

Volume 2, No. 1

April 1996

IT'S CONFERENCE TIME . . .

President Hinckley, opening his first general conference as president of the Church, commented that conference provides an opportunity for "that sociality which is so pleasant and so important a part of the culture of this great organization." He also defined the purpose a general conference as: "To renew our faith, to enlarge our understanding of things divine, to express our love and respect one for another in this great and remarkable brotherhood and sisterhood." ("As We Gather Together," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995), 5.

So how are we doing?

That will be the topic of the semi-annual Conference Critique, a spirited interchange about conference talks and conference doings, its plusses, its pageantries, its ploddings, and implications. All serious conference watchers and their opinions are welcome at April 8, 1996, at the third-floor auditorium of the main library, 209 E. 500 South, Salt Lake City, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The panel, moderated by Lavina Fielding Anderson, includes Margaret Merrill Toscano, Deborah Rossiter, Gene Mahalko, and Victor Gener.

Margaret, the mother of four daughters, was, with her husband Paul, a cofounder of the Mormon Alliance in July 1992 and a former president and member of the board of the Mormon Women's Forum. A feminist and a theologian, Margaret is currently teaching classical languages at the University of Utah and writing her dissertation on sacred sexuality. Her most recent publication is "Images of the Female Body--Human and Divine," in *Mormon Women's Forum: An LDS Feminist Quarterly*, 5 (Dec. 1994): 1-24. A few months after Paul's stake president excommunicated

him in September 1993, Margaret stopped attending church.

Deborah Rossiter, a full-time Provo homemaker, is the single mother of five boys ages five to eighteen, intermittently working on my bachelor's degree in English, and writes fiction. "A Mormon Story" appears in the most recent issue of *Sunstone*. She is a lifetime member of the Mormon church, attends regularly, and is a visiting teacher but describes her relationship to the church as "somewhat ambiguous." She explains, "Last year, when my husband died I was told that two people whom I wanted to speak at his funeral could not speak. One had been excommunicated and the other was on probation." She grew up in San Diego "where we got only an hour of conference on the radio; and I had no idea who the General Authorities were or what they said."

Victor Gener, originally from Boston, Massachusetts, served LDS mission in the Utah Ogden Mission (formerly Salt Lake City North mission). He is currently a philosophy major at the University of Utah with an emphasis in religious thought, works as an administrative assistant for the university's Bioethics Center, and is now selecting a graduate school.

Gene Mahalko grew up in Eastern Pennsylvania, the child of a convert from Russian Orthodoxy and a third-generation East Coast Mormon with no Utah roots. For much of Gene's youth, general conference consisted of driving sixty miles to the district chapel to hear an audio broadcast. Gene graduated from BYU with two degrees (math and computer science), served a mission, married, and was in the army in Korea. A job with WordPerfect brought him back to Utah after fifteen years in Texas and North Dakota.



"GUIDEPOSTS" IDENTIFIED

At the winter's quarterly meeting, therapist James E. Chapman gave a polished presentation and led a lively discussion on "Finding Your Way Through: Helpful Guideposts for Disaffected Mormons." He began by setting the stage with a case study of disaffection. During the 1960s, "Mary," who could not accept the Church's racism, was excommunicated when she made a panel presentation on her personal beliefs.

Jim identified what he calls "new emerging Mormons." He describes them as having been "deeply committed to the Church" and still committed "to the gospel, to the highest of Christian values. The irony of their situation is that there seems to be no legitimate place for them in their own religious community. Most of them hope to stay Mormons, to hold their new ground, to secure a firm place for themselves in their own church."

Emotionally, they must deal both with grief and guilt, despondency over a lack of direction, pain at being rejected by others, and confusion as they recognize that "many of their outer commitments as Mormons are at war with their changing inner convictions."

Such emerging Mormons have four alternatives: abandon the Church completely, repress their questions and suppress the inner turmoil, protest in open confrontation and accept the inevitable conflict and censure (the greatest danger with this course, Jim points out, is not the risk of official punishment but the risk "of imitating and adopting the offensive traits of the opposition" and losing one's "commitment to the high ethical principles which once justified the confrontations"), and fourth, "building new and value-based networks amid and parallel to the Church, to coexist with and penetrate the old." This fourth option is characterized by "loving affiliation" and "a gentle and spontaneous coming together." It is "not a campaign or strategy, but a consciousness; not an event, but a natural flowing process."

Jim also analyzed the therapeutic tasks that accompany the three phases of ambiva-

lence, commitment, and integration/resolution.

In the twenty-two tasks that made up his personal odyssey of twenty years ago, which he shared, he found himself largely alone, reading deeply, thinking intensely, and writing to clarify his thoughts and the stages he was trying to deal with. Discussion groups such as those offered by alternative forums offer the possibility of "companions on the journey" of rebuilding religious commitment and new relationships.

CASE REPORTS Vol. 1 DUE IN MAY

After many promises and postponements, the Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Vol. 1, will be mailed in late May. "This first volume will be atypical in a couple of ways," comments Lavina Fielding Anderson. "We've always planned the Case Reports to be like a magazine, with many short articles on a variety of topics; but this first volume will consist mainly of one gigantic article."

The topic is child sexual abuse in the Church. About half of the space will be taken up with contextual materials: official statements on sexual abuse, reports of how other churches handle sexual abuse, and about thirty cases that have been reported in the newspapers involving criminal prosecutions and/or lawsuits against Mormons involved in child sexual abuse, including the most recent case filed--a suit for \$750 million in West Virginia in which the Church is named as a defendant for negligence.

The other half consists of three interlinked cases involving bishops as alleged perpetrators; no criminal prosecutions were ever filed but two women were excommunicated for "embarrassing the Church" by refusing to be quiet about abuse occurring to children.

Volume 1 "should have come out in 1995," notes Anderson, so Volume 2 will also come out this year--in the fall. Subscribers for 1995 will receive Volume 1 and, if they renewed their subscriptions for 1996, Volume 2 as well.

The number in the upper right-hand corner of the label contains the year of the subscription.



VOLUNTEERS WELCOME

The Mormon Alliance has a long list of tasks and a limited number of hands, so the welcome mat is out! If any of these jobs interest you, please contact Lavina Fielding Anderson (801) 467-1617.

- Serving as a trustee to do long-term planning, select topics for quarterly meetings, and set policy
- Planning and chairing quarterly events
- Serving on case reports committee, listening to individuals who report their experiences and helping them write it, if needed
- Serving on reconciliation committee to promote better understandings between leaders and members
- Letter-writing project to General Authorities and general auxiliary to provide feedback from the field
- Preparing a "member's handbook" to analyze policies that impact members
- Maintaining mailing list for subscribers, media contacts, and others
- Advertising upcoming events
- Writing press releases
- Writing, editing, reproducing, and/or mailing press releases, postcards, and newsletters
- Handling mailings
- Scheduling facilities for quarterly meetings
- Participating on a conference critique panel
- Moderating a conference critique panel
- Planning and chairing Sunstone session
- Staffing Mormon Alliance information table at Sunstone

THOUGHTS FOR OUR DAY

"Our wretched species is so made that those who walk on the well-trodden path throw stones at those who are showing a new road."

-- Voltaire

"The way that leads to power in life must ever be straight and stony. It is still true, and will be forever, that the broad roads and flowery paths lead to weakness and misery, not to happiness and strength. There is no real happiness that does not involve self-denial."

--David Starr Jordan

ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENT

By Common Consent is the quarterly newsletter of the Mormon Alliance. Comments, articles, and items for inclusion are welcome, if they are submitted thirty days before the mailing deadlines, which are the first weeks of July, October, January, and April. Please send them to Mormon Alliance, 6337 S. Highland Drive, Mail Box 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121.

TRUSTEES OF THE MORMON ALLIANCE

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To report cases of ecclesiastical and spiritual abuse, contact Lavina Fielding Anderson, 1519 Roberta Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84115, (801) 467-1617.

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Subscriptions are \$30 for each calendar year. At any point during the year that a subscription begins, you will receive the four newsletters of that year, the Case Reports volume for that year, and notifications about the quarterly meetings in January, April, August, and October. On request, you may receive meeting notices at no charge.

If the upper right-hand corner of your mailing label has "95," you will receive this newsletter, Volume 1 of the Case Reports, and a reminder, which we hope you will have already heeded, to renew your subscription for 1996. If the label contains "96," you will receive Volume 1 of the Case Reports (unless you are a new subscriber since January) and Volume 2, due out in the fall, plus the quarterly newsletters. If you subscribed in January 1996, you will receive only the 1996 newsletters and Volume 2 of the Case Reports, but not Volume 1 unless you order it separately.

Individual copies of the Case Reports will be available for \$20.00 from Signature Books, 564 W. 400 North, Salt Lake City, UT 84116. The price includes shipping and handling.

A letter in the upper right-hand corner also means that your subscription will continue through 1996. If your records show any discrepancies with the mailing label designations, please write us.

Mail subscriptions (\$30) to the Mormon Alliance, 6337 Highland Drive, Box 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121.

CHURCHWATCH

Lavina Fielding Anderson

Note: This column contains reports of events relevant to on-going issues of leader-member relations, Mormon feminism, and academic freedom.

January 1996. Among the fourteen lettered items on a BYU flier, "Statements in Support of the Honor Code and Honor Code Compliance," were: An important aspect of the "(F) Freshmen Experience" is the right of first year students to see the upper division students and each other as models of the Honor Code. (G) Required compliance to the Spirit and the letter of the Honor Code does not violate the 'teach them correct principles and they govern themselves' statement. We should teach the correct principles and let the individual, as demonstrated by his or her actions and attitudes, choose to accept the privilege to attend or work at BYU or to find an institution where the policies and values are more to their liking. We should not be in a position, or be perceived as being in a position of cajoling, pleading, or coercing students or employees to appropriate behavior. (H) The BYU community has a responsibility to those who abide by the Honor Code to require compliance of all. the expectation of compliance is neither threatening nor unfair."

In a related move, President Merrill J. Bateman announced that local bishops will receive annual letters asking if BYU employees in their congregations have met the standard for temple worthiness. He insists that the policy is not new. "In the past, he said, the university relied on church leaders to notify it if an employee was not in compliance. But that method was 'haphazard,' he said, since not all church officials followed through." If local church leaders decide that a BYU employee does not qualify for temple eligibility, then that person will have "a period of time in which they would be expected to try to resolve the issues," President Bateman said. "But if, for one reason or another, they don't resolve those issues, then that could lead to their termination." Some professors view the change as a significant shift from past practice, call it "intrusive" and say it will interfere with their private relationships with their religious leaders. "It means that someone outside the university will be making decisions as to whether I stay at the university or not," said Scott Abbott, an associate profes-

sor of German. William E. Evenson, a professor of physics said the administration promised three years ago, when it changed the academic-freedom policy, that it would not send lists of names to local bishops to check off. "I've been a bishop," he said. "I think most bishops will be supportive and protective of those in their flock. But there will be some who are not. And even with a supportive bishop, I'm troubled by being monitored. I'm troubled by the lack of trust this reflects." The new policy also requires non-Mormon employees to meet annually with their dean to "renew your continuing commitment" to BYU's Honor Code. Denise K. Magner, "A Test of Faith: To Stay Employed, Brigham Young Professors Must Prove Spiritual Worthiness," Chronicle of Higher Learning, 23 Feb. 1996, A17.

16 January 1996. A divorced mother, acting on behalf of her eleven-year-old daughter, filed a \$750 million lawsuit in West Virginia accusing the Church of negligence. The child and her brother were abused by their father, James F. Adams, for six years beginning in 1988. In September 1989, he confessed the abuse to his father (who was also his bishop), to the stake president, and to his Mormon employer, the CEO of a hospital. None of them reported the abuse, nor did at least three Mormon women: Adams's mother, his second wife, and the wife of the hospital CEO. Six months later, Adams was given a temple recommend to marry his second wife. The abuse continued for five years. When the son showed his stepmother (by then divorced from Adams) a video of Adams abusing both children and forcing them to perform sex acts on each other, she telephoned their biological mother in Alaska who telephoned the state police. Adams, confronted at work, admitted the abuse and was immediately arrested. He was sentenced to a maximum of 185 years in prison; but his petition for a new trial, based on a complaint that he was intimidated into pleading guilty by church leaders to all counts as charged, has been granted and is scheduled to begin on 29 April.

28 January 1996. A letter from the California area presidency, Loren C. Dunn, C. Max Caldwell,



and Cree-L Kofford, was read in all sacrament meetings. Assembly Bill 1982, which would prohibit California from recognizing same-sex marriages legalized in other states, was due for a vote that week. "Any effort that members, acting as individual citizens, can make to contact their own legislators in support of this measure would be in harmony with the Church's proclamation on the family," read the letter. The bill passed the assembly. As it approached the house, priesthood quorums received instructions to write their Senators; sample letters were provided, along with the senators' addresses; they were instructed to have husband and wife write separate letters; "Hand written letters are the most effective. . . . We are requested to write, as individuals. The Church should not be mentioned." Photocopies in my possession

21 February 1996. Lowell L. Bennion died at age eighty-seven. He was director of the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah for twenty-seven years until he was forced out by Ernest L. Wilkinson, then BYU president and Church Commissioner of Education. Wilkinson, a conservative, was offended by Bennion's liberalism and his open discomfort with the Church's ban on black priesthood. "The psychological stress of the summer of 1962 almost exhausted Lowell," but an unusual spiritual experience sustained him, Mary L. Bradford, his biographer, wrote. One night, Bennion had a powerful dream in which he saw Jesus Christ standing at the foot of his bed, looking at him and smiling. Jesus "held out his arms in blessing, and I felt peace and comfort." One of Bennion's sons was excommunicated for homosexuality; Lowell attended the court to plead for understanding. Another son became president of Church-owned Ricks College. Church President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke at Bennion's funeral. An open-mike memorial service was conducted in his honor by friends on 17 March 1996.

24 February 1996. According to estimates by the Church's management information center, there were 4,719,000 members outside the United States and the same number inside the United States, for a total of 9,438,000. On 25 February, there were more outside the United States. The Church includes more than 2,100 stakes, 700 districts, 300 mission, 22,500 wards in 156 nations or territories. Church statisticians estimate that in 1999 there will be more non-English-speaking members in the Church than English-speaking members and that in 2012, Spanish-speakers will outnumber English-

speakers. Jay M. Todd, "More Members Now Outside U.S. Than in U.S.," Ensign, March 1996, 76.

27 February 1996. Avraham Gileadi, excommunicated in September 1993 even after he stopped his controversial and popular lectures on Isaiah and the last days, was rebaptized by a soon-to-be-missionary son and confirmed by Leauon Otten, the stake president who excommunicated him. Otten also lifted the ban on his writing and speaking "though they suggested he stay close to the scriptures and words of church authorities." Gileadi described his baptism as "a sweet experience. . . . I feel like I'm home again. . . . I've grown so much. . . . I have learned to love my leaders unconditionally, even after all I have been through. I truly have no hard feelings." Neighbor and fellow ward member Kent Haws commented that "in a real sense, everything was taken from Avraham, but to his credit, he valiantly practiced the Christian virtues and now everything is being restored in even greater measure." Gileadi "has been humble and contrite and submissive and has taught us all the principle of repentance and long-suffering. When faced with adversity, he yielded his heart to God," added Haws' wife, Dee. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Church Rebaptizes Excommunicant," Salt Lake Tribune, 2 March 1996, C-1.

March 1996. Noel B. Reynolds, president of FARMS, wrote: "The negative spirit of anti-Mormonism lives on, surviving its retired or expired standard-bearers. Each generation recruits new champions, mostly from a relatively small number of dissidents on the fringes of Mormon society. . . . Many in the news media who are drawn mindlessly to controversy have given the detractors new status and power, christening them 'Mormon intellectuals' and presenting them to the world as the thinking Mormons who know the inside story about the Church. In their rush to produce controversial news, many journalists have overlooked the obvious truth—the LDS intellectual and academic communities are composed of strong believers in Joseph Smith's revelations and solid supporters of the Church leadership. Only at the fringes is there noticeable dissent. The overwhelming majority of LDS academics and intellectuals are active, faithful Latter-day Saints who find these detractors to be driven by a secret hate for a goodness they cannot understand or enjoy on their own terms." Noel B. Reynolds, "Preface," Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars (Salt Lake City: Des-

eret Book Company/Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1996), ix-x.

March 1996. Elder L. Lionel Kendrick of the Seventy wrote an article on "Our Moral Agency," (Ensign, March 1996, 28-33), the term which, under Elder Packer's guidance, has replaced the nonscriptural term "free agency." "Moral agency" is used once (D&C 101:78) in the scriptures. In this doctrinal article, Elder Kendrick referred twenty-seven times to "agency" or "moral agency," none to "free agency."

2 March 1996. Utah Senator Craig Taylor (R-Kaysville) described high school students in favor of controversial proposed gay-straight alliance clubs as pawns of the ACLU and other adult groups. According to him, the gay agenda is: "'Since they can't reproduce, they have basically said, 'We will seduce and sodomize your children.''" The Salt Lake School Board has banned all non-curricular clubs, including Bible study groups, to avoid permitting the proposed alliances. Samuel A. Autman, "Young Protesters Are Pawns, Critics Claim," Salt Lake Tribune, 2 March 1996, B-1. Both the school board and the legislature held illegal, secret meetings, thereby earning the press's professional "Black Hole" awards for violating public access laws.

12 March 1996. Elder M. Russell Ballard, speaking on the "last days" at BYU's devotional, warned students against "false prophets within and without the Church" and preached obedience to the First Presidency. "We will not lead you astray. We cannot," said Elder Ballard. He also reportedly said, "If we do not know, then nobody knows" in

reference to "revelation affecting the church, particularly about the time of the Second Coming." He cited the decline in SAT scores, the increase of violent crimes, suicides, and illegitimate births, and increased natural disasters as evidence of the last days. Taylor Syphus, "Ballard: Heed LDS Leaders in Faith during 'Last Days,'" Salt Lake Tribune, 16 March 1996, C-2.

April 1996, Academic Questions published papers from a symposium, "God in the Academy," organized by George M. Marsden, University of Notre Dame, who was a forum speaker at BYU on 27 February 1996. Other participants were Stephen Macedo of Syracuse University, Glenn C. Altschuler of Cornell University, James Nuechterlein, editor of First Things, David G. Roskies of Jewish Theological Seminary, and Jacob Neusner, Distinguished Research Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida and visiting professor of religion at Bard College. Neusner, while approvingly quoting Joseph Smith as saying, "The glory of God is intelligence," also observed, "Perhaps the strongest argument against religion in the academy derives from religious academies, Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, standing for the lot of them. There, month by month, dress codes shade over into thought codes, neat haircuts serving for right-thinking brains underneath, so that the entire viability of a Christian (Latter Day Saints) university as a center of free inquiry is called into question by shameless firings and intimidation of wrong opinion." Jacob Neusner, "An Infusion of the Whole," Academic Questions, Spring 1996, 17-21.

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