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Confidentiality in
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Readers' Forum

Whose God in History?

Neal W. Kramer's essay "Looking for God in History," *SUNSTONE*, 8, 1 and 2, pp. 15-17, is one of the most sophisticated attacks on academic history produced by a faithful Latter-day Saint. He is far better read than Boyd Packer but his point is the same. Mormon history is best written with an eye to the *fact* that, "the hand of God is mightily revealed in the history of this church. . . ." To re-establish God in history, Kramer attacks the "positivism" of academic history through linguistic analysis. He concludes that the rules and conventions of language make the positivist dream of "absolute knowledge" a "fleeting dream of the scientist." If academic history is a mere convention, then history written by the faithful who experience God is as valid if not more valid than it.

I know of few students of the philosophy of science and of history who would not agree with the limitations which Kramer places on the attainment of absolute knowledge, but his caricature of history and science as naively positivistic does little service to him or to those disciplines. Thoughtful scientists and historians see their branches of learning not so much as a search for truth as systems of rules which allow theories to be evaluated in terms of sense data. In science, the predictive power and/or usefulness (will it get a rocket to the moon?) of a theory determine its acceptance. The tentative nature of "scientific truth" is seen in the changes of world view which punctuate the history of science. In history, theories are judged by how well they account for the various pieces of data essential to the question being asked. Though science and history were profoundly affected by positivism, neither is in the last half of the twentieth century as uncritically positivistic as Kramer would have us believe.

What seems most to bother Kramer about academic history is its refusal to

recognize the hand of God in events. The reason for this aspect of academic history is both clear and persuasive. What sense data exist to reveal God's hand? If such data existed, whose God would it reveal? Because God is not sensible, data dealing with him is nonsense and speculative. Were historians to admit such nonsense data, they would lose much of their shared universe of discourse which allows them to evaluate their theories. Personal, inspired speculation with no data would become as valid as hard documents and chaos would replace orderly criticism.

Though academic history can not consider God as a causal factor, it has no difficulty in considering the belief in God and mystical experiences as factors at play in peoples' lives. Constantine's conversion, Mohammed's conversations with Gabriel, and Joseph Smith's visions are all data to be accounted for in historical explanations. The faithful and the faithless can evaluate the success or failure of such explanations in making the lives of religious figures intelligible.

Kramer might reasonably be asked, is academic history as hostile to faithful history as faithful history is to academic history? I believe that the answer is no. The academic sees faith-promoting, in-house history as a valid interpretation of religious mythology. The perceptions of the faithful become vehicles to help the academic outsider understand what the faith means to the believer. The academic must view faithful history critically, but he should not view it with hostility.

Of special interest to me as an outsider, an academic historian, is the peculiar historical orientation of Mormonism. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the Visitors' Centers today, one sees an explicit positivistic theory of history propounded by "The Church." It is almost an article of faith that a study of history will prove to the open

minded the reality of the apostasy and the necessity of the restoration. Mark E. Peterson does not hesitate to use histories of Christianity to prove the worldliness and apostasy of Catholicism in *Which Church is Right?* Kramer and Packer, however, seem to recoil from academic studies of Mormonism which may tend to show worldly factors at work in the restored church. Mormons cannot consistently use history to show that some theological points are tenable to historical verification and then selectively refuse to allow that Mormonism is in those points capable of historical falsification.

From the position which Kramer seeks to defend, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, witches, etc., can and should find that their deity "is mightily revealed" in their history. This is, of course, true and acceptable, but religious subjectivity is not the only path open to history. The academic historian must see things from outside the plenitude of spirit which pervades insider traditions. His job is to make such traditions intelligible to outsiders. The insiders already know the truth of their tradition. Absolute knowledge therefore does not reside in the tentative, plausible explanations of the academic historian but rather in the "divinely inspired" insider histories of the faithful. Kramer does not need to attack a caricature of academic history to justify the absolutist interpretations of his religion. They are justified by the beliefs of the faithful. To them academic history is secular foolishness. He does, however, need to come to grips with the Mormon theory of history which in its positivism allows aspects of theology to be tested historically.

Michael T. Walton
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dem Bohns

Having read BYU political scientist David Bohn's essay on the illusory nature of historiographical objectivity (*SUNSTONE*, May-June 1983), I'm left wondering whether it's not a departmental project to attack the "New Mormon History" and its practitioners, with the baton having now passed from Louis Midgley to Professor Bohn. But perhaps everyone needs a hobby, and this is probably a morally more acceptable one than deer hunting or participating in pyramid schemes.

Bohn explains how historians are trapped by their categories and by their times, which leads them to force

meaning upon the facts they collect. In fact, they only collect the facts that fit into their world views and grand schemes. I gather that Bohn thinks that what he's got to say is news to historians. Well, his discussion of the problems of evidence and explanation bring to mind the lectures I heard in my graduate historical methods class at the University of Utah, that bastion of secular humanism. Going back beyond that, when I was a mere youth of 22 and an undergraduate at the same institution, I was assigned to read Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which Bohn approvingly cites and which pretty much lays out the whole picture of how world view influences scientists (I wonder if that includes *political* scientists). But getting back to graduate school, the same professor who lectured about evidence in another class was careful to have us consider several schools of interpretation regarding U.S. colonial history, including the causes of the Revolution and the factors involved in the writing and ratification of the Constitution. He concluded the course with an admission that there's no final, absolute explanation, that different sets of assumptions will lead to different visions of the past. I must admit that I found this analysis a bit depressing, as it argues for a more relativistic view than most people find acceptable and certainly more so than I find comfortable. It struck me at the time that part of the problem is that reality is so complex that no single scholarly approach can hope to encompass it.

So maybe Bohn isn't so far off when he says that the best that finite human efforts at scholarship can achieve is "bounded relativism," although I'd like to know what sets the bounds. It seems to me that the problem is once you admit some degree of relativism, what stops you from going all the way and saying all explanations are of equal value? Even on Professor Bohn's terms, he can't very well claim any greater certitude or objectivity for historical projects based on Mormon "categories of belief as a theme," contrary to what Neal Kramer had to say in his shot at the "New Mormon History" in the previous issue (SUNSTONE, March-April 1983). (Parenthetically, when I read Kramer's essay, I experienced the un-Christian temptation to send a xerox copy to his doctoral committee chairman at the University of Chicago with a query as to whether a person so opposed to the methods of scholarship can really be happy as a grad student at a major university.

But I bit my tongue and saved that jibe for this letter instead.)

Now personally I feel that people ought to be free to approach the writing of history from any angle they choose, and if they want to study religious history, they ought to deal with religious matters as they come across them in their work. What I can't quite figure out is how they can proceed except to present evidence and draw conclusions from it to support a particular interpretation. Hopefully the interpretation will follow from the facts and their own rational processes, but if they want to draw their interpretations from the scriptures or a talk they heard in conference, I guess that's okay too. It strikes me that most Mormon historians, Old or New, don't seem to be *trying* to force theories or models on their facts, but rather spend most of their time lining facts up, one after another, sometimes without drawing any conclusions at all. (Maybe I've been reading *BYU Studies* too much.) So maybe Kramer's advice isn't so far out in left field (or right field, probably)—let one's subject give his own view in his own words and then the historian just bears his testimony that what the person said is true. Of course that implies that one can only use sources which say things one feels able to bear testimony to. And there's the problem. I find it a little hard to be more comfortable with a historian

who wants to tell me what God was thinking about a particular event than I am with a historian who has delusions of being a sociologist, anthropologist, or psychologist. After all, as Bohn reminds us, history cannot *prove* spiritual claims, which require personal validation coming from a higher source.

But enough of this arcane theorizing. SUNSTONE recently has run a whole series of articles discussing the theoretical possibilities of history. Let's get down to cases. Maybe I could understand better what everyone is trying to say if they could point out some specific books or articles that I could read. By the way, in the last general conference at least two General Authorities warned against those (historians, obviously) who point out the flaws in the lives of past Church leaders, rather than appreciating the great work which they did. I can agree that there's a great need for a balanced approach, and I've heard this accusation tossed about a lot lately, but no one ever identifies the books and articles where this hatchet-job history takes place. I'd like to propose yet another SUNSTONE contest (with Correlation perhaps putting up the prize money), with the winner being the person who can submit the longest list of such works, a condition being that besides author and title, the contestant must also point to specific passages which justify

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The 1984 SUNSTONE THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM will be held on August 23rd through the 25th at the Hotel Utah in Salt Lake City. Plan to include the symposium in your summer activities. Further details will be forthcoming.

their inclusion in his/her list.

Fordham Hurley
Taylorsville, Utah

Bohna Fide Article

David Earl Bohn's article, "No Higher Ground" (SUNSTONE, May-June 1983) raises important issues about the writing of Mormon history, but also distorts what many Mormon historians are trying to accomplish. Bohn appears to believe that academic historians aim toward an approach of total neutrality toward the object of their inquiry, much in the manner of older and now outmoded "positivistic"

approaches of the physical sciences. This is a subtle though serious misreading of the historical enterprise. Although I can speak with authority only for myself, I believe that no reputable historian, if understood fully in context, would argue that *total* objectivity is possible. Rather, historians do their best to achieve the fullest and most comprehensive analysis of their topics. Far from being dogmatists or absolutists, historians are aware that simply to be alive is to have perspectives and experiences which influence our perceptions of the world. The point is to try to come as

close as possible to a fair and balanced assessment of events, while recognizing that we will inevitably fall short of this goal in some respects.

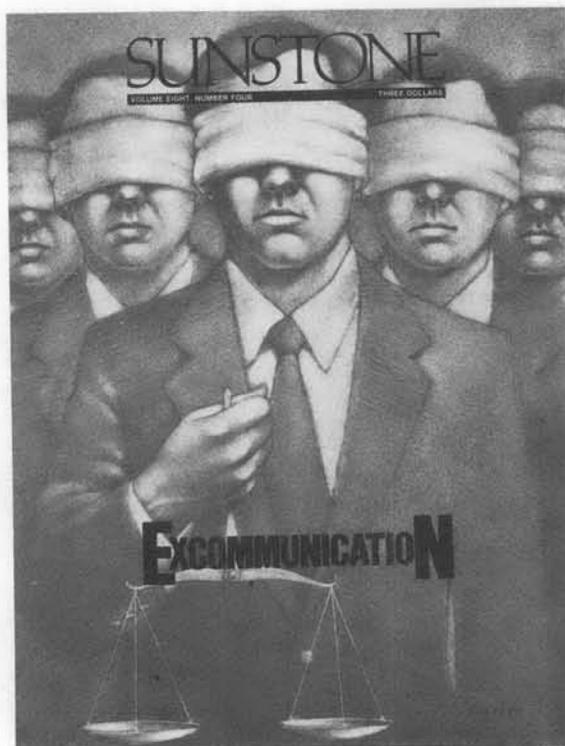
Historians do have failings. For example, Bohn is right that much, but certainly not all, academic historical writing is biased against taking religious movements seriously on their own terms. I have repeatedly encountered writers who assume that certain religious claims are so obviously untrue that they do not merit serious investigation. Such a narrow-minded viewpoint is not held either by myself or by leading Latter-day Saint historians of my acquaintance. Indeed, one of the major concerns underlying my work is that as much of the evidence as possible be investigated before conclusions are reached. Bohn and some Mormon conservatives may not like the specific conclusions that historians eventually reach, but this is very different from suggesting that I or other Mormon historians exclude valid perspectives and categories of evidence from our investigation.

When Bohn implies that one's perspective must in some sense predetermine one's conclusions, he is only partly right. Certainly one needs to be able to define a problem in order to collect appropriate data to begin to answer it effectively. But the answer itself is not necessarily predetermined wholly by the question asked. Any investigator who is sincerely interested in determining what happened in the past will continually test out different hypotheses and seek new evidence in attempting to explain and understand events. For example, if one were to hypothesize initially that Joseph Smith's visions might have been due to epileptic seizures (one example used by Bohn), this hypothesis could be tested to see if the evidence appeared to support it or not. Since in this case the evidence does not appear to support the hypothesis, the investigator could then proceed to look at a wide range of additional approaches in order to develop a more comprehensive explanation.

I am frankly puzzled at just what overall conclusions Bohn is stumbling toward when he goes beyond simply stating commonplace historiographic generalizations. He says that he is not nihilistic, yet much of the thrust of his argument moves in just such a direction. Although total certainty or agreement is unlikely about any complex issue, this should not discourage us from doing our best to

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be as fair as possible in considering various explanations. Such a sincere search for understanding is not "positivistic" or reductionistic, but quite the contrary. I am somewhat baffled that Bohn appears to think that his historiographic ruminations are directed against the reductionism of historians when, to my eye, they would seem more logically to be directed against the reductionism of the writers of dogmatic polemic, whether that polemic be historical or theological.

The biggest problem I have with writers of supposedly "faith-promoting" Mormon history is not with their framework *per se*, but rather with their failure to consider fairly the full range of available evidence and interpretation. They, not the historians, start with their minds already made up about what they will find. The result tends to be purely apologetic writing pitched to the lowest common denominator—writing which "talks down" to Saints as though they were mere children. I continue to believe that such writing is neither good religion nor good history.

Lawrence Foster
Georgia Institute of Technology

Still Another Bohn to Pick

In the last two issues of *SUNSTONE*, two writers appear to be trying to defend Mormon orthodoxy against the onslaught of what David Earl Bohn calls "The New Mormon Historians" (David Earl Bohn, "No Higher Ground," *SUNSTONE* [May-June 1983]: pp. 26-32. See also Neal W. Kramer, "Looking for God in History," *SUNSTONE* [Jan.-April 1983]: pp. 15-17). Both Bohn and Neal W. Kramer seem to believe that by mentioning the difficulties, ambiguities, and general limitations of language and repeating the now-commonplace list of deficiencies in positivism as an approach to history, they have somehow vindicated the traditional approaches to Mormon history. Bohn is the more careful as well as the more thoughtful of the two. After a rather nihilistic attack on historians in which he asserts that, if you reject the canons of positivism, then "the historians' distinction between 'good history' and 'bad history' evaporates" (p. 27), he arrives at the somewhat contradictory and exceedingly weak conclusion that the "New Mormon Historians [have failed] to make a convincing case against the possibility of an honest and quality Mormon history that takes its own categories of belief as a theme" (p. 32). If there is

no way to distinguish good from bad history, one wonders what Bohn could possibly mean by a "quality Mormon history." Moreover, if the strongest argument that can be made in favor of Mormon orthodoxy is that its critics have not proven that it must necessarily involve one in dishonesty and bad quality history, then one can hardly celebrate the vindication of that orthodoxy.

Bohn has indeed summarized several reasons why a thoughtful historian should reject positivism. There are, however, three closely related failures in his article. First, he has failed to show that any of the New Mormon Historians he lists are positivists. As a former student of Professor McMurrin (whom Bohn labels as a positivist), I strongly doubt the appropriateness of the label. I would be very surprised if Professor McMurrin would label himself a positivist. Since I am less familiar with the philosophical views of the others mentioned by Bohn, I cannot comment on the appropriateness of the label.

The second inadequacy of Bohn's article is that it failed to show how, even if the tenets of positivism are indefensible and even if all of these New Mormon Historians are positivists, their specific assertions that run counter to Mormon orthodoxy are undermined. When, as a young LDS seminary student, I read my first critical account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, I went to my seminary teacher to ask about it. He produced a volume of Mormon Church history which denied the involvement of Mormon Church members or officials in this massacre. Regardless of the adequacy or inadequacy of positivism, regardless of Bohn's arguments on subjectivity, objectivity or "bounded relativism," a set of events occurred at Mountain Meadows in 1857. Even with Bohn's "bounded relativism" it *must* be the case that either Juanita Brooks in her classic account of the massacre is fundamentally misinformed and/or misrepresenting the facts or my seminary teacher and the Mormon history he showed me were misinformed and/or misrepresenting the facts. After studying hermeneutics, cultural differences, and the ambiguity of language (all factors Bohn feels vindicate traditional Mormon history), I conclude that the Mormons in 1857 may have felt very differently about the massacre than I do; it undoubtedly had an entirely different significance for them than it has for me; but I also conclude that

there is a certain stubborn objectivity about the killing of scores of men, women and children that will not go away despite Bohn's appeal to hermeneutics and his attack on positivism. Either men, women and children were killed by Mormons or they weren't. We must agree on that common core of objective facts or we cannot even compare different interpretation, or differences in assessments of the facts. Surely Bohn believes that there is a fundamental difference between the elephants I describe for him after a visit to the zoo and the proverbial pink elephants described by a person suffering from delirium tremors. Regardless of the adequacy of the way in which positivism explains objectivity, virtually all of us know that some notion of objectivity must be adopted. Certain types of psychoses are no more than a loss of any mental tie to such objectivity. So a critique of positivism does not obviate the charge that many traditional church historians have written accounts which have distorted or altered objective facts.

My third criticism of Bohn's article applies also to Kramer's article and to most of the writings of the New Mormon Historians as well (at least to that part of their writings that I have read). When Bohn attacks the epistemological views of positivists, he appears to believe that discrediting positivism somehow vindicates the use of "visions," "prophesies," or the "word of God" generally, as a source of knowledge about historical events. Repeating the arguments against one particular epistemological or methodological approach (positivism) does absolutely nothing to make a convincing case for communication with God as a source of factual knowledge about our world of experience, either present or past.

The fact is that any independent, thinking academician who is also religious must attempt to come to grips with the relationship between her or his religious experience and her or his historical or social-scientific views about the world. Neither Bohn nor Kramer appear even to attempt to do this. On the other hand, in so far as I have read their writings, neither do the New Mormon Historians. Like Bohn and Kramer, I have wondered just which tenets of traditional Mormonism these New Mormon Historians accept and which they reject. And if I knew this, I would wonder how they intellectually integrate these religious tenets into their secular theories and assessments

of facts.

There have been, of course, a large number of intellectuals who have attempted to understand this relationship. Most generally, they have interpreted religious scriptures, rites and rituals as metaphorical communications about, or sharings of, religious experiences when such experiences cannot be described or communicated in the same manner as the ordinary experience that can be apprehended with the senses and the intellect and that we generally refer to as objective. Some Christian churches are sufficiently flexible to permit the intellectual to interpret scriptures, rites and rituals in this manner. I do not know if the Mormon church has this flexibility.

As a youth in Mormon seminary, I remember when I asked my teacher about God communicating with the prophets. I asked him if God actually spoke in the same manner as you and I speak. If a prophet had a tape recorder, could he record God's voice? Would it be in English? With a Utah accent? Or would the prophet merely have a religious experience of the type that most of us have, an experience that is not easily translated into ordinary language. If so, then each of us would have to judge for ourselves the meaning we got from the prophet's metaphorical communication of his religious experience. My seminary teacher warned me that I should pray to God to help me remove them. I did, but to no avail.

The composer Anton Bruckner once said that his symphonies were attempts to communicate to others some aspects of his religious experiences. Bruckner's religion has always been much more comprehensible to me than that of Ezra Taft Benson or Boyd K. Packer. And since throughout my academic career I have been an intellectual opponent of positivism, the attacks on positivism by Bohn and Kramer have absolutely no impact on this judgment. When I hear the ethereal beauty and sublime power of Bruckner's ninth symphony, I believe he is communicating a message from God. When I read the hard-hearted, reactionary social, economic, and political views of Benson or the blatant anti-intellectualism of Packer, I cannot believe that God could be involved. Despite the efforts of the New Mormon Historians, or such academic Mormons as Bohn and Kramer, I still do not have the slightest evidence that an inquiring, open-minded, academic historian or

social scientist can be accommodated with the Mormon church in such a manner that the academic both maintains her or his intellectual integrity and simultaneously satisfies her or his need for spiritual communion.

E.K. Hunt
University of Utah

An Ode to Free Will

In her article, "Toward a Mormon Concept of Original Sin" (SUNSTONE 8:3), Sister Allred appears to have misconstrued the importance of the Atonement for Mormon theology. The Atonement is central to (apostate) Christianity simply because original sin is likewise central therein. But neither is central to Mormonism.

"Atonement"—restoring the whole, putting the fragmented back together—operates in Christianity to rectify the horrendous cosmic error, the Fall, which (in Orthodox Christianity) apparently catches God by surprise and necessitates Jesus' belatedly becoming the cosmic tool to correct that unforeseen mistake. Orthodox Christianity here ignores the scriptures which make Jesus an integral part of the plan of salvation, e.g. the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." These scriptures render the Fall a cosmic necessity, while Christianity has God expecting Adam and Eve to live eternally without sin in the Garden of Eden.

Mormonism, by denying the evil or mistaken implications of the Fall (a fall "upwards," as Sterling Sill puts it), needs no atonement by Jesus to correct fundamental cosmic error. Rather we see the Fall as a launching of mankind into full freedom, a blessing of unlimited opportunity for personal growth and education.

Mortality with its necessary "opposition in all things" provides concrete dilemmas enough without describing it, as does Allred, as "inevitability of sin." Mortality is *par excellence* the place where individual free will is to be practiced and learned. Salvation is thereby *earned*.

Allred rejects the foregoing nonsinful Fall as inconsistent with the scriptures. She is largely correct; Pauline theology appears to be expressly contrary to Mormon theology at this point. And I include in my notion of Pauline theology Joseph Smith's earliest pronouncements in the Book of Mormon and elsewhere. Joseph may have made some of these statements mistakenly or inadvertently while under the

influence of Pauline theology. But in his later years, Joseph rejected Pauline assumptions and felt no reluctance to abandon whole sections of scripture as well.

The solution, then, to the conflict (which Allred correctly sees) between the necessary and good Fall and the scriptures is to simply ignore the scriptures. Of course, we don't want to ignore the *original* scriptures or primitive Christian views, but we know that the *present* scriptures have been tampered with and are biased in favor of a corrupt Christianity (see the *Cambridge History of the Bible*, pp. 265, 284-85, 295-96, 339). Allred has apparently been led astray by the present New Testament/Pauline emphasis upon the evil implications of the Fall. I suspect the truly Primitive Christian views were Mormon, not Orthodox Christian.

The "universality of sin" identified by Allred is statistical (the result of the sheer number of free agents making their own decisions), not "inevitable." It is Jesus' resurrection, not his suffering nor death which is efficacious as atonement. We learn from our individual experiences and pay for our own sins until we learn to act correctly. There is no original sin. We are morally neutral (being uncreated of God, who was himself not sinless during his mortality), thus free to choose our own character and eternal destiny.

The whole purpose of both the Fall and the plan of salvation is the enhancement of individual free will, culminating in the final judgment, in which each will account for his use of that will. Thus, free will (with final judgment) is *the* central gospel doctrine, not atonement.

In the same issue, Eugene England presents his "Paradox of Selfhood," which mistakenly solemnizes the abrogation of individualism. His erroneous simplification has the Church always the winner of the conflict, with the individual binding himself to it in "painful transcendence."

Why can't the Church official seek to "transcend" the "painful paradox" of his mistaken inspiration by confessing his erstwhile error? Why can't Church leaders admit error? That they may be occasionally inspired by direct revelation does not arrogate to them the myth of infallible inspiration. By refusing to challenge their own sources of inspiration Church leaders perpetuate the myth of infallible inspiration. Learning such discernment may prevent the kind of error Apostle Richards made in mistakenly prophesying the Willie

handcart company into their own destruction. Brigham Young publicly blasted Richards for his prophetic stupidity, but how did that assure the Saints that repeat performances by Richards (or other Church leaders) would not occur? Why wasn't Apostle Richards required to write letters of apology to each member or family of the Willie Company?

England has failed to realize that (1) life may not be "tragic" at the heart of it; (2) the tragedy of the paradox may be unnecessary where the Church pronouncement or policy is simply wrong; (3) individuals who transcend the paradox by suffering higher enlightenment in binding themselves to the community is what Roman Catholics and others have been doing for centuries, an act which tells us nothing about the truthfulness of the community; (4) painful dilemmas do not lead inexorably to enlightenment, especially where one horn of the dilemma is error; (5) paradox may not be the ultimate explanation of life, for paradox (in my opinion) is a confession of inexplicability, and admission that life and the gospel cannot be integrated into meaningful synthesis.

Cummings, whom England criticizes, has correctly simplified the paradox of selfhood into its primary constituent—free will; the ability to choose—even against the pronouncements of Church authorities. Cummings is correct: The profundity of choice is not simplified by avoiding it through "suffering transcendence," as England recommends.

Personal responsibility, of course, awaits those who choose (either direction) with consequences of eternal dimension. But isn't the individual *ever* justified and sometimes totally moral in opposing a Church pronouncement or policy? As an original founder of *Dialogue*, England must know that individual responsibility ultimately supercedes community interests.

England's praise of "the need to be forced" betrays his begging of the real conflict.

Gerry L. Ensley
Los Alamitos, California

Agency at the Heart

As a thought-provoking essay, Janice Allred's article on Original Sin was excellent (SUNSTONE, May-June 1983). I wish, however, her theological arguments had been as compelling as her desire to justify Christ's atonement for Mormons. As she states, "the revelations of the

prophets should provide the truths from which we proceed," but no clear doctrine on the subject exists aside from the second Article of Faith. Brigham Young once averred, "The Savior came . . . to redeem the earth and the children of men from original sin . . . committed by our first parents" (*Journal of Discourses*, June 1867). And Orson Pratt taught, "Adam transferred death to his posterity, not for any sin that they had committed, but as a consequence of his own sin" (*The Seer*, p. 97). Even latter-day scripture seems to

teach original sin (Moses 6:54-55).

On the other hand, Wilford Woodruff taught, "Adam and Eve came to this world to perform exactly the part they acted in the Garden of Eden; and I will say, they were ordained of God to do what they did" (*Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, p. 233). Joseph Fielding Smith added, "Adam made the decision, in fact the only decision that he could make" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 4:81). And Marion G. Romney summed up this "softened

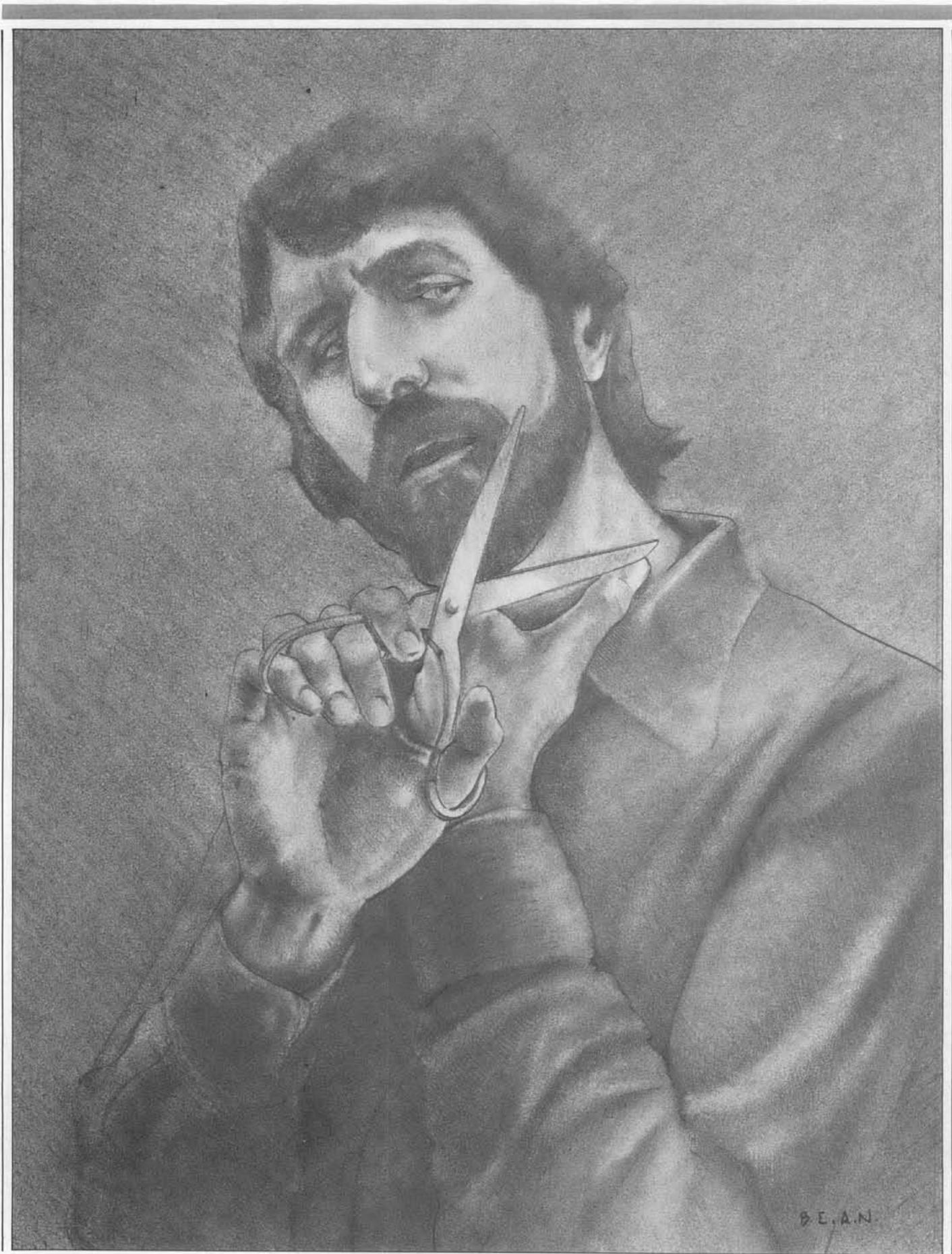
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Announcing the Sunstone Sketchbook.

Too often, anthologies and collections of Mormon visual art represent the voice of the critic or compiler rather than of the artist himself. **Sunstone** wants to provide Mormon artists the opportunity to express themselves, their creative feelings, and their relationship to the Church and gospel unencumbered by commentary.

Future issues will devote 2-3 pages highlighting the work of an artist whose life or work represents Mormonism, as well as comments on the work by the artist. All work will be reproduced in black and white so line art is preferred; continuous tone pieces will also be accepted. Artwork submitted must be the artist's own and should be accompanied by sufficient return postage.

Send artwork, a brief biographical sketch, and a paragraph commenting on your work to SUNSTONE, P.O. Box 2272, Salt Lake City, Utah 84110



TO BEARD OR NOT TO BEARD

RICHARD S. VAN WAGONER

IN days of old, when nights were cold, Mom sent us to bed with a hot water bottle at our feet. But why warm only the feet? Though the feet rest on the sole, the face is the home of our chinny-chin-chin. Since the beginning of time, beards have known and understood that we should pamper the face, keeping it warm in the winteriest weather.

And beards are more than chin warmers. Throughout history beards have served as a symbol of manhood. A clean-shaven Adam or a smooth-cheeked Abraham would lack biblical macho. Who can forget the powerfully bearded Moses with Cecil B. DeMille staff raised to the heavens challenging the Red Sea? The mere thought of that scene makes your hair want to part.

Beards have always been a sign of social distinction. As long ago as 3,000 B.C., Egyptian kings and even queens (and this in a day when *queen* meant more than it does now) wore false beards called *postiche* to symbolize their royalty. The kings were clean shaven to prevent beard-bugs; the queens simply preferred falsies. Greek heroes, too, were distinguished by their flowing beards.

The origin of shaving is disputed by two ancient Greek legends. One has Aristotle Gillette discovering a razor so improved over the previous flint instrument that nine out of ten Greek males claimed you could "feel the difference." In the other, more dubious account, Alexander the Great reportedly ordered his soldiers to shave so their beards could not be grasped in combat.

The Semites appear in ancient graffiti with wild, ungroomed beards which not only reflected the desert's glare but also camouflaged overbites. Babylonians and Persians, too, are usually depicted with not only curly beards but also shady women. Early Romans wore their beards uncut until approximately 300 B.C., at which time their lengths were legion. The first Roman known to have shaved every day was the noted general Scipio Africanus. The custom quickly spread. Young Roman men were so pleased to achieve a showing of facial hair that they dedicated the cuttings to the Roman goddess of barbershop, Fortuna Barbata.

Jewish men wore full beards to be considered kosher. Leviticus 19:27 and 21:5 even forbid the destruction of

the "corners" of the beard. In the Bible, shaving of the beard is a sign of mourning and/or degradation. Shaving was identified with the spontaneous plucking of the beard, an expression of great sorrow, to say nothing of pain. Forced removal of even half a beard, as shown in 2 Samuel 10:4, was severe humiliation.

With the rise of Hasidism, a man without a beard was often compared to a eunuch. The Talmud goes so far as to regard a beard "the adornment of a man's face." Only men already disgraced by the disreputable business of dealing with Roman authorities were allowed to defile themselves by clipping their beards. The general Jewish objection to removal of the beard was that facial hair was God-given to distinguish man from woman. To refuse such a gift by shaving was therefore considered an offense against both God and nature.

Jewish history recounts the dastardly efforts of several rulers, including Nicholas I of Russia, to break Jewish spirit by forcing males to remove their beards and earlocks. Maria Theresa of Austria even ordered Jews to cut their beards so as to be singled out as a foreign element by their Christian neighbors—a foreshadowing of the yellow stars of David which would serve similar purpose during World War II. In perhaps the ultimate humiliation of European Jews, Hitler's death camp supervisors marched Jewish men to their deaths clean-shaven.

Like most Teutonic peoples, the original Saxons were bearded. It was the effete Norman French clergy who introduced the vice of shaving among the English. Wisdom again prevailed during the reign of Edward III, and hirsute faces reappeared. Francis I of France and Henry VIII of England were champions of the full beard, admiring its capacity for shielding bad teeth, embarrassing skin conditions, and such social improprieties as blushing.

Beards went through successive periods of favor and disfavor during the eighteenth century. When they again became stylish in the early part of the nineteenth century, they were unfortunately associated with revolutionary politics and Bohemian lifestyles: Ragged whiskers became a cartoonist's symbol for Bolsheviks

and anarchists. But by midcentury whiskers took a turn for the better as a mark of the free spirit of western pioneers and desert prospectors. Though no signer of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution had a beard or mustache, Abraham Lincoln made an honest man out of the bearded face. During the Civil War men were too busy killing each other to shave, so beards became as fashionable as killing.

My own culture seems to have forgotten the historical importance of Mormon beards. Whiskers sifted the hardtack and bean soup of Missouri jails. Fuzzy faces marched through spring rains and summer sun on that famous pioneer trek. Early Mormon missionaries, though they traveled without purse or scrip, usually took a beard along. Who can imagine an unbearded Brigham Young, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, or Heber J. Grant? Who but a heretic could envision prayers ascending to a shaven God?

As a student of beardlore, I find evidence in Mormon history to support what I have always believed: Beards are as certain harbingers of good health as chicken soup. When frail seventy-two-year-old Lorenzo Snow and his snowy white beard were whisked away to Sugarhouse Penitentiary in 1886 for having more wives than the law allowed, two Ogden physicians averted the usual prison shearing by their plea that "in consideration of the advanced age of the bearer, Lorenzo Snow, and also of his usually delicate condition, we the undersigned, take the liberty of stating that we fear his health would be seriously jeopardized by depriving him of his hair and beard, as he has worn the latter 16 years on this account."

And Bishop Hiram B. Clawson, about to be shorn of his much-loved mustache, approached the prison doctor with a five-dollar gold piece hidden under this thumb. "Doctor, I'm afraid that if my moustache is shaved off it will be detrimental to my health," the aging polygamist pleaded. "Why?" the good doctor asked as the gold piece was deftly slipped into his palm. "There is a weakness in my throat." "Mr. Clawson," the doctor replied, "I'm sure your health would be much impaired if your moustache were removed. I shall, therefore, give strict instructions that you be not shaved."

J. M. Paxton, a less delicate or deft polygamist, captured the feeling of a prison barber stealing his mustache right out from under his nose:

Then on your upper lip
The mower makes a dash,
And you are fired out
Without a bit of 'tache'. . . .

Oh give me back my moustache,
It makes me feel so queer,
I often try to curl it,
But find it is not here.

It 'minds me of a story,
I hardly like to tell,
My darling used to curl it,
And she always did it well.

And then with arms about my neck,
She took a kiss for pay
And other lips besides my own
Had moustache on that day.

Elderly patriarchs were joshed that their improved looks would allow them to attract younger wives when they returned home. But in fact returning "cohabs" were met by skittering children who ran into their mothers' homes yelling, "Ma, there is a stranger out in the yard and he says he is Pa."

Most Mormons viewed the loss of their beards as a forced compromise of their beliefs, a personal loss of freedom. No wonder, given that kind of full-bearded integrity, that so many of my favorite people have been bearded: Jesus, Santa Claus, Uncle Remus, Mr. Whiskers—even my Aunt Alma with the seven whiskers curling out from her black mole.

For a while we bearded Utahns had a champion to cheer for, our own Governor Scott Matheson. The governor, recuperating from a minor heart attack earlier this year, decided to grow his beard to "reprioritize" his thinking, to restructure his personal goals. When rumors spread that the Matheson cheeks were being invaded by a growing salt-and-pepper menace, insults began. *Scroungy, motorcycle gang leader, cheap tin-horn gambler, bum* were among the buzz words spread by anonymous verbal assassins (no doubt ambitious Republicans). But when it appeared uncertain the beard would stay, the *Salt Lake Tribune* urged, "Grow It, Gov." Debate mounted. Opinions as to whether the razor should be given its day were spouted in every barbershop in the state.

For a while I thought there was hope. When the governor left the hospital, papers announced "Matheson, Beard, sent home." Anxiously, I watched the news each night to catch a moment's glimpse of my bearded hero cutting ribbons and inspecting earthen dams. Matheson looked splendid—a surprising winner in the Heber J. Grant look-alike contest. But a news bulletin of 3 June brought the stunning news that Mrs. Matheson had cast an override veto.

Henceforth we members of the United Beardgrowers Association will remember exactly what we were doing the moment we first heard that Governor Scott Matheson shaved his beard. In the final dark moments before the official razor struck, the governor issued a clemency order for the mustache, declaring, "I'm going to need something to break up that sea of skin." Thank heaven something was salvaged.

I did receive some consolation from the auctioning off of the dead beard for the Utah Heart Association. I didn't hear of it in time, so did not make the affair, but a tall, dark stranger in a beige overcoat sold me a small packet of the "gov's whiskers" on the banks of State Street River. Rushing home to examine my treasure, I found I had been bilked out of my fifty cents. The purported whiskers were either seagull droppings or sugarbeet pulp. They tasted like the latter.

Beards are a lonely lot. Facial hair, fallen into disrepute everywhere, gets no respect at all among the Mormons. Bearded men are as rare as women speakers in General Conference. But much as I lament the monotony of the clean-shaven masses, I do not despair. It is never too late to repent and allow our faces to return to their natural, God-given, bearded condition.

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The Atonement

DO TRADITIONAL EXPLANATIONS MAKE SENSE?

J. CLAIR BATTY

IN that preexistent realm known as life before television, there was radio. On long winter evenings it was radio that brought Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, *The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger*, *The Cisco Kid* and his faithful companero Poncho to many youngsters in their preteen and early teen years. I was one of them. Beamed into my bedroom with the same fifty-thousand-watt clear-channel clarity were also the voices of country preachers petitioning listeners to come unto Christ and be saved. I can still hear the strongly southern-accented words that formed almost a chant: "Christ died for your sins. Christ died for the sins of the world. Christ took the sins of the world on his shoulders."

These were the same words that flowed across the pulpit of our tiny rural LDS ward chapel or were uttered with tearful emotion in testimony meetings. It was the same message that came through in the hymns of gratitude and supplication, repeated so often that we knew the words by heart:

I tremble to know that for me he was crucified.
That for me a sinner he suffered, he bled and died.
I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt,
Such mercy, such love and devotion can I forget?¹

To have so many sources proclaim that same message was almost more than I could bear. It seemed the entire Christian world understood a concept that made absolutely no sense at all to me. I could not imagine how Christ could take on his shoulders my sins and the sins of the world. My Sunday School and priesthood quorum teachers only intensified the frustration as they offered various explanations of the concept of the Atonement.

In such settings it was customary to present an analogy wherein we find ourselves about to lose home and hearth to some heartless creditor(s) to whom we owe money. Then, according to the analogy, comes the magnanimous philanthropic friend who offers to refinance us. He pays off our debt to the creditor(s) thus satisfying justice and then transfers the debt to himself

to be repaid later on somewhat easier terms.² This type of analogy seemed to me to break down in that the always anonymous creditor actually is not paid in transferable bonds, stocks, or coin of the realm but in blood, anguish, and suffering. It was easy to visualize how a benefactor's money is as effective as my own in redeeming my financial obligations and satisfying a creditor's sense of justice. But if my personal mistakes had offended someone to the point of their demanding retribution, I could not understand how they could be content with the blood and pain and suffering of someone else. The vicarious nature of the Atonement was beyond my comprehension.

I liked the pit-and-the-ladder explanation much better. While walking along a path we fall into a pit so very deep that we have no hope of ever getting out by ourselves. We are trapped, doomed to spend the rest of eternity in that dreadful hole. Along comes a trusted friend with a ladder as tall as our prison is deep. He lowers the ladder, allowing us to scramble up and make good our escape from the clutches of the pit.³ The analogy was so simple and straightforward even I could understand. We mortals had fallen into the pit of death because Adam had partaken of the forbidden fruit. The Father sent his son to overcome death and provide a means of escape. But unfortunately this simple little analogy failed to explain all the talk about the vicarious sacrifice of Christ wherein he took upon himself the sins of all mankind. The concept of his dying for our sins was totally left out.

Writers and sermonizers on the Atonement seemed always to weave such a tangled fabric of unfathomable clichés about sin and punishment, justice and mercy, that I could not sort it out. These clichés suggested only that mankind had gotten into deep trouble and Jesus had volunteered to take the punishment or in some other way assist us.

On the farm where I was then growing up we had, among other sources of sustenance, a small flock of



If the Father and the Son are of one mind, why must Christ act as our advocate or mediator with the Father? Could it be that the Savior knows us better or cares about us more than the Father? Are they arguing over who gets saved and who doesn't?

laying hens and a few milk cows. The ultimate transgression this young steward of the coop and barn could visualize was stumbling and breaking a basket of eggs or spilling a pail of milk. That happened very rarely, but when it did, my wise parents combined counsel with consolation, suggesting that while awkwardness is not a virtue to be cultivated, it is to be expected that when you are in the milk and egg business you sometimes end up with broken eggs and spilt milk. The version of the Atonement that I thought I heard sounded very much like a story wherein children sent to the hen house gather eggs and accidentally, carelessly, or deliberately drop the basket and break the eggs. These children have been conditioned to expect a terrible beating for their transgression. An older brother comes along and seeing the plight of the poor trembling egg-breakers says something like this: Although I have never broken an egg or spilt a drop of milk in my entire life, I, the strongest, will take the beating you so richly deserve. I will take upon my shoulders the responsibility for your broken eggs. I will suffer for you after which you will be in my debt forever and ever.

The difficulty with this scenario is that it presupposes the existence of an authority figure who could be deceived into believing that big brother actually broke the eggs or who was so befuddled, frustrated, drunken, or angry that it didn't really matter who broke the eggs just so long as he could vent his rage by inflicting pain and seeing someone suffer. It was difficult for me to worship a god who either had such a warped sense of fair play that vicarious suffering could satisfy his notions of justice or was of such limited power as to be coerced into cooperating with beings who did.

To me it was all very confusing and of all young men seeking answers to life's riddles I was surely among the most miserable. My apparently feeble mind could not comprehend what seemed to be a simple, beautiful, and totally acceptable concept for nearly every other Christian in the world.

And then one night when I was alone with just the lamp, a book, and quiet contemplation, came a thrilling discovery. In his marvelous work *Jesus the Christ*, James E. Talmage writes, "In some manner, actual and terribly real though to man incomprehensible, the Savior took upon Himself the burden of the sins of mankind from Adam to the end of the world."¹ Recently I read again that burned-forever-into-my-memory sentence on the same page of the same book. There was the same red line under those words: *though to man incomprehensible*. There was certain comfort in the realization that if a great scholar like Talmage admitted he didn't understand the Atonement, perhaps I wasn't as severely retarded as I had feared.

Yet a bit later on in seminary and priesthood classes the tendency for teachers to dismiss questions about the Atonement as "delving into the mysteries and not essential to my salvation" again fueled my frustrations. It was easy to agree one could not hope to comprehend the basic mechanisms of *how* the Atonement was accomplished but still something within me cried out for greater understanding of at least *the concept*. An awareness was gradually deepening in me that the Atonement was more than a frivolous nonessential item of academic interest only to theological zealots. As Bruce R. McConkie so eloquently states:

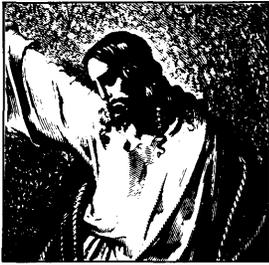
Nothing in the entire plan of salvation compares in any way in importance with that most transcendent of all events, the atoning sacrifice of our Lord. It is the most important single thing that has ever happened in the entire history of created things, it is the rock foundation upon which the gospel and all other things rest. Indeed all "things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it," the Prophet said (*Teachings*, p. 121).

The doctrine of the *atonement* embraces, sustains, supports, and gives life and force to all other gospel doctrines. It is the foundation upon which all truth rests, and all things grow out of it and come because of it. Indeed the atonement is the gospel.

It seemed maddening that the fundamental tenet of Christianity would remain so inscrutably mysterious to me. If other elements of the plan of salvation could make sense, why did this essential cornerstone continue to elude my understanding? These feelings were reinforced by exposure to LDS instruction wherein the sectarian notions of the incomprehensible nature of God are treated with a touch of sarcasm. These instructions implied to me that basic doctrines should be understandable. What did the words of the prophets on the subject of the Atonement really mean? Was it just sophistry and subterfuge or could it make sense to one as untutored and uninspired as I?

Obviously the farm boy who stared in wonder at tender bean sprouts pushing their way up through crusted soil and who was totally dazzled by the content of an egg organizing itself into an intricate feathered mechanism that pecked its way through a protective shell to step bravely into life could never hope to comprehend the technical detail of how the Atonement was accomplished. That would be like trying to sort out the technical detail of how the earth was organized. But surely the rationale for or concept of atonement could be understood.

From various sources one learns the word *atonement* is synonymous with reconciliation, absolution, redemption, reparation, paying ransom or price, rendering of sacrifice. It seems then that an understanding of the concept should resolve such



It is difficult to worship a god who either has such a warped sense of fair play that the vicarious suffering of an innocent can satisfy his notions of justice or is of such limited power as to be coerced into cooperation with beings who do.

questions as: Why was payment, ransom, reconciliation, or sacrifice necessary? Who made the payment, ransom, or sacrifice? What did the payment or ransom consist of? To whom was the ransom or sacrifice made? For whom was the ransom or sacrifice made?

These questions, for which most members of the Church have a ready answer, may be deceptively simple. For example consider the question, who made the sacrifice, who paid the ransom? I had always understood that it was the Savior, Jesus Christ, who made the atoning sacrifice. But what of such scriptures as, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16-17) or "Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son" (D&C 20:21) or "It was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his Only Begotten Son" (Jacob 4:5). This was the precise theme of a recent lesson in a Melchizedek Priesthood study guide. In that lesson the question is asked, why was the Father willing to sacrifice his only begotten son in the flesh? Apparently Abraham and God the Father have similar roles as the *sacrificer* and Isaac and Jesus have similar roles as the *sacrificed*.⁶

But what then of the question, to whom was the sacrifice made? The dictionary in my King James Bible described the widely accepted Christian point of view, "He [Christ] is a 'ransom for many.' By His life and death He made before God an act of moral reparation, in man's name and on man's behalf, to that divine holiness and justice which our sins have outraged and defied. This act of reparation having been made it becomes morally possible for God to forgive us when we ask Him to do so 'for Christ's sake.'" ⁷

Could this actually be saying (1) that our sins have outraged God the Father (that divine holiness) and (2) that reparation (tribute, bounty, satisfaction, amends, restitution) is demanded to calm him down? This puts the Father in the very strange position of both demanding reparation (payment, tribute) to himself and then providing that payment in the form of blood and suffering of his beloved son. Can this possibly be? Perhaps one could find such inconsistent behavior in an earthly medieval monarch gone mad but surely not in the Supreme Being of the universe whom we worship and want to emulate.

Closely tied to the notion of Christ's sacrifice being to his heavenly father is his role as mediator or advocate with the Father.⁸ Is an advocate or mediator necessary because the Father doesn't know us as well as the Savior does, or doesn't care about us as much as the Savior does or is more stern than the Savior is or has a different opinion about the plan of salvation than the Savior does?

Are they arguing over who gets saved and who doesn't? This idea seems wildly inconsistent with the many scriptural declarations of "oneness" of the Father and the Son.⁹ They claim to be one in mind and purpose. Why would the Son have to plead our case with the Father who authored the plan of salvation in the first place? Obviously I was misinterpreting the intent of these "advocate with the Father" passages because they made little sense to me.

Writers have often attempted to circumvent such difficulty by suggesting the sacrifice is demanded not by God the Father but by justice. The demands of justice are stated so forcefully that we begin to wonder who this very assertive person "Justice" is. But can justice be anything other than the sense of right and wrong of the ultimate presiding authority? Doesn't this lead us right back to the demands of justice being nothing more than the demands of God the Eternal Father who is the ultimate presiding authority?

At least one writer has defined justice in another way. According to this definition the universe is awash in a sea of intelligences. These intelligences are outraged at our admittedly offensive behavior and are incensed at the idea of our hoping to return to heaven's hallowed hallways after participating in this earthly orgy of sin and corruption. Their combined voices scream for blood and suffering to pay for such sinning. They, in effect, become justice. The ultimate sacrifice according to this view was made to meet their demands, i.e., the demands of justice.¹⁰

I have some sympathy for this point of view. It is a model that at first glance explains many scriptures such as this: "The work of justice could not be destroyed if so, God would cease to be God . . . do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit. If so God would cease to be God." (Alma 42:13, 25.) But it seems incredible that the gods of heaven and earth must submit to what amounts to blackmail. According to this view if the demands of justice (the multitude of intelligences) are not met, they (the multitude) will withdraw allegiance, unplug God's support system, and God will cease to be God. It seems to me unlikely that the omnipotent beings we worship would find it necessary to appease this host of not-so-intelligent intelligences who would be satisfied with the vicarious suffering of a total innocent.

Suppose we inquire as to *what* exactly comprises the sacrifice? What *is* the atoning sacrifice? Many would respond that the "sacrifice" consisted of Christ's suffering, bleeding, and dying. This response is supported by scripture such as Alma 21:9, which states that "there could be no redemption for mankind save it were through the death and sufferings of Christ, and



The scriptures indicate that it is the blood of Christ which atones for our sins. If these verses are to be interpreted literally, then the blood of Christ must be regarded as a mysterious cleansing elixir, and the Atonement slips beyond rationality.

the atonement of his blood." Our hymns reflect this, as in:

How great the wisdom and the love
That filled the courts on high,
And sent the Savior from above
To suffer bleed and die.

His precious blood he freely spilt,
His life he freely gave
A sinless sacrifice for guilt,
A dying world to save.⁹

But the notion that it is Christ's death and the accompanying spilling of blood that somehow atones for our mistakes seems, to me, to miss the mark. Death in the manner experienced by the Savior is certainly not unique, though to offer one's life for others has always been regarded as the ultimate sacrifice. As Jesus himself said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). But what is life? If there is indeed life after death then one really cannot lay down his or her life, i.e., existence, awareness, state of being. It is the uncertainty that most mortals have about death that makes giving up life for someone else so utterly magnificent. Wouldn't the absolute certainty that death constitutes only a transition to another realm of existence and not the end of existence itself dramatically reduce the sacrifice involved in "dying" for others? Wherein, then, is the sacrifice associated with Christ's dying? The Father surely knew with absolute certainty that his only begotten son would not cease to exist; what did he really sacrifice in "giving" Christ to the world? If in fact one thousand years with us is but one day with God then the thirty-three years of Christ's earthly life meant only that the Father lent him to us for about forty-seven minutes. The anguish we mortals feel over the death of a child is intensified by fear that we shall never see that child again. The Father was surely not burdened by that kind of fear.

Jesus probably also was reasonably certain that for him death was not really the end of existence. Thus, words and phrases such as "Christ died for us" or "Christ died for our sins" seem rather empty. Surely Christ had to do more than die for our sins because that act seems to involve less of a sacrifice than many mortals have made in giving up their lives for others. And so the question persists: What was the sacrifice associated with the Atonement?

Perhaps a key element in the sacrifice was the shedding of blood. We are bombarded with scriptures dealing with the blood atonement: "Salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:18). "Their garments should be made white through the blood of the

Lamb" (Alma 34:36). "As in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins" (Mosiah 3:16). "And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood" (3 Ne. 27:19). "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11). (Emphasis added.)

But do these statements reflect literal or symbolic truth? If they are literally true then the blood of Christ must be regarded as a mysterious elixir possessing magical cleansing powers, and the concept of the Atonement slips beyond rationality. If the statements are intended to convey symbolically the notion that blood sustains life in our mortal bodies and to shed one's blood is to die, then are not these statements only another way of saying Christ died for our sins? Is the bleeding from every pore as he struggled in Gethsemane indicative of more than the intensity of Christ's agony? If the essence of the Atonement lies not in Christ's dying or bleeding then perhaps it lies in Christ's suffering. But if so, how?

I confess that the rhetoric and analogies about the Atonement that defied my comprehension as a boy continue to elude my understanding as a man. No doubt my spiritual myopia severely distorts my vision of the eternal scheme of things. Nevertheless I have arrived at a perspective of the Atonement that seems reasonably consistent with revealed word on the subject and brings to my mind peace. It seems to me that because of the often highly symbolic prophetic descriptions of the Atonement, we have unnecessarily shrouded an elegantly simple concept in mystery. To explain the concept requires a brief review of the plan of salvation.

There exist in this wide universe beings who, because of their vast intelligence, knowledge, experience, and power, qualify as gods. According to our founding prophet we are the same age as these divine beings, having existed coeternally with them.¹¹ Our earliest-mentioned level of organization is referred to simply as intelligence, implying perhaps an entity capable of self-awareness, identity, and independent thought but apparently not procreation.¹² Our heavenly father and mother arranged for the intelligences to begin a kind of progression in which we were born as literal spirit children.¹³

Because, for some reason, the more substantial physical bodies of the divine parents were more desirable than the spiritual constituents of their children, *body acquisition* and *testing* became important if the spirit offspring were to continue their progression. Apparently the godly parents knew well how their children behaved while in their presence. The acid test



We frequently hear that Christ was a ransom for our sins. This puts God the Father in the very strange position of both demanding reparation or tribute to himself and then providing that payment in the form of the blood and suffering of his own son.

would come when the children were thrust into yet another realm of existence where the overriding parental influence was considerably filtered.

Even in the household of gods there seems to have been sibling rivalry: not just squabbling, but outright rebellion. Indeed, the cause of the disagreement was not trivial but addressed a question of fundamental importance. Many appear to have been concerned about the risk involved in leaving relatively safe surroundings for the uncertainty associated with the rather perilous expedition to earth. They became vulnerable to the “big-brother-will-take-care-of-you-if-you-will-give-big-brother-your-support,-allegiance-and-taxes (i.e., glory) concept” to which humankind is still so susceptible. Lucifer, one of the particularly ambitious sons, asked for power to remove all risk from the proposed earthly experience. He was so persuasive that many of our spirit brothers and sisters stood by him as he insisted that none of us be allowed to make mistakes. (Abr. 3:25-28.) He would make all the decisions and we would be constrained by divine authority to follow his dictatorial mandates. Lucifer would bask eternally in the glory of our gratitude and servitude to him. Lucifer and company became so intolerably obnoxious that they were expelled in a struggle sometimes referred to as the war in heaven. These outcasts became bitter and determined to make things as difficult as possible for those who were allowed to come to earth.

Our older brother, the most intelligent and influential of us all (Abr. 3:19), chose to sustain the plan of the Father. That plan included sending us to a specially prepared planet where there were few guarantees. Many of us would not make it back to the presence of our heavenly parents. We were eternal entities in our own right and even the gods could not preprogram us for certain behavior leading to a fixed destiny. We were free agents.

Arrangements were made for physical molecules to cluster around our spirits in an astonishing fashion and form the much desired bodies. A problem was encountered in that this clustering of atoms into the highly organized patterns necessary for physical bodies could be only temporary (in some cases more temporary than others). Almost inevitably the beautifully organized systems must cease to function and eventually disintegrate. The molecules of our bodies would return to the earth.

This phenomenon called death seems a necessary part of the test-of-the-free-agent plan. If there were no suffering or death then free agency and hence the possible range of human transgression would be severely limited. To allow someone, for example, to cut off fingers or toes or possibly even an arm or a leg from a

fellow creature but prevent more lethal lops and chops through heavenly intervention would be to follow Lucifer’s safe but restricted not-one-shall-be-lost plan. On the other hand, if there was no death but those who departed were simply “translated” or “beamed up” then we would no longer be walking by faith, for there would be ample evidence of godly presence; our agency would be compromised by an immense burden of sure knowledge. Thus the death mechanism, a logical and necessary part of the entire plan, was launched with the event known as the fall of Adam.

The mission of Jesus Christ in this plan was twofold. The first part involved encouraging as many of us as possible to return to the presence of our heavenly parents so that we could continue to progress. This was a task made so immensely difficult and delicate by the independent nature of our eternal intelligence that even the failure rate of gods would be high. Because of our free agency even the favored Son could not use his vast power in this task except “by persuasion, by long suffering, by gentleness and meekness and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41).

What courage it must have taken for the one we call Jesus the Christ to say something like this: “The task ahead is immensely difficult; Satan’s tremendous opposition makes it even more difficult. The sins of mankind lend strength and enthusiasm and encouragement to Satan’s opposition. The rejection of me by so many of my brothers and sisters whom I love makes the personal burden of grief for me almost intolerably heavy. Nevertheless, I will do that which I was ordained to do; I will finish the task for which I accepted responsibility in spite of the vastly greater burden imposed by your sins. I will carry them and overcome the increased resistance because of them. In this sense I will take the sins of all mankind on my shoulders.”

The second part of this mission required power such as only a god could possess to resurrect or restore our bodies as well as those of all other once organized or organic systems. And so in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, the Savior exercised his divine power and made all the necessary arrangements not only to overcome his own imminent death but brought to bear those great forces necessary to do the same for all mankind. That this process was not easy or trivial, even for one vested with godly powers, is attested to by his own testimony: “[This] suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink—nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men” (D&C 19:18-19). This combining of elements



It is the uncertainty we have about death that makes giving up life for someone else so utterly magnificent. But if death constitutes only a transition to another realm, how can Christ's dying for mankind be considered a sacrifice?

ultimately to reunite the spirit and the physical body was totally independent of whether we were good or bad or how we met the test. We would all gain immortality purely by his grace and, could thus return to our godly parents with physical but eternally enduring bodies like theirs.

Together, these immensely difficult tasks of gathering disciples and overcoming death comprise the sacrifice of the Atonement. It was a sacrifice for Christ to step down from his place of power and eminence to live the humblest of earthly lives, to be ridiculed, spat upon, tormented, tortured, and ultimately murdered in the cruelest fashion by those very creatures he was struggling to save from their dead-end, no-further-progress-possible predicament. And it was a sacrifice for the Heavenly Parents to send their son off on such a mission knowing the immensity of the task he faced and the despair he would know of feeling forsaken by both God and man.

Thus the sacrifice was perhaps not one of appeasement to an angry or pouting deity made in the manner of offering infants to the fiery gods of ancient Canaan. Perhaps this sacrifice was not made to anyone or anything. Perhaps it was a sacrifice similar to that of a soldier who throws himself on a grenade about to explode in order to save his comrades or like a selfless individual plunging into a burning building to save sleeping brothers and sisters. Perhaps the sacrifice associated with the Atonement was a sacrifice *for* someone rather than *to* someone.

Similarly, the Savior's role as advocate with the Father may simply be confirmation that in spite of wickedness so great that a flood was required to cleanse the earth and make a new start, in spite of the aggregate and individual transgressions of mankind being even greater than perhaps anticipated, that in spite of all that he personally endured during his mission to earth, the Savior advocated proceeding with the plan of salvation that all had agreed upon in the early councils. Perhaps the reconciliation associated with his role as mediator is to persuade mankind to accept the Father rather than persuade the Father to accept mankind.

I still do not understand references to "hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt" or statements to the effect that Christ has bought us with his blood. Perhaps we use these poetic, symbolic, and somewhat hypnotic phrases in our teaching and talk too much. I add a personal plea to those who understand the Atonement on behalf of those of us in the Church who are slow learners or lack inspiration but nevertheless sincerely want to understand what all such statements really mean. Help us sort out where reality ends and allegory, metaphor, or similitude begin.

In application we probably cannot rely on Christ's blood shed in the Garden of Gethsemane or on the cross to magically cleanse us. We must symbolically cleanse ourselves by liberal application of the stiff, painful scrubbing brush of repentance in order for the miracle of the Atonement to be fully effective. Whatever it is, the Atonement almost certainly is not a confirmed ticket to the celestial kingdom but can make such a trip possible.

The Lone Ranger, the Shadow, and the Cisco Kid have given way to the A Team and Howard Cossell. Television beams into my home the message and image of petitioners for Christ who continue to confuse the man who was bewildered as a boy. But some progress has been made in sorting through the cliches.

There may indeed be more to the Atonement than overcoming technical difficulties and the undercutting effects of our sins to make the necessary arrangements for immortality. But even this limited perspective fills me with awe for the being who could accomplish such a work.

Notes

1. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1948), no. 80. See also "How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *ibid.*, no. 68.
2. A recent much publicized version of this analogy may be found in Boyd K. Packer, *The Mediator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978) (cf. Boyd K. Packer, "The Mediator," *Ensign* 7 [May 1977]: 54).
3. See, for example, Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:126-27.
4. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 11th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), p. 613.
5. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 60.
6. *Choose You This Day* [Melchizedek Priesthood study guide, 1980-81] (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), p. 118.
7. *A Concise Bible Dictionary Based on the Cambridge Companion to the Bible* (Cambridge: At the University Press, n.d.), s.v. "atonement."
8. See, for example, D&C 29:5; 32:3; 45:3; 62:1; 110:4; 76:69; 107:19; 2 Ne. 2:9, 27-28; Moro. 7:28; Jacob 3:1; Isa. 53:12; 1 Tim. 2:5-6.
9. See, for example, 3 Ne. 11:27; 19:23, 29; 20:35; 28:10; John 10:30 17:11, 21-22.
10. W. Cleon Skousen, *The First 2000 Years* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1953), pp. 352-62.
11. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B.H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1932-51), 6:311; D&C 93:29.
12. For a discussion of different views on the nature of intelligence, see Blake Ostler, "The Idea of Pre-Existence in the Development of Mormon Thought," *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 59-78.
13. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 249.

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Christ's Atoning Sacrifice

THE ROLE OF THE CRUCIFIXION

JOYCE N. WOODBURY

ON a February evening I sat down to prepare the Sunday School lesson for a class of thirteen-year-olds; on page 56 of the teacher's manual, I read:

Draw a priority chart with 1st, 2nd, 3rd across the top and A (cross), B (garden), and C (washing) down the side. . . . Let A represent Christ hanging on the cross, B his suffering in the garden of Gethsemane, and C Christ washing the feet of the apostles. . . . have the students rank the events first, second and third in order of their feelings for Christ's greatest act of love. Have them show their decision by raising their hands. Count the number of hands raised and write it in the correct box on the priority chart.

It is important that the students understand that Christ's greatest act of love was shown when he suffered for the sins of the world in the garden of Gethsemane.¹

I was appalled by the idea of asking a group of teenagers to rank their Savior's actions and to vote on them according to their own very limited understanding. I was stunned by the idea that Christ showed less love on the cross than he did in Gethsemane, or that Gethsemane can be considered apart from the cross. I began working on a rewarding personal search through the scriptures, reading about and studying the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus Christ.

Centering the Atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane is new to Mormonism. I have been a Church member all my life and have taught in each of the auxiliary organizations. Every lesson manual I used prior to that course taught that Christ took upon

himself the sins of the world in preparation for his great sacrifice (D&C 19:16-19), that he bore these sins upon the cross (1 Pet. 2:24), that by his death he atoned for the sins of mankind (Heb. 9), which reconciled man to God (Jacob 4:11), and that he preserved the marks of the Crucifixion in his resurrected body as evidence that he had been slain for the sins of the world (3 Ne. 11:11, 14). The sacramental hymns also taught me from childhood to revere the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross:

Let me not forget, O Savior
Thou didst bleed and die for me
When thy heart was stilled and broken
On the cross at Calvary.²

The scriptures themselves contain overwhelming evidence of the importance of the Crucifixion. The death of Christ, the great and last sacrifice on the cross, was predicted by Old Testament and Book of Mormon prophets, and foreshadowed by types and images. These shadows began so long ago that even the heathen nations preserved legends of the dying god. C. S. Lewis writes in *Surprised by Joy*, that his resistance to Christianity was shattered when an atheist friend, remarking on the good evidence for the historicity of the gospels said, "Rum thing. . . . All that stuff of Frazer's about the Dying God. Rum thing. Almost looks as if it had really happened once."³

Scholars might debate the source of these ancient beliefs, but Mormons know where they came from. The scriptures teach us that prophets of each dispensation from Adam on were given knowledge of Christ's



I was appalled that a lesson manual would ask members to rank their Savior's actions and to vote on them according to their own very limited understanding. I was stunned by the idea that Christ showed less love on the cross than he did in Gethsemane, or that the two could be considered separately.

atonement sacrifice. When Adam offered sacrifice after being driven from the Garden of Eden, an angel asked him why he did so. He answered, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:6-7).

Another type and shadow of the ultimate sacrifice was given when Abraham, the friend of God, was asked to sacrifice Isaac. As he prepared to slay the boy, an angel intervened and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12). Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac is comparable to the love of the Father in Heaven, who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32). And as Isaac walked willingly up Mt. Moriah and laid himself upon the altar, so Christ "loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The immensity of this sacrifice is noted by biblical commentator W. Popkes: "That God delivers up his Son is one of the most unheard-of statements in the New Testament. We must understand 'deliver up' in its full sense and not water it down to mean 'send' or 'give.' What happened here is what Abraham did not need to do to Isaac."⁴ Isaac did not have to die; a substitute was provided for him (Gen. 22:13). The ram was offered in place of Isaac just as the Son of God died as a ransom for us all (Matt. 20:28).

Still another symbol of Christ's crucifixion is the brazen serpent which Moses lifted upon a pole in the wilderness by the Red Sea: "And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived" (Num. 21:9). The serpent is referred to as a prophetic type in the gospel of John (3:14-15; 12:32-33), and in Alma (33:19), and in Helaman: "As many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live" (Hel. 8:14-15).

Jesus himself emphasized the importance of the cross when he told his disciples in Palestine, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me" (John 8:28). He further told his disciples in America, "My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works" (3 Ne. 27:14).

The entire law of Moses with its feasts, cleansings, and sacrifices was designed to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of Christ. Even before the institution of the law, the Israelites killed a lamb without blemish and painted their doorposts with its blood so the

angel of death would pass over them (Ex. 12:1-14), and subsequently the blood of the lamb, in addition to that of other animals, was offered as an atonement for sins on the altar of the tabernacle (Lev. 17:11). Christ's death was the ultimate sacrifice which fulfilled the law of Moses and made permanent atonement, taking away the sins of all (Heb. 10:10-12). John the Baptist referred to Christ's atoning sacrifice when he saw him walking along the banks of the River Jordan and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The title of "the Lamb" was also used by Nephi (1 Ne. 12) and by John in Revelation (e.g., Rev. 5:12; 12:11), and Peter called him a lamb without spot and without blemish whose blood redeemed us, "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:19-20).

Abinadi also preached that Christ's sacrifice was a fulfillment of the Mosaic law which was a type and shadow of it (Mosiah 16:14). In addition, he taught that Christ's sacrifice, like the offerings made by the priests in the temple, was to redeem men from their individual sins: "Behold I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. . . . all those who have . . . believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for the remission of their sins . . . these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions." (Mosiah 15:9-12.) And Amulek, too, preached that Christ was the great and last sacrifice made for individual sins and also as an atonement for Adam's fall: "Christ shall come among the children of men, to take upon him the transgressions of his people, and . . . he shall atone for the sins of the world. . . . for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish. . . . then shall there be . . . a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled. . . . And behold this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God." (Alma 34:8-9, 13-14.) In his first letter, John says that Christ is "the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2). The scriptures do not make a distinction between Christ's suffering and death to redeem mankind from Adam's fall, and his suffering and death to redeem mankind from individual sins. Thus, *atonement* and *redemption* are two words for the same act.

The Book of Mormon prophets preached that the resurrection came as a direct result of the Atonement, and that it is mankind's bodily resurrection which gives men the agency and the opportunity to repent and stand



The Prophet Joseph Smith didn't change Mark or Matthew to include Christ's bloody sweat in Gethsemane. Indeed, the omission of the agony in the garden from the gospel of John is puzzling, as is the complete silence of Peter and Paul on the subject. The Book of Mormon also omits this information.

before the Lord to be judged. Samuel the Lamanite said: "For behold, he surely must die that salvation may come. . . . Yea, behold, this death bringeth to pass the resurrection, and redeemeth all mankind from the first death—that spiritual death [caused by the fall of Adam]. . . . But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind . . . and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord. Yea, and it *bringeth to pass the condition of repentance.*" (Hel. 14:15-18, emphasis added.) Lehi says that the redemption from Adam's fall makes men "free to know good and evil and to act for themselves" and to be judged for their own sins (2 Ne. 2:26). And according to Paul, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). Christ atoned for our sins and, at the same time, redeemed us from the fall of Adam so that "mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their own works, according to law and justice" (Alma 42:23).

After reading so many scriptures testifying of the importance of Christ's crucifixion, I wonder at the assurance with which the author of my lesson manual says that Christ's greatest act of love took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke alone of the synoptic gospels gives a description of the bloody sweat which is amplified in Joseph Smith's translation. Joseph Smith didn't change Mark or Matthew to include this, nor did he add anything about Gethsemane to John.

The omission of the agony in Gethsemane from the gospel of John is, indeed, puzzling, as is the complete silence of Peter and Paul on the subject. Paul, after the resurrected Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, dedicated the rest of his life to missionary work, preaching the crucified and risen Christ: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Paul rehearsed his conversion and the message given to him over and over again in skillful permutation, but he never wrote about Gethsemane.

This lack of information about Gethsemane is also common to Book of Mormon scriptures. Nephi, who received a vision of the Savior's life and sacrifice was either not shown Gethsemane, or chose not to describe it (1 Ne. 11). Abinadi preached to King Noah concerning the coming of the Messiah and his great mission without making reference to Gethsemane. None of Alma's many

sermons on the Atonement and Resurrection include it. The only scripture in the Book of Mormon that specifically relates to Christ's suffering which caused blood to come from every pore because of his "anguish for the wickedness . . . of his people" is in Mosiah 3:7, and it makes no direct reference to the Atonement at all, but is, instead, a partial list of the kinds of physical pain Christ suffered throughout his life in somewhat the same manner as Isaiah 53.

The 1983 Relief Society manual states that "he freely partook of the pain in Gethsemane through which he paid the price for our sins."⁵ James E. Talmage's description of Christ's suffering as "a spiritual agony of soul such as only God is capable of suffering,"⁶ and Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-19 are used to support this statement. But neither Talmage nor this passage of scripture say that Christ atoned for our sins in Gethsemane.

Christ's suffering in Gethsemane was certainly a part of his suffering and death which atoned for our sins; he accepted the burden of our sins in Gethsemane. But he did not pay the price for our sins there; the Atonement was not accomplished until he had carried that burden to the cross and had relinquished it with his death. The Crucifixion, not the Garden of Gethsemane, was the symbol of the Atonement which Christ showed his followers when he appeared to them after his resurrection. In Jerusalem he showed his apostles the prints of the nails in his hands and feet (Luke 24:40) and the wound in his side (John 20:20). In America he called his people to him that they might thrust their hands into his side and feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet, "that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and *have been slain for the sins of the world*" (3 Ne. 11:14, emphasis added). He retained the marks of the Crucifixion in his resurrected body as proof that he was, indeed, the God of Israel whom the prophets had predicted would be the great and last sacrifice for sin. In complete fulfillment of the Mosaic law (which, according to Abinadi, was a type and shadow of Christ's sacrifice), the atoning blood shed on the cross was his life's blood, given at his death (see Lev. 4:3-4, 22-24; 5:6, 9, 17-18; 17:11; Deut. 12:13-14, 27).

At the last supper Jesus introduced the sacrament which would always remind his followers of this blood which was shed for them. He used there the passover "cup of blessing" to initiate the taking of the wine that represents his blood. This passover wine was always mingled with water before being blessed, and is a type and shadow of the blood and water which gushed from the Savior's body when the centurion pierced his side (1 Jn. 5:5-6; Zech. 12:10). Then, after breaking the bread



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Every lesson manual I used prior to the current one taught that Christ took upon himself the sins of the world and bore them on the cross.

Jesus said, "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The word which is translated as "in remembrance" is a rare one which, in biblical Greek, always means "a memorial before God," as in Leviticus 24:7.⁷ Furthermore, according to Paul, Christ's body was "broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24), signifying not only that the Savior's body was given as a sacrifice, but that it was broken by the nails that fastened it to the cross and by the spear that pierced it.

The bread and water taken together are to remind us of "Christ our passover [who] is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7) which saves us from death and makes possible Christ's intercession for us if we keep his commandments. Thus partaking of the bread and water permits us to renew the covenants we make at baptism—to keep his commandments, to always remember him, and to take his name upon us (D&C 20:77-79). We can only take the sacrament after repentance and baptism (3 Ne. 18:11), which makes us members of Christ's kingdom, and therefore his sons and his daughters, the "seed" of which Abinadi spoke when he said, "these are they whose sins he has borne" (Mosiah 15:12). Christ himself referred to the link between this spiritual adoption and the cross when he said, "I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God" (D&C 35:2).

Those who say that Jesus' suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane paid the price for our sins have misinterpreted Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-19 which states: "For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink— Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men." Some Mormons think that the phrase "partook and finished my preparations" means that Christ drank the entire "cup" of suffering and finished the Atonement in the Garden of Gethsemane. However the dictionary definition of *partake* is "to take a part or share" and the definition of *prepare* is "to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity."⁸ Therefore, a more accurate interpretation of this scripture seems to be, "Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I drank a portion of the cup and got ready to carry out my duty for the children of men."⁹ That this is correct is borne out by John 18:11:

When Jesus and his apostles left the Garden of Gethsemane and were accosted by the priests and soldiers, Peter cut off the ear of Malcus. "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up the sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Peter states positively that Christ in "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

Some might say that when Christ said, "glory be to the Father" (D&C 19:19), he indicated that he had fulfilled the Father's will and had completed his atonement for the sins of mankind. But he used the same idea of glory for the Father when Judas left the supper table to betray him, saying, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John 13:31). When he appeared to the Nephites, Christ said, "I . . . have glorified the Father by taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Ne. 11:11). In each instance Christ glorified the Father by submitting to his will and making a decision which permitted the Atonement to take place. He was the Redeemer by the will of the Father (D&C 31:13), seeking not his own will, but that of the Father (John 5:30). The Father's will was that the atoning sacrifice should take place so that every human being could be brought back into God's presence in a resurrected body and be assigned a glory of his own (see Abr. 3:25-28). "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

Christ's bloody sweat shed in Gethsemane was part of his intense suffering for mankind. So was the blood shed when the crown of thorns was pressed on his head. He suffered for us under the Roman lash. But the greatest suffering of all occurred on the cross where he was physically tortured and spiritually tormented and abandoned by his Father in Heaven. Elder Talmage writes:

At the ninth hour . . . a loud voice, surpassing the most anguished cry of physical suffering issued from the central cross . . . : "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What mind of man can fathom the significance of that awful cry? It seems, that in addition to the fearful suffering incident to crucifixion, the agony of Gethsemane had recurred, intensified beyond human power to endure. In that bitter hour the dying Christ was alone, alone in most terrible reality. That the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fulness, the Father seems to have withdrawn the support of His immediate Presence, leaving the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death.¹⁰



The 1983 Relief Society manual states that Jesus “partook of the pain in Gethsemane through which he paid for our sins,” citing James E. Talmage’s *Jesus the Christ* and Doctrine and Covenants 19 as its sources. Yet neither of these texts say that Christ atoned for our sins in the garden.

Luke says that in Gethsemane an angel appeared to strengthen the suffering Christ (Luke 22:43), but on the cross the Father abandoned him and he suffered alone as he conquered sin and death. In Jesus’ own estimation his greatest act of love was not his suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, but his death on the cross: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

During the weeks that I have read and studied the scriptures, I have come to the conclusion that I must accept Christ’s own statements concerning his greatest act of love. But I asked myself many times, “Does it really matter *where* the Atonement took place?” The answer is, “Yes, it does matter.” The Atonement is the great and last sacrifice predicted by the prophets and the law of Moses. This is of great significance to Latter-day Saint belief in prophetic revelation recorded in scripture. That Christ suffered and died for our sins on the cross is scriptural truth: “He was delivered for our offenses” (Rom. 4:25), and was “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13; see also Deut. 21:23), and was a “sacrifice for sin” (2 Ne. 2:7). Moreover the scriptures clearly state that it was particularly Christ’s submission to the suffering imposed upon him by other men which enabled him to atone for the sins of each repentant sinner: “Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart” (D&C 21:9). This matters. Indeed, it is vitally important to our understanding of Christ and his mission. For when we reject the Christ of Isaiah who was oppressed and afflicted, taken from prison and from judgment, and stricken for the transgressions of his people (Isa. 53; Mosiah 14), we lose sight of the real Jesus who became a man and took upon himself the pains and sicknesses of his people (Alma 7:11-13). We need to recognize that Christ accepted the most disreputable death of his time¹¹ and descended below all in a specific physical sense (D&C 122) so that he could become the judge of all: “For it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men that all men might be subject unto him. . . . he suffereth the pains . . . of every living creature . . . who belong[s] to the family of Adam. . . . that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.” (2 Ne. 9:5, 21-22.) “And [he] took upon him the form of a servant. . . . And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That . . . every knee should bow . . . and . . . every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord.” (Philip. 2:7-11.)

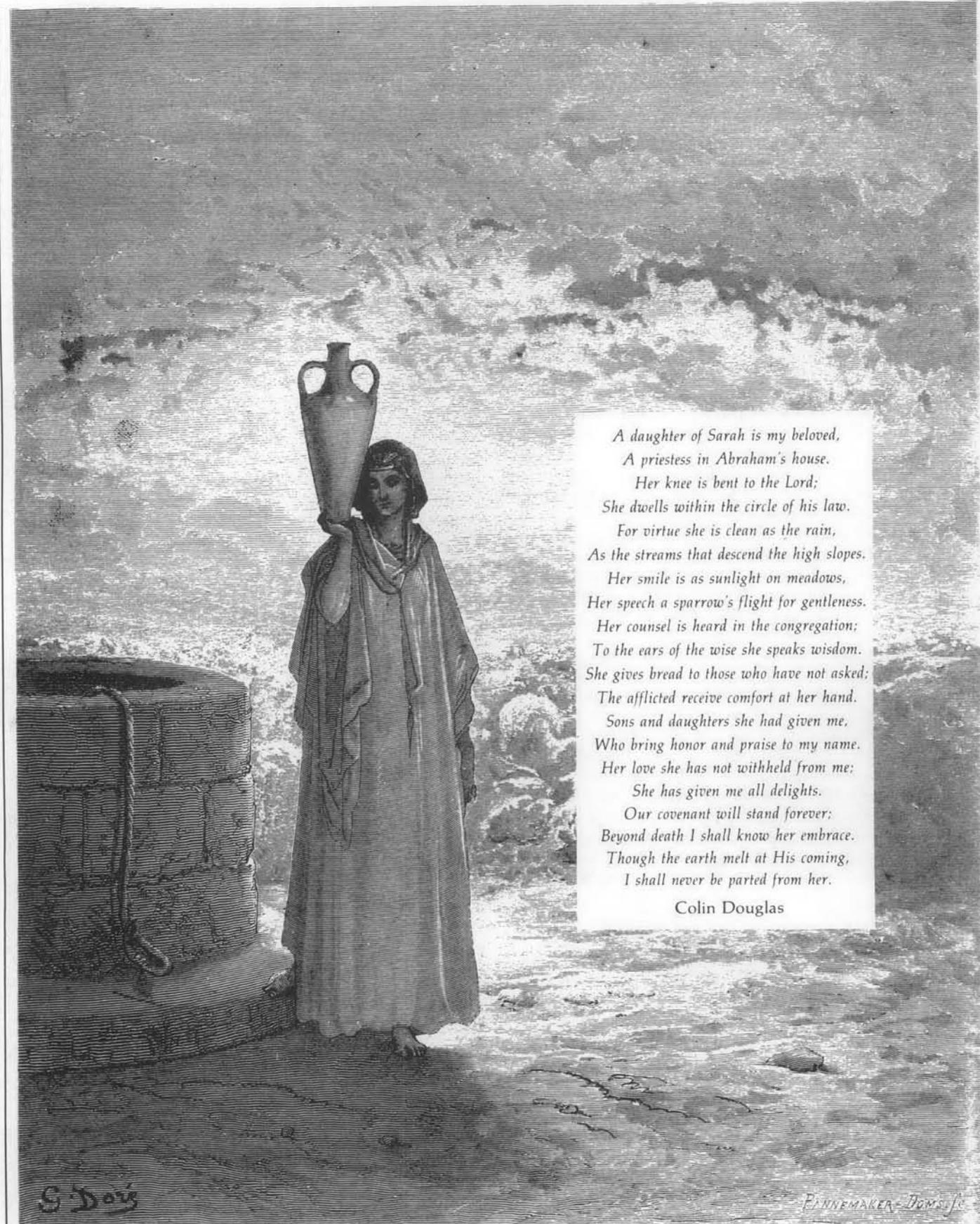
As Elder Talmage observes, “However incomplete may be our comprehension of Christ’s vicarious sacrifice in all its parts, we cannot reject it without becoming infidel; for it stands the fundamental doctrine of all scripture.”¹² Note that Elder Talmage says it is “the fundamental doctrine of *all* scripture.” I think that one of the most important things I learned from my reading and studying of the scriptures concerning the atoning sacrifice is that all the scriptures are important; one cannot pick and choose. We can’t set aside the Book of Mormon and all the letters of Paul on the basis of a particular evaluation of three verses in the Doctrine and Covenants. We must consider all scriptures carefully before we change the center of our belief from the crucified and risen Christ to the private suffering of the Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We have much to contribute to the world’s understanding of Christ’s mission, but Latter-day scriptures teach the same good news preached by Christ’s disciples in the Old World: Christ, who was crucified for us, is risen, and we will be lifted up before him at the last judgment day just as he was lifted up upon the cross.

Notes

1. *Introduction to the Scriptures, Part B* [Sunday School Course 13 teacher’s manual] (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980), p. 56.
2. “In Humility Our Savior,” *Hymns: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1948), no. 49.
3. C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1955), pp. 223-24.
4. W. Popkes, as quoted in Juergen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden, 2d ed. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), p. 191.
5. *Relief Society Courses of Study 1983* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), p. 31.
6. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 11th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1945), p. 613.
7. J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 710, 1057, 766-67.
8. *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “partake,” “prepare.”
9. In 3 Nephi 11:11 the Savior says that he drank “out of” the cup, which means he took a choice or selection from the whole of it (see *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “out of”).
10. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 660-61, italics in original.
11. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 33.
12. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, [30th ed.?] (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), p. 77.

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*A daughter of Sarah is my beloved,
A priestess in Abraham's house.
Her knee is bent to the Lord;
She dwells within the circle of his law.
For virtue she is clean as the rain,
As the streams that descend the high slopes.
Her smile is as sunlight on meadows,
Her speech a sparrow's flight for gentleness.
Her counsel is heard in the congregation;
To the ears of the wise she speaks wisdom.
She gives bread to those who have not asked;
The afflicted receive comfort at her hand.
Sons and daughters she had given me,
Who bring honor and praise to my name.
Her love she has not withheld from me;
She has given me all delights.
Our covenant will stand forever;
Beyond death I shall know her embrace.
Though the earth melt at His coming,
I shall never be parted from her.*

Colin Douglas

TELLING CONFES



ONFESSIONS

Confidentiality in
the practice
of Religion

MARGARET P. BATTIN

WHEN, if ever, may or should a professional practitioner reveal a confidential disclosure? This is a question of moral concern that arises in many areas of professional ethics. Those who have access to private information include many individuals, among them physicians, psychiatrists, attorneys, teachers, and business executives; but they also include religious professionals: priests, rabbis, ministers, pastors, and others. Indeed, religious confession may

represent the paradigm case of the ethical problems related to confidentiality.

In the secular professions, arguments and policies permitting or requiring the violation of confidentiality have been proposed in a variety of cases. These include violations in order to observe the law, to prevent harm to the confessant, to prevent third-party harms, to rectify third-party harms, to prevent harm to the practitioner, to prevent harm to the profession or profession-

al organization, and to prevent harm to the society. Not all professions countenance breaches of confidentiality in all these cases, however, and policies governing disclosure of confidential information have varied widely even within specific professions. In medicine, for instance, explicit policies have ranged from the Hippocratic Oath's vacuous requirement that the physician keep secret "whatever ought not to be spoken," to a rule of absolute secrecy as enunciated by the World Medical Association in 1949, and to the extremely liberal position adopted by the American Medical Association in 1971, which held that a physician may not reveal confidential material "unless he is required to do so by law or unless it becomes necessary in order to protect the welfare of the individual or of the society," a policy so broad that it is usually interpreted to cover all the cases mentioned above.

Even though a Catholic priest, by violating the seal of confession, could prevent the outbreak of a devastating, worldwide war, he would nevertheless still be bound to absolute secrecy.

Policies governing the practice of law have been consistently more restrictive, usually permitting the violation of confidentiality only when required by court order or to prevent a crime which involves the risk of death or serious bodily harm; nevertheless, the law has also permitted the attorney to divulge confidential material in order to collect his or her fee. Psychiatrists and psychotherapists now appear to be legally obligated—not merely permitted—to violate the confidentiality of a relationship with a patient or client when serious bodily harm or death to a third party is threatened. In the landmark *Tarasoff* case, University of California at Berkeley psychiatrists were convicted for failing to warn the eventual victim of their patient's threats to kill her.

Analogous practices in business are somewhat less easy to identify, but many of the celebrated whistle-blowing cases involve situations in which internal corporate information is released in order to protect consumers, clients, or other third parties, such as the inhabitants of an industrially polluted region. In most

secular professions, however, generally accepted policies concerning confidentiality can be identified, and seem to stipulate *prima facie* respect for confidentiality but permit occasional violations at least in order to observe the law or to prevent serious third-party harms. In all the professions, however, issues of confidentiality remain matters of fierce ethical dispute.

In religious practice, two sorts of matters form the usual topics of confession: matters of deviation in religious belief, and matters of behavior unacceptable to the group. Among religious groups which practice private confession, however, there is nothing resembling an even relatively unified position. Rather, religious practice is extremely diverse, marked by policies at both extremes. These range from absolute confidentiality in any and all circumstances to routine disclosure of confessional material obtained in situations which appear to promise confidentiality. A look at the policies and practices of two specimen groups—the Roman Catholic Church and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—reveals the issues in sharpest contrast.

The Catholic Rule

Catholicism's position with respect to confidentiality in sacramental confessional situations is absolute: There are no conditions under which guarantees of confidentiality, once given, can be breached. This policy is articulated in canons 889 and 890:

889. The sacramental seal is inviolable. Consequently the confessor must exercise all diligent care not to betray the penitent in any degree by word, sign, or in any other way or for any cause whatsoever.

890. The confessor is entirely prohibited from using knowledge acquired from confession if this use involves a gravamen for the penitent, even though there is no danger of revelation or betrayal.

This policy is far stronger than that employed in any of the secular professions: It admits no violations whatsoever, regardless of the circumstances involved. If the confessant ("the penitent") does not give permission for the release of the information and if it would displease or harm the penitent to have it released, the seal of confession, once given, is to remain inviolate, even after the penitent's death. The confessor (the priest) may not even reveal the information to someone who has the best interests of the penitent at heart (for instance, a concerned physician, psychotherapist, or family member), no matter how great the benefits to the confessant may be, or no matter how great the harms avoided—even if he could save the penitent from death.

Nor may the confessor reveal confessed information to protect a third party, even when that person will suffer grave physical, emotional, or spiritual harm. The confessor may not reveal information to rectify past injustices or injuries, even when other persons are being punished for the confessant's crimes. Nor may the priest reveal confessional material in order to observe the law. Rather, the priest who is legally compelled to testify in a court of law is instructed to assert, even under oath (on

the Bible, to God), that he knows nothing of the matter confessed.¹ The priest may not reveal confessed information to protect or prevent harms to himself. If, for instance, he knows (to cite a problem often discussed by the medieval casuists) that the wine in the communion chalice has been poisoned and refraining from drinking it would reveal that he has learned this fact from confession, he must put the cup to his lips and die. He must not break confidentiality even to preserve the church from scandal or to prevent grave wrongs to society as a whole. Although in some rare cases the priest may refuse to grant absolution, he may *never* reveal the confession. As one writer puts it, "Even though a priest, by violating the seal [of confession], could prevent the outbreak of a prolonged, devastating, world-wide war, he would, nevertheless, still be bound to absolute secrecy."²

Not even the pope himself can release a confessor from his obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the confessional, and there are *no* consequences so grave that the seal may be broken.³ The penalty for a priest who does break the seal of confession is automatic excommunication from the church.

Mormon Practice

In contrast to this, the position on confidentiality which characterizes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is very much looser than that of the Catholic Church, and indeed than that favored among most of the secular professions. For Mormons, confession per se is not a scheduled part of the ordinary discipline or rites of the church. It does not take place in special locations or in structures similar to Catholic confessional booths, and it is not accompanied by the recitation of specific formulas or the performance of ritual motions or gestures. Nor is confession anonymous, with the identity of the confessant protected from the confessor. Nevertheless, private confession does occur in a variety of forms within Mormon practice.

One form of Mormon confession is an informal consequence of the very high level of social intervention by religious officials. As the ward official, the bishop is expected to assume an active role in the lives of the members for whom he is responsible, and the member is encouraged to discuss regularly with his bishop any matters of belief or behavior which trouble him. Discussion of such matters may be initiated by the member, but may also be initiated by the bishop. Home teachers, although functioning primarily to promote the economic welfare and security of members, may also discuss matters of behavior or belief, and are expected to stimulate and encourage maintenance of religiously and morally acceptable patterns of life. In both these situations, "confession" may include explicit statements made by the individual to the bishop or home teacher, but it may also include whatever is observed by the official about the individual's circumstances, habits, and lifestyle.

The second, more formal variety of confession occurs

in the temple interview, conducted when the church member applies for a temple recommend, or permit to enter the sanctuary. The temple interview requires the applicant to respond to a set of questions, including questions about adherence to doctrinally mandated abstinences (avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, addictive drugs, and stimulants), questions about beliefs, and questions about sexual practices. Normally, one is expected to renew one's temple recommend annually, and a recommend must be obtained for permission to enter the temple to attend or participate in special rites like weddings and baptisms. A valid recommend may also be required in order to engage in missionary work or for church members who are employed in church-owned offices, schools, or industries.

In the third form of confession, a member may be asked to give an account of his beliefs and/or behavior before a church court, or his prior confession may be used as evidence in a church court trial. A trial by church court is held in order to examine the status of a member who gives evidence of radical deviancy in belief or who is believed to be involved in behavioral practices which violate the standards of the church, including serious sexual sin. The court action results in a recommendation for no action, probation, disfellowshipment, or excommunication. An excommunicated person, although not prohibited from attendance at church assemblies, loses other privileges, and may be readmitted to full standing only when the infractions are discontinued, evidence of complete repentance is given, and appropriate restitution is made. In cases of murder or transsexual operations, however, no readmission is possible at all. The holding of a court may involve the presentation of the confession to as many as sixteen persons, as well as those who examine the two copies of the court report which are stored in the confidential files of the ward or stake and at central church headquarters.

As in Catholicism, the scriptural texts of Mormonism contain no explicit statements concerning matters of confidentiality in any form of confession; the principal exception is the requirement in Doctrine and Covenants 42:89-93 that "if any shall offend in secret, he or she shall be rebuked in secret." The *General Handbook of Instructions*, a periodically updated manual which regulates the functions of bishops, stake presidents, and other church officials (and hence is known popularly as the Bishop's Handbook), insists on strict confidentiality in church court proceedings. It also requires the bishop or stake president to obtain permission from the individual to use his confession in a church court trial.⁴

In Mormonism, as in Catholicism, confidential material may be divulged if the individual consents to the disclosure. In some cases, permission for the release of information may be readily given, particularly if the individual believes it is necessary for his own salvation. However, the practical consequence of divulging confessional information may be very high. Though the court may also impose a lesser penalty, excommunication is mandatory for some sins. Excommunication is also likely for many of the more serious offenses unless considerable time has elapsed since the transgression and there is evidence of complete reformation and repentance.

Release of confessed information may affect not only

the individual's membership status, but have profound economic and social consequences as well. Particularly in areas which have a high concentration of Mormons in the general population, excommunication may result in stigma for oneself and one's family, disruption of personal relationships, and loss of one's job. These effects may be particularly pronounced if the individual has been prominent within the church or in public life. Such effects of course do not always occur, and in some wards excommunicated members who continue to attend church are given considerable emotional and social support. Nevertheless, both in fact and in rumor the consequences can be very bad (particularly for infractions like homosexuality), and the confessant may be quite reluctant to grant permission for the disclosure of such information, if indeed he is willing to confess at all.

Information about transgressions may come to the attention of church officials either through the confession of the transgressor, or through reports, rumors, gossip, and the like from other individuals, other church officials, or public sources. For most transgressions, the bishop or stake president may elect to call a court at his own discretion; he examines the initial information, and considers whether a trial is warranted. However, under certain circumstances, a court *must* be convened—whether or not the individual admits the transgression or consents to attend the trial. In those cases in which the bishop or stake president is not required to call a court, he may still do so at *his*—not the member's—discretion.

A revision of the Bishop's Handbook in autumn 1983 stipulates that the bishop or stake president convening a court "may use information received in a member's voluntary confession as evidence in a Church court only with the member's permission," and comments that "the duty of confidentiality to one who confesses precludes the use of such information as evidence without permission,"⁵ but it does not relieve the bishop or stake president from his obligation to call a court, nor restrict his efforts to assemble evidence about the infraction from other sources. Rather, the handbook requires that the bishop or stake president "can and should persuade"⁶ the member to release the confession for use in court, and does not consider the possibility that such permission might be refused.

One might suppose that even though policies governing the disclosure of confessions and other evidence of serious sins by the bishop or stake president to a church court are not explicitly stated to the general membership (since the Bishop's Handbook is available only to officials), members would eventually discover, through their own experience or that of their friends, the policies that are in force. Indeed, most Mormons are aware that serious sins are addressed in a court, and that a court will result in some degree of public disclosure. Many, however, do not realize that a court may be called with or without their consent, and that voluntary confession, though itself recognized as a part of repentance, "may not remove the need for a court." Although reliable empirical data are difficult to obtain, bishops and stake presidents often claim that the member generally brings expectations of confidentiality to the initial confession:

It begins as a private admission of disturbing personal matters, made to a spiritual counselor one trusts. This expectation is also said to be particularly strong among young people, who may be comparatively naive about the policies of the church.

Disclosure of confessional information to church courts is not the only violation of expectations of confidentiality which may occur. Among those grounds for excommunication which involve sexual sins, almost all involve the performance of sexual activities with a partner or partners. The bishop may ask the identity of the partner, and failure on the part of the confessant to supply it is often interpreted as evidence of inadequate repentance. However, if the partner is identified and is a member of the church, the bishop shall report the infraction to the bishop or stake president of the partner. The Bishop's Handbook explicitly stipulates that where young, unmarried persons from different wards or stakes have been involved in "moral transgressions" (i.e., sexual relationships) with each other, their priesthood leaders should "consult with each other" in order to achieve consistency in church discipline. The bishop or stake president who becomes aware (presumably, either through the confession of a member of his own ward or stake, or other evidence) of transgressions by individuals outside his ward or stake is required to "confidentially inform the Church leaders of those implicated."⁷ Once this information has been forwarded, the bishop or stake president of the partner implicated may confront the partner with evidence of his or her complicity in the sinful acts, and, if he deems it appropriate, convene a church court. This second disclosure may also be made with or without the consent of either the initial confessant or of the partner, although since the 1983 revision of the Bishop's Handbook, the confession itself is not to be used in court without the permission of the confessant.

It is sometimes claimed that reporting confessions within a closed hierarchy is not a violation of confidentiality. However, although church officers are required to keep the proceedings of a church court confidential, the fact that a court is being held is often a matter of widespread knowledge. If the trial results in excommunication, the fact of excommunication is announced to the ward executive committee (for males) or to the Relief Society president (for females). Prior to the 1983 revisions, excommunication was to be announced to the assembly of all adult males in good standing (i.e., the priesthood meeting) within a ward or stake. If the grounds for excommunication are apostasy and the individual is considered a threat to others (particularly by supporting polygamy), the details may be announced at the priesthood meeting and the members thereby warned. More detailed announcements of court actions may also be made to "dispell rumors." Even if the specific grounds for excommunication are not announced, they are relatively easy to infer within a highly integrated community. The end result is, generally, that the substance of one's confession, if not its precise details, does not remain confidential, whether one consents to its disclosure or not.

Of course, this does not exhaust the variety of confessional practices which may be observed in various

religious groups. In some (particularly among fundamentalist groups), direct confession in front of the entire assembly is encouraged or required, and is not preceded by any form of private confession; thus no issues of confidentiality arise. Other denominations, including most of mainline Protestantism, hold that confession can be made only directly by the individual to deity; these groups recognize no institutional practice of confession at all, although most do provide pastoral counseling. In some groups, confession is purely formal: It involves reciting a general acknowledgement of sins, but includes no specific description of them. And in some groups, especially among the cults or new religions, we find what is probably best described as forced confession, where issues of confidentiality are entirely beside the point. While the circumstances are sometimes private, no guarantees of confidentiality are given or understood. Nevertheless, it is Catholicism and Mormonism which exhibit the sharpest differences among groups practicing private confession in circumstances seeming to promise confidentiality, differences which have profound moral implications.

Methodological Considerations

The central moral question is this: When, if ever, is it ethical for the religious professional to violate confidentiality, either directly or indirectly? It may be objected that such a question cannot be entertained, since practices concerning confession are doctrinally grounded and hence inaccessible to ethical critique. Canons 889 and 890, for instance, are to be held *de fide*: They are matters of faith for the believing Catholic. And while in Mormonism the Bishop's Handbook, which articulates the policies concerning confidentiality in confessional situations, is not available to the general membership, it is nevertheless a record of church-adopted procedures and serves to state the church's official position. Nonetheless, despite the fact that both views are matters of doctrine or of official regulation, this cannot give them privileged status in an examination of the ethical issues concerning confidentiality in religious confession. Doctrinal requirements concerning confidentiality cannot enter the argument as premises, and the issue is not resolved simply by pointing to the various doctrinal requirements on the relevant point.

But if this is so, then what status do doctrinal matters have in an argument about the moral issues in various kinds of religious practices? An answer to this general methodological question may be developed by viewing the doctrinal assertions concerning confidentiality in their historical context. The biblical texts James 5:16, Matthew 16:19, and John 20:23 are often cited as the scriptural basis for the practice of confession within Christianity. However, considerable dispute surrounds both the precise nature of these texts, and the actual development of the practice they establish.⁸ Although the historical evidence is uncertain, it is apparent that much of the confession preceding and accompanying the

administration of sacramental penance during the patristic era of the church was public. The individual recited his sins, either generically or in explicit detail, before the assembled church community, and gave public evidence of his status as a penitent. He wore the *cilicium* (precursor of sackcloth and ashes), stood in a restricted area of the church among the ranks of public penitents, and did not participate in the sacrament. These practices clearly continued at least until the time of Leo I, around A.D. 500. Recently, scholars have come to believe that confession itself may not always have been public, and in fact may have been predominantly private, although the acts of satisfaction—the evidence of one's status as a penitent—were required to be public. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence, as for instance in a letter of Leo I written in 459, that some penitents were compelled to read in public an explicit list of personal sins. Leo rejected this practice as an abuse, and insisted that private confession to a priest would be sufficient.

Mormon practice invites coercion, both in requiring persuasion of the member to relinquish his claims to confidentiality and in using confessed information to oblige partners to confess.

Some sources claim that Leo instituted private confession initially for priests and deacons in order to protect the church from the scandal that would otherwise arise, and that this practice was thereafter extended to the laity. More probably, it was the Celtic monks of the sixth century who introduced a new mode of penance, incorporating both secret confession to the priest and reconciliation without public penance, defamation, or legal consequence. One's sins were a private matter, not for public display. Some of the more fanciful accounts, often from later antipapist sources, claim that with the establishment of private auricular confession abuses became rampant, particularly of female penitents.⁹ Indeed, some claim that the confessional booth itself was introduced in order to prevent such abuses: It prevented the confessor and penitent from direct vision and, more importantly, from touching. Whatever the details of its origin, however, the booth also provided for the first time some degree of

anonymity for the penitent and complete privacy for the act of confession. With this, the possibility of genuine confidentiality arose. By the time of the Council of Trent (1551), the church's present position, assuring complete confidentiality in all matters of confession, had been established, and has remained unchanged since that time.

Mormon practices too display an evolving historical development, though of course the period of development is comparatively short.¹⁰ During the lifetime of Joseph Smith there was no institution of private confession; all confessions were public, made to the entire group. The bishop did not develop a pastoral and counseling function, in which private confession might occur, until after the exodus from Illinois in 1846 and arrival in Utah in 1848. During the nineteenth century, testimony meetings, held the first Sunday of every month, were the primary vehicle for public confession. Private confession generally took place in an adversary setting, following a complaint made about a member or investigation of a rumor circulating about him or her, where confession followed confrontation with this evidence. During some periods of Mormon history, public confession was mandated by the church, for instance upon the occasion of the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in April 1893, but by the early twentieth century public confession was discouraged. Mormonism, less insular and increasingly aware of its public image, sought to avoid practices which might invite public critique. Although testimony meetings are still a major part of Mormon practice, members are now discouraged from giving explicit or general confessions of deviant beliefs or behavior on these occasions, and genuine confession is typically made privately, to one's bishop, stake president, or to a trial court.

Recognition of the developmental history of the practice of confession within the two religious groups allows us to see the appropriate logical status to be assigned to the doctrinal policies concerning confidentiality. To begin with, there are primary or *first-order doctrines* which govern specific religious practices, such as the requirement articulated in James that the Christian believer confess his sins and repent. However, such doctrinally mandated practices themselves may introduce new ethical questions. For example, the practice of marriage poses problems in promise-keeping; the practice of baptism raises issues in commitments and second-party consent; and the practice of charity poses problems of paternalism and manipulation. The solutions which religious groups develop to solve these newly raised ethical problems may be considered *second-order doctrines*; they have a different logical status in the moral argument. Second-order doctrines do not dictate a practice, as first-order doctrines do, but are developed subsequently to govern the practice and its associated problems. They function as conclusions or "answers" to the moral problems raised.

This observation provides an answer to the procedural issue of whether questions concerning the moral status of doctrinally governed religious practices can even be entertained, or whether they are inaccessible to ethical critique. Second-order doctrines and policies cannot be given privileged status in the moral argument;

to do so would be to beg the question, not to provide a solution to it. Thus, it cannot be held, at least morally speaking, that the Catholic priest ought never to violate the confidentiality of the confessional because canons 889 and 890 forbid him to do so, or that the disclosing of information about persons engaging in illicit sexual practices is permissible for the Mormon bishop because that is what the Bishop's Handbook directs. Rather, since the ethical problem both historically and logically precedes the development of doctrinal answers to it, the moral issue of confidentiality must be addressed directly, without question-begging doctrinal appeal.

Both Catholicism and Mormonism differ radically from the position which is generally accepted in the secular professions, though of course they differ in opposite ways. The secular professions all recognize some circumstances in which confidentiality is to be violated, despite the *prima facie* assumption that it be kept. In none of them is there a prohibition of confidence-breaking which is exceptionless or absolute. But neither is there in any of the secular professions a policy which encourages routine divulging of information obtained in privacy. It is important to consider, then, whether there is anything distinctive about *religious* confession which might justify such radical departures from the policies concerning confidentiality which are recognized in the secular professional fields.

The Catholic Position Favoring Secrecy

Two general objections may be brought against Catholicism's policy of absolute confessional secrecy. First, although Catholic doctrine recognizes that ordinary secrets may be violated in some circumstances, confessional secrets may portend the same serious harms that other lesser secrets do, and have the same disastrous effects on innocent third parties. For instance, the penitent may confess his plans to assault, rob, cheat, or even kill someone. He may confess having committed a crime or moral atrocity for which the victim has not been recompensed, or for which an innocent person has been convicted, criticized, stigmatized, or even executed. Cases of preventable murder draw perhaps the greatest criticism for a policy of inviolable secrecy. In a much-publicized case in West Germany, a sixteen-year-old butcher's assistant confessed to his priest that he had committed a murder; unable to convince the boy to give himself up to the police, the priest nevertheless kept the confession confidential, and the youth committed three more murders before he was caught.¹¹ Similarly, in Boston in 1982, a man named George Reissfelder, wrongly imprisoned for the crimes of someone else, was released only after the deathbed confession of another; Reissfelder had been imprisoned for sixteen years.¹² Not only may a confessant reveal intentions to seriously harm or kill others, but he may also plan to harm or kill himself, as in the confessant who reveals that he is contemplating suicide. Where keeping confidentiality will result in harms of a serious sort, the challenge to the Catholic position is most severe.

Second, the Catholic policy favoring secrecy may seem

to compromise the moral integrity of the confessor and the church. To keep confessed material secret when there are compelling reasons for revealing it brings upon both the confessor and the church a kind of moral taint, tantamount perhaps to complicity in the crime itself. To fail to act to prevent a serious wrong—as in the case of the West German priest—is to fail to make the morally, if not legally, required response and thus to compromise or destroy one's own moral integrity. To forbid a priest to reveal the information which would end Reissfelder's sixteen undeserved years in jail is to make that priest a moral accomplice, as it were, to the unjust jailing itself.

It simply does not settle the issue to say that the Catholic priest cannot act because he does not know. He does know, and the moral question still exists: Should he act?

Against these two objections favoring the divulging of confidential material even from the confession, Catholicism has three arguments. These arguments form the basis for Catholicism's insistence that confessional secrets are a class apart from other kinds of secrets, and are not subject to breaches of confidentiality in any circumstances at all.

First, because confession involves revealing something shameful or disturbing and which might harm the confessant if revealed, the confessional relationship involves a promise, tacit or explicit, under protection of which he first becomes willing to confess at all. The stronger the implicit promise (in the absence of any explicit disclaimers), the stronger is the fundamental expectation that confidentiality be respected. Second, only under a policy of absolute confidentiality will it be possible for the confessing individual to be complete, forthright, and fully honest in revealing the darkest, most shameful facts of his past and future. Third, a policy of secrecy, because it permits the confessant such thorough self-expression, allows the priest an unparalleled opportunity to mold the penitent's conscience and instill values in a way much more effective than is possible with external preaching or teaching.

Implicit in these arguments are replies to the objections to absolute secrecy. First, it is true that a

policy of secrecy will sometimes mean that harms to persons which could be prevented—assaults, robberies, slanders, even murders—will be permitted to occur. Nevertheless, cases in which the priest can actually prevent such harms are very much less frequent than one might suppose. For one thing, whatever the confessant may claim to be contemplating, the priest may not be able to predict with an adequate degree of accuracy whether the contemplated or feared action will actually occur. Although because of the very secrecy of the confessional there is no accurate empirical data to substantiate this claim, it is at least imaginable that religious professionals will be no better at making accurate predictions of future dangerous behavior than psychiatrists or psychologists, for example, and if they have no specific training in the psychological sciences, they are perhaps even less successful. Even trained professionals in these sciences have notoriously poor success at predicting future crimes.¹⁵ Were priests to inform secular authorities, family members, physicians, or potential victims about projected violence, the number of faulty disclosures of confidential information would probably very sizeably outnumber the accurate ones. If the argument is that the priest ought to prevent future harms, there are few guarantees that he could do so with any degree of success.

This first reply, however, is not wholly successful. To acknowledge that the priest who believes the confessant will commit a harm may err in his prediction is not to absolve him of moral responsibility for doing what he can to prevent it, particularly in those cases where the likelihood of harm may be very high. This is particularly true where the infraction is comparatively repetitive or where the confessant has already engaged in such behavior in the past, such as frequent cruelty to a spouse, consistent fraud or tax evasion, or repeated child abuse. Problems of accuracy are also much less pressing where the infraction is a past one. Furthermore, in some cases, although the harming act is past, the victim remains harmed, or an innocent third party is still being punished for the crime he did not commit. Here, the confessor may be quite accurate in his ability to prevent or rectify these harms.

Second, a secret confessional gives the priest not only an unparalleled opportunity to mold the conscience, but therewith an unparalleled opportunity to dissuade the confessant from acting on harmful or criminal plans. This is an opportunity the priest would not otherwise have; were confidentiality violable just in cases of proposed grave harms, it is in precisely those cases that confession would not be made. The opportunity to prevent some serious harms—like the three additional murders by the butcher's assistant in West Germany—are comparatively infrequent, and are well outweighed by the many, many cases in which the priest persuades the penitent that the deeds he contemplates are wrong. Thus, the very secrecy of the confessional works to protect the potential victims.

While this second reply comes much closer to answering the major arguments against the Catholic view, it is still not wholly successful. There is, of course, no empirical evidence to establish—or refute—such a claim, beyond the impressions of the priests involved,

since if the confessional is genuinely secret, the necessary data cannot be obtained. Even so, this still would not answer the principal objections in an entirely adequate way. Whatever general policies may be effective, ought not the priest prevent a serious harm to an innocent person or group of people, if it is something he can accurately foresee and if he can do so without causing other harms? Is the case not still more pressing if the harms are severe and widespread—such as the outbreak of a “prolonged, devastating, world-wide war”?

The Mormon Position Favoring Nonconfidentiality

For Mormons, one’s actions and beliefs in this world directly influence one’s status in the next. Although all persons are resurrected, admission in the afterlife to the telestial, terrestrial, or celestial kingdoms and one’s status as servant or god are the product not only of divine grace but of one’s present obedience to sacred law. Deviation in belief or in behavior, if uncorrected, entails that one will attain a lesser status in the afterlife, and lose the benefits of proximity to the most exalted; and if the deviation is severe enough so that one counts among the “sons of perdition,” one will be condemned to hell. (These claims, and the background metaphysical assumptions, are of course matters of first-order doctrine.) Insofar as the church official with pastoral functions, particularly the bishop, is committed to promoting the spiritual welfare of the members within his care, he is obligated to help members in good standing in the church remain so, and to help those whose status is in jeopardy correct their beliefs or behavior so that they may regain their standing in the church.

As a result, the bishop must use every opportunity to encourage members to avoid sin. Teaching, counseling, and the setting of example may be sufficient; but for the member who will not recognize or acknowledge his sins himself, the bishop must confront the member directly with them. Admonishment by the bishop may be adequate to help the member control his behavior, but if the deviation is severe or the member is recalcitrant, he can only regain good standing by submitting to trial, possible disfellowshipment or excommunication, and rebaptism. Consequently, in the Mormon view, it is for the sake of the individual who transgresses that the bishop must reveal the information to higher church authorities and to members of a court, to assist this individual in making appropriate spiritual amends.

Furthermore, the same argument applies to other persons associated with the confessant in a practice viewed as sinful. Other persons who are confidantes, accomplices, or partners in unacceptable criminal, sexual, or other practices are for the same reasons also in jeopardy. Indeed, since they have not voluntarily confessed to their own bishops, they are perhaps in jeopardy to a greater degree. Such persons, too, in order to repent, avoid sin, and regain good standing, must be confronted with their errors. It is for this reason that the

bishop of the initial confessant is expected to inform the bishop of the partner or partners, so that all the parties to the acts may be confronted, subjected to trial, and, ultimately, have their good standing restored with the church and with God.

In addition, such discipline is also viewed as necessary for the “cleansing of the church,” since it is held to remove unsavory, subversive, or dangerous influences from the community as a whole. In this way the bishop exercises his responsibilities not only toward those whose standing is under immediate threat, but those who may be threatened in the future. This is viewed as a

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particularly strong obligation where an unacceptable activity threatens to become widespread, as for instance in doctrinal criticism or objections to church practice or policy, spreading of deviant beliefs, or participation in social practices like viewing pornography, practicing homosexuality, adultery, or polygamous marriage, which, it is often believed, will encourage other morally vulnerable individuals to engage in similar behavior. Contact with individuals considered licentious or adulterous may also be viewed in the same way.¹⁴ Although it is nowhere stated in this fashion, the Mormon view in effect treats absolute respect for confidentiality as morally irresponsible, since it may ignore the welfare of the initial member or of other persons associated with or affected by the member, and may fail to protect the moral integrity of the community as a whole.

The features of the Mormon view may be still clearer in its critique of Catholicism. Catholicism, the Mormon view might argue, underestimates the prevalence and nature of harms to third parties. It fails to see that sinners may perpetrate not only major criminal harms, but more frequent and subtle though equally immoral ones, especially among the sexual sins. Furthermore, the Mormon view might add, Catholicism has failed to recognize the responsibility of the religious profes-

sional to *all* members of the faith, not just specified immediate clients; the religious professional can neither prefer the interests of the immediate client to those of others affected by him, nor prefer the interests of any individual to those of the community as a whole.

But the differences between Catholicism and Mormonism may be still more substantial. Catholicism requires violation of a fundamental moral principle when it forbids the confessor from preventing serious harm. But although Mormon practice appears to honor this principle, it violates others. First, it requires that implied promises, however they arise, must in some cases be broken. Second, it permits deception, since confidentiality is emphasized, but policies are also maintained which require its violation, and these policies are not announced to the membership at large. Third, it invites coercion, both in requiring persuasion of the member to relinquish his claims to confidentiality and in using confessed information to oblige partners, confidantes, or accomplices also to confess. Thus, both traditions, in their different ways, require violation of basic moral rules.

Excuses

Both traditions claim that although fundamental moral principles must be violated in the practice of confession, they are violations in a good cause. However, though each tradition may seem to make its case in a persuasive way, neither adequately answers the moral challenge which the practice of private confession puts to it.

In Catholicism despite the strength of the argument that absolute secrecy in the confessional may in general serve to protect third parties from harm, a substantial moral problem remains: Ought not the priest intervene to prevent a severe, accurately foreseeable harm, when he cannot dissuade the confessant from his plan? To this question, Catholicism has developed two further answers.

First, it holds that the seal of confession—the promise of absolute secrecy—cannot be given if the confession is imperfect, that is, if the confession is simulated, uncontrite, or insincere. In such cases, the rules governing other kinds of secrets apply, and if there is proportionately grave reason to do so, confidentiality may be broken. But of course the confession which is not contrite is precisely one in which the confessant is not genuinely penitent. He declines to make a firm promise of amendment, or he refuses to rectify the wrongs he has done, or he persists in his intention to initiate or repeat the evil act. This covers most of the cases in which severe harms are threatened and thus serves to temper the uncompromising severity of the second-order position concerning confessional confidentiality which Catholicism has adopted. Nevertheless, it does not fully eliminate the moral problem, for once the seal has been given, it must—regardless of the consequences—be kept.

As a second defense, Catholic doctrine supplies a more basic, general answer. According to Catholic teaching,

the priest who could act to prevent a harm by releasing confessional material but fails to do so cannot be morally blamed, since he holds that knowledge in a different way from ordinary knowledge upon which he might act. Confessional knowledge is held “in God,” or “as God,” and not *known* in the ordinary sense at all. Consequently, the priest is not morally complicit in any crime, even though he may appear to allow it to occur. Furthermore, should the priest be forced to testify in a court of law concerning a confessant’s revelations, he cannot be blamed for lying. He is giving a truthful account of the fact that he knows nothing of the matter in the ordinary way. With this doctrine of knowing “in God,” Catholicism moves to answer the final remaining objection to its policy of absolute confessional secrecy.

This defense, however, is itself another among the higher-order doctrines which have developed to resolve the ethical issues attendant upon a doctrinally mandated practice. It too is an evolved response to the disturbing moral questions the practice of private confession raises. However, it is in an important way different from the second-order doctrines examined earlier. It does not simply dictate a course of action with respect to the problem at hand, but serves to *excuse* the residual objections which the adoption of a second-order doctrine had raised.

But it is not apparent that this is a successful excuse. After all, insofar as the priest has heard and understood the confession and would be capable of repeating the words in which it is expressed, he does *know* the confessed information. This is of course not to say that the confessor knows that the confession is true, but only that he knows what the confessant has said; nevertheless, despite the problems of accuracy of prediction mentioned earlier, this will often be sufficient to incur moral responsibility even though the individual may not be legally obligated to act. Like second-order doctrines which function as answers, such third-order doctrines which function as excuses also cannot be accorded status among the premises in the general moral argument concerning confidentiality. It simply does not settle the issue to say that the priest cannot act because he does not know. He *does* know, and the moral question still exists: Should he act?

No text of Mormon scripture, doctrine, internal policy, or public statement of the church, as far as I know, acknowledges Mormonism’s practices with respect to confessional confidentiality as involving promise-breaking, coercion, or deceit, although informal interviews lead me to believe that they are felt and acknowledged privately by many as such. Nor do the primary scriptural texts or statements provide anything which might count as a doctrinal “excuse” for such practices. Nevertheless, recent Mormonism appears to be developing a third-order doctrine designed to answer the ethical discomfort felt in examining the church’s policies concerning confidentiality. This teaching, first articulated in the supplement to the Bishop’s Handbook for 1979,¹⁵ is that trial by a church court is redemptive in character, in that it “allows” or helps the transgressor to repent more fully than would otherwise be the case. It is “a court of love and redemption,” not retribution. It is important not to confuse this teaching with the first-

order doctrine that confession, remorse, and repentance are redemptive; this teaching is common to both Mormonism and Catholicism, and is originally derived from primary biblical texts. But contemporary Mormonism's new assertion that the *court* process is itself redemptive, serving not merely for discipline or to purge the church of undesirable influences but rather to benefit the accused, does appear to have developed in answer to the residual ethical problems left by adopting a policy which permits nonconsenting disclosure, deception, or coercion. Under this new teaching, the bishop who reports a confession could not be accused of harming the confessant, because the court elicited by his disclosure is a benefit, not a harm.

As an excuse, this doctrine functions as an analogue of the Catholic teaching that the priest has knowledge of the confessed material only "in God." In the Catholic version, the priest is not blamable for lying or for ignoring harms because he does not know the confessional secrets in any usable way; in the Mormon version, the bishop is not blamable for promise-breaking, deceit, or coercion, since, as it turns out, he is bringing the confessant benefits instead of harms.

Thus, of the two major religious traditions examined here, one, Catholicism, attempts to resolve the moral issues generated in practicing private confession by adopting a policy of absolute confidentiality, but then excuses its professionals for ignoring harms and for lying. The other, Mormonism, adopts policies which violate confidentiality, directing its practitioners to break promises, deceive, and coerce; it excuses these practices on the grounds that they bring benefits, not harms. In both traditions, perhaps, such situations occur relatively infrequently, but that does not dispell philosophical suspicion. Clear violations of ordinary moral rules are required in both.

Justifications

Lying, ignoring harms, promise-breaking, deceit, and coercion are accusations not to be applied lightly to practitioners within the religious professions. But it is important to notice that similar activities, though perhaps weaker in form, are countenanced in the secular professions as well. Indeed, there exist numerous situations in which ordinary moral rules are overridden in the interests of enabling the secular practitioner to provide the service which is the function of his or her profession. So, for instance, the ordinary rule of truth-telling yields in medicine before a more weighty rule that the physician shall always promote cure, or, if cure is not possible, relieve pain. On this basis, information may be withheld from patients whose recovery it might seriously jeopardize, or for whom it would cause severe, fruitless suffering.¹⁶ Put more crudely, this is just to say that sometimes the physician may—indeed *ought* to lie.

Similarly, the practice of law countenances violations of ordinary moral rules against concealment of information. The attorney is expected to reveal only aspects of the client's case which are favorable to him, and to withhold those which are not. He is also expected

to deny that his client is guilty, even when he knows the contrary to be true. This too is a form of deception, institutionally favored, and held essential to the provision of adequate legal defense. In still another area, the business executive who designs marketing strategies which "get people to buy" by engendering wants that are not true needs may be practicing a subtle form of coercion; yet it is so much a part of contemporary economic life that we barely recognize it at all, and do not object to it when we do. If, then, lying, promise-breaking, deceit, and coercion are apparently justifiably embedded in the practices of secular professionals, whether in weaker or stronger forms, can it not be the case that they are justifiably a part of the practices of religious professionals too?

In each of the secular fields, violations of the ordinary moral rules are accepted just in case they are necessary in order for the practitioner to provide the service which is the function of the profession. But what is the service the religious professional provides? This traditional characterization may abbreviate a very long dispute: his service is to facilitate and promote the individual's spiritual development in order to make possible the attainment of salvation.¹⁷ The concept of salvation (or, in Mormonism, that condition of salvation known as exaltation), of course, derives from first-order doctrine,

Both the Catholic and Mormon traditions claim that although fundamental moral principles must be violated in the practice of confession, they are violations in a good cause.

the coherence or actuality of which cannot be questioned here. But, also as a matter of first-order doctrine, salvation cannot simply be dispensed by the religious practitioner; it is conferred upon the individual by God. Though the religious practitioner may also engage in various peripheral functions, such as the regulation of behavior, teaching morality, or strengthening the church institution, his central professional function is to facilitate the individual's attainment of this highly valued state.

As in other professions, violations of ordinary morality will be acceptable just if they are necessary to

enable the practitioner to perform his central function; those institutional practices are favored which are maximally effective in providing the profession's services with minimal violation of ordinary moral rules. Thus, the question arises, are either the policies permitting lying and ignoring of harms found in Catholicism, on the one hand, or the policies encouraging promise-breaking, deceit, and coercion found in Mormonism, on the other, *necessary* for the priest or bishop to facilitate the individual's attainment of salvation?

This is at root a factual empirical question, like the corresponding questions in the secular professions. But notice that in religious practice there is little way of answering it. One can perhaps identify the efficacy with which a religious practitioner promotes what are held to be facilitating states or preconditions for salvation. Combining the two traditions, for which first-order beliefs are similar here, such states might include remorse, sorrow or contrition, repentance, satisfaction or restitution, the performance of penance, reconciliation, and the avoidance of further sin. But it cannot be objectively determined whether the religious professional is ultimately effective in promoting salvation, even if the fundamental doctrine that salvation is granted to some is left unchallenged. This is because the attainment of salvation is, so to speak, screened off from objective earthly view. Despite the beliefs or feelings of many believers that they are "saved," there is no independent way of verifying that such claims are true. Yet the religious professional's function is not simply to produce in people the *feeling* that they are saved, but to facilitate their actual salvation, and it is on the basis of this latter function alone that violations of ordinary moral rules could be condoned.

Hence, the crucial empirical question necessary to discover whether the ethically suspect confessional practices are justified is one which cannot, in the end, be answered. There are many associated issues which could be raised—for instance, whether the Catholic practice of scheduled, highly ritualized confession, where secrets are not revealed and there is no public scandal, invites sin (as Mormon critics sometimes charge) by making it possible to purge oneself of guilt with relative ease; or whether the Mormon practice of disclosing certain kinds of confidences dissuades many people, including those with the most serious sins, from confessing at all. These are in principle empirical issues, though it might prove difficult to obtain any objective, relevant data bearing on such claims. Indeed, it may even be undiscoverable whether in either tradition the efficacy with which secret vs. nonsecret, confrontive confessional practices produce genuine remorse, actual repentance, real penance, or, in particular, the avoidance of further sin. This is especially the case since the absence of further confession is not an indication of the absence of sin, particularly where the costs of confession are high. But if it cannot be determined whether a religious professional or institution is actually effective in promoting salvation, the violations of ordinary morality which are made in its name must be taken much more seriously. After all, some morally atrocious practices have been conducted in the name of promoting

salvation in the past—the burning of heretics, the enslavement of Indians, the enlistment of an army of children to fight in religious wars—and surely believers of both faiths will wish to be sure that contemporary practices are not among them.

Notes

1. Most American states recognize priest/penitent privilege, protecting the priest from being compelled to testify in a court of law concerning matters learned in confession. The precise scope of the privilege varies widely from state to state.

2. Edwin F. Healy, S. J., "The Seal of Confession," *Review for Religious* 2 (15 May 1943): 176.

3. John R. Roos, *The Seal of Confession*, The Catholic University of America Law Studies no. 413 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1960), p. 1.

4. *General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), pp. 51-64.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. For a brief introduction to this dispute, see the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 ed., s.v. "confession, auricular." This also provides a brief bibliography of the major sources.

9. See, for instance, Count C. P. Lasteurie du Saillant, *The History of Auricular Confession*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1848), vol. 1, chap. 2, on "Seduction of Women in Spain, by Means of Confession."

10. I thank D. Michael Quinn (department of history, Brigham Young University) for much of the following information.

11. *Parade*, 11 February 1968, p. 27, as cited in Fred L. Kuhlmann, "Communications to Clergymen—When Are They Privileged?" *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 24 (1974): 44.

12. Telephone interview with Martie Barnes, Associated Press writer, Boston, on a story in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, 31 August 1982.

13. In a 1965 study, for instance, 86% of potential parolees identified by psychiatrists as potentially violent were not charged with a later violent crime; a 1968 study showed 326 incorrect identifications of violent individuals for every correct one; a third study showed false predictions of violence in 19 out of 20 cases (Dennis W. Daley, "Tarasoff and the Psychotherapist's Duty to Warn," *San Diego Law Review* 12 [July 1975]: 932-51). In some specific instances, like the notorious *Tarasoff* case, predictions of future violence have proved deadly accurate; but such cases are in the very small minority.

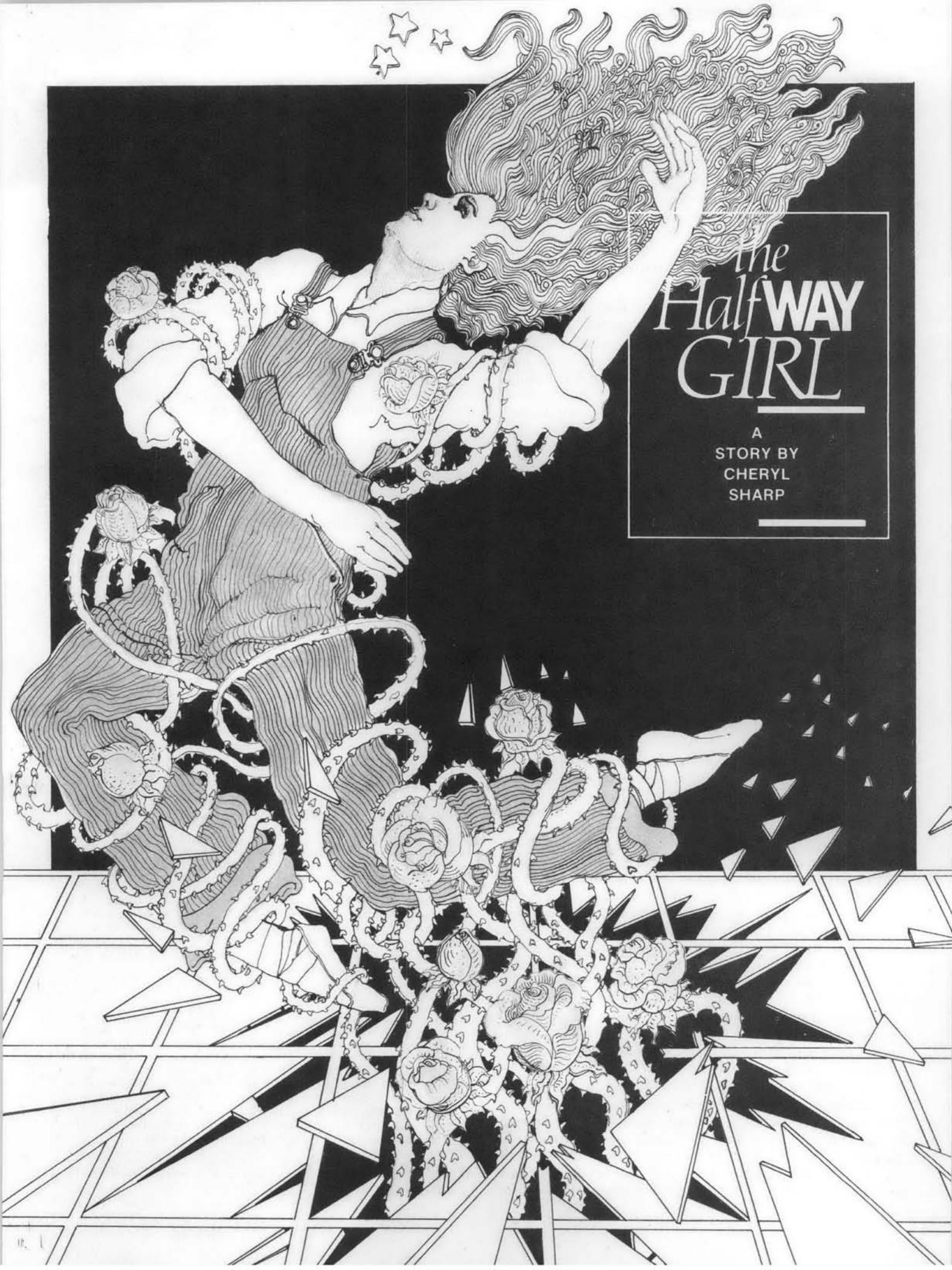
14. It is important here to remember that Mormons consider sexual sins to be extremely serious infractions. Such sins are, in fact, sometimes described as "next to murder" in their gravity.

15. *Supplement to the General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), section 8, p. 1. See also the account provided by Lester E. Bush, Jr., "Excommunication and Church Courts: A Note from the *General Handbook of Instructions*," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Summer 1981): 78. The previous edition of the *Handbook* (1976) asserts only that the court is to be held "in a spirit of love," and still earlier editions (e.g., 1968) do not mention love at all.

16. This would not, however, justify concealing information from a dying patient who cannot recover and for whom that information might be of crucial importance in decisions about facing death.

17. John Hick ("On Grading Religions," *Religious Studies* 17 [December 1981]: 451-67) identifies the goal of the major world religions as "salvation/liberation." We may suppose, I think, that the attainment of liberation is more closely connected with the Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, and that salvation can be identified as at least the traditional goal of Western, Christian-based faiths.

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the
HalfWAY
GIRL

A
STORY BY
CHERYL
SHARP

IN small Utah towns, the sun presses against the streets and buildings with an intimacy hard to find in places less exposed. Usually nothing is hotter than the single, paved street running both ways out of town. Odelle, Utah, though, had its own particular hotspot: the only greenhouse for miles around.

Full of sensual blooms and small green slips, the greenhouse should have been a place of wonder. Yet even the school children, bursting into three free months of exploring, left it alone. It was no challenge, just a steaming building which left even the most intrepid child limp as the garden flowers his mother babied all through the summer.

The old men and women who worked there, their droop caused from time as much as place, liked seeing the heat smother younger planters, liked watching young hands slow to a senile pace. Even the migrants, who swaggered in every morning, charged by the pace of their transient lives, even they soon lost their volatile edge. By noon they were as lifeless as the regulars who planted at the opposite end of the table. By noon there was no difference, save a little skin tone, between one sweating group and the other. For most, the greenhouse was just a place to earn a paycheck to spend in the bigger towns north along the mountains.

The only exception to the rule of swelter and slowdown was the new girl. She stood apart, midway between the regulars and the migrants, which was the reason for her nickname. She was quiet, too, so reserved that one old man wondered if she was only halfway there. He repeated the thought out loud, drawing snickers from both ends of the table. Not that there was anything halfway about her work; she transplanted faster than any of the other women (who were all faster than the men). Neither the heat nor the envious mutterings slowed her down.

No one guessed that the halfway girl had dreams. Though most of the women who fingered dirt five days a week had dreams, they were different dreams—of men or drink or eternal salvation. The halfway girl dreamed of movement. She cherished her speed at planting, thought it indicative of some greater talent. While the other women just shook their heads and remarked at such a diligent worker, she plucked her plants from the seed flats with a speed and economy of movement that attracted jealousy even in the hottest hours.

"I don't know how you do that without breaking the root," one of the women would observe, watching the halfway girl press the roots straightway into the dirt with her forefinger, then filling the ensuing hole with a quick pressure of her thumb.

Another woman would counsel: "I make the hole with one hand and put the plant in with the other; then I pat the dirt around it. That way I'm sure nothing breaks or wilts up and dies. Why don't you try it my way?"

Always the halfway girl seemed to consider the advice of others and always she kept her own way. Her rate was up to five dollars an hour, but to her, it wasn't the money that signified, just the skill, just the movement.

The girl stayed all day in the greenhouse, and when the others left for lunch, she was alone. She valued this time more than any other, anticipating the moment when the dirt maker ground to a halt and all the other workers shuffled out. The dirt maker was an old cement mixer, standing at the end of the table. Compost and soil were loaded into it, and all day it grumbled and ground out "Grade A Dirt." "Hardly government inspected," said the boys who shoveled in manure. When the machine was turned off, the halfway girl felt her soul turn back on. And during this in-between time, the end of morning, not yet afternoon, the halfway girl could hear herself breathe.

When she walked to the refrigerator, tucked between the pansies and the cash register, she heard her shoes spread the gravel with each step. The grunt of the refrigerator door as it gave way to her firm tug sounded clearly in the building full of quiet things—the plants, the moisture, and the halfway girl.

On the refrigerator door some long-gone planter had pasted a poem. She liked the poem, though it made her uneasy. Like sacrament meetings when the bishop caught the spirit of exhortation and rebuked their frailties—commending their energies to a finer cause. If the babies didn't cry or the air conditioner turn on, it could be an inspiring experience. Yet more often she felt confused, unsure of the first step up. She wished she knew whether the flowers in the poem were a good or a bad thing.

The Production Planter's Song

It could smother
someone in an instant,
all that dirt
that fills our flats.
(Each flat—twelve cups
each cup—eight plants
ninety-six plants—hands
must be fast).

Jack be nimble,
Jack be quick,
thirty-five cents
is all you get.
But hands get old,
too stiff to be sold.
The fingers break
and will not hold
newborn plants.
They wilt, they fold.

Ashes to ashes,
the planter is still
dust to dust.
The dirt will spill,
and only the grave
and the earth will know
the flowers that fall
and root and grow.

As the halfway girl ate her sandwich, she wandered through the greenhouse, stroking the plants and listening to the quietness. Sometimes she fancied she could hear the leaves twisting as they followed the sun. Or sometimes she imagined the roots exploring the

limits of their pots, searching through the rich dirt like her own fingers. When the lunch hour was up, she turned back to her job, trying to ignore the grumble of the dirt maker.

The work day ended at four, though some left earlier. The halfway girl always brushed her section of the table off, reported her number of transplanted flats to the skeptical boss, then gathered her purse, and stepped outside. And she was always surprised that the outdoors was cooler than indoors.

The walk to the bus stop was another good part of the day. She enjoyed stretching her heels forward, feeling the whole back of her leg lengthen until the power from her hips thrust foot after foot down in a long, hungry stride. Someone once had accused her of eating up the space when she walked, and she liked to think it was true.

Every day she paid her fare just as the bus began to move. She was always in control, the backs of her legs straining as she leaned slightly forward to avoid lurching. As she turned to find her seat, she kept her knees slightly relaxed, ready to adjust her balance with the most subtle shift of the bus. She never clutched at the backs of seats as she made her way down the aisle. Her control would have graced a dancer.

To dance was the halfway girl's most secret dream, one that had begun to grow at the beginning of the summer when she saw a dance concert on television. Even through the warped picture of her old black and white, she could tell that here was something wonderful.

The dancers' feet moved with surety at any speed. Their arms could float with the fluid carelessness of a dream or capture lines as stark and unyielding as the edges of the mountains surrounding her valley. She thought it must be one of the bishop's "finer causes."

Yet she had not looked for a dance class and probably never would have if it hadn't been for a conversation she'd overheard at the greenhouse. It had been early, before the heat and noise of the dirt maker conspired to still the flamboyant character of the migrants.

"Oh, don't kill them leetle flowers," sang one young Mexican. "Pretty as a leetle butterfly with petal wings. Oh, don't kill them butterflowers, them flowerflies all grown up from a leetle caterpillar seed."

"Listen to that nonsense," said one of the regulars. "Butterflowers and flowerflies, hmmph," the woman snorted, nearly crushing the plant she thrust into the dirt.

"At least he's enjoying himself," quibbled an old man who disliked busybody women. "Gives us old folks something to listen to, eh?"

The woman, who did not consider herself old, glared, but the man continued. "Perks me up to listen to their nonsense—they have so much energy and hope. Why maybe someday," he paused, glancing down at his arthritic legs, "someday, I'll race the friskiest boy to the edge of town where the tall trees wait, and I'll shinny up higher even than the church. And maybe someday," he

glanced down the table to where the halfway girl worked at a furious pace, "someday that little girl down there will realize that all that dirt she hustles her life around is just dirt."

The halfway girl was angry. "Who is that old man to judge me?" she thought. She shook her head, trying to clear his words out of her mind. Only her fingers marked her agitation, and that day she transplanted flowers faster than ever before.

Even she was a little awed by her speed, but the old man's words returned, diminishing her achievement. "Just dirt, just dirt." And her thoughts expanded the refrigerator poem: "Sixteen flats an hour? So what? So what? Jack be nimble, Jack be quick; dirty fingers is all you get. So what? So what?" Suddenly the halfway girl knew she wanted to do something impressive. Something which people would applaud. When the home teachers made their monthly call they'd be more interested in her talents, less in the status of her social life. The bishop would see her from the podium and be reminded of her achievements, overlooking the fact that she sat alone.

"But there's nothing I can do," she thought. "Nothing I want to do. Except . . . ?" She stared at her hands, trying to deny the unspoken words that would commit her dreams. But the hands themselves betrayed her as she watched them dart among the plants. They were aware. They gauged the strength of the roots, the weight of the dirt, and coupled roots and dirt with quick, sure movements that stood out clearly in the lazy room. "Nothing I want to do. Except . . ." She admitted it now. "Except, maybe I want to dance." She felt then the excitement that sent her pulse throbbing through her body. "Maybe," she thought, "maybe I ought to take a dance class." Suddenly she knew it was the right thing to do, knew it as well as if she had received revelation.

As she waited for the work day to end, the halfway girl noticed a lift in the energy level around her. A cool draft blew through an open door. The heat stood still. A storm was coming.

The people in the bus that afternoon chattered more than usual, as though the rising wind enticed the words, one right after another, from their mouths. The halfway girl hardly noticed though, her own excitement blowing her home without a glance at the gathering clouds.

There was only one ballet studio in town, so she called there and asked about classes.

"The one class we have for adults meets tonight at seven. They've already had a month though, so you'd have to be willing to do some catching up."

"That's okay," said the halfway girl. "What do I need?"

"Well, leotard and tights and shoes. We sell shoes here, if you need them."

"Oh, good. Well, I'll see you tonight then." The halfway girl hung up the phone, then dropped onto her bed, hugging her knees. It had been so easy. Now she had only to wait until time to catch the bus. She could see herself turning and leaping. She could see the old man at the greenhouse envying her every move. She

straightened her bedspread, then watered her plants. Finally, she grabbed a sweater, turned out the lights, and stepped outside.

Usually she could look down her street and see clear to the end of town. Not that the town was especially small; instead it was as carefully planned as any Utah community. No winding river disturbed the precision of the streets, and the trees were never full enough to blur the view. That night, however, rain clouds had crept down the mountains, slipping into the valley and replacing the heat with a heavy layer of grey.

The ballet studio was downtown, above a hardware store, in one of those narrow two-story buildings with long, rectangular windows. The girl found a door that opened onto a long flight of stairs. Pulling the door tightly shut against the wind, she began to climb. Because the light was bad, she went slowly until she reached the top. Several women sat in what served as the waiting room and office. They stared at her as she entered.

"Are you new?" demanded a girl sitting at a desk.

"Yes."

"I thought so," said the secretary, a note of satisfaction in her voice. "Knew I hadn't seen you around before. You the one that called?"

"Yes."

"Do you still need some shoes?"

The halfway girl nodded.

"Come over here then." The secretary pointed to a stool next to a bookshelf stacked with shoe boxes. "What street size do you wear?"

"Seven."

"Okay." The secretary pulled a box out of the shelves. "Now these fit tight at first, but they stretch a half-size, and you don't want them sloppy. When you get home, you'll have to sew the elastic across the top to hold them on. Tonight you can wear just your socks. You can dress in there."

The halfway girl pulled aside a stained green curtain and stepped into a dingy cubicle full of clothes. She hung her coat on a hook and shoved her new shoes on a shelf. She sat down in a chair in the corner of the dressing room, not wanting to wait in the office with all those women who stared.

Suddenly a door banged open, and a wave of noisy, little girls rushed into the room. They paused for a moment as they saw the halfway girl in the dressing room, and then they scrambled for their clothes.

"Have you seen my other green tennis shoe?" A girl of about ten or eleven dangled a shoe in the halfway girl's face.

"No, I'm sorry."

"Well maybe I'll wait until everybody leaves, and then it will be there, in the middle of the floor—it always is. Hey," exclaimed the young girl, noticing that the halfway girl was dressed for class. "Are you going to dance here?"

The halfway girl nodded.

"Oh, well, you know what? Hooper's loony. And the roof's leaking tonight; she's always worse when the roof's leaking. Think she'd get it fixed, huh? But no, that leak's been here for ages. Know how I know?" A long face full of braces leaned over the halfway girl. "Because

my sister used to take here a long time ago. And she says the leak was here then too. Oops, there's my shoe." The young girl shoved her foot into the shoe, bending the back under her heel. "Well, I've got to go now. My mom's waiting. Bye."

"Bye." The halfway girl slipped through the curtain when things were quiet again.

"That way." The secretary pointed to another door that opened into a large, bare room. "I told Mrs. Hooper you were here."

When the halfway girl stepped into the studio, she nearly tripped over a large bucket which stood by the door.

"Just walk around it," an irritated voice advised. "You won't be dancing over there anyway."

The halfway girl looked up, surprised to see the room empty except for herself and a middle-aged woman, standing by a brown, plastic phonograph. The woman did not look like a dancer. Mrs. Hooper wore an olive green tee shirt and blue polyester pants that were short and too tight around hips which were neither small nor firm. And she wore thick white socks with pointed blue Keds.

As the halfway girl watched, the woman pulled her ponytail tighter and tighter until every hair was flat and her forehead was stretched and gleaming. Her eyebrows and lashes were so blond they faded into the broad, white surface of her face. Her eyes were the one remarkable feature of her face. They, too, were light, light blue, but they were so intense that the halfway girl dropped her gaze.

"My name is Mrs. Hooper. I'm your teacher." A crust of lipstick clung to her lips, bobbing up and down as she spoke. "I don't know why no one else is here. Adult classes are so unreliable. Diane will be here, of course, but then, she's always late. We'll wait for her."

The halfway girl nodded. She felt embarrassed standing in the empty room with almost no clothes on and nothing to do. Mrs. Hooper turned away, fiddling with the record player, and the halfway girl retreated to the back of the room where the windows looked out on the street below. It was raining heavily. She saw a fat woman squeeze out of her car and run along the sidewalk, slipping as she came directly beneath the window; then the halfway girl could no longer see her. She heard a clatter as someone clambered awkwardly up the stairs. Mrs. Hooper heard it too and turned around. "Diane's here."

Diane burst into the studio, dumping her wet coat and boots by the rain bucket. "Hello, Mrs. H. Am I the only one ag . . . ?" She stopped abruptly and followed the teacher's gaze to the slender, long-legged girl in the corner.

"We have a new student, Diane. You'll need to do well so she can follow you in the exercises." Mrs. Hooper motioned them to the side of the room closest to the record player. A thick metal rod protruded a few inches from the wall about rib height.

"All ballet classes begin at the barre. The barre is used

to assist balance. Just follow Diane. Begin by facing me with your left hand on the barre. I would like to see two demi's and one grand plie in first, second, and third positions."

The record was scratched and sluggish, but the halfway girl didn't notice at first. She was too intent on capturing the essence of the movement Diane was working at. When the exercises were completed, the two turned around, putting their right hands on the barre. The halfway girl was in front now, but confident she knew the exercise well enough to repeat it on her own. This time she noticed the scratchy music and hoped the other bands would be better. When the exercise was over, she remembered to hold the last pose.

"Have you ever danced before?" The question lashed out at the halfway girl, and she jumped, turning to face Mrs. Hooper.

"No, I never have."

"That's hard to believe. Well, let's continue." The teacher dropped the needle on the record, and the next exercise began. There were about ten barre exercises, both left and right sides. They were not difficult for the halfway girl, but neither were they exciting. They involved primarily the feet and lower legs.

"Okay, come center," said Mrs. Hooper, moving a stool towards the middle of the room where she could sit and watch them. "You have a very good body for dance, you know." The words seemed to come reluctantly as the teacher stared at the halfway girl.

"Oh, thank you." The halfway girl was embarrassed and disturbed by the antagonism she sensed in the compliment.

"But not many talented people get good." Mrs. Hooper exchanged a knowing glance at Diane. "They think they're too good for me, too much pride. They didn't get anywhere. In fact, I told them to leave."

The halfway girl shot a sideways glance at Diane, who wouldn't look at her.

The teacher surveyed the silence in front of her, then, seemingly satisfied, turned back to the record player.

"We'll do an arm exercise before we finish."

The halfway girl enjoyed the arm exercise, enjoyed the shapes she created and brushed away. She followed Diane in a little bow, then stood, bewildered, as the teacher turned off the record player. She watched as Diane picked up her clothes, then ran over to her.

"Isn't there any more?" she asked, incredulously. "Don't you ever dance, I mean?"

Diane kept her eyes on the floor. The halfway girl felt a hand clutching at her shoulder.

"What did you say?" The halfway girl found herself facing the teacher.

"I just wondered. . . ."

"What did you just wonder?"

"I just wondered if we ever got to move. Use the whole room ever?" The halfway girl winced under the pressure of the woman's hand.

"I knew you were like that," said the teacher, staring at her. "Your kind always think you know better than me. Well, you can just leave." Mrs. Hooper dropped her hand. "I don't need to take that from students. You can just leave." Her voice fell to a whisper. "Leave and don't come back—leave."

The halfway girl fled into the dressing room. She was shaking. She pulled her clothes on, hearing Diane stumble down the stairs. Not wanting to be left alone with Mrs. Hooper, the halfway girl hurried out.

She was nearly down the stairs when she remembered her new dance shoes, tucked on the shelf in the dressing room. Turning, she ran back up the stairs and into the dressing room. As she grabbed her shoes, she heard a loud thumping in the studio. She stepped back into the darkened office then hesitated at the top of the stairs. Slowly she turned back to look in the studio.

Mrs. Hooper held a mop up to the ceiling where a dirty, brown stain spread out from the leak. As the girl watched, the teacher thrust up the end of the mop, then stumbled back as a shower of rotten plaster fell to her feet. Mrs. Hooper stared at the ragged hole in her ceiling for several seconds before she noticed the halfway girl.

"I thought I told you to leave," Mrs. Hooper spat out, her blue eyes blazing. The girl turned and ran.



As the halfway girl rode the bus home, she found it hard to push the dance teacher from her mind. Hard because the strongest emotion she'd ever left behind her was indifference. But now the teacher sat immobile in the girl's mind, staring out with light, blue eyes. The halfway girl pulled her sweater closer around her.

When she got home, the halfway girl put the dance shoes away with her winter clothes. Then she brushed her teeth, read her scriptures, and set the alarm for morning. She never missed a day of work.

The next morning was cool, the rain still drizzling. The lukewarm air of the greenhouse was welcome for a change. The old man stood next to her at the planting table and smiled when she joined the regulars at noon. She chatted through the afternoon and at the end of the day when she tallied up her number of flats, it was much the same as everybody else's. That day the planters stopped calling her the halfway girl. She supposed the hometeachers would be pleased. Her name was Jane, just Jane. And she stumbled as she left the bus.

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Waking

*Morning wakes clear, a full moon,
and flat shadows cross the lawn.
Frost takes itself serious after rain,
and the wind is frozen out of sight.*

*All the stars are winter stars:
Regulus, king of the east, Orion
and the great hounds of the south,
that long river Eridanus,
too faint to see.*

*Across the way my neighbor's light
keeps solitary wake. Wood smoke hangs
by the chimney, reluctant to rise.
His wife thinks about widowhood,
of the cabin where they began their lives.
How short forever seems to be.
We enter and leave the world alone
under an absent sun, a cold moon,
and pallid, indifferent stars.*

Donnell Hunter

BATIKS

for Jenny

I. Kintamani, Bali, Indonesia

Along the road to Kintamani,
the Balinese glide,
graceful and small,
carrying all
in baskets balanced on black-haired heads.

The road to Kintamani scoops
through island trees
and, climbing,
twines its lava loops
past Hindu shrines
and paddy fields of the Balinese.

The bus to Kintamani jolts
to a high hill shy
of the sulphurous smoke
solfataras choke
up, belching, blotting the Balinese sky.

The slopes near Kintamani hold
villages rolled
in a lava grave;
but Balinese vendors, mobbing the hill,
oblivious, spill
colorful snares
of hand-crafted wares.

Children rave, "Postcards, Madame!"
women wave ("Madame, Madame!")
bold batiks bled from the hunched of Java
whom bosses and their pittance enslave.

The mountain thunders and the children rave.

From Kintamani a road descends,
weaves and bends
through the countryside.

Dignified,
small,
smiling all,
brown Balinese,
balancing burdens with ancient ease,
glide by hedges of coconut trees.

II. Jogjakarta, Java, Indonesia

Jenny told me I had to feel
Java congeal
in Jogja's fray
and tight suspense
to sense

Indonesia in decay,
better to appreciate,
accentuate,

Bali's utter difference.

A woman wrapped in a black sarong
hurries along,
bent by the baskets bulged on her back,
and navigating the glutting throng,
propels frantic feet,
deftly dodging the beat
of bullocks lugging a wooden cart
(how long
have the tiny men jogged alongside?
Why don't they ride?
Where did they start?)
while beves of becas and bicycles spin
past her, panting, pedalled by thin,
shirtless men—
then
she crosses the street
(whose human factories huddle and squint
through shadows rank with dust and heat,
taking infinite pain
with filigree silver and batik print)
to disappear down a steamy lane
jammed and stained with Javanese
aching for breeze,
straining for patches of shade and squatting
by open stalls
where produce sprawls
close to piles of refuse, rotting.

Java spreads as the city thins.

Rice farmers bathe in brown rivers
and herd geese single-file on small green ridges
between paddies.

Prambanan's temples to the Hindu trinity
and Borobudur's bell-jarred Buddhas
attract more tourists than do Jogja's mosques.
Ask the blind beggars.

The streets of Jogjakarta pulse,
convulse,
clot, and squeeze
juggling, jostling Javanese
through Java's curious cultural heart—
my Kintamani couterpart.

Karen Marguerite Moloney

Notes for BATIKS

1. A solfatara is a volcanic vent issuing sulfurous gases.
2. A beca is a pedal trishaw.

continued from page 7

interpretation" by stating, "Adam had intelligence, as much as any man that ever lived since or lives now. . . . I do not look upon Adam's action as a sin. I think it was a deliberate act of free agency. He chose to do that which had to be done to further the purposes of God" (*Look to God and Live*, p. 251.)

With such diametrically opposed positions taken by "the Brethren," we are left, as Allred writes, to "our own reasoning, or theologizing" in order to obtain a "complete, harmonious, and coherent" doctrine. While she finds the "softened interpretation" to be "not consistent with the scriptures," I find her "hardened" version at loggerheads with man's free agency. From my study of the gospel, the plan of salvation seems centered around the correct use of agency. In order to be "complete, harmonious, and coherent," any doctrine must keep agency at its heart.

The question, then, is whether sin or agency is behind the fall of man. Allred decides that sin is involved since Adam and Eve broke a commandment by eating the fruit. Yet, she seems to admit that no sin exists in the absence of law. She nevertheless has Adam and Eve sinning while obtaining the law (i.e., in a state of innocence). Logically, they could have sinned only after the act of obtaining the law not during or before. This is certainly supported by scripture (2 Ne. 2:22-23). This passage also suggests that the fruit represented the ability to make moral judgments "being able to understand the law." This, however, may be a mere semantic argument. A close reading of 2 Nephi shows that in the area of moral judgment Adam and Eve were identical to little children and yet it does not imply they lacked intelligence or reason. (See also D&C 93:38, 29:47.)

Allred briefly mentions God's dilemma—how do you get immortal beings into mortality and expose them to sin and yet remain guiltless—and then dismisses the only rational explanation. She states, "Adam and Eve did not partake of the fruit in a conscious effort to forward God's plan. . . . It was not until later . . . the plan of redemption was explained to them." Without that vital knowledge, they had no basis for rational choice (and lacking moral judgment really could not be tempted). However, if they were taught the plan, they could choose wisely and freely and we don't find ourselves having to "justify God to man."

In the apocryphal "Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan," (hereafter referred to as A&E), an enlightening story of the Garden of Eden drama is unfolded in which Adam's and Eve's agency is left intact. In this text, Adam holds God blameless by admitting, "Thou gavest me understanding and knowledge, and a pure heart and a right mind from thee." (A&E 34:8). The tractate notes that Adam and Eve sought exaltation when making their choice. And the Lord said unto Adam and Eve, "Of your own free will have you transgressed through your desire for divinity, greatness and an exalted state, such as I have" (A&E 6:4-5). In all accounts, including the endowment, Eve convinces Adam through reason, not ignorance or deceit, to partake of the fruit. It is only logical to believe that Eve was persuaded by the same means. In A&E God confirms it was Adam's and Eve's desire for godhood that led them to partake of the fruit. God also teaches that Satan can offer only a hollow substitute of the true plan of salvation. God teaches, "See Satan's love for thee, who pretended to give thee the godhead and greatness; and, behold, he . . . seeks to destroy thee from off the earth. . . . But as to the godhead he cannot give it to you." (A&E 46:4, 7 and 45:5.) Indeed, only Christ can bring to pass "the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 2:39). The point of all this is that God was not paying mere lip service to free agency when he told our first parents, "Thou mayest choose for thyself."

As to the larger question of what takes the place of original sin to explain the requirement of Christ's atonement, Allred offers several intriguing ideas but fails to note the twofold nature of the Atonement. With or without sin, all mankind needs to be redeemed from the grave. We chose to enter mortality, as did Adam, knowing that Christ would choose to fulfill his role in the Atonement (John 10:17-18). This part of the redemption is the only universal grace offered by Christ unconditionally. The part of the Atonement dealing with sin is conditional upon obedience and repentance. Thus we do not find ourselves wrestling with a "gap" in our theology concerning the need for redemption; but, after all, are really seeking an answer to the interesting, but less crucial, question raised by Allred: "Why is it impossible for men to be sinless?"

Her discussion of little children plainly shows that children are, in fact, considered sinless if they die before the age of accountability. Only after

we arrive at the age of accountability do we fall short of godliness and succumb to sin. So some do die without sin—children. In looking for a reason as to why man sins, the answer may simply be that man, regardless of his agency, is not physically capable of controlling his every thought twenty-four hours-a-day for his entire life. Yet the Savior urged us to try to control them (Matt. 5:27-28). It was this capacity in Jesus (probably because of his divine nature) that made him, of all mortals, capable of perfection.

Bradd C. Hayes
Chula Vista, California

The Shadow of Control

In response to Jay S. Bybee, SUNSTONE (8:3): We are living in a society that is currently undergoing a mighty philosophical struggle relative to the relationship between control and responsibility.

As our land progresses further into a state of government control in the name of society the strict natural laws of justice will make it harder for those in government to escape the burden of responsibility that comes home when one assumes control. City and county bureaucrats are beginning to catch a glimpse of the light as code enforcement and inspection is being held increasingly by judges to transfer responsibility and liability to government agencies. And now it is the psychiatrists and psychologists who are suddenly confronted with the reality of justice—I guess it hadn't occurred to people that if they lay claim to the precision of expertise in human behavior, that grants them the power to remove the punishment affixed to a criminal act. The package deal also brings corresponding greater accountability for the actions of those whom they have sheltered.

When will we ever learn that responsibility is the shadow of control, and that the sun will not forever remain behind the clouds.

Allan Hunt
Carnation, Washington

Historicity of the Book of Mormon

I read with interest the Readers' Forum responses to my September/October, 1982 article on the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

The most helpful letter was the one from Art Simmons, who forces me to reflect on whether my definition of scripture leaves room for the Book of Mormon. He properly notes that the

New Testament was a product of the early Christian experience while the Book of Mormon was for Mormonism the founding experience itself. I think the basic difference is that one charismatic leader produced no known writings (and most of the writings that were produced were not written until it became clear that He would not return soon) while the other charismatic leader launched his movement with a written statement of his faith.

It seems to me that in both cases the writings arose out of the life situation of the community, even though in Jesus' case the writings were produced after the community had existed for about two decades. In Mormonism it was Joseph's life experience that produced the writing. He did not write in isolation, but as a result of interaction with family and friends, many of whom became leaders in the movement. And the Book reflected the original faith of the Mormon community.

Charles is guilty of simplistic thinking when he argues that if Joseph wrote the book, it follows that "there were no visitations from an angel named Moroni. It seems unlikely that God would use a deceiver, however well-intentioned, to communicate his will or organize his church. Therefore the subsequent revelations have been bogus. The Church and its theology would all have been Joseph's invention."

Is Charles telling us that it is not possible that Joseph could have written the book as the result of a profound spiritual experience—even an experience that included a divine visitation or was sincerely thought by Joseph to have been a divine visitation? Do we have to assume that a prophet correctly understands his or her religious experiences? Why would we have to regard Joseph as a deceiver? Just how does the conclusion that Joseph wrote the book require the conclusion that his later revelations were bogus? And is the Church denigrated if its theology is based on the thought of its founding genius?

It seems to me that Charles lets the cat out of the bag as to what troubles him when he writes near the end of his letter: "The personal and institutional consequences of accepting Russell's position are immense." I really doubt that the institutional church would be affected very much if the majority of Mormons, including all General Authorities, read my article and were persuaded by it. But

nevertheless, the personal and institutional consequences are not relevant as to the truth of the matter.

I am surprised that Charles regards the statement I quoted from Barzun and Graf ("Truth rests not on possibility nor on plausibility but on probability") to be "undoubtedly the silliest statement" he had read in years. The point of their statement is that historians, in their attempt to get as close to the truth as possible, must base their conclusions on probability rather than mere possibility or plausibility. The point is an important one for faithful Mormon historians, who are too tempted to arrive at conclusions consistent with the faith even when an alternate interpretation is more probable. A faithful explanation that is merely possible or plausible is much to be preferred by them. Certainly Barzun and Graf recognize the elementary principle that historical "truth" is fallible, and that "probability" and "truth" are not synonymous.

If Raymond Soller's long, interesting letter relates to my article I don't catch the connection.

Robert Mashkin claims I am not "very interested in listening to answers that have been around a long time." Scott Smith claims that my kind of "untempered and fashionable liberalism rests on a strong desire to believe the book non-historical." He also suggests that I represent myself as an intellectual who would be uncomfortable giving the book a fair shake. How do these two men—total strangers to me—know so much about my motivations and the predilections I may have brought to my research? What do they know of the personal struggles of faith and reason that I have gone through in the past 25 years? Smith's letter in particular adds nothing to the discussion. It is simply an uninformed cheap shot intended to discredit rather than seriously discuss the issue.

William D. Russell
Lamoni, Iowa

Issues of Intimacy

We goofed! The following article was printed in SUNSTONE 8:4 with several paragraphs in the wrong order. We express our apologies to the author and our very confused readers, and hope that this reprinting will make amends.

REDIRECTING MY FINGER

Marybeth Raynes

After being a therapist for a few years, I rarely encounter an entirely new situation any more. But recently, to my delight, I did. A couple, who had been and are very active in the Church and who have had severe marital problems most of their seventeen years of married life, came for help about a decision to stay married or to divorce. Nothing new about that. But their approach to telling me about their marriage was. For the first time in my experience, each spouse discussed at length what he or she had done to cause the problems that exist between them. I was amazed. Each had some personal insight, each took responsibility for his or her part of the dysfunction, and neither blamed the other.

It had not always been that way. A recent crisis had scared both of them and each had since spent days of

excruciating self-introspection. Of course, the problems did not stop with their insight. But their awareness provided an excellent foundation for working with the problems at hand.

Probably their most crucial discovery was that it is fruitless to demand that the other person change. I agreed. Since we have no direct control over anyone's actions but our own, we can only change ourselves.

Unfortunately, although we give lip service to the idea in Mormon culture that only the Lord—or the Holy Ghost—can change a person's heart, we spend a good deal of effort trying to change other people in our wards, in our families, in our circle of friends. The milder methods of sermons and logic (discussions of good reasons to keep the commandments, why an eternal principle is true) often escalate to threats and ultimatums (lasting sorrow or grief, loss of family in the eternities, hurting our family or friends) when change doesn't occur.

Sometimes these methods seem to work. A person is moved by a sermon to transform his or her life; a new reason or logic for a desired behavior makes sense and clears the way for change; a threat scares someone enough to "clean up his act." (Although not easily visible, generally the person who is threatening is more scared than the person he or she is trying to frighten.) But however effective they may seem at times, negative methods are essentially high-risk tools. Resentment, guilt, or other negative feelings often come back towards the person applying the pressure. The relationship may suffer in the process of "just trying to help"—a poor trade off in most cases.

The old tale about the argument between the wind and the sun illustrates the ineffectiveness of force. Each argued he could get a man to take his coat off. The wind tried first, using force. The man only clutched the coat more tightly to him. The sun provided comfort and then warmth, and the man readily took off his coat.

What works then in getting a person to change? In relationships between adults or peers, basically nothing. (I am excluding discussion about relationships between adults and children because I think there are some important exceptions to my following points.) I can *invite* but not demand change. The best I can hope for is to influence a person in an area in which he or she already wants to change. The irony is that many people already truly want to change parts of their lives or personalities that I may want them to change. Most people are pretty hard on themselves and can compose quickly long lists of undesirable qualities. Many feel stuck with behavior that is as obnoxious to them as to others. By discovering an area a person wants to change and then using positive methods such as example, reasoning, modeling, empathy and encouragement, environment for change is created.

Most of the time, however, when I change the direction of my finger and point it at myself long enough to realize how I am contributing to the problem a lasting, satisfactory solution occurs. How do I do it? (First an important disclaimer. It is *not* easy and I am not always successful at first. Sometimes it takes months of practice.) First of all I must develop the right mind-set. *How* I point my finger at myself is crucial. I can damage myself as much by being negative as I can others. I shouldn't threaten, sermonize, nag, or blame.

Beyond that, I must give myself credit for having good motives but sometimes poor methods in interacting with others. For example, I see a friend's habit of constantly reminding his family members about upcoming get togethers (even though all have efficiently kept appointment books) as a way of saying, "I love you, I want to get together, I don't want anything to happen so that we will miss out on a good time" (a good motive). But his style communicates "I am not sure if you can keep track of events by yourself" or "I am not sure if I am important enough to you for you to remember me on your own" (poor method). Similarly I need to learn to recognize such shortcomings in myself.

Finally, I must expect to change at least as much as the other person. This willingness helps rule out self-interest as the only motive for wanting the other to change.

After these preliminaries, I try a number of things. I ask other friends (safe ones at first!) to describe how they see me in a problem situation. I ask the person I am having the problem with. Most partners are quite willing to tell you what they think you are doing wrong. But I need to learn to ask for the right information, for specific, concrete details about actions, voice tone, facial expression. Going back over the memory of a certain event sometimes helps. I try to piece together the sequence of the problem interaction. I run it over in slow motion in my mind. For example, what do I feel, and then say, after he says such and such? And then, what does he say or do after my statement or action? In sum what is the effect of my words and actions on others, not just my intentions?

Next, and tougher yet, I take my budding awareness to my partner or friend and share what I have discovered and what I want to change. As risky as this part is, it is often the most rewarding. With couples I counsel and in my own relationships, I have found that talking through the sequence of a problem and its underlying causes in a nonjudgmental atmosphere often provides important breakthroughs in seemingly endless problems. Meeting the other half way is a more seductive invitation to change.

Whatever the initial reaction of others, a continuing commitment to change myself regardless of what the other person does is important. Even if the particular problem in the relationship isn't solved, I generally feel

better about my own life and often my other relationships will go better.

Realistically when two people are changing, the course is not predictable. Relapses occur easily during stress or crisis. Recently married, I found myself during the two weeks before the wedding (although positive, weddings are a crisis like any other major change) telling my fiance, now husband, how he could make me feel better when I was particularly tired or overloaded. Then I realized that my requests were really asking him to take the responsibility for the difficult task of making me happy. I was shrugging off onto him what was essentially my own job.

Changing ourselves often works magic and overcomes the other person's resistance to change. But not always. When change seems impossible, I still have several alternatives.

I can accept the problem as ongoing but not disruptive to the relationship. Essentially, I agree to disagree with the other person *and* affirm that the disagreement is not central to my relationship with him/her. We can build on other things. Many members married to nonmembers have chosen this solution and have found a peace that always actively expecting a temple marriage will never bring. An important note: Giving up an expectation does not mean giving up hope; it simply means giving up the sense that it is my right to have it happen, giving up making myself unhappy if it does not happen, and giving up forecasting sudden relief or change.

Or I can change the nature of the relationship so that the issue or problem is deleted from my interaction with that person. Rearranging schedules, doing less of certain kinds of things together, deciding not to talk about a certain issue except at safe times—or never again—are all possible. With this in mind, my definition of a good marriage at this point in life is: sharing and celebrating all of the points in our lives that we have in common, exploring areas of new agreement and interaction (on new activities or old problems), and finding ways to slide past each other with as little conflict as possible in areas where we disagree. Accepting that we do not have to agree and interact on every idea or event brings freedom to celebrate what we do have without allowing the conflicting areas to contaminate what we enjoy.

A final possibility is to discontinue or take a "leave of absence" from the

relationship. In some situations, this may be the easiest solution. But in a marriage, a family, or with long-term friends this is very difficult and often doesn't work. Still after a long trial of trying to change yourself, not demanding change of the other, and following the above two alternatives, that option may be important to consider. Several Church authorities have agreed that even though the Church deplores divorce, it does not demand that genuinely unhappy or severely conflicted couples stay together. Colloquially stated, we are not required to sweat out an eternal marriage. However, and paradoxically, thinking through the idea of dissolution sometimes reveals areas of agreement and accord and renews the desire to change what is causing

difficulty.

Happily I'd like to report that my own efforts at changing myself instead of wanting someone else to do all the changing has had marvelous results. I find myself able to care more about other people as I find myself wanting less to change them. The generous outpouring of love and concern I feel from friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances has been rich testimony that non-demanding love works wonderfully. The couple who came in pointing their fingers only at themselves are also finding marriage somewhat more satisfying. The struggle isn't over (it never is), but their commitment to change themselves is starting to unravel some long-tied knots in their relationship.

level of intimacy.

In my most recent column, I argued that all significant interpersonal relationships are eternal and that we ought to apply the eternal perspective to our friendships as well as to family ties. It seems to me that Mormon theology, if taken seriously, demands that we view eternal relationships more broadly than we typically do. After all, truth encompasses all things; there is no such thing as immaterial matter; everything operates according to natural and universal laws. In fact, in eternity time and space become secondary to the order within the universe and the interconnectedness of all things. The field of quantum mechanics—sometimes called the new physics—applies a similar principle at the subatomic level. According to this theoretical orientation, inseparable quantum interconnectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality.

Out of the new physics are coming some intriguing ideas which have—I believe—eternal implications. John Steward Bell and others have experimentally demonstrated the existence of a *quantum connection*. They find that when two particles (two photons, for example) or two systems have interacted, they continue to exert an influence upon each other. Once two things are connected, they are always connected. This influence is not diminished with distance nor mitigated by time. It is instantaneous and as strong at a mile as at a millimeter. Events interact faster than the speed of light. There are even some scholars who suggest that just as electricity does not flow until it is grounded—until it knows where it is going—this connection might operate as a pull from the future as much as a push from the past. Perhaps we are influenced even by future interaction with each other.

My understanding of physics is not sufficient for me to completely grasp all of this (I am still being charmed by quarks and held captive by gluons), so to me it sounds rather mystical. But I am also not well enough versed in mysticism to understand it from that perspective, so I interpret it in the context of my version of Mormon eternalism. I believe that my existence is part of a web of interconnections without beginning and without end. I believe that every connection I have ever made and ever shall make exerts an influence upon me and will continue to do so throughout eternity. Everything—and everyone—I

Paradoxes and Perplexities

THE ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE Marvin Rytting

The movie *I Never Sang for My Father* begins and ends with the following quote: "Death ends a life, but it does not end a relationship, which struggles on in the survivor's mind toward a resolution which it may never find." This statement captures the need we have to achieve what the gestalt psychologists call *closure* in our interpersonal relationships. Closure is a sense of resolution—a feeling that everything fits together, at least for now, and there are no outstanding issues needing to be resolved. At one level we often go in and out of closure in a relationship as new issues arise and need to be worked through, so there can be a sense of closure for every specific encounter between us. But there is a more general sense of closure wherein our relationship finds its own level and we have a feeling that this is where we want to be with each other. This can happen at any level of intimacy. It may be that we reach closure when we decide to terminate the relationship—or not to develop it at all—and have worked through all of our feelings about it. We can also find closure as casual friends or close personal friends or as mates or even as friendly antagonists. The essence of closure is that whatever the level of intimacy, we

both accept the nature of the relationship and we have resolved our conflicts about it.

Many relationships end, however—or simply go on hold—without reaching closure. This is what happens in *I Never Sang for My Father*. The protagonist is never able to confront his father and resolve all of the feelings which have been tormenting him for forty years and his father dies before he can find closure. It is difficult to achieve closure with someone who is dead, and thousands of people are in therapy trying to reach some kind of resolution with dead parents—or other significant, but inaccessible, people.

If we add the eternal perspective to this situation, it is not only in the mind of the survivor that the relationship lives and seeks closure but also in the mind—or spirit—of the deceased. I suggest that the relationship itself has a spiritual existence that continues and needs to find closure. I suspect that one of the tasks of eternity will be for us to work on *every* relationship we establish during this life until we have reached some sort of resolution with each one; and I anticipate that one of the joys of eternity will be the continual interpersonal explorations with those people with whom closure is at some

touch becomes part of me at some level. The influence of any given quantum connection may be infinitesimally small in comparison with the untold billions of quanta that form my eternal existence. If the only contact that we ever experience with each other is through these words, our relationship may seem insignificant in the eternal perspective. The more we share, however, the more important will be the influence we shall exert upon each other during eternity. It is even possible that our failure to develop our relationship here will have a profound influence upon us. In my vision of eternity, I translate the physical quantum connection into an interpersonal metaphor because I believe that these personal connections are the essence of eternal living.

If it is true that all relationships are eternal and have an impact commensurate with their importance to us here, we need to approach them with an eternal perspective. The eternal existence of multiple relationships is, at one level, simply a given. At another level, however, this perspective can make it easier to integrate a variety of relationships in our lives. Under our current consciousness, we act as if our resources are scarce—the more time and affection you spend with someone else, the less you can spend with me. In eternity, however, there is no limit upon resources, time, or affection, so that when we share, we do not lose. The ultimate loss that we fear is the loss of the relationship itself—if you start liking someone else, you might stop liking me. Under our current consciousness, the continuation of our relationship (if only one is allowed per customer) is dependent upon its favorable comparison with every other possible relationship and thus it is dangerous to allow any other possibilities to exist, lest they become more attractive and I lose you. If, however, each meaningful relationship is eternal, its survival is dependent solely upon its own quality and other relationships cannot threaten it.

Thus the eternal perspective provides for a polyconsciousness where a multiplicity of relationships is not threatening. There is room for them all. This is one reason why polygamy fit into a Mormon viewpoint so much better than into the American capitalistic notion of ownership and the distribution of scarce resources. Selfishness and jealousy are out of place in eternity. Of course, plural marriage is not the only model of

multiple relationships. Plural friendship is also a possibility.

The most important implication of the eternal perspective is a moral imperative. One of the objections which existential thinkers have made to the notion of life after death is that it takes the focus away from the present and releases us from the existential need to live authentically, under the threat of ceasing to exist at death. This criticism, however, applies only to traditional visions of the hereafter. To the extent that we are waiting for an afterlife which will be radically different from the present, we may ignore the need to live authentically and be willing to passively accept tyranny and injustice because of the promise of eternal happiness for those who suffer during mortality.

If we take the idea of eternity seriously, we recognize how important the present is. If every relationship we establish has eternal implications, we cannot escape from the consequences of how we interact with each other. You have a claim upon me to resolve our relationship,

and if I treat you unfairly or unkindly or cause you harm, I must make things right with you—either now or later. This leads to a moral imperative of existential proportions. We are responsible for our behavior in every relationship, and there is no escape—not even the escape of death. I may run away from you during this life, but I cannot run for eternity. If I avoid finding closure in the present, I must work for it in the future. If I abuse you in the present, I must answer to you in the future. I may even need to account for my failure to make contact with you during this life. The effect of this should be to focus our attention on the quality of the relationships we have in the present.

This vision of eternity provides us with promise and with responsibility—the promise that what we share here is merely a prelude to eternal sharing and the responsibility to make what we share worthy of eternity. This promise and responsibility apply not only to temple marriages, but to every relationship we have.

Aesthetics and Noetics

NIETZSCHE'S STOMACH

Michael Hicks

"Aesthetics," said Nietzsche, "is nothing but a kind of applied physiology." When he objected to some painting or piece of music or poem, he felt his disquietude in his limbs, in his chest, in his stomach. And when he assented to a piece of artwork, it was because he was, quite literally, touched by it. He felt it tingling in his bones, quivering in his tendons. In either case, whether assenting or objecting, he had as his criterion the *aesthetic* experience—that is, a feeling experience, for the word comes from the Greek *aisthanesthai*, which means, more or less, "to feel."

We have always considered feelings the special province of meaningful experience. And we usually think of feelings as emotions. Sorrow, fright, anticipation, envy—these are the sort of things we are so often enjoined to "get in touch with." This is not without cause. They are cloudy things, emotions—tentative, vagrant. But there is another sort of feeling that

the scriptures point to: "You shall feel that it is right," Oliver Cowdery is told in a revelation. *Feel* here is used in its simplest sense, to perceive or to apprehend through the body: Rightness is a sensation, a physical thing. It may be as localized as a burning in the bosom. Or it may be as general as *taste*, at least in the way Joseph Smith used the term: "I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you."

Joseph's religion consisted of sensations linked to ideas, whether they came as flashes of awareness or as postludes to long deliberation. Brigham Young once summed up the teaching of his mentor by saying that the things of eternal life are born in the experience of "our minds and understandings expanding by that which we learn . . . by the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear." Implicit in the spiritual-materialism of the avatars of early Mormon philosophy is the notion that every idea is connected to a sensation, and every sensation to an idea. The spirit

(read "mind") is the arbiter of these impressions, these feelings. It charts and logs the changes in the body. It applies physiology.

Fixed in the Mormon mind is a proverb of the eternal dialectic: "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things." To savor the sweet we must first grimace at the bitter. To "feel that it is right" we must feel that something else is wrong. What is wrong is most of what we experience every day; if art is to speak to us of rightness, we must first come to learn the terrible wrongness of the world. To confess pessimism in our culture may be heretical, but I can hardly escape this attitude toward the world system and human nature. This is the pessimism of Paul when he says "let God be true and every man a liar"; of John when he tells us that men love darkness better than light; of the psalmist when he writes "there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Art tastes of right in a world that is essentially wrong. It speaks of health in a world essentially sick. And—here many fail to understand—it speaks of strength in a world essentially weak. Art, strong art, is potent to the degree that it may disarm or momentarily injure us in our weakness. For this reason we sometimes fight art that is difficult. Like the wrestling angel, it wounds as it blesses.

The danger of religious art is the danger of religion itself. Rather than a force for right, health, and strength, it can and usually does become a mere salve for their opposites—wrong, sickness, weakness. That religion saves best, I think, that provokes us and challenges us. (Joseph made the telling remark that every divine communication will tell us things we never thought of before. The unthought-of, to turn his remark around, is a sign of truth.) Yet religion remains for most people an opiate—or, to hold to our terms, an anaesthetic. And most religious art deadens feeling by repetition, numbs by a litany of formulae, or puts to sleep by a surfeit of effects. The truly aesthetic, to the contrary, awakens feeling by variation, order, clarity. Thus any art should be above all a piece of artifice. Like language, it is a contrivance, one that informs the mind (read "spirit") by arousing physical sensations that correspond to ideas. Its logic may not be the logic of you or me, but that is how it teaches.

Nietzsche's stomach—like Oliver's bosom—instructed the mind in the language of feeling. The aesthetic in

religion and in art should not really lift us out of the body, but drive us, rejoicing, back into it. We should be,

as the philosopher put it, "no longer swimming, floating, but walking and dancing."

Give and Take

SO DANGEROUS IT COULDN'T BE TALKED ABOUT

Scott C. Dunn

There's a myth perpetuated by some Mormon intellectuals that it is the radically right, the overly orthodox, the constrictingly conservative within the Church that encourage the suppression of historical documents, academic analysis, and new ideas. According to these "Liahona" members, free inquiry would blossom and ultimately benefit the kingdom, if only the stodgy conservatives would permit it. Yet not long ago, the commitment of these intellectuals to academic freedom was put to the test—and failed.

I first became aware of the situation when I joined the staff a few months ago. At that time, *SUNSTONE* had just published an article challenging some of the assumptions of those intellectual heroes known in the Church as "New Mormon Historians." What startled—and disillusioned—me was the discovery that a number of historians had gone to great lengths to discourage the publication of this manuscript. For them, open discussion and disagreement was insufficient; they sought to prevent distribution of ideas contrary to their own. Those who had fought against intellectual suppression had suddenly embraced it.

The situation is similar to one which occurred several years ago when Immanuel Velikovsky attempted to publish his controversial *Worlds in Collision* (1950). A number of scientists, annoyed at Velikovsky's ignorance of so many well-established facts, persuaded the publisher to abandon the project. Velikovsky took the manuscript to another publisher and by 1964 the book had gone through nearly thirty printings in the United States and Great Britain. A near-repeat of the situation occurred some decades later when Carl Sagan organized a symposium of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to discuss Velikovsky's

controversial ideas. One scientist discouraged the effort, saying that no matter how negative the presentation, such a public forum could only contribute to the spreading of Velikovsky's unsupportable theories. But the symposium was held, the proceedings published, and now interested individuals can study and examine both sides of the issues for themselves.

It is one thing to discover the deplorable practice of suppressing discussion in a totalitarian regime bent on quelling opposition. But to find it among those whose professions are integrally connected with education and the open examination of issues is nothing less than inexcusable. As Milton observed, truth is only made manifest when competing ideas are allowed to be discussed in an open setting. This same notion was echoed several years ago by James Talmage in the *Improvement Era*. In his article, he approvingly cites the following from a newspaper editorial: "The man who cannot listen to an argument which opposes his views either has a weak position or is a weak defender of it. No opinion that cannot stand discussion or criticism is worth holding. And it has been wisely said that the man who knows only half of any question is worse off than the man who knows nothing of it. He is not only one-sided but his partisanship soon turns him into an intolerant and a fanatic. In general it is true that nothing which cannot stand up under discussion or criticism is worth defending." (23 [January 1920]: 204.)

Some have suggested that *SUNSTONE* is similarly guilty of suppression. From time to time I have heard a few individuals refer to the magazine's "hidden agenda" which supposedly supports liberal ideas while shunning conservative ones. I wish these people had the opportunity I have had of working with *SUNSTONE* for a few months and seeing how ludicrous such a charge really is. The hassles of putting out a magazine with a small staff and meager budget are so many,

and the number of available well-written manuscripts so few that the mere suggestion of SUNSTONE's employing a calculated selectional bias is laughable. As I look over the submissions in my files, I see many good articles representing a variety of viewpoints; yet none are radically liberal nor radically conservative. The relative sameness of these manuscripts makes *even having the opportunity* for selectional bias a luxury that simply does not exist.

We are, to a great extent, constrained by what people submit: If SUNSTONE appears to feature more articles representing the Liahona side of the Church, it is due to a paucity of good manuscripts representing the traditional or Iron Rod views. Indeed, so anxious are we to achieve a balanced perspective, that we often find ourselves being much more selective with so-called "liberal" manuscripts than conservative ones. As my accomplished predecessor Susan Staker Oman once observed, "The easiest way to get an article printed in SUNSTONE is to submit something conservative that is even halfway well written. It will be published immediately."

I have wondered why we receive so few submissions propounding, defending, analyzing, and encouraging traditional Mormon views. A few acquaintances have answered this query by saying that they "would *never* submit anything to SUNSTONE—it's too liberal!" I am at a loss to understand this attitude, for it reminds me of the proverbial man who cut off his nose to spite his face. People who complain about a perceived one-sidedness in a magazine and then refuse to submit contrasting views are nothing but self-fulfilling prophets. They reinforce whatever narrowness exists by refusing to contribute to the obvious remedy. A more productive approach would be to submit their best writing, writing which represents what they personally would like to see in an independent Mormon magazine.

In the play *1776*, the deciding vote in favor of debating the issue of American independence is cast by Rhode Island representative Stephen Hopkins with these words: "Well, I'll tell y'—in all my years I never heard, seen, nor smelled an issue that was so dangerous it couldn't be talked about. Hell yes, I'm for debatin' anything—Rhode Island says Yea!" SUNSTONE maintains its commitment to be an open forum and free voice for the best writing, thinking, and feeling the religious community has to offer. As editors we look for clear expression,

responsible argumentation, and original thought—*not* for reinforcement of our personal opinions. While our commitment to the Mormon faith and the faith of our audience naturally draws some borders on what can be considered appropriate, we nevertheless believe that Mormonism's dedication to "anything virtuous, lovely, of good

report or praiseworthy" embraces a wide range of analytical and personal expression.

In sum, it appears to me that Hopkins was right: No idea—no matter how conservative or how much it may challenge current thought—is so dangerous that it deserves to be suppressed. Hell yes, I'm for debating anything: SUNSTONE says yea!

J. Golden Nuggets

ON BEING A GENERAL AUTHORITY

James N. Kimball

I have enjoyed being a General Authority even though I know I would never have amounted to a damn thing in this church if I hadn't been the son of Heber C. Kimball. You know I had hold on one of the three paths to high office in the Church. Those three are: inspiration, revelation, relation.

But I wouldn't have missed it. I love to meet with the members of the Church and hear their testimonies and help them with their problems. And besides, if I hadn't been a General Authority, I would have missed meeting all of the nuts in the Church. For some reason they seem to seek me out. One man in Kanab told me one time after a meeting that he was no longer active in the Church because he didn't believe the story of Jonah and the whale. I told him that was one helluva reason for being inactive, but he said that was it; he wasn't going to change. I told him I would make him a deal: I said, "Look, brother, I'll soon be on the other side. I'll look up Jonah and ask him how he lived in the belly of that whale and then I'll come back and tell you. You stay active till I get back." But he would have none of it. "Besides," he said, "what if Jonah isn't there?" I said, "Then, hell, you'll have to look him up when you get there."

On another occasion one sister in Snowflake, Arizona, asked me between conference sessions if I would be so good as to look up her father when I got to the other side and give him a message for her. And then she handed me this envelope full

of small messages which she had written. I looked at her, and I looked at the envelope and said, "No, sister, I can't do this. When I get on the other side, I won't have time to look all over hell for your father."

In Delta this sweet sister came up to me, but she was no nut. She had a real problem. She asked me if I could talk to her after sacrament meeting was over. I told her to wait for me and I would. After the meeting she said, "I have two brothers; the older of the two by one year has been an absolute pillar in the Church. He has done everything the Lord asked him to do. He was a bishop and he worked with the youth; he has been a missionary and raised a fine family. He has been active in community affairs. He was all a brother or father or husband could be. Last summer, Brother Kimball, he was called home: He was killed by lightning while working out in the field. He left a beautiful wife and a young family. Now my other brother, the younger of the two, is no good at all. He has never done anything in the Church. He smokes, he drinks, he chases women, he can't hold down a job. He is an embarrassment to all of us. And yet he is still living. Why would the Lord call home the other brother? I don't understand, Brother Kimball. Help me." I didn't know what to say to her. I thought for a long time. My heart went out to her. Finally I said, "Sister, it's the Lord's will." She said, "What do you mean it's the Lord's will?" And I said, "Well, I don't think God wants that jackass brother of yours any more than you do." She threw her arms around me and gave me a big hug and said, "Brother Kimball, that is the best answer I ever received."

SUNDAY'S FOYER



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