

STILL AT THE LIBRARY....

CONFERENCE CRITIQUE

So . . . how were the acoustics in the Conference Center, especially by the time they reached your television set?

Will there be a New Trend in Authoritative Ties to kick off the new millennium?

Will there be any discreet self-congratulation on once again keeping the traditional (or is it "natural"?) family safe by the Proposition 22 win in California?

And where will President Hinckley dazzle the press next after his triumph at the National Press Club?

Oh, whoops! Almost forgot. What did the leaders say about gospel principles?

The semi-annual conference critique will explore these and other trends on Monday, April 3, 2000, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the main library downtown (209 E. 500 South), in the meeting room on the south side of the second floor. Once again, Janice Allred will be Discussion Czar for this freewheeling and insightful exchange.

The parking structure on the northwest corner of the library block has been demolished, but there should be ample on-street parking on the south and east sides of the block and across the street on the City-County Building block.

CASE REPORT REPORT

Vol. 4 (historically dated 1998) is creaking toward the typesetter's. This volume provides an overview of the 1992-97 BYU firings and ex-

communications, with personal essays by participants, a narrative history, and contextual scholarly essays by James Chapman and Becky Johns.

Individuals involved in ecclesiastical-academic actions during that period are D. Michael Quinn, Maxine Hanks, Avraham Gileadi, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Lynne Kanavel Whitesides, David P. Wright, Brent Metcalfe, Gail Houston, Brian Evenson, Michael Barrett, Janice Merrill Allred, and Steven Epperson. This issue will also include several reviews of relevant books.

Vol. 5 (1999) is hot on the heels of Vol 4 and will follow it within a couple of months. It will deal with the perceptions of those who experience the patriarchy-centered Church from the position of "Other" -- especially the experiences of women, gays, and lesbians.

If you received the newsletter for 1998 and 1999, you will automatically receive these volumes of the case reports as well. But please check your mailing label. If the number in parentheses after your name is not (00), it means that you need to renew your subscription promptly to continue receiving *By Common Consent* and the *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance*, Vol. 7, 2000. Subscriptions run for the calendar year.

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We have rudiments of reverence for the human body, but we consider as nothing the rape of the human mind. -Eric Hoffer

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 LAST WEEKS OF DECEMBER, MARCH, JULY, AND SEPTEMBER. PLEASE SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE ABOUT ARTICLES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS TO MORMON ALLIANCE, 1519 ROBERTA STREET, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84115.

TO REPORT CASES OF ECCLESIASTICAL AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE,
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My Thoughts on the Women's Movement

Rhoda Thurston

Las Cruces, New Mexico

My response to the question, "What do women really want or need?" is this: Equality! Equal importance and value for work accomplished! Recognition of the fact that manhood and womanhood, with all the differentials of their occupations and achievements are preparation for Godhood!

Since the priesthood is not a person but a channel of power to do God's work on earth, women must also use God's power to do the works of Christ, as they are commissioned to do and to serve the needs of their fellow-women.

Charity, the pure love of Christ, is not available without His power. Women's work is

A woman's organization should provide teaching and training with encouragement for all its members to express ideas and experiences, not just quoting what men say, in our messages and lessons. Women have visions to share of ways to do things that provide fellowship and cooperation.

We need women models of faith and courage like the heroines of the Restoration, to help us see the blessings and opportunities of celestial marriage and to develop confidence and self-esteem to become a partner in godliness.

The teachings of the prophets apparently no longer see a need to recognize the femaleness in Godhood.

We women need assurance that doing our best will be recognized and rewarded by a godly Judge!

It seems impossible that a woman can gain a feeling of worth or self-esteem when she is subjected to negative orders by priesthood authority and when she is told, "Never disagree with a bishop, no matter what he requests you to do" . . . "A man without the priesthood can do no more than a woman can do" . . . The Lord will never be on a woman's side in a disagreement with her husband or any Church official."

Women need leaders who inspire respect for truth, honesty, and integrity in Church history as well as in daily conduct. We need freedom to govern ourselves with knowledge of correct principles. Leaders who renounce eternal gospel principles do not inspire confidence that conformity to their interpretations will further our eternal welfare.

We really could use less harassment for our observations. I am grateful for the example of women of courage, who know from experience what repression of scholars, intellectuals, and feminists can do. I feel inspired by the honest

desires and achievements of women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who have the stamina of mind to reveal the injustice underlying male-centered laws and the unfairness in church policies that cause so much unnecessary suffering.

Women need equality -- and "not for ourselves alone"* but because men and children also need the benefits that will come from equality.

*Note: This phrase comes from an interview by centenarian Ethel Hall, who voted for the first time in 1920. The slogan of the college from which she had just graduated to begin her career teaching English and mathematics to eighth-graders was "Not for ourselves alone, but that we must teach others." Ken Burns and Paul Barnes, producing a film on early U.S. feminists, took the phrase from her interview as the title of their film and book (written by Geoffrey C. Ward) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

NEWS I WISH I WERE READING IN THE *ENSIGN*

It's the caption for a photo tucked into one of the news pages of the *Saints Herald*, showing four women. It reads:

Sisters Ordained. During services held August 29 in the Eldorado Springs, Missouri congregation, three sisters were ordained to their first priesthood offices . . . Myrna Parks, elder; Jeanie Ogle, teacher; and Donna Neely, priest. Pictured with them is their mother, Ruth (Mrs May) McCullick. *Saints Herald*, February 2000, 32.

Editorial

Institutional Humility *Lavina Fielding Anderson*

As Pope John Paul II celebrated Lent with a mass in which he acknowledged sins committed by Catholics and his church against Christians and non-Christians, especially Jews, it aroused uncomfortable echoes of one of Mormonism's own public relations management of its historical moment of greatest atrocity.

Gordon B. Hinckley, speaking at the September 1999 dedication of a monument at the site of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, said: "No one knows fully what happened at Mountain Meadows. I don't, nor can it be explained,

but we express our regrets over what happened there, and we all need to put this behind us. . . . That which we have done here [dedicating the monument] must never be construed as a acknowledgement . . . of any complicity in the occurrences of that fateful and tragic day." (Carma Wadley, "A Time to Heal," and "Truth about Tragedy May Never Be Known," *Deseret News*, 5 Sept. 1979, A-1, A-20"; John L. Hart, "'Let the Book of the Past Be Closed,'" *Church News*, 18 Sept. 1999, 3, 8).

Five months later, in an interview on the anniversary of his fifth year at Church president, the topic came up again.

Tribune: In regard to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, you've said the church bears no responsibility for the massacre. In saying that, where would you place the blame?

Hinckley: Well, I would place the blame on the local people. (Transcript of interview with President Hinckley conducted on February 23, 2000 by Vern Anderson and Peggy Fletcher Stack of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, posted on the *Tribune's* website.)

A third voice, that of Richard Landes, director of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University and professor of a course on heresy and inquisition, places the Pope's acknowledgment in a broader context that seems relevant, not only to the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but to the larger question of the use of power within religion.

In a column published in the *Los Angeles Times*, 12 March 2000, Landes called Pope John Paul II's confession "a revolution in thinking at the very center of the most hierarchized and centralized of all the religious institutions in world history. And he offers an apology precisely for the abuses of power that that institution--at its most authoritarian moments--committed in the name of the faith and the church."

During the crusades and the inquisition, "quintessential messages of Christian faith--love and forgiveness--were trampled in terrifying exercises of thought control and sacred rage. And for centuries, the leaders of the church

insisted that, whether these things were wrong, the church was not responsible, nor need it apologize."

One of the cruelest afflictions reported to the Mormon Alliance is how frequently anyone who has tried to discuss an episode of ecclesiastical abuse with another ecclesiastical leader receives, at best, a polite but uncomfortable hearing, the hasty advice to "put it behind you," and, if they confess an inability to forget on command, a stern and often threatening lecture that they have therefore become the one at fault because they are refusing to forgive.

How hard would it be for a bishop or a stake president or a General Authority to say simply and sincerely, "What happened was wrong. It should not have been handled that way. That's not what the Savior says should happen in Doctrine and Covenants 121. I'm so sorry. How can I help you deal with this so that you can begin to move toward forgiveness?" Apparently impossible, at least in some cases.

Instead, as one person put it, "When you're raised to think that the Church is perfect and that you should always follow the leaders, it's so confusing to have something like this happen. I just wanted someone in authority to acknowledge that someone else in authority had done something wrong. Instead, I had to listen to someone tell me--*again*--that I was wrong and that, by implication, what had happened to my daughter wasn't wrong--*again*. And then he got to the only point that really important to him. Was I going to sue the Church? I hadn't even thought about it. But I can tell you, when I left his office, I was thinking about it."

Landes acknowledges the "great vulnerability" created in "the act of acknowledging error and sin, and the asking of forgiveness for it. . . . And the task becomes ever more difficult the greater the failing, the more official the agent, the more authoritarian the personality. It is all the more painful for an institution that has formally sought . . . to claim infallibility."

What is next? Unquestionably the LDS Church is at a high point of popularity and national and international influence politically

Not only is it "right," it also has "might." In the wake of the Church's "victory" over Proposition 22 in California, President Hinckley's national visibility and popularity thanks to his undeniable talent and strengths with the press, and its high-level visibility as the champion of the "natural" family, which has brought it allies with cultural and ethnic groups where women are still sexually mutilated, "honor killed" if they are raped, and fed, educated, and housed differently from their male kin, it is not unlikely that the Church will look for other enemies to smite, other holy wars to fight.

I prefer Landes's thoughtful call for a different approach:

"[The Pope] has struck a blow at the forces of demonization within religion, and he has begun with his own religion and his own institutions. . . . This is precisely the kind of thinking that, at some level, every religion, and certainly any religion that claims a monopoly on salvation, needs to do at the dawn of this age of global civilization.

". . . This is an extraordinary opening to an enormous and fateful dialogue, an invitation to a profound exploration of the dynamics that lead from credal arrogance to inquisitorial hatreds, and of the ways to avoid those paths."

The first real step has yet to be taken at Mountain Meadows. Instead, it has been taken at Rock Canyon Assembly in Provo, Utah, where Rev. Dean Jackson of the Assemblies of God led his congregation--perhaps two third of whom are former Mormons--in a communal experience of repentance for feelings of bitterness and hostility harbored against their Mormon neighbors--the inevitable results of exclusion and oppression by a religious majority committed to the position of being "the only true Church." Rock Canyon Assembly members signed a document affirming their repentance, asking forgiveness, and pledging "to live our lives as ambassadors for Christ, as though He were making His appeal through us."

In early November, with representatives of Provo City and a Mormon General Authority present, the worship service focused on a minis-

try of reconciliation. A framed copy of the document hangs in the conference room of BYU's religion faculty. The outreach has continued, with Rev. Jackson speaking to Steve Covey's Sunday School class. Stephen Robinson, a BYU professor of ancient scripture who has worked for interfaith understanding with the Southern Baptist congregations, responded: "The truth is that Dean Jackson and his congregation have shamed us. All this time we Mormons have been complaining about our treatment in America, and they could have sung the same song to us—but they didn't. They came, rather, with confession for their wrongdoing. I am embarrassed that they had to make the first move."

Maybe we're getting it at last?

Study and Learn

Lew W. Wallace

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Acts 10 tells of the apostle Peter's vision while he was praying on the roof of Simon the tanner's house in Joppa. The heavens opened and a great sheet of sailcloth lowered, containing every kind of four-footed beast, reptile, and bird, and a voice said, "Get up, Peter, and eat." Peter protested that he had never eaten anything profane or unclean, and the voice replied, "You are not to call profane what God calls clean." Three times the scenario was repeated, and Peter was puzzled over it until the summons by Cornelius, the Roman centurion in Caesarea made the meaning clear: The gospel was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Peter got the message, but he could never quite accept it fully, eventually insisting that Gentiles be circumcised (like the Jews) to become Christians.

In our day, we too have had a similar vision, the Lord lowering not a sailcloth loaded with every conceivable creature, but a giant "spreadsheet" loaded with every conceivable subject, with the command "Get up, study and learn." Things in the heavens, on the earth and under the earth, things which have been, are

now, and must shortly come to pass: things at home and abroad, the wars and the perplexities of the nations and the judgments which are on the land, and also a knowledge of countries and of kingdoms. We--like Peter--protest. "It is too much. Is it really necessary? I attend church, pay tithing and go to the temple." The voice answered even before we protest. "Do not call unnecessary what God has called necessary (expedient) for you to understand." We are to be prepared for future missions and callings to which He will call us. We are to "study and learn out of the best books," including our canonized quadruple combination.

For the intelligent educated people of the Church, their brains and talents are being wasted-- or at least under- utilized--because the kindergarten-level anonymous material from the correlated Curriculum Department is a "one size fits all" simplified (dumbed down) recitation of the basics deemed appropriate for the less educated millions of new converts. Why should we "follow the manual" when D&C 58 commands us to be anxiously engaged in a good cause and bring forth much righteousness on our own initiative? If we do only that which is commanded, we are "slothful servants," and if we do that halfheartedly, we are "damned." If we do not study, we will lose the ability (and desire) to study.

The opportunities to study and learn "out of the best books" are now a thousandfold what they were when the revelation was given, and we have no excuse for not doing much better. We have been, could be, and should be much better. Our lessons, our prayers, our songs, our sermons, our programs, and our people all need improvement. "Be Prepared" is not just a motto for the Boy Scouts.

UPDATE YOUR ROLODEX

To streamline operations, the Mormon Alliance's mailing address after 1 May will be: 1519 Roberta Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84115 Please do not send correspondence to the former address, Box 215, 6337 Highland Drive, after that date. It will not reach us.

I Know This Much is True

Roberta Giesea

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It's not easy for me to look at my raw inner self as I flutter through my hectic life, even if I now and then have quiet moments of fleeting insight just before I fall asleep or when I'm alone in the shower.

Once in a while a novel will propel me out of my self-inflicted comfort level into the bright light of self-discovery. Wally Lamb's newest best seller, *I Know This Much Is True*, will go down in my personal history of growth because it has forced me to once again analyze my inner feelings. It has caused me to look at myself as the main character, Dominick, looks at himself. The depth of his struggle exposed a rawness within me, not because my life has been like his, but because he grows in self-knowledge and wisdom through adversity. The book shows the complexity of his growth from anger to an understanding of three principles about life that offer an evolving serenity.

When I first picked up the book, I thought the title was ineffective and dull; but as I read the main character's final words, I was struck with the depth of the meaning of them. After recounting his self-discovered principles of life, his final words are, "I know this much is true."

As I examine myself, I have to admit that what I had in common with the main character was not his adversities but his reaction toward

his adversities. I had anger that my life has not turned out the way I wanted it to. Angry because I've been disillusioned and yes, abused by the spiritual leaders I trusted, but mostly, angry with God. I remember feeling that I was drowning in deep water, reaching out for a hand to pull me out and all I received was a foot on the head to force me under. Walking away was my answer, deeply burying the inner feelings that meant so much to me, yet never really being able to rid myself of them. I was left spiritually alone, wondering where I fit in.

Yet, no matter how shut off I tried to be, God, in his wisdom, continued to catch me off guard by sending subtle messages in unexpected ways. For instance, Christ's words as he hung on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) jolted me one day when I realized I was in good company with another who had moments of feeling abandoned.

Today, after finishing Wally Lamb's book, I picked up Volume 3 of the *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance*. As I leafed through it, I felt sad comfort from the words of courage of those who have also suffered spiritual abuse. I know my struggle for inner peace is a slow process. I have a long way to go. Yet, I know this much is true: "I am not alone. God loves his children and wants us to comfort each other." Yes, I know this much is true.

Mormon Alliance

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