

LETTERS

A Fundamental Change of Heart

I want to comment on Catherine Hammon Sundwall's letter in the fall 1994 issue, itself a comment on Michael Quinn's outstanding article, "Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon Political Conflicts" (in the summer 1993 issue). I disagree with many of Ms. Sundwall's fundamental premises and with many of her conclusions.

I first want to make my own biases clear so that my agenda is not hidden. I think I am a believing and practicing Mormon. But unlike many other Latter-day Saints, I never warmed to President Benson. This is partly because I could never accept his ultra-conservative politics (I am on the moderate-to-liberal end of the spectrum), and partly because I found his religious writings and speeches permeated with the same authoritarianism that characterized his politics; a good example is his speech, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets."

This authoritarianism was and still is anathema to me. I respected President Benson because of the office he held, but I never loved him in the same way I did President Kimball, whom I consider a prophet very much in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon traditions—certainly the greatest our century has so far seen—and who personified kindness, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned. I still miss President Kimball greatly.

As to the legacy that President Benson will leave Mormons and Mormonism, I think the jury is still out. Lavina Fielding Anderson chronicled in *Dialogue's* spring 1993 issue the sad tale of the institutional church's increasing repression of dissidents or "alternative voices"—real and per-

ceived—during the 1980s and early 1990s. This culminated in the excommunications of the September Six and other more recent disciplinary actions against persons who dissent or who are perceived as heterodox or liberal.

I don't know that we can attribute these anti-Christian actions to President Benson directly. But I do believe the authoritarian values he articulated in his political and religious statements both fostered a climate in which Mormons willingly scapegoated their own on the altar of supposed orthodoxy and gave aid and comfort to those who actually performed the sacrifices. Of course, President Benson was not the only church leader to voice such sentiments. But he did set an example that others willingly followed. And because of his high position in the hierarchy, his statements had a great deal of credibility. On the other hand, the extreme right's wholesale take-over of the church that some commentators foresaw upon President Benson's ascension thankfully never came to pass. Islands of moderation remain, although they may be under siege.

I now hope that President Hunter's call for reconciliation will herald a new era, help us to heal the wounds that have divided our house against itself over the last decade, and finally bring the unjustly disenfranchised back into the fold. I will return to these themes later.

There you have my biases. Ms. Sundwall's conservative and institutional biases color her analysis of Professor Quinn's article, though she never admits them except to say that she too considers communism to have been an "Evil Empire," echoing President Ronald Reagan's overheated rhetoric of the early 1980s. She then

goes on to credit this "Evil Empire" mindset and President Benson in particular with cracking the foundations of communism and believes that Benson's extremism was justified on this basis. Again, I think the jury is still out. But I wonder if the verdict will support her version of the facts. It is on this particular portion of her letter that I wish to comment the most.

Professor Eugene England argues convincingly in his recent *Sunstone* essay, "What Covenant Will God Receive in the Desert," that communism in Eastern Europe collapsed from the weight of its own bloated and sterile ideology, finding itself impotent in the face of internal pressures it could not understand, contain, or refute. He believes, and I agree, that the existence of a significant American political or military contribution to the demise of Eastern European communism is open to debate.

History appears to support this interpretation, although conclusions are still tentative. Twice America confronted communism on the battlefield, once in Korea and once in Vietnam. The result was inconclusive in the former case and a debacle in the latter from which we have yet to heal. American diplomatic history from the 1980s onward is replete with story after story of our propping up corrupt, repressive right-wing dictatorships and tampering with democratically elected governments, sometimes fatally, all in the name of anti-communism—the leaders we supported might have been bastards, but at least they were "our bastards." In so doing, we squandered whatever credibility and goodwill we had. The Vietnam conflict showed the impotency in our foreign policy.

Yet another example is in the re-

cent rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East, particularly in Iran. America was so preoccupied with the bogey of communism that for decades we propped up a hereditary despot against the will of his people. Ultimately, America suffered a humiliation sufficient to bring down a U.S. president when the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers turned vicious against our people and property in Iran.

During the 1980s under Reagan and Bush we funded one side of an insane arms buildup that allowed us to annihilate the world many times over. The only result of this was to leave America with a choking debt burden that will haunt our posterity for decades. This is part of Reagan's dubious legacy to America, the legacy of those who sought to bring down the "Evil Empire" by force of arms.

In all this it's doubtful we appreciably slowed the spread of communism anywhere in the world. But even more serious, as Professor England points out, has been the spiritual decline that accompanied our bankrupt foreign policy and the massive arms buildup over the last decade. As Gene said, "God has sent leanness into our souls." Nor was this unforeseen. President Kimball warned against just this occurrence in his stunning prophetic essay, "The False Gods We Worship" (*Ensign*, June 1976). America ignored him. Now we pay the price.

Sadly, many Mormons of my generation have embraced this political and military agenda and made it part of the church's agenda, ignoring Christ's teachings to "love our enemies," just as President Kimball foretold. (In my own limited experiences, my readings of his 1976 sermon to priesthood quorums and Sunday

school classes were usually met with defiance, angry silence, or an impassioned plea to defeat “godless communism” by whatever means necessary, especially armed might.) The Mormon equating of extreme conservatism, laissez-faire capitalism, wealth, political power, social status, and righteousness are well documented.

Today we reap the bitter harvest of our godless fascination with weapons of destruction and military force as a legitimate instrument of foreign policy. Our youth, who call themselves Generation X—nameless and faceless—murder themselves and others in our streets and schools with guns and knives. (Zion, especially Salt Lake City, is not immune. Two young boys recently shot and killed each other in the parking lot of a Salt Lake supermarket simply because one stared too long at the other and the latter took offense. Murders among teenagers are at an all-time high.)

Worldwide, terrorists kill innocents in the name of political expediency. Battles rage unchecked in Africa, the Middle East, and Southern and Southeast Asia. All the while, America pumps billions into weapons development and procurement, forcing schools to raise funds for the sacred task of educating our children by selling cookies. We foul the environment, despoiling our Mother Earth, yet governments permit the use of state-sanctioned violence against environmentalists and indigenous peoples who attempt to halt the rape of our planet and save our precious resources. This, too, is part of the Reagan legacy, a belief that all disputes can best be resolved by force and that the ends justify the means, however reprehensible.

As Americans, our commitment

to armed might has increased but our commitment to social justice has waned. Now the homeless crowd our streets and shelters. Physical abuse of spouses and sexual and physical abuse of innocent children, those who ought to be most dear to us, increase year by year. Drug and alcohol abuse, greed, unethical business and legal practices, gambling, and sexual immorality run rampant as we seek without success to heal the hollowness in our souls with money, things, and ephemeral pleasure. Sadly, this is the most pernicious part of Reagan’s legacy, and the very lie that Satan perpetrated on Cain: the secret of Master Mahan, converting human life into money.

What does all of this have to do with Quinn’s article? Just this: The virulent anti-communism Elder Benson and others preached in the 1950s and 1960s happened within the context of America’s ongoing spiritual and ethical decline. The beliefs that communism was the source of all our ills and that conservative politics alone could save us, to which Elder Benson contributed nationally and among the church, set the agenda that Reagan and his ilk followed unchecked. It became the lodestar of American foreign and domestic policy in the 1980s. But these policies, coupled with our fanatical devotion to military technology as the savior of the West—displacing the person and atonement of Jesus Christ—and our false confidence in the authority and wisdom of the few to set policy for the many, failed us miserably, leaving our country financially, morally, and spiritually naked.

Now that communism has been revealed for the empty shell it was, we search for new enemies to fight, to

blame, to scapegoat: There must be some cause why we are not fulfilled, and that cause must be found and brutally eliminated. In Mormonism's case, we have turned our anger on ourselves, blaming "alternative voices" and the heterodox—real or perceived—among our members for the unease we feel. So we decide to rid ourselves of the so-called unorthodox among us—they are pariahs.

But the true cause of our malaise, as Shakespeare pointed out so long ago, is not external: it is in ourselves. Each one of us, individually and collectively, must undergo a fundamental change of heart. We must repent with broken hearts and contrite spirits; forswear our pride in technology, wisdom, wealth, and armed might; renounce unrighteous dominion and war; proclaim peace; and return battered and broken to Christ, who is the One who will heal us with his stripes and who has solemnly covenanted with us on the cross and through his prophets that he will do so. Only thus can we be whole again, in our souls and in our church.

Professor Quinn ably chronicles one facet of the rise and temporary triumph of Mormon anti-communism, ultraconservatism, and authoritarianism. Contrary to Ms. Sundwall's assertions, this fits within the overall context in which it occurred. Just as happened to our country, the rise of authoritarianism and the need to scapegoat perceived enemies has left our church floundering spiritually. Quinn shows some of the roots of that problem.

This work is thus a necessary foundation on which other historians and political scientists can and will build as we seek to understand the sociological, political, and religious

forces that betrayed us in the latter half of the twentieth century and left us frightened, angry, hateful, and spiritually bankrupt, both in and out of the church. (I disagree that there is something intrinsically demeaning or unworthy in assembling data and chronicling facts. It's a necessary first step to meaningful analysis, as any historian, scientist, or lawyer will attest.) In this case, the story Professor Quinn has assembled is not pleasant, but it is absolutely essential for us. Thank you, sir, for doing so. May we learn from your efforts, so that we are not condemned to live out this history again. And may God have mercy on us.

Postscript:

The sacrament meeting topic in the Woodruff 2nd Ward, Idaho Falls Ammon West Stake, on 20 November 1994, was "gratitude." After two girls read their talks from the *New Era*, the main speaker arose. He is an ordinance worker at the Idaho Falls temple, recently retired as southern California coordinator of the John Birch Society. For the next thirty minutes, we were regaled with his concept of gratitude. Foremost was the result of the recent election, in which, as he put it, "God took matters into his own hands" by engineering the defeat of many liberals at various political levels, signaling the eventual downfall of "President Clinton and her husband" and the coming of a new day in American politics. He took up his remaining time promoting the extreme right-wing agenda and showing how there was no meaningful difference between ultraconservative politics and the gospel.

It was as blatant a violation of the

Brethren's oft-repeated dictum that our worship meetings should be politically neutral as I have ever seen, and I include many Elders' quorum meetings where the primary topic of discussion has been the evil of the IRS. Sadly, at the end of the service the speaker was surrounded by a large crowd who appeared to have agreed with everything he said and wanted to congratulate him on his political and religious acumen. I was so offended by the whole performance, I left the chapel midway through the talk and did not return to church that day. (Had I stood to bear my testimony of the divine nature of liberalism or the mission of Teddy Kennedy, I doubt my reception would have been so warm.)

I recount this story mostly because of the way the speaker established his credibility in beginning his talk: Everything he was going to tell us, he said, was based upon talks that then Elder Ezra Taft Benson had given to various gatherings of the John Birch Society that the speaker had attended over the years. And Elder Benson, as everyone knew, appeared at these Birch Society meetings and said what he said there under the direct guidance of, by the explicit direction of, and with the blessings of, the First Presidency of the church. All in all, it was a very effective tactic and brought our speaker a great deal of authority from the outset. I suppose nobody but myself had read Quinn's article, and realized that these statements might not be as true as the speaker wished they were.

Alan E. Barber
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A "Political" Theory of the Atonement

Dialogue readers were richly benefitted by Lorin Hansen's masterful article on "The 'Moral' Atonement" (Spring 1994). I don't think I've ever read such an exhaustive (or persuasive) presentation of the history of Christian thought over time of the nature and meaning of this central doctrine.

I realize that not being a lawyer I'm perhaps obtuse about fine distinctions, but regarding the difference between Origen's (not Origin) Ransom notion and Anselm's Satisfaction theory, it seems to me that as the First Presidency once said about whether in being given the priesthood one should first have the priesthood conferred and then the office or vice versa, "It is a distinction without a difference." A ransom is by definition payment to satisfy an expectation or demand.

Regrettably, despite thirty-one pages devoted to the topic, and citation of President John Taylor's *Mediation and Atonement* (which is the standard Mormon work on the topic and, contrary to Hansen's opening assertion, far more than a "simple definition and statement of general purpose"), Hansen cites not one line of *Mediation* and devotes very little space to the Government (or might one say Political) theory of the Atonement—or relating the Political theory to the Moral theory of the Atonement with which he winds up his discussion. Even a casual reading would show that President Taylor, with great spiritual and philosophical insight, closely related the two in a manner unique to Christian teaching and

largely absent from contemporary Mormon orthodoxy (which, as Roger Launius argues in an earlier article in the same issue of *Dialogue*, has become heavily contaminated with traditional Christian neo-Platonism).

Certainly Martin Luther's crude notion of "wrathful urge to punish and annihilate a sinful world and parallel urge to forgive and to bless" hardly comes into Mormonism's concept of the need for, nature of, or effects of the Atonement. And while the Moral Atonement notion of Fiddes, White, and Wheeler (at least as presented by Hansen) comes closer than earlier apostate Christianity to a reasoned exposition, I was disappointed that Hansen did not quote one word of President Taylor's *Mediation and Atonement* argument which formulates in somewhat poetic but majestically persuasive terms, a more complete Restoration view of why Jesus had to die.

President Taylor, heroically anticipating the contributions of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, contemporary Chaos Theory, and Bell's Theorem, saw reality as probabilistic, i.e., a choice determined rather than based on Newtonian determinism—which still rules the backwaters of science (primarily the social sciences).

Taylor drew upon the peculiarly Mormon notion of a finite God existing in the same universe with other uncreated intelligences of Nature—stars, mountains, seas, and gardens—which were organized into higher forms by him. In their higher states this native intelligence may even be organized into humans and other living creatures. Such intelligence is co-eval with God, not his creation ("Man also was in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth was

not created or made, neither indeed can be" [D&C 93:291]). This extends the need for and reach of the Atonement far beyond any traditional scope of debate or speculation. Thus, in President Taylor's terms, God is seen as the Governor of all the intelligences of the universe, not just of man, ruling by persuasion and justice rather than fiat—a Great Catalyst, speeding up the evolution of natural processes rather than as First Cause. The great purpose of creation: "Men [in the form of highly organized intelligences] are, that they might have joy" (2 Ne. 2:25)—and, moreover, that "they might act and not be acted upon." The Atonement is thus a triune phenomenon involving God, Man, and Nature—not something imposed on either Man or Nature.

As Taylor argues, Nature, which, following the initial creative (organizational) act by Jehovah (Jesus) had been in full harmony with God's will and purposes, reverted to quasi-chaos when Adam (with Jehovah one of the co-deities of the organization) and his wife Eve, God's elect children, deliberately broke his law. By this act, Nature was offended, seeing one of the Creators break the law by which all had agreed to be bound, and through universal rebellion, death—chaos in slow process—came into the world, requiring a voluntary act by one "like unto God," willing to sacrifice himself, though himself without sin, to redeem his sinful brothers and sisters.

Only in this manner could the rebellious intelligent matter of nature be persuaded to trust God once again, realigning itself with his farsighted, eternal purposes—permitting the rebellious elements (of which post-Adamic man's earthly tabernacle now consists) to reunite with man's

now-experienced spirit, to permit a glorious resurrection as a result of regained respect and obedience to the desire of the perfect Jesus, sinless Son of God, to extend his saving grace to his less perfect brethren.

Thus, viewed in John Taylor's terms, Jesus did not die to satisfy an arbitrary concept of justice, but as a calculated and unavoidable strategy of remediation and moral suasion to win rebellious Nature back into compact with God and his fallen children as outlined above. Compare this to the traditional story of the politics behind the War in Heaven.

Projected into the experience of the material world, redemption is thus seen more as a politics of high morality, albeit a curiously Mormon materialist, quasi-pantheistic politics, than as primitive magic, or even the doctrinal mystery accepted by traditional Protestant or Catholic theology.

While some may argue that there's more poetry than mathematics in President Taylor's formulation, it is nevertheless miles ahead of Origen or Irenaeus, and light years ahead of such traditional Christian philosophers as Anselm, Abelard, or Jonathan Williams—or for that matter such modernists as Campbell, Caird, Bushnell, Fiddes, White, Wheeler, Hartshome, Cobb, Ogden, Williams, or Pettinger—in giving intellectual content to the Atonement.

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More on A. C. Lambert

Carlyle Lambert takes me to task in the fall 1994 issue for saying that his father, A. C. Lambert, was forced to

leave BYU. Well, Carlyle was a youngster at the time, and he didn't know that his father's driving ambition for many years was to become president of BYU. I knew A. C. as a student and later as a neighbor and close friend. He did everything right to qualify for the position. However, at the same time his passion for historical research caused him to secretly write articles and book-length manuscripts of the arcane, obscure, suppressed, sensitive, and unknown aspects of Mormon history and doctrine. His closet writing became known, and he was forced to resign from BYU.

His daughter, Ruth, much older than Carlyle, furnished me with much of the material for my article, which *Dialogue* has accepted, on A. C.'s half century's literary output. He was the most prolific and least published author of Mormonism.

Sam Taylor
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Hope for Us All

I have not missed an issue of *Dialogue* since reading one for the first time thirteen years ago. I have often written letters in response to various articles I have read but only in my own mind. To release a letter with my name on it would have meant to me that I was putting the most precious thing in the world to me at risk—my membership in the church. As a convert of nineteen years, it didn't take me long to understand that feminism and intellectuals were walking a very thin line in our church. I have never considered myself a feminist. I am not even an intellectual in the real meaning of this term. However, I cannot

turn my back on the thirst for knowledge that my heavenly father blessed me with.

I have read many provocative articles in *Dialogue* but never felt so overwhelmed by anything as I did on reading "Matricidal Patriarchy: Some Thoughts toward Understanding the Devaluation of Women in the Church," by Erin R. Silva, in the summer 1994 issue. I was so moved by the obviously clear understanding of the very depth of a woman's soul. I felt every fiber of my being laid bare by Silva's work. It wasn't until I reached the end of the article that I understood the force of his words. Erin R. Silva is a man. I had been so certain this was written by a woman that I found myself discounting so many areas of his abilities. I now realize that even women discount other women. If Erin R. Silva, a male, can reach such profound depths of emotion to truly understand the devaluation of women in the church, there is hope for us all. I have never felt such a powerful explosion of truthfulness as he has exhibited with such eloquence. If I have jeopardized my position in the church by taking this position, I will ask my husband and children to understand and keep loving me. This time I can't help but speak.

Thank you so much for publishing these wonderful works.

Shari Taylor
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Gifted Individual or "Quick Study"?

I'd like to contribute some supplementary information to Dan Vogel's article "The Locations of Joseph Smith's Early Treasure Quests," which

appeared in the fall 1994 issue. In footnote 56, Vogel cites the report of an interview with David Whitmer wherein Whitmer refers to conversations he had in 1828 with individuals in Palmyra who claimed to have seen the place at the Hill Cumorah from which the Book of Mormon plates had been taken. Vogel's additional citations of W. W. Phelps and John A. Clark together with an earlier footnote (52) of Lorenzo Saunders's comments in the 1880s with respect to his visiting the Hill Cumorah on 23 September 1827 and having seen nothing unusual leave some ambiguity as to what part of the hill Whitmer was referring and whether anything had actually been recovered there by Joseph Smith.

Fortunately, collected reports of additional interviews with David Whitmer recently published in the book *David Whitmer Interviews*, edited by Lyndon W. Cook, clarify this matter. For convenience I'll reference citations to reports of interviews with David Whitmer to pages in this reference work as DWI:page number. The following citations show that both David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery saw a stone box on the Hill Cumorah in the 1828-30 period:

(1) "On the road he [Whitmer] found the community teeming with excitement over the alleged treasure, and heard several persons threaten to kill the finder unless he divided his wealth with them. When asked how they knew such a treasure had been found, several asserted that they had seen the receptacle from which it was taken by Smith. . . . Whitmer and Cowdery . . . were conducted to the hill where they personally viewed the receptacle in which Moroni, at the beginning of the fifth century, had concealed the history

of his fathers" (DWI:172-73).

(2) "I saw the stone which formed the box or receptacle in which the metallic plates were found, on the hillside, Commarah" (DWI:143).

(3) "It was a stone box, and the stones looked to me as if they were cemented together. That was on the side of the hill, and a little down from the top" (DWI:23).

(4) "Three times has he [Whitmer] been at the hill Cumorah and seen the casket that contained the tablets, and the seer-stone. Eventually the casket had been washed down to the foot of the hill, but it was to be seen when he last visited the historic place" (DWI:7).

Thus, David Whitmer confirms Joseph Smith's story of the stone box on the Hill Cumorah. The reference to Oliver Cowdery having been present with him on at least one occasion lends additional credibility to Cowdery's description of the stone box in his last letter (no. VIII) to W. W. Phelps in the October 1835 *Messenger and Advocate*.

Additional interesting observations by David Whitmer in his interviews include the setting for the dictation of the Book of Mormon during June 1829 at his parents' house (the cabin in which the church was organized in April 1830) in Fayette, New York. David claims (1) that Joseph Smith dictated with the seer-stone in the crown of a hat and his face partially covered by the hat (DWI:55, 123-24); (2) that the gold plates were not present during the dictation (DWI:188); (3) that "Smith was at no time hidden from his collaborators, and the translation was performed in the presence of . . . the

entire Whitmer household and several of Smith's relatives besides" (DWI:173); and (4) that Joseph Smith had "no book or manuscript, before him from which he could have read as is asserted by some that he did, he [Whitmer] having every opportunity to know whether Smith had Solomon Spaulding's or any other person's romance to read from" (DWI:139-40).

Thus, David Whitmer effectively removes Joseph Smith from behind any barrier separating him from his scribe and also takes the Bible from his vicinity as a possible reference work. This is obviously at some variance from the picture of Joseph dictating from behind a curtain or blanket (this method was apparently used only in 1828 with Martin Harris, who is the source for this story) with a Bible at his side to compare with similar passages in the Book of Mormon. Since the bulk of the approximately 1/3 of the book of Isaiah found in the Book of Mormon was dictated at the Whitmer home, there are only two ways in which Joseph could have obtained this material in order to dictate it: he either committed it to memory (together with the words in the King James Version that are italicized as these words represent a large part of the differences in the Isaiah passages between the two books) or he received it supernaturally as he claimed. Add to the Isaiah material the dictation of a lyrical psalm (2 Ne. 4:16-35), two extensive allegories (1 Ne. 8; Jacob 5), numerous examples of Hebrew poetic style and idiomatic expressions (Hebraisms), as well as a symmetric arrangement of story elements in the structure of 1 Nephi, and you either have an extremely gifted individual with an extraordinary memory and a highly creative mind pulling all sorts

of fascinating material from a hat—or a prophet. If Joseph spent as much time searching for buried treasure as has been alleged, he must have been an extremely “quick study” with respect to internalizing biblical text, linguistic structure, and style if he is to be explained on a naturalistic basis. His contemporaries, however, if they were alive today, might have considerable difficulty recognizing this portrayal as the “Jo” Smith they knew.

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Follow the Leaders

Jack Harrell (“Letters,” Fall 1994) in his cry from the heart inadvertently but succinctly states the core problem in the Mormon church: if Eileen Davies (“Letters,” Winter 1993) is correct about the leaders moving even further from Jesus and if Joseph Smith was correct about dissidents being on the high road to apostasy, then where stands the individual who experiences unrighteousness from leaders? The answer is that the quote used in good faith by Jack, if read in context in *History of the Church*, 3:385, tells us that Joseph was addressing his Twelve Apostles on Tuesday, 2 July 1839, at which time Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith were ordained apostles and a number of the Twelve were going overseas on missions. Joseph said, “I then addressed them and gave much instruction calculated to guard *them* against self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, and self-importance.” The prophet was talking to and about the Twelve. And with good cause. Ten of the Twelve turned against Joseph.

Only Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball didn’t raise their hands against him. In that instance you wouldn’t want to be following those ten dissidents, would you?

Joseph said, “If I told you who I am and what I know you would kill me.” Indeed.

On Tuesday, 3 November 1835, Joseph received a revelation (HC, 2:300) addressed to the Twelve, “Behold they are under condemnation, because they have not been sufficiently humble in my sight, and in consequence of their covetous desires, in that they have not dealt equally with each other in the division of monies which came into their hands.”

On Monday, 11 September 1843 (HC, 6:29), at a meeting of the Twelve, Brigham Young said, “I know that men who go through the world with the truth have not much influence; but let them come with silk velvet lips and sophistry, and they will have an influence. It is your privilege to be discerners of spirits. . . . No power can hide the heart from the discerning eye.”

That is the key to surviving the man of perdition and the false prophet in the church: personal godly revelation, and that is what both Joseph and Brigham pounded the members about: obtaining personal godly revelation.

But something was clearly lacking in at least three of the most senior Twelve and President Spencer W. Kimball in more recent days when self-confessed forger/murderer Mark Hofmann conned them for years as to his true character and intentions leading to two cruel murders, families ruined, so-called experts unfrocked, leaders lying, and the church made to look silly. Brigham, where were you then? It’s a weak man, an insignificant

"leader," who has to rely on draconian, follow-the-leader-at-all-costs, quasi-military discipline to boss the chook-farm. No wonder the Lord in D&C 121 makes it clear that the men, not the women, in the church are bound to lose the power of the priesthood due to unrighteous dominion. No wonder the man of perdition and the false prophet are going to soon make their end run and drag the great many along with them into the pit.

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Grateful for Courageous People

In his recent letter to *Dialogue* (Winter 1994) John Emmett claims to be a person with a "balanced and personal appraisal of the church and everything associated with it." He then proceeds to admit that "there will also be a diversity of opinion about God, the Restoration, and the church." However, Brother Emmett undermines both of these statements in his critique of Lavina Fielding Anderson's essay, "Freedom of Conscience: A Personal Statement."

First of all, no one is completely balanced or neutral in their approach to any issue. We all come with the personal baggage of our own beliefs, world view, cultural influences, personal experiences, and so on. This is obviously true of Brother Emmett, who posits a decidedly legalistic approach to life in general and Mormonism in particular. For him, the lines are clearly drawn, with moral traffic lights flashing to let us know when we have crossed them. But this view does not allow for the diversity of interpretation which Brother Emmett

claims to accept.

According to Brother Emmett, Lavina cannot possibly be a "believing and orthodox Mormon" because of the views she expresses in her essay. But the fact is that Lavina's beliefs, her service in the church, and her actions are all very orthodox. So actually the question that Brother Emmett ought to ask is why and how does a believing and orthodox member of the church come to hold views like those expressed in Lavina's essay? Furthermore, why does Brother Emmett think he has the right to judge Lavina's beliefs as unorthodox? Surely, as Mormons we must be suspicious of any attempts to impose creedal tests or even tests of orthodoxy on one another given the fact that Joseph Smith was reviled, and finally martyred, for his own unorthodox ideas and beliefs.

The orthodoxy litmus test which Brother Emmett applies is that of belief in the Restoration. It seems that while Brother Emmett admits that there will be a variety of opinions on this matter, there is only one acceptable view of the Restoration. This stand, in and of itself, undermines Brother Emmett's position as a balanced observer. He has a definite preference for what Paul Toscano, in his book *The Sanctity of Dissent*, identifies as the modern Mormon view of the Restoration. This view holds that the Restoration's primary purpose was to give us a priesthood structure which provides a "fail-safe conduit to God" (Toscano, xii). But others, such as myself, believe that the Restoration "was meant to re-establish the truth that our relationship to God is individual, personal, direct, and passionate. Our apostles, prophets, and leaders were meant not to give us rules, but to call us to Christ" (xiii). Just because Lav-

ina or I or anyone else does not believe in the Restoration in the same way Brother Emmett does, this does not mean we do not believe in the Restoration. It also does not mean that we ignore the "Lord's chosen." For me, the "Lord's chosen" are those who testify of Christ and who speak with the power of the Holy Ghost, whether they hold the office of apostle or primary pianist; whether they are a child or an adult, a man or a woman, Mormon or Catholic.

Because we are all the "Lord's Chosen," I find myself particularly offended by Brother Emmett's suitcase analogy. In his opinion we should not be concerned by the 200 cases of ecclesiastical abuse documented by Lavina, because it is like worrying about one lost bag of luggage among a thousand that have arrived safely. Clearly, there are several problems with this analogy. First, Christ obviously does not deal in numbers. It is he who told us that the good shepherd would leave

the ninety and nine to find the one lost sheep. Second, a piece of luggage is not analogous to a human life. Luggage can be replaced, but pain from ecclesiastical abuse can have emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological effects on not only the person abused but also on their spouse, family, and friends.

Finally, Brother Emmett reminds us that life is not fair. Of course life is not fair. But does that mean we do nothing when we encounter injustice in the world? Do we ignore our covenants to bear one another's burdens because life is not fair? Do we turn the other way in the face of starvation, war, and torture because life is not fair? Do we silently allow unrighteous dominion to take place in the church of our beloved savior because life is not fair? It is exactly because life is not fair that I am grateful for courageous people like Lavina Fielding Anderson.

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