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norm and he is the deviant. This simple exercise in consciousness raising is, I think, effective. It is also akin to the vicarious pronoun switching lesbians and gays have always used in relating to the heterosexual world.

In light of the prospect that it may not be any easier for a homosexual to reverse her or his sexual orientation than for a heterosexual, Rytting asks in another article: "How certain should we be of our doctrinal basis, and are we?" It is a question which I asked two years ago when I first came to terms with my irrefutable romantic ardor for women. Why was it wrong to love someone of my own sex? How could something which made me feel so whole, alive, and happy not be right?

Given the premise that there are reasons for why things are "right" and "wrong," that "commandments" are not dictums doled out to suit the whims of an omnipotent God but, rather, descriptions by a loving, more advanced fellow being of the best road to human happiness, the most plausible theological justification I could find for the doctrine of heterosexuality was that, the Book of Mormon teaches, existence is contingent on opposition and that as a trusted professor of mine suggested, female and male are perhaps the fundamental types of that opposition. Furthermore, as most blatantly evidenced in the creation of children, only in the synergistic union of the sexes are certain material and spiritual dimensions of creative dynamic tension feasible.

Needless to say, this theorizing wasn't much comfort. My searching took me away from BYU to a community in the East known for its large lesbian population where, in the company of women-identified-women, I felt euphorically validated in essential parts of my psyche. It was here that I eventually fell deeply in love with a woman to whom in another context I could have easily, joyously, committed myself "for time and all eternity." However, for no convincing doctrinal reason, nor due to any internalized shame or fear of retribution by a homophobic god (such as being plagued with AIDS), I painfully ended my lover relationship with Carol. For some profound reason I don't understand, but which I attribute to a guiding spiritual voice, I personally could not be at peace as a lesbian. Losing Carol has been devastating. It is still too soon to

know what we can salvage in the context of friendship.

Although I find celibacy as sustaining as white bread, I do feel a degree of inner harmony. I also feel lonely, and I desire to strike through the isolation imposed by the contradictory label "Mormon lesbian" by exploring with others an issue which, in my sense, haunts a good many of our sisters and brothers. I don't doubt that being

celibate in the East allows me, as Rytting, a certain safety in exposure which others in the Church aren't granted.

I appreciate Rytting's articles, and I yearn for more concerned enlightened voices to foster a much needed climate of tolerance, dialogue, and community.

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The N oumenonist

THE ROYAL WE

Paul M. Edwards

I have been thinking about prophets and the royal *we*. This all came about in remembering an old story about the butler in the household of Queen Victoria. On his first day of work he arrived with tea at the queen's bedchamber and asked for entrance. From behind the door came the polite response, "We are using the royal facilities." The butler (apparently concerned with having enough tea) asked, "May I inquire madam, who is in there with you?" Or as the more contemporary among us ask: "You got a mouse in your pocket?"

In our institution, while not intended by the speaker, the use of the royal *we* reaffirms for me a split in the responsibilities and expectations of our leaders. Prophets are called to stand at that point where the vision of their insights confronts the traditions of their times. But in our tradition this prophetic vision is also attached to another set of roles: president, administrator, business manager, personnel director, and ceremonial chieftain. The *we* spoken by the prophet leaders in the Mormon movement—with the possible exception of the Church of Christ-Temple Lot—emphasizes the dual personality that is expected. The royal *we* is not just an affectation of those in positions of extreme authority, nor of the community nature of the positions they hold, but also represents the expressive dualistic nature of their positions. And by way of reflection, of ours.

Not only is there considerable difference between the role of visionary (the one who speaks of the spontaneous) and that of leader (the officer of compromise), there is downright

contradiction. The prophetic role is to see not only those things which are inherent in the nature of our existence, but to see the results of our behavior as well. Thus, this prophet speaks to our times of the implications of our times, to challenge that which has always been done in order to do what must be done to attack the traditions of our times in order that we might respond to more than our times.

On the other hand, this leader serves as the penultimate, if not the ultimate, authority: the manager. For this role the concern must be with tradition and preservation. It arises in the leader's role as fence-mender and as spokesman for the Church members in their community. It requires the leader to walk a thin line between extremes and status quo. Here he must represent those who see the Church as sanctuary. He must walk openly with those more afraid of the future than aware of its challenge. He must somehow protect the Church from the pressure to make it the frontier of human knowledge and activity. He must take a position which does not offend anyone, thus often a position that states nothing.

In the capacity as an organizational administrator, he plans procedures ignoring the mission to break out; he solidifies when the call is to fragment; he seeks position when the need is to convert to the dream we must pursue; he orders and defines when the calling is to the chaos of the world in which we must work. His paradoxical responsibilities require him to smooth the ruffled feathers of the bureaucrat while the world desperately needs someone to jar them out of their current behavior.

Lacking not only prophetic vision, but office and calling as well, I do not know what an unencumbered prophet might

be able to see. But playing "let's pretend" for a moment, I suspect that if the divine wind were to blow away the fogs of institutional regulation, the first light of a dawning revolution might appear. The heart of this revolution is irony, an irony arising from the opposition between reason and spontaneity. Socrates, as we understand him, symbolizes the point at which reason began to be enthroned as a more perfect and more superior approach to life. The idea, as it emerged, began to compromise and replace the spontaneous life. But in doing so it created a duality in our being. For although such spontaneity can be, and was, suppressed, it cannot altogether be removed. The irony of Socrates is that in his discovery we have supplemented a primary movement with a secondary one. And because of it, we find ourselves rationalizing spontaneity in such a way that instead of saying what we think, we pretend to think what we say.

Shortly after the turn of the eighteenth century, rationalism began to uncover, not new types of reason as they expected, but the limitations of reason. Boundaries with the irrational became apparent, and rather than replacing spontaneity, reason was seen to depend upon and be maintained by it.

This, I would suggest, is the potential understanding of the prophetic view of our generation and the challenge to our institutional vision. While still mourning the loss of reason we stand at the opposite point to the mind of Socrates. He hit upon the power and direction of reason; we have found the first light of new discovery in the vitality of the spontaneous.

This is not, I trust you understand, some return to primevalism, not yet another stanza to the melody "The Good Old Days." Rather it is the realization that extremes of reason—and those pragmatic wolves living in the sheep's coat of reason—must be reduced to their proper rank. It does not deny reason; it simply recognizes that contemporary persons mistrust it and ridicule its pretensions to absolute sovereignty. The mission of the age is the conversion from the assumption of reasoned tradition (and traditional reason) to the inclusion of the revolutionary aspects of this irony.

The irony here is that our church has become unified into systems, and the systems designed to preserve them have become their greatest challenge. We find now not only an affirmation for the taste of certain things, but the determination to have distaste for others. It is a frame of mind which sees both the need for and the distrust of

progress. This revolution now at its dawning is not, as are most, against the abuses of our system, but against usage or custom, or tradition that does not speak, of methods that do not effect, of efforts that do not produce. This peculiar and unmistakable disposition of mind is in an infantile stage. But so is its counterpart. For the frame of wisdom of those dominated by ancestral ideas and held in time through one of the many forms of historical malnutrition are also infantile. The first is a youth of vitality and the second of sterility.

The irony is further represented in the almost unfathomable confrontation that exists in our expectations for our leaders. The institutions' traditionalist mind is to be found living in obedience to the status quo, precisely because it is established and possesses an almost invulnerable prestige of "having always been." When faced with the challenge of

meaning and feeling as epistemological and action tools, it never seems to occur to us to reform the structure of the accepted tradition.

The irony produces its own call to take up the service of the ideas of change. The call is to respond to the spontaneity and its product: the radical reappraisal of the relationship between life and ideas, between being and becoming. Of course it must preserve true continuity with the past, for only by tying in with what persons have known and accepted can it be accepted. But the answer must also take sufficient account of new factors that now render the old answers and old ways inapplicable. And in the process there must be someone who remains sensitively aware of the essential humanness in every position that humans take, and to respond to it. Such a person is, and will be, prophetic rather than presidential.

P aradoxes and Perplexities

FOREVER FRIENDS

Marvin Rytting

About ten years ago, I was wandering through the more sordid parts of the library when my eyes—and imagination—were captured by the words *Nun, Witch, Playmate* standing together in close proximity. I was intrigued by the juxtaposition of three so seemingly dissimilar roles and curious about what the nun, the witch, and the playmate had in common. I was pleasantly surprised to discover, in this oddly titled book by Herbert Richardson, an insightful discussion of Mormon theology. I have learned to grasp for the rare nuggets of thought about Mormon theology wherever I can find them and this one was for me a true gem—a pearl of great price. It gave me a new appreciation of the power of Joseph Smith's teachings and provided a new perspective on the nature of eternal marriage.

Richardson treats sexual mores as a function of the evolution of consciousness. He suggests that Joseph Smith's concept of celestial marriage is based upon an expanded consciousness which creates new possibilities for intimate relationships. He points out that the Prophet Joseph taught that a relationship between two unique persons cannot be

dissolved, but must itself be a spiritual reality. Thus, the eternal nature of the marital and sexual union is a direct expression of our awareness of ourselves as eternally unique spiritual beings.

The implications of this doctrine, however, have been dissipated and largely lost by a confusion about the meaning of *eternal*, particularly between two distinct uses of the term. When *eternal* is used in the scriptures, it does not always refer to the concept of lasting forever, but often is an adjective synonymous with the possessive *God's* (because God is eternal). Thus, eternal life does not refer to living forever but to living as a God or living God's life. Likewise, scriptural references to eternal punishment are not to be interpreted as meaning that the punishment will last forever. Eternal punishment is God's punishment (D&C 19:6-12). Likewise, I would argue, eternal marriage does not mean that the marriage will last forever. Eternal marriage is God's marriage or a marriage like unto God's. It would be less confusing if we stopped using *eternal* in this context and replaced it with *celestial*. Thus we should talk about celestial life and celestial marriage.

One characteristic of eternal existence

is that it is universal—it applies to everybody. This is the one thing about which there is no choice. The question is not “to be or not to be.” I cannot choose not to be. I am. I always have been. I always shall be. My eternal existence is a given—backwards and forwards. Another important characteristic of my eternal existence is that I am unique: I am an individual and I am conscious of myself as a separate identity. I always have been and always shall be unique and individual. A corollary of this premise is that my eternal existence has a continuity; I am eternally the same person. There will be no miraculous changes in my personality when I die. I shall continue to have the same strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, friends and enemies.

The doctrine of eternal marriage is a logical extension of our nonnegotiable, unique, and continuous eternal existence. I suggest, however, that the doctrine as we typically discuss it is only part of the story. Just as with eternal life and eternal punishment, eternal marriage is marriage after the order of God and we need to make a clear distinction between this celestial marriage and the more general category of eternal relationships. We are taught that only celestial or temple marriages will be held together by eternal covenants and that only by entering into this new and everlasting covenant can we attain the fullness of exaltation and have eternal increase. It is not inherent in this doctrine, however, that temple marriages will be the only eternal relationships. Couples may not be legally married in the terrestrial kingdom, but who is to say that they cannot live together forever?

The logic of eternal existence implies that if you and I are unique and eternal beings, our relationship *must* also be unique and eternal, no matter what the nature of it is. Any significant relationship which I establish here with another eternal individual will have an eternally meaningful existence commensurate with the level of commitment established here. If we hate each other here, we should expect to hate each other there. If we are friends here, our friendship should be eternal. If my personality is indeed continuous across the experience of death, then I expect to enjoy being with the same people in eternity whose company I seek out now. I shall want to have not only the same family ties, but also the same circle of friends.

We have not thought through the concept of eternal relationships very

clearly and consequently our images of the afterlife are distorted.

Typically, we picture a romantic version of the nuclear family for those of us with temple marriages. This does not make sense, however. Even though my children are sealed to me, I do not expect them to live with me forever, nor do I expect to live with my parents forever. In the ideal vision, my children will have established their own families, just as their children will and as my wife and I have. Thus we are really talking about an extended family where we may get together for occasional family reunions. In terms of actual interpersonal relationships, the consequences of being sealed to parents and children are unclear.

The image really becomes one of us, as husband and wife, starting a new family of spirit children with whom to populate the worlds that we are going to create as gods. As exciting as that sounds, however, I am not sure that I want to do it full-time for eternity. Can I not get time off to play racquetball or visit with friends? As much as I love my wife, I am not sure that I want to spend all of my time—I mean my eternity—associating only with her. Just as I enjoy being with many people during this life, I suspect that I shall want to spend time with many friends in eternity.

We focus so much on the goal of godhood that we have not developed any vision of what eternity will be like for those of us who do not become gods. We do have the infamous “ministering angel” image but we do not really have a clear picture of what ministering angels do with their time (or their eternity). In the lower realms of the celestial kingdom, will we be forbidden to talk to each other? It seems fairly clear that we shall not be involved in eternal pregnancy, but what about our interpersonal life? Again, I suspect that we shall continue to have the same type of friendships that we have here.

We have no vision at all about interpersonal life in the terrestrial or celestial kingdoms. Are the terrestrials going to sit around in enforced solitude? If we can associate with others there, are we not likely to be involved with those people whom we enjoy here? I can see no justification at all for assuming that if we have spent fifty years living together happily on earth, we shall be prevented from associating with each other—and loving each other—in the terrestrial kingdom. It simply does not fit with a logical Mormon concept of eternal existence.

If we take the concept seriously that we are all eternally existent as unique individuals with continuity of our identity and that our existence is a spiritual reality, the logical conclusion is that *every* relationship established by two such spiritual beings has an eternal existence which is as real as we are. I suggest that eternal relationships—within and beyond the family—are a given and we shall all have them.

If all of this is true—if all relationships are indeed eternal—what is the significance of the temple sealing ordinances, especially marriage? Is marriage for time and all eternity symbolic of the inherent reality of the eternal nature of all relationships or is it a necessary ritual which will determine the quality of our interpersonal eternity? I suspect that it is some combination of the two, but I have no way of knowing exactly where on the continuum the true answer falls. It is largely irrelevant anyway. Even if the marriage ceremony is only symbolic, it is a very important symbol and should be valued and performed as if it were literal. And even if it is a literal requirement for exaltation, I suggest that it affects only the quality or nature of our relationship and not its eternal existence.

This view of eternity suggests that our typical approach to temple marriage is distorted. We often present (especially to the youth) a very romantic argument for temple marriage wherein the reason to be married in the temple is to be together forever. We ought to put more emphasis upon the nature of celestial marriage as a path to exaltation.

We also ought to pay more attention to relationships other than the marital one. We need to recognize that marriage might not be the appropriate model for everybody and definitely not for every relationship. We should look for other images of acceptable eternal relationships for those for whom the marital one might not fit. Even for those who have marriage as a primary relationship, we ought to recognize the importance of the other relationships in life. We need to devote more energy to friendships and treat them as eternally significant. We should make room for both singleness and multiple relationships as acceptable models for time and eternity. We need to go beyond our constricted perspective and be true to the expanded consciousness of Joseph Smith’s vision of eternity.