

March 13, 1983
777 East Walnut
Provo, Utah 84604

My dear Melle,

You have been on my mind a great deal since we talked in California and I feel an urgency to write to you. I am sure that we were meant to meet and that our Father in Heaven must be very aware of your search and your struggles with the doubts that have blocked your pathway. The basis of this letter will be a testimony that He lives, and that he does hear and answer our prayers.

I must share with you that I was especially drawn to you during my workshop in California, not knowing that you had been a member of the church. I noticed where you were sitting and the times when you left and entered the room. When I had the opportunity to spend time with you I began to understand why. Your gifts are badly needed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You have a deep spiritual motivation and you are sensitive to the needs of others. I was touched when you said we are born into this world to bless the lives of others and to serve. As you continue to stay close to our Father in Heaven your prayers will not go unanswered.

Before I was born, my parents began to have serious doubts concerning church policies and the authority of church leadership. My Father, Stanley W. Pratt, was a grandson of Orson Pratt and he had difficulty reconciling present church policies with those of the past. They decided to leave the church and convinced my aunt and uncle to leave as well. Consequently, I was not born into the church and spent my early childhood years outside the church.

The relationship between my parents deteriorated as my Mother became increasingly disillusioned with the group they had joined. She felt as if a dark cloud had affected her discernment of truth and her ability to reason. At this time she made what was to become the most important decision of her life. Even though the older children had decided to remain with my Father, she decided to take the remaining five children in her care and come back into the church. I thank God daily for that decision!

I mention this personal information to you because it so starkly illustrates what became of all of us as we became like two separate families. For those who left the church, the quality of their lives plummeted. Their lives, and the lives of their children, have been infected with value confusion, turmoil, and intellectual, spiritual and physical poverty. They are good and loving people but they lack direction and moral certainty.

In virtually every case, for those of us who came back into the church the quality of life escalated upward! A high degree of excellence infused every area of our lives, interwoven in strong value systems. All have happy, stable marriages. Husbands and wives have attended various universities. All have become leaders in the church and community and all are spiritually motivated. Our children are rich in intellectual and spiritual gifts and there is a powerful purpose shining in our lives. Most importantly, we are close in our love relationships with one another and with our children. The fruits of the Gospel were the evidence of eternal truths.

I became increasingly unhappy about the state of our family. Alarmed by the crumbling family unit and the destructive course set by some of our loved

ones I remembered the scripture that so deeply touched Joseph Smith; "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God...and it shall be given him." I figured that scripture applied to me as well! One night I knelt by the side of my bed with tears spilling down my cheeks and told the Lord I needed some answers. I told Him that if we were to remain a broken family throughout the eternities it may be helpful for me to know so I could work toward some kind of acceptance. I told Him if there was any hope for reunity in the Gospel of Jesus Christ I wanted to know that too. I shared my feeling that the mass confusion in the minds of family members who left the church had been largely the result of decisions their parents made- and that I would accept a special mission to help unify my family if such a reunion was possible. I knew that my Father was a good man who had great integrity but had been deceived by cunning men. I knew that only God knows our hearts and that He is a God of fairness. Mostly, I needed hope!

I got off my knees and crawled into bed. I had been there only a few minutes when a light began to grow at the foot of my bed. Slowly, it began to fill the entire room, illuminating the closet door and other objects in the room- turning to brilliance! I have never been more petrified in my life! Fear, like a hard lump, filled my throat and tears stung my eyes. In the center of the light the figure of a man appeared, standing more than a foot above the floor. He spoke softly in a penetrating voice: "Fear not!" It was more than a request. It was a command. The fear left me instantly and a perfect serenity flooded my being. I felt totally at ease with this messenger whose beauty defied description- as if I were talking with my best friend. I knew why he had come and I asked the question that was burning in my mind- the question he had come to answer. "When will my family be reunited in the church of Jesus Christ?"

Very tenderly, but with authority, he said, "The time has not yet come."

Only two sentences and the conversation was over. Almost instantly, he was gone and the light filtered away. I was filled with awe- with peace, and most of all with the hope that my family would not be forgotten- that one day they would be given a new chance to make a new decision, a decision born of their own free agency, and their own knowledge. I also felt a special responsibility to be a source of peace, acceptance and help to my family!

My Father never quite believed in the message and validity of my vision and died a few years later without being rebaptized into the church. When I questioned the Lord it was made known to us that we should apply for his reinstatement. It is highly unusual that someone who has been excommunicated would be reinstated and I must confess that our hopes were not high. You can imagine our joy when we received a letter from Robert C. Gunderson, Coordinator of Special Services, which said, "This is to inform you that Stanley Wallace Pratt, who was excommunicated on 5 May, 1959, was reinstated by baptism on 24 June, 1970. On 24 June, 1970, the endowment this individual received in life, together with all sealing blessings which were received in life except those which may have been otherwise specifically cancelled, were restored. It was a pleasure to be of service to you in this matter." If you are wondering any further

When I read the letter I knew that on the other side my Father was being given a second chance to accept the gospel. I believe he has done that. Gradually, other members of the family have come to us for counsel- for help- for the same hope that my heavenly messenger gave to me. I believe that one day the time will come that we will be reunited in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and I have an undeniable witness that the Lord is no respecter of persons. For the honest in heart, throughout the four corners of the world, He hears and answers prayers.

Which brings me to the exciting part of the letter. When you mentioned a man named Dee Jay Nelson, a doctor who supposedly left the church because of a cover-up of his true translation of the Book of Abraham, I must admit I had never heard of him before. This morning I told my 16 year old son that I needed sources- and I needed them today! I didn't know where to turn for information about this man. Immediately he responded, "Call Dr. Hugh Nibley. He is the leading linguist and Egyptologist in the church!" Shon, because of his special gifts as a national foreign language scholar, had been given a personal interview with Dr. Nibley and has a great respect for him. After several tries, I reached Dr. Nibley who lives in our area and mentioned my need to get more information about Dr. Nelson. His voice came alive as he said, "That matter was settled several years ago!" He corrected my use of the term "Doctor" and said that "Mr." Nelson had only two years of high school. He bought a cheap mail order diploma and forged his name on numerous documents to give himself authority- then devised a unique and intricate anti-Mormon plot to lure away members of the church. Unfortunately, he was fairly successful and after his fraudulence was unveiled in the western states he moved to the east coast where not as many people had heard of him. He advised me to locate the book, "They Lie in Wait to Deceive" by Robert and Rosemary Brown and told me to pick up the book, "Abraham in Egypt" which he wrote himself. I did not want to wait til Monday to comb the bookstores, so I asked my 17 year old Sunday school students if they had ever heard of the book by the Browns. Heidi Hughes responded immediately and said her brother, Craig, had almost been lead away from the church by Mr. Nelson's deceptions. She appeared at my doorstep almost before I returned home from church with the book in her hands. As I leafed through the book I was amazed at some of the letters and documents they have uncovered! They pointed out how people like Mr. Nelson want people out of the church at any price, even at the cost of their own integrity!

Mr. Nelson never received a degree, never taught at BYU or any university, was never an international authority on the Egyptian language and was never commissioned by the church to translate the Book of Abraham. He has received such a bad reputation that even many other anti-Mormon groups will have nothing to do with him. He has never published anything about Egyptian culture that has scientific merit. He was never active in the church.

The most touching thing of all was a letter written by Craig Hughes that appeared on the inside cover of the book that Heidi brought to our home. He has given me permission to share it with you:

"I completed this book August 21, 1982. My eyes were truly opened. I remember being in Pasaat on my mission and picking up a copy of "The Mormon Papers". I still remember reading Dee Jay Nelson's letter asking that his name be removed from the church records as a result of his coming to the light after his translation of the supposed Book of Abraham. I fell into the trap and doubts arose. I made the mistake of putting the church on trial, believing gullibly, every anti-Mormon statement without reservation. As a result of this book I realized how easily I believed Mr. Nelson's credentials as an eminent Egyptologist and his statements concerning his "commission" to translate the Book of Abraham papyri. All lies! I had no reason to doubt his statements.

Not so anymore. In my book, the anti-Mormons will be the ones on trial from this day on. Furthermore, as a result of this book I've learned to appreciate even more the strong testimony I've received of the truthfulness of this church. It's true, it's true, IT'S TRUE!"

Craig E. Hughes

Melle, our church has never been one to lash out at the churches who spend so much time and money on anti-Mormon campaigns. We havn't the time or energy for destructive purposes. You can spend all your time fighting against something,

or spend it fighting "for" something! But, because of the numbers of innocent victims (my family members among them!) of elaborate plots like Nelsons, church leaders are beginning to support writings which defend the church. Robert and Rosemary Brown obviously have a special mission in this area so I called them this evening in Mesa, Arizona, and shared your dilemma and Craig's beautiful letter. They were deeply moved, and will be sending you an autographed copy of their book immediately. They are in the process of publishing several others.

So....it has been an exhausting day! Everyone is in bed as I write you this letter- but I cannot deny that today we have been led by the spirit toward a great purpose! I feel so renewed- so good inside, and so happy for you!

I believe in you. I believe in your faith. I believe the time will come. When it does, I hope I can be there to celebrate it with the gift of song!

I love you!

Your Sister,

Deanna