



MORMON
ALLIANCE

BY COMMON CONSENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE MORMON ALLIANCE

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SEXUAL ABUSE & ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY

This August at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, Janice M. Allred presented a long paper entitled "Sacrificing the Children: Why the Church Won't Fight Child Sexual Abuse." She answered the question inherent in her title by stating, "Although Church leaders have explicitly denounced child sexual abuse, the power structure of the church and the follow-your-leaders rule legitimizes it. When the church requires members to obey their leaders even when doing so violates their own conscience, when it requires members to accept the utterances of leaders as absolute truth, it demands a sacrifice of us even greater than giving up our sexual purity; it violates something more precious than our body. It demands the sacrifice of our judgment, our spiritual feelings, our free agency; it violates our integrity and personhood. It forces us to yield to the church, to a leader, that which should only be given freely to God. The church cannot fight child sexual abuse as long as it legitimizes and defends ecclesiastical and spiritual abuse.

In a powerful and moving conclusion, Janice wrote:

I cried, "Oh Lord, how long?" How long will you suffer the cries of these little ones to come up to you in vain?" And the Spirit came upon me and said, "Prophecy against the leaders of my Church," and I said in my heart, "How can I do it? I do not wish evil upon anyone." And the Spirit said to me, "They will bring it upon themselves." And I wrote the words which the Spirit put into my mind.

In their folly, in their blindness, in their pride, they have said, "Let us lead the people, and we will never lead them astray." They have taught the people to revere their leaders, rather than to have faith in Jesus Christ. They have said that peace and safety lie in following them.

And the leaders have abused the people. They have laid heavy burdens on them, too grievous to be borne. They have not led them to Jesus Christ who would have lifted their burdens, wiped their tears, and healed their wounds, but they heaped more burdens

upon them and lashed their backs if they did not move quickly enough. They have used the people to gratify their pride, satisfy their appetites, and cover their sins. Woe, woe be to all leaders who have eaten the flock and not fed them. Woe, woe, especially to those high leaders in high places who sit upon their thrones of power and do not heed the cries of the little ones, but sacrifice them to that great god Moloch whose image they have erected in the shadow of my temple, because they would rather that the children suffer than have one blemish put upon that great idol which they have served: the idol of their power, the idol of their influence, the idol of their reputations. They would rather that the little ones suffer than destroy that great idol of leader infallibility, that great idol of "follow your leaders."

Oh people of my church, how oft have I pled unto you to come unto me, but ye would not. How oft would I have comforted you with my spirit and poured down my revelations upon your heads but ye would not. Instead ye preferred to follow your leaders; you praised them all the day, but me ye have not looked for nor found.

For I am found upon the cross and you are ashamed of me. You could not bear to be humiliated. You praised the rich and successful, and honored them, but the poor, and the wounded, and the hungry you have not regarded but have blamed them for their own condition and cast them aside.

And because you have not led my people unto me but have set yourselves up as a guide and a light for them, it shall be done to you even as you said. You shall be responsible for all their afflictions. All that you have afflicted upon them shall be returned unto you. Your secret sins and works of darkness and counsels of deceit shall be published abroad and those who revered you, who well nigh worshiped you, shall despise you. And all this will surely come to pass, unless ye repent. Therefore, repent ye and come unto me saith the Lord.



Conference Trends and Tensions

The Mormon Alliance's semi-annual conference critique was, like conference itself, filled with paradoxical and even contradictory messages.

Panelist Bruce Jensen commented that, out of all the sessions, he most enjoyed the vitality and spirituality of the general Relief Society session. He praised President Jack's message that "women are poised" on the threshold of "a new spirituality," ready to move forward, and spoke with longing of the lack of a similar message for men.

However, the other panelists expressed concerns about the mixed message they felt women received. Moderator Lavina Fielding Anderson commented, "I always get very nervous when somebody starts out assuring me that I'm not a second-class citizen," and identified many of the messages of apparent praise as being, instead, "threatening prescriptions--this is how you'd *better* behave."

Devery Anderson pointed out the paradox that men get praised "for being more like women" in acquiring traits of sensitivity, service, and kindness, "but women don't get praised for being more like men." Another individual commented on how openly patronizing it would have been for President Jack to have said, after President Faust's address to women, "These men add such luster to our meeting," a comment that President Hinckley made after his daughter, Virginia H. Pearce, spoke representing the Young Women. (Her talk was universally praised by panelists and audience members for being specific, helpful, and positive.)

Panelist Dan Wotherspoon said he particularly enjoyed conference as a "story-maintenance ritual," a function performed in religious societies by its shamans. Most panelists agreed that this function was important, but some commented on the ominous implications of one repeated story: the emphasis on authority.

Audience members commented: "Elder Packer suggested his special witness status, but basically refused to say how he had acquired that status. Most of the apostles identified themselves as special witnesses, but the testimonies they bore were to the Holy Ghost--experiences that are fully accessible to ordinary members of the Church."

A bright spot for most listeners was Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's address on the gospel promise of peace and a general deemphasis on specific programs in favor of talks with broader gospel themes, particularly the atonement and mission of Jesus Christ.

For tapes of this and past conference critiques, contact Steve Mayfield, (801) 773-8914. The next conference critique will convene April 7, 1997, at the third-floor auditorium of the main library, 209 East. 500 South, Salt Lake City, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. All serious conference watchers are invited.

Drawing a Blank?

Two readers of the Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance: Volume 1, 1995, were startled to discover some blank pages at a gripping point in the narrative. If you have a defective copy, please return it to Signature Books, 564 W. 400 N., Salt Lake City, UT 84116, to the attention of Boyd Payne, and you will promptly receive a replacement copy free of charge.

Volume 2 Coming Up

The Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Vol. 2, 1996, is due off the press before the end of the year, marking the end of "the world's longest catch-up game," according to co-editor Lavina Fielding Anderson. It follows the 1995 volume, which was mailed 1 August.

This volume will contain articles and essays, experiences of missionaries whose presidents concentrated on "the numbers," and the experiences of some gay and lesbian members of the Church whose efforts to open respectful and informative dialogues with their Church leaders made them into targets. Over half of the volume will be devoted to a documentary history of the excommunication proceedings of Janice Allred.

Publishing two volumes in one year has been an expensive undertaking, and the Alliance would welcome most appreciatively any contributions toward defraying the cost of the second volume.



CHURCHWATCH

Lavina Fielding Anderson

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

25 June 1996. BYU passed its ten-year accreditation review with "high marks" after a March visit and document reviews by the nineteen-member team, chaired by Pat Ford. According to the report, "The university claims simultaneously both a spiritual and an intellectual mission, and the present evaluators discovered persistent, significant testimony that these two aspirations, together with the documents which deal with them, are consciously lived on campus, and inform virtually every decision." The accreditation team recommended: (1) better measures of its mission and a written policy to outline "how assessments will influence on-going planning and activity; (2) better training for the new technology planned in the library addition; (3) better definitions in and standardization of the institution's data bases; (4) less "unevenness" in implementing faculty annual review policies; (5) a reduction of "administrative layers, confusion between staff and line functions, and a thick lattice of administrative arrangements that obscure core administrative systems, (6) more student involvement in policy decisions, (7) reductions in large sections for general education class size, and (8) "a master plan for upgrading athletic facilities." [no author], "Despite Some Rifts, BYU Receives Glowing Marks," Salt Lake Tribune, 6 July 1996, B-3; Sharon M. Haddock, "BYU Passes Evaluators' Sharp Scrutiny," Deseret News, 7 July 1996, B-3.

6 July 1996. Fifty-three-year-old Ronald Alan Jenkins, a former high school teacher, Scoutmaster, and Mormon, was sentenced in Twin Falls, Idaho, to prison for at least seven years and a maximum of seventeen years for molesting one teenage boy. He also confessed to molesting seven boys over the past twenty years. *Associated Press*, "Teacher Sentenced for Molesting Boys," Deseret News, 6 July 1996, B-9.

12 July 1996. Lisa M. Talbot, the first woman doctoral candidate in BYU's Electrical Engineering Department, filed a civil-rights action against BYU, the Church, and twenty "John Does" for "blocking her progress toward a doctorate." She said her dissertation proposals were 'repeatedly rejected' even though some were eventually approved for development by male doctoral students. Joe Constanzo, "Student Accuses Her BYU Advisers of Bias," Deseret News, 13 July 1996, A-11.

29 July 1996. A study by the Center for Policy Alternatives and the Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington, D.C., has ranked Utah forty-sixth out of the fifty states in the wages received by women in Utah compared to men. Nationally women earn 72 percent of what men are paid; in Utah, they earn 61.1 percent.

August 1996. Michelangelo Signorile, in "The Secret History of Mormons," Out (August 1996), 25-26, describes BYU's aversion therapy program for male homosexuals, initiated after a 1959 meeting by the General Authorities. The men were encouraged to masturbate while viewing erotic photos of women; if they "got an erection at the sight of the male erotica, however, they were jolted for eight long seconds with a 1,600-volt charge via electrodes connected to their arms." The article also reviews D. Michael Quinn's just-released Same-Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example (University of Illinois Press) and includes a brief interview with Quinn: "I was married and have four children, and so I feel I'm part of a complicated interaction," he tells me. 'I don't define myself as "bisexual" because I don't have an equal attraction to both genders. I am overwhelmingly attracted to men.'"



16 August 1996. The September issue of Sunstone, available at the annual Sunstone Symposium, included an anonymous article by a BYU faculty member documenting unannounced changes in contracts that give the administration more control over faculty's private lives, violations of procedural safeguards made at the time the academic freedom document was accepted by the university administration, a pattern of discriminatory hiring against women (five cases documented), the firing, exclusion, and censuring of women faculty for "feminist" activities, interviews with BYU administrators and General Authorities in which women are asked whether they are lesbians, punitive restrictions on faculty who write letters in newspapers, participate in Sunstone, or otherwise protest the trend at the university, a list of nine faculty who left the university out of discouragement, the pressure put on Brian Evenson to leave, the persecution of sociologist Larry Young for speaking at Sunstone and wearing an earring, the firing of Gail Houston, and President Bateman's personal attack on VOICE's Clothesline Project and Brandie Siegfried as its advisor. The article concluded with the revelation that Bateman had plagiarized many of the ideas and even the wording of Gertrude Himmelfarb in his graduation address in April 1995. Himmelfarb is a neoconservative, currently an emeritus history professor at City University of New York, residing in Washington, D.C.

At the annual University Conference for faculty, which opened the school season on 26 August, Bateman said: "I apologize for the ambiguity and inattention which created the confusion. The attribution could and should have been clearer. I promise to be more careful in the future." Bateman also paraphrased the 1991 statement issued by the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve which "'counsel[ed] members not to participate in symposium where presentations injure the Church or are not appropriate.' I believe the publication of an anonymous article by a symposia group denigrating members of the Twelve and advocating the transformation of BYU into a secular university supports the wisdom of that statement." Hilary Groutage, "Y. President Denies Plagiarism Charge, Offers Explanation, Apology to Scholar," Deseret News, 21 August, 1996, B-2; Dennis Romboy, "Y. President Writes Scholar, Denies Plagiarizing Her Work," Deseret News, 20 August 1996, B-1; Hilary

Groutage and Peggy Fletcher Stack, "BYU Leader Sorry for Speech's 'Ambiguity,'" Salt Lake Tribune, 27 August 1996, B-2; Sharon M. Haddock, "Y. Leader Again Defends Himself," Deseret News, 28-29 August 1996, B-6; Janna Nielsen, "Pres. Bateman Answers Plagiarism Concerns," (BYU) Universe, August 29, 1996; from @BYU Newslite; Lisa Guernsey, "Brigham Young's President Accused of Plagiarism in Inaugural Speech," Chronicle of Higher Education, electronic NEWS UPDATE posted Friday, August 16, 1996, printout in my possession.

9 September 1996. LaVar Withers, a retired Mormon physician in Idaho, admitted that he sexually molested patients for more than thirty years in exchange for a plea bargain that reduced the charge from a felony to a single charge of battery. He was sentenced to serve thirty days in jail, spend two years on probation, do ten hours of volunteer service a week, and pay \$15,500 in fines. The complaint referred to 117 victims between 1965 and 1995, when Withers retired "under pressure from the state Board of Medicine." He agreed to the plea bargain after ten women testified of being fondled, groped, and raped, and after Special Prosecutor Dan Hawkley threatened him with sixteen new charges. The five newly identified victims included a woman now serving a Mormon mission in Central America. Withers, married and the father of four children, admitted that there was a "factual basis for the charges" but did not admit wrong-doing or apologize. An anonymous "Church source" confirmed that Withers had been put on probation at least a year earlier. This source did not specify the terms of the probation except to say that he did not have a temple recommend. There was no indication a new court was scheduled, although one witness at the sentencing hearing suggested that it would be appropriate. Associated Press, Rexburg, ID, "Retired MD Admits 30 Years of Molestations," Deseret News, 15 Sept. 1996, B-2; Associated Press, Idaho Falls, "Jailed Ex-Doctor Also Under LDS Discipline," Deseret News, 20 Sept. 1996, A-15; "Abuse Case Spurs Change In-Law's Limits," Deseret News, 20 Sept. 1996, A-15; Associated Press, "Doctor Hopes to Spend Sentence at Home" and "Our View: No House Arrest for Withers," Idaho Statesman, 18 Sept. 1996.

18 September 1996. Bishops and stake presidents in three Utah regions met with Elder Alexander B.



Morrison, the area president, to learn about the implementation of an Inner City Welfare Region, piloted earlier in Ogden and now being implemented under the full-time direction of Loren Burton, newly appointed executive director. Elements of the program include resource sharing by wealthier stakes, LDS Social Services counseling for birth parents, those with same sex attraction, and adults molested as children; and requests to members to attend ethnic awareness and gang awareness workshops, provide foster care, mentor, and serve welfare missions. *Bishop Lynn H. Burgon, sacrament meeting address, Whittier Ward, 22 Sept. 1996, notes by Lavina Fielding Anderson.*

A column by Lois M. Collins, *Deseret News*, Human Services writer, described a new program that will begin in November 1996 called Salt Lake Interfaith Hospitality Network. The program enlists host congregations who will "temporarily adopt homeless families, who will stay in the churches overnight. Volunteers from the congregation will provide a meal, recreation or study assistance, friendship, and breakfast." The children will be driven to their schools every day and the parents will go to a "day center where other volunteers will...help with job hunting, a housing search...utility assistance, and job training." Collins said that "eight host churches" will participate, and in another section of the article named Episcopalians, Church of Christ, Greek Orthodox, Lutherans, Methodists, Mormons, "and other congregations" but without specifying that any of them are providing the host congregations. (She did not mention the inner city welfare region, and it is not clear that there is any connection between it and the program she describes.) *Lois M. Collins, "S. L. Churches Come Together to Assist Homeless Families," Deseret News, 17-18 Sept. 1996, A-13.*

28 September 1996. Mormon women are more likely than Mormon men "to attend church, pray privately, consider themselves strong Church members, . . . have spiritual experiences, . . . believe the Church . . . is the only true church, have faith in Jesus Christ, and act lovingly." On 26 out of 31 measures of religious belief and practice, women rated higher than men. Men were more likely to say they knew LDS scriptures and doctrines and more likely to believe that they were going to the celestial kingdom. *Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Men Less Religious Than Women?" Salt Lake Tribune, 28 Sept. 1996, C-1, C-2.*

ORGANIZATIONAL STATEMENT

The Mormon Alliance was incorporated on July 4, 1992. Its purposes are to identify and document ecclesiastical/spiritual abuse, to promote healing and closure for its survivors, to build more sensitive leadership, to empower LDS members to participate with more authenticity in Mormonism, and to foster a healthier religious community.

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 January, April, July, and October. Please mail them to Mormon Alliance, 6337 South Highland Drive, Mailbox 215, Salt Lake City, Utah 84121.

Trustees of the Mormon Alliance

Janice Merrill Allred, Lavina Fielding Anderson,
James E. Chapman, Allen Roberts,
Marti Lynne Jones, Paul Swenson

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 for that year, the Case Reports volume for that year, and notifications about quarterly meetings in January, April, August, and October. On request, you may receive meeting notices at no charge.

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

Sorting Out Subscriptions...

Partly because of the delayed publication schedule and partly because of human nature, subscription renewals are lagging. Please check your address label. If it says 1995, you need to renew immediately to pay for the 1996 newsletters you have already received and for the forthcoming annual (which you will not receive, if you don't renew).

And brace yourselves for a renewal notice in January 1997. That will let you start out the new year as a paid-up subscriber and the Alliance as fiscally healthy.



"Rules: Whom Do They Apply To?"

Why have a handbook of instructions if you're going to make up the rules anyway? Why have a rulebook if only the leaders have access to it? Is it true, as Fred Voros speculates, that "There is only one rule: The leaders make the rules"? Do some operations of Mormonism predispose its leaders to consider themselves above the laws and rules that bind members?

The January quarterly meeting of the Mormon Alliance will discuss "Rules: Whom Do They Apply To?" The exact nature of the program is still firming up and will, to some extent, depend on whether an hour-long special on child abuse in the Mormon Church by NBC Dateline, currently in the editing process, airs in November as planned.

If it doesn't (how long did we wait for "Sixty Minutes"?), we will explore the same topic using examples of procedural irregularities from disciplinary councils, cases from the Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Vol. 2, 1996, and examples shared by participants from the audience.

This meeting will be held Wednesday, January 15, 1997, in the third-floor auditorium of the main library, 209 E. 500 South, Salt Lake City, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Letters

I have read the Case Reports, Vol. 1, and am saddened at the continuous and on-going pain that members of the Church suffer, not only through the sexual abuse inflicted upon helpless children but also through the insensitivity and coldness of their priesthood leaders.

I wrote a letter to the editor about Mother in Heaven, which I thought every member of the Church could agree with. It read: "In Mormon culture we are taught that the highest and noblest calling that God has assigned his daughters is motherhood and, in that calling, she should do nothing without the approval of the priesthood, which only men can hold. In this Zion culture our Mother in Heaven surely knows the rewards and pains of such a role. She is awarded no name, no recognition, and definitely no reverence for her never-ending labor of love."

In response, my stake president made a special visit to ask me if I wished to have my name removed from Church membership rolls. It was half-way between an invitation and a threat. My reply was, "I'll just be a silent member until I'm put in my coffin. If they send me to hell from there, I guess that's where I'll go."

I am grateful he has been released. I do not believe that Church officials can cut us off from the love of God, however hardhearted their threats can be.

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