

# Readers' Forum

SUNSTONE welcomes letters from our readers and prints a representative sample of opinions. All letters represent the attitudes of the writers and not necessarily those of the editors or publisher. To be considered for publication, letters should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. A more lengthy letters will be treated like a manuscript submission.

## Art Should Edify

Brother Keele's statement that lofty ideas require lofty modes of expression is a point well taken. The Mormon dramas should not be judged against the backdrop of Grande Opera, however, being a form of popular entertainment on the same level as the movie. I attend few popular movies any more, having found most superficial, sensationalistic, and generally devoid of any intellectual stimulation. Beyond lacking any spiritual value, for the most part even the "spiritual substitute" of sentimentality seems largely out of vogue. Their strength, if there is any, is generally in characterization or in the technical aspects. Technically, the Mormon plays range from good to excellent, at least when one considers the facilities available. They have been known to be sentimental, and yet have surprising depth of character and theme (once again keeping in mind these are meant to be popular entertainment). I have found many of the Saturday's Warrior songs to be quite moving, for example, and increasingly so the more I have listened to them. They make me think and feel, on a spiritual plane.

As for these plays committing aesthetic sin or blasphemy, I believe Brother Keele should be careful of judging the aesthetic tastes or level of others. I firmly believe that many people are moved and caused to think deeply by these dramas. I believe many have been touched by the Spirit as they have for the first time internalized these ideas. Many of these would have slept through "The Woman Without a Shadow," I'm sure. Perhaps a lack of musical education precludes many from enjoying opera, but this in no way implies that they are not well educated in other fields, academic or not, or that they are not just as spiritually elevated as those

who do like opera, as the term "aesthetic sin" would imply.

Similarly, Brother Reynolds is quoted in the same issue of SUNSTONE as calling literature that substitutes sentimentality for spirituality unworthy of us. Another point well taken. But once again let us beware not to judge a thing without spiritual merit just because we were not moved. Mark Twain must not have been spiritually touched by the Book of Mormon to have called it "chloroform in print." Once again the novels referred to should not be judged against serious literature, but against drug store romances and cheap paperbacks. They are casual reading, on the level of entertainment rather than art. Though they can be superficial and sentimental, I find even the clumsiest didacticism more edifying than the cheap thrills of sensationalist novels. Though I prefer more serious fiction, I do not regard those who prefer the other as automatically spiritually inferior because of it.

Mormondom needs not only art worthy of her, but entertainment worthy of her as well. If entertainment detracts from art, the answer is certainly not to stop producing good entertainment, but to produce more meaningful art and to educate our audience. Mormon art and Mormon entertainment ought to edify. A Mormon's very life ought to be centered around his own and others' progression. Both the writer of operas and of musicals should use the finest their respective modes have to offer to help their audiences to see, think, feel, and grow.

Benson Y. Parkinson  
Ogden, Utah

**The Orthodoxy Question**  
After reading Michael Hicks article

entitled "Do You Preach the Orthodox Religion?" I must say that it sounds very reminiscent of the historical accounts of heretics as recounted by Elaine Pagels in her book, *The Gnostic Gospels* (1979).

It has always been my understanding that the "Gospel" embraces all truth. But as with the history of mankind, truth has always taken a back seat to the orthodox teachings of the day. It seems to me that one day we all, whether great or small in the kingdom, will be required to give a detailed accounting as to how we dealt with truth when it presented itself. As things are today, it seems that the heresy question cannot be resolved at the orthodox organizational level. Therefore it appears that any attempt to do so would do nothing more than bring about one's own ostracism.

It is my humble prayer to all those who are desperately earnest in reconciling the heresies of these latter days, to search out their own theological roots. If I may suggest, a good place to embark in this truth seeking venture would be in the *Ugaritic Texts* of Ras Shamra. A couple of unforgettable books listed here should open new doors for new truth inspiring concepts in understanding latter day theology: E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1980; Conrad E. L'Heureux; *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Edwards Brothers, Inc. 1979. Both of these books are a part of the Harvard Semitic Monograph Series and are distributed by Scholars Press of Chico, California.

In closing I would admonish all those who love truth and are not afraid of where the truth may lead them, to diligently test and prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thes. 5:21).

Robert G. Frie  
Tyler, Texas

## Liberal Do Gooder

Your September-October issue of John C. Bennett and his article "From Christian Faith to Social Ethics" was to say the least very disturbing.

Mr. Bennett speaks like the typical liberal "do gooders" that have gotten us into the economic problems we now face and the same ideas that have put France into socialism and the rest of Europe on the way.

Men like that are either blindly led astray, or have additional ambitions of power. They speak as though without government controls, give away programs, etc. that the deprived would continually worsen. With that

thinking I ask myself, how did mankind ever make it to 1930 when the "new deal" started the do gooder thinking. Life was so terrible then; no opportunity to pay back a national debt. Never having experienced the effects of inflation, nor all of the red tape required to start a business within the bounds of such a gracious government. Yet they seemed to be all right! Large slums or ghettos were

not common place. Convicted murderers do not have the humanitarian rights to put off the execution indefinitely. It goes on and on.

There is one thing I realize from these men. As long as they can persuade the public as they have done so far, my investment portfolio for high inflation assets will stay in effect.

Dell Chryst

# Scriptural Commentary

## ON ISAIAH

Steve Christensen

Probably one of the most interesting yet perplexing books of the Old Testament is the book of Isaiah. In this issue of Commentary we bring to your attention some interesting extracts regarding various aspects of the book of Isaiah.

### Major Themes from the Book of Isaiah

1. Remnant to Return: 1:9; 2:3; 4:3; 10:20-22; 11:16; 15:9; 18:7; 37:32; 44:28.
2. Messianic prophecy related to Christ's first coming: 1:18; 7:14-15; 9:2-7; 11:1-5; 6:9-10; 7:10-16; 8:17-18; 16:4-5; 22:21-25; 25:8; 28:16; 32:1-4; 41:11; 41:27; 42:1-8, 16; 45:20-25; parts of 49:1-13; 50:4-7; 52:3-15; 53; 61:1-3; 63:9; 66:7.
3. Messianic prophecy related to the Second Coming: 2:10-21; 4:4; 9:18-19; 10:16-34; 11:4-5, 14-16; 13:6-22; 24:6-23; 25-26; 30:27-33; 31:9; 33:11-17; 34; 40; 60:19-22; 61; 63-64.
4. The latter-day restoration: 2:2-3; 5:26-30; 11:10-14; 14:1-3; 18; 24:13-16; 26:15-18; 28:5, 9-14; 29; 32:15-20; 33:4-6; 41; 43; 44; 49:1-6, 22; 54; 60-61.
5. The Gathering: 2:2-3; 10:22; 11:11; 14:1-2; 18; 24:13; 32:19-20; 33:4; 43:5-9; 45:20-25; 49:5-6, 22-26; 51:11; 65:8-9; 66:18-21.
6. The Millennium: 2:4, 17-19; 4; 11:6-9; 12; 19:19-25; 25-28; 30; 33:20-24; 35; 43:19-21; 54:11-14; 55:12-13; 65:17-25; 66:20-24.
7. Warning to Latter-day Saints: 2:19; 3-4; 13:1-5; 26:17-21; 28; 32:9-15; 56-60; 65-66.
8. Care for the poor and needy: 1:17, 23; 3:14-15; 9:17; 10:2; 11:14; 14:30, 32; 25:4; 26:6; 29:19; 32:7; 41:17; 58:6-7; 66:2.
9. Warnings to the wicked: 1; 2:10-22; 3-5; 9-10; 14-17; 19; 21-24; 28; 34; 46-48; 56; 65-66.
10. Promises of peace and joy to the faithful: 25-27; 48-18; 54:10, 13; 55:12; 57:1-2, 19; 60:15; 61:10-11; 65:14, 18-19; 66:5, 10-14 (over 100 references to this concept in Isaiah).
11. Apostasy: 1; 3; 5; 9:20-21; 10; 14; 21-

10. Promises of peace and joy to the faithful: 25-27; 48-18; 54:10, 13; 55:12; 57:1-2, 19; 60:15; 61:10-11; 65:14, 18-19; 66:5, 10-14 (over 100 references to this concept in Isaiah).

11. Apostasy: 1; 3; 5; 9:20-21; 10; 14; 21-24; 28; 30; 33:1-9; 47; 48:1-8; 55-59; 65:1-16; 66:15-18.

12. Scattering of Israel: 2:2-5; 5:5-7, 13; 8:15; 16:4; 30:16-17; 33:3; 61:9.

13. The everlasting covenant: 24:5; 33:8; 42:6; 54:10; 55:3; 56:4, 6; 61:8.

From L. Lamar Adams, *The Living Message of Isaiah* (Deseret Book: SLC, UT) 1981, pp. 51-52.

### Computers Study the Authorship of Isaiah

After two years of research of all available literature on the book of Isaiah, I discovered that only one out of ten scholars was in the conservative camp. (Adams, *Statistical Style Analysis of the Book of Isaiah*, pp. 19-23.) Since the scholars in the critics' camp claimed that the reason for dividing up the book of Isaiah was its literary style, the evidence concerning authorship could be tested using the computer and statistical analyses. Rates of literary usage, such as unique

wording and other habits of speech or writing, could be identified and tabulated by a computer to conduct an authorship style analysis on the book of Isaiah compared with other Old Testament authors. This I did for claims made by both conservatives and divisionists.

The file containing the comprehensive log of all claims and arguments obtained on the Isaiah authorship problem was a large one, filling a two-foot filing drawer. Since there were so many claims by both critics and conservatives, analyzing these claims was almost like moving an enormous mountain bare-handed. In fact, it would have been impossible were it not for certain computer techniques.

A team of thirty-five researchers at Brigham Young University, working three years, began by coding the Hebrew text of the book of Isaiah and a stratified random sample of verses from eleven other Old Testament books. The coded text was transferred to computer cards and tapes. The researchers involved in the project included Hebrew scholars, linguists, computer programmers, statisticians, computer keypunch typists, research secretaries, and other research specialists. They were assisted by the BYU computer center, graduate school, and religion department.

In addition to the full text of the book of Isaiah in Hebrew, other literary works were put on computer tape: parts of eleven other Old Testament books in Hebrew, the full text of the Book of Mormon, the full text of the Doctrine and Covenants, and large portions from the writings of the famous English poet, Thomas Carlyle.

As I anxiously pored over the results, I could hardly believe my eyes! I was completely overwhelmed at such strong evidence of unity, of single authorship, of the book of Isaiah in the literary style analysis!

From L. Lamar Adams, *The Living Message of Isaiah*, pp. 22-23, 25.

# Paradoxes and Perplexities

*I am writing this column to share a slightly warped vision of the Mormon experience—or rather, of my Mormon experience—not because it is the right view but because it is a different view. I think that what would benefit the Mormon culture most right now is an exploration of the different ways of being Mormon rather than the correct way to be a*

*Mormon. One of the best ways of illuminating possibilities and options are to examine paradoxes and perplexities. I love paradoxes because they expand the mind. I agree with Kierkegaard that 'the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without paradox is like the lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity.'*

*Dealing with paradoxes, I shall come up with questions rather than answers, perplexity rather than certainty. I shall be contradictory. But I identify with Walt Whitman who wrote: 'Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. (I am large. I contain multitudes.)' I have found that in my life there is room for contradiction because I contain a multitude of ideas and feelings and ways of being. And I love being able to be so many things and experience so much. I believe that the gospel is large and can contain multitudes and so the bias that will pervade this column is that there is room in the Gospel of Christ for all of us (and that includes you and me and maybe them, too).*

#### THE JOYS OF CLERKHOOD Marvin Rytting

In this "Religion of Clerks" it is common to express great compassion for those unsung heroes—the stake and ward clerks. The frustrations of clerkhood are obvious and were poignantly and humorously expressed in a letter printed in *SUNSTONE* last year. For the most part, the various clerky callings are accepted with reservations and deserted with an audible sigh of relief. I would like, however, to describe my experience with the other side—the joys of being a clerk.

I first discovered how wonderful it can be to engage in the secular part of church work during my mission when I was transferred into the mission home to be the accountant. I loved it. Most of those who worked there would say something like this when they bore their testimonies: "I love the association with the mission leaders, but I sure miss the missionary work." I did not mind being at the hub of power (which is what they usually meant) and working with the mission leaders (although it was really the mission president's five-year-old daughter with whom I enjoyed associating), but what I loved most about that calling was the escape from proselyting. How wonderful to be a missionary without having to do missionary work. I learned that being a clerk can be a good escape.

The best part of being the mission accountant was that I could do it ALONE. After ten months of constant companionship, I had come to cherish the fifteen minutes I could be alone in the shower as the high point of the day. Now I had a private office of sorts where I could close the door and do my work in my own way instead of trying to match the style of someone very different. Because we were busy preparing for a division of the mission and hence a move to a new mission home, my companion did not have time to go to the bank with me and so (please do not tell anyone) I would go by myself. The glorious feeling of freedom and exhilaration I

experienced walking in downtown Curitiba without a chaperon was incredible. Just writing about it animates me, and I laugh and clap my hands at the memory of a delicious piece of independence stolen from the system I experienced as so oppressive.

It was much more than being free of a companion, however. I could do my work—and do it well—without having to coerce others. I could determine for myself the success of my work. As a missionary, my success usually was measured by my ability to convince other people to do things (mostly be baptized). I was judged not by what I could do, but by what I could get others to do. Some people enjoy that situation. I do not. I have a terrible time with the mixed motivation of sharing the gospel with others: Do I want them to accept the gospel because it would be good for them or because it would make me look good? And the more pressure they put upon us and the more incentives they provided for us to be good gospel salesmen, the more trouble I had in wanting to share the gospel. I still cannot sell anything because I cannot ask people to do something so that I can make a profit. As a clerk I was spared such conflicts.

There were also intrinsic satisfactions from doing the job well. At the age of twenty I was involved in international finance, handling hundreds of thousands of dollars. It not only taught me skills which I since have used in many settings, but it was ego-gratifying and often fun. Handling money in Brazil occasionally had almost comic overtones. Inflation was so bad that they could not afford coins, and some of their bills were worth less than a penny. In fact, the largest denomination of currency was at that time worth \$2.70. That makes \$100 pretty bulky, especially if you want to have any change. When new missionaries arrived, I would change \$100 into *cruzeiros* for them. With \$1500 for 15 missionaries, I would literally take a briefcase with me to the bank and have it filled with bundles of bills just like robbing a bank in the old western movies. It was wild. And as additional perquisites, I had access to a typewriter (marvel of marvels) and a tape recorder (translate music). I came home from my mission with very fond feelings for financial clerkhood.

For the past six years (an incredible tenure these days), I have been an assistant stake financial clerk handling building operation expenses and a welfare farm. For me, it has been the perfect calling in the Church—which is why I have been careful to keep it so long. I can help build up the

kingdom without having to confront either the differences between my personal style and that expected of officers in the Church or the philosophical conflicts with Church policy which seem to be steadily increasing for me. Like the mission home assignment, clerkhood is both pleasant to do and convenient as escape from a myriad of jobs which I would not enjoy.

The nicest thing about being a clerk is that there is really *no way that I can magnify my calling*. To be free from that burden is an immense relief. Most callings in the Church carry with them the automatic injunction: Magnify Your Calling—keep making it bigger and bigger. In effect we can never rest because the job is never finished. There is a never ending supply of inactive people to activate or gentiles to convert, and lessons can always be a little better, meetings more spiritual, home teaching visits more meaningful. A subtle variation of this theme, perhaps more pernicious, is the focus on quality rather than quantity; we can never be satisfied that we are doing our jobs well enough.

My job as a financial clerk, however, cannot be magnified. I pay the bills, keep accurate records, send in my reports, and am finished. Like housework, it will all need to be done again next month, but there is that wonderful moment when all that needs to be done for now has been completed and I do not have to ask if there is more than I ought to be doing—or if I ought to be doing it better. And so no one else asks either. There are no guilt-producing interviews in which I am asked to report on my stewardship and promise to do better. The workload is high, but the worryload is low.

I also like the independence of the clerk job. I do have to rely on other people to supply me with money and to have bills sent to the right place and to countersign the checks and reports, but these are minor irritations. I do not have people telling me when to work or where to work or how to work. I can use my own talents and my own style and perform my responsibilities in my own way (within limits). What is more important, the quality of my work is dependent upon what I do, not on what I can con other people into doing. I am not concerned with increasing percentages or meeting goals or motivating people. When I send in my reports, I do not care what they say as long as they are accurate. I am not trying to spend more or less—only to stay in the black.

Being a stake financial clerk (and if you are going to be a clerk, that is the

one to be) also has the advantage of allowing for anonymity. Assistant stake clerks are invited to all of the meetings, but no one misses us if we do not attend (there is usually no goal for percentage of assistant clerks who are present at any meeting).

Therefore, I never go. I remain in the background, and they do not bother me nor do they try to promote me.

It is not all that easy, however, to remain a clerk for so long. Although I am not particularly ambitious, especially within the Church, there is a subtle pressure which says I ought to be. There is a look of failure to someone who never has a position of responsibility. So they occasionally ask why I do not want to be on the high council. I respond that if I were called to the high council, I would have to shave my beard and start wearing white shirts. This is a trivial example—it ought to be irrelevant—of the increased conformity which a “higher” calling would demand. If I were to move up into the hierarchy, I might feel the obligation to act upon—or at least agree with—some policies with which I strongly disagree. And if I were to become ambitious and want to continue moving up, I would feel not only an institutional obligation to conform but also a selfish motivation to play the game as well as possible. Then I could not trust my conformity. I am a heretic of sorts, and I value my ability to decide for myself what I believe. In having my own mind, I often disagree with Church positions. It is precisely for people like me that callings like assistant stake financial clerk exist. It is a wonderful place for a heretic to hide.

Still, I am sometimes troubled by questions. Couldn't I do more good promoting what I consider a more humane application of the rules of the Church rather than standing in the wings? Could I help people if I took a position working with them rather than working with money? The irony is that I help many people in my profession, but none of them are Mormons. Almost all of my concern for people is directed outside of the Church because I am not sure that I can do it—at least in my way—inside the Church. Thus the Church loses a valuable resource, and I lose the satisfaction of helping my own people. Should I try to work out a compromise? It is comfortable for me to hide in the clerk's office, but is it moral?

Here is a paradox which produces a true moral dilemma. In order to have any credibility, I have to have a position of responsibility. The higher I am in the hierarchy, the more

credibility I have and therefore the more I can do for people and for the organization. At the same time, however, the higher I am, the more pressure I feel to conform and the less free to express heterodox views or behave in ways contrary to the norms. Thus, I am less able to have the kind of impact that results in changes.

From experience I know I have little credibility. A friend of mine who is not a Mormon was telling some of her relatives who are Mormons about some of my views. One of their first questions was “What position does he hold in the Church?” When they discovered that I was merely a clerk, they easily dismissed me and my views as irrelevant. If I were in the bishopric, I would have more credibility and more opportunity to help people, but I would not have been able to go down to the Unitarian church and openly discuss the dilemmas of being a Mormon Feminist. I caused enough constern-

ation among the priesthood brethren as it was—it would have been completely unacceptable had I gone as an official of the Church. (Nor could I get away with writing this column.)

Such are the perplexities of my experience as a Mormon. I start out describing the joys of clerkhood and end up questioning the morality of enjoying being a clerk. I suspect that I have not completely escaped from the tyranny of needing to magnify. There seems to be an official Mormon rule that if something feels good it is probably immoral and if we are comfortable, we need to repent. But while I occasionally take advantage of these opportunities to feel guilty, in my saner moments, I am certainly glad that I am a clerk.

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## I ssues of Intimacy

### AVENUES AND ROADBLOCKS Marybeth Raynes

Intimacy is simultaneously one of the most intense joys and perplexing problems of our lives. We seek it earnestly and long, suffer its absence, and celebrate its presence. Mormon culture particularly emphasizes being connected to God and others as a central value. Though our motivation is thus very high, we often lack skills. Hence our search for intimacy and connectedness leads us not only on a broad road with delightful vistas but also one with plenty of potholes and blind detours.

Since the field of psychotherapy, particularly marriage and family therapy, has given me important insights into the dilemmas of intimacy, I will approach this column from that vantage point. I will try to investigate how Mormon people—in families (whatever types or forms) and in friendships (individual friendships or friendship groups)—grapple with the ideas and practices of loving, of being intimate, of being bonded to each other.

I am not suggesting that I have the answers. I only have clues derived from reading, workshops, discussions

and experiences with others. My answers are tentative because what works for me or those I know may not work for everyone. Many of my solutions to problems of last year are not my solutions of today. They change as I change. Many of my old solutions were in themselves problems! Still I would like to share what I have to give.

Intimacy is not included in the title as an eye-catcher—to insure that the reader will make it through at least the first two paragraphs, hoping the subject is sex. Rather there are two important reasons: (1) Intimacy is often used as a euphemism for sexual intimacy, thereby excluding the entire arena of emotional intimacy that is essential to every person's well being. (2) I would like to broaden the concept of intimacy within Mormon culture to convey a quality of closeness that is sought by most people regardless of their circumstances in life. With the strong emphasis on marriage in Mormon culture, many may feel that being married is the only way to intimacy. It is not; there are many paths. The discussion of intimacy

needs to be broadened to include the multitude of ways we can lovingly relate to others and to define the problems and joys of intimacy in whatever forms Mormons find or create.

So this first essay is an exploration of the ways we both promote and inhibit the experience of intimacy for ourselves within Mormonism. The avenues and the roadblocks will suggest topics to explore in future columns.

First, the avenues. The doctrine of eternal marriage provides an important underpinning for Mormon thinking about relationships. The idea of being eternally bonded to someone you love can give a tremendous sense of security and continuity. No matter what happens, many believe the relationship will continue. We will never have to say goodbye. Turning all of humanity into a large extended family through sealings is a practical solution to the familiar human wish for a true sense of closeness in the "family of man."

Additionally the strong, continuing emphasis on love, charity, and serving others provides an emotional groundwork for these eternal bondings. The list of qualities by which the power of the priesthood ought to be maintained (D&C 121:41-46) is a credible list of qualities necessary in an intimate relationship. Directly or indirectly, love undergirds all of the gospel principles and church programs and policies developed within the Church.

The Church has provided a plethora of tools to aid the work: manuals, talks, projects, examples abound. The Mormon stance toward love and eternity is thus very practical. Fortunately most Church leaders, writers, and manuals do not promote the view that good relationships magically happen. They require work. In spite of discouragement, the Saints are encouraged to persevere.

Real life examples of loving relationships that work may be the strongest testament to charity and intimacy in Mormon culture. Mormon temple marriages not only have a dramatically lower divorce rate than the national average, but most married couples also say that they are happy. Church magazines and manuals and talks in various meetings are generously sprinkled with examples of loving, giving, caring, and sharing. The people I talk with who are Mormons value close, caring relationships as paramount in their lives (along with a closeness to God).

On a larger scale, the support members give to charitable efforts is

impressive: welfare program projects, calls for help during crises, ward or stake assignments. While such generosity is usually directed to other members rather than the larger community, nonetheless there is a strong thread of wanting to love and be loved, to serve and share.

The sense of community which emerges is intimacy grown large: all people are my brothers and sisters and all are commonly involved in an absorbing activity. The remarkable experience of feeling at one with an entire group during a communal hymn or prayer is often deeply felt and treasured by Church members. Stories and legends from early Church history abound, telling of large groups in intimate contact while praying, healing, preaching. In the present day, a ribbing sometimes given to missionaries leaving to go home is "Just think elder (or sister), today almost four million people are praying for you; tomorrow you won't have anybody!"

Despite all of these undergirdings in doctrine, policy, and practice for intimate relationships in Church culture, however, there are also many roadblocks. As long as structure is provided for our relationships we know how to act in caring ways, but when left to experience the spontaneity, ambivalence, immediacy, and unexplored paths of new interpersonal situations we stop short. We do well in the *doing* and *getting* forms of human behavior, but we are poorly equipped for the *being* mode. When we have exhausted ideas on how to spend the Sabbath day or picked through the recent talks of the General Authorities or finished working on a project with another ward member or completed taking care of a sick neighbor, we do not know how to go to the deeper levels of our experience and share how we feel about what we are experiencing. Being intimate requires letting all of the actions and activities of the moment recede into the background in order to allow the feeling and perceivings parts of our natures into the foreground.

Why does this distancing happen?

First, I believe we are confused about the very word intimacy. If intimacy is always equated with sexuality, then it is allowed in very limited circumstances. As a group, Mormons are very ambivalent about sexuality. Sex is viewed as both good and bad (a topic for a later essay). Hence intimacy also has double meanings for Church members. One example is the male-female relationships. Even non-romantic friendships or colleagueships are distrusted as being inherently sexual and possibly dangerous.

In the broader context of emotional intimacy, our use of language also discourages feelings of closeness. For example, "standing firm" or "holding tight to the iron rod" are phrases we often use. Intimacy requires "letting go" or "flowing with the experience." These phrases seem to imply getting out of control, and getting out of control may lead to doing something wrong. Another aspect of Church language also promotes and blocks intimacy simultaneously. The use of the terms "brother" and "sister" seems to be endearing at first glance. But the terms are usually paired with last names instead of first; Brother Smith sounds more distant than John. Too, additional practices distance us. Missionary companions are not allowed to use first names for fear they will become too close and lose the spirit of their calling. Many people in a ward never know any first names. And the Mormon equivalent to the impersonal "hey you" is an offhand "hey sister" or "hey brother."

Moreover, intimacy is blocked because form is emphasized over experience. Particularly, the nuclear family is stressed to the exclusion of other forms of bonding. Because marriage is so highlighted we often think that only "true" intimacy—everlasting closeness—can or does occur in marriage. Or if not in marriage at least in the immediate or extended family. Closeness, if it occurs for too long or too deeply outside of the family, may be distrusted. Three examples: dating relationships that do not lead to marriage are devalued, same sex friendships that are a cornerstone to a person's life are warned against because they may take away essential energies needed for the family (the paradox is that they often give essential energies needed to sustain family life), and opposite sex friendships are viewed with suspicion generally. I believe all three can either buttress and strengthen the ties within the family or can supplement what a person feels is lacking in his or her family and can thereby stabilize the family unit. Certainly, a variety of interpersonal relationships can be a mainstay to those who are single.

Another aspect of the emphasis on form may curb intimacy within marriages or families. The strictly defined roles encouraged in patriarchal families limit us. Only by crossing channels of experience with others can I really feel the full range of human emotions and existence. Husbands may never know the tenderness and joy of taking care of a baby or the wear and tear of having fragmented household tasks to do day

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