

The Mid-Life Crisis of a Sixties Mormon Male

# DO YOU STILL BELIEVE IN MAGIC? WHY THE SIXTIES GENERATION IS LOSING FAITH

By J. Frederic Voros, Jr.

I RECENTLY HAD LUNCH WITH A FRIEND I HADN'T SEEN FOR a couple of years. Throughout our friendship both of us have been active, faithful Latter-day Saints. I don't recall either of us ever expressing any inclination to leave or drift away from the Church. But as we sat down at the table, she said, "First things first. Are you still in the Church?"

About a year ago I received a letter from a college friend I'll call Tim. Tim has a remarkable depth of devotion to the Church and labors tirelessly in it. He wrote, "What worries me is that nearly every bright, expansive-thinking, well-informed Saint of my own [generation] has become to some extent disaffected with the Church." In fact, he wrote, "it seems that those who are really well-informed in the Church are leaving it."

One more. The Sunday the newspaper advertisement for the 1988 Sunstone Symposium appeared, a friend approached me; he's in his thirties, a former bishopric member, active in the Church. "I saw your paper in the ad," he said. "What's it about?"

I got right to the point: "I think our generation is suffering a crisis of faith."

Without hesitation, he replied, "That certainly describes me."

I think it describes many of us. And I'm not speaking of those who simply have trouble with Church standards, or inactives who "know it's true" but play on Sundays, and so forth. I am speaking of men and women who are leaders in their missions, wards, and stakes, who have led lives of commitment and sacrifice for the Church, who have married in the temple, paid tithing, sat through leadership meetings, and the like. I see a crisis of faith among some of the most committed members of the sixties generation: those who grew up in the 1960s and were in college in the sixties and seventies.

It's possible that the crowd I run with is particularly prone to gloomy introspection and murmuring, but I don't think so.

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At least, we never used to be. In my observation, we are slipping, losing faith, leaving. What is happening?

## THE AGE OF PROMISE

I CLOSE my eyes and I am in Austin, Texas. It's hot. I'm in a beige 1963 Ford Falcon with my mother. She's on sabbatical leave from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She's studying at the University of Texas. She's driving. I'm not driving because I'm only thirteen. She handles the car, I handle the radio. It's on a good station. They're playing a new song, a great song, from a new group. They're singing,

Do you believe in magic, in a young girl's heart  
How the music can free her, whenever it starts  
And it's like magic, if the music is groovy  
And makes you feel happy like an old-time movie.

We'll go dancin' baby then you'll see

How the magic's in the music and the music's in me.

I know it seems impossible, just reading the lyrics here on the page, and especially if you were never tuned in, but it was true, in a way: it seemed there was magic in the music made by John Sebastian, Simon and Garfunkel, and, of course, above all, the Beatles.

The Beatles were the master magicians, leading the magical mystery tour. They reigned over the sixties. Their music was stunning, a blend of lyrical melodies and pounding sexual energy. But they were more than musicians. They were, as my friend Paul Toscano once remarked with resentment, gods. And, as Clifton Jolley added, "they were good gods. They gave us what we wanted."

What we wanted was that magic they spun so well. Their songs, movies, and photos seemed to give us glimpses into a life that was far more exotic, exalted, fulfilling, and fun than

ours. We wanted a piece of it. In fact, some hotels where the Beatles had slept actually cut their sheets into squares and sold them, like splinters of the cross or locks of the Virgin's hair, to adoring acolytes. For my generation, the Beatles were indeed more popular than Jesus.

Their apotheosis coincided with the efflorescence of a new culture. In the late sixties and early seventies life seemed to bristle with excitement and meaning, with the promise of a new kind of idealism, a rejecting hypocritical materialism and embracing love, tolerance, justice, and poetic living. We lived in a neo-renaissance of kaleidoscopic lights, brightly colored clothing, intoxicating incense, sitar music, and social awakening.

Most of us were in high school and college and, like students of every generation, we were doing a lot of things for the first time. We experienced first hand the charms and attractions of the opposite sex. We experienced intellectual things. We were exposed to poetry, even if it was Lawrence Ferlinghetti. And we read. When I think of the sixties, my high school years, I think of *Walden*, John Giffin's *Black Like Me*, James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Rod McKuen's *Stanyon Street and Other Sorrows*, and Tolkien's *The Hobbit*: transcendentalism, social justice, self-indulgent introspection, and fantasy. In fact, mostly fantasy. Mostly magic.

We were going to build a better world, where young men carried flowers, not rifles; where corporate power gave way to caring; where oppression melted into an easy egalitarian brotherhood. These were the assumptions of our music, films, books—of our own culture.

A roughly parallel renaissance was quietly occurring in the Church during the sixties and seventies. My own experience as a convert to the Church may have been somewhat atypical. I joined the Church in 1968 at the age of seventeen. A student in my mother's Bible as literature class, a returned missionary named Clifton Jolley, referred the missionaries. (I trust Clifton will not be embarrassed by this revelation, but if he is, that only supports my thesis.)

Still, though my experience was different in some respects, I think it was largely similar to my peers'. We prayed and received testimonies. We enjoyed seminary as a context for learning and building youthful fellowship. We read the scriptures. We were frequently moved by the Spirit at testimony meetings. We served missions and were thereby immersed in the gospel. We saw others gain testimonies, and wept with them at testimony meetings.

It was a time of idealism about the Church, its destiny, and its leaders. President McKay seemed to symbolize the love, spirituality, intellectual awareness, and even romance that fueled our idealism.

For us, the future seemed overflowing with promising possibilities. We were ready to dedicate our lives to building the kingdom of God on earth in literal fact. I remember a friend suggesting that we all go to law school together and then start our own firm, and be, as he put it, "kingdom lawyers." What great things might we do in the world or the Church? What books might we write, or what political conundrums solve?

We were, after all, a chosen generation, held back, because of our valiance, to play a vital part in the crucial struggle of these latter days. We were, apparently, more righteous than our parents and grandparents. We expected to amply fulfill the injunction to "teach your parents well." We were probably among those righteous Saints who would greet Christ as he ushered in the millennium. There was, after all, the rumor that Harold B. Lee's patriarchal blessing stated that he would preside over the Church at the Second Coming. We didn't necessarily believe that, but still, it symbolized a feeling: the Promised Land was within our grasp.

On a more personal level, we anticipated our own private Promised Lands. God would lead us to an attractive mate with whom we would enjoy the greatest and most secret promise of our youth: sex. And that would bring the satisfaction and fulfillment of parenthood.

There was no sense that we would get old, sick, or divorced. We didn't believe in the Endless Summer as much as we assumed it. I can remember as a twenty-year-old missionary sitting in the church in Yanai, Japan, staring, mesmerized, at the clock. Around, around, the second hand went, like a knife slicing moments off my life. That was the first time it had ever occurred to me that, unless I died first, I would grow old. As old as my grandfather, with white hair and bowed back. I didn't think about it again for a long time. The Endless Summer continued.

I don't mean to suggest that there was no difficulty, disappointment, loneliness, or tragedy. There were the victims of the ghetto and the victims of assassins' bullets. There were unfortunates even in the fantasy world our magicians spun around us: Eleanor Rigby, Mrs. Robinson, Romeo and Juliet. But their plights tended to be either significantly poignant or else the product of the hypocrisy, greed, and blind prejudice of our parents' generation. It was this world we intended to transform. And to do it, the Beatles assured us, "All you need is love." Even the extended tragedy of Vietnam would end, if we would only "make love not war," get in bed, and, with John and Yoko, "give peace a chance."

So there we were, moving through the mid-seventies toward the eighties, on the outskirts of the Promised Land. It was our Age of Promise, our intellectual childhood. I wonder, in retrospect, if we had any inkling that our Age of Promise was

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in decline and that we were teetering on the brink of the adolescent period that I call the Age of Disillusionment.

### THE AGE OF DISILLUSIONMENT

I RECALL a line from George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*: "Sir: there are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it." Our tragedy was the latter. Our mistake was that we set foot in the Promised Land. We reduced all those glittering potentialities to reality.

To change the metaphor, in our youth, life was like an enormous Victorian house, full of tantalizing nooks and crannies, closets and attics. What would we discover? How would our discoveries change us? What was behind that ornate door? So we went about exploring. College. Temple. Mission. Marriage. Sex. Profession. Perhaps achievements, such as publishing, making money, performing, taking leadership roles in church and community. Finally, all the doors were opened, all the crannies explored.

And then came the terrifying realization: this is it. It was that feeling you used to have on Christmas morning, when all the presents that you ached to open were opened. But this time, Christmas would not come round again, filling you once more with excruciating anticipation.

This is it. The magic of the sixties and our college years somehow evaporated, our pageant faded. The promises of the early years now seemed hollow. The words of a twenty-year-old Simon and Garfunkel song, recently rerecorded by some new, adolescent techno-group, proved eerily prophetic:

Time, time, time, see what's become of me  
While I looked around for my possibilities.  
I was so hard to please.  
Look around, leaves are brown,  
And the sky is a hazy shade of winter.

We are feeling our mortality settling upon us. This is it. This is life on earth. From here on out, we will have joys and sorrows, but mostly it will be a lot like what has gone before, and then, as the saying goes, you die. In short, like our parents before us and their parents before them, but with a depth of disillusionment only those raised on television are capable of, we of the sixties generation suffered a mid-mortality crisis.

WHAT of the magic of our younger years? Much of it was smoke and mirrors. For example, it turns out that the Beatles' music, as remarkable as it was and still is, was not a glimpse into some charmed and exotic lifestyle. In fact, the lovable mop-

tops were light-years from Nirvana. They couldn't even get along with each other, much less usher in an Age of Love. While touring, they would pop pills and bed the groupie girls their private room service sent up. While not touring, they spent a lot of time avoiding each other. Eventually their quarrels erupted into protracted and public litigation. On the twentieth anniversary of the Sgt. Pepper album, Paul McCartney was asked whether in fact love is all you need. He replied, "Is love all you need? I don't know, really. I don't know what you need. I'm just some fella."

The magic went to seed. And the same process is at work in our own lives. Many of us who majored in English, music, history, and humanities have become lawyers, computer salesmen, and investment advisors. Instead of our work being a vehicle for bringing the world into line with our ideals, it has turned out to be little more than a means of making money, and the more the better.

We're like Edward Keating, who in the sixties founded and edited the left-wing intellectual magazine *Ramparts*. *Ramparts* folded in 1974, but Keating is launching a new glossy magazine about living in the high-tech age called *Silicon Valley World*. His comment: "I'm not out to save the world anymore. I'm just trying to save myself from a pauper's grave."

Or we're like the leader of the sixties recording group, the Strawberry Alarm Clock, who played at my Senior Prom. I recently heard him interviewed on radio. The interviewer asked him to explicate a densely symbolic and evocative lyric from their big hit, "Incense and Peppermint." The interviewer had apparently wondered about this particular line for twenty years. The band member replied, "Oh, it doesn't mean anything. Back then we would just string a bunch of words together that sounded good." He's not into music anymore, either. He said he feels the greatest opportunities now are in the direct mail business.

Another of our great promises was the fulfillment of marriage. But after we walked from the world into the temple, we walked right back out into the world again. The Promised Land looked suspiciously like the land just the other side of the river, and we called it Wilderness. I don't mean to demean temple—or civil—marriage, or to suggest that a good marriage doesn't offer considerable satisfactions. It does. But it is not to your life what the final scene in a Shakespearean comedy is to the play. It does not resolve all the conflicts and set the world straight forever.

And for a few it is much worse than that indeed. Take for example a woman I'll call Kathy. Kathy was raised in the Church; in fact her father was a bishop. Coming up through MIA, she says, she had one message drilled into her: keep yourself clean, and one day a man will find you worthy and take you to the

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temple. That was usually the end of the lesson. Anyway, she did. She tried to be worthy of this priesthood holder who would crown her dream by deigning to take her to the temple. And a man did take her to the temple. But afterwards he beat her. This was not the Promised Land. There was no magic there.

On the spear side, some males grapple with a different problem. Many of their notions of sexuality were shaped in part by furtive encounters with *Playboy* magazine. Of course, these sixties youth had mothers, sisters, girlfriends, and so on. But in the back of some male minds there lurks an ideal of womanhood to which no woman, even the ones in the pictures, can or would ever want to measure up. It is fantasy. It is pornographic in the sense that it reduces human beings to objects—toys, in fact. As a result, many men search in vain in their marriages and relationships for the thrill these images seem to promise.

**M**ANY men and women of the sixties generation are looking back with romantic nostalgia and wondering why adulthood feels so different than it looked. By now we should have arrived. We express our disappointment in ironic bumper stickers asking, “Are we having fun yet?” In other words, where is all that fun and fulfillment we were promised in our youth? This can’t be right: we were not to be among the mass of men and women leading lives of quiet desperation.

Again, I see a parallel process at work in our religious lives. I remember, when I was seventeen years old, trying to explain to my agnostic father why I had joined the Church. This church is guided by prophets, I told him. “Really?” he responded. “What have they prophesied?” At the time I deflected the comment as merely contentious. But it is a question many active Mormons of our generation are asking, and one the Brethren themselves seem uncomfortable with.

I remember with great clarity a comment Gordon B. Hinckley made in his address to the general women’s conference in September of 1983. He approved the concept of career education for women on the rationale that, even if they married, they might at some time need to support themselves. “None of us,” he observed, “can foretell the future.” Obviously, the remark was not intended as a comment on his office. Still, it underscores what many feel: that our prophets are less likely to announce “Thus saith the Lord” than to announce an administrative reorganization; our seers less likely to see the future than to offer wise advice about the present; our revelators less likely to receive a new revelation than to repackage one Joseph received.

At the same time, new revelations from other quarters raise unsettling questions. Fawn Brodie’s psycho-history was one

thing, but now we have a flood of well-researched revisionist history that clouds the clarity of the familiar accounts. New light on Joseph Smith’s practice of plural marriage and his life-long involvement with the occult are showing him to be a far more enigmatic and multifaceted prophet than the one we were taught about in church or at BYU. And the measures that the Church is widely reported to have taken to curb certain historians have struck many believers as incompatible with our shared ideal of the search for truth.

“I joined the Church in the sixties because they told me there was a living prophet who could speak for God and answer my religious questions,” a friend told me. “But now if I ask any, I’m treated like a troublemaker.”

Books probing the so-called corporate empire of the Church are being read by active Mormons, and are having an effect. This church that conducts marketing surveys, hires a New York public relations firm,<sup>1</sup> and applies *sub rosa* political pressure is not the one that the sixties generation embraced.

A friend of mine, an active member, is troubled by many of these issues. Why did the Church university “whitewash” the history of Joseph Smith, especially his plural marriages? How could he take all the Church history classes and graduate seemingly knowing less about Joseph Smith than did

his nonmember father, who read only one book? Why is the Church so secretive about its financial and political dealings? “They want you to tell all,” he says, “but they won’t tell you anything.” His refrain is, “I wish I felt about the Church the way I did in high school and college.”

Again, we have become, to some extent at least, the victims of our inflated expectations. Just as real women never meet up to the image of those luscious playmates, so real men in the real Church never live up to the sometimes false ideals of apostles and prophets held by many of our generation in our youth. I think of the young man who told a friend of mine that he nearly lost his testimony when his father was called to be an apostle. The magic looks much better at a distance.

**T**HE essence of religion is contact with God. Without it, you have a social club, a philosophical society, even a theological movement, but you do not have religion. The Church was exciting in our youth and on our missions because it was a context and a catalyst for divine contact. We were immersed in the specifically spiritual aspects of the religion: prayer, service, contemplation, and scripture reading, the kinds of experiences on which personal faith is founded. We had religious questions, and they were being answered. We were deciding whether we believed in God, and what he meant to us. We thought

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about him. He seemed nearer then. We have, or he has, drifted away. My friend Tim wrote:

I see the Church as being essentially in the same position as the Roman Catholic church several generations past the apostolic fathers. We look back to an early time when the spiritual gifts were evident. Revelation has been replaced by tradition. Organization has replaced the Holy Ghost.

In a recent *Dialogue* article, Warner Woodworth observes that the high-rise Church Office Building is often jokingly called the "great and spacious building," a reference to the symbol of worldliness in Lehi's dream.<sup>2</sup> In my experience, such jokes implying worldliness in the Church are fairly common. In fact, we now have entire books of them. I think in particular of a cartoon in Pat Bagley's *Treasures of Half-Truth* showing a chapel with a large sign out front sporting McDonald's-style arches and reading, "McMormons. Over 6 million saved."

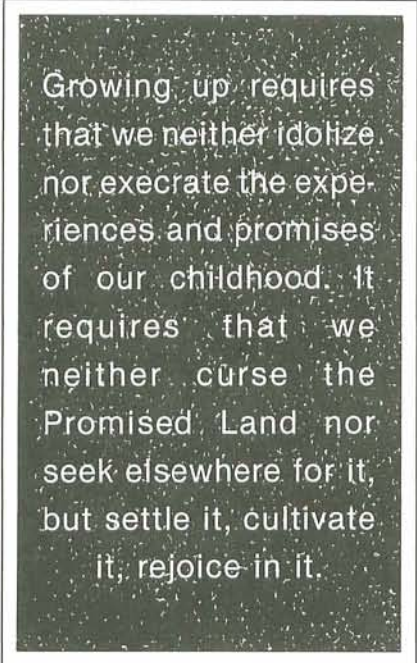
It is an anthropological commonplace that jokes are a means of channelling anger, jealousy, and other negative emotions. I believe these Mormon jokes are a way of deflecting the sense of loss many of us feel, to blunt the loneliness that lingers when the magic disappears. Joking about the "great and spacious building" is our way of expressing the wish that the temple, and its magic, still dominated the Zion skyline and our own lives.

And in addition to our changing perceptions, changes in substance are taking place. Woodworth points out a number of ways that the Church is acquiring more and more trappings of a corporate bureaucracy. As a result, he suggests, we as Saints "face similar institutional pressures—to conform, to march in lock step, to do as we are told." You would hardly expect a current president of the Church to announce, as Brigham Young did, "I am not a stereotyped Latter-day Saint, and do not believe the doctrine. . . . Away with stereotyped 'Mormons.'"<sup>3</sup>

I sense that our collective worship seems to be less centered on the spiritual aspects of our inner religious lives and more on the outward behavioral and social aspects. When I was in high school, and certainly when I was at BYU, talks and lessons seemed more centered on Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith, understanding the actual content of the Book of Mormon (as opposed to its ecclesiastical significance), prayer, the Holy Ghost, faith, and learning. Now, it seems to me that they are oriented more toward obedience: to various commandments, to principles of righteous living, and to ecclesiastical authority.

The official Church's solutions seem somehow unable to reach the paradoxes we're grappling with. I recently saw a Church film which in many respects was refreshingly well done. Church leaders sat and talked casually. Someone explained that the Church's missions had hitherto been depicted as separate circles,

and that this graphic depiction failed to show these separate missions as an integrated whole. A new graphic was unveiled which presented, not separate circles, but pie-shaped pieces which interlocked to form a complete circle, symbolizing the unity of the Church's missions. What did this mean, I thought, when friends of mine were losing faith, dying on the vine, abandoning religion altogether, or searching for a more sustaining religion elsewhere?



Growing up requires that we neither idolize nor execrate the experiences and promises of our childhood. It requires that we neither curse the Promised Land nor seek elsewhere for it, but settle it, cultivate it, rejoice in it.

In our private religious lives, many of the promises of our youth seem broken. So many of our prayers seem to have gone unanswered, especially as we have prayed for the dreams of our youth to come true. I think of Woody Allen's remark that there should be a day set aside when we gather and commemorate all God's broken promises. The bittersweet humor in this quip lies in the fact that we still believe in God, and remember those promises. It is he who seems to have forgotten us.

In sum, the promises of youth seem to have withered on the vine. Many of us are unemployed, underemployed, or unhappily employed. Our marriages are as much challenge as fulfillment. We have not become somebody. On the religious front, we are not walking into Zion, Christ is not about to come, we are not righteous, we are not growing in love and tolerance, we never weep in testimony meeting, our prayers are not

answered.

We are in a sense experiencing grief. We are grieving for the loss of the romance, the magic, the life, the Church, the world that we once knew. We long to regain the sense of meaning, hope, and promise. We want to be virgins again. We want the magic back.

What can be done for those of us struggling in the Age of Disillusionment?

## THE AGE OF REJECTION

THE third stage of our growth is being written now, by each of us. Here our generational path forks.

For those who cannot reconcile the promises of childhood with the disillusionment of adolescence, the Third Age is an Age of Rejection, of Denial, or of Despair.

Some continue to cling to the promises of youth and insist that a realm of true meaning, enjoyment, and fulfillment exists, but somewhere else. A man I know couldn't deal with the gulf between the plainness of real marriage and the images of romantic and sexual fulfillment that he had harbored since youth. Although he had a charming and attractive wife, his life with her didn't live up to his expectations. He had to go for it. So

he did—he abandoned his family in his quest to fulfill his sexual fantasies.

Others reject the Church, feeling that the true magic is elsewhere. A few expand their families by a wife or two and retreat into the stern consistency of fundamentalism. More venture into one of the evangelical protestant churches, where Jesus may be hiding. Take Kathy, whose husband beat her. She finally left him. She also left the Church, which she says set her up to be taken advantage of by him. She says that she now attends “a Christian Church—you know, one where they talk about Christ on Sunday.”

Some in our generation are seeking the lost magic in drugs, hoping to escalate the thrill until satisfaction is achieved. Others seek the magic in increasingly strong sexual stimulants in a grim quest for physical fulfillment.

Still others resolve the contradiction between the promise and the reality by denying the realities as well as the illusions of the Age of Promise. For them, it was all bunk. We only *thought* our prayers were answered; we only *thought* we tasted the Spirit with the scriptures, in the temple, or in testimony meeting. They may cash in the ideals of youth in favor of a reactionary cynicism in business or personal life.

And of course, many more, unable to bear the contradiction, slip quietly to the margin of faith, tacitly rejecting the Church and perhaps even God. They may, as Julia Flyte says in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, set up their own good in place of God's.

So for those unable to reconcile the Age of Promise with the Age of Disillusionment, this age is the Age of Rejection.

#### THE AGE OF RECONCILIATION

FOR many other members of the sixties generation, the present age is an Age of Reconciliation, of Recognition, of Maturity. They recognize the Age of Promise for what it was.

Much of the magic that settled around us then was in our eyes, not in our world. It was a function of our childhood. We cannot recreate the feelings we had then because we are no longer children. There is only one first kiss.

To this extent, our grief is not for the loss of a greater meaning or reality, but simply the loss of our own innocence. When, as a college student, I first read Gerard Manley Hopkins's poem “Spring and Fall: to a young child,” I was entranced by its beauty and sentiment, but I didn't know then that I had not yet left childhood myself. It now speaks not only to me, but of me:

Margaret, are you grieving  
Over Goldengrove unleaving?

Leaves like the things of man, you  
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
Ah! as the heart grows older  
It will come to such sights colder  
By and by, nor spare a sigh  
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;  
And yet you will weep and know why.  
Now no matter, child, the name:

Sorrow's springs are the same.  
Nor mouth had, no nor mind expressed  
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
It is the blight man was born for,  
It is Margaret you mourn for.

This sense of loss is a blight, as Hopkins says. We are right to grieve. And yet, we must not surrender to grief.

Growing up requires that we reconcile within ourselves the paradox of the Age of Promise and the Age of Disillusionment. It requires that we neither idolize nor execrate the experiences and promises of our childhood. It requires that we neither curse the Promised Land nor seek elsewhere for it, but settle it, cultivate it, rejoice in it.

We cannot continue to pine for something that never was and never will be. We cannot, like aging screen idols, loiter around the gates of Eden waiting for a chance to slip back into some magical preserve where, of all places on earth, life matters.

If we do, we will fail to snatch the meaning that is passing by. God intended us to find pleasure in his creations, in each other, in marital union, in our children, in our work, however humble it may be, and in him. We cannot see the beauty with which he has crowned the lilies of the field if our eyes are ever on the horizon, searching for the distant cloud that signals the arrival of the army of Zion.

We must be able to say, paraphrasing G.K. Chesterton, “Is life all dust? What a beautiful thing dust is though.” We must embrace the paradox.

To do so requires adult faith. There is beauty in the undiluted faith of a child, but it is the faith of one with no reasons to disbelieve. The more useful faith is adult faith. It may lack showy foliage, but its roots have run deep in search of water in dry times. Adult faith believes in the face of tribulations, disappointments, and private failures. Adult faith is the faith of one who “looks round upon a universe from which every trace of [God] seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.”<sup>3</sup>

Adult faith prays to accept and endure rather than to achieve. Some time ago a friend of mine remarked, “The grace of Christ should be enough for us . . . but it isn't.” Nor is anything else. We seem to have been born with desires that can never be fulfilled. We want more but nothing seems to satisfy. Nothing lives up to its billing. No Church calling, no fortune, no Academy

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Award, no Venus or Adonis, will ultimately satisfy. There is nothing which, if only we had it, we would be happy. At least, nothing in this world. For this hunger that we now experience is heaven-hunger. And the pleasures and satisfactions of this world are mere appetizers, never intended to satisfy. For the promise of God is that in him, in his glory, we will find rest.

Let us by all means change, build, and comfort where we can. Let us improve and reform the Promised Land. But ultimately our present role is to embrace the goodness in our marriages, our children, our spouses, our church, our jobs, and ourselves, without insisting that any of them live up to our childhood expectations. We must, if it is our lot, reconcile ourselves to working in the direct mail business. Is that so much worse than singing lyrics that sound good, but mean little or nothing? Is the meaning of day-to-day reality really worse than the illusion of meaning?

FINALLY, I must confess that I still believe in magic. Despite what I know about the lives of the Beatles, or perhaps because of it, I am still saddened by the face that Eleanor Rigby leaves in the jar by the door and delighted by the Brandenburg-inspired trumpet obbligato in "Penny Lane."

And despite what I know about the life of Joseph Smith, or perhaps because of it, I believe he saw things in magical stones, saw angels, and conversed with God. In fact, Joseph the magician/prophet is to me a more interesting and credible figure than the innocent boy prophet of Sunday School. If we don't think he acted the prophet, perhaps we don't yet know what a prophet is.

There is also magic in the Church. No, it's not the kingdom of God we dreamt for, and yes, I wish it were. Film today's Church and you would have a movie less like Charlton Heston's *Ten Commandments* than Robert Duvall's *Tender Mercies*. The kingdom lives in individual lives and in pockets of Christian community. That is where the meaning lies: in charity, in forgiveness, and in personal faith in Jesus Christ: faith that he came, that he suffered for us, faith even that he will come again.

For us who saw so much light, and thought we saw so much more, ours is a dark age. But it is in the darkness we best learn to walk by faith, and hope, and charity. Without these, we will have been, as Paul Toscano has written, "Too blind in youth to see the coming darkness, / Too blind in age to see the coming light."

This present age is the Age of Reconciliation for those who, seeing the rough edges of the Church and of mortality, maintain their conviction of the core truth-claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ and of the Church. To again quote Tim:

I am reminded of Thomas More, who, while he

brightly perceived the failings of the Roman Church, remained faithful to it. What alternative was there? What alternative do we have? I assume that we have all received witnesses from the Spirit in times past (if not present) confirming the veracity of the Restoration. . . . [w]hat choice do we have but to remain steadfast.

I believe there still is magic in the Word of God, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and that it proceeds from him throughout his creations, including the gods and creeds of all nations. It is what we seek. It is him we seek.

Rather than the integrated pie shapes, I prefer the cross as the symbol of the Church. The Book of Mormon defines the righteous as "they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world and despised the shame of it" (2 Nephi 9:18). The cross is a haunting, challenging, and ultimately comforting symbol. It is a symbol both of death and of victory—of victory through death. It marks our way: we will come to reconciliation, I believe, only when we nail upon it our false expectations of God, of his kingdom, of each other, and of ourselves; when we crucify our own expectations of what life should be, and let him replace them with what he will. ☩

Adult faith prays to accept and endure rather than to achieve. For this hunger that we now experience is heaven-hunger. And the pleasures and satisfactions of this world are never intended to satisfy. The promise of God is that in him we will find rest.

NOTES

1. Crescent, McCormick & Paget, See John Heinerman and Anson Shupe, *The Mormon Corporate Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 70-71.
2. Warner Woodworth, "Brave New Bureaucracy," *Dialogue* 20:3 (Fall 1987), 33.
3. *Journal of Discourses* 8:185.
4. Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943), 59.
5. C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 39.



Announcing  
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