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Cover art by Galen Smith
Back cover art by Jeanette Atwood

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IN RESPONSE TO Noah Van Sciver's comic, "Book of Mormon Origins," (June 2011) SUNSTONE received the following:


GRAPHIC NOVEL

The Sacred Grove is strangely young—devoid of foliage, with spindly, half-grown trees. And awkward, teen-age

Joseph, on his knees—trapped inside the walls of his own comic strip—has coal-black hair, and fuller lips than we recall. Is all of this a horror tale? His pale countenance

is dipped in wash of pen-and-ink, encroaching menace of the adversary's darkness that surrounds him. The vision's blackest blacks and whitest whites reveal his face as stark and vulnerable—he swims in waves of perspiration. Perhaps we, too, should

be afraid, since comic art defies an orthodox interpretation. Blinding light that's soon to vanquish fleeing vestiges of Satan's power, and then to manifest a Father God presumed 'till now as dead, will also testify the boy and Deity converse in charming lunacy of ordinary speech—preserved and read in dialogue balloons. Trite—the superhero cartoon-god is old, and whiter still than any ghost.

But almost lost in shadow, the story's one authentic flesh-and-bone anomaly, the Son—

swarthy, plain, Semitic, real—no form or comeliness we should desire.

How is it, cartoon-Joseph seems to know him?

PAUL SWENSON
Several years back, we thought it would be a grand idea to post some of our books (in their entirety) on a website. We assumed this would be useful for history researchers and readers of poetry and fiction. Now that we have, we want to advertise to Sunstoners, the only question being how to do so effectively. We met and talked about it and had pizza (which was really tasty), then met a few more times before we realized we had spent our budget on delicious cheese and pepperoni. So we decided we would just show you one of our pizzas and hope you understand. Ugh! ☹️ www.signaturebookslibrary.org
2011 Utah Sunstone Symposium

New Place
New Feel
Same Magic
FROM THE EDITOR

I WILL GO; I WILL PLAY

By Stephen Carter

WHAT WOULD A GOOD Mormon video game play like?” It's a question that has doubtless crossed the mind of many a Mormon gamer as he fires missiles at a giant mutant brain, or slices her way through a horde of zombies, or fattens up a princess.

The first game ideas that come to mind might be something like Street Fighter Nauvoo, where characters from early Mormon history do battle for supremacy. Of course, being a Mormon video game, it would have to teach something, so we'd give each character special fighting moves that would sneak a few facts into the player's brain. Joseph Smith could have a back-breaking stick-pull move; Brigham Young could mash his opponents with a covered wagon, and Eliza Snow could call on the help of a few heroic couplets.

Or maybe we could develop a game called Brigham Kong, where a pixelly pioneer guy climbs up logs and jumps over barrels to rescue his wife from Brigham's harem.

The possibilities are endless—but also, admittedly, not all that Mormon. We may be using Mormon characters and borrowing from stereotypes, but when looking for a good Mormon video game, shouldn't we be hoping for something a little deeper; something with more substance; something that could possibly tap the core of Mormon experience, theology, and worldview?

A similar question is contemplated at length in a book edited by Craig Detweiler, Halos and Avatars: Playing Video Games with God (Westminster John Knox Press). But in this case, the question is: What makes a game Christian?

In her chapter, Rachel Wagner provides a quick tour of video games that feature biblical themes or characters; games like Bible Fight where you can break face with Jesus, Moses, Eve, Satan, and even Mary. The fig leaf-clad Eve can use her serpent attack or call Adam in to kick some trash for her, though Noah's ability to call in a wild animal stampede is more impressive. Or a player can use Mary's heavenly teleportation ability to get her out of the tight spots her flying feet can't. Moses can rain frogs on an opponent or hurl a couple of hefty commandments. Or if you want to let your fists fly outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, you can play Faith Fighter and rumble as Mohammed (with or without a face), Buddha, Budai, or Ganesha.

These games, of course, were mainly developed for laughs, and so I suppose we shouldn't expect much depth from them. But as I found out, even when dealing with Christian development companies, it is still almost impossible to find a game that uses biblical characters, stories, and themes as anything more than pawns in the service of a trivial scenario.

For example, the Wisdom Tree company has been making Bible-based video games for more than 20 years. One of their most popular titles is Bible Adventure—three games stuffed into one NES-compatible cartridge. In the first game, “Noah's Ark,” the player controls Noah as he picks up animals and carries them overhead to the ark. In “Baby Moses,” you play Moses' mother as she tries to carry her diaper-clad infant (over her head) past enemies—many of whom, if they get their hands on the baby, will throw him in the water. And don't miss out on Noah's Ark 3-D, a first-person shooter (or, rather, slingshotter) where the goal is to shoot tranquilizers at an onslaught of homicidal goats before they batter Noah to a pulp. Please also give Jesus in Space a try; currently on sale for only $22.95!

These are the faithful games. The ones from people who purportedly take their religion seriously.

The Christian video game that got the most attention in Halos and Avatars was the Left Behind series, based on the popular religious apocalypse books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. The game takes place in ruined city streets where neutral characters wander among evil soldiers, military vehicles, and rumbling tanks. The player's job is to convert as many neutral people as possible to God's side and then mount an attack on evil forces.

How do you go about converting a neutral character to the Lord's side? Well, first you build a relationship of trust, and then . . . just kidding. If your spirit meter is high enough, all you have to do is click on the desired characters and, in a shower of light, they're born again and equipped to kick some Satanic tushie! And how do you fill your spirit meter high enough to perform such a miracle? Click on it with your mouse. Lots. If you happen to shoot an innocent bystander—or worse, stand near a rock concert—your spirit meter will plunge. But it's nothing a few dozen repentant clicks can't fix. The world of Left Behind, though dangerous, is a predictable and controllable world where all one has to do to succeed is follow the rules.
So what about Mormon video games? How do they stack up against mainstream Christian games?

My Google search revealed exactly two Mormon video games. The first, *Outpost Zarahemla*, is a goofy, space-based *SimCity*-type game. You play a humanoid missionary who is under the command of a fish-headed senior companion. He puts you in charge of a space station where your job is to keep the drivers of incoming spaceships happy by building power sources, lemonade stands, and rec centers that provide “good clean fun.” Oh, and you have to earn money. In fact, profit is so important that you can’t complete a level until you’ve earned a specified sum.

As the game continues, you are required to build family history centers (where some visitors learn that an ancestor was a fish), and other vaguely Mormon structures.

Some spaceships that come in are marked by an exclamation point. If you click them, they will ask you a churchy question such as “Are Mormons Christian?” (Answer: Yes); “How many books of Alma are there in the Book of Mormon?” (Answer: One); and “What is a deacon’s duty?” (Answer: To help the bishop). Considering the game was released in 2004, it’s not too bad, and it has some humorous moments. But its religious elements are only tacked on—unless the core of Mormonism is making a profit.

The second game I found is called *Brother Nephi’s Ultra-funtastic Point-and-Click Adventure*. It has been released in two parts thus far: the first getting Nephi into Jerusalem to acquire the plates of brass, and the second helping him find and kill Laban. As the game continues, you are launched into a mini-game where Nephi is standing, sword drawn, where Nephi is standing, sword drawn, over Laban’s body. The object is to land a tension that makes integrating video games world might not come to pass. Such a possibility strikes at Christianity’s foundations. And when you jiggle the pillars of people’s worldview, they tend to freak out.

Likely I was feeling something similar while I helped hack Laban’s head off: I was messing with a core story. Being one of the founders of Mormonism’s first satire magazine, *The Sugar Beet*, I’m not squeamish about tipping a sacred cow or two. But the murder of Laban is one of those stories that bears the markings of archetype.

Archetypes are stories that get told again and again because they have deep roots in essential aspects of human experience. The roots are so deep that even when thousands of years’ worth of people and institutions try to interpret the stories to favor their particular worldview, the stories still manage to retain their ability to lead thoughtful listeners into mystery.

Abraham’s attempted sacrifice of Isaac is one such story. Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish Christian philosopher, wrote an entire book, *Fear and Trembling*, exploring the mystery Abraham’s narrative points us toward: what is the nature of faith? As Kierkegaard points out, if one of us found out that a man was taking his son to a mountain in order to sacrifice him,

---

Why does a Mormon male need to be married before age 25? Any older, and he wouldn’t be able to jump the barrels.

Umm, yeah. The causal chain doesn’t make a lot of sense there, but it does in the game . . . kind of. But that’s part of the game’s charm: its dry, free-associative sense of humor.

However, the game suddenly grows very strange when Nephi finds Laban. Until now, the tone of the game has been breezy and witty (though the amateurish voice acting destroys the ethos of the script). But suddenly, angelic music swells, and, as Nephi is bathed in an ethereal light, a deep, God-like voice quotes scripture about how Nephi is bathed in an ethereal light, a deep, God-like voice quotes scripture about how one person may perish if it will save the souls of many.

Then the mood alters drastically again as the player is launched into a mini-game where Nephi is standing, sword drawn, over Laban’s body. The object is to land a swiftly moving line inside a small demarcated area—and it’s not easy. Each time you miss, Nephi’s sword comes down and eyeballs, fingers, and other body parts fly up. It’s funny. Really. But as I giggled and hacked, I was almost afraid I was going to be struck by lightning. The mini-game bumped me up against a question I had never thought about before: what are the tensions that make integrating video games and scripture so difficult?
wouldn't we try to stop him? Indeed, wouldn't we have tried to stop Abraham? And what about Nephi? If Jerusalem's finest had caught him chopping Laban's head off, wouldn't they have been justified in carting Nephi off to jail? If we had been nearby, wouldn't we have tried to stop Nephi from committing his act? Taking a life is irreversibly mandated, especially since—unlike Abraham's story—Nephi actually does deprives him of no one he loves, gets an adversary out of his way, and secures him access to the plates of brass. He has everything to gain and nothing to lose by killing Laban. It seems unlikely that such a convenient and lucrative murder could be divinely mandated, especially since—at least in Abraham's story—Nephi actually does end a human life.

I can't recall having ever been in a Sunday School class where someone questioned Nephi's decision. The popular vote seems to be that Nephi did the right thing—the voters happily embracing the idea that God and Nephi were utilitarian thinkers (considering the life of one man to be of less moral weight than the religious cohesion of Lehi's descendants, and therefore expendable). But archetypal stories are structured to ignite exploration, not instill certitude. Nephi's story is meant to fracture our worldview, not stabilize it.

Which brings me back to my original question: what element could imbue a game with a resonantly Mormon core? It would be our unique archetypal stories, presented in such a way that the player would have to grapple with the tensions that make the stories powerful.

But how might such a game unfold? Mark Hayse presents an interesting template in his Halos and Avatars chapter "Ultima IV: Simulating the Religious Quest."

At the beginning of this fantasy role-playing game released in 1985, the player is presented with a series of ethical dilemmas, for example: "Thou art sworn to uphold a Lord who participates in the forbidden torture of prisoners. Each night their cries of pain reach thee. Dost thou, A) show compassion by reporting the deeds, or B) honor thy oath and ignore the deeds?"

Notice how the choices pit two virtues against each other? There doesn't seem to be a correct answer—only a revealing one. The answers the player provides shape the character he or she will play. In a way, the character is an embodiment of the player's worldview.

The player wanders through Britannia, encountering other characters—friendly and otherwise—monsters, animals, and difficult situations. The goal is to perfect the character in each of the eight virtues, but no guidance is offered. As players interact with the game, their decisions affect their character's virtues. In all cases, players have to sacrifice one thing to gain another. If they flee from an unwinnable battle, they lose valor points, but they also live. If they cheat the herbs woman so that they can have enough money to buy an essential item, they gain the item, but lose honesty points.

But here's the twist. The game never shows players how many points they have in each virtue, or the consequences their actions have on their virtues. As Hayse writes: "Gradually, players come to realize that the quest for virtue demands ongoing ethical self-assessment. Every interaction with the subjects and objects of Britannia requires critical reflection." Some of the questions the player is forced to contemplate include: "What is the right thing to do when I am attacked by others? . . . When asked to share financial or physical resources with others, how much should I share? . . . Are there certain tools that I should not employ in the service of virtue? Or does the virtue sanctify every tool in order that the end justifies the means?" Now there's a question for Nephi!

A careful study of scripture and Church history reveals the fact that our world and its inhabitants are complex and ever-changing. It might be comforting to think that one need only "choose the right" in order to increase one's spiritual stature and avoid the evils of the world, but it's a false comfort. Zion's Camp was a grab-bag of death, failure, and miracles. Many of Alma and Amulek's converts were burned to death by their own neighbors. Ammon's converts had even less luck, being constantly dogged by murderous armies. Sure, we can offer mollifying explanations for these difficult situations, but they serve only to neuter the exploratory potential these stories offer.

The Book of Mormon seems very clear in its conviction that good intentions don't always produce good results. What if we built a game around that idea? Could we make Alma into a video game character, eject him from King Noah's palace and watch as the player attempts to bring people together around a common, but revolutionary, faith? How would he spread his gospel? What parts of the gospel would he emphasize? How would the people react to those particular principles? Whom would Alma trust with power in his fledgling church? How would he deal with the attacks of King Noah's army? What decisions would he make in order to keep his people alive in the wilderness? How would he secretly boost his people's morale while they are enslaved by the Lamanites? What sacrifices will he need to make to achieve his goals? How will the consequences of his decisions affect him and the people who follow him?

At first, it might seem that developing such a game would be prohibitively expensive, especially for such a small audience. But making a game as an app or as a Flash game to be distributed on the internet can be relatively inexpensive. The graphics don't have to be the greatest, as Ultima IV proves, and neither does the music. What really matters is how skillfully room is made for value-laden, consequence-ridden choices, where something like a virtual soul can be forged.

Video games could prove themselves to be a great medium in which to create a post-modern midrash, where we could not only re-envision our stories, but relive them; drawing out the archetypal power many of them possess, making them more personally relevant. Besides, think of how the seminary program would boom if the kids knew that they were required to play awesome video games for half an hour a day.
SUNSTONE invites short musings: chatty reports, cultural trend sightings, theological meditations. All lovely things of good report, please share them. Send to: <dan.wotherspoon@me.com>

Blogwatch

An earlier version of this reflection was published 13 January 2011 on the Exponent blog, www.the-exponent.com, and is reprinted here with permission.

THE GARMENT AND THE VEIL

With snow-white veil and garments as of flame,
She stands before thee, who so long ago
Filled thy young heart with passion and the woe
From which thy song and all its splendors came . . .

–HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PRETTY ORTHODOX IN MY garment wearing. I’ve worn them under the bra as I was instructed. I also wore both tops and bottoms together, feeling that the garment wasn’t complete unless I wore the set. I found that I get the most out of my garments when I think about the symbolism of the Atonement. They play an important part of an archetypal story that goes like this:

Eve found herself vulnerable outside the Garden of Eden. Her world was now open to strife, sickness, and death. Then Jesus, the creator of earth, told her that he’d make a way for her to overcome these ills of the new world. He would descend to Earth and lay down his life for her and her posterity. And as a promise that he would do this, he gave Eve a coat of animal skin, a sacrifice in similitude of his own future sacrifice: A sacrifice that would serve to cover up Eve’s vulnerability to this new world and the death that exists there.

Because this is the narrative I use to understand the garment, I have appreciated wearing it. I tend to look better with more clothes on, so making sure I’m covered hasn’t been an issue. In many ways I liked the sense of equality—both men and women get to wear it, and ordaining women to wear the Garment of the Holy Priesthood has got to mean something about an endowed woman’s priesthood power, even if we don’t fully understand it yet.

I also view the garment as a type of veil. It shields us from the outside world. I’m not comparing it to a burqa, but to the veil that hangs inside the temple. The garment is similar to the temple veil in distinct ways, and we can learn about the meaning of one by learning about the meaning of the other.

T HIS LAST YEAR, however, I made a conscious decision to not wear the garment, or rather, to not wear it in an orthodox sense. When I was planning for the birth of my baby, I purchased some nursing tops for the garment. But when I was hit with mastitis the day I came home from the hospital, my plans changed. I wasn’t able to wear a nursing bra, much less the garment. As I healed, and I began to get the hang of nursing twenty times a day (and I have the recorded times to prove it!), I began to feel it wasn’t right for me to wear the garment as I’d been instructed. This doesn’t mean I’ve given up on the symbolism I enjoy with the garment, but that I found it was necessary to make a temporary modification.

What I felt is that I needed to be close to my new tender baby. I wanted to feel him close to me, skin on skin, wrapped in only a diaper and under a blanket big enough for the both of us. I wanted him to know my touch, to smell my skin, to lay his head on my chest and hear my heartbeat. I couldn’t imagine anything holier than my touch on his skin, and the gentle dependence he had on my body. Although he was born full term, I wanted the benefits of Kangaroo Care, the ability to incubate my baby outside of the womb by holding him close to my skin during feedings.

I found the garment nursing tops to be a hindrance to this closeness. To lay my baby on my constantly milk-soaked top and only give him access to the bare minimum part of myself didn’t seem to bring us the bonding I wanted. When I wasn’t wearing the garment top, and I could lay him right on my skin, I could quickly wipe any excess milk off of his skin and mine. This was the practical consideration, but there was a spiritual consideration, too.

As I thought about the symbolism of my wearing the garment or not, I remembered the garment as a veil. In my understanding, the garment sets endowed people apart from the rest of the world and often serves as a physical barrier between the self and others—between Eve and the lone and dreary world. I thought about this veil separating me from my newborn infant son, who relied on me for all his nurturing. And I remembered Heavenly Mother. I thought about the veil that separates us from her, the veil that some say the Father put between her and us so that we cannot touch her and defile her with our coarseness. “A veil to pro-
tect her from her children,” some Church leaders have told me. I thought about the times I have ached for Heavenly Mother, those desperate times in my life when I wished for the veil to part so that I could be held against her and sob into her chest and have her nourish me. I looked at my own newborn son, and I decided I could not bear any longer to have a veil placed between us.

ALISA
Midvale, Utah

Scripture notes

In this regular column, Michael Vinson, a master’s graduate of the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge and a frequent devotional speaker at Sunstone symposiums, delves into personal and scholarly aspects of scripture.

HOW MUCH DOES JESUS CARE ABOUT DOCTRINAL PURITY?

...And I shall bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me. And this I do that I may establish my gospel, that there may not be so much contention; yea, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them.

—D&C 10:62–63

ONE OF MY Earliest experiences in “BIBLE bashing” came while I was serving as a stake missionary in California and waiting for my own mission call. I had gone out with the elders to visit an investigator, who had invited a surprise visitor—the leading anti-Mormon minister in our little community. Almost immediately, the Reverend and the missionaries began arguing about points of doctrine while I sat there with just a year of Rick's College religion classes behind me and nothing to add to any arguments. The voices became louder, and I could feel temperatures rising in the room. I am sure the investigator was sorry to be there as well. After nearly an hour of arguing, there was a pause and I finally spoke up. I'll get to what I said in a moment.

I wish I could say I learned from that experience, but a little scriptural knowledge and a lot of missionary zeal is a dangerous combination, and a year later, while on my mission in Bolivia, I had my own run-in with a minister who had been invited over by our investigator.

As I reflect back on these Bible-bashing experiences, they now seem to me not so different from all other arguments about scriptural meaning and doctrine, including those going on within the Church today. I am thinking especially here of members who have been punished by or threatened with excommunication over theological or doctrinal issues. Instead of bashing over points of scripture—though that can certainly happen in Sunday School—these confrontations take place in the privacy of a stake high council room and are known today as “Church Disciplinary Councils” (though in classic Orwellian double-speak, they were once called “courts of love”). In the Church’s purge of intellectuals in the early 1990s—one that to some extent still continues—one of the main justifications for the excommunications was that these persons’ writings and lectures could contaminate the “pure” doctrine of the Church as taught in classes and meetings. Clearly some Church leaders have felt that doctrinal purity is an issue that should be pressed. Indeed, a recent edition of the Church Handbook of Instructions lists keeping the Church “pure” as adequate reason for excommunication. Teaching “false doctrine” is also mentioned as an excommunicable offense.

But I believe there is something inherently dangerous for the long-term health of religious institutions that perpetrate this point of view. First, because all leaders are human, there is not any earthly institution—“true church” or otherwise—that does not occasionally make mistakes that might be considered doctrinal. For instance, there are few Church leaders today who are willing to still stand up and say that the denial of priesthood blessings to blacks was truly the word and will of the Lord. Nevertheless, before the 1978 priesthood revelation in 1978, some Latter-day Saints were threatened with or received Church discipline for advocating the eradication of...
racial boundaries.

I am not denying the reality of priesthood revelation but only pointing out that sometimes our surety about Church doctrine and practice is not as sure as we might like. Even if we are confident that this ship belongs to the Lord, men are at the helm and do the steering. Because of the principle of agency, I have to believe that the Lord will pretty much let them steer or take the Church any direction in which they are inclined.

So, how much does Jesus actually care about the purity of the doctrine taught in the Church? On the surface the answer seems straightforward. Of course the Lord cares about the doctrines being taught; why else would the world have needed a restoration of priesthood authority after a long apostasy? But perhaps this answer is not as intuitive as it might first appear.

I believe that part of our obsession with punishing dissenting teachings in the modern Church stems from the ancient Christian church practice of emphasizing orthodoxy over orthopraxy. In other words, it was not what you did that made you a Christian in the ancient church (think of Paul eradicating the Jewish dietary laws) as much as what you believed. Leaders of the ancient church fought constantly over doctrine and interpretation, and they often resorted to ostracizing fringe doctrines or teachers.

But one can find an alternative in the Jewish tradition, which emphasizes practice (orthopraxy) over beliefs (orthodoxy). In Judaism, there is a fairly long tradition of disagreement over doctrines (according to the Mishnah, this was true even dating back to the time of Jesus), so that almost every variety of belief or non-belief is tolerated. There is no litmus test, per se, that is administered to Jews every year or two to be sure that they believe the same as everyone else in the congregation. Instead, for most congregations, as long as you observe the practices, regardless of what you actually believe, you are considered a Jew.

This was the religious tradition Jesus was raised in. You could be excommunicated for becoming a tax farmer (part of the Roman tax-collecting bureaucracy) but not for voicing alternative views of scriptural interpretation.

Some of Jesus’s views on how we should treat differing interpretations of doctrine can be seen in the account of Christ's visit to Book of Mormon peoples: “And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been” (3 Nephi 11:28).

Admittedly, at first glance, this passage lends itself to two different readings. One reading could see Christ’s injunction as a form of “Thou shalt not dispute anymore because this is the official doctrine”—Jesus channeling Elder McConkie’s Mormon Doctrine, as it were.

But in the next verse we read, “For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.” The Nephites had apparently had some extensive doctrinal disagreements, but the Savior was more concerned with how they treated each other than he was with what anyone was teaching.

Jesus seems to be advocating orthopraxy over orthodoxy—preaching against the temptation to impose a particular system in order to regulate spiritual conformity within the church. In other words, Jesus is saying (and this point is repeated in other verses as well) there is no
point of doctrine or church teaching that is worth contending, disputing, or arguing about with fellow church members if it interferes with our loving each other. The inverse is true as well. If we truly respect and love each other, we can have those vigorous doctrinal discussions with this caveat: don’t get too carried away with the correctness of your point of view.

So did Jesus correct the doctrine of the Nephites when he appeared to them? Yes, but only after warning them about the dangers of contending over the meaning of scripture. In D&C 10:62-63, the verses I quoted at the beginning of this column, the Lord identifies Satan as the force behind contention over doctrine and the temptation to “wrest the scriptures” and turn them into tools for battle. As much as we might enjoy intellectual dialogue, there is some point at which differences can begin to degenerate into angry disputations. I think the Savior knew that, in the midst of disagreements, we often lose our tempers and are tempted to call each other names. In fact, in the online chat and blog environment this tendency even has a name: “Godwin’s Law of Nazi Analogues,” which predicts that the longer an online disagreement continues, the more likely one party will resort to comparing the other to Nazis. If we reach the point of pointing fingers and calling names, whether we are a Church leader judging from one side of the high council table or a member sitting on the other, we have transgressed the Lord’s law of love.

For the kickoff of the second season of Ancient Aliens, which aired on 27 July (coinciding with the release of the movie Cowboys and Aliens), the producers decided to explore the topic “Ancient Aliens and the Old West.”

The show explains that “according to Ancient Astronaut theorists, Moroni may in fact have been a star being, an extraterrestrial whose mission was to pass down to Smith and his followers the advanced knowledge of the Mound Builders.”

The show includes clips from an interview with Logan Hawkes, author of Close Encounters of the Old West, who states that “Moronee [sic] claimed to be from the Pleiades star cluster.”

“So a church today 9-million strong believe that their church may have originated not of this world, but of another world,” Hawkes concludes.

This is, of course, an outrageous falsehood: The LDS Church is 14-million strong.

SO WHAT DID I say to the anti-Mormon minister that evening so long ago when I was an ignorant stake missionary? I told him that even though we disagreed strongly over the meaning of Jesus’ words, I knew the Lord loved him just as much as he loved us, and that I loved him, too. A strong spirit of the Lord’s love came into that room, and just before leaving with the missionaries, the minister took me aside and said that he had felt something in his heart that he had not experienced before, and he asked if he could visit with me later that week. I wish I could tell you I was brave enough to follow through with that visit, but I was too young and scared.

The lesson for me, though, still remains a force whenever I am tempted to dogmatically argue with someone about a Church teaching or interpretation of doctrine. Nothing, it seems, is as important to the Lord as loving our fellowman—even, or especially, Church members whom we may fervently feel to be in doctrinal error.

MICHAEL VINSON
Star Valley, Wyoming

Adventures of a Mormon Bookseller
In this regular Cornucopia column, Curt Bench, owner and operator of Benchmark Books (www.benchmarkbooks.com), a specialty bookstore in Salt Lake City that focuses primarily on used and rare Mormon books, tells stories—both humorous and appalling—from his 35-plus years in the LDS book business.

“UNSCRUPULOUS OR MISGUIDED ADVENTURERS”

THE BANNER HEADLINE IN THE JANUARY 1894 Salt Lake Herald advertisement reads, “ARE YOU A WELL WOMAN?” The lengthy ad then touts “Viavi” as a remedy for various female disorders. The product (offered in various forms—some to be used internally and some externally) was promised to be a “boon” to “Eve’s daughters.” But husbands were also promised benefits:
A poor man's sole cause of happiness is often a cheerful healthy wife and their babies. She may not be accomplished in social arts, but she has warm arms to enfold him. Men are governed by the same human longing, whatever their various ranks may be, and the hearthstone of a millionaire is made brighter if a wife be there who is NATURALLY prompted to the display of sweet emotion.

After selling book subscriptions for several years, brothers Hartland and Herbert Law formed the Viavi Company in 1886. Although their main product was designed to treat uterine and other female disorders, Viavi also manufactured and sold eye and ear treatments, tonics, and laxatives. Company literature further promised treatments for obesity, headaches, and even bad breath. Supposedly, the firm's miracle products could help women regulate how many children they bore, improve the sexual health of both men and women, and cure just about any other illness, including cancer.

The American Medical Association took a rather dim view of Viavi, stating that if the Law brothers were correct in their claims, "then the whole medical world is all wrong," and asking, "What reputable physician, not employed by them, could be found to agree with them?" The AMA review also noted that the Laws, who had started with almost nothing, were now affluent, their patrons consisting of "confiding sick and suffering women, to whom, not skilled in medicine, their literature appeals."

Viavi products sold nationwide and were popular with Mormons in Utah for some time. Viavi ads ran in the Church's Young Woman's Journal for at least three straight years (1900–1903; the image on page 11 is one example). That the ads would run in an LDS publication is puzzling since several years before this, the Church's First Presidency discussed the company and concluded that it was no more than a "fraudulent money scheme." In a 30 January 1894 letter written by Joseph F. Smith (then counselor to President Wilford Woodruff) to a Logan, Utah, stake president, Smith refers to the "pretentious [sic] and flaming advertisement" that Viavi had run in the Salt Lake Herald earlier that month. Smith's letter says that Church leaders determined the scheme was designed to "prey upon the weak and unsuspecting." However, he cautions the stake president against "openly opposing this scheme, for in so doing you might give to it undue importance, but we think you can quietly put a stopper upon it, and thereby save our people from being duped and robbed of their means by either unscrupulous or misguided adventurers."

SN'T IT COMFORTING to realize that such chicanery and scheming is a thing of Utah's past? I'm sure readers will all agree that it's hard to imagine that any company or person would try to deceive or sell a questionable product to anyone, let alone a fellow Saint, as part of a get-rich-quick scheme. Certainly not in the Mormon book and document business anyway.

NOTE

1. Benchmark Books sold this letter to Utah State University's Merrill-Cazier Library Special Collections. It is quoted here with the library's permission

A place for every truth

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."

UNDERSTANDING TALMAGE

O NE OF THE CHALLENGES IN READING ANY book written by James E. Talmage is grappling with the difficult vocabulary. He uses big words. Really big words. Words like “tesseradecads,” which refers to the arrangement into “groups of fourteen individuals each.” The word occurs in Talmage's Jesus the Christ in the discussion of the genealogies of Jesus (see Matthew 1:17; Jesus the Christ, 89). Some of my favorites include: casuist—someone skilled in judging right from wrong; palliate—to cover with excuses; stultify—to cause another to look foolish.

Words such as these flowed naturally from Talmage, as he was schooled in Latin and German while a student at Brigham Young Academy. Most likely he also learned German from his mentor Karl G. Maeser. A great many of the difficult words Talmage uses, especially in The Articles of Faith and Jesus the Christ, have a Latin or German root base.

In 1996, I had the opportunity to interview John R. Talmage, who was then, at age 85, the last living child of James and May Talmage. I asked John if his father brought a dictionary to the Salt Lake Temple when he was writing Jesus the Christ. He replied, “Father didn't use a dictionary. If he didn't know the meaning of a word, he didn't use it.”

Not everyone who wanted to benefit from the books Talmage wrote was blessed with his huge vocabulary, however. Recognizing this, and in response to Jesus the Christ's having been chosen as the course of study for Melchizedek Priesthood quorums for 1963 and 1964, several missionaries serving under President J. Leonard Love in the Northern California Mission in 1963 undertook a project to make things easier for readers who tripped on those strange words conjured from memory or concocted fresh by Elder Talmage. It was a booklet they titled Understanding Talmage, subtitled “A Conceptual Dictionary to Supplement the
Study of *Jesus the Christ* and *Articles of Faith* by Elder James E. Talmage. Readers today sometimes have trouble locating *Understanding Talmage* because it’s commonly referred to as “The Talmage Dictionary.” Also, *Understanding Talmage* has been long out of print, but copies can occasionally be found at used and rare bookstores or for sale on the Internet.

Another difficulty in using *Jesus the Christ* as a reference guide is that Talmage provided no scripture index. Thus, if you wanted to find out what Talmage had to say about Amos 8:11–12, you would have to do some research. In 1963, a couple by the name of J. Marlan and Christina Vella sought to remedy this lack by compiling the “Scripture Index to *Jesus the Christ*.” Their index may have been meant for publication, but it never got that far. For those interested in obtaining one, Special Collections at BYU’s Harold B. Lee Library has been willing to make reprints available for purchase on demand.

**From the pews**

A two-sentence version of this piece appeared as Aaron C. Brown’s 9 February 2011 Facebook status update.

**LEADERLORE**

**N**ot thing drives me crazier than hearing a well-meaning Latter-day Saint earnestly explain how some popular Mormon teaching doesn’t count as official—or as a “doctrine”—because it belongs to some other—supposedly inferior—category of teaching: “Culture.” “Policy.” “Speculation.” “Folklore.” It’s not that I object to drawing distinctions between central gospel teachings and their lower-class cousins. It’s not that our terms can’t have concrete, useful meanings. It’s that more often than not, they don’t. They’re just empty words. And this is a problem. For if we Mormons are going to draw distinctions between “doctrine” and “non-doctrine,” we need to make sure we’ve thought hard about the contours of these categories. We need to carefully define our terms, and then use them in concrete, principled ways. Otherwise, we’re just employing clever rhetorical tricks to downgrade LDS teachings we don’t like, without doing the work of showing why these teachings should be viewed as less authoritative than teachings we do like.

Perhaps no term for “non-doctrine” irks me so much as “folklore,” because, to my ears, it implies that the “lore” being disparaged originated with the common Mormon “folk”—in other words, that some idea is the weird invention of rank-and-file Mormons from yesteryear who had too much time on their hands and too much zeal in their heads. But many of the embarrassing, awkward, even shameful, ideas that have circulated among the Mormon populace have no such lowly origins. Many were either promulgated by the senior leadership of the LDS Church (often in official fora), or were at least promoted and popularized by them.

We really need a term that reflects this reality. We need a word that helps us confront the necessary task of reflecting on the origin of our teachings.

I understand the perceived need to employ a term that can safely disown outdated Mormon teachings and practices without gratuitously embarrassing the LDS leadership. But our collective failure to properly identify the origins of false Mormon teachings has costs. It prevents many of us from recognizing where destructive religious notions often come from. It dissuades many of us from learning from these historical episodes, and from raising constructive questions about how we should approach the teachings of authorities we want to view as inspired.

So here’s my suggestion: Let’s jettison “folklore,” at least when we discuss Mormonism’s past racial teachings or any other outdated teachings the LDS leadership once promoted. Let’s save it for instances where we’re supremely confident that the Mormon “folk” really are the authors of the “lore.” If we want to employ the term in reference to a sighting of the Three Nephites, a UFO story, or some other tale of dubious provenance, fine. But teachings once viewed as authoritative by Mormon leaders deserve a different term—one that doesn’t mask important questions about the origin and authoritativeness of our “lore.”

Let’s stop talking about “folklore” and start talking about “leaderlore.”

Aaron C. Brown
Seattle, Washington
Was there a period without temptation after the Tower of Babel fell while Satan learned all the new languages?

Since a spirit has negligible mass, does a resurrected woman show when she is pregnant? If not, birth must be a breeze.

No wonder Heavenly Father has children "as numerous as the sands of the sea."

Christ lived a sinless life, which means that he wasn't guilty of any sins of omission.

Does that mean there was no way he could have cast one more demon out, or healed one more person?

Does that mean there is a ceiling on how many righteous acts a person can perform in a lifetime?

Joseph Fielding Smith said in Doctrines of Salvation that "changes will be made in their bodies to suit" the condition of those who do not make it to the celestial kingdom. Does that mean that for many people, gender will become a negligible characteristic?

How does that jive with the Proclamation on the Family's contention that "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose"?

Are there planets populated by genderless resurrected humans living "separately and singly"?

D&C 33 teaches that when Jesus returns, the earth will morph into its terrestrial state, having no mountains, valleys, or deserts.

Does that mean no more skiing through new powder, ATVing through the desert, or hang gliding from mountainsides?

I guess we'll still have water skiing and scuba diving. Maybe those are the RIGHTEOUS sports . . .

Why is the willingness to kill considered such a benchmark of spirituality? (e.g., Nephi & Abraham)

How good do you have to be to qualify as "righteous?"

How BAD do you have to be to qualify as "wicked?"

I wonder if I know any wicked people?

All the experience of humanity was funneled through Jesus during the atonement. Since, as far as I know, Jesus never sinned nor surfed . . .

. . . does he know how it feels to sin or surf, or does he simply know how I feel when I sin or surf?
Early Mormon history

THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE IN JOSEPH SMITH’S MORMONISM

By D. Michael Quinn

It is extremely difficult for most of us today to comprehend the violence that was pervasive, often normative, in early American culture. Much of this normative violence had its roots in the national culture while regions (such as the South and West) had their own traditions of sanctioned violence in daily life. In other instances, the rowdism and violence were normative only for a subculture that was defined primarily by social class or ethnicity. Early Americans had perspectives about violence that were very different even from those of modern Americans who have served in the military or lived in war-torn societies, because it is normal for modern Americans to grow up in a peaceful environment where violence is considered a violation of social norms.

Some of America’s culture of violence is rooted in England. Robert Shoemaker has observed of England’s traditions of male honor before 1800 that “violence for men was part of accepted codes of masculine behavior, and offered them a means of affirming their gender identity, and gentlemen a means of confirming their superior social position.” Nevertheless, Shoemaker’s statistical analysis shows that urban Englishmen of all classes were becoming less violent during the decades before 1800. Part of the reason for this decline of violence was the growing success of English common law’s “duty to retreat.” As Richard Maxwell Brown explains, a centuries-old “society of civility” in Britain that called for “obedience to the duty to retreat—really a duty to flee from the scene altogether or, failing that, to retreat to the wall at one’s back—meant that in the vast majority of disputes no fatal outcome could occur.”

Beginning with an 1806 decision by a Massachusetts court, gradually the United States “as a whole repudiated the English common-law tradition in favor of the American theme of no duty to retreat: that one was legally justified in standing one’s ground to kill in self-defense.” This shift resulted in America’s “proud new tolerance for killing in situations where it might have been avoided by obeying a legal duty to retreat.”

During this same period, American norms were changing concerning violence by boys and teenagers. E. Anthony Rotundo observes: “Early in the 1800s, men and women had seen youthful brawls as a badge of evil and a sign that manly self-control was not yet developed.” However, during a decades-long transition, “bourgeois Northerners did more than endorse interpersonal violence: they now believed that fighting helped to build youthful character.”

A few examples may be helpful in recognizing this early American culture of violence, which extended from the elite to the lower classes, from the cities to the villages, from North to South, from the Eastern Establishment to the western frontier. Although dueling (usually with pistols) was permitted by the laws of various states and was regarded as honorable by most Americans of the time, Thomas Jefferson in 1798 persuaded ambassador (and future president) James Monroe against trying to kill U.S. president John Adams in a duel. Alexander Hamilton, a founding father of the Republic and secretary of the U.S. Treasury, died in an 1804 duel. The history of dueling in the nation’s capital also included “an affair of honor” between Secretary of State Henry Clay and Senator John Randolph. Known for dueling while he was justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court in the early 1800s, Andrew Jackson killed one opponent in 1806, engaged in a hotel brawl as army general with Thomas Hart Benton in 1813, massacred countless Creek Indian women and children (including hundreds on a single day), executed six Tennessee militiamen in 1814 for leaving camp when they thought their enlistments had expired, illegally invaded the Spanish territory of Florida in 1818, and hanged two British men there for befriending the Seminole Indians—yet Jackson was elected U.S. president in 1828. As governor of Illinois Territory, William Henry Harrison declared “a war of extermination” against the Kickapoo Indians who opposed white
settlement on their ancestral lands, and he successfully used this violent campaign to get elected as U.S. president in 1840. In 1842, Abraham Lincoln nearly engaged in a sword duel with the Illinois state auditor.

Violence in the classroom was also common in early America. In 1802, students at Princeton University burned down the library; before 1830 had arrived, they had engaged in five other “major campus rebellions.” Student rioting and violence also plagued the University of Virginia during the 1830s and 1840s. The problem was even worse at public schools where the children of farmers, shopkeepers, and common laborers were educated. In 1837 alone, 400 schools had to be closed in Massachusetts because of violence and disciplinary problems.

From colonial times to the mid-1840s, it was a tradition in Philadelphia on Sundays for young men to commit both “organized and spontaneous mayhem.”

The pervasiveness of violence in early American culture, particularly by men, leads to an obvious question. Did every early American man, or even the vast majority, commit assault and battery? Existing evidence indicates that the answer is “no” for a large portion of American males during that era.

Why did many early American males avoid violence, even though it was socially sanctioned? Opinion polls did not exist, relatively few American males wrote diaries or letters about their personal feelings, and even fewer commented about their responses to violence (aside from service in the military). Therefore, the answer can be only tentative, but many early American males apparently declined to participate in their country’s culture of violence because of some combination of the following factors: non-aggressiveness in their personalities, their adherence to the Christian commandment to “turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39), family indoctrination against violence, or their perception that there was never sufficient cause for them to resort to violence in their daily lives.

Because many American males (and nearly all females) avoided violence, we might question whether there really was a “culture of violence” in early America. To answer that question, we need more than arrest records, or anecdotal references to violent incidents, or even estimates of those who did not engage in violent acts. Rather, we need to ask a more fundamental question: What were the norms of the society regarding violence?

In terms of the previously cited examples of legally and socially sanctioned violence in daily life and of the election of national leaders with violent reputations, it should be obvious why historians regard early America as a violent culture. Though the incidents of violence are certainly important, both individually and statistically, the crucial question is whether the violent incidents occurred in concert with the society’s norms or in opposition to them.

It may be difficult for the majority of those who follow the Restoration message that began with the 1830 Book of Mormon to conceive of early Mormon culture as being violent. After all, the Book of Mormon’s narratives endorsed self-defensive wars (Alma 43: 26, 47) but also expressed discomfort or condemnation of violence in daily life (1 Nephi 4:7–18; Mosiah 29:14; Alma 35:15; 48:11). Members of the Community of Christ, headquartered in Independence, Missouri, can point to a tradition of gentle co-existence with their neighbors which extends to that movement’s founding in the 1850s.

Members of the LDS Church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, can point to a similar tradition throughout their own lifetime and that of their parents, grandparents, sometimes great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents.

However, the Utah church’s peaceful norms extend back only to the 1890s, and the Community of Christ’s norms do not define the Mormonism which existed before the Reorganization of the 1850s. To avoid the “presentist bias”
of trying to make the past conform to our own experience and world views, we need to explore the personalities, norms, and behaviors of early Mormonism concerning violence.

In the above sentence, I mentioned “personalities” first because prior to the existence of Mormonism’s norms, its founder Joseph Smith Jr. had developed personality traits which interacted with the norms of the Church he led from 1830 to his death in 1844. As biographer Richard Lyman Bushman has recently observed, “Joseph’s reaction to insults was learned behavior, shared with his society. His anger was both his own and an expression of a cultural practice—what honorable men were taught to do. . . . The culture of honor moved him to contend with the offending parties to protect his easily bruised pride, even though all the while he wanted peace.”

On the one hand, for example, in 1836 a Kirtland resident called Joseph Smith “a pugnacious Prophet.” This described a repeatedly manifested aspect of Smith’s personality—he physically assaulted those who offended him, and he spoke with pride about these violent incidents. His followers might justify such personal behaviors with religious prooftexts about Jesus using a whip on money-changers in the temple at Jerusalem (John 2:15), but the Mormon Prophet’s resorting to assault and battery also reflected early America’s culture of violence and its code of male honor.

On the other hand, as God’s living Prophet and mouthpiece on earth, Smith also claimed that Mormons had the religious right to take vengeance on their enemies and had the theocratic right to form private armies. Joseph Smith’s personality and his theocratic teachings were the joint basis for early Mormonism’s norms for violent behavior. This resulted in a violent religious subculture within a violent national culture.

“When I was a boy” in Palmyra, New York—probably in the 1820s—Smith confronted a wife-beater: “I whipped him till he said he had enough.” He also told Mormon friends he had enough.” He also told Mormon friends the 1820s—Smith confronted a wife-beater: “I whipped him

culture.

early Mormonism’s norms for violent behavior. This resulted in a violent religious subculture within a violent national culture.

“...”

However, despite these violent incidents in his early life (one expressing his code of male honor and one representing self-defense), the first few years of Joseph’s leadership of the Church were remarkably non-violent. His pacifism was most extraordinary when, in March 1832, a mob broke into the homes of Smith, then church president and his counselor Sidney Rigdon in Hiram, Ohio. The mob dragged the two from their beds, attempted to poison Smith, nearly castrated him, beat both men unconscious, then tarred-and-feathered them. Worse, the Prophet’s adopted child died from exposure to the cold as the mob ransacked his house. Nevertheless, Joseph preached the next day to a congregation which included several of his attackers, and he sought no retribution. Among this mob was a former friend, apostate Symonds Rider.

I find it difficult to explain in satisfactorily human terms how Joseph Smith could manifest such Quaker-like pacifism in his personal responses to this physical attack on himself and family in 1832, yet could lash out with vehemence at far lesser provocations during the last ten years of his life. This contrast seems beyond Richard Bushman’s biographical assessments.

To explain the Prophet’s pacifist behavior in 1832, I think Joseph believed that Mormonism required him to live a higher standard. However, that changed—and Joseph became “pugnacious” for reasons that are neither explained nor self-evident.

Perhaps hackneyed phrases such as “straw that broke the camel’s back” or “dam bursting” apply to the cumulative effect of the years of religious ridicule and personal insults that he experienced. Both certainly provoked the Prophet’s conventionally American code of honor. At any rate, it is easier to explain the theocratic basis for violent aspects in his religious leadership after 1832.

Because Joseph Smith’s 1832 response to the 1832 mob attack was the most important guide his followers had concerning how they should respond to violent attacks, Mormons behaved as pacifists when Missourians attacked them in Jackson County during July 1833. Mobs destroyed the Mormon newspaper, the home of editor William W. Phelps, and burned nearly all copies of the newly printed Book of Commandments, the first collection of Smith’s revelations. Then the mob tarred-and-feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and other Mormon men for not agreeing to leave the county immediately. The Missouri Mormons gave no resistance to these attacks, brandished no weapons, and did not speak of revenge.

As resident John Corrill wrote, “up to this time the Mormons had not so much as lifted a finger, even in their own defense, so tenacious were they for the precepts of the gospel—‘turn the other cheek.’” That changed after Smith made the first revelatory pronouncement that Mormo
theocracy was a here-and-now reality, not some distant event connected with the millennial return of Jesus.31

In August 1833, Smith announced the words of God: “And now verily I say unto you, concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them . . . .” The document required Mormons to obey divine rule, not secular authority, concerning war and militarism: “And again, this is the law I gave unto mine ancients, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them” (D&C 98:4–11, 33).34 The revelation implied that God would reveal such commands through the LDS Prophet. That became explicit within months, when Joseph Smith became the theocratic commander-in-chief of the “armies of Israel.”

Having previously endured an anti-Mormon attack without retribution, the Mormon community in Missouri responded to this document’s instructions to endure a total of three attacks and “bear it patiently.” However, upon the fourth attack, “thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified.” This theocratic justification extended to vengeance against “all their enemies, to the third and fourth generation” (D&C 98:23, 25–26, 31, 37).

In October 1833, Missourians raided isolated Mormon homes, which was the second major attack of “your enemy,” after the attack in July. On 1 November, mobs destroyed the Church’s gristmill in Independence and attacked Mormon homes there. This was the third attack, and, in compliance with the August revelation, the Mormon community in Missouri again chose to “bear it patiently.” The next night, the Missourians raided Mormon settlements in the Blue River Valley. This time—the fourth attack—the Mormons surprised their enemy by fighting back. Skirmishes increased until the “Battle of Blue River” on 4 November, when Book of Mormon witness David Whitmer led the Mormons in killing two Missourians and severely wounding others. In response, Jackson County’s leaders called out the militia, who compelled the Mormons to surrender their weapons and begin leaving their homes.35

It is possible that the 1833 Missouri mobbings caused the Prophet to enlist some of his followers as bodyguards, but the practice would have been understandable after his being tarred-and-feathered in 1832. In any event, a non-Mormon in Ohio wrote in January 1834 that “Smith has four or five armed men to guard [sic] him every night.”36

A month later, Joseph dictated a revelation concerning “the redemption of your brethren who have been scattered on the land of Zion” and “in avenging me of mine enemies.” To accomplish these ends, the revelation commanded Smith to organize at least “a hundred of the strength of my house, to go up with you unto the land of Zion,” adding the instruction, “And whoso is not willing to lay down his life for my sake, is not my disciple” (D&C 103:1, 26, 28, 34). This was the beginning of the Mormon military expedition called “Zion’s Camp.”37

Perhaps the most significant dimension of this “commandment” (v. 1) was its provision that “ye shall avenge me of mine enemies . . . unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (vv. 25–26). This new statement verified that the conditions laid down in the 1833 revelation had been fulfilled and that the Latter-day Saints were now free to take “vengeance” at will against any perceived enemy. This February 1834 revelation was the equivalent of a standing order from God—you may fire when ready.

Zion’s Camp did not succeed in redeeming Zion, but it transformed Mormon leadership and culture. In February 1834, the high council in Kirtland, Ohio, elected Joseph Smith as “commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel.”38 This was one of the first acts of the newly organized high council, which thereby acknowledged Smith’s religious right to give God’s command to “go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people” (D&C 98:4–11, 33).

Zion’s Camp was the first organization established for the external security of Mormonism. In June 1834, Joseph Smith created the second by reorganizing his private bodyguards into an organization led by a captain, his brother Hyrum, who presided over twenty of “my life guards.”39

Six months later, the military experience of Zion’s Camp (rather than any ecclesiastical service) was the basis upon which Joseph Smith said he was selecting men for the newly organized Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy.40 Unlike other American religious denominations, “the church militant” was a literal fact in Mormonism, not just a symbolic slogan.41

During this same period, Joseph Smith was involved in two outbursts of personal violence in Kirtland. Sometime between April 1834 and April 1835, the following incident occurred, as described by Smith himself. After a Baptist minister threatened him with a cane, the Prophet said, “I whipped him till he begged. He threatened to prosecute me. I sent Luke Johnson[,] the constable[,] after him and he run him out of the County into Mentor,” Ohio.42 Johnson explained that this act of violence occurred because the minister, after receiving the hospitality of the Prophet’s home, then “called Joseph a hypocrite, a liar, an im-
posters and a false prophet, and called upon him to repent.” Therefore, “Joseph boxed his ears with both hands, and, turning his face towards the door, kicked him into the street.” The American code of honor triumphed.

In April 1835, Joseph’s brother-in-law Calvin W. Stoddard accused him of assault and battery. At a preliminary hearing, the judge ruled that “it is considered that the charge is sustained,” and the Prophet was bound over for trial at the Court of Common Pleas. However, because Stoddard failed to appear at the May trial, Smith was acquitted, and the plaintiff had to pay court costs.44

Despite this charge of battering his brother-in-law in a dispute during the spring, the Prophet showed remarkable restraint in the fall with his brother William, who had an equally pugnacious reputation.45 Because Joseph would not allow their mother to testify at a high council trial, William Smith “became enraged. I finally ordered him to set [sic] down. He said he would not unless I knocked him down.” Although furious at his brother, Joseph did not respond to this challenge with violence. Concerning a subsequent argument, Joseph wrote that William “used violence upon my person.”46

However, this fraternal conflict of 1835 had a final outcome which the Prophet’s diary and official LDS history did not mention. Joseph Smith’s devoted friend Benjamin F. Johnson, a Kirtland resident, reported that “for insolence to him, he (Joseph) soundly thrashed his brother William who boasted himself as invincible.”47

Less than four years later, Smith’s former secretary Warren Parrish referred in print to these incidents. He condemned “the Prophet[’]s fighting four pitched battles at fisticuff, without [sic within] four years, one with his own natural brother, one with his brotherinlaw [sic], one with Ezra Thair [Thayer], and one with a Baptist priest.” Parrish’s statement was endorsed by two disaffected apostles (including Constable Luke Johnson) and two disaffected Presidents of the Seventy.48

By contrast, rather than becoming disaffected because of the Prophet’s personal violence, some faithful Mormons cited these incidents as justification for their own aggressive behavior. Following his ordination in Kirtland to the LDS offices of elder and seventy,49 Elijah Abel served a proselytizing mission. After this African-American elder threatened “to knock down elder Christopher Merkley on their passage up Lake Ontario, he publickly [sic] declared that the elders in Kirtland make nothing of knocking down one another.” Jedediah M. Grant and Zenas H. Gurley disapproved of Abel’s preaching this, and they formally accused him of misconduct.50

ON 24 SEPTEMBER 1835, notwithstanding the absence of an external threat, Joseph Smith organized militarily in Kirtland. He proposed “by the voice of the Spirit of the Lord” to raise another Mormon army “to live or die on our own lands, which we have purchased in Jackson County, Missouri.” His manuscript diary concluded in his own handwriting: “I ask God in the name of Jesus that we may obtain Eight hundred men (or one thousand) well armed and that they may ac[ç]omplish this great work.”51 A thousand-man army was a remarkable goal for an organization with fewer than nine thousand men, women, and children, which may be why the official LDS history changed the phrase to “one thousand emigrants.”52 John Whitmer, who was official Church Historian at this time, added something that Smith’s diary left unstated: on this day, the high council “by revelation” appointed the LDS president as head of the “war department” of the “Lord’s Host.”53

This was a significant expansion of Joseph’s previous role as commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel because “war department” assumed crucial circumstances. First, he used the phrase which defined the jurisdiction of the U.S. Secretary of War, and this implied a nationalistic dimension in Mormonism. Second, given that the U.S. War Department was a permanent function, in war or peace,54 the Prophet’s military oversight was also permanent. Third, as head of Mormonism’s “war department,” Smith did not need to be a line officer in the field during hostilities. Like the U.S. Secretary of War, Joseph now had oversight of all Mormon military operations. Fourth, he had no mortal superior and thus combined in himself roles that the U.S. government found it wise to separate in time of war—military command and civilian oversight. The fact that his diary stated his military goals for Missouri but did not reveal his actual organizational responsibility may indicate that the Prophet wanted to be an unseen hand to outside observers of Mormon military ventures.55 If so, the Prophet failed in his intention: in May 1836, a hostile resident referred to Kirtland’s Mormons as “a military array of ragamuffins, headed by the modern Mohammed.”56

Furthermore, tensions with non-Mormons at Kirtland led Joseph Smith to take an extraordinary step in November 1836. He and eleven other general authorities (including four of his counselors in the First Presidency) joined with fifty-nine other Mormons in signing a warning to the non-LDS justice of the peace to “depart forthwith out of Kirtland.” Of those who signed this warning against Kirtland’s judicial officer, at least a dozen later joined the “Danites” in Missouri; this 1836 document foreshadowed their activities less than two years later.57 John Whitmer was probably referring to this November ultimatum when he lamented the beginning of “secret combinations” in Kirtland “in the fall of 1836.”58

In another incident about which Smith’s personal diary and official history are completely silent, he was acquitted in June 1837 of conspiring to murder anti-Mormon Grandison Newell. The silence may be due to the fact that two of Joseph’s supporting witnesses in the case, both apostles, acknowledged that the Prophet discussed with them the possibility of killing Newell. Apostle Orson Hyde testified that “Smith seemed much excited and declared that Newell should be put out of the way, or where the crows could not find him; he said that destroying Newell would be justifiable
in the sight of God, that it was the will of God, &c.” Hyde tried to be helpful by adding that he had “never heard Smith use similar language before,” insisting further: “I have known him for some time and think him to be possessed of much kindness and humanity towards his fellow beings.” Likewise, apostle Luke S. Johnson acknowledged to the court that Joseph had said “if Newell or any other man should head a mob against him, they ought to be put out of the way, and it would be our duty to do so.” However, Johnson also affirmed: “I believe Smith to be a tender-hearted, humane man.” Whether or not the court agreed with that assessment, the judge acquitted Joseph because there was insufficient evidence to support the charge of conspiracy to commit murder.  

In the fall of 1837, David W. Patten investigated the Prophet’s secret relationship with his servant girl Fanny Alger, and the hapless apostle collided with Smith’s code of male honor. Brigham Young described what happened: “David in[sult]ed Joseph & Joseph slap[p]ed him in the face & kicked him out of the yard.” However, the Mormon Prophet’s code of honor took offense at far lesser provocations. Benjamin F. Johnson reminisced that “criticism, even by his associates, was rarely acceptable, and contradiction would rouse in him the lion at once, for by no one of his fellows would he be superseded or disputed and in the early days at Kirtland, and elsewhere[,] one or more of his associates were more than once, for their impudence, helped from the congregation by his (Joseph’s) foot.”

When armed dissenters joined anti-Mormons in forcing the Prophet and his loyal followers to flee Kirtland in January 1838,63 this event solidified a world view that was indelible throughout the rest of the nineteenth century: Mormonism was fighting for its life against conspiracies of anti-Mormons and Mormon traitors. Every generation of the Mormon hierarchy remembers this heritage of anti-Mormon persecutors and collaborating apostates. This is the context in which, as Marvin S. Hill observed, “the desire for refuge from pluralism and the uncertainty of choice in a free society encouraged a quest to eliminate opposition both within and without the [LDS] Church through intimidation and, when necessary, violence.”

Some of Kirtland’s dissenters also resettled at the new Mormon headquarters of Far West, Missouri, where they associated with local dissenters. Joseph and his loyal followers were determined to prevent these formerly faithful leaders from causing mass disaffection a second time. They pursued this aim through an organization which functioned both militarily and theocratically.

In early June 1838, Sampson Avard—who considered himself an ultra-loyal Mormon—proposed organizing the “Danites” among other ultra-loyal Mormons. The Danites were the first civil appendage of Mormon power since 1834. Some historians have claimed that Joseph Smith and the rest of the First Presidency were unaware of the...
Danite organization, but documentary evidence shows otherwise.

Quoting from his daily journal, founding member William Swartzell later wrote that the Danites organized formally as the “Daughters of Zion” in June 1838 at Far West, taking their nickname from the prophecy of Daniel about the stone cut out of the mountain without hands (Daniel 2: 44-45). While the organization was still functioning, loyal LDS member Albert P. Rockwood wrote in 1838: “the Companies are called Danites because the Prophet Daniel has said [Daniel 7: 18] the Saints shall take the kingdom and possess it for-ever.”

Two weeks after the formation of a second group at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri, John Smith (who was both stake president and a special counselor in the First Presidency) called the organization “the Danites” in his diary. He also described Danite meetings as routine events.

Soon this militant group developed an infamous reputation for its intimidation of Mormon dissenters and its warfare against anti-Mormon militia units. Joseph Smith cited those two purposes in his journal (called a “Scriptory Book”) to explain why “we have a company of Danites in these times.” Sidney Rigdon, first counselor in the First Presidency, later made a similar statement in the official LDS newspaper.

Thus the Prophet’s own diary corroborates the later statement by Ebenezer Robinson, who remained a believing Mormon but regretted his Danite activities: “Both Joseph Smith, jr. and Sidney Rigdon sanctioned and favored the only organization of ‘Danites’ of which the writer has any knowledge.”

On 17 June 1838, Sidney Rigdon preached his “Salt Sermon” as a warning that Mormon dissenters would “be cast out and trodden under foot of men.” Rather than simply being an echo of Matthew 5: 13, Rigdon’s sermon was restating what an 1834 revelation had authorized the First Presidency to do to Mormons who “hearken not to observe all my words” (D&C 103:8-10).

The next day, Second Counselor Hyrum Smith and his uncle John Smith (an Assistant Counselor in the First Presidency) joined with Danite leader Sampson Avard (the first signatory) and eighty other Danites in signing a threatening letter to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, Lyman E. Johnson, and William W. Phelps. Presidency counselor John Smith was the only general authority who signed both this 1838 warning and the earlier warning to Kirtland’s justice of the peace. This Danite threat instructed these excommunicated dissenters to “depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you.”

Ebenezer Robinson, who also signed the Danite document, later wrote that all the signers were members of the recently organized Danite “military organization.” He added that he was told in June 1838 that the Document itself “was gotten up in the office of the First Presidency.” Avard specified that Counselor Rigdon wrote the text of this Danite ultimatum. Although the Danites had been organized primarily for external security against the possibility of Missouri mobs, they now functioned as an organization for internal security—to intimidate and possibly kill dissenting Mormons.

Indeed, Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory Book” journal showed that the Prophet intended the Danites to use force against LDS dissidents: “we have a company of Danites in these times, to put to right physically that which is not right, and to cleanse the Church of verry [sic] great evils . . .” (emphasis added). The fact that the Danite death threat was written by Joseph’s first counselor Sidney Rigdon, signed by second counselor Hyrum Smith, and co-signed by assistant counselor John Smith indicates that the First Presidency had thorough knowledge of the Danite organization in mid-1838 and crucial participation with its violent manifestations from the outset.

Speaking of the prominent dissidents who received this death threat in June, Joseph Smith’s “Scriptory” journal noted: “These men took warning, and soon they were seen bounding over the prairie like the scape Goat to carry off[their own sins].” Unable to see the situation in such light-hearted terms, dissenter John Whitmer wrote: “While we were gone[,] Jo. & Rigdon & their band of gadiantons kept up a guard and watched our houses and abused our families and threatened them if they were not gone by morning they would be drove out & threatened our lives if they [the Danites] ever saw us in Far West.” “Gadianton” was a Book of Mormon term for thieves and murderers who were bound by secret oaths (Helaman 6: 18, 24, 26).

The Danites’ 1838 ultimatum was not an irregularity in Mormonism but a direct fulfillment of a revelation four years earlier concerning unfaithful Latter-day Saints “who call themselves after my name” (D&C 103: 4). Stephen C. LeSueur observed: “The Danite organization was the product of, not an aberration from, Mormon attitudes and teachings. The Danites represented mainstream Mormonism.” Despite trying to put the best face possible on this event, Leland H. Gentry acknowledged: “The method chosen by the Latter-day Saints to rid themselves of their dissenting Brethren was unfortunate since it furnished the dissenters with further proof that the Saints were inimical to law and order.”
Regarding the Danite expulsion of prominent Mormon dissenters, Sidney Rigdon told apostle Orson Hyde at Far West that “it was the imperative duty of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, they should have their throats cut from ear to ear.” Remarkably, an official LDS newspaper later published this verification of the First Presidency’s 1838 authorization for theocratic killings. Rigdon was, after all, merely restating in 1838 what the Prophet had said a year earlier about Grandison Newell—that Newell should be put out of the way, or where the crows could not find him; he [Joseph Smith] said that destroying Newell would be justifiable in the sight of God, that it was the will of God, &c.”

Benjamin Slade, a lifelong Mormon, soon testified that counselor Rigdon referred to carrying out that threat in mid-1838. “Yesterday a man had slipped his wind, and was thrown into the bush,” Rigdon told a closed-door meeting of Mormon men (apparently Danites), adding: “the man that lisps it shall die.”

On 4 July, a month before the county election, the First Presidency virtually dared the Missourians to try to stop Mormons from exercising their civil liberties: “It shall be between us and them a war of extermination,” counselor Rigdon warned, “for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us.” Joseph Smith published this Independence Day talk as a pamphlet, advertised it in the LDS periodical, and explained that Rigdon’s sermon expressed “the fixed determinations of the saints, in relation to the persecutors . . . for to be mob[bed] any more without taking vengeance we will not.”

Non-Mormons were determined to prevent Mormons from voting in Daviess County, which resulted in violence at the county seat of Gallatin in August 1838. “The first thing that came to my mind was the covenants entered into by the Danites,” wrote lifelong Mormon John L. Butler of this incident. He rallied the dozen other Mormons at the voting place by shouting: “O yes, you Danites, here is a job for us.” Among the Danites he rallied to fight the Missourians was Samuel H. Smith, Book of Mormon witness and brother of the LDS president. This account was included in the LDS Church’s official “Journal History.” Although there were no fatalities, this election-day “battle” between self-professed Danites and anti-Mormons started a virtual civil war that engulfed four Missouri counties.

In retaliation for raids against isolated Mormon farms, Mormon forces (primarily, if not exclusively, Danites) pillaged two non-Mormon towns. “There is no question,” wrote BYU professor William G. Hartley, “that Latter-day Saint rangers burned buildings at Millport and Gallatin,” including the U.S. post office and county treasurer’s office. In the most candid account ever written by a Utah Mormon historian about the Missouri Danites, he also acknowledged: “It is certain that some of the Missouri Danites played the thief, and it is possible, although unproven, that one or two were murderers.”

However, Hartley’s comparison of the Danites with the National Guard was a flawed attempt at “balanced assessment,” since the Danites were religious vigilantes, not legally commissioned soldiers. Likewise, Hartley’s comparison fails in defining Danite atrocities as “wartime . . . military actions,” when in fact the Danite acts of “arson, vandalism, and robbery” were what they appeared to be, “clearly crimes” (his quotes). These Mormon crimes may have been understandable responses to even more savage attacks, but the retaliation was illegal by any definition. Worse, the Danites targeted a whole class of individuals—non-Mormons in general—rather than the specific perpetrators of the attacks for which Mormons sought revenge.

Describing Danite security arrangements for August 1838, the manuscript autobiography of loyal Mormon Luman A. Shurtliff revealed that Joseph Smith was also a Danite. Between two discussions of Danite “sighns [sic] and passwords” and the Danite “countersign,” Shurtliff noted how the LDS President and his brother Hyrum Smith (a Danite by mid-June 1838 as well as Joseph’s second counselor in the First Presidency) gave the necessary “countersign” as the two approached Shurtliff, who was the night sentry. A little further in his narrative, Shurtliff added that while he was on guard duty with newly appointed apostle John Taylor, “I did not feel at liberty to use any sighn [sic] or password” because “Br Taylor was not a Danite.” However, like Hyrum, Joseph Smith was a Danite, and they both used the Danite countersign.

Justus Morse, a Danite, listened to Joseph Smith authorize a Danite meeting (apparently after the Gallatin fight) to “suck the milk of the gentiles.” Morse, who remained loyal to the Prophet throughout his life, added that Smith explained “that we had been injured by the mob in Missouri, and to take from the gentiles was no sin,” merely retribution.

Danites who maintained lifelong loyalty to the LDS Church later wrote of what they did to defenseless “gentiles” during this “Mormon War” in Missouri. For example, twenty-year-old Benjamin F. Johnson participated in a raid that Danite captain Cornelius P. Lott led against an isolated settlement:
My sympathies were drawn toward the women and children, but I would in no degree let them deter me from duty. So while others were pillaging for something to carry away, I was doing my best to protect, as far as possible, the lives and comfort of the [non-Mormon] families who were dependent on getting away on horseback. . . . While others were doing the burning and plunder, my mission was of mercy so far as duty would permit. But of course I made enemies at home [among fellow Mormons], and became more known by those who were our avowed enemies. Before noon we had set all [houses and barns] on fire and left upon a circuitous route towards home.

The LDS publishing house of the Central States Mission printed that uncomfortable acknowledgement of Mormon depredations.93

On the other hand, Oliver B. Huntington offered no apology. This lifelong Mormon wrote decades later that he and other Danites had “the privilege of retaking as much as they took from us.” However, contrary to Huntington’s rationalization of justified retribution, Danites sometimes plundered the property of gentiles who had previously been friendly to their Mormon neighbors. The Danites involved did not know these friendly non-Mormons.94

Moreover, in the skirmishes that both sides called “battles,” Mormons used deadly force without reluctance. Benjamin E. Johnson wrote that Danite leader (and future apostle) Lyman Wight told his men to pray concerning their Missouri enemies: “that God would damn them, and give us power to kill them.”95 According to lifelong Mormon and Danite, Nathan Tanner, apostle David W. Patten (a Danite captain with the code name “Fear Not”) told his men: “Go ahead, boys; rake them down.” This was on 25 October 1838, at the beginning of the Battle of Crooked River.96

The highest-ranking Mormon charged with murder for obeying this order was apostle Parley P. Pratt, who allegedly took the careful aim of a sniper in killing one Missourian and then methodically killed eighteen males, including the point-blank execution of two boys (aged nine and ten). Militiamen also used a “corncutter” to mutilate the still-living Thomas McBride. When survivors found the elderly man, his corpse was “literally mangled from head to foot.”99

However, a generally unacknowledged dimension of the extermination order and the Haun’s Mill massacre is that they both resulted from Mormon actions at the Battle of Crooked River. Knowingly or not, Mormons had attacked state troops, and this had a cascade effect. Local non-Mormon residents feared annihilation: “We know not the hour or minute we will be laid in ashes,” a local minister and county clerk wrote the day after this battle. “For Gods sake give us assistance as quick as possible.” Correspondingly, the attack on state troops weakened the position of pro-Mormon Missourians in the state’s militias and government offices. Finally, upon receiving news of the injuries and death of state troops at Crooked River, Governor Boggs immediately drafted his extermination order of 27 October 1838 on the grounds that the Mormons “have made war upon the people of this state.”100 Worse, the killing of one Missourian and mutilation of another while he was defenseless at Crooked River prompted the mad-dog revenge by Missourians in the slaughter at Haun’s Mill.

The day after that massacre, Joseph Smith and other LDS leaders surrendered to the Missouri militia, which had encircled Far West. After Sampson Avard—under arrest and vulnerable to the same criminal charges filed against Joseph Smith—testified against the Prophet (his Danite “Secretary of War”) in open court, the Prophet publicly repudiated the Danite constitution specified: “All officers shall be subject to the commands of the Captain General, given through the Secretary of War.” The Prophet had held the latter position “by revelation” in the Church’s “war department” for three years.103 He had been commander-in-chief of the Armies of Israel for four years. The Danites’ military actions of 1838 were carried out under the general oversight and command of Joseph Smith, and their violent acts resulted in multiple disasters: the massacre of a Mormon settlement, the ransacking of LDS headquarters, the near-execution of LDS leaders, and the expulsion of the Mormon population from Missouri.

And that perspective is necessary to understand a curious dimension in the next stage of early Mormonism’s culture of violence. During the balance of Smith’s leadership, strident Mormon militarism co-existed with military non-violence among the Mormons.
THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS WITH Illinois political leaders eager for the support of the bloc-voting Mormons, LDS headquarters in February 1841 gained a state-chartered private army, the Nauvoo Legion. The LDS president was its governor-appointed commander, holding the rank of lieutenant-general. Aside from Smith, only George Washington had ever held that rank. By 1842, this Mormon army of 2,000 was the largest military organization in Illinois. Within two years, the Nauvoo Legion had about 5,000 men under arms, compared with the U.S. army's total of fewer than 8,500 soldiers. Under Smith's direction, the Nauvoo Legion drilled and held mock battles.

Nevertheless, the legion engaged in no violent actions, even when its commander was kidnapped, arrested, and nearly dragged back to Missouri for certain death. Although most members of the Mormon "Relief Expedition" which came to his aid were officers and soldiers in the Nauvoo Legion, they acted as a ragtag collection of friends, rather than as the Nauvoo Legion under orders.

Despite being the commander of a Mormon militia which rivaled the size of the U.S. army, Smith did not lead it into violent conflicts; nor did his subordinates. Haunted by the 1838 consequences of violent Mormon militiamen, for which he had clearly been responsible, Joseph Smith limited himself to saber-rattling in Illinois.

Although he avoided violent militiamen, the LDS Prophet expanded the Mormon culture of violence in personal, civil, and theocratic ways at Nauvoo. He boasted of his past physical assaults, advocated theocratic blood atonement, and committed acts of assault and battery—all in response to what he regarded as justifiable provocation.

It will probably never be known if the Prophet privately authorized his bodyguard and former Danite Orrin Porter Rockwell to kill Missouri's ex-governor Boggs in May 1842, as an extension of Smith's "spilling his blood on the ground" doctrine (which he did not announce publicly until 1843). Smith held Boggs directly responsible for the expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County in 1833 and for the disasters of 1838. Killing Boggs would have fit within the provisions of the 1833 revelation (D&C 98:31). It would have also been consistent with another Danite's pledge to Joseph Smith in 1839: "I from this day declare myself the Avenger of the blood of those innocent men, and the innocent cause of Zion." The Prophet had this pledge copied into his personal letterbook.

The attempt to kill Boggs occurred one month after Smith received a revelation that has never been officially published. The full content of this document of 7 April 1842 is presently unknown, but it provided the ponderous name for a future theocratic organization that was nicknamed the Council of Fifty: "Verily thus saith the Lord. This is the name by which you shall be called—The Kingdom of God and His Laws, with Keys and power thereof, and judgment in the hands of his servants. Ahman Christ." Killing Boggs a month later was likely the first theocratic "judgment in the hands of his servants." One of the LDS newspapers (edited by the Prophet's brother William, an apostle) called the attempted assassination a "noble deed."

Completely loyal at this time, the Prophet's second counselor William Law understandably asked Smith in 1842 about this matter. Law later claimed that Smith replied: "I sent Rockwell to kill Boggs, but he missed him, [and] it was a failure; he wounded him instead of sending him to Hell." On 5 July 1842, witnesses overheard an argument between Rockwell and recently excommunicated First Presidency counselor John C. Bennett about the attempted assassination. Four days later, two men signed affidavits that during this argument, "Rockwell said he had been up into Boggs's neighborhood, in Missouri; and said he, 'If I shot Boggs, they have got to prove it.'" Decades later, Rockwell also allegedly acknowledged: "I shot through the window and thought I had killed him, but I had only wounded him; I was damned sorry that I had not killed the son of a bitch." Boggs miraculously survived this attempt on his life in May 1842, despite two large balls of buckshot lodged in his brain and two in his neck. Already a fugitive from Missouri punishment for capital crimes, Joseph Smith made several denials that he was involved in the attempt to kill Boggs.

In May 1842, Joseph Smith reassembled a cadre of bodyguards, selecting primarily those with experience as Danites in Missouri. Former Danites such as Dimick B. Huntington, Daniel Carri, and Albert P. Rockwood began serving as Nauvoo's "Night Watch." Previously a Danite captain, Rockwood had already been serving as "commander of my [Smith's] life guards." The Prophet's bodyguards included such well-known Danites as John L. Butler, Reynolds Cahoon, Elias Higbee, Vinson Knight, Orrin Porter Rockwell, and Samuel H. Smith. The other bodyguards with Missouri experience were probably lesser-known Danites. In December 1842, a bounty hunter wrote to Missouri's governor: "All
of our efforts to seize the renegade Smith, have proved fruitless. He keeps constantly around him as body guard some 12 to 14 enthusiastic fanaticks which makes a secret approach impossible.  

In January 1843, Smith told dinner guests about whipping the Protestant minister in Kirtland “till he begged.” A month later, he preached publicly about whipping the Palmyra wife-beater. On 28 March, the Prophet wrote that seventies president “Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street.” This was another instance of Smith upholding his sense of male honor.

Also in March 1843, Joseph Smith told the Nauvoo city council that he was opposed to hanging: “If a man kill another[,] shoot him or cut his throat[,] spilling his blood on the ground and let the smoke thereof ascend up to God. If I ever have the privilege of making a law on this point, I will have it so.” This remark echoed statements that Sidney Rigdon had made five years earlier, while a counselor in the First Presidency, about cutting the throats of non-Mormons in Missouri.

Although Smith's instructions about capital punishment to the city council could be viewed as a secular commentary from the city's mayor favoring a particular mode of capital punishment, theocracy was clearly the context of his comments as Church president to the LDS general conference on 6 April 1843: “I'll wring a thief's neck off if I can find him, if I cannot bring him to Justice any other way.” When former Danite John L. Butler heard his Prophet preach on this occasion, he understood Smith as saying “that the time would come that the sinners would have their heads cut off to save them.” Butler said the “spirit” of God filled him as he listened to those words. Butler's account was likewise included in the official “Journal History.”

In June, Smith instructed the Nauvoo Mormons about the next stage of violence against their enemies. He warned what would happen “if Missouri continues her warfare, and to issue her writs against me and this people unlawfully and unjustly . . . if they don't let me alone, I will turn up the world—I will make war.”

In August, the Mormon Prophet showed that he did not hesitate to physically assault a civil officer: “[Walter] Bagby called me a liar, and picked up a stone to throw at me, which so enraged me that I followed him a few steps, and struck him two or three times.” Smith added in a sermon: “I seized him by the throat to choke him off.” He pleaded guilty to assault and battery of Bagby, who was the county tax collector, and the Nauvoo judge assessed a fine for this crime. Joseph Smith's secretary William Clayton added that Daniel H. Wells had ended the brawl when he “stepped between them and succeeded in separating them.” The prophet had evidently wanted to do further damage to Bagby, judging from his later complaint in a sermon about “Esquire Wells interfering when he had no business.”

Concerning Nauvoo's Sunday meeting of 17 September
1843, Joseph's official history stated: “I took my post as Mayor outside the assembly to keep order and set an example to the other officers.”130 Some non-Mormon attendees had a different perspective about the example Smith was setting. These residents of Warsaw, Illinois, were at Nauvoo, in attendance upon public preaching, near the Temple. Bennett [not John C.] and his companion were engaged in some conversation about the time of day; when the Prophet, who happened to be near, came blustering up, and seizing him by the collar, led him out of the crowd. After letting go, Bennett turned to speak to him, when Smith commenced beating him with his cane, declaring that, if he didn't shut his mouth, he would cane him out of the corporation [i.e., the city-limits]. Bennett came home, and on Tuesday made complaint before Justice [George] Rockwell for assault & battery. A writ was issued, and put into the hands of Mr. [James] Charles, Constable, who on appearing before the Prophet on Wednesday, was coolly told that he was too late! He had procured an arrest, and had a trial before a Nauvoo court, and was discharged.

In other words, Smith had arranged to have himself acquitted of the assault.131 Although not dated in the autobiography which recorded it, the following incident may also have occurred in 1843. Ira N. Spaulding was riding in the Prophet's carriage when “there came a man who held a [promissory] note against Joseph. He talked kindly to the man and begged him to wait a short time for the money as he could not pay him then[,] but good words would not satisfy him. He abused him [the Prophet] shamefully, calling him every mean name he could think of.” The man should have known that this was not a wise thing for anyone to do. Smith “stepped outside the carriage and knocked him down flat as a beef, not speaking a word and come into the carriage and traveled on.”132

Even the Mormon Prophet’s well-known hobby of wrestling manifested an unpleasant willingness to take physical advantage of smaller men. While celebrating wrestling manifested an unpleasant willingness to take physical advantage of smaller men. While celebrating wrestling manifested an unpleasant willingness to take physical advantage of smaller men. While celebrating wrestling manifested an unpleasant willingness to take physical advantage of smaller men.

In 1934 by a “little dough-head” and “a right-hand Brutus.” The latter remarks put the police on notice to look for Mormon dissenters as traitors. Within a week, Nauvoo's police force continued to double as Smith’s personal bodyguards.136

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These Mormon policemen were proud of their Danite background. According to one complaining Mormon at Nauvoo, policeman Daniel Carn “told me several times [that] Daniteism was not down . . . said it was a good system.” Carn laconically replied (in Joseph Smith’s presence): “Daniteism is to stand by each other [—] that is all I know about Daniteism.”137

As mayor, Joseph authorized his police to kill “if need be,” and then said his own life was endangered in December 1843 by a “little dough-head” and “a right-hand Brutus.” The latter remarks put the police on notice to look for Mormon dissenters as traitors. Within a week, Nauvoo's police force left Smith’s second counselor William Law and Nauvoo’s stake president William Marks under the terrifying impression that Smith had marked them for death.138 Both were foes of the Prophet's secret practice of polygamy.139

On 11 March 1844, Joseph Smith secretly organized the theocratic Council of Fifty in fulfillment of the revelation
nearly two years earlier. Several months later, disaffected members claimed that he “swore them all to present secrecy, under penalty of death.” Although the 1844 minutes of the Council of Fifty are sequestered in the LDS First Presidency’s vault, the claim of a theocratic “penalty of death” in 1844 is verified by available minutes from a later date which referred to a “Penalty.”

BYU professor William G. Hartley has written that the Missouri “Danite oaths [were] not to betray each other, the breaking of which could bring the death penalty.” At least eighteen members of the Council of Fifty had already taken oaths as Danites before Smith required this new guarantee of deadly secrecy in the spring of 1844.

Within two weeks, Smith took the first step toward abandoning the non-violent militarism which had characterized his leadership of the Nauvoo Legion during the years since he had escaped a death sentence for Danite militarism in Missouri. On 26 March, the Council of Fifty authorized Smith to ask Congress to commission him to recruit “one hundred thousand armed volunteers in the United States and Territories.” As secretly approved by this theocratic council, Smith’s “memorial” to Congress promised that he would use this military force “to extend the arm of deliverance to Texas [then an independent nation in conflict with Mexico]; [to] protect the inhabitants of Oregon from foreign aggressions and domestic broils; to prevent the crowned nations from encircling us as a nation on our western and southern borders.” This petition also asked Congress to provide for the arrest and two-year imprisonment of anyone who “shall hinder or attempt to hinder or molest the said Joseph Smith from executing his designs.” In case Congress was unwilling to grant these powers, Smith prepared a similar petition to the U.S. president. Ostensibly representing Smith as mayor, Orson Hyde carried this memorial to the Presidency’s vault, the claim of a theocratic “penalty of death” in 1844.

As the mob clamored up the stairs, he fired at them in Carthage Jail. But he was neither a willing nor non-violent martyr. As the mob clamored up the stairs, he fired at them with a six-shooter pistol, wounding three.

MORMON CULTURE BECAME increasingly violent following the murder of its founding Prophet. Claiming apostolic succession from his fallen leader, Brigham Young authorized assault and battery against Nauvoo dissidents and applauded Porter Rockwell for killing some of those identified as involved in murdering Smith and other Mormons. The pioneer trail and in the Utah society he created, Young increasingly preached about “blood atonement” against sinful Mormons and about “avenging the blood of the prophets” against anti-Mormons. These themes of violence and vengeance became both normative and pervasive in LDS sermons, hymns, newspaper editorials, and patriarchal blessings for decades.

However, LDS apologists claim that faithful Mormons were really non-violent pioneers who regarded as mere “rhetorical devices” or “hyperbolic rhetoric” all evidence of this wholesale endorsement of theocratic violence. To the contrary, there were many examples of religiously motivated assaults and murders until the First Presidency in December 1889 publicly abandoned previous Mormon teachings about blood atonement for apostates and about the temporal Church’s theocratic prerogatives. Moreover, Utah pioneer diaries, correspondence, and Church minutes indicate that ordinary Mormons believed that they had the religious obligation to “blood atone” apostates and to avenge the blood of the prophets on anti-Mormon gentiles. As Utah historian Melvin T. Smith has noted, “violence against ‘evil’ became a defensible rationale for both the Smith family and for most early Church members.”

The fact that many Utah Mormon men did not act upon the norms for violence that Brigham Young and other general authorities promoted is beside the point. Those violent norms were officially approved and published by the LDS Church in pioneer Utah. Likewise, most Mormon men did not marry polygamously, even though this was an unrebutting norm of the LDS Church until 1890. Nevertheless, Brigham Young did not originate Mormonism’s culture of violence. It had been nurtured by Joseph Smith’s revelations, theocracy, and personal behavior before June 1844. Like all prophets before or since, Smith was influenced by his environment, which included a national culture of violence and its code of male honor. This was a volatile mix for those early Americans who became Mormons within a hostile religious environment that was increasingly dominated by crusading Evangelicals.

NOTES


13. John Mack Faragher, Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 31–32; Thomas D. Clark, “Harrison, William Henry (1773–1841),” in Lamar, New Encyclopedia of the American West, 471. Illinois was originally part of Indiana Territory, over which Harrison was governor. For brief narratives, historians often simply refer to the Illinois portion of Indiana Territory by describing them as occurring in Illinois Territory. The same approach applies to early events in Arizona before it was officially split from New Mexico Territory.


19. For example, in his Internet article, “Militias and Mormon Culture??” (at www.jefflindsay.com/militias.shtml, accessed on 3 March 2011), Jeff Lindsay wrote: “In Utah, I know of very few Mormons who owned guns . . . I honestly don’t recall ever seeing a gun during my years living in that state . . . The Church teaches its members across the world to find peaceful, legal, orderly solutions to problems, even when those problems might be bad laws or oppressive governments.” In the middle of discussing Mormon history from Joseph Smith (including the Missouri “Danites”) to pioneer Utah, Lindsay exclaimed: “Violence is not part of Mormon culture!”


22. Richard Lyman Bushman “with the assistance of Jed Woodworth,” Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 295. Their source-notes for this discussion did not mention the 2002 version of my essay on this topic, but their bibliography (page 704) cited it.

23. Truman Cooe, “Mormonism,” The Ohio Observer, 11 August 1836, page
24. In fact, is what Jeff Lindsay did in his Internet article, “Militias and Mormon Culture?”


27. John Corrill, A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, (Commonly Called Mormons). . . With the Reasons for the Author for Leaving the Church (St. Louis: By the author, 1839), 19.


36. William G. Hartley, My Best For The Kingdom: History and Autobiography of John Lowe Butler, A Mormon Frontiersman (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1994), 44–45, also interpreted the military provisions of the 1833 revelation in a cumulative manner. However, he offered a lengthier time frame to describe theocracy as a distant, millennial circumstance until Smith changed the emphasis both publicly and privately in 1842.


38. History of the Church, 2: 39.


42. Joseph Smith diary, 1 January 1843, in Faulring, An American Prophet’s Record, 267.


50. Last accusation against Elijah Abel by Jedediah M. Grant, which “was substantiated by the written testimony of elder Zenos H. Gurley,” in First Council of Seventy’s minute book (1837–43), 81–82 (1 June 1839), Archives, Church History Library (hereafter cited as LDS Archives), with complete transcription currently available to the public in D. Michael Quinn’s research files, Beinecke Library. This meeting (in fact, the entire day) is absent from History of the Church.

For Grant, see Gene A. Sessions, Mormon Thunder: A Documentary History of Jedediah Morgan Grant (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); For Gurley, see Clare D. Vlahos, “The Challenge to Centralized Power: Zenos H. Gurley, Jr. and the Prophetic Office,” Courage: A Journal of History, Thought and Action 1 (March 1971): 148–58. Gurley’s first name has been spelled both “Zenos” and “Zenos,” but I used the spelling I found in most manuscripts and original sources.


52. History of the Church, 2: 282. Deseret News 1993–1994 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1992), 396, shows 8,835 total members in 1835, with 7,500 located in the two stakes of the Church (one in Ohio and one in Missouri). More recent almanacs do not separate stake membership from the total LDS membership of 8,835 in 1835.


54. For example, Letter From the Secretary of War, Transmitting a List of the Names of the Clerks Employed in the War Department, During the Year 1820, and the Compensation Allowed To Each . . . (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 1821), which was a peace-time publication. During the “Cold War” with the Soviet Union after 1945, the U.S. government officially changed these terms to “Secretary of Defense” and “Department of Defense.”


56. Another Mormon Invasion,” Daily Missouri Republican (St. Louis, MO), 17 May 1836, referring to “letters from Kirklnd, Ohio have been received here by the last mail from persons of undoubted veracity . . .”

57. “Petition of Joseph Smith Jr. to Ariel Hanson,” 7 November 1836, Lake County Historical Society. The signers (those with verified membership in the Mormon paramilitary Danites in 1838) were LDS First Presidency members Joseph Smith (Danite), Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon (Danite), Frederick G. Williams, and John Smith (Danite), Apostles Brigham Young, W. W. Phelps, and John Taylor, the Seventy’s Presidents Joseph Young, Zebceede Coltrin, Lyman R. Sherman, and Leonard Rich. Re-arranged in alphabetical order with corrected spellings of names, the other signers were: Solomon Angell, Loren W. Babbitt, Edson Barney, Royal Barney Jr., Isaac H. Bishop, Roswell Blood, Edmund Bosley, Norman Buell, Jacob Bump, Horace Burgess, Reynolds Cahoon (Danite), William F. Cahoon, James M. Carroll, Jared Carter (Danite), Harrim Clark (Danite), Manecell F. Cowdery, Warren A. Cowdery, William Cowdery, John Davidon, Lysander M. Davis, Malecum C. Davis, David Dort, Bechias Dustin, Sterry Fisk, Solomon Freeman, George W. Gee (Danite), John P. Greene (Danite), John Gribble, S[elah] J. Gri[fin], Isaiah Harvey, Nathan Haskins, Jonathan H. Holmes, Vinson Knight (Danite), Lorenzo L. Lewis, Garland W. Meyers, Artemus Millet, Roger Orton, Ebenzer Pierce, Peter Shirts, John D. Parker, Burton H. Phelps, William D. Pratt, David H. Redfield, John Reed, Ezekiel Rider, Ebenezer Robinson (Danite), Peter Shirts, Asael Smith, Don C. Smith, George A. Smith (Danite), Samuel H. Smith (Danite), Harvey Stanley, Christopher Stillwell, Hyrum Stratton, Ezra Strong, Benjamin Sweat, Chauncy G. Webb, Edwin Webb, Joseph Willard, and Willard Woodstock.


60. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 167 (for April 1838 testimony about the investigations “last fall”), 171n18 (for Fanny Alger); Todd Compton, In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 37–38 (which gives the incorrect date of “the summer of 1837” for Patten’s inquiry).


Young said that he was less severe with other Mormons than the founding prophet was. See Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: Latter Day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 8: 317–18.

62. LeBaron, Benjamin Franklin Johnson, 221.


4. Hill, Quest for Refuge, 70. In view of that assessment by Marvin S. Hill in 1989, I was mystified by his rejection in SUNSTONE (November 1997) of my analysis of early Mormonism's culture of violence as presented in Extensions of Power.


8. Nevertheless, as I discuss in Origins of Power, 111, until 1842, early Mormon pamphleteering and editorials did not discuss the Daniel prophecies as applying to the LDS Church at present, but instead discussed theocracy as a distant, millennial circumstance. Joseph Smith changed the emphasis both publicly and privately in 1842, thus introducing the Missouri Danite interpretation to the Church at large.


10. Joseph Smith diary, 4 July 1838, in Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith, 2: 249 (for quote), 249n1 (noting that "June" was penciled sideways in the margin opposite these lines), which were otherwise dated as 4 July 1838; also Faurling, An American Prophet's Record, 187; Jessee, Ashurst-McGee, and Jensen, Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839, 278. Hartley, My Best For the Kingdom, 165.

11. LeSueur, The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri, 46. In confirmation of just how mainstream one LDS apologist regards this 1838 death threat against Mormon dissenters, Anderson, "Clarifications of Boggs' [sic] Order and Joseph Smith's Constitutionalism," 63, stated: "Like many responsible contemporaries, Joseph Smith experimented with prior restraint of defamation in times of danger. But the flight of the Cowdery-Whitmer group is an exception in Joseph Smith's policy of full rights for Mormons and neighbors."

12. Leland H. Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints In Northern Missouri From 1836 to 1839," Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965, 171. However, despite the Mormon paranoia of 1838, the following is an overstatement by Wm. Exiles in a Land of Liberty, 126; "The baptism of the dissenters initiated a veritable reign of terror against those who might doubt the wisdom of Church policy."

84. Oration Delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon on the 4th of July 1838 (Far West, MO: Elder’s Journal Office, 1838), 12, as the only quote from this document in Church History in the Fullness of Times, 92. A photographic reprint of the oration is in Peter Crawley, “Two Rare Missouri Documents,” BYU Studies 14 (Summer 1974): 517–27.


88. Hartley, My Best For the Kingdom, 69, 62. He referred to the post office mentioned by Philip Covingtion, justice of the peace for Davies County, affidavit, 22 September 1838, and to the treasurer’s office in William P Peniston’s affidavit, 21 October 1838, in both in Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders, &c In Relation to the Disturbances With the Mormons, 43–44.

89. Hartley, My Best For the Kingdom, 42.

90. History of the Church, 1776; Cannon and Cook, Far West Record, 67; Lyman Wight to Cooper and Chidester, editors of the Strangite newspaper (for August 1838), LDS Archives, also typescript at Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Provo, Utah. A written revelation of 8 July 1838 had appointed John Taylor as an apostle. (Doctrine and Covenants 118:1, 6)

In Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders, &c In Relation to the Disturbances With the Mormons, hereafter mentioned.

91. Sampson Avard, the Danite leader at Far West, testified: “As for Joseph Smith, jr., and his two counselors, the witness does not know that they ever took the Danite oath.” This indicates that Smith was not initiated at Far West, and instead the prophet undoubtedly received his Danite initiation from Lyman Wight. Wight was the Danite leader at Adam-oni-Ahman, the second largest organization of Danites. There was a certain symmetry in this, since Smith had ordained Wight as the Church’s first high priest in 1831, and Wight in turn had ordained Smith as a high priest. Three years later, Smith secretly ordained Wight “to the office of Benanemy [‘Banenymy’ in the presence of an angel].” See History of the Church, 1: 176n; Cannon and Cook, Far West Record, 67; Lyman Wight to Cooper and Chidester, editors of the Strangite newspaper Northern Indiana, July 1835, in Wight letterbook, 23, Archives of The Community of Christ (formerly The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), Independence, Missouri.

92. Sampson Avard, and the Danite leader at Far West, testified: “As for Joseph Smith, jr., and his two counselors, the witness does not know that they ever took the Danite oath.” This indicates that Smith was not initiated at Far West, and instead the prophet undoubtedly received his Danite initiation from Lyman Wight. Wight was the Danite leader at Adam-oni-Ahman, the second largest organization of Danites. There was a certain symmetry in this, since Smith had ordained Wight as the Church’s first high priest in 1831, and Wight in turn had ordained Smith as a high priest. Three years later, Smith secretly ordained Wight “to the office of Benanemy [‘Banenymy’ in the presence of an angel].” See History of the Church, 1: 176n; Cannon and Cook, Far West Record, 67; Lyman Wight to Cooper and Chidester, editors of the Strangite newspaper Northern Indiana, July 1835, in Wight letterbook, 23, Archives of The Community of Christ (formerly The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), Independence, Missouri.

93. James H. Hunt, Mormonism . . . Their Troubles In Missouri and Final Expulsion From the State (St. Louis: Ustick & Davies, 1844), 190–91. Although he did not acknowledge that Tarwater sustained these injuries after he was shot and lying unconscious on the ground, an assistant LDS Church historian gave a more gruesome description of his injuries, including “a terrible gash in the skull, through which his brain was plainly visible.” See Andrew Jenson, “Caldfew, County, Missouri,” The Historical Record 8 (January 1888): 702; also Alexander L. Baugh, “The Battle Between Mormon and Missouri Militia at Crooked River,” in Garr and Johnson, Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History, Missouri, 93 (for discussion of Tarwater).


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106. History of the Church, 5: 462.

107. See discussion in narrative text for Note 124.


109. Alanson Ripley to “Dear brethren in Christ Jesus,” with Joseph Smith, 10 March 1839, Joseph Smith letterbook 2 : 17, Smith papers, original in LDS Archives, with microfilm copies at Community of Christ Archives, at Lee Library, and at Marriott Library, quoted in Hill, Quest for Refuge, 100.

110. William Clayton diary, 1 January 1845, in George D. Smith, ed., An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton (Salt Lake City: Signature Books/Smith Research Associates, 1991), 153, gives the earliest available statement of the revelation's text but does not date it. The earliest known statement that this revelation occurred on 7 April 1842 is Council of Fifty minutes, 10 April 1880, typed copy; Lee Library, also in Joseph F. Smith diary, 10 April 1880, LDS Archives (with complete transcription in Quinn’s research files, Beinecke Library, December 1880, LDS Archives (with complete transcriptions of the above in Burks’ manuscript, with transcription in Warren A. Jennings, History of the Church, 5: 9, 15, 6: 151.

111. Joseph Smith letter to Mr. Bartlett, 22 May 1842, in Quincy Whig (Quincy, IL), 4 June 1842, 27 May 1842, in Quincy Herald (Quincy, IL), 2 June 1842, History of the Church, 5: 9, 13, 6: 151.


114. James B. Allen, Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, A Mormon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 140. Based on the list of Smith’s personal staff and “guards” in the Nauvoo Legion as of February 1841 (History of the Church, 4: 296), Hartley, My Best For The Kingdom, lists 20 bodyguards the following the men: John L. Butler, Thomas Grover, Christian M. Kremeyer, John Snyder, Alpheus Cutler, Reynolds Cahoon, Henry G. Sherwood, Shadrach Roundy, Vinson Knight, James Allred, Elias Higbee, and Samuel H. Smith. A problem with this list is that it omits Orrin Porter Rockwell, the actual commander of the “lifeguards,” with the explanation that the 1840 entry in History of the Church listed Rockwood only as a “drill master” with the Nauvoo Legion. Apparently, Smith’s “lifeguards” in the Nauvoo Legion were for ceremonial purposes and overlapped with his actual bodyguards who were “ordained” to protect his life. For sources about the Danite affiliation of the above men, see appendix, “Danites in 1838: A Partial List,” in Origins of Power, [479]–490.

115. L.B. Fleak (at Keokuk, Iowa) to Governor Thomas Reynolds, 4 December 1842, folder 14346, box 319, Reynolds Correspondence, Missouri State Archives, Joseph City, Missouri, with transcription in Warren A. Jennings, “Two Iowa Postmasters View Nauvoo: Anti-Mormon Letters to the Governor of Missouri,” BYU Studies 11 (Spring 1971): 286. For the context of why Missouri’s governor was receiving reports from attempted kidnappers, see George R. Gayler, “Attempts by the State of Missouri to Extradite Joseph Smith, 1841–1843,” Missouri Historical Review 58 (October 1963): 21–36.

116. Joseph Smith diary, 1 January 1843, in Fauring, An American Prophet’s Record, 267; History of the Church, 5: 216, deleted this entry; see Note 26, last sentence.


118. History of the Church, 5: 316.

119. Joseph Smith diary, 5 March 1843, in Fauring, An American Prophet’s Record, 326, phrased differently in History of the Church, 5: 296 (“[I] will shoot him, or cut off his head, spill his blood on the ground,” also “on that subject”); see Note 26, last sentence.


121. Jonas Hobart affidavit on 9 July 1842 (for quote); Samuel Marshall affidavit on 9 July 1842 (for third person paraphrase of quote), both in John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints… (Boston: Leland and Whiting, 1842), 283. Lacking these specific and sensational, in Smith and his allies typically used, these affidavits quoted/paraphrased Rockwell’s guarded and not-quite-in- criminating statement. Under the circumstances, the affidavits sound like unexaggerated statements of what Hobart and Marshall actually heard him say.

122. Quoted in Harold Schindler, Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1966), 60.


124. Joseph Smith letter to Mr. Bartlett, 22 May 1842, in Quincy Whig (Quincy, IL), 4 June 1842, 27 May 1842, in Quincy Herald (Quincy, IL), 2 June 1842, History of the Church, 5: 9, 13, 6: 151.

125. Joseph Smith statement, manuscript minutes of 6 April 1843 conference, first version (page 10), and with quoted words lined out in second version (page 4), both documents in LDS Archives, with complete transcriptions in Quinn’s research files, Beinecke Library. This statement by Joseph Smith is absent from the report of his remarks in Times and Seasons, History of the Church, and in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 173–81.

Despite her marriage to Oliver Olney on 19 October 1843, performed by the first of the six girls residing as house servants with the Joseph Smith family. During this period, Beinecke Library. Nauvoo's 1842 census showed "Phoebe" Wheeler as a member in the Nauvoo Relief Society, 21 [July] 1843, uncatalogued manuscript, Beinecke Library. A broadside was a refutation of printed charges posted by Thomas Broughton Jr., accusing the author of being "a bullying tardy beast [Smith], whose fury increased in an inverse ratio to his discovery of the breach, I would, doubtless, have suffered great personal injury, by the dash of my entire inability from the effect of disease, and the want of suitable weapons, to resist his brutal violence."

H. Wells Esq., who happened to be near, and who nobly throwed himself into the only time Smith's manuscript diary referred to the complaint against "Mrs Sagers," whose fury increased in an inverse ratio to his discovery of the breach, I would, doubtless, have suffered great personal injury, by the dash of my entire inability from the effect of disease, and the want of suitable weapons, to resist his brutal violence."

And I would here remark, that, but for the timely interference of Dan'l H. Wells Esq., who happened to be near, and who nobly throwed himself into the breach, I would, doubtless, have suffered great personal injury, by the dash of my entire inability from the effect of disease, and the want of suitable weapons, to resist his brutal violence."

" . . . And I would here remark, that, but for the timely interference of Dan'l H. Wells Esq., who happened to be near, and who nobly throwed himself into the breach, I would, doubtless, have suffered great personal injury, by the dash of my entire inability from the effect of disease, and the want of suitable weapons, to resist his brutal violence."


133. Alexander L. Baugh, "Joseph Smith's Athletic Nature," in Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 140. For example, Isaac M. Dwight, To the public, Augusta, Dec'r 2d, 1823 (Augusta, GA: N.p., 1823). This broadside was a refutation of printed charges posted by Thomas Broughton Jr., accusing the author of being "a bullying coward, a bragadocio in words and a poultroon in deeds."

135. Phebe Wheeler Olney statement, written between November 1843 and April 1844 on the back of Susan McKee Culbertson's application for membership in the Nauvoo Relief Society, 21 [July] 1843, uncatalogued manuscripts, Beinecke Library. Nauvoo's 1842 census showed "Pheobe" Wheeler as the first of the six girls residing as house servants with the Joseph Smith family. Despite her marriage to Oliver Olney on 19 October 1843, performed by Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Phebe apparently continued as a servant in the Smith home until 1844. Its unrelated reference to "Mrs Sagers" indicates that this entry dates from November 1843 to April 1844, when the marital complaints of Mrs. Harrison Sagers involved the high council. The more likely time period for discussion of the Harrison case in the Smith household was November 1843, the only time Smith's manuscript diary referred to the complaint against Harrison. See Joseph Smith diary, 25 November 1843, in Faulring, An American Prophet's Record of Nauvoo high council minutes, 25 November 1843, 14 April 1844. History of the Church, 6: 118, 333 (which retroactively adds the April 1844 reference to Sagers as if it were part of Smith's diary). Nauvoo 1842 census in Lyman De Platt, Nauvoo: Early Mormon Records Series (Highland, UT: By the author, 1980), 86; Lyndon W. Cook, comp., Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages, 1839–1845 (Orem, UT: Grandin Book Co., 1994), 107; also Joseph Smith diary, 2 March 1843 to 21 January 1844, in Faulring, An American Prophet's Record, 314, 323, 324, 334, 335, 336, 337, 373, 388, 403, 412, 424, 433, 438, 442, for his positive or neutral references to Foster; see Note 26, last sentence. Smith's next reference (460) described Foster as a dissenter trying to destroy him. History of the Church, 5: 369, 6: 355, for Foster's positions in the Nauvoo Legion.


137. Statements by Eli Norton and Daniel Carn in presence of Mayor Joseph Smith, Nauvoo City Council Minutes, 3 January 1844, LDS Archives, with complete transcription in Cook, William Law, 46n.


140. Church History in the Fulfness of Times, 270; Origins of Power, 120–22, also appendix, "Members of the Council of Fifty, 1844–45, Ranking as of 27 June 1844 (at Joseph Smith's death)," [521]–528; Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth," passim.

141. George T.M. Davis, An Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, and Hyrum Smith, His Brother, Together with a Brief History of the Rise and Progress of Mormonism, And All the Circumstances Which Led to Their Deaths (St. Louis: Chambers and Knapp, 1844), 7, emphasis in original. Davis, a newspaper editor, was in Nauvoo gathering information just before Joseph Smith's death. See History of the Church, 6: 587.

142. Hartley, My Best For the Kingdom, 50. For the documentary evidence on which his statement is based, see Document Containing the Correspondence, Orders, &c. In Relation to the Disturbances With the Mormons, 97 (which was quoted by Schindler, Orrin Porter Rockwell, 46–47, and by Roberts, Comprehensive History, 1: 501; also variant of the oath in William Swartzell daily journal, 21 July 1838, in his Mormonism Exposed, 22. In his manuscript autobiography (1807–51), pages 120, 125 (for August 1838) at LDS Archives, he states in the margin, "Mormon Luman A. Shurtleff verified that the Danites took a solemn "oath," without giving its details. His reference to "oath" was removed in the typscript, "Luman Andros Shurtleff: My Grandfather, 1807," at Utah State Historical Society.

However, David J. Whittaker, "The Book of Daniel in Early Mormon Thought," in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., By Study and Also By Faith, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., and Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990), 1, 171, observes that in the letters of Albert P. Rockwell to his relatives about the Danites in 1838, "nowhere is there the cutthroat secrecy that Avard later succeeded in convincing Judge Austin King and the non-Mormon public that there was." However, since Rockwell as a Danite was already bound by a penal oath of secrecy (as friendly Mormon sources verify was the case), he understandably did not center that information to his uninitiated relatives. Whittaker's argument is the fallacy of irrelevant proof.


147. Uriah Brown to Brigham Young, 3 November 1845, LDS Archives; statements of Phineas Young and Almon W. Babbitt, in Council of Fifty minutes, 25 August 1851, LDS Archives, with complete transcriptions of the above in Quinn's research files, Beinecke Library; also Origins of Power, 127–28, for discussions of the three non-Mormons in Smith's theocratic Council of Fifty.

148. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Report of the Committee on Naval Affairs, On the Petition of Uriah Brown, January 27, 1815. Read and Ordered To Lie On The Table, document 53 in State Papers, 3rd Session, 13th Congress (Washington, D.C.: Roger C. Weightman, 1815), whose one-page text stated in part: "The committee on naval affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of Uriah Brown, together with the report of the acting secretary of the navy, have, according to order, had the said memorial and report under consideration, and thereupon submit the following report: ... many difficulties would be pre-
sented to the execution of such a plan, as it is represented by the memorialist, that to be able to effect it, the vessel carrying the materials must approach within three or four hundred feet of the vessel to be attacked. The memorialist supposes that fifty thousand dollars would be necessary to carry his plan into execution; the committee taking into consideration the present situation of the finances... think it would be inexpedient at this time to authorize an appropriation for the purpose proposed by the memorialist.

149. Sidney Rigdon sermon on 6 April 1844, compiled on 24 April 1844 by Thomas Bullock, LDS Archives, with complete transcription in Quinn's research files, Beinecke Library, deleted from the published report.

150. Church History in the Fulness of Times, 281, for photograph of the “six-shooter” Joseph Smith used and the single-shot handgum he gave his brother Hyrum who declined to fire it. John Hay, “The Mormon Prophet’s Tragedy,” Atlantic Monthly 24 (December 1869): 675, identified three men who were shot by Joseph Smith: John Wills in the arm, William Vorhees in the shoulder, and William Gallagher in the face. Hay was a son of Charles Hay, a surgeon of the Carthage militia and apparently a member of the mob. Church History in the Fulness of Times, 282, agrees that Smith wounded three men.


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Stories, without author identification, will be judged by noted Mormon authors and professors of literature. Winners will be announced by 28 February 2012 on Sunstone’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. Publication is not guaranteed, but winners agree to give Sunstone first publication options.

Prizes will be awarded in two categories: short-short story—fewer than 1,500 words; and short story—fewer than 6,000 words. Prize money varies (up to $400 each) depending on the number of winners announced.
The book that Joseph Smith translated by way of Seer stone was said to have been written by prophets of God living from 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. and gives an account of a large civilization beginning with a family who left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. and came to the American Continent.

After arriving in America, the family’s patriarch, Lehi, passed away, leaving his sons in charge of the family in this new land.

Lehi’s Sons:

Nephi

and his older brothers Laman & Lemuel

Laman & Lemuel would beat Nephi & tie him up.
On one occasion they were beating Nephi with a rod when an angel appeared and rebuked the men for beating their brother.

CEASE!

The Family eventually split into two rival groups.

1. The Nephites, who followed Nephi and were righteous followers of God.

2. The Lamanites, who followed Laman and Lemuel, who were rebellious and opposed the Nephites.

In about 34 A.D., after the death of Christ, the resurrected Christ visited America on his way to Heaven.
He taught the people how to establish his church and for more than 200 years all were converted to the gospel of Christ.

The division between the Nephites and the Lamanites was no more.

And then sometime after 200 A.D., a group of people once again dissented and called themselves Lamanites.

Sin and wickedness seeped into the Nephite culture and by about 421 A.D., the Nephites had been completely destroyed by the Lamanites.
Shortly after his appointment in 1951 as president of the LDS Church’s educational flagship, Brigham Young University, Ernest L. Wilkinson (1899–1978) began scrutinizing his faculty’s compliance to LDS teachings. For a time, his attention focused especially on tithing contributions. All practicing Church members are expected to pay to their local congregations at least one-tenth of their annual income, though how this is defined and how faithfully members adhere to this expectation are considered personal matters between members and their local religious leader(s). Members’ church status is determined, in part, by their meeting their tithing obligations. Wilkinson himself paid his own tithing, and he expected nothing less from his faculty.

Wilkinson also understood that if he hoped to secure Church funding for BYU, the school’s board of trustees, all members of the Church’s governing hierarchy, might respond less positively if faculty were found to be less than full tithepayers. In fact, following the precedent of past practices at the LDS school, Wilkinson decided to use an individual’s tithing history to help determine raises, promotions, and even continuing employment. Wilkinson himself paid his own tithing, and he expected nothing less from his faculty.

By 1929, the payment of a full tithing had become virtually de rigueur for all Church-employed school teachers. “Those who cannot conscientiously do these things,” wrote LDS Commissioner of Education (and later apostle) Joseph F. Merrill (1868–1952), “should not, we believe, be encouraged to remain in the employ of the Church school system.” Two years later, at Merrill’s urging, BYU President Franklin S. Harris (1884–1960) convened a special faculty meeting to discuss loyalty to the Church, including the payment of tithing. Enclosed with Merrill’s request was a summary the Church’s Presiding Bishop’s office had provided of the tithing records of all faculty for the previous year. Of the 102 faculty identified, slightly more than half had paid a full tithing, 37 percent had paid a partial tithing, and 8 percent had paid no tithing. “You are not expected to retain permanently on your staff non-tithepayers,” Merrill subsequently reminded Harris.

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Despite repeated exhortations, 1934 figures reveal that, compared to 1931, the number of faculty paying a full tithing had actually decreased 19 percent, the number
paying a partial tithing had increased 2 percent, and the number paying no tithing had risen 17 percent. While this decline may have been due largely to the effects of the Great Depression, LDS leaders were still “dumbfounded” at what they saw as blatant disobedience. “As far as I am concerned,” Church President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) insisted, “the Church is paying these people. If they haven’t enough loyalty to the Church to do their duty and pay their tithing, I want it recorded here and now that I want other teachers there.”

Six years later, the situation had not improved. When, in 1940, LDS officials decided that salary increases were to be granted only to full tithepayers, BYU’s acting president reported that “practically all members whom we intended to give a small increase cannot qualify under this new requirement.” Dismayed, the First Presidency responded bluntly: “No person who has not paid a full tenth of his Church compensation for the year 1939 will receive any advance in salary for the next school year; that is to say, the school year 1940–41. At the end of the next school year the question of advances in salaries can be given consideration to those who have fully tithed their Church compensation, and who are otherwise entitled, under the principles hereinafter set forth, to such consideration. The First Presidency feel that this rule must be mandatory.”

Wilkinson’s attempt to gain access to faculty tithing records proved premature, however, as Church policy stipulated that the “amount of tithing paid by an individual or by the total ward membership is confidential and should not be disclosed by the bishopric to anyone except to the stake president as requested and in confidential reports to the General Authorities.” And when McKay’s counselors in his First Presidency learned the extent of the information that Wilkinson sought, they decided to withhold from Wilkinson the exact amounts of tithing paid by faculty members. Undeterred, Wilkinson arranged to have the Presiding Bishop’s office identify for him any faculty who were partial- or non-tithepayers, though without disclosing the exact amounts of tithing paid. This, Wilkinson believed, would allow him to double-check the data, if needed, with a faculty member’s local Church leaders. But the arrangement was not without its shortcomings. As Wilkinson discovered by the end of April 1957:

WITH HARRIS’S DEPARTURE, the emphasis on faculty tithet-paying decreased somewhat as attention shifted to other areas of campus administration, notably how best to manage the sudden growth of the student body following World War II. Thus Ernest Wilkinson was both surprised and chagrined to learn in 1957 that more than a few faculty members were not full tithepayers. BYU “must pay awfully low salaries,” he recalled several local Church officials telling him, sarcastically. Alarmed, Wilkinson met immediately with LDS President David O. McKay (1873–1970) “on whether we should insist on payment of tithing by teachers at the BYU. President McKay shared my opinion,” Wilkinson reported, “namely, that . . . it was unthinkable that we retain on our faculty people who do not pay tithing. He authorized me not only to ask teachers what they do in this respect, but actually to find out what they do by checking with the Presiding Bishop’s office and let the teachers know that I know what their record is.”

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brought to my home some cancelled checks for his tithing for last year. True, they were for only about 1/3 of what he should have paid, but at least he was a partial tithepayer and over the years was very faithful, apparently, and paid less last year than ever before.  

Wilkinson also decided to announce publicly that promotions and salary increases would henceforth be based, in part, on the payment of a full tithing. “When I am called upon this year,” he promised his faculty five months later, “to pass on proposed promotions in academic rank for members of the faculty I hope I do not have to refuse any on the ground that the nominee does not adhere in practice to . . . the payment of tithing.”

Wilkinson’s push for compliance did not sit well with some faculty, who had initially been employed at the university under a different set of assumptions. “These demands were seen by some,” recalled R. Kent Fielding (b. 1920), who taught history, as nothing more than Wilkinson’s personal opinions and served only to alienate the President from the independent minded members of the faculty. Many of us believed that our faculty status was protected by the practice of tenure so long as we met the standards of our academic professions. Most of us accepted our prior experience as reason to believe that our religious beliefs and practices were matters of private conscience, providing we made no attempt to convert others or to subvert established orthodoxies. To others it seemed that further conditions of employment at BYU were being added without consultation. The opinion was frequently expressed that other standards of religious orthodoxy might be promulgated in the same manner and also required for faculty status unless some stand were taken against arbitrary decisions. The suggestion that any who disagreed should resign “as a matter of conscience,” was taken as a warning of the consequences of disagreement with other teachings of the Church as interpreted by “authority.”

“This invasion of the sacred tithing records, using them to put pressure on the faculty,” added J. Kenneth Davies (b. 1925), a member of the economics department, “was resented by a substantial portion of the faculty, including some of the most orthodox members of the church who were never interviewed for non-compliance. A number of prominent members of the faculty resigned in protest. I personally had no difficulty on the issue because my tithing records showed me in conformity with the law of tithing, a principle I firmly believed in and practiced. However, I was disturbed by what I perceived as a violation of Church procedures.”

THE POOR RECORD OF CERTAIN FACULTY

IN MARCH 1958, when Wilkinson again requested a report from the Presiding Bishop’s office on faculty members’ tithing payments, McKay again ruled that Wilkinson “could be furnished information about whether or not they pay part or full tithing.” Wilkinson, however, hoping for more, also asked for the names of any errant faculty and the exact amounts of tithing paid so that he did not have to rely solely on the statements of local LDS officials. “If you should decide that for proper administration I should have this information,” the lawyer-turned-president pressed McKay, you may be sure that I will keep it confidential. . . . I do not intend to disclose its existence to the teachers involved, but it will give me sufficient basic information that with respect to teachers who are derelict in their duty, I may call them in and by careful questioning obtain from them direct the facts. You will appreciate, of course, that I do not have time to interrogate all 500 members of the faculty on a matter of this kind, nor would there be any purpose in interrogating more than probably ten per cent of the faculty who, by their dereliction, are giving the University in the eyes of their own stake presidents and bishops, a bad name.

The Presiding Bishop already has the list of our teachers themselves for their appointment and promotion–namely, that they shall be faithful members of some 600 faculty members. One of the difficulties arises from one of the criteria adopted by the presidents and bishops, a bad name.

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McKay was not persuaded, reiterating that Wilkinson would get the names of teachers judged not to be full tithe-payers but not the specific amounts of tithing paid. Two weeks later, Wilkinson met with faculty members “who are not tithe-payers (in all cases they claimed to be part-tithe-payers, but I insisted there was not such a thing as a part-tithe-payer; but that a tithepayer means one who pays one-tenth of his income). On the whole, the individuals to whom I spoke had a very fine attitude and I think will make a greater effort to pay a full tithing another year.”

Wilkinson disliked having to work with incomplete information. “This was a day of almost complete frustration,” he recorded early the next year.

I stayed at my home all day in an attempt to determine salaries for next year and evaluate the worth of some 600 faculty members. One of the difficulties arises from one of the criteria adopted by the teachers themselves for their appointment and promotion–namely, that they shall be faithful members of the Church, adhering to all its standards. The Presiding Bishop’s office has this year given me a list of teachers indicating within certain limits their performance as far as tithing is concerned, and I
Wilkinson found himself facing one of his more outspoken committee of BYU’s board of trustees the following week, that 73 percent of faculty paid a full tithing, 18 percent a partial tithing, and 9 percent no tithing.27

“I have three alternatives,” Wilkinson argued.

One is to pay little attention to it, as has been too much of our practice in the past. If I do this, we become just another educational institution and this alternative must be rejected. The second is to let the teachers know that their jobs depend on performance in this respect. I have to reject this, because to make the payment a condition of being employed is to force the payment of tithing, in which event it ceases to be a voluntary offering. The only logical third alternative is to call the teachers in and say in effect, “One of the prerequisites for appointment to our faculty is the voluntary payment of tithing. I am not going to require you to pay it, because it ceases to be voluntary, but since you have not voluntarily paid, it would seem you ought to look elsewhere for a position.” . . . I know that a chat with many faculty members will bring them to their senses and have them pay a full tithing. My difficulty will be that I will never know whether they are paying it to keep their jobs or based on their own belief.25

Wilkinson arranged to meet with McKay in his office a few weeks later. During the hour-long early morning conference, Wilkinson told President McKay of the faculty having adopted as a criteria for promotion the fact that members of the faculty must live in accordance with the standards of the Church, and I could not administer this rule without knowing the tithing paid by the faculty members. He told me that he agreed with me. He thought I ought to know the details and he would take it up in a meeting of the First Presidency that morning. . . . He told me that when I got permission he would permit me to share information with the deans as to whether or not teachers were non-tithe payers or part-tithe payers, but I should not inform the deans as to amounts. That I should hold confidential.26

Wilkinson also reported that of the $3.6 million paid in faculty salaries, approximately $273,925 was returned to the Church as tithing (or about 75 percent of a full tithing); and that 73 percent of faculty paid a full tithing, 18 percent a partial tithing, and 9 percent no tithing.27

During an afternoon meeting with the executive committee of BYU’s board of trustees the following week, Wilkinson found himself facing one of his more outspoken trustees regarding the religious orthodoxy of some of the school’s faculty:

A few weeks previous Kent Fielding of our campus had admitted . . . that he did not have a testimony of the Gospel. In answer to the question of why he had become a member of our faculty when he had no testimony of the Gospel, he replied that while he was interrogated by [LDS Apostle] Harold B. Lee at the time of his appointment [to the history faculty in 1952], he was never asked whether he had a testimony of the Gospel. I had told Brother Lee about this at the time, and Brother Lee, whose main weakness as far as I can see is that he cannot accept criticism, had interpreted it as serious criticism on my part of him. So in this meeting, alluding to this situation, he said he had been disappointed that I had not gotten rid of about a third of the faculty who did not have a testimony of the Gospel. I told him that I thought his estimate was altogether too high. His response was that he thought I must be awfully naive if I did not know the large number of our faculty who did not have a testimony. He was smarting very much under what I thought was my criticism of him for not having properly interrogated Brother Fielding.

Out of this whole discussion, however, came the suggestion that I should not increase the salaries or promote any of our faculty who do not pay an honest tithing. Just how I am going to do this is still a mystery unless the Brethren give me a list of the amount paid by each faculty member.28

Years later, Fielding recalled being asked during a brief interview with one of Wilkinson’s aides about some controversies in Mormon history, including Fielding’s study of the LDS Church in Ohio during the 1830s. Fielding replied that his “testimony” of the ‘truthfulness’ of the gospel demanded a basic honesty about its origins and its early leaders and could not survive on the kinds of contrivances which appeared in the distorted histories and altered documentation. “Nothing more was said, Fielding wrote, and “I began to believe that my arguments were acceptable and that the matter might end without further consequences.”29 Of his earlier 1952 meeting with Apostle Lee (1899–1973), Fielding added: “Apostle Lee was concerned with only two issues: ‘Brother Fielding, are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?’ . . . ‘Have you ever been unfaithful to your wife?’ . . . Lee was adamant and stern as he required a direct answer. Once that was given, there were no more questions and the interview concluded as pleasantly as it had begun.30

Three days after his encounter with Lee, Wilkinson spent an entire Sunday “wrestling with the question of what to do with faculty members who were not faithful in the payment of their tithing. The best solution I came up with during the day,” he wrote,
was that they probably should be treated the same way as they treat the Lord—a new application of the Golden Rule. Under this application, if they paid no tithing they would get no salary increase. If they paid half tithing they would get half the salary increase contemplated. As I worked on this during the entire day I finally realized that if, for instance, a faculty member should have paid $600 tithing but paid none and was denied a proposed $600 increase, the law of retribution worked even mathematically correct.

This still, however, did not seem to be the correct answer, but I went through and made out salaries for the entire faculty pretty largely on this basis.\textsuperscript{31}

Wilkinson continued to grapple with the issue, and the following Tuesday, 28 April 1959, sought additional advice:

At 7 a.m. I called Brother Marion Romney followed by a call to Brother Hugh Brown on the question of what I should do with respect to faculty members who had failed to pay a full tithe. Brother Romney was the one who, in my Executive committee meeting last week, had proposed that there be no promotion or salary increase of any kind for those who did not pay a full tithe. I felt when I talked to him, however, that he had pretty much changed his mind on this, his feeling being that since tithing was supposed to be voluntary people would not get the benefits from it if they paid it under coercion. He proposed, therefore, that I go ahead and set salaries without much respect to tithing this year but that members of the Executive Committee come down and meet individually with members of the faculty who were deficient in this respect. Brother Brown echoed pretty much the same thoughts.\textsuperscript{32}

Early the next morning, Wilkinson met with McKay again to discuss the situation. “I told President McKay also,” he recorded,

that since he had authorized me to have information concerning faculty salaries, I had obtained the same and was shocked at the fact that apparently 100 members either were non or token tithe payers. He said he was shocked also. I told him that it had been suggested to me by Executive Committee that no salary increases should be given to those who were in that situation, but that I had my doubts that that was the proper way to handle it because that had the effect of requiring the payment of tithing when as a matter of fact it ought to be a voluntary matter. He said he agreed with me and that salary should be predicated largely on professional ability.

I then told him that obviously we must do something about it, and I proposed that he appoint members of the Quorum of the Twelve to come to the
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ought to take with respect to the faculty rather than making compliance with Church standards a requirement. I pointed out that the Board had considered fully that viewpoint, but that that was the standard held up for us as faculty members to persuade our students to adhere to the Church standards. The Board felt that faculty members themselves must of necessity adhere to all standards in order that they could properly teach the students both by precept and example. I pointed out further that while I had used tithing as an example in my talk, it was only used as an example and what I said applied to all standards and principles of the Church. . . .

I am sure that my comments in the afternoon had a wholesome effect. In fact, after the meeting was over Bob Riggs came up, shook hands, and commended me for my statement. He even went so far as to admit that I might be right. He was somewhat chastened and had the best attitude I had ever known him to have.39

For Riggs, the new policy was merely the tip of the iceberg regarding what he perceived as Wilkinson's authoritarian administrative style. “That afternoon,” Riggs recalled more than thirty years later,

...they had one of their open forum discussions, a panel discussion on the topic “What is a university?” They opened it up for comments. . . . I told how I had come to BYU fresh out of graduate school with high hopes for the kind of institution that it was and could be, and how I'd enjoyed my association with the faculty here, and with the students, but then one thing after another, I don't recall all the things that I mentioned, but I know I mentioned . . . President Wilkinson's unwillingness to consult the faculty, how we really weren't part of the enterprise in the sense that faculty ought to be and gradually I'd developed a great disappointment with what was going on here and now we had come to this tithing requirement and while I agreed that everybody here ought to pay their tithing, it ought to be voluntary for us, it ought to be a matter of free will giving just as it is for everybody else, and from now on my tithing was going to be one dollar short. I also said that because of the things that had happened I was tender[ing] my resignation from the university, that I would be here throughout the year but I would not be here the following year.40

True to his word, Riggs moved to another university at the end of the school year, teaching part-time at the University of Arizona, Tucson, while also attending law school.41

WILKINSON CORRECTLY FEARED that Riggs was not his only faculty critic and quietly asked some of his subordinates to watch out for similar sentiments. Less than two weeks after Wilkinson's address, BYU's public relations director, Lester B. Whetten (1904–88), informed Wilkinson: “While you were in Europe, at one of our Deans['] Council meetings the matter of tithe paying was discussed at some length. I recall that I was quite surprised to hear some of the deans make statements of this nature, stating that some of their men felt this way. My memory could be in error, but as I recall Dean [Armin J.] Hill and possibly Dean [Leonard W.] Rice were the ones who advanced these ideas.”42

Following the Christmas break, Wilkinson met with Armin J. Hill (1912–1988), the fifty-seven-year-old dean of the College of Physical and Engineering Sciences, who, as Whetten had noted, shared some of Riggs's concerns:

One special thing I did [today] was to have Dean Hill in. I had received a rather impudent note from him stating that he had supported me in the past but implying strongly that if I went ahead, as he felt I was going to do, and examined the tithing of members of the faculty, that he would not support me. He wanted some assurance from me that I would not [examine the faculty's tithing records]. I called him in with Brother [Earl C.] Crockett and Brother Bernhard and told him that he had not such assurance from me, that I would not give it, and that what I did in a situation would be between me and the Board of Trustees. I told him I wanted to know if I did something he didn't want me to do, if I would still have his support. He backed down and promised that I would.43

Evidently, Wilkinson's comments had reached LDS headquarters in Salt Lake City, and early that same January 1960, the Presiding Bishop's office reminded the Church's local leaders: “How much tithing a man pays is his own business, his bishop's and the Lord's . . . Privacy is precious, and the inalienable right of every member of this Church.”44 The First Presidency, too, explicitly informed Wilkinson that such confidential information was to be obtained directly from them. Sensitive to any hint of impropriety, Wilkinson sought to reassure McKay: “I asked if there had been complaints that I had been obtaining the information from local Bishops. He told me that they had received a letter of criticism to the effect that all secretaries in my office and other places knew the amounts paid by faculty members. I assured him there was no truth of any kind to that statement, that no one had the information except me. He said he had himself assumed that fact but that he was glad to have this assurance.”45
Early the next week, meeting with McKay and his two counselors, J. Reuben Clark (1871–1961) and Henry D. Moyle (1889–1963), Wilkinson stressed

that unless I knew what the faculty paid, I was in no position to know whether they were, in fact, full tithe payers. President McKay agreed with this and the First Presidency consented that I continue to obtain the information in that way.

I assured them that contrary to reports they had received, that this information was not available to secretaries and was not being broadcast around the campus.

I reported that I had, pursuant to their instructions of last fall [1959], informed Deans of particular faculty members who were short in the payment of tithing but that I had not disclosed the amount to the Deans. I was authorized to continue.

In the meantime, Humanities and Social Sciences Dean Leonard W. Rice (1914–1986), the second of the two deans about whom Whetten had expressed concern, decided that, like Riggs, he could no longer remain at BYU, and informed Wilkinson of his intent to resign and accept a job teaching in Rhode Island because he did not think he could conform to the standards which I set forth in my speech to the faculty in September of 1959. I have known for some time that Leonard was not orthodox in all matters, but he has been an outstanding teacher and administrator and I hope we can persuade him to come back. I cannot for the life of me understand why Leonard cannot conform to the standards set down.

Wilkinson immediately arranged to meet privately with Rice, and for more than two hours the two men debated a variety of topics:

He [Rice] had taken some exception to my letter of last September in which I laid down the requirement that all members of the faculty must be loyal and faithful to the Church. I do not as yet know whether he will return. He particularly had grievances against Elder Mark Petersen and Elder Bruce McConkie. He just could not agree with many of their statements. I took the position that it may be that there are certain isolated statements made by different members of the General authorities with which some of us could not agree, but that it is incumbent upon all of us at the BYU to support these General Authorities in the performance of their various offices. He agreed with that.

Rice did not change his mind and left BYU for Rhode Island by the end of that school year.

"SELF-STYLED INTELLECTUALS"

WILKINSON SPENT MUCH of the remainder of February 1960 going over the partial information he continued to receive from the Presiding Bishop's office. On the evening of the 23rd, he met individually with five faculty members who, according to the Presiding Bishop's office, "had not paid tithing during the year." He also talked with one of his deans, who thought

I ought to have one of the General Authorities come down and sit down with the non-tithepayers and try to persuade them. I recalled that I had personally once suggested this to my Executive Committee but they had turned it down on the ground that they would be undermining my authority, that I ought to do it myself. This particular Dean was afraid that there was an organized clique intending to make a cause celebre out of the present situation and force the Administration to give way on this tithing question or in the alternative to fire some of them, which would be the occasion for a big outburst.

From my conferences during the evening, I am convinced that if there is a clique of that kind it is confined to very few teachers in political science and history.

Three days later, Wilkinson interviewed nineteen additional teachers. "Many of them," he recorded,

admitted their carelessness or lack of faith, but promised to do better. There were, however, as would be expected, a few dissidents who took bitter exception to the fact that the administration should be concerned with what they considered an obligation between themselves and their bishops. These were generally the self-styled intellectuals who thought they could pretty much solve the problems of the world by logic and the spirit of the intellect. They were centered largely in three departments: English, political science, and history.

The next day, Saturday, 27 February 1960, Wilkinson and aide Earl C. Crockett (1903–1975) reviewed the records of approximately forty-five faculty members "who were deficient in the payment of tithing and decided on their salaries for next year. Generally, where they had made no payments on tithing, they got no increases. . . . However, where members paid a partial tithing and exhibited certain evidence of a desire to bear their share of Church responsibility, we tried to be lenient in salary increases. None of the 45, however, received the salary increase he would have received had he otherwise measured up fully in this particular.

According to Kent Fielding, he was one of the nineteen faculty whom Wilkinson interviewed on the 26th. "I was determined to stand my ground . . . ," Fielding recalled.
“Despite Wilkinson's forthright declaration and his position of authority, it was my Church also and the source of my youthful values as well as the faith of my ancestors, my living relatives and most of my friends. I intended to retain my allegiance on my own terms, regardless of the outcome. Without risks, no change was possible.” As a result, Fielding and his wife had “determined to withhold any further payment of tithing and to refuse to reveal our offerings to any others.”54 When the acting dean of Fielding's college, Reed H. Bradford (1912–1994), subsequently “asked me to confirm the accuracy of my tithing record, which he held in his hand,” Fielding wrote,

I refused to look at the record. I declared that such matters were confidential to the parties directly involved and perhaps to God. He replied that President Wilkinson had been given permission to access the tithing records and to utilize this information in decisions affecting salary and promotion. I declared that such matters were now immaterial; it had become a question of conscience with me and I must be retained or fired on my own terms. He urged me not to take such a position, for it could not be supported by the administration. I charged him with irresponsibility in being an agent of coercion rather than in defending the academic freedom of his faculty. He said he could not fulfill his duties as a dean without carrying out the order of his administrative leaders. I declared that he should resign his administrative duties rather than to violate his allegiance to his academic profession.55

As Fielding recalled, Wilkinson began their 26 February 1960 interview by explaining that “his concern was with my evident lack of religious orthodoxy which had the potential of disturbing the testimony of my students in the future.” Wilkinson then queried: “Do you believe Joseph Smith saw God?” “I have to believe he thought he did.” Fielding answered. “This interview continued for four hours,” Fielding wrote, “under circumstances which were never threatening; indeed, they seemed most congenial and understanding. The subject of tithing was never mentioned.” Later, however, Fielding concluded that the decision to terminate his employment—reached on 27 February and delivered to Fielding during a meeting with Wilkinson on 3 March—had been made prior to his interview, that “I was the victim of an elaborate charade, designed to give me a sense of fair treatment.”56

During a 2 March 1960 meeting with his board of trustees, Wilkinson was pleased to report that his efforts were bearing fruit, and that, in fact, the amount of tithing paid by the school's faculty in 1959 was considerably more than what had been paid in 1958.57 Wilkinson continued his interviews of faculty members, and in early May 1960 informed trustees that a total of thirty-nine teachers were being released, to be “replaced by faithful and highly educated men.”58

“WE DO NOT INTEND TO FORCE FACULTY MEMBERS TO PAY TITHING”

AS 1961 BEGAN, Wilkinson again faced the task of reviewing the tithing payments of his faculty in determining adjustments to salaries. “This is a most difficult assignment,” he reported on 26 February.

Actually, what ought to be done with respect to those who do not pay tithing is to release them from the faculty because no one should pay tithing in order to stay. I am happy to report that, whereas a few years ago there were quite a number of faculty members who paid only a token tithing, so far this year I have found only about three. Now the main difficulty is in the interpretation of what constitutes tithing. I find that many fall in the upper brackets; that is they will pay about 80% or 85% of what is really a full tithing.59

A month later, still reviewing faculty tithing information, he reported:

The day before yesterday one teacher reported to me that while he knew the record showed he was a non-tithe payer he had paid his full tithing after the end of the year, but too late to get on the record for the year. Yesterday in checking with the bishop to confirm his story, about which we were rather suspicious, we found that immediately after having had his interview with me, he went to the bishop and paid the tithing. The bishop commented, “He is a peculiar duck. I could not understand why he was so insistent that I accept a check yesterday for last year’s tithing.”60

Following a meeting with his executive committee that May, Wilkinson complained to Henry Moyle about a lack of timely cooperation from the Presiding Bishop’s office. He also thought Church authorities need to issue some authoritative definition of what constituted full tithing, particularly that it should be paid before the payment of taxes. He [Moyle] thoroughly agreed with my viewpoint, but said as long as President McKay and President [J. Reuben] Clark were in the First Presidency there was no chance to get any authoritative interpretation. He informed me also that President [Stephen L] Richards, and he thought Bishop [Thorpe B.] Isaacson, only paid their tithing after the deduction of taxes and that there was not a chance at the present time to change that situation.61

By the end of that month, Wilkinson, during a meeting with McKay, pointed out
that, although bishops in the Church were supposed to have their reports in by the middle of January, there were some reports from some bishops this year which did not get in until well after the first of March. This had hindered us in getting the reports as quickly as we should have the facts in order to determine the eligibility of faculty members for reappointment, etc. I suggested that if there was some way of having the Presiding Bishop’s Office get these records in on time, that it would be helpful to us.62

Wilkinson continued to face similar difficulties each year for the next two years. In early 1962, he recorded being “a little discouraged to find that approximately 150 of our faculty were not paying full tithing . . . this lack of loyalty and lack of assuming their share of financial responsibility for the financing of the Church disappointed me very much.”63 The next year, he was surprised to find that without his knowledge, two of his aides had assigned college deans to interview faculty members whose tithing contributions were reported to be less than 100 percent. “These deans merely called some in and told them they were short,” Wilkinson reported. “The deans do not know the full facts; and since I am the only one knowing the full facts, it would have been better had I done the interviewing. Some faculty members were furious, but as generally turns out to be the case in these situations, they had made bad mistakes in either computation or definition of what constitutes tithing.”64

Wilkinson believed that he had the appropriate “authority to check the tithing of all faculty members.”65 However, the Presiding Bishop disagreed, and raised the matter with McKay the next month. As described by McKay:

Bishop [John H.] Vandenberg of the Presiding Bishopric explained that the information about tithing paid by members of the faculty of the Brigham Young University has been requested, and asked whether or not it should be released. Limited authorization formerly given President Wilkinson was considered. I said that we do not intend to force faculty members to pay tithing, nor do we intend to release information about tithing they pay. Special permission was given on one occasion, but it has not been continued regularly. Bishop Vandenberg said that it is the Bishop’s prerogative to interview the person, and the responsibility rests with the person paying tithing. Bishop Victor L. Brown suggested that President Wilkinson might be informed as to whether or not faculty members are tithers, part tithers, or non tithers. I indicated approval. Bishop Vandenberg said that accordingly they would disapprove of giving information about the amount of tithing paid.66

“We have reviewed your request for information regarding the amount of tithing paid by the faculty members
with The First Presidency,” the Presiding Bishopric subsequently informed Wilkinson. “The occasion on which permission was given to provide you with this information as indicated by President McKay was ‘for that time only.’ The First Presidency has ruled that this information is not to be provided but rather we can give you the status of those employees as to whether they are full, part or non-tithepayers.”

By the end of 1963, Wilkinson decided to pursue a long-time dream of running for public office and stepped down as president of BYU. Following his defeat and return to the BYU presidency in late 1964, his absence together with changes in the composition of the First Presidency and McKay's failing health combined to end his surveillance of faculty tithing payments. In fact, current BYU policy strictly prohibits the release of faculty tithing information to university administrators.

During the eight years of increased surveillance of the individual tithing records of BYU faculty members, some two dozen (probably more) teachers were dismissed or resigned specifically, according to Wilkinson, because of “religious problems,” “church problems,” or “disagreement with administration,” including “disagreement with President's administrative approach.”

While these numbers may not seem to represent much of an impact on BYU generally, the effect of Wilkinson's drive to enforce adherence to LDS teachings on the lives of the individuals who left, either voluntarily or involuntarily, cannot easily be overstated. For some teachers who believed the primary criteria regarding their employment centered on academic experience and expertise, Wilkinson's emphasis on tithing was misplaced and irrelevant. Still others, appealing to Church guidelines regarding the confidential nature of one's tithing history, viewed Wilkinson's interest as inappropriate. For Wilkinson, however, BYU was an extension of the Church, and he was merely an agent of the Church's general authorities. Not only did he see nothing wrong with having access to such information, he considered it essential if he were to successfully administer the affairs of the “Lord's University.” That such tensions endured for nearly a decade underscores the challenges confronting a religion-sponsored university and its advocates.

NOTES


2. “The amount of tithing and other offerings paid by a member is confidential. Only the bishop and those who are authorized to handle such contributions should know the amount” (Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops, 2010 [Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010], 128).

3. Harvey Fletcher, “Autobiography,” 41, in Harvey Fletcher file, University Archives, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

4. See “Tithing Record of the Faculty of the Brigham Young University for 1913, Exclusive of Those Who Discontinued Service June 30,” courtesy of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

5. On the other hand, ten (15 percent) had paid more than 150 percent, and four (6 percent) had paid more than 300 percent. Ibid.


7. Merrill, Letter to Harris, 1 March 1933, in Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, 2:217.


9. In Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, 2:218.

10. Ibid., 385.

11. In Franklin L. West, Letter to Christen Jensen, 9 May 1940, in Franklin L. West Papers, Perry Special Collections.

12. According to BYU's official history, “Written records do not indicate precisely what President Harris did to handle the tithing problem, but some living faculty members remember that Harris interviewed faculty members who did not pay a full tithe, reporting special problems and extenuating circumstances to the First Presidency. Where there was any doubt, President Harris usually supported the cause of the faculty member” (Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years, 2:218, 414). See also Janett Jensen, *The Many Lives of Franklin S. Harris* (Provo, Utah: BYU Printing Services, 2002), 60–63. While BYU's official history addresses Harris's response regarding faculty tithing, it is silent on Wilkinson's efforts to enforce compliance, even though Wilkinson was one of the authors of the official history. For a very brief treatment of Wilkinson's monitoring of faculty tithing, see Gary James Bergera and Ronald Pridris, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 68–70.

13. Wilkinson, “Notes for Presentation to First Presidency on ‘Tithing Problem,’” 16 April 1959, Wilkinson Papers, Perry Special Collections. Unless otherwise noted, all such Wilkinson-related materials are in his papers at BYU.


15. *The Messenger* (distributed by the Presiding Bishopric of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints), 16 (April 1957): 2. Using more or less the same wording, this was reiterated in subsequent editions of the Church’s *General Handbook of Instructions*.

16. Wilkinson, “Notes for Presentation to First Presidency.”

17. Wilkinson, Diary, 22 April 1957.


19. Robert Kent Fielding, “Growing Up Mormon: Autobiographical Narratives and Related Papers,” August 1997, 20, in Robert Kent Fielding Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library. Fielding graduated from BYU twice, in 1950 (B.A.) and again in 1952 (M.A.). Although Fielding may appear to figure more prominently than other faculty members in the following narrative, it would be a mistake to view him, or any other single faculty member, as a primary instigator of tithing-related controversies. Fielding was one of a number of faculty who disagreed with Wilkinson's policies. If Fielding's name appears more frequently than others, it is simply because he left an account of his involvement.


21. McKay, Diary, 3 March 1938, David O. McKay Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library.


23. Wilkinson's handwritten notation on ibid.


25. Ibid., 13 March 1959.


27. Ibid. McKay's diary reported only: “The question of whether President Wilkinson should have access to the tithing records of the faculty of the Brigham Young University. The faculty itself has already voted that compliance with Church standards is one of the criteria for promotion. This question was discussed at our meeting of the First Presidency today.” (McKay, Diary, April 16, 1959, emphasis in original).
28. Wilkinson, Diary, 23 April 1959. Beginning in 1957, Fielding chaired an “Intelectual Climate Committee” to “foster the rational and intellectual side of Mormonism” (Fielding, “Growing Up Mormon,” 21). Two years later, he participated in an on-campus debate with LDS educator E. E. Erickson regarding the place of liberal Mormonism in the Church. When he learned of the meeting, Wilkinson recorded that it “apparently turned out to be the most vigorous criticism of Church tendencies and Church leaders that has been held on the campus since I have been here” (Wilkinson, Diary, 17–19 January 1959). Evidently, word of Fielding’s comments also reached Harold B. Lee, which prompted Lee’s exchange with Wilkinson.


30. Ibid., 17. During the 1950s, Fielding pursued, and was awarded, a Ph.D. in history at Indiana University. His dissertation was on the LDS Church in Ohio during the 1830s.


32. Ibid., 28 April 1959. Romney (1897–1988) had been ordained an apostle in 1951; Brown (1883–1975) had been ordained an apostle in 1938 and would serve as a member of McKay’s First Presidency beginning in 1961.


34. BYU Board of Trustees Meeting, Minutes, 29 April 1959, courtesy of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

35. Wilkinson, Diary, 30 April 1959. Ray R. Canning (1920–94), who taught sociology at BYU, fumed over what he believed was Wilkinson’s intrusion into his private life. “That is the way Wilkinson operated,” Canning later said. “It seemed shocking to me. Wilkinson seemed shocked by the revelation of what was taking place on the campus and the way it was handled. I was just appalled” (“My Personal Odyssey,” 30). Canning and his wife, Mildred, eventually left BYU.


37. Wilkinson, Diary, 21 September 1959. “In the emotional and sometimes heated discussion which followed the address,” remembered Kent Fielding, “it was many times repeated by Wilkinson that Brigham Young University had a Destiny which required faith and dedication . . . . In that context, all arguments to the contrary seemed pitiful and self-serving” (“Growing Up Mormon,” 34).

38. Wilkinson, Diary, 22 September 1959. In 1968, following his own disagreements with Wilkinson, Bernhard resigned to accept the presidency of Western Illinois University. From 1974 to 1983, he presided over Western Michigan University.

39. Wilkinson, Diary, 22 September 1959. Bernhard tried to persuade Riggs to stay, assuring him that there would be no administrative retaliation. However, Riggs was dismayed soon afterwards to learn that the administration had decided not to grant him a promised promotion because “of my public criticism of the University and President Wilkinson the previous fall” (Riggs, email to Garry James Bergera, 4 February 2011).

40. Robert E. Riggs, Oral History, 8 September 1992, 32, Perry Special Collections. Riggs later clarified: “I did, for instance, state that from then on my tithing would be ‘one dollar short.’ But in fact I immediately repented of that inflammatory statement. My tithe payments, both before and after the speech, are instructed: ‘The simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968], p. 102.’ Today, members are instructed: ‘A tithe is one-tenth of a farmer’s income after deducting standard business operating expenses; a tithe is one-tenth of a farmer’s income after deducting standard business operating expenses’ (General Handbook of Instructions, Number 19 [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1963], p. 67, emphasis in original). In 1968, however, Church officials referred members, without elucidation, to the D&C 119 (General Handbook of Instructions, Number 20 [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968], p. 102). Today, members are instructed: ‘The simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord himself, namely, that the members of the Church should pay ‘one-tenth of all their interest annually,’ which is understood to mean income. No one is justified in making any other statement than this’ (Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010, p. 125).

41. Following a career teaching political science at the University of Minnesota, Riggs returned to BYU, now presided over by Wilkinson’s successor, Dallin H. Oaks (b. 1932), to join the J. Reuben Clark Law School.

42. Whetten, Memorandum to Wilkinson, 5 October 1959. Before coming to BYU in 1956, Whetten had served as executive dean of the Chicago College of Osteopathy, as superintendent of schools in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, as director of agriculture at Mesa College (Colorado), and as president of Snow College (Utah). In addition to directing BYU’s public relations, he was also dean of General College. From 1972 to 1973, he chaired the school’s Department of Indian Education.


47. Rice graduated from BYU in 1941. He then enrolled at the University of Washington. He served in World War II as a cryptographer. Following the war, he returned to Washington to finish his Ph.D. studies. He subsequently joined the BYU faculty, chaired the English department, and in 1957 was named Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences.


49. Ibid., 16 February 1960. Petersen (1900–84) had been ordained an apostle in 1944; McConkie (1915–85) had joined the First Council of the Seventy in 1946 (and would be ordained an apostle in 1972). Both men were literalistically oriented LDS theologians.

50. In 1962, Rice was appointed thirteenth president of the Oregon College of Education (in Monmouth), where he remained until his retirement in 1977.


52. Ibid., 26 February 1960.

53. Ibid., 27 February 1960.


55. Ibid., 37–38.

56. Ibid., 39–43. Fielding was told he would be given a sabbatical leave after which he would be allowed to return only if he passed another interview with a member of BYU’s board of trustees. Following his leave, Fielding decided to hazard an interview with Harold B. Lee. But after Lee replied with “a cryptic and wholly unsympathetic letter,” Fielding “made no further effort to secure approval” (ibid., 44–45). Following a career at the Graduate School for Teachers at Wesleyan University (Connecticut), the Utah Center for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, and the Connecticut Commission on Higher Education, Fielding retired in 1978.

57. BYU Board of Trustees, Minutes, 2 March 1960.

58. Ibid., 4 May 1960.


60. Ibid., 2 March 1961.

61. Ibid., 11 May 1961. In 1960, Church members were told that tithing is “one-tenth of their interest (income)” (General Church Handbook, Number 18 [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1960], p. 59). Three years later, Church leaders were more explicit: ‘A tithe is one-tenth of a wage earner’s gross income; a tithe is one-tenth of a professional man’s income after deducting standard business expenses; a tithe is one-tenth of a farmer’s income after deducting standard business operating expenses’ (General Handbook of Instructions, Number 19 [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1963], p. 67, emphasis in original). In 1968, however, Church officials referred members, without elucidation, to the D&C 119 (General Handbook of Instructions, Number 20 [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1968], p. 102). Today, members are instructed: ‘The simplest statement we know of is the statement of the Lord himself, namely, that the members of the Church should pay ‘one-tenth of all their interest annually,’ which is understood to mean income. No one is justified in making any other statement than this’ (Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops 2010, p. 125).


64. Ibid., 29 March 1963.


66. McKay, Diary, 24 May 1963; emphasis in original. Vandenberg (1904–92) had been named Presiding Bishop in September 1961. When Ken Davies asked him about Wilkinson’s access to tithing information, Vandenberg seemed shocked by the revelation of what was taking place on the campus and said that he would certainly look into it (“My Personal Odyssey,” 30).


69. All BYU employees must undergo annual ecclesiastical endorsement interviews conducted by local LDS officials. “If an ecclesiastical endorsement is not granted for an employee, BYU does not ask the reason why” (Carri Jenkins, email to Gary James Bergera, 8 February 2011).
RETURN OF THE NATIVE

By Levi S. Peterson

The Phoenix-bound plane was airborne before I allowed myself to consider the negatives of what I was doing. I told my stepdaughter who lives in Seattle an outright lie about my destination, saying I was flying to Corvallis to visit an old buddy from my Navy days. I knew I would have to expand on that lie when my wife, on a cruise with her sisters, got around to calling me. Even worse, I would have to expand on the lie I had been telling myself for a long time, that there was no resemblance between who I’d become and the fifteen-year-old kid who forced himself on his first cousin in a barn back in 1951.

It was my sister Rosa who phoned me, saying that Uncle Hammond was dead, also that Aunt Sophrina was holding up, but a daughter, who had been taking care of them, had gone to pieces. Not that anybody expected me at the funeral, Rosa said, but it wouldn’t be decent not to let me know. To which I replied that she was right, it was something I ought to know even if I hadn’t been home for over half a century. I appreciated Rosa greatly. She was the only one left who kept me posted on things in Linroth.

Actually, Rosa’s call caught me at a lonesome moment, Patricia having just left on her cruise. I went golfing that first day, and the next day I helped a neighbor put up a cedar fence, but I woke up both nights feeling abandoned, and on the second night the thought hit me like a bullet, Just go! Patricia had been at me for a long time to take her to Linroth. Our friends couldn’t believe we had been married for twenty years without a single visit to my home town. That story had to be a fiction, they said; it just wouldn’t happen in real life to a couple as normal as we were. But it wasn’t fiction. So I woke up that morning and said to myself, this is it, my one and only chance to scout things out in advance and see if Linroth has turned into a Levi’s-and-boots kind of town full of firearm-packing Republicans like the rest of Arizona, because if it has, it isn’t a place to take Patricia, who ran out of patience long ago with ultra-right wing folks and can be counted on to stop and quarrel if she runs into any of them. At least that was the reason I gave myself, though later, as I realized once the jetliner was airborne, the real reason was to test myself and see whether I could keep my composure when the old anxiety—the old self-incrimination—came back to me like delirium tremens to a half-cured drunk.

I lived in Phoenix during the last year and a half of high school, so I shouldn’t have been surprised at how hot it was when I left the air terminal and climbed on a shuttle bus out to the car rental lot. But I was surprised, and, after navigating onto the freeway heading east toward Mesa and Globe, I was equally surprised at how little I recognized of the city I’d once known so well. But all this wonderment proved a beneficial distraction, so for a while the fantods I had been anticipating on the airplane didn’t kick in. When they did kick in, I was eating a hamburger in a fast food place on the east end of Globe. Out a window I could see the junction where the Safford-bound highway split off toward Show Low, and I was struck hard by the fact that the junction looked exactly like it used to fifty years ago, also by the fact that on Thanksgiving Day of the year I turned 17, I stood at that very junction trying to thumb a ride home to Linroth because I had heard that Cassia, my cousin, would probably be there. I stood at the junction all day in a cold wind. What little traffic took the Show Low road didn’t stop for me. I was broken-hearted to say the least. A little before dark, I caught a ride back to Phoenix, and when the school year was out, I joined the Navy and never made another attempt to go back to Linroth.

I threshed all this over while sitting in the fast food place, wondering how I ever figured that, even if I had made it home to Linroth and even if Cassia had actually been there—I later learned she wasn’t—I would have had the nerve to beg her forgiveness, which made me pause for a moment to wonder how, having more or less ruined her life, I could face her at the present if she happened to turn up at Uncle Hammond’s funeral, which—according to my current reasoning—she just might. I sat there after I had finished my hamburger and cola mulling that possibility and, as I say,
having the fantods. Then it occurred to me to get Rosa on my cell phone and find out if Cassia was in town, because if she was, I would turn around and go back to Phoenix and catch the first available plane back to Seattle.

Unluckily, Rosa didn't answer her mobile phone, and when I dialed her house phone, a granddaughter—likely a teenager, I thought—answered and said Rosa was out. When I asked the girl whether she had ever heard of her uncle Rulon Braunhil, which is me, she said, “Sure, you’re grandma’s brother who lives in Seattle.” But when I asked if an elderly cousin named Cassia had come home for the funeral, she said nobody had told her anything about that. “I didn’t even know I had an elderly cousin Cassia,” she said.

MY TROUBLE WITH Cassia—which I didn’t see as trouble for a long time—came about because we were born within six days of each other and our families regarded us as twins and encouraged us to do things together. As a result, we had feelings for each other from early on that first cousins shouldn’t have. Around the time we turned five or six we got into the habit of getting undressed and checking each other out behind a chicken coop. Luckily, we got past that phase without being caught.

The summer we were ten, we wrestled each other on the back lawn of the seminary building, and she pinned me and kissed me long and hard. “That’s the way Betty Grable kisses Victor Mature,” she said and kissed me again.

The year we were twelve and in MIA, we rode in the back seat of my parents’ car to a stake-wide New Year’s Eve party in Holbrook. It was very cold, and Cassia and I huddled under a blanket and we kissed in a way that seemed sinful to me. I put a hand on one of her breasts and she took it off. I felt humiliated. For several months after that I wanted to forego partaking of the sacrament, but doing so would have made me intolerably conspicuous because I was a deacon and had to help pass the bread and water to the Linroth congregation every Sunday. That doubled my worry because I understood people who partook of the sacrament unworthily were eating and drinking damnation unto themselves.

All of that trouble between Cassia and me was nothing compared to the trouble we got into during the summer we were fifteen, and it happened because our fathers owned side-by-side farms on the creek. I had been hoeing corn on a rainy afternoon in June. Near evening, Cassia came down the lane to fetch cows home for evening milking. She wore a dress and scuffed brown and white oxfords with no socks. A squall of rain hit, and she climbed into a barn at the head of the pasture.

“Hey, dummy,” she shouted from a window, “come in out of the rain.”

I dropped my hoe, crawled through a fence, and climbed into the barn. Damp and shivering, we sat side by side in the hay. Our shoulders touched, and I gazed at her askance. She was beautiful—dark brows, an aquiline nose, slightly hollowed cheeks.

“When we were kids,” she said, “you asked me to marry you, here, in this barn.”

I couldn’t remember that.

“You kissed me,” she said. “Don’t you remember that?”

“I remember other places, but not here,” I said.

She placed a stem of hay on my head. I removed it with an irritable gesture. She replaced it, and I let it stay.

“Did you kiss Lori Ann when you took her home from the junior prom last spring?” she went on.

“That’s none of your business.”

“You did, didn’t you?”

“That just isn’t any of your business.”

“Would you kiss me now?” she said.

I stared at her.

She puckered her lips and closed her eyes.

Alarmed, I said, “The rain’s quitting. We better be going.”

She pushed me down and placed a long, lingering kiss on my lips.

To that point I had struggled to maintain an illusion of disinterest. But after that long, lingering kiss, a frantic, furnace-fed flame drove through me and there was no stopping me even though when I tuggeup her dress she pleaded for me not to do it and when the deed was done, she wept. I waited til full dark before I went home, long after she had climbed from the barn and gathered her cows and returned along the lane. Lightening arced madly through a distant cloudburst, a portent and testimony, of the hell I had suddenly entered.

My nighttime terror was of God, who couldn’t overlook a rape, particularly a rape of a first cousin. As weeks passed, I realized God was toying with me, letting me simmer in anxiety, preparing a catastrophic demise for me in the ripeness of his own due time. My daytime terror was that Cassia would tell her parents, who would tell my parents, and who knew what would happen then? Maybe they’d turn me over to the law and I’d end up doing a life sentence down at Florence. In the meantime, Cassia avoided me. One day when I saw her in the store, she turned on her heel and disappeared through the door at the rear that said “Employees Only,” even though she wasn’t an employee. She didn’t come down the lane anymore, either.

When fall approached, the two Braunhil homes were set abuzz by the announcement that Cassia would spend the school year with an aunt on her mother’s side in Salt Lake City. The reason given was that her bright mind merited a challenging high school. Weeks after she left, I overheard a mere fragment of conversation between my sisters Carol and Rosa, who were washing dishes at the kitchen sink. A single phrase—“put it up for adoption”—lingered in my mind as I left the house by the kitchen door, heading for a belated duty in the corral, where unmilked cows lowed impatiently. By the time I returned with a pail brimming with foamy milk, I had figured it out. Cassia had been banished to Utah to have a baby.

Years later, I pressed my mother to open up about Cassia. She admitted the real reason that Cassia went to Utah was that the junior prom last spring?” she went on.
that Uncle Hammond, informed by Aunt Sophrina of his daughter's pregnancy, had exiled her forever from his house. When the family gathered for prayer before supper on the day he found out, Hammond forbade Cassia to join. "You no longer belong to this family," he said. The next day she left on the afternoon bus. Aunt Sophrina and Dory took her to meet the bus. My mother went too, and so did Carol and Rosa. I imagine those girls already knew the real reason.

The more I thought about the circumstances under which Cassia left Linroth, the more certain I felt that she wouldn't show up at Uncle Hammond's funeral. I figured that he'd be the next to last man in the whole world—me being the very last—she would want to show some respect for by attending his funeral. In any event, I had got myself as far as Globe, and I wanted to keep on going. So I did, calming my nerves by working out a little plan in case a tactical retreat proved necessary. With the exception of Rosa, nobody presently alive in Linroth had seen me for fifty years, and if I took a little care not to confront persons near my own age face to face, I could easily remain incognito. I would take a motel in Show Low for the night and turn up in Linroth just in time for the funeral and take a seat at the back of the church. If I saw Cassia filing in among the mourners after the closing of the casket, I'd slip away when the funeral adjourned to the cemetery, leaving town as unannounced as I had entered it.

When I got to Show Low, there was still a lot of daylight left and I kept driving, assuring myself that I would just take a quick look around Linroth and then come back to Show Low for the night. My eyes blurred with tears when I rounded the hill south of Linroth. From that perspective, the little town nestling in a horseshoe-shaped valley looked as familiar as if I had left it the day before. Driving on in, I could see a lot of things had changed. There was a Chevrolet dealership, a modern post office building, and, across the street from the church house, a bank branch and a café. The church house itself, constructed of chiseled yellow stone and topped by a steeple, was unchanged. The doors and window frames must have been painted recently because they looked as fresh and well cared for as when I had last seen the building.

Driving down the street, I saw a modern small-town version of a supermarket occupying the spot where a mercantile had once stood. Across the street from the supermarket I saw an old red brick home fronted by a white picket fence. Attached to the fence was an ornate sign declaring "Pioneer Bed & Breakfast." I pulled over and with motor idling sat thinking a while. If I registered with a pseudonym—the name of my Corvallis friend came to mind—that failed hitchhike on Thanksgiving Day I never went there to see her do it. I went back to the bed, took off my shoes, and lay down, somehow feeling truncated, cut in half, dismembered.

I graduated from high school in Phoenix because after Cassia left for Utah I acted out the complete outlaw at Linroth Union High. I sauntered down corridors slamming locker doors shut, popped bra straps on unwary girls, and knocked a boy over a bench in the shower room after PE, in consequence of which my parents and I met with the principal one morning.

"I just hope you can influence your son to behave," the principal said. "The next step is the state industrial school at Fort Grant. If we expel him, that's where they'll put him."

"What's got into you?" my mother said. "You come home late. You don't do your chores. You sass your dad. This isn't like you at all!"

Fortunately, my father had a plan. "Rulon says he can't take it here anymore. Boys get that way. So I phoned Uncle Trevor," he said. "That's my brother who lives in Phoenix," he explained to the principal. "He says let Rulon come live with him and Sybil."

Dad looked at me. "Do you want to do that, son? Do you think you could settle down and start getting decent grades again?" I said I would try, and I did, having made up my mind that I really had gone kind of crazy, and Cassia notwithstanding, I had a life to live and needed to get on with it.

My dad was a good man. He wasn't anywhere near as hidebound and punctilious as Uncle Hammond. Neither was Uncle Trevor, for that matter. He was laid back, too.

I went home to Linroth for brief visits, but as I said, after that failed hitchhike on Thanksgiving Day I never went back. I knew Linroth was like a malaria zone for me. It was
as if I had been run through some kind of a magnetizing machine and there was a protective shield around the town that automatically deflected me.

My parents came to my graduation from Camelback High School, and when I told them I wanted to join the Navy, they agreed to sign for me. The Korean War was going full tilt, and like a lot of the other fellows at Camelback, I could see serving in the Navy was ten times smarter than getting drafted into the infantry. I did my basic training at the Great Lakes training station on the shores of Lake Michigan, then was assigned to a logistics unit at the Alameda Naval Air Station across the bay from San Francisco. Although handing out underwear and socks to new arrivals wasn’t my idea of excitement, the bustling activity of the base distracted me, and upon returning to my quarters in the evening I often realized that I had gone for hours without thinking of my private hell. But with evening the fandots returned, and I spent long, wakeful nights until I got some sleeping pills from the base medical center and began to knock myself out every night by taking a couple.

After nearly a year at the base, I started to take evening courses in electronic engineering at the University of California at Berkeley. During the first semester, I met and began to date a young woman from Mexico, Emilia, who was finishing a master’s degree in philosophy. An atheist, she had a long list of proofs for the absence from the universe of a divine personality, and she was eager to convert me. As things stood, I was eager to be converted. I did some superficial reading in Hume, Nietzsche, Russell, and Sartre, declared myself free from Christianity, and threw away my reading in Hume, Nietzsche, Russell, and Sartre, declared myself free from Christianity, and threw away my

I \textit{DOZED OFF} for a while on the bed in the bed-and-breakfast place and woke up wondering how I was going to spend the evening. I went downstairs and asked the Burleson girl whether there was still a movie theater in town.

"Yes, but it just runs on Saturday night."
"What do people do for entertainment during the rest of the week?"
"Friday nights there's usually a dance somewhere—here or in Saller's Cove or up at Show Low. Monday night is family night for the Mormons. Everybody stays home. Other nights, a lot of people play softball. There'll be a game tonight with a team from Holbrook."

"What about that café up the street?" I said. "Do local people seem to like it?"
"A lot of them seem to. We could have fixed you dinner if I had let my dad know early enough that you wanted it."
"That's all right. I'll check out the café."

I drove to the café and went in. I took a seat in a booth, and a girl in a lacy apron came from behind a counter and handed me a menu. "We only offer the full menu on Friday and Saturday night, she said. "Tonight, the entrée is chicken fried steak."
"No lasagna?" I said. "Too bad."
"You could have a hamburger or a sandwich."
"I'll have the chicken fried steak," I said, handing back the menu.
"Chicken fried," she called to the fry cook.

She stood fingering the menu, apparently in no hurry to
leave. I looked her over. I wouldn't have called her pretty, yet I was attracted by her dark, curly hair and reassuring smile, which caused me to consider my own less-than-attractive person—a thin fellow, somewhere between tall and short, somewhat stooped, and possessed of a lined, emaciated face and white, close-cropped hair.

"I was wondering . . . ," she started to say, then suddenly blurted, "Are you my uncle Rulon?"

I was totally astonished.

"My friend Cindy Burleson phoned me a few minutes ago. I hope you won’t be mad at her for telling me you were in town."

"No, I won’t be angry."

"You phoned Grandma at noon, didn't you?" she went on. I nodded.

"I'm the one you talked to. I'm Ashley. I'm Lee Ann's daughter. We live next door to Grandma. Mom asked me to run over and borrow a lemon juicer. But Grandma wasn’t there, and I couldn't find it."

A couple of boys of high school age came in and sat at the counter. Ashley served them Cokes and stood behind the counter talking to them. After a while she brought my order. "You wanted to know about Cousin Cassia," she said.

"When Mom brought me to work a while ago, she told me Cassia is arriving by Amtrak and Grandma will pick her up in Winslow early tomorrow morning."

"I'm glad to know that," I said—truthfully enough though I realized Ashley would assume my reason to be quite different than it was.

At this point, a man entered the restaurant and looked around uncertainly. His face was broad and pasty, and a shock of graying hair hung almost to his eyes. His long-sleeved shirt was buttoned at the throat. He shuffled to my booth and slid in opposite to me.

"My name is Clemon Haines," he said, offering me a limp handshake. Ashley in a low voice. "Do you worry about a fellow like that?"

"I leaned confidentially toward me. "The church pays for the funeral. The dark wood of the pews glistened, and the scent of furniture wax pervaded the atmosphere. The pasty-faced Haines fellow was on my mind. Men who violate women ought to be castrated. That goes for a man who has his way with his first cousin in a barn. That's how I felt. That's how I had been feeling off and on for five decades. Also, sitting in the church, I could see the disadvantages of being a total disbeliever. If I believed in God, I could ask for forgiveness and maybe I could get a feeling of relief."

"All right."

"Promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

It was getting toward twilight when I went outside. I saw lights in the church and heard an organ, so I crossed the street and went in, taking a seat in the backmost pew. The church was empty except for me and a woman at the organ, who smiled at me and went on playing. Likely she was practicing for the funeral. The dark wood of the pews glistened, and the scent of furniture wax pervaded the atmosphere. The pasty-faced Haines fellow was on my mind. Men who violate women ought to be castrated. That goes for a man who has his way with his first cousin in a barn. That's how I felt. That's how I had been feeling off and on for five decades. Also, sitting in the church, I could see the disadvantages of being a total disbeliever. If I believed in God, I could ask for forgiveness and maybe I could get a feeling that said, "Okay, you've done penance enough. Go your way and sin no more."

However, I knew I had to get my mind off irremediable matters in a hurry. I needed to concentrate on how to leave town without Rosa and Cassia finding out I had been there. Figuratively speaking, I was kicking my own butt over and over for giving the Burleson girl my true name. The key now, of course, was Ashley, who sooner or later would tell her grandmother and Cassia that I had been in town. I had to come up with a reason for her not to tell them—a reason that could at best be only half accurate—and I had to somehow convey it to her before her mother came for her at ten-thirty.

When I went back, the café was empty except for Ashley and the fry cook. Ashley looked surprised when I walked in, of course. "I'd like a cola," I said and went to the back booth.
When she brought the drink, I said, “I need to talk to you for a minute.”

“About what?” she asked, throwing a quick glance toward the pass-through window into the kitchen.

“I’ve changed my mind about going to the funeral. I want to leave town first thing in the morning. I don’t want Rosa and Cassia to know I’ve been here. I wish I hadn’t come in the first place. I need you to promise not to tell them I’ve been here. Just that.”

Shifting uneasily, she glanced again toward the pass-through window. Time passed. Obviously I had put her between a rock and a hard place.

“There’s a reason I have stayed away from Linroth for fifty years,” I added.

“And it involves Grandma?”

“No. Cassia.”

I was in a pure panic, speechless, maybe shaking a bit and certainly wondering how it was that a pleasant, innocent-looking teenager of whose existence I had had no inkling until a few hours earlier should turn out to be the one soul to whom I had confided even so much as a remote hint of my reason for not returning to Linroth.

“All right,” she said at last. “I promise. I won’t say a word.”

A short, burly man came into the café and took a seat at the counter. Ashley left me and took his order. Then a chattering couple came in and took a seat in a booth, and she took their order.

I got up and walked to the door. As I stepped onto the sidewalk, I saw Ashley had followed me. “Couldn’t you settle things with Cassia?” she asked.

“I don’t think so,” I said. “I ruined her life.”

She looked at me for a long time, then shrugged and went inside.

I WOKE UP around three a.m. from a nightmare about a swarm of frenzied ants running over my feet and up my legs. I turned on the light and got out of bed and sat in a chair. I felt hollow and heart sick, the way I felt when I first understood that first cousins can marry in Europe and nearly half of the states in the Union. Unanswerable questions came back to me. Did our parents know but choose to whom I had confided even so much as a remote hint of my reason for not returning to Linroth.

That’s why I couldn’t imagine Cassia would want to see me under any circumstance. The least I could do was honor her wish and leave town at dawn as I had originally planned.

I went down to the lobby at daybreak and looked up Seattle-bound flights from Phoenix on the house computer. I decided on a late afternoon departure and secured an online reservation. After a breakfast of sausage gravy and biscuits, I loaded my travel bag into my car and, by way of a final goodbye to Linroth, drove along the back streets. Driving by the cemetery, I saw a man loading a backhoe onto a trailer. I stopped, got out, and—back to playing incognito—said, “There must be a funeral coming up.”

“Yeah. Just dug a grave for a feller named Hammond Braunhil. Old as Methuselah. Damn well time for him to go.” The backhoe operator had red, scaly cheeks. He looked like a man who didn’t worry about washing his face and combing his hair when he got out of bed in the morning.

He scrutinized me closely. “You from around here?”

“I’m just passing through. I’ve lived in Seattle most of my life. I don’t know much about little towns. I get curious sometimes to see what they look like from the back side.” I was surprised how slithery and loathsome I felt, though technically nothing I said was a lie.

The backhoe man, who had been digging close to the cemetery gate, got into his truck and left. I decided to take a look at the grave—that serving as a kind of vicarious attendance at the funeral I had chosen to miss. Both the open grave and the excavated soil were covered by a tarp—nothing to see there. Looking around, I realized I was in Braunhil territory. My Braunhil grandparents were here, as were my own parents and the seven-month stillborn girl.
they insisted on naming. Suddenly, I was beset by the sense of an unfulfilled duty. It seemed a pity a man should pay his respects to the mortal dust of his parents for the first time at my age.

I could vaguely recall the interment of my stillborn sister. But I attended the funeral of neither of my parents. I was spared the guilt of intentionally missing my father's funeral because Boeing had sent me to Mulhouse, France, and without informing anyone, I went to Haute Savoie in the Alps for a weekend of skiing, where I was put even more out-of-touch by a four-day blizzard.

When my mother died, Rosa let me know by telephone. “I hope you'll come for the funeral,” she said.

I was silent.

“It's time,” she said. “I don't know what it is with you, but it's time to get over it. Come home, Rulon.” But I couldn't. Like a felon, I was reluctant to revisit the scene of my crime, the ruin of Cassia.

Nor did I mention the funeral to Patricia, whom I was dating at the time. After that, I always spoke to Patricia of my mother's death—and my father's too—as vaguely in the past. My mother had faithfully written at least one letter a week from the moment of my departure. Needless to say, my knowledge of matters in Linroth fell off drastically with her death.

When I left the cemetery, I decided to drive along the street I had grown up on, which I quickly decided was a bad mistake because I went to pieces when I passed by the two Braunhil houses, mine and Cassia's, and all of a sudden I wanted to see Cassia—unbeknownst to her, of course, because her gaze would have withered me like an earthworm in the summer sun. So I made up my mind to attend the funeral after all, where I could sit at the back of the church, a stranger among strangers, I recognized Ashley, who seemed intent on marshaling her younger cousins into pairs. Finally, at a distance from all the others—as if there had been some hesitation on their part about joining the mourners' throng—came two women, whom—with a catch in my throat—I recognized as Rosa and Cassia. The twenty-five years since Rosa had brought Mother to Seattle for my commissioning as a lieutenant commander in the Navy Reserve had been kinder to her than to me. Of sturdy frame, she had a round face, prominent cheeks, and amber-grey hair swept upward to add to her already imposing height. As for Cassia, her slight, slender body was clad in a black dress with a white collar and cuffs. Her hair, once auburn, was silvered—something like light on rippling water. Her forehead was lined, her cheeks seamed, her mouth composed. As she and Rosa passed from my view, I felt apathetic and let down. What had I expected? Perhaps something transcendent, ethereal, other-worldly.

In any event, fragments from the past tumbled through my mind—kaleidoscopic memories of fights, street games, bonfires, and family gatherings. I recalled a day when Bryant intervened in a fight between me and Badge, saving me from a sure beating. I remembered that Rosa tackled me once during a game of football, and I plowed into the gravel with my elbows and knees. I remembered hiding in Uncle Hammond's granary while Dory and Brenda searched for me during hide-and-seek; I held my breath for fear they would hear me. I loved those kids, all of them; siblings and cousins were one and the same to me. Here they were, most of them, at this funeral, the Braunhil family more or less in its entirety, and I longed to claim a place among them. Sitting at the back of the church, a stranger among strangers, I recognized afresh what a fragile and pitiable creature a human being is without a family. I was lucky, of course, to have married Patricia, but considered objectively, my marriage to her was a grafting onto the trunk of a tree planted by her dead husband, whose last name Patricia kept because Koreen and Alisha wanted her to.

I knew it was time for me to leave, but I could no longer muster any sense of urgency. I hadn't seen enough of my kin. I knew I'd stay as long as there was a reasonable chance of concealing my presence in the crowd.

The funeral began with a hymn, which—though I hadn't so much as thought of it in fifty years—returned to me word for word. A son-in-law of Hammond's, Jasper Cleveland, gave a lengthy invocation, extolling Hammond as a man mighty in the service of the Lord. A daughter, Brenda, read his life story. As a young man, he had served as a missionary in New England. Upon his return, he attended Arizona State University, where he met and married Sophrina. They settled in Linroth, and he became one of the foremost farmers in Navajo County, winning all sorts of prizes for cattle and crops at fairs. He had been on the local school board four or five times. He had been counselor to one bishop and two stake presidents, but had never been a
ricocheting off the walls of my mind, I calmly reflected that skirt, and a white blouse, and, despite the frantic thoughts turned in my direction. She wore half-high heels, a black later she was conferring with Ashley, and both girls were looking my way. Jolted by a shot of adrenaline, I realized breakfast place got out. Before entering the gate, she paused parked near the gate and the Burleson girl from the bed-and-
Ann, I supposed.

Standing beside a woman I couldn’t identify—her mother, Lee Jurred by the grave, also my cousins Bryant, Dory, and among strangers. My siblings Badge, Carol, and Rosa lin-

A considerable crowd stood around the grave. Observing their bowed heads, I surmised that the dedicatory prayer was in progress. Following that, the formalities of the service were at an end, and the crowd began to disperse, filing through the cemetery gate and getting into cars and driving away. Several persons entering cars near mine glanced my way. I sat tight, confident in my anonymity, a stranger among strangers. My siblings Badge, Carol, and Rosa lingered by the grave, also my cousins Bryant, Dory, and Brenda—to say nothing of Cassia and the girl Ashley, who stood beside a woman I couldn’t identify—her mother, Lee Ann, I supposed.

A vague apprehension grew over me when another car parked near the gate and the Burleson girl from the bed-and-breakfast place got out. Before entering the gate, she paused and looked my way. Jolted by a shot of adrenaline, I realized I had missed my chance to escape. Sure enough, an instant later she was conferring with Ashley, and both girls were looking my way. Ashley left the gravesite, came through the gate, and turned in my direction. She wore half-high heels, a black skirt, and a white blouse, and, despite the frantic thoughts ricocheting off the walls of my mind, I calmly reflected that a girl doesn’t have to be pretty to be attractive if she was as decent and good natured. She doesn’t seem like somebody who would hold a grudge for fifty years.

“Are you aware that at the age of sixteen Cassia was ex-
iled to Utah to have a baby?” I asked in exasperation. “Do you realize that this is her first day in Linroth in fifty years? Do you realize that I am the cause of her exile?”

“No, I didn’t know that,” she said.

“Cassia doesn’t want to see me,” I repeated. “It would embarrass her profoundly. It would make her angry.”

“I could at least ask her if she would like to see you.”

“Don’t even think about that!”

I hadn’t budged her an inch. She looked steadily into my eyes. I began to feel disconcerted and finally looked away. She continued to stand there, her hands on the car door. It dawned on me that she was going to win by default. Just by standing there, just by not giving me permission to leave, she was making my worst nightmare come true. Pretty soon someone else—her mother, for example, or maybe Rosa—would join her. With that thought, I pushed open the door and got out. I felt like a prisoner ready for his execution.

“Let’s go,” I muttered.

She turned and led me through the gate. The group around the grave watched us closely.

“It’s Rulon!” Rosa cried, but it was Cassia who came forward. I glanced at her face. Her brow was even more furrowed, her cheeks more seamed, than I had realized from my brief glimpse of her at the church house. Her unadorned, half-pinched lips were ambiguous, perhaps angry, perhaps grieved. The ambiguity depressed me. I lowered my eyes. The hem of her dress came slightly above her knees and her feet were clad in black flats trimmed with golden buckles. There was something measured, something poised, in her step. I felt a flicker of hope. As she neared, she held out her arms, and with a flood of relief I reached for her hands. I fixed my eyes on the base of her throat. Her skin was freckled as if she had been in the sun a good deal. Truly, her silvered hair caught sunlight like rippling water, and her eyes—when at last I dared look into them—brimmed with luminescent tears.

“Forgive me,” I choked.

“I forgave you long ago.”

“How could you?”

“Well, I picked her out of the crowd and planted her in the stem of my heart. Graham used to think that he was Buddhist, now he is Christian. My wife is a Born Again Christian. She watches Joel Osteen. He looks a little like me. Some people, God forbid, say that I look like Woody Allen. I am not that ugly. I am an atheist.

What has happened to religion? I feel bad about its confusion. I am tempted to study the Torah in defense of the death of Judaism. If the skeletons in the concentration camps saw me now? They would put on flesh and ask if it was worthwhile after all to have died for Moses? I am tempted to tell communism and fascism that religion will stand up against their wholesale killings. I will become religious. I will convert to real faith. I will be your rabbi if you will teach me to believe in stardust in a landscape without Jewish stars.

DAVID LAWRENCE
YOUR OLD WOMEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS

By Sara Burlingame

INTRODUCTION

FOLLOWING IS A VERSION OF A PRESENTATION I gave at the 2010 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium. Before I started, I called two women—Kynthia and Beth—to the podium and handed each a goblet filled with small squares of chocolate. Then I enjoined them to pass this “sacrament.”

As they made their way down the aisles, presenting the goblet to each audience member, I intoned: “As the cup is passed, please take a piece of chocolate, but don’t eat it yet.”

When everyone held a piece of chocolate, I continued, Now that we have received this sacrament, I would like you all to lick or nibble a portion—not the entirety—of your chocolate. Brothers and Sisters, this chocolate is your intellectual integrity. Someday you are going to meet someone of another faith whom you will love very much. When that day comes, you’ll want to have a whole and unbesmirched chocolate to offer them. We can refrain from “tainting” our chocolate by refusing to slander people who believe differently than we do.

I hope this has been a meaningful and deeply impressive lesson for you all even though it has almost nothing to do with the talk I’ve prepared. I am counting on the old adage, “There’s nothing that Latter-day Saints love more than an object lesson—relevant or not.”

That “opening exercise” seemed a cheeky way for me, a non-Mormon, to show that my understanding of Mormon culture went beyond denim skirts and green Jell-O. But how then do I explain the sadness that washed over me when I saw Kynthia and Beth cradling their goblets, solemnly moving down the aisles with their offering? I wondered how long those two had been waiting for someone to call their names; to ask them to come to the front of a congregation; to entrust the objects of ritual into their hands.

With that sadness came a clear vision—one I am grateful to own, even if doing so means I have to give up my atheist card. As those two women stood across from each other in the Sheraton Hotel conference room, reflected endlessly in the echoing mirrors, I also saw a host of faithful, stagnant women waiting patiently behind them, fanning out across time. I wanted to call to those women, bound in the wings, to take their rightful place—or at the very least, I wanted to proclaim, “This sacrament is real, too. We are still a people gathered, and you have served us. That must be holy.”

But what those women really wanted—to stand in front of their people and be recognized as beloved daughters of God, equal to their brothers, was clearly not in my power to give them. And that was heartbreaking. Ritual is important. I was foolish to forget that the act of ritual contains its own rules and that no person can control the results.

A year later, I still don’t know how I feel about that vision. I am content to have witnessed and learned something from it, even if that something was only a deeper understanding of the particular pain that exclusion carries.

THE SPEECH

I WANT TO talk about faith and personal narrative today, and a good way to start is to tell my own story. I was raised Baha’i by my parents, but as a teenager, I experimented with Christianity, Buddhism, New Age–ism and—perhaps most memorably for those around me—a very vocal Goddess worship. By age 16, I’d found what felt like my true calling and remained a staunch adherent to
atheism until I read an article in Bust magazine exploring
the curious phenomena of Mormon feminism. I became a
regular reader of the blog it cited and even began meeting
the women who wrote for it. My curiosity about this pecu-
liar people grew until I agreed to take the missionary dis-
cussions. Those naturally led to my conversion, a testi-
momy of the Book of Mormon, my baptism surrounded by
my once skeptical family who, inspired by my pow-
erful example, soon chose baptism themselves.

Not really. The stuff after the missionary discus-
sions is imaginary. But I do recognize the resonance of
the story. When I relate my actual story, I can hear
the devout silently sketching in the right
ending—the only ending
that seems to make sense
of my participation in their
religion. Sometimes that
narrative is so powerful I
feel the pull of it myself.

MY ACTUAL
STORY is that I
am an atheist
and feminist who came to
Mormonism because of my
feminism—not in spite of
it. I really did read an ar-
ticle in Bust about Lisa
Butterworth and her blog,
Feminist Mormon House-
wives. And, being an en-
lighted do-gooder, I de-
cided to help those
Mormon women out. So I
barreled onto the blog, no
less ridiculous than the
Margaret Sanger Society
representative in Cheaper
by the Dozen who shows up
at the Gilbreth household:
“Here I am, ladies! Hold
onto your hats, I’m going to
teach you about Real
Feminism!” I spared myself some humiliation only because I
followed my mother’s sage advice, “Wait to make an ass of
yourself until after you know these people better.” The re-
result? I was not the atheist who brought enlightenment to
those sad, oppressed Mormon women.

But I was still an atheist. I still find the concept of patri-
archy offensive. My skin crawls when I hear of the bureau-
cracy behind sealings and the folklore of a middle manage-
ment style in the hereafter. But there is also the power of
women blessing their own children—an innate connection
to the divine trumping a lifetime of social conditioning.
There is the LDS pioneer experience that resonates with
many sagas of exile and redemption. Where in the atheist
story can I voice my attraction to the particular grace I have
found only in fleeting mo-
mements of community?
Where is the room for
mystery? How good it feels
to share my real and
metaphorical scars with
another woman whose life
is both nothing like my
own but also a mirror of
the suffering and redemp-
tion that I have felt.

I have found myself
outside of the atheist-
turned-convert story pop-
ularized by Lee Strobel,
C.S. Lewis, and every issue
of Ensign I’ve picked up. I
likewise feel very little
connection to the Ed
Deckers of the world—the
Dawkinses and Hitchenses
with their dismissive
snideness toward faith.

Thus, I was left to
cobble together my own
story: the story of an
atheist trying to fit in with
the Mormons. How does
that work? The answer came as I
was listening to National
Public Radio—the secular
version of general confer-
ence.

I had recently been
elected to the Democratic
National Convention as an
Obama delegate for
Wyoming, and I was strug-
gling to decide whether to
publicly identify as a
queer. I was in a hetero-
sexual marriage, so the question of being queer had never
really come up. But the DNC form wanted to know.

How much diversity would they claim, I wondered? If I
did out myself, I would face an awkward reception at best
and open hostility at worst. But would it kill me to get a little
gay schwag, rub elbows with Gavin Newsom, and receive
that bittersweet applause—the affection people give when
they know someone is queer and from Wyoming—the home of that sweet-faced boy whose crucified body was found propped against some of that ubiquitous Wyoming barbed wire?

I finally decided to openly identify as a queer delegate and immediately had to begin fielding questions from fellow delegates, reporters, and friends. I spoke as honestly as I could. Yes, I was married to a man; yes, I’d had previous relationships with women; no, I didn’t plan to leave my husband now that I had identified as a queer delegate. But I was still conflicted about what that title meant and the extent to which I could claim it if I was not living it.

Then on a mild spring day, I was parked in my car, baby sleeping in the back seat, my brain half-engaged with an NPR interview with a Palestinian woman who had written a book about her childhood. Soon the tone of her voice—her rich, deep tenor and thick rolling r’s—began to make an impression on me. And of all things, I found myself thinking, “Huh. That woman’s voice gives me a real testimony of my queerness.”

In that moment, I realized two things: one, I was perfectly at peace with the fluidity of my sexuality. And two, I had used the word “testimony.” Apparently, I had spent so much time around Mormons that I’d incorporated not just their jargon, but the worldview that came with it. I, Sara Burlingame, had unconsciously claimed the Mormon right to ask for and receive revelation. And if that revelation happened to come from NPR—well, alleluia!

More important, I realized that just as my sexuality is fluid, so is my spirituality. I’m an atheist immersed in, and in love with, Mormon people. If I can be a queer/hetero-married/Obama delegate from the great state of Wyoming, why not an atheist who loves Mormons? It was possibly the least bizarre part of my identity. (I’m kidding about that last part. If I sprouted horns, bowed three times a day to Hong Kong, and declared the divinity of Lady Gaga, my secular friends would find that far more palatable than my love for and contact with the Latter-day Saints.)

Being an inhabitant of this fluid spiritual state, I find myself translating stories from the world into Mormonese and vice versa. For instance, I often hear secular feminists ask, “Why don’t Mormon feminists just withhold their membership—rob the Church of their participation, their money, and certainly and perhaps most critically, their children until the Church changes?”

As a narrative, their demand could look like this:

Christ died. The Church he’d formed fell into apostasy. Joseph Smith received a vision and subsequently restored the gospel. But it was incomplete. Due to men’s fallen nature, they’d neglected to fully include women in this restoration. Whispering into the prophet’s ear, Satan had urged him to consider the needs of only half of God’s marvelous creation. The prophet complied. Finally, through prayer and fasting, a band of valiant Mormon women decided to fight the Church, publishing polemics against it, and withdrawing their “favors,” a la Lysistrata, from their priesthood-holding husbands. The prophet finally relented, recognizing the divine nature of the women’s protests. Men and women now jointly hold the priesthood in the LDS faith.

I couldn’t imagine a less Mormon story if I tried. But I’ve felt the presence of another story inching its way into my consciousness, asserting itself so persistently that I have to remind myself that it isn’t real.
Christ died. His church fell into apostasy. Joseph Smith received a vision and restored the gospel. But because the world wasn’t ready to hear of the divine nature of women that mirrored their Heavenly Mother, the Church was incomplete. When the kingdom had been built on earth by a righteous people, Heavenly Mother began to reveal herself to ordinary men and women. Her appearances came to be expected in nightly dreams and even during tedious sacrament meetings.

At first, those brushes with the female divine were subtle: the image of a swollen womb, a motherly caress on your temple when you were alone in the car worrying about where this month’s mortgage payment would come from. But the whisper crescendoed until God’s people could no longer deny that, yes, they had a Heavenly Mother and she was aching to connect with them. The prophet heard so unceasingly from members of the Church who wanted to make sense of these dreams that he began to pray daily, and finally hourly, for direction.

Then the prophet received a revelation that Mother in Heaven had been trapped in a prison of her people’s making. Because she allowed for free agency, she would not be released until those same people grew and ached enough to know her in return. And so it came to pass that men and women jointly hold the priesthood in the LDS faith and pray openly to their Heavenly Parents.

Now that’s a Mormon Story. And it’s a story in which I want to play a minor role. If there is a place for someone like me, who loves your stories and your valiant hearts, I want to claim that role. Messy, dissonant, and hard to explain. Practically Mormon.

I’ll close with a poem I wrote:

**PRAYER TO A GOD IN WHOM I DO NOT BELIEVE**

I didn’t have my own words
So I had to borrow yours
My people never hied to Kolob
We didn’t feel the need
We knew what it was like to be
Hungry
But bread stayed bread
And wine was more than enough
Without becoming blood
I never cared for your confining spaces
Sterile baptism pools
Or your creed that concludes
“meetings without end”
But I need your people, Lord
More than desire them
If this is a battle
Must I acknowledge that you’ve won?
This world may be a testing ground

And the men and women I want
Beside me
Belong to you
I say this in my own name
Amen.
ROUND TABLE

PORNOGRAPHY, MASTURBATION, SEX, AND MARRIAGE IN MORMONISM

with Dr. Stephanie Buehler, Natasha Helfer Parker, and John Dehlin

The following is excerpted from the Mormon Stories podcast (episode 245), “Pornography, Masturbation, Sex and Marriage in Mormonism,” which was first released on 10 March 2011. To hear the full discussion (about twice the length presented here), visit http://mormonstories.org/?p=1506. This excerpt is printed with the permission of all participants.

Natasha Parker: Pornography is becoming a regular subject in general conference addresses, and its use is currently affecting many Mormons and our culture at large. There are many who feel the Church is making pornography such a prominent topic that it is actually causing even more problems. Others express appreciation for the frank discussion and accountability that is taking place within the Church.

Today we’re diverging from the usual Mormon Stories format in that I’m not interviewing a Mormon. I wanted to try to get a different perspective on the topic, so I have asked a prominent psychologist and sex therapist, Dr. Stephanie Buehler, to join us today. She is the director of the Buehler Institute, which has offices in Newport Beach and Riverside, California, and she’s the author of a recent book, Sex, Love, and Mental Illness: A Couple’s Guide to Staying Connected. Dr. Buehler treats people of all different races, cultures, and religions, and is very familiar with problematic behaviors that can be associated with pornography. Hello, Dr. Buehler!

Dr. Stephanie Buehler: Hello, Natasha.

Parker: Thank you so much for joining this discussion today. I have also invited John Dehlin, the founder of Mormon Stories and himself a graduate student in psychology, to join us and help me make sure we cover all the angles on this topic. So, hello, John!

John Dehlin: Hello, guys! Happy to be here! Thanks for joining us, Dr. Buehler.

Parker: I thought the first place we'd start is a definition of the topic at large. As a therapist, one of the things I like to do when I first talk with people about pornography is to make a distinction between pornography and erotica, but I would love to get your sense of that distinction, Dr. Buehler, so that we can know what you're talking about when you refer to pornography.

Buehler: I think pornography is the depiction of sexual acts—whether in photos, or print, or video—designed to titillate people. Its purpose is to get people sexually aroused. Erotica does the same thing, but I think most people would think of erotica as being something that piques your interest and is maybe not so frank, so “in your face.” It is more sensual and, I think, invites the viewer to think about their own sensuality whereas pornography is really more of an exchange between exhibitionists and voyeurs—people who simply like to watch other people engage in sex acts. I think people will have different definitions of what's erotic, and some people are going to want to stretch the boundaries a little bit, but I think if you were to look at a painting of a nude couple in an embrace, you'd call that erotic, whereas if you had movies of the same couple having sex for the sake of having sex, you might call that pornographic.

Parker: It seems to me that in the more traditional strains of Mormonism, we tend to define a lot of things as pornography that I wouldn't necessarily define that way, so I think what you've shared here is an important start.

Dehlin: I’m wondering if we’re exploring this distinction because sometimes people say they need or enjoy having something to “get them going” sexually. Perhaps we’re trying to ask whether it’s okay for married couples, or for single people, or whomever, to have some light form of sexual arousal through erotica that can help them achieve whatever their sexual goals are. And if we allow for that, maybe it’s important to then have a more clearly drawn line between that and something that is socially taboo or forbidden.

Parker: Using erotica as part of your sexual repertoire is definitely an issue worth exploring. I often get someone coming in and saying things like, “I’m addicted to pornography,” or a wife who is angry that her husband is looking at pornography, but when I dig deeper the pornography they are referring to is something like looking through a Victoria’s Secret catalog or watching Dancing with the Stars or some other thing that can be erotic and sensual and maybe even inappropriate for some people but something I would never label “pornography.” So I think that's why I want our audience to really understand what exactly it is we're talking about.

Dehlin: I think that within the Mormon context, and probably just in most human experience, looking at pornography most often starts with somebody getting exposed to some pictures or some movies when they are in their adolescent years. In other words, their first sexual experiences are not in the context of having a partner at all, so there is probably a strong drive to engage in some type of self-stimulation. Let's start with the adolescent experience and then move into marital relations, because many LDS leaders see this as an epidemic—that our teens are looking at porn too much and masturbatory too much, and, as a result, there's a lot of shame, a lot of charged language around this subject.

Buehler: In the “old days,” exposure to pornography was pretty minimal. You had a “girlie” magazine, and it was probably very well worn. But these days, it’s not just looking at a couple of pictures, you're usually on the Internet where there's just so much material—an endless supply. And I think that part of the problem is this endless supply.

In adolescence, there is a natural curiosity about the human body and about sex. From my non-Mormon perspective, a teen's interest in sexuality is quite healthy; the desire to see the human body in all its
glory doesn’t concern me. It’s when the adolescent’s social skills start to decline, when they get involved in a sordid world that has become their central world—that’s when things become problematic.

PARKER: Can you speak to the separation between masturbation and pornography use? My understanding is that there are many adolescents and adults who masturbate without pornography being any part of it.

BUEHLER: That is very true. You can use your own fantasy material, or sometimes people just get into a sensual experience or begin exploring their body; so, you don’t need pornography to get aroused. There are certainly other ways. Human beings are very creative.

DEHLIN: Let’s hit that topic head on. When I was growing up, I was taught that masturbation is a really bad sin. There is a famous talk that was given by an LDS Church leader twenty or so years ago that basically had the philosophy that the body is like a factory that produces semen or hormones, and what you don’t want to do as a teenager is get the factory revved up, because once you do you’re always looking for opportunities to masturbate, which can then lead to sexual behavior with a partner or maybe even lead to perversions. That was, I think, the mind set at the time. As a result, masturbation had a lot of shame and fear connected with it.

From your point of view, is masturbation something we should fear? Does it lead to promiscuity, or homosexuality, as that sermon taught?

BUEHLER: I would say it doesn’t necessarily lead to any of those. Understanding your own body and finding out that your body can give you pleasure is fine. And, actually, there are some health benefits to masturbation. For men it helps with prostate health; for women it helps balance the hormones. And, of course, it oxygenates the body and the brain. If you have a healthy attitude about it, it can make you feel relaxed and vital.

But when you bring shame into the process, you can cause some unhealthy cycles. If you masturbate and are then filled with shame, and then masturbate again to relieve those anxious, negative feelings, only to bring on more guilt and shame, that’s not good. It is at that point that you risk getting into some problematic behaviors.

As for masturbation becoming a compulsive behavior: in the field of sex therapy, we would say that if it interferes with your day-to-day functioning, if it interferes with your relationships or hinders your ability to get to your job, or if it is something that you are actually doing on the job, or if because of masturbation you’re not pursuing friendships, then you have a problem. But if it’s not interfering with anything, well, maybe it’s not so much of a problem.

DEHLIN: What about the idea that masturbation leads to promiscuity? The argument from some within conservative religious traditions would be that masturbation gets people too sexualized at too young an age, leading them to want to have sex outside of marriage.

BUEHLER: I don’t think that masturbation does that; I mean if masturbation led to promiscuity, everybody would be promiscuous!

(Laughter from all)

PARKER: I’ve heard it called the safest sex ever developed. No STDs involved. No unwanted pregnancy:

BUEHLER: Those are really good points. I tend to think that masturbation can actually help prevent people from making bad decisions. If you know that you can bring yourself pleasure or that you can comfort yourself in this way, you might choose to not seek sexual relationships outside of marriage, or relationships that aren’t healthy for you in other ways.

DEHLIN: So masturbation could possibly keep you from moral transgressions, you’re saying . . .

BUEHLER: Yes. That’s what I think.

DEHLIN: What about the idea of masturbation as a sexual release? Is there any psychological or physiological data that suggests that people have kind of a sexual clock that needs a release?

BUEHLER: At the mid-point of their menstrual cycle, when they’re ovulating, women experience surges in hormone levels that often cause them to feel “randy” or “horny,” and if there’s no partner available, then they might feel the need to have a sexual release. Men don’t have the same kind of definitive clock, but they have build-ups of semen and hormones, and they can also feel a need for release. So we do seem to have a physiological need. Suppressed or repressing that need can cause psychological problems, disconnecting people from their
DEHLIN: So are you making the argument very sad.

PARKER: In LDS culture, people tend to get with their enjoyment of sex. It is really that bad? or, “Are there good things about porn?” My feeling is that in many of these cases the bloggers are starting to use pornography and want to believe that they can do so healthily. What evidence do you know of on either side of that equation? Does pornography negatively impact our psychology or our arousal templates? Are there positive aspects? And now I’m talking specifically about pornography and not erotica.

PARKER: Sometimes on Mormon blogs, I’ll come across headlines like: “Pornography: Is it really that bad?” or, “Are there good things about porn?” My feeling is that in many of these cases the bloggers are starting to use pornography and want to believe that they can do so healthily. What evidence do you know of on either side of that equation? Does pornography negatively impact our psychology or our arousal templates? Are there positive aspects? And now I’m talking specifically about pornography and not erotica.

PARKER: Well, “everyone has done it” is more accurate. My experience as a sex therapist working with hundreds and hundreds of couples is that there are plenty of people who really aren’t interested in pornography, who don’t need it, and who don’t see why someone would look at it.

PARKER: To me, “doing it” connotes a more regular practice versus “Well, I was exposed to it once or twice.”

DEHLIN: I’m interested in whether all pornography is alike in terms of its poten-
DEHLIN: Earlier you argued that masturbation is very problematic. When looking at pornography—and that's just the light stuff—there are things that can be quite shocking or distasteful to somebody who stumbles upon it.

PARKER: And even more upsetting if they are finding themselves aroused by it at the time but then later feel ashamed about their reaction.

BUEHLER: Right. There is some evidence that men who are involved in downloading or looking at child pornography might never have looked at it in the first place if there hadn't been such easy access. So there is definitely a dark side to Internet pornography.

Some men who look at pornography end up with quite a bit of sexual dysfunction when they try to have partnered sex. They encounter erectile dysfunction or delayed ejaculation. Partnered sex just doesn't have the same “charge” as what he's used to when looking at pornography—and that's very problematic.

DEHLIN: Earlier you argued that masturbation in moderate amounts can actually be healthy. If we take violent, heinous pornography off the table, are you saying: Hey, it's okay if a man or a woman wants to look at pornography every once in a while as long as it doesn't interfere with their job or their marriage or whatever?

BUEHLER: I think each person must decide for him- or herself whether pornography is something they are comfortable with—which it is something that improves their lives.

DEHLIN: That kind of statement might sound like moral relativism to a religious person—“Anyone can do anything they want.” If I put on my orthodox-believer hat, I wouldn't want my psychologist to say, “Do whatever works for you.” I would want him or her to tell me what is healthiest. So, if you were to give me a guideline for what provides the greatest health benefits for the greatest amount of people the greatest amount of time, what would you advise?

BUEHLER: In my practice, I never recommend looking at pornography. It really isn't up to me to make that decision. I understand what you're saying about moral relativism, but to me, it really is a matter of examining your own values.

If somebody asks me about pornography, I will ask questions like, “What do you believe? What does your church tell you? What do you think is healthy? What's a healthy amount for you?” Those are all issues that can be explored. If an activity leaves someone filled with guilt or shame after they do it, then I don't think that's a healthy activity for them.

DEHLIN: But we just got through saying that some people's interpretation of their church's teachings can actually increase chronic, unhealthy masturbation and porn use. Yet you seem to be willing to turn people back to the wolves, so to speak—to say, “What are your values?” Knowing that so many people equate their values with their church's teachings.

BUEHLER: Well, I do try to help my clients examine their church's messages about masturbation and pornography since those are often such a big part of their identities. But I'm pretty sure people know that a therapy room is different from a pastor's office. A therapy room is a place for free exploration; it's up to them to determine what feels right. I'm simply a guide.

PARKER: Whereas if you go to a Christian counselor or an LDS therapist working for an agency associated with its religion, the therapist is probably more likely to lay out ground rules that go along with the values of the religion, versus a therapist who is going to be more experiential, asking what the client is bringing to the table.

BUEHLER: In my practice, I see people from all religions—including Mormonism—as well as atheists and agnostics. I get the whole spectrum. Since there are so many different ideas and values concerning pornography, I really feel that people have to be square with their ideas and beliefs about it. If they can't figure that out in my office, I may suggest they go back to the church and have a discussion on these issues with somebody they trust.

DEHLIN: As we move on to a discussion of partnered sex, I can imagine some people encountering this conversation who will say, “How could there ever be a healthy scenario for porn use when you have a spouse in bed next to you?”

BUEHLER: Well, I think some couples would say, “Variety is the spice of life.” Others might say that watching other people in sexual encounters keeps them from having extra-marital, in-person sexual experiences. Some couples watch it to get ideas about sexual practices. It can also trigger sexual arousal and interest. And some people simply consider it to be a form of entertainment.

PARKER: You're talking about the couples who want to look at porn together?

BUEHLER: Right—when it's a consensual act. If both partners are enjoying it together, it would be similar to enjoying a meal together or enjoying skiing together.

PARKER: I wonder, though, how often it's actually consensual. Sometimes one partner—usually the woman—will say she wants to watch it, but what I hear is, “I'll go along with it because I know this is what my husband likes, and I don't want to be left out.” They are worried; they want to improve their relationship, so they don't say, “Well, this doesn't really do it for me.” I worry that they are putting themselves in a position that will build resentment toward their partner, which will feed into other issues within the marriage.

PARKER: I'd like to talk about whether or not someone can become “addicted” to pornography.

BUEHLER: Whether you can actually be “addicted” to pornography, or be a “sex addict” is something we argue about constantly in professional circles.

One of the problems with applying the “addiction” label in this case is that it's similar to calling food an addiction. We need to eat; we have a drive to eat; and we have a sex drive, whereas we don't have a drive to consume alcohol or drugs. There's nothing intrinsic about those substances that causes us to seek them out. So, I'm not really sure you can become addicted to pornography...
from that standpoint. However, there are some similarities to an addiction. It seems that some viewers of pornography do need increasingly intense material to achieve the same charge. Compulsion can also show up—urges that a person feels he or she must satisfy lest some terrible thing happen to them. So it has some of the characteristics of an addiction, but I don’t know if we can call it a pure addiction.

PARKER: Are there personality traits that you notice when you work with compulsive pornography users?

BUEHLER: I’ll use the word “men” in my reply because I haven’t encountered women with that kind of problematic behavior.

Often the men I work with are emotionally detached from their partner. They may say they love their partner, but their behavior shows they really haven’t made a good attachment. They don’t feel truly bonded to their partner—and pornography is just another wedge. It can become a way for the man to regulate the emotional intimacy in the relationship. And that to me is one of the saddest things about using too much pornography.

PARKER: I’ve counseled couples where the man will say, “Well, I only use it once a week. I don’t know why she’s making such a big deal out of it.” But she is devastated because she doesn’t want this to be a part of her marital life.

BUEHLER: To me that speaks to the man’s emotional detachment. In effect, he is saying to his wife, “So what if my behavior disturbs you? I don’t care.” The not-caring is what allowed the man to get into the pornography and use it to cut his partner out of the picture. The not-caring is the most destructive part of that scenario.

Sometimes men who overuse pornography do so because they are dissatisfied with aspects of their relationship but are poor communicators or conflict avoiders. Pornography is often only a symptom of other emotional deficits like handling intimacy and conflict—being able to communicate with one’s partner.

PARKER: It seems that a lot of women find out that their husband is watching pornography, not because the husband comes and tells her about it but because the husband is “found out” in some way. When this happens, I hear a lot of very intense emotions, almost the same type I encounter when there’s been an extra-marital affair. The spouse feels like the porn use is an infidelity.

BUEHLER: For some people, it can be a form of infidelity. Some people feel that texting or “sexting” is a form of infidelity, and others don’t feel so threatened. I think couples need to have a “sit down on the sofa” talk and lay it out. “This is my definition of infidelity.” Or “If you’re getting sexual gratification—any sexual gratification—outside the marriage bed, I consider that to be a form of infidelity.” It has to be spoken up front; it has to be discussed.

DEHLIN: But there are going to be spouses who feel that way about masturbation. There are probably plenty of Mormon wives who, if they were to find their husband masturbating, would want to take him to the bishop; they would want him to confess; they would want to put him on a repentance plan, because they consider it a gross, egregious violation of their marital vows.

PARKER: I love your provocative language, John! I agree that there is very little wiggle room for masturbation in Mormon culture.

DEHLIN: However, it’s probably common, especially when babies come, for there to be valleys in the number of sexual exchanges going on between husband and wife. Or sometimes people’s libidos wane. Let’s just say bluntly that a man doesn’t “get it” as much as he wants to. Sometimes he’s faced with weeks or even months without regular intimacy with his wife.
BUEHLER: Wait! Why is he unable to tell his wife about his sexual needs? Why can’t the two of them have a “sit on the sofa” conversation about the change in their life, the stressor that’s occurred, and talk about how they are going to continue to have a satisfying intimate relationship?

They should explore all the avenues. Does it have to be sex? Does it all have to be intercourse focused? Maybe he just needs to be cuddled or hugged or have his feet or neck rubbed. Maybe they simply need to be consciously nicer to each other, giving each other treats that don’t require the energy level of sex.

So will a guy go off and take care of himself because he doesn’t want to bother his wife? Yes. Is that okay sometimes? In my mind, yes. But the more important thing is having conversation. We are not taught how to have an adult-to-adult, sit-down chat about sex. We’re raised that sex is something you don’t talk about. It’s too embarrassing. Which doesn’t really make any sense. Talking about sex should carry a lower level of tension than actually having it, but we have so much shame, so much guilt. We’re not given an adult vocabulary for talking about our sexual needs. That is what creates the problem.

PARKER: And I have found that once couples learn to have this type of conversation, they can usually come to good compromises. Maybe it will be that he’s going to masturbate but in her presence or at least with her knowledge and permission. And again, I feel bad that we’re being stereotypical because I know there are women who have a higher sex drive than men, women who also look at pornography, and sometimes the shame there can be even greater because we don’t talk about women looking at porn. But I find that once the couple can acknowledge their shared values and come to some compromises, a lot of this anxiety can dissipate.

DEHLIN: What if a good chunk of the women who aren’t very interested in sex only feel that way because their husbands don’t know how to help them achieve orgasm? Could a couple’s sex life improve if the husband got a little savvier?

BUEHLER: Definitely. It’s kind of interesting to me that women don’t always put those two things together. They see their husband getting a lot of pleasure from sexual activity, but they’re not getting much out of it themselves. If couples are more open to exploring each other’s bodies and understanding each other’s sexuality and being freer with one another, then maybe there wouldn’t be as much need for pornography.

We have a lot of problems with people being suppressed. And it’s not just women who have their sexuality suppressed—it’s men, too. They may have developed the idea that sex is dirty, or not something you do with a “nice” woman. We have a lot of sexual problems in our culture.

DEHLIN: Should a man get rid of the expectation that mere penetration is going to lead to his wife’s sexual satisfaction?

BUEHLER: Absolutely. Absolutely. Most women find that they don’t have orgasm through penetration.

PARKER: Seventy-five percent.

BUEHLER: One study showed that women who have been in a relationship for a long time are more likely to have a vaginal orgasm. A lot of a woman’s response is bound up in how much she trusts her partner and how familiar she is with her own body. Men shouldn’t feel like they have to bring their wife to orgasm through intercourse only. There are many other avenues.

It’s important for the couple to understand female anatomy and the whole art of lovemaking—the nuanced touching and caressing that leads a woman to become aroused. Only when she is highly aroused do you want to try for orgasm. Just knowing that can be helpful.

When sex goes well, it is a wonderful experience. But it becomes perilous when it becomes too goal-oriented. A man can get his ego bent out of joint if he can’t bring his wife to orgasm, and a woman can feel guilty and upset with herself. That’s not a good scenario for the couple at all.

DEHLIN: And then if the woman feels as if she has to “fake” the orgasm so the man doesn’t feel rejected or sad, then that can also drive her to want to avoid sex.

BUEHLER: And if at some point she can’t keep up the charade and tells her husband so, it can be devastating. “Faking it” may seem like a good idea at first, but I think it just leads to very bad feelings.

DEHLIN: Here’s my summary of what our main points seem to have been. It sounds like your advice to teens is to be moderate about masturbation and pornography usage: don’t have shame and guilt, use good judgment. You seem to be arguing that masturbation may even prevent sexual exploration and the spread of venereal diseases.

BUEHLER: I would agree with that. We have natural curiosity about our bodies and about sex, and satisfying that natural curiosity is a healthy thing.

DEHLIN: And when it comes to sex in marriage, your mantra seems to be, “Communicate, communicate, communicate.” Both members of the relationship need to give in order to come to a mutual understanding about their shared sexuality.

BUEHLER: That’s a good summation.

DEHLIN: And then the final thing I’m hearing you say is to make sure that sex is pleasurable for both members of the couple. It’s especially important to help the wife achieve orgasm regularly. The wife may need to explore herself, even through masturbation, so she can become familiar with what brings her pleasure, and then teach her husband how to help with that—and that is likely not going to be through penetration alone, but through oral sex or manual manipulation or whatever. You’re saying that couples can increase their mutual sexual satisfaction, making pornography and masturbation less of an issue.

BUEHLER: I think you summed it up really well. The more you communicate about sex, the more you’ll enjoy it as a couple.

NOTES


Dr. Stephanie Buehler’s book, Sex, Love, and Mental Illness: A Couple’s Guide to Staying Connected is available in bookstores everywhere. Her website is thebuehlerinstitute.com, where visitors can link to a free e-book, Sexual Discoveries: 25 Secrets for Incredible Sex.

Natasha Helfer Parker’s website is: natashaparker.org. She also blogs at: mormontherapist.blogspot.com.
BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

UNUSUAL TALES FROM THE BORDERLANDS

by D. Jeff Burton

In this column, I share some unusual—and sometimes troubling—experiences and observations from four Borderlanders. I've changed the names of the first three. To respond, please send an email to jeff@eburton.com. I will forward your messages and may include some responses in a later column.¹

Jacob: Having been attracted to both men and women since my teens, I am what is sometimes referred to as a bisexual man. After a typical LDS upbringing, I went to BYU, met a wonderful woman, married in the temple, and fathered three children. We were all very active in the Church and, to all appearances, a standard Mormon family.

During all those years, I did not act on my attraction to men. But later, my work required me to travel overseas for extended periods. During these times away from home, I met and became attached to a man. One thing led to another, and we had sex.

I knew my actions were terribly wrong and sought counseling. Somehow my wife suspected that I might have stepped out on her. Although she knew no details—especially not that I had been involved with a man—she asked me about it directly. Bad as they were, I told her the facts. I said I would never commit the act again and was trying to repent for it. I asked for her forgiveness. I so wanted our marriage and family unit to survive; I was willing to do whatever was needed.

Of course, my wife was stunned, hurt, betrayed, and furious. She sought counsel from friends, family, and the bishopric. Some, including one bishop's counselor, strongly urged her to divorce me, and she did. Ward members and neighbors soon knew the "sordid" details, and I was pushed into the Borderlands, where I still live. Everyone seemed to rally around my wife, but I felt little, if any, support from my ward leadership. I was the expendable one, the throw-away.

I hoped that if I fully cooperated in the divorce proceedings, went through the Church's repentance process, and showed my wife that I loved her and our children, she might in time change her mind and be willing to reestablish our eternal family. She stayed in the family home, and I moved out of the stake. Everyone has seemed to ignore my wife that I loved her and our children, she might in time change her mind and be willing to reestablish our eternal family. She stayed in the family home, and I moved out of the stake. Everyone has seemed to ignore my desire to keep my family together and to heal my past sins. This whole episode has not drawn me closer to the Church nor back to Group 1. Indeed, it has made me feel that Church membership is all about money and control, not about helping individuals and family.

What have others experienced along these lines? Any suggestions?

Jeff: Thanks for sharing your story with our readers. Let's see what responses this column generates.

Mary: I have been married for ten happy years to an inactive Mormon from a very active LDS family. I am not an LDS Church member, nor is my family of origin.

I think that the LDS Church provides good structure and programs for children and families and promotes a healthy lifestyle. It also seems to provide teachings on how to be a good Christian during this lifetime, maybe even better teachings than other Christian religions offer. As a whole, I think very highly of the LDS people I've met or known.

We have two children, ages five and...
eight. My husband would love for all of us to join up and be active in the LDS Church together. Unfortunately over the years, I have read things about Church doctrines and teachings that have raised serious issues. I am also bugged by Mormons bearing their testimonies to me. They seem to do it more for their benefit than mine, as if trying to reaffirm their own beliefs instead of imparting any spiritual information to me. These testimony-bearing incidents usually happen when I ask a question about some LDS doctrine or teaching. It's frustrating because I'm only looking for information.

I'm trying to determine if I can take part in the LDS experience for the sake of my husband and children. Can I go to church, participate in family home evenings, get involved in the activities, but not fully accept the doctrine or Church proceedings?

From reading your columns, I note that others have felt the way I do now. The various approaches you suggest others use to deal with these problems address many of my concerns, and reading them gives me hope.

JEFF: I think you can find suitable ways of integrating yourself into your husband's and children's Mormonism. Just do what feels comfortable and allows you to be honest. Go as far as you can with that fuel. Time will likely expand your horizons. An initial approach might be to simply tell members, “I am not a true believer, but I want to participate in church with my husband and children. So I'll use the doctrines and practices that work for me. Is that okay with you?”

As for the doctrines, teachings, and unique LDS practices you are not able to accept yet, you might simply ignore the doctrine and theology and instead concentrate on the human, the now, the good, the opportunities for service, and your family's needs.

MARY (sometime later): Well, we have started attending church with our kids. Depending on the day's topic in the Gospel Principles class, it can be a bit of a challenge for me to sit and listen to doctrine I don't necessarily believe—or in Mormonese, doctrine I don't have a testimony of. I barely made it through the “Final Judgment” lesson last week and am not looking forward to “Exaltation” next week. From what I've read, it outlines each commandment and doctrine a person is required to adhere to.

I have to come to terms with trying to fit into a religion that withholds blessings from those who don't adhere to its doctrines, teachings, and commandments. I would be happier if these religious activities were a source of comfort for me, and a refuge from the world at large. But I realize that won't happen unless I am fully converted.

Our kids are doing okay at church, but they are starting to realize that, as a family, we don't follow all the “rules.”

For now I'll have to remain a fence-sitter, which may get more uncomfortable as time goes on. So I'll work on trying to get comfortable up there. Perhaps a large cushion might help.

JEFF: Any suggestions from our readers on how to pump up Mary’s cushion?

OLIVER: While a teenager in the eastern United States, I converted to the Church. Then I went on a mission, and married an LDS woman. Now, in my early thirties, I'm a relatively new subscriber to SUNSTONE. I recently read your column, “Protecting and Strengthening Your Marriage,” and found it very interesting and useful. Who developed the “Groups in the LDS Orbit” model? How is it supposed to be interpreted?

JEFF: I call that model the “fried egg.” The yolk represents core members; the egg white is a group of “members of record only,” and a fairly thin membrane between the two is where Borderlanders are located. The reasons people find themselves between the core group and the non-participating group vary. Most of us understand that if five hundred Mormons are sitting in a chapel, five hundred different versions of Mormonism will be represented. The differences are often small and unspoken but can sometimes be quite large. Thus, the “fried egg” model doesn't always fit every person's situation. Where would you place yourself in that simplified model?

OLIVER: That is difficult to explain. Maybe a little background will help.

My perception is that Mormon pioneers had a raw “fire in the belly” that brought them close together, despite their diverse set of personalities and backgrounds. They had a sense of mission which I am sure was intensified by the newness of the Church and the persecution it endured. There was a feeling of fellowship and an attitude of working together for a common goal.

I don't feel that kind of fellowship in our ward and stake. On the whole, Church members have done well in our society, creating a kind of cultural security blanket. So fellowship or togetherness seems to be built on socializing instead of on mission. (I may sound cynical but don't necessarily mean to be.) Fellowship seems to be all about the board-game nights, the dances, dinners and parties, the BYU bond, and other socializing behaviors, some of which I openly
criticize (at least with my wife and non-member friends). My church experience hasn’t provided me a strong sense of mission and Christian service.

Many born and raised in the Church may know only that socializing foundation—that “weak fellowship” culture. If so, how will they work their way to a spiritual conversion and find a sense of mission? I’m worried that this kind of conversion happens only rarely among this population.

So, I suppose I do find myself somewhere outside the yolk. As a convert, I’ve retained a religious past which was centered on service and work. My wife and I sometimes skip Church social events to engage in public service efforts. Sometimes ward members in the “yolk” perceive us as being inactive, or at least disconnected from the CTR track.

A better “yolk” (a purer one, in my view) would be one in which this “inward comfort” is changed to a focus on getting out to mingle with, work with, and give Christian service to non-members.

I don’t mean all this as criticism . . . well, maybe I do.

JEFF: Thanks for your story. This is another facet of living in the Borderlands that we haven’t dealt with much in the column. So, readers, please respond.

BRAD [his real name]: I grew up in Idaho, served a mission, and then began a seven-year stint at BYU, finishing a biology degree, then an MPA and a JD. For six of those seven years, I was very happy and felt I fit in just fine. I won intramural championships, took extra classes in several disciplines, dated like crazy, served in elders quorums, led student service organizations, attended devotionals, and worked as a teaching assistant. However, instead of rich and rewarding BYU activities, my final year has been filled with anxiety and loss.

I love to exercise my mind by evaluating issues I care about, such as happiness, personhood, epistemology, equality, governance, decision-making, and bioethics. Last year I became interested in homosexuality, a topic that, because I’m completely heterosexual, had never really been on my radar. I’m a binge learner, and once I started on this topic, I couldn’t stop researching. I became a teaching assistant for a bioethics class where readings and discussion on homosexuality constitute one week of the curriculum. The moral gravity of LDS homosexual issues grabbed me, and I gathered a lot of data. I decided to summarize the subject in a book, and over a three-week period, the book seemed to come through me. In short, I felt inspired. I began to sell the initial book to libraries and bookstores (it sold out at the BYU bookstore). Now I am seeking a publisher.

Distributing my book had its costs. Soon after I completed the first draft, my main-stream LDS girlfriend decided we needed to separate. The MPA program declined to nominate me for the presidential management fellow program, a nomination I had been counting on and working toward for years. My parents were upset; my bishop called me into his office several times; BYU’s Law School wanted to “warn” me. Nevertheless, I persisted. And every day I feared BYU would block me from graduating.

I attended the Sunstone Symposium last summer and have subsequently read extensively in the Mormon blogosphere. I feel there is an undercurrent of people who could help the Church transition to a more democratic, less hierarchical, less fundamentalist culture. There is far too much richness inside and outside the Church to justify the kind of limited worldview I spent about a quarter century immersed in. I’m hoping that this undercurrent will grow with the rise of my generation and its successor.

JEFF: What a story. Thanks for being open and sharing your thoughts. You are one of the few Borderlanders who have been able or willing to “come out” in the column with your real identity. Readers: Any thoughts for Brad?

NOTES

1. All past columns are available for download at www.forthosewhowonder.com. This is column 41.
2. At the August Sunstone Symposium at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, Brad Carmack chaired session UT11315, concerning issues related to gays and gay marriage. He also presented a paper “Why Mormonism Can Abide Gay Marriage.” UT11342. At the same symposium, I chaired session UT11122 about Borderland experiences.

Please send me your experiences from life in the Borderlands.

D. Jeff Burton
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PAINTING

My daughter says the best gift for Christmas was painting four daughters’ nails—not figures frescoed on massive walls or pastoral scenes sketched on canvas but eighty ovals brushed brilliant, cotton balls scrunched between toes—and, oh, the talk while waiting. After mom’s funeral, nothing more we can do, our eyes heavy and weary, my daughters and I stretch out on a bed while I paint their nails. During these elongated moments I forget where I am and why.

I think I see portraits in miniature, women who came before and those yet to be, cameos in relief, seraphim and cherubim hovering near small moons, icon faces of saints, each oval a token, a passage.

ANITA TANNER
THE FAMILY FORUM

DISCIPLINE

by Michael Farnworth, Ed.D.

Before we were sent to earth, were we warned never to do violence, but that we would inevitably be victims of it and very likely from the hands of our own family? Historically and statistically, our spiritual, emotional, and physical safety is most threatened by our family, the people who profess to love us the most.

YEARS AGO MY mother ran across the following piece of doggerel. She was tickled by its message and decided to share it with all six of her grown children.

WHEN I'M A LITTLE OLD LADY

Then I'll live with my children and bring them great joy to repay all I've had from each girl and boy. I shall draw on the walls and scuff up the floor; run in and out without closing the door. I'll hide frogs in the pantry, socks under my bed. Whenever they scold me, I'll just hang my head. I'll run and I'll romp, always fritter away the time to be spending chores every day. I'll pester my children when they're on the phone as long as they're busy, won't leave them alone. Hide candy in closets, rocks in a drawer, and never pick up my clothes from the floor. Dash off to the movies and not wash a dish. I'll plead for allowance whenever I wish. I'll stuff up the plumbing and deluge the floor, as soon as they've fixed it, I'll flood it some more. When they correct me, I'll lie down and cry, kicking and screaming not a tear in my eye. I'll take all their pencils and flashlights and then, when they buy new ones, I'll take them again. I'll spill glasses of milk to complete every meal; eat my banana and just drop the peel. Put toys on the table, spill jam on the floor, I'll spill glasses of milk to complete every meal, eat my banana and just drop the peel.

A CONSIDERED RESPONSE TO THE LITTLE OLD LADY

I'd be happy to have my mother come back and live with us, that mean old bat! I'd remark her around and pull on her ear; I'd spank her butt and yell till she feared! I'd do all the things she did to us; the things I could tell you would make her blush! I'd sit her in the corner when she didn't behave, I'd lecture her long, about an hour each day; I'd scold her for being inquisitive, then say, Mind your own business, you busy old bray! I'd ground her; I'd spank her; I'd shame her a lot. Then act as if she were being the mean little snot! I'd call her names like slow as a poke— maybe mess and dirty and you little old dope. I might even scream, "You make me crazy at times!" Please, please go away, here's a nickel and dime!"

It wasn't the most flattering thing I've received from my mother. It made me wonder how much resentment she bore toward my childhood self. That thought reminded me of the years I spent as a child under her rule, and I realized that the poem needed a response from a child's point of view. So I created the following reply.

Yes, my good old mom would be in for a shock if she came back to live with me on my block! But fair is fair in this reversal of roles. What goes around comes around, everyone knows! So what of the moral? I'll give you a clue: The fun you felt would pass into the blues if you had to live with us like we lived with you!

EXCEPT in cases of severe abuse that receive attention from authorities, parents are usually insulated from the consequences of their behavior toward their children. I knew a family with a young adult daughter who had the brain development of a five- or six-year-old. She could be loving and docile but could also throw terrible, violent tantrums. She would try to make her parents shut up and threaten to hit them if they didn't stop doing things she didn't like. I can't help but wonder if she was giving back to her parents what she'd received from them.

Since the family is the basic building block of our culture, the child's perception of right and wrong is shaped largely by the cultural values the family embraces. Mormon parents are in an especially interesting place. They are trying to be disciples of Christ, but they feel pressure to produce children who fit cultural expectations. So they turn to the tools most readily available to them: discipline and punishment.

Some research suggests that more than ninety percent of us receive corporal punishment as children. And because discipline patterns tend to get passed down, generation after generation of parents will continue to use violence to socialize their children.

The problem with our culture's form of discipline is its preoccupation with control and power. We sometimes immerse our children in a discipline based on punishment: hitting, spanking, threats, punitive manipulation, and shame. Our culture justifies these actions by preaching that what ever we parents do is for children's own good; that we need to prepare our children for the "real world"; that our success as parents is determined by our children's obedience; that the honoring of children is more important than the honoring of children.

Instead of examining our real selves, of trying to discover our true identity as we journey through life, we are distracted by the outer demands of society. We rely on the gauges of worldly appearance and prestige. We embrace the cultural values of control and power even though they are corrosive to our souls and displace the

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OCTOBER 2011
Parents who place obedience above all else often are willing to sacrifice the child’s inner sense of value for the approval of others.

Jean Piaget spoke of as “an unquestioned acceptance of the given.” Everything is exciting, wonderful, and crying out to be experienced—that is, until fear or shame becomes part of the child’s world. When I engaged in violent parenting, I instilled pockets of fear and shame into my children. When children begin to doubt themselves and fear their world, everything changes. They feel stressed and inadequate; they hesitate to attempt new things; they become spiritually anemic. In fact, when parents are never satisfied and continually harass their children to be better, the child’s neurological functions become skewed.

According to neuroscientist Paul MacLean, the lower brain is responsible for survival action, the middle part is responsible for emotions, and the upper area is responsible for thinking. From Harville Hendrix’s book, Getting the Love You Want, I use two terms—“old brain,” which includes the stem and limbic areas of the brain, and “new brain,” which includes the neo-cortex, or thinking area.
of the brain
Our old brain was fully functional at birth. We were breathing, our organs were functioning, and we could express fear, discomfort, and contentment. Instead of language, our old brain dealt with images and feelings. We were reactionary, instinctual, survival-oriented creatures. Our new brain—our sensory, motor, thinking, and language center—had been installed, but it was very immature. Not until we were seven or eight years old did the new brain begin to dominate, and not until our mid-twenties did it develop to full maturity.

The old brain does not recognize linear time, so fears and feelings that developed in early childhood can still live on in our adult brain. Accessing and working with these old, embedded feelings is very difficult, as they are powerful and resistant to change. As William Faulkner wrote, “The past isn’t dead; it isn’t even past.” A look, a tone of voice, a smell, or a memory can trigger old brain energies from childhood that set off a sequence of behavior beyond the conscious control of the new brain.

Shame, stress, threat, and fear activate the reflexive old brain into survival mode, and the higher cognitive functions of the new brain are put on hold. Professor of neurology Robert Sapolsky describes the effects chronic stress has on adults: “It suppresses the immune system—causing sickness; it slows and disrupts growth; it erodes memory; it disrupts the ability to learn; it blocks the formation of new neurons in the brain; it can permanently damage the memory function of the hippocampus; it slowly kills.” As frightening as these effects are on adults, imagine how much more powerful their consequences are upon children.

When parents create a discipline environment of shame and fear to enforce obedience, their children will spend much time in “old brain” survival strategies of fight, flight, or freeze, stunting their higher neurological development. Parents’ verbal and physical acts of violence, done in the name of meeting the demands of our culture, may end up squelching the higher brain development we desire for our children. When children’s obedience is motivated out of fear, or when children believe that obedience is the only way to receive love, children can get stuck in lower brain development. Obedience becomes survival behavior.

There are spiritual consequences to this transformation. Children unable to meet their parents’ high expectations blame themselves. They grow up marinating in a stew of failure, which generates vanity. The Hebrew word for vanity denotes a sense of emptiness, falsehood, and worthlessness. These children defend themselves against this deep-seated sense of inadequacy by fantasizing about being an unattainable self; they compare themselves unfavorably with others, thus breeding even more insecurity. This feeling of worthlessness causes people to hide from themselves and others, an act dishonest to themselves, to others, and ultimately to God.

Vanity likely undergirds much of our good and bad parental behaviors. We displace our own sense of childhood failures with exaggerated feelings of both adult superiority and inferiority. We start the process all over again in our children by setting impossible expectations for them, hoping to obtain the approval of the society at large and thus feel better about our children and ourselves.

Certainly each generation of children deserves better discipline than that their parents were served. A discipline of compassion and Christ-consciousness tastes much different than our culture’s often violent agenda of control and power. We parents can improve, but we must awaken from our cultural slumber to do so, and that is a difficult thing to do. We are usually only willing to change paradigms in response to crisis situations. Voluntary conversion is much easier, but often we don’t see the unintended consequences of our parenting tactics until they have already rooted themselves in our children. The next column will introduce ideas for expanding and understanding our interactions with our offspring.

MY SISTER WANTS ME TO COME AND READ THROUGH THIRTY YEARS OF DIARIES

in the house overlooking rainbent pines, in the life others would envy she loses her self in fragments. How could we have changed so she asks over the phone. How could I not still be eleven in front of the old Plymouth on Main street, Mother Younger there than I am now. Beginnings. What might go, pressed flat as a daisy from someone she tries to remember like a deaf man remembers an opera he heard eleven years ago. My sister, fragile, as in demand as those flowers has found her days losing color, turning thin, breakable as those nearly transparent brittle leaves. Nothing bends like the pines. Her days are a shelf of blown glass buds a heart beat could shatter. Come she says We can laugh at what seemed so serious then. Maybe from what happened in the apartment when the roof fell in or at Nanny’s as Herbert was dying we can know something about the stories we haven’t begun yet.

LYN LIFSHIN
IN MEMORIAM

MARION D. HANKS
AND CHIEKO N. OKAZAKI

Among the First
by J. Frederick (Toby) Pingree

J. FREDERICK (TOBY) PINGREE is a life-long disciple of Elder Hanks, and, under Hanks’ personal endorsement, has served as chair of the Sunstone Board of Directors.

A LONG WITH NEWS of this beloved Church leader’s death came much well-deserved recognition of the extraordinary fullness of the life he’d lived. Collectively, those who had known him hailed Elder Hanks as a genuine “Man for All Seasons”—an author and scholar, a remarkable humanitarian, an accomplished athlete, an advisor to five U.S. presidents, a Boy Scout in the truest sense, a general authority for five decades, a mission president, a temple president, a New Era editor, a counselor to and leader of governmental and international service organizations—the list could go on. He personified what being a disciple of Christ means: reaching out to embrace and lift the poor and downtrodden, standing up to the proud and the mighty, sharing testimony of Christ at all times and in all places, rendering service whether recognized or not, giving liberally to worthy causes.

But my recognition of Duff Hanks’ legacy is personal and intimate: how my life was influenced by 63 years of association with the man. In the fall of 1947, I entered Salt Lake’s West High School and grudgingly enrolled in early morning seminary. While completing his law degree at the University of Utah, Duff (as we always called him) was our teacher, and it was his first year on the job. From the beginning, all of my reservations about seminary—and those of my callow comrades—evaporated as our teacher worked to know us each personally, treated us like peers, and talked thoughtfully and poignantly of the Savior and of prophets, both ancient and modern.

I could be a firebrand, and one day I accosted a sociology teacher about his alleged affiliation with the Communist Party. I think Duff thought my aggressive behavior was juvenile, but during the next class, he commented on it in such a way that I felt validated for being willing to take on an established authority figure when I sincerely perceived a threat to our way of government.

But he also challenged me in subtle but enduring ways. One day, he told us about a family of African-Americans who had joined the Church prior to his arrival in Cincinnati as a missionary. Perceiving that their attendance caused a conspicuous decline in participation by white folks, they had stopped coming to services. Each Sunday thereafter, Elder Hanks and fellow missionaries traveled to the family’s farm outside of town to hold sacrament meeting with them. As I listened, a keen feeling settled on my heart that something was not right. In telling the story, Duff said nothing derogatory about the Church nor its members, but I sensed that he had been quietly protesting. Duff’s powerful, unadorned tale of good faith and steadfastness in the face of injustice would encourage and console me years later when my disagreement with the Church establishment on blacks and the priesthood came close to open rebellion.

Naturally, my intense, constant relationship with Duff at West High diminished significantly when I moved on to the University of Utah. But later, he became part of that era’s fabled University of Utah Institute of Religion faculty, along with Lowell Bennion, T. Edgar Lyon, and George Boyd—a group of L.D.S. Church teachers that Sterling McMurrin considered the finest ever assembled. Although Duff’s classes were invariably overenrolled, I managed to gain entry to a few. But the demands of university teaching and “General Authoritying” in his life, along with my growing involvement in university life, meant that our paths crossed less and less frequently.

The years passed, and I moved around the world—to the mission field, military service, graduate school, four different work locations outside of Utah, and a mission presidency. My contact with Duff was occasional and usually brief, occurring when he would tour a mission in my locale, preside at a stake conference in my area, or address a professional group with which I was affiliated. No matter howbrief or intermittent the contact, however, Duff always treated me with the same graciousness and dignity that I remembered from those West High seminary days.

Through the years, Duff became a well-known and highly respected person within the Church and throughout the world. His general conference talks were eagerly anticipated, and requests for his time and talents came from all quarters. The special competence he demonstrated in many fields over the years, and the relatively young age (31) at which he had been called as a general authority, led many to expect that he would one day ascend the Church ladder and become an apostle, much as had Richard L. Evans, whom Duff had succeeded among the seven presidents of the Seventy in 1953.

But it wasn’t to be: Duff was released to emeritus status around age 70, the now-prescribed retirement time for Quorum of Seventy members. Though it was never verified, a rumor grew in Church gossip circles that Duff had incurred the displeasure of one or more of those at the top of the Church hierarchy.
by challenging certain orthodoxies.

The last time I met with Duff was in the lobby of the Joseph Smith Building (formerly Hotel Utah). He was well past retirement and showing signs of age. He told me of many of his experiences with other Church authorities, remarking that in the years before blacks had been given full fellowship in the Church, many of his Church colleagues had struggled as he had with this gross inequity, hoping and praying for its resolution. He described the deep personal satisfaction he’d felt at being able to represent the Lord in many places, under a wide range of circumstances, to diverse people of all races, social strata, nations, and religious persuasions.

As we parted, I had the temerity to ask him why, in his view and considering his great influence and longevity as a general authority, he had not risen to a more prominent Church position. He smiled, and mildly chastened me with a statement that “one serves in the Lord’s Church where and when one is called, and for long as one is called.”

Then, after a pause, and with a twinkle in his eye, he ventured that the Lord had not selected him for further advancement because “He knew me too well and loved me too much.” I do not know whether it was the Lord who chose not to elevate Duff in this mortal context, but I am certain to my core that among those who are chosen in this mortal context, but I am certain to me too much.” I do not know whether it was the Lord who chose not to elevate Duff in this mortal context, but I am certain to my core that among those who are chosen in this mortal context, but I am certain to me too much.”

Coming Home
by Paula Jensen Goodfellow

PAULA JENSEN GOODFELLOW, one of the founding mothers of the DAM Women Retreat (www.rockymountainretreat.org), recently completed an MA in speech-language pathology. If Mormon ichtchye makers sold bracelets that read “WWCD” (What would Chieko do?), Paula would totally buy one

In the early 1990s, I lived in Westminster, Colorado, a suburb of Denver. In those dark days of dial-up modems and primitive web browsers, we felt relatively isolated from events in Utah. Despite this disconnection, I began to hear news from friends about the new Relief Society presidency. They were feisty, independent, well-educated women. My friend in New Mexico said that Sister Okazaki, the new first counselor, had visited her stake and that she was an incredibly strong speaker with a very personal manner.

A few months later, I heard that Sister Okazaki was coming to our stake. I was sure there would be a big crowd, so I arrived early. Very early. Early enough that I actually crashed the leadership meeting before the main meeting.

I saw Chieko standing at the pulpit: a tiny woman wearing a simple fuchsia dress. During the question and answer session, it became clear that her outward appearance masked an intelligent, caring, and strong woman. When male leaders asked questions, she didn’t use the cloying, high-pitched, unsure Relief Society voice; she didn’t defer to them. Instead she told the leaders directly, clearly, and strongly what they should do. When a Relief Society president asked for guidance on working with her bishopric, Sister Okazaki told the woman to go back to her leaders and tell them what she needed from them and to explain how it should be done.

At one point during the main meeting, I was startled and pleased to realize that she was quoting from Exponent II. And as she spoke, she leaned forward, gripping the podium, stating her message forcefully. Her talk was grounded in the teachings of Jesus, emphasizing kindness and love. She urged us to not be so hard on ourselves. She was pleased with us as we were.

Listening to this woman speak, I felt as if—having been trapped for many years on another planet—I had finally received the message that it was time to come home. I felt more hope for women in the Church that day than ever before.

A few years later, she came to the Rocky Mountain Retreat for LDS Women. Although she was there as the keynote speaker, she didn’t hold herself apart from the rest of us. I saw her spending hours talking with the women there, listening to them, and sharing her own opinions.

Sister Okazaki made the Church a better place because of her talents and as did the faithful servant in Jesus’s parable. Here’s to many more Mormon women like her.

Breaking Free of Cookie-Cutter Mormonism
by Mary Ellen Robertson

MARY ELLEN ROBERTSON is Sunstone’s director of outreach and symposia and was the first LDS woman to complete the women’s studies in religion MA program at Claremont Graduate School.

CHIEKO OKAZAKI’S SEVEN-YEAR tenure in the General Relief Society Presidency (March 1990–April 1997) coincided with my progress into adulthood—my last two years of college, my post-graduation wanderings, my acceptance into Claremont Graduate School’s women’s studies in religion program, connecting with like-minded Mormons via email lists, and figuring out life as a single LDS woman.

Chieko’s talks were always a highlight in general conference—engaging, instructive, and, for me, the equivalent of a window being thrown open to air a stuffy room. Likewise, her books were a source of inspiration and instruction, liberally seasoned with humor, grace, and reality.

Six months after her release from the General Relief Society Presidency, Chieko spoke at a four-stake women’s conference in Pasadena, California. This was my first and only experience hearing Chieko speak live—and uncorrelated. The chapel and cultural hall were packed with women eager to hear her.

The conference theme was “Discover the Joy,” based on D&C 42:61: “If thou
shall ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peacable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal."

Chieko began by holding up four cookie cutters and asking the congregation what they thought cookie cutters had to do with joy. Many associated them with the warmth of cooking and raising children.

Chieko said we get many promissory notes at Church: If we have family home evening, our kids will get along. If we’re obedient, we’ll be happy. If we work harder, do better, or do things more times, we’ll be blessed. She pointed out that the scripture the conference theme was based on focused on gospel basics—not all the things we’re supposed to do.

She described things that are supposed to bring women joy. Mothers, for example, are supposed to find total joy and fulfillment in bearing and raising children; single women are supposed to find joy in preparing to marry and have families; widows like herself are supposed to find joy in enduring to the end.

Chieko compared these ideals to a café’s Blue Plate Special and worried that women in the Church are too often presented with a meal or a message that may not fill their actual needs. The problem with messages delivered like Blue Plate Specials is that they don’t treat women as individuals. Chieko wondered if others felt as she did sometimes—she doesn’t want one more Blue Plate Special and feels like she’ll gag on what someone else is trying to feed her. (At this point, it was difficult for me to restrain the impulse to stand and cheer).

Chieko returned to her original analogy, saying that we sometimes try to live cookie cutter lives, and a time can come when those boundaries don’t feel good anymore. That’s when we need personal revelation from our Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. We shouldn’t lop parts of ourselves off in order to fit someone else’s prescribed shape.

In other words, cookie cutters are for cookies—not human beings; we should not try to live someone else’s life or pray someone else’s prayer. She tossed the cookie cutters into the audience for people to keep and remember the message: women are individuals with individual needs.

She said that if any of us felt useless, worthless, unloved, or sad, to get help from the Lord, the Relief Society president, the bishop, family, or a therapist—make a change. You are worth rearranging the environment for, she insisted.

I spent the conference taking notes, trying to keep up with Chieko’s brilliant stream of ideas. A few days later, I typed the notes and emailed them far and wide. Such wisdom deserved wide circulation.

The feedback was immediate from all quarters:

“‘This summary is something I can pass on to three women friends in need today.’

“What a relief to hear something beyond ‘have faith’ and ‘write in your journals.’”

“Chieko speaks right where women are: none of this ‘humble yourselves and follow the formula’ stuff, because she knows that women need a much different message.”

“What a stunningly beautiful and powerful address. I’ve been trying to think why it hit me so hard. That rare combination of honesty, good sense, and the gospel?”

When news of Chieko’s 2 August 2011 passing began to circulate, a friend wrote to say she remembered my notes from this talk and lamented that Chieko was gone.

I attended Chieko’s memorial service in Salt Lake on 10 August 2011. I felt her loss keenly, as I’m sure thousands of LDS women did who had been spiritually fed by her life’s work. I was grateful that she conveyed through her words and by her example that there is more than one way to be an LDS woman and that joy comes from developing a firsthand, personal, intimate, daily relationship with Jesus Christ.

The First and Last Time with Chieko
by Phyllis Barber


In 1997, at the Snow Mountain Retreat near Granby, Colorado, I met Chieko. For the first and last time. Even though this was my single encounter with this graceful, elegant, almost mystical woman, the meeting made a large imprint on my mind.

We were both speakers at the Denver Area Mormon (DAM) Women’s Retreat. At the time, I considered myself a misunderstood, rebel/fringe item who was in a like/dislike relationship with my Mormon, all-encompassing, surround-sound upbringing—and my public remarks reflected that state of mind, that uncertainty, that internal debate.

Sometime after my speech, I stood looking through a window at the outlines of the black pine trees stark against the sky as the sun slipped past the horizon. Chieko came up to me, having heard my words and read my writing. The gently observant woman said something to the effect of: “You have some issues with Mormonism, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do,” I said bluntly, having long ago given up any pretense.

“But you’re not bitter or anti. You have a deep yearning for the truth and for God. And it’s all right to take issue with Mormonism. I, too, have my differences.”

This conversation had taken a turn from what I’d expected from someone who’d been in the presidency of the General Relief Society. (Later, though, I heard Chieko voice her discouragement with the way the Church approaches homosexuality, and better understood her words.)

She continued, “The Church needs you, needs your mind and your perceptions. Don’t go away. Stay.”

I looked into her eyes, and for one moment, felt déjà vu trickling through my veins. Somewhere, long ago, on some high misty mountain in Japan, perhaps. A wise woman with long gray hair falling over her shoulders; small wooden sandals that sounded in the quiet; a purple obi tied around her long kimono. A fleeting image in the shifting mist. We both turned to other people waiting to have conversations, but I felt as if a thread had tied itself to me, a thread that connected us.

Chieko’s words have returned to me many times when I’ve felt there was no place for me on the pews of my ward or on the Church’s membership rolls; words spoken in the high mountains of Colorado as the sun set behind jagged peaks.
LDS CHURCH, DOCTRINES RECEIVE WIDE MEDIA ATTENTION

WITH THE BOOK OF MORMON MUSICAL PLAYING ON Broadway, two Mormons running for president, and a polygamy leader serving a life sentence for sexually assaulting minors, Mormons are receiving a degree of media attention not seen since the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

While the Church redoubles its efforts to project a hip, diverse image through the “I’m a Mormon” campaign and other web and broadcasting initiatives, Mormon scholars and celebrities are making the rounds on radio and TV in an effort to explain to the general public the nuts and bolts of this peculiar faith.

“We’re jumping into the conversation because there is a big one going on about Mormons, and we want to be a part of it,” Stephen B. Allen, managing director of the Missionary Department, told the Washington Post. “When someone goes into Google, if the first 10 sites are people who hate us, we lose in terms of our message.”

The “I’m a Mormon” campaign includes ads which have been broadcast on TV and YouTube as well as taxi and subway signs. In the ads, men and women of various races and backgrounds say something about their lives or professions and end with the punchline, “. . . and I’m a Mormon.”

Mormon watcher Jan Shipps told the Washington Post that the Church spent $1 million alone on a Times Square billboard located steps away from the theater where the Book of Mormon musical plays.

According to the Post, the LDS Church is using “search engine optimization” strategies to improve the visibility of LDS websites through Google and other search engines.

“LDS impressed me with how they have leveraged inbound marketing to dramatically improve their outreach,” web consultant Justin Briggs wrote last December on distilled.net. “Their strategy is much more forward thinking than many organizations and companies.”

The cover of Newsweek’s June 13/20 issue featured a leaping missionary fashioned after The Book of Mormon musical ads but with Mitt Romney’s face superimposed. In the main article, novelist Walter Kirn, a former Mormon, gives an overview of the religion, touching on the doctrine of eternal progression and the history of polygamy. It also includes a reference to Glenn Beck and the John Birch Society.

Kirn describes the LDS Church as “an organization which resembles a sanctified multinational corporation—the General Electric of American religion, with global ambitions and an estimated net worth of $30 billion.”

SCHOLARS SPEAK OUT

RICHARD BUSHMAN AND Joanna Brooks are two Mormon scholars who in recent interviews gave candid but sympathetic answers to questions about Mormonism. Historian Richard Bushman was asked to respond to CNN’s “In the Arena” blog after Tricia Erickson, an ex-Mormon, called temple ordinances “completely violent, mind controlling and alarming” and stated that “an indoctrinated Mormon should never be elected as President.”

“Erickson does a good job of making Mormon temple rituals seem ominous and irrational,” Bushman responded. “The secrecy surrounding the temple inevitably arouses suspicion, but in my opinion, secrecy is important. I see Mormon temples as an effort to create a sacred space in a secular world—a quest followed by numerous religious peoples throughout history. They are a spatial equivalent of the Christian and Jewish Sabbath where a sacred time is demarked from the rest of the week.”

Bushman did not shy away from difficult theological questions, including one about lyrics from The Book of Mormon musical, according to which, Mormons believe that “God lives on a planet called Kolob.”

“Pretty close, but not precisely accurate,” Bushman replied. “Mormon theology differs radically from conventional Christianity in locating God in time and space. He is not outside
promises you make . . . those commitments and command-
head to remind them or something on their hand or arm—
T estament days, they used to wear those things on their fore-
ring? Why?"

"Why not the magic shirt, or the magic socks? Why not a
ward expression of an inward commitment."

Marie Osmond appeared on CNN's
IN A RELAXED, humor-filled atmosphere, Donny and
and blogs on Mormon issues, published a piece in the 5
August Washington Post dispelling some popular misconceptions
about the LDS faith. On 24 August, she was a guest on
NPR's Talk of the Nation, where she gave candid responses to
difficult questions about gender issues, homosexuality, race,
and even the temple garments.

Asked whether Mormons believe that Jesus is God,
Brooks responded: “There are theological technicalities and
reasons, some of them having to do with the distinctive
Mormon view of the shape of the Trinity, which lead some
theologians and some Christians to reject us as part of the
mainline orthodox Christian tradition. But we sure feel
Christian to ourselves.”

“There is a lot of talk, especially in pop culture, some of it
derisive, about Mormon undergarments,” Brooks observed.
“And you’ll see them described as magic undergarments. It’s
worth saying out loud that observant adult Mormons go to
the temples as adults and make promises to live lives of modesty
and devotion and fidelity, and they wear undergarments
under their street clothes to remind themselves of those
promises. Are they magic? That’s not something I believe,
and calling them so is a little derisive. It’s sort of like calling
a kippah a magic beanie.”

DONNY AND MARIE ON CNN

IN A RELAXED, humor-filled atmosphere, Donny and
Marie Osmond appeared on CNN's Joy Behar Show on 29
August, answering questions about The Book of Mormon mu-
sical, polygamy, Mitt Romney, and temple garments.

“Do you think Mitt Romney could win being a
Mormon?” Behar asked.

“Could Kennedy do it being a Catholic?” Marie re-
sponded.

Using Elder Carlos E. Asay's language from a September
1999 Ensign article, Donny called the temple garments “an
outward expression of an inward commitment.”

“The [temple] ceremony there, it goes back to the same
ceremony in Solomon’s day—all those sacred temples back
then, not everybody was allowed in there,” Donny said. “But
the promises we make to God—you know, this magical un-
derwear or whatever you want to call it—all it is, is an out-
ward expression of an inward commitment.”

“But why underwear?” Behar pressed the Osmonds.
“Why not the magic shirt, or the magic socks? Why not a
ring? Why?”

“Way back in the days of Jerusalem . . . , the Old
Testament days, they used to wear those things on their fore-
head to remind them or something on their hand or arm—
it’s the same thing,” Donny replied. “It’s a reminder of the
promises you make . . . those commitments and command-
ments that you say, ‘God, I promise to keep them.’”

“I just think that, you know, are we different?” Marie
added. “Are we weird? No. We have more fun than anybody
on the planet.”

POLL: AMERICANS DON'T TRUST
MORMONS, MUSLIMS

A SURVEY CONDUCTED 10 YEARS AFTER THE 11
September terrorist attacks reveals that Mormons, along
with Muslims and atheists, are among the least accepted mi-
nority groups. The “What It Means to Be American” poll by
the Public Religion Research Institute concludes that only
67 percent of Americans have a favorable view of Mormons.
Muslims fared worse, with only 58 percent favorable views,
and atheists fared worst of all, with only 46 percent.

In a recent interview published by Dialogue: A Journal of
Mormon Thought, author and scholar Shaun A. Casey argues
that many Americans still perceive Mormonism as secretive.

“I think centrist and center-right Americans are suscep-
tible to the fear factor about what they perceive to be closed,
secret or secretive, or esoteric groups,” Casey tells Gregory
A. Prince in the fall 2011 issue. “It’s almost the same way
they distrusted the Catholic Church.”

A 2003 poll by International Communications Research
revealed that 33 percent of Americans view Muslims and
Mormons as holding values and beliefs dissimilar to their
own. In 2006, during Mitt Romney’s campaign for the White
House, a Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg Poll reported that 37
percent of Americans would not vote a Mormon into the
U.S. presidency.

LDS “REGRET” FOR MOUNTAIN
MEADOWS MASSACRE

AS THE SITE OF THE MOUNTAIN MEADOWS MASSACRE
became a national historic landmark on 11 September, Elder
Marlin K. Jensen expressed regret for the 1857 massacre in
which a Mormon militia killed 120 men, women, and chil-
dren emigrating to California.

Falling short of issuing an apology, Jensen said that the
human element of the massacre “compels me to say today
just how sorry I am for what happened here so long ago.”

Church historian Richard Turley added that “no one alive
today is responsible for this horrific crime, but we are re-
ponsible for how we respond to it.”

In September 2007, President Henry B. Eyring similarly
expressed “regret” for the massacre in a statement which
was prepared by Jensen and authorized by the First
Presidency.

In July 2011, Warner Bros. purchased the film rights to
Jon Krakauer’s 2003 bestseller Under the Banner of Heaven,
which juxtaposes the 1857 massacre with the 1984 Lafferty
murders. Ron Howard recently signed on to direct the film
with a screenplay written by former Mormon and Academy
Award-winner Dustin Lance Black.
People

Died. Best-selling Mormon author CHIEKO OKAZAKI, 84, of congestive heart failure. Born in Hawaii to Japanese laborers on a plantation, Okazaki moved to Utah in 1951, where, despite racial discrimination, she became a teacher and eventually a school principal. In 1961, she was the first non-Caucasian to join the Young Women’s General Board, and in 1990, she became the first non-Caucasian to serve in the General Relief Society Presidency. A breast-cancer survivor, Okazaki addressed issues often ignored in official LDS discourse, such as sexual abuse and the difficult choices mothers working outside the home must make. As described by Vanderbilt professor Kathleen Flake, Okazaki was “fearlessly honest about herself and the problems that members of the Church faced.”

Died. Elder MARION D. HANKS, 89, of conditions incident to old age. One of the longest-serving General Authorities, he served actively for 39 years until his 1992 release at age 70. An athlete and an inspiring speaker, Hanks studied law at the University of Utah and taught seminary and institute classes for the Church Educational System. From 1962–1964, he served as president of the British Mission, where future apostles JEFFREY R. HOLLAND and QUENTIN L. COOK then served as missionaries. In the early 1950s, he took African-American visitors into his home when no Salt Lake City hotels would receive them. BYU professor Warner Woodworth called Hanks a “sweet companion to those who suffered.” “The world has Albert Schweitzer,” wrote Woodworth. “The Church has Elder Hanks.”

Monikered. President DIETER E. UCHTDORF, 70, second counselor in the First Presidency. He is known popularly as “The Silver Fox” and “Mr. Mac.” According to Salt Lake Tribune’s Peggy Fletcher Stack, Uchtdorf received the first nickname “for his amazing head of hair” and the second after being seen “buying Apple computers for himself and family members.”

Charged. With failing to report teen sexual assault, LDS bishop GORDON LAMONT MOON, 43. According to Duchesne County detective DAN BRUSO, Moon, who is also vice president of the Duchesne County School Board, was told by a teenaged girl of his congregation that she had been sexually assaulted by a teenaged boy, and Moon advised her not to report the assault to the police.

Featured. Former Miss Wyoming and BYU student JOYCE MCKINNEY, 62, in ERROL MORRIS’s new documentary Tabloid. In 1977, McKinney was accused of abducting and raping LDS missionary KIRK ANDERSON in Ewell, Surrey. The case, dubbed “the Manacled Mormon,” created a media sensation in both the U.S. and U.K. McKinney, who claims she was trying to save Anderson from “the Mormon cult,” was charged in 1984 with stalking Anderson at his workplace.

Out. As a gay man, BYU television producer KENDALL WILCOX, 41. Wilcox, who has produced documentaries, talk shows, and reality series for BYU, is now producing Far Between to document his journey as a gay Mormon.

Convicted. President of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, WARREN JEFFS, 55, of sexually assaulting underage girls whom he took as spiritual wives. During the trial, Jeffs, who acted as his own lawyer, attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the playing of an audio tape in which he can be heard giving sexual instruction to twelve of his wives, including one who was allegedly 14 at the time of the marriage. The instruction, which Jeffs called “heavenly sessions,” was allegedly related to ritualistic sexual encounters which Jeffs had with his wives in beds and in the baptismal font in the FLDS Texas temple.
in the end, the message is not against Mormonism but literalism: that whatever our different myths, metaphors, and rituals, the real purpose of religion is to give us a higher purpose and a sense of compassion in the universe.

—Maur eeN dowd
New York Times

Everyone's Responses to The Book

How audiences interpret [the show’s most obscene] song and others like it . . . will determine whether the musical is received as an unapologetically rude yet unexpectedly sentimental hit, or a polarizing, provocative work of possible blasphemy.

—DAVE ITZKOFF, NEW YORK TIMES

The Book of Mormon may be the most obscene show ever brought to a Broadway stage . . . . But their musical also has an uplifting message: the Mormons save the African villagers and come to realize that the moral of the story is more important than whether it’s true.

—JACOB BERNSTEIN
The Daily Beast

The day I spoke with co-creator Matt Stone, I coincidentally ran into a group of Mormon missionaries in the lobby of a mall. A dapper-looking elder gave me a message to pass along to Parker and Stone: “Tell them I said ‘hi’ and I think their show is funny.” So freakin’ nice.

—Christopher BeAM
SlAtE.com

Conservative Mormons have ignored or denounced it. The Mormon Church itself . . . has signaled to members to turn the other cheek . . . Meanwhile, some more liberal Mormons (and some ex-Mormons) are making pilgrimages to New York to see it.

—Laurie GoodsTeIN
New York Times
The only problem with *The Book of Mormon* is that its theme is not quite true. The religions that grow, succor, and motivate people to perform heroic acts of service are usually theologically rigorous, arduous in practice, and definite in their convictions about what is True and False.

—DAVID BROOKS, NEW YORK TIMES

David Brooks says that “vague, uplifting, non-doctrinal religiosity doesn’t actually last.” If Brooks were to attend his local Mormon congregation for a few months or years, he’d see how wrong he actually is.

—JOANNA BROOKS, RELIGION DISPATCHES

I can’t recommend the show to anybody. It’s just too much. I was frequently uncomfortable watching it. But that’s a different thing than saying the show is hurtful or willfully antagonistic to the Church. It simply isn’t.

—GLEN NELSON
Mor Mo Nar Tis Gr o up.Co M

I’m not willing to spend $200 for a ticket to be sold the idea that religion moves along oblivious to real-world problems in a kind of blissful naiveté.

—MICHAEL OTTERSON
HEAD OF LDS PUBLIC AFFAIRS
With the recent passing of Sister Chieko Nishimura Okazaki, Mormonism lost one of its tireless fighters for addressing “real” issues facing Latter-day Saints today—ones for which there are no easy answers, and which sometimes reveal weaknesses in ways we as a Church handle things. Early in Sister Okazaki’s tenure as a counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, Sister Okazaki became alerted to the intense emotional, physical, and spiritual pain brought on by sexual abuse. In characteristic style, she addressed it head on, refusing to blink in the face of this agony but also refusing to forget the Savior’s promises to be with us always, no matter what. The following few paragraphs are excerpted from remarks given 23 October 2002 during an “Embracing Hope” conference at Brigham Young University. Access the full text at: http://www.byub.org/talks/Talk.aspx?id=1136.

WE ARE ALL HERE TOGETHER IN THIS CHURCH. We are all here together in this problem, and we must be all part of the solution. How is it possible to reveal trust that has been betrayed? When the fabric of our lives is ripped and wrenched, what will make it whole? Let me use the analogy of a piece of lace or a crocheted dolly or a cat’s cradle. All of them begin with a long, straight thread or string. It becomes complex and beautiful when it touches other parts and other strings, but all of them are fragile. They can be shredded, unraveled, and torn, but we need to remember that there is a pattern. Even if it is damaged, it can be re woven. Second, each part supports the other parts and is connected to them. You cannot pick one string out without destroying the whole pattern. I am part of the pattern. The bishop who sits with the injured members of the ward while they face the injury and begin healing is part of that pattern. You are part of this pattern, and the Savior is part of this pattern. I like to think of the Savior’s love as filling the spaces in the lace where there is no thread because there wouldn’t be a pattern if there weren’t spaces. I think of him as the intersections where the threads come together, making something special happen where they touch and connect. We can be part of this network of service and support, and we can be part of the Savior’s pattern.

[Let me quote from] material prepared with the support of the Brigham Young University’s Women’s Research Institute: “Victims need to be believed. They need to be listened to. They need to be relieved of any inappropriate guilt about their role in the abuse. Many women reported the strength they felt as their bishops and therapists worked together. This arrangement allows bishops to concentrate on the spiritual and physical welfare of their ward members while the trained professional works with the victim to resolve emotional issues.” One of the women was so anxious and frightened about going to her bishop that she wouldn’t let him shut the door of his office during their first conversation. But when he heard her story, “he cried with me,” she said, “and that is when I started trusting him. He is the first man I ever remember trusting. I gave my therapist permission to talk with him to better understand how he could best help me.” And now another woman reported that her bishop was also initially baffled about how to help her, but he took the time to go out and get educated. He still keeps in touch with her even though she has moved to another state.

FOR THOSE OF you who have been spared the scourge of abuse, I ask you to open the circles of your sisterhood and brotherhood. Include those whose trust has been betrayed by those who should have been their protectors. Open your hearts to them. Let them open their hearts to you. This is a burden that is grievous to be born. May we shoulder it together, not merely adjust it upon the backs of those who have born it so long alone. May we love each other with a pure unselfish active love as the Savior has loved us.

May our troubled hearts find the peace we seek with him, I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.
The Monitoring of BYU Faculty Tithing Payments: 1957–1963
By Gary James Bergera