

SUNSTONE

MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, AND ART



ments were instituted for the benefit of man; and that the laws should hold men accountable for their actions in relation to them, both in making laws and in administering them, for the good and safety of society. 2 We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and he inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life. 3 We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same; and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people if a republic, or the will of the sovereign. 4 We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable to him and to him only, for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion; that the civil magistrate should restrain freedom of the soul. 5 We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments; and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest; at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience. 6 We believe that every man should be honored in his station, and that rulers and magistrates as such, being placed for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty; and that to the laws of all men show respect and deference, as without them peace and harmony would be supplanted by anarchy and terror; human laws being instituted for the express purpose of regulating our interests as individuals and nations, between man and man; and such laws given of heaven, prescribing rules on spiritual concerns, for faith and worship, both to be answered by man to his Maker. 7 We believe that rulers, states, and governments have a right, and are bound to enact laws for the protection of all citizens in the free exercise of their religious belief; but we do not believe that they have a right in justice to deprive citizens of their religious opinions do not justify sedition nor conspiracy. 8 We believe that the commission of crime should be punished according to the nature of the offense; that murder, treason, robbery, theft, and the breach of the general peace among men, by the laws of that government in which the offense is committed; and for the maintenance of public peace and tranquility all men should step forward and use their ability in bringing offenders against good laws to punishment. 9 We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is favored and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens.

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SUNSTONE

MORMON EXPERIENCE, SCHOLARSHIP, ISSUES, & ART

APRIL 2008

Issue 149



SUNSTONE (ISSN 0363-1370) is published by The Sunstone Education Foundation, Inc., a non-profit corporation with no official ties to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Articles represent the opinions of the writers only.

SUNSTONE is indexed in the *Index to Book Reviews in Religion and Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT/IBBR 1975—on CD-ROM.*

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website: www.sunstoneonline.com

United States subscriptions to SUNSTONE are \$45 for 6 issues, \$76 for 12 issues, and \$106 for 18 issues. International subscriptions are \$58 for 6 issues; \$100 for 12 issues; \$138 for 18 issues. All payments must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. All international subscriptions will be sent via surface mail. Bona fide student and missionary subscriptions are \$10 less than the above rates. A \$10 service charge will be deducted from refund amount on cancellations. All subscription prices subject to change without notice.



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Cover concept and design: Allen Hill.

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Y E A , Y E A



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A GOOD BALANCE

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN I HAVE enjoyed a SUNSTONE issue as much as I did the December 2007 issue. I don't always read the magazine from cover to cover, but I have almost finished devouring this entire issue.

I particularly enjoyed Helen Whitney's piece, "The Making of *The Mormons*." I had no idea what went into making a documentary of this magnitude. Not surprisingly, the film has received criticism from some as being too friendly to the Mormons and from some Latter-day Saints as being too critical. I think she struck a good balance, and I was fascinated by her telling how it all came together.

DEAN THOMPSON

Roy, Utah

FINDING ITS WAY AGAIN

THE DECEMBER 2007 SUNSTONE IS one of the best yet. Recently I had grown discouraged with SUNSTONE because it seemed to have lost its way. It was publishing all kinds of unrelated and weird stuff from fringe groups that had nothing to say to me except that the spin-off groups just keep getting curiuser and curiuser. While it would be fun to occasionally have an issue devoted to what's weird in Mormonism today, that's not for me.

I lived through and participated in the days of rage, the adversarial period when *Dialogue* and SUNSTONE and other independent forums emerged and many people, including me, questioned not giving the priesthood to Blacks and women, and many other issues. Some of my friends were among those disfellowshipped when things came to a head.

I left the Church but am now back, and I appreciate it more fully than I would have had I not made that circular journey. Consequently, what I want now is a conversation with people who are finding the strengths of that Church and our gospel while still seeing today's problems clearly. An informed and compassionate engagement. The articles in this past issue were inspiring to me in ways I've not been inspired, uplifted, and enlightened by in a long time. Thank you so much—and please, more of the same.

GORDON E. MOSS

Ogden, Utah

WHERE THE VITALITY LIES

I AM TREMENDOUSLY PLEASED BY THE December 2007 issue of SUNSTONE. Once again, I found everything done so attractively and interestingly, starting with Carol Bernstein's cover photo. I give a standing ovation to everything I've read, which is the whole magazine! I don't know how SUNSTONE gets it so right.

Because I'm in danger of sounding too smug about the riches we Sunstoners bring each other—the very thing that embarrasses me when I hear our virtues as the one true Church touted in the ward—I'd like to comment especially on the short reflection on Helen Whitney's film by Mathew N. Schmalz, "Moroni Meets Nietzsche." If I were forced to say the one thing I liked best about this issue, it would be his essay. This sounds strange—liking one of the not-explicitly-Mormon parts best. I'm not sure I can explain it, but I'll try.

Even though I have no interest in returning to the Episcopal Church of my youth nor to the Catholic Church I was deeply engaged with during my raising-children days, I still honor the gifts of the Holy Spirit that worked so early and effectively to help me accept the love of God and the discipleship of his Son Jesus. And for non-Mormon Christians, that foundational realm is where *all* the spiritual vitality lies; the bus doesn't go any farther. That's why, as Schmalz states, "non-Mormon Gentiles tend not to be interested in Mormon theology or worship." Why would they be? I used to feel that way, too, until inscrutable forces came into play and I felt my way into a decidedly strange religious tradition which now seems both full of meaning and messy in all the right ways.

That said, it pays to listen to our non-Mormon friends whose insights we need. At least for me, Schmalz's last paragraph is straight from God's mouth to my ear: "*The Mormons* presents us with two kinds of Mormonism. There is the 'Moroni meets Nietzsche' kind with an expansive sense of progress built on self-mastery that complements contemporary American preoccupations with capitalism and empire. But the documentary presents another kind of Mormonism as well, one that emphasizes not victory but surrender and in doing so evokes a very different kind of meeting. In this form of Mormonism, Moroni turns his back on Friedrich Nietzsche and embraces the crucified and risen Christ."

Thank you Mathew Schmalz and Helen

Whitney and, once again, everyone who wrote for or edited this issue.

MARYLEE MITCHAM
Golden, Colorado

REVEALING OURSELVES

I HAVE ENJOYED THE DECEMBER 2007 issue of SUNSTONE, especially the focus section on the Helen Whitney documentary, *The Mormons*. Of all the commentaries, however, I found the reflection by Mathew N. Schmalz to be exceptional. I also found the comments by his students to be remarkable, especially considering their age.

Professor Schmalz writes that the most important reason scholars look at Mormonism is “because of what [Mormonism] reflects or reveals about America.” I would add that what it reveals about people of our time, in 2008, is pretty important, too.

JOHN DESHAZO
Huntsville, Alabama

SKEWED STANDARDS

IN HIS REVIEW, “A FAITHFUL CRITIQUE of the PBS Presentation on Mormonism,” T. Allen Lambert equates Fawn Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History*, Richard and Joan Ostling’s *Mormon America*, and Grant Palmer’s *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins* with “such trashy films as *The Godmakers*.” After this startling comparison, Lambert has the nerve to chide Helen Whitney for her failure to measure up to his “standards of scholarship, objectivity, and fairness.”

Many respected scholars and serious students of Mormonism have expressed admiration for the research and scholarship of the Brodie, Ostling, and Palmer books listed above. Lambert certainly demonstrates his admitted “faithful” point of view—one we are familiar with after reading the cloying hagiographies and celebratory “histories” spun out by Mormon apologists over the past 175 years.

Lambert’s comparisons are anything but “fair.” Rather than a thorough and far-ranging film like Whitney’s, I suspect that a presentation of uninterrupted praise of the Church would have better satisfied Lambert’s temperament.

DOUGLAS R. BOWEN
St. George, Utah

CORRECTION

TWO READERS WROTE taking SUNSTONE to task for a mistake in our coverage of Sister Julie K. Beck’s October 2007 General Conference talk, “Women Who Know” (see SUNSTONE, December 2007, p.72). The SUNSTONE story states: “Citing Ezra Taft Benson’s 1987 speech, ‘To the Mothers of Zion,’ Beck declared that ‘mothers who know’ do not delay or limit childbearing.” The SUNSTONE report is incorrect. In her remarks, Sister Beck did not mention limiting family size. President Benson’s talk cited by Sister Beck does counsel mothers not to curtail the number of children they have, but Beck did not quote that line in her remarks. SUNSTONE is very sorry for this error.

FAITHFUL OR FAITHLESS?

JUDGING FROM HIS RESPONSE IN THE last issue, my letter in the October 2007 SUNSTONE seems to have touched a raw nerve for Robert Rees. Notwithstanding his harsh repudiation of my comments and his conclusion that I must be blinded by my own prejudice, he seems to have completely missed my point. I raised the question as to whether SUNSTONE has a litmus test for publishing under the motto of “Faith Seeking Understanding” a cover article that is written by an excommunicated Mormon who seems to believe she is more inspired than God’s anointed prophet.

Rees seems to think that any article is acceptable as long as the arguments are sound and are presented objectively with an acceptable tone, meeting the standards of “academic discourse.” He does not mention faith as a

prerequisite, which is precisely the reason for my earlier comment.

One of the reasons I have enjoyed reading SUNSTONE for more than thirty years is that many of the authors (more now than under previous administrations) share their opinions in a faithful context. They don’t understand or know all of the answers, but they are seeking and they still believe that the Church is somehow “true.” They don’t bash the Church or the prophets.

I believe Toscano’s article crosses that line and has no place as the cover article of a magazine that is dedicated to discussing faith in a constructive way. If SUNSTONE believes in its motto of “Faith Seeking Understanding,” then it—and Rees—must respect the boundaries of faith in which we seek to understand.

DAVID RICHARDSON
Colorado Springs, Colorado

HONEST JON by Jonathan David Clark



TOUCHSTONES

THE WARD

STORM HOMES

I N ONE OF his radio broadcasts, Garrison Keillor describes being assigned a “storm home” as a school boy in Minnesota. Those who, like him, were bused to school from outlying farms, were assigned a home in town to go to in case a blizzard struck during school hours. Keillor also speculated on other disasters, both physical and emotional, that would necessitate his turning to his storm home for help and protection.

Keillor’s musings caused me to think about the many storm homes available to me, and I realized that most of them are homes of members of my ward. One is the man who works in the evening and keeps his eyes open during daytime hours to safeguard the at-home mothers and children in our neighborhood. Another is the neighbor who drops what he is doing to help me stop an emergency water leak. There is the visiting teacher who relates to my isolation as a young mother with small children at home. There is also the shared parenting of concerned teachers and leaders, the offerings of love that are manifest in meals and visits during times of health setbacks, and the smiles and congratulations when I was able to get rid of my “chemo wig.” I also find storm homes in those who spend hours preparing lessons and talks to lift and inspire, in those who live in a way that makes their lives a conduit for the Spirit and who benefit

all within their sphere of influence, and in those whose example of courage and commitment in the face of life’s adversities encourage me.

Keillor concludes by saying he never had occasion to actually go to his storm home during that school year. Like him, I have experienced few blizzards I could not weather and few burdens I could not carry alone, but I am grateful for the security of the many storm homes around me. Our ward associations have given us many opportunities to share our hearts and bind ourselves to each other, helping us know that we have shelter with each other no matter what storms may come.

*What greater gift dost thou bestow,
What greater goodness can we know
Than Christ-like friends, whose gentle ways
Strengthen our faith, enrich our days.*

—“Each Life That Touches Ours
for Good” (*Hymns*, 293)

BECKY ROPER
Salt Lake City, Utah

THE WARD THAT
TOOK ME IN

I HAVE OCCASIONALLY heard Latter-day Saints comment on the dress or grooming of someone attending church meetings: a shirt that lacks a tie, a pair of too-informal shoes, a blouse or shirt with some pop-culture reference on it. Whenever I hear such

comments, I think of the first ward I ever visited: Kingston Ward, in what was then a medium-sized town about ninety miles north of New York City.

In the summer of 1972, I was a fifteen-year-old at Camp Rising Sun, a nondenominational leadership training experience with an international group of campers and staff. Campers were encouraged to learn about each other’s cultures, and I, raised a faithful Roman Catholic, pestered the Mormon campers and staff with many questions. It was natural for me to follow them to church.

Unfortunately, I hadn’t brought to camp any clothes appropriate for LDS services. The Mormon campers wore the full 1970’s LDS treatment—right down to wingtip cordovan shoes. I wore my least soiled pair of sneakers and my least filthy dungarees and wondered how I would fit in at church.

The Kingston Ward members treated me, and the other scruffily dressed non-LDS campers, like visiting royalty. Not only did ward members not say a thing about my grubby clothing, I did not detect even the slightest bit of unspoken disapproval. Instead, the members went out of their way to welcome us and answer the many questions that we had. In particular, the Gospel Essentials class teacher—Larry, a manager at a nearby fast food restaurant—spent a lot of time with me out of class, discussing my questions about the Bible and the LDS gospel. (After obtaining parental permission, I was baptized three years later.)

I suspect many Saints have wards that they go home to in their minds. Kingston Ward is one of those for me, and I catch myself referring to it a few times each year in the Sunday School class I teach or in sacrament meeting talks. It was the ward that took me in when I did not fit in.

MARK E. KOLTOKO-RIVERA
Winter Park, Florida

GOD IN THE STARS

WHEN I WAS a girl, our ward held regular campouts. The chosen spot was distant enough to feel remote and secluded but near enough that even the young parents with small children could manage the trip. We set up tents, cooked on fires, and ran through the trees. Usually—and this was my favorite part—we were allowed to put our sleeping bags out under the stars at bedtime. Moms would make sure we were warm enough (we were), and dads would hand out flashlights (not to play with, only to use if we needed to find the bathroom in the middle of the night).

TOUCHSTONES is a SUNSTONE section that debuted in December 2005. It was inspired by “Readers Write” in The SUN magazine. TOUCHSTONES topics are intentionally broad in order to give room for personal expression. Writing style is not as important as the contributor’s thoughtfulness, humor, and sincerity. SUNSTONE reserves the right to edit pieces, but contributors will have the opportunity to engage in an editing exchange prior to publication.

To submit a reflection, please send it typed and double-spaced to SUNSTONE, 343 North Third West, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84103. Electronic submissions can be sent via email to EDITOR@SUNSTONEONLINE.COM. Submissions should be kept at about 400 words, but we are willing to make exceptions for exceptional pieces. Please submit right away for upcoming topics!

Upcoming Topics: { CROSSROADS
COMING CLEAN



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Lying there away from city lights, we would giggle and whisper and listen for animal noises. Eventually, we would settle down long enough to notice the wondrous, endless, beautiful stars. Someone's parent or older sibling would point out constellations, visible planets, and even the Milky Way. Our eyes wide open in awe—captivated by the hugeness of the sky—we would marvel at the ideas of galaxies, space, time, and aliens. I don't know what my parents did while we kids watched the stars. Maybe they watched us, re-living the first time when *they* realized the universe was bigger than their own imaginations and remembering the ward campouts of their youth.

Do wards still go on campouts these days? I hope parents have not gotten so busy and so comfortable with tropical vacations and RVs that they forget about simplicity and nature. Ward campouts were where we discovered religion in the sense of community; miracles in the wildlife and vegetation of the earth; friendship in campfires and s'mores and laughter—and God in the stars.

ELISE EGGETT JOHNSON
Mission Viejo, California

SNAPSHOTS

THE FOLLOWING OCCURRED on the same Sunday:

- The congregation is not-so-gently chided for only 50 percent of temple recommend holders having “traded up” for the new bar-coded recommends. We are reminded how in Christ's parable, only five of the ten virgins were prepared to attend the marriage feast and that this parable was intended for modern-day members of his Church.

- From the pulpit, the presiding authority notes that some have arrived at the meeting on “Mormon Standard Time.”

- Choir members complain to the choir director about microphone placement and the negative comments they've heard about which singing parts are (unfortunately) heard best via the system.

- The stake president reminds the music personnel that all prelude music must come from the hymnbook.

- The director of the congregational singing (a former Protestant) encourages the organist to activate extra stops during the opening song and afterwards, with tears in her eyes, thanks the organist for providing a greater musical experience for the congregation.

- A former bishop shares his enjoyment at being the new Scoutmaster of eleven boys.

- An eighty-year-old farmer refers to his recent injurious encounter with farm machinery and shares the thoughts he had about his apparent imminent demise—thoughts filled with the peace of the gospel. He expresses his belief that his recovery was speeded significantly by priesthood blessings he'd received.

- A younger man expresses gratitude for the love of his wife and for the positive influence her spirituality has had on his life.

- A seasoned mother shares a parenting experience and notes that only the Spirit can do effective teaching, reminding us that we all have access to the Spirit.

- A Laurel shares a connecting experience she had with her father, links that experience with the scriptural injunction to honor her parents, then declares that speaking in church isn't as scary as she thought it would be.

- A young man bears testimony of Jesus Christ, saying he wants to know more about him and about Joseph Smith.

- A thirteen-year-old black girl, who was raised in a very rough west-side neighborhood and attends church alone, sings in the choir and says she feels the Spirit.
- A middle-aged single woman, inactive for years, describes the outpouring of love she experienced from the Relief Society sisters when none of her children could help care for her during a six-week recovery from an injury. She also describes her absolute delight in recently attending the temple for the first time.

NAME WITHHELD
Utah County, Utah

A TALE OF TWO DEATHS

RELIGIONS ARE EXCEEDINGLY generous when it comes to death. Some, however, celebrate the end of a life more sensitively than others, I think.

I'm an Episcopalian who often hangs out with Mormons. They think I am offering friendship. Well, sure. But mostly, I hope they will bury me.

MABEL ALICE DALEY
1922–2002

MABEL (my mom) liked red carnations, which was a pretty good deal for Dad. Carnations are cheap. She wore little white anklets, Keds, and Wranglers for as long as I knew her. She bought a '30s Studebaker for \$50, and Dad painted it. Neither of them could shut the trunk unless they jumped on it. If my mother knew she was a wealthy woman in a very wealthy town, she hadn't quite got the hang of it, if you know what I mean.

For thirty-five years, my mother—who believed in nothing beyond this life—sang in the choir, taught Sunday School, ran the church thrift store, served on the Altar Guild, belonged to the Red Brickers (think of this as a cross between the priesthood, the Relief Society, and the ward basketball team), and tithed 10 percent—all for and to St. John's Episcopal Church.

Then she moved to Florida. Then she died, and my sister and I began to plan the funeral. We agreed to pay the usual fee to the priest; the usual fees to the singer and organist; the expected donation to the sexton to open the door, turn on the lights, turn off the lights, and close the door; a donation to the Altar Guild for clean linens on the altar and another to the Flower Guild for placing our

flowers. We paid for the procession and the favor of a graveside service. We paid for programs. We arranged for a caterer. We ordered \$400 in arrangements of red and white carnations, and—now \$15,000 later—attended a requisite meeting with the Flower Guild.

The tastefully dressed ladies of the Flower Guild sat at a long table in expensive shoes and fashionable haircuts. They offered us flowers from the church gardens, gladiolas and roses which were “tasteful and in-season.” We stared in disbelief. They explained: “Carnations are not appropriate to our sanctuary.” We promised to take the carnations right out the door behind Mom. They resisted. We insisted. And in the morning, in the true spirit of a compromise we never made, we arrived to find our arrangements of carnations placed so far to the side of the sanctuary as to be nearly out the door and a stunning altar dripping with gladiolas and roses.

LARAINÉ WILKINS
1964–2006

LARAINÉ was an intellectual whose primary goal was to understand God's design. If my mother believed in nothing, then by contrast, Laraine seemed to believe in everything. Either way amounted to a precarious relationship to her church community.

Laraine seemed to believe that to understand life, one had to touch life. She wanted to hear a higher range, to see a greater distance, to know the taste and feel of everything. But no matter how sensual she managed to be, she was still dominated, I believe, by the need to understand.

And in pursuit of understanding, Laraine cast a wide spiritual net that included Mormons, Mormonism, and also me—equally. Even in the face of pain, rejection, and conflict, she loved her own and taught me to as well.

Laraine was buried in Idaho near her childhood family, but as she lived in Salt Lake City, her ward arranged a memorial service for those of us here who loved her. A well-intentioned confidante prepared me for the memorial service. “They will be dishonest. They will use her death to promote Mormonism. They don't really give a damn about her.”

The people who didn't give a damn had prepared a wonderful memorial service. No money changed hands. Nothing was expected of mourners but to mourn. The doors were open, the lights on, the bishop presiding, the flowers in place. Someone videotaped the service for Laraine's daughter who

was in the hospital (the result of injuries from the same car accident that claimed Laraine's life) and couldn't be there. There was music; there was prayer. There were speeches, all of them describing the woman I loved exactly as I knew her, and not as either they or I perhaps wished her to be.

The Latter-day Saints of the 11th Ward had been very busy. Laraine's child was surrounded by care, and a sister had sensitively transgressed her home, creating an exceptional eulogy from the artifacts Laraine had left behind. The final chapter of Laraine's life had been written for her—exactly, I believe, as she would have written it herself. And on an otherwise uneventful Saturday morning, the people who weren't supposed to give a damn cast a wide spiritual net and held in their tender hands a true communion of saints until we were ready to let go and begin to grieve.

CHERYL PACE
Salt Lake City, Utah

MORE THAN BRICK AND MORTAR

WHEN I THINK of The Ward, I think of my original home ward—the old San Gabriel Ward. It was a small, tightly-knit group of Saints, but when I was twelve, the ward was dissolved and we were absorbed into Rosemead Ward. We met in the same building but with a totally different cast of characters.

When I was a teenager, there was talk of our building becoming a stake center. For this to happen, we had to have a minimum of 175 people at sacrament meeting on consecutive Sundays. We campaigned to get bodies in the pews and sighed with relief on the days when we reached or surpassed the magic number.

The quest for stake center status dragged on for years and didn't play out quite as we'd hoped. Demographics lagged behind the expansion plans. The area wasn't growing, and young families moved away to find more affordable housing.

Built before standardized floor plans, the ward building was a two-story, homegrown oddity with no elevator and a tacked-on addition that wasn't connected to all of the second floor. It was completely unsuitable for a stake center, yet we persisted in believing we could make it happen.

In 1990, Rosemead Ward began meeting in a different building—a move some thought was temporary. Shortly thereafter, however, the old Rosemead/San Gabriel ward building was completely torn down.

I remember the sickening feeling I had the first time I drove by the vacant lot where our ward building had once stood. It was hard to believe the building which had been the setting for my formative church years simply didn't exist anymore. It had been my locus for weekday Primary, ward Christmas parties, Fourth of July breakfasts and flag raisings. My first youth dance. Roadshows. Seminary. Softball practice on the expansive front lawn. Funeral services for a baby who had died of AIDS. Rooms tricked out for Halloween spook alleys. The peach orchard behind the building that one of our bishops believed was a key to our creating a United Order right there in San Gabriel.

Using Google Earth, I recently looked at the old ward site. There's scant evidence that any building was ever there. Though the palm trees that flanked the front walkway still stand, there are now dirt paths where driveways once were. The Rosemead/San Gabriel building's absence is just as disconcerting to me now—nearly two decades later—as when the building came tumbling down.

I know testimony isn't built out of brick and mortar, but I feel that with my ward building gone, part of my foundation is missing, too.

MARY ELLEN ROBERTSON
McAllen, Texas

YESTERDAY'S WARD

MY OLD SALT Lake City ward was about a mile long and a quarter mile wide with the cream-colored meetinghouse and still-mysterious tower in its midsection. Almost everyone walked to church, children with parents, except for my brother who always stayed many steps behind us. Only decades after the building's dedication in 1937 was a swath of front lawn removed, then paved and striped for parking.

Before the bloc plan squeezed most meetings onto Sundays, priesthood meeting came first and then Sunday School. Dads could get home between to help with the kids, but back then, many mothers of young'uns (including mine) simply didn't try to go to Sunday School. They might appear for Mothers' Day when the bishopric made a big show of having the biggest family stand up. Because we ultimately numbered eight kids, I always hoped enough of us would show up for our family to grab the glory. Can't remember if we ever did. Mom was disinterested in that award, and I gradually sensed that she thought surviving, instead of being notably fertile, was the goal of motherhood.

In those old days, Junior Sunday School met in the cultural hall, most classes in screened-off sections but one or two on the stage. Passing the sacrament included leaving atop the piano a little silver tray with a piece of bread and cup of water. Leaving it thus was necessary because the pianist played all during the deacons' rounds and could only partake of the emblems afterward. I don't recall how anyone collected the tray.

Both Junior and Senior Sunday School had two-and-a-half-minute talks and song practice before going to class. Everything ended by noon, so everyone could go home and have lunch, and kids and maybe dads could nap. Dinner came before sacrament meeting at six. After that, for teens, came fire-sides: going to friends' homes and listening to prominent great speakers and having celestial desserts in which considerable competition developed.

Back then, Relief Society was Tuesday mornings; women in the paid workforce couldn't go. Primary was Tuesday after school. We were Zion's Girls and Zion's Boys before advancing to Larks, Bluebirds, and Seagulls or Blazers, Trekkers, and Guides. "Mutual" was Wednesday evening, and every year we put on roadshows. These original, short plays were performed in succession in each ward building by busing performers and trucking scenery and props around. Choir practice was Thursday night.

We did welfare projects—sorted potatoes, hoed weeds, bought bricks to help build the stake center, had dance clubs, sports teams, fundraising bazaars, and the

usual parties. On the night of a missionary farewell, adults dropped a dollar or more in the box on the table at the chapel door as the ward clerk greeted us. The money was to pay for transport into "the field."

Maybe most memorable to me were the Saturday night Ward Shows—feature films screened twice: at 6 p.m. for the under-twelves and a few chaperones, and at 9:00 for older members. All films were current releases plus a cartoon and often a newsreel. In order to attend, we had to show a "budget" card which would be hole-punched by the ward clerk around the edge as we entered the cultural hall. Having the card meant that your family had paid its yearly assessment. Those who didn't have one (yet) were quietly admitted and listed apparently for further administrative action.

I no longer remember whether other wards in our stake or city had such shows. Perhaps some ward member working for a distribution company had legitimately been able to lend or rent films, and our ward leaders simply staged the activity on their own. Would such individuality be approved nowadays? I suspect our Ward Shows ended because of pressure from downtown theater managers whose potential customers were being entertained for "free" (sort of) elsewhere. I do know that I immensely miss that unstructured gathering of ward members, all together, all chattering before and after the screening, under no pressure to hustle on to the next meeting.

CAROL B. QUIST
Salt Lake City, Utah

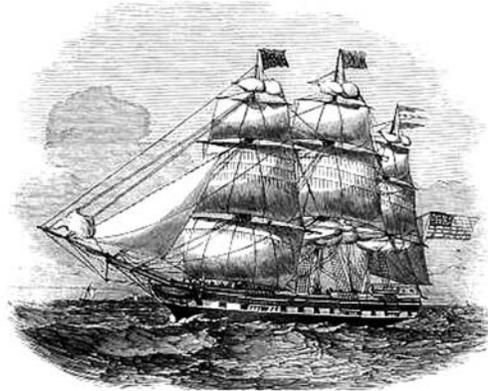


SUNSTONE

has launched the

Mapping Mormon Issues

PROJECT



MAPPING MORMON ISSUES is a Sunstone initiative to commission “framing articles” on topics that challenge serious students of Mormonism. Articles prepared for the Mapping Mormon Issues project will orient students within the ongoing discourse about various difficult issues. These articles will strive to be dispassionate summaries of the scholarship and debates—how the discussions have unfolded over time, what the main arguments are for this position over that one—instead of actually weighing in on the debates themselves. Each completed article will be published in SUNSTONE magazine and online through the Sunstone website. In addition to written text, MMI will offer interviews with experts and key players in the discussions of each topic, as well as other audio and visual helps to students of the issue. The project will also offer links to free versions of past and current Sunstone symposium discussions about each topic and will actively seek permission to provide links to the best scholarship in other journals and forums.

To be successful, the Mapping Mormon Issues project will require considerable commitments of time, effort, and money. MMI will be administered by a group of people consisting of the SUNSTONE editor, two Sunstone board members, and several people outside the formal Sunstone organizational structure who are committed to the serious study of Mormon issues and to the project’s success.

WE ARE THRILLED to announce that the fundraising campaign has begun with a bang as long-time Sunstone friends MIKE AND RONDA CALLISTER have pledged to match up to \$5,000 in donations others send to the Mapping Mormon Issues project. Several new donors have contributed since the first announcement about the project, and we have commissioned work on the first four topics—presentations of which will be given at the Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium this August. But we still need several thousand more dollars to meet the matching pledge amount and reach the goal of having ten MMI topics completed by the end of 2009. **Please pledge your support today!**

*To donate or learn more about the Mapping Mormon Issues project, please visit
WWW.SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM, contact Sunstone by phone at 801.355.5926,
or email us at MMI@SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM.*





THE 2008 BROOKIE & D.K. BROWN

FICTION CONTEST

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION invites writers to enter its annual fiction contest, which is made possible by a grant from the Brookie and D. K. Brown family. All entries must relate to adult Latter-day Saint experience, theology, or worldview. All varieties of form are welcome. Stories, sans author identification, will be judged by noted Mormon authors and professors of literature. Winners will be announced in SUNSTONE and on the foundation's website, www.sunstonemagazine.com; winners only will be notified by mail. After the announcement, all other entrants will be free to submit their stories elsewhere. Winning stories will be published in SUNSTONE magazine.

PRIZES will be awarded in two categories: short-short story—fewer than 1,500 words; short story—fewer than 6,000 words.

RULES: 1. Up to three entries may be submitted by any one author. Five copies of each entry must be delivered (or postmarked) to Sunstone by 30 JUNE 2008. Entries will not be returned. A \$5 fee must accompany each entry. No email submissions will be accepted.

2. Each story must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white paper and be stapled in the upper left

corner. The author's name must NOT appear on any page of the manuscript.

3. Each entry must be accompanied by a cover letter that states the story's title and the author's name, address, telephone number, and email (if available). This cover letter must be signed by the author and attest that the entry is her or his own work, that it has not been previously published, that it is not being considered for publication elsewhere, and that it will not be submitted to other publishers until after the

contest. If the entry wins, SUNSTONE magazine has one-time, first-publication rights. Cover letters must also grant permission for the manuscript to be filed in the Sunstone Collection at the Marriott Library of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The author retains all literary rights. Sunstone discourages the use of pseudonyms; if used, the author must identify the real and pen names and the reasons for writing under the pseudonym.

Failure to comply with rules will result in disqualification.

The Sunstone Education Foundation is pleased to announce:



THE 2008 R. L. "BUZZ" CAPENER MEMORIAL WRITING CONTEST IN COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES

THE SUNSTONE EDUCATION FOUNDATION invites submissions of papers to the 2008 R. L. "Buzz" Capener Memorial Writing Contest in Comparative Religious Studies.

The contest originates in the conviction that the study of Mormon theology and doctrine can greatly benefit from examination in a comparative context with other Christian and non-Christian traditions. The contest encourages entries that bring LDS concepts and practices into discussion with the worldviews, doctrines, and rituals of other faiths, trusting that the comparative act will enrich the understanding of each. Papers should exhibit sound scholarship but also be accessible to a broad, non-specialist readership.

The papers, without author identification, will be judged by qualified scholars of Mormonism and religious studies. Winning articles will be published in a future issue of SUNSTONE magazine. Only the winners will be notified personally of the results. After the judging is complete, all non-winning entrants will be free to submit their essays elsewhere.

The contest is sponsored by the family of R. L. "Buzz" Capener to honor the memory of his life of faith, acceptance of diversity, and the pursuit of truth.

PRIZES: A total of \$1,000.00 will be awarded:

- \$750 for the best submission
- \$250 for the runner-up

RULES:

1. Only one entry may be submitted by any author or team of authors. Four copies must be postmarked or reach the Sunstone offices before or on **30 JUNE 2008**. Entries will not be returned.
2. Each entry must be 8,000 words or fewer (exclusive of footnotes). Entries must be typed, double-spaced, on one side of white paper, paginated, and stapled in the upper left corner. Author name(s) should not appear on any page of the entry.
3. Each entry must be accompanied by a cover letter that states the essay's title and the author's (or authors') name, address, telephone number, and email address.

Each cover letter must be signed and attest that the entry is the person or team's work, that it has not been previously published, that it is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere, will not be submitted to other forums until after the contest, and that, if the entry wins, SUNSTONE magazine has one-time, first-publication rights.

4. Winners will be selected by anonymous evaluations supplied by judges appointed by the Sunstone Education Foundation and the R. L. "Buzz" Capener Memorial Writing Contest organizing committee. Sunstone will announce the winners in SUNSTONE magazine and at the foundation's website, WWW.SUNSTONEMAGAZINE.COM.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in disqualification.

SUNSTONE

343 NORTH THIRD WEST
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84103-1215

SPRING SYMPOSIUMS

More than 130 people attended the 2008 Sunstone West Symposium, which was held at Claremont Graduate University and co-sponsored by the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association. The symposium featured seventeen sessions, including a screening and discussion of the film *Nobody Knows: The Untold Story of Black Mormons* and presentations on everything from the “problem of evil” to immigration, from body image to why Latter-day Saints shy away from the symbolism of the cross.

The Sunstone Midwest Symposium held in Independence, Missouri, was part of a larger Restoration Studies conference co-sponsored by the John Whitmer Historical Association and the Community of Christ Seminary. Drawing more than 150 folks to the Independence campus of Graceland University, the sixteen sessions included keynote addresses by former RLDS prophet/president Wallace B. Smith and historian Jan Shippo. In between, attendees enjoyed discussions ranging from the Book of Mormon in today’s Community of Christ to all the Mormons who have sought the U.S. presidency. On the final day, attendees were given the chance to view fantastic treasures such as seer stones and rare books, letters, and photographs in the Community of Christ archives and temple museum.

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“Women Who Know” panel



“The Legacy of President Gordon B. Hinckley” panel



Brian Birch presents on the role of theology in Mormon studies



Russell Frandsen shares his thoughts during the “Why I Stay” panel

SUNSTONE WEST PHOTOS BY ALLEN HILL

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14–15 March
Claremont,
California

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Panel on doctrinal and ecumenical shifts within the Community of Christ



Tom Kimball speaks on a “Stages of Faith and the Restoration” panel

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11–13 April
Independence,
Missouri



Wallace B. Smith, emeritus RLDS prophet/president



Crowd waiting to hear Wallace B. Smith speak

SUNSTONE MIDWEST PHOTOS BY MIKE KARPOWICZ

FROM THE EDITOR

“WAY”

By Dan Wotherspoon

SO LONG TO THE HIPSTER



SUNSTONE HAS BEEN richly blessed these past three and a half years to have enjoyed the dedication, friendship, and many talents of Allen Hill as our magazine managing editor and symposium coordinator. We were very fortunate to be able to pluck Allen from the desperate grasps of center directors and professors at Utah Valley State College who recognized his tremendous gifts and kept him very busy but barely fed. Well, the school has turned the tables on us now and lured him back to become one of the coordinators of its Honors Program—a position there finally worthy of his many abilities. We're very sad to see him go but excited to

know that he's moving on to new and wonderful challenges at his alma mater, a place where he's maintained close friendships and other ties.

During his tenure here, Allen brought SUNSTONE magazine to new heights in terms of its overall look and design. (He had to begin his new job a few weeks before this issue was finished, and if you take a good look, I'm certain you'll be able to tell which pages and ads enjoyed his creative touch versus mine.) With Allen's attention to detail, under his watch Sunstone has also enjoyed many of our best-organized symposiums—and I have marveled at his willingness to be flexible and cheerful on the spot when glitches and last-minute presenter demands have thrown things into potentially crazy-making chaos.

On a more personal note, all of us affiliated with Sunstone have just plain enjoyed Allen's unique personality and distinct aesthetic. His demeanor and approach to life, which centers around relationships and the enjoyment of simple pleasures, have made him a wonderful co-worker and a treasured friend. He's a “hipster” (one of several terms I've added to my vocabulary thanks to Allen) who I am very glad to have gotten to know and a few of whose traits I've begun to take on for the better. I don't think I'll ever deliberately wear a white shirt or thick-framed glasses, but when I catch myself enjoying a moment in which life reveals itself as particularly sweet, it just might be because I've been hanging with Allen for the past few years.

AS MANY OF you have already learned, I will be stepping away from the Sunstone helm following the Salt Lake symposium this August. That moment will come after seven and a half of the most wonderful years in my life. As in every life transition, I'm heading into uncharted seas, excited for new adventures but still longing for the security of known waters.

That it's time for me to move on has been made absolutely clear to me. My deepest self has been sending me clues about it for the past couple of years. Some of these hints have come in the form of funks and sleepless nights that began to arrive far too regularly and for too long now to be viewed as healthy should they continue. The time it takes me to recover my energy following the completion

of big projects and events has lengthened considerably. I've also been increasingly unable to work as deep into the night or on as many weekends as I used to, which has caused production to begin to slip.

Other clues have come to me more as quiet whispers telling me that while this role with Sunstone was an important stop on my road to finding my true vocation—whatever it is that I'm “called” to be in this world—it isn't the final destination. Like everyone still searching for their truest calling, I wish I knew more right now about the shape and specifics of what I'll be doing when I experience that ultimate state of soul in which I'll be my whole self in full partnership with God and the universe; but that doesn't seem to be mine to foresee right now.

ONE of my favorite teachers on finding one's vocation is Parker J. Palmer. In his book, *Let Your Life Speak*,¹ Palmer describes the feeling that comes when one feels compelled toward the discovery of one's true vocation: “This is something I can't not do, for reasons I'm unable to explain to anyone else and don't fully understand myself but that are nonetheless compelling” (p. 25).

Palmer then shares a pivotal moment in his own journey to discover his life's calling. At the time, he was thirty-five and taking a sabbatical year at Pendle Hill, a Quaker community outside Philadelphia that is dedicated to helping searchers pursue the connection between their inner life and outward service to the world. Having just spent five years in Washington, D.C., as a professor and community organizer—what had seemed to him an ideal combination for finding a deep congruence between his inner and outer life—Palmer was confused about why he wasn't feeling truly fulfilled.

As Palmer shared with fellow Pendle Hill residents his desire to come to understand his vocation, he became frustrated by their advice. Responding with “traditional Quaker counsel,” the residents kept urging him: “Have faith, and way will open.”

Finally, after a few months of deepening struggle with this question of his vocation, Palmer approached Ruth, a thoughtful older resident:

“Ruth,” I said, “people keep telling me that ‘way will open.’ Well, I sit in the silence, I pray, I listen for my calling, but way is not opening. I've been trying to find my vocation for a long time, and I still don't have the foggiest idea of what I'm meant to do. Way may open for other people, but it's sure not opening for me.”

Ruth's reply was a model of Quaker plain-speaking. “I'm a birthright Friend,” she said solemnly, “and in sixty-plus years of living, way has never opened in front of me.” She paused, and I started sinking into despair. Was this wise woman telling me that the Quaker concept of God's guidance was a hoax?

Then she spoke again, this time with a grin. “But a lot of way has closed behind me, and that's had the same guiding effect.” (p. 38)

I don't know exactly how I know it, but I have come to understand my sleeplessness and various other struggles with energy these past couple of years as “way” closing to me

IF I HAD to pick just one thing I gained during my time at Sunstone, it would be confidence in my confessional voice.

the option of staying in this amazing and fulfilling yet apparently not-quite-endpoint-for-me role at Sunstone.

OVER the course of the thirty-plus editorials I've written for the magazine, I've shared glimpses into some of the various closings that guided me toward this Sunstone stop in the first place. Newly married and ready to be provider for my family and spiritual guide for others, I was certain that way was opening for me a career in the Church Education System. After being heavily recruited from my job as an instructor at the Missionary Training Center, I took all the CES preparatory courses, did the student teaching, and received high marks in my evaluations. About all that I had left to do was say "yes." During my student teaching, however, I had reluctantly come to the conclusion—very surprising to me but very clear—that I just wasn't meant to teach teenagers. There was an easiness that was missing, and when I shared that hesitation with my interviewer during one of the final hiring steps, he completely understood. "Seminary teachers are born not made," he said, suggesting that a calling to work with teenagers is one of those intangibles that just can't be forced.

Even after that closing, however, I felt certain that my true vocation was still to be found teaching religion in some form or another. So forward I went with stops at Arizona State for a master's and Claremont Graduate School for a doctorate.

My time in Arizona marked a closing to the simple faith I had brought into my study of religion. I became overwhelmed by the strong evidence of human temperaments and agendas in scripture, while at the same time becoming entranced by the astonishing beauty and power of faith traditions besides my own. Arizona State also closed for me the notion that finding capital-"T" kinds of truth was easy; I came to realize that divine markers are accessed in much more subtle ways.

My Claremont years were filled mostly by my continuing to get more and more familiar with the new religious world I found myself in. I took exciting courses and mulled over big issues, but way kept drawing me back to a focus on Mormonism. I eventually wrote a doctoral dissertation that allowed me to spend a couple of years concentrating on my favorite parts of Mormonism—sensibilities

about the expansiveness of human nature and our deep interconnectedness with each other, God, and the physical world. It was wonderful. Surely way had opened, and it was all going to be smooth sailing from there.

I was wrong. To use Ruth's words, "way closed behind me" in the form of a painful next few years during which I was not able to land a full-time university teaching job. My dissertation committee members spent about ninety minutes of my two-hour defense speculating about the kinds of academic posts there might be for someone who specializes in Mormon theology, so I should have guessed right then that finding a fit might be tough. Given the recent unfolding of Mormon studies at several universities, I occasionally find myself thinking that I just graduated about fifteen years too early. But to say that would be to deny that this closing off of an academic career was my being guided to discover and grow in new areas.

IF I had to pick just one thing I gained during my time at Sunstone, it would be confidence in my confessional voice. Perhaps the biggest battle of my life—one still ongoing—has been to come to understand that real strength is found only in one's vulnerability, in laying bare pretenses to surety and unassailable virtue. Though I began to sense within my first couple of years of academic training that truth isn't reachable solely through intellectual power, I know that I would have had a much harder time heeding the sound of my soul's wisdom were I to have landed an academic post. Instead of the classroom, way opened into the confessional.

If it is nothing else, the SUNSTONE editorship is an extended immersion in the confessional, the sacred world of spiritual autobiography. Sunstone publishes and provides symposium platforms for many, many personal essays—but even its more scholarly articles provide windows into the author's journey. Why did she choose to study this subject? Why did he approach it in this way rather than that? What does this author's tone reveal about his confidence in his conclusions? What can we learn from this study about what she values most?

I first became drawn to Sunstone by certain people I met in the magazine's pages and at symposiums who seemed grounded in both the universality of mind-heart-spirit and the particularity of Mormonism. I know now

that I was attracted to these individuals because—though often very different from me in temperament, interests, and life experience—they weren't afraid to share their adventures in spiritual warfare or the scars they had received. They were for me the "wounded healers" that Henri Nouwen writes about: people who are able to offer strength and healing precisely *because of* the injuries they've received, people who are willing to "put [their] own search at the disposal of others" and "allow others to enter [their] life" and see how they connect with each other.²

I am far from having fully learned how to be completely open and vulnerable and welcoming to guests in this manner, but very certain that way closed those other doors so that I might be opened more to this aspect of my vocation. Nevin Compton Trammell's poem "I'm Tired, I'm Whipped" speaks vividly to me about the convoluted journey that led to my discovering and embracing my confessional voice:

*I'm tired
I'm whipped
too dumb to quit
too smart
to let life go by*

*I'm working hard
to find truth
in my own backyard
I've done everything
but die*

*Took the long way around
on a short ride to town
found a pass
where few have been*

*Gained a love
lost a friend
scraped my knees
learning to please*

*started out with no choice
somewhere
somehow
found my
voice*

THOUGH one can never be certain how way might be opening, I'm excited about a spiraling circularity I sense in the next step I feel called to take in my journey toward vocation. Following the completion of two more magazine issues and Sunstone's August symposium, I will begin working alongside Randy Paul, a close friend whom I first met during my time at Arizona State, in a non-profit foundation dedicated to helping people find a constructive, life- and

faith-affirming way through deep religious and cultural conflicts. And the key to the foundation's methodology is that discussants must bring their full selves to the table—their angers, resentments, and wounds, as well as their excitement and passion for the truths and beauties of their spiritual traditions.

Nouwen writes that no host can predict how they will be affected by a guest they invite to their table, "but it is exactly in common searches and shared risks that new ideas are born, that new visions reveal themselves and that new roads become visible."³ I'm wistful about the approaching close of my time at Sunstone but nervously thrilled for the way that is opening in the opportunity to work with Randy and his foundation. Way has never yet failed to provide a great adventure. 

NOTES

1. Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).
2. Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Image Books, 1979), 99–100.
3. *Ibid.*, 100.



BIRCH CREEK SERVICE RANCH

Birch Creek Service Ranch provides twelve-to-fifteen-year-old boys and girls a rural, character-building experience through community service, ranch work, outdoors activities, and artistic endeavors. Each activity is designed to help clients grow by challenging them to do something new, serve another person, or dedicate themselves totally to an area in which they would like to improve. Through these challenges, clients experience growth in character as they experience success in the activity.

BCSR is not a reform camp or treatment program. It is a camp for good kids who

have not had serious behavioral problems in the past but who wish to have a positive experience in rural Utah—learning to appreciate the outdoors, being engaged in the community, and learning the value of hard work.

Slots are still open for this year's sessions:

Boys Session One: 9 June – 2 July
 Girls Session: 5 July – 19 July
 Boys Session Two: 21 July – 13 August

For applications and details, visit www.birchcreekranch.org

BCSR is the successor to the Bennion Teton Boys Ranch, founded by Lowell Bennion in the early 1960s and closed in 2005



birch creek service ranch po box 423 spring city, ut 84662 www.birchcreekranch.org

SUNSTONE DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS AND EDITOR

Position Available

Under the general direction of the Board of Trustees, the Director of Publications and Editor is responsible for producing the content of SUNSTONE magazine and other publications produced by the Sunstone Education Foundation. Duties include:

- Selecting, commissioning, and editing articles
- Typesetting, illustrating, designing, and producing the magazine
- Coordinating all aspects of printing and delivery of the magazine
- Recruiting and directing section editors and other magazine volunteers

Candidate's Qualifications

- Commitment to the Sunstone Education Foundation's core mission and values
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills
- Capacity to help foster and maintain relationships with constituents inside and outside the Sunstone community
- Willing and able to build community and develop relations with new readers, speakers, and supporters
- Ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with potential donors
- Serve as one of the key external faces of the organization
- Strong managerial competence with a creative temperament
- Strong budgetary management skills
- Collaborative teamwork skills with internal peers
- Comfort with current and emerging technologies a plus

Compensation and Benefits

- Negotiable and commensurate with qualifications and experience

To apply, please submit resume and cover letter to:

Rory Swensen, Co-Chair, Sunstone Board of Trustees
 343 N. Third West
 Salt Lake City, UT 84103
 (801) 355-5926
 email: rory@sunstonemagazine.com

Screening has already begun and will continue until the position is filled.



SUNSTONE

GORDON BITNER HINCKLEY

1910–2008



LDS.ORG

LDS PRESIDENT GORDON B. HINCKLEY, 97, DIED ON Sunday, 27 January 2008 of causes incident to age, after serving for twelve years as president of the Church and for fourteen years before that as counselor to three ailing prophets. He had served as a member of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles since October 1961.

Under President Hinckley's leadership, the Church grew from nine to more than thirteen million members. During his tenure, Hinckley traveled more than half a million miles and spoke to hundreds of thousands of members in more than sixty nations. He launched an ambitious plan to build smaller temples, bringing the total number of temples to 122, oversaw the building of a massive conference center in downtown Salt Lake City as well as extensive restorations of historical sites and other Church-owned buildings. He established the Perpetual Emigration Fund, a student loan program for Latter-day Saints in Third World countries, and created the Area Authority model for overseeing Church affairs worldwide.

Savvy in public affairs, President Hinckley expanded the Church's engagement with the media by hiring Edelman Public Relations, committing Church support to the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, and creating a highly active Public Affairs committee capable of issuing immediate responses to LDS-related stories. During his tenure, Hinckley granted interviews to prestigious TV personalities and media outlets, including CNN's Larry King, CBS's Mike Wallace, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the Associated Press, *Newsweek*, and the *New Yorker*.

Stories about Hinckley's passing appeared in media outlets around the world, including the Associated Press, the BBC, *Newsweek* magazine, and the *New York Times*. "He implored

people to be better—to be kinder, more forgiving, more inclusive," LDS reporter Elise Soukup eulogized in an 11 February *Newsweek* sidebar. "And he led by tireless example."

President George W. Bush and many other public figures issued statements praising Hinckley. "Gordon demonstrated the heart of a servant and the wisdom of a leader," reads President Bush's statement. "He was a tireless worker and a talented communicator who was respected in his community and beloved by his congregation." Utah Governor Jon Huntsman ordered flags in Utah to be flown at half-mast, an act of respect typically reserved for government figures.

Shortly after Hinckley's passing was announced, LDS students in Salt Lake City's East High School and South Jordan's Bingham High, communicating mostly via text messages, agreed, as an expression of respect, to wear their Sunday best to school the next day. Bloggers posted video tributes at YouTube that included excerpts from President Hinckley's talks, music, and documentary footage.

A 2 February commemorative edition of the *Church News* focused on President Hinckley's family, his 1933 mission to England, media relations efforts, extensive traveling, temple building, and some of his teachings. The centerfold was a world map showing 216 locations on five continents he had visited since March 1995.

Viewing, Funeral, and Burial

A VIEWING OF President Hinckley's body was held in the Conference Center 31 January and 1 February, with mourners arriving as early as 7 a.m. and waiting for up to four hours to pay their respects. Flanked by Church security personnel, the open casket was laid in the lobby of the Conference Center. A video of President Hinckley's 95th birthday celebration was shown in the auditorium.

Early on Saturday, 2 February, the casket was closed in a private family ceremony. At 11 a.m., a public funeral was held in the LDS Conference Center. Broadcast via TV and Internet, the service was attended by religious and civic leaders, including then-presidential hopeful Mitt Romney and U.S. Senate majority leader Harry Reid. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir provided the music.

Funeral speakers included President Hinckley's daughter Virginia H. Pearce, Presiding Bishop H. David Burton, Earl C. Tingey of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy,

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Boyd K. Packer, and President Hinckley's two counselors in the First Presidency, Thomas S. Monson and Henry B. Eyring. The speakers' talks were printed in a supplement to the March *Ensign*.

Virginia Pearce, speaking as family representative, celebrated Hinckley as a father as well as a prophet. She recounted the 1837 conversion of Lois Judd Hinckley (President Hinckley's great-grandmother) and some of the hardships the Hinckley family faced during Utah's pioneer period.

"Our father was adorable," she said. "And he was a marvel to watch. Disciplined and courageous, with an unbelievable capacity for work, he believed in growth. A favorite scripture reads: 'That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day' (D&C 50:24). That process of continual growth is the story of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that he loved to tell, as well as the story of his own life. That kind of growth requires faith, courage, discipline, and hard work—partnered with the gracious hand of the Lord."

Boyd K. Packer shared happy memories of his interactions with President and Sister Hinckley. He also used the occasion to explain the order of succession in the Church. "Always the senior Apostle becomes the President," said Packer, "and the next senior becomes the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Outlined in the revelations are the truths and instructions by which the Brethren administer the Church. Whatever the crisis or whatever the opportunity, the directions and guidance can be found in the verses of scripture."

Thomas S. Monson called President Hinckley "a giant of knowledge, of faith, of love, of testimony, of compassion, of vision" and gave an intimate account of the prophet's last days. "Just a week and a half ago, President Hinckley met with President Eyring and with me in our First Presidency meeting," Monson said. "His voice was strong; his mind was clear. He was self-assured and decisive. A few days later, he lay near death; his family members gathered to be near him in his last hours. President Eyring and I were privileged to be with him and the family on Saturday and again on Sunday, when we were joined by President Boyd K. Packer."

"As long as I live, I shall cherish the memory of my last visit to his home, brief hours before his passing," Monson added. "It was a sacred time of parting; we knew the veil was very thin and that he was being summoned to the other side."

After the service, the apostles stood in line while the casket proceeded to the hearse. As the cortege made its way to the cemetery, observers lined up along South Temple waving handkerchiefs and canes. The "cane wave tribute," as it has been called, was a grassroots expression promoted at CANEWAVETRIBUTE.BLOGSPOT.COM. "Most of us have had the



President Hinckley's daughter Virginia Pearce speaks at her father's funeral

pleasure of seeing [President Hinckley] greet the masses with a wave of his cane," the blog reads. "It became his signature over the past few years, and we all got a good laugh when he used his cane to wave to the masses instead of using it to help him walk."

A private burial ceremony was held in the Salt Lake Cemetery, where President Hinckley's casket was lowered into a golden-colored vault next to his wife's. A lone bagpiper played "Danny Boy"—one of President Hinckley's favorite songs—as well as "Amazing Grace" and "Praise to the Man."

The burial was attended by about 375 family members and Church leaders. A bouquet of white and red roses was laid atop the casket, to which family members added roses of various colors. The casket rested on soil from both Utah and Lancashire, England, where Hinckley served his mission.

Built of the same granite as the Salt Lake Temple and the Conference Center, Hinckley's monument stands seven feet tall. Its symmetrical shape is reminiscent of the Church Office Building.

In an essay posted on the website of the University of Chicago's Martin Marty Center, LDS scholar Kathleen Flake observed that despite the presence of the entire Church hierarchy, the grave was dedicated by Hinckley's eldest son Richard G. Hinckley; then Church leaders were "dismissed."

"Families are, as Latter-day Saints like to say, forever," Flake wrote. "What they don't say is that the church is not forever. It is only the instrument for endowing families with the right and duty to mediate the gifts of the gospel to their members, thereby sealing the willing among them as families in the life to come."

"This was Hinckley's message as a prophet," Flake concluded. "As he would have it and as the best Mormon funerals do, his message was embodied and enacted by his family who blessed him in death, no less than in life. This is how the Latter-day Saints, at least, bury a prophet."

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Through the Sunstone blog and newsletters, we asked members of the Sunstone community to share personal reflections about President Hinckley's life and legacy. The following are selected from those we received.*



White hankkerchiefs and canes were a frequent sight along the funeral route.

ABOUT SIX YEARS AGO, I WAS SITTING IN RELIEF Society, and I was just done with it. The teacher had the most annoying, high-pitched Relief Society voice you can imagine, and she was saying all sorts of horrible, judgmental things that I imagined to be deliberately designed to make me feel as guilty as possible. I tried staring at the chandelier, tried using my wedding ring as a reflective surface to see what I could see behind me, even tried saying the alphabet to myself. But when it came time for the closing prayer, every distraction technique failed me, and I had to listen. Oh, the horror. The sister giving the prayer was quite possibly the most self-righteous person on the planet, and the Rameumptom-worthy speech she gave in her self-important, low-toned voice put me over the edge.

I plugged my ears and decided I would say my own prayer. And, with rage-filled, teeth-grinding intensity, I gave God an ultimatum.

"God," I said, "you have approximately sixty seconds to give me a good reason not to just turn my back on all of these mean old b because I swear, I will leave this church."

When everyone else got up, I did, too. Filing directly into sacrament meeting, I found my husband and sat down next to

him. I thought briefly about whether or not threatening God had been a good idea, but I then noted also that God's sixty seconds were just about up, and I began contemplating leaving immediately instead of having to sit through sacrament meeting.

Just then, Gordon B. Hinckley walked through the front door.

Now, the prophet does not usually stroll into your sacrament meeting. Like, ever. Everyone started doing the intense whispering thing—the "I'm freaking out but I'm in the chapel so I can't freak out loud" kind of thing.

Of course, our bishop asked him to say something to us. (I'll bet the poor man never got to just go to sacrament meeting.) He hobbled up to the podium, surveyed us all, and with an atypical frown, said: "Now, I know a lot of you. And you know what I know about you? You're kind of mean. You're kind of self-righteous. For heaven's sake, you need to learn how to be a little kinder. A little more like Christ. Try treating everyone like a neighbor for once."

"That'll work, God," I said.

KERRY SPENCER
West Jordan, Utah

ILIVED IN SEOUL, KOREA, FOR THREE YEARS IN THE 1980s. President and Sister Hinckley spoke at a fireside while I was there. President Hinckley had been supervising Church units in Asia for several years, and Koreans had grown to love him, especially because he remembered their names. Although the fireside was at the English-speaking Yongsan Branch, the chapel and cultural hall were full of both Koreans and Americans. Because I was branch organist, I sat immediately behind President and Sister Hinckley during the meeting.

My powerful experience with President Hinckley came the next day, however. I was in Itaewon, an area next to the U.S. army base that catered to foreigners as a shopping district by day and a red-light district at night. Walking along the street, I wasn't paying attention to anything in particular when I bumped into an unseen something. It stopped me short, and I looked around to see what had happened. About thirty feet away, I saw President Hinckley looking at a street vendor's wares. Several men were with him, and one of the Korean men noticed me. Realizing I recognized President Hinckley, he came over and asked if I would like to shake President Hinckley's hand. I said I didn't want to bother him. I just watched him a minute and then went home.

What a powerful effect that experience had on me, though. I realized that what I had felt was the Spirit that President Hinckley carried with him. I hadn't noticed it the night before at the fireside because one expected to feel the Spirit there. But to feel it in Itaewon, a place of lucre and lust, and to feel it so strongly and at such a distance—that was amazing. Though I had always believed generally in the power and authority of LDS leaders, I received a physical witness that day that President Hinckley was a man of God.

I've always regretted that I didn't shake his hand, but it has

been more significant to me to realize that I didn't have to touch him, or even be near him, to feel the power of the Spirit that he carried.

TRACIE A. LAMB
Kerikeri, New Zealand

I MET PRESIDENT HINCKLEY BEFORE HE WAS CALLED to be the prophet. We were invited to attend a sacrament meeting to hear President Ezra Taft Benson's grandson speak before leaving on his mission. I had two kids under age two and spent most of the meeting juggling babies in the foyer, which happened to be visible from the stand. Eventually I took my rambunctious boys outside and, wondering why I'd even tried to come, pushed both kids in the stroller up and down the streets of downtown Salt Lake until the meeting was over. My struggle apparently hadn't gone unnoticed by President Hinckley. As President Hinckley and President Benson left after the meeting, my husband reached out his hand to shake theirs. President Hinckley politely shook it and those of my boys. He then immediately turned his attention to me to acknowledge my work as a mother and to inquire about how I was doing.

President Hinckley was amazing to me in so many ways. His sense of humor delighted and amused me. His work ethic humbled me. His public relations skills impressed me to no end. His open heart and open arms to all people inspired me. And his tender feelings for the people of Finland and his efforts to see the Helsinki Temple completed and dedicated affected me in a very personal way.

I have a favorite photo of President Hinckley with his wife. In it, they are riding in a convertible in Hawaii. They look so happy together. I am reassured to know today they are happy together again.

DALENE R. ROWLEY
Provo, Utah

WE FIRST MET IN 1960 while serving as missionaries in the Southern Far East Mission in Hong Kong. A mission is a great place to meet one's spouse, even if we've received a lot of good-natured kidding about it over the years. At the time, Elder Hinckley was serving as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, executive secretary of the missionary department, and supervising all of the missions in Asia.

Two events were memorable to us about his first visit to Hong Kong. In a carefully orchestrated evening meal of Chinese food at a fine restaurant to which missionary leaders had been invited, he reminisced about how good the Chinese food had been in London during his own missionary service there. It seemed to some of us present that his remarks and manner revealed that he was, quite understandably, experiencing culture shock, overwhelmed by the crowded mass of humanity and the vivid contrasts of wealth and poverty in that thriving colony city. From that time forward, his "conversion" to things Asian was rapid and very pleasing to us.

Before leaving Hong Kong for a visit to the Philippines, he attended a missionary testimony meeting. Our group was relatively small, so everyone spoke. In her remarks, one of the sister missionaries who shared an apartment with Marge referred to Marge as the "Mother Superior" of the group. It was a great line, and one that Elder Hinckley would remember.

We were married in June 1961 and were almost immediately called to serve during that summer as Salt Lake Valley missionaries. We helped administer a Sunday School consisting of local Chinese Saints in a downtown ward building, and in the afternoon, we gave simple written-language lessons to the young children in those families who were not able to read Chinese characters. Elder Hinckley visited there one Sunday morning, and as he departed, he invited the two of us for supper at his home in East Millcreek that evening. To say we were surprised would be a huge understatement, but we



"President Hinckley will be greatly missed. No word yet whether President Monson will inherit his cane."

went eagerly. The first item of conversation after we were seated was intimidating: “I want to know what went on between you two in the mission field.” Sister Hinckley, who had been in the kitchen working, appeared almost instantaneously. “Gordon, that’s none of your business; you leave those two alone.” He obeyed, and we enjoyed a nice meal and a pleasant evening without further interrogation.

We left for Boston that fall for Bill to continue his schooling. Marge kept us afloat financially by typing student papers, sewing clothing for people, and babysitting. Who should be assigned to visit one of our stake conferences but Gordon Hinckley, now ordained an apostle? After the conference session, we walked from seats in the back of the Cambridge chapel toward the stand. Elder Hinckley leaned over the pulpit

to greet us: “Well, if it isn’t the Mother Superior from Afton, Wyoming.” Like many others, we were witnesses to his remarkable memory. He would remember Marge again, ten years later, when, during our first year of teaching at BYU, we met briefly in the Smith Fieldhouse after a basketball game.

In July 1971, we, with our family of five young children, were back in Hong Kong, having been asked to preside over the newly organized Hong Kong mission, with additional responsibility for Church affairs in Vietnam. On 2 February 1973, following the announcement that U.S. troops would be withdrawing before the end of March, Elder Hinckley wrote to us: “I have wondered about the status of our Church members in South Vietnam. Do we have enough strength there for the Church to keep going with our American brethren gone? I would be pleased to have some kind of report.” Bill happened to be in Saigon when that note arrived. Upon returning to Hong Kong, he replied with a detailed description of his perspective on conditions in the country and shared some spiritual impressions that led him to request permission to send four elders to begin proselytizing in that city. On 13 March, in a letter representing the First Presidency and the Twelve, Elder Hinckley wrote back granting that request, and what followed were two extraordinary years of missionary success and growth of the branch in Saigon. That progress ended in April 1975 when South Vietnam was overrun and Saigon fell. Happily, missionary efforts continued among enclaves of Vietnamese-speaking people in many other countries.

If there were some things that were “none of his business,” implementing a vision of Church growth worldwide was very much President Hinckley’s business—a business in which he was remarkably successful. We honor and will miss Marjorie and Gordon Hinckley.

MARGE AND BILL BRADSHAW
Orem, Utah



President Hinckley greets well-wishers during a visit to Tarawa, Kiribati—one stop in an eleven-day tour of the Pacific Rim in 2000.

I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED PRESIDENT HINCKLEY AND been happy to have had the pleasure of his visiting us in our homes in both Egypt and the Philippines. During his Philippines visit, President Hinckley stayed after a church meeting held in our home to visit with us and have dinner, along with other members we always invited, including a Filipino girl and her American fiance.

As we chatted after dinner, President Hinckley advised the couple not to marry “because after prayerful thought, the Brethren had decided that mixed marriages weren’t a good idea.”

Later that evening, when the others had left, President Hinckley asked my husband Don if there were any reasons why he shouldn’t make Don the branch president. Don told him that, for one thing, he couldn’t go along with his advice to the couple not to marry—that he thought the American was getting the best end of the deal. After hearing this and a few other reservations, President Hinckley concluded that Don was not the person to put in charge. And perhaps President Hinckley was right. The man’s mother was devastated when she heard of the engagement and said if Ping ever walked in her front door, she would walk out the back. The marriage didn’t last.

KAY BOWEN
St. George, Utah

WHEN GORDON BITNER HINCKLEY PASSED away, he was not at all the relatively obscure man he was back in 1967 when, unbeknownst to him, he propelled me toward life as a writer—one of those people he once said ought be boxed up and tossed into the sea.

The assignment for my sophomore English class was straight-forward. We were to imagine that we had somehow become stranded on a high cliff.

Rescuers have located a rope barely long enough to reach you but there is no way to secure it so you could rappel down. Up is the only way to go. Footholds and handholds will be scarce. Describe in detail the person you would choose to anchor the rope, to save you when you slip, your lifeline.

Most wrote tributes to a mother, a father, a brother, or a favorite uncle. Pragmatists selected peers who were skilled mountaineers and strong linebackers. My choice was a young apostle who would later be president of the Church, who also happened to be my best friend's father. He was not fearsomely strong, but, in truth, physical strength was irrelevant. As I would trust him with my soul, who would be more likely to risk his own life to save mine?

I don't recall the details of the anecdotes I offered in support of my choice, so I must now resort to somewhat frayed mental snapshots. To those, I have added more current pictures that underscore why I would choose him still.

SNAPSHOT ONE: He was a few years older than my own father. In fact, as a young man he taught Dad in seminary, then later hired him to help translate the scriptures into Portuguese. After a fruitless attempt to win raises for two chronically underpaid Church employees, he returned to his office, annoyed that his pleas had been rebuffed again by a notoriously tight-fisted Presiding Bishop. "For the labourer is worthy of his hire. . ." Brother Hinckley fumed. He was nothing if not a scriptorian.

SNAPSHOT TWO: Although I had been aware of him for most of my life, I did not start paying attention to him until I was a pre-teenager. He was the soft-spoken first counselor in our stake (East Millcreek) for what seemed like an eternity. When I first heard him speak from the podium at quarterly conference—and every time thereafter—I assumed he was the visiting general authority. He sounded like an apostle. He still sounded like an apostle when they called him to be one. It was a calling I had anticipated for years.

SNAPSHOT THREE: My first up-close impression came during a routine family dinner in his home. I was a middle-teen. His blessing on the food included a brief prayer. It was like no other I had heard before or since, except from him. I had the distinct impression that he was having a frank exchange with the Lord. I couldn't hear the other side of the conversation, but I was pretty certain Brother Hinckley could. It was a truly awesome thing to witness.

SNAPSHOT FOUR: Like lots of young people—old ones too—I was wrestling with God. I had read just enough history for it to be troublesome, enough philosophy to have doubts, enough math to realize that some things in life just do not add up. Sitting on the lawn behind his white-clapboard cottage on 27th East, we were talking about the meaning of life, God, and the Church when Brother Hinckley joined us. As I assumed he was on a first name basis with God, I wanted him to confirm that God had told him the Church was true. Believe me, I

would have taken his word for it. But I couldn't get up the courage to be so blunt, so we waltzed around the confounding issue of personal testimony until finally he said something like, "You've told me about your doubts. How about telling me a few things about the gospel you believe to be true?" I ticked off a few safe ones and a couple of provocative ones for good measure. He looked me square in the eyes and said: "Hold tight to what you know to be true and let them lead you to all the rest."

SNAPSHOT FIVE: He had great respect for his children and young people generally. While he was in charge of all the Church missions in Asia, Sister Hinckley would occasionally accompany him on long trips to meet with Church leaders and missionaries. Sister Hinckley was the most responsible mother I ever met. Her "tight leash" seemed rooted in the trust that she had taught sound principles and that her children had learned well. So off they went, leaving their high-school-aged daughter in charge of the youngest two children. Neighbors and relatives looked in on them from time to time, but there was no question the Hinckleys were certain their middle daughter could handle things. And she did!

SNAPSHOT SIX: He briefly joined another animated backyard discussion, this one about the presumed correlation between our valiancy in the war in heaven and being born into the gospel of Jesus Christ. He indulged our self-aggrandizing arguments for a moment or two, then responded this way: "I cannot say with certainty that your performance in the pre-existence had anything to do with the particular family you became part of on earth. However, I am certain your privileged birthrights have more to do with your personal responsibilities and obligations than they do with your entitlements."

SNAPSHOT SEVEN: I assumed my mission call would be to Japan or China or Korea. I was the youngest of a group of friends, and nearly every one of the older boys wound up in Asia—the region supervised by Brother Hinckley. I put two and two together and figured I too would soon be heading there, which explains why I was floored when my call directed me to the mission offices overlooking Harvard Square. A week later, Brother Hinckley phoned to offer his congratulations and gauge my reaction. My memory of the conversation is still vivid, so this is a very accurate paraphrase. "I'm pleased but very surprised, I expected a call to a mission in Asia," I confessed. There was thoughtful silence on the line. "What is the date on the letter from President McKay?" he asked. I gave him the date. "Ah," he said, audibly relieved. "I was out of town that week." I laughed loudly, then needed: "I thought missionary callings were supposed to be inspired." "Oh they are," he insisted, in that breathy, thoughtful voice he often engaged to presage a wry turn of phrase or textured statement of principle. "They're like an inspired game of darts: if you know the young man, it just helps you aim the dart a little better."

SNAPSHOT EIGHT: I served my mission to the Harvards and Yalies, returned home to the University of Utah, wrote my

“As his wife neared death in the spring of 2004, President Hinckley told her he needed two more years to do what needed to be done. It took him nearly four. And we are all the better for it.”



Larsen holds the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is his right as a father and priesthood holder to baptize, confirm, bless, and ordain his children.” A private conference between the apostle and young man ensued. When it came time for the ordination, the boy’s father came forward and ordained his son an elder.

PRESIDENT HINCKLEY WAS a serious man, yet he did not want for a sense of humor. A particularly snappy dresser, now a stake president in New York, was asked to pronounce the benediction on a meeting that included the prophet. “That was a fine prayer you

offered,” President Hinckley said, his eyes twinkling. “And the Lord may have taken you seriously if he wasn’t distracted by your snazzy tie.”

Like a good Boy Scout, Gordon Bitner Hinckley was always shaping up the “camp site.” In the 2006 April General Conference his voice was ripe with righteous indignation as he opened a speech he had once sardonically entitled “My Last Will and Testimony”:

When a man grows old he develops a softer touch, a kindlier manner. . . . I have wondered why there is so much hatred in the world. . . . Coming closer to home . . . racial strife still lifts its ugly head. I am advised that even right here among us there is some of this. I cannot understand how it can be. . . . I remind you that no man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ. . . . How can any man holding the . . . priesthood arrogantly assume that he is eligible for the priesthood whereas another who lives a righteous life but whose skin is of a different color is ineligible?

It is no surprise that this man who loved life like few others went grudgingly into that long good night. As his wife neared death in the spring of 2004, President Hinckley told her he needed two more years to do what needed to be done. It took him nearly four. And we are all the better for it.

Historians taking stock of the Hinckley era, which for all practical purposes reaches back more than seventy years, will soon remind us that no mortal man—excepting Joseph Smith and Brigham Young—had a greater influence on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints than the man I described in a college essay forty years ago when he was a young apostle.

Now the fate he once thought fit for a writer is his. He too has been boxed up, if not tossed into the sea. Like the very best writers, Gordon Bitner Hinckley remains tangible as his example and words live on.

R.B. SCOTT
Boston, Massachusetts

essay about Brother Hinckley, and went off to New York to write for *Time* magazine. Good journalists keep track of people. I read all of Brother Hinckley’s speeches, saved news clips about him, read official biographies, asked questions. I learned that he too had dreamed of writing for *Time* before he was persuaded to take an important position with the Church—one that put him in daily contact with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. His decisions then helped shape many Church policies. In fact, some of the presidents he worked for—Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, and David O. McKay—regularly joked that he was “an apostle without the calling.”

SNAPSHOT NINE: Six years had passed when I ran into him at a press conference in 1971 at the Warwick Hotel in midtown Manhattan. He was now a more prominent apostle. He had personally directed an effort aimed at drawing more African Americans into the Church. His plan was working well. So we reporters wanted to know all about it: Was it a harbinger of change? Where might it lead? Like the good counselor he had always been and would be for many more years to come, he redirected our enthusiastic, flattering questions to his new boss, President Harold B. Lee.

SNAPSHOT TEN is my favorite. As a young apostle, he attended the quarterly priesthood meeting of a stake that had recently been formed out of wards of the East Millcreek Stake, which he had led for many, many years. As a consequence, he was on a first-name basis with many families in both stakes. Learning that the apostle was at the meeting, a young man—“the Larsen boy,” in Hinckley idiom—who was to be ordained an elder that evening, asked, through the stake president, if Elder Hinckley might perform the ordination. He was delighted to be asked but wondered aloud whether the boy’s father ought not be a wiser choice. The stake president explained that the young man felt his father’s problems living the Word of Wisdom rendered him unworthy. “Yes, yes, I understand,” President Hinckley sighed, “nevertheless, Brother

GORDON B. HINCKLEY AND THE RITUALIZATION OF MORMON HISTORY

By Hugo Olaiz

I FIRST NOTICED a facet of Gordon B. Hinckley's leadership on 4 April 1993 when he gave a talk commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. Then still a counselor in the First Presidency, Hinckley described the events of 6 April 1893 when Wilford Woodruff had offered the dedicatory prayer for that temple. Hinckley then announced that he had invited the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to sing the special Hosanna Anthem, which was then to be followed by congregations gathered around the world singing, "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning."¹

As a young man, I had been lucky enough to witness the dedication of a temple, even singing in the choir during one of the dedicatory sessions, and I knew that the Hosanna Anthem comes with precise instructions to be sung during temple dedications only. By inviting the whole church to sing "The Spirit of God" along with the Hosanna Anthem, Hinckley was reenacting a sacred, but seldom experienced, ritual, and he was inviting all the membership of the Church to participate.

I was intrigued by this reenactment, which I understood as a deliberate use of ritual—though at that time, I didn't yet grasp the subtle but powerful ways that ritual works in shaping institutions such as the Church. Today some will remember President Hinckley as a great prophet and others as a great administrator, but I will remember him best as our Great Ritualizer.

In his essay, "The Ritualization of Mormon History," Davis Bitton defines ritualization as the creation of "forms and symbols whose function is not primarily communication of knowledge but rather the simplification of the past into forms that can be memorialized, celebrated, and historically appropriated."² In this sense, Mormons ritu-

alize history through reenactments such as Pioneer Day parades, the creation of commemorative landmarks such as This Is the Place Monument, and through the production of paintings, tracts, books, charts—even movies. Bitton goes on to say that ritualization is the process of "selecting out certain aspects, dramatizing them, memorializing them, and giving to the whole the simplicity of a morality play."³

Later in the essay, Bitton refers to a period in the Church's public relations efforts when it

presented standardized, "prettified" versions of history through movies produced by the BYU Motion Pictures Studio. . . . Working powerfully in the same direction were graphic arts as mediated by manuals, official periodicals, and brochures prepared by public relations firms. By mid-century the visual presentations of Mormon history numbered in the thousands—all contributing to the process of ritualization by establishing a sense of the past that was primarily emotional, appropriable, and not primarily concerned with accuracy.⁴

This period to which Bitton refers coincides exactly with the time Gordon B. Hinckley entered the scene. Pathetically underpaid and overworked—so much so, Apostle John A. Widtsoe dubbed him "The Slave"—Hinckley started his long Church career in 1935, working for the Church's Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee.⁵ As part of his duties, he consulted with leaders on how best to deal with Church critics, wrote scripts for slide presentations used for proselytizing, and helped produce a myriad of materials including pamphlets, brochures, and audio presentations.

Hinckley was also the person often assigned to work on historical materials for radio programs and, later, for television. In his first year as a full-time employee, he produced "Down Pioneer Trails," a slide lecture depicting locations along the Mormon Trail. In 1942, he helped produce "Historic Highlights of Mormonism," the first LDS slide presentation produced in Technicolor. In 1947, he wrote a succinct Church history called *What of the Mormons?*, which survives to this day under the title *Truth Restored*.⁶ In preparing these and scores of other materials, Gordon B. Hinckley not only played a crucial role in "prettifying" our past, he also developed a genuine interest in Mormon history and a tremendous appreciation for the pioneers—themes that would appear in his talks over and over again.

As an assistant to the Twelve, and later as an apostle, Hinckley found himself participating in more dramatic acts of ritualization—not only giving general conference speeches, but playing a central role in innumerable groundbreaking ceremonies, temple dedications, and the unveiling of plaques and statues. In the process, Hinckley also became an ardent defender for the preservation of historic sites. In the 1970s, he pleaded with the First Presidency to build a visitors' center and re-create the cabin on the Peter Whitmer farm where the Church had been organized. His persuasion paid off, and on 6 April 1980, in celebration of the Church's sesquicentennial, a general conference session was beamed live for the first time from a location other than Temple Square—the Whitmer cabin and farm Hinckley had helped preserve. "[The Church's] history has been heroic," Hinckley said on that occasion. "It stands today a tower of strength, an anchor of certainty in an unsettled world. Its future is secure as the church and kingdom of God."⁷

Hinckley's comfort with presenting Mormon history as (in Bitton's words) "emotional, appropriable, and not primarily concerned with accuracy" became even more palpable in the late 1980s. As the Hotel Utah was being converted into the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the man who had started his career producing slides with what now seems like Stone-Age technology took Academy Award-winning director Kieth Merrill to the hotel's gutted grand ballroom. "I envision a great movie screen on which we will tell the story of our people," he told Merrill. As he gave Merrill his first charge for what would eventually become the film *Legacy*, Hinckley made it clear that he didn't want the pioneer story to *instruct* as much as



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to move: “I want visitors to know of us and to feel our history. I want them to cry.”⁸

As I alluded above, by the early 1990s, Hinckley was not merely ritualizing Mormon history but formulating new rituals by recontextualizing LDS ceremonies that had traditionally been associated with temple dedications. In doing this, Hinckley moved from ritualization as defined by historian Davis Bitton—the process of shaping history for memorializing purposes—to ritualization as defined by religious studies scholar Catherine Bell: a strategic way of acting so the performance of the ritual has social meaning and differentiates itself from other practices.⁹

President Hinckley acted in several ways to become Mormonism’s Great Ritualizer. As mentioned above, during the centennial celebration of the Salt Lake Temple, Hinckley invited the whole church to participate in a ceremony—the singing of the Hosanna Anthem—which is normally associated only with temple dedicatory sessions, and in so doing, deliberately connected present-day Saints with the past. Hinckley also embraced and encouraged the tradition of waving white handkerchiefs at the end of regional conferences, and he reenacted and beamed live the Hosanna Shout during the dedication of the Conference Center.¹⁰ He likely chose to expand these rituals to new settings and the wider Church membership not only because they are so idiosyncratically Mormon, but because they are all-inclusive. Through these ritualizations, President Hinckley wanted every member to feel a part of God’s kingdom.

The drive for ritualization also became evident when President Hinckley succeeded in seeing that the Conference Center would be completed in time to offer it as a birthday gift to Jesus on 6 April 2000. “Barring some unforeseen circumstances, the building will be ready for the general conference of April in the year 2000,” Hinckley announced in 1998. “It will be a gift to the Master, whose

“P resident Hinckley made us all feel part of something bigger than the sum of its parts; he made each of us a modern pioneer.”

birth we will commemorate at that season.”¹¹ Intended or not, Hinckley’s statement played on the Mormon notion that 6 April 2000 would be more than the Church’s anniversary—as that date is, according to certain die-hard Mormon literalists, the exact 2000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ.¹²

In offering the new building as another connection between the Church and Christ and the dawn of a new millennium, Hinckley’s enthusiasm was unspoilable. He suggested that the building was the fulfillment of prophetic statements made by Brigham Young and James E. Talmage and talked of it most proudly:

Now in this historic season, when we mark the birth of a new century and the beginning of a new millennium, we have built this new and wonderful Conference Center.

The birth of Jesus was left unmentioned but was likely still present in the minds of many that day. And Hinckley broke down in tears as he talked about a personal offering to the building that was from his home backyard: a walnut tree which had been used in creating the conference center’s pulpit. “The end product is beautiful,” he said. “It represents superb workmanship, and here I am speaking to you from the tree I grew in my backyard, where my children played and also grew.”¹³ When Church-owned publisher Deseret Book released *The Story of the Walnut Tree* shortly thereafter, it was obvious that the story of the Hinckley family’s connection to the building had become deliberately mythologized.¹⁴

The same drive for ritualization can be observed in the trip to Vermont that President Hinckley made in December 2005 to commemorate the bicentennial of Joseph Smith’s birth. In making this symbolic pilgrimage, Hinckley returned both literally and figuratively to his favorite place: Joseph Smith’s story. Despite having once produced slide shows about ancient America titled “Forgotten Empires” and “Before Columbus,” Hinckley was never particularly interested in proving the historicity of the Book of Mormon. He was, however, an ardent defender of the reality of the First Vision. “Our

whole strength rests on the validity of that vision,” he once told Mike Wallace. “It either occurred, or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most important and wonderful work under the heavens.”¹⁵

But by going to Vermont, Hinckley was not only ritualizing the birth of Joseph Smith, he was also ritualizing a ritual: the Vermont pilgrimage that Joseph F. Smith, the founder’s nephew, had made in 1905 to celebrate the first centennial. “A century ago, President [Joseph F.] Smith dedicated the monument which marks the Prophet’s birthplace,” Hinckley said. “Today while the sun was shining, we walked about this magnificent polished shaft, thinking not only of the man it memorializes, but also of the providence of the Lord in bringing it into place.”

Just as he had done on previous occasions in celebrating the erection of the Salt Lake Temple and the Tabernacle, Hinckley went on to recount in detail the construction of the Vermont monument. Just like every step of the Pioneer Trail and every stone in the Nauvoo Temple, just like every brick and wall in every LDS building and monument, and just like the life of Joseph Smith himself, Hinckley couldn’t see the construction of the “Vermont shaft” as anything short of miraculous.

“It was a miracle,” Hinckley concluded, after describing the many difficulties the builders had encountered.

At that time, it was probably the largest single polished shaft anywhere in America, if not the entire world. It may still be so. . . . Its creation and erection were almost like Joseph’s description of his own life when he said: “I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by striking with accelerated force against mobs, blasphemers, licentious and corrupt men and women—all hell knocking off a corner here and a corner there.

Thus I will become a polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty.”¹⁶

That’s the Joseph—and the church—Gordon B. Hinckley believed in: pure and dynamic,

constantly assailed by enemies and traitors, but intrinsically miraculous and ultimately triumphant in the face of adversity.

Sanitizing history

RITUALIZATION has a dark side. Hinckley knew and accepted this as the price he had to pay for good P. R. Bitton writes of ritualized LDS history: “Accurate or inaccurate, it [is] certainly selective. There are, for example, no marble monuments to polygamy.”¹⁷ Hinckley understood that the ritualization of Mormon history is also a sanitization process by which some events are selected for attention and others discarded. He saw in each step of the Mormon trail a symbol of our faith, but wherever the trail was crooked, he did not hesitate to “prettify” it and straighten it up. He saw in each temple stone the sacrifice of the pioneers, but wherever the bricks didn’t quite fit together, he was willing to take the structure apart, replace the offending parts, and build an edifice even more appealing than the original.

In his desire to present a faith-promoting, “not weird” version of Mormon history, Hinckley was on occasion willing to distort events, doctrines, or statistics. The racist beliefs and practices that had barred Blacks from the priesthood and temple blessings became, in Hinckley’s words, “little tricks of history.”¹⁸ In a 1997 interview, he shrank what he had once called the “grand and incomparable concept”¹⁹ of eternal progression to the size of “a little couplet,” part of “some pretty deep theology that we don’t know very much about.”²⁰

In 1998, Hinckley stated that “between 2 and 5 percent of our people were involved in [polygamy],”²¹ even though the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* gives much higher numbers (suggesting the percentage was closer to one fourth).²² How could Hinckley justify making such an inaccurate statement? He wasn’t really lying—he was reenacting an attempt at misinformation that goes all the way back to Joseph F. Smith, who during the infamous Smoot hearings used those same statistics in front of the Senate committee. Smith testified that “only about 3 or 4 percent of the entire male population of the Church have entered into that principle.” Senator and former federal marshal Fred Dubois retorted that Smith’s estimate merely reflected the number of polygamists convicted.²³ Only fourteen years had passed since Church leaders had publicly abandoned polygamy, and they were already rewriting its history.

In an insightful essay that addresses the issue of how early Mormon leaders deliberately recast the issue of polygamy, Clay Chandler observes that “the real question isn’t whether lies were told but rather, were the lies and deception which accompanied polygamy justifiable?”²⁴ I suspect that while an apostle and prophet, Hinckley felt justified in distorting LDS history and theology in the same way he had when writing Church materials for the mission field and public relations efforts: knowing that his prime directive was to protect and embellish the Church’s image. In Hinckley’s mind, it really doesn’t matter whether 3, 13, or 30 percent of members once were polygamists. Just as the Mountain Meadows Massacre and Mormon racism are all “behind us,” as he often said, so are the skeletons of polygamy. In 1999, he dedicated a monument for those killed at Mountain Meadows but in doing so, emphasized what he likely saw as the real purpose of the monument: “to bring this [issue] closure.” “No one knows fully what happened at Mountain Meadows,” he said on that occasion. “I don’t know, nor can it be explained, but we expressed our regrets over what happened there, and we all need to put this behind us.”²⁵

In all of these statements, however, it is hard to attribute any hypocrisy to Hinckley, who simply seemed to embody the ambiguities and contradictions of the whole Church. If Hinckley’s public statements about Mormon history ever sound contrived or manipulative, actions he took in the 1980s suggest that, behind the scenes, he was trying to protect, not destroy, Mormon history research. When Spencer W. Kimball was in failing health and not expected to live much longer, Hinckley apparently “conspired” to transfer the Church’s History Division to BYU, thus saving it from potential disbanding as might have occurred under the stern, reactionary hand of Ezra Taft Benson, who succeeded Kimball as Church president.²⁶

Insiders and outsiders

AS Bitton describes it, ritualization involves the process of selecting symbols.²⁷ During his administration, Hinckley helped establish two contrasting sets of symbols: one intended for the media and for nonmembers; the second directed to LDS members only. The two sets of symbols are invoked through two modalities of discourse. When the discourse is intended for nonmembers, the symbols chosen revolve around Jesus Christ and emphasize similar-

ties with mainstream Christianity. When the discourse is directed to members, the symbols invoked converge on the importance of temple ordinances and stress those elements of our tradition that make us a “peculiar people.” The astute use of both sets of symbols allowed Hinckley to laud the doctrine of eternal progression in general conference but downplay the “little couplet” in the public arena; to chuckle at the titles of “president, prophet, seer and revelator” in public interviews²⁸ while solemnly reclaiming them in general conference; and to use the uncorrelated expression “gays” when talking with reporters,²⁹ while reverting to correlated, euphemistic expressions in LDS publications.³⁰

The Church’s drive to appear mainstream and the impulse to remain peculiar clashed dramatically during the reconstruction of the Nauvoo Temple—a building which like no other embodies the hopes and traps of ritualizing Mormon history. Once abandoned, desecrated, burned down, and toppled by a tornado, the Nauvoo Temple is a visible link to our most peculiar and least discussed ordinances (baptisms for the dead, endowments, even plural marriage) and symbols (sunstones, moonstones, squares and compasses). Mormons feel ambivalent towards the legacy of Nauvoo—the place where Joseph Smith married some thirty women,³¹ delivered the now embarrassing-to-some King Follett discourse,³² and was ordained “king.”³³

The new Nauvoo Temple is, like so many other Hinckley projects, a masterpiece of compromise. The interior of the edifice—the part of the building non-members cannot see—was completely reconfigured to adapt to the way temple ordinances are currently administered, with only the inclusion of three-tiered pulpits to hint at an earlier brand of Mormonism. Originally used for priesthood assembly meetings, the pulpits were recreated not for their original function but simply as a token reminder of an era long gone. As for the exterior, the First Presidency authorized an exact replica complete with sunstones and moonstones,³⁴ but they delayed the decision regarding whether to include the recumbent Angel Moroni which once doubled as a weathervane at the very top of the building. Under a square and compass (symbols taken from Freemasonry), dressed in temple robe and cap, the angel once trumpeted to the world how far Mormonism had moved by 1846 from its primitivist Christian origins.

Masonic symbols had a central place in Mormon iconography from the Nauvoo

period through the end of the nineteenth century but have since fallen in disfavor. In the LDS Nauvoo Visitor's Center, the weathervane depicting an angel, holding a square and compass in Masonic fashion, was removed from a model of the Nauvoo Temple the day after the center opened.³⁵ For a 2002 exhibit at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City, the image of the weathervane Moroni was displayed only after heavy editing, with the Masonic symbols all gone.³⁶ In the end, President Hinckley's "we're not weird" campaign sealed the weathervane's doom, and when the decision was finally announced, it came as no surprise: the Nauvoo Temple would be topped by a vertical Angel Moroni—a still peculiar, but less radical, symbol of our faith.³⁷

"I don't think the Church has changed so very much as the perception of the Church has changed," Hinckley told *New Yorker* writer Lawrence Wright in 2002.³⁸ Yet the Nauvoo Temple stands as a symbol of a Church that has managed to pull exactly the opposite miracle: Our theological innards may have been probed and reconfigured; the external appearance remains the same.

Ritualizing Hinckley

PRESIDENT Hinckley's amazing career took him from merely shaping Mormon *stories* to actually making Mormon *history*. The man who started his career celebrating the Mormon past ended up shaping its future. In his last years, President Hinckley, the Great Ritualizer, inevitably became himself the object of ritualization. When he was first called as an extra counselor to assist the aged and declining First Presidency headed by Spencer W. Kimball, he continued to do what he had always done: ritualize the charisma of the prophet. "We do not need innovation," Hinckley declared in an April 1983 speech intended to dispel rumors that Kimball was hospitalized or in a coma. "We need devotion in adherence to divinely spoken principles. We need loyalty to our leader, whom God has appointed. He is our prophet, our seer and revelator."³⁹

After Kimball's death, however, when Ezra Taft Benson's advanced age left the Church virtually "prophetless," Hinckley affirmed more explicitly his own position as the first line of what he called the "backup system" of the church. "As it was during the time when President Kimball was ill, we have moved without hesitation when there is well-established policy," Hinckley famously said in his October 1992 speech, using the pronoun *we*, but meaning *I*. Then he clarified,

"Let it never be said that there has been any disposition to assume authority or to do anything or say anything or teach anything which might be at variance with the wishes of him who has been put in his place by the Lord."⁴⁰

Hinckley was ordained Church President on 18 March 1995. On that occasion, even noted LDS critic Sandra Tanner praised him: "He is an extremely effective, knowledgeable leader and is completely aware of the problem areas of Mormon history," she told *Christianity Today*. But while critics remained fixated on the Church's past, Hinckley fixed his eyes on the future: "One of the LDS Church's first acts after Hinckley—at 84 and apparently in robust health—took office was to hire Edelman Public Relations to mold public perception of the group," *Christianity Today* wrote. "The Mormon leader also held the first news conference by the church's 'prophet, seer and revelator' in more than twenty years and hinted at more openness with the media."⁴¹ It must have felt like a triumph for Hinckley to hire the world's largest public relations firm—a company with forty-six offices and more than 2,200 employees around the world—to help shape and protect the Church's institutional image.

As recipient of the prophetic mantle, Hinckley, the man who had celebrated the lives of fourteen previous prophets and served as a counselor for three of them, found himself being constantly celebrated by the whole Church membership. Hinckley's life was commemorated in a book,⁴² a documentary film,⁴³ and photo exhibits.⁴⁴ On one occasion, he tried to step into a Wal-Mart in St. George, Utah, but never got past the front door as he was mobbed by admirers.⁴⁵ He had a BYU building and a University of Utah academic chair named after him. He received distinctions, honors, and awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Unpretentious and gentle, Hinckley complained occasionally of the loss of privacy and what he perceived as adulation. He professed not to like the spotlight, but when he got it, he used it to defend the church and inspire its members. His 95th birthday party, held on 22 July 2005, may have been his only flirtation with personal extravagance. More than 21,000 sympathizers, international performers, and other celebrities gathered in the Conference Center for a birthday bash titled "A Celebration of Life." With reporter Mike Wallace as host, the concert and tribute included performances by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the Orchestra at Temple Square, singers Gladys Knight, Liriel Domiciano, Donny Osmond, and others.

Hinckley was well aware of his own historicity and his own mortality, however, and often handled the prospects of his own demise by joking about it. "How'd you like to be put in a box like that and sealed up?" he quipped in 2002 as he sealed a time capsule in the newly dedicated Nauvoo Temple. "Well, if you get involved with a cemetery, that's what will happen. But . . . we don't want to think about that."⁴⁶ In 2004, he told CNN's Larry King that he was attending a lot of funerals lately—those of "all my friends who jog." "I sometimes feel like the last leaf on the tree and the wind's blowing," he laughed.⁴⁷

During the April 2006 general conference, shortly after undergoing colon cancer surgery and being warned by the doctors that he might have to undergo chemotherapy, Hinckley confessed that he was facing "the sunset of [his] life." Some of his remarks on that day suggested that he was putting his papers and affairs in order, yet he also quipped with typical humor: "I trust that you will not regard what I have said as an obituary." The topics for his speeches at that conference suggest that he had started to think about his legacy. He condemned racial hatred and divisiveness and testified one more time that "the vision given the Prophet Joseph in the grove of Palmyra was not an imaginary thing. It was real."⁴⁸

What if?

EVEN though "What if?" exercises are ultimately futile, I cannot resist the temptation to ask myself the question: What would have happened to the Church had President Hinckley never developed any special interest in Mormon history? Even though we tend to see Hinckley's love for Mormon history as an asset, could it have been instead a liability? Had he not read so many pages about Mormon persecution, might he have advanced a more balanced understanding of the complex issues in LDS history?

For instance, Hinckley may have invited the inactive and the excommunicated to "come back" to the Church, but he had zero tolerance for dissenters. Acutely aware of our troubled past, he saw the critics of today's Church as a continuation of the ones of yesteryear. He branded them part of the work of the devil. He knew that "enemies from within" had had a part in Joseph Smith's demise, and he predicted that many more apostates would rise from within the Church.⁴⁹ Only slightly more tactful in addressing the issue of Church critics than



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“In his last years, President Hinckley, the Great Ritualizer, inevitably became himself the object of ritualization.”

Elders Melvin J. Ballard and Bruce R. McConkie had been, Hinckley likened voices of dissent and criticism to “the barking of a little dog at the heels of a strong and beautiful animal.”⁵⁰ When occasions allowed, he cautioned reporters against speaking with Church critics as they researched their stories,⁵¹ but he was ultimately resigned to the fact that critics and controversies “attract the media.”⁵²

Hinckley learned his “facts” in his youth and, for good or for bad, he stuck to them throughout his life. Despite his vast knowledge of historic events, dates, and places, his views of Mormon history remained simplistic, apologetic, even propagandistic. He could never see Joseph Smith as anything but a nearly blameless victim of conspiracies by traitors, apostates, and enemies of the Church. He couldn’t really understand why, after Joseph Smith ordered the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, “the fire of hatred, which had been fanned so long, now burst into fury.” He couldn’t see any reason behind the polygamy raids of the 1880s other than “the bitter hand of persecution.”⁵³

Hinckley’s view of world history was equally full of simple, white and black forces. Unlike Apostle Dallin H. Oaks, who in reference to the AIDS pandemic declined to claim “a direct and inevitable relationship” between immorality and God’s punishment,⁵⁴ Hinckley belonged to an older school and genuinely believed that such relationships exist. “The wages of sin is death,” he solemnly reminded his audience in the only speech he ever gave on the subject of HIV/

AIDS.⁵⁵ Like Spencer W. Kimball before him, he believed that the lesson of history is a sobering one. “We need to read more history,” he said at the October 1970 General Conference. “Nations and civilizations have flowered, then died, poisoned by their own moral sickness.”⁵⁶ Yet despite such ominous warnings, Hinckley couldn’t help but be ultimately optimistic about the future. He described these days as the best and the worst of times. For him, the whole history of the world pointed towards “the great, new day of the Restoration.”⁵⁷

Right man, right time

F A W N Brodie once said that “Joseph [Smith]’s true monument is not a granite shaft in Vermont, but a great intermountains empire in the West.”⁵⁸ One could say that Gordon B. Hinckley’s true monument is not found in the temples he dedicated nor the historic sites he helped preserve but in the worldwide church he expanded at a nearly miraculous rate. In an act almost impossible to follow, more than perhaps any other Church leader, Hinckley made intrepid efforts to bridge the gap between the embarrassing and the praiseworthy, the peculiar and the mainstream, the past and the future. As never before, Hinckley’s church saw itself directed less by the impulse to faithfully preserve its doctrine or its history than by the drive to project a robust public image. In Temple Square’s South Visitors’ Center, where an impressively peculiar twelve-oxen baptismal font once stood,

the display focuses now on the importance of families.⁵⁹ In the LDS editions of the Book of Mormon, Del Parson’s Anglo-Saxon Jesus has been replaced by a more widely recognized painting by Heinrich Hofmann.⁶⁰ In temple ceremonies, Masonic elements have been toned down and ritual nudity discontinued.⁶¹ The weirder or more peculiar elements of our tradition’s varied past have been discreetly removed from the spotlight and stored in a dark corner.

We Mormons like to think that God sends prophets tailored to our times. Thus, David O. McKay, charismatic and congenial, became president when the church expanded worldwide, and Spencer W. Kimball, a firm admonisher of chastity, took reins on the heels of the sexual revolution. Even if this notion seems simplistic, it is hard not to see something providential in the fact that Gordon B. Hinckley became president in this media-saturated age when reputations, both personal and institutional, rise and fall overnight under the spell of talking heads, pundits, and spin doctors. President Hinckley was the man of the hour, a prophet for our times. He prophesied with the voice of an image consultant; his oracles were in tune with the spirit of public relations.

Yet in ritualizing some pages of our history, Gordon B. Hinckley also succeeded in reconnecting us with those Saints who went before us. By reenacting the sacred Hosanna Anthem in the April 1993 commemoration of the Salt Lake Temple dedication, he made us all feel part of something bigger than the sum of its parts; he made each of us a



Showing CBS's Mike Wallace around Temple Square, 1995

modern pioneer. Sitting at a stake center, hundreds of miles away from Salt Lake City, I sang and shouted with the armies of heaven on that day. We all did. Any personal, historical, or doctrinal dissonance Church members may have felt on that day was crushed under the one-voiced blast of the Hosanna Shout. Under Gordon B. Hinckley's watchful eye, the Spirit of God has burned within Mormonism, consumed some embarrassing pages of the past, purified others, and fused blessings of yore and visions of the future into a brave new church. ☪

NOTES

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Peaceful House of God," *Ensign*, May 1993, 72.

2. Davis Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History and Other Essays* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 171. Another good study of ritualization as understood by historians is Robert Middlekauff, "The Ritualization of the American Revolution," in Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner, eds., *The Development of an American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 43–57.

3. Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History*, 177.

4. *Ibid.*, 180.

5. Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 88.

6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *What of the Mormons?* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1947), now Gordon B. Hinckley, *Truth Restored: A Short History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979).

7. Gordon B. Hinckley, "What Hath God Wrought through His Servant Joseph!" *Ensign*, May 1980, 60.

8. Kieth Merrill, "Behind the Scenes with the Director of Testaments," [\[magazine.com/arts/000317testament.html\]\(http://magazine.com/arts/000317testament.html\).](http://www.meridian-</p>
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9. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York and Oxford: New York University Press, 1992), 7–8.

10. The Hosanna Shout and the hymn "The Spirit of God" were first performed during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The waving of white handkerchiefs was first enacted during the laying of the capstone of the Salt Lake Temple. See James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City, Bookcraft: 1962), 119–20, 150.

The tradition of waving white handkerchiefs at the conclusion of regional conferences started before Hinckley became president, but it was apparently during his administration that it became standard. See, for example, "Prophet Visits South America," *LDS Church News*, 16 November 1996, 3; "A Touching Scene in Soccer Stadium," *LDS Church News*, 23 November 1996, 4; "An Outpouring of Love for Prophet: Pres. Hinckley Addresses 88,000 in Central America," *LDS Church News*, 1 February 1997, 3.

For the history of the Hosanna Shout, see Steven H. Heath, "The Sacred Shout," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1986): 116–23. For the waving of white handkerchiefs as part of the temple dedication ceremony, see *ibid.*, 119–20.

11. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Welcome to Conference," *Ensign*, November 1998, 4.

12. "We believe Christ to have been born in the year known to us as B.C. 1, and, as shall be known, in an early month of that year. In support of this belief we cite [D&C 20], which opens with these words: 'The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh.' James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 103.

13. Gordon B. Hinckley, "To All the World in Testimony," *Ensign*, May 2000, 4.

14. Don H. Staheli and Robert T. Barrett, *The Story of the Walnut Tree* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 2000).

15. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith," *Ensign*, November 2002, 78. Though this statement was not included in the 60

“It is hard not to see something providential in the fact that Gordon B. Hinckley became president in this media-saturated age when reputations, both personal and institutional, rise and fall overnight under the spell of talking heads, pundits, and spin doctors.”

Minutes broadcast, President Hinckley declares that this is something he said to interviewer Mike Wallace.

16. "Church Also Hailed Prophet's 100th Year," *Deseret News*, 24 December 2005.

17. Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History*, 180.

18. "Hinckley Takes LDS Case to the Nation," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 April 1996, D1.

19. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Don't Drop the Ball," *Ensign*, November 1994, 48.

20. "Musings of the Main Mormon," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 April 1997.

21. Interview, *Larry King Live*, 8 September 1998.

22. "The exact percentage of Latter-day Saints who participated in the practice is not known, but studies suggest a maximum of from 20 to 25 percent of LDS adults were members of polygamous households. At its height, plural marriage probably involved only a third of the women reaching marriageable age—though among Church leadership plural marriage was the norm for a time." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., Daniel H. Ludlow, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1095, s.v. "Policies, Practices, and Procedures." "Of the Utah women born between 1830 and 1840 who ever married (they would have reached the prime marriage ages in the 1860s, when plural marriage was at its peak), about 30 percent entered into such marriages." *Ibid.*, 4:1530, s.v., "Vital Statistics: Demographic Characteristics."

23. Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 65–66. During the hearings, Mormons also displayed a Church census according to which "in 1902 there were only 897 polygamous families, as compared with 2,451 families twelve years earlier" (James B. Allen and Glen B. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 441–43).

24. Clay Chandler, "The Truth, the Partial Truth, and Something Like the Truth, So Help Me God," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 112.

25. "Mountain Meadows Massacre—A Time to Heal," *Deseret News*, 5 September 1999, A1.

26. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 214–15.

27. Bitton, *The Ritualization of Mormon History*, 171.

28. Q: You are the president, prophet, seer and revelator of the Mormon Church? A: I am so sustained, yes. (Laughter) Q: Now, how would that compare to the Catholic Church? Do you see yourself as Catholics would see the pope? A: Oh, I think in that we're both seen as the head officer of the church, yes."

From "Musings of the Main Mormon," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 April 1997.

29. "Now, we have gays in the church. Good people. We take no action against such people—provided they don't become involved in transgression, sexual transgression." *Ibid.*

30. The long-standing LDS practice of using language such as "people struggling with same-sex attraction" or "those who experience same-sex feelings" rather than "gays" or "homosexuals" goes back to a 1978 BYU fireside in which Elder Boyd K. Packer refused to acknowledge the word "homosexual" as a noun: "I accept the word as an adjective to describe a temporary condition. I reject it as a noun naming a permanent one." Boyd K. Packer, "To the One," in *1978 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, ca. 1978), 33.

President Hinckley never used the word *gay* as a noun in any pronouncement intended for members, favoring instead euphemisms such as "those who profess homosexual tendencies," "those who refer to themselves as gays and lesbians," and even the hyper-euphemistic (and confusing) expression, "those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians." See "Why We Do Some of the Things We Do," *Ensign*, November 1999, 54; "What Are People Asking about Us?" *Ensign*, November 1998, 71.

31. See Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997).

32. To B. H. Roberts's chagrin, Church leaders refused to include the King Follett discourse in the *History of the Church*. See T. Edgar Lyon, "Church Historians I've Known," *Dialogue* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 15–16. Joseph Fielding Smith dealt with the problematic King Follett discourse by including it in his edition of Joseph Smith's teachings but adding long footnotes that "clarify" problems and by omitting the paragraph in which Joseph Smith talks of "thousands of children, reigning on thrones of glory, with not one cubit added to their stature." See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 395–461. For an unexpurgated version of the King Follett discourse, see Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *Brigham Young University Studies* 18 (Winter 1978), 193–208; also *The Essential Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 232–45; cf. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (eds.), *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1980), 340–62.

33. Various accounts give different titles for Joseph's "kingship." For instance, one refers to him as having been ordained "a King and Ruler over Israel." Another recorded it as "King, Priest and Ruler over Israel on the Earth." See D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Book, 1994), 124.

34. They also allowed for suns, moons, and stars to be included in the design of the rug of the celestial room. See "Nauvoo Temple—Here to Stay," *SUNSTONE*, July 2002, 60. For an exploration of the meaning of sunstones and moonstones, see Benson Whittle, "The Sunstones of Nauvoo: An Interpretive Account of the Temple Capitals," *SUNSTONE*, July 2002, 17–25, and Maxine Hanks, "The Nauvoo Temple: A Symbol of Wholeness," *Sunstone*, July 2002, 26–27.

35. See Allen D. Roberts, "Where Are the All-seeing Eyes? The Origin, Use and Decline of Early

Mormon Symbolism," *SUNSTONE*, May 1979, 22–37.

36. "Angel Makeover," *SUNSTONE*, July 2002, 14; for a better picture of the recumbent Angel Moroni, see illustration between pages 132 and 133 of David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994).

37. "I Saw Another Angel Fly," *SUNSTONE*, November 2001, 73.

38. Lawrence Wright, "Lives of the Saints," *The New Yorker*, 21 January 2001, 43.

39. "He Slumbers Not, nor Sleeps," *Ensign*, May 1983, 5.

40. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Church Is on Course," *Ensign*, November 1992, 53.

41. "Leader Seeks Kinder, Gentler Image," *Christianity Today*, 24 April 1995, 45.

42. Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996).

43. *Gordon B. Hinckley: Man of Integrity, 15th President of the Church*, videocassette produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, c1995.

44. "Photo Highlights of Pres. Hinckley's Service," *Church News*, 6 August 2005, 12; "Concert to Mark Pres. Hinckley's 95th birthday," *Deseret Morning News*, 22 July 2005, B4.

45. "Marjorie Hinckley—'Every Bit His Equal,'" *Deseret Morning News*, 5 April 2003, A1.

46. "Rebuilding History: Hinckley Dedicates the New Nauvoo Temple," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 28 June 2002, A5.

47. Interview, *Larry King Live*, 26 December 2004.

48. "I am now trying to deal with the many books and artifacts that I have accumulated over the years. In the course of this process, I found an old journal. . . ." Gordon B. Hinckley, "Seek Ye the Kingdom of God," *Ensign*, May 2006, 81–83.

49. "There will likely continue to be criticism and attacks of many kinds on the Church and its people. It will be of more sophisticated nature than it has been in the past; and in the future, as before, we may expect much of it to come from those within the ranks of the Church—members of record while apostates in spirit." Gordon B. Hinckley, *Conference Report*, October 1970, 65–66.

50. Gordon B. Hinckley, "150-Year Drama: A Personal View of Our History," *Ensign*, April 1980, 11–14. In 1919, Melvin J. Ballard had said, "The dogs may bark, but the grand, majestic Caravan, the Church of the living God, will move on triumphantly." *Conference Report*, June 1919, 91. Ballard has made similar statements in April 1921, April 1931, and April 1936. In 1984, Bruce R. McConkie said, "The Church is like a great caravan—organized, prepared, following an appointed course, with its captains of tens and captains of hundreds all in place. . . . What does it matter if a few barking dogs snap at the heels of the weary travelers? Or that predators claim those few who fall by the way? The caravan moves on." "The Caravan Moves On," *Ensign*, November 1984, 82–85.

51. "As I was leaving, Hinckley cautioned me against speaking with the Church's many critics who, he said, are not part of the 'life of the religion.' He said, 'I'm a living part of it. These men'—he indicated his public relations officials—'are part of it. They know why this thing ticks. They know why this is the fastest-growing religious element in the United States and in the world, almost.'" Lawrence Wright, "Lives of the Saints," *The New Yorker*, 21 January 2002, 44.

52. "Musings of the Main Mormon," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 April 1997.

53. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Truth Restored: A Short History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 74, 132–33.

54. CBS interview with Dallin H. Oaks, 30 December 1986; see WWW.AFFIRMATION.ORG/LEARNING/OAKS_INTERVIEW.SHTML.

54. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Reverence and Morality," *Ensign*, May 1987, 45.

56. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Conference Report*, October 1970, 65–66.

57. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Dawning of a Brighter Day," *Ensign*, May 2004, 83; see also Gordon B. Hinckley, "At the Summit of the Ages," *Ensign*, November 1999, 72–74.

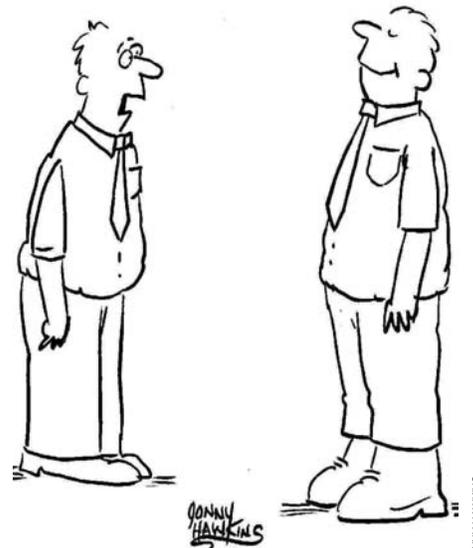
The LDS Church News reported on President Hinckley's 31 October 2006 address, saying the prophet "summarized events of world history, including the deadly plague of the 14th century, the Reformation, the American Revolution and the eventual restoration of the gospel. 'All of the history of the past has pointed to this season,' he remarked. 'The Almighty Judge of the nations, the Living God, determined that the times of which the prophets had spoken had arrived. Daniel has foreseen a stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands which rolled forth and filled the whole earth' (see Daniel 2:34–35)." *LDS Church News*, 4 November 2006, 3.

58. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 2nd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 404.

59. "High-Tech Visitors Centers Reopen, Focus on Jesus and Families," *SUNSTONE*, January 2002, 77.

60. Hugo Olaiz, "'Our Jesus Is Your Jesus': New DVD Presents Reassuringly Familiar Images of Christ," *SUNSTONE*, May 2003, 70–71. The 2002 U.S. printing of the Book of Mormon contained the new Hofmann image, but the description of the illustration still reads, "The Lord Jesus Christ—Painting by Del Parson."

61. John-Charles Duffy, "Concealing the Body, Concealing the Sacred: The Decline of Ritual Nudity in Mormon Temples," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 1–21.



"Are you wearing faith lifts?"



CORNUCOPIA

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

Blogwatch

WHY I AM NOT A DISAFFECTED MORMON

The following reflection is a lightly edited version of a 25 February 2008 post on the LDS group blog MORMONMATTERS.COM.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A GROWING NUMBER OF disaffected Mormons these days. I am not one of them. Here is why.

24 FEBRUARY 2008—9:05 a.m. My wife and three of our daughters are already at church; I'm lagging behind at home with a straggler. My six-year-old still can't find her other Sunday shoe (again). When we finally find the shoe, we go back and forth for an eternity over whether to buckle her shoes through the first or second hole in the straps. With her shoes finally on, I make for the front door, but she's not behind me. Now she tells me she has to find her coloring book, and now I'm more than a bit irked. I get her in the car and deliver a stern lecture about getting ready for church *before* she watches cartoons.

9:18 a.m. Still grumpy, I grumble about my fellow ward members' parking jobs as I hunt for one of the last open spots in the parking lot. We're going to miss the sacrament; I just know it. We park, and as we walk toward the chapel doors, I hold out my hand for my daughter to take it. She puts her soft small hand in mine, and we silently make up for this morning.

We enter the foyer outside the chapel and see that it's standing-room-only. The chapel doors are closed, and the foyer seems unusually quiet. As a deacon enters the foyer with the emblems of Christ's sacrifice, my daughter reverently folds her arms. I cradle her face in my hands.

A few minutes later, a sister comes out of the chapel and into the foyer. She's struggling with two of her small children. At her heels is the Primary president asking whether she can help with one of the children.

9:28 a.m. As my daughter and I join the rest of our family in the chapel, we sit down behind an old friend I haven't seen at

church for a few years. He's sporting a goatee that suits him; he looks like a movie star. I pat him on the shoulder and whisper to him: "You're lookin' pretty tough with that goatee; remind me to stay on your good side." He laughs. "Don't worry," he assures, "you're always on my good side."

As I juggle my daughters on my lap and try to keep them from bumping the people in front of us, I catch snippets of the speakers' talks. A sister in our ward is talking about being perfected in Christ:

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him . . .
love God with all your might, mind and strength,
then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye
may be perfect in Christ . . .

Then she quotes from Elder Bednar's most recent General Conference address:

We will not attain a state of perfection in this life . . .
The Lord's pattern for spiritual development is "line
upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and
there a little." Small, steady, incremental spiritual im-
provements are the steps the Lord would have us
take.

The sister's husband speaks next. He tells a story about a priesthood blessing he received that didn't come true—and talks about the lesson he learned from that experience:

Faith is not so much about believing strongly enough
to make the Lord do what we want Him to do for us.
It's about continuing to believe even after things
haven't gone the way we've wanted them to be.

The brother's words bring to mind a favorite quotation from Thomas Merton, a Catholic monk:

If we are not humble, we tend to demand that faith
must also bring with it good health, peace of mind,
good luck, success in business, popularity, world
peace, and every other good thing we can imagine. . . .
If we insist on other things as the price of our be-
lieving, we tend by that very fact to undermine our
own belief.

10:20 a.m. I'm in classroom number 6 with my Primary boys. We cover the usual first order of business: we share our good news from the preceding week while I dole out handfuls of Skittles. Then come the prayer and the lesson. We read about the voyage of Lehi's family to the promised land. At the end of our discussion, we summarize what we've learned:

Even though Nephi was doing everything God had
asked him to do, God allowed his brothers to keep
him bound for four days until his ankles and wrists

All-seeing eye

FAITH-DEMOTING ART



and at Joseph's request, he brought Almera to room number 10 in Joseph's Mansion Home, which she occupied for several days until leaving to stay at Benjamin's house in Macedonia."

What about the quality of the art on the site? Minerva K. Teichert or Arnold Friberg works, these aren't. The black-and-white drawings are sometimes crude, often blurry, and most of them seem to have been created with the help of a computer art program. Reporter Menachem Wecker, who wrote a story about the site for the *Religion News Service*, had trouble finding the names of the artists, who prefer to go by pseudonyms or use their initials only. "I don't consider the images . . . to be high art in the sense that a 'Mormon art' movement would be," an artist known as J.V. confesses to Wecker, "so I don't mind if it is viewed as kind of limited and shallow."

At this site, both truth and beauty are indeed in the eye of the beholder.

were horribly swollen and sore. But Nephi did not murmur; he thanked God when he was finally released from his hardship.

11:10 a.m. As I shuttle my boys towards the Primary room for sharing time, I stop to thank one of the other male Primary teachers for wearing a blue shirt today and making me feel comfortable. He laughs and tells me he's disappointed I'm wearing a suit coat over mine.

As we file into the Primary room, I sit behind another blue-shirted brother. He's sitting in his usual position with his arm gently around a boy in his class who has Asperger's Syndrome.

He's a sweet boy but can be quite a handful at times. But no matter how rowdy the boy becomes, the teacher lovingly calms him down without showing an ounce of irritation. Words come into my mind:

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.

Then I begin to feel slightly jealous of this teacher sitting in front of me. He gets to wrap his arm around Jesus every Sunday.

11:15 a.m. I feel a tug on my shirt sleeve and look down. "Which verse did we end on?" asks one of my Primary boys

WHAT IMAGES MIGHT HAVE BEEN produced if Jerald or Sandra Tanner were visual artists? Now you can find out by visiting IMAGESOFTHERESTORATION.ORG, a site dedicated to illustrating censored episodes of LDS history. "Many interesting and informative events in the development of Mormonism have never been depicted in Mormon art and remain concealed in big, dry history books," the site explains. "This site represents an attempt to bring some of these events to light."

The site's images are actually less innocent than this statement might lead readers to believe—they focus exclusively on embarrassing aspects of the LDS past. For instance, "Joseph Smith Translating the Golden Plates" (left, top) depicts the prophet sitting on stairs with his face buried in a hat while Oliver Cowdery takes dictation at a desk below. "The First Visions" is a series of nine images dramatizing how Joseph Smith changed his account of the First Vision over the years.

Even more controversial, "Almera Woodard Johnson Smith" (left, bottom) depicts the Prophet in the act of seducing Almera, one of his plural wives. The site explains: "Almera testified that after being sealed to Joseph, she 'lived with the Prophet Joseph as his wife.'" It continues, "Benjamin [Franklin Johnson] reports that after the marriage ceremony,

(the one who usually pays the least attention in class). “I want to finish reading the story from class.” As I guide him to the verse where we left off, I notice a familiar-looking name written on the outside edge of the triple combination he borrowed from the meetinghouse library. I hold up the book to read the name written on it, and I’m dumbfounded.

It’s the name of one of my high school buddies who, sixteen years earlier, had veered off the “straight and narrow,” dropped out of Seminary, and gotten hooked on meth. Apparently his Seminary scriptures have spent the last decade and a half in the church library being loaned out to Primary children. As I leaf through my buddy’s old seminary scriptures, my eyes catch a comment he had written on one of the pages in bold purple ink: “*Christ suffered for our sins.*”

For a moment, I think about what has happened in my friend’s life since he wrote those words as a Seminary student. His meth addiction, his brushes with angry drug dealers and with death, his father going to jail. And now, the pending divorce he had told me about when I had last seen him a couple of months ago.

I decide to reclaim my friend’s scriptures and deliver them to him in the afternoon.

12:00 p.m. I make the rounds to pick up three of my daughters, the other having already gone home sick with my wife. I walk into the nursery room, pick up my two-year-old, and I thank the sister Saint who has worked in the nursery for ten years now—by choice. Over the last seven years, she has taught all four of my daughters some of their first lessons about Jesus.

As we walk outside, I catch a Guatemalan brother in our ward and ask him how he and his wife are liking their new Primary calling. “It’s a challenge,” he says, “but we are enjoying it. The little children make us happy.”

12:15 p.m. When I arrive home, I find my wife taking a much-needed nap. I change my clothes, change my two-year-old’s diaper, and make my girls lunch as they play with their new pet frogs. After lunch, I call my old high school buddy’s cell phone number. Although it was working just a couple months ago, the number is no longer good. I call the restaurant he manages and I’m told he no longer works there. I sometimes lose track of him like that. I’ll give him his old Seminary scriptures when I find him again.

2:30 p.m. I pay a visit to the Nigerian family I’ve been home teaching for seven years now—a single mother who admirably nurtures and provides for the three of her five children still young enough to be living with her. She shares with me an experience from today’s Gospel Doctrine class. Although she’s often had difficulty getting into the Book of Mormon, today Nephi’s Psalm was like “a bucket of water being poured over a thirsty soul.”

Awake, my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul.

She confides in me some spiritual struggles she’s been having. Although we come from completely different sides of the world, I’m struck by how similar her spiritual struggles are to my own. I listen to her words and try to return words of comfort and encouragement I’ve drawn from my similar experiences. As we pray together before I leave, the Spirit of God consumes us.

4:30 p.m. My family and I arrive at my uncle’s house to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. The house is filled with family—my parents, my brother’s family, two uncles and two aunts, three cousins, and a slew of children. We celebrate all the special occasions together: birthdays, Thanksgivings, Christmas dinners, Fourth of July. And, of course, baby blessings, baptisms, missionary farewells and homecomings, and marriages, too. We’re always together, and I hope we always will be.

9:45 p.m. We’re back home now. The kids are sleeping soundly in their beds; my wife is knocked out, too. As I sit at the computer writing these thoughts for tomorrow’s post, I look back on another beautiful Sunday.

And I’ve never felt happier to be a Mormon.

ANDREW AINSWORTH
Irvine, California

Righteous dominion

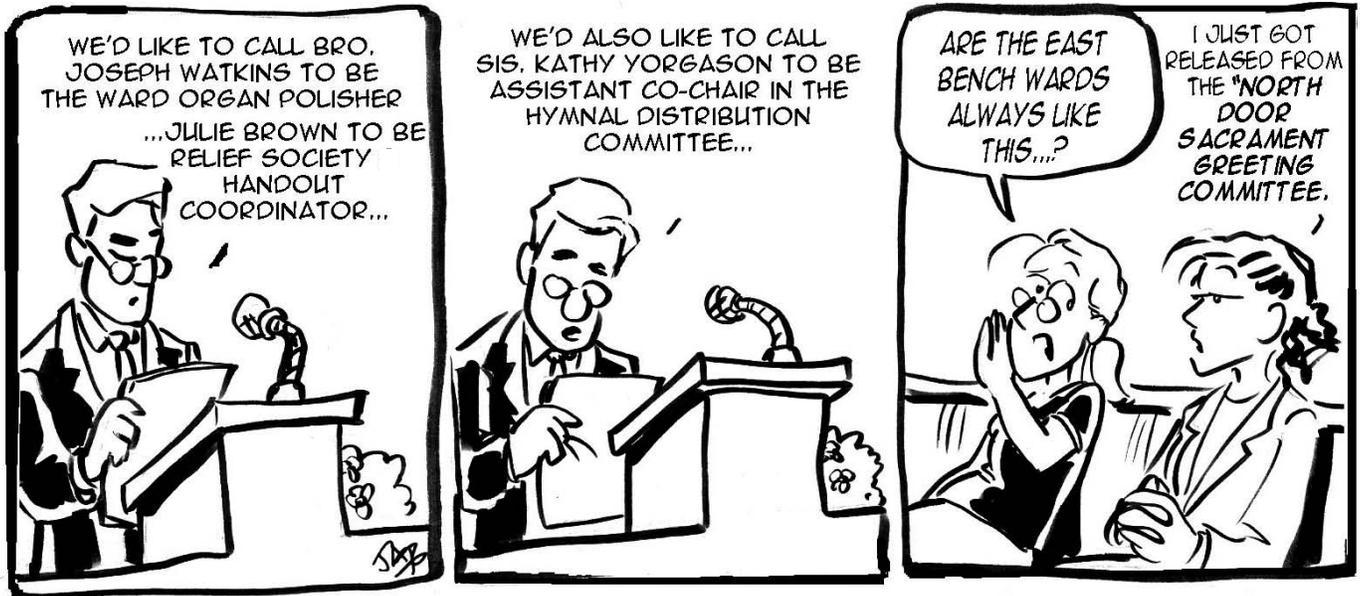
THINKING “OUTSIDE THE BUILDING”

THE PLEASANT HILL FIRST WARD IN THE OAKLAND California Stake is a graying congregation that requires fewer and fewer people to staff children’s and youth organizations. In addition, many people have been Church members for a long time, have held every calling again and again, and are tired of playing “musical chairs” with their ward positions. The bishop’s challenge has been to re-energize and challenge ward members who feel “stale” in their church experience.

To do this, he broadened the role of the Public Affairs committee within the ward and charged it with finding and implementing interesting service opportunities outside the ward. In addition, if a member has a volunteer community-service position, that counts as their official church job as well. Naturally, the bishop stresses that this program works only after the vital ward positions are staffed, but in a small ward where some don’t have appropriately challenging callings, this new vision keeps people involved and alive in church service.

The ward’s outreach program meets several goals at once:

- It helps raise the visibility of the church in the community, where many other denominations are much more active. This way, area Latter-day Saints don’t have to feel so guilty about not being part of community movements. Service by church members helps to improve the community and makes members feel good about the role they play in it.



- It gives those who are partially or not active a chance to participate in church without “total immersion.” Community service is a way to involve those on the sidelines in a positive, non-threatening way—offering a variety of levels of participation to those who find it easier to do a community service project than to attend sacrament meeting.

- It fulfills the Savior’s commission for us all to serve our neighbors, whether in or out of the Church, and makes that possible within the framework of the ward organization.

Some examples of the work of the Public Affairs/Community Service Committee: more than sixty people participated in a three-hour clean-up at a national historic site, followed by a picnic on the grounds. Older women who weren’t physically able to help with the cleaning took the opportunity to make quilts within the historical building itself. Several months later, the ward planted one hundred oak trees on nearby land. Children’s books have been sent to Iraq, and school supplies have been collected for lower-income schools. Numerous individual projects have been completed as well.

Cooperating with the other wards, the bishop has also opened the chapel building to community groups. In late 2006, the county Interfaith Council held its annual meeting there. An annual local school performance of *The Nutcracker* draws 800 people, many of whom have never stepped into a Mormon chapel before. When the local high school’s choir used the building for Saturday rehearsals, the parents were invited in to look around, too. The bishop admits that limits have to be drawn, and his committee has developed a contract of sorts for groups using the building.

Although this is a long-term process, the bishop is encouraged that the ward members have supported the vision and

understand why this outreach is important. He is considering passing out buttons that read, “Think Outside the Building.”

VICKIE EASTMAN
Salt Lake City, Utah

NOTE: *Righteous Dominion* presents stories of leaders and others who are true exemplars of the love of Christ, who have touched lives through their flexibility or their understanding that people are more important than programs. Please email your stories to column editors Alan and Vickie Eastman at: STEWARTSLC@AOL.COM.

Scripture notes

NEPHI AND YOUR SELF-RIGHTEOUS BROTHER-IN-LAW

“Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.”

—2 NEPHI 4:17

NOT LONG AGO, A FRIEND AND I GOT TALKING over lunch about Nephi’s Lament (2 Nephi 4:17–35). As we discussed this famous passage in which Nephi anguishes over his persistent weaknesses even though he’d been blessed with visions and incredible manifestations of God’s love and power, my friend noted how annoying it must have been to live with Nephi—that Nephi comes across to him a great deal like a self-righteous brother-in-law or missionary companion—take your pick.

Intrigued by this thought, I re-read the lament and was sur-

prised to see how frequently Nephi mentions his anger and refers to his brothers as his “enemies.” In verses 27 and 29, Nephi mentions his angry outbursts which he blames on his enemies (as well as chastens himself for letting his enemies anger him). A clue to who these enemies are comes in verse 13 (just before the lament) when Nephi says “Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael [Nephi’s brothers-in-law] were angry with me.” Why were they angry? Because Nephi had admonished them in the name of the Lord. But I think Nephi indicates that the anger goes both ways because he seems to be lamenting his own temper as well.

I then took a moment to ponder Nephi’s various experiences with Laman, Lemuel, and his brothers-in-law. Nephi admonishes his brothers when they went to get the brass plates; he corrects them when they were returning with the daughters of Ishmael; he even reprimands his father for complaining during the broken bow incident. While building the ship, Nephi points the finger of the Lord at them, and then again on the ship, and then who knows how many other times in the New World he might have felt compelled to correct them. And these are just the instances that Nephi recorded for us. It does make you wonder if Nephi felt compelled to correct everyone in all things: “Excuse me, Sam. I noticed that you’re gripping that axe with your left hand—just wondered if you noticed, that’s all.”

The point of this musing isn’t to question whether Nephi was acting as an agent of the Lord in these instances. Rather it is about how we relate to family members we disagree with—or even who we think are on the wrong side of the Lord. If we take the position of pointing our fingers at them and enumerating their wrongs and mistakes, I think we will drive them farther from us—even if we record a short-term success. (Think of how many times Laman and Lemuel came back asking forgiveness of Nephi).

In the long run, however, Nephi’s family was unable to live together, and they spilt up—with disastrous consequences that played themselves out for hundreds of years. Think of how history might have been different had Nephi recorded:

And it came to pass that I Nephi did put my arm around my brother, Laman, and did tell him with all the feelings of my heart that I did know that I was sometimes full of beans and that I did know that he and Lemuel did not always agree with me, but that I did love them anyway. And behold, we did covenant not to live too close to one another but to always have family reunions where we would retire to the woods and eat cooked meats and let the cousins run wild.

At this summer’s family reunion, when your self-righteous brother-in-law wanders over with his lemonade and sees the fully caffeinated Coke in your hand, beat him to the punch. Put your arm around him, tell him you think he’s full of beans and you don’t agree with much that he believes is important, but that you love him anyway. I like to think it’s what Nephi would have done if he had a chance to do it all over again.

MICHAEL VINSON
Star Valley, Wyoming

The road taken

ONE IN A THOUSAND

In remembrance of the thirtieth anniversary of Elder Boyd K. Packer’s speech, “To the One,” given at Brigham Young University, 5 March 1978.

To the one, from the many
Not the few
To the one of the Twelve
Who refuted science
Or never lived on a farm
Who said I was created
From contagion or suggestion
An adjective instead of a noun.

From the one who discovered
He was one in three
Two out of six friends
That long, snowy winter
At the Lord’s University.
Your voice bouncing off amphitheater walls
And down empty student halls
As I got up and left as you still spoke
Eyes following me as I turned to look
For others heading for the exits
And there were two or three
But the rest stayed to hear
How I could change.

Elder Packer, your talk finally inspired me
To make the forty-mile journey up I-15
To an unmarked, brick warehouse
Three blocks west of Temple Square
That hid a gay country western bar and disco
Where I discovered I wasn’t one in a hundred
But, as the psychiatrists said, one in ten
Surrounded by hundreds of men.
That night I met an Idaho farmhand
With big, calloused palms, who held me close,
And the swirling lights and ear-ringing music
Disappeared in the shelter of his embrace.

I left quietly at the end of that semester
Before the entrapments, expulsions, and
excommunications began
For San Francisco, where the first openly gay man
Had just been elected, perhaps the reason for your talk.
I graduated from other universities with degrees
And eventually left for another country
Unwilling to tap under toilet partitions,
To lead a shadow life or wait for the law to change
In another century. I look out of my train window
At flat, green fields bounded by canals,
Black-spotted white cows and the occasional windmill

On my way home from teaching at university
To a man who's one in a thousand.

BRYAN R. MONTE
The Netherlands

"A Place for Every Truth"

THE EINSTEIN RUMOR

This regular Cornucopia column features incidents from and glimpses into the life and ministry of Elder James E. Talmage as compiled by James P. Harris, who is currently working on a full-length biography of this fascinating Mormon apostle. The column title is adopted from the statement inscribed on Elder Talmage's tombstone: "Within the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is room and place for every truth thus far learned by man or yet to be made known."

WHenever I speak about James E. Talmage in firesides or other gatherings, I almost always get a question about Albert Einstein's supposedly having said that Talmage was the smartest man he'd ever met. On one occasion, a brother became very upset with me when I told him the rumor was not true. He had heard the story from his mission president who is now a temple president, so in the man's mind, that made the story true no matter what I said.

Here's what I know: There are no references in Talmage's journals suggesting that he and Einstein ever met. I have made queries at Princeton and Rutgers, where a great number of Einstein papers are housed, and the librarians know of no references to a James E. Talmage.

The closest thing to an Einstein reference in the Talmage journals comes on 12 July 1924:

I had an interview with President Heber J. Grant on important matters; and he advises that I should attend the approaching meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, to be held in Toronto, Canada, next month.

Talmage arrived in Toronto for the science convention on 9 August 1924. While there, he met with LDS missionaries, and in the evening, he and mission president Joseph Quinney "attended an evening meeting at which the Einstein Theory of Relativity was the subject of discussion."

In October 1996, I had the opportunity to interview John R. Talmage, then the last living child of James and May Talmage. We had a wonderful discussion that lasted more than three hours. John was very lucid despite his being eighty-five-years-old. Near the end of our discussion, as we looked at an enlarged picture of his father in his college laboratory, I asked John about the Einstein rumor and if it was true. He shook his head "no" and said that to his knowledge, his father and Einstein had never met. John also expressed his bafflement over how that rumor might have ever started.

I first heard the Einstein/Talmage rumor in 1976 while serving as a missionary in Brazil. Since that time, I have learned that we Latter-day Saints love our faith-promoting rumors. I have also learned that James E. Talmage was an amazing man—an educator, a scientist, a father and husband, and an apostle. As one who has benefited greatly from studying the life of Dr. James E. Talmage, I can state without hesitation that neither his intellect nor any other character trait needs an endorsement from Albert Einstein or anyone else.

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Mormonism uses two kinds of language for different purposes—often at cross purposes. Committed to building God’s kingdom, Mormons favor a theocratic ethic that cites the will of God to determine the courses and boundaries of political action. Committed to pluralism and democracy, Mormons interact with non-believers in forums where political action is supposed to be decided and conducted on principles of pluralism, reasoned debate, and mutual restraint.

COMPROMISING THE KINGDOM

AN INTERPRETIVE HISTORY OF MORMON POLITICS

By Ashley Sanders

WHEN JOSEPH SMITH RAN FOR PRESIDENT OF the United States in 1843, he did so on a platform that, to a twenty-first-century voter might seem encouragingly progressive before turning ominous. Smith’s progressive planks—abolition, prison reform, and the defense of civil liberties—give twenty-first century Americans almost everything they’ve come to expect (at least rhetorically) from democracy: equal rights, fair-mindedness, and an urgent reform ethic. But if Smith spoke more brashly and adamantly than more pragmatic contemporary politicians, the reason may be less encouraging to today’s citizen: Smith spoke with the zeal and ideals of a religious reformer precisely because he did not divorce his role as prophet from his role as politician. If this union of prophet and politician allowed a strong progressive platform, Smith’s disregard for the separation of church and state also made him unabashedly theocratic. From the standpoint of a modern civil religion that tries to compartmentalize faith and politics, Smith’s allegiance to theocracy makes him both hopefully forward and hopelessly backward.

During his recent bid for the White House, a lot of people asked Mitt Romney probing questions about the relationship between his faith and his politics. While some of these questions arose from a general secular suspicion of religion and a sanitized notion of the religious and the secular—the history of Mormonism in the United States does invite hard questions about religious freedom and separation of church and state.



ASHLEY SANDERS graduated from Brigham Young University with degrees in philosophy and English. She is currently working for the Nader campaign in Washington D.C. before she goes to graduate school in creative writing and English literature. She blogs at WWW.PROJECTDESERET.COM and is a Cooperativist at WWW.LDS-COOPERATIVE.COM.

After all, Mormon history is a fascinating and often disturbing narrative about political and religious overlap and the series of dilemmas that arise at the interface between the two. Any person who respects religious and civil liberties has good reason to wonder how the unique and problematic political history of Mormonism might play out in the future.

Mormon history is too often told as a struggle between perpetrators and victims. Mormons, of course, typically cast themselves as victims. Even a cursory reading of Mormon history, however, reveals that tragedy traveled both ways and was complicated by contradictory allegiances.

Mormons, for example, have historically been torn between God language—which, as revelation, is supreme and requires utter allegiance—and democratic language—the language of discussing and dissenting in a common dialect. Throughout their history, Mormons have privileged a commitment to God over a commitment to democracy. This attitude follows understandably and sometimes necessarily from LDS doctrines, and it would be naive to expect Mormons to entirely abandon it. Nevertheless, this decision to privilege God language inflicts real consequences on those who speak a different dialect. Non-religious people, favoring democratic language over God-language, are just as consistent in their bias and have just as much right to it. Because of this, Mormon history—both the living and the telling of it—always stalls; both sides are equally justified and equally unable to desist. Both sides are victims and perpetrators of their own consistency, and both are reasonably angry at bearing the brunt of the other’s conclusions.

In Mormon history, the tension of equal claims replays again and again in more specific types of conflict. It plays out in the conflict between minorities and majorities when Mormons—often regional majorities and national minorities—are unable to negotiate the prerogatives and restraint central to both roles. It plays out in the conflict between spiri-

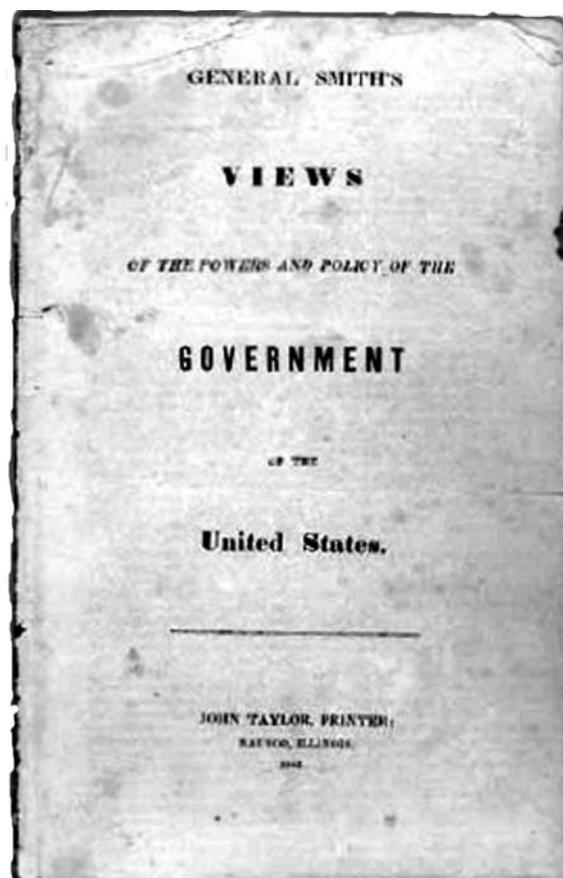
Joseph Smith's union of prophet and politician allowed him to put forth a strong progressive platform, but his disregard for the separation of church and state also made him unabashedly theocratic. From the standpoint of a modern civil religion that tries to compartmentalize faith and politics, Smith's allegiance to theocracy makes him both hopefully forward and hopelessly backward.

tual religion and political religion, as Mormonism—committed to a social, economic, and geographic Zion—attempts to balance political power with political clout and morality with neutrality. It plays out in the conflict between Mormon amnesia—forgetting and repeating the mistakes of the past—and Mormon entitlement—the right to pursue happiness unmolested. Finally, it plays out in the conflict between Mormon assimilation and survival, in the question of how much to yield in order to endure. Inevitably, pursuing religious freedom will mean encroaching on secular freedom *from* religion in order to maintain sectarian freedom *of* religion.

In this process, both sides will be right even as from the other's perspective both are wrong. Thus it is impossible to write Mormon history as anything but a paradox. Writing Mormon history does not allow for neatly identified victims and perpetrators; in Mormon history, both sides are victims and perpetrators of laws that propel but cannot defend both sides at once.

THIS ARTICLE PROPOSES a political history of Mormonism as dilemma, as a desperate attempt to reconcile the sometimes irreconcilable values of religion and politics, prophecy and policy. Many people would frame this history differently. Some see Mormon history as the shift from radicalism to conservatism. And that is fair, if one uses radicalism in its broadest sense. In other words, nineteenth-century Mormons were radical in every category: theologically, politically, and socially. They were ideologically and geographically un-assimilable. It is also true that twenty-first-century Mormonism, despite its eccentricities, is broadly conservative. Modern Mormons have been largely assimilated, and the majority values this assimilation and its dividends.

Nevertheless, this shift from radicalism to conservatism more closely mimics the classical shift from sect to church—societal outsider to institutional insider—than it does a political shift. To be sure, modern Mormons are often card-carrying, Republican super-patriots, a contrast to their ancestors' uncompromising separatism and perennial ambivalence toward government. But the word “radical” has gained a certain political connotation (not to mention cachet), and applying it to early Mormonism could be misleading and anachronistic. A twenty-first century progressive would hardly consider theocracy to be “radical” in a political sense. Instead, she would probably call this impulse “fundamentalist,” which means, simply, that it is radical in the wrong direction. Our contempo-



Joseph Smith's presidential platform, 1844

rary perspective makes us liable to two errors: first, to confuse progressive political consequences of theocracy with the political aims of a progressive democracy; and second, to interpret political Mormonism against a naively facile concept of the separation of church and state.

Early Mormonism was nothing less than the desire to create the kingdom of God on earth. And this desire was not merely religious, but also political, social, and economic. The word for this earthly kingdom—Zion—is comprehensive; it is both a physical and temporal place designed to meet both temporal and spiritual needs. Understanding this helps us make sense of Joseph Smith, whose presidential platform embodies the tensions, dangers, and possibilities inherent in benevolent theocracy. The irony is that Smith and his followers needed a democracy to protect their wishes for theocracy. In other words, they needed a secular government to safeguard their



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Early Mormons essentially ignored secular government. They did not seek to overthrow it; they expected it to be overthrown in the Second Coming and diligently went about orchestrating its replacement—a kingdom of God that conformed to a higher vision and destiny.

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Because of these competing insistencies, Smith and his followers experienced persecution from the outset. For this same reason, Smith sought to build a society in addition to a religion, a community of Christ that would administer to a person's spiritual, economic, social, and physical needs. From the beginning, then, Smith was not just a prophet but a city planner, situating Zion as a geographical gathering place. While others in Jacksonian America spoke of democracy and the common man, Smith proclaimed himself radically uncommon, and spiritually recast the concept of Manifest Destiny as the right to a frontier Zion that would serve as a great religious experiment—an experiment that half-supported and half-subverted civil society. Today's ubiquitous Mormon odes to democracy and the Constitution would come later, and only as a response to increasing persecution. The early Joseph Smith shared the views of other nineteenth-century millenarians: The end of the world was approaching, and the government that administered the world would go with it. For this reason, early Mormons essentially ignored secular government. They did not seek to overthrow it; they expected it to be overthrown in the Second Coming and diligently went about orchestrating its replacement—a kingdom of God that conformed to a higher vision and destiny.

Kirtland, Ohio, was the first Zion, Smith's inaugural city of God and the gathering place for latter-day Saints. In its early years, it manifested Mormons' indifference to secular government and their zeal for building the kingdom. The Kirtland years, from 1831 to 1838, were a critical and turbulent period for American democracy. Had Mormons paid more attention to secular government, they would have found they were surrounded by intense debates over constitutional dilemmas—dilemmas which the Mormons would confront throughout the history of their church. In other words, the Kirtland years coincided with the beginnings of certain political, religious, and legal themes that would follow the Saints (or lead them) wherever they went.

The Indian Question: Ruthless westward expansion and the beginning strains of Manifest Destiny jeopardized the survival of American Indians, as exemplified by the Jackson administration's Trail of Tears. Since American Indians are given special status in the Book of Mormon, the belief that the gospel would redeem and restore these people turned Mormons into sometime advocates of Indians. On one hand, the Saints' own

right to worship, even as that freedom to worship threatened the smooth functioning of democracy. Consequently, the political history of Mormonism is fraught, not only with dilemma, but also ambivalence—the ambivalence of a religion that needs the protection of the very system it is trying to displace.

JOSEPH SMITH ORGANIZED the Church of Christ (later The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) on 6 April 1830. From the beginning, Smith and others proclaimed that their church was the one true church, ordained by God and possessing the fullness of Christ's gospel. This belief itself exemplified the tensions that would later lead to trouble and severe persecution. The organization of God's "true" Church established more than a religion; it also established a pattern of stressing unity as a protection from plurality and a precedent of conceiving the Church as something above and apart from other institutions.

A church that received direct revelation from a prophet was suited to thrive in a country that privileged the freedom of worship.

Conversely, however, this type of church also logically subordinated the laws and values of civil society to the laws and society of God. This incongruity would lead to anxiety for both believers and non-believers, since both sides felt allegiances to incompatible political languages even as both insisted their languages be sanctioned and safeguarded by the American political system.

expansion westward contributed to the displacement of Indians. Mormon missionary work could be condescending, and there were even occasional intermarriages designed to whiten—both spiritually and literally—the remnant of America’s house of Israel. On the other hand, the Saints’ parallel history of persecution and exile, combined with Book of Mormon teachings about the redemption of the Lamanites, sometimes led Mormons to denounce Indian expulsion. Some Mormon leaders even went so far as to claim land for Mormons and Indians in common.

For Mormons, the Indian question was not just a question of racism and expansion. For Mormons, the Indian question was at the crux of a debate between God’s word and man’s word. Whereas American democracy compromised human rights in exchange for empire and political balance, Mormons—at times—proclaimed that their scriptures mandated the historical and human worth of Indians. As God’s word, the scriptures were more important than the politiaese spoken in Washington. Mormon advocacy for Indians set an ideological precedent: a commitment to God over democracy that would cause Mormons to sometimes defend, and sometimes mistreat, Indians.

Abolition. The 1830’s saw the rise of abolitionist fervor. Debates over the abolition of slavery and racial equality would affect Mormons practically, ethically, and theologically for the next 150 years. The conflict over slavery threatened the Mormons’ survival in Missouri, a former territory that had entered the Union as a slave state to maintain a tenuous balance of slave and free states in the republic at large. Because Mormons were sympathetic to abolition, their increasing presence in Missouri threatened not only local political arrangements but national ones.

Differences between Mormonism’s approach to the Indian question and, later, its approach to the race question, underscore tensions that are crucial to understanding Mormon history. Mormons divided their racial attitudes down the line of God’s word, granting Indians a relatively privileged status based on certain revelations while denying Blacks the same status. The primacy of God’s word divides theology—the prerogative of God—from consensus ethics—the prerogative of democracy. There is no better example of this than the conflict over extending the priesthood to Blacks and parallel conflicts over black civil rights. Blacks ultimately gained both, but the Church’s response to the conflicts illustrates the extent to which a church’s claim makes it impervious to the democratic language of civic debates occurring all around it. It was this display of imperviousness that often made nineteenth-century non-Mormons feel threatened by Mormons, leading ultimately, to persecution.

The Nullification Crisis. In 1832, South Carolina flouted federal authority in the name of states’ rights, and President Andrew Jackson threatened military force. This crisis introduced the dilemma between the prerogatives of state and federal governments. Ultimately, the crisis ended with an impor-

tant conclusion: that the federal government had primacy over state governments and that the larger balance of unity and freedom was more important than the concerns of a minority group.

The event is relevant to Mormon history because states’ rights appeals would prove a double-edged sword for Mormons. In Missouri, the federal government would use states’ rights as rationale for not intervening on the Mormons’ behalf. Ironically, this notion of state and local primacy would not prevail in Illinois, where Smith’s move to create a city-state would be seen as a threat meriting federal intervention.

The states’ rights issue also exemplifies tensions, experienced by Mormons and non-Mormons alike, between the Constitution as a boon and the Constitution as a burden. Southerners and Mormons both appealed to the laws of the land for protection, but once constitutional law came to be seen as a threat to the survival of ideological identity, Southerners and Mormons both opted to petition and then secede, reasserting their minority rights by voluntarily exiling themselves. This sovereignty would be short-lived for both, however, and in the resuming power clashes, Mormons and Southerners would be assimilated back into the federal government. In the process, both would be forced to negotiate new legal and cultural identities.

THESE ARE THE issues Mormons might have perceived if they had held their ears to the ground during the first decade of the Church’s existence. Instead, Kirtland Saints did precisely the opposite: Looking straight ahead, they busied themselves with building up the kingdom of God in preparation for the Second Coming. Politics interested them insofar as it interfered with this project. Otherwise, it was a distraction.

This is not to say that Mormons weren’t political. In the broad sense of the word, they decidedly were, and in the narrow sense, they certainly tried to be. The very idea of Zion was political in the broad sense, advocating particular forms of social and economic organization in a geographic space. And from the beginning, Smith saw that he would need to amass political power in the narrow sense to protect and cultivate the fledgling Church of Christ. Consequently, political Mormonism grew as robustly as did its religious counterpart, and there was never a shortage of Saints running for political office. Unfortunately for Smith, even the groundswell of emigrants to Kirtland was not enough to give Mormons a majority in local politics, and both he and his followers suffered sound political defeats early on. But Mormons offset their negligible political power with a surfeit of political clout, buying land, building a community, and flooding the city with new converts. This clout combined with Smith’s charisma as a politically active prophet, made non-Mormons worry disproportionately about Mormon political power.

At the same time that Smith was establishing a community in Kirtland, he identified Jackson County, Missouri, as the site of the New Jerusalem, God’s promised land of Zion and the gathering place for faithful Saints. Mormon emigration to

Missouri set the stage for a clash of political languages and freedoms, as Mormons arrived with non-negotiable religious claims to a land already ruled by secular notions of property rights, pluralism, and democracy. In addition to purchasing enormous tracts of land, the Mormons also started a news-

sons for them. The paramount virtue of obedience often trumped questions of equity and personal conscience. The kingdom of God required unity; factionalism threatened peace and progress.

The Saints were attempting a theocracy under and alongside democracy, and the tensions between the assumptions and values of the two systems would produce both ideological and actual violence. Had Mormons confined their religious logic to matters of religion, the non-Mormons in Jackson County might not have reacted violently. Indeed, the image of Mormons as victims of religious persecution is misleading. Their theological beliefs, however strange, would probably not have incited such intense reactions had Mormons not equated them with a social, political, and geographic program. The mob persecution suffered by Mormons, though brutal and tragic, resulted from an understandable fear. Non-Mormons understood (at least viscerally) the danger of circular religious logic when applied to politics. As long as Joseph Smith demanded followers' complete obedience and claimed to know how God wished them to act, he could control the entire Mormon vote. This danger was magnified precisely because it could not be addressed; it was above the language and rationality of politics. The idea that God's law trumped civil law could, if embraced by enough followers, threaten the safety, livelihood, and liberties of all who still relied on the "lower law."

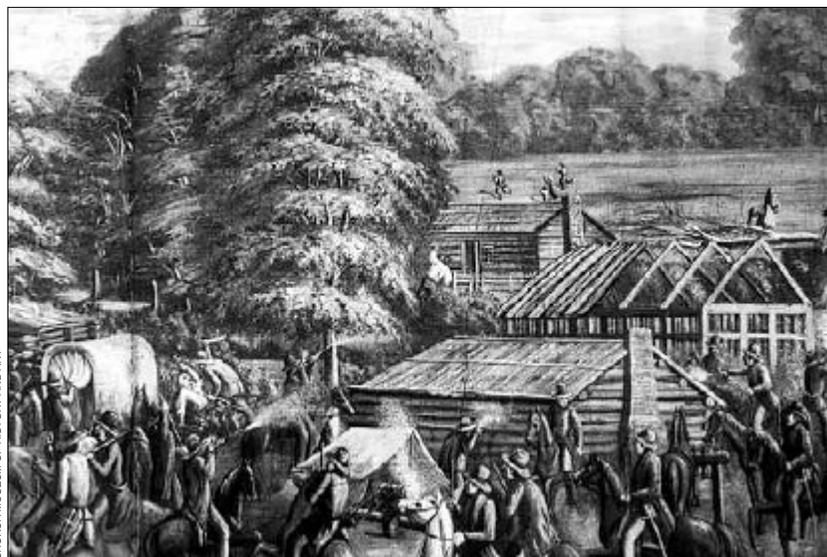
Mob violence erupted in July 1833. The Missouri Mormons had not done anything illegal, but their rampant land speculation, defense of Native Americans, and pro-abolitionist stance made non-Mormons feel threatened. Without any actual crimes to justify legal recourse, Missourians turned to vigilante power to solve what they saw as a rapidly developing problem. Incited by an article

in *The Evening and Morning Star* in which W.W. Phelps seemed to encourage free Blacks to migrate to the state, local mobs destroyed the printing office and demanded that the Saints leave the county within the year. In exchange, the mob promised a vigilante ceasefire. Soon suspecting that Mormons were planning to ignore their contract, the mobs attacked again, driving the Saints into the more hospitable Clay County.

Meanwhile, Smith faced growing unrest and mob violence in Kirtland. As part of his plans for Zion, Smith had implemented a radical new economic system, the law of consecration intended to create temporal equality and provide for the masses of poor immigrants arriving in Kirtland and Missouri. This economic revelation complicated the Saints' problems. Communal ownership and economic solidarity exaggerated the appearance of Mormon power, greatly troubling non-Mormons who feared they could not compete. Furthermore, the law of consecration's failure to produce new capital in a community where the poor dramatically outnumbered the

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*M*ormons were a national minority and a regional majority, a position that offered them nothing but cold comfort. Their overreach as majority seemed to justify mob revolts, after which their status as a victimized religious minority could be dismissed by the Protestant majority.



"HAUNS MILL," by C.C.A. Christensen

paper, *The Evening and Morning Star*, edited by W.W. Phelps, which seeded the impending conflict. From the perspective of non-Mormon Missourians, the sermons, revelations, and religious editorials printed in the paper revealed Mormonism as a threat to the logic of democracy. Phelps published announcements about Mormons taking over the county and indicted non-Mormons with heavenly censure. To non-Mormons, this was not just insulting, it was dangerous because it suggested that Mormons sought to impose their religious laws and destiny on others. Furthermore, the newspaper exemplified the impenetrable language of religious discourse, which insured that it could glibly dismiss criticism as proof of devilry and lack of faith.

Mormons saw it differently. They were, after all, merely exercising their freedoms of press and religion. More important, their belief in prophets bound them to the laws of God as communicated through Joseph Smith. These laws were not democratic, and neither God nor Joseph was required to give rea-

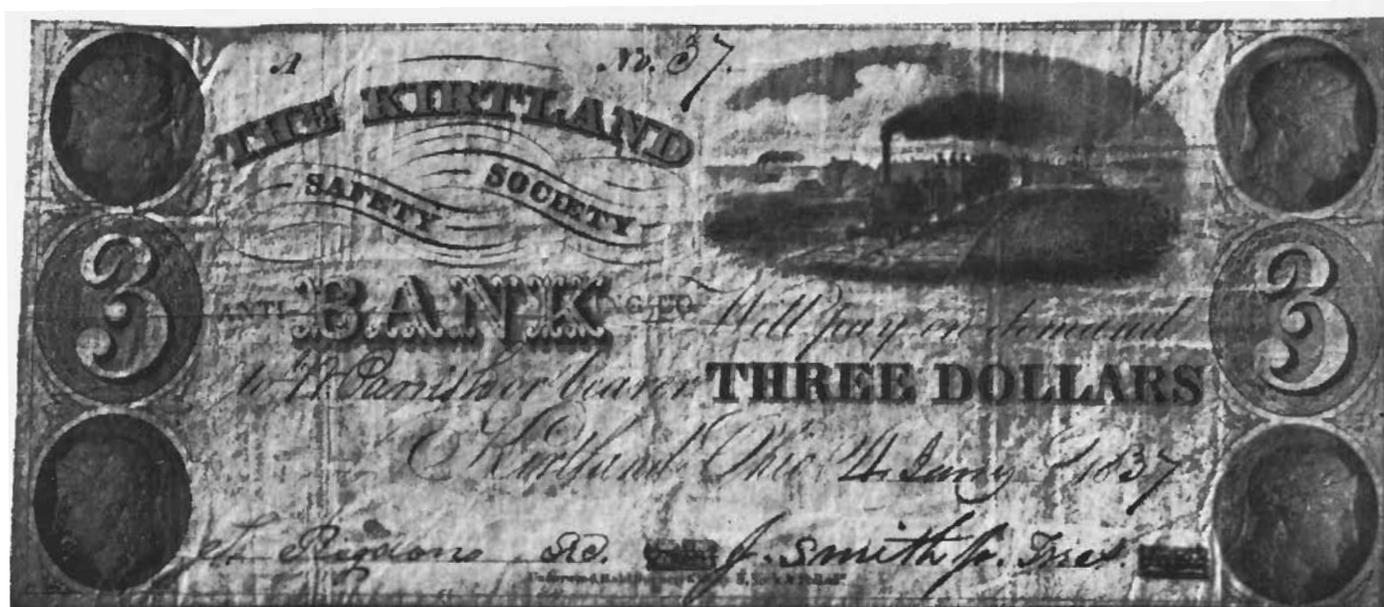
rich encouraged Smith to eventually try other measures for economic relief, including printing and distributing worthless money through the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company. Problems with debt, counterfeiting, and bankruptcy followed, leading many Saints to defect. Non-Mormons in Kirtland also resented the Mormons due partly to land speculation, money-borrowing, and Smith's mingling of religious and economic authority. Unlike the Missourians, the Kirtland mobs went straight for the prophet and his counselor, Sidney Rigdon, dragging them from their beds in the middle of the night to tar and feather them.

Both mobsters and Mormons were beginning to realize that the law was incapable of protecting either group from the others' excesses. This incapacity was partly unwillingness, a *laissez-faire* frontier policy of letting the public will be worked

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Smith implemented the law of consecration intended to create temporal equality and provide for the masses of poor immigrants arriving in Kirtland and Missouri. But when the law of consecration failed to produce new capital in a community where the poor dramatically outnumbered the rich, Smith tried other measures to bring economic relief, including printing and distributing worthless money through the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company.

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Three-dollar bank note issued in 1837 through the Kirtland Safety Society

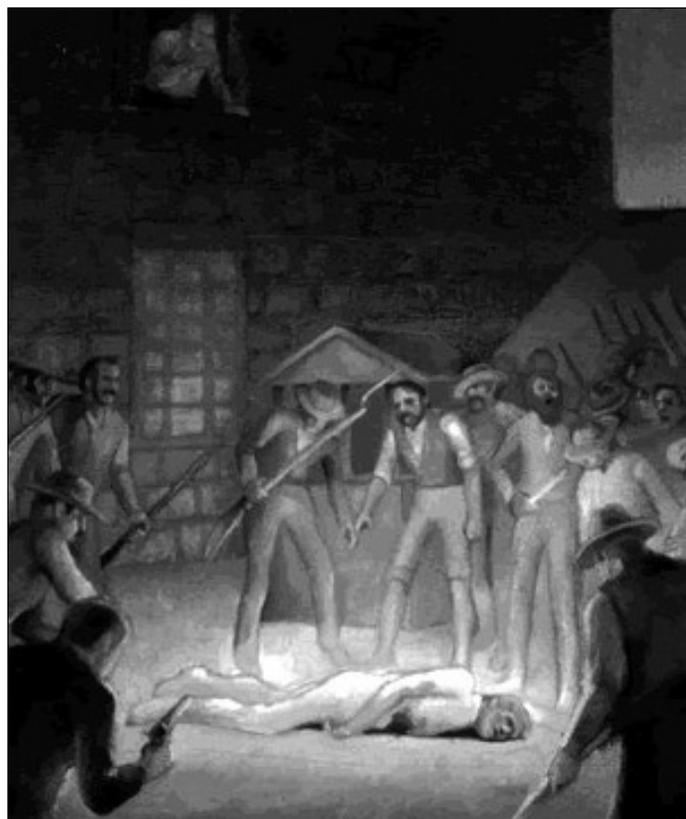
out through vigilante action. Also to blame, however, were inherent limits of the law itself, which offered both sides their respective freedoms but was less adept at drawing the boundaries between them. A constitution predicated on both the separation of church and state and the prerogatives of both was unequipped to handle a case in which a religion threatened civil liberties without violating the law. Hence the mobbers felt compelled to take matters into their own hands. When they did, the Mormons were forced into their own epiphany: that although Missourians had committed a crime, the law would smile on them for doing its dirty work. A national minority and a regional majority, Mormons could receive nothing but cold comfort. Their overreach as majority seemed to justify the mobs' violence, after which their status as a victimized religious minority allowed them to be dismissed by the majority.

Recognizing the Saints' dilemma makes it possible to understand how Zion's Camp could march to Jackson County

under a banner that read, without irony, "Peace." Having fruitlessly petitioned political leaders all the way to President Jackson, Smith was more certain than ever that the laws of the land were corrupt and could not help his people. Reflecting the paradox of the Saints' circumstances, Smith published revelations declaring the Constitution to be inspired—urging people to petition for the privileges and rights that document promises them—while simultaneously defying the law to organize an independent military force.

Despite its failures to redress the Saints' grievances, Zion's Camp marked a fundamental shift in the way Smith (and, consequently, the Saints) perceived their religion's place in American politics. They could no longer afford to be detached millenarians building an insular kingdom of God. Their persecution had forced them to see the government as both ally and traitor, and their paradoxical response embodied the contradiction: an army that fought for peace and a people who broke the law in order to fight for its protection. Smith preached the

The image of Smith's mutilated body on the ground outside Carthage Jail surrounded by the rioting mob is a tragic and sinister indictment of Constitutional failure. This failure was America's as much as Smith's: an inability to balance competing rights in the name of two different kinds of freedom.



"FORCES OF EVIL," by Gary Smith

virtues of a governmental system that he was increasingly appropriating into a political religion. Abandoned by the government, Smith abrogated the terms of government and reasigned them to religion, becoming the "Commander of the Armies of Israel" and Mormonism's Secretary of War.

As vigilante violence continued in Kirtland, Ohio, and erupted in Clay County, Missouri, Smith and those who still followed him relocated to the newly formed Caldwell County, Missouri. Feeling threatened and anxious, Mormons used increasingly shrill religious rhetoric when dealing with the political problems that besieged them—excommunicating insiders and sanctioning violence against dissident insiders and hostile outsiders alike. This violence was carried out largely by a group known as the Danites, a marauding secret society established by Samson Avard to defend the faith (ideologically and actually) through violence. The logic of defensive violence culminated in the Danite Manifesto—an order to ex-Mormon dissenters to flee the region—and Sidney Rigdon's infamous "Salt Sermon," which called for the banishment of dissenters and sanctioned violence against those members who had "lost their

savor." Rigdon also fanned anti-Mormon hostilities by delivering an Independence Day sermon that declared Mormon independence from mobbers and vowed that if the Saints' freedom were infringed, they would wage a war of extermination in which "one party or the other will be utterly destroyed."

Fleeing Mormon dissidents encouraged ex-Mormons to take the extermination threats seriously. As Mormons spilled over the Caldwell County line and into Daviess County, locals who feared an encroaching Mormon political influence barred Mormons from voting in the county's local elections, insisting that they had no more right to the vote than did a Negro. Missourians also proceeded to drive Mormons in DeWitt County out of their homes.

The scuffles that resulted initiated the Mormon War, a largely vigilante affair in which both Mormons and non-Mormon mobbers and militias plundered and burned each others' towns, creating hundreds of refugees. After Missouri governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his infamous extermination order, the besieged Saints surrendered under bleak terms: they were to surrender their arms, give up their leaders to be imprisoned, forsake their property, and leave the state. While Smith and other leaders were arrested and detained for months without trial (narrowly avoiding summary execution), the remaining Mormons—ravaged, destitute, and deprived of property—crossed the Mississippi River into Quincy, Illinois, where people sympathetic to the Mormons, shocked at minority persecution and the breakdown of law, received them warmly.

Rather than tempering the Saints' concept of Zion, the Missouri persecutions consolidated and cemented it. Instead of addressing the dilemmas that had spawned waves of persecution, Mormons set about building a new theocracy with almost amnesiac zeal, dismissing real notions of pluralism and dialogue in favor of a tolerant but religious city-state. Not that Illinois objected. Sympathetic and economically unstable, the General Assembly sought to improve its own financial woes by encouraging Mormon settlement, granting the Saints a city charter that gave them almost limitless power: the right to organize and muster a militia, power over *habeas corpus*, and a blissful silence concerning church-state relations. Once Smith's captors let him escape from Liberty Jail, he joined the Nauvoo Saints and became both mayor of the city and its chief judge, as well as lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion. Other Church leaders held other public offices, the beginnings of a shadow government that would continue late into the Utah territorial period.

As the Saints' numbers swelled to 12,000, old problems re-

turned, but this time like photographic negatives of the past. This time it was the Saints who enjoyed a formidable military force, at times half the size of the U.S. military. Ultimately the freedom of the press that began the Missouri troubles would threaten in the opposite direction.

At the advent of his city-state, Smith reiterated his beliefs in religious tolerance and freedom, a claim he appeared to believe even as he constructed a theocracy that challenged, if not denied, those values. He and his followers continued to pursue a politically comprehensive Zion, manipulating Illinois's two-party system for leverage. In the end, bloc-voting Mormons angered both Whigs and Democrats and augmented anti-Mormon sentiment.

Smith did not care an ounce for partisan politics. His explicit ambition was "theo-democracy," a dream that required merging church and state entirely. Already head of Nauvoo's military, judiciary, and municipal government, Smith established a clandestine Council of Fifty, a subordinate ecclesiastical body intended to perfectly combine religion and policy-making power. Joseph acted as the Council's "King, Priest and Ruler over Israel on Earth," which combined these previously spiritual titles with all the prerogatives of a political leader. This was inimical to democracy, since it allowed Smith exclusive access to God's will alongside his exclusive claim to law-making—a combination that required unquestioning obedience from his followers.

The obedience of many insiders was put to the test when Smith required unflinching compliance with his teachings on polygamy. Those who rejected polygamy could expect both legal and ecclesiastical consequences, given Nauvoo's merger of civil and religious powers. Dissenters included such top leaders as William Law, whose protestations led the Council of Fifty to excommunicate him and authorize threats on his life. Outraged, Law established the *Nauvoo Expositor*, a newspaper that promised to reveal Smith's polygamous practices as well as condemning his unsavory use of habeas corpus writs, his practice of land speculation, and his status as "self-constituted Monarch." Law vowed at all hazards to "exercise freedom of speech in Nauvoo, independent of ordinances abridging the same."

This break between Smith and a former confidante illustrates the pathos of the Saint's political dilemma. Impelled by a non-negotiable devotion to God's law, even as it made demands that required dramatic dissent from the norms of the dominant American culture, the Saints who remained loyal to Smith required greater solidarity and unity than ever before. They had been brutalized, ignored, and ridiculed and their fruitless petitions convinced them to declare ideological sovereignty. On the other hand, Mormon dissenters had been psychologically and politically brutalized by a theocratic regime that did not allow for debate, democracy, or difference. This dilemma culminated in Smith's ironic order to destroy the *Expositor*, reversing the violence that mobs had committed on his own press in Independence, Missouri. This order led to Smith's imprisonment, and, ultimately, his death by vigilante violence.

THE IMAGE OF Smith's mutilated body on the ground outside Carthage Jail surrounded by the rioting mob is a tragic and sinister indictment of Constitutional failure. This failure was America's as much as Smith's: an inability to balance competing rights in the name of two different kinds of freedom.

It is no surprise, then, that the remaining Saints quit America with disdain. The peculiar religion of Mormonism had gone from sect to sectioned. Orson Pratt spat out the general sentiment when he bid farewell to the United States: "It is with greatest of joy that I forsake this republic; and all of the saints have abundant reasons to rejoice that they are counted worthy to be cast out as exiles of this wicked nation."

In the wake of Joseph's death, Brigham Young was left with the overwhelming task of pointing the Church not only to heaven but into geographic exile. Leading and organizing wagon trains in a trek across a continent doesn't turn leaders into irenic negotiators, and Young was proof of that. Buffeted by persecution, Young was trained in the vicissitudes that produce autocrats rather than compromisers. Once in Utah, he ushered in Zion with gale force. He took pages from Smith's book and added some of his own. He declared the Great Basin a gathering place for all denominations before establishing, in the usual manner, a theocracy that ultimately excluded non-Mormons and (incidentally) Indians. He pursued economic reform with zeal, coordinating everything from communes to cooperatives and pouring money into Church-run industry. More even than Smith, Young completed the merger between economy and religion, stressing self-reliance to avoid dependency on the corrupt nation they had left behind.

At first glance, the territory years may appear as the vanguard of today's progressive reform movements: localism, voluntary socialism, and communal living. But Mormon communitarianism came at a high price: celebrating the group and enforcing its unity at the expense of individualism and pluralism. This group unity demanded strong leadership—and required that the Saints eschew factions. As such, Mormon politics were based not on democratic contest but on expectations of unanimous support. Placing the authority of territorial government in the hands of church leaders, Young created a shadow government behind a government that was itself only a mock democracy.

When Gentiles starting flooding into "Mormon country," the politics of Mormon solidarity and the circle-speak of theocracy began to chafe. When the Gentile minority complained, leaders (religious and political) responded with dogmatism and even advocated violence. The Saints' earliest need for ideological survival had quickly merged with the need for physical survival, which gave this aggression a disturbingly religious foundation. Reasoning thus, the Saints employed a relentless God-language that unified Church and State and often threatened the right to difference—temporal or spiritual. As a result, criticizing the economy became synonymous with criticizing the prophet even as Saints were segregated from the sphere of political deliberation. The existing Gentiles formed a feeble splinter faction known as the Liberal Party, but in the

Leading and organizing wagon trains in a trek across a continent doesn't turn leaders into irenic negotiators, and Brigham Young was proof of that. Buffeted by persecution, Young was trained in the vicissitudes that produce autocrats rather than compromisers.



face of an overwhelming, bloc-voting majority, they could do very little. Meanwhile, Republicans in Washington declared an ideological war on the “twin relics of barbarism”—slavery and polygamy. Seeking refuge in states’ rights, Young relentlessly petitioned for statehood, offering bribes and consolidating local power.

Convinced by reports of polygamy that Utah was in open theocratic rebellion, President Buchanan mustered the largest peacetime army in United States history to quash it. As exaggerated news of war reached Utah, Young called out his militia, prepared supplies, and evacuated all of Salt Lake City. As the spiritual counterpart to this temporal trial, the Saints threw themselves headlong into a Mormon Reformation—a period of fanatical fasting, worship, and preparations for the millennium. The largely psychological skirmish ended when Young agreed to accept a newly-appointed governor. Nevertheless, the collateral damage was real: Among other things, war hysteria and historical tensions led a group of Mormons in Southern Utah to massacre the men, women, and children of an Arkansas wagon train. The Mountain Meadows Massacre was the tragic consequence of mutual persecution, bloody rhetoric, ideological embattlement, and war frenzy.

Young had forged a strategy for ideological and physical survival that required strict uniformity and obedience while promising economic equality and God’s law. He had known the trials brought both by pluralism and by the dream of Zion, and his attempts to avoid one and realize another suddenly seemed doomed to fail. The classic dilemmas had hounded him. Relocating his church in a remote territory, Young had almost escaped the pluralistic challenge, but as America caught up with him, he was once again forced to explain the mind of God to a willful democracy. Committed to God’s law, Young used God’s language, offering salvation at the expense of difference and debate. The problem of language reflected the problem of competing freedoms, as Young’s pursuit of religious liberty had sent his society colliding into liberties coming from the other direction. Believing as he did, it was

impossible to concede to the fallen demands of civil government. Young died in 1877 with his two chief projects unfinished and America’s project unfinished with him: his beloved temple halfway done, his plans for statehood halted, and the anti-polygamy movement frothing.

After Young’s death, disapproving Protestants dealt Mormons two blows that proved nearly lethal. In 1882, Congress passed the Edmunds Act and, five years later, the Edmunds-Tucker Act. The Edmunds-Tucker Act dissolved the Church completely and confiscated all its property exceeding \$50,000. Hundreds of top Church leaders were forced into prison or hiding. When the Supreme Court upheld the act as constitutional, Mormonism seemed on the brink of collapse.

With the Church leaders in exile and its finances in shambles, survival seemed to mandate some measure of assimilation. Assimilation, in turn, required the Church to accept the arguments and procedures of pluralism as more binding than the purposes and edicts of God.

From the standpoint of secular logic, the excruciating impasse is hard to fully understand. Mormons had operated for decades on the conviction that God’s law trumped civil law, and they had risked their lives, friends, and homes to build His kingdom. As a theology and as a practice, polygamy had been corroborated and legitimized through every channel the Saints’ recognized—revelation, scripture, and personal confirmation—the rejection of which would signify disobedience and faithlessness. And now, for reasons they had confronted and language they had rejected before, they were on the verge of rejecting truth, tradition, and God’s wishes in exchange for an institutional skeleton.

After years of invoking constitutional guarantees of religious liberties, the Saints were now about to give up the heart of their religion in the name of compliance to constitutional law. Deciding this conundrum would be the first act the Church made as an institution rather than a sect, as an organization weighing survival alongside image rather than a faction insisting inflexibly on religious truth. The ensuing process of assimilation would transform the character of the Church, shifting its values, practices, and identity toward the goal of acceptance rather than separatism.

John Taylor, the third president of the Church, had died in hiding in the midst of the polygamy crisis, shortly after having been ordained Priest and King over all Israel. Taylor was the last prophet to receive this ordination—and the dream of theocracy died with him. It fell to his successor, Wilford Woodruff, to eulogize theocracy, by promulgating the Manifesto of 1890, and to cobble together a pluralist Church

that could still claim fidelity to its divinely ordained purposes.

Modern Mormonism's facile rejection of polygamy obscures the agony inherent in Woodruff's dilemma. Breaking with the logic of early Mormonism, Woodruff was suddenly expected to deny revelation, commandments, and God's law to defer to a form of government that seemed intent on destroying Mormonism's precious truths. It was no surprise then that Church leaders couldn't bring themselves to depart from God's path. Secret post-Manifesto polygamous marriages gave fuel to continuing accusations of Mormon immorality and rebellion. On charges that Utah was denying anti-polygamy edicts, the House of Representatives refused to seat Mormon Congressman B.H. Roberts and later Republican Senator Reed Smoot. Smoot was eventually seated, but not without a price: After grueling testimony before an outraged Senate, President



UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

UTAH STATE PENITENTIARY, "SUGARHOUSE PRISONERS"
Jailed for practicing polygamy, LDS leaders in prison included George Q. Cannon (center) and John Henry Smith (second from right).

Joseph F. Smith issued a second Manifesto, this time rejecting polygamy unambiguously and defining the consequences of defiance.

Because the Reed Smoot hearings required Church leaders to explain Mormonism in political and democratic terms, the hearings played an important role in enacting the shift that changed Mormonism into the religion we recognize today. As Mormons took their place in a heterogeneous democracyscape, the language of theocracy devolved into a sort of political pidgin. Joseph F. Smith was forced to render Mormon God-language into the too-small dialect of democracy. Having successfully insulated themselves in a far-flung territory, Mormons found themselves overtaken yet again by a country moving westward. The problem of language had met, finally, with the closing of the frontier. There was no place left to go.

Confronted with this new situation, Smith capitulated and changed the content of Mormonism for good: formerly central precepts were to be abandoned for the sake of survival. This did not spell just the end of polygamy; it spelled the begin-

nings of poly-lingualism within Mormonism. The Church now faced the most complicated trial of its existence: how to build a political, social, and spiritual Zion without confusing the spiritual language of religion with the democratic language of politics.

As the old theocracy died out, Mormon leaders had to negotiate a balance between unity—the watchword of the old system—and dialogue—the method of the new system. This tension was doubly complicated by the paradox of involvement and endorsement, as Church leaders tried to exercise their political-religious rights to influence and protect their interests without overstepping bounds or seeming to endorse candidates and platforms. For a Church accustomed to a single-party, bloc-voting populace ruled by a unified and overt theocracy, the subtlety was a difficult one for them to pull off.



With Church leaders in exile and the institution's finances in shambles, survival seemed to mandate some measure of assimilation. Assimilation, in turn, required the Church to accept the arguments and procedures of pluralism as more binding than the purposes and edicts of God.



Inwardly, the Church continued to meddle, an evil deemed necessary to balance Republicans and Democrats and avoid dividing along religious lines. Outwardly, it began issuing the same kind of political neutrality statements it does today. Church leaders would spend the next hundred years adjusting to modern Mormonism's modified dilemmas of church and state.

Church leaders had several options open regarding when and how to intervene in the political sphere. The Church might have proceeded in a spirit of debate, allowing all political views entrance and presiding over the ensuing discussion. Church leaders could have made broad comments and left it up to members to apply them. Or—and this has consistently been the strategy favored by Church leaders—the Church could claim political neutrality except on moral issues, with the caveat that it gets to decide what is and isn't moral. This approach does not, however, preclude accusations of political influence and can stifle debate by determining what views can be broached and which sides get to argue.

Around the time Utah received statehood, citizens were abandoning the Church-formed People's Party to vote for candidates from the Republican or Democratic parties. Gentiles, often entrepreneurs and business magnates, tended to vote Republican. The Saints were overwhelmingly Democrat. Knowing they could not allow Utah to remain divided on religious lines, Church leaders poured considerable effort into getting the Saints to make the Republican switch, at times

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Ezra Taft Benson's legacy to the Church was a growing number of members who equated living the gospel with being patriotic, pro-capitalist Republicans. His one-sided political rhetoric constricted the religious discussion to a circle of pretended political neutrality in which decidedly political elements were deemed moral issues and moral issues not deemed religious were declared political.

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simply assigning Church members to a party and, at others, coordinating candidates and making strategic comments to sway the election. Clearly, Church leaders still directed Mormon politics, although in a different way than they had under the theocracy. Used to voting as blocs in a pseudo-democracy led by God, the Saints gave enormous credence even to idiosyncratic preferences of their leaders. The virtue of unity still prevailed, influencing individual Mormons to continue subordinating their personal preferences to the good of the whole.

This reality propagated the perception that rank-and-file Mormons were always acting on orders, voting one way or another on the whims of their leaders. This perception, often accurate, only helped to alienate whatever party seemed to be out of favor.

Trying to force old-school unity in a new system during the last decade of the nineteenth century, Church leaders issued the Political Manifesto, a decree requiring any Mormon who wished to run for office to clear his candidacy with headquarters. The Political Manifesto patently clashed with the spirit of a new political dispensation, even as it represented an adjustment to the new system: the purpose of the Manifesto was to help the Church forge useful, and if need be, shifting political alliances with outsiders by orchestrating, and if need be, restraining, the political activities of insiders.

At almost every level of government, the Church arranged for candidates who served its institutional interests, overstepping its bounds by confusing religious obligation with political conscience. At various times and places, the Church either furtively or openly intervened in politics, pressuring rank and file members to run for or refuse certain offices and heavily influencing the vote. In most of these instances, the Church equated righteousness with obedience to Church leaders' political direction, whether or not that political obedience had anything to do with religion.

This kind of maneuvering might have created less opposition if the Church had openly acknowledged its political influence. Instead, the Church tirelessly asserted its neutrality, thus arousing resentment and anger among non-Mormons and some Mormons over the Church's apparently deceptive collusion in politics.



Ezra Taft Benson being sworn in as United States Secretary of Agriculture under President Dwight D. Eisenhower

THE CHURCH WAS still failing to successfully balance its inherent interest and involvement in temporal affairs with the expectation that as an institution in a pluralist democracy, the Church could no longer demand religious allegiance in temporal affairs.

To solve the problem, the Church had started to use the often arbitrary criterion of morality to justify its political involvement. However, the Church's changing positions on moral issues indicates that morality was never the only criterion determining Church intervention. Other factors included the political preferences of Church leaders, the threats they perceived from other parties, and the interests of the institution—increasingly, a basic institutional rather than ideological survival. But the Church's habit of using vestigial theocratic language while at the same time professing political neutrality, alienated some Mormons and pressured the rest in a political lockstep that seemed to ignore the influence their political activities would have on people who did not share Mormon beliefs. This practice also restricted the dialogue and deliberation required for ethical participation in the larger political society. This tension is important to identify because arguments about whether Church leaders “endorsed” certain political views and initiatives or simply expressed their “opinions,” or about how to distinguish between political dissent (which Church leaders claim is permissible) and apostasy (which is not), have recurred in later controversies involving Communism, civil rights, feminism, and homosexuality. Even as Mormons seemed to merge into the American democratic system, their approach to politics became rather more convoluted than it had been in the nineteenth century. Under the theocratic ethic, the Church's approach to politics was straightforward: the Church was a theocracy and would act accordingly. In the twentieth century, Church leaders adopted a complicated strategy of declaring political neutrality while using religious teachings about unity and deference to authority to their political advantage.

Another issue that received changing moral status concerned women's rights. Whereas women's suffrage was a central issue for most states at the turn of the century, Utah had little need for the movement. Having enfranchised women in 1870 and again in 1896, the Church was among the vanguard of a certain strain of equal rights. Church leaders—themselves predominantly male—encouraged women to get jobs, go to medical school, run for office, and even divorce if necessary. Women's suffrage was enthusiastically supported throughout the state, Church involvement was positive, encouraging women to join and discuss the cause with gusto. This scenario would change dramatically over the next fifty years as the next battle for women's rights would be regarded in the Church as a moral depredation that required political intervention.

As for two of the national traumas of the twentieth century—World War I and World War II—the Church responded with mixed messages. War, although obviously a moral issue, did not elicit the same kind of direct intervention that the Church had displayed on other issues. This ambivalence probably related to the Church's uneasy position as a religion with both history and headquarters in the United States. As such, the Church had to maintain strong ties with the government even if that meant slighting the needs and political opinions of Church members outside the U.S.

At the April 1942 General Conference, leaders were surprisingly forceful in speaking out against war, insisting that “the Church is and must be against war.” The Church could not regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes, the First Presidency announced, then recommended that such disputes “should and could be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiation and adjustment.”

Despite this strong First Presidency statement, however, Church leaders differed in their opinions about war in general and never actually resisted once their government had declared war. As a result, Mormon opinions about war were largely driven by historical context, geography, and experiences. In Germany, for instance, Helmuth Hübener's anti-Nazi stance was seen as hostile to both Church and God. Hübener was a hero on the other side of the ocean, however, where experience shaped God in the image of democracy.

While Church leaders varied on the subject of war, their commitment to the American political system caused them to view most conflicts through the lens of nationalism rather than religious idealism. By the time the U.S. entered Vietnam, then, Mormons were almost devoutly patriotic and BYU students were praised for being “an eye of calm” in the storm of anti-war activity that character-

ized the Sixties. Pacifism—a moral stance on the decidedly moral issue of war—became a negative litmus test for faithfulness, as an increasingly American Church embraced militarism to demonstrate its cultural assimilation. The substantive morality of sectarian Mormonism had deferred to a procedural morality of self-preservation.

God-language was conflated with a conservative political language as Church leaders equated the political order that seemed to assure the Church's survival with the moral order on which their religion was founded. At the same time, Church leaders continued to preach a spiritual requirement of unity, thus equating religious integrity with an obligation to conform to Church leaders' political directives. What Mormons failed to recognize was that this move endangered the health of the political system by applying theocratic ethics to a pluralistic debate, on the part of an institution that was now inside, not outside, that system.

This tension would peak several times in the latter half of the twentieth century, most notably in debates over Communism, feminism, and homosexuality. The debate over Communism, especially when backlit by civil rights and the Blacks and priesthood question, highlighted the paradoxes that characterized the Church's struggle with politics. Ezra Taft Benson—the Church's fiercest opponent of Communism—was the ultimate symbol of assimilation, enjoying high leadership positions in both church and state without any apparent conflict of interests. But just because Benson's interests united for him didn't mean that they did for Church members generally. In fact, many Saints were alarmed and worried at authori-



“My conference talk is titled ‘The Quandary of Celestial Polygamy and the Nature of Mother in Heaven.’ . . . Just kidding. I’m talking about the importance of following one’s leaders.”

justify the denial of rights and fair treatment to an entire group of people. This language undercut democratic debate—which requires people to give reasons for their opinions—replacing it with a circular argument that treated the status quo as a self-evident virtue. Bound by an ethic of fidelity to inspired leaders, Church members had no way to distinguish between opinion and revelation, political and religious affairs, or ethics and obedience. Particularly troubling is the way that the Church’s rhetoric around racial questions pressured black Latter-day Saints to place higher value on their obedience to Church leaders than in their own equality, so that it could become a mark of supreme faith to promote the very ideas that reinforced one’s inferiority. At the same time, the civil rights and priesthood dilemmas showed that the Church—in addition to shaping political reality—could also be shaped by the political actions of outsiders. This was the kind of compromise that Church leaders of an earlier generation had dreaded when contemplating assimilation into a pluralist democracy.

BEFORE THE TWENTIETH century ended, the Church intervened to fight two more political movements it deemed morally dangerous: the Equal Rights Amendment and gay marriage. Having survived the trial of survival and the trial of assimilation, the Church now faced what sociologist Armand L. Mauss has called the “predicament of respectability.”⁶ Mormons now enjoyed the fruits of credibility but worried about a loss of identity. As happens with many organizations, the Church responded to this identity loss by using the power it had attained by assimilation to champion traditional values and ways of life. In the late twentieth century, this meant a sustained emphasis on gender roles and differences built into a conventional concept of family. Mormon women were caught in a new dilemma as the Church declared feminism and equal rights inimical to its religious project.

Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972; the amendment had to be ratified by the requisite number of states by 1979. The basic aim of the ERA was to guarantee equal rights to women and abolish previously legal forms of discrimination. Since Mormon Utah had been one of the first U.S. territories to grant women suffrage, and Mormon women had a history of mobilizing for gender equality in other areas, it might seem logical for similar support to have been applied to this newest equality movement. But the Church that had supported votes for women in the 1870s was hardly the same Church that confronted the ERA in the 1970s. In its retreat from polygamy, the twentieth-century Church had developed a new fixation on monogamy, the nuclear family, and an idealized vision of motherhood. This development had turned the entire question of gender inside out.

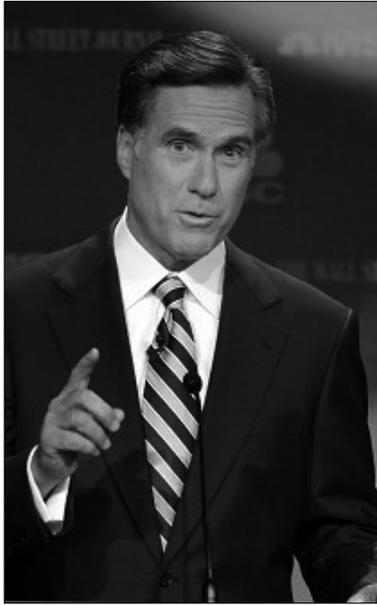
In the midst of the customary professions of political neutrality, the Church opposed the ERA as a moral issue. General Authorities asked bishops and Relief Society presidents to recruit women who could block feminist platforms at the 1977 International Women’s Year conferences. Volunteers attended anti-ERA meetings in LDS meetinghouses where they were ed-

ucated about the IWY’s agenda and taught how to obstruct its passage. These training sessions usually fixated on red herrings, claiming that the equality movement was the brainchild of lesbians intent on destroying gender difference and endangering motherhood. In fact, the agenda items at the IWY advocated a broad political equality that included the option of motherhood and homemaking. The ERA never passed, falling three states short of ratification. Some attribute its defeat to the work of Mormon women who, in obedience to the political directives of Church leaders, rejected an amendment that had been designed to guarantee their right to equality and choice.

The Church’s concern to preserve gender difference led in later decades to a protracted battle against gay marriage. While more public than its anti-ERA campaign (which Church leaders implausibly maintained was a spontaneous grassroots initiative), the Church’s efforts to prevent gay marriage have unfolded in essentially the same manner. Working through the courts, state legislatures, and media campaigns, the Church has spent sizable amounts of money fighting gay marriage, even calling members on short-term “missions” to help political organizations defeat gay marriage initiatives. The Church maintains that it is exercising its religious liberty to fight a serious moral issue.

The fight against gay marriage remains unresolved. It is both a hot-button issue for voters and a litmus test for the faith and obedience of Latter-day Saints. As in political interventions past, the Church uses religious language to defend its position, rather than offering secular arguments that would permit pluralistic debate, and it appears unconcerned about how the political initiatives it supports disadvantage those who do not share Mormons’ religious beliefs. Critics of Mormon initiatives against gay marriage have argued that the Church inappropriately seeks to impose its commandments by law, confusing doctrine with politics, threatening the rights of non-Mormons. For these critics, morality requires Church authorities to restrict their political influence to matters that can be discussed in a language common to believers and non-believers. For the Church, by contrast, morality entails obedience to God and his truth and privileges revelation over democratic debate, at least on subjects perceived to be as fundamental as gender and family. Without this conception of morality, Mormons cannot fully practice their religion. For the non-Mormons who are affected by Mormon political action, the moral question is a question of authority. To them, morality requires leaders to restrict their influence to matters they can defend in a language common to both.

ALMOST TWO HUNDRED years after Joseph Smith founded it, the Church is still grappling with the same political questions it started with. Alternately a minority and majority voice, Mormonism uses two kinds of language for different purposes—often at cross purposes. Committed to building God’s kingdom, Mormons favor a theocratic ethic that cites the will of God to determine the courses and boundaries of political action. Committed to pluralism and democracy, Mormons interact with non-believers in



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*R*omney's shift from a moderate to a hard-line Republican parallels the evolution of Mormonism, and his candidacy might be seen as a metaphor for the direction the Church is heading. Both Mormonism's and Romney's political careers involved rightward shifts made in hopes of political survival.

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languages create paradoxes that are implied and safeguarded by the First Amendment's arrangement of church and state—and that the First Amendment cannot resolve. Indeed, these paradoxes are the inevitable consequence of mixing religious unity with secular pluralism. LDS history clearly shows that both Mormons and non-Mormons took turns violating the liberties of the other, and it's also easy to see why they felt they had to.

Mormon history is the transformation of a separatist, politically indifferent sect into fully assimilated, politically active institution. This shift accounts for many of the apparent contradictions in the Church's political positions over the years. Once a peculiar sect that challenged the limits of Victorian sexuality and defied the federal government, Mormonism is now an organization that pours money into restricting a homosexual minority that defies the Protestant sex ethic. These changes in policy, emphasis, and action arose as the early Church slowly moved from anxiety about its own survival to working to ensure the survival of the structure itself. Along the way, the Church reluctantly discarded its theocratic dream in order to win a seat at democracy's table. The legacy of this decision is appropriately paradoxical, as the Church issues neutrality statements it knows it can't keep and often inflicts on outsiders measures like those it once endured as a minority.

SO WHAT SHOULD we make of this convoluted story? Mitt Romney recently ended his presidential bid, but not without a major media to-do about Mormonism. Which makes sense: Anyone with a good grasp of the patterns and tensions in Mormon history would have burning questions. Understanding Mormonism's penchant for theocratic ethics, how would a Mormon candidate negotiate a pluralist society with overlapping rights? Would the LDS Church—founded on the primacy and power of divine revelation—use its leverage and religious logic to direct a candidate's stance on key issues? Would a Mormon president safeguard the separation between church and state? And finally, what kind of politi-

forums where political action is supposed to be decided and conducted on principles of pluralism, reasoned debate, and mutual restraint. These competing lan-

fair one. Unfortunately, as it was discussed in connection with Romney's campaign, the question betrayed a latent paranoia and a soft bigotry that favors state over church. After all, the question is not really about ability but appropriateness; not whether a Mormon *could* be president as much as whether one *should*. When Bill Clinton played the race card on Barack Obama, we gasped. Anyone suggesting Hillary Clinton would be inept as president simply because she is a woman was similarly flayed. Those factors, we insist, have nothing to do with the presidency. When the question concerns religion, however, we play a different game. Suddenly we are concerned.

From a constitutional perspective, the question is strange. Our country's founding compact prohibits religious tests; a candidate should be able to run in spite of or even because of his religious beliefs. On a practical level, however, even a bigoted anxiety makes sense. We sense that religion can influence a candidate more profoundly than can even race or gender—or, if not more profoundly, more irrefutably. Questions of gender and race, while tricky, have been absorbed within the boundaries of political discourse. Race and gender speak the political language of pluralistic democracy. Religion, however, appears to be something apart, a different language existing above or alongside our common one. In an important sense, religion—and religious reasoning—are inarguable from the outside.

We have two classic Mormon problems, then: the problem of freedom and the problem of minorities. The separation of church and state called for in the First Amendment guarantees both freedom to exercise religion and freedom from religion—freedom to a secular life, as well as for religious people, the freedom from the consequences of that secular life. At the kernel of this freedom is a paradox called morality, which both sides cite to safeguard their freedoms *to* and *from*.

Mitt Romney was caught up in this paradox since, as a religious candidate—more precisely, as a conservative religious candidate—he seemed liable to endanger secular rights. And indeed, Romney did espouse policies aligned in many cases with the Christian Right. Oddly enough, though, as Romney's campaign worked harder and harder to woo Christian fundamentalists, anti-Mormon bigotry only increased among the conservative evangelicals who had long ago co-opted the brand of political morality espoused by Romney. On the surface, it would seem that Romney Mormons and evangelicals

cian might Mormonism's shifting history produce?

These questions are important to ask. The question that hounded Romney's run, however, was usually pithier: *Can* a Mormon be President? If this question were intended to grapple with very real tensions between Mormonism and politics—it would be a

would be happy for an alliance. But Romney's rebuffed efforts to forge that alliance merely underscored the minority discrimination to which Mormons are still subject. Mormons, while sharing many conservative political tenets with evangelicals, have a theology that is anathema to hard-line Christians, who, however ambivalent they may be about separation of church and state, demand an even stricter separation of church and church.

This tension stretches back to the beginnings of Mormon history, when those howling for church-state separation were a Protestant majority who resented the affront that Mormonism, as a minority sect, posed to their civil religion. Today, evangelical Protestant values have merged so thoroughly with American culture that evangelicals and observers alike often see the two as indistinguishable. It is for this reason that presidential candidate and Southern Baptist minister Mike Huckabee mostly escaped the kinds of questions about his religion that bedeviled Mitt Romney, who found himself forced to answer—mid-debate—if God has a body. Ironically, the cultural dominance of evangelicals puts them in the position to build their own kind of Zion—a comprehensive political, economic, and social government based on a theocratic ethic that operates at the expense of minorities. Thus, while assimilated Mormonism has abandoned much of the zeal for Zion that characterized its first sixty years, it now finds itself at the mercy of a cultural religion that nevertheless accuses it of not respecting church-state separation.

IF THE MEDIA have any obligation in light of Mormon history, this is it: to carefully and consistently enforce a reasonable separation of church and state regardless of a religion's minority or majority status. Without vigilance, religious majorities will continue to set unfair boundaries for religious minorities. Additionally, potentially helpful and illuminating debates will continue to devolve into attention to doctrinal idiosyncrasies and obscure the truly significant reasons a candidate should or shouldn't be president.

If the media have an obligation to be fairer to Mormons, Mormons likewise have an obligation to be fair with the media. It is true that the notion of the separation of church and state can be oversimplified, with the result that candidates can face unrealistic, and unjust, pressure to divorce their religious convictions from their political convictions. But there are also legitimate reasons for the media to raise questions about church-state relations. Mormonism has a history of overextending its religious influence into the political sphere. Thus, there are real and unsettling trends in

Mormon political history that should be examined in light of Romney's candidacy.

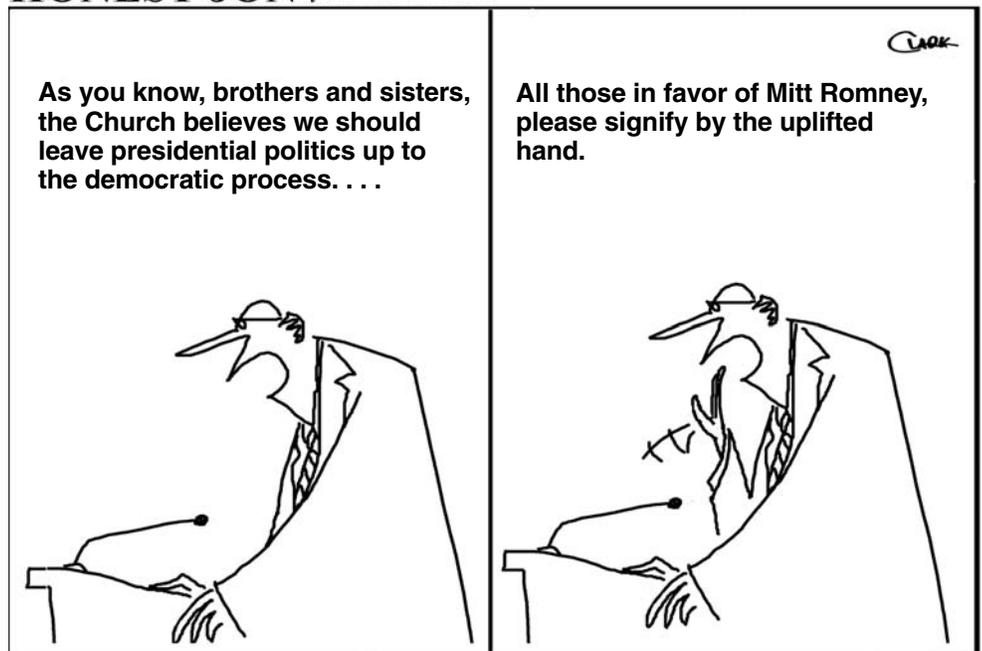
Romney's presidential bid is over, but he remains important as an icon of modern Mormonism. Romney's shift from moderate Massachusetts governor to hard-line Republican presidential hopeful can be seen as paralleling the evolution of Mormonism, and his candidacy may be a metaphor for the direction the Church is heading.

Mormonism's and Romney's political careers both involved rightward shifts made in hopes of political survival. In fact, Romney's career as a moderate liberal governor can be seen as a perhaps surprising product of Mormon assimilation. When the Church agreed to abandon theocracy in exchange for statehood, it sought to retain a more indirect political influence by urging Mormons to run for office.

As we have seen, Church leaders attempted for a time to control which Mormons ran for office. Eventually, however, the Church gained enough indirect political clout, thanks to Mormons' success at aligning themselves with political conservatism, that individual Latter-day Saint politicians were increasingly left free to believe and behave as they wanted. The Church wanted the respectability that came from Mormon participation in the national political mainstream, and that respectability depended in part on overcoming the perception that Church leaders dictated to Mormon voters or politicians. Precisely because Romney came from a highly assimilated—and politically conservative—Mormonism, he was free to be a moderate liberal governor, an option that wouldn't have existed in the more radical but theocratic early Church.

Like the Church, Romney was persuaded to sacrifice political substance for political survival. Thus the erstwhile moderate liberal governor swerved toward hard-line conservatism that seemed better calculated to secure him the high prize of

HONEST JON by Jonathan David Clark



When some BYU students and faculty protested the commencement invitation to Vice President Cheney on political grounds, Cheney supporters immediately spun the issue as a moral one. Those who disagreed with the decision to invite the vice president were denounced as faithless, disobedient dissenters.



BYU students and faculty protest the invitation of Vice President Dick Cheney to speak at the 2007 commencement ceremony

the presidency. But here the parallel to the Church's political reversal breaks down. Romney's reversal does not match Mormonism's evolution from radicalism to conservatism. Mitt Romney defied the theocratic ethic of early Mormon radicalism with his commitment to dialogue and negotiation in a pluralist democracy. Governor Mitt Romney was hardly a separatist, a fundamentalist, nor a theocrat. He provided for gay rights and universal healthcare while being a member of a Church that discouraged both.

In his shift toward political conservatism, Romney travelled both backward and forward in Mormon history. Exchanging a more liberal social vision for a conservative one, Romney as presidential candidate adopted positions that brought his politics more clearly into line with those of the majority of late twentieth-century American Mormons. Yet in making this shift, Romney relied increasingly on the impermeable language of theocracy more than on a rhetoric of dialogue and pluralism. His new conservatism consequently mirrored an aspect of nineteenth-century Mormon radicalism: Echoing early Mormon teaching about Americans as a chosen people inhabiting a promised land, Romney began to argue for security and unity over liberty and difference. Whether the chosen people of Romney's rhetoric were to be understood as Americans generally or truly enlightened religious conservatives more narrowly, either way outsiders were excluded—in one case be-

cause of their foreignness, in the other because of their immorality. Foreignness and immorality were the same grounds on which nineteenth-century Protestants had excluded Mormons from their vision of America as a chosen Christian nation. Romney's rhetoric as presidential candidate also increasingly conflated spiritual and political virtues, rewarding loyalty and treating dissent like political sin.

When Romney gave his abdication speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference, he said two things that are important to note. First, Romney insisted that he was quitting the race

because he loved America. He loved America so much, in fact, that he could not bear to do anything that would threaten America's victory in the fight against "evil extremism." Among the threats to America that Romney named in his speech were terrorism and gay marriage.

Romney's speech accentuates what appears to be historical amnesia. Romney's enthusiasm for strengthening executive power in response to terrorism—such as his call to double the size of Guantanamo—seems odd coming from someone whose polygamous ancestors were persecuted by a federal government unchecked by effective advocacy for the civil liberties of minorities. Like antipolygamists who painted Mormons as recalcitrant rebels shaking their fists at the U.S. government, Romney portrays Islamic extremists in simplistic, distorted terms as incomprehensible villains who cannot abide America's success or the freedoms that America generously offers the rest of the world (by the force of its military and corporate might). Romney's Mormon forebears rejected pluralism in favor of theocracy, resisted domination by an imperialistic U.S. government, even resorted to guerrilla tactics when threatened with violence. With that heritage, Romney would seem to be historically tone-deaf if he cannot at least understand how theocratic Muslims resisting U.S. imperialism might resort to similar tactics. And never mind terrorism: as Romney is a member of a Church that suffered persecution for its un-

conventional marriage practices, one might expect his stance on gay marriage to boast more finesse than denying the legitimacy of any marriage other than the union of “one man and one woman”—or, at least, more consistency.

There were good reasons to reject Romney as a presidential candidate. His positions estranged large groups of people by appealing to an exclusive religious morality. But to say this is to take issue with his positions, not to accuse him of violating separation of church and state. There is little reason to fear that Church leaders would try to invoke their authority to receive revelations in order to direct an LDS president.

Leaders value the Church’s position in the political system too much to jeopardize that status by so blatantly re-inviting old accusations of authoritarian theocracy. Although it is obvious that the Church tries to influence politics, it does so the same way that any other organization does and, on balance, has about the same success. When it comes to individual politicians, the Church makes its positions known but stops short of overt influence. Thus, Latter-day Saint politicians are generally free today to judge politics from whatever standpoint seems most appropriate to them.

While there shouldn’t be much worry about the LDS Church overtly influencing Mormon politicians, there are still legitimate concerns about its ability to influence the Mormon electorate. As we have seen, in the process of assimilation, Church leaders failed to provide a way for members to distinguish between political opinion and religious doctrine. The Church continues to add to this confusion by repeatedly and publicly announcing its political neutrality even as it intervenes in political affairs. In both covert and overt ways, Church leaders still influence Mormon political action and opinion. Less visibly, it exercises influence through PACs and a labyrinth of legal and social networks; more visibly, it declares certain political issues to be moral issues and uses subtle and not-so-subtle communications to enlist its members in the cause.

Even though the Church assimilated into the U.S. democratic system and became more diverse, it never released members from the duty to maintain unity and follow their leaders in both temporal and spiritual affairs. This has resulted in a hermetic logical world in which politics is an extension of religion and dissent is still regarded by many as disobedience. This is why, no matter how many pronouncements of political unity the Church makes, its members remain almost monolithically Republican and treat a conservative status quo with literally religious reverence.

This dynamic was evident when Church leaders invited Vice President Dick Cheney to speak at Brigham Young University’s 2007 commencement ceremony. When some students and faculty protested the invitation on political grounds, Cheney’s supporters immediately spun the issue as a moral one, challenging the faithfulness of those members who opposed Cheney’s visit and the policies of his administration. Oddly, this spin came less from university administrators than from students, who flooded the campus newspaper’s editorial page with letters insisting that protesting Cheney’s visit was the

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

*Religion is something apart, another language
above or beside our common one. In a sense,
religion—and religious reasoning—are
inarguable from the outside.*

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

same as questioning the authority of the prophet (since the invitation had come from Church leaders). Those who disagreed with the decision to invite the vice president were denounced as faithless, disobedient dissenters. Some letter writers even went so far as to claim that disagreeing with Cheney’s political positions qualified as religious dissent, as if Church leaders’ inviting Cheney to speak was a prophetic endorsement of the Bush administration.

When political opposition is denounced as disobedience to God and his servants, democratic dialogue becomes impossible. The paucity of dialogue within Mormonism is dangerous, because it creates a new generation of Mormon bloc voters who ignore history, context, and the ethics required by pluralistic democracy to prop up an insidious status quo. An electorate trained this way is unlikely to defend an appropriate relation between church and state, potentially violating the rights of minority groups in order to prove faithful to what they perceive as the will of God as delivered through prophetic mouthpieces. At the very least, this way of approaching politics encourages many Mormons to support anything that may mean survival or greater prominence for their institution, and this motivation can lead them to vote for candidates who likewise stress survival over substance. Trained to think of politics in terms of preserving institutions and unprepared to engage in meaningful dialogue about difficult issues, Mormons are susceptible to vote for candidates who argue for preserving the security of institutions—the Constitution, the United States—by eroding the civil rights and liberties that make those institutions vital in the first place. ☪

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Whatever our political beliefs may be, using the Book of Mormon to contend with different ideas runs counter to the Christian doctrine of love and unity that permeates the book's pages.

IS THE BOOK OF MORMON A POLITICAL TREATISE?

By Carl Brinton

GIVEN THE MANY OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES IN THE situations facing today's Americans and those that impacted the Nephites of ancient America, I find it puzzling that contemporary Mormons often try to draw issue-specific political lessons from the Book of Mormon, using its text to justify their positions on almost every debate—from the flat tax to the war in Iraq. Such a desire to apply Book of Mormon lessons, albeit anachronistically, is understandable as the book is the core document within the Church and also the main source for governmental commentary within the LDS canon, containing 76 percent of all scriptural references to politics or governance. Still, I'm not at all sure the book was intended to be a sourcebook for political punditry.

Before arguing this final point, I offer two summaries of the way the Book of Mormon's political messages are being applied today.¹ The first is a synopsis of how the Book of Mormon supposedly supports conservative political positions. The second is how other Latter-day Saints are trying to employ the book to support politically progressive opinions. I believe that both approaches overreach the book's intent, and I suggest we'd be better off leaving these kinds of exegesis and argumentation behind and focusing instead on the book's spiritual message.

I. HOW THE BOOK OF MORMON IS CURRENTLY USED IN CONSERVATIVE MORMON POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In this section, I write in the voice and use the evidences and arguments employed by many who see the Book of Mormon as a political document supporting conservative values.

IN HIS APRIL 2003 General Conference Address, "War and Peace," President Gordon B. Hinckley defended U.S. involvement in Iraq:



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In a democracy we can renounce war and proclaim peace. There is opportunity for dissent. Many have been speaking out and doing so emphatically. That is their privilege. That is their right, so long as they do so legally. However, we all must also be mindful of another overriding responsibility, which I may add, governs my personal feelings and dictates my personal loyalties in the present situation. When war raged between the Nephites and the Lamanites, . . . the Lord counseled them, "Defend your families even unto bloodshed" (Alma 43:47). . . . It is clear from these and other writings that there are times and circumstances when nations are justified, in fact have an obligation, to fight for family, for liberty, and against tyranny, threat, and oppression.

As President Hinckley demonstrates, the Book of Mormon is clearly germane to our understanding of how we should view the war in Iraq. Throughout the record, the Nephites encounter villains who are very much like Saddam Hussein—some with even more sinister credentials. So, even though President Hinckley is expressing his own opinion here, it is important to listen to him as he has a deep knowledge and understanding of both the Book of Mormon and the situation the world is in right now. President Hinckley allows for differences of opinion, but he emphasizes that it is our duty to support, not undermine, those who are giving their lives for our liberty.

The Democrats' attempts to withhold funding from our troops in Iraq is similar to what was happening when Captain Moroni wrote the Nephite government demanding help (Alma 59–62). Pahoran, the chief judge at the time, responded that there were politicians who were making it impossible for him to support the troops on the front lines. While no one argues that we should deal with the Democrats the same way that Moroni dealt with the king-men (Alma 62:9), we should understand that when a nation is at war, support rather than criticism, and patriotism rather than selfishness, are essential.

Another source of support for the war in Iraq from the Book of Mormon is Nephi's being led to kill Laban because "the Lord

slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief” (1 Nephi 4:13). The similarities between Laban, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden are striking. While Nephi naturally hesitated to kill anyone, he recognized that he had to remove this obstacle to his family’s—and eventually his nation’s—progress and prosperity. This story shows that in many cases, the death of a wicked person is necessary for the well-being of society.

Many pacifists argue that the Book of Mormon preaches peace, not war, often citing the story of the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi (later called the people of Ammon), a group who, once converted to the gospel, gave up fighting, preferring instead to die at the hands of their enemies rather than lift up their swords (Alma 27:3, 27–30). This is indeed a powerful story of repentance and change, but those who cite this as a justification for pacifism must recall that the Lord instructed the people of Ammon to seek out military protection from the Nephites, and, after a few short years, their children who became known as the “stripping soldiers” and took up their swords to defend their families and their freedoms. This story teaches us the importance of having a strong military not only for our own national security but also for the security of those who would otherwise be defenseless.

In his General Conference remarks, President Hinckley refers to one of the most important political scriptures from the Book of Mormon, the story of Captain Moroni and the Title of Liberty:

[Moroni] rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole. And he fastened on his headplate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat, (and he called it the title of liberty) and he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren. . . . (Alma 46:12–13)

From this passage, we can clearly see that there are times to fight; and the fight against the tyranny and terrorism of Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda is one of those times. Tyrannous and subversive groups of this same ilk cropped up in Book of Mormon times, too, in the form of the Gadianton robbers, who robbed, scourged, and killed Nephites for decades. At one point, the Nephites and Lamanites even

CONSERVATIVE

VIEW:

*The government’s
coercive tactics of
taxing and
redistributing wealth
is the same as
Satan’s plan to
force all people
to do right.*



banded together to defeat them, much as we must do with other countries—even with former enemies—to defeat the scourge of terrorism.

The Book of Mormon teaches that America is a promised, blessed land (Ether 2:7). It indicates that the freedom the colonists attained during the Revolution was granted by the Lord (1 Nephi 13:19) and that such freedom would continue to be enjoyed unless America should forget the Lord (2 Nephi 10:10–14). The U.S. Constitution, which establishes the liberty of this land, is of utmost importance, not only for our legal freedoms, but also for our prosperity and our future. As such, judges, who have the duty to apply the Constitution should merely apply it, not rewrite it.

The Book of Mormon reveals that one of the main characteristics of bad leaders is their wasteful spending which creates a great tax burden upon the people. One such waster was King Noah, who took a fifth of all his subjects’ possessions as a tax (Mosiah 11:3)—a rate that appalled the Nephites at the time but seems like chump change compared to the 40 or 50 percent tax rate some Americans pay today. Opposing the placing of this kind of burden, King Benjamin “labored with [his] own hands . . . that [his people] should not be laden with taxes” (Mosiah 2:14).

The sin of idleness is repeatedly excoriated in the Book of Mormon, yet many of today’s government programs, such as welfare, simply tax hardworking people to benefit

people who choose not to work. Granted, many on welfare rolls are there through no fault of their own, but the government’s coercive tactics of taxing and redistributing wealth is the same as Satan’s plan to force all people to do right. Our fiscal agency is important because charity is more meaningful when given willingly and with proper motives. The Book of Mormon is replete with instances of charity toward the poor, and Church members follow suit through their generous giving through tithes and fast offerings.

Finally, the Book of Mormon clearly teaches that in any foreign policy decisions, our government should keep two things in mind: First, America is a choice land, even to the point of being choice above all other lands (2 Nephi 10:10–14). As such, our nation has the sacred duty to maintain its primacy so we can spread freedom and the gospel throughout the world. Only a strong America will be able to ensure the continued progress of other nations toward peace and freedom. Second, the nation of Israel also holds a special place in history, and, as such, requires our unwavering support. Israel is the land set aside for the gathering of the Jews. It is the land of their inher-

itance, and only if they have the friendship and aid of the most powerful country on earth will they be able to stand up to their myriad enemies in that troubled region.

II. HOW THE BOOK OF MORMON IS CURRENTLY USED IN PROGRESSIVE MORMON POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In this section, I write in the voice and use the evidences and arguments of those who use the Book of Mormon to support more progressive political agendas.

IN AN APRIL 1972 General Conference address, David O. McKay clearly laid out the conditions for what constitutes just versus unjust wars:

There are conditions when entrance into war is justifiable, and when a Christian nation may, without violation of principles, take up arms against an opposing force. Such a condition, however, is not . . . an attempt to enforce a new order of government, or even to impel others to a particular form of worship, however better the government or eternally true the principles of the enforced religion may be.

Despite the threat the Lamanites posed to the Nephites during the hundreds of years of history covered by the Book of Mormon, the Nephites never once waged a righteous preemptive war. They never once attempted to install in Lamanite lands a system of judges elected by the voice of the people (which was often the Nephite system of government), even though that system was freer and more democratic. And the

Nephites never once started a war against the Lamanites because of the Lamanites' false traditions or religion. Hence, if we use the Book of Mormon as our guide, our current preemptive war in Iraq—brought about by the treachery of our leaders and backed by the pretense of installing a new, better government in Iraq—is indefensible.

Even though there may be times when the Book of Mormon seems to indicate that wars are justified, the record's clearer message is that "war is hell" and suggests a way to prevent it. One of the most powerful stories in the Book of Mormon is that of the people of Ammon, who give up their very lives because they refused to kill their brethren. While this is clearly not applicable in all cases, the power of that story shows that the moral ideal is to forego conflict, even if it requires sacrifice. It echoes Christ's radical doctrine of turning the other cheek when an enemy strikes you. Few people realize the deep implications of this doctrine, its eternal truth, or its potentially wide application. Indeed, after Jesus Christ visited the people in the Americas and the people enjoyed a perfect society for nearly two hundred years, even when some began to become wicked and "smite upon the people of Jesus," "the people of Jesus did not smite again" (4 Nephi 1:34).

Even when war was deemed necessary, the focus of the righteous Nephites was always on fair engagement with their enemy, preventing casualties on both sides, and simply driving the enemy out of Nephite lands—not conquering or destroying them. In every instance of war, even during times when the people were wicked, war was accompanied by sorrow and mourning. The most striking example of this comes in pre-

Nephite times as Jaredite battles killed millions of people. The book reports that each night as the survivors would return to their camps, they would take "up a howling and a lamentation for the loss of the slain of the people; and so great were their cries, their howlings and lamentations, that they did rend the air exceedingly" (Ether 15:16). The Book of Mormon record also recounts the sorrows that war brought to the people even in wars waged for righteous purposes (e.g., Mosiah 21:8–15; Alma 28:2–6).

In reference to the Vietnam War, President Harold B. Lee quoted a First Presidency statement about World War II, which read:

[The Church] cannot regard war as a righteous means of settling international disputes; these should and could be settled—the nations agreeing—by peaceful negotiations and adjustments.²

This statement is especially powerful in that it was not offered merely as a personal opinion the way President Hinck-



"Okay. We'll come up with visas . . . but I swear I am never going to write about you guys in my record!!!"

ley's statement on the war in Iraq was. Peaceful negotiations are indeed possible if we will give them the necessary time, deliberation, and, above all, humility. It was pride that brought down the Jaredites and the Nephites. The same pride, now manifest in the "you're with us or you're against us" foreign policy we pursue today, will be the downfall of the U.S. unless we make an immediate course correction. Repentance applies to countries as well as people. All entities should work to become better and seek forgiveness for past indiscretions and wrongs.

The Book of Mormon also teaches us that power corrupts; hence there must be vigorous checks on that power. Nephi didn't want to become the king of his people, and he gave in only after his followers' repeated requests (2 Nephi 5:18). Earlier, the wise brother of Jared cried concerning the institution of a monarchy among his people: "Surely this thing leadeth into captivity" (Ether 6:23). Sadly, his prophecy was soon fulfilled as Corihor, the son of the Jaredites' second king, rebelled against his father (Ether 7:4-5), starting a pattern of corruption and political upheaval that eventually led to the destruction of the Jaredite nation. The recent unchecked expansion of executive power under the Bush administration runs counter not only to the sacred Constitution on which this nation was founded, but also to the eternal principle of governance without unrighteous dominion (D&C 121:37).

In other instances from the Book of Mormon, Alma refused the crown, although, unlike Nephi, he did not give into popular pressure to become their monarch (Mosiah 23:7-14); and Mosiah, who became king after his great father, Benjamin, died, instigated fundamental political reform, changing the government system from monarchy to democracy. Instead of a king, the Nephites would elect a series of judges (Mosiah 29:13-16). Such a system offered the people a voice and allowed for greater freedoms.

Checks against individual power are an important safeguard in any democratic culture, one that is diminished by blindly obedient attitudes toward leaders of the nation. Whether the president is Republican or Democrat, there must be effective checks on that person's power through the legislature, judiciary, media, and election process. Rather than people blindly obeying their leaders, the Book of Mormon makes the case for leaders to obey the people (2 Nephi 5:18), something distinctly lacking today as evidenced by the U.S. government's continuing to wage war in Iraq despite the majority of its citizens who now oppose it.

PROGRESSIVE

VIEW:

The similarities between the Gadianton robbers and how big business works today is shocking. Our entire economic system is focused on getting gain, and most of it at the expense of others.



The Book of Mormon also views as deeply immoral the harsh imprisonment and torture of political prisoners. In his famous address, King Benjamin noted, "Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons" (Mosiah 2:13). If our penal system were to emulate the Christian system of King Benjamin, we would focus more on prevention and rehabilitation than on punishment. Yet we do the opposite: the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the entire world and among developed nations is among the least focused on prevention and rehabilitation.³

As for treatment of prisoners, the Book of Mormon unequivocally condemns torture. Never once is torture used by the righteous, while it is employed several times by the wicked (e.g., Alma 14:22; Alma 20:29; Moroni 9:10). Many "tactics" that some today might call "enhanced interrogation techniques" were employed on Alma and Amulek when they were in jail. These included humiliating them, withholding food and water, stripping them, binding them with strong cords, and hitting them. While this is clearly condemned in the scriptures, some Church members have lost this clarity, as evidenced by Mitt Romney's support for doubling the size of Guantanamo Bay.

Our government currently abridges and limits the rights of its citizens in several ways that the Book of Mormon decries. For instance, many conservative Church members have campaigned in support of a Constitutional amendment designed to limit "marriage" to the legal union between a man and a woman. As members of the Church,

we recognize that homosexual actions are counter to the morality put forth by God through his Latter-day prophets, but such commandments are distinct from policy prescriptions. Regarding policy, one of the most important Book of Mormon doctrines is that "the law could have no power over any man for his belief" (Alma 1:17), a sentiment echoed in the Doctrine and Covenants' treatise on government, which states that "the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience" (D&C 134:4). Given that homosexual couples will continue to cohabit whether or not such an amendment passes, as members of a church that values marriage, we can make a strong case that, while a same-sex couple's lifestyle runs counter to our understanding of God's commandments, providing them more protections and support for their being in a stable relationship would benefit both them and society as a whole.

We must also look at another of the Book of Mormon's main passages with great political implications: care for the poor and

afflicted. Mormon movingly articulates this concern as he recounts Alma's lament over what he saw among the members of his church:

Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted. Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people. (Alma 4:12–13)

In a revelation about the temporal affairs of the restored Church, Joseph Smith suggests the consequences that await such callous, prideful people:

Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment. (D&C 104:18).

We don't use the word "hell" very much in today's Mormonism, but the Book of Mormon invokes it quite often and includes among its inhabitants not only murderers and adulterers but also idol worshippers and the rich who "despise the poor [for] their hearts are set upon their treasures" (2 Nephi 9:30).

The Gadianton robbers described in the Book of Mormon are an example of this evil way of living. Their secret combinations were "that they might get gain" (Helaman 6:17). In today's parlance, one could say they got together and decided to exact a profit from others through coercive and dishonest means. The similarities to how big business works hand in hand with the U.S. government today is shocking. Our entire economic system is focused on getting gain, and most of it at the expense of others: the workers who are laid off or whose jobs are outsourced to cheaper workers in other nations simply out of a desire to return an extra few percentage points to stockholders; the working families who toil with no or inadequate health care; people throughout the world who breathe polluted air, drink polluted water, and deal with the increasingly dramatic effects of environmental degradation and global warming caused, in large part, by greed and special interest groups who corrupt our political system. Corporations such as Halliburton, Blackwater, and Enron are the Kishkumens, Gadiantons, and Akishes of today.

Above all other political themes, the Book of Mormon teaches us the importance of renouncing war and proclaiming peace—something today's Mormonism has all but forgotten. In the June 1976 First Presidency message in the *Ensign*, President Spencer W. Kimball stated:

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we align ourselves against the enemy instead of aligning ourselves with the kingdom of God; we train a man in

the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan's counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior's teaching: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:44–45)

In contrast to President Hinckley's remarks, which offered his personal opinion on why the war in Iraq was justified, President Kimball is here unequivocally speaking in his prophetic office. Although he was, by many estimations, a rather conservative man, President Kimball unflinchingly decries the high levels of defense spending that many Church members support. But it is the end of his statement that is so powerful—about how we too often define patriotism in terms of war-winning rather than peace-building. The Lord tells us explicitly that we are to "renounce war and proclaim peace" (D&C 98:16). How can we love our enemies if we continue to "commit vast resources" toward their destruction?

It seems that the care for the souls of our enemies is all gone out of us. In the Book of Mormon, the Nephites went to great pains to avoid killing their enemies, even giving them many chances to end the fighting. Captain Moroni, one of the most successful generals in the Book of Mormon, detested killing his brethren. Moroni ensured that his men did not kill Lamanites while they were drunk and asleep (Alma 55:19). Even after they had invaded his land, killed his people, stolen his possessions, and reviled his God, Moroni abhorred bloodshed and obeyed Christ's injunction that we seek peace first—that killing one's enemy is a last, last resort.

Brigham Young stated: "Of one thing I am sure: God never institutes war; God is not the author of confusion or of war; they are the results of the acts of children of men. Confusion and war necessarily come as the results of the foolish acts and policy of men; but they do not come because God desires they should come" (*Journal of Discourses* 13: 149). Brigham Young is sure on that point, but it seems our current Mormon culture is not.

III. CONCLUSION

WHILE IT IS understandable for people of every political persuasion to desire to use the Book of Mormon to form and validate their political opinions, they must proceed with the greatest of care. There are two main caveats for using the Book of Mormon as a political document.

First, the Book of Mormon was written in an entirely different cultural, historical, and political context, which makes comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the United States tenuous or even dubious. The first and major difference between the situation faced by Book of Mormon peoples and that in which our society finds itself is our respective geopolitics. For us to understand the Nephites' situation during most of the period of time covered by the Book of Mormon, we would need to conceptualize a neighboring country with a

population several times larger than ours who has a history of repeatedly and aggressively invading our country with the sole intention of subjugating our society, killing our people, and destroying our way of life.

Furthermore, even the domestic political atmosphere of the Book of Mormon is incredibly different from ours. Unlike today's United States, monarchy was the common form of government during the time period chronicled in the Book of Mormon. Many of the people favored monarchy, and certain groups even rebelled against democratic experiments hoping to reinstate the monarchy (Alma 62:9-10). As mentioned earlier, Book of Mormon peoples saw democracy as unusual to the point that they even rejected prophetic counsel in their attempts to pressure Nephi and the brother of Jared to give them kings (2 Nephi 5:18; Ether 6:23). Showing the differences between Nephite and today's American cultures even further, righteous Book of Mormon leaders said that a monarchy would be preferable to a democracy if one could guarantee good kings (e.g., Mosiah 29:13).

One of our currently cherished political principles—the separation of church and state—was virtually non-existent in the Book of Mormon, as several chief judges also served as high priests (e.g., Mosiah 29:42; Helaman 2:2, Helaman 3:37). This would be analogous to President Monson serving simultaneously as President of the United States.

The second caveat against using the Book of Mormon for political guidance is that its main purposes are spiritual, not political. At the spiritual climax of the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ comes to visit the people of the Americas. He has just atoned for the sins of all people, was resurrected to overcome death, and has descended from the heavens to teach the essential Christian doctrine. The order and content of Christ's teaching is, therefore, of paramount importance to understanding the message of the Book of Mormon. Christ first helps each person gain a testimony of his divinity, then gives priesthood authority to Church leaders, then teaches baptism. After these acts, he teaches his doctrine: "For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil" (3 Nephi 11:29).

Whether we are for or against the war in Iraq, prefer public or private control over the economy, or have any other political belief, using the Book of Mormon to sharpen ideological divides and contend with those who differ from us politically runs counter to the Christian doctrine of love and unity that permeates the book's pages.

While polemicizing about the Book of Mormon's political lessons for today's world makes for an interesting topic of conversation and may even serve to deepen our knowledge of good and poor political practices, we must take care that we do not use the book as yet another weapon by which we feel morally superior to those who hold opposing viewpoints. Such a use of the Book of Mormon is antithetical to the book's true purposes: to humble us, to teach us how to beat our swords into plowshares, to help us set eternal riches rather than earthly riches as our aim; and to bring us closer in love to our brothers and sisters and to our God. ☺

NOTES

1. I have gathered these arguments, both conservative and progressive, from articles, blogs, conversations, and observations in sacrament meetings and various classes at church and school.
2. Harold B. Lee, "From the Valley of Despair to the Mountain Peaks of Hope," *The New Era*, August 1971, 5.
3. Gail Russell Chaddock, "U.S. Notches World's Highest Incarceration Rate," *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 August 2003.



CONTAINING IRIS

Her estranged husband tells her,
They're picking up your clothes with sticks.
 It's only partly true.
 He says it to cover his discomfort
 in case we blame him for leaving her
 so long unremembered.

How she ate or slept we can't imagine.
 Every surface in her house has been subdued
 beneath forty-five years of stratigraphy.
 When the neighbors found her,
 she was light as the shrouds of billowing
 dust that catch in our throats
 as we excavate the canyons and shifting
 valley floors of her fossil record.
 Maybe the act of stacking sustained her.

Or maybe this landscape is accidental,
 held in perfect balance against reason
 like the impossible mud arches
 of termites.

A jungle of potted plants thrives
 in the southern windows.
 We pack clothes and photographs.
 Everything else goes into garbage bags,
 until the garage looks like a makeshift morgue
 full of slumping bodies. I've counted—
 nearly two hundred bags to contain her.

—DEB HOHENTHAL

Why do the majority of Mormons vote primarily with right-wing conservatives when it's not in our best interest and our scriptures and theology seem to demand something else?

“WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH MORMONS?”

By Don Nielsen

IN HIS FASCINATING BOOK, *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*, Thomas Frank offers a compelling look at the way evangelical Christians have been exploited by the Republican Party. The book demonstrates how the right-wing of the GOP has marshaled “public outrage over everything from improper flag display to un-Christian art . . . [and] achieved the most unnatural of alliances, bringing together blue-collar Midwesterners and Wall Street business interests, workers and bosses, populists and right-wingers” to foment a revolution that has benefitted Wall Street to the detriment of Main Street.¹

I argue that a similar co-opting has occurred in the Mormon community—hence the title of this essay—notwithstanding the fact that a close alliance with the right-wing Republican agenda is neither in the economic interest of a majority of Church members nor in harmony with our scriptures and theology. In a stampede to be associated with certain conservative religious principles touted by the Republican Party, Mormons are forgetting prophetic warnings about the “pride cycle” into which otherwise well-intentioned people fall because of a self-satisfied belief in their being God’s “chosen people” (see, for example, Helaman 3:1, 33–36). This sense of one’s own righteousness often leads to spiritually destructive emphases such as a reverence for wealth, “costly apparel” and “precious things” (Alma 31:18, 28) and disdain for the poor (Psalms 10:2; 2 Nephi 26:20). By succumbing to the GOP’s aggressive “religious values” campaign, we Latter-day Saints are also distancing ourselves ever farther from the scriptural ideals of Zion and the City of Enoch and are moving perilously closer to Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed not because of

homosexuality, as many believe, but because “pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49).

IWORK FOR the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (which is a union). My responsibilities include outreach to religious and faith-based communities to engage them in the battle to achieve Single Payer healthcare (also known as H.R. 676).² Most religious communities I interact with have been positive and supportive of the campaign to guarantee quality healthcare for all of God’s children. A notable exception to this widespread support among religious groups, however, has been members of my own tradition, Mormonism. Though it would clearly benefit the vast majority of Latter-day Saints to be assured that they, their children, and their grandchildren have guaranteed, quality healthcare, I have had very little success thus far at interesting Mormons in the cause.

Inadequate healthcare is an enormous social problem and puts tremendous stress on many members of the Church, their families, local bishoprics, Relief Societies, welfare committees, and overall ward resources. Given this stress and strain, I am amazed at the opposition to single payer healthcare I find among my fellow members of the Church. Even though many of them have either no health insurance or insurance that is grossly inadequate, and even though they know little about specific single payer healthcare proposals, they react vigorously against the idea. They respond with statements such as, “That sounds like socialism,” “We don’t need government-run healthcare,” or “They tried that in Canada, and it doesn’t work.”³ These statements are often followed up with, “As a church, we don’t get involved in politics,” or “We’re against anything that takes away our free agency.”

We don’t get involved in politics? Certainly we do. We usually characterize our ecclesiastical excursions into the political



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realm as responding not to “political issues” but rather “moral issues.” But isn’t the insurance company-dominated healthcare system we currently have not “immoral?” Why is it we will willingly write to elected officials and canvass neighborhoods over two men wanting to get married but sit back and do nothing about (1) the fact that more than 47 million of our fellow citizens have absolutely no health insurance at all,⁴ while (2) many of the rest of us are underinsured⁵ and at the mercy of insurance companies that depend on the denial of care for their profits?⁶ How could there be anything more restrictive of “free agency” than the deterioration of one’s health

to go as far and as fast as we can in the opposite direction: toward a so-called “free” market system that relies on ever-increasing consumerism for its survival.

RECENT SURVEYS REVEAL that approximately 58 percent of Utahns identify themselves as Mormon. And while of course there are Mormon Democrats in Utah, Utahns still vote overwhelmingly Republican, and President Bush continues to enjoy high approval ratings in the state. Why? If we are to believe Utah State Republican Party Chair Joe Cannon, it is because “the president takes on the tough is-

*I*NSTEAD OF MOVING TOWARD THE LAW OF CONSECRATION,
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due to an otherwise treatable disease or injury? Shouldn’t the concept of free agency be harmonized with the equally important scriptural commandment that we care for the sick and the needy?

Many well-meaning Mormons I’ve encountered contend that individuals must be responsible for their own health care costs rather than care being the responsibility of society as a whole. While personal responsibility is, of course, an important ideal, many people have exercised all the personal responsibility at their disposal and still can’t afford health insurance. And there are many others who find out, usually too late, that the insurance they have is inadequate.⁷

The proposed single payer program is essentially an expanded and improved Medicare system for all. It would guarantee coverage for everyone, protect choice of doctor, promote cost savings by slashing administrative waste, and get the insurance companies out of the way. Yet, as I’ve mentioned, while many religious groups I’ve talked to embrace the concept, when I broach the subject with members of the LDS community, it is as if I were asking them to embrace Satan’s plan to abolish free agency.

To me, it’s hard to imagine a more Satanic approach to fixing a problem involving human suffering than promoting “free market” principles where the drive to maximize profits necessarily requires insurance companies to deny care to the sick and the needy. As it stands now, health insurance is similar to the auto-insurance model in which insurance companies collect your premiums then fight like crazy to keep from paying out in the event of an accident. And in the event companies are forced to pay, they may well cancel the policy or raise the rates in order to recoup the loss. Such an approach to healthcare is morally indefensible especially for a people required to live some day the law of consecration. Instead of moving toward that higher law, it seems that we’re determined

issues that resonate with Utahns. . . . We are where he is on social issues like abortion and gay marriage.” Cannon also states, “Mormons are the African-Americans of the Republican Party—something like 90 percent of black Americans vote Democratic.”⁸

What Cannon and the Republican leadership fail to mention is that fights against abortion and gay marriage are, for all the bluster surrounding them, essentially meaningless when it comes to effecting actual change. Abortion is still legal. No constitutional amendment banning gay marriage has been passed. So if such issues never get real traction, why do conservatives push them so hard? Referring to these kinds of failures in Kansas, Thomas Frank suggests that the right wing keeps pressing “moral issues”

precisely *because* they are not capable of being resolved by the judicious application of state power. . . .

They stoke the anger, keep the pot simmering. . . .

Thus they allow the politician in question to grandstand magnificently while doing nothing.⁹

I believe that like conservatives in Kansas, many Mormons are too distracted by the message that the Republican party has the “values” and “character” that match their own morality to notice their inability to make progress on these issues. Even as more and more factories with good-paying, benefitted jobs keep closing across the U.S., leaving more and more families to sink into poverty and lose their health insurance—because Republicans take on the “tough issues . . . like abortion and gay marriage,” President Bush and his party can do little wrong in the eyes of many Mormons and other religious conservatives.

One member of a ward I used to live in, the chief financial officer of a large corporation and himself well-off financially, candidly admitted to me once, “I always get a kick out of members of the Church who are living paycheck to paycheck or

worse but yet vote Republican and don't seem to realize that doing so is not in their interest." This brother, a Republican, admitted to me that current economic policies have been great for him and his company because they have allowed him to eliminate good-paying union jobs at will and even ship them south of the border. But while he knows how these policies enrich him personally, even he is dumfounded by the fact that average-wage, working-class Church members vote Republican.

Perhaps one reason for this disconnect between real-world issues and how Mormons with average incomes vote is found in the seminal essay by Werner Sombart, "Why is There No Socialism in the United States." In this essay, Sombart speaks about the "embourgeoisement" of the working class, meaning

investigative reporter David Cay Johnston stated:

Adam Smith . . . warned again and again that it is the nature and tendency of business people to want to put their thumb on the scale, and even better, to get the government to put the thumb on the scale for their benefit. . . . They're doing it by taking from those with less to give to those with more. . . . All the way through [the Old and New Testaments] you can read condemnation after condemnation of taking from the poor to benefit the rich. You will come to ruin—it says in the Old Testament—if you give to the rich, and yet that's what we're doing.¹²

Mormons who vote for right-wing economic policies are

MANY LATTER-DAY SAINTS HAVE EMBRACED AN IDEOLOGY THAT TEACHES US, WHETHER WE REALIZE IT OR NOT, TO NOT BELIEVE THAT WEALTH IS PRESUMPTIVELY EVIL—A PRINCIPLE THAT IS CLEARLY ESTABLISHED IN SCRIPTURE. THE ECONOMIC WISDOM OF TODAY'S POLICY MAKERS IS THAT WE CAN IN FACT SERVE BOTH GOD AND MAMMON.

the widespread belief among workers that they can "go to the top or almost to the top of the capitalist hierarchy."¹⁰ In other words, members of the working class often vote against their own interests because they hope to be rich some day and don't want to ruin it for themselves when they get there.

MEMBERSHIP PROJECTIONS VARY from study to study, but it's impossible to deny that Mormonism is now a global faith and is growing outside the United States at a much higher rate than within. Currently the majority of Mormons live outside the U.S., and more Church members speak Spanish than English. As Warner Woodworth and James Lucas state in their 1999 book, *Working Toward Zion*, "The 'typical' LDS person of [this] century will be tan or dark-skinned, urban poor or working class, from a Latin cultural background, and will not speak English."¹¹

Throughout my experiences as a missionary in Brazil (1977–79) and interacting with members in Latin America since then (during an employment stint in the airline industry and via ongoing emails and phone calls with Brazilian missionary companions and other friends), I have yet to hear any Latin American Latter-day Saint clamor for U.S.-like free-market economic policies to come to their nation. What they worry about are the same things most of us worry about: the ability to feed, clothe, and shelter their families and maybe make things a little better for their children. The Latin American members I know worry about the great colossus to the North and its growing domination of their societies. While loyal to the Church, most of them harbor feelings of insecurity about the current administration and its economic policies and wonder why so many U.S. Mormons support them.

In a recent Bill Moyers interview, Pulitzer Prize-winning in-

turning their backs on their brothers and sisters in Latin America, as well as the less fortunate among us here in the U.S. In so doing, they are negatively affecting their own interests as well. It may be reassuring when our LDS men and young boys are dressed in white shirts and ties and our nation's president is where we are "on social issues like abortion and gay marriage," but as our scriptures warn us, none of this necessarily means "all is well in Zion" (2 Nephi 28:21). As the CFO in my old ward admits, even if current economic policies benefit his pocketbook, these policies are not in the best interests of most of us. His point was economic. I believe it's also spiritual, and we need reform.

FOLLOWING HIS DISCUSSION with the rich young ruler about what is required to enter heaven, Jesus pronounced that "it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25). The standard Mormon Sunday School response to this statement by the Savior above goes something like this:

That scripture refers to a gate called "the eye of the needle" that camels had to go through to enter Jerusalem. It was really low, so the camels had to get down on their knees to get through. It's like that for the wealthy. It's not impossible for them to get into heaven—just like it wasn't impossible for the camels to go through the gate—it's just difficult when they let money become too important in their lives.

This interpretation is so widespread among Latter-day Saints that Hugh Nibley felt he had to do what he could to correct this factually and spiritually faulty sentiment in no uncertain terms:

There is no evidence anywhere at all that there was a gate called “The Eye of the Needle.” No, Jesus really meant it: It’s impossible. You’ve got to get rid of your treasures; you have to have the one way or the other. “No man can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24); compromise is out of the question. . . . “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”¹³

As Nibley understood, both the Bible and LDS scriptures abound with passages in which the dangers of material wealth for our eternal salvation are clearly explained: “For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel . . . more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (Mormon 8:36–37). In other places, we are commanded to “be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27); that “it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin” (D&C 49:20); and that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Yet, as the typical Sunday School response to the “eye of the needle” passage reflects, many Latter-day Saints have embraced an ideology that teaches us, whether we realize it or not, to not believe that wealth is presumptively evil, something that is clearly established in scripture. The economic wisdom of today’s policy makers is that we *can* in fact serve both God and mammon.

One helpful contrast to such a theological embrace of wealth can be found in the tenets of “liberation theology,” a method of interpreting Christ’s scriptural message and movement begun among Latin American Catholics, which I first encountered while serving as a missionary in Brazil. One of liberation theology’s main principles is set forth in the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

What exactly does it mean to establish the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven? We know that in the City of Enoch, as well as among the Nephites during the two hundred years that followed the visit of Christ, the common denominator was that “there was no poor among them” (Moses 7:18; 4 Nephi 1:3). Not only was there no poor among them but there was

“peace in the land” and “they did heal the sick” (4 Nephi 1:4–5). These two groups are the best prefigurations of Zion, a way of being in community that Latter-day Saints are supposedly still striving to create today.

As I look at today’s world, however, I see so many people—both Mormons and not—who don’t seem to care anymore about the absence of peace in the land, about healing the sick, or about the fact that there are poor among us. What these people seem to care about is gay marriage, abortion, and the sanctity of the marketplace. As Mormon Christians, how can we continue to espouse political, economic, and social policies and philosophies that perpetuate the existence of war, sickness, and poverty?

I am thankful for the beautiful examples in our scriptures, such as the people of Ammon, which teach us what our reaction to war ought to be (Alma 24). They warn us that “they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matthew 26:52). They admonish us that when someone smites us on our “right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39). They urge us to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (D&C 98:16). Rather than cherishing these scriptures, however, my experience is that when these are brought up in Gospel Doctrine class or referenced in a sacrament meeting talk, they are quite often met by an uncomfortable silence. It’s as if we are embarrassed by them.

ANOTHER FRUSTRATING ASPECT of the acceptance by Mormons of non-scriptural views about wealth is that the party most enthusiastically advocating them, the GOP, has come to be dominated by the evangelical/religious right. Why did Mitt Romney, for example, face his greatest challenges and obstacles from *within* his own party, largely because of his religion?

According to a February 2007 *USA Today*/Gallup poll, 75 percent of “liberals” would be willing to vote for a Mormon as president compared with 66 percent of “conservatives.” Troubling evidence of conservative and evangelical hostility toward Mormonism is abundant. The desire of so many Mormons to “fit in” with or appease these factions is per-

Pontius' Puddle



plexing to me and feels like a betrayal of ancestral sacrifice for our distinctive beliefs and identity.

A large contributor to this problem, I believe, is that our system offers effectively only two political parties. When one believes there are only two choices, one naturally defaults to the one that remains after the other has been shown to be defective.

Hugh Nibley writes of his frustration when he finds himself called upon to stand up and be counted, to declare myself on one side or the other, which do I prefer—gin or rum, cigarettes or cigars, tea or coffee, heroin or LSD, the Red Rose or the White, Shiz or Coriantumr, wicked Nephites or wicked Lamanites, Whigs or

the Lord will approve.”¹⁷ Why can't we have such diversity of political views within the Church today?

THE SAVIOR'S TEACHING, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40), urges us to examine every action regarding our fellow human beings by the standard of acting as if every person were Jesus Christ himself. If this principle is something held dear by Latter-day Saints, the question naturally arises how we can espouse this standard and simultaneously believe that a system of healthcare that relies on the denial of care to vast numbers of the population is

OUR THEOLOGY TEACHES US WE WILL BE JUDGED BY THE DESIRES OF OUR HEART. WHAT ARE THE DESIRES OF OUR HEART? THE GOSPEL TEACHES US THAT THE MORE FAITH WE HAVE IN GOD, THE MORE WE DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS; AND THE MORE WE HELP OTHERS, THE MORE WE WILL LOVE GOD.

Tories, Catholic or Protestant, Republican or Democrat . . . capitalism or communism? *The devilish neatness and simplicity of the thing is the easy illusion that I am choosing between good and evil, when in reality two or more evils by their rivalry distract my attention from the real issue.* The oldest trick in the book for those who wish to perpetrate a great crime unnoticed is to set up a diversion, such as a fight in the street or a cry of fire in the hall that sends everyone rushing to the spot while the criminal as an inconspicuous and highly respectable citizen quietly walks off with the loot.¹⁴

I believe Nibley is right in arguing that the choice between being Republican or Democrat is not a choice between good and evil, or even between two goods. Both parties are to be blamed for much of today's consumerism and continued increase in division between the rich and the poor. David Cay Johnston sums up his findings about government policies that subsidize the richest on the backs of the poor this way: “There's one party in Washington. It's the party of money. It has different wings and factions. But Washington is the party of money.”¹⁵

Even with this strong caveat, I still can't understand why the Mormon choice to support Republican policies seems so unexamined since, on the whole, the GOP is much deeper entrenched in theories that favor the rich. Historian Thomas Alexander writes that in the early twentieth century, “Democratic Mormons like Brigham H. Roberts . . . believed that a pluralistic political system necessitated an active loyal opposition.”¹⁶ There was once even a significant number of socialists active in the Church, and the early Church cautiously welcomed their political voice as evidenced by President Joseph F. Smith's statement that he saw “no harm in the wise and intelligent study of socialistic principles, such of them at least as are true as the teachings of the Gospel and the spirit of

acceptable. Wouldn't denying healthcare to someone be the same thing as denying healthcare to Christ himself? Wouldn't it be a direct denial and rejection of the divine each of us claims exists in all of us? Given my role with a nurses union, I use healthcare as my main example. But certainly the same principle applies to every other public policy issue.

Our theology teaches us we will be judged by the desires of our heart (Alma 41:3). What are the desires of our heart? The gospel teaches us that the more faith we have in God, the more we desire to help others; and the more we help others, the more we will love God. Cornell West once said:

I speak as a Christian—one whose commitment to democracy is very deep but whose Christian convictions are even deeper. . . . To see the Gospel of Jesus Christ bastardized by imperial Christians and pulverized by Constantinian believers and then exploited by nihilistic elites of the American empire makes my blood boil. . . . I do not want to be among those who sold their souls for a mess of pottage—who surrendered their democratic Christian identity for a comfortable place at the table of the American empire while, like Lazarus, the least of these cried out and I was too intoxicated with worldly power and might to hear, beckon, and heed their cries.¹⁸

I hope that my actions will one day be fully consistent with desires of a heart like that of which West speaks. May it be so for all of us. ☪

NOTES

1. Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), from the dust jacket.
2. Single payer healthcare, as set forth in H.R. 676, a federal bill, would establish a universal health insurance program with single-payer financing by cre-

ating a publicly financed, privately delivered healthcare system that would ensure all Americans have the highest quality and most cost-effective healthcare services regardless of employment, income, or healthcare status.

3. H.R. 676 is not socialism because government would not own the means of production, and hospitals and doctors' groups would still be allowed to make a profit. "The reality is that the best foreign healthcare systems, especially those of France and Germany, do as well or better than the U.S. system on every dimension, while costing far less money." See Paul Krugman, "Health Care Excuses," *New York Times*, 9 November 2007.

In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Judy Foreman writes that "an impressive array of data shows that Canadians live longer, healthier lives than we do. What's more, they pay roughly half as much per capita as we do (\$2,163 versus \$4,887 in 2001) for the privilege. . . ."

Foreman quotes Dr. Barbara Starfield, a distinguished professor at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, who says, "By all measures, Canadians' health is better. . . . [Canadians] do better on a whole variety of health outcomes, including life expectancy at various ages."

She also cites Dr. Stephen Bezruchka, a senior lecturer in the School of Public Health at the University of Washington in Seattle. "There isn't a single measure in which the U.S. excels in the health arena. . . . We spend half of the world's health-care bill and we are less healthy than all the other rich countries. . . . Fifty-five years ago, we were one of the healthiest countries in the world. What changed? We have increased the gap between rich and poor. Nothing determines the health of a population [more] than the gap between rich and poor."

The article also quotes Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School, who argues that "the summary of the evidence has to be that national health insurance has improved the health of Canadians and is responsible for some of the longer life expectancy." See Judy Foreman, "In Health, Canada Tops U.S." *Los Angeles Times*, 23 February 2004.

4. U.S. Census Bureau, found at http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income_wealth/007419.html; see also The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities at <http://www.cbpp.org/8-29-06health.htm> (accessed 2 February 2008).

5. On 6 August 2007, *Consumer Reports* reported that four in ten Americans are "underinsured." Half postponed needed medical care because of cost. One quarter had outstanding medical debt. Only 37 percent said they were prepared to handle unexpected major medical bills. See http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2007/08/CU_Insurance.html (accessed 2 February 2008).

6. While premiums have ballooned by 87 percent in the past decade, insurance industry profits have climbed from \$20.8 billion in 2002 to \$57.5 billion in 2006. During that same period, healthcare interests spent \$2.2 billion on federal lobbying, more than did any other sector. And as of December 2007, the insurance industry had flooded the presidential candidates with more than \$11 million in campaign contributions to keep the present system intact. See http://www.centerforlaborrenewal.org/?P=A&Category_ID=/&Article=202&PHPSESSID=0f8d (accessed 2 February 2008).

7. A 2007 Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that average family premiums are now \$12,106 — not including the additional charges for deductibles and co-payments for everything from doctor's appointments to prescription drugs to emergency care. See http://www.kaisernetwork.org/dailey_reports/rep_index.cfm?DR_ID=474507 (accessed 2 February 2008).

8. Bob Bernick, Jr., "Utah No. 1 in Approval of Bush," *Deseret Morning News*, 28 July 2006.

9. Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?*, 101 (emphasis added).

10. Werner Sombart, *Why Is There No Socialism in The United States?* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1976), 115–19.

11. Warner P. Woodworth and James W. Lucas, *Working toward Zion: Principles of the United Order for the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1999), 5.

12. *Bill Moyers Journal*, 18 January 2008, transcript available at <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/01182008/transcript.html> (accessed 7 March 2008).

13. Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, ed. by Don E. Norton, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, Vol. 9 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 315. Earlier in the book, Nibley defines "mammon" as "the standard Hebrew word for any kind of financial dealing" (p. 37).

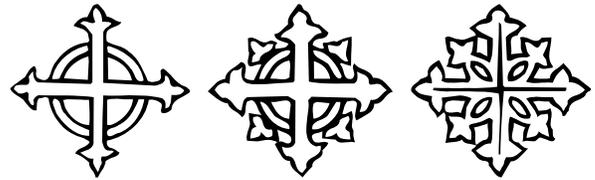
14. *Ibid.*, 163–64 (emphasis added).

15. *Bill Moyers Journal*, 18 January 2008, transcript.

16. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 31.

17. *Ibid.*, 184.

18. Cornell West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight against Imperialism* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 171–72.



TOUR OF VERMONT VILLAGES

I approach the Vermont village
by winding road.
Houses disappear around corners
but the church spire
points like a compass needle,
not magnetic north,
but magnetic all the same.

It's the sacred hub
of these tiny villages
they tell me.
Always the highest point.
Always the door that's ever open.

Made me think of New York
where churches must draw straws
with skyscrapers
for what looms largest.

Here, the soul
is never in any doubt.
The church needs no altar.
It is an altar.
with surrounding stores and houses
as its pews.

And forget denomination.
Unlike New York again,
each house of worship clearly marked . . .
sure sins are cleansed
but not at the expense of dogma.

I park outside that church.
Up close,
it's plain as parents,
equally as comforting.
I enter because
where else would my journey begin?
I'll find that covered bridge later.
For now,
the spirit is a bridge
and I'm covered.

—JOHN GREY

SUNSTONE readers weigh in about the relationship between their faith and their political views.

HOW DOES YOUR MORMONISM AFFECT YOUR POLITICS?

THE DESIRE TO CONNECT one's faith to specific political issues strikes me as a Protestant thing to do. I know many Mormons have strong political views, especially on issues that relate to the family (such as abortion or gay marriage), and they see those views flowing out of particular LDS faith-related commitments (such as belief in the eternal family). But when I consider the relationship between politics and my Mormon faith, I find that my faith has a lot to say about political order, but little to say about the specifics of policies within that order.

For instance, as a Mormon I see my faith speaking to the importance of government "by the voice of the people," as well as some warnings about what can happen when the people collectively make bad choices. As a Mormon, I also envision a future social order in which the people are of one heart and one mind and have all material things in common, and agree collectively to live according to the law of God, which I understand to be, in its highest manifestation, the pure love of Christ. From this vision, stems my awareness that current U.S. social, political, and economic configurations fall far short of that ideal.

As a Mormon, I understand the principle of agency to be of paramount importance. My understanding of the way agency works out in practice suggests that it is quite possible that there is no one "right" way to solve the many problems we face, so long as we solve them. Those problems include a growing ecological crisis and profound economic and social inequities (both local and global), which lead to political and social instability and the all-too familiar problem of terrorism and a host of other social ills, such as family instability and anomie, chemical abuse, and crime. Based on my reading of the Book of Mormon, Latter-day Saints should be particularly concerned about extreme inequality and the degradation of



BLOG.PETA/LOP.DE

the poor. We should be particularly concerned that the tone of American politics seems to be increasingly dominated by "the spirit of contention." Now, more than ever before, it seems U.S. citizens no longer share a common vision of what it means to be American, and are demonizing those who disagree with them.

Mormon faith offers us few prescriptions about how to tackle such problems, just broad principles. But that we should be—that we must be—concerned about the social order and trying to perfect it, I have no doubt. Because, again, Mormons have always been rooted in the principle that our kingdom is very much of this world. A paradox of Mormon faith is that, while we believe in the Millennium and we look forward to it

with our whole hearts, we've never been much for just waiting for it to happen. We're all about doing what we can to start making it happen, right here, right now—in our wards, in our communities, and in our nation.

JOHN D. GUSTAV-WRATHALL
Minneapolis, Minnesota

THE 2008 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAS brought a renewed interest nationally about Latter-day Saint attitudes toward, and doctrines about, politics. In recent decades, Latter-day Saints have distinguished themselves as avid believers in democracy while also going to great lengths to show their patriotism and allegiance to the U.S. government. While a commitment to democracy is consistent with Latter-day Saint scripture, unquestioning obedience to political authority is not.

A common theme in LDS scripture is a deep suspicion of power and the exercise of political authority over others. This suspicion is based on the assumption that power tends to corrupt those who acquire it:

We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men [and women], as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. (D&C 121:39)

Latter-day Saints are to “befriend” the laws of the U.S. Constitution because such laws support “that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges” for “all mankind,” against the threat of unrestrained government authority (D&C 98:5–6).

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Alma warns those who have fled the tyranny of King Noah that they should not choose for themselves a new king. Rather, “ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another; therefore I say unto you it is not expedient that ye should have a king” (Mosiah 23:7). Such views tend to reinforce the radical view of leadership taught in the New Testament, where Jesus explains, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: . . . whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:25–27).

These examples suggest that Latter-day Saint doctrine advocates a political system that is highly democratic, decentralized, and participatory, and that promotes equality, so that each member of the body politic can act as “an agent unto him [or her] self” (D&C 29:35) and freely decide how to live his or her life, using the ethics of the gospel as a compass and guide. Further, this political freedom and equality should be accompanied by economic freedom and equality, in which “all things [are had in] common among them; therefore there [are] not rich and poor, bond and free, but they [are] all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift” (4 Nephi 1:3).

But what if living under such a system is not possible? How should Latter-day Saints act when living under authoritarian regimes, or when their government, whether democratic or authoritarian, undertakes immoral policies such as waging wars of aggression for economic gain? As Noam Chomsky writes, “A large part of the Bible is devoted to people who condemned the crimes of state and immoral practices” (*Interventions*, 214). Chomsky mentions the prophet Elijah’s condemnation of the wicked King Ahab for killing Naboth in order to take possession of his vineyard (1 Kings 21). In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Abinadi is imprisoned and finally burned to death for criticizing the wicked King Noah (Mosiah 12–17). The example of these prophets suggests it is our religious responsibility to criticize abuses of power, even by those who assume benign-sounding titles such as president or prime minister.

When engaging in politics, we as Latter-day Saints should always remember our religious heritage and seek to promote Latter-day Saint values of democracy, equality, and freedom, while at the same time strongly condemning the crimes of those in power.

WILL VANWAGENEN
Provo, Utah

THAT I AND MOST MORMONS ARE RELIABLY Republican is an overdetermined fact. The data are clear. Were national elections decided by any of the following subsets of voters—those who are pro-life, opposed to dole welfare, supportive of traditional marriage, married (with or without children), active church-goers, strict constructionists, pro-military, or above average in donating money and time to charity—Republicans would always win. The prototypical Mormon is a member of all of these subsets of reliably Republican voters and therefore, unsurprisingly, is a Republican.

The Republican commitment to the hallmarks of political conservatism—choice, accountability, believing that the natural man is evil and that evil must be actively resisted, that salvation requires grace and thus secular utopias are an illusion—echoes the stance we all took during the Council and War in Heaven. There may be dark echoes of the great Council in the Democrats’ stance as well, they being the party of the state, which is distinguished from other institutions most clearly by its compulsory powers and monopoly on the use of force.

Democrats believe in using the power of the state, especially the macro nation-state, to compel citizens to do good—e.g., to give money to the poor. But as the Council made clear, compelled action has no positive moral content. Republicans have faith in free markets, a social institution which embodies choice and accountability. The evidence is in. North/South Korea, East/West Germany, and Mao/Deng China amply illustrate that compulsion by the state—no matter how well intended—cannot address the material needs of humanity. After World War II, it was Hong Kong, the freest of free markets, that most successfully lifted its masses out of abject poverty.

Like France’s Louis XIV, the Book of Mormon’s King Benjamin was the state, but he did not use his monopoly on force to seize the wealth of his people and distribute it to the poor. Rather, he kept taxes low and strongly enjoined voluntarily sharing with the needy. Republicans likewise oppose higher taxes but donate more time and money to charity, giving on average 30 percent more than Democrats, despite being a little less well off financially. (Arthur C. Brooks, *Who Really Cares* [Basic Books, 2006]).

King Mosiah warned that the few are more likely to go astray than the many, but when the few are in power, their moral degradation spreads (Mosiah 29:26). The U.S. under the judicial tyranny of recent years is a case in point. The courts are the least democratic branch of government, the branch in which just four (Massachusetts) or five people (United States) may force significant change. Generally supported by Democrats and opposed by Republicans, the courts have in recent years dramatically altered the moral landscape of the United States, denuding the public square of religious observances and symbols while protecting profanity, pornography, abortion, euthanasia, and sodomy, and foisting on an unsupportive public a redefinition of marriage. Unsurprisingly, when Zeetzrom and others of his profession are given the power to reshape the moral landscape, general moral degradation follows.



PAINTING BY ARNOLD FRIBERG

AS THE PEOPLE of Ammon learned while uncomfortably sheltered behind Captain Moroni's lines, in a fallen world, pacifism is not an option. Sons must sometimes be sent into battle. Evil must sometimes be forced from heaven.



While it is legitimate to create a context for choice, moral outcomes are usually optimized when parameters are provided by micro social units closely connected to the individual—the family, church, and local community. Democrats tend

to support the flow of political power from society's micro to its macro units while opposing the single most legitimate role of the macro state—protecting the people from colossal external evils. As the people of Ammon learned while uncomfortably sheltered behind Captain Moroni's lines, in a fallen world, pacifism is not an option. Sons must sometimes be sent into battle. Evil must sometimes be forced from heaven. Republicans understand this truth more fully than do Democrats.

The arguments above notwithstanding, the Republican Party is at best an imperfect defender of the Mormon values I and others hold dear. It is ultimately entranced by power and is often seduced by Mammon. Its principal grace is its adversary, the Democratic Party, which so thoroughly, so consistently embraces one patently false secular gospel after another.

VAL LARSEN
Harrisonburg, Virginia

“GIVE SAID THE LITTLE STREAM” WAS MY FAVORITE song in Junior Sunday School and Primary sixty years ago. I loved the image of the little stream and the raindrops making the grass green and raising the flowers' drooping heads, making a positive difference in the world. The third verse was aimed at me:

*Give, then for Jesus give;
Give, oh! give,
Give, oh! give.
Give, then for Jesus give;
There is something all can give.
Do as the streams and blossoms do,
For God and others live.*

Unlike the currently favored “I Am a Child of God,” which features a passive child waiting for guidance and teaching from an adult, this song directed *me* to take action. I was to give, not in order to receive earthly blessings nor for the prospect of a heavenly reward, but simply to live “for God and others.” “Others” was not limited to my family nor my church. Giving wasn't limited to grown-ups; “there is something all can give.”

As an adult, I have been impressed with the number of passages in the Book of Mormon advocating help for the poor and condemning those who oppress the poor. The Lord crowns that theme with the law of consecration, for “it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin” (D&C 49:20).

Several years ago, I bucked family tradition and registered as a Democrat. Although no political party is free of corruption and self-interest, the platform of the Democratic Party is closer to the ideals I have learned in church. I support affordable health care for all of Heavenly Father's children. I support immigration reform that deals fairly with the problem of my brothers and sisters from impoverished countries who come here to provide for their families. I support programs to protect Heavenly Father's beautiful earth and all life on it. I support progressive tax policies that do not oppress the poor. I support social programs to alleviate suffering in this country and foreign aid to alleviate suffering in developing countries. I support peaceful means to counter oppression and relieve suffering throughout the world.

I know it is impossible to be sure that social programs are abuse-free, but I try to follow the advice I received as a member of a new Relief Society presidency many years ago. As the outgoing Relief Society president taught us about welfare visits and filling out food order forms, she said: “You will make errors, but it is best to err on the side of generosity.”

In my personal choices as well as my political views, I try to “do as the stream and blossoms do, For God and others live.”

ANN JOHNSON
Cedar City, Utah

I HAVE BECOME MUCH MORE CONSERVATIVE AS I have aged, thereby giving credence to Churchill's adage that “any man who is under thirty, and is not a liberal, has no heart; and any man who is over thirty, and is not a conservative, has no brains.” However, LDS scripture continues to both inform and justify my preference for non-violence.

While I chose to serve as a medic in the Army Reserves during the Vietnam War rather than apply for conscientious objector status (an option I'd not yet heard of when I signed up to serve my country while still in high school), I was and still am nonetheless deeply moved by the story of the people of Ammon, who laid down their lives rather than take up arms against their brethren (Alma 23–24). Despite the persistent recounting of one war after the other in the Book of Mormon, war is not so much glorified in the book as simply reported. If anything, the excesses of war are declared repugnant to religion (cf. Mormon's resignation of his commission in Mormon 3). While I do believe some wars (e.g., WWII) are just, neither

Vietnam nor the current war in Iraq seems to meet the criteria laid out in D&C 98:33–34.

For this reason, just before President Bush and the U.S. Congress declared war on Saddam Hussein, I was found arm-in-arm with young, long-haired liberals, protesting in the street in front of our town’s city hall. But my picket sign was quite different from each of theirs: “*Renounce War; Proclaim Peace (D&C 98:16).*” As one might imagine, explaining that citation between verses of “Give peace a chance” gave me plenty of opportunity to ask those “golden questions.”

LDS scriptures are replete with stories and even commandments that teach us to eschew violence. Dramatic incidents such as Nephi’s being told by the Lord to take the life of Laban are exceptions that seem to prove the rule that turning the cheek is almost always the better way. Even during the Mormon persecutions of the 1830s, when self-defense and even retaliation were clearly justified by my ancestors, the Lord’s preference for how one should treat one’s enemy was loud and clear: “And then if thou wilt spare him, thou shalt be rewarded for thy righteousness; and also thy children and thy children’s children unto the third and fourth generation” (D&C 98:30).

I’ll confess that I have grown more comfortable with the idea of capital punishment in my later years than I was as a young liberal. There are some people this world is simply better off without, and one need not search too far in LDS scripture to find justification for the capital punishment of those who through their actions against humanity have forfeited the right to live. But even so, the injunction to forgive is everywhere in Mormon doctrine—an ideal one can ignore only at his or her peril.

Do LDS scriptures provide clear answers to every political problem one might encounter? Of course not. After all, Mormonism counts among its faithful both Harry Reid and Mitt Romney—each of whom professes to read and be guided by those scriptures. But can the scriptures provide sound direction for greater ethical commitment within the context of our political leanings? Amen and amen.

ROGER ROBIN EKINS
Paradise, California

THE GREAT STRENGTH INHERENT IN MORMON conservatism is its appeal to traditional social values without the blatant advocacy for “Christianizing” the nation that is justly offensive to people of other faiths or no faith.

I believe we need to continue to champion the apolitical nature of the Church to the public and avoid outright advocacy of traditional marriage initiatives and other agendas, trusting that proper understanding of gospel principles will yield votes supportive of such efforts without public stumping using Church organizations.

I believe we need to clearly and publicly distance ourselves from the repugnant agenda of the Christian Right. The Christian Right’s militant advocacy of specific political candidates, judicial appointments, and curriculum agendas, such as teaching creationism in schools, alienates many would-be voters from supporting conservative candidates and conservative values. The less Latter-day Saints are associated with that agenda, the better. A “Christian nation” as championed by Christian fundamentalists would be an environment hostile to Mormons and people of other faiths. Let’s steer clear!

JOE SHOOPACK
San Diego, California

MY OBSERVATION IS THAT LATTER-DAY SAINTS often allow “cultural Mormonism” to become confused with the gospel of Mormonism. There is a great dichotomy between the stereotypical Mormon and the personification of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The stultifying, oppressive influence I see and dislike most is the omnipresent pressure to conform to “acceptable” Mormon thought. If the bishop or stake president or any General Authority expresses or implies an opinion on any issue—be it anti-abortion, anti-gay rights, pro-Republican, pro-imperialism, pro-military, anti-consumerism, whatever—the rank and file seem to generally accept it without question as part and parcel of the gospel. The unspoken implication is that if you don’t support these “establishment” opinions, you are somehow deficient in your faithfulness. It matters not if the

 **Pontius’ Puddle**



THE EXTREME POVERTY I witnessed on my mission opened my eyes to how unfeeling the market could be. Theories of comparative advantage didn't seem to be helping the villagers living in trash dumps, salvaging plastic they could recycle for money.



opinion (such as support for the war in Iraq) runs counter to Christ's message.

The abortion issue can serve as a good test case. In the Council in Heaven, Jehovah advocated agency while Lucifer proposed forcing people to do what is right. The morality of the particular issue is not the key question. Both my wife and I are unalterably convinced that, except in the case of rape or incest or certain unquestionable birth defects, abortion is a terribly immoral act. We would never condone it. But likewise we would not favor laws to countervail the free agency of those who feel that terminating a pregnancy is the right choice for them.

I believe there is a deep-seated prejudice among Latter-day Saints to *make* people be "good"—either through legislation or social pressure—and to support candidates who favor this kind of approach. Until Mormons learn to vote more objectively, I propose (only half-kiddingly) that everyone with a temple recommend be banned from voting unless they can defend their choice on its own merits—and on gospel grounds—not simply because a Church leader stated it as his or her position.

DAN PASCAVAGE
Chardon, Ohio

MY MISSION WAS A SEMINAL INFLUENCE ON MY politics, not because of any doctrine I learned but because of the living conditions I observed in the Philippines. When I returned to BYU, the typical narratives supporting capitalism no longer satisfied me. The extreme poverty I had witnessed had opened my eyes to how unfeeling the market could be. Theories of comparative advantage didn't seem to be helping the villagers living in trash dumps, salvaging plastic they could recycle for money. The "liberal" ideas I was being taught in my English and anthropology classes seemed to make more sense.

With my new-found skepticism of capitalism, reading the scriptures became enlightening in ways that I hadn't anticipated. Capitalistic axioms had been constraining my understanding of LDS doctrine.

One of my first epiphanies came as I stumbled upon this scripture referring to the United Order: "This is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low" (D&C 104:16). The justification for capitalism's inequities in wealth hinges on the principle of the "invisible hand" that transforms self-interest into public good. This idea declares that when people selfishly pursue their own interests, everyone else benefits: the poor are exalted as the rich are exalted. Tell most economists that you favor providing for the poor by taking from the rich,

and they will tell you that if the rich are made low, everyone is made low.

Because it relies on a Darwinistic view of the world, capitalism cites a lack of resources as a leading cause for poverty: there are simply too many people competing. The Lord explodes this myth: "For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare" (D&C 104:17). Resources may be limited but are still plentiful. The problem is not the amount of resources but our management of them. People are not hungry for a lack of food; Americans throw away enough food to feed nations. The world is not broken, but the way we treat it is.

The Old Testament reveals even more wisdom regarding the economy: "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger" (Leviticus 23:22). Here, not only does God give the farmer the chance to pass along God's generosity in providing for a bounteous harvest, but he allows the poor to remain anonymous, allowing them to take what is needed without guilt and absolving them of the obligation to return the gift. Contrast this with America's highly provisional aid packages, which do little more than ensure that developing nations will remain subject to our business interests.

The cult of the individual and the American ideal of self-determination had also stunted my gospel understanding by masquerading as the principle of self-reliance. A survey of the scriptures will reveal that the only mentions of self-reliance are passages that condemn it: "Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jeremiah 17:5). Rather than pretending to earn our material blessings, we are counseled to show our appreciation for God's mercy by being merciful in turn: "If God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another" (Mosiah 4:21).

It's not my purpose to impose a particular politics on Latter-day Saints. In fact, I believe that there is a lot of merit to capitalism. My concern is that doctrines of a worldly philosophy such as capitalism can disguise themselves as gospel principles. Politics' focus on expediency can lower the mark of perfection until marginal, material gains become our ideal. Because the Lord's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, scripture has the potential to challenge our status quo. I would encourage any Mormon to be open to this possibility.

NATE HOUSLEY
Sandy, Utah

MORMONS AND POLITICS

MORMONISM AND TORTURE—
PARADOXES AND FIRST PRINCIPLES

By Boyd Petersen

MITT ROMNEY'S CAMPAIGN for the presidency put Mormonism into the spotlight even though Romney tried time and again to shove it back into the wings. While Romney had to face questions about whether he is really a Christian, about whether his allegiance to a Mormon prophet would come before his allegiance to the Constitution, and even about his Mormon underwear, it was sometimes difficult to see how his religion affects his political beliefs. His shift on abortion was characterized as political expedience: some saw it as pandering to the evangelical community while others viewed his original pro-choice position as pandering to the more liberal Massachusetts voters. On *60 Minutes*, he dodged a question about polygamy by stating that he couldn't "imagine anything more awful than polygamy."¹ He tried to slough off a *Newsweek* reporter's question about whether or not he practiced baptism for the dead, a practice which has attracted controversy over ordinances performed for Jews killed in the Holocaust, by stating, "I have in my life, but I haven't recently."²

Because of these many attempts to minimize his Mormonism during his campaign, it should come as no surprise that the question of how his Mormon beliefs would influence his views on controversial interrogation techniques such as waterboarding largely remained unasked. In one of the Republican presidential debates, Romney was asked about these techniques and responded by suggesting we should double the size of Guantanamo Bay. "I don't want them on our soil," Romney stated. "I want them on Guantanamo, where they don't get the access to lawyers that they get when they're on our soil. I don't want them in our prisons. I want them there."³ While it is hard to tell whether

this is an accurate reflection of what Romney would have advocated as president, or simply the type of political bravado we expect in political debates, there were legitimate reasons to reflect on how Romney's Mormonism might have influenced his actions regarding torture should he have been elected.

LIKE any religion, Mormonism thrives on paradox. Inevitably two fundamental but contradictory propositions, both established as true, will come into conflict. While Mormonism shares with Christianity the violent Old Testament scriptures in which God commands Israel to destroy other nations, as well as the pacifism of New Testament scriptures advocating "turning the other cheek," Mormonism's own scriptures also provide paradoxical statements about war and human rights. On the one hand, the Book of Mormon begins with Nephi's being commanded to cut off Laban's head after Laban had spurned repeated attempts to acquire the brass plates and had threatened to slay Nephi and his brothers. The justification for Nephi's slaying Laban is that "it is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).⁴ Since Nephi obtained information (i.e., his family's records) at the cost of one man's life, this story could be read as support for the position that obtaining from detainees information that could keep a nation safe is worth the suffering of a detainee in Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib. Then there are the emotionally stirring words of Captain Moroni as he rallies his army to war and writes on his "standard of liberty" the words: "In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children" (Alma 46:12–13). Many young

Mormons are also inspired by the story of the two thousand stripling soldiers, who "took their weapons of war to defend their country" (Alma 53:18).

On the other hand, one of the most moving Book of Mormon narratives involves the people of Ammon, who, after their conversion, made an oath never to shed blood again and "buried their weapons of war deep in the earth" (Alma 26:32). As a result, many of them "laid down their lives . . . because of their love and of their hatred to sin" (Alma 26:34). The Doctrine and Covenants calls on Church members to "renounce war and proclaim peace" (D&C 98:16). It is also important to note that the Book of Mormon (and, within it, the Book of Ether) ends with unrestrained warfare's ultimate result: the complete annihilation of a people. Any positive message given about warfare is undermined by the Book of Mormon's tragic ending.

THE ways this paradox has influenced individual Mormons have recently found their way into the news. In July 2007, *Vanity Fair* published an article that disclosed the fact that the two authors of the new torture techniques being practiced by CIA interrogators are both Mormon psychologists: James Elmer Mitchell and Bruce Jessen—who, because of their shared religion, were referred to by colleagues as the "Mormon mafia." In addition to devising or adapting the new information extraction techniques, Mitchell and Jessen also were put in charge of training interrogators in these new techniques—including "waterboarding"—at CIA "black sites" throughout the world.

Steve Kleinman, an Air Force Reserve colonel and expert in military intelligence, notes the peculiarity of the CIA's choosing "two clinical psychologists who had no intelligence background whatsoever, who had never conducted an interrogation . . . to do something that had never been proven in the real world." Another terrorism expert, Michael Rolince, described the tactics as "voodoo science." Rolince said that the goal was to "break down" the suspects "through isolation, white noise, completely take away their ability to predict the future, [and] create dependence on investigators." Although the Bush administration claimed that interrogators received careful training, many actually received only "on-the-job training during brutal interrogations that effectively unfolded as live demonstrations." Kleinman feels that Mitchell and Jessen "have caused more harm to American national security than they'll ever understand."⁵



BOYD PETERSEN has a Ph.D. in comparative literature and is the program coordinator for Mormon Studies at Utah Valley State College. He is the author of the award-winning biography Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life and is SUNSTONE's "Mormonism and politics" editor.

The Mormon psychologists who devised the new torture techniques “have caused more harm to American national security than they’ll ever understand.”

Coincidentally, defending the use of these questionable interrogation techniques fell to another Mormon, Judge Jay Bybee, a graduate of BYU law school. In August 2002, Bybee was the head of the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel. Bybee signed off on a controversial memorandum stating that any interrogation techniques were legally permissible as long as the pain they caused was less than “serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily functions or even death.” If the intent is to gain information rather than cause harm, the memo reasoned, the technique would be justifiable and could not be classified as torture.

While the memo was eventually disavowed by the White House, it caused a controversy, including among Latter-day Saints. Dan Burk, an LDS law professor at the University of Minnesota, was irate and started a debate about the memo on the Mormon blog *Times and Seasons*. “I cannot believe that the practice of torture is acceptable to anyone who claims to be a disciple of Jesus Christ,” wrote Burk. “There seems to me something seriously awry in a government that is stockpiling legal justifications in preparation for such activity. But the support and leadership of at least one, and possibly more Latter-day Saints in such preparations is deeply troubling.”

In response to Burk, Nate Oman, a law

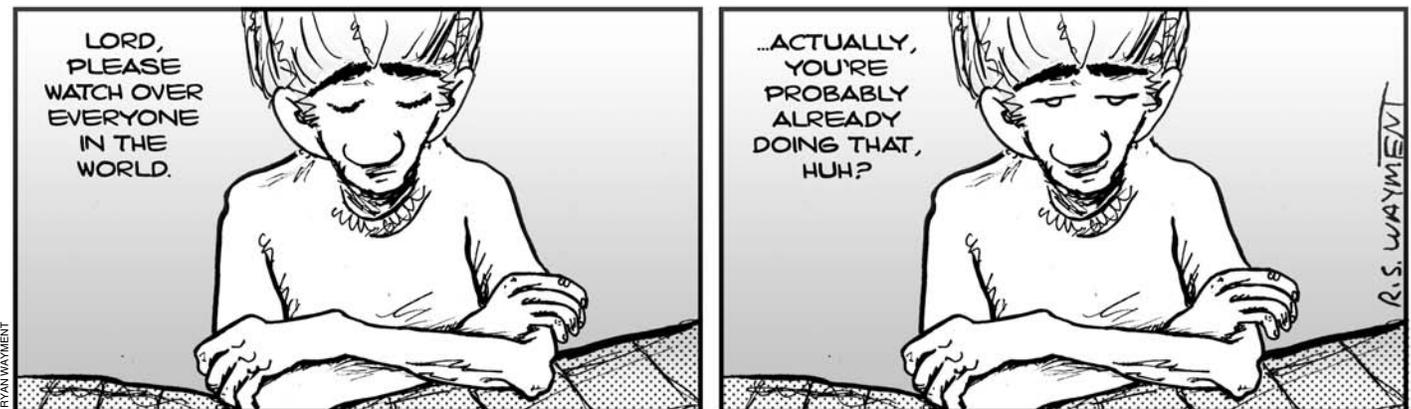
professor at William and Mary, asked whether the LDS gospel commits Mormons to a particular ethical approach. He noted that “if we are utilitarians,” it might be morally justifiable to torture someone in order to get information they had about a ticking bomb that was set to go off in an orphanage; but, he writes, “it is probably not morally justifiable if we are Kantians.” Oman notes that Burk’s argument rests upon the view that “good Mormons must be Kantians,” but Oman also recognizes the paradox discussed above as he writes, “On the other hand, one can point to fairly utilitarian moral claims in scripture.”⁶

Peggy Fletcher Stack summarized the debate within the Mormon community in a *Salt Lake Tribune* article. She quoted Fred Gedicks, a BYU law professor who refused to defend Bybee’s memo but added that “it’s fine to talk about the teachings of the Savior about peace, but when the other side is not living those teachings, there are real risks by living them unilaterally.”⁷ In that same article, another Mormon, Michael K. Young, currently the president of the University of Utah but formerly a deputy legal advisor in the State Department during the presidency of George Bush Sr., said his approach in advising the president was to provide explanations about what the government *could* do legally as well as what they *should* do morally. “You can often go beyond that and say that while tech-

nically one is prepared to do this, there are a whole lot of reasons you don’t want to do this, some of them morally based.”⁸

THE torture debate became tragically personal for one Mormon soldier. Alyssa Peterson, a returned missionary with a gift for language, earned a psychology degree from Northern Arizona University on a military scholarship. After graduation, she went to the Defense Language Institute, where she quickly learned Arabic. At 27, she was sent to Iraq, where she served in an intelligence unit assigned to a prison at Tal-Afar, in northwestern Iraq, conducting interrogations and translating enemy documents. On 15 September 2003, the military reported that she had been killed by “non-hostile weapons discharge,” only the third female soldier killed in Iraq. Her father reported to co-workers the day before her death that he had a premonition that his daughter was in trouble.

An NPR reporter for KNAU in Flagstaff, Arizona, Kevin Elston, also had a feeling that something was wrong—in this case with the Army’s official explanation. Upon filing a Freedom of Information Act request, he discovered that Alyssa Peterson had died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Peterson had objected to the interrogation techniques being used on prisoners, and after just two nights working in “the cage,” she refused to participate any longer. When Peterson resisted orders, she was told that this was a new kind of war and the old rules no longer applied. Peterson was reassigned to the base gate, where she monitored Iraqi guards. She was also sent to suicide prevention training. Elston reported that a suicide note was found on Peterson’s body which stated that she found it ironic that suicide prevention training had taught her how to commit suicide.⁹



Army spokespersons in Peterson's unit have refused to describe the techniques used there and say all records of these interrogations have been destroyed. But Kayla Williams, a soldier who worked with Peterson, reported that in one method, "they stripped prisoners naked and then removed their blindfolds, so that I was the first thing they saw. And then we were supposed to mock them and degrade their manhood." In a September 2006 CNN interview, Williams stated, "What I saw was that individuals who were doing interrogations had slipped over a line and were really doing things that were inappropriate."

While Peterson found it impossible to speak out in opposition to such interrogation techniques, former military personnel find it easier to do so. In an opinion column published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* in December 2007, David Irvine, a Latter-day Saint attorney, brigadier general, and former Army Reserve intelligence officer, described a meeting of fifteen former officers with Republican candidate Mike Huckabee. The officers included a four-star Marine general, a three-star Army general, a Navy rear admiral, an Army psychiatrist, the commander of the Pacific fleet's submarine forces, and an assortment of infantry division commanders. The fifteen represented a group of fifty retired admirals and generals who oppose the use of torture by the military and CIA.

The generals asked for individual meetings with each of the presidential candidates of both parties to educate them about the problems torture causes for national security, its inconsistency with American moral standards, and its unreliability as a means of gathering reliable information. All of the Democratic candidates accepted the offer to meet with the group. Of the Republican candidates, only Huckabee accepted (although McCain's opposition to torture is well-documented). Irvine was impressed by Huckabee's reaction to the meeting: "Waterboarding is torture, and torture violates the moral code of Americans and jeopardizes the country's security," Huckabee stated. Irvine reflected on the moment: "As the only Mormon in the room, I found myself regretting that Mitt Romney had declined the invitation. It was evident from Huckabee's comments that his faith had informed his revulsion for torture."¹⁰

EVEN though he was never asked about it specifically, Mitt Romney's Mormonism likely informs his views on the use of torture just as it does for any studious Latter-day Saint. But, as this brief

summary shows, Mormon scripture offers paradox rather surety. Should we in all places and times "renounce war and proclaim peace," or should we adopt the view that it is better that "one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief"? Both sides can be supported with Mormon scripture. And Latter-day Saints have found themselves, with tragic consequences, on both sides of this moral debate.



NOTES

1. "Some Mormons Worry as Faith Comes under Scrutiny," 19 June 2007, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Politics/story?id=3293303&page=1> (accessed 12 January 2008).
2. Jonathan Darman and Lisa Miller, "Mitt's Mission," *Newsweek* online, 1 Oct. 2007, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/41889/output/print> (accessed 12 January 2008).
3. "Romney: Double Guantanamo," <http://www.cnn.com/POLITICS/blogs/politicalticker/2007/05/romney-double-guantanamo.html> (accessed 12 January 2008).
4. Ironically, this same argument was used by Caiaphas to justify crucifying Jesus. See John 11:50.
5. Katherine Eban, "Rorschach and Awe," *Vanity Fair*, 17 July 2007, <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/07/torture200707> (accessed 12 January 2008).
6. Dan Burk, "Hanging by a Thread," *Times and*

Seasons, 22 June 2004, <http://www.timesandseasons.org/?p=947#more-947> (accessed 12 January 2008).

7. However, in a talk entitled, "The False Gods We Worship," which appeared in the June 1976 *Ensign*, Spencer W. Kimball seems to argue that living the gospel call to peace unilaterally is exactly what we should do:

We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas (see 2 Nephi 1:7)—or he will fight our battles for us (Exodus 14:14; D&C 98:37, to name only two references of many).

8. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Memo on Torture Stokes Ethics-Versus-Faith Debate," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 July 2004, A1, http://www.cephas-library.com/mormon/mormon_memo_on_torture_stokes_ethics_vs_faith.html (accessed 12 January 2008). For more information about the Alyssa Peterson story, see Greg Mitchell, "Why Did U.S. Soldier Kill Himself—After Refusing to Take Part in Torture?" at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/greg-mitchell/why-did-us-soldier-kill-h_b_95289.html (accessed 7 April 2008).

9. Excerpt found at Captain Cynic.com discussion, "The Truth of War," <http://www.captaincynic.com/thread/34277/excerpt-truth-of-war.htm#34277>. See Elston's Arizona Republic story at <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/1105soldierdeath05.html>. See also Brian Moench, "Has Military Lost its Humanity?" *Deseret News*, 22 November 2006, A14.

10. David Irvine, "Presidential Candidates and Where They Stand on Torture," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 December 2007.



TIMING

His slender voice barely rising
above the band's barely enough rhythm,
we slowdanced when I was still in college
and still waiting for Elvis and the Beatles in 1954,
and Freddie Drexler, twenty-five, but looking fifty,
sang for the 'Fairbury Ramblers'.

Coming home forty years later
to bury my mother, I was sorry to find his name
listed to sing her favorite hymns, sorry
that such a small voice would celebrate her passing.

Looking fifty at sixty-five,
his fragile tenor fell over me like the light
at the end of summer evenings, his timing,
so wrong for the beginning of life, impeccable now,

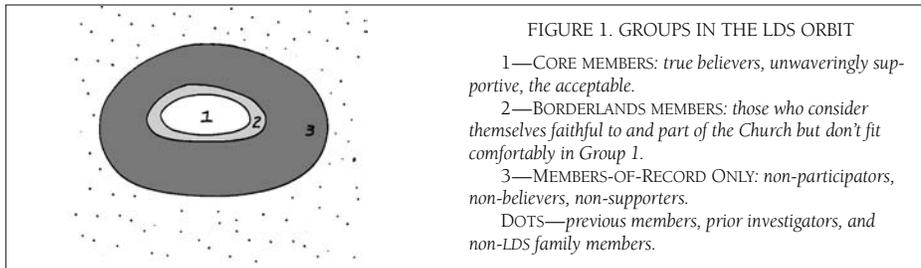
making seamless the circle
in which I sit with her again on New Years Eve
in 1950, spelling each other down while we waited
for the stroke of midnight, so I could fire the shotgun
out the back door and we could go to bed.

—LARSEN BOWKER

BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

BEING HONEST WITH OTHERS
ABOUT OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES

By D. Jeff Burton



IN THIS COLUMN, I share a recent exchange of messages with “Susan” (not her real name), a newcomer to Sunstone discussions.¹ I’ve changed a few biographical details in order to help keep her identity private.

SUSAN: I am a student, twenty-four years old, and have been a member of the Church for a little more than nine years. Discovering the mind-broadening power of the Book of Mormon converted me to the Church. The Mormon teaching that “truth is everywhere” is a liberating principle that has been central to my religious journey.

Before I joined the Church, I was blessed to be able to attend many churches where I learned many great truths. I feel so fortunate to have had these experiences. I carried many sacred truths and practices with me into my new life as a Latter-day Saint. I don’t see a conflict between these and my new-found beliefs.

A few weeks ago, I was having a hard time getting into the spirit and mindset of prayer, so I grabbed an old copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* to help facilitate that spirit. A neighbor guy came over to see my roommate. As I was clearing my things from the living room, including my book, he looked at me and said “Oh, are you not a member of our church?” I told him that I am a member. He said, “Oh, your typical LDS person doesn’t use a prayer book.”

There have been so many times during my membership when I have had this type of

interaction—one that makes me feel like I should apologize for who I am. My conclusion: I guess I am just not “typical.”

I don’t think Heavenly Father sent any of us here to be typical. I know I did not join this Church because I was interested in fitting stereotypes but because I loved my Heavenly Father and I felt this was the best place I could serve him and reach my highest potential.

I am so glad that Sunstone is here, because it helps me feel like maybe even I can have a niche in the Body of Christ and find new truths. I also want you to know that your description of the Borderlanders is something that I have wanted to put into words for a long time. I’m probably in the Borderlands with you.

How do members and priesthood leaders view being involved with Sunstone?

JEFF: As for what members think about Sunstone, if you were to ask them, I think you’d find that many won’t know what you’re talking about, others will think it is just fine, and some might lift an eyebrow. Sunstone has had former mission presidents, stake presidents, and bishops on its Board of Directors, and I have been corresponding with a bishop in Tooele who reads the magazine because he has “Borderlanders” in his ward and wants to understand them better. I myself recently completed a two-year LDS service mission. So, don’t be too concerned. All walks of Mormon life are happily involved with Sunstone.

In your message, you said that “the mind-

broadening power of the Book of Mormon” converted you. What do you mean by that?

SUSAN: Thanks. I am really glad to have the opportunity to discuss these things. Most of my attempts to do so with my peers have resulted in blank looks. Maybe those blank looks are warranted, or maybe my experiences are just reflective of being in Utah or being in a singles ward.

I appreciate your answering my question about what a bishop’s perspective might be. I am certainly not taking an interest in Sunstone because I have an axe to grind with my bishop (or anyone else in the Church for that matter), but I was interested to learn if the bishop would want to take my temple recommend away or something like that.

What I meant by the “mind-broadening power of the Book of Mormon” is this: I am a convert to the Church. All my life I was taught that the Bible is all there is. Then, I started taking the discussions, and for a while, the Book of Mormon was actually pretty scary. I was fifteen years old, and I told the missionaries that I knew if I read that book and found truth there, then my life was going to change, which was a really intimidating thought.

The mere existence of the Book of Mormon challenged me out of my comfort zone. I believe that it teaches true principles, but I wrestle with the claims as to its origin. (That is something I *never* discuss with anyone. You are the first.)

Discovering the Book of Mormon was like the scene in the *Wizard of Oz* in which the world changes from black and white to color. The Book of Mormon taught me to not place limits on how God may speak and to stop putting him in a box. Also, it specifically teaches that anything that testifies of Christ is of God, regardless of where it is found. That teaching relieved me of great cognitive dissonance that I had felt as I’d searched other churches.

Not only could I stop putting God in a box, but I could also stop putting people in boxes. Further, it is the Book of Mormon that has inspired my catholic (lower-case c) approach to spirituality, seeking truth wherever it can be found.

What causes me confusion is that I feel that doing this is doctrinally sound as far as the Church is concerned, but it is seen as very strange among most members I interact with. They don’t seem to understand it the way I do.

JEFF: Thanks for the explanation about the Book of Mormon. That is a nice approach to

D. JEFF BURTON is an author and a former member of the Sunstone Board of Directors.

"The Book of Mormon has inspired my approach to spirituality, seeking truth wherever it can be found. What causes me confusion is that I feel that doing this is doctrinally sound as far as the Church is concerned, but it is seen as very strange among most members I interact with. They don't seem to understand it the way I do."

life—searching for truth wherever it can be found. Keep in mind that truth and factuality are often not the same thing.

As I see it, the Book of Mormon holds a lot of "truth," but the common understandings of its origins may not be entirely "factual." Also, one person's truth is not necessarily another person's truth when it comes to human thought and behavior. So I suppose truth is, in some respects and at some times, in the eyes and ears and minds of the beholder. But as you say, we should respect every other person in his or her religious journey and for the truths other people hold dear (for themselves).

Unfortunately other members are not likely to be as accepting of us as we would like them to be.

SUSAN: Thank you for making that distinction between truth and factuality. I do have some questions as to the "Sunday School version" of the origins of the Book of Mormon. But, for some reason, at church, there is this huge need to emphasize, "the Book of Mormon is true, the Church is true, and Joseph Smith was a true prophet." It seems as if we hang onto those phrases like a child who refuses to part with her security blanket. I think those phrases make us feel safe.

I suppose I don't believe that the Church is "true" in the Mormon sense of things because of my emphasis on the Church as a social structure. I liked what I read in your column about the Church being "good." I agree with that, and that makes it "true" for me.

JEFF: Your approach to things reminds me of "Kristen's" story in the December 2007 Borderland column. Perhaps you might find a fellow traveler there.

SUSAN: Thanks. I have now read that column featuring Kristen's experiences. I am so pleased that she has a husband who is united with her on their journey of faith as a family. I admire them both because if I ever get married, I would want my marriage to be based on mutual respect for the other person's spiritual needs, even if they don't fit the mold.

What impresses me about Kristen is that

she seems to have some of the same needs as I do, but she is honest about them and acts to find ways to get them met. It sounds like she and her husband found strength at the Methodist church.

Like her, I too went to another church for a couple of years when I lived in Orem. I went to St. Mary's Episcopal Church—and it was wonderful. I felt I learned much about the character, personality, and complexity of Christ and his teachings. It was a place of unconditional acceptance and fearlessly candid dialogue.

My bishop actually was highly supportive of my experiences there. He received a great deal of criticism for (in the words of my home teacher at the time) "letting me go to another church." He was open-minded enough to ask, without rushing to some sort of judgment, what it was I was finding at St. Mary's.

Like Kristen, there have been seasons of my life when I felt like I needed a short break from church attendance in order to focus more on deepening my relationship with God. I am approaching one of those seasons again, which fills me with some apprehension. When you don't show up to church for a few weeks, the "attendance crisis management team" (e.g., visiting teachers, home teachers, Relief Society presidency) comes to help you in your "time of need."

The irony is that during those times, what I *need* is space. Do you have any ideas on how I can tactfully explain that I am not in need of help? Is this kind of "mother-hen" mentality pretty isolated to singles' wards, or does it happen often in family wards, too?

JEFF: I don't have any specific suggestions on how to explain your need for space to your ward members except to just be honest about it. Maybe a reader will email me with some good suggestions, and I'll forward them to you.

SUSAN: Something new. I have suddenly been presented with an opportunity to reconcile with a man I dated for a year and a half. To be honest, although I am not rushing into anything, I am really excited about the possibilities. We are working on rebuilding trust and are in the process of reviewing cer-

tain patterns of the past, identifying lessons learned, and discussing the development of healthier communication between us.

Like me, this man is a Borderlander. The most crucial element of our relationship that makes the process worthwhile is our spiritual connection and compatibility. He is a man who also refuses to put God in a box. With him, I can grow at my own pace, use the things that work for me to help me draw closer to God, and be open to detours in my spiritual journey without the fear of putting my relationship with him in jeopardy.

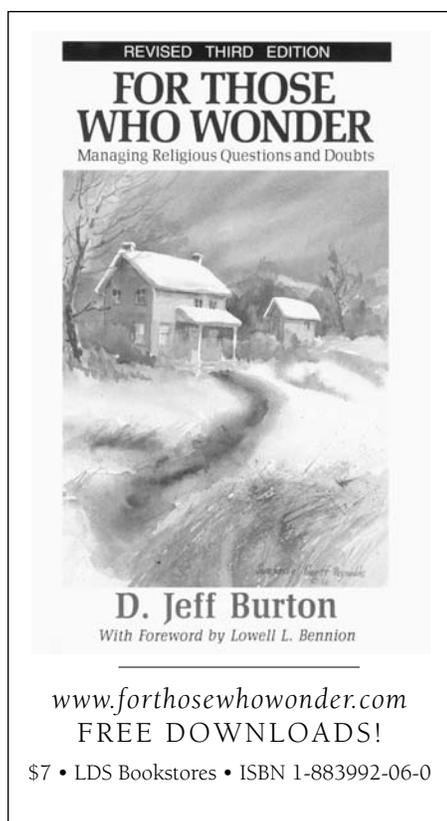
In a conversation with my roommate, a good friend for the past two years, I mentioned that I was thinking of renewing my relationship with this ex-boyfriend. She gave me what I can only describe as the "deer in headlights" look.

Immediately she asked: What about the gospel? What about temple marriage? What about raising your children in the Church? She asked these questions so fast that I wasn't sure which one to tackle first.

So, I took one of the deepest breaths I have ever taken. I communicated honestly with her that being married in the temple is not as important to me as it is to be married to a man with whom I am spiritually and emotionally compatible. I told her that it is more important for me to teach my children to ask questions, explore a variety of spiritual paths, and choose for themselves than it is to raise them within a particular church. (My theory is that Heavenly Father gave his kids free agency, so I see nothing wrong with giving it to mine.)

She asked me if I had ever gotten a witness that this is the only true church, and I admitted that in ten years, I have not (which has not been for lack of trying). She asked about the temple endowment, since I had been endowed during the last year. She asked if I believe that the temple is *a* path to God rather than *the* path to God, and I said that the former would be a fair assessment of my feelings.

I told her that while I wholeheartedly believe many teachings of the Church, I cannot claim to know that Joseph Smith is a prophet. As much as possible, I tried to answer the questions she asked without going



off on tangents. I saw no reason to lay it on thick.

She told me that she was grateful for the clarity, that so much of what she had seen and heard from me that had bewildered her now made sense. But she then asked me why I had kept “secrets.”

I explained that I have never made false claims of knowledge or belief just to sound good in testimony meeting. I said that I have never seen a reason to attempt to impose my perspectives on any other member of the Church, that it has not been a matter of keeping secrets.

She asked about my temple recommend interview, and I said that I had answered the bishop’s questions as I understood them and had been forthcoming with him.

Since our conversation, my roommate has given me the silent treatment, and she has accused me of still being “secretive.” That baffles me, because to my understanding, the purpose of the Church is not to put everyone’s individual beliefs under a microscope.

This was the first time I have ever been this candid with anyone in my environment about my beliefs, and I am not sure what to expect from here on. As far as it is within my control, I will simply try to keep the peace with others.

This incident has only caused me to further wonder if the message that I send by

being active in the Church is, by default, dishonest.

JEFF: Thanks for sharing your latest experiences with the challenge of honesty.

Yes, our actions send messages that sometimes can be misleading. Others can interpret strong church activity as a sign that a person is a “true believer.” And some do allow others to make such interpretations. How this all will shake out at the Day of Judgment I’m not sure.

A complete view of “honesty” and “truth” recognizes that they are often not matters of “rightness or wrongness” nor of facts that can be labeled “black or white” but are more of a continuum. It takes work and thoughtfulness to approach the “whole truth” of most matters that affect human behavior and thought.

Let me give you a thought experiment: Suppose your roommate asked you why you attend church. If you were to be completely honest, you might say, “Well, there are a lot of reasons. I’d have to think about it to give you the complete answer, but these thoughts come to mind: We are asked to attend—maybe even commanded for some meetings. I usually learn something new about how to live my life better. My friends are there. I want to keep my temple recommend. It feels good to be thinking about Jesus and how he would live if he were here in my shoes. I would feel guilty staying home. I am afraid that if I didn’t attend, I might not get certain blessings. I like the quietness of the meetings. And finally, I suppose, it has become a habit.”

Approaching honesty in this complete and thoughtful way allows us to see ourselves more clearly and encourages us to make positive changes in our lives based on the full reality of our different—even if competing and not really rational—desires and motivations. This is the ideal way to approach being honest and is one with which you have become quite acquainted recently.

But, again, for various reasons, staying “in the closet” about one’s beliefs and motivations is also a common practice among Borderlanders. It is often safer and easier. For some, and at some times, secrecy may be the only open option.

Coming out to “True Believing Mormons” about our Borderlander status can be traumatic, and the responses we receive are sometimes surprising, sometimes dismaying. You’ve taken a courageous step towards openness and honesty, and I’m confident that it will work out in your favor. As William Morris has written, “Honesty is the best policy” for the long run.

For now, I would simply treat your

friends as you always have and, after the shock and fright wears off, they will likely come around. Who knows, your roommate may have subconscious issues that were brought to the level of emotional distress when she heard your honest views of the Church. Perhaps you shook her worldview of how things should be.

SUSAN: Things have smoothed over a bit at home with my roommate. I don’t think that things will ever be completely the same, but the air isn’t as thick. I have tried to show my friend that I am the same person I always was—the only difference is that now she knows something about me that she didn’t before.

For many of my friends, Mormonism is all they have ever known. Were they to deviate from the mainstream, it could likely cause problems in many of their families, especially between them and their parents (who, in some instances, still have some say in their lives, especially because of financial support). I feel saddened when I am talking to my friends and hear phrases such as, “I could never tell my parents . . .”

That never happens to me. There isn’t a thing I can’t tell my mom. My relationship with her is more like that between two adult female friends than between a parent and child. She has never been LDS and doesn’t really care one way or the other if I stay in the Church. All she cares about is that I am happy with my choices.

In my childhood, the idea of there being “one true church” was a foreign notion. I was taught that the whole world of options was open to me. Who am I to say that, had I been raised as they were, I would not think and feel the way they do?

I am certainly not saying that all LDS parents are people who would not unconditionally accept their children, because I know for a fact that that is not true. But, I also know that if many of my friends were to explore other options, even other ways of being LDS, their relationships would be negatively affected.

I think I am a very fortunate lady! 🙏

NOTE

1. In my first column (this is the twenty-eighth), I introduced the Borderland member as one who may have an unusual but LDS-compatible outlook on life, a distinctive way of thinking about faith, belief and testimony, a different view of LDS history, some open questions about a particular aspect of the Church, reduced or modified activity, or feelings of not meeting Group 1 acceptability criteria. See the figure. Copies of former columns are available at WWW.FORTHOSE-WHOWONDER.COM.

UPDATE

THOMAS S. MONSON ORDAINED
CHURCH PRESIDENT

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER PRESIDENT HINCKLEY'S burial (see section beginning on page 14), senior apostle Thomas S. Monson was ordained by other members of the Quorum of the Twelve as the sixteenth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In addition to his many years of Church service, President Monson, 80, is well known for his sermons peppered with faith-promoting stories, humorous anecdotes, and poems which he delivers in a practiced oratorical style.

Born 21 August 1927 in Salt Lake City, President Monson has had a meteoric career as a Church leader: He was ordained a bishop at age 22, a mission president at age 32, and an apostle at age 36—becoming the youngest apostle since 1910, when Joseph F. Smith called his 33-year-old son Joseph Fielding to the Quorum of the Twelve. At age 80, he is the youngest man to become LDS president since Spencer W. Kimball was ordained to that position at age 78. He previously served as a counselor in the First Presidency under Presidents Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley.

Before becoming an apostle, President Monson served in the U.S. Naval reserve, following which he obtained a degree *cum laude* in business management from the University of Utah and married Frances Beverly Johnson in the Salt Lake Temple. They are the parents of three children, eight grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

In 1952, after working for years at the LDS-owned *Deseret News*, President Monson accepted a position at the *Deseret Press*. In 1962, he was appointed manager for the *Deseret News Press*.

President Monson Selects Counselors, Meets the Press

DURING A 4 FEBRUARY press conference held in the lobby of the Church Administration Building, LDS Director of Public Affairs Bruce Olsen confirmed the ordination of Thomas S. Monson as Church president. Olsen said the event had taken place the day before in the Salt Lake Temple. Olsen also announced that Monson had reorganized the First Presidency, appointing Henry B. Eyring, 74, and Dieter F. Uchtdorf, 67, as first and second counselors, respectively. The German-raised Uchtdorf is one of only five foreign-born leaders ever to serve in the First Presidency, and one of only two born in a non-English-speaking country. (The other one was Anthon H. Lund, born in Denmark.)

President Hinckley's passing and the reorganization of the First Presidency created a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve, which was filled two months later, during the April 2008 General Conference, with the call of Elder D. Todd Christofferson.

Standing in front of a mural-sized reproduction of Harry



The new First Presidency—Thomas S. Monson (center), Henry B. Eyring (left), and Dieter F. Uchtdorf (right)—enjoy a light-hearted moment during a 4 February press conference.

Anderson's painting depicting Jesus commissioning the Twelve, President Monson read a brief statement, followed by statements from both counselors.

Asked "what is it like to have to follow President Hinckley," Monson replied, "Not difficult, because he blazed the trail!" "I worked with him for so long—44 years," Monson added. "We knew each other so well. I knew and testify afresh that he was the Lord's prophet."

When queried about his health, Monson replied that he is in good health, though some years ago he was diagnosed with Type II diabetes. "It is under control, totally, and I'm healthy and well, and I still do a day's work—and half a night, as well."

A reporter asked Monson if he is committed to continue President Hinckley's legacy of "openness in terms of the Church's relationship with the media and the way it shared aspects of its history and past."

"Yes, I come from the media field," said Monson, "in newspaper and other types of media. I believe in an open book and access to the media. Yes, I do."

Another reporter commented that despite President Hinckley's efforts to bring the LDS Church to the mainstream, a percentage of Americans still have qualms about the Mormon faith. The reporter then asked, "How would you like to see [the Church] perceived?"

"I think we should not be sequestered in a little cage," Monson replied. "I think we have a responsibility to be active in the communities where we live—all Latter-day Saints—and to work cooperatively with other churches and through other organizations. My objective there is I think it's important that we eliminate the weakness of one standing alone, and substitute for it the strength of people working together. And there are many efforts where, if we get together, various religions in the community, and work toward the common goal, we should be successful. [Already] we cooperated with the Red Cross, we cooperated with the Catholic church, other

churches . . . to witness a better community and a better world. I believe in that spirit.”

Other questions focused on difficult issues. NPR reporter Howard Berkes referred to President Monson’s recent statement to Relief Society women that they should receive an education to prepare for the possibility of their husband’s illness or death or for the possibility of divorce (*Ensign*, November 2007, 118–21). “What would you say to Mormon women who may see that the need for an education or a career goes beyond those two things?” Berkes asked.

“Today’s world is competitive—more than it has ever been,” Monson answered. “Men *and* women need to get a type of education that will enable them to meet the exigencies of life—whether it be the death of a husband or the death of a wife or moving to this assignment or to that assignment. I believe men *and* women need to be prepared for a vastly broader scope than we ever had before. *Well* educated, too!”

Pressed on whether “education for the sake of education is worthy [beyond] the notion of the death of a spouse,” President Monson replied, “Oh, I certainly think so.” He continued, saying that education gives people “the satisfaction of knowing that you’ve accomplished something—that you had a goal and that you achieved it.”

Salt Lake Tribune religion reporter Peggy Fletcher Stack addressed recent LDS support for a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage and noted that some members disagree with positions taken by the Church leaders. She then asked, “Is it okay for people to disagree and still be in good standing with the Church?”

“I would say that it depends upon what the disagreement is,” Monson replied. “If it were some type of an apostasy situation, why, that would not be appropriate. If it were something political, why, we do not enter into political politics [sic], and so there’s room for opinions on here and there, either side.”

Carrie Moore of the *Deseret News* asked Presidents Monson and Uchtdorf if Church leaders, who in the past have overwhelmingly been from Utah, are capable of understanding the needs of an international church.

“We are not representing a nation, or a country, or an ethnic group,” said President Uchtdorf, who was born in Czechoslovakia but spent most of his life in Germany. “We are representing the Church of Jesus Christ. We are representatives of Him.” He added that this is not simply a “global” but a “universal” church. “It is a message of universal power, and it’s the message that will connect and combine and unite and bless all the countries, nations, and ethnic groups.” Uchtdorf added that “no one better than President Monson has such a feeling for the needs of the individual and for the needs of the nations around the world.”

Reminiscent of President Hinckley, President Monson showed his sense of humor as he took a minute toward the end of the press conference to extemporaneously praise President Uchtdorf, a former airline pilot, saying that Uchtdorf “knows every airport in this world. And therefore he has access to every country in this world. He doesn’t worry about visas or anything else!”

GAY MORMONS SEND LETTER TO PRESIDENT MONSON

A FEW DAYS FOLLOWING THE SETTING APART OF Thomas S. Monson as LDS president, leaders of Affirmation: Gay & Lesbian Mormons sent him a letter asking to open a dialogue and to work together in counseling gay Saints, their families, and their priesthood leaders.

“We believe that by working together this can be done in a manner consistent with Church doctrine and the teachings of the Savior,” the letter reads. “Although there are many areas of hurt and disagreement that have separated us, there are many more areas on which we can find agreement and, in so doing, become a blessing in the lives of many of the Saints, both straight and gay.”

Shortly after the letter became public, Affirmation leaders were contacted by Fred M. Riley, commissioner of LDS Family Services, who said President Monson had asked him to meet with them. The meeting will occur in early August.

Affirmation was founded in 1977 to serve the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Mormons. The full text of the letter is posted at WWW.AFFIRMATION.ORG.

LDS CHURCH WEIGHS IN ON IMMIGRATION DEBATE

AS A DEBATE OVER IMMIGRATION ISSUES HEATED UP during the 2008 Utah Legislature session, Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the First Quorum of the Seventy asked lawmakers to “slow down, step back, and assess the implications and human costs involved.”

“With decisions hanging in the balance that have such significant consequences, I believe a more thoughtful . . . not to mention humane, approach is warranted,” Elder Jensen said in an event organized by Westminster College. Jensen said he was speaking on behalf of the First Presidency.

The remarks came as the Utah legislature prepared to consider an anti-immigration bill that would have imposed a long list of penalties on the state’s undocumented immigrants.

House Minority whip David Litvack, D-Salt Lake City, told the media that legislators met with general authorities and received a similar plea: “The basic message was that we need to step back, not to be so reactive, and let cooler heads prevail.”

The LDS Church allows undocumented immigrants to be baptized, receive temple ordinances, and serve missions within the United States. The Church boasts more than five hundred foreign-language units in the U.S., made up mostly of first-generation immigrants.

Rebecca van Uitert, an LDS immigration attorney in New York City, says that out of dozens of people that she helped convert as a missionary in Southern California, not one of



Marlin K. Jensen

LDS.ORG

them had legal status. “There were even some undocumented bishops and stake presidents,” she told the *Salt Lake Tribune*. “Basically, everyone was undocumented.”

Perhaps partially in response to Jensen’s and other leaders’ comments, a revised version of the immigration bill removed a provision that would have repealed in-state college tuition for undocumented students and pushed back the date when the new law takes effect. Lawmakers also added exemptions that protect churches from liability if they provide food, clothing, or other charitable services to undocumented immigrants.

In a related story, LDS officials have contacted the eleven LDS members serving in the U.S. Congress to discuss concerns over a plan to change a 2005 law that allows churches to send undocumented immigrants on missions.

“The church is concerned that one provision of the new bill would substantially weaken a law Congress passed in 2005 to protect the missionary and ministry programs of the churches,” said M. Kenneth Bowler, director of public and international affairs for the LDS Church in Washington, D.C. “The church has taken no position on the numerous other provisions of the bill.”

ROMNEY DROPS OUT OF PRESIDENTIAL RACE

TWO DAYS AFTER EXPERIENCING A CRUSHING BLOW in the “Super Tuesday” Republican primaries held 5 February, LDS presidential hopeful Mitt Romney dropped out of the race, saying that if he were to continue campaigning, he would be helping the eventual Democratic nominee win an office which, he believes, will be better served by fellow GOP candidate John McCain.

“I disagree with Senator McCain on a number of issues,” Romney said. “But I agree with him on doing whatever it takes to be successful in Iraq, and finding and executing Osama bin Laden. . . . And I agree with him on eliminating Al Qaida and terror worldwide.”

“Now, if I fight on, in my campaign, all the way to the convention . . . I’d forestall the launch of a national campaign and, frankly, I’d make it easier for Senator Clinton or Obama to win. Frankly, in this time of war, I simply cannot let my campaign be a part of aiding a surrender to terror.”

In a speech that seemed intended to leave a final impression of him as a stalwart social and religious conservative, Romney lamented “the attack on faith and religion,” announced that “Europe is facing a demographic disaster,” and reemphasized the need for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. “It’s time for the people of America to fortify marriage through a constitutional amendment,” said Romney, “so that liberal judges cannot continue to attack it.”

According to a *Boston Globe* report, Rom-

ney spent more than \$42 million of his own money in the campaign. This self-financing puts him ahead of Steve Forbes, the publisher who spent \$38 million on his unsuccessful run for the GOP nomination in 1996, but considerably shy of the \$63.5 million that H. Ross Perot spent on his 1992 third-party presidential campaign.

Anti-LDS Bias Explored

IN THE AFTERMATH of Romney’s speech, observers asked what role Romney’s Mormonism may have played in his defeat. Although it is not clear to what extent Romney failed to gain more voter support because of his religious affiliation, most observers agree that Romney’s campaign put the LDS faith in a harsh spotlight. A *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll in late January revealed that 50 percent of Americans would have reservations or be “very uncomfortable” about a Mormon president.

“I don’t think that any of us had any idea how much anti-Mormon stuff was out there,” LDS sociologist Armand Mauss told the *Wall Street Journal*. “The Romney campaign has given the Church a wake-up call. There is the equivalent of anti-Semitism still out there.”

According to *Journal* reporter Suzanne Sataline, “Romney’s candidacy revived old lines of attack and mockery of some of the church’s unusual practices” including temple ceremonies, the wearing of garments, and baptisms for the dead.

Gregory Johnson, a Utah evangelical who often engages in public religious debates with BYU professor Robert Millet, told the *Salt Lake Tribune* that he believes Romney’s guarded approach and perceived secrecy about his beliefs were a factor in his demise. Johnson says that in 2006, he and Millet told the



“I’m sure Heavenly Father has another purpose for Mitt. I mean, there’s a vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve.”

People



Deceased. LDS scholar WILLIAM MULDER, 92. Mulder produced influential articles on Mormon history and literature, wrote a book about Mormon immigration from Scandinavia, and co-edited the compilation *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*. A frequent contributor to Sunstone symposiums, Mulder co-founded, along with Sterling McMurrin, the so-called “Swearing Elders,” a group of LDS professors and intellectuals who held Mormon forums at the University of Utah from 1948 to 1956.

Deceased. LDS magnate and inventor JAMES LEVOY SORENSON, 86. Among other inventions, Sorenson helped develop the first real-time computerized heart monitor and invented the paper surgical mask, the plastic venous catheter, and a blood recycling system. A philanthropist, Sorenson created the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation, which correlates genetic and genealogical databases, and donated more than \$30 million for the 1999-2002 rebuilding of the Nauvoo Temple.



Best-selling. STEPHENIE MEYER, 34, a BYU graduate, Mormon mom, and author of vampire romance novels. Meyer’s *Twilight* trilogy recently took the book world by storm, and a film based on the first book is now scheduled to reach the silver screen this December. Meyer says that her characters tend to think about where they came from and where they are going. And, she adds, she won’t write in gratuitous sex. According to a *Los Angeles Times* story, at

readings Meyer often gets asked, “What’s a nice Mormon girl like you doing writing about vampires and werewolves?”



Controversy. Over the awarding of the Margaret A. Edwards Award to LDS sci-fi writer ORSON SCOTT CARD, 56. The award, given by the Young Adult Library Services Association, has been challenged by some librarians and readers because Card has also written opinion pieces very critical of homosexuality. Brenna Shanks, chair of the award committee, said that Card’s writings about homosexuality were brought to her attention only after the award was announced, and she affirmed that “Card’s opinions and beliefs were not, and should not, be a consideration.”

Reinstated. BYU baseball star KENT WALTON, 21, days after being dismissed from school when his bishop withdrew Walton’s ecclesiastical endorsement, a requirement for continued enrollment. According to a story in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Walton’s bishop, Wayne Childs, withdrew the endorsement because Walton hadn’t attended church often enough. Walton’s father, Ken Walton, said that his son attended six out of ten or eleven church meetings last fall. During the other Sundays he was ill, attending church with friends in Cedar City, or attending church at home, or it was LDS General Conference.



Farewell. To POSTUM, the non-caffeinated, unofficial “Mormon coffee,” which was discontinued by its manufacturer, Kraft Foods, in late 2007 due to declining sales figures. Since the announcement, Postum fans, mourning the loss of their favorite wheat bran, wheat, molasses, and maltodextrin beverage, have been filling various online forums with favorite Postum memories.

Romney campaign, “You’ve got to have town-hall meetings, discussion groups, something on your website. . . . Religion can’t be a taboo thing, because people are going to want to know.”

Whitney Johnson, the LDS co-founder of an investment firm, wrote an op-ed in the *Boston Globe* admitting that she received the news of Romney’s withdrawal with a mixture of disappointment and relief.

“As Mormons, we weren’t just considering voting for a person to be president, but a Mormon to be president,” she wrote. “And instead of keeping our identity on the down low, it was brought into relief, potentially undermining a century’s worth of work to feel fully accepted by our neighbors and co-workers. In fact we have worked so hard to assimilate, we have even been able to convince ourselves that we are accepted. With Romney in the national spotlight, it has become all too

clear we aren’t. This is a discovery we would have preferred not to make.”

Although many see the failed Romney bid as an overall negative experience for the LDS Church, at least some Mormons see a silver lining. “I am still convinced it’s not as bad as the media says it is,” wrote BYU professor Joe Campbell for the *Deseret News*. “Call me a cockeyed optimist, but I subscribe to what President Gordon B. Hinckley once said about negative media coverage: this will be a ‘blip.’ But it has opened a door of opportunity.”

“Latter-day Saints do have our work cut out for us,” Campbell concludes. “We can no longer circle the wagons in grand pioneer tradition and hope the media goes away. Latter-day Saints need to reach out in our communities, on the Web and in the nation’s media and be part of the discussion and dialog.”

LDS MISSIONARIES VANDALIZE SHRINE

MEMBERS OF THE SANGRE DE CRISTO PARISH IN SAN Luis, Colorado, first pressed, then dropped, charges against three LDS missionaries who allegedly vandalized a shrine and posted the evidence on the Internet. The incident occurred in 2006 at the Shrine of the Mexican Martyrs, a tourist attraction, but it was discovered more recently through photographs posted to a photo-sharing website, PHOTOBUCKET.COM.



"Hannemann broke the head off a saint," read the caption under this image posted at the website PHOTOBUCKET.COM.

One of the pictures shows a missionary holding the severed head of one of the Mexican martyrs memorialized in the shrine. "Hannemann broke the head off a saint," the text under the picture reads. Information available at the mission's alumni website makes it possible to identify the elder holding the statue's head as Layne Hannemann.

Another picture shows a missionary preaching from the Book of Mormon inside the Chapel of All Saints. A third photo shows a missionary pretending to sacrifice another on the church altar. Although the pictures are no longer available at Photobucket, they were reproduced by several newspapers, including the online versions of the *Pueblo Chieftain*, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and the *Salt Lake Tribune*. The *Pueblo Chieftain* later removed the pictures.

"What [the missionaries] did was extremely imprudent, extremely uncharitable and inflammatory," the Reverend Pat Valdez told parishioners. "You have worked hard and this whole community has worked hard to build that shrine as an expression of our faith and an expression of our love of God."

Robert Fotheringham, president of the Colorado Springs mission, said that one of the missionaries, from Idaho, was disciplined and sent home. The other two, one from California and the other from Nevada, had already finished their missions last summer. All three had distinguished themselves for their work in community service, including with the elderly, Fotheringham said.

"They're fabulous young men," he said. "I love them like sons. They've done fabulous service except for this. . . that's why this is so out of character."

Fotheringham met with Valdez and other community members on 7 March and presented them with a written apology from one of the missionaries. Although, because of legal issues, Fotheringham would not identify the young men to the media, the written apology was signed by an "R. Thompson."

"I realize that my companions and I have made a mockery of that which is most sacred to many of the residents of San Luis and the rest of the world. I should have known better because I have seen many of the same types of blasphemies made against my own church and I have been appalled," Thompson's statement said.

Shortly after the story broke, Bruce Olsen, managing director of public affairs for the LDS church, issued a statement expressing dismay at the incident. The statement was sent to media outlets but not posted at the church's online newsroom.

"The Church has begun a thorough investigation of the incident," the statement read. "We are providing the names of those involved to law enforcement officials and will continue to cooperate fully with those investigating the incident as well as with officials of the Roman Catholic Church."

On 18 March, Arthur Tafoya, bishop of the Pueblo Diocese, issued an Easter letter asking local parishioners to forgive the missionaries and "pray for the young men who showed such a lack of tolerance and understanding." Two days later, the San Luis Parish Council recommended that the Costilla County Sheriff Office not pursue the investigation. This action reversed a previous council vote urging a thorough investigation.

In 1972, two LDS missionaries spent six months in a Thailand prison after one of them climbed atop an image of Buddha and posed for a picture. The picture was widely reproduced by Thai newspapers, and for the next two years, the number of LDS baptisms dropped throughout the country.



"Relax, Elder. No one will even see it online."

AN OLIVE LEAF

“AS SOVEREIGNS IN A FREE GOVERNMENT”

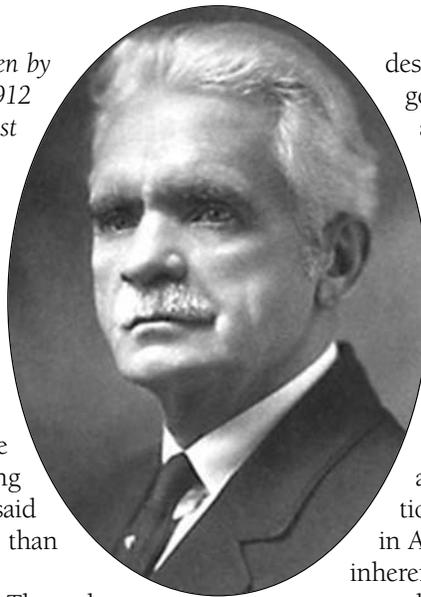
By B.H. Roberts

The following is excerpted from the address given by Elder B. H. Roberts during the October 1912 General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I WISH I KNEW WHO IT WAS THAT said, “In essentials let there be unity: in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.” But if I ever knew who said it I cannot now remember who it was, and I don’t know that it matters, because the beauty and truth of the utterance is self-evident. It is one of those things which the world has accepted into its literature as being true and sensible, and it matters little who said it since it does not require other authority than the thing itself to commend it to men. . . .

The Latter-day Saints are a blest people. There does exist . . . perfect unity in relation to all . . . essentials; in regard to the faith we have received, in regard to the dispensation of the fulness of times which God has revealed in these days unto us. And so I rejoice in these blessings, and can look forward with perfect confidence that in all these great and essential things, touching the salvation of men, the Church of Christ will remain absolutely united. . . .

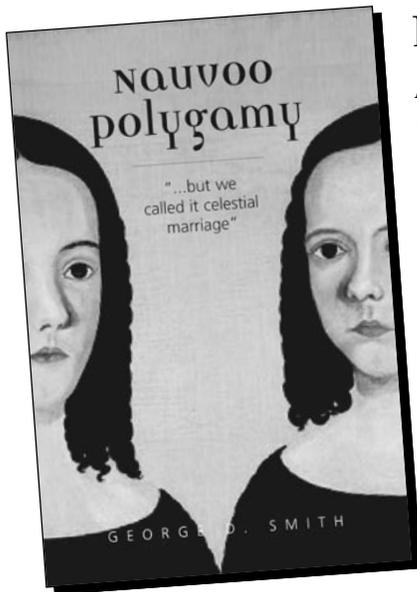
Now, when you contemplate that other division, the non-essentials, here you have a field wherein liberty should exist; wherein should exist tolerance: tolerance in our social relations and activities, in our commercial affairs, and in industrial pursuits: in the sphere of civil government. These things in which the judgment of men may be exercised, and where it is merely a question, perhaps, of policy, or of administration. If only we can infuse into this sphere of the non-essentials, where one man’s judgment may be as good as another’s, if in that field we can only bring in the principle of charity, and of tolerance and the recognition of the liberty of all men, it seems to me then we shall have good reason to believe that in this sphere of non-essentials, we shall get along quite as happily as we may in the field where we are united in reference to absolute essentials. I believe that we are entitled to take an optimistic view with reference to these matters that make up the sphere of non-essentials; and especially in relation to the sphere of civil government. There is a passage in the Book of Mormon that to me has been very instructive and also very encouraging. . . . It occurs in the Book of Mosiah, where there is



described a transition from a monarchial form of government to a reign of judges, which in reality was a sort of republic, or rule by the people. The value of this passage . . . is in that it expresses confidence in the ability of the people to rule, to govern themselves (Mosiah 29:25–27, 30–32). . . .

To my mind Joseph Smith, in bringing forth . . . the principle of personal, moral, responsibility to God for the government that obtains in free republics has contributed one of the mightiest thoughts to the political life of the age in which he lived, that any man has brought forth in all the contributions that have been made to political thought in America. Patrick Henry’s idea that men had an inherent right to rebel against insufferable tyranny is not equal to it. Jefferson’s great doctrine of the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed with the inalienable rights of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, is not greater than this Book of Mormon doctrine. Webster’s great contribution of “nationalism,” viz., that this nation was an indestructible union of indestructible states, is not superior to it. And Lincoln’s great thought, that the principle of the Declaration of Independence, that all men are of right free, must hold good as to the colored race as well as to the white race, does not surpass it. Because this great Book of Mormon thought is this: that while governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, there goes with that the awful, moral responsibility, direct to God, of every man and woman participating as sovereigns in a free government, for the kind of government that obtains in such country. The great doctrine of direct, moral responsibility to God of a free people is indeed a soul-inspiring utterance, but it is also an awe-inspiring condition, and on its face bears evidence of the divine source whence it comes. . . .

N OW, in relation to all these matters, we are operating in the realm of the non-essentials, that is, the realm where human judgment may be exercised: and where men may not be able to come to absolute unity of understanding in relation to matters, and in that event, let us remember that it is the realm where liberty and tolerance prevail, and it is proper that charity also should abound. ☪



Nauvoo Polygamy by George D. Smith

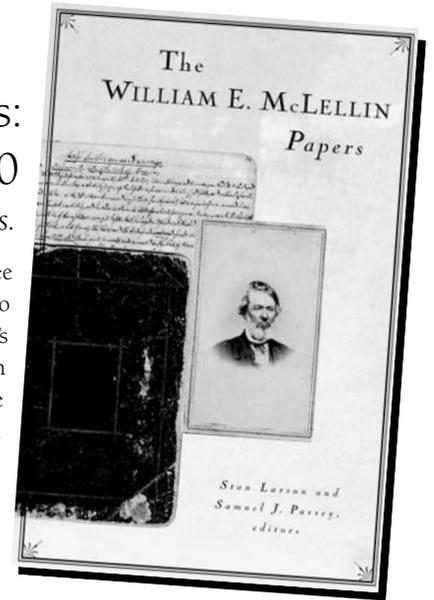
As Joseph Smith enlisted men and women in the cause of polygamy, a pattern of initiation developed, including what might be called courtship and persuasion—long walks in the woods, urgent appeals, secrets confided, promises made, and threats to discourage rejection or disclosure. This volume contains a comprehensive scrutiny of available records from Nauvoo, Illinois. Readers will learn how the practice spread among some 200 men and 700 women even before the dispersion out of the city. The author traces a recurring fascination with polygamy back to the sixteenth century and forward to the nineteenth in answer to the question of where the idea in Nauvoo came from. *Nauvoo Polygamy*: "... but we called it celestial marriage." George D. Smith. 672 pages. hardcover. \$39.95. March 2008.

The William E. McLellin Papers: 1854–1880

Stan Larson & Samuel J. Passey, eds.

The well-educated, highly enigmatic school teacher of Tennessee origin, William E. McLellin, converted to Mormonism early on and rose quickly to become one of the original twelve apostles. In 1836, he saw his peaceable kingdom turn violent in the Zion's Camp march and became disillusioned. Yet throughout his life, he retained his belief in the Book of Mormon and revelation by "peep-stones," the Second Coming, and spiritual gifts. His perspective is unique in that he associated with nearly every faction of Mormonism—and his wife was RLDS. In later years, he reminisced about what his early experiences meant and what he believed. *The William E. McLellin Papers: 1854–1880*.

Stan Larson & Samuel J. Passey, eds. 608 pages. hardcover. \$39.95. December 2007.



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