you some pornography through the mail. And it's unsigned. Maybe we should report it to Security." Jeri, bless her soul, was intent on protecting me, a sitting stake president, from viewing something I shouldn't.

"Give me the postcard," I said, taking it from her trembling

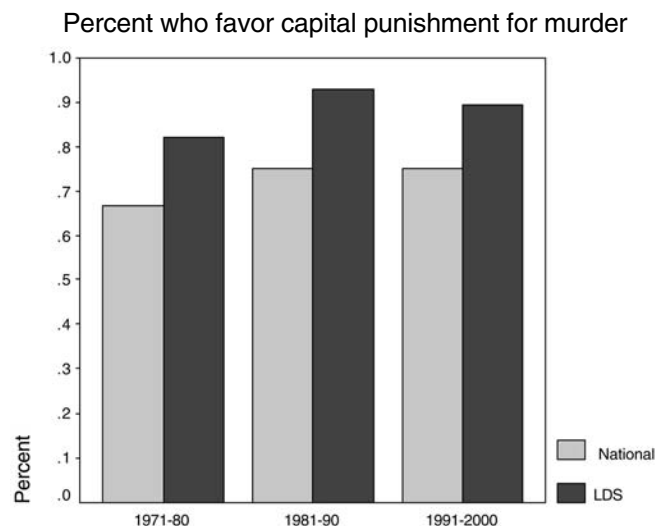


Karl Sandberg

Peculiar People

THE LONG SHADOW OF BLOOD ATONEMENT?

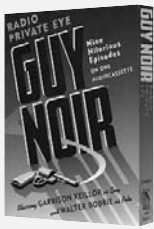
LATTER-DAY SAINTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR capital punishment for murder than is the case nationally. According to respondents to the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, three-fourths of the national population favor capital punishment, with this percentage increasing since the 1970s. Nearly ninety percent of Mormons favor capital punishment for those convicted of murder. Latter-day Saint approval of capital punishment increased at about the same rate after the '70s as it did nationally, and the gap between national and LDS opinions has remained fairly constant.



Mormon Media Image

SUCH A PIECE OF ART

"A dark night in a city that knows how to keep its secrets. But high above the quiet streets on the twelfth floor of the Acme Building, one man is still trying to find the answers to life's persistent questions . . . Guy Noir; Private Eye."



SO BEGINS THE INTRODUCTION TO the serial adventures of Garrison Keillor's fictitious private detective. Listeners of Keillor's radio show, *A Prairie Home Companion*, always know the Guy Noir segment will be full of laughs, but on 9 February 2002, LDS listeners had an extra reason to chuckle. As Keillor, who plays the

voice of Guy Noir, described *femme fatale* Ann Thrope, he used his typical descriptive lingo:

"Oh my gosh. She was magnificent, tall, tan, with that look of hope and trust in her face that a guy appreciates so much. And that was just her face. The rest of her was such a piece of art that whoever designed it probably hadn't gone to Brigham Young. Though she certainly looked like the answer to a prayer. She had a pair of legs that would make a Baptist fall to his knees."



Garrison Keillor

As the story unfolds, it turns out that Noir's new flame is an accountant from Arthur Andersen who eventually offers him a chance for a life with her in Mexico.

hand. And there it was, not exactly pornographic, but certainly a startlingly graphic color photograph, in full sensual splendor (right there in the Jesse Knight Humanities Building!), of a gorgeous woman on a sandy Mediterranean beach, less-than-scantily clad in a bikini, leaning soulfully and fleshily into the camera, and radiating sun-kissed desirability from every pore—nine-tenths of which were clearly visible to the, well, naked eye.

Puzzled, for this was clearly not a picture of my wife—or of any wife I knew—I turned the unsigned postcard over and read simply: "She says she's a widow from Scipio. Could this be the one?"

Bless you Karl Sandberg, and thanks for the memories!

RICHARD H. CRACROFT
Orem, Utah

Twenty Years Ago in Sunstone

A STANDING REBUKE TO SHODDY, PARTISAN HISTORY

The Church history division moved from Church headquarters to BYU on 1 September 1982. Ten turbulent years in what Davis Bitton would later call "Camelot" were over. It was therefore fitting that the article by Bitton, originally titled "Like the Tigers of Old Time," from which the following is excerpted, appeared in the September-October 1982 issue of SUNSTONE. Bitton's reflections seem just as relevant today as they did during the difficult time for Mormon historians in which it was written.

IT SHOULD BE CLEAR THAT HISTORY, FAR FROM being considered a harmless interest somewhere between novel-reading and stamp collecting, has been viewed as a prickly, troublesome threat with a power to do real damage. In Elizabeth's England, in late nineteenth century Catholicism, in Mormonism, various efforts were made to tame Clio, making her subservient to church or state.

My conclusion is not going to be only the cheap and easy one of calling for freedom in the research and writing of history. That is one part of what I wish to say. Those in positions of leadership in church or state, those who become concerned about speeches and writing they dislike, should once a year read John Stuart Mill *On Liberty*; they should commit it to memory; better still, they should understand it, believe it, and carry out its precepts. You will remember that Mill appealed for the free expression of ideas not only because true and valuable ideas might otherwise be suppressed but also because of what the absence of comparison does to those holding sound positions. "If the opinion is right," he said, "they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."

History which authority figures have feared has . . . [often] turned out to be quite within the capacity of the institution to endure. Mill would say that an institution that does not have that capacity does not deserve to endure. When historical matters come out, life goes on. Sometimes adaptation is made. Or counter-versions to the unwelcome history are produced, and scholarship continues its dialectical movement, one generation after another. We vastly overestimate the extent to which most people are motivated by such things as history, and we underestimate their capacity for adjustment and enlarging and reformulating earlier views. Most of the time, it seems to me, institutions are better off encouraging access to information and allowing good and well-researched history to be a standing rebuke and answer to shoddy, partisan history.

But indifference to what historians come up with, a complete willingness to let the research and writing take place without hindrance, an opening up of the archives in their totality to any and all research—such a situation is not in the cards. We will continue to experience tension in one way or another, which is to say that researchers will continue to push for access to documents and will write up their findings, while

All-seeing eye

A COSMO MAKEOVER?

AT FIRST GLANCE, YOU MIGHT NOT EVEN notice that the person you are passing isn't wearing a typical BYU shirt. But wait—Cosmo the Cougar with shades, facial hair, and a pierced ear? It's then that you notice how the first two letters of the logo have been juxtaposed and how, when read as a question, they take a lighthearted poke at BYU's "culture of conformity." At least that's how the shirt's creator, Troy Williams, interprets the fun behind the design. Williams, a film student at the University of Utah, has created several versions of the shirt and is selling them to raise money for his senior film project. For more information, see <www.ybushirts.com>.



defenders of the bastions will find it necessary to draw lines and exercise restraints.

History is not as far removed from us as we sometimes think. Its tendrils reach from the near or distant past into our lives at many points. Concern over how much of history is revealed, and how it is presented, is the tribute paid by those who recognize that it is in fact relevant to the present. History is not the dead past, for it is not dead and, as someone has discerned, is in many respects not even past.

Righteous Dominion

COLUMN DESCRIPTION: *The term "Righteous Dominion" is clearly an oxymoron, like "jumbo shrimp." Yet we all understand the term, because virtually every reader of this magazine knows LDS leaders who have exercised "unrighteous dominion" to the detriment of their flock. Those few have created spiritual havoc far out of proportion to their numbers. Indeed, there are vast numbers of good men and women in the Church who maintain their influence "by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness, and pure knowledge . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile" (D&C 121:41-42). Such leaders may sometimes bend a rule or two when someone's spiritual well-being is at stake. For them, people are more important than programs, and conscience*

more powerful than conformity. They act as exemplars of the love of Christ. "Righteous Dominion" is dedicated to such leaders and will tell their stories. We've started with one example and invite you to submit your experiences to us for future columns. Please email your stories to <StewartSLC@aol.com> —Alan and Vickie Eastman

THE WARD CHRISTMAS WREATH

LIKE MANY LATTER-DAY SAINTS EACH CHRISTMAS season, I look at the gloriously decorated Temple Square with pride. The thousands of lights, the greenery swags inside and outside the Tabernacle, the lighted trees clustered around the organ—all give me the warm feeling of Christmas. Besides a sense of civic pride and the desire to draw visitors who might want to hear the gospel message, I'm sure the Church must also wish to provide a sense of holiness and spiritual uplift for its members when it decorates this most sacred place for Christmas.

When I lived in California, my ward had a lovely Christmas tradition in the form of a specially-made wreath of artificial greenery. About four feet in diameter, it hung in our chapel over the choir seats every year, starting the first Sunday after Thanksgiving. Within itself, the wreath contained the story of Christ's birth. The skyline of Bethlehem, cut from wood and painted white, was wired into place in the center of the wreath. Clear mini-lights were woven into the branches of the upper arch of the wreath; when lit, they looked like the stars in the heavens. One light was mounted in a hole cut into a single wooden star—this was the Star of Bethlehem. A red bow on the bottom arch finished it off. Our ward loved that wreath. Its hanging each year signaled the start of a whole month of rejoicing over Christ's birth. It gave us something visual to focus on, something to help us teach the story to our children. It set a mood—the chapel seemed a holier place.

When I moved to a new ward, I found myself facing a bare cinder block wall during the entire Christmas season. As a member of a performing group, I had visited the buildings of other denominations and had seen joyous and welcoming greenery, lights, and banks of red poinsettias—a clear sign to all that the celebration of Christ's birth was imminent. So I decided to try to reproduce my old ward's Christmas wreath in this new place. It required the permission of the two ward councils in the building, but with the help of an ally (with connections, and whom no one could refuse), I finally prevailed. When the wreath went up for the first time, my heart was glad. Ward members noticed and expressed the feelings I had hoped.

Over time, though, the other ward's bishop had more and more objections to the wreath. His feelings seemed to be based on a rather arbitrary rule in the *Church Handbook of Instructions* that there are to be no Christmas decorations in the chapel and that any Christmas trees in the foyer or cultural hall are to be without lights. Most years, he tolerated the wreath, but eventually, the "stars" could be lit only during my ward's meetings. Finally, it came to the point where our ward wanted the wreath

and the other bishopric did not. I will always be grateful to my bishop for his solution to this problem. Since the wreath was sturdy and self-contained, he simply unplugged it after our meetings, lifted it down (it helped that he was a tall man), and stored it in his office for the week. Then, each December Sunday, he put it up before our meetings, plugged it in, and let it shed its glow over our meetings. The other ward got the blank cinder block wall.

Now I'm in another new ward looking at another blank wall. I ask myself if I have the energy to fight again for something beautiful in our chapel at Christmas. I also ask a larger question—why should we have to break rules in order to bring spiritual and emotional warmth to our chapels at Christmas? The Lord himself said he came not only to bring life, but that we might have it more abundantly. I'm grateful for a bishop who remembered this and was willing to stand up to pressure, knowing that his ward members would welcome, and needed, more spiritual nurturing at Christmas.

VICKIE STEWART EASTMAN
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Alternate Voices

MAIN STREET MANIA: PROJECTS THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT

WE'VE ALL HEARD ABOUT THE BEAUTIFUL PLAZA the Church built in downtown Salt Lake City (see news coverage, page 70). But only a few know about the other ideas imagined for that space. Here's an exclusive scoop on some of the ideas that never made it beyond the drawing board:

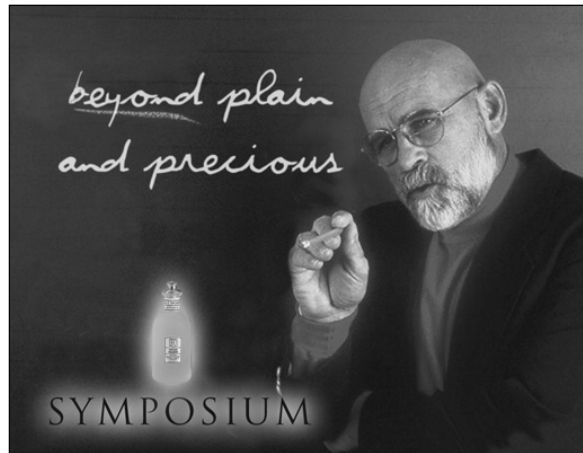
BYU-MAIN STREET: Freshmen would enter this mini-campus from the corner of Main & South Temple, emerging six hours later from the corner of Main & North Temple with diploma in one hand and eternal companion on the other. RESTRICTIONS: Open to everyone, but some restrictions may apply to outspoken feminists, gays, and men with beards.

DESERET INDUSTRIES: THE VINTAGE OUTLET. This upscale version of the popular thrift store chain would target large Brady Bunch-like families who haven't yet discovered—or who can't afford—cotton. RESTRICTIONS: Open to everyone, but making it through the checkout may require proficiency in Spanish.

BOOK OF MORMON MUSEUM: THE NEPHITE EXPERIENCE.

Lighter minds

A SCENT FOR THE SPIRITUALLY ADVENTUROUS



IT APPEARS THE FOLKS AT THE *Sugar Beet* have found another, um, “sponsor” for their satirical e-zine, <www.thesugarbeet.com>. As with the 1991 Church “statement on symposia,” we at Sunstone are glad the ad didn't mention us!

We wish this sponsor the best of luck. We're sure a fragrance like this will be one of those that smells different on each individual wearer.

A meticulously accurate historical reconstruction of the sets for the movie *The Testaments*, this museum will provide evidence that the Seagull Monument fountain may have been built on the site of a pre-Columbian baptismal font and that State Street may stand on what used to be a Nephite highway. RESTRICTIONS: Open to everyone, but some restrictions may apply to archeologists and DNA researchers.

THE MAIN STREET MEGAPLEX: This could be advertised as the Ultimate Mormon Cinematic Experience. While the main theater upstairs would continuously run Richard Dutcher's *God's Army*, smaller rooms downstairs would screen some of Dutcher's less-known projects: *God's Navy*, *God's Boys Scouts of America*, and *God's Immigration and Naturalization Service*. RESTRICTIONS: Open to everyone, but some restrictions may apply to unmarried couples who display affection during the screenings and to visitors who refuse a Kleenex after the show.

THE LATTER-DOT COM CAFÉ: With hot cocoa the only item on the menu, this cyber-café would bring a little bit of Paris to Temple Square. Equipped with fast Internet access, computers at each table will help patrons do genealogy, retrieve old *Ensign* articles, and find that special someone waiting for them at <www.ldssingles.com>. RESTRICTIONS: Open to everyone, but some restrictions may apply to hackers and to married men who hide their rings before clicking on the mouse.

Called to Serve

A FATHER'S ADVICE

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I WENT TO A MISSIONARY farewell for the son of a friend. When my friend stood to speak, he said he was going to give a different talk than the one he had planned. It occurred to me that this was the talk he had planned on ever since his son's birth. When our children are born, we automatically begin thinking of the ordi-

nances we'll perform and the advice we'll give at various points in their lives.

I had been thinking on a regular basis about what I would say at my daughter's missionary farewell. But given recent events and the new rules for farewells (see page 75), it's not likely I will be asked to speak. So I offer in writing the gist of the advice and council I would give.

MISSIONS ARE PHYSICALLY HARD, SO DON'T DO ANYTHING TO MAKE THEM HARDER. Fasting is a good idea, but occasionally some district or zone leader will come up with the bright idea of fasting for two or three days to increase everyone's commitment or testimony. The only thing I ever got from fasting more than one day was a headache and the dry heaves. Your level of spirituality won't go up much when you're sick and tired, so as far as I'm concerned, one day is enough.

MISSIONS ARE JOGS NOT SPRINTS. Don't get caught up in

quotas and goals for baptisms. God's time is not our time. He may not much care that it's the last week of the month. It may be the first where he's living. When I was a missionary, we had an all-mission conference. It was three days before the end of the month, and Elder Franklin D. Richards was coming on tour the next month. At the end of the conference, our mission president announced that we would fast for the remaining days of the month (see my thoughts above) and that anyone could return to any area of the mission if they felt it would result in a baptism. The numbers we put up were impressive, and Elder Richards was pleased. His next question for us was interesting. He wanted to know what we'd done for the current month. The answer, as you might imagine, was not much. Just do the work, and if baptisms happen, they happen.

JUST LOVE YOUR COMPANION AND GET ON WITH IT. Your companions may be people who will remain your closest

Of Good Report

ARE YOU A CARPENTER YET?

Kenny Kemp is a Latter-day Saint author with a growing national reputation. In his latest work, The Welcoming Door: Parables of the Carpenter, Kemp offers a fresh look at three of Jesus's parables by inserting a young Jesus, Jeshua bar Joseph, into the unfolding dramas and allowing him to interact with and help the main characters. The Library Journal states that Kemp's choice to portray Jesus as "a young man who has not yet begun to fulfill his destiny, but [for whom] the glimmers of it are quite evident" helps the parables gain power and significance. We agree. The following scene, in which Jeshua interacts with a young servant, is excerpted from Kemp's treatment of the parable of the Prodigal Son.

FOR SEVERAL DAYS ARAH CONSIDERED MICAH'S words of warning about the carpenter. He'd known Micah all his life. He knew the old man to be kind and sincere, if a bit gloomy. He'd known Jeshua only a few days but already felt Jeshua loved him like his own father. He wanted to believe what the carpenter said. Jeshua had stated that "the truth always tastes good, if we're hungry for it." Arah was hungry for answers, and the things Jeshua said about God and answers to prayers not only tasted good, they echoed in his soul, making him think about life in new ways.

Until Jeshua arrived, Arah felt that he'd spent his whole life looking at the ground, lugging heavy water buckets to and from the fields, or staring into the blackness of the well, hauling the wet, slimy rope up to empty the waterskin and drop it again. Repetition was the nature of his life, day in and day out, and he was just a boy. He wondered if he would still be hauling water when he was as old as Micah, who crawled along the rows of barley, his eyes also focused on the ground.

But something about Jeshua made him look up at the heavens with new eyes. He began to see faces in the fluffy white clouds, feel the miracle of the sun on his face, and imagine his father walking the streets of heaven with God. The thought made Arah's eyes mist, and he had to turn away so Jeshua wouldn't see him. But the image tasted so good that he wanted to hug Jeshua and thank him for taking away the image of his father dying on his low, hard bed, eyes

sunken and skin yellow and his hair falling out. "Consumption," they called it; Mother said it was the "wasting disease," and when Father died, he weighed no more than Arah.

Jeshua talked about Arah's father as if he was alive and well; that he was still Arah's father and still concerned about him. What kind of boy would he grow up to be? Honest? Kind? Generous? Or would he be angry, sullen and bitter, like so many people? Jeshua said everyone's life was hard—he showed Arah a number of white, ridged scars on his own hands—but a hard life didn't have to make us hard as well.

And when Arah protested, saying he was a water boy and that would never change, Jeshua handed him his hammer and asked, "Are you a carpenter yet?"

"No," said Arah, hefting the heavy hammer.

"So you're still a water boy?"

Arah nodded, "That's what I mean."

Jeshua held out a piece of wood and handed Arah a small nail, "Hammer it in."

Arah did so. The nail, miraculously, went straight in. He looked up and smiled.

"Now you're a carpenter, Arah," said Jeshua. "Things are changing already."

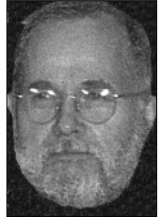
Kenny Kemp, *The Welcoming Door: Parables of the Carpenter* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 47–48.

friends for the rest of your life. They just as likely might be persons whom you would never associate with (or even like) back here in the world. It is possible that at one time or another one of them may even drive you nuts. I still remember sitting in our little basement apartment in Fredricton, New Brunswick, during lunch and having my companion ask me if I'd ever listened to myself eat soup. I have rarely eaten soup since without remembering his remark. The point is that the work is more important than any personalities involved.

DON'T RELY TOO MUCH ON THE MEMBERS. Most of us are a slothful and faithless lot and wouldn't help the missionary effort if our lives depended on it. But there are some things you should remember. You're in their area for only a short time, even though it may seem like an eternity. This is where they live and where they'll be with their neighbors long after you've gone. Their memories are long, and unfortunately you may have to live with the consequences of the lack-

adaisical efforts of some previous missionaries. We once had a sister missionary in our ward who would regularly point out the Gospel Doctrine teacher's errors and ignorance on some finer points of doctrine. She would then follow up with counsel for the Relief Society president about becoming more spiritual. Guess how effective she was? Members know when missionaries are serious and when they're just marking time. If you work hard at finding and teaching, the members will notice and come around. And if they don't, that's not your concern.

This is *your* chance to serve. It is probably the only chance you'll ever have to totally devote yourself to serving your fellow beings and, in so doing, your God (Mosiah 2:17). Have a good time.



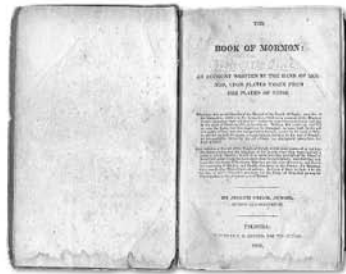
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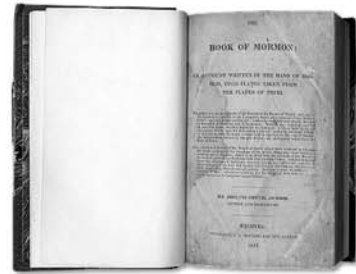
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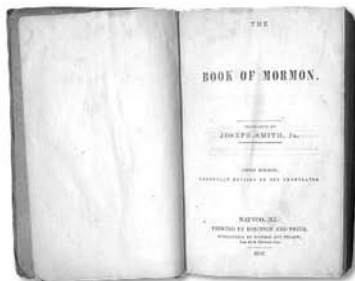
First Edition Book of Mormon

Palmyra, 1830. 1 of 5000 copies printed by E. B. Grandin. Bound in original full calf with original label on the spine. Housed in a custom, full leather clamshell box. \$60,000.00



Fawn M. Brodie's Book of Mormon

1st edition. Palmyra, 1830. 1 of 5000 copies printed by E. B. Grandin. Rebound in 3/4 blue morocco with marbled boards, raised bands, and gilt decor. Previously owned by Fawn M. Brodie, with her signature on a binder's leaf. \$65,000.00



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*Did Hugh Nibley really tether a goat to his front lawn so he wouldn't have to mow it?
Did Hugh and his friend scribble Book of Mormon passages in Egyptian in one of Utah's
red rock canyons? Would he walk home from work, forgetting he had driven that day?
What truths lurk behind these and other stories?*

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FOLKLORE: HUGH NIBLEY—THE MAN AND THE LEGEND

By Boyd Petersen

ONCE, SATAN APPEARED TO HUGH NIBLEY, announcing that he and his forces were about to close down the temple in Manti, Utah, and that there was nothing Hugh could do about it. Hugh responded that indeed he would do something, and so, teaming up with the Three Nephites, he went to the doors of the Manti Temple and holding back the forces of evil, allowed the temple to operate undisturbed.¹

This story is obviously not true. While I've heard speculation that Hugh Nibley himself is one of the Three Nephites (how else could someone know so much?) and have been unable to determine that claim's truthfulness, I know this story of Hugh's thwarting Satan is false. It was transferred to the body of Hugh Nibley lore from an experience attributed to Apostle Marriner Merrill, first president of the Logan Temple (serving from 1884–1906). According to Apostle Rudger Clawson, Elder Merrill noticed a group of strangers arrive at the temple, some walking and some on horseback. One man came forward, and Apostle Merrill asked him who he was and what he wanted. The person replied that he was Satan and then demanded that Merrill shut down the temple for he did not like what was going on there. Merrill commanded him to leave. Satan reluctantly obeyed but promised that he and his followers would whisper into everyone's ear "persuading them not to come to the temple." Logan Temple attendance did fall off dramatically for a long time afterward.² I suspect Clawson's tale about the temple president's encounter with Satan has entered the Nibley folklore cycle because of Hugh's status as one of the Church's preeminent explicators of temple rituals.



BOYD PETERSEN is a doctoral student in comparative literature at the University of Utah. He is Hugh Nibley's son-in-law, married to Zina, the youngest of the Nibley's nine children. He is the author of Hugh Nibley: a Consecrated Life (available January, 2003, Greg Kofford Books), from which this essay is excerpted.

"HOTTER THAN A FIRECRACKER"

*Preaching repentance to a cleaver-wielding woman
and calling down fire from heaven*

HUGH NIBLEY HAS achieved within the Mormon community the distinguished status of folk legend while still alive. Latter-day Saints, especially those who have attended BYU, love telling stories about Hugh.³ These narratives are shaped during the telling to accommodate the needs of the audience, and the fact that Hugh Nibley stories are told and the ways they are told really say more about our religious community than they do about the man himself.

Folklore is shaped, as Richard Dorson has argued, in two significant ways: "by variant tellings of a more or less verifiable incident, and by absorption of wandering tales that get attached to likely figures."⁴ And although many of the stories surrounding Hugh Winder Nibley, like the story of his defending the temple from Satan and his minions, are patently false, I have discovered that the origins of the "borrowed" narratives are much slipperier than I had assumed. For, as his biographer, I've had the unique opportunity to compare the legendary Nibley with the documented one and have found it not always easy to disentangle the embroidery from the core biographical facts. Often, I have discovered factual, historical elements behind these borrowed tales—something I hadn't expected. And this discovery has made me cautious about concluding a story is false simply because it is also told about another individual.

For example, one popular story is that while Hugh was serving a mission in Germany, his mission president instructed him to preach to the people that they must repent or be destroyed by fire. The story crescendos with a knowing nod to the fact that many German cities were destroyed by fire during World War II bombings.⁵

This is a great story. However, it is a story immediately recognizable as fitting within a popular folktale motif about Mormon missionaries in general. In his classic study of mis-

sionary folklore, William A. Wilson points out that many missions contain stories of how elders, after being mistreated and mocked by the people of a particular village, are “forced to bring the Lord in to fight the battle for them” by shaking the dust from their feet and pronouncing a curse on the townsfolk. The Lord validates these missionaries’ actions by destroying the city. Wilson offers numerous examples: “Towns are destroyed in South America by wind, in Chile by floods, in Costa Rica by a volcano, in Mexico by an earthquake, in Japan by a tidal wave, in Taiwan and Sweden by fire. In South Africa, a town’s mining industry fails, in Colorado a town’s land becomes infertile, and in Germany a town’s fishing industry folds.” Wilson also notes that in Norway, a city is destroyed by German shelling during World War II.⁶

So what are the facts? Hugh did serve his mission in Germany, and he did return to Germany after World War II. But the resemblance between Wilson’s unrepentant Norwegian city and Hugh’s German cities, both destroyed by military activities, would seem to make the Nibley story a classic fit within the larger body of missionary lore. However, just as I was about to cross this tale off my list of authentic Nibley stories, I discovered the following in Hugh’s missionary journal: “Tracting in Bruchsal. These people really have had a chance. These many testy attempts to dismiss the subject entirely are plainly the workings of a guilty conscience.”⁷ I then I found a letter written by Hugh to his friend, Paul Springer, immediately following World War II:

Having visited all the scenes of my missionary labors by jeep, and beheld the painfully literal justifications of the warning word to these foolish people 17 years ago, I speak with confidence of calamities to come. Everything has turned out exactly as I had imagined, so there is no reason to suppose that it won’t continue to do so.⁸

My assumption that I could always easily tell the difference between Hugh Nibley fact and folklore was shattered once and for all when I interviewed him in 1997, and he described himself as a very fiery missionary: “I was hotter than a firecracker in those days; I was preaching destruction and fire from heaven.”⁹ Apparently, as part of the blessing as Hugh received when he was set apart for his mission, Apostle Melvin J. Ballard admonished Hugh to warn the German people that unless they repent, “they will be destroyed by fire from heaven” as prophesied in the scriptures (e.g., D&C 63:34).¹⁰

Hey, did you hear the one about how when Hugh was a missionary he preached to the German people that they must repent or be destroyed by fire, and then, when they didn’t, the same cities were destroyed during World War II bombings?



*Master Sgt. Hugh Nibley, 1946
Heidelberg, Germany*

he had later discovered that her house had been destroyed by fire “from heaven” during the war. Rather than being a simple borrowing, as I first thought, the factual story has now been recast using the framework of the more common missionary folktale.

THE MARRIAGE OF HUGO

*Apostles, notecards, the Provo love-mart, and
a most delectable love in Phyllis*

THIS SAME SORT of blending of the factual and the mythic is easily seen in variants on the Hugh Nibley courtship story. The tale has many versions, but the truth is every bit as amazing as the folklore. Following his military service, Hugh got a job at the *Improvement Era*. There, he came to know Elder John A. Widtsoe, who encouraged him to teach at Brigham Young University. In May 1946, Hugh took the apostle’s advice and accepted a position as assistant professor of history and religion at BYU. Still, even as they encouraged him to come, Widtsoe and BYU administrators expressed some concern that Hugh was a thirty-six-year-old bachelor—a certified menace to society. Widtsoe, in particular, pressed Hugh to find a wife. Hugh described his encounter with Widtsoe as “the rising admonition of the brethren that I get me espoused.”¹¹ Hugh told Elder Widtsoe to work it out with the Lord and “I will marry the first girl I meet at BYU.”¹²

And, according to Hugh, on one occasion during his mission, he stopped at a butcher shop and spoke with the butcher’s wife. When he prophesied of fiery destruction to come, the woman got so angry that she chased Hugh away with a meat cleaver. In 1946, at the conclusion of the war, Hugh drove through this same town and came upon a door frame standing alone, the only portion of the house to survive the firebombs. He realized that it was the very butcher shop where the cleaver-wielding woman had chased him out.

Granted, important differences between the historical event and the folklore version remain. There is no evidence, for instance, that Hugh actually cursed any city or house during his mission, nor did he invoke “the Lord to fight his battle for him.” Nevertheless, the truth behind the lore is not too far removed: Hugh had been instructed by an apostle to warn the people of the wrath to come; he did so in the language of the scriptures (probably more zealously than the average missionary); he had been, in fact, threatened by the butcher’s wife; and

On 25 May 1946, one of his first days on campus, Hugh walked into the housing office, and the almost-twenty-year-old receptionist, Phyllis Draper was the first woman he met there. On the basis of that encounter, Hugh decided to marry her. As Phyllis later told the story, he “kept coming into the office every few days to ask for 3x5 notecards. And he wouldn’t take very many, just a few, which would get him through the next couple of days, and then he’d come and ask for another one.”¹³

In a letter written about 5 August, two weeks before he proposed, Hugh announced to his best friend his intentions to marry Phyllis:

Meantime all that the smartest pomades and the most lavish applications of Shinola can do to redeem the defects of nature [are] being thrown into the balance against the blandishments of youth, wealth and collegiate glamor to put the belated Hugo on a footing with some of the less dashing also-rans in the celebrated Provo love-mart. Wish me well, sweetling, and when we meet again, who knows . . .?¹⁴

Their first date was to a picnic Hugh’s cousin had invited him to. Thereafter, they took long walks, ate dinner together in the cafeteria, and had deep discussions. On 18 August, Hugh asked Phyllis, whom he later described to his mother as “delectable and ever-sensible,”¹⁵ to marry him.¹⁶ They were married four weeks later on 18 September 1946. About their whirlwind courtship, Hugh quips, “That’s why it’s called BYWoo, I guess.”¹⁷

Most folk versions of Hugh Nibley’s courtship are fairly faithful to the truth—except for exaggerating the speed of the courtship—and emphasize that Hugh made his marriage a matter of obedience to apostolic instruction rather than following more conventional feelings of romance. Two of the variants, however, show direct borrowing from other sources.

Here’s another one: Did you know that when Hugh was thirty-six and still unmarried, he told Elder Widtsoe to “work it out with the Lord, and I will marry the first girl I meet at BYU”?



*Hugh and Phyllis Nibley with their first child, Paul.
Inset: The “delectable and ever-sensible” Phyllis.*

In one, Hugh reportedly fasted for three days and then walked up Provo’s Rock Canyon where he patiently waited. Soon the woman whom the Lord intended for Hugh walked up the canyon.¹⁸ This narrative borrows heavily from Old Testament narratives in which a patriarch ascends a mountain to meet with God and obtain divine direction, and others in which a chosen prophet meets the woman who has been divinely selected for him, usually by a well. In a second version, “an angel came to him and told him to marry or he would cut off his head.”¹⁹ This story is an obvious borrowing from Joseph Smith’s report that he entered polygamy only after an angel with a drawn sword threatened him if he continued to delay.²⁰ In short, these storytellers are taking the essential elements of the true Hugh Nibley courtship story—admittedly already unconventional—and combining them with elements from other sources, with the purpose of highlighting and accentuating the ideals of obedience to divine command.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Nephi’s visit to Southern Utah, a safe landing, absent-mindedness, and what about that goat?

IN OTHER NIBLEY tales, the facts remain quite similar to the folklore. One story relates how Hugh took his colleague and former Egyptian teacher Klaus Baer hiking in Utah’s red rock country. At one point, they stopped and into the sandstone carved Egyptian characters that read, “Plate #1—I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents. . . .”²¹ Although this story sounds wildly apocryphal, Hugh himself confirms that the story is largely true in a letter of condolence to Baer’s widow soon after Klaus’s death:

Once as we hiked through the depths of Chimney Rock Canyon, he would stop from time to time to scratch into the red walls such Egyptian graffiti as are

found left by travellers and pilgrims at Egyptian tombs or shrines, e.g., "NN visited this place and he found it to be like heaven."²²

The main difference between the folktale and the fact is that Baer did not carve a Mormon text on the stone.²³

In other folktales, the relationship between truth and folklore is quite difficult to untangle. A story that baffles me is the tale about Hugh's parachuting behind enemy lines during World War II:

During World War II at some point, Hugh Nibley was to parachute into Greece for some reason, you know, along with his [Military Intelligence] responsibilities or whatever. And as he was parachuting into Greece, he realized that there were people on the ground who could see him and could shoot at him and who were—at least, it appeared that they were—assuming that he was a bad guy instead of a good guy. He didn't know how to indicate to them that he was a good guy instead of a bad guy since he didn't speak any modern Greek. So what he did—at least this is the way the story goes—was that the only Greek he knew was ancient Greek and it was the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. And so, to convince them that he was a good guy, he started shouting out, as loud as he could in ancient Greek, either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* to convince them that he was a good guy and not a bad guy. And they subsequently did not shoot at him and he was able to land successfully and carry out his mission.²⁴

While this story is significantly false—Hugh never parachuted into Greece during World War II—one element is accurate. Hugh *did* visit Greece after his mission, between November 1929 and early 1930, and was delighted that because of his skill in classical Greek, he could communicate effectively with at least some Greeks. While not nearly as exciting as the folktale, this episode does seem to be the basis for the World War II story. However, I don't know of a story involving another person from which the basic World War II setting and extensions might have been borrowed.

Even more difficult is separating fact from fiction in the many absent-minded professor stories told about Hugh. Richard Dorson has correctly pointed out that "every college and university in the land possesses some odd faculty member whose behavior makes legends."²⁵ Tales of such professors have been circulating for a long time. A story from ancient Greece tells of the presocratic philosopher Thales, who, as he was "gazing upwards while doing astronomy, fell into a well." According to tradition, many made fun of him "since he was eager to know the things in the heavens but failed to notice what was in front of him and right next to his feet."²⁶ Well, Hugh Nibley has been appointed as the Thales of BYU. He is the quintessential absent-minded professor—knowing volumes of esoterica but not being able to remember the mundane, like where he parked the car.²⁷

It is quite easy to find Hugh Nibley stories that are told about absent-minded or eccentric professors at other univer-

sities. In his essay "The Folklore of Academe," Barre Toelken relates a number of these tales, some of which have been attributed to Hugh Nibley. In one, the professor "concluded a mid-campus conversation with a student by asking, 'Which way was I going when we stopped?' and on being told, answered, 'Oh, then I *have* eaten lunch.'"²⁸ In another, the professor writes notes on the board with one hand and erases them with the other. (In the Nibley version, he uses his shirt or suit sleeve to erase the board.)²⁹

That these stories so easily stick to the Hugh Nibley legend is a testament not only to Hugh's absent-mindedness (which is absolutely true) but also to his amazing breadth of knowledge, which he sometimes assumes everyone shares. In one story, a student approaches Hugh after a lecture to ask a question. Hugh recommends a book to him and sends him off to the library. But the book is not in the library, so the student sends for it through inter-library loan. When the book arrives, the student discovers that it is in German and has not been translated. Back he goes to Hugh and tells him that he got the book "but I don't understand it; it's in German." Hugh replies, "So what? It's a small book."³⁰ In another tale, Hugh supposedly forgets what language to lecture in and without realizing it starts going off in a dead language.³¹

Another absent-mindedness story describes a time Hugh took one of his children, a baby at the time, to the grocery store. He pushed the baby around the store, went through the check stand, and loaded the groceries into the car. When he got home with the groceries he realized he had left the baby at the store.³² Phyllis assures me that Hugh never left a baby at the store, but once when the whole family went shopping, they accidentally left one of their eight children—much older than a baby—and didn't realize it until after they had returned home.

Many of the absent-minded professor stories have certainly been borrowed from the larger tradition of academic folklore. However, several contain a factual basis. Hugh *has* actually been caught wearing mismatched shoes or socks. And he *has*, in fact, walked home on numerous occasions when he had actually driven to the campus that day. Other stories are impossible to confirm but are plausibly consistent with Hugh's personality.

Hugh himself is not certain about some of these stories. According to one tale about his mission, a small congregation in Germany took up a collection to buy a new coat for one of the elders. Believing that, since the elder needed a new coat, he probably could also use a new pair of shoes, Hugh chipped in generously, only to discover later that *he* was the needy missionary.³³ This story seems probable. Hugh's first concern in dress has always been practicality, not fashion. He buys most of his clothes at thrift stores and has frequently worn jogging shoes with standard J.C. Penney (circa 1945) suits. However, when I asked Hugh about this particular story, he couldn't say whether it happened or not. "It could be true," he admitted. "It was a long time ago, and that sort of thing happened."³⁴

Perhaps Hugh has ulterior motives behind his dress. One story relates how one of his colleagues was walking across

campus one day with Hugh “in his mismatched socks and his old sport coat and his crumpled hat, and he looked at me with this sly grin and said, ‘They’ll never make me department chairman!’”³⁵

Hugh is also known for his numerous witty statements and outrageous comments, many of which have ended up in the folktales about him. For instance, Hugh reportedly once debated another BYU faculty member who, in an effort to butter him up, stated, “We at BYU lean on every word you say,” to which Hugh allegedly retorted, “If you do, you’re a damn fool.”³⁶ Hugh is also said to have told a class, “Why, I’d rather have a live cobra in my living room than a television.”³⁷ I’m inclined to believe these remarks are pretty reliable, especially when we consider that the most commonly repeated remark Hugh ever made is authentic and has changed little in the various folklore versions. When giving the opening prayer at the 1960 BYU convocation, Hugh did indeed state: “We have met here today clothed in the black robes of a false priesthood. . . .” Twenty-three years later, on 19 August 1983, Hugh explained this invocation when he was awarded an honorary doctorate. His stirring address was “Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift.”³⁸

Legends about Hugh Nibley’s eccentric behavior even spill over onto his own front yard in two folktales about his lawn. According to both stories, Hugh didn’t mow his lawn for a long time, and its disheveled appearance began to irritate his neighbors. One account claims that rather than just keep it mowed, Hugh bought a goat, and staked him to the center of his lawn, and let the goat take care of keeping his grass short.³⁹ In another account, Hugh simply pours gasoline over his lawn and sets it afire.⁴⁰ Both tales are false but based on an authentic Hugh Nibley characteristic: Hugh doesn’t think of keeping up his yard as a virtue. In one letter he wrote, “I have not the slightest intention of keeping up the yard in the conventional sense: it looks good to me and I am the guy it is supposed to please.”⁴¹

Hugh’s respect for the environment is also a factor in his apparently eccentric behavior; he dislikes the idea of trimming or cutting down any living thing. His early years in the lush green forests of Oregon while witnessing their destruction at the hands of his own grandfather helped etch this attitude into his psyche. Thus, the tale about Hugh’s pouring gasoline on his lawn is both untrue and inconsistent, not recognizing his great respect for nature.

Another story relates how Hugh was studying in his office late one evening when a broken pipe in the nearby rest room

Psst. Did you know that Hugh dresses the way he does on purpose so he’ll never be called to a leadership position?



Hugh with Robert Redford and former Salt Lake City mayor Ted Wilson during Wilson’s U.S. senate campaign, 1982.

caused a minor flood. Upon being warned, Hugh gathered the books and note cards arranged in tidy stacks around the floor, returned to his chair, put his feet on his desk and continued reading.⁴² Again, I have no idea whether or not this story is true, but it is consistent with Hugh’s obsession with learning. Before his retirement, he routinely took a book to most faculty meetings and still takes one to family functions. Furthermore, his ability to concentrate during the most chaotic disruptions is legendary and not overstated.

One story almost too frightening to be true is that Hugh would prop a book up on the steering wheel when he would drive the half-hour commute between his home in Glendale, California, and UCLA. This story is true, confirmed by two of his brothers, Sloan and Reid.⁴³

MYTHIC STATURE

“Pure” intellect and “pure” spirituality

WHILE LOOKING AT the truth behind the Nibley folklore can be fun, all folklore ultimately tells us more about the community in which it is told than about the subject of that lore. As William Wilson states:

The bulk of Mormon folklore functions to persuade church members that [their] beliefs are valid and that individuals must devote themselves valiantly to the cause—indeed, may suffer dire consequences if they fail to do so. In brief, this folklore falls into two broad categories: lore that shows how God protects the church in its battle with the world, and lore, remarkably like that of the early Puritans, that shows how God brings about conformity to church teachings by intervening directly in the lives of church members.⁴⁴

Much of the folklore told about Hugh Nibley certainly falls into these categories. It validates the faith and promotes conformity. Some Nibley folklore functions like the broader folklore told about academics in general. It helps us to justify the fact that although we aren’t quite as brilliant as the professors are, we do have a competency in various life skills that they lack.

Still, the fact that we tell stories about Hugh Nibley reflects our esteem for the man. Our culture needs someone who can stand as a combination of pure intellect and pure spirituality (“pure” meaning untainted by commercial exploitation, academic politics, groupie-ism, or trying to build a following), and Hugh not only fills that role but actually *is* that person.

It's not a mask. It's not a collusion between a performer and his public. He really is a person of mythic stature for Mormon folk.



To comment on this article, or to read comments by others, visit our website: <www.Sunstoneonline.com>.

NOTES

1. Jeff Hovenier, interview with Boyd Petersen, 21 Apr. 1990. Transcript in my possession.

2. Quoted in N. B. Lundwall, *Temples of the Most High* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1947): 107–8; also in Joseph Heinerman, *Temple Manifestations* (Manti, Utah: Mountain Valley, 1974): 83.

3. In fact, the stories are so plentiful that one folklorist was able to write her English department master's thesis about the Hugh Nibley stories told just by BYU professors. See Jane D. Brady, *The Brigham Young University Folklore of Hugh Winder Nibley: Gifted Scholar, Eccentric Professor and Latter-day Saint Spiritual Guide*, master's thesis (Brigham Young University, 1996).

4. Cited in Richard M. Dorson, "J. Golden Kimball: Apostle and Folk Hero" (review of Thomas E. Cheney's *The Golden Legacy*), *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Autumn/Winter 1973): 166.

5. Benjamin Urrutia, letter to Boyd Petersen, 15 Feb. 1990.

6. William A. Wilson, "On Being Human: The Folklore of Mormon Missionaries," *SUNSTONE* (Jan./Feb. 1982): 39.

7. Hugh Nibley Journal, 25 Mar. 1929. Hugh Nibley journal currently in author's possession.

8. Hugh Nibley, letter to Paul Springer, late summer 1946.

9. Hugh Nibley, interview with Boyd Petersen, 9 Oct. 1997.

10. Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 3, Transcripts of lectures presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1989 1990* (Provo: FARMS, n.d.), 123. I later discovered that Hugh had related the whole tale to this class.

11. Hugh Nibley, letter to Paul Springer, ca. 5 Aug. 1946.

12. Todd F. Maynes, "Nibleys: Pianist, Scholar, Brilliant But Different," *Daily Universe*, 1 Nov. 1982, 7.

13. Phyllis Draper Nibley, "Faith of an Observer," 421. Compilation of interviews, circa 1983–84, conducted for a video documentary of the same name that aired in 1985. Photocopy of typescript in my possession, pagination added.

14. Hugh Nibley, letter to Paul Springer, ca. 5 Aug. 1946. The term "sweetling" Hugh uses in reference to his long-time friend, Paul Springer, is just one of many playful terms of endearment the two used with each other during their many years of regular correspondence.

15. Hugh Nibley, letter to Agnes Sloan Nibley, 23 Aug. 1946.

16. Nibley, journal; Hugh Nibley, letter to Agnes Sloan Nibley, 19 Aug. 1946.

17. Maynes.

18. Collected by Liliane Zmolek in 1973. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, William A. Wilson Folklore Archives (hereafter WAWFA), FA4 3.5.2 L.

19. Gerald Smith, personal email to Boyd Petersen, 20 Jan. 1994.

20. The angel/sword story is reported in Zina Diantha Huntington Jacobs Smith Young, *Collected Discourses* ed. Brian Stuy. (Woodland Hills, Utah: BHS Publishing, 1992), 31–32; *History of Joseph Lee Robinson*, typescript, Utah State Historical Society, 13; Benjamin H. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, Mo.: Zion's, 1947): 95–96; Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, 1905 Address, typescript, 1–2, Perry Archives, Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

21. Collected by John Baird in 1973. WAWFA, FA5 4.14.1.3.1.

22. Hugh Nibley, letter to Miriam Reitz Baer, June 1987.

23. In an interview, Hugh later confirmed that Baer did not engrave the "I, Nephi" text, but rather the traditional Egyptian text that he refers to in the letter to Baer's widow (Hugh Nibley, interview with Zina Petersen, 26 Jan. 2002).

24. Jeff Hovenier interview. A condensed version of the same narrative is told by Eric Eliason, personal email to Boyd Petersen, 27 Jan. 1994).

25. Richard Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 255.

26. *Readings in Ancient Greek Philosophy: From Thales to Aristotle*, S. Marc Cohen, et al, eds. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995), 8.

27. Dorson., 256.

28. Cited in Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction* (New York City: Norton, 1968), 321. The Nibley version of this tale was collected by Rick Skousen in 1989. WAWFA, FA5 4.14.1.8.1.



This Pat Bagley cartoon was commissioned by Sunstone and the framed original presented to the Nibleys during the banquet roast of Hugh at the 2002 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium.

29. *Ibid.*, 323.

30. Johnna Benson Cornett, interview with Boyd Petersen, 30 June 1992. Transcript in my possession. Eric Eliason relates a similar story about a Greek book and when the student approaches Hugh he replies, "Don't be silly, everyone knows Greek," Eliason email.

31. Johnna Benson Cornett interview.

32. Collected by Susan Madsen in 1980. WAWFA, FA1 576.

33. Collected by Sondra Jones in 1971. WAWFA, FA1 286.

34. Hugh Nibley interview, 9 Oct. 1997.

35. Eugene England, interview with Boyd Petersen, 9 Apr. 1990. Transcript in my possession.

36. Story told to me by Alan Witt in 1984.

37. Marilyn Lindsay, interview with Boyd Petersen, summer 1989. Transcript in my possession. Benjamin Urrutia tells the same story, but says the snake was a python.

38. Hugh W. Nibley, *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 491.

39. Collected by Kristi Bell in 1977. WAWFA, FA5 4.14.1.6.1.

40. Story told to me by Michael Fishbach, summer 1985.

41. Hugh Nibley, letter to Agnes Sloan Nibley, 28 Apr. 1950. Tom Nibley, the third eldest of Hugh's children, has reluctantly admitted to having started a small lawn fire when he was about eight years old. Perhaps a neighbor saw the smoke, and a new folktale was born.

42. Collected by John Baird in 1973. WAWFA, FA5 4.14.1.4.1. See also Hal Knight, "Behind the Legend, There's a Man," *Deseret News*, 1 Sept. 1976: B-1. A similar story relates how a janitor was repairing a leaky pipe in the library at night and found Hugh to be the only other person in the library. He asked Hugh to hold the flashlight for him while he worked but found it difficult to repair the pipe because Hugh would get absorbed in the book he was reading and forget to aim the flashlight. Collected by Liliane Zmolek in 1973. WAWFA, FA4 3.5.0).

43. Arnold J. Irvine, "Hugh Nibley: Always Studying, Always Learning, Always on the Go," *Deseret News Supplement*, 15 Apr. 1984: 4. For the brothers' versions of this story, see "Faith of an Observer," 478–79, 538.

44. Wilson, "Mormon Folklore," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, Richard M. Dorson, ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1983), 157.

With imagination and optimism far out of proportion to the foundation's stretched finances, the 1980s represented one of Sunstone's most creative periods. Who are the incredible people who not only kept it going but helped it soar? How are things different today?

“IMMEDIATELY IRRESISTIBLE IDEAS” SUNSTONE AND PEGGY FLETCHER, 1980–86

By Lavina Fielding Anderson

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifth article in a series chronicling the history of Sunstone's first twenty-five years and is part two of Anderson's coverage of the years 1978–1986. The first part, “Dreams, Dollars, and Dr. Pepper: Allen Roberts & Peggy Fletcher Years (1978–1980)” was published in SUNSTONE, February 2000.

PEGGY FLETCHER GREW UP IN NEW JERSEY IN A home welcoming to a generous form of Mormonism. A great-granddaughter of President Heber J. Grant and a granddaughter of both Wallace F. Bennett, long Utah's Senator, and Harvey Fletcher, the father of stereophonic sound, she easily mingled her family, personal, and religious identity. The family library included Lowell Bennion, Elder John A. Widtsoe, and Fletcher's *The Good Life* but nothing by President Joseph Fielding Smith or Elder Bruce R. McConkie. Her parents subscribed to *Dialogue*, and Peggy remembers reading its articles on the discovery of the Joseph Smith papyri and with her father talking over what it meant in the same dispassionate but engaged way that conversations on science and religion swirled unthreateningly through the house. “Our lives were bracketed by ward activities,” she recalls. “There was no real dissonance between reading the scriptures and reading *Dialogue*.”¹

When she met Scott Kenney at the University of Utah, Ted Eyring, dean of the chemistry department, was her bishop; Carlisle Hunsaker and Kent Dunford were on the Institute faculty. “All of these liberal types were in leadership positions,” she recalls, “but I never knew it was unusual.” Scott, a member of the Gospel Doctrine class she was teaching, impressed her with his quiet thoughtfulness and astuteness. So when in the summer of 1974 he told her he wanted to start a magazine, “I didn't stop to think. I instantly said ‘Sure!’ That's how I made

the biggest decision of my life until Mike Stack asked me to marry him. And that, too, was an immediately irresistible idea. I instantly said, ‘Sure!’”

Those who might conclude from these examples that the wide-eyed, waiflike Peggy was easily suggestible had not encountered the unyielding steel she brought to the task of keeping SUNSTONE alive for eight years, often by willpower alone.

NEW OFFICES, SAME ISSUES

*“I've got every question you've got and more besides,
and if I can hang in here, so can you.”*

FOLLOWING THE 1980 demolition of the Hotel Newhouse, which had been Sunstone's home for the previous year, the office moved to Arrow Press Square (West Temple Street between First and Second South) for about a year. While there, Allen Roberts, Peggy's co-editor and co-publisher, reluctantly resigned due to Sunstone's financial straits and its inability to pay anything close to a salary that could support his young family. Peggy's own lifestyle was never anything but spartan. By the time she left the magazine in 1986, Sunstone was paying her a salary of \$5,000 a year. She drove a donated car, lived in a \$225-a-month apartment, and often wangled invitations to lunch so she didn't have to buy food.

Always looking for ways to reduce overhead, Peggy begged office space from her grandfather in the Bennett Paint building on Third South which had housed his business office and, for a year, until it moved, the paint store. For the next five and a half years, the rooms on the second floor were Sunstone's home, the place where twenty three issues of the magazine and almost the entire three-year run of the *Sunstone Review* were produced. It also served as a kind of informal social center for Mormon intellectuals looking for a place to hang out, a lively information exchange, and even a confessional of sorts as some staffers and visitors struggled to explore and express



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their faith in an environment more hospitable and supportive than their local wards.

Indeed, for many people then, as now, Sunstone was a lifeline, a tether to a Church that seemed to be steaming off in a strange direction, leaving them marooned and abandoned. The intellectual isolation that questioning believers felt in their wards was often suffocating. Peggy remembers giving top attention to spiritual crises, consequently spending “hours on the phone, so much time that the staff probably ended up doing my work for me more often than not.”

Sometimes people called with questions—questions that they could take to literally no one they knew. Sometimes they would announce they were leaving the Church. Sometimes they begged Peggy to tell them how they could stay in the Church. “I always told them how sad it was to think of leaving the Church,” she recalls. “I always pled with them not to go, that it would be like my sister or my brother leaving the family. I’d say, ‘We love you. We need you. I’ve got every question you’ve got and more besides, and if I can hang in here, so can you.’ They were desperate for answers, and they saw the editor of SUNSTONE as a source of sympathetic, authoritative answers.”

THE MAGAZINE ROLLS ON

Consistently high creativity and quality

YET EVEN AS Peggy and the staff dealt with these and other kinds of crises, they managed to produce one thoughtful and engaging magazine after another. SUNSTONE’s major emphases changed little during these years: history, theology, Book of Mormon studies, contemporary issues, personal essays, interviews, fiction, poetry, and reviews. Some regular columns were added to the editorial mix. Psychologist Marvin Rytting wrote of “Paradoxes and Perplexities.” Attorney Jay Bybee explored “Law of the Land.” Therapist Marybeth Raynes wrote a popular column, “Issues of Intimacy.” Paul M. Edwards, president of the RLDS Church’s Temple School, took on a variety of philosophical topics in his “The Noumenonist,” including a critique of the women’s movement. James N. Kimball wrote a well-read column of “J. Golden Nuggets,” irreverent anecdotes about his great-uncle.

Peggy’s broad-based theological interests led to greater emphasis on interesting articles from non-Mormon scholars, who were starting to pay greater attention to Mormon topics. Although some readers argued that SUNSTONE’S precious space should be conserved for examinations of Mormonism by its own scholars, Peggy published Edwin S. Gaustad’s analysis of history and theology, Catherine L. Albanese’s “Mormonism and the Male-Female God: An Exploration in Active Mysticism,” and Kenneth L. Woodward’s “The Use and Abuse of Religion,” followed by Laurence R. Iannaccone, an evangel-

SUNSTONE READERS, 1983

CERTAINLY Peggy and her staff had an intuitive sense of who Sunstone’s readers were, but a 1983 reader survey honed that sense. From 445 responses came this snapshot:

DEMOGRAPHICS. 78 percent of readers were between 25 and 50. Average age was 40. 63 percent were male.

INCOME. 70 percent earned more than \$25,000 per year; 44 percent earned over \$40,000 annually.

PROFESSION. 70 percent were working professionals (lawyers, doctors, engineers, educators).

EDUCATION. 91 percent were college graduates. 56 percent had graduate degrees. 78 percent participated in continuing education programs, special conferences, and workshops.

OWNERSHIP. 78 percent owned their own homes. 56 percent owned two or more cars.

TRAVEL. 73 percent took two or more vacations per year. 82 percent traveled out of state at least twice per year. 38 percent traveled out of state five or more times per year.

RECREATION. 36 percent went on camping or backpacking trips regularly. Readers indicated a strong interest in jogging and outdoor sports. They were less enthusiastic about genealogy and personal history.

REGULAR ENTERTAINMENT. 68 percent regularly went to movies; 57 percent to plays; 53 percent to operas, symphony, and ballet; 39 percent to art shows and galleries; 58 percent ate out six times or more times per month.

BUYING PATTERNS. 56 percent bought sixteen or more books a year (the high was two hundred), while 47 percent bought six or more music albums or tapes a year (the high was one hundred).

FAMILY STATUS. 76 percent were married; 60 percent had children under eighteen living at home.

MULTIPLE EXPOSURE. 87 percent of SUNSTONE readers kept their issues permanently; 75 percent referred to them after reading them once; 20 percent referred to them more than five times. Readers shared their copies on average with 2.6 other people.

READER comments from the survey ran across a wide spectrum:

- I’m still looking for a periodical which can stimulate thinking Mormons without tromping all over their spiritual sensitivities. You’re not it yet. Latest issues could have been published by Deseret Press. . . .

- Sometimes I worry about some of your intellectuals. Do they really have testimonies?

- Life without SUNSTONE would be bleak indeed out here on the farm while waiting for Pops to get his Ph.D. and living in a struggling branch currently going through a “zeal without knowledge” spasm.



ical Protestant minister, who argued that Paul's injunctions for women to keep silence in church were misinterpreted, that he was responding to a query about this practice sent to him in a letter and was actually denouncing it as a kind of Pharisaic legalism inconsistent with the gospel of Christ. Still, there was no neglect of Mormon theology by Mormons. Mormon philosopher Kent Robson warned that Mormonism might be veering too much toward Protestant theology, and Keith E. Norman argued that "we are scarcely aware of the strengths of our unique theology."²

Book of Mormon studies continued to explore environmental questions, historicity, channeled writing, and such analytical approaches as wordprint studies.³ Abortion, aesthetics, and the apocalypse, pacifism, popular culture, fiction, social activism, correlation, folklore, and photo essays all found their places in SUNSTONE'S pages.

Feminism continued as a strong emphasis. Ida Smith pointed out: "There is a tendency for us to think of men as individuals—and women as roles. . . . Women tend to be put in pigeon holes the minute they take on a new relationship: wife, mother." Linda King Newell's landmark reconstruction of the practice and demise of Mormon women's blessing the sick was a dignified lament for a litany of losses. Sociologists and psychologists explored the generally positive but sometimes troubling "geography of Mormon sexuality," while Margaret M. Toscano opened a new chapter in the feminist dialogue with her essay: "The Missing Rib: The Forgotten Place of Queens and Priestesses in the Establishment of Zion," and Jerrie W. Hurd speculated that such scriptural images as "Wisdom" of Proverbs and the "Tree of Life" might actually refer to Mother in Heaven.⁴

Despite SUNSTONE'S deemphasis on heavily documented articles, strong history papers still appeared in its pages. Kenneth L. Cannon II examined the difficult process of disengaging from polygamy after 1890. Gary James Bergera recorded Carl A. Badger's "personal agony" as Reed Smoot's secretary during the humiliating hearings that, in his view, showed his church's leaders acting in bad faith. Mark S. Lee thoughtfully reexamined *Reynolds vs. United States* as an exercise in legislating morality. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher wrote a landmark examination of the exercise of spiritual gifts among Mormon women at Winter Quarters. Boyd Kirkland studied the evolution of the unusual Mormon doctrine that Jesus Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.⁵

In other notable articles and essays, Bruce L. Christensen simultaneously defended the need for Church public relations and raised troubling questions about its use. Gary Browning, Eugene England, and Howard Ball took strong and unpopular positions against the demonization of the Russians and against militarism in general. Louis Zucker reflected on living his life in Salt Lake City as a Jew. D. Jeff Burton caused a stir with his powerful identification and validation of the "closet doubter." Anthony A. Hutchinson unflinchingly examined what the humanness of Joseph Smith means in a context of faith.⁶

The amazing thing about this publishing record is its consistently high creativity and quality. Reading the magazine

alone makes it easy to overlook Sunstone's life-and-death financial struggles. Yet reading the financial record alone leads to the false assumption that the magazine was hastily scratched together out of easily available and comparatively shoddy material. Nothing could be further from the truth. At one point in 1985, the publication schedule was in such shambles that the editorial staff stopped putting dates on the masthead. Volume 10, no. 6 appeared with a June 1985 date. No. 7, dateless, arrived in my mailbox on 4 March 1986. No. 8 contains an announcement of Peggy's farewell party dated 30 April 1986.

A TEAM EFFORT

Leadership styles and life lessons

MUCH OF SUNSTONE'S success against great odds was due to Peggy's evolving leadership and the high caliber of Sunstone's core group of staff and volunteers. During Peggy's tenure, the mastheads of both SUNSTONE and the *Sunstone Review* were always outdated and contained a constantly shifting list of names and job titles that reflected Peggy's philosophy: "Most of those who worked with us were volunteers. They could have whatever title they thought would help them the most with their job."

Among the first to arrive was Susan Staker (then Oman), who came during the time Allen was still at Sunstone. Managing a young family, Susan had just finished helping Hal Cannon curate a very successful Utah folklore exhibit and write the catalog. She was looking for part-time work with flexible hours, and the opportunities at Sunstone were a good match. She started as part-time receptionist but soon became (whatever her masthead title may have been at any given moment) the "Guru of Editing."

To Peggy, "Susan was everything that I'm not. She was organized and disciplined. She met deadlines. She was the first person to impose editorial rules on the magazine. She was quick at editing. I was slow and agonizing. She was thorough and detailed, and just so smart. She never had a temper tantrum. She was always reliable. If she said she would be there, she was there."

Scott Dunn joined the Sunstone team in 1983, coming over after earning a linguistics degree from BYU and from working on the university's off-campus paper, the *Seventh East Press*. Very tall, thin, and bearded (when he let his hair grow out, as he did one year, he looked a lot like the way Jesus is portrayed), Scott shared with Susan the bulk of the editing duties. Peggy says of Scott: "He was a great writer, he could catch any error, and he really helped bring a professionalism to the magazine. It was he, along with Susan, who established Sunstone's first style guide." Besides his wonderful, droll wit and great sense of humor, Peggy's most vivid memory of Scott is "walking by, seeing him in his corner office, headphones on, listening to music, just happily editing away." Peggy, who was always more of Sunstone's "big picture" visionary, recalls she did very little actual editing during the years Scott and Susan worked together. "I can't say enough about how blessed we were to have them with us."

Another key player during much of Peggy's editorship was art designer Brian Bean. Susan praises him as "really great at design. He did wonderful things. He eventually had to find a more stable job, but SUNSTONE was good for him creatively." Brian was also an absolute rock of dependability at a time of great flux. "We were spoiled with Brian," Peggy admits.

Although what follows is by no means an exhaustive list, many others also made important contributions to the magazine. Ron Bitton and Nicole Hoffman were very talented writers, reviewers, and editors. Cecilia Warner was a terrific news editor, first with the *Review* and then with the magazine. Connie Disney and Marcelyn Ritchie played key roles in the magazine's "look" and layout, and Mike Stack was a staff photographer *par excellence*. Peggy also singles out Kerry Bate's role as a typesetter. "He was a fabulous typist. Fast. Accurate. He'd work nights and weekends, and we were always amazed at how much he could get done."

In addition to great magazine help, Sunstone was blessed to have many high caliber people working in the office and on the business end. Peggy considers her hiring of Martha Ball to be one of the best strokes of luck during her Sunstone tenure. "She was the right person at the right time. We needed her. She was very organized, very disciplined. She smoothed over the office chaos." Martha, who was married and had children, was about a half-generation older than most of the rest of the staff and functioned as something of a "mother figure" around the Bennett building offices. Peggy recalls another bonus from Martha's extra maturity: "She was connected. She knew everybody. I would bet half of the people who eventually formed our national advisory board were first suggested to us by Martha."

Michelle Macfarlane played several key roles during much of this period. She was very task-oriented and helped with everything from organizing symposiums, to raising funds as development director, to helping with the magazine. Peggy says of Michelle, "She was capable of doing anything and everything!"

Tom Miner, Renee Hepworth, Madlyn Tanner, Mary DeLamare-Schaefer, Rebecca Cornwall, Chris Allen, Charlotte Hamblin, and many others helped Sunstone stay afloat administratively. They raised funds, worked on subscriptions, prepared mailings. Husband-and-wife team Joe and Rebecca Harris came along just as the importance of computers and the potential value of database-driven processes were first being noticed and helped move Sunstone into the information age.

THE GURU OF EDITING



Susan Staker enjoys a hallway conversation during a Sunstone symposium

SUSAN Staker, now living in Seattle, Washington, where she is editorial director of instructional communications for Adobe Systems, "loves editing and loved editing for Sunstone." She recalls many happy, tender, and tense moments related to her time at Sunstone. A tender moment came when on assignment for the magazine she covered D. Michael Quinn's speech to BYU's student history association responding to Elder Boyd K. Packer's harsh 1981 address,

"The Mantle is Far, Far Greater than the Intellect," that decried the dangers of analytical history. Susan and Michael were old friends who had taken German and history together at BYU years earlier. Michael, who had carefully written his response in third person in an attempt to provide both some distance from a topic that was his life's passion and also to deal respectfully with a General Authority, choked up not far from the end and, overcome by emotion, asked Susan to finish reading it for him.

She also recalls something of an editing "test case" in an article about the Book of Mormon that had been submitted by San Francisco businessman George D. Smith (who later co-founded Signature Books). "When I finished editing it, it had gone from about thirty pages to nine," recalls Susan. "Then we had a dilemma. Peggy was working up to approach him for a donation, so she wanted him to like us, and I had just cut his article by two thirds. We went over the article carefully. I would have agreed if she'd said to pull back, but Peggy agreed with me that cutting was what it needed and that we had to deal with the article on its merits. I was terrified when I gave it back to George, but his reaction was 'Great!' On that basis, he later told Peggy, he decided Sunstone was a serious organization. It made me feel good about Peggy, and it certainly made me feel good about George."

Susan also remembers the moment when she decided she didn't want to edit anymore. "I was working with Jim Allen's response to a quirky little piece about Joseph Smith and something he'd reportedly said about men wearing Quaker hats on the moon. It was a serious response with a light-hearted twist, and he was very anxious about it, worried about explaining everything so no one would be offended. I was concerned with writing problems: trying to straighten out sentences and move interesting information out of the footnotes and into the text. I remember arguing at one point that writing was supposed to *present* information, not *conceal* it. It was then I realized this wasn't just about Jim. It was the whole environment that was making him and people like him afraid. Taking out an adjective or changing a sentence from the passive to the active voice was fraught with significance: What consequences could this have for his family? His employment? His callings? So many feelings were at stake. It was a relief when I started a graduate program and had to move on. Until then, I hadn't realized how hard editing SUNSTONE had been: so much work, so much intensity, so little money." (At the highest point, Susan was making \$7 an hour.)

Lorie Winder (Stromberg), an energetic, glamorous Californian, came aboard in 1979 through her connections with both Peggy and Allen. Lorie had been Peggy's roommate for the summer of 1976 in Berkeley. She had known Allen even longer as a member of his BYU ward. Lorie first volunteered but was then hired to mail the very successful Cal Grondahl cartoon books that Sunstone had published. Whatever Lorie's title might be at any given moment, Peggy relied on her commitment and enthusiasm. She tapped a "gigantic network" of volunteers and friends, but also never hesitated to jump in and do whatever task was next. "She can be very outspoken, but she had a ton more energy than I ever had," recalls Peggy. "She just breathed a lot of fun into everything."

In addition to its core of paid staff, Sunstone was graced with wonderful volunteers. John Sillito had been involved with Sunstone since at least 1975 when, as a member of the archival staff in the Church Historical Department, he had a conversation with Bill Slaughter about this "new magazine" and wondered if they could use a book review editor. It was a volunteer position he held through the incredible roller-coaster ride of the next decade. Susan Staker singled John out for praise: "Good sense, no bullshit, a real workhorse. He always had so much integrity and persistence."

Dennis Clark and Mark Thomas were also among Sunstone's most loyal volunteers, Dennis serving faithfully through most of Peggy's years as SUNSTONE's poetry editor, and Mark making himself available for any and all tasks. Many other volunteers were a bit less regular, "floaters," who would

come in for a few weeks or a few months, often drawn out of loneliness or because they were searching for something. They came and went. Peggy learned to enjoy them and their talents while they would match stride with Sunstone for a few paces or many; then she would let them go without regret.

"Sometimes it was emotionally draining being in the office," remembers Susan. "So many people came needing support. They'd volunteer, but it was sometimes hard to get them to work. They wanted to talk. After they processed their issues, they'd either move out of the Church or into another job. Maybe it always happens with largely volunteer organizations, but we saw people at a very vulnerable point in their personal development. I never figured out who would stay in the Church, who would leave, and why. And of course, I was right there processing my own issues at the same time. But I do know the Church is wrong to demonize Sunstone as damaging to people's faith. For everyone who left, five stayed. When people came to Sunstone, they were looking for reasons to stay attached, otherwise they would already have left. And they usually found reasons."

Lorie was also one of those for whom Sunstone was an important intellectual and spiritual home during a vulnerable period. "Sunstone functioned as a community," she recalls. "There were always a lot of people in the office, a lot of conversations going on. I basically worked for nothing—a couple of times I didn't even ask Peggy for my salary when I knew that she was under unusual financial stress—because it was a way to process my issues. I'd been committed intellectually and emotionally to the ERA, and the Church's stand really pulled

THE SUNSTONE DEBATING SOCIETY

IN May 1983, the Sunstone Foundation organized the Sunstone Debate Society, citing Joseph Smith's Nauvoo debating society. The first meeting of this short-lived enterprise was held 7 June, and featured a debate between Eugene England vs. Rev. George Nye, with Steve Christensen moderating, on the topic: "Resolved: Mormons Are Christians." Encouragingly, even after a mailing to more than 2,500 people plus other expenses, the evening generated a profit, from the suggested donation of \$5 per person, of \$909.

A questionnaire passed out at the event in an effort to measure interest in potential future topics offered twenty-one choices. Even after the passage of fifteen years, most would still generate lively discussions:

- The Book of Mormon is a book of ancient history.
- Women should hold the priesthood.
- God could not have used evolution to create humanity.
- A liberal Democrat cannot be a good Mormon.
- If a leader requires a wrongful act of his followers, the responsibility lies with the leader, not the follower.
 - Authority resides in the strength of the idea not in the power of the office.
 - Population is God's concern not ours.

- God is intimately involved in the lives of his children.
- The Church should take care of its own and has no responsibility for the world.
- There can be only one true church.
- Pacifism is the only fully Christian response to war.
- The Church has no reason to provide financial disclosure.
- Tithing should be graduated like income, in preparation for the United Order.
- A rich man cannot enter heaven.
- Age is not a factor in wisdom.
- Joseph Smith was not a Mormon.
- Even God cannot know the future.
- There will be physical procreation in the hereafter.
- Physical handicaps are God's way of testing the human spirit.
 - When a person dies it is because God needed him/her.
 - God is married.

This last topic was the subject of the final Sunstone Debate Society effort, a November 1984 give and take, with Paul and Margaret Toscano taking the affirmative and Rev. William F. Maxwell of St. Mark's and Rev. Anne Campbell, chaplain at Westminster College, taking the negative.



PHOTO: GLYDE MUELLER

Peggy in her Sunstone office at the Bennett Building

For her birthday one year, longtime friend and supporter John Ashton brought Peggy a truckload of her favorite beverage, Sugar Free Dr. Pepper.

the rug out from under me. Those years at Sunstone were a vital time for me in sorting out my religion so that I could stay attached in a way that is neither codependent nor fearful.”

The exact number of those who worked for Sunstone at any given moment was a guess. Peggy somewhat optimistically told a reporter in August 1982 that the staff had ten full-time employees and fifteen volunteer writers, not counting authors.⁸

When asked to reflect on her own leadership style during her tenure, Peggy appraises herself candidly: “My strength, but also a real weakness for Sunstone, was that Sunstone and I were a package. To make it work, I was selling myself all the time. People had to like me to like Sunstone. I knew intuitively that it needed to be different, but in some ways, it never happened.” John Sillito saw this trait as positive: “How could you turn her down when she asked you to do something? Nobody could say they worked harder or sacrificed more than she did.”

Susan Staker appraised Peggy’s style as “very persuasive, charming, and strategic,” but not indirect. “I didn’t ever have to guess what she meant. She had the final say, but I was free within my area of expertise. If I thought there was a problem, we’d solve it on the spot.” An 11 August 1982 hand-written memo from Susan to Peggy shows not only the development of the Sunstone operation (it was publishing the *Review* and also sponsoring the annual symposium during this time), but also Susan’s skill at gentle prodding:

We used to talk about the magazine all of the time because that’s what Sunstone was. And I was involved in most aspects of what was going on. That has all been changing—inevitably and mostly for the better. I’m involved in narrower aspects of the overall operation and you have to balance more responsibilities and

more people. You’ve scheduled meetings for this and time for that. But ironically, the one thing we’ve never scheduled in is the magazine itself. So I find myself snatching for your time—and you’re often on the run, looking at the clock, preoccupied by something else. I’m not blaming you for that; I know you feel besieged from every point. But it can be disconcerting for me. I’m always having to feel out when I’m welcome, when I’m not. So the first thing I’m suggesting is that you and I schedule a regular editorial meeting that is as sacrosanct as the *Review* meeting. I know I’d still

have to snatch other time but at least I’d have a certain amount of time and attention I could depend on.

Susan’s other concerns were a clearer definition of her responsibility as editor and also clearer communication channels between *Review* and SUNSTONE decision-makers.⁷

Lorie talks about the challenge of balancing friendship with the employer/employee relationship. “If Peggy was dissatisfied with something I did, sometimes it was difficult for me to figure out what it was exactly.” She saw Peggy in operation as “seductive in a way—by that I mean that she was very curious, a great listener, with boundless enthusiasm. She could really key into someone’s interests and launch memorable, stimulating conversations that could go on for months. We were all committed, but for every single one of us, there were limits—practical limits, time, money, the rest of our lives—on our commitment. For Peggy, there were no limits.”

Someone Peggy should have never hired was designer Mike Rogan, successor to a longish list of designers that had last ended with Brian Bean. Rogan, who had previously been a designer for one of the Church magazines, came to Sunstone just as he was called to a ward bishopric. His marriage was beginning to crumble, and he was also undergoing a midlife crisis.

In retrospect, Peggy sees that Rogan’s “whole life had been holding back and holding in. The handwriting was on the wall, but I didn’t see it.” Rogan started wanting to work at his apartment or at night after everyone had left the office, because the office was chaotic. “Well, it was.” He began missing deadlines, “but our schedule was so erratic, how could I possibly hold anybody to that?” Gradually, Peggy and Susan realized they never knew when Rogan was coming in. And they never knew how to find him. This was a serious problem because every article was individually designed, the hand-labor of

doing paste-up from slix enormous, the process of making corrections complicated. (See sidebar on production, page 31.)

"I was so naive about drugs," Peggy sighs. "People told us Mike had a problem, but I just didn't get it. I thought I'd given him some really clear ultimatums, but what I'd probably done was timidly ask him, 'Oh, by the way, could you come to work more?' Then after a long string of problems, when I got him on the phone, I said, 'I just don't think this is going to work.' He couldn't believe I was firing him. He exploded, cursed me, called me names."

That was at the end of March 1985. On the night of 1–2 April, someone broke into the office, stole the computer and printer, worth about \$6,000, and all of the software and backup diskettes. "When I came to work the next day, all of the books were thrown off my bookshelves," recalls Peggy. "My chair was turned upside down with a screwdriver jammed through the seat." Rogan was the logical suspect, especially since there was no sign of a break-in. Some windows had been shattered, but from the inside. When the police asked to do lie-detector tests, one staff member refused, and Rogan had disappeared. No one was ever charged.

The insurance paid for a new computer; from the last print-out, the staff rekeyed the 7,000-names in their database and, with heroic efforts, got the spring 1985 issue out on time. Peggy sent out an emergency letter begging past contributors to give \$200–500 immediately to cover emergency costs. She also asked for more substantial donations to cover the \$30,000 required for the upcoming symposium.⁹

All in all, it was a bitter taste at the end of an exhausting decade of working with Sunstone. "I was terrified," Peggy admits. "This was violence aimed at me, and I realized that I'd been naive in a hundred different ways. Once I found a homeless man sleeping in my car. I thought nothing of working alone until three o'clock in the morning. I hitchhiked to work for years. It was so Mormon and so stupid to feel like someone was watching out for me. I'd never want my kids to do what I did."

MAKING IT WORK

Got a fund-raising idea? Let's try it!

IT GOES WITHOUT saying that keeping Sunstone alive financially during Peggy's tenure was a never-ending struggle. Aware of her own limitations as a business manager, Peggy several times recruited people for that role: her cousin Bruce Bennett, Tom Miner, and others. She'd bring them aboard, and they would stay for a while but then leave. Despite their best efforts, all became discouraged. Sunstone's budget was approximately \$200,000 a year by the mid-1980s, but it was impossible to manage the money successfully when there was simply not enough—not enough, on some occasions, to pay the staff and, more frequently, not enough to publish the magazine at regular intervals. John Sillito recalls, as one of his most poignant memories, going into Peggy's office just after she got off the phone with a creditor. "She was huddled in her army jacket to keep warm, holding her can of Dr. Pepper, and looking just devastated. I realized how lucky I was

just to be able to do Sunstone as a hobby, and do the part I loved best—the books—but not to have to carry any of that financial responsibility."

A national advisory board, Peggy hoped, would combine both moral and economic support. She organized this group in a blitz of letters and phone calls during March and April 1983. These individuals came on board knowing they were dreaming big and digging deep into their personal pockets.

Peggy's invitations to prospective board members were far-ranging and ambitious, a true cross-section of productive Mormons. Usually those who refused pled the press of already oppressive work schedules (and usually proved it by listing their current obligations). A few also cited the current Church climate as a reason it would be "unwise" to become a public Sunstone ally. Among those who regretfully declined, nearly always with warmest personal regards to Peggy herself, were Leonard Arrington, John W. Bennion, Stanford Cazier, Richard H. Cracroft, William E. Evenson, Deanne Francis, Carl S. Hawkins, Dean R. Lindsay, Meg Monk, Ron Miller, and Barnard and Cherry Silver.

A particularly heartwarming acceptance came from the late Elizabeth D. Gee, then in Morgantown, West Virginia, where her husband Gordon was president of West Virginia University: "I view Sunstone as an island of excellence in an ever-deepening quagmire of mediocrity, sentimentality, and distortion. I, for one, am glad you are not giving up."

In documents provided to advisory board members, the foundation projected income for the next seven months, to March 1984, as \$153,480. Of that estimated income, the greatest amount would come from magazine and *Review* renewals (\$53,480), followed by contributions (\$42,000) and book sales (\$34,000).¹⁰ The symposium and advertising were to bring in approximately equal amounts—\$12,000 each. Sunstone at that time owed \$40,416: \$17,814 in bills to various printers and the rest of it in loans (\$8,500 to the bank, and \$35,916 to individuals). Sunstone's projected expenditures for the same period came to \$152,273. It cost approximately \$1200 to print an issue of the *Review*, \$2500 for an issue of the magazine. Even though these projections showed a nicely balanced budget, Sunstone really had a \$30,000 deficit. Peggy asked advisory board members to contemplate at their leisure the following wish-list: \$58,230 for outstanding debts; \$20,000 to cover the "worst case cash flow"; \$42,000 to "make certain that we meet annual giving goals"; \$15,000 for a computer and typesetter; \$5,000 for a copy machine; and \$20,000 to make the *Review* self-supporting.¹¹ Between April and August 1983, the board raised \$8,700, close to its commitment to raise \$10,000 during the same time period.¹²

Sunstone Review, which had begun publishing with 1,200 subscriptions in 1981, stood at 2,000 subscriptions in 1982 and 2,800 in 1983.¹³ Peggy was reporting circulation figures that were considerably higher than subscription figures, based on the assumption that each copy reached more than one reader: 6,500 for the magazine in August 1982, and 20,000 for the *Review*.¹⁴ The next year, Peggy was reporting circulation figures of 7,000 and "more than 20,000."¹⁵

However, by 1 April 1983, it was clear that despite their best efforts, the *Review* was never going to be the financial boon the Sunstone leadership had all dreamed it would become, and Peggy proposed combining the *Review* with the magazine, reintegrating its news and reviews and publishing the magazine monthly. She hoped that if subscriptions could top 5,500, the magazine would break even—assuming \$100,000 in contributions, book sales, and advertising.¹⁶ The combined budget would be \$240,000 a year. The decision to recombine the *Review* and the magazine was finalized in April

1984, presented first as a “temporary” suspension of the *Review* for the summer despite fears (which proved correct) that suspension would mean death.¹⁷

Subscriptions for the reintegrated magazines climbed steadily: 2,900 in October 1984, 3,400 in February 1985, 4,000 two months later in April. So it was reasonable to project 4,800 for January 1985 and the magic number of 5,500 for August 1985.¹⁸

One piece of paper from September 1984 adds up “Pressing Debts” (\$25,086.74), “Non-Pressing Debt” (\$20,971.32), and

A MIRACLE EVERY TIME

BEFORE computers and desk-top publishing—before, in short, the last couple of years of Peggy’s term—producing SUNSTONE was a highly technical, labor-intensive, hands-on project. Articles were typed on electric typewriters, corrected in pencil and retyped. Typesetters were people, not machines, and while they preferred perfect copy, they could deal with a word inserted here or there.

The set type was lines of solid lead, stored carefully in forms at the typesetting establishment. The typesetter hand-inked these forms with a roller and pulled “galley,” sheets of newsprint about twelve inches wide and seventeen or eighteen inches long. Proofreading galleys was a painstaking job that required looking not only for mechanical weirdness, such as broken letters, or missing paragraph indentations, but also reading against copy and canny intelligence, since lines, paragraphs, and even whole pages could be missing, inverted, or garbled. Corrected proofs went back to the typesetter, sometimes more than once. Making changes (additions, deletions, more graceful prose) at this stage was strongly discouraged but happened anyway.

The final typesetting product was “slix,” beautiful columns of exquisitely black type on heavy coated (hence, “slick”) bright-white paper. The issue’s designer(s), who had already done thumb-nail sketches of how each page would look—where the illustrations would come, how the titles would be handled, what ornamental effects would be used, where the page numbers would come—would handle these slix with a combination of reverence and massacre.

Measuring the space available on the “dummy” (model page) to the eighth-inch, the designer would slice the type column with an Exacto knife, run it through a machine that laid ribbons of hot wax on the back, and then stick it down on the first of many “boards,” a heavy-weight posterboard with room for a double spread (two pages), the page margins outlined in nonreproducible blue ink. The wax made it possible to pick up a typeset piece and shift it to another location,



Production tools from a bygone era.

sometimes whittling a line off the bottom of one column and shifting it to the top of the next column or razoring out a word to squeeze a line “plus a bit more” into one column.

No corrections were supposed to be made at the board stage. Of course, there were. Sometimes the corrections would be two, three, or even four layers deep (for everything had to be on that board: photographs, borders, lines, and type). Having something “fall off the boards”—a page number, a running

head, a caption—was a perpetual nightmare.

Completed boards were then delivered to the press, where a cameramen “shot” the boards and then organized the negatives to produce “signatures,” groups of eight or sixteen pages.

Once the signatures were assembled in order, they came back to the editing team as a blueline, printed in blue ink on photographic paper, folded and stapled signature by signature. Each page had to be scrutinized, literally with a magnifying glass, looking for broken type, ink specks that meant a flaw on the negative, crooked or broken letters, and down-right errors. There weren’t supposed to be any mistakes, of course. Of course, there were. Back to the press the blueline would go. Sometimes a second blueline would be necessary.

The next step was printing. A call would come, very often in the middle of the night, “Press check!” The designated checker for that issue would sleepily drive out to west Salt Lake only to come fully awake at the intoxicating smell of ink and the thunderous roar of the web press, half a block long. Were the ink values correct? Was the paper taking the ink evenly? The cover, printed on a sheet-fed press, involved a separate press check. Were the color values true? Was the positioning as ordered?

A day later, the issue would be delivered, smelling deliciously of fresh ink, the page edges rustling crisply under a brushing thumb, the columns of type vividly authoritative and real in a way that no earlier stage quite was.

A new issue of SUNSTONE. Something had come into being that had not existed before. It was a miracle every time.

“Possible Write-offs” (\$20,000) for a not-so-grand total of \$66,058.06.¹⁹

One funding approach Sunstone tried early in the decade was applying for grants. The Utah Endowment for the Humanities awarded Sunstone a grant in 1981. Peggy recalls that it was for a pretty small amount, but the records showing what it supported and the amount have apparently not survived. Another application in 1983 was rejected; UEH was “a little hesitant to fund Mormon things.”²⁰ Michelle Macfarlane successfully steered through the hurdles a grant for “A Celebration for Mormon Arts” (the program cover featured a bunch of the famous Relief Society glass grapes) to receive a \$3,000 award from the Herbert I. and Elsa B. Michael Foundation of Salt Lake City, \$1,000 from a private donor, and \$500 from the Utah Endowment for the Humanities for the 1984 symposium.²¹

A good idea that fizzled was a luncheon for business people who were not part of the usual Sunstone circle. The idea had been successfully tested as a “fund-raising businessmen’s breakfast,” underwritten by Gary Sheets and Steve Christensen, on 24 May 1984, with Gary Smith speaking on the office of Church Patriarch, the topic of a book he was currently working on with Irene Bates. Those attending paid \$35 for the privilege.

This gathering was sufficiently successful that another was planned as a pre-symposium event in August 1984. Historian D. Michael Quinn delivered a lecture on “The Business World of the Mormon Hierarchy, or A Brief Tale of a Thousand Companies.” He organized it around an imaginary “Mormon Everyman in Salt Lake City in 1907 to 1932” and “the extent to which he could participate in Mormon hierarchy-directed businesses,” contrasted with “the business world of the present LDS General Authorities.” A hundred fifty-two attended—about half of them recruited in the last three days before the luncheon—and it took in \$1,340. Unfortunately costs topped \$1,600.

Sunstone spent considerable care planning an end-of-the-year 1984 fundraising campaign with thank-you letters from Peggy and Michelle Macfarlane to each of the eighty-four contributors. Contributions that year ranged from \$10 to \$1,000. Twelve gave the suggested amount of \$200, but the most money came in increments of \$100 (twenty-five), \$25 (nineteen), and \$50 (sixteen).²²

A more modest, but likewise successful, fund-raising effort was made in 1985, when journalist Robert Gottlieb, coauthor of *America’s Saints*, came to speak at a B.H. Roberts Society lecture in January. Although Sunstone had no official connection with the B.H. Roberts Society, it arranged an “after-the-lecture” discussion for a private list of invitees that promised “information not included in the book or in his . . . presentation.” Sunstone covered the costs of refreshments and invitations through donations, and the event raised more than \$600.²³

Until his murder by Mark Hofmann in 1986, Steve Christensen continued to contribute generously. He underwrote the entire cost of at least one symposium and helped on several others. He also wrote “Sunday School Supplement,” a column of

theological and historical enrichment to accompany whichever of the standard works was being studied in a given year.

Despite the constant financial restrictions, Peggy was a tiger when it came to anything that impinged on her vision of Sunstone. When one businessman on the advisory board seriously proposed declaring bankruptcy, stiffing the subscribers, and starting over, Peggy dropped him from the board. According to Peggy, he was “outraged and incredulous. ‘You can’t do that to me, just because you disagree with me,’ he complained. He was speaking Sunstone language but to him it meant something different. I said, ‘I’m perfectly willing to take criticism of my leadership or management style, but we have to be on the same page. If we don’t believe in the same vision for Sunstone, I can’t work with you.’”

Peggy didn’t back down, but fights like these were very hard on her. “I had to learn how to deal with wealthy people. A lot of them are used to having their way because of their wealth. And heaven knows, Sunstone needed the money. I was always pulled between wanting the best for Sunstone and yet resisting some of their pressures.”

Another indication of just how tough things were is revealed in staff minutes from January to June 1983 that gently break the news that there are no more janitorial services. The notes indicate that Sunstone staff are to be responsible for once-a-week cleaning. Donations of supplies and toilet paper are welcome. Overhead needs to drop immediately by one-third, and the biggest overhead is staff expenses. In a January memo, Peggy reminded employees to be “more punctual and reliable. . . . Impetuous, unexpected absences are inappropriate.” She suggested time limits of fifteen minutes on personal phone calls and “interoffice chatting.”²⁴

Still, even though it was a constant source of stress throughout Peggy’s entire tenure, grappling with obdurate financial realities did not dim Sunstone’s creative sparkle. An undated project list for 1984 ranges widely: Publish a compilation of “best” articles from the last ten years. Continue polling a random sampling of Mormons—perhaps 200 a month—to “identify trends” in LDS thought and culture. Develop a budget to pay freelance writers. Establish a writer-in-residence and an artist-in-residence program at the magazine. Increase the total number of pages.²⁵

“PEGGY SUNSTONE” GETS MARRIED

“I am entirely confident of Sunstone’s future without me.”

PEGGY WOULD PROBABLY still be running Sunstone today except for Mike Stack, a tall, easy-going photographer who started as a volunteer with the 1984 symposium, then later was hired to work in production and photography. Peggy and Mike began spending time together in such a low-key way that eight months passed before the staff realized they were dating.

“I really had come to peace with the idea that I would do Sunstone for the rest of my life, but Mike was the first person who didn’t love ‘Peggy Sunstone,’” she muses. “My being Ms. Sunstone wasn’t the thing about me that he liked best. There

were these other sides that I'd sort of forgotten. After he proposed and I accepted, he said, 'I can't be married to Sunstone. I want to be married to you. We have to leave—to get completely away for a while.' Something in me trusted him, even though I couldn't, at that point, imagine myself apart from Sunstone."

Peggy told the board to start looking for her successor. She and Mike married on 12 October 1985. The foundation's strategy for replacing Peggy was to divide her position into two: a publisher/public relations person and an editor. A letter sent to members of the National Advisory Board listed five criteria for the first position:

1. An educational background strong in . . . publishing, journalism, public relations or related fields.

2. Significant managerial experience, including publications, . . . people and financial systems.

3. Fund-raising and public relations experience—preferably with nonprofit organizations.

4. An understanding of and willingness to work with the LDS community in its numerous manifestations.

5. Ability and willingness to project an image and conduct consistent with the established values of the organization and its governing bodies.²⁶

Accompanying this letter was a nine-point job description that covered public relations functions, fund-raising, staff management, financial management (including producing items like the cartoon books and calendars), organizing the Sunstone

FROM ENGLISH LIT TO SUNSTONE TO FAMILY TO THE *TRIBUNE*

PEGGY'S journey to Sunstone was not at all predetermined. While studying English literature as an undergraduate at the University of Utah, Peggy developed an interest in the religious backgrounds of authors like John Milton, John Donne, and George Herbert. Following graduation, she went to Graduate Theological Union, in Berkeley, California, where she focused primarily on religious history. She lived very frugally—"it was great training for Sunstone"—and managed to eke out two years there.

But back in Utah, during a fellowship in Leonard J. Arrington's flourishing Church History Division, she realized she was home: "Mormonism was my heart of hearts, the core of my core. I knew it best and wanted the best for it. It was my language." Thus it made perfect sense for Peggy to take on Sunstone full time. "It was a chance to enact my fantasy of a giant Gospel Doctrine class where all of my friends would come for a conversation about the gospel that never ended. That stayed my vision. Yes, it—the magazine, the symposium, the office—was a place to deal with intellectual issues; but the social fabric kept it together long after the intellectual things grew stale. We didn't talk about community in the same way in the 1970s that we do now, but that's what Sunstone was."

Sunstone was her life for the next eight years. After Peggy and Mike married in October 1985, they left the following spring and went to Africa for a year of adventures. Then, they settled in New York, where Peggy edited the *Hastings Center Report*, a journal that deals primarily with questions of medical ethics, and Mike attended film school. Son Jamie and daughter Suzanne were born there. Then in 1991, while the family spent the summer in Salt Lake, Peggy was hired to write features for the *Salt Lake Tribune's* new religion section. As the family prepared to return to New York, the paper offered her a full-time position, which she still holds.

Peggy's and Mike's reintegration into the city was surprisingly easy, but also painful as the joyful birth of twins Karen and Camille 29 January 1992 was overshadowed by Camille's medical problems that eventually took her life just days be-



The Stack family on the deck of the *Statsraad Lehmkuhl* Oslo, Norway, August 2001.
(L to R: Mike, Karen, Peggy, Jamie, Suzanne).

The family tagged along as Peggy covered for the *Tribune* the first leg of *Sea Trek 2001*, a sesquicentennial re-enactment of the first seaward journeys of 19th-century Mormon immigrants from Scandinavia and Great Britain.

fore the twins' second birthday. During Camille's courageous struggle, Peggy wrote a moving and dignified series for the *Tribune*, "Camille's Song." Upon her passing, many Salt Lake City residents felt close to this beautiful and gallant child, and they, alongside family, friends, General Authorities, and ex-communicants, filled the chapel for her funeral.

The family now lives in a pleasant brick home on a quiet circle on the city's east bench. Mike has created a fantasy playground for the children in the generous backyard. Peggy just recently ended a four-year stint as her ward's Primary president, and she is the author of an unexpected best-seller, *A World of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), gorgeously illustrated by Kathleen Peterson. Now in its third printing, the book provides careful, short, and respectful summary-descriptions of the world's major religions.

Symposium, acting as staff liaison with the National Advisory Board and its executive committee, and perpetuating “values and goals for the organization consistent with the highest and best traditions of the organization’s past as well as moving the organization forward into areas of sound and appropriate growth and expansion.”²⁷

By February 1986, Peggy was writing to donors: “I will be leaving in the spring, but I am entirely confident of Sunstone’s future without me. Indeed, the success of Sunstone is due to the collective energies and ongoing support of people like you. Sunstone really belongs to you and our other readers, not to those of us who produce it. As long as you care about it, Sunstone will continue to exist.”²⁸

Ultimately, the board of trustees decided to hire Daniel Rector for the publisher/public relations position. Daniel, according to Peggy, was a dynamic young “IBM executive type,” who walked into the office “in a suit and everything” and wanted to talk about starting a theological school. Although the idea for a school dropped by the wayside, he did agree in April 1986 to accept the position and put the magazine and its finances on a more professional footing. And after months and months of hard lobbying, first by Peggy and then by Daniel, Elbert Peck, an urban planner in Virginia and Peggy’s first choice for the job all along, was persuaded to take over the editorship in October.

THE DEMONIZING OF SUNSTONE

Today’s attitude toward Sunstone is a far cry from the days when a senior apostle thanked “dear Peggy” for a gift subscription

ANYONE COMPARING THE 1980–86 years of Sunstone with what has happened since then can clearly see the creation and hardening of new boundaries, more explicit levels of official disapproval, shrinking support, greater fear, and forced choices for some between faith and understanding. It is a far cry from the climate in October 1983, when then-apostle Gordon B. Hinckley thanked “dear Peggy” for sending him a complimentary magazine subscription. It is a very far cry indeed from the climate on 12 April 1984, when the Sunstone Foundation executive committee eagerly approved Dallin H. Oaks’s name to be invited to speak at the Saturday night banquet. Oaks, former BYU president and former justice on Utah’s Supreme Court had been named as the Church’s newest apostle just the week before.²⁹ (Peggy issued the invitation. Oaks turned it down.) Today’s climate is also a very far cry from the time when as many as sixty BYU faculty participated in the Sunstone Symposium in any given year or when Church employees in various departments at the headquarters building were on the staff or involved in special projects. Such overlapping allegiances would be currently unthinkable.

“SOMETHING ALMOST SACRAMENTAL”

PATRICK McKenzie, a dentist in Issaquah, Washington, a member of the National Advisory Board and “a real sweet guy,” offered to pay for Peggy’s plane ticket if she’d fly up to speak to a group he had helped organize. Peggy said, “Sure.” On the day she left in November 1983, she had a terrible cold. The weather in the Northwest was raw and drizzly. She could tell it was not the best timing. She coughed through a feverish night in the McKenzies’ guestroom and staggered out to breakfast the next morning in her bathrobe, eyes and nose swollen, throat scratchy.

“As soon as we poured the orange juice and said the blessing,” she remembered, “he pulled out this list of questions that he’d been saving up. The very first one—I guess he thought we’d start with something easy—was about the historicity of the Book of Mormon.”

Their conversation continued for most of the day. She addressed one group Saturday evening, and her voice was nearly gone before a Sunday evening fireside in a large hall near the McKenzies’ home. “There must have been a hundred people there,” she recalls. “I couldn’t get through a whole sentence without coughing. After a few minutes, I stopped what I was trying to say and said, “I don’t think I’m going to make it. Does anyone have a cough drop?”

“And then something wonderful happened, something almost sacramental. People dug in their purses and their pockets, coming up with cough drops and lozenges and pastilles. They passed them down the row and up the aisle. I took this handful of cough drops—all shapes and sizes—and piled them on the podium in front of me. I talked and ate cough drops for the rest of the evening, and I didn’t cough again during the entire talk. Not even once.”

Thoughtfully appraising the situation in recent years, Lorie Winder Stromberg observes, “I don’t think Sunstone changed; I think the Church and what it was willing to tolerate changed. Then Sunstone changed in response. . . . A living intellectual tradition lies in the clash of ideas, the dynamic of differing opinions, and when half of the debate doesn’t show up, everyone suffers. It helps liberal intellectuals stay honest by having an informed conservative challenge them.” She remembers nostalgically the time where the “boundary between liberals and conservatives was much more fluid and friendlier.”

The demonizing of Sunstone that began in the early 1990s has, Peggy says, “broken my heart.” After the General Authorities issued their 1991 statement discouraging participation in symposia, Gene England asked her, “So how does it feel to have killed your baby?” He saw the newspaper stories Peggy had written about the 1991 symposium as the direct cause of the statement. Peggy wonders how much truth there may be in England’s analysis. Many of those who had kept SUNSTONE on their coffee tables with the *Ensign* and *Newsweek* now hide it or don’t subscribe. When Peggy gave a presentation on her recent best-selling book, *The World of Faith*, in a neighboring Relief Society, the woman who was to introduce her called ahead of time for biographical information and asked where she’d met Mike. When Peggy told her they had

worked together at Sunstone, there was a long pause. “Really!” commented the woman, then moved on. She didn’t mention Sunstone in the introduction, and Peggy “felt diminished. I’m not ashamed of my years at Sunstone. I’m proud of those years.”

She mourns: “It’s a different Church—a good Church—but a different Church than the one we grew up in. At the highest levels, it’s almost as if there is no faith left in our own doctrine and history. Somehow I’ve become the heretic by trying to protect the history and preserve the heritage. People think of Sunstoners as those who are somehow dismantling the faith or trying to push it in weird directions. It’s not true. Sunstoners are the ones who have the *most* faith in Mormonism, the ones who are *most* in love with Mormon ideas.”

Mark Thomas compares Sunstone to the United Order. “You go in with this idea that couldn’t possibly succeed, and reality mangles it, but something about the dream survives even the disillusionment. Sunstone is the hidden part of Mormonism. If Mormonism doesn’t like it, it doesn’t like itself.”



To comment on this article, or to read comments by others, visit our website: <www.Sunstoneonline.com>.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, statements attributed to the following individuals come from interviews I conducted on the dates noted; notes in my possession: Peggy Fletcher Stack, 9 Jan. 1999; Allen Roberts, 6, 8 Jan. 1999; Lorie Winder Stromberg, 16, 17 Jan. 1999; John Sillito, 21 Jan. 1999; Susan Staker, 19 Jan. 1999; and Mark Thomas, 22, 25 Jan. 1999.

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4. Ida Smith, “The Psychological Needs of Mormon Women,” *SUNSTONE* (Mar.–Apr. 1981): 59–66, quotation from 64; Linda King Newell, “A Gift Given, a Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick among Mormon Women,” *SUNSTONE* (Sept.–Oct. 1981): 16–25, with responses by D. Michael Quinn and Irene M. Bates, 26–29; Harold T. Christensen, “The Persistence of Chastity: A Built-in Resistance within Mormon Culture to Secular Trends,” Marvin and Ann Rytting, “Exhortations for Chastity: A Content Analysis of Church Literature,” and Marybeth Raynes, “A Wish List: Comments on Christensen and the Ryttings,” *SUNSTONE* (Mar.–Apr. 1982): 7–24; Margaret M. Toscano, “The Missing Rib: The Forgotten Place of Queens and Priestesses in the Establishment of Zion,” *SUNSTONE* (July 1985): 17–22; Jerrie W. Hurd, “The Unnamed Woman in Scripture,” *SUNSTONE* (July 1985): 23–26.

5. Kenneth L. Cannon II, “After the Manifesto: Mormon Polygamy, 1890–1906,” *SUNSTONE* (Jan.–Apr. 1983): 27–35; Gary James Bergera, “Secretary to the Senator: Carl A. Badger and the Smoot Hearings,” *SUNSTONE* (Jan.–Apr. 1983): 36–44; Mark S. Lee, “Legislating Morality: Reynolds vs. United States,”

SUNSTONE (Apr. 1985): 8–12; Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, “Women at Winter Quarters,” *SUNSTONE* (July–Aug. 1983): 11–20; Boyd Kirkland, “Jehovah as the Father,” *SUNSTONE* (Autumn 1984): 36–44.

6. Gary L. Browning, “The Russian Chimera,” Eugene England, “Can Nations Love Their Enemies?” and Howard Ball, “The Nation State: Immorality and Violence,” *SUNSTONE* (Nov.–Dec. 1982): 18–24, 49–55, 57–58; Louis C. Zucker, “A Jew in Zion,” *SUNSTONE* (Sept.–Oct. 1981): 35–44; D. Jeff Burton, “The Phenomenon of the Closet Doubter,” *SUNSTONE* (Sept.–Oct. 1982): 34–35.

7. Susan [Staker], “Of All Things, A Memo,” to Peggy Fletcher, 11 Aug. 1982, in “Staff” folder, Sunstone Papers. The Sunstone Papers are housed in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Those cited in this paper are at this time still uncatalogued.

8. Anne Watson, “Magazines: A Will to Survive,” *Deseret News*, 21 Aug. 1982, S–5.

9. Peggy Fletcher letter to contributors, 18 Apr. 1985, in “Letters to Individual Donors” folder, Sunstone Papers.

10. There may have been a certain amount of hopefulness in these figures. Peggy’s report to the advisory council for Jan.–July 1982 showed contributions supplied 47 percent of the revenue, followed by renewals at 35 percent. Pie charts available in “National Advisory Council” folder, Sunstone Papers.

11. Budgets attached to minutes of National Advisory Board meeting, 25 Aug. 1983; cover letter dated 14 Sept. 1983, in “National Advisory Council” folder.

12. Board members identified in the 1 Apr. 1983 minutes who had committed to raise \$1,000 apiece were Jack Zenger, Dick Circuit, Reed Hunter, George Smith, Molly Bennion, Joel Peterson, Leonard Romney, Bellamy Brown, J. Bonner Ritchie, and Dick Southwick. However, board members who attended the meeting on 25 Aug. 1983 were Alan Ackroyd, Molly Bennion, Gayle Chandler, Deanne Frances, Reed Hunter, Patrick McKenzie, Grant Osborn, Stuart Poelman, Jeanne Pugsley, Annette Rogers, Kathryn Romney, George Smith, Jan Stout, Don Stringham, Reed Stringham, Nola Wallace, and Dennis Youkstetter. The first executive committee, appointed that spring by Peggy, consisted of Jon Lear (chair), John Ashton, Ross Anderson, Jim Clark, Jerry Kindred, and Sterling Van Wagenen. Minutes, National Advisory Board, 25 Aug. 1983, in “National Advisory Council” folder.

13. Bar graph, “Subscriber Growth,” in “National Advisory Council” folder.

14. Watson.

15. “Editor Rocks Mormon Boat with Liberal Publications,” undated clipping from *Arizona Republic* attached to National Advisory Board minutes, 25 Aug. 1983, in “National Advisory Council” folder.

16. “Exhibit 2,” attached to Agenda, 1 Apr. 1983, in “National Advisory Council” folder.

17. “Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting,” 12 Apr. 1984, in “Executive Committee” folder, Sunstone Papers. The story of the rise and fall of the *Sunstone Review* is documented in John R. Sillito, “A ‘Most Outrageously Ambitious Project’: *The Sunstone Review*, 1981–1984,” *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 2002), 46–55.

18. “Figure 3: Subscriptions,” in “Subscriptions” folder, Sunstone Papers.

19. “Debt Record” 27 Sept. 1984, typescript in “Financial Records” folder, Sunstone Papers.

20. Handwritten unsigned memo on scratch pad, “Utah Endowment for the Humanities” folder, Sunstone Papers.

21. “Utah Arts Council, Evaluation Report Form Due 31 Dec. 1984,” in “Grants” folder, Sunstone Papers. At the same time, UEH turned down a proposal to publish a special issue of the magazine on the arts. Handwritten notes on the cover of the rejection letter report: “Panelists split because of ‘Mormon only’ issue—state/theological problem. ‘Afraid’ to take it on. Emphasis ‘Mormon culture.’” Ruth R. Draper, letter to Peggy Fletcher, 15 Dec. 1983, in “Grants” folder.

22. See “1984 End of the Year Giving” folder, Sunstone Papers. Forty of the contributors were from Utah, nineteen from California, ten from the East and Midwest, and the rest from the West and Northwest.

23. See “Gottlieb Fundraiser” folder, Sunstone Papers.

24. “Notes from Staff Meeting,” 12 Jan., 26 Jan., 17 June 1983, in “Minutes” folder, Sunstone Papers.

25. “Sunstone Projects Needing Funding 1984,” in “Financial Records” folder.

26. “Job Posting—Statement of Qualifications,” n.d., attached to Michelle Macfarlane, letter to National Advisory Board, 25 Oct. 1985, in “National Advisory Board” folder.

27. “Job Description, Publisher/President, Sunstone Foundation,” *ibid.*

28. Peggy Fletcher Stack, letter to Jolene Graves, Feb. 1986, in “Donations, General” folder, Sunstone Papers.

29. Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting, 12 Apr. 1984, in “Executive Committee” folder.

*How has the rise of the World Wide Web affected Mormonism? Who is online and why?
How has the Church responded? How about the “unofficial” Church?
Are we becoming “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-dot Com?”*

ONE LORD, ONE FAITH MANY CHAT ROOMS: MORMONS, THE INTERNET, AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF OPEN SPACES

By Hugo Olaiz

[The Internet] is a very large room in which everyone is shouting.
—Elder Henry B. Eyring¹

*God speaks not only through prophets, seers, and revelators, but
also out of the mouths of babes, scholars, and asses.*
—Scott G. Kenney²

FIRST (CYBER)VISION

“An unusual excitement on the subject of listservs. . . .

IT HAS BEEN NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS SINCE THE FIRST LDS email list was announced,³ and I don’t think we have realized yet how profoundly the Internet is affecting the Mormon world. The Net is changing the way the Church proclaims the gospel, perfects the saints, and redeems the dead;⁴ but perhaps more important, it is changing the way we Latter-day Saints generate discourse, interact with each other, and find others with like interests.

“There was in the place where we lived an unusual excitement on the subject of listservs,” wrote cybersaint Danny Clark in 1993 in a piece entitled “The True Mailing List.”

It commenced with Mormon-L, but soon became general among all the mailing lists. Indeed the whole Internet seemed affected by it, and great multitudes subscribed themselves to the different mailing lists, which created no small stir and division among the Internet, some crying “Lo, here!” and others “Lo

there!” Some were contending for Mormon-L, some for Zion-L and some for LDS Net.⁵

Clark’s piece is particularly funny in the way it applies a basic Mormon tenet—the idea that one church must be true and all others in error—to the chaotic and fluid world of the Internet. But beyond its humorous intent, Clark’s satire addresses one of Mormonism’s most basic anxieties: the threat to place and order that comes with the emergence and proliferation of open spaces.

THE INTERNET AS OPEN SPACE

The problematic nature of uncharted territory

BECAUSE OF ITS abstract nature, when we speak of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and many other things computer-linked, we unconsciously but pervasively employ spatial metaphors. We refer to it all collectively as “cyberspace.”⁶ We talk about “visiting a site” and “meeting in a chatroom.”

Yet for many Mormons, the notion of open or uncharted space is problematic. From official anxieties about independent “symposia”⁷ to debates within independent groups themselves about what it means to truly be an open forum,⁸ there is a great deal of anxiety in Mormon circles about spaces free from institutional control.

While many cybersaints, both in the mainstream and on the margins, have ventured into the open space and found participation in virtual groups rewarding and faith-promoting, many Mormons are still puzzled and troubled by the Internet—a space so open and dynamic as to defy traditional notions of place, order, authority, and discourse control. It is not surprising, then, that some Mormons view the Web not simply as the road, but as the superhighway, to apostasy.⁹ Yet, despite the hesitations of some, new Mormon mailing lists, websites, and



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chatrooms are becoming an unofficial but increasingly legitimate part of the Mormon universe; and in both reactionary and proactive ways, official LDS sites are now beginning to “settle” parts of the electronic frontier.

EXTANT BIBLIOGRAPHY

A new area of study with much left to understand

LITTLE HAS BEEN written about the impact of the Internet on Mormonism. It appears the only strictly sociological study has been advanced by Hildi Mitchell, a social anthropologist at the University of Sussex.¹⁰ In her study, Mitchell suggests that if the LDS Church has responded to the advent of the Internet with caution, it is simply because of “the lack of control [the Church] can exercise over Internet publication of material.”¹¹ Mitchell, who focused her research on a feminist mailing list on the margins of Mormonism,¹² shows how some of these electronic groups appropriate LDS structures, subvert the traditional concept of callings,¹³ and even use the Internet to mobilize opposition to official LDS policies.¹⁴ “The existence of these groups does not derive only from their symbolic relationship to [traditional] Mormon community structures,” concludes Mitchell, but also “from some of the particular features of digital technology.”¹⁵ For Mitchell, these particular features (e.g., the speed, the global reach, and the unregulated nature of the Internet) allow these kinds of interactions and mobilizations.

Also reflecting on the role of the Internet in Mormonism, Sheldon Greaves identified three specific areas—LDS discourse, scholarship, and activism—where the unofficial Mormon Internet, mailing lists in particular, could make extraordinary contributions. Writing in 1994, Greaves suggests that electronic forums “fill an important need among people who use the networks to find other Mormons who share their interests and concerns,” and predicts that “as the number and variety of participants increase, [the Internet’s] usefulness as a tool for understanding Mormonism will likely increase.”¹⁶

In *Mormons and the Internet*, the first attempt toward a comprehensive treatment of the subject, LauraMaery Gold focuses on both official and unofficial sides of Mormonism.¹⁷ Like many other Web-savvy writers, she takes a practical not sociological approach, and her vision of online Mormon communities is all-encompassing and idealistic: “I see communities of like-minded Latter-day Saints coming together from their homes and offices in every little village in the world to inspire one another, to support one another, to work out the programs of the Church in their own ways . . . I have seen miracles take

SIX MORMON INTERNET COMMUNITIES

by Marc Fisher



1. **MEET AND GREET.** This group of Mormons meets and talks for social purposes. A younger community, it includes support groups, “cyberdaters,” and mission alumni pages.



2. **LEARN AND YEARN.** This group is for personal study of doctrinal, historical, and social Mormonism. It is very diverse with broad demographics.



3. **SEE AND FLEE.** This group comes to the Net to find resources for lessons and talks. They come in, find a fine little resource, and then leave. These are teachers, Scouters, Young Men and Young Women leaders, and those with urgent talk assignments.



4. **THE PREVALENT AND CONVALESCENT:** This group is online to do genealogical research. It may be the largest LDS Internet community and tends to be an older one.



5. **THRASH AND BASH:** This group is anti-Mormon. They use the Net to discount or discredit Mormonism, historically, socially, or doctrinally. They are varying ages and come from diverse religious backgrounds. A fast-growing Mormon apologist community is also on the Net.



6. **THE “TESTI-MONEY” COMMUNITY:** This group uses the Net to buy and sell Mormon-related merchandise and services.

Marc Fisher is an Internet watcher and former database manager for several Mormon-related websites.



place in the lives of members—and nonmembers—of the Church through the friendships they’ve found in online LDS communities.”¹⁸

OPEN SPACE AND PROPER CHANNELS

Fast and anonymous communication makes electronic gate-keeping a nearly impossible challenge

PERHAPS MORMON CYBERSPACE generates anxieties, first of all, because it represents an open space where people can freely choose their own niche. In Mormon belief and custom, participation and callings in a specific congregation are never by choice or preference. Unlike members of other denominations, who often choose freely what congregation to attend, Mormons are assigned to a specific ward with strict geographical boundaries.¹⁹ Personal characteristics such as sex, age, and marriage status further constrict the spaces in which members can move, and participation outside assigned bounds is strongly discouraged. From deciding who can sit on the meetinghouse stand²⁰ to determining who can enter the temple,²¹ Mormon spaces, both physical and symbolic, are carefully regulated.

In his description of LDS temples as sacred spaces, non-Mormon social scientist Douglas J. Davies has defined

Mormon “sacred secrecy” as “a means of maintaining a boundary that ensures a privilege of access to the prime source of identity.”²² We can conceive of all Mormon buildings (tem-

jungle, a territory without rules or laws. Browsing the Web can be overwhelming because of the extraordinary amount and diversity of the information and activities it offers. In cyberspace

In cyberspace one can download a Primary lesson or post the a temple recommend. One can find an eternal companion or enga

ples, chapels, institutes of religion, etc.) as regulated space. Participation is encouraged but carefully controlled. Information and directives do move from space to space, but this communication must go through “the proper channels.”²³

The Internet subverts this order of things by providing a parallel, unofficial channel for information. A good example of how the Internet subverts the proper channels is a commercial site that was launched in 2001 to provide confidential counseling for Mormons who do not want to turn to their bishops.²⁴ For a religion in which local leaders have “ecclesiastical monopoly” over their congregations, the alternative of turning to a website instead of a bishop is an extraordinary change.

Another example of how the Internet has affected “proper” dissemination of information occurred about six months before the Relief Society and Melchizedek Priesthood manuals were combined in 1998. Even though the change had not yet been officially announced, a general authority mentioned during a stake conference in the Midwest the plan to combine them, and a cybersaint in attendance posted the news on a mailing list. As reported by Mormon cyberwatcher Keith Irwin, a Church employee in the curriculum department was left “speechless” by how quickly the news had reached the general membership.²⁵

Most of the Web functions as seemingly unregulated space. One can freely visit sites, sign up for mailing lists, and join chatroom discussions. Moreover, whereas in geographically bound space, the status of a member (such as active/inactive, male/female, adult/young adult) is quite apparent,²⁶ the Internet has ways to hide these social markers. For example, in a chatroom or on a mailing list, an LDS man could quite easily participate in a forum intended for Relief Society sisters and, let’s say, exchange recipes or tips on home schooling.²⁷ Chatroom nicknames are often gender-neutral, with obscure Mormon names, such as Nehor or Kolob, among the favorites. This feature helps protect the identity of the users but also has the effect of putting all the members of a group on essentially equal footing.

FROM JUNGLE TO FRONTIER TOWN

The emergence of a new social order

A MORE PROFOUND reason the Church, like many other institutions, finds the Internet unsettling is because it is a space in which no one really seems to be in charge. For the average person, the Net appears as a chaotic

one can download a Primary lesson or post the text of the endowment. One can bear testimony or auction off a temple recommend.²⁸ One can find an eternal companion²⁹ or engage in an indecent proposal—sometimes both in the same sitting!

The title of Sheldon Greaves’s essay, “Mormon Settlements on the Electronic Frontier,” suggests an image for revising this description of the Internet as a “jungle.”³⁰ To me, more than an anarchic jungle, the Internet resembles a nineteenth-century frontier town. The Net *does* have laws controlling discourse and participation, but they are so different that we hardly recognize them as such. Cyberspace is being settled under a new social order.

The Internet is not merely another place—it is a different type of space altogether. It has its own set of protocols, etiquette, and expectations. In SUNSTONE or *Dialogue*, a simple exchange of opinions (for instance, an article and a responding letter to the editor) typically takes between three and six months. On the Internet, an exchange of opinions typically takes twenty-four hours, and can even occur in real time. In the printed media, anonymity is discouraged. On the Internet, anonymity is tolerated and sometimes even encouraged. In the printed media, once a document is published, the text is forever fixed. On the Internet, discourse occupies a fluid space, somewhere between written and spoken discourse. Opinions can be posted on a webpage, but they can also be edited at any time. Most strikingly, books and magazines tend to occupy always the same physical space in libraries—even sitting on the same shelf and having the same call number. Webpages, on the other hand, tend to change their location in cyberspace, and they often disappear without a trace. Not surprisingly, those who grew up using traditional intellectual tools, such as books and periodicals, often find the Internet unsettling.

Another serious Internet issue is the question of authority. Within Mormonism, materials used in manuals, talks, and on the official LDS website are nearly always supported by statements from scriptures or living prophets. Some divergence from strictly “correlated truths” is allowed, especially in classrooms, but teachers, who are assigned to moderate class discussions, are charged with keeping the doctrine pure.

But many Mormons go to the Net in the first place because they are hungry to hear personal opinions and experiences—not official lines from a manual. Usually, the person in charge of a mailing list seems to be absent, and discussions seem unmoderated.³¹ Traditional notions of authority tend to collapse further because we usually know little about the Mormon status of the participants. Over time, of course, the most vocal members

of small discussion groups tend to acquire reputations, but that is not to say that they have a “more important calling” or a higher priesthood rank than the others. Information on the

“It seems to be more than just an issue of authorship and authority,” says Woodworth. “It’s also a problem of intended audience and intended meaning. On the Internet, it may seem

text of the endowment. One can bear testimony or auction off
ge in an indecent proposal—sometimes both in the same sitting!

Web can also turn out to be unsubstantiated rumors,³² urban legends,³³ or even hoaxes.³⁴

The Internet also complicates the issue of authority by blurring authorship. The author of a piece can be unknown or anonymous, and works posted on the Web can be easily altered or misappropriated. Former SUNSTONE assistant editor Cherie Woodworth has twice been the victim of having her work altered or misappropriated. A satirical piece she wrote about LDS missionaries wearing pins on their lapels (to dispel the perception that they are gay couples) was altered by an anonymous hand who then added a sentence comparing President Gordon B. Hinckley to Adolf Hitler. The piece circulated worldwide, mostly in its altered version. Part of another Woodworth satire, this time about the new LDS Conference Center, was published by Robert Kirby in *The Salt Lake Tribune* without any attribution to Woodworth.³⁵ Kirby, who had received the piece sans author in an email message, later apologized for the misappropriation.³⁶

like you’re whispering something privately to a small group of your best friends, when actually it may turn out that it has been ‘whispered’ to hundreds of perfect strangers.”³⁷

“VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES” SETTling THE OPEN SPACE
Promoting diversity or “preaching to the choir”?

IT IS COMMONPLACE nowadays to talk about “virtual communities.” Yet this notion is both complex and problematic. What exactly is a virtual community? What defines membership? What kind of impact does the community have both on its members and on a larger social realm?³⁸

In her analysis of Mormon virtual communities, Mitchell utilizes political scientist Benedict Anderson’s notion of imagined communities³⁹ and concludes that “‘community’ need not be restricted to face-to-face communications.”⁴⁰ I suggest that the Mormon groups settling in cyberspace—especially mailing lists and chatrooms—are indeed developing many

E-GAY: GAY MORMON YOUTH AND THE INTERNET

by Jed R. Brubaker

ACCORDING TO A 1998 survey conducted in partnership with *Oasis Magazine*, the average age for young homosexuals to “come out” is now sixteen. This development is due largely to the Internet. In no other medium can one investigate issues of sexual identity anonymously, without fear of judgment. The Internet helps gay youth connect with others experiencing the same challenges and thus provides them with a sense of community.

At a time when I thought I was “the only one,” the sense of belonging I found through the Internet literally kept me alive. The Internet provided me with the resources and information I needed to create a stable sense of self as I came out of the closet.

But a young Latter-day Saint on the Internet faces two conflicting Mormon values. On the one hand, we are taught to pursue education and knowledge. Yet the well-known phrase, “Be in the world, but not of it,” encourages us to avoid any influence that might corrupt. Ultimately the message is: “Learn everything you can, *but not too much*.”

For me, as for many gay pre-teens and teenagers, the Internet held the promise of self-enlightenment. It encouraged self-exploration. It promised to alleviate the anxiety I felt while sorting out my sexuality.

But all this came at a price. The Internet was a modern Tree of Knowledge. It offered the gift of enlightenment, but at the expense of my childhood faith, beliefs, and sense of who I am. Taking up the journey of self-discovery the Internet opened up for me meant leaving Eden. I had to struggle to create a new identity—a dual identity—preserving what I could from the past while rejecting what no longer worked for me. It’s a problem without a clear solution.

As I work online now with the next group of gay teenagers grappling with these issues, I see the same story replayed. The question is simple: “Will I hold on to who I am now, or will I let go in hopes of who I could become?”

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MORMONISM ONLINE IN JAPAN

by Jiro Numano

THE LDS INTERNET population in Japan is rapidly increasing among the common membership, following about ten years of pioneering by advanced PC users. The email exchange activities here trace back to 1991 when Shigeyuki Tsuchiya started an "On-line Family-Home-Evening Home Party." The name was changed in 1993 to "Bountiful." As the number of participants grew and the subjects discussed diversified, a group interested in broad topics, calling itself "Irreantum," branched off. In 1995, Tsuchiya opened another mailing list, "lds-j," and these three are currently the major mailing lists among Japanese Latter-day Saints. In 1998, a more conservative group added another list, "Zion" for exchanging faith-promoting notes. In the meantime, lists for specific purposes have also been formed. "Plate" is used for storing useful gospel-related texts, "jlds-info" for providing information, and "j-lds" (Grant's Legacy) is geared to English-speaking members. Of course, many smaller ones exist for stake or ward areas.

Subscribers to these lists have enjoyed unique cyber-Mormon communities, exchanging news of Church activities and sometimes sharing worries and questions. The role played by "Irreantum" when the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake (which killed six thousand citizens, including five Latter-day Saints) hit the Kobe area in 1995 is worthy of special attention. The latest news and needs were posted there, and the information helped energize relief operations. Online networks were a powerful medium, offering the candid voices of the victims and the reactions of readers.

Interestingly, the Japanese Mormon presence online has attracted many who have been away from the Church to re-examine their commitments; but it has also become a place for exchange among those who are thinking of leaving and those who have already left the Church.

Regarding official Church-related home pages, nine missions have well-organized ones in English, one of the chief purposes of which is to serve as the alumni page for returned missionaries. The Church's official site, <lds.org>, can now be viewed in Japanese. Some attempts have also been made to open and maintain privately-run webpages to introduce and defend the Church. Anti-Mormon pages have been very active since 1999 and have had such a strong influence that some members, including priesthood leaders, have left the Church. While various efforts are being made to cope with these pages, opposition to the Church's mission appears strong and often behaves without inhibition.



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traits that help define these virtual groups as communities, including the ritualistic sharing of information, the pursuit of special interests, and, at least in some cases, the fostering of a sense of solidarity.⁴¹

But like the Smith family living in a "burnt-over district," we soon realize that we do not have "one God, one faith, one website." We have scores of independent sites and mailing lists that appear, divide, specialize, and disappear daily. This is one of the paradoxes of the Internet. Ideally, Mormon groups are imagined as the ultimate Sunday School lesson (minus the teacher), i.e., as an open forum where people with different opinions can exchange ideas in a respectful manner. But really we find a myriad of groups where both the topics of discussion and the politics of the participants become progressively specialized. As the various forums grow, divide, and specialize, intra-group analysis reveals that most groups are essentially preaching to the choir.

"Unfortunately, there are too few broad-based LDS discussion groups where civility is the rule," laments Keith Irwin. "The lack of civility, in my opinion, has led to a specialization of discussion groups."⁴² Many observers worry about this gradual fragmentation, polarization, and ghettoization of virtual communities.⁴³ In an ultimate irony, the Net could actually be promoting uniformity instead of diversity, and fragmentation rather than unity. And this possibility undermines the Net's potential to do one of the things that LDS members who congregate in geographically bound wards often learn to do: tolerate (and perhaps, even accept) those who are different.⁴⁴

DIVERSITY IN THE OPEN SPACE

Conservatives, vegetarians, and Trekkies

DESPITE THESE DANGERS of fragmentation and polarization, the Mormon Internet is extraordinarily diverse. It doesn't limit itself to the purely religious aspects of Mormonism but shows the splendid diversity of Mormon cultures and subcultures. The young and the old, the single and the married, the liberal and the conservative, the straight and the gay, are all represented in Mormon cyberspace. With some speaking quietly and others screaming with all the bandwidth they can muster, unofficial websites and mailing lists represent "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33)—voices and rooms that seem to be pointing in all directions.

We must not assume that liberals, minorities, and alternate voices are the only groups on the Internet. With thousands of websites, hundreds of mailing lists, and dozens of chatrooms, mainstream Mormons have certainly established their own settlements on the electronic frontier. Yet, because of the LDS Church's tendency to perceive alternate voices as potential threats, it is only natural that, feeling unwelcome in physical Mormon spaces, alternate voices flock to cyberspace, where freedom of speech reigns supreme.

The boundaries of Mormon cyberspace are open and imprecise. Depending on personal views and attitudes, we may perceive as faith-promoting not only discourse found in main-



CARTOON BY JONATHAN COOMBS (based on concept by Hugo Olaz and John-Charles Duffy)

Uh, Sister, since when is your family's email address, Hunk@Beefcake.com?

stream locations such as the Church's official website or *Meridian Magazine*,⁴⁵ but also that found in more peripheral locations as diverse as the LDS Skinny-Dipper Connection,⁴⁶ Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons,⁴⁷ or a webpage dedicated to Mormon vegetarianism.⁴⁸

The Web is also the place where small Mormon groups scattered throughout the world transcend the limitations of physical space and congregate around a special interest, language, or need. From a group of LDS mothers of children with Down's Syndrome⁴⁹ to members dealing with depression,⁵⁰ to LDS members who are *Star Trek* fans,⁵¹ the Net has hundreds of special interest groups that highlight the richness and complexity of the Mormon universe.

OFFICIAL RESPONSE I:
THE CLOSURE OF OPEN SPACES
The cases of <lds.net> and the Church Handbook of Instructions

THE OFFICIAL CHURCH response to the emergence of open spaces has been two-fold. On the one hand, LDS officials have created a myriad of official spaces that correlate and unify the LDS presence on the Internet (see the following section). On the other, they have taken action to control some of the sites cropping up.⁵² The first official LDS action

regarding the Net many cybersaints can remember was an act of censorship: the expulsion of one of the most popular mailing lists, Mormon-L, from a BYU server.⁵³

Symptoms of worry about open spaces emerged as soon as it became possible to buy domain names ("Web addresses"). In 1992, John Hayes, a Latter-day Saint and computer programmer from Seattle, Washington, helped the Church register the name <lds.org>. He also registered <mormon.org> and <mormon.net> "because [he] didn't want them to fall in the wrong hands."⁵⁴ Unfortunately, he did not secure <mormon.com>, and what he had feared did happen. Finally, years later, an Orem businessman spent tens of thousands of dollars to buy the domain from the person who had registered it and had then used it to post pornography and distort scriptures.⁵⁵

As Mormon cyberspace expanded, virtual communities and businesses started to register other domain names that included the words LDS and Mormon. But when, after three years in operation, the owners of <lds.net>, an Internet filtering service, attempted to trademark their name, lawyers working for the Church responded swiftly. Not only did they place an injunction on the trademark, but they attempted to bar the company from using the name LDS.net, the word



CARTOON BY JONATHAN COOMBS (based on concept by Hugo Olaz and John-Charles Duffy)

Harold's luck took a dramatic turn for the better when he stopped attending singles dances and started to log onto www.HotSaints.com.

WWW—"WORLD WIDE (SINGLES) WARD"?

WHAT A NICHE! Take a very large group of single people whose religious tradition stresses the importance of marriage, and especially within the faith, if they want temporal and eternal happiness. So, they must date. Add to this mix the fact that most members of this group are still in their sexual prime, they want to meet a special someone, but many have finished their schooling and have found that it isn't as easy as it once was to meet other singles through the tried and true ways. Indeed, if you are a Latter-day Saint who believes the Holy Ghost is responsible for all terrestrial progress, you would likely rank celestial match-making as the *raison d'être* for the invention of the World Wide Web—or is it the "World Wide Ward?"

Although there are many competitors vying to sign up potential LDS cyberdaters, no one has captured this niche market better than LDSingles.com. With an average of 2,700 members logged onto the service at any given time throughout the day, and about 4,000 at night, LDSSingles is a phenomenon. According to its president, Bob Haupt, most subscribers to the service are between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, yet "plenty of people over forty are finding each other as well." Haupt says the company's statistics "absolutely destroy the myth that it's easier to be struck by lightning than to meet and marry someone when you're over thirty-five." Indeed, since the service's launch in March 1996, LDSingles estimates that more than one thousand marriages have resulted among folks who met via its forums. "There are four couples in our ward alone that are happily married because of LDSSO!" reads a recent testimonial about a happy match. "For the ladies out there, I would say take heart. There are very good LDS men who are faithful and sincere and are willing to be a good partner and father. Don't give up, give in, or relax your principles for any reason."



So, you've decided to look for love online; what must you do? Each match-making service is different, but typically you first create a profile for yourself: your age, where you live, if you've been married before, number of children, and other vital stats. You might then simply write a description of yourself, your goals and interests, your job or career plans, and anything else you'd like to share. Many of the services have specific prompts where you may or may not wish to note your church activity level, political leanings, favorite movie or music, dream vacation, and so forth. And even though many subscribers come to these services as part of a genuine celestial pursuit, the profiles that generate the most activity usually include a photo or gallery of photos. After creating a basic profile, you will then be able to browse for free, but if you subscribe (prices range from \$7.95 to \$11.95 per month), you can then also contact via email, instant messaging, or in chat rooms, those who match your search criteria and who spark your interest. If the intrigue isn't mutual, the other person may gently turn you down or create a block so you will not be able to contact them again.

As with any Internet forum, even the LDS matchmaker sites have to deal with the "creep factor," men who pose as women, and vice-versa, or even worse. Still, Haupt stresses that for LDSingles, complaints along these lines are very rare—far below the industry average. So, even though you have had great online or phone conversations with someone and you finally decide to meet, Haupt urges all cyberdaters to exercise the same kind of common sense they would when meeting any blind date: "Meet in a public place, perhaps even bring a friend along. Keep it casual until you feel confident you know who this person really is."

"Liahona" in the company's slogan ("Your liahona [sic] to the Internet"), and even an artist-drawn graphic of a Liahona. Ironically, the company was run by faithful Mormons trying to promote LDS moral standards on the Net. The Church's legal department referred the case to the Kirton & McConkie law firm, which also questioned the use of "Mormon" in a LDS.net-run site called <mormonvillage.com>. Fearing negative publicity in other ventures, the owners of LDS.net decided to sell the company rather than engage in lengthy litigation with the Church.⁵⁶

In January 1999, an anonymous priesthood leader scanned a copy of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* and began to circulate it in cyberspace. This was not the first time sensitive Mormon material had been divulged in cyberspace: Years before, the more sensitive (though not copyrighted) text of the LDS endowment had been posted on several sites.⁵⁷ But when the handbook appeared on several websites, the Church copyrights office called the offending parties and threatened them with legal action.⁵⁸

In July 1999, long-time Church critics Jerald and Sandra Tanner posted two sections of the handbook on the website of their organization, the Utah Lighthouse Ministry. When the Church sued the Tanners for copyright infringement, a number of events and ironies underscored the anxieties of broken boundaries. While other sites were posting the whole 160-page handbook, LDS officials singled out the Tanners, who had posted merely seventeen pages.⁵⁹ Moreover, when the lawsuit erupted, many Mormons, fearful of the Church's aggressive pursuit of the case,⁶⁰ rushed to the Internet to offer, and to obtain, their own copies.

Rather than suppressing access to the handbook, the lawsuit against the Tanners brought unwanted attention to the document and helped reinforce a sense of solidarity among LDS members who wanted a copy. When the Tanners finally agreed to remove the pages they had posted, they posted a link to an Australian site where the

handbook was still available, and the address of the new site was published in *The Salt Lake Tribune*.⁶¹ Even though the Australian site eventually removed the document, copies of the handbook continue to appear in different parts of cyberspace. The case of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* illustrates anxieties both within the institution (which fears the possibility that boundaries might be irreversibly broken) and among less-empowered grassroots Mormons (who fear the possibility that such boundaries will be refortified).

OFFICIAL RESPONSE II: "COLONIZING" CYBERSPACE *Reluctance turns to opportunity*

BEGINNING IN 1996, the First Presidency pursued a number of initiatives to monitor and coordinate the development of the official LDS website at <lds.org>. They did this through the Internet Task Committee and a

October 2000 to October 2001, the number of people who followed General Conference over the Net doubled to more than 120,000. Now LDS officials are thinking about broadcasting General Conference with broadband technology (i.e., with the same definition of a TV signal). "In five to ten years, we'll all have broadband," predicts Bonneville International Corp. president and CEO Bruce Reese.⁷⁴

Although Elder Holland has several times said that "[Church leaders] aren't 'breathless' about using the Internet,"⁷⁵ LDS-sponsored sites continue to crop up. The *LDS Church News* went online in December 1995.⁷⁶ On April 1999, the Church announced a genealogical site at <familysearch.org>.⁷⁷ By October 2002, the site had grown to where it receives three million hits per hour.⁷⁸ In January 2001, the Church began developing <mormon.org>, a missionary site for nonmembers, which was finally launched in October 2001 and has received more than two million visits.⁷⁹

In an ultimate irony, the Net could actually be promoting uniformity rather than diversity, fragmentation instead of unity.

company the Church created, the Millennial Star Network (abbreviated "M-Star").⁶² The official LDS site was activated in February 1996, and in December of the same year, the Church began to post information.⁶³ This first version of the site contained basic media information, as well as information about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and genealogical research. The main page featured Del Parson's painting *The Lord Jesus Christ*, which, according to an *LDS Church News* article, "undoubtedly help[s] to dispel the misconception that [LDS] members are not Christian."⁶⁴ (The main page image was later changed to depict a smiling family,⁶⁵ and finally to depict Temple Square's North Visitor Center's Christus statue on a background of bluish clouds.)⁶⁶

When the first version of the official site was posted online, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated that the Church had no interest in using the Internet to communicate with its members, because only a small fraction of members had access to the Web.⁶⁷ However, the site's most recent version includes resources specifically aimed at members: the LDS scriptures, family resources, General Conference talks, and thirty years of Church magazines that can be accessed by keyword or by topic.⁶⁸ The Church is also keeping statistical information on the number of virtual visitors to the site and which pages they visit. In March 1997 the *LDS Church News* reported the equivalent of 48,000 "hits" (visits to individual pages) a day.⁶⁹ By March 2000, that number had grown to 750,000 hits a day.⁷⁰

The Church has also rapidly progressed in using the Internet for General Conference. Only three days after the April 1997 General Conference, transcripts of the talks from all sessions were posted on the Church's official site.⁷¹ In April 1998, Bonneville Communications began to broadcast a limited live audio signal via the Internet.⁷² In October 1999, the signal was expanded to include audio and video.⁷³ From

Other official Mormon sites are "colonizing" cyberspace and helping carry out the mission of the Church. For instance, one site offers a free copy of the LDS edition of the Bible—and a visit by Mormon missionaries.⁸⁰ The LDS Foundation site helps coordinate donations other than tithing and fast offerings.⁸¹ The official Church site, <lds.org>, can now be used to reserve tickets to temple open houses.⁸² And the new <mormon.org> site allows users to send electronic cards with inspirational images.

These official websites, with carefully correlated contents, present a unified image and send a clear response to the many anti-Mormon sites on the Internet.⁸³ However, there are still anxieties about control. A ban on the use of email by LDS missionaries has recently been lifted,⁸⁴ but a March 2001 letter from the Presiding Bishopric directed local Church leaders to discontinue the many hundreds of home pages maintained by wards and stakes across the world: "As the Church grows, it is very important that information presented to the world be accurate and dignified and that it represent a single, unified Church voice."⁸⁵ Although intended for official Church units only, the directive generated anxiety among some members who operate private or commercial sites with Mormon content.⁸⁶

THE FINAL FRONTIER *Opportunities abound for all*

IF THE INTERNET is a bad place to look for "the true mailing list," this is because absolute truths and dogmas do not fare well in open spaces. The virtual presence of marginal Mormon groups suggests that the Internet is gradually becoming the frontier where the battles between free speech and correlated discourse will finally be fought. Overall, the Web has already proven an extraordinary tool for less-empow-

The case of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* illustrates anx (which fears the possibility that boundaries might be irreversi empowered grassroots members (who fear the possibility that su

ered Mormon groups. Feminists and intellectuals, gays and lesbians can network across the world and explore different issues with little fear of being censored or disciplined. It is not clear how much the LDS Church monitors Mormon discourse on the Internet, but the use of nicknames, pseudonyms, and the presence of private mailing lists guarantees that the Strengthening Church Members Committee will have more difficulty tracking alternate voices on the Net than in more traditional media.

At least in part, using the Web promotes an alternative cul-

ture. This culture is based on the principles of finding one's own niche, accepting multiplicity rather than singularity, and freely networking across vast physical and virtual spaces. It is not clear yet how different demographic groups in Mormonism are embracing or repelling this culture. But anecdotal evidence suggests that whereas the LDS mainstream often tends to see the Internet as an occasional supplement to their ward experience, for many Mormons on the margins, the Net is the most important—and sometimes the only—medium for

engaging in productive dialogue with other like-minded people and channeling their ideas into activism.⁸⁷

Whereas the main purpose of the official LDS sites continues to be the dissemination of official information, many unofficial sites allow Mormons to interact and “bring a measure of balance back to the battle between the ‘conservatives’ and the ‘liberals.’”⁸⁸ Disenfranchised Zoramites of the twenty-first century can now create virtual meeting houses where no one will judge their earrings or their Birkenstocks—only their ideas and their eloquence in expressing them (see Alma 32: 1-12).

Despite the anxieties that cyberspace generates, the LDS Church is taking, overall, an increasingly optimistic approach toward the Internet and its possibilities. Commenting on the Church's missionary site, Elder Dallin H. Oaks has recently stated, “We believe that using the Internet will open a whole new world of opportunity to share the gospel for members and missionaries.”⁸⁹ The president of Millennial Star Network, Franklin Lewis, went so far as to describe the Church's efforts as “coloniz[ing] an electronic global community of members and friends of the Church.”⁹⁰ By talking of “colonization,” Lewis is returning to an old metaphor used previously in discussions of the Open Frontier. Perhaps the day has come when the open realms of cyberspace are no longer seen only as a threat but also as an opportunity. 

DIFFERENT SPACES, SIMILAR PROBLEMS

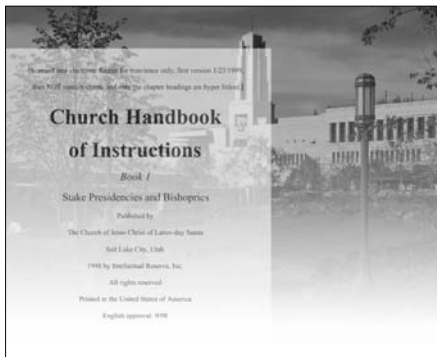
SOME INTRIGUING PARALLELS exist between the controversy over the Main Street Plaza—a physical space—and that over the posting of the *Church Handbook of Instructions* in virtual space. In 1999, lawyers for the Church aggressively pursued a lawsuit against Jerald and Sandra Tanner over the handbook, going so far as to demand that the Tanners remove from their website a link to another site in Australia that had also posted it. Likewise, when the Church purchased a section of Main Street in downtown Salt Lake City, its lawyers made an aggressive push to legitimize control over what they now considered to be private space (see related story on page 70).

Both official moves encountered strong opposition, and perhaps even backfired. The Tanner lawsuit brought unwanted attention to the *Handbook*, and its circulation seems to have since increased, with its text continually cropping up on various sites. The inauguration of the LDS Plaza also encountered a vociferous public opposing the move. In both the physical world and in cyberspace, LDS leaders are discovering how difficult it is to restore broken boundaries and to control an open space.

Interestingly, some Mormons allied with non-Mormons in opposing

the LDS Plaza project; so too, Mormons and non-Mormons worked together in scanning and posting the handbook. Whereas ex- and anti-Mormons can make little use of its contents, many Mormons find the handbook to be empowering.

Church officials have defended restrictions on the LDS Plaza on the basis that the space is “sacred ground.” Religion professor Douglas J. Davies, in an analysis of LDS temple ritual, proposes that by controlling access to sacred space, leaders protect privileged information and perhaps also “exert a degree of institutional control over ordinary members” (*The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, p. 81). Some observers believe these are the same reasons LDS leaders wish to control access to the *Church Handbook of Instructions*. By posting the handbook's contents on the Internet, some less-empowered Mormons seem to have found an effective way to break boundaries and to fight institutional control.



To comment on this article or read comments by others, please visit our website: <www.sunstoneonline.com>.

ities both within the institution ably broken) and among less- ch boundaries will be refortified).

NOTES

1. Jennifer Toomer, "To Get It Right, LDS Delayed Its Web Site," *Deseret News*, 1 Feb. 1997, sec. A1; also quoted in Drew Clark, "Mormonism on the Internet," *This People* 18 (Summer 1997): 40.

2. "God's Alternate Voices," *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 1990): 14.

3. The first LDS online group, LDS-Net, was established in 1988 by Darren Leigh, Michael Fetterman, and Richard Hyde. See "Welcome to the Email First Ward: Belonging to an Electronic Discussion Group" (panel presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 12 August 1993, session 363); Bryan Waterman, "A Guide to the Mormon Universe: Mormon Organizations & Periodicals," *SUNSTONE* (Dec. 1994): 65. Mormon-L, the first mailing list to reach a large number of users, was announced in "Sunstone Calendar," *SUNSTONE* (Oct. 1991): 61 and *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 25 (Spring 1992): 7-8;

4. It has been suggested that the three main LDS websites (<mormon.org>, <lds.org>, and <familysearch.org>) parallel the three-fold mission of the Church; see *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 2002): 76. The second part of the only book entirely dedicated to the Mormon Internet is also organized according to the Church's three-fold mission; see LauraMaery Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000-2001* (Rocklin, Calif.: Prima Publishing, 2000), 87-175.

5. Electronic copy of the full text in my possession.

6. The term "cyberspace" was first used by William Gibson in his 1984 science-fiction novel *Neuromancer*.

7. See "Church Issues Statement on 'Symposia,'" *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1991): 58-59; "BYU Memo Highlights Academic Freedom Issue," *SUNSTONE* (Feb. 1992): 62-66; Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Spring 1993): 7-64.

8. See "Open, Independent, Responsible," *SUNSTONE* (July 2001): 10.

9. Since 1996, Church leaders have repeatedly cautioned members about the dangers of the Internet—pornography in particular. For some of the earliest admonitions, see Sara Jane Weaver, "Walk Path of Faith, Young Adults Told," *LDS Church News* (27 Jan. 1996): 3; Gordon B. Hinckley, "True to the Faith," *Ensign* (June 1996): 4; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Up for Truth," *Brigham Young University Speeches 1996-1997* (Provo, Utah), 24; Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Conversation with Single Adults," *Ensign* (March 1997): 62; see also "Cyberspace Cautions," *LDS Church News* (19 June 1999): 16. In 1999, LDS authors Clark L. and Kathryn H. Kidd published *A Parent's Survival Guide to the Internet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999). When Gold published the second edition of *Mormons on the Internet*, she added a chapter called "Creating a Safe Space on the Net" (73-84).

10. Hildi Mitchell, "Society, Support and Subversion: The Changing Nature of Mormon Community in the Digital Age" (paper presented at Visions and Voices Conference, University of Manchester, 27-31 Oct. 1999; electronic copy with no pagination in my possession).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Mitchell specifically examines ELWC-Plus, a Mormon feminist mailing list founded by Lynn Matthews Anderson. For information on ELWC-Plus, see "Postimonies from the Net: The Ward from Hell," panel presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 1995 (tape #SL95-363).

13. In a humorous vein, the women in the list started to call their mailing list "the Ward from Hell," and went so far as to assign themselves "callings" in their organization. Lynn Matthews Anderson was referred to as the "bishop" of the "ward."

14. In 1998, when the LDS Church donated \$500,000 to a campaign for banning same-sex marriages in Alaska, several ELWC-Plus participants became involved in MormonAid, an unofficial LDS group that donated several thousands of dollars to oppose the campaign. See Bob Mims, "LDS Activists Oppose Church's Donation to Anti-Gay Marriage Effort," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 Oct. 1998, C3; Patty Henez, "LDS Cash Carries Gay-Marriage Fight," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 Oct. 1998, A1.

15. Mitchell.

16. Sheldon Greaves, "Cybersaints: Mormon Settlements on the Electronic Frontier," *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1994): 21-25.

17. Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000-2001*. For reviews of Gold's book, see Marc A. Schindler, *SUNSTONE* (June 1998): 68-69, and Gregory Taggart, *FARMS Review of Books* 10 (1998): 206-10.

18. Gold, xviii.

19. According to the 1998 *Church Handbook of Instructions*, "Membership records are to be kept in the ward in which the member lives. Exceptions, which should be few, require the consent of the bishops and stake presidents involved and the approval of the Office of the First Presidency" (1: 127).

20. In a 1996 BYU fireside, Elder Boyd K. Packer stated that an "unwritten order" regulates many of the things Mormons do in church—even the proper positioning of a bishop's counselors on the stand. Apparently too controversial to be included in *Brigham Young University Speeches 1996-1997*, the talk, "The Unwritten Order of Things," is available at the LDS Church Archives, and on a number of websites, and can be purchased through <www.speeches.byu.edu>. For a summary, see "Elder Packer Outlines 'Unwritten Order,'" *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 1997): 72.

21. Todd Compton has reflected on the current policy of closed-doors temples (and the alternative) in "Thoughts on the Possibility of an Open Temple," *SUNSTONE* (Mar.-Apr. 1999): 42-49.

22. Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 80.

23. The expression "the proper channels" was first used in the early days of Mormonism to warn against the dangers of "false spirits"; see "On the Influence of False Spirits," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 2 (March 1842): 172-75. Now it is used to refer more generally to the way members must interact with Church leaders. See Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 229-48; see also Packer, "The Unwritten Order of Things."

24. See <www.ldscounseling.com>. Mark Eddington, "Mormons Who Don't Want to Face Bishop Can Find Counseling Online," *Salt Lake Tribune* (17 Mar. 2001): C1.

25. Keith Irwin, "Foreword," in LauraMaery Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000-2001*, xi.

26. There have, of course, been cases of people "disguising" themselves to project a more desirable Mormon status. Prospective missionaries, for instance, have been known to attend BYU dances wearing white T-shirts under their shirts and shorts to the knee under their slacks, thus projecting the more desirable status of garment-wearing returned missionaries. According to Lawrence Wright, non-Mormon lawyers have been known to use a similar subterfuge to influence LDS juries; see "Lives of the Saints," *The New Yorker* (21 Jan. 2002): 49.

27. See Amy S. Bruckman, "Gender Swapping on the Internet," in Peter Ludlow, ed., *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1996), 317-25.

28. Bob Mims, "The Highest Bid: Temple Recommend Yanked from Sale on Internet Auction," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 July 1999, A1; "LDS Temple Recommend is Deleted by eBay," *Deseret News*, 31 July 1999, E2; "Temple Recommend Offered for Sale on eBay," *SUNSTONE* (Feb. 2000): 74.

29. See Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000-2001*, 248-52; Carolyn Campbell, "Marriage by Modem," *Salt Lake City Weekly* (26 July 2001): 18-23; Jesse Hyde, "LDS Singles Mingling on the Web," *Deseret News*, 23 June 2002, A1.

30. Greaves, "Cybersaints: Mormon Settlements on the Electronic Frontier." The expression "the Electronic Frontier" was popularized by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an organization for the protection of civil and free speech rights <www EFF.org>. See Joshua Quittner, "The Merry Pranksters Go to Washington," *Wired* (June 1994): 77-81, 128-31.

31. In a moderated mailing list, a person or a team of people read every message sent to the list before posting them. In an unmoderated mailing list, messages are posted automatically, but members who do not abide by the regulations of the list can be expelled by the list owner.

32. In 1999, for example, the Internet helped circulate the rumor that Dallin H. Oaks was engaged to be married to Deseret Book vice-president Sheri L. Dew. The rumor collapsed on 25 Aug. 2000, when Elder Oaks married Kristen Meredith McCain.

33. One of the best known cases of urban legends originated in a satirical piece by Cherie Woodworth. See "Accidental Author of an Internet Legend," *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1997): 55-57.

34. There are a number of websites dedicated to urban legends and Internet hoaxes. One of the most complete is found at <www.urbanlegends.about.com>.

35. See Robert Kirby "Conference Center Will Not a) Be Used for BYU Football Games; b) Levitate on Pillars of Fire; c) Have a Beer License," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 Apr. 2000, C1.

36. Robert Kirby, "Here's a Funny One—Accidental Web Bootlegging," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 Apr. 2000, C1; see also Shinika Sykes, "Did Kirby Err in Not

Crediting Author of Internet Humor List?" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 Apr. 2000, AA2.

37. Personal communication with Cherie Woodworth, 11 July 2001; notes in my possession.

38. These questions are currently being addressed best in a sociological framework. See Steven G. Jones, ed., *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communication and Community* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995); Marc A. Smith & Peter Kollock, *Communities in Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 1999); Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000); James Slevin, *The Internet and Society* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers/Polity Press, 2000); Ludlow (ed.), *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier*, 397–444.

39. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions/NLB, 1983).

40. Mitchell.

41. Steven G. Jones, "Understanding Community in the Information Age," in Jones, *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communication and Community*, 10–35.

42. Irwin, xiii.

43. Cass Sunstein, *Republic.com* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 51–88; Andrew L. Shapiro, *The Control Revolution* (New York: Century Foundation/PublicAffairs, 1999), 115–23; Dave Healy, "Cyberspace and Place: The Internet as Middle Landscape on the Electronic Frontier," in David Porter, ed., *Internet Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 55–68.

44. According to Eugene England, experiences in an LDS ward bring members "into powerful relationships with a range of people and problems in their assigned congregation that are not primarily of their own choosing but are profoundly redemptive in potential, in part because they are not consciously chosen." See "Why the Church Is As True As the Gospel," SUNSTONE (Apr. 1986): 33.

45. See <www.meridianmagazine.com>.

46. See <www.ldssdc.info>; "What Do You Know about Mormon Nudists? Would You Like to Know More?" SUNSTONE (Apr. 2002): 79.

47. See <www.affirmation.org>; Hugo Olaiz, "Gay & Lesbian Mormons: Interviews with James Kent, Former Executive Director of Affirmation, and with Aaron Cloward, Founder and Coordinator of Gay LDS Youth," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33 (Fall 2000): 123–36.

48. See <www.vegsource.com/articles/catano.htm>; "Animal-Rights Group Asks President Hinckley to Stop Sponsoring Hunts," SUNSTONE (Jan. 2002): 76.

49. See <groups.yahoo.com/group/mormondsmommies>.

50. See <groups.yahoo.com/group/ldsdepressionsupport>.

51. See <groups.yahoo.com/group/lds-trekkers/>.

52. For information on the LDS role in pulling a temple recommend from an Internet auction, see sources cited in note 28.

53. See Clark, "Mormonism on the Internet," 41.

54. *Ibid.*, 40.

55. Steve Fidel, "Bishop Pays Big Bucks to Buy, Clean Up 'Mormon.com' Web Site," *Deseret News*, 9 May 1998, E1.

56. See "Virtually Mormon: Mormons and the Internet," panel presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, Aug. 2001 (tape #SL01–331); for a report on the panel, see Lynn Arave, "Sunstone Panel Looks at LDS Web Use," *Deseret News*, 12 Aug. 2001, A23.

57. The sites can be easily found with a search engine and offer written descriptions of 1879, 1931, 1984, and 1990 versions of the endowment, plus audio files with the 1984 and 1990 versions.

58. Personal communication with a confidential source, 6 Mar. 2002; notes in my possession.

59. Documents and news stories related to the lawsuit are available at <www.utlm.org>.

60. Lawyers representing the Church demanded the Tanners destroy or turn over every copy of the handbook they possessed (both in print and electronic), post a statement on their website admitting copyright violations, and ask readers to destroy any copies they had created. In a move that received national attention because of its ramifications for free speech rights, lawyers for the Church later demanded that the Tanners also remove a link to another site where the handbook had been posted.

61. Sheila R. McCann, "With LDS Book on Net, Lawsuit Might Be Moot," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 Oct. 1999, D1.

62. See entry CR 2163 in the electronic catalogue of the LDS Church Historical Department, Manuscripts Division. The file, restricted to the public, contains the correspondence collected by the committee; see also "Conference Broadcast on the Internet," *Ensign* (Nov. 1999): 109.

63. "The Mormon Universe," SUNSTONE (Sept. 1996): 94; "Church Has Internet Home Page," *Ensign* (May 1997): 112; David L. Politis, "LDS Church Launches Its 1st Official WWW Page," *Deseret News*, 12 Jan. 1997, M3.

64. Weaver, "Church Enters World Wide Web 'Carefully and Methodically'"; see also "Church Has Internet Home Page," *Ensign* (Aug. 1999): 74.

65. See "Images on an Era: Becoming a Worldwide Family," *Ensign* (Dec. 1999): 43; Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000–2001*, 33.

66. R. Scott Lloyd, "Mountain of Information on Church's Internet Site," *LDS Church News* (28 Oct. 2000): 1–4.

67. Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000–2001*, 29–30.

68. See Lloyd, "Mountain of Information," 3–4.

69. Weaver, "Church Enters World Wide Web 'Carefully and Methodically'"; "Family History Web Site Launched."

70. See Bob Mims, "Is the Internet an Instrument of God?," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 Mar. 2000, C2; Russell C. Rasmussen, "Computers and the Internet in the Church," in *Out of Obscurity: The LDS Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 280.

71. "Conference Talks on Web Site," *LDS Church News*, 12 Apr. 1997, 2.

72. Carrie A. Moore, "Conference Via Internet," *Deseret News*, 3 Oct. 1998, E1.

73. "Conference Broadcast on the Internet," *Ensign* (Nov. 1999): 109.

74. Lynn Arave, "LDS Quick to Use Technology," *Deseret News*, 5 Apr. 2002, B8.

75. Gold, *Mormons on the Internet, 2000–2001*, 26.

76. See "Church News, Complete With Texts And Photos, Is Now On World Wide Web," *LDS Church News*, 16 Dec. 1995, 12; "Church News' Delivered Via Internet," *LDS Church News* (22 June 1996): 11; "Instant Access on Internet," *LDS Church News* (20 July 1996): 13; Mark L. Reece, "'Church News' Web Site Going Strong at Age 2," *LDS Church News* (17 Jan. 1998): 10.

77. See Steve Fidel, "LDS Genealogy Online," *Deseret News*, 24 May 1999, A1; "Family History Internet Service Launched," *LDS Church News* (29 May 1999): 3, 8–10; "LDS Church Begins Public Test of Online Genealogical Service," *Deseret News*, 4 Apr. 1999, A16.

78. Steve Fidel, "Genealogy Site Is a Hit—7 Million Times a Day," *Deseret News*, 22 May 1999, E1; Steve Fidel, "LDS Web Site Is Huge, Huge Hit," *Deseret News*, 25 May 1999, B4; Steve Fidel, "LDS Web Site Is Resorting to Appointments," *Deseret News*, 27 May 1999, B1; "Huge Upgrade for FamilySearch," *Deseret News*, 26 Nov. 1999, B11; "3 Million Hits Per Hour on LDS Site," *Deseret News*, 31 Oct. 2002, B3.

79. See "New Website Takes Missionary Work Into Cyberspace," SUNSTONE (Apr. 2002): 76; Carrie A. Moore, "LDS Church Puts Beliefs on Web Site," *Deseret News*, 5 Oct. 2001, A1; Bob Mims, "Web Site Allows Curious to Learn About LDS Church Anonymously," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 Oct. 2001, C3; Dallin H. Oaks, "Sharing the Gospel," *Ensign* (Nov. 2001): 9.

80. See <www.freeholybible.com>.

81. See <www.ldsfoundation.org>; Nicole R. Grubbs, "Web Site Suggests Ways to Give," *LDS Church News* (19 Jan. 2002): 11; "Website 'Broadens Reach'" *LDS Church News* (15 June 2002): 10.

82. "LDS Event Tickets Are Online," *Deseret News*, 30 Sept. 2001, A18.

83. See Gregory H. Taggart, "Mormonism on the Internet: Now Everybody Has a Printing Press," in *FARMS Review of Books* 9 (1997): 161–173; Gregory Taggart, "Mormonism on the Internet II," in *FARMS Review of Books* 10 (1998): 200–205; Carrie A. Moore, "Apologetics Symposium Will Give LDS a Chance to Respond to Criticisms," *Deseret News*, 12 June 1999, E1.

84. See "Missionaries May Communicate Via Email," *LDS Church News* (12 Jan. 2002): 4; "Missionary@Email-Allowed," SUNSTONE (Apr. 2002): 77.

85. Lynn Arave, "LDS Church Calls for Unplugging Local Church Units' Web Sites," *Deseret News*, 27 Mar. 2001, A7; Bob Mims, "LDS Church to Unify Its Net Voice," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 March 2001, A1.

86. Part of the confusion was caused by a story in the *Salt Lake Tribune* stating that the directive affected "unofficial Mormon related Web Sites" (Mims, "LDS Church to Unify Its Net Voice," A5). In reality, the letter addressed only sites maintained by wards, stakes, and other official organizations. See comments in Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium session, "Virtually Mormon," (tape SL01–331).

87. Lee Poulsen has recently conducted research trying to define the role the Internet plays in the lives of active Latter-day Saints. He believes mainstream members use it primarily as an information tool, but rarely subscribe to mailing lists. He believes further that for many Mormons on the margins, participation in on-line forums represents a stage of transition out of Mormonism. From personal communication with Lee Poulsen, 30 Apr. 2002, notes in my possession; see also Lee Poulsen, "Can Thoughtful Mormons Remain Active and Change the Church?" paper presented at the Sunstone West Symposium, San Francisco, Apr. 2001 (tape #SW01–18).

88. Carla G. Surratt, *The Internet and Social Change* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2001): 164. Surratt compares the official and unofficial Mormon presence on the Net (161–64).

89. Quoted in Paul VanDenBerghe, "mormon.org," *Ensign* (Apr. 2002), 52.

90. "Conference Broadcast," 109.

THE BOOK OF ORME

OR

HIGH ADVENTURE ON THE OPEN SEAS

OR

A SUPPOSEDLY FUN THING I'LL NEVER DO AGAIN UNTIL NEXT YEAR

By Kevin Smith

An account of the travels and struggles of the people of Orme (Ormites) as they crossed the great water to the land of lava rocks, sparse trees, steep hills, and sea caves; and of their encounters and battles with the elements, the wild Snodgrass Tribe, giant sea crabs, gangs of marauding land pigs, a tree-hugging hatchet boy, and the long arm of the law.

CHAPTER ONE

Details of the coming forth of this record and usual disclaimer

1. Wherefore, it is a narrative, abridged from a reformed shorthand inscribed on the underside of crab shells and from the memory of the author, whose eyes did behold all that did come to pass.

2. Yea, the author's eyes did scarcely believe all that will be detailed below. However, to all those pure in heart and brave in spirit, the truthfulness of the following narrative will be confirmed. And behold, let it serve as a warning to all who will listen, that when Brother Orme doth speak of *high adventure*, he is really referring to *almost certain death*.

3. If there be any fault in this record, it is due to the weakness of the author, whose intent was to document the adventure for the stripling youth described in this record to pass to their children. And to their children's children, and so on. If the following can also serve as a warning for those who might come into contact with Bishop (now Stake President) Snodgrass while providing a laugh or two, well, then, okay.

CHAPTER TWO

Adventurers and antagonists identified; accounts of the band's travels to the land of desolation; two angels fend off a demonic host

1. Be it known unto all, that a stripling band of young men representing the ward of Redhawk did assemble at the appointed time Sunday evening at the home of Brother Orme.

KEVIN SMITH recently completed doctoral studies in industrial and organizational psychology. He is a senior human resources consultant for Guidant Corporation and teaches written communication at the University of Phoenix. He, his wife, Candi, and five children live in Temecula, California, where he currently serves as an elders quorum instructor in the Redhawk Ward.

There were eight to ten of them; we were never exactly sure how many.

2. Among these great adventurers were: Kip the Konqueror, Daniel the Destroyer, Taylor the Terrible, James the Younger, Brad the Barbarian, Nathan the Crab Catcher, Donnie the Investigator, Alex the Brave, and their youth leader, Ty Turley Trejo—whom many call *Triple T*.

3. Accompanying these stalwart youths were grown adult men, who should have known better (or who could have at least checked out the Channel Islands on the Internet before agreeing to participate). Among them were: James the Senior, also known as Indiana Shigley, father of James the Younger; Brother Smith, our spiritual guide; Logan the Liberator, the son of Brother Smith and a pig wrangler by trade; the other brother Smith, the stiff-necked one, so named for having broken cervical vertebrae the previous summer in an unfortunate body surfing incident, and father to Alex the Brave; and the band's leader, Brother Orme, without whose fearlessness and devotion to the youth and failure to *really check things out thoroughly*, this adventure would not have been possible.

4. Yea, in fairness to this great leader, he and the rest of us were beguiled and bedazzled by the cunning and the slippery promises of the authors of all exaggerated stories, even a bishop named Snodgrass (Brother Orme's so-called friend from a different stake) and the brother of Bishop Snodgrass, known hereafter as the brother of Bishop Snodgrass.

5. Yea, the youths did assemble at the appointed time at the home of Brother Orme. And it came to pass that they did promptly prepare their bedding and they did swiftly and mightily put their heads on their pillows and their words were but whispers so as not to disturb the Orme family, though the accuracy of this account might be questioned by Sister Orme. And they did snore softly after being lulled to sleep by Brad the Barbarian's singing a medley of Jimmy Eat World's most popular songs.

A FACSIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ORME

No. 1

STRIPLING WARRIORS IN SEARCH OF CRAB
Scorpion Bay, Santa Cruz Island

EXPLANATION

Fig. 1. Donnie the Investigator; Fig. 2. Alex the Brave; Fig. 3. Brad the Barbarian;
Fig. 4. Nathan the Crab Catcher; Fig. 5. Kip the Konqueror; Fig. 6. Ty Turley Trejo

6. And it came to pass that they arose at the appointed time to begin their journey.

7. Yea, and all leaders did show up eventually, and the band did begin its journey, stopping once to get fuel in the land of Gentiles known as Pasadena.

8. Verily, we did travel without controversy to a place called Oxnard, or yea, we did arrive at a place by Oxnard, to a pier next to the great water. We did cross the great water and did arrive without grievous incident at the Island of Santa Cruz, hereafter known as the land of desolation, our intended refuge for the next three sun risings and settings.

9. And behold, the stripling warriors did form a chain gang along with the rest of the passengers, a rugged assortment of parolees and environmentalists, to unload all the provisions we had prepared for our wilderness sojourn. And yea, they were exceedingly great, for we did bring with us the comforts of civilization.

10. And behold, we did make several trips to the Valley of Korihor, the designated camping area (or, in other words, the first campsite we came to). And verily, the loads were heavy, and we did make many return trips to the beach for our mighty provisions. We marveled at the primitiveness of our new land, its jagged beauty, its unforgiving isolation, and that

after all this time—traveling many miles, crossing the great water, unloading the ship, setting up camp—it was only half-past ten in the morning. Indeed, we wondered—in this forsaken land, doth time stand still?

11. Yea, and while we did endeavor to bring civilization to this most desolate of all campgrounds, verily Brother Orme did prophesize that we could soon expect a visit from Bishop Snodgrass and the members of his tribe (Explorer Scouts), an extroverted gang of daredevils whose principal vices were to risk one another's lives and then find others to whom they could tell of their close encounters with the grim reaper and entice to *go and do likewise*. And behold, Brother Orme did caution one and all that should we come across a member of the Snodgrass tribe, Bishop Snodgrass himself, or the brother of Bishop Snodgrass, we should have no social intercourse, but should flee with all haste.

12. Yea, soon upon landing, we did also observe the sea kayaks, the very instruments which would nearly prove to be our destruction. And had we understood the peril in which these vessels would place our lives, we would have burned them upon discovery. Amen.

13. But behold, our faith and strength were renewed by a wondrous feast (chili dogs). Yea, and such fortitude was required, for our first night of camping was indeed eventful.

14. For verily, it did not take the forces of darkness long to learn of our whereabouts; for behold, as soon as the last ray of sunlight disappeared beyond the harbor, we were visited by the spawn of Satan in the guise of wild island pigs, the ferociousness of which we were ill prepared to counter. Eagerly did they seek our garbage and food supplies. Their snorts and grunts and pounding hooves did strike fear into the hearts of all as we lay upon our bellies within our tents and awaited death—hoping that when our time was upon us, death would come swiftly.

15. And it came to pass that the Lord was merciful, and caused two holy angels, one clothed in flowing raiment, white and shining beyond all description, the other wearing what looked like striped boxer shorts, to command the unholy marauders to cease and desist, sending them scampering up the hill behind our tents and into the darkness from whence they had come. As the pigs were retreating, the author doth believe he saw these two angels enter the tent of Brother Smith and his son Logan the pig wrangler. And it came to pass that the author and his son Alex the Brave did run hither and enter the

tent so as to catch a glimpse of the holy angels. But alas, as quickly as they entered, they were gone, leaving us to find only Brother Smith and his son.

16. But behold, this was not to be the last test of our mettle against the pigs. Alas and verily, we resolved to be better prepared for our next encounter with these unholy beasts, obvious fence-sitters in the pre-existence who had lost their chance for human tabernacles.

CHAPTER THREE

The warriors fall victim to the enticings of an ecclesiastical but maniacal leader and the siren songs of sea creatures promising cool and fun stuff; blessedly, all survive

1. And behold, this is where everything starts to blur together.

2. Yea, a great day dawned for the stripling warriors, for on this day, they would become stripling men. On this day, these warriors did things that would cause lesser mortals to flee, their mothers to faint, and their fathers to contact their attorneys.

3. And it came to pass that after a succulent meal of scrambled eggs and butchered meats in packaging labeled *Not for Sale*, grog, and a syrupy mixture composed of ten parts Tang and two parts water, our band was ready to test our mental and physical limits. For surely, as Brother Orme had prophesied, we did soon meet up with the wily Bishop Snodgrass and the brother of Bishop Snodgrass. And ignoring the wisdom to *flee with all haste*, it was on this day that after a full five minutes of kayaking instructions from these tempters, the youths and their leaders did set out on the kayaks upon the great water in search of high adventure and the world's largest sea caves.

4. Yea, we did all reach the first cave together. And, behold, Bishop Snodgrass and the brother of Bishop Snodgrass did entice us to enter the cave with such utterings as *it will be cool and fun* and many other things parents warn their children against when imploring them not to yield to peer pressure. And thus they lured us to pass through the small opening in the wall of the sea cave when the swell was down, adding that we should lean backward rather than forward as the chest can take more pressure than the spine can and that if we heeded these instructions and did not panic and were very, very lucky, we would not be counted among those who damage their necks and have to be helicoptered out in shame. (As the day progressed, though, this became an increasingly attractive option.) And lo and behold, each did hold to the iron rod, speaking figuratively, for the paddles were made of aluminum, and did survive this test of manhood.

5. And buoyed with newfound confidence, we did press on until we were gathered in the place of relatively calm, seal-infested waters to receive further instruction from Bishop Snodgrass and the brother of Bishop Snodgrass. It was in this Cove of Temporary Calm, as it is now known, that we were reminded who controlled the waters and—more to the point—who didn't (us); for it did become clear to us that each member of our band would have to paddle for his life, fighting breakers

and fatigue, yea, to stroke mightily so as to reach the calm waters past the Point of Despair and Utter Hopelessness, lest we be thrown against the protruding rock cliffs or blown out to sea—yea, lost forever.

6. And behold, each warrior did gird up his board shorts and forge ahead. For verily, stroking safely past the Point of Despair and Utter Hopelessness required every reserve of energy. Lo, each warrior learned in this moment of truth that each must take responsibility for his own progress, comforted by the strength and encouragement of his fellows and faith in his Maker, to whom fervent prayers were offered.

7. And verily, all did make it to the gaping mouth of the world's largest known sea cave. And there was much rejoicing until that tempter of fate, even Bishop Snodgrass, uttered the following words: *We're going through the painted cave two at a time, then one by one through the next hole in the wall. Everybody's got medical insurance? Don't worry, it will be cool and fun. Does anybody not have life insurance? Brother Orme? Everybody signed the waiver, right?*

8. And again, by the grace of the God of Abraham, Noah, Neptune, Ariel, Sinbad, and Popeye, each who entered the narrow passage deftly positioned his kayak through the opening, lying as flat as possible so as to avoid knocking the light off his helmet and clutching the cave ceiling, waiting for the surge to subside to pull himself through the total darkness into the mouth of the main cave.

9. And verily, in the prophetic words of Bishop Snodgrass: *It was cool and fun*. And harrowing.

10. And it came to pass that after the successful exploration of the caves, Brother Orme became an interpreter for a herd of seals. For upon hearing his whistle, they would respond with a cacophony of barking, a siren's song luring us to a mystical beach where one could ride his kayak to shore on top of even bigger breakers. Bishop Snodgrass assured us that the interpretation was correct, and that these were honest seals as far as he could tell. The stripling warriors were encouraged, and most, including Brother Orme, followed Bishop Snodgrass in the direction of this mystical beach. Again, we were promised that this would be *cool and fun*. However, as this beach was in the opposite direction of the camp, the more intelligent members of the party headed toward camp.

11. And it came to pass, as the day neared its end and the seal-called warriors straggled home, that our band was running low on ice; so we drank mightily and with varying degrees of enthusiasm all the remaining Pepsi, except for that needed to caramelize the onions for hamburgers cooked in celebration of eight to ten Varsity Scouts returning from almost certain death. And there was much rejoicing.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Ormites encounter crabs, a ranger, and a hatchet-wielding environmentalist; they bear mighty testimony; they struggle mightily and triumph over the devilish land pigs

1. Whereas the foolhardy Snodgrass tribe demanded the use of the kayaks for more adventures in sea spelunking and

the Ormites offered no opposition, the brave band of warriors spent the third day of their adventure hiking and eating sandwiches made from the butter of peanuts and the flesh of strawberries, and snorkeling and fishing in the Bay of Scorpions.

2. And lo, a large king crab was captured and brought to shore, its presence creating a great commotion, even to attracting a large crowd. And soon a zealous guardian of the law (a park ranger) charged the length of the beach, and taking the strap off his 9mm Beretta, he instructed the surprised Ormites: *Put the crab down. Step away from the crab.*

3. And it came to pass that after checking that no Ormite had a crab in his possession, his spirit was soothed and he told them to go ahead, catch anything they liked as long as they didn't already have one (including a crab, as long as they were going to eat it). Thus, the Ormites returned to crab harvesting and caught two big ones.

4. Upon retrieving the second one, it so happened that a hatchet-carrying tourist rose to instruct seven to eight Ormites to put the crab back in the water, as all creatures associated with the park were protected. And verily, he was ignored as the stripling fishermen carried their catch in a crab cooker. Then this protector of crabs ran to the ranger to tell of the supposed crime but was rebuked by the officer who had no further interest in harassing or debating with Boy Scouts.

5. And it came to pass that upon entering the hallowed campsite, the stripling fishermen were besieged by the hatchet boy with threats and taunts and blasphemies too vicious to relate about their having caught a crab. And having already been lectured earlier by the hatchet boy for the crime of chasing off the pigs who belonged to this land while we were the intruders, the youth did the worst thing they could have done. They ignored him again.

6. And verily, the young warriors did cook their prey in a frothy, boiling cauldron and they did feast on crab legs and spaghetti noodles covered with a delicate sauce made from tomatoes, mushrooms, garlic, and fruit cocktail, and the meal did finally end with dessert quesadillas. And it was all very good.

7. And it came to pass that the band did gather in a meeting in which mighty testimonies were felt and borne. Specifically, testimonies on service and kindness and leadership and praying and blessings and faith and making good choices and honoring the priesthood and drawing closer to Jesus Christ and serving on missions and making progress and helping

A FACSIMILE FROM THE BOOK OF ORME

No. 2



**“THOU SHALT BE MADE STRONGER THAN
MANY WATERS” (Moses 1:25)**

EXPLANATION

Fig. 1. The gaping mouth of Earth's largest known sea cave.

Fig. 2. Stripling warriors in kayaks (number unknown).

each other. And it was very good.

8. And it came to pass that upon the conclusion of the meeting, the wily Bishop Snodgrass did challenge the youth to a contest called *flashlight wars*. And whereas this contest has similarities to the Gentile game of *capture the flag*, at no time beforehand was it explained nor expected that should Bishop Snodgrass ever be flashed, he would call the opposing team cheaters and end the game. This occurred with greater frequency whenever the stripling warriors were poised to win.

9. And finally, as we bedded down for our last evening, we could hear the Satanic army of the land pigs determinedly approaching. And verily, as the land pigs approached, they became bolder and bolder, for they sensed our time on the island would soon be ending and the prospect of plunder would evaporate.

10. And lo, we did tremble and quake at the terrible on-

slaught which was near upon us. For verily, we knew it would either be us or them who would survive the night.

11. And the warriors prepared the best they could by stacking the ice chests and taping down food containers. But alas, it was not enough. For the murderous hoard descended the mountainside, oinking what sounded like a battle cry of *Four legs good; two legs bad* and proceeded to knock over fully-grown eucalyptus trees (thereby *really* giving the hatchet boy and others of his ilk something to complain about). The flashlights only made the beasts more determined, nor did the thunderous snoring of the other Brother Smith have its intended effect. And while the stripling warriors fought bravely with handmade spears and sharpened sticks, the battle for the garbage was about to turn into a pogrom.

12. But, as our band was about to give up the fight, we were saved (and thus the way for this record coming forth was prepared) by the quick thinking of Daniel the Destroyer, who over the previous three days had been painstakingly conducting clinical trials for a land pig repellent.

13. And lo, mistaking the repellent for human garbage, the leader pig (named Snowflake) ate the entire batch and fell into a coma. Believing him to be dead, and full of cannibalistic fervor, for such doth the devil's spirit cause, the other pigs ate him. And their carnal desires sated, they waddled up the cliff above Potato Harbor, plunging into the depths of the great water—or so we imagined for it was really dark, and we thought we heard splashing. Thus our lives *and* our refuse had been preserved. And there was much rejoicing.

CHAPTER FIVE

The band returns across the great waters; a bittersweet parting with their garbage; this record will stand as a testimony of the truths of the Ormite adventures

1. And came to pass that only after much foolish speech by Bishop Snodgrass and the brother of Bishop Snodgrass riling the youth about the chance to see more caves, Brother Orme and the Other Brother Smith and Ty did test the winds and stood firm in their conviction that an attempt to reach the caves and return in time to catch the last boat out was pure vanity. And thus were all dissuaded from pursuing this folly, and the pernicious designs of these tempters were, for once, foiled.


2. And it came to pass that the return trip to the shores of the great land was uneventful, except for the band learning that dolphins are small whales. Hmmm.

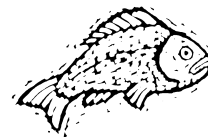
3. And it came to pass that upon arriving to land, we did handle the luggage as a chain gang might do so. And we did rejoice at the opportunity to help our fellowman as well as ourselves. And behold, much to the envy of the other warriors, Alex the Brave stopped being a longshoreman long enough to pose for a photograph with an exotic Asian princess (at the request of one of her handmaidens).

4. And verily, after carefully packing all of the garbage for which we had so valiantly fought the night before into his van, alas, because there was no space left for human beings, Brother

Smith was compelled to surrender the hard-won refuse to a dumpster. While this writer will not swear to it, he thinks he saw tears well up in Brother Smith's eyes as these battle spoils were unloaded from his vehicle. Following a moment of silence, the band journeyed homeward.

5. And it came to pass that the Ormites did assemble a final time at the first In'N'Out Burger they could find. Double-Doubles Animal Style. Fries. Cokes with ice. And, yea, it was all very good.

6. And verily, the adventure was over. We learned about each other and about ourselves. And we learned about and experienced the gospel in action. Stripling warriors became strapping young men. These adventurers will no doubt tell their posterity of their heroics, and as some of this band may be prone to exaggerate as time dims memory, it is for this reason that the truth has been recorded. And lo, behold, even, verily, and yea, it was all very, very good indeed. Plus it was *cool and fun*. Amen. 



WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT THE OWL SO FIERCE?

(Rembrandt)

At night, when the whole flock herds together,
each shoving her way to the warm center,
the sound of stronger wings descends.
There's commotion in the flock—the talons
of a great horned owl select the tired or the weak,
sink the claws in deep, lance the life
with a hold that won't lose her in flight.
Those nearest the victim cry out a defense.
When the chicken is lifted away,
the others quiet down, return to their low sounds
and shoving. I sleep soundly; the dog
has merely raised his head.

I sleep through the night without you now,
but these dreams, when I remember them,
frighten me. The days are plain.
Our son, who continues to grow, starts from his sleep,
a crying from which there's no soothing.
But these, you'd be happy to know,
grow more and more infrequent.

—STEPHEN FRECH

1998 Brookie & D. K. Brown Fiction Contest Moonstone Winner

REDEEMING THE DEAD

By Todd Robert Petersen

THIS MORNING MY MOTHER CALLED TO TELL ME that the Sergeant Major had slipped in the shower. That was how she put it; she wouldn't say that he was dead, as if not saying the word would keep her from confessing some weakness on his part. There was a bump in the bathroom, she said. Then she hurried upstairs to see what was wrong, but she knew it before she got there. She said she called my brother Alex first, but he wasn't at the rectory. The details were vague, but before I could ask her what Alex said, she started crying and said that she forgot that he was in Rome doing some kind of work for the Archdiocese.

"I don't know who to call, Jacob." She said she didn't even know if she should call anyone. I told her I'd come down right away. We hadn't spoken in seven years, and the words seemed to croak out of my mouth.

"You don't have to come down," she said. She was always telling people they didn't have to do what she wanted them to do.

"Of course I do," I said.

She just kept sobbing into the phone.

"Just hang up," I told her. "I'll be down by ten." Carrie came in from the bathroom, drying her hair. "Just hang up, Mom. I'll be there soon."

Carrie looked over at me, and when I glanced up at her, she covered herself with the towel and whispered, "What's wrong?" I cupped my hand over the receiver and told her that the Sergeant Major was dead. She looked away without moving her face, and that surprised me. It was old news that I didn't speak to anyone in the family but Alex. She was so used to it, I think, that she didn't know what to say. I could see that in the way her eyebrows dropped slightly toward one another.

She sat down on the far corner of the bed with the towel crumpled in her lap, and she stared into the mirror over her dressing table. I told my mother one last time that I'd be down by ten and then hung up. For a long space of time Carrie said nothing. She's put together her own picture of my family dynamics from what my brother, the dutiful Father Alexander

Warren, S.J., has told her and from what I haven't. It's a pretty accurate one as far as I know. He's got neither the cause nor the desire to misrepresent the family, and she's been kind enough not to press me on it. I've let the details slide in our temple interviews. I know I shouldn't have, but it seems easier than trying to explain things, and it keeps us from having to talk about it. Carrie doesn't think my mother is part of the problem, just a victim of it. Alex says God knows our mother's heart and the Sergeant Major's, and we should maybe just accept that for now. He's trying to relieve my guilt—strange move for a priest—but we both seem to think that in this instance silence has been a good thing, for us at least.

"So you're going down?" she asked.

I nodded. "I told her I would."

There was a static charge crackling in the air around us. I thought the phone would ring again, telling me not to come after all. I could sense that we both felt it, and the waiting kept us from bringing up the fact that my family didn't come to our wedding or to either of the girl's blessings, or that Carrie and I have had to explain why we only go to Mommy's parents at Christmas, that I'm not an orphan, and why Uncle Alex wears funny black clothes. We've been waiting to tell them what it means to have your father disown you because you became a Mormon. Carrie tells people that the waiting is not for the children but for their father. I never knew I was that easy to read.

WHEN I WENT down to Tacoma to tell my mother and the Sergeant Major that I would be leaving soon on a mission to Korea—where he served his first tour in the 144th Airborne—the Sergeant Major cursed, swiped his plate off the table, and stormed out of the room. My mother sat in her place, crying; then she crossed herself and told Alex to go to his room. Even at sixteen, he was obedient. He stood and left the room. I stood under the arch that divided the living room from the dining room while my mother's face fell into her hands. Alex looked down at me from the stairs and I nodded to him. He took the cue and disappeared.

"I don't know what I'm supposed to say," I said.

She just continued to cry without looking up. I waited for something from her, but it never came. So I got in my car and drove back up to school. I thought seriously about calling some of my old friends and getting drunk, but I ended up falling asleep in my dorm room with the lights on and the tele-



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vision blaring. I thought about that night a lot on my mission, when I was trying to get people to give up drinking. I wanted to tell them that booze is just another problem, not a solution, but I could never lie to them. By-product of the spirit, I guess.

About halfway into my mission, Alex wrote me in Korea to let me know that the Sergeant Major had changed his will and left him his prized '69 GTO because the Sergeant Major had said—and Alex quoted him here—“I have lost my son.” I threw the letter onto my bed and tried to get permission from the mission president to call Alex at the seminary. He told me it might not be a good idea. He said maybe I should let it rest for a while. I told him there was a two-week lag in the mail anyway, and by the time I could get word back home, this whole deal would be a month gone. The mission president told me I could do whatever I thought necessary.

So, the next day I caught my companion by the back of his coat as we passed a pay phone a half-mile or so from our apartment in Seoul. I told him I didn't want the call to be tracked.

He said, “Salt Lake doesn't tap our phones, Elder.”

“Right, but there are mission rules.”

“But the President said—”

“Yeah, yeah,” I said and then dialed. When Alex answered, I could tell I had gotten him up.

“What the hell does he mean, ‘I lost my son?’” I barked.

“Jake?” His voice was crackling over the line.

“What does he mean with this lost-my-son crap?”

“For crying out loud,” he said, “you know he can't believe you'd do this kind of thing to Mom, what with the way she's tried her whole life to bring up two good Catholic boys. Second, he can't believe you went over to preach to the Koreans. He says they're all godless commies. You know how he puts it. He's the biggest John Bircher in the free world.”

“I'm in Seoul, Jake,” I said, setting my backpack down on the floor of the phone booth, “not Pyongyang. These are the people he tried to save from the red devil. I'm just after the real one, that's all.”

“Good for you, but you know as well as I do that there's the world we all live in, and then there's the Sergeant Major's.”

“He's a bastard, Alex.”

“Are you supposed to be talking like that?” Alex asked.

“What difference does it make anymore?” I said.

CARRIE TOLD ME that it was the right thing to do. Then she finished buttoning her jeans and said, “You know that, don't you?”

I nodded.

“She called you. Maybe this is the first time she could, Jake.”

“It's your old ‘the-Sergeant-Major-has-my-mother-in-chains’ argument. She could have done something, said something, but she didn't. Not once. Alex said she never even asked.”

“Who put the nickel in you?” Carrie said.

“She doesn't know what to do with the body, that's all,” I told her. “That's why she called. I'll bet she just doesn't want the police or anyone to see him in the shower.”

“And you want people in there seeing your father naked?”

“No, it's just—”

“What?”

“Nothing”

“You're being an insensitive crab,” she said.

“This is my fault?”

“Did I say anything about fault?”

“No it's just that all of a sudden, I'm the villain.”

“You need to get over yourself pretty quick, Jacob. Your mother's a widow regardless of what you think. If you can help, you ought to. What would Alex be doing?”

“Father Alex would be administering Extreme Unction, and

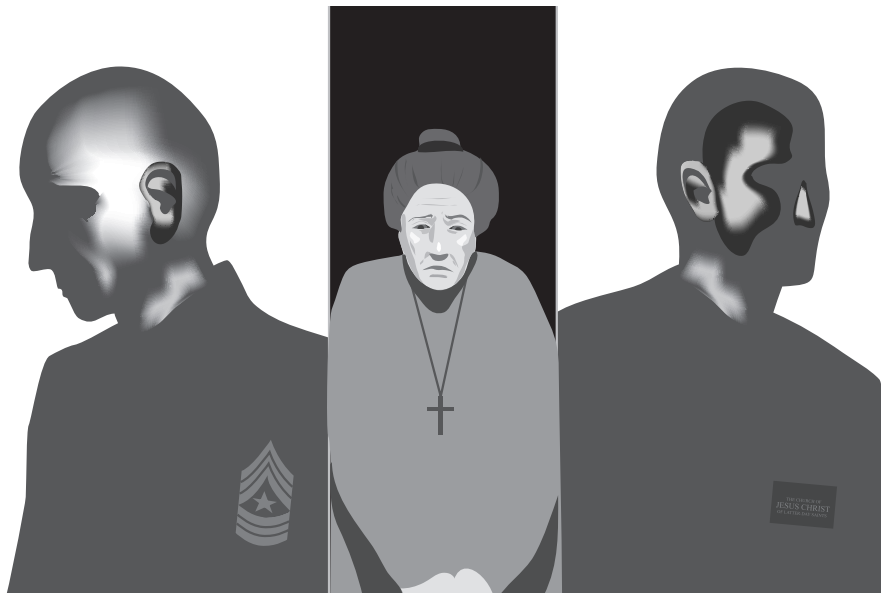
my mother would be tickled.”

“How about you? What does a priesthood holder do when his father dies?”

“I didn't say I wasn't going,” I said.

“I didn't either. I said you have a crappy attitude,” Carrie said, rising and returning to the bathroom. “I'll call your office and tell them what's happened. The kids and I will be fine. We'll come down tonight, when you've got things together.”

AT TEN-FIFTEEN, I pulled into the driveway of my parents' house. Before I was to the house, the electric garage door opened, and my mother stood backlit in the doorway behind the Sergeant Major's GTO. I slipped between the cars and made my way up to her. The car was draped, as always, in the same blue cover, and my mother was still in her slippers and robe. As I came up the stairs, she said she didn't know what else to do.



JONATHAN COOMBS

“It's your old ‘the-Sergeant-Major-has-my-mother-in-chains’ argument.”

"Mom, it's okay," I said, ignoring the fact that she hadn't aged since I had last seen her.

"He just fell in the shower. I heard him . . ."

"Upstairs?" I asked.

She nodded.

I made my way past her and down the hall to their bathroom. The door was partly open, and I could see the Sergeant Major's arm hanging across the edge of the tub. The tips of his fingers had turned blue; the fingers were straight and stiff like rolled coins. On the topside of the first joints, the hairs stood out like stark wires against the white tub enamel. The rest of his outline was visible from the small amount of windowlight that bled through the translucent vinyl shower curtain. His bowels and bladder had released, and the smell coiled about in the room like steam. I flicked on the fan.

From the hallway, I heard my mother say, "Jacob, I'm sorry."

"Mom, don't come up here," I called back.

I leaned against the door jamb and thought of praying, but I couldn't ask for a blessing on anything there. I wondered what could be done for someone like this and asked myself questions that flapped around without words. It might have been prayer, but I didn't listen for an answer because I was sure God had one—and I didn't want to hear it. That's how God and I have been handling things lately.

I reached up and unsconced the shower head, turned on the water, and began washing the Sergeant Major off. I struggled when it came time to turn him over and wash the backs of his legs and the tub underneath him. He was heavy and not really rigid enough, but I eventually managed it, rolled him back, and put the shower head back up where it belonged. When I stood and turned around, my mother was standing in the doorway clutching her hands together.

"I didn't know who to call," she said, then started crying. "You were the only one I could think of." I went to her and tried to put my arms around her. Her body was stiff, and I tried to direct her head onto my shoulder. She resisted at first, but finally she just let it lie there.

AFTER I CALLED the police and gave them the vital information, they said they'd call the county coroner's office to have them check on the body. We could make

whatever funeral arrangements we wanted after they came. The funeral home would pick the body up from the house. I asked how long it would be, and they said they'd have to page one of the deputy medical examiners. If they weren't busy, they'd have someone over within the hour.

"Is there any problem if I move the body?" I asked.

"Have you already moved him?" the officer asked.

"Yes," I said. "He died in the shower. My mother wanted things to be a little more discreet."

"I see," the officer on the phone said. "If this were an investigation—"

"But since it's not—"

"Just don't move anything."

"He's still naked," I said. "My mother—"

"Just. Please don't. It will be easier in the long run."

Then, without thinking, I asked him why I had to play out every critical moment of my life over the telephone. He paused so long that I thought he had hung up, but eventually he said, "It's hard to exist, man. Straight lines. You've got to keep it in straight lines." I started to respond to him a few times in my head, but I couldn't decide if he'd answered my question. He sounded too much like Alex. "Tell your mother to hold tight," he said. "Put her on the phone to someone."

"Put her on the phone?" I asked. It was like he didn't even hear what I said.

"If she feels like she's got a purpose, she won't fall apart so bad," he said.

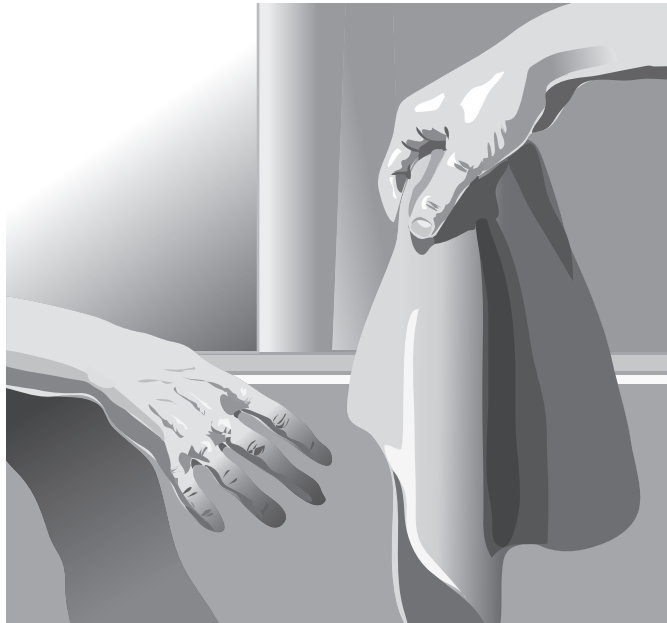
I told him I'd do it; then I hung up.

Mother was in her room, lying face down on the bed. "Should we call Uncle Bill?" I asked her. "Are he and Charlotte still in Aberdeen?" She didn't move except to breathe. "Mom?" I said, then sat down on the edge of the bed. "Mom?" I said again. "Can you turn over? I want to talk to you."

She didn't move.

"Does the Sergeant Major have a will?" I asked to get her thinking about something. "Is there anything we need to do?" She finally nodded and told me to go find a gray steel box in the den and bring it to her. "The key is taped under the top right-hand drawer," she said.

By the time I brought the box and key back, she was sitting up. Unlocking the box, she looked up at me and said, "When they come, I want him dressed and lying in here on the bed."



JONATHAN COOMBS

I reached up and unsconced the shower head, turned on the water, and began washing the Sergeant Major off.

Her eyes were insistent.

"The police said not to move him," I told her.

"Why are the police coming?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"It's not right for him to be seen like that," she said, opening the box. She dug through some papers until she found a small manila envelope and slid out a document. Carefully, she unfolded the papers and read through them. "Here," she said then handed the papers to me. "The second paragraph." It was my father's directions for his funeral arrangements. The burial is to be enacted by my Uncle Bill. It said he wishes to have his body donated to the University of Washington Medical School for scientific study; the remains are then to be gathered and cremated. The ashes are then to be scattered from eighteen thousand feet over the Pacific Ocean.

I looked up at my mother, her lips were compressed, and she rocked her jaw back and forth. Her eyes were fixed on a point a few inches in front of her feet. Her eyelids didn't flicker. Her breathing had all but stopped. I asked her if she wanted his body to go to science. She shook her head and said she didn't want him cremated either. "His body won't rise on Judgment Day if it's floating out in the ocean. He won't be anywhere to rise from," she said softly.

"I don't think you have to worry about that," I told her, turning the pages over and then back. "Who else knows about this? It doesn't even look notarized."

"One page of the will can't just disappear, Jacob. Then the rest is no good," she said. "I'm going to lie alone in my grave for eternity, isn't that right?" She looked up at me with absolutely lucid eyes. For a few heavy seconds, she composed herself and then, pointing at the will, said, "Jacob, I won't have my remains scattered about like that."

"Mom, that's not how it works," I said.

"You think I don't know that? Do you think that you could just go join some church and have me not know that? Your father thinks you're going to hell," she said. "He says—" then she stopped speaking. I could see the quiver start in her upper lip.

"What do you say about it?" I asked her. She just shook her head and took hold of her wedding ring with her fingertips. "I'll go dry him off," I said, not wanting to watch her cry again.

She said nothing.

"Clear a spot," I told her, and then I stood up and left. When I got to the door, I stopped, turned back to her and said, "You knew Alex was in Rome, didn't you? You didn't even try to call him." She nodded once without looking up, an almost imperceptible nod. Maybe it was the first time she could call. The Sergeant Major had kept her from her grandchildren. I wondered if she would ever forgive him for that. I imagined she would, but it was going to take time. "Mom," I said. "Carrie's going to bring the girls down this afternoon."

She looked up at me suddenly. "When?" she asked.

"This afternoon, once things get settled," I said.

Then, as if I weren't there at all, she rose from the bed, crossed to her closet, and began sliding hangers back and forth. She pulled a few dresses from among the others, held

them up to her small body, and then began to toss them one-by-one onto the bed. After a few seconds, she turned to me and said, "I suppose you'll be able to baptize him now in your temple."

"I hadn't thought of it," I told her. "I try not to think of him very much at all anymore. I've had a relatively happy life since I gave up trying to please him."

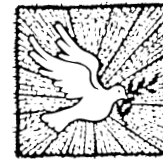
"Jacob," she said, laying a last dress down on top of the others. "You can't pawn this hate off on your father anymore. You're responsible for it now."

Her eyes were clear and steady, her head erect, her shoulders squared against the space between us.

I wanted to flash an answer right back at her, but I didn't have one. I wondered what Jesus would have done, but that turned out to be a lousy question. Jesus never had to hate his father just so he could keep his head on straight. ☞



To comment on this story, or to read comments by others, visit our website: <www.Sunstoneonline.com>.



CELLO PLAYER

The old woman hobbled into the brownstone ignoring the firemen's pleas.

She soon emerged from the haze dragging a cello by its scroll across a snake pit of fire hoses, the bow clamped doglike between her teeth.

Eyeing the homeless faces, she sat on a neighbor's salvaged chair, spread her floral dress to make space for the cello there.

She touched the maple wood shoulders as if it were a bewildered child, and leaned into it, grasped the bow and played a Bach Suite.

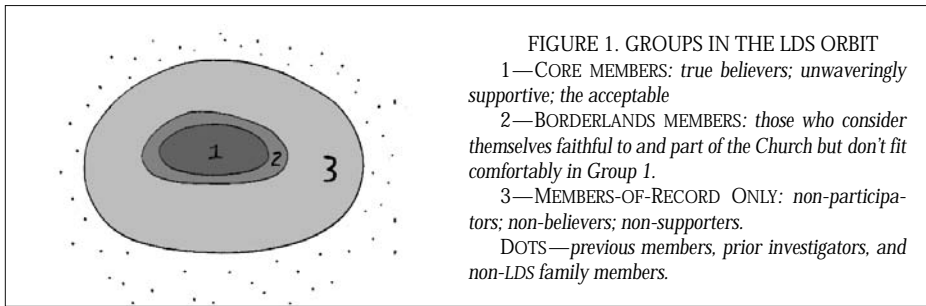
Black smoke dwindled and firemen paused and gazed. The worst was over for the night.

—GERALD R. WHEELER

BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS

EXPLORATIONS OF OPENNESS

By D. Jeff Burton



THIS COLUMN DEALS with a common question for Borderlanders: How honest and up-front about their questions and struggles should Group 2 “Borderlanders” be with Group 1 (true believers)?

For more than six months, I corresponded by email and met in person with a young man I’ll call Stephen. Imagine a typical Latter-day Saint in his mid-twenties who has filled a mission to Ireland and earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting, living in the Northwest, working in his profession but unmarried and looking for his eternal mate.

I’ve edited our exchanges for conciseness, clarity, and to protect Stephen’s identity. He has read this column and agreed to share his story. We both welcome comments or insights from readers. You can email me or write a letter to the SUNSTONE editor.

STEPHEN: I’m dealing with the most difficult thing I have ever faced, and although I have many supportive and loving family members and friends, I don’t feel that I can, or should, worry them with this. I’m typically very stable emotionally and meet life’s challenges with resolve and a plan, but I am struggling a great deal with my present challenge.

All my life, I have been a very active and believing member of the Church. All of my family are dedicated to the Church. I have always loved the Church, the teachings, the family-oriented atmosphere, Scouting, and so forth. I’ve had a great experience in the

Church and value very much the way of life, the people, and the closeness.

When trying to decide on a college, I ruled out BYU because I felt students weren’t trusted there. I had been given a great deal of trust and freedom by my parents, and I felt pretty capable of making good decisions on what to wear, when to shave, how long my hair should be, what time to be home, and who were appropriate roommates. I felt attending BYU would have been a step backwards for me. And until now, that’s been the extent of my challenges with the Church.

About a year and a half ago, I started learning some things about Church history that were new to me, and very troubling, and I’m still trying to figure out how to deal with them. [Stephen then relates his studies and especially his concerns about stories of Joseph Smith’s behavior with regard to polygamy.] As I’ve studied, my firm foundations have disintegrated. I felt as if I had been deceived in some way. How could this happen to me? I’ve heard of people losing their testimonies before, but mine had always been so strong. How could this happen to me? I wanted desperately to find answers.

I thought there must be people out there who knew all this stuff and had either found it to be wrong or had found a way to accept it and still maintain their faith. Hoping to learn more, I attended the 2001 Mormon History Association conference in Cedar City and also the Sunstone symposium in Salt Lake City. It was nice to see things being discussed in the open—something I hadn’t felt

I could do without judgment or criticism. It was interesting to see the range of people who attended, from solid believers to open critics. I’m still baffled by and even jealous of people who know the history and seem okay with it.

I suppose I could deal with this struggle indefinitely, but it has started to affect one relationship which is very important to me. And this is where I really need some help. I have been dating a woman for the past year, and we are very fond of each other. My struggle with the Church has been quietly going on in the background. I kept thinking I could fix it or find answers that would allow me to get past it.

When I finally saw I wasn’t going to be able to fix my concerns, we talked a little. I didn’t feel I could give her all the details because I didn’t want her to go through what I’ve been dealing with. All I could say was there are some historical things (mainly polygamy and the way women were brought into it) that I was having a hard time accepting as being from God.

We both wonder just what is going on—me, with the church; her, with me. I’m sure she thinks I’m nitpicking some trivial Church history issue, but to me, it is very serious. And so, here we are, confused, trying to figure out why our beautiful relationship is slipping away. It hurts so much.

I also worry about relationships with my family. I haven’t talked much with them about this, but they know something is going on. My mom will be heartbroken if my relationship breaks up. How can I explain that? I don’t want to worry my family or strain our association over Church issues.

I guess my main concerns are these: I don’t know how to fix this situation. I don’t know how to explain it to those close to me. I don’t know what my future is with the Church.

JEFF: *Your situation is a difficult one indeed. But it is not all that unusual or intractable. We don’t read about it in the Ensign, but it happens all too often. It can even be a blessing if you let it be. Unfortunately, I can’t give you any direct advice about how to solve your problem. You will have to find a way. But perhaps conversations with me, your bishop, and others might help you find the answers you seek.*

To start, I would like you to think carefully about each of the following independent (but related) statements and how they might affect you, your romantic relationship, and your disillusionment with Joseph Smith and related Church history problems:

1. *One person’s interpretation of Church history will not always be the same as another’s.*

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2. You do not need to have a complete understanding of Church history or Joseph Smith to be a good person, a good father and husband, to support the Church, or to be a follower of Jesus.

3. Each Latter-day Saint develops a personal relationship with God that is different from every other.

4. Each member has a right to develop and tailor his or her own personal relationship with God and the Church.

5. "To some it is given to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful." (D&C 46:13–14)

6. The Church is here to help us as individuals—and that need for help varies from person to person.

7. Those who have grown up in the Church can rarely completely remove themselves from it.

8. Religion is only a part of a full and happy life.

9. A full and happy life will incorporate Christ's principles of honesty and love.

10. We are not required to tell everything we think or know to others in order to be honest and loving.

figure out how to make that work in a romantic relationship with a woman to whom I am not yet committed. I don't know how to reconcile my feelings that tell me I should fully share my concerns, knowing that they may not be acceptable to her (keeping in mind the principle that you suggest of not letting religion destroy love). Are you suggesting that I not discuss my problems with her in order to hang onto our relationship? And more generally, how shall I handle my problems with Church history—should I tell others what I know?

JEFF: No, you must find a way to share your concerns with your girlfriend. As for how to handle the problem in general, you will find a way given time and that desire. Perhaps people should know more Church history, but I don't believe it is always necessary for us to educate people about our interpretations of that history. As Joseph Smith said, "No man knows my history." Every rendition of history is an interpretation. How you "know" history is different from how others "know" the same events in history. You can read histories of Joseph Smith, for example, that support his position as a messenger from God while others "prove" that he was of the devil.

Joseph Smith lived in a different world that we can't see clearly today. I have read some of the same accounts but haven't interpreted them as negatively as you have. Joseph Smith's dimly lit adventures in polygamy are not as important to me as they are to you. And perhaps not to your girlfriend.

STEPHEN: Now we arrive at the central issue for me this past year: If my girlfriend was aware of these happenings (knowledge), would she be okay with it (interpretation)? Would she be more understanding of my struggle with them? My feeling is that if she were aware of this behavior on the part of Joseph Smith, she would struggle to be okay with it—but maybe not. Do I remain silent, leaving her baffled over what I am concerned about, and protect her faith while sacrificing our love? Or, do I attempt to talk, challenging her faith while trying (perhaps selfishly) to hang onto our love?

JEFF: This is a touchy area, and your efforts to protect her are admirable. However, the ability to describe your reservations and concerns are necessary in a mature and loving relationship. To make a marriage work, both of you must be willing and strive to understand the other (not

"Our religion has neither the intent nor purpose to destroy love."

11. Our religion has neither the intent nor purpose to destroy love. (In the "God versus Satan" model of religion, it is Satan that destroys love.)

12. There are stages of faith for those involved in our religion just as with all other traditions, and the more advanced stages have few absolutes.

STEPHEN: I've read your statements and am comforted to know people are finding ways to be at peace with the Church and with friends and family, while not necessarily agreeing or being okay with everything the Church does or teaches. I can see myself getting along okay in that kind of scenario and keeping friendships and family relations intact. I guess I have actually been operating that way for some time.

My present struggle, though, is: I'm not sure I could expect my potential mate, who has certain expectations from a Church standpoint, to be okay with it. If I already had a wife and family relationship, I think my approach to my recent "discovery" of troubling Church history issues would be pretty clear. I would do everything I could to hang onto my family, respect their beliefs, and not "rock the boat."

However, my big difficulty is trying to

STEPHEN: We're really talking about two things here, and there is an important difference, at least to me. I agree with you that it's not my job to educate or have anyone else share my interpretation of Church history. I'm okay with however people choose to interpret things. My bigger concern is that people do not even know the history and therefore they never have to, or get to, interpret (think, ponder, question) it themselves.

This relationship between interpretation and knowledge was the beginning of my own struggles a year and a half ago. I had always respected and admired (interpretation) Joseph Smith as the founder and Prophet of the Church. I had no reason to feel otherwise. However, when I found out (knowledge) that he was inviting young girls and women into marriage, often against their desires and better judgment, promising salvation for themselves and their extended family, hiding these marriages from his wife Emma, and so forth, I became concerned.

JEFF: If the history of Joseph Smith's experience with polygamy truly is as you've concluded, then certainly there is much to be concerned about. However, there are conflicting accounts and it is useful to remember that

agree, but understand). Frankly, I don't think your girlfriend's faith would be shaken by your concerns. She would likely think you've misinterpreted Joseph's actions and/or motives. She would think the enemies of the Church are behind the histories and they are not factual or accurate.

If she is willing to listen and is interested in understanding you, you should share your concerns with her. But not in an argumentative way, not in a way to tear down Joseph Smith or her own faith. But again, I think you should investigate your own response to these stories and your motives in telling others about them.

STEPHEN: My motivation is not to destroy her faith, or even have her think the way I do. I just want her to know my heart and mind and why I struggle with this and, in so doing, perhaps save our relationship. But by bringing these things to her attention, I cannot help but run the risk of challenging her faith. Is that a risk I want to be responsible for? She would probably hear me out if I asked her to, but I'm not sure it would be the best thing.

JEFF: You could explain your concerns and then ask her if she is willing to listen. Before you share, though, again you will need to look closely at your motives. In most dilemmas such as yours, there are the "presenting reasons" ("I want

her to know the truth," "I want her to understand me") and the not-so-obvious reasons: ("I want her to believe the way I do and see Church history as I do," "I want her to be angry at the Church"). I don't know your reasons (these were only examples of possibilities), but you need to explore your mind and soul and see what is happening inside. Often, when we scout out all our reasons for doing something, the urge to do it evaporates.

STEPHEN: Hmm . . . yeah. Good point. I admit, I think it would be nice to have "her believe the way I do and see Church history as I do" and suspect that is part of my hope. Mostly though, I want to be acceptable to her and understood by her. Right now, she thinks I am some kind of slacker from a Church standpoint because I "have to think about what the prophet says." (She's okay with me everywhere else.) I guess my ultimate hope would be that she could say, "I understand why you struggle with those things, and I'm okay with that."

JEFF: *That is the ideal. However, you've brought up a different faith issue (thinking about what the prophet says before following) that broadens the divide between you and most Group 1 members. It may be an outcome of your*

or so, Stephen's concerns and struggles evolved, and he me sent the following message.]

STEPHEN: The heart of my current struggle is outlined below:

I am burdened with feelings of sadness.

Is it okay for me to say less than I know and feel in a temple recommend interview, and perhaps even appear to agree with something I'm not comfortable with, in order to preserve love in my relationships (existing and newer) by having a temple recommend?

Am I "too fringe" in my thinking to ever hope for a marriage relationship with a Mormon woman?

JEFF: *This must be a difficult time for you. Loss of important things in our lives is tough to deal with (e.g., love, testimony). Nothing I can say will heal the hurt or make the sadness go away, but maybe a few additional thoughts might help put things in perspective.*

Sadness is an emotion. A difficult emotion. Unavoidable in your situation. But, like all emotions, it is manageable. Try to keep a rational approach. (Step outside yourself, and think about how it feels, what it does, where it exists in you, how it comes out). Keep busy, do fun things, be with people—time will solve this problem. Rely on prayer and God's love.

has tender feelings, and I feel I have hurt her a great deal by not discussing Church issues earlier in our relationship, before we became so attached. I guess I appeared to her to be every bit the Church man she desired. I worry that I let her trust me and love me while I struggled with my religious doubts. I guess my desire to be with her overshadowed thoughts of how all this could hurt her. I wish I could fix all that somehow.

JEFF: *I don't think things are that drastic for her, but I think you've learned a valuable lesson about being tactfully up-front with people about your life and leanings. I think your friend will get over it, one way or the other. And she may learn a valuable lesson here, too.*

One more thought. You might just lean back and give this some time. Don't put any pressure on her one way or the other. Just be there, being you. She may grow into a new way of seeing life, her Mormonism, and you. She may find your good qualities as a person outweigh her need for the standard, ideal (and largely cartoon) Mormon husband.

I know this is a tough time. But you've crossed a frontier and are entering a new phase of your life. It will be exciting but troubling. (You might want to discuss this with your bishop.) Just be

"I am burdened with feelings of sadness."

exploring Church history and not getting adequate resolution.

STEPHEN: Fueling this reluctance to explore Church history, I believe, is the Church itself. Although they proclaim otherwise, my observation is that the Church does not want us to learn all we can, especially about its history.

JEFF: *I don't disagree. I wish it were otherwise, too. If everyone were encouraged from a young age to study and understand everything and anything, and learn how to filter the junk from the jewels, most members would still be okay. Doing such open study early in life is like getting an inoculation that protects against serious infections later. Unfortunately, as others have pointed out, the Church has chosen isolation rather than inoculation as the primary approach to protection. Isolation usually works, but when the unsuspecting and unprotected are exposed to an infectious agent, they sometimes have a serious reaction. This sometimes happens to true-believers who, never having heard a discouraging word, find themselves overwhelmed and distraught when they learn or hear something negative.*

[NOTE: About this time, Stephen and his girlfriend broke up, but that was not the end of the story nor their relationship. Over the next month

When we fall in love with someone, we're not just falling in love with the person but with a vision of how the future with this person might be. Apparently, your girlfriend wasn't so much in love with you as with her imaginations of some ideal life ahead. Apparently you didn't fit her image of the ideal man. Maybe this is a blessing in disguise because being with someone who understands you and trusts you is very important.

It is easier to mate with someone who shares your likes, dislikes, beliefs, thoughts, faith, and so forth. If your friend isn't in a position to accept you as you are, given who she is, there are others out there who will be more like you and more accepting of your unique character and gifts.

As for temple recommend interviews, you have entered a part of your life where absolutes are diminishing. It is best to respond to others with that fact. Given, for example, a temple-recommend question, "Do you have a testimony of the Restoration?" you can honestly say, "I think it might be possible, I have a few questions about it; I will have faith that it is true; I will act as if it is true," and so forth. Your bishop will probably give you the benefit of the doubt.

STEPHEN: I worry a great deal about my girlfriend and how she is doing. Our breakup has been very hard for both of us. She

honest with yourself and others. Prayer can help. Let your true, good, Christ-like character show through so that others around you can relax and appreciate the good in you. (And maybe even envy you.) Take this experience as a blessing rather than a curse. Curiosity and wonderment can often be better than "sure" (but dull) knowledge. Maybe in the future, you'll regain a firm testimony of Mormonism, but if not, accept all that is good in the religion and its people. That is the road to happiness in our culture.

STEPHEN: I've already spoken to my current bishop and a former bishop. They both think I might be being misled by Satan. I was sincerely looking for help and simply wanted them to understand. Just having concerns and raising questions seemed to them to be a sign that Satan has a hold on me.

JEFF: *Some members (and even some bishops) have a binary outlook on life: "things are black or white," "you're either with me or against me," things come only from God or the Devil." As such, they may think that questioning must come from Satan. Frances Lee Menlove has written about how those who desire to discuss their questions or doubts in these circumstances often find communication difficult or impossible.¹ And without meaningful discussion, good members can feel alienated from the*

Group 1 community. You'll have to be careful not to fall into that trap.

STEPHEN [writing a month or so later]: Updates. My friend and I have had some further discussions. We're both pretty clear now on where the other is with religious thoughts and beliefs. It was tough getting there (mostly because of my not knowing how to explain things), but I think it will help us make better decisions regarding our relationship. I don't feel like I'm hiding anything from her anymore, which is a relief. She was willing to read some of the things I've been concerned with, mostly in regards to Joseph Smith's polygamy, which was completely new to her. So far, she considers most of it ridiculous, unfounded or, as you predicted, lies. Now, she pretty much knows where I'm at and why (misguided as it seems to her), so I feel like I've given it my best shot there. It still hurts a great deal, for both of us, and probably will for awhile.

JEFF: *Yes it will. But you're doing as well as can be expected. Believe me, there have been much worse outcomes.*

In an earlier message, you described all the good things you find in the Church, all the good things it had done for you. When I balance that with your concerns over history, polygamy, and so forth, I wonder if there is not some compromise you could make for and within yourself. Has your faith in all other factors of the Church been weakened? Have you come to distrust all other LDS faith claims? If not, here is an attitude that might work: "I will accept the less desirable aspects of the religion and balance them against other more desirable aspects."

STEPHEN: Hmmm, yeah. Good questions. I'm not sure what you mean by "accept the less desirable aspects." . . . What would this acceptance consist of? I can accept that Joseph Smith's polygamy experiences happened. I can't accept them as appropriate, or worse, holy. Nor could I defend them as such. I feel I'm being expected to do that.

JEFF: *Other descriptors might include: "less well accepted" or "less understood." You could take every trait of the Church and line them up from "most desirable" to "least desirable" and have "difficult history," "polygamy by J.S." and "blindly following" on the less desirable end and put "Christ's teachings," "service," and "community" on the other end.*

STEPHEN: Yes, there is much that I like at Church that I would like to hang onto. I love how members of the Church care for and watch out for one another. I want to be a part of that. I like the clean living. I like the basic teachings of being a good person, striving to be better, and so forth. I recognize there is

much good, and I want to hang onto all that I can in spite of my concerns. Will any Mormon girl be okay with this approach?

JEFF: *Yes, there are good LDS women who will accept you as you are. (Quite a few may read this column, for example. Maybe SUNSTONE readers will respond with some suggestions.)*

STEPHEN: I attended another church about a year ago, just to see what it was like. In what could best be described as a "testimony meeting," a gentleman got up and spoke. He said he struggled to believe in God and wasn't even sure there was such an entity but still wanted to live a good and decent life and to associate with others who want the same. This guy was still accepted and fellowshipped at that church. He was there for human contact and understanding, not to be judged or shunned because he doubted or disbelieved.

I can't imagine someone getting up in an LDS testimony meeting and saying, "I'm not absolutely sure Joseph Smith was a prophet" or, "I have questions about the Book of Mormon" or, "I'm pretty sure polygamy was wrong, but I like and respect you and want to be part of the Church." But it's getting more and more difficult for me to not say something like this.

JEFF: *Perhaps you ought to try it. I have. But be prepared to be a card-carrying Borderlander from that point on.*

STEPHEN: Maybe a few years down the road, I'll be kicking myself for not just going along with things, not tap dancing around temple recommend questions, never disagreeing with anything Church-related, and not salvaging my relationship with my girlfriend. Right now, I don't see a way to do that and maintain my sanity.

JEFF: *Given only those two options, it would be better to maintain your sanity. But there are more options. I have two favorite quotes that offer hope for those on a path like yours. "Skepticism, riddling the faith of yesterday, prepares the way for the faith of tomorrow" (Romain Rolland). And, "In all things it is better to hope than despair" (J. W. van Goethe).* ☺

NOTE

1. Francis Lee Menlove, "The Challenge of Honesty," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (spring 1966): 44-53.

Please send me any of your tales from life in the Borderlands.

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WHAT I WANTED FROM SNOW

"We have always wanted something beyond what we wanted."

—Ernesto Cardenal

I wanted from snow
what it couldn't tell me
in the white brightness
of mid-day.
Even in darkness
the sky was light,
too light to be real.
I wanted the underside of snow,
what it told me when it sifted
between barn wall slats—
a fine line of powder
like a finger pointing.
I wanted what I heard
when sleigh runners
whisked across the surface,
Dad going down to the lower forty
to bring home a load of hay,
how different the sound of empty, full.

I wanted the starkness
of blood on snow
when we killed chickens
or our cow dog limped homeward
from way off somewhere,
his leg mangled in a trap,
a red trail splattering the snow.

And in winter thaw I needed to find
way behind the farmhouse
a dead hawk frozen in snow
that could be lifted up,
softened and returned to dark earth.

When I stood before Father's casket
and breathing overwhelmed me,
I wanted to see his farmland
continually rising and falling
to the rhythms of earth,
pleated temple robe
across his white chest
like furrows of plowed soil
covered in snow.

—ANITA TANNER

NONSTANDARD DEVIATIONS

A LAMENTATION FOR PEACE

By Michael Nielsen

DID YOU HEAR Elder Nelson's call for peace at the October 2002 General Conference? It was beautiful and, for me, among the most inspirational conference messages in years. He urged us to act for peace as individuals and to pray for peace as a church. Some of his remarks seemed directed only to the LDS faithful, but many of his comments seemed to apply to individuals and nations everywhere. A few excerpts will illustrate:

- "We cannot fully love God without loving our neighbor."

- "Because of the long history of hostility upon the earth, many feel that peace is beyond hope. I disagree. Peace is possible. We can learn to love our fellow human beings throughout the world. Whether they be Jewish, Islamic, or fellow Christians, whether Hindu, Buddhist, or other, we can live together with mutual admiration and respect, without forsaking our religious convictions. Things we have in common are greater than are our differences. Peace is a prime priority that pleads for our pursuit."

- "Descendants of Abraham—entrusted with great promises of infinite influence—are in a pivotal position to emerge as peacemakers. Chosen by the Almighty, they can direct their powerful potential toward peace. Resolution of present political problems will require much patience and negotiation. The process would be enhanced greatly if pursued prayerfully."

- "[Isaiah's] prophecies of hope could materialize if leaders and citizens of nations would apply the teachings of Jesus Christ. Ours could then be an age of unparalleled peace and progress. Barbarism of the past would be buried. War with its horrors would be relegated to the realm of maudlin memory. Aims of nations would be mutually supportive. Peacemakers could lead in the art of arbitration, give relief to the needy, and bring hope to those who fear. Of such patriots, fu-

ture generations would shout praises, and our Eternal God would pass judgments of glory."¹

Uplifted at hearing Elder Nelson's address, I interpreted his statements as directed to the world. I was not alone in this, as news outlets announced that the Church was taking a stand against the renewed U.S. war against Iraq. The headline on KUTV News in Salt Lake City said, "LDS Church Issues Strong Middle East Anti-War Statement." Its story began, "The Mormon church on Saturday issued a strong anti-war message, clearly referring to current hostilities in the Middle East, advocating patience and negotiation and urging the faithful to be peacemakers."² News giant CNN ran a similar story which is still (at the time of this writing) available on its website.³ In each case, the message they heard was that the Church was speaking against war and in favor of peaceful negotiations. A reasonable conclusion, given Nelson's cry for peace and the pivotal role that "descendants of Abraham" have in world affairs.

SADLY, this was not to be. The Church's public relations arm issued a statement renouncing such a conclusion. "Some news outlets have misinterpreted a recent general conference address by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. We encourage reporters and editors to consider the full text of Elder Nelson's remarks," reads the press release.⁴ The statement then reiterates a short passage from the talk:

During the Second World War when members of the Church were forced to fight on opposing sides, the First Presidency affirmed that "The state is responsible for the civil control of its citizens or subjects, for their political welfare, and for the carrying forward of political policies, domestic and foreign. . . .

But the Church itself, as such, has no responsibility for these policies, [other] than urging its members fully to render . . . loyalty to their country."

No, apparently the Church was not taking a position against countries making war. Even when war appears likely, the Church seems to want to stay out of the political fray. Even when many lives are at stake.

DO recent Church actions support the claim that it stays out of politics? Perhaps it depends on the perspective one takes. From where I sit, I must conclude that the Church does become involved in political issues—most especially in those related to life and death. In the context of present events, perhaps the most striking recent example is the Church's high-profile lobbying in Oregon's anti-euthanasia campaign. That state's 1994 Death with Dignity Act resulted in vigorous efforts by the Church to defeat the measure. When the issue resurfaced in 1997, the Church again weighed in strongly for life.

Despite the press release clarifying Elder Nelson's almost-a-message-to-the-world, a little time in the library yields many examples in which the Church *has* spoken out against war and other societal problems. President Brigham Young explained the rationale for addressing temporal concerns this way:

We must perform a temporal labour—a manual labour—in order to arrive at the condition which fits us to receive the full benefit of the spiritual. . . . When people are hungry they need substantial food; when they are thirsty they need substantial drink. . . . It is the duty of the true minister of Christ to instruct the people of God how to get their food today.⁵

The specific issue of war came up several times during Heber J. Grant's tenure as Church president. With the end of World War I clearly in mind, the First Presidency's 1919 Christmas message looked forward to the day when peaceful settlements of "international



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We have witnessed an opportunity lost. The message of an apostle, whose calling is to proclaim the gospel to the world, could actually have been heard throughout the world. Instead, he spoke only to the converted and those willing to be converted.

quarrels” would replace “armed conflict and detestable bloodshed.”⁶ (See “An Olive Leaf,” page 80, for another message decrying war by President Grant and his counselors.)

In a 1961 general conference address, Elder Howard W. Hunter reminded listeners of the connection Brigham Young highlighted between the physical and the spiritual. “There are some who ask why the Church is concerned with temporal affairs. The Church is interested in the welfare of each of its members. This interest therefore cannot be limited to man’s spiritual needs alone but extends to every phase of his life.” Citing Doctrine and Covenants 29:34–35, Elder Hunter continues, “The Lord makes no distinction between temporal and spiritual commandments, for he has said that all of his commandments are spiritual. When we understand the plan of life and salvation, this becomes evident to us.”⁷

Like Elder Nelson’s conference address forty-one years later, Elder Hunter’s remarks suggest to me that as individuals and as a church, we cannot ignore the social events around us. We must engage them as we are anxiously engaged in doing good. To do otherwise would be to constrain the influence of the gospel to Sundays but not the rest of the week. It would be tantamount to saying the gospel has no message for leaders of the United States as they consider proper actions with regard to the Middle East.

THE Church’s quick back pedal with regard to Elder Nelson’s remarks saddens me even more because the Church has engaged specific war-related issues in the past. One of the most interesting illustrations of this point is a March 1971 *Ensign* article written by Edwin Firmage. Titled “Arms Control in the 70s”, the article not only offers scriptural rationales for beating swords into plowshares, but also describes bipartisan efforts to fight nuclear proliferation and goes into detail about the types of weapons available to nations.⁸ Could such an article appear in today’s *Ensign*?

Perhaps the high point of Church efforts toward peace came in 1981. The cold war had been keeping international tensions high, and the U.S. devised the MX missile plan to thwart a successful first strike by the Soviet Union. The plan called for Utah and

Nevada to host hundreds of missiles hidden in a complex set of silos—so many that the Soviets could not make a first strike against all of the silos. The idea was that the threat of retaliation would prevent an attack.

Amidst intense public debate, the Church did not shrink from taking a firm position against the MX missile proposal. On 5 May 1981, the Church issued a statement containing a point-by-point discussion of why the MX plan was flawed. The statement decried the arms race, discussed the probable outcomes of different types of attacks, and even objected to the likely economic, environmental, and social problems that Utah and Nevada would face while the silos were being constructed.⁹ Church opposition helped defeat the plan.

Unfortunately, Church efforts to achieve peace no longer seem a priority. For a fleeting, shining moment, the Church spoke to the entire world about peace; but that was another generation, another time, and, in some ways, another church. Today’s Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints seems to be governed by a public relations policy dictating that when we preach the gospel of peace, we speak only of inner peace, spiritual peace. I lament that the Church’s message to the nations does not include a temporal call for peace for all of Abraham’s descendants, for all the world, in the here and now. Brigham Young claimed we should feed people physically before expecting them to embrace the gospel’s spiritual nourishment. Surely we should also work to ensure people’s physical safety before asking “Do you know where you came from, why you’re here, and where you’re going?” Messages of family togetherness cannot reach people whose immediate concerns are

to escape falling bombs, missiles, and biological weapons.

We have witnessed an opportunity lost. The message of an apostle, whose calling is to proclaim the gospel to the world, could actually have been heard throughout the world. Instead, he spoke only to the converted and those willing to be converted. Others thought for a moment that they were part of the conversation. Sadly, they learned the discussion was for members of the Mormon family only.

Said the Psalmist: “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalms 34:14). Lamentably, the twenty-first century psalmist would write it differently. “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. But do this only within oneself. Seek not peace among nations.”



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NOTES

1. Available at <www.lds.org>.
2. Available at <www.kutv.com>.
3. Available at <www.cnn.com>.
4. Available at www.lds.org. Look in the media section under “Media Resources” and “News Reporting: Corrections and Clarifications.”
5. *Journal of Discourses* 9:239.
6. James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*. 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–1975): 5:164.
7. Howard W. Hunter, *Conference Reports*, Oct. 1961, 108–09.
8. Edwin Brown Firmage, “Arms Control in the ‘70s”, *Ensign* (Mar. 1971), 54.
9. “News of the Church,” *Ensign* (June 1981), 76.

Pontius’ Puddle



BOOK REVIEW

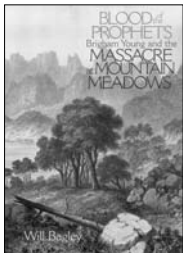
WRESTLING BRIGHAM

BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS: BRIGHAM YOUNG
AND THE MASSACRE AT MOUNTAIN MEADOWS

by Will Bagley

University of Oklahoma Press, 2002

493 pages, \$39.95

Reviewed by Robert H. Briggs

Historian Will Bagley identifies the victims, heroes, and villains of the Mountain Meadows massacre, but focuses especially on the question, "What did Brigham Young know and when did he know it?"

BY DUSK ON Friday, 11 September 1857, the massacre at Mountain Meadows was over. But the "affair" it produced is with us yet. In *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, Will Bagley, an independent writer and historian, has constructed a narrative that treats both massacre and affair and their combined reverberations down to the present. Published by the University of Oklahoma Press, it is a handsome volume with carefully selected historical maps, illustrations, and photographs that do much to enhance the text.

For a half century, Juanita Brooks's *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950) has been the standard treatment of the subject. Yet in later editions and reprintings of her classic work, Brooks outlined areas of her history that warranted further study. Moreover, in *Blood of the Prophets*, Bagley has amply demonstrated that sources not available to Brooks should be evaluated and woven into our understanding of this event. Further, the widespread ethnic strife of the twentieth cen-

tury has brought the conditions that surround horrific massacres into sharper focus. Thus, as we approach the 150th anniversary of this lamentable event, with new sources and frameworks, it is appropriate to produce new histories of this difficult chapter in Utah and western history.

Blood of the Prophets contains nineteen chapters plus an epilogue, a brief addendum, and an appendix identifying the victims of the massacre. The story begins in the 1830s with the conflict between Mormons and their neighbors in Missouri and later Illinois. Bagley then quickly moves to the massacre's precursors in frontier Utah, the outbreak of the Utah War, and the massacre itself. Nearly half the narrative concerns these events.

Next, Bagley details the federal investigations of 1857–59 (followed by a decade-long hiatus during the Civil War and its aftermath) and the renewed federal investigations of the 1870s that culminated in the indictment of nine southern Utah militiamen, one of whom, John D. Lee, was brought to trial. Lee's first trial ended in a hung jury, but Lee

was convicted in the second and was ultimately executed by firing squad in early 1877, the same year Brigham Young died. More than a third of the narrative deals with the events of this twenty-year period.

In the remaining sixty pages, Bagley discusses the fate of such massacre planners or participants as Isaac C. Haight, Philip Klingensmith, John M. Higbee, and William H. Dame, all of whom died between 1880 and 1910. He briefly treats the contributions of massacre commentators such as Josiah Gibbs, Josiah Rogerson, Orson Whitney, and Robert Baskin. And he highlights the final years of the last of the militia participants and the Fancher party's surviving children.

In the final chapter and epilogue, Bagley recounts Juanita Brooks's courageous revelation of the details of the massacre in the early 1950s, the tentative efforts toward reconciliation between descendants of the Arkansas train and of southern Utah militiamen including John D. Lee, and the successive placing of monuments in 1990 and 1999 at the Mountain Meadows massacre site as more fitting remembrances of the dead.

Here and earlier, as he pays respect and acknowledges intellectual debts, Bagley praises Brooks as one of the West's "best and bravest historians" (xiii) and announces that his work "is not a revision but an extension of Brooks's labors" (xiv). For me, his account of the courage and contributions of Juanita Brooks is one of the most satisfying sections of the book.

WHAT are Bagley's purposes in constructing his narrative? One stated goal is to "bring to life forgotten victims and heroes" (xviii). These include both the slain and the survivors in the Arkansas train, as well as individual Mormons of "integrity and courage" (xviii) who opposed the massacre and its cover-up or who later held for a forthright acknowledgment of Mormon involvement in it.

Here Bagley succeeds admirably. Through clever sleuthing, he has unearthed considerable background on the main Arkansas family groupings—Fanchers, Bakers, Camerons, Dunlaps, Huffs, Joneses, Millers, Mitchells, and Tackitts—that composed the Fancher party. He traces their roots in Arkansas, their blood and marriage connections, their involvement in the cattle business, and Alexander Fancher's previous trips to California. Later in the account, Bagley traces the post-massacre lives of some of the child survivors. The resulting portrait humanizes the members of the Arkansas party far better than any previous effort, including Brooks's.



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Similarly, Bagley's narrative includes sketches of little-known Mormon frontiersmen. Some, like Laban Morrill of Cedar City, opposed from the outset an attack on the emigrant train. Others, like John and William Hawley, George A. Hicks, William Laney, and Charles W. Wandell, were outspoken in criticizing the cover-up of the massacre or supported prosecution of all perpetrators. Again, Bagley has done a service in uncovering obscure sources and recognizing their value to a fuller account of the complex affair that followed the massacre.

Bagley also discloses another purpose. Where he feels "official Mormon accounts of the crime laid the blame on victims and Indians," he has made "a special effort to set the record straight" (xvii). Like others before him, Bagley agrees that Indians were "accomplices" in the massacre but not "instigators," as some have charged.

Bagley's main purpose, however, is an attempt to answer the question, "What did Brigham Young know, and when did he know it?" (xiv) It is in this focus and his conclusions that Bagley and many fellow investigators of the massacre part company. To his credit, Bagley acknowledges the difficulties and complexities of this issue. He notes that while many federal officials believed Young was "directly responsible" for the massacre, they could not muster the evidence for an indictment, let alone a conviction. Bagley states: "Those who seek to 'prove' that Young explicitly ordered the massacre should consider this fact" (xiv). On the other hand, in agreement with Brooks and citing her conclusion, Bagley judges the evidence for Young as an "accessory after the fact" to be "abundant and unmistakable" (xv). Bagley further maintains that scholars within the Mormon tradition have "dismissed early Mormon religious violence too blithely" and neglected the "devastating impact" of the massacre and its cover-up on "the LDS church and Brigham Young's reputation" (xiv).

By implication, if not direct assertion, Bagley advances the thesis that the Mountain Meadows massacre resulted from several intertwined aspects of frontier Mormonism. One contributing factor was Mormon religious ceremonies conducted in the Endowment House in which initiates vowed, among other things, to pray that God would avenge the blood of the martyred Mormon founder and prophet Joseph Smith. A second factor was nineteenth century Mormon theological speculation regarding "blood atonement." Third was the practice of giving patriarchal blessings to individual Church members, some of which were laced with



PHOTO FROM BLOOD OF THE PROPHETS, COURTESY THE UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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sanguinary imagery of "avenging the blood of the prophets." A final factor, Bagley contends, was Mormonism's excesses during the mid-1850s, the period known as the "Mormon Reformation." Taking this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, Bagley asserts that frontier Mormonism at this time was essentially a "culture of violence" (50, 378), and at its center was a violent ideology. Thus, "Early Mormonism's peculiar obsession with blood and vengeance created the society that made the massacre possible if not inevitable" (379). Disagreeing with Brooks's conclusions about the roles played by other circumstances—economic, political, social, psychological, cultural, and military—Bagley concludes that "a ruthless commitment to revenge as a religious principle played a larger role" than all other factors (378). Thus, bucking more than a century of research in the social sciences, he argues for the primacy of religious influences.

Bagley's assertion is circumstantial. Some circumstantial cases can be persuasive and even compelling. Lacking direct evidence, how strong is this one?

Blood of the Prophets pursues a conspiracy theory that weaves together several events. The first is the May 1857 murder of beloved Mormon leader Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas and the arrival in Utah that July of his bereaved widow Eleanor McLean Pratt. Her arrival and the emotions that arose from the story she told coincided with the Saints re-

ceiving confirmation that a large, apparently belligerent, contingent of the United States Army was marching toward Utah. Further straining Mormon nerves were the several, California-bound overland companies passing through Utah that season.

According to Bagley, in an effort to both demonstrate his control over all overland routes and "avenge the blood of the prophets" (presumably that of Joseph and Hyrum Smith), as well as the more recent murder of Parley Pratt, "Brigham Young initiated the sequence of events that led to the murder of one hundred and twenty men, women and children" (380). The hapless Arkansas emigrants "fell victim to Brigham Young's decision to stage an incident that would demonstrate his power to control the Indians . . . and to stop travel on the . . . overland road" (380).

Bagley asserts that one concrete step in effecting these ends was Young's conference with Utes and Southern Paiutes on 1 September 1857 in Great Salt Lake City, only a week before the first attack at Mountain Meadows. To cement a Mormon-Indian alliance in the anticipated clash with federal troops, Young granted to these Indians "all the cattle gone to California" on the southern route. Bagley interprets this as Brigham Young's "encourag[ing] his Indian allies to attack the Fancher party" (379). He asserts that these Indians, or at least the Paiutes, high-tailed south to attack the Fancher train in southern Utah and relieve them of their livestock, presumably ignoring all the other cattle they passed in their three-hundred-mile journey.

Bagley contends further that even before this, Young had conveyed orders concerning the Fancher party to one of his leading lieutenants, George A. Smith, to travel to southern Utah to, as Bagley puts it, "arrange their destruction at a remote and lonely place" (381). Camping with the Fancher company near Corn Creek in south-central Utah in late August, Smith had been troubled with the impression that some evil would befall this group of emigrants. Smith shared his premonition with Jacob Hamblin, who recorded it in his journal. For Bagley, this is a "chilling glimpse" into the encounter between the Mormon party and the Arkansas company (110). According to Bagley, Young's injunction led Smith to invent "the tale of the poisoned spring to provide a motive for murder and sent [Mormon militiaman] Silas S. Smith south to rouse the population" (381). *Blood of the Prophets* asserts this sequence as the chain of events directly linking Brigham Young to a conspiracy to murder the

Arkansas emigrants. Bagley concludes that Brigham Young justified it as “a righteous and necessary act of vengeance” (175).

By themselves, this string of events has the ring of plausibility. Yet in his telling, Bagley ignores or overstates several lines of evidence. First, Utah’s Mormons were obsessed with reports not of meandering emigrant trains but of invading U.S. troops. Second, Young’s proposal of an alliance with Native American bands was made to meet the exigencies posed not by faraway emigrants leaving the territory but by onrushing federal troops aimed at the heart of the Mormons’ Great Basin sanctuary. Third, it was not rhetoric that provoked the scattered and exposed southern Utah settlers, whose emotions were already whipped and frayed by the threat of war. Rather, it was their collective memory of the outrageous abuses, injustices, denials of redress and, most prominently, repeated dispossessions between 1833 and 1846 when they had attempted to peaceably settle in Missouri and Illinois.

BAGLEY purports to examine the “intertwined religious beliefs and political conditions” (xv) in 1850s frontier Utah, and, to some extent, does so. Yet *Blood of the Prophets* ultimately downplays the political factors and presents the massacre as an act of “religious fury” (xiii) like so many others that still garner headlines today.

When he reaches for a larger theoretical framework, Bagley alludes to the conflict between Mormons and their neighbors in the Midwest. There had indeed been a cycle of conflict and reciprocating violence. Yet Bagley conceives of this cycle not just between Mormons and their neighbors but also *within* Mormonism itself. This “bitterness and zealotry” among the Mormons “inexorably fueled the bitterness and emotions that led to Mountain Meadows” (xviii).

This view reflects, first, a fundamentally flawed understanding of the nature of ethnic conflict and, second, a biased view of frontier Mormonism in Utah. Consider the first of these. What is the proper framework in which to consider this massacre? There are several models we might employ to understand what happened at Mountain Meadows:

- **WAR CRIME OR ATROCITY**—comparing the massacre to war crimes such as those committed during the two World Wars, the 1915 slaughter of Armenians in Turkey, the massacre of Cambodians in the mid-1970s during the Pol Pot regime, or the mass murders of Muslims in Bosnia during the mid-1990s.

- **VIGILANTE ACTION**—comparing the

massacre to extralegal vigilante activity very common in the nineteenth century, especially in the West.

- **OPPRESSED MINORITY BACKLASH**—comparing the massacre to other instances of violent backlash by a provoked minority after repeated injustices. (Very strong evidence exists for this phenomenon in both nineteenth and twentieth century United States history, including instances of violent backlash following the mistreatment of Indians, Blacks, Chinese, Hispanics, Italians, Irish, and others.)

- **WITNESS SILENCING**—comparing the massacre to other circumstances in which a sense of extreme necessity compelled perpetrators to take action that would leave no competent witness alive.

However, the most promising approach may come from the interconnected disciplines contributing to the emerging field of ethnic studies.

Bagley cites several nineteenth-century commentators who labeled the Mountain Meadows massacre “the darkest deed of the nineteenth century” and “a crime that has no parallel in American history for atrocity” (xiii). In reality, however, the massacre pales in comparison with the mass killings associated with the Indian Wars, slavery, the Civil War, and the post-Reconstruction lynching of African-Americans. Then followed the twentieth century with its unprecedented wars, atrocities, and massacres. One estimate for the world-wide death toll from all wars, massacres, and atrocities during the last century is 180 million, the worst in the history of humankind.

From the effort to comprehend this appalling bloodletting and its causes arose a number of studies which have grappled with genocides, massacres, ethnic cleansings, mass killings, and other forms of ethnic conflict. With this has come a variety of theories, approaches, and models that attempt to describe and to some degree explain these phenomena.

As scholars have studied episodes of ethnic cleansing, they have recognized that U.S. history has also been marred by this type of violence. One approach to understanding ethnic conflict in the United States is the study of devaluing and mutual antagonism. Devaluing is the process by which the prejudice one group feels toward another leads to blaming, scapegoating, or otherwise diminishing the other. A sharp dichotomy is drawn between “our group” and “the other.” The other may be viewed as less intelligent, less likable, or lazy. The other may also be viewed by the group as morally bad and as a danger,

intent on harming or destroying “us.”

This scenario is heightened when a mutual antagonism exists between two groups that already have a history of violent episodes between them that have not yet healed. According to researcher Ervin Staub, this situation has “especially great instigating power.” Armed conflict or the threat of it intensifies antagonisms and creates additional hostility. In that environment, the hostility will be transferred to passing civilians (such as the Fancher company) if they are seen as in league with the enemy group and especially if they are seen as “aiders and abettors.”¹

Another powerful instigator of retaliatory violence is the dispossession of property. Between 1833 and 1846, the Mormons suffered a series of dispossessions in northwestern Missouri and western Illinois, the last of which precipitated their move to the Great Basin. What’s more, in 1857, the approaching federal army represented the largest, best-equipped, and best-organized force ever arrayed against them. Naturally, they perceived a credible threat of a new dispossession. In southern Utah, some Mormon settlers believed the Fancher party was in league with the federal troops, while others came to believe the Arkansas emigrants would actually return from California to dispossess the Mormons.

Physical dispossession of property involves extreme economic deprivation plus a direct threat to individual or group security. Further, since an ethnic group may feel a “spiritual” connection to its land, dispossession can also become an attack on the spiritual identity of the group. Witness the centuries of resistance of Native Americans to the forced dispossession of their homelands. Witness also the example of nineteenth century New Mexico, where the “Mexicans” (the original *mestizo* occupants of New Mexico) resisted “American” encroachments on their homeland. The same thing can be seen in Chicano resistance during the latter half of the twentieth century to similar actions throughout the Southwest and California. This element—a renewed threat of dispossession—cannot be ignored in a complete study of the instigating causes of the massacre.

All these factors make a theoretical framework like Bagley’s—that focuses primarily on a single factor such as religious motivation—too narrow and confining, both philosophically and pragmatically. It is not sufficiently broad and multidisciplinary to adequately assess the role of other factors such as economics, politics, culture, sociology, and psychology. Focusing so narrowly on reli-

gious motivations, itself a throwback to many nineteenth-century anti-Mormon theories, threatens to shipwreck any hope for an accurate and balanced interpretation. I'm disappointed to find this book's many new sources shoehorned into an old framework that does not do them justice. A multidisciplinary approach, judiciously applied, would have been much more satisfactory.

The approaches I have outlined do not demolish what I term Bagley's Violent Religious Motivation model. It has some merit. The massacre arose from complex intertwining conditions, factors, motives, and causes. Violent Religious Motivation sheds some light, especially as applied to individuals such as Isaac Haight and John D. Lee. But other models offer more thorough explanations.

WILL Bagley has spent years of sleuthing, and his twenty-five-page bibliography of primary sources is itself a major contribution. Not only has he netted the widest collection of Mountain Meadows materials to date, but the primary sources are identified in a very detailed fashion, making it very helpful for future researchers. It will be indispensable for modern students of the subject. The value of this bibliography is evident on every page. The narrative is interwoven with hundreds of perspectives on the massacre and the larger, continuing, and still not exhausted, Mountain Meadows "affair."

Bagley writes a popular historical column for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and his writing skill stands him in good stead to convey this complex subject in a lively, engaging manner. His treatment of minor characters and many specific episodes is good. In many cases, he has found new sources or teased out details from old ones, allowing his narrative to provide many fresh perspectives. His treatment of John D. Lee is reasonably fair, as is that of the Paiutes, and is an important corrective for some of the scapegoating of the past. His attention to the shattering effect of the massacre on the faith of some Mormon adherents is also a contribution. His chapter about Juanita Brooks is a jewel. And his epilogue dealing with the recent "peace and reconciliation" efforts is a good summary of those important efforts.

What, then, are its shortcomings? The shortcomings stem from a faulty research design, one too narrowly focused on "what did



CONVINCED THAT BRIGHAM YOUNG WAS AN ACCESSORY BEFORE THE FACT TO THE MASSACRE, BAGLEY LOOKED AT THINGS PRIMARILY THROUGH THIS PRISM, UNFORTUNATELY SKEWING BOTH THE QUESTIONS HE SOUGHT ANSWERS TO IN HIS SOURCES AND HIS INTERPRETATION OF THOSE SOURCES.

Brigham Young know and when did he know it?" Convinced that Young was accessory before the fact to premeditated murder, Bagley interpreted his sources only through this prism. The narrow research design and his interpretative framework created a feedback mechanism, with each reinforcing the other. Unfortunately, this loop skewed both the questions he sought to answer as he looked at sources and his interpretation of those sources.

The other major weakness of *Blood of the Prophets* is its narrow, old-fashioned theoretical framework. Juanita Brooks's seminal work demonstrated a nascent multidisciplinary approach. She probed Mormons' inflammatory speeches, temple vows, and patriarchal blessings. But within her framework, she explored both the religious and cultural influences of these conditions. Her work also paid close attention to the importance of the Mormon settlers' "determination not to be driven," and, in so doing, was implicitly exploring both cultural and psychological impulses. She also emphasized the importance of the approaching war as a great instigator. Indeed, she judged the fog of war as the *sine qua non* of the massacre. She also implicitly included war's near cousin, politics, within her analysis.²

By comparison, the framework of *Blood of the Prophets* is anemic and one-dimensional. Its approach is less an extension of Brooks's model than a throwback to the fallacious, single-cause explanation of Robert N. Baskin in the nineteenth century.³ This fact is unfortunate and, I believe, unintended. This volume could have contributed to burgeoning studies

of large-scale violence and crime. But it may be neglected in such explorations because its framework—religiously motivated revenge—ignores decades of research on so many other important factors.

Writing about historical events as complex as the Mountain Meadows massacre is extraordinarily difficult. Bagley deserves praise for the areas in which he has made valuable contributions. As for the book's shortcomings, continuing investigations will provide the opportunity for revision. Future studies need to incorporate more context, more interpretive rigor that teases out other contributing and instigating causes, and a tone that is less polemical and has less insinuation. Such studies will provide what is not sufficiently in evidence here, that hallmark of well-executed history: balance. ☞

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Robert Briggs has written a much more extensive treatment of Blood of the Prophets, from which this review is excerpted. This larger work treats in far greater detail subjects such as the Mormon-Indian alliance and Paiute involvement, additional massacre characters, the two John D. Lee trials, and the perceived threat from the East. It also contains important reflections on the craft of history and several challenges facing massacre researchers, including the difficulties of handling sources as diverse as the eyewitness testimonies of child survivors, affidavits from militia members who participated in the killing, and evidence from antagonistic sources. We have made this extended review available on the Sunstone website, <www.sunstoneonline.com>, and highly recommend it to interested readers.*



To comment on this essay or read comments by others, please visit our website: <www.sunstoneonline.com>.

NOTES

1. See Ervin Staub, "Mass Murder," in Ronald Gottesmann, ed., *Violence in America, An Encyclopedia*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1999), 2: 320–29.

2. See Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), vi., xii.

3. Robert N. Baskin was one of the federal prosecutors in the first trial of John D. Lee, a former mayor of Salt Lake City, and a fierce opponent of theocratic Mormonism.

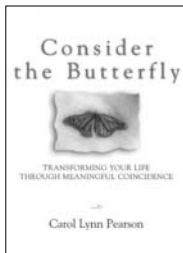
B O O K R E V I E W

COINCIDENCE WITH POTENTIAL

CONSIDER THE BUTTERFLY: TRANSFORMING YOUR
LIFE THROUGH MEANINGFUL COINCIDENCE

by Carol Lynn Pearson
Gibbs Smith, 2002
160 pages, \$12.95

Reviewed by Lisa Tensmeyer Hansen



Through her generous sharing of more than forty stories from her own life, Carol Lynn Pearson suggests that events and ideas with unexpected connections are wonderful reminders that that we are noticed, that we are worth the universe's attention.

"I had pretty much given up on the idea that I would ever experience the mystical. I was resigned just to sit at the table of my cosmological kitchen, sipping the bit of warmth my little cup offered, still keeping one eye on the front door, just in case it ever opened and my hoped-for vision or voice or angelic encounter burst in.

"Now, here's the good part. While I was eyeing the front door, something snuck in very quietly through the back door and tiptoed up to the table." (10).

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST in Carol Lynn Pearson's metaphysical kitchen is synchronicity, or coincidence with potential. In addition to being her guest, synchronicity is the benevolent host of a new approach to daily life in Pearson's newest book, *Consider the Butterfly: Transforming Your Life Through Meaningful Coincidence*. By means of brief, personal stories related with candor and remarkable vulnerability, Pearson illustrates how synchronicity can serve as our daily guide and revelator of insight. According to the author, even the simplest coincidence may sport a hidden meaning,

but only—and here's the rub—when we pay attention. Coincidences may, in fact, be tossed aside as odd little curiosities by the unaware, but Pearson's message is that events and ideas with unexpected connections are definitely worth examining, that someone (the universe?) is trying to attract our notice and teach us something new.

Pearson's graceful stories imply that—behind the scenes—life is highly organized enough that useful lessons are orchestrated for our benefit. Could someone be trying that hard to communicate with us? A good number of her stories suggest that, at least half the time, the deeper meaning may be simply that we are noticed, that the struggles and concerns of our little lives are worth the universe's attention. Is that such a bad message for us to receive on a regular basis? With characteristic extroversion, Pearson demonstrates the way she turns these messages into connections with others and, in so doing, teaches us how we too might share ourselves with others through explorations of our own synchronicities. Simply moving us to connect with others wouldn't be a bad objective for a behind-the-scenes Coincidence-Weaver either. In this vein, Pearson

shares a diversity of stories ranging from intimate family revelations to a profound response to the 11 September tragedy, all generated from noticing the messages of subtle coincidence.

A second set of stories carry more pointed personal advice, directing her to act in support of specific people. This is where I appreciate the author's willingness to divulge personal thoughts, sharing with us how to mitigate a universal sense of inadequacy ("Have I done the right thing at the right time?") by acting. For example, after Pearson takes DeJeah, a young woman from a home for troubled girls, clothes shopping, Pearson admires a sweater DeJeah has in her closet, which DeJeah spontaneously offers to give to Pearson. "Oh, no, DeJeah," Pearson responds. "Keep it. You need a pretty sweater like that." The coincidence at the crux of this scene is that Pearson has just finished having the time of her life cutting up a favorite cranberry red blouse to make a tie for an acquaintance who had said in passing that he'd love to have a tie in just that color. Sitting in the car after the conversation with DeJeah, the message arrives in Pearson's mind.

"What? DeJeah had just offered me her pretty cranberry red sweater? And I had said—no? Here I was in the middle—literally in the middle—of having such a good time making Wally's tie, and DeJeah wanted to join the fun, and I had told her to go away?"

Then she acknowledges the message,

"Giving is so powerful, so much fun. Receiving is harder. But if nobody ever received Wally's tie, nobody could ever have the fun of making it from the shirt off her back. And if nobody ever received the cranberry red sweater out of DeJeah's not very full closet, nobody could ever have the fun of giving it, of feeling abundant, generous, powerful."

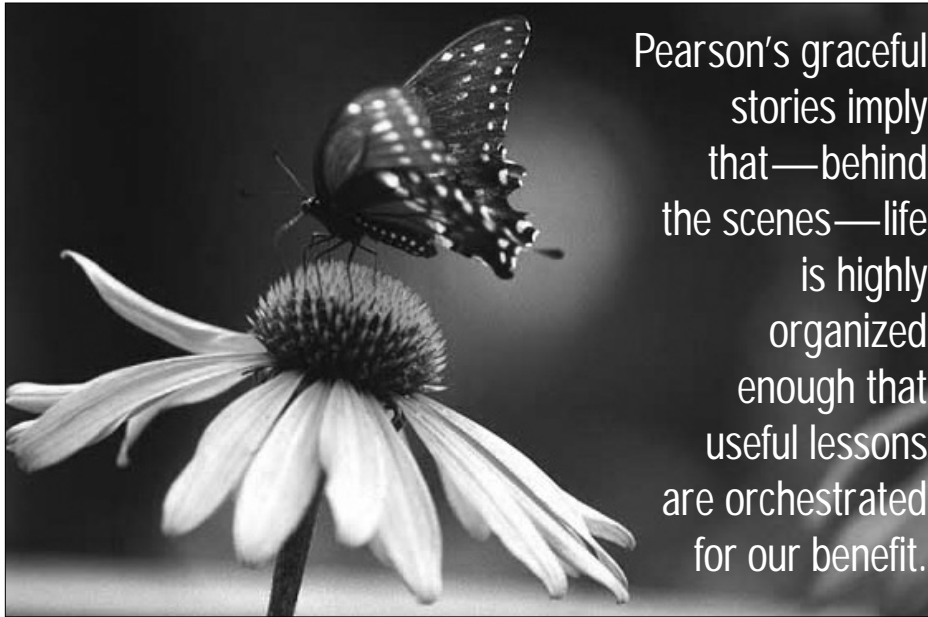
And so Pearson acts on the message to re-do her initial response, and rewards the reader with the follow-up:

"DeJeah lit up like a little Christmas tree. 'Really? Okay!' She bounded to her feet.

I've been wearing the sweater as I have been writing this. I think I will wear it to Church on Sunday and tell the story to Wally. He will enjoy it. And I will wear it with jeans on Monday night when Rozan and I go to see our girls. And I predict—for indeed I am a



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Pearson's graceful stories imply that—behind the scenes—life is highly organized enough that useful lessons are orchestrated for our benefit.

prophetess—that when DeJeah and I share a hug, she will grin and giggle, and that family tie will be even stronger too. That magical tie” (114–16).

A third set of synchronicities have more obvious other-worldly roots, coming to Pearson as apparent messages from the spirit world. These include several from her daughter, Katy, who passed away in February 1999, and whose void in the author's life is powerfully bridged by periodic subtle coincidence. The title story details a flood of butterflies, real, literary, and symbolic that catch the author's attention in a single day of remembering Katy. Recalling that in myth, butterflies are charged with carrying spiritual messages between the living and the dead, the author adds: “Did you know that the Greek word for butterfly is the same as the word for soul? Or that the butterfly is the only creature that changes its DNA in the process of transformation?” In considering Katy, Pearson also considers the butterfly: “The fragile cocoon falls away. The wings spread and, ah—such beauty!” (133)

A WONDERFUL lightheartedness pervades all the stories, even the ones addressing loss of hope, loss of life, loss of relationship. How can this be? The very vehicle by which these messages come to Pearson (and to us, which is her point) is through the humor of unexpected connection, the playful delight we experience as we recognize the orchestration behind the revelatory event, no matter the profundity of the message. “What if God wants to play with us as well as work with us?” she asks. “What if

God actually wants us to laugh?” (18)

Decoding the messages of the forty-odd stories presented to us would be entertaining enough (think of it as a New-Age version of *Encyclopedia Brown* for adults), but the reader also comes to know Carol Lynn Pearson more intimately in the process: as a mother of real children, a neighbor, a sufferer and survivor of losses, a seeker of understanding and rightness in the world—almost an everywoman.

After turning the last page, you are likely to feel you have just spent the afternoon with a dear neighbor. You might even find yourself reaching for the phone to tell Carol Lynn thank you. Her delight in the discovery of daily synchronicities will follow you, and you will notice the many small connections that are brewing in your own life, leading you to wonder what the universe wants to say to you, too.

WITH Carol Lynn's permission, I'm going to venture an example. After finishing the first draft of this review, I set *Butterfly* aside and turned to another project. On impulse, I flipped the book open again. The story on the open page related a synchronicity regarding Carol Lynn's birthday, 27 September. The “aha” moment occurred: “That's today!” With an irrepressible giggle, I found Carol Lynn's number from directory assistance and wished her a happy birthday.

If you receive messages that make you laugh and then make you think, and if you then respond by connecting with someone you might otherwise not have, Carol Lynn's purpose will have been achieved. ☺



THREE VISITS

1.
His mouth is simple.
It's full of parochial words
that sink like stones
when he speaks,
but his teeth
shine, the lump in
his throat floats like
a tennis ball above a
net of thoughts,
he is here in white
we are having our game of words.

2.
His eyes are misty.
A stained calico yet
compelling like
a sunset's tinted arc,
he can still fire them
with early stars, the
nurses found
temper there,
but night is close
we both know
a show of bravado
is a costly salve;
a luxury for
prescriptionless
men.

3.
His hands are shaking.
He takes his tea bag
and tears it,
casts the leaves
into the remnant
pond and asks
his son, with
whispers,
to tell
him what he
sees. . . the truth:
a segmented fruit
like mandarin
each piece
something less
than what the memory
is worth,
his skin
keeping him
whole.

—CLAYTON HANSEN

ANNIVERSARY REVIEW

GETTING "REAL"

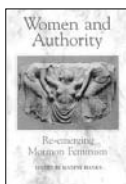
WOMEN AND AUTHORITY:
RE-EMERGING MORMON FEMINISM

Edited by Maxine Hanks

Signature Books, 1992

494 pages, \$19.95

Reviewed by Sonja Farnsworth



Women and Authority was published exactly ten years ago. What role has it played in Mormon feminist discourse? How has it affected one contributor's feelings about her own feminism?

WHEN CINDY LEFEVRE began her graduate studies at Sacramento State University in the early 1990s, a professor asked each student to share information about their cultural backgrounds. Cindy revealed that she was Mormon, and the professor reacted with disbelief, asking, "What is a Mormon woman doing in a women's studies class?" "I'm a Mormon feminist," said Cindy. "Impossible," the professor countered, "there's no such thing."¹

I had similar problems with my Mormon feminist identity during my graduate studies at San Jose State. When other students learned I was Mormon, they often assumed I was anti-feminist. When they learned I was a feminist, they couldn't believe I was still a Mormon. When they learned I was, they often disapproved. And those were just the non-Mormons!

Mormon students could be worse. One read an essay I'd written for a class assignment about my experiences with feminism. Naturally, I identified myself in the essay as a Mormon feminist. After writing critical comments in the margins ("Do you believe in the prophet or not? If you don't, then leave!") she gave the essay to the local LDS institute director. He mailed the copy to me with a harsh note suggesting my feminist interests were related to "homosexual pursuits." When I read his letter, I groaned. I was a Feminist, not a Lesbian.

Meanwhile, two states away, in Salt Lake City, Peggy Fletcher had been confronting similar issues. In the Spring 1991 issue of *Women's Quarterly*, her article, "Mormonism AND Feminism" included the following:

At the naming ceremony for my infant daughter I called myself a feminist and was chastised by my family and other congregants. I mention my Mormon faith to feminist friends and am met with scoffs. "Isn't that the church that defeated the equal rights amendment?" Both camps, then, agree: "Mormon feminist" is an oxymoron.²

An oxymoron's life is bittersweet. Rejected in my tradition, I yearned to find a community. What held me back was a pervading sense that Mormon feminism did not count in feminist circles either. Fortunately, several of my professors took me seriously and kindly introduced me to other academic feminists. I wanted to believe they were right, that my work was legitimate, but I couldn't absorb their vision of my value. At each academic conference, I'd slink in and out of feminist presentations, certain that if I tried to present a paper, I'd be laughed off the podium. In a recent SUNSTONE editorial, Dan Wotherspoon shared some of the frustrations that had attended his search for a job as a religion professor, a self-consciousness that closely matched my own fears at the time:

I had convinced myself that in spite of my two graduate degrees in religion, I looked to search committees like some naive Utah boy who, yes, had studied all the big theories, but must still believe all that "crazy" stuff they'd heard about Latter-day Saint beliefs or Mormon missionary zeal.³

"Crazy stuff" aside, I squirmed as the "Mormon feminist" label named and unnamed me in the same utterance. I longed for the legitimate labels under which "real" feminists operated. Oh, to have been a "post-modern feminist," "ethnic feminist," "eco-feminist," or "professor of women's studies," anything that did not equate with "jumbo shrimp."

THEN things changed. One of my feminist essays, "Mormonism's Odd Couple: The Motherhood-Priesthood Connection," was selected to appear in a forthcoming book, *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks. The book was a groundbreaking anthology that included one hundred fifty feminist voices and nineteen major contributors. Signature Books published *Women and Authority* in December, 1992. It sold out of its first print run of 3500 copies in less than a year and went into a second printing, which is now nearly sold out. According to Tom Kimball, marketing director at Signature Books, "Unfortunately, books on women's issues don't sell well, but *Women and Authority* is sort of an anomaly. It's been one of our bestsellers for ten years now, ranking in sales with books by D. Michael Quinn and Todd Compton. For a non-biographical work, it's our bestselling women's title and may be one of the bestselling books on Mormon women's issues in general."⁴

When *Women and Authority* was first released, several papers, publications, and academic journals gave it favorable reviews. This included the prestigious *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, which mentions the book's "impressive roster of scholars and lay people," refers to its "fine historical essays," and calls it an "ambitious collection . . . [that symbolizes] the depth, commitment, and diversity of contemporary Mormon feminism."⁵ But though the *Mormon Women's Forum Quarterly* gave it considerable attention, no reviews appeared in either *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* or SUNSTONE. It is appropriate then, on this ten-year anniversary of the book's publication, that SUNSTONE include at least one person's reflections on its importance and impact.



SONJA FARNSWORTH has a master's degree in speech communication from San Jose State University. She has published several articles and is working on two books. She has recently moved to Salt Lake City and now teaches at the University of Phoenix.

PEOPLE in and out of the Church have long impugned the validity of Mormon feminism. Although LDS women have voiced feminist views heroically for one hundred sixty years, their texts and the stories of their courage were scattered over, and absorbed by, the forbidding background of Mormon patriarchal discourse. “Text” and “discourse” are the operative terms here. A text is a single perspective, either written or spoken. But a discourse functions on a higher level. It is “not a language or a text but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms categories, and beliefs.”⁶ Mormon feminist writings and stories operate on a textual level, while those of Church leaders function discursively and will, therefore, overwhelm any text that opposes them. As Hanks explains in her introduction:

We may write a feminist text within a patriarchal discourse without substantively altering the discourse. This has happened in Mormonism as well as in other male-centered cultures; women have written texts within an incompatible male discourse, which explains why women’s texts repeatedly disappear within the culture” (xxiii).

To end Mormon feminism’s perpetual disappearing act, it was necessary to level the playing field between Mormon feminist texts and authoritative Mormon discourse. How? By morphing feminism from a text into a discourse. Fortunately the time was ripe for just such an achievement. During the eighties and early nineties, a huge and cumulative wave of articulate feminist voices amassed, focused on a wide array of topics—the relationship of LDS women to the priesthood, gender-inclusive issues, and the definition of God as female as well as male. Hanks constructed *Women and Authority* specifically to capture this rich and productive burst of Mormon feminism and elevate it to the level of a discourse. As such, it could finally compete with the Mormon patriarchal discourse that had once defined it. It defined itself and was no longer doomed to emerge, retreat, re-emerge, and retreat again. It was finally stable.

How did *Women and Authority* achieve this new stability for Mormon feminism? First, by demonstrating that Mormon feminism is not (as some Church leaders have suggested) a momentary aberration that copycats 1970s feminism, but a heritage enduring from Mormonism’s earliest beginnings. And second, by demonstrating many links between Mormon feminism and American feminism. Indeed, by showing that



Mormon feminist writings and stories operate on a textual level, while those of Church leaders function discursively and will, therefore, overwhelm any texts that oppose them. *Women and Authority* was constructed specifically to capture a rich and productive burst of Mormon feminism into a discourse. As such, it could finally compete with the Mormon patriarchal discourse that had once defined it.

multiple secular feminisms (liberal, cultural, social, radical, and postmodern) have all appeared within the Mormon feminist tradition, *Women and Authority* placed the Mormon discourse within the larger context of the American feminist discourse. Against this background, the story of Sonia Johnson is no longer a traumatic blip on the Mormon screen but a thread in the fabric of feminism at large; Mormon feminist writers are not oxymorons but real players on the feminist stage. In short, Mormon feminism and Mormon feminists are on the map.

Once you’re on the map, you’re real. Before *Women and Authority*, the glimmers and intimations of a Heavenly Mother and a female priesthood that existed in Mormon discourse and scripture were easier to dismiss. But by methodically consolidating a vast array of Mormon feminist essays, statements, and voices, *Women and Authority* stabilized concepts of a female deity, the divine feminine, and feminist theology. In doing so, it became, as one astute Mormon feminist put it, a kind of “Mormon feminist bible.”⁷

Suddenly tangible, these concepts were a threat to Mormon authority. In 1993, Church leaders excommunicated Hanks, along with one of the book’s contributors, Yale scholar D. Michael Quinn, whose landmark article was entitled, “Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843.” Although Church condemnation has caused no end of grief for these two, the publication of *Women and Authority* was, nevertheless, a watershed moment for Mormon feminism.

As a cohesive anthology, *Women and Authority* brought Mormon feminism to the attention of the American feminist academy. Several universities, including Tufts and Brown, have used *Women and Authority* as a text book or for feminist readings. Most recently, I’ve learned that Harvard Divinity

School uses it in a class called “Women and American Religion.” I’ve dared to believe I was a real feminist ever since.

According to Anne Broude, director of the women’s studies in religion program at Harvard Divinity School, “Religious feminists have never been completely embraced by either their religion or feminism.”⁸ For Mormon women, *Women and Authority* offers a solution. They still have little authority within the Church, but their voices now speak in a discourse of their own—with authority felt by a large audience of Mormons, feminists, readers, students, and professors in colleges and universities all over the United States.

As for me, it feels good to be real. Really! ☺

NOTES

1. Cindy LeFevre, telephone conversation with Sonja Farnsworth, Oct. 2002.
2. Peggy Fletcher, “Mormonism AND Feminism,” *Women’s Quarterly* (spring 1991): 30.
3. Dan Wotherspoon, “Without the ‘But,’” *SUNSTONE* (Nov. 2001): 8.
4. Tom Kimball, telephone conversation with Sonja Farnsworth, 12 Dec. 2002.
5. Catherine A. Brekus, *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Dec. 1995): 743–44.
6. Joan W. Scott, “Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference,” in *Conflicts in Feminism*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), 135; quoted in *Women and Authority*, xxiii.
7. Marnie Leavitt, email post to the Mormon Feminist Network discussion list, <MoFemNet@yahoogroups.com>, 2002.
8. Beth Potier, “Reconciling Faith With Feminism: HDS’s Women and Religion Conference Attracts Overflow Crowd,” *Harvard Gazette*, 7 Nov. 2002.

N E W S

DEFEATED IN COURT, LDS CHURCH LAUNCHES VIGOROUS PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FOR TEMPLE SQUARE PLAZA

THE NEW PLAZA at Temple Square, first seen as a collaborative effort between Salt Lake City and the Church, has become the grounds for a legal battle involving freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the easement rights over two acres of property that used to be part of the city's Main Street.

In early October, a federal appeals court in Denver declared LDS restrictions on the plaza unconstitutional because in the agreement between the Church and city, the city had retained an easement on the property and, as a public sidewalk, such space is protected by the First Amendment. The ruling has exacerbated a controversy that involves Church officials, politicians, lawyers, and community leaders. Not only does the future of the plaza hang in the balance, but so does the tenor of Mormon/non-Mormon relations in the city, and possibly the reelection of Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson.

LDS OFFICIALS LAUNCH A RESPONSE

SHORTLY after the Denver ruling, Church officials announced they would appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary. "[The Tenth Circuit has] declared the sidewalks to be full-blown public forums. That ruling is unprecedented and troubling," says Church attorney Von Keetch. LDS officials argue the ruling "allows those who wish to demonstrate on private property to override constitutional private property

rights as well as the free exercise of religion clause of the First Amendment."

In an bid to win the battle for public opinion, LDS officials launched an unprecedented publicity campaign and sent a letter to Mayor Rocky Anderson asking him to give up or sell the easement. Anderson, a nonpracticing Mormon, has said he cannot give up the easement, partly because

residents were promised a legal guarantee of passage through the plaza. Says Anderson, "I find it extremely ironic I'm being demonized by a lot of people, including [former] Mayor [Deedee] Corradini and some officials of the Church of Jesus Christ, because I have refused to renege on a written contract that they themselves negotiated, drafted, and signed."

But even if Anderson were to give up the easement, some observers believe that free speech rights could still be invoked by citizens because the plaza is built on what has traditionally been a public space.

In mid-November, the Church also produced thousands of packets entitled "The New Church Plaza: A Perspective from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Distributed to neighborhoods, businesses, and wards across the city, the packets contain two full-color brochures laying out the LDS position on the issue and responding to several of the criticisms that have been leveled about the way the Church has handled the matter.

"Unfortunately, some have . . . felt that this place of peace should be a place of protest, that this island of quiet beauty should be used for confrontational or noisy demonstrations," writes President Gordon B. Hinckley in the packet's cover letter. In best Mormon fashion, President Hinckley asks Salt Lake City residents to "study and ponder" the packet materials and makes a plea for peaceful coexistence.

Some suggested the packet was a call to LDS members in the valley to lobby for the Church's position. Not so, says Presiding Bishop H. David Burton. "What [President Hinckley] is asking [for] in his letter is comments. He's not asking for blind obedience."

Although the packet may not have been a call for lobbyists, the *Deseret News*



ABOVE: Looking North, the Main Street Plaza (highlighted) between Temple Square on the left, and the Joseph Smith Memorial building on the right.

BELOW: Facing south, Brigham Young stands in the distance as plaza-goers admire the temple reflecting pool.



reported that approximately one dozen Salt Lake stake presidents were recently invited to meet with Church officials to learn more about the Church's position on the plaza. At this same meeting, they were also encouraged to "raise their voices at City Hall." Each stake was asked to invite at least ten members to attend Salt Lake City Council meetings to support the Church's position.

Even as they have encouraged Latter-day Saints to be involved in support of the Church's stance, LDS officials have been careful to maintain that this issue shouldn't be seen as a litmus test for worthiness. Addressing this issue in a manner unusual for its forthrightness, Elder Lance B. Wickman, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, stated: "Can we somehow debunk the idea that members of the Church are a bunch of automatons who simply wait for the smoke to go up from 47 S. Temple Street and then march out like so many minions to do the will of the president of the Church? My heavens, I would think in the twenty-first century, in a relatively educated place like this, we could get rid of that. You've got a bunch of Mormons beating each other over the head with that."

Comments and creative compromise proposals have been arriving at Church headquarters and City Hall by the hundreds, but LDS officials have consistently intimated that the only acceptable solution is to give the Church the easement. "It's hard to see how we can move to any kind of discussion of other options as long as the easement is sitting square in the front," says the Church's director of media relations, Mike Otterson. "The easement [issue] confronts the Church with the reality of having public protesters on our own sacred ground."

As Otterson had hinted, days later, Church officials rejected a "time, place, and manner" proposed compromise by the mayor suggesting the city maintain an easement only on the sidewalk

FROM SQUARE TO RECTANGLE TO SQUARE ONE: A CHRONOLOGY OF THE LDS PLAZA

1998: Salt Lake City economic development director and LDS member Stuart Reid approaches Presiding Bishop H. David Burton, inviting the Church to build a plaza on the section of Main Street between North and South Temple, with the city keeping the property title. Burton replies that the Church would build the plaza only if LDS officials are allowed to control the public's behavior on the property.

December 1998: Without any reference to the easement issue, Mayor Deedee Corradini and President Gordon B. Hinckley announce the LDS Church will buy the section of Main Street for \$ 8.1 million. Members of the City Council complain the mayor didn't inform the Council about the plan in advance of the agreement.

March 1999: Planning Commissioner Craig Mariger questions Church attorney Mark Mascaro about how the LDS Church would restrict behavior on the plaza. Mascaro says that the plaza would be "a free park to the city" and that the Church's restrictions would address only "protests, banners, picketing—things like this."

4 March 1999: The planning commission recommends the Main Street closure with a number of conditions, including that "the plaza be no more restrictive than a public park, except there would be no picketing or protesting." In closed-doors negotiations, city officials and LDS lawyers remove this condition and revise the sale draft.

13 April 1999: Mascaro tells the City Council that the Church supports the planning commission's conditions. The sale draft presented to the Council, however, is different from the one presented to the planning commission. The revised draft allows Church security to evict pedestrians who assemble, picket, distribute literature, sunbathe, smoke, carry guns, play music, make speeches, or engage "in illegal, offensive, indecent, obscene, vulgar, lewd or disorderly speech, dress or conduct." The draft also grants the Church the exclusive right to broadcast speeches, play music, and distribute literature. Mariger states that even though he had approved the ban on protesters, none of the other restrictions were presented to the commission. "This doesn't sound like a public space to me," Mariger tells the Council, "it sounds like an annex to Temple Square." Divided along Mormon vs. non-Mormon lines, the Council votes 5–2 to approve the sale.

7 October 2000: The Church opens the plaza. LDS spokeswoman Kim Farah states that "the only difference between Temple Square and the plaza is that the plaza is not gated." Protesters attend the opening and engage in behavior intended to defy the restrictions. In order to avoid confrontations on a "historic weekend," LDS officials declare a 48-hour moratorium on enforcing the restrictions.

November 2000: The ACLU files a lawsuit challenging the way Mayor Corradini sold the street. Though not named in the lawsuit, the LDS Church files a motion to become a defendant in the case.

January 2001: District Court Judge Ted Stewart, a Latter-day Saint, throws out the ACLU lawsuit, deeming the restrictions "reasonable." The ACLU appeals in federal court.

September 2002: Members of an evangelical group are blocked from walking through the plaza. One of the members had been previously arrested for distributing anti-LDS literature on Church property. LDS media relations official Dale Bills acknowledges that in blocking the group's passage, Church security had misunderstood the public easement and assures that the "misunderstanding has now been cleared up."

October 2002: Three Tenth Circuit judges reverse Judge Stewart's decision, lifting all the restrictions imposed on the Plaza. Lawyers for the LDS Church request a new hearing with all the judges of the Tenth Circuit court. LDS officials ask Mayor Rocky Anderson to give up the easement. Mayor Anderson decides instead to attempt to resolve the matter by suggesting some constitutionally allowed "time, place, and manner" restrictions—a solution that would guarantee public access to the plaza.

November 2002: The request for a Tenth Circuit rehearing is denied. LDS leaders announce they will appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. LDS officials launch a massive PR campaign for the easement.

December 2002: Mayor Anderson offers "time, place, and manner" restrictions that are rejected outright by the Church, increasing the likelihood the Church will appeal the Denver court's ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court. Group uses the plaza to host a vigil in support of Mormon scholar Thomas W. Murphy (see story, page 73). President Hinckley gives preliminary endorsement to Anderson and the Alliance for Unity's "land for peace" plan.



Bishop H. David Burton

Sources: Deseret News, Salt Lake Tribune, <www.slcgov.com>, <www.lds.org>.



Salt Lake City
Mayor Rocky Anderson

I find it extremely ironic I'm being demonized by a lot of people, including the former mayor and some LDS officials, because I have refused to renege on a written contract that many of these same people negotiated, drafted, and signed.
—Mayor Rocky Anderson



Elder Lance B. Wickman
of the Seventy

Can we somehow debunk the idea that members of the Church are a bunch of automatons who simply march out like so many minions to do the will of the president of the Church? You've got a bunch of Mormons beating each other over the head with that.
—Elder Lance B. Wickman

next to the Joseph Smith Building (along the plaza's east edge, farthest away from the temple). Under this plan, leafletting and other "peaceful, expressive activities" such as picketing, proselytizing, and other general forms of speaking out would have been allowed.

Two weeks later, following behind-the-scenes negotiations initiated by a group of religious and community leaders known as the Alliance for Unity, and with the intervention of LDS millionaire Jon Huntsman, a second plan was proposed by Mayor Anderson. Under this new plan, the city would give up the easement entirely and allow the Church to impose behavior and speech restrictions. In exchange, the Church would donate a two-

acre lot on Salt Lake City's traditionally underserved west side and help the Alliance for Unity raise funds to build facilities for youth. As part of the exchange for the easement, the Church would promise to allow public passage through the plaza.

Although LDS officials are still studying the new proposal, Bishop Burton stated the new plan "represents a potentially workable solution. President Hinckley has seen the [new] proposal and endorses [it]." ☞

SMILE—YOU'RE ON CHURCH SECURITY CAMERA



Church security films protesters.

LDS OFFICIALS HAVE in the past used the Church's website to present only the best view possible of Temple Square, but that has recently changed. As part of the campaign for full control of the plaza, Church security personnel are videotaping un-Churchlike incidents taking place on the disputed space and even posting some of the footage on the official website <www.lds.org>. In a 49-second snippet, a loud anti-Mormon preacher calls Brigham Young a "whoremonger" and loudly asks passers-by, "If you were to die today, would you be in heaven, or

would you be in hell?"

Church security is also posting a log of "disruptive events"—some of which sound like real disruptions, while others sound almost humorous. "An apparently intoxicated female approached a member of Church security on the plaza and asked if he was dating anyone," reads an incident report for 28 November. "She described herself as the 'futuristic plastic Barbie.'" Another entry on the log cites as a disruption "two young men remov[ing] coins from the reflecting pond on the plaza."

According to Church spokesman Dale Bills, security guards "have increased their monitoring activity because of the public scrutiny."

A "LITTLE BIT OF PARIS" OR "SACRED GROUND"?

CHANGING DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PROJECT

AS THE DENVER judges noted in their October ruling, part of the problem the Church would face in court is the change in rhetoric LDS officials have used to describe the plaza as the process moved from the Church's pitch of the idea to the public to its defense of its right to impose restrictions on the property.

The plaza was first described as "a free park to the city," a "pedestrian-friendly area," and "a public environment." Yet, as LDS officials began to defend the restrictions, they shifted, referring to the plaza with terms like "private religious property," an "ecclesiastical park," and "sacred ground."

Perhaps the most memorable description of the project was made in November 1999, when Church architect Kerry Nielsen compared the plaza to the *Champs Elysees* and said the project would give Salt Lake City "a little bit of Paris." That statement was taken as both hyperbolic and ridiculous—especially considering that activities such as smoking and protesting had already been explicitly banned from

the plaza. "Which 'little bit of Paris' are they talking about?" Mayor Rocky Anderson asked as the controversy raged. "Maybe they had a different part of Paris in mind than we did."

After the Denver court's ruling, ACLU Attorney Stephen Clark said he hoped the Mormon Church would accept the decision and "create, in addition to 'a little bit of Paris,' a little bit of Hyde Park in downtown Salt Lake City, so all viewpoints are heard."

A brief look at other ways the plaza is referenced in speech and print is also instructive. Whereas the LDS Church systematically calls the space "the LDS Plaza" or "the Church Plaza," Mayor Anderson calls it "the Main Street Plaza." Local newspapers have used all three terms to refer to the project, but a count of all occurrences in the two major Salt Lake City newspapers since 1998 reveals that both the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Deseret News* favor the expression "Main Street Plaza" over all others. Not surprisingly, the *LDS Church News* prefers "the Church Plaza."

SEVERAL LDS AUTHORS “CALLED IN” TO DEFEND CHALLENGING WRITINGS

SEVERAL RECENT INSTANCES in which LDS scholars have been excommunicated or contacted by Church leaders to defend their writings have caused a stir in Mormon intellectual circles as well as made headlines in prominent national news outlets.

Shane Whelan, author of the book, *More Than One: Plural Marriage, a Sacred Heritage, a Promise for Tomorrow*, was excommunicated in a disciplinary council 11 August 2002 (see story, page 74). Thomas W. Murphy, an anthropology professor at Edmonds Community College, in Edmonds, Washington, was granted a reprieve one day before a scheduled disciplinary council in which he fully expected to be excommunicated, and Edward Ashment, an LDS Egyptologist living in California has been contacted by his stake president about his research. One other scholar, who wishes to remain anonymous, has also confirmed recent meetings with the stake president for similar reasons. It is not clear if these cases are related, though inevitably some observers have speculated that four actions in four months signals a new headquarters-directed campaign against scholars who publish findings that challenge Church positions.

Tom Murphy's experience began with a 27 November meeting with his stake president, Matthew Latimer, which Murphy describes as "courteous and polite." Latimer said an unnamed person had given him a copy of Murphy's article, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," which appeared in the recent Signature Books' anthology of Book of Mormon studies, *American Apocrypha*. Murphy's essay analyzes genetic studies of Native Americans from North, Central, and South America that challenge long-held

Church teachings that Native Americans descended from peoples whose history is chronicled in the Book of Mormon. In a letter circulated to family and friends, Murphy says that Latimer asked him to "confirm his understanding that my article concluded that the Book of Mormon was a nineteenth century document, a position that was contrary to the teaching of the Church." Murphy acknowledged Latimer's understanding was correct and explained that he had "come to that conclusion after entering Book of Mormon scholarship as a defender . . . only to confront overwhelming evidence of the scripture's modern origin."

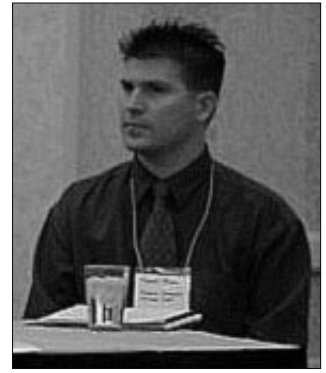
Inquiring about Murphy's future plans, Latimer informed Murphy that as stake president, it was "his duty to ensure that members of the LDS Church do not publish materials, contrary to the teachings of the Church." When asked if he had plans to

publish further, Murphy responded that even excommunication would not discourage him from "openly and honestly confront[ing] the difficulties plaguing the Book of Mormon and its representations of American Indians."

Latimer offered Murphy an opportunity to take a few weeks to rethink his position, but Murphy rejected the offer, and a disciplinary council was scheduled to meet on Sunday, 8 December.

PRIVATE BECOMES PUBLIC

ONE of those who received Murphy's aforementioned letter was Ron Priddis, managing editor of Signature Books, who forwarded the letter to Patty Henetz of the Associated Press. Henetz's 30 November story was carried nationwide by several newspapers, including the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *Los Angeles Times*.



Thomas W. Murphy

The story also appeared on CNN, MSNBC, and other news channels throughout the country. Several of these media outlets had their own reporters follow up on the story, keeping it in the national eye for the following week.

As the date of the council approached, friends and supporters of Murphy took action. They began to organize vigils throughout the country, designed to support Murphy and raise awareness of free speech issues in the Church. The two most visible vigils were planned for Murphy's Lynnwood, Washington, stake center and the Main Street Plaza in Salt Lake City.

MURPHY SUPPORTERS PROTEST ON MAIN STREET PLAZA



Ron Priddis (left) and other demonstrators march in support of Thomas Murphy and in protest against Church attempts to limit free speech.

EVEN AFTER RECEIVING news that Tom Murphy's disciplinary council had been indefinitely postponed, twenty or so demonstrators descended on the Church-owned Main Street Plaza 8 December. The group, which included active Latter-day Saints, ex-Mormons, and atheists, made two complete circles around the plaza's perimeter, stopping twice, each time to share their thoughts and reflections. Janice Allred read a statement from the Mormon Alliance, whose mission is to help stop ecclesiastical abuse within the Church; others also spoke about the harm done by excommunication and expressed solidarity with Murphy. In addition, the protester's focus included free speech, Book of Mormon racism, and restrictions on the Church plaza.

Several demonstrators brought signs exclaiming "Tom Murphy gets burned at the stake center," "And it came to pass that no Lamanite DNA was found throughout all of the land," "Proud to be a DNA Mormon," and "We thank thee O God for a mayor," among others. The vigil lasted two hours and came off peacefully with marchers mostly remaining silent. With large crowds in the plaza and on Temple Square enjoying the Christmas lights, some passersby took offense at the demonstration and the protesters were subjected to minor heckling.

On 7 December, the day before Murphy's scheduled Church court, Latimer contacted the scholar, saying he had decided to postpone the council indefinitely. In a brief statement to the press explaining his decision, Latimer noted, "Decisions relating to spiritual welfare are a private matter between each member and his or her local Church leader. Unfortunately, this matter has received media attention, and Mr. Murphy himself has stated publicly that my decision to hold a disciplinary

council is emotionally difficult for him. In light of these considerations, I think it is best not to proceed at this time."

When word of the postponement became public, all vigils, except for the one in Salt Lake (see sidebar), were cancelled. The story seems to have now quieted down, although Murphy says that *Science* magazine plans to run a story that will include greater focus on the issue of DNA evidence. At press time, Murphy had not been contacted further by Latimer.

REMAINING PRIVATE

IN contrast to Murphy's story, which was heavily publicized in the press, details of the contact between Edward Ashment and his stake president have been virtually unknown. This is in keeping with Ashment's wishes. When contacted by SUNSTONE, Ashment confirmed that in late July or early August he had been contacted by his stake president, "most recently in reference to some of his writings about the Book of Abraham," but declined

to give more specifics. Ashment did indicate that after exchanging letters with his stake president, he has received no further contact about this matter.

SUNSTONE has been able to confirm that another LDS scholar has recently had a series of meetings with his or her stake president to defend scholarship presented about another challenging issue. However, this individual has declined to be named and has determined to keep details of these discussions out of the press altogether.

CHURCH DISCIPLINES AUTHORS, LEADS TO FAMILY BREAK-UP

THE CASES DESCRIBED above stand in stark contrast to events which unfolded this past August for two other Latter-day Saints. Following spiritual promptings that they should share some of the positive views of Mormonism's polygamist past they had encountered researching the topic, Shane Legrande Whelan and his wife of four months, Rhonda, decided to write a book. Unlike many other treatments of the subject, this book would not be a "fundamentalist" treatise but rather a work geared to helping Latter-day Saints better appreciate their own heritage and understand the doctrines surrounding the past practice. Previously, Shane had been a marketing director for a major insurance company, but they decided that he should now research and write full time. The project occupied the next two years of their lives, and the culmination of their work was the December 2001 publication of *More Than One: Plural Marriage—A Sacred Heritage, a Promise for Tomorrow*.

In presenting their research, the Whelans (Shane is the author, but it was a team effort) write positively of polygamy, noting that the Church has never renounced it as a doctrine, only as a practice. Throughout the book, the Whelans are careful to note that although they look forward to the day when the Lord sees fit to restore the principle again, the reinstatement of plural marriage would "require certain changes in the laws of the land, in our social responsibility, and in the religious principles that make up the foundation of our society. This accomplished, the Lord could then voice his approval through the latter-day prophet giving him permission to once again commence the practice of plural marriage in the Church" (181).

Self-published, the book immediately enjoyed solid sales through its website, <www.zionpublishers.com>, and is still carried in many LDS bookstores. Ads for the book ran on Church-owned KSL radio during April General Conference weekend, boosting sales. Encouraged by this success, the Whelans decided to launch a billboard campaign, and beginning in June, four billboards went up along the Wasatch front (see picture).

The new billboards triggered an immediate response from the Whelans' stake president, Brent B. Cleverly, who asked to meet with them. In their 23 June meeting, Shane Whelan reports Cleverly expressed his feelings that they were "promoting plural marriage" and his displeasure, calling the book "an embarrassment to the Church." After a brief discussion, he demanded the Whelans stop the billboard ads, shut down the webpage, and cease selling the book. The Whelans explained that their finances were deeply interwoven with



Above: Billboard advertising *More Than One*
Right: Shane Legrande Whelan



the book and that doing so would bankrupt their company and they would be unable to meet their obligations to the printer and other creditors. Cleverly insisted they do it anyway.

After several days of consideration, the Whelans individually wrote letters to Cleverly explaining they felt it wasn't fair to be asked to bankrupt their company and reiterating that they were not promoting polygamy and fully supported the prophet. After meeting again three weeks later, the stake president put both Shane and Rhonda on informal probation. On 28 July, Cleverly then sent letters informing them he had scheduled separate disciplinary councils for them, Shane's for 11 August and Rhonda's for 28 August.

The result of Shane's ninety-minute council was excommunication for "apostasy." In an interview with SUNSTONE, Shane expressed great dissatisfaction and reiterated various procedural errors that had occurred. Rhonda's three-an-a-half hour council led to disfellowshipment. Two days later, Rhonda told Shane she was divorcing him. As part of the conditions for eventual reinstatement to full fellowship, she had been ordered to stay away from evil influences, with Shane being explicitly named as one. When Shane reminded his wife of the spiritual experiences they had had while writing the book, Rhonda said she had been convinced by the stake presidency and high council that those experiences, along with her prayers about whether or not to marry Shane, had been answered by "the wrong source."

Reflecting on his first and only encounter with Church disciplinary procedures, Shane states: "Being excommunicated from the Church has been a heartbreaking experience and has left many scars, but even more damaging is the knowledge that Church leaders deliberately and directly took steps to destroy our marriage. How can I ever return to a church that justifies the destruction of a family in order to build the kingdom of God?"

UPDATE

GENERAL CONFERENCE BRINGS NEW POLICIES, WARNING

THE OCTOBER 2002 General Conference featured several announcements of interest dealing with temple recommends and the missionary program, stern warnings concerning the growing problem of child abuse, and differing interpretations following an apostle's remarks on peace.

Citing the workload often heaped upon presiding branch, ward, and stake leaders, President Gordon B. Hinckley, during the Saturday priesthood session, announced that temple recommends will now be valid for two years from the issue date instead of one: "We hope this will be beneficial [in helping free up more of the leaders' time]. We are confident that it will."

President Hinckley also announced a sweeping cultural change in the Church missionary program. "The First Presidency and the Twelve, after most prayerful and careful consideration, have reached the decision that the present program of missionary farewells should be modified," President Hinckley announced. He explained that missionaries will be given a few minutes to address the congregation, however, siblings, parents, friends, and others will no longer be allowed to participate. President Hinckley noted that many wards along the Wasatch Front, between missionary farewells and homecomings, rarely have sacrament meetings that are not focused on a leaving or returning Elder or Sister. He also discouraged members from holding "open houses" or other gatherings surrounding missionary departures or homecomings.

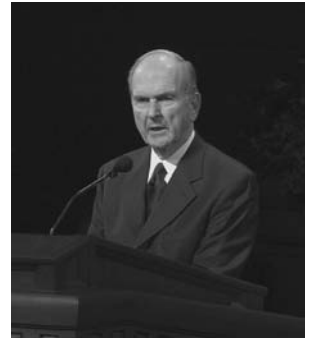
While Latter-day Saints in areas with a high concentration of members, who have missionaries coming and going all the time, may be somewhat relieved by the announcement, Latter-day Saints in other areas will likely be disappointed. In small communities, a missionary farewell and return is a rare occurrence, something that may happen only once every several years.

Earlier in the same session, Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of Twelve Apostles spoke plainly to LDS young men: "Please understand this: the bar that is the standard for missionary service is being raised. The day of the 'repent and go' missionary is over. . . . Some young men have the mistaken idea that they can be involved in sinful behavior and then repent when they're 18 1/2 so they can go on their mission at 19. While it is true that you can repent of sins, you may or you may not qualify to serve." He then urged bishops "to recommend only those young men and women whom you judge to be spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally prepared to face today's realities of missionary work." (For more about this change, see page 4.)

As allegations of child sexual abuse by priests swirled, polarizing the Catholic community and costing that church millions of dollars in damages, President Hinckley sent a harsh message to the priesthood session audience: "I speak of the evil and despicable sin of child abuse. We cannot tolerate it. We will not tolerate it. Anyone who abuses a child may expect Church discipline as well as possible legal action."

One Conference address that garnered national attention and prompted a response from the Church Public Affairs office was Elder Russell M. Nelson's sermon, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers."

Some in the LDS community, and many in the national media, saw Elder Nelson's talk as a call against the immanent war with Iraq. But shortly after the talk made headlines, a Church press



Elder Russell M. Nelson

release declared: "Some news outlets have misinterpreted a recent general conference address by Elder Russell M. Nelson. Elder Nelson pointed to the example and teachings of the Savior as 'the pathway to peace on earth and good will among men.' He also made plain that the scriptures 'strongly condemn wars of aggression, but sustain obligations of citizens to defend their families and their freedoms.'" (For additional details and a reflection on Elder Nelson's remarks, see page 60.)

LDS WOMEN SURVEYED, BUT NO ANSWERS DISCLOSED

DO CHURCH LEADERS undervalue the contributions of women? Are LDS women who work outside the home criticized by other women in their wards? Why might an LDS woman want to live in the celestial kingdom? These are some of the frank questions addressed by a May 2001 Church-ordered survey on women and the Relief Society. The survey's existence was revealed in an October *Salt Lake Tribune* story by former SUNSTONE editor Peggy Fletcher Stack. Unfortunately, results of official Church surveys are always kept confidential.

Several more questions deal with the role of husbands and priesthood leaders, trying to assess whether women find it hard or easy to work with men at home and in Church capacities. Others ask how women feel about Relief Society meetings, personal enrichment meetings (formerly known as homemaking), service activities, and visiting teaching. The questionnaire also deals with personal religiosity and spirituality.

Five questions deal specifically with emotional well-being and depression—topics that have been the object of much speculation over the years. Studies conducted in the early and mid-1980s debunked the notion that Mormon women are more depressed than non-LDS women, and other recent studies have arrived at similar conclusions (see *Dialogue* [summer 1986], 150–55; Daniel K. Judd, ed., *Religion, Mental Health, and the Latter-Day Saints*, Provo: Brigham Young University, 1991).

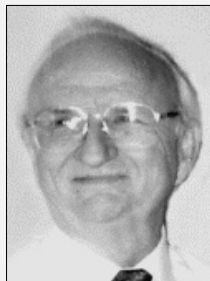
Observers believe that at least five hundred LDS women would have taken the survey, enough to make the results statistically reliable. Despite the potential value of the information the survey might yield, Bonnie Parkin, who was sustained in April as general president of the Relief Society, told the *Salt*

People



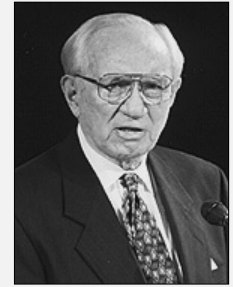
DIED: Mormonism lost a kind and courageous voice 18 October, with the passing of **Maclynn O. "Mac" Madsen**, age 68, from a sudden heart attack. Madsen, a former healthy lifestyles professor and golf coach at Weber State University, became known to many when in December 2000, he organized and published a petition with more than three hundred backers in the *Salt Lake Tribune* calling for LDS leaders to enter into a meaningful dialogue about the Church's teachings on homosexuality. Madsen had become energized about making the way smoother for gay Latter-day Saints when he learned his daughter is a lesbian. In addition to working for greater understanding on this issue, Madsen thoughtfully challenged the Church to live up to its ideals in other areas, recently publicizing its ownership and operation of two for-profit hunting preserves. Madsen was a frequent presenter at Sunstone symposiums, and even as he wrote and spoke with great passion, it was easy to tell that his words were inspired by a deep and abiding love for his family, the Church, and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sunstone and all who knew Mac will greatly miss him.

DIED: Popular writer of Mormon esoterica, **Max B. Skousen**, passed away 16 November at the age of 81. During his colorful career as a scholar and author, Skousen was excommunicated, rebaptized, and then excommunicated once more. In a short explanation of his relationship to Mormonism on his website, <www.maxskousen.com>, Skousen wrote: "Although I am a fully dedicated believer in the divine mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and support its leadership on all levels, I willingly and peacefully accepted a loss of membership on the records of the Church in December 1996 for only one reason, which was to share these deeper views of the scriptures among members of the Church. . . . In serving these deeper seekers, I consider myself to be still a full, loyal, non-critical member of His Church on the records in heaven." Among Skousen's better-known books are *How to Pray and Stay Awake* and his four-part series, *A Blessing Hitherto Unknown*, exploring the blessings available to those who put to the test President Ezra Taft Benson's challenge to truly abide by the teachings of the Book of Mormon.



DECLINED: **President Gordon B. Hinckley** turned down an invitation to attend a ceremony in Washington, D.C., held by the Caring Institute, honoring him as one of the ten most

caring individuals in America. In explaining the prophet's absence, Church spokesperson Dale Bills noted, "President Hinckley regularly declines invitations for events on Monday nights," and cited the Church's long-time policy encouraging families to spend one night a week together. During the October 2002 General Conference, President Hinckley even appealed to school officials in areas with concentrated populations of Latter-day Saints to consider not scheduling any events or activities on Monday night.



DEFEATED: Utah polygamist Tom Green has had at least one reason to smile from his prison cell recently. In the November 2002 election, Juab county prosecutor **David Leavitt** lost his bid to keep his job by just twenty-two votes—less than one percent. Leavitt, the younger brother of Utah governor Mike Leavitt, gained national attention for his aggressive prosecution of Green for polygamy and welfare fraud.

FAILED: A write-in campaign designed to send Utahn **Cody Judy** to Washington was defeated when Judy garnered a total of eight votes in November's congressional election. Judy is out of prison after holding then-apostle Howard W. Hunter hostage with a fake bomb during a Brigham Young University devotional. Despite his inability to win the minds of Utah voters, Judy's campaign garnered national attention when it was featured several times on Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart."



CHALLENGED: When former CES employee **Grant Palmer** walked into Sam Weller's Books in Salt Lake City on 30 November to sign copies of his new book, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*, he didn't know what to expect. Palmer's book challenges many conventional and traditional LDS teachings about the early days of Mormonism. Many responded positively to Palmer's comments; however, former BYU political science professor Louis Midgley created several tense moments as he took issue with Palmer's assertions. Midgley quizzed Palmer about his current standing in the Church and his history as an Institute teacher. In an email detailing his reactions to the event, Midgley admitted, "I was aggressive . . . I raised a bit of hell with Palmer."

Lake Tribune that she didn't know of the existence of the survey. The study had been commissioned by Parkin's predecessor, Mary Ellen Smoot. Still, Parkin and her counselors seem to be in tune with many of the issues the survey addressed. In a *Salt Lake Tribune* interview shortly after her call to serve, Sister Parkin indicated that one of her presidency's primary goals would be to help all Mormon women feel loved by God. As reported, "they want Mormon women to stop being judged for working or staying at home, being single, divorced or childless. They don't want women to feel alienated and alone."

Surveys such as this are conducted by the Church's Research Information Division. Sources familiar with Church procedures say that once the division gets the questionnaires back, sociologists analyze the raw data and compose results charts that are sent to the General Authorities.

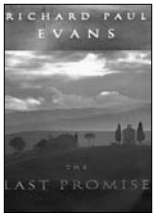
Although the Church never releases the results of its surveys, in the October 1999 General Conference, Elder Ben B. Banks, then executive director of the Research Information Division, mentioned the existence of a recent survey that asked active LDS members who had once been less active what had led them away from full participation and what had helped them become more active again (*Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 9-11).

You may view the complete survey on the Sunstone website, <www.sunstoneonline.com>.

UTAH SAINTS HOLD CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL—EN ESPAÑOL

SOME 13,000 HISPANIC Mormons converged on Temple Square on 9 December to participate in a Christmas devotional

DESERET BOOK REVISES CONTENT STANDARDS FOR BOOKS SOLD



CITING NEW STANDARDS for content, Church-owned bookstore Deseret Book recently declined to carry LDS author Richard Paul Evans's latest novel, a romance titled *The Last Promise*. This newest offering from the author of *The Christmas Box* tells the story of a woman with an abusive husband who finds comfort in the arms of another man. Evans notes, however, that the two never consummate the relationship.

According to *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret News* articles, the chain's new standards stem from a customer survey conducted last year. Queries of more than three hundred regular shoppers indicated that, at some point, most had purchased something from Deseret Book that contradicted their standards. Company president and former Relief Society general counselor, Sheri Dew, was quick to point out that the policy revision is not a moral or religious decision, but a business one. "We have an extensive body of research to show that this title falls out of the guidelines people depend on when shopping in our stores," Dew said.

Dew and other company spokespersons have found themselves repeatedly defending the decision in the media. Their main response is to ask why any store would carry something their customers don't want them to stock. In the course of her defense of the decision regarding Evans's novel, Dew also announced Deseret Book would be reviewing all titles on its shelves and applying the new guidelines to them. The guidelines have few specific criteria but instead ask if a book has "immoral content" that is presented as acceptable, fun, or normal.

Many took exception to Deseret Book's new guidelines, no one more so than Evans, who was surprised his novel didn't qualify under the new

standards. "The book is not about adultery," Evans insisted. "The book would be a PG-rated movie, at the most." Others have joked that the Bible, with its troubling tales of drunkenness (Noah), lying (Abraham), or incest (Lot), might be next to go at Deseret Book. Others, like Eric Snider, an online humorist whose column "Snide Remarks" can be seen at <www.ericSnider.com>, have asked more philosophical questions: "There are a lot of gray areas in life, and this book explores one of them. In the world of Deseret Book, however, there is no gray, only black and white (mostly white). [Deseret Book] apparently doesn't want to burden its customers by making them think about the gray areas, the parts where divorce is sometimes the best option, and where a close friendship is more valuable than a dead marriage."

Deseret Book's decision apparently did not affect sales or diminish the enthusiasm of Evans's fans. In a recent radio interview, Evans said that shortly after the ban was announced, he receiving a standing ovation as he arrived for a book signing at a Barnes and Noble bookstore in Bountiful, Utah.



"WHAT KIND OF SICKO WRITES ABOUT A MOTHER LEAVING TWO LITTLE KIDS AT HOME WHO ARE THEN TERRORIZED BY AN INTRUDER ?!!"

Celluloid Watch

Festival Celebrates LDS Film

WITH SCREENINGS, ROUNDTABLES, competitions, and some 1,500 people in attendance, the second LDS Movie Festival took place 13–16 November in Provo, Utah. Organized by BYU film students, the festival features LDS filmmakers and celebrates the diversity of Mormon movies.

While *God's Army* cost \$240,000 to make, and *The Singles Ward* had a budget of \$400,000, young LDS filmmakers usually express themselves through projects with even lower budgets. This year's festival included a video marathon in which competing teams were given 24 hours to shoot, edit, and deliver a short film based on an assigned theme. More than thirty teams participated in the marathon.

"For me, the festival is about trying to explore themes and ideas," says Lee Stratford, a festival participant and BYU student majoring in film. "We have to think of ways to help filmmakers and audiences get better educated so that they can explore things that really matter in very meaningful ways."

For more information about the LDS film festival, go to <www.ldsbox.com>.

Tom Cruise, Men of Small Stature, Need Not Apply

WRITER AND DIRECTOR Gary Rogers is still looking for the hunk who will play the part of Nephi in *The Book of Mormon Movie, Volume 1*. "Must be large in stature," reads the casting

call. "Minimum of 6'1", or preferably taller. Must be muscular and have a 'leading man' face."

In a *Deseret News* interview regarding casting, Rogers said he thought having a celebrity in a main role would detract from the film's effectiveness: "Tom Cruise playing Nephi or Jack Nicholson playing Lehi just wouldn't work. They bring too much baggage with them, not to mention their enormous price tag."

With music by former Mormon Tabernacle Choir associate conductor Robert C. Bowden, volume 1 of this ambitious, multi-million dollar series could reach the silver screen as early as 2003. In order to fund the project, Rogers recently sold his TV company in addition to securing independent financing.

Although the LDS Church has already produced several short films based on episodes from the Book of Mormon—as well as the full-length *The Testaments of One Fold and One Shepherd*—this will be the first independent attempt to put the 1,000-year long epic in celluloid.

For more information about the film, visit its website, <www.bookofmormonmovie.com>. Information about several other LDS movie projects in the works is available at <www.ldsfilm.com>.



Laban's Palace boasts a massive stone façade

conducted entirely in Spanish. Originally scheduled for the Tabernacle but later moved to the Conference Center, the event was the largest gathering of Hispanic Mormons in Utah history.

Elder Richard G. Scott, who learned Spanish as a missionary in Uruguay, advised Hispanic members to keep cultural traditions that are compatible with LDS teachings. Other speakers included Elder M. Russell Ballard, who spoke through a translator, and Elder Boyd K. Packer, who added some brief, unscheduled comments.

Elder Cree-L Kofford, of the Quorum of the Seventy, announced that next year, the Church will open twenty-five English language schools for immigrants who live along the Wasatch front.

Spanish is now the second most widely used language in the Church, and statisticians predict that by 2012, it will become number one. Although there are five native Spanish-speakers serving in the First and Second Quorums of Seventy, none of them spoke at the devotional.

CHURCH REAFFIRMS POLICY REGARDING TEMPLE WORK FOR JEWS

LDS CHURCH LEADERS recently met with representatives of the Jewish community to discuss a 1995 agreement declaring that the Church will not perform temple work for Holocaust

victims nor other deceased Jews. After finding approximately 20,000 Jews that had been added to the LDS genealogical database in the past several years, independent researcher Helen Radkey accused the Church of violating its agreement. However, following a 10 December meeting between Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy and Ernest Michel of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Victims, both groups acknowledged the Church has not changed its position. Instead, it appears the Church has had trouble creating a system that can guarantee no temple ordinances will be performed for deceased Jews. Michel noted, "Certain cracks . . . have appeared that have caused trouble with some members of the Jewish community." Through Elder Christofferson, the Church has reaffirmed its policy to do what it can to prevent names of deceased Jews from entering the genealogical database that supplies LDS temples with candidates for the vicarious ordinances.

COUNTERPOINT CONFERENCE EMPHASIZES MAKING CONNECTIONS

THE MORMON WOMEN'S Forum held its annual Counterpoint Conference 16 November at the University of Utah Alumni house. Among the featured speakers addressing this year's theme, "Finding a Place—Creating a Space: How Women Make Connections in Public and Private," were

Margaret Toscano and a panel of young LDS women who addressed the question, "Is there a place for intelligent young women in the Church?" Toscano alluded to her experiences participating in a recent Harvard University conference of religious feminists in which she spoke about how many religious feminists feel marginalized by both their own religious community as well as by many other feminists, albeit for opposite reasons. In her remarks on the panel of young women, Ray Allred, a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington, noted that the problem is not that inequality for women exists in the Church, but the "reticence on the part of [Mormon] culture to seek answers" to it. Martha Sonntag Bradley gave the conference's keynote speech, titled, "Our Power Lies in Hidden Places."



Margaret Toscano

MORMON FOCUS AT SSSR

THE SOCIETY FOR the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) held its 2002 Annual Meeting, 1-3 November, in Salt Lake City. Of its more than one hundred sessions, six featured papers or panels dealing directly with Mormonism. Topics in these sessions ranged from Carrie Miles's study of the Church's response to societal change in women's roles, to a report by



Armand Mauss responds to SSSR panel honoring him.

Tim Heaton and three others about LDS employment services, to Daryl White and Michael Nielsen's examination of personal grooming as a measure of faithfulness in Mormon culture.

BYU's Marie Cornwall gave a plenary address titled, "Gender and Religion in Comparative Perspective: In Search of a Paradigm," and a special panel session paid tribute to Armand L. Mauss, author of *The Angel and the Beehive* and the forthcoming *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*, for his many contributions to Mormon and other religious studies. Mauss is a former president of both the SSSR and the Mormon Social Science Association.

FORUM DISCUSSES SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG MORMONS

DURING AN OCTOBER event sponsored by LDS Family Fellowship, Ogden suicidologist Mark K. Malan spoke on preventing psychosexual shame suicide among Mormons.

In studies Malan conducted in Utah and California, some LDS students attributed their suicidal thoughts to distress and shame over masturbation questions asked during worthiness interviews. Catholic students did not. Malan attributes the difference to confessionary practices: While Catholic priests do not ask youth specifically about masturbation, Mormon bishops are often more inquisitorial. By being less inquisitive,

Malan told his audience, LDS bishops could prevent the psychosexual shame that leads some young Mormons to suicide.

The connection between LDS masturbation shame and suicide was highlighted in October 1983, when Eugene Eliason filed a \$26 million wrongful-death suit against the Church, alleging that stern LDS counseling against masturbation had led his sixteen-year-old son Kip to kill himself. More recently, LDS bishops have been instructed to avoid discussing morality issues that may "arouse curiosity or experimentation," and the new *For the Strength of Youth* pamphlet addresses masturbation only euphemistically (see SUNSTONE, Apr. 2002, 76).

Even though a 1990 study concluded that BYU students have a lower rate of suicidal thoughts and attempts than other college students nationally, for the last ten years, Utah has been among one of the fifteen states with the highest suicide rates. According to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Utah ranks among the top three states for suicide rates of males between fifteen and nineteen.

Suicide has been a particular concern for organizations that seek to serve gay Mormons. Affirmation: Gay and Lesbian Mormons has documented twenty cases of gay Mormons who have committed suicide since the 1960s, and the suicides of three gay Mormons in 2000 received widespread media attention (see SUNSTONE, Apr., 2001, 90-91).]

Family Fellowship is a Mormon organization dedicated to strengthening families with homosexual members. For more information about this organization, visit <<http://www.ldsfamilyfellowship.org>>.

HAPPY HOMECOMING FOR THE "SWEARING ELDERS"

HISTORIAN BRIGHAM MADSEN and English professor William Mulder shared a few laughs as they reminisced about the "Swearing Elders," a group of LDS professors and intellectuals who held Mormon forums at the University of Utah from 1948 to 1956. Their reunion took place 12 November at an event sponsored by the Mormon Studies Brown Bag Series at the University of Utah.

A predecessor to forums such as the Sunstone symposium, the Swearing Elders were, according to Thomas A. Blakely, "the first generation of modern Mormon intellectuals," the first to apply critical methodologies to various Mormon topics (SUNSTONE, Jan. 1986). "The tone [of the meetings] was not of ridicule," says Mulder. "It was an earnest endeavor to learn what non-Mormon historians and sociologists were discovering as the most interesting aspects of Mormonism."



Mark Malan argues certain interview practices may put LDS youth at a higher risk for suicide.



Cover, January 1986
SUNSTONE

AN OLIVE LEAF

BRAVELY AND HEROICALLY CHOOSE
A BETTER COURSE OF LIFE

By Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, and David O. McKay

In 1942, as most of the world was torn and tattered by war, the First Presidency issued this Christmas message of hope and peace. As today's world is once again under the shadow of war, their wisdom is particularly appropriate.

WE ARE APPREHENSIVE of mankind's welfare in a world of tribulation and of false ideals. Two world wars within the short time of twenty-five years discredit the intelligence not to say the spirituality of the rulers of this supposedly enlightened century! With nations grappling at one another's throats, with millions of men engaged in a death struggle, with the precious principles associated with man's freedom threatened with repudiation, if not abandonment, men and women the world over should make this the most thoughtful, the most prayerful, the most sacred Christmas of all time, should more earnestly than ever seek the causes of this world's disaster, and bravely and heroically choose a better course of life.

This is a time when mankind should turn their thoughts to the teachings of the Christ; and in larger numbers than the world has ever heretofore witnessed conform thereto their attitudes and actions. Unless multitudes of men and women so change their hearts and lives, the world will continue to be drenched in blood and the present civilization be threatened with disintegration. . . .

It is a deplorable but recognizable fact that men's hearts all too generally are turned from and not toward God. Self-promotion, not God's glorification, is the motivating factor in most people's lives. Irreverence is all too manifest. The Lord's name is frequently "taken in vain," and profanity, particularly here in the United States, is so common as to pollute the air. The possibility "that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God," has become a sad reality. "Therefore, let the Church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation."

The world needs more godliness, and less godlessness; more self-discipline, less self-indulgence; more power to say with Christ, "Father, not my will, but thine be done."

Christ came to bring peace. Rejection of His way of life has made strife and contention rampant. Man, not the Lord has brought deadly conflict and subsequent misery. Wars spring from wickedness. As a destructive fire devastates pro-



ductive fields and growing forests, wars engulf the innocent and righteous as well as the wicked. Millions of hearts in homes on all continents are today yearning for the end of battles and the coming of peace. Under present conditions, however, the war will be ended only by superior armed forces, by increased number of swifter and stronger planes, by more shattering bombs and other weapons of destruction; but Peace

will be maintained only by nobler men and by more Christ-like nations. . . .

Not until Freedom triumphs, and a just peace comes may we hope for "good will among men." When a soldier sees his "buddy's" body torn and mangled beside him, he madly, desperately seeks revenge. Multiply that soldier by millions, and you readily see how hate, not good will, governs the hearts and actions of mankind. Thus war makes men vicious and arouses in them brutal instincts. It prompts the abrogation of all moral obligations.

Today when these facts are so strikingly manifest, let all sincere men recognize the evil conditions that have caused wars, and resolve with God's help to banish them forever. There must come a victory of Right and Freedom over Iniquity and Oppression; but war will never be vanquished until men change their hearts and establish new ideals. Not only individuals, but nations must say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

Critically, dangerously, mankind stands at the Crossroads. When the present conflict is ended, will the children of men continue along the old highway stretching through the centuries and leading only to misery and destruction; or will they turn into the more rugged path and follow Him who said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? Most sincerely and humbly we declare that in Jesus Christ and Him alone may be found the peace and salvation of the human family. . . .

We wish to all of you a blessed and hallowed Christmas!

The First Presidency
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The Internet subverts this order by providing a parallel, unofficial channel for information. Cyberspace is being settled, but under a new social order.