

THE MORMON PURGE

H Saturday, August 8, 1992

Besieged LDS Intellectuals to Fight Back

By Peggy Fletcher Stack
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Mormon intellectuals have been feeling besieged for the last year. Feminists, environmentalists, anthropologists, historians and journalists have all felt the heat from LDS head-

LDS Official Acknowledges

Continued from p.

Verdict in Trials of 6 Mormon Scholars: Guilty

By Peggy Fletcher Stack
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

In the summer of 1954, Salt Lake educator and self-proclaimed heretic, Sterling M. McMurrin, was told by his LDS leaders that he might be excommunicated.

Boundaries of Mormonism

Toscano, Avraham Gileadi, D. Michael Quinn, Maxine Hanks and Lavina Fielding Anderson were excommunicated. Lynn Kar Whitesides was disfellowshipped.

Cartoonist Says Oaks Lied To Protect Fellow Apostle

By Vern Anderson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Church Monitors Critics

A committee of high Mormon Church officials monitors the contents and writings of members and church leaders.

Cracks in the temple: Mormon unity in peril

By Paul Brinkley-Rogers
The Arizona Republic

SALT LAKE CITY — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is an American original, and one of the most successful global

BENSON LEAVES CHURCH: Republic cartoonist, grandson of LDS prophet, quits the Mormon Church. Story, A22.

Benson's Grandson Accuses LDS Apostle of Lying

Continued from B-1

Packer to meet with Heinz and "further also"

The grandson of Mormon Church President Ezra Taft Benson contends that a church apostle lied in order to cover up a more senior apostle's role in the excommunication of a Mormon dissident.

UTAH Tuesday, October 12, 1993

More Stories Point to LDS Leaders As Source of Dissident Crackdown

By Peggy Fletcher Stack
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

It was the week that was. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints steadfastly had insisted disciplinary actions taken recently against six dissident members were initiated locally.

meeting was false. The church's crackdown on public dissidents has been the talk of Utah this fall. It culminated this week with those unusual admissions. The questions now being asked: What's happening and what's next?

Toscano, Maxine Hanks, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Avraham Gileadi and D. Michael Quinn were excommunicated. Lynn Kanavel Whitesides was disfellowshipped. It is accurate to say such actions were not "directed" by LDS general authorities, but sources told *The Tribune* that church leaders indirectly initiated some of the actions.

erated the mission of the church. The Council of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in their responsibility to maintain doctrinal purity of the church," said Arnold R. Augustin, director of media relations. One way the church is discovering impure doctrine is by reading newspapers. In an Oct. 2 interview in the church-owned *Deseret News*, Elder Oaks described how the church's Strengthening the Members Committee pours over newspapers and other publications to identify members accused of crimes, preaching false doctrine and criticizing leadership. That information is "forwarded" to local leaders "as a way of keeping busy bishops informed." Though technically not a directive from church headquarters, most stake

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

The Story of How Mormon Leaders Moved to Repress Rebellion By Church Historians, Feminists and Other Dissidents

Discloses Secret Memos About Suppression of Church History

THE MORMON PURGE

By Jerald and Sandra Tanner

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The Mormon Purge

While the Mormon Church continues to grow at a rapid rate (close to 9,000,000 members in 1993), it is obvious that internal problems are also beginning to mount. Consequently, church leaders have decided to take an uncompromising stand against Mormon historians and other dissenters within the church who wish to tell the unvarnished truth about church history and other issues.

Five Excommunicated

In an apparent show of strength just before the October, 1993, General Conference of the Mormon Church, six prominent church members were summoned to stand trial in church courts for apostasy. On October 2, 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported the results of those trials:

Three men and three women have been charged with apostasy for their writing and speaking about Mormon subjects. Paul Toscano, Avraham Gileadi, D. Michael Quinn, Maxine Hanks and Lavina Fielding Anderson were excommunicated. Lynne Kanavel Whitesides was disfellowshipped. . . .

Ms. Whitesides' council was a ward rather than stake group. Her judges were the bishop, his two counselors, a clerk and the ward executive secretary—all men.

Her bishop, Virgil Merrill, had said she could have a friend and her husband with her during the hearing.

But on the night of her Sept. 14 council, Mr. Merrill forbade even her husband to accompany her.

"You are thinking of dissolving this woman's temple marriage. Don't you think he has a vested interest in participating in this council?" said Ms. Whitesides' friend, Martha Pierce.

During the council, Ms. Whitesides was accused of "creating friction" with her Mormon feminist statements on television. She also was charged with failure to support church leaders by saying, also on TV, she couldn't "find any evidence of Christ in [Elder] Packer's last speech."

She was disfellowshipped that night for "conduct contrary to the laws of the church." . . .

Lavina Fielding Anderson was excommunicated for a single article in the independent Mormon journal, *Dialogue*. *The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership* chronicled episodes of intimidation against Mormon thinkers for the last 20 years. . . .

On Sept. 23, she was excommunicated.

LDS historian D. Michael Quinn has had three such councils within the last four months. . . .

While he didn't attend the council, he wrote a defense.

"I vowed I would never again participate in a process which was designed to punish me for being the messenger of unwanted historical evidence and to intimidate me from further work in Mormon history," he wrote.

But he did reaffirm his faith that "Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was God's prophet of the Restoration and that Ezra Taft Benson is the prophet, seer and revelator on the Earth today."

The council was kind. They put him on probation. But in July, the punishment was upgraded to disfellowshippment. This week, while he was in California, his stake leaders excommunicated him. . . . Avraham Gileadi, a conservative theologian and writer, was excommunicated for his writings about the Apocalypse and the Book of Isaiah. He attended his council but declined to talk with the press about his experience.

Some of those who were excommunicated used to write articles for the church's official publication, *The Ensign*. D. Michael Quinn, for instance, has written at least six articles for *The Ensign*, and about the same number for *Brigham Young University Studies*. It seems ironic that this man, who was once held in high esteem within the church, is now considered to be an "anti-Mormon." Lavina Fielding Anderson, who was also excommunicated, used to be an assistant editor for the church's *Ensign* magazine.

A decade before the present purge began there was another attempt by the church to silence intellectuals. Lavina Fielding Anderson, who was recently excommunicated, gave this information about the matter:

Sunday, 22 May 1983. Dawn Tracy publishes an article in the *Provo Daily Herald* reporting that she talked to fourteen Mormon writers in four states who "had been questioned" by local ecclesiastical leaders. All had contributed to *Dialogue*, *Sunstone*, or the *Seventh East Press*. Roy Doxey, former BYU dean of religious education, says that Apostle Mark E. Petersen "ordered

the investigations.” Elder Petersen, whose assignment has long been the investigation and suppression of fundamentalist Mormons [those who encourage the practice of polygamy and the Adam-God doctrine], has apparently expanded his mandate to include other individuals whom he defines as enemies of the church. In 1962 he told a conference of seminary and Institute faculty, “In teaching the gospel there is no academic freedom. . . . There is only fundamental orthodox doctrine and truth.”

Three of the writers who were investigated are faculty members at BYU. . . .

Scott Faulring’s stake president chastised him for his writings but admitted he had never read the offending articles. This stake president also “warned him to be cautious in his writing” and refused to tell him “who asked him to talk to me,” said Faulring. Gary James Bergera of Provo, also interviewed, commented: “My stake president told me . . . what I had written was anti-Mormon because it wasn’t uplifting.” . . . Other writers questioned are Armand Mauss, Thomas G. Alexander, David John Buerger, Lester Bush, Edward A. Ashment, Jeff Keller, and Richard Sherlock. Carlos Whiting, a Mormon writer . . . is quoted as saying the writers who were interviewed are upset and adds, “Anti-intellectualism being manifest in the church is contrary to basic doctrine. . . . More serious, however, seems to be the inept approach of the various leaders involved in the inquiries.”

J. D. Williams denounces the proceedings as “an inquisition” and adds, “Passing ecclesiastical judgment on writers who have conducted serious, historical research is a denial of everything the church stands for.” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, pages 20-21)

A Sleeping Crisis?

The Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith maintained that on May 6, 1833, he had a revelation in which God told him that, “The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 93:36). Consequently, the church has stressed the importance of education. While this emphasis on the quest for knowledge has helped the church to gain respect throughout the world, there is a downside to the matter: the more informed people become, the more likely they are to question the church’s teachings.

Many years ago Thomas F. O’Dea, who was professor of sociology at the University of Utah, predicted that a crisis may be developing in the Mormon Church:

The Latter-day Saints have successfully created a Mormon community with its own values and social structure, although it is no longer a separate entity but is rather very much a part, both geographically

and sentimentally, of the larger secular society of the United States. Yet Mormonism retains much of its old peculiarity, and Mormondom remains in many respects a society in its own right and, as such, has been subject to a number of stresses and strains within its own structure. These sources of conflict have created grave problems for the Mormon movement, and some of them are even now capable of severe threats to its welfare. . . .

Perhaps Mormonism’s greatest and most significant problem is its encounter with modern secular thought. This encounter presents itself in terms of a specific dilemma that may be phrased, “education versus apostasy,” and has created an unhappy intellectual group among the Mormons today. Closely related to this fundamental problem are two other dilemmas. Mormonism’s insistence upon reason and the implicit rationality of its tenets comes into conflict with its equally emphasized belief in the miraculous and give rise to what we may call the dilemma of “rationality versus charisma.” In addition, Mormonism’s concern with both authority and individualism presents another problem.

This third dilemma of “authority and obedience versus democracy and individualism” leads into the whole problem of Mormonism and the governing of men. . . .

A Salt Lake City Mormon intellectual once remarked to me that the Mormon religion has provided the basis for a satisfying life to the great majority of its followers. He added: “Only the questioning intellectual is unhappy.”

The situation of the intellectual is likely to be somewhat ambiguous in any society, and he is generally the object not only of esteem but also of suspicion. . . . The intellectual in his creative aspects is necessary to the maintenance and progress of society, for it is he as creator who produces widely shared and appreciated benefits, ranging from the realm of values to that of physical comforts. Yet the intellectual is also given to reflection and criticism; he also questions. As a questioner and critic, he not only annoys conservatives but may come to threaten, or at least appear to threaten, cherished beliefs, values and institutions. As creator and preserver, the intellectual is esteemed; as critic and questioner, he is suspect. . . . Mormonism succeeded in evolving an intellectual group from its own native roots, an accomplishment of note, doing credit to its tradition, but one that introduces the ambiguity of intellectual conflict into the Mormon society. . . . the return of Mormonism to full participation in the general life of the American republic would, of necessity, involve an encounter with modern thought. Such an encounter would bring peculiarly Mormon beliefs and values into touch with critical ideas and approaches that would test the former’s viability in a way different from that of any previous challenge. The Mormon attitude toward education and learning would make this challenge even more important and increase the difficulty in meeting it. From their earliest beginnings, the Latter-day Saints have placed great emphasis upon education. . . . Little did they realize that in placing their

hopes in education they were at the same time creating the “transmission belt” that would bring into Zion all the doubts and uncertainties that, in another century, were to beset the gentile world. . . .

The church was based upon the idea of modern revelation, upon the belief in the restoration in our time of what had been lost through the sinfulness and apostasy of man. . . . From a new revelation so explicit; from a modern scripture so timely, whose translation was a divine work and therefore uncorrupted; from scriptures given by God himself to chosen people in the latter days, a literal reading of the word would certainly offer solution to any important religious problems.

Therefore, despite Joseph Smith’s recognition that the Bible need not necessarily be taken literally in all cases, the modern scriptures were certainly to be so understood. Literalism became and has largely remained characteristic of the Mormon approach to the text of modern revelation. The Bible . . . may be unclear, may even be seriously corrupted, but the scriptures presented to the world in our own time by a man who talked with God, translated by a modern prophet through divine inspiration and miraculous assistance—these scriptures must be literally true, or the very foundations of Mormon faith are threatened.

Thus it was a very literalist kind of religion . . . that was placed in close relation to and communication with modern thought by the reincorporation of Mormonism into secular American life. This confrontation contained the great possibility that acquaintance with modern learning by thoughtful Mormons would lead to apostasy. Quite obviously, by encouraging education and giving it a central place in both its own activities and its world view, Mormonism exposed itself more vulnerably to the danger. . . . The Mormon youth, who usually comes from a background of rural and quite literal Mormonism, finds that his entrance into the university is an introduction to the doubt and confusion that his first real encounter with secular culture entails. He has been taught by the Mormon faith to seek knowledge and to value it; yet it is precisely this course, so acceptable to and so honored by his religion, that is bound to bring religious crisis to him and profound danger to his religious belief. The college undergraduate curriculum becomes the first line of danger to Mormonism in its encounter with modern learning.

The church has not been unaware of this threat, nor has it failed to respond to the danger. The most striking of its efforts in this direction is the Institute and Seminary system. This highly organized and generously financed program has included the building of L.D.S. institutes near colleges and seminaries near high schools, where religion is taught . . . For the Mormon student to come directly to a college or university without the possibility of seeking help at these institutes would be for him to come from a high-pressure chamber to the open air without passing through a series of decompression chambers.

The Institute system provides able teaching, most often by men who themselves are intellectuals and who are aware of the kind of problem the student faces and the sort of help he needs. . . . While the institutes and seminaries have been manned by people who often tend toward a liberal position or at least have a conservative-liberal attitude in theology, the Division of Religion at Brigham Young University has of late years been conservative. . . . Yet Brigham Young University has not been free from those currents of modern thought that we have characterized earlier, and a few years ago such opposition led to open conflict. . . .

The Institute system is the way the church has developed to meet the threat of apostasy involved in Mormonism’s encounter with secular education. . . . Can the church make the accommodation to modern thought necessary to satisfy the concern with truth that its own teachings have created in its more intellectual members and, at the same time, maintain the basic articles of faith without which it will certainly cease to survive in its present form? . . . It will be recalled that the government of the church, though marked by strong authoritative characteristics, is a government by laymen. There is no clergy in the professional sense of that term. . . . this preponderance of non-professionals affects the church’s formation of its basic outlook and creates added difficulties in connection with the present problem. Despite the fact that the small group of the General Authorities do receive a stipend, the church leaders are not professionals in the sense of having received the special educational formation and training in philosophy and theology that the education of a clergy would involve. . . . Members of the higher councils may be educated men, but they are usually not educated in those subjects that would be helpful to religious leaders facing these problems. . . .

If we add to this the general policy of promoting in the higher reaches of the hierarchy on the principle of seniority, we see that older and therefore usually more conservative men tend to get into these influential positions. . . . The one group of men who could come near to meeting the challenge of secular learning are those involved in the Institute and Seminary system and others like them in education and related professions. But the present basis of selection and promotion make the possibility of many of these men advancing to membership in leading bodies and especially in the General Authorities a very slim one indeed.

The conservative, literalist, fundamentalist group seems now to control the church, and these principles of church organization . . . make the advancement of liberals into church leadership very unlikely in the next several years. Yet it is these very liberals, shut out from leadership, who in the church’s educational system are saving many of the youth from apostasy. *Can the church remain in this kind of halfway house*, and, if so, how long? . . .

Moreover, it must not be overlooked that the church leadership needs the intellectuals. It needs them not only to man the church's educational institutions but, perhaps more importantly, to prevent the kind of open rift between the Mormon church and modern learning and higher education that would involve intellectual embarrassment and loss of respectability. Thus it must seem wiser to many among the church leaders to seek unvoiced compromises and to avoid embarrassing confrontations. . . . When these developments are considered against the background of the intellectual atmosphere in the country today . . . we are impressed by the possibility of a *slow drift toward a dilution of belief*. Such a drift, which may be well started, is certainly far from the flood. It could issue in a victory for religious and theological liberalism without any crisis or showdown. Although age and conservatism control the top bodies, youth, as is often tritely remarked, possesses the future, and the youth incline away from the older literalism to the extent that they become intellectuals or are influenced by the intellectuals in the church's educational system. There is no reason to suppose such a drift will not continue.

Such a slow infiltration of liberal notions may, in its own undramatic way, prove as fatal to Mormonism as a religious system as would a severe crisis. Mormon beliefs and their ability to answer the needs of men today may be put to the test and found wanting without any outer signs of controversy, although the inner crises and conflicts . . . remain an important aspect of private lives. Moreover, a new generation may be able to discover new compromises and find that it can make compromises more easily than did an older group. . . .

The possibility of a crisis must not be completely written off, however. Certainly a reversal of the present trend that mildly favors the liberals, or at least a serious challenge to it, is quite possible. The order of succession to the presidency makes it likely that the next man to hold the First Presidency of the church will be a conservative. Should that happen, a crisis may well develop. Yet the fact that the Mormon intellectual has accustomed himself to living in a prolonged and normalized state of crisis in relation to literal Mormon beliefs and to church authority as their embodiment seriously qualifies any dramatic prognosis.

Unquestionably, there is a tendency privately to accept more liberal views—or something several degrees more liberal than the old conservative and literalist Mormonism—on the part of many who support and sustain the General Authorities and defend the Mormon tradition. . . . The structure of the church is such that it is difficult to meet the problems posed by apostasy in any way except in terms of suffering slowly festering discontent, or a slow drift to liberalism under the cover of orthodox phrases and genuine loyalty to the organization, or some combination of the two. . . .

Mormonism . . . was the child—the stepchild may be more accurate—of nineteenth-century American

Protestantism. Its early appeal lay in the fact that its restoration of divine revelation in the latter days answered the problems about which the older denominations could only quarrel. Thus the church must hold to its latter-day revelations literally or lose the theological and charismatic basis of its legitimacy. . . .

As this theology is literal and fundamentalist, the liberal can choose only between submission and personal disquietude or apostasy and suffering the guilt of deserting the tradition in which he has been reared and to which he feels great attachment. The church was founded upon a new opening of the heavens in our day, and it cannot easily, a mere century later, refuse to accept literally the words spoken by God himself to its founders. . . .

The position of the church, to recapitulate, is briefly this: With its fundamentalist theology, it faces the threat of apostasy on the part of its intellectuals, who cannot accept such a position. . . .

Clearly, the dilemma of education versus apostasy is one to which Mormonism has as yet found no genuine solution. . . . Mormonism as a way of life has to its credit that it has created a genuine intellectual group of considerable proportions in relation to the general size and rural composition of the community as a whole. But these intellectuals find themselves very often in a condition of inner conflict. Torn between a loyalty to the Mormon tradition and a commitment to modern thought. . . .

In frank discussion, their profound difficulties come to the fore. I was told by one that "a day of reckoning is coming, because of the church's insistence on fundamentalism." He compared the church to a train rushing down the track without an engineer. Another declared that the liberals in the church were "doomed to defeat," that the liberal idea of a Mormon church that gave up certain theological tenants, such as uniqueness of the Mormon people, modern revelation, and the like, and embraced instead social idealism was unworkable, as it would destroy the motivation of the rank and file. This man stated that the destruction of orthodox theology would mean the destruction of the church. He added that the leadership knew this and hence fought liberalism. . . . one man . . . spoke very seriously of the danger of being cut off from the church if he published a book to which the church objected. Another man who spoke favorably of the church to me and urged me to get close to the Mormon people and see the Mormon point of view from the inside said to me later, "We are priest-ridden and we are politics-ridden."

In these remarks we begin to get the feel of the intellectual's predicament and of his attitude toward authority and theological orthodoxy. His objections are usually held within the context of strong loyalty to Mormon institutions and values. There is much pride in the accomplishments of Mormon settlement, and, despite the fact that its theological foundations have vanished for

them, many of these intellectuals feel strongly identified with the very peculiarity of Mormonism that derived originally from those foundations. The result is conflict. The man who expresses antagonism to some aspect of the church will express admiration of another and rise in defense of the Mormon value system if necessary. . . .

Despite this confusion, despite these conflicts, the liberal Mormon intellectual remains a churchgoing man; university wards of the Mormon church have unusually large attendance. He remains a loyal but troubled opposition. . . . They contribute as best they can to church and community. Yet the question must be raised: Is there not here a great likelihood of a permanent alienation of the intellectual from the community? If the intellectual does not rebel, is not his frustration costly to the community, which could make far better use of his special talents? Will not some eventually rebel? What of the children of such parents? Will not the Mormon regard for education make this problem more and more pressing for the church? . . .

We can only conclude that the encounter of Mormonism and modern secular learning is one that is still taking place. It is a spectacle of the present, of which no history can as yet be written. Upon its outcome will depend in a deeper sense the future of Mormonism. A final loss of the intellectual would be a wound from which the church could hardly recover. A liberalization of belief and an abandonment of traditional positions in faith would transform, if not destroy, Mormonism. These potentialities slumber fitfully and insecurely within the present state of prolonged but regularized crisis.

In the meantime the conflict in the minds of the liberal Mormon intellectual remains real indeed. For many of them, their discontent and their loyalty are a burden they cannot lay down. They do not see any clear way out. They are, of course, statistically a small part of the community, and yet, despite their small number, they are not without crucial importance. Their alienation would be of great consequence. They express their conflict in private discussions and at times in published books. In the former, their great dilemma often expresses itself in contradictory statements. . . .

Mormonism, which a hundred years ago began with such high hopes for education as a solution to the problems of mankind, finds itself today with uneasy intellectuals in Zion itself. They have followed the admonition of their prophet and sought wisdom, but the result of their quest has placed them in opposition to many of his most important doctrines. (*The Mormons*, by Thomas F. O’Dea, 1965 printing, pages 222-237, 239-240)

In his book, *The Mormon Establishment*, published in 1966, Pulitzer Prize winning reporter Wallace Turner wrote the following:

Dr. Thomas F. O’Dea . . . insists that the church is in the midst of a crisis. . . . He said that “Mormonism is in a sleeping crisis.”

“It is a strange crisis, one not easily noticed; a lotus-eating crisis, a sleeping crisis, an unrecognized crisis of prosperity and acceptance. It has met its crises of adversity. But can it survive its own success?” . . .

He said being a Mormon is like having a second nationality. . . . Some of the feeling of quasi-nationality was what led Richard Burton, the explorer, to make his prediction that one day the Mormons would exist as a separate nation in the desert.

“There is a common tradition of suffering and achievement,” said O’Dea. “Even for those who no longer believe, the very area evokes a loyalty and bond of history with those who are still devout. . . .”

Small wonder, then, that a relatively small number ask to have their names removed from the rolls in a formal excommunication. When they do, of course, this signals a great and violent apostasy.

Some of these have had tremendous impact on the church in years past. Some of the top leaders have been cast out. But in keeping with Dr. O’Dea’s theory of the sleeping crisis, one of the most influential apostates of the 1960s has been a young machinist, who with his wife, left the church and now makes a living printing books and documents which contradict official Mormon pronouncements.

His name is Jerald Tanner. His wife, Sandra, is a great-great-granddaughter of Brigham Young. . . . He and Nathan Eldon Tanner, the high LDS official, are both descended . . . from John Tanner, the man who helped Joseph Smith in the 1830’s. Both the young man and his wife grew up in the LDS church. He drifted away first and she followed. . . . the three of us sat in the high-ceilinged living room of the old house and discussed the general question of how one feels on leaving the company of the Saints.

“It was a long time before I could admit I didn’t believe the Book of Mormon,” said Sandra Tanner, dandling Brigham Young’s great-great-great-grandchild on her knee. “It was weeks after that before I could say it out loud.” . . .

The Tanners operate as the Modern Microfilm Company [now Utah Lighthouse Ministry]. They specialize in copying books and documents that are out of print, or have been suppressed in one way or another, but that bear on the history and doctrine of the LDS church. When I talked with them, they had thirty-one titles . . . the best seller was *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* prepared by them jointly. . . . the Tanners have signed individual statements setting out their religious experience. Jerald Tanner wrote that he was born and reared in the Mormon church, but that he was nineteen years old before he heard the Word of Christ preached.

“I remember being told that a certain man who was excommunicated from the church was possessed with the devil,” he wrote. I can remember walking past this

man's house and being afraid of him because I firmly believed that he was possessed of the devil. I believed that a person would almost have to be possessed of the devil to leave the "true church." So strong was my conviction that I was greatly shocked to hear a boy in Sunday School say that he didn't know for certain that the church was true. I felt it was strange, indeed, for a person to be a member of the Mormon Church and not know it was true . . .

"When I was about eighteen years old I had to face reality. . . . the first time I saw David Whitmer's pamphlet, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, I threw it down in disgust. After throwing it down I began to think maybe that wasn't the right way to face the problem. . . . I picked up the pamphlet and read it through. I found that I could not prove David Whitmer [one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon] wrong, and that the revelations Joseph Smith gave had been changed. . . .

"Since that time I have found more and more proof that the church in which I was raised is in error. The most important thing that I found, however, was not that the Church was in error, but that I myself was in error. I found that I was a sinner in need of a Savior . . ."

This is a remarkable statement, telling much about the young man who made it as well as giving his views on the religion he is trying to undermine. He considers himself a Protestant, a believer in Christ and in the doctrines of eternal salvation . . .

Sandra Tanner's statement shows that she had doubts about her religion, but was generally able to contain them—until "I met Jerald and we began studying the Bible and Mormonism together. As we studied I began to see the contradictions between the Bible and the teachings of the Mormon church."

As a child she had been taught to admire her ancestor, Brigham Young. This was the point at which Jerald Tanner made his attack on her faith. He did it in Brigham's own words.

"Then Jerald had me read some of Brigham Young's sermons in the *Journal of Discourses* on Blood Atonement," Mrs. Tanner wrote. "I was shocked! I knew what Brigham Young was saying was wrong but I couldn't reconcile these sermons with the things I had always been taught concerning him. I knew these were not the words of a Prophet of God.

"As I studied I not only found errors in Mormonism, I also began to comprehend there was something wrong in my own life. As I studied God's word I realized I was a sinful hypocrite."

That day as she talked in the living room of the old house across from the ballpark in Salt Lake City, she remembered her first meeting with Jerald Tanner. She was visiting her grandmother.

"I fell in love with him," she said quite simply and without embarrassment. Then she used a typical Mormon analogy to explain what she thinks their present life purpose to be. "What we do is more of a mission, you might say." . . .

There also is the demonstration by the Tanners that an apostate from the Mormon church generally takes with him their techniques of indefatigable research and argument that he was taught while in the church's embrace. The Tanners' masterwork, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* is an intricate weaving of arguments from many sources against the fundamental precept of the Saints' doctrine—that Joseph Smith, Jr., was a prophet of God and that his production of the Book of Mormon, the revelations set down in *Doctrine and Covenants*, and further writings in the *Pearl of Great Price* represented the fruits of divine inspiration. . . .

With the Tanners the church today finds itself faced by its own techniques of argument and its own words turned back against it . . . the campaign is effective, too, and of this there is no doubt. . . .

A modern apostasy can be understood through the story of the Tanner couple. . . . through this example of drifting away we also see a truth about the strength of Mormonism. It is, as Dr. O'Dea said, a second nationality for those born into it. They may leave the church—as an immigrant leaves Europe to settle in the United States—but they have ties with the church and share a common history, common values and common thought and speech patterns with those they left behind in the great congregation of the Saints.

When we consider these apostasies, we must remember that many, many more remain solidly in the church than have drifted away. . . . One who comes to mind is J. D. Williams . . . a professor of political science at the University of Utah. . . . As a political liberal he abhors the church's attitude on Negroes [this, of course, was written before the Mormon Church changed the "anti-Negro doctrine" in 1978]. . . .

Williams has been a bishop of his ward (which annoyed some of the high church officials who find his liberal views offensive). He now is a high counselor of his stake . . . He was critical of the policy of secrecy attached to the church archives. This prevents historians from examining source documents. . . .

"I would open it all up and be sure the truth could be known," said Williams. (*The Mormon Establishment*, 1966, pages 153-160, 162-165)

Although these observations regarding the possibility of "a sleeping crisis" in the Mormon Church were made about three decades ago, the conflict now seems to have become a reality. For a number of years an intense struggle between very conservative church leaders and liberal historians has been going on. Since both sides realized that an open conflict would be very costly to the church, much of the fighting has been carried out behind closed doors. Lately, however, the battle has escalated and newspapers and television stations now frequently report new developments in the conflict.

Allen Roberts, coeditor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, has written an outstanding article for *Private Eye Weekly* concerning the serious implications of the purge. In this article, Roberts makes it clear that the problem goes far beyond the six people who were severely disciplined in September, 1993:

Perhaps the real target of the purge is the large group of those who will moderate their behavior to conform with leaders' desires in order to stay in good standing. This leverage is especially effective on members who owe their livelihood to the church. After presenting a paper on BYU's academic freedom policy at a Sunstone Symposium, BYU professor Scott Abbott was in danger of being disciplined, but saved himself from punishment by obeying a demand to write letters of apology to church leaders.

Those leaving Mormonism on their own terms, rather than waiting to be disciplined and dishonorably removed on the church's terms, have consistently mentioned the church's growing intolerance of diversity and individual freedom, the loss of spirituality, love and forgiveness, the obsession with power, control and unity, and the lack of acceptance of new, progressive ideas, as among the reasons for leaving. . . . Candidates for future disciplinary action have expressed anxiety over the dilemma of whether to resign their memberships quietly by writing a letter, or whether to wait for the axe to fall and go "kicking and screaming" as one liberal Mormon put it.

In the wake of the rash of punitive actions over the last year, members in all quarters are left perplexed and confused at the church's motives, and amazed at the intensity and inconsistency of the actions. . . .

One apparent reason church leadership has such a great need to rid itself of certain members is an increasing institutional need to promote a positive image of Mormonism. The church's award-winning advertisements advance the image of Mormonism as a respectable, conservative, family centered, mainstream church. Cleansing the church of what it considers to be its non-conforming or "different" members on both sides of the spectrum of orthodoxy is another method of trying to attain a positive image. Certain leaders do not approve of any but the orthodox referring to themselves as Mormons. A way of solving this problem is to cut off the heterodox, after which the church can dismiss them as non-Mormon or even anti-Mormon.

One need only look at the variety of reasons for which people have been excommunicated or disfellowshipped to see the pattern of purifying the church of perceived extremists, reformers and malcontents. Many others have been excommunicated besides the well-known "September Six" group . . .

Ronald Garff of the Duchesne Stake was excommunicated for having sold tapes on the Last Days. Once his livelihood, he stopped selling the tapes

upon the request of his local church leader, but was still excommunicated.

Thirty-plus Mormons in Sanpete County [were] excommunicated for conducting "prayer circles," and for their zeal in studying the early teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, now the church president. Conservative, scriptural literalists who take their religion very seriously, they believe they are being true to the religion's origins and doing nothing more than preserving important early doctrinal truths and practices. They believed too much, not too little.

Rulon Price, a retired attorney, [was] disfellowshipped one year ago for expressing his belief that "Where there is a conflict between what the scriptures say and what leaders say, God expects us to follow the scriptures." This view conflicts with that of then-Apostle Ezra Taft Benson who said in his controversial 1980 speech . . . that "Second: The Living Prophet is More Vital to Us Than The Standard Works [Mormon scripture]," and that "Third: The Living Prophet is More Important to Us Than a Dead Prophet." Price is scheduled this month to defend his membership against a charge of apostasy.

Given its image-consciousness, it is ironic that the church would risk the loss of credibility and positive image it is now suffering due to excommunications. To date, the national and international press, including the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Arizona Republic*, BBC, and *Time* magazine, and the largest newspapers in several foreign countries, have given close attention to the new "Mormon problem." Church leaders have responded defensively. Elder Dallin Oaks labeled the dissidents as people "trying to get a movement started by exaggerating their grievances." (*Private Eye Weekly*, October 20, 1993, pages 10-11)

Excommunication is certainly not something new in the Mormon Church. It was used by Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, to control his people. For example, when the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon expressed displeasure with the way the church was being run, they were excommunicated. While Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery were later rebaptized and came back into the church, David Whitmer claimed that God Himself spoke to him "by his own voice from the heavens, and told me to 'separate myself from among the Latter Day Saints' . . ." Consequently, Whitmer remained out of the church until his death in 1888 (see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 58-59).

In Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*, we find that he painted a rosy picture of the unity in the church:

I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man

ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, pages 408-409)

In reality, the church was riddled with dissension. Allen Roberts revealed:

In the Mormon tradition, Joseph Smith frequently censored or cut off opponents in his effort to maintain power. He excommunicated or disfellowshipped better than 60 percent of the apostles and first presidency members he himself had appointed. Ultimately his purges proved fatal when, after destroying the printing press of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, some of those he had disciplined cooperated with others to assassinate him. (*Private Eye Weekly*, October 20, 1993, page 13)

Although Joseph Smith seemed prone to excommunicate those who questioned his authority, there is one statement that he made which those who have recently been cut off from the church are very interested in. According to the official *History of the Church*, Smith claimed that he was against having people tried for “erring in doctrine”:

Elder Pelatiah Brown . . . was hauled up for trial before the High Council.

I did not like the old man being called up for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodist[s], and not like the Latter-day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I want the liberty of *thinking and believing as I please*. It feels so good not to be trammelled. It does not prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine. (*History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 340)

Joseph Smith’s successor, President Brigham Young, ruled the church with an iron hand. He even referred to himself as a dictator:

I sometimes say to my brethren, “I have been your dictator for twenty-seven years—over a quarter of a century I have dictated this people; that ought to be some evidence that my course is onward and upward.” (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 14, page 205)

In a sermon given on February 3, 1867, President Brigham Young boasted that he even had a right to dictate the ribbons which the women should wear:

Now ask the Father in the name of Jesus whether I am telling you the truth about temporal things or not, and the same Spirit that bore witness to you that baptism by immersion is the correct way according to the Scriptures, will bear witness that the man whom God calls to dictate affairs in the building up of his Zion has the right to

dictate about everything connected with the building up of Zion, yes even to the ribbons the women wear; and any person who denies it is ignorant. There is not a man or woman in the world who rises up against this principle but what is ignorant; all such are destitute of the spirit of revelation and enjoy not the Spirit of Christ. (*Ibid.*, vol. 11, page 298)

Like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young used excommunication as a powerful tool to retain his right to dictate to the people. President Young even threatened those who traded with non-Mormons with excommunication:

And you, sisters, cease trading with any man or being in this city or country who does not belong to this church. If you do not, we are going to cut you off from the church . . . cease trading with those who are not of us. (*Ibid.*, vol. 12, page 315)

Excommunication was certainly a very serious punishment in early Utah. Those who were cut off from the church and did not leave the territory had a very difficult time surviving the pressures they faced.

One of the most significant excommunication trials in the church’s history was that of Fawn Brodie for writing a book in 1945 regarding Joseph Smith entitled, *No Man Knows My History*. Although almost half a century has passed, Mrs. Brodie’s book continues to sell. It has had a significant influence upon those who really want to know the truth about the origin of Mormonism. Although Mrs. Brodie was cut off from the church and publicly ridiculed by the church for writing the book, a number of Mormon scholars now feel that her book was a very important contribution in the quest to learn the truth about Joseph Smith and the rise of Mormonism.

Prior to 1978, there was a great deal of contention in the church regarding the fact that blacks could not hold the priesthood and were forbidden the privilege of going through the secret temple endowment ritual. This, of course, meant that they could not receive the crowning ordinance of celestial marriage for eternity in Mormon temples. Bruce R. McConkie, who became an apostle in 1972, explained the doctrine:

Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the negroes. Such spirits are sent to earth through the lineage of Cain, the mark put upon him for his rebellion against God and his murder of Abel being a black skin. . . .

Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty. (Abraham 1:20-27.) The gospel message of salvation is not carried affirmatively to them . . .

The negroes are not equal with other races where the receipt of certain spiritual blessings are concerned, particularly the priesthood and the temple blessings that flow therefrom, but this inequality is not of man's origin. It is the Lord's doing . . . and grows out of the lack of spiritual valiance of those concerned in their first estate. (*Mormon Doctrine*, 1966, pages 527-528)

Mormons who criticized the anti-black doctrine were considered to be weak in the faith and were often reprimanded for not being in harmony with the prophet of the church. John W. Fitzgerald was one of those who paid a high price for questioning the church's position on blacks. In a speech delivered at the First Baptist Church in Salt Lake City, Utah, July 1, 1973, Dr. Fitzgerald revealed that he had been excommunicated for opposing the anti-black doctrine:

Fellow Christians and fellow Americans: I love the great Mormon people. Their faith and works; their practical achievements . . .

The inspiration and motivation to learn, to acquire knowledge, to progress, are all basic to Mormonism. . . . I am a product of Mormonism. I am very proud of my heritage. I rejoice in the teachings of loving parents and friends. And so, it makes me very sad, indeed, that because I have dissented peacefully and in good conscience, and have declared that I believe that the discrimination against the Negro is wrong, unethical, and un-Christian, and immoral, that it has no real revelation-value, not in Scripture or out of it, that my name has been withdrawn from the rolls of the Mormon Church.

The President of the Holladay Stake, supported by his counsellors, the High Council of that Stake, *under orders of The First Presidency of the Church*, and supported by them, have excommunicated me from the L.D.S. Church. . . .

I have declared my independence from that Mormon dogma of discrimination. And from that point of dogma and practice; from the brain-washing and the thought control, that says, "Negroes are cursed"; that they are not worthy to hold the Mormon priesthood because of the sins of their ancestors, or because of lack of valiance in a premortal life, I separate myself. And from that kind [of] intolerance, I declare my spiritual freedom. (*The Freedom of Religion and the Freedom From Religion*, 1973, pages 11-12,14-15)

Like John W. Fitzgerald, Grant Heward was very disturbed by the anti-black doctrine. Mr. Heward knew that the scriptural source for the doctrine came from the Book of Abraham. Joseph Smith claimed to translate this book from an Egyptian papyrus scroll. It was subsequently canonized in the *Pearl of Great Price*—one of the four standard works of the Mormon Church.

In 1967, Mr. Heward was very interested to learn that Smith's Egyptian papyri, which had been lost for many decades, had been rediscovered at the Metropolitan Museum

of Art. The previous year (1966) we printed *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, a document which revealed the *modus operandi* Joseph Smith used to translate the Egyptian characters. Church leaders had suppressed this document for a hundred and thirty years. Mr. Heward's careful examination of this document convinced him that Joseph Smith did not have the slightest idea how Egyptian writing should be translated.

After examining the original papyri and comparing it with the *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, Mr. Heward was absolutely convinced that Smith's "translation" of the Book of Abraham was spurious. He, in fact, found devastating evidence to show that the "Book of Abraham," was in reality the Egyptian "Book of Breathings" and had absolutely nothing to do with Abraham and his religion.

Grant Heward provided us with information which demonstrated beyond all doubt that Joseph Smith's translation was a work of his own imagination. We printed this material in 1968 in a booklet entitled, *Is the Book of Abraham True?* (For a very detailed discussion of this subject see our book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 294-369D.)

One of the editors of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* contacted us and indicated that the journal was very interested in printing our research but feared to do so because of the explosive nature of the material. He indicated, however, that if they were able to get Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley to make a response to the work, they would consider publishing it. Fortunately, Dr. Nibley consented and the article "The Source of the Book of Abraham Identified," by Grant S. Heward and Jerald Tanner appeared in the Summer, 1968, issue of *Dialogue* (see pages 92-98). In addition, the same issue included the noted Egyptologist Richard A. Parker's translation of the very papyrus we had identified as the text Joseph Smith "translated" as the Book of Abraham. Parker's translation clearly demonstrated that the text was in fact the "Book of Breathings"—a pagan Egyptian funerary text.

Grant Heward's work with regard to the Book of Abraham provided a way for the Mormon leaders to escape the dilemma they were in with regard to the anti-black doctrine. Instead of commending Mr. Heward for his truthful research, however, church leaders decided to turn a deaf ear to the evidence he presented. They undoubtedly believed that if they admitted the Book of Abraham was a false translation, it would seriously reflect on the authenticity of Mormonism.

Even before the article appeared in *Dialogue*, Grant Heward was in trouble with the church over the authenticity of the Book of Abraham. Mr. Heward passed out some material on the subject at a General Conference of the church, and on June 14, 1967, he received a letter from his Stake Presidency which contained this statement:

“You are hereby requested to appear before a Stake High Council court of the Midvale Stake . . . for investigation of alleged circulation of literature challenging the validity of a standard work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

The Stake Presidency was apparently acting under orders from Joseph Fielding Smith, who later became the tenth prophet of the Mormon Church. Mr. Heward made this statement concerning his trial:

. . . the court was very kind and courteous. There was not so much as an unkind word spoken during the entire proceedings. The Stake President proved to be a kind and loving man. The Bishop, who held an inquiry some weeks previous, was also warm and friendly. I am grateful for their kindness. *Both stated that the charge came from the office of Joseph Fielding Smith.*

When asked if I had any witnesses, I replied that I brought none, but that truth itself and God were my witnesses. I later thought that if they really investigated the testimony of “Truth,” they would find him a faithful witness indeed. Most people simply refuse to examine the evidence.

In this case the truth did not seem to count. Mr. Heward was excommunicated from the Mormon Church on June 21, 1967.

Muzzling Reed Durham

In 1974, Reed Durham was serving as Director of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah. Since the University of Utah is a large university located in Salt Lake City, the heartland of Mormonism, it is obvious that Dr. Durham had an important position at that time. In addition, Durham was serving as president of the Mormon History Association.

While Reed Durham really loved the LDS Church, he realized that there were serious problems in Mormon history. Dr. Durham spent a great deal of his time seeking ways to reconcile these discrepancies and his desire was to keep students from leaving the church. Unfortunately, however, Dr. Durham went one step too far after he became president of the Mormon History Association.

In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we examined the relationship between Mormonism and Freemasonry and presented convincing evidence that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonic rituals when he created his temple ceremony (see pages 484-492). According to the *History of the Church*, vol. 4, pages 551-552, Joseph Smith became a Mason on March 15, 1842:

In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office. . . .

Wednesday, March 16. — I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree.

Reed Durham was very interested in the possibility of a connection between Mormonism and Masonry and did his own study of the matter. In 1974, Durham addressed the Mormon History Association concerning the ties between Mormonism and Masonry. Although Dr. Durham still maintained Joseph Smith was a prophet, in his address he made some shocking admissions concerning the fact that Smith had incorporated Masonry into his new religion:

One historian, who has spent at least 25 years exploring the topic of Mormonism and Masonry, finally concluded that any person who ventured into this area of study was something of a “foolhardy nitwit.” So mote it be! Still I am convinced that in the study of Masonry lies a pivotal key to further understanding Joseph Smith and the Church. . . . It commenced in Joseph’s home when his older brother became a Mason. . . . The many parallels found between early Mormonism and Masonry of that day are substantial . . . I believe that there are few significant developments in the Church, that occurred after March 15, 1842, which did not have some Masonic interdependence. . . .

There is absolutely no question in my mind that the Mormon [temple] ceremony which came to be known as the Endowment, introduced by Joseph Smith to Mormon Masons, had an immediate inspiration from Masonry. This is not to suggest that no other source of inspiration could have been involved, but the similarities between the two ceremonies are so apparent and overwhelming that some dependent relation cannot be denied. . . .

It is also obvious that the Nauvoo Temple architecture was in part, at least, Masonically influenced. Indeed, it appears that there was an intentional attempt to utilize Masonic symbols and motifs. . . .

It was true that in orthodox Masonry . . . the inclusion of women was definitely prohibited . . . The Joseph Smith Masonry was daily becoming less orthodox and tended to follow more in the direction of some unorthodox Masonry . . .

The second type of unorthodox female Masonry was known as “Adoptive” Masonry. . . . The ceremonies for women in this order were quite similar to those later found within the endowment ceremony of the Mormons. . . . I suggest that enough evidence presently exists to declare that the entire institution of the political kingdom of God, including the Council of Fifty, the living constitution, the proposed flag of the kingdom, and the anointing and coronation of the king, had its genesis in connection with

Masonic thoughts and ceremonies. . . . Can anyone deny that Masonic influence on Joseph Smith and the Church, either before or after his personal Masonic membership? The evidence demands comments. (Presidential Address by Reed Durham at the Mormon History Association, April 20, 1974, as printed in *Mormon Miscellaneous*, October, 1975, pages 11-13,16)

After giving this speech, Reed Durham found himself in real trouble with church leaders. Richard Stephen Marshall gave this information:

Dr. Reed Durham of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah is a highly respected scholar who has encountered some difficulty with Church leaders because of his open attitude toward Mormon history . . . Durham delivered the presidential address of the Mormon History Association. . . . It was an examination of Mormonism and Masonry, and an historical analysis of the influence of the latter upon the former.

He was evidently aware of the fact that he was treading on controversial ground in delivering his paper.

He closed his paper with an appeal for an increased openness in the examination of Mormon history: "There are many questions which still demand answers. I earnestly hope I have raised some questions. Perhaps I have answered a few. But if we, as Mormon historians, respond to these questions and myriads like them relative to Masonry in an ostrich-like fashion, with our heads buried in the traditional sand, then I submit: there never will be 'any help for the widow's son.'"

David Martin adds an editorial comment at the end of Durham's paper . . . He says: "In the year and a half since the above talk was given, the head in the sand attitude has prevailed. . . . Dr. Durham has been chastised by the church and made apology. And his talk has done a brisk business on the Mormon History underground."

Sandra Tanner, in a[n] interview with this writer . . . said that Reed Durham was a very honest man, and a little naive because he thought Mormons would be more open minded than they were. She said that he had been under scrutiny for some time and that after he gave his paper on masonry he was called in to see President Spencer W. Kimball. Shortly thereafter he wrote a letter and circulated it reaffirming his faith in the Church, its temple ceremony and the present leaders. He was then given a year's sabbatical leave from the Institute to write a book, and returned not as director, as he had been, but as a teacher. Max Parkin . . . told this writer that the rumors to the effect that Durham had been released because of his talk in Nauvoo were without any truth. He said that it was his own decision not to return as Director of the Institute, so that he could devote more time to research. ("The New Mormon History," by Richard Stephen Marshall, A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, pages 51-54)

In a footnote on page 54 of the same thesis, Marshall revealed the following concerning the letter of apology Durham was forced to write:

"Dr. Durham told this writer, in reference to his letter, that I had to write that. They wanted me to bear my testimony. I hadn't done that in my talk. They had me do that so people would know where I stood." (Interview, April 11, 1977).

The leaders of the Mormon Church seem to have realized that Reed Durham's forthright approach to Mormon history presented a serious challenge to the church. Consequently, they decided to make an example of him so that other scholars would not follow in his footsteps. Since Durham loved the church and wanted to continue teaching at the Institute of Religion, he accepted the church's restrictions. On May 4, 1977, a Mormon scholar wrote Durham a letter requesting more information concerning his speech on Mormonism and Masonry. Dr. Durham responded as follows:

Thank you so much for your kind letter & for the requests for further info. about my address—

I am sorry, but because of the nature of the subject matter, the Brethren [i. e., the highest leaders of the church] have requested that I do no more with the subject again—I am not to release info. or have any more to say on the subject. This hurt me very much—as I believe that nothing—no amount of study, exploration, nor research, will ever hurt the church or the cause of truth—ever! However, I will be obedient to my Brethren and be still.

I am sorry I can't help you—Sincerely Reed C. Durham, Jr.

The treatment given to Reed Durham certainly shows the suppressive attitude concerning Mormon History which Mormon leaders want to perpetuate.

Church History Aborted

Unfortunately, this was not the only crushing blow Reed Durham received from the General Authorities of the church. A few years later Dr. Durham and fifteen other Mormon historians were badly mistreated by "the Brethren." Each of these men had been specifically chosen to write one of the volumes for a sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church. Church Historian Leonard Arrington was appointed to oversee the production of this history. It was to be his most important project. All of these volumes were to be authored by prominent Mormon scholars. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for April 26, 1975, quoted Dr. Arrington as saying:

“We have signed contracts with 16 persons, each of whom is writing one volume of the set,” said the church historian. “Each requires several years of intensive research and none will be available before 1978. We hope all 16 volumes will be ready by 1980.”

The idea behind the project was to have the volumes ready for the 150th anniversary of the Church the sesquicentennial celebration of 1980. Unfortunately, 1980 arrived without a single volume being published! From what we were able to determine, some of the scholars were too frank in their presentation and this caused great consternation among some of the church leaders.

As early as 1978, church officials were conniving to stop the publication of the sesquicentennial history. Since the authors were having some problems meeting the deadline given in the original contract, it was apparently suggested that this might be a good pretext the church could use to cancel the contracts. In addition, the question arose as to whether the church could refuse to pay the authors for their manuscripts. In a memo dated April 4, 1978, church counsel Wilford W. Kirton, Jr. informed Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley that it was impossible to break the contracts without the possibility of being sued by the authors:

I have met with James Mortimer and Lowell Durham of Deseret Book Company. They requested that I prepare and submit my opinion regarding certain contracts with Deseret Book . . . the Arrington letter of February 15, 1978, is a general status report advising that the authors are progressing in their work and several authors indicate that their writings will be completed this year. . . . I conclude that *the publisher may not cancel the contract* by reason of the author’s failure to meet the performance schedules. . . . The question has arisen as to whether the publisher has a right to refuse payment for the manuscripts.

Assuming the correctness of my opinion that the publisher in the circumstances of this case is not entitled to cancel the contract, it would necessarily follow that *the publisher cannot refuse payment* for the author’s work. . . . Where, as in this case, an author has devoted a great deal of time and effort in producing a volume of history over a period of several years, I would normally expect a court of law to resolve any doubt or ambiguity jeopardizing compensation in favor of the author and against the publisher. . . .

In summary, I conclude that the publisher under the facts of this case has a weak position if it were to attempt to cancel the Agreement and to refuse payment for the work . . .

I leave the matter to others to determine whether the Publisher should morally refuse to publish a manuscript against the affirmative provision in Paragraph 3 wherein the Publisher agrees to publish the work. . . .

In 1972, the authors agreed to a “15% royalty” on the books that were sold by the church’s Deseret Book Company. In 1974, however, Leonard Arrington and Wm. James Mortimer, sent the authors a letter which said:

The Brethren of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve . . . have requested us to ask authors of the volumes of our sesquicentennial history to surrender their rights to royalties on their volumes in return for a flat payment of \$20,000. . . . We congratulate you on the fact that the Brethren feel sufficient confidence in you that they are willing to make such a substantial and unprecedented cash payment. It will be appropriate if you will treat the financial aspects of your Amended Author Publisher Contract as confidential, as it represents a departure from the traditional method [of] compensating Church writers. . . . We trust you will sign the attached sheet and return it to Deseret Book Company at the earliest opportunity.

All of the writers apparently consented to this agreement. According to this document, the authors would not receive the \$20,000 in one lump payment; instead they would receive “\$5,000.00 upon the completion of an approved manuscript; another \$5,000.00 upon the publication of the book; another \$5,000.00 within six (6) months following publication or later if the Author requests; and another \$5,000.00 within one year after publication or later if the Author requests” (Amended Author-Publisher Agreement, page 1).

By 1980, however, church officials had apparently decided that the history must be scuttled. Instead of just coming out and telling the authors what was really on their minds, they devised a cunning plan. They would again amend the contract in such a way that they could escape printing part or all of the proposed history. It was suggested the contract should be sweetened up so that the authors would receive the full \$20,000 as soon as they delivered their manuscripts. On the other hand, however, the amendment to the contract would contain a bitter pill: the writers would relinquish their legal right to demand that the church’s Deseret Book Company actually print their manuscripts. In a memo written by Wilford W. Kirton, Jr. to Lowell M. Durham, dated April 22, 1980, Kirton claimed that [Lowell] Durham had “suggested that the language should be carefully worded to avoid, if possible, disputes with the authors.”

Mr. Kirton, however, pointed out that if the language was camouflaged, it could later cause problems for the church:

In my prior memorandum, I conclude with the opinion that the Contract obligates the Publisher to publish the final edited work . . . if the desired result is to be achieved, the language granting the Company sole

Dr. Alexander
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primary source materials. We congratulate you on the fact that the Brethren feel sufficient confidence in you that they are willing to make such a substantial and unprecedented cash payment. It will be appropriate if you will treat the financial aspects of your Amended Author-Publisher Contract as confidential, as it represents a departure from the traditional method compensating Church writers.

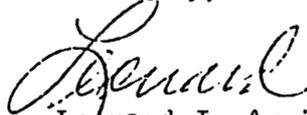
Consistent with the foregoing, we are enclosing herewith an original and one copy of a proposed Amended Author-Publisher Agreement for your consideration. If it is satisfactory, you should sign both the original and the copy and return the executed copy to us for our files.

We should also like to inform you that the Brethren of the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency have formally reaffirmed our previously-announced arrangement for a screening committee for each of the volumes. The church screening committee for these volumes consists of Leonard Arrington, Church Historian; James Allen and Davis Bitton, Assistant Church Historians; and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Editor of the Historical Department. We know you will be delighted with this formal reapproval of policy.

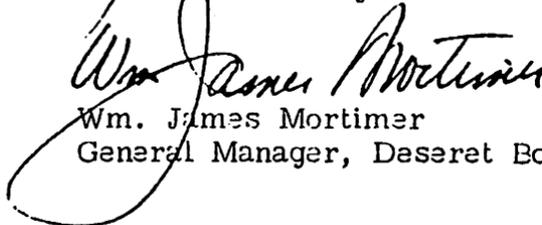
We know several of you are working actively on your volumes and we look forward to the early completion of your first drafts. You will be interested to know that the first volume of our Mormon Heritage Series, Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons, edited by Dean Jessee, is now available from Deseret Book Company and other outlets.

We trust you will sign the attached sheet and return it to Deseret Book Company at the earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Leonard J. Arrington



Wm. James Mortimer
General Manager, Deseret Book

A photo of page 2 of a letter, dated November 4, 1974, from the Church Historian Leonard J. Arrington and Wm. James Mortimer to one of the authors. Notice that he was congratulated because "the brethren feel sufficient confidence in you that they are willing to make such a substantial and unprecedented cash payment."

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I called attention to the several provisions in the various paragraphs of the Contract which were relevant to that point.

Paragraph 3 contained a provision indicating that when the manuscript had been approved for publication by the Historical Department it will be published at the Publisher's expense. While other provisions of the Agreement subject the work to editing or alteration as required by the Historical Department or the Publisher, the Contract goes on to provide that the editing or alteration shall not materially change the meaning or otherwise change the text of the work.

In my prior memorandum, I conclude with the opinion that the Contract obligates the Publisher to publish the final edited work.

In my meeting with you and Tom Mabey the other day, you advised that your Board had directed that a letter be prepared to each author in which the authors would be advised that the Company would pay the full \$20,000.00 upon delivery of the manuscript, with the understanding that the manuscript became the property of the Company and that it would have sole discretion as to when or if the manuscript would be published.

You suggested that the language should be carefully worded to avoid, if possible, disputes with the authors. Efforts in this direction might suggest the need or desirability that each manuscript would have to meet the approval of the principal leadership of the Church before the Company could invest in its publication. But if the desired result is to be achieved, the language granting the Company sole discretion as to when or if the manuscript were to be published, would need to be adequately set forth so that anyone reading the letter would clearly understand that the author had transferred rights of publication to the Company.

My conclusion on this point is that I believe existing Contracts obligate the Company to publish each manuscript, so that if the Company were to obtain the right not to publish, that would have to be the subject of an Amendment to the existing Contract.

If I may be of any further assistance in this matter, will you kindly advise.


Wilford W. Kirton, Jr.

WWK/mhp

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: WILFORD KIRTON
FROM: OSCAR W. McCONKIE III
RE: Contract between Deseret Book and
Sixteen Authors of Church History

The legal issue dealt with here is whether the Deseret Book Company can refuse to accept the written manuscripts of the sixteen authors on the grounds that the deadlines as specified in the contracts are past due, or whether Deseret Book Company has waived its right to refusal of acceptance because of its encouragement to the authors to proceed with their written manuscripts in spite of their missing the deadlines.

The case law states that Deseret Book Company has waived its contractual right to refuse acceptance of the manuscripts because of its encouragement to the authors to finish the manuscripts even though the express deadlines of the contracts have not been met.

In Satcher v. Woodmen of the World Life Insurance Co., 18 S. E. 2d 523, 199 S. C. 59, (1942), an Insurance Company tried to have declared void an insurance policy because the insured had not paid the premium on time. The facts showed that the insured did pay the premiums late for several months but that the Insurance Company accepted them. The Court ruled:

The first page of a memo, dated March 27, 1978, from Oscar W. McConkie III to Wilford Kirton. McConkie expresses the opinion that the church "has waived its contractual right to refuse acceptance of the manuscripts . . ."

discretion as to when or if the manuscript were to be published, would need to be adequately set forth so that anyone reading the letter would clearly understand that the author had translated rights of publication to the Company.

My conclusion on this point is that I believe existing Contracts obligate the Company to publish each manuscript, so that if the Company were to obtain the right not to publish, that would have to be the subject of an Amendment to the existing Contract.

A memo, dated May 1, 1980, included a proposed draft of the “Amendment to the Contract.” In this document we find the following:

1. Publisher agrees to pay the Author the sum of TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$20,000.00), as payment in full for the Author’s manuscript, in cash, upon delivery of the Author’s manuscript . . .
2. In consideration of such payment, the Author hereby grants to the Publisher the exclusive right to determine when or if the Author’s manuscript will be published.

While we do not know whether this proposed draft was sent to the authors, we do know that the sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church was totally scrapped by the leaders of the church. As we understand it, in order to suppress the history without the possibility of lawsuits, the General Authorities did pay each author who finished his work \$20,000 (those who had not finished their volumes may have received a smaller amount). Since there were sixteen authors to be paid off and other costs involved, the church leaders may have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to scuttle the history. That the General Authorities would approve this massive project and then abort it after some of the church’s top scholars spent years working on it shows a total lack of inspiration.

The reader will remember that Richard Steven Marshall said that Reed Durham took “a year’s sabbatical leave from the Institute” to work on the book. It must have been a crushing blow to Dr. Durham and the other authors when they found that the church rescinded the agreement it had originally made with them. It is obvious that the Mormon leaders simply could not face an open and honest history.

The New Mormon History

The leaders of the Mormon Church have felt very threatened by what is known as “New Mormon History.”

Whereas much of the history written by LDS historians in the past has been slanted to cover up the mistakes of the Mormon leaders, more recent historians are including controversial aspects of church history. Leonard Arrington apparently wanted the sixteen-volume sesquicentennial history of the Mormon Church to reflect this more open approach.

Richard Stephen Marshall gave this information regarding the New Mormon History:

Recent years have seen the emergence of a widespread new approach to Mormon history. Though this new movement remains unnamed by most scholars participating in it, or commenting on it, it seems fitting to apply the appellation of “The New Mormon History” as does Robert Flanders.

Latter-day Saint Church Historian, Leonard Arrington, explained to this writer that to call this type of history a “New History” “gets us into trouble with the General Authorities.” . . .

Arrington points out elsewhere that traditional Mormon history has been influenced by several “built-in biases,” which the New History would try to circumvent in its attempt at historical discovery. . . . Traditional history is saccharin. It allows for no error, no mistake in judgment on the part of a past Church leader, no conflict among the brethren. . . . Richard Bushman said that it was not until recent years that “many Mormon historians have readily admitted there were some faults in the early leaders. . . .”

. . . Because of traditional Mormon historians there has been a certain amount of historical data which has been ignored. There have been “historical questions which the Church would prefer to sweep under the rug.” An increased openness in Mormon history will have a tendency to arouse questions which could prove uncomfortable, and no doubt, it is this uncomfortability which has caused some people to frown upon the new objectivity. They are used to the Old History, which Arrington calls “sugary.” . . .

Arrington has also pointed out that “our historians were perhaps unduly respectful of certain authorities, placing credence in accounts that should have [been] subjected to critical analysis.” . . .

Although much objective Mormon history has been written since the turn of the century both Flanders and Hansen point to the publication of Fawn McKay Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History* as an event of great significance in the history of the New Mormon History. . . . Robert Flanders calls the book “a landmark . . . a transitional work,” linking both the Old and the New Histories. He adds that a “new era dawned with her book. All subsequent serious studies of early Mormonism have necessarily had Brodie as a reference point.” . . .

Another event which has given great impetus to the New History movement was the founding, in 1966, of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. . . .

Leonard Arrington, in a very pointed statement[,] seemingly justifies an in-depth probing into the Mormon past: "My own impression is that an intensive study of Church history, while it will dispel certain myths or half-myths sometimes perpetuated in Sunday school (and other classes) will build testimonies rather than weaken them."

There are many who do not share that opinion, including a good portion of the General Authorities. There is some logical justification for their lack of regard for a totally open approach to Mormon History. There is some evidence that those who examine it with any degree of intensity will indeed have a greater chance of losing their faith. . . .

In a recent address [two speeches given in 1976 are cited] . . . Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, issued several indictments against the tendency to treat Mormon history with a merely secular methodology. . . .

This talk seems to have been given on the genuine idea that *one's faith is endangered when one delves too deeply into the Mormon past*. It appears as though present LDS authorities only encourage knowledge to the extent that it will produce faith. A case in point is found in the obvious omission of any discussion of polygamy in Sunday school manuals. Knowledge which detracts from faith is *knowledge better not learned*. There is a self-preservation instinct among the leaders of the Church. . . . anything which endangers faith is bad, and to be avoided. It is better to be ignorant than to know if the knowing will lead away from salvation. . . .

One can perhaps see the reason the traditionalists say history should be taught so as to inculcate faith, and that if it does not result in greater testimony, then it should not be taught in that manner. Often the philosophy leads to the distortion of Mormon history, and to the selection of only those historical facts which cast a favorable light on the Church and its leaders. . . .

The New History in its effort to discover the "truth" about 19th century Mormonism finds a divergence between what the present Church says and what history indicates is fact. The historians, in trying to determine what actually happened, tread on sensitive ground." ("The New Mormon History," by Richard Stephen Marshall, A Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, May 1, 1977, pages 13, 14, 17-18, 20, 23-25, 32-33, 35-38, 44)

Unfortunately, in discussing New Mormon History, the contributions of some who played an important part in advancing the cause of truth are sometimes overlooked. For example, some Mormon historians who write New Mormon History try to disassociate themselves from Fawn Brodie because of the stigma attached to the fact

that she was excommunicated. Others who were either excommunicated or asked for their names to be removed from church records share a similar fate. Some of the real pioneers such as LaMar Peterson, John W. Fitzgerald, Grant Heward, H. Michael Marquardt, and others are often ignored. It should be remembered also that others who were never members of the church have added a great deal to the New History. We think especially of the late Wesley P. Walters, a minister who was so fascinated by Mormon history that he became a great authority on the subject.

Interestingly, one early contribution came from Brigham Young University professor M. Wilford Poulson. In his study, *Word of Wisdom Background*, written in 1930, Poulson demonstrated that Joseph Smith's revelation concerning the Word of Wisdom contained important similarities to the writings of the temperance movement. As we will show below, Leonard Arrington, who was certainly one of the pioneers of New Mormon History, wrote on the same subject in 1959. His article seems to have upset many people. Although Stanley S. Ivins was a very quiet man who did not write a great deal on Mormon history, the research he did had a very significant effect on the New History.

In the editor's Introduction to the book, *The New Mormon History*, D. Michael Quinn, suggested that "The 'New Mormon History,' for want of a better term, began with the publication of Juanita Brook's *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* in 1950 . . . but there were certainly antecedents. From the 1900s to the 1930s, assistant church historian Brigham Henry Roberts, despite his shortcomings as a historian, exemplified much of the philosophy later identified with the New Mormon History" (page vii). Dr. Quinn bypassed Fawn Brodie because he felt she was anti-Mormon and did not take Joseph Smith's "religious claims seriously" (page xiv, note 7).

Robert Lindsey, who served as a reporter for the *New York Times* and authored both *The Falcon and the Snowman* and *Flight of the Falcon*, wrote a book regarding the Mormon forger Mark Hofmann. In this book, Lindsey made these comments regarding the beginning of "The New Mormon History":

When Doyle, a mildly successful British mystery writer, decided to introduce to his readers a new hero called Sherlock Holmes almost half a century after Joseph Smith's death, he chose the Mormons as his first villains. Holmes's *A Study in Scarlet* depicted Utah's Mormons as a murderous and licentious cult ruled by terror and the Danite band.

Church leaders called such attacks the work of Satan, unprincipled muckrakers, bigots and embittered former Mormons. But in 1945, an attack on the Book of Mormon came from close range . . . Fawn M. Brodie, a niece of David O. McKay, a church Elder who later

became its Prophet, Seer and Revelator, wrote a biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History* . . . Much of the material she cited in support of her thesis had been drawn from diaries and other documents kept by early Mormons in compliance with Smith's history-keeping mandate, offering evidence to modern Mormon leaders that history was a sword with two edges.

Joseph Smith's emphasis on education produced during the twentieth century a large system of schools, seminaries, religious institutes and colleges . . . And it would also produce conflicts in the minds of many young Mormons that would tear at their hearts and souls.

Among the new generation of lawyers, physicians, professors, scientists and businessmen . . . were some who began to ask skeptical questions about the church's teachings.

Church authorities told them to accept what they were told on faith. . . .

But questioning by the new generation of educated Mormons persisted nevertheless, and during the 1950s there were the beginnings of an intellectual movement within the church. . . .

Adding to the ferment was the unhappiness of some Mormons over the church's refusal to accept blacks into its priesthood . . .

In 1960 the church acted decisively to protect the faith of its members from intrusions by the outer world, to halt the challenges to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and to increase obedience to the church hierarchy. The job was given to an organization called the Correlation Committee. It was assigned to review, correlate and change church publications and statements to ensure they were consistent "for doctrinal soundness and correctness of doctrinal interpretation." There was to be one consistent story. To deviate in any way was heresy.

The Correlation Committee, however, was unable to stifle the incipient intellectual movement, and a conservative wing of church leaders led by Ezra Taft Benson demanded a stronger crackdown. . . . In some communities teenage Mormon elders went to local libraries and removed Mrs. Brodie's book and others that were considered critical of the church. At Brigham Young University in 1964, professors who accepted the theory of evolution without reservation or expressed views considered religiously or politically subversive were monitored and reported on by a ring of student spies organized by a senior administrator at the university.

In many ways, the atmosphere imposed by the church's most conservative leaders would evoke comparisons with the world depicted by George Orwell in 1984. Orwell's totalitarian world was ruled by a Thought Police that indoctrinated children in what they were to believe beginning in infancy and then forced adults to accept unquestioningly whatever their leaders told them was the truth. It was a world in which history books were burned, history was rewritten and the past was defined by what the rulers said it was.

"Who controls the past controls the future," Orwell's ruling party said: "who controls the present controls the past."

Yet the fledging Mormon intellectual movement persisted.

In 1966, a group of scholars established a new organization, the Mormon History Association, and publicly sought access to the thousands of diaries of early Mormons and other historical documents that the church had placed off-limits. Several church members established *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, which printed interpretive articles that were generally in accord with orthodox Mormon dogma but occasionally pointed to apparent inconsistencies or puzzles in it.

At the same time that the intellectuals were pressing for more freedom of thought, the task of managing the church's rapid growth and far-flung economic interests had begun to overwhelm its spiritual leaders. . . . In a sweeping reorganization of the church's bureaucracy, they decided to professionalize management operations . . . the hierarchy in 1972 appointed Leonard Arrington, a Utah State University economist and author of *Great Basin Kingdom*, a 1958 book that was considered a classic among Western historians, as Church Historian.

. . . The appointment of Arrington, who had been one of the founders of the Mormon History Association, initiated a period of intellectual freedom in the church that Mormon historians would later call Camelot.

It was an appointment the church hierarchy would regret. (*A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder and Deceit*, pages 49-52)

On pages 128-130 of the same book, Robert Lindsey wrote the following:

Perhaps only Utah in the last half of the twentieth century could have produced someone like Michael Marquardt or Jerald Tanner. Through 150 years of persecution, travail and growth, the Mormon church had had many enemies, from frontier newspaper editors and federal marshals to homicidal bigots and disillusioned apostates. Marquardt was a mailman . . . whose hobby was wading through the ocean of paper left behind by generations of Mormons and writing research reports that almost always contradicted the church's version of its history and origins.

Tanner was a machinist turned publisher whose historical research, probably more than that of anyone else except Fawn Brodie, had given birth to what was being called "the new Mormon history."

By the broadest definition, they were members of the Mormon Underground, the unorganized collection of history buffs who traded copies of old documents like members of a spy ring passing secrets. But while many

participants in the Underground, such as Steve Christensen, were fiercely loyal to the church and convinced its doctrines could survive candid scrutiny of its history, Michael Marquardt and Jerald Tanner were thoroughly committed to the premise that much of what the church taught was false and manipulative.

Marquardt . . . had converted to Mormonism as a teenager, moved to Salt Lake City, immersed himself in the study of church history as a hobby, then became disenchanted with Mormonism and resigned fifteen years after joining the church. Although he left the church in 1976 he continued to study its history with the passion of a missionary, searching libraries and archives for evidence to repudiate the church hierarchy.

As noted above, many LDS authors involved in writing the New History find it hard to acknowledge that researchers who left the church or were excommunicated played any important role in the emergence of New Mormon History. To do so, of course, could subject them to close scrutiny by Mormon officials and provide additional fodder to those who wish to see the real truth about Mormon history suppressed.

Getting Rid of Arrington

Church leaders not only wanted to abort Leonard Arrington's most important project (the sixteen-volume history), but they also felt that it was necessary to destroy the power of the man they themselves had appointed to be the Mormon Church Historian.

It now seems very obvious that Dr. Arrington was appointed Church Historian in an attempt to stifle the criticism the church was receiving because it was suppressing its most important records. For many years prior to the appointment of Arrington, we had exerted pressure on the Mormon Church to be forthright about its history. By the early 1970s many LDS scholars had joined in this protest.

Joseph Fielding Smith had been Church Historian for many years. Smith ruled the Church Historian's Office with an iron hand and would not let scholars have unrestricted access to the documents. In 1970, he became the tenth president of the Mormon Church, and turned the Church Historian's Office over to Apostle Howard W. Hunter. This did not satisfy some of the more liberal Mormons, who by this time had become very aroused over the policy of suppression. Sometime after Hunter's appointment, a group of Mormon scholars presented the Mormon leaders with a list of suggestions on how they should run the Historian's Office. According to Leonard Arrington, they wanted a trained historian to be appointed as Assistant Church Historian. They also wanted the church records to be made available to scholars and for the church itself to start printing its rare documents.

When we heard about these requests we could not see how the church leaders could possibly comply with them without undermining the entire foundation of the church. Take, for instance, the idea of appointing a qualified historian. A true historian, if he were honest with himself, could never approve of the methods used by Joseph Fielding Smith and other Church Historians in the past. Besides, it had become traditional for a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to fill this position. In the "Guide To The Historian's Office Library-Archives" this statement appeared: "Since the days of Nauvoo this important responsibility has been assigned to a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles." It seemed very unlikely, then, that the church would appoint a trained historian. Nevertheless, on January 15, 1972, this surprising announcement appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune*:

Dr. Leonard J. Arrington, noted Utah educator and author, has been named historian of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be released . . .

The church's *Deseret News* for January 15, 1972, acknowledged that Arrington's appointment was "an historic step, the first time that this important post has been filled by going outside the membership of the church's general authorities." While Dr. Arrington was an active Mormon, many people considered him to be very liberal. Arrington, in fact, had openly criticized the church for not publishing the diaries of the early Mormon leaders and for not permitting "qualified historians to use them without restriction" (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1966, page 26). In the same article, Leonard Arrington remarked: "Just as Mrs. Brodie's biography, and certain others, are usually regarded (by the Mormons, at least) as 'anti,' most of the 'pro' biographies are undeviating pictures of sweetness and light. These err even more on the side of incredibility than the blacker portraits of the anti's."

Church leaders had to be aware of the fact that Leonard Arrington wanted a truthful history of the church when they appointed him as Church Historian. As early as 1959, Dr. Arrington was making waves. Richard Stephen Marshall reported:

Brigham Young University Studies was founded in 1959 and caused a stir with the publication of its first issue, as this writer understands it, because of the article by Leonard Arrington, "An Economic Interpretation of the 'Word of Wisdom.'" The periodical obviously succumbed to pressure from above and did not publish anything for a year. Then it reappeared in 1961 with an entirely new board of editors. ("The New Mormon History," page 26)

The appointment of Leonard Arrington as Church Historian was certainly a surprise, and the choice of James B. Allen and Davis Bitton as assistant historians certainly signaled that the church was moving in a new direction. Allen had previously published an article which undermined Joseph Smith's story of his First Vision, and Bitton had written an article in which he made an attack on the accuracy of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church*.

Orthodox members of the church who were aware of the liberal views held by these historians must have wondered what church leaders had in mind when they appointed these men to oversee the history of the church. The only reasonable explanation is that the policy of suppressing the church records had failed and that Mormon leaders were trying to present a new image to the world. They were apparently trying to make it appear that they were proud of the records they had suppressed for so many years.

Unfortunately for the church leaders, they soon found that the contents of some of the records which were released were so devastating to church members that they were forced to return to a policy of suppression.

In any case, after his appointment, Dr. Arrington announced great plans for the Historical Department. Many of these ideas were thwarted by men who followed the philosophy of Ezra Taft Benson, who was at that time President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. Benson made it crystal clear that he felt it was wrong to tell the whole truth about Mormon history. He, in fact, maintained that there should be a cover-up with regard to certain things that might make the Mormon Church look bad.

Dr. Arrington's problems began just after his appointment to the office of Church Historian when he announced the formation of a group known as "Friends of Church History." On November 24, 1972, the church's newspaper announced that the "Friends of Church History" was to hold an "organizational meeting" at the "General Church Office Building":

Monthly meetings will be held at which papers will be presented, thus providing members with a means of keeping up-to-date on current research and new interpretations, Smart added. . . .

"It will be a meeting of the like-minded, a chance for Church history buffs to stimulate thought and encourage study among their group and beyond," commented Dr. Leonard Arrington . . .

The group, which will operate in cooperation with the Church's Historical [De]partment, will have access to the department's facilities for research and study. (*Deseret News*, November 24, 1972)

The Friends of Church History got off to a great start with about 500 people showing up for the first meeting. Dr. Arrington was undoubtedly elated by the large turn out, but the Mormon leaders could apparently see that this

could cause serious problems for the church. With such a large group studying church history too many things might be uncovered which could prove embarrassing to the church. Consequently, an order was issued by the First Presidency that the next meeting should be canceled. Meetings were to be held "the fourth Thursday of each month," but no meetings were held after the first one.

After "Friends of Church History" had not met for several months, Dr. Arrington was asked the reason. He replied that they were still "thrashing out" the constitution. When a prominent Mormon scholar was told of Dr. Arrington's statement, he commented that they were "thrashing out more than the constitution." William B. Smart—the man who was supposed to head the Friends of Church History—confirmed that it was the "First Presidency" that gave the order to "hold" it up.

On December 13, 1972, the *Deseret News* announced that "Elder Joseph Anderson has been appointed director of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Since Anderson believed in suppressing the church's records, his appointment was taken as bad news for those who wanted an open history. It soon became apparent that Leonard Arrington was becoming "Church Historian" in name only. The Mormon leaders were working behind the scenes to stifle some of Leonard Arrington's most important plans. We have already shown that the General Authorities scuttled Arrington's most important project—the sixteen-volume history of the church.

Another dream of Dr. Arrington was to have the church publish a one-volume history. This dream became a reality in 1976 when James B. Allen, Assistant Church Historian, and Glen M. Leonard wrote the book, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. In the Foreword to this book, Dr. Arrington wrote:

With the approval of the First Presidency, we asked two of our finest historians, James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, to undertake the task of preparing this history. . . . the work was read by a committee consisting of myself as Church Historian; Dr. Davis Bitton, assistant Church Historian; and Dr. Maureen Ursenback Beecher, editor of the Historical Department.

After *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* appeared, there was a rumor that Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (now prophet of the church), wanted the book "shredded." Richard Steven Marshall furnishes this information:

It is this attitude on the part of Church leaders which undoubtedly led Ezra Taft Benson to ask that *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, by James Allen and Glen Leonard, be shredded. (James Allen told this writer that his book created a stir primarily because he and Leonard had treated the Word of Wisdom in a historical as well as a

spiritual manner, and also because they did not call the story of the crickets and the seagulls a miracle.) . . . This conflict is underscored by the distinct possibility that Elder Benson will become the thirteenth president of the Church in the event of the death of Spencer W. Kimball. That could turn out to be an unlucky number indeed for LDS historians who want to publish objective New History. (“The New Mormon History,” pages 38-39)

Although the book was not “shredded,” Ezra Taft Benson maintained that the church would not continue to print it. In a letter dated June 23, 1978, Benson stated: “The book, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, will not be republished” (see photograph of letter in *Mormonism—Shadow or Realty?* page 13-C). Although, the book was later reprinted, Lavina Fielding Anderson points out that it was suppressed for a decade:

1976. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, by James B. Allen and Glen Leonard, is published. It sells out within a few months but is not reprinted because some general authorities are offended at its approach. A second printing eventually appears in 1986, and a new edition is published in 1993. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, page 10)

On page 61 of the same article, Lavina Fielding Anderson revealed the “existence of a ‘blacklist’ prohibiting some people from writing articles for *The Ensign* or speaking at BYU functions, and the policy at Deseret Book, also shared by church manuals or CES materials, of not quoting certain authors.” In a footnote on the same page, Anderson stated that when she worked for the church’s official publication, *The Ensign*, the book, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, could not even be cited by that magazine:

While I was at the *Ensign*, the magazine’s blacklist was a 3x5-inch card kept in the desk of Sharon Kirwin, secretary to the editor . . . Over the years it included Reid Bankhead, Hyrum Andrus, Paul Toscano, Eugene England, Gordon Thomasson, and Lowell Bennion. An individual on a planning committee at Brigham Young University explained to me during the early 1990s that I was “on the [university’s] blacklist” for the annual women’s conference (and presumably other events as well). “Uncitable” books include but not limited to *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* by Linda Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* by James B. Allen and Glen Leonard, and the works of D. Michael Quinn.”

The letter written by Ezra Taft Benson regarding the fact that *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* would not be reprinted, clearly demonstrates that as far as Mormon

history is concerned, the views of Leonard Arrington and Ezra Taft Benson are diametrically opposed. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger* for January 1979, we warned that Benson was trying to get rid of Dr. Arrington:

There is reason to believe that Benson wants to remove Arrington from his position as Church Historian. Some feel that he will gradually be “phased out.” It is also reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult for Mormon scholars to get access to documents in the Historical Dept. If Dr. Arrington should survive under the leadership of Spencer W. Kimball, it is very unlikely that he will remain Church Historian if Ezra Taft Benson becomes President.

About eighteen months after we wrote the statement above, it became clear that the process of “phasing out” Dr. Leonard Arrington had been set in motion. The *Salt Lake Tribune* for July 3, 1980, announced:

PROVO (AP) — The history research division of the Mormon church’s historical department will move to Brigham Young University, officials announced Wednesday.

The department’s library and archives division and arts and sites division will remain at the church’s Salt Lake City headquarters, said church President Spencer W. Kimball. . . .

Director of the new institute will be Dr. Leonard J. Arrington, church historian.

Most of the division’s personnel will be transferred to BYU, where they will become part of the faculty and staff.

Although President Kimball tried to persuade members of the church that “This transfer of the work of professional historians from a Church department to an institute in the university is a forward step,” (*Deseret News*, Church Section, July 5, 1980), it was obvious to anyone who examined the situation that this was a real demotion for Church Historian Leonard Arrington. Before Arrington’s appointment, the Church Historian had charge of the records and made decisions as to who could see and/or make copies of the various documents. The transfer of Arrington to Brigham Young University in Provo created a forty-five mile gap between the Church Historian and the church’s records stored in the Church Office Building in Salt Lake City:

Dr. Arrington and some History Division staff members eventually will move to the BYU campus but, the institute has not yet been assigned a particular building or office area in Provo. The Church’s library and archives will remain in Salt Lake City. (*Deseret News*, Church Section, July 5, 1980)

It is obvious, then, that church leaders wanted to get Dr. Arrington as far away from the Church Office Building as possible and to reduce his influence with the Mormon people. Arrington was transferred to the “Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History.” It is certainly ironic that he would be sent to an organization named after Joseph Fielding Smith. As we have stated earlier, Smith ruled the Church Historian’s Office with an iron hand. According to Peggy Fletcher, “The Apostle who claimed the title of Church Historian the longest was Joseph Fielding Smith who served from 1921 to 1970” (*Sunstone*, April 1985, page 46).

After Joseph Fielding Smith’s death in 1972, Leonard Arrington wrote an article concerning Smith. While he commended Smith for his hard work and making important improvements in the Historian’s Office, Arrington commented regarding his suppressive policy:

“Objectivity” for President Smith meant seeing that the history of the Church was presented in a positive light, rejecting the extreme and irresponsible charges of the Church’s enemies. . . .

When Wallace Stegner wrote in the preface to his *Gathering of Zion* that the materials of the Church Archives were “opened to scholars only reluctantly and with limitations,” he represented probably the loudest complaint raised against the Historian in his administration of the Office. President Smith’s hesitancy to make available all of the documents in his care can be best understood in the light of his awareness of the multitudes of anti-Mormon books which had appeared, and continued to appear, prior to and during his lifetime. Early in his career he had been advised by his father that “the more you say to [critics of the Church], the more opportunity is given them for criticism and faultfinding.” He was obviously not anxious to provide ammunition that would later be fired back at the Church. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1972, page 23)

Joseph Fielding Smith and Leonard Arrington could not have been further apart in their views on being forthright about Mormon history. Arrington represented openness and fairness, whereas Smith was on the side of control and suppression.

Lavina Fielding Anderson reported that on February 23, 1982, “Don Schmidt announces to the Archives Search Room staff that nobody will see any papers of former apostles until further notice. Although this policy is later modified, rules governing access continue to bob and weave over the next ten years” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, pages 18-19).

The church’s treatment of Leonard Arrington plainly demonstrates that there is still a great deal of opposition to the idea of “telling it like it is.” Church officials have obviously concluded that it would be very dangerous

to allow the whole truth about the origin of the church to come out. The Mormon historian Klaus J. Hansen, who wrote his thesis at the church’s Brigham Young University, made some interesting observations about the idea of having “an unvarnished version” of LDS history:

I am of course, one of those who have contended that the Church Historian’s Office as well as other Church depositories may well contain important secret documents whose release might have profound effect on Mormon historiography if not Mormon history. The possible, even probable, existence of further records of the Council of Fifty . . . is perhaps the most obvious example. . . .

Every so often I am asked if my research into Mormon history hasn’t strengthened my testimony—a rhetorical question which I am generally expected to answer with a resounding yes. My questioners, of course, assume either that the Church has no skeletons to hide or that, in the unlikely event that they do, it would be much better to exhibit them in public. I suppose not a few Mormons would be taken aback by Joseph Smith’s remark to Brigham Young that “If I were to reveal to this people what the Lord has revealed to me, there is not a man or a woman would stay with me.” A historian who would make it his business to juxtapose myth and reality in Mormon history might not expect results quite that dramatic, yet the fact is that *an unvarnished version of the history of the Church that lets the chips fall where they may is potential dynamite*. If historians, therefore, do not necessarily agree with the still relatively conservative and restrictive policies of the Church Historian’s Office they should at least understand that these proceed from an internal logic. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1970, pages 107, 110)

Although the Mormon leaders began undermining Leonard Arrington’s work some years before, they officially took away his “ecclesiastical and bureaucratic positions” in 1982. Writing in 1985, Peggy Fletcher demonstrated that when they made the final move against him, it was done in a underhanded way; the man who replaced him was set apart for the job in a private session:

Slowly, however, the relationship between the Church Historian and the managing director of the historical department began to alter. With the appointment of Elder G. Homer Durham in 1977 as Elder Dyer’s replacement, the line of authority became less clear. On February 28, 1978, Arrington’s title was officially changed from “Church Historian” to “Director of History Division of Historical Department.” . . . Elder Durham began to assume some of the responsibilities and decisions that had once been Arrington’s. Arrington, for example, no longer had free access to the Quorum of the Twelve to present his proposals nor complete control of his budgets. . . .

Unfortunately, all of this was done in an atmosphere of tension and suspicion. There was very little communication between the historians and their critics.

No longer was the managing director their “champion,” as Elder Dyer had been, but rather one of their antagonists.

On January 25, 1982, Leonard Arrington received a letter from the First Presidency extending him an “honorable release” from both his ecclesiastical and bureaucratic positions “with sincere appreciation.” On February 8, 1982, Elder G. Homer Durham was set apart as “Church Historian,” in a private session. There was no mention of Arrington’s release or Durham’s new calling in either General Conference or the Church News.

One corridor of the historical department is lined with portraits of the Church historians beginning with Oliver Cowdery. However, there is no picture of Leonard Arrington among them. In his place hang Alvin Dyer and Joseph Anderson. The explanatory plaque says these are the managing directors, but, as the historians know, before 1972 there were no managing directors.

During the interim between the death of Elder Durham on January 10 and the appointment of Elder Larsen on February 28, 1985, there were many questions about the future of the office of Church Historian. One historian commented: “The situation in the historical department is absolute chaos. There is very little understanding between the historians and the brethren. . . . Institutionalism could kill the office of Church Historian. We need someone who can listen.” (*Sunstone*, April 1985, pages 47-48)

Leonard Arrington is highly respected by a large number of important people. Consequently, the fact that his picture was omitted when pictures of the other “Church Historians” were hung caused a great deal of resentment among his admirers. According to Lavina Fielding Anderson, in 1990, there was a move to give him at least some recognition:

Sometime between this date [24 February 1978] and 1 June 1978 portraits of Church Historians from John Whitmer to Elder Durham are hung . . . They include photographs of Elders Alvin R. Dyer and Joseph Anderson, managing directors of the Historical Department during Arrington’s tenure but never referred to as Church Historians. Leonard Arrington is conspicuously omitted. In the summer of 1990, a separate grouping of division heads’ portraits is hung, including Donald Schmidt, Earl Olsen, Florence Jacobsen, and Leonard Arrington. . . . Portraits of succeeding Church Historians . . . are also hung . . . (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, page 11)

It is unlikely that this token gesture, coming at such a late date, will do anything to heal the rift created by church officials who wanted to destroy even the memory of Dr. Leonard Arrington.

Davis Bitton, who served as an Assistant Church Historian under Leonard Arrington, wrote an article

entitled, “Ten Years in Camelot: A Personal Memoir.” In this article Bitton reflected on the sad state of affairs that developed after Arrington was appointed Church Historian:

Between 1972 and 1982 I was part of the team of historians located in the Church Office Building under the direction of Leonard J. Arrington. It was a golden decade—a brief period of excitement and optimism—that someone has likened to Camelot. But it came to an end. . . . To tell anything like the whole story would require a book. . . .

In 1972 . . . the old Church Historian’s Office was reorganized as the Historical Department of the Church with Alvin R. Dyer as its managing director. There were to be three subdivisions: Library, Archives, and Historian’s Division. . . . Named to head the Historian’s Division and given the title of Church Historian was Leonard J. Arrington. It was the first time a professional historian, a real historian, was named to the position, for the so-called Church Historian had traditionally been one of the apostles and functioned as an administrator. . . . There were some hopes in the specific mandate to write scholarly history that a little judicious pump-priming would yield positive long-range results—respect for the Church, its history, and leaders who were willing to support thorough scholarship.

Even before 1972 there had been hints of a thaw. Scholars had been granted access to materials for a variety of historical projects. In 1967 Leonard Arrington’s contract with Knopf for a one-volume history had led him to make such a request, which had been granted. S. Lyman Tyler . . . had also been a door-opener in arranging to get a letter of clearance from President N. Eldon Tanner for about a dozen scholars engaged in similar projects during the 1960s. I was one of those fortunate enough to receive such a letter—now no longer operative but glued in my scrapbook as proof of an attitude that once prevailed. Elder Howard W. Hunter, Church Historian for a brief period after Joseph Fielding Smith became president of the Church, had been warm and communicative, even inviting a group of us historians in for rap sessions. The Church and its historians seemed to be getting along well; certainly the historians saw themselves as loyal members . . .

Newly called as Church Historian in early 1972, Leonard had the right to appoint his own assistants . . . I remember the excitement with which I received the information, and the grateful wonderment at his choosing me for one of the two Assistant Church Historians. . . .

Elder Alvin R. Dyer was our managing director and our champion. . . . Dyer took it as his role to “put wheels” under the new division . . . Approving wholeheartedly as the various proposals were presented was the First Presidency. . . . The division at its largest included fourteen

historians and three secretaries. . . . On one occasion Leonard and I were advised to leave a chapter on polygamy out of our book. . . . Polygamy is a large and important part of our history. . . . Thinking that we could render service by producing a concise, low-key treatment of the subject, we proposed such a work to our superiors. They declined. . . . polygamy is such a sensitive subject that some General Authorities preferred to avoid mentioning it at all. Church magazines were not supposed to mention the practice. . . .

The euphoria of being part of something like the Historical Division in 1972 is hard to convey. It seemed like a heaven-sent opportunity. Our leaders were behind us, liked us, encouraged us. We had available one of the great collections of primary source material in the world. . . .

When one remembers that all of this was assumed to be not only professionally meritorious but also a fulfillment of a commission from the Church, based on the idea that the time had come to write the history of the Church in a professionally competent manner, it is perhaps understandable that we often had the strong feeling that God was in his heaven and all was right with the world.

A project that had been suggested in meetings with Elder Howard Hunter even before 1972 was a sesquicentennial history of the Church. . . . Given the opening up of new primary sources and the contributions of a new generation of historians after World War II, the time seemed ripe for a new monument to Mormon history. Proposals were made, approved, and, after many discussions, sixteen authors selected to produce as many volumes. . . . This project had the full backing of the First Presidency. At a kick-off dinner sponsored by Deseret Book, the authors gathered with their wives, enjoyed a delicious repast, and listened to a positive address by Elder Thomas Monson [now a member of the First Presidency]. . . there seemed every reason to believe that a superior history, one that could stand comparison with any other, was about to appear and remain the standard for many years to come. . . .

I have been discussing various aspects of our activities from 1972 on. . . . But there is a downside to this story, what I might refer to as the “decline” of the History Division. . . .

In turning over in my mind the series of experiences that led to the demise of the History Division, I discover that I am still too close to them, too emotionally involved, to be regarded as anything but an *ex parte* witness. Some experiences I choose not to detail. Recognizing my own lack of objectivity, I will offer just a few observations.

From the beginning, we detected some negative rumblings. . . . We were puzzled and dismayed when an outspoken General Authority criticized us for including the entire text of a Brigham Young letter alluding to a Word of Wisdom problem. However, we were neither disappointed nor disheartened. Were they not simply

the inevitable pricks and stings that come when you do anything of interest or importance?

One member of the Historical Department, a librarian, regularly went through anything we published, underlining passages he considered inappropriate, and sent these annotated copies to his personal contacts among the General Authorities. We were certainly aware of this and simply hoped that small minds would be so recognized by those in positions of responsibility. . . . But the behind-the-scenes, over-the-back-fence rumor-mongering was insidious. . . .

It is my guess that some of our detractors had the mental picture of us as a conspiratorial, anti-Church cabal that sat around trying to figure out ways to cause trouble, to embarrass the Church, to undermine and destroy. I can state categorically that such a picture was a nightmare reflecting fears and suspicion but did not bear any resemblance to the facts.

It did not help that the decade of our existence was a time when Jerald and Sandra Tanner were publishing a variety of works with the specific purpose of refuting or embarrassing the Church. Those ex-Mormons had begun their publishing activity before the Historian’s Division was ever created, and they would continue it long after. But the two activities were going on simultaneously. . . . We did not sympathize with the Tanners. But in a vague and general way one can imagine how “the troubles of our Church history” could be seen in terms of both fronts. I was dismayed when an honor’s thesis produced by a University of Utah student lumped the work of the historians of the History Division (for which he showed little appreciation) together with the publications of the Tanners. For him, it was all “the New Mormon History.” Guilt by association is a devastating thing, as we discovered.

There were other straws in the wind. With the publication of *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, the generally favorable reception was tempered by criticism. When Elder Ezra Taft Benson addressed a meeting of institute teachers, he mentioned three deficiencies in that work . . . These criticisms . . . were far more formidable than anything earlier. They came from a highly placed apostle and were delivered to educators of the Church.

To understand why we did not throw in the towel immediately it must be remembered that scarcely a day passed without positive, favorable reaction. People throughout the Church enjoyed what we were doing, found it interesting, and were encouraged with the model we provided of high-quality research and continued loyalty. Responses came by letter, by telephone, and in personal conversation from ordinary members, bishops and stake presidents . . . and even some General Authorities. . . . even in the face of some criticism we could continue to think that basically we were on the right track and were fulfilling the mission to which we had been called.

On one occasion the question of publishing articles in *Dialogue* came up. . . . It might have been concluded that *Dialogue* was out of bounds, but the result of the discussion was acceptance of an informal guideline: no single issue would contain more than one (perhaps two) pieces by History Division people. . . . The same applied to *Sunstone*.

One of my personal disappointments was the lack of mutual respect and willingness to discuss. Never were our critics [i. e., Mormon Church officials] willing to sit down and talk over matters with us. If we were inaccurate, we could be so informed. If a book had errors, they could be corrected in future revised editions. If we were violating the procedures set up by Elder Dyer back in 1972 and approved by the First Presidency, we could be told about it. But such conferences did not occur. I may be pardoned a personal suspicion that critics, especially those who have not put in the same hours of back-breaking research in the archives, are afraid to discuss such matters across the table with historians who have done their homework. But civilized standards would presumably find room for some such discussion if differences of opinion arose.

I can state objectively that the decision was made to scuttle the sixteen-volume history . . . to sharply circumscribe the projects that were approved, to reject any suggestions, however meritorious, for worthy long-range projects, to allow the division to shrink by attrition, and finally to reassign the remaining historians to a new entity, the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History . . .

Leonard J. Arrington was called as Church Historian in 1972. He was sustained at general conference that year and for the next couple of years. In 1975 he was named “Director” of the History Division but was not released as Church Historian. . . . Finally, in 1982, he received a letter honorably releasing him. That same year Elder G. Homer Durham . . . was named Church Historian.

If you visit the East Wing of the Church Office Building you will find in the hallway a gallery of portraits. These are the Church Historians, from Oliver Cowdery to G. Homer Durham. But where is Leonard Arrington? Nowhere to be seen. The official explanation is that to be a Church Historian one has to be a General Authority. A brief period of our history, awkwardly embarrassing to someone, is thus erased. Orwell’s Truthspeak did not have to wait for 1984. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1983, pages 9-19)

Leonard Arrington wrote his own account of his unique experience as Church Historian in *The Journal of Mormon History*. In his article, “The Founding of the LDS Church Historical Department,” 1972, Arrington stated that “The best published account of our stewardship in the Historical Department of the Church is Davis Bitton, ‘Ten Years in Camelot: A Personal Memoir’ . . .” (*The Journal of Mormon History*, Fall 1992, page 56).

Although Dr. Arrington recommended Bitton’s account which criticized Mormon Church officials, he himself shied away from being critical of “the Brethren” in his own account:

The founding of the Historical Department of the Church in 1972 may be traced to preparatory actions taken by President N. Eldon Tanner and Elder Howard W. Hunter. As a counselor in the First Presidency beginning in 1963, President Tanner sought to acquaint himself with the current research in the field of Church history. . . . I sensed that he had an understanding of the frustrations historians felt about obtaining access to materials in the Church Historian’s Library and Archives and that he sympathized with my arguments about the need for more openness. But he was a diplomat, reserved in expressing his opinions.

Since 1921 Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, a member of the Council of the Twelve, had served as official Church Historian. . . . His principal interest as Church Historian was archival—that is, in acquiring materials and preserving them. . . . Elder Smith and his associates had amassed an enormous body of materials, an unbelievably large and complete archive consisting of about two thousand diaries and personal histories . . . thousands of minute books, letters, and historical records. Very little of this collection was readily available to historians. . . . Elder Hunter . . . confessed that the Church Historian’s Office had done almost nothing to compile Church history since B. H. Roberts’s multi-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church* had been completed in 1930, although revelations had clearly required them to do so. They had not published important documents, had not compiled biographies, and had not written narrative or interpretive history. Almost nothing had been done to compile material on Church history in the twentieth century. . . . President Tanner telephoned me in Logan, asking me to come see him . . . When I entered his office, President Tanner smiled warmly and motioned me into the big leather easy chair next to his own. “Brother Arrington,” he began, “I’ll come straight to the point. . . . We would like . . . you Brother Arrington, to be Church Historian . . .” Elder Hunter invited me to his office where he candidly discussed the condition and function of the Historical Department during the two years he had been Church Historian . . . He said that my own appointment had come about because of the strong feeling of some of the brethren that the Church needed a professionally trained historian . . . he felt the Church was mature enough that *our history should be honest*. He did *not* believe in suppressing information, hiding documents, or concealing or withholding minutes for possible censorial scrutiny. He thought we should publish the documents of our history. Why should we withhold things that are a part of our history? he asked. He thought it in our best interest to encourage scholars—to help them and cooperate with them in doing honest research. . . .

During the ten years the History Division remained a part of the Historical Department of the Church, we had reason to believe that we enjoyed the confidence of the presidents of the Church. President Harold B. Lee . . . talked with me several times about the work of the division. He told me that he thought *Great Basin Kingdom* [a book written by Arrington] was the finest book on the history of the Church since Roberts's *Comprehensive History* appeared in 1930 and favored our doing a similar general history directed at members of the Church. This is the volume that eventually came out in 1976 as *Story of the Latter-day Saints*. President Lee said he thought our history should be written by professionally trained persons and that he supported the programs that we had reported to him. "The best thing that could happen to us," he said, "is to have a history that is so honestly written that it would be equally acceptable to members of the Church and the outside world." Joined by President Marion G. Romney and Elder Hunter, he pronounced a personal blessing on my head, which, among other things, declared: "Brother Arrington . . . the Lord will bless you and enlarge you and will open new doors to you to enable you to amass material and write histories and prepare necessary documentation for the benefit of generations yet unborn so that [all] will know what has gone on before."

After President Lee's premature and unexpected death in December 1973, President Spencer W. Kimball assumed office. He was also very supportive. . . . On two different occasions he told me that he was fully aware two or three of the brethren were not entirely pleased with our publications but that he himself had confidence in us and that, more importantly, the Lord was blessing us in our work. He encouraged Davis Bitton and me as we wrote *The Mormon Experience* . . .

On 24 July 1978, while he was still in good health, President Kimball and I spoke by invitation at the Days of '47 Banquet . . . At the conclusion of the meeting, President Kimball came over to where I was seated. . . . he put his arms around me, kissed me on the cheek, and said movingly, "I want you to know that I love you very much and that the Lord is pleased that you are historian of his Church." How I have cherished that loving blessing! . . .

Officers of the Mormon History Association have asked me to evaluate our experience in working those ten years in the Historical Department . . .

First, I can plainly see that, after the death of Elder Dyer in 1973, we would have done well to have published a regular newsletter or circular letter to inform General Authorities of the work we were doing. This would have given them more information about our efforts and provided a sound basis for decisions about our activities in the years that followed. (*The Journal of Mormon History*, Fall 1992, pages 41, 42, 46-47, 50, 52-53, 55)

This is certainly a mild statement to be coming from a man who was so badly mistreated by "the Brethren."

The reader will remember that in his account of the "decline" of the History Division, Davis Bitton said that the church allowed members of the Division to write one or "perhaps two" pieces for each issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and that the "same applied to *Sunstone*" magazine. Since that time things have really changed. Those who write for these two publications are now considered to be out of harmony with "the Brethren." Church leaders have also been very concerned about the Sunstone Theological Symposium. After the symposium held in 1991, "the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles" issued a statement containing the following:

"Recent symposia sponsored and attended by some members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have included some presentations relating to the House of the Lord, the holy temples, that are offensive. We deplore the bad taste and insensitivity of these public discussions of things we hold sacred. We are especially saddened at the participation of our own members, especially those who hold Church or other positions that give them stature among Latter-day Saints and who have allowed their stature to be used to promote such presentations.

"We have a different concern about some of the other topics at these symposia. Some of the presentations by persons whom we believe to be faithful members of the Church have included matters that were seized upon and publicized in such a way as to injure the Church or its members or to jeopardize the effectiveness or safety of our missionaries. . . . There are times when public discussion of sacred or personal matters is inappropriate.

"Some of our faithful members have doubtless participated in these symposia because they were invited to state or to defend the Church's position on a particular topic. There are times when it is better to have the Church without representation than to have implications of Church participation used to promote a program that contains some (though admittedly not all) presentations that result in ridiculing sacred things or injuring The Church of Jesus Christ, detracting from its mission, or jeopardizing the well-being of its members." (Statement released to the news media by the Mormon Church leaders, dated August 23, 1991)

In her article in *Dialogue*, Lavina Fielding Anderson gave this information about the effect of the statement:

Two weeks after the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, "the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles" issues a statement expressing concern. . . . Lowell Bennion, a Sunstone participant, comments, "We are asked to love the Lord

with all our hearts and minds. It is a poor religion that can't stand the test of thinking.”

Salt Lake City resident Christian Fannesbeck, who wrote a letter to the First Presidency saying he was “puzzled” by the statement, is called in by his bishop, acting on instructions of his stake president, Herbert Klopfer, and relieved of his church calling as a Blazer-B instructor. He is told the action is taken on instruction of “high church officials.” (He has since been put in charge of scheduling the building.) Kim Clark writes a letter to the editor, published in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, commenting on the statement. His stake president calls him in and tells him that he is “undertaking an investigation that could result in disfellowshipment or excommunication.”

At October general conference, Elder Boyd K. Packer refers explicitly to the joint statement and comments on “the dangers of participating in symposia which concentrate on doctrine and ordinances and measure them by the intellect alone. . . . There is safety in learning doctrines in gatherings which are sponsored by proper authority.”. . . Elder Charles Didier of the First Quorum of the Seventy instructs Saints to build testimony “by asking your Heavenly Father in the name of his Son Jesus Christ. Do not turn to public discussions and forums.” (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, pages 35-36)

Throwing Out Quinn

Perhaps one of the hardest decisions the leaders of the Mormon Church had to make at the time of the recent purge was what they should do with the Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn. Unlike Leonard Arrington, who was very gracious in accepting his release from the office of Church Historian, Dr. Quinn has bravely stood against attempts by Church leaders to silence him for over a decade. It was predictable, therefore, that Quinn would not go down without a fight. Moreover, with Quinn the church is faced with a very explosive situation. Dr. Quinn knows a great deal about the true history of the church and since he was on the inside track at the Historical Department under Dr. Arrington, he had access to many extremely important documents. In a speech Quinn gave in 1981, which we will refer to below, he noted that he had “spent a decade probing thousands of manuscript diaries and records of Church history” that he “never dreamed” he would see. In addition, it is believed that he has a very large collection of copies of documents which could prove very embarrassing to the church.

D. Michael Quinn wanted to be a defender of the Mormon Church when he decided to become a historian. It was, in fact, Dr. Quinn who lifted his pen in 1977 in an attempt to refute our work. Quinn wrote a pamphlet entitled, *Jerald and Sandra Tanner's Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* According to Richard Stephen Marshall,

Mormon historian Reed Durham gave him the following information:

He also said that due to the large number of letters the Church Historian's Office is receiving asking for answers to the things the Tanners have published, a certain scholar (name deliberately withheld) was appointed to write a general answer to the Tanners . . . This unnamed person solicited the help of Reed Durham on the project. The work is finished but its publication is delayed, according to what Leonard Arrington told Durham, because they can not decide how or where to publish it. . . . it *will probably be published anonymously*, to avoid difficulties which could result were such an article connected with an official Church agency. (“The New Mormon History,” page 62)

As Dr. Durham predicted, D. Michael Quinn's work was “published anonymously.” The words, “By a Latter-day Saint Historian,” appear where Quinn's name should be found on the front cover and on the first page of the book. The coming forth of the anonymous rebuttal was shrouded in secrecy. While we knew Zion Bookstore was the distributor of the response, we were unable to find out where the booklets were printed. In almost all books the name of the publisher is listed at the beginning of the book. When we asked Sam Weller, the owner of the bookstore, where he had obtained them, he replied that he did not know! and that it was all a very secret operation. He claimed that he received a letter giving details of how he could handle the pamphlet, but that the writer was not identified. He maintained that he received 1,800 free copies of the pamphlet and was told that he could use any money he made to reprint the booklet.

We talked with Wilfrid Clark, who works for Mr. Weller. Clark claimed that all he knew about the matter was that Zion Bookstore received an anonymous letter containing a key to a room in a self storage company on Redwood Road. He said that he personally went to the company and picked up the books.

In our book, *Answering Dr. Clandestine: A Response to the Anonymous LDS Historian*, pages 1-6, we show how we broke through the maze to learn that D. Michael Quinn was the author of the rebuttal. This identification was confirmed by David Mayfield, who worked for the Historical Department of the church at the time the rebuttal was being prepared.

Those who were in authority over Quinn must have had a great deal of trust in him; otherwise, they would not have allowed him to work on such a secret project which could cause the church great embarrassment if the details of it became known.

An organization known as Mormon Miscellaneous, located at 8912 South 700 East, Sandy, UT 84070, still reprints and sells Dr. Quinn's rebuttal to us. Now that Quinn has been excommunicated from the Mormon

Church, it will be interesting to see if this organization will continue to sell the pamphlet. It would seem that there should at least be some attempt to clarify what has taken place. Instead of the words, “By a Latter-day Saint Historian” appearing at the front of the booklet, it should read something like, “By an Ex-Latter-day Saint Historian.”

While D. Michael Quinn still maintains his belief that Joseph Smith was a prophet, he has obviously become more critical of the church leaders suppressing important documents. In the booklet he prepared in 1977, he criticized us for being upset that the General Authorities of the church were suppressing important documents from their people:

An extension of the Tanners’ selective use of evidence is the fact that they often make assertions and draw conclusions without referring to evidence that qualifies, challenges, or refutes their argument. For example, they berate the LDS Church for “Suppression of Records.” . . . the Tanners cast the LDS Archives in a sinister light because it was closed to the public for many decades, but fail to comment that this closed-archive practice is not only consistent with the policy of most businesses (including the richly historical Hudson’s Bay Company), but also with that of most religious and charitable organizations. (*Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism: A Response to Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 13-14)

Not long after Dr. Quinn wrote the statement cited above, he had his own first-hand encounter with the suppressive policies of the church and did not like what he experienced. In his research Quinn discovered that for a number of years after the 1890 Manifesto, which was supposed to stop the practice of polygamy, a number of prominent church leaders and others were secretly given permission to take plural wives. Quinn pursued information concerning this subject but found that church leaders would not allow him to examine some important documents in the First Presidency’s vault. In his article, “On Being a Mormon Historian (and Its Aftermath),” D. Michael Quinn wrote the following:

President Hinckley telephoned in June 1982 to say that he was sympathetic about a request I had written to obtain access to documents in the First Presidency’s vault but that my request could not be granted. . . .

A few weeks later, Apostle Packer told one of my students that my biography of J. Reuben Clark, then in manuscript, “will never see the light of day because it dirties the memory of a good man.” Brigham Young University Press published it thanks to the intervention of two senior apostles, Howard W. Hunter and Thomas S. Monson, who both carefully read the manuscript and made limited (and reasonable) suggestions for revision. . . .

In May 1984 my college dean told me he had been instructed by “higher authority” to ask me not to publish a paper I had just presented to the Mormon History Association. It was a historical survey of the public activity of general authorities in business corporations. The dean apologized for having to make this request. I agreed not to publish my presentation and told no one about the incident.

In 1985, after *Dialogue* published my article “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriages, 1890-1904,” three apostles gave orders for my stake president to confiscate my temple recommend. . . . I was told that three apostles believed I was guilty of “speaking evil of the Lord’s anointed.” The stake president was also instructed “to take further action” against me if this did not “remedy the situation” of my writing controversial Mormon history.

James M. Paramore, the area president who relayed these orders, instructed my stake presidency to tell me that this was a local decision and reflected their own judgment of the state of my church membership. My stake president replied that he was not going to tell me something which was untrue. Unlike the area president, my stake president and one of his counselors had read the *Dialogue* article. They saw nothing in it to justify what they were being required to do.

I told the stake president that this was an obvious effort to intimidate me from doing history that might “offend the Brethren” . . . The stake president also saw this as a back-door effort to have me fired from BYU. . . . He continued to sustain me in my stake calling and said he would not take the “further action” of disfellowshipping or excommunicating me for continuing to do Mormon history. . . .

At various stake and regional meetings, Apostle Packer began publicly referring to “a BYU historian who is writing about polygamy to embarrass the Church.” At firesides in Utah and California, a member of BYU’s religious education department referred to me as “the anti-Christ of BYU.” Church leaders today seem to regard my post-Manifesto polygamy article (and much of the New Mormon History) as “speaking evil of the Lord’s anointed” because they themselves regard certain acts and words of those earlier church leaders as embarrassing, if not actually wrong. . . .

I find it one of the fundamental ironies of modern Mormonism that the general authorities who praise free agency, also *do their best to limit free agency’s prerequisites*—access to information, uninhibited inquiry, and freedom of expression. (*Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History*, edited by George D. Smith, 1992, pages 90-93, 95)

D. Michael Quinn finally found the church leaders’ attempt to control their history so repressive that he felt he could no longer do research at the church archives:

In June 1986 the staff of the church historical department announced it was necessary to sign a form which Elder Packer declared gave the right of pre-publication censorship for any archival research completed before signing the form. I and several others refused to sign the form and have not returned to do research at LDS church archives since 1986. (*Ibid.*, page 109, footnote 52)

D. Michael Quinn has shown a great deal of courage throughout his ordeal with church leaders and officials at Brigham Young University. In 1981, he did something that very few Mormon scholars dared to do: he publicly took issue with Apostles Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer, two of the most powerful leaders of the Mormon Church. To make things even worse for Quinn, Benson became president of the church in 1985.

It was on November 4, 1981, that Quinn delivered a monumental address before a student history association at Brigham Young University. In the *Salt Lake City Messenger*, March 1982, we called it “One of the best speeches ever given by a Mormon historian.” *Newsweek* referred to it as a “stirring defense of intellectual integrity.” In this speech, Dr. Quinn made these significant comments:

Although Latter-day Saints have been trained as historians at universities outside Utah for half a century and have been publishing Mormon history during that entire period, only recently have prominent LDS general authorities publicly criticized the motivations and publications of Mormon historians. In part, this can be explained as a reaction to the increasingly “high profile” of scholarly and interpretative Mormon history during the past fifteen years. . . .

Preoccupied with trying to assimilate hundreds of thousands of new converts annually into the LDS Church’s present theological, social, and administrative identity, some Church administrators have viewed with understandable misgiving this burgeoning exploration of Mormonism’s fluid past. The concern of these Church leaders has not been assuaged by the fact that contemporary with the proliferation of Mormon historians and histories there has been a shift in anti-Mormon propaganda from doctrinal diatribe to the polemical use of elements from the Mormon past to discredit the LDS Church today. In reaction to this confluence of developments, two members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer) have specifically identified Latter-day Saint historians as the source of difficulty. . . . General authorities in recent years have criticized Mormon historians for republishing in part or whole out-of-print Church publications such as the 1830 Book of Mormon, the *Journal of Discourses* (edited and published for thirty-two years under the auspices of the First Presidency), and statements taken from former Church magazines published for the children, youth, and

general membership of the Church. It is an odd situation when present general authorities criticize historians for re-printing what previous general authorities regarded not only as faith-promoting but as appropriate for Mormon youth and the newest converts.

Elder Packer specifically warns against historians using “the unworthy, the unsavory, or the sensational” from the Mormon past, merely because it has been previously published somewhere else, and he berates historians for their “exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told.” But this raises the question of personal honesty and professional integrity. If a historian writes about any subject unrelated to religion, and he purposely fails to make reference to pertinent information of which he has knowledge, he is justifiably liable to be criticized for dishonesty. . . .

In connection with Elder Packer’s counsel to avoid reference to previously published sensitivities, Elder Benson warns historians against environmental explanations of the background of revelations and developments in LDS history. . . .

Like the questions of previously published items, a historian writing about a non-religious subject would be considered inept at best and dishonest at worst if he described someone’s innovation or contribution without discussing the significance of previously existing, similar contributions and ideas of which the historical person was undoubtedly aware. If a Latter-day Saint historian discusses the revelation to Joseph Smith about abstinence from tobacco, strong drinks, and hot drinks, and then fails to note that during the 1830s religious reformers and social reformers were involved nationally in urging abstinence from these identical things, any reader has cause to criticize the historian’s accuracy, to question his motives, and to doubt any affirmation the historian might give to the revelation’s truth. . . . If we write Mormon history as though its revelations and developments occurred without any reference to surrounding circumstances, we undermine the claims for the Restoration of living prophets. . . . Boyd K. Packer demands that Mormon historians demonstrate and affirm that “the hand of the Lord [has been] in every hour and every moment of the Church from its beginning till now.” . . . Mormon historians may share the convictions of the Nephite prophets and Boyd K. Packer that the “hand of the lord” operates throughout history and that “His purposes fail not,” but they also have an obligation to examine the evidence, reflect upon it, and offer the best interpretations they can for what has occurred in Mormon history. . . .

A more serious problem of Mormon history is involved in the implications of Boyd K. Packer’s demand that historians demonstrate that “the hand of the Lord [has been] in every hour and every moment of the church from its beginning till now.” Every Mormon historian agrees with Ezra Taft Benson that “we must never forget that ours

is a prophetic history,” but there are serious problems in the assertion or implication that this prophetic history of Mormonism requires “the hand of the Lord” in every decision, statement, and action of the prophets. . . . Central to the apparent demands of Elders Benson and Packer is the view that the official acts and pronouncements of the prophets are always the express will of God. This is the Mormon equivalent of the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility. . . .

Mormon historians would be false to their understanding of LDS doctrines, the Sacred History of the Scriptures, the realities of human conduct, and the documentary evidence of Mormonism if they sought to defend the proposition that LDS prophets were infallible in their decisions and statements. . . . the Mormon historian has both a religious and professional obligation not to conceal the ambivalence, debate, give-and-take, uncertainty, and simple pragmatism that often attend decisions of the prophet and First Presidency, and not to conceal the limitations, errors, and negative consequences of some significant statements of the prophet and First Presidency. In like manner, however, the Mormon historian would be equally false if he failed to report the inspiration, visions, revelations, and solemn testimonies that have also attended prophetic decisions and statements throughout Mormon history.

A few critics have been more specific in their criticism of Mormon historians who portray the human frailties of LDS leaders. Ezra Taft Benson observes that Mormon historians tend “to inordinately humanize the prophets of God so that their human frailties become more evident than their spiritual qualities,” and Boyd K. Packer has recently made the following comments about a Mormon historian’s talk: “What that historian did with the reputation of the President of the Church was not worth doing. He seemed determined to convince everyone that the *prophet* was a *man*. We knew that already. All of the prophets and all of the Apostles have been men. It would have been much more worthwhile for him to have convinced us that the *man* was a *prophet*; a fact quite as true as the fact that he was a man. He has taken something away from the memory of a prophet. He has destroyed faith.”

“This is, in part, related to the infallibility question. Elder Packer criticizes historians for eliminating the spiritual dimension from their studies of prophets, and he accuses such historians of distortion for failing to deal with such a fundamental characteristic. Yet Elders Benson and Packer also demand that historians omit any reference to human frailty (aside from physical problems, I suppose) in studies of LDS leaders, and emphasize only the spiritual dimension. Elder Packer quite rightly observes that omitting the spiritual, revelatory dimension from the life of a Church leader would also deny the existence of the spiritual and revelatory, but it is equally true that omitting reference to human weaknesses,

faults and limitations from the life of a prophet is also a virtual denial of the existence of human weaknesses and fallibility in the prophet. Must Church history writing portray LDS leaders as infallible, both as leaders and as men? This is not the Sacred History we know.

Sacred History (which is contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon, *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *Pearl of Great Price*) is an absolute refutation of the kind of history Elders Benson and Packer seem to be advocating. Sacred History presents the prophets and apostles as the most human of men who have been called by God to prophetic responsibility. Sacred History portrays the spiritual dimensions and achievements of God’s leaders as facts, but Sacred History also matter-of-factly demonstrates the weaknesses of God’s leaders. Examples are the scriptural accounts of Abraham’s abandonment of his wife Hagar and son Ishmael, Noah’s drunkenness, Lot’s incest, Moses’ arrogance, Jonah’s vacillation, Peter’s impetuosity and cowardice . . . Moreover, the *Doctrine and Covenants* contains frequent condemnations of Joseph Smith by the Lord. Sacred History affirms the reality of divine revelation and inspiration, but also matter-of-factly demonstrates that God’s leaders often disagree and do not always follow His revelations consistently. . . .

According to the standards of history apparently required by Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer, such a writer of Scriptural Sacred History is suspect at best and faith-destroying at worst. . . . The recent biography of Spencer W. Kimball is virtually Sacred History in its presentation of a lovably human prophet of God, whereas the Mormon history of benignly angelic Church leaders apparently advocated by Elders Benson and Packer would border on idolatry.

Ezra Taft Benson, Boyd K. Packer, and Professor Midgley accuse Mormon historians of writing Church history to accommodate non-Mormon scholarship, but Elder Packer, in particular, advocates another type of Accommodation History. He assaults the philosophy and conduct of Mormon historians because their objective Church history “may unwittingly be giving ‘equal time’ to the adversary,” and because such history “may be read by those not mature enough for ‘advanced history’ and a testimony in seedling stage may be crushed.” . . . Boyd K. Packer is not advocating the gradual exposure of the Saints to historical truth. He excludes that possibility by warning historians against publishing objective history even in professional journals that “go far beyond the audience that they have intended, and destroy faith,” and he assails Mormon historians who “want to tell everything whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not.” Elder Packer is not advocating Paul’s dictum of milk before meat, but he demands that Mormon historians provide only a Church history diet of milk to Latter-day Saints of whatever experience. . . . a diet of milk alone will stunt the growth of, if not kill, any child.

Aside from urging the kind of Church history that would not surprise or offend even the newest convert, Boyd K. Packer urges that historians write Church history from a siege mentality to deny any information that enemies of the Church could possibly use to criticize the Church. By this standard, most of the Old Testament, the Gospel of John, many of Paul's epistles, and the Book of Revelation would never be approved for inclusion in the Bible. Moreover, at the very time the Romans were persecuting and martyring the early Christians (to an extent never equaled in Mormonism), the New Testament writers were including candid discussions of Peter's foibles, disagreements between the apostles, and apostolic condemnation of whole communities of Christians. . . . Why does the well-established and generally respected Mormon Church today need a protective, defensive, paranoid approach to its history that the actually embattled earlier Saints did not employ?

Ezra Taft Benson and Boyd K. Packer want Church history to be as elementary as possible and as defensive as possible. This is Accommodation History for consumption by the weakest of the conceivably weak Saints, for the vilest of the conceivably vile anti-Mormons, and for the most impressionable of the world's sycophants. In contrast, the Sacred History of the Scriptures is presented for the instruction and enlightenment of the Saints, with the affirmation that the weaker Saints can become strong by knowing the full truth and by seeking the power of the Spirit, that the enemies of God's truth will distort things to their own destruction anyway, and that the praise of the world is seductive. . . . Sacred History is not timid, defensive, or public-relations oriented, and Mormon historians are better to use it as their guide rather than the Accommodation History that has often characterized twentieth century Mormonism and that some general authorities apparently want to perpetuate indefinitely.

The Accommodation History advocated by Elders Benson and Packer and actually practiced by some LDS writers is intended to protect the Saints, but actually disillusiones them and makes them vulnerable. Ezra Taft Benson reports with obvious irritation the fact that LDS Seminary and Institute teachers ask him, "When and where can we begin to tell our *real* story?" and Elder Benson observes, "Inferred in that question is the accusation that the Church has not been telling the truth." The tragic reality is that there have been occasions when *Church leaders, teachers, and writers have not told the truth they knew about difficulties of the Mormon past*, but have offered to the Saints instead a mixture of platitudes, half-truths, omissions, and plausible denials. Elder Packer and others would justify this because "we are at war with the adversary" and must also protect any Latter-day Saint whose "testimony [is] in seedling stage." But such a public-relations defense of the Church is actually a Maginot Line of sandy fortifications which "the enemy" can easily breach and which has been built up by digging lethal pits into which the Saints will

stumble. A so-called "faith-promoting" Church history which conceals controversies and difficulties of the Mormon past actually undermines the faith of Latter-day Saints who eventually learn about the problem from other sources.

One of the most painful demonstrations of that fact has been the continued spread of unauthorized polygamy among the Latter-day Saints during the last seventy-five years, despite the concerted efforts to [of?] Church leaders to stop it. Essential to this Church campaign is the official historical argument that there were no plural marriages authorized by the Church or First Presidency after the 1890 Manifesto, and that whatever plural marriages occurred between 1890 and the so-called "Second Manifesto" of April 1904 were the sole responsibility of two renegade apostles, John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley. A lifelong opponent of post-1890 polygamy, J. Reuben Clark spearheaded the administrative suppression of the polygamist Fundamentalists from the time he entered the First Presidency in 1933, but he ruefully noted in 1945, "that one of the reasons why the so-called 'Fundamentalists' had made such inroads among our young people was because we had failed to teach them the truth." The truth was that more than 250 plural marriages occurred from 1890 to 1904 in Mexico, Canada, and the United States by authorization of the First Presidency, and by action or assent of all but one or two members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The official denial of that fact in LDS Church statements and histories actually has given credibility to the Fundamentalists in their promotion of new plural marriages after 1904 in defiance of First Presidency authority. . . .

In warning Mormon historians against objective history and against telling too much truth about the Mormon past, Boyd K. Packer says, "Do not spread disease germs!" To adopt the symbolism of Elder Packer, I suggest that it is apostates and anti-Mormons who seek to infect the Saints with disease germs of doubt, disloyalty, disaffection, and rebellion. These typhoid Marys of spiritual contagion obtain the materials of their assaults primarily from the readily available documents and publications created by former LDS leaders and members themselves. Historians have not created the problem areas of the Mormon past; they are trying to respond to them. Believing Mormon historians like myself seek to write candid Church history in a context of perspective in order to inoculate the Saints against the historical disease germs that apostates and anti-Mormons may thrust upon them. The criticism we have received in our efforts would be similar to leaders of eighteenth century towns trying to combat smallpox contagion by locking up Dr. Edward Jenner who tried to inoculate the people, and killing the cows he wanted to use for his vaccine.

The central argument of the enemies of the LDS Church is historical, and if we seek to build the Kingdom of God by ignoring or denying the problem areas of our

past, we are leaving the Saints unprotected. (*On Being a Mormon Historian*, by D. Michael Quinn, 1982, pages 1-2, 8-10, 13-14, 16-22; revised and reprinted in 1992 in *Faithful History: Essays On Writing Mormon History*, pages 69-111)

In the “Aftermath” which appears in *Faithful History*, Michael Quinn stated that after he gave this talk, he was warned by “active and inactive Mormons, and even non-Mormons” not to publish this essay. Nevertheless, he gave *Sunstone* permission to publish it. The “publicity resulted in meetings with my college dean and with a member of the First Presidency. . . . Neither Dean Hickman nor President Hinckley gave direct instructions, but both advised against publication of ‘On Being a Mormon Historian.’ A few days later, I asked *Sunstone’s* editors not to print the already-typeset essay.” (*Faithful History*, page 89)

When we discovered that *Sunstone* was not going forward with the publication of this important speech, we suspected that a great deal of pressure was being exerted to suppress Dr. Quinn’s essay. Since we felt that no publisher connected with Mormonism would dare print the speech, we published it ourselves in early 1982. Quinn did not ask us to do it, and we had no communication with him—either directly or indirectly—regarding the subject.

We published it because we believed the Mormon people had a right to know what was going on in their church.

Church leaders were distressed with Quinn when *Newsweek* ran a story entitled, “Apostles vs. Historians,” on February 15, 1982. Quinn reported that one of the church leaders warned him that Apostle Boyd K. Packer, whom he had criticized in his speech, could remain vengeful long after having a disagreement:

A few days later, a general authority invited me to his office. He warned me that he found Elder Packer to be easily offended and vindictive years afterwards.

In May, my stake presidency informed me that five former bishops had recommended me to be the ward’s new bishop but that Apostle Mark E. Petersen had blocked the appointment. (*Faithful History*, pages 89-90)

D. Michael Quinn went on to state that Apostle Petersen had asked the stake presidency, “Why is Michael Quinn in league with anti-Mormons,” “and Quinn felt that this comment was referring to our publication of his speech. If, in fact, Apostle Petersen was speaking of our publication of Quinn’s critical comments regarding church history, he was far from the mark. The only conversations we ever had with Dr. Quinn were in relation to his booklet, *Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Distorted View of Mormonism*. We never discussed any other subject with him. Although there was no shouting or name-calling, the discussions

were antagonistic in nature. These conversations took place on the telephone.

On page 103 of *Faithful History*, footnote 22, Michael Quinn told of an experience he had with Apostle Boyd K. Packer:

When Elder Packer interviewed me as a prospective member of Brigham Young University’s faculty in 1976, he explained: “I have a hard time with historians because they idolize the truth. The truth is not uplifting; it destroys. I could tell most of the secretaries in the church office building that they are ugly and fat. That would be the truth, but it would hurt and destroy them. Historians should tell only that part of the truth that is inspiring and uplifting.”

Although he did not use the same graphic example, in a speech given in 1981, Apostle Boyd K. Packer made these comments:

There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not. Some things that are true are not very useful.

Historians seem to take great pride in publishing something new, particularly if it illustrates a weakness or mistake of a prominent historical figure. . . .

The writer or the teacher who has an exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told is laying a foundation for his own judgment. . . .

That historian or scholar who delights in pointing out the weaknesses and frailties of present or past leaders destroys faith. A destroyer of faith . . . places himself in great spiritual jeopardy. He is serving the wrong master, and unless he repents, he will not be among the faithful in the eternities. . . .

In the Church we are not neutral. We are one-sided. There is a war going on, and we are engaged in it. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1981, pages 263-64, 266-67)

Before he was actually excommunicated, D. Michael Quinn gave up his job at the church’s Brigham Young University. Quinn claimed that he was not fired by the university, but he asserted that so much pressure was put upon him that he felt he had to leave:

In the spring of 1986, graduating history majors at BYU voted me “outstanding professor.” That fall BYU’s administration had my name dropped from a list of participants in an upcoming celebration of Mormonism in Britain. Then for the second year in a row, BYU’s administration denied my application for “Professional Development Leave.” This time the college dean . . . said the apostles on the executive committee of the Board of Trustees had prepared a list of faculty members and research topics which BYU administrators were forbidden

to support. "I have always hoped that one day BYU will become a real university," the dean said, "but this makes me feel that day will never arrive."

By January 1987 pressures on me increased. BYU's administration required the history department and Charles Redd Center for the American West to withdraw funds they had promised me to give a paper on general American religion at the University of Paris. . . .

Despite all that had happened, until January 1987 I could not yet believe that my life's hopes were at an end. A new department chair let me know that my situation would improve only if I stopped doing research which implied Mormon studies. . . . Abandoning Mormon history may have been safe in the climate of repression but it was unacceptable to me, especially as an option of duress. "Publish or perish" is the experience of scholars at most universities, but for this Mormon historian it was "publish and perish" at BYU.

After publication of my *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* . . . two members of BYU's history department circulated the rumor that my stake high council was excommunicating me for apostasy. The rumor was completely false, but more important, I had thought these rumor-mongers were my colleagues and friends. . . .

No one ever gave me an ultimatum or threatened to fire me from Brigham Young University. . . .

On 20 January 1988, I wrote a letter of resignation . . .

Three months after my departure, it angered me to learn that BYU had fired a Hebrew professor for his private views on the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Although I personally regard the Book of Mormon as ancient history and sacred text, I told an inquiring newspaper reporter: "BYU officials have said that Harvard should aspire to become the BYU of the East. That's like saying the Mayo Clinic should aspire to be Auschwitz. BYU is an Auschwitz of the mind."

When BYU's associate academic vice-president asked me if that was an accurate quote, I confirmed that it was. "Academic freedom exists at BYU only for what is considered non-controversial by the university's Board of Trustees and administrators," I wrote. "By those definitions, academic freedom has always existed at Soviet universities (even during the Stalin era)."

The extinction of free thought is more accurately a goal of some general authorities, some BYU administrators, and even some faculty members. By contrast, many BYU faculty are dedicated to the unfettered life of mind for themselves and students. . . . I admire those who remain at BYU to continue a quiet struggle for genuine academic freedom. (*Faithful History*, pages 92-95)

The BYU Spy Ring

In February, 1967, almost a decade before D. Michael Quinn came to Brigham Young University, it was revealed

that a "spy ring" had been operating at the church-owned university. The following appeared in *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, published by the Associated Students of the University of Utah:

Brigham Young University is in the calm of a hurricane's eye after being rocked with student charges of *an administration-instigated spy ring* and before the Board of Trustees acts on a request for a joint faculty-administration-board investigation of the charges.

Two political science students Ronald Hankin and Coleen Stone described the "spy ring" to BYU student body Tuesday during a "free forum" speech. Hankin claims to have been asked by Steven Russell, senior political scientist, to "check up on a reaction to Pres. Ernest Wilkinson's April 21 speech" before the student body. The speech was a "conservative view of totalitarianism, federal aid, capitalism and socialism." . . .

In a *Chronicle* interview, Hankin said 15 students were offered the "spy task" authorized by Vice President Joseph T. Bentley. "We were to check up on eight teachers . . ."

Meanwhile, the campus chapter of American Association of University Professors (AAUP) called a sudden meeting Thursday to discuss "secrecy, tenure and academic freedom." After a two-hour meeting, the group issued a detailed resolution requesting a joint investigation on the allegations. The 100 faculty representatives issued the request to the BYU Board of Trustees, the Quorum of Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . .

Chapter Pres. Briant S. Jacobs said in a statement Thursday, "Serious student allegations recently reflected upon the atmospheric freedom at Brigham Young University." . . .

A former John Birch Society member, Hankin said during the summer he "had recriminations and realized what was wrong." At that time he began "passing information from both sides around." Finally, "I was contacted by BYU vice presidents Lewis and Crockett about the leftist leanings of Dr. Hillam." (*The Daily Utah Chronicle*, March 6, 1967)

According to the same paper, at first BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson tried to deny the charges: "According to an Associated Press story, Wilkinson said the students were 'misinformed' and that he had no knowledge of the alleged spy ring."

Even though the Brigham Young University officials initially denied the existence of the spy ring, an investigation showed that such a ring did exist and President Wilkinson was forced to admit the truth of the accusation. In a statement which is reminiscent of Richard Nixon's famous statement on Watergate, President Wilkinson finally agreed to "accept responsibility:

PROVO (AP) — Brigham Young University President Ernest L. Wilkinson acknowledged Tuesday that a student investigation team had existed on campus to check on so-called liberal professors.

And Dr. Wilkinson pledged “my sincerest efforts to see that such a situation does not occur again in the future.” . . .

In his letter, Dr. Wilkinson said:

Although there is misrepresentation in the charges, there was such a group, reports were made and students were under the impression they were acting with the sanction of the administration.

He did not say who the students were reporting to, but added:

As president, I must accept responsibility, and I regret the misunderstanding and uneasiness which has been engendered.

(*Salt Lake Tribune*, March 15, 1967)

Under the caption, “Wilkinson Confirms ‘Spy Ring’ Charges,” the following appeared in the *Ogden Standard Examiner* on March 14, 1967:

The existence of a student “spy ring” last spring at Brigham Young University was confirmed today by Dr. Ernest L. Wilkinson, school president. . . .

When the charges were first made, the BYU administration said the students were “misinformed.”

In an interview with the *Daily Utah Chronicle*, Colleen Stone, one of the students who exposed the spy ring, made some very serious charges against the BYU and even claimed that the school was looking for an excuse to “oust us”:

Miss Stone said she and Hankin could not be “ousted” from school for the speech because the activity was authorized by the administration since it was sponsored by the student government committee. However, she said, “I have been tailed since 1 p. m. Wednesday and they’re trying to find us doing something wrong so they can oust us.” . . .

Also in her “forum” speech, Miss Stone told the campus “We go to a university to pursue truth without limitations, yet we don’t have such an environment here; the passage of knowledge is suppressed.” She quoted a recent faculty meeting of the religion department as saying the position of the university was: (1) for young LDS girls to meet young LDS boys; (2) to train seminary teachers; and, (3) to provide a place where the ideas of the world can be tried by the doctrines of the Church. (*Daily Utah Chronicle*, March 6, 1967)

On March 28, 1967, “two of the BYU spies,” Mr. Hankin and Mr. Sisin, were guests in the Caucus Room at the University of Utah. They stated that they “had

been subjected to a good deal of harassment. BYU people seemed to resent them as ‘squealers.’” They also stated that one of the administrators at BYU “told them he wished he had their telephones bugged.” Two weeks later Ronald Hankin was “dismissed from school.” The Mormon-owned newspaper, the *Deseret News*, reported:

PROVO — Student Ronald Hankin, 24, was dismissed from school for multiple violations of BYU standards all separate from his part in disclosing a student “spy” ring, a statement, printed in the university’s weekly *Faculty Bulletin*, said Thursday.

It emphasized there was no connection with the fact that Mr. Hankin was the student who charged that classmates were being used to spy on so-called “liberal” professors.

Mr. Hankin also wrote Thursday in a letter to the *BYU Daily Universe* that his dismissal was unrelated to his allegations regarding the spy ring. . . .

“Most of the infractions occurred and investigation was being made prior to the Feb. 28 student forum when Mr. Hankin made allegations regarding the ‘spy ring.’” (*Deseret News*, April 13, 1967)

In the book, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis make it very clear that although President Ernest L. Wilkinson tried to dissociate himself from the spy ring, he was the one who was responsible for the operation:

By 1966, Wilkinson had concluded that the most effective means of combating the “advocacy [of] concepts at variance with the view[s] of our prophet” was to encourage selected students to covertly monitor the political and economic sympathies of their teachers on and off campus. In mid-April 1966, Wilkinson summoned his comptroller and aide, Joseph T. Bentley, to inform him that he intended to deliver a forum address . . . that would “rock the campus from one end to the other.” According to Bentley, Wilkinson asked him if he “knew of some reliable students who would advise [the administration] as to the comments of teachers” in response to this speech. Bentley suggested Stephen Hays Russell, “a very competent and reliable student,” and several other undergraduates he believed could be trusted. . . .

Wilkinson’s intent, Bentley insisted in 1982, was to “subdue criticism of the brethren. . . . In some of these classes, sentiments were expressed against Elder Ezra Taft Benson. Wilkinson was loyal to the brethren.” According to Stephen Hays Russell’s 1967 statement, he was summoned to Bentley’s office and informed that he had been “selected by the administration to assist in a confidential project.” Flattered, Russell eagerly agreed. According to Russell, Bentley warned that “President Wilkinson’s name must remain clear from the project” and that “if I got caught at this, official university reaction would be that I was working on my own.”

Then, with Russell present, Bentley “commenced writing a list of ‘liberal professors,’” inviting Russell to make any additions he “deemed proper.” . . . Many of the faculty listed had campaigned for Wilkinson’s opponent during the 1964 election. . . . Bentley . . . subsequently remembered the confidence that he and Wilkinson had in Russell. “We seized upon the opportunity to use this young man to set up the monitoring groups.” Bentley later acknowledged (authors’ interview).

Immediately after his meeting with Bentley, Russell contacted a number of friends, many of whom he had met at local John Birch Society meetings. He assured them that “an important situation had arisen in which they could assist me in serving the administration.” The small group assembled that evening, 20 April 1966, in room 370 of the Wilkinson Center. While one of the students stood guard at the door, Russell read a prepared mission statement, repeated his instructions from Bentley on the need for complete secrecy, and asked those who were not sympathetic to leave. Of the eight faculty targeted, Ray C. Hillam . . . was reportedly “on the top of the [administration’s] list. . . . They wanted to know about him and they [were] going to get him,” Russell promised. . . . Eight students volunteered . . .

As promised, Wilkinson presented his hard-hitting address . . . The nine undergraduates dutifully attended their assigned classes, asked leading questions, took careful notes, and promptly reported back to Russell . . . At Bentley’s urging, Russell submitted his findings directly to Wilkinson. Russell said that he “read a few of the more explosive and derogatory remarks to [the president] and then handed him the report.” Wilkinson expressed his appreciation and Russell left. Privately, Wilkinson fumed in his journal over the professors’ remarks, observing that many of the school’s faculty “think much more of their political convictions than they do of following their prophets” (Wilkinson Journal, 29 April 1966). Wilkinson handed Russell’s report to Vice-President Clyde Sandgren and instructed him to meet with the students individually to verify the accuracy of their allegations. Russell and other sympathetic students *continued to monitor classes throughout the next ten months*. Some students met personally with professors and on at least one occasion recorded a conversation without the knowledge of the faculty member involved. The list of “tainted” professors expanded . . . The students’ reports were channeled to Wilkinson through either Bentley or Sandgren, who were expected to verify the reports before forwarding them to the president’s office.

In mid-July, one of Hillam’s students confided to him that Sandgren had asked him to confirm a number of allegations against Hillam . . . Hillam contacted his department chair, Edwin Morrell, who registered a personal protest with Wilkinson over the way the investigation was being handled. According to Morrell, Wilkinson replied that he “should not object because surveillance [was] a common practice used by the

FBI.” . . . Hillam . . . later met privately with Wilkinson, who assured him that students had not been organized to “spy on” the faculty, confidently predicting that Hillam’s charge of improper administrative procedure would be put to rest during the vice-presidents’ hearing. . . . On 16 September . . . Wilkinson reassured his faculty, “I now hear that I am bugging phones and have instituted an elaborate spy system. This latest rumor is as false as the others. . . . may I ask you to get your information from authentic sources rather than from those who couldn’t know.” . . .

Official hearings commenced on 15 September. Hillam was confronted with a lengthy list of statements he had allegedly made several months earlier. . . . During the hearing, Hillam questioned Russell closely in an attempt to establish how he had assembled his information. Economics chair Richard Wirthlin was also allowed to question *Russell, who denied any involvement in concerted surveillance activities*. Toward the end of the hearing, however, an excited Louis Midgley unexpectedly stuck his head in the room and whispered, “I have [Hankin] and he will tell everything.” . . . Hillam announced that he would like to introduce a witness in his defense. He opened the door and introduced a buoyant Hankin. Sandgren suddenly became “very uneasy,” according to Russell’s account. Hankin explained his story of an “administration-organized spy ring,” . . .

According to Russell’s 1967 statement, he “dashed right to President Wilkinson’s office and told him of Hankin’s expose.” Wilkinson looked at the young undergraduate and, “with an instructive tone of voice,” said, “You know of course this is the first I’ve heard of this group.” The President suggested that Russell contact Bentley for “advice on how to reply to the vice-presidents.” After Russell left, Wilkinson asked to see his three vice-presidents and was distressed to learn that both Lewis and Crockett believed Hankin’s story. He telephoned Bentley and suggested that Russell be used as the administration’s “scapegoat.” According to Russell, Bentley refused, pointing out that Russell “was a good and conscientious student and had only done what [he] had been asked to do.” Russell remembered that Bentley confessed that he “was worried” about Wilkinson. “He’s involved and he’s scared.” The next morning Wilkinson recommended that Russell have an attorney draft his response to the vice-presidents. Bentley suggested that they approach H. Verlan Andersen, a politically conservative faculty member with legal experience. . . .

Meanwhile, Hillam met with a number of colleagues in his home for a “strategy session.” . . . Following their strategy meeting, the professors began conducting their own investigation. . . . Richard Wirthlin went to Wilkinson four days later and accused Russell of “spying on teachers.” According to Wirthlin, Wilkinson “exploded” and demanded that he “give him all his evidence,” insisting that Hillam, not Russell, was the

subject of the hearing and that the vice-presidents had no right to look into allegations of spying. Wilkinson then threatened to investigate Wirthlin by looking into charges that had accumulated against him (author's interview). . . . during a second university-wide faculty meeting, the president "reiterated" that he had "not knowingly" urged any students or others to report on faculty members. "I feel confident," said Wilkinson, "that no members of the Administrative Council would do so." . . . Wilkinson wrote Hillam . . . to assure him that he had not encouraged any student to "spy" on the faculty because such would have been an "improper administrative procedure." . . .

On 28 February 1967, Wilkinson learned that "some very rebellious students," as he referred to them in his journal, specifically undergraduates Ronald Hankin, David Sisson, and Colleen Stone, had contacted area newspapers and television and radio stations, announcing their intention to publicly raise the "spy ring" incident during an ASBYU "Free Forum" in the Wilkinson Center. Alarmed, Wilkinson immediately met with the dean of students, Elliot Cameron, and the chief of BYU security, Swen Nielsen. The university had assembled a list of "very serious charges" against Hankin and Sisson, Wilkinson explained. Cameron and Nielsen would do well, he continued, to bring these students immediately in and "interrogate [them] so as to keep them occupied during the period they were going to make these false accusations." Wilkinson discovered afterwards that neither Cameron nor Nielsen succeeded in locating the three undergraduates before their scheduled public appearance and wondered whether he was "getting the proper support from the dean of students" (Wilkinson Journal, 28 Feb. 1967). . . .

In the wake of Hankin's confession, the university seemed to erupt. Campus officials hotly denied the charges, but AAUP members requested that the Board of Trustees formally investigate Hankin's allegations. Disillusioned after nearly a week of official denials, Edwin Morrell threatened to resign his position as political science chair . . . Less than two weeks after Hankin's public expose, Wilkinson issued a formal, public statement on 11 March in which he acknowledged "the organized surveillance of faculty by students," accepted responsibility as president . . . and regretted any "misunderstanding and uneasiness which [had] been engendered." . . . Tellingly, however, Wilkinson did not detail the extent of his and other administrators' personal involvement. . . .

As a result of the publicity given Hankin's accusations, Stephen Russell reported hearing his name "on every front . . . mentioned with derision. I felt the burden of the whole affair had been carried long enough," he soon concluded. Less than one week later, Russell gave "a detailed confession of the affair" to his bishop and also spent nearly "three tearful hours" with his faculty advisor, Larry Wimmer, who asked Russell to repeat his confession to President Tanner and Elder

Lee. At their request, Wilkinson prepared a lengthy statement of the controversy for the Board of Trustees, admitting to having asked Bentley to recruit Russell and other students . . . In mid-May, the three vice-presidents amended their report to include a condemnation of Wilkinson for having withheld important information from them and for having organized a group of students to obtain reactions to his April 1966 speech. They also apologized for not having arrived at this conclusion earlier. . . . Hillam pushed for "a further explanation" of the administration's involvement in directing student spies. . . . When finally completed on 15 May 1969, more than three years after Wilkinson first called Bentley into his office, the vice-presidents' report vindicated Hillam of all charges and detailed the complicitous participation of Wilkinson, Bentley, Sandgren, and Russell. By this time, however, at least four social science faculty had left BYU employ—Richard Poll, John Bernhard, Richard Wirthington, and David Hart—in part because of the administration's handling of the Hillam case. . . .

Chastened from all sides, Wilkinson pursued his anti-socialist crusade less ardently over the next few years until his resignation in 1971. Still, rumors of student spies continued to plague his administration, and Wilkinson still pressed associates to "keep in close touch" with "trouble making" faculty, suggesting in 1971 that Louis Midgley's promotion to full professor be postponed "another year" to "see if he doesn't mellow a little more." Only one year before his death in April 1978, Wilkinson unflinchingly insisted that "students were never organized by the administration to spy." (*Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, by Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, 1985, pages 207-217)

BYU Student in Watergate

Ernest L. Wilkinson resigned his position as president of Brigham Young University in 1971. The following year a student from the university found himself being questioned regarding the Watergate break-in. On January 17, 1973, the BYU paper, *Daily Universe*, reported:

BYU student Thomas Gregory testified yesterday in Washington D. C. that he was paid \$3400 for spying and quit after a "close call" in an effort to bug Sen. George McGovern's headquarters.

Gregory testified in the Watergate bugging trial that he met with E. Howard Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy, James W. McCord Jr., and four other defendants in a Washington hotel room early last May.

He said McCord expressed interest in planting electronic listening devices in the offices of McGovern campaign officials, according to Associated Press reports. . . . He did agree to remain in the building late on May 28 and leave some locks open when he departed. However, another man working in the headquarters discovered him and wanted to know why he was there.

While we have no reason to believe that President Wilkinson knew anything about the break-in before it occurred, it is interesting to note that Wilkinson belonged to the law firm “Wilkinson, Cragun & Barker” which represented Maurice H. Stans during the Watergate hearings. Stans later pleaded guilty to “five misdemeanor counts in his handling of secret cash donations to the 1972 Nixon campaign. . . . One of these counts involved \$81,000 in cash turned over to a campaign aide who became paymaster for the Watergate coverup” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, March 13, 1975).

Ernest L. Wilkinson said that he could “understand” why President Ford pardoned Nixon, but he felt that to be consistent Ford should have also pardoned Nixon’s lieutenants (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 9, 1974).

During the investigation of the Watergate break-in, it was discovered that Robert Bennett, a prominent Mormon who went on a mission for the Mormon Church and is now serving as senator for the state of Utah, was the owner of the Mullen Company where the Watergate burglars conspired to commit some of their crimes. The company was originally founded by Robert R. Mullen, and later bought by Robert Bennett. During the Watergate investigation it was discovered that the Mullen Company provided cover for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Surprisingly, it also handled public relations for the Mormon Church.

The Mullen Company was deeply involved in intelligence work for the CIA. Howard Hughes’ Summa Corporation was one of the clients which had ties with the CIA.

Before Robert Bennett came on the scene, Robert Mullen had written a book for the Mormon Church entitled, *The Latter-day Saints: The Mormons Yesterday and Today*. It is interesting to note that a secret agent for the CIA by the name of James Everett worked on foreign editions of this book.

Although Mr. Mullen claimed he was a non-Mormon, he was far from an unbiased observer. The book was, in fact, a thinly disguised propaganda piece written for the church. This, of course, was not too surprising since his firm handled public relations for the church. According to the church’s *Deseret News*, October 8, 1966, Mullen “was engaged to publicize the first European tour of the famous Tabernacle Choir . . .” Mr. Mullen acknowledged that he began handling work for the church in 1955. The Mullen Company, with Robert Bennett at the head, was still handling public relations for the church at the time of the Watergate break-in.

One of Robert Bennett’s employees was Howard Hunt, the notorious spy who took part in the Watergate break-in. According to James McCord, who was also involved in the Watergate affair, some of the plans for the burglary

were discussed at Robert Bennett’s company. McCord gave this testimony in the Senate Watergate Hearings:

Mr. McCORD. The meetings, as best I recall, in which these references by Mr. Hunt took place, took place in Mr. Hunt’s office, in the Robert F. Mullen Co. . . .

Mr. Liddy, during those discussions, as best I recall, would raise the topic that the planning and the progress of the operation itself was going forward . . .

Mr. McCORD. I believe my previous testimony which I will restate before this committee, was to the effect that when I had met Mr. Hunt in his offices at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue [this is the address of the Mullen Co.] with Mr. Liddy that he had referred to his previous work at the White House for Mr. Colson, referring to him as his superior; that during the session that Mr. Hunt, Mr. Liddy, and I had in Mr. Hunt’s offices, Mr. Hunt had a typed plan that he had typed himself, step-by-step, for the entry of the Democratic National Committee headquarters . . . (Hearings Before the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities of the United States Senate . . . U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973, Book 1, pages 142-143)

Besides the Watergate break-in, other illegal surveillance activities were discussed at the same company which handled the Mormon Church’s public relations.

After the Watergate break-in was discovered, Robert Bennett found himself faced with the possibility that his activities could bring embarrassment to both the Mormon Church and the CIA. Therefore, he did his best to cover up both the BYU spy who was involved in the activities and the relationship of his own company with the CIA.

Bennett’s attempt to suppress the involvement of BYU spy Thomas Gregory was not successful. Gregory said that he was contacted by the FBI in December of 1972—about six months after the Watergate break-in.

Jack Anderson gave this information concerning Bennett’s cover-up of the BYU spy:

Bennett was called in for questioning six times by the original Watergate prosecutors. He held back Gregory’s vital information out of loyalty to the youth Bennett claims.

But the prosecutors traced Bennett’s long-distance telephone calls to Gregory. When Bennett learned this, he called the prosecutors and said: “Look, you’ve found Tommy. I’ll tell you about Tommy.” (*Deseret News*, June 25, 1974)

The Rockefeller Report made it clear that Robert Bennett did not reveal the CIA relationship to either “the grand jury or to the FBI when he was later interviewed by it” (*Report to the President by the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States*, pages 197-198).

Robert Bennett publicly stated that he knew nothing about the Watergate break-in. He claimed, in fact, that

Hunt had lied to him: “‘ You’ve got to know about Hunt,’ Mr. Bennett said. ‘He made things up. He led me to believe he had instructions he didn’t have. He said he’d never been near the Watergate that night’” (*New York Times*, April 28, 1973).

In his testimony given in *DNC vs McCORD*, Robert Bennett admitted that before the Watergate affair Thomas Gregory told him that Hunt was planning to bug the Democrats:

Q When you got there on Monday morning, June 19th, Mr. Hunt was already there; is that correct?

A That’s correct.

Q Did you have any conversation with him?

A I asked him about the stories that had appeared in the newspapers over the weekend with respect to the Watergate burglary and he refused to discuss them in any detail.

Q Why would you ask him about the stories in the paper?

A Because out of the conversation we had had previously, I had reason to believe that he might know something about what had gone on.

Q Will you tell us about those previous conversations, Mr. Bennett, which led to this surmise or speculation on your part.

A Of course, the most dramatic one was the conversation I had with Tom Gregory . . . whom Howard recruited to act as an information source for him within first the Muskie and later the McGovern campaign. Tom had come to me for advice as to what he should do because he was getting very nervous about some of the things he was being asked to do by Mr. Hunt, specifically to help lay plans for the planting of a bug in Frank Mankiewicz’s office in McGovern’s headquarters. I had advised Tom that he must not participate in any such activity and that he should terminate his relationship with Mr. Hunt, which he had done.

Q When did Mr. Gregory come to you to request your advice on this matter?

A The week prior to this. Well, the week of June 17th.

Q June 17th was a Saturday.

A I believe it was the Wednesday prior.

Q After you had that conversation with Mr. Gregory on that Wednesday, did you have any conversation with Mr. Hunt?

A No, although I expected to, but it never occurred.

Q Did you see Mr. Hunt between that Wednesday and the following Monday?

A Yes, but not to have any in-depth conversation with him.

Q Why was it that Tom Gregory came to you for advice?

A Tom Gregory was recruited through my nephew and he knew that I had contact with Mr. Hunt and,

therefore, assumed that I would be knowledgeable about Mr. Hunt’s activities. Also, Mr. Gregory and I are both members of the same religious faith and he knew that I would understand his religious qualms about what it was he was doing.

Q On Monday, the 19th, when you saw Mr. Hunt, did you have any discussion with him then concerning the problem that Tom Gregory was having?

A No.

Q Did you raise the question with him?

A No.

Q Did you have the opportunity on that Monday to discuss that problem with him?

A I suppose I did, but, that not being the principal item of concern that day, I didn’t think to bring it up. (Deposition of Robert Bennett, *DNC vs McCORD*, April 19, 1973, pages 26-29)

The Rockefeller Report states that Robert Bennett learned of the “illegal activity” on “June 14, two days before Watergate, when Gregory told Bennett that Hunt had asked him to bug the office of Frank Mankiewicz in McGovern Headquarters.”

On page 196 of the Rockefeller Report, we find that “At one time Hunt approached Bennett with a proposal to obtain the assistance of the Hughes organization for a burglary in Las Vegas to secure purported information about Senator Muskie.” The Rockefeller Report goes on to say that “It was also this proposal which first gave Bennett concern with respect to Hunt’s judgment; he assumed, however, that Hunt, being attached to the White House staff, would be adequately supervised and controlled.”

According to Robert Bennett, Hunt had discussed the idea of breaking into the Greenspun safe with him in 1971 (see *New York Times*, April 28, 1973).

Jack Anderson, who is also a member of the Mormon Church, did not hesitate to publish the fact that Bennett knew of the “burglary-bugging team” before the Watergate break-in was discovered:

WASHINGTON — CIA front man Robert Bennett, son of veteran Sen. Wallace Bennett, R-Utah, has conceded that *he knew a White House burglary-bugging team was on the prowl in advance of the celebrated Watergate break-in.*

A secret memorandum, written by his CIA case officer, states the senator’s son withheld vital information from the authorities.

In an interview with my associate Les Whitten, Bennett acknowledged he knew at least three days before the Watergate burglary that White House aide E. Howard Hunt, and his second-story crew had plotted to break into the campaign headquarters of Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., and bug the place.

Instead of reporting the conspiracy to the police, Bennett kept his mouth shut. He also confided to his CIA contact that he had held back information from the original Watergate prosecutors when they later questioned him about the Watergate break-in.

This episode is another link in the mysterious CIA involvement in Watergate. We uncovered the first piece of the puzzle as early as April 7, 1973, when we reported that the CIA had “ordered its agents not to talk to the FBI about the explosive Watergate case.” Thereafter, we published several reports about the CIA and Watergate, but the full story still hasn’t been told. (*Deseret News*, June 25, 1974)

In our book, *Mormon Spies, Hughes and the C.I.A.*, written in 1976, we compiled a great deal of material regarding Robert Bennett’s links to the burglary-bugging team that was responsible for the Watergate break-in. We presented strong circumstantial evidence that linked Bennett to the Watergate scandal and examined his mysterious ties to the CIA.

In addition, we cited testimony showing that after the break-in, when the FBI was diligently searching for Howard Hunt, Robert Bennett was in contact with him. It has been claimed that “The FBI had assigned 150 agents to the search.” On page 9 of his report, Senator Baker claimed that “Bennett served as the point of contact between Hunt and Liddy during the two weeks following the Watergate break-in.”

Unfortunately, most people in Utah had no interest in looking into the matter, and, as it turned out, Robert Bennett was recently elected as U. S. Senator from the state of Utah.

While we were preparing this book for publication, some extremely important C.I.A. memos came to light that make it very clear that Bennett was deeply involved in the Watergate scandal. David Corn has written an article in *The Nation* magazine, November 29, 1993, which deals with Robert Bennett’s involvement in the sordid affair. Corn cites a memo written by “C.I.A. officer Jack Kindschi” which indicates that Bennett knew what was going on. On page 659 of his article, Mr. Corn comments:

Bob Bennett thus remained in the shadows of Watergate. In the years since, Watergate-ologists have wondered about his knowledge of Hunt’s illegal activities. . . . Bennett maintains he did no wrong. . . . Last year Bennett said of Watergate, “I was never part of the mess. I was close to it, I saw it first-hand, but I didn’t do anything illegal, improper or immoral.”

Bennett was running for the job of U. S. senator from Utah when he made that assertion. As a candidate, Bennett professed he was “appalled” when he learned of Hunt’s plans to break into Greenspun’s safe. His denials were effective. He won the election. The Kindschi memo

suggests Bob Bennett was a willing participant in the conspiracy. Today he makes laws. (*The Nation*, November 29, 1993, page 659)

Fortunately, *The Nation* was willing to provide us with copies of two memos relating to Robert Bennett. These memos actually came from secret files connected with the assassination of John F. Kennedy. After a great deal of pressure, the government decided to release many of these documents. They were finally made available in 1993. Both of the memos were written by C.I.A. officer Jack Kindschi. The first is dated September 10, 1973. This document indicates that Howard Hunt was implicating the Mullen Company in planning an illegal break-in:

4. According to [redacted] Mr. Mullen received information that E. Howard Hunt is confessing everything he knows (and suspects) concerning the Mullen-CIA relationship as well as embroidering as much as possible in order to minimize his involvement and forthcoming sentence. At this juncture, according to [redacted] Hunt is attempting to affix the blame of the abortive entry into Hank Greenspun’s office in Las Vegas on the Mullen Company, who Hunt alleges acted upon instruction from their client, Howard Hughes.

While the first memo only suggests that the Mullen Company may have been involved in planning a burglary, the second memo indicates that Bennett not only discussed the possibility of breaking into Greenspun’s safe with Howard Hunt and a Hughes representative, but it also discloses that “early-on” Howard Hunt told Bennett about the “plumbers group” which, of course, was a name for the burglary-bugging team. In this memo Jack Kindschi indicated that he met with an individual “in my automobile” who seemed to have important inside information regarding Robert Bennett. Interestingly, Robert Bennett feels that the former owner of the Mullen company, Robert R. Mullen, revealed this information to the CIA. Dan Harrie reported:

Mr. Bennett believes the CIA’s secret informant in the memo is his former boss, Bob Mullen, the now-deceased founder of the public-relations firm and CIA front later purchased by Mr. Bennett. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, November 12, 1993)

The Kindschi memo, written August 10, 1973, contained some startling revelations about Bennett:

3. I queried [redacted] on how Mr. Bennett fared during his 27 July appearance before the staff members of the Senate Select Committee on the Watergate. [redacted] replied that Bennett had been put through the “wringer” and that the atmosphere had been chilly and, at times, even unfriendly. The staff was not interested in Bennett’s (or Mullen’s) connections with the Agency.

In fact, no questions were put to Bennett concerning his relationship with the Agency nor his involvement in establishing funding conduits for the 1972 election. Rather, the entire line of questioning, which exceeded three hours in duration, centered upon Bennett's relationship to E. Howard Hunt, the "plumbers unit" in the White House, and Howard Hughes. According to [redacted] Hunt early-on had informed Bennett of the existence of the "plumbers group" as well as the projected plan to break into the safe of Hank GREENSPUN in Las Vegas to retrieve alleged damaging information relevant to Senator Muskie. Hunt informed Bennett of this plan because he (Hunt) knew that GREENSPUN had been a party to a plot in which Hughes allegedly lost close to \$50,000,000 . . . Hunt suggested to Bennett that Hughes might be interested in the contents of GREENSPUN'S safe . . . As [redacted] related the story, Bennett then checked with his Hughes contact to ascertain if Hughes might be interested in gaining access to GREENSPUN'S safe. Shortly thereafter, the Hughes representative informed Bennett that they were not interested and, in fact, would not touch such a plan with a "10 foot pole." Bennett then dropped any interest or involvement in the scheme. The staff Committee, with this background, questioned Bennett thoroughly and intimated that they did not believe Bennett [*sic*] was coming clean with them. Bennett told [redacted] that he was certain that the material for this line of questioning came from Hunt and Colson. Moreover, Bennett asserted that some of the information available to the staff could have come only from a telephone tap on his line which Bennett suspected had been installed by the FBI. . . .

4. According to [redacted] Bennett was so shaken by this ordeal that he immediately notified his father, Senator Bennett who, in turn, sought out Senator Baker to seek his assistance. Baker asserted that he would see that the investigation would be even-handed and impartial and that he believed in Bob Bennett's integrity. Somewhat later, according to [redacted] Senator Ervin spoke with Senator Bennett and assured him that his son would not be subpoenaed and put on national television. Ervin reputedly remarked that the Committee was having problems in controlling the ardor and investigative zeal of the staff. Ervin noted that they "smell blood" and have been intoxicated by their successes, notably in the Butterworth break-through. Ervin noted that both he and Senator Baker have been hard pressed in containing the staff's enthusiasm for pursuit and that they had to tread a careful line with them.

5. [redacted] noted that Bennett was somewhat assuaged by Senator Baker and Ervin's comments, but fears that the staff, if thwarted, will leak the Hughes story and the Mullen-Agency connection to the media. . . . ("Memorandum For The Record," written by CIA agent Jack Kindschi, August 10, 1973)

Unfortunately a number of sentences, which would have revealed the name of the informant and might have given more information on Bennett were whited

out when the secret memo was released. In any case, the information appears to have come from someone who had inside information on both the secret hearings and the relationship between Howard Hunt and Robert Bennett.

If Robert Bennett is correct in his belief that Robert R. Mullen was the person who revealed the information in the memo, it makes the contents of the document even more significant than if they came from someone who was not involved with Mullen and Company. In a letter to us dated October 11, 1974, CIA agent James Everett said that "Robert Bennett purchased Robert R. Mullen & Co. in 1971 as near as I can recall. . . . Mr. Mullen remained on as Chairman of the Board and Bob Bennett took the position of President." Since Mr. Mullen continued on as "Chairman of the Board," it seems reasonable to believe that he knew a great deal about what was going on at the company after he sold it to Robert Bennett. If Robert R. Mullen, who handled public relations for the Mormon Church for about a decade and a half, was the one who gave the damaging information found in the memo, it would certainly carry a great deal of weight.

The memo is very disturbing because it shows that Senator Wallace Bennett was able to get special treatment for his son so that he would not be "subpoenaed and put on national television." It is obvious now that Robert Bennett should have been publicly interrogated before the Watergate Committee. Had this occurred, it is doubtful that he would have obtained the position of senator for the state of Utah. It would seem that there was an attempt by people in high places to cover up Bennett's knowledge of the Watergate affair.

When the information revealed in the two memos cited above is combined with the material we presented in our book, it becomes very clear that Bennett was a major figure in the scandal. Although we do not have room here to adequately deal with the material, the following are some of the facts relating to the matter:

1 — Some of the planning for the Watergate break in was discussed at Robert Bennett's company.

2 — Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt actually worked for Robert Bennett.

3 — The CIA memo reports that "Hunt early-on had informed Bennett of the existence of the 'plumbers group' as well as the projected plan to break into the safe of Hank GREENSPUN."

4 — The memo also says that Bennett "checked with his Hughes contact to ascertain if Hughes might be interested in gaining access to GREENSPUN'S safe."

5 — In his testimony Robert Bennett admitted that days before the Watergate break-in he was told by Thomas Gregory, a spy from Brigham Young University, that Hunt asked him to plant "a bug in Frank

10 August 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with []

1. I met with [] from 1030 to 1130 hours, this date, for the purpose of [] The meeting was conducted in my automobile.

2. [] morale was of high order in that []

3. I queried [] on how Mr. Bennett fared during his 27 July appearance before the staff members of the Senate Select Committee on the Watergate. [] replied that Bennett had been put through the "wringer" and that the atmosphere had been chilly and, at times, even unfriendly. The staff was not interested in Bennett's (or Mullen's) connections with the Agency. In fact, no questions were put to Bennett concerning his relationship with the Agency nor his involvement in establishing funding conduits for the 1972 election. Rather, the entire line of questioning, which exceeded three hours in duration, centered upon Bennett's relationship to E. Howard Hunt, the "plumbers unit" in the White House, and Howard Hughes. According to [] Hunt early on had informed Bennett of the existence of the "plumbers group" as well as the projected plan to break into the safe of Hank GREENSPUN in Las Vegas to retrieve alleged damaging information relevant to Senator Muskie. Hunt informed Bennett of this plan

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A CIA memo dated August 10, 1973, indicating that Howard Hunt had "early on informed [Robert] Bennett of the existence of the 'plumbers group' as well as the projected plan to break into the safe of Hank GREENSPUN in Las Vegas ..."

Mankiewicz's office in McGovern's headquarters." Bennett also acknowledged that "Tom Gregory was recruited through my nephew."

6 — Bennett held back information concerning the spy until he found that his phone calls with Gregory had been traced.

7 — According to Senator Baker, "Bennett served as the point of contact between Hunt and Liddy during the two weeks following the Watergate break-in." He could have helped the FBI capture Hunt. Instead, however, he remained silent and caused the government to spend a great deal of money and time in its attempt to apprehend Hunt.

8 — From documents we have examined, it appears that Robert Bennett was able to offer Mullen clients not only public relations, but also information on spying as well. In a deposition he gave, Robert Bennett admitted that he tried to interest his clients in a bugging device:

Q Did he [Howard Hunt] ever discuss with you whether he had any particular knowledge of electronic surveillance and this sort of thing?

A Not as far as his CIA activities were concerned, no.

Q Did he ever indicate that he had that knowledge other than what was involved in his CIA activities?

A He indicated an interest in it after he had joined our company . . .

Q In what context did that interest express itself?

A He said a friend of his had developed a device, which, as he described it, was very, very sophisticated in the realm of electronic surveillance. He said it could be attached to a piece of furniture, that it was voice actuated . . . and that it was invulnerable to an electronic sweep and suggested that maybe some of our clients would be interested . . . If they were, he said he could introduce them to the individual who had developed it. I checked and none of our clients had any interest in it. (*DNC vs McCord*, Deposition of Robert Bennett, April 19, 1973, pages 24-25)

The information which has come to light concerning Robert Bennett is very disturbing. The fact that both Robert Mullen and Robert Bennett handled public relations for the Mormon Church for many years is also troubling, especially when we learn that a CIA agent was working on Mullen's book about the Mormons. Some have suggested the possibility of a relationship between the Mormon Church and the CIA, It has, in fact, been known for sometime that both the CIA and the FBI recruit a proportionately large number of Mormons. Howard Hughes, who had very important links to the CIA, also hired a large number of Mormons. According to the *Las Vegas Sun*, May 18, 1975, Robert Bennett himself eventually became "public relations director for the

Summa Corporation, an umbrella firm entirely owned by Hughes."

After the Watergate scandal came to light, the Mormon Church separated itself from Mullen and Company. In a letter to us dated October 7, 1974, CIA agent James Everett said, "There undoubtedly was concern on the behalf of the Church when it became apparent that Mullen & Company would be under scrutiny for the Watergate affair. You will recall that a young Mormon boy was recruited by Howard Hunt to serve as spotter and informant in the Democratic Party Headquarters."

In his relationship with the Mormon Church, Robert Bennett seems to have dealt with the late Apostle Mark E. Petersen. As shown above, Petersen was the man who was in charge of making investigations of those who were out of harmony with the church. In his letter to us, James A. Everett stated: "9. It is my understanding that Mark E. Petersen was head of the Public Relations effort at the level which was served by Robert R. Mullen & Co. There were undoubtedly many other P. R. efforts which may be handled by other administrative arrangements." In the same letter Mr. Everett also stated that Bennett and Petersen "are good friends."

Packer Directing Purge?

As noted earlier, D. Michael Quinn felt that Apostle Boyd K. Packer had a great deal to do with the problems he and other Mormon scholars were facing. Interestingly, many Mormon intellectuals feel that Apostle Boyd K. Packer is the moving force behind the present purge going on in the church. An Associated Press article mentioned that, "The actions came just months after Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified feminists, homosexuals and intellectuals as the three dangers facing The Mormon Church" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, September 20, 1993).

Church officials, however, denied that the excommunications have been directed from the highest levels of the church and claimed that it was only local leaders who instigated the trials. It seems highly unlikely, however, that so many prominent people would be called in by local leaders in such a short period of time. The whole thing seems to have been orchestrated from above. As indicated above, it appears that the timing of the purge was related to the General Conference of the Mormon Church. Church leaders seem to be making a statement that those who continue to question their authority and the policies of the church will be cut off.

Some important information regarding Apostle Packer's involvement in the purge came to light on October 10, 1993, when the *Arizona Republic* printed the following:

SALT LAKE CITY — The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is . . . no stranger to controversy, from infancy to the present.

It once preached that polygamy was the key to salvation. It fought the federal government as its members labored to establish its kingdom on Earth in the wastes of Utah. Violent splinter groups, convinced that Armageddon is at hand, occasionally grab headlines.

In recent years, it appeared as if the Brethren, as they style themselves, had shaken off their tumultuous past and emerged as unique but mainstream Christians.

However, with its phenomenal expansion and its growth as a corporate power have come new problems and challenges for the church.

As the millennium comes to an end, a small but influential number of "saints" claim their leaders are silencing legitimate internal debate in the name of maintaining doctrinal purity, conformity, obedience and faith. They say the church's patriarchal foundation is out of step with the times, that it inhibits free speech, intellectual inquiry and academic freedom, and that it denies women an equal role in church affairs and at home.

The situation is complicated by the fact that the church's president and prophet, 94-year-old Ezra Taft Benson, is silenced by infirmity.

Benson's counselors and quorums run church affairs. Critics claim that the void has robbed the church of direction and perhaps even of divine inspiration, and that ambitious elders may be leading the Brethren astray. . . .

The newest and potentially most powerful challenge to unity may come from women. . . . Feminists say the all-male hierarchy is not sensitive to women's needs, especially in cases of sexual abuse or unhappy marriage, a complaint that has provoked the church to recently teach its officials to be more aware. . . .

Dallin Oaks, 61, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles . . . said the sanctions were not part of an orchestrated effort to silence critics.

"There is no purge," said the former BYU president, who has dismissed critics as "publicity hounds" and "wolves."

However, Oaks did not deny that Boyd K. Packer, a senior apostle . . . may have improperly met with the leader of a church court hearing excommunication proceedings against author and lawyer Paul Toscano.

Toscano, 48, an outspoken women's rights supporter, was "ex'd," as church members call excommunication, on Sept. 19.

In addition, Oaks acknowledged that the Strengthening the Members Committee, which some members liken to an intelligence agency but which Oaks calls a "clipping service," may have monitored speeches,

writings and activities of those suspected of apostasy and passed on material to church officials.

"Elder Packer does not have the authority to make church policy," Oaks said of the man many dissidents believe plays a key role in the crackdown. . . .

Oaks said that "if Elder Packer is having any conversations with" the court, "it is outside the normal channels and . . . if he gave a directed verdict (against Toscano), that is contrary to policy and irregular, and it is contrary to what I know about Elder Packer and the way he operates."

Packer acknowledged Thursday that he met in July with fellow church leader Loren Dunn and Toscano's stake president, Kerry Heinz, to discuss Toscano. He said Heinz requested the meeting.

"We talked doctrine and philosophy," Packer said. "I did not instruct him to hold a disciplinary council and absolutely did not direct a verdict. That is against church policy. When he (Heinz) left, I did not know what he would do." . . . many moderate Mormons are troubled by their church's stern reaction to criticism.

"I feel it has instilled a lot of fear in people," said Judy Curtis, 52, of Phoenix. "I'm concerned because some people feel they can't talk freely or openly unless they feel it is approved. . . ."

Phoenix attorney Michael Clyde, son of Aillen Clyde, the No. 3 woman in the Relief Society, said, "The whole question of discipline is very difficult. I am a devout Mormon who has sat on (church) courts, and I am certainly troubled by any suggestion that they are being used to quiet an issue. . . ."

Last month, John Beck, 33, of Provo, resigned the church and quit his job as a BYU business professor.

"My problems had to do with the ethics of the university," he said, "which comes down to their not telling the truth. They are firing people not for the reasons they say."

His wife, Martha Nibley Beck, 30, daughter of famed pro-church scholar Hugh Nibley, said she left her job as a BYU sociology professor in July after the school removed Carol Lee Hawkins as leader of the Women's Symposium. Hawkins had said she wanted to invite Pulitzer and Bancroft Prize-winner Laurel Thatcher Ulrich . . .

"The church is moving toward social isolation," Martha Beck said. "If you are to do what the right wing of the church says, you have to break away from the entire current of social change in the U.S."

BYU spokeswoman Margaret Smoot said that the removal of Hawkins was routine and Ulrich was never uninvited.

However, Smoot's predecessor, Paul Richards, 57, who left BYU last year, ridiculed that notion.

"Here we had an opportunity to invite the most decorated woman in the church, but the board was told by higher authority you can't do this," he said. "The church wants to portray this image of being unified in all it does. . . . *It wants Mormons to be unquestioning*—something

I believe goes against church teachings and portrays a great insecurity.

“I worked in public affairs for the church for 13 years, and *I had to lie all the time*, and this has *really battered my faith*.” (*Arizona Republic*, October 10, 1993)

The same issue of the *Arizona Republic* revealed that the Mormon prophet’s grandson had decided to leave the church because of the church’s misrepresentation of the facts:

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson—first grandchild of Ezra Taft Benson, the ailing head and prophet of the Mormon Church—has resigned from the church. . . . His wife of 16 years, Mary Ann Benson, 36, also resigned. . . . The Bensons said they resigned to protest what they believe is an increasingly intolerant church leadership. . . .

Steve Benson came to his decision after a five-day visit to Salt Lake City. He agreed to make the trip in order to help a *Republic* writer who was reporting on the church’s reaction to dissent gain access to high church officials and to key supporters and critics.

While there, Benson visited his grandfather, who is church president, and his parents.

He said the example set by his conservative, outspoken 94-year-old grandfather, who taught him the importance of remaining true to what you believe, gave him the fortitude to make an emotionally wrenching split from the church.

“There is an old Mormon hymn,” he said in explaining his resignation. “Do what is right, let the consequence follow, battle for freedom in spirit and might.”

“In order to be truly obedient, one must be allowed the right to think, question, doubt, and search for truth. The modern church is intolerant of these God-given rights. . . . I didn’t leave the church. The church left me.”

Mary Ann Benson said leaving the church was “painful, yet exhilarating.”

“Since I’ve left, I feel very empowered and free, free to define my relationship with God, follow my purpose in life and free to finally find peace,” she said. . . .

Steve Benson said he believes one sign of the church’s “dysfunctionality” was reaction to his statements in July on his grandfather’s infirmity.

At that time, Benson said he believed that due to his failing health, his grandfather was incapable of exerting any true leadership.

“I hated to see the church manipulate him and . . . use him to falsely prop up the notion that he is actively leading the church,” he said.

“Local church leaders called me in to explain my actions. I received anonymous letters, some hateful, from church members—in essence damning me to hell and telling me I was possessed by the devil.” (*Arizona Republic*, October 10, 1993)

The following day, October 11, 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported some other statements made by Steve Benson:

“I could not, in good conscience, be in an organization that was destroying the spirituality of the very souls of its members,” Mr. Benson said Sunday. “In the name of freedom of religion, *the church has turned freedom of speech on its head*.”

“[I left] because of the current atmosphere of fear, intolerance and intimidation in this dark period of the church we’re groping through now,” he said. . . .

“I felt the church had put a theological plastic bag over my head that was spiritually and intellectually suffocating me,” he said. . . .

Be [By?] refusing to be silenced, and by leaving a church he believes to be run by a “corrupt” leadership, he said he has lived up to his grandfather’s expectations.

The next day an article written by Vern Anderson of The Associated Press reported a new development. The article was captioned, “Oaks Lied To Protect Fellow Apostle”:

The grandson of Mormon Church President Ezra Taft Benson contends that a church apostle lied in order to cover up a more senior apostle’s role in the excommunication of a Mormon dissident.

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson said Monday his decision last week to resign from the church was based in part on Elder Dallin H. Oaks’ statements to a reporter about Elder Boyd K. Packer.

Elder Oaks admitted late Monday he “could not defend the truthfulness of one of the statements” about Packer, who is considered by many to be behind the church’s recent crackdown on dissidents. . . .

Oaks told *Arizona Republic* reporter Paul Brinkley-Rogers on Oct. 1 that he had “no knowledge” of whether Packer had met with Kerry Heinz, the local ecclesiastical leader for Salt Lake lawyer Paul Toscano, before Heinz excommunicated Toscano on Sept. 19. . . .

However, in a “personal and confidential” letter to Oaks on Oct. 6, Benson reminded the apostle that in a private meeting Sept. 24, Oaks had told Benson he was “distressed and astonished” that Packer had met with Heinz.

He quoted Oaks as saying of Packer, “You can’t stage manage a grizzly bear,” and added that “it was a mistake for Packer to meet with Heinz and a mistake for Heinz to ask for the meeting.”

Benson also wrote that Oaks “further acknowledged that you later talked directly to Elder Packer and told him that you felt it was wrong and violated church disciplinary procedure for Elder Packer to have been in contact with President Heinz.”

Benson said he was making his letter to Oaks public

because he was fed up with church leaders shading the truth. . . .

In an interview Monday evening, Oaks declined to confirm or deny most of Benson's assertions about a pair of private interviews the church prophet's grandson had in September with Oaks and Elder Neal A. Maxwell, another member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

... However, Oaks, a former Utah Supreme Court justice, acknowledged that his single statement to reporter Brinkley-Rogers about having no knowledge of the Packer-Heinz meeting was one "I could not defend."

"It was not a truthful statement," Oaks said.

Benson's letter to Oaks had warned the apostle that unless he set the record straight, Benson would feel no obligation to honor the promise of confidentiality he had earlier given Oaks and Maxwell.

Oaks called *The Republic's* reporter that night and retracted the "I have no knowledge of whether he [Packer] did" statement. . . .

Oaks did not retract other statements in the interview . . . that Benson had alleged—and Oaks denies—were false or deliberately misleading. . . .

Oaks . . . stressed that Benson at least three times had assured him and Maxwell that their meetings . . . were confidential and would never be publicly discussed.

"I think that Steve Benson is just going to have to carry the responsibility for whatever he relates about a confidential meeting," Oaks said.

Benson said he felt acutely the moral dilemma of having promised confidentiality, but then having seen deliberate efforts to mislead the public about Packer's role in the Toscano affair.

"I had to decide to be a party to the coverup or be faithful to my own convictions," Benson said. "I had to let Elder Oaks walk a plank of his own making." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 12, 1993)

The more church leaders said on the subject, the worse it began to look for Oaks, Packer and other church leaders. Apostle Packer eventually revealed that he actually had the approval of the Council of the Twelve Apostles to meet with Heinz. On October 17, 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

Mormon Church Apostle Boyd K. Packer said he had the endorsement of the Council of the Twelve Apostles when he met with an ecclesiastical leader who later excommunicated a member of the church.

Packer told the church-owned *Deseret News* Friday that when stake president Kerry Heinz asked through a mid-level church official to meet with Packer, Packer asked his fellow apostles in a meeting whether he should.

". . . I felt there may be some sensitivity about his request," Packer said. . . .

Toscano has said that while Heinz agreed that he asked to meet with Packer, there are indications Packer

or church general authority Loren Dunn first initiated the inquiry into the public speeches of Toscano and his wife, Margaret Toscano.

Since Apostle Oaks is a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, he must have known about the meeting Apostle Packer had with Heinz even before it occurred. The fact that he told Steve Benson about the Packer-Heinz meeting after it took place, shows that it was on his mind and that he was deeply concerned about the matter. In light of the above, the fact that Oaks was not forthright about the matter casts a dark shadow on the entire incident.

Apostle Dallin Oaks was so embarrassed about the bad press he was receiving that he launched an attack on the Associated Press in the church's newspaper, *Deseret News*:

Sitting in his office in the LDS Church administration building, Elder Dallin H. Oaks carefully reads a news report that says he admitted to "falsely telling" a journalist he had no knowledge of an event involving the excommunication of a church member.

"Life isn't fair," Elder Oaks said. "Somebody said that time heals all wounds. But it's also true that time wounds all heels," he added in jest. But in a serious tone, Elder Oaks . . . said he feels "wounded" by an Associated Press story that he said dwelled on his admission that he made a statement he couldn't defend, and downplayed his efforts to promptly correct his unintentional error.

"It impugned my integrity and seriously distorted the account of the facts as it was presented," Oaks said in an interview this week.

The apostle said he didn't willfully mislead a news reporter. He explained that he had misspoken during an hour-long interview and when he was notified of that, he called the reporter to retract a "statement I could not defend."

Meanwhile, in Phoenix, Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Steve Benson expressed frustration over what he sees as high-ranking church officials twisting the truth and deceiving members.

"I'm tired of playing this little game," he said . . . "The church needs to respect its members. . . . It wants to muzzle its members." . . .

In his interview with the *Deseret News*, [Steve] Benson said what Elder Oaks told him didn't square with what was said to the reporter. So he transmitted a confidential letter to Elder Oaks pointing that out. Benson said he also warned that if the apostle did not "set the record straight" he would no longer feel obligated to keep their discussion confidential. . . . Elder Oaks said, he reviewed the transcript of his interview with the reporter and found he couldn't defend his comment about having no knowledge of Packer meeting with Heinz.

"How do you make a statement like that? I can't give any better explanation than the fact that I was talking a

mile a minute and I just said something that on mature reflection I (concluded), “I can’t defend the truthfulness of that,” Elder Oaks said. . . . after later learning that Elder Oaks left intact the other comments that troubled Benson, Benson said he followed through on his threat to go public.

In a followup letter transmitted Friday to Elder Oaks explaining why he decided to speak openly about their confidential conversations, Benson said, “I feel you violated the trust and faith between not only you and me, but between the church leadership and the members at large. I therefore felt it my moral obligation to break the silence that otherwise would have served only to perpetuate falsehood and false faith.” (*Deseret News*, October 16, 1993)

Apostle Oaks would like people to believe that he merely made a mistake when he said he did not know Apostle Packer met with Heinz. This, of course, is very difficult to believe. Ironically, Oaks himself has released a partial transcript of his interview with *The Arizona Republic* which establishes beyond all doubt that he was not forthright about the matter:

The Arizona Republic: “In the case of Toscano . . . do you have any evidence that Elder Packer [was] involved in any way in the decision-making process in the disciplining of [Toscano]?”

Oaks: “As for Elder Packer, Elder Packer does not have a specific responsibility for any area in the church. . . . So, if Elder Packer is having any conversation with Kerry Heinz, it is outside the normal channel. That’s all I can say. I have no knowledge of whether he did. But if he did and if he gave a directed verdict or anything like that, that is contrary to policy. It is irregular and it’s contrary to what I know of Elder Packer and the way he operates. . . . He’s a forthright and plain-spoken man, but Elder Packer is far too sophisticated and sensitive a man to call a stake president and tell him what he has to do in a church discipline case. I just don’t believe that. What’s possible is that a stake president might think he heard such a thing; nobody can dismiss that possibility . . . that kind of slippage happens in communication.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 17, 1993)

As we have shown, Apostle Oaks tried to divert attention away from his fallacious statement by attacking the Associated Press. Oaks claimed the story “impugned my integrity and seriously distorted the account of the facts . . .” The Associated Press responded as follows:

Bill Beech, bureau chief for The Associated Press in Salt Lake City, said the AP story was based on a tape-recorded interview with Oaks, was accurate and made no distortions.

Though Packer said Friday that he had the support of the Council of the Twelve in meeting with Heinz, Benson wrote in an Oct. 6 letter to Oaks that Oaks had told him “it was a mistake for Packer to meet with Heinz and a mistake for Heinz to ask for the meeting.” . . . in another letter Friday to Oaks, Benson appealed to the apostle to correct what Benson believes are other conflicts between Oaks’ private version and the public statements about Packer’s involvement.

“You were provided an opportunity to set the record straight completely,” he wrote. “You chose only to correct one of three falsehoods.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 17, 1993)

Apostle Dallin Oaks finally became so upset over the charge that he had lied that he did something very few General Authorities have done in recent years: he wrote an article regarding the matter which was published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* on October 21, 1993. In this article Apostle Oaks said, “I did not ‘lie’ to the reporter,” and went on to declare: “My perception of this matter is simple. I have been the victim of double-decker deceit: 1, betrayal of promises of confidentiality, and 2, false accusations of lying.”

On October 25, 1993, Steve Benson wrote an article in response to Apostle Oaks’ comments:

Mormons are admonished to be honest. Unfortunately, Apostle Dallin Oaks chooses to deny important truths relating to Elder Boyd Packer’s involvement in the excommunication of Paul Toscano.

On Sept. 9, I met with Elders Oaks and Maxwell. . . .

On Sept. 24, we met again and confidentially discussed the Toscano excommunication. . . .

In that meeting, I asked Oaks if Kerry Heinz, Toscano’s stake president, had any contact with Packer prior to Toscano’s excommunication.

According to my notes taken during the meeting, Oaks admitted that Heinz “called and asked for a meeting” with Packer. Oaks said he was “distressed and astonished” that Packer agreed to the meeting. Referring to Packer, he said, “You can’t stage-manage a grizzly bear.” He said “it was a mistake for Packer to meet with Heinz and a mistake for Heinz to ask for the meeting.”

(One wonders why the conflict between Oaks’ surprise over the Packer-Heinz meeting and Packer’s public statement that the Twelve authorized that meeting.)

Oaks said he later talked with Packer and told him he felt Packer had violated procedure by meeting with Heinz, noting that Packer had no authority or responsibility in this area. He said he strongly urged Packer to avoid future [*sic*] such meetings, adding that he expected Toscano “to sue the church.”

On Oct. 1, an *Arizona Republic* reporter asked Oaks if Packer was “involved in any way” in the disciplining of Toscano. . . .

Oaks' answer contained several clear-cut falsehoods, which point to a larger pattern of deceptions.

First, by couching the Packer-Heinz meeting hypothetically, he falsely implied personal ignorance of whether it occurred. Oaks left this on the record.

Second, Oaks said he had no knowledge that Packer met with Heinz. Commendably, Oaks later retracted this statement.

Third, Oaks claimed that if Packer met with Heinz, it ran contrary to Oaks' knowledge of how Packer operated. Oaks left this on the record.

Finally, Oaks claimed he knew nothing more. He left this falsehood on the record.

Upon hearing Oaks' attempted cover for Packer, I was dismayed and faxed Oaks a letter on Oct. 6, detailing what he told me on Sept. 24, juxtaposed against what he told the reporter on Oct. 1. I highlighted his false on-the-record statements, so that there could be no misunderstanding.

I informed him that our confidentiality agreement was void and offered him 24 hours to set the record straight, advising him that if he did not, I would.

It is critical to understand that Oaks did not initiate any corrections for the record. Only after receiving my Oct. 6 letter did he contact the reporter to issue a limited retraction.

Initially, I was pleased to hear from the reporter that Oaks had corrected himself. On Oct. 7, I faxed him a second letter, thanking him for taking the opportunity to clarify his earlier statements.

"That thank-you note proved to be premature, because I was unaware at the time I wrote it that Oaks had not retracted all his falsehoods. Upon discovering that he had left most of them intact, I concluded he had been provided ample opportunity to set the record straight and had not.

When Oaks chose to publicly dissemble, he violated my trust and that of the church at large. May his heart go out, not only in love but in reconciliation, to those who have suffered from this abuse of ecclesiastical power. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 25, 1993)

It is obvious that Dallin Oaks has had a very difficult time facing this challenge to his honesty and authority. Apostle Oaks firmly believes that church members have no right to criticize their leaders. In a speech given at the "1985 CES *Doctrine and Covenants* Symposium," Oaks warned:

Criticism is particularly objectionable when it is directed toward Church authorities, general or local. . . . Evil speaking of *the Lord's anointed* is in a class by itself. It is one thing to depreciate a person who exercises corporate power or even government power. It is quite another thing to criticize or depreciate a person for the performance of an office to which he or she has been called of God. *It does not matter that the criticism*

is true . . . David recognized that we are never justified in any gesture or act against the Lord's anointed. . . . The Holy Ghost will not guide or confirm criticism of the Lord's anointed, or of church leaders, local or general." (pages 24-25)

The *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 18, 1985, summarized Apostle Oaks' address in this manner:

PROVO (UPI) — A Mormon apostle says church leaders should not be criticized because they are "the Lord's anointed" even if that criticism is true—and he also warned members to rely on faith and not historical fact.

The reader will remember that the *Arizona Republic*, October 10, 1993, quoted Apostle Packer as saying that he "talked doctrine and philosophy" when he met with Heinz:

Packer acknowledged Thursday that he met in July with fellow church leader Loren Dunn and Toscano's stake president, Kerry Heinz, to discuss Toscano. He said Heinz requested the meeting.

"We talked doctrine and philosophy," Packer said. "I did not instruct him to hold a disciplinary council and absolutely did not direct a verdict."

In an article entitled, "Mormon Dissident Answers Leaders," Paul Toscano replied to Apostle Packer's statement that he "did not direct a verdict":

I wish to respond with the following clarifications to the Oct. 17 LDS Church statement, particularly as touching the involvement of church general authorities in my excommunication:

Elder Boyd K. Packer has admitted . . . he conferred with my stake president, Kerry M. Heinz, regarding the discipline of my wife Margaret and me.

On the afternoon of July 11, Mr. Heinz called in Margaret alone and told her she must immediately cease all writing, speaking and publishing. This fact shows that Mr. Heinz had taken Elder Packer's statements, made to him earlier that day, as a mandate to act, not merely as a philosophical discussion of church doctrine.

In his July 11 meeting with Margaret, Mr. Heinz explained that he had called her in because his friend, F. Melvin Hammond, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy serving in Mexico, had informed him that "certain general authorities" were inquiring why Mr. Heinz had not earlier disciplined Margaret for her public speaking.

Elder Hammond's call to Mr. Heinz preceded Mr. Heinz's call to Elder Packer. It appears that Mr. Heinz called Elder Packer to protect his own standing and image among his line leaders.

On Aug. 5, in a meeting among Mr. Heinz, our bishop Wilson Martin, Margaret and me, we discussed among other things Margaret's paper . . . and my paper . . .

Margaret and I stated our intention to present these papers on Aug. 12 and 13 at the Sunstone Symposium . . . Mr. Heinz warned us not to speak and specifically told me that, if I criticized any church leader by name, I would be disciplined.

On Sept. 9, in a meeting with Margaret and me, Mr. Heinz stated that he had heard a tape of my Sunstone presentation, that he believed that my criticism of the ideas of some church leaders was apostasy, and that he intended to convene a disciplinary council on me (but not Margaret). I asked Mr. Heinz if he had ever been told by Elder Packer that I should be excommunicated. He said no. I then asked, "But wasn't the fair implication of Brother Packer's words to you that I be disciplined and excommunicated from the church?" He answered, "Yes, that was the fair implication of his words."

This statement shows that even though Mr. Heinz understood that Elder Packer was not directing a verdict, he also understood that Elder Packer wished me to be excommunicated. . . .

In an Oct. 12 *Tribune* article, Elder Dallin Oaks admitted that he told an undefendable untruth to cover Elder Packer's involvement in my excommunication. This means that Elder Oaks thought it more righteous to falsify to protect a fellow apostle than to tell the truth to protect a church member. . . .

Although the church's Oct. 17 statement acknowledges my right to appeal, it does not address the conflict of interest in my case created by President Benson's disability. There exists no functioning First Presidency to hear my appeal.

Of course, the apostles have the authority to act as the First Presidency. But Elder Packer said in an Oct. 17 *Tribune* article that he had obtained the consent of all the apostles before improperly conferring with my stake president. Elder Oaks has stated that this involvement improperly contravened established church procedures.

This impropriety now extends to all the apostles, who are tainted with partiality in this matter and cannot judge me with "equality and justice," as required by *Doctrine and Covenants* 102:16. . . . I have asked for a public re-hearing of my case before the priesthood and membership of the church, in order to defend myself against the charge of apostasy and to show that my excommunication was connived in bad faith, in contravention of the revelations and rules of the Church, and by means unbecoming church leaders. . . .

I only claim the right to worship God according to the dictates of my own conscience and to voice my opinions, my heartfelt concerns and my criticisms without threat of censure or fear of reprisal within the community of the Saints. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 20, 1993)

Although Paul Toscano seems to have raised some legitimate questions regarding his excommunication, it is doubtful that the top leaders of the Mormon Church will

lend a sympathetic ear to his pleas. They know that if they were to overturn the verdict, they could lose a great deal of their control over members of the church.

There Is No Purge?

While Apostle Oaks maintained that there is no orchestrated effort to silence critics in the church and that, "There is no purge," the evidence all seems to point in the opposite direction. Allen Roberts commented as follows in the *Private Eye Weekly*:

Elder Dallin Oaks has attempted to persuade the public that "there is no purge" on the reasoning that six lost people are of no numerical consequence given the church's membership of 8.5 million. Recently excommunicated historian Michael Quinn had this to say about Elder Oaks' notion that it takes more than six people to constitute a purge: "That is like saying there wasn't a purge at Tiananmen Square because only 200 people were killed out of one billion Chinese." Those who consider this more than a numbers game point to Jesus' parable of the 99 and one lost sheep, and the Mormon scripture that "Every soul is great in the eyes of God." The purge is more widespread and far greater in scale than any have heretofore reported. (*Private Eye Weekly*, October 20, 1993)

The Religion Section of the *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 16, 1993, contained an article entitled, "More Stories Point to LDS Leaders As Source of Dissident Crackdown." In this article Peggy Fletcher Stack presented some important information which seems to establish that there is indeed a "purge" going on and that it is being directed from the highest levels of the church:

It was the week that was.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints steadfastly had insisted disciplinary actions taken recently against six dissident members were initiated locally, not at the church headquarters.

Then, Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of Twelve acknowledged he met with one of the dissidents' stake presidents, Kerry Heinz, before the disciplinary council to discuss concerns about lawyer Paul Toscano's doctrinal positions.

And fellow apostle, Dallin H. Oaks, admitted to The Associated Press his denial about his knowledge of the Packer/Heinz meeting was false. . . .

The questions now being asked: What's happening and what's next?

The LDS Church leadership declined to respond this week to written questions from *The Salt Lake Tribune*. . . .

In September, six LDS dissidents were summoned to church disciplinary councils to answer charges of

apostasy. . . . sources told *The Tribune* that church leaders indirectly initiated some of the actions.

Either Elder Packer or his longtime friends in the Quorum of the Seventy, Elders Malcolm Jeppson and Loren C. Dunn, *communicated with most of the stake presidents or bishops* of the six disciplined members. While not confirming or denying specific involvements of general authorities, an LDS spokesman reiterated the mission of the church.

“The Council of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve are united in their responsibility to maintain doctrinal purity of the church,” said Arnold R. Augustin, director of media relations.

One way the church is discovering impure doctrine is by reading newspapers.

In an Oct. 2 interview in the church-owned *Deseret News*, Elder Oaks described how the church’s Strengthening the Members Committee pours over newspapers and other publications to identify members accused of crimes, preaching false doctrine and criticizing leadership. That information is “forwarded” to local leaders “as a way of keeping busy bishops informed.”

Though technically not a directive from church headquarters, most stake presidents receiving such materials would presume the feelings of the general authority.

In the case of Mr. Gileadi, a Bible scholar, the mandate to the stake president was clear.

Elder Jeppson is the Utah South Area President who over sees the Salem Stake in Utah County that excommunicated Mr. Gileadi. He had numerous conversations with Mr. Gileadi’s stake president, Randall Gibb, about the scholar.

Mr. Gibb told Mr. Gileadi in October 1992 to stop writing, speaking and publishing his ideas about the Book of Isaiah and the predictions of the coming Apocalypse. Mr. Gileadi complied and the situation was resolved to Mr. Gibb’s satisfaction.

In June, Mr. Gibb was released as stake president. He believes it was a normal rotation after serving for six years, but sources close to Elder Jeppson say the Seventy wanted more action taken against Mr. Gileadi.

Elder Packer made the final selection of the new stake president, Leann G. Otten. Stake members were surprised at the choice: Mr. Otten had been installed as the stake patriarch only a couple of months earlier. The choice made sense to others, however. Mr. Otten is a member of Brigham Young University’s religion faculty, longstanding opponents of Mr. Gileadi and his theological interpretations.

By August, Mr. Otten had summoned Mr. Gileadi to a disciplinary council.

The verdict—excommunication—was read from the pulpit in every ward in the Salem stake, both in Relief Society meetings for the women and Priesthood meetings for the men. In recent years excommunications normally have not been announced publicly.

In another case, Elder Jeppson urged the stake leaders in Duchesne to take action against Ron Garff, a lifetime Mormon who produced videotapes called “Today Through Armageddon.”

The tapes deal primarily with predictions of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as expressed in Mormon Scripture and by LDS Church prophets and general authorities through speeches at General Conferences.

In September 1992, Mr. Garff was told by his stake president, C. Leland Wright, that Elder Jeppson had some doctrinal objections to the tapes. The stake president read a letter to Mr. Garff, which was *from the general authority*. It stated Elder Jeppson’s general complaints and then instructed Mr. Garff to stop production and distribution of the tapes. Mr. Wright was instructed *not to give Mr. Garff a copy of the letter*.

Mr. Garff repeatedly asked which scriptures or quotations the general authority found objectionable. Mr. Wright didn’t know but said he would find out from Elder Jeppson. Mr. Garff was never told.

“President Wright said many times that he was being pressured from above to take action,” said a member of the Duchesne stake and a friend of Mr. Garff.

The stake president then summoned Mr. Garff to a disciplinary council, without indicating any charges. Mr. Garff was told he could not play his tapes in his defense at the council.

After great anguish, Mr. Garff agreed to discontinue producing the tapes, saying he “valued his membership more than his business.”

To Mr. Garff’s dismay, “President Wright said he was under extreme pressure and the Brethren wanted a court held as scheduled,” said Mr. Garff’s friend.

At the disciplinary council, the tapes were not played, no witnesses testified and no affidavits were presented. Mr. Garff was disfellowshipped and told to “seek out where he was wrong and repent of it.”

In the case of Ms. Whitesides, her bishop, Virgil Merrill of the Salt Lake 11th ward, was contacted repeatedly *by a general authority* at church headquarters about her.

Finally in late August, Mr. Merrill received a full transcript of a television interview she did with KTVX, Channel 4, with passages underlined in yellow. A date for a disciplinary council was set immediately.

Elder Dunn, of the Utah Central Area Presidency, sent a copy of Ms. Anderson’s article, “The Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology,” to her stake leader, Marlin Miller.

The excommunications have attracted the attention of national TV news . . .

Nevertheless, the general authorities are determined to define impermissible public statements by LDS members no matter how much attention they receive in the news media.

In fact, the church leaders drew the battle lines at this month's General Conference.

Elder James E. Faust told the assembled priesthood holders: "Those men and women who persist in publicly challenging basic doctrines, practices and establishment of the church sever themselves from the Spirit of the Lord and forfeit their right to place and influence in the church."

And Apostle Neal A. Maxwell said in reference to erring members, "We [need] them not." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 16, 1993)

While we believe that the Mormon Church and other organizations have every right to excommunicate those who will not conform to their teachings, it is extremely disturbing that the Mormon leaders would work in a clandestine manner to accomplish their purpose. As one of the dissidents has pointed out, the top officials have tried to shield themselves, giving the appearance that they are benign, good-natured individuals, while those on the lower levels have to take all the blame for the excommunications. It may be true that the top leaders of the church felt that it is necessary to remove some members to preserve the church, but they should have had the courage to stand up and accept responsibility for their actions.

Secret Files on Members

As mentioned above, Mormon leaders have been keeping a close eye on those who question "the Brethren." Vern Anderson of The Associated Press reported:

A committee of high Mormon Church officials monitors the statements and writings of members who criticize the church and turns the material over to local ecclesiastical leaders.

The committee "provides local church leadership with information designed to help them counsel with members who, however well-meaning, may hinder the progress of the church through public criticism," church spokesman Don LeFevre acknowledged.

LeFevre's statement came in response to an allegation Thursday by a speaker at the four-day Sunstone Symposium . . .

Brigham Young University Professor Eugene England said that the Strengthening Church Members Committee is keeping secret files on members and using them in a campaign of intimidation.

"I accuse that committee of undermining the church," said England, an English professor. . . .

The committee's secretary is William O. Nelson, LeFevre confirmed, but he declined to identify its chairman or other members from the LDS hierarchy. Nelson, who works in the church's Correlation

Department, served as secretary to Ezra Taft Benson when the church president headed the Council of the Twelve from 1974 to 1985.

Omar Kader remembers Nelson during those years as "someone who always acted like he was speaking for the brethren" and who kept a secret file on him when Kader was an instructor at BYU in the late 1970s.

Nelson was a counselor in the presidency of the church stake in Orem where Kader resided.

"I had no idea who he was," Kader recalled Friday, "until a BYU administrator came to me and said, 'Your [Democratic] political activity has come to the attention of the brethren,' a term for members of the church's hierarchy."

The same BYU official, since deceased, identified Nelson as the source of the file, which was given to church headquarters and to Kader's dean at the church-owned school, Kader said.

Nelson, reached at home late Friday, categorically denied keeping a file on Kader.

"I don't know where this misinformation is coming from but this is a total surprise to me," he said. "I simply don't know the people."

In a symposium presentation, Lavina Fielding Anderson, editor of the independent *Journal of Mormon History*, detailed alleged instances of church intimidation of Mormon intellectuals and feminists, including "an internal espionage system" that maintains secret files on some members.

Anderson spoke of reported cases in which local ecclesiastical leaders—bishops or stake presidents—have conducted "puppet interviews" or punished members on information secretly supplied by high church officials.

"I am bewildered and grieved when my church talks honorably from one script and acts ignobly from another," she said. . . .

The church's often uneasy relationship with its intellectual community has been unusually tense in the past year. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, August 8, 1992)

We first became acquainted with the fact that there was a group known as the "Strengthening Church Members Committee" in 1991 when we broke the story concerning the Pace memo. On July 19, 1990, Glenn Pace, Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the church, sent a memo to this committee regarding his belief that some members of the church were engaging in "Ritualistic Child Abuse" (see *Salt Lake City Messenger*, November 1991). At that time we had no idea that this committee was involved in monitoring church scholars.

About a week after Vern Anderson's story appeared in the newspaper, Peggy Fletcher Stack revealed more concerning the committee:

Mormon Church leaders say they have a scriptural mandate to keep secret files on outspoken members.

In a rare public announcement Thursday, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints compared its Strengthening Church Members Committee to a similar effort in the 1830s designed to fend off violent attacks.

It said the committee is “currently comprised” of James E. Faust and Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Last week, the church acknowledged the existence of the committee . . .

The unsigned statement . . . quoted from section 123 of the church’s *Doctrine and Covenants*: “And perhaps a committee can be appointed to find out [the names of all persons who have had a hand in their oppressions], and to take statements and affidavits; and also to gather up the libelous publications that are afloat.”

LDS historian F. Ross Peterson thinks the church’s statement is “stretching the scriptural justification.”

“Comparing *Sunstone* and *Dialogue* folks to people who were shooting Mormons in 1839 Missouri is unfair,” said Mr. Peterson. Many people associated with the independent LDS publications *Sunstone* and *Dialogue* have been questioned about their loyalty by ecclesiastical leaders.

Two years ago, Mr. Peterson was grilled by his local church authorities about comments to the press concerning changes in the LDS temple ceremony. In the process of the interview, the leaders continually drew photocopied items out of a file and asked him about things he had written decades ago. The file was sitting on the churchmen’s desk, but Mr. Peterson was not allowed to see its contents.

“Files are a strange carryover from a paranoia that resembles McCarthyism,” said Mr. Peterson.

The tactics are nothing new to William O. Nelson, a staff member on the committee, he said.

Mr. Nelson . . . shares President Benson’s John Birch Society politics, according to fellow employees.

LDS Church employees told *The Salt Lake Tribune* the church has kept files on outspoken members for decades.

In the late 1970s, a church librarian, Tom Truitt, told researchers in the LDS historical department that he was “on a special assignment from the brethren” to read all LDS historical articles, underline “objectionable parts” and send them on to the “brethren.” His clipping system was influential in having the one-volume history of the LDS church, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, removed from the shelves at Deseret Book stores and dropped from the reading list at LDS institutes.

Linda Newell, an LDS biographer, said the problem with such a method is that “the church leaders always read everything out of context.”

J. Bonner Ritchie, a professor of organizational behavior at BYU, said the church has been keeping files on church members for more than 30 years. That doesn’t shock him.

“It’s what you do with the information that can be either helpful or destructive,” he said.

Ms. Newell added:

“It’s one thing to know who your enemies are. But it’s quite another thing to label as an enemy church members who love the church, who work in the church, who pay their tithing, who go to the temple, and who only want to help the church.” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, August 14, 1992)

Lavina Fielding Anderson refers to the incident mentioned above in which Ross Peterson was called in because of his public statements:

Ross Peterson’s stake president, Bill Rich, acting on instructions from the area presidency, Elders William Bradford, Malcolm Jeppsen, and Richard P. Lindsay, take away his (expired) temple recommend. In a follow-up meeting the area presidency threatens “further action” and refers to a thick file containing materials dating back to the 1960s on Ross, an active Democrat in Cache Valley for many years. It is only after a flood of letters and phone calls to church headquarters, plus individual lobbying of general authorities by Ross’s friends, that Rich reissues a recommend in June. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, page 33)

On pages 62-63 of the same issue of *Dialogue*, Lavina Fielding Anderson expressed her objections to the church keeping secret files:

Forth, we must protest, expose, and work against an internal espionage system that creates and maintains secret files on members of the church. If there were some attempt to maintain a full and complete record—including the record of church service, the lives influenced for good, and the individual’s spiritual strength—I might feel differently. I might also feel differently if individuals had access to their files. But they are secretly maintained and seem to be exclusively accusatory in their content. I find such an activity unworthy in every way of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Fifth, we must be more assertive in dealing with our leaders. I have had good experiences with my stake president. But I am repelled by reports of puppet interviews, where a stake president or bishop is ordered to interview and/or punish a member on information secretly supplied by ecclesiastical superiors. Such a procedure does not uphold the ideal of confidentiality. Rather it violates the trust that should exist between member and leader, and we should say so. Furthermore the stake president, not the offended general authority, is required to deal with the offender. This process short-circuits the scriptural injunction of face-to-face confrontation . . . Perhaps more importantly such a system isolates and insulates leaders from members. These leaders create hostile stereotypes of members

who are “evil” and “deserve” to be punished and excluded. Similarly members judge and stereotype faceless and voiceless general authorities who are known to them only through punitive intermediaries. Both behaviors are equally damaging.

The experiences related by Mormon intellectuals remind us of a spying operation that was directed against us after we left the Mormon Church. In 1980, we discovered that an employee at the Church Office Building had been spying on us under an assumed name. As far as we can determine, this clandestine operation against us began almost four years earlier when a man by the name of Steven Mayfield wrote us a letter using the alias “Stan Fields.” At the time he wrote this letter Mr. Mayfield was “employed by the FBI in a clerical capacity.” The letter, dated October 11, 1976, was sent from California and contained the following:

Dear Friends in Christ: I am a feollow [*sic*] Ex-Mormon for Jesus, and would like to be added to your mailing list . . . What is it like being “Apostates” in the capitol of the “Saints”? It really fas[c]inates me how anyone could survive as long as you have.

Thank you in advance for answering my questions . . . God’s blessings on you as you do His work, Sincerely in Christ

Steven Mayfield not only assumed an alias, but he opened up a post office box in Pleasant Hill, California (P.O. Box 23114) for the purpose of deception. (It is, of course, a common practice for those engaged in spying operations to cover their tracks by assuming different names and renting post office boxes.) Mr. “Fields,” who professed to be our Christian brother, spied on our operation for about four years and also penetrated a number of groups that were ministering to Mormons. By dishonest means he obtained the names of many Mormons who have questions about their religion. He diligently worked to obtain photographs of critics of the Mormon Church and gathered large files of information. (We, of course, never allowed him access to any of our files or our mailing list.)

In his zeal to provide a good cover for himself, Mr. “Fields” went so far as to claim that his own church was “Satan inspired” (Letter dated July 22, 1978), and even pretended to pass out material critical of the Mormon Church around Temple Square. His nefarious career, however, came to a sudden end in July, 1980, when we discovered his true identity. We also found that he was actually employed at the Mormon Church Office Building in the old Genealogical Department. When we directly confronted him in the Church Office Building with the evidence of his spying activities, he made no attempt to deny the basic charges. Although he claimed he “was not spying for the church,” he acknowledged he had used church equipment to carry out his duplicity.

Steven Mayfield was not only gathering information on “anti-Mormons,” but he was also interested in Mormon homosexuals and those involved in the feminist movement. When we questioned Mayfield, he freely admitted that he had become a member of Mormons For ERA. We wanted a current photograph of Mr. Mayfield, but he did not like the idea. Instead, he offered a xerox copy of his membership card for “Mormons For ERA.” The card, of course, had Mayfield’s alias instead of his real name: “Stan Fields is a Regular member of Mormons for ERA.” The expiration date was 12/31/80.” It was signed by National President “Sonia Johnson.”

Sonia Johnson, who vigorously opposed the Mormon Church’s stand against ERA, had been excommunicated from the church. The battle between Johnson and the church received a great deal of coverage in the national news media. It is little wonder, then, that Mr. Mayfield would try to infiltrate her organization. We were told that Mayfield had a massive collection of material on Sonia Johnson. In a letter to Maurice Barnett, dated December 27, 1979, “Stan Fields” wrote: “P. S. You interested in the SONIA JOHNSON THING?? got a ton of articles on Her. It’s BIG NEWS Here in ZION!!”

In a letter to Paul Carden, dated February 8, 1980, Steven Mayfield made it clear that he wanted more information on Johnson: “Thanks for the Clippings. I got a ton of ‘em here too!! Sonia is getting more publicity than the Black ‘revelation.’ . . . I am interested in getting copies of other articles you might have on her, especially letters etc.” In another letter to Mr. Carden, dated May 7, 1980, Mayfield inquired to see if Carden knew about Johnson’s plans: “What do does? [*sic*] Sonia Johnson & friends have planned for LA Area Conference—the airplane scene or what?”

Although we do not know why Mr. Mayfield would think that Paul Carden would have any inside information regarding Sonia Johnson’s activities, the fact that he would be seeking such material certainly raises a question with regard to his motives. Why would he be so interested in trying to find out exactly what Sonia Johnson was doing? Steven Mayfield has massive files on those who have left or are critical of the church. In our taped interview with Mr. Mayfield, he acknowledged that he had “tons of tapes.” Recently Mayfield boasted that he spent a great deal of time taping the comments of people who called in on radio shows and were critical of Mormonism.

Interestingly, Mr. Mayfield still attends sessions of the Sunstone Theological Symposium and the Mormon History Association. He was, in fact, at the most recent (1993) Sunstone Theological Symposium held in Salt Lake City. It is very difficult to believe that Mayfield would be gathering information on so many people just for his own interest. It seems far more logical to believe that this material is being passed on to Mormon officials.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner
 Modern Microfilm Company
 Salt Lake City, Utah

10-11-76

Dear Friends in Christ: I am a feollow Ex-Mormon for Jesus, and would like to be added to your mailing list, to receive your news-letter. Also would like to receive a list of the materials you sell. Would also be interested in knowing how your work is received among the people of Utah, both Mormon and Non-Mormon. What is it like being "Apostates" in the capitol of the "Saints"? It really fasinates me how anyone could survive as long as you have.

Thank you in advance for answering my questions and you anything you send me. God's blessings on you as you do His work, Sincerely in Christ

Stan Fields
 Stan Fields
 P.O. Box 23114
 Pleasant Hill, California
 94523

 **MORMONS FOR ERA**

Stan Fields

is a *Regular* member of

Mormons for ERA.

12/31/80 *Sonia Johnson*
 Expiration National
 Date President

Mormons for ERA has no official connection with
 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Above: A photograph of a letter in which Steven Mayfield took on the alias "Stan Fields" in an attempt to obtain information from us. Below: A photograph of "Stan Fields" membership card in Mormon for ERA.

Before we exposed Mr. Mayfield in 1980, he was mailing out packets of what he called “goodies” to many people. These packets consisted of newspaper articles and other material which would be of great interest to those critical of Mormonism. This material was duplicated on photocopiers in the Church Office Building. It is evident that Mayfield used these packets of “goodies” as bait so that he could gain intelligence about the activities and plans of organizations he deemed unfriendly to the Mormon Church. He was extremely interested in buttering up people so that they would provide him with names, addresses, photographs and tapes from these groups. He was also very interested in learning where meetings would be scheduled and who would attend. Interspersed between statements like, “I pray for you and that God protects you in this great work” (Letter to Wally Tope, Postmarked July 11, 1980), Fields would sneak in his requests for information. We extract the following from letters Mayfield wrote to us under the alias Stan Fields:

P. S. I understand that Mrs. Tanner recently spoke up in Ogden in two churches there. Can you tell me the exact dates and if it is possible to get tapes of her talks? Do you plan on giving more lectures in the near future? (Letter dated Jan. 23, 1978)

In the supplement you also mentioned lectures (tapes?) by Dr. Martin on Aug 20, 1977 and Dr. Martin/Dr. Davis on July 10, 1977. Could it be possible to obtain copies from you . . . I will gladly send you tapes, cash or even come to your place and copy the lectures if need be. (Letter dated August 30, 1978)

It was good to talk with you on 5/4/79 re: your lecture in Ogden. . . . hope to get tape from the Lelands. . . . I am still interested in borrowing that tape by Dr. Martin . . . (Letter received May 13, 1979)

In letters written to Paul Carden, “Stan Fields” commented:

I would be very interested in receiving your newsletter and in fact would like copies of any back issues (xerox copies or whatever)[.] The reason I would like the back issues is that 1 - I like to use them for reference and 2 - I am a collector of materials, and it allows me to be better acquai[n]ted with my fellow ex-Mormons (& Christians). . . (Letter dated May 7, 1979)

Praise Jesus for you and EMFJ in So. Calif. it was super to get the newsletters etc. from you . . . Still I would like a complete set of them if possible—even if they are photocopies I realize you are busy, so don’t feel I am putting pressure on you. The worth of a soul lost in Mormonism is more important than me and my earthly needs. . . .

At the present time Steven Mayfield is working for Mormon Miscellaneous, an organization dedicated to countering the claims of critics of the Mormon Church. One thing that is peculiar about Mr. Mayfield’s research is that although he has spent a great deal of time and money compiling massive files on individuals and groups for at least seventeen years, he does not seem to publish material on what appears to be his favorite subject. This, combined with other information we have, leads us to believe that his files are used for other purposes.

In a letter dated, August 18, 1980, Roger S. Young of the FBI acknowledged that “Steven L. Mayfield was employed by the FBI in a clerical capacity in our San Francisco Office from July 3, 1973, until June 3, 1977.” This, of course, covered part of the time when Mr. Mayfield was spying on us. The FBI, however, denied any knowledge of Mayfield’s activities with regard to Mormonism: “Mr. Mayfield has assured you that he acted on his own initiative, and his correspondence was in no way authorized or approved by the FBI.”

John Harrington, who was at the time a reporter for the *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, was very interested in the question of whether Mayfield was involved with Church Security. According to Harrington, he asked Mayfield if he had been passing on the material he had obtained in his spying activities to the church. At first Mayfield said he would not comment about the matter, but when he was pressed real hard, he replied, “Yes.” Mr. Harrington was to meet with him the next day to learn the details, but to his disappointment Mayfield disappeared. For a number of days he could not be found at home nor at work.

Recently we received information concerning contacts Steven Mayfield had with Church Security, but we do not feel that it would be wise to make this information available at the present time. If anyone has more information concerning Mr. Mayfield, we would certainly like to know about it. (Send material regarding this subject to Utah Lighthouse Ministry, PO Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110. For an interesting treatment of Steven Mayfield’s spying see our book, *Unmasking A Mormon Spy: The Story of Stan Fields*, written in 1980).

In the book cited above, we wrote the following about spying operations in the church:

We feel that it is possible that the same type of surveillance ex-Mormons were under was also directed against Mormon scholars who are somewhat liberal in their views. Church Historian Leonard Arrington and Reed Durham may have suffered because of this type of thing. In a letter dated August 13, 1978, a man who had defected from the Mormon Church gave this information:

“I had a fellow . . . who works with Cleon Skousen tell me he had been assigned by Ezra T. Benson to investigate Leonard Arrington and other church

historians. Apparently he had been in on the problem with Durham after his speech on “is their [there?] no help for the Widows Son? . . . [he] showed me a file he had on Leonard Arrington.” (*Unmasking A Mormon Spy*, pages 25-26)

Some people felt that we were going too far in our accusations regarding Steven Mayfield. They believed that Mayfield had acted on his own and that there was no real need to take his activities seriously. Now that the Mormon Church itself has acknowledged that it has a special committee (Strengthening Church Members Committee) involved in gathering information on church dissidents, this whole matter needs to be reexamined.

Be this as it may, now that the cover-up has unraveled and church leaders have admitted that there is a committee appointed to gather information on members, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have issued a statement which seems to indicate that the excommunications will continue. In this statement we find the following:

We have the responsibility to preserve the doctrinal purity of the church. We are united in this objective. . . .

The longstanding policy of church discipline is outlined in the *Doctrine and Covenants*: “We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members . . . according to the rules and regulations of such societies . . . They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 134:10). . . .

The general and local officers of the church will continue to do their duty and faithful church members will understand. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 17, 1993)

Although a statement like this, coming at a time of tenseness in the LDS Church, is likely to silence many church members, it could also cause further dissension. In view of the backlash which has already occurred because of the excommunications, it remains to be seen whether church leaders will continue the purge.

One thing that is obvious about the whole affair is that many members of the church are becoming polarized over the issues and the rhetoric is becoming louder. For example, Allen Roberts wrote the following:

All fingers seem to point to Elder Boyd Packer, acting president of the twelve apostles, as the prime force behind what has been called the “Mormon Inquisition.” While Elder Packer, nicknamed “Darth Packer” by the irreverent because of his cold and detached personal style, is a far cry from Torquemada (the 15th century Inquisitor General of the Spanish Inquisition), his speeches, instructions to lower ranking authorities, and direct contacts with local leaders have shown him to be the prime orchestrator of top-level-organized punishment.

Understanding something of Elder Packer’s background is essential to comprehending his “cleansing the church” philosophy. Raised by an authoritarian German father, Packer and his brothers entered the military during World War II instead of serving missions. This military influence had an indelible impact on Packer’s view of the church, according to a close family acquaintance, “He sees the church as an army. He is one of its generals and the members are privates who should march in step and do what they are told without question.” Packer’s fondness for using military metaphors (he attacked historians for providing “ammunition to the enemy”) is well-known. (*Private Eye Weekly*, October 20, 1993)

On October 18, 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* revealed the following:

A threat apparently intended for excommunicated LDS historian D. Michael Quinn was delivered by phone Saturday night to the home of the wrong Michael Quinn.

The baby sitter of Michael D. Quinn answered the phone call . . . Michael D. Quinn, who is a member of the Elders Quorum in his ward in Bountiful, explained:

“The 15-year-old baby sitter answered the phone and a male voice asked for Michael Quinn. She said I could not come to the phone. . . .

“The man told herto give me this message, ‘I’m tired of the statements he’s making about the LDS Church. I’m tired of hearing him criticize the church. He’d better start keeping to himself. If he doesn’t, I have his phone number and I know where he lives. I’ll come get him. I hate him. He stinks.’ Then he hung up.” . . .

Angered by the threat after he spoke to the nonhistorian, Mr. Quinn, the historian, said Sunday:

“Threatening phone calls are a new low in the current *atmosphere of repression* in the LDS Church. I hold Apostle [Dallin H.] Oaks personally responsible for inciting such sick-minded Mormons. Apostle Oaks publicly stated that the feminists and scholars excommunicated in September were actually *wolves*. Utah shepherders kill wolves rather than allow them to wander around and kill sheep. Elder Oaks has increased the paranoia of Mormons toward differences of opinion and dissent. I refuse to remain quiet while . . . Oaks and [Apostle] Boyd K. Packer demonize anyone they don’t agree with. It would have been more Christian of Apostle Oaks to describe excommunicated persons as ‘lost sheep.’ That might have avoided giving encouragement to the selfappointed vigilantes in the Mormon community.”

“The Thinking Has Been Done”

In our book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 183-184, we present a number of statements from Mormon leaders which clearly teach blind obedience to

the authorities of the church. One of the most controversial is a Ward Teachers' Message which appeared in the official organ of the church, *The Improvement Era*, in 1945:

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the "prophets, seers, and revelators" of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. Lucifer . . . wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to "do their own thinking". . . .

When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy. (The Improvement Era, June 1945, page 354)

It should be noted that this notorious Ward Teachers' Message was also printed in the church's newspaper, *Deseret News*, Church Section, on May 26, 1945. It is clear, then, that the Latter-day Saints read this message in both the *Deseret News* and *The Improvement Era*. Moreover, the ward teachers presented this lesson in the homes of the Mormon people.

Mormon apologists, who do not want to face the fact that their leaders require very strict obedience to their counsel, have pointed to a letter written by the eighth president of the church, George Albert Smith, which they feel invalidates the quotation cited above. It was published in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1986, pages 38-39. President Smith was responding to a question by a Unitarian minister who was upset by the article which appeared in the Mormon Church's official organ.

In response, President Smith wrote: "I am pleased to assure you that you are right in your attitude that the passage quoted does not express the true position of the Church."

President Smith's letter raises a very serious question: why did Smith write this letter to a private individual, who was not a member of the church instead of making a public correction in the church's *Improvement Era*? If the article did not really represent the position of the church, Smith should have demanded a retraction. Mormon apologists have been unable to point to any public statement by Smith repudiating the article.

Unfortunately, the Mormon Church has a history of giving out false statements to those who are not members of the church when embarrassing information comes to light. Moreover, there have been times when even members of the church have been deliberately deceived about what was going on by church leaders to protect the image of the church. It was Joseph Smith himself who set the example in this regard.

Mormon Church records clearly show that Joseph Smith was deeply involved in the secret practice of

polygamy while he was in Nauvoo, Illinois. Nevertheless, on May 26, 1844, just a month before he was murdered, he absolutely denied any connection with the practice:

What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and *having seven wives, when I can only find one*. I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, page 411)

Joseph Smith actually had far more than seven wives when he made this statement. Those who will take the time to examine the church's own *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 132, will find that Smith had already received plural wives when he gave the revelation on the subject in 1843. In that revelation we find the following:

And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith [Joseph's wife], receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me . . .

And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man . . . have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified. (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132: 52, 61-62)

For more information on the false statements regarding polygamy by Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders see *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* pages 245-248. After the Manifesto was given in 1890, the top Mormon leaders publicly proclaimed that they were not allowing any more polygamous marriages. These statements, however, were absolutely false (see pages 231-244b of the book cited above). As noted above, D. Michael Quinn found himself in serious trouble with church leaders for revealing the truth about this matter.

The belief that the interests of the Mormon Church are sometimes more important than the truth has continued until the present time. We have already shown that Apostle Dallin Oaks told Steve Benson in private that he knew Apostle Packer met with Kerry Heinz, but when Oaks was asked about the matter by the press, he claimed he had no knowledge about such a meeting.

While we may never know exactly what was on President George Albert Smith's mind when he wrote the letter to the minister, it is obvious that his public silence concerning this serious matter left the Mormon people with the strong impression that they should never question the decisions of the leaders of the church.

The purge which is now going on in the Mormon Church tends to demonstrate that the present leaders of the church really want their people to believe that, "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan—it is God's plan. . . . When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy."

The statement made in *The Improvement Era* in 1945 appears to be the basis for a statement which appeared in the church's publication, *The Ensign*, some thirty-three years later. In an address given by Young Women General President Elaine Cannon in 1978, we find the same type of reasoning:

Tonight President Kimball extends an invitation . . . for all of us as women to follow him as he follows the Savior. . . . He is our leader, in all the world of would-be leaders, who can guide us back to the presence of God. . . . Personal opinions may vary. Eternal principles never do. *When the prophet speaks, sisters, the debate is over.* . . . we emphatically and happily declare, "I will be obedient! I will help strengthen others that they may be so too!" (*The Ensign*, November 1978, page 108)

The following year, 1979, the First Presidency Message, written by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency, endorsed Elaine Cannon's statement as an important truth regarding Mormonism:

Recently . . . Young Women President Elaine Cannon made the following statement: "When the Prophet speaks, . . . the debate is over" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1978, p. 108).

I was impressed by that simple statement, which carries such deep spiritual meaning for all of us. Wherever I go, my message to the people is: Follow the prophet. . . .

It is difficult to understand why there are so many people who fight against the counsel of the prophet. . . .

Latter-day Saints should be able to accept the words of the prophets without having to wait for science to prove the validity of their words. We are most fortunate to have a living prophet at the head of the Church to guide us. . . .

True Latter-day Saints . . . know that the messages of the prophet have come from the Lord and have the concurrence of all the General Authorities . . . Whose side are we on? When the prophet speaks the debate is over. (*The Ensign*, August 1979, pages 2-3)

The reader will notice the close agreement between the statement made in 1945 and the one which appeared in 1979. The 1945 Ward Teachers' Message contained this statement: "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. . . . When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy."

The 1979 First Presidency Message reads: "When the prophet speaks the debate is over." The same basic message—that church members are to give unquestioned obedience to the pronouncements of the church—appears in both statements.

Lavina Fielding Anderson revealed that Gary James Bergera's stake president told him that the prophet's orders should be obeyed even if they were wrong:

Gary James Bergera of Provo, also interviewed, commented: "My stake president told me that *if the prophet told me to do something wrong, I would be blessed if I obeyed.* . . . The stake president, Penrod Glazier, singled out an article about Jerald and Sandra Tanner published in *Seventh East Press* and a news story Gary had co-authored on an anti-Mormon conference in Alta published in *Sunstone Review*. According to Bergera, the stake president "said it was clear in the article that I didn't support the Tanners. . . . But because I interviewed them I came close to supporting them." Bergera's stake president denies that he is acting on orders from anyone else but several years later confirms to another stake president that he was asked to "watch over" Bergera by Elder [Apostle] Mark E. Petersen. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, page 21)

The idea that a person should follow church leaders whether right or wrong was taught very early in the Mormon Church. For example, Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor to President Brigham Young, made these comments in a sermon in the Tabernacle on November 8, 1857:

In regard to our situation and circumstances in these valleys, brethren, wake up! WAKE UP, YE ELDERS OF ISRAEL, AND LIVE TO GOD and none else; and learn to do as you are told, both old and young: learn to do as you are told for the future. And when you are taking a position, if you do not know that you are right, do not take it—I mean independently. *But if you are told by your leader to do a thing, do it. None of your business whether it is right or wrong.* (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, page 32)

On another occasion, Heber C. Kimball, proclaimed:

If you do things according to counsel find they are wrong, the consequences will fall on the heads of those who counseled you, so don't be troubled. (*William Clayton's Journal*, page 334)

Mormon leaders teach that it is impossible for the living prophet to lead members astray. In "Extracts From Three Addresses By President Wilford Woodruff Regarding The Manifesto," published in the church's *Doctrine and Covenants* just after "Official Declaration-1," page 292 of 1989 printing, we find the following:

The Lord will never permit me or any other man who stands as President of this Church to lead you astray. It is not in the programme. It is not in the mind of God. If I were to attempt that, the Lord would remove me out of my place, and so He will any other man who attempts to lead the children of men astray from the oracles of God and from their duty.

In a sermon given in the Tabernacle on February 23, 1862, Brigham Young, the second prophet of the church, declared:

The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and *he will never suffer you to be led astray* if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and *sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray*, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, page 289)

It was, of course, Joseph Smith himself who originally set the pattern of absolute obedience in the church. He, in fact, gave a revelation in which members of the Mormon Church were told to “give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me; For *his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth*, in all patience and faith” (*Doctrine and Covenants* 21:4-5).

On January 29, 1860, Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt made these comments concerning obedience in the church:

Have we not a right to make up our minds in relation to the things recorded in the word of God, and speak about them, whether the living oracles believe our views or not? *We have not the right. . . .*

Do you not perceive that this would in a short time, cause a complete disunion and division of sentiment throughout the whole Church? . . .

God placed Joseph Smith at the head of this Church; God has likewise placed Brigham Young at the head of this Church; and he has required you and me, male and female, to sustain those authorities thus placed over us in their position; and that authority is binding on all Quorums and individuals of Quorums. . . . We are *commanded to give heed to their words in all things, and receive their words as from the mouth of God*, In all patience and faith. . . . I have to conquer my natural disposition and feelings, and bring them to bow to the authority God has instituted. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7, pages 374-375)

On April 9, 1857, Wilford Woodruff, who later became the fourth prophet of the church, also made it clear that when the Mormon leaders speak, “the thinking has been done”:

There are a few thoughts that I wish to present to the congregation touching one principle that has been alluded to by the brethren,—namely, in regard to following the instructions and counsels of those who lead us. . . . I have never in my life known it to fail, that when men went contrary to the counsel of their leaders, either in the days of Joseph or brother Brigham, they always became entangled and suffered a loss by so doing.

Now, whatever I might have obtained in the shape of learning, by searching and study respecting the arts and sciences of men,—whatever principles I may have imbibed during my scientific researches, yet, if the Prophet of God should tell me that a certain principle or theory which I might have learned was not true, I do not care what my ideas might have been, I should consider it my duty, at the suggestion of my file leader, to abandon that principle or theory. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 5, page 83)

On April 8, 1844, the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith exclaimed:

God made Aaron to be the mouth piece for the children of Israel, and He will make me be god to you in his stead, and the Elders to be mouth for me; and if you don't like it, you must lump it. (*History of the Church*, vol. 6, pages 319-320)

This same attitude has continued to plague the church to the present time. The current prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, greatly encouraged this type of thinking. On February 26, 1980, about six years before Benson became president of the church, he gave a speech which provided strong support for the idea that when church leaders speak, “the thinking has been done.” In this address Benson made these comments:

FIRST: *The Prophet is the Only Man Who Speaks For The Lord in Everything. . . .*

SECOND: *The Living Prophet is More Vital to Us Than The Standard Works* [i. e., the Bible, Book of Mormon, *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*]. . . .

THIRD: *The Living Prophet is More Important to Us Than A Dead Prophet. . . .* the most important prophet so far as you and I are concerned is the one living in our day and age to whom the Lord is currently revealing His will for us. Therefore the most important reading we can do is any of the words of the Prophet contained each week in the Church Section of the *Deseret News*, and any words of the Prophet contained each month in our Church magazines. Our marching orders for each six months are found in the General Conference addresses which are printed in the *Ensign* magazine. . . .

Beware of those who would pit the dead prophets against the living prophets, for the living prophets always take precedence.

FOURTH: *The Prophet Will Never Lead The Church Astray. . . .*

FIFTH: *The Prophet is Not Required to Have Any Particular Earthly Training or Credentials to Speak on Any Subject or Act on Any Matter at Any Time.*

Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly

knowledge which God gives to His Prophet on the same subject. They feel the prophet must have the same earthly credentials or training which they have had before they will accept anything the prophet has to say that might contradict their earthly schooling. How much earthly schooling did Joseph Smith have? Yet he gave revelations on all kinds of subjects. We haven't yet had a prophet who earned a doctorate degree in any subject, but as someone said, "A prophet may not have his PhD but he certainly has his LDS." . . . you stand with the prophet and you'll be blessed and time will vindicate you.

SIXTH: *The Prophet Does Not Have to Say "Thus Saith the Lord" to Give Us Scripture.*

Sometimes there are those who haggle over words. They might say the prophet gave us counsel but that we are not obligated to follow it unless he says it is a commandment. But the Lord says of the Prophet, "Thou shalt give heed unto all his *words and commandments* which he shall give unto you." (D&C 21:4) . . .

Said Brigham Young, "I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, *that they may not call scripture.*" (Journal of Discourses 13:95.)

SEVENTH: *The Prophet Tells Us What We Need to Know, Not Always What We Want to Know.* . . .

Said President Harold B. Lee: "You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life . . . Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow . . . Let's keep our eye on the President of the Church." . . . it is the living Prophet who really upsets the world. . . . Some so-called experts of political science want the prophet to keep still on politics. . . .

EIGHTH: *The Prophet is Not Limited by Men's Reasonings.* . . .

NINTH: *The Prophet Can Receive Revelation on Any Matter—Temporal or Spiritual.* . . .

TENTH: *The Prophet May be Involved in Civic Matters.*

When a people are righteous they want the best to lead them in government. Alma was the head of the Church and of the government in the Book of Mormon; Joseph Smith was mayor of Nauvoo and Brigham Young was governor of Utah. . . . Those who would remove prophets from politics would take God out of government.

ELEVENTH: *The Two Groups Who Have The Greatest Difficulty in Following The Prophet Are The Proud Who Are Learned And The Proud Who Are Rich.* . . .

TWELFTH: *The Prophet Will Not Necessarily be Popular With The World or The Worldly.* . . .

THIRTEENTH: *The Prophet And His Counselors Make Up The First Presidency—The Highest Quorum in The Church.* . . .

"FOURTEENTH: *The Prophet And The Presidency—The Living Prophet And The First Presidency—Follow Them And Be Blessed—Reject Them and Suffer.* . . .

I testify that these fourteen fundamentals in following the living prophet are true. If we want to know how well we stand with the Lord them [then?] let us ask ourselves how well we stand with His mortal captain—how close do out [our?] lives harmonize with the words of the Lord's anointed—the living Prophet—President of the Church, and with the Quorum of the First Presidency.

May God bless us all to look to the Prophet and the Presidency in the critical and crucial days ahead is my prayer. ("Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets," by President Ezra Taft Benson, February 26, 1980, pages 2-13, 16; printed in its entirety in our book, *Following The Brethren: Speeches By Mormon Apostles Ezra Taft Benson And Bruce R. McConkie*)

Many people feel that when Ezra Taft Benson gave this controversial address, he was paving the way for the time when he would be Prophet, Seer and Revelator of the church. Lavina Fielding Anderson wrote the following concerning the speech:

26 February 1980. Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve gives a controversial speech . . .

J. D. Williams, a professor in the University of Utah political science department, calls "Benson's speech 'a plea in anticipation' of his becoming church president." Don LeFevre, public communications spokesman, responding to press inquiries; agrees that "Benson's speech accurately portrayed the church's position that a prophet can receive revelations from God on any matter—temporal or spiritual" and that "*the prophet's word is scripture*, as far as the church is concerned, and the living prophet's words take precedence in interpreting the written scripture as it applies to the present." (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1993, pages 13-14)

Although many people felt that Benson was going to clean house when he became the thirteenth president of the church, by the time he arrived at that position he was apparently too old to vigorously contend with those he perceived to be enemies of the church. Nevertheless, his actions in earlier years undoubtedly set up conditions which led to the present purge.

Like Benson and Packer, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie was another General Authority who believed that when the Mormon "leaders speak, the thinking has been done." McConkie made this crystal clear in a letter he wrote to Brigham Young University professor Eugene England. England had apparently made the mistake of believing the Prophet Brigham Young's teaching that God Himself continues to progress in knowledge.

In the *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, page 93, President Young plainly set forth this teaching: "We are now, or may be, as perfect in *our sphere* as God and Angels are in theirs, but the greatest intelligence in existence can

continually ascend to greater heights of perfection.” Wilford Woodruff, who later became the fourth prophet of the church, likewise taught this doctrine: “God himself is increasing and progressing in knowledge, power, and dominion, and will do so, worlds without end.” (*Ibid*, vol. 6, page 120)

Even though Brigham Young and other top leaders of the early Mormon Church dogmatically proclaimed that God was continually progressing in knowledge and other attributes, Bruce R. McConkie strongly protested against Eugene England teaching the same doctrine. Surprisingly, in this remarkable letter Apostle McConkie also admitted that Brigham Young taught that Adam was our God and the ‘father of our spirits,’ and asserted that President Young sometimes taught false doctrine:

This may well be the most important letter you have or will receive. . . . Because I do not engage in controversy or discussion of divergent views . . . I simply dropped your letter in a drawer and did not bother to read it. . . .

Over the months various hearsay reports have come to me indicating that you are presenting and championing the views you sent to me. I have now reached the conclusion that it would be wise for me to depart from my usual custom and send you an answer to your letter. I do so out of respect for your parents . . . and for your own personal well-being . . .

I shall write in kindness and in plainness and perhaps with sharpness. I want you to know that I am extending to you the hand of fellowship though I hold over you at the same time, the scepter of judgment. . . .

On Sunday, June 1, 1980, I spoke . . . in the Marriott Center . . . In that talk I said:

“There are those who say that God is progressing in knowledge and is learning new truths.

“This is false—utterly, totally, and completely. There is not one sliver of truth in it.” . . .

In that same devotional speech I said: “There are those who believe or say they believe that Adam is our father and our God, that he is the father of our spirits and our bodies, and that he is the one we worship.” I, of course, indicated the utter absurdity of this doctrine and said it was totally false.

Since then I have received violent reactions from Ogden Kraut and other cultists in which they have expounded upon the views of Brigham Young and others of the early Brethren relative to Adam. They have plain and clear quotations saying all of the things about Adam which I say are false. The quotations are in our literature and form the basis of a worship system followed by many of the cultists who have been excommunicated from the Church. . . .

Now may I say something for your guidance and enlightenment. If what I am about to say should be taken

out of context and published in *Dialogue* or elsewhere, it would give an entirely erroneous impression and would not properly present the facts. As it happens, I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. He was called of God. . . . He was a mighty prophet. . . . He completed his work and has gone on to eternal exaltation.

Nevertheless . . . Prophets are men and make mistakes. Sometimes they *err in doctrine*. . . . Sometimes even wise and good men fall short in the accurate presentation of what is truth. Sometimes a prophet gives personal views which are not endorsed and approved by the Lord.

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This [i. e., Brigham Young’s teaching regarding Adam], however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. But, be it known, Brigham Young also taught accurately and correctly, the status and position of Adam in the eternal scheme of things. What I am saying is, that Brigham Young, contradicted Brigham Young, and the issue becomes one of which Brigham Young we will believe. The answer is we will believe the expressions that accord with the teachings in the Standard Works.

Yes, Brigham Young did say some things about God progressing in knowledge and understanding, but again, be it known that Brigham Young taught emphatically and plainly, that God knows all things . . . the issue is, which Brigham Young shall we believe . . .

I think you can give me credit for having a knowledge of the quotations from Brigham Young relative to Adam, and of knowing what he taught under the subject that has become known as the Adam God Theory. . . . As for me and my house, we will have the good sense to choose between the divergent teachings of the same man and come up with those that accord with what God has set forth in his eternal plan of salvation. . . . people who teach false doctrine in the fundamental and basic things will lose their souls. The nature and kind of being that God is, *is one of these fundamentals. I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan of salvation*, but Brigham Young also taught the truth in these fields on other occasions. And I repeat, that in his instance, he was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward. What he did is *not a pattern for any of us*. If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us. . . .

Wise gospel students do not build their philosophies of life on quotations of individuals, even though those quotations come from presidents of the Church. Wise people anchor their doctrine on the Standard Works. . . .

If it is true, as I am advised, that you speak on this subject of the progression of God at firesides and

elsewhere, you should cease to do so. If you give other people copies of the material you sent me, with the quotations it contains, you should cease to do so. It is not your province to set in order the Church or to determine what its doctrines shall be. . . . *it is my province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is. It is your province to echo what I say or to remain silent.* You do not have a divine commission to correct me or any of the Brethren. The Lord does not operate that way. If I lead the Church astray, that is my responsibility, but the fact still remains that I am the one appointed with all the rest involved so to do. The appointment is not given to the faculty at Brigham Young University or to any of the members of the Church. . . . those at the head of the Church have the obligation to teach that which is in harmony with the Standard Words. *If they err then be silent on the point and leave the event in the hands of the Lord. . . .*

I advise you to take my counsel on the matters here involved. *If I err, that is my problem;* but in your case if you single out some of these things and make them the center of your philosophy, and end up being wrong, *you will lose your soul.* One of the side effects of preaching contrary to what the Brethren preach is to get a spirit of rebellion growing up in your heart. . . .

Now, I think I have said enough in this letter so that if you are receptive and pliable, you will get the message. If you are not, rebellion will well up in your heart. . . . Perhaps I should tell you what one of the very astute and alert General Authorities said to me when I chanced to mention to him the subject of your letter to me. He said: "Oh dear, haven't we rescued him enough times already."

Now I hope you will ponder and pray and *come to a basic understanding* of fundamental things and that unless and until you can *on all points, you will remain silent on those where differences exist between you and the Brethren.* This is the course of safety. I advise you to pursue it. If you do not, perils lie ahead. It is not too often in this day that any of us are told plainly and bluntly what ought to be. I am taking the liberty of so speaking to you at this time, and become thus a witness against you if you do not take the counsel. (Letter written by Apostle Bruce R. McConkie to Eugene England, dated February 19, 1981; photographically reproduced in our book, *LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine*)

Apostle Bruce R. McConkie's private letter to Eugene England not only provides an insightful look into the confusion found in Mormon theology, but it also shows how one of the most powerful apostles in the Mormon Church misused his authority in an attempt to silence Professor England.

It should also be noted that Apostle Bruce R. McConkie directly contradicted teachings found in President Ezra Taft Benson's speech, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophets." Whereas Benson dogmatically set forth the teaching that the words of the present Prophet, Seer and

Revelator of the church take precedence over the scriptures, McConkie just as strongly maintained that the teachings of the scriptures were the final test of what is true. The reader will remember that Apostle McConkie wrote: "Wise gospel students do not build their philosophies of life on quotations of individuals, *even though those quotations come from presidents of the Church.* Wise people anchor their doctrine *on the Standard Works.*"

Non-Functional Prophets

Mormon leaders maintain that the LDS Church is "the only true church" upon the face of the earth. Moreover, it is claimed that the church is led by direct revelation from God through the "living prophet," who is also the president of the church. No one else can give revelations to the church.

In our book, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, published by Moody Press in 1980, page 439, we pointed out that the Mormon Church had been confronted with some serious problems and that the ability to deal with these issues was complicated by the fact that some of the Mormon leaders were very old. David O. McKay, the ninth prophet, lived to be ninety-six years old. He was in very poor health toward the end of his life and was hardly in any condition to function as prophet, seer and revelator for the church.

Instead of appointing a younger man after McKay's death, church leaders chose Joseph Fielding Smith who was ninety-three years old. Smith lived to be ninety-five, and the leadership of the church passed to Harold B. Lee who was seventy-three years old. Lee lived less than two years and Spencer W. Kimball became president. Kimball lived to be ninety years old, but was in very poor health toward the end of his life and could not really lead the church. Ezra Taft Benson became president of the church in 1985. Although he is now ninety-four he is still sustained as the living prophet.

Because of the way the Mormon hierarchy is structured there seems to be little hope of younger leadership, and even less hope for any new revelations from the "living prophet." The problem is that the president of the Council of the Twelve Apostles always becomes prophet of the church. Since this system is based on seniority, it is almost impossible for younger men to move to the top.

Interestingly, the average age of the last five prophets of the church was eighty-one years when they attained that position. This should be contrasted with the fact that Joseph Smith was only in his twenties when he assumed the role of prophet of the Mormon Church. The present system, therefore, seems to insure that only a man who is already old can become prophet. The effect

of this policy is that those who are appointed prophets are very likely to become senile or in bad health during their presidency.

The Mormon system works in such a way as to bring a man into the highest office in the church at the very time when he is least competent to adequately perform his duties. While the highest leaders of the church have forced many of those on lower levels to retire (i. e., go on emeritus status), they will not retire themselves and the “living prophet” is never removed no matter how incompetent he becomes.

It has become very obvious that at the present time the Mormon Church does not have a functioning “Prophet, Seer and Revelator.” The whole claim that the church is superior to all others because it has a “living prophet” now seems to be in jeopardy. Although church leaders have tried very hard to cover up the seriousness of this situation, the truth is becoming widely known to the Mormon people.

As we have shown above, when Steve Benson publicly questioned the fact that his grandfather was capable of leading the church, he was called in to explain his actions. On July 10, 1993, three months before Steve Benson left the church, Vern Anderson of the Associated Press reported that President Ezra Taft Benson’s grandson was deeply concerned regarding his grandfather’s growing problem of senility:

As Mormon Church President Ezra Taft Benson approaches his 94th birthday, the years have stilled his voice, clouded his mind and raised questions about the faith’s rigid order of succession.

Attired in a sweatsuit and fed by others, Benson spends his days in supervised seclusion in an apartment overlooking Temple Square. He is an infirm retiree in a church that doesn’t officially retire its “prophet, seer and revelator.”

The incongruity struck a 13-year-old Benson greatgrandson the other day as he poured his breakfast cereal: “Dad, why do they call him prophet when he can’t do anything?”

The boy’s father is Steve Benson, a practicing Mormon who won a Pulitzer Prize this year for the political cartoons he draws . . .

His son’s question is one reason Benson decided to speak openly for the first time about his grandfather’s decline. . . .

A more compelling motivator, however, is what he believes are misleading efforts by the church’s hierarchy to preserve an image of a more vibrant Ezra Taft Benson, an image less problematic for the core Mormon belief in a literal prophet of God.

“I believe the church strives mightily to perpetuate the myth, the fable, the fantasy that President Benson,

if not operating on all cylinders, at least is functioning effectively enough, even with just a nod of the head, to be regarded by the saints as a living, functioning prophet,” he said.

That is not the grandfather Benson saw when he visited in March from Arizona, or whom he has seen struggle with encroaching senility during much of his 7-year administration.

“The last time I saw him he said virtually nothing to me,” said Benson, who long enjoyed a close relationship and mutual avidity for current events with the church leader. “He looked at me almost quizzically, as if he were examining me.”

In earlier visits, the former U.S. agriculture secretary . . . could manage at least a word or two. . . .

Benson, who has not spoken in public for more than three years, was already suffering memory loss when he assumed the presidency in 1985 at age 86. His grandson said facing church audiences became a frightening experience for a man who once had relished the pulpit.

While some church “general authorities” are retired at 65, the granting of emeritus status does not extend to the faith’s 12 apostles or three-member First Presidency, the belief being God will choose his leaders and the length of their service.

Steve Benson sees the practice as needlessly impractical.

“I don’t think God would expect us to be bound legalistically or structurally to a system that obviously isn’t working,” he said.

Gordon B. Hinckley, Benson’s first counselor, has taken pains in recent sermons to stress the church does not face a leadership crisis. . . .

A request to interview Hinckley or an apostle about the church’s pattern of succession was declined through spokesman LeFevre, who said in writing Friday that Benson’s counselors “report to him” and “review with him major decisions before those decisions become final.”

But Steve Benson, 39, said it has been some time since his grandfather has been capable of participating in any way in the administration of the church’s affairs, although that is “an image that people deeply, almost desperately want to believe.

“And I’m not demeaning or ridiculing that desire to believe. I’m just saying that what the church is presenting to the members to believe is not factual,” he said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 10, 1993)

The *Arizona Republic*, July 13, 1993, published an article containing the following:

The grandson of the Mormon Church’s president is being battered and praised by Mormons for revealing last week that the aged Ezra Taft Benson cannot physically or mentally lead the Church . . . The *Arizona Republic*’s political cartoonist, has received numerous telephone calls from Mormons, who clearly are split on the issue. . . .

One woman left a message for Benson saying that although he spoke the truth, he never should have made his opinions public.

Some members in wards . . . prayed Sunday for their church leader, affirming their faith in his leadership despite Benson's statements that his grandfather, at 93, is "not in the loop" and cannot attend to church affairs.

Because Mormons believe that their church president can receive messages directly from God, the mental state of their leader is crucial.

Meanwhile, a spokesman from national church headquarters in Salt Lake City seemed to backpedal Monday, saying Benson's assessment of his grandfather's physical and mental capacity is not new to "the typical, faithful Mormon."

Don LeFevre, spokesman for the 9 million-member church, said . . . that Benson's counselors review major church decisions with the prophet at his home, where he must be tended with round-the-clock care.

Steven Benson said the notion that the president's two counselors, Gordon Hinckley and Thomas Monson, could review anything with his grandfather is nonsense.

"The debate is so emotional because it is a matter of trust," Benson said. "If the church hides the truth about non-functional prophets, members then may ask, 'What else is the church hiding?'"

In an article appearing in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 21, 1993, Steve Benson was quoted as saying:

"The point I was trying to make is that President Benson is the prophet in title only, not in role. President Benson is not carrying out his role. He can't," the grandson, an active Mormon, said Tuesday.

The fact that President Benson's counselors did not have a great deal of confidence in his ability to function became evident when documents filed with the state of Utah were examined by the *Salt Lake Tribune*:

Documents on file with the state of Utah are strong evidence that the parent corporation of the Mormon Church no longer is being directed by its president, Ezra Taft Benson.

Two certificates of authority filed in May 1989 gave absolute control over the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to counselors Gordon B. Hinckley and Thomas S. Monson.

It is the first time since the corporation was founded 70 years ago that anyone other than the church president has obtained total authority over Utah's most powerful corporation.

The documents, at the Utah Department of Commerce, were signed with a machine that duplicates the signature of 94-year-old President Benson. They were filed six months before President Benson . . . made his last public speech.

Church leaders said this week the filings and the use of a signature machine were routine, and done with President Benson's approval. . . .

The Corporation of the President was created in 1923 by then-church President Heber J. Grant. Today, the corporation owns all church assets—including a multibillion-dollar portfolio of financial and property holdings.

Each of the six church presidents ordained since Grant delegated limited powers to other church officials . . .

But for the first time, the 1989 documents gave "plenary"—or absolute—power to the two counselors.

Entitled "Certificates of Authority" and dated May 23, 1989, the documents say Presidents Hinckley and Monson can keep those complete powers—even if President Benson becomes disabled or is determined by a court to be incompetent. . . .

Although the 1989 documents are the only ones ever filed with the state that confer plenary power over the corporation to the two counselors, the church made no announcement of the change. It has continued to portray President Benson as the ultimate power behind church affairs.

Mr. LeFevre confirmed that a signature machine was used at President Benson's direction to execute the documents. . . .

Fran Fish, notary public administrator for the state Department of Commerce, said signatures written by machine are legal—as long as the original signatures on which the machine copies are based is written by the signator and duly witnessed.

Still, Ms. Fish . . . said use of a signature machine on state corporate filings "is certainly out of the norm." . . . Steve Benson . . . has said that his aging grandfather no longer possesses the mental faculties to handle church affairs.

"The church has misrepresented the condition of President Benson and stated flatly that his role as prophet has in no way been impeded," Steve Benson said this week. "My grandfather has become a *storefront mannequin* while the business of the store is conducted behind closed doors."

He said a signature machine has replaced his grandfather's hand on all personal and family correspondence." "Evidently," Steve Benson said, "the signature machine had not been programmed to sign, 'Grandpa.'" (*Salt Lake Tribune*, August 15, 1993)

Mormon Church leaders appear to be on the horns of a dilemma with regard to their non-functional prophet, Ezra Taft Benson. On the one hand, it is maintained that only a revelation given to the prophet could change this extraordinary policy of the church. On the other hand, however, President Benson is obviously incapable of giving such a revelation. Vern Anderson observed: "The strict apostolic succession—which church spokesman

Don LeFevre said would require a revelation from “the Lord to his prophet” to change—has fostered a gerontocracy” (*Salt Lake Tribune*, July 10, 1993).

While the present situation with regard to President Benson must be very perplexing to the General Authorities of the Mormon Church, a worse scenario might be if the apostle with the most seniority were already mentally incompetent when installed as prophet. In view of the way medical advancements are lengthening people’s lives, it is even conceivable that a “prophet” might live for a quarter of a century without contributing anything to the church.

It is apparent that the Mormon Church’s claim to be led by a “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator,” is not substantiated by the facts. The Bible relates that the prophet Moses lived to be extremely old, but it goes on to say that “his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). We certainly cannot say this of most of the recent prophets of the Mormon Church. While it is claimed that these men are “living prophets,” they seem to become mere figureheads as they advance in age.

The Mormon document forger Mark Hofmann put the “living prophet,” President Spencer W. Kimball, to the acid test in the 1980’s and demonstrated that the so-called “*living oracles*” are just as fallible as other men. At a time when revelation was really needed in the church, Kimball seemed to be completely oblivious to what was really going on. President Kimball was unable to detect that the documents Hofmann was selling to the church were forgeries.

Two of the documents even contained revelations purportedly written by Joseph Smith himself, yet Kimball had no knowledge that they were spurious. After President Kimball died, his successor, the Mormon Prophet Ezra Taft Benson, had no spiritual insight regarding the matter. He failed to realize that the documents were forgeries, and church officials made it very difficult for investigators to examine the documents.

Moreover, during the criminal investigation that followed after Hofmann killed two people, the Mormon Church discovered that it had a key piece of evidence, part of the real McLellin Collection, in its vault. This would have provided important evidence of fraud on Mark Hofmann’s part because he was trying to sell church leaders items they already had in their own vault! Instead of coming forth with information regarding the collection,

church leaders decided to suppress this evidence from investigators. Mormon Church official Richard Turley has acknowledged that this matter was brought to the attention of the First Presidency, and Apostles Boyd K. Packer and Dallin H. Oaks. While one would assume that only the “living prophet” could make such an important decision, we do not have any hard evidence that Benson made the decision to cover up the existence of the collection. If, however, Ezra Taft Benson was responsible for the cover-up, it was a terrible decision which later caused embarrassment to the church. On the other hand, if his counselors in the First Presidency and Apostles Oaks and Packer did not consult with him, it would tend to provide further evidence that the “living prophet” is only a figurehead. For much more information regarding this matter see our book, *The Mormon Church and the McLellin Collection*, pages 1-16.

The psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung made some very important observations that should be considered by all people who believe the teaching, “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done”:

All mass movements, as one might expect, slip with the greatest ease down an inclined plane represented by large numbers. Where the many are, there is security; what the many believe must of course be true; what the many want must be worth striving for, and necessary, and therefore good. In the clamor of the many there lies the power to snatch wish-fulfillments by force; sweetest of all, however, is that gentle and painless slipping back into the kingdom of childhood, into the paradise of parental care, into happy-go-luckiness and irresponsibility. All the thinking and looking after are done from the top; to all questions there is an answer; and for all needs the necessary provision is made. The infantile dream state of the mass man is so unrealistic that he never thinks to ask who is paying for this paradise. The balancing of accounts is left to a higher political or social authority, which welcomes the task, for its power is thereby increased; and the more power it has, the weaker and more helpless the individual becomes. (*The Undiscovered Self*, pages 70-71)

As we have shown, Mormon leaders tell their people that “When the prophet speaks the debate is over.” We feel that this type of absolute obedience can be very dangerous. In Jeremiah 17:5 we find this admonition: “*Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord.*”



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