

# THE MORMON WORKER



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*"I Teach Them Correct Principles and They Govern Themselves"- Joseph Smith*

## 12Th Article Of Faith: Sustaining The "LAW"

by Ron Madson

*"I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of Heaven commanded me to do what I did."*

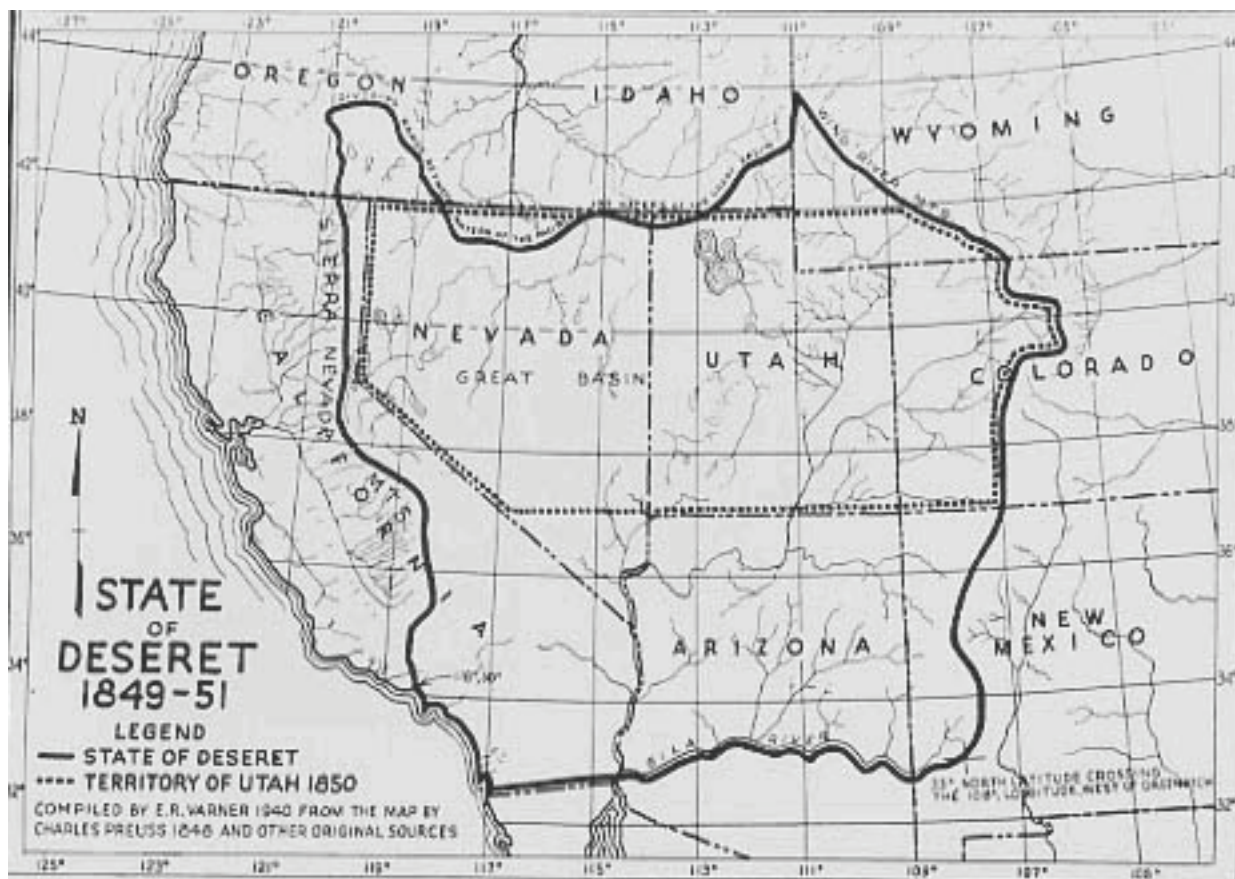
Wilford Woodruff<sup>1</sup>

In 1842 the editor of the Chicago Democrat newspaper, John Wentworth, wrote Joseph Smith and requested that Joseph provide the paper with information concerning the Mormons. In response to this request, Joseph wrote what is now called the "Wentworth Letter."<sup>2</sup> The letter published in the Nauvoo Times and Seasons on March 1, 1842 contained a brief history of the church, and thirteen doctrinal statements later referred to as the "Articles of Faith."

The Articles of Faith have become the universally accepted "Cliff Notes" of the Mormon faith--memorized by all primary children, printed on missionary tracts, and universally accepted as the essential creed governing our church.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith states a general rule as to our relationship to earthly governments: "We believe

in being subject to kings, presidents,



rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." This is further reinforced in a revelation given eleven years earlier: "Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land. Wherefore, be subject

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"The 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith"

## Have We Forgotten Our Past?

by Ricky Cheney

At the commencement of the First World War, many people around the globe, including prominent anar-

chists, held differing views regarding participation in the War. Inside any "ism" there are at the very least nuances of thought. Among the anarchists, Kropotkin, Jean Grave, Monatte, and Nettlau all took stances supporting their respective countries' involvement in the war, while Malatesta, Berkman, and Emma Goldman remained more consistent with their anarchist ideals. Malatesta wrote an article entitled "Anarchists Have Forgotten Their Principles" in which he reminded his colleagues: "We have always preached that the workers of all countries are brothers, and that the enemy—the 'foreigner'—is the exploiter, whether born near

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"Forgotten Our Past"

## Yes, The Gospel of Redistribution

By Forest W. Simmons

This essay was inspired by a thought provoking article in the March 2009 edition of the Mormon Worker entitled, "The Gospel of Redistribution?" by Matthew Wapsett, Ph.D, and by the provoked thoughts of the many people that posted their comments to the online edition at <http://themormonworker.org/articles/issue6/the-gospel-of-redistribution.php>

Most of the comments were in favor of voluntary redistribution of wealth to the less fortunate in the

form of private charity, but were against government welfare on the grounds that (1) government funds are acquired through compulsory taxation, and (2) government intervention causes more problems than it solves, including dependency of recipients. If government would only get out of the way, men of good will would have more means and incentive to step in and solve the problem without all of the bungling and waste of a faceless bu-

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# Why Torture is Evil

by William Van Wagenen

Most defenders of torture rely on the argument that torture saves (American) lives, and that torture is therefore justified and moral. Such defenders often cite fantastic scenarios similar to the following: Imagine a terrorist group is planning to detonate a nuclear bomb in the middle of a major US city. Now imagine that one of the terrorists is captured by the CIA. The terrorist won't reveal the information needed to stop the attack so he must be tortured until he gives up the information, allowing the CIA to stop the attack and save hundreds of thousands of lives. Such defenders then pose the question, "How could it be wrong to torture one evil person in order to save hundreds of thousands of lives?"

In other words such defenders cite as their "proof" that torture is moral an imaginary scenario which has never occurred and which has no basis in reality. In fact, US Supreme court justice Antonin Scalia defended the use of torture at a legal conference in Canada in this way by specifically referencing the popular television drama "24", in which the fictional US special agent Jack Bauer routinely tortures terror suspects to save American lives in situations similar to that described above. Scalia stated:

"Jack Bauer saved Los Angeles . . . He saved hundreds of thousands of lives . . . Are you going to convict Jack Bauer? . . . Say that criminal law is against him? 'You have the right to a jury trial?' Is any jury going to convict Jack Bauer? I don't think so."<sup>[1]</sup>

Recently, former Vice President Dick Cheney used essentially this rationale to defend the Bush administration's use of enhanced interrogation techniques, such as water boarding, stress positions, sleep deprivation, and exposure to extreme temperatures, which the International Committee of the Red Cross says constitute torture.<sup>[2]</sup>

Cheney stated that, "I am convinced, absolutely convinced, that we saved thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of lives," by using such techniques and called the federal government's efforts to prevent terror attacks since 2001 "one of the greatest success stories of American intelligence."<sup>[3]</sup>

Sadly, Cheney's claim about the virtues of torture is no more connected to reality than is Scalia's. Cheney's defense of torture rests on three false and/or highly questionable assumptions: Firstly, that saving lives was the Bush administration's primary purpose for introducing the

use of torture; secondly that the intelligence gained by torture actually prevented attacks on the American homeland; thirdly, that torture actually saved American lives generally.

This first assumption is incorrect because much of the torture Cheney is now retrospectively defending had nothing to do with saving American lives, but rather with obtaining evidence that a link existed between Al-Qaeda and the Iraqi government. Colonel Lawrence B. Wilkerson, former chief of staff of the Department of State during the term of Secretary of State Colin Powell, reports that:

"Likewise, what I have learned is that as the administration authorized harsh interrogation in April and May of 2002--well before the Justice Department had rendered any legal opinion--its principal priority for intelligence was not aimed at pre-empting another terrorist attack on the U.S. but discovering a smoking gun linking Iraq and al-Qa'ida. So furious was this effort that on one particular detainee, even when the interrogation team had reported to Cheney's office that their detainee "was compliant" (meaning the team recommended no

*Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.*

*- Hebrews 13:3*

more torture), the VP's office ordered them to continue the enhanced methods. The detainee had not revealed any al-Qa'ida-Baghdad contacts yet. This ceased only after Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, under waterboarding in Egypt, "revealed" such contacts. Of course later we learned that al-Libi revealed these contacts only to get the torture to stop. There in fact were no such contacts."<sup>[4]</sup>

Such a link was crucial to find in order to implicate the Iraqi regime in the 9/11 attacks, which could then provide a justification for the US to invade Iraq and install a new pro-US government, something which prominent members of the Bush administration had been advocating since at least 1998, and for reasons that had nothing to do with international Islamic terror groups.<sup>[5]</sup>

Under duress of torture, Al-Libi fabricated the story that the Iraqi government trained Al-Qaeda operatives in chemical and biological warfare. This incorrect informa-

tion was cited by President Bush in a speech on Oct 7, 2002 and by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his famous speech at the United Nations on February 5, 2003, and proved crucial in giving the Bush administration sufficient domestic and international support to launch the invasion of Iraq in mid-march 2003.<sup>[6]</sup>

So torture after 9/11 had more to do with starting a new war in which further American lives would be lost than with saving Americans from future terror attacks.

The second assumption underlying Cheney's argument, that the intelligence gained by torture has prevented attacks against the American homeland, is highly questionable. Though Cheney claims that, "Every senior official who has been briefed on these classified matters knows of specific attacks that were in the planning stages and were stopped by the programs we put in place,"<sup>[7]</sup> he has presented no evidence to confirm this.

In contrast, a May 2004 report by the CIA inspector general noted that the enhanced interrogation program produced some useful information but that "it is difficult to determine conclusively whether interrogations have provided information critical to interdicting specific imminent attacks," according to a declassified

document. "Imagine that the system would not have leaked such a story. It would have been leaked in a New York minute."<sup>[9]</sup> Until such evidence is produced, it is impossible to know that any attacks on the American homeland have been prevented.

What is clear and indisputable, however, is that Cheney's torture policy has directly led to the deaths of thousands of US servicemen and women, thus refuting the third assumption underlying Cheney's claim, namely that torture has saved American lives. Let me explain how this is the case: Once the US had successfully occupied Iraq, the US Army began to meet resistance from a variety of armed groups, whose stated goal was to expel the American occupiers.<sup>[10]</sup> Rather than order the withdrawal of the US Army from Iraq and remove US troops from harm's way (the obvious choice if preserving American lives is one's priority), the Bush administration remained determined to establish a long-term military presence in the country. In order to defeat the fledgling Iraqi insurgency, which targeted US troops with road side bombs, mortars, and sniper fire, it now became crucial to gather intelligence that could prevent such attacks. Because US intelligence gathering was poor, the US military resorted to the wide-scale round up and interrogation of thousands of adult Iraqi males (as well as some women and children),<sup>[11]</sup> 70% to 90% of which were arrested by mistake, according to US intelligence officials.<sup>[12]</sup>

US interrogators in Iraq and Afghanistan soon began using many of the enhanced interrogation techniques pioneered in Guantanamo and the secret CIA prisons on these detainees.<sup>[13]</sup> According to a report written by former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, the "augmented techniques for Guantanamo migrated to Afghanistan and Iraq where they were neither limited nor safeguarded,"<sup>[14]</sup> resulting in the torture of Iraqi and Afghan detainees

**Continued on page 3 as "Torture"**

## A note to our readers

The Mormon Worker is an independent newspaper/journal devoted to Mormonism and radical politics. It is published by members of the LDS Church. The paper is modeled after the legendary Catholic Worker which has been in publication for over seventy years.

The primary objective of The Mormon Worker is to meaningfully connect core ideas of Mormon theology with a host of political, economic, ecological, philosophical, and social topics.

Although most contributors of The Mormon Worker are members of the LDS church, some are not, and we accept submissions from people of varying secular and religious backgrounds.

The opinions expressed in The Mormon Worker are not the official views of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In solidarity,  
The Mormon Worker



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## “Torture”

in a fashion far more brutal than the torture methods officially endorsed by top Bush Administration officials.

Methods of abuse in Iraq and Afghanistan have included stuffing a detainee into a sleeping bag, wrapping him with electrical cord, and suffocating him to death,<sup>[15]</sup> covering a detainee’s head with a plastic bag, then shackling him “in a crucifixion-like pose that inhibited his ability to breathe” until he died of asphyxiation,<sup>[16]</sup> and until the guard on duty was surprised the detainees’ arms “didn’t pop out of their sockets;”<sup>[17]</sup> beating a detainee “with a flashlight so severely that he eventually died from his injuries;”<sup>[18]</sup> stripping detainees naked and forcing them to masturbate,<sup>[19]</sup> “[b]reaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees; pouring cold water on naked detainees; beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair; threatening male detainees with rape; allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell; [and] sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light.”<sup>[20]</sup>

US Army interrogator Tony Lagouranis, who served in various US prisons throughout Iraq, including in the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, described how the rationale of torturing prisoners to save American lives led US interrogators to torture not only suspected insurgents, but also regular Iraqis known to be innocent as well:

“Once introduced into war, torture will inevitably spread because the ticking bombs are everywhere. Each and every prisoner, without exception, has the potential to be the one that provides the information that will save American lives. So if you accept the logic that we have to perform torture to prevent deaths, each and every prisoner is deserving of torture. In a situation like Iraq, it wasn’t just a few abstract lives that might be saved somewhere, at some future time. The mortars came almost every day. The life in question was my very own. Once we accepted that any prisoner might be holding information that could save lives, we gladly used everything in our tool box on everyone. This resulted in the expansion of the class of people who could be tortured. Now it included people who had been picked up for questioning but were not being suspected of being insurgents, and it included people who were picked up on hunches—people against whom we had no solid evidence—and it included relatives of our real targets. Again, I see the

spread of torture to these groups as natural and inevitable. At the time, I barely noticed it happening.”<sup>[21]</sup>

Public outrage among Iraqis, as well as Arabs from neighboring countries, as a result of the US use of torture, caused the ranks of those wishing to fight the American occupiers to swell. This in turn caused the number of attacks against US troops in Iraq to increase, leading to higher American casualties. Matthew Alexander, who led an interrogations team assigned to a Special Operations task force in Iraq in 2006, and who was responsible for obtaining the intelligence which led to the US military killing the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, described how the use of torture contributed to an *increase* in US military deaths in Iraq:

“I learned in Iraq that the No. 1 reason foreign fighters flocked there to fight was the abuses carried out at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. Our policy of torture was directly and swiftly recruiting fighters for al-Qaeda in Iraq. The large majority of suicide bombings in Iraq are still carried out by these foreigners. They are also involved in most of the attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq. It’s no exaggeration to say that at least half of our losses and casualties in that country have come at the hands of foreigners who joined the fray because of our program of detainee abuse. The number of U.S. soldiers who have died because of our torture policy will never be definitively known, but it is fair to say that it is close to the number of lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001. How anyone can say that torture keeps Americans safe is beyond me -- unless you don’t count American soldiers as Americans.”<sup>[22]</sup>

Alexander’s view is reinforced by the 2006 National Intelligence Estimate (abbreviated as NIE, it is a report representing the consensus view of the 16 US intelligence agencies, including the CIA). The New York Times reported that the NIE concluded that “the American invasion and occupation of Iraq has helped spawn a new generation of Islamic radicalism and that the overall terrorist threat has grown since the Sept. 11 attacks,” while previous drafts of the NIE “describe actions by the United States government that were determined to have stoked the jihad movement, like the indefinite detention of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal.”<sup>[23]</sup>

So not only has torture not saved any American lives, it has actually led to more Americans being killed and increased the overall terrorist threat to America. But what was the alternative? After 9/11, did the Bush Administration have any other choice? Yes. Rather than announc-

ing that the protections of the Geneva Conventions did not apply to US-held detainees and introducing enhanced interrogation techniques, thus opening the door to even more heinous forms of torture, Cheney and his colleagues could have dealt with the problem of terrorism by pursuing the criminals who carried out the 9/11 atrocities using the police and interrogation methods of the FBI. They could have refrained from invading Iraq, a country which had never attacked US soil and had no part in 9/11, and thereby avoided killing tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians. Even after the invasion of Iraq had taken place, the administration could have withdrawn US troops from that country once resistance to the US occupation began, and after it became clear that most Iraqis did not welcome the US presence. Instead, they chose to impose their will on Iraqis by torture and violence, and put Americans in harms way in the process.

But what if you really could save hundreds of thousands of lives by torturing a terrorist, and thereby stop a massive, imminent attack on an American city? If such a scenario were to present itself, it would be reasonable to say that torturing that person would be moral. However, because such a scenario exists only in our imaginations, the question of whether the use of torture is moral in such a circumstance is irrelevant. Instead, we can be sure that anyone using such a rationale to endorse the use of torture in the real world is doing so to justify a policy that will, in reality, lead to the torture of hundreds if not thousands of innocents, as has actually occurred in Iraq. That is why torture is illegal under international law under all circumstances,<sup>[24]</sup> and why Tony Lagouranis, the Army interrogator quoted above and who himself participated in torturing Iraqi detainees, feels that, “If you don’t include torturing helpless prisoners in your definition of evil, your definition of evil is meaningless.”<sup>[25]</sup>

1. “What would Jack Bauer do?” By Colin Freeze, *Globe and Mail*, June 16<sup>th</sup> 2007.

2. ICRC Report on the Treatment of Fourteen “High Value Detainees” in CIA Custody by the International Committee of the Red Cross, 43 pp., February 2007. Mark Danner quotes the report as follows: “The allegations of ill-treatment of the detainees indicate that, in many cases, the ill-treatment to which they were subjected while held in the CIA program, either singly or in combination, constituted torture. In addition, many other elements of the ill-treatment, either singly or in combination, constituted cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment.” See “The Red Cross Torture Report: What It Means,” by Mark Danner, *New York Review of Books*, April 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, Volume 56 Number 7.

3. “Bush-Era Intelligence Saved ‘Thousands,’ Cheney Says.” *Fox News.com*, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2009

4. “The Truth About Richard Bruce Cheney,” by Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, *The Washington Note*, May 13<sup>th</sup> 2009. An army psychologist involved in interrogating prisoners at Guantanamo Bay made the same claim as Wilkerson. See: “Report: Abusive tactics used to seek Iraq-al Qaida link.” By Jonathan S. Landay, *McClatchy Newspapers*, April 21, 2009.

5. Letter to President William Clinton, Project for the New American Century, January 29, 1998.

6. Newsweek, “Al-Libi’s Tall Tales,” by Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

7. “Remarks by Richard B. Cheney,” *American Enterprise Institute*, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2009.

8. “CIA Fights Full Release of Detainee Report,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 2009.

9. “Former CIA Station Chief Challenges Claims that Torture Thwarted Terror Attacks.” *The Raw Story*, June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009.

10. Interview with Izzat Al-Douri, “The Resistance Speaks,” *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, 19 - 25 June 2008 Issue No. 902. “Iraqi Insurgents Offer Peace in Return for US Concessions,” by Robert Fisk, *The Independent*, February 9, 2007.

11. According to the Brookings Institution, by November 2004 US and Coalition forces were holding roughly 8,300 detainees. By December 2007, the number of Iraqi detainees in US custody had reached 26,000, with another 24,000 detainees in Iraqi Government custody. See “Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq,” *Brookings Institution*, May 28 2009.

12. See “Red Cross: Iraq abuse ‘tantamount to torture,’” *Associated Press*, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2004.

13. “The Bush administration approved a set of expanded techniques for a select set of prisoners at Guantanamo, and these techniques soon migrated to Iraq.” See Lagouranis, Tony. “Fear Up Harsh: An Army Interrogators Dark Journey Through Iraq.” *Nal Caliber*, 2007, pg. 245.

14. Quoted in “Torture Team: Rumsfeld’s Memo and the Betrayal of American Values,” by Philippe Sands, *Palgrave Macmillan*, New York, 2008, pg. 152.

15. “Command’s Responsibility: Detainee Deaths in U.S. Custody in Iraq and Afghanistan,” by Hina Shamsi, *A Human Rights First report*, February 2006, pg. 2.

16. Jane Mayer, “A Deadly Interrogation,” *The New Yorker*, Nov. 14, 2005.

17. “Iraqi Died While Hung From Wrists,” By Seth Hettner, *Associated Press*, February 17, 2005.

18. Jane Mayer, “A Deadly Interrogation,” *The New Yorker*, Nov. 14, 2005.

19. “Videos Amplify Picture of Violence,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 2004.

20. Selection from the Taguba Report, as quoted in “Torture at Abu Ghraib: American Soldiers Brutalized Iraqis. How Far up Does the Responsibility Go?” by Seymour Hersh, *The New Yorker*, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2004. For instances of a female and a child being raped in Abu Ghraib, see “Abu Ghraib Abuse Photos Show Rape,” *Telegraph (UK)*, May 28<sup>th</sup> 2009.

21. *Fear Up Harsh*, pg. 246.

22. “I’m Still Tortured by What I Saw in Iraq.” By Matthew Alexander, *Washington Post*, November 30, 2008.

23. 2006 National Intelligence Estimate, reported by Mark Mazetti, “Spy Agencies Say Iraq War Worsens Terrorism Threat,” *New York Times*, September 24, 2006. Similarly, Sudha Ramachandran writing in *Asia Times Online* summarizes a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) as follows, “The CSIS report says that 85% of those interrogated were not on any watch list of known terrorists. ‘The vast majority of Saudi militants who entered Iraq were not terrorist sympathizers before the war,’ the report states. Most of the Saudi fighters were ‘radicalized almost exclusively by the coalition invasion ... Most of the Saudi militants were motivated by revulsion at the idea of an Arab land being occupied by a non-Arab country. These feelings are intensified by the images of the occupation they see on television and the Internet ... the catalyst most often cited [in interrogations] is Abu Ghraib, though images from Guantanamo Bay also feed into the pathology,’ the CSIS study points out.” See “Trashed: Some Myths About Iraq,” *Asia Times Online*, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

24. United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. See article 2: “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political in stability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”

25. *Fear Up Harsh*, pg. 232.



# Three Good Reasons Not to Join the Military

by Tariq Khan

## Recruiters lie. Don't be fooled.

Most of the counter-recruitment literature I've come across focuses on economic issues. This is appropriate, as most of the recruiter's main selling points have to do with "money for college" and "career opportunities." Most people who enlist in the military do it for economic reasons. It is true that the recruiter's promises of education and economic prosperity often go unfulfilled in the lives of many suckers duped by these well-trained military hucksters. However, I maintain that the best reasons to stay out of the military are not based on economics, but on issues of individuality, human rights, and freedom.

An effective tool in the recruiter's hands is his appeal to patriotism, "freedom fighting," and adventure. Yesterday I received in the mail a letter and brochure from the Army National Guard. Even though they've never met me, they want me to join their ranks. The information packet is overwhelmingly done in dark shades of blue. Any good PR expert can tell you that many people associate dark blue with honesty and strength, which is why so many politicians, both democrat and republican, use this color for their pamphlets, stickers, signs, television commercials, and other propaganda.

The brochure is full of nationalistic images that put Goebell's (the infamous Nazi propagandist) work to shame: the trustworthy, loyal, clean-cut soldiers, both men and women and of diverse racial descent; the proud freedom fighter standing tall with a flag waving in the background; the adventurous troopers aiming their guns; the totally extreme cool dudes sliding down ropes out of a helicopter and shouting, "hooah!" It's got it all.

And the language! It's like a trip in a time machine back to the 1950's. "CITIZEN. SOLDIER. DEFENDER OF FREEDOM. Your country needs you . . . to help protect those who cannot protect themselves . . . now is the time to stand up and be counted." The only difference is that they've replaced the word

communism with the new demon, terrorism. "THE MOST IMPORTANT WEAPON IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM. YOU. BE ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST POWERFUL WEAPONS." The envelope includes a typed letter from a military representative beginning with the words, "Dear American, you may never have another chance like this one. To become a force against terror and other forces that threaten America's way of life." Wow. I didn't know that America, whatever that's supposed to mean, has a way of life. I will not be filling out these forms or contacting the Army recruiter for more information, but if I were to write back, my letter would look something like this:

## Dear deceitful recruiter,

*I am not a weapon. I am a human being. My guitar is a weapon, a*

***"Know that an army is an instrument for killing, and that the enrollment and management of an army-the very things which kings, emperors, and presidents occupy themselves with so confidently- is a preparation for murder. . . Silently defy this superior class by refusing to bow down to their fetish of bullets. Cease supporting their preachers who cry for war and spout patriotism for consideration. .. We will not enlist. We will not shoot on their order. . . Your false cry of Wolf! Wolf! Shall not alarm us. . . Peace on earth! - It can only come when men do away with armies, and are willing to do unto other men as they would be done by." -Leo Tolstoy***

*weapon against fascism, as are my anarchist books, but I sure as hell won't put those things to use for Uncle Sam. I will not join your fascist, armed gang of thugs. To join your army is like joining the Nazi army. Your slick, nationalist propaganda sickens me. Your shade of blue is ugly. The soldiers in your pictures look like mindless automatons. If any of my friends decide to join the military, I will tell them the following. Here are three of many reasons why you should not join the military:*

*You are a free agent. You own yourself. You own your own life. When you join the military you give ownership of yourself up to the state and thereby cease to be a free agent. This you do by signing a contract. You may not break your end of the contract, but the military can break its end of the deal, and probably will, whenever it wants to. If you do break this contract, they claim the right to punish you in a number of*

*ways including incarcerating you in a military prison. Right now there are people rotting in prison cells for that very reason. By joining the military you become government property. Do you love and trust the government so much that you are willing to give up your agency to become its property?*

*The military is a cruel, abusive, and murderous organization. In recent years U.S. soldiers have bombed elementary schools and water treatment plants, run kids over with tanks (seriously), tortured people who were not even charged with a crime (not that charges justify torture), sexually assaulted women, and perpetrated general acts of senseless murder and abuse throughout the world all because some guy with shiny pins on his uniform ordered them to. Sexual assault is over five times higher in the military than it is in the civilian population. Do you want to be a murderer? A torturer? A rapist? An order-taking automaton? If your answer is no, the military is not for you.*

*The military is the most authoritarian type of organization there is. It is organized in a strictly top-down way. You take orders. You get yelled at. You get punished for no good reason. Yes sir. No sir. Yes ma'am. No ma'am. You stand at attention. You march. Your every move is regimented. If you fail to acknowledge that you are inferior to an officer by forgetting to salute or forgetting to say sir or ma'am, you will be yelled at in a most humiliating manner. They tell you where to go, when to wake up, when to go to bed, how to make your bed. If you make your bed differently than how they commanded you, you will be punished. They tell you how your locker must be organized, how to fold your clothes. Make sure you fold your shirts into perfect six-inch squares or you will be punished. If the toothpaste tube in your drawer is even one-inch too far to the left, you will be punished. Are your socks folded correctly? Did you iron your underwear? They tell you what to think, who your friends are, who are "the*

*enemy." You don't consider Arabs to be your enemy? Well, you will be forced to treat them as your enemy nonetheless. Hut-two-three-four-hut-two-three-four. Can this type of armed fascism have anything to do with personal happiness or freedom? Can people like this, whose lives are utterly void of individual liberty, or who have absolutely no concept of real freedom, be a force that "liberates" others? That protects the liberty of others? By joining the military you increase the amount of authoritarianism in the world and decrease the amount of freedom by at least one person.*

*No, Mr. Recruiter, I will not join the pernicious, destructive, deceitful, murderous, authoritarian military that pays your salary. I will not help you reach your quota of recruits for this year. The "career opportunities" you offer are a sham. A career in what? Killing people and being bossed around? Bossing others around? No thanks. I will not murder others or subject myself to the authority of your officers. Not for college money, not for any amount of money. Your money is blood*

*money. I will not be part of your death machine. The freedom you claim to be protecting is slavery. What you call strength is ignorance. Your wars will never achieve peace. The idea that a centralized, hierarchical, organization of armed people marching around in dorky uniforms, shouting orders at each other, kill-*

*ing whoever they're ordered to kill, has anything to do with "protecting freedom" is laughable, stupid, and sad. The officers you swear to obey are imbeciles and scoundrels. Your Commander in Chief is a megalomaniac with a flag in place of a brain. Shall I swear to obey orders? Hell no! I will not join.*

***Disrespectfully not yours,***  
*Anarchist*

Note: This article was written during the presidency of George W. Bush; the phrase "megalomaniac with a flag in place of a brain" was written with him in mind.



Continued from page 1

## “Gospel of Redistribution”

reaucracy. If enough people cared about the needy to pass laws to help them, then why would the law be needed?

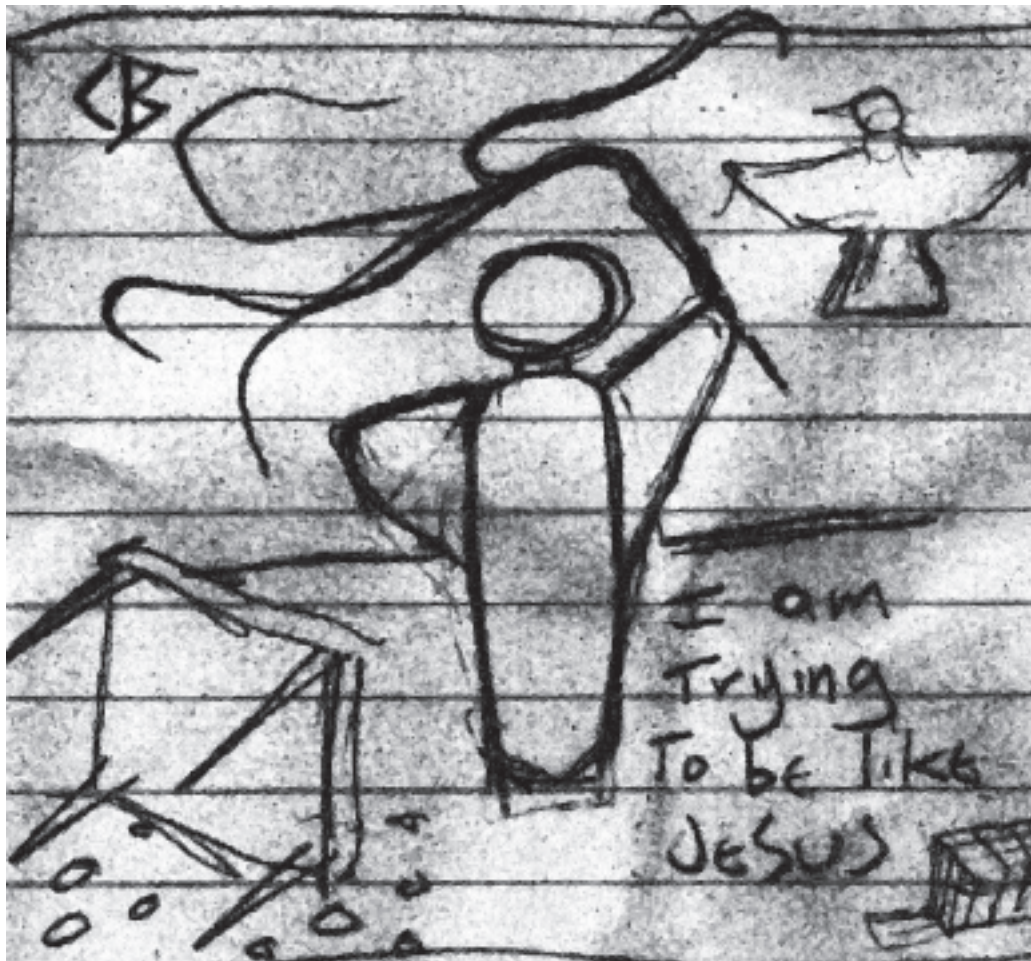
Many comments relied on the authority of cold war era pronouncements of church leaders against godless communism and socialism. Of course these leaders were not speaking against the United Order and would resent that non-members might call it “Christian Communism.” Of the leaders cited, one in particular, Elder Ezra Taft Benson, used to speak and write enthusiastically and optimistically of laissez-faire capitalism as a system that could foster free enterprise solutions to poverty without compromising agency.

Some comments pointed out that there are other more equitable systems of government based on egalitarian principles that do not require downward redistribution of wealth because these systems do not allow the upward concentration of wealth in the first place, e.g. by keeping control of the means of production and disposition of goods in the hands of the producers (i.e. workers) rather than a separate class of owners and managers. These systems are forms of “libertarian socialism” or “anarcho-syndicalism.” Unfortunately, opponents of socialism, including some church leaders, tend to paint all of its forms with the same broad brush. In their view laws that prohibit vast accumulation of wealth must compromise the agency of the thwarted robber barons. Would they go so far as to say that Captain Moroni and his army had no right to pull down the power of the wealthy king men?

Where there is no systematic upward distribution of wealth, no downward distribution is needed. But as long as there are concentrations of wealth and power, as has been the rule throughout history, the rich and powerful have known how to use governments to entrench their advantage. The most blatant recent example is the multibillion dollar taxpayer bailout of billionaires. In the words of Noam Chomsky, “Bailouts and subsidies for the rich, but market discipline for the poor,” and “privatize the profits while socializing the costs.”

According to D&C 134 we believe that governments are [supposed to be] instituted for the benefit of mankind. But what benefit do we get from governments that are only used to reinforce the natural advantage of the rich and powerful over the poor and powerless? Some would argue that military and police protection from foreign and

domestic threats are legitimate uses of government that benefit both the rich and poor alike. However in practice the poor are the traditional cannon fodder for the wars waged by the rich, not to mention that they are also the traditional targets of tasers and tear gas when protesting unsafe working conditions, unfair labor practices, and other social inequity and iniquity (to be didactically redundant). If government does have a legitimate role in protection of the population, then why not in protection from the wolf of hunger at the door? As somebody mentioned in the comments, we have had more casualties from poverty than from any shooting wars. Furthermore, our shooting wars have caused more poverty at home and abroad than most people realize. Talk about redistribution: From food to bombs!



### Jesus Over Throwing the Tables Of the Capitalists.

Art by Clint Bushman

Since the principle of individual agency is central to the strongest comments by LDS readers against “redistribution” of wealth, let’s take a closer look at this. First of all, when we chafe at being compelled (by threat of consequences that might compromise our agency) to donate some of “our” money to help the poor, haven’t we forgotten that in reality it all belongs to the Lord? If he were to make us stewards over a part of it, that part would only satisfy our basic needs, until everybody’s basic needs were covered. If we were compelled to distribute the Lord’s money to the people that he would want to help, we would still have a choice; we could give cheerfully or grudgingly. Wasn’t that our choice when mom or dad made us share with our siblings?

Secondly, if I choose to not pay tithing, I am restricted from enter-

ing the temple. If I choose to not pay taxes, I may have some other restriction imposed. Which consequence is worse from an eternal perspective? We who are LDS believe that God respects our agency, but the consequences of using our agency against God’s laws are worse and longer lasting than the consequences of using our agency against man’s laws. Because of this we need to rethink our “agency” excuse for opposing laws of men that provide for collecting taxes for the general welfare, as outlined in article I section 8 of the US constitution. If I refuse to pay my taxes because I don’t believe in supporting war profiteers, I might go to jail (though most war tax resisters have gotten away with it), but I doubt that would keep me out of the Celestial Kingdom. In Matthew 25, the Lord doesn’t say, “I needed money for bombs, and you refused

his eyes in hell, being in torment,” presumably tormented with a clear realization of how much suffering his vanity caused his fellow beings. Will a man rob god? Inasmuch as ye have robbed one of the least of these ye have robbed me (and vice-versa). “They rob the poor because of their fine clothing,” etc. Can we use “agency” as an argument against penalties for robbery? Bastiat considered taxes for welfare to be “legal plunder” of the rich by the poor. He didn’t seem to realize that mere possession does not constitute ownership, or to know who the real owner was. Possession does not constitute stewardship, either. Only someone with the appropriate priesthood keys can appoint such a stewardship. So let’s not get too defensive about “our” possessions. One comment suggested rather ironically that “love it or leave it” could be applied to people who feel taxes are too coercive. They could go to Somalia where there are no taxes and see what that is like. Others responded that because this was not a realistic possibility, they felt that societies that used public funds for welfare could only give you two choices: pay up or go to jail. However in traditional societies, people who exhibit anti-social behavior (like not pitching in to help) are not exiled to far away countries like Somalia but are shunned locally.

The D&C terminology is that “they become a law unto themselves” and they are left to the “buffetings of Satan,” in that they forfeit their safe place in the bosom of society. Outer darkness is not a special torture camp, it just means that if you cannot abide the law of any kingdom of glory (where a decent person would want to live) then you must become a law unto yourself and deal with the forces of chaos on your own without the benefit of the eternal government of god, the holy priesthood. This would be the ultimate in self sufficiency, except for the indispensable “hand out” of an indestructible resurrected body.

Many comments spoke highly of self reliance as opposed to dependency. But the scriptures emphasize interdependency. Too much emphasis on self reliance to the extreme of self sufficiency gives a lopsided view of our natural interdependency; if you have two coats and your neighbor has none, save your extra coat for a rainy day. You might not have enough money to buy a new one when this one wears out. When I was in a position to talk to other bishops about welfare cases that crossed ward boundaries, I used to wince when they used “self sufficiency” interchangeably with “self reliance.” Unfortunately in a recent issue of the Liahona maga-

Continued on page 6 as  
“Gospel Of Redistribution”



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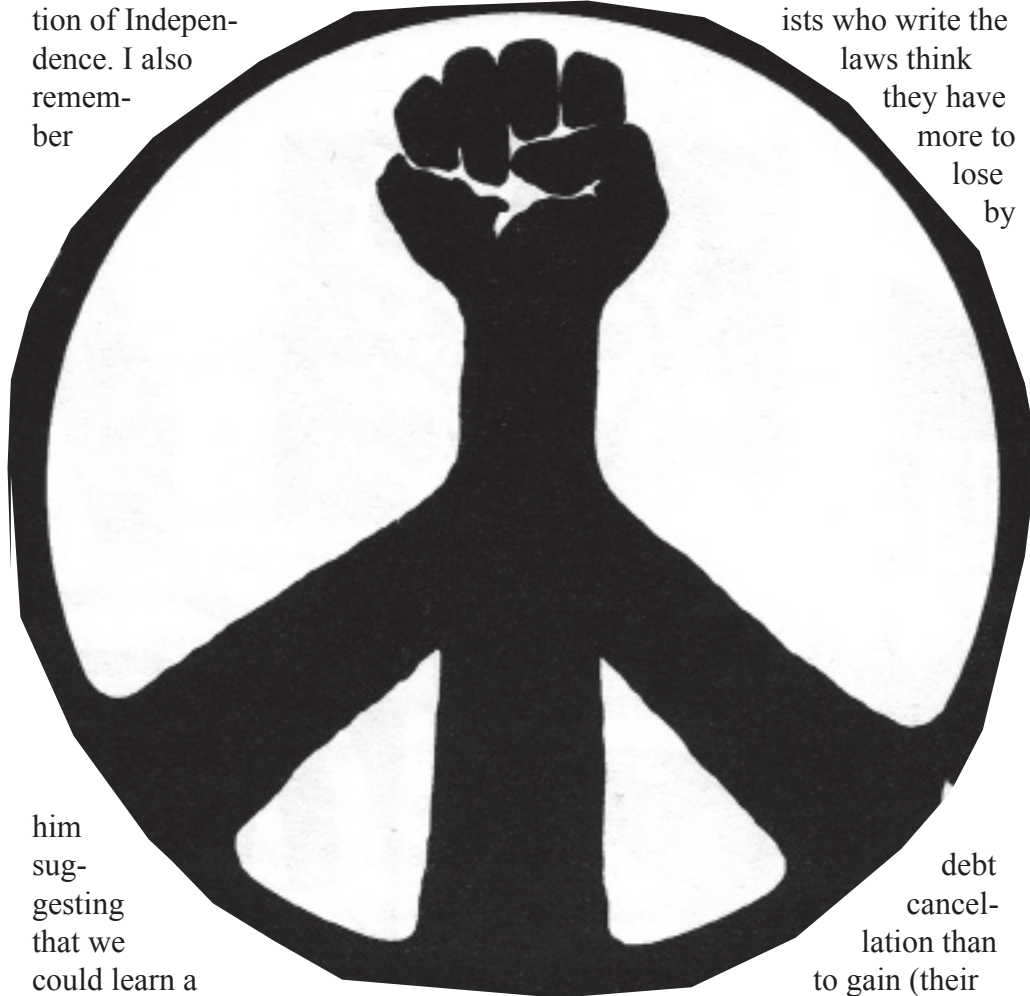
### “Gospel of Redistribution”

zine all instances of “self reliance” in Marion G. Romney’s talk on the subject were translated into Spanish as “auto suficiencia,” which means self sufficiency.

Why have some Mormon leaders like Elders Benson and Romney been so adamant against government funded safety nets while other leaders (not as vocal in the McCarthy era) have been in favor of a substantial government role like the New Deal? During the Great Depression, most Utah and Idaho Mormons were farmers and ranchers, so they scoffed at the need for government assistance. My mother, who grew up in the Naples Ward of Vernal, Utah, was a lifelong Republican (who passed away in 1964, before Goldwater lost to LBJ). But my father, who was raised in the coal mining camps of Carbon County during the depression, voted for FDR. Most farmers had little quarrel with laissez-faire capitalism, because they had the means to survive its depression, and they liked its leave-us-alone-to-prosper policy when things were going well. But unregulated capitalism is a double bind because on the one hand it makes self-sufficiency necessary for survival, while on the other hand its monopoly game style ratcheting dynamic inexorably concentrates control of property, wealth, and government into the hands of an elite few, so that for most people it is not even possible to have enough land for subsistence farming.

I believe that socialism, communism, and capitalism as we know them are all far from the United Order that the Lord wants us to live. It seems to me that capitalism is better with a social safety net for the poor than without it, and that agency is a poor excuse for omitting this provision. The rest of this essay is a critique of the system under which we live, the one that caused Moroni to exclaim, “O ye pollutions . . .” Some people will assume that because I criticize capitalism, that I must approve of other false and failed systems that are now commonly called communism and socialism, just like they falsely assume that if I am not a Republican, then I am a Democrat. I don’t approve of any system that concentrates wealth or power, whether into the hands of government bureaucrats or into the hands of private tyrannies. We have learned by sad experience that such concentrations of power and wealth always corrupt those hands, lead to various forms of slavery, and grieve the Lord as the common people mourn the consequences of unrighteous dominion. So let’s talk about the inner vessel, the system that concerns us most at present.

It seems to me that supporting capitalism (whose god is Mammon) is just as bad as supporting the godless Soviet style communism that Elders Benson, Romney, and J Ruben Clark used to condemn in conference talks. It is easy to criticize the outer vessel half way around the world, but it took a Spencer W. Kimball to criticize the evils of capitalism at home, as he did in his remarks celebrating two hundred years of the Declaration of Independence. I also remember



him suggesting that we could learn a thing or two from the Chinese about living simply and working cooperatively as opposed to our system of cut throat competition. This was during his tenure as church president circa 1980 when it wasn’t popular to suggest that the West could learn something from the East. These critiques were not frequently quoted like the ones from other leaders against the system used by our official enemies. It always struck me as odd that Elder Benson would cast the communists in the role of modern Gaddianton Robbers when the Robber Baron capitalists seemed so much more apt for the part.

It seems to me that unrestrained capitalism is not truly compatible with democracy. In democracy the influence of a group of people is in proportion to the number of people in it. In capitalism, the influence of a group is in proportion to its wealth. Dollars talk, and capitalism protects their speech because of laws bought and paid for by (you guessed it) capitalists.

Similarly, capitalism is incompatible with the Law of Moses in which there was a periodic (seven year) release from all debts. Like the Ten Commandments, this part of the Law of Moses was never rescinded. In fact, it is subsumed under the law of consecration and stewardship which says, in effect, that all debts must be forgiven at all times, not

just every seven years. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” is a risky prayer for those who categorically limit the forgiveness of debts. If we were to put even the Law of Moses version of the debt release into practice immediately, it would solve our economic problems by getting everybody out of debt now and starting us down the road of recovery from capitalism. Of course, this cannot happen, because the rich capitalists who write the laws think they have more to lose by

debt cancellation than to gain (their souls).

Capitalism makes Babylon “the whore of all the earth” in that it commodifies everything for profit. Nothing is too sacred to be commodified, from sex to security. Pollution credits commodify the poisoning of the planet. Indigenous farmers cannot save and use their traditional seeds without paying a royalty to Monsanto, because they never thought to patent them. The “churches that are built up to get power and gain” are the giant corporations of capitalism. Any protection of life cannot be a seamless part of capitalism. It must be must be jury rigged as a makeshift patch and grafted onto the system with baling

wire and duct tape from the outside. As these patches are sloughed off, species continue to be exterminated, our air, water, and food supply poisoned, forests turned into desert wasteland. It is impossible to regulate the concentrated wealth of capitalism that pays the regulators for

its freedom from regulation. Under capitalism, instead of a chicken in every pot, we have a fox in every henhouse, otherwise known as the “revolving door” between industry and government.

Capitalists have no interest in the fate of surplus workers displaced by industrialization, where machines make it possible for one man to produce as much as a thousand pre-industrial age workers. It wouldn’t be so bad if these workers had enough land for subsistence farming outside of the capitalist economy, but no, that cannot be. To see how hard it is for families lucky enough to own farms to hold on to them under capitalism, Google “India Farmer Suicides.” Capitalist agribusiness has driven many millions of peasants worldwide off of their small farms into the slums. In Mexico this effect was highly amplified by NAFTA, a big factor in the increase of undocumented immigrants in the USA.

The secret and private combinations that have been built up to get power and gain, and have gotten above us in control of our government as Moroni warned in chapter eight of Ether, are the giant corporate powers, including the king men that own them, the lobbyists and other movers and shakers of capitalism behind the scenes, the bought out politicians, and the collaborating intellectuals that continue to justify them through their priestcraft, not the long feared communists! These same radical capitalist powers have taken control of the former Soviet Union and Red China, which no longer have even the superficial forms of socialism that were once held out in promise to their poor. The beast of John’s apocalypse that ravages the world is not the pathetic United Nations (as averred by our 700 Club Christian friends), rather it is the corporatocracy of the Gentiles who were once an highly favored people, but are now lifted up in our pride above all the nations of the whole earth while serving Mammon.



“When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint.

When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist.”

—Dom Helder Camara



## In the Trenches

### An interview with members of Democracy Unlimited Humboldt County (DUHC)

by Jason M. Brown

*On May 30, 2009, I met up with David Cobb and Megan Wade Antieau, two members of Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County (DUHC), a community-organizing workers collective based in California. Megan and David were speaking in Eugene, Oregon at a two-day conference on Peace and Collective Action. Visit their website at [www.duhc.org](http://www.duhc.org) and see their ad in this edition of the MW.*

**Jason:** I'm here with Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County. They have done some amazing work around democratizing local elections and challenging corporate power. They are featured in the documentary *The Corporation* as an example of a group directly challenging the illegitimate concept that a corporation is a "person" with constitutional rights. So would you guys tell us a little bit about DUHC and its mission?

**Megan:** We are a grass-roots organization that develops strategies and tactics to exercise democratic power over both corporations and government. Stated simply, we are non-violent revolutionaries dedicated to making the promise of democracy a reality in our local community. And we want to help other communities do the same thing. We started as a study group in the mid 1990s, and quickly learned that corporations are not merely exercising power, they are ruling us. We realized that if we were going to create the peaceful, just, sustainable and democratic society we wished to live in, we would need to work to make systemic changes in the social, legal and political institutions of this country. So we got to work!

**David:** I am struck by *The Mormon Worker's* tagline, which is a quote from Joseph Smith—"I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves." This really mirrors our belief at Democracy Unlimited that people have the right and responsibility to organize society and to create the institutions that best meet our needs. And not just our basic needs for food, shelter and clothing, but also our need for art, spirituality, connection and community. At Democracy Unlimited we realize what I suspect readers of *The Mormon Worker* realize: we do not live in a functioning democracy in the United States. It is our task to educate, agitate, and organize. Not just to complain, but to experiment with strategies and tactics to help meet people's tangible needs while

also building the power necessary to shift our very culture.

**Jason:** David, could you give us a few examples of why you say we do not live in a functioning democracy?

**David:** Democracy means "the People Rule." The overwhelming majority of Americans want an end to the war in Iraq but the bombs continue to fall; the overwhelming majority of Americans want access to healthcare as a fundamental human right and yet it's a commodity that's bought and paid for at a profit; the overwhelming majority of Americans want clean air and clean water, yet toxins and poisons are spewed into our air and water and it's legal to do so! The overwhelming majority of Americans want direct action taken to address the looming global climate crisis, yet none of the existing solutions are implemented because we the people do not have control over our own institutions.

**Jason:** Could you talk a little bit about your personal influences, both philosophical and tactical?

**Megan:** There are five members of our collective, and each one of us would answer that question pretty differently in terms of how our own experiences and what led us to be part of the work that we are doing. For example, five years ago I was an Evangelical Christian and very much involved in that community. I am no longer a part of that because I saw the need for change in our world and I was looking for the best way to do that and ended up with this group. It's different for everyone. In terms of philosophical influence, Michel Foucault is a huge influence on me, meshed with anarchist thought.

**Jason:** In particular what attracts you to anarchist ideas?

**Megan:** I think an understanding of power as a relationship that can be changed and modified. Power is not just other people having power over you. Power is something that is shaped through many things, not just strength or size. Data is power. Language is power. Thought is power. We need to think *and* act in ways that create "power-with" relationships rather than "power-over" relationships.

Coming out of the Christian tradition I decided that the forms of

authority embedded in traditional Christianity are not the types of authority that I believe in. I believe in the authority of the individual experience, I believe in the authority of communities; but I do not necessarily believe in the authority of ordained white men with lots of economic power to tell everybody else what to do.

**David:** The biggest influence on me and my politics was my mama. I was born out of wedlock and in grinding poverty. Yet from the instant I came into this world I was loved. My mama loved and cherished me. I knew from my earliest consciousness that there was a place in this world for me and that I was wanted. And I think everybody should experience that sense of belonging regardless of race, creed or nationality. It is a basic human right. So I want to give a Mormon Worker shout out to my mama as my biggest influence. As I consider my early childhood, I remember beginning to understand the teachings of Christ—love, compassion and tolerance—and I wanted those principles and values to be a core part of my life.

**Jason:** Are you just saying that because I'm Mormon?

**David:** [laughs] Jason, my grandfather was a Baptist preacher! I was raised in that tradition. But as I got older I became disgusted with the hypocrisy associated with most Christian churches. I am reminded of the time Mohandas Gandhi was asked about Christianity, he said, "I like your Christ, but I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

**Megan:** [laughing] Well, I have received a greater amount of compassion from Christians than perhaps David has.

**David:** In terms of philosophers, I am also inspired by anarchist thought. To me the core value of anarchism is not around the tactical: are Anarcho-primitivists better than syndicalists, or is the I.W.W. relevant today or not, for example. I profess anarchist sensibilities because I am opposed to oppression and compulsion. I don't think that we can create the kind of world that I want to live in by imposing it on anybody; we have got to create the circumstances and the conditions to allow genuine liberation.

**Jason:** Could you talk a little bit about the successes DUHC has had?

**Megan:** We have several core issues that we are doing education on all the time. We have a number of projects that we are involved with in the com-

munity. We have a few economic democracy projects which includes a Community Currency called The Humboldt Exchange. Our Independent Business Alliance is a very recent success; we have been able to publish a guide with over 600 local, independent businesses. People are learning how important it is to help to build a thriving local economy.

I think our greatest program at the moment is our Food and Democracy program, which is meeting a very basic need by connecting consumers and farmers through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Another exciting new project that embodies the concept of shifting culture is the Honor Tax. We are based in Humboldt County California, which is traditional Wiyot Indian land. That land was stolen through an intentional and blatant policy of brutal genocide. As an organization, Democracy Unlimited is paying a voluntary Honor Tax directly to the Wiyot tribal leadership. And we are inviting other organizations, individuals and businesses to join us in recognizing the sovereignty of the Wiyot people, by choosing how much and how frequently you pay to recognize their sovereignty and to shift the conversation about native peoples in our society. This provides us with the beginnings of an honest conversation that must take place if there is ever going to be healing and reconciliation.

These projects are attempts to build alternative systems and structures, in addition to the more traditional activist work like direct action or working for laws that stop immediate harm to our community. We need to be doing that and also to be building alternative systems so that we are not always on the defensive. We need to be actively creating the world we want right here, right now.

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### “The 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith”

to the powers that be... (Doctrine & Covenants 58: 21, 22).”

This scripture coupled with the 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith has been interpreted as a commandment that requires unconditional obedience to all laws of the land in which a Latter-Day Saints owes his citizenship.

Fortunately, it is rare that the laws of men cannot be reconciled, or at least adapted, so as to prevent a direct conflict with the laws of God. But history has shown us that at critical times such is not the case, especially when a nation has chosen to compel its’ citizens to obey mandates directly in violation of the laws of God and acts contrary to one’s Christian conscience. So, we must ask:

1. Are there any doctrinal qualifications placed upon this general rule to sustain the laws of our nation?
2. What historical precedence can we examine to see how holy men have handled conflicts between the laws of God and the laws of man?
3. What are our practical choices when faced with conflicts between the laws of God and the laws of man?

#### Doctrinal Qualifications as to Obedience to Law of Land

##### a. “Natural Law” versus “Positive Law”

The “law” can be segregated into essentially two types---“natural law” and “positive law.” Positive law is the actual law of any given government. Positive law simply recognizes that the law is whatever any nation or society states the law to be and has the force essential to make it binding on it’s citizens. These are the myriad of rules that govern our everyday behavior. In other words, the positive law approach simply states that the “law” is whatever we as humans say the law is---no more and no less.

By contrast, “natural law” is a belief that the existence of law is set by nature and God, and, therefore, human beings have certain natural or inalienable rights that exist independent of their government. Natural law on occasion stands in opposition to a particular positive law, and thus can function as a standard in which to criticize, challenge or, in extreme cases, civilly disobey a law. It should not be surprising that the framers of our nation were drawing on natural laws as their point of reference when they proclaimed that certain truths and rights were “self-evident” and, therefore, a sound moral basis for disobeying the laws

of their government. Allegiance to a higher law justifies any individual or people in disobeying any positive law that seeks to deny those inalienable rights.

##### b. Doctrinal Guidance as to our relationship to Laws and Government:

How does the Lord define the “law”? Does He want His people to use a positivist approach where all laws and decisions made by rulers comprise the “law” and must without qualification be sustained by their very existence? Or does the Lord invite us to employ the founding fathers’ approach where the only

we believe “governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man.”

In verse 2 we learn that “no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.” In other words, the corollary of this statement is that if a government does not secure to each individual the freedom of his conscience, then it can not expect to be sustained. To underscore this point verse 4 puts human law in its proper place: “... but we do not believe that human

in fact have no “right in justice” to do otherwise.

The Lord further outlines His immutable law as to how a nation and people should respond to enemies in Section 98 of the Doctrine and Covenants. As if anticipating that the laws of men would come in conflict, He prefaces his law with: “I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them.” Then as to the laws of the land, He tells us which laws are “justifiable” before him---“that law which is constitutional” and “supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges,”(DC 98: 4-8) and that whatever is more or less cometh of evil. Each of these statements are consistently charged with a negative corollary which can be interpreted to mean that if a law is not constitutional and does not protect freedom of conscience, then that law is NOT justified. To do otherwise, would be to deny the very freedom which is God given to all mankind.

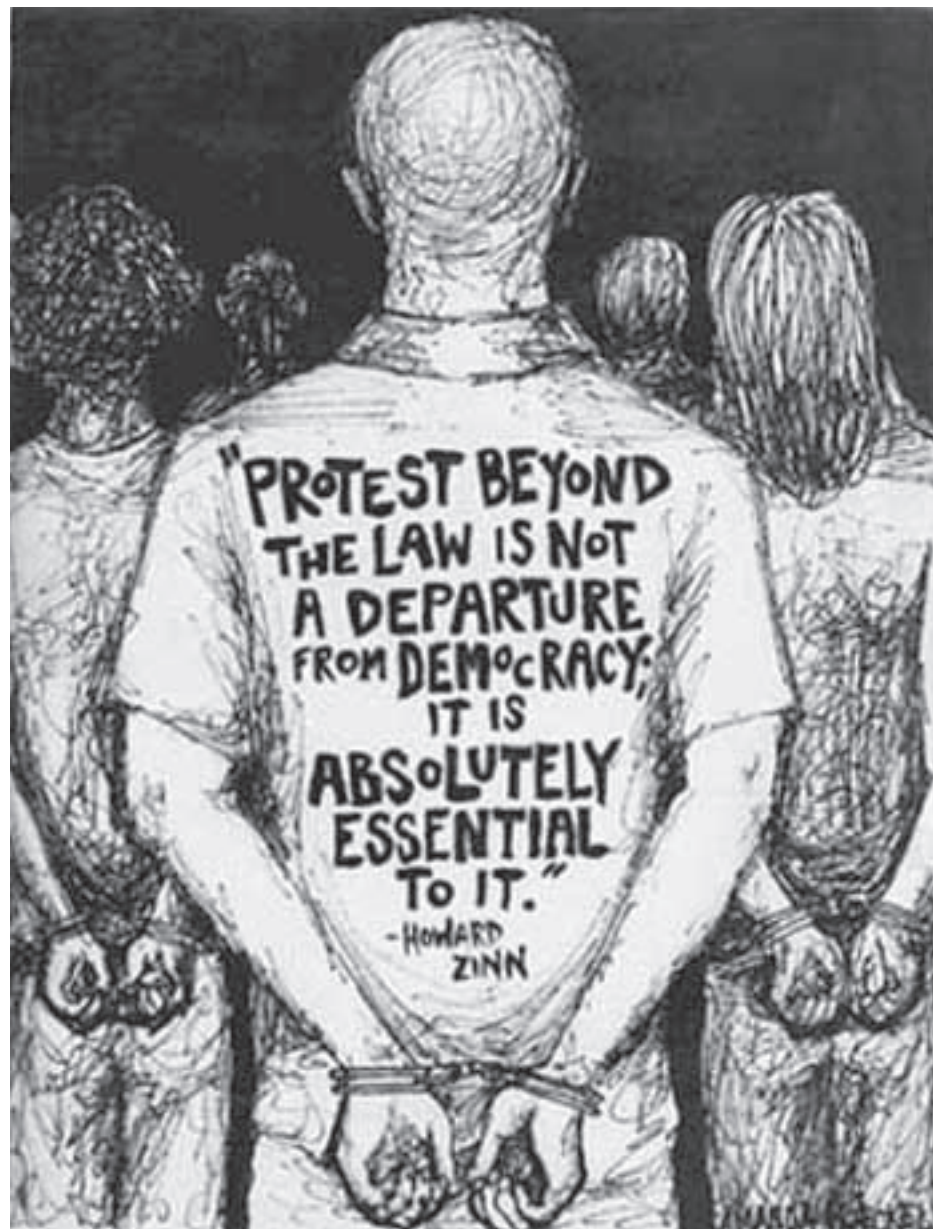
#### HISTORICAL PRECEDENCE

##### a. Polygamy: The First major Latter-Day Conflict:

How did the “Elders of the Church” who were inspired and wrote the “Declaration of Belief Regarding Governments and Law” (Section 134), and Section 98 of the Doctrine & Covenants apply those principles when they faced a major conflict between what they considered a law of God and the laws of the land—namely, polygamy? It is incontrovertible that these prophets firmly believed that it was God’s will to practice polygamy. They also believed that pursuant to the language of Doctrine & Covenants Section 134 that their belief and practice of polygamy was a matter of religious conscience and freedom of religion. Equally incontestable is the fact that polygamy was from its inception in direct violation of the laws of the land in which they were citizens.<sup>4</sup>

How did these early prophets and apostles handle this irreconcilable conflict? Polygamy was taught privately until the Nauvoo period when between 1841 to 1844 it was widely practiced among key church leaders. However, it was not until 1852 that polygamy was openly preached from the pulpit while the saints were residing in Utah Territory.<sup>5</sup> Ten years after this declaration, the United States Government passed the Morrill Anti-bigamy Act that prohibited all plural marriages in any territory of the United States.<sup>6</sup> How did the Prophet at the time respond? Echoing Thoreau’s “Duty of Civil Disobedience” premise,

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“The 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith”



unconditional laws are those that are based in natural/eternal laws?

On August 17, 1835 when the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was proposed the Elders of the Church issued a proclamation with the following preamble which now prefaces Section 134 of the Doctrine & Covenants:

“That our belief with regard to earthly governments and laws in general may not be misinterpreted nor misunderstood, we have thought proper to present at the close of this volume our opinion concerning the same.”<sup>3</sup>

Each verse of Doctrine and Covenants section 134 begins with “we believe” which signals that we are receiving, similar to the Articles of Faith, our creed in regard to our relationships to laws and governments. The first verse states that

law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men...” Then what “laws” are we bound to “sustain”? The answer is clearly given in verse 5: “We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments...”

These verses define the essence of natural law. In short, every law is conditional and qualified in that we are only “bound to sustain” a law or government “while” protected in our inalienable rights--- which include our “free exercise of conscience” according to the dictates of our faith. The burden then shifts to the lawmaker of any government to only enact laws or issue orders that allow us the “the free exercise of our religious beliefs” and that they



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### “The 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith”

Brigham Young laid down his foundational beliefs in regard to what laws we must sustain, or rather laws that we are not required to sustain: “It is a pretty bold stand for this people to take, to say that they will not be controlled by the corrupt administrators of our general government. We will be controlled by them, if they will be controlled by the constitution and the laws (Journal Discourse Vol. 5, pg. 231).”

The statement above qualifies sustaining and being obedient to laws based on the determination of whether the law or order in question from one’s government is just, wholesome, constitutional, and not corrupt. Brigham Young’s successor, John Taylor, was even clearer as to whether obedience to the laws of the land should override one’s religious conscience:

“I would like to obey and place myself in subjection to every law of man. What then? Am I to disobey the law of God? Has any man a right to control my conscience, or your conscience? No man has a right to do it (JD Volume 26, page 152).”

From 1887 until 1890 the church entered a period of defiance, arrests, confiscations, and hiding. This colorful time reached its climax when in 1890 the United States Supreme Court upheld the Edmunds-Tucker Act which allowed the seizing of nearly all the assets of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Within five months the 1890 Manifesto was issued, ending the practice of polygamy and bringing into compliance church doctrine and policy with the laws of the land. The Manifesto issued by the President Wilford Woodruff would at first appear to be not only a pragmatic decision, but also a significant step away from the belief that the laws of God and the free exercise of one’s conscience take precedence over the laws of men. However, the words of the Prophet Wilford Woodruff confirm the opposite: “But I want to say this: I should have let all the temples go out of our hands; I should have gone to prison myself, and let every other man go there, had not the God of Heaven commanded me to do what I did [namely, end polygamy] (MS 53: 796 (1891)).”

Once again the Prophet of the Church made it clear that in the final analysis, it was God’s will and commandments received through revelation and not the actual laws of the land that was the determinative factor.

#### b. Scriptural examples of Civil Disobedience:

While in captivity in ancient Babylon the Israelites were subject to corrupt government. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego rose in prominence because of their wisdom, knowledge and virtue. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, sent out a royal decree that at the sound of the cornet and flute that “ye shall fall down and worship the golden image and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same be cast in to the fiery furnace” (Daniel 3: 5,6). These men of God having high government position all refused to bow down before the golden image for such was contrary to their religious beliefs. They civilly disobeyed and were willing to accept the full consequences of their acts even unto death “if it be God’s will.” Following that example, King Darius, Nebuchadnezzar’s successor, issued a law that all who petitioned or prayed unto any God or man, save the King, would be thrown into the lion’s den. Daniel, a believing Israelite and the King’s trusted advisor, could not in good conscience obey such a law. He civilly disobeyed by immediately going to his God in open and public prayer.

This tradition of the Israelites placing their beliefs above that of the “powers that be” when the law required them to violate their religious beliefs was repeatedly demonstrated from the Exodus out of Egypt to the Maccabean Wars. Then when the Son of God came, He taught that one should render unto Cesar what which was rightfully his but then render unto God that which was His, and when a conflict arose the choice was made apparent by His disciples. Filled with the spirit of God, the Apostle Peter preached publicly and when arrested, beaten and then ordered by local authorities to no longer preach. Peter asked this rhetorical question: “Whether it be right in the sight of god to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” Upon his release, he immediately disobeyed and returned to preaching. When rearrested and questioned why he disobeyed, he answered his own question: “We ought to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).”

The Book of Mormon reinforces the deference to natural law from Nephi’s extreme example of civil disobedience in slaying a government official and taking the plates, to Abinadi and Alma’s subversive activities, to Ammon’s revealing and qualified comment when he pledged his allegiance to King Lamoni: “...whatsoever thou desireth which is right, that will I do (Alma 18:17).”

#### PRACTICAL APPLICATION

It is rare that sustaining the law of the land cannot be reconciled with

our free and religious conscience. The 12th Article of faith can and should apply to our everyday civil duties—regulations, contracts, speed limit, criminal laws, taxation with representation. It is wise and virtuous to be civil and obedient to many civil laws. The prophet Joseph Smith observed:

“All regularly organized and well established governments have certain laws by which more or less, the innocent are protected and the guilty are punished. That fact admitted, that certain laws are good, equitable and just, ought to be binding upon the individual who admits, this, and lead him to observe in the strictest manner an obedience to these laws (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 49).”

Most free nations generally recognize and protect their citizen’s rights to worship according to their conscience. The United States allows, for example, conscientious objectors to military service when their faith requires of them that they not take another human life. Our faith also recognizes that privilege as set forth in another Article of Faith:

“We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, and what they may (11<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith).”

Common sense and Christian virtue informs us that there is no need to disobey laws such as those that protect “peace and tranquility” and common purposes (see DC 134:8). Then what defines matters which are of such significance that we would consider qualifying our obedience through civil disobedience? I would suggest two areas that merit such consideration: First, matters involving religious beliefs and secondly, matters involving issues of life and death which constitute the foundation of all personal and inalienable rights.

#### a. Religious beliefs and worship

It should be evident to any thinking Latter-day Saint that if any government or authority were to command us to worship a false god, and not pray, or do anything that would deny our faith, that we could not sustain such laws in good conscience and should civilly disobey. The Lord tells us in Doctrine and Covenants 134: 7 where the line is to be drawn:

“We believe that rulers, states, and governments have a right, and are bound to enact laws for the protection of all citizens in the free exercise of their religious beliefs; but we do not believe that they have a right in justice to deprive citizens of this privilege.”

At a minimum, it appears that obedience to the laws of one’s land is conditional or subject to one’s religious beliefs and freedom of conscience.

#### b. The inalienable right to “Life”

Is there no greater inalienable right by virtue of creation then one’s right to live their life and the liberty to express what virtue and goodness they can in their life? The destroying of life is such a crime against nature that the taking of life by another is repeatedly prohibited: “Thou shalt not kill.” Under what conditions can such an express commandment be excused? Mormon being charged with compiling the Book of Mormon, considered the whole sweeping saga of his people and concluded with this admonition: “Know ye not that ye must lay down your weapons of war, and delight no more in the shedding of blood, and take them not again, save it be that God shall command you (Mormon 7:4).”

God created life and only God can command us to take life—no one else. Mormon does not say “save it be that” your government or ruler commands you, but rather “save it be that God shall command you.” Mormon, like Jefferson and Madison, staked out a boundary in declaring where natural law triumphs over the laws of man.

What rational and moral individual would deliberately take the life of an innocent child? Does the sanction of one’s government make moral what one could not do privately? Can a decree of government clean one’s hands of murder?<sup>8</sup>

On one end of the spectrum there are those of deep faith that exalt what they consider a higher law of God when they refuse to take any human life no matter the innocence or depravity of the victim, and no matter the calculation as to what harm can be prevented by killing those that present a threat. In our nation we refer to them as the Amish and Mennonite communities. Then on the other far end of the spectrum are the self proclaimed patriots that say they will obey their government or nation “right or wrong” and their minds quickly attach to some isolated general rule or scripture to resolve the issue—no more thinking or debate. They are the “We are commanded and we obey crowd”--- and the 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith becomes a handy, isolated, general rule to cut short any further thinking or seeking of personal revelation. Those who turn their conscience and will over to their government are sometimes engaged in a noble and just cause, but sometimes they are goose-stepping for

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the Third Reich---but that is not for them to decide or worry about because they have decided obey unconditionally. But for those that believe life is an inalienable right, then obeying government orders to take a life cannot be sustained if the order violates one’s God given conscience.

### CONCLUSION

The general principle of obedience laid out in the 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith is conditional as evidenced by clearly stated scriptural qualifications; historical application by those who received those revelations, and just common moral sense. Believing men of faith and conscience have civilly disobeyed their governments from the beginning of recorded history based on their belief that at times a higher law demanded civil disobedience.

We must each decide what value, virtue, or religious belief we place on a higher level of commitment than obedience to one’s government and it’s laws. Personally, like hundreds of thousands of Latter-day Saints living in other nations, I could adapt, if necessary, to social democracy, burdensome taxes, and even uncomfortable curtailments of my civil liberties. I would probably protest and seek to make changes, but I would see no compelling reason for outright civil disobedience as long as I could practice my faith and freedom of conscience.

However, if the government makes a law that orders me to join with them in killing innocent life or destroying the souls of other men or even destroying their homes and property, then I would refuse to do so. At that point I would civilly disobey. Why? Because now my government is not robbing me of my transient material things or limiting some of my freedoms, but rather it is robbing me of what little virtue I might have by requiring me to destroy some other innocent soul’s life and well being.

Nephi told us that when the Son of God comes to the world He will show us all “things that we should do.” What did Jesus do in relation to the “powers that be?” Where did he draw the line? He was denied many civil liberties by the nation that occupied his country. He and his people were taxed without representation. They were subjected to the taking of their lives, liberties and properties. And yet when He was invited by others to take up arms and rebel against the powers that be what did he do? He refused and commanded His disciples to put away their swords. He made

no protest to any forms of taxation and even suggested returning all the money to those who created the currency. He taught “going the extra mile” and to live in harmony and peace even with enemies. So what did he refuse to do? He refused to harm anyone in anyway. No authority on earth could compel Him to do evil either individually or in concert with others no matter how just the cause. He refused to harm the sinner and even His enemies. So when this same God tells us to live civilly and sustain law unless it involves the taking of life and freedom of conscience, what does His example mean to me?

Having the light of Christ and the right to personal revelation, we

have an irrevocable, covenantal obligation to study, ponder, pray and receive answers.

We should never abdicate that responsibility to others. The promptings of the spirit will tell us all things we must do. When we receive personal revelation we will know of ourselves what path we must take. Responding to that spirit will in time and eternity lead us to the tree of life. If we do not seek the spirit of revelation or we receive

promptings and ignore them then we are to that degree denying the spirit of God in our life. And when we ignore our God given conscience or let it atrophy, something deep within us begins to die. The words of Henry Thoreau aptly describe this reality: “Is there not a sort of bloodshed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man’s real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds an everlasting death.” (Duty of Civil Disobedience, pg. 43).

It is for each of us to decide whether we will interpret the 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith as being an unqualified mandate or whether we can be men and women for all seasons and love and sustain our government and the natural law upon which it was founded by civilly disobeying when it no longer protects us, our neighbor or even our enemies in our God given inalienable right to life and freedom of conscience.

(Endnotes)

1. The Wentworth Letter, March 1, 1842; DHC 4: 535-541
2. Cache Stake Conference, Logan, Utah, Nov. 1, 1891
3. Adopted by unanimous vote at a General Assembly of the Church held at Kirtland,, Ohio, August 17, 1835. HC 2: 247-249
4. Revised Laws of Illinois, 1833, pp. 198-



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5. Orson Pratt, August 29, 1852, Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City
6. Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act which forbade practice of polygamy in U.S. Territories. July 8, 1862
7. US Code Title 48 & 1461
8. Journal Discourses 7: 137, Brigham Young: ““Our traditions have been such that we are not apt to look upon war between two nations as murder... Does it justify the slaying of men, women and children that otherwise would have remained at home in peace, because a great army is doing the work? No: the guilty will be damned for it.”

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us or in a far-off country, whether speaking the same language or any other.”

Emma Goldman furthered this argument by attesting that, “America is essentially the melting pot. No national unit composing it is in a position to boast of superior race purity, particular historic mission, or higher culture. Yet the jingos and war speculators are filling the air with the sentimental slogan of hypocritical nationalism, ‘America for Americans,’ ‘America first, last, and all the time.’” Factions are inevitable and often pernicious, but can also be a tool to strengthen any movement or ideology. Sometimes

we must be reminded of our past and our ideals to continue forward in the right direction, and so it goes with Mormonism.

Members of the LDS Church have a lucid history of immigration that has been part of an intrinsic paradox characterizing the region now called Utah. We ourselves were immigrants who fled to a new country to find something better, yet now a malady of anti-immigrant sentiment towards a group in a similar position has somehow become prevalent in the state. Utah was not always Zion, nor was it a blank canvas prior to 1847 when Mormon religious-refugees, numbering 1,681 claimed the land. Mormon pioneers actually entered what was then Mexico’s far-northern frontier, despite a pre-existent Aztec claim of the area pertaining to the sacred region of Aztlan. Aztlan is the sacred ancestral home of the Nahua peoples who later migrated to central Mexico. The story of Aztlan became a tradition

that depicted a utopian paradise, free of disease and death, which was located somewhere in the far north. The region of Aztlan included what is now the southwestern continental United States of America, and multiple studies have shown that the location of legendary Aztlan is in modern-day Utah. Mormons in pursuit of a similar utopia, Zion, migrated to the area, while the Aztec claim remains. Mormons and Mexican-American Chicanos share similar elements in their histories of

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ness their differences and pluralities to be advantageous. The progression towards a society structured on communitarianism and cooperation, rather than profit and capital, will likewise mean the reduction of various types of privilege. The first step is that Latinos must be fully represented, and they indelibly have historical rights to such representation and equality.

We must ask ourselves, “Have we forgotten our principles and our past?” We are immigrants! This is the land of the Aztecs. Utah is Aztlan, not just Zion. Latinos are the largest minority group here and Mexico also legally owned the area when the Mormon settlers arrived. Irrespective of the party affiliations of Utah legislators who created discriminatory policies such as SB81, this is not a partisan issue. Rather, this is a highly spiritual matter.

Renowned Anarchist Rudolf Rocker wrote that “race theory is the leit-motif of a new barbarism which endangers all the intellectual and spiritual values in culture, threatening to smother the voice of the spirit with its ‘voice of blood.’ And so belief in race becomes the most brutal violence to the personality of man, a base denial of all social justice. Like every other fatalism, so also fatalism is a rejection of the spirit...”

Let us not smother the voice of the spirit by giving preference to particular cultures or ethnicities. Mormonism and all the collective “isms” found in the Latin American population in Utah can be symbiotic components of a more beautiful future. Harmonious, synergetic, and serviceable relationships are possible, but we must overcome the barricading impediments of harmful legislation and xenophobic sentiments. Homogeneity and monolithic conformity are not, and never should have been, parts of our teleology or end goal. We are all in this together, in Zion, in Aztlan, in America, and in the world. These titles may ultimately be arbitrary, but our spiritual and intellectual values are not. No matter where you lie on the spectrum of any of these battles, you are affected by and affecting the whole equation. Mikhail Bakunin stated, “I am truly free only when all other human beings, men and women, are equally free.” As Mormons we are only in Zion if we are allowing and promoting the existence of Aztlan for all of our brother and sisters, documented or undocumented, especially for Latino “immigrant” herman@s with whom we share such a similar past.

# Proposition 8 and its Discontents

## An interview by Gregory Van Wagenen

The ballot initiative known as Proposition 8, which effectively modified the constitution of the State of California, was arguably the most contentious issue in North American politics in 2008. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November last year, after passing with a three percent margin, the foundation of the state’s legal authority was re-written to mandate that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Below is an interview with James, who is a gay member of the LDS Church. James discusses his views on Proposition 8, and how strong LDS support for the legislation affected his experience in the church.

**Gregory:** Has your relationship with the LDS Church changed since the Proposition 8 debate? If so, how?

**James:** The church’s open stance made me feel ostracized. I felt voiceless in a sea of open hostility and ignorance.

I am a strong believer in separation of church and state. Religion to me is a personal matter. I do not feel comfortable pressing my personal beliefs on other people nor do I feel comfortable when other people force their views, religious or otherwise, on me. My relationship with God is a personal one – as is anyone’s... when I pray to God I feel a love and sense of acceptance greater than I have ever felt. God created and loves me as I am; so when I go to church and am told that “those people are wrong” and “those people need to be saved” and “those people are waging war against God by defacing marriage,” I do not see it.

I know I am gay. I did not ask or choose this and I could reject God altogether, but I love the Creator. The message of the Church is perfect but right now many of the members are not. The message of Christ’s love for mankind is tarnished with a message of “God loves you unless...” The comments and views of many of the members put a wedge between me and God. So I have stopped attending. I still maintain my relationship with God and since I do not feel comfortable in my Church I have left it.

There was a network of bloggers that helped me stay in the Church longer than I would have. And it also helped that there was a fellow member who was struggling under the burden of the same cross I was. It helped to have someone to confide in. At my low points he would build me up and in his I would build

him up. After moving across the country it became harder though. With no one to share that struggle with it became impossible to stay in.

**Gregory:** How comfortable do you feel vocalizing your position on the issue of sexuality within the church? Do you feel silenced or encouraged to speak?

**James:** Usually I wasn’t the one who would bring up the subject, but rather other members. I would try to chime in

with something that leaned in favor of gay rights or issues but was bulldozed down and looked at as simply short of the Truth. I even tried to mention the fact that many teenage suicides result when young people cannot love themselves because their religion or society makes it hard for them to do so. It is as if you have to change a part of you to fit in. As if you are a puzzle piece. And if you don’t fit in with the cookie cutter image then you are tossed out.

Many men even marry women just to stay in the Church, but can you structure a marriage on a lie? Is that what God would want? Is it better to lie and fit in than to accept who you are and love yourself? Many people in my last branch [congregation] said that the Church was being persecuted [for its support for Prop 8]... but I feel that word is thrown around too loosely. This made me closet my opinion. In a sense I felt censored by the sentiment and clanging opinion of my fellow members.

**Gregory:** Were you ever troubled by the fact that religious leaders seemed to be giving political advice in a spiritual context?

**James:** Of course. There are so many other pertinent issues that need to be faced here and abroad. People need to be brought together not torn apart. And that is just what

happened to many families in the church over that. If we are going to be a Church of Christ we need to accept people for all their “faults” and love them. But if Christian churches continue to make this a wedge-issue, more and more people, gay or not, are going to further



marginalize them.

**Gregory:** If there were one message you could send to the wider world about your experience as a gay Mormon, what would it be?

**James:** I would like to say that I feel both sides were in the wrong in California (and not just there but seemingly abroad). Christian and Gay militancy are much the same. Both are binary: closeted or liberated, damned or saved; both demand emotional showboating and almost narcissistic public displays of emotion and both seek to turn private lives into public crusades or moral right. And both are impatient to the quirks and kinks of human behavior. There is no middle ground and in a country as diverse as this there must be.

I would also like to add that the Church has enriched my life, and the principles I glean from the Gospel like charity and love I make a point to act on. I follow Jesus’ example of universal love and I follow what the Bible so clearly states – “Judge not lest ye be judged”. I have met many a good person in the Church who I love. Even though a few of them no longer love me after I shared with them a certain aspect of who I am.



# Are The Rich Damned?

By Cliff Burton

## Are the rich damned?

Though this controversial question tends to be carefully sidestepped in church meetings, Jesus himself addressed it in the Gospel of Mark: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 10:25).” Since it seems impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, this passage leaves us with the impression that the rich cannot enter God’s kingdom, or in other words, that the rich are damned. For Mormons with significant wealth, hearing such a comment from Jesus, whose example we’re supposed to follow, can be pretty hard to take.

Such a Mormon might think: “Is it really wrong for me to be wealthy? Didn’t I work hard all these years to earn the wealth I’ve accumulated? What’s wrong with living in a nice home, taking exotic vacations, driving a fancy car, and enjoying the finer things in life? Is that what Jesus *really* meant, that the rich are damned?”

The Apostles were similarly shocked when they heard what Jesus had said, so they asked him a question hoping to get some further explanation: “Who then can be saved?” Jesus then replied, “With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible (Mark 10:26-27).” For wealthy Mormons this qualifier comes as a godsend, literally: “Oh, good. It looks like I *can* be rich and get to heaven. I was worried for a second there that I might have to change my lifestyle. I was worried there might be something wrong with being filthy rich. Looks like I won’t need to sell my mansion on the east bench in Salt Lake City and move to the west side of town, get rid of my Hummer and buy a Hyundai, stay in a Motel 6 for my next vacation instead of the Four Seasons, or give all my money away to a bunch of lazy poor people.”

While the passage telling us that with God all things are possible gives the rich some relief from the anxiety of going to hell, unfortunately the New Testament is a big book, and, as it turns out, has some other comments by Jesus that are pretty scary as well, indicating that its not ok to live in luxury while grinding the faces of the poor.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus from the New Testament is one example (Luke 16:20-31). In it, Jesus describes how an anonymous rich man enjoys all the good

things in life, while a beggar named Lazarus waits outside the gate of the rich man’s home, hoping to get some of the “crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table.” Instead of getting food from the rich man, dogs come and lick Lazarus’ sores, after which Lazarus dies, apparently from starvation. Angels then carry his soul to “Abraham’s bosom,” in other words to heaven. The rich man dies soon thereafter, and instead of going to heaven like the poor beggar Lazarus, the rich man “lift[s] up his eyes” in hell, “being in torments.”

Apparently the rich man’s cruelty in refusing to share his wealth with



others in need, when he had more than plenty to spare, was enough to land him in a tough spot in the afterlife. The rich man even asks the prophet Abraham to send an angel to the man’s still living relatives, in order to warn them that if they are greedy and don’t help the poor, they’ll also go to hell. Abraham refuses, telling the rich man that Moses and the prophets have been preaching such a message all along, and that if the rich man’s relatives don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they won’t bother listening to an angel either.

For wealthy Mormons this story is likely pretty disturbing, and may make them again wonder whether they can really be rich and go to heaven after all.

But, the rich Mormon says: “the Bible isn’t an infallible book. There are plenty of mistakes, mistranslations, and transmission errors in the text. Maybe all that talk of the rich going to hell in the Bible was added by some Catholic monk in the Middle-Ages, who corrupted the text of what Jesus really said. Instead of thinking that a rich person like me can’t go to heaven, I’m sure I can find some support for my lifestyle in the other holy books of scripture. In fact, I remember some comforting words from the Book of Mormon (a book of scripture written by prophets in the ancient Americas) where the prophet-king Benjamin says that

if you keep the commandments, God will bless you and make you rich: “And behold, all that [God] requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you (Mosiah 2:22).” The rich Mormon might be tempted to then draw some conclusions, “You see, I’ve become wealthy because of how righteous I am. If I didn’t deserve the money I’ve got, and didn’t deserve to enjoy it, why would God have bothered to make me rich? Other people are poor because they don’t keep the commandments or are lazy, or both. If someone is poor, that’s his own fault, not mine!”

Though King Benjamin’s words might make a rich Mormon a little more optimistic initially, sadly, the Book of Mormon is also a pretty big book and it doesn’t take long before we come across passages that are pretty scary for the rich, just as we find in the Bible. In this case, we simply need to finish reading the exact same sermon of King Benjamin in which we thought the rich had found some comfort. King Benjamin later teaches that anyone who refuses to help those in need isn’t really on the road to heaven:

“And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish. Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just- But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this, the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God (Mosiah 4:16-18).”

And if that’s not enough, the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi has a few pretty harsh things to say about the rich as well: “But wo unto the rich who are rich as to the things

of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their god. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also (2 Nephi 9:30).”

So it seems that when God says he will prosper those who keep the commandments, it looks like he was talking about a people or nation as a whole, rather than individuals. For example, in the book of 4 Nephi, Mormon describes how the entire Nephite people prospered due to their righteousness, having all things common among them, so that there were no rich or poor, rather than just a few “righteous” members of society getting rich while everyone else wallowed in poverty.

Does this mean the rich are really damned? It looks like the answer is mostly yes, the rich will be damned. But since Jesus did say that with God all things are possible, there must be some small chance the rich may join the poor beggar Lazarus in heaven. But how is that? In the Doctrine and Covenants (a book of revelations received by the prophet Joseph Smith), God gives some commentary on the story of the Lazarus and the rich man: “Therefore, if any man shall take of the

abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wealthy, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment (D&C 104:18).”

Apparently, the rich have a chance of going to heaven *only* if they “impart their portion to the needy.” In other words, if the rich give their wealth to the needy, or use their wealth to help others rather than to live in luxury, they may get to heaven. So even though it is extremely hard for the rich to go to heaven, it is possible, if they have enough charity to want to use their wealth to bless others, rather than watching others, such as the beggar Lazarus, or children in Africa, die from want, just in order to drive nice cars, or have big houses that will impress the neighbors. The prophet Jacob from the Book of Mormon makes this point explicitly:

“Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted (Jacob

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2:17-19).”

Of course, it would be best to begin living the Law of Consecration and create a society in which there is neither rich nor poor. But until that time comes, it is important that we have enough charity to use our excess resources to end as much suffering as we can now. Each of us, whether rich or middle-class or even poor by American standards, is incredibly wealthy compared to those in developing countries, hundreds of millions of whom live on less than a dollar a day. If any of us think we are not that well off and don't have anything to give, seeing life in the slums of Mumbai, or Mexico City, or Port-aux-Prince would change that real quick. Even though it is the fabulously wealthy that will most strongly be condemned at the last day for their cold-heartedness and greed, there is certainly more that each of us can do now to live more frugally and use the excess resources we have to help others. Otherwise we may find that we will, with the wealthy, lift up our eyes in hell as well.

## Homophobia: An Attack on My Family

by kristina grace k.

### The Personal is Political

In my years as a facilitator for workshops training people how to be better allies to the LGBTQ (that's Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) people in their communities, I don't think I've ever met someone who was against homosexuality and wasn't religious. Even if they were not religious in any other facet of their life, religion was their way of defending their own fear and biases against homosexuality. I believe that there is little to no biblical evidence to justify the link between anti-gay attitudes and Christianity.<sup>[7]</sup>

As an anarchist, I feel that arguing whether or not queer folks should be allowed to make their own romantic decisions and be free from fear of discrimination, harassment, abuse and murder using a source as old and mysterious as scripture to be moot. Scriptures have been used to justify atrocities like slavery and colonization along with noble-hearted causes like women's equality and animal rights. Let's face it, you

understand that those Mormons who grew up in the church may need a new way of looking at the scriptures commonly used to back up anti-gay prejudice as doctrine. We cannot forget that while ongoing revelation is a reality for us, it is not our job as members to follow prophets *blindly* and without serious prayer and scrutiny. Why have a process in place to sustain church leadership if the idea was to just submit to them? Former LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie stated, “With all their inspiration and greatness, prophets are yet mortal men with imperfections common to mankind in general. They have their opinions and prejudices and are left to work out their own problems without inspiration in many instances.”

Clearly the claim of prophets of the early Church that black men would never hold the priesthood was uninspired and incorrect. The lesson then is to understand church historical attitudes on political topics and how they change with time. The claim that “it wasn't the right time” before the 1978 “revelation” on the priesthood was obviously a nice way of saying that leadership and/or membership of the Church wasn't ready for black male members to have the same authority white male members did.

For further examination of the most commonly used Biblical passages to defend anti-homosexual attitudes please refer to the list of sources at the end of this article. As for the Mormon canon of scripture, there are no passages in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, or the Pearl of Great Price to validate or justify personal prejudices against homosexuality; an interesting concept for a book written “for us in our day”.

I have met several Mormons in the past few years since I joined the church who have a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian. According to a national survey Pew Research Center released in 2007, 41% of North Americans have a close friend or family member who is homosexual. Like other studies on familiarity and tolerance for homosexuality, it also showed that “people who have a close gay friend or family member are more likely to support gay marriage.”<sup>[8]</sup> An article written by the Human Rights Campaign also summarized two studies released in 2006 by saying, “Not only are more Americans becoming familiar with the lives of GLBT people, but as they become more familiar, they are

more supportive.”<sup>[9]</sup> Perhaps that accounts somewhat for my own attitude on the topic as I grew up in a home with queer parents.

Evidence-based studies of gay and lesbian parenting consistently present data in favor of the ability of queer parents to raise well-adjusted children. In an examination of 21 studies, researchers Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz of the University of Southern California reported “findings of no notable differences between children reared by heterosexual parents and those reared by lesbian and gay parents...”<sup>[10]</sup>

Researchers studied factors such as children's overall well-being, self-esteem, psychiatric disorders, couple and peer relationships, behavior, gender identity, adjustment, and parental stress. Incidents of emotional stress experienced by children raised in homes with same-sex parents were the result of anti-gay and homophobic harassment and bullying. But these same children who experienced anti-gay harassment “also reported greater well-being, more nurturing, and a greater tolerance for differences.”<sup>[11]</sup>

Scientific proof aside, the experience of having queer parents is enough for me to justify the right my mother had to raise me. Nobody in all their bible-thumping, sign-swinging fervor could ever sway me to say otherwise. I never considered anything to be “wrong” with my family until much later in life when other people tried to point it out to me. What I ended up learning was that we made people uncomfortable. We didn't fit into the culturally built box labeled, “FAMILY”, and therefore our existence as a family unit was threatening.

I think many people don't believe that they have any connections to families like mine. It makes it easier, after all, to put forward money, time and energy to fight against my family if you believe you have nothing to do with me. Somehow, anti-gay language gets away with creating the false image of gay people being disconnected from family. As if our family isn't just that—a family. How ridiculous and absurd to assume that those of us who love our queer family members are somehow influenced by Satan. How adverse to the gift of agency, how detrimental to individuality, and how unfriendly to freedom it is to create laws that would physically and financially punish couples simply for who they love. How abusive it is to keep children away from healthy, loving parents for the sole reason that those parents are queer. How selfish to deny an orphaned child a stable and strong home because the adoptive parents

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“Homophobia, Family”



could argue just about anything using the Bible if you wanted to. How you interpret the Bible says more about what kind of person *you* are than it says about what the Bible actually says. But as a Mormon I also



# I'll Be Glad: A Personal Narrative

by Cory Bushman

## I'll Go Anywhere That You Do And If You Don't Go Before

At approximately 7:40am I board a minibus in a village near Baryatino, Russia to begin the 300km journey to Moscow. As the minibus jolts along the pock-filled road, I am reminded of the irony of my traveling 300km to hear LDS Apostle Dieter F. Uchtdorf speak. A few days previous to my departure, I inform my brother who is currently in Utah of my travel plans. His immediate response was, "Cory, he speaks here all the time." I realize my complacency when I am living in Salt Lake City, so close to the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. How many times have I neglected to attend a meeting where Church leaders are speaking, that is being held just minutes away from my home? But now I am a foreigner in a land far from home, and I yearn for some connection to 'my people'.

## Lord, I Don't Want To Go Without You Anymore

With a copy of Richard Bushman's biography, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, in hand, I board a commercial bus at 8:20am, which takes me from Baryatino to the city of Kaluga and then on to the capital, Moscow. I watch out the window for hours as the landscape changes. White and lavender lilac bushes line the streets and once again my thoughts turn to home. My maternal grandmother, Nola, was raised in Utah, where every spring lilacs bloom and penetrate the air with their intoxicating scent. My grandparents left Utah and the lilac bushes for Southern California when my mother was a teenager. Years later my mother found herself living in Utah once again, and, feeling the separation from my grandmother, she devised a plan. She filled a box with freshly-picked lilacs, placed the stems of the lilacs in balloons filled with water, and shipped the box to California. When Nola opened the package, the aroma of lilacs filled the air and she wept with joy. I carry a picture of Nola with me throughout my travels. Though I have never met Nola in this life, the lilacs act as a link, connecting generations of my ancestors in purpose and in love.

## Meet Me In A Pillar Of Fire Shade Me With A Big White Cloud

My hope as I travel throughout Russia is not to be a foreign observer, but in the words of the late puppeteer, Jim Henson, to be an "extraordinary appreciator." This hope has been easy to obtain as there have been countless extraordinary events

taking place all around me. As the bus stops in a small village, to pick up additional passengers, a woman and man enter the bus and move to the rear. I soon discover that the couple is deaf and that an elderly man, with a kind weathered face is standing outside of the bus to see them off. I watch as the man signs to the couple, giving them advice and expressing his love. I am struck by the beauty and the simplicity of their interactions.

## Lord Wherever You Go You'll Always Have Me Around

In the evening I arrive at my accommodation, located just north of the Kremlin. At my hostel I meet travelers from Australia, Poland, Germany, Russia, England, the U.S. and Thailand. I meet a man from Wisconsin who was born in Salt Lake City and who expresses his "great respect for Mormons." I meet a young Russian woman who is an eighteen hour train ride away from home. When I tell her where I am from, she says that she has "friends from Salt Lake City." She tells me that her friends are two women who live in her city and have invited her to attend Russian classes.

## You Will Give My Body Rest And Never Let Me Thirst

On Monday, June 1, I find my way through Moscow's incredible Metro system, to the Hotel Cosmos where the church meeting is to take place. Out of fear of not finding the hotel's location, I find myself being four hours early for the fireside. I watch as the small choir practices and as Russian Latter-day Saints begin to trickle into the hotel's auditorium. There is a feeling of excitement and anticipation in the air. The room fills gradually and just after seven o'clock, the crowd stands as President and Sister Uchtdorf, along with Elder and Sister Neil L. Andersen enter the room. President Piper is first to speak, followed by Sister Cathy Andersen. Sister Andersen shows her love for the Russian Saints by delivering her thoughts in their native tongue.

## So I'm Not Going Anywhere If You Don't Go There First

Full-time missionaries have been serving in Russia since 1990. There are currently around 20,000 members, 121 branches and now only seven missions, as the two Moscow missions have recently been combined into one.<sup>(2)</sup> As I sit in the congregation made up of both Russian and International Saints, I am reminded of an idea posed by Richard Bushman regarding the early members of the church, but

I feel that it is just as relevant here and now:

*"They listen transfixed, puzzled, and sometimes fearful. They know a power beyond the ordinary plays around them. They want to grasp it and make it their own. Can they break mountains and divide the seas? Can they put the armies of nations at defiance? Sometimes they are uncertain. Sometimes they burn with certainty. They feel their lives are being elevated, their persons empowered. The concerns of farms, shops, and families drop away, and they dedicate their lives to the work."<sup>3</sup>*

## When I See You Beckoning Me That's How I'll Know

Elder Andersen addresses the congregation next. He boldly tells the Saints that the fate of the church in Russia rests upon their shoulders and encourages the Saints to work toward the creation of a Stake in Moscow. He says that the importance of a Stake is that it not only acts as a protector, but it is symbolic of the testimonies and strength of its members.

*"Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted. Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but when the storm cometh they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them. But behold, they are in the hands of the Lord of the harvest, and they are His; and he will raise them up at the last day."<sup>(Alma 26:5-7)</sup>*

Sister Uchtdorf reiterates Elder Anderson's words, encouraging the Saints to listen to the Holy Ghost and to keep the commandments in order to have this gift continually. She ends her words by saying, "I'm sure next time when we come, you will have a Stake."

## Lord Following Your Lead Is The Only Way I'll Go

President Uchtdorf begins his address by lovingly expressing his happiness in seeing the children of the church jumping around and being joyful. I am pleasantly surprised by President Uchtdorf's sense of humor and his ability to speak freely, without written script. His interpreter amazingly keeps up, despite President Uchtdorf's rapidness. At one point in his address, President Uchtdorf realizes the

challenge, pauses, laughs to himself, hugs the interpreter and then continues.

Joseph Smith taught, "We believe that all men are born free and equal; that no man, combination of men, or government of men, have power or authority to compel or force others to embrace any system of religion, or religious creed, or to use force or violence to prevent others from enjoying their own opinions, or practicing the same, so long as they do not molest or disturb others in theirs, in a manner to deprive them of their privileges as free citizens..."<sup>(4)</sup> President Uchtdorf expresses his belief that free will and moral agency is the "greatest gift next to life itself." He says that "we will not and cannot force anyone to remain or be active in the church" but that it is up to the individual. He professes that it is our duty to bear witness of what is right, not to tell others what they are doing wrong. "We honor other religions. We respect them...we defend them in their freedom to practice their religion."

After expressing his excitement regarding the temple in Kiev, Ukraine that will be dedicated in 2010 and will serve the Saints in Moscow, he takes a moment to express his sorrows. "We have way too many wars in this world and there is only one power to overcome this" he continues, "This Gospel is the answer to any challenge in this life." He lovingly tells the Russian Saints that their "faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" and that they are "known by the Prophet as a faithful people." He reassures their potential to grow, telling them that they are individually "pioneers that go forward, and others [will] follow." He encourages the Saints to "Be not guided by your fears. Be courageous."

Joseph Smith told his people, "The smallest and weakest among us, shall be powerful and mighty."<sup>(5)</sup> President Uchtdorf mirrors this teaching as he tells the congregation that we are individually stronger than Satan and that we "can overcome. We can live pure, if we choose to do so." The talk ends with a powerful promise, that if we live these teachings, that there will be a "temple in Russia not far at hand." He smiles as he says, "Let's not wait another fifty years before we have a temple in this place."

## When You Get Your Flock Together, Please Take Me Along

The following day I find myself privileged to be eating dinner with two young Russian sisters, both converts to the church. With great admiration I listen to them speak

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"I'll Be Glad"



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**“I’ll Be Glad”****Our Common Humanity**

by Crystal Busenbark

of their experiences and the power that they felt as President Uchtdorf spoke directly to them. One of the women is asked by another party if she has any previous religious background, and in response she shares the story of her grandmother, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, living in Russia during the Soviet Era. Since the Bible was considered to be counter-revolutionary, it was prohibited. Her grandmother’s family shared one Bible with multiple families in their neighborhood. They would pass the Bible along on a week to week basis with the hope of raising their children up in the same religious tradition.

**Lord, I’m Too Weak To Travel  
I’ll Be Glad You’re Strong  
And I’ll Lean On Your Arm**

The next morning I travel the 300km back to the community where I am volunteering. Everyone seems surprised that I made it back without getting lost, but I am of the same mindset of Ray Bradbury when he wrote, “Half the fun of travel is the aesthetic of lostness.” I feel blessed to have acted as an ‘extraordinary appreciator’ in the midst of the Saints in Moscow and to witness the strength and beauty of a people who have discovered truth and in the joy that truth manifests.

\**I’ll Be Glad* lyrics / poem by Shannon Stephens

[1]Deseret News, Monday, July 14, 2008 (Tad Walch).

[2]Bushman, Richard. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York: First Vintage [3]Books Edition, March 2007, p.160.

[4]Bushman, *Joseph Smith* (p.281).

[5]Bushman, *Joseph Smith* (p.214).

*“The earth provides enough resources for everyone’s need, but not for some people’s greed.”*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

Environmental policy is the basis of democracy. Life and livelihoods are intertwined with the natural environment. Without a healthy world, all the things we hold dear will cease to exist.

The earth has always provided for us everything we need to survive. She has given us the atmosphere to breathe, the water to drink and the food to eat. She has given us thousands of varieties of plants and places to make our homes. The earth gives us all of these things without any protest. She gives to us beyond measure. The earth is our greatest ally, our protector, and yet we treat her as if she was our slave and we were her masters. We have become selfish, always wanting more and capitalism has become the perfect system to promote this widespread greed.

When is enough enough? For the truly greedy, it never is. Greed is what feeds the atrocities of the mega corporate conglomerates, which have no moral convictions, except the pursuit of profit. In today’s society these corporations have overtaken our government in size and power. Of the 100 largest economies on earth right now, 51 are corporations. These corporations are exploiting our natural resources by chopping down our trees, blowing up our mountains, and using up all our water. They are leaving behind a pile of destruction where ever they go and we’re running out of oil, running out of land to expand food production and generally running out of planet to exploit.

In the past three decades alone, one-third of the planets natural resource

base has been consumed. We are cutting and mining and hauling and trashing at such a fanatical rate that we’re undermining the planets very ability for people to live here. In the United States we have less than 4% of our original forests left. 40% of our waterways have now become undrinkable. We are not just using up too many of these God given natural resources, but we’re using far more than our fair share. The United States has just 5% of the world’s population, yet somehow we are consuming 30% of the world’s resources and we are creating 30% of the worlds waste. If we were to continue to consume at this rate we would need three to five planets but unfortunately we have only one. How is it made possible for us here in the US to consume all these resources despite the fact that we account for such a small portion of the earths population? This has been accomplished through the blatant exploitation of the people, land, and resources of the third world while at the same time preventing these countries from developing their own industries. Even though these indigent people have been living on this land for generations, multinational corporations claim that they do not own their land or their natural resources. These corporations have obliterated our global fisheries with 75% of them now being fished at or beyond capacity. They have used up 80% of our planets original forests. And in the Amazon alone, we’re now losing 2,000 trees a minute. Due to the erosion of local environments and economies 200,000 people a day are moving from environments that have cared for and sustained them for generations. They will most likely move to the big city slums where they will work in dingy polluted factories making less than \$2 a day.

Our zealous consumption is not free; it has come at an astounding price. We are paying with the loss of our clean air and our natural resources. We have paid with an increase in asthma and cancer rates. The children

of the Congo have paid with their future, 30% of these children have now dropped out of school to mine coltan, a type of metal that we here in the first world need to make our disposable electronics. But most importantly we will eventually pay with the loss of all our lives because if humanity keeps abusing the earth in this way she will retaliate against her abusers and we will be eliminated.

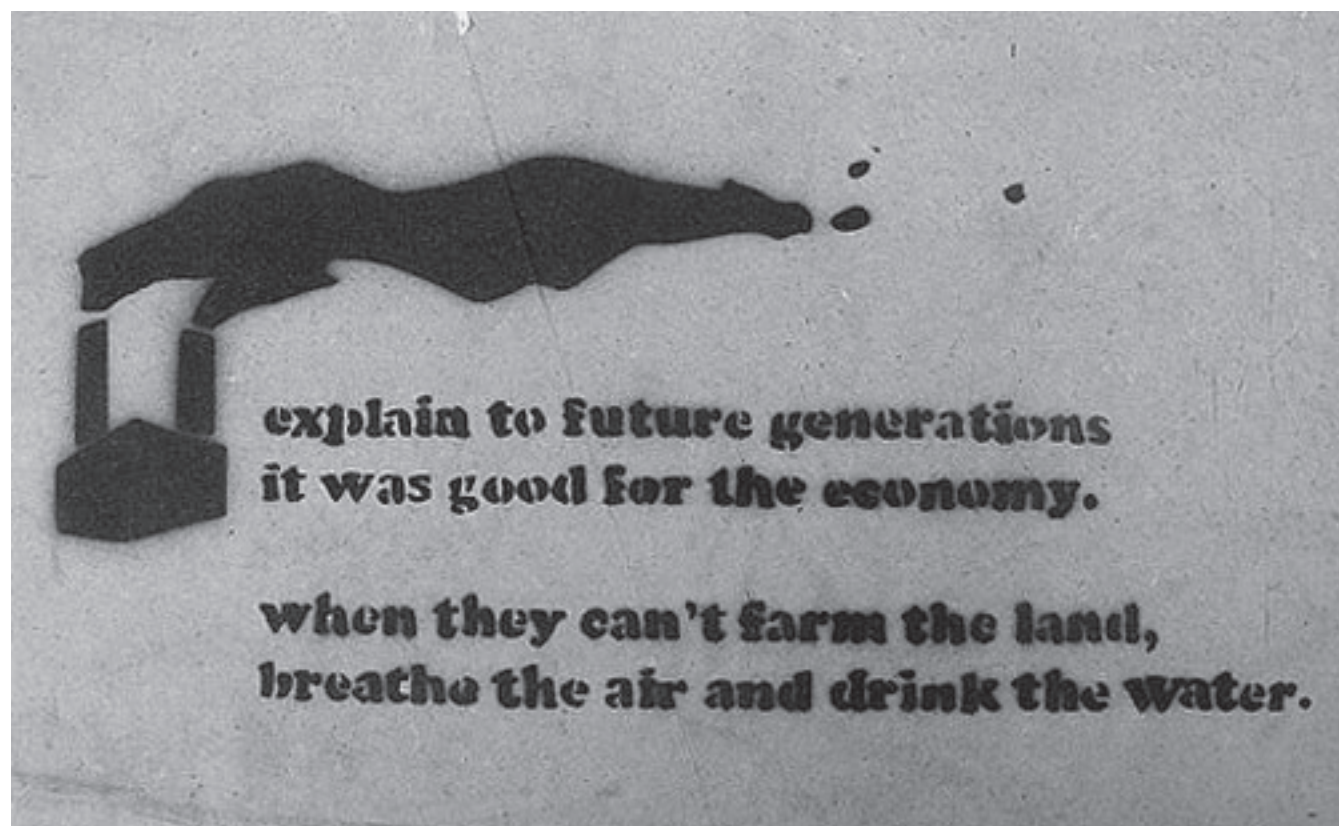
We are a nation of consumers. Consumption is the heart of our system and it has become the driving force behind our economy. After 9/11 when our country was still shocked and reeling from the devastation it had suffered, President Bush did not tell us to grieve, or pray, or even to hope, he told us to shop. As a society we have come to measure our own value and worth not by what we contribute but by how much we consume. We keep a constant flow of materials and goods flowing through our system at all times. Only an astonishing 1% of it all is still in use 6 months after purchase. This means that 99% of everything that we have harvested, mined, processed and transported will be gone after 6 months, buried in a land mine somewhere, never to be seen again.

We haven’t always been a nation of consumers. Over the last 50 years we have more than doubled our consumption rate, parting from a way of life that valued stewardship and resourcefulness. I think that retailing analyst Victor Lebow put it best when he said, “Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption.... we need things consumed, burned up, replaced and discarded at an ever accelerating rate.”

This was our answer after World War II as to how we were going to fix and build our economy. President Eisenhower’s Council of Economic Advisors Chairman stated that, “The American economy’s ultimate purpose is to produce more consumer goods.” Our ultimate goal is not to provide food, shelter, health insurance, education, sustainability or justice; it is to become the ultimate consumers. So far our plan has been met with astounding success.

To keep us consuming, many manufacturers design their products in such a way that they wear out after a certain amount of usage or otherwise become obsolete, a process called planned obsolescence. The other major strategy used to create perpetual consumption is perceived

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“Common Humanity”





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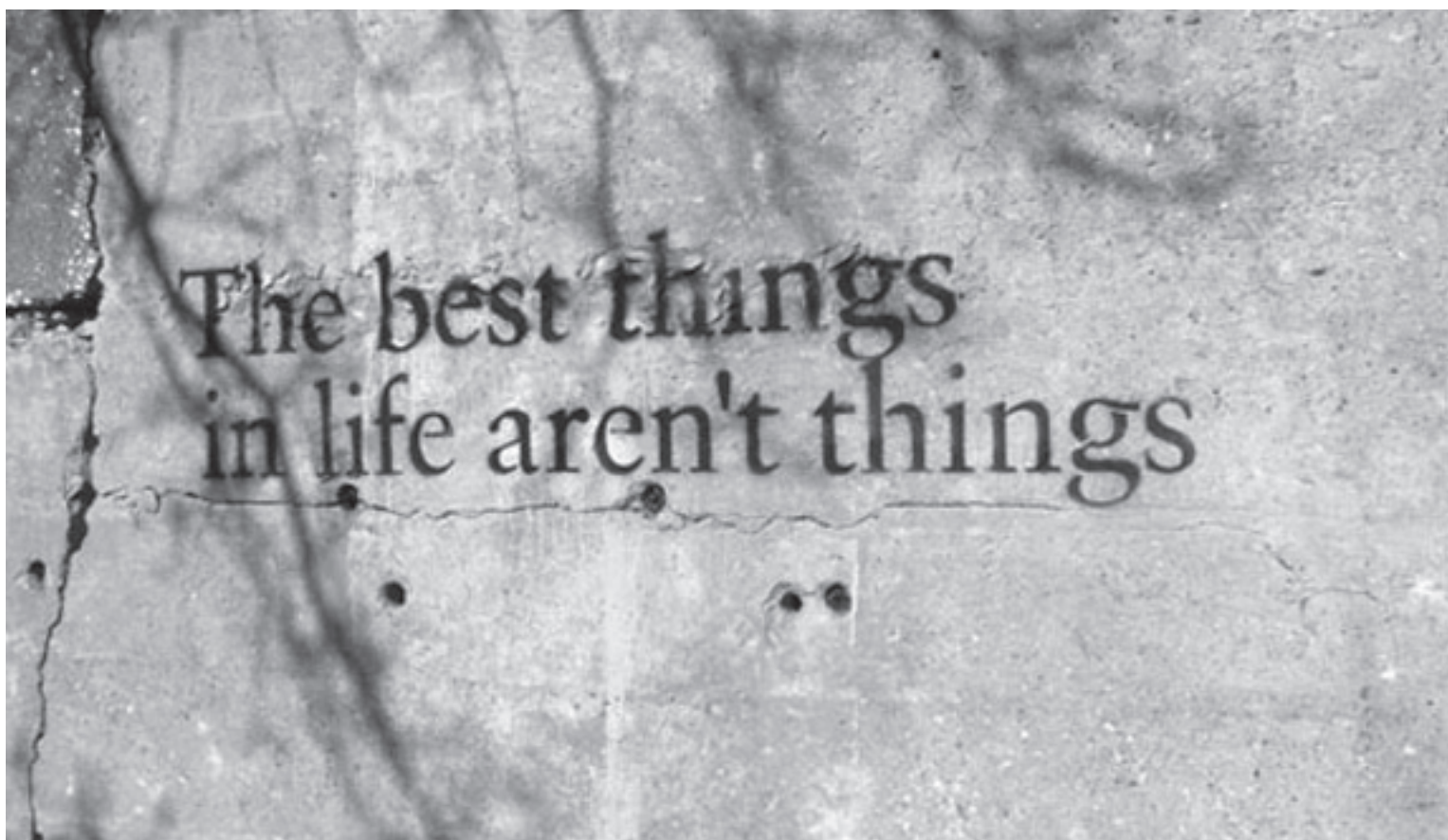
## “Common Humanity”

obsolescence, which is the constant updating and outdated of products and styles. This process makes us feel as though our fully functional products are no longer satisfactory; we see this to a great degree in both the electronics and fashion industries. There's no greater perpetrator in the spewing forth of this overall dissatisfaction than our own media. Each of us living here in the United States is bombarded with more than 3,000 advertisements a day. We will see more advertisements in this year alone than people 50 years ago saw in an entire lifetime. These advertisements will tell us 3,000 times a day that we're just not good enough. We have the wrong hair, the wrong skin, the wrong clothes and the wrong car. But luckily they have the answers to all these problems, all we must do is buy their products and we too can be “right” again. Media also plays a crucial role in hiding the anguish and ugliness that this consumption brings about. We don't see the child laborers, the displaced peoples, the pollution, the sweat shops or the raping of our natural resources. All we see is the finished product, packaged in shiny wrappings, waiting for us to be bullied into buying it.

We can't keep going down this path. Every person living in the United States produces four and a half pounds of garbage everyday, which is twice as much as we were producing 30 years ago. We must reclaim and transform our system into something based on sustainability and equity. We are in desperate need of a deeper democracy, one that recognizes the value of all living systems upon which human welfare and survival wholly depends. The environment is at the base of our global society and when we ignore the environment, all the things built on it – culture, society, livelihoods – will suffer and eventually cease to exist. Property rights may not be universal, but water, food and seeds are universal human rights. Joint ownership of the planet is essential in a very real sense in order to stop endemic starvation, malnutrition,

thirst, poverty, terrorism, racism, and extremism.

There is a new movement rising up, a resistance of the disadvantaged and excluded, who are working to protect their fundamental rights to the earth's resources. Markets and free trade have paved the way for globalization, which has removed responsibility and accountability from corporations and in this system the poor have the function of bearing all the costs. History has shown us that societies that over-exploit their resources and life-support systems are bound to collapse. Living economies are an alternative to the unsustainable system. Living economies are based on co-ownership and co production, on sharing and participation.



A living economy respects the renewable limits of natural resources and shares those resources to ensure everyone's needs are met. Biodiversity and water cannot be privatized in a living economy. A living economy relies on localization as an ecological imperative. Globalization leads to growth of the market, without creating jobs or providing security, whereas living economies revolve around human needs and preserving nature. Economics and ecology are not pitted against each other in living economies. The question of how we choose to view the world is based on our values. Living economies value life over profit and allow us to reclaim our common humanity.

We must realize that we are all members of the earth community and we all have a duty to protect the rights and welfare of all species and peoples. As human beings we have no right to encroach on the ecological space of others species or people, or treat them with cruelty and violence. All species, humans, and cultures have intrinsic worth.

They are subjects, not objects that can be manipulated or owned. We have no right to own other species, other people or the knowledge of other cultures through patents and other intellectual property rights. It is the duty of all people who live on this beautiful planet to defend biological and cultural diversity. Diversity is an end in itself, a value, a source of richness both material and cultural. All humans have the right to sustenance, to food, water, to safe and clean habitat, to security and ecological space. These rights are natural rights, they are birthrights given by the fact of existence on earth and should be protected through the community rights and commons. They are not given by states or corporations nor can they be extinguished by state or corporate control.

Localization of economics is a social and ecological imperative based on vibrant, resilient local economies, which support national and global economies. The global economy should not crush and destroy local economies. It should be based on earth-centered and community-centered knowledge systems. Living knowledge is knowledge that maintains and renews living processes and contributes to the health of the planet and people. Living knowledge is a commons; it belongs collectively to communities that create it and keep it alive. All humans have a duty to share knowledge. Rights are derived from and balanced with responsibility. Those who bear the consequences of decisions and actions should be the decision makers. Living economies connect people in circles of care, cooperation and compassion instead of dividing them through competition and conflict. Together we can globalize compassion, not greed; peace, not war.

It is the common attitude of the

American people to regard the environment as a non-issue that has no effect on our lives and which we, in turn, have no effect on. We perpetually fail to recognize the enmeshed threads that bind the fate of nature to our own, like individual strands in a spider's web. What we fail to see is that this problem is one that is perpetuated by countless lone persons whose individual choices change the world every day. It's not irrational to think that we can make a difference or that we can change the course we are on, what is truly unrealistic is the idea that we can continue to squander our resources and pillage our planet and think that there will always be an earth for us to live on.

Recommended Reading:

1. “Top 200: The Rise of Corporate Global Power” by Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh
2. “Natural Capitalism” by Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins
3. “Can't See the Forest” by Josh Sevin
4. “Global Issues: An Introduction” by John L. Seitz
5. “Global Environmental Issues” by Frances Harris
6. “Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth” by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees
7. “Welcome to my Jungle...before it's gone--Rainforests--Statistical Data Included” by Karen de Seve
8. “Davos 07: the Sound of the City” by Ken Livingstone
9. “Congo, Coltan, Conflict” by Benjamin-Todd
10. “Why Consumption Matters” by Betsy Taylor
11. “Journal of Retailing” by Victor Lebow
12. “Made to Break: Technology and Obsolescence in America” by Giles Slad, Harvard University Press (2007)
13. “Data Smog: Surviving the Information Glut” by David Shenk
14. “Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace” by Vandana Shiva, South End Press (2005)



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## “Homophobia, Family”

are the same-sex.

While at times I feel I have failed my queer friends and family members by participating in the church (I am a recent convert), I also feel like I was attracted to Mormonism for a purpose. Though it is very difficult for me to constantly practice patience with the members in my ward or stake on these issues, things often look bright. I seem to be meeting more people who have close ties to a LGBTQ person which means that more LGBTQ people are feeling comfortable with approaching their LDS friends and family members. As an ally and a daughter to a very amazing woman, I cannot give up in trying to soften the hearts of the Saints. To abandon the church when it shows ignorance or weakness does little to change attitudes. I must gather the strength to move forward in faith.

### A Letter to Potential Allies

Each community is different and thus, has different needs, weaknesses and strengths. There is no one way to combat homophobia and transphobia, so don't expect anyone to give you the answer. There are some suggestions I can make, though, coming from my own experiences. I do not speak for queer or trans folks. I do not speak for children of queer or trans folks. I only speak for myself. The first thing for me to do was to take responsibility for my own education. I have to make the initiative to read, ask questions, and create my own ideas about something. Then I have to choose whether or not to act on those ideas. That is the essence of self-liberation. What I know can set me free.

I also have to understand some basic questions that often get pushed aside like, “What is the difference between gender, sex, and sexuality?” and “What is an ally?” I have to unlearn what I have been taught about groups of people: queer, trans, Mormons, anarchists, etc. I have to become conscious of my role as an oppressor and ask how my actions and words affect others. What may seem basic is usually quite radical.

Some communities need slow, detailed explanations focused on these “basic” themes. As a Mormon I have the responsibility to listen for on-the-sly homophobic or heterosexist comments and speak up! If I don't open my mouth then I let that person know I agree with them. I also need to integrate myself more into the culture of the church, to be present. This is the fundamental principle of coalition politics and how real change happens, when I move outside my comfort zone.<sup>[12]</sup> I

also need to listen to the voices of LGBTQ Mormons.

As an anarchist I have to understand that lots of people are starting at square one. Some people have never had to think about homophobia and even more have never even heard the word, “transgender.” I must be prepared to talk to these people. I must also not assume that so-called Anarchist spaces will automatically be safe spaces for queer and trans folks just as I should not assume that all queer and trans folks are anti-capitalist, anti-war, anti-racist, anti-sexist, or anti-statist.

Here's that list I promised to help get you started.

Books:  
*Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth* by Wayne Besen, 2003, The Haworth Press

*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* by John Boswell, 1980, The University of Chicago Press

*Coalition Politics: Turning the Century* by Bernice Johnson Reagon, 1983, Rutgers University Press

*My Gender Workbook* by Kate Bornstein, 1998, Routledge

*Peculiar People* Edited by Ron Schow, Wayne Schow & Marybeth Raynes, 1991, Signature Books

*Same-sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-century Americans: A Mormon Example* by D. Michael Quinn, 1996, The University of Illinois Press

*What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality* by Daniel A. Helminiak, Ph.D., 2000, Alamo Square Press

DVD:  
*For the Bible Tells Me So*, 2007, First Run Features.

Internet:  
<http://www.affirmation.org>

<http://mormonsformarriage.com>

<http://www.religioustolerance.org>

<http://www.truthwinsout.org>

[1] Lisa Neff “Mormons on a Mission” *The Advocate*. April 12, 2005 [2] Don D. Harryman, “With all Thy Getting, Get Understanding” *Peculiar People*. 1991, Signature Books. [3] “Ex-Gay Mormon Group, Evergreen, Lists Convicted Sexual Predator Therapist as Resource” Oct. 10, 2008. This same article also makes note of Evergreen's Ministry listing convicted sexual predator therapist, Christopher Austin, as a resource for patients. [4] Michelle Garcia, “South African Gangs Raping Lesbians to ‘Cure’ Them” March 13, 2009 [5] Please see Anne Fausto-Sterling's (a geneticist and professor of medical science at Brown) “Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Men and Women” *The New York Times*, March 12, 1993. [6] Rebecca A. Walter, “The Problems with Niceness” April, 2009 [7] See John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* for detailed analysis of the history behind biblical scripture and tolerance to homosexuality. [8] Shawn Neidorf & Rich Morin “Four-in-Ten Americans Have Close Friends or Relatives Who are Gay” May 23, 2007 [9] “New Reports Show More Americans Know Someone Gay, Leading to an Increase in Their Support of Equality” Oct. 13, 2006 [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org) [10] Judith Stacey & Timothy Biblarz, “How does the sexual orientation of parents matter?” *American Sociological Review*, 2001. [11] Ellen C. Perrin, MD, professor of pediatrics, Tufts University School of Medicine. American Academy of Pediatrics Conference and Exhibition, Washington, D.C., Oct. 8-11, 2005 [12] See Bernice Johnson Reagon's “Coalition Politics”

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## “DUHC”

In order to do that we also need to be teaching one another how to run those systems. In other words, we need to be teaching and learning the arts and skills of democratic decision-making. So we are resisting, we are building alternative systems, we are teaching organizing skills and we are doing general education. Our entire philosophy is intended to shift our culture so that people are not only participating in the alternate systems, but are also learning and experiencing a different perspective, one based on cooperation and collaboration rather than domination and abuse.

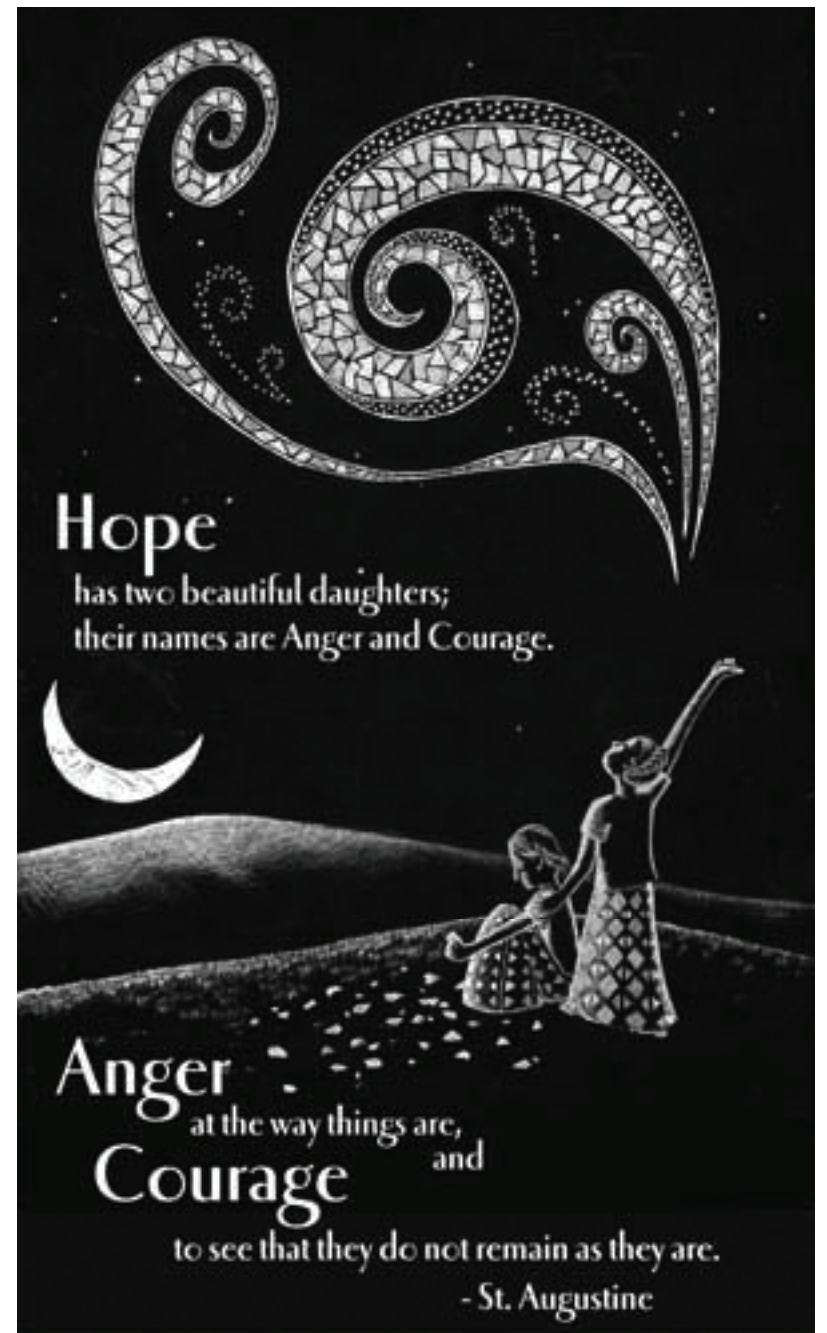
**David:** I would also like to describe our work with the County General Plan, which is the basic blueprint for land use issues. Under California law, every twenty years there has to be an update of the County General Plan. It is usually a pretty boring process, and radicals and social change agents usually don't get involved. But at Democracy Unlimited we are bringing our unabashedly radical social justice perspective into the process. We want to make sure that we protect our timber and agricultural land; we want to make sure that affordable housing is part of the conversation, and we want to prevent urban sprawl.

We are working with more traditional liberal-oriented environmental groups in a very cooperative and collaborative process. We are also trying to push some of these groups outside of their typical comfort level. Basically, it's just good old fashioned grassroots organizing coupled with DUHC's radical analysis. And we are using the General Plan update as an opportunity to do this.

**Jason:** Lastly I want to continue talking about the politics of the spirit, or the spirit of politics and the role of spirituality in this moving forward of these principles.

**David:** The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Our ultimate end must be the creation of the beloved community.” I believe that. I think that the reason so many people are cynical or apathetic about politics is because they have not had the experience of being part of a beloved community and cannot even imagine what it might look or feel like.

At Democracy Unlimited we are not



a faith-based group, but the desire to create the beloved community is the reason that I do what I do. Now, I am not looking for a pat on the head from you or the readers of *The Mormon Worker*, but I quit a successful law practice in order to dedicate myself to this project.

The effort to create the beloved community is the great human task. It is the great work, and that's what we are striving to do at Democracy Unlimited. So we invite your readers to contact us. Let's work together to create the world we want and deserve. Let's create the beloved community together!



# Immigration

by Tyler Bushman

Opinions of members of the LDS church concerning immigration range all across the political spectrum. However, in light of our doctrines regarding individual families and the eternal nature and equality of the human family, it seems that the issue becomes a little clearer. Elder M. Russell Ballard spoke on the need for an eternal perspective when considering the world situation: “If we are determined to live by Heavenly Father’s plan, we will use our God-given moral agency to make decisions based on revealed truth, not on the opinions of others or on the current thinking of the world.” Considered from an eternal perspective, we realize that borders are simply man-made artifices. Separating families through immigration laws, promoting pride under the guise of nationalism and creating insurmountable economic restrictions, borders take away our agency and thwart God’s plan.

The very concept of borders creates false divisions that segregate the human family, cultivating an attitude of prejudice toward those who would otherwise be neighbors. No vast moral discontinuity occurs when we step from one side of a boundary to the other...in fact this kind of fear and isolation is what inevitably starts wars. By amplifying our cultural, economic and racial differences, our brothers and sisters become “wholly other.” Just as sexism, racism, and classism force us to segregate ourselves into hierarchical ranks, nationalism becomes yet another tool of discrimination. “But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature...for *the LORD* seeth not as man seeth; for for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).” In the scriptures, we are taught that divisions and inequality do not come from God, who is the father of us all. “For none of these iniquities come of the Lord...he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female... and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Ne. 26:33). Indeed, the Book of Mormon shows us the kind of society that was built when physical and psychological borders were destroyed. “And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people...and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner

of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God. And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings (4 Ne. 1:15-18).”

Leaders of the church have repeatedly spoken about the importance of the family unit as the primary component of society. Conversely, immigration laws (which are one of the fruits of international borders) have divided millions of families. Jim Reed from the Tampa Tribune reported last year, “No one knows how many immigrant families in the United States are divided because a parent was forced to leave the country. The National Immigration Forum, however, reports that 3 million children born in this country have at least one parent who is undocumented and at risk of deportation.” The Proclamation on the Family, issue by the First Presidency states the church’s stance on the evil of breaking up the family: “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another [...] The family is ordained of God. Children are entitled to [...] be reared by a father and a mother. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets. We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.”

Ultimately the Christian, eternal perspective of borders is epitomized in the oft-repeated verse to “love one’s neighbor as oneself.” We, as Latter-Day Saints should strive to build a world where we can work and live with our neighbors, where no human is illegal, and where families are not separated because of imaginary lines drawn in the sand. Seeking to build Zion, we strive for justice and equality for all of God’s children.

## Contributors:

**Jason Brown** served an LDS mission in the Dominican Republic and graduated from BYU in anthropology. He hopes to dedicate his life to the principles of solidarity, sustainability and cooperation.

**Cliff Burton** served an LDS mission in Stockholm, Sweden. He currently resides in San Francisco, CA.

**Crystal Busenbark** is finishing her degree in Peace and Justice Studies at Utah Valley University. She is the Utah County Chair of High Road for Human Rights, the president of the UVU Peace and Justice Club, a member of Students Against Militarism and an avid human rights activist. She lives in Provo, Utah and is the mother of four beautiful children.

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**Tyler Snow Bushman** served an LDS mission in Puebla, Mexico. He is a Permaculture designer / Appropriate technology welder. He is currently working on starting a non profit that will work in the State of Chiapas Mexico in Zapatista communities. Its goal to be to help strengthen their autonomy through doing workshops on appropriate technology and Permaculture design, including workshops on Food Forests, Sustainable food yielding gardens, and bike powered machines.

**Ricky Cheney** served an LDS mission in Paraguay, Asuncion North and has translated and interpreted the indigenous language Guarani for the church. He is a bio-centric, feminist, anarcho-mormon who enjoys riding his bicycle and interacting with his community in all the forms of species he happens to encounter. He has organized many community events such as a film series and public forums highlighting issues such as Torture, Immigration Reform, and Sex-ed Reform.

**kristina grace k.** lives in Northern Virginia with her partner and young son with whom she co-edits the anarchist journal, Rebel Stew. She grew up in a home with queer parents and in the GLBT community in the DC Metro area. kristina has been involved in a wide range of activism since the age of 12 including queer liberation, radical feminism, and animal rights. She currently works as a full-time mother, a part time yoga teacher and as a student doula and childbirth educator. She has identified as an anarchist for seven years and for three of those years has been a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Tariq Khan** resides in northern Virginia with his partner and new born baby, where he co-edits the anarchist journal Rebel Stew. He’s been involved in a wide spectrum of anti-authoritarian work ranging from animal/earth liberation to prisoner support to immigrants rights and fighting racism. He’s a military veteran and has been involved with various anti-militarism efforts such as supporting troop and veteran resistance and counter-recruitment work. He’s also played in some Washington DC area anarcho-punk bands.

**Ron Madson** served an LDS mission to France-Switzerland. Ron received a bachelors degree in English from BYU and a Juris Doctorate from the J. Reuben Clark Law School in 1981 and has practiced law in Nevada and Utah for the past 27 years.

**Forest Simmons** has a PhD in mathematics from UT Austin 1981. He graduated from BYU with a BS in Math and Physics in 1977, served as an LDS missionary in the Argentina South Mission from November 1970 to November 1972, served in Vietnam from August 1967 to September 1969 as an enlisted man in the US Army, and is a lucky husband, father, and grandfather in a wonderful extended family.

**Gregory VanWagenen** is a secular Mormon. In the past he organized for the Militant Labor Forum in Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. He has also worked as a campaign volunteer for the New Democratic Party in the Burnaby-Kingsway (British Columbia) riding. He has three children.

**Will Van Wagenen** has a Bachelors Degree in German from Brigham Young University, and a Master’s degree in Theology from Harvard University. Will spent seven months in Iraq doing human rights work in 2005-2006.











