

# THE LORD STANDS READY TO HELP WHEN NO ONE ELSE CAN

By Oliver Alden

MUCH COURAGE must have been required for the anonymous bishop to publish the piece he has, particularly given the hostile reception he anticipates from some in his congregation should his identity become known. I have no doubt that love and concern were his motives. I have no reason to question the truthfulness of his story or the validity of his claim to transformation. He has obviously experienced a profound miracle. What I wonder is whether he appreciates how rare a miracle it is.

I did not experience that miracle, though I fought the same battle as the anonymous bishop. Fought it with actions no less faithful. Fought it for years longer than he. Fought it, even, with a purer moral record. While I obviously cannot compare the intensity of our individual struggles, I also cannot believe that anyone battled homosexuality with more ferocity, or prayed for relief from it with more fervor, than I. But nothing happened. If there is a lesson to be learned from our contrasting experiences, perhaps it is that, for reasons neither the anonymous bishop nor I can explain, change comes for some, but for others it does not.

In my experience, the number of men for whom change does not come is very large. The anonymous bishop writes as if the choice—even for those of us for whom no change comes—still somehow lies between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Thus, he laments, if one of us chooses homosexuality, we deny ourselves the possibility of eternal marriage in the temple and the joys of children.

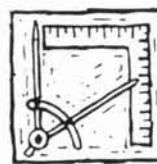
It was not a choice of mine that denied me these things. What the anonymous bishop does not grasp is that, for many of us, the choice does not actually lie between homosexuality heterosexuality. We could not become heterosexual if we struggled faithfully with every fiber of our being to do so, as many of us know from sad experience. For us, the real choice lies between homosexual activity and celibacy—as Elder Oaks' recent *Ensign* article seems to acknowledge. Temple marriage and children are simply not within the realm of possibility. I wish they were. But neither my wishes nor the anonymous bishop's exhortations will change the situation. The choice the anonymous bishop urges me

to make, my experience has shown, is one that is simply not available to me.

What is available to me is my relationship with my Heavenly Father and my ability to receive guidance from him through the Spirit as to how I should live my life, whatever challenges and issues it may present. It is perhaps for this reason that I find the course adopted by the bishop's charge—at least as the anonymous bishop depicts it—to be as potentially troubling as the bishop himself finds it. Not because the young man in question abandoned his ostensibly fruitful efforts to turn himself into a heterosexual. Frankly, it is a bit difficult to believe that a devout Church member who claimed that he had succeeded in becoming both romantically and sexually attracted to at least two women simultaneously, but who had evidently nonetheless remained in contact with his former male lover, and who then cast away all his successes upon reading a single pseudonymous article in an alternative journal, hadn't been a bit less than honest about his feelings—although perhaps he had only been dishonest with himself. How truly successful could his efforts have been if he abandoned them so readily?

Rather, what is troubling to me is that there is nothing in the bishop's account to suggest that the young man chose his course in prayerful consultation with the Lord and in reliance upon the Spirit. If he did not—if he acted upon anything less than a personal revelation of undoubted veracity—then either he did not understand my article or he did not believe it, for the course I described—and by implication recommended—was not, ultimately, to opt for homosexual activity rather than celibacy. It was to seek individually the guidance of the Lord and to act in accordance with it, whatever it may be. My experience is that the Lord stands ready to help when no one else can or will—and that sometimes he helps in ways other than what we might expect. I hope that the bishop's charge understood this, and that he prayed very sincerely about his decision to return to his male companion before acting upon it. I would never try to prescribe for the Lord what answer he must give the young man.

I would also never urge the bishop's charge to try by his own efforts to turn himself into a heterosexual. In all probability, he can't. But I would urge him to rely upon the Lord, to seek his counsels and the promptings of the Spirit, and to live in consonance with them in every area of his life and in every field of his endeavor, including with respect to his sexuality. If he does this, he will enjoy happiness and peace. And, ultimately, he will, as the anonymous bishop pleads, stay with God. ☐



## CHARTED MOVEMENTS

Moon phases, tidal flows, corn ripening—  
These movements I thought to follow.  
Not fertility charts, hormone flows, and catheters.  
Children are supposed to come on the crescendo  
Of the blood's song, the full roundness of a moon,  
Slipping into your life silently as droplets of rain.  
The death of dreams is plotted by a lab technician.  
Nothing can bring them back—  
Prayers in a forest or money on a table.  
The dark moon hangs above me:  
The eye of God gone blind to me  
Or the curve of his turned back?

—CARA O'SULLIVAN