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YEA, YEA



NAY, NAY

PROVO HONORS

A PARAGRAPH IN "Clipped and Controlled" (SUNSTONE, Aug. 1996) criticized me for "dismantling General Education and Honors as the intellectual center of the University." Your anonymous author reported that the BYU Honors Program "underwent several debilitating changes" including declaring service learning to be "undesirable at BYU," cancelling "concert and lecture series in favor of Sunday Firesides" and discontinuing faculty seminars, replacing them "several summers later only by nuts-and-bolts seminars."

Service learning continues to be a requirement for Honors graduation. The Honors Program has helped support student thesis research in Africa, Central and South America, and the South Pacific. This year, an Honors graduate who studied entrepreneurship in Zimbabwe started her own bank there, specializing in small business loans. University-subsidized travel for service learning has been centralized under the Kennedy Center, where it seems to be flourishing.

We have hosted noted scholars including Yale law Professor Stephen Carter, Brown University philosopher Martha Nussbaum, Northwestern University Russian Professor Gary Saul Morson, and Rhodes scholar Paul Rahe. We have organized concerts performed by ECM recording artists Danny Zeitlan and Charlie Haden, and Kurt Bestor.

We continue to hold spring faculty seminars with distinguished visiting lecturers including Jamie Sethian (Berkeley), Eric Mazur (Harvard), and John Paulos (Temple). We do not have a Sunday fireside series but have organized an evening lecture series featuring among others members of the Quorum of the Twelve. These lectures are published in *On Becoming a Disciple-Scholar* (Bookcraft). I did ask the editors of the off-campus newspaper *Student Review* not to meet in the Maeser Building, but your author failed to mention that I made the same request of the board of FARMS. We have supported student academic journals including *Insight*, *Journal of Environmental Studies*, *Aporia*, *Thetan*, and *Journal of International and Area Studies*. Students in our Honors 200 freshman composition course have written, edited, and published their own textbook, *There are Dinosaurs Beneath the Stadium*.

PAUL ALAN COX
dean, General Education & Honors
Brigham Young University

UNWRITTEN RULES

"CLIPPED AND CONTROLLED" gave a remarkable, accurate, and effective catalog of recent problems and difficulties at Brigham Young University—I was very glad you had the courage to publish it. At the same time, however, I think it unfortunate that the article appeared under "Anonymous" rather than the author's name or even a pseudonym since that may make some people question the validity of the article.

Since I was the object of an anonymous letter while at Brigham Young, I think it might be worth explaining why I see the anonymity of the article as of a different type than the anonymous letters that BYU seems sometimes to accept and use against its faculty. Though it provides an unfortunate level of complication, the anonymity of the article is no reason to ignore the truth of "Clipped and Controlled's" claims.

Anonymous letters operate behind the scenes at Brigham Young and certain other institutions. Often a person is not aware that such a letter has been written and taken seriously, sometimes even filed for later reference. Anonymous letters accuse individuals and make claims about peoples' characters that institutions often do not bother to substantiate. Unacknowledged, they infect members of the institutional hierarchy's views of an individual. Even when administrators know the identity of the accuser, they often act to protect the accuser and keep his or her identity concealed, letting these functions as if they were anonymous, and with the same negative effects. Anonymous letters and hidden statements are something that are used by hierarchies in institutions to secretly undermine the position of individuals, to fix the odds against the individual, and to give the institution further leverage.

In my case, an anonymous letter was used as a means of asking me to justify my work. I was asked to write a response to a person I had never seen and whose identity still has never been revealed to me. Later, the BYU administration claimed that this anonymous letter was of no importance because there were "other concerns." Despite repeated queries, however, I was never honestly told who had these other concerns nor what the concerns were. I was faced, then, with a screen of double anonymity, an anonymous letter was used to shield other people who wished to remain anonymous. I was thus put in a position where I was forced to try to an-

swer and address concerns without knowing where those concerns originated or what exactly they were. Though this is a particularly blatant example, many of the other faculty members discussed in "Clipped and Controlled" faced a similar difficulty, discovering too late that anonymous decisions had been made privately about them which visible committees and administrators felt they had to ratify.

By contrast, "Clipped and Controlled" does not operate behind the scenes but in the public arena. Its statements can be independently verified, and anyone can read the article and know exactly what the issues are. It is not slanderous (though it says things that the administration of BYU is not likely to want to hear), sticking largely to the fact. When it does move from fact to judgment, it does so openly instead of privately.

The author chooses anonymity because he or she fears repercussions from BYU and from the Church for speaking what I know many faculty at Brigham Young are feeling. My experience with BYU suggests to me that he or she is right to fear this. At BYU, there is

very little to protect those who choose to speak out against flaws they see in the institution. BYU's so-called academic freedom document has been written in a way that allows it to be interpreted to protect the institution rather than the individual, as Bruce Hafen made remarkably clear in my own case. In addition, now that the president of BYU is a general authority, any statements against his policies or even pointing out his plagiarism could be interpreted as "criticizing a general authority," and thus make the anonymous author subject to the loss of his or her job, and even excommunication.

If this is not enough to satisfy some readers, I will further say that though I did not write the article, I have done sufficient research to be satisfied with the accuracy of the author's statements in all but one or two minor points. The cases are accurately portrayed, and comparison to Himmelfarb's original article shows that Bateman clearly, though perhaps unwittingly, plagiarized Himmelfarb. (Since university presidents are often chosen for something other than their academic prowess, I am less offended by this

initial plagiarism than by Bateman's later grudging half-apologies and his Nixonesque refusal to admit wrongdoing.) I agree with the article and admire the person who was willing to state directly what so many have been discussing and feeling.

Currently, there seem to be two general problems at Brigham Young, problems that make it nearly impossible for BYU to be an effective university—problems which have bred and which will continue to breed a host of more specific difficulties. First, I think that people who want BYU to be a religious institution—which I think is, in every way, a worthy and worthwhile endeavor—too often are unclear about what it takes to make a university function effectively. If the students are going to have the kind of experience that allows them to grow and to experience the benefits of a university education, there must be space for students and faculty to take certain risks. The university should support the faith, but at the same time allow people to ask hard questions. True learning is a dialectical process, and if we are not allowed to ask questions, the whole process will suffer and

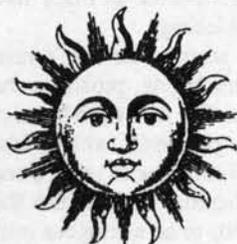


we will fail to help our students develop the ability to cope with the difficult issues they are sure to encounter.

Second, and related, the biggest problem

at BYU is the attempt of administrators, some faculty, and some students to anticipate the concerns of the general authorities. I was told by the dean of Humanities that I just should

have known that my book was inappropriate, that they shouldn't have had to tell me. This seems to be a common attitude among administrators. The result is a system that



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controls and intimidates. Here, the supposed concerns of general authorities never have to be stated since the administration feels they know in advance what the board of trustees wants: in the name of general authorities things are done that I would hope most of them would not approve of. Unwritten rules operate in the same way as anonymous letters; they remain hidden to all but a select few. If you don't follow them without having been told about them, it is clear you do not belong. BYU is becoming an institution where there is a higher premium placed on obedience than on integrity, where academic excellence is sacrificed in favor of wearing white shirts and conforming one's will.

BRIAN EVENSON
Stillwater, OK

ALIVE AND HEALTHY

YOUR REPORT THAT the BYU self-study recommends "eliminating sixteen Family, Home, and Social Sciences degrees such as the anthropology B.A." is an error ("Self-Study: BYU Basically Healthy," SUNSTONE, June 1996).

Apparently you misunderstood. We recommended, and the self-study approved, dropping the "B.A.—Secondary Teaching Emphasis" track. In the fifteen years the track has been available, only three students have taken it. After all, the demand for anthropology courses in high schools is limited. Students with an interest in teaching anthropology were better advised to have a triple-minor program in history, geography, and anthropology.

The anthropology department is recognized as central to the general education mission of the university and the increasingly international LDS church. Indeed, the self-study document recommended that we be allocated another faculty teaching slot. Our revised undergraduate B.A. curriculum includes a four-semester sequence in the theoretical underpinnings of anthropology and the most current trends in the social sciences. Our undergraduates do supervised field work in Guatemala, Namibia, India, and the U.S. We have instituted a five-year, integrated B.A./M.A. as well as a graduate non-thesis option in Mesoamerican studies. We have never been healthier, and we invite your readers to the archaeological conferences, ethnographic film festival, and related social events during the 1996–1997 academic year that celebrates the department's fiftieth anniversary.

JOHN HAWKINS
*department chair, anthropology
Brigham Young University*

KIDDIE DIP

I WAS IMPRESSED with the even-handedness of Richard Mavin's treatment of the phenomenon known in England as "Baseball Baptisms" ("The Woodbury Years: An Insider's Look at Baseball Baptisms in Britain," SUNSTONE, Mar. 1996). He didn't try to lay the blame on any one person or system. People can sometimes be caught up in their enthusiasm for an apparently fool-proof success formula that later seems fraught with unforeseen consequences. My wife and I lived through the "Kiddie Dip" program in the U.S. South. It caused a great deal of harm and little permanent good. Many children were baptized without proper teaching, and some were baptized without their parents' knowledge or permission. But the most damaging consequences of this ill-advised program were the breakdown of trust between missionaries and members and the agony of later missionaries and local leaders in taking thousands of names off Church records. This was extremely demoralizing—facing parents who didn't know their child had been baptized into a church they hardly understood. Then, too, it was clearly impossible to provide transportation for all the children baptized even if their parents let them come to church. Of the 120 or so children baptized in the Lexington (North Carolina) Branch, only two (to my knowledge) stayed active in the Church.

I have thought a lot about how something

like the "Kiddie Dip" program could have gotten so perverted from normal missionary procedures. I conclude that the race for statistics became all-important. This episode has hurt me for years; now I have gotten it off my chest. Thank you, Brother Mavin.

CHARLES L. SELLERS
Knoxville, TN

GOLDEN NUGGETS

ELBERT PECK mentioned in his one-hundredth-issue editorial that no one ever comments on the articles. Well, I think about them, and here are some comments.

1. When the magazine comes, my family all says that they see I am still an apostate. Is this really the message you want to send?

2. Sometimes, I wonder why I subscribe, but occasionally there's a gold nugget.

3. My reaction to Quinn's article on baseball baptisms was furthered by Richard Mavin's. I feel Quinn continually writes in the spirit of pointing the finger of disgust and shame and tries to demoralize and debunk the good in the Church. Mavin put the episode in a much truer light, especially when Mavin told what happened in three missions, not just one. (See Quinn, "I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era," SUNSTONE, Dec. 1993).

4. I was moved to tears by the celibate homosexual, "Oliver Alden," and his struggles. It's a gold nugget. I wonder how his eventual salvation will end up. I have had enough ex-



"You wouldn't display glass grapes in the '60s.
I'd say that shows you're a woman of independence."

MEMBER MISSIONARY MOMENTS



With the carpool

"Do you prefer Spencer Kimball on 'Christ the Perfect Leader' or Truman Madsen on Joseph Smith?"



At the supermarket

"I'm buying all this food to store in our basement because a living prophet told me to just like Joseph of old told Pharaoh."



While traveling

"Have you ever wondered, 'Why am I here?' and 'Where am I going?' ..."

periences with spiritual "messages" like his that I know we don't know everything.

5. The Mormon Alliance disturbs me (see Paul Toscano, "Dealing with Spiritual Abuse: The Role of the Mormon Alliance" *SUNSTONE*, July 1993). Devoted to exposing and debunking abuse of power, they trade in the devil's coin. They immerse themselves in qualities the Savior warned us against. Concerning their critique of general conference ("Mormon Alliance Deconstructs Conference," *SUNSTONE*, Dec. 1995), I shake my head and think, the *gall* of them.

EUNICE PACE
West Jordan, UT

Lavina Fielding Anderson responds:

The Mormon Alliance takes seriously the injunction that begins: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness. . . ." (see D&C 121:40-44). When power is exercised for unrighteous dominion, the whole Church suffers. Recognizing abuses of power is the first step in correcting abuses of power so that we may experience "an increase of love."

Perhaps your negative feelings about the Alliance's conference critique come from a too-limited definition of "critique." To critique is "to consider the merits and demerits of and judge accordingly." Everyone who listens to Conference performs such a critique with every talk, with every session, around the dinner table afterwards, and with friends. The conference critique is an opportunity to do the same thing in a larger forum. We invite your participation.

OLD HAS BECOME NEW

I AGREE WITH Sheldon Greaves: Mormon liberals need fewer Jeremiahs and more social activism ("Old Testament Sunstone, New Testament Sunstone," *SUNSTONE*, Mar. 1996). But his two categories, Old and New Testaments, are oversimplistic and downright wrong. The Old Testament prophets preached the social justice he ascribes to the New. We do need a new spirit, one that transcends religious legalism to principled, spirit-filled living, which was the point of the N.T. authors, but also of those O.T. guys who talked about things like, oh, a "new covenant." Quit bashing that venerable scripture; choose some other metaphor.

But Greaves is right, the call is between *talking* and *doing*. It's an omni-dispensational dynamic, and it afflicts Mormon liberals today. Sunstone's forums can, indeed, be a marketplace for such activism. But Sunstone is

ahead of its constituency. In recent years, symposiums have featured numerous sessions on LDS humanitarian organizations, which have been poorly attended; people choose the more sensational sessions.

MARK BRENT
Belmont, CA

MIND GAMES

AFTER READING "The Manti Mormons" by Becky Johns (*SUNSTONE*, JUNE 1996), I can imagine that Jim and Elaine Harmston devoted their lives to the Church and expected to participate in all the big happenings of the "Last Days" as promised by Brother Cleon Skousen and others. When some of us realize that that view isn't reality or that institutions change and, like the old grey mare, "ain't what she used to be many long years ago" we react in different ways. It is okay with me if the Harmstons want to talk with Joseph Smith and have a polygamous marriage. Sadly, children always get dragged through all this religious stupidity.

As far back as I remember, I have been taught to look forward to the Second Coming. What I look forward to now is a time when we stop messing with each others minds in the name of the Lord so that we don't end up with a spiritual crisis and go out and build an endowment house in Manti that looks like a build-it-yourself barn.

TIM GARRARD
Stockton, CA

COULD SCRIPTURAL SCHOLARSHIP SAVE MORMON LIBERALS?

I ENDORSE THE conclusions of Carol Lynn Pearson's "Could Feminism have Changed the Nephites." Female voices in the Mormon canon would benefit us all. And if the official canon is not changed, let us informally change it. Pearson has articulately and successfully read a woman's perspective into a patriarchal book.

But her article disturbed as it inspired. Pearson manifests a scriptural illiteracy common among Mormon writers. She compares the Book of Mormon statements on women with statements in the New Testament, especially Jesus'. She argues that the Book of Mormon has been edited by a warrior who for the most part ignored the female society of the Nephites and used several negative female images. She looks to the New Testament for exemplary treatment of women. She simply pulls out her King James

Version to find the real Jesus and his words. She cites stories and dialogue that are not historical to support the picture of Jesus she wants. Even then, she distorts the evidence.

First, the woman caught in adultery. Jesus stated that anyone without sin should cast the first stone (John 8:1-8.) It's a wonderful story. Unfortunately, it was almost certainly not part of the original Gospel of John. It was added by a later editor, and it is therefore difficult to argue for its historicity. Mormonism has correctly asserted that the Bible has been greatly modified. Why, then, do we think that we can naively pretend that it is perfect, as Pearson does?

In other instances, Pearson seriously misreads texts. Pearson has searched her New Testament for the history and words of Jesus to see if there are any negative female images or negative statements about females. She reports that there are "None. Not one." (She forgives Jesus' use of negative male imagery as non-sexist because it is balanced by an exclusively male concept of God.)

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this issue. What is at stake is the truth and who has a claim to it. Scriptural arguments such as Pearson's cannot be taken seriously because their premises are incorrect. The question facing us is whether or not we are searching for truth or for just a well-turned phrase. Why do the best Mormon essayists distort scriptural texts so blatantly?

Recently, Mormon scholars have been excommunicated (some of them scriptural scholars). Liberal Mormons have paraded these excommunications as a gross offense, yet the work of these scholars is ignored by those of us who claim to support them. Liberal Mormonism cannot claim to stand on ground higher than any other Mormon institution unless the careful search for truth is our highest priority. At present, it is not.

I hope that SUNSTONE continues to publish articles like Pearson's. It was passionate and thought-provoking. But please provide better guidance to help eliminate our profound illiteracy regarding our holy texts.

MARK D. THOMAS
Lynnwood, WA

OUT OF THE CLOSET

I RESPOND TO "Anonymous Bishop" and the pseudonymous gay Mormon, "Oliver Alden" (see "My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me" by "Oliver Alden," SUNSTONE, Aug. 1995; "Stay with God: A Response to 'Oliver Alden'" by "Anonymous Bishop," June 1996; and "The Lord Stands

Ready to Help When No One Else Can" by "Oliver Alden," June 1996).

Anonymity on either side of the issue is a sad commentary on the state of forgiveness and understanding in our community. It is also unnecessary. It damages the numerous gay and lesbian Mormons and their families who are crying out for answers and role models. It is time to stop supporting the shame of the closet and start speaking and publishing, openly, the many honest and healing stories men and women are sharing.

"Anonymous Bishop" speaks of the miracle of overcoming a life of unhappiness and sexual temptation. Yet he does not stand by his words or speak from a place of gratitude enough to be a real example to his flock or to the other LDS men who struggle with their homosexual feelings. I doubt the bishop's story. It has too many holes. The gay man whom he quotes has similar sentence construction, word choice, and outcome as does the bishop. Where is the honesty? Where can we verify the cure?

One homosexual experience does not a gay man make. Numerous studies show that a significant number of men have had a same-sex experience but consider themselves heterosexual. This bishop does not sound like he was ever a homosexual. Perhaps he had dissonance over his sexual experimentation, but nothing told me he had walked a similar path as I had, nor did I find any answers in his sterile and simple story. President Gordon B. Hinckley admonished the Church to stop encouraging homosexuals to marry as therapy, yet this bishop encour-

ages us to marry, promising that the "temptations" of same-sex attraction will disappear. There are enough broken Mormon families. There are enough hurting homosexuals married to hurting heterosexuals.

"Oliver Alden," also speaking from a closet and unwilling to meet the public, or even his gay and lesbian brothers and sisters, openly, is no different from "Anonymous Bishop." Like "Bishop," "Alden's" fear is translated to shame by hiding. He, seemingly, has not learned to be proud of the spiritual confirmation that he is whole as he is. We are bereft of knowing him and fellowshiping with him in our common journey.

Anonymous stories lose their power when a light is shone on them. Until people are willing to back up their story with themselves, we need not listen or believe what they have to say. The work of healing and growing among gays and lesbians has been an incredible miracle to witness. Many share their stories without shame, without apology.

As a gay Mormon who spent two decades attempting to find the cure for my homosexuality in faithful Church service, sincere prayer, fasting, LDS Social Services therapies, and self-hatred, I now proudly acknowledge the gifts of my life that I feel are God-given and beautiful, including my sexuality. My personal journey, like that of many of my gay and lesbian siblings, has been one that is most powerfully a spiritual one. It has been most about healing and community building.

ROB KILLIAN
Rochester, NY



"No, no, no . . . Billy Casper helped our image much more than Ty Detmer did."

GET REAL!

BRAVO for "Oliver Alden"! He is to be admired for his integrity in how he handles his homosexuality and for his courage to be open (although anonymous). He has remained a good, faithful Mormon while approaching his homosexuality according to Joseph Smith's admonition to study it out in his mind. He is familiar with how God speaks to him, he knows God's voice, and he feels secure that he is living his life with God's approval. He encourages others to consult with God, but he does not advise other homosexuals how to live their lives.

In contrast, "Anonymous Bishop" appears to believe that all gay Mormon men can and should live their lives as he has done, married with children. **WRONG!** It may work for the bishop (but does it for his wife?), but it won't work for all gay Mormon men.

As God gave Adam and Eve seemingly opposite commandments, he also puts us in situations that don't have easy solutions. Lavina Fielding Anderson has said that we need to be not "children of God," but "adults of God," willing to work out difficult problems on our own, daring at times to not live the "letter of the law."

I speak from the experience of having been married for twenty-six years to a gay Mormon man who also served as a bishop.

By his own admission, during the early years of our marriage, he gave in to the temptation of homosexual sex many times. I knew none of this until many years into the marriage, after all of our children were born. He was miserable. Because he hated himself, he could not love his family.

It is possible that "Anonymous Bishop's" marriage is working great. Mine didn't. If my husband had been able to somehow make peace with himself and God, he would have been a wonderful, talented person. But that wasn't the case; we had a very dysfunctional family, and our children do not feel that they were blessed having a gay father, as the "Bishop" suggests they might.

People who think that all a gay man has to do is find a nice girl, get married and everything will be great, don't have a clue! It's like sacrificing a virgin. Get real!

ANONYMOUS FORMER WIFE
West Valley City, UT

IN THE DARK AGES

SHAME on SUNSTONE for printing the article by "Anonymous Bishop," who thinks he's cured himself of being gay. Is this guy from the Dark Ages? With all the research and experience showing that one's sexual orientation can *not* be changed, I was amazed someone still believes that with

enough prayer a gay can become straight. I am amazed SUNSTONE would print such a relic of outdated and misinformed thinking.

"Anonymous Bishop" quotes from other closeted friends about how they were happy only after leaving the gay life. What absurdity! How can anyone be happy when pretending to be something other than what they really are in order to fit into the heterosexual Mormon pigeon hole. I have been happier than I ever dreamed possible since I formed a union with another woman. I wish other gays and lesbians might find the joy of loving and being loved. They might also end the self-hatred that leads numerous gays and lesbians to suicide.

JENNIFER R. GOODFELLOW
Arlington, MA

ROOM FOR BOTH TYPES

I APPRECIATE "Oliver Alden's" courage in sharing his struggle with homosexuality and trying to retain morals, ethics, and religious values. Most LDS gays go through this, and there are precious few LDS gay role models. "Alden's" articles help me be more patient with God. I was moved while reading them. Likewise, I appreciate "Anonymous Bishop's" current journey. It is a very personal thing. It is harder when a family is involved. We need to make room for both types of experiences in our Mormon culture and theology.

"Anonymous Bishop's" article disturbs me because it implies that homosexuality, morality, and spirituality are mutually exclusive. This is reflected in the title asking "Alden" to "stay with God" and how "Bishop" suggests that God has given him great gifts as a result of not "choosing" to be gay. Does this mean that "Alden," in trying to keep his moral standards, is not close to God? I know gays closer to God than some straight LDS church members are.

I'm glad heterosexual marriage worked for "Bishop." However, I know gays who wanted to throw up every time they had sex with their wives. When these men became intimate with a partner of the same sex, they found the intimacy, emotional bonding, and the love they had been missing. We cannot confine the desire for an intimate relationship to heterosexuals; it is a basic human desire and need. To categorically exclude homosexuals is cruel, harmful, and sinful.

"Bishop" believes homosexuality is a "burden," a disability, to be "corrected" in the next life. Correcting such a fundamental element as sexuality in the hereafter is not like fixing pimples or bad eyesight. If one's whole personality is going to change in the next life,



"Bro. Firth, you have a choice—you can be scoutmaster, genealogy instructor, or have the calling in the envelope that our sweet spirit Kimberly is holding."

what is the point of living this one? Is homosexuality a disability as left-handedness once was considered? As with left-handedness, it is society's view of homosexuality that has caused it to be a burden.

Concerning "Alden's" personal revelation, I know righteous blacks who, before the 1978 revelation, received personal revelation about receiving the priesthood. Like "Alden," they recognized it was meant only for them.

God did not give them a schedule, just an assurance that they would receive.

"Bishop" presupposes gays are selfish. As with heterosexuals, some are, many aren't. Consider a lesbian couple I know. One partner is confined to a wheelchair. She is a wonderful artist and works every day. Her partner lovingly helps her. I have a friend who nursed his partner through AIDS. He wanted him to live and die with dignity. He wasn't

looking for another sexual conquest. Hetero- and homosexual love are more than sex.

JAY BELL
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OF GOOD REPORT

"FULFILLMENT IN DEPENDENCE"

Through the indignities of old age—passivity, loss of control, suffering—we model Jesus' life from one of action to one of "passion."

JESUS MOVED IN HIS LIFE FROM ACTION TO PASSION.

For several years, he was extremely active preaching, teaching, and helping, always surrounded by large crowds and always moving from place to place. But in the Garden of Gethsemane, after his last supper with his disciples, he was handed over to those who resented him and his words. He was handed over to be the object of actions by others. From that moment, Jesus no longer took initiatives. He no longer did anything. Everything was done to him. He was arrested, put in prison, ridiculed, tortured, condemned, and crucified. All action was gone. The mystery of Jesus' life is that he fulfilled his vocation not through action but through becoming the subject of other people's actions. When he finally said, "It is fulfilled" (John 19:30), he meant not only "All I needed to do I have done," but also "All that needed to be done to me has been done to me." Jesus completed his mission on earth through being the passive subject of what others did to him.

What Jesus lived we also are called to live. Our lives, when lived in the spirit of Jesus, will find their fulfillment in a similar kind of dependence. Jesus made this clear when he said to Peter, "When you were young, you put on your belt and walked where you liked, but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you rather would not go" (John 21:18). We, too, must move from action to "passion," from being in control to being dependent, from taking initiatives to having to wait, from living to dying.

Painful and nearly impossible as this move seems to be, it is in this movement that our true fruitfulness is hidden. Our years of action are years of success and accomplishment. During these years, we do things about which we can speak with pride. But much of this success and many of these accomplishments will soon lie behind us. We might still point to them in the form of trophies, medals, or artistic products. But what is beyond our success and productivity? Fruitfulness lies beyond and that fruitfulness comes through passion, or suffering. Just as the ground can only bear fruit if broken by the plow, our own lives can only be fruitful if opened through passion. Suffering is precisely "undergoing" action by others, over which we have no control. Dying is always suffering, because dying always puts us in the place where others do to us whatever they decide to do, good or bad.

It is not easy to trust that our lives will bear fruit through this sort of dependence because, for the most part, we ourselves experience dependence as uselessness and as burdensome. We often feel discomfort, fatigue, confusion, disorientation, and pain, and it is hard to see any fruit coming from such vulnerability. We see only a body and a mind broken to pieces by the plow that others hold in their hands.

Believing that our lives come to fulfillment in dependence requires a tremendous leap of faith. Everything that we see or feel and everything that our society suggests to us through the values and ideas it holds up to us point in the opposite direction. Success counts, not fruitfulness—and certainly not fruitfulness that comes through passivity. But passion is God's way, shown to us through the cross of Jesus. It's the way we try to avoid at all costs, but it is the way to salvation. This explains why it is so important to care for the dying. To care for the dying is to help the dying make that hard move from action to passion, from success to fruitfulness, from wondering how much they can still accomplish to making their very lives a gift for others. Caring for the dying means helping the dying discover that, in their increasing weakness, God's strength becomes visible.

The well-known words of the apostle Paul, "God chose those who by human standards are weak to shame the strong" (1 Cor. 1:27), take on new meaning here because the weak are not only the poor, the disabled, and the mentally ill, but also the dying—and all of us will be dying one day. We must trust that it is also in *this* weakness that God shames the strong and reveals true human fruitfulness. That's the mystery of the cross. When Jesus was on the cross, his life became infinitely fruitful. There, the greatest weakness and the greatest strength met. We can participate in this mystery through our death. To help each other die well is to help each other claim the fruitfulness in our weakness. Thus our dying enables us to embrace our cross with the trust that new life will emerge. Much of this becomes concrete when we are with people who must come to terms with their approaching death. ☐

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

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