



MORMON
ALLIANCE

BY COMMON CONSENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE MORMON ALLIANCE

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April 1997

Speaking of Conference . . .

While LDS Church leaders the world to listen to conference, the Alliance invites you to talk about their messages at the semi-annual Conference Critique, Monday, April 7, third-floor auditorium of the main library, 209 E. 500 South, Salt Lake City, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Moderator Janice Allred and her husband, David, are the parents of nine and the grandparents of two. She meets in a weekly discussion group with other leaders of Utah County's religious community. A volume of essays is forthcoming from Signature Books.

Harry Fox was born in Tokyo in 1921 to Church of Christ missionaries, lived in Japan until age fourteen, and received his Master's of Religion from Pepperdine University. He and his wife, Jeri, returned to Japan in 1947, where they helped establish the Ibaraki Christian College. Since moving to Orem in 1989, Harry has continued to serve several congregations part-time.

Deana M. Holmes, who holds a J.D. from the University of Houston Law Center, has practiced law, managed bookstores, and now works for a Salt Lake-area medical device manufacturer and is a foot soldier in the Internet war with the Church of Scientology. After two and a half years in Utah, her membership records have finally been forwarded from Texas.

Paul Tinker, a graduate of the University of Utah College of Law, has practiced law in Salt Lake City for over twenty years where he lives with his wife, Ann, and five children. He occasionally teaches priesthood lessons.

Linda Quinton-Jones, who practices family law in Provo, recently became a single parent after thirty-four years of marriage and fourteen children. She occasionally expresses a wish for a T-shirt that says "I did too much LDS in the 60's, 70's, and 80's."

Case Reports, Vol. 2, 1996

The 1996 volume of the *Case Reports* is currently at the press and will be mailed on or before May 15. This volume, 330 pages long, is even heftier than the 1995 volume, and focuses on a broader range of themes than Volume 1, which was devoted to child sexual abuse in the Mormon Church.

The introduction explores some of the healthy and unhealthy dynamics of authoritarianism in the Church, including an analysis of Doctrine and Covenants 121 ("no power or influence can or ought to be maintained . . ."), followed by four accounts: a collection of anonymous reports of ecclesiastical abuse (a one-time departure from the Alliance's policy of not accepting unidentified reports), Devery S. Anderson's "The Kind of Experience That Changes You Forever" (describing a conflict with his stake president over whether he had the right to meet his intellectual needs with a quarterly study group), "Shrinking to Fit" by Phyllis Ford Rueckert (experiences as a woman in a ward where creativity was punished), and "One Day You Finally Knew" by Vivian D. Ellsworth (the exhaustion and erosion of her family's faith under pressure from their stake president not to seek and follow inspiration).

A second pair of articles discusses secondary abuse--or the effects of ecclesiastical abuse on those close to the victim. David G. Pace, in "McConkie and Dad: Memories, Dreams, and a Rejection. A Personal Essay," describes the effect on him and his family of Elder Bruce R. McConkie's public chastisement of his father, George Pace, a BYU religion professor, in 1981-82. A second essay provides context and analysis of Elder McConkie's addresses.

Four helpful books are reviewed: David Johnson and Jeff Van Vonderen's, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* and Ronald M. En-



roth, *Churches That Abuse* (by J. Frederic Voros, Jr.), Marlene Winell's *Leaving the Fold: A Guide for Former Fundamentalists and Others Leaving Their Religion* (by Warren S. Parkin), and Father Leo Booth's *Breaking the Chains: Understanding Religious Addiction and Religious Abuse* (by Thayne I. Andersen).

The longest single essay in the book is Janice Merrill Allred's documentary history of her ecclesiastical leaders' 1994-95 disciplinary action against her, "White Bird Flying: My Struggle for a More Loving, Tolerant, and Egalitarian Church," including her own careful analysis of how Church discipline works and its effects on all those involved, including the leaders who impose it.

This annual is included in all 1996 subscriptions; individual copies will be available for \$20 (includes shipping) from Boyd Payne, Signature Books, 564 West 400, Salt Lake City, UT 84116 (801) 531-1483.

The 1997 volume will be mailed on November 15.

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 send them to Mormon Alliance, 6337 S. Highland Drive, Mailbox 215, Salt Lake City, UT 84121.

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

Uncommon Dissent

Gene Mahalko

The Utah Legislature just adjourned--always a good time for a bit of reflection on the use of power in society. Most state legislatures are idiosyncratic creations, especially when it comes issues like liquor control. This is certainly true in Utah, with the added shadow of the LDS Church looming in the distance. A group named the Alcohol Policy Coalition (APC) has lobbied several times in recent years to have the blood alcohol level at which a driver is presumed impaired lowered to 0.04%. To put that in context, the present Utah limit is 0.08%, tied for lowest in the nation. Many states have a 0.10% limit, and drivers pulled over for erratic driving usually have a blood alcohol level of around 0.16%.

The APC and some supporting legislators tried to persuade the LDS Church to endorse the proposal. Two years ago, the *Deseret News* did editorially support the proposal, so endorsement seemed possible.

The bill was not endorsed by "the Church," and the *Deseret News* also declined to support it. That put a severe crimp in the prospects for the bill. However, the APC carried on. They went to the expense and trouble to get a driving simulator and run tests showing that drivers were more impaired with a blood alcohol level of 0.04 than they were when sober.

I have no doubt that is true. But, if our *real* intent is to remove impaired drivers from the road, I wanted to see some other tests run on that driving simulator. (1) Place a cellular phone on the front seat under some papers and have it start ringing. (2) Place a crying infant, or two fighting children, in the back seat. (3) Wake the subject up at 3:30 a.m. and give the driving test.

I had no doubt that all these tests would indicate far more driver impairment than for a person with a 0.04% alcohol level. I wanted to propose that the law be amended to treat all cell phones like open liquor bottles--they could be carried only in the trunk.

Further, any driver in a car with one child in a car seat, or two or more children of any age, would be presumed impaired unless there was at least one other adult in the car besides the driver. Now *there* is a law that would be relevant to Utah.

As fate would have it, a medical research report was published and widely publicized during the legislative session, which pointed out that a driver talking on a cellular phone had the same accident rate as a driver with a 0.10% blood alcohol level. With that, the APC gave up on their bill. Imagine--the LDS Church and the *New England Journal of Medicine* killing an alcohol regulation bill in Utah! Which is what makes living here so interesting.

Test Question

Francis Nelson Henderson

I admire the courage of Janice Allred and others for refusing the attempt to restrict her freedom of speech. As a missionary under President McKay in 1962-64, I taught that "free agency" was a central truth of the Church, guarded and protected by it. I was inspired by President McKay's intervention when Sterling McMurrin was threatened by a Church court.

Following President McKay's day came a new emphasis on obedience. Combined with the idea of infallibility, that call to conformity seemed to automatically condemn some of my convictions without public objection. For example, as a young married man, I found myself opposed to the position, articulated most trenchantly by J. Reuben Clark, that marital sexual intercourse could occur only at the "hazard" of pregnancy. Also, I believed the Equal Rights Amendment was a simple, positive, clarifying statement that would benefit my daughters. When teaching elders' quorum or Gospel Doctrine classes, I often felt the need to balance classroom discussions by advocating the inherent benefits of free agency above obedience.

For example, I taught that freedom, love, spontaneity, and genuine delight without ulterior motive, are necessary to moral living. To obey is not enough. Slaves obey. Purity of motive is essential. Motive is corrupted by fear, hope of reward, or a burdensome sense of duty. Thus, the principle of free agency takes precedence over obedience:

By the early 1980s, I reached a point in my life where I concluded that the Church was willfully domineering from the top. My friends and family insisted that I incorrectly

perceived the intentions of Church leaders. In exasperation, I constructed a clarifying test question and example as follows:

"First, without the threat of excommunication, can I publicly advocate, through public speaking and writing, a point of view that conflicts with the position of Church leadership? Second, the heretical teaching that I choose to advocate is within the above question. Namely, I teach that a Church member must be free from the threat of excommunication, to speak and write publicly, a point of view that disagrees with the teachings of the Church leadership. Otherwise, I am not a free agent."

Finally, about 1983, all members of my immediate family agreed with my perception--that I indeed may be excommunicated were I to publicly and vigorously advocate the above freedom of speech. At last, my perception was acknowledged. No more denial.

The threat is real and destructive as demonstrated by the discipline of nine LDS men and women within the intellectual community. I now interpret such attacks on freedom of conscience and expression as "the Mormon way." I learned that Church history contains many examples from the time of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to the present that establish authoritarian values as the Mormon tradition. I believe that President McKay's tolerance was an aberration.

On the dome of the Jefferson Memorial is inscribed: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." Yes, the Church uses excommunication or the threat of it to dominate and control members. However, differences of ideas in the "mind of man" cannot be the basis of



separation among God's children.

Inscribed on the northwest wall of the Jefferson Memorial is another of Thomas Jefferson's beliefs: "Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens . . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion. . . No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship or ministry or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief, but all men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion. I know but one code of morality for men whether acting singly or collectively."

Jefferson's words set a national standard of behavior. Churches should be inherent guardians of freedom because of freedom's essential function in moral living and spiritual growth. I believe that the attempt to dismiss Janice Allred's right of free speech is an act of "unrighteous dominion." Public renunciation of these acts and the restoration of membership to those who have suffered from them are needed in order to clearly remove the implied threat of excommunication from the minds of all Church members.

Ritual and Elder Packer

"President Packer's October 1996 devotional address at BYU was very interesting on many levels," announced Dan Wotherpoon at the Mormon Alliance's quarterly meeting in January. (See Summary of "Unwritten Order"). "One of these is his deliberate attempt to make central to Mormonism certain things which most Church members would consider quite peripheral. Among my goals is to suggest several reasons why he might have chosen to play with Church boundaries in this way."

The evening's presentation--a lecture-discussion--focused on several theories about myth and ritual and their possible use in understanding aspects of Mormon life, especially theses about how ritual often fosters a feeling of "empowerment" for participants. Dan suggests that the theories found in the literature of ritual studies are potentially helpful in understanding moves like Elder Packer's, for, just like his efforts, ritual is very concerned with articulating specific roles for participants, with detailed ordering and strict boundary observance.

Audience participation was lively throughout the summary. One man commented on the "danger of equating rigid rules with spirituality." A woman admitted that the talk upset her a great deal. "He's an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I was so offended that he would imply to young students that this is what the Church is all about."

Dan introduced three main theories about how ritual empowers participants. Mircea Eliade and Lawrence Sullivan focus on our need to live as much of our lives as possible in "sacred" space and time and how ritual and boundary-maintenance activities serve this end. Eliade believes that the sacred is found in the assurance, in the face of existential angst, that the world will continue "to be" rather than run down and burn out, while Sullivan focuses on a sacred world as one that "makes sense." Eliade sees the repetitiveness of ritual and the reenactment of specified cultural roles as "creative" in the sense that they give us, in Paul Tillich's words, the "courage to be." Sullivan reads these same types of activities as helpful in shoring up our symbol systems. "A symbolic world owes its life to contrasts and boundaries," Dan explained. Ritual perfor-



mances, in effect, "re-divide the chaos for us. They empower those who enact these roles to live more 'meaningfully' by re-creating a world of ordered, specific relationships."

The third theory, best articulated by Jonathan Z. Smith, relies on the fact that things rarely go *exactly* the way we hope they will. Ritual performs "the way things ought to be *in conscious tension* to the way things are. . . . [It] provides an occasion for reflection and rationalization on the fact that what ought to have been done was not done, what ought to have taken place did not take place."

Dan found this thesis especially appropriate in analyzing Elder Packer's efforts. "So much of his address focused on idealized roles--all callings should be thought of as directly inspired by God, funerals and farewells ought to be centered on teaching the gospel, we should always act and dress in a 'dignified' manner. Why emphasize such things? I believe it is a direct result of the fact that normal church life does *not* measure up to his sense of the ideal and he must come to grips with this dissonance."

During the discussion, Dan pointed out that this pattern of emphasizing the ideal directly in the face of a muddier reality has been a hallmark of Elder Packer's sermons for a long time. One prime example is his address, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," which drew national media attention when Michael Quinn, then teaching at BYU, challenged his premises. Elder Packer argued that Mormon history should emphasize only the positive, "prophetic" features of Church leaders, ignoring their weaknesses. An audience member mentioned the fact that it is also Elder Packer--far more than other apostles--who likes to emphasize the "special" nature of

the type of revelation the prophets and apostles receive, implying that the apostles speak with God or Christ much more directly and more frequently than members.

Drawing upon another theme in Smith's work, Dan told the story, recorded by Plutarch, of a priestess. When two mule drivers who had brought sacred vessels into the temple asked for a drink, She replied, "No, for I fear it will get into the ritual." Smith suggests that her refusal is "exercising the economy of signification. To permit something as apparently trivial as a drink of water to occur in the temple runs the risk of blurring the focus, of extending the domain of meaning to an impossible degree."

Elder Packer's emphasis on the "unwritten order of things" that are learned only through "observation and experience," speaks to similar issues, but reaches an opposite conclusion. The priestess's fear was that people observing the actions in the temple would read significance into something quite ordinary and essentially unimportant. Dan's final question was whether Packer's overt attempt to extend our boundaries to include things that originate primarily as matters of style and preference, rather than in revelation, runs this same risk. By attempting to sacralize more things, perhaps he is in danger of blinding us to things that might actually *be* sacred.

Summary: "The Unwritten Order"

Speaking on 15 October 1996, President Boyd K. Packer instructed the students at a BYU devotional in "The Ordinary Things Every Member of the Church Should Know" or "the unwritten order of the Church" which allowed Church business to be transacted "in decency and order." He stressed the importance of his instructions: "If you learn about these things that are not written down, you will be better qualified to be a leader, and you are going to be a leader. The most important



position of leadership is in the home." These procedures "set a tone, a standard of dignity and order. . . Be alert to the unwritten order of things and take an interest in them, and you will find that you will increase your ability and your value to the Lord."

He identified eight key procedures: (1) The person presiding should sit near the person conducting so that he or she can act if "prompted to adjust or correct something that goes on in the meeting." This instruction also applies to meetings of the women's auxiliaries. (2) "Do not write to [the General Authorities] for counsel supposing that someone in a more prominent position will give a more inspired answer. . . . If we could get this one thing taught in the Church, a great power would rest upon us." Someone seeking counsel should go (in this order) to his or her parents, home teacher, and the bishop who "may choose to send you to his file leader, the stake president." (3) Leaders should not seek advice from colleagues of the same position. "Revelation comes from above, not from the side. . . . However more experienced . . . or more spiritual he may be, it is better to go through the proper channels." (4) "We are deeply worried about the drift that is occurring in the Church" to allow families to determine the programs of funerals and missionary homecomings/farewells. As a result, these meetings frequently become "family reunions in front of ward members where 'we hear about the deceased instead of the Atonement.'" "Of all meetings, funerals could and should be the most spiritually impressive. Often the spirit is repulsed by the humorous experiences and jokes when the time could be devoted to teaching things of the spirit." (5) Individuals should wear their "Sunday best" to Church. "Slouchy clothing. . . leads to informal and slouchy conduct," he said. (6) Correct names, not nicknames, should be used in programs and while conducting Church business. "It bothers me to sustain 'Buck' or 'Butch' or 'Chuck' to the high council."

(7) "We do not aspire to calls in the Church, nor do we ask to be released. You are called to position by inspiration. It is not wise for us to refuse a call. We must presuppose that the call comes from the Lord." (8) Having the first counselor sit on the right and the second counselor on the left is "an example of doing things decently and in order."

He related a story about a bishop whom complained at leadership meeting Elder Packer was conducting that he had called nine women to be Relief Society president and all nine women had refused. Elder Packer suggested two reasons for their refusal: (1) The bishop had not issued a proper calling, speaking in the name of the Lord, and (2) This bishop was not setting a proper example of followership but was known for resisting the counsel of the stake president.

Sources: Jennifer Dyer, "Church Things Should Occur with Dignity, Order," *(BYU) Universe*, 16 Oct. 1996, @BYU Newsline, printout in my possession; Christie C. Babbit, "Heed Unwritten Order, Pres. Packer Says," *Deseret News Web Edition*, 16 October 1996, printout in my possession; Michael Smart, "Morman [sic] Apostle Packer Emphasizes 'Order of Things' in His Provo Talk," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 19 Oct. 1996, C-8.

If the powerful in an organization are threatened by difference, then the rightness of the position or the competence of the speaker matters not at all. The power might be determined by position, culture, numbers, ability to punish or simply collusion by others. --Reba Keele, in Linda Galindo and Reba Keele, "United We Stand," *Network*, February 1997, 8.

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