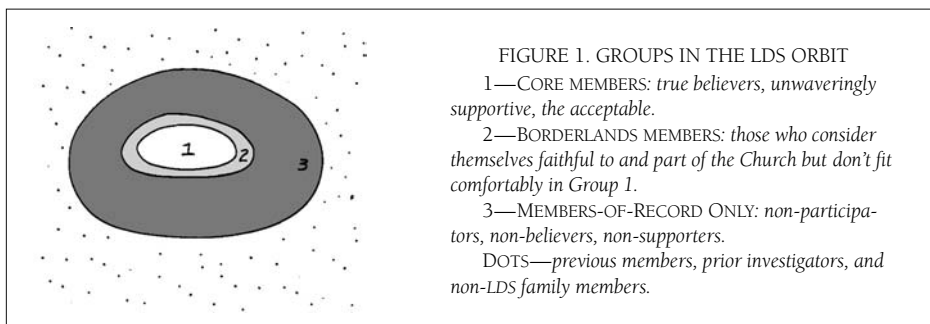


BRAVING THE BORDERLANDS . . .

WORMWOOD AMONG
THE MORMONS—PART 2

By D. Jeff Burton



NOTE: This regular column explores the stories of Borderlanders because it is useful to know how others have successfully (or unsuccessfully) dealt with problems and challenges.¹

I RECENTLY FOUND a second message in my email inbox addressed to the mysterious Wormwood. It had been forwarded by someone interested in this column. I simply present it here.

My Dearest Wormwood,

It was good to see an email once again from my favorite nephew! I am really enjoying this new communications genre. It certainly opens up many possibilities for us.

But on to more important matters. I am becoming quite distressed about the slow progress in the tempting of your man, that young new convert to the Christian sect, the "Mormons."

I note with some alarm that your man was recently married to his fiancée (and in the Mormons' Bountiful temple no less!) and that you were *not* successful in getting them involved in premarital sex. I just can't fathom what could have happened! Sloggob reported to me that he sent you quite a few email messages identifying our free pornographic websites that you were supposed to forward to your man. According to our infernal spyware reports, you spent a considerable time reviewing those sites, so it is beyond me why you didn't forward them in a timely manner. I expect a report.

Meanwhile, we will simply have to pick up from here. Not all is lost, but a "family

man" can be more difficult for you, especially as he takes on new responsibilities, has children, gets a serious job, etc. I will instruct you on how to handle this dangerous new situation as time permits.

Incidentally, our Internet spyware is providing a wealth of information about the hearts and minds of Mormons in Utah. Just this past May, Salt Lake City residents recorded the second highest number of Google hits on "pornographic" sites for larger cities in the USA. We can thank Sloggob and the Infernal Tempter Department (ITD) of the Lowerarchy for the development of "Internet temptation" and its obvious successes here in these valleys of the mountains!

Before detailing my recommendations for trapping your man, let me remind you once again that your continued naive, ham-handed, and crude attempts to corrupt your man just won't work with these Mormons. Please! Imagine trying to tempt your man to steal a set of tires, for goodness sakes! Or to lie about his education on his resume? What were you thinking? Many Mormons recognize the "big sins" and will avoid them so long as they have "no need of bread" or think they might be caught.

You must be more judicious in your use of temptations. You must be clever and hide temptations behind screens of public acceptance and apparent good will. Your man

must think he is going the "right way" when in fact he is on our path!

OKAY, let's get down to today's tempter training lesson. The most effective approaches to corrupting the practice of charitable giving are based on my favorite temptation principles: *fear*, *greed*, and *pride*. There are many variations, but if you handle them correctly, these three principles will work very well with your man.

For example, try to instill in your man a *fear* that if he does not pay tithing, he will incur the displeasure and wrath of a God who keeps score. Let him believe, for example, that he will get sick and won't be able to work, or that his money will be stolen, and so forth. Place into his mind the old Mormon saying, "I couldn't afford not to pay tithing." This fear-based approach to giving is beneficial to our side because your man will not be sharing out of a sense of love and generosity; no, he will be paying in order to avoid trouble.

The second tactic is based on *greed*. Point out to your man the folklore common among many Mormon men that paying tithing will result in an outpouring of material blessings that will compensate for any sacrifice made to pay tithing. Be sure you emphasize the word "material" as it is central to the greed approach. Yes, yes, I know that our Enemy often rewards those who are generous and unselfish, but often it's in the worlds to come and in non-material ways. Your man must not be allowed to dwell on those facts.

Pride can be useful here, too. Your man is a bit too young, but my man's experience with *prideful giving* will be educational. Over the past few months, I have quietly reminded my man that liberal but discreetly public donations to the Church might be rewarded with future plum callings such as mission president, director of a visitor's center, or other "white collar" or administrative callings that don't involve getting directly involved in genuine service such as callings at Deseret Industries or the Humanitarian Center—*those* we must avoid like the plague. I have had my man envision the potential shoulder-rubbing with the very elect that may ensue. . . or the eventual call to a real position of authority, such as a Seventy! Of course it is *pride* that tells my man that this will come as a result of his "generosity" and "Christlike demeanor."

We must be careful, of course. Unless fear, greed, or pride *continue* as the prime motivators for giving, your man may actually get caught up in that dangerous spirit of giving that relates to unselfishness, and this may put him on a path to assist in the work of our Enemy. It's a danger we will have to work

D. JEFF BURTON is an author and a member of the Sunstone Board of Directors.

around. I will be here to help you if your man doesn't respond well to the fear, greed, and pride ploys.

When you are using money to tempt your man, it will help, of course, if your man adopts the prevalent assumptions of "to be successful, I need to make good money" and "I am expected to provide well for my wife and kids." We have been very successful in encouraging many Mormons (and Americans in general) to "need" things. We've made them think it is their duty, even their prerogative, to "get stuff." It makes it easier if your man, for example, thinks he is doing it "for the family." Yes, "a Humvee for the whole family!"

NOW to the matter you wrote about in your email. You state that your man, because he desires to be a good and religious fellow, is leaning towards a conservative viewpoint and, more especially, joining the Republican Party. You express concern because most Utah Mormons are conservative and Republican. Now on its face, yes, if not handled carefully, this could be a bad move for our side. The "permissiveness" of many liberals and Democrats is often helpful in our work. And conservatives tend to express a liking for Jesus, and they often carry a Bible around. Yeah, it sounds dangerous to our work. But let me show you how you can corrupt the process for your man (as we have done for countless others).

As you know, our Enemy's true gospel is actually grounded in the very dangerous principles of honesty, sharing, caring, generosity, humility, forgiveness, thoughtfulness, love, kindness, selflessness, peacemaking, healing the sick, caring for the poor and widows, the search for truth, and other attributes that take people outside themselves. These we must help your man avoid at all costs. He should not be allowed to understand this. . . or even to think about it.

We have found it useful to help religious conservatives move to the *far* right—into what is called "fundamentalism"—where they tend to hold exclusively to the "religious concerns" of homosexual orientation, secular humanism, evolution, homeless people who exploit society, welfare "bums" and "cheats," illegal aliens who get a "free" education, and so forth. Now our Enemy himself never addressed any of these issues during his ministry on this earth, and certainly he would not have approached these problems the way most fundamentalists do, but we have created a generation of preachers, radio personalities, and others who have, through their books, websites, cable TV stations, and radio programs, imbued all fundamentalists (including



ALL THIS ZEAL and activity takes his mind away from those pesky and perilous principles of Christianity.

Mormon fundamentalists) with our brand of Christianity.

The election of the current President, by the way, is our most notable triumph in exploiting Christian fundamentalism in the clever guise of "compassionate conservatism."

Furthermore, you may encourage your man to use his Bible and Book of Mormon, *but* only to prove that the age of the earth is 6,000 years, that a homosexual orientation is an abomination, that an actual worldwide flood occurred about 3,000 years ago, that God is a vengeful father, that women should be subservient to men, that life operates according to a precise "works = blessings" formula, that blacks are the descendants of Ham and thus cursed, that war with "heathens" is okay, that we must support Israeli wars in order to hasten the Millennium, and so forth. These are uses of the Bible that further our work. Just keep your man from reading Jesus' actual teachings during his two ministries here.

My man's recent "religious devotions" can teach you something. Thanks to my efforts, he is becoming a well-regarded financial supporter of a local "send 'em back to Mexico" movement, plus I recently enticed him to financially support a group that fights "homosexuals teaching in the public schools." He is coming to see these "moral" activities as a *major* part of his personal religion (based on the fact that he actually donates money to these endeavors). Others in his circle applaud him for his generosity—which helps nurture his pride and encourages him to continue with these "religious" endeavors. And all this zeal and activity takes his mind away from those pesky and perilous principles of Christianity. It makes my job of bringing him to our Father Below much easier.

Okay, how does my man's seemingly religious activities make my job easier, you might well ask? Well, for one, he recently told his wife that, deep down, he could see the "occasional burning" of abortion clinics (by others, of course) because "it is what God would want if nothing else works." He also turned his head and walked away recently when he saw two young ruffians bullying a gay man. Envisioning our Enemy endorsing or even condoning destructive and violent behavior is exactly the kind of attitudes and ideas I want my man to have about his "Jesus." It works in our favor in every case.

Sadly for our side, and a situation we will have to watch closely, my man's teenaged son has come to realize that he was born a homo-

sexual. Sad for *us*, because my man might change his narrow attitudes and approaches to this issue when and if his son "comes out." It could definitely be detrimental to my efforts. Parents of homosexual children often change their thinking and attitudes in ways that make our work more problematic in bringing souls to our Father Below.

Fortunately, the ITD has several programs I can employ. One is to inculcate in the son's mind the deep conviction that he will "hurt his dad" if he comes out. My man, of course, is better off not knowing that his son is "that way." And, even better, if we can keep the son in his closet, the son himself will be forced into dishonesty and immoral behavior and will move towards our camp! Incidentally, if the son does come out, I will try to justify to my man that some kind of dreadful response—such as throwing his son out of the house—will be acceptable, even *expected* of *him* by his friends. That could help salvage the situation, but I prefer not to risk it.

So, to conclude, encourage your man to move into far right-wing "fundamentalist" thinking as soon as possible, and persuade him to actually provide financial support. That solidifies the deal. Doing so will keep him occupied. He will not dwell on the perilous principles of true Christianity, and he will feel within himself that he is a righteous man and better than others—just what you want him to think and feel! And those feelings and attitudes will be reinforced by today's society.

WELL, my good Nephew, let this be sufficient for today. I am looking forward to your response and praying for some good news, finally, about the downfall of your man.

—Your affectionate uncle

NOTE

1. In my first column (this is the twenty-second), I introduced the Borderland member as one who may have an unusual but LDS-compatible outlook on life, a distinctive way of thinking about faith, belief, and testimony, a different view of LDS history, some open questions about a particular aspect of the Church, reduced or modified activity, or feelings of not meeting Group 1 acceptability criteria. See the figure. Copies of all past Borderlands columns are available at www.forthosewhowonder.com.

Please send me any of your experiences or tales from life in the Borderlands.

D. Jeff Burton, jeff@eburton.com